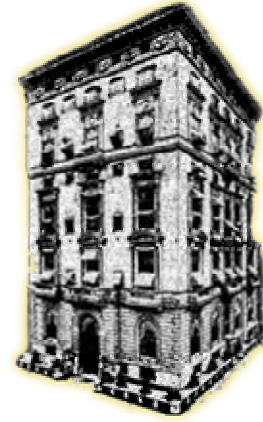


High School/Faculty Summer Reading List



Alexie, Sherman

Ten Little Indians

In this collection of stories, Alexie explores American life in general and Spokane Indian life in particular. Alexie hits many notes. His writing can be funny, very funny. One Indian character frets over what a tragedy it will be for Indians once white people realize “that Indians are every bit as relentlessly boring, selfish, and smelly as they are.” His writing can be hauntingly evocative and very moving. It can be completely classical and yet utterly, unpretentiously American. These are involving, highly readable stories—take them on in one stretch or a tale at a time. (A little note: Alexie’s career in part began in the Brooklyn periodical *Hanging Loose*, which also first published many Saint Ann’s writers). (Carol Rawlings Miller 9+)

Amis, Martin

Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million

The novelist’s take on Stalin. Written in Amis’s trademark show-off style, and full of interesting details about the USSR. (Michael Donohue 10+)

Austen, Jane

Pride and Prejudice

It was a dry season for good books in the Kantor household—everything that seemed promising quickly disappointed—and so returning to Austen’s gem was that much more of a pleasure. Her language—ironic, amused, affectionate—is delicious, and the plot never fails to make my heart race (will he confess his love? Will she acknowledge hers?) even though I’ve read the book so many times before. Austen’s a miracle worker. I can’t think of a better summer read. (10+ Melissa Kantor)

Barrett, Andrea

Servants of the Map

This lovely book of short stories is a fun read because you can make connections amongst the characters and events of each story. The stories also bring in familiar moments from two of Barrett’s other books, *Ship Fever* and *The Voyage of the Narwhal*, which are also enjoyable summer reads. (Tricia Reixach 10+)

Brooks, Geraldine

Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women

An Australian reporter for the Wall Street Journal spent six years covering the Middle East. This is the stunning and enlightening story of her journey toward an understanding of the women behind the veil, and of the often contradictory political, religious and cultural forces that shape their lives. She deftly illustrates how Islam’s holiest texts have been misused to justify repression of Muslim women, and how male pride and power have warped the original message of the faith. (Anne Bosworth 11+)

Catton, Bruce

The Army of the Potomac (3 vols: Mr. Lincoln’s Army; Glory Road; A Stillness at Appomattox)

Don’t laugh, this is for real. Take the plunge into this brilliantly written Civil War history. Catton has a marvelous eye for

detail, and his descriptions are full of vivid humor and compassion. I devoured the whole trilogy and was crying for Rebel blood. (Michael Donohue 9+)

Chbosky, Stephen

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

What it's like growing up in high school. Written in the form of letters to an unknown person. Both funny and sad. (Anne Bosworth 9+)

Chevalier, Tracy

The Lady and the Unicorn

An intriguing novel about the unicorn tapestries, well researched and historically fascinating. Chevalier (author of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*) writes gracefully, although at times her style is as delicate as a frayed thread—so strained with its quaint little Frenchisms, etc. that you get the feeling it will snap at any minute. (Jane Avrich 9+)

Clarke, Richard

Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror

He took an oath to defend the U.S. constitution "against all enemies foreign and domestic" and I guess he had his work cut out for him. The account of 9/11 itself—told from the inside—is chilling. (Anonymous 10+)

Cohn, Rachel

Gingerbread

Gingerbread is a smart, funny, moving story about a cool California teenager dealing with getting kicked out of boarding school, a complicated love life and a confusing, unusual step/biological/half family. Unlike lots of Young Adult novels, *Gingerbread* doesn't feature an annoying heroine you know would never really exist. (Melissa Kantor 9+)

