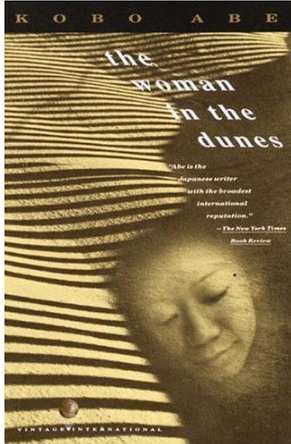


# **Saint Ann's High School/Faculty Suggested Summer Reading List 2010**



Abe, Kobo. **The Woman in the Dunes**

A haunting and powerful story, simply and elegantly told, by one of Japan's most revered novelists. An amateur entomologist is taken hostage by the inhabitants of a remote seaside village. He is lowered into a pit where he must spend his days and nights with a woman whose sole purpose in life is to shovel out the encroaching sand. A beautiful parable on the ultimate futility of all human goals, this book serves as a reminder of what is really important in life. (Paul Lockhart)

Alexie, Sherman. **Face**

The poems in this collection are electric: full of joy and wisdom. Alexie's insightful treatments of both family life and the writer's life are carefully made with a regard for form that is at once rigorous and exquisitely playful.

These are poems you want to read aloud to friends. (Marty Skoble)

Austen, Jane & Seth Grahame-Smith. **Pride And Prejudice And Zombies**

Enjoyable romp into a land of sword-swinging ladies with hopeful hearts and rivals both living and undead. (Mike Roam)

Baker, Russell. **Growing Up**

Love-filled memoir of growing up during the Depression by the legendary New York Times columnist. Brings the era alive. Indescribably great. (Denise Rinaldo)

Barbery, Muriel. **The Elegance of the Hedgehog**

Beautiful and profound and deeply moving: an extraordinary book to whet your appetite (even if you didn't know you had one) for movies and philosophy. Perhaps the only book in the world, certainly the only novel, to make sense of Edmund Husserl. Try it, you'll be amazed! (Marty Skoble)

Barbery, Muriel. **The Elegance of the Hedgehog**

This charming novel is the story of the intersecting lives of the inhabitants of a six-family apartment building in a very posh section of Paris. Parallel stories of a middle-aged concierge and a twelve-year-old girl reveal a secret and profound intellectual engagement with life that is a conscious contradiction to their stereotypical places in French society. One really comes to love these characters and can't help be moved by the ending. (Coco vanMeerendonk & Barbara Everdell)

Benedict, Helen. **The Edge of Eden**

In *The Edge of Eden* a British family moves to the Seychelles in the early sixties. Benedict captures the magic and danger of life abroad, in a culture that you only somewhat understand. This family is soon mixed up with fortunetellers and witch doctors and in considerable trouble. There's humor here, but the book is moving, too (reminding me of Diane Johnson, *Le Divorce* or *Persian Nights*). I couldn't put it down. (Carol Miller)

Bloom, Amy **Where the God of Love Hangs Out**

This book is more than a collection of riveting stories about love, lovers and families in all their infinite complexity. It may be more accurate to describe it as a set of novellas, and chances are you will reflect upon them long after you've finished the book. (Amy Fontaine)

Bovell, Andrew. **When the Rain Stops Falling** (play)

Reading *When the Rain Stops Falling* is an entirely different experience than seeing it at Lincoln Center, but just as amazing. Each scene in the text is dated which is very helpful and the generational relationships are much clearer. (Nancy Reardon)

Bradley, Alan. **The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie**

Everyone I know (people whose literary opinions I trust) who likes this genre (detective fiction), says that it is the best of its kind. I'm planning on reading it this summer. (Linda Kaufman)

Bryson, Bill. **Shakespeare: the World as Stage**

My 17th-century elective read this last fall, and everyone agreed it was an excellent biography of Shakespeare. Bryson tells not just the story of Shakespeare's life—what little we know of it—but also the story of how so many people have become obsessed with the hunt for a new document or manuscript that would “explain it all.” It doesn't hurt that Bryson is a brilliant humorist, author of *Notes from a Small Island* and *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. (For two other titles about Shakespeare, see Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* and Shapiro's *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*) (Michael Donohue)

