

AP Seminar

Summer Reading

In order to prepare for our course this year, you should choose one book-length piece of non-fiction and complete the assignment below. Because students typically don't tend to read long non-fiction texts, I want you to get in the habit of reading book-length nonfiction over issues or ideas that strongly interest you. Don't think of the summer reading as a drudgery; pick a book that you like and enjoy it!

You may choose from the provided list, or you may choose something not on the list. However, what you choose should be consistent with this list in terms of both rigor and length. In other words, a 100-page book will not be acceptable. Your book should have academic or scholarly merit and force you to confront ideas or issues - no self-help or how-to books or scriptural texts.

You may NOT count as your AP Seminar summer reading any other book that you are reading (or read prior to this course while in high school) for another summer reading or in-school assignment.

Please purchase a print copy of the book at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or other booksellers.

Assignment

After reading the book, type a document with the following numbered items. This document should be accessible digitally through your Google Drive on Day One of our course. You are not required to annotate your book, but you may do so, if you wish. A failure to have this assignment will have a substantive impact on your grade during the first weeks of the course.

1. A 300-400 word synopsis of the book that includes author and title.
2. Four specific quotes under which you explain the significance of the quote (50-100+ words per quote)
3. A bulleted list of three Big Ideas that the text raises. Think of Big Ideas as themes or topics or significant questions that the book raises. For each Big Idea, list the idea and then discuss its treatment in the book in 100+ words.
4. Describe at least one place where you disagree with an assertion or idea presented in the text and why you disagree. At least 100+ words here.

BRING YOUR BOOK TO CLASS ON DAY ONE of the school year.

Book List

Again, this book list is not exclusive. If you find for personal or family reasons that none of these books work, then read something that is not on the list, but your choice *must* be of generally the same length and rigor as those found here. Please note that I am not responsible for the content of the books on the list; I have read a number of them, but many of them come recommended from my campus colleagues, other AP teachers and AP readers, reputable book lists, award lists, and the like. I am treating you as the responsible student that you are; if you start reading a book that you later find problematic and cannot finish, then find something else to read.