Colwin, Laurie

A Big Storm Knocked It Over

The mysteries of married life and the vagaries of one's own family and one's spouse's family are topics Colwin covers in a posthumously published novel. For Jane Louise, even Teddy (her wonderful, new, rock-solid husband) and a baby on the way are not enough to stave off plenty of free-floating anxiety. Luckily, she shares her joy and her distress with best friends Edie and Mokie who have decided to embark on parenthood at the same time. The extended family formed by these two couples must suffice emotionally for each of the four individuals, since not one of the four fits within his or her own family. A warm and witty story. (Anne Bosworth 11+)

Dalrymple, William

City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi

Djinn are spirits said to be seen only after prolonged fasting and prayer; they are integral to understanding the city of Delhi. The author, a young Scot carrying on the fine British tradition of travel writing, has a knack for meeting fascinating people and capturing their most revealing remarks. He introduces us to dervishes, eunuchs, partridge fighting, weddings, and expatriates. His wife contributes sketches that nicely complement his text. An entertaining book. (Anne Bosworth 11+)

Dubus, Andre

The House of Sand and Fog

Two exiled people whose dreams collide. Dubus' portrait of the Iranian man's denial and determination is chilling and touching as his deft handling of the hapless young woman who loses her house because she is too depressed to open her own mail. Beautiful writing. (Gail Brousal 10+)

In this riveting novel three fragile yet determined people become dangerously entangled in a relentlessly escalating crisis. Colonel Behrani, once a wealthy man in Iran, is now a struggling immigrant in the California hills who is willing to bet everything he has to restore his family's dignity. (Anne Bosworth 9+)

Dunant, Sarah

The Birth of Venus

An enthralling and exciting historical novel of Renaissance Florence in the time of the fanatic monk, Savonarola. The tale starts with the discovery of a beautiful snake with a man's face painted across and down the body of an old nun they are preparing for burial. We go back over her life to understand how a nun would come by such an erotic tattoo. The daughter of a wealthy cloth merchant, she sought the freedom of marriage in order to paint, but finds that she may have bought her liberty at the cost of love and true fulfillment. The book gives a lively, well researched, picture of the artists, politics and people of Florence at this time. (Anne Bosworth 11+)

Eugenides, Jeffrey.

Middlesex

Funny, sad, original, Eugenides' novel follows Calliope who at fourteen years old discovers she/he is an hermaphrodite. How this came to be forms a major part of the novel as her lineage is traced to the small Greek village from which her grandparents emigrated to America. We feel Callie's pain and fear for her as she transforms into Cal. We fear for him too. Yes, it's about gender and stereotypes, the old world and the new, the power of history (cultural and genetic)—a fascinating novel. (Gabrielle Howard 11+)

Fales-Hill, Susan

Always Wear Joy: My Mother Bold and Beautiful

Why not? She's a good writer. Race and class in Manhattan. (Anonymous 9+)

Feynman, Richard

Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman & What Do You Care What Other People Think? Further Adventures of a Curious Character

"Think for yourself!" Very enjoyable reading from a person who marches to his own drumbeat, and who is also a brilliant Nobel-prize-winning physicist. The *What Do You Care...* has a report on the investigation of the explosion of the space shuttle "Challenger", while both books have anecdotes of early age loss of religious faith and late age insistence that people protect the pro-scientific anti-authoritarian virtues of skepticism, investigation, development, and uncertainty. If he tweaks your interest, there is also a wonderful biography of Feynman called *Genius*, by James Gleick, and there are the "Feynman Lectures on Physics" (Feynman's book *Six Easy Pieces* has highlights from the lectures, and is a pleasure to read and study.) (Mike Roam 10+)

Flanders, Laura (editor)

