

2026 Grade 11 American Literature Summer Reading Assignment

Instructions: All students entering Grade 11 must complete summer reading. Choose one book from the list below.

CP Students: For the selected text, identify a major theme (such as the American Dream, identity, freedom, adversity, empowerment) and record a **minimum of four** important quotes related to the theme. In the first week of school, you will be assessed on the merit of your quotes and on your ability to understand and write about their literary significance in the text.

Honors students: Honors students must complete the required reading assignment for CP and also read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Identify a major theme in *The Great Gatsby* and record a minimum of four important quotes that span throughout the novel and relate to the theme. For each quote, write a 50 – 100-word explanation as to why this passage is important and how it relates to the theme you chose. This assignment must be typed and will be due the first week of school.

Summer Reading - Multilingual Students

We want to ensure that all of you, especially our newcomer and multilingual students, feel included in our summer reading experience. This summer, you have three options for selecting a text:

Honors Level:

1. You must read the book, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. You may read the translated version of this text or the English version. Please see the assignment requirements above.

For the second text selection:

2. Read any book in your home language that aligns with grade-level appropriate content and text complexity. If you choose this option, make sure the text aligns with the appropriate grade level complexity and that it conforms to the assignment requirements.
3. Read the translated version of any book from the list that follows.

CP Level

1. Read any book in your home language that aligns with grade-level appropriate content and text complexity. If you choose this option, make sure the text aligns with the appropriate grade level complexity and that it conforms to the assignment requirements.
2. Read the translated version of any book from the list that follows.

Whether you are reading in your first language or a new one, the goal is to enjoy reading and expand your learning in a way that is comfortable and meaningful to you.

List of Contemporary Books

*All students entering 11th grade will choose a book from this list unless otherwise noted above for multilingual learners

**** As this is a list aimed at high school level students, some of the books address mature ideas and issues. Please preview the books before making your selections so that you are not surprised by the content.**

Author	Title	<u>Synopsis</u>
David Schepp	<i>Beautiful Boy</i>	What had happened to my beautiful boy? To our family? What did I do wrong? Those are the wrenching questions that haunted every moment of David Sheff's journey through his son Nic's addiction to drugs and tentative steps toward recovery. Before Nic Sheff became addicted to crystal meth, he was a charming boy, joyous and funny, a varsity athlete and honor student adored by his two younger siblings. After meth, he was a trembling wraith who lied, stole, and lived on the streets. (Goodreads)
Tara Westover	<i>Educated</i>	Tara Westover was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, she prepared for the end of the world by stockpiling home-canned peaches and sleeping with her "head-for-the-hills bag". In the summer she stewed herbs for her mother, a midwife and healer, and in the winter she salvaged in her father's junkyard. Her father forbade hospitals, so Tara never saw a doctor or nurse. Gashes and concussions, even burns from explosions, were all treated at home with herbalism. The family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. <i>Educated</i> is an account of the struggle for self-invention. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty and of the grief that comes with severing the closest of ties. With the acute insight that distinguishes all great writers, Westover has crafted a universal coming-of-age story that gets to the heart of what an education is and what it offers: the perspective to

		see one's life through new eyes and the will to change it. (Goodreads)
Delia Owens	<i>Where the Crawdads Sing</i>	For years, rumors of the “Marsh Girl” have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life—until the unthinkable happens. <i>Where the Crawdads Sing</i> is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps. (Goodreads)
Hillary Jordan	<i>Mudbound</i>	It is 1946, and city-bred Laura McAllan is trying to raise her children on her husband's Mississippi Delta farm - a place she finds foreign and frightening. In the midst of the family's struggles, two young men return from the war to work the land. Jamie McAllan, Laura's brother-in-law, is everything her husband is not - charming, handsome, and haunted by his memories of combat. Ronsel Jackson, eldest son of the black sharecroppers who live on the McAllan farm, has come home with the shine of a war hero. It is the unlikely friendship of these brothers-in-arms that drives this powerful novel to its inexorable conclusion. (Goodreads)
Britt Bennett	<i>The Vanishing Half</i>	The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical. But after growing up together in a small, Southern Black community and running away at age 16, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different as adults, it's everything: their families, their communities, their racial identities. Many years later, one sister lives with her Black daughter in the same Southern town she once tried to escape. The

		other secretly passes for White, and her White husband knows nothing of her past. Still, even separated by so many miles and just as many lies, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen to the next generation, when their own daughters' storylines intersect? Weaving together multiple strands and generations of this family, from the Deep South to California, from the 1950s to the 1990s, Brit Bennett produces a story that is at once a riveting, emotional family story and a brilliant exploration of the American history of passing. Looking well beyond issues of race, <i>The Vanishing Half</i> considers the lasting influence of the past as it shapes a person's decisions, desires, and expectations, and explores some of the multiple reasons and realms in which people sometimes feel pulled to live as something other than their origins. (Goodreads)
Rebecca Skloot	<i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i>	Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her enslaved ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they’d weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb’s effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave. Now Rebecca Skloot takes us on an extraordinary journey, from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to stark white laboratories with freezers full of HeLa cells; from Henrietta’s