Burnham, Dorothy K. **Cut My Cote**

My all time favorite book is *Cut My Cote*. It isn't really beach reading, but for me, it was the book that changed the path of my life because it woke me up to thinking about garments in a completely different way. I have recommended it to students who I think are ready to be conceptually focused, serious and curious. It is a small book about the history of garment shape development in the world, over time. It focuses on traditional clothing shapes. (Kate S. Hamilton)

Cheever, John. **The Wapshot Chronicle and The Wapshot Scandal**

Lots of people have read Cheever's stories, but few get around to these novels. I finally did, and it turns out that they're not really novels but loosely organized series of episodes about the two Wapshot brothers. I couldn't put either book down. (Michael Donohue)

Chevalier, Tracy. **Remarkable Creatures**

*Remarkable Creatures* takes place in England in the 1820's at a time when dinosaur fossils are first being discovered. It is fascinating to see how these discoveries threaten both church and scientific doctrines of the time and to learn about women's' position in that society. Beautifully researched and written.

*The Lady and the Unicorn* is another period piece. It takes place in France in the late fourteen hundreds and is a fictional account of the making of the unicorn tapestries. Once again Chevalier does terrific research on the period and the science of tapestry making. Told from multiple points of view, the book itself is a brilliant tapestry which raises interesting philosophical questions. (Richard Mann)

Child, Julia. **My Life in France**

I would have flown through Julia Child's memoir *My Life in France* if it weren't for the fact that it repeatedly sent me running into the kitchen ravenous and ready to cook. Her passion for French cuisine and cooking is truly infectious. What a fascinating woman she was! (Molly Sissors)

Collins, Gail. **America's Women and When Everything Changed**

Both are great, but for a quick, entertaining, occasionally infuriating look at the history of women and the women's movement in the United States, read the pair. Recommended for everyone, but especially for young women who've grown up since the feminist movement; you won't believe how far we've come. (Rebecca Johnson)

Collins, Wilkie. **The Woman In White**

Published in 1860, this thriller is enjoyably "over the top" with melodrama, mystery, villains, mistaken identity, arson, villains, and sympathetic characters. (Mike Roam)

Demick, Barbara. **Nothing to Envy**

A journalistic account of private lives in North Korea. It's very difficult to get a view this clear of ordinary life in the country of Kim Jong-Il, and Demick does it really well. Not a cheerful book, but a must if you have any interest in North Korea. (Michael Donohue)

Doxiadis, Apostolos, Christos Papadimitriou, Alekos Papadatos, and Annie Di Donna.

**Logicomix: an Epic Search for Truth**

Logicomix is a thrilling graphic novel about set theory, logic, genius, madness, and the modern foundations of Mathematics. Bertrand Russell (a personal hero of mine) retells his life's story and search for absolute truth. (Paul Salomon)

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. **Crime and Punishment**

Inspired by last year's read-aloud, I took --and relished--this journey into the frenetic mind of a Russian wanna-be philosopher and bad-guy. (Mike Roam)

Dugard, Martin. **Into Africa**

The "truth is stranger than fiction" account of Henry Morton Stanley's search for Dr Livingstone, who had been missing for years in Central Africa. The larger threads of mid-nineteenth century history --colonialism, slavery and the emergence of journalism as a powerful influence on public opinion--weave in and out of this story of two unusual men and their grueling exploration of the area surrounding the source of the Nile. (Jennifer Halliday)

Durrell, Gerald. **My Family and other Animals**

Perfection--this is the memoir of the Durrell family's move to the island of Corfu when they can stand the bad weather in England no more. Durrell, who went on to become a zoologist, tells the ultimate story of youthful enthusiasm (for bats, frogs, puppies, dolphins, etc). Wonderful. Gerald's brother Lawrence went on to become a famous writer, too, of *The Alexandria Quartet*, which is fantastic as well (in a very different way). He appears here as "Larry." (Carol Miller)

Eco, Umberto. **The Name of the Rose**

A fantastic page-turner of a murder mystery featuring a Sherlock Holmes inspired medieval monk. Makes you wish you could spend a week or two in a 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian monastery. (Denise Rinaldo)

Eggers, Dave. **Zeitoun**

Riveting. Follow, Syrian born Zeitoun as he decides to ride out Hurricane Katrina in order to protect his

property while his family flees. Hell breaks loose. (Maria Falgoust)

