Dear Friends,

Thank you for enrolling in Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. We're pleased that you'll be joining us next fall. You'll have the opportunity to receive an A.P. weighted grade and, if you perform well on the A.P. English Language and Composition Exam next spring, you'll be eligible for advanced placement and/or credit at hundreds of colleges and universities across the country.

Of course, A.P. weighted grades and potential college credits are peripheral to the real reasons one should enroll in Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. This course will be intellectually stimulating—encouraging us to explore fascinating questions and ideas that have inspired wonder over the centuries. It will be rich—rich with wonderful books from the American literary tradition that deserve to be read and reread, rich with probing conversations and thoughtful writing experiences. The best classes are almost magical for students and teachers alike. They inspire us; they lift us up; they challenge our thinking and touch our hearts. As your teachers, we'll do our best to conjure some magic for you next fall.

Meanwhile, we're asking you to experience some of that magic over the summer. Like all English classes at Vernon Hills High School, A.P. English Language and Composition includes a summer reading experience. We invite you to choose your summer reading book(s) from our list of recommended titles—titles that are extraordinarily varied in their subjects, styles, and sensibilities, and all of which complement the American Literature focus of this course.

If you love science and math, you'll surely enjoy Dick Feynman's laugh-out-loud observations about physics and life. If you love classical music, you shouldn't miss Judith Kogan’s wonderful reflections upon the student experience at The Juilliard School or Leonard Bernstein’s passionate musings on the power of music. If you're fascinated with the role of religion in our lives, you might be drawn to Chaim Potok's resonant works of fiction. Our list also features “classic” works such as Moby Dick, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Grapes of Wrath, and For Whom the Bell Tolls. The authors on our list are wonderfully diverse—diverse in gender, race, religious faith, sexual orientation, political viewpoint, social class, national origin, age, and many other facets of the self. No matter who you are or what your interests may be, we hope you'll find books to love on our list of recommended titles.
Books have the power to change us. They inspire us to become more thoughtful, more perceptive, more awake, more alive. They allow us to enjoy the company of fine minds and hearts—their thoughts and feelings transfixed in paper and ink. Books serve as mirrors, helping us to reflect upon our experiences, to understand our lives with greater acuity and depth. They also serve as windows, revealing corners of the universe beyond the borders of our personal experiences. Books enlarge us; they enlarge the world of our understanding. We hope that, no matter who you are, these authors’ works will serve as both mirrors and windows for your personal enjoyment and growth.

If you feel yourself drawn to a book not on our list, hungry for the knowledge and perspective that that book offers, simply contact us and ask to read that book for your summer experience. We hope you’ll feel personal ownership and investment in the summer and outside reading experiences. Thank you in advance for helping us to enrich our offerings.

What would a summer reading experience be without the opportunity to write as well? For many of us, writing is as enjoyable as reading. Writing, too, can reflect and reveal our selves—or open a window on the far reaches of experience. With that in mind, we’re asking you to compose a thoughtful, engaging response to your summer reading book, to be submitted during the first week of class in the fall. We’ve described the sort of written projects we have in mind in the pages that follow. As you’ll note, the creative possibilities are many. If you have any questions about your written response, we invite you to contact us.

If you’re pleased to have so many choices among outstanding books, and so many varied possibilities for your written responses, take heart: the choices won’t cease with the beginning of the school year. Twice during each semester, you’ll be given the opportunity to choose additional books for Outside Reading Projects (ORPs)—drawing upon the same list of titles we’ve assembled for our summer reading experience. If you wish, you may read five books over the summer, instead of merely one, in order to provide yourself with a significant head start on the school year. To claim an even more dramatic head start, use the summer months to compose written responses to each of your five books—making each new ORP as simple as pulling a paper from the file, revising it in light of newly-developed writing skills, and submitting it to your teacher. This would free you to focus on other challenges during the regular school year.

Beyond pleasurable reading and writing, we hope you’ll have the opportunity this summer to pursue whatever you love most. Best wishes for the summer and the coming year.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Kemp and Mr. Gerber
Contact Information:

Dr. Paul Kemp
VHHS English Department Chair
145 Lakeview Parkway
Vernon Hills, Illinois 60061
Office: 2303H
Phone: (847) 932-2024
Fax: (847) 932-2149
E-mail: paul.kemp@d128.org

Mr. Doug Gerber
VHHS English Department
145 Lakeview Parkway
Vernon Hills, Illinois 60061
Room: 2209
Phone: (847) 932-2800, ext. 8154
Fax: (847) 932-2149
E-mail: doug.gerber@d128.org
“[An American Childhood] combines the child’s sense of wonder with the adult’s intelligence and is written in some of the finest prose that exists in contemporary America. It is a special sort of memoir that is entirely successful….This new book is [Annie Dillard’s] best, a joyous ode to her own childhood.” --Newark Star-Ledger

“The reader who can’t find something to whoop about in this book is not alive. An American Childhood is perhaps the best American autobiography since Russell Baker’s Growing Up.” --Philadelphia Inquirer

“By turns wry, provocative, and sometimes heartbreaking….This is a work marked by exquisite insight.” --Boston Globe

“Loving and lyrical, nostalgic without being wistful, this is a book about the capacity for joy.” --Los Angeles Times

“An American Childhood…more than takes the reader’s breath away. It consumes you as you consume it, so that, when you have put down this book, you’re a different person, one who has virtually experienced another childhood.” --Chicago Tribune

“Casts a golden glow on family life...Reading [Annie Dillard] can be as exciting as reading a thriller—though the only ‘plot’ lies in her unfolding of a child’s entry into consciousness....Her book is a celebration of being alive.” --New Woman

“This sunny memoir...reminds one of an Impressionist painting...her memories shimmer on the page.” --Cyra McFadden

 “[Annie Dillard] is one of those people who seem to be more fully alive than most of us, more nearly wide-awake than human beings generally get to be.” --New York Times

“Annie Dillard has been twice-blessed—by literate and prosperous parents, who gave her unconditional love and freedom of mind and person, and by her own extraordinary gifts of observation and language. The reader of An American Childhood reaps the fruit of these blessings.” --Newsday

“A rare treat, an autobiography you’ll want to read more than once...When she...reawaken[s] your own joy, you can’t help but be grateful.” --San Jose Mercury-News

“Dillard is a natural stylist with a flair and keen love for words. We’ve seen it in her Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Living by Fiction, and now this, her most luminous work....An American Childhood’s penultimate chapter is literature on high beam. Her memories rush and bubble up, a kind of waterfall of language and feeling, in summation....Annie Dillard’s An American Childhood is a glorious, exultant book. You must read it.” --Columbus Dispatch
**The Bell Jar**  by Sylvia Plath


“A vulnerable young girl wins a dream assignment on a big-time New York fashion magazine and finds herself plunged into a nightmare. An autobiographical account of Sylvia Plath’s own mental breakdown and suicide attempt, *The Bell Jar* is more than a confessional novel; it is a comic but painful statement of what happens to a woman’s aspirations in a society that refuses to take them seriously...a society that expects electroshock to cure the despair of a sensitive, questioning young artist whose search for identity becomes a terrifying descent toward madness.”

“Sylvia Plath’s only novel is a deceptively modest, uncommonly fine piece of work...A sharp and memorable poignancy. With her classical restraint and purity of form, Sylvia Plath is always refusing to break your heart, though in the end, she breaks it anyway.” -- *Saturday Review*

“A fine novel, as bitter and remorseless as her last poems—the kind of book Salinger’s Fanny might have written about herself ten years later, if she had spent those ten years in Hell.” -- *The New York Times Book Review*

“A special poignance...a special force, a humbling power, because it shows the vulnerability of people of hope and good will.” -- *Newsweek*

“By turns funny, harrowing, crude, ardent and artless. Its most notable quality is an astonishing immediacy, like a series of snapshots taken at high noon.” -- *Time*

**Beloved**  by Toni Morrison


“Sethe. Proud and beautiful, she escaped from slavery but is haunted by its heritage. She must deal with this haunted life on every level, from the fires of the flesh to the heartbreaking challenges to the spirit. Set in rural Ohio several years after the Civil War, this profoundly affecting chronicle of slavery and its aftermath is Toni Morrison's greatest novel, a dazzling achievement, and the most spellbinding reading experience of the decade.” Winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

“A masterpiece...Magnificent...Astounding...Overpowering!” -- *Newsweek*

“Toni Morrison’s finest work...Nothing she has written so sets her apart, so displays her prodigious, almost shocking talent.” -- *Chicago Sun-Times*

“A brutally powerful, mesmerizing story...Read it and tremble.” -- *People*
“Beloved is history written in lightning...grand fiction that enlarges the spirit.” --Newsday

“A life-affirming novel...strong enough to break your heart.” --Boston Globe

“Brilliantly explores the psyche and spirit of a people, with language that sings and characters that soar off the pages into our blood.” --Ms.