The W Effect: Bush's War on Women

A collection of short pieces on how George W's policies are hurting women. (Of course, I find the pieces on sex and abstinence education, abortion, AIDS, condoms and gay marriage especially interesting). I've only read parts of this book so far, but I'm already angry—good sign! (Laura Paley 9+)

Foer, Jonathan Safran

Everything is Illuminated

It's rare for me to laugh out loud while reading, but this book got me with its intricate, detailed, and mood-swingy story. I felt like I was swimming in a sea with sparkling fish, ancient creatures, surprising structures, and sudden flashing bursts of humor mixed with deep sorrows. (Mike Roam 9+)

Frayn, Michael

A Landing on the Sun

From the playwright who wrote "Copenhagen," a quirky novel about a British civil servant who has to investigate the mysterious death, twenty years earlier, of another civil servant. (Michael Donohue 11+)

Garrels, Anne

Naked in Baghdad

Garrels is the NPR correspondent who covered the war in Iraq. Her memoir is a fresh look at the situation. I think it's about to come out in paperback, with extra (more recent) materials added. (Michael Donohue 9+)

Glass, Julia

Three Junes

The story covers three different Junes (the month) in the life of Fenno, the oldest son of a Scottish vet and his collie-breeding wife, and his two younger brothers Dennis and David. The second section, "Upright" is about Fenno's life in New York City (the bookstore he owns, and the man he falls in love with); He comes home for Christmas accompanied by a gay friend with a wicked sense of humor, especially in reference to brother Dennis and his French wife. The third section focuses on a woman whom Fenno's father met in Greece, and who, after his death, is seeing Fenno in New York. Glass deals with the intersection of love, infidelity, AIDS, and infertility with remarkable clarity. Reminds me of early Iris Murdoch. (Anne Bosworth 9+)

Goldberg, Myla

Bee Season

Eliza Naumann is the only "normal" member of her slightly bizarre family. Her dad is a cantor at their synagogue and is heavily involved in Jewish mysticism, her mother is a distant, high-powered lawyer, and her brother is brilliant. When Eliza wins her school spelling bee the family dynamics start to shift; her dad believes that she is destined for greatness and everyone else starts to fall apart. What a great quirky book. Rent the movie *Spellbound* in conjunction with reading this book. (Ragan O'Malley 9+)

Greene, Graham

The Quiet American

I've long been a Graham Greene fan-just *The End of the Affair* and *The Power and the Glory* are sufficient to earn him my "great writer" designation-but I'd never read this novel until this year. And what a year to read it, with the uncanny comparisons between our escapades now in Iraq and this portrait of the beginning of our foray into Vietnam. It's a very wise and very disturbing read. (Jim Halverson 9+)

Haddon, Mark

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

What an extraordinary book. The narrator is fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone, who also happens to be autistic. Late one night he finds his neighbor's dog impaled with a garden fork. Initially he is accused of murdering the dog and as a result resolves to solve the crime. With the encouragement from a teacher at his school he writes a book about his experiences. It is truly amazing to spend 226 pages inside the mind of this autistic boy. (Ragan O'Malley 9+)

Halberstam, David

The Fifties

For those who are too young to remember the 50's and have always thought of it as a boring era. From the Eisenhower "secret government" to McDonald's to James Dean, it's a fascinating read. (Rebecca Johnson 10+)

Hawkes, Judith

Heart of a Witch

A compulsive page-turner that's as well written as it's erotic and scary. If you like witches and maladjusted teens, gobble this one up. You'll find yourself dancing widdershins. (Jane Avrich 11+)

Hemon, Aleksandar

Nowhere Man

Debut novel by a very impressive young Bosnian writer. Peters out in the end, but wonderfully engrossing for most of the way. (Michael Donohue 11th+)

Hill, Reginald

Death's Jest Book

Hill is undoubtedly the most erudite of mystery novelists. This one, as usual, is laced with poetry, literary puns, at least a dozen words you might find only in the Oxford English Dictionary. It's also a terrific read with characters who mature as they discover more of the truth about themselves. (Marty Skoble 9+)

