



[\(Compartment C, Car 293 - 1938 by Edward Hopper\)](#)

## SUMMER READING 2025: Returning Students

Summer break can be a wonderful time to catch up on reading—to discover new genres or authors, to re-read old favorites, or to finally tackle a literary classic. We share this summer reading list to help students do just that. It includes information about the required all-school summer reading, which you should have received in the mail by now, and the course-specific required reading. You will also find several curated lists of book recommendations from teachers, students, and beyond. We hope you will use these lists to establish additional reading goals for yourself this summer. Your advisor will likely ask you about what you've read over the summer when you meet this fall.

Happy reading!

Mr. MacDonnell

**PART ONE:**  
**Required All-School Summer Reading**

The aim of Commonwealth's All-School Summer Reading Program is to encourage our community to read for pleasure outside of school in the hopes of developing lifelong reading skills and interests. The summer reading program exposes faculty, staff, and students alike to new writers, genres, and reading experiences, all while practicing analytical thinking and group discussion.

Ideally, summer reading will elucidate varied opinions on a text, help us be open to new perspectives, inspire the readers and writers in our community, and encourage reading outside of the classroom. This year, each book has a central theme of or relationship to **immigrant experiences**. In September, we will break into small groups to discuss different books, and faculty and returning students will lead discussions.

It is an utmost priority that students of all levels of ability be able to participate in and gain from this all-school summer reading. Faculty discussion leaders for the all-school discussions will meet students where they are at, and create an environment for fruitful and respectful conversation.

**On this year's theme:**

This year, the summer reading theme at Commonwealth is immigration. Students, faculty, and staff can choose from an array of stories and perspectives. Each book, whether fiction or nonfiction, set in the U.S. or elsewhere, explores how immigrant and migrant identity is shaped by dislocation, memory, and language—and how borders operate beyond geography, shaping the intimate and the everyday. All the books engage frankly with immigrants' struggles, but also celebrate their resilience and strength in the face of social, political, and environmental challenges. They illustrate emotional ruptures, cultural negotiations, and the navigation of political power across visible and invisible boundaries. At the same time, they show how migrants help redefine possibility in the places they move through.

Past years' summer reading themes of failure, redemption, metamorphosis, and empathy may offer additional layers to our conversations about this year's books.

**You choose one of the following books as your summer reading:**

***The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri (p. 2003 - Contemporary Fiction):** *The Namesake* takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name. **Content Warning: Death, Racism, Sexism**

***Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee (p. 2017- Historical Fiction):** In the early 1900s, teenaged Sunja, the adored daughter of a disabled fisherman, falls for a wealthy stranger at the seashore near her home in Korea. He promises her the world, but when she discovers she is pregnant—and that her lover is married—she refuses to be bought. Instead, she accepts an offer of marriage from a gentle, sickly minister passing through on his way to Japan. But her decision to abandon her home, and to reject her son's powerful father, sets off a dramatic saga that will echo down through the generations.

**Content Warning: Racism, Sexism, Death, Abortion, Miscarriage**

***Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (p. 2007 - Graphic Novel):** *Persepolis* is the story of Satrapi's unforgettable childhood and coming of age within a large and loving family in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution; of the contradictions between private and public life in a country plagued by political upheaval; of her high school years in Vienna facing the trials of adolescence far from her family; of her homecoming—both sweet and terrible; and, finally, of her self-imposed exile from her beloved homeland. It is the chronicle of a girlhood and adolescence at once outrageous and familiar, a young life entwined with the history of her country yet filled with the universal trials and joys of growing up. **Content Warning: War, Death, Violence**

***Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García (p. 1992 - Historical Fiction):** Here is the dreamy and bittersweet story of a family divided by politics and geography by the Cuban revolution. It is the family story of Celia del Pino, and her husband, daughter and grandchildren, from the mid-1930s to 1980. Celia's story mirrors the magical realism of Cuba itself, a country of beauty and poverty, idealism and corruption. *Dreaming in Cuban* presents a unique vision and a haunting lamentation for a past that might have been. **Content Warning: Sexual Assault, Self Harm**

***Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (p. 2016 - Fiction):** Two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, are born into different villages in eighteenth-century Ghana. Effia is married off to an Englishman and lives in comfort in the palatial rooms of Cape Coast Castle. Unbeknownst to Effia, her sister, Esi, is imprisoned beneath her in the castle's dungeons, sold with thousands of others into the Gold Coast's booming slave trade, and shipped off to America, where her children and grandchildren will be raised in slavery. One thread of *Homegoing* follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, as the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and British colonization. The other thread follows Esi and her children into America. From the plantations of the South to the Civil War and the Great Migration, from the coal mines of Pratt City, Alabama, to the jazz clubs and dope houses of twentieth-century Harlem, right up through the present day, *Homegoing* makes history visceral, and captures, with singular and stunning immediacy, how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed in the soul of a nation. **Content Warning: Slavery, Racism, Sexual Violence**

***The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson (p. 2010):** In this beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson presents a definitive and dramatic account of one of the great untold stories of American history: the Great Migration of six million Black citizens who fled the South for the North and West in search of a better life, from World War I to 1970.

Wilkerson tells this interwoven story through the lives of three unforgettable protagonists: Ida Mae Gladney, a sharecropper's wife, who in 1937 fled Mississippi for Chicago; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, and Robert Foster, a surgeon who left Louisiana in 1953 in hopes of making it in California. **Content Warning: Racism, Murder, Violence**

***Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen* by Jose Antonio Vargas (p. 2018):** From the author, who immigrated (not knowing he had no legal papers) from the Philippines as a child, "This is not a book about the politics of immigration. This book—at its core—is not about immigration at all. This book is about homelessness, not in a traditional sense, but in the unsettled, unmoored psychological state that undocumented immigrants like myself find ourselves in. This book is about lying and being forced to lie to get by; about passing as an American and as a contributing citizen; about families, keeping them together, and having to make new ones when you can't. This book is about constantly hiding from the government and, in the process, hiding from ourselves. This book is about what it means to not have a home.

After 25 years of living illegally in a country that does not consider me one of its own, this book is the closest thing I have to freedom." **Content Warning: Xenophobia, Racism, Deportation**

## **PART TWO:**

### **Required Summer Reading & Assignments for Specific Classes**

*All students should check this section to see which courses they are taking have required summer reading.*

#### **MEDIEVAL WORLD HISTORY - 10TH GRADE STUDENTS**

***The Prince* by Machiavelli (ISBN: 978-0199535699):** When Machiavelli's brief treatise on Renaissance statecraft and princely power was posthumously published in 1532, it generated a debate that has raged unabated until the present day. Based upon Machiavelli's first-hand experience as an emissary of the Florentine Republic to the courts of Europe, *The Prince* analyses the usually violent means by which men seize, retain, and lose political power. Machiavelli added a dimension of incisive realism to one of the major philosophical and political issues of his time, especially the relationship between public deeds and private morality. His book provides a remarkably uncompromising picture of the true nature of power, no matter in what era or by whom it is exercised. This fluent new translation is accompanied by an introduction that considers the true purpose of *The Prince* and dispels some of the myths associated with it. It has the most comprehensive explanatory and critical notes found in any currently available English translation and the most comprehensive bibliography in any edition of the work. It also contains a helpful Glossary of Proper Names, an Index and a map.

#### **UNITED STATES HISTORY**

***Changes in the Land* by William Cronon (ISBN: 9780809016341):** Please read William Cronon's "ethno-ecological" history of New England: *Changes in the Land* (ISBN: 978-0809016341). Taking paper notes on a copy from the library or an e-book is just fine. This profound and revolutionary book explores how Native Americans transformed the environment before contact with Europeans—and how the changing economy of the 17th century led to an ecological transformation. I encourage you to read the whole book, but if you want a shorter version, read chapters 4, 5, and 8. There is an optional, extra-credit assignment here to help you read actively, looking for the author's argument amidst the detail (a skill we'll try to practice in the coming year!) This book looks drier than it actually is—and reading actively may help you uncover the quite radical claims hidden within.