“Dazzling...Magical...An extraordinary work!” --The New York Times

“There is something great in Beloved: a play of human voices, consciously exalted, perversely stressed, yet holding true. It gets you.” --The New Yorker

“A stunning book...A lasting achievement!” --Christian Science Monitor

“Superb...a profound and shattering story that carries the weight of history...exquisitely told.” --Cosmopolitan

“Compelling...Morrison shakes that brilliant kaleidoscope of hers again and the story of pain, endurance, poetry, and power she is born to tell comes out right.” --The Village Voice

“Majestic...Strong...Devastating in impact” --Kirkus Reviews

“Heart-wrenching...Mesmerizing!” --The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Powerful is too tame a word to describe Toni Morrison's searing new novel.” --Library Journal

“Shatteringly eloquent.” --Booklist

Note: This selection contains mature themes and language. It may not be suitable for all students. Please discuss your selection with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

Black Boy  by Richard Wright


“Black Boy is a classic of American autobiography, a subtly crafted narrative of Richard Wright’s journey from innocence to experience in the Jim Crow South. An enduring story of one young man’s coming of age...Black Boy remains a seminal text in our history about what it means to be a man, black, and Southern in America.”

“Superb....The Library of America has insured that most of Wright’s major texts are now available as he wanted them to be read....Most important of all is the opportunity we now have to hear a great American writer speak with his own voice about matters that still resonate at the center of our lives.” --New York Times Book Review
“The publication of this new edition...is a major event in American literary history.” --*New Republic*

“It [is] impossible to deny...that *Black Boy* [is] a work of stunning imagination and mythic power....*Black Boy*, so much in the tradition of the slave narrative, belong[s] also, as Ralph Ellison discerned in one of the earliest reviews, to the tradition of the blues. It [is] an elegant gesture of testifying ‘both [to] the agony of life and the possibility of conquering it through sheer toughness of spirit....’ Read carefully as an affirmative literary work of art, *Black Boy*...serves a liberating function: It provides the opportunity to remember and to be renewed.” –Jerry W. Ward, Jr.

**The Blind Assassin** by Margaret Atwood


“The Booker Prize-winning sensation from the incomparable Margaret Atwood—a novel that combines elements of gothic drama, romantic suspense, and science fiction fantasy in a spellbinding narrative. *The Blind Assassin* opens with these simple, resonant words: ‘Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge.’ They are spoken by Iris Chase Griffin, sole surviving descendant of a once rich and influential Ontario family, whose terse account of her sister’s death in 1945 is followed by an inquest report proclaiming the death accidental. But just as the reader expects to settle into Laura’s story, Atwood introduces a novel-within-a-novel. Entitled *The Blind Assassin*, it is a science fiction story improvised by two unnamed lovers who meet in dingy backstreet rooms. When we return to Iris, it is through a 1947 newspaper article announcing the discovery of a sailboat carrying the dead body of her husband, a distinguished industrialist. What makes this novel Margaret Atwood’s strongest and most profoundly entertaining is the way in which the three wonderfully rich stories weave together, gradually revealing through their interplay the secrets surrounding the entire Chase family—and most particularly the fascinating and tangled lives of the two sisters. *The Blind Assassin* is a brilliant and enthralling book by a writer at the top of her form.”

“The first great novel of the new millennium.” --*Newsday*

“A literary high-wire act....Big and ambitious....A sweeping family saga.” --*Newsweek*

“Hauntingly powerful....Margaret Atwood is one of the greatest writers alive.... [Her] style is tight, authoritative and as glittering and hard as a diamond....*The Blind Assassin* is a novel of luminous prose, scalpel-precise insights and fierce characters....Atwood’s new work is so assured, so elegant and so incandescently intelligent, she casts her contemporaries in the shade.” --*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Bewitching....A killer novel....Atwood’s crisp wit and steely realism are reminiscent of Edith Wharton....A wonderfully complex narrative.” --*The Christian Science Monitor*
“Vintage Atwood—furious, funny, brilliant and subversive….Atwood achieves an almost impossible combination—a hall of mirrors, with cutting insights at every turn, cloaked in a dreamy, all-enveloping atmosphere that seduces the reader with every sentence….Iris Chase Griffen is one of the most memorable in a long line of dangerous, driven Atwood women.” --The Times-Picayune

“The Blind Assassin is by far the most intricately plotted of Atwood’s novels to date, a puzzle designed to beguile the reader much as the tales of Scheherazade beguiled King Shahryar.” --The Oregonian

“Enthralling….Unforgettable….Iris Chase is a brilliant addition to Atwood’s roster of fascinating fictional narrators. Not only is her story sinuously complex, but she is entertaining company.” --Time

“Intricate, haunting….The Blind Assassin….is the kind of story so full of intrigue and desperation that you take it to bed with you simply because you can’t bear to put it down….Atwood has achieved an astonishing feat.” --Harper’s Bazaar

**Blink** by Malcolm Gladwell


“In The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. In Blink, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology to reveal that the difference between good decision making and bad has less to do with how much information we process than with our ability to focus on a few, particular details, Gladwell shows how we all can become better decision makers—in our homes, in our offices, and in everyday life.”

“A real pleasure…. Blink brims with surprising insights about our world and ourselves.” --Salon.com

“Gladwell can be simultaneously lively and serious, with particularly good instincts for finding quirky, varied examples to prove his points.” --New York Times

“A really fun ride…. Gladwell offers a near-limitless supply of fascinating anecdotes…. He is without peer in his ability to sum up complex concepts with a simple, tight phrase.” --Chicago Tribune

“Royally entertaining…. Gladwell’s real genius is as a storyteller. He’s like an omniscient, many-armed Hindu god of anecdotes: he plucks them from every imaginable field of human endeavor.” --Time

“Gladwell brilliantly illuminates an aspect of our mental lives that we utterly rely on yet rarely analyze, namely our ability to make snap decisions or quick judgments…. Enlightening, provocative, and great fun to read.” --Booklist

“Blink moves quickly through a series of delightful stories…. He’s always dazzling us with fascinating information and phenomena…. If you want to trust my snap judgment, buy this book: you’ll be delighted.” --New York Times Book Review
**Brave New World**  by Aldous Huxley


“A fantasy of the future that sheds a blazing critical light on the present—considered to be Aldous Huxley’s most enduring masterpiece.”

“Mr. Huxley is eloquent in his declaration of an artist’s faith in man, and it is his eloquence, bitter in attack, noble in defense, that, when one has closed the book, one remembers.” --*Saturday Review of Literature*

“A fantastic racy narrative, full of much excellent satire and literary horseplay.” --*Forum*

“It is as sparkling, as provocative, as brilliant, in the appropriate sense, as impressive as the day it was published. This is in part because it prophetic voice has remained surprisingly contemporary, both in its particular forecasts and in its general tone of semiserious alarm. But it is much more because the book succeeds as a work of art...This is surely Huxley’s best book.” --*Martin Green*

---

**Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West**  by Dee Brown

[Commentary from the Bantam Books Edition: 553-07077-195]

“*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* is a painful, shocking book which conveys not how the West was won, but how it was lost.” --*The Washington Post Book World*

“Original, remarkable, and finally heartbreaking.” --*The New York Times*

“It is no exaggeration to call this one of the most important contributions to the history of the frontier ever published. Reading this indictment...will leave the fair-minded reader with a sense of shame—plus a shock of recognition.” --*Saturday Review Syndicate*

“A fascinating, painful document...A vivid narrative, lifted to high emotional and moral power by Brown’s use of the words of the great Indian chiefs and warriors. The poetic diction and extraordinary eloquence of these Indian voices sear the heart.” --*The Wall Street Journal*

“Extraordinary...A whole narrative of singular integrity.” --*The New York Times Book Review*
The Chosen  by Chaim Potok


“Here is the classic novel about the unlikely friendship that develops between two boys in 1940s Brooklyn. Reuven Malther is a secular Jew with an intellectual, Zionist father; Danny Saunders is the brilliant son and rightful heir to a Hasidic rebbe. Together they navigate the emotional terrain of adolescence and the demands of family, and a crisis of faith when stories of the Holocaust begin to emerge on the shores of America. The Chosen is a profound, deeply moving story of fathers and sons...and of the enduring power of love.”

“Anyone who finds [The Chosen] is finding a jewel. Its themes are profound and universal....It will stay on our bookshelves and be read again.” --The Wall Street Journal

“Perceptive, touching, exquisite, and unusual...This is a most profound novel: Chaim Potok is a gifted writer.” --Boston Sunday Herald

“We rejoice, and even weep a little....While Reuven talks we listen because of the story he has to tell, and long afterward it remains in the mind and delights.” --The New York Times Book Review

“[The Chosen] makes you want to buttonhole strangers in the street to be certain they know it’s around....It revives my sometimes fading belief in humanity. Works of this caliber should be occasion for singing in the streets and shouting from the rooftops.” --Chicago Tribune

“The Chosen is one of the best novels I have read in the last decade. The author asks and provides unique and original answers to the nature of parental love, infuses his novel with a quiet and compelling wisdom, brings alive a period and neighborhood with rare style.” --Los Angeles Times

“The Chosen is a compelling, absorbing book. It offers deep, sympathetic insight into the variety and profundity of Jewish tradition and heritage. It's interesting as social commentary and as, simply, story. It's a joy to read for its splendid, singing prose style as much as for its message.” --Minneapolis Star Tribune

[Another recommended title by Chaim Potok: My Name is Asher Lev]
The Dispossessed  by Ursula Le Guin

Winner of the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award


“In her most ambitious and prophetic novel to date, Ursula K. Le Guin has produced a stunning tour de force—the spellbinding story of Shevek, a brilliant physicist who single-handedly attempts to re-unite two planets cut off from each other by centuries of distrust. Anarres, Shevek’s homeland, is a bleak moon settled by an anarchic utopian civilization; Urras, the mother planet, is a world very similar to Earth, with its warring nations, great poverty, and immense wealth. Shevek risks everything in a courageous visit to Urras—to learn, to teach, to share. But his gift becomes a threat...and in the profound conflict which ensues, Shevek must re-examine his philosophy of life.”

