

# Summer Reading 2026

## Incoming 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Parents,

Our summer reading program opts to give York Catholic students more choice in what they read, hoping that students can find a book that is a true page turner. Our goal has always been to keep students reading through the summer months, but getting students to put down the phone and pick up a book is even more challenging. In expanding our recommended list, we hope to ensure there is something for everyone, and that the summer read is a positive experience and a fun adventure. Our English Department invested time developing reading lists per grade level, to include a few classics, nonfiction, realistic and historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and dystopia.


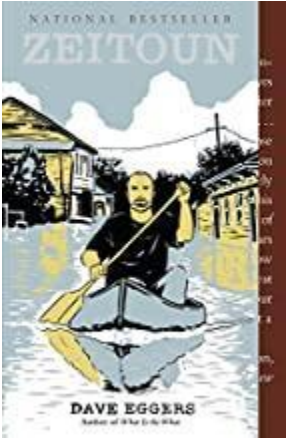
Take time with your student(s) to peruse the list, making sure their book choice meets with your parental approval. A synopsis is included with each title to assist with selection. If you are not sure where to look for more information regarding the content of the text for your child, you can consult [Common Sense Media](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) ([www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)) or look at the publisher's recommendations.

We will ask students to respond to a written prompt referencing their title once they are back in the classroom in late August.

We wish your family a safe and fun-filled summer, and invite all of you to pick up one of the titles listed to enjoy on the beach, by the pool, on a long car ride, or in a shady chair in the backyard. Happy reading, everyone!

Mrs. Kathy Hand  
Principal

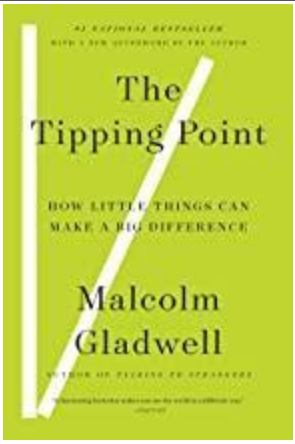
Choose one of the following books to read during the summer. When you return to school in August, your chosen book will be the topic of your first writing.

Genre	Title/Author	Summary
<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>Black Birds in the Blue Sky</i></p> <p><b>Brandy Colbert</b></p>		<p>In the early morning of June 1, 1921, a white mob marched across the train tracks in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and into its predominantly black Greenwood District—a thriving, affluent neighborhood known as America's Black Wall Street. They brought with them firearms, gasoline, and explosives. In a few short hours, they'd razed thirty-five square blocks to the ground, leaving hundreds dead. The Tulsa Race Massacre is one of the most devastating acts of racial violence in US history. But how did it come to pass? What exactly happened? And why are the events unknown to so many of us today?</p>
<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>Zeitoun</i></p> <p><b>Dave Eggers</b></p>		<p>Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun run a house-painting business in New Orleans. In August of 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approaches, Kathy evacuates with their four young children, leaving Zeitoun to watch over the business. In the days following the storm he travels the city by canoe, feeding abandoned animals and helping elderly neighbors. Then, on September 6th, police officers armed with M-16s arrest Zeitoun in his home. Told with eloquence and compassion, Zeitoun is a riveting account of one family's unthinkable struggle with forces beyond wind and water.</p>

**Nonfiction/  
Memoir**

***The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference***

**Malcolm Gladwell**

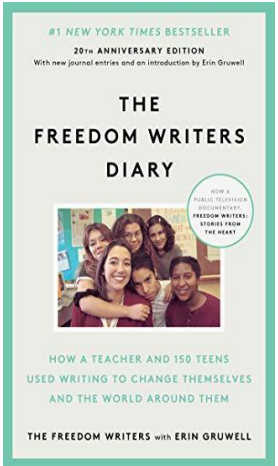


The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. Just as a single sick person can start an epidemic of the flu, so too can a small but precisely targeted push cause a fashion trend, the popularity of a new product, or a drop in the crime rate. This widely acclaimed bestseller, in which Malcolm Gladwell explores and brilliantly illuminates the tipping point phenomenon, is already changing the way people throughout the world think about selling products and disseminating ideas.

