

## Summer Reading and Assignments for AP English

The following books are what we will be covering in AP next year. The first list is the mandatory summer reading assignments. The second list is made up of the books that we will read in class next year. This may be especially helpful for those students who are also taking AP History next year. The third list is made up of books that appear most often on the AP test. Don't be overwhelmed by these lists. The only mandatory readings are the highlighted works.

### LIST 1: SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENTS

#### **The Catcher in the Rye – J.D. Salinger**

The hero-narrator of THE CATCHER IN THE RYE is an ancient child of sixteen, a native New Yorker named Holden Caulfield. Through circumstances that tend to preclude adult, secondhand description, he leaves his prep school in Pennsylvania and goes underground in New York City for three days. The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say about Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it. There are many voices in this novel: children's voices, adult voices, underground voices—but Holden's voice is the most eloquent of all. Transcending his own vernacular, yet remaining marvelously faithful to it, he issues a perfectly articulated cry of mixed pain and pleasure. However, like most lovers and clowns and poets of the higher orders, he keeps most of the pain to, and for, himself. The pleasure he gives away, or sets aside, with all his heart. It is there for the reader who can handle it to keep.

Once finished with the novel, students will complete a character analysis of Holden Caulfield which should be 2-3 pages and contain evidence from the text.

#### **The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini**

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history, *The Kite Runner* transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

Craft a 2-3-page paper which explores the way in which courage is portrayed in the novel. What constitutes true bravery? What are the key moments when characters are brave and who is the bravest character, if any? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.

#### **No Country for Old Men – Cormac McCarthy**

Cormac McCarthy returns to the Texas-Mexico border, setting of his famed *Border Trilogy*. The time is our own, when rustlers have given way to drug-runners and small towns have become free-fire zones. One day, a good old boy named Llewellyn Moss finds a pickup truck surrounded by a bodyguard of dead men. A load of heroin and two million dollars in cash are still in the back. When Moss takes the money, he sets off a chain reaction of catastrophic violence that not even the law—in the person of aging, disillusioned Sheriff Bell—can contain. As Moss tries to evade his pursuers—in particular a mysterious mastermind who flips coins for human lives—McCarthy simultaneously strips down the American crime novel and broadens its concerns to encompass themes as ancient as the Bible and as bloodily contemporary as this morning's headlines. *No Country for Old Men* is a triumph.

Once finished with the novel, students will craft a 2-3-page essay discussing the inserted dialogue and narration from Sheriff Ed Tom Bell and the purpose of that narration. Does it add or detract from the story? What is the purpose? Why does McCarthy choose to end the novel in the fashion he does?

### LIST 2: BOOKS WE WILL READ IN CLASS NEXT YEAR

#### **1984 – George Orwell**

Winston Smith toes the Party line, rewriting history to satisfy the demands of the Ministry of Truth. With each lie he

writes, Winston grows to hate the Party that seeks power for its own sake and persecutes those who dare to commit thoughtcrimes. But as he starts to think for himself, Winston can't escape the fact that Big Brother is always watching...A startling and haunting vision of the world, *1984* is so powerful that it is completely convincing from start to finish. No one can deny the influence of this novel, its hold on the imaginations of multiple generations of readers, or the resiliency of its admonitions—a legacy that seems only to grow with the passage of time.

### **Beowulf – Unknown**

The story focuses on the titular character of Beowulf, a Scandinavian hero who comes to the aid of the Danes to save their land from a human-demon monster named Grendel. After defeating Grendel, Beowulf must then kill Grendel's mother. He returns to Scandinavia with more fame and accord and eventually becomes king. Then fifty years later, a dragon attacks his kingdom, and the hero must fight once again to defend his title and his honor. What makes "Beowulf" a lasting classic is its depiction of Norse traditions and culture. The people have strong connections inherent within a kinship society; if someone was killed it was the family's duty to exact justice or receive payment for the death. "Beowulf" also shows an interesting dichotomy between the Norse pagan religion of when the story is set versus the monotheistic Christian storytellers who likely first related the tale during the Middle Ages. Many scholars debate the epic poem's true stance on religion, but the tale gives an accurate depiction of how paganism deteriorated as monotheism flourished. A classic of Anglo-Saxon literature, "Beowulf" remains one of the greatest epic poems ever written.