Hustvedt, Siri

What I Loved

This is a hard book to characterize—at once a mystery, an elegy, a love story, and a family saga. The writing is beautiful and the conversations between the characters are moving and intriguing. (Jessica Noyes 11+)

Jin, Ha

Crazed

A depressing but strangely exhilarating novel about modern China—events leading to Tiananmen Square. I also liked his novel *Waiting*—but not as much. (Anonymous 9+)

Johnson, Wayne

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams

Striving and struggling of Joe Smallwood in the bleak and awe-inspiring landscape of Newfoundland. A saga filled with politics, estranged lovers, heartbreak and the drama of the place. The description of seal hunting is striking and startling—this alone makes the book worth reading. (Gail Brousal 9+)

Kantor, Melissa

Confessions of a Not It Girl

Addictive, hilarious, moving and very alive, this book absolutely rocks. The fact that it's marketed as a "young adult" novel will make you want to beat up your little sister and steal her copy. (Jane Avrich, Ages 9 to 90)

Keynes, John Maynard

The Economic Consequences of the Peace

Before he became a renowned economist of the 20th century, Keynes served as a British Treasury adviser and witnessed the creation of the Treaty of Versailles, the peace document of 1919 that demanded vengeful reparations of a defeated Germany. He forecast doom watching the Allied winners dismember the loser economically. He was right: Germany was ruined, and down the road came Hitler. In this outraged and brilliant book, Keynes chronicles the short-sighted, self-serving motives that created catastrophic foreign policy. America, Britain, and France are the major players. (Did someone say déjà vu?) (Ruth Chapman 10+)

Kidd, Sue Monk

The Secret Life of Bees

This is the story of Lily Owens, a young girl who lives in South Carolina in the 1960's. Lily is essentially being raised by Rosaleen, her "housekeeper/babysitter," but she is tormented by a memory of the day her mother died. Lily and Rosaleen run into trouble in town and escape to Tiburon and the home of three eccentric black female beekeepers. A marvelous story of friendship, love and sisterhood. (Ragan O'Malley 9+)

King, Laurie

The Game

This is the newest of King's Sherlock Holmes inspired series which reimagines the adventures of the famous sleuth through the eyes of his feisty female sidekick, Mary Russell. With Mary's wit and intelligence in tow this brand new Holmes adventure is anything but elementary. (Bibi Boynton 9+)

Klein, Arnold

Nagel

In this long poem set on the eve of the 2000 elections, the poet wanders into a coffee shop in New York City only to find out that the barista is none other than the devil. The ensuing dialogue is a critique of contemporary ethics and a challenging response to the superficiality of consumerism. Funny, brilliant, and unlike anything else you will ever read, *Nagel* is a poem worth seeking out. (Alex Levin 9+)

Kolbert, Elizabeth

The Prophet of Love and Other Tales of Power and Deceit

I've spent the past five years enjoying Elizabeth Kolbert's trenchant, hilarious articles in "The New Yorker" and am thrilled to be reading her recently published collection. In this age of rabid political idiocy, Kolbert's incisive profiles of New York politicians (including Giuliani, Bloomberg and Clinton) are a cool breeze on a sultry afternoon. Her nuanced explanation of how New York politics work (they don't) will inform and amuse lifelong politicians and neophytes alike. (Melissa Kantor 9+)

Krakauer, Jon

Into the Wild

In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all his cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*. (Laura Paley 9+)

Krishnamurti, J.

Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti

Anyone interested in reflecting upon words like time, movement, beauty, truth, knowledge, understanding, life and death, will love to journey with *Total Freedom*. The man is a rare and eloquent teacher and the book is filled with valuable insight on the nature of self— a true philosopher of light! "...truth is a pathless land..." (Micheline Gingras 10+)

Lawrence, D.H.

