

Summer Reading Suggestions

Compiled and Adapted from sources such as the
American Library Association, Barnes & Noble, WeAreTeachers, Prentice Hall

Grades 9 - 12 Suggested Summer Reading

Prentice-Hall Literature, the textbook used by the English department at Dover High School, recommends the following titles as summer reading to maintain fluency and reading level and to encourage independent reading. Students may find these titles at libraries and bookstores. Note: Please review the level, content, and details of selected novels. These are suggestions, and are not – in any way – required reading for all students.

Agee, James, **A Death in the Family**

Story of loss and heartbreak felt when a young father dies.

Anderson, Sherwood, **Winesburg, Ohio**

A collection of short stories lays bare the life of a small town in the Midwest.

Baldwin, James, **Go Tell It On the Mountain**

Semi-autobiographical novel about a 14-year-old black youth's religious conversion.

Bellamy, Edward, **Looking Backward: 2000-1887**

Written in 1887 about a young man who travels in time to a utopian year 2000, where economic security and a healthy moral environment have reduced crime.

Bellow, Saul, **Seize the Day**

A son grapples with his love and hate for an unworthy father.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg, **The Ox-Bow Incident**

When a group of citizens discovers one of their members has been murdered by cattle rustlers, they form an illegal posse, pursue the murderers, and lynch them.

Dorris, Michael, **A Yellow Raft in Blue Water**

Three generations of Native American women recount their searches for identity and love.

Gaines, Ernest, **The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman**

In her 100 years, Miss Jane Pittman experiences it all, from slavery to the civil rights movement.

Lewis, Sinclair, **Main Street**

A young doctor's wife tries to change the ugliness, dullness and ignorance which prevail in Gopher Prairie, Minn.

London, Jack, **Call of the Wild**

Buck is a loyal pet dog until cruel men make him a pawn in their search for Klondike gold.

McCullers, Carson, **The Member of the Wedding**

A young southern girl is determined to be the third party on a honeymoon, despite all the advice against it from friends and family.

Melville, Herman, **Moby-Dick**

A complex novel about a mad sea captain's pursuit of the White Whale.

Morrison, Toni, **Sula**

The lifelong friendship of two women becomes strained when one causes the other's husband to abandon her.

Parks, Gordon, **The Learning Tree**

A fictional study of a black family in a small Kansas town in the 1920s.

Poe, Edgar Allan, **Great Tales and Poems**

Poe is considered the father of detective stories and a master of supernatural tales.

Potok, Chaim, **The Chosen**

Friendship between two Jewish boys, one Hasidic and the other Orthodox, begins at a baseball game and flourishes despite their different backgrounds and beliefs.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, **Uncle Tom's Cabin**

The classic tale that awakened a nation about the slave system.

Walker, Alice, **The Color Purple**

A young woman sees herself as property until another woman teaches her to value herself.

Welty, Eudora, **Thirteen Stories**

A collection of short stories about people and life in the deep South.

Wolfe, Thomas, **Look Homeward, Angel**

A novel depicting the coming of age of Eugene Gant and his passion to experience life.

Wright, Richard, **Native Son**

Bigger Thomas, a young man from the Chicago slums, lashes out against a hostile society by committing two murders.

Allende, Isabel, **House of the Spirits**

The story of the Trueba family in Chile, from the turn of the century to the violent days of the overthrow of the Salvador Allende government in 1973.

Balzac, Honore de, **Pere Goriot**

A father is reduced to poverty after giving money to his daughters.

Borges, Jorge Luis, **Labyrinths**

An anthology of literary fireworks based on Borges' favorite symbol.

Camus, Albert, **The Stranger**

A man who is virtually unknown to both himself and others commits a pointless murder for which he has no explanation.

Carroll, Lewis, **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**

A fantasy in which Alice follows the White Rabbit to a dream world.

Cervantes, Miguel de, **Don Quixote**

An eccentric old gentleman sets out as a knight "tilting at windmills" to right the wrongs of the world.

Conrad, Joseph, **Heart of Darkness**

The novel's narrator journeys into the Congo where he discovers the extent to which greed can corrupt a good man.

Defoe, Daniel, **Robinson Crusoe**

The adventures of a man who spends 24 years on an isolated island.

Dostoevski, Feodor, **Crime and Punishment**

A psychological novel about a poor student who murders an old woman pawnbroker and her sister.

Eliot, George, **The Mill on the Floss**

Maggie is miserable because her brother disapproves of her choices of romances.

Esquivel, Laura, **Like Water for Chocolate**

As the youngest of three daughters in a turn-of-the-century Mexican family, Tita may not marry but must remain at home to care for her mother.

Forster, E.M., **A Passage to India**

A young English woman in British-ruled India accuses an Indian doctor of sexual assault.

Fuentes, Carlos, **The Death of Artemio Cruz**

A powerful Mexican newspaper publisher recalls his life as he lies dying at age 71.

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel, **One Hundred Years of Solitude**

A technique called magical realism is used in this portrait of seven generations in the lives of the Buendia family.

Gogol, Nikolai, **The Overcoat**

Russian tales of good and evil.

Grass, Gunter, **The Tin Drum**

Oskar describes the amoral conditions through which he has lived in Germany, both during and after the Hitler regime.

Kafka, Franz, **The Trial**

A man is tried for a crime he knows nothing about, yet for which he feels guilt.

Lawrence, D.H., **Sons and Lovers**

An autobiographical novel about a youth torn between a dominant working-class father and a possessive genteel mother.

Mann, Thomas, **Death in Venice**

In this novella, an author becomes aware of a darker side of himself when he visits Venice.

Pasternak, Boris, **Doctor Zhivago**

An epic novel of Russia before and after the Bolshevik revolution.

Paton, Alan, **Cry, the Beloved Country**

A country Zulu pastor searches for his sick sister in Johannesburg, and discovers that she has become a prostitute and his son a murderer.

Remarque, Erich Maria, **All Quiet on the Western Front**

A young German soldier in World War I experiences pounding shellfire, hunger, sickness, and death.

Scott, Sir Walter, **Ivanhoe**

Tale of Ivanhoe, the disinherited knight, Lady Rowena, Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Robin Hood at the time of the Crusades.

Tolstoy, Leo, **Anna Karenina**

Anna forsakes her husband for the dashing Count Vronsky and brief happiness.

Wells, H.G., **The Time Machine**

A scientist invents a machine that transports him into the future.

Ashe, Arthur and Arnold Rampersad., **Days of Grace**

Biography of a highly respected tennis star and citizen of the world who dies of AIDS.

Baker, Russell, **Growing Up**

A columnist with a sense of humor takes a gentle look at his childhood in Baltimore during the Depression.

Berenbaum, Michael, **The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as told in the United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Brown, Dee, **Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee**

A narrative of the white man's conquest of the American land as the Indian victims experienced it.

Cooke, Alistair, **Alistair Cooke's America**

A history of the continent, with anecdotes and insight into what makes America work.

Criddle, Jan. D. and Teeda Butt Mam, **To Destroy You Is No Loss: The Odyssey of a Cambodian Family**

After the 1975 Communist takeover of Cambodia, Teeda's upper-class life is reduced to surviving impossible conditions.

Crow Dog, Mary and Richard Erdoes, **Lakota Woman**

Mary Crow Dog stands with 2,000 other Native Americans at the site of the Wounded Knee massacre, demonstrating for Native American rights.

Delany, Sara and A. Elizabeth with Amy Hill Hearth, **Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years**

Two daughters of former slaves tell their stories of fighting racial and gender prejudice during the 20th century.

Epstein, Norrie, **Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard.**

Gain a perspective on Shakespeare's works through these sidelights, interpretations, anecdotes, and historical insights.

Haley, Alex, **Roots**

Traces Haley's search for the history of his family, from Africa through the era of slavery to the 20th century.

Hamilton, Alexander; Madison, James; Jay, John, **The Federalist Papers**

The Federalist Papers are a series of 85 articles or essays promoting the ratification of the United States Constitution. They were published serially between October 1787 and August 1788. The authors of The Federalist (as they were originally called) wanted both to influence the vote in favor of ratification and to shape future interpretations of the Constitution.

Hersey, John, **Hiroshima**

Six Hiroshima survivors reflect on the aftermath of the first atomic bomb.

Karlsen, Carol, **The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England**

The status of women in colonial society affects the Salem witch accusations.

Kennedy, John F., **Profiles in Courage**

A series of profiles of Americans who took courageous stands in public life.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., **A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.**

King's most important writings are gathered together in one source.

Kovic, Ron, **Born on the Fourth of July**

Paralyzed in the Vietnam War, 21-year-old Ron Kovic received little support from his country and its government.

Marx, Karl, **The Communist Manifesto**

Expresses Marx's belief in the inevitability of conflict between social classes and calls on the workers of the world to unite and revolt.

Mathabane, Mark, **Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa**

A tennis player breaks down racial barriers and escape to a better life in America.

Maybury-Lewis, David, **Millenium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World**

Profiles members of several tribal cultures.

McPherson, James, **Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era**

From the Mexican War to Appomattox, aspects of the Civil War are examined.

Mills, Kay, **This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer**

Fannie Lou Hamer, a sharecropper's daughter, uses her considerable courage and singing talent to become a leader in the civil rights movement.

