



**Advanced Placement
Language & Composition
Summer Reading Packet
2022-2023**

Welcome to Advanced Placement Language and Composition!

Next year, we will be studying together with a dual purpose: to help you learn to analyze rhetorical and argumentation strategies that writers employ to achieve their purposes through close reading techniques and to help you learn to apply those strategies in your own writing. Indeed, these skills will not only serve you well on the A.P. Language and Composition exam next May, but they will also aid you in becoming stronger readers, writers, and rhetoricians beyond our class!

In order to begin our journey together, you will be required to complete summer readings and assignments associated with those readings. The books you will be reading will meet both of our purposes: one book is an introduction to argument and some of the best writers/speakers who have applied the strategies of argument across time and cultures; the other is a work of nonfiction of your choice from a list of options.

Remember, AP Language is a college level class. Therefore, we are setting our expectations high; we are confident that you can reach them. Therefore, you will need to spend time and effort when reading these books. Reading them quickly “just to get it done,” or worse, reading only Sparknotes or watching a film version of your books, will not suffice! You will need to read these texts closely, and you will need to be looking for *not only what the author says, but also how he/she says it*.

It is not required, but we highly suggest that you purchase a copy of each of your books. You can get them at a local bookstore or even buy them used on-line. You may be able to borrow the books from the high school or public library if you do not want to purchase them.

Within this packet, you will find the two reading assignments and an annotated list of nonfiction books. You will also find some information we want you to be aware of as you are reading—things like close reading strategies and how to mark up a book.

We are very excited to teach this course, which we believe will offer you a new way of examining the things that you read, whether they are pieces of fiction, nonfiction, or even visual texts.

Happy summer! Happy reading!

Let our journey begin,

Mr. Dietz, Mrs. Nester, Mrs. O'Brien, and Mrs. Stuckey

The Assignments:

Next year in AP Language, you will be exploring several types of writing. Specifically for the AP Test, you will need to be able to write the following types of essays:

- 1. Analysis**—a close examination of texts, with the awareness of a writer’s purpose and the techniques the writer uses to achieve it
- 2. Argument**—a discourse intended to persuade an audience through reasons and/or evidence
- 3. Synthesis**—a bringing together of several texts, both written and visual, to form a coherent essay

For the purpose of summer reading, you will focus on **analysis** of the texts that you are reading. This will require you to read closely and carefully. Yes, you need to read for literal meaning (obviously, you must understand what is going on in the text), but you will also need to read “between the lines.” To *analyze* is to break a complicated item into its component parts, examine those parts individually, and explain how they work together to create the larger, more complex entity you are studying.

Assignment #1:

- Read *Thank You For Arguing, Third Edition: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion* by Jay Heinrichs (Chapters 1-13).
 - Access a PDF of the text at the following link: [Thank You for Arguing](#)
- For this assignment, we are asking you to annotate your book.
 - If you own your book, you can annotate by highlighting and annotating (making notes in) the margins of the text.
 - If you are choosing not to buy your book, you can still annotate the book by making notes in a Google doc or in a notebook.
 - We will be referring to this book all year, so you will want to make sure you understand what you are reading.

Assignment #2:

- Choose and read one of the nonfiction selections on the attached annotated list. You need to make sure that you do a close and careful reading. Remember, you cannot just read “to get it done.”
- Again, for this assignment, we are asking you to annotate your book.
 - If you own your book, you can annotate by highlighting and annotating (making notes in) the margins of the text.
 - If you are choosing not to buy your book, you can still annotate the book by making notes in a Google doc or in a notebook.
- At the start of the school year, you will be given an assignment to demonstrate your understanding of the book.

Some things you may want to look for as you read:

- Parts that will help you give a brief overview of your book
- Information on the author's purpose
- Quotes that you like or that help you make a point
- Parts that show the writer's style

Here are some other things to think about and note as you read:

- Listen to the questions and observations you make as you read and capture your thoughts in the book margins

Some things to note in your book might be places in the text where you:

- are confused, puzzled, or surprised
- struck by the language or an image
- can relate the text to something in your life or to another text or to something happening locally or globally
- can predict what might happen
- react strongly (either positively or negatively)

**While not required, many strong readers create notes in addition to annotating/
highlighting their book.**

If you choose to do so, you may want to use one or more of these to help you create your notes:

- a paraphrase of a complex segment of text
- possible explanation of confusing material
- a main idea from the text and why it is important
- a strong positive or negative reaction and an explanation of that reaction
- a reason for agreeing or disagreeing with the author
- a comparison and/or contrast of a passage with another text or with prior knowledge
- a prediction based on evidence from the resource
- a question generated as a result of reading
- a description of a personal experience that relates to the resource

AP Language and Composition Nonfiction Reading Choices 2022-2023

Bradley, James. *Flags of Our Fathers.* In this unforgettable chronicle of perhaps the most famous moment in American military history, James Bradley has captured the glory, the triumph, the heartbreak, and the legacy of the six men who raised the flag at Iwo Jima. Here is the true story behind the immortal photograph that has come to symbolize the courage and indomitable will of America. In February 1945, American Marines plunged into the surf at Iwo Jima—and into history. Through a hail of machine-gun and mortar fire that left the beaches strewn with comrades, they battled to the island's highest peak. And after climbing through a landscape of hell itself, they raised a flag. Now the son of one of the flag raisers has written a powerful account of six very different men who came together in a moment that will live forever (Bookrags).

Bradley, James. *Flyboys.* In this book Bradley writes of the Pacific and World War II. Over the island of Chichi Jima, nine American flyboys—Navy and Marine airmen sent to bomb the Japanese—were shot down. One would be miraculously rescued, but the others would be imprisoned and subjected to a fate so terrible that it has been kept top secret until now. *Flyboys* reveals for the first time what happened to these men. Bradley details the war in the Pacific, from the attack on Pearl Harbor through the bitter end, including some of the most savage fighting the world has ever seen. And he explores the Japanese warrior culture and how America's own ideas about war in peace conflicted with Japan's. This is not just the story of those who died, but also of those who lived—including the young Navy pilot who would one day become the president of the United States (Amazon).

Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking.*

At least one-third of the people we know are introverts. They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking; who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion; who favor working on their own over working in teams. It is to introverts—Rosa Parks, Chopin, Dr. Seuss, Steve Wozniak—that we owe many of the great contributions to society. In *Quiet*, Susan Cain argues that we dramatically undervalue introverts and shows how much we lose in doing so. She charts the rise of the Extrovert Ideal throughout the twentieth century and explores how deeply it has come to permeate our culture. She also introduces us to successful introverts—from a witty, high-octane public speaker who recharges in solitude after his talks, to a record-breaking salesman who quietly taps into the power of questions. Passionately argued, superbly researched, and filled with indelible stories of real people, *Quiet* has the power to permanently change how we see introverts and, equally important, how they see themselves.

Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood.* On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their faces. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues. Five years, four months and twenty-nine days later, on April 14, 1965, Richard Eugene Hickock, aged thirty-three, and Perry Edward Smith, aged thirty-six, were hanged for the crime on a gallows in a warehouse in the Kansas State Penitentiary in Lansing, Kansas. *In Cold Blood* is the story of the lives and deaths of these six people. It has already been hailed as a masterpiece (Borders).

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring.* First published by Houghton Mifflin in 1962, *Silent Spring* alerted a large audience to the environmental and human dangers of the indiscriminate use of pesticides, spurring revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. "*Silent Spring* became a runaway bestseller, with international reverberations . . . [It is] well crafted, fearless and succinct . . . Even if she had not inspired a generation of activists, Carson would prevail as one of the greatest nature writers in American letters" (Peter Matthiessen, for *Time's 100 Most Influential People of the Century*) (Borders).

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me.* For Ta-Nehisi Coates, history has always been personal. At every stage of his life, he's sought in his explorations of history answers to the mysteries that surrounded him—most urgently, why he, and other black people he knew, seemed to live in fear. What were they afraid of? Coates takes readers along on his journey through America's history of race and its contemporary resonances through a series of awakenings—moments when he discovered some new truth about our long, tangled history of race, whether through his myth-busting professors at Howard University, a trip to a Civil War battlefield with a rogue historian, a journey to Chicago's South Side to visit aging survivors of 20th century America's 'long war on black people,' or a visit with the mother of a beloved friend who was shot down by the police. In his trademark style—a mix of lyrical personal

narrative, reimagined history, essayistic argument, and reportage--Coates provides readers a thrillingly illuminating new framework for understanding race: its history, our contemporary dilemma, and where we go from here (Good Reads).

Conley, Garrard. *Boy Erased: A Memoir.* The son of a Baptist pastor and deeply embedded in church life in small town Arkansas, as a young man Garrard Conley was terrified and conflicted about his sexuality. When Garrard was a nineteen-year-old college student, he was outed to his parents, and was forced to make a life-changing decision: either agree to attend a church-supported conversion therapy program that promised to "cure" him of homosexuality or risk losing family, friends, and the God he had prayed to every day of his life. Through an institutionalized Twelve-Step Program heavy on Bible study, he was supposed to emerge heterosexual, ex-gay, cleansed of impure urges and stronger in his faith in God for his brush with sin. Instead, even when faced with a harrowing and brutal journey, Garrard found the strength and understanding to break out in search of his true self and forgiveness. By confronting his buried past and the burden of a life lived in shadow, Garrard traces the complex relationships among family, faith, and community. At times heart-breaking, at times triumphant, this memoir is a testament to love that survives despite all odds (Good Reads).

Dawidoff, Nicholas. *The Catcher was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg.* The story of Moe Berg, sometime major-league catcher, sometime spy, sometime lawyer, and full-time enigma. Berg, a Princeton graduate and Wall Street lawyer who played sporadically (and not very well) with the major leagues between 1923 and 1939, was recruited by Wild Bill Donovan for the OSS during World War II, and he eventually was awarded the Medal of Freedom for his work in Germany collecting information for the H-bomb project. A Jew, Berg was the odd man out in nearly every world he inhabited--the Ivy League, baseball, Wall Street, the OSS--and Dawidoff neatly emphasizes how his sense of himself as an outsider worked marvelously to his advantage in espionage, just as it had inhibited and held him back everywhere else (Biblio.com).

Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur "Genius" Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as "wrenching and revelatory" (*The Nation*), "vivid and unsettling" (New York Review of Books), *Evicted* transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of 21st-century America's most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible (Amazon).

Ebert, Lily. *Lily's Promise.*

When Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert was liberated in 1945, a Jewish-American soldier gave her a banknote on which he'd written 'Good luck and happiness'. And when her great-grandson, Dov, decided to use social media to track down the family of the GI, 96-year-old Lily found herself making headlines round the world. Lily had promised herself that if she survived Auschwitz, she would tell everyone the truth about the camp. Now was her chance. [S]he writes movingly about her happy childhood in Hungary, the death of her mother and two youngest siblings on their arrival at Auschwitz in 1944 and her determination to keep her two other sisters safe. She describes the inhumanity of the camp and the small acts of defiance that gave her strength. From there she and her sisters became slave labour in a munitions factory, and then faced a death march that they barely survived. Lily lost so much, but she built a new life for herself and her family, first in Israel and then in London. It wasn't easy; the pain of her past was always with her, but this extraordinary woman found the strength to speak out in the hope that such evil would never happen again.

Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl.* The dust storms that terrorized the High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since. Timothy Egan's critically acclaimed account rescues this iconic chapter of American history from the shadows in a tour de force of historical reportage. Following a dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, Egan tells of their desperate attempts to carry on through blinding black dust blizzards, crop failure, and the death of loved ones. Brilliantly capturing the terrifying drama of catastrophe, Egan does equal justice to the human characters who become his heroes, "the stoic, long-suffering men and women whose lives he opens up with urgency and respect" (*New York Times*).

