

AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading List 2025-2026

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Section I (due the first day of class) – Students must choose one of the following “Classic” novels. You can find them at the library or you can access free books online:

- [*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison](#) - This is set in the United States (both the South and Harlem) in the late 1920s/early 1930s. A nameless narrator deals with racism and personal identity. Note: This is the most frequently cited text on the AP Literature test. Also, make sure you are reading the correct novel, as there is another with the same title.
- [*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen](#) - This is set in rural England during the early 19th century. It is a romantic novel of manners that explores themes of class, marriage, and social expectations. Note: the novel has inspired countless adaptations, including modern films and retellings like *Bridget Jones's Diary*.
- [*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens](#) - This is set in both London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. It is historical fiction and addresses multiple themes of justice, class, and sacrifice (and public executions). Note: The novel inspired a Batman movie; it also has one of the most well-known opening lines of any book.
- [*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley](#) - this tells the story of a Gifted scientist who creates an artificial man and brings the creature to life. The novel is part Gothic novel - part science fiction and touches on themes such as science, ambition, and responsibility. Note: Frankenstein is the name of the scientist, not his monster, unlike the Halloween costumes.
- [*The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood](#) - This is set in the future in what is currently the United States. Birth rates have plummeted and a religious, patriarchal government takes over the country, forcing fertile women into surrogacy. Note: There is a popular Hulu show based on this dystopian novel, but there are significant differences from the book. It is still an interesting comparison.
- [*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald](#) - This is set in NYC during the spring and summer of 1922. The story revolves around the American Dream and the attainability of that dream based on social class. Note: This is the most-read novel in eleventh grade classrooms - if you read this in an eleventh grade class, you may not select it for summer reading.

After reading, write a personal response paper in which you discuss a theme from the work and relate that theme to life in the 21st Century. Begin the paper with a paragraph that briefly summarizes the plot and includes the title, the author's name, and the date the novel was first published. You should have a thesis statement at the end of your introductory paragraph. This personal response is to be 2 pages, typed, double spaced. Include within the body of the paper a **minimum of six quotes** that support that theme; cite the page number in parentheses after the quote. Submit in Google Classroom.

Section II (due the first day of class) – Select one of the following twenty-first century works for a **handwritten** dialectical journal of at least **fifteen** entries. Before selecting your choice, I encourage you to look for interviews or podcasts with these authors. They are all living and still writing. This will not only help you pick a voice you like, but it will also help you understand themes of the novel you read.

· *A Thousand Splendid Suns* - Khaled Hosseini. Set in Afghanistan, this tells a story of subjugated women over the course of four decades.

· *The Yellow Birds* – Kevin Powers. This story is set in Iraq, Virginia, and Fort Dix, and tells a story of a soldier in the War on Terror.

· *The Vanishing half* - Brit Bennett. This story tells of African American twin sisters who choose different paths in adulthood; one passes as white and disappears while the other returns to her all-Black hometown.

· *Behold the dreamers*- Imbolo Mbue. The immigrant experience in post-9/11 America is framed against the backdrop of the financial crisis, offering a dual perspective on the American dream.

· *All the Light We Cannot See* – Anthony Doerr. Set before, during, and after WW II, this tells the stories of a young blind French girl and a German orphan boy forced to be a Nazi.

· *Under the feet of Jesus* - Helena Maria Viramontes. Set in California's Central Valley, this story follows a young Mexican American girl and her family of migrant farm workers. It explores themes of poverty, immigration, labor, and resilience in the face of Injustice.

You will be using your journal for an in-class essay about injustice. Work to find and analyze quotes that will help you be successful on that writing assignment. Choose passages that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking, or puzzling. Texts often challenge the reader's attitudes, positions on current issues, and personal/family values. Social injustice is a concept that relates to the unfairness or injustice of a society and/or members of the society in the divisions of rewards, burdens, and other incidental inequalities. What examples of social injustice and/or social justice did you discover in the novel that you read? Pay attention to this.

Look for: effective or creative use of stylistic or literary devices, structural shifts, examples of patterns, passages that illustrate a particular character or setting. Your responses should be more analytical than explanatory. I will have examples posted on the class Google Classroom.

Section III (Due the first day of class) - Poetry – Select one of the following poets for an in-depth study. Do not plagiarize. I do not expect you to understand poetry heading into this class. It's important that you use your own reactions. I do not want you reading online analysis for this assignment. I know that you have not had much poetry analysis in high school. This is just for you to read and think about what these poems are saying.

Select one of the following poets and create a short “anthology” of the poet's work, including a brief biography (in your own words). You should select SIX of the poet's works to include in your anthology.

Robert Frost	Walt Whitman	Langston Hughes	Martin Espada
Randall Jarrell	Richard Wilbur	Emily Dickinson	Gwendolyn Brooks
Sylvia Plath	E.Ee Cummings	Naomi Shihab Nye	Y.B. Yeats
Dylan Thomas	Patricia Smith	Paul Lawrence Dunbar	Adrian Rich

Requirements:

- Select, research, and write a two-paragraph summary of your poet's life.
- Use [Poetry Foundation](#) or [Academy of American Poets](#) (or another reputable site) to search for poems you want to include in your anthology - try to select a variety of lengths, styles, and subjects.
- Copy and paste the title and poem into a document.
- Pick FOUR of the six poems and write 4-6 polished sentences that explain why you included this poem in your anthology. You are permitted to use “I”.
- Ideas for discussion: reason for picking the poem, reaction, insights about poetic devices and how they contribute to the meaning of the poem.

In addition to the summer reading work, you must log onto Google Classroom at some point during the summer – before the first day of school. This is a class site that will allow you to ask questions, discuss works, and keep up-to-date on assignments and changes in the class. It also has an assortment of AP resources and samples of summer work. Some of your assignments throughout the year will involve utilizing this site. Here is your [rubric for the summer reading assignment](#).

The focus of AP Literature is to develop excellence in analyzing and interpreting literature. This cannot be achieved by relying on online guides, such as Spark Notes, rather than reading the literature. Often the most challenging reading provides the greatest reward. You should work to cultivate your appreciation of novels, plays, poetry, and creative non-fiction and look for opportunities outside of summer reading to read works of literary merit. Have a great summer, and I look forward to meeting all of you in the classroom next year.