

# Summer Reading 2026

## English: Entering Grade 6

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### Summer Reading for Incoming 6th Graders

**Step 1:** Collect a copy of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* and read it over the summer. You can purchase your own or borrow a copy from a library. This imaginative story should be a fun read.

**Step 2:** Read (and hopefully enjoy) the novel.

**Step 3:** Expect an in-class essay/Choice Board Project during the first week of school on *The Witches*. This essay/project will challenge you to recall events from the story and to discuss their significance.

---

## English: Entering Grade 7

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### Summer Reading for Incoming 7th Graders

**Step 1:** Collect a copy of Brian Jacques' *Redwall* and read it over the summer. You can purchase your own or borrow a copy from a library.

**Step 2:** Read (and hopefully enjoy) the novel.

**Step 3:** Expect an in-class essay during the first week of school on *Redwall*. You will be asked to write about the novel's characters - focus on the protagonist and the lessons or ideas the other characters teach them. You will be writing about the book from memory, so you are encouraged to take notes, write a summary, act out the book, talk to your friends about it, review it at the end of the summer; do whatever will help you remember the story and its details.

---

## English: Entering Grade 8

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### **Summer Reading for Incoming 8th Graders**

**Step 1:** Collect a copy of Diana Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*. You can purchase your own or borrow a copy from a library.

**Step 2:** Read (and hopefully enjoy) the novel.

**Step 3:** Expect an in-class essay during the first week of school on *Howl's Moving Castle*. You will be asked to write about the novel's characters - focus on the protagonist and the lessons or ideas the other characters teach them. You will be writing about the book from memory, so you are encouraged to take notes, write a summary, act out the book, talk to your friends about it, review it at the end of the summer; do whatever will help you remember the story and its details. *As a word of caution*, there is a wonderful film by Studio Ghibli that is very loosely based on Jones' novel and has the same title, but they are radically different in plot, tone, and themes. Don't believe that watching the film will prepare you to discuss the book.

---

### **English: Entering Grade 9**

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### **Summer Reading for Incoming Ninth Graders**

In-class response essay (first week of school)

**Step 1:** Obtain a copy of the book below through the library or a bookstore to read over the summer.

**Step 2:** As you read, consider the book's themes, characters, cultural or historical context, settings, and plot to prepare for an in-class writing assignment during the first week of classes. The in-class writing assignment will give you the opportunity to respond to the ideas in the text. You must be ready to write about the book during the first week of classes to earn full credit for the assignment.

*Life of Pi* By Yann Martel

Piscine Molitor Patel, the son of an Indian zookeeper in Pondicherry, begins his narrative back in India when as a child he developed his peculiar religious convictions -- peculiar because Piscine ("Pi" as he becomes known) decides to embrace Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam at the same time. His frustrated parents don't know what to make of Pi's unorthodox devotion to three religions, but Pi himself sees no contradiction between his sets of beliefs. When the family zoo falls on hard times, Pi's father decides to move the family to Canada in search of a new life. They travel on a Japanese cargo ship, along with many of their animals, and begin the long journey across the Pacific. The ship does not make it far beyond the Philippines, though, before encountering a strong storm. In mysterious circumstances the animals are released from their cages and the ship ruptures and begins to founder. Pi scrambles for safety, but when the confusion fades, he finds himself alone in a life raft with a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan, and Richard Parker -- a full-grown male Bengal tiger. (Provided by Bergen County Cooperative Library System)

---

### **English: Entering Grade 10**

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

#### **Summer Reading for Incoming 10th Graders**

**Step 1:** Collect a copy of Siobhan Dowd's *Bog Child* and read it over the summer. You can purchase your own or borrow a copy from a library. As historical fiction, your comprehension of the novel will be greatly improved if you take the time to learn a little about the Troubles and the 1980/1 Irish hunger strikes.

**Step 2:** Read (and hopefully enjoy) the novel.

**Step 3:** Expect an in-class essay during the first week of school on *Bog Child*. This essay will challenge you to recall events from the story and to discuss their significance.

---

### **English: Entering Grade 11**

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

## Summer Reading for Incoming 11th Graders

In-class response essay (first week of school)

**Step 1:** Choose and obtain one book from the list below to read over the summer.

**Step 2:** As you read, consider the book's themes, characters, cultural or historical context, settings, and plot to prepare for an in-class writing assignment during the first week of classes. The in-class writing assignment will give you the opportunity to respond to ideas in the text. You must be ready to write about the book during the first week of classes to earn full credit for the assignment.

### *The Great Gatsby* By F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's third book, stands as the supreme achievement of his career. First published by Scribner in 1925, this quintessential novel of the Jazz Age has been acclaimed by generations of readers. The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s.

### *Bless Me, Ultima* By Rudolpho Anaya

Set in rural New Mexico in the 1940s, the novel tells the story of a boy who learns to navigate the changing American landscape during World War II with the help of a *curandera* (spiritual healer) who guides him through the cultural, religious, and moral contradictions he faces in his community of farmers, priests, cowboys, and soldiers. Like his protagonist, Rudolpho Anaya grew up in a New Mexico community heavily influenced by both Catholicism and spiritual healers, with a *vaquero* (cowboy) father and three older brothers who went off to war in their youth. Anaya is an "extraordinary storyteller" that has "always written unpretentiously but provocatively about identity. (National Endowment for the Arts)

---

## English: Entering Grade 11 Advanced Placement

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

## Summer Reading for Incoming AP English Language and Composition 11th Graders

In-class response essay (first week of school)

**Step 1:** Choose a book from the list below and obtain a copy through the library or a bookstore to read over the summer.

