

## AVALON HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER 2025 READING PROGRAM

Teachers have been asked to suggest a book that they love and would like to share with high school students. All students entering a high school grade will pick two books from this list of teacher selections and read them. The names of the teachers who selected the texts are hidden for now. When we come together in the fall, students who picked a book will meet with the teacher who selected it. There will be a short assessment of your reading of the text and then there will be an open discussion of the work in which the teacher will share what moved him in the text. Students can share impressions and ask questions about the work in this time.

This year the books are divided into two categories: 1) 9th & 10th grade books and 2) 11th & 12th grade books. Based on the grade you will be in the Fall of 2025, please select your books from the appropriate category.

In continuity with past practice, each student entering a high school grade will learn a poem over the summer and recite it for his English teacher. These are all Shakespearean sonnets. They are as follows:

9<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sonnet 18

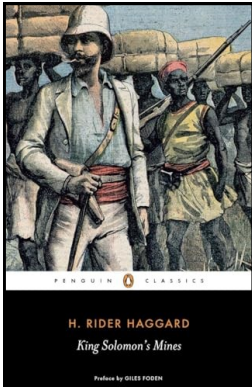
10<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sonnet 73

11<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sonnet 44

12<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sonnet 29

### 9th and 10th Grade Summer Reading Options

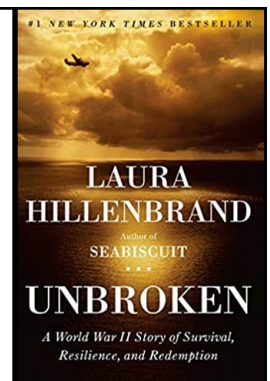
#### 1) *King Solomon's Mines* by H. Rider Haggard



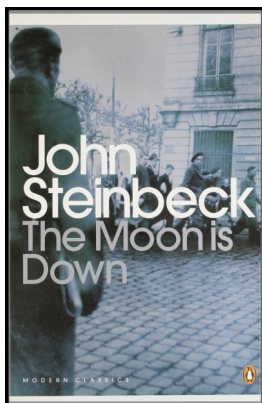
Embark on a thrilling adventure into the heart of unexplored Africa in this timeless classic of action and discovery. When the intrepid explorer Allan Quatermain agrees to help a desperate man search for his missing brother—last seen chasing rumors of a lost treasure—he finds himself leading a perilous expedition across deserts, mountains, and treacherous tribal lands. Driven by an ancient map and the legend of King Solomon's fabled diamond mines, Quatermain and his companions—Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good—encounter danger at every turn: wild beasts, hostile warriors, and the looming threat of betrayal. But as they press deeper into the unknown, they uncover secrets far more powerful than gold or jewels. Packed with danger, daring, and unforgettable characters, *King Solomon's Mines* is one of the earliest and most influential examples of the “lost world” adventure genre. First published in 1885, it remains a gripping tale of courage and endurance, set against the backdrop of imperial ambition and exotic mystery.

#### 2) *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand

In this extraordinary true story, *Unbroken* follows the epic life of Louis Zamperini—Olympian, bombardier, and war hero—whose indomitable spirit carried him through unimaginable trials. A troubled youth who competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Zamperini's journey takes a dramatic turn when his bomber crashes into the Pacific during World War II. Drifting on a life raft for 47 harrowing days, Zamperini fights off sharks, starvation, and despair, only to be captured by the Japanese Navy. As a prisoner of war, he endures brutal treatment, humiliation, and suffering at the hands of a merciless guard. Yet through it all, Louis refuses to be broken. Masterfully told by bestselling author Laura Hillenbrand (*Seabiscuit*), *Unbroken* is a testament to the strength of the human will. Gripping and inspiring, this powerful biography reminds readers of the resilience found within us all, even in the darkest of times. *Unbroken* is an unforgettable story of courage, faith, and survival against all odds.



