A Guide to Summer Reading

Upper School 2010

In building this list of suggested books, we have sought to make our selections diverse and eclectic. Faculty members have contributed books they have loved, books that inspired them to read and keep reading. We hope you will browse through our brochure and talk to your friends, your parents, and to us about books. Perhaps most of all, we hope you will enter and enjoy the wide world of reading.

( Needless to say, you may not choose to re-read selections you chose last summer. What fun would that be?)

In preparation for English class:

Rising ninth graders are required to read The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger and one other book from our brochure of suggested titles.

Rising tenth graders are required to read The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald and one other book from our brochure of suggested titles.

Rising eleventh and twelfth graders are required to read one book from our brochure of suggested titles; they are also required to read one book specific to their junior-senior elective assignment. (This title will come in a summer mailing.)

In addition, this summer there is a required book for history class:

Students enrolling in Modern World History (9th Grade)

Read one of the following:

Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter by Adeline Yen Mah
“Adeline Yen Mah returns to her roots to paint an authentic portrait of twentieth-century, World War II China as well as to tell the story of her painful childhood and her courage and ultimate triumph over despair.”

Gandhi: His Life and Message for World by Louis Fischer
Although an assassin’s bullet ended Mahatma Gandhi’s life prematurely in 1948, his life and teachings remain a brilliant example today. This moving biography tells the whole story of the great man – from his boyhood days in India through his experiences in South Africa, where he worked to achieve legal equality for Indians, to the exciting years in India. (from the book jacket)
Students enrolling in Twentieth Century World History (10th grade)

Read one of the following:

**Hiroshima** by John Hersey
On August 6, 1945 Hiroshima was destroyed by the first atom bomb ever dropped on a city. This book, John Hersey’s journalistic masterpiece, tells what happened on that day. Told through the memories of survivors, this timeless, powerful and compassionate has become a classic that stirs the conscience of humanity. *(New York Times)*

**One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich** by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Signet Classics)
From the icy blast of reveille through the sweet release of sleep, Ivan Denisovich endures. A common carpenter, he is one of millions viciously imprisoned for countless years on baseless charges, sentenced to the waking nightmares of the Soviet work camps in Siberia…This powerful novel of fact is a scathing indictment of Communist tyranny, and an eloquent affirmation of the human spirit. *(from the book jacket)*

Students enrolling in United States History Survey (11th grade)

Read the following:

**George Washington: The Founding Father** by Paul Johnson
Writing for the *Eminent Lives* series of biographies, Johnson concisely describes Washington's life from his youth in Virginia, through the American Revolution and his eight years as president.

Students enrolling in AP United States History

Read the following:

**Founding Brothers** by Joseph Ellis
An illuminating study of the intertwined lives of the founders of the American republic- John Adams, Aaron Burr, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington. During the 1790s, which Ellis calls the most decisive decade in our nation's history, the greatest statesmen of their generation - and perhaps any- came together to define the new republic and direct its course for the coming centuries. Ellis focuses on six Discrete moments that exemplify the most crucial issues facing the fragile new nation . . . *(from the book jacket).*

*FACULTY SUGGESTIONS FOR SUMMER READING*
Cindy Douglass

The Broken Cord by Michael Dorris
In The Broken Cord, Michael Dorris tells the true story of how, at the age of 26, a single graduate student and founder of the Native American Studies Department at Dartmouth College adopted a young Indian boy with developmental problems, hoping to cure him with love and care. What Dorris discovered was the devastation of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a birth defect that plagued the troubled Native American culture in the 1980s. This is an account of a dedicated single father who struggled to raise his child alone and to understand the reality of a disease that few knew much about at that time. Over the course of the story, Dorris, part Native American himself, learns to accept what love can and cannot do, and to better understand “his” people and himself. Winner of the 1989 National Book Critics Circle Award.

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger
The novel Peace Like a River by Minnesota writer Leif Enger reads like an old-fashioned romance of the American cowboy west. Its protagonist, an eleven-year old boy who believes in miracles, finds himself on a cross-country search for his outlaw brother who has been charged with murder. The prose style sometimes reminds you of beautiful poetry but it alternates with exciting chapters of adventures that involve an FBI agent and plenty of gun-play. A challenging read, but one that will haunt your imagination.

The Portable Edgar Allan Poe by Edgar Allan Poe
Before there was Simon Baker, before there was Sherlock Holmes, there was C. Auguste Dupin, the clever detective from the mysteries of Edgar Allan Poe. Included in this collection of stories are the well-known "Tell Tale Heart," "The Black Cat" and "The Cask of Amontillado" but also the wonderful mysteries of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Masque of the Red Death." Poe is a local legend and one of the most brilliant short story writers of all time. Read some of these stories and then go tour the Poe house in Richmond late one evening. Have fun!

Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver
What would you do if someone dropped a baby off in your car at a rest stop and asked you to keep it? Well, Taylor Greer, a young woman on the road to independence and adventure, agrees and this is the story of how she and her new charge, “Turtle,” end up in Arizona taking care of each other. Publisher’s Weekly called the book “a marvelous affirmation of risk-taking, commitment and everyday miracles.” The Bean Trees is a fun read, a beautiful tale of unconditional love in unusual circumstances.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie
1989, when Salman Rushdie published his fourth novel, The Satanic Verses, he created controversy in the Muslim world. The Supreme Leader of Iran banned the book immediately and issued a fatwa against its author, a religious edict calling for his death. While Rushdie was in
hiding, he responded to the attack as artists often do- with his pen. In 1991 he published *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*—political satire disguised as a children’s book. Like *Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz* and all of Roald Dahl’s books, this tale of Haroun and his storytelling father is funny! But while you are laughing at the entertaining verbal humor, the plight of the depressed storyteller, “The Shah of Blah,” and of his fellow citizens, who belch with melancholy after eating “glumfish” from the “mournful sea,” you are actually reading a compelling defense of art, of freedom of expression and of stories, a powerful attack on those who seek to oppress or disparage the role of the storyteller in society. If you enjoyed Dahl’s hilarious *BFG*, you will enjoy this fantasy meant to be read with the heart of a child and the mind of an adult.

* Especially recommended for students signed up for *Contemporary World Literature* in the fall.

**Pete Follansbee**

*After Dark* by Haruki Murakami
This novel is a wonderful read, as Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami shepherds his reader through seven hours of a Tokyo night. Over these hours, we come to know and care about the lives of his odd and wonderfully human characters. The novel begins at a late-night Denny’s where we meet 19-year-old protagonist, Mari Asai, who is engaged in conversation by a twenty-something musician, Tetsuya, who once had a crush on Mari’s beautiful older sister, Eri. Their friendship develops as we travel through Murakami’s city night and through its quiet mysteries that include a “love hotel,” a dark predator, and a fascinating limbo in which sister Eri seems imprisoned. We also meet peripheral characters that we come to know and care about. A quick read, this novel was my favorite of two summers ago. Pick it up! I think you’ll enjoy it.

*The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley
Naturalist and essayist Loren Eiseley is not a writer whose work should fall through the cracks to be lost to the past, and this collection of his best essays should help ensure that he and his work remains vital and alive. If you’re interested in science, nature, and speculation on our being and place in natural history and the cosmos, then Eiseley reads well and easily, his nonfiction narratives capturing the miracles and mysteries of man and the natural world.

*For The Time Being* by Annie Dillard
Few books have ever tossed me around through history, nature, and philosophy, yet left me so enlightened and oddly grounded than Dillard’s nonfiction meditation on just about everything under the sun. More specifically, Dillard titles her chapter sections, *Birth, Sand, China, Clouds, Numbers, Israel, Encounters, Thinker, Evil*, and *Now*, and in so doing, shows us places, events, statistics, philosophers, and philosophies that allow us to sense both the grandeur of existence and our own smallness. If you like history, religion, nature, and philosophy, and if you like thinking about where we fit into all this, then this narrative by Annie Dillard will toss you around, and then set you down—somehow delightfully changed. And this is what reading should do.

*The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell
This artfully written science fiction novel traces the journey and aftermath of a twenty-first century expedition to the distant planet of Rakhat. Upon hearing the proof of extraterrestrial life via a listening station in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, a varied group of “agnostics, true believers, and misfits” embarks on a journey to find the voices behind the singing that has traveled over light years of darkness and space. Through wonderful characters and masterful storytelling, the reader learns what we might find when we search for being beyond the boundaries of our own world and galaxy.

Far From the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy
In his novel, Thomas Hardy transports his reader Far From the Madding Crowd, and places him in the English countryside of shepherd Gabriel Oak and maid Bathsheba Everdene. But when Bathsheba inherits a farm of her own, Hardy’s pastoral world is turned upside down, as passion and power storm across the landscape of Hardy’s richly textured narrative.

Roger Hailes

Joseph Andrews by Henry Fielding
Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews, one of my all-time favorites, features the classic friendship of Parson Adams, an Anglican clergyman, and Joseph Andrews, a young, reckless, but good-hearted youth. It’s a picaresque story of their travels through the English countryside. I would love to talk with anyone who reads this book because I know you’ll love it.

Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence
Sons and Lovers, by D. H. Lawrence, is set near Nottingham, England and concerns itself with the relationship between a boy and his mother. Later his world expands and he includes a young girl in a romantic relationship. This novel should be read first before tackling other Lawrence novels.

As You Like It by William Shakespeare
As You Like It, Shakespeare's romantic comedy, teaches young men the proper way to love. If you read just one romantic comedy, this is the one to read. The play includes a wonderful debate concerning the glory of country life versus the life at court.

