



Suggested Reading List

It is our pleasure to share with you an updated collection of our favorite books, fiction and non-fiction, to expand upon the books your teachers assign.

For years, we have advocated the enormous value of literature as we believe that avid readers become more proficient writers and that reading broadens our perspective, developing social maturity.

We trust that in these pages you will find your way to hours of happy reading!

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The Dunbar Team

(Abstracts borrowed and pieced together from Amazon.com and Kirkus Reviews.)

FICTION

All the Light We Cannot See

by Anthony Doerr

Doerr presents us with two intricate stories, both of which take place during World War II; late in the novel, inevitably, they intersect. In August 1944, Marie-Laure LeBlanc is a blind 16-year-old living in the walled port city of Saint-Malo in Brittany and hoping to escape the effects of Allied bombing. We also meet Werner Pfennig, an orphan raised in the Children's House outside Essen, in Germany, who developed an obsession with radio transmitters and receivers. Werner is put on a team trying to track down illegal radio transmissions, some of which Marie-Laure and her uncle are responsible for. There is lots of suspense, some good twists, and very appealing characters in this fine book. 2014. 531 pp.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay

by Michael Chabon

Brooklyn-born Sam Clay and his refugee cousin Josef Kavalier forge their way into the golden age of the comic book against the frightening backdrop of quickly-spreading Nazi occupation. A triumph of originality, imagination, and storytelling, this exuberant novel begins in New York City in 1939. A young escape artist and budding magician named Joe Kavalier arrives on the doorstep of his cousin, Sammy Clay. While the long shadow of Hitler falls across Europe, America is happily in thrall to the Golden Age of comic books. Sammy, looking for a way to cash in on the craze, finds the ideal partner in the aloof, artistically gifted Joe, and together they embark on a huge adventure. From the shared fears, dreams, and desires of two teenage boys, they spin comic book tales of the heroic, fascist-fighting Escapist and the beautiful, mysterious Luna Moth, otherworldly mistress of the night. What a fun book this is! 2012. 684 pp.

Americanah

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

To the women in the hair-braiding salon, Ifemelu seems to have everything a Nigerian immigrant in America could desire, but the culture shock, hardships, and racism she's endured have left her feeling like she has "cement in her soul." Smart, irreverent, and outspoken, she reluctantly left Nigeria on a college scholarship. Her aunty Uju, the pampered mistress of a general in Lagos, is now struggling on her own in the U.S., trying to secure her medical license. Ifemelu's discouraging job search brings on desperation and depression until a babysitting gig leads to a cashmere-and-champagne romance with a wealthy white man. Astonished at the labyrinthine racial strictures she's confronted with, Ifemelu, defining herself as a "Non-American Black," launches an audacious, provocative, and instantly popular blog in which she explores what she calls Racial Disorder Syndrome. Author Adichie has an omnivorous eye for resonant detail; a gift for authentic characters; pyrotechnic wit; and deep humanitarianism. 2014. 588 pp.

Animal Farm

by George Orwell

Old Major, a boar, calls a clandestine meeting of the animals of Manor Farm. He shares his dream of a farm governed by all of the animals, where they would all be free and equal, working to support themselves instead of their master, Mr. Jones. This classic work tells the simple and tragic story of what happens when the oppressed farm animals rebel. A fable of symbolic value, it is a satirical representation of the Russian revolution and the appeal and pitfalls of socialism. 1946. 140 pp.

The Art of Fielding: A Novel

by Chad Harbach

The title is a reference to baseball, but Harbach's concern with sports is more than just a cheap metaphor. *The Art of Fielding* explores relationships--between friends, family, and lovers—and the unpredictable forces that complicate them. There's an unintended affair, a post-graduate plan derailed by rejection letters, a marriage dissolved by honesty, and at the center of the book, the single baseball error that sets all of these events into motion. *The Art of Fielding* is somehow both confident and intimate, simple yet deeply moving. It's pure fun and the pages fly. 2012. 544 pp.

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress

by Dai Sijie

The story of two Chinese teenagers who have been sent to a small village for “re education” during Mao’s Cultural Revolution. Sons of doctors and dentists, their days are now spent muscling buckets of excrement up the mountainside and mining coal. The boys obtain a box of translated Western classics. Knowledge and prose gained from these books will soon delight an itinerant tailor’s daughter who will learn more than she anticipated. A love story as well as a fascinating historical perspective on this period in China’s history. 2001. 201 pp.

Beloved

by Toni Morrison

In the troubled years following the Civil War, the spirit of a murdered child haunts the Ohio home of a former slave. This angry, destructive ghost breaks mirrors, leaves its fingerprints in cake icing, and generally makes life difficult for Sethe and her family; nevertheless, the woman finds the haunting oddly comforting for the spirit is that of her own dead baby, nevernamed, thought of only as *Beloved*. A dead child, a runaway slave and a terrible secret are the central concerns of Toni Morrison’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book. 1987. 278 pp.

Brick Lane

by Monica Ali

Brick Lane chronicles the life of Nazneen, a Bangladeshi girl so sickly at birth that the midwife at first declares her stillborn. At 18 her parents arrange a marriage to Chanu, a Bengali immigrant twice her age—who turns out to be less than an ideal husband. Nazneen accepts her fate, which seems to be the main life lesson taught by the women in her family. "If God wanted us to ask questions," her mother tells her, "he would have made us men." Over the next decade-and-a-half Nazneen grows into a strong, confident woman who doesn't defy fate so much as bend it to her will. This book is full of wonderful, colorful characters led by Nazneen, one of the more memorable heroines to come along in a long time. If Dickens or Trollope were loosed upon contemporary London, this is exactly the sort of novel they would cook up. 2004. 432 pp.

