

English Department
English 11
Summer Reading List¹

In the Peddie English Department, we hope that you encounter both “windows” and “mirrors” during your reading journey here. As Rudine Sims Bishop writes in her essay “Windows and Mirrors: Children’s Books and Parallel Cultures”:

A book can sometimes be a window. The view from the window can be imagined or real, familiar or new, panoramic or narrow. Usually the window is also a door, and a reader has only to walk through in imagination to become a part of whatever world has been created or re-created in the book. When lighting conditions are just right, a window can also be a mirror, reflecting back for us the joys and sorrows, the loves and hates, the pain and pleasure of living. One of the reasons literature exists is to transform human experience, and reflect it back to us so that we can better understand it. Through the mirror of literature we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, of reaffirming our place in the world and our society.

In other words, books can serve as “mirrors” that reflect back to you your own experiences, while they can also function as “windows,” helping you to see the world through perspectives different than your own. While we design our academic-year curriculum with this framework in mind, we also recognize that Summer is an opportunity to continue reading literature that both reflects and broadens your perspectives.

Therefore, we ask that you select TWO books to read this Summer from your grade-level Summer Reading list:

- One book exploring topics that resonate with your own experience
- One book exploring topics that are distinct from your own experience

We recognize that *the entirety* of the book will not reflect/diverge from your own experience; rather, we ask that at least *one* aspect of it do so. (E.g. character, setting, plot, etc.) You also may not select the same book for both a ‘window’ and a ‘mirror’- you must read two *different* texts from your grade-level Summer reading list.

¹ All descriptions are from Amazon unless otherwise noted

1. [Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay](#), by Michael Chabon: A young escape artist and budding magician named Joe Kavalier arrives on the doorstep of his cousin, Sammy Clay. While the long shadow of Hitler falls across Europe, America is happily in thrall to the Golden Age of comic books, and in a distant corner of Brooklyn, Sammy is looking for a way to cash in on the craze. He finds the ideal partner in the aloof, artistically gifted Joe, and together they embark on an adventure that takes them deep into the heart of Manhattan, and the heart of old-fashioned American ambition. From the shared fears, dreams, and desires of two teenage boys, they spin comic book tales of the heroic, fascist-fighting Escapist and the beautiful, mysterious Luna Moth, otherworldly mistress of the night. Climbing from the streets of Brooklyn to the top of the Empire State Building, Joe and Sammy carve out lives, and careers, as vivid as cyan and magenta ink.

Spanning continents and eras, this superb book by one of America's finest writers remains one of the defining novels of our modern American age.

2. [Annie John](#), by Jamaica Kincaid: An adored only child, Annie has until recently lived an idyllic life. She is inseparable from her beautiful mother, a powerful presence, who is the very center of the little girl's existence. Loved and cherished, Annie grows and thrives within her mother's benign shadow. Looking back on her childhood, she reflects, "It was in such a paradise that I lived."

When she turns twelve, however, Annie's life changes, in ways that are often mysterious to her. She begins to question the cultural assumptions of her island world; at school she instinctively rebels against authority; and most frighteningly, her mother, seeing Annie as a "young lady," ceases to be the source of unconditional adoration and takes on the new and unfamiliar guise of adversary.

At the end of her school years, Annie decides to leave Antigua and her family, but not without a measure of sorrow, especially for the mother she once knew and never ceases to mourn. "For I could not be sure," she reflects, "whether for the rest of my life I would be able to tell when it was really my mother and when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world."

3. [The Art of Fielding](#), by Chad Harbach: At Westish College, a small school on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of five people are upended.

Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. College president Guert Affenlight, a longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen Dunne, Henry's gay roommate and teammate, becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike Schwartz, the Harpooners' team captain and Henry's best friend, realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella Affenlight, Guert's daughter, returns to Westish after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life.

As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one another find their true paths. Written with boundless intelligence and filled with the tenderness of youth, *The Art of Fielding* is an expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment -- to oneself and to others.

4. [Blood in the Garden](#), by Chris Herring: For nearly an entire generation, the New York Knicks have been a laughingstock franchise. Since 2001, they've spent more money, lost more games, and won fewer playoff series than any other NBA team.

But during the preceding era, the Big Apple had a club it was madly in love with—one that earned respect not only by winning, but through brute force. The Knicks were always looking for

fights, often at the encouragement of Pat Riley. They fought opposing players. They fought each other. Hell, they even occasionally fought their own coaches.

The NBA didn't take kindly to their fighting spirit. Within two years, league officials moved to alter several rules to stop New York from turning its basketball games into bloody mudwrestling matches. Nevertheless, as the 1990s progressed, the Knicks endeared themselves to millions of fans; not for how much they won, but for their colorful cast of characters and their hardworking mentality.