Fallada, Hans. **Every Man Dies Alone**

This book is not for everyone; it's long, intense, and, as is to be expected from a novel about the German Resistance to the Nazis, very, very sad. It is also beautifully written, captivating, and deeply moving. This is not a slog of a read; if the period interests you at all, you'll be amazed by how quickly you fly through it. (Rebecca Johnson)

Filkins, Dexter. **The Forever War**

Filkins is a New York Times reporter who's been covering Afghanistan since before 9/11, and he also spent several years covering the war in Iraq. His impressionistic account of life as a war reporter is one of the best books I've read in the last couple of years. (Michael Donohue)

Finkel, David. **The Good Soldiers**

An unbelievable book. Finkel, a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist follows the lives of the infantry soldiers of Battalion 2-16 on their 15-month deployment to Ramalayah, Iraq. Led by the ever-optimistic Col. Ralph Kauzlarich, the battalion faced seemingly endless challenges in the form of possible IEDs hidden in every trash pile or under any clump of dirt, local Iraqi corruption, and endless attacks. Many soldiers were killed or seriously wounded; and yet day after day the battalion attempted to fulfill the mission they were commanded to carry out. This joins my small list of favorite books about war (both fiction and non-fiction): *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, *Killer Angels* by Michael Sahaara, and *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. (Ragan O'Malley)

Fuller, Alexandra. **Don't Let's go to the Dogs Tonight**

Sobering and riveting, this is the story of a family's struggle to stay afloat in the political turmoil of post-colonial southern Africa. Fuller's voice is authentic and her memoir is rich with detail and nuance. Unforgettable. (Liz Velikonja)

Goldman, Steven. **Two Parties, One Tux and a Very Short Film About the Grapes of Wrath**

Mitchell is not athletic, has no girl prospects in sight and a best friend named David. They are friends because they hang out together—but how well do they really know each other? Apparently not that well because it is a surprise when David comes out to him at lunch one day. This is a window into one boy's life—where he learns how to actually act like a friend, he hands in an offensive claymation film, and he gets a little action. Hilarious—my favorite young adult novel of the year. (Ragan O'Malley)

Goldstein, Rebecca. **The Mind-Body Problem**

Awesome novel about sexy philosophers, with delicious asides about logic and truth from flawed and very human thinkers. (Mike Roam)

Gombrich, Ernest H. **A Little History Of The World**

Wonderfully charming, thoughtful, compassionate, and easy-reading history of the world, written for a young audience. (Mike Roam)

Holmes, Richard. **The Age of Wonder: The Romantic Generation and the Discovery of the Beauty and Terror of Science**

It's a masterpiece, bringing Coleridge onto the same scene with not only Wordsworth but also Michael Faraday, not to mention the astronomer Caroline Herschel, Humphrey Davy, Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, evolutionary biology, revolutionary politics, opium, electromagnetism, balloon aviation, nitrous oxide

(inhaled), and mesmerism. The only gap in Holmes's culture seems to be calculus. History makes irresistibly interesting bedfellows. (Bill Everdell)

Howard, Manny. **My Empire of Dirt**

Much more than a memoir, much more than an artfully written, thoughtful account of Manny Howard's struggle to reconcile home-grown (family) values with a consumer-driven economy, this is a moving narrative of one man's struggle with American hubris. It is indeed "a cautionary tale," but through it all, neighborliness, friendship, family, and, yes, love, shine brightly. [Transparency note: Manny is my stepson, but what I write is the truth; anyway, as a Saint Ann's graduate, he belongs to all of us.] (Marty Skoble)

Hughes, Richard. **A High Wind in Jamaica**

Not-at-all-cute tale of English children captured by pirates. Don't be fooled by the Henry Darger drawing on the cover into thinking this is just some quirky novel for hipsters. It is haunting. Easily the best book I've read all year. (Chandra Speeth)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. **The Remains of the Day**

I wish I could turn back time so that I could relive the experience of reading this novel for the first time. Ishiguro creates a small, perfect world in *The Remains of the Day*, one of the most imaginative novels I have ever read. (Alex Levin)

James, Henry. **The Portrait of a Lady**

Gorgeous sentences, gripping story. It may be long, but you will spend as much time as you did reading it, and more, mulling over the choices Isabel Archer makes and why. A novel that will stay with you. (Liz Fodaski)

