

SCRANTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL
FRESHMAN SUMMER READING LIST

2026

Coelho, Paulo *The Alchemist*

Steinbeck, John *Of Mice and Men*

Schoolwide Read:

McCullough, David *The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For*

Students will be assessed on the texts during the first quarter as outlined in more detail by their English and Social Studies teachers in September.

Copies of the summer reading selections will be available at Books-A-Million, Viewmont Mall in Scranton and Barnes and Noble, Arena Hub Plaza in Wilkes-Barre.

SCRANTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL
SOPHOMORE SUMMER READING LIST

2026

English II

Hemingway, Ernest

The Old Man and the Sea

Knowles, John

A Separate Peace

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

Honors English II

Hemingway, Ernest

The Old Man and the Sea

Knowles, John

A Separate Peace

Satrapı, Marjane

Persepolis (Part One): The Story of a Childhood.

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

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SCRANTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

JUNIOR SUMMER READING LIST

2026

English III

Orwell, George

1984

Wilde, Oscar

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

A.P. English Language and Composition

Gladwell, Malcolm

Outliers

McMahon, Sharon

The Small and the Mighty: Twelve Unsung Americans Who Changed the Course of History, from the Founding to the Civil Rights Movement

Noah, Trevor

Born a Crime: Scenes from a South African Childhood

Orwell, George

1984

Westover, Tara

Educated

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

Students will be assessed on the texts during the first quarter as outlined in more detail by their English teachers in September.

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SCRANTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

SENIOR SUMMER READING LIST

2026

English IV

Chopin, Kate *The Awakening*

Whithead, Colson *The Nickle Boys*

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

Honors English IV and AP Literature and Composition

Chopin, Kate *The Awakening*

Díaz, Junot *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Steinbeck, John *The Grapes of Wrath*

Vonnegut, Kurt *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Whithead, Colson *The Nickle Boys*

Schoolwide Read:
McCullough, David

The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For

Students will be assessed on the texts during the first quarter as outlined in more detail by their English teachers in September.

Copies of the summer reading selections will be available at Books-A-Million, Viewmont Mall in Scranton and Barnes and Noble, Arena Hub Plaza in Wilkes-Barre.

Scranton Preparatory School

2026 Summer School-wide Reading Book

On July 4, 2026, America will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In honor of America's 250th birthday, the Prep community will read David McCullough's *The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For*, ©2017.

The following questions are meant to help students focus on the most important themes, lessons, and big ideas from the book.

Guided Reading Questions from select speeches:

1. In his speech to the Joint Session of Congress in 1989, McCullough uses symbols such as Simon Willard's clock, and Clio, the muse of history. Explain how these symbols emphasize the importance of historical perspective.
2. In his Dickinson College speech, McCullough alludes to a quote from Dr. Benjamin Rush in 1786: "The American war [with Britain] is over, but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed." Reflect on the ways in which we are still living out the "American Revolution."
3. In his speech to the University of Massachusetts at Boston, McCullough alludes to various lessons of history. Choose one that resonates with you and reflect on the reasons why.
4. From his Dartmouth College speech in 1999, explain what McCullough means by the phrase, "What's essential is invisible." Which invisible presidential characteristic is most impressive to you?
5. In his speech at Ohio University in 2004, McCullough speaks of education as the "bulwark of freedom." Explain the role education plays in self-governance and the pursuit of happiness.
6. In his commencement speech at Boston College, McCullough reminds the graduates that, "Information is useful, and has value, but information isn't learning. Information isn't poetry, or art, or faith, or wisdom." What pitfalls exist in our modern information age? How can you as an individual, and we, as a society, navigate these pitfalls to ensure actual learning?

Reflection Questions on re-occurring themes and lessons found throughout the book:

1. A reoccurring theme in McCullough's speeches is that there is no such thing as a self-made man or woman. Explain his argument. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Another reoccurring theme is that history teaches us that character matters. McCullough agrees with the ancient Greeks that character is destiny. He also quotes Abigail Adams' advice to her eleven-year-old son (and future president), John Quincy Adams:

It is not in the still calm of life or the repose of a pacific station that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities which would otherwise lay dormant wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.

Evaluate the importance of character in shaping our history and our future as a country.

3. According to McCullough, what is gained from learning our nation's history? What are the risks of ignorance?
4. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence 250 years ago in Philadelphia. His most enduring line from the document, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," encapsulates the highest ideals of America. In what ways have we, as a country, lived up to Jefferson's words and in what ways have we failed?