

## Summer Reading List

Dear Incoming Seniors,

This is it! Your Final Preston Summer Reading Assignment has arrived!

Of course, reading is the best preparation for the academic challenges that college will send your way. It expands your vocabulary and your horizons. Reading keeps your brain in gear. Regardless of why you read or what you read, reading makes you smarter. It's that simple. Readers are better writers. They get the 'sound' of good writing in their head, and they use that as a measure of their own work.

What follows are the requirements for Preston's Summer Reading Program for Rising Seniors. We expect you to read a minimum of four books over the summer—and complete a short writing assignment regarding two of these mandatory books. We do, however, allow you, the student, to have some choice in what you read.

Our goal is to have you read for pleasure, so we have provided you with a list of a wide range of books that cover many subjects and interests. Some books are short, but challenging. Others are longer, but easy to read and understand. Still, others represent a middle level of difficulty. Either way, we are sure you'll find something that appeals to you on each list.

You must have the required readings with you throughout the first months of school, but feel free to use the New York Public Library as a resource. For more information on *SimplyE*, the library's free version of *Kindle*, please access this link: <https://www.nypl.org/books-music-movies/ebookcentral/simplye>

If you have any questions, feel free to email Ms. Esposito, the English Department Chairperson, at [mesposito@prestonhs.org](mailto:mesposito@prestonhs.org)

Enjoy your summer and see you next year!

Sincerely,

The Senior-Level Faculty

**Assignment:**

**1. Access and read Edith Wharton’s *House of Mirth* and Truman Capote’s “Breakfast at Tiffany’s.”** While you can purchase any hard-copy version, we suggest the below ISBN editions since you can easily find them in any store. As noted on the previous page, you can also use The New York Public Library’s *SimplyE*: <https://www.nypl.org/books-music-movies/ebookcentral/simplye>

<i>The House of Mirth</i> ISBN-10: 1690037474 ISBN-13: 978-1690037477	Breakfast at Tiffany’s ISBN-10: 0679745653 ISBN-13: 978-0679745655
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**2. Complete the following writing assignments as a typed document which you should submit during class in September and, later, on Turn-It-In.com:**

Lily Bart and Holly Golightly are two women who, like everyone, must contend with the circumstances of their births and the times in which they live. After you read, answer (in a typed document that should appear on Turnitin.com) each of the following writing prompts:

1. Find two quotes—one for Lilly Bart and one for Holly Golightly—which summarize *each character’s* circumstances. For example, for Lily Bart you might choose, “We are expected to be pretty and well-dressed until we drop” (Wharton). Explain how each quote summarizes the character’s situation.
2. Now find a quote for each that summarizes the way she *manages* these circumstances. For example, Lily says, “I have tried hard, but life is difficult, and I am a very useless person.” For each character, explain why this quote reveals how she handles her life.
3. Write a **thesis** and **MEAL** paragraph that answers this question: ‘Which side wins—the women or their circumstances (society)?’ Please note that your thesis should appear separate from your MEAL paragraph.

**3. For the remaining two books, you must choose one book from the fiction list and one book from the non-fiction list (on this document’s pages 3-8). Exposure to each of these genres is important for cross-cultural understanding. The following lists provide a wide variety of subject matters and difficulty levels from which you may choose. You must complete these two choices by the first day of class in September. Read for understanding and enjoyment but prepare yourself to write knowledgeably about these books during the first week of classes.**

**Section One:** Choose at least one title from these fiction selections (alphabetized by author). Feel free to read more.

***A Long Petal of the Sea***, by Isabel Allende

Isabel Allende's *A Long Petal of the Sea* gets to the heart of immigrant struggle. . . . [It] begins, as it ends, with the heart. . . . Victor and Roser's story is compelling. . . . Allende's prose is both commanding and comforting. The author writes eloquently on the struggle of letting go of one culture to embrace a new one and shows that one's origin story is not the whole story. . . . While debate and policy surround the issues of refugees and immigration, Allende reminds us that these issues, at their core, are made up of individuals and their love stories.