### **Brave New World – Aldous Huxley**

Aldous Huxley's profoundly important classic of world literature, *Brave New World* is a searching vision of an unequal, technologically-advanced future where humans are genetically bred, socially indoctrinated, and pharmaceutically anesthetized to passively uphold an authoritarian ruling order—all at the cost of our freedom, full humanity, and perhaps also our souls. "A genius [who] who spent his life decrying the onward march of the Machine" (*The New Yorker*), Huxley was a man of incomparable talents: equally an artist, a spiritual seeker, and one of history's keenest observers of human nature and civilization. *Brave New World*, his masterpiece, has enthralled and terrified millions of readers, and retains its urgent relevance to this day as both a warning to be heeded as we head into tomorrow and as thought-provoking, satisfying work of literature. Written in the shadow of the rise of fascism during the 1930s, *Brave New World* likewise speaks to a 21st-century world dominated by mass-entertainment, technology, medicine and pharmaceuticals, the arts of persuasion, and the hidden influence of elites.

### **Frankenstein – Mary Shelly**

Desperate in his search of the secret of life, young Dr Victor Frankenstein attempts to construct and then bring to life a previously inanimate creature. He succeeds, yet immediately finds himself horrified and repulsed by the fruit of his long-lasting labors and, as a result, abandons the creature without a word. This action begins a series of tragic events in the life of the scientist, as the enraged monster begins his quest to fill every minute of Dr. Frankenstein's life with terror, dread and misery. First published in 1818, this novel continues to captivate the audience today. Frankenstein is not merely a horror story, but, rather, a tale that would make its readers ponder on the pursuit of knowledge and explore what monstrosity truly means.

### **The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald**

*The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's third book, stands as the supreme achievement of his career. First published in 1925, this quintessential novel of the Jazz Age has been acclaimed by generations of readers. The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when *The New York Times* noted "gin was the national drink," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s, and details the loss, love, and, ultimately, the ability of one man to hope above all things.

### **Hamlet – William Shakespeare**

*Hamlet* is Shakespeare's most popular, and most puzzling, play. It follows the form of a "revenge tragedy," in which the hero, Hamlet, seeks vengeance against his father's murderer, his uncle Claudius, now the king of Denmark. Much of its fascination, however, lies in its uncertainties. Among them: What is the Ghost--Hamlet's father demanding justice, a tempting demon, an angelic messenger? Does Hamlet go mad, or merely pretend to? Once he is sure that Claudius is a murderer, why does he not act? Was his mother, Gertrude, unfaithful to her husband or complicit in his murder?

### **The Importance of Being Earnest – Oscar Wilde**

Here is Oscar Wilde's most brilliant tour de force, a witty and buoyant comedy of manners that has delighted millions in

countless productions since its first performance in London's St. James' Theatre on February 14, 1895. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is celebrated not only for the lighthearted ingenuity of its plot, but for its inspired dialogue, rich with scintillating epigrams still savored by all who enjoy artful conversation.

From the play's effervescent beginnings in Algernon Moncrieff's London flat to its hilarious denouement in the drawing room of Jack Worthing's country manor in Hertfordshire, this comic masterpiece keeps audiences breathlessly anticipating a new bon mot or a fresh twist of plot moment to moment.

### **The Inferno – Dante Alighieri**

The classic tale of confusion and loss. Dante makes his way through the nine circles of hell, encountering sin and tragedy as he discovers what it takes to be forgiven and saved. Told in lyric form, Dante's inferno is a classic story of morality and ethics and serves as both a window into 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century belief as well as political satire.

### **The Road – Cormac McCarthy**

A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other. *The Road* is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, "each the other's world entire," are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation.

### **Slaughterhouse-Five – Kurt Vonnegut**

*Slaughterhouse-Five*, an American classic, is one of the world's great antiwar books. Centering on the infamous firebombing of Dresden, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the mythic journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we fear most.

### **A Streetcar Named Desire – Tennessee Williams**

It is a very short list of 20th-century American plays that continue to have the same power and impact as when they first appeared—57 years after its Broadway premiere, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* is one of those plays. The story famously recounts how the faded and promiscuous Blanche DuBois is pushed over the edge by her sexy and brutal brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. *Streetcar* launched the careers of Marlon Brando, Jessica Tandy, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden, and solidified the position of Tennessee Williams as one of the most important young playwrights of his generation.

