

Summer Task Reading List:

Peter Ackroyd	<i>The Great Fire of London</i>	Spenser Spender wants to make a film of Dickens' "Little Dorrit" using a contemporary London prison as a set. But he is not the only person interested in Dickens. Unwittingly he becomes the catalyst for bizarre meetings, coincidences and events, culminating in an apocalyptic conflagration.
Monica Ali	Brick Lane	Still in her teenage years, Nazneen finds herself in an arranged marriage with a disappointed man who is twenty years older. Away from the mud and heat of her Bangladeshi village, home is now a cramped flat in a high-rise block in London's East End. Nazneen knows not a word of English, and is forced to depend on her husband. But unlike him she is practical and wise, and befriends a fellow Asian girl Razia, who helps her understand the strange ways of her adopted new British home.
Martin Amis	<i>Time's Arrow, London Fields</i>	<i>Time's Arrow</i> tells the story, backwards, of the life of Nazi war criminal, Doctor Tod T. Friendly. He dies and then feels markedly better, breaks up with his lovers as a prelude to seducing them and mangles his patients before he sends them home...Escaping from the body of the dying doctor who had worked in Nazi concentration camps, the doctor's consciousness begins living the doctor's life backwards
JG Ballard	<i>Empire of the Sun</i>	Based on J. G. Ballard's own childhood, this is the extraordinary account of a boy's life in Japanese-occupied wartime Shanghai – a mesmerising, hypnotically compelling novel of war, of starvation and survival, of internment camps and death marches. It blends searing honesty with an almost hallucinatory vision of a world thrown utterly out of joint. Rooted as it is in the author's own disturbing experience of war in our time, it is one of a handful of novels by which the twentieth century will be not only remembered but judged.
Iain Banks	The Wasp Factory	Frank, no ordinary sixteen-year-old, lives with his father outside a remote Scottish village. Their life is, to say the least, unconventional. Frank's mother abandoned them years ago: his elder brother Eric is confined to a psychiatric hospital; and his father measures out his eccentricities on an imperial scale. Frank has turned to strange acts of violence to vent his frustrations. In the bizarre daily rituals there is some solace. But when news comes of Eric's escape from the hospital Frank has to prepare the ground for his brother's inevitable return - an event that explodes the mysteries of the past and changes Frank utterly.
Ray Bradbury	Fahrenheit 451	The hauntingly prophetic classic novel set in a not-too-distant future where books are burned by a special task force of firemen. Guy Montag is a fireman. His job is to burn books, which are forbidden, being the source of all discord and unhappiness. Even so, Montag is unhappy; there is discord in his marriage. Are books hidden in his house? The Mechanical Hound of the Fire Department, armed with a lethal hypodermic, escorted by helicopters, is ready to track down those dissidents who defy society to preserve and read books.
Anita Brookner	<i>Hotel du Lac</i>	Into the rarefied atmosphere of the Hotel du Lac timidly walks Edith Hope, romantic novelist and holder of modest dreams. Edith has been exiled from home after embarrassing herself and her friends. She has refused to sacrifice her ideals and remains stubbornly single. But among the pampered women and minor nobility Edith finds Mr Neville, and her chance to escape from a life of humiliating spinsterhood is renewed.