Autobiography / Memoir

- Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Wait Till Next Year*. (Pulitzer author about childhood and baseball.)
- McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*. (Poverty, starvation, and exuberance in depression Ireland.)
- McCourt, Frank. *Tis'* (Continuation of McCourt's story in NY.)
- McCourt, Malachy. *Swimming with Monks*. (Frank's brother tells his side of the story.)
- Ashe, Arthur. *Days of Grace*. (Ashe's personal struggles with prejudice and AIDS.)
- Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. (Growing up in the Deep South.)
- Griffin, John Howard. *Black Like Me*. (Eyewitness history by a white man who "becomes" black.)
- Rodriguez, Richard. *Hunger for Memory*. (Social assimilation / education with alienation.)
- Karr, Mary. *The Liar's Club*. (Poetic insight into one of the ugliest places on earth.)
- Wolff, Tobias. *This Boy's Life*. (Somber, dark funny story of growing up in the 1950's.)
- Drakulic, Slavenka. *Café Europa*. (Idiosyncratic look at westernized ex-communist countries.)
- Wideman, John Edgar. *Brothers and Keepers*. (One a professor, the other an inmate.)
- Cheng, Nien. *Life and Death in Shanghai*. (Imprisonment, resistance, justice.)
- Orwell, George. *Down and Out in Paris and London*. (Life as a tramp in Europe.)
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Dust Tracks on a Road*. (Account of her rise from poverty to prominence.)
- Dawson, George. *Life is So Good*. (101 year old recounts life in context of 20th century.)
- Armstrong, Lance. *It's Not About the Bike*. (Honest, open, smart autobiography.)
- Moss, Barbara. *Change Me Into Zeus' Daughter*. (Female version of *Angela's Ashes*.)
- Lynch, Thomas. *The Undertaking*. (Essays by a small town undertaker.)
- Conover, Ted. *Newjack*. (Chronicles a year as a prison guard at Sing-Sing.)
- Gawande, Atul. *Complications*. (A surgeon writes about his 'craft'.)
- Eire, Carlos. *Waiting for Snow in Havana*. (Yale professor about his childhood in Cuba before Revolution.)
- Angelou, Maya *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (African-American writer traces her coming of age.)
- Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle* (Story of childhood with eccentric parents.)
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Graphic novel--author describes her youth in revolutionary Iran.)
- Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace One School at a Time*. (Sheltered and nursed in a remote mountain village, author vows to return to build schools throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan.)
- Krakauer, John. *Three Cups of Deceit: How Greg Mortenson, Humanitarian Hero, Lost His Way* (Krakauer's investigation revealing the "truth" about Mortenson's story.)
- Ung, Loung. *First They Killed My Father* (Memoir of a young girl whose life was torn apart by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.)
- Sheff, David. *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey through His Son's Addiction*. (Father's anguished account of his promising son's meth addiction and its painful impact on the entire family is honest, raw, and full of information about the realities of drug addiction.)
- White, Neil. *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* (Man sent to prison set in last leper colony in America.)
- Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. (An account of one boy's life as a child soldier in Sierra Leone.)
- Fuller, Alexandra. *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. (The author remembers "her African childhood with candor and sensitivity.")
- Levi, Carlo. *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. (An account of Levi's year of exile in the Lucania region of Italy.)
- Hillenbrand, Laura. *Unbroken*. (The story of a pilot brought down during World War II begins with a boy who would become an Olympian, despite a difficult childhood with a tendency towards defiance.)
- Martinez, Domingo. *The Boy Kings of Texas*. ("Lyrical and gritty, this authentic coming-of-age story about a border-town family in Brownsville, Texas.")

Biography

- Sobel, Dava. *Galileo's Daughter*. (Father/daughter's vastly different worlds.)
- McBride, James. *The Color of Water*. (A tribute to his remarkable mother.)
- Gunther, John. *Death Be Not Proud*. (Father tells of 17 year old's struggle with brain tumor.)
- McCullough, David. *John Adams*. (Palace intrigue, scandal, and political brilliance.)
- Kennedy, John F. *Profiles in Courage* (Classic study of courageous lives.)

- Ellis, Joseph. *Founding Brothers*. (6 stories about the “gestative” 1790’s.)
- Maraniss, David. *When Pride Still Mattered: The Life of Vince Lombardi*. (Capturing the life of the coach as a metaphor for success.)
- Isaacson, Walter. *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. (Insightful bio of his career and relationships.)
- Leblanc, Adrian Nicole. *Random Family*. (Four teens grow up in the Bronx.)
- Gleick, James. *Isaac Newton*. (Comprehensive and intimate look at a great scientist.)
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (Author struggles to come to terms with his parents’ brutal past at Auschwitz in this seminal graphic novel.)

Nature

- Kinder, Gary. *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea*. (Engineer’s scheme to salvage \$1 billion.)
- Junger, Sebastian. *The Perfect Storm*. (Legendary tale of Man v. Nature.)
- Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air*. (Everest climb gone wrong.)
- Larson, Erik. *Isaac’s Storm*. (Tale of the deadliest hurricane of all time.)
- Fromm, Peter. *Indian Creek Chronicles*. (Modern day *Walden* in Idaho wilderness.)
- Winchester, Simon. *The Map that Changed the World*. (An account of one man’s impact on mapmaking and geology.)
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden* (Author spends 26 months alone in the woods to “front the essential facts of life.”)
- Finkel, Michael, *The Last Stranger in the Woods* (Story of a hermit who lived in the Maine woods for 27 years before being caught.)
- Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. (Imagining the Earth without human beings offers an intriguing way to explore our impact on the planet.)
- Abbey, Edward. *Desert Solitaire*. (A collection of vignettes about life in the wilderness of Utah and the nature of the desert itself by a park ranger and conservationist.)
- Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring*. (This classic sparked a national outcry in the 1960s about our treatment of the natural world.)