The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy
Thomas Hardy’s Mayor of Casterbridge is the best and most suspenseful of Hardy's many novels. It’s a great comeback, or a feel-good, story. Hardy makes his readers really care about and understand his characters.

Lewis Lawson

Martin Eden by Jack London
This novel, on the surface a pseudo-love story, closely examines the values of social classes and that which is superficial. But what makes this book so powerful is the examination it gives to what makes good literature. Excitement, combined with insights into the subtleties of good
writing, illuminate a wonderful read for those seeking something a little different from the typical Jack London nature story.

**McTeague** by Frank Norris
This naturalistic novel demonstrates how man is not always in control of his destiny, but is often a victim of it. The greed, jealousy, revenge and brutality make this a great work for younger readers to gain a glimpse into 19th century California and to envision the deterministic aspects of naturalism as a style of writing.

**Tobacco Road** by Erskine Caldwell
This work describes the squalid life of degradation lived by backcountry sharecroppers in Georgia. Deterministic in theme, it is powerful, raw, and somewhat prurient, but it gives an incredible view into the life of poor and oppressed people. Just as the land is worn out, so too is its hopeless hero. These hapless characters, both comical and degenerate, create a lasting impression on the reader. *Tobacco Road* is an important piece for those who wish to know more about the ‘ole’ South other than the life of chivalry depicted in works like *Gone with the Wind*.

**One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest** by Ken Kesey
A very entertaining novel, Kesey creates an analogy with how “the power structure” dehumanizes modern man by relating a bizarre story of events in a psychiatric ward in Oregon. Randle Patrick McMurphy, a wild Irishman, creates circumstances that result in his being transferred from a maximum security prison to a hospital. Here he challenges the sadistic control of “Big Nurse.” What follows is a story of transformation from hope to passivity (much like the parallels of “Big Brother” on the individual in society) through the characters of Chief “Broom” and McMurphy.

**The Bridge of San Luis Rey** by Thornton Wilder
Wilder examines the question of whether man lives by plan or by accident through the studies of Brother Juniper, a Franciscan monk who seeks parallels into the lives of five people who fell to their death when a bridge collapses in 1714 in Lima, Peru. Through his examination of those people’s lives, Brother Juniper develops an interesting perspective on the age-old question of fate vs. free will. Although he and his book are burned at the stake for heresy, Wilder uses Brother Juniper’s one remaining copy that has survived to discover some fundamental truths about human relationships. This book is recommended for the mature, sensitive reader.

**Mil Norman-Risch**

**Interpreter of Maladies** by Jhumpa Lahiri
In the sparest of prose Lahiri writes stories that feel like poems. I don’t know how she does it. This book is a collection of stories about characters caught in the most ordinary moments where cultural identity and personal history suddenly clash. In her detailed renderings of isolated moments Lahiri brings the reader to some place where the absurd and the tragic meet quietly and intimately in the lives of Indian-Americans.

**White Teeth** by Zadie Smith
This book is like an audiotape. I could hear the inflections, accents, even pitch and tone of every line of dialogue as though these were real voices. Set in North London, the book presents families of mixed ethnicities and follows their stories from the 1970s through the mid-1990s. The wild assortment of characters, the fast-paced plot and prose, the carnivalesque irreverence provided me a lively, memorable way to think about globalism, terrorism, post-industrialization, post-colonialism, and the ever more fluid categories of identity, history, and culture. The book is funny, poignant, smart, ambitious, and sometimes mean.

*Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
Reading this book with a narrator caught in a tight situation with a zebra, an orangutan, a hyena, and a 450-pound tiger kept me thinking a lot about large animals. While the book is slow-paced and often discursive, the plot actually involves literal life and death struggles and feats of survival. The scenery, characters and conflict hardly vary for most of the book, but rather than being bored by what might feel static, I found myself musing and reflecting. The book is easy to read, often suspenseful.

*Saturday* by Ian McEwan
Written by popular contemporary novelist Ian McEwan, *Saturday* is a fast-paced suspenseful novel that takes place in a single day. The main character, a neurosurgeon, has planned a day culminating with a dinner to celebrate the arrival of his daughter who will be coming home from Paris. What happens to interrupt the ordinary weekend preparations of a London citizen against the backdrop of a mass demonstration against the Iraq war includes a chance encounter with an aggressive man who violates the day's equilibrium and threatens his entire family. The book is a fast read.