Johnson, Ian. **Wild Grass**

This is a short, crisply written, brilliant piece of journalism about China, written by a Wall Street Journal reporter. It tells about three episodes in recent Chinese history, including the best account anywhere of the Falun Gong controversy of the late 1990s (Johnson won a Pulitzer for his coverage of it). (Michael Donohue)

Kennedy, Raymond. **Lulu Incognito**

Haunting, hypnotic, and deeply strange...This book is a modern gothic that sucks you under with fetishy, claustrophobic excess. On the surface the story is about a bland young woman absorbed and reinvented by a wealthy family that teeters on the edge of moral ruin. A bizarre but gripping read. (Shawn Nacol)

Laxness, Halldor. **Independent People**

*Independent People* is a dark, sweeping epic set in the Icelandic countryside at the turn of the 20th century. It is a study in isolation, a man's desire to fulfill his dreams, no matter the consequences to him or his family. (Savannah Roberts)

Lehmann, Rosamond. **Invitation to the Waltz** introduces us to the seventeen-year-old Olivia Curtis, poised to enter, somewhat unwillingly, the bewildering world of courtship. In its heartbreaking sequel *The Weather in the Streets*, we rejoin her ten years later, now an independent bohemian woman in London. Compulsively readable, both showcase Lehmann's acute capacity for blending romance and devastation. (Elise Meslow)

Lockhart, Paul. **A Mathematician's Lament**

Our own Paul Lockhart's beautiful description of the joys that can and should be found in mathematics. (Mike Roam)

Logan, John. **Red** (play)

Thrilling. It's about Mark Rothko. (Nancy Reardon)

Lourie, Dick. **If The Delta Was The Sea**

Northeast white saxophone playing poet meets Clarksdale, Mississippi blues reality and learns a few things that challenge his (and OUR) assumptions and radically increase our understanding of just what it is that is "America." This is an amazing book, full of delightful characters and stories. It's easy to read, easy to love. And... surprise: count the syllables in almost any line. How does he do that? (Marty Skoble)

Mann, Charles C. **1491**

A well-written book about the many complex pre-Columbian civilizations that once flourished in the Americas-- and their rapid destruction. The product of a well-meaning liberal arts education, I still knew next to nothing about any of this until I read this book. (Chandra Speeth)

Mantel, Hilary. **Wolf Hall**

Who can resist those crazy Tudors? Henry and his wives. The French and their treaties. The mead, the mutton. Thomas Cromwell (apparently he was a great guy--who knew?!). **Wolf Hall** won the Booker, but don't let that award fool (or scare) you. This book is a box of candy, perfect for long days in the hammock or on the beach. (Melissa Kantor)

Mantel, Hilary. **Wolf Hall**

The story of Thomas Cromwell and his rise, amazing, within the court of Henry VIII. It's completely absorbing. *Wolf Hall* is a novel, its author at liberty to imagine the lives of historical characters (the king, the archbishop, the pope, the master of rolls, and...the wives). It's long and involving, perfect for a rainy spell indoors. Sir Thomas More worship? You won't find that here. (Carol Miller)

Mantel, Hilary. **Wolf Hall**

If you are interested in 16th Century English history and have time to wade through 500 plus pages of fictionalized history; this is the book for you. Yes, it's long, but the characters really come alive and the descriptions of England during the period of Henry VIII are vivid. (Linda Kaufman)

Marias, Javier. **Bad Nature**

A translator hired to work on an Elvis Presley movie being filmed in Acapulco ends up abandoned by Presley and his entourage in a seedy bar in Mexico City, and "Guadalajara" is recorded without benefit of proper coaching. Which haunts the translator more—having to live with this botched recording, or forever eluding his captors? A New Directions Pearl, this slim paperback fits in a back pocket, which is ideal because I wanted to start reading it again as soon as I finished. (Cathy Fuerst)

Markham, Beryl. **West with the Night**

This is Beryl Markham's memoir of being a bush pilot in the 1930s in Africa. Her story is in itself wonderfully interesting, but she is a gorgeous writer, too. Ernest Hemingway said this of *West with the Night*: "As it is she has written so well, and marvelously well, that I was completely ashamed of myself as a writer. I felt that I was simply a carpenter with words, picking up whatever was furnished on the job

and nailing them together and sometimes making an okay pigpen. But she can write rings around all of us who consider ourselves as writers." I plan to re-read it this summer. A beautiful and memorable book. (Carol Miller)