Anthony Burgess	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>	A dystopian horror, a black comedy, an exploration of choice, A Clockwork Orange is also a work of exuberant invention which created a new language for its characters. Fifteen-year-old Alex likes lashings of ultraviolence. He and his gang of friends rob, kill and rape their way through a nightmarish future, until the State puts a stop to his riotous excesses. But what will his re-education mean?
Angela Carter	<i>The Bloody Chamber</i>	From familiar fairy tales and legends - Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard, Puss in Boots, Beauty and the Beast, vampires and werewolves - Angela Carter has created an absorbing collection of dark, sensual, fantastic stories.
Joseph Conrad	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Conrad's narrator Marlow, a seaman and wanderer, recounts his physical and psychological journey in search of the infamous ivory trader Kurtz: dying, insane, and guilty of unspeakable atrocities. Travelling upriver to the heart of the African continent, he gradually becomes obsessed by this enigmatic, wraith-like figure. Marlow's discovery of how Kurtz has gained his position of power over the local people involves him in a radical questioning, not only of his own nature and values, but also those of western civilisation. The inspiration for Francis Ford Coppola's Oscar-winning film <i>Apocalypse Now</i> , <i>Heart of Darkness</i> is a quintessentially modernist work exploring the limits of human experience and the nightmarish realities of imperialism.
Daniel Defoe	<i>Moll Flanders</i>	The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders Who was born in Newgate, and during a life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Years a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her brother) Twelve Years a Thief, Eight Years a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest and died a Penitent
Charles Dickens	<i>Bleak House</i>	A complex mystery story and an unforgettable indictment of an indifferent society. Its representations of a great city's underworld, and of the law's corruption and delay, draw upon the author's personal knowledge and experience.
Sebastian Faulks	<i>Engleby</i>	The story of Mike Engleby, a working-class boy who wins a place at an esteemed English university. But with the disappearance of Jennifer, the undergraduate Engleby admires from afar, the story turns into a mystery of gripping power. Sebastian Faulks's new novel is a bolt from the blue, unlike anything he has ever written before: contemporary, demotic, heart-wrenching - and funny, in the deepest shade of black.
Michael Frayn	<i>Spies</i>	In the quiet cul-de-sac where Keith and Stephen live the only immediate signs of the Second World War are the blackout at night and a single random bomb site. But the two boys suspect that the comfortably ordinary houses in the Close and their inhabitants are not what they seem. As Keith, the leader in all their enterprises, authoritatively informs the trusting Stephen, the whole district is riddled with secret passages and underground laboratories - hideaways for any number of murderers, unsung war heroes and secret agents.
William Golding	<i>The Spire</i>	The Spire: Dean Jocelin has a vision: that God has chosen him to erect a great spire on his cathedral. His mason anxiously advises against it, for the old cathedral was built without foundations. Nevertheless, the spire rises octagon upon octagon, pinnacle by pinnacle, until the stone pillars shriek and the ground beneath it swims. Its shadow falls ever darker on the world below, and on Dean Jocelin in particular.

Mohsin Hamid	<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>	At a cafe table in Lahore, a bearded Pakistani man converses with an uneasy American stranger. As dusk deepens to night, he begins the tale that has brought them to this fateful encounter. Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. At the top of his class at Princeton, he is snapped up by the elite valuation firm of Underwood Samson. He thrives on the energy of New York, and his budding romance with elegant, beautiful Erica promises entry into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore. In the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, and his relationship with Erica eclipsed by the reawakened ghosts of her past. And Changez's own identity is in seismic shift as well, unearthing allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and maybe even love.
Joseph Heller	<i>Catch-22</i>	Set in the closing months of World War II, this is the story of a bombardier named Yossarian who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. His real problem is not the enemy - it is his own army which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. If Yossarian makes any attempts to excuse himself from the perilous missions then he is caught in Catch-22: if he flies he is crazy, and doesn't have to; but if he doesn't want to he must be sane and has to. That's some catch...
Susan Hill	<i>I'm the King of the Castle</i>	'I didn't want you to come here.' So says the note that the boy Edmund Hooper passes to Charles Kingshaw upon his arrival at Warings. But young Kingshaw and his mother have come to live with Hooper and his father in the ugly, isolated Victorian house for good. To Hooper, Kingshaw is an intruder, a boy to be subtly persecuted, and Kingshaw finds that even the most ordinary object can be turned by Hooper into a source of terror. In Hang Wood their roles are briefly reversed, but Kingshaw knows Hooper will never let him be. Kingshaw cannot win, not in the last resort. He knows it, and so does Hooper. And the worst is still to come...
Kasuo Ishiguro	<i>The Remains of the Day</i>	<i>The Remains of the Day</i> tells, in the first person, the story of Stevens, an English butler who has dedicated his life to the loyal service of Lord Darlington (described in increasing detail in flashbacks). The novel begins with Stevens receiving a letter from a former colleague, the housekeeper Miss Kenton, describing her married life, which he believes hints at an unhappy marriage. Stevens' receipt of the letter coincides with his opportunity to revisit this once-cherished relationship, if only under the guise of investigating the possibility of her re-employment. Stevens' new employer, a wealthy American named Mr. Farraday, encourages Stevens to borrow his car to take a well-earned break, a "motoring trip," and Stevens takes the opportunity to arrange to meet with Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, in Cornwall, where she now lives.
Doris Lessing	<i>Memoirs of a Survivor</i>	A compelling vision of a disorientating and barbaric future. Many years in the future, city life has broken down, communications have failed and food supplies are dwindling. From her window a middle-aged woman - our narrator - watches things fall apart and records what she witnesses: hordes of people migrating to the countryside, gangs of children roaming the streets...
Cormac McCarthy	<i>The Road</i>	The Road is the story of a father and son walking alone through burned America, heading through the ravaged landscape to the coast.