“Extraordinary...Absorbing...Brilliantly wrought. This is what the best science fiction does best—and this is one of the best.” --The Village Voice

“Brilliantly conceived and stunningly executed.” --Chicago Daily News

“Fascinating...Its combination of intelligence and imagination sends ideas dancing endlessly around the brain.” --Christian Science Monitor

“Her writing is remarkable...Le Guin’s characters...are complex and haunting, and her writing is remarkable for its sinewy grace.” --Time

“Intriguing...Engrossing and well-told...Ursula Le Guin is more than a writer of adult fantasy and science fiction...she is a philosopher; an explorer in the landscapes of the mind.” --Cincinnati Enquirer
The Ethics of What We Eat:
Why Our Food Choices Matter  
by Peter Singer and Jim Mason


“How much do we really know about the food we eat? We routinely pick up neatly packaged cuts of meat, cartons of milk, eggs, and other goods at the grocery store, giving little thought to their origins. Little do we know that a dark world of unclean, unethical, and often horrifying production lurks beneath the pristine appearance of our store-bought food. Actions that we would never knowingly support are being driven by our consumer dollars. Peter Singer, our most probing ethicist, and Jim Mason, an environmentally conscious writer and attorney, reveal this underworld. They undertake an at-turns shocking, illuminating, and darkly humorous journey, unearthing secrets that food producers would rather keep buried. Beginning with their adventure at the dinner tables of three typical families with differing tastes and grocery-shopping habits, they trace the origins of each family’s food and use their findings to discuss how we might put more ethics into our shopping carts. Pairing this expose with well-thought-out sections on the pros and cons of buying local, or products labeled ‘fair trade,’ the complex dynamics of sustainability, the controversy over genetically modified organisms, the ethics of obesity, and the health implications of raising children vegan, The Ethics of What We Eat provides a thought-provoking and edifying read that won’t soon be forgotten. The Ethics of What We Eat was published in hardcover under the title The Way We Eat.”


“A no-holds-barred treatise on ethical consumption, this is an important read for those concerned with the long, frightening trip between farm and plate.” --Publishers Weekly

“Peter Singer may be the most controversial philosopher alive; he is certainly among the most influential.” --New Yorker
Everything Is Illuminated  by Jonathan Safran Foer

The Award-Winning New York Times Bestseller


“With only a yellowing photograph in hand, a young man—also named Jonathan Safran Foer—sets out to find the woman who may or may not have saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Accompanied by an old man haunted by memories of the war; an amorous dog named Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior; and the unforgettable Alex, a young Ukrainian translator who speaks in a sublimely butchered English, Jonathan is led on a quixotic journey over a devastated landscape and into an unexpected past. By turns comic and tragic, but always passionate, wildly inventive, and touched with an indelible humanity, this debut novel is a powerful, deeply felt story of searching: for the past, family, and truth.”

“Imagine a novel as verbally cunning as A Clockwork Orange, as harrowing as The Painted Bird, as exuberant and twee as Candide, and you have Everything is Illuminated....Read it, and you'll feel altered, chastened—seared in the fire of something new.” --Washington Post Book World

“[A] wild, indelible first novel....The payoff is extraordinary: a fearless, acrobatic, ultimately haunting effort.” --The New York Times

“Everything Is Illuminated is...nothing less than shattering.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“Comedy and pathos are braided together with extraordinary skill in a haunting debut....Riveting intensity and originality.” --Kirkus Reviews (starred)

“He has given us a deeply resonant work that could only be the first great American Jewish novel of the twenty-first century.” --The Forward

“Read, you can feel the life beating.” --Philadelphia Inquirer

“Remember his name, for it will accompany you for many, many years to come....Underneath the wit and the fun, there is a tragic story, which Jonathan tells step by step, with suspense and rhythm, unlike anything I have read in a long time. Most accomplished literary masters of our time would not be able to write with the brilliance, truth and skill of this twenty-five-year-old rookie! I laughed and cried with this book....A mixture of beautifully crafted language, impeccable narrative structure, and, most important of all, a quality of truth and humanity that allows the reader to identify fully with the story.” --Isabel Allende

“Foer has written a glittering first novel...with great humor, sympathy, charm, and daring. Every page is illuminated.” --Jeffrey Eugenides
“You will have to ignore everything you read about this novel. For you will read that Everything Is Illuminated is a work of genius, that its author, at twenty-five, has staked his claim for literary greatness, that it’s a new kind of novel, that after it things will never be the same again. You won’t believe it and you’ll decide not to read the book on principle. And that would be a disaster, because it’s all true.” --The Times (London)

“Everyone who takes books seriously is talking about Everything Is Illuminated.” --NPR's Fresh Air

“A zestfully imagined novel of wonders....He will win your admiration, and he will break your heart.” --Joyce Carol Oates

“[An] enormously impressive first novel....Everything is illuminated, indeed, by this author’s furious, glorious starburst of prose.” --New York Newsday

“Have you ever found, after finishing a completely awesome book, that you have so many competing impulses about what to do next that you become frozen by excitement? That is how I feel right now. One thing I want to do...is tell every single one of my friends that I have just finished reading Everything Is Illuminated, an amazingly funny, adventurous, and powerful novel....I was dumbstruck with amazement and joy.” --Vancouver Sun

Note: This selection contains mature themes and language. It may not be suitable for all students. Please discuss your selection with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close  by Jonathan Safran Foer

The New York Times Bestseller


Jonathan Safran Foer emerged as one of the most original writers of his generation with his best-selling debut novel, Everything Is Illuminated. Now, with humor, tenderness, and awe, he confronts the traumas of our recent history. Nine-year-old Oskar Schell has embarked on an urgent, secret mission that will take him through the five boroughs of New York. His goal is to find the lock that matches a mysterious key that belonged to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. This seemingly impossible task will bring Oskar into contact with survivors of all sorts on an exhilarating, affecting, often hilarious, and ultimately healing journey."

“Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close is a miracle, a daybreak, a man on the moon. It’s so impeccably imagined, so courageously executed, so everlastingly moving and fine.” --Baltimore Sun
“A funny, wise, deeply compassionate novel that will renew readers’ faith that the right book at the right time still has the power to change the world.” —O, The Oprah Magazine

“Energetic, inventive, and ambitious...an uplifting myth born of the sorrows of 9/11.” —Boston Sunday Globe

“Is there a novel that, in a fit of envy, Holden Caulfield, Huck Finn, Harriet the Spy, and Krazy Kat—all of the above—might long to enter? And would feel at home in? Yes! Jonathan Safran Foer’s funny, tender, tragic, ingeniously imaginative Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close has all the kick and brio of a child’s wild vision and a child’s wild hurt. Foer’s nine-year-old Oskar Schell, confronting the cataclysm of our time, is an American original.” —Cynthia Ozick

“Jonathan Safran Foer’s second novel is everything one hoped it would be—ambitious, pyrotechnic, riddling, and above all, in its portrait of orphaned Oskar, extremely moving. The powerful emotions generated feel deserved, not borrowed. An exceptional achievement.” —Salman Rushdie

“[Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close] contains moments of shattering emotion and stunning virtuosity that attest to Mr. Foer’s myriad gifts as a writer.” —Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times

“With humor, wisdom, and exceptionally fine prose, Jonathan Safran Foer has done something both masterful and absolutely necessary: he has written the first great novel about September 11.” —Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Funny, and extremely tender, and incredibly brave.” —The Stranger (Seattle)

“The tragedy of September 11 has made Oskar older than his years, but in Foer’s tender portrayal the grief that weighs him down makes children of us all.” —Washington Post Book World

“Brilliant...Foer demonstrates once again that he is one of the few contemporary writers willing to risk sentimentalism in order to address great questions of truth, love, and beauty.” —Publishers Weekly, starred review

“Magnificent...a triumph for literature itself.” —Buffalo News

Their Eyes Were Watching God  by Zora Neale Hurston


“In this American classic, Hurston tells with haunting sympathy and piercing immediacy the story of one black woman’s evolving selfhood...."

“There is no book more important to me than this one.” —Alice Walker
“Their Eyes belongs in the same category—with that of William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway—of enduring American literature.” --Saturday Review

“The prototypical Black novel of affirmation; it is the most successful, convincing, and exemplary novel of Blacklove that we have. Period.” --June Jordan, Black World

The Fixer by Bernard Malamud

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award


“The Fixer (1966) is Bernard Malamud’s best-known and most acclaimed novel, and one that makes manifest his roots in Russian fiction, especially that of Isaac Babel. Set in Tsarist Russia during a period of virulent anti-Semitism, the novel tells the story of Yakov Bok, a Jewish handyman blamed for the brutal murder of a young Russian boy. At the outset, Bok leaves his village to try his luck in Kiev, and after denying his Jewish identity, he finds himself working for a member of the anti-Semitic Black Hundreds Society. When the boy is found dead in a cave, drained of nearly all his blood, the Jews are accused of ritual murder. Arrested and imprisoned, Bok refuses to confess to a crime that he did not commit. Malamud said of the book: ‘Whatever else it had to be about, it had to be about how the idea of freedom grows in the mind of a man subjected to a grave injustice.’ The Fixer dramatizes a particular kind of injustice, and the result is a masterpiece of twentieth-century fiction.”

