

**LAGUNA BLANCA SCHOOL
SUMMER READING LIST 2026
FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9**

All Laguna Blanca students entering Grade 9 in the fall are required to read two books: *Cannery Row* and *The Hate U Give*. If students would like to read more than these two books, they are welcome to choose an additional summer reading book from the list below.

Because this summer reading will form the basis for class discussion and writing assignments during the first quarter, we ask that students highlight **one** passage (1-2 paragraphs max) **per chapter** in both required reading texts. The highlighted passage should be something that jumps out to you. Maybe it is something that feels important or causes you to question something about the story, or society in general.

Please note: Cannery Row and The Hate U Give should be a new book or a used book that has no marking in it at all.

REQUIRED SUMMER READING:

CANNERY ROW, John Steinbeck (1945) **ISBN: 978-0-14-200068-7**

Cannery Row focuses on the acceptance of life as it is: both the exuberance of community and the loneliness of the individual. Drawing on his memories of the real inhabitants of Monterey, California, including longtime friend Ed Ricketts, Steinbeck interweaves the stories of Doc, Dora, Mack and his boys, Lee Chong, and the other characters in this world where only the fittest survive, to create a novel that is at once one of his most humorous and poignant works.

We will use this text as a guide for our 9th grade fall trip to Monterey as we begin to examine how students fit into the social “tide-pool” that is high school and our community.

THE HATE U GIVE Angie Thomas (2017) **ISBN: 978-0-06-249853-3**

Here is the summary of the film adaptation, produced by Fox 2000 and released in October, 2018: Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter lives in two worlds. The first is Garden Heights – a predominantly black neighborhood where her family is ingrained in the community and her dad owns the corner store, but where drugs and gangs are a fact of life. The second is her Williamson life, as a scholarship student at an all-white school. While in her neighborhood one night, a white cop shoots and kills Starr’s childhood best friend at a random pull-over and Starr is the only witness. Suddenly, she finds herself in the middle of a national controversy. With the help of her family, she must find her voice in order for justice to be served.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL SUMMER READING:

SPEAK Laurie Halse Anderson (1999)

A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda’s freshman year in high school. (National Book Award 1999; Best Books for Young Adults 2000; Printz Honor Book 2000)

THE IMPOSSIBLE KNIFE OF MEMORY Laurie Halse Anderson (2014)

The daughter of a traumatized war veteran must care for her father and survive senior year.

THE POET X Elizabeth Acevedo (2020)

Fans of Jacqueline Woodson, Meg Medina, and Jason Reynolds will love this New York Times-bestselling novel-in-verse by an award-winning slam poet, about an Afro-Latina heroine who tells her story with blazing words and powerful truth. 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. (National Book Award for Young People's Literature, the Michael L. Printz Award, and the Pura Belpré Award)

YOU SHOULD SEE ME IN A CROWN Leah Johnson (2020)

Liz Lighty has always believed she's too Black, too poor, and too awkward to shine in her small, rich, prom-obsessed midwestern town. But it's okay -- Liz has a plan that will get her out of Campbell, Indiana, forever: attend the uber-elite Pennington College, play in their world-famous orchestra, and become a doctor. (Stonewall Honor Book)

THE NAZI HUNTERS: HOW A TEAM OF SPIES CAPTURED THE WORLD'S MOST NOTORIOUS NAZI Neal Bascomb (2013)

The winner of the 2014 YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults, this book offers students a thrilling spy mission, a moving Holocaust story, and a first-class work of narrative nonfiction.

A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIRS OF A BOY SOLDIER Ishmael Beah (2007)

Beah describes his experience as a child soldier from Sierra Leone, fleeing attacking rebels and wandering a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. Picked up by the government army by the age of thirteen, Beah learns that he is capable of committing truly terrible acts. Eventually released by the army and sent to a UNICEF rehabilitation center, he struggles to regain his humanity and to re-enter a world of civilians who view him with fear and suspicion. (Best Books for Young Adults 2008)

COMPLICATIONS: A SURGEON'S NOTES ON AN IMPERFECT SCIENCE Atul Gawande (2002) In the collection of 14 pieces, some of which were originally published in *The New Yorker* and *Slate*, Gawande uses real-life scenarios – a burned-out doctor who refuses to quit; a terminal patient who opts for risky surgery, with fatal results – to explore the larger ethical issues that underlie medicine. He asks: How much input should a patient have? How can young doctors gain hands-on experience without endangering lives? And how responsible are these doctors for their mistakes?

