

# JPII Summer Reading List 2025-2026

As a college-prep school, JPII values year-round learning. Many classes have summer reading assignments to help students engage and prepare for their classes. All assignments are due the second time the class meets in September. Look below to find your courses and required books. See subsequent pages for assignments.

Course Name	Required Book(s)	ISBN
English 9	<i>The Hobbit</i> by Tolkien	0-345-33968-1
Honors English 9	<i>The Hobbit</i> by Tolkien <i>Mr. Blue</i> by Connolly	0-345-33968-1 978-1944418076
Biology / Honors Biology	<b>Choose One:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A Short History of Nearly Everything</i> by Bryson</li> <li><i>The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic</i> by Johnson</li> </ul>	978-0767908184 978-1-59448-269-4
AP Environmental Science	<i>The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History</i> by Elizabeth Kolbert	978-0-8050-9299-8
World Literature	<i>Oedipus the King</i> by Fagles	978-0-14-044425-4
Honors World Literature	<i>Oedipus the King</i> by Fagles <b>AND</b> <b>Choose One:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Left to Tell</i> by Ilibagiza</li> <li><i>First They Killed My Father</i> by Ung</li> </ul>	978-1401944322 978-0-06-085626-7
Honors World History	<i>Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History</i> by Stark	978-1-59947-536-3
Chemistry / AP Chemistry	<b>Chemistry Choose One   AP Chemistry Choose Two:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Disappearing Spoon and Other True Tales of Madness, Love and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements</i> by Kean</li> <li><i>The Poisoner's Handbook, Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York</i> by Blum</li> <li><i>The Poison Squad: One Chemist's Single-minded Crusade for Food Safety at the Turn of the Twentieth Century</i> by Blum</li> </ul>	978-0-316-05163-7  978-0143118824  978-0-14-311112-2
American Literature	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> by Hurston	978-0060838676
Honors American Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> by Hurston</li> <li><i>Of Mice and Men</i> by Steinbeck</li> </ul>	978-0060838676 978-0140177398
AP US History	<b>Choose One:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Jungle</i> by Sinclair</li> <li><i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Stowe</li> </ul>	978-1-59308-118-8 978-1840224023
Physics	<i>Signposts to God: How Modern Physics and Astronomy Point the Way to Belief</i> by Bussey	978-0830851492
Moral Theology & Social Justice	<i>A Song for Nagasaki: The Story of Tagashi Nagai</i> by Paul Glynn	978-1621648123
English Literature & Composition	<i>Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing</i> by Trimble	978-0205028801

## **Associated Assignments**

### ***The Hobbit***

Answer each of these questions below in a well-developed paragraph (minimum of 5-10 sentences). Responses must be typed, double-spaced. Please write your answers without assistance from others. This writing activity will demonstrate how thoughtful you can be independently. Be sure to include quotes and paraphrases from the text in each response.

1. Compare Bilbo at the beginning of his journey with Bilbo at the end of his journey. What are the changes and what causes them? Would you call him a hero? Why or why not? What is the most valuable lesson learned?
2. When Bilbo took the Arkenstone to Thorin's enemies it seemed a dreadful betrayal to him. But before he dies Thorin has a change of heart and tells Bilbo, "I wish to part in friendship from you, and I would take back my words and deeds at the Gate." Why has Thorin changed? What has he learned from Bilbo?
3. Examine the ways in which the battle between good and evil or light and darkness is fought in *The Hobbit* and discuss what is communicated about human nature through this struggle.

### ***Mr. Blue***

Answer each of these questions below in a well-developed paragraph (minimum of 5-10 sentences). Responses must be typed, double-spaced. Please write your answers without assistance from others. This writing activity will demonstrate how thoughtful you can be independently. Be sure to include quotes and paraphrases from the text in each response.

1. Do some research on St. Francis. How does J. Blue compare? What are some significant contrasts?
2. Connolly could have chosen to have the story of Blue narrated by a fully supportive acquaintance or disciple. What is the effect of the voice of the skeptical narrator on you as a reader?
3. "Your failure is measured by your aspirations. Aspire not, and you cannot fail. Columbus died in chains. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Let us all live snugly -- and life will soon be little more than a thick, gelatinous stream comfortability and ignorance." Explore Connolly's concept of heroism as a rejection of mediocrity. What is heroic about Mr. Blue?