Lady Chatterly's Lover

If you can tolerate Lawrence's repressed excesses, this book still feels naughty after all these years. An interesting groundbreaker that reads like a potboiler. (Jane Avrich 10+)

Lee, Chang Rae

Aloft

Jerry Battle, semi-retired, views his world of Long Island from his plane, and distances himself from his family with similar detachment. I think Jerry Battle is Lee's most successful character; the change in topography of Long Island in the last seventy years is woven seamlessly into Lee's tale of Jerry as he learns to approach his world more intimately. (Gail Brousal 10+)

Lem, Stanislaw (translated by Michael Kandel)

The Futurological Congress: From the Memoirs of Ijon Tichy

Masterful, hilarious speculative fiction from one of the wryest writers going. A multiply-nested hallucinogenic excursion, characterized by wild linguistic and structural invention. (Ben Nachumi 11+)

Lethem, Jonathan

The Fortress of Solitude

Growing up in the 70's in Boerum Hill (before it was Boerum Hill.) Saint Ann's is mentioned. Race and class in Brooklyn. I thought it was superb. (Anonymous 10+)

Lively, Penelope

The Photograph

Compelling reading. The central figure is already dead when the novel begins, but the reader (along with each of the characters who populate this story) is captivated by Kath. The narrative examines past, present, and the wear and tear of time as it elegantly builds to the conclusion's *lacrimae rerum* note—a brilliant book. (Gabrielle Howard 11+)

Mahfouz, Naguib.

The Harafish

This is a remarkable book by a Nobel prize winning Egyptian author. The story traces seven generations of a single family as their fortunes rise and fall. (Dan Finkel 10+)

Maxwell, Glyn

Time's Fool

A masterful novel in verse (*terza rima* no less!) Yes it's "hell-on-wheels" as the young protagonist is trapped in time, at 17, doomed (for a crime he was enticed into committing) to ride the same train, stopping at his home town on Christmas Eve once every seven years. His quest for redemption, through death, through repentance, through love is beautifully, movingly rendered. The ending is brilliantly conceived. *The Flying Dutchman* meets Dante's *Inferno*, and we get a fascinating vehicle for objectively observing the changes wrought by the modern age. (Marty Skoble 10+)

McPherson, James

Drawn With The Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War

A highly readable, intelligent, compelling and substantive analysis of the "big picture" issues of the American Civil War. Why did the South lose? How did the South differ from the North? Race and Class, Uncle Tom's Cabin, was it about slavery, etc. Gets some fun out of disagreeing with other scholars on certain points, and convinced me that the Southern Cause wasn't just "States Rights" and the war was started by the South-- which was infringing on Northern States' rights, seceding, shooting, more militant, less industrialized, and less educated. The author is a Princeton professor and won the Pulitzer Prize for his *Battle Cry of Freedom*, also about the civil war. (Mike Roam 9+)

Milhauser, Stephen

Edwin Mullhouse: The Life and Death of an American Writer 1943-1954 by Jeffrey Cartwright

Simply an amazing piece of writing. First published in 1972, Milhauser's cult novel is both a parody of literary biography and a heartfelt evocation of childhood. (Matt Shapiro 11+)

Munro, Alice

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

If you can remember this mouthful of a title, read these stories. Each is a sensitive, well-turned and beautifully subtle tale that's a novella in itself. Superb, as is all of her work. (Jane Avrigh 9+)

Pearl, Matthew

The Dante Club

Some of the most gruesome murders you'll ever read about, utterly fascinating for crime fiction fans, mixed with a fascinating depiction of the rise of American literacy (Harvard vs. Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Lowell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, et al. in a battle over the first American translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*). Add to this, illuminating (and disturbing) insights into the American social scene (in Boston) after that most traumatic of oxymorons, The Civil War. The intellectual anxiety of the literati can become tiresome, but turn a few pages and the gore, the excitement, the hunt for a deranged and diabolical killer catch you up once again. (Marty Skoble 9+)

