

11th Grade AP Summer Reading List (AP Language and Composition) 2008

All students entering 11th Grade Advanced Placement Language and Composition must read *two* books. All students must read the first text listed below *and* select one additional text from the **Choices** list.

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius by Dave Eggers (Memoir) - The book claims to be a “memoir” in which “many parts have been fictionalized.” What we can say for certain is that it contains a powerful and poignant story. Dave, just out of college, becomes the caretaker of his 8-year-old brother when both parents die within five months of each other. Suddenly, he is attending parent/teacher conferences and little league. This book contains some strong language but sophisticated readers will also encounter authentic emotion, irony, and exquisite prose.

CHOICES: Students are required to select a second text from the list below:

Guns, Germs, and Steel by Jared Diamond (Non-fiction) This Pulitzer Prize winning book explores some of the great forces that shaped human history over the last 10,000 years. It gives a foundation for understanding history by arguing that the rise of civilization is linked to biological diversity and the evolution of technologies.

The Fixer by Bernard Malamud (Fiction) This 1966 novel is based on a true story about a man in Czarist Russia who is accused of ritually murdering a young boy. Because he is Jewish, he is arrested and imprisoned without an indictment.

March by Geraldine Brooks (Fiction) – Although Alcott’s Little Women stay home in Concord, Massachusetts during the Civil War, Mr. March, their minister father, becomes a chaplain for the Union army. This powerful novel recounts his experiences with the horrors of both slavery and war, chronicling the physical and moral toll wreaked by that terrible conflict.

The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver (Fiction) – When missionary Nathan Price sets off for a remote village in the Congo with his wife and four daughters, hopes are high. However, the realities of life in the jungle, the threat of war and natural disaster, and Nathan’s stubborn personality soon dispel everyone’s illusions and result in consequences reaching far into the future for all.

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Neuromancer by William Gibson (Fiction) – Often referred to as the first novel of the cyberpunk generation, this is the story of Case, a computer cowboy who sells his skills in a high-tech underworld. He becomes involved in a shadowy conspiracy of murder and mystery as he propels his consciousness through cyberspace.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan (Nonfiction) – Follow Pollan as he illustrates a history of corn, analyzes the frozen food aisle of Whole Foods, and studies the properties of a Chicken McNugget. There are many eye-openers in the book, one of which is the prevalence of corn in the American diet; of the 45,000 items in a supermarket, more than a quarter contain corn. Pollan looks at how the food industry has exploited the corn plant, to the detriment of growers and consumers alike.

Northanger Abby by Jane Austen (Fiction) - While spending a few weeks in Bath with a family friend, seventeen year old Catherine Morland meets and falls in love with Henry Tilney, who invites her to visit his family estate, Northanger Abbey. Once there, Catherine, a great reader of Gothic thrillers, lets the shadowy atmosphere of the old mansion fill her mind with terrible suspicions.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert M. Pirsig (Fiction) - Set as a story of a cross-country trip on a motorcycle by a father and son, it is also a journey through 2,000 years of Western philosophy. Pirsig allows readers to meditate on the seemingly simple, but infinitely complex question: How can one distinguish "good" from "bad?" Throughout the father-son journey, the concepts of truth, value, and quality are examined and reexamined.