Ellis, Joseph J. *American Creation*. This subtle, brilliant examination of the period between the War of Independence and the Louisiana Purchase puts Pulitzer-winner Ellis among the finest of America's narrative historians. Six stories, each centering on a significant creative achievement or failure, combine to portray often flawed men and their efforts to lay the republic's foundation. Set against the extraordinary establishment of the most liberal nation-state in the history of Western Civilization... in the most extensive and richly endowed plot of ground on the planet are the terrible costs of victory, including the perpetuation of slavery and the cruel oppression of Native Americans. Ellis blames the founders' failures on their decision to opt for an evolutionary revolution, not a risky severance with tradition (as would happen, murderously, in France, which necessitated compromises, like retaining slavery). Despite the injustices and brutalities that resulted, Ellis argues, this deferral strategy was a profound insight rooted in a realistic appraisal of how enduring social change best happens (*Publishers Weekly*).

Ellis, Joseph J. *Founding Brothers*. In retrospect, it seems as if the American Revolution was inevitable. But was it? In *Founding Brothers*, Ellis reveals that many of those truths we hold to be self-evident were actually fiercely contested in the early days of the republic. Ellis focuses on six crucial moments in the life of the new nation, including a secret dinner at which the seat of the nation's capital was determined--in exchange for support of Hamilton's financial plan; Washington's precedent-setting Farewell Address; and the Hamilton and Burr duel. Most interesting, perhaps, is the debate (still dividing scholars today) over the *meaning* of the Revolution. In a fascinating chapter on the renewed friendship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson at the end of their lives, Ellis points out the fundamental differences between the Republicans, who saw the Revolution as a liberating act and hold the Declaration of Independence most sacred, and the Federalists, who saw the revolution as a step in the building of American nationhood and hold the Constitution most dear. Throughout the text, Ellis explains the personal, face-to-face nature of early American politics--and notes that the members of the revolutionary generation were conscious of the fact that they were establishing precedents on which future generations would rely (*Publishers Weekly*).

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. Why do we eat some animals and not others? Is vegetarianism really that much better for the world? Foer tackles these questions and much more in this book that looks into the history of eating habits across cultures, and how what we eat has shaped society. It's as much about farming and the food we eat as it is about the moral implications behind why we eat what we do. Faced with the prospect of being unable to explain why we eat some animals and not others, Foer set out to explore the origins of many eating traditions and the fictions involved with creating them. Traveling to the darkest corners of our dining habits, Foer raises the unspoken question behind every fish we eat, every chicken we fry, and every burger we grill.(Good Reads)

Gawande, Atul. *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. Medicine reveals itself as a fascinatingly complex and "fundamentally human endeavor" in this distinguished debut essay collection by a surgical resident and staff writer for the *New Yorker*. Gawande, a former Rhodes scholar and Harvard Medical School graduate, illuminates "the moments in which medicine actually happens," and describes his profession as an "enterprise of constantly changing knowledge, uncertain information, fallible individuals, and at the same time lives on the line." Gawande's background in philosophy and ethics is evident throughout these pieces, which range from edgy accounts of medical traumas to sobering analyses of doctors' anxieties and burnout. With humor, sensitivity and critical intelligence, he explores the pros and cons of new technologies, including a controversial factory model for routine surgeries that delivers superior success rates while dramatically cutting costs. He also describes treatment of such challenging conditions as morbid obesity, chronic pain and necrotizing fasciitis, the often-fatal condition caused by dreaded "flesh-eating bacteria" and probes the agonizing process by which physicians balance knowledge and intuition to make seemingly impossible decisions. What draws practitioners to this challenging profession, he concludes, is the promise of "the alterable moment the fragile but crystalline opportunity for one's know-how, ability or just gut instinct to change the course of another's life for the better." These exquisitely crafted essays, in which medical subjects segue into explorations of much larger themes, place Gawande among the best in the field (*Publishers Weekly*).

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Malcolm Gladwell takes readers 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 (Good Reads).

Goodman, Matthew. *Eighty Days: Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's History-Making Race*

Around the World. On November 14, 1889, Nellie Bly, the crusading young female reporter for Joseph Pulitzer's *World* newspaper, left New York City by steamship on a quest to break the record for the fastest trip around the world. Also departing from New York that day—and heading in the opposite direction by train—was a young journalist from *The Cosmopolitan* magazine, Elizabeth Bisland. Each woman was determined to outdo Jules Verne's fictional hero Phileas Fogg and circle the globe in less than eighty days. The dramatic race that ensued would span twenty-eight thousand miles, captivate the nation, and change both competitors' lives forever. A vivid real-life re-creation of the race and its aftermath, from its frenzied start to the nail-biting dash at its finish, *Eighty Days* is history with the heart of a great adventure novel. Here's the journey that takes us behind the walls of Jules Verne's Amiens estate, into the back alleys of Hong Kong, onto the grounds of a Ceylon tea plantation, through storm-tossed ocean crossings and mountains blocked by snowdrifts twenty feet deep, and to many more unexpected and exotic locales from London to Yokohama. Along the way, we are treated to fascinating glimpses of everyday life in the late nineteenth century—an era of unprecedented technological advances, newly remade in the image of the steamship, the railroad, and the telegraph. For Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland—two women ahead of their time in every sense of the word—were not only racing around the world. They were also racing through the very heart of the Victorian age (Amazon).