“Brilliant [and] harrowing…Historical reality combined with fictional skill and beauty of a high order make [it] a novel of startling importance.” --Elizabeth Hardwick

“When I finished reading this novel, I felt castigated and inspired. Grumbling about the state of the world suddenly wasn’t enough. And excusing myself from political activity felt wrong. In light of this book, my inaction felt immoral. While The Fixer isn’t a book about morality, it is a moral book. That is, rather than offering a flimsy directive, it presents the reader with a forceful question: Why aren’t you doing anything?” --Jonathan Safran Foer, from the introduction
**For Whom the Bell Tolls**  by Ernest Hemingway


“In 1937 Ernest Hemingway traveled to Spain to cover the civil war there for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Three years later he completed the greatest novel to emerge from "the good fight," *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The story of Robert Jordan, a young American in the International Brigades attached to an antifascist guerilla unit in the mountains of Spain, it tells of loyalty and courage, love and defeat, and the tragic death of an ideal. In his portrayal of Jordan’s love for the beautiful Maria and his superb account of El Sordo's last stand, in his brilliant travesty of La Pasionaria and his unwillingness to believe in blind faith, Hemingway surpasses his achievement in *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* to create a work at once rare and beautiful, strong and brutal, compassionate, moving and wise. 'If the function of a writer is to reveal reality,' Maxwell Perkins wrote to Hemingway after reading the manuscript, 'no one ever so completely performed it.' Greater in power, broader in scope, and more intensely emotional than any of the author’s previous works, it stands as one of the best war novels of all time.”

“This is the best book Ernest Hemingway has written, the fullest, the deepest, the truest.”  -- *The New York Times Book Review*

---

**The Good Earth**  by Pearl Buck


“Though more than sixty years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. 'I can only write what I know, and I know nothing but China, having always lived there,' wrote Pearl Buck. In *The Good Earth* she presents a graphic view of a China when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings for the ordinary people. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during this century. Noble Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel—beloved by millions of readers—is a universal tale of the destiny of man.”
"A comment upon the meaning and tragedy of life as it is lived in any age in any quarter of the globe."
--The New York Times

“One of the most important and revealing novels of our time.” --Pittsburgh Post Gazette

“One need never have lived in China or know anything about the Chinese to understand it or respond to its appeal.” --Boston Transcript

The Grapes of Wrath  by John Steinbeck


“When John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath first appeared in 1939, it electrified an America still convalescing from the depression. Particularized in the story of the Joad family, the novel is not only a powerful dramatization of the forced migration of the ‘Okies’ from their bank-foreclosed fields and farms; it is a dramatization as well of the plight of the dispossessed everywhere. Written out of passionate conviction by a master storyteller, The Grapes of Wrath is both a great social document of an era and a milestone in American fiction. Those who have read it before will find a new impact in the rereading of it, and those of a later generation who come to it for the first time will have the shock of a major literary discovery."

“The Grapes of Wrath is the greatest American novel I have ever read.” --Dorothy Parker
Guns, Germs, and Steel:  
The Fate of Human Societies  
by Jared Diamond

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize  
and the Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science


“We all know that history has proceeded very differently for peoples from different parts of the globe. In the 13,000 years since the end of the last Ice Age, some parts of the world developed literate industrial societies with metal tools, other parts developed only nonliterate farming societies, and still others retained societies of hunter-gatherers with stone tools. Those historical inequalities have cast long shadows on the modern world, because the literate societies with metal tools have conquered or exterminated the other societies. While those differences constitute the most basic fact of world history, the reasons for them remain uncertain and controversial” (Diamond 13). “The question motivating the book is: Why did history unfold differently on different continents….The answers to the question don’t involve human racial differences at all. The book’s emphasis is on the search for ultimate explanations, and on pushing back the chain of historical causation as far as possible” (Diamond 9).

“This is a brilliantly written, passionate, whirlwind tour through 13,000 years of history on all the continents—a short history of everything about everybody. The origins of empires, religion, writing, crops, and guns are all here. By at last providing a convincing explanation for the differing developments of human societies on different continents, the book demolishes the grounds for racist theories of history. Its account of how the modern world was formed is full of lessons for our own future. After reading the first two pages, you won’t be able to put it down.” --Paul R. Ehrlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies, Stanford University

“No scientist brings more experience from the laboratory and field, none thinks more deeply about social issues or addresses them with greater clarity, than Jared Diamond as illustrated by Guns, Germs, and Steel. In this remarkably readable book he shows how history and biology can enrich one another to produce a deeper understanding of the human condition.” --Edward O. Wilson, Pellegrino University Professor, Harvard University

“Serious, groundbreaking biological studies of human history only seem to come along once every generation or so….Now Jared Diamond must be added to their select number….Diamond meshes technological mastery with historical sweep, anecdotal delight with broad conceptual vision, and command of resources with creative leaps. No finer work of its kind has been published this year, or for many past.” --Martin Sieff, Washington Times

“[Diamond’s] masterful synthesis is a refreshingly unconventional history informed by anthropology, behavioral ecology, linguistics, epidemiology, archeology, and technological development.”  
--Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“Fascinating and extremely important…. [A] synopsis doesn’t do credit to the immense subtlety of this book.” --David Brown, Washington Post Book World
“Deserves the attention of anyone concerned with the history of mankind at its most fundamental level. It is an epochal work. Diamond has written a summary of human history that can be accounted, for the time being, as Darwinian in its authority.” --Thomas M. Disch, New Leader

“A wonderfully engrossing book...Jared Diamond takes us on an exhilarating world tour of history that makes us rethink all our ideas about ourselves and other peoples and our places in the overall scheme of things.” --Christopher Ehret, Professor of African History, UCLA

“The question, 'Why did human societies have such diverse fates?' has usually received racist answers. Mastering information from many different fields, Jared Diamond convincingly demonstrates that head starts and local conditions can explain much of the course of human history. His impressive account will appeal to a vast readership.” --Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Professor of Genetics, Stanford University

“The scope and the explanatory power of this book are astounding.” --The New Yorker

“Fascinating....Lays a foundation for understanding human history.” --Bill Gates

---

**The History of Love** by Nicole Krauss

*New York Times* Bestseller


“Fourteen-year-old Alma Singer is trying to find a cure for her mother’s loneliness. Believing that she might discover it in an old book her mother is lovingly translating, she sets out in search of its author. Across New York an old man named Leo Gursky is trying to survive a little bit longer. He spends his days dreaming of the lost love who, sixty years ago in Poland, inspired him to write a book. And although he doesn’t know it yet, that book also survived: crossing oceans and generations, and changing lives....”

“Marvelous.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“Astonishing.” --Washington Post

“Ingenious.” --New York Times

“Devastating....One of the most passionate vindications of the written word in recent fiction. It takes one’s breath away.” --Spectator

“Even in moments of startling peculiarity, [Krauss] touches the most common elements of the heart. In the final pages, the fractured stories of *The History of Love* fall together like a desperate embrace.” --Washington Post
“Wonderful and haunting...deftly layered....Its mysteries are intricate and absorbing and its characters unforgettable....Not quite a thriller, not exactly a coming-of-age story, nor a Holocaust memoir, *The History of Love* manages to be all three and also something more: a breathtaking meditation on loss and love. It's the sort of book that makes life bearable after all.” --*Miami Herald*

“[Krauss] reveals the characteristics of humanity that transcend time and the experience of living....The characters are compelling and true, and the reader will come through the book not just caring about but wanting to heal them.” --*Denver Post*

“*The History of Love* has perfect pitch and does its dance of time between contemporary New York and the wanderings of the Jews with unsentimental but heart-breaking grace. [Krauss] also happens to write like an angel.” --*Guardian*

“A tender tribute to human valiance. Who could be unmoved by a cast of characters whose daily battles are etched on our mind in such diamond-cut prose?” --*Independent on Sunday*

“Krauss' writing is so engrossing, at once so fragile and brittle and sharp and pulsing with life, and the voices she creates are so real, that we are quickly absorbed into this mournful yet ultimately life-affirming novel....Krauss has created a satisfying, fascinating work of fiction that is at once funny, poetic and mysterious. And in Leo Gursky, she has created a character that hobbles off the page and sits on the park bench next to you.” --*San Antonio Express-News*

“Nicole Krauss’s Leo Gursky is all voice—frisky, aching, jittery, stunning, heart-rending, irresistible. There’s nothing like his voice, nor will there ever be. A cross between [Isaac Bashevis] Singer and Woody Allen, Kafka and Leopold Bloom, Nicole Krauss’s gripping new voice doesn’t work its way into the pantheon of American voices; it literally walks straight up to them and asks them to move over—or else it will haunt their living days and nights. And it does just that. You can’t shut it off, can’t put it out of your mind, can’t live without hoping to run into it again and again. Leo Gursky is here to stay. And we are the luckier for it.” --Andre Aciman

“*The History of Love* is such a unique and beautiful book, one I read with great pleasure quite literally from the first sentence to the last. It is a mystery, a prose poem, a meditation, a single answer to many questions. It is the kind of book one hopes to find but rarely does: a work that captivates, challenges, and consoles, all at once. Nicole Krauss is proof positive that great literature is being written today.” --Elizabeth Berg

“From the twentieth-century Jewish experience of dislocation, Nicole Krauss has constructed—with nods to Bellow and Singer and a kiss blown across the gulf of years to Bruno Schulz—a stirring, soulful novel that speaks to our own losses and loves. This book will break your heart and at once mend it.” --Ken Kalfus
"How Doctors Think" by Jerome Groopman, M.D.

