MUS 10th-Grade Summer Reading List
(3 books)
Rising 10th graders should read three books over the summer. The focus of this list is on American themes, in preparation for American Literature during the sophomore year. On his honor a student should choose books that he has not already read. Students will be tested on all three books during the first week of school.

Do you remember the short story you read in 8th grade, “There Will Come Soft Rains”? It's the one in which the mechanical parts of a house “live on” after the humans have suffered a nuclear attack. That story is a part of this novel, in which some Earthlings are forming a new civilization on Mars. (Note: Read the Simon & Schuster 2012 edition.)

The story of the American Olympic crew team that raced in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, this book focuses on the athletes, their coaches, the sport of crew, and the use Hitler made of the occasion to distract the world a bit longer from his real intentions.

Told in many characters’ voices, this novel is about the investigation of a murder on a Louisiana plantation in the 1970's. The Sheriff must contend with one dead white man and eighteen old, black men claiming responsibility.

The Thin Man by Dashiell Hammett. *Detective novel.*
This is a detective novel in which crime-solving couple Nick and Nora Charles investigate a murder.

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving. *Fiction.*
Johnny Wheelwright begins to tell the story of his friendship with Owen Meany: “I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice – not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason I believe in God. I am a Christian because of Owen Meany.”

Pet Sematary by Stephen King. *Horror.*
In the tradition of American writers Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, King offers his own bone-chilling insight into the landscape of good and evil. King calls this novel his “most frightening.”

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer. *Non-fiction.*
Following his college graduation, Chris McCandless sent his money to a world hunger organization and set out on a cross-country trek to experience a simpler life, one inspired by writers such as Thoreau. Krakauer explores Chris’s motivations, as well as the consequences of his accidental death on his family and friends.

Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis. *Fiction.*
George E. Babbitt, a successful businessman who appreciates the “God of Progress,” enjoys an “up-to-date,” middle-class American life. Unfortunately, his life is dominated by a mindless conformity. (Recommended, but not required, for boys taking AP History.)
All the Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy. Fiction.
The first in McCarthy's Border Trilogy, this novel is about 16-year-old John Grady Cole, who persuades his best friend to ride south from Texas into Mexico, where they hope to find work as cowboys.

The Catcher in the Rye by JD Salinger. Fiction.
Expelled from Pencey Prep, Holden Caulfield tries to run away from his parents, his teachers, and all the “phony” in the world. (Note: Students who read this novel last summer should select a different book.)

When doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital treated Henrietta Lacks for cervical cancer in 1951, they removed cells from her body – without her permission. These cells became the first “immortal” ones and have been used ever since for vital medical research. This is a fascinating story about a woman, her family, and medical ethics. Memphis Leaders selection.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck. Fiction.
Driven by the dust from their home in Oklahoma, the Joad family heads West on Highway 66, “the mother road, the road of flight.” Like hundreds of thousands of other migrants during the 1930’s, the Joads seek work and a new life in California.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Fiction.
Published in 1852, Stowe’s novel was an immediate bestseller, despite being banned in the South. When he met Stowe at the White House, President Lincoln is said to have remarked, “So this is the little lady who started this big war.” (Recommended, but not required, for boys taking AP History.)

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut. Science fiction.
Vonnegut’s characters stay on Earth in this darkly humorous consideration of science and religion.

The Ravine by James Williamson. Fiction.
Young Harry Polk's story is set in 1958 Tuckalofa, Mississippi, where an all-white jury has been convened to decide the fate of a local white sheriff, accused of having beaten a black prisoner to death. Although Harry’s story is fiction, the setting and events are real.

The grandchild of slaves, Wright spent his childhood in the South, including Memphis, in the 1920’s.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski. Fiction.
Set on a farm in Wisconsin, this book is about Edgar Sawtelle, his parents, their dogs, and a mysterious death in the family. Writer Stephen King said of this novel: ’I flat-out loved [it] . . . I closed the book with that regret readers feel only after experiencing the best stories: It's over, you think, and I won't read another one this good for a long, long, time.”