

## Senior Summer Reading 2018

**You will read two books over the summer and complete two written assignments.**

**Required: Choose one of these two books:**

**1. Book: *Educated* by Tara Westover**

**Synopsis:** Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, she prepared for the end of the world by stockpiling home-canned peaches and sleeping with her “head-for-the-hills” bag. In the summer she stewed herbs for her mother, a midwife and healer, and in the winter she salvaged metal in her father’s junkyard.

Her father distrusted the medical establishment, so Tara never saw a doctor or nurse. Gashes and concussions, even burns from explosions, were all treated at home with herbalism. The family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when an older brother became violent.

When another brother got himself into college and came back with news of the world beyond the mountain, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. She taught herself enough mathematics, grammar, and science to take the ACT and was admitted to Brigham Young University. There, she studied psychology, politics, philosophy, and history, learning for the first time about pivotal world events like the Holocaust and the Civil Rights Movement. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she’d traveled too far, if there was still a way home.

*Educated* is an account of the struggle for self-invention. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty, and of the grief that comes from severing one’s closest ties. With the acute insight that distinguishes all great writers, Westover has crafted a universal coming-of-age story that gets to the heart of what an education is and what it offers: the perspective to see one’s life through new eyes, and the will to change it.

**OR**

**2. Book: *Hillbilly Elegy* by J D Vance**

**Synopsis:** From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America’s white working class.

*Hillbilly Elegy* is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the

inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck.

The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.'s grandparents were "dirt poor and in love," and moved north from Kentucky's Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility.

But as the family saga of *Hillbilly Elegy* plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance's grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history.

A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

**CHOOSE ONE FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST. IF YOU HAVE A BOOK YOU WOULD LIKE TO READ INSTEAD, EMAIL ME TO GET IT APPROVED.**

**Book:** *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi

**Synopsis:** *American Street* is an evocative and powerful coming-of-age story perfect for fans of *Everything, Everything*; *Bone Gap*; and *All American Boys*. In this stunning debut novel, Pushcart-nominated author Ibi Zoboi draws on her own experience as a young Haitian immigrant, infusing this lyrical exploration of America with magical realism and *vodou* culture.

On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—a good life.

But after they leave Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud American cousins, Chantal, Donna, and Princess; the grittiness of Detroit's west side; a new school; and a surprising romance, all on her own.

Just as she finds her footing in this strange new world, a dangerous proposition presents itself, and Fabiola soon realizes that freedom comes at a cost. Trapped at the crossroads of an impossible choice, will she pay the price for the American dream?

**Book:** *Batman: The Dark Night Saga* by Frank Miller

**Synopsis:** It is ten years after an aging Batman has retired and Gotham City has sunk deeper into decadence and lawlessness. Now as his city needs him most, the Dark Knight returns in a blaze of glory. Joined by Carrie Kelly, a teenage female Robin,

Batman takes to the streets to end the threat of the mutant gangs that have overrun the city. And after facing off against his two greatest enemies, the Joker and Two-Face for the final time, Batman finds himself in mortal combat with his former ally, Superman, in a battle that only one of them will survive. This collection is hailed as a comics masterpiece and was responsible for the launch of the Batman movies.

**Book:** *Girl in Translation* by Jean Kwok

**Synopsis:** When Kimberly Chang and her mother emigrate from Hong Kong to Brooklyn squalor, she quickly begins a secret double life: exceptional schoolgirl during the day, Chinatown sweatshop worker in the evenings. Disguising the more difficult truths of her life-like the staggering degree of her poverty, the weight of her family's future resting on her shoulders, or her secret love for a factory boy who shares none of her talent or ambition-Kimberly learns to constantly translate not just her language but herself back and forth between the worlds she straddles.

