

Summer Reading for Rising Juniors 2026-27

COMMUNITY BOOK. You must read the following community book. The community book is one which is read by every member of the class. Parents are also invited to read the community book. During the first week of school, your English teachers will review, conduct, or oversee projects, presentations, and group seminars – all in an effort to generate a sharing of ideas as a community.

Author	Title
Colson Whitehead	<i>The Underground Railroad.</i> A vital book that forces us to reckon with the brutalities of slavery. This is a work of postmodern “historical fiction,” as Whitehead reimagines the Underground Railroad as an actual system of trains and tracks running beneath 19 th -century America. We follow the interconnected lives of several runaway slaves who trudge a phantasmagoric yet oddly real version of America during the time of slavery. This adventurous and highly readable novel will surely spark lively conversations among students.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT CHOICE: You must also read **one** book from the following list.

Author	Title
Maya Angelou	<i>All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes.</i> The author, her son, and several friends travel through Ghana discovering the real country and the author's dreamed-of ancestral “homeland” – touching anecdotes and great description.
James Baldwin	<i>Go Tell It On The Mountain.</i> One day in the life of a fourteen-year-old – as well as the past, dreams, and desires of his family – reveals the development and search for identity of an African-American boy.
Elif Batuman	<i>The Idiot.</i> A Turkish-American student discovers life at Harvard, email, the beauty of language, and (a kind of) love. This compelling novel, told in the unique and likable voice of its first-person narrator, will give you insight into college life in the 1990s (and today) while dazzling you with its prose. Published in 2017.
Octavia Butler	<i>Kindred.</i> Can the story of American slavery be told as a gripping sci-fi novel? In <i>Kindred</i> , a black woman from the 1970s time travels to the slave past of her ancestors, where she meets – and becomes enslaved by – her great grandmother's white owner. If she alters history, she will cease to exist; if she doesn't alter history, a horrible racist will punish and torture hundreds of people just because they are black. How does the past influence the present? How does hatred get passed down to the next generation? What is a hero? Can Americans ever be free of history? Should Americans ever be free of history?
Ta-Nehisi Coates	<i>Between the World and Me.</i> This work of nonfiction, by celebrated <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> columnist Coates, is written as a long letter to his son and explores race in contemporary America. Lyrical, brutal, and more than relevant
Kate Chopin	<i>The Awakening.</i> This is a daring novel which shows the transformation of Edna Pontellier from a young wife and mother to a woman who declares her freedom and spiritual rebirth.

E.L. Doctorow	<i>Ragtime</i> . Doctorow's work is a captivating and uniquely American story. Set at the turn of the 20th century in New York, this novel features historical figures like J.P. Morgan and Harry Houdini rubbing shoulders with Doctorow's fictional characters. A truly mesmerizing look at American history through the lens of fiction.
W.E.B. Du Bois	<i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> . This collection of essays by one of America's great thinkers explores race, identity, will, religion, and many other important topics. A key work to understanding our country's history and the legacy of slavery.
Pat Frank	<i>Alas, Babylon</i> . Published at the height of the Cold War, this is the chilling story of the members of a north Florida community suffering – and surviving – a nuclear war.
W. Timothy Gallwey	<i>The Game of Tennis: The Classic Guide to Peak Performance</i> . This book explores how to gain a competitive advantage in sports and in life. Numerous successful athletes, coaches, musicians, and artists cite this book as a profound influence on their growth and success. If you've ever wondered how to quiet that inner voice of self-doubt, this book is for you.
John Gardner	<i>Grendel</i> . The monster Grendel from the classic English epic <i>Beowulf</i> retells, from his point of view, the story of his life prior to his battle with the Great Prince, as well as the battle itself.
Ernest Hemingway	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> . A tragic love affair set during World War I realistically discusses the disillusionment felt by some individuals in the modern world.
Gayl Jones	<i>Corregidora</i> . Ursa is a beautiful and powerful blues singer who works a roadhouse dive-bar in the early part of the 20th century. She is haunted by her legacy: her grandmother and mother were both molested by their plantation owner/master. As she recounts her family's tragic narrative, she finds she may be repeating the past with her current boyfriend. A book that is dark, gripping, wrenching, and powerful; it examines the need for the blues, the need for testimony, and the importance of storytelling.
Catherine Lacey	<i>The Answers</i> . A young woman with a mysterious illness needs money to fund her treatments, so she takes a job as an "emotional girlfriend" – part of an experiment with a millionaire to test the limits of love, attraction, and dedication. Keen insight on our emotional lives and the often-inexplicable bonds of relationships. Super hip and very cool. Published 2017.
J. Drew Lanham	<i>The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature</i> . Written in an easy-to-read and poetic style, the careful descriptions of the natural world (Lanham writes eloquently about many species of birds, plants, and more), and the frank discussions of race relations in rural South make this memoir a very compelling book. Published 2017.
Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee	<i>Inherit the Wind</i> . An intense drama about one of the most controversial trials of the century. Two of the greatest American lawyers of the time battle about a teacher's right to teach, freedom of speech, and the great questions of evolution.

