

SUMMER READING 2013

In addition to your required reading Kaye Gibbons's Ellen Foster for incoming ninth-graders, F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby for entering tenth-graders; a text that aligns with your fall elective for eleventh- and twelfth-graders you need to choose and read (at least) one of the following books. They will be available at Book Fair in May.

Bowen, Elizabeth. The Death of the Heart.

In this piercing story of innocence betrayed set in the thirties, the orphaned Portia is stranded in the sophisticated and politely treacherous world of her wealthy half-brother's home in London. There she encounters the attractive, carefree cad Eddie. To him, Portia is at once child and woman, and he fears her gushing love. To her, Eddie is the only reason to be alive. But when Eddie follows Portia to a sea-side resort, the flash of a cigarette lighter in a darkened cinema illuminates a stunning romantic betrayal--and sets in motion one of the most moving and desperate flights of the heart in modern literature.

Bradbury, Ray. The Illustrated Man.

That The Illustrated Man has remained in print since being published in 1951 is fair testimony to the universal appeal of Ray Bradbury's work. It is a marvelous, if mostly dark, quilt of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. In an ingenious framework to open and close the book, Bradbury presents himself as a nameless narrator who meets the Illustrated Man--a wanderer whose entire body is a living canvas of exotic tattoos. What's even more remarkable, and increasingly disturbing, is that the illustrations are themselves magically alive, and each proceeds to unfold its own story, such as "The Veldt," wherein rowdy children take a game of virtual reality way over the edge. Or "Kaleidoscope," a heartbreaking portrait of stranded astronauts about to reenter our atmosphere--without the

benefit of a spaceship. Or "Zero Hour," in which invading aliens have discovered a most logical ally--our own children.

Chabon, Michael. The Mysteries of Pittsburgh.

The enthralling debut from best-selling novelist Michael Chabon is a penetrating narrative of complex friendships, father-son conflicts, and the awakening of a young man's adult identity. Chabon masterfully renders the funny, tender, and captivating first-person narrative of Art Bechstein, whose confusion and heartache echo such literary forebears as The Catcher in the Rye's Holden Caulfield and The Great Gatsby's Nick Carraway. An unforgettable story of coming of age in America, it is also an essential milestone in the movement of contemporary American fiction, from a novelist who has become one of the most important and enduring voices of his generation.

Defoe, Daniel. Robinson Crusoe.

The story begins with the universal quest: the young man in Britain, torn between his safe home and his hunger for adventure, breaks away from his loving father and sails away into the unknown. After a series of harrowing escapes, he's shipwrecked on a desert island. His lively first-person account shows how his intelligence and education help him survive for many years, and how he uses technology, including guns and tools salvaged from the ship. He sets up home, reads the Bible, finds a parrot as a pet, and even devises a calendar to keep track of time. Then one day he finds a human footprint. Delighted to have a companion at last, Crusoe names the newcomer Friday (since Crusoe found him on Friday). Crusoe teaches "my man Friday" to speak English, fire a gun, carve a canoe, and clothe his nakedness, and they live happily together.

Dickens, Charles. Great Expectations.

Great Expectations, described by G. K. Chesterton as a "study in human weakness and the slow human surrender," may be called Charles Dickens's finest moment in a remarkably illustrious literary career. In an overgrown churchyard, a grizzled convict springs

upon an orphan named Pip. The convict terrifies the young boy and threatens to kill him unless Pip helps further his escape. Later, Pip finds himself in the ruined garden where he meets the bitter and crazy Miss Havisham and her foster child Estella, with whom he immediately falls in love. After a secret benefactor gives him a fortune, Pip moves to London, where he cultivates great expectations for a life which would allow him to discard his impoverished beginnings and socialize with the idle upper class. As Pip struggles to become a gentleman and is tormented endlessly by the beautiful Estella, he slowly learns the truth about himself and his illusions.

Enger, Leif. Peace Like a River.

Hailed as one of 2002's top five novels by Time, and selected as one of the best books of the year by nearly all major newspapers, Peace Like a River captured the hearts of a nation in need of comfort. "A rich mixture of adventure, tragedy, and healing, " the novel is "a collage of legends from sources sacred and profane -- from the Old Testament to the Old West, from the Gospels to police dramas" (Ron Charles, The Christian Science Monitor). In "lyrical, openhearted prose" (Michael Glitz, The New York Post), Enger tells the story of eleven-year-old Reuben Land, an asthmatic boy who has reason to believe in miracles. Along with his sister and father, Reuben finds himself on a cross-country search for his outlaw older brother who has been charged with murder. Their journey is touched by serendipity and the kindness of strangers, and its remarkable conclusion shows how family, love, and faith can stand up to the most terrifying of enemies, the most tragic of fates.

