

# 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading List

You will be required to read two books over the summer, one (1) from List A and one (1) from List B. Honors students must read three books. Please note that Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* counts as three books. We suggest that you purchase your own copies so that you can take notes, underline, or make comments. You will be allowed to use the books while completing a graded in class writing assignment in September.

Don't be turned off by the idea that some of the following works are considered "classic." There is a great deal of variety here; you're sure to find something that you can dig into. A quick comment on each of the books will be found in this list. Remember that you will be given a major in-class writing assignment based upon your summer reading.

## List A-

Plath, Sylvia The Bell Jar- Plath tells the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown beginning during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s. Plath herself committed suicide in 1963 and left behind this scathingly sad, honest and perfectly-written book, which remains one of the best-told tales of a woman's descent into insanity.

Sinclair, Upton The Jungle- Witness a young immigrant family as they are slowly ground down by a merciless society that treats them as animals to be used up and discarded. While Sinclair's main target was the industry's appalling labor conditions, the reading public was most outraged by the disgusting filth and contamination in American food that his novel exposed. As a result, President Theodore Roosevelt demanded an official investigation, which quickly led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug laws.

Heller, Joseph Catch 22- The modern classic black comedy that satirizes the absurdity of war. Echoes of Yossarian, the bombardier who was too smart to die but not smart enough to find a way out of his predicament, could be heard throughout the counterculture. As a result, it's impossible not to consider Catch-22 to be something of a period piece. But 40 years on, the novel's undiminished strength is its looking-glass logic. Again and again, Heller's characters demonstrate that what is commonly held to be good, is bad; what is sensible, is nonsense.

Kesey, Ken One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest- Cowed by sadistic Nurse Ratched, the inmates of a mental hospital are galvanized by a new patient, the free-spirited McMurphy, who enters a pitched battle of wills with the nurse. Critics are divided on the meaning of the book: Is it a tale of good vs. evil, sanity over insanity, or humankind trying to overcome repression amid chaos? Whichever, it is a great read.

O'Connor, Edwin The Last Hurrah- O'Connor's 1956 account of big-city politics, inspired by the career of longtime Boston Mayor James M. Curley, portrays its Irish-American political boss as a demagogue and a rogue who nonetheless deeply understands his constituents. It's simply the best book ever written about Irish Politics in Boston.

Autobiography of Malcolm X- One of the most important spokesmen for the Civil Rights movement of the sixties went through significant changes in his philosophy, which may have led to his assassination. Malcolm X's searing memoir belongs on the small shelf of great autobiographies. The reasons are many: the blistering honesty with which he recounts his transformation from a bitter, self-destructive petty criminal into an articulate political activist, the continued relevance of his militant analysis of white racism, and his emphasis on self-respect and self-help for African Americans. And there's the vividness with which he depicts black popular culture--try as he might to criticize those lindy hops at Boston's Roseland dance hall from the perspective of his Muslim faith, he can't help but make them sound pretty wonderful.

Morrison, Toni Sula- As girls, Nel and Sula are the best of friends who find in each other a kindred spirit to share in each girl's loneliness and imagination. When they meet again as adults, it's clear that Nel has chosen a life of acceptance and accommodation, while Sula must fight to defend her seemingly unconventional choices and beliefs.

Kingsolver, Barbara Pigs in Heaven- Taylor illegally adopts Turtle to save her from a life of abuse. However, Annawake Fourkiller, a lawyer, insists Turtle be returned to the Cherokee Nation. Kingsolver makes the reader understand and sympathize with both sides of the controversy, as she contrasts Taylor's inalterable mother's love with Annawake's determination to save Turtle from the stigmatization she can expect from white society.

Asimov, Isaac The Foundation Trilogy- This title counts only as one book. A thousand-year epic, a galactic struggle, a monumental work in the annals of science fiction begins a new chapter in the story of man's future. As the Old Empire crumbles into barbarism throughout the million worlds of the galaxy, Hari Seldon and his band of psychologists must create a new entity, The Foundation-dedicated to art, science, and technology-as the beginning of a new empire. Foundation and Empire describes the mighty struggle for power amid the chaos of the stars in which man stands at the threshold of a new enlightened life which could easily be destroyed by the old forces of barbarism. Second Foundation follows the Seldon Plan after the First Empire's defeat and describes its greatest threat-a dangerous mutant strain gone wild, which produces a mind capable of bending men's wills, directing their thoughts, reshaping their desires, and destroying the universe.

