11/12 Summer Reading List

DIRECTIONS: If you are a rising junior, welcome to the 11/12 team! Here is our first assignment for 2021-2022: Select and read a book from the following list. In order to receive credit, you must read a book that you have never read before.

Finish your reading before the beginning of the school year. Early in the semester, students will complete a follow-up project based on the summer reading books. This project will count as a significant grade. Also, an extra-credit assignment will be available for reading a second book from the list.

These selections represent a wide array of subject matter, style, and reading difficulty. Consider the reading levels & choose wisely. ( * Very accessible reading level / * * Most 11th & 12th graders find the reading level works for them / * * * Challenging reading level; strong readers may enjoy more)

**Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut:** A wacky satire about a World War II soldier who becomes unstuck in time. It is part social satire, part science fiction novel, and part anti-war memoir; it is one hundred percent classic Vonnegut.

**Beloved (1987) by Toni Morrison:** Beloved is a novel by Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning American author Toni Morrison. It is about an enslaved mother that kills her infant child and is later haunted by the ghost. Good for readers that like metaphysical subject matter and a true reading challenge. Morrison is the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize and when critics begin to list the greatest writers of the twentieth century, Morrison is always on the short list. If you love great writing, don't miss her work!

***The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) by Margaret Atwood***

In Margaret Atwood’s dystopian future, environmental disasters and declining birth rates have led to a Second American Civil War. The result is the rise of the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian regime that enforces rigid social roles and enslaves the few remaining fertile women. Offred is one of these, a Handmaid bound to produce children for one of Gilead’s commanders. Deprived of her husband, her child, her freedom, and even her own name, Offred clings to her memories and her will to survive. At once a scathing satire, an ominous warning, and a tour de force of narrative suspense, The Handmaid’s Tale is a modern classic.
**Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America, where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion—for each other and for their homeland.

**The Night Circus (2011) by Erin Morgenstern**

The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not. Within the black-and-white striped canvas tents is an utterly unique experience full of breathtaking amazements. It is called Le Cirque des Rêves, and it is only open at night. But behind the scenes, a fierce competition is underway: a duel between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, who have been trained since childhood expressly for this purpose by their mercurial instructors. Unbeknownst to them both, this is a game in which only one can be left standing. Despite the high stakes, Celia and Marco soon tumble headfirst into love, setting off a domino effect of dangerous consequences, and leaving the lives of everyone, from the performers to the patrons, hanging in the balance.

**Educated (2018) by Tara Westover**

Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara’s older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she’d traveled too far, if there was still a way home.

**The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (2010) by Rebecca Skloot**

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and more. Henrietta’s cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can’t afford health insurance. This New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew. It’s a story inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we’re made of.
**Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) by James Baldwin:** A semi-autobiographical novel by James Baldwin, it tells the story of John Grimes, an intelligent teenager in 1930's Harlem, and his relationship to his family and his church. Baldwin said, "[it] is the book I had to write if I was ever going to write anything else." Baldwin's first major work, this novel has established itself as an American classic. With lyrical precision, psychological directness, resonating symbolic power, and a rage that is at once unrelenting and compassionate, Baldwin chronicles a fourteen-year-old boy's discovery of the terms of his identity as the stepson of the minister of a storefront Pentecostal church in Harlem. Baldwin's rendering of his protagonist's spiritual, sexual, and moral struggle of self-invention opened new possibilities in the way Americans understand themselves.

**Touching the Void (1988) by Joe Simpson:** Simpson and his climbing partner, Simon Yates, had just reached the top of a 21,000-foot peak in the Andes when disaster struck. Simpson plunged off the vertical face of an ice ledge, breaking his leg. In the hours that followed, darkness fell and a blizzard raged as Yates tried to lower his friend to safety. Finally, Yates was forced to cut the rope, moments before he would have been pulled to his own death. The next three days were an impossibly grueling ordeal for both men. Yates, certain that Simpson was dead, returned to base camp consumed with grief and guilt over abandoning him. Miraculously, Simpson had survived the fall, but crippled, starving, and severely frostbitten was trapped in a deep crevasse. Summoning vast reserves of physical and spiritual strength, Simpson crawled over the cliffs and canyons of the Andes, reaching base camp hours before Yates had planned to leave.

**The Joy Luck Club (1989) by Amy Tan:** Four daughters who have grown-up in America and their four mothers who have grown-up in China tell their stories. Do the mothers and daughters share any common ground? The best-selling novel focuses on four Chinese American families in San Francisco, and it chronicles their struggles to be a family even though they do not share the same "home."

**One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez:** A novel by Nobel Prize-winning Colombian author Marquez, it was first published in Spanish in 1967. The novel chronicles a family's struggle and the history of their fictional town, Macondo, for one hundred years. One Hundred Years of Solitude crosses genres, combining elements of history, magical realism, and pure fiction. Considered Marquez’s magnum opus.
**The Tenderness of Wolves (2006) by Stef Penney:** The year is 1867. Winter has just tightened its grip on Dove River, a tiny isolated settlement in the Northern Territory, when a man is brutally murdered. A local woman, Mrs. Ross, stumbles upon the crime scene and sees the tracks leading from the dead man’s cabin north toward the forest and the tundra beyond. It is Mrs. Ross’s knock on the door of the largest house in Caulfield that launches the investigation. Within hours she will regret that knock with a mother’s love -- for soon she makes another discovery: her seventeen-year-old son Francis has disappeared and is now considered a prime suspect.

**1984 (1949) by George Orwell:** In this famous dystopian novel, the main character Winston Smith struggles with oppression in Oceania, a place where the Party scrutinizes human actions with ever-watchful Big Brother. Defying a ban on individuality, Winston dares to express his thoughts in a diary and pursues a relationship with Julia. These criminal deeds bring Winston into the eye of the opposition, who then must reform the nonconformist. George Orwell's 1984 introduced the watchwords for life without freedom: BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING.

**The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Olympics (2014) by Daniel James Brown** The Boys in the Boat tells the mesmerizing tale of Joe Rantz and the 1936 Olympic eight-oar crew from the University of Washington. But it is much more than a story of athletic endeavor. It’s about a child abandoned by indifferent parents, Americans’ struggle to survive during the Great Depression, a young man’s love of a young woman, and the amazing physical and psychological demands of rowing. It’s about loss and redemption. It has drama and pathos and moral scope. And it culminates on an extraordinary international stage in Berlin in 1936, with Adolf Hitler looking on. (Penguin Random House)

**Anxious People (2020) by Fredrik Backman** From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of A Man Called Ove comes a charming, poignant novel about a crime that never took place, a would-be bank robber who disappears into thin air, and eight extremely anxious strangers who find they have more in common than they ever imagined.