

11th and 12th Graders' Suggested Summer Reading List



Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It on the Mountain.*

James Baldwin describes the course of the fourteenth birthday of John Grimes in Harlem, 1935. Baldwin also uses extended flashback episodes to recount the lives of John's parents and aunt and to link this urban boy in the North to his slave grandmother in an earlier South.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage.*

During the Civil War, a Union regiment rests along a riverbank, where it has been camped for weeks. A tall soldier named Jim Conklin spreads a rumor that the army will soon march. Henry Fleming, a recent recruit with this 304th Regiment, worries about his courage. He fears that if he were to see battle, he might run. The narrator reveals that Henry joined the army because he was drawn to the glory of military conflict. Since the time he joined, however, the army has merely been waiting for engagement.

Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* Dillard examines Tinker Creek in Virginia and the creatures that lived there. This Pulitzer Prize winning book is filled with striking descriptions of wildlife and unique insights about the wonders of nature.

Doctorow, E. L. *Ragtime.* This work of historical fiction is mostly set in New York City from about 1900 until the United States entry into World War I in 1917. A unique adaptation of the historical narrative genre, the novel blends three fictional American families and various actual historical figures into a historical framework that revolves around events, characters and ideas important in the History of the United States.

Doctorow, E. L. *The March.* Random House, 2005. Toward the end of the Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman is joined by characters both historical and fictional as he marches 60,000 Union troops on a sixty-mile wide path of pillage and destruction through Georgia and the Carolinas.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* Setting out to show to the reader "the strange meaning of

being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century," Du Bois explains the meaning of the emancipation, and its effect, and his views on the role of the leaders of his race.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man.* The unnamed African-American narrator announces, "I am invisible, understand, because others refuse to see me." His search for his identity is a complex quest, which takes him from the deep South to the North.

Faulkner, William. *Intruder in the Dust.* Race relations in the deep South of mythical Yoknapatawpha County are depicted when an elderly African-American farmer Lucas Beauchamp is framed for the shooting death of a white man.

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.* The inventor, writer, statesman, and diplomat tells his story with wit, charm, and intellect. Full of concrete suggestions and ideas on how to achieve moral perfection.

Gaiman, Neil. *Anansi Boys.* William Morrow, 2005. Fat Charlie Nancy's normal life ended the moment his father dropped dead on a Florida karaoke stage. Charlie didn't know his dad was a god. And he never knew he had a brother. Now brother Spider is about to make Fat Charlie's life more interesting—and more dangerous.

Gaiman, Neil. *Neverwhere.* Richard Mayhew is just an average guy who believes in helping people. When he stops to help an injured stranger on a London street, however, his life changes in ways he never imagined. He finds himself in London Below, where time and reality bear little resemblance to real life. In short, Richard Mayhew no longer exists. In this wildly popular fantasy, Richard must set out on a harrowing quest to solve a murder mystery in order to reclaim his life.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun.* The play is a "living-room" drama, set in Southside Chicago. Walter Lee, a black chauffeur, dreams of a

better life and hopes to use his father's life insurance money, \$10,000 to open a liquor store. Beneatha, his sister, wants to go to medical school which their mother, Lena Younger, supports. Walter sinks half of of the money into his business scheme, only to have it stolen by a con artist. Walter regains his pride and integrity when he decides...

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter.* A young woman, Hester Prynne, is led from the town prison with her infant daughter, Pearl, in her arms and the scarlet letter "A" on her breast. A man in the crowd tells an elderly onlooker that Hester is being punished for adultery. While waiting for her husband, Hester has apparently had an affair, as she has given birth to a child. She will not reveal her lover's identity, however, and the scarlet letter, along with her public shaming, is her punishment for her sin and her secrecy.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Nick Adams Stories.* A boy goes on a camping trip with his father in Michigan. A young man is held hostage inside a café by two thugs. A soldier fights on the battlefields of World War I. A troubled veteran tries to heal his war wounds... are all examples of the experiences depicted in this novel.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings.* This compilation of Hurston's nonfiction features the original version of her autobiography and her groundbreaking collection of African-American folklore.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Witchcraft of Salem Village.* An investigation of Salem's outbreak of witchcraft hysteria in an intriguing nonfiction work.

Kurson, Robert. *Shadow Divers: True Adventures of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II.* Random House, 2004. Two week-end scuba divers flirt with danger and intrigue in their six-year quest to learn more about a sunken World War II German U-boat they discovered sixty miles off the New Jersey coast.