### **The Taming of the Shrew – William Shakespeare**

Love and marriage are the concerns of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Lucentio's marriage to Bianca is prompted by his idealized love of an apparently ideal woman. Petruchio's wooing of Katherine, however, is free of idealism. Petruchio takes money from Bianca's suitors to woo her, since Katherine must marry before her sister by her father's decree; he also arranges the dowry with her father. Petruchio is then ready to marry Katherine, even against her will. Katherine, the shrew of the play's title, certainly acts much changed. But have she and Petruchio learned to love each other? Or is the marriage based on terror and deception?

## **LIST 3: BOOKS THAT APPEAR MOST OFTEN ON THE AP TEST**

### **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn – Mark Twain**

Referring to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, H. L. Mencken noted that his discovery of this classic American novel was "the most stupendous event of my whole life"; Ernest Hemingway declared that "all modern American literature stems from this one book," while T. S. Eliot called Huck "one of the permanent symbolic figures of fiction, not unworthy to take a place with Ulysses, Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Hamlet." The novel's preeminence derives from its wonderfully imaginative re-creation of boyhood adventures along the Mississippi River, its inspired characterization, the author's remarkable ear for dialogue, and the book's understated development of serious underlying themes: "natural" man versus "civilized" society, the evils of slavery, the innate value and dignity of human beings, and other topics. Most of all, *Huckleberry Finn* is a wonderful story, filled with high adventure and unforgettable characters.

### The Awakening – Kate Chopin

When first published in 1899, *The Awakening* shocked readers with its honest treatment of female marital infidelity. Audiences accustomed to the pieties of late Victorian romantic fiction were taken aback by Chopin's daring portrayal of a woman trapped in a stifling marriage, who seeks and finds passionate physical love outside the straitened confines of her domestic situation. Aside from its unusually frank treatment of a then-controversial subject, the novel is widely admired today for its literary qualities. Edmund Wilson characterized it as a work "quite uninhibited and beautifully written, which anticipates D. H. Lawrence in its treatment of infidelity." Although the theme of marital infidelity no longer shocks, few novels have plumbed the psychology of a woman involved in an illicit relationship with the perception, artistry, and honesty that Kate Chopin brought to *The Awakening*.

### Crime and Punishment – Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The two years before he wrote *Crime and Punishment* (1866) had been bad ones for Dostoyevsky. His wife and brother had died; the magazine he and his brother had started, *Epoch*, collapsed under its load of debt; and he was threatened with debtor's prison. With an advance that he managed to wangle for an unwritten novel, he fled to Wiesbaden, hoping to win enough at the roulette table to get himself out of debt. Instead, he lost all his money; he had to pawn his clothes and beg friends for loans to pay his hotel bill and get back to Russia. One of his begging letters went to a magazine editor, asking for an advance on yet another unwritten novel — which he described as *Crime and Punishment*. One of the supreme masterpieces of world literature, *Crime and Punishment* catapulted Dostoyevsky to the forefront of Russian writers and into the ranks of the world's greatest novelists. Drawing upon experiences from his own prison days, the author recounts in feverish, compelling tones the story of Raskolnikov, an impoverished student tormented by his own nihilism, and the struggle between good and evil. Believing that he is above the law, and convinced that humanitarian ends justify vile means, he brutally murders an old woman — a pawnbroker whom he regards as "stupid, ailing, greedy...good for nothing." Overwhelmed afterwards by feelings of guilt and terror, Raskolnikov confesses to the crime and goes to prison. There he realizes that happiness and redemption can only be achieved through suffering. Infused with forceful religious, social, and philosophical elements, the novel was an immediate success.

### The Crucible – Arthur Miller

One of the true masterpieces of twentieth-century American theater, *The Crucible* brilliantly explores the threshold between individual guilt and mass hysteria, personal spite and collective evil. When witchcraft is found in Salem, Massachusetts, trials and arguing lead to the deaths of many townspeople. This play follows the true origins of the Salem Witch Trials and explores the depths of darkness inherent in the human soul. It is a play that is not only relentlessly suspenseful and vastly moving, but that compels readers to fathom their hearts and consciences in ways that only the greatest theatre can.

