



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Summer Reading List
For Students Entering Grade 12
 (Note: Students in AP English have a separate list.)

Essential Questions:

1. What does an author gain from writing his/her story?
2. How does an author's experience influence his/her perspective?
3. How do personal experiences affect an individual emotionally and/or intellectually?
4. How do significant challenges shape an individual?
5. What type of stories, memories, or anecdotes are the most interesting to read about and why?

Selections

The senior reading list is comprised of memoirs so that students have an opportunity to study and appreciate the personal narrative, a writing style suitable to the college essay.

Author	Title	Synopsis	Recommended (not required) for
Beah	<i>A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier</i>	This absorbing account by a young man who, as a boy of 12, gets swept up in Sierra Leone's civil war, reveals the life and mind of a child abducted into the horrors of warfare. Told in clear, accessible language, this memoir is a gripping firsthand account of war and the ongoing plight of child soldiers in conflicts worldwide. From Publishers Weekly	Dilemmas
Bouton	<i>Ball Four: The Final Pitch</i>	In the early '70s, former hurler Jim Bouton tossed off one of the funniest, most revealing insider's takes on baseball life in his diary of the season he tried to pitch his way back from oblivion on the strength of a knuckler. In this honest account, Bouton humanizes heroes and shines a light into the game's darker corners. Amazon.com Review	Satire
Dylan	<i>Chronicles: Volume I</i>	One would not anticipate a conventional memoir from Bob Dylan--indeed, one would not have foreseen an autobiography at all from the pen of the notoriously private legend. What <i>Chronicles: Volume I</i> delivers is an odd but ultimately illuminating memoir that is as impulsive, eccentric, and inspired as Dylan's greatest music. Amazon.com Review	Film Studies
Holloway	<i>Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali</i>	This memoir recalls the two years Holloway spent as a Peace Corps volunteer in the remote village of Nampossela West Africa. It centers on her close friendship with Monique, the village's overburdened midwife. Her account presents the tragic consequences of inadequate prenatal and infant health care in the developing world and the realities of women's lives outside the industrialized world. From Publishers Weekly	Dilemmas
Kingsolver, Kingsolver, Hopp	<i>Animal, Vegetable, Miracle</i>	Novelist Kingsolver recounts a year spent eating home-grown and local food. The Kingsolver clan grow a large garden in southern Appalachia and spend summers "putting food by." Along the way, the Kingsolver family, having given up industrial meat years before, abandons its vegetarian ways and discovers the pleasures of conscientious carnivory. From Publishers Weekly	Dilemmas

Maathai	<i>Unbowed</i>	The first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate, and the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, Wangari Maathai understands how the good earth sustains life. In her memoir, Maathai describes the paradise she knew as a child in the 1940s and the deforested nightmare it became. Maathai remained unbowed as she fought for women's rights and launched the Green Belt Movement. From Booklist	Dilemmas
McCarthy	<i>McCarthy's Bar: A Journey of Discovery in Ireland</i>	While most travel writers seek out opportunities to meet the famous or infamous, McCarthy has a knack for bumping into them, which is how he met a former member of Jimi Hendrix's band, and the author Frank McCourt. He discovers that "In Ireland, the unexpected happens more than you expect," which makes for a hilarious tour through one of the most beautiful, friendly, and quirky places on earth. Amazon.com Review	Irish Literature Satire
McCourt	<i>Angela's Ashes: A Memoir</i>	"Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood..." writes Frank McCourt "...is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood." Born in Brooklyn in 1930, McCourt grew up in Ireland after his parents returned there because of poor prospects in America. Add poverty, death, and illness to the presence of an unemployed, alcoholic father, and you have a compelling memoir of a truly difficult childhood. Amazon.com Review	Irish Literature Dilemmas
Noor	<i>Leap of Faith : Memoirs of an Unexpected Life</i>	Queen Noor offers a vastly informative and even fascinating memoir of her life from her childhood in an Arab American family to her tenure as wife of the charismatic King Hussein, who died in 1999 of cancer. As the woman who stood behind one of the major players in the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century, Queen Noor brings a unique perspective to the contemporary history of the region. From Booklist	Dilemmas
Sedaris	<i>Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim</i>	David Sedaris continues to spin his personal history into comedic gold. A good chunk of the material in <i>Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim</i> debuted in other media outlets, such as <i>The New Yorker</i> , but Sedaris' brilliantly written essays deserve repeat reads. Amazon.com Review	Satire
Vowell	<i>Take the Cannoli: Stories from the New World</i>	A regular on Public Radio International's <i>This American Life</i> , Vowell's book stands as a quirky collection of thoughts, ramblings and memories that charmingly cohere into a full picture of American life. Vowell's writing, a blend of serious observations and bouncy remarks, makes for rich commentary on America, and for great stories. From Publishers Weekly	Satire Film
Walls	<i>The Glass Castle: A Memoir</i>	Walls opens her memoir with a recollection of riding in a taxi and spotting her mother "rooting through a dumpster." Walls's parents were a matched pair of eccentrics, and raising four children didn't conventionalize either of them. Living with a mom who thought that "being homeless is an adventure," the Walls children learned to support themselves in a variety of creative ways. From Publishers Weekly	Dilemmas