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

by Junot Diaz

The titular Oscar is a 300-pound-plus "lovesick ghetto nerd" with zero game (except for Dungeons & Dragons) who cranks out pages of fantasy fiction with the hopes of becoming a Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien. The book is also the story of a multi-generational family curse that courses through the book, leaving troubles and tragedy in its wake. This dynamic, entertaining, and achingly heartfelt book will stick with you long after you're done reading it. The fast-moving narrative is funny, hip, tragic, soulful, and bursting with desire. 2008. 339 pp.

Catch-22

by Joseph Heller

Set in the closing months of World War II in an American bomber squadron off Italy, Catch22 is the story of a bombardier named Yossarian, who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he hasn't even met keep trying to kill him. Catch-22 is a microcosm of the twentieth century world as it might look to someone dangerously sane. It is a novel that lives and moves and grows with astonishing power and vitality – a masterpiece of our time. It is outrageously funny and strangely affecting. It is totally original. 1961. 460 pp.

The Chocolate War

by Robert Cormier

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the whole school comes apart at the seams. To some, Jerry is a hero, but to others, he becomes a scapegoat – a target for their pent-up hatred. And Jerry? He's just trying to stand up for what he believes, but perhaps there is no way for him to escape becoming a pawn in this game of control; students are pitted against other students, fighting for honor – or are they fighting for their lives? 1974. 191 pp.

The Circle

by Dave Eggers

Set in the not-so-distant future, this novel centers on Mae Holland who takes a job at the Circle, a rapidly growing and powerful internet company with a utopian culture and cult like following. She soon finds herself entangled in a series of events that bring issues of social networking, privacy, memory, and freedom to the forefront. Mae can't believe her luck, her great fortune to work for the most influential company in the world—even as life beyond the campus grows distant, even as a strange encounter with a colleague leaves her shaken, even as her role at the Circle becomes increasingly public. What begins as the captivating story of one woman's ambition and idealism soon becomes a heart-racing novel of suspense, raising questions about memory, history, privacy, democracy, and the limits of human knowledge. 2014. 497 pp.

Cold Mountain

by Charles Frazier

A tale of a wounded Confederate soldier who walks away from the ravages of the Civil War and back home to his prewar sweetheart, Ada, who has been struggling alone on Cold Mountain. His travels through the devastated landscape of the South interweave with Ada's struggle to revive her father's farm. As their lives converge at the close of the war, the pair confronts their transformed world. Frazier's elegant language takes center stage in this novel. 1998. 474 pp.

Cry, the Beloved Country

by Alan Paton

Cry, the Beloved Country is a beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s. The book is written with such empathy and understanding that to read it is to share fully in the gravity of the characters' situations. It both touches your heart deeply and inspires a renewed faith in the dignity of mankind. Cry, the Beloved Country is a classic tale, passionately African, timeless and universal. 1948. 320 pp.

Cutting for Stone

by Abraham Verghese

You'll be swept into this riveting tale about two generations of Indian doctors working in Ethiopia through tumultuous times. Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death 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. Moving from Addis Ababa to New York City and back again, Cutting for Stone is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine and ordinary miracles--and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined. 2010. 667 pp.

A Death in the Family

by James Agee

On a sultry summer night in 1915, Jay Follet leaves his house in Knoxville, Tennessee, to tend to his father, whom he believes is dying. The summons turns out to be a false alarm but on his way back to his family, Jay has a car accident and is killed instantly. Dancing back and forth in time and braiding the viewpoints of Jay's wife, brother and young son, Rufus, Agee creates an overwhelmingly powerful novel of innocence, tenderness and loss that should be read aloud for the sheer music of its prose. 1957. 310 pp.

Ethan Frome

by Edith Wharton

Ethan Frome, a poor, downtrodden New England farmer is trapped in a loveless marriage to his invalid wife, Zeena. His ambition and intelligence are trodden by Zeena's cold, conniving character. When Zeena's young cousin Mattie arrives to help care for her, Ethan is immediately taken by Mattie's warm, vivacious personality. They fall desperately in love as he realizes how much is missing from his life and marriage. Tragically, their love is doomed by Zeena's ever lurking presence and by the social conventions of the day. 1911. 181 pp.

The Goldfinch

by Donna Tartt

Theo Decker, a 13-year-old New Yorker, miraculously survives an accident that kills his mother. Abandoned by his father, Theo is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. Bewildered by his strange new home on Park Avenue, disturbed by schoolmates who don't know how to talk to him, and tormented above all by his longing for his mother, he clings to the one thing that reminds him of her: a small, mysteriously captivating painting that ultimately draws Theo into the underworld of art. As an adult, Theo moves easily between the drawing rooms of the rich and the dusty labyrinth of an antiques store where he works. He is alienated and in love--and at the center of a narrowing, ever more dangerous circle. The Goldfinch is a mesmerizing, stay-up-all-night tale, an old-fashioned story of loss and obsession, survival and self-invention, and the ruthless machinations of fate. 2015. 771 pp.

The Hate You Give

by Angie Thomas

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life. With smooth but powerful prose delivered in Starr's natural, emphatic voice, finely nuanced characters, and intricate and realistic relationship dynamics, this novel will have readers rooting for Starr and opening their hearts to her friends and family. 2017. 464 pp.