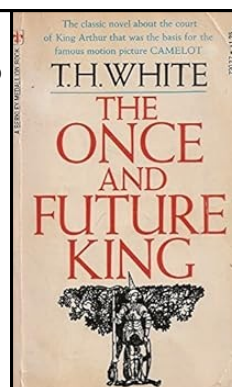
### 3) *The Moon is Down* by John Steinbeck



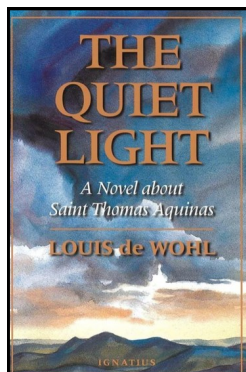
*The Moon is Down* is a novel by John Steinbeck. It was commissioned by the U.S. government as propaganda to be distributed during World War II. It was written with the purpose of motivating resistance movements in occupied countries. The story tells of the military occupation of a small town in Northern Europe by the army of an unnamed nation at war with Great Britain and Russia (much like the occupation of Norway by Germans during World War II). It is an examination into the mind and motives of occupiers as well as the occupied. A French language translation of the book was published illegally in Nazi-occupied France by a French Resistance publishing house. Numerous other editions were secretly published across occupied Europe in many languages including Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, and Italian (as well as a Swedish version). It was the best known work of U.S. literature in the Soviet Union during the war. Although the text never names the occupying force as German, references to “The Leader” as well as “memories of defeats in Belgium and France 20 years ago” clearly suggest it.

### 4) *The Once and Future King* by T.H White

The legend of King Arthur is familiar to many, and is the source of the name of Avalon. In his retelling of this classic tale, T. H. White begins with Arthur’s youth as a boy simply known as “the Wart”, who soon rises to prominence through his friendship with the wizard Merlyn, for whom time runs backwards. As Arthur grows in age and power, he must wrestle with the question of what makes a good king and husband, how to achieve lasting peace, and whether might makes right. Friendship and faithfulness play key roles in Arthur’s life, as do war and betrayal. This is a good read for those who love medieval legend or any aspiring leader. Told in four parts, *The Once and Future King* is both a whimsical fantasy and a profound exploration of human nature, justice, and the burden of leadership. In rich and lyrical prose, White transforms an ancient myth into a modern meditation on the struggle between good and evil, idealism and reality.



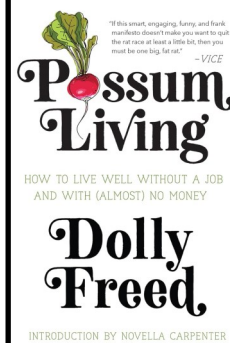
### 5) *The Quiet Light* by Louis de Wohl



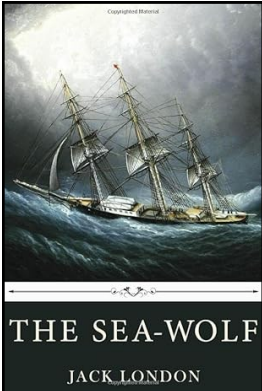
In *The Quiet Light*, master storyteller Louis de Wohl brings to life the deeply moving story of Saint Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest minds in Christian history. Set in the rich and turbulent landscape of 13th-century Europe, this inspiring historical novel follows Thomas from his noble beginnings to his humble devotion to God’s truth. Torn between his family’s ambitions and his own spiritual calling, young Thomas shocks his aristocratic relatives by joining the newly formed Dominican Order. Amid threats, imprisonment, and ridicule, Thomas remains steadfast in his pursuit of wisdom and faith. His journey leads him to Paris, Cologne, and Rome—through royal courts and theological debates—as he becomes a gentle but towering force in the world of philosophy and theology. *The Quiet Light* is a vivid portrait of a man whose humility and brilliance changed the course of thought and devotion in the Western world.

### 6) *Possum Living* by Robert A. Dolly Freed

At eighteen, with only a seventh-grade education, Dolly Freed wrote *Possum Living*, a 1978 classic about the five years she and her father lived self-sufficiently on a half-acre outside of Philadelphia. Known for its witty, no-nonsense advice on frugal living, the book offers practical guidance on everything from homeownership to health and finances, all delivered in Freed’s irreverent and straightforward style. Thirty years later, *Possum Living* remains relevant and inspiring. This updated edition features new reflections from a wiser Freed, whose possum-style philosophy has led to financial independence and a life of continued exploration. In a culture consumed by material desires, Freed’s emphasis on living a life without excess is more timely a message than ever.