Through Kimberly's story, author Jean Kwok, who also emigrated from Hong Kong as a young girl, brings to the page the lives of countless immigrants who are caught between the pressure to succeed in America, their duty to their family, and their own personal desires, exposing a world that we rarely hear about. Written in an indelible voice that dramatizes the tensions of an immigrant girl growing up between two cultures, surrounded by a language and world only half understood, *Girl in Translation* is an unforgettable and classic American immigrant novel—a moving tale of hardship and triumph, heartbreak and love, and all that gets lost in translation.

**Book:** *Metro 2033* by Dmitry Glukhovsky

**Synopsis:** The breathtaking original story that inspired both the METRO 2033 and METRO: LAST LIGHT video games! An international bestseller, translated into 35 languages, *Metro 2033* is a story of intensive underground survival set in the shattered subway of a post apocalyptic Moscow. In 2013, the world was devastated by an apocalyptic event, annihilating almost all mankind and turning the earth's surface into a poisonous wasteland. A handful of survivors took refuge in the depths of the Moscow underground, and human civilization entered a new Dark Age. The year is 2033. An entire generation has been born and raised underground, and their besieged Metro Station-Cities struggle for survival, with each other, and the mutant horrors that await outside. Artyom was born in the last days before the fire. Having never ventured beyond his Metro Station-City limits, one fateful event sparks a desperate mission to the heart of the Metro system, to warn the remnants of mankind of a terrible impending threat. His journey takes him from the forgotten catacombs beneath the subway to the desolate wastelands above, where his actions will determine the fate of mankind.

**Book:** *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

**Synopsis:** Paulo Coelho's masterpiece tells the magical story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who yearns to travel in search of a worldly treasure as extravagant as any ever found. The story of the treasures Santiago finds along the way teaches us, as only a few stories can, about the essential wisdom of listening to our

hearts, learning to read the omens strewn along life's path, and, above all, following our dreams.

**Book:** *I Let You Go* by Clare Mackintosh

**Synopsis:** On a rainy afternoon, a mother's life is shattered as her son slips from her grip and runs into the street . . . *I Let You Go* follows Jenna Gray as she moves to a ramshackle cottage on the remote Welsh coast, trying to escape the memory of the car accident that plays again and again in her mind. At the same time, the novel tracks the pair of Bristol police investigators trying to get to the bottom of this hit-and-run. As they chase down one hopeless lead after another, they find themselves as drawn to each other as they are to the frustrating, twist-filled case before them.

**Book:** *A Walk In the Woods* by Bill Bryson

**Synopsis:** The Appalachian Trail trail stretches from Georgia to Maine and covers some of the most breathtaking terrain in America—majestic mountains, silent forests, sparkling lakes. If you're going to take a hike, it's probably the place to go. And Bill Bryson is surely the most entertaining guide you'll find. He introduces us to the history and ecology of the trail and to some of the other hardy (or just foolhardy) folks he meets along the way—and a couple of bears. Already a classic, *A Walk in the Woods* will make you long for the great outdoors (or at least a comfortable chair to sit and read in).

**Book:** *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas.

**Synopsis:** Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor black neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend, Khalil, at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, Khalil's death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Starr's best friend at school suggests he may have had it coming. When it becomes clear the police have little interest in investigating the incident, protesters take to the streets and Starr's neighborhood becomes a war zone. What everyone wants to know is: What really went down that night? And the only person who can answer this is Starr. But what star does- or does not- say could destroy your community. It could also endanger her life.

**Book:** *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* by John Green and David Leviathan

**Synopsis:** One cold night, in a most unlikely corner of Chicago, Will Grayson crosses paths with . . . Will Grayson. Two teens with the same name, running in two very different circles, suddenly find their lives going in new and unexpected directions, and culminating in epic turns-of-heart and the most fabulous musical ever to grace the high school stage. Told in alternating voices from two YA superstars, this collaborative novel features a double helping of the heart and humor that have won them both legions of fans.