Plato, **The Republic**

Plato creates an ideal society where justice is equated with health and happiness in the state and the individual.

Rogosin, Donn, **Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues**

Negro League players finally gain recognition for their contributions to baseball.

Tocqueville, Alexis de, **Democracy in America**

This classic in political literature examines American society from the viewpoint of a leading French magistrate who visited the U.S. in 1831.

Tuchman, Barbara, **A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century**

Tuchman uses the example of a single feudal lord to trace the history of the 14th century.

Williams, Juan, **Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-65**

From *Brown vs. the Board of Education* to the Voting Rights Act, Williams outlines the social and political gains of African-Americans

Yolen, Jane, **Favorite Folktales From Around the World**

Yolen frames these powerful tales with explanations of historical and literary significance.

Attenborough, David, **The Living Planet: A Portrait of the Earth**

Various habitats expand the vision of Planet Earth.

Bronowski, Jacob, **The Ascent of Man**

A scientist's history of the human mind and the human condition.

Carson, Rachel, **Silent Spring**

Carson's original clarion call to environmental action sets the stage for saving our planet.

Darwin, Charles, **The Origin of Species**

The classic exposition of the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Hawking, Stephen, **A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes**

Cosmology becomes understandable as the author discusses the origin, evolution, and fate of our universe.

Leopold, Aldo, **A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There**

Leopold shares his present and future visions of a natural world.

Campbell, Joseph, **The Power of Myth**

Explores themes and symbols from world religions and their relevance to humankind's spiritual journey today.

Kotlowitz, Alex, **There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in Urban America**

Lafayette and Pharoah Rivers and their family struggle to survive in one of Chicago's worst housing projects.

Kozol, Jonathan, **Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools**

Kozol's indictment of the public school system advocates equalizing per pupil public school expenditures.

Terkel, Studs, **Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession**

This kaleidoscope covers the full range of America's views on racial issues.

Brecht, Bertolt, **Mother Courage and Her Children**

A product of the Nazi era, *Mother Courage* is a feminine "Everyman" in a play on the futility of war.

Chekhov, Anton, **The Cherry Orchard**

The orchard evokes different meanings for the impoverished aristocrat and the merchant who buys it.

Sarte, Jean Paul, **No Exit**

A modern morality play in which three persons are condemned to hell because of crimes against humanity.

Wilder, Thornton, **Our Town**

The dead of a New Hampshire village of the early 1900s appreciate life more than the living.

Wilson, August, **The Piano Lesson**

Drama set in 1936 Pittsburgh chronicles black experience in America.

John Berger, ***Pig Earth***

For the past twenty years Berger—novelist, painter, and art historian—has lived in a small village in the French Alps. Fascinated by the traditions and endangered way of life of the mountain people, he has written about them in both his fiction and his nonfiction. Set in a small village in the French Alps, *Pig Earth* relates the stories of skeptical, hard-working men and independent women. (Delia Seigenthaler)

Lawrence Sanders, ***The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling or The Burglar Who Painted Like Mondrian*** Murder mysteries in the Bernie Rhodenbarr series. Just one, please! (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Matthew Crawford, ***Shop Class as Soulcraft***

Crawford is dissatisfied with the degree to which higher education trains us to be workers who deal *only* in the language of ideas, and he presents a dichotomy between doing work that relies on thinking (the abstract) and work that relies on doing (the concrete). If you've ever asked the question, "When am I actually going to *use* [insert academic subject here]," this might be a great read for you. (Justin Karpinos)

David Epstein, ***The Sports Gene***

This book would make a great corollary to Gladwell's *Outliers* (also on the list). Epstein investigates some of the genetic explanations for athletic genius. Epstein is less reliant on anecdotes than Gladwell is, so the "book-club" appeal is less, but the source material is arguably better. A fascinating read for anyone interested in understanding more about what 21st-century science can (and cannot) reliably say about human performance. (Justin Karpinos)

Darcy Frey, ***The Last Shot***

This book follows three inner-city boys from Coney Island through their high school years, as

they hope that basketball will give them a way out of the ghetto. Chris Meadors '00 writes, "For any sports lovers, the preface will make them shiver and they won't be able to put it down." (Chris Meadors '00)

Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*

Outliers is about how uncontrollable environmental factors have profound effects on our world. Ned Hildebrand '06 finds this book "very interesting and a great nonfiction read." (Ned Hildebrand '06)

Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*

During the Second World War, Louie Zamperini's plane crashed into the ocean. According to Amazon.com, "Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater." Michael Rosen '82 says the book is about "the resolve of an individual whose plane is shot down over the ocean and survives insurmountable risks and dangers. It is also about inner strength and forgiveness." (Michael Rosen '82)

Christian Jacq, *Ramses, Volume 1: The Son of Light*

The author, a French Egyptologist, takes some basic historical facts about the Pharaoh Ramses and adds a healthy dose of imagination and speculation, creating an almost but not quite believable story in five volumes. This first volume introduces the reader to Ramses, Moses, Homer and assorted other historical figures as Ramses' father tests his young son's ability to rule. (Penny Phillips)

Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*

"At a point in life when one is through with boyhood, but has not yet discovered how to be a man, it was my fortune to travel with the most marvelously appealing of teams." The first sentence of this masterpiece of sporting literature sets its tone. The team is the mid-20th-century Brooklyn Dodgers, the team of Robinson and Snyder and Hodges and Reese, a team of great triumph and import. (Trent Boysen)

Sam Kean, *The Disappearing Spoon*

Science writer Kean takes readers through the most interesting parts of the periodic table of the elements, discussing how various elements were created, discovered, or used. From college pranks (like the disappearing spoon) to mind-bending experiments (like the creation of the Bose-Einstein condensate, an entirely new state of matter), from nefarious purposes (poisons, nuclear war) to medical miracles (X-rays, sulfa drugs), the elements take on a life of their own in this engaging and fascinating book. (Pamela Malinowski)

Christina Baker Kline, *Orphan Train*

This novel describes the lives of two girls raised by families other than their own. One girl grew up in the Midwest at the time of the Great Depression and one is growing up in Maine in contemporary times. Their paths cross when one is elderly and the other is in high school, trying to stay out of "Juvie." An unlikely but important friendship develops, changing both women.

The two women are interesting and compelling characters. Their lives are heart-wrenching and their friendship is heart-warming. The historical accounts of the social programs initiated early in the 1900s to relocate orphaned children from Northeast cities like NYC to rural communities in the Midwest are fascinating. (Debbie Van Slyke)

Beryl Markham, *West With the Night*

Beryl Markham's family moved from England to Kenya when she was just a child. In this memoir, she writes about learning to hunt with the Maasai while growing up and then about her experiences as a bush pilot when she became an adult. Jesse Fleisher '94, who worked in Africa as a member of the Peace Corps for several years, says this is one of his favorite Africa books. (Jesse Fleisher '94)

James A. Michener, *Mexico*

This book tells the story of an American journalist who travels to Mexico to report on a bullfight between two great matadors and, while there, discovers the history of his Mexican ancestors. (Rhonda Prater)

Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*

Mowat's account of the summer he lived alone in the frozen tundra observing the wolves is a remarkable tale. Through his studies he developed a deep affection for these wild creatures, which are of no threat to the caribou or man. (Tamara Berthel)

Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*

Comedian and "Daily Show" host Trevor Noah grew up in a sharply divided South Africa, in which neither his white father nor his black mother could safely be seen in public with their biracial child. Noah doesn't hesitate to describe the difficulties of living under apartheid (which formally ended when he was still a child), but he also invites the reader to laugh at the absurdities of life in South Africa and at his childhood adventures. (Kate Pritchard)

Christopher McDougall, *Born to Run*

This book is a tall tale that happens, incredibly, to be a true story. In vivid and energetic language, McDougall explores our human history, discusses why people run ultramarathons, and introduces us to the Tarahumara tribe, which incorporates distance running into its cultural practices. Especially recommended for cross-country runners it will inspire you to run more this summer than ever before. (Jeff Edmonds)

Lillian Rogers Parks (with Frances Spatz Leighton), *My Thirty Years Backstairs at the White House*

The autobiography of Lillian Rogers Parks, who was for thirty years a seamstress and hairdresser at the White House. While Parks acknowledges major historical and political events (her career ran from the Hoover administration through to Eisenhower), her primary focus is on the first families as people with the same strengths and frailties we all possess. (Penny Phillips)

David Quammen, *The Flight of the Iguana: A Sidelong View of Science and Nature* A collection of offbeat essays by one of the greatest nature writers. (George Flatau)

Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*

McKenzie Andrews '11 writes, "This is the first interesting nonfiction book I read in high school. It follows the life of a T-shirt, beginning with its start as raw materials and continuing until it is manufactured in China, sold in the U.S. and then donated to Africa. It offers insight into the international economy and globalization, while also giving a different perspective on something you see every day. Almost every product around us comes from another country and it's especially important for us as Americans to understand this global supply chain. It's also just cool to get a better understanding of how our world works." (McKenzie Andrews '11)

Sonia Sotomayor, *My Beloved World*

In this recently published memoir, Sonia Sotomayor (a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court) writes about "her life from a Bronx housing project to the federal bench, a journey that offers an inspiring testament to her own extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself" (Amazon.com description). Mrs. Davies says, "I liked her discussion of her personal growth and the emphasis on her Hispanic background. It's also interesting how she persevered in spite of hardships (diabetes, alcoholic father) and discrimination." (Debbie Davies)

Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store*

An insightful look at the South from the perspective of a child growing up as a member of the only Jewish family in a small Tennessee town. (Steve Robins)

Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, *Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters*

On January 15, 2009, Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger had minutes to make the decision of whether to return a stricken plane to the airport for a safe landing or to attempt a risky emergency landing of US Airlines flight 1549 on the Hudson River. This memoir not only describes the details of this event, which became known as the "Miracle on the Hudson," but also relays the lifetime experiences which led to his interest in becoming a pilot and his fascination with flying. The lively narratives and anecdotes engage readers as they realize that this life-saving decision was the culmination of a myriad of lessons derived from classmates, teachers, parents and colleagues. (Betty White)

Colin M. Turnbull, *The Forest People*

Written in 1961, this book is an anthropological account of the lives of the Mbuti pygmies, hunter-gatherers living in central Africa. Sam Warlick '08 says that this book is "the most readable, engrossing, and lively anthropological text ever written," showing us "not just the pygmies' incredible rainforest lifestyle but also their lives and personalities as individuals, building a nonfiction story with both lovable, funny characters and an eye-opening view of people connected to nature." (Sam Warlick '08)

Lisa Ray Turner and Blaine Ray, *Casi Se Muere* An American girl goes to high school in Chile. (In Spanish) (Rhonda Prater)

Lisa Ray Turner and Blaine Ray, *El Viaje de su Vida* Sixteen-year-old Carlos Ayala of Cincinnati, Ohio, goes on a cruise with his family from the U.S. to the Yucatan. (In Spanish) (Rhonda Prater)

Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone*

This novel is a coming-of-age story about twins and the girl they both love, spanning two continents (Africa and North America). The richness of their family story and their dedication to each other is enthralling. The writer, Abraham Verghese, was a doctor in East Tennessee when HIV/AIDS came into our world. (Anita Schmid)

Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*

Genetic research like the kind Wells does is revolutionizing human paleoanthropology and rewriting much of humanity's growth, from a small group of maybe 100 individuals in Africa (50,000-100,000 years ago) to what will soon become our ten-billion-strong human population on Earth. (Steve Smail)

Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

Wright chronicles his childhood and adolescence as a black male in the segregated South. His inspirational journey—from suffering to survival to triumph—highlights larger systemic failures and the remarkable power of reading and finding one's individual voice. (Dana Mayfield)

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

A classic and entertaining work by an unusual environmentalist writing about his experiences as a park ranger in Arches National Park. (Steve Robins)

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*

This book takes you halfway across the world, throws you down in the middle of a slum in India, and lets you wander through the homes and disorganized social structure of extreme poverty. This true story, written by a *New York Times* reporter, lets you witness and experience what it takes to live like most of the people in the world. It is an attack on your senses and all of your emotions. (Hannah Dobie '11)

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Sara Chazin '01 writes, "The book is about a boy's coming of age and the journey that he takes to find himself. It is an example of how life hands you different surprises that you may not expect when starting your journey. It shows how this boy deals with these surprises. In addition, it is beautifully written." (Sara Chazin '01)

K. C. Cole, *The Universe and the Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty*

If you've ever wondered why math matters, this is the book for you. Without an equation or

formula in sight (but with a good deal of humor), K. C. Cole shows how the patterns revealed by mathematics help us understand the world around us. (Ann Wheeler)

Arturo de Rosa, *La Momia Desaparece*

A comic mystery taking place in Mexico, where two detectives search for a mummy missing from the Museum of Anthropology. (In Spanish) (Rhonda Prater)

Marta de Rosa, *El Secuestro*

A comic mystery in which two detectives try to get to the bottom of a kidnapping in Colombia. (In Spanish) (Rhonda Prater)

Jane Goodall, *In the Shadow of Man*

Jane Goodall was a young secretary when the legendary Louis Leakey chose her to undertake a landmark study of chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream Reserve. *In the Shadow of Man* is an account of her early years at the Reserve, where she was the first person to document that chimpanzees make tools and display many complex behaviors indicative of significant cognitive abilities. (Tamara Berthel)

Jonathan Harr, *The Lost Painting*

The true story of the “discovery” of a lost Caravaggio masterpiece by graduate art history students—a “joys of research” book. (Zach Gordon ’11)

Tony Hawks, *Round Ireland with a Fridge*

The true story of the author’s attempt to win a bet that he could hitchhike around Ireland with a mini-fridge in tow. (Matthew Haber)

Robert Hicks, *The Widow of the South*

The Widow of the South tells the story of Carrie McGavock and her servant Creole of Carnton Plantation in Franklin, Tennessee. Overwhelmed by life and unable to cope with her personal tragedies, Carrie had withdrawn into herself. Then a disaster of tremendous magnitude knocked on her door and forced her to rejoin the world. The deaths of so many during the Battle of Franklin gave Carrie a purpose in life. (Penny Phillips)

Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker*

Set in what is left of England ten centuries after a nuclear war destroys much of the modern world, this post-apocalyptic science fiction novel imagines humanity’s fall into conditions not unlike those of our prehistoric ancestors—life is nasty and brutish as ignorance, superstition, and myth come to replace technology and science as its governing principles. Narrated by Riddley, an inhabitant of this society, the novel also looks at the role of language and how it helps us to understand and shape the world. (Dean Masullo)

A. J. Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man’s Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

The often funny, always heartfelt story of *Esquire* writer A. J. Jacobs’ attempt to spend a year of his life following the rules of the Bible as closely as possible. (Matthew Haber)

Steve Jones, *Darwin's Ghost*

This book is a wonderful, updated version of *The Origin of Species*, using Darwin's exact table of contents and many of his original words but replacing 1800s examples with modern ones that support *Origin's* arguments concerning natural selection. (Tamara Berthel)

Suki Kim, *Without You, There Is No Us: My Time With the Sons of North Korea's Elite*

Isolated politically, economically, and culturally, North Korea is the enigma of an increasingly globalized world. Suki Kim's account of her time as an English teacher in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang is set in 2011, when the government shut down all its universities and sent the students to work in labor camps—all its universities, that is, except the all-male Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, where Kim taught the sons of the most powerful families in the country. There, amid the backdrop of the death of Kim Jong-il and the ascendancy of Kim Jong-un, Kim was witness to the workings of the totalitarian regime—the indoctrination, the surveillance, the obedience, and the fear—and its effect on the young men that she had come to the country to teach. (Dean Masullo)

Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome*

A highly readable and interesting history of the events surrounding the construction of the Duomo in Florence in the 15th century. (Matthew Haber)

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*

A novel about the lives of women in an American missionary family and their interactions with the people, nature and politics in the Belgian Congo in the latter half of the 20th century. (Freya Sachs)

John McWhorter, *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold Story of English*

This is an absolutely wonderful history of English that tries to answer questions about why English has some of the weird stuff it has, like the completely useless “do” at the beginning of a question. The author takes aim at some of the conventional thought about early English history and gives a thoroughly engaging history of the influences wrought upon English over the centuries. (Will Mason '85)

James Michener, *Space*

This book explores the time between V-E Day in 1945 and the heyday of the United States Space Program in the 1970s through the lives of 5 families. It provides an interesting look at how culture changed in those years and also explains how the technology we take for granted today came to be. (Penny Phillips)

Larry Niven, *Ringworld*

A science fiction classic in the tradition of Asimov, *Ringworld* mixes hard science with an exciting and outlandish plot of galactic exploration. According to Nathan Schine '09, “This book is insanely fun to read. Niven presents the reader with a surprise every few pages. He

relates his poetic conceptual creativity in straightforward and engaging prose that allows you to become lost in his world.” (Nathan Schine ’09)

Jenny Nordberg, *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* Afghanistan is a country torn by war and dominated by an extreme patriarchy: Men are privileged in all quarters of society; women are seen as inconsequential and inconvenient. In this award-winning book, Nordberg, a *New York Times* reporter, traces the remarkable stories of young girls and women who, in search of the opportunities available only to their male counterparts, make their way in Afghani society disguised as boys and men. These *bacha posh*— in Afghan Persian, the term means “dressed as boys”—risk their lives every day for the rights and privileges that most people take for granted: education, work, and basic human rights. (Dean Masullo)

Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*

Chris Cowperthwaite ’95 describes this book as “a close look at the same small group of scientists who have been on the wrong side of every major health and environmental debate of the last fifty to sixty years. *Merchants of Doubt* ... explains how they’ve managed to keep ‘debates’ going despite overwhelming scientific evidence that smoking is bad, acid rain and the ozone hole are real, and climate change is a serious threat.... Despite the fact that it is science-based, extremely well-researched, and meticulously documented, it reads easily enough for laypeople to understand. Anyone who is remotely concerned with energy policy should read this.” (Chris Cowperthwaite ’95)

Matt Ridley, *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters*

The book devotes one chapter to each of the human chromosomes and an unnumbered chapter to the sex chromosomes. It describes the gene, its discovery, and a snippet of its function. Omer Ikizler ’07 writes, “I have peers here at Swarthmore who cite this book as their inspiration to become biologists. It’s informative yet entertaining, and it is written in an approachable, imaginative style.” (Omer Ikizler ’07)