Summer reading assignment [here](#). Students could also use the summer to prepare for the states quiz in September (filling out a blank map).

## UNITED STATES HISTORY SINCE 1865

Link to the [summer reading assignment](#). *These Truths* by Jill Lepore (ISBN: 9780393635249):

Students in United States History since 1865, should supplement what we will be learning in this course with the first 300 pages Jill Lepore's sweeping history of the United States, *These Truths*, up to the Civil War (ISBN: 978-0-393-63524-9). Taking paper notes on a copy from the library or an e-book is just fine. It is very beneficial to use the book to begin a AP study guide for the spring, by using this extra-credit document to keep structured notes.

Students could also use the summer to prepare for the states quiz in September (filling out a blank map).

## U.S. POLITICS AND POLICY

*Tyranny of Merit* by Michael J. Sandel (ISBN: 978-1250800060).

Link to [summer assignment](#). We'll begin our study of recent politics and policy on a philosophical note: thinking about the idea of meritocracy in the United States. As you read, keep an outline of his argument (and your reactions to it), which will be useful for our first week of discussion! If you want a second eye-opening read, checkout Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic*, which provides a useful window into how the Civil War was being understood in the 1990s. This book (which as you might guess merits a content warning of racism, sexism, and racial epithets) would flesh out some of the themes we'll come to all fall—but is in no way required.

## EMPIRES AND NATIONALISM

Marc David Baer, *The Ottomans: Khans, Caesars, and Caliphs* (New York: Basic Books, reprint edition, 2023), ISBN 978-1541673793.

To understand the post-Ottoman states that we will explore in Empires—including Bosnia and Iraq—you should know how the empire functioned both at its height and in decline. Baer's book offers a vivid account. Please read the Introduction, Chapters 13-22, and the Conclusion. Don't worry about remembering names or dates. Rather, mark some passages that help you understand how the Ottoman empire ruled its diverse peoples and what circumstances steered those peoples toward coexistence or conflict. Note: you will draw on this book for your first writing assignment.

## MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

*Voltaire: a life* by Ian Davidson (ISBN: 978-1605982878) Voltaire was arguably the single most influential thinker of the Enlightenment. Although he lived out his life (1694-1778) under the monarchy, he was later claimed as a hero by the leaders of the French Revolution. As you read Davidson's lively biography, first see what you can learn about the political and social realities of life under the old regime. For instance, how did authors make money? How did censorship work? How did French nobles conduct their extramarital affairs? Next, pay attention to the events that became part of the narrative of the Enlightenment. For instance, how and why did the trial of Jean Calas become notorious? **Please read the Note to the Reader and Chapters 1-9, 12, 17, 22, 25-29, and 33. As you read, mark points that interest, puzzle, or surprise you.** You will draw on this book for one of our early writing assignments.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

*Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (ISBN: 978-1571313560).

As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these lenses of knowledge together to show that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings are we capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learning to give our own gifts in return.

## FRENCH 2

*Contes* by Charles Perrault (ISBN: 978-2011557438).

## FRENCH 3

*Nouvelles du monde* by Various Authors (ISBN: 978-2278082551).

## BIOLOGY 2

Students should complete [this assignment](#).

**PART THREE:**  
**Student, Faculty, and Staff Recommendations**

*Faculty and staff share some of their favorite books.*

**Faculty recommendations related to immigrant experiences:**

**Mr. Williams: *Not a Nation of Immigrants: Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion* (p. 2021)** - This paradigm shifting book from the highly acclaimed author of *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* charges that we need to stop believing and perpetuating a simplistic account of America as solely established by and for immigrants, and embrace the real (and often horrific) history of the United States that was founded in violence.