Erdrich, Louise. The Round House.

One of the most revered novelists of our time – a brilliant chronicler of Native-American life – Louise Erdrich returns to the territory of her bestselling, Pulitzer Prize finalist The Plague of Doves with The Round House, transporting readers to the Ojibwe reservation in North Dakota. It is an exquisitely told story of a boy on the cusp of manhood who seeks justice and understanding in the

wake of a terrible crime that upends and forever transforms his family. Riveting and suspenseful, arguably the most accessible novel to date from Erdrich, The Round House is a page-turning masterpiece of literary fiction – at once a powerful coming-of-age story, a mystery, and a tender, moving novel of family, history, and culture.

Frazier, Charles. Cold Mountain.

The hero of Charles Frazier's beautifully written and deeply-imagined first novel is Inman, a disillusioned Confederate soldier who has failed to die as expected after being seriously wounded in battle during the last days of the Civil War. Rather than waiting to be redeployed to the front, the soul-sick Inman deserts, and embarks on a dangerous and lonely odyssey through the devastated South, heading home to North Carolina, and seeking only to be reunited with his beloved, Ada, who has herself been struggling to maintain the family farm she inherited. Cold Mountain is an unforgettable addition to the literature of one of the most important and transformational periods in American history.

Harbach, Chad. The Art of Fielding.

"[The Art of Fielding] is not only a wonderful baseball novel, but it's also a magical, melancholy story about friendship and the coming of age that marks the debut of an immensely talented writer...Mr. Harbach has the rare abilities to write with earnest, deeply felt emotion without ever veering into sentimentality, and to create quirky, vulnerable and fully imagined characters who instantly take up residence in our hearts and minds. He also manages to re-work the well-worn, much-allegorized subject of baseball and make us see it afresh, taking tired tropes about the game (as a metaphor for life's dreams, disappointments and hopes of redemption) and interjecting them with new energy. In doing so he has written a novel that is every bit as entertaining as it is affecting....You don't need to be a baseball fan to fall under this novel's spell, but The Art of Fielding possesses all the pleasures that an aficionado cherishes in a great, classic game: odd and strangely

satisfying symmetries, unforeseen swerves of fortune, and intimations of the delicate balance between individual will and destiny that play out on the field" (Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times).

Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms.

The best American novel to emerge from World War I, A Farewell to Arms is the unforgettable story of an American ambulance driver on the Italian front and his passion for a beautiful English nurse. Hemingway's frank portrayal of the love between Lieutenant Henry and Catherine Barkley, caught in the inexorable sweep of war, glows with an intensity unrivaled in modern literature, while his description of the German attack on Caporetto — of lines of fired men marching in the rain, hungry, weary, and demoralized — is one of the greatest moments in literary history. A story of love and pain, of loyalty and desertion, A Farewell to Arms, written when he was thirty years old, represents a new romanticism for Hemingway.

Irving, John. A Prayer for Owen Meany.

Owen Meany is a dwarfish boy with a strange voice who accidentally kills his best friend's mom with a baseball and believes—accurately—that he is an instrument of God, to be redeemed by martyrdom. John Irving's novel, which inspired the 1998 Jim Carrey movie Simon Birch, is his most popular book in Britain, and perhaps the oddest Christian mystic novel since Flannery O'Connor's work. A rollicking entertainment, Owen Meany is also a meditation on literature, history, and God.

King, Stephen. The Shining.

The novel begins with a fresh start when Jack Torrance takes over as caretaker of the sprawling, snowbound Overlook Hotel for the winter months; he considers the isolation the perfect atmosphere for finishing his novel. His wife Wendy thinks it will be great for their son Danny, who has been having some emotional problems, and a chance for the family to bond. But soon the family realizes

that all is not what it seems at the hotel.