**Step 2:** As you read, consider the book's themes, rhetorical devices, intended audience, purpose, and thesis to prepare for an in-class writing assignment during the first week of classes. The in-class writing assignment will give you the opportunity to respond to ideas in the text. You must be ready to write about the book during the first week of classes to earn full credit for the assignment.

*A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf

Based on lectures given at Cambridge colleges and first published by the Hogarth Press in 1929, *A Room of One's Own* is an extended essay about the predicament of female writers and a stirring call for autonomy and recognition. As well as settling scores with reactionary critics and laying the foundations of a history of women's literature, the text is also a triumph of imagination, with a celebrated passage envisaging the fate of a fictional sister of Shakespeare's.

A seminal, widely studied feminist polemic that touches on both literature and politics, *A Room of One's Own* is essential reading for those wishing to understand the progress that has been made in women's rights and the struggles that still lie ahead.

*Down and Out in Paris and London* by George Orwell

**From the author of *1984*, the classic semi-autobiographical story about the adventures of a penniless British writer in two cities.**

*Down and Out in Paris and London* follows the journey of a writer among the down-and-out in two great cities. Without self-pity and often with humor, this novel is Orwell at his finest—a sobering, truthful portrayal of poverty and the reality of social class in Europe.

*Education of a Wandering Man* By Louis L'Amour

From his decision to leave school at fifteen to roam the world, to his recollections of life as a hobo on the Southern Pacific Railroad, as a cattle skinner in Texas, as a merchant seaman in Singapore and the West Indies, and as an itinerant bare-knuckled prizefighter across small-town America, here is Louis L'Amour's memoir of his lifelong love affair with learning--from books, from wandering, and from some remarkable men and women--that shaped him as a storyteller and as a man. Like classic L'Amour fiction, *Education of a Wandering Man* mixes authentic frontier drama--such as the author's desperate efforts to survive a sudden two-day trek across the blazing Mojave desert--with true-life characters like Shanghai waterfront toughs, desert prospectors, and cowboys whom Louis L'Amour met while traveling the globe.

---

## **English: Entering Grade 12**

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### **Summer Reading for Incoming 12th Graders**

In-class response essay (first week of school)

**Step 1:** Obtain the book below to read over the summer.

**Step 2:** As you read, consider the book's themes, characters, cultural or historical context, settings, and plot to prepare for an in-class writing assignment during the first week of classes. The in-class writing assignment will give you the opportunity to respond to the ideas in the text. You must be ready to write about the book during the first week of classes to earn full credit for the assignment.

### ***The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

The searing, post-apocalyptic novel about a father and son's fight to survive. A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other. *The Road* is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, “each the other's world entire,” are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation.

---

## **English: Entering Grade 12 Advanced Placement**

The purpose of summer work is to develop the prerequisite reading skills necessary to be successful in your English class next year. If you do not practice these skills, you are setting yourself up to fail in English next year. You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of your summer reading during the first week of school, and this assignment will be graded.

### **Summer Reading for Incoming AP English Literature and Composition 12th Graders**

In-class AP Lit-style FRQ essay (first week of school)

**Step 1:** Choose and obtain one book from the list below to read over the summer.

**Step 2:** As you read, consider the book's structure/plot, characters, narration, figurative language, and settings to prepare for an in-class essay during the first week of classes. The in-class writing assignment will give you the opportunity to analyze the literary elements, complexities, and meaning of the work as a whole. You must be ready to write about the book during the first week of classes to earn full credit for the assignment.

***Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko**

Thirty years since its original publication, *Ceremony* remains one of the most profound and moving works of Native American literature, a novel that is itself a ceremony of healing. Tayo, a World War II veteran of mixed ancestry, returns to the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. He is deeply scarred by his experience as a prisoner of the Japanese and further wounded by the rejection he encounters from his people. Only by immersing himself in the Indian past can he begin to regain the peace that was taken from him. Masterfully written, filled with the somber majesty of Pueblo myth, *Ceremony* is a work of enduring power.

***Native Speaker* by Chang-Rae Lee**

In *Native Speaker*, author Chang-Rae Lee introduces readers to Henry Park. Park has spent his entire life trying to become a true American—a native speaker. But even as the essence of his adopted country continues to elude him, his Korean heritage seems to drift further and further away. Park's harsh Korean upbringing has taught him to hide his emotions, to remember everything he learns, and most of all to feel an overwhelming sense of alienation. In other words, it has shaped him as a natural spy. But the very attributes that help him to excel in his profession put a strain on his marriage to his American wife and stand in the way of his coming to terms with his young son's death. When he is assigned to spy on a rising Korean-American politician, his very identity is tested, and he must figure out who he is amid not only the conflicts within himself but also within the ethnic and political tensions of the New York City streets.