Ben Lerner	10:04. A writer ponders the hazy line between reality and fiction. We see our narrator use his life in his fiction, write an epic poem, and wonder about the meaning of an art "in the present tense." A beautifully written and intellectually stimulating novel that provokes a great many interesting questions. The title comes from the scene in <i>Back to the Future</i> when Marty McFly and Doc time travel. Published in 2014.
Anne Morrow Lindbergh	<i>Gift from the Sea.</i> Lindbergh wrote much of this nonfiction book while on a solo vacation on Captiva Island, Florida. Though very brief, this work explores what it means to be human in an ever-changing and often challenging world. Each chapter is named for a shell Lindbergh found on the beach, and she uses these as metaphors to ponder our shifting identities as we move through life. A great choice for anyone who has ever stood beside an ocean and considered the depth of the world and the self.
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman.</i> This sad and beautiful and often very funny play explores the vastness of one man's American Dream, the pressures of family, and the price of ambition. A great introduction to one of America's greatest playwrights (and a writer you'll read in English 3).
Gloria Naylor	<i>Mama Day.</i> This novel explores the intricacies of an isolated yet modern African American family on the fictional Willow Island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Multiple perspectives and a plain prose style have helped make this a classic. Gullah culture, voodoo, the oral tradition, and well-drawn characters. Deceptively simple.
Annie Proulx	<i>The Shipping News.</i> Can one find happiness, security, and identity in remote Nova Scotia? The unlikely hero of this novel overcomes physical and emotional obstacles to try to do this.
Sylvia Plath	<i>The Bell Jar.</i> This is an autobiographical novel about an ambitious and brilliant young woman's search for values and her eventual breakdown.
Chaim Potok	<i>The Chosen.</i> A baseball game brings together two boys from different backgrounds. As they become friends, they learn how different Jewish beliefs and traditions influence their lives and their futures.
Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale AND Epictetus	<i>Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior</i> AND <i>The Enchiridion.</i> For this choice, you'll read two very brief books by two very different – yet connected – writers. Stockdale was shot down over North Vietnam and spent seven and a half years as a prisoner of war. How did he survive torture and solitary confinement? By remembering the words and lessons of the ancient Stoic philosopher Epictetus. These books provide timeless lessons on courage and self-control. If you're looking for a way to shape your life into something noble and authentic, these books are for you.
Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin.</i> According to Abraham Lincoln, this novel started the Civil War. Meet a wide range of memorable characters who all reckon with slavery, freedom, and responsibility. And be ready to turn the pages quickly! Lots of action and adventure and even comedy.

Mark Twain	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> . One of the most important American novels, ever, this tale (told in the sometimes foul-mouthed always unique voice of Huck) follows a boy's literal journey along the Mississippi River and his figurative journey into adult and an understanding of the horrors of slavery and racism. Funny, moving, and profound – and a book every American needs to read at some point in her life, so why not now?
Mark Twain	<i>The Innocents Abroad</i> . Humorous letters Twain wrote to a San Francisco newspaper while traveling in Europe with a group of naive fellow Americans compiled into a funny travel narrative.
Margaret Walker	<i>Jubilee</i> . This Civil War novel chronicles the life of Walker's great-grandmother, and through her, a white plantation owner and his beloved black mistress. Through her narration of events, the author captures the spirit of freedom over bondage.
Colson Whitehead	<i>Nickel Boys</i> . Set in and around Tallahassee during the Civil Rights Era and based on the horrific events at a fictionalized version of the Dozier School, this novel explores systemic racism and the undying human will to persevere. At times, the reality Whitehead depicts is brutal, but the story will hold your attention, and this is a quick (though haunting) read.
August Wilson	<i>Fences</i> . This brief, award-winning play, set in 1950s Pittsburgh, focuses on Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball star, and his family. While Troy struggles to provide for his family and remains haunted by his own unjustly brief athletic career, his wife urges him to protect his family and his son, who, against Troy's wishes, wants to pursue a college football career. A thoughtful, beautiful play that reckons with racism, masculinity, and responsibility.
Callan Wink	<i>Bear-Tooth</i> . If you like hunting and fishing and the great outdoors, this book is for you. A thrilling page-turner, set in the present-day Montana wilderness, along the borders of Yellowstone, this novel tells the story of two brothers who try to live off the land. But financial difficulties force them into some dangerous – and exciting – situations with a kilt-wearing (fake?) Scottish poacher in search of elk antlers. <i>Bear-Tooth</i> will take you into the wilderness on bear hunts, down whitewater rivers in a raft, and all throughout the territory of Yellowstone, with federal agents in hot pursuit.