*The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai
Set in the 1980s in both New York City and in the Nepalese region of India at the foot of the Himalayas, this novel reminds us that the dynamics of globalism—mass consumerism, post-colonial displacement, reactionary unrest—are forces that no one escapes. Even what may seem mere quirks of personality—a retired judge’s pet names for his dog, or a middle-aged Indian woman’s fondness for Jane Austen—might be shaped entirely by history. Desai captures for her reader the pithy essence of place: the monsoon wetness of the Indian village, the subterranean anonymity of the New York City basement lodgings where Bijou and others live windowlessly, afraid of being seen, but also longing to be seen and known. With only the sparsest commentary, the novel speeds along from longing to loss as a rather quick, thick read devoid of device. Where the story ends is more like life than art: it’s complicated.

*Linda Rouse*

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou recounts in humorous and moving detail her early years growing up poor and black in Stamps, Arkansas. Whether she is writing about false teeth flying out of a preacher's mouth during a sermon or her efforts (successful) at getting fired by a nasty white woman, Angelou dazzles the reader with vivid stories recreating her
childhood and teenage years. Since each chapter dramatizes a separate incident, you can read this delightful autobiography in installments.

**New Boy** by Julian Houston

*New Boy* is a semi-autobiographical novel by Richmond native Julian Houston. Houston, now a circuit court judge in Massachusetts, chronicles the experiences of Rob Garret, the first black student at Draper, a northern boarding school. Set in the late 1950s, Rob struggles with grades, sees prejudice at Draper, encounters black militants in Harlem, experiences Jim Crow racism, and struggles to change the world in which he lives. A fast, intriguing, enlightening read.

**China Boy** by Gus Lee

*China Boy* is the story of seven-year-old Kai Ting, the youngest child (but the only son) of Chinese immigrant parents. Set in the Panhandle District of San Francisco, Kai’s challenges include the death of his mother, his father’s remarriage to a white woman, and daily beatings by neighborhood bullies. Kai is funny and resilient. I found myself rooting for him.

**1984** by George Orwell.

Orwell’s *1984* offered a vision of a dystopian society completely controlled by the now-ubiquitous concept of Big Brother. Written nearly 60 years ago, some might think the novel lost currency once the title year passed; however, the novel’s topics still resonate today. The 1949 novel depicts a society controlled by Big Brother and the “Inner Circle.” The novel’s narrator, Winston Smith, detests the government and longs to join the resistance. He meets and falls for a woman named Julia (a crime in the Oceanic society). The remainder of the novel addresses the possibility of rebellion in a society where individualism is a “thoughtcrime.” An excellent, thought-provoking read.

**Oroonoko** by Aphra Behn

Widely considered to be one of the first pieces of writing to fit the characteristics of what would later be called "fiction," *Oroonoko* follows the early life in Africa (as well as the enslavement and subsequent experiences in slavery in what later became Surinam) of the title character, Oroonoko, an African prince. A bit melodramatic and gory in parts (especially at the end), Behn’s novel continues to hold significance within British literature as authored by one of the first women to earn her living through her pen, as well as one of the first to write about enslaved Africans so that readers would feel sympathy for the increasing number of Africans stolen from their homes and the conditions they were forced to endure in slavery. If you are interested in the rise of the novel, the rise of literature by women, or the early circumstances of slavery, *Oroonoko* makes a fabulous read.

**Ted Shaffner**

**Into the Wild** by John Krakauer

In 1992, Chris McCandless sold all his possessions and drove to Alaska where he walked into the wilderness north of Denali. He never returned. This book chronicles his journey, piecing together his diary and other clues gathered from the scene of his death. For some, McCandless
was a fool, and for others, a modern-day Thoreau. In either case, it’s an absorbing and philosophical look into our relationship with the wild.

*As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner
This is a novel about the deep South. The members of the Bundren family have promised to take the body of their mother to the town where she wanted to be buried. The story is told from multiple points of view with some extraordinarily vivid characters. It’s a complex, funny, and emotional ride. Once you get the hang of it, you’ll find this a truly rewarding book to read.

*A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail* by Bill Bryson
In 1998, Bryson and his old college buddy set out to hike the Appalachian Trail. The characters he meets (including “Chicken John,” who is legendary for always being lost on the trail) provide most of the comedy, but the book also benefits from Bryson’s deep introspection about a vanishing part of American culture. This is a good book for those who love the outdoors and also like a good laugh.

*The Boilerplate Rhino: Nature in the Eye of the Beholder* by David Quammen
With the gifts of an expert storyteller, Quammen writes 26 essays (originally published in *Outside* Magazine) on such diverse topics as “Bumblebee Economics,” the terminal velocity of cats in free-fall, a passion for snakes (and rattlesnakes in particular), as well as ruminations on Thoreau and Robert Penn Warren. Quammen has a gift for making even the history of American lawns so intriguing that it’s hard to put this book down.

*The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* by Alan Watts
What if everything you’ve based your life on is an illusion? What if who you think you are isn’t who you are at all? When I first read this book, I felt like Wylie Coyote running off a cliff and realizing there is nothing under his feet. If you like eastern philosophy and aren’t afraid to rediscover the underpinnings of your life, it’s time for you to read The Book.

