

Summer Enrichment Reading List: AP Literature

The summaries/reviews of these books are compliments of www.barnesandnoble.com. If you have any questions, you can email Mrs. Potter all summer long at mpotter@tfd215.org

1. *A Girl Named Zippy* by Haven Kimmel

In this first book, Kimmel has written a love letter to her hometown of Mooreland, IN, a town with an unchanging population of 300 in America's heartland. Nicknamed "Zippy" for her energetic interpretation of a circus monkey, she could not be bothered to speak until she was three years old, and her first words involved bargaining with her father about whether or not a baby bottle was still appropriate. Born in 1965, Zippy lived in a world filled with a loving family, peculiar neighbors, and multitudes of animals, including a chicken she loved and treated like a baby. Her story is filled with good humor, fine storytelling, and acute observations of small town life.

2. *3 Nights in August* by Buzz G. Bissinger, H.G. Bissinger, and Tony Larussa

A Pulitzer Prize-winning author captures baseball's strategic and emotional essences through a point-blank account of one three-game series viewed through the keen eyes of legendary manager Tony La Russa. *Three Nights in August* shows thrillingly that human nature -- not statistics -- can often dictate the outcome of a ballgame. Through the lens of these games, Bissinger examines the dramatic changes that have overtaken baseball: from the decline of base stealing to the difficulty of motivating players to the rise of steroid use. More tellingly, he distills from these twenty-seven innings baseball's constants -- its tactical nuances, its emotional pull.

3. *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver

The Poisonwood Bible is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it -- from garden seeds to Scripture -- is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.

4. *The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood takes the art of storytelling to new heights in a dazzling new novel that unfolds layer by astonishing layer and concludes in a brilliant and wonderfully satisfying twist. The novel opens with these simple, resonant words: "Ten days after the war ended, my sister drove a car off the bridge." They are spoken by Iris, whose terse account of her sister Laura's death in 1945 is followed by an inquest report proclaiming the death accidental. But just as the reader expects to settle into Laura's story, Atwood introduces a novel-within-a-novel. The novel has many threads and a series of events that follow one another at a breathtaking pace. As everything comes together, readers will discover that the story Atwood is telling is not only what it seems to be--but, in fact, much more.

5. *Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett* by Jennifer Gonnerman

Life on the Outside tells the story of Elaine Bartlett, who spent sixteen years in Bedford Hills prison for selling cocaine--a first offense--under New York's Rockefeller drug laws. The book opens on the morning of January 26, 2000, when Bartlett is set free and returns to New York City. At 42, she has virtually nothing: no money, no job, no real home. All she does have is a large and troubled family, including four children, who live in a decrepit housing project on the Lower East Side. "I left one prison to come home to another," Elaine says. Over the next months, she clashes with her daughters, hunts for a job, visits her son and husband in prison, negotiates the rules of parole, and campaigns for the repeal of the laws that led to her long prison term.

6. *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell

Malcolm Gladwell, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, has been studying trends for years and has written several articles for the magazine that have developed into his new book, *The Tipping Point*. According to Gladwell, the Tipping Point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. Just as a sick individual in a crowded store can start an epidemic of the flu, so too can a small but precisely targeted push start a fashion trend or cause the popularity of a new restaurant to take off overnight or cause crime or drug use to taper off. In *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell shows how very minor adjustments in products and ideas can make them more likely to become immensely popular. He reveals how easy it is to cause group behavior to tip in a desirable direction by making small changes in our immediate environment.

7. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* by Erik Larson

The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany. A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and daughter Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. Suffused with the tense atmosphere of the period, the novel lends a stunning, eyewitness perspective on events as they unfolded.

8. *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko

Tayo, a young Native American, has been a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, and the horrors of captivity have almost eroded his will to survive. His return to the Laguna Pueblo reservation only increases his feeling of estrangement and alienation. While other returning soldiers find easy refuge in alcohol and senseless violence, Tayo searches for another kind of comfort and resolution. His quest leads him back to the Indian past and its traditions, to beliefs about witchcraft and evil, and to the ancient stories of his people. The search itself becomes a ritual, a curative ceremony that defeats the most virulent of afflictions--despair.

9. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan

The novel weaves together two narratives: the story of LuLing, a young girl in 1930s China, and that of LuLing's daughter, Ruth, as a middle-aged woman in modern San Francisco. Ruth is a ghostwriter chafing under the weight of a stagnant relationship and coming to terms with the growing senility of her formidable mother. A widow for four decades, LuLing struggles to raise Ruth while battling the demons that chased her from her childhood in China to her new life in America. She longs for her beloved Precious Auntie, whose restless spirit wanders the world because her dead body was thrown off a cliff, not buried..

10. *Loose Balls: The Short, Wild Life of the American Basketball Association* by Terry Pluto

The ABA was born in 1967 and in nine tumultuous seasons introduced such legendary stars as Julius Erving, Connie Hawkins, George Gervin, and Moses Malone. Pluto, a basketball writer for the Akron Beacon Journal, spins an irreverent history in interview format of the league with the three-point shot, the slam dunk contest, the red, white, and blue ball. The ABA saga includes unsettled finances, ever-changing teams, and constant war with the more established National Basketball Association. As well as the stars, we meet the owners (Earl Foreman, John Y. Brown, and Charles O. Finley), the coaches (Hubie Brown, brother Larry Brown, Bob Bass, and Slick Leonard), the bad boys (Warren Jabali and John Brisker), the characters (Wendell Ladner and Marvin Barnes), and dozens of others. Well-told by participants, this is a history laced with humor from a league filled with fun.