**Nonfiction/  
Memoir**

***The Freedom Writer's Diary***

**Erin Gruwell**

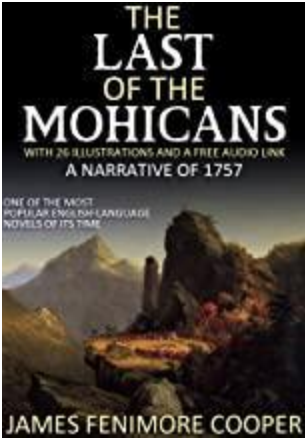
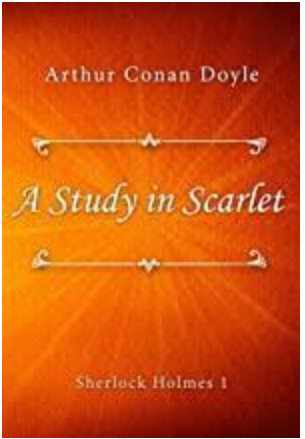
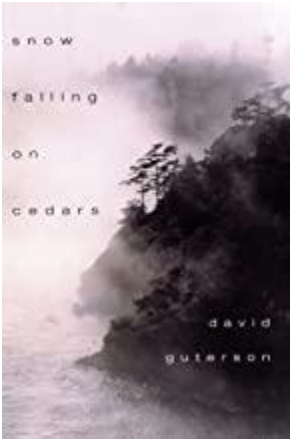


In 1994, an idealistic first-year teacher in Long Beach, California, named Erin Gruwell confronted a room of “unteachable, at-risk” students. She had intercepted a note with an ugly racial caricature and angrily declared that this was precisely the sort of thing that led to the Holocaust. She was met by uncomprehending looks—none of her students had heard of one of the defining moments of the twentieth century. So she rebooted her entire curriculum, using treasured books such as Anne Frank’s diary as her guide to combat intolerance and misunderstanding. Her students began recording their thoughts and feelings in their own diaries, eventually dubbing themselves the “Freedom Writers.” Consisting of powerful entries from the students’ diaries and narrative text by Erin Gruwell, *The Freedom Writers Diary* is an unforgettable story of how hard work, courage, and determination changed the lives of a teacher and her students.

<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>Unbroken</i></p> <p><b>Laura Hillenbrand</b></p>		<p>In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics, but when World War II began, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived, adrift on a floundering life raft. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, 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.</p>
<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor</i></p> <p><b>Laura Hillman</b></p>		<p>In the spring of 1942 Hannelore received a letter from Mama at her school in Berlin, Germany--Papa had been arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Six weeks later he was sent home; ashes in an urn. Soon another letter arrived. "The Gestapo has notified your brothers and me that we are to be deported to the East—whatever that means." Hannelore knew: labor camps, starvation, beatings. How could Mama and her two younger brothers bear that? She made a decision: She would go home and be deported with her family. Despite the horrors she faced in eight labor and concentration camps, Hannelore met and fell in love with a Polish POW named Dick Hillman. Oskar Schindler was their one hope to survive. Schindler had a plan to take eleven hundred Jews to the safety of his new factory in Czechoslovakia. Incredibly both she and Dick were added to his list, but survival was not that simple. Weeks later Hannelore found herself, alone, outside the gates of Auschwitz, pushed toward the smoking crematoria.</p>

<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>Becoming</i></p> <p><b>Michelle Obama</b></p>	 <p>The book cover for 'Becoming' by Michelle Obama features a portrait of Michelle Obama smiling and resting her chin on her hand. The title 'BECOMING' is at the top, and 'MICHELLE OBAMA' is at the bottom. A small line of text at the top reads 'FEATURING A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR'.</p>	<p>In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America—the first African American to serve in that role—she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world, dramatically changing the ways that families pursue healthier and more active lives, and standing with her husband as he led America through some of its most harrowing moments. In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address.</p>
<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>The Glass Castle</i></p> <p><b>Jeannette Walls</b></p>	 <p>The book cover for 'The Glass Castle' by Jeannette Walls features a black and white photograph of a young child. The title 'THE GLASS CASTLE' is centered above the image, and 'JEANNETTE WALLS' is centered below it. At the top, it says 'THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER'. At the bottom, it says 'AUTHOR OF HALF BROTHER SISTER' and 'WITH THE SILVER STAR'. There is also a quote from 'The New York Times' at the bottom.</p>	<p><i>The Glass Castle</i> is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette’s brilliant and charismatic father captured his children’s imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn’t want the responsibility of raising a family. The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.</p>

