



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Summer Reading List
For Students Entering Grade 11



Essential Questions:

1. What does a work of literature have to say about the American Character in terms of the following ideas: the desire for freedom? the search for identity? the conflict between the individual and society? the struggle between good and evil*? the pressure to conform?
2. What is the nature of the American Dream, and how does it change for different people in different times and places?

Selections		
Author	Title	Synopsis
Boyle	<i>The Tortilla Curtain</i>	In this explosive and timely novel, T. Coraghessan Boyle explores an issue that is at the forefront of the political arena. He confronts the controversy over illegal immigration head-on, illuminating through a poignant, gripping story the people on both sides of the issue, the haves and the have-nots. From Penguin.com
Bryson	<i>A Walk in the Woods</i>	Hiking provides only a backdrop to a heartfelt discourse on the social condition of America, local history, the environment, and the complexities of friendship. The pretext for the book was Bryson's interest in "rediscovering America" after returning to the United States after twenty years in Britain. From a review on Amazon.com
Cather	<i>My Antonia</i>	First published in 1918, and set in Nebraska in the late 19th century, <i>My Antonia</i> is the tale of the spirited daughter of a Bohemian immigrant family planning to farm on the untamed land. Antonia represents immigrant struggles with a foreign land and tongue, the restraints on women of the time, general human desires, and the American frontier spirit. Amazon.com Review
Eggers	<i>Zeitoun</i>	<i>Zeitoun</i> is the story of one man's experience after Hurricane Katrina. Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a successful Syrian-born painting contractor, decides to stay in New Orleans and protect his property while his family flees. After the levees break, he uses a small canoe to rescue people, before being arrested by an armed squad. When a guard accuses him of being a member of Al Qaeda, he sees that race and culture may explain his predicament. From The New Yorker
Ellis	<i>The First Family</i>	Ellis notes that any study of either John or Abigail is necessarily about them both, and in <i>The First Family</i> his focus is on that partnership. The letters John and Abigail exchanged are the chief documents. The book examines the strengths of the Adams' marriage as well as the toll taken by their years apart. Ellis has produced a very readable history of the nation's founding as lived by these two. From Booklist
Enger	<i>Peace Like a River</i>	Reuben "Rube" Land, an asthmatic 11-year-old recalls the events of his childhood in small-town Minnesota circa 1962. In the winter of his 11th year Rube's brother Davy guns down two schoolyard bullies who break into the Lands' house. After Davy's escape from jail, Rube, his younger sister Swede, and their father hit the road too, determined to find Davy. In the end it's in Rube's father that Enger finds something quietly heroic in the bred-in-the-bone Minnesota decency of America's heartland. Amazon.com Review

Goodwin	<i>Wait Till Next Year</i>	In this memoir Pulitzer Prize winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin recounts some wonderful stories about both her family and an era when baseball truly was the national pastime that brought whole communities together. A great deal of the narrative centers around the sport, but between games and seasons, Goodwin also relates the impact of pivotal historical events. Goodwin gives readers reason to consider what each of us has retained of our childhood passions. From <i>Library Journal</i>
Kidder	<i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i> Required for all students entering grade 11	In some readers, this book about infectious disease specialist Paul Farmer may sow the seeds of humanitarian activism. Farmer's goal is nothing less than redressing the "steep gradient of inequality" in medical service to the desperately poor. His work establishing a complex of public health facilities on the central plateau of Haiti forms the keystone to efforts that now encompass initiatives on three continents. Farmer and a trio of friends created a charitable foundation called Partners in Health (PIH). From <i>School Library Journal</i>
Lahiri	<i>The Namesake</i>	On the heels of an arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Ashoke does his best to adapt while his wife pines for home. When their son Gogol is born, the task of naming him reflects their hope of respecting old ways in a new world. With empathy and penetrating insight, Lahiri explores how we respond to parental expectations and how we come to define who we are. Amazon.com (product description)
McCullough	<i>1776</i>	Esteemed historian David McCullough covers the military side of the momentous year of 1776 with characteristic insight and a gripping narrative. McCullough writes vividly about the dismal conditions that troops on both sides had to endure and also explores the importance of motivation and troop morale. <i>1776</i> is the work of a master historian. Amazon.com Review
Momaday	<i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i>	Mr. Momaday retells the Kiowa myths that he learned from his grandmother, speculates on the actual history they may symbolize, and describes, with infectious nostalgia, the Indian life he knew as a child. There are distinctive illustrations by the author's father, Al Momaday. <i>Atlantic Monthly Review on Amazon.com</i>
Stockett	<i>The Help</i>	Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. It is 1962, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, but Constantine has disappeared. Kathryn Stockett creates three extraordinary women whose determination forever changes a town and the way women – mothers, daughters, caregivers, friends – view one another. <i>The Help</i> is a timeless and universal story about the lines we abide by, and the ones we don't. Amazon.com Review
Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Though "Uncle Tom" has become a synonym for a fawning black yes-man, Stowe's Tom is actually American literature's first black hero, a man who suffers for refusing to obey his white oppressors. <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> is a living, relevant story, passionate in its vivid depiction of the cruelest forms of injustice and inhumanity—and the courage it takes to fight against them. Amanda Claybaugh (Columbia University) on Barnes and Noble.com
Tan	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i>	Four mothers, four daughters, four families whose histories shift with the four winds depending on who's "saying" the stories. In 1949 four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared unspeakable loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. Rather than sink into tragedy, they choose to gather to raise their spirits and money. Forty years later the stories and history continue. Amazon.com Review