Mason, Zachary. **The Lost Books of the Odyssey**

Odysseus reinvents himself as a busker. The Cyclops prefers his blindness after a time. Agamemnon sets Odysseus the task of writing the history of the world first in a single book, then in a single sentence, then a single word. Each chapter in this book is a lyric poem, the whole the literary equivalent of the slow-cook movement or Glenn Gould playing *The Goldberg Variations* on Homer. (Cathy Fuerst)

McCann, Colum. **Let the Great World Spin**

A little hard to get into, but stick with it. This book sings. Makes you think about the connectivity that we all love about living in the (our) city. Fabulous times ten! (Drew McGhee)

Mitford, Jessica. **Hons and Rebels**

Utterly engrossing memoir told by a member of one of England's strangest aristocratic families. Five sisters: one becomes a horsey housewife, one socialite novelist, one a Fascist, one a Nazi, and the last one (the author) a Communist journalist. Absolutely hilarious--when it isn't horribly sad. (Chandra Speeth)

Mitford, Nancy. **The Pursuit of Love**

The seven Radlett children and their cousin Fanny have their run of the family's Gloucestershire estate, and you can join them on their capers (fox hunting, child hunting, long chats in the Hons' cupboard). Crazy Uncle Matthew, lovely (if vague) Aunt Sadie, the beautiful (if untethered) Linda Radlett--this is a cast of characters into which you will happily (eagerly) insert yourself, and when Linda makes a bad marriage (not JUST one, mind you), you'll find yourself worrying less about the encroaching German army than you do about this heroine's romantic future. (Melissa Kantor)

Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. **Three Cups of Tea**

What I found remarkable about Mortenson's story, which is centered on his efforts to build a school in a small Pakistani village, is his respectful attitude toward the villagers. He visits them because he sees them as friends, and because he learns from them, in addition to being able to help out. At the same time, he does not romanticize their culture. I believe that this book deserves all of the success it has had. (Navid Karimeddy)

Nottage, Lynn. **Ruined**

*Ruined* is a masterful play set in a house of prostitution in war-torn Congo. Women's bodies become part of the battlefield of government officials and rebels. If you have the stomach for this, you should read it, especially if you aren't able to attend a performance. (Richard Mann)

Niffenegger, Audrey. **Her Fearful Symmetry**

This novel takes place both in and around Highgate Cemetery in London—one of the highlights of this quirky novel to be sure. Elspeth Noblin dies and leaves her London flat, which borders the cemetery, to her American twin nieces, daughters of her own estranged twin sister, Edie. The girls, rather lost in life, jump on the opportunity, and go to live in the flat for a year (a condition of the will). They get to know Robert, Elspeth's former lover; Martin, a charming man crippled by his OCD and the ghost of Elspeth herself. (Ragan O'Malley)

O'Brien, Tim. **The Things They Carried**

You may not read more powerful, beautifully written stories in your life. Told by a Vietnam Vet, about his experiences in Vietnam, the book is nonetheless not a memoir. It is, rather, a brilliant collection of fictional short stories that walks the line between reality and the world of the imagination. (Adam Gidwitz)

O'Neill, Joseph P. **Netherland**

A novel rightly recommended by a friend: the characters and events seem real and sincere and deep, and completely kept my attention. An intriguing and unusual part of the book is the game of cricket which connects many of the story lines. (Mike Roam)

Padel, Ruth. **Darwin: A Life in Poems**

This is a wonderful biography of Darwin, even better for its brevity and the fact that it's a series of beautiful poems, much of them employing the actual words of Darwin, his wife and other contemporary scientists. Ms. Padel weaves tapestries of vivid images, distills emotional and intellectual and even physical struggle to clear moments of pain and joy, and gives us all the essential information in easy to follow sidebars. A total pleasure. (Marty Skoble)

Patterson, Scott. **The Quants: How a New Breed of Math Whizzes Conquered Wall Street and Nearly Destroyed It**

A well-written and fast-paced description of the computer-aided financiers who may deserve some of the blame for last year's economic meltdown. Those bankers and hedge fund managers had mathematical models based on decades of patterns which allowed them to profit from high-speed trading and extensive leveraging, until the markets stumbled into behavior not seen in those previous decades. The book gives highly educational descriptions—with metaphors and examples—of credit default swaps and related topics. (Mike Roam)