*Kitt Squire*

*A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway
This is Ernest Hemingway's collection of vignettes on life in Paris during the 1920s. This was a time in Hemingway's life when he was quite literally a starving artist, living off what little income his journalism generated while he taught himself to write fiction. Out of this time in Hemingway's life came the beginnings of many of his most famous novels, and what's special about *A Moveable Feast*, as Hemingway's musings on life in Paris and on the craft of writing itself are rich with a detail and an honesty that motivates the mind to create. is the glimpse it gives readers into the mind of a talented author as he embarked on his writing career. Any writer struggling to find inspiration would do well to read

*Wonder Boys* by Michael Chabon
Michael Chabon's *Wonder Boys* tells the story of a slightly confused adventure that takes place over the course of only a few days. Involving a burnt out college professor, his pregnant
mistress, a compulsive liar from his fiction class, a dead dog, a tuba, a drag queen, an antique Joe DiMaggio jersey, and a dented Ford Galaxie, this story is a hilarious and entertaining look at academia and the complicated twists and turns our lives take.

**East of Eden** by John Steinbeck
Reflecting on the accomplishment of the ambitious *East of Eden*, John Steinbeck said: "I think everything else I have written has been, in a sense, practice for this." This Nobel Prize-winning novel tells the complicated, dark, and endlessly fascinating story of two families: the Trasks and the Hamiltons. If you enjoy reading and sorting out plots, you'll delight in tracking the history of these two families and discovering the biblical references that exist throughout this novel. An allegory of the story of Cain and Abel, *East of Eden* is a beautiful exploration of the darkness of human nature.

**Vlastik Svab**

**Cold Mountain** by Charles Frazier
*Cold Mountain* is the story of Inman, a deserter from the Confederate Army, and his long and arduous journey from the front lines of the Civil War back to his home in the Blue Ridge of western North Carolina. His motivation is Ada, a former Charleston belle who is trying to survive the war by managing her father’s farm. While their love is young and tender, Inman’s desire to see Cold Mountain again helps him triumph over epic battles (including the infamous “crater” of Petersburg), thieves, Union soldiers, and other unsettling characters he meets along the way. Frazier’s narrative contains many tales of fascinating characters, re-creating the Carolinas during the Civil War and the trials those people faced.

**On the Road** by Jack Kerouac
Originally type-written over a period of three weeks on a 120-foot-long scroll of paper, *On the Road* is the seminal work of the Beat Generation. The novel details several cross-country trips made by the narrator, Sal Paradise, in the company of his speed-loving, girl-chasing, adventure-seeking effusive pal Dean Moriarty. Based on several road trips made by Kerouac and friends in the early 1950’s, the novel uses stream-of-consciousness writing to expand on the restlessness of the Beats. The novel, which Bob Dylan claims changed his life, is one of the most influential American works of the 20th century.

**Cat’s Cradle** by Kurt Vonnegut
Kurt Vonnegut is a master of irony, satire, and wit. His novels highlight the idiocies of the events of the 20th century, including World War II and the development of nuclear weapons. *Cat’s Cradle* is a work of science fiction, of sorts, that follows the children of Felix Hoenikker, a fictitious Nobel-prize winning physicist who has created ice-nine—a molecular alternative to liquid water. The scientific, religious, and political battles that ensue over this monumental invention result in catastrophe. Vonnegut’s unique misanthropy contributes to an amusing and frightening read.

**Z. Bart Thornton**
**Let Us Now Praise Famous Men** by James Agee
In the late 1930s Agee and the photographer Walker Evans were sent on assignment for *Fortunate Magazine* to document the lives of tenant farmers in rural Alabama. Instead of simply turning out an article, Agee created a masterpiece that is part sociology, part manifesto. “If I could do it, I’d do no writing at all here. [The book] would be photographs, fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron.” Wrestling with a desire to capture the lives of the families he chronicles, Agee produces a masterpiece like no other I know. I dare you to read it.

**The New York Trilogy** by Paul Auster
*The New York Trilogy* is a series of three short stories—“City of Glass,” “Ghosts,” and “The Locked Room.” Post-modern detective fiction. Mysteries about mystery. Meditations on identity and reality. Auster draws on the conventions of traditional detective stories while experimenting with irony and fragmentation. *The Trilogy* is a page-turner that will have you trying to assemble pieces of Auster’s intricate narrative puzzle until the last page—and perhaps even after you’ve closed the book.

**Spartina** by James Casey
Winner of the National Book Award, this novel focuses on a Rhode Island fisherman named Dick Pierce who’s preoccupied by his latest project: building a 50-foot boat in his backyard. A graduate of St. Albans and Harvard (and currently a professor at the University of Virginia), Casey does a fantastic job capturing the nuances and complexities of a working-class New Englander and his encounters with the world around him. I also recommend another of Casey’s novels, *The Half-Life of Happiness*, a sprawling tale of an extended family here in Virginia.

