

**LAGUNA BLANCA SCHOOL
SUMMER READING 2026
STUDENTS ENTERING ENGLISH 10 and OPT-IN HONORS**

*All Laguna Blanca students entering Grades 5-12 in the fall are required to read at least one book this summer. We ask that students use Post-it notes or a pen/pencil to mark passages they find important, interesting, or confusing -- to prepare for graded writing assignments in English 10 during the opening weeks of school. **Please buy only new books or used books with no markings.** The required texts can be purchased at Chaucer's, Amazon, or ThriftBooks. Please buy the specific edition as indicated by the ISBN # and links listed below.*

REQUIRED READING: PLEASE READ AND ANNOTATE SHORTLY BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR STARTS!

LORD OF THE FLIES: TEXT, NOTES, CRITICISM (1954) by William Golding ISBN-10: 0399506438 ([this edition](#))

INDEPENDENT REQUIRED READING:

PLEASE READ AND ANNOTATE ONE OF THE BOOKS FROM THIS LIST, SHORTLY BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR STARTS, OR YOU CHOOSE ANOTHER BOOK TO PRESENT.

THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN (2007) by Sherman Alexie

The novel centers on Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian (Native American) Reservation. Based on the author's own experiences, the protagonist is determined to take his future into his own hands. Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white high school in a farm town, where the only other Indian is the school mascot...

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE (2017) by Anthony Doerr (American)

A story of resilience and hope, this beautiful novel follows a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as they try to survive the devastation of World War II. The story moves briskly and efficiently toward its climactic encounter during the Allied bombing of Saint-Malo, France, a couple of months after D-Day. Although the narrative consists largely of flashbacks, it focuses most sharply on two characters: the blind child Marie-Laure LeBlanc, who joins the French Resistance, and the very Aryan-looking Werner Pfennig, a technocratic private in the service of the Thousand-Year Reich.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT (1928) By Erich Maria Remarque Written by a German veteran of WWI, the novel describes the German soldiers' physical and mental trauma during the war as well as the detachment from civilian life felt by many upon returning home from the war.

THE BELL JAR (1963) by Sylvia Plath

The Bell Jar follows the story of Esther Greenwood as she battles with mental illness in 1950s America. Plath's poignant writing offers an honest exploration of a young woman's struggle with identity, societal expectations, and her own sense of self.

BRAIN ON FIRE (2012) by Susannah Cahalan (American)

An award-winning memoir and instant *New York Times* bestseller, *Brain on Fire* goes far beyond its riveting medical mystery, offering the powerful account of one woman's struggle to recapture her identity. When twenty-four-year-old Susannah Cahalan woke up alone in a hospital room, strapped to her bed and unable to move or speak, she had no memory of how she'd gotten there. Days earlier, she had been on the threshold of a new, adult life at the beginning of her first serious relationship and a promising career at a major New York newspaper. Now she was labeled violent, psychotic, a flight risk. What happened? In a swift and breathtaking narrative, Cahalan tells the astonishing true story of her descent into madness, her family's inspiring faith in her, and the lifesaving diagnosis that nearly didn't happen.

THE COMPLETE PERSEPOLIS (2000, 2001) by Marjane Satrapi (Graphic novels)

Persepolis is the story of Satrapi's unforgettable childhood and coming-of-age within a large and loving family in Tehran, Iran, during the Islamic Revolution; of the contradictions between private life 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.

DAMSELFLY (2018) by Chandra Prasad

Damselfly by Chandra Prasad is a young adult novel that reimagines *Lord of the Flies*. It follows a group of American teenagers, including Samantha Mishra, who are stranded on a deserted island after a plane crash. They are all members of a fencing team from a private boarding school. As they struggle to survive, the novel explores themes of power, race, identity, and human cruelty, with unseen antagonists and plot twists adding a layer of mystery.

