**AP European History**

**Suggested Summer Reading List**

**Sophie's World** by Jostein Gaardner

One day fourteen-year-old Sophie Amundsen comes home from school to find in her mailbox two notes, with one question on each: "Who are you?" and "Where does the world come from?" From that irresistible beginning, Sophie becomes obsessed with questions that take her far beyond what she knows of her Norwegian village. Through those letters, she enrolls in a kind of correspondence course, covering Socrates to Sartre, with a mysterious philosopher, while receiving letters addressed to another girl. Who is Hilde? And why does her mail keep turning up? To unravel this riddle, Sophie must use the philosophy she is learning—but the truth turns out to be far more complicated than she could have imagined.

**Pillars of the Earth** by Ken Follett

Set in 12th-century England, the narrative concerns the building of a cathedral in the fictional town of Kingsbridge. The ambitions of three men merge, conflict and collide through 40 years of social and political upheaval as internal church politics affect the progress of the cathedral and the fortunes of the protagonists.

**World Without End** by Ken Follett

*World Without End* takes place in the same town of Kingsbridge, two centuries after the townspeople finished building the exquisite Gothic cathedral that was at the heart of *The Pillars of the Earth*. The cathedral and the priory are again at the center of a web of love and hate, greed and pride, ambition and revenge, but this sequel stands on its own. This time the men and women of an extraordinary cast of characters find themselves at a crossroad of new ideas—about medicine, commerce, architecture, and justice. In a world where proponents of the old ways fiercely battle those with progressive minds, the intrigue and tension quickly reach a boiling point against the devastating backdrop of the greatest natural disaster ever to strike the human race—the Black Death.

**The Birth of Venus** by Sarah Dunant

Alessandra Cecchi is not quite fifteen when her father, a prosperous cloth merchant, brings a young painter back from northern Europe to decorate the chapel walls in the family's Florentine palazzo. A child of the Renaissance, with a precocious mind and a talent for drawing, Alessandra is intoxicated by the painter's abilities. But their burgeoning relationship is interrupted when Alessandra's parents arrange her marriage to a wealthy, much older man. Meanwhile, Florence is changing, increasingly subject to the growing suppression imposed by the fundamentalist monk Savonarola, who is seizing religious and political control. Alessandra and her native city are caught between the Medici state, with its love of luxury, learning, and dazzling art, and the hellfire preaching and increasing violence of Savonarola's reactionary followers. Played out against this turbulent backdrop, Alessandra's married life is a misery, except for the surprising freedom it allows her to pursue her powerful attraction to the young painter and his art.
**Girl With a Pearl Earring** by Tracy Chevalier

With precisely 35 canvases to his credit, the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer represents one of the great enigmas of 17th-century art. The meager facts of his biography have been gleaned from a handful of legal documents. Yet Vermeer’s extraordinary paintings of domestic life, with their subtle play of light and texture, have come to define the Dutch golden age. His portrait of the anonymous *Girl with a Pearl Earring* has exerted a particular fascination for centuries—and it is this magnetic painting that lies at the heart of Tracy Chevalier’s second novel of the same title. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* centers on Vermeer’s prosperous Delft household during the 1660s. When Griet, the novel’s quietly perceptive heroine, is hired as a servant, turmoil follows. First, the 16-year-old narrator becomes increasingly intimate with her master. Then Vermeer employs her as his assistant—and ultimately has Griet sit for him as a model. Chevalier vividly evokes the complex domestic tensions of the household, ruled over by the painter’s jealous, eternally pregnant wife and his taciturn mother-in-law. At times the relationship between servant and master seems a little anachronistic. Still, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* does contain a final delicious twist.

