

English IV: Summer Reading and Writing, 2026

The summer between junior and senior year involves some thinking about the future. No matter what your initial thoughts for after high school might be, we want to help you set yourself up for college applications. Most seniors will need one or more essays as part of applying for admissions or scholarships, and we'd like to help you start that process so you can present your best self when the time comes.

Rather than diving into the writing first, we'll explore the kind of personal, creative writing that most college essays require. For your summer reading assignment this year, we're asking you to choose a **memoir**. Like memoirs, most college essays are nonfiction, and the good ones use the techniques of creative writing to help draw readers in, allowing readers to get to know the aspects of themselves that writers choose to show.

You may choose any memoir from the list below. Find one that will interest you! If you have questions, contact Mr. Sherman (gregorysherman@grcatholiccentral.org) or Dr. Sheaffer (auburnsheaffer@grcatholiccentral.org).

Adventure

Wild by Cheryl Strayed

Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

Family and Faith

Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius by Dave Eggers

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

Faith of My Fathers by John McCain

Traveling Mercies by Anne Lamott

Here If You Need Me by Kate Braestrup

Hope: The Autobiography by Pope Francis

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt

Educated by Tara Westover

Life and Learning

My Losing Season: A Memoir by Pat Conroy

The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande

Shoe Dog by Phil Knight

Becoming by Michelle Obama

Born to Run by Bruce Springsteen

An American Life by Ronald Reagan

Decision Points by George W. Bush

Surrender by Bono

I am Malala by Malala Yousafzai

There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension by Hanif Abdurraqib

Identity

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

I'm Still Here by Austin Channing Brown

The Color of Water by James McBride

Dreams from My Father by Barack Obama

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Surviving

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Brain on Fire by Susannah Cahalan

Bookmark Directions: While you read, look for passages that fit the bolded descriptions listed on each bookmark. (So, yes, cut this page in half vertically.) Respond to the following questions and leave the bookmark in that page. If you don't own or have a hardcopy of the book, use your iPad to take pictures of the pages you 'bookmark.' We will use these passages in the fall for our college essay assignment. (Note: A passage can be as short as a few paragraphs or as long as several pages.)

Bookmark #1	Bookmark #2
Essential character trait	Change in character
Pages:	Pages:
What trait does this passage reveal?	What change occurs?
<u>How</u> does the author reveal the trait?	<u>How</u> does the author describe the change, show the development?
What is the best sentence in this passage? (Quote it!)	What is the best sentence in this passage? (Quote it!)
What is your most essential characteristic? Why?	How have you changed in high school?

Bookmark #3	Bookmark #4
<u>Reflection</u> on obstacle/challenge	Reflection on an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of self or others
Pages:	Pages:
What obstacle is described?	What event or accomplishment is described?
<u>How</u> has the author changed his/her understanding of life as a result of having overcome the obstacle?	<u>How</u> has the author grown in understanding himself or herself or others? (What realization did he or she come to?)
What is the best sentence in this passage? (Quote it!)	What is the best sentence in this passage? (Quote it!)
What is one significant obstacle you have faced? What did you learn from it?	What accomplishment or event in your life has led to a significant realization about yourself or others?