Dear Incoming Sophomores,

Reading is the best way to meet the academic challenges that high school and later college will send your way. It expands your vocabulary and your horizons. Reading keeps your brain in gear. Regardless of why you read or what you read, reading makes you smarter. It’s that simple. Readers are better writers. They get the “sound” of good writing in their head, and they use that as a measure of their own work.

What follows are the requirements for Preston’s Summer Reading Program for Rising Sophomores. We expect you to read a minimum of four books over the summer.

We are allowing you to have some choice in what you read. Our goal is to have you read for pleasure and to enjoy what you have read. With this aim in mind, we have provided you with a wide ranging list of books that cover many subjects and interests. Some books are short, but challenging. Others are longer, but easy to read and understand. Still others represent a middle level of difficulty. As well, we have included hyperlinks to author web pages or other useful sites to support your reading.

We are sure you’ll find something that appeals to you in each list.

Sincerely,
The Sophomore level Faculty

**Assignments:**

*Requirements for English:*

You are REQUIRED to purchase and read the following two novels. You must bring these with you to English class on the first days of school.

1. **Night, by Elie Wiesel**

   “Night is Elie Wiesel's masterpiece, a candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps. Night offers much more than a litany of the daily terrors, everyday perversions, and rampant sadism at Auschwitz and Buchenwald; it also eloquently addresses many of the philosophical as well as personal questions implicit in any serious consideration of what the Holocaust was, what it meant, and what its legacy is and will be. In this memoir by Nobel laureate, Elie Wiesel, a scholarly, pious teenager is wracked with guilt at having survived the horror of the Holocaust and the genocidal campaign that consumed his family. His memories of the nightmare world of the death camps present him with an intolerable question: how can the God he once so fervently believed in have allowed these monstrous events to occur? There are no easy answers in this harrowing book, which probes life's essential riddles with the lucid anguish only great literature achieves.”

   Click here for a free Study Guide to the novel – it is not required, but we recommend highly that you use it to get the most out of your reading.

2. **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, by Mark Haddon**

   Christopher, a fifteen-year-old boy with Asperger syndrome, lives with his father; his mother supposedly died two years before. He discovers the dead body of Wellington, his neighbor's dog, speared by a garden fork. Mrs. Shears, Wellington's owner, calls the police, and Christopher comes under suspicion. When a policeman touches him, he hits the policeman, and is arrested, then released with a caution. He decides to investigate the dog's death, despite his father's orders to stay out of other people's business. However, he is severely limited by his fears and difficulties when interpreting the world around him. Throughout his adventures, Christopher records his experiences in a book: a "murder mystery novel".

   Do you want to know more about the author? Here is a link to Mark Haddon’s blog.
In addition to the two works listed above, you are required to read the article "The Savant Syndrome: Islands of Genius" by Darold A. Treffert, M.D. as a non-fiction supplement to The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time. This can be found beginning on page 5 of this document. The questions at the end must be answered and typed and will be submitted it to your English teacher as well as turnitin.com on the first day of school for a grade.

**Requirements for Science:**

1. You are required to purchase a copy of one science-related magazine or journal. You should plan to bring this magazine to your first science class in September. These titles should be readily available in any larger bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble. You are required to purchase and read a copy of Isaac's Storm by Larson, Erik (1999). Random House Publishing. ISBN 0-609-60233-0. Be prepared to discuss the book in class in September.

2. Possible science-related magazines include:

   ♦ Scientific American
   ♦ Science
   ♦ Discovery
   ♦ Popular Science

**Requirements for Religion:**

1. All incoming sophomores are **required** to view the film Jesus of Nazareth, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, prior to the first day of Religion class. This film should be available for rental from local video stores, library or Netflix.

For the remaining two books, choose one book from the fiction list and one book from the non-fiction list that follows. The non-fiction genre perhaps offers a student more helpful writing models than a novel does because the non-fiction writer must explain and analyze information in a clear and compelling style. Just like you.

**Section One:** Choose at least one title from this section. Feel free to read more.

**The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, by Douglas Adams**

Join Douglas Adams's hapless hero Arthur Dent as he travels the galaxy with his intrepid pal Ford Prefect, getting into horrible messes and generally wreaking hilarious havoc. Aliens snatch Dent from Earth moments before a cosmic construction team obliterates the planet to build a freeway. You'll never read funnier science fiction; Adams is a master of intelligent satire, barbed wit, and comedic dialogue. Read an exclusive interview with Douglas Adams about his life and writing process.

