JPII Summer Reading List 2026-2027

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	*The Hobbit* by Tolkien	0-345-33968-1
Honors English 9	*The Hobbit* by Tolkien *Mr. Blue* by Connolly	0-345-33968-1 978-1944418076
Biology / Honors Biology	Choose One: ● *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bryson ● *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic* by Johnson	 978-0767908184 978-1-59448-269-4
World Literature	*Oedipus the King by* Fagles	978-0-14-044425-4
Honors World Literature	*Oedipus the King by Fagles AND* Choose One: ● *Left to Tell* by Ilibagiza ● *First They Killed My Father* by Ung	 978-1401944322 978-0-06-085626-7
Honors World History	*Bearing False Witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History* by Stark	978-1-59947-536-3
Chemistry / AP Chemistry	Chemistry Choose *One* | AP Chemistry Choose *Two*: ● *The Disappearing Spoon and Other True Tales of Madness, Love and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements* by Kean ● *The Poisoner's Handbook, Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York* by Blum ● *The Poison Squad: One Chemist's Single-minded Crusade for Food Safety at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by Blum	 978-0-316-05163-7 978-0143118824 978-0-14-311112-2
American Literature	*Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Hurston	978-0060838676
Honors American Literature	● *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Hurston ● *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck	 978-0060838676 978-0140177398
AP US History	Period One	
Physics	*Signposts to God: How Modern Physics and Astronomy Point the Way to Belief* by Bussey	978-0830851492
Moral Theology & Social Justice	*A Song for Nagasaki: The Story of Tagashi Nagai* by Paul Glynn	978-1621648123
English Literature & Composition	*Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing* by Trimble	978-0205028801
SMU Literary Foundations 220	*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, 1818 version	978-1524705701

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 demonstra te 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.

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.

APUSH: Period One- See Eagle Community for assignment directions.

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
Assignment is due the first full day of class

A. Draw a map of Japan- label the following cities: Nagasaki, Izumo, Matsue, Hakata, Kyoto
B. Write an essay- as a young man, Tagai believed a cadaver is 'all that man is' (ch. 3 part 3). What did that mean and how did that belief change over the course of the book? Include three significant influences on Tagai's life that changed his anthropology.

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.

SMU English 220: associated assignment is available on Schoology in the Eagle Community Course ➡️ yellow "Summer Reading Folder" ➡️ purple "SMU/JPII Summer Reading folder"

"Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell

- printed and handed out by Dr. Wallace in May 2026
- associated assignment on Schoology also available in Schoology in the Eagle Community Course ➡️ yellow "Summer Reading Folder" ➡️ purple "SMU/JPII Summer Reading folder"