ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENT INDEPENDENT READING LIST

Please find below some suggestions for reading over the summer and beyond. These titles and descriptions have been assembled to assist students in selecting some interesting and pertinent reading for the summer but also to act as a reference during the next school year.

We know that independent reading leads to academic achievement for adolescent students. Research tells us it improves their writing skills, increases their reading comprehension, builds their vocabulary and raises their scores on achievement tests. Beyond these benefits, independent reading opens new vistas to adolescents, helping them to understand themselves, their world and other people. Besides, reading can provide hours of pleasure.

We’d like our students to fall in love with reading this summer, and ask your help. We have compiled the list below and some instructions to help you get started.

How to use this list

A general word This list has been compiled with a view to accommodating a range of reading tastes and abilities. Within some categories, titles in the latter part of the list are more challenging or contain more mature content than those at the beginning. Parents are encouraged to do further research if they are unsure about a given book for their child. We ask students to refrain from reading works that are on class lists (clearly indicated on the list), so as not to spoil their enjoyment and sense of discovery in class.

Specifics Please help your children to:

1. Choose two to three of the books on this list that appeal to them.
2. Try a title from two or more genres/categories.

And when the summer is finished, please encourage your children to keep a book of their choosing on the bedside table throughout the year!

We hope our students will find titles here that give them pleasure and hold more than transitory interest – even without us teachers standing by.

Happy reading!

The English Department
Modern/Contemporary

The Go-Between, by L.P. Hartley
Love story.

A Separate Peace, by John Knowles
War, peace and the friendship formed between teen-aged boys at a prep school the summer before the Second World War. Often taught in high schools.

The House on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros
Very accessible series of short stories that tell the story a girl growing up in a Mexican American barrio.

Lord of the Flies, by William Golding
A group of young boys find themselves stranded and alone on an island. The story plots their attempts to establish order, and the disorder that follows. (On the Grade 9 book list. Read only if you are in IGCSE rather than Grade 9.)

The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd
A motherless 14-year-old girl in the 1960s is taken in by a strong and eccentric new family. A modern best-seller.

The Bean Trees, by Barbara Kingsolver
A modern best seller. The adventures of a resourceful young single woman who finds herself the guardian of an abandoned baby girl.

Birdsong, by Sebastian Faulks
Love story set during the First World War.

Ceremony, by Leslie Marmon Silko
A young Native American returns to his reservation after having been held as a prisoner in the Second World War. His search for identity and resolution lead him to seek out the ancient traditions and stories of his people.

Cry, the Beloved Country, by Alan Paton
Classic story set in apartheid South Africa.

A Prayer for Owen Meany, by John Irving
A modern best-seller. The story of a young boy who finds his destiny.

The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini

Going After Cacciato, by Tim O'Brien
A private in the American army decides to flee the Vietnam War and make his way to Paris. Winner of the National Book Award, this novel examines both fear and heroism. (O'Brien’s The Things They Carried is studied in Gr. 11.)

The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger
The novel that defined many generations of young Americans who were trying to make sense of the world around them. Impossible not to like.

Obasan, by Joy Kogawa
The story of a Nisei, the child of Japanese immigrants, in Canada during the Second World War.

Snow Falling on Cedars, by David Guterson
Both love story and a murder mystery. Takes place in a fishing community on an island off of the west coast of North America in the 1950s. Contemporary best-seller.

The Namesake, by Jhumpa Lahiri
A young Bengali couple immigrate to the United States and find themselves caught between two cultures. Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

All Quiet on the Western Front, by Erich Maria Remarque
The moving story of a German schoolboy-turned-soldier in the trenches during the First World War.

Novels – classic

The Red Badge of Courage, by Stephen Crane
A farm boy goes off to fight in the American Civil War dreaming of glory, but finds something quite different.

Oliver Twist, by Charles Dickens
Classic tale of an orphan who runs away to London and meets up with a band of youthful pickpockets. Dickens’s stories are beloved for their colourful characters and event-filled plots.

