

## AP Language Independent Reading List

You may choose any of the books listed here or any book from on the summer reading list.  
You must get approval from me for any book not on those lists.

### SCIENCE

*The Emperor of All Maladies* by Siddhartha Mukherjee — An in-depth biography of cancer.

*Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande — Medicine, life, and choices about how we die.

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot — History of the most prolific cells in science.

*Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly — African American female mathematicians and the race to space.

*Packing for Mars* by Mary Roach — The strange science used to get astronauts ready for space.

*Leaving Orbit* by Margaret Lazarus Dean — “Notes from the last days of American spaceflight”

*Annals of the Former World* by John McPhee — Four books (*Basin and Range*, *In Suspect Terrain*, *Rising from the Plains*, and *Assembling California*) collected into one giant work on the geological history of North America.

*The Secret Life of Lobsters* by Trevor Corson — “How fishermen and scientists are unraveling the mysteries of our favorite crustacean.”

*Stiff* by Mary Roach — An oddly compelling, often hilarious exploration of the strange lives of our bodies postmortem.

*The Demon-Haunted World* by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan — Argues that scientific thinking is critical not only to the pursuit of truth but to the very well-being of our democratic institutions.

*Zero* by Charles Seife — A compelling look at the strangest number in the universe.

*The Demon in the Freezer* by Richard Preston — Takes us into the heart of the U.S. biodefense program where scientists are doing controversial experiments with live smallpox virus.

### GLOBAL ISSUES

*Night Draws Near* by Anthony Shadid — A portrait of Iraqi citizens “weathering the unexpected impact of America’s invasion and occupation.”

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo — Life in a Mumbai slum.

*Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder — One doctor’s work bringing medical care to those most in need.

*Without You, There Is No Us* by Suki Kim — A reporter goes inside a school for the sons of North Korea’s elite.

*Nothing to Envy* by Barbara Demick — North Korean defectors tell what it’s like inside the country.

*Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi — Reading American classics in revolutionary Iran.

*The Lonely War* by Nazila Fathi — An Iranian journalist’s account of the struggle for reform in modern Iran.

## HISTORY

*The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson — The great migration of African Americans to northern cities, and the impact it has today.

*Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand — World War II tale of survival after being shot down over the Pacific Ocean.

*The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown — Olympic rowing at the 1936 Berlin Olympics (this book is amazing!).

*Sin in the Second City* by Karen Abbott — Stories from America's favorite Victorian-era brothel and the culture war it inspired.

*Eighty Days* by Matthew Goodman — Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland race around the world in 1889.

*In the Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson — America's ambassador to Germany, and his headstrong daughter, in the lead up to World War II.

*Killers of the Flower Moon* by David Grann — A conspiracy against the Osage tribe, and the birth of the FBI.

*The Wordy Shipmates* by Sarah Vowell — The Puritans and their strange journey to found America

*Galileo's Daughter* by Dava Sobel — A look at the relationship between Galileo and his oldest daughter, a nun named Maria Celeste.

*The Romanov Sisters* by Helen Rappaport — A look at the fall of the Romanov family, focusing specifically on the lives of Nicholas and Alexandra's four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia.

*City of Light, City of Poison* by Holly Tucker — An account of Paris's first police chief and a poisonous murder epidemic in the late 1600s.

*Undaunted Courage* by Stephen E. Ambrose — A biography of Meriwether Lewis that relies heavily on the journals of both Lewis and Clark.

*The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson — The stories of two men: Daniel H. Burnham, the architect of the 1893 World's Fair, and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer masquerading as a charming doctor.

*Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond — Chronicles the way that the modern world came to be and dismantles racially based theories of human history.

*Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan* by Richard Bowers — Tells a group of intertwining stories that culminate in the 1947 collision of the Superman Radio Show and the Ku Klux Klan.

*The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe — The story of the American test pilots who became the original "Mercury Seven" astronauts.

## LITERARY NONFICTION CLASSICS

*In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote — A true-crime, non-fiction novel that recounts the 1959 murders of four members of the Clutter family.

*The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean — Obsession and rare flowers in the Florida Everglades.

*Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer — The story of a harrowing, deadly climb on Mount Everest.

*Random Family* by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc — “Love, drugs, trouble, and coming of age in the Bronx.”

*Friday Night Lights* by Buzz Bissinger — The big business of high school football in Texas.

*Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion — Essays on a feminist journalist’s experiences in California in the 1960s.

*Newjack* by Ted Conover — A journalist goes undercover as a prison officer in Sing Sing to better understand the penal system.

*The Monster of Florence* by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi — Historical true crime on Italy’s Jack the Ripper, who killed between 1968 and 1985.

*The Blind Side* by Michael Lewis — A sports biography on one man’s journey to the NFL and the evolution of the game.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley — The Muslim leader, firebrand, and anti-integrationist, tells the extraordinary story of his life and the growth of the Black Muslim movement.

*Walden* by Henry David Thoreau — In 1845, Thoreau moved to a cabin he built by Walden Pond. His account of his time there reveals how separating oneself from society can lead to true authenticity and enlightenment.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

*Does Jesus Really Love Me?* by Jeffrey Chu — A gay Christian looks for God in America.

*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman — Cultural barriers in life and medicine (so good!).

*Evicted* by Matthew Desmond — Poverty, profits and the eviction crisis in America.

*Gang Leader for a Day* by Sudhir Venkatesh — A sociologist spend a decade in Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes to better understand the lives of the urban poor.

*Homicide* by David Simon — A look at one year spent with homicide detectives in Baltimore.

*Methland* by Nick Reding — A look at the impact of meth on small towns, based on four years of reporting in an agricultural town in Iowa.

*And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts — The first and perhaps most comprehensive look at the AIDS crisis.

*The Omnivore’s Dilemma* by Michael Pollan — Explores how our food choices may determine not only our health but our survival as a species.

## CONTEMPORARY REPORTING

*The Man Who Loved Books Too Much* by Allison Hoover Bartlett — “The true story of a thief, a detective, and a world of literary obsession.”

*The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu* by Joshua Hammer — A group of librarians banded together to pull off a literary heist to save precious Arabic texts from Al Qaeda.

*Moby Duck* by Donovan Hohn — “The true story of 28,800 bath toys lost at sea and of the beachcombers, oceanographers, environmentalists and fools, including the author, who went in search of them.”

*Columbine* by Dave Cullen — The definitive account of the Columbine shooting.

*Five Days at Memorial* by Sheri Fink — Life and death and medical malpractice at a hospital ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

*Tribe* by Sebastian Junger — Learning about loyalty and belonging from tribal societies.

*Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance — A powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America’s white working class.