The Shining is an absorbing novel, setting a gloomy and unsettling mood from early on. At its surface the book is a study in isolation. King first initiates the reader with a feeling of claustrophobia as he focuses on the Torrances, a family of three, as its major characters. By placing them in the colossal Overlook Hotel, where a powerful, evil presence haunts every corner, in the shadow of the Colorado mountains and as they'll be cut off from any possible human contact due to the extreme cold weather eventually King heightens the twin themes of isolation and the feeling of being locked in, building the level of tension to an unbearable degree.

Knowles, John. A Separate Peace.

Set at a boys' boarding school in New England during the early years of World War II, A Separate Peace is a harrowing and luminous parable of the dark side of adolescence. Gene is a lonely, introverted intellectual. Phineas is a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. What happens between the two friends one summer, like the war itself, banishes the innocence of these boys and their world. A bestseller for more than thirty years, A Separate Peace is John Knowles's crowning achievement and an undisputed American classic.

Kwok, Jean, Girl in Translation.

When Kimberly Chang and her mother emigrate from Hong Kong to Brooklyn squalor, she quickly begins a secret double life: exceptional schoolgirl during the day, Chinatown sweatshop worker in the evenings. Disguising the more difficult truths of her life-like the staggering degree of her poverty, the weight of her family's future resting on her shoulders, or her secret love for a factory boy who shares none of her talent or ambition-Kimberly learns to constantly translate not just her language but herself back and forth between the worlds she straddles. Through Kimberly's story, author Jean Kwok, who also emigrated from Hong Kong as a young girl, brings to the page the lives of countless immigrants who are

caught between the pressure to succeed in America, their duty to their family, and their own personal desires, exposing a world that we rarely hear about.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. The Namesake.

In The Namesake, Lahiri enriches the themes that made her initial collection an international bestseller: the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, the conflicts of assimilation, and, most poignantly, the tangled ties between generations. Here again Lahiri displays her deft touch for the perfect detail -- the fleeting moment, the turn of phrase -- that opens whole worlds of emotion. The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name. Lahiri brings great empathy to Gogol as he stumbles along the first-generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detours, and wrenching love affairs. With penetrating insight, she reveals not only the defining power of the names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents, but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince.

Here is the world's most famous master plan for seizing and holding power. Astonishing in its candor The Prince even today remains a disturbingly realistic and prophetic work on what it takes to be a prince . . . a king . . . a president. When, in 1512, Machiavelli was removed from his post in his beloved Florence, he resolved to set down a treatise on leadership that was practical, not

idealistic. In *The Prince* he envisioned would be unencumbered by ordinary ethical and moral values; his prince would be man and beast, fox and lion. Today, this small sixteenth-century masterpiece has become essential reading for every student of government, and is the ultimate book on power politics.

Moore, Alan. V for Vendetta.

Alan Moore has led the field in intelligent, politically astute (if slightly paranoid), complex adult comic-book writing since the early 1980s. It is 1998 (which was the future back then!) and a Fascist government has taken over the U.K. The only blot on its particular landscape is a lone terrorist who is systematically killing all the government personnel associated with a now destroyed secret concentration camp. Codename V is out for vengeance ... and an awful lot more. V for Vendetta is, like its author's later Watchmen, a landmark in comic-book writing. Alan Moore has led the field in intelligent, politically astute (if slightly paranoid), complex adult comic-book writing since the early 1980s. He began V back in 1981 and it constituted one of his first attempts (along with the criminally neglected but equally superb Miracleman) at writing an ongoing series. It is 1998 (which was the future back then!) and a Fascist government has taken over the U.K. The only blot on its particular landscape is a lone terrorist who is systematically killing all the government personnel associated with a now destroyed secret concentration camp. Codename V is out for vengeance ... and an awful lot more.

Morrison, Toni. Sula.

In Sula, Toni Morrison, winner of the 1993 Nobel Prize for literature, tells the story of two women--friends since childhood, separated in young adulthood, and reunited as grown women. Nel Wright grows up to become a wife and mother, happy to remain in her hometown of Medallion, Ohio. Sula Peace leaves Medallion to experience college, men, and life in the big city, an exceptional choice for a black woman to make in the late 1920s. As girls, Nel and Sula are the best of friends, only children who find in each

other a kindred spirit to share in each girl's loneliness and imagination. When they meet again as adults, it's clear that Nel has chosen a life of acceptance and accommodation, while Sula must fight to defend her seemingly unconventional choices and beliefs. But regardless of the physical and emotional distance that threatens this extraordinary friendship, the bond between the women remains unbreakable: "Her old friend had come home.... Sula, whose past she had lived through and with whom the present was a constant sharing of perceptions. Talking to Sula had always been a conversation with herself." Lyrical and gripping, *Sula* is an honest look at the power of friendship amid a backdrop of family, love, race, and the human condition.