Pochoda, Ivy. **The Art of Disappearing**

This is the story of Toby and Mel. He works magic; she works fabric. He can conjure castles out of sand; she can hear fabrics sing. They meet in the Old Stand Saloon in Intersection when he sends her a glass of wine to wash down shrimp in cream; two days later, they marry in the Silver Bells All-Nite Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. Her love intensifies his magic, but one of his tricks goes disastrously wrong for a second time, which launches them on a search for real magic. And their love—an illusion, too? I fell in love with these characters; they have magic up their sleeves and their quilts, yet their world is dissolving, and not just in the trick box barely big enough to stand up in that transports them to their memories. (Cathy Fuerst)

Powell, Anthony. **A Dance to the Music of Time**

I recently learned that Liam Flaherty named his dog Jenkins, after the narrator of this 12-novel sequence, an English epic that begins just after World War I and ends in the early 1970s. If I ever get a dog, I will follow Liam's example, but my pet will be named after Ted Jeavons, the droll husband of Jenkins's Aunt Molly. This requires a real commitment, but you may find that, like Liam and me, you get hooked. Plus, you couldn't find a better duodecalogy anywhere. (Michael Donohue)

Rilke, Rainer Maria. **Letters on Cézanne**

Rilke saw an exhibit of Cézanne paintings in 1907 and repeatedly returned to better understand what he was seeing. His letters about those encounters are remarkable explorations not just of Cézanne's art but of Cézanne as artist. Rilke is a superb guide to the exhausting, inspiring work of this artist and to the act of seeing. (Ruth Chapman)

Robb, Graham. **The Discovery of France**

Robb is a literary historian (he wrote biographies of Balzac, Hugo and Rimbaud), who explored France on his bicycle ("14,000 miles in the saddle"), in an effort to better understand the country. Not wanting his standpoint to be that of the "patronizing, parochial ignorance of Parisians," he focused on the "faceless millions" who lived isolated from Paris. The result is a vivid picture of a world that, for all its precariousness and cruelty, showed incredible variety and ingenuity. If you like odd and little known facts and discoveries, this book is for you. A fascinating read. (Marielle Vigourt)

Salinger, J. D. **Nine Stories**

The stories are amazing and sparkling, with unusual characters including a tale-telling romantically-challenged coach, a precociously poised pre-teen meeting a soldier, and a teen prodigy with an intensely religious outlook. (Mike Roam)

Schoenbaum, Samuel. **Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life**

Once you've read Bryson (also in this reading list), this is the next step: a fascinating account of all the traces we have of Shakespeare's life and his career in the theater. There are more things in the record than many people realize. (Michael Donohue)

Shaffer, Mary Ann and Annie Barrows. **The Guernsey Literary and Potato Pie Society**

A page turner. Really got me interested in learning more about this island and how the inhabitants lived under Nazi occupation. The *New York Times* had a rave review of *Gabriel*, a play about the same topic: living under Nazi occupation on the island of Guernsey. Can't wait to see that. (Linda Kaufman)

Shapiro, James. **Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?**

This is just out, so it's still in hardcover. A history of the "anti-Stratfordian" thesis—the idea that the Shakespeare we know from the historical record did not write the plays that bear his name. There's also wonderful material on this in the Bryson book (also in this reading list), but Shapiro gives a more complete account, including some great stuff on Delia Bacon, the first person to fully articulate the anti-Stratford position. (Michael Donohue)

Shriver, Lionel. **We Need to Talk about Kevin, The Post-Birthday World, & So Much For That**

Great Writing. Often provocative. *We Need to Talk about Kevin* especially resonates for anyone knowing/caring for and about an adolescent. (Drew McGhee)

Shay, Jonathan. **Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character**

In his portrait of post-traumatic stress disorder, psychiatrist Dr. Shay parallels his combat-torn Vietnam patients and Achilles at Troy. His chronicle of what can happen when soldiers experience betrayal by their superior officers and loss of their comrades is harrowing and fiercely instructive. I don't know how reliable Dr. Shay is as a classicist, but he does the job for me when he matches veterans' stories about their trauma in Vietnam with Achilles' actions after Patroclus' death. The recent accounts we hear about soldiers unstrung in Iraq and Afghanistan make this book especially worthy of attention. (Ruth Chapman)

