Swampscott High School Summer Reading 2017

Welcome to summer reading! Students are required to read ONE of the following books in his/her grade and annotate (see annotation assignment). Students should bring copy of his/her book on the first day of school. All English classes will begin with summer reading. These novels have been carefully chosen and are connected to essential questions for each course. Please feel free to email Dennis Kohut, English Department Chair with any questions about summer reading at the following address: kohut@swampscott.k12.ma.us .

At this time, you may not use an e-reader or tablet for summer reading. Our current school policy does not allow for students to have their own electronic devices.

*Students enrolled in an Advanced Placement English class should refer to the appropriate AP summer reading assignment posted on the department website*.

Freshman – Coming of Age and the Evolution of an Identity

**Eleanor and Park** by Rainbow Rowell

Eleanor, 15, is the new girl at school and bullied because she's overweight and dresses in a flamboyant manner. Park is a half-Korean boy who has lived in Omaha, Nebraska, all his life but still feels like an outsider. This is a story of first love, which very slowly builds from the first day Eleanor sits next to Park on the school bus. First they ignore each other, and then they slowly become friends through their love of comic books and 1980s alternative music. Park is the only good thing in Eleanor's life. Her home life is a miserable exercise in trying to stay out of her abusive stepfather's way, and finding new ways to wear the same clothes repeatedly since there is no money for anything extra.

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time** by Mark Haddon

Late one night, Christopher comes across his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork. Wellington's owner finds him cradling her dead dog in his arms, and has him arrested. After spending a night in jail, Christopher resolves--against the objection of his father and neighbors--to discover just who has murdered Wellington. He is encouraged by Siobhan, a social worker at his school, to write a book about his investigations, and the result--quirkily illustrated, with each chapter given its own prime number.

**Every Day** by David Levithan

Every day a different body. Every day a different life. Every day in love with the same girl.

There’s never any warning about where it will be or who it will be. A has made peace with that, even established guidelines by which to live: Never get too attached. Avoid being noticed. Do not interfere.

It’s all fine until the morning that A wakes up in the body of Justin and meets Justin’s girlfriend, Rhiannon. From that moment, the rules by which A has been living no longer apply. Because finally A has found someone he wants to be with—day in, day out, day after day.

**The Absolutely True Story of a Part-Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie

This novel is a semiautobiographical chronicle of Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, a Spokane Indian from Wellpinit, WA. The bright 14-year-old was born with water on the brain, is regularly the target of bullies, and loves to draw. He says, "I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats." He expects disaster when he transfers from the reservation school to the rich, white school in Reardan, but soon finds himself making friends with both geeky and popular students and starting on the basketball team. Meeting his old classmates on the court, Junior grapples with questions about what constitutes one's community, identity, and tribe.

**The Sun is Also a Star-** Nicola Yoon

Over the course of a single day in New York City, two teenagers who have nothing in common randomly meet and fall in love. Now I know that sounds absurdly cliché, but somehow in Nicola Yoon’s hands, it doesn’t read that way. Natasha is a practical young woman trying to keep her family from being deported in a matter of hours. Daniel is a poet at heart, but on this day he is dutifully making good on his familial commitment to a college interview. The two are inexplicably drawn to each other and somehow their paths keep converging. The novel is told in alternating points of view, and one of the special touches of Yoon’s book are the chapters narrated by people who are unintentionally part of Natasha and Daniel’s story, mirroring our almost spooky interconnectedness. *The Sun is Also a Star* is a thought-provoking story of possibility, fate, and the illogical beauty of love

**The Song of Achilles**- Madeline Miller

Betrayal, ardor, war, and prophecies--in The Song of Achilles, author Madeline Miller brings together everything I love about The Iliad without the labor of epic poetry. In this new twist on the Trojan War story, Patroclus and Achilles are the quintessential mismatched pair--a mortal underdog exiled in shame and a glorious demigod revered by all--but what would a novel of ancient Greece be without star-crossed love? Miller includes other good tragic bits--foreknowledge of death, ruthless choices that pit pride and reputation against the lives of innocents, the folly of men and gods--and through her beautiful writing my spine chilled in the presence of Achilles’ mother, the sea goddess Thetis, and I became a bystander in the battlefield of Troy awash with blood, exaltation, and despair. The Song of Achilles infuses the essence of Homer with modern storytelling in a combination that is utterly absorbing and gratifying--I can’t wait to see what Miller tackles next.

Sophomores – The Self and Society: Man at Conflict

**Never Let Me Go** -From the Booker Prize-winning author of *The Remains of the Day*comes a devastating new novel of innocence, knowledge, and loss. As children Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were students at Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school secluded in the English countryside. It was a place of mercurial cliques and mysterious rules where teachers were constantly reminding their charges of how special they were.

Now, years later, Kathy is a young woman. Ruth and Tommy have reentered her life. And for the first time she is beginning to look back at their shared past and understand just what it is that makes them special–and how that gift will shape the rest of their time together. Suspenseful, moving, beautifully atmospheric, Never Let Me Gois another classic by the author of The Remains of the Day.