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln.*

The life and times of Abraham Lincoln have been analyzed and dissected in countless books. Do we need another Lincoln biography? In *Team of Rivals*, esteemed historian Doris Kearns Goodwin proves that we do. Though she can't help but cover some familiar territory, her perspective is focused enough to offer fresh insights into Lincoln's leadership style and his deep understanding of human behavior and motivation. Goodwin makes the case for Lincoln's political genius by examining his relationships with three men he selected for his cabinet, all of whom were opponents for the Republican nomination in 1860: William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates. These men, all accomplished, nationally known, and presidential, originally disdained Lincoln for his backwoods upbringing and lack of experience, and were shocked and humiliated at losing to this relatively obscure Illinois lawyer. Yet Lincoln not only convinced them to join his administration—Seward as secretary of state, Chase as secretary of the treasury, and Bates as attorney general—he ultimately gained their admiration and respect as well. How he soothed egos, turned rivals into allies, and dealt with many challenges to his leadership, all for the sake of the greater good, is largely what Goodwin's fine book is about. Had he not possessed the wisdom and confidence to select and work with the best people, she argues, he could not have led the nation through one of its darkest periods (Amazon).

Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern.* In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Stephen Greenblatt has crafted both an innovative work of history and a thrilling story of discovery, in which one manuscript, plucked from a thousand years of neglect, changed the course of human thought and made possible the world as we know it. Nearly six hundred years ago, a short, genial, cannily alert man in his late thirties took a very old manuscript off a library shelf, saw with excitement what he had discovered, and ordered that it be copied. That book was the last surviving manuscript of an ancient Roman philosophical epic, *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius—a beautiful poem of the most dangerous ideas: that the universe functioned without the aid of gods, that religious fear was damaging to human life, and that matter was made up of very small particles in eternal motion, colliding and swerving in new directions. The copying and translation of this ancient book—the greatest discovery of the greatest book-hunter of his age—fueled the Renaissance, inspiring artists such as Botticelli and thinkers such as Giordano Bruno; shaped the thought of Galileo and Freud, Darwin and Einstein; and had a revolutionary influence on writers such as Montaigne and Shakespeare and even Thomas Jefferson. (W.W. Norton)

Holt, Nathalia. *Rise of the Rocket Girls.* In the 1940s and 50s, when the newly minted Jet Propulsion Laboratory needed quick-thinking mathematicians to calculate velocities and plot trajectories, they didn't turn to male graduates. Rather, they recruited an elite group of young women who, with only pencil, paper, and mathematical prowess, transformed rocket design, helped bring about the first American satellites, and made the exploration of the solar system possible.

For the first time, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* tells the stories of these women—known as "human computers"—who broke the boundaries of both gender and science. Based on extensive research and interviews with all the living members of the team, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* offers a unique perspective on the role of women in science: both where we've been, and the far reaches of space to which we're heading. (Good Reads)

Isaacson, Walter. *The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race.*

When Jennifer Doudna was in sixth grade, she came home one day to find that her dad had left a paperback titled *The Double Helix* on her bed. As she sped through the pages, she became enthralled by the intense drama behind the competition to discover the code of life. Even though her high school counselor told her girls didn't become scientists, she decided she would.

Driven by a passion to understand how nature works and to turn discoveries into inventions, she would help to make what the book's author, James Watson, told her was the most important biological advance since his co-discovery of the structure of DNA. She and her collaborators turned a curiosity of nature into an invention that will transform the human race: an easy-to-use tool that can edit DNA. Known as CRISPR, it opened a brave new world of medical miracles and moral questions.

The development of CRISPR and the race to create vaccines for coronavirus will hasten our transition to the next great innovation revolution. The past half-century has been a digital age, based on the microchip, computer, and internet. Now we are entering a life-science revolution. Children who study digital coding will be joined by those who study genetic code.

Should we use our new evolution-hacking powers to make us less susceptible to viruses? What a wonderful boon that would be! And what about preventing depression? Hmm...Should we allow parents, if they can afford it, to enhance the height or muscles or IQ of their kids? After helping to discover CRISPR, Doudna became a leader in wrestling with these moral issues and, with her collaborator Emmanuelle Charpentier, won the Nobel Prize in 2020. (Good Reads)

Hickam, Homer H. *Rocket Boys* (also published as *October Sky*). In 1957, when 14-year-old Homer Hickam, a.k.a. Sonny watches Sputnik fly over his hometown of Coalwood, West Virginia, his life is changed forever. Knowing he wants to be part of the space race, Sonny and his friends set out to learn as much as they can about launching rockets. Soon, these Rocket Boys wind up enlisting the help of everyone in town. Set against a backdrop of miners' strikes, the beginning of the Cold War, and America's loss of innocence, this book reads like a novel (Borders).

Hill, Katie Rain. *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition.* In her unique, generous, and affecting voice, nineteen-year-old Katie Hill shares her personal journey of undergoing gender reassignment. Katie never felt comfortable in her own skin. She realized very young that a serious mistake had been made; she was a girl who had been born in the body of a boy. Suffocating under her peers' bullying and the mounting pressure to be "normal," Katie tried to take her life at the age of eight years old. After several other failed attempts, she finally understood that "Katie" --the girl trapped within her--was determined to live. In this first-person account, Katie reflects on her pain-filled childhood and the events leading up to the life-changing decision to undergo gender reassignment as a teenager. She reveals the unique challenges she faced while unlearning how to be a boy and shares what it was like to navigate the dating world and experience heartbreak for the first time in a body that matched her gender identity. Told in an unwaveringly honest voice, *Rethinking Normal* is a coming-of-age story about transcending physical appearances and redefining the parameters of "normalcy" to embody one's true self (Good Reads).

Hillenbrand, Laura. *Seabiscuit: An American Legend.* The book takes place between 1929 and 1940, a period during which the world changed dramatically. In the United States, a stock market crash heralded the decade-long Great Depression that mired the country in despair and hopelessness. During those dark days, average citizens clung to even the smallest diversion that afforded hope or escape from their daily lives. An unlikely hero—a short, squat, and seemingly unfit racehorse—offered one such distraction, becoming a media darling and capturing the national imagination. In fact, in 1938, as the world teetered on the brink of World War II, the majority of new coverage was devoted not to politicians or warmongers but to one knobby-kneed horse nearly past his prime. Seabiscuit became a cultural icon, according to Hillenbrand, and offered hope to a generation of disadvantaged people: if he could overcome adversity and become a winner, so could they. From his initial outings in the dust of Tijuana to his grudge match with Triple Crown winner War Admiral, Seabiscuit epitomized the rags-to-riches American dream for millions of impoverished citizens who wondered whether the dream was still possible (Amazon).