### ***A Short History of Nearly Everything***

Come to class prepared to discuss at least one topic you found interesting in your reading. Aside from the class discussion, you will be making a Google Slide presentation during the first week of school about a specific topic from the Bryson book.

### ***The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic & How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World***

Come to class prepared to discuss at least one topic you found interesting in your reading. Aside from the class discussion, you will be making a Google Slide presentation during the first week of school about a specific topic from a particular aspect of the case presented in the book.

***The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History:*** For each chapter write a paragraph reflecting on what you read. This can include things that jumped out to you, something interesting, questions you have, or observations. We will be discussing the book at the beginning of the school year.

***Sophocles' Oedipus the King:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

***Left to Tell:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

***First They Killed My Father:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

### ***The Disappearing Spoon and Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements***

Come to class prepared to discuss at least one process, chemical, or scientist you found interesting in your reading. Aside from the class discussion, you will be making a Google Slide presentation about a specific element or case discussed in your book. While those presentations will be assigned the first week of school, it would be helpful to be thinking about 1 or 2 topics for your presentation.

### ***The Poisoner's Handbook, Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York***

Come to class prepared to discuss at least one process, chemical, or scientist you found interesting in your reading. Aside from the class discussion, you will be making a Google Slide presentation about a specific element or case discussed in your book. While those presentations will be assigned the first week of school, it would be helpful to be thinking about 1 or 2 topics for your presentation.

***The Poison Squad: One Chemist's Single-minded Crusade for Food Safety at the Turn of the Twentieth Century***

Come to class prepared to discuss at least one process, chemical, or scientist you found interesting in your reading. Aside from the class discussion, you will be making a Google Slide presentation about a specific element or case discussed in your book. While those presentations will be assigned the first week of school, it would be helpful to be thinking about 1 or 2 topics for your presentation.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

***Of Mice and Men:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

***The Jungle***

In no less than 500 words, consider the historical significance of your selected novel and use examples from the text to consider the following:

1. Research the date and location of publication and how the book was received by the public. How might this be useful information in assessing the historical significance of the novel?
2. What can historians learn of American society from reading this book? Consider the central issue at hand and how the author intends readers to feel about that issue. What is the solution suggested by the novel?
3. Catalog the people encountered throughout the book (that is, create categories and place characters into them – this does not need to be an exhaustive list). How are they a representative cross-section of American society? How are they a representative of sectional ideals or attitudes?

***Uncle Tom's Cabin***

In no less than 500 words, consider the historical significance of your selected novel and use examples from the text to consider the following:

1. Research the date and location of publication and how the book was received by the public. How might this be useful information in assessing the historical significance of the novel?
2. What can historians learn of American society from reading this book? Consider the central issue at hand and how the author intends readers to feel about that issue. What is the solution suggested by the novel?
3. Catalog the people encountered throughout the book (that is, create categories and place characters into them – this does not need to be an exhaustive list). How are they a representative cross-section of American society? How are they a representative of sectional ideals or attitudes?

***Signposts to God: How Modern Physics and Astronomy Point the Way to Belief***

Summarize two main ideas from each chapter. After your final chapter summaries, conclude with a paragraph describing your thoughts on the marriage of science and Christian belief. You do not have to agree with the author but you must academically defend your view.

***A Song for Nagasaki: The Story of Tagashi Nagai***

Reflect during your summer reading and be prepared for an in-class 3-page reflection on the following questions...

- A. **Explain the title of each chapter.** Include at least one direct quotation that you find particularly important (include the page #), and briefly explain how it relates to the chapter title. **OR** . . .
- B. **Write a personal response to each chapter.** How did you feel after reading it? Did any particular stories or any of Glynn's insights inspire you, confuse you, or challenge your thinking? Include at least one direct quotation that you find particularly interesting (include the page #), and briefly explain how it affected you.

***Stark's Bearing False Witness***

Write a 250-word response to each topic addressed in the book (10 in all). What were your preconceived notions about this topic? What surprised you? Did you feel compelled to do more research? What did you learn? Why do you think this misrepresentation of the Church has persisted throughout history? Don't skip the short introduction, it provides useful context to the rest of the book.

***Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing by Trimble:*** See Eagle Community for assignment directions.