Heart of Darkness

by Joseph Conrad

In Conrad's haunting tale, Marlow, a seaman and wanderer, recounts his physical and psychological journey in search of the mysterious trader Kurtz. Traveling to the heart of the African continent, he discovers how Kurtz has gained his position of power and influence over the local people. Marlow's struggle to fathom his experience involves him in a radical questioning of not only his own nature and values but the nature and values of his society. 1902. 112 pp.

The Killer Angels

by Michael Shaar

This novel 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. 1974. 355 pp.

The Kitchen Boy: A Novel of the Last Tsar

by Robert Alexander

A fascinating story of the kitchen boy, Leonka, who served Russia's last Tsar and his family, as their world crumbled around them. Because of his lowly position in the household, he was able to see and hear secret things, which he keeps to himself until decades later, knowing he is ready to die, he reveals all he knows about the imperial family and their horrific death. The plot is beautifully rendered, with one final jaw-dropping and satisfying twist. 2004. 229 pp.

Life After Life

by Kate Atkinson

Atkinson delivers a wildly inventive novel about Ursula Todd, born in 1910 and doomed to die and be reborn over and over again. She drowns, falls off a roof, and is beaten to death by an abusive husband but is always reborn back into the same loving family, sometimes with the knowledge that allows her to escape past poor decisions, sometimes not. As Atkinson subtly delineates all the pathways a life or a country might take, she also delivers a harrowing set piece on the Blitz as Ursula, working as a warden on a rescue team, encounters horrifying tableaux encompassing mangled bodies and whole families covered in ash, preserved just like the victims of Pompeii. From her deeply human characters to her comical dialogue to her meticulous plotting, Atkinson is working at the very top of her game. 2013. 560 pp.

Life of Pi

by Yann Martel

Pi Patel is the son of a zoo-keeper. When he is sixteen, his family emigrates from India to North America aboard a Japanese cargo ship, along with their zoo animals bound for new homes. When the ship sinks, Pi must use his cunning and knowledge to survive 227 days in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger. Imaginative and unforgettable Life of Pi is a magical reading experience, an endless blue expanse of storytelling about adventure, survival, and ultimately, faith. 2001. 350 pp.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

by Ken Kesey

In this classic novel of the 1960s, Kesey's hero is Randle Patrick McMurphy, a boisterous, brawling, fun-loving rebel who swaggers into the world of a mental hospital and takes over. A lusty, life-affirming fighter, McMurphy rallies the other patients around him by challenging the dictatorship of Big Nurse. But this defiance, which starts as a sport, soon develops into a grim struggle, an all-out war between two relentless opponents: Nurse Ratched, backed by the full power of authority, and McMurphy, who has only his own indomitable will. What happens when Nurse Ratched uses her ultimate weapon against McMurphy provides the story's shocking climax. 1962. 272 pp.

One Hundred Years of Solitude

by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Macondo is a fictional Colombian village in which civil war rages, hearts break, dreams shatter and lives are lost. Over the course of one hundred years, the rise and descent of the Buendia family is chronicled by a mysterious gypsy. A circling mythical history with many biblical themes and an extraordinary example of magic realism. 1970. 432 pp.

The Plot Against America

by Philip Roth

Charles A. Lindbergh became a national hero after his solo Atlantic crossing; he also was accused by some of being a Nazi sympathizer. Roth creates a world where Charles A. Lindbergh defeats FDR in the 1940 presidential election and frames the story in his own Jewish family history in New Jersey. Incorporating Lindbergh's actual radio address in which he accused the British and the Jews of trying to force America into a foreign war, Roth's Lindbergh enacts new laws and creates an atmosphere of religious hatred. Historical figures such as Walter Winchell, Fiorello La Guardia and Henry Ford inhabit this suspenseful and plausible fiction, which illustrates how easily people can be persuaded by self-interest to abandon morality. 2004. 400 pp.

The Poisonwood Bible

by Barbara Kingsolver

A missionary family from Georgia heads to the Belgian Congo in 1959. The family struggles with their new life in the remote village of Kilanga. With Baptist minister Nathan Price's inflexible approach to both the Congolese and his family, his wife and daughters are overwhelmed yet eventually enlightened by their changed circumstances. 1998. 576 pp.

A Prayer for Owen Meany

by John Irving

Set in a 1950-60s New England prep school town, Owen Meany is an eccentric dwarfish boy, who accidentally kills his best friend's mother with a foul ball at a Little League game. Owen believes that everything that happens is the will of God while also believing that he is actually an instrument of God. The scene of the doltish headmaster driving a trashed VW down the school's marble staircase is a marvelous set piece. So are the Christmas pageants Owen stars in. But it's all, as Highlights magazine used to put it, "fun with a purpose." When Owen plays baby Jesus in the pageants, and glimpses a tombstone with his death date while enacting A Christmas Carol, the slapstick doesn't cancel the fact that he was born to be martyred. A wonderful, unforgettable book. 1989. 610 pp.

The Red Badge of Courage

by Stephen Crane

More the story of the battle that rages inside the hero, Henry Fleming, than of that between Confederate and Union soldiers, this novel is a psychological study of fear. Crane's genius is as much apparent in his sharp, colorful prose as in his ironic portrayal of an episode of war so intense, so immediate, so real that the terror of battle becomes our own in a unique masterpiece. Many believe modern American fiction began with Stephen Crane. 1895. 245 pp.