Hong, Cathy Park. *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning.* Ms. Hong offers a raw, unflinching and honest portrayal of what it is like to live as a Korean-American in a land that most often does not differentiate Korean-Americans from other Asian-American ethnicities. The author also draws parallels of experiences from other minority groups by including examples of famous minority figures' speeches and references. If you slept through U.S history at school, or if you never studied U.S history like me, this book offers a shocking eye-opener on how historical events, such as the extremely prejudiced 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that banned all Asians and Pacific Islanders, or the more recent LA riots, have consistently and continuously shaped the rhetoric against minority

populations in white America. Further, Ms. Hong candidly describes how films, music, works of literature, lifestyle choices and Hollywood propagate conformity to the racial mindset of white superiority. While this book may validate many depressing truths about America, However, there is also a positive energy and hope that things are changing, slowly but surely. This book is recommended for anyone who has even a remote interest in the subject of race, minorities or immigration (Amazon).

Keefe, Patrick Radden. *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern*

Ireland. In December 1972, Jean McConville, a thirty-eight-year-old mother of ten, was dragged from her Belfast home by masked intruders, her children clinging to her legs. They never saw her again. Her abduction was one of the most notorious episodes of the vicious conflict known as The Troubles. Everyone in the neighborhood knew the I.R.A. was responsible. But in a climate of fear and paranoia, no one would speak of it. In 2003, five years after an accord brought an uneasy peace to Northern Ireland, a set of human bones was discovered on a beach. McConville's children knew it was their mother when they were told a blue safety pin was attached to the dress--with so many kids, she had always kept it handy for diapers or ripped clothes. Patrick Radden Keefe's mesmerizing book on the bitter conflict in Northern Ireland and its aftermath uses the McConville case as a starting point for the tale of a society wracked by a violent guerrilla war, a war whose consequences have never been reckoned with. The brutal violence seared not only people like the McConville children, but also I.R.A. members embittered by a peace that fell far short of the goal of a united Ireland, and left them wondering whether the killings they committed were not justified acts of war, but simple murders (Good Reads).

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Anti-Racist.* Scholar Ibram X. Kendi won a National Book Award for his 2016 history of racist thought in the U.S., *Stamped From the Beginning*, and leads the Antiracist Research & Policy Center at American University. He's spent years immersed in the facts and theory of one of society's ugliest dimensions. His conclusion? There is no such thing as not being racist. Rather, he posits, there is only racism and that which actively works against it: antiracism. In his latest book, both self-examination and self-help, Kendi offers detailed instructions on how and why to put antiracism into practice. *How to Be an Antiracist* offers a reverberant challenge to its readers, calling on them to rethink deeply rooted ideas about race. It won't be easy or comfortable, but Kendi makes a convincing case that it's worthwhile (*Time*).

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants.* As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these lenses of knowledge together to show that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings are we capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learning to give our own gifts in return.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft.* Part memoir, part master class by one of the bestselling authors of all time, this superb volume is a revealing and practical view of the writer's craft, comprising the basic tools of the trade every writer must have. King's advice is grounded in his vivid memories from childhood through his emergence as a writer, from his struggling early career to his widely reported near-fatal accident in 1999 -- and how the inextricable link between writing and living spurred his recovery. Brilliantly structured, friendly and inspiring, *On Writing* will empower and entertain everyone who reads it -- fans, writers, and anyone who loves a great story well told (Good Reads).

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life.* When Barbara Kingsolver and her family moved from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they took on a new challenge: to spend a year on a locally-produced diet, paying close attention to the provenance of all they consume. Concerned about the environmental, social, and physical costs of American food culture, they hoped to recover what Kingsolver considers our nation's lost appreciation for farms and the natural processes of food production. Since 2007, their scheme has evolved enormously. In this new edition, featuring an afterword composed by the entire Kingsolver family, Barbara's husband, Steven, discusses how the project grew into a farm-to-table restaurant and community development project training young farmers in their area to move into sustainable food production. Camille writes about her decision to move back to a rural area after college, and how she and her husband incorporate their food values in their lives as they begin their new family. Lily, Barbara's youngest daughter, writes about how growing up on a farm, in touch with natural processes and food chains, has shaped her life as a future environmental scientist. And Barbara writes about their sheep, and how they grew into her second vocation as a fiber artist, and reports on the enormous response they've received from other home-growers and local-food devotees. With Americans' ever-growing concern over an

agricultural establishment that negatively affects our health and environment, the Kingsolver family's experiences and observations remain just as relevant today as they were ten years ago. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is a modern classic that will endure for years to come (Amazon).

Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster.* This gripping true-life adventure tale tells the story of the disaster in which several climbers died on the slopes of Mt. Everest in 1996, as witnessed by Jon Krakauer, a journalist who is also one of the climbers to reach the summit that year. Led by Rob Hall, one of the most highly respected climbers in the world at that time, the team Krakauer climbs with becomes split up after a series of small incidents and a sudden change in the weather, leaving five of his teammates dead on the mountain. Another expedition led by the flamboyant Scott Fischer also loses climbers in the storm, including Fischer himself. Krakauer recounts the events of the ill-fated expeditions from his own personal experience and makes several suggestions as to what may have led to the climbers being caught high on the world's most sought-after "trophy summit."

Kurlansky, Mark. *Salt: A World History.* Salt, the only rock we eat, has made a glittering, often surprising contribution to the history of humankind. Until about a hundred years ago, when modern geology revealed its prevalence, salt was one of the world's most sought-after commodities. A substance so valuable it served as currency, salt has influenced the establishment of trade routes and cities, provoked and financed wars, secured empires and inspired revolutions. Populated by colorful characters and filled with fascinating details, Mark Kurlansky's kaleidoscopic and illuminating history is a multi-layered masterpiece that blends economic, scientific, political, religious, and culinary records into a rich and memorable tale.

