

American Literature Outside Reading List
English 11AP - Second Semester

Select one of the following classic American novels to read, and bring the book to class (ebooks are ok) **Friday, January 20th**. You will need to complete this book by **Friday, March 10th**.

On The Road by Jack Kerouac

On the Road chronicles Jack Kerouac's years traveling the North American continent with his friend Neal Cassady, "a sideburned hero of the snowy West." As "Sal Paradise" and "Dean Moriarty," the two roam the country in a quest for self-knowledge and experience. Kerouac's love of America, his compassion for humanity, and his sense of language as jazz combine to make *On the Road* an inspirational work of lasting importance.

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

Their Eyes Were Watching God follows the life of Janie Crawford, a girl of mixed heritage, around the turn of the century. When Janie, at sixteen, is caught kissing shiftless Johnny Taylor, her grandmother swiftly marries her off to an old man with sixty acres. Janie endures two stifling marriages before meeting the man of her dreams, who offers not diamonds, but a packet of flowering seeds.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

They carried malaria tablets, love letters, 28-pound mine detectors, dope, illustrated bibles, each other. And if they made it home alive, they carried unrelenting images of a nightmarish war that history is only beginning to absorb. Since its first publication, *The Things They Carried* has become an unparalleled Vietnam testament, a classic work of American literature, and a profound study of men at war that illuminates the capacity, and the limits, of the human heart and soul.

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

In 1949 four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. With wit and wisdom, Amy Tan examines the sometimes painful, often tender, and always deep connection between these four women and their American-born daughters. As each reveals her secrets, trying to unravel the truth about her life, the strings become more tangled, more entwined.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name.

The Road by Cormac McCarthy

A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there.

They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other.

For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway

The story of Robert Jordan, a young American in the International Brigades attached to an antifascist guerilla unit in the mountains of Spain, it tells of loyalty and courage, love and defeat, and the tragic death of an ideal. In his portrayal of Jordan's love for the beautiful Maria and his superb account of El Sordo's last stand, in his brilliant travesty of La Pasionaria and his unwillingness to believe in blind faith, Hemingway creates a work at once rare and beautiful, strong and brutal, compassionate, moving and wise.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

A lusty, life-affirming fighter who swaggers into the world of a mental hospital and takes over, Randle Patrick McMurphy rallies the other patients around him by challenging the dictatorship of Nurse Ratched. He promotes gambling in the ward, smuggles in wine and women, and openly defies the rules at every turn. But this defiance, which starts as a sport, soon develops into a grim struggle, an all-out war between two relentless opponents: Nurse Ratched, back by the full power of authority, and McMurphy, who has only his own indomitable will. What happens when Nurse Ratched uses her ultimate weapon against McMurphy provides the story's shocking climax.

Jazz by Toni Morrison

In the winter of 1926, when everybody everywhere sees nothing but good things ahead, Joe Trace, middle-aged door-to-door salesman of Cleopatra beauty products, shoots his teenage lover to death. At the funeral, Joe's wife, Violet, attacks the girl's corpse. This passionate, profound story of love and obsession brings us back and forth in time, as a narrative is assembled from the emotions, hopes, fears, and deep realities of black urban life. Jazz is the story of a triangle of passion, jealousy, murder, and redemption, of sex and spirituality, of slavery and liberation, of country and city, of being male and female, African American, and above all of being human.

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving

Eleven-year-old Owen Meany, playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire, hits a foul ball and kills his best friend's mother. Owen doesn't believe in accidents; he believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen after that 1953 foul is both extraordinary and terrifying. At moments a comic, self-deluded victim, but in the end the principal, tragic actor in a divine plan, Owen Meany is the most heartbreaking hero John Irving has yet created.

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