Remains of the Day

by Kazuo Ishiguro

A character study of Stevens, an aging English butler who has spent thirty years in service at Darlington Hall, decades that span the Second World War Stevens' duties and his personal desires are in profound conflict, as he believes that a dignified butler never lets go of his professionalism despite any personal circumstances. This beautifully written novel delicately describes his attempts to reconcile his feelings as he lives in two very different worlds in the manor house. 1989. 256 pp.

Small Things Like These

by Claire Keegan:

In the winter of 1985, Irishman Bill Furlong finds himself increasingly troubled. A coal and timber merchant, he is happily married and the father of five daughters with a successful business. But the scars of his childhood linger: His mother had him while still a teenager, and he never knew his father. A series of troubling encounters at the local convent, which also functions as a "training school for girls" and laundry business, disrupts Furlong's sedate life. Readers familiar with the history of Ireland's Magdalen laundries, institutions in which "fallen women" were incarcerated and often died, will immediately recognize the circumstances entrapping desperate young women, but Furlong does not immediately understand what he is witnessing. Keegan, a prizewinning Irish short story writer, says a great deal in very few words to extraordinary effect in this short novel. The Magdalen laundries, this novel implicitly argues, survived not only due to the cruelty of the people who ran them, but also because of the fear and complicity of those who were willing to look aside rather than resist. A stunning feat of storytelling and moral clarity.

Where the Crawdads Sing

by Delia Owens

For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life—until the unthinkable happens. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps. 2018. 384 pp.

SCIENCE FICTION

1984

by George Orwell

Published in 1949, this is Orwell's dark vision of the future. The story takes place in 1984 and depicts an imaginary era when a totalitarian state controls and censors every aspect of life, even people's thoughts. An apocalyptic satire where the State is ruled by the Party; its leader and dictator is Big Brother. The main character, Winston Smith, is determined to remain human under inhuman circumstances. 1949. 328 pp.

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

This satirical novel is set in the year 632 AF (After Ford), and is a grim picture of a world in which human embryos are developed in bottles and conditioned to collectivism and passivity. A 'savage' is found in New Mexico and imported as an experiment. This classic novel is considered Huxley's enduring masterpiece. 1932. 288 pp.

Ender's Game

by Orson Scott Card

Ender Wiggin is a very bright young boy with a powerful skill. One of a group of children bred to be military geniuses and save Earth from an inevitable attack by aliens, known here as "buggers," Ender becomes unbeatable in war games and seems poised to lead Earth to triumph over the buggers. Meanwhile, his brother and sister plot to wrest power from Ender. Twists, surprises and interesting characters elevate this novel into status as a real page-turner. 1985. 226 pp.

Fahrenheit 451

by Ray Bradbury

Bradbury's classic, frightening vision of the future: firemen don't put out fires – they start them in order to bum books. This vividly painted society holds up the appearance of happiness as the highest goal, a place where trivial information is good, and knowledge and ideas are bad. Fire Captain Beatty explains it this way: "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs.... Don't give them slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy." 1953. 179 pp.

The Handmaid's Tale

by Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood writes about life in the imaginary Republic of Gilead, a country formed within the borders of what was formerly the United States, and explores the consequences of the reversal of women's rights as a group of conservative religious extremists take power. The story is narrated by Offred, a Handmaid in this new society whose ruling regime classifies women and their prescribed roles. Atwood uses her novel to explore the themes of the subjugation of women and the ways in which women gain and use power. 1986. 311 pp.

The Hunger Games

by Suzanne Collins

This science fiction story introduces sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives in a post apocalyptic world in the country of Panem where North America once existed. Panem is governed by a central city called the Capitol which televises the Hunger Games annually in which each of 12 districts must offer up one boy and one girl to face the children from other districts in a fight to the death. The novel asks where does one find compassion when everything in your experience is pushing you to ruthlessness? 2008. 374 pp.

The Parable of the Sower

by Octavia Butler

When unattended environmental and economic crises lead to social chaos, not even gated communities are safe. In a night of fire and death, Lauren Olamina, an empath and the daughter of a minister, loses her family and home and ventures out into the unprotected American landscape. But what begins as a flight for survival soon leads to something much more: a startling vision of human destiny...and the birth of a new faith, as Lauren becomes a prophet carrying the hope of a new world and a revolutionary idea christened "Earthseed". This chilling story will hold you in its grip! 2000. 352 pp.

Ready Player One

by Ernest Cline

In the not-so-distant future the world has turned into a very bleak place; luckily there is OASIS, a virtual reality world that is a vast online utopia. People can plug into OASIS to play, go to school, earn money, and even meet other people (or at least they can meet their avatars), and for protagonist Wade Watts it certainly beats passing the time in his grim, poverty-stricken real life. Along with millions of other world-wide citizens, Wade dreams of finding three keys left behind by James Halliday, the now-deceased creator of OASIS and the richest man to have ever lived. The keys are rumored to be hidden inside OASIS, and whoever finds them will inherit Halliday's fortune. But Halliday has not made it easy. And there are real dangers in this virtual world. Stuffed to the gills with action, puzzles, nerdy romance, and 80s nostalgia, this high energy cyberquest is an addictive, fully satisfying read. 2012. 400 pp.

