



Summer Reading List
For incoming 11th graders
2008-09

At Tapestry High School, literacy is an important component of all classes. Incoming juniors are required to read **at least four books** over the summer, one common text in preparation for our first big unit of study or "expedition," and three from a choice of selections. You will be assessed on the required reading early in September but after the first week of school. All titles are readily available in paperback from bookstores, on-line or the public library:

Required Reading:

- Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, by Barbara Ehrenreich **1340**

Ehrenreich, a journalist, decided to find out just how people survive on the wages of the unskilled--at \$6 to \$7 an hour, only half of what is considered a living wage. So she did what millions of Americans do, she looked for a job and a place to live, worked that job, and tried to make ends meet. Even in her best-case scenario, with all the advantages of education, health, a car, and money for first month's rent, she has to work two jobs, seven days a week, and still almost winds up in a shelter. With her characteristic wry humor, Ehrenreich brings the invisible poor out of hiding and, in the process, the world they inhabit --where civil liberties are often ignored and hard work fails to live up to its reputation as the ticket out of poverty.

Choice List: Pick Three from this List

A note about the numbers on the right: These numbers are "Lexile Scores," which provide a guideline for the difficulty of these books. Generally, the higher the Lexile Score, the more challenging the book. If you are very interested in a book, chances are you will read it successfully regardless of the Lexile score, so don't let a high number keep you from reading a book you really want to read.

- **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass** **1080**

Born into a family of slaves, Frederick Douglass educated himself through sheer determination. His unconquered will to triumph over his circumstances makes his one of America's best and most unlikely success stories. Douglass' own account of his journey from slave to one of America's great statesmen, writers, and orators is as fascinating as it is inspiring.

- **When I Was Puerto Rican, Esmeralda Santiago** **1020**

"Our home was a giant version of the lard cans used to haul water from the public fountain. Its windows and doors were also metal, and as we stepped in, I touched the wall and burned my fingers." So begins this involving memoir of family life, poverty, ambition, island countryside and Brooklyn, N.Y., cityscape by the eldest of 11 Puerto Rican children. Santiago attended Harvard on a scholarship and she is now president of her own film company. She relates her childhood with humor and affection.

- **Down these Mean Streets, Piri Thomas** **820**
 As a dark-skinned Puerto Rican, born in 1928, Piri Thomas faced with painful immediacy the absurd contradictions of America's racial attitudes (among people of all colors) in a time of wrenching social change. Three decades have not dimmed the luster of his jazzy prose, rich in Hispanic rhythms and beat-generation slang.
- **The Autobiography of Malcom X, Alex Haley** **1120**
 Malcolm X's searing memoir has many fine qualities: the blistering honesty with which he recounts his transformation from a bitter, self-destructive petty criminal into an articulate political activist, the continued relevance of his militant analysis of white racism, and his emphasis on self-respect and self-help for African Americans. And there's the vividness with which he depicts black popular culture--try as he might to criticize those lindy hops at Boston's Roseland dance hall from the perspective of his Muslim faith, he can't help but make them sound pretty wonderful.
- **Manchild in the Promised Land, Claude Brown** **860**
 An unforgettable epic of growing up as a boy on the streets of Harlem. Stories are told as slices of life, made all the more striking by the author's brilliant insights into character and social pressures.
- **Autobiography of a Face, Lucy Grealy** **1200**
 At age nine, Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with a potentially terminal cancer. When she returned to school with a third of her jaw removed, she faced the cruel taunts of classmates. In this strikingly candid memoir, Grealy tells her story of great suffering and remarkable strength without sentimentality and with considerable wit.
- **The Shipping News, Annie Proulx** **730**
 In this touching and atmospheric novel set among the fishermen of Newfoundland, Proulx tells the story of Quoye. From all outward appearances, Quoye has gone through his first 36 years on earth as a big schlump of a loser. He's not attractive, he's not brilliant or witty or talented, and he's not the kind of person who typically assumes the central position in a novel. But Proulx creates a simple and compelling tale of Quoye's psychological and spiritual growth. Along the way, we get to look in on the maritime beauty of what is probably a disappearing way of life.
- **The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd** **840**
 The search for a mother, and the need to mother oneself, are crucial elements in this well-written coming-of-age story set in the early 1960s against a background of racial violence and unrest. When Lily's beloved nanny, Rosaleen, manages to insult a group of angry white men on her way to register to vote and has to skip town, Lily takes the opportunity to go with her, fleeing to the only place she can think of--Tiburon, South Carolina--determined to find out more about her past.
- **Ender's Game , Orson Scott Card** **780**
 Ender Wiggin is a very bright young boy with a powerful skill. One of a group of children bred to be military geniuses and save Earth from an inevitable attack by aliens, known here as "buggers," Ender becomes unbeatable in war games and seems poised to lead Earth to triumph over the buggers. Meanwhile, his brother and sister plot to wrest power from Ender. Twists, surprises and interesting characters elevate this novel into status as a bona fide page turner.
- **Waiting to Exhale, Terry McMillan** **710**
 McMillan's zesty novel tells the stories of four 30ish black women bound together by warm, supportive friendship and by their dwindling hopes of finding Mr. Right.
- **She's Come Undone, Wally Lamb** **760**
 "Mine is a story of craving; an unreliable account of troubles that began, somehow, in 1956 on the day our free television was delivered." So begins the story of Dolores Price, the overweight, unconventional heroine of Wally