FEVER DREAM (2017) by Samanta Schweblin

A young woman named Amanda lies dying in a rural hospital clinic. A boy named David sits beside her. She's not his mother. He's not her child. Together, they tell a haunting story of broken souls, power, and the desperation of family. In a translation

from Spanish, *Fever Dream* is a nightmare come to life, a ghost story for the real world, a love story, and a cautionary tale. One of the freshest new voices in the Spanish language, translated into English for the first time, Samanta Schweblin (Argentinian) creates an aura of otherworldly reality in this absorbing work.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING (2001) by Tracy Chevalier

This historical novel is based on Johannes Vermeer's famous "Girl with a Pearl Earring" oil painting (c. 1665), and it tells the story of Griet, a 16-year-old poor girl living with her family in Delft, Netherlands. When Griet is hired as a servant in Vermeer's household, turmoil ensues. Tracy Chevalier transports readers to a bygone time and place in this richly imagined portrait of the young woman who inspired one of Vermeer's most celebrated paintings.

INTO THIN AIR: AN ACCOUNT OF THE MT. EVEREST DISASTER (1999) by Jon Krakauer

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more—including Krakauer's—in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.

JAMES (2024) by Percival Everett

James by Percival Everett is a novel that reimagines Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" from the perspective of Jim, the enslaved Black man who travels with Huck. It follows Jim's journey as he flees being sold to a new owner and, with Huck, escapes down the Mississippi River, highlighting Jim's intelligence, agency, and compassion. The novel explores themes of identity, belonging, and the sacrifices made to protect loved ones, while also satirizing the era's hypocrisy and racism.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB (1989) by Amy Tan (Chinese American)

The Joy Luck Club is divided into four parts, each containing four stories told in first-person POV that explore the conflicts of four mother-daughter pairs. Each part begins with an allegorical story that distills the themes of the stories that follow. The mothers met in San Francisco's Chinatown after World War II and formed a social club called the Joy Luck Club. Most of the novel takes place in the late 1980s with lengthy flashbacks to the mothers' youths in war-torn China. "Amy Tan's special accomplishment in this novel is not her ability to show us how mothers and daughters may hurt each other, but how they love and ultimately forgive each other." (Nancy Willard, writer)

THE LADY IN GOLD (2012) by Anne-Marie O'Connor

Anne-Marie O'Connor presents the galvanizing story of Gustav Klimt's 1907 masterpiece—the portrait of a Viennese Jewish woman, Adele Bloch-Bauer. The celebrated painting, stolen by Nazis during World War II, subsequently became the subject of a decade-long dispute between the heirs and the Austrian government. When

the US Supreme Court became involved in the case, its decision had profound ramifications in the art world. Expertly researched, *The Lady in Gold* is a riveting tale of Nazi war crimes, the history of Vienna, and a glimpse into the high-stakes workings of the contemporary art world.

***KLARA AND THE SUN* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Klara is hyper-observant, always watching those around her closely. Klara is also an Artificial Friend, a lifelike android destined to become a companion for a human child. Is it empathy, the way she notices, observes, and adjusts her behavior accordingly? Or something else? This is a fresh and original dystopian AI tale that poses big philosophical questions with the subtlety and understatement that are Ishiguro's trademark. Ishiguro was a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2017.

***LILIANA'S INVINCIBLE SUMMER* (2023) by Cristina Rivera Garza** In luminous, poetic prose, Rivera Garza tells a singular, yet universally resonant story: Liliana is a spirited, wondrously hopeful young woman who tries to survive in a world of increasingly normalized gendered violence. Rivera Garza traces her sister's history, depicting everything from Liliana's early romance with a handsome but possessive man to that exhilarating summer of 1990 in Mexico City when she loved, thought, and traveled more widely and freely than ever before. Using her skills as an acclaimed scholar, novelist, and poet, Rivera Garza collected and curated evidence—handwritten letters, police reports, school notebooks, and interviews with Liliana's loved ones—to document her sister's life. Through this remarkable and genre-defying memoir, she confronts the trauma of losing her sister and examines how this tragedy continues to shape who she is—and what she fights for—today.

***LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE* (1992) by Laura Esquivel**

This classic love story takes place on the De la Garza ranch, as the tyrannical owner, Mama Elena, chops onions at the kitchen table in her final days of pregnancy. While still in her mother's womb, her daughter-to-be weeps so violently that she causes an early labor, and little Tita slips out amid the spices and fixings for noodle soup. This early encounter with food soon becomes a way of life, and Tita grows up to be a master chef, using cooking to express herself and sharing recipes with readers along the way.

***MACHINES LIKE ME* (2020) by Ian McEwan**

Set in an uncanny alternative 1982 London, *Machines Like Me* powerfully portrays two lovers who will be tested beyond their understanding. Charlie, drifting through life and dodging full-time employment, is in love with Miranda, a bright student who lives with a terrible secret. When Charlie comes into money, he buys Adam, one of the first-generation synthetic humans. With Miranda's assistance, he codes Adam's personality. The near-perfect human that emerges is beautiful, strong, and smart—and a love triangle soon forms. Ian McEwan's subversive, gripping novel poses fundamental questions: What makes us human—our outward deeds or our inner lives? Could a machine understand the human heart? This provocative and thrilling tale

warns against the power to invent things beyond our control.

MISEDUCATED: A MEMOIR (2021) by Brandon P. Fleming

An inspiring true story of one man's transformation from a delinquent, drug-dealing dropout to an award-winning Harvard educator through literature and debate—all by the age of twenty-seven. *Miseducated* is an honest memoir about resilience, visibility, role models, and overcoming limitations.

THE NATURAL (1952) by Bernard Malamud

Malamud's debut novel, *The Natural*, tells the story of Roy Hobbs, a once-promising baseball prodigy who attempts to make a comeback after a gunshot wound ruined his career. The character of Roy Hobbs is very loosely based on the real-life baseball player Eddie Waitkus, who was shot by an obsessed fan in 1949. Biting, witty, provocative, and sardonic, Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* is widely considered to be the premier baseball *novel* of all time—as well as a mirror of contemporary society.

THE POET X (2018) by Elizabeth Acevedo (Novel in verse)

Afro-Latina protagonist Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking. But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman, about whom her family can never know. This book is a testament to self-expression!

PRIDE: A PRIDE AND PREJUDICE REMIX (2019) by Ibi Zoboi

Zoboi skillfully balances cultural identity, class, and gentrification against the heady magic of first love in her vibrant reimagining of Jane Austen's beloved classic. A smart, funny, gorgeous retelling starring all characters of color. Zuri Benitez has pride. Brooklyn pride, family pride, and pride in her Afro-Latino roots. But pride might not be enough to save her rapidly gentrifying neighborhood from becoming unrecognizable.

SEVERANCE (2019) by Ling Ma

Ling Ma's post-apocalyptic book about a fictional pandemic eerily predicted many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originating in the global manufacturing center of Southeast China, the airborne virus "Shen Fever" quickly sweeps the world and turns people into zombies. Masks, social distancing—nothing helps, and there's no cure. A young Chinese American protagonist living in Manhattan is part of a tiny group seemingly immune to the virus.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE (2018) by Helen Keller

When she was 19 months old, Helen Keller (1880–1968) suffered a severe illness that left her blind and deaf. Not long after, she also became mute. Her tenacious struggle to overcome these handicaps—with the help of her inspired teacher, Anne Sullivan—is

one of the great stories of human courage and dedication. In this classic autobiography, first published in 1903, Miss Keller recounts the first 22 years of her life,

WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING (2018) by Delia Owens

The novel is a coming-of-age murder mystery by an American zoologist. It takes place in the 1950s and 60s in North Carolina, where an illiterate girl, Kya, grows up in the marshes, abandoned by her family and forced to survive on her own. The second timeline that intertwines with that of Kya's childhood follows an investigation into the apparent murder of Chase Andrews, a local celebrity. This beautifully captivating novel celebrates resilience and ingenuity in the face of all odds.