***Yo! (Yo!)***, by Julia Alvarez (in English or Spanish)

Alvarez's novel happily returns us to the rambunctious Garcia family, who appeared in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991). Here the focus is on one particular Garcia girl, Yolanda, nicknamed "Yo," who has grown up to be a writer. Alvarez smartly chooses not to have Yo tell her own story, which certainly would have been sufficiently interesting, given that she has followed a colorful path as writer, wife, and teacher. Alvarez selects a different technique: having Yo's life story told by the people around her, including her mother, her cousin, the maid's daughter, her teacher, her third husband, a man who stalks her (!), and her father. This cumulative effect, as each person who knows Yo has his or her say, results in a remarkably multifaceted portrait that will at once provoke, amuse, and warm readers.

***Fahrenheit 451***, by Ray Bradbury

Bradbury's novel explores the eternal battle between censorship and freedom of thought and continues to be relevant today more than ever. In Bradbury's future, books are illegal and happily so--citizens are too busy watching their wall-sized televisions and listening to their in-ear "seashell" radios to care about the loss of good literature. Guy Montag begins the novel as a fireman who enforces the temperature of the title--that at which books burn--but then transforms and tries to show his society the mistake of censorship.

***Please, Mr. Einstein***, by Jean-Claude Carrière

It is the early 21st century, and a young, nameless student intent on learning more about Einstein finds her way into a mysterious office that houses—Einstein himself, walking and talking, full of generosity and the urge to make his ideas plain. The expected thought-experiments (an elevator with no frame of reference, two trains moving side by side) cover the basics of relativity, but soon the young student presses Einstein, who thought deeply about such questions, to examine the morality of his achievements: could the world after Hiroshima truly be a better place? Carrière's Einstein, like the real one, has mixed feelings on the topic, and one of the novel's few dramatic moments comes when the smartest man in the world is unable to provide all the answers.

***Ordinary People***, by Judith Guest

A remarkable book about an ordinary family's response to an extraordinary tragedy; it was so popular in its time precisely because the Jarretts could be any American family and what happened in their family could happen in anyone's family. Well, maybe not in anyone's family; most Americans aren't wealthy enough to live in a McMansion in an upper-middle-class bedroom community, nor do most families own a boat. But, income aside, the Jarretts are like most people one knows: a hardworking father, a mother who wants the best for her family, and two teenage sons, one outgoing and confident, the other quiet and retiring, living in his older brother's shadow. A freak boating accident leaves the older brother dead by drowning, and the family devastated. The parents, Cal and Beth, and their younger son Conrad, are left to cope with the aftermath. *Ordinary People* is the story of how they cope--or fail to.

***Catch-22***, by Joseph Heller

Set in a World War II American bomber squadron off the coast of Italy, *Catch-22* is the story of John Yossarian, who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. Yossarian is also trying to decode the meaning of *Catch-22*, a mysterious regulation that proves that insane people are really the sanest, while the supposedly sensible people are the true madmen. And this novel is full of madmen -- Colonel Cathcart, who keeps raising the number of missions the men must fly in order to finish their tour; Milo Minderbinder, a dedicated entrepreneur who bombs his own airfield when the Germans offer him an extra 6 percent; and Major -- de Coverley, whose face is so forbidding no one has dared ask his name.

***Lost Children Archive***, by Valeria Luiselli

In Valeria Luiselli's fiercely imaginative follow-up to the American Book Award-winning *Tell Me How It Ends*, an artist couple set out with their two children on a road trip from New York to Arizona in the heat of summer. As the family travels west, the bonds between them begin to fray: a fracture is growing between the parents, one the children can almost feel beneath their feet. Through ephemera such as songs, maps and a Polaroid camera, the children try to make sense of both their family's crisis and the larger one engulfing the news: the stories of thousands of kids trying to cross the southwestern border into the United States but getting detained—or lost in the desert along the way. A breath-taking feat of literary virtuosity, *Lost Children Archive* is timely, compassionate, subtly hilarious, and formally inventive—a powerful, urgent story about what it is to be human in an inhuman world. —*The New Yorker*

***The Life of Pi***, by Yann Martel

The imaginative and unforgettable *Life of Pi* is a magical reading experience, an endless blue expanse of storytelling about adventure, survival, and ultimately, faith. The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths for size, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father packs up the family and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a harrowing shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker ("His head was the size and color of the lifebuoy, with teeth").

