Dear AP Language and Composition Student,

Welcome to your senior year! It’s an exciting time, and we can’t wait to share the experience with you. Since one of your priorities this fall will be completing the college application process, we will work with you on your college application essay soon after we return to school. As a result, your summer reading will help prepare you for that important assignment, which gives you an opportunity to share some important aspect of your life with colleges.

For summer reading, you may read a memoir of your choice. Memoirs differ from autobiographies in that they tend to focus on important events and/or people in the writer’s life rather than providing a comprehensive view of the author’s entire life. You’ll be doing the same thing in your college essay--discussing some specific aspect of your life that makes you who you are.

Most of you have read memoirs before. For example, the summer reading for English 10 Accelerated includes *The Glass Castle*, Jeanette Walls’s tale of her unconventional upbringing in a poverty-stricken family. There are two requirements for this assignment. First, you must choose a memoir that you haven’t read before. Second, your choice should be 200-400 pages in length (though you won’t be penalized for choosing a longer book).

You may use the list below to help you make your choice, but you are free to choose another book as long as it meets our requirements. Please be aware that some memoirs may include mature content. You are responsible for choosing a text that you are comfortable with. **If you would like to read a book that is not on the suggested list, please e-mail stahlk@bcsc.k12.in.us or dowlingj@bcsc.k12.in.us by Friday, June 5th to get your choice approved.**

**Suggested Titles** (*Asterisks are used for titles with a full .PDF available online):

*American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood* by Marie Arana (309 pages)--Arana grew up with a cultural identity split in half between her Peruvian father and American mother. Coming to terms with this split is at the heart of this graceful, beautifully realized portrait of a child who “was a north-south collision, a New World fusion. An American Chica.”

*Angela’s Ashes: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt (235 pages)--the story of how Frank endured growing up in poverty in Ireland--wearing shoes repaired with tires, begging for a pig’s head for Christmas dinner, and searching the pubs for his father--a tale he relates with eloquence, exuberance, and remarkable forgiveness.

*Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey through His Son’s Meth Addiction* by David Sheff (352 pages)--a story of shocking descent into substance abuse and the gradual emergence of hope. Sheff shows us that, whatever an addict’s fate, the rest of the family must care for one another, too, lest they become addicted to addiction.
**Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood** by Trevor Noah (304 pages)--Noah’s wild coming-of-age tale during the twilight of apartheid in South Africa infused with his trademark comedic wit.

**Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness** by Susannah Calahan (288 pages)--Calahan’s astonishing true story of her descent into madness, her family’s inspiring faith in her, and the lifesaving diagnosis that nearly didn’t happen.

**The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother** by James McBride (295 pages)--McBride retraces his mother’s footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story that touches readers of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

**Educated: A Memoir** by Tara Westover (352 pages)--a young woman’s quest for knowledge takes her from her survivalist family in the mountains of Idaho to Harvard and Cambridge Universities.

**Forward: A Memoir** by Abby Wambach (245 pages)--the highest goal scorer in the history of soccer (both male and female) reveals how her professional success often masked her inner struggles.

**I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban** by Malala Yousafzai (327 pages)--the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls’ education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou (290 pages)--Angelou learns about love for herself, the kindness of others, and her own kind spirit as she relates her struggles with childhood trauma and racism.

**Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption** by Bryan Stevenson (368 pages)--an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer’s coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

**A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier** by Ishmael Beah (229 pages)--Beah, now 26 years old, tells a riveting story in his own words: how, at the age of 12, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence.

**The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates** by Wes Moore (250 pages)--Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. How did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence?

**Running Home: A Memoir** by Katie Arnold (384 pages)--Arnold loses her father to cancer and must confront her own mortality in a memoir about the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of our world - the stories that hold us back, and the ones that set us free.

**Running with Scissors: A Memoir** by Augusten Burroughs (340 pages)--the true story of a boy whose mother gave him away to be raised by her psychiatrist, a dead-ringer for Santa and a lunatic in the bargain. At turns foul and harrowing, compelling and maniacally funny, but above all, it chronicles an ordinary boy's survival under the most extraordinary circumstances.
Salt in My Soul: An Unfinished Life by Mallory Smith (336 pages)--for more than 10 years, Mallory Smith recorded her thoughts and observations while living with cystic fibrosis, leaving instructions for her mother to publish her work posthumously. What emerges is a powerful and inspiring portrait of a brave young woman and blossoming writer who did not allow herself to be defined by disease.

*Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism* by Temple Grandin (270 pages)--Temple Grandin, Ph.D., is a gifted animal scientist who has designed one third of all the livestock-handling facilities in the United States and just happens to have autism.

*Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup (248 pages)--Born a free man in New York State in 1808, Solomon Northup was kidnapped in Washington, DC, in 1841. He spent the next 12 harrowing years of his life as a slave on a Louisiana cotton plantation.

*When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi (228 pages)--a chronicle of Kalanithi’s transformation from a naïve medical student “possessed,” as he wrote, “by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life” into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality.

*Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed (336 pages)--With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, Strayed would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone, forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her.

*The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* by Maxine Hong Kingston (201 pages)--As a girl, Kingston lives in two confounding worlds: the California to which her parents have immigrated and the China of her mother’s “talk stories.” The fierce and wily women warriors of her mother’s tales clash jarringly with the harsh reality of female oppression out of which they come.

Note that a few of these texts are available for free online, and many more are available at the local library in both hard copy and on Overdrive. You’ll need to have a copy of your book with you (either physical or electronic) when we begin school, so please keep that in mind.

Finally, you may be wondering what our summer reading work will look like since you’ll all be reading different texts. When fall semester begins, we will ask you to refer to key passages in your book. So, please mark or note passages, moments, quotes, etc. that you feel are particularly powerful as you will need to refer to those items in class assignments and assessments. Also be sure to make note of key themes or messages that the author wants readers to consider throughout the book and in the text overall. Most of all, we want you to enjoy your reading and take this opportunity to be inspired and renewed by a powerful, personal story.

We hope you have a wonderful summer. See you soon!

Ms. Dowling
Ms. Stahl