WATER FOR ELEPHANTS Sara Gruen (2006)

Jacob Jankowski, finding himself parentless and penniless, joins the circus where he meets the freaks, drifters, and misfits who populate his world. Here he meets up with Rosie, the seemingly untrainable elephant he comes to care for.

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME Mark Haddon (2003)

Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically gifted, autistic fifteen-year-old boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret information about his mother. (Best Books for Young Adults 2004; Alex Award 2004)

THE BEAN TREES Barbara Kingsolver (1988)

On her way across the country, independent Taylor Greer is given an orphaned Cherokee girl to raise as her own.

THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES Sue Monk Kidd (2002)

Desperate to escape her cruel father, fourteen-year-old Lily Owen breaks her housekeeper Rosaleen out of jail and searches for answers about her mother's life and death. She follows the only clue she has, an unusual label off a honey jar, to find sanctuary and a true sense of family with a trio of eccentric beekeeping sisters.

SOLD Patricia McCormick (2006)

When she is tricked by her stepfather and sold into prostitution, thirteen-year-old Lakshmi becomes submerged in a nightmare in which her only comfort is the friendship she forms with the other girls. These friendships help her to survive and eventually escape. (National Book Award Finalist 2006; Quill Award 2007; California Young Reader Medal 2008)

TOUCHING SPIRIT BEAR Ben Mikaelson (2001)

After his anger erupts into violence, Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the Native American tradition of Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life. (Best Books for Young Adults 2002; California Young Reader Medal 2003)

SUNRISE OVER FALLUJAH Walter Dean Myers (2008)

Robin Perry, who is from Harlem, serves in Iraq in 2003 as a member of the Civil Affairs Battalion, and his time there profoundly changes him.

A FAREWELL TO ARMS Ernest Hemingway (1929)

This is a war story and a love story, all rolled into one. Set in Italy in the last years of WWI, this modernist novel is considered by some critics to be the greatest war novel of all time.

FAHRENHEIT 451 Ray Bradbury (1953)

Bradbury's pulse-pounding dystopian science fiction classic is as poignant today as it was upon its release. Crafting a world of oppression that holds up a stark mirror to modern censorship, *Fahrenheit* succeeds in being a timeless outcry against governmental hypocrisy in the burgeoning digital era.

ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL Jesse Andrews (2012)

This is the funniest book about death that you will ever read.

THE BROKEN EARTH N. K. Jemisin (2015) (or any book in this trilogy)

At the end of the world, a woman must hide her secret power and find her kidnapped daughter in this "intricate and extraordinary" award-winning novel of power, oppression, and revolution. Science Fiction (Hugo Award 2016)

SEEDFOLKS Paul Fleischman (1997)

This Newbery Medal-winning collection tells thirteen stories from diverse perspectives—young and old, immigrant and native, haunted and hopeful. A fractured neighborhood unites with just a few seeds, turning a drab empty lot in Cleveland into a beautiful green garden.

AMERICAN GODS Neil Gaiman (2001)

Beautifully written contemplation on belief and loss of identity in post-9/11 American society and the idea of the decline of values and morality. Also darkly hilarious and a wildly entertaining read.

EVERYTHING LEADS TO YOU Nina LaCour (2014)

When Emi Price, a talented young set designer already beginning to thrive in the LA film scene, finds a mysterious letter at an estate sale, it sends her chasing down the loose ends of a movie icon's hidden life.

THE INVENTION OF WINGS Sue Monk Kidd (2014)

A fictional novel loosely based on the life of famed abolitionist Sarah Grimke and what led her to become an anti-slavery warrior at a time when women were expected to be satisfied solely in the role of housewife. The book follows Sarah's friendship and conflicts with former family slave Handful over a thirty-five year period.

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS Agatha Christie (1934)

One halted train, one frightening blizzard, one murder, and twelve suspects. In this Hercule Poirot murder mystery taking place on the Orient Express' trip from Istanbul to London, the famous detective must decipher evidence from distraction. He finds himself caught up in an old family affair regarding a murdered child, and he must figure out who is telling the truth, and who is covering up somebody else's bloody mess