***In Country***, by Bobbie Ann Mason

In the summer of 1984, the war in Vietnam comes home to Sam Hughes whose father died there before she was born. This is an extraordinary novel of reconciliation and shared hopes--and a youthful confrontation with the legacy of Vietnam. *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe In direct, almost fable-like prose, the novel depicts the rise and fall of Okonkwo, a Nigerian whose sense of manliness is more akin to that of his warrior ancestors than to that of his fellow clansmen who have converted to Christianity and are appeasing the British administrators who infiltrate their village. The tough, proud, hardworking Okonkwo is at once a quintessential old-order Nigerian and a universal character in which sons of all races have identified the figure of their father. Achebe creates a many-sided picture of village life and a sympathetic hero. This is a seminal work.

***The English Patient***, by Michael Ondaatje

With ravishing beauty and unsettling intelligence, Michael Ondaatje's Booker Prize-winning novel traces the intersection of four damaged lives in an Italian villa at the end of World War II. Hana, the exhausted nurse; the maimed thief, Caravaggio; the wary sapper, Kip: each is haunted by the riddle of the English patient, the nameless, burned man who lies in an upstairs room and whose memories of passion, betrayal, and rescue illuminate this book like flashes of heat lightning.

***The Shipping News***, by Annie Proulx

In this touching and atmospheric novel set among the fishermen of Newfoundland, Proulx tells the story of Quoye. From all outward appearances, Quoye has gone through his first 36 years on earth as a big loser. He's not attractive, he's not brilliant or witty or talented, and he's not the kind of person who typically assumes the central position in a novel. However, Proulx creates a simple and compelling tale of Quoye's psychological and spiritual growth. Along the way, we get to look in on the maritime beauty of what is probably a disappearing way of life.

***Riding the Bus with My Sister***, by Rachel Simon

When she received an invitation to her mentally retarded sister's annual Plan of Care review, Simon realized that this was Beth's way of attempting to bring her back into her life. Beth challenged the author to give a year of her life to riding "her" buses with her. Even though Simon didn't know where it would take her, she accepted. During that time, she came to see her sister as a person in her own right with strong feelings about how she wanted to live her life, despite what others thought. Not everyone on the buses, drivers or passengers, liked or even tolerated Beth, and it shamed the author to realize that she sometimes felt the same way about her sibling. As the year passed, Simon came to the realization that "No one can be a good sister all the time. I can only try my best. Just because I am not a saint does not mean that I am a demon." The time together became a year of personal discovery, of acceptance, and of renewed sibling love and closeness.

***The Nickel Boys***, by Colson Whitehead

Based on a real school for boys that closed in Florida in 2011 after more than one hundred years in existence, Colson Whitehead's Nickel Academy is the kind of institution that purports to rebrand bad boys into good young men. So in theory it should be a good place for Elwood, a young black man who, although he had planned to attend a nearby college, was caught unknowingly riding in a stolen car. But what happens inside Nickel Academy does not match its public image, and Elwood is about to learn that, no matter how idealistic or optimistic he is, his life is taking a very bad turn. He is lucky to meet Turner, who does not share Elwood's idealism and who helps him to survive Nickel Academy. But what Elwood experiences there will never leave him. Set in the 1960s during Jim Crow, 2019 Pulitzer Prize winning *The Nickel Boys* is both an enjoyable read and a powerful portrayal of racism and inequality that acts as a lever to pry against our own willingness to ignore it.