Now, through his original reporting and interviews with more than two hundred people, author Chris Herring delves into the origin, evolution, and eventual demise of the iconic club. He takes us inside the locker room, executive boardrooms, and onto the court for the key moments that lifted the club to new heights, and the ones that threatened to send everything crashing down in spectacular fashion.

Blood in the Garden is a portrait filled with eye-opening details that have never been shared before, revealing the full story of the franchise in the midst of the NBA's golden era. And rest assured, no punches will be pulled. Which is just how those rough-and-tumble Knicks would like it.

5. [Born a Crime](#), by Trevor Noah: Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of The Daily Show began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.

Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mother's unconventional, unconditional love.

6. [The Boys in the Boat](#), by Daniel James Brown: For readers of Unbroken, out of the depths of the Depression comes an irresistible story about beating the odds and finding hope in the most desperate of times—the improbable, intimate account of how nine working-class boys from the American West showed the world at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin what true grit really meant.

It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys' own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an

unforgettable portrait of an era, a celebration of a remarkable achievement, and a chronicle of one extraordinary young man's personal quest.

7. [The Circle](#), by Dave Eggers: When Mae Holland is hired to work for the Circle, the world's most powerful internet company, she feels she's been given the opportunity of a lifetime. The Circle, run out of a sprawling California campus, links users' personal emails, social media, banking, and purchasing with their universal operating system, resulting in one online identity and a new age of civility and transparency.

As Mae tours the open-plan office spaces, the towering glass dining facilities, the cozy dorms for those who spend nights at work, she is thrilled with the company's modernity and activity. There are parties that last through the night, there are famous musicians playing on the lawn, there are athletic activities and clubs and brunches, and even an aquarium of rare fish retrieved from the Marianas Trench by the CEO.

Mae can't believe her luck, her great fortune to work for the most influential company in the world—even as life beyond the campus grows distant, even as a strange encounter with a colleague leaves her shaken, even as her role at the Circle becomes increasingly public.

What begins as the captivating story of one woman's ambition and idealism soon becomes a heart-racing novel of suspense, raising questions about memory, history, privacy, democracy, and the limits of human knowledge.

8. [Crying in H Mart](#), by Michelle Zauner: In this exquisite story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humor and heart, she tells of growing up one of the few Asian American kids at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of a painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food.

As she grew up, moving to the East Coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, and performing gigs with her fledgling band--and meeting the man who would become her husband--her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live. It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

Vivacious and plainspoken, lyrical and honest, Zauner's voice is as radiantly alive on the page as it is onstage. Rich with intimate anecdotes that will resonate widely, and complete with family photos, *Crying in H Mart* is a book to cherish, share, and reread.

9. [The Eden Express](#), by Mark Vonnegut: Mark Vonnegut set out in search of Eden with his VW bug, his girlfriend, his dog, and his ideals. But genetic predisposition and "a whole lot of **** going down" made Mark Vonnegut crazy in a culture that told him "mental illness is a myth" and "schizophrenia is a sane response to an insane society." Here he tells his story with the eyes that see from the inside out: a moving remembrance of an era and a revealing look at mental illness . . . and getting well again.

10. [Everything I Never Told You](#), by Celeste Ng: Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet.

So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos.

A profoundly moving story of family, secrets, and longing, *Everything I Never Told You* is both a gripping page-turner and a sensitive family portrait, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another.

11. [*Fun Home*](#), by Alison Bechdel: Distant and exacting, Bruce Bechdel was an English teacher and director of the town funeral home, which Alison and her family referred to as the "Fun Home." It was not until college that Alison, who had recently come out as a lesbian, discovered that her father was also gay. A few weeks after this revelation, he was dead, leaving a legacy of mystery for his daughter to resolve.

In her hands, personal history becomes a work of amazing subtlety and power, written with controlled force and enlivened with humor, rich literary allusion, and heartbreaking detail.

12. [*A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*](#), by Dave Eggers: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* is the moving memoir of a college senior who, in the space of five weeks, loses both of his parents to cancer and inherits his eight-year-old brother. This exhilarating debut that manages to be simultaneously hilarious and wildly inventive as well as a deeply heartfelt story of the love that holds a family together.

13. [*I Have Some Questions for You*](#), by Rebecca Makkai: A successful film professor and podcaster, Bodie Kane is content to forget her past—the family tragedy that marred her adolescence, her four largely miserable years at a New Hampshire boarding school, and the murder of her former roommate, Thalia Keith, in the spring of their senior year. Though the circumstances surrounding Thalia's death and the conviction of the school's athletic trainer, Omar Evans, are hotly debated online, Bodie prefers—needs—to let sleeping dogs lie.

