

Senior Summer Reading List 2009

REQUIRED READING

Students will read two books this summer, one specified by English teachers and one that may be chosen from the list provided.

A. For English class: Please read the following book and complete the writing assignment below.

Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*

From the two items below, choose one and write about 250 words, typed or handwritten, to demonstrate your knowledge and grasp of the book's themes and points.

1. Find a significant passage and show specifically how that passage helps a reader understand the whole book.

2. Find a gap that you think should be filled. Write a scene or episode to fill that gap. At the start of your episode, say exactly and explicitly where the episode belongs (give a page number).

You are expected to turn in your notes to the English department head at registration. Please bring *In the Lake of the Woods* to the first English class meeting. If you have questions regarding the English reading call Louise Schwingel at 413-498-5023.

B. For the opening day of school: Read one book from the following list of titles (teachers who recommended them are in parentheses, along with annotations if supplied). On one page, write up answers to the following questions, and be prepared to bring the notes and the book to class and deliver these answers in an oral report on the first day of school.

1. Why did you choose this book?

2. What did you like or dislike about the book?

3. Select one passage from the book that you think is particularly well written and representative of what readers can expect from the book.

To learn more about the books on this list, visit nmhschool.org/academics.

From students:

Catch-22, Joseph Heller (I recommend this book because it has to do with the logical idea behind a catch-22, a no win situation, in which two or more conditions require each other to exist, a logical paradox. The catch-22 coined in this book is that during the war, any bomber pilot that wanted to get out of bombing duty, to be discharged, may ask to be discharged if they are insane. This is illogical based on Heller's idea of a catch-22, because any man who asks to be discharged due to their insanity

are in fact, sane. It's a fictional, historical novel published in the 60's, and it's something I read over the summer that I enjoyed a lot. Themes include the idea of sanity and insanity in war, the power of government, the corruption of government, and inevitability of certain aspects of war. Crazy book. Patrick Norton '11)

Guns, Germs, and Steel, and *Collapse*, Jared Diamond (They are both lengthy books but contain a world of information. If you can read these two books you won't need to take world history class. From the beginnings of agriculture to the modern times, the author describes how and why the Europeans ended up dominating the world at the end of 20th century. This book is NOT RACIST nor does it suggest that other people are somehow inferior. It simply summarizes 25,000 year human history into a few hundred pages using remarkably easy-to-understand concepts. Jun Ho Sung '11)

Of Love and Shadows, Isabel Allende (Kendall Sercombe '10)

Pattern Recognition, William Gibson (The plot is very complex but very interesting and explores future technology. Priscilla Hume '10)

The Fourth Hand, John Irving (This is a complex, odd, and very well-written book. Priscilla Hume, '10)

The Satanic Verses, Salman Rushdie

Lot's Cradle

The Red Tent, Anita Diamant

The Brief and Wonderful Life of Oscar Wao, Junot Diaz

The Lorax, Dr. Seuss

From the **history and social sciences** department:

Wild Swans, Jung Chang (This is the story of three generations of the author Jung Chang, her mother, and her grandmother. These women bring life and meaning to China's twentieth century. The book begins with the end of Imperial China, through Japanese occupation, the Nationalist movement, the Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Communists, Communist takeover, Mao's Great Leap Forward and the starvation of millions in the process, the Cultural Revolution and the re-education camps, to Mao Zedong's death and Jung's own personal flight to Britain to continue her education. *Wild Swans* may be at times difficult to read, due to vivid and sometimes graphic accounts of several events. .)

Killer Angels, Michael Shaara (This novel by Michael Shaara (1974) reveals more about the Battle of Gettysburg than any piece of learned nonfiction on the same subject. Michael Shaara's account of the three most important days of the Civil War features deft characterizations of all of the main actors, including Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Buford, and Hancock. The most inspiring figure in the book, however, is Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, whose 20th Maine regiment of volunteers held the Union's left flank on the second day of the battle. This unit's bravery at Little Round Top helped turn the tide of the war against the rebels. There are also plenty of maps, which convey a complete sense of what happened July 1-3, 1863. Reading about the past is rarely so much fun as on these pages.)

