

2026 English Summer Reading Guide:
English 3 College Prep

Instructions:

- **Read ONE of the** five books (three fiction, two nonfiction choices) listed on the next page before the first day of school in August.
- **Note about content:** As you are rising juniors, we seek to challenge you with texts of rigor and complex, real-life issues. Some of the choices below cover challenging experiences, such as varying forms of violence, death, or different types of abuse and neglect. Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and Haruf's *Plainsong* depict some scenes of sexual violence. Use your discretion when selecting.
- **Obtain the physical book, not an ebook.***
 - *Students with specific ebook accommodations should follow their learning plan and can consult with their school learning specialist with any questions about their accommodations.
- **You may purchase the book or get it from the library** — but you must have it in your possession each day of class to start the school year. For most in-class work related to the book, you will *not* be able to use your iPad (except for accommodations), so you need your own physical copy.
- **Follow the instructions below** for reading and preparing for the in-class assessment. Your English teacher will provide further instructions on the first day of school.

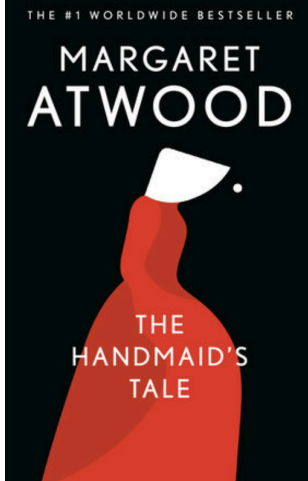
Guidance while reading:

- **Annotating:** To really read a book, you must engage with it actively. Passively reading long texts does not work. You might retain something, but your thinking will be minimal.
 - Here is what to track as you read:
 - Characters, events, and settings
 - Themes, motifs, patterns, and trends
 - Questions or unknown words (look them up while reading)
 - Connections you're making between the book and... yourself or your environment; your world; other books, texts, films, our world today.
 - Realities of the human condition, both past and present.
- **Responding and thinking:** Each of the book choices says something about the lived human experience. Think about these questions while reading:
 - What is the author trying to show about the lived human experience? What type of life is shown? What do we see? What are we asked to consider or think about?
 - Where in the text do you see sources of conflict, struggle, or obstacles for the characters? (Conflict can be internal (character struggling with a set of decisions/realities), external (character struggling with other characters), or larger (character struggling with society/other tensions/realities).
- **Focused reading:** Put your phone or device in another room while reading, and do not read while listening to music with words. Research suggests strongly that reading without the distraction of a smartwatch, smartphone, smart toaster, or DEVICE OF ANY TYPE WHATSOEVER besides a book, pencil, or pen correlates to deeper thinking, better writing, and overall improved health. Additionally, brain research demonstrates that our brains cannot actually listen to words in music and read at the same time.

In-class assessment:

You will write two-part essay on your chosen summer reading text during the first classes which will require you to cite specific passages and analyze specific quotations. (*There is NO written assignment to complete ahead of time.*) Make sure you have carefully and thoughtfully read and reviewed your book and that your annotations are helpful to you.

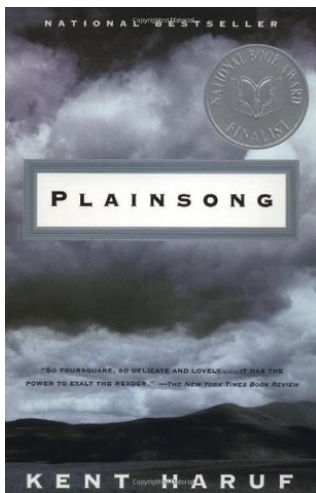
List of Book Choices:



[The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood](#)

Margaret Atwood's popular dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* explores a broad range of issues relating to power, gender, and religious politics. After a staged terrorist attack kills the U.S. President and most of Congress, the government is deposed and taken over by the oppressive and all-controlling Republic of Gilead. Offred (Of the Commander Fred), now a Handmaid serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife, can remember a time when she lived with her husband and daughter and had a job, before she lost everything — including her own name. Despite the danger, Offred learns to navigate the intimate secrets of those who control her every move, risking her life in breaking the rules in hopes of ending this oppression. Choose this book if you'd like to enter a world of many forms of oppression and violence. In some ways, this offers an alternative dystopian landscape to the one Ray Bradbury wrote about in his *Fahrenheit*, which we will read starting in August.