**Rebecca, by Daphne DuMaurier**

This is a novel of mystery and passion, a dark psychological tale of secrets and betrayal, dead loves, and an estate called Manderley that is as much a presence as the humans who inhabit it.

**The Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien**

Encountering ruthless trolls, beastly orcs, gigantic spiders, and hungry wolves, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins discovers within himself astonishing strength and courage. And, at the ultimate confrontation with the fearsome dragon Smaug, the hobbit braves the dangers of dark and dragon fire alone and unaided. This story is the prequel to Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings trilogy.

**The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, by Arthur Conan Doyle**

From “A Scandal in Bohemia,” in which Sherlock Holmes is famously outwitted by a woman, the captivating Irene Adler, to “The Five Orange Pips,” in which the master detective is pitted against the Ku Klux Klan, to “The Final Problem,” in which Holmes and his archenemy, Professor Moriarty, face each other in a showdown at the Reichenbach Falls, the stories that appear in The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes bear witness to the flowering of author Arthur Conan Doyle’s genius.

**A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens**

Dickens painted a vivid picture of the French Revolution with melodrama set on a background of villainy and violence, built on the coincidence of an Englishman and a
Frenchman who look alike. Dickens created a moving tale. In the end, a dissolute man, raised by a woman's love, becomes the hero.

The Dark is Rising, by Susan Meyer
In this book, Will Stanton begins to have strange experiences on his eleventh birthday, just before Christmas. He soon learns he is one of the Old Ones, a guardian and warrior for The Light. He learns that he must help find the four Things of Power for The Light in order to battle the forces of The Dark. The first of these Things of Power is the Circle of Six Signs. This book is the key book for the main character, Will Stanton. It is in this book that he collects the six signs, which become the Circle of Signs, one of the Things of Power, by finding the additional five mandala (he has been given one earlier) and uses the completed Circle to ward off the forces of The Dark. This book received the 1974 Newbury Honor.

Cat’s Eye, by Margaret Atwood
Controversial painter Elaine Risley vividly reflects on her childhood and teenage years. Her strongest memories are of Cordelia, who was the leader of a trio of girls who were both very cruel and very kind to young Elaine, in ways that tint Elaine’s perceptions of relationships and her world—not to mention her art—into the character's middle years. The novel unfolds in Canada of the mid-20th century, from World War II to the late 1980s, and includes a look at many of the cultural elements of that time, including feminism and various modern art movements. This book was a finalist for the 1988 Governor General’s Award.

Section Two: Choose at least one non-fiction book from this section. Feel free to read more.

Shout: The Beatles in Their Generation, by Phillip Norman
Journalist and novelist Norman (Rave On: The Biography of Buddy Holly) here updates and revises his 1981 Beatles biography, which sold 125,000 copies. The book now includes information on Paul McCartney's and Ringo Starr's recent activities, details the tragic end of George Harrison's life, and seeks to present a more objective view of the contributions made by each Beatle (the 1981 edition was decidedly anti-McCartney). Norman also includes new insight into the complex relationship between John Lennon and Yoko Ono, the result of several interviews with Ono in recent years. While Norman’s revision still seems a tad harsh on Harrison as a guitarist and McCartney as a human being, it is the most balanced, detailed, and highly analytical of the popular biographies of the Beatles. Priced to find its way into the home libraries of Beatles fans, this is also well worth purchasing as a replacement by libraries owning the first edition. From “Library Journal.”

Down and Out in London and Paris, by George Orwell
What was a nice Eton boy like Eric Blair doing in scummy slums instead of being upwardly mobile at Oxford or Cambridge? Living Down and Out in Paris and London, repudiating respectable imperialist society, and reinventing himself as George Orwell. His 1933 debut book (ostensibly a novel, but overwhelmingly autobiographical) was rejected by that elitist publisher T.S. Eliot, perhaps because its close-up portrait of lowlife was too pungent for comfort.