Station Eleven

by Emily St. John Mandel

Station Eleven concerns the before and after of a catastrophic virus called the Georgia Flu that wipes out most of the world's population. On one side of the timeline are the survivors, mainly a traveling troupe of musicians and actors and a stationary group stuck for years in an airport. On the other is a professional actor, who dies in the opening pages while performing King Lear, his ex-wives and his oldest friend, glimpsed in flashbacks. There's also the man—a paparazzo-turned-paramedic—who runs to the stage from the audience to try to revive him, a Samaritan role he will play again in later years. Mandel's depiction of both the tough hand-to-mouth existence of a devastated world and the almost unchallenged life of the celebrity is spare. The intrigue arises when the troupe is threatened by a cult and breaks into disparate offshoots struggling toward a common haven. Woven through these little odysseys, and cunningly linking the cushy past and the perilous present, is a figure called the Prophet. Indeed, Mandel spins a satisfying web of coincidence and kismet while providing numerous strong moments, as when one of the last planes lands at the airport and seals its doors in self-imposed quarantine, standing for days on the tarmac as those outside try not to ponder the nightmare within. Another strand of that web is a well-traveled copy of a sci-fi graphic novel drawn by the actor's first wife, depicting a space station seeking a new home after aliens take over Earth—another artistic take on man's fate and future.

NONFICTION

Angela's Ashes: A Memoir

by Frank McCourt

A powerful, exquisitely written debut, a recollection of the author's miserable childhood in the slums of Limerick, Ireland, during the Depression and WW II. McCourt was born in Brooklyn in 1930 but returned to Ireland with his family at the age of four. He describes, not without humor, scenes of hunger, illness, filth and deprivation that would have given Dickens pause. In a work that is extraordinary in every way, McCourt magically retrieves love, dignity and humor from a childhood of hunger, loss and pain. 1996. 368 pp.

Between the World and Me

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Coates wrote this stunning book as a series of epistles to his 15 year-old son, prompted by his horrified reaction to the news that no charges would be brought against the police officer involved in the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown. Coates explains what it means to be black in America, through snapshots of his own young adulthood. It is as written as much to the white community as it is to his son, and in fact white Americans may need to read this book more urgently and carefully than anyone. This is a powerful and exceptional book. 2016. 152 pp.

Beyond the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity

by Katherine Boo

In this brilliant book a bewildering age of global change and inequality is made human through the dramatic story of families striving toward a better life in Annawadi, a makeshift settlement in the shadow of luxury hotels near the Mumbai airport. As India starts to prosper, the residents of Annawadi are electric with hope. Abdul, an enterprising teenager, sees "a fortune beyond counting" in the recyclable garbage that richer people throw away. Meanwhile Asha, a woman of formidable ambition, has identified a shadier route to the middle class. With a little luck, her beautiful daughter, Annawadi's "most-everything girl," might become its first female college graduate. And even the poorest children, like the young thief Kalu, feel themselves inching closer to their dreams. But then Abdul is falsely accused in a shocking tragedy; terror and global recession rock the city; and suppressed tensions over religion, caste, sex, power, and economic envy turn brutal. With intelligence, humor, and deep insight into what connects people to one another in an era of tumultuous change, *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers* carries the reader headlong into one of the twenty-first century's hidden worlds—and into the hearts of families impossible to forget. 2014. 288 pp.

Black Ice

by Lorene Cary

In 1972, Cary left her African American suburban Philadelphia neighborhood to attend St. Paul's, an elite, formerly all-male prep school in New Hampshire. In these memoirs she describes the tumultuous transitions this new life engenders, as well as the inevitable racism over which she triumphs. After graduating, she returns to St. Paul's as a teacher. Cary tells her story well with precise and moving descriptive language. 1991. 237 pp.

The Blind Side

by Michael Lewis

Michael Oher was an outstanding left tackle at Ole Miss in 2009, and went on to be one of the top choices in that year's NFL draft. His life story is far more intriguing because he never played football until he was 16. Escaping a life of poverty, he was taken in and eventually adopted by a local family in Memphis, where he attended the same private school as their children on an athletic scholarship. This is a story of hope and generosity, and what can happen when an impoverished boy receives the kind of love and support that many upper- and middle-class children can take for granted. 2006. 352 pp.

The Boys in the Boat

by Daniel James Brown

Daniel James Brown's *The Boys in the Boat* is the kind of nonfiction book that reads like a novel. Centered around the life of Joe Rantz—a farm boy from the Pacific Northwest who was literally abandoned as a child—and set during the Great Depression, this book centers on the against-all odds University of Washington's eight-oar crew team that raced in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. This is fast-paced and emotional nonfiction about determination, bonds built by teamwork, and what it takes to achieve glory. 2014. 404 pp.

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

by Dee Brown

This extraordinary book changed the way Americans think about the original inhabitants of this country. Beginning with the Long Walk of the Navajos in 1860 and ending 30 years later with the massacre of Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota, it tells how the American Indians lost their land and lives to a dynamically expanding white society. Extraordinarily powerful. 1970. 487 pp.

The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother

by James McBride

The Color of Water tells the remarkable story of Ruth McBride Jordan, the two good men she married, and the twelve children she raised. Jordan, born Rachel Shilsky, a Polish Jew, immigrated to America soon after birth; as an adult she moved to New York City, leaving her family and faith behind in Virginia. Jordan met and married an African American man, making her isolation even more profound. The book is a story of success, a testament to one woman's true heart, solid values and indomitable will. Ruth Jordan battled not only racism but also poverty to raise her children and, despite being sorely tested, never wavered. In telling her story – along with her son's – The Color of Water addresses racial identity with compassion, insight and realism. It is, in a word, inspiring. 1996. 291 pp.