All the Kings' Men, Robert Penn Warren (Arguably the best American political novel, this book has been used many times with great success in Jim Shea's American Government class here at NMH.

Loosely based on the 1930's Louisiana politician Huey Long, *All The King's Men* is beautifully written and has a captivating plot. Corruption, murder and intrigue... this book has it all and is well worth a read.)

From the **library** staff:

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck (From *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*: "Published in 1939. Set during the Great Depression, it traces the migration *of* an Oklahoma Dust Bowl family to California and their subsequent hardships as migrant farm workers. Upon publication, the well-researched novel provoked controversy for exposing the injustices of the migrant labor system. It won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940.")

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age, Kevin Boyle (From *Publishers' Weekly*: "History professor has brilliantly rescued from obscurity a fascinating chapter in American history that had profound implications for the rise of the Civil Rights movement. With a novelist's craft, Boyle opens with a compelling prologue portraying the migration of African-Americans in the 1920s to the industrial cities of the North, where they sought a better life and economic opportunity. This stirring section, with echoes of Dickens's *Hard Times*, sets the stage for the ordeal of Dr. Ossian Sweet, who moves with his young family to a previously all-white Detroit neighborhood. When the local block association incites a mob to drive Sweet back to the ghetto, he gathers friends and acquaintances to defend his new home with a deadly arsenal. The resulting shooting death of a white man leads to a sensational murder trial, featuring the legendary Clarence Darrow, fresh from the Scopes Monkey trial, defending Sweet, his family and their associates. This popular history, which explores the politics of racism and the internecine battles within the nascent Civil Rights movement, grips right up to the stunning jaw-dropper of an ending.")

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party, M. T. Anderson (From *Kirkus Review*: "A historical novel of prodigious scope, power and insight. . . . This is the Revolutionary War seen at its intersection with slavery through a disturbingly original lens.")

From the **mathematics** department

The Road, Cormac McCarthy (A searing, post-apocalyptic novel destined to become McCarthy's masterpiece. A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there.)

Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (*The Kite Runner* follows the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. As children in the relatively stable Afghanistan of the early 1970s, the boys are inseparable. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted.)

The Hungry Tide, Amitav Ghosh (Man-eating tigers, river dolphins, crocodiles, mangrove forests, lunar rainbows, and the great cosmic metronome of the sweeping tides that inundate the Sundarbans, a vast archipelago in the Bay of Bengal, these are the marvels Ghosh orchestrates in this entrancing tale about the conflict between wildness and civilization, thus following his internationally acclaimed historical saga, *The Glass Palace* (2001), with another triumph of gorgeous writing, intelligent romance, and keen philosophical inquiries.)

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle, David Wroblewski (Born mute, speaking only in sign, Edgar Sawtelle leads an idyllic life with his parents on their farm in remote northern Wisconsin. For generations, the Sawtelles have raised and trained a fictional breed of dog whose thoughtful companionship is epitomized by Almondine, Edgar's lifelong friend and ally. But with the unexpected return of Claude, Edgar's paternal uncle, turmoil consumes the Sawtelles' once peaceful home. When Edgar's father dies suddenly, Claude insinuates himself into the life of the farm--and into Edgar's mother's affections.)

A Tour of Calculus, David Berlinski (Peter Snedecor)

The Climb: Tragic Ambitions on Everest, Anatoli Boukreev, (Written by the head guide from the 1996 Everest Expedition, this narrative challenges much of Jon Krakauer's account in his book *Into Thin Air*. John Christiansen)

Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino (Each story is about an imagined city and is about two pages long. Mark Yates)

The Eyre Affair, Jasper Fforde (Simply put, one of the coolest books I have ever read. It takes you to a whole new world that exists in our world. John Christiansen)

Fermat's Enigma, Simon Singh (Peter Snedecor)

City of Dreams: A Novel of Nieuw Amsterdam and Early Manhattan, Beverly Swerling (This is an excellent historical novel that follows the development of New York City through the lives of one family. John Christiansen)

Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981 - 1987, Bob Woodward (This is a fascinating look at the CIA in the Regan era. John Christiansen)