Cokie Roberts, *Founding Mothers*

An in-depth, meticulously researched look at the lives of the wives of the founding fathers. The responsibilities they bore and the influence they exerted during the birth of our nation are eye-opening. These are not the demure, uninformed, un-empowered New England housewives of myth and legend. These women are the real thing! (Penny Phillips)

Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running: La Vida Loca*

The attraction and the dangers of the “crazy life” as a gang member in Los Angeles. (Steve Robins)

Patrick Rothfuss, *The Name of the Wind*

According to Amazon.com, “This is the riveting first-person narrative of Kvothe, a young man who grows to be one of the most notorious magicians his world has ever seen. From his

childhood in a troupe of traveling players to years spent as a near-feral orphan in a crime-riddled city, to his daringly brazen yet successful bid to enter a legendary school of magic, *The Name of the Wind* takes the reader on a journey through an extraordinary life that is nonetheless touched by the same joys and heartaches that we know so well.” Caroline Clark ’09 writes that this book “has been compared to Harry Potter, if only for the wizards-at-school aspect, but the scope of this novel (the first in a trilogy) is so much broader. This is, of course, another giant fantasy novel, but this is one that you should read despite that, if not because of it.” (Caroline Clark ’09)

Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*

Sacks was a neurologist who wrote several books about patients with brain injuries or disorders, who exhibited all manner of bizarre symptoms. This book is perhaps his best known and most fascinating. (Matthew Haber)

Arlene Schrade, *El Ojo de Agua (ISBN 0-8442-7212-4)*

An American exchange student’s adventures in Costa Rica. (In Spanish) (Rhonda Prater)

John Ratey, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*

This is an easy-to-read, compelling account of the ways that exercise affects our brains, increasing mental focus and reasoning, boosting our moods, and improving our memory. Dr. Ratey describes recent research involving children and adults. It is a great read for anyone wanting to jumpstart or to deepen their commitment to regular exercise. Readers will find themselves thinking about ways to spur on their brain health, mental sharpness, and good mood through physical activity. (Debbie Van Slyke)

Dodie Smith, *I Capture the Castle*

Any book that begins, “I write this sitting in the kitchen sink...” is sure to be entertaining. An aspiring writer, 17-year-old Cassandra lives with her peculiar family in an old English castle, and this book chronicles six months in her life complete with struggles, frustrations, and first love. (Ann Wheeler)

Garth Stein, *The Art of Racing in the Rain*

Hitesh Dayal ’01 calls this book “a story of hope and inspiration,” as well as a “very creative and fun story... that’s told from a unique perspective (from the dog!).” (Hitesh Dayal ’01)

Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*

A satire with a light touch, this novel—part of Trollope’s *Barchester Chronicles* series—entwines the religious conflicts between evangelicals and high church with social classes, small-town politics and eccentrics in nineteenth-century England. Tom Bailey ’85 writes, “I read this when I was laid up with a cold. It made me want to stay ill so that I could read it through again.” (Tom Bailey ’85)

Karen Thompson Walker, *The Age of Miracles*

This novel tells the story of a young girl coming of age as the earth's rotation begins to slow down. (Matthew Haber)

Edward O. Wilson, *Naturalist*

Today, Edward O. Wilson is a renowned scientist who has written widely about biology and evolutionary theory—but in the 1930s he was a little Alabama boy with a fascination for ants. His autobiography, *Naturalist*, tells the story of his discovering his own interests as a boy, and, as an adult, eventually pursuing those scientific interests in places such as the South Pacific and the Florida Keys. (Ann Wheeler)

Simon Winchester, *The Map That Changed the World*

A humble and observant canal engineer in England draws the world's first geological map, puts the Earth sciences at the forefront of academia, initiates the Industrial Revolution, then has his ideas ignored and stolen, which puts him in debt and jail. A classic hero's journey mixing science, art, logical observation, determination and redemption. (Steve Smail)

Carl Zimmer, *Parasite Rex: Inside the Bizarre World of Nature's Most Dangerous Creatures*

A thorough and cool look at the world of parasites. (Tamara Berthel)

Rick Bragg, *All Over But the Shoutin'*

As an adult, Rick Bragg became a reporter for the *New York Times*. This book is his memoir of growing up in very rural northeast Alabama during the 1950s and '60s. (Ann Wheeler)

Kenneth Brower, *The Starship and the Canoe*

An intriguing double biography of the famous astrophysicist Freeman Dyson and his son George, who drops out of college to paddle the Vancouver Island waters and live in a treehouse. One of them is designing a spaceship, the other an ocean-going kayak. An exceptional questioning of 20th-century technology. (Liz Mask)

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

A revealing glimpse inside the minds of two murderers and one enamored writer. (Robbie McKay)

Caleb Carr, *The Alienist*

Noted military historian Carr writes a gripping historical mystery set in New York City at the turn of the century. (Pat Miletich)

Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan*

A history of the U.S. financial system and economy through the lens of the House of Morgan, from the mid-1850s to the 1980s. Hawkins Entekin '06 writes that "given the recent financial crisis, I think this book gives some great history and perspective on U.S. economic history and is a really great and interesting read to boot.... It would really give students some great information that will help make them well-informed citizens." (Hawkins Entekin '06)

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*

An analytical study of why some societies succeed and others fail. (George Flatau and Lorna Morris)

Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*

This collection of essays was recommended by both Michael Landsman '08 and Chloe Stillwell '08. Chloe writes that "Didion gives an honest, vivid, and somewhat eulogistic description of life and people, especially California in the 1960s.... I know this book would have had a profound impact on me in high school and maybe saved me a year as an urban studies major." (Chloe majored in writing; she further says that "as a nonfiction concentration student, her take on the genre, even stories that didn't directly involve her, inspired me as a writer.") Michael says that "this book changed my life; I never travel anywhere without my copy. Her essay 'On Self-Respect' will resonate with all young people coming to terms with themselves. Didion provides the cynical heft of a journalist, the philosophical insight of an academic, and the creative flourish of an artist as she explores the Summer of Love in San Francisco, John Wayne's final days, Joan Baez, Los Angeles traffic, and vacationing in Hawaii." (Michael Landsman '08 and Chloe Stillwell '08)

Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*

Although Michael Eric Dyson is a well-known professor of sociology at Georgetown, the author of many scholarly books, he describes this book as a cry from his heart, telling a specifically (but not necessarily exclusively) white audience what he thinks they need to know about the experience of African-Americans in this country. Stunned by the recent presidential election, Dyson writes a book that is very much of this moment (name-checking Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, and Colin Kaepernick) but also one that looks back at American history to see what has brought us here. (Ann Wheeler)

Dave Eggers, *What is the What*

In this epic tale, Dave Eggers explores the life of Valentino Achak Deng, a refugee from the Sudanese civil war. It's a fictionalized memoir of his life and experiences, sometimes full of dark moments, at other turns lyrical, telling the story of one of the "Lost Boys" and his journey. (Katie Greenebaum and Freya Sachs)

Jonathan Franzen, *The Twenty-Seventh City* According to Amazon.com, "

Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* In this book, Goodwin explores the political partnership of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt and the times in which they lived. (Pat Miletich)

Robert Heinlein, *Starship Troopers*

Recommended by David Tannenbaum '05, this classic science fiction novel presents an alternate society in the future and tackles subjects such as the relationship of the soldier and the government, the citizens' role in society, and the right to vote. David writes that "this book has shaped my views on my country, the society in which I live and gave me a purpose in the

direction that I should take with my life. Caveat: the movie is no representation.” (David Tannenbaum ’05)

Paul Hoffman, *The Man Who Loved Only Numbers: The Story of Paul Erdős and the Search for Mathematical Truth*

Erdős was an amazing and prolific mathematician whose life as a world-wandering numerical nomad was legendary. He published almost 1,500 scholarly papers before his death in 1996, and he probably thought more about math problems than anyone in history. Like a traveling salesman offering his thoughts as wares, Erdős would show up on the doorstep of one mathematician or another and announce, “My brain is open.” (Debbie Davies)

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

In this book, Kidder tells the story of Dr. Paul Farmer’s travels around the world and his work with disease control, particularly with people living in extreme poverty. It’s both an inspiring true story and a call to arms. (Betty White)

Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*

Kolbert uses the accounts of extinctions of several species to investigate the sixth mass extinction, the one caused by humans. She writes vividly of her field experiences following scientists studying current species threatened by extinction. (Dawn Matthies)

Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*

A sometimes frightening look at the inequalities present in many school systems, this study of American public education reveals conditions that many could not have imagined. (Betty White)

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* This exciting scholarly work interweaves the story of a serial killer at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair with descriptions of the immense challenges of constructing the fair, its historical importance, and the famous figures who attended it—turning it all into a first-rate historical mystery. (Pat Miletich and Ann Wheeler)

Robert K. Massie, *Catherine the Great*

Amazon.com describes this recent biography as “the extraordinary story of an obscure young German princess who traveled to Russia at fourteen and rose to become one of the most remarkable, powerful, and captivating women in history.” Not only is the book recommended by two alumni, but it was also written by an alumnus—Robert K. Massie graduated from PDS in 1946. (Martha Keith Butler ’46 and Scott Sudduth ’54)

Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*

An unannounced circus, with games and manipulations that stretch far beyond the performance itself, *The Night Circus* is an adventure for the characters and for the reader; Morgenstern creates a world you want to understand, full of surprise and magic. (Rosanne Siman ’04)

Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*

An unusual novel about the journey of Japanese picture brides to husbands on the West Coast before World War II, *The Buddha in the Attic* builds a collective portrait of the women rather than following the story or stories of one or a handful of brides. The result is a fascinating perspective on the culture clash and personal challenges of these women as the war and Japanese internment loom. This story is taken up in Otsuka's novel *When the Emperor Was Divine*. (Pat Miletich)

Mark and Delia Owens, *Cry of the Kalahari*

Carrying little more than a change of clothes and a pair of binoculars, Mark and Delia Owens arrived deep in the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa, living for seven years in an area with no roads, no people, and no source of water for thousands of miles. In this wilderness they met animals that had never seen humans before. (Tamara Berthel)

Michael Parker, *If You Want Me to Stay*

A fourteen-year-old boy tells the story of how he did everything he could to save his family after his mother left and his father's hold on sanity unraveled. On a journey from North Carolina to the coast, Joel and his little brother Tank thread their way back to their mother. (Delia Seigenthaler)

Peter Pezzelli, *Francesca's Kitchen*

Francesca is a widow whose family lives far away. She is searching for a way to be needed. Through cooking and mothering, she finds a way. This story is about family and love. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Alan Lightman, *The Accidental Universe*

Lightman is both a physicist and novelist. In this collection of seven essays, he considers our current scientific understanding of the larger universe and questions how these scientific theories fit into our psychological and spiritual quest for meaning in our lives. (Ann Wheeler)

Nathaniel Philbrick, *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*

According to Amazon.com, "The ordeal of the whaleship *Essex* was an event as mythic in the nineteenth century as the sinking of the Titanic was in the twentieth. In 1819, the *Essex* left Nantucket for the South Pacific with twenty crew members aboard. In the middle of the South Pacific the ship was rammed and sunk by an angry sperm whale. The crew drifted for more than ninety days in three tiny whaleboats, succumbing to weather, hunger, disease, and ultimately turning to drastic measures in the fight for survival. Nathaniel Philbrick uses little-known documents—including a long-lost account written by the ship's cabin boy—and penetrating details about whaling and the Nantucket community to reveal the chilling events surrounding this epic maritime disaster." (Brittany McFall '00)

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*

In this engaging book, Pollan explores the complexities of our current food system, looking at conventional, local, and organic agriculture, and considers foraging as well. A fascinating read for people who care about the story of their food. (Freya Sachs)

Esmeralda Santiago, *Cuando era puertorriqueña*

Cuando era puertorriqueña is the autobiography of Esmeralda Santiago; it's her coming-of-age story. Santiago takes the reader through her childhood as a country girl ("jíbara") to her drastic move to New York at the age of thirteen. Santiago explains to the reader what it was like to be an Other in a new place and an outcast among other minority groups, whether because of her nationality, ethnicity, or language. The autobiography is touching and revealing. All in all, a must-read. Students who are not studying Spanish may enjoy this book in English translation. (Heather McRae)

Robert Schenkkan, *The Kentucky Cycle*

Winner of the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, this play addresses history on a very personal, character-driven level from generation to generation between two Kentucky families; it's a page-turner, as it involves action, tragic events, love, violence, revenge. (Catherine Coke)

David Sedaris, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*

Humorous essays about fartsuits, frustrations, and family. This book is filled with the acerbic wit and insight for which Sedaris is known. (Robbie McKay)

Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*

An ethnographic look into an underprivileged community outside Chicago that explores the social networks and fictive kinships that keep the community alive. Julia Garrison '08 writes, "People often don't understand the challenges that people on welfare, government-subsidized housing, and other benefits face. They often don't realize that even with these benefits, families have trouble feeding their children. This book provides insight as to how these families use their social networks to make ends meet." (Julia Garrison '08)

Elizabeth Strout, *Amy and Isabelle*

In the small, gossip-ridden New England town where Amy Goodrow, 16, lives with her mother Isabelle, the inhabitants go about their daily lives—work, school, home—with mundane complacency. Bored and listless and full of secret turmoil, Amy grows more and more alienated from her mother with the arrival of a stranger in town, and what begins as an adolescent awakening threatens to become her undoing. Strout went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Olive Kitteridge*, but this first novel is every bit as rich and painstaking, a brilliant study in characterization and point of view. (Rachel Levy Howell '00)

Héctor Tobar, *Deep Down Dark: The Untold Stories of 33 Men Buried in a Chilean Mine, and the Miracle that*

Set Them Free The subtitle of this book says it all. In 2010, thirty-three Chilean miners were trapped when the mine where they were working collapsed. As a result of an international effort, they were rescued sixty-nine days later. Héctor Tobar talked to all of these men, read diaries that they kept while trapped, talked to their families (many family members spent two months living in tents just outside the mine) and wrote this fascinating book, telling of the emotional and physical struggle of all involved during those difficult days when no one knew if these thirty-three men would ever see sunlight again. Ann Patchett has written that in this book Tobar “is taking on all the big issues of life.... What is life worth? What is the value of one human life? What is faith? Who do we become in our darkest hour?” (<http://www.npr.org/2014/12/11/369409338/join-the-morning-edition-book-club-were-reading-deep-down-dark>) (Freya Sachs and Ann Wheeler)

Anne Tyler, ***Digging to America***

In *Digging to America*, Anne Tyler tells the story of two families, beginning with the arrival of their adopted Korean infants. In this warm-hearted, humorous tale, both families confront in different ways all the usual trials of life in affluent suburban America, leading readers to think about what being “American” really means. (Debbie Davies)

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, ***A Midwife’s Tale***

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, historian Ulrich “translates” and expands upon the journal Martha Ballard kept during her years as a midwife in Hallowell, Maine. It is a wonderful look into 18th-century life in a small New England town. (Penny Phillips)

Jeannette Walls, ***The Glass Castle***

Walls and her siblings were dragged around the country by a brilliant, alcoholic father and an unconventional, artistic, narcissistic mother. The children learned to support themselves, eating out of trashcans at school or painting their skin so the holes in their pants didn’t show. One by one, each child escaped to New York City. Still, it wasn’t long before their parents appeared on their doorsteps and began living as a homeless couple in Manhattan while their children rose in the world. (Katie Greenebaum)

Tobias Wolff, ***This Boy’s Life: A Memoir***

Novelist Tobias Wolff’s memoir of his tempestuous childhood, as engagingly well-written as it is unsettling. (Katie Greenebaum)

Henry Adams, ***The Education of Henry Adams***

In a book which is less an autobiography than a cultural, scientific, and political history of the times in which he lived, Adams describes changes during his life and explains what one must do to be successful in the rapidly changing modern world. Adams is the grandson and great-grandson of American presidents. (Steve Robins)

Tamar Adler, ***An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace***

Julia Sullivan ’01 describes this book as “a modern-day home economics that speaks to cooking and eating seasonally and sustainably ‘with economy and grace.’” She recommends it in order

“to encourage the younger generation to explore food issues and to think about the cost of food” as well as to “bring them back to the kitchen and the table.” (Julia Sullivan '01)

Natalie Angier, *The Beauty of the Beastly*

A book of essays about organisms on which we do not normally dwell, divided into seven chapters: “Loving,” “Slithering,” “Dancing,” “Dying,” “Adapting,” “Healing,” and “Creating.” (Tamara Berthel)

Aimee Bender, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*

In this recent novel, Bender imagines that her narrator, Rose Edelstein, can taste the feelings that were present as everything she eats was created. This magical realist LA tale is at turns quirky, engaging and funny. (Freya Sachs)

Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*

After interviewing scientists in a number of fields, Bryson wrote this engaging overview of scientific understanding of our world, intended for the general reader. His framework follows the history of the earth, but along the way he touches on fields like quantum physics and astronomy as well as the natural sciences.

(Steve Slovenski and Ann Wheeler)

Italo Calvino, *Cosmicomics*

Amazon.com calls these inter-related short stories “enchanting stories about the evolution of the universe, with characters that are fashioned from mathematical formulae and cellular structures.” (Richard Swor '09)

Sean Carroll, *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson*

Leads Us to the Edge of a New World This is a great review of the discovery of the Higgs Boson. The author describes what the silly thing is, its scientific importance, and the extremely protracted and costly search for it. (Will Mason '85)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

In Rachel Carson’s seminal environmental text, she explores issues with DDT and its environmental impact. This book, scientifically fascinating and intriguingly written, helped launch the environmental movement. (Freya Sachs)

Ha-Joon Chang, *Economics: The User’s Guide*

Unlike the authors of *Freakonomics* (also on this list), Chang is adamant that economics is not a study of everything. He delivers an engaging and concise description of a modern economy. This book is an excellent introduction to different schools of economic thought and to why some countries are rich and others are poor. (Bill Wilson)

Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family’s Century of Art and Loss*

Nonfiction, but so fascinating it reads like fiction.

