

Summer Reading List—Grade 12 2010

As a candidate for twelfth grade English next fall, you are expected to read two books from this list over the summer. During the second week of school, you will write an essay in class to show how well you have understood the book. The essay will also help your new English teacher see how well you write.

The following list contains a brief description of each book and a numbered rating system to indicate to you the degree of difficulty of each book. The numbers mean:

1. a book slightly easier than 12th grade level
2. a book typical of the reading ability of a 12th grader
3. a book geared to slightly older students
4. a difficult book—you should be a good reader with the persistence to finish a lengthy book

1. ***Naked*** – (1) David Sedaris.

In one of his most highly praised memoirs, Sedaris humorously presents seventeen essays depicting his quirky life. From the plague of nervous tics disrupting Sedaris' school years to the hitchhiking days of encountering a motley mix of characters, *Naked* is the amusement park of memoirs.

2. ***Life Class*** – (1) Pat Barker

Three art school students live a bohemian lifestyle in London, until World War I forces them to question their beliefs about love, art, and “truth.”

3. ***The Old Man and the Sea*** – (1) Ernest Hemingway

Santiago, an unlucky old fisherman in Cuba, goes out to sea for several days and wrestles with the biggest fish he's ever seen. Will he be able to bring it back, and prove to his village and himself that he can still have success as a fisherman?

4. ***The Time Traveler's Wife*** – (2) Audrey Niffenegger

A man born with a genetic abnormality that causes him to travel in time meets his wife at various points in her life, and she falls in love with him before she actually meets him in real time. The effect this has on their relationship, and the philosophical burden time travel places on their marriage, is the subject of this unique love story.

5. ***Foe*** – (2) J.M Coetzee

In this complex novel, the classic story of Robinson Crusoe is retold with a new character, Susan Barton, who challenges Crusoe's understanding of his own story.

6. ***Bel Canto*** – (2) Ann Patchett

When terrorists invade a South American Vice President's home in the middle of a party and take the guests hostage, they set off a series of events that reveal that the connections between people are sometimes stronger than the ideas that divide them.

7. ***Persuasion*** – (2) Jane Austen

Persuasion follows the story of a young woman who breaks the heart of the man she loves because she falls prey to the advice of a friend, persuading her that he is not an adequate match. The final completed novel before Austen's death, *Persuasion* is a passionate story of love, loss, disappointment, and redemption.

8. ***Love Marriage*** – (3) V. V. Ganeshanathan
With an uncle who joined the Tamil Tigers and parents who left Sri Lanka to escape the war, American-born Yalini struggles to establish her own identity. Family, marriage, love, culture, history, and contemporary society all play into the equation.
9. ***The Road*** – (3) Cormac McCarthy
This novel is set in a post-apocalyptic world of gray skies that drizzle ash. Journeying across this horrific landscape are an unnamed man and his emaciated son whose love for each other helps them survive.
10. ***The Stranger*** – (3) Albert Camus
This novel presents the story of Meursault, who is on trial for his life. It examines the absurdist ideas that life is meaningless and people act irrationally. Readers encounter a frightening perspective with disturbing implications as they scrutinize Meursault's emotionless response to death and murder.
11. ***One Hundred Years of Solitude*** – (3) Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Through the story of the Buendia family, this novel tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of the mystical town of Macondo.
12. ***Sula*** – (3) Toni Morrison
Set in a Midwestern black community called The Bottom, the story follows two friends, Sula and Nel, a rebel and a conformist, as they come to terms with their lives as women, from childhood to old age and death.
13. ***The Oedipus Cycle*** – (3) Sophocles (*Translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald*) *
Three classic Greek tragedies still thrill us with explorations of the timeless conflict between pride and humility. These plays also help us understand the development of dramatic literature and particularly the genre of tragedy.
14. ***Anna Karenina*** – (4) Leo Tolstoy
The impossible and destructive triangle of Anna, her husband Karenin, and her lover Vronsky, set in nineteenth century Russia
15. ***Crime and Punishment*** – (4) Fyodor Dostoyevsky
A complex examination of guilt, self-destruction, and repentance. This novel follows the story of Raskolnikov, a man who believes he has the right to commit murder.
16. ***Middlesex*** – (4) Jeffrey Eugenides
This novel follows Cal, a man who tells the story of his Greek-American family from the time his grandparents knew each other in the old country to his own adulthood in Berlin. It is an often unsettling, often humorous story of a person who, as an adolescent, is forced to question everything she understands about herself.

* Required for A.P., along with two other level 3 or 4 books.