

**Putnam Valley High School**  
**11th Grade English**  
**Summer Reading List**  
**2009**

**Students entering English 11 must read any two of the following books:**

**FICTION**

*Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett

Somewhere in South America, at the home of the country's vice president, a lavish birthday party is being held in honor of the powerful businessman Mr. Hosokawa. Roxanne Cross, opera's most revered soprano, has mesmerized the international guests with her singing. It is a perfect evening-until a band of gun wielding terrorists take the entire party hostage. But what begins as a panicked, life-threatening scenario slowly evolves into something quite different, a moment of great beauty, as terrorists and hostages forge unexpected bonds and people from different continents become compatriots, friends and lovers.

*Bell Jar, The* by Sylvia Plath

The autobiographical novel describes an ambitious and brilliant young woman's search for values and her eventual breakdown.

*Bridges of Madison County, The* by Robert James Waller

Photographer Robert Kincaid meets Iowa farm wife Francesca Johnson while looking for the famous bridges. Her family is away, and the two discover an uncommon passion between them---one that cannot be denied or completely fulfilled.

*Color of Water, The* by James McBride

This is a young black man's search to uncover his white mother's past and his own identity. McBride examines his life, his own childhood in Brooklyn's Red Hook housing projects, and the love that guided his family's life.

*DaVinci Code, The* by Dan Brown

Robert Langdon is a Harvard professor of symbology who can't stay out of trouble. This mild-mannered academic finds himself entangled in a deadly conspiracy that stretches back centuries. Visiting Paris on business, he is awakened at 2:00 a.m. by a call from the police: an elderly curator has been murdered inside the Louvre, and a baffling cipher has been found near the body. Aided by the victim's cryptologist granddaughter, Langdon begins a danger-filled quest for the culprit, but the deeper he searches, the more he becomes convinced that long-festering conspiracies hold the answer to the art lover's death.

***Farewell To Arms, A*** by Ernest Hemingway

This novel is about a love story based largely on the author's experiences as a young soldier in Italy when Hemingway, working as an ambulance driver in the war, fell in love with an English nurse.

***Glass Castle: A Memoir, The*** by Jeannette Wall

This memoir revolves around the author's parents, who give the concept of bad parenting a whole new meaning. The irresponsible romantic of a father was an inventor of outlandishly useless devices, and her mother, an artist, was his abettor. As the two of them dragged the family around the country on the run from creditors and from one bad idea to another, they virtually ignored their four hapless children, except when they were giving them shoplifting lessons or stealing money for booze.

***Grapes of Wrath, The*** by John Steinbeck

This is the saga of a family in 1939 that struggles through the Great Depression by laboring as Dust Bowl migrants. This novel focuses on the travels of bankrupt farmers as they struggle to deal with the problems of poverty plaguing their family as they head to the promise land of California.

***History of Love, The*** by Nicole Krauss

It has been decades since Leo Gursky first surrendered his heart, then wrote a book about it, at the tender age of ten, and he's been in love with the same person ever since. Leo believes his book is lost to time, but what he doesn't know is, not only has it survived sixty years without him, but it has also been an inspiration to others. Fourteen-year-old Alma was even named for a character from the book. When she realizes how deeply the story touched her lonely mother, she embarks on a search for answers.

***House of Sand and Fog*** by Andre Dubus

Colonel Behrani, an Iranian immigrant, has spent most of his savings trying to enhance his daughter's chances of a good marriage. Once she is married, he spends the remaining funds on a house at an auction, unwittingly putting himself and his family in the middle of a legal tussle with the house's former owner, Kathy Nicolo. What begins as a legal struggle turns into a personal confrontation, with tragic results.

***Interview With The Vampire*** by Anne Rice

In a darkened room a young man sits telling the macabre and eerie story of his life—the story of a vampire, gifted with eternal life, cursed with exquisite cravings for human blood. Vampire Louie tells his epic story of love, betrayal, loneliness and hunger.

***Known World, The*** by Edward P. Jones

This is a story of Henry Townsend, a black farmer and former slave, who falls under the tutelage of William Robbins, the most powerful man in Manchester County, Virginia. Making certain he never circumvents the law, Townsend runs his affairs with unusual discipline. But death and chaos soon take over.