Simonson, Helen. **Major Pettigrew's Last Stand**

The Major of *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* (never *Mr. Pettigrew*, thank you very much), is very much a tradition-bound, upper-crust English widower who surprises himself and his stuffy neighbors by falling for Mrs. Jasmina Ali, the lovely Pakistani widow who runs the local shop. Wryly funny and insightful, this

British comedy of manners (and much more) is by first time novelist and ex-pat Helen Simonson who, until very recently, lived in Brooklyn Heights with her family. (Amy Fontaine)

Skloot, Rebecca. **The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks**

The story of Henrietta Lacks and her cervical cancer cells. Extracted from her tumor without her knowledge or consent, these cells gave rise to one of the most important cell lines, known as HeLa, ever grown. Not only have they been instrumental in countless scientific breakthroughs, but a multi-billion dollar industry emerged based on the sale of these cells to labs around the world. But who was Henrietta Lacks? Very readable non fiction. (Ragan O'Malley)

Smith, Betty. **A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**

I did not grow up with this book and I am glad to have discovered it now. Smith's description of growing up in Williamsburg in the first years of the twentieth century is hardly a nostalgic look back at "the good old days." She tells of good but imperfect people struggling to survive, educate themselves and escape poverty in a community that had little time for childhood. (Jennifer Halliday)

Smith, Patti. **Just Kids**

Just about everybody important in American culture (art, music, poetry, theater, etc.) in the last four decades is here. Not always easy or pretty, but what a party! Join them on this important journey, beautifully written. (Marty Skoble)

Sorrentino, Gilbert. **Gold Fools**

Sorrentino is a master of the bizarre constraint. This hilarious comic novel is a case in point: written entirely in the interrogative. Yes, that's right, every sentence is a question. Moreover, the entire piece sounds like it's told by some old toothless prospector (or Gabby Hayes), which is even more amazing since Sorrentino is a Brooklynite. Try it. It's a hoot! (Marty Skoble)

Stockett, Kathryn. **The Help**

1962: Mississippi. Three women: Skeeter, a twenty-two year old college graduate whose mother just wants her to get married; Constantine, the maid who raised her; and Aibileen, a black maid raising her seventeenth white child, and whose best friend is the sassiest cook in Mississippi, finally come together when the rigid discriminatory lines and prejudices that suffocate them become too much to bear. They start a movement of their own that will deeply change the ways women view one another. A beautiful book, full of humor and poignancy, about freedom and the lines we abide by—and the ones we don't. (Marielle Vigourt)

Strout, Elizabeth. **Olive Kitteridge**

It's melancholy at times, but it makes you remember that it's all beautiful—even the darkness in life is beautiful. This poor woman doesn't get it—she spends a lot of her life being bitchy when she could have appreciated what she had. (Lou Kylis)

Strout, Elizabeth. **Olive Kitteridge**

*Olive Kitteridge* is a must read. Rarely has a book of short stories evoked a world and set of characters as vividly as this one. The thoughts and feelings of the characters in this small town in Maine are as palpable as fire and water. It is an instant classic, every bit as powerful as Salinger's *Nine Stories*. (Richard Mann)

Sullivan, Robert. **The Thoreau You Don't Know**

No question about it, this is a Thoreau I did not know but was delighted to meet. You will be too. Sullivan's grasp of the history and economics (as well as the literature) of Thoreau's time brings into focus a world that I also didn't know and suspect few do. Amazing, enlightening, and, yes, joyful! Thanks, Bob! (Marty Skoble)

Summerscale, Kate. **The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher**

This is a totally gripping and beautifully written account of one of England's first detectives and the murder case that undoes him. It's nonfiction but reads like fiction; the reader is not only swept into the mystery, but into the mind of the sympathetic and fascinating detective, Mr. Whicher, who was one of the first to imagine that such cases could be solved. (Anna Ziegler)

Swados, Elizabeth. **The One and Only Human Galaxy**

Magical indeed are these remarkable poems, all based on the life of Harry Houdini. Ms. Swados creates a vivid psychic biography as she channels the voice of the master of escape (and others), and his dramatic life unfolds before us in work that is masterfully designed. (Marty Skoble)

Talese, Gay. **The Gay Talese Reader**

Want to write for the Ram? Buy this immediately, and learn from the master as you read Talese's classic magazine profiles on Frank Sinatra, Joe Dimaggio, Joe Louis and others. (Michael Donohue)

