

**Brentwood High School
English Department
2025-2026 Summer Reading**

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Overview of BHS Summer Reading – ALL SHOULD READ!:

Students,

We hope you have a relaxing summer, whether out fishing or splashing it up at the pool, keeping cool in the movie theater, or taking in a baseball game. It's the season of detoxing from the rigors of academics and enjoying all that life has to offer - family, friends, and fun!

By the same token, though, we recognize the value of staying active of mind. In this spirit, we in the BHS English Department are determined to make summer reading opportunities purposeful and intentional.

Please review the document's contents below for your grade-specific requirements regarding summer reading for the upcoming 2025 fall semester. **A summer reading selection is mandatory, and teachers will conduct an opening assessment two weeks after the start of the 2025-2026 school year:**

Some grade levels offer great flexibility, so find something that suits your interests! Before selecting any option, please review and confirm choices with parents/guardians.

All the best,

Dr. Erica Powell & Laura Spretnjak
English Department Chairs, 2025-2026

English I

Welcome to Brentwood High! We highly recommend that you choose a book that you have always wanted to read. Your selection must meet the following requirements:

1. The work you choose should be a narrative of some variety—fiction is required. Do not choose poetry or plays. Avoid non-fiction reads that do not tell a story (such as self-help books or compilations of essays and speeches).
2. As we want to maintain a certain expectation of grade-level challenge, your book should be a minimum of 175 pages.
3. Additionally, your book should have a lexile level of 900 or more (or as close to that number as possible). You can use this website to see if your book has an appropriate lexile level: [Lexile Find a Book site](#)

Ask a parent, grandparent, teacher, or friend what their favorite books are to get some ideas. We want you to be inspired as well as to read something that will be meaningful and relevant to you.

Still looking for ideas on what to read? Here are a few suggestions from our freshman teachers:

- *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1300 L)
- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien (1000 L)
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (1050-1190 L)
- *Friday Night Lights* by H.G. Bissinger (1220 L)
- *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens (1090-1150 L)
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (various - choose an appropriate edition)
- *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner (920 L)

***NOTE:** The novels listed above are simply suggestions and can be used as a starting point. The freshman teachers encourage you to pick something that interests you and that you will enjoy reading!

Please **DO NOT READ** from the following works/WCS protected titles that likely will be covered in class:

- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *The Odyssey* by Homer
- *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

Good luck with your search, and have fun reading!

Thanks,
BHS Freshman English Teachers – the best group in town!

English II

Congrats! You made it through your freshman year! You're well on your way through your high school career, and we want to make sure you don't "turn off" completely during the summer. For this reason, we are requiring students to read one of the following novels:

- *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Beah
- *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho
- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
- *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells

As you move toward adulthood and college, we on the sophomore team wanted to invigorate the chore of summer reading with a wide array of experiences and ideas. We recognize, though, that not all books "work" for all students; some content or themes may reach beyond an individual's or a family's comfort zone, so make sure to read reviews of the novels before you make your final selection.

Your assignment upon returning to school will consist of an in-class "Book Talk" with others who read the same novel. You will also be challenged with a writing component that asks you to synthesize ideas and opinions of your own.

Though it is not a requirement, it is highly recommended that you take notes or annotations in your novel prior to the school's start date. This will help you to get back into the swing of things and refine skills that may have gone dormant over the summer.

See you in the fall!

BHS Sophomore English Team

English III Standard and Honors

Welcome to English III! While we hope your summer is productive recreationally, we also want to get ready for 2025-2026. We plan to build from the skills gained during freshman and sophomore years to prepare you for a variety of writing possibilities, including the college essay at the end of the school year.

For your summer reading, you must **read one book** by Monday, August 18th, that meets the following criteria:

1. The book should be narrative literature in nature - no books of poetry, nonfiction, or plays.
2. The book must be written by an American author - do your homework!
3. The book should have an approximate lexile level of 900 L. The [Lexile Find a Book site](#) can help you out.
4. The book cannot be one read from a previous year of school. Branch out and try something new that interests you.