In Paris, Orwell lived in verminous rooms and washed dishes at the overpriced "Hotel X," in a remarkably filthy, 110-degree kitchen. He met "eccentric people--people who have fallen into solitary, half-mad grooves of life and given up trying to be normal or decent." Though Orwell's tone is that of an outraged reformer, it's surprising how entertaining many of his adventures are: gnawing poverty only enlivens the imagination, and the wild characters he met often swindled each other and themselves. The wackiest tale involves a miser who ate cats, wore newspapers for underwear, invested 6,000 francs in cocaine, and hid it in a face-powder tin when the cops raided. They had to free him, because the apparently controlled substance turned out to be face powder instead of cocaine.

In London, Orwell studied begging with a crippled expert named Bozo, a great storyteller and philosopher. Orwell devotes a chapter to the fine points of London guttersnipe slang. Years later, he would put his lexical bent to work by inventing Newspeak, and draw on his down-and-out experience to evoke the plight of the Proles in 1984. Though marred by hints of unexamined anti-Semitism, Orwell's debut remains, as The Nation put it, "the most lucid portrait of poverty in the English language." --Tim Appelo
Click [here](#) for a brief article about the Paris of Orwell’s day.

**Blame my Brain, by Nicola Morgan**

*From the Q & A with author Nicola Morgan at her [webpage](#)*

**Q: What is it (Blame My Brain) about?**

**A:** What's going on in your head. Why. Why it’s important. How long it will last. And what you can do about it.

**Q: What's so interesting about that? It's just a brain.**

**A:** Yes, but there's fantastic new research into the teenage brain and what scientists have discovered in the last few years will amaze you. And reassure you. And amaze and reassure your parents.

**Q: Explain.**

**A:** Well, scientists used to think that when we are born we have all the brain cells (neurons) we'll ever have. Now they know it’s not true. And especially that just before puberty large numbers of extra ones suddenly grow. Then, during the rest of adolescence, about the same amount are cut back drastically. During adolescence, bits of your brain develop at different speeds. Your teenage brain is in a state of physical change, probably greater than at any time since you were two years old and greater than at anytime you will experience again.

**The Number Devil: A Mathematical Adventure, by Hans Magnus Enzenberger**

Bad dreams plague Robert until a mysterious creature called the Number Devil appears to him one night. Robert, who hates everything to do with numbers, thinks it just another nightmare, but, surprisingly, finds himself fascinated by the intricacies of mathematics as taught by the exacting but always enthusiastic Devil. In a series of 12 dreams, Robert (and the reader) are introduced to ever more complex theories, from different kinds of infinity to triangular numbers.

In Number Hell/Number Heaven, Robert and the Devil meet famous mathematicians of the past and Robert is inducted into the ranks of number apprentices. Surreal touches (numbers flying in the air, floating in a swimming pool), fanciful names for mathematical terms (prima-donna numbers for prime numbers) and problems posed directly to the reader contribute to the playful tone. The generous and strategic use of color, however, provides the biggest boost: even mathematical equations look festive here, hand-printed in warm muted tones.

The string of mathematical concepts may well daunt many readers, unused to a novel of ideas, particularly because the reasoning behind several of the "tricks" demonstrated by the Devil is not fully explained. However, for certain kinds of readers (chess players & puzzle enthusiasts) this will be a favorite. From *Library Journal*

Here is a fascinating guide to the book.

**Beethoven’s Hair, by Russell Martin**

A well-publicized 1994 Sotheby's auction listed, among other musical artifacts and ephemera on the block, a lock of Beethoven's hair. The high-bidders for the hair, two Beethoven enthusiasts, were easy enough to identify by their oddball names: one was a doctor named Che Guevara, the other a retired real estate developer named Ira Brilliant. But the real story is how did the lock end up on the auction block? More important, can we learn anything from a 175-year-old snippet of hair? Russell Martin has created a rich historical treasure hunt, an Indiana Jones-like tale of false leads, amazing breakthroughs, and incredible revelations. This unique and fascinating book is a moving testament to the power of music, the lure of relics, the heroism of the Resistance movement, and the brilliance of forensic science.

Click [here](#) for a New York Times article about the forensic science behind the book.

**Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations, by Georgiana Howell**

She was an English writer, traveler, political officer, administrator in Arabia, and an archaeologist who explored, mapped, and became highly important to British imperial policy-making due to her extensive travels in Greater Syria, Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia
Minor, and Arabia. She was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1917. Bell, along with T. E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), helped establish the Hashemite dynasties in Jordan as well as in Iraq. She played a major role in establishing and helping administer the modern state of Iraq utilizing her unique perspectives from her travels and relations with tribal leaders throughout the Middle East. During her lifetime, she was highly beloved and trusted by British officials and given an immense amount of power for a woman in that time.