David James Duncan, *The Brothers K*

A moving portrayal of four brothers and their conflicted parents as they passionately navigate the politics of the 1960s, religion, and their dreams of professional baseball. (Liz Mask)

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

A classic text of political and educational theory, *Democracy and Education* is the masterwork of the greatest

American philosopher of the 20th century. Dewey shows the intimate and interwoven relationship between

democracy and education, challenging the reader to think carefully about the meaning of these concepts. This book is a great read for the philosophically minded student interested in thinking deeply and critically about the duties of democratic citizenship and the challenges that remain for education. (Jeff Edmonds)

Sylvia Earle, *The World is Blue*

Earth is an ocean planet; it looks blue from space, with only bits of brown and green where continents are located. Oceanographer Sylvia Earle has spent a lifetime learning about the ocean firsthand, and she collects in this book the wisdom she's gained. Earle explains the roles the oceans play in our planet's biosphere, how humans are changing the ocean, and what we can do to protect and preserve the vital functions the ocean fulfills for our own continued ability to call Earth our home. (Freya Sachs)

Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

This book documents the story of Lia Lee, the severely epileptic daughter of Hmong refugees in Merced, California. The views of the Hmong and Lia's Western doctors are completely at odds with regard to what her condition is and how to care for her. The story that unfolds is one of misunderstandings and clashing cultures. Ian Trupin '09 writes, "I read this book for an introductory course in medical anthropology, and it had a huge impact on how I think about health, illness, and medicine in the context of culture.... What Lia's family and doctors have to go through, and the extent to which they are talking past each other on the subject of Lia's condition, made me aware of the cultural construction and the subjectivity of health and illness for the first time in my life." (Ian Trupin '09)

Hans Fallada, *Every Man Dies Alone*

A remarkable fictionalized study of the psychology of resistance in Nazi Germany, particularly recommended for students enrolled in Social Conscience. (Matthew Haber)

Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century, 3.0 (3rd edition)*

According to Amazon.com, "*The World Is Flat 3.0* is an essential update on globalization, its opportunities for individual empowerment, its achievements at lifting millions out of poverty, and its drawbacks—environmental, social, and political—powerfully illuminated by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*." (Eliot Goldfarb '11)

Tana French, *In the Woods*

Rob Ryan is a detective on Dublin's murder squad—but, unknown to most of his colleagues, he also has a mystery in his own past: when he was twelve years old, two of his best friends disappeared and he was found alone in the woods, wearing blood-covered shoes. He has never been able to remember what happened. In the book, as he (along with his professional partner and best friend, Cassie Maddox) investigates the murder of a young girl, he also begins to revisit the puzzle of his own past. (Ann Wheeler)

Robert Galbraith, *The Cuckoo's Calling*

In Robert Galbraith's debut novel, Cormoran Strike, a private detective who lost his leg in the Afghanistan war, investigates the apparent suicide of a world-famous supermodel. A little while after the initial publication of the novel, readers were surprised and intrigued to learn that "Robert Galbraith" is really a pseudonym for J. K. Rowling. Although her style and approach to storytelling are very different in this novel than in the Harry Potter series, the characters are equally compelling. (Ann Wheeler)

Steven Galloway, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*

The core of this novel of the siege of Sarajevo in 1992 is the truly remarkable action of a cellist who witnesses a mortar killing twenty-two people standing in a breadline. For twenty-two days the cellist plays in the crater to memorialize their deaths. The novel examines the stories of four people and their attempts to survive and keep hold of their humanity during the longest siege of a capital city in modern warfare. (Pat Miletich)

Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien Años de Soledad*

A Latin American classic, this novel is a fictional account of the lives of the Buendía family. (It may be read in Spanish by AP students; the English translation, found on the "Classics of World Literature" list, also counts as a selection for senior English courses.) (Rhonda Prater)

Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That*

A British scholar and poet's autobiography of his youth and experience in World War I. (Mackey Luffman)

Robert Grudin, *Time and the Art of Living*

Robert Grudin writes about the way we experience time: about the quality of our attention to the moments of our lives, about various ways to think about the way we spend our time—generally about how to live well. The book invites slow, thoughtful reading. This book is out of print, but used copies can be found online. (Ann Wheeler)

David Halberstam, *The Children*

In this book, David Halberstam tells the story of the college students who spearheaded the Nashville sit-ins in 1960 and went on to become leaders in the national Civil Rights movement. Every page of this massive book is fascinating, but you may choose to read only the section

concerned with events in Nashville (Book 1, also titled “The Children,” through page 234). (Ann Wheeler)

Kent Haruf, *Plainsong*

In the small town of Holt, Colorado, a high school teacher is confronted with raising his two boys alone after their mother retreats first to the bedroom, then altogether. A teenage girl—her father long since disappeared, her mother unwilling to have her in the house—is pregnant, with nowhere to go. And out in the country, two brothers, elderly bachelors, work the family homestead. (Cindy Crenshaw)

Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe*

Mr. Hubbell writes that “no book has made me think more deeply about how humans choose or avoid choosing how to organize themselves. Reading this book feels like a conversation between a group of people that disagree about many things but have a common purpose for their discussion—to take no way of being (or of thinking) for granted.” (Wilson Hubbell)

Adam Johnson, *The Orphan Master’s Son*

This book tells the winding tale of an orphan who, alternating between criminality and heroism, finds his way through the ranks of North Korean society. It’s part love story, part horrifying exploration of life under Kim Jong-il’s repressive totalitarian regime. (Matthew Haber)

Jon Katz, *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho*

Journalist Katz follows the lives of two alienated small-town high school boys—both “geeks”—looking to escape social constraints and create satisfying lives. (Steve Robins)

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*

This classic of military history is a short, accessible survey of three battles in Western Europe that had major consequences for their survivors and subsequent political events. It skillfully weaves together factors like psychology, animal behavior, technology and the impact of organizations to explain what the experience of battle was like then. In turn, this approach helps us understand why people in the past chose some actions over others. (Mackey Luffman)

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

This Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play in two parts (*Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*—be sure to read both) explores life in America during the 1980s, as the AIDS crisis escalates. According to Amazon.com’s review, the play “mixes magical realism with political speeches, high comedy with painful tragedy, and stitches it all together with a daring sense of irony and a moral vision that demands respect and attention.” (Catherine Coke)

David Laskin, *The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century*

In this book, Laskin tells the true story of his family, beginning with his mid-1800s ancestors in the Pale of Settlement and the choices they made that changed their lives. Essentially, Jews in the Pale (western Russia) at some point chose between making Aliyah to Israel, escaping to

America or remaining in Europe. The author does a nice job of piecing together the highly variable fates of his family members. (Ben Doochin '78)

Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx* A decade-long study of one family and the problems engendered by poverty. (Katie Greenebaum)

Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*

According to Amazon.com, this book shows “that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—how people get what they want or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing.” James Parker '81 writes that “this very readable book challenges you to look at problems from a different perspective.” (James Parker '81)

Alan Lightman, *The Discoveries: Great Breakthroughs in 20th-Century Science*

A book chronicling the greatest scientific discoveries of last century, with summary introductions and the original papers heralding the discoveries. (George Flatau)

Charlie LeDuff, *Detroit: An American Autopsy*

According to Amazon.com, “Back in his broken hometown, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charlie LeDuff

searches the ruins of Detroit for clues to his family’s troubled past. Once the richest city in America, the vanguard of America’s machine age—mass-production, blue-collar jobs, and automobiles—Detroit is now its poorest: America’s capital for unemployment, illiteracy, dropouts, and foreclosures. With the steel-eyed reportage that has become his trademark and the righteous indignation only a native son possesses, LeDuff sets out to uncover what destroyed his city. He beats on the doors of union bosses and homeless squatters, powerful businessmen and struggling homeowners and the ordinary people holding the city together by sheer determination.” (Catherine Coke)

Helen Macdonald, *H is for Hawk*

Remembering her younger self’s fascination with T. H. White’s book *The Goshawk*, Helen Macdonald decided to

raise and train a hawk as an outlet for her grief after her father died. In her book *H is for Hawk*, she simultaneously tells the story of learning more about the surprisingly complex life of T. H. White (best known as the writer of *The Once and Future King*), coming to terms with her grief for her father, and—most important—experiencing the fascinating, difficult process of living with and training a hawk. (Ann Wheeler)

Elizabeth Merrick, ed., *This Is Not Chick Lit: Original Stories by America’s Best Women Writers*

The stories in this collection both challenge and subvert the stereotypes and assumptions around women’s fiction. With selections from a wide range of literary talents such as Aimee Bender, Jennifer Egan, and Curtis Sittenfeld, there is much wisdom to be found in these short pieces, as

the writers investigate life's difficult and often uncomfortable questions. Vulnerable and real, the characters encountered here won't find solace in a Prada bag, and if anything sparkles on these pages it's the prose itself. The universal subject matter and themes—love, identity, the search for belonging and connection—will appeal to female and male readers alike. (Rachel Levy Howell '00)

Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*

In this book, Miłosz writes from his own experience of living in Poland under Communist rule, explaining both the appeal and the abuses of the Communist system. Matt Kastrinsky '05 “read this book for a History of Europe class in college and found it very fascinating and an enjoyable read. When Communism and Stalinism are widely demonized in Western history and cultural education, I found a story that explains the allure and reasoning behind intellectuals' support of Stalinism to be a welcome addition to any well-rounded education, in terms of both cultural and historical trends.” (Matt Kastrinsky '05)

Lorrie Moore, *Like Life*

Mordant and incredibly perceptive short stories about contemporary women and their tentative forays into real, messy life. (Katie Greenebaum)

