

Summer Reading for Rising Sophomores (Honors) 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
Mark Haddon	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.</i> Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow. A murder mystery of sorts, a young boy's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.

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

Author	Title
Chinua Achebe	<i>Things Fall Apart.</i> Set in Africa, the story of conflict between father and son, between traditional ways and changing times, between the native culture and the imperialist influence of the British.
Mariama Ba	<i>So Long a Letter.</i> In this short novel (told in a series of letters), a recently widowed schoolteacher in Senegal tells her remarkable story. Keen insight in the life of a compelling African woman.
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre.</i> An orphan girl grows up in Victorian-era England and eventually becomes a governess in a mysterious mansion on the wind-swept moors. Classic romance tale.
Dante	<i>The Inferno.</i> What would you do if you woke up one day and realized you were in Hell? Well, this epic poem explores how one man reacts as he journeys towards paradise with the help of his kindly mentor Virgil and with his mind on his beloved Beatrice. A harrowing look at justice, punishment, and the quest for spiritual enlightenment.
Michaela DePrince and Elaine DePrince	<i>Taking Flight: From War Orphan to Star Ballerina.</i> In this memoir by an acclaimed dancer and her mother, we see a young girl discover her passion for dance and overcome numerous obstacles to become one of the greatest ballerinas in the world. A hopeful book that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of art.

Charles Dickens	<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." So begins one of the world's most exciting and romantic stories about the French Revolution. Besides the two cities – Paris and London – there are two families, two villains, and two men who look alike, who both fall in love with the same woman. Good triumphs in the end, but just barely.
Daphne DuMaurier	<i>Rebecca</i> . Mystery / romance about a young woman who marries a wealthy man, but she is troubled by a sense of his mansion's being haunted by memories of his previous wife.
Athol Fugard	<i>"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys</i> . Set in South Africa during apartheid, this brief play explores the consequences of racism and our shared potential for empathy.
Neil Gaiman	<i>The Ocean at the End of the Lane</i> . After returning home for a family funeral, a middle-age man relives a magically fantastical, yet frightening, childhood memory with a young girl named Lettie and her unusual mother and grandmother who lived on the farm at end of the lane.
Goethe	<i>Faust, Part One</i> . The doctor in this play makes a deal with the devil -- and, well, you can imagine this doesn't work out the way he plans. This classic work is a touchstone of Western culture (and an excellent introduction to human "over-reaching" -- an idea you'll read about in <i>Frankenstein</i> , during the school year).
John Green	<i>Everything is Tuberculosis</i> . Green – famous for his novels <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i> and <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> – turns to nonfiction in this book that explores tuberculosis, the most deadly infectious disease in the world. Green describes his book as "a history of human responses to tuberculosis intertwined with a contemporary story of one person's experience." Green meets Henry, a young patient in Sierra Leone, and follows his journey as he fights this awful disease, ultimately discovering that human choices have prevented eliminating this scourge. A must read for anyone interested in medicine and the ethics of care.
Yaa Gyasi	<i>Homegoing</i> . This award-winning novel explores the legacy of slavery in Africa by focusing on the amazing stories of two sisters. These girls grow up unknown to one another in two different villages, yet fate brings them back together. Gyasi was born in Ghana and attended the prestigious Stanford writing program.
Homer	<i>The Odyssey</i> . The epic poem of epic poems. Join Odysseus as he sails the wild seas, encounters tempting sirens, a somewhat dim cyclops, dangerous flowers, and more! A classic adventure for the ages.
Chigozie Obioma	<i>The Fishermen</i> . Set in the 1990s, this novel traces the political history of Nigeria through the story of Ben and his brothers. A compelling coming of age story with a lot of feeling.

George Orwell	1984. This classic dystopian novel warns against the abuses of a totalitarian government, which controls people's jobs, marriages, and ideas by spying on them.
Alan Patton	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country.</i> This novel tells the story of Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom as they navigate the beauty and terror of South Africa. One of the most famous African novels of all time, and one you won't soon forget.
Ferrol Sams	<i>The Whisper of the River.</i> In this sequel to <i>Run with the Horsemen</i> , Porter Osborne continues his humorous escapades in a small southern college. His faith and heritage are challenged by the new people he meets as he decides about his future.
Jose Saramago	<i>Blindness.</i> Incredible novel of a mysterious illness that spreads through an unnamed country: one day, for no clear reason, everyone starts to go blind. Eventually, the entire nation is a nation of blind persons. Half science-fiction, half parable or allegory, this violent and gripping read was singled out in the judges' citation when the author was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature—the highest award that can be given to a writer. Is the blindness disease a metaphor for our own pandemics like AIDS or avian flu, etc? Does it represent our inability to truly see and perceive ourselves and one another? You don't have to have read Plato's allegory of the cave to be haunted by this dark, stunning page-turner.
George Saunders	<i>The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil.</i> An allegory of our times, this is the story of Inner Horner, a nation so small it can only accommodate one citizen at a time. The other six must wait their turns in the Short-Term Residency Zone of the surrounding country of Outer Horner.
George Bernard Shaw	<i>Pygmalion.</i> Renowned language professor Henry Higgins makes a bet that he can transform Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl, into a genteel and well-mannered lady through speech lessons. This funny and insightful play shows how language shapes our sense of self – as Eliza discovers her own personal power.
Nevil Shute	<i>On the Beach.</i> Compassionate yet chilling story of a small town in Australia awaiting a wave of nuclear radiation in the aftermath of an atomic war. The characters spend their last days in their own unique ways.
Gary Shteyngart	<i>Vera, or Faith.</i> This 2025 novel introduces us to Vera – a half-Jewish, half-Korean girl – as she reckons with her family's dissolution and searches for her "mom-mom" (her birth mother) with the help of AI, her friends, and her sharp intellect. Set in a near future where America teeters on the edge of dystopia, this funny, brief, and easy to read novel will make you fall in love with Vera and will help you understand love in your own life.

Sophocles	<i>Oedipus the King</i> . Want to know how the Oedipus story begins? How Antigone inherited her curse? If so, read this, the first work in Sophocles' Oedipus Cycle. In trying to escape his fate, Oedipus runs into his horrible destiny.
Maria van Lieshout	<i>Song of a Blackbird</i> . This 2025 graphic novel weaves together two stories in Amsterdam: in one, a contemporary teenager searches for a bone marrow donor for her grandmother; in the other, an art student in 1943 joins the Dutch Resistance to help Jewish people escape the Nazi occupation. Stark, powerful drawings enliven this story of bravery and resistance (and there's even a daring bank heist!).
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> . A play which is a hilarious attack on Victorian manners, romance, and mistaken identities.
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> . A young man remains mysteriously youthful over the years while his portrait grows old and shows the corruption of his dissolute life
P.G. Wodehouse	<i>Right Ho, Jeeves!</i> A house party in the country, mixed-up romances, plans that backfire, and a wise butler who knows all the answers--these ingredients come together to create Wodehouse's comic style. The life and loves of the English aristocracy are satirized in this novel.