**The Closed Circle** by Jonathan Coe
A follow-up to *The Rotters’ Club* -- Coe’s brilliant, ambitious, and uproarious study of young Britons growing up in the factory town of Birmingham in the 1970s – this novel unfolds against the “backdrop of Britain’s ongoing racial and social tensions” in the last years of the 20th century. While it helps to have read *The Rotters’ Club* first, it’s not essential; Coe helpfully includes a synopsis of what happens in that “prequel.” You might also want to check out Coe’s newly-published *The Rain Before It Falls*.

**The Names** by Don DeLillo
Some of you know DeLillo for his National Book Award-winning *White Noise*, a dark comedy about the travails of an eccentric family upended by a natural disaster. *The Names* is a lyrical novel about American expatriates – artists, spies, and entrepreneurs – living in Greece in the 1980s. A gorgeous rumination on classical landscapes, imaginary realities, and postmodern terrorism, this novel is alternately comic and tragic; it’s unforgettable.

**LIBRARY**

**Melanie Barker**

**Parable of the Sower** by Octavia Butler
Lauren Olamina, an empath who can feel the pain of others like it was her own, is forced to flee her protected community in the Los Angeles suburbs when a violent band of scavengers attacks in the night. Armed with minimal supplies and a few survivors from her former walled community, Olamina leads this vulnerable pack northward in hopes of finding a new life and new faith in a land devoid of humanity.

_A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius_ by Dave Eggers
By the time Dave Eggers is 22, both of his parents have died from unrelated cancers within weeks of each other and Eggers is now the unofficial guardian for his eight-year-old brother Christopher. At a time when most 22-year-olds are attending their last college parties and making their post-college plans, Eggers finds himself playing the role of “single mom” while trying to make a name for himself in the media world through the founding of the now defunct _Might Magazine_ and the successful literary magazine _McSweeney's_ (http://www.mcsweeneyes.net). A powerful and refreshingly original memoir!

_A Simple As Snow_ by Gregory Galloway
Anna Cayne is a mystery. She dresses all black, spends her time composing the obituaries of everyone in her small town, litters her bedroom floor with biographies of Ambrose Bierce and Houdini, and works by Plath, Lovecraft, and Camus, and directs her attention and all the affection a Goth girl can muster toward the unnamed narrator of this book. When Anna disappears with barely a trace (her black dress is found by a hole in the frozen lake) everyone assumes she’s dead—except her boyfriend. Full of secret codes and characters with questionable pasts, this novel is guaranteed to haunt you long after you’ve turned the last page. For more on _As Simple as Snow_, visit: http://www.asimpleassnow.com/.

_Liars and Saints_ by Maile Meloy
Meloy’s novel, which chronicles five generations of the Santerre family, begins with the marriage of Teddy, an American fighter pilot during World War II, and Yvette, a French-Canadian woman with a strict Catholic upbringing and an unforgettable over-the-shoulder smile. Years later when their sixteen-year-old daughter Margot gives birth to a baby boy in a French convent, Yvette decides to pass the child off as her own. _Liars and Saints_ documents in economical yet vivid prose how decisions of one generation can affect others that follow.

_Black Swan Green_ by David Mitchell
Thirteen-year-old Jason Taylor lives in Black Swan Green, the most boring village in all of England. In this town, he publishes poems under the pseudonym Eliot Bolivar in the local paper, watches as tensions mount between his mother and father, and struggles to gain rank in his school’s social hierarchy, an impossible feat for a kid with a stammering problem. This coming-of-age novel relays the hardships of growing up socially awkward, virtually friendless, and helpless in a world where adults make all the rules.

_A llen Chamberlain

_Mister Pip_ by Lloyd Jones
In 1991, thirteen-year-old Matilda's Pacific island home is caught in the violence of a civil war. After all the teachers are evacuated, Mr. Watts, the only white man left on the island, brings the children back to school with his reading aloud of *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. Although the children know nothing of Victorian London, Dickens captivates them. The final confrontation between the villagers and the rebels is heartbreaking (so be prepared). In the midst of this terror and deprivation, Matilda finds that survival can depend on the power of storytelling and the strength of imagination.

**Persepolis** by Marjane Satrapi
In her autobiography, Satrapi tells of her life growing up during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War. A spirited girl with Iron Maiden and Kim Wilde posters in her room, she rebels against the fundamentalism invading her life; she weeps as playmates are killed by bombs and beloved Uncle Anoosh is imprisoned and executed by the Islamic regime. In nuanced black and white drawings, Satrapi not only sweeps the reader into the tumult of Iranian history but also into the life of an extraordinary girl and her family.