Paul Murray, *Skippy Dies*

This is a very funny novel set in a tony but declining Irish boarding school. Whatever you're thinking, it's not that. Very contemporary, very large in scope, a little crass, a little sentimental, but always, always compelling. And, yes, Skippy does, in fact, die. (Katie Greenebaum)

Sylvia Nasar, *A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash*

A journalist's moving depiction of John Nash, a leader in the academic world of mathematics who battled schizophrenia through much of his career. (Debbie Davies)

Ann Patchett, *State of Wonder*

In Nashville writer Ann Patchett's novel, a research scientist travels reluctantly to South America in search of a missing colleague and an elderly mentor. As she travels deeper into the wilderness, her adventures become stranger and stranger. (Rosie Siman '04)

Jodi Picoult, *Sing You Home*

Sing You Home starts with a tragedy that quickly turns into a life change for Zoe, the main character. This book deals with topics of religion, gay rights, suicidal teenagers, in vitro fertilization and parental rights. Once you pick it up, it is very hard to put down. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*

In *The Botany of Desire*, Pollan examines the way that other species have influenced us, including the human desire for sweetness/apples and our desire for beauty/tulips. (Diane Sorrel)

Julia Scheeres, *Jesus Land*

Scheeres, who is white, and her adopted black brother, David, suffered cruel abuse as children, first in their strict Calvinist home in Indiana in the 1980s and then when their parents sent them to a fundamentalist reform school (more like a boot camp) in the Dominican Republic. Though their story is often heartbreaking, the tenderness between sister and brother in Scheeres' memoir is ultimately uplifting and redemptive. (Katie Greenebaum)

Charles Seife, *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea*

This quick "biography" traces the history of the number 0 from its inventors, the Babylonians, through its controversial effects on religion and society to its importance in our belief in quantum physics and the Big Bang. This witty book focuses on the ideas behind mathematical concepts and zero's effect on them. Readers are invited to play along with Seife as he explains the many wonders zero reveals. (Debbie Davies and Nathan Schine '09)

Carol Shields, *Unless*

Becky Salomon '04 writes, "This book explores various roles of women in our society and the challenges young adults face as they try to find their paths. Carol Shields wrote it after being diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer; the book was published just before her death in 2003. It is a straightforward book without complicated themes or language, but it is a wonderful defense of 'mundane' domesticity." (Becky Salomon '04)

Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon*

Solomon discusses the experience of depression, including the disease's various treatments and the influence of politics and big business on how it is perceived. (Katie Greenebaum)

Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*

According to Amazon.com, "Only once in a while does a writer come along who defies comparison—a writer so original, he redefines the way we look at the world. Neal Stephenson is such a writer and *Snow Crash* is such a novel, weaving virtual reality, Sumerian myth, and just about everything in between with a cool, hip cybersensibility to bring us the gigatriller of the information age." Elizabeth Reiland '07 writes that this book is "well-loved by people in tech fields" and that "it also makes me think about different aspects of the world in ways I might not otherwise have even considered." (Elizabeth Reiland '07)

Amy Tan, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

A novel about the relationship between a Chinese-born mother who is losing her memories and her American-born daughter who learns about her mother's past. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch*

When Theo Decker is thirteen years old, his mother is killed in an explosion while they are visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Stunned and confused, he staggers out with one of the paintings: *The Goldfinch* by Carel Fabritius. As Theo moves from the Park Avenue apartment of a classmate to his father's house in Las Vegas, as he becomes an art dealer and drug addict,

as he gets involved with the Russian mob, he always carries the painting with him. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is filled with engaging characters and surprising plot twists. (Ann Wheeler)

Amor Towles, *A Gentleman in Moscow*

People, comrades, ladies and, of course, gentlemen and home (however home is defined), the nobility inherent in change go and obtain a copy of Amor Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*. It is a delightful read and perhaps deceptively so. I might encourage you to read it twice over so that the book's decadent prose does not blind you to crucial themes the sanctity of commitment, the link between identity that emerge from Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov's remarkable feat of finding fulfillment in confinement, albeit of the most luxurious sort. And, come to think of it, you have my full permission to indulge in each moment of bliss that saturates Towles' sentences. Rostov's is a situation in which we could all find ourselves: feeling overwhelmed and restricted by our circumstances. But when faced with such a daunting inevitability, all we need to do is consult the Count. In his grace, you can find your very own resolve to "master your circumstances." Towles will remind you that, as Montaigne says, "the surest sign of wisdom is constant cheerfulness." Constructed with aptly elegant language, this ever-capable and suave protagonist will remind you that confinement is only a frame of mind.

James Welch with Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*

An account of myth-busting and movie-making that helps you understand why, in the words of the bumper sticker, "Custer had it coming." (Mackey Luffman)

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*

According to Amazon.com, "In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for Northern and Western cities, in search of a better life." Andrew Zibart '71 writes that you should read this book because "it's fascinating.... Never knew there were actually two Bibles (one for white folks, one for black)." (Andrew Zibart '71)

Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*

A look at the loss of diversity, its effects, and some solutions. (Tamara Berthel)

Simon Winchester, *Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded, August 27, 1883*

The largest volcanic eruption to hit humankind during the 1800s is only part of a complex story involving the lucrative European spice trade, tsunamis that reverberated around the planet dozens of times over, and possibly the genesis of radical Islam, which defines much of the present global political scene. (Steve Smail)

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*

In a book which is less an autobiography than a cultural, scientific, and political history of the times in which he lived, Adams describes changes during his life and explains what one must

do to be successful in the rapidly changing modern world. Adams is the grandson and great-grandson of American presidents. (Steve Robins)

Tamar Adler, *An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace*

Julia Sullivan '01 describes this book as “a modern-day home economics that speaks to cooking and eating seasonally and sustainably ‘with economy and grace.’” She recommends it in order “to encourage the younger generation to explore food issues and to think about the cost of food” as well as to “bring them back to the kitchen and the table.” (Julia Sullivan '01)

Natalie Angier, *The Beauty of the Beastly*

A book of essays about organisms on which we do not normally dwell, divided into seven chapters: “Loving,” “Slithering,” “Dancing,” “Dying,” “Adapting,” “Healing,” and “Creating.” (Tamara Berthel)

Aimee Bender, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*

In this recent novel, Bender imagines that her narrator, Rose Edelstein, can taste the feelings that were present as everything she eats was created. This magical realist LA tale is at turns quirky, engaging and funny. (Freya Sachs)

Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*

After interviewing scientists in a number of fields, Bryson wrote this engaging overview of scientific understanding of our world, intended for the general reader. His framework follows the history of the earth, but along the way he touches on fields like quantum physics and astronomy as well as the natural sciences.

(Steve Slovenski and Ann Wheeler)

Italo Calvino, *Cosmicomics*

Amazon.com calls these inter-related short stories “enchanted stories about the evolution of the universe, with characters that are fashioned from mathematical formulae and cellular structures.” (Richard Swor '09)

Sean Carroll, *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson Leads Us to the Edge of a New World*

This is a great review of the discovery of the Higgs Boson. The author describes what the silly thing is, its scientific importance, and the extremely protracted and costly search for it. (Will Mason '85)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

In Rachel Carson’s seminal environmental text, she explores issues with DDT and its environmental impact. This book, scientifically fascinating and intriguingly written, helped launch the environmental movement. (Freya Sachs)

Ha-Joon Chang, *Economics: The User’s Guide*

Unlike the authors of *Freakonomics* (also on this list), Chang is adamant that economics is not a study of everything. He delivers an engaging and concise description of a modern economy.

This book is an excellent introduction to different schools of economic thought and to why some countries are rich and others are poor. (Bill Wilson)

Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss*
Nonfiction, but so fascinating it reads like fiction.

[The Home and the World by Rabindranath Tagore](#): A rich Bengali noble lives happily until a radical revolutionary appears.

[The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams](#): Earth is demolished to make way for a Hyperspatial Express Route. Don't panic.

[One Thousand and One Nights Anon](#): A Persian king's new bride tells tales to stall post-coital execution.

[The Sorrows of Young Werther by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#) : Werther loves Charlotte, but she's already engaged. Woe is he!

[Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie](#): The children of poor Hindus and wealthy Muslims are switched at birth.

[Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy by John le Carre](#): Nursery rhyme provides the code names for British spies suspected of treason.

[Cold Comfort Farm by Stella Gibbons](#) : Hilarious satire on doom-laden rural romances. "Something nasty" has been observed in the woodshed.

[The Tale of Genji by Lady Murasaki](#): The life and loves of an emperor's son. And possibly the world's first novel?

[Under the Net by Iris Murdoch](#): A feckless writer has dealings with a canine movie star. Comedy and philosophy combined.

[The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing](#): Lessing considers communism and women's liberation in what Margaret Drabble calls "inner space fiction."

[Eugene Onegin by Alexander Pushkin](#): Passion, poetry and pistols in this verse novel of thwarted love.

[On the Road by Jack Kerouac](#): Beat generation boys aim to "burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles."

[Old Goriot by Honore de Balzac](#): A disillusioning dose of Bourbon Restoration realism. The anti-hero "Rastignac" became a byword for ruthless social climbing.

[The Red and the Black by Stendhal](#): Plebeian hero struggles against the materialism and hypocrisy of French society with his "force diame."