***Memoirs of a Geisha*** by Arthur Golden

Nitta Sayuri is a young Japanese woman who was taken from her home at the age of nine and sold into slavery as a geisha. She discovers a rare opportunity for freedom when the outbreak of WWII forces an end to the only life she has ever known.

***Memory Keeper's Daughter*** by Jim Edwards

In a small-town, surgeon Dr. David Henry finds himself delivering his own twins. He recognizes the signs of Down's Syndrome in his daughter's face. In a split-second decision he asks the nurse to take his daughter away. As his wife mourns the missing piece in their perfect lives, David struggles with this painful secret that may pull his family apart.

***My Sister's Keeper*** by Jodi Picoult

This is a heart-wrenching, controversial story of a family desperately trying to save their eldest daughter who has been dying from APL since she was two years old. This family is torn apart by conflicting needs and a passionate love that triumphs over human weakness. This novel examines what it means to be a good parent, a good sister, and a good person.

***Nannie Diaries, The*** by Emma Mc Laughlin and Nicola Kraus

Written by two former nannies, the alternately comic and poignant satire punctures the glamour of Manhattan's upper class. Nanny takes a position caring for the only son of the wealthy X family. When the marriage begins to disintegrate, Nanny ends up involved way beyond the bounds of human decency or good taste.

***On The Road*** by Jack Kerouac

This novel follows the adventures and travels of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty as they cross North America, usually broke, in search of belief and meaning.

***Slaughterhouse Five*** by Kurt Vonnegut

After surviving the bombing of Dresden in WWII, Billy Pilgrim spends time on the planet Trafalmond.

***Walden*** by Henry David Thoreau

In this book, Thoreau offers his philosophy on life and his observations of nature gleaned from two years of solitude living in a cabin on Walden Pond in Massachusetts.

***Yellow Raft in Blue Water, A*** by Michael Dorris

This novel is about three generations of Indian women, beset by hardship and torn by angry secrets, yet joined together by bonds of kinship.

NON-FICTION/BIOGRAPHY

***Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors*** by Piers Paul Read

On October 12, 1972, a plane carrying a team of young rugby players crashed into the remote, snow-peaked Andes. Out of the forty-five original passengers and crew, only sixteen made it off the mountain alive. To survive, they were forced to do what would have been unthinkable...

***Angela's Ashes*** by Frank McCourt

This novel is a best seller and the 1997 Pulitzer Prize winning memoir about a young boy growing up with his family in Ireland. Young Frank Mc Court and his family try against all odds to escape the poverty and the hardships of living in the slums of pre-war Limerick.

***Autobiography of a Face*** by Lucy Grealy

Lucy Grealy writes a candid memoir about her struggle with cancer as a child and her attempt to live a normal life as she matured. The story tells of her suffering in school as she contends with taunts and bullying. The book captures the battle between wanting to be an adult and wanting to remain as a child.

***Blue Blood*** by Edward Conlon

As a Harvard graduate and an accomplished writer, Edward Conlon has a different view on things than most other New York City cops. The book is a memoir tracing his life and career from the time he was a rookie cop working tough neighborhoods up to the days he was a narcotics officer on his way to being a detective. The book also offers insight into the role of the family and deals with current issues about brutality and self-defense.

***Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*** by Eric Schlosser

The author charges that fast food has hastened the “malling” of the American landscape, widened the chasm between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled the U.S. cultural imperialism abroad.

***In Cold Blood*** by Truman Capote

This novel is about the shocking story of the slayings of the Clutter family of Kansas, and the capture, trial, and execution of their murderers.

***Into the Wild*** by Jon Krakauer

This is the true story of a young man who hitchhiked into the Alaskan wildlife and walked alone to Mt. McKinley before being found dead. The main character had given \$25,000 in savings to charity and invented a new life for himself before his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. It is a thrilling and haunting story of adventure and mystery.

***This Boy's Life*** by Tobias Wolff

This is Tobias Wolff's memoir and moving tale of the frustrations and cruelties of growing up in a dysfunctional family in the 1950s and 1960s. Teenaged Wolff moves with his divorced mother from Florida to Utah to Washington State to escape her violent boyfriend. When she remarries, Wolff finds himself in a bitter battle of wills with his abusive stepfather.

***Tuesdays with Morrie*** by Mitch Albom

The author, an alumnus of Brandeis University, tells of his meetings with a former professor suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease and all of the lessons he learned about life and death from his college mentor.