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Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. Maladies accurately diagnosed and misinterpreted, matters temporary and life changing, relationships in flux and unshakeable, unexpected blessings and sudden calamities, and the powers of survival—these are among the themes of Jhumpa Lahiri's extraordinary, Pulitzer Prize-winning debut collection of stories.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. Gogol Ganguli, born to Indian immigrants newly arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts after an arranged marriage, grows up resenting both his strange name and the Indian culture imposed by his family.

Larson, Erik. *Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. Crown, 2003. The fates of an architect and a serial killer were linked by the greatest fair in American history: the Chicago World's Exposition of 1893, nicknamed "The White City." Edgar Award, National Book Award Finalist

Meltzer, Milton, e.d. *The American Revolutionaries: A History in Their Own Words*. A sweeping collection of primary sources that captures the spirit of '76 through the voices of people who joined the struggle for independence.

Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd*. Good and evil collide in this allegorical tale, set on the battleship *Indomitable*. This novel centers on the relationship of three men serving in the British Navy. Billy Bud, the angelic handsome sailor, is pitted against the diabolical Claggart who falsely accuses him of plotting mutiny. Captain Vera must uphold the truth and administer justice for these two after a violent confrontation.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. First published 1969. A young Black girl yearns for beautiful blue eyes like the little white girls she sees in this Nobel Prize winning author's novel.

Muir, John. *My First Summer in the Sierra*. John Muir describes his personal experiences as a sheep herder in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. Uncertain of his future goals, seventeen-year-old Richie Perry, a black high school graduate from Harlem, travels to Vietnam to fight in the United States Army. He confidently believes that the medical profile he has received for a knee injury will be properly processed and prevent him from engaging in combat. He also believes in the flurry of rumors about imminent peace and in the prevalent romantic myths about warfare.

Picoult, Jodi. *My Sister's Keeper*. Atria, 2004. Anna was conceived as a bone marrow match for her older sister, Kate, and up until now she has not challenged her role.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. First published 1963. This autobiographical novel describes an ambitious and brilliant young woman's search for values and her eventual breakdown.

Roberts, Cokie. *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation*. Morrow, 2004. The ABC news commentator and NPR news analyst offers a social history of the women of the Colonial Period who influenced the Founding Fathers.

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America*. Houghton Mifflin, 2004. In this semiautobiographical fantasy, Charles Lindbergh defeats President Roosevelt in the 1940 Presidential election and acts on his anti-Semitic leanings. Pulitzer Prize

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. The stories of four Chinese-immigrant women and their American-born daughters. The daughters try to understand and appreciate their mothers' pasts, adapt to the American way of life, and win their mothers' acceptance. The book's name comes from the club formed in China by one of the mothers, Suyuan Woo—hoping to bring luck to her family and friends and finding joy in that hope.

Tan, Amy. *The Kitchen's God's Wife*. Amy Tan wrote *The Kitchen God's Wife* about her mother, Daisy. Most of Winnie's story in the novel is drawn from Daisy's life, including the difficult life and marriage she left behind in pre-communist China. The presentation of Winnie's story, as she tells her story to Pearl, is reminiscent of the oral tradition. Tan, like Pearl, had never given much thought to her mother's life in China, and she was amazed at what she learned.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Cat's Cradle*. The Hoenikker family of this novel closely parallels Vonnegut's own family, consisting of an elder son who is a scientist, a tall middle daughter, and a younger son who joins Delta Upsilon. The narrator is again a writer who, in this case, is working on a book called *The Day the World Ended*, about the bombing of Hiroshima

Walker, Margaret. *Jubilee*. Vyry, the daughter of the white plantation owner and his black slave mistress, lived in Georgia in the middle 1800's. It is the story of a young heroine who is a black slave girl and her struggles before, during, and after the war. With facts and details, Walker presents the little-known everyday life of the slaves: their loves, hopes, fears, struggles, and triumphs.

Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle*. Scribner's, 2005. The successful MSNBC.com gossip columnist, who "made it" against all odds, shares her astonishing memoir of a childhood lived in a seriously dysfunctional, but uniquely vibrant, family.

Wharton, Edith. *Ethan Frome*. The narrator of the novel notices a crippled, frail, sad-looking man in town, whose name is Ethan Frome. Ethan drives the narrator back and forth until one winter day Ethan invites him to his home on his farm to stay the night. At the Frome farm, the narrator then sees what makes him so miserable: the two women who live with him. The narrator then begins to suspect the turn of events that led to the tragic fate of Ethan and Mattie.