A Distant Mirror

by Barbara Tuchman

In this historical narrative, Barbara Tuchman writes of the cataclysmic 14th century, when the energies of medieval Europe were devoted to fighting wars and warding off the plague. Some medieval thinkers viewed these disasters as divine punishment for mortal wrongs; others, more practically, viewed them as opportunities to accumulate wealth and power. Tuchman looks into such events as the Hundred Years War, the collapse of the medieval church, the rise of various heresies and other events that caused medieval Europeans to wonder what they had done to deserve such horrors. 1978. 704 pp.

Educated: A Memoir

by Tara Westover

A recent Cambridge University doctorate debuts with a wrenching account of her childhood and youth in a strict Mormon family in a remote region of Idaho. An astonishing account of deprivation, confusion, survival, and success. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home. 2018. 352 pp.

Friday Night Lights: A Town, A Team and a Dream

by H. G. Bissinger

While Odessa, Texas' economic fortunes wax and wane with those of the energy industry, the town's heart is true to the Permian Panthers, one of America's premier high-school football teams. With its pep rallies, motorcades, a stadium that seats 20,000 and insistence on nothing less than total victory, the town's obsession is high school football. Bissinger's extraordinary account of a year spent with the Permian Panthers paints a very personal picture of the players and the pressures they face on the field and off. 1990. 400 pp.

Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies

by Jared Diamond

MacArthur fellow and UCLA evolutionary biologist Diamond takes as his theme no less than the rise of human civilizations. This is an impressive achievement, with nods to the historians, anthropologists and others who have laid the groundwork. Diamond tells us that the impetus for the book came from a native New Guinea friend, Yali, who asked him, "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?" The long and short of it, says Diamond, is biogeography. A book of remarkable scope. 1999. 480 pp.

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius

by Dave Eggers

At the age of 22, Eggers became both an orphan and a "single mother" when his parents died within five months of one another of unrelated cancers. In the ensuing sibling division of labor, Dave is appointed unofficial guardian of his 8-year-old brother, Christopher. The two live together in semi-squalor, decaying food and sports equipment scattered about, while Eggers worries obsessively about child-welfare authorities, molesting babysitters and his own health. His child-rearing strategy swings between making his brother's upbringing manically fun and performing bizarre developmental experiments on him. The book is also about being young and hip and out to conquer the world. 2001. 485 pp.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

by Rebecca Skloot

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew. 2011. 381 pp.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

by Bryan Stevenson

What is the one commonality of people on death row? If the victim is white, the perpetrator is 11 times more likely to be condemned to die than if the victim is black. When Stevenson was a 23-year-old Harvard law student, he started an internship in Georgia where his first assignment was to deliver a message to a man living on death row. This assignment became his calling: representing the innocent, the inadequately defended, the children, the domestic abuse survivors, the mentally ill—the imprisoned. This fast-paced book reads like a John Grisham novel. One of those profiled, Walter, was at a barbecue with over 100 people at the time of the murder he was accused of, and spent more than six years on death row. The stories include those of children, teens, and adults who have been in the system since they were teens. 2015. 368 pp.

The Liars' Club: A Memoir

by Mary Karr

This funny, razor-edged memoir of a troubled American childhood from the child's point of view describes growing up in an East Texas refinery town, life in the midst of a turbulent family of drunks and liars, a schoolyard rape, and other dark secrets. One of the most dazzling and moving memoirs to come along in years. 1995. 336 pp.

Liar's Poker

by Michael Lewis

'Liar's Poker' is a game in which the objective is to reward trickery and deceit. Lewis describes his four years as an entry-level bond salesman in the 1980s with Salomon Brothers, illustrating how economic decisions made at the national level changed security markets and made bonds the most lucrative game on Wall St. From the frat-boy camaraderie of the fortyfirst-floor trading room to the killer instinct that made ambitious young men gamble everything on a high-stakes game of bluffing and deception, Michael Lewis's knowing and hilarious insider's account of an unprecedented era of greed, gluttony, and outrageous fortune is a thrilling ride. 1990. 256 pp.

Mountains Beyond Mountains

by Tracy Kidder

The title Mountains Beyond Mountains is a metaphor for life's challenges: once you have scaled a mountain, you reach a place where you can always see more mountains farther away; you will never stop climbing. Dr. Paul Farmer's quest to provide medical help to the desperately poor of Haiti is the subject of this book. Farmer crosses the globe many times to focus his attention on the battle against tuberculosis in some of the world's poorest regions. 2004. 317 pp.

My Brother

by Jamaica Kincaid

The death of Kincaid's brother from AIDS resulted in a book that is lyrically beautiful and emotionally forceful. Writing only a year after the death of her brother, Kincaid uses the event to re-explore issues that permeate her novels and other writings: family, race and migration. *My Brother's* flowing, stream-of-consciousness prose pulls readers along through the range of psychological changes Kincaid experiences as she grapples with her loss. 1997. 208 pp.

Night

by Elie Wiesel

This book, originally published in 1958, was one of the first autobiographical accounts of life in the Nazi death camps. Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel takes his readers with him from his sheltered childhood, a childhood steeped in faith and religious observance, into the ghetto, on the transport, through Dr. Mengele's selections, into the concentration camps, on the Death March, and beyond. *Night* is an incomparable work exploring the daily hell of life in Auschwitz and the impact that experience has on one's faith in God. 1958. 144 pp.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals

by Michael Pollan

Humans were clearly designed to eat all manner of meats, vegetables, fruits, and grains. But, as Pollan points out, America's farmers have succeeded so wildly that today's fundamental agricultural issue has become how to deal sensibly with overproduction. The result of this surfeit of grain is behemoth corn processors, who have commoditized the Aztecs' sacred grain and developed ways to separate corn into products wholly removed from its original kernels. This excess food and Americans' wealth and rapid-paced lifestyles now yield supersized portions of less-than-nutritious eatables. Pollan contrasts the technologically driven life on an Iowa corn farm's feedlots with the thriving organic farm movement. Pollan's easy writing style and unique approach freshen this contemporary debate. 2007. 450 pp.