**Mr. MacDonnell: *White Teeth* (p. 2010)** - Unbelievably cutting, witty, and expansive, this is a multi-family story of connected immigrant experiences. Zadie Smith's writing style grips you, makes you laugh, and makes you cry. There's something physical about reading this book. Cannot recommend it more highly!

**Ms. Rodriguez: *The Other Half of Happy* by Rebecca Balcárcel (p. 2019)** - This immersive, award-winning novel following the story of Quijana, a girl in pieces, is now available in paperback. One-half Guatemalan, one-half American: When Quijana's Guatemalan cousins move to town, her dad seems ashamed that she doesn't know more about her family's heritage. This is a heartfelt poetic portrayal of a girl growing up, fitting in, and learning what it means to belong.

**Ms. Sundberg: *Our Missing Hearts* by Celeste Ng (p. 2022)** - This book imagines a chilling political climate for Asian immigrants in the US, describing a world that felt all too possible. It really captured and sustained my interest through the whole book.

**Ms. Budding: *Behold the Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue (p. 2017)** - Jende Jonga, a Cameroonian immigrant living in Harlem, has come to the United States to provide a better life for himself, his wife, Neni, and their six-year-old son. In the fall of 2007, Jende can hardly believe his luck when he lands a job as a chauffeur for Clark Edwards, a senior executive at Lehman Brothers. Clark demands punctuality, discretion, and loyalty—and Jende is eager to please. Clark's wife, Cindy, even offers Neni temporary work at the Edwardses' summer home in the Hamptons. With these opportunities, Jende and Neni can at last gain a foothold in America and imagine a brighter future.

**Ms. Anna: *Skin Folk* by Nalo Hopkinson (p. 2001)** - Skin Folk is a story collection by Jamaican-Canadian writer Nalo Hopkinson. It has elements of folk tales, sci fi, and more realistic fiction, all with the view point of being Jamaican and Canadian.

**Ms. Haber: *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (p. 2025)** - I'm not sure anyone has every so thoroughly put the reader in the shoes of an immigrant, and I think teaching people to read comics isn't a bad skill even though this would fight against our other goal of getting people to read words.

**Ms. Haber: *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen (p. 2016)** - THE ENDING IS TOO VIOLENT. Brilliantly written IMHO! the unnamed main character is an outsider even at home—the mixed raced triple agent—but the sections in US of being alienated as an other are so vivid...

**Ms. Thompson: *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid (p. 2017)** - This book explores what causes some people to immigrate through the lens of two young people. The element of magic realism is an unexpected delight.

**Mr. Conolly: *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolpho Anaya (p. 1999)** - This book is sort of the inverse of the topic. That's because it is one of the first best-selling books by a Chicano author, which takes place in a community in New Mexico that has always spoken Spanish: the people did not move, the border did. It's a coming of age story set in the post-WW 2 years, exploring the folkways and struggles of a Hispanic community at a time of transformation and erosion of their culture. It follows the spiritual journey of an adolescent boy as he navigates between various ideologies: Christianity, native-influence folk religion, and modernity. It's dramatic and also funny at times. There are some adult themes, but I think incoming 9th-graders could handle it.

**Ms. Borman: *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee (p. 2017):** In the early 1900s, teenaged Sunja, the adored daughter of a crippled fisherman, falls for a wealthy stranger at the seashore near her home in Korea. He promises her the world, but when she discovers she is pregnant—and that her lover is married—she refuses to be bought. Instead, she accepts an offer of marriage from a gentle, sickly minister passing through on his way to Japan. But her decision to abandon her home, and to reject her son's powerful father, sets off a dramatic saga that will echo down through the generations.

**Mr. Samblas: *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García (p. 1992):** Here is the dreamy and bittersweet story of a family divided by politics and geography by the Cuban revolution. It is the family story of Celia del Pino, and her husband, daughter and grandchildren, from the mid-1930s to 1980. Celia's story mirrors the magical realism of Cuba itself, a country of beauty and poverty, idealism and corruption. *Dreaming in Cuban* presents a unique vision and a haunting lamentation for a past that might have been.