[The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas](#): "One for all and all for one:" the eponymous swashbucklers battle the mysterious Milady.

[Germinal by Emile Zola](#): Written to "germinate" social change, Germinal unflinchingly documents the starvation of French miners.

[The Stranger by Albert Camus](#): Frenchman kills an Arab friend in Algiers and accepts "the gentle indifference of the world."

[The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco](#): Illuminating historical whodunnit set in a 14th-century Italian monastery.

[Oscar and Lucinda by Peter Carey](#): An Australian heiress bets an Anglican priest he can't move a glass church 400km.

[Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys](#): Prequel to Jane Eyre giving moving, human voice to the mad woman in the attic.

[Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll](#): Carroll's ludic logic makes it possible to believe six impossible things before breakfast.

[Catch-22 by Joseph Heller](#): Yossarian feels a homicidal impulse to machine gun total strangers. Isn't that crazy?

[The Trial by Franz Kafka](#): K proclaims he's innocent when unexpectedly arrested. But "innocent of what?"

[Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee](#): Protagonist's "first long secret drink of golden fire" is under a hay wagon.

[Waiting for the Mahatma by RK Narayan](#): Gentle comedy in which a Gandhi-inspired Indian youth becomes an anti-British extremist.

[All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Remarque](#): The horror of the Great War as seen by a teenage soldier.

[Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant by Anne Tyler](#): Three siblings are differently affected by their parents' unexplained separation.

[The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin](#): Profound and panoramic insight into 18th-century Chinese society.

[The Leopard by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa](#): Garibaldi's Redshirts sweep through Sicily, the "jackals" ousting the nobility, or "leopards."

[If On a Winter's Night a Traveller by Italo Calvino](#): International book fraud is exposed in this playful postmodernist puzzle.

[Crash by JG Ballard](#): Former TV scientist preaches "a new sexuality, born from a perverse technology."

[A Bend in the River by VS Naipaul](#): East African Indian Salim travels to the heart of Africa and finds "The world is what it is."

[Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky](#): Boy meets pawnbroker. Boy kills pawnbroker with an axe. Guilt, breakdown, Siberia, redemption.

[Dr. Zhivago by Boris Pasternak](#): Romantic young doctor's idealism is trampled by the atrocities of the Russian Revolution.

[The Cairo Trilogy by Naguib Mahfouz](#): Follows three generations of Cairenes from the First World War to the coup of 1952.

[The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson](#): This famous novella has been adapted for movies, opera and plays.

[Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift](#): Swift's scribulous satire on travellers' tall tales (the Lilliputian Court is really George I's).

[My Name Is Red by Orhan Pamuk](#): A painter is murdered in Istanbul in 1591. Unusually, we hear from the corpse.

[One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez](#): Myth and reality melt magically together in this Colombian family saga.

[London Fields by Martin Amis](#): A failed novelist steals a woman's trashed diaries which reveal she's plotting her own murder.

[The Savage Detectives by Roberto Bolaño](#): Gang of South American poets travel the world, sleep around, challenge critics to duels.

[The Glass Bead Game by Herman Hesse](#): Intellectuals withdraw from life to play a game of musical and mathematical rules.

[The Tin Drum by Gnter Grass](#): Madhouse memories of the Second World War. Key text of European magic realism.

[Austerlitz by WG Sebald](#): Paragraph-less novel in which a Czech-born historian traces his own history back to the Holocaust.

[Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov](#): Scholar's sexual obsession with a prepubescent "nymphet" is complicated by her mother's passion for him.

[The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood](#): After nuclear war has rendered most sterile, fertile women are enslaved for breeding.

[The Catcher in the Rye by JD Salinger](#): Expelled from a "phony" prep school, adolescent anti-hero goes through a difficult phase.

[Underworld by Don DeLillo](#): From baseball to nuclear waste, all late-20th-century American life is here.

[Beloved by Toni Morrison](#): Brutal, haunting, jazz-inflected journey down the darkest narrative rivers of American slavery.

[The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck](#): "Okies" set out from the Depression dustbowl seeking decent wages and dignity.

[Go Tell It On the Mountain by James Baldwin](#): Explores the role of the Christian Church in Harlem's African-American community.

[The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera](#): A doctor's infidelities distress his wife. But if life means nothing, it can't matter.

[The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark](#): A meddling teacher is betrayed by a favorite pupil who becomes a nun.

[The Voyeur by Alain Robbe-Grillet](#): Did the watch salesman kill the girl on the beach? If so, who heard?

[Nausea by Jean-Paul Sartre](#): A historian becomes increasingly sickened by his existence, but decides to muddle on.

[The Rabbit books by John Updike](#): A former high school basketball star is unsatisfied by marriage, fatherhood and sales jobs.

[The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain](#): A boy and a runaway slave set sail on the Mississippi, away from Antebellum "civilisation."

[The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle](#): A drug addict chases a ghostly dog across the midnight moors.

[The House of Mirth by Edith Wharton](#): Lily Bart craves luxury too much to marry for love. Scandal and sleeping pills ensue.

[The Warden by Anthony Trollope](#): "Of all novelists in any country, Trollope best understands the role of money," said WH Auden.

[Les Miserables by Victor Hugo](#): An ex-convict struggles to become a force for good, but it ends badly.

[Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis](#): An uncommitted history lecturer clashes with his pompous boss, gets drunk and gets the girl.

[The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler](#): "Dead men are heavier than broken hearts" in this hardboiled crime noir.

[Clarissa by Samuel Richardson](#): Epistolary adventure whose heroine's bodice is savagely unlaced by the brothel-keeping Robert Lovelace.

[A Dance to the Music of Time by Anthony Powell](#): Twelve-book saga whose most celebrated character wears "the wrong kind of overcoat."

[Suite Francaise by Irene Nemirovsky](#): Published 60 years after their author was gassed, these two novellas portray city and village life in Nazi-occupied France.

[Atonement by Ian McEwan](#): Puts the "c" word in the classic English country house novel.

[Life: a User's Manual by Georges Perec](#): The jigsaw puzzle of lives in a Parisian apartment block. Plus empty rooms.

[Tom Jones by Henry Fielding](#) : Thigh-thwacking yarn of a foundling boy sewing his wild oats before marrying the girl next door.

[Frankenstein by Mary Shelley](#): Human endeavours "to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" have tragic consequences.

[Cranford by Elizabeth Gaskell](#): Northern villagers turn their bonnets against the social changes accompanying the industrial revolution.

[The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins](#): Hailed by TS Eliot as "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels."

[Ulysses by James Joyce](#): Modernist masterpiece reworking of Homer with humour. Contains one of the longest "sentences" in English literature: 4,391 words.

[Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert](#): Buying the lies of romance novels leads a provincial doctor's wife to an agonising end.

[A Passage to India by EM Forster](#): A false accusation exposes the racist oppression of British rule in India.

[1984 by George Orwell](#): In which Big Brother is even more sinister than the TV series it inspired.

[Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne](#): Samuel Johnson thought Sterne's bawdy, experimental novel was too odd to last. Pah!

[The War of the Worlds by HG Wells](#): Bloodsucking Martian invaders are wiped out by a dose of the sniffles.

[Scoop by Evelyn Waugh](#): Waugh based the hapless junior reporter in this journalistic farce on former Telegraph editor Bill Deedes.

[Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy](#) : Sexual double standards are held up to the cold, Wessex light in this rural tragedy.

[Brighton Rock by Graham Greene](#): A seaside sociopath mucks up murder and marriage in Greene's novel.

[The Code of the Woosters by PG Wodehouse](#): A scrape-prone toff and pals are suavely manipulated by his gentleman's gentleman.

[Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte](#): Out on the winding, windy moors Cathy and Heathcliff become each other's "souls." Then he leaves.

[David Copperfield by Charles Dickens](#): Debt and deception in Dickens's semi-autobiographical Bildungsroman crammed with cads, creeps and capital fellows.

[Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe](#): A slave trader is shipwrecked but finds God, and a native to convert, on a desert island.

[Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen](#): Every proud posh boy deserves a bratty, prejudiced girl.

[Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes](#): Picaresque tale about quinquagenarian gent on a skinny horse tilting at windmills.

[Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf](#): Septimus's suicide doesn't spoil our heroine's stream-of-consciousness party.

[Disgrace by JM Coetzee](#): An English professor in post-apartheid South Africa loses everything after seducing a student.

[Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte](#): Poor and obscure and plain as she is, Mr. Rochester wants to marry her. Illegally.

[In Search of Lost Time by Marcel Proust](#): Seven-volume meditation on memory, featuring literature's most celebrated lemony cake.

[Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad](#): "The conquest of the earth," said Conrad, "is not a pretty thing."

[The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James](#): An American heiress in Europe "affronts her destiny" by marrying an adulterous egoist.

[Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy](#): Tolstoy's doomed adulteress grew from a daydream of "a bare exquisite aristocratic elbow."

[Moby Dick by Herman Melville](#): Monomaniacal Captain Ahab seeks vengeance on the white whale that ate his leg.

[Middlemarch by George Eliot](#): "One of the few English novels written for grown-up people," said Virginia Woolf.

It is recommended that parents/guardians review and approve any selections prior to student reading. There are many websites available recommending and suggesting a variety of books for young adults of all ages.