But when the Granby School invites her back to teach a course, Bodie is inexorably drawn to the case and its increasingly apparent flaws. In their rush to convict Omar, did the school and the police overlook other suspects? Is the real killer still out there? As she falls down the very rabbit hole she was so determined to avoid, Bodie begins to wonder if she wasn't as much of an outsider at Granby as she'd thought—if, perhaps, back in 1995, she knew something that might have held the key to solving the case.

In *I Have Some Questions for You*, award-winning author Rebecca Makkai has crafted her most irresistible novel yet: a stirring investigation into collective memory and a deeply felt examination of one woman's reckoning with her past, with a transfixing mystery at its heart. Timely, hypnotic, and populated with a cast of unforgettable characters, *I Have Some Questions for You* is at once a compulsive page-turner and a literary triumph.

14. [*I Heard Her Call My Name*](#) by Lucy Santos: For a long time, Lucy Sante felt unsure of her place. Born in Belgium, the only child of conservative working-class Catholic parents who transplanted their little family to the United States, she felt at home only when she moved to New York City in the early 1970s and found her people among a band of fellow bohemians. Some would die young, to drugs and AIDS, and some would become jarringly famous. Sante flirted with both fates, on her way to building an estimable career as a writer. But she still felt like her life a performance. She was presenting a façade, even to herself.

Sante's memoir braids together two threads of personal narrative: the arc of her life, and her recent step-by-step transition to a place of inner and outer alignment. Sante brings a loving irony to her account of her unsteady first steps; there was much she found she still needed to learn about being a woman after some sixty years cloaked in a man's identity, in a man's world. A

marvel of grace and empathy, *I Heard Her Call My Name* parses with great sensitivity many issues that touch our lives deeply, of gender identity and far beyond.

15. [Klara and the Sun](#), by Kazuo Ishiguro: Here is the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass on the street outside. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her. *Klara and the Sun* is a thrilling book that offers a look at our changing world through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator, and one that explores the fundamental question: what does it mean to love?

16. [Matrix](#), by Lauren Groff: Cast out of the royal court by Eleanor of Aquitaine, deemed too coarse and rough-hewn for marriage or courtly life, seventeen-year-old Marie de France is sent to England to be the new prioress of an impoverished abbey, its nuns on the brink of starvation and beset by disease.

At first taken aback by the severity of her new life, Marie finds focus and love in collective life with her singular and mercurial sisters. In this crucible, Marie steadily supplants her desire for family, for her homeland, for the passions of her youth with something new to her: devotion to her sisters, and a conviction in her own divine visions. Marie, born the last in a long line of women warriors and crusaders, is determined to chart a bold new course for the women she now leads and protects. But in a world that is shifting and corroding in frightening ways, one that can never reconcile itself with her existence, will the sheer force of Marie's vision be bulwark enough?

Equally alive to the sacred and the profane, *Matrix* gathers currents of violence, sensuality, and religious ecstasy in a mesmerizing portrait of consuming passion, aberrant faith, and a woman that history moves both through and around. Lauren Groff's new novel, her first since *Fates and Furies*, is a defiant and timely exploration of the raw power of female creativity in a corrupted world.

17. [The Nix](#), by Nathan Hill: It's 2011, and Samuel Andresen-Anderson hasn't seen his mother, Faye, in decades—not since she abandoned the family when he was a boy. Now she's reappeared, having committed an absurd crime that electrifies the nightly news and inflames a politically divided country. The media paints Faye as a radical hippie with a sordid past, but as far as Samuel knows, his mother was an ordinary girl who married her high-school sweetheart. Which version of his mother is true? Two facts are certain: she's facing some serious charges, and she needs Samuel's help.

To save her, Samuel will have to embark on his own journey, uncovering long-buried secrets about the woman he thought he knew, secrets that stretch across generations and have their origin all the way back in Norway, home of the mysterious Nix. As he does so, Samuel will confront not only Faye's losses but also his own lost love, and will relearn everything he thought he knew about his mother, and himself.

18. [On Beauty](#), by Zadie Smith: Having hit bestseller lists from the New York Times to the San Francisco Chronicle, this wise, hilarious novel reminds us why Zadie Smith has rocketed to literary stardom. *On Beauty* is the story of an interracial family living in the university town of Wellington, Massachusetts, whose misadventures in the culture wars—on both sides of the Atlantic—serve to skewer everything from family life to political correctness to the combustive collision between the personal and the political. Full of dead-on wit and relentlessly funny, this tour de force confirms Zadie Smith's reputation as a major literary talent.

19. [Redeployment](#), by Phil Klay: Phil Klay's *Redeployment* takes readers to the frontlines of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, asking us to understand what happened there, and what happened to the soldiers who returned. Interwoven with themes of brutality and faith, guilt and fear, helplessness and survival, the characters in these stories struggle to make meaning out of chaos.