**Autobiography of a Face** by Lucy Grealy
At the age of nine, Lucy is diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma, a virulent cancer with only a five percent survival rate. Her memoir recounts years of chemotherapy and countless operations to remove the cancer and reconstruct her jaw, but the book is more than medical details. It is a meditation on the tyranny of beauty, loneliness, and pain and how Lucy finds resilience in her imagination and writing. You will find yourself handing this book to friends and saying two words: Read it!

**Never Let Me Go** by Kazuo Ishiguro
*My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years.* The opening sentence of the novel introduces us to our narrator and to her mysterious profession. Kathy and her friends Tommy and Ruth are human clones raised to be organ donors when their bodies mature; however, each must care for other donors before completing their own donations ending in death. The book is deeply disturbing (in the best sense) and raises stunning questions: What does it mean to be human? Do clones have souls?

Carolyn LaMontagne

**The Road** by Cormac McCarthy
Years after nuclear war has devastated the country (and possibly the planet), a father and his young son are making their way south, in the hopes of finding food, warmer weather, and community. The landscape is burned and bleak. All of the homes have been scavenged multiple times, and every found can of food is a banquet. The sun is blocked by ash and no plants can grow. Few people have survived, and many of those who have rove the land in vicious gangs. Yet, in the midst of this violence and despair is a father who would do anything to keep his son alive, and a boy who has somehow kept his innocence and humanity. A powerful, finely crafted look at a dark future.

**A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters** by Julian Barnes
With a touch of postmodern flair, Barnes gives us a series of tenuously related stories, beginning with a scathing critique of Noah from the perspective of a woodworm on the Ark, continuing with such gems as the story of a terrorist attack on a cruise ship, an analysis of Gericault’s painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, and a short treatise on the nature of love, and ending with a glimpse of heaven. This is a witty, brilliant, and sometimes odd assortment of stories, ideal for the reader looking for something unconventional.

**Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close** by Jonathan Safran Foer
Nine-year-old Oskar Schell, the quirky, precocious, and inventive narrator of this novel, comes across a mysterious key in his father’s belongings a year after his father’s death in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The novel follows his journey throughout New York, searching for the lock that the key will open and encountering a motley cast of characters along the way, as well as his internal struggle with the loss of his father. This is a story with humor and grief in equal measure; Oskar will make you laugh and will almost certainly break your heart.

**The Book Thief** by Marcus Zusak
How do you tell the story of a young orphan girl living in Nazi Germany, including the scene in which her younger brother dies, without falling into the traps of melodrama or sentimentality? Marcus Zusak does it by having Death narrate. Zusak’s Death is omniscient, darkly humorous, and exhausted, and his take on the war and on the life of young Liesel provides a whole new perspective on this time in history, one that focuses on life outside of the concentration camps and the ways in which the Nazi party’s hand reached into the lives of the German people. In addition to Liesel and Death, there’s a foster mother who can’t talk without swearing, a Jewish man being hidden in the basement, and a foster brother who is loyal to the Nazi party. This is a book to savor, full of sadness and hope and fascinating characters.

**In Cold Blood** by Truman Capote
On Nov. 15, 1959, in rural Kansas, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith murdered the four members of the Clutter family: a mother, father, and two teenage children. Author Truman Capote, a successful novelist, became obsessed with the story and spent years interviewing the investigators and the killers, gaining their trust and access to their thoughts. This work, the culmination of his research and obsession, reads like a novel. He goes beyond reporting the facts of the crime, and delves into the lives and minds of the two killers. A fascinating nonfiction read for those interested in crime, psychology, or journalism.

**HISTORY**

**Barbara Anderson**

**Cassandra** by Christa Wolf
Wolf, a scholar of classical Greek, and, next to Gunter Grass, the greatest contemporary German writer, reweaves Homer's Iliad from Troy's prophetess' point of view. As the Greeks beleaguer the great city and slaughter its inhabitants, Cassandra remains the unflinching seer of two worlds and two worldviews: that of the victors and that of "the others,” the victims. The former
constructed the histories and philosophies of all subsequent "great civilizations" the latter may be reemerging in current feminist consciousness and its "Cassandran" labors of clearing up the falseness of linear historical thinking and one-dimensional consciousness. A mind-blowing read!

**Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany** by Joel Agee
This is the coming-of-age-story of a young American boy who lived with his family in East Germany as the communist German Democratic Republic was constructed by idealistic anti-fascists, committed Marxists, and ordinary people who had survived total war and destruction. Agee goes to school (when he feels like it), makes friends, and enjoys a remarkably carefree adolescence, while his parents' marriage disintegrates and his stepfather's vision of a more just world is increasingly hemmed-in and stifled.