Science

- Sobel, Dava. *Longitude*. (One of the thorniest scientific problem of 18th century is solved.)
- Alvarez, Walter. *T.Rex and the Crater of Doom* (Story of impact theory of dinosaur extinction development.)
- Werbach, Adam. *Act Now, Apologize Later*. (Former Sierra Club president on steps to stop environment loss.)
- Roach, Mary. *Stiff: The Curious Life of Human Cadavers* (Humorous, touching, and respectful look at how scientists utilize the human body.)
- Silverstein, Ken. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The True Story of a Boy and His Backyard Nuclear Reactor* (Boy’s obsession with nuclear energy creates radioactive device with potential to spark environmental disaster in his community.)
- Firlik, Katrina. *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside*. (Honest appraisal of work as a doctor.)
- Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (Story of a woman whose cancerous cells were developed in culture without her knowledge and became the HeLa line scientists used in researching some of the most important and astounding medical discoveries of the 20th century.)
- Cahalan, Susannah. *Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness*. (A twenty-two-year-old reporter’s memoir of suffering from a rare brain disease that opened research in the medical community.)
- Sacks, Oliver. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. (Recounts the case histories of patients lost in the bizarre, apparently inescapable world of neurological disorders.)

Food

- Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation*. (Discussion of the rise of fast-food restaurants and its effects on our culture.)
- Bourdain, Anthony. *Kitchen Confidential* (A gritty look at life in a real, upscale New York restaurant.)
- Lyman, Howard. *Mad Cowboy*. (Critical, unflinching account of the meat industry’s manipulation of cows and humans.)
- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. (Brilliant and eye-opening exploration of our food choices, suggesting that how we eat may determine not only our health but our survival as a species.)
- Moss, Michael. *Salt, Sugar, Fat*. (An investigative report that links the rise in obesity in America with the rise of the processed foods industry.)

Culture

- Thompson, Gabriel. *Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do* (Author works in various unskilled labor jobs providing engaging and gruesome details.)
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed* (A social critic goes "undercover" as an unskilled worker to reveal the dark side of American prosperity.)
- Levitt, Stephen and Stephen Dubner. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. (Interesting illumination of mysteries of everyday life.)
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point*. (Explains why changes in society occur suddenly.)
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. (An examination of television's effect on American Culture.)
- Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows*. (An examination of how screens - TV and computer - are rewiring our brains.)
- Orwell, George. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. (An unflinching account of life in north England coal mines.)
- Grandia, Greg. *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City* (The stunning, never before told story of the quixotic attempt to recreate small-town America in the heart of the Amazon.)
- Vance, J.D. *Hillbilly Elegy*. ("a probing look at the struggles of America's white working class through the author's own story of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town")
- Desmond, M. *Evicted*. (A candid examination of 8 Milwaukee families whose poverty becomes an obstacle to even the most basic of needs.)

Sports

- Remnick, David. *King of the World*. (Muhammad Ali as racial and cultural hero in the 1950's.)
- Reynolds, Bill. *Fall River Dreams*. (A team searches for glory, while the town searches for soul.)
- Gildea, William. *Where the Game Still Matters*. (Last championship season in Indiana.)
- Millman, Chad. *The Odds*. (Follows the lives of 3 professional gamblers through a college basketball season in a one-of-a-kind city struggling to reconcile its lawless past with its family-friendly makeover.)
- Dent, Jim. *The Junction Boys*. (10 days in training camp with Bear Bryant.)
- Lewis, Michael. *Moneyball*. (How Oakland A's general manager is changing baseball.)
- Conroy, Pat. *My Losing Season*. (Famous author on his senior year at The Citadel.)
- Riley, Rick. *Who's Your Caddie?* (Sports Illustrated writer caddies for famous people.)
- McManus, James. *Positively 5th Street*. (World series of poker and murder in Vegas.)
- Shapiro, Michael. *The Last Great Season*. (Brooklyn Dodgers 1956 pennant race.)
- Powell, Robert Andrew. *We Own This Game*. (Pop Warner football in Miami run by race, politics, money.)
- Asinof, Eliot. *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series*. (The scandal and damage caused.)
- Bissinger, H.G. *Friday Night Lights*. (Best-selling story of life in the football-driven town of Odessa Texas.)

