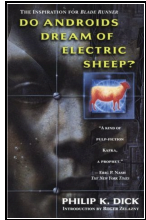


2026 English Summer Reading Guide:
AP Literature & Composition

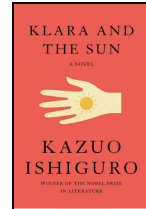
The Books: Choose **ONE pair** from the choices below. **THIS MEANS YOU READ BOTH BOOKS.** Each pair presents a classic text with a modern pairing of equal or surpassing literary merit. Obtain **physical copies** of the books that you will bring to class. (Ebooks are only allowed for specific ebook accommodations.) **Please read the classic first and the modern pairing next. Follow the instructions at the end of this guide for annotating.** You will write about both books in class during the first week of school.

Pairing #1 Ghosts in the Machine

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick



Klara and the Sun By Kazuo Ishiguro



READ FIRST

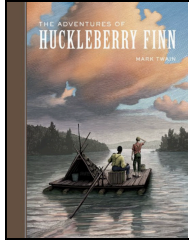
In Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, set in a post-apocalyptic future, Earth has been ravaged by nuclear war, leading many humans to emigrate to off-world colonies. The story follows Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter tasked with "retiring" rogue androids who illegally disguise themselves as humans. These androids are nearly indistinguishable from humans and are primarily identified through a test that measures empathetic response, a quality believed to distinguish humans from androids. As Deckard tracks down and confronts these sophisticated machines, he grapples with profound ethical dilemmas, questioning the nature of humanity, empathy, and the moral implications of his work. The novel explores themes of identity and consciousness and critiques societal norms and the essence of what it means to be human in a technologically advanced world.

READ SECOND

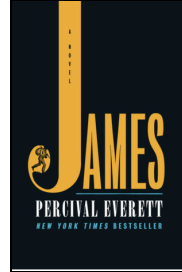
Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro introduces us to Klara, an Artificial Friend (AF) with outstanding observational capabilities, designed to be a companion to children. Set in a dystopian future where societal roles are determined by genetic editing and artificial intelligence is woven into daily life, the novel unfolds through Klara's perspective as she waits in a store to be chosen by a customer. Klara's journey begins when she is purchased to serve as a friend to Josie, a sickly child with a mysterious illness linked to genetic "lifting." As Klara learns about human emotions, relationships, and the complex world around her, she becomes increasingly determined to find a way to save Josie. Throughout the story, Ishiguro explores themes of love, sacrifice, and the moral implications of technology, prompting readers to ponder what it means to love and to be loved, and whether artificial beings can truly understand or possess these quintessentially human experiences.

Pairing #2 Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?

[*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*](#) by Mark Twain



[*James*](#) by Percival Everett



READ FIRST

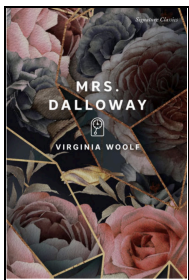
In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, we follow Huck Finn as he flees from his abusive father and embarks on a journey down the Mississippi River. Accompanied by Jim, an escaped slave seeking freedom, Huck's voyage becomes a profound exploration of moral dilemmas and social injustices. Through various encounters with a cast of characters, from feuding families to con artists, Huck grapples with his own conscience and societal norms that dictate racial prejudices. This seminal work of American literature challenges the reader to consider questions of right, wrong, and what it means to be free, all set against the backdrop of the pre-Civil War South. *Note to readers: *Huckleberry Finn* was written in 1885 and uses the vocabulary of the time period, including racially offensive language.

READ SECOND

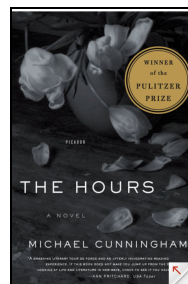
James by Percival Everett retells Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from Jim's perspective. Jim becomes a runaway slave after he hears that he's going to be sold by his owner, Miss Watson, and separated from his family. He escapes to a nearby island, but he's very quickly joined by a local boy, Huckleberry "Huck" Finn, who has faked his death in hopes of getting away from his abusive father. The chain of events sets Jim and Huck off on an adventure down the Mississippi River, resulting in various colorful, dangerous, and at times tragic encounters as they make their way down the river. Meanwhile, Jim has his own goals of finding a way to free his wife and daughter. He also has to keep himself and Huck alive in the process, as well as to preserve his dignity and reclaim his identity. *Note - this novel also contains the language of the late 1800s, and students should be aware that choosing this book will require them to engage and grapple with it.