Wuthering Heights, by Emily Brontë
This novel was on the IGCSE curriculum for the past three years. The story of the doomed love affair between Cathy and Heathcliff has recently been made into a film – the 10th version thus far!

The Good Earth, by Pearl S. Buck
The Nobel Prize-winning author’s saga of family life in a Chinese village.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens
Dickens is many people’s favourite novelist. His vividly drawn characters are unforgettable, and his plots have many twists and turns. He was a national institution in the 19th century and continues to be so today.

Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain
An American classic about a boy and a runaway slave who flee their troubles and learn important lessons while floating down the Mississippi on a raft and finding adventure.

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë
A classic 19th-century author whose story of a poor governess who falls in love with her mysterious employer is full of mystery and horror.

Emma, by Jane Austen
A less-than-perfect but winning heroine in this early 19th-century novel filled with the ironic humour that has made Austen a perennially beloved author, and her works the subject of cinematic re-makes every few years. (Austen’s Pride and Prejudice is taught in AP English Literature.)

Biography

Diary of a Young Girl, by Anne Frank
Anne Frank hid with her family from the Nazis during the Second World War and during this time wrote a diary. She was captured and killed in a gas chamber, but her diary remains a beautiful testament to her humanity.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou
The autobiography of a black American woman who lives through exceptionally difficult times in her childhood. She is now a well-known writer.

Long Walk to Freedom, by Nelson Mandela
The autobiography of the former South African President.

Night, by Elie Wiesel
The experiences of Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, professor and activist, in a concentration camp during the Second World War.

Roots, by Alex Haley
Seeking his own family origins, the author traces his ancestry back six generations to a young man torn from his homeland and brought to the slave markets of the New World.
**Adventure**

**Treasure Island** or **Kidnapped, by Robert Louis Stevenson**  
Classic adventure stories of interest particularly to people who do not have a habit of reading.  
*(Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde on the reading lists for Grade 10 Honours and IGCSE English.)*

**Touching the Void, by Joe Simpson**  
A classic of mountaineering, this is a tale of courage and of psychological and physical stamina.

**Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage, by Alfred Lansing**  
The story of the explorer’s extraordinary survival in his attempt to cross the Antarctic overland.

**Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster, by Jon Krakauer**  
A first hand story of a disastrous attempt to climb the mountain.

**The Perfect Storm, A True Story of Men Against the Sea, by Sebastian Yunger**  
The title says it all.

**My Family and Other Animals, by Gerald Durrell**  
The adventures of his family on an extended visit to Corfu. Funny.

**Science fiction / Fantasy**

**The Martian Chronicles, by Ray Bradbury**  
A struggle between Earth people and Martians and an enchanted, dreamlike setting. Especially appropriate for the early years of high school.

**The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, by Douglas Adams**  
Funny and clever.

**The Day of the Triffids, by John Wyndham**  
The world is overwhelmed by monstrous plants.

**Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury**  
The nightmare world of the future where books are banned. *(Taught in IB English B.)*

**The Time Machine, by H.G. Wells**  
The title of this classic of the science fiction genre is self-explanatory.

**History/ Historical fiction**

**Nicholas and Alexandra (history), by Robert Massie**  
A Pulitzer Prize-winning author’s riveting account of the last czar and his family evokes a fascinating historical period. *(An excerpt of this biography is found in the IGCSE grade 10 language book.)*

**The Guns of August (history), by Barbara Tuchman**  
The Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian narrates the dramatic events that led up to the First World War, and portrays the people involved.

**Wild Swans, by Jung Chang**  
Compelling story of three generations of women in China – before, during and post revolution. Quite long but interesting for people who like history.

**Sarum, by Edward Rutherfurd**  
A compelling and highly readable story of the history of England from the Stone Age to the 1980’s told through the events of the town of Salisbury.