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

by Annie Dillard

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek is a series of essays that combines scientific observation, philosophy, daily thoughts, and deeper introspection with glorious prose. On the surface, Annie Dillard is simply exploring a place called Tinker Creek and its inhabitants: "It's a good place to live; there's lots to think about." But as her observations range well beyond the landscape into worlds of esoteric fact and metaphysical insight, each paragraph becomes suffused with images and ideas. 1974. 304 pp.

The Road From Coorain

by Jill Ker Conwa

In her autobiography, Conway writes that as a child she sought refuge from the adult concerns and duties of her life by retiring to her swing in the eucalyptus grove. There she “would kick furiously in order to rise up higher and see a little farther beyond the horizon.” The Road from Coorain describes Conway’s life until the age of twenty-three when she leaves Australia for graduate school at Harvard University and a life of academic honor, including her role as the first woman president of Smith College. This is an indelible portrait of a harsh and beautiful country and the inspiring story of a remarkable woman’s life. 1989. 238 pp.

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down

by Anne Fadiman

Lia Lee was born in 1981 to a family of recent Hmong immigrants, and soon developed symptoms of epilepsy. By 1988 she was brain dead after a tragic cycle of misunderstanding, overmedication and culture clash. The proper treatment of Lia’s epilepsy become a tug-of-war for Lia’s life between her doctors and her parents. Anne Fadiman uses this battle as a vehicle to discuss key differences between Western and Eastern medicine, and how each group views the patient in such different ways. 1997. 360 pp.

The Tipping Point

by Malcolm Gladwell

Malcolm Gladwell, a staff writer for the New Yorker, has a way with words. He also has a way with ideas, and this book presents an interesting concept: that major changes don’t require enormous shifts; they occur when things reach a “tipping point” (or “the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point”). Gladwell develops his theory through several scenarios: the sale of Hush Puppies shoes, epidemics and the fall of crime in New York. This book has been regularly cited by several of our students as having made a big impact on how they look at the world. 2002. 301 pp.

The Universe and The Teacup: The Mathematics of Truth and Beauty

by K.C. Cole

Mathematics, that breathtaking invention of ours that reveals the tiniest particles of matter and takes us to the outermost reaches of the cosmos, is found by many people to be intimidating. In The Universe and the Teacup, K. C. Cole demystifies mathematics and shows us—with humor and wonderfully accessible stories—why math need not be frightening. Using the O. J. Simpson trial, the bell curve, and Emmy Noether, the nineteenth-century woman scientist whose work was essential for Einstein’s theory of relativity, Cole helps us see that more than just being a tool, math is a key to understanding the beauty of everything from rainbows to relativity. 1999. 224 pp.

When Breath Becomes Air

by Paul Kalanithi

When Breath Becomes Air is a powerful look at a stage IV lung cancer diagnosis through the eyes of a neurosurgeon. When Paul Kalanithi is given his diagnosis he is forced to see this disease, and the process of being sick, as a patient rather than a doctor--the result of his experience is not just a look at what living is and how it works from a scientific perspective, but the ins and outs of what makes life matter. This heart-wrenching book will capture you from page one and still have you thinking long after the final sentence. 2016. 256 pp.

Young Men and Fire

by Norman MacLean

Lightning came crashing down in the vast spruce forest about Seeley Lake, Montana in 1949, touching off a huge fire. Fresh from WW II, paratrooper-firefighters descend to fight the great fire which ultimately claimed the lives of thirteen of those men. Beautifully written and published posthumously, it went on to win the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992 for MacLean, also the author of A River Runs Through It. 2000. 316 pp.

ADVENTURE

Alive By Piers

Paul Read

On October 12, 1972, a plane carrying a team of young rugby players crashed into the remote, snow-peaked Andes. Out of the forty-five original passengers and crew, only sixteen made it off the mountain alive. For ten excruciating weeks they suffered deprivations beyond imagining, confronting nature head-on at its most furious and inhospitable. This story of survival and loyalty to each other is a classic. 1975. 318 pp.

Black Hawk Down

by Mark Bowden

Late in the afternoon of Sunday, 3 October 1993, 140 elite US soldiers descended from helicopters into a teeming market neighborhood in the heart of the city of Mogadishu, Somalia. Their mission was to abduct two top lieutenants of a Somali warlord and return to base. It was supposed to take them about an hour. Instead, they were pinned down through a long and terrible night in a hostile city, fighting for their lives against thousands of heavily armed Somalis. Black Hawk Down is a minute-by-minute account of modern warfare. 2000. 576 pp.

Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption

by Laura Hillenbrand

This is the inspiring true story of a man who lived through a series of catastrophes almost too incredible to be believed. Louie Zamperini was a juvenile delinquent-turned-Olympic-runner turned- Army-hero. During a routine search mission over the Pacific, Louie's plane crashed into the ocean, and what happened to him over the next three years of his life is a story that will keep you glued to the pages. 2010. 496 pp.