**Ms. Tomer: *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (p. 2016):** Two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, are born into different villages in eighteenth-century Ghana. Effia is married off to an Englishman and lives in comfort in the palatial rooms of Cape Coast Castle. Unbeknownst to Effia, her sister, Esi, is imprisoned beneath her in the castle's dungeons, sold with thousands of others into the Gold Coast's booming slave trade, and shipped off to America, where her children and grandchildren will be raised in slavery. One thread of *Homegoing* follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, as the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and British colonization. The other thread follows Esi and her children into America. From the plantations of the South to the Civil War and the Great Migration, from the coal mines of Pratt City, Alabama, to the jazz clubs and dope houses of twentieth-century Harlem, right up through the present day, *Homegoing* makes history visceral, and captures, with singular and stunning immediacy, how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed in the soul of a nation. **WARNING: Sensitive content.**

### General faculty recommendations:

**Mr. MacDonnell: *The Wager* by David Grann (p. 2023):** A story about a mutiny, multiple shipwrecks, and navigating treacherous waters. This is a nonfiction work about an English naval ship and its ill-fated voyage to South America. It is a captivating story and a true page turner. Out of all of the Grann books I've read (*Killers of the Flower Moon* & *The Lost City of Z*) this is my favorite. Tons of fun facts and vivid portrayals of maritime life in the 1700s.

**Mr. MacDonnell: *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martin (p. 2020):** I just finished reading this, and it's a great read for anyone interested in technology, A.I., or urban planning. Very political in nature, it's a science fiction about an emissary / diplomatic representative from a space station heading to a major imperial hub in the midst of massive political upheaval. Mahit (the main character) carries an Imago-Machine implanted in her skull, which allows her to access the memories of the previous diplomat, who was mysteriously found dead (suspected murder). It's a space opera, *Dune* style. Page turner.

**Ms. Thompson: *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr (p. 2015):** A moving, intricate story. Short chapters that move the story along. War, hidden treasures, adventure.

**Ms. Haber: *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier (p. 1938):** I have lost count of how many times I've read this book since I first stayed up until 4 in the morning reading it when I was 14. A modern (1938) gothic tale with surprising parallels to *Jane Eyre*, the novel tells the story of the young, unnamed narrator who finds herself uncomfortably living in the shadow of her wealthy husband's perfect first wife. What sticks with me most is not the twists but the narrator's very familiar habit of imagining people talking about her, now as a great success, then as a humiliating failure. The new cover claims *Rebecca* is the best novel written in the 20th century. I could be convinced—it's the certainly the one I wanted to reread most often. Warning: in my opinion, the first chapter is boring and not necessary for the rest except to set the gothic mood. In the 2,000 times I've read the book, I've read the first chapter twice. I'd feel free to skip it after the famous first sentence. (Yikes! is that allowed?) Hitchcock made a movie of it (though changing the ending), which is not surprising as Du Maurier also wrote two other tales that he made into movies: *Don't Look Now* and *The Birds*.

**Mr. Elliot: *Personal Responsibility--The Athlete's Responsibility Manual* By Jeff Janssen (p. 2016):** Something all student athletes should check out!

**Mr. Dardonville: *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* by Johnny Pitts (p. 2019):** non-fiction- a documentary view of African populations around contemporary Europe and how they are navigating a difficult, xenophobic landscape while balancing multiple identities. Recommended for grades 10+.

**Mr. Dardonville: *No-no Boy* by John Okada (p. 1978):** fiction - Considered the "first Japanese American novel," it tells (based on real "no-no boys") the story of Ichiro Yamada, a Japanese man who answered "no" twice on a compulsory questionnaire used to establish loyalty to the government and willingness to serve in WWII for the US, and who was subsequently interned. Following the immediate aftermath of his release from the camp, this angsty (and at times quite vulgar) novel explores the social dynamics within the Japanese immigrant community in a trying era. Recommended for grades 10+.