New York Times Bestseller and Quill Award Winner


"How Doctors Think" is a window into the mind of the physician and an insightful examination of the all-important relationship between doctors and their patients. In this myth-shattering work, Jerome Groopman explores the forces and thought processes behind the decisions doctors make. He pinpoints why doctors succeed and why they err. Most important, Groopman shows when and how doctors can—with our help—avoid snap judgments, embrace uncertainty, communicate effectively, and deploy other skills that can profoundly impact our health.

“A unique, important, and wonderful book...You’ll never look at your own doctor in the same way again.” --Stephen D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

“Must reading for every physician who cares for patients and every patient who wishes to get the best care.” --Time

“Elegant, tough-minded...deeply affecting...remarkable. Here is Groopman at the peak of his form, as a physician and as a writer. Readers will relish the result.” --Michael Crichton, New York Times Book Review

“Well worth reading both for intellectual pleasure and as a guide to communicating with people you entrust your life to.” --Newsweek

“A fascinating exploration of the subconscious forces that influence how doctors approach illness.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“Enlightening and invaluable.” --Wall Street Journal

“Laced with compelling anecdotes—including some of Groopman’s own painful trials and errors—the book considers what can be done to promote, at the very least, better communication between patient and physician.” --Elle

“Engaging and accessible to the lay reader but also thoroughly credible and interesting to a professional audience....” --New England Journal of Medicine

“This is medicine at its best, ‘a mix of science and soul.’” --New York Times
The Joy of Music  by Leonard Bernstein

“*How did Beethoven write his symphonies?* In a brilliant imaginary feat, Bernstein shows how a great composer works. *What makes opera grand?* Maestro Bernstein explores the emotional directness and magnitude of a great popular art. *Why can’t you write a nice hit tune?* In a wry and hilarious dialogue, Bernstein explains why music can’t be written to order. Here is the joy of music, mapped with photographs, illustrations, and musical notations...Here is an exuberant literary excursion with the inimitable Mr. Leonard Bernstein.”


“Stimulating and humorous examples of an original mind working over some basic questions about music and about our time.” --*Sacramento Bee*

“Leonard Bernstein comes through as easily in print as on the concert platform or before the video cameras. That conclusion is inescapable when one is confronted with his dazzling tome, *The Joy of Music.*” –Alan Branigan, *Newark News*

The Laramie Project  by Moises Kaufman

“*On October 7, 1998, a young gay man was discovered bound to a fence in the hills outside Laramie, Wyoming, savagely beaten and left to die in an act of brutality and hate that shocked the nation.* Matthew Shepard’s death became a national symbol of intolerance, but for the people of Laramie the event was deeply personal, and it is their voices we hear in this stunningly effective theater piece....”

*The Laramie Project* is a terrific piece of theater, history, and life.... There emerges a mosaic as moving and important as any you will see.... Nothing short of stunning.... You should not miss a theatrical and human event that deserves standing up for, with applause....” --*New York Magazine*

“A riveting theatrical experience.” --*Variety*

“Deeply moving...[Kaufman] has a remarkable gift for giving a compelling theatrical flow to journalistic and historical material.... *The Laramie Project* is determined to find the light in an event of harrowing darkness.” --*The New York Times*
“Remarkable...[a] probing and distinctive theater piece...assembled with care, compassion and dollops of comic relief.... The high-octane performances and unique staging make this a must see for any theatergoer.” --Daily News

“Few playwrights have cut to the heart of tragedy so unerringly.” --The Village Voice

“Brilliant...bone-hard drama [that] dares to touch the hidden wound of the American West.... Within these pages, a healing occurs.... If I could, I would stand on every street corner in America and pass this play out as a handbill for a more civil society.” --Terry Tempest Williams, author of Leap and Refuge

“A bracing, wholly original and deeply affecting piece of theater. It radiates integrity, an aching collective need to understand incomprehensible events. It portrays an American town with grace, truth, theatrical economy, compassion, wit, despair and love. [It proves that] theater can serve as witness to our deeds.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“An amazing piece of theater.” --The New York Post

“A complex and ultimately optimistic portrait of a town that was challenged by the most catastrophic of events.” --USA Today

“Sad, sober and gripping.... Something nourishing has been excavated by Kaufman and his committed collaborators from the tragedy.” --Daily Variety

“A towering theatrical accomplishment.... [The Laramie Project is] Our Town for the new millennium, capturing from real life the same sense of humanity in the raw that Thornton Wilder did years ago with the fictional Grover’s Corner. The play moves the theater in a new and different direction.” --San Francisco Times

“An invigorating theatrical adventure.” --David Rothenberg
The Lenses of Gender:
Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality  
by Sandra Lipsitz Bem, Ph.D.

Winner of four national and international prizes, including the Best New Book in Psychology Award of the Association of American Publishers


“This prize-winning book...will help to transform the way we think about gender and sexual orientation. Sandra Lipsitz Bem discusses how hidden assumptions embedded in our social institutions, our cultural discourses, and our individual psyches perpetuate male power and oppress women and sexual minorities. These assumptions, which Bem calls the lenses of gender, shape not only perceptions of social reality but also its more material aspects—such as unequal pay, inadequate day care, and discrimination against lesbian women and gay men. She argues, among other things, that we must worry less about difference, per se, than about how even our most neutral-looking institutions invisibly transform difference into disadvantage.”

“The Lenses of Gender is exactly the book we need. Broad in scope and vision, coherent, and humane, it is an exemplary guide to our thinking about gender and its place in our past and future.”
--Catharine Stimpson

“Written by a groundbreaking theorist in the psychology of women and gender studies, this book integrates an analysis of both homophobia and heterosexism.” --Mary Roth Walsh, professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and editor of Women, Men, and Gender

“A stimulating and tightly argued treatise on how American and Western culture defines gender.... A thought-provoking study, bringing together many social, biological, and political theories into a well-reasoned volume.” --Kirkus Reviews

“As an accessibly written, intelligent book that raises important political issues, [The Lenses of Gender] is well worth reading for all of us.” --Cecilia Ridgeway, Contemporary Sociology
The Life You Can Save: 
Acting Now to End World Poverty  
by Peter Singer


“For the first time in history, it is within our reach to eradicate world poverty and the suffering it brings. Yet around the world, a billion people struggle to live each day on less than many of us pay for bottled water. And though the number of deaths attributable to poverty worldwide has fallen dramatically in the past half-century, nearly ten million children still die unnecessarily each year. The people of the developed world face a profound choice: If we are not to turn our backs on a fifth of the world’s population, we must become part of the solution. In The Life You Can Save, philosopher Peter Singer, named one of ‘The 100 Most Influential People in the World’ by Time magazine, uses ethical arguments, provocative thought experiments, illuminating examples, and case studies of charitable giving to show that our current response to world poverty is not only insufficient but ethically indefensible. Singer contends that we need to change our views of what is involved in living an ethical life. To help us play our part in bringing about that change, he offers a seven-point plan that mixes personal philanthropy (figuring how much to give and how best to give it), local activism (spreading the word in your community), and political awareness (contacting your representatives to ensure that your nation’s foreign aid is really directed to the world’s poorest people). In The Life You Can Save, Singer makes the irrefutable argument that giving will make a huge difference in the lives of others without diminishing the quality of our own. This book is an urgent call to action and a hopeful primer on the power of compassion, when mixed with rigorous investigation and careful reasoning, to lift others out of despair.”

“Part plea, part manifesto, part handbook, this short and surprisingly compelling book sets out to answer two difficult questions: why people in affluent countries should donate money to fight global poverty and how much each should give…. Singer doesn’t ask readers to choose between asceticism and self-indulgence; his solution can be found in the middle, and it is reasonable and rewarding for all.” --Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“If you think you can’t afford to give money to the needy, I urge you to read this book. If you think you’re already giving enough, and to the right places, still I urge you to read this book. In The Life You Can Save, Peter Singer makes a strong case—logical and factual, but also emotional—for why each of us should be doing more for the world’s impoverished. This book will challenge you to be a better person.” --Holden Karnofsky, co-founder, GiveWell

“In The Life You Can Save, Peter Singer challenges each of us to ask: Am I willing to make poverty history? Skillfully weaving together parable, philosophy, and hard statistics, he tackles the most familiar moral, ethical, and ideological obstacles to building a global culture of philanthropy and sets the bar for how we as citizens might do our part to empower the world’s poor.” --Raymond C. Offenheiser, president, Oxfam America
Man Walks Into a Room by Nicole Krauss


“The brilliant debut of a new voice in fiction, hailed by Esquire magazine as 'one of America’s best young writers.' Samson Greene, a young and popular professor at Columbia, is found wandering in the Nevada desert. When his wife, Anna, comes to bring him home, she finds a man who remembers nothing, not even his own name. The removal of a small brain tumor saves his life, but his memories beyond the age of twelve are permanently lost. Here is the story of a strikingly intelligent, sensitive man returned to a world in which everything is strange and new. An emigrant in his own life, set free from everything and everyone who once defined him, Samson Greene believes he has nothing left to lose. So when a charismatic scientist asks Samson to participate in a bold experiment, he agrees. What he gains is nothing short of the beautifully painful revelation of what it is to be a human being.”