Amy Tan, The Bonesetter's Daughter- This novel is divided into two major stories. The first is about Ruth, a Chinese-American woman living in San Francisco. She worries that her elderly mother, LuLing, is gradually becoming more and more demented. LuLing seems increasingly forgetful, and makes bizarre comments about her family and her own past. The second major story is that of LuLing herself, as written for Ruth. Several years earlier, LuLing had written out her life story in Chinese. Ruth arranges to have the document translated. Once Ruth learns the details of her mother's past in China, she gains a new understanding of her mother and her seemingly erratic behavior. Answers to both women's problems unfold as LuLing's story is finally revealed in its entirety. Like much of her work, this novel deals with the relationship between an American-born Chinese woman and her immigrant mother.

### **List B-**

Herbert, Frank Dune- This Hugo and Nebula Award winner tells the sweeping tale of a desert planet called Arrakis, the focus of an intricate power struggle in a byzantine interstellar empire. Arrakis is the sole source of Melange, the "spice of spices." Melange is necessary for interstellar travel and grants psychic powers and longevity, so whoever controls it wields great influence.

Golding, William The Inheritors- Eight Neanderthals encounter another race of beings like themselves, yet strangely different. This new race, Homosapiens, fascinating in their skills and sophistication, terrifying in their cruelty, sense of guilt, and incipient corruption, spell doom for the more gentle folk whose world they will inherit.

Wharton, Edith Ethan Frome- Ethan Frome works his unproductive farm and struggles to maintain a bearable existence with his difficult, suspicious, and hypochondriac wife, Zeenie. But when Zeenie's vivacious cousin enters their household as a "hired girl," Ethan finds himself obsessed with her and with the possibilities for happiness she comes to represent.

Crane, Stephen The Red Badge of Courage- Is this really about Courage? Is the protagonist really courageous? Crane's novel was published as a complete work in 1895 and quickly became the benchmark for modern anti-war literature. Although the exact battle is never identified, Crane based this story of a soldier's experiences during the American Civil War on the 1863 Battle of Chancellorsville. Many veterans, both Union and Confederate, praised the book's accurate representation of war, and critics consider its stylistic strength the mark of a literary classic.

Wouk, Herman The Caine Mutiny- The story of a rebellion in the modern navy. Upon its original publication in 1951, this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel was immediately embraced as one of the first serious works of fiction to help readers grapple with the human consequences of World War II. In the intervening half-century, Herman Wouk's boldly dramatic, brilliantly entertaining story of life-and mutiny-on a Navy warship in the Pacific theater has achieved the status of a modern classic.

Knowles, John A Separate Peace- The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust.

McCourt, Frank Angela's Ashes- Born in Brooklyn in 1930 to recent Irish immigrants Malachy and Angela McCourt, Frank grew up in Limerick after his parents returned to Ireland because of poor prospects in America. It turns out that prospects weren't so great back in the old country either--not with Malachy for a father. A chronically unemployed and nearly unemployable alcoholic, he appears to be the model on which many of our more insulting clichés about drunken Irish manhood are based. Mix in abject poverty and frequent death and illness and you have all the makings of a truly difficult early life. Fortunately, in McCourt's able hands it also has all the makings for a compelling memoir.

Remarque, Erich All Quiet on the Western Front- Paul Baumer enlisted with his classmates in the German army of World War I. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. And as horrible war plods on year after year, Paul holds fast to a single vow: to fight against the principles of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other--if only he can come out of the war alive.

Angelou, Maya I Know Why a Caged Bird Sings (or any other title from her four part autobiography) In this first of five volumes of her autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learned a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These very lessons carried her throughout the hardships she endured later in life, including a tragic occurrence while visiting her mother in St. Louis and her formative years spent in California--where an unwanted pregnancy changed her life forever.

Junger, Sebastian The Perfect Storm- A hair-raising account of a storm that took the lives of a fishing boat's crew off the coast of Massachusetts. October 1991. It was "the perfect storm"—a tempest that may happen only once in a century—a nor'easter created by so rare a combination of factors that it could not possibly have been worse. Creating waves ten stories high and winds of 120 miles an hour, the storm whipped the sea to inconceivable levels few people on earth have ever witnessed. Few, except the six-man crew of the *Andrea Gail*, a commercial fishing boat tragically headed toward the storm's hellish center.