Pairing #3 A Day in Two Worlds

[*Mrs. Dalloway*](#) by Virginia Woolf



[*The Hours*](#) by Michael Cunningham



READ FIRST

READ SECOND

In the wake of World War I and the 1918 flu pandemic, Clarissa Dalloway, elegant and vivacious, is preparing for a party and remembering those she once loved. In another part of London, Septimus Smith is suffering from shell shock and is on the brink of madness. Their days interweave and their lives converge as the party reaches its glittering climax.

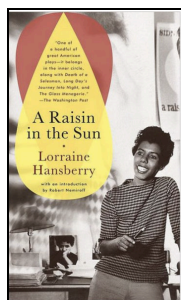
Over the course of a single day, from first light to the dark of night, Woolf achieves an uncanny simulacrum of consciousness, bringing past, present, and future together, and recording, impression by impression, minute by minute, the feel of life itself.

In *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham, widely praised as one of the most gifted writers of his generation, draws inventively on the life and work of Virginia Woolf to tell the story of a group of contemporary characters struggling with the conflicting claims of love and inheritance, hope and despair. The narrative of Woolf's last days before her suicide early in World War II counterpoints the fictional stories of Samuel, a famous poet whose life has been shadowed by his talented and troubled mother, and his lifelong friend Clarissa, who strives to forge a balanced and rewarding life in spite of the demands of friends, lovers, and family.

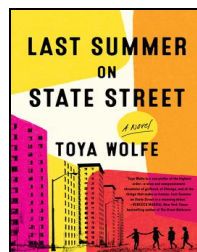
Pairing #4** A lovely so real: literature of Chicago neighborhoods

****Students who took English 3 must pick a different pairing.**

[A Raisin in the Sun](#) by Lorraine Hansberry



[Last Summer on State Street](#) by Toya Wolfe



READ FIRST

Every so often a single story changes everything. *A Raisin in the Sun* is one such story. Steeped in themes of dreams new and old, the ongoing effects of racism, and the things that divide us, it's never a bad time to read the timeless classic that continues to speak to the way the world works.

Lorraine Hansberry's award-winning drama about the hopes and aspirations of a struggling, working-class family living on the South Side of Chicago connected profoundly with the psyche of Black America—and changed American theater forever. The play's title comes from a line in Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem," which warns that a dream deferred might "dry up/like a raisin in the sun."

READ SECOND

Felicia "Fe Fe" Stevens lives with her vigilantly loving mother and older teenage brother, whom she adores, in building 4950 of Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes. It's the summer of 1999, and her high-rise is next in line to be torn down by the Chicago Housing Authority. She, with the devout Precious Brown and Stacia Buchanan, daughter of a Gangster Disciple Queen-Pin, form a tentative trio and, for a brief moment, carve out for themselves a simple life of Double Dutch and innocence. But when Fe Fe welcomes a mysterious new friend, Tonya, into their fold, the dynamics shift, upending the lives of all four girls.

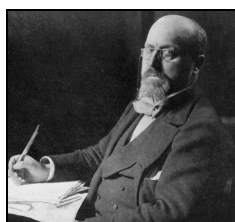
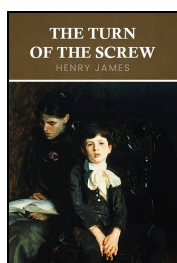
As their beloved neighborhood falls down, so do their friendships and the structures of the four girls' families. Fe Fe must make the painful decision of whom she can trust and whom she must let go. Decades later, as she remembers that fateful summer—just before her home was demolished, her life uprooted, and community forever changed—Fe Fe

tries to make sense of the grief and fraught bonds that still haunt her and attempts to reclaim the love that never left.

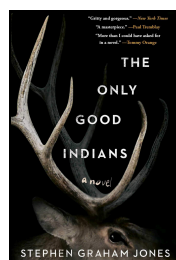
Profound, reverent, and uplifting, *Last Summer on State Street* explores the risk of connection against the backdrop of racist institutions, the restorative power of knowing and claiming one's own past, and those defining relationships which form the heartbeat of our lives. Interweaving moments of reckoning and sustaining grace, debut author Toya Wolfe has crafted an era-defining story of finding a home—both in one's history and in one's self.

