

Portland Waldorf High School Humanities Department

2016 Recommended Summer Reading List

Why Read?

It is very important for high school students to develop their abilities as readers and nourish their interest in reading, not only by completing reading assignments carefully, but also by reading on their own. Reading expands our vocabulary in that it broadens our understanding of words we know and puts new words at our disposal. Similarly, encountering other writers and writing styles strengthens our understanding of grammar and style and the ways of thinking that underlie them. It allows the student to learn about subjects in addition to what they are taught in class, and indeed enhances their ability to learn on their own. In a very practical sense, then, reading puts more tools in the student's tool box. This in turn enables them to not only do better work in their school assignments, but also to do well on standardized tests (such as the ACT) and to prepare for college and life after high school. Indeed, studies show a strong correlation between good independent reading habits and success in school and work.

When we read a book, an article, a newspaper, or even a recipe or set of instructions, we take in information and knowledge and thereby shape our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Works of literature such as novels and biographies affect us in even more substantial ways. Good books can increase our knowledge of other lives and worlds, expand our ability to make connections, provide us with insights and fresh ideas, grow our vocabulary, deepen our relation to language, foster our imagination and, most importantly, bring us delight and pleasure.

With this in mind, we offer here a list of books recommended for incoming 9th grade students. It is neither definitive nor exhaustive. It includes books, primarily novels and biographies, that are appropriate to 9th grade reading levels and can strengthen reading skills. Many of the titles have been selected because they relate in general ways to subjects studied during the 9th grade (introduction to literature, colonial America, the history of Revolutions) or because they address the experience of young people in different times and places.

This is not a list of required reading assignments. However, we do believe it is good for students to pursue independent reading. We recommend that each student choose at least a couple of these books to read over the summer, but the choice is up to you.

Happy Reading!

Joy Adamson, *Born Free* (1960) Environmentally conscious memoir of raising an orphaned lion cub.

Paul Annixter, *Swiftwater* (1950) Life in a New England town in the early 1900s.

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) Perennially popular novel of manners set in early 19th century England.

James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (1953) Classic, African-American semi-autobiographical novel about growing up as a minister's son in Harlem.

Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine* (1957) Sci-fi writer's memories and fantasies of growing up in the 1920s.

Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (1847) Classic British novel chronicling a young girl's growth into adulthood and her stormy love for the tumultuous Mr. Rochester.

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Another classic from the Brontes, the portrait of Heathcliff, a tortured outcast, set in the British moors.

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers* (1913) Swedish-American farm family on the Nebraska prairie.

Eileen Chang, *Naked Earth* (1956) Two young people face revolutionary changes in Mao's China.

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) Adventure and espionage on the eve of World War I.

Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (1984) Story of a girl with mixed race parentage growing up in Jamaica.

James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohican* (1826) Historical adventure novel set in the forest wilderness during the Seven Years war, on the eve of the American revolution.

Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) Memoir of life as a common sailor in the American merchant marine.

Anita Diamant, *The Boston Girl* (2014) Novel about a young Jewish girl growing up in Boston in the early 20th century.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850) The most autobiographical of Dickens's novels, drawing on his experience of cruelty and privation growing up in Victorian London.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) Historical novel set in London and Paris before and during the French revolution.

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861) First person story of orphan who makes good, after many trials and tribulations, with many great characters.

Roddy Doyle, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1994) Booker prize winning novel about a young Irish working class rascal growing up in 1960s Ireland during political unrest.

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) Maggie Tulliver and her brother grow up amid changes in an English village during the 1820s.

Esther Forbes, *Johnny Tremain* (1944) Newberry award winning novel about a young silversmith during the Revolutionary war.

Anne Frank, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) Writings from the Dutch language Diary kept by a young Jewish girl in hiding in Nazi occupied Amsterdam.

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791) A famous father's notes to his son about his extraordinary life; one of the most influential autobiographies ever written.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) Masterful study of dishonesty and adultery in colonial New England.

Robert Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) Science fiction novel about a Martian who visits Earth.

Khaled Hossini, *The Kite Runner* (2003) A young boy in post-revolutionary Afghanistan and his family's servant devote their days to kite-flying.

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) Subtle ghost story about a young governess and her charges.

Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (1903) Autobiography of the first deafblind person to earn a college degree, and the teacher who helped her.

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (1903) Adventure novel set in the Canadian Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush, with a sled dog as the unforgettable central character.

Beryl Markham, *West with the Night* (1942) Memoir of British born Kenyan aviator during the pioneer days of flight. She became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic.

James McBride, *The Good Lord Bird* (2013) National Book Award winning novel about a young African American slave boy who is taken up in the adventures of the abolitionist John Brown.

Paula McClain, *Circling the Sun* (2015) Historical novel based on the life of pioneering aviator Beryl Markham.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (1886) Historically based adventure story set in Scottish highlands in mid-18th century.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit; or, There and Back Again* (1937) British fantasy novel recounting the adventures of one Bilbo Baggins and his wizard friend Gandalf.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) The epic quest to destroy the ring of Sauron and preserve the liberty of Middle Earth. Taken by many to be a modern allegory of 20th century history.