

**Colonie Central High School  
1 Raider Blvd.  
Albany, NY 12205**

June, 2010

Dear Incoming Advanced Placement Language and Composition Students:

Reading is one of the most valuable and pleasurable habits you can develop. Much of our class time together next year will be spent reading, talking and writing about what we read.

As an incoming Advanced Placement student, you must select two works from the list on file in the library in the high school and read them over the course of the summer. This list represents a wide range of subjects and interests. Please take the time to read the annotations and to solicit advice about the books on the list.

You will be expected to write an essay in class on these works within the first week of school. You are also expected to maintain a response journal for each of these works. The following topics/reactions should be included among your entries.

1. A detailed discussion of what you learned from each book.
2. A review of the book's strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of a critical reader.
3. A discussion of the ways that the author uses words, structure, irony and point of view and an explanation of how they contribute to your understanding of the book.

Advanced placement English is a challenging course, which requires that the student have an extensive knowledge base of college level fiction or nonfiction works. You will be expected to read and maintain a response journal on two books from this list per quarter. The journal should contain at least 20 entries for each choice. Reading a minimum of two books over the summer will assist your preparation for the year ahead.

Enjoy your summer! We look forward to meeting with you in September.

Sincerely,

The English Department

**AP LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**  
**SUMMER READING LIST**  
**SUMMER 2010**

- Black Elk**                    **Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of The Oglala Sioux.** This book, taken from the dialogue of Black Elk and others, is perhaps the closest thing to a Native American classic in Literature. Somehow a previously (relatively) unrecorded culture comes alive in this first-hand account of the Lakota life before and after the fight for the Black Hills.
- Brown, Dee**                    **Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West.** First published in 1970, this extraordinary book changed the way Americans think about the original inhabitants of their country. Beginning with the Long Walk of the Navajos in 1860 and ending 30 years later with the massacre of Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota, it tells how the American Indians lost their land and lives to a dynamically expanding white society.
- Cahill, Thomas**                **How the Irish Saved Civilization.** The holy men and women of Ireland play a key role in preserving European Western civilization's heritage: they remain unconquered when Rome fell and preserved the bulk of western social and literary heritage. Passages gleaned from historical writings compliment a fine history, which often reads like a novel.
- Dillard, Annie**                **Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.** Pilgrim at Tinker Creek is a series of essays that combines scientific observation, philosophy, daily thoughts, and deeper introspection with glorious prose. On the surface, Annie Dillard is simply exploring a place called Tinker Creek and its inhabitants: "It's a good place to live; there's lots to think about." But as her observations range well beyond the landscape into worlds of esoteric fact and metaphysical insight, each paragraph becomes suffused with images and ideas.
- DuBois, W. E. B.**                **The Souls of Black Folk.** The book's largely autobiographical chapters take the reader through the momentous and moody maze of Afro-American life after the Emancipation Proclamation: from poverty, the neoslavery of the sharecropper, illiteracy, miseducation, and lynching, to the heights of humanity reached by the spiritual "sorrow songs" that birthed gospel and the blues.

**Gates, Henry Louis**

**Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man.** Harvard professor and frequent New Yorker contributor Henry Louis Gates Jr. offers profiles of prominent black American men in this collection which takes its title from the Wallace Stevens poem “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” Solid reporting on such subjects as Colin Powell, James Baldwin, Louis Farrakhan, and others is bolstered by Gates’ eloquent writing. His essay on the O. J. Simpson case is revelatory and provides calm and reasoned thoughts on the meaning of the case from noted black intellectuals, including Gates himself.

**Hochschild, Adam**

**King Leopold’s Ghost.** King Leopold of Belgium, did not much care for his native land or his subjects, all of which he dismissed as “small country, small people.” Even so, he searched the globe to find a colony for Belgium, frantic that the scramble of other European powers for overseas dominions in Africa and Asia would leave nothing for himself or his people. When he eventually found a suitable location in what would become the Belgian Congo, later known as Zaire and now simply as Congo, Leopold set about establishing a rule of terror that would culminate in the deaths of 4 to 8 million indigenous people, “a death toll,” Hochschild writes, “of Holocaust the Belgian King, who salted away billions of dollars in hidden bank accounts throughout the world. Hochschild’s fine book of historical inquiry, which draws heavily on eyewitness accounts of the colonialists’ savagery, brings this little-studied episode in European and African history into new light.