If your novel fits the bill, congrats! Should you have any questions, please visit the faculty page on the BHS website and email any of us. We'll be glad to help you out. Below is a list to get started if you're having trouble finding a suitable selection:

A Visit from the Goon Squad by Jennifer Egan (1010 L)
Absalom, Absalom! by William Faulkner (1070 L)
This Side of Paradise by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1070 L)
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories by Washington Irving (1380 L)
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey (1050 L)
Moby-Dick by Herman Melville (1150 L)
The Jungle by Upton Sinclair (1170 L)
Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1050 L)
Black Boy by Richard Wright (950 L)

We hope you choose something that works for you. See you in August!

BHS Junior English Teachers

English IV Standard and Honors:

Welcome to English IV! The following task applies to both standard and honors sections, so if that's you, you're in the right spot!

We love reading; we *want* you to read. However, we recognize that your plans post-BHS may be of higher priority. For this reason, **we ask you to read this PDF of college essays** ([College Application Essays That Worked | Ocean Ed](#)) as planning for the first weeks of school. Our aim is to compile what is most helpful and most beneficial for the majority of our students moving forward, and this seems like a good starting point.

Our goal is to have students produce a rough draft college essay **within the first few weeks of school**. If you are not seeking to pursue entry at a college or university, we will craft an individual product that works for your purposes when you arrive to school in August.

Below are the Common Application essay prompts for the 2025-2026 school year. These might be useful for those wanting to get an early jump on writing!

Looking forward to seeing you for the final countdown to graduation!

All the best,
BHS Senior English Teachers

Common App Topics and Prompts, 2025-2026

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

AP Language – 11th grade

Overview: In AP Language, the primary focus is nonfiction essay writing—both personal and formal types and in a variety of genres (political, biographical, autobiographical, philosophical, ethical, etc.). Your AP Language and Composition Exam in May will challenge you in both analyzing the content of and the rhetorical strategies used within a variety of formal and informal nonfiction essays. The test will also ask you to compose three one-draft essays: one prompt will require you to synthesize several sources into an argument-persuasion formal essay addressing a current issue; a second prompt will ask you to analyze the argument and rhetorical strategies used within a specified text; a third prompt will give you an opportunity to write a personal essay, reacting to an abstract idea, in which you provide the specific and appropriate evidence in defense of your argument.

However, since this class is taken during your third year of high school, the course takes the place of English III, which traditionally uses a survey of American literature as the foundation for literary studies. Knowing that you will return to literature as the foundation for discussion during your senior year (usually AP Literature and Composition), we will include within our AP Language curriculum some of the highlights of the American literary canon that are typically included within the AP Literature and Composition exam.

Summer reading selection reflects this two-tier focus of AP Language and Composition.

Assignment: You will read two selections this summer: an archetypical American novel, and one text from what is often called the “other literature,” that is the nonfiction genre. The assigned texts are:

Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson by Mitch Albom

You will need to procure your own copies, for in this class we practice annotating texts—requiring you to write, in blue or black ink, and within the margins, your reactions to the text. Your annotations prove that you have been involved intellectually with the text and the ideas. Do not expect your annotations to be perfect or sophisticated yet; but instead, strive to get involved in the intellectual journey and to record your involvement by your annotations. Your annotating skills will improve as the year progresses. As a reward for making sincere efforts to annotate your reactions, these texts will be submitted for an annotation grade.

So, what do you annotate? Reactions. Your reactions. Your reactions to character comments, use of symbols, settings, conflicts, aphorisms, reflections, possible themes, editorial comments of the narrator. Your annotations should not be summaries, but reflections, references, observations, personal epiphanies. In other words, they are an ink trail of your interaction with and analysis of the author’s Truth. Annotating is a key skill for optimal success in this class and in your future collegiate studies.

Be prepared to discuss these texts during the first two weeks of school, to beef up your annotations, and to both answer multiple-choice questions and write a variety of essays (like

those described in the above "Overview") addressing the rhetorical strategies, points of view, and abstract truths of the selected works.