**Section Two: Choose at least one title from these non-fiction selections, (alphabetized by author). Feel free to read more.**

***The Fire Next Time***, by James Baldwin

A national bestseller when it first appeared in 1963, *The Fire Next Time* galvanized the nation and gave passionate voice to the emerging civil rights movement. At once a powerful evocation of James Baldwin's early life in Harlem and a disturbing examination of the consequences of racial injustice, the book is an intensely personal and provocative document. It consists of two "letters," written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, that exhort Americans, both black and white, to attack the terrible legacy of racism. Described by *The New York Times Book Review* as "sermon, ultimatum, confession, deposition, testament, and chronicle...all presented in searing, brilliant prose," *The Fire Next Time* stands as a classic of our literature.

***A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier***, by Ishmael Beah

A twelve-year old boy first flees from attacking rebels with his friends, but later is transformed into a cold-blooded soldier. This is a heartbreaking personal memoir of a boy growing up in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 1998 and his rehabilitation.

***A House of My Own: Stories from My Life***, by Sandra Cisneros

From Chicago to Mexico, the places Sandra Cisneros has lived have provided inspiration for her now-classic works of fiction and poetry. But a house of her own, a place where she could truly take root, has eluded her. In this jigsaw autobiography—made up of essays and images spanning three decades, and including never-before-published work—Cisneros has come home at last. Written with her trademark lyricism, in these signature pieces the acclaimed author of *The House on Mango Street* and winner of the 2018 PEN/Nabokov Award for Achievement in International Literature shares her transformative memories and reveals her artistic and intellectual influences. Poignant, honest, and deeply moving, *A House of My Own* is an exuberant celebration of a life lived to the fullest, from one of our most beloved writers.

***Man's Searching for Meaning***, by Viktor Frankl

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. Between 1942 and 1945 Frankl labored in four different camps, including Auschwitz, while his parents, brother, and pregnant wife perished. Based on his own experience and the experiences of those he treated in his practice, Frankl argues that we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose. Frankl's theory holds that our primary drive in life is not pleasure, as Freud maintained, but the discovery and pursuit of what we personally find meaningful. A 1991 reader survey by the Library of Congress that asked readers to name a "book that made a difference in your life" found *Man's Search for Meaning* among the ten most influential books in America.

***Eleni***, by Nicholas Gage

In 1948, as civil war ravaged Greece, communists abducted children and sent them to communist "camps" behind the Iron Curtain. Eleni Gatzoyiannis, forty-one, defied the traditions of her small village and the terror of the communist insurgents to arrange for the escape of her three daughters and her son, Nicola. For that act, she was imprisoned, tortured, and executed in cold blood. Nicholas Gage joined his father in Massachusetts at the age of nine and grew up to become a top New York Times investigative reporter, honing his skills with one thought in mind: to return to Greece and uncover the one story he cared about most—the story of his mother. Eleni takes you into the heart a village destroyed in the name of ideals and into the soul of a truly heroic woman.

***Bad Feminist***, by Roxanne Gay

A collection of essays spanning politics, criticism, and feminism from one of the most-watched young cultural observers of her generation, Roxane Gay. "Pink is my favorite color," she writes. "I used to say my favorite color was black to be *cool*, but it is pink—all shades of pink. If I have an accessory, it is probably pink. I read *Vogue*, and I'm not doing it ironically, though it might seem that way. I once live-tweeted the September issue." In these essays—some funny, some raw, all insightful—Roxane Gay takes us through the journey of her evolution as a woman (*Sweet Valley High*) of color (*The Help*) while also taking readers on a ride through culture of the last few years (*Girls*, *Django in Chains*) and comments on the state of feminism today (abortion, Chris Brown). The portrait that emerges is not only one of an incredibly insightful woman continually growing to understand herself and our society, but also one of our culture.