In "Redeployment", a soldier who has had to shoot dogs because they were eating human corpses must learn what it is like to return to domestic life in suburbia, surrounded by people "who have no idea where Fallujah is, where three members of your platoon died." In "After Action Report", a Lance Corporal seeks expiation for a killing he didn't commit, in order that his best friend will be unburdened. A Mortuary Affairs Marine tells about his experiences collecting remains—of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers both. A chaplain sees his understanding of Christianity, and his ability to provide solace through religion, tested by the actions of a ferocious Colonel. And in the darkly comic "Money as a Weapons System", a young Foreign Service Officer is given the absurd task of helping Iraqis improve their lives by teaching them to play baseball. These stories reveal the intricate combination of monotony, bureaucracy, comradeship and violence that make up a soldier's daily life at war, and the isolation, remorse, and despair that can accompany a soldier's homecoming.

Redeployment has become a classic in the tradition of war writing. Across nations and continents, Klay sets in devastating relief the two worlds a soldier inhabits: one of extremes and one of loss. Written with a hard-eyed realism and stunning emotional depth, this work marks Phil Klay as one of the most talented new voices of his generation.

20. [Sag Harbor](#) by Colson Whitehead: Benji spends most of the year as one of the only black kids at an elite prep school in Manhattan, going to roller disco bar mitzvahs, desperately trying to find his place in the social hierarchy.

Then he spends his summers in the African-American community of Sag Harbor on Long Island, and is just as confused. He's way behind on the latest handshakes, baffled by new slang, and his attempts to be cool and meet girls are constantly thwarted by his extremely awkward inner geek, braces and a badly cut Afro.

It's the summer of 1985 and Benji is determined that this is the summer when things will change and he'll fit in. For starters, he'll be reinvented as 'Ben'. When that doesn't catch on, it's another summer of the perpetual mortification that is teenage existence.

21. [Transcendent Kingdom](#) by Yaa Gyasi: Gifty is a sixth-year PhD candidate in neuroscience at the Stanford University School of Medicine studying reward-seeking behavior in mice and the neural circuits of depression and addiction. Her brother, Nana, was a gifted high school athlete who died of a heroin overdose after an ankle injury left him hooked on OxyContin. Her suicidal mother is living in her bed.

Gifty is determined to discover the scientific basis for the suffering she sees all around her. But even as she turns to the hard sciences to unlock the mystery of her family's loss, she finds herself hungering for her childhood faith and grappling with the evangelical church in which she was raised, whose promise of salvation remains as tantalizing as it is elusive.

22. [Uncle Tom's Children](#), by Richard Wright: Originally published in 1938, *Uncle Tom's Children*, a collection of novellas, was the first book from Richard Wright, who would go on to win international renown for his powerful and visceral depiction of the Black experience. The author of numerous works of fiction and nonfiction, most notably the acclaimed novel *Native Son* and his stunning autobiography, *Black Boy*, Wright stands today as one of the greatest American writers of the twentieth century.

Set in the American Deep South, each of the powerful and devastating stories in Uncle Tom's Children concerns an aspect of the lives of Black people in the post-slavery era, exploring their resistance to white racism and oppression. The collection also includes a personal essay by Wright titled "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow."

23. [The Underground Railroad](#) by Colson Whitehead: Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. An outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is on the cusp of womanhood—where greater pain awaits. And so when Caesar, a slave who has recently arrived from Virginia, urges her to join him on the Underground Railroad, she seizes the opportunity and escapes with him.

In Colson Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor: engineers and conductors operate a secret network of actual tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora embarks on a harrowing flight from one state to the next, encountering, like Gulliver, strange yet familiar iterations of her own world at each stop.

As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the terrors of the antebellum era, he weaves in the saga of our nation, from the brutal abduction of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. The Underground Railroad is both the gripping tale of one woman's will to escape the horrors of bondage—and a powerful meditation on the history we all share.

24. [Watchmen](#), by Alan Moore: Considered the greatest graphic novel in the history of the medium, the Hugo Award-winning story chronicles the fall from grace of a group of superheroes plagued by all-too-human failings. Along the way, the concept of the superhero is dissected as an unknown assassin stalks the erstwhile heroes.

This edition of Watchmen, the groundbreaking series from Alan Moore, the award-winning author of V For Vendetta and Batman: The Killing Joke, features art from industry legend Dave Gibbons, with high-quality, recolored pages found in Watchmen: Absolute Edition.

25. [What I Talk About When I Talk About Running](#) by Haruki Murakami: While training for the New York City Marathon, Haruki Murakami decided to keep a journal of his progress. The result is a memoir about his intertwined obsessions with running and writing, full of vivid recollections and insights, including the eureka moment when he decided to become a writer. By turns funny and sobering, playful and philosophical, here is a rich and revelatory work that elevates the human need for motion to an art form.