**Book:** *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline

**Synopsis:** Are you a "gamer"? What if your favorite video game became reality? In *Ready Player One*, a science-fiction thriller, it's the year 2044. The real world is an ugly place. High school student Wade Watts escapes reality by going into OASIS, a virtual reality gaming program that lets you be anything you want to be. Wade even attends high school in this video game world - a place where you can live and play and fall in love on over ten thousand virtual planets. Wade is a normal kid - until one day, a puzzle by OASIS creator and billionaire James Halliday changes everything. The first person to solve the puzzle will get Halliday's fortune. Once Wade solves the first step, his life will never be the same as other powerful players seek to find him - and possibly end his life forever...

**Book:** *Ashes to Asheville* by Sara Dooley

**Synopsis:** After Mama Lacy's death, Fella was forced to move in with her grandmother, Mrs. Madison. The move brought Fella all sorts of comforts she wasn't used to at home, but it also meant saying goodbye to her sister Zoey (a.k.a. Zany) and her other mother, Mama Shannon. Though Mama Shannon fought hard to keep Fella, it was no use. The marriage act is still a few years away and the courts thought Fella would be better off with a blood relation. Already heartbroken, Fella soon finds herself alone in Mrs. Madison's house, grieving both the death of her mother and the loss of her entire family.

Then one night, Zany shows up at Mrs. Madison's house determined to fulfill Mama Lacy's dying wish: to have her ashes spread over the lawn of the last place they were all happy as a family. Of course, this means stealing Mama Lacy's ashes and driving hundreds of miles in the middle of night to Asheville, North Carolina. Their adventure takes one disastrous turn after another, but their impulsive journey helps them rediscover the bonds that truly make them sisters. A heartrending story of family torn apart and put back together again, *Ashes to Asheville* is an important, timely tale.

**Book:** *Mistborn: The Final Empire!* By Brandon Sanderson

**Synopsis:** A thousand years ago, the prophesied hero from lore rose up to overthrow a great and terrible evil. Only, he lost, and the Dark Lord took over and has been ruling with an iron fist for a thousand years. Ash falls from the sky in this barren land, and mists come every night, deep and mysterious. In this setting, a gang of thieves decides that the prophecies were all lies and that they can't trust in some fabled hero to save them. They decide to take matters into their own hands, and plan a daring heist of the dark lord himself, planning to use the emperor's own wealth to bribe his armies away from him and take over the empire.

**Book(s):** *Lily and the Octopus* by Steven Rawley

**Synopsis:** When you sit down with *Lily and the Octopus*, you will be taken on an unforgettable ride. The magic of this novel is in the read, and I don't want to spoil it by giving away too many details. I can tell you that this is a story about that special someone: the one you trust, the one you can't live without. For Ted Flask, that someone

special is his aging companion Lily, who happens to be a dog. *Lily and the Octopus* reminds us how it feels to love fiercely, how difficult it can be to let go, and how the fight for those we love is the greatest fight of all.

**Book:** *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter* by David Sax

**Synopsis:** Sax describes various industries that have either shifted from analog goods to digital versions and how there has been a growing resurgence of their analog versions in today's society. The music industry, photography world, and brick and mortar stores have all seen a renewed interest in vinyl records, analog photos, and physical store locations. Each industry is profiled and the question arises -- why are we coming back to analog goods when digital was supposed to replace everything?

**Book:** *Eleanor and Park* by Rainbow Rowell

**Synopsis:** *Two misfits. One extraordinary love. Eleanor...* Red hair, wrong clothes. Standing behind him until he turns his head. Lying beside him until he wakes up. Making everyone else seem drabber and flatter and never good enough...Eleanor. *Park...* He knows she'll love a song before he plays it for her. He laughs at her jokes before she ever gets to the punch line. There's a place on his chest, just below his throat, that makes her want to keep promises...Park.

Set over the course of one school year, this is the story of two star-crossed sixteen-year-olds—smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try.