“Nicole Krauss, with this remarkably felt, sharp-witted debut novel, strides into the forecourt of American letters.” --Susan Sontag

“A provocative first novel...beautifully written, intellectually engaging....Krauss has a remarkable feel for what is ultimately unfathomable.” --Chicago Tribune

“Casually dazzling...thoroughly riveting.” --Entertainment Weekly

“Mysterious and compelling....Krauss brings to her work a poet’s gift for seizing upon small but potent details.... [A] novel that...is hard to forget.” --Los Angeles Times Book Review

“By turns creepy, witty, austere, and vibey...a major contribution to the art of collective obliviousness, a lonely meditation on the nature of memory and loss.” --Esquire

“Great nuance and sophisticated prose that seduces you with its cadences....You’ll savor the last page—and be hungry for future work from this talented author.” --The Washington Post Book World
Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden


“A literary sensation and runaway bestseller, this brilliant debut novel presents with seamless authenticity and exquisite lyricism the true confessions of one of Japan’s most celebrated geisha. In Memoirs of a Geisha, we enter a world where appearances are paramount; where a girl’s virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder; where women are trained to beguile the most powerful men; and where love is scorned as illusion. It is a unique and triumphant work of fiction...completely unforgettable.”

“Astonishing...breathtaking....You are seduced completely.” --Washington Post Book World

“Captivating, minutely imagined...a novel that refuses to stay shut.” --Newsweek


“Enthralling...written as if it were a memoir dictated by a geisha. The story draws the reader in from the very first page.” --USA Today

“A first novel of stunning effect....Lovely and lyrical.” --Philadelphia Inquirer

“A startling act of literary impersonation, a feat of cross-cultural masquerade on the order of Kazuo Ishiguro’s The Remains of the Day...delectable.” --Vogue

“Beautifully written...told with insight, grace, and intelligence...immensely believable. An enchanting debut.” --Redbook

“A story with the social vibrancy and narrative sweep of a much-loved 19th-century bildungsroman....Golden has found the heart and matter of a truth that lies beyond detail.” --The New Yorker


“A stellar achievement....Golden presents Sayuri’s story in elegant, liquid prose.” --Arizona Daily Star

“Memoirs of a Geisha is nothing short of astonishing....Elegant and spare, but wonderfully evocative.” --Houston Chronicle

“You feel as if you’ve entered not just another world, but an extraordinary and foreign heart.” --Pico Iyer

“Readers are likely to come away from Arthur Golden’s breathtaking first novel...feeling as if they’ve just spent several hours with the most gifted geisha in Kyoto...beautifully detailed.” --San Francisco Chronicle
Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and International Bestseller


“Middlesex tells the breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides, and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family, who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit, witnessing its glory days as the Motor City, and the race riots of 1967, before they move out to the tree-lined streets of suburban Grosse Pointe, Michigan. To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret, and the astonishing genetic history that turns Callie into Cal, one of the most audacious and wondrous narrators in contemporary fiction. Lyrical and thrilling, Middlesex is an exhilarating reinvention of the American epic.”

“A towering achievement.... Every [character] we meet in Middlesex is vibrantly alive.... Eugenides has taken the greatest mystery of all—What are we, exactly, and where do we come from?—and crafted a story that manages to be both illuminating and transcendent.... [Eugenides] has emerged as the great American writer that many of us suspected him of being....” —Los Angeles Times Book Review (cover review)

“Expansive and radiantly generous.... Deliriously American.... It is a colossal act of curiosity, of imagination, and of love.” --The New York Times Book Review

“An epic.... This feast of a novel is thrilling in the scope of its imagination and surprising in its tenderness.” --People

“Unprecedented, astounding.” --San Francisco Chronicle Book Review

“A big, cheeky, splendid novel...lyrical and fine.” --The Boston Globe

“Epic and wondrous...Middlesex begins as a generous, tragicomic family chronicle of immigration and assimilation, becomes along the way a social novel about Detroit, perhaps the most symbolic of American cities, and incorporates a heartbreaking tale of growing up awkward and lonely in ’70s suburbia. It’s a big, affectionate, and often hilarious book.” --Salon.com

“Middlesex is so fully imagined, so vivid, funny, touching, and original, that it often left me grinning with delight.” --The Mercury News (San Jose)

“Genuinely moving.” --Times Literary Supplement

“Middlesex sweeps the reader along with easy grace and charm, tactfully concealing intelligence, sophistication, and the ache of earned wisdom beneath bushels of inventive storytelling.” --The New York Observer

“An often affecting, funny, and deeply human book...a charmingly ingenious writer...Middlesex is an enormously ambitious book, whose many stories do indeed gather to present a broad swath of Greek-American life.” --The New Republic
“A book so wildly imaginative…and yet so warm-hearted that it’s hard to resist…it is frequently hilarious and touching.” --USA Today

_The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez_ by John Rechy


“On a hot, still day in May, Amalia Gomez sees—or thinks she sees—a large silver cross in the sky. Does that augur a miracle? The pragmatic, twice-divorced Amalia is doubtful. The neighborhood—a decaying area near a shabby part of Hollywood Boulevard—is under attack from gang wars and the police. Her live-in boyfriend is behaving suspiciously, her ‘fast’ teenage daughter Gloria has become too much to handle, and her teenage son is hinting he’s in serious trouble. Most of all, Amalia is haunted by thoughts of her past and her first-born, dead in jail under mysterious circumstances. As the epiphanies and small omens of Amalia’s day build to a climax as wondrous as it is shattering, John Rechy takes us into the life of a Chicano family in Los Angeles, its spirit and its gritty reality, and ‘scorchingly evokes…the dark side of the American Dream.’” (Publishers Weekly)

“A triumph, a sad, beautiful and loving book rooted in cultural experience as well as deep intuition…Amalia comes to stunning and heartbreaking life.” --Newsday

“A marvelous account of one woman’s life in violence-torn East Los Angeles....An uplifting and almost inspirational story...told so well that it’s impossible not to become caught up in it from the first page...a renewal of faith in the human spirit.” --The Dallas Morning News

“John Rechy is a...rare and wonderful novelist. _The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez_...[has] one of the best endings of a novel that I’ve ever read...a ‘miracle’ so startling and original, so utterly convincing...that I’ll always consider Rechy a literary great, even if he never writes another novel.” --Wichita Eagle

“If Los Angeles is one of this country’s most important cities, then the human and social message of [this] novel is equally important. In taut, clear prose, the story line follows a day in the life of a twice-divorced Mexican-American woman in her mid-40s. Through her personal life we look into the human heart; through her working life we look into the conditions of invisible millions....As Amalia moves toward her miracle...Rechy’s pictures are grainy, rough, raw. And yet...Amalia’s refusal to surrender enables her to make heroic resolutions at the end of this miraculous day [in a] last chapter worth waiting for.” --The Philadelphia Inquirer

“Rechy’s controlled, wholly sympathetic portrait of Amalia is wrenching...we feel startled and moved.”

--Hartford Courant

“John Rechy has a tremendous gift of insight into the lives of Hispanic women living in the barrio. Amalia Gomez’s spirit lives in every woman who is oppressed, victimized, trapped in poverty, humiliated, and surrounded by fear and violence.” --Maia Leyba, Albuquerque Journal
“A fine novel, an eloquent feat of imagination...One is reminded how real stories can open doors in walls one didn’t know were there, how they can seize heart and mind.” --Paula Fox, author of A Servant’s Tale

“[Rechy’s] best...searing veracity...brilliant characterization....[It] leaps to a stunning climax.” --El Paso Herald Post

Note: This selection contains mature themes and language. It may not be suitable for all students. Please discuss your selection with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

**The Mismeasure of Woman** by Carol Tavris


“When 'man is the measure of all things,' woman is forever trying to measure up. In this enlightening book, Carol Tavris unmasks the widespread but invisible custom—pervasive in the social sciences, medicine, law, and history—of treating men as the...standard. Tavris expands our vision...by illuminating the similarities between women and men and showing that...real differences lie...in power, resources, and life experiences.”

“[Written with] wit, erudition, and moderation.... The great virtue of this book is that its author never confuses the very real differences in women's and men’s experiences—pregnancy and childbearing being the most obvious—with the cultural artifacts surrounding these undeniable facts of life.” --The New York Times Book Review

“In the good humored and commonsense approach that has typified her work, Tavris shows how both men and women use dubious standards of measure.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“Original, provocative, and utterly fascinating, this splendid book will change profoundly the way we think about the sexes—and sex differences.” --Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D.

“By destroying myths about the inferiority and superiority of women, The Mismeasure of Woman provides the ground for a new dialogue between men and women.” --Sam Keen

“The author's unusual ability to winnow out deeply embedded errors in thinking makes this an especially important, stimulating, and timely work.” --Kirkus Reviews

“A valuable, enlightening roadmap to sanity for women and men.” --Publishers Weekly

“Tavris' lucid analysis...covers an impressive range of topics [and is] a thoughtful, challenging contribution to the debate on gender and its social meaning—a humane plea for understanding between men and women.” --Philadelphia Inquirer

“Like a breath of fresh air, Tavris sweeps through the entire spectrum of psychological and physical myth-making, providing valuable, occasionally astonishing, insights. The Mismeasure of Woman is a book of major significance.” --Buffalo News
“The Mismeasure of Woman is magnificent...[a] sensible, penetrating, and critically incisive analysis of women's and men's issues....” --Richard Paul, Ph.D.

