



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Summer Reading List
Senior Advanced Placement (AP)

Selections

Note: Seniors enrolled in AP Literature are required to read the whole-school community reading selection, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving, and two other selections from the AP list.

Author	Title	Synopsis
<i>Ragtime</i>	Doctorow	Published in 1975, <i>Ragtime</i> captures the spirit of America in the era between the turn of the century and the First World War. The story opens in 1906 in New Rochelle, New York, at the home of an affluent American family. One lazy Sunday afternoon, the famous escape artist Harry Houdini swerves his car into a telephone pole outside their house. And almost magically, the line between fantasy and historical fact, between real and imaginary characters, disappears.
<i>Invisible Man</i>	Ellison	A classic from the moment it first appeared in 1952, <i>Invisible Man</i> chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the levels of intolerance and cultural blindness. Searching for a context in which to know himself, he discovers how elusive and unknowable truth really is.
<i>As I Lay Dying</i>	Faulkner	Addie Bundren, the wife and mother to a poor, white farm family in 1930s Mississippi, is on her deathbed. Friends and family members gather to help ease her pain and to prepare for her funeral. She is a proud, bitter woman who is ready to die. As her last wish, she requests that her husband bury her among her family in the town of Jefferson. Upon her death, her family follows through with her wish. Faulkner uses multiple narrators, each with his or her own interests and biases, to create a puzzle so that readers can piece together the ‘true’ circumstance of the story.
<i>A Prayer for Owen Meany</i> (Required)	Irving	A compelling plot line traces the friendship of two boys from childhood through college, grapples with the effect of the Vietnam conflict on the characters and the town, and begs the reader to believe in a miracle.
<i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>	Kingsolver	A fierce, evangelical Baptist takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1957. This novel is an epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	Marquez	The story follows 100 years in the life of Macondo, a village founded by José Arcadio Buendía and occupied by descendants all sporting variations on their progenitor's name. Then there are the women who struggle to remain grounded even as their men folk build castles in the air. Civil war rages throughout, hearts break, dreams shatter, and lives are lost in this work of, magical realism. Translated into more than two dozen languages, Marquez’s brilliant novel of love and loss in Macondo stands at the apex of 20th-century literature.

<i>Beloved</i>	Morrison	This Pulitzer Prize winning-novel (1988) by Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison (1993) stares into the abyss of slavery and transforms history into a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby. Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died namelessly and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved.
<i>American Pastoral</i>	Roth	Philip Roth's novel takes a life-long view of the American experience in this thoughtful investigation of the century's most divisive and explosive of decades, the '60s. Roth reconstructs the halcyon days, circa World War II, of Seymour "the Swede" Levov, a high school sports hero and all-around Great Guy who wants nothing more than to live in tranquility. But as the Swede grows older and America crazier, history sweeps his family inexorably into its grip.
<i>White Teeth</i>	Smith	In <i>White Teeth</i> , first novelist Zadie Smith takes on race, sex, class, history, and the minefield of gender politics, and such is her wit and inventiveness that these weighty subjects seem effortlessly light. She also has an impressive geographical range, guiding the reader from Jamaica to Turkey to Bangladesh and back again. The book's home base is a scrubby North London borough, where we encounter Smith's unlikely heroes: prevaricating Archie Jones and intemperate Samad Iqbal, who served together in the so-called Buggered Battalion during World War II. In the ensuing decades, both have gone forth and multiplied. The mixed blessings of assimilation are an ongoing torture for Samad as he watches his sons grow up. These classic immigrant fears--of dilution and disappearance--are no laughing matter. But in the end, they're exactly what gives <i>White Teeth</i> its lasting power and undeniable bite. Big questions demand boldly drawn characters. Zadie Smith's aren't heroic, just real: warm, funny, misguided, and entirely familiar.
<i>The Confederacy of Dunces</i>	Toole	The hero of this tragicomic classic that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981 is Ignatius J. Reilly, an absurdly self-absorbed "Don Quixote" of the French Quarter whose romp through New Orleans and oddball encounters make for one of the funniest spot-on satires in American Literature.
<i>Slaughterhouse 5</i>	Vonnegut	Centering on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden in the Second World War, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know. <i>Slaughterhouse Five-Or The Children's Crusade A Duty-Dance with Death</i> is a remarkable blend of black humor, irony, the truth and the absurd. Released the same time bombs were falling on South East Asia, this title caused controversy and awakening.