In the Heart of the Sea

by Nathaniel Philbrick

In the Heart of the Sea brings to life the incredible story of the wreck of the whaleship Essex, the inspiration for the climax of the Moby-Dick. In 1820 the 240-ton Essex set sail from Nantucket on a routine whaling voyage. Fifteen months later, in the farthest reaches of the South Pacific, she was repeatedly rammed and sunk by an eighty-ton bull sperm whale. During ninety days at sea under horrendous conditions, the survivors clung to life as one by one, they succumbed to hunger, thirst, disease, and fear. 2001. 320 pp.

Into Thin Air

by John Krakauer

This book is the definitive account of the deadliest season in the climbing history of Mount Everest. In 1996, Krakauer took an assignment for Outside Magazine to report on the growing industry of commercially-guided high-altitude climbing. When Krakauer reached the summit of Mt. Everest, he hadn't slept in 57 hours and was reeling from the brain altering effects of oxygen depletion; eight climbers died trying the same ascent. A real-life horror story that explores the limits of human endurance and responsibility. 1999, 332 pp.

Into the Wild

by John Krakauer

Why did recent Emory graduate Christopher McCandless trade a bright future — a college education, material comfort, uncommon ability and charm — for death by starvation in an abandoned bus in the woods of Alaska? This is the question that John Krakauer's book tackles. By book's end, McCandless isn't merely a newspaper clipping, but an oddly magnetic personality. You won't soon forget him. 1997. 224 pp.

The Perfect Storm

by Sebastian Junger

Meteorologists called the storm that hit North America's eastern seaboard in October 1991 a "perfect storm" because of the rare combination of factors that created it. For everyone else, it was perfect hell. In *The Perfect Storm*, Junger conjures for the reader the meteorological conditions that created the "storm of the century" and the impact the storm had on many of the people caught in it. Chief among these are the six crew members of the swordfish boat, the *Andrea Gail*, all of whom were lost 500 miles from home beneath roiling seas and high waves. 1997. 301 pp.

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West

by Stephen Ambrose

Ambrose here loosens the reins to his admiration of Lewis and Clark's fearlessness and skill in braving the unknown, an exploration of which had sunk into obscurity in the 1800s but has since ascended to iconic status in American history. Framed as a biography of Lewis, this work relies heavily on both Lewis and Clark's famed journals, backed up by the author's personal travels along the Missouri River route from St. Louis to the Pacific. A stimulating tour guide, Ambrose paces the mundane so well with the unusual that readers will be entranced. 1996. 528 pp.

Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail

by Cheryl Strayed

At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone. Told with suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* powerfully captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her. 2013. 315 pp.

SHORT STORIES

The Things They Carried

by Tim O'Brien

This sly, almost hallucinatory book that is neither memoir nor novel nor collection of short stories but rather an artful combination of all three. Set in the Vietnam War era, the narrator of most of these stories is "Tim"; yet the author freely admits that many of the events he chronicles here never really happened. He never killed a man as "Tim" does in "The Man I Killed," and unlike Tim in "Ambush," he has no daughter named Kathleen. But just because a thing never happened doesn't make it any less true. In "On the Rainy River," the character Tim O'Brien responds to his draft notice by driving north, to the Canadian border where he spends six days in a deserted lodge in the company of an old man named Elroy while he wrestles with the choice between dodging the draft or going to war. The real Tim O'Brien never drove north, never found himself in a fishing boat 20 yards off the Canadian shore with a decision to make. The real Tim O'Brien quietly boarded the bus to Sioux Falls and was inducted into the United States Army. But the truth of "On the Rainy River" lies not in facts but in the genuineness of the experience it depicts: both Tims went to a war they didn't believe in; both considered themselves cowards for doing so. Every story in *The Things They Carried* speaks another truth that Tim O'Brien learned in Vietnam; it is this blurred line between truth and reality, fact and fiction, that makes his book unforgettable. 2009. 233 pp.

The Illustrated Man

by Ray Bradbury

This is a collection of stories that mix 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. The illustrations are themselves magically alive, and each proceeds to unfold its own story. Even though most were written in the 1940s and 50s, these stories are just as chilling today as they were when first published. 1951. 256 pp.

The Lottery and Other Stories

by Shirley Jackson

A collection of 25 stories which range from ordinary to the fantastic. Some describe characters in typical town settings, while others hint at mental illness and diabolical fantasies experienced by unstable characters. 1949. 320 pp.

A River Runs Through It and Other Stories

by Norman MacLean

The first novella in this collection is about the MacLeans, a Presbyterian family in early 20th century Montana, whose opinions of life are filtered through their passion for fly fishing. The other stories are about the MacLean brothers and their summers at a logging camp, working with the US Forest service. 1976. 231 pp.

Olive Kittredge
by Elizabeth Strout

Olive, at the center of this collection of stories, is a 7th grade math teacher in the small town of Crosby, Maine. This “novel in stories” features Olive and other coastal Maine characters who are sustained by the rhythms of ordinary life while encountering loneliness, loss, hope and community. As one reviewer says, “the collection is easy to read and impossible to forget”. 2008. 304 pp.

PLAYS

Glengarry Glen Ross
by David Mamet

This scalding comedy is about small-time, cutthroat real estate salesmen trying to grind out a living by pushing plots of land on reluctant buyers in a never-ending scramble for their fair share of the American dream. This book thoroughly captures the tough life of tough characters who cajole, connive, wheedle, and wheel and deal for a piece of the action – where closing a sale can mean a brand new Cadillac but losing one can mean losing it all. 1994. 108 pp.

Death of a Salesman
by Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller’s masterpiece centers on Willy Loman, an elderly failing salesman who is tired of life on the road. Loman is both an all-American dreamer and loser in this classic play about the human condition. 1949. 144 pp.