“This book sets the standard that future works will have to measure up to for years to come. A truly important book, it should be read by everyone who invokes psychology to explain the world.” --Rachel Hare-Mustin, Ph.D.

“Carol Tavris challenges the ubiquitous myths with empirical findings carefully but also clearly and cleverly. She is a wonderful writer and The Mismeasure of Woman is a wonderful book.” --Carol Nagy Jacklin, Ph.D.

“Captivating and well documented.” --Booklist

---

**Moby Dick** by Herman Melville


“Moby Dick is the epic saga of a one-legged fanatic, Captain Ahab, who swears vengeance on the mammoth white whale who has crippled him. The first American novel to win a place in the literature of the world, it has been called a realistic story of whaling, a romance of unusual adventure and weird characters, a symbolic allegory, a drama of heroic determination and conflict.”

“[Moby Dick is] the greatest of American novels.” –The Atlantic Monthly

“...We have here an American masterpiece, a book that rewards constant re-reading, that provides all the tingling excitement of high adventure and the profounder satisfaction of 'all deep, earnest thinking.'” —Denham Sutcliffe

“Moby Dick brought all of the magic, the sadness, the wild joy of many waters into my life.” --John Masefield
**My Name is Asher Lev**  by Chaim Potok


“Here is the original, deeply moving story of Asher Lev, the religious boy with an overwhelming need to draw, to paint, to render the world he knows and the pain he feels on canvas for everyone to see. A loner, Asher has an extraordinary God-given gift that cannot be controlled, but that possesses a spirit all its own. It is this force that he must learn to master without shaming his people or relinquishing any part of his deeply felt Judaism. It is under the labor of these burdens that Asher must work and live and love. He knows it will not be easy for him, but he knows, too, that even if it is impossible, it must be done....”

“A novel of finely articulated tragic power...Little short of a work of genius.” --*The New York Times Book Review*

“Memorable...A book profound in its vision of humanity, of religion, and of art.” --*The Wall Street Journal*

“Such a feeling of freshness, of something brand-new...Attention-holding and ultimately moving.” --*The New York Times*

“Engrossing and illuminating...” --*The Miami Herald*

---

**The Namesake**  by Jhumpa Lahiri


“Meet the Ganguli family, new arrivals from Calcutta, trying their best to become Americans even as they pine for home. The name they bestow on their firstborn, Gogol, betrays all the conflicts of honoring tradition in a new world—conflicts that will haunt Gogol on his own winding path through divided loyalties, comic detours, and wrenching love affairs. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for her story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri brilliantly illuminates the immigrant experience and the tangled ties between generations.”

“Splendid.” --*Time*

“Superb.” --*Washington Post*

“Dazzling...The Namesake is that rare thing: an intimate, closely observed family portrait that effortlessly and discreetly unfolds to disclose a capacious social vision...a debut novel that is as assured and eloquent as the work of a longtime master of the craft.” --*New York Times*
“Hugely appealing...Gracefully written and filled with well-observed details, Lahiri's novel—like her hero—manages to bridge two very different societies and to give us the absolute best of both.”
--People

“A poignant, beautifully crafted tale of culture shock...Reading it, anyone will understand how it feels to be a cultural outsider.” --Fort Worth Morning Star-Telegram

“What sets Lahiri apart is simple yet richly detailed writing that makes the heart ache as she meticulously unfolds the lives of her characters.” --USA Today

"Lahiri's graceful first novel more than fulfills the promise of her Pulitzer-winning story collection...The exquisitely detailed saga of the Ganguli family...becomes the classic story of American immigration and assimilation.” --Entertainment Weekly

“Extraordinary...an insightful and descriptive take on family, tradition, and self-acceptance...Jhumpa Lahiri is an accomplished novelist of the first rank.” --San Diego Union-Tribune

“Poignant...A novel of exquisite and subtle tension, spanning two generations and continents and a plethora of emotional compromises in between...The Namesake is a story of guilt and liberation; it speaks to the universal struggle to extricate ourselves from the past—from family and obligation and the curse of history.” --Boston Globe

“A full flowering of her talent...beautifully rendered....” --New York

“Achingly artful, Lahiri's first novel showcases her prodigious gifts.” --Baltimore Sun

“A book to savor....” --Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Emotionally charged and deeply poignant....” --Philadelphia Inquirer

“The Namesake is a quietly moving first novel...Intensely absorbing....” --Columbus Dispatch

“Sparingly beautiful prose...Lahiri's novel ultimately dramatizes a common experience shared by all people: the search for identity.” --Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

“A rare and wonderful tale.” --Orlando Sentinel

“[A] novel whose characters and incidents continue to leap freshly to mind weeks after reading it.” --Book Page

“A powerful and original voice.” --Star Tribune

“Against all that is irrational and inevitable about life, Lahiri posits the timeless, borderless eloquence and permanence of great writing.” --Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
“Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America” by Barbara Ehrenreich

The New York Times Bestseller and Notable Book of the Year

“Millions of Americans work full-time, year-round, for poverty-level wages. Barbara Ehrenreich decided to join them…. How can anyone survive, let alone prosper, on [minimum wage]? To find out, Ehrenreich moved from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, taking the cheapest lodgings available and accepting work as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing home aide, and Wal-Mart salesperson. She soon discovered that even the ‘lowliest’ occupations require exhausting mental and physical efforts. And one job is not enough; you need at least two if you intend to live indoors. Nickel and Dimed reveals low-wage America in all its tenacity, anxiety, and surprising generosity—a land of Big Boxes, fast food, and a thousand desperate stratagems for survival. Instantly acclaimed for its insight, humor, and passion, this book is changing the way America perceives its working poor.”

“Ehrenreich’s account is unforgettable—heart-wrenching, infuriating, funny, smart, and empowering…Nickel and Dimed is vintage Ehrenreich and will surely take its place among the classics of underground reportage.” --Juliet Schor

“Ehrenreich writes with clarity, wit, and frankness….Nickel and Dimed is one of the most important books to be published this year, a new entry in the tradition of reporting on poverty that includes George Orwell’s The Road to Wigan Pier....” --Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

“Piercing social criticism backed by first-rate reporting…Ehrenreich captures not only the tribulations of finding and performing low-wage work, but the humiliations as well.” --Minneapolis Star Tribune

“Barbara Ehrenreich’s new book is absolutely riveting—it is terrific story-telling, filled with fury and delicious humor and stunning moments of the purest empathy with those who toil beside her.” --Jonathan Kozol

“A brilliant on-the-job report from the dark side of the [economic] boom. No one since H. L. Mencken has assailed the smug rhetoric of prosperity with such scalpel-like precision and ferocious wit.” --Mike Davis

“Eloquent...This book illuminates the invisible army that scrubs floors, waits tables, and straightens the racks at discount stores.” --USA Today

“Courageous...Nickel and Dimed is a superb and frightening look into the lives of hard-working Americans...policy makers should be forced to read.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“Nickel and Dimed opens a window into the daily lives of the invisible work-force that fuels the service economy, and endows the men and women who populate it with the honor that is often lacking on the job. And it forces the reader to realize that all the good-news talk about welfare reform masks a harsher reality.” --The Washington Post
“In Nickel and Dimed, Ehrenreich expertly peals away the layers of self-denial, self-interest, and self-protection that separate the rich from the poor, the served from the servers, the housed from the homeless. This brave and frank book is ultimately a challenge to create a less divided society.”
--Naomi Klein

“Unflinching, superb....” --Ms.

“Unforgettable...Nickel and Dimed is one of those rare books that will provoke both outrage and self-reflection. No one who reads this book will be able to resist its power to make them see the world in a new way.” --Mitchell Duneier

“It is not difficult to endorse Nickel and Dimed as a book that everyone who reads—yes, everyone—ought to read, for enjoyment, for consciousness-raising and as a call to action.” --Chicago Tribune

“Captivating.... Just promise that you will read this explosive little book from cover to cover and pass it on to all your friends and relatives.” --The New York Times

Nothing But the Best:
The Struggle for Perfection at the Juilliard School  by Judith Kogan


“She’s a shrewd storyteller with a good eye for emotionally charged detail, and her narratives of orchestral mutiny and precompetition jitters are deliciously real....a fascinating, Upton Sinclair-type expose on how musical artists are made.” --The New York Times Book Review

“Nothing But the Best is a wonderfully written chronicle of the angst and aspirations of the classical music world’s young hopefuls as they experience the rigors, the rivalries and the rewards at The Juilliard School. The author has captured the cafeteria conversations, the complaints, the dreams of the students, with a sharp ear and a watchful eye. The world of classical music is truly unforgiving, and the courage with which these young people try to meet those absolute standards is very moving.”
--Eugenia Zuckerman

“...Accurate, impassioned, sympathetic, and concerned for the emotions as well as the activities of her subjects. With the immediacy of a diary, her book details the students’ never-ceasing struggles for recognition, the pressures and pains of practice, lessons, auditions, competitions, and eventual emergence into the hard realities of a musical career.” --Musical America

“It’s a lively account, drawing on conversations, anecdotes, high moments and lows, like a Juilliard version of A Chorus Line.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“I loved reading this book. It took me back to the days when I too, like Peter Schickele, majored in ‘cafeteria.’ I appreciated the opportunity to pause and reflect on the Juilliard experience.” --Yo Yo Ma
Nudge  by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein


“Every day we make decisions on topics ranging from personal investments to schools for our children to the meals we eat to the causes we champion. Unfortunately, we often choose poorly. The reason, the authors explain, is that, being human, we all are susceptible to various biases that can lead us to blunder. Our mistakes make us poorer and less healthy; we often make bad decisions involving education, personal finance, health care, mortgages and credit cards, the family, and even the planet itself.... Thaler and Sunstein invite us to enter an alternative world, one that takes our humanness as a given. They show that by knowing how people think, we can design choice environments that make it easier for people to choose what is best for themselves, their families, and their society. Using colorful examples from the most important aspects of life, Thaler and Sunstein demonstrate how thoughtful ‘choice architecture’ can be established to nudge us in beneficial directions without restricting freedom....”

