

Form VIII English

World Literature: Independent Summer Read



Reading Diary 2026

- Select one of the listed works for summer reading. It will be the subject of your summer Reading Diary and later your Fall Research Paper. Consider your selection carefully. Don't pick a book for trivial reasons: because it's short (relatively speaking) or "easy." Choose a book that genuinely intrigues you.
- The Reading Diary (RD) is due on the first day of English class. Submit it as a digital file or a handwritten journal. Ornament your diary as you like.
- Complete 8-10 diary entries, each 250-500 words. If an entry is closer to 250 words, the word count should not include lengthy quotes.
- Entries are in direct response to your summer read. Space out responses such that you are speaking to each part of the book: beginning, middle, and end.
- Date each entry and list chapters/pages referenced.
- Your RD should be both personal and interpretive: your goal should be to understand the work and relate it to your personal experience. Feel free to employ the first person "I" and to express yourself poetically; this is a place to experiment with literary style.
- After I have read and graded your diary, you and I will confer on a research paper topic, the major writing project of the Fall Semester.
- Your grade on the RD is based on your level of thoughtful engagement with the work of literature and the quality of your writing. If you wish, you may submit samples for feedback in June or July.

***** EMAIL ME YOUR SELECTION BY MAY 22. NO MORE THAN THREE CAN STAKE A CLAIM TO THE SAME BOOK. FIRST COME FIRST SERVE.**

Reading Diary Choices

1. **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** by Mark Twain
One of my all-time favorite books. Tremendous fun.
2. **The Scarlet Letter** by Nathaniel Hawthorne
Challenging but gorgeous, a brilliant tapestry with some very dark threads.
3. **The Souls of Black Folk** by W.E.B. DuBois
A profound exploration of being black in America post Reconstruction.
4. **The Unvanquished** by William Faulkner
One of the most accessible Faulkner novels but no less profound.
5. **Wiseblood** by Flannery O'Connor
Bizarre, experimental, deep. You'll never be the same for having read it.
6. **Beloved** by Toni Morrison
One of the most amazing novels of the 20th century. An uncanny tale that transcends racial politics.
7. **Slaughterhouse-Five** by Kurt Vonnegut
War, time-travel, brilliant writing.
8. **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep** by Philip K. Dick
One of the greatest works of speculative fiction.
9. **Crime and Punishment** by Fyodor Dostoevsky
One of Dostoevsky's five elephants.
10. **Laurus** by Eugene Vodolazkin
Mr. Graham recommends—he says it's up there with Lord of the Rings!
11. **Three Body Problem** by Cixin Liu
Everybody is talking about it. It won all the sf awards. First in a trilogy.
12. **Quo Vadis** by Henryk Sienkiewicz
Josh Hays's favorite. 'Nuff said
13. **Midnight's Children** by Salman Rushdie
Of the first forty Booker Prize winners, this was voted the best!
14. **Master of Go** by Yasunari Kawabata
The best place to start reading modern Japanese literature.
15. **The Importance of Being Earnest** by Oscar Wilde
Hilarious and brilliant drama.
16. **Wuthering Heights** by Emily Bronte
More dark and more mysterious than you might anticipate.
17. **Persuasion** by Jane Austen
Jane Austen was the Aristotle of literature.
18. **Antony and Cleopatra** by Shakespeare
You can never read too much Shakespeare.

19. **Morte D'Urban** by J.F. Powers
The quintessential Catholic novel. Funny, moving. Read if you like to laugh at priests.
20. **The Plague** by Albert Camus
Having lived through the pandemic will make you appreciate this novel greatly.
21. **The Sorrows of Young Werther** by Goethe
You haven't read this novel but all of Europe did.
22. **The Castle** by Franz Kafka
The Bohemian author Kafka was the Dante of the 20th century.
23. **Njal's Saga**
Perhaps the greatest of the medieval Icelandic sagas.
24. **A Tale of Two Cities** by Charles Dickens
Dickens! He's easier and more enjoyable to read now that you're older.
25. **One Hundred Years of Solitude** by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
One the greatest works of the magical realism and the Latin American Boom.
26. **Aeneid** by Virgil
Reading this Roman classic is the best prep for our reading of Dante's Inferno.
27. **The Iliad** by Homer
So different from the Odyssey. Equally great and majestic.
28. **The Secret Agent** by Joseph Conrad
One of Fr. Stephen's favorites. He's ready to discuss it with you.
29. **Things Fall Apart** by Chinua Achebe
Classic Nigerian work about colonialism. A good gut punch.
30. **The Remains of the Day** Kazuo Ishiguro
One of the most perfect novels ever written.
31. **Blindness** by Jose Saramago
You've never read anything like this. What if right now, people started going blind?
32. **Wandering Star** by J.M.G. Le Clezio
Very timely novel about displacement and hope.
33. **Platero and I** by Juan Ramon Jimenez
The genius of Andalusia