

Suggested Reading List

High School · Grades 9–12 · Ages 14–18

Substantial literature, primary documents, serious science and history, plus concrete reading on trades, certificates, military technical training, and college. The point is informed choice: students should see several honorable paths, not a single script.

These titles favor high-interest stories, classic adventure, biography of builders and discoverers, and practical nonfiction. Series are listed as one entry when the whole run is the point; start with the first or best-known volume. Adjust for reading level and interest.

Novels and Major Works

1. Pride and Prejudice — Jane Austen
2. David Copperfield or Great Expectations — Charles Dickens
3. Crime and Punishment — Fyodor Dostoevsky (or a well-chosen abridgment first)
4. The Brothers Karamazov — Fyodor Dostoevsky (selections)
5. Julius Caesar and Macbeth — William Shakespeare
6. The Odyssey and The Iliad — Homer (a good translation)
7. The Aeneid — Virgil (selections)
8. 1984 — George Orwell
9. The Federalist Papers (selected essays)
10. The Law — Frédéric Bastiat
11. The Wealth of Nations — Adam Smith (selected chapters)
12. Uncle Tom's Cabin — Harriet Beecher Stowe
13. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn — Mark Twain (full text)
14. The Lord of the Rings — J. R. R. Tolkien (complete)
15. Mere Christianity — C. S. Lewis
16. Biography-heavy history: McCullough's The Wright Brothers or 1776
17. Plutarch's Lives (selected)
18. Nicomachean Ethics — Aristotle (selections)
19. A Tale of Two Cities — Charles Dickens (full text)
20. The Conservative Mind — Russell Kirk (selections, if desired)

Informative Reading, Vocations, and College Pathways

21. Shop Class as Soulcraft — Matthew B. Crawford
22. The Case Against Education — Bryan Caplan (or a clear summary of the signaling argument)
23. Economics in One Lesson — Henry Hazlitt (complete)
24. Basic Economics — Thomas Sowell (selected chapters)
25. CTE / skilled-trades handbooks: auto mechanics, electrical, plumbing, welding, machining, HVAC, construction management, diesel, aviation maintenance
26. Apprenticeship realities; employee vs. independent-contractor paths
27. Books on two-year technical degrees, certificates, and military technical training

28. Colleges That Change Lives or similar “fit over prestige” guides
29. How to Read a Book — Mortimer Adler (complete)
30. The Well-Trained Mind — Susan Wise Bauer (high-school planning chapters)
31. A Student’s Guide to the Core Curriculum, or published Great Books lists
32. Biographies of builders: Ford, Carnegie, Edison, the Wrights, and modern engineers who stayed technical
33. Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman! — Richard Feynman
34. The Character of Physical Law — Richard Feynman (or other popular physics that stays on the science)
35. Books on energy, materials, logistics, and why things cost what they cost
36. The Millionaire Next Door and The Millionaire Mind — Thomas J. Stanley
37. Range — David Epstein
38. What Color Is Your Parachute for Teens or similar practical career workbooks
39. Guides to dual enrollment, CLEP, community-college transfer, and trade-school return on investment
40. Primary sources: the Constitution, selected Federalist and Anti-Federalist essays, Washington’s Farewell Address
41. Military history and strategy (Keegan, Ambrose, or similar)
42. Books on farming, manufacturing, and the physical economy
43. Entrepreneurship: starting and keeping a real business (not only “follow your passion”)
44. Logic and informal fallacies (The Fallacy Detective and beyond)
45. A first serious look at statistics and how numbers are misused
46. Books on writing clearly for work and college (Strunk & White plus a practical rhetoric)
47. Explorer and scientist lives at adult length (Shackleton; Darwin’s voyage narrative; Faraday)
48. The Defining Decade — Meg Jay (especially junior and senior year)
49. Is College Worth It? and similar cost-benefit treatments
50. A personal Great Books climbing list so the student leaves high school already on the next set of mountains

How to use this list

This is a starting map, not a mandate. A student who finishes one adventure often wants the next book in the series, a related biography, or a hands-on skill. Vocational and college titles are included so families can see that “what comes next” includes trades, certificates, military technical training, two-year programs, and four-year study.

Availability varies. Many classics are in any public library; older history series such as Landmark and G. A. Henty are often found used or in reprint. Preview unfamiliar editions for reading level and suitability.