Lamb's *She's Come Undone*. Dolores is a class-A emotional basket case, but she is no quitter; she battles her woes. Hers is a dysfunctional *Wonder Years*, where growing up in the golden era was anything but ideal.

- **This Boy's Life, Tobias Wolff** 1000
Wolff electrified critics with his 1989 memoir, which many deemed as notable for its artful structure and finely wrought prose as for the events it describes. The story is pretty grim: Teenaged Wolff moves with his divorced mother from Florida to Utah to Washington State to escape her violent boyfriend. When she remarries, Wolff finds himself in a bitter battle of wills with his abusive stepfather, a contest in which the two prove to be more evenly matched than might have been supposed. Deception, disguise, and illusion are the weapons the young man learns to employ as he grows up--not bad training for a writer-to-be. Somber though this tale of family strife is, it is also darkly funny and so artistically satisfying that most readers come away exhilarated rather than depressed.
- **Bad Boy: A Memoir, Walter Dean Myers** 970
This superb memoir begins simply with an account of Myers's family history and his boyhood. Vivid detail makes the Harlem of the '40s come alive, from the music and children's games to the everyday struggle for survival. As Myers grows older, however, his story also grows in complexity. Soon readers are caught up in his turbulent adolescence and his slow, painful development as a writer. Even while performing poorly in school, the teen endlessly devoured great works of literature, often in secret. He also wrote, sometimes quitting out of discouragement but always beginning again.
- **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou** 1070
Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learned a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These very lessons carried her throughout the hardships she endured later in life, including a tragic occurrence while visiting her mother in St. Louis and her formative years spent in California--where an unwanted pregnancy changed her life forever.
- **The Burn Journals, Brent Runyon** 690
On the sixteenth page of this incisive memoir, eighth-grader Brent Runyon drenches his bathrobe with gasoline and ("Should I do it? Yes.") sets himself on fire. The burns cover 85 percent of his body and require six months of painful skin grafts and equally invasive mental-health rehabilitation. From the beginning, readers are immersed in the mind of 14-year-old Brent as he struggles to heal body and mind.
- **Silent Spring, Rachel Carson** 1340
Silent Spring, released in 1962, offered the first shattering look at widespread ecological degradation and touched off an environmental awareness that still exists. Rachel Carson's book focused on the poisons from insecticides, weed killers, and other common products as well as the use of sprays in agriculture, a practice that led to dangerous chemicals to the food source. Carson argued that those chemicals were more dangerous than radiation and that for the first time in history, humans were exposed to chemicals that stayed in their systems from birth to death.
- **Whirligig, Paul Fleischman** 760
After a drunk teenage boy kills a girl while driving, his life is transformed by traveling the country to fulfill a seemingly whimsical request of the girl's mother.
- **Rats Saw God, Rob Thomas** 970
In order to pass English class and graduate, 18-year-old Steve York has to write a 100- page essay about his life. What sounds like a run-of-the-mill writing assignment, however, becomes an excuse for Steve to reflect on the last four years (from Texas freshman to California senior), and figure out where it all went wrong. Maybe it was when he discovered that he really couldn't relate to his father, the Famous Astronaut. Or it could be because his "heart had been run through frappé, puree, and liquefy on a love blender" by his ex-girlfriend, Wanda "Dub" Varner. No matter where the finger of blame ends up pointing, it's a wild ride of self-enlightenment

as Steve discovers that not all relationships are permanent, and that some--like the one with his dad--can be mended with a little work.