Read The Woman Who Made Iraq, a news article in Atlantic magazine about Bell.

*The House of Windsor,* by Andrew Roberts
The fifth volume in a five volume History of England, *The House of Windsor* has at its centre insights into and biographies of England during a the tumultuous twentieth century. The book traces the lives of monarchs of living memory and near past, from George V to the current Elizabeth the Second.

In 1854, when the existence of bacteria and the concept of waterborne disease are still unknown, two men, one a physician and the other a clergyman, successfully trace the source of a cholera epidemic to a contaminated well in an impoverished part of London. Click here for biographical background on Dr. John Snow.

*Angela’s Ashes,* by Frank McCourt
Born in Brooklyn in 1930 to recent Irish immigrants Malachy and Angela McCourt, Frank grew up in Limerick after his parents returned to Ireland because of poor prospects in America. It turns out that prospects weren’t so great back in the old country either. Mix in abject poverty and frequent death, and illness and you have all the makings of a truly difficult early life. Fortunately, in McCourt’s able hands it also has all the makings for a compelling memoir.

Read an interview with the Frank McCourt about his life in teaching and writing here.
The Savant Syndrome: Islands of Genius
Darold A. Treffert, M.D.

Savant Syndrome is a rare, but spectacular, condition in which persons with various developmental disabilities, including Autistic Disorder, have astonishing islands of ability or brilliance that stand in stark, markedly incongruous contrast to the over-all handicap. In some, savant skills are remarkable simply in contrast to the handicap (talented savants). In others, with a much rarer form of the condition, the ability or brilliance is not only spectacular in contrast to the handicap, but would be spectacular even if viewed in a normal person (prodigious savant). There are fewer than 100 reported cases of prodigious savants in the world literature. The condition was first named Idiot Savant in 1887 by Dr. J. Langdon Down (better known for having named Down's Syndrome). He chose that term because the word "idiot" at that time was an accepted classification level of mental retardation (IQ below 25) and the word "savant" meant knowledgeable person derived from the French word savoir, meaning "to know". The term idiot savant has been largely discarded now, appropriately, because of its colloquial, pejorative connotation and has been replaced by Savant Syndrome. Actually Idiot Savant was a misnomer since almost all of the reported cases have occurred in persons with IQs of 40 or above. The condition can be congenital or acquired in an otherwise normal individual following CNS injury or disease. It occurs in males more frequently than in females in an approximate 6:1 ratio.

Savant skills occur within a narrow but constant range of human mental functions, generally in six areas: calendar calculating; lightning calculating & mathematical ability; art (drawing or sculpting); music (usually piano with perfect pitch); mechanical abilities; and spatial skills. In some instances unusual language abilities have been reported but those are rare. Other skills much less frequently reported include map memorizing, visual measurement, extrasensory perception, unusual sensory discrimination such as enhanced sense of touch & smell, and perfect appreciation passing time without knowledge of a clock face. The most common savant skill is musical ability. A regularly re-occurring triad of musical genius, blindness and autism is particularly striking in the world literature on this topic. Premature birth history is commonly reported in persons with Savant Syndrome.

In some cases of Savant Syndrome a single special skill exists; in others there are several skills co-existing simultaneously. The skills tend to be right hemisphere in type--
nonsymbolic, artistic, concrete, directly perceived—in contrast to left hemisphere type that tend to be more sequential, logical, and symbolic including language specialization.

Whatever the special skills, they are always linked with phenomenal memory. That memory, however, is a special type—very narrow but exceedingly deep—within its narrow confines. Such memory is a type of "unconscious reckoning"—habit or procedural memory—which relies on more primitive circuitry (cortico-striatal) than higher level (cortico-limbic) cognitive or associative memory used more commonly and regularly in normal persons.

Approximately 10% of persons with Autistic Disorder have some savant abilities; that percentage is much greater than in other developmental disabilities where in an institutionalized population that figure may be as low as 1:2000. Since other developmental disabilities are much more common than autism, however, the actual percent of persons with Savant Syndrome turns out to be approximately half Autistic Disorder and half other Developmental Disabilities.

