

2016 Summer Reading Book Descriptions (taken from Amazon.com)

Freshmen (200) *Peak*, by Roland Smith

After fourteen-year-old Peak Marcello is arrested for scaling a New York City skyscraper, he's left with two choices: wither away in Juvenile Detention or go live with his long-lost father, who runs a climbing company in Thailand. But Peak quickly learns that his father's renewed interest in him has strings attached. *Big* strings. As owner of Peak Expeditions, he wants his son to be the youngest person to reach the Everest summit--and his motives are selfish at best. Even so, for a climbing addict like Peak, tackling Everest is the challenge of a lifetime. But it's also one that could cost him his life.

Freshmen (300-400) *The Book Thief*, by Markus Zusak

This Australian author grew up hearing stories of the bombings in Munich and of the Jews being marked off in his mother's small town and knew he wanted to tell this story. Set during WWII Germany, nine-year-old Leisel Meminger lives with a foster family outside Munich where she steals in order to scratch out a meager living. She finds she can't resist books, even though she can't read, and through the late 1930s and early 1940s, builds a collection of stolen books as well as friends she meets during this time. She shares her stolen books with neighbors during the bombing raids, including a Jewish man who has been hidden in the foster family's basement before being marched off to Dachau. The story is rich in imagery and shows that while some of the people at this time had cast their allegiance to Hitler, there were rebellious children and other people who didn't follow the rules.

Sophomores (all levels) *A Long Way Gone*, by Ishmael Beah

This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them. What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this hell and survived. In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. This is a rare and mesmerizing account, told with real literary force and heartbreaking honesty.

Juniors (all levels excluding AP) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie

Junior is a 14-year-old Indian who is growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation and aspires to be a cartoonist. His struggles center on the conflict and guilt of living in poverty with his family while attending a white high school, where he seemingly leaves the adults in his life behind. This best-seller won the National Book Award and is based on the author's own experiences. The story is accompanied by drawings that chronicle his contemporary adolescent as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to have.

Seniors: Option 1 *Thank You for Your Service*, by David Finkel

In *Thank You for Your Service*, Finkel follows many of those same men as they return home and struggle to reintegrate—both into their family lives and into American society at large. He is with them in their most intimate, painful, and hopeful moments as they try to recover, and in doing so, he creates an indelible, essential portrait of what life after war is like—not just for these soldiers, but for their wives, widows, children, and friends, and for the professionals who are truly trying, and to a great degree failing, to undo the damage that has been done. *Thank You for Your Service* is an act of understanding, and it offers a more complete picture than we have ever had of two essential questions: When we ask young men and women to go to war, what are we asking of them? And when they return, what are we thanking them for?

Seniors: Option 2 ***Outliers*, by Malcolm Gladwell**

In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"—the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band. Brilliant and entertaining, *Outliers* is a landmark work that will simultaneously delight and illuminate.

Seniors: Option 3 ***Superfreakonomics*, by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner**

Four years in the making, *Superfreakonomics* asks not only the tough questions, but the unexpected ones.

Superfreakonomics challenges the way we think all over again, exploring the hidden side of everything with such questions as:

- Why are doctors so bad at washing their hands?
- How much good do car seats do?
- Did TV cause a rise in crime?
- Can eating kangaroo save the planet?

Levitt and Dubner mix smart thinking and great storytelling like no one else. By examining how people respond to incentives, they show the world for what it really is – good, bad, ugly, and, in the final analysis, -super freaky.

AP Language ***Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood**

The story of this dystopian novel is told through the experiences of Offred, a handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, where fear is used by the government and politicians to control the population. The society has been radically overturned by a theocratic revolution. And women are now strictly controlled. The story focuses on the place of women and the role of men where women are not allowed to have jobs or money. Although gender roles are the foundation of the story, this novel is more about the human condition showing what people are capable of doing, good and bad.

Selected chapters from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, by Thomas Foster

While many books can be enjoyed for their basic stories, there are often deeper literary meanings interwoven in these texts. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* helps us to discover those hidden truths by looking at literature with the eyes—and the literary codes—of the ultimate professional reader, the college professor. What does it mean when a literary hero is traveling along a dusty road? When he hands a drink to his companion? When he's drenched in a sudden rain shower? Ranging from major themes to literary models, narrative devices and form, Thomas C. Foster provides us with a broad overview of literature—a world where a road leads to a quest, a shared meal may signify a communion, and rain, whether cleansing or destructive, is never just a shower—and shows us how to make our reading experience more enriching, satisfying, and fun.

AP Literature ***Atonement*, by Ian McEwan**

On a hot summer day in 1935 in the English countryside, 13-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a minor flirtation between her older sister Cecilia and Robbie Turner, son of a servant and Cecilia's childhood friend. What starts as a domestic crisis becomes a crime story that changes the lives of the people in this upper-middle-class household. The story follows Briony into the 21st century, taking her from a highly-imaginative young girl into adulthood.

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