Mosley, Walter. *The Devil in the Blue Dress*.

Walter Mosley's *Easy Rawlins* has few illusions about the world--at least not about the world of a young black veteran in the late 1940s in Southern California. His stint in the Army didn't do anything to dissuade him from his belief that justice doesn't come cheap, especially for men like him. Fired from his job on the line at an aircraft plant, he's in danger of losing his home, symbol of his tenuous hold on middle class status. That's a good enough reason to accept a white man's offer to pay him for finding a beautiful, mysterious Frenchwoman named Daphne Monet, last seen in the company of a well-known gangster. Easy's search takes the reader to an L.A. few writers have shown us before--the mean streets of South Central, the after-hours joints in dirty basement clubs, the cheap hotels and furnished rooms, the places people go when they don't want to be found.

Oliver, Mary. *Why I Wake Early*.

Mary Oliver has been writing poetry for nearly five decades, and in that time she has become America's foremost poetic voice on our experience of the physical world. This collection presents forty-seven new poems, all written within the last two years, and each exhibiting the power and grace that have become the hallmarks of Oliver's work. The volume includes poems on crickets, toads, trout

lilies, black snakes, goldenrod, bears, greeting the morning, watching the deer and, finally, lingering in happiness. Each poem is imbued with the extraordinary perceptions of a poet who considers the everyday in our lives and the natural world around us and finds a multitude of reasons to marvel.

Papadimitriou, Christos H. and Apolostos Doxiadis. Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth.

This exceptional graphic novel recounts the spiritual odyssey of philosopher Bertrand Russell. In his agonized search for absolute truth, Russell crosses paths with legendary thinkers like Gottlob Frege, David Hilbert, and Kurt Gödel, and finds a passionate student in the great Ludwig Wittgenstein. But his most ambitious goal—to establish unshakable logical foundations of mathematics—continues to loom before him. Through love and hate, peace and war, Russell persists in the dogged mission that threatens to claim both his career and his personal happiness, finally driving him to the brink of insanity.

This story is at the same time a historical novel and an accessible explication of some of the biggest ideas of mathematics and modern philosophy. With rich characterizations and expressive, atmospheric artwork, the book spins the pursuit of these ideas into a highly satisfying tale. Probing and ingeniously layered, the book throws light on Russell's inner struggles while setting them in the context of the timeless questions he spent his life trying to answer. At its heart, *Logicomix* is a story about the conflict between an ideal rationality and the unchanging, flawed fabric of reality.

Russell, Karen. Swamplandia.

Russell's lavishly imagined and spectacularly crafted first novel sprang from a story in her highly praised collection, *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* (2006). *Swamplandia!* is a shabby tourist attraction deep in the Everglades, owned by the Bigtree clan of alligator wrestlers. When Hilola, their star performer, dies, her husband and children lose their moorings, and *Swamplandia!* itself is endangered as audiences dwindle. The Chief leaves. Brother

Kiwi, 17, sneaks off to work at the World of Darkness, a new mainland amusement park featuring the “rings of hell.” Otherworldly sister Osceola, 16, vanishes after falling in love with the ghost of a young man who died while working for the ill-fated Dredge and Fill Campaign in the 1930s. It’s up to Ava, 13, to find her sister, and her odyssey to the Underworld is mythic, spellbinding, and terrifying. Russell’s powers reside in her profound knowledge of the great imperiled swamp, from its alligators and insects, floating orchids and invasive “strangler” melaleuca trees to the tragic history of its massacred indigenous people and wildlife. Ravishing, elegiac, funny, and brilliantly inquisitive, Russell’s archetypal swamp saga tells a mystical yet rooted tale of three innocents who come of age through trials of water, fire, and air.

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein.