History / Politics / War

- Lacey, Robert and Danny Danziger. *The Year 1000: What Life Was Like at the Turn of the First Millenium* (A detailed description of life in Anglo-Saxon England.)
- Winchester, Simon. *The Professor and The Madman*. (Intriguing tale about the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary.)
- Ambrose, Stephen. *Undaunted Courage*. (Compelling story of Lewis and Clark expedition.)
- Sontag, Sherry. *Blindman's Bluff*. (A story of American submarine espionage.)
- Cahill, Thomas. *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. (Analyzes the role of Irish monks in bridging antiquity to modernity.)
- Herman, Arthur. *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*. (Examines the Scottish Enlightenment and its role in modernity.)
- Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *Notes on a Kidnapping*. (An investigation behind Pablo Escobar's terror)
- Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. (A look at how the modern world came to be.)
- Fleming, Thomas. *Duel*. (Story of duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton.)
- Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish to Inform You Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families*. (An account of the Rwandan Genocide.)
- Menzies, Gavin. *1421: The Year China Discovered America*. (Was there discovery before Columbus?)
- Huffington, Arianna. *Pigs at the Trough*. (What to do about greedy CEOs and politicians.)
- Friedman, Thomas. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (Discussion of advances in technology.)
- Tuchman, Barbara *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century* (An example of a single feudal lord is used to trace the history of the 14th century.)

- Karlsen, Carol *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (The status of women in colonial society affects the Salem witch accusations.)
- Gwynne, S.C. *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, The Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History* (The story of Cynthia Parker whose son became the last and greatest chief of the Comanche tribe.)
- Mann, Charles C. *1491: New Revelations on the Americas Before Columbus* (A critical examination of indigenous America before Columbus arrived that challenges many ideas about Columbus.)
- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (An analysis of how King Leopold II of Belgium seized the vast Congo wilderness in Africa for his own gain.)

True Crime

- Berendt, John. *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. (Entertaining true crime story set in Savannah, GA)
- Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood*. (details the 1959 murders of 4 members of the Herbert Clutter family in the small farming community of Holcomb, Kansas.)
- Cornwell, Patricia. *Portrait of a Killer*. (The Jack the Ripper crimes are solved - maybe.)
- Metress, Christopher. *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative*. (An examination of on of the most famous murders in the South.)
- Krakauer, Jon. *Under the Banner of Heaven*. (A work of investigative journalism takes “readers inside America’s isolated Mormon Fundamentalist communities to examine a double murder.”)
- Larson, Erik. *The Devil and the White City*. (A story of the Chicago World’s Fair and the first serial killer.)

Travelogue/Adventure

- Pirsig, Robert. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. (Travel, philosophy and motorcycling across the country)
- Paterniti, Michael. *Driving Mr. Albert: A Trip Across America with Einstein’s Brain*. (A scientist and journalist drive across country...)
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. (Tale of a cross-country Bohemian adventure.)
- Chawin, Bruce. *In Patagonia*. (“One of the most strikingly original postwar English travel books” about the author’s journey into the Patagonia region of South America.)
- Bryson, Bill. *A Walk in the Woods*. (A humorous recounting of one man’s comic effort to hike the Appalachian Trail.)
- Trollope, Frances. *Domestic Manners of the Americas*. (A 19th c. critique of American culture by a British visitor.)