Nota Bene: The father of the personal essay, Michel de Montaigne, treasured his annotations more than the text, because his annotations were a record of his perceptions and his sense of truth at the time of the reading. Let your annotations do and be the same for you—a record of your soulful journey within the text.

AP Literature – Summer Reading Packet (in room B120) and Novels

Congratulations on enrolling in AP Literature for the 2025-2026 school year!

Required Readings and Assignments

A. DUE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6th:

- a. Obtain a copy of, read, and annotate selections found in the “AP Lit Summer Reading 2025” PDF packet. Complete associated questions and tasks.**
- b. These materials will be assigned to the class on Tuesday, August 5th. If you would like to get a jump start, they are available now for your needs. (That’s code for “Do it now.”)**

You will need to complete materials found in the “AP Lit Summer Reading 2025” PDF packet.

Pick this up in room B120. The packet includes the following:

- Two brief overviews of Form vs. Function to read
- Two poems (text provided) to annotate according to directions:
 - o “Jenny kiss’d Me” (1838) by Leigh Hunt
 - o “Elvis Kissed Me” (ca. 1999) by T.S. Kerrigan
- Two songs (lyrics provided – you may need to listen to each as well) to annotate according to directions:
 - o “My Way” by Frank Sinatra
 - o “When Do I Get to Sing ‘My Way’” by Sparks
- Comparative Analysis Charts and Form vs. Function Debrief Questions

B. DUE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13th:

- a. Be prepared to discuss the assigned books listed. You will not need to annotate the texts themselves, but you should have copies of each book available in class and with ideas regarding the topics included in the “AP Lit Summer Reading 2025” PDF packet.**
- b. There will be no grades associated with the completion of the texts until Monday, August 18th, in accordance with WCS policy.**
- c. However, in-class participation for students on August 13th-15th will benefit individuals for preparation regarding future assignments.**

It wouldn’t be summer without some heavy – and sweaty! – lifting, so get yourself to Seaside and curl up with these two books featuring the light and breezy topic of the wild, wild West! You will need to read any complete edition of the following texts, but you may avoid annotating them (huzzah!):

- Background information on the two selections, provided in the AP Lit Summer Reading 2025 packet (Téa Obreht interview and Cormac McCarthy retrospective)

- *Inland* (2019) by Téa Obreht (**must procure a copy**)
- *No Country for Old Men* (2005) by Cormac McCarthy (**must procure a copy**)
- Topic Engagement and Text Debrief, provided in the AP Lit Summer Reading 2025 packet (prior students' examples included)

C. DUE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27th:

- Work on completing a college essay that aligns with your personal needs and expectations for the future. This may be a rough draft.**
- If you have completed a college essay, bring materials related to the college application process (scholarship essays, supplemental materials, etc.).**
- You do not need to print any of these items for August 27th, as they still may be undergoing revision. However, you should be prepared to share digitally any requested documents or to show visible proof of progress to the teacher on this date.**

Do your best to complete a college essay (most choose to complete a Common Application essay, though you may opt to work on a scholarship essay or a school-specific prompt instead). By the end of your attempts, you should have a viable and workable draft that can be proofed and edited in class.

Please note that officials at College Board state that you should have one essay completed by the time the fall semester rolls around – this is our effort to hold your feet to the proverbial fire. We are assisting you in practical but pertinent time management skills and your pursuit of academic endeavors beyond high school. HOWEVER, we are not in the business of “grading” the college essay as we would an essay produced for class – we will discuss sample writings, common “do this, don’t do that” tidbits, but we are not a magic portal to college acceptance.

This may sound mean, but it is blunter than anything: the AP curriculum does not feature a college essay unit, nor is it in our job description. We are your support system in your pursuits beyond senior year... that is, we are willing to help, but you must first help yourself.

Check out [Common App](#) and get yourself started on the path to success.

Students, if you have any questions about the structure of the course, the summer expectations, or the timeline established thus far, please contact Matt Grimes at james.grimes@myplace.wcs.edu. See you in the fall!