From the **performing arts** department:

Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters, Wally Lamb, ed. (Short stories and journals by women in the York Correctional Facility. Marianne Lockwood)

Bel Canto, Ann Patchett (A gripping story of a group of notable people from different countries who are taken hostage at a state party in South America. Sheila Heffernon)

Girls Like Us: Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon -- And the Journey of a Generation, Sheila Weller (This is the story of three remarkable women who have all made important inroads during the late fifties, sixties and seventies in a mostly male-dominated industry. Weller makes their stories come alive with simply, but compelling prose. Reading this, one gets some interesting insights into the world of music, and the culture of the sixties in the US.)

From the **physical education and athletics** department:

Bang the Drum Slowly, Mark Harris

The Natural, Bernard Malamud

From the **religious studies** department:

Nickle and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, Barbara Ehrenreich (A noted social critic explores poverty in the US by spending a year trying to live on menial jobs.)

The Dispossessed, Ursula K. Le Guin (This science fiction classic contrasts two worlds where different social systems have evolved.)

The Palace Walk, Nagib Mahfouz (The first of the Cairo trilogy by this Nobel laureate tells the story of a traditional Egyptian family in the early part of the 20th century.)

The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth, E. O. Wilson (The noted Harvard scientist seeks common ground with evangelical Christians in a letter about preserving biodiversity.)

From the **science** department:

Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynmann, Richard Feynmann (Craig Hefner)

Unbowed: A Memoir, Wangari Maathai (Becca Leslie)

Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser (Laura Christiansen)

Rainbow's End, Verner Vinge (Jay Ward)

The Future of Life, Edward O. Wilson

Acquiring Genomes, Lynn Margulis

Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth, James Lovelock

The World Without Us, Alan Weisman

From the **visual arts** department:

Daybooks, Edward Weston (For more than 15 years, Edward Weston kept a diary in which he recorded his struggle to understand himself, his society, and his medium.)

A Gathering of Old Men, Ernest Gaines (Set on a Louisiana sugar plantation during the 1970s, this novel is about the death of a Cajun farmer that results in racial tension and inspires a group of elderly men and a young white woman to take a stand against the authorities and the family of the murdered farmer.)

Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment (Excellent book on how meaningful learning needs to be a lifelong journey.)

The Measure of a Man, Sidney Poitier (Inspiring autobiography of a self-made man who rose from a life of poverty to become one of the most respected screen actors and directors of his generation.)

Creative Authenticity, Ian Roberts (Encourages artists to trust their own instincts and guides them toward creating artwork that is true to their selves.)

Prep, Curtis Sittenfeld (This novel about adolescent angst takes place in a prestigious Massachusetts boarding school.)

From the **world languages** department:

Chinese

Beginning Level

Mandarin Chinese Phrase Book

The Legend of White Snake, Zhao Qingge (ENG-CHI version)

The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan

Intermediate and Advanced Level

Selected Readings of Contemporary Chinese Short Stories, Liu Lianli

Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Zhao Qingge

The Dragon Lover and Other Chinese Proverbs, Yong-sheng Xuan

French

Intermediate Level

Le Petit Prince, Antoine de St-Exupéry

Voltaïques, Short stories, Ousmane Sembene (Senegal)

Advanced Level

Le gone du Chaâba, Aziz Begag (Algérie/France)

Le Bouc Emissaire (the Scapegoat), Daniel Pennac (France)

Latin

Cicero, Anthony Everitt (A biography of the 1st century BC politician and orator whose writings provide us with much of we know about the Rome of Caesar.)

Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found, Mary Beard (A description by a leading classicist of the every-day life in Pompeii using the archaeological record preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. .)

Fire From Heaven, Mary Renault (A biographical novel about the childhood and youth of Alexander the Great.)

Claudius, The God, Robert Graves

Spanish

Cool Salsa - Bilingual Poems

Red Hot Salsa - Bilingual Poems

Intermediate Level

El Libro de los Abrazos, Eduardo Galeano

Poemas y Adivinanzas, Gloria Fuertes

Advanced Level

La Casa en Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros

Los Cuentos de Eva Luna, Isabel Allende