		small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia — a land of wooden quarters for enslaved people, faith healings, and voodoo — to East Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells. Henrietta’s family did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research without informed consent. And though the cells had launched a multimillion-dollar industry that sells human biological materials, her family never saw any of the profits. As Rebecca Skloot so brilliantly shows, the story of the Lacks family — past and present — is inextricably connected to the history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of. Over the decade it took to uncover this story, Rebecca became enmeshed in the lives of the Lacks family—especially Henrietta’s daughter Deborah, who was devastated to learn about her mother’s cells. She was consumed with questions: Had scientists cloned her mother? Did it hurt her when researchers infected her cells with viruses and shot them into space? What happened to her sister, Elsie, who died in a mental institution at the age of fifteen? And if her mother was so important to medicine, why couldn’t her children afford health insurance? Intimate in feeling, astonishing in scope, and impossible to put down, <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> captures the beauty and drama of scientific discovery, as well as its human consequences. (Goodreads)
K.J. Reilly	<i>Four for the Road</i>	Asher Hunting wants revenge. Specifically, he wants revenge on the drunk driver who killed his mom and got off on a technicality. No one seems to think this is healthy, though, which is how he ends up in a bereavement group (well, bereavement groups. He goes to several.) There he makes some unexpected friends: There’s Sloane, who lost her

		dad to cancer; Will, who lost his little brother to a different kind of cancer; and eighty-year-old Henry, who was married to his wife for fifty years until she decided to die on her own terms. And it's these three who Asher invites on a road trip from New Jersey to Graceland. Asher doesn't tell them that he's planning to steal his dad's car, or the real reason that he wants to go to Tennessee (spoiler alert: it's revenge)—but then again, the others don't share their reasons for going, either. (Goodreads)
Jas Hammonds	<i>We Deserve Monuments</i>	Family secrets, a swoon-worthy romance, and a slow-burn mystery collide in <i>We Deserve Monuments</i>, a YA debut from Jas Hammonds that explores how racial violence can ripple down through generations. Seventeen-year-old Avery Anderson is convinced her senior year is ruined when she's uprooted from her life in DC and forced into the hostile home of her terminally ill grandmother, Mama Letty. The tension between Avery's mom and Mama Letty makes for a frosty arrival and unearths past drama they refuse to talk about. Every time Avery tries to look deeper, she's turned away, leaving her desperate to learn the secrets that split her family in two. While tempers flare in her avoidant family, Avery finds friendship in unexpected places: in Simone Cole, her captivating next-door neighbor, and Jade Oliver, daughter of the town's most prominent family—whose mother's murder remains unsolved. As the three girls grow closer—Avery and Simone's friendship blossoming into romance—the sharp-edged opinions of their small southern town begin to hint at something insidious underneath. The racist history of Bardell, Georgia is rooted in Avery's family in ways she can't even imagine. With Mama Letty's health dwindling every day, Avery must decide if digging for the truth is worth toppling the delicate relationships she's built in Bardell—or if some things are better left buried. What's more important: Knowing the truth or keeping the peace? (Goodreads)

Karen McManus	<i>One of Us Is Lying</i>	On Monday afternoon, five students at Bayview High walk into detention. Bronwyn, the brain, is Yale-bound and never breaks a rule. Addy, the beauty, is the picture-perfect homecoming princess. Nate, the criminal, is already on probation for dealing. Cooper, the athlete, is the all-star baseball pitcher. And Simon, the outcast, is the creator of Bayview High's notorious gossip app. Only, Simon never makes it out of that classroom. Before the end of detention Simon's dead. And according to investigators, his death wasn't an accident. On Monday, he died. But on Tuesday, he'd planned to post juicy reveals about all four of his high-profile classmates, which makes all four of them suspects in his murder. Or are they the perfect patsies for a killer who's still on the loose? (Goodreads)
John Corey Whaley (YA Novel/ dealing with mental illness)	<i>Highly Illogical Behavior</i>	Sixteen-year-old Solomon has agoraphobia. He hasn't left his house in three years. Ambitious Lisa is desperate to get into a top-tier psychology program. And so when Lisa learns about Solomon, she decides to befriend him, cure him, and then write about it for her college application. To earn Solomon's trust, she introduces him to her boyfriend Clark, and starts to reveal her own secrets. But what started as an experiment leads to a real friendship, with all three growing close. But when the truth comes out, what erupts could destroy them all. Funny and heartwarming, <i>Highly Illogical Behavior</i> is a fascinating exploration of what makes us tick, and how the connections between us may be the most important things of all. (Goodreads)