

**Seneca Valley High School
Summer Reading List
2008-2009**

NOTE: *If you have a summer reading assignment for an AP, Cambridge, Pre-IB or ESOL class, you do NOT have to read a book on this list. Your AP, Cambridge, Pre-IB or ESOL assignment supersedes the assignment on this page.*

Keep in mind that students are free to select any book on this list to read for the summer reading assignment. Parents / guardians are encouraged to review these texts and the book reviews with their children before the student selects a book.

So Long a Letter – Mariama Ba (Lexile N/A)

[Click here to access reviews of *So Long a Letter* on Amazon.com](#)

Ramatoulaye, a Senegalese widow, writes a letter to her friend Aissatou in which she recounts the stories of their lives. Ramatoulaye reflects upon her husband's decision to take a second wife, a practice sanctioned by Islam, and how it impacted their relationship and her life. This book presents an intimate look at the lives of women in post-colonial French West Africa, addressing issues of marriage, motherhood, politics, and religion. Originally written in French, this book won the first Noma Award for Publishing in Africa.

Caramelo – Sandra Cisneros (Lexile N/A)

[Click here to access reviews of *Caramelo* on Amazon.com](#)

This novel is the first book published by Cisneros after the widely-acclaimed *House on Mango Street*. During the annual Reyes family trip to Mexico City, Lala, the youngest of seven children, learns about her family history through often exaggerated stories. Like the striped shawl, *caramelo rebozo*, inherited from her grandmother, this story weaves tales together to paint a picture of the Mexican-American immigrant experience.

Crackback – John Coy (Lexile 490)

[Click here to access reviews of *Crackback* on Amazon.com](#)

“A crackback block comes from the outside. If you don't see it coming, it can destroy you...” Miles, a high school football player, seems to be taking blows both on and off the field. These hits come from his new coach, who has a tough coaching style, from his dad, who seems to be harboring family secrets, and even from his teammates, who are pressuring him to take steroids as football competition intensifies. To complicate matters, Miles also deals with typical teenage drama, namely, romance.

The Andromeda Strain – Michael Crichton (Lexile 840)

[Click here to access reviews of *The Andromeda Strain* on Amazon.com](#)

Originally published in 1969, this scientific thriller is now a classic. A pre-eminent biophysicist warns the U.S. government that space craft returning to earth may be carrying deadly organisms from outer space. Intrigued, the government sends probes into space to collect such organisms with plans to harvest them into biological weapons. Two years later, one of these probes drops to the earth and all the residents of a town 12 miles from the crash site drop dead. Government officials and scientists must collaborate to counter the Andromeda Strain, a rapidly mutating microorganism that causes fatal blood clots.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close – Jonathan Safran Foer (Lexile 940)

[Click here to access reviews of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* on Amazon.com](#)

Oskar Schell is a 9-year-old boy whose father was killed in the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. While snooping through his father's belongings, he finds a key in an envelope labeled "Black." He embarks on a personal quest to find, in New York City, the lock that this key opens by tracking down every "Black" listed in the phone book. A sub-plot involves Oskar's grandfather, an elderly gentleman who survived the bombing of Dresden during World War II. Oskar's escapades are both heart-wrenching and heart-warming.

The Kite Runner – Khalid Hosseini (Lexile 840)

[Click here to access review of *The Kite Runner* on Amazon.com](#)

This is a story about two boys, Amir, the son of a wealthy Kabul businessman, and Hassan, the son of the businessman's servant. Though the boys are playmates and friends, Amir is fiercely jealous of Hassan, whom Amir believes represents the kind of son his father wishes he had. In addition to this rivalry, their lives are shaped by Afghanistan's turbulent history, from the Soviet occupation of the 1980s through the rise of the Taliban. Though Amir immigrates to America, he is forced to return to Afghanistan and confront his past.

Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster – Jon Krakauer (Lexile 1320)

[Click here to access reviews of *Into Thin Air* on Amazon.com](#)

In 1996, experienced climber and journalist Jon Krakauer joined an Everest expedition as part of an assignment for *Outside* magazine. Despite being led by experienced Everest climbers, including Rob Hall, one of New Zealand's foremost mountaineers, and Scott Fisher, one of America's best climbers, the expedition ended in disaster, with eight dead including Hall and Fisher. Krakauer reflects upon the successes of previous Everest expeditions and the failures of his own.

Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League – Ron Suskind (Lexile 1080)

[Click here to access review of *Hope in the Unseen* on Amazon.com](#)

In 1995, Ron Suskind won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing for a series of articles he wrote for the *Wall Street Journal* about Cedric Jennings, a student at Ballou High School in Washington, D.C. Though Cedric's father is an ex-con and a drug dealer and his hardworking mother is underpaid, he overcomes the odds associated with a rough childhood and gets accepted to Brown University. This non-fiction book chronicles his last two years of high school and his first year in college.

What is Lexile?

The Lexile Framework for Reading was developed by MetaMetrics, an independent education company, after 15 years of research funded by the National Institutes of Health. The Lexile Framework uses a common measurement to evaluate both reading ability and text difficulty. Readers who know their Lexile score know to choose books with similar measures. If readers choose books with Lexile measures that exceed their own Lexile score, they will have difficulty with comprehension.

Not all students at Seneca Valley High School have been tested to determine their Lexile score. The [Lexile Map for Reading](#), however, provides guidelines in terms of the Lexile measures students at each grade level should be able to read.

Please note that the Lexile measure of a book refers only to its text difficulty, measured by word frequency and sentence length. It does not take into account content or readers' interest. Lexile scores are provided to help students choose their summer reading book, but they should not be the sole factor considered when deciding what to read.

For more information about the Lexile Framework for reading, check out <http://www.lexile.com/>