

# 11th Grade Summer Reading

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## Multicultural Lit

### Haitian-American

#### [American Street](#), Ibi Zoboi

On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—a good life. But after they leave Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud American cousins, Chantal, Donna, and Princess; the grittiness of Detroit's west side; a new school; and a surprising romance, all on her own. Just as she finds her footing in this strange new world, a dangerous proposition presents itself, and Fabiola soon realizes that freedom comes at a cost. Trapped at the crossroads of an impossible choice, will she pay the price for the American dream?

### African-American

#### [The Vanishing Half](#), Brit Bennett

The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical. But after growing up together in a small, southern black community and running away at age sixteen, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different as adults, it's everything: their families, their communities, their racial identities. Many years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same southern town she once tried to escape. The other passes for white, and her white husband knows nothing of her past. Still, even separated by so many miles and just as many lies, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen to the next generation, when their own daughters' storylines intersect?

#### [The Water Dancer](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates

Young Hiram Walker was born into bondage. When his mother was sold away, Hiram was robbed of all memory of her — but was gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. This brush with death births an urgency in Hiram and a daring scheme: to escape from the only home he's ever known...

So begins an unexpected journey that takes Hiram from the corrupt grandeur of Virginia's proud plantations to desperate guerrilla cells in the wilderness, from the coffin of the deep South to dangerously utopic movements in the North. Even as he's enlisted in the underground war between slavers and the enslaved, Hiram's resolve to rescue the family he left behind endures.

### Latinx

#### [Dominicana](#), Angie Cruz

Fifteen-year-old Ana Cancion never dreamed of moving to America, the way the girls she grew up with in the Dominican countryside did. But when Juan Ruiz proposes and promises to take her to New York City, she has to say yes. It doesn't matter that he is twice her age, that there is no love between them. Their marriage is an opportunity for her entire close-knit family to eventually immigrate. So on New Year's Day, 1965, Ana leaves behind everything she knows and becomes Ana Ruiz, a wife confined to a cold six-floor walk-up in Washington Heights. Lonely and miserable, Ana hatches a reckless plan to escape. But at the bus terminal, she is stopped by Cesar, Juan's free-spirited younger brother, who convinces her to stay.

As the Dominican Republic slides into political turmoil, Juan returns to protect his family's assets, leaving Cesar to take care of Ana. Suddenly, Ana is free to take English lessons at a local church, lie on the

beach at Coney Island, see a movie at Radio City Music Hall, go dancing with Cesar, and imagine the possibility of a different kind of life in America. When Juan returns, Ana must decide once again between her heart and her duty to her family.

### [In the Time of the Butterflies](#), Julia Alvarez

*In the Time of the Butterflies* is inspired by the true story of the three Mirabal sisters who, in 1960, were murdered for their part in an underground plot to overthrow the government. Alvarez breathes life into these historical figures—known as "las mariposas," or "the butterflies," in the underground—as she imagines their teenage years, their gradual involvement with the revolution, and their terror as their dissent is uncovered.

## **Asian-American**

### [On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous](#), Ocean Vuong

*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* is a letter from a son to a mother who cannot read. Written when the speaker, Little Dog, is in his late twenties, the letter unearths a family's history that began before he was born — a history whose epicenter is rooted in Vietnam — and serves as a doorway into parts of his life his mother has never known, all of it leading to an unforgettable revelation. At once a witness to the fraught yet undeniable love between a single mother and her son, it is also a brutally honest exploration of race, class, and masculinity.

### [Exit West](#), Mohsin Hamid

In a country teetering on the brink of civil war, two young people meet—sensual, fiercely independent Nadia and gentle, restrained Saeed. They embark on a furtive love affair and are soon cloistered in a premature intimacy by the unrest roiling their city. When it explodes, turning familiar streets into a patchwork of checkpoints and bomb blasts, they begin to hear whispers about doors—doors that can whisk people far away, if perilously and for a price. As the violence escalates, Nadia and Saeed decide that they no longer have a choice. Leaving their homeland and their old lives behind, they find a door and step through.

## **Native American**

### [There There](#), Tommy Orange

Tommy Orange's wondrous and shattering novel follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to one another in ways they may not yet realize. Among them is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and trying to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, pulling his life together after his uncle's death and working at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old Orvil, coming to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American—grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and unflinching, utterly contemporary and truly unforgettable.

### [Love Medicine](#), Louise Erdrich

Set on and around a North Dakota Ojibwe reservation, *Love Medicine* is the epic story about the intertwined fates of two families: the Kashpaws and the Lamartines. With astonishing virtuosity, each chapter draws on a range of voices to limn its tales. Black humor mingles with magic, injustice bleeds into betrayal, and through it all, bonds of love and family marry the elements into a tightly woven whole that pulses with the drama of life. Filled with humor, magic, injustice and betrayal, Erdrich blends family love and loyalty in a stunning work of dramatic fiction.

## **LGBTQ+**

### [\*Aristotle & Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe\*](#), Benjamin Alire Saenz

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be.

### [\*The Black Flamingo\*](#), Dean Atta

A boy comes to terms with his identity as a mixed-race gay teen - then at university he finds his wings as a drag artist, *The Black Flamingo*. A bold story about the power of embracing your uniqueness. Sometimes, we need to take charge, to stand up wearing pink feathers - to show ourselves to the world in bold colour.