Larson, Erik. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin.* The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history. A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. As that first year unfolds and the shadows deepen, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance—and ultimately, horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder reveals Hitler's true character and ruthless ambition. Suffused with the tense atmosphere of the period, and with unforgettable portraits of the bizarre Göring and the expectedly charming—yet wholly sinister—Goebbels, *In the Garden of Beasts* lends a stunning, eyewitness perspective on events as they unfold in real time, revealing an era of surprising nuance and complexity. The result is a dazzling, addictively readable work that speaks volumes about why the world did not recognize the grave threat posed by Hitler until Berlin, and Europe, were awash in blood and terror.

Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: A Saga of Magic and Murder at the Fair That Changed America.* Bringing Chicago circa 1893 to vivid life, Erik Larson's spellbinding bestseller intertwines the true tale of two men -- the brilliant architect behind the legendary 1893 World's Fair, striving to secure America's place in the world, 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 (Borders).

Larson, Erik. *The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz.* In *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson shows how Churchill taught the British people "the art of being fearless." It is a story of political brinkmanship, but it's also an intimate domestic drama, set against the backdrop of Churchill's prime-ministerial country home, Chequers; his wartime retreat, Ditchley, where he and his entourage go when the moon is brightest and the bombing threat is highest; and of course 10 Downing Street in London. Drawing on diaries, original archival documents, and once-secret intelligence reports--some released only recently--Larson provides a new lens on London's darkest year through the day-to-day experience of Churchill and his family: his wife, Clementine; their youngest daughter, Mary, who chafes against her parents' wartime protectiveness; their son, Randolph, and his beautiful, unhappy wife, Pamela; Pamela's illicit lover, a dashing American emissary; and the advisers in Churchill's "Secret Circle," to whom he turns in the hardest moments. (Good Reads)

Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything.* Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, Levitt and Dubner 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. In *Freakonomics*, they explore the hidden side of . . . well, everything. The inner workings of a crack gang. The truth about real-estate agents. The myths of campaign finance. The telltale marks of a cheating schoolteacher. The secrets of the Klu Klux Klan. What unites all these stories is a belief that the modern world, despite a great deal of complexity and downright deceit, is not impenetrable, is not unknowable, and—if the right questions are asked—is even more intriguing than we think. All it takes is a new way of looking. *Freakonomics* establishes this unconventional premise: If morality represents how we would like the world to work, then economics represents how it actually does work. It is true that readers of this book will be armed with enough riddles and stories to last a thousand cocktail parties. But *Freakonomics* can provide more than that. It will literally redefine the way we view the modern world (Borders).

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong.* Americans have lost touch with their history, and in *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, Professor James Loewen shows why. After surveying eighteen leading high school American history texts, he has concluded that not one does a decent job of making history interesting or memorable. Marred by an embarrassing combination of blind patriotism, mindless optimism, sheer misinformation, and outright lies, these books omit almost all the ambiguity, passion, conflict, and drama from our past. In this revised edition, packed with updated material, Loewen explores how historical myths continue to be perpetuated in today's climate and adds an eye-opening chapter on the lies surrounding 9/11 and the Iraq War. From the truth about Columbus's historic voyages to an honest evaluation of our national leaders, Loewen revives our history, restoring the vitality and relevance it truly possesses. Thought provoking, nonpartisan, and often shocking, Loewen unveils the real America in this iconoclastic classic beloved by high school teachers, history buffs, and enlightened citizens across the country.

McCullough, David. *1776.* In this stirring book, David McCullough tells the intensely human story of those who marched with General George Washington in the year of the Declaration of Independence—when the whole American cause was riding on their success, without which all hope for independence would have been dashed and the noble ideals of the Declaration would have amounted to little more than words on paper. Based on extensive research in both American and British archives, *1776* is a powerful drama written with extraordinary narrative vitality. It is the story of Americans in the ranks, men of every shape, size, and color, farmers, schoolteachers, shoemakers, no-accounts, and mere boys turned soldiers. And it is the story of the King's men, the British commander, William Howe, and his highly disciplined redcoats who looked on their rebel foes with contempt and fought with a valor too little known (Borders).

Moore, Wes. *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates.* Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world (Amazon).

Mukherjee, Siddhartha. *The Gene: An Intimate History.* There are no greater connectors between human beings, our families, our ancestors, and even our futures than genes. We all know the basic biological facts about DNA and evolution, but this book skillfully connects ancient assumptions about heritability with modern techniques of recombination to gently expand that common knowledge. Like all great works of popular science, Siddhartha Mukherjee makes you feel like you understand a subject so complex that its development has spanned (and is likely to continue to span) literally all of human history (AMETHYST FRECH, <https://reading.berkeley.edu>).

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books.* Every Thursday morning for two years in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Azar Nafisi, a bold and inspired teacher, secretly gathered seven of her most committed female students to read forbidden Western classics. Some came from conservative and religious families while others were progressive and secular; some had spent time in jail. They were shy and uncomfortable at first, unaccustomed to being asked to speak their minds, but soon they removed their veils and began to speak more freely—their stories

intertwining with the novels they were reading by Jane Austen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and Vladimir Nabokov. As Islamic morality squads staged arbitrary raids in Tehran, as fundamentalists seized hold of the universities and a blind censor stifled artistic expression, the women in Nafisi's living room spoke not only of the books they were reading but also about themselves, their dreams and disappointments (Good Reads).

Navasky, Victor S. *Naming Names*. This book, written by a professor at Columbia University, is about the witch hunt for Communists—imagined to be lurking in every corner—during the age of Senator Joe McCarthy. It seems Hollywood insiders were particularly targeted and coerced into turning in friends and family for real or imagined Communist associations. The book focuses heavily on a few people who caved in and named names, a few others who stood strong, and how both sides lived afterwards with their choices.