**Ready Player One** - In the year 2044, reality is an ugly place. The only time teenage Wade Watts really feels alive is when he's jacked into the virtual utopia known as the OASIS. Wade's devoted his life to studying the puzzles hidden within this world's digital confines—puzzles that are based on their creator's obsession with the pop culture of decades past and that promise massive power and fortune to whoever can unlock them.
 But when Wade stumbles upon the first clue, he finds himself beset by players willing to kill to take this ultimate prize. The race is on, and if Wade's going to survive, he'll have to win—and confront the real world he's always been so desperate to escape.

**The Knife of Never Letting Go –** Patrick Ness

Prentisstown isn't like other towns. Everyone can hear everyone else's thoughts in an overwhelming, never-ending stream of Noise. Just a month away from the birthday that will make him a man, Todd and his dog, Manchee -- whose thoughts Todd can hear too, whether he wants to or not -- stumble upon an area of complete silence. They find that in a town where privacy is impossible, something terrible has been hidden -- a secret so awful that Todd and Manchee must run for their lives.

**The Girl with All the Gifts – MR Carey**

Melanie is a very special girl. Dr. Caldwell calls her "our little genius."
Every morning, Melanie waits in her cell to be collected for class. When they come for her, Sergeant Parks keeps his gun pointing at her while two of his people strap her into the wheelchair. She thinks they don't like her. She jokes that she won't bite, but they don't laugh.

**Juniors- The American Experience**

**The Book of Unknown Americans**– Christina Henriquez

The story takes place in a run-down apartment building in Delaware, home to nine families who arrived in the States from various South and Central American countries, each looking to better the lives of the next generation. In alternating chapters, these men and women share stories of how their adopted country has left its mark on them, for better and worse. The close bond that develops between the Rivera and Toro families drives the novel forward, particularly the relationship between their children Mayor and Maribel, as closely held secrets and feelings of guilt, love, hope, and despair are unpacked with warmth and compassion.

**The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao** – Junot Diaz

Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight ghetto nerd who—from the New Jersey home he shares with his old world mother and rebellious sister—dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, finding love. But Oscar may never get what he wants. Blame the fukú—a curse that has haunted Oscar’s family for generations, following them on their epic journey from Santo Domingo to the USA. Encapsulating Dominican-American history, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* opens our eyes to an astonishing vision of the contemporary American experience and explores the endless human capacity to persevere—and risk it all—

**Everything I Never Told You** by Celeste Ng

From the first sentence of Celeste Ng’s stunning debut, we know that the oldest daughter of the Chinese-American Lee family has died. What follows is a novel that explores alienation, achievement, race, gender, family, and identity--as the police must unravel what has happened to Lydia, the Lee family must uncover the sister and daughter that they hardly knew.

**Bodega Dreams – Ernesto Quinonez**

The word is out in Spanish Harlem: Willy Bodega is king.  Need college tuition for your daughter?  Start-up funds for your fruit stand?  Bodega can help.  He gives everyone a leg up, in exchange only for loyalty--and a steady income from the drugs he pushes.

**Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis** by JD Vance (Non-fiction)

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a probing look at the struggles of America’s white working class through the author’s own story of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town

*Hillbilly Elegy* is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of poor, white Americans. The disintegration of this group, a process that has been slowly occurring now for over forty years, has been reported with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. In *Hillbilly Elegy*, J.D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hanging around your neck.

American Studies

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Seniors – Comparative Global Experiences: Living Meaningful Lives

**Persepolis** by Marjane Satrapi

Adult/High School-Marji tells of her life in Iran from the age of 10, when the Islamic revolution of 1979 reintroduced a religious state, through the age of 14 when the Iran-Iraq war forced her parents to send her to Europe for safety. This story, told in graphic format with simple, but expressive, black-and-white illustrations, combines the normal rebelliousness of an intelligent adolescent with the horrors of war and totalitarianism.

**The Kite Runner** by Khaled Hosseini

Amir is the son of a wealthy Kabul merchant, a member of the ruling caste of Pashtuns. Hassan, his servant and constant companion, is a Hazara, a despised and impoverished caste. Their uncommon bond is torn by Amir's choice to abandon his friend amidst the increasing ethnic, religious, and political tensions of the dying years of the Afghan monarchy, wrenching them far apart. But so strong is the bond between the two boys that Amir journeys back to a distant world, to try to right past wrongs against the only true friend he ever had.

**Things Fall Apart** by Chinua Achebe

This novel tells two overlapping, intertwining stories, both of which center around Okonkwo, a “strong man” of an Ibo village in Nigeria. The first of these stories traces Okonkwo's fall from grace with the tribal world in which he lives, and in its classical purity of line and economical beauty it provides us with a powerful fable about the immemorial conflict between the individual and society.

**Little Bee** by Chris Cleave

Little Bee, a young Nigerian refugee, has just been released from the British immigration detention center where she has been held under horrific conditions for the past two years, after narrowly escaping a traumatic fate in her homeland of Nigeria. Alone in a foreign country, without a family member, friend, or pound to call her own, she seeks out the only English person she knows. Sarah is a posh young mother and magazine editor with whom Little Bee shares a dark and tumultuous past.

**The Sound of Waves** by Yukio Mishima

Set in a remote fishing village in Japan, The Sound of Waves is a timeless story of first love. A young fisherman is entranced at the sight of the beautiful daughter of the wealthiest man in the village. They fall in love, but must then endure the calumny and gossip of the villagers.

All synopses courtesy of amazon.com and goodreads.com

