

Mrs. Olson
English 10

Sophomore Summer Independent Reading List

The books on this list come highly recommended from librarians, high school English teachers, and journalists. If a title sounds interesting to you, do a little research on it to see if it's a good fit. As always, make sure your parents are involved in the book selection process. If you would like to read something that is not on the list, check with your teacher first to make sure you won't be reading it during the school year.

Fiction

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*

In Gilead, a dystopia, fertile lower-class women serve as birth-mothers for the upper class.

Buck, Pearl. *The Good Earth*

Life in China at a time before the vast political and social upheavals transformed an essentially agrarian country into a world power. Buck traces the whole cycle of life-its terrors, its passions, its ambitions, and its rewards.

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) *Don Quixote*

The adventures of an eccentric Spanish country gentleman and his companion who set out as a knight and squire of old to right wrongs and punish evil.

Bryce Courtenay, *The Power of One*

Set in South Africa during apartheid, a young Afrikaans boy forms an unlikely friendship with a black South African.

Dante. *The Inferno* (from the Divine Comedy)

Part I of the classic poem describing hell, purgatory, and heaven.

Dumas, Alexandre. *The Count of Monte Cristo*

Sent to prison on a false accusation in 1815, Edmond Dantes escapes many years later and finds a treasure which he uses to exact his revenge.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*

First published 1942. The classic authority on mythology and its interpretations.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*

A story of friendship, betrayal, and loyalty set in Afghanistan during the Taliban occupation.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible*

An American family moves to the Congo to be missionaries and is unprepared for what it meets there.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*

The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans.

Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*

Yann Martel's imaginative and unforgettable *Life of Pi* is a magical reading experience, an endless blue expanse of storytelling about adventure, survival, and ultimately, faith.

Roy, Arundhati, *The God of Small Things*

A pair of twins growing up in India face difficult circumstances which they struggle to overcome.

Paton, Alan. *Cry, the Beloved Country*

A country Zulu pastor searches for his sick sister in Johannesburg, and discovers that she has become a prostitute and his son a murderer.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*

A young German soldier in World War I experiences pounding shellfire, hunger, sickness, and death.

Smith, Alexander McCall, *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*

A delightful series of detective novels set in Botswana.

Non-Fiction

Ambrose, Stephen. *Band of Brothers*

The story of the legendary 101st Airborne and their experiences in World War II.

Bissinger, H. G. *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*

The author penetrates the culture of high school football as it is lived in Odessa, Texas.

Dinesen, Isak. *Out of Africa*

A Danish woman moves to Kenya and starts a coffee plantation in the 1930s-1940s.

Hickman, Homer. *October Sky*

A teacher inspires students in a West Virginian school to be rocket scientists.

Lansing, Alfred. *Endurance*

The incredible true story of Ernest Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica in 1914.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities*

A scathing look at the inequalities in public education in America.

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*

Born in depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants, Frank McCourt experienced a childhood fraught with poverty and occasional cruelty. This story recounts McCourt's miserable existence with remarkable exuberance and remarkable forgiveness.