

AP Language and Composition Summer Reading 2026

Dear future AP Language Students,

*This summer, you will read your choice of **two non-fiction books**.*

You may purchase your books or borrow them from the school library or the Lewis & Clark library—they will not be provided directly by your teachers because we hope to offer you choices from a wide range of topics and styles.

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When you return to school in the fall, be ready to speak and write intelligently about the ideas, arguments, concepts, and writing style of each work. While you aren't required to write anything about your reading until the school year begins, it's a great idea to **annotate** your books (sticky notes are a great way to do this with a library book!) or **take notes** as you read.

Pay particular attention to the central argument(s) of each work, and how the author connects with his or her audience. As you read, **ask yourself critical questions**, such as the following:

- “How do the author’s stylistic choices help to make the subject interesting?”
- “What research did the writer do?”
- “What perspectives or ideas are being left out?”

Some of these works are very challenging—not only in terms of the reading level, but also due to emotional content in some cases; make sure to select books that appeal to you, read carefully, and consider finding a partner to read and discuss the text with you. You might even consider a “book club” with your friends!

A final suggestion would be **to build familiarity with other non-fiction texts**: read newspapers and as many articles from quality literary magazines like *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, and/or *Harper’s Magazine* during the summer as you can, paying attention to argument, style, and structure. Get used to the format and style of non-fiction writing as much as possible.

The list below is long, but not exhaustive: If you would like to read a high-quality non-fiction book that you do not see listed, please email Jenna Clark (jclark@helenaschools.org) or Roger Scruggs (rscruggs@helenaschools.org) to check whether the selection is appropriate.

We also recommend visiting the **Lewis & Clark Library** or a **local bookstore** such as Montana Book Company or Aunt Bonnie’s Books, as they stock a wide variety of non-fiction and can not only help you find these texts but can also help you to select the best book for your taste and interests. Librarians and the great people in local shops are an incredible resource that we encourage you to tap!

Have a great summer, and Happy Reading!

-Jenna Clark & Roger Scruggs

Author Last Name	Author First Name	Title	Year Published	Category
Abbey	Edward	<i>Desert Solitaire</i>	1968	Environment
Alexander	Michelle	<i>The New Jim Crow</i>	2010	Politics
Angelou	Maya	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	1969	Culture
Arendt	Hannah	<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	1963	History/ Philosophy
Barry	Dave	<i>I'm Not Taking This Sitting Down</i>	2000	Culture
Barry	John M	<i>The Great Influenza</i>	2004	History (Science)
Bloom	Harold	<i>The Western Canon</i>	1994	Culture
Bourke	Joanna	<i>An Intimate History of Killing</i>	1999	History/ Philosophy
Bryson	Bill	<i>A Short History of Nearly Everything</i>	2003	Science
Capote	Truman	<i>In Cold Blood</i>	1965	Culture
Carr	Nicholas	<i>The Shallows</i>	2010	Education / Culture
Chomsky	Noam	<i>Manufacturing Consent</i>	1988	Media/ Propaganda
Collins	Gail	<i>When Everything Changed</i>	2009	Politics
Crawford	Matthew	<i>Shop Class as Soulcraft</i>	2009	Education
Cullen	Dave	<i>Columbine</i>	2009	Economics/ Current Events
Cullen	Dave	<i>Parkland</i>	2019	Culture
de Tocqueville	Alexis	<i>Democracy in America</i>	1835	Politics
Diamond	Jared	<i>Collapse</i>	2004	Environment
Diamond	Jared	<i>The Third Chimpanzee</i>	1991	Science
Diamond	Jared	<i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i>	1997	Science
Didion	Joan	<i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i>	2005	Culture
Dillard	Annie	<i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i>	1974	Environment
Dunbar-Ortiz	Roxanne	<i>An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States</i>	2014	History/ Philosophy
Egan	Timothy	<i>Immortal Irishman</i>	2016	History/ Philosophy
Egan	Timothy	<i>The Worst Hard Time</i>	2006	History/ Philosophy
Eggers	Dave	<i>Zeitoun</i>	2009	Economics/ Current Events
Ehrenreich	Barbara	<i>Nickel and Dimed</i>	2001	Economics/ Current Events
Ellison	Ralph	<i>Shadow and Act</i>	1964	Culture
Frankl	Viktor E.	<i>Man's Search for Meaning</i>	1946	History
Friedan	Betty	<i>The Feminine Mystique</i>	1963	Politics
Gilbert	Daniel	<i>Stumbling on Happiness</i>	2006	Science
Gitlin	Todd	<i>Media Unlimited</i>	2002	Media/ Propaganda

