Summer Reading Assignment 2015
English 9
Armstrong and Baldwin

Rationale
During the summer we are hopeful that all incoming ninth graders will read as much as possible. To that end we are providing a list of titles that will interest, challenge, and inspire our students. Our hope is that students will read many of the below listed works, but only three are required. All students must read Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions, our first required text of the year.

Required
Nervous Conditions - Tsitsi Dangarembga
Note: This book should be read and finished just before school starts in August. Reading the book earlier in the summer will make class discussion and paper writing more difficult. A good choice would be to read it once in the early summer and a second time before school starts. Please highlight passages that are important to character development for easy reference during class discussions.

Selections
All students are required to select at least two titles from the list below to read in addition to Nervous Conditions.

A Note for Parents
Though we have not personally read every title listed below, many are award winners, and all have been recommended by the American Librarian Association (ALA) or by our own team of school librarians. We feel comfortable recommending the titles listed below as age/grade-level appropriate books. We strongly recommend that parents read the synopses below, browse through the books in book stores, and be involved in the selection of titles for summer reading. They make for great dinner and car ride conversations. We are always looking for new titles to add to our list. If your son or daughter reads a great book this summer, please email us and tell us what you think!

Recommended Reads
- Speak – Laurie Halse Anderson
- Great Expectations – Charles Dickens
- Seraphina – Rachel Hartman
- Climbing the Stairs – Padma Venkatraman
- Ship Breaker – Paolo Bacigalupi
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Mark Haddon
- Nil – Lynne Matson

Recommended Challenging/Mature Reads
- Debbie Harry Sings in French – Meagan Brothers
- Parrotfish – Ellen Wittlinger
- The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake – Aimee Bender
Responding to Summer Reading
Upon returning to school, students will be writing and responding orally to prompts based upon their summer reading. To come to school unprepared for that writing would be a poor start to the year. So read, think, and enjoy!

Note from Army and Jenni
Often, well-meaning parents ask their sons and daughters to do the summer reading right away. However, the English Department has found that doing so makes it hard for us to have a detailed, meaningful discussion in September. To the extent that your summer plans make it possible, please read the summer reading in the latter half of the summer vacation. *Nervous Conditions*, specifically, should be read last (right before returning in August). If students do read earlier, please encourage them to review their work just before classes begin. Thank you!

Recommendations and Notes on Book Selections

**Recommended Reads**

*Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
High school can be really tough. Melinda’s life changed after the end of the year party, and when she can’t talk about what happened, her friends assume the worst of her. It is only when her (ex) best friend is in danger that Melinda finds the courage to speak.

*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
A young orphaned boy is given a chance to make himself a gentleman by a mysterious benefactor. If you are interested in exploring the class differences during the Victorian era, and enjoy reading about crime, guilt, revenge, and reward, read on to discover how young Pip finds himself in possession of “great expectations.”

*Seraphina* by Rachel Hartman
In a land in which dragons can take human form, half-dragon Seraphina is an abomination who must hide her true nature. When Prince Rupert is murdered in a dragonlike fashion, tension heats up between dragons and humans, and Seraphina is caught in the middle—and falling in love with the wrong person.

*Climbing the Stairs* by Padma Venkatraman
In India during the last days of British rule before World War II, all Vidya wants is college. When her father is beaten senseless by the police and can no longer support their family, though, they must move in with her grandfather’s more traditional family, which forbids education for women. Vidya must find a way to keep her dream alive.

*Ship Breaker* by Paolo Bacigalupi
A desperately poor teen-aged scavenger is forced to make terrible, unthinkable choices in a future world of drowned cities and killer storms where a tiny, rich elite control the few remaining
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
An autistic 15-year-old math genius investigates the murder of his only friend, the neighbor’s poodle, uncovering a startling deception whose repercussions forever change his world.

Nil by Lynn Matson.
One moment 17 year old Charley is in the parking lot of Target, and in the next moment there is a flash, searing pain she blanks out. When she awakens, she realizes that she has somehow been transported to a jungle island, and that she is not alone.

Recommended Challenging/Mature Reads

Debbie Harry Sings in French by Meagan Brothers
After Johnny’s alcoholism lands him in rehab, his mother sends him to backwater South Carolina, where kids call him “fag” even though he’s straight. He keeps wishing he were “cool, tough, and beautiful” like Debbie Harry, lead singer for the ‘80s band Blondie. Then his kick-butt girlfriend teaches him to walk in heels, and everything changes.

Parrotfish by Ellen Wittliner
When Angela becomes Grady, life becomes a bit more complicated. With the help of both old friends and new, Grady is able to navigate school and get the better of the bullies who try to embarrass him.

The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake by Aimee Bender
When is a magical gift a curse? Rose bites into homemade birthday cake on the eve of her 9th birthday and discovers that she can taste her mother’s emotions. Suddenly she knows far too much about the secrets that people usually hide from others.

My Name is Asher Lev by Chaim Potok
A young artist struggles between his creativity and the demands of his family and religious community when he is accused of blasphemy.

Harp of Burma by Michio Takeyama
Mizushima, a Japanese soldier fighting the British in Burma during WWII uses his love of music to encourage his fellow soldiers and to confound the enemies. Taken as prisoners of war by the British, his companions fear the worst when he doesn’t return from a secret mission.