***In Her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton***, by Elizabeth Griffith

The first comprehensive, fully documented biography of the most important woman suffragist and feminist reformer in nineteenth century America, *In Her Own Right* restores Elizabeth Cady Stanton to her true place in history. Griffith emphasizes the significance of role models and female friendships in Stanton's progress toward personal and political independence. *In Her Own Right* is, in the author's words, an "unabashedly 'great woman' biography."

***A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes***, by Stephen W. Hawking

Perhaps the most famous popular science book of recent years, *A Brief History of Time* even had the distinct honor of being made into a film. This tenth anniversary edition has been revised and updated to reflect discoveries made since its original 1988 publication. It also contains a new introduction and a chapter on wormholes.

***Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life***, by Anne Lamott

Think you have a book inside of you? Anne Lamott isn't afraid to help you let it out. She will help you find your passion and your voice, beginning from the first crummy draft to the peculiar letdown of publication. Readers will be reminded of the energizing books of writer Natalie Goldberg and will be seduced by Lamott's witty take on the reality of a writer's life, which has little to do with literary parties and a lot to do with jealousy, writer's block and going for broke with each paragraph. Marvelously wise and best of all, great reading.

***The Biology of Belief***, by Bruce Lipton

This is a groundbreaking work in the field of New Biology. The author is a former medical professor and research scientist. His experiments, and those of other leading-edge scientists, have examined the processes by which cells receive information. The implications of this research radically change our understanding of life. It shows that genes and DNA do not control our biology; that instead, DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our positive and negative thoughts. Dr. Lipton's profoundly hopeful synthesis of the latest and best research in cell biology and quantum physics is being hailed as a major breakthrough showing that our bodies can be changed as we retrain our thinking.

***The Blue Sweater***, by Jacqueline Novogratz

This is the education of a patient capitalist. Novogratz was an idealistic college graduate hired by Chase Manhattan to investigate and write off loans to the Third World. What she discovers in her journey is a blue sweater she gave away to Goodwill many years early on the back of a small Rwandan boy. This sweater becomes a metaphor for the interconnectedness of the world. Later, Novogratz founds The Acumen Fund that underwrites investments to rising entrepreneurs in the Third World to foster economic growth from the bottom of the pyramid up.

***Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers***, by Mary Roach

Those curious or brave enough to find out what really happens to a body that is donated to the scientific community can do so with this book. Bodies are divided into types, including "beating-heart" cadavers for organ transplants, and individual parts--leg and foot segments, for example, are used to test footwear for the effects of exploding land mines. Just as the non-emotional, fact-by-fact descriptions may be getting to be a bit too much, Roach swings into macabre humor. In some cases, it is needed to restore perspective or aid in understanding both what the procedures are accomplishing and what it is hoped will be learned. In all cases, the comic relief welcomes readers back to the world of the living.

***Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love***, by Dava Sobel

*Galileo's Daughter* is a fascinating biography that gives an intimate look at the life of Galileo through the 124 letters written by his eldest daughter, Virginia, published in translation for the first time from the Italian. Virginia was one of Galileo's three children born out of wedlock. Together with her depressive younger sister, she was placed in the Convent of San Matteo near Galileo's Florence home at the age of 13, where she took the name Suor Maria Celeste, in tribute to her father's work. Galileo recognized in Virginia an "exquisite mind," and she, in turn recognized the depth of her father's faith in Catholicism and proved to be an unwavering source of loyalty, support, comfort, and strength for him when he was brought to trial before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1633.

***Einstein: The Life and Times***, by Ronald William Clark Ronald W.

Clark's definitive biography of Einstein, the Promethean figure of our age, goes behind the phenomenal intellect to reveal the human side of the legendary absent-minded professor who confidently claimed that space and time were not what they seemed. Here is the classic portrait of the scientist and the man: the boy growing up in the Swiss Alps, the young man caught in an unhappy first marriage, the passionate pacifist who agonized over making The Bomb, the indifferent Zionist asked to head the Israeli state, the physicist who believed in God.

**If you have any questions, feel free to email Ms. Esposito, the English Department Chairperson, at  
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