<p><b>Nonfiction/ Memoir</b></p> <p><i>Educated</i></p> <p>Tara Westover</p>		<p>Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara’s older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she’d traveled too far, if there was still a way home.</p>
<p><b>Classics</b></p> <p><i>My Antonia</i></p> <p>Willa Cather</p>		<p>This is the classic story of the daughter of the immigrant Bohemian Shimerda family that sets out to farm the untamed prairie land of Nebraska in the late 19th century. The father of the family finds the demands of this new life unbearable. He did not want to leave his homeland where he had a home, a trade, and friends, but does so because his wife believes their children will have a better life in America. The burdens of this new life become too much for the father to bear and he commits suicide before the end of the first winter. Told to us from the perspective of the adoring Jim Burden, an orphan who comes to live at his grandparent’s neighboring farm, <i>My Antonia</i> is an enduring American classic rich with both the spirit that brought so many immigrants to this land in search of a better life and of the tragic circumstances that affected so many pioneers.</p>

<p><b>Classics</b></p> <p><i>The Last of the Mohicans</i></p> <p><b>James Fenimore Cooper</b></p>		<p>The story is set in 1757 during the French and Indian War when France and Great Britain battled for control of the American and Canadian colonies. The colonizers war however, overlays older struggles between nations of Native Americans for possession of the same lands. Through these layers of conflict, Cooper threads a thrilling narrative, in which Cora and Alice Munro—daughters of a British commander on the frontline of the colonial war—attempt to join their father. They are thwarted by Magua, the sinister ‘Indian runner.’ Luckily, the two sisters find help from a person called Hawkeye, the white woodsman, and his companions, the Mohican Chingachgook and Uncas, his son—the last of his tribe.</p>
<p><b>Classics</b></p> <p><i>A Study in Scarlet</i></p> <p><b>Arthur Conan Doyle</b></p>		<p>The first of the Sherlock Holmes stories, this was also the first of Conan Doyle’s books to be published. In this fascinating and exciting tale, the two towering creations of detective fiction—Holmes, the master of the science of detection, and Watson, his faithful companion—make their auspicious debut. The two detectives are immediately in fine form as Holmes plucks the solution to the mystery from the heart of Victorian London.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i></p> <p><b>David Guterson</b></p>		<p>San Pedro Island, north of Puget Sound, is a place so isolated that no one who lives there can afford to make enemies, but in 1954 a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder. In the course of the ensuing trial, it becomes clear that what is at stake is more than a man's guilt. For on San Pedro, memory grows as thickly as cedar trees and the fields of ripe strawberries—memories of a charmed love affair between a white boy and the Japanese girl who grew up to become Kabuo's wife, memories of land desired, paid for, and lost. Above all, San Pedro is haunted by the memory of what happened to its Japanese residents during World War II, when an entire</p>

		<p>community was sent into exile while its neighbors watched. Gripping, tragic, and densely atmospheric, <i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i> is a masterpiece of suspense—one that leaves us shaken and changed.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>The Kite Runner</i></p> <p><b>Khaled Hosseini</b></p>		<p>The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father’s servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history, <i>The Kite Runner</i> transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, the possibility of redemption, and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>The Beekeeper’s Apprentice</i></p> <p><b>Laurie King</b></p>		<p>In 1915, Sherlock Holmes is retired and quietly engaged in the study of honeybees in Sussex when a young woman literally stumbles onto him on the Sussex Downs. Fifteen years old, gawky, egotistical, and recently orphaned, the young Mary Russell displays an intellect to impress even Sherlock Holmes. Under his reluctant tutelage, this very modern, twentieth-century woman proves a deft protégée and a fitting partner for the Victorian detective. They are soon called to Wales to help Scotland Yard find the kidnapped daughter of an American senator, a case of international significance with clues that dip deep into Holmes's past.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>Misery</i></p> <p><b>Stephen King</b></p>		<p>Bestselling novelist Paul Sheldon thinks he’s finally free of Misery Chastain. In a controversial career move, he’s just killed off the popular protagonist of his beloved romance series in favor of expanding his creative horizons, but such a change doesn’t come without consequences. After a near-fatal car accident in rural Colorado leaves his body broken, Paul finds himself at the mercy of the terrifying rescuer who’s nursing him back to health—his self-proclaimed number one fan, Annie Wilkes.</p>