- **The Things they Carried, Tim O'Brien** 880
Weapons and good-luck charms carried by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam here represent survival, lost innocence and the war's interminable legacy. O'Brien's meditations--on war and memory, on darkness and light--suffuse the entire work with a kind of poetic form, making for a highly original, fully realized novel.
- **Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe, Fannie Flagg** 990
Set in a small Alabama train stop town in the 1930s and told through various women's voices, this novel shares anecdotes of Whistle Stop as the chapters jump back and forth through time. We hear from Mrs. Threadgoode, reminiscing fondly from her nursing home in the 1980s, and the chatty Dot Weems, editor of the gossipy town newsletter (1929-1969), and then listen in on spirited dialogue set in the town of Whistle Stop itself. Readers are set down in the corner booth to eavesdrop on the comings and goings of an array of eccentric, ragtag characters who drop in for buttermilk biscuits.
- **The Liars' Club, Mary Karr** 950
In this funny, razor-edged memoir, Mary Karr, a prize-winning poet and critic, looks back at her upbringing in a swampy East Texas refinery town with a volatile, defiantly loving family. She recalls her painter mother, seven times married, whose outlaw spirit could tip into psychosis and her fist-swinging father who spun tales with his cronies--dubbed the Liars' Club.
- **Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return, Marjane Satrapi** 500
Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return details Marjane Satrapi's experiences as a young Iranian woman cast abroad by political turmoil in her native country. Older, if not exactly wiser, Marjane reconciles her upbringing in war-shattered Tehran with new surroundings and friends in Austria. Whether living in the company of nuns or as the sole female in a house of eight gay men, she creates a niche for herself with friends and acquaintances who feel equally uneasy with their place in the world.
- **Roots, Alex Haley** 1330
Millions have read the story of the young African boy named Kunte Kinte, who in the late 1700s was kidnapped from his homeland and brought to the United States as a slave. Haley follows Kunte Kinte's family line over the next seven generations, creating a moving historical novel spanning 200 years.
- **Cane River, Lalita Tademy** 970
Lalita Tademy's riveting family saga chronicles four generations of women born into slavery along the Cane River in Louisiana.
- **Fist, Stick, Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America** 1020
Canada knows the world of inner-city children intimately, for he grew up in some of the most dangerous areas of the Bronx. As a young child, he learned that only those who can fight will survive. When he reached adolescence, the knife was the weapon of choice, but for today's youth, which he calls "the handgun generation," it is the pistol. Canada explains exactly what growing up in this war zone does to the psyche: fear, doubt and anger crowd the mind, driving out love, friendship and laughter.
- **Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters First 100 Years, Sarah and Elizabeth Delaney** 890
Born to a former slave whose owners broke the law by teaching him to read, the sisters got a solid education. North Carolina was paradise--despite the Rebbies--until Jim Crow reared its hideous head. The girls had loved to ride in the front of the trolley because the wind in their hair made them feel free, but one day the conductor sadly ordered them to the back. The family moved to New York, where Bessie became the town's second black woman dentist and Sadie the first black woman home-ec teacher. They befriended everyone who was anyone in the Harlem Renaissance (their brother won the 1925 Congressional primary there), pursued careers instead of husbands, and lived peacefully together.

- California Blue, David Klass** **820**
 A 17-year-old loner with a passion for nature discovers a new species of butterfly in the old-growth forest near his home and is thrust headlong into the battle between environmentalists and the timber industry. A gripping story of a young man holding on to personal convictions in spite of family and community pressure.
- A People's History of the United States, Howard Zinn** **No Lexile Available**
 Consistently lauded for its lively, readable prose, this revised and updated edition of *A People's History of the United States* turns traditional textbook history on its head. Howard Zinn infuses the often-submerged voices of blacks, women, American Indians, war resisters, and poor laborers of all nationalities into this thorough narrative that spans American history from Christopher Columbus's arrival to an afterword on the Clinton presidency.
- Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia. Marya Hornbacher** **No Lexile Available**
 Eating disorders are frequently written about but rarely with such immediacy and candor. Hornbacher was only 23 years old when she wrote this book so there is no sense of her having distanced herself from the disease or its lingering effects on her. This, combined with her talent for writing, gives readers a real sense of the horror of anorexia and bulimia and their power to dominate an individual's life.
- Brother, I'm Dying. Edwidge Danticat** **No Lexile Available**
 Edwidge Danticat's father and uncle chose very different paths: the former struggled to make a new life for himself in America, while the latter remained in the homeland he paradoxically loved. In following their lives and their impact on future generations, Danticat's powerful family memoir explores how the private and the political, the past and the present, intersect.
- Teen Angst? Naah! A Quasi Autobiography** **No Lexile Available**
 In his first book, 19-year-old Vizzini recounts his comical and intelligent, if not particularly penetrating experiences as a teenager coming of age in New York City. The first section covers highlights from junior high school, followed by one section each for his four years at Stuyvesant High School. Each showcases such universal and humiliating hurdles as vacationing with parents and preparing for the prom. Readers get a real sense of Vizzini through his stories.
- Dreams from My Father, Barack Obama** **No Lexile Available**
 Barack Obama, a black man raised by his white mother and grandparents, decided to journey to Kenya to learn more about his African father after receiving news of his death. This memoir is not about his father's life, but about Obama's, and he brings that home with an intimate tone. Throughout the book, the U.S. Senator looks at race from the point of view of someone who has seen and been part of a variety of cultures, and he explains how his perspective shaped his views.