

**Saint Francis High School  
American Literature  
Summer Reading 2017**

**All American Literature (non-Honors) students are required to read Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. Check the ISBN when you purchase your copy so you bring to class the correct edition: ISBN 13: 9780062277756.**

**During the first week of school, you will be tested on your factual understanding of the novel. The novel will also be discussed in seminars and you will write a formal essay on the novel.**

**For the 2nd book, please choose one title from the provided list.** For the 2nd book, you may be required to write a personal and/or creative response. During the first week of school, you will be provided with a list of guided questions for this response. Depending on your assigned teacher, there may be additional assessments. Come prepared by finishing the two books before the first class.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

This 1969 autobiography about the early years of African-American writer and poet Maya Angelou illustrates how strength of character and a love of literature can help overcome racism and trauma.

*My Ántonia* by Willa Cather

Set in Nebraska, the novel has five sections that correspond roughly to stages of Ántonia's life, through marriage and motherhood, except the middle volume, "Lena Lingard," is about Jim Burden in college and his affair with Lena, Ántonia's friend.

*All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel. \*\*description courtesy of Amazon.com

*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer

Nine-year-old Oskar Schell has embarked on an urgent, secret mission that will take him through the five boroughs of New York. His goal is to find the lock that matches a mysterious key that belonged to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. This seemingly impossible task will bring Oskar into contact with survivors of all sorts on an exhilarating, affecting, often hilarious, and ultimately healing journey. \*\*description courtesy of Amazon.com

*Washington Square* by Henry James

This is recommended for students who enjoyed *Daisy Miller*, which was assigned in English 9. Henry James is a master of language. This novella (short novel) asks an interesting question: is it better for a plain girl to marry the man she deeply loves even though he is mainly interested in her money, or should she not marry at all? Catherine Harrington falls for Morris Townsend and is happy until her father cruelly discourages Catherine from marrying such a man. Morris may be faking love for Catherine, but does that matter if Catherine is happy?

*The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd

Hetty “Handful” Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke’s daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women. This exquisitely written novel is a triumph of storytelling that looks with unswerving eyes at a devastating wound in American history, through women whose struggles for liberation, empowerment, and expression will leave no reader unmoved. \*\*description courtesy of Amazon.com

*Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston

This memoir contains the life experiences of a woman who seeks to understand how her Chinese ancestors shaped her own life story.

*McTeague* by Frank Norris

This 1899 novel, set in San Francisco (a Cliff House scene is memorable), tells of a dentist who marries a woman after she wins \$5000 from a lottery ticket, but nothing goes well, greed rearing its ugly head.

*Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* by Barack Obama

The author recounts his life up to his enrollment in Harvard Law School. Many readers are surprised by the early experiences that influenced our nation’s 44th president. He lived in diverse environments--Hawaii, Jakarta, Los Angeles, Kenya-- where he learned about others and himself.

*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

This long novel indicates what it was like to grow up in New York City between 1912 and 1920. The protagonist is Francie Nolan, who relies on her imagination and her love of reading to provide a temporary escape from poverty.

*Travels with Charley in Search of America* by John Steinbeck

To hear the speech of the real America, to smell the grass and the trees, to see the colors and the light—these were John Steinbeck's (author of *Of Mice and Men*) goals as he set out, at the age of fifty-eight, to rediscover the country he had been writing about for so many years. With Charley, his French poodle, Steinbeck drives the interstates and the country roads, dines with truckers, encounters bears at Yellowstone and old friends in San Francisco. Along

the way he reflects on the American character, racial hostility, the particular form of American loneliness he finds almost everywhere, and the unexpected kindness of strangers.

\*\*description courtesy of Amazon.com

*Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut

An apocalyptic tale of this planet's ultimate fate, it features a midget as the protagonist, a complete, original theology created by a calypso singer, and a vision of the future that is at once blackly fatalistic and hilariously funny. A book that left an indelible mark on an entire generation of readers, *Cat's Cradle* is one of the twentieth century's most important works—and Vonnegut at his very best. \*\*description courtesy of Amazon.com

*Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton

This novella (short novel) published in 1911 gives an introduction to the author whom many consider America's greatest female writer of fiction. Readers learn a lot about what life was like in New England long ago. Your grandparents probably read this since *Ethan Frome* was once read by every high school student--a classic!