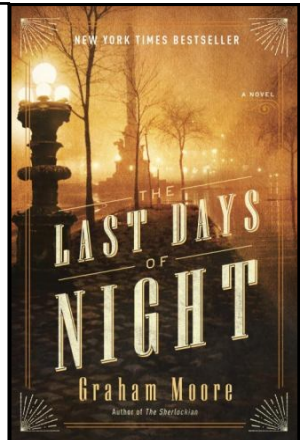
## 7) *The Sea Wolf* by Jack London



Humphrey van Weyden is a physically weak man. During an accident on a ferry on San Francisco Bay, he falls into the water and is rescued by the crew of the *Ghost*, a sealing schooner captained by a man who is a true nightmare. Wolf Larsen is unusually strong and terribly cruel. Also a man with a keen intellect, Captain Larsen recognizes a fellow man of learning in Weyden and forces him into academic discussions while making him slave away on the ship's deck. Humphrey must overcome his personal weaknesses if he hopes to survive life under Larsen's tyranny. *The Sea-Wolf* is an exciting adventure story written in Jack London's vivid, fast-paced, and yet thoughtful style.

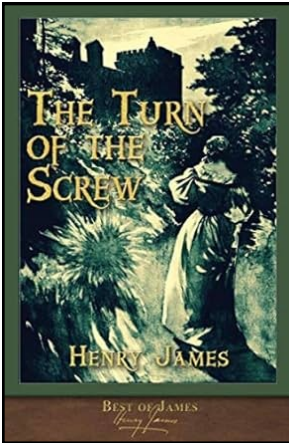
## 8) *The Last Days of Night* by Graham Moore

New York, 1888. The miracle of electric light is in its infancy. Thomas Edison has won the race to the patent office and is suing his only remaining rival, George Westinghouse, for the unheard of sum of one billion dollars. He hires a young, untested, twenty-six year old fresh out of Columbia Law School named Paul Cravath to defend him. Cravath's task is daunting. Edison is a wily, dangerous opponent with vast resources at his disposal, including the backing of J.P. Morgan himself. Cravath shares with his famous opponent a compulsion to win at all costs. In obsessive pursuit of victory, Paul crosses paths with Nikola Tesla, an eccentric, brilliant inventor who may hold the key to defeating Edison, and with Agnes Huntington, a beautiful opera singer who proves to be a flawless performer on stage and off. As Paul takes greater and greater risks, he'll find that no one is quite who they seem. Part legal thriller, part tour of a magical time, *The Last Days of Night* plunges you into a world of intense intrigue and diabolical backstabbing while it illuminates the moment before the world switched over to the electrical age and changed forever.



# 11th and 12th Grade Summer Reading Options

## 1) Three Short Ghost Stories by Henry James, Oliver Onions, and Sheridan Le Fanu

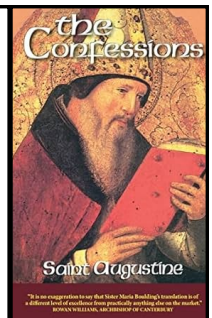


- 1) "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James    2) "The Beckoning Fair One" by Oliver Onions  
3) "Green Tea" by Sheridan Le Fanu

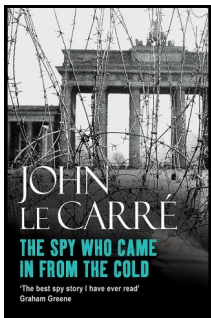
Ghosts! Ghosts! Ghosts! or...are they ghosts? What ARE ghosts? What is it like to be haunted by ghosts? How do you KNOW if you are really being haunted? Can you tell if someone else is really being haunted? Does being haunted by ghosts drive you crazy? Or is it only the fact that you are crazy that allows you to be haunted in the first place? Does that fact that you might be crazy mean that you aren't really seeing ghosts? Maybe you can only really see ghosts if you're sane. Or is that a crazy idea? James' famous novella is one of the greatest and most revered ghost stories in the English language—and one by an author famous for his analytical and realist writing. Children, governesses, servants, madness, and spooks and highbrow prose. Onions and Le Fanu add to the fun. What could be more thrilling to an Avalon man?

## 2) *The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Books 1 through 9*

As the Church has asked us to follow an Augustinian, Pope Leo XIV, and you are on the cusp of adulthood, now is the perfect time to read St. Augustine's *Confessions*. *Confessions* is a raw, brutally honest, autobiographical exploration of a young man's search for meaning, purpose, and identity. Augustine doesn't sugarcoat his struggles—he wrestles with temptation, pride, ambition, and doubt, as we all do today. But his struggles direct him to the big questions: Who am I? Why do I do what I do? What truly satisfies the soul? Despite being written 1600 years ago, *Confessions* remains relevant to our lives today, which proves the book's brilliance. Augustine cuts right to the center of what it means to be human, no matter what period in history you fall in.

