

English IV: Great Books, 2024-2025

Next year I have the privilege of instructing you for English IV. This document outlines some important things for the coming year, including buying your own books (if you choose), and your summer reading.

BOOKS:

This year we are continuing to encourage all students at all grade levels to purchase their own copies of the books that we are going to read. You do not have to do so, but it is a great thing to be able to notate, annotate, highlight, and even put post-it notes into a text. It greatly improves your understanding and greatly helps you to engage with the story in a meaningful way. I am often pleased in later years to go back to books I have annotated and see my remarks, to see where I am the same and where I have grown. It sometimes reminds me of times, places, and, most importantly, people that are now gone forever.

So, consider purchasing some or all of these titles for your own use next year.

2024-2025 English IV Book list:

The editions are important because it ensures the same pagination and, in some cases, translations, which can be critical for understanding. Again, buying your own books is optional but highly encouraged. I encourage you to buy from a local bookstore if you can. Used copies also save on money, and you can find many cheaper high quality editions at abebooks.com. If you purchase from Amazon, don't forget to use Amazon Smiles to help support MCA!

With the exception of *The Stranger* and *Fathers and Sons*, for which you need to have the edition we use in class in order to have the correct translations. If you want a book that will be treasured and can afford it, choose a good hardback edition with lovely illustrations, or, for academic work, I would recommend you pick up the Norton editions (new or used) of the other titles.

- [*Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*](#) by Roosevelt Montás
- [*The Stranger*](#) by Albert Camus
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- [*Crime and Punishment*](#) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

Have a great break,

Summer Reading

Rising 12th Grade Summer Reading

Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation

What is the value of a classical education? Traditionally characterized by a rigorous engagement with the classics of Western thought and literature, this approach to education is all but extinct in American universities, replaced by flexible distribution requirements and ever-narrower academic specialization. Many academics attack the very idea of a Western canon as chauvinistic, while the general public increasingly doubts the value of the humanities. In *Rescuing Socrates*, Dominican-born American academic Roosevelt Montás tells the story of how a classical education transformed his life, and offers an intimate account of the relevance of the Great Books today, especially to members of historically marginalized communities.

Montás emigrated from the Dominican Republic to Queens, New York, when he was twelve and encountered the Western classics as an undergraduate in Columbia University's renowned Core Curriculum, one of America's last remaining Great Books programs. The experience changed his life and determined his career—he went on to earn a PhD in English and comparative literature, serve as director of Columbia's Center for the Core Curriculum, and start a Great Books program for low-income high school students who aspire to be the first in their families to attend college.

Weaving together memoir and literary reflection, *Rescuing Socrates* describes how four authors—Plato, Augustine, Freud, and Gandhi—had a profound impact on Montás's life. In doing so, the book drives home what it's like to experience a classical education—and why it can still remake lives.

As you read this book over the summer, deeply consider how a work of great literature can change people for the better. We will discuss the value that classical education, also known as the liberal arts tradition, provides to an individual life and society wholly. Be prepared to discuss what it means to be free.