Obama, Michelle. *Becoming*. 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. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms. Warm, wise, and revelatory, *Becoming* is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations—and whose story inspires us to do the same (Good Reads).

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*. *In the Heart of the Sea* tells perhaps the greatest sea story ever. Philbrick interweaves his account of this extraordinary ordeal of ordinary men with a wealth of whale lore and with a brilliantly detailed portrait of the lost, unique community of Nantucket whalers. Impeccably researched and beautifully told, the book delivers the ultimate portrait of man against nature, drawing on a remarkable range of archival and modern sources, including a long-lost account by the ship's cabin boy. At once a literary companion and a page-turner that speaks to the same issues of class, race, and man's relationship to nature that permeate the works of Melville, *In the Heart of the Sea* will endure as a vital work of American history (Borders).

Pink, Daniel H. *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. Most people believe that the best way to motivate is with rewards like money—the carrot-and-stick approach. That's a mistake, says Daniel H. Pink. In this provocative and persuasive book, he asserts that the secret to high performance and satisfaction—at work, at school, and at home—is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. Drawing on four decades of scientific research on human motivation, Pink exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does—and how that affects every aspect of life. He examines the three elements of true motivation—autonomy, mastery, and purpose—and offers smart and surprising techniques for putting these into action in a unique book that will change how we think and transform how we live (Amazon).

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. Today, buffeted by one food fad after another, America is suffering from what can only be described as a national eating disorder. Will it be fast food tonight, or something organic? Or perhaps something we grew ourselves? The question of what to have for dinner has confronted us since man first discovered fire. But, as Michael Pollan explains in this revolutionary book, how we answer it now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, may determine our survival as a species. Packed with profound surprises, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is changing the way Americans think about the politics, perils, and pleasures of eating. (Penguin Books)

Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. This is the story of the American Military Adventure in Iraq. The heart of the story *Fiasco* has to tell, which has never been told before, is that of a military occupation whose leaders failed to see a blooming insurgency for what it was and as a result led their soldiers in such a way that the insurgency became inevitable. The book includes hundreds of hours of interviews with top U.S. officials who were on the ground during the surge and beyond. Thomas Edwin "Tom" Ricks is an American journalist who writes on defense topics. He is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*. He writes a blog at ForeignPolicy.com and is a member of the Center for a New American Security, a defense policy think tank. He lectures widely to the military and is a member of Harvard University's Senior Advisory Council on the Project on U.S. Civil-Military Relations.

Roberts, Cokie. *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation.* (NOTE: There is another book by this name by another author; make sure to get Roberts' book.)

While much has been written about the men who signed the Declaration of Independence, battled the British, and framed the Constitution, the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters they left behind have been little noticed by history. #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Cokie Roberts brings us women who fought the Revolution as valiantly as the men, often defending their very doorsteps. Drawing upon personal correspondence, private journals, and even favored recipes, Roberts reveals the often surprising stories of these fascinating women, bringing to life the everyday trials and extraordinary triumphs of individuals like Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, Deborah Read Franklin, Eliza Pinckney, Catherine Littlefield Green, Esther DeBerdt Reed and Martha Washington—proving that without our exemplary women, the new country might have never survived (Borders).

Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.* Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal *New York Times* bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew (Amazon)

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World: A Memoir.* The first Latinx (Puerto Rican) and third woman appointed to the US Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor has become an instant American icon. Now, with a candor and intimacy never undertaken by a sitting Justice, she recounts her life from a Bronx housing project to the federal bench, a journey that offers an inspiring testament to her own extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself (Good Reads).

Tan, Amy. *Where the Past Begins.* In this wise and profound memoir, novelist Tan (*The Joy Luck Club*, etc.), now 65, looks back on her life, illuminating the path that led her to writing. Tan's fans and writers of all kinds will find her latest work fascinating; she explores how her writing has evolved and how memory sparks imagination. She also reveals how listening to classical music helps her create scenes during the writing process. Writers will find a chapter of emails between Tan and her editor Dan Halpern to be clever and endearing, illustrating how an exceptional editor helps shape a book and shore up a writer's self-esteem. Tan also reveals that it takes her years to write a novel, with each more difficult than the last. Woven throughout are tales from the writer's sometimes traumatic past. Her mother, once married to an abusive Chinese pilot, left her husband and three daughters in China, married Tan's father, had three more children, and occasionally threatened suicide. When Tan was 15, her father, an electrical engineer and part-time evangelical minister, died of a brain tumor—as did her older brother six months later. Despite hardships and sacrifices, the Tan family held fast to one another, and the “resilience” of love is apparent in these pages. The memoir reveals that, for Tan, the past is ever present, serving as a wellspring of emotion and writing inspiration (*Publishers Weekly*).

Treuer, David. *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present.* Tommy Orange, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, who won several literary awards and was named a Pulitzer finalist for his 2018 debut novel, *There There*, called this book “a sweeping, brilliant, and thorough history of Native America.” A finalist for the National Book Award in nonfiction this year, it is meant to counter the widespread narrative that Native American culture was destroyed in the 1800s. “This book would focus on the untold story of the past 128 years, making visible the broader and deeper currents of Indian life that have too long been obscured,” Treuer, a member of the Ojibwe Tribe, wrote (*New York Times*).

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story.* In May 2001, a group of men attempted to cross the Mexican border into the desert of southern Arizona through the deadliest region of the continent, the “Devil's Highway.” Three years later, Luis Alberto Urrea wrote about what happened to them. The result was a national bestseller, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, a “book of the year” in multiple newspapers, and a work proclaimed as a modern American classic (Good Reads).

