

Welcome to Advanced Placement English Language and Composition!

This course will introduce you to the various rhetorical modes of writing while requiring you to analyze non-fiction and classic works of American Literature for effective use of language and style, find your voice as a writer, and prepare for the AP English Language and Composition exam.

Over the summer, we encourage you to read at least one non-fiction book in order to maintain and improve your reading skills. Throughout the course of the year, the class will focus on enhancing your reading and writing skills in preparation for the AP English Language and Composition exam.

Below, you will find a list of suggested non-fiction books that we have enjoyed and think would be helpful for next school year. Feel free to choose a book not on this list. We anticipate having an informal discussion at the beginning of the year about what students read over the summer.

For your convenience, a summary of each book is attached.

Sports: *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown

War/Biography: *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand

Memoir: *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls

Memoir: *Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness* by Susannah Cahalan

Science/Medicine: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

Sociology: *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell

Crime/History: *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson

Business: *Freakonomics* (revised edition) by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner

We look forward to seeing you in AP English Language and Composition class in the fall!

Sincerely,

The AP Language and Composition Team (Mr. Gluskin, Ms. Gorski, Mr. Lapish, and Mr. Twadell)

Book Summaries (courtesy of amazon.com)

Sports: *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown Daniel James Brown's *The Boys in the Boat* is the kind of nonfiction book that reads like a novel. Centered around the life of Joe Rantz—a farmboy from the Pacific Northwest who was literally abandoned as a child—and set during the Great Depression, *The Boys in the Boat* is a character-driven story with a natural crescendo that will have you racing to the finish. In 1936, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team raced its way to the Berlin Olympics for an opportunity to challenge the greatest in the world. How this team, largely composed of rowers from “foggy coastal villages, damp dairy farms, and smoky lumber towns all over the state,” managed to work together and sacrifice toward their goal of defeating Hitler's feared racers is half the story. The other half is equally fascinating, as Brown seamlessly weaves in the story of crew itself. This is fast-paced and emotional nonfiction about determination, bonds built by teamwork, and what it takes to achieve glory.

Sociology: *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"—the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different?

His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band.

War/Biography: *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War.

The lieutenant's name was Louis Zamperini. In boyhood, he'd been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman,

embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown.

Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will.

Memoir: The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an "excitement addict." Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever.

Later, when the money ran out, or the romance of the wandering life faded, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town -- and the family -- Rex Walls had done everything he could to escape. He drank. He stole the grocery money and disappeared for days. As the dysfunction of the family escalated, Jeannette and her brother and sisters had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resources and will to leave home.

What is so astonishing about Jeannette Walls is not just that she had the guts and tenacity and intelligence to get out, but that she describes her parents with such deep affection and generosity. Hers is a story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that despite its profound flaws gave her the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on her own terms.

Memoir: Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness by Susannah Cahalan

An award-winning memoir and instant New York Times bestseller that goes far beyond its riveting medical mystery, *Brain on Fire* is the powerful account of one woman's struggle to recapture her identity.

When twenty-four-year-old Susannah Cahalan woke up alone in a hospital room, strapped to her bed and unable to move or speak, she had no memory of how she'd gotten there. Days earlier, she had been on the threshold of a new, adult life: at the beginning of her first serious relationship and a promising career at a major New York newspaper. Now she was labeled violent, psychotic, a flight risk. What happened?

Science/Medicine: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they'd weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb's effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave.

Crime/History: *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* by Erik Larson

Erik Larson—author of #1 bestseller *In the Garden of Beasts*—intertwines the true tale of the 1893 World's Fair and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Erik Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction.

Business: *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (revised edition) by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner

Which is more dangerous, a gun or a swimming pool?

What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common?

How much do parents really matter?

These may not sound like typical questions for an economist to ask. But Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He studies the riddles of everyday life—from cheating and crime to parenting and sports—and reaches conclusions that turn conventional wisdom on its head.

Freakonomics is a groundbreaking collaboration between Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, an award-winning author and journalist. They set out to explore the inner workings of a crack gang, the truth about real estate agents, the secrets of the Ku Klux Klan, and much more. Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, they show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—how people get what they want or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing.