

MSTC English 1 Summer Reading Book List: 2020-2021

Before You Begin: The 2020 Paul Laurence Dunbar High School Summer Reading program strives to present current, relevant, and/or high-interest literature to a young adult audience. Our goal is to encourage our students to choose books both appropriate for and interesting to them, to read for pleasure, and to demonstrate their reading comprehension at a high level of thinking. This list consists of books that have won numerous state and national awards plus some classics or modern classic texts. Some titles may contain content that is mature in nature or that may be objectionable to some families. We recommend using resources such as the Lexington Public Library or accessing reviews on websites such as Amazon.com to make informed decisions when selecting specific books.

Classics

- ***1984* by George Orwell**
 - Winston Smith wrestles with oppression in Oceania, a place where the Party scrutinizes human actions with ever-watchful Big Brother. Defying a ban on individuality, Winston dares to express his thoughts in a diary and pursues a relationship with Julia. These criminal deeds bring Winston into the eye of the opposition, who then must reform the nonconformist.
- ***Catch 22* by Joseph Heller**
 - Captain John Yossarian is a bombardier in the 256th Squadron of the Army Air Forces during World War II, stationed on Pianosa, an island in the Mediterranean between mainland Italy and Corsica. The squadron's assignment is to bomb enemy positions in Italy and eastern France. It is the summer of 1944, but events are not told in chronological order; sometimes time changes without warning. Most of the action takes place from spring through December of 1944, but there are flashbacks to 1942, when Yossarian was in basic training at Lowery Field in Colorado, and to 1943 when he was in cadet training at Santa Ana, California.
- ***The Call of the Wild* by Jack London**
 - Buck, a huge, four-year-old half-Saint Bernard and half-Scottish shepherd dog, is living a life of civilized ease in California's Santa Clara Valley in the home of Judge Miller. It seems to be the best of all possible worlds, for Buck is the most prized animal that the Judge owns. Around this time, however, gold is discovered in the great North, and large dogs suddenly become tremendously valuable because these types of dogs are needed to haul the heavy sleds through the deep snow fields. Tragically, for Buck, one of the Judge's servants (an addictive gambler) steals Buck and sells him to a ring of thieves who are making a great deal of money by buying and selling dogs to northern traders.
- ***The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy**
 - In a fit of drunken anger, Michael Henchard sells his wife and baby daughter for five guineas at a country fair. Over the course of the following years, he manages to establish himself as a respected and prosperous pillar of the community of Casterbridge, but behind his success there always lurk the shameful secret of his past and a personality prone to self-destructive pride and temper.

Non-Fiction

- ***Born a Crime: Stories From a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah**
 - Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of The Daily Show began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.
- ***I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer* by Michelle McNamara**
 - For more than ten years, a mysterious and violent predator committed fifty sexual assaults in Northern California before moving south, where he perpetrated ten sadistic murders. Then he disappeared, eluding capture by multiple police forces and some of the best detectives in the area. Three decades later, Michelle McNamara, a true crime journalist who created the popular website TrueCrimeDiary.com, was determined to find the violent psychopath she called "the Golden State Killer." Michelle pored over police reports, interviewed victims, and embedded herself in the online communities that were as obsessed with the case as she was.
- ***The Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance**
 - The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.'s grandparents were "dirt poor and in love," and moved north from Kentucky's Appalachian region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility. But as the family saga of Hillbilly Elegy plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance's grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America.
- ***Where Nobody Knows Your Name: Life in the Minor Leagues of Baseball* by John Feinstein**
 - Baseball's minor leagues are a paradox. For some players, the minors are a glorious launching pad toward years of fame and fortune; for others, a crash-landing pad when injury or poor play forces a big leaguer back to a life of obscure ballparks and cramped buses instead of Fenway Park and plush charter planes. Focusing exclusively on the Triple-A level, one step beneath Major League Baseball, Feinstein introduces readers to nine unique men: three pitchers, three position players, two managers, and an umpire. Through their compelling stories, Feinstein pulls back the veil on a league that is chock-full of gifted baseball players, managers, and umpires who are all one moment away from getting called up—or back—to the majors.

- ***Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon**
 - Laymon writes eloquently and honestly about growing up a hard-headed black son to a complicated and brilliant black mother in Jackson, Mississippi. From his early experiences of sexual violence, to his suspension from college, to his trek to New York as a young college professor, Laymon charts his complex relationship with his mother, grandmother, anorexia, obesity, sex, writing, and ultimately gambling. By attempting to name secrets and lies he and his mother spent a lifetime avoiding, Laymon asks himself, his mother, his nation, and us to confront the terrifying possibility that few in this nation actually know how to responsibly love, and even fewer want to live under the weight of actually becoming free.

Fiction

- ***An Uninterrupted View of the Sky* by Melanie Crowder**
 - It's 1999 in Bolivia and Francisco's life consists of school, soccer, and trying to find space for himself in his family's cramped yet boisterous home. But when his father is arrested on false charges and sent to prison by a corrupt system that targets the uneducated, the poor, and the indigenous majority, Francisco's mother abandons hope and her family. Francisco and his sister are left with no choice: They must move into the prison with their father. With their lives upended, Francisco faces an impossible decision: Break up the family and take his sister to their grandparents in the Andean highlands, fleeing the city and the future that was just within his grasp, or remain together in the increasingly dangerous prison.
- ***I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez**
 - Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never abandon their family. But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role. Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out every possible way Julia has failed. But it's not long before Julia discovers that Olga might not have been as perfect as everyone thought.
- ***I Hunt Killers* by Barry Lyga**
 - Jasper "Jazz" Dent is a likable teenager. A charmer, one might say. But he's also the son of the world's most infamous serial killer, and for Dear Old Dad, Take Your Son to Work Day was year-round. Jazz has witnessed crime scenes the way cops wish they could—from the criminal's point of view. And now bodies are piling up in Lobo's Nod. In an effort to clear his name, Jazz joins the police in a hunt for a new serial killer. But Jazz has a secret—could he be more like his father than anyone knows?

- ***I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson**
 - At first, Jude and her twin brother Noah, are inseparable. Noah draws constantly and is falling in love with the charismatic boy next door, while daredevil Jude wears red-red lipstick, cliff-dives, and does all the talking for both of them. Years later, they are barely speaking. Something has happened to change the twins in different yet equally devastating ways . . . but then Jude meets an intriguing, irresistible boy and a mysterious new mentor. The early years are Noah's to tell; the later years are Jude's. But they each have only half the story, and if they can only find their way back to one another, they'll have a chance to remake their world.
- ***Pawn of Prophecy* by David Eddings**
 - Long ago, so the Storyteller claimed, the evil God Torak sought dominion and drove men and Gods to war. But Belgarath the Sorcerer led men to reclaim the Orb that protected men of the West. So long as it lay at Riva, the prophecy went, men would be safe. But that was only a story, and Garion did not believe in magic dooms, even though the dark man without a shadow had haunted him for years. Brought up on a quiet farm by his Aunt Pol, how could he know that the Apostate planned to wake dread Torak, or that he would be led on a quest of unparalleled magic and danger by those he loved - but did not know? For a while his dreams of innocence were safe, untroubled by knowledge of his strange heritage. For a little while...
- ***Scythe* by Neal Shusterman (or one of the following books in the trilogy)**
 - A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery. Humanity has conquered all those things, and has even conquered death. Now scythes are the only ones who can end life—and they are commanded to do so, in order to keep the size of the population under control. Citra and Rowan are chosen to apprentice to a scythe—a role that neither wants. These teens must master the “art” of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own.