### Great Expectations – Charles Dickens

In this unflinchingly suspenseful story of aspirations and moral redemption, humble, orphaned Pip, a ward of his short-tempered older sister and her husband, Joe, is apprenticed to the dirty work of the forge but dares to dream of becoming a gentleman. And, indeed, it seems as though that dream is destined to come to pass — because one day, under sudden and enigmatic circumstances, he finds himself in possession of "great expectations." In telling Pip's story, Dickens traces a boy's path from a hardscrabble rural life to the teeming streets of 19th-century London, unfolding a gripping tale of crime and guilt, revenge and reward, and love and loss. Its compelling characters include Magwitch, the fearful and fearsome convict; Estella, whose beauty is excelled only by her haughtiness; and the embittered Miss Havisham, an eccentric jilted bride.

### Jane Eyre – Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë's impassioned novel is the love story of **Jane Eyre**, a plain yet spirited governess, and her employer, the arrogant, brooding Mr. Rochester. Published in 1847 under the pseudonym Currer Bell, the book heralded a new kind of heroine—one whose virtuous integrity, keen intellect, and tireless perseverance broke through class barriers to win equal stature with the man she loved. Hailed by William Makepeace Thackeray as "the masterwork of a great genius," *Jane Eyre* is still regarded, over a century later, as one of the finest novels in English literature.

### King Lear – William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's *King Lear* challenges us with the magnitude, intensity, and sheer duration of the pain that it represents. Its figures harden their hearts, engage in violence, or try to alleviate the suffering of others. Lear himself rages until his sanity

cracks. What, then, keeps bringing us back to *King Lear*? For all the force of its language, *King Lear* is almost equally powerful when translated, suggesting that it is the story, in large part, that draws us to the play. The play tells us about families struggling between greed and cruelty, on the one hand, and support and consolation, on the other. Emotions are extreme, magnified to gigantic proportions. We also see old age portrayed in all its vulnerability, pride, and, perhaps, wisdom—one reason this most devastating of Shakespeare's tragedies is also perhaps his most moving.

*A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* – James Joyce

Originally published in serial format in "The Egoist" between 1914 and 1915, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," is the semi-autobiographical portrayal of James Joyce's early upbringing as an Irish Catholic in late 19th century and early 20th century Dublin. The novel was originally planned as a 63-chapter autobiographical novel in a realistic style entitled "Stephen Hero" however Joyce reworked the novel into five condensed chapters, dispensing with the strict realism which he originally planned in favor of the use of free indirect speech, a narrative style which allows the reader to peer into the developing mind of the protagonist. At the center of the novel is Stephen Dedalus, whose life, based on Joyce's own experiences, is depicted from its various stages starting in childhood and moving through early adulthood. The language of the novel changes throughout the book to correspond with the artistic development of Stephen Dedalus as he ages and matures. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" is a masterful depiction of the process of self-discovery and rebellion against authority that is indicative of youth, one which would establish Joyce as a central figure of the modernist literary movement.

*The Scarlet Letter* – Nathaniel Hawthorne

Like all of Hawthorne's novels, "The Scarlet Letter" has but a slender plot and but few characters with an influence on the development of the story. Its great dramatic force depends entirely on the mental states of the actors and their relations to one another, —relations of conscience, — relations between wronged and wrongers. Its great burden is the weight of unacknowledged sin as seen in the remorse and cowardice and suffering of the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale. Contrasted with his concealed agony is the constant confession, conveyed by the letter, which is forced upon Hester, and has a double effect, — a healthful one, working beneficently, and making her helpful and benevolent, tolerant and thoughtful ; and an unhealthful one, which by the great emphasis placed on her transgression, the keeping her forever under its ban and isolating her from her fellows, prepares her to break away from the long repression and lapse again into sin when she plans her flight.

*Wuthering Heights* – Emily Bronte

Considered lurid and shocking by mid-19th-century standards, *Wuthering Heights* was initially thought to be such a publishing risk that its author, Emily Brontë, was asked to pay some of the publication costs. A somber tale of consuming passions and vengeance played out against the lonely moors of northern England, the book proved to be one of the most enduring classics of English literature. The turbulent and tempestuous love story of Cathy and Heathcliff spans two generations — from the time Heathcliff, a strange, coarse young boy, is brought to live on the Earnshaws' windswept estate, through Cathy's marriage to Edgar Linton and Heathcliff's plans for revenge, to Cathy's death years later and the eventual union of the surviving Earnshaw and Linton heirs.