Pairing #5 Ghosts and Supernatural Imaginings

[*The Turn of the Screw*](#) by Henry James



[*The Only Good Indians*](#) by Stephen Graham Jones



READ FIRST

By the comforts of a blazing fireplace on a cold Christmas Eve night, guests at a holiday party share stories of phantoms and ghosts of Christmases past. Yet one guest delivers a tale of sheer fright for which no one listening was prepared. As the story goes, after losing both parents, a young boy and girl move into a large wooded estate to be held under the care of their uncle. Wanting nothing to do with raising the children, the uncle hires a young governess to attend to their care. Yet the governess never could have anticipated the horrors that awaited her discovery. When it becomes evident that the children have some supernatural connection with a deceased former governess and her lover, the young governess finds herself scrambling to regain control of two children slipping away from her grasp. This classic horror tale is now a hit Hollywood movie called *The Turning*, starring Finn Wolfhard from *Stranger Things*.

READ SECOND

From *New York Times* bestselling author Stephen Graham Jones comes a novel that is equal parts psychological horror and cutting social commentary on identity politics and the American Indian experience. Fans of Jordan Peele and Tommy Orange will love this story as it follows the lives of four American Indian men and their families, all haunted by a disturbing, deadly event that took place in their youth. Years later, they find themselves tracked by an entity bent on revenge, helpless as the culture and traditions they left behind catch up to them violently and vengefully.

Reading Carefully and Tracking Your Thinking:

While reading, notice and track ideas based on the guidance below. **Annotate in your books** so you can find your thoughts quickly when you discuss and write about the book in the first week of class.

Assessment:

During the first week of class, you will be required to write an in-class essay in AP Classroom discussing literary elements in both of your paired novels. To that end, here are some suggested things to look for as you annotate:

- **Character:** How is each character characterized? What seems to motivate each character? What conflicts must each character face? How do they respond to their conflicts? How do they interact with their environment(s)? What are their relationships to one another? How do their worldviews differ? How do characters shift and develop from start to finish? Do any stay the same?
- **Setting:** What are the main settings throughout the book? What are the physical, geographical, and social details of each setting? What values and ideas are represented by each setting? What is the mood of each setting? How do the settings influence the characters? How do the settings relate to the conflicts in the book? What role do the settings play in the book?
- **Plot Structure:** What are the story's main events, and what order are they told in? How does each part relate to the other parts and the whole? When does the conflict occur? Is there any resolution? How does the plot's structure influence our story experience and view of the characters? How does the novel begin, and how does it end? Is there a relationship between the two? What is the relationship between the ending and the rest of the story?
- **Narration:** Who is the narrator? Does the narrator change? How does the narrator's identity impact the way the story is told? What point of view is the story told in? How does the narration influence our perspective on each character or how the events unfold? What is emphasized and what is left out?
- **Symbolism:** Are there any people, places, events, objects, or details that seem to hold a larger, figurative meaning beyond their literal details? What ideas do these symbols represent? What role do they play in the story?
- **Patterns and Developments:** What do you notice building, repeating, shifting, or changing over the course of the novel?
- **Topics and Themes:** What abstract ideas does this book deal with? What is the author trying to express, question, explore, or communicate, based on the literary elements and developments in the book? What does this book reveal about some aspect of human experience?

A note about originality: AP Literature students are encouraged to develop their own critical thinking, analytical writing, and close reading skills, which are essential for success in the course and on the AP exam. Just like a runner needs to train their own muscles instead of relying on a motorized bike, students grow by doing the hard work themselves, deeply engaging with the text and forming their own ideas. That's why we don't allow AI or internet analysis (LitCharts, Schmoop, etc.) at any point in the course, including summer reading. Using AI or any outside sources as a substitute for original thinking will result in a zero and academic integrity penalty in line with our school policies.

NEED HELP?

If you are a transfer student or you are any student with a question you can't figure out yourself, email either Mrs. Galvez (lgalvez@depaulprep.org) or the teacher listed on your schedule.