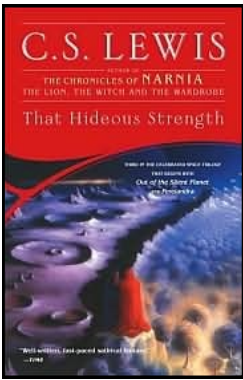


## 3) *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* by John le Carré



In the shadowy world of Cold War espionage, nothing is as it seems—and no one can be trusted. In *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, master storyteller John le Carré delivers a gripping, morally complex thriller that redefined the spy novel and established him as one of the genre's greatest voices. British agent Alec Leamas is a man on the edge—burned out, bitter, and ready to leave the spy game behind. But when he's given one last assignment, Leamas is drawn into a dangerous web of deception and betrayal that stretches from London to East Berlin. As he plays his part in an intricate plot to bring down a high-ranking East German intelligence officer, Leamas must question everything: loyalty, love, and the true cost of doing the "right" thing. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* is an examination of moral ambiguity in a world driven by secrets and lies. It remains a true classic of spy fiction.

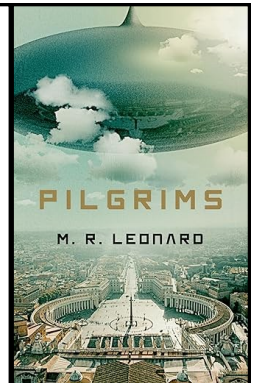
#### 4) *That Hideous Strength* by C.S. Lewis



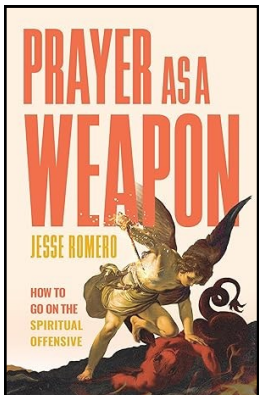
In the epic conclusion to C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* delivers a gripping tale of science, power, and spiritual warfare set not in the stars—but on Earth itself. Mark and Jane Studdock, a young couple caught in the tides of a changing world, find themselves on opposite sides of a hidden battle between darkness and light. Mark is drawn into the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.), a seemingly progressive organization with a terrifying secret agenda: the conquest of the human spirit through manipulation, control, and the promise of a new, soulless order. Meanwhile, Jane begins to experience prophetic dreams and is led to a community resisting N.I.C.E.—a band of faithful seekers under the guidance of a mysterious figure who holds the key to humanity's fate. Part dystopian thriller, part spiritual allegory, *That Hideous Strength* weaves myth, theology, and science fiction into a powerful and prophetic vision.

#### 5) *Pilgrims* by M.R. Leonard

The world is ending, and out-of-work Latin teacher and burnout Austin DeSantis just wants to spend his final days wallowing in sin—until aliens land at the Vatican, speak Latin, and declare themselves Catholic. Drafted as a translator, Austin is thrust into humanity's first contact with a mysterious alien race. As tensions rise between the Church, the military, and an alien AI, he must uncover the visitors' true motives—and choose where his loyalties lie—before global chaos erupts. *Pilgrims* is a sci-fi retelling of Augustine's *Confessions*, blending a high-concept premise with ceaseless pacing and rich characterization. It has the humor and grittiness of Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins*, and the excitement of C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy. If you love science fiction but Frank Herbert's *Dune* left you theologically starved, this is a fun summer read for you.



#### 6) *Prayer as a Weapon* by Jesse Romero

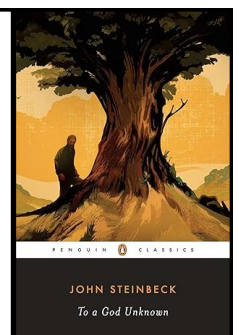


In the eternal battle for souls, prayer is our greatest weapon. In this book on spiritual warfare, acclaimed author and radio host Jesse Romero emphasizes the importance of prayer in facing our modern crises, especially for men who are the heads of their households. He reminds us that the faculty of prayer is both a gift and a protective weapon from God. Far from a passive routine, it is an intrepid action in which we directly encounter the divine and drive away the diabolic.

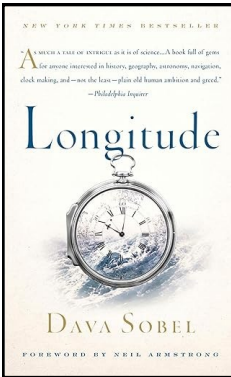
Romero identifies the different types of prayer -- liturgical, adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise -- and demonstrates from Scripture and Tradition that prayer is also a weapon. Romero suggests that "this idea is unfamiliar to most Catholics, especially Catholic men."