**Book:** *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick

**Synopsis:**By 2021, the World War has killed millions, driving entire species into extinction and sending mankind off-planet. Those who remain covet any living creature, and for people who can't afford one, companies built incredibly realistic simulacra: horses, birds, cats, sheep. They've even built humans. Immigrants to Mars receive androids so sophisticated they are indistinguishable from true men or women. Fearful of the havoc these artificial humans can wreak, the government bans them from Earth. Driven into hiding, unauthorized androids live among human beings, undetected. Rick Deckard, an officially sanctioned bounty hunter, is commissioned to find rogue androids and "retire" them. But when cornered, androids fight back—with lethal force.

**Book:** Albert Camus's *The Stranger*

**Synopsis:** Through the story of an ordinary man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder on an Algerian beach, Camus explored what he termed 'the nakedness of man faced with the absurd

**Book:** *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon

**Synopsis:** Natasha: I'm a girl who believes in science and facts. Not fate. Not destiny. Or dreams that will never come true. I'm definitely not the kind of girl who meets a cute boy on a crowded New York City street and falls in love with him. Not when my family is twelve hours away from being deported to Jamaica. Falling in love with him won't be my story.

Daniel: I've always been the good son, the good student, living up to my parents' high expectations. Never the poet. Or the dreamer. But when I see her, I forget about all that. Something about Natasha makes me think that fate has something much more extraordinary in store—for both of us.

The Universe: Every moment in our lives has brought us to this single moment. A million futures lie before us. Which one will come true?

**Book:** *How to Bake Pi* by Eugenia Cheng

**Synopsis:** What is math? How exactly does it work? And what do three siblings trying to share a cake have to do with it? In *How to Bake Pi*, math professor Eugenia Cheng provides an accessible introduction to the logic and beauty of mathematics, powered, unexpectedly, by insights from the kitchen. We learn how the béchamel in a lasagna can be a lot like the number five, and why making a good custard proves that math is easy but life is hard. At the heart of it all is Cheng's work on category theory, a cutting-edge "mathematics of mathematics," that is about figuring out how math works.

**Book:** *Girl on a Train* by Paula Hawkins

**Synopsis:** Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning and night. Every day she rattles down the track, flashes past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stops at the signal that allows her to daily watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. She's even started to feel like she knows them. Jess and Jason, she calls them. Their life—as she sees it—is perfect. Not unlike the life she recently lost. And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Unable to keep it to herself, Rachel goes to the police. But is she really as unreliable as they say? Soon she is deeply entangled not only in the investigation but in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

**Book:** *On Fire: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life* by John O'Leary

**Synopsis:** In the bestselling tradition of Brene Brown's *Daring Greatly* and Nick Vujcic's *Life Without Limits* comes a rousing 7-step plan for living a life on fire, filled with hope and possibility—from an inspirational speaker who survived a near-fatal fire at the age of nine and now runs a successful business inspiring people all around the world.

When John O'Leary was nine years old, he was almost killed in a devastating house fire. With burns on one hundred percent of his body, O'Leary mustered an almost unimaginable amount of inner strength just to survive the ordeal. The insights he gained through this experience and the heroes who stepped into his life to help him through the journey—his family, the medical staff, and total strangers—changed his life. Now he is committed to living life to the fullest and inspiring others to do the same.

An incredible and emotionally honest account of triumph over tragedy, *On Fire* contains O’Leary’s reflections on being that little boy, the life-giving choices made then, and the resulting lessons he learned.

**Book:** *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

**Synopsis:** Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew.

**Book:** *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari

**Synopsis:** Homo sapiens rules the world because it is the only animal that can believe in things that exist purely in its own imagination, such as gods, states, money and human rights. Starting from this provocative idea, *Sapiens* goes on to retell the history of our species from a completely fresh perspective. It explains that money is the most pluralistic system of mutual trust ever devised; that capitalism is the most successful religion ever invented; that the treatment of animals in modern agriculture is probably the worst crime in history; and that even though we are far more powerful than our ancient ancestors, we aren't much happier.

Note: Synopsis are curated from Amazon.com and other book-selling websites.