Gladwell	Malcolm	<i>Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference</i>	2000	Culture
Gladwell	Malcolm	<i>Blink</i>	2005	Science
Gladwell	Malcolm	<i>Outliers</i>	2008	Culture
Gladwell	Malcolm	<i>What the Dog Saw</i>	2009	Culture
Gould	Stephen Jay	<i>The Mismeasure of Man</i>	1980	Science
Grant	Adam	<i>Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know</i>	2021	Psychology / Self-Help
Green	John	<i>Everything is Tuberculosis</i>	2025	Medicine / Personal Narrative
Haley	Alex & Malcolm X	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	1965	Politics
Hamil	Pete	<i>A Drinking Life: A Memoir</i>	1994	Culture
Hayek	Frederick	<i>The Road to Serfdom</i>	1944	Economics/ Current Events
Hendrickson	Paul	<i>The Living and the Dead: Robert McNamara and Five Lives of a Lost War</i>	1996	History/ Philosophy
Hickam	Homer	<i>Rocket Boys (a.k.a. October Sky)</i>	1998	Memoir/STEM
Hillenbrand	Laura	<i>Seabiscuit</i>	1999	History
Hillenbrand	Laura	<i>Unbroken</i>	2014	History
Hillman	James	<i>A Terrible Love of War</i>	2004	History/ Philosophy
Hofstadter	Richard	<i>The American Political Tradition</i>	1948	Politics
Iyengar	Sheena	<i>The Art of Choosing</i>	2010	Culture
Johnson	Steven	<i>The Ghost Map</i>	2006	Medicine/History
Junger	Sebastian	<i>Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging</i>	2016	Culture
Kercheval	Jesse Lee	<i>Space</i>	1998	Science
Kingsolver	Barbara	<i>Animal, Vegetable, Miracle</i>	2007	Culture
Klein	Ezra (and Derek Thompson)	<i>Abundance: What Progress Takes</i>	2025	Political Science
Klosterman	Chuck	<i>Sex, Drugs, and Coco Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto</i>	2009	Culture
Kristof	Nicholas and Sheryl WuDunn	<i>Half the Sky</i>	2009	Economics/ Current Events
Krugman	Paul	<i>The Conscience of a Liberal</i>	2007	Politics
Kurson	Robert	<i>Shadow Divers</i>	2004	History
Larson	Erik	<i>The Devil in the White City</i>	2003	History/ Philosophy
Leonard	Annie	<i>The Story of Stuff</i>	2010	Culture
Leopold	Aldo	<i>A Sand County Almanac</i>	1949	Environment
Lewis	Michael	<i>The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine</i>	2010	Economics/ Current Events
Lewis	Michael	<i>Who Is the Government?</i>	2025	Politics/ Current Events

Lim	Elvin	<i>The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric</i>	2008	Culture
Mooney	Jonathan	<i>The Short Bus: A Journey Beyond Normal</i>	2007	Culture
Muir	John	<i>My First Summer in the Sierra</i>	1911	Environment
Nash	Roderick	<i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i>	1965	Environment
Nimura	Janice P.	<i>The Doctors Blackwell</i>	2021	Medicine/History
Noah	Trevor	<i>Born a Crime</i>	2016	Humor/ Memoir
Orlean	Susan	<i>The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession</i>	1998	Culture
Orwell	George	<i>Homage to Catalonia</i>	1938	History/ Philosophy
Perlstein	Rick	<i>Nixonland: The Rise of a President</i>	2008	History/ Philosophy
Pollan	Michael	<i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i>	2006	Culture
Postman	Neil	<i>Amusing Ourselves to Death</i>	1985	Culture
Preston	Richard	<i>The Hot Zone</i>	1994	Non-Fiction Medical Thriller
Ravitch	Diane	<i>The Death and Life of the Great American School System</i>	2010	Education
Reid	T.R.	<i>The Healing of America</i>	2009	Economics/ Current Events
Reynolds & Kendi	Jason & Ibram X.	<i>Stamped</i>	2020	Culture / Race
Richtel	Matt	<i>A Deadly Wandering</i>	2014	Culture
Rodriguez	Luis J.	<i>Always Running</i>	1993	Culture
Rodriguez	Richard	<i>Hunger for Memory</i>	1981	Culture
Sacks	Oliver	<i>The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales</i>	1985	Science
Safran Foer	Jonathan	<i>Eating Animals</i>	2009	Culture
Schlosser	Eric	<i>Fast Food Nation</i>	2001	Culture
Shah	Sonia	<i>The Fever: How Malaria Has Ruled Humankind for 500000 Years</i>	2010	Medicine/History
Shilts	Randy	<i>And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic</i>	1987	Medicine/History
Simon	David	<i>The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood</i>	1997	Economics/ Current Events
Skloot	Rebecca	<i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i>	2010	Science
Slouka	Mark	<i>Essays from the Nick of Time</i>	2010	Culture
Solnit	Rebecca	<i>Men Explain Things to Me</i>	2014	Politics
Sowell	Thomas	<i>Intellectuals and Society</i>	2009	Politics
Sullivan	Andrew	<i>The Conservative Soul</i>	2006	Politics
Szanto	Andras	<i>What Orwell Didn't Know</i>	2007	Media/ Propaganda
Thoreau	Henry David	<i>Walden</i>	1854	Environment

Ulin	David L.	<i>The Lost Art of Reading: Why Books Matter in a Distracted Time</i>	2010	Education
Wallace	David Foster	<i>A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again</i>	1997	Culture
Westover	Tara	<i>Educated</i>	2018	Education Memoir
Wheelan	Charles	<i>We Came We Saw We Left: A Family Gap Year</i>	2021	Travel Memoir
Will	George	<i>Men at Work: The Craft of Baseball</i>	1990	Culture
Will	George	<i>One Man's America: The Pleasures and Provocations of Our Singular Nation</i>	2008	Politics
Wood	Gordon	<i>The Radicalism of the American Revolution</i>	1991	History/ Philosophy
Wright	Richard	<i>Black Boy</i>	1945	Culture
WuDunn	Sheryl and Nicholas Kristof	<i>Half the Sky</i>	2009	Economics/ Current Events
X	Malcolm & Alex Haley	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	1965	Politics
Yousafzai	Malala	<i>I Am Malala</i>	2013	Economics/ Current Events
Zinn	Howard	<i>A People's History of the United States</i>	1980	History/ Philosophy