Victor Frankenstein was a precocious child, inspired by and obsessed with the scientists of the past. In university, he continues his obsession, which culminates in the creation of a man made of corpses. As the creature awakens, Victor is horrified and disgusted and runs away. He becomes stricken with illness shortly afterwards and his childhood friend, Henry Clerval, helps nurse him back to health. After four months, Victor finally recovers, only to find that his little brother, William, has been murdered. Sure that the fiend he created is responsible, Victor returns to his home. The tormented creature eventually reveals himself to his furious creator and relays the events leading to William's murder. After his heart-rending story, he begs his creator to make a woman for him who will accept him and become his mate. Victor agrees, but has second thoughts. Should he create another monster like the one already in existence? If he decides against this second blasphemy, what repercussions will he and his family have to endure?

Toole, John Kennedy. A Confederacy of Dunces.

Meet Ignatius J. Reilly, the hero of John Kennedy Toole's tragicomic tale, A Confederacy of Dunces. This 30-year-old medievalist lives at home with his mother in New Orleans, pens his

magnum opus on Big Chief writing pads he keeps hidden under his bed, and relays to anyone who will listen the traumatic experience he once had on a Greyhound Scenicruiser bound for Baton Rouge. But Ignatius's quiet life of tyrannizing his mother and writing his endless comparative history screeches to a halt when he is almost arrested by the overeager Patrolman Mancuso--who mistakes him for a vagrant--and then involved in a car accident with his tipsy mother behind the wheel. One thing leads to another, and before he knows it, Ignatius is out pounding the pavement in search of a job. Our hero stumbles from one adventure to the next. His stint as a hotdog vendor is less than successful, and he soon turns his employers at the Levy Pants Company on their heads. Ignatius's path through the working world is populated by marvelous secondary characters. The many subplots that weave through A Confederacy of Dunces are as complicated as anything you'll find in a Dickens novel, and just as beautifully tied together in the end. But it is Ignatius--selfish, domineering, and deluded, tragic and comic and larger than life--who carries the stor. His fragility cracks the shell of comic bluster, revealing a deep streak of melancholy beneath the antic humor.

Valente, Catherynne M. The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making.

Fairyland is a book that is both deeply in love with fairy tales and sharply critical of them: the story of September, a girl who flies from her dreary and sad life in Nebraska to Fairyland on the Green Wind. In Fairyland, she meets every sort of wonderful mythical beast (including a wyvern that's half library), eats the most wonderful and strange things, and has the most wonderful and extraordinary adventures and quests. And it really is wonderful: whimsical and lyrical and shot through with an imagination that simultaneously renders the traditional furniture of fairy tales fresh, and manages to make the author's own inventions seem as mythic as the first story told in the first cave in front of the first fire. But Valente's fairytale broods and seethes, and it is not always such a

nice place. For every velocipede herd thundering across the plain, ridden by a marvelous fairy in aviator's leathers and jodhpurs, there's a whipped blue water-djinn who bears the emotional scars of slavery. For every autumn kingdom filled with fiery sylvan alchemists, there is a political exile in the winter country, banished and sorrowing. For every brave sacrifice from September's companions, there's an abandoned soap golem that wishes the good queen would restore Fairyland to its glory. And that's what makes Valente's work so truly fairytale fantastic: the sense that the magic sweetness is alloyed with a pinch of salty tears that makes it all so flavorful and complex, a wonder streaked with anxiety.

Verghese, Abraham. Cutting for Stone.

A sweeping, emotionally riveting first novel — an enthralling family saga of Africa and America, doctors and patients, exile and home. Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon at a mission hospital in Addis Ababa. Orphaned by their mother's death in childbirth and their father's disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. Yet it will be love, not politics — their passion for the same woman — that will tear them apart and force Marion, fresh out of medical school, to flee his homeland. He makes his way to America, finding refuge in his work as an intern at an underfunded, overcrowded New York City hospital. When the past catches up to him — nearly destroying him — Marion must entrust his life to the two men he thought he trusted least in the world: the surgeon father who abandoned him and the brother who betrayed him.

Waugh, Evelyn. Brideshead Revisited.

[Especially recommended for fans of Downton Abbey.] In this classic tale of British life between the World Wars, Waugh parts company with the satire of his earlier works to examine affairs of the heart. Charles Ryder finds himself stationed at Brideshead, the family seat of Lord and Lady Marchmain. Exhausted by the war, he

takes refuge in recalling his time spent with the heirs to the estate before the war-years spent enthralled by the beautiful but dissolute Sebastian and later in a more conventional relationship with Sebastian's sister Julia. Ryder portrays a family divided by an uncertain investment in Roman Catholicism and by their confusion over where the elite fit in the modern world.