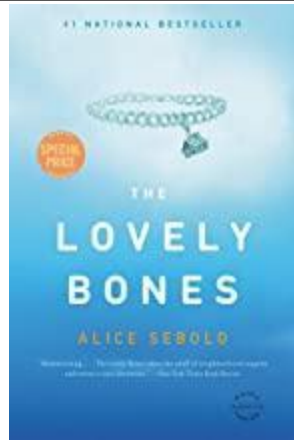
		<p>Annie is very upset over what Paul did to Misery and demands that he find a way to bring her back by writing a new novel—his best yet, and one that’s all for her. After all, Paul has all the time in the world to do so as a prisoner in her isolated house...and Annie has some very persuasive and violent methods to get exactly what she wants.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>The Bean Trees</i></p> <p><b>Barbara Kingsolver</b></p>		<p>This is the charming, engrossing tale of rural Kentucky native Taylor Greer, who only wants to get away from her roots and avoid getting pregnant. She succeeds, but inherits a three-year-old Native American girl named Turtle along the way, and together, from Oklahoma to Arizona, half-Cherokee Taylor and her charge search for a new life in the West. Hers is a story about love and friendship, abandonment and belonging, and the discovery of surprising resources in seemingly empty places.</p>
<p><b>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</b></p> <p><i>The Dante Club</i></p> <p><b>Matthew Pearl</b></p>		<p>Boston, 1865. The literary geniuses of the Dante Club—poets and Harvard professors Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell, along with publisher J. T. Fields—are finishing America’s first translation of <i>The Divine Comedy</i>. The powerful Boston Brahmins at Harvard College are fighting to keep Dante in obscurity, believing the infiltration of foreign superstitions to be as corrupting as the immigrants arriving at Boston Harbor, but as the members of the Dante Club fight to keep a sacred literary cause alive, their plans fall apart when a series of murders erupt through Boston and Cambridge. Only this small group of scholars realizes that the gruesome killings are modeled on the descriptions of Hell’s punishments from Dante’s <i>Inferno</i>. With the lives of the Boston elite and Dante’s literary future in the New World at stake, the members of the Dante Club must find the killer before the authorities discover their secret.</p>

<p>Science Fiction/ Fantasy/ Dystopia</p> <p><i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i></p> <p>Douglas Adams</p>		<p>It's an ordinary Thursday morning for Arthur Dent... until his house gets demolished. The Earth follows shortly after to make way for a new hyperspace express route, and Arthur's best friend has just announced that he's an alien. After that, things get much, much worse. With just a towel, a small yellow fish, and a book, Arthur has to navigate through a very hostile universe in the company of a gang of unreliable aliens. Luckily the fish is quite good at languages and the book is <i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>, which helpfully has the words DON'T PANIC inscribed in large, friendly letters on its cover.</p>
<p>Science Fiction/ Fantasy/ Dystopia</p> <p><i>A Great and Terrible Beauty</i></p> <p>Libba Bray</p>		<p>It's 1895, and after the suicide of her mother, 16-year-old Gemma Doyle is shipped off from the life she knows in India to Spence, a proper boarding school in England. Lonely, guilt-ridden, and prone to visions of the future that have an uncomfortable habit of coming true, Gemma's reception there is a chilly one. To make things worse, she's been followed by a mysterious young Indian man, a man sent to watch her. But why? What is her destiny? And what will her entanglement with Spence's most powerful girls—and their foray into the spiritual world—lead to?</p>
<p>Science Fiction/ Fantasy/ Dystopia</p> <p><i>Never Let Me Go</i></p> <p>Kazuo Ishiguro</p>		<p>As children, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were students at Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school secluded in the English countryside. It was a place of mercurial cliques and mysterious rules where teachers were constantly reminding their charges of how special they were. Now, years later, Kathy is a young woman. Ruth and Tommy have reentered her life, and for the first time she is beginning to look back at their shared past and understand just what it is that makes them special—and how that gift will shape the rest of their time together.</p>

Science  
Fiction/  
Fantasy/  
Dystopia

*The Lovely  
Bones*

Alice Sebold



"My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973." So begins the story of Susie Salmon, who is adjusting to her new home in heaven, a place that is not at all what she expected, even as she is watching life on earth continue without her -- her friends trading rumors about her disappearance, her killer trying to cover his tracks, her grief-stricken family unraveling. Out of unspeakable tragedy and loss, *The Lovely Bones* succeeds, miraculously, in building a tale filled with hope, humor, suspense, even joy.