**Ms. Anna: *The Goblin Emperor* by Katherine Addison (p. 2014):** It's great! Wonderfully world-built fantasy novel about the heir no one ever expected to rise to power suddenly thrust into being emperor. In a heavily segregated empire of both elves and goblins, Maia has mixed heritage and must learn how to navigate a hostile court, other empires, and the expectations of his advisors.

### **Recommendations from Graduating Seniors (class of '25):**

**Rimas Youssef: *The Stranger in the Lifeboat* by Mitch Albom (p. 2021):** Finished it recently, spectacular book. The back of the book reads "What would happen if we called on God for help and a God actually appeared?" and that summarizes the book perfectly. It analyzes the topic of the physical manifestation of God (mainly from a Christian lens) and regardless of a readers view on faith, I think the book has a lot to offer in terms of lessons for reflection.

**Lillian Walsh: *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver (p. 2023):** I really liked this book because it incorporates a lot of complex topics: stereotypes of Southerners, the Opioid crisis, and the foster care system to name a few into one story about a teenage boy growing up in the Appalachian mountains of Virginia. It's based on Charles Dickens's David Copperfield.

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (p. 1958):** I really loved this book because it's centered around the pre colonial culture of my tribe in Nigeria before British colonialism. The book was truly devastating to read near the end but I still loved it because I learned so much about pre colonial practices in my tribe that I wasn't previously aware of, having not grown up in Nigeria.

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *Red Rising* by Pierce Brown (p. 2014):** this is a sci-fi book that is part of a bigger series. It's a story of the hierarchy of genetically modified humans according to specific Colors (e.g. Violet, Blue, Gold, and more). It explores a Red, Darrow, at the bottom of the hierarchy fighting to overcome this system and its leaders, the Golds. The book and series explores the dangers of unchecked power and ambition. I could talk about this series forever just because of how good it is but I would recommend this series to anyone who is a big fan of sci fi. This is by far the best sci-fi series I've ever read!

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger (p. 1951):** It's been a while since I read this book but it was incredibly funny but also kind of depressing from what I remember so there's that.

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin (p. 1963):** Ms Haber recommended this book to me and I'm really glad she did. The book talks about white ignorance, the dangers of religious extremism, black identity and more. It speaks of how equality can be made through the efforts of both black and white people.

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (p. 1987):** this book was terribly sad but it tells a story of how slavery ruined the lives of black people and deeply traumatized them. It's centered on a woman named Sethe whose dead baby, Beloved, haunts the house she shares with her young daughter Denver. I recently had the chance to reread it for English class and got to notice some things that I didn't before which was nice.

**Prosper Anoke-Samuel: *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison (p. 1970):** this book was also, unfortunately, really sad but I loved it nonetheless. It tells the story of a black girl who wishes to have really blue eyes and blonde hair.

**Zach Walton: *The Murderbot Diaries* (specifically, *All Systems Red*) by Martha Wells (p. 2017):** This series has one of the most human portrayals of a non-human I've ever read, following a robot through its action-packed and emotional journey.

**Sarah McPeck: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith (p. 1943):** Classic, very well written on a sentence by sentence level especially. Smooth read in that you are able to anticipate plot development.

**Sarah McPeck: *The Silentiary* by Antonio di Benedetto (p. 1964):** Great exploration of sound. The narrator is an author attempting to write his first novel. Interesting to read as an exploration of changes in Latin America in the 20th century.

**Sarah McPeck: *The Rooftop* by Fernanda Trias (p. 2000):** Fairly short, but very suspenseful, tense book. Unreliable narrator adds to the general sense of uncertainty and mystery as you read

**Sarah McPeck: *On Freedom*, Timothy Snyder (p. 2024):** Nonfiction, fairly general exploration of freedom and its implications, drawing on recent events and political thought. Interesting to see freedom examined from a progressive perspective.

## **Recommendations from Affinity Groups**

### **Gender-Sexuality Alliance Recommends:**

- *Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller
- *Who's Afraid of Gender* by Judith Butler
- *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin
- *House on the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune
- *Rain God* by Arturo Islas
- *Brownstone* by Samuel Teer
- *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong
- *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel

### **FAM Recommends:**

- *The Souls of Black Folks* by W.E.B. DuBois
- *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates;
- *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi & Yusef Salaam
- *Becoming* by Michelle Obama

### **First Gen Students Recommend:**

- *A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League* by Ron Suskind
- *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students* by Anthony Abraham Jack
- *Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey from a Homeless Shelter to the Ivy League* by Dan-el Padilla Peralta

## Film Recommendations Related to Immigrant Experiences

**Mr. MacDonnell:** *Past Lives* (2023) Dir. by Celine Song & *Didi* (2024) Dir. by Sean Wang.

**Anna Moss:** *West Side Story* (1961) Dir. by Roberts & Wise, *Minari* (2020) Dir. by Isaac Lee Chung, *Flee* (2021) Dir. by Jonas Poher Rasmussen.

**Ms. Dale:** *Le Havre* (lThe Haven') Dir. by Aki Kaurismäki & *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) Dir. by Jim Jarmusch.

**Mr. Singer:** *Flee* (2021) Dir. by Jonas Poher Rasmussen [if it were up to me this should be required viewing], *Of An Age* (2022) Dir. by Goran Stolevski, *Brooklyn* (2015) Dir. by John Crowley.

**Mr. Dardonville:** *L'histoire de Souleymane* (Souleymane's Story) (Boris Lojkine, 2024) - a gripping narrative about a Guinean asylum-seeker in France who works as a food delivery worker in Paris and is preparing to give his testimony to French immigration authorities. Conveys the precarity that African migrant workers face just to get a foot in the door.

*Saint Omer* (Alice Diop, 2022) - The film follows the case of a Senegalese immigrant who has been charged in the murder of her 15-month-old daughter, based on a real case from 2016. Grapples with the racial dynamics of postcolonial France.

*Nous* (We) (Alice Diop, 2021) - Also from Alice Diop, a documentary which travels up and down the RER B line to the peripheral quarters of Paris to encounter individuals who have been rendered peripheral by French society.

*La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1991) - This has to be one of my favorite films ever, one which gives a glimpse into the highly inflammable dynamics of the Parisian banlieues in the nineties. In black and white.

*La graine et le mulet* (The Secret of the Grain) (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2007) - About a Franco-Tunisian family planning on opening a restaurant (if I remember correctly, there are a few sex scenes - like a lot of other French films - so I'm issuing a content warning, I guess?)

## **PART FOUR: Further Reading Recommendations**

*Additional curated lists to assist students in finding enjoyable reads.*

### **Books in the Commonwealth Library**

- [What's new in the Commonwealth Library](#) - See what we've brought into the collection over this past year. It represents a range of genres, forms, modes, topics, and interests. Check one out!

### **Recommendations from the Boston Public Library**

- [Staff Picks](#)
- [Personalized Reading Recommendations](#)
- [Award Winners](#)
- [Booklists](#): “Black Is..”, “AAPI Heritage Month”, “We Are Pride”, “Vida Latina”, “Native Lives, Native Stories”, “Disabled, Not Unable”
- [New Titles](#) & [Bestsellers](#)

### **The Immigrant Learning Center Reading Recommendations**

### **Publisher’s Weekly: 10 Essential Books About the Immigrant Experience**

### **Immigration Project Reading Recommendations** (Santa Cruz Bookshop)

### **Greenwich Library: 10 Contemporary Novels on the Immigrant Experience in America**

### **Global Refuge: 21 Must-Read Books About Immigration**

### **Minuteman Library Network Book Lists**

### **New York Public Library Recommends**

### **Cambridge Public Library Recommends**

### **Brookline Public Library Recommends**