**Krakauer, Jon**

**Into the Wild.** What would possess a gifted young man recently graduated from college to literally walk away from his life? Noted outdoor writer and mountaineer Jon Krakauer tackles that question in his reporting on Chris McCandless, whose emaciated body was found in an abandoned bus in the Alaskan wilderness in 1992.

**Krakauer, Jon**

**Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster.** Since the 1980s, more and more “marginally qualified dreamers” have attempted the ascent of Everest, as guided commercial expeditions have dangled the possibility of reaching the roof of the world in front of anyone wealthy enough to pay for the privilege. In 1996, Outside magazine asked Krakauer, a frequent contributor, to write a piece on the commercialization of Everest, and Krakauer signed on as a member of New Zealander Rob Hall’s expedition. The disastrous outcome of the 1996 expedition forced Krakauer to write a very different article.

- Mailer, Norman.** **Executioner's Song.** A powerful drama, a distorted love affair, and a chilling look into the mind of a murderer in his countdown with a firing squad.
- Sagan, Carl** **Cosmos.** The best-selling science book ever published in the English language, COSMOS is a magnificent overview of the past, present, and future of science. Brilliant and provocative, it traces today's knowledge and scientific methods to their historical roots, blending science and philosophy in a wholly energetic and irresistible way.
- Sedaris, David** **Naked.** David Sedaris is nationally famous for his commentaries on National Public Radio--his "Santa Land Diaries," an exposé on being an elf at Macy Department Store's during Christmas is now a classic of American humor. In Naked, he takes on the rest of the year. Sedaris has a forthright, common sense prose style that seems perfectly reasonable until he begins to explain the world. Suddenly, the everyday becomes a nightmare, the ordinary hilarious, and the average incredible. Sedaris's genius is in exposing the basic absurdity--and cruelty--of people and institutions.
- Steinbeck, John** **Travels with Charley: In Search of America.** With his dog Charley, John Steinbeck set out in his truck to explore and experience America in the 1960s. As he talked with all kinds of people, he sadly noted the passing of region speech, fell in love with Montana, and was appalled by racism in New Orleans.
- Styron, William** **Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness.** A great novelist describes his devastating descent into depression, taking the reader on an unprecedented journey into the realm of madness. The author of Sophie's Choice was overtaken by persistent insomnia and a troubling sense of malaise--the first signs of a deep depression that would soon engulf his life and leave him on the brink of suicide.
- Terkel, Studs** **Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression.** First published in 1970, this classic of oral History features the voices of men and women who lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s.

**Welty, Eudora**

**One Writer's Beginnings.** Among the most beloved of American writers, Eudora Welty's stories and novels have entertained us for over half a century. Here, in her memoirs, she writes with her usual candor and grace about how a writer's sensibilities are shaped. As compelling as her stories, as witty as her personality, as finely honed as her fiction, Welty's account of her life is a powerful and fulfilling read.

**Winchester, Simon**

**The Professor and the Madman.** When the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary put out a call during the late 19th century pleading for "men of letters" to provide help with their mammoth undertaking, hundreds of responses came forth. Some helpers, like Dr. W.C. Minor, provided literally thousands of entries to the editors. But Minor, an American expatriate in England and a Civil War veteran, was actually a certified lunatic who turned in his dictionary entries from the Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum.

**Wolff, Tobias**

**This Boy's Life: A Memoir.** This unforgettable memoir, by one of our most gifted writers, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. His various schemes running away to Alaska, forging checks, and stealing cars - lead eventually to an act of outrageous self-invention that releases him into a new world of possibility.

**Wright, Richard**

**Black Boy.** Black Boy is a classic of American autobiography, a subtly crafted narrative of Richard Wright's journey from innocence to experience in the Jim Crow South. An enduring story of one young man's coming of age during a particular time and place, Black Boy remains a seminal text in our history about what it means to be a man, black, and Southern in America.