Vance, J.D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis.* From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class. *Hillbilly Elegy* is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has

never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck. (Good Reads)

Walls, Jeannette. *Half Broke Horses*. "Those old cows knew trouble was coming before we did." So begins the story of Lily Casey Smith, Jeannette Walls's no nonsense, resourceful, and spectacularly compelling grandmother. By age six, Lily was helping her father break horses. At fifteen, she left home to teach in a frontier town -- riding five hundred miles on her pony, alone, to get to her job. She learned to drive a car and fly a plane. And, with her husband Jim, she ran a vast ranch in Arizona. She raised two children, one of whom is Jeannette's memorable mother, Rosemary Smith Walls, unforgettably portrayed in *The Glass Castle*. Lily survived tornadoes, droughts, floods, the Great Depression, and the most heartbreaking personal tragedy. She bristled at prejudice of all kinds -- against women, Native Americans, and anyone else who didn't fit the mold. Rosemary Smith Walls always told Jeannette that she was like her grandmother, and in this true-life novel, Jeannette Walls channels that kindred spirit. *Half Broke Horses* is Laura Ingalls Wilder for adults, as riveting and dramatic as Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* or Beryl Markham's *West with the Night*. Destined to become a classic, it will transfix audiences everywhere (Good Reads).

Wolfe, Tom. *The Right Stuff*. After an opening chapter on the terror of being a test pilot's wife, the story cuts back to the late 1940s, when Americans were first attempting to break the sound barrier. Test pilots, we discover, are people who live fast lives with dangerous machines, not all of them airborne. Chuck Yeager was certainly among the fastest, and his determination to push through Mach 1--a feat that some had predicted would cause the destruction of any aircraft--makes him the book's guiding spirit. Yet soon the focus shifts to the seven initial astronauts. Wolfe traces Alan Shepard's suborbital flight and Gus Grissom's embarrassing panic on the high seas (making the controversial claim that Grissom flooded his Liberty capsule by blowing the escape hatch too soon). The author also produces an admiring portrait of John Glenn's apple-pie heroism and selfless dedication. By the time Wolfe concludes with a return to Yeager and his late-career exploits, the narrative's epic proportions and literary merits are secure. Certainly *The Right Stuff* is the best, the funniest, and the most vivid book ever written about America's manned space program (Amazon).

Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. In *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman offers an utterly original approach to questions of humanity's impact on the planet: he asks us to envision our Earth, without us. In this far-reaching narrative, Weisman explains how our massive infrastructure would collapse and finally vanish without human presence; which everyday items may become immortalized as fossils; how copper pipes and wiring would be crushed into mere seams of reddish rock; why some of our earliest buildings might be the last architecture left; and how plastic, bronze sculpture, radio waves, and some man-made molecules may be our most lasting gifts to the universe. *The World Without Us* reveals how, just days after humans disappear, floods in New York's subways would start eroding the city's foundations, and how, as the world's cities crumble, asphalt jungles would give way to real ones. It describes the distinct ways that organic and chemically treated farms would revert to the wild, how billions more birds would flourish, and how cockroaches in unheated cities would perish without us. Drawing on the expertise of engineers, atmospheric scientists, art conservators, zoologists, oil refiners, marine biologists, astrophysicists, religious leaders from rabbis to the Dalai Lama, and paleontologists—who describe a pre-human world inhabited by megafauna like giant sloths that stood taller than mammoths—Weisman illustrates what the planet might be like today, if not for us (Good Reads).

Westover, Tara. *Educated*. Tara Westover was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, she prepared for the end of the world by stockpiling home-canned peaches and sleeping with her "head-for-the-hills bag." In the summer she stewed herbs for her mother, a midwife and healer, and in the winter she salvaged in her father's junkyard. Her father forbade hospitals, so Tara never saw a doctor or nurse. Gashes and concussions, even burns from explosions, were all treated at home with herbalism. The 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. Then, lacking any formal education, Tara began to educate herself. She taught herself enough mathematics and grammar to be admitted to Brigham Young University, where she studied history, learning for the first time about important world events like the Holocaust and the civil rights movement. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home. *Educated* is an account of the struggle for self-invention. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty and of the grief that comes with severing the closest of ties. With the acute insight that distinguishes all great writers, Westover has crafted a universal coming-of-age story that gets to the heart of what an education is and what it offers: the perspective to see one's life through new eyes and the will to change it (Good Reads).

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*. Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people — including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball's Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others — she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day.

Williams, Thomas Chatterton. *Self-Portrait in Black and White*. A reckoning with the way we choose to see and define ourselves, *Self-Portrait in Black and White* is the searching story of one American family's multigenerational transformation from what is called black to what is assumed to be white. Thomas Chatterton Williams, the son of a "black" father from the segregated South and a "white" mother from the West, spent his whole life believing the dictum that a single drop of "black blood" makes a person black. This was so fundamental to his self-conception that he'd never rigorously reflected on its foundations—but the shock of his experience as the black father of two extremely white-looking children led him to question these long-held convictions. It is not that he has come to believe that he is no longer black or that his kids are white, Williams notes. It is that these categories cannot adequately capture either of them—or anyone else, for that matter. Beautifully written and bound to upset received opinions on race, *Self-Portrait in Black and White* is an urgent work for our time (Amazon).

Yousafzai, Malala. *I Am Malala: A Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban*. When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school, and few expected her to survive. Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she has become a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate (Good Reads).

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post American World: Release 2.0* "This is not a book about the decline of America, but rather about the rise of everyone else." So begins Fareed Zakaria's important new work on the era we are now entering. Following on the success of his best-selling *The Future of Freedom*, Zakaria describes with equal prescience a world in which the United States will no longer dominate the global economy, orchestrate geopolitics, or overwhelm cultures. He sees the "rise of the rest"—the growth of countries like China, India, Brazil, Russia, and many others—as the great story of our time, and one that will reshape the world. The tallest buildings, biggest dams, largest-selling movies, and most advanced cell phones are all being built outside the United States. This economic growth is producing political confidence, national pride, and potentially international problems. How should the United States understand and thrive in this rapidly changing international climate? What does it mean to live in a truly global era? Zakaria answers these questions with his customary lucidity, insight, and imagination (Amazon).