Iain McEwan	<i>The Child in Time</i>	<i>The Child in Time</i> opens with a harrowing event. Stephen Lewis, a successful author of children's books, takes his three-year-old daughter on a routine Saturday morning trip to the supermarket. While waiting in line, his attention is distracted and his daughter is kidnapped. Just like that. From there, Lewis spirals into bereavement that has effects on his relationship with his wife, his psyche and time itself.
Toni Morrison	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Terrible, unspeakable things happened to Sethe at Sweet Home, the farm where she lived as a slave for so many years until she escaped to Ohio. Her new life is full of hope but eighteen years later she is still not free. Sethe's new home is not only haunted by the memories of her past but also by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved.</i>
Philip Roth	<i>Goodbye Columbus</i>	<i>Goodbye, Columbus</i> is the story of Neil Klugman and pretty, spirited Brenda Patimkin, he of poor Newark, she of suburban Short Hills, who meet one summer break and dive into an affair that is as much about social class and suspicion as it is about love.
J.D. Salinger	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	Holden Caulfield is a seventeen-year-old dropout who has just been kicked out of his fourth school. Navigating his way through the challenges of growing up, Holden dissects the 'phony' aspects of society, and the 'phonies' themselves: the headmaster whose affability depends on the wealth of the parents, his roommate who scores with girls using sickly-sweet affection.
W.M Thackeray	<i>Vanity Fair</i>	Thackeray's upper-class Regency world is a noisy and jostling commercial fairground, predominantly driven by acquisitive greed and soulless materialism, in which the narrator himself plays a brilliantly versatile role as a serio-comic observer. Although subtitled <i>A Novel without a Hero</i> , <i>Vanity Fair</i> follows the fortunes of two contrasting but inter-linked lives: through the retiring Amelia Sedley and the brilliant Becky Sharp, Thackeray examines the position of women in an intensely exploitative male world.
H G Wells	<i>The Time Machine</i>	When a Victorian scientist propels himself into the year 802,701 AD, he is initially delighted to find that suffering has been replaced by beauty, contentment and peace. Entranced at first by the Eloi, an elfin species descended from man, he soon realises that this beautiful people are simply remnants of a once-great culture - now weak and childishly afraid of the dark. But they have every reason to be afraid: in deep tunnels beneath their paradise lurks another race descended from humanity - the sinister Morlocks. And when the scientist's time machine vanishes, it becomes clear he must search these tunnels, if he is ever to return to his own era.
Jeanette Winterson	<i>Oranges are not the only Fruit</i>	The story of Jeanette, adopted and brought up by her mother as one of God's elect. Zealous and passionate, she seems destined for life as a missionary, but then she falls for one of her converts. At sixteen, Jeanette decides to leave the church, her home and her family, for the young woman she loves. Innovative, punchy and tender, <i>Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit</i> is a few days ride into the bizarre outposts of religious excess and human obsession.