

English Summer Reading Lists: Grades 9 & 10

Life-transforming ideas have always come to me through books.
- bell hooks

Why summer reading? While studies from Oxford University and the National Endowment for the Arts have correlated summer reading with improved test scores, academic success in college and greater professional credentials, the best reason to read is because it's fun. Escape into a good book and have a great summer!

Classics

***Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya**

Six-year-old Antonio embarks upon a spiritual journey under the guidance of Ultima, a healing woman, that leads him to question his faith and beliefs in family, religion, and other aspects of his Chicano culture.

***Emma* by Jane Austen**

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse is the most flawed, the most infuriating, and, in the end, the most endearing precisely because she is so imperfect.

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

When the eponymous penniless governess falls in love with the brooding master of Thornfield, she is swept up into dangerous, tragic events.

***A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines**

In jail for a murder he did not commit, Jefferson is reluctantly comforted by Grant, a teacher who must impart to him some wisdom and pride before the execution.

***The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway**

A group of American and British expatriates living in Paris go on an excursion to Pamplona, Spain to fish, drink, fall in love and run with the bulls.

***The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien**

Based on O'Brien's own experiences, in this extraordinary collection of related short stories, recurring characters, interwoven plots, and themes reveal the experiences of foot soldiers in the Vietnam War.

***1984* by George Orwell**

Winston Smith, a worker at the Ministry of Truth in the future political entity of Oceania, puts his life on the line when he joins a covert brotherhood in rebelling against the Party that controls all human thought and action.

***Night* by Elie Wiesel**

The classic autobiographical account of the author's experiences as a boy at Auschwitz.

Realistic Fiction

***The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga**

Balam Halwai is educated in the art of corruption when he is hired as the driver for the wealthiest man in his village in India, by witnessing his employers bribe and barter through his rearview mirror.

***How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez**

In fifteen tales, this novel chronicles Yolanda and her three sisters' exile from the Dominican Republic to New York and their rebellion against their immigrant elders.

***Tell the Wolves I'm Home* by Carol Rifka Bruny**

The one person who ever understood 14-year-old June Elbus is her uncle, the renowned painter Finn Weiss. So when he dies of a mysterious illness her mother cannot speak about, June's world is turned upside down. But his death brings a surprise to her life—someone who will help her question what she knows about Finn, her family, and even her own heart.

***A Scanner Darkly* by Philip K. Dick**

A police officer assigned to capture an elusive drug dealer does not realize that the man he is chasing is really himself—a situation brought about by the drug's capability of producing split personalities in its users.

***The Commitments* by Roddy Doyle**

This adrenaline and expletive-filled first novel traces the short, funny, and furious career of a group of working-class Irish kids who form a band to bring soul to Dublin.

***Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier**

As Dimple Lala turns seventeen, she realizes that life is about to become more complex. Her best friend is pulling away and her parents are trying to find her a boyfriend. Will she ever be more than an "American-Born Confused Desi"?

***Crank* by Ellen Hopkins**

In short poems, Kristina Georgia Snow's life is turned upside-down when she visits her absentee father and becomes addicted to crank. The drug is a monster that leads her down a desperate path which threatens her mind, soul, and her life.

***Fever Pitch* by Nick Hornby**

Part autobiography, part comedy, Hornby's award-winning memoir captures the fever pitch of football (soccer) fandom—its agony and ecstasy, its community, its defining role in thousands of young men's coming-of-age stories.

***Jellicoe Road* by Melina Marchetta**

Abandoned by her drug-addicted mother at the age of eleven, high school student Taylor Markham struggles with her identity and family history at a boarding school in Australia.

***Paranoid Park* by Blake Nelson**

It was an accident. He didn't mean to kill the security guard with his skateboard—it was self-defense. Should he confess, or can he get away with it? This is a riveting look at one boy's fall into a world of crime, guilt, and fear—and his desperate attempt to get out again.

***When I Was the Greatest* by Jason Reynolds**

Ali lives in Bed-Stuy, a Brooklyn neighborhood known for guns and drugs, but he and his sister, Jazz, and their neighbors, Needles and Noodles, stay out of trouble until they go to the wrong party, where one gets badly hurt and another leaves with a target on his back.

***Prep* by Curtis Sittenfeld**

Midwesterner, Lee Fiora is sent by her father to a prestigious boarding school in Massachusetts where she manages to survive in spite of the social differences between her and her classmates.

***Sag Harbor* by Colson Whitehead**

Benji Cooper, the son of a doctor and a lawyer, is one of very few African-American students at an elite Manhattan prep school. So he really looks forward to summer when he and his brother Reggie, left alone for most of the week while their parents work, can relax within the comfortable confines of the community of professional African-Americans that spend the warm months at Sag Harbor.

***Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger**

Grady, a high school student who is transgendered, yearns for acceptance by his classmates and family as he struggles to adjust to his new identity as a male.

***Wildlife* by Fiona Wood**

Two sixteen-year-old girls in Australia come together at an outdoor semester of school before university—one thinking about boys and growing up, the other about death and grief, but somehow they must help each other to find themselves.

Historical Fiction

***The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Throne* by M.T. Anderson**

Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, from birth to age sixteen, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War.

***Regeneration* by Pat Barker**

In 1917, Siegfried Sassoon, a combat officer and poet, writes a letter publicly disavowing the war. He is found to be "mentally unsound" and is sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital, where there is a psychiatrist renowned for curing such cases.

***The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards**

What happens when a baby is born with Down syndrome? When Norah goes into labor, her husband, Dr. David Henry, must deliver their babies at home with his nurse. Seeing his daughter's handicap, he sends her to an institution and tells Norah that their daughter died at birth.

***Obasan* by Joy Kogawa**

The narrator learns about the experiences of her grandmother, Obasan, who was among those Japanese Canadians relocated to internment camps at the beginning of World War II.

***Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson**

Ruth and her sister Lucille are cared for by Sylvie, the transient sister of their dead mother. They attempt to keep house as the forces of nature erode their stronghold.

***Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko**

One Navajo family, on a New Mexico reservation, struggles to survive in a world no longer theirs in the years just before and after World War II.

***The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan**

San Francisco ghostwriter Ruth Young finally begins to understand her Alzheimer's-afflicted mother LuLing's preoccupation with ghosts and curses when she reads LuLing's writings of her dark backwoods childhood in 1920s China--where LuLing's mute, disfigured nursemaid committed suicide, and a nearby cave held what may have been the bones of the lost ancient hominid Peking Man.

Science Fiction and Fantasy

***Foundation* by Isaac Asimov**

As the Galactic Empire declines, psychic historian Hari Seldon and his band of psycho-biologists form the Foundation, a corporation designed to rule the world. (Series)

***The Ladies of Grace Adieu* by Susanne Clarke**

In eight charming stories, Susanna Clarke introduces us to deceptive fairies, dangerous deals and the history of magic in Victorian England.

***Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman**

Charlie Nancy was leading a comfortable life until his father died and discovered that dear old dad was a human form of Anansi, the African trickster god, and that he had a brother, Spider, who 2 inherited some of his father's godlike abilities.

***Sabriel* by Garth Nix**

Sabriel, daughter of the necromancer Abhorsen, must journey into the mysterious and magical Old Kingdom to rescue her father from the Land of the Dead.

***The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss**

Kvothe, a legendary hero and villain who is presumed dead, recounts the story of his life and shares the dark secrets that have shaped his life and forced him to take up a lonely existence in a land of strangers.

Mystery

***The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith**

Precious Ramotswe sets up shop in a small storefront in Gaborone to become a private detective, and soon has more business than she expected, including a case involving a missing child. (Series)

***The Other Side of Dark* by Sarah Smith**

Since losing both of her parents, social outcast Katie can see and talk to ghosts. When fellow student Law sees her drawings of a historic house, they seek a treasure rumored to be hidden there by illegal slave-traders.

***Akata Witch* by Nnedi Okorafor**

Twelve-year-old Sunny Nwazue, an American-born albino child of Nigerian parents, moves with her family back to Nigeria, where she learns that she has latent magical powers which she and three similarly gifted friends use to catch a serial killer.

Dystopian Fiction

***Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood**

Jimmy, apparently the last human being on earth, grew up in a world split between corporate compounds obsessed with gene splicing and polluted urban centers of uneducated drug users. When his childhood best friend Crake's experiments with bioengineering cause humanity's shockingly quick demise, Jimmy is left to try and pick up the pieces.

***The Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler**

Lauren Olamina has hyper-empathy; if she sees another in pain, she feels their pain as acutely as if it were real. When her family enclave is destroyed, Lauren begins a journey north and recruits fellow refugees to her embryonic faith, Earthseed, the prime tenet of which is "God is change."

***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Years after leaving Hailsham, a wonderful boarding school in England, Kathy and her old friends are forced to face the truth about their childhood and their fate in a cruel new world.

***The Children of Men* by P. D. James**

Near the end of the 20th century, for reasons beyond the grasp of modern science, human sperm count went to zero. The last birth occurred in 1995, and in the space of a generation, humanity has lost its future.

***I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson**

Robert Neville has witnessed the end of the world. Everyone has been obliterated by a vampire virus, but he has somehow survived and must embark on a series of projects to discover the source of the plague and hopefully put an end to the vampires.

***The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

In a post-apocalyptic blight, a father and his child must journey across the country, through a nation consumed by fire and ravaged by the few living people left, to (what they hope) to be safety on the Pacific shore.