Pullman, Phillip

His Dark Materials (Trilogy: **The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, The Amber Spyglass**)

There seems to be no consensus about the appropriate age level for these books. Although the publisher lists them as

“teen,” one review called them “the last great fantasy trilogy of the 20th century.” Fantasy is the key word: If you like fantasy, these are excellent. Parallel worlds, daemons and a mysterious substance called Dust. (Good writing too.) (Judy Hawkes 9+)

Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich (translated by Vladimir Nabokov)

Eugene Onegin

Get the Nabokov translation! Nabokov loves Russian, loves Pushkin, and is a perfectionist in matters of style, drama, and wording. I don't read Russian, but Nabokov's essays (not surprisingly) assert that all the previous translations failed, mangling the text in order to try to live up to Pushkin's rhyme scheme. I read another translation to compare and it didn't come close to the subtlety of Nabokov's work, which ignores rhyme scheme and makes the story all the more moving and alive. (Mike Roam 10+)

Robinson, Elisabeth

The True and Outstanding Adventures of the Hunt Sisters

Robinson manages to combine great wit and often heartbreaking poignancy in this well-written first novel, that is both an insight into Hollywood and into a middle American family grappling with the grave illness of one of its members. (Amy Fontaine 9+)

Rhys, Jean

Wide Sargasso Sea

Written as a prelude to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys creates an identity for the otherwise shadowy figure of Rochester's mad Creole wife, in Antoinette—a beautiful, lonely Creole heiress who grew up in the West Indies on a decaying plantation. When she comes of age she is married off to an Englishman, and he takes her away from the only place she has ever known—a house with a garden where “the paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell.” She is driven to madness through a combination of his desire for her and his distaste and hate for everything that she represents. An intriguing tale full of ambiguity it is a sad tale of dispossession and dislocation. (Anne Bosworth 9+)

Schiff, Stacy

Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)

A thoroughly engaging book about Nabokov's wife, and (by association) Nabokov himself. The Nabokovs do a lot of running away—from Russia in 1919, from Berlin in 1937, from Paris in 1940. Recommended especially for students who have read *Pnin* or *Pale Fire*. (Michael Donohue 11+)

Schlosser, Eric

Fast Food Nation

This book provides an eye-opening and often horrifying look at the pervasive impact and insidious nature of the fast food industry. *Fast Food Nation* will likely have an effect on your eating habits (as it did on mine) but it explores far more than the dietary evils of fast food. Schlosser demonstrates how the industry has adversely impacted America's landscape, economy, and labor force. I think this book is essential reading, particularly for those who work with children. A burger will never be the same. (Chiara Peacock 9+)

Shelley, Percy Bysshe

The Witch of Atlas

How does a Romantic poet understand the operations of his own mind as he writes? Where does one idea end and a new one begin? To find out, you may want to consult Shelley's strange and beautiful poem. It reads like an invitation into the poetic imagination. (Alex Levin 9+)

Smiley, Jane

Horse Heaven

There are certainly worse problems a novel could have than characters to whom you grow overly attached. A plot this convoluted would be one, if only it weren't so hard to stop reading. There are elements of magic realism, astounding coincidences, unabashed anthropomorphism. Improbably, it all works. *Horse Heaven* is a joyous, big-hearted entertainment, a stakes winner by any measure, and for both horse lovers and fans of Smiley's dry, character-based wit, a cause for celebration on par with winning the Triple Crown. (Anne Bosworth 9+)

Smith, Alexander McCall

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency

This is not your standard mystery book. It is about the larger mystery of life—in Africa. It introduces us to Mma Ramotswe, her friends, her family, clients and country— and the landscape of the heart. (Nancy Reardon 9+)

Stendahl

The Charterhouse of Parma

Now this is a novel: page-turning action plus intelligent and sensitive word-paintings of history and power, in a light-handed style that is almost parody. Various characters have personalities with wild mixes of cleverly calculated political behavior and impulsive but sincere passionate love, making this something like an inside-out version of Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons*. (Mike Roam 10+)