#### 7) *To a God Unknown* by John Steinbeck

After his father's death, Joseph Wayne moves to California to establish a large farm in a hidden valley. A huge old oak tree in the midst of the valley becomes the focus of a bizarre notion: he believes that the spirit of Wayne's dead father inhabits the tree. Consequently, Wayne's life becomes an internal struggle between the Christianity of his and his brothers' world and the paganism that belief in the tree produces. The traditional Catholic culture of the local Mexican workers and the strange "magic" of the land blur the lines of Wayne's reality. *To a God Unknown* is a novel that poses deep questions about the way we view God, nature, and the deep traditions that make us who we are as human beings.



## 8) *Longitude* by Dava Sobel

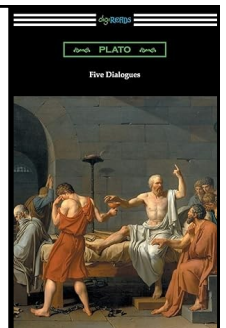


For centuries, the greatest challenge in navigation was determining a ship's exact longitude at sea. Countless sailors were lost to shipwrecks caused by this unsolved mystery—until one man changed the world. In *Longitude*, bestselling author Dava Sobel tells the remarkable true story of John Harrison, a humble English clockmaker who dared to take on the scientific elite of his day. While astronomers insisted the solution lay in the stars, Harrison believed in the precision of mechanics. Through decades of tireless work, he developed a series of extraordinary sea clocks—chronometers—that allowed sailors to determine longitude with astonishing accuracy. This gripping tale of innovation, persistence, and triumph blends history, science, and human drama into a fascinating narrative. Sobel brings to life not only the technical ingenuity of Harrison's creations, but also the rivalry, political intrigue, and skepticism he faced. *Longitude* is a story of how one man's determination forever changed the way we explore our world.

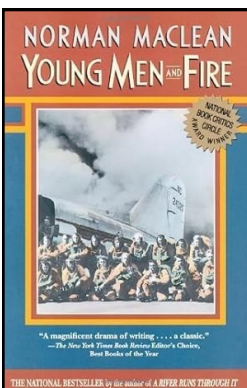
## 9) *Five Dialogues*, translated by G.M.A. Grube, (Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo)

What is virtue? What is justice? How should we educate the young? Are the Olympian gods good? What happens when we die? The Athenian philosopher and self-described “gadfly” Socrates loved to pester his fellow citizens with these and similar questions. In so doing, he made himself both friends and enemies. In 399 BC, he was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens by disrupting their conventional education. These five dialogues, written by his student **Plato**, recount the events surrounding Socrates' trial, imprisonment, and execution. Against the objections of friends and opponents, Socrates argues for the necessity of intellectual inquiry, the importance of right action, and the immortality of the soul.

Hackett Publishing, ISBN 978-0-87220-633-5



## 10) *Young Men and Fire* by Norman Maclean



From the acclaimed author of *A River Runs Through It* comes a haunting and deeply human account of one of the most tragic events in the history of American firefighting. In *Young Men and Fire*, Norman Maclean tells the true story of the 1949 Mann Gulch fire in Montana, where thirteen young smokejumpers—elite wildfire fighters—lost their lives in a sudden, ferocious blaze. Blending meticulous research with personal reflection, Maclean reconstructs the events of that fateful day with both the precision of a scholar and the lyricism of a poet. As he follows the footprints of the doomed crew, he explores the science of wildfire behavior, the courage of youth, and the thin line between life and death in the wilderness. *Young Men and Fire* is a meditation on loss, heroism, and the human spirit. Completed shortly before Maclean's death, this final masterpiece is a moving tribute to the men who died and a powerful exploration of how we seek meaning in tragedy.

## 11) *The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century*

by Kirk Wallace Johnson

On a cool June evening in 2009, twenty-year-old American flautist Edwin Rist broke into the British Natural History Museum at Tring and stole hundreds of rare bird specimens—some collected by 19th-century naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace 150 years earlier - and escaped into the darkness. What would possess a person to steal dead birds?

Two years later, Kirk Wallace Johnson was consumed by the strange case of the feather thief. He unravels this bizarre true crime, delving into a world where beauty, greed, and obsession collide. What begins as a tale of theft becomes a deeper exploration into the lengths people will go to possess beauty, and the consequences of their actions on science and conservation.

This is the gripping story of a bizarre and shocking crime, and one man's pursuit of justice.