Neil Weiser

**Last Days of the Sioux Nation** by Robert Utley
This book is a scholarly yet very readable analysis of the conditions and forces leading to the Battle of Wounded Knee, December 29, 1890, an event that marked the end of native American military resistance and which symbolized the final subjugation of the American Indian. Included is a full description of the Ghost Dance Religion and its chief apostle, Wovoka, and a full analysis of the events at Wounded Knee resulting in the deaths of 400 Miniconjou Sioux and their chief, Big Foot.

**Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase of Lincoln's Killer** by James L. Swanson
*Manhunt* chronicles the events from the assassination of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, through the death and postmortem investigation of John Wilkes Booth. It provides detailed accounts of the actions of Booth, David Herold, George Atzerodt, Mary Surratt, and others involved in the plot against Lincoln, as well as those of the host of investigators, military officials, and political leaders in pursuit of the conspirators. Well researched and well written, the book reads like a contemporary mystery, yet conveys its findings in the best traditions of fine historical writing.

**SCIENCE**

Jim Bledsoe

**The River Why** by David James Duncan
This quirky, funny, novel presents a young man’s search for the meaning of life along an Oregon river. In his quest to achieve fly-fishing nirvana, our hero, Gus, meets and is influenced by a series of unlikely teachers. He uncovers personal truths about death, religion, philosophy, love, and living in harmony with nature. You don’t have to be a fisherman to be hooked by this one.

**Ishmael** by Daniel Quinn
Are you a Leaver or a Taker? A newspaper ad “Teacher seeks pupil, must have an earnest desire to save the world” brings the novel’s narrator together with Ishmael, a telepathic gorilla. During the course of the dialog, Ishmael recounts the rise of human civilization, the “Taker” culture and
the “Leaver” culture, and the role of mankind in the environment. Ishmael challenges us all to consider our relationship to the environment and presents a philosophy for approaching global problems.

Ben Greenbaum

Pompeii by Robert Harris
This novel traces the natural events preceding the eruption, as well as various fictitious events involving historical and fictitious characters impacted by the eruption. It’s an interesting and riveting read from all vantage points.

Rebecca Hottman

Basin and Range by John McPhee
In this first book of the series on North American geology Annals of a Former World, John McPhee, a noted journalist and author, travels with geologist Kenneth S. Deffeyes through the breathtaking and inspiring topography of the Basin and Range province of the western United States. Along the way, McPhee expounds on the theory of plate tectonics that revolutionized modern geology in the twentieth century and on the nature of scientific inquiry in general. The prose abounds with imagery of the natural world and insight into the minds of the scientists that bring the geologic past to light. An easy yet very interesting read, and one of my favorite nonfiction books ever.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Chris Little

Driving Over Lemons by Chris Steward
This is one of the funniest books about completely changing your life that I have ever read. It is about an English expatriate who decides to move to a rundown farm in Spain, fix it up, and live a life close to nature. His descriptions of the challenges (scorpions, neighbors) and rewards are some of the best pieces of travel writing from England in years. His wry wit and hilarious situations make for quick and easy reading.

Live to Tell the Tale by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Trying to write an autobiography of your life at the same time you are writing novels, essays, newspaper articles, and university lectures can be a challenge. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the most important writer in Latin America of the twentieth century, pulls it off with grace and charm. For an American reader, this book gives you an insight into a life that is wildly different from your own, and full of things that you only read about in novels. His life is extraordinary, complete with mansions filled with butterflies, with grandmothers who talk to dead people, and with all the stuff of magical realism come alive.

In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez
This historical fiction is based on the lives of normal people who lived through the dictatorship of one of the bloodiest dictators of the twentieth century. It is a love story, a political novel, and a thriller all rolled into one. It was made into a movie with Salma Hayek, and it is an interesting addition to your library because Miguel (and his wife) in our Collegiate cafeteria lived through this same period in the Dominican Republic.

**PERFORMING ARTS**

**Stacy Pfeifer**

*Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd
Lily Owens has been living with her father, an unkind and unforgiving man since her mother was killed when she was only four. Her nanny Rosaleen, a stubborn and severe black woman, is the only friend and companion that Lily has. Rosaleen manages to insult a group of racists in town and is forced to leave. Lily chooses Tiburon, a town from the back of a picture left behind from her mother, and they flee together. *The Secret Life of Bees* is a story of strong women joining together to combine a life of joy and sorrow, love and loss, and guilt and forgiveness.

*Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden
Nitta Sayuri tells the story of her life as a Geisha. She was taken from her home in 1929 when she was only nine years old and sold into slavery. Sayuri enters the Geisha world, working as a slave in the renowned Geisha household in Gion, the Geisha district of Kyoto. Sayuri is chosen to learn the ways of Geisha, mastering dance and music. *Memoirs of a Geisha* is a tale of a young and courageous woman who is forced to survive a life of servitude and then reinvent herself after the tumult of World War II.