Stroud, Jonathan

The Amulet of Samarkand

It's not the kid's book it's supposed to be; it's fun and very witty. The footnotes add a whole other dimension to one of the narrative voices, giving us an amusing running commentary on the complex nature of vanity. It's Harry Potter meets H.G. Wells: the world (England, of course) is run by magicians; their politics involve suppressing the freedoms of normal people, and the young hero of this first part of a trilogy is discovering the dark side of power. (Marty Skoble 9+)

Tartt, Donna

The Little Friend

Tartt (what a great name!) is really quite an extraordinary stylist, especially when she's writing about the south where she grew up. Harriet is a fantastic character—unpretty, smart and truly heroic—and the book begins and ends superbly, although the middle gets as soggy and slow as the swamp where it's set. A better editor could have cut out a good 200 pages, but it's still worth wading in the over-lush muck. (Jane Avrigh 9+)

Tremain, Rose

The Colour

Set in mid-nineteenth century New Zealand, Joseph Blackstone, his wife Harriet and Joseph's mother Lillian are in search of new horizons. An already tortuous life is upended by the appearance of gold. Only the women survive and grow in this harsh environment. (Gabrielle Howard 11+)

Truss, Lynne

Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation

This book is spectacular. The version I have is the British version (so, obviously, some rules are different), but I have heard that there will soon be an American version available. The title is from the following joke:

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air.

“Why?” asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

“I'm a panda,” he says, at the door. “Look it up.”

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.
Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.

So punctuation really does matter, even if it is only occasionally a matter of life and death. There are wonderful references in this book to organizations like the Apostrophe Preservation Society and numerous examples of misspelled words. One reviewer from "The New York Times" called it "rib-tickling" and I agree. It's really a FUN grammar book (who knew there was such a thing!). (Liz Craft 9+)

Tyler, Anne

The Amateur Marriage

One of her better ones. It tells the story of Pauline and Michael married in a rush before Michael, overcome by a flush of patriotism, goes off to war in 1942 without a clue. After a short stint at fighting, this stoical, rather phlegmatic man, is shot in the butt by another GI and sent home with a shattered leg. Tyler skillfully illuminates the marriage in her inimitable fashion. The story is sharply told, although Tyler seems to run out of steam at the very end. (Anne Bosworth. 11+)

Vanbrugh, Sir John

The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger

Imagine going to the theatre only to find your own life portrayed in the drama. That is the premise, or at least one of the many premises of Vanbrugh's comedy of manners. Complex, surreal, and frequently beautiful, Vanbrugh challenges prevailing mores about the value of remaining true to the ones you love. This neglected play is ready for a new readership! (Alex Levin 9+)

Vanderbes, Jennifer

Easter Island

With the interwoven stories of two women, 60 years apart, this novel begins in 1912 when Elsa marries an anthropologist, an old friend of her father's, in order to make life financially secure for herself and her younger sister, Alice. Together, they travel to Easter Island, where her husband, Edward, plans to study the giant Moai sculptures. It is Elsa who discovers the reasons behind the destruction of the giant statues. Sixty years later botanist, Greer Farraday, mourning for her husband and suffering from the knowledge that he has plagiarized her work before his death, picks up where Elsa left off. The two compelling characters' stories of betrayal are equally engrossing. This historical novel deftly combines romance, warfare, and science. (Anne Bosworth. 10+)

Vonnegut, Kurt

Cat's Cradle

One of Vonnegut's best. Recommended especially for students who enjoyed *Slaughterhouse-Five*. (Michael Donohue 9+)

Waugh, Evelyn

A Handful of Dust

An excellent comedy set in interwar London (and, strangely, South America). It has one of the greatest, most chilling endings of any novel ever. (Michael Donohue 11+)

Thanks to everyone who contributed!

Happy Reading!