**Brunelleschi’s Dome** by Ross King

By all accounts, Filippo Brunelleschi, goldsmith and clockmaker, was an unkempt, cantankerous, and suspicious man—even by the generous standards according to which artists were judged in fifteenth-century Florence. He also designed and erected a dome over the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—a feat of architectural daring that we continue to marvel at today—thus securing himself a place among the most formidable geniuses of the Renaissance. At first denounced as a madman, Brunelleschi literally reinvented the field of architecture amid plagues, wars, and political feuds to raise seventy million pounds of metal, wood, and marble hundreds of feet in the air. Ross King’s captivating narrative brings to life the personalities and intrigue surrounding the twenty-eight-year-long construction of the dome, opening a window onto Florentine life during one of history’s most fascinating eras.

**The Agony and the Ecstasy** by Irving Stone

This is a classic biographical novel about Michelangelo—in which both the artist and the man are brought to life in full. A masterpiece in its own right, this novel offers a compelling portrait of Michelangelo’s dangerous, impassioned loves, and the God-driven fury from which he wrested the greatest art the world has ever known.

**Return of Martin Guerre** by Natalie Davis

The Inventive Peasant Arnaud du Tilh had almost persuaded the learned judges at the Parlement of Toulouse, when on a summer’s day in 1560 a man swaggered into the court on a wooden leg, denounced Arnaud, and reestablished his claim to the identity, property, and wife of Martin Guerre. The astonishing case captured the imagination of the Continent. Told and retold over the centuries, the story of Martin Guerre became a legend, still remembered in the Pyrenean village where the impostor was executed more than 400 years ago.

**The Hangman’s Daughter** by Oliver Potsch

Germany, 1660: When a dying boy is pulled from the river with a mark crudely tattooed on his shoulder, hangman Jakob Kuisl is called upon to investigate whether witchcraft is at play. So
begins *The Hangman’s Daughter*--the chillingly detailed, fast-paced historical thriller from German television screenwriter Oliver Pötzsch, a descendant of the Kuisls, a famous Bavarian executioner clan. Magdalena, the clever and headstrong daughter of Bavarian hangman Jakob Kuisl, lives with her father outside the village walls and is destined to be married off to another hangman’s son—except that the town physician’s son is hopelessly in love with her. And her father’s wisdom and empathy are as unusual as his despised profession. It is 1659, the Thirty Years’ War has finally ended, and there hasn’t been a witchcraft mania in decades. But now, a drowning and gruesomely injured boy, tattooed with the mark of a witch, is pulled from a river and the villagers suspect the local midwife, Martha Stechlin.

**Catherine the Great** by Robert K. Massie

Born into a minor noble family, Catherine transformed herself into Empress of Russia by sheer determination. Possessing a brilliant mind and an insatiable curiosity as a young woman, she devoured the works of Enlightenment philosophers and, when she reached the throne, attempted to use their principles to guide her rule of the vast and backward Russian empire. She knew or corresponded with the preeminent historical figures of her time: Voltaire, Diderot, Frederick the Great, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Marie Antoinette, and, surprisingly, the American naval hero, John Paul Jones.

**Nicholas and Alexandra** by Robert K. Massie

In this commanding book, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Robert K. Massie sweeps readers back to the extraordinary world of Imperial Russia to tell the story of the Romanovs’ lives: Nicholas’s political naïveté, Alexandra’s obsession with the corrupt mystic Rasputin, and little Alexis’s brave struggle with hemophilia. Against a lavish backdrop of luxury and intrigue, Massie unfolds a powerful drama of passion and history—the story of a doomed empire and the death-marked royals who watched it crumble.

**Fall of Giants** by Ken Follett

A thirteen-year-old Welsh boy enters a man’s world in the mining pits; an American law student rejected by love finds a surprising new career in Woodrow Wilson’s White House; a housekeeper for the aristocratic Fitzherberts takes a fateful step above her station, while Lady Maud Fitzherbert herself crosses deep into forbidden territory when she falls in love with a German spy; and two orphaned Russian brothers embark on radically different paths when their plan to emigrate to America falls afoul of war, conscription, and revolution. From the dirt and danger of a coal mine to the glittering chandeliers of a palace, from the corridors of power to the bedrooms of the mighty, *Fall of Giants* takes readers into the inextricably entangled fates of five families—and into a century that we thought we knew, but that now will never seem the same again.