Theories to explain Savant Syndrome include eidetic imagery, inherited skills, concrete thinking and inability to think abstractly, compensation & reinforcement, and left brain injury with right brain compensation. Newer findings on cerebral lateralization, and some imaging and other studies that do show left hemisphere damage in savants, suggest that the most plausible explanation for Savant Syndrome to be left brain damage from pre-natal, peri-natal or post-natal CNS damage with migratory, right brain compensation, coupled with corresponding damage to higher level, cognitive (cortico-limbic) memory circuitry with compensatory takeover of lower level, habit (cortical-striatal) memory. This accounts for the linking of predominately right brain skills with habit memory so characteristic of Savant Syndrome (Treffert, 1989). In talented savants, concreteness and impaired ability to think abstractly are locked in a very narrow band but, nevertheless, with constant practice and repetition can produce sufficient coding so that access to some non-cognitive structure or unconscious algorithms can be automatically attained. In prodigious savants, some genetic factors any be operative as well, since practice alone cannot account for the access to vast rules of music, art or mathematics that seems innate in these persons. Once established, intense concentration, practice, compensatory drives and reinforcement by family, teachers and others play a major role in developing and polishing the savant skills and memory linked so characteristically and dramatically by this unique brain dysfunction.

One of the pre-natal CNS injury mechanisms, which has implications not only for Savant Syndrome but other disorders as well in which male sex is over-represented, is the neurotoxic effect of circulating testosterone on the left hemisphere in the male fetus based on observations and reported by Geschwind and Galaburda. Since the left brain completes its development later than the right brain, it is at risk for CNS damage for a longer period of time to circulating-testosterone (which can be neurotoxic) in male fetuses and that left CNS damage, with right brain compensation, may account for the high male:female ratio not only in Savant Syndrome, but in autism, stuttering, hyperactivity and learning disabilities as well.

The movie *Rain Man* depicted an autistic savant and that term became almost a household word. It is important to remember, however, that not all autistic persons are
savants, and not all savants are autistic. What one sees in Rain Man are savant skills (lightening calculating, memorization etc.) grafted on to autism (narrowed affect, obsessive sameness, rituals etc). It is also important to point out that the savant in the movie is a high functioning person with autistic disorder, but the disorder consists of an entire spectrum of disabilities ranging from profoundly disturbed to high functioning; not all autistic savants function at such a high level.

For many years it was feared that helping the savant achieve a higher level of functioning with treatment--"eliminating the defect"--would result in a loss of special skills, i.e. there would be a trade-off of right brain special skills for left brain language acquisition, for example. That has not turned out to be the case. Quite to the contrary, "training the talent" is a valuable approach toward increasing socialization, language and independence. Thus the special skills of the savant, rather than being seen a odd, frivolous, trivial or distracting, become a useful treatment tool as a conduit toward normalization in these special persons. Some schools have begun to include persons with Savant Syndrome into classes for the gifted and talented as a method of enhancing further this conduit toward normalization.

There are probably fewer than 25 prodigious savants living at the present time. Some of those include Leslie Lemke (music), Alonzo Clemens (sculpting), Richard Wawro (painting), Stephen Wiltshire (drawing), Tony DeBlois (music) to name some. Other prodigious savants more recently described are in England, Australia and Japan. A 1983 60 minutes program on Savant Syndrome was particularly useful in bringing this remarkable condition to more general attention and of course the move Rain Man catapulted the condition to national prominence. There have been a number of other television specials and several movies about Savant Syndrome over the past 10 years. My book Extraordinary People: Understanding Savant Syndrome reviews the condition in depth.

After reading the three articles discussing Asperger’s syndrome, answer the following 10 questions.

1. Name three characteristics of a person with Asperger’s syndrome?
2. Why do researchers believe that Asperger’s syndrome may be hereditary?
3. What is the difference between Asperger’s syndrome and autism?
4. Describe three problems that might arise due to sensory of over sensitivity.
5. What is meant by the term echolalia?
6. Do all people with autism exhibit the same symptoms?
7. What is a savant?
8. What are the six skills that are characteristic of a savant?
9. The novel you are about to read is told through the point of view of a boy with Asperger’s syndrome. What do you expect from this novel?

10. Do you know anyone that is autistic or who has Asperger’s syndrome? If so, explain what they are like. If you do not know someone personally, have you ever read about or seen a person with autism in a movie?