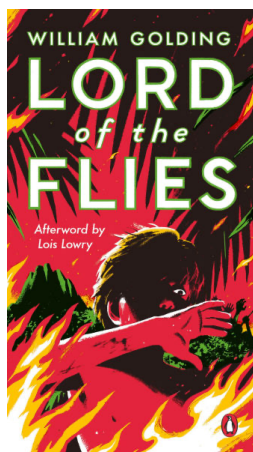
Originally published in 1985. Fiction. Dystopia. See content note above. ISBN: 9780385490818



[Plainsong by Kent Haruf](#)

A minimalist novel that creates a community of conflict, big and small, impacting the daily lives of people in ways they don't understand or appreciate at first. The American town — not metropolis — is the focus here where no one is anonymous, unless they really try to be. The nature of community and the pain of decisions is under consideration in this story involving students and teachers and parents and notable absences of them along the way. We hear early, "You're here now...This is where you are." Living in a major U.S. city, we can forget a prior era (or alternative current one) in which people live in small communities where they depend on one another for better and worse. A prior era in which boys work as newspaper deliverers before school to make money. Where kids don't have phones. Though this might sound like a less complicated prior reality, it is not. Choose this book if you're interested in vivid storytelling that shows the little detail through a variety of character perspectives. Childhood discovery, the reality of confronting an unexpected pregnancy, absent and cruel parents, and a teacher struggling with the range of students in his class all have their moments in this harrowing novel.

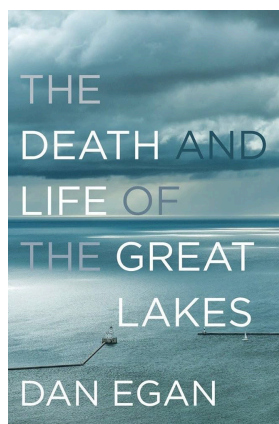
Originally published in 1999. Fiction. Small town. See content note above. ISBN: 9780375705854



[Lord of the Flies by William Golding](#)

An old classic that begins with a stunning premise—school children stranded on an island. However, this is no simple horror story. In creating this world, Golding focuses on the making (and unmaking) of a community, the desires of humans, and the ways in which we can fall apart. Read this if you'd like an interesting preview of several of the first texts of English 3. If you've read and liked a work of dystopia before, this might be for you...

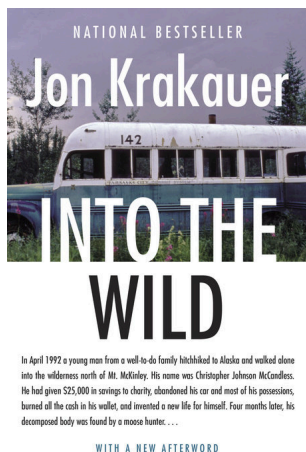
Fiction.
Originally published in 1954.
ISBN: 9780399501487



[The Death and Life of the Great Lakes by Dan Egan](#)

To the east and three miles away from our campus, Lake Michigan offers students and teachers time away from the busy routines of city life. But, beneath the surface of the increasingly clear and less blue water, problems — significant ones — swirl. Told by a Milwaukee journalist, this book covers the story of unforeseen damage caused by human actions. How do we (and *have* we in the past) recognize and seek to improve such harm? Like the *Titanic's* unseen iceberg, this story challenges us to think of the many ways our decisions and lifestyles affect the world we live in and depend on. Egan's prose is approachable and entertaining. Read this if you're interested in learning more about a natural treasure, the five Great Lakes, and thinking through tricky questions of climate and nature.

Originally published in 2017. Nonfiction. Science. Ecology. Climate change. ISBN: 9780393355550



[Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer](#)

In the thirty years since its publication, this text has been celebrated for his discussion of resounding American themes, resisting easy answers and clichés. We all face moments of doubt and despair, but the subject of this book sets out on a journey, leaving the familiar and entering the unknown. In what does become a tragedy, Krakauer—a gifted writer of true stories—explores, as much as possible, the inner workings of a person who is willing to make a drastic decision like this to set off on their own.

Originally published in 1996. Adventure. Wilderness. Nonfiction. ISBN: 9780385486804