

Viewpoints on Modern America • Outside Reading

Dear Viewpoints student,

One of our objectives for this year is to get you reading for pleasure and enjoying it. To this end, we have an Outside Reading expectation for each quarter – for some of this, there will not even be an assessment in class, but we do expect reading to go on.

We have put together a year-long reading program, some with recommendations and some with requirements. In general: if you want to read something that's not on the list, ask us, and we are likely to assent happily.

Choose *affirmatively*; don't pick just because something is simple or because your buddy is doing it, and *certainly don't pick* something you've read before – it would be dishonest for you to get credit now for work you've done before our class began.

Pick up a great book and love it!

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Rosin and Mr. Wright

Q1: Although this may change as we get into the school year, we're anticipating (now, during the summer, that the Q1 Outside Reading will be *any American fiction*. These suggestions come from Rosin, Wright, and others, but you may read outside the suggestions -- check the other lists for other suggestions, or ask other teachers, parents, or friends. If you find something outside this list, please check with us, but it'll probably be okay. Not all of these are incredibly "literary," but all are absolutely worth your time.

- *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, by Edward Abbey
- *The Alienist*, by Caleb Carr
- *White Noise*, by Don DeLillo
- *Snow in August*, by Pete Hamill
- *Foreign Affairs*, by Alison Lurie
- a crime novel by George Pelecanos
- *Samaritans* or *Clockers*, by Richard Price
- *Snow Crash*, by Neal Stephenson
- *Killing Floor* or *The Enemy*, or any other of the Lee Child titles that Mr. Wright can't shut up about (Child is an Englishman but lives and sets his works in NYC using an American archetypal loner as his protagonist)

Q2: a [bildungsroman](#) (“novel of education”) by an American author. Read one of the items on this list. (See “**Q2 Option**”, below, too.)

- *Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides
- *Ellen Foster*, by Kaye Gibbons
- *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac
- *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, by Ken Kesey
- *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger
- *The Lovely Bones*, by Alice Sebold – warning: this book opens with what has been aptly described by a reviewer as “an almost unimaginable horror”.... Although the book itself is exquisite and very sweet, please be warned about the contents of the opening chapter
- *Meridian*, by Alice Walker

Q2 Option: The following novels are *not quite* bildungsromans – the former is almost fitting, but the latter is definitely a [picaresque](#), in which the (roguish) antihero definitely doesn’t develop in the way we expect the protagonist to develop in a bildungsroman. Your teachers love *Confederacy*, whatever it is, and think you’ll probably find it very funny.

Although Mr. Payne disputes him on this in the kind of spirited debate that only true literature geeks can have, Rosin claims that the Pynchon novel is one of the greatest of the last fifty years.

Because Rosin, not Payne, edited this file, let it state here simply that both of these novels are very entertaining and replete with literary merit. If you’re interested in reading one of these instead of a true bildungsroman, you may do so; your eventual assessment may be tweaked slightly to accommodate your alternate reading choice.

- *The Crying of Lot #49*, by Thomas Pynchon
- *A Confederacy of Dunces*, by John Kennedy Toole

Q3: American non-fiction. Read one of the items on this list. A topic or subtopic (to help you identify texts that might interest you) is listed in parentheses for each.

- *Friday Night Lights*, by H.G. Bissinger (sports, education, race)
- *The Great Escape*, by Paul Brickhill (war)
- *Made in America*, by Bill Bryson (language, history)
- *In Cold Blood*, by Truman Capote (crime, psychology)
- *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson (nature)
- *The Call of Stories*, by Robert Coles (medicine, education)
- *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, by Annie Dillard (nature)
- *The Broken Cord*, by Michael Dorris (Native Americans, disability)
- *Nicked and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich (labor, work, poverty)

- *Blink or The Tipping Point or Outliers*, by Malcolm Gladwell (human intuition, popular culture, marketing, psychology)
- *My Life*, by Katharine Graham (memoir, journalism)
- *Commotion in the Blood: Life, Death, and the Immune System*, by Stephen Hall (medicine)
- *A Drinking Life*, by Pete Hamill (memoir)
- *A Civil Action*, by Jonathan Harr (law, justice)
- *Hiroshima*, by John Hersey (war)
- *Give Our Regards to the Atomsmashers*, ed. Sean Howe (comics)
- *The Year of Living Biblically*, by A.J. Jacobs (religion)
- *Just Do It: Nike Culture in the Corporate World*, by Donald Katz (business)
- *Savage Inequalities*, by Jonathan Kozol (education, poverty)
- *Devil in the White City*, by Erik Larson (1890s, suspense, murder, World's Fair)
- *Freakonomics*, by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner (economics)
- *Liar's Poker*, by Michael Lewis (business, stock market)
- *Moneyball*, by Michael Lewis (sports, business)
- *The Blind Side*, by Michael Lewis (sports, education, race)
- *Crossing Open Ground or Arctic Dreams*, by Barry Lopez (nature)
- *The Armies of the Night*, Norman Mailer (1960s, war, memoir)
- *The Color of Water*, by James McBride (family, race)
- *The Cutter Incident*, by Paul Offit (medicine, law)
- *The Hamburger*, by Josh Ozersky (food, culture)
- *Maus I and Maus II*, by Art Spiegelman (memoir, Holocaust)
- *Den of Thieves*, by James Stewart (business, stock market)
- *The Cuckoo's Egg*, by Clifford Stoll (technology, mystery)
- *Hell's Angels*, by Hunter S. Thompson (1960s)
- *My Own Country*, by Abraham Verghese (medicine, memoir)
- *Echoes in the Darkness*, by Joseph Wambaugh (murder [on the Main Line] – a student who read this in the past found the explicit letters written by one of the people in this book to be disturbingly graphic; be warned that this could be a very unsettling read for you)
- *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, by Tom Wolfe (1960s)

Q4: Your choice will depend on your research project.