## **Jewish**

### [\*Everything is Illuminated\*](#), Jonathan Safran Foer

With only a yellowing photograph in hand, a young man – also named Jonathan Safran Foer – sets out to find the woman who may or may not have saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Accompanied by an old man haunted by memories of the war; an amorous dog named Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior; and the unforgettable Alex, a young Ukrainian translator who speaks in a sublimely butchered English, Jonathan is led on a quixotic journey over a devastated landscape and into an unexpected past.

### [\*The History of Love\*](#), Nicole Krauss

Fourteen-year-old Alma Singer is trying to find a cure for her mother's loneliness. Believing she might discover it in an old book her mother is lovingly translating, she sets out in search of its author. Across New York an old man called Leo Gursky is trying to survive a little bit longer. He spends his days dreaming of the lost love who, sixty years ago in Poland, inspired him to write a book. And although he doesn't know it yet, that book also survived: crossing oceans and generations, and changing lives...

## **Muslim**

### [\*Ayesha at Last\*](#), Uzma Jalaluddin

Ayesha Shamsi has a lot going on. Her dreams of being a poet have been set aside for a teaching job so she can pay off her debts to her wealthy uncle. She lives with her boisterous Muslim family and is always being reminded that her flighty younger cousin, Hafsa, is close to rejecting her one hundredth marriage proposal. Though Ayesha is lonely, she doesn't want an arranged marriage. When a surprise engagement is announced for her cousin, Ayesha is torn between how she feels about the unsettling new gossip she hears about the groom's family. Looking into the rumors, she finds she has to deal with not only what she discovers about him, but also the truth she realizes about herself.

## **Disability/Chronic Illness**

### [\*Love from A to Z\*](#), S.K. Ali

Adam Chen, a Chinese Finnish Canadian Muslim university freshman with a devastating secret; Zayneb Malik, a Pakistani Guyanese Trinidadian hijab-wearing high school senior from Indiana, who's been suspended from school after confronting an Islamophobic teacher. The two meet on a flight to Doha, Qatar, where both will be spending spring break. Adam is returning home to tell his father and sister that he's been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, the disease that took his mother's life. As the story and a budding romance unfold, Adam tries to see his way forward into an uncertain future, and Zayneb teams up with her friends back home to try to hold her teacher to account.

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Descriptions and links from Amazon and/or Goodreads

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## World Lit

### [172 Hours on the Moon, Johan Harsad](#)

Three teenagers are going on the trip of a lifetime. Only one is coming back. It's been more than forty years since NASA sent the first men to the moon, and to grab some much-needed funding and attention, they decide to launch an historic international lottery in which three lucky teenagers can win a week-long trip to moon base DARLAH 2.

### [A Long Way Gone: Memories of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah](#)

The devastating story of war through the eyes of a child soldier. Beah tells how, at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and became a soldier.

### [In the Name of God, Paula Jolin](#)

Seventeen year-old Nadia is an excellent student, daughter and sister, and above all wants to be the best Muslim she can be. But she's conflicted about her Westernized peers, the economic, social and political struggles of her country, and the war raging in Iraq. When her cousin is arrested by the authorities for speaking out, Nadia finds herself drawn into the world of Islamic fundamentalism, contemplating making the ultimate sacrifice to take a stand for her people and her religion.

### [Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi](#)

Wise, funny, and heartbreaking, *Persepolis* is Marjane Satrapi's memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran's last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of her country.

### [A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini](#)

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a breathtaking story set against the volatile events of Afghanistan's last thirty years - from the Soviet invasion to the reign of the Taliban to post-Taliban rebuilding - that puts the violence, fear, hope, and faith of this country in intimate, human terms. It is a tale of two generations of characters brought jarringly together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives - the struggle to survive, raise a family, find happiness - are inextricable from the history playing out around them.

### *Life of Pi, Yann Martel*

Life of Pi is a fantasy adventure novel by Yann Martel published in 2001. The protagonist, Piscine Molitor "Pi" Patel, a Tamil boy from Pondicherry, explores issues of spirituality and practicality from an early age. He survives 227 days after a shipwreck while stranded on a boat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

### *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent*, Julia Alvarez

Uprooted from their family home in the Dominican Republic, the four Garcia sisters - Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofia - arrive in New York City in 1960 to find a life far different from the genteel existence of maids, manicures, and extended family they left behind. What they have lost - and what they find - is revealed in the fifteen interconnected stories that make up this exquisite novel from one of the premier novelists of our time.

### *Americanah*, 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.

### *Song of Achilles*, Madeline Miller

Greece in the age of heroes. Patroclus, an awkward young prince, has been exiled to the court of King Peleus and his perfect son Achilles. By all rights their paths should never cross, but Achilles takes the shamed prince as his friend, and as they grow into young men skilled in the arts of war and medicine their bond blossoms into something deeper - despite the displeasure of Achilles' mother Thetis, a cruel sea goddess. But then word comes that Helen of Sparta has been kidnapped. Torn between love and fear for his friend, Patroclus journeys with Achilles to Troy, little knowing that the years that follow will test everything they hold dear.

### *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, Dalai Lama XIV, Desmond Tutu, Douglas Carlton Abrams

The occasion was a big birthday. And it inspired two close friends to get together in Dharamsala for a talk about something very important to them. The friends were His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The subject was joy. Both winners of the Nobel Prize, both great spiritual masters and moral leaders of our time, they are also known for being among the most infectiously happy people on the planet.