Welcome to American Literature! This summer assignment is meant to keep your reading and writing skills fresh. You should choose one of the following books to read. You can choose if your book is Fiction or Nonfiction.

### Fiction Choices
- **Catch 22** by Joseph Heller: The satirical story of a WWII soldier who thinks everyone is trying to kill him and hatches plot after plot to keep from having to fly planes again.
- **Bastard Out of Carolina** by Dorothy Allison: The story of an abusive Southern childhood.
- **The Known World** by Edward P. Jones: The story of a black, slave-owning family.
- **For Whom the Bell Tolls** by Ernest Hemingway: A young American anti-fascist guerilla in the Spanish civil war falls in love with a complex woman.
- **The Good Earth** by Pearl S. Buck: The story of a family in turn-of-the-century China.
- **Middlesex** by Jeffrey Eugenides: A male hermaphrodite comes to terms with having been raised as a girl.
- **The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love** by Oscar Hijuelos: The story of Cuban musician brothers in New York in the 1930s.—warning: contains graphic sex.
- **Stones from the River** by Ursula K. LeGuin: The life of a dwarf woman in Germany.
- **Roots** by Alex Haley: (Historical fiction—based on a true story) The origins of the author’s family are traced from Africa to America.
- **The Book of Unknown Americans** by Cristina Henriquez: After their daughter Maribel suffers a near-fatal accident, the Riveras leave Mexico and come to America. But upon settling at Redwood Apartments, a two-story cinderblock complex just off a highway in Delaware, they discover that Maribel's recovery—the piece of the American Dream on which they've pinned all their hopes—will not be easy.
- **Interpreter of Maladies** by Jhumpa Luhiri: Fictional stories of Indian families in the United States.
- **Prep** by Curtis Sittenfeld: A girl from a small, lower-middle class family earns a scholarship to a prestigious boarding high school, where she struggles with her identity in a the world of the 1%'s female teenagers.
- **The Underground Railroad** by Colson Whitehead: Agüila struggles with her identity in a the world of the 1%'s female teenagers.

### Nonfiction Choices
- **The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace** by Jeff Hobbs: An account of a young African-American man who escaped Newark, NJ, to attend Yale, but still faced the dangers of the streets when he returned, “nuanced and shattering” (People) and “mesmeric” (The New York Times Book Review).
- **Outliers / Blink / The Tipping Point** by Malcolm Gladwell: Fascinating statistical studies of everyday phenomena.
- **The Hot Zone: A Terrifying True Story** by Richard Preston: There is an outbreak of ebola virus in an American lab, and other stories of germs in modern society: warning: graphic and gross descriptions of diarrhea.
- **The Emperor of all Maladies** by Siddhartha Mukherjee: The history of cancer.
- **Fire Shut Up In My Bones** by Charles Blow: Poetic and powerful memoir takes us through his life, from an impoverished childhood in Louisiana to a fraternity house to adulthood, as he learns what it is to become a man and comes to terms with the abuse he suffered as a child.
- **Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America** by Gustavo Arellano.

**The Scarlet Letter** by Nathaniel Hawthorne Set in 17th-century Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony, during the years 1642 to 1649, it tells the story of Hester Prynne, who conceives a daughter through an affair and struggles to create a new life of repentance and dignity.

**On the Road** by Jack Kerouac Based on the travels of Kerouac and his friends across the United States. It is considered a defining work of the postwar Beat and Counterculture generations, with its protagonists living life against a backdrop of jazz, poetry, and drug use.

**The Awakening** by Kate Chopin Set in New Orleans and on the Louisiana Gulf coast at the end of the 19th century, the plot centers on Edna Pontellier and her struggle between her increasingly unorthodox views on femininity and motherhood with the prevailing social attitudes of the turn-of-the-century American South.

**Written by Denver-based columnist Gustavo Arellano, this novel traces the spread of world’s best cuisine (Mexican) into white mainstream America, and the cultural implications of tacos and burritos.**

**Hunger of Memory**, Richard Rodriguez. A memoir that explores Richard Rodriguez's coming-of-age in an America that challenges him to understand what it is to be a Mexican American and what it is to be a Catholic in America.

**Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives**, Suzanne Oboler Hispanic or Latino? Mexican American or Chicano? Social labels often take on a life of their own beyond the control of those who coin them or to whom they are applied. Suzanne Oboler explores the history and current use of the label “Hispanic,” as she illustrates the complex meanings that ethnicity has acquired in shaping our lives and identities.

**The Glass Universe: How the Ladies of the Harvard Observatory Took the Measure of the Stars**, by Dava Sobel

Mid Nineteenth-century Harvard College observatory employs women to be “calculators” or “human computers” to track and measure stars. Engrossing story of early American female scientists who shaped our study of astronomy.

**Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis**, by J. D. Vance A memoir about the Appalachian values of his upbringing and their relation to the social problems of his hometown.

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**Overview**

1. Bring completed assignment with you—on paper—on the first day of school.
2. Work may be typed or handwritten.
3. Any assignments not turned in during the first week of school will be marked late and receive a 20% reduction in credit. Any student who does not complete a summer assignment will be issued a zero until he/she makes up the assignment for a reduced grade in Saturday School.
4. You will write 1 essay; you get to choose the prompt. The prompts are as follows:

**Fiction Assignment Prompts** (choose 1)

- Analyze how the main character changes over the course of the novel. Use evidence from the novel to compare and contrast the character’s beliefs, personality, and priorities over the course of the novel.
- Analyze the themes of the novel. What observations does the author make about the world around him?
- Analyze a motif or symbol in the novel. What does this symbol/motif reveal about the novel’s larger themes?

This essay should include an introduction, a thesis statement, full formal analysis body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This must be a minimum of two full pages.

**Non-fiction Prompts** (choose 1)

- How do the knowledge and facts in this book contrast with previous ideas on the subject? Explain how an understanding of this subject matter has grown/evolved over time.
- Analyze the author’s purpose of the novel. What techniques does the author use to convey this purpose throughout the novel?
- What inequalities or social justice problems are revealed in this novel?

This essay should include an introduction, a thesis statement, full formal analysis body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This must be a minimum of three full pages.

*If you would like to read a different book not from the lists, you must get Ms. Hickey or Mr. B’s approval! For more questions, please reach out to Katie Hickey (katie.hickey@scienceandtech.org) or Mike Bienkowski (mike.bienkowski@scienceandtech.org) Expect a response in 1-3 business days*