Toews, Miriam. **The Flying Troutmans**

When 11-year-old Thebes and 15-year-old Logan find that their mother has once again landed in the psych ward, the kids call their aunt, Hattie, to come take care of them. Mildly resentful of her duty, Hattie returns from Paris to Canada and the family she has been trying to get away from. Without much of a plan, she decides to take the kids on a road-trip to find their long absent father. Along the way, they encounter everyone from Americans who don't quite understand their Northern neighbors, to relatives they never knew existed. A great, understated road novel that will make you laugh, roll your eyes and cry all during the same paragraph. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Toibin, Colm. **Brooklyn**

A universal sort of American tale about making a life in New York. Simple and beautiful. (Carol Miller)

Toibin, Colm. **The South**

This slim, (largely) quiet novel focuses on a woman (young and then not so young) who leaves her husband and child to live as an ex-patriot in Spain. The writing is simple and gorgeous. Imagine "The Sun Also Rises" told from the perspective of Brett Ashley's younger, artistic sister. Kind of. (Melissa Kantor)

Tomalin, Claire. **Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self**

Recommended especially for students in this year's 17th century elective, who read excerpts from Pepys's diary. This book, part guided tour of the diary, part history of Restoration England, will blow your mind. (Michael Donohue)

Tower, Wells. **Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned**

A recent collection of short stories by a very young writer. The title story is worth the price of the book -- it combines a modern slacker's voice with an account of Vikings raiding and pillaging a coastal village. (Michael Donohue)

Tuchman, Barbara. **Guns of August**

This is hardly beach reading, but Tuchman's detailed narrative of the first month of World War One is a fascinating account of the folly of man and war. JFK gave this book to his staff during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and it is just as relevant today. (Jesse Kohn)

Unsworth, Barry. **Land of Marvels**

A fabulous tale of adultery, archeology and intrigue in Mesopotamia just before the first world war. The end felt a trifle...neat, but the book's still a beautifully written page turner. (Melissa Kantor)

Walls, Jeannette. **Half Broke Horses**

I didn't like her memoir *The Glass Castle* at all, but this is riveting. It's about her grandmother and the adventurous and at times unbelievable life she led. The perfect antidote to bourgeois complacency, this book will humble you, and you'll enjoy it! (Liz Fodaski)

White, E.B. **One Man's Meat**

From the man you might know as co-author of *The Elements of Style*, a book of essays with something for everyone. White is a master of the well-constructed yet humble sentence, and these essays take up some important topics. Dated in the best way. The essay on poetry is lovely. (Liz Fodaski)

West, Rebecca. **The Fountain Overflows**

Nobody writes a sentence better than she does, and here are hundreds of thousands of them strung together. A subtle and strange book, at once so perceptive about the internal lives of her characters that we believe them to be real... *and* full of poltergeists. (Chandra Speeth)

Wyndham, John. **Day of the Triffids** (originally published in 1951, republished recently)

A shower of green meteors draws everyone but our hero into the streets, blinding them and thereby allowing the enormous thinking three-legged plant-creatures to escape from the lab and visit havoc upon the English countryside. Vintage Cold War dystopianism that kidnapped my imagination the summer I turned twelve. I couldn't walk in front of cars for months after reading Christine. But plants -- they're everywhere. (Ben Rutter)

Ziegler, Anna. **Photograph 51**

Ask our own Anna Ziegler how to get a copy of her prize-winning play about the people and drama (power, lies, mood, theft?) involved in the discovering the structure of DNA. (Mike Roam)

**Linda Kaufman writes:** Some books I enjoyed when I was in high school and that I don't think that people read any more: **Sister Carrie**; **An American Tragedy** by Theodore Dreiser, **U.S.A.** trilogy by John Dos Passos, **The Count of Monte Cristo** by Alexander Dumas, **The Forsythe Saga** by John Galsworthy, **Green Mansions** by William Henry Hudson, **Daisy Miller** by Henry James, **The Magic Mountain**; **Death in Venice** by Thomas Mann, **Jean-Christophe** by Romaine Rolland, **Giants in the Earth** series by Ole Edvart Rolvaag, **The Last Puritan** by George Santayana, **Rogue Herries** series by Hugh Walpole.

**Thank you to everyone who contributed! Happy Reading!**