“How often do you read a book that is both important and amusing, both practical and deep? This gem of a book presents the best idea that has come out of behavioral economics. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to see both our minds and our society working better. It will improve your decisions and it will make the world a better place.” --Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University, Nobel Laureate in Economics

“In this utterly brilliant book, Thaler and Sunstein teach us how to steer people toward better health, sounder investments, and cleaner environments without depriving them of their inalienable right to make a mess of things if they want to. The inventor of behavioral economics and one of the nation’s best legal minds have produced the manifesto for a revolution in practice and policy. Nudge won’t nudge you—it will knock you off your feet.” --Daniel Gilbert, professor of psychology, Harvard University

“This book is terrific. It will change the way you think, not only about the world around you and some of its bigger problems, but also about yourself.” --Michael Lewis

“This is an engaging, informative, and thoroughly delightful book. Thaler and Sunstein provide important lessons for structuring social policies so that people still have complete choice over their actions but are gently nudged to do what is in their own best interests.” --Don Norman, Northwestern University
Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell


“Why do some people succeed far more than others? There is a story that is usually told about extremely successful people, a story that focuses on intelligence and ambition. In Outliers Malcolm Gladwell argues that the true story of success is very different, and that if we want to understand how some people thrive, we should spend more time looking around them—at such things as their family, their birthplace, or even their birth date. The story of success is more complex—and a lot more interesting—than it initially appears. Outliers explains what the Beatles and Bill Gates have in common, the extraordinary success of Asians at math, the hidden advantages of star athletes, why all top New York lawyers have the same resume, and the reason you’ve never heard of the world’s smartest man—all in terms of generation, family, culture, and class. It matters what year you were born if you want to be a Silicon Valley billionaire, Gladwell argues, and it matters where you were born if you want to be a successful pilot. The lives of outliers—those people whose achievements fall outside normal experience—follow a peculiar and unexpected logic, and in making that logic plain Gladwell presents a fascinating and provocative blueprint for making the most of human potential.”

"In the vast world of nonfiction writing, [Malcolm Gladwell] is as close to a singular talent as exists today... [Outliers] is a pleasure to read and leaves you mulling over its inventive theories for days afterward...Outliers represents a new kind of book for Gladwell...It is almost a manifesto." –New York Times Book Review

"...The explosively entertaining Outliers might be [Gladwell’s] best and most useful work yet...there are both brilliant yarns and life lessons here: Outliers is riveting science, self-help, and entertainment, all in one book." –Gregory Kirschling

“Outliers can be enjoyed for its bits of trivia, like why most pro hockey players were born in January, how many hours of practice it takes to master a skill, why the descendents of Jewish immigrant garment workers became the most powerful lawyers in New York, how a pilots’ culture impacts their crash record, how a centuries-old culture of rice farming helps Asian kids master math. But there’s more to it than that. Throughout all of these examples--and in more that delve into the social benefits of lighter skin color, and the reasons for school achievement gaps--Gladwell invites conversations about the complex ways privilege manifests in our culture. He leaves us pondering the gifts of our own history, and how the world could benefit if more of our kids were granted the opportunities to fulfill their remarkable potential.” –Mari Malcolm

“Gladwell once again proves masterful in a genre he essentially pioneered—the book that illuminates secret patterns behind everyday phenomena. His gift for spotting an intriguing mystery, luring the reader in, then gradually revealing his lessons in lucid prose, is on vivid display. Outliers begins with a provocative look at why certain five-year-old boys enjoy an advantage in ice hockey, and how these advantages accumulate over time. We learn what Bill Gates, the Beatles and Mozart had in common: along with talent and ambition, each enjoyed an unusual opportunity to intensively cultivate a skill that allowed them to rise above their peers. A detailed investigation of the unique culture and skills of Eastern European Jewish immigrants persuasively explains their rise in 20th-century New York,
first in the garment trade and then in the legal profession. Through case studies ranging from Canadian junior hockey champions to the robber barons of the Gilded Age, from Asian math whizzes to software entrepreneurs to the rise of his own family in Jamaica, Gladwell tears down the myth of individual merit to explore how culture, circumstance, timing, birth and luck account for success—and how historical legacies can hold others back despite ample individual gifts. Even as we know how many of these stories end, Gladwell restores the suspense and serendipity to these narratives that make them fresh and surprising.” – *Publishers Weekly*

**A People’s History of the United States** by Howard Zinn


“Known for its lively, clear prose as well as its scholarly research, *A People’s History of the United States* is the only volume to tell America’s story from the point of view of—and in the words of—America’s women, factory workers, African Americans, Native Americans, working poor, and immigrant laborers. Revised and updated with two new chapters... *A People’s History of the United States* features insightful analysis of the most important events in our history.”

“A brilliant and moving history of the American people.” -- *Library Journal*

“Historians may well view it as a step toward a coherent new version of American history.” -- *New York Times Book Review*

“One of the most important books I have ever read in a long life of reading....It’s a wonderful, splendid book—a book that should be read by every American, student or otherwise, who wants to understand his country, its true history, and its hope for the future.” -- Howard Fast
The Plot Against America  by Philip Roth


“In an astonishing feat of narrative invention, our most ambitious novelist imagines an alternate version of American history. In 1940 Charles A. Lindbergh, heroic aviator and rabid isolationist, is elected President. Shortly thereafter, he negotiates a cordial ‘understanding’ with Adolf Hitler, while the new government embarks on a program of folksy anti-Semitism. For one boy growing up in Newark, Lindbergh’s election is the first in a series of ruptures that threatens to destroy his small, safe corner of America—and with it, his mother, his father, and his older brother.”

“A richly terrifying historical novel....[Roth is] the greatest fiction writer America has ever produced.”  --Esquire

“It’s not a prophecy; it’s a nightmare....[A] sinuous and brilliant book.”  --The New Yorker

“A remarkable act of historical imagination and one of [Roth’s] most moving novels.”  --People

“The writing is extraordinary, complex but highly readable, evocative, and colored with a tenderness and affection.... This is one of Roth’s finest books.”  --O, The Oprah Magazine

“Raises the stakes as high as a patriotic novel can take them.... Effortlessly, it seems, Roth has led us to suspend disbelief; then he makes us believe....”  --Los Angeles Times Book Review

“Roth takes readers on a harrowing safari across interdimensional borders into a bizarre version of his hometown.... [His] delivery is so matter-of-fact, so documentary deadpan that when we’re 10 pages into the book our own world starts to seem like a flimsy fantasy.”  --Time

“One of the world’s most brilliant writers.... His words fly off the page, his sentences gathering a momentum that hauls the reader along to a place beyond mere critical appraisal.”  --The Observer (London)

“A harrowing novel of political psychology.... It may be the saddest book Roth has written and the most frightening.”  --The Village Voice

“Roth is writing the most brilliant books of his life, chronicling the American century.... Today’s artists need to tell us about our world, but maybe they need to do it in camouflage. Philip Roth, an old master, has shown the way.”  --The Guardian (London)

“The most compelling of living writers.... [His] every book is like a dispatch from the deepest recesses of the national mind.”  --New York

“Provocative.... At times, deeply affecting.... An intimate glimpse of one family’s harrowing encounter with history.”  --The New York Times

“Intimately observed characters in situations fraught with society’s deepest, most bitter tensions.... Too ingeniously excruciating to put down.”  --Newsweek

“ Ingenious.... Roth’s gorgeous and forceful prose, which swirls and dances and rages...has never seemed more precise and lucid.”  --Fort Worth Star-Telegram
“Once again, Philip Roth has published a novel that you must read—now....A stunning work.” --The Christian Science Monitor

“Huge, inflammatory, painfully moving.... Far and away the most outward-looking, expansive...book Roth has written.” --The Washington Post Book World

“Roth’s most powerful book to date. Confounding and illuminating, enraged and discomfiting, imaginative and utterly—terrifyingly—believable.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“A breathtaking leap of imagination.... The writing is brilliant.” --USA Today

“In The Plot Against America, Philip Roth has reasserted the supremacy of the novel over all other literary forms. This is the first fictional masterpiece of the 21st century, and it rings entirely true.” --Evening Standard (London)


The #1 New York Times Bestseller


“Every Thursday morning for two years in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a bold and inspired teacher named Azar Nafisi secretly gathered seven of her most committed female students to read forbidden Western classics....The girls in Azar Nafisi’s living room risked removing their veils and immersed themselves in the worlds of Jane Austen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and Vladimir Nabokov. In this extraordinary memoir, their stories become intertwined with the ones they are reading. Reading Lolita in Tehran is a remarkable exploration of resilience in the face of tyranny and a celebration of the liberating power of literature.”

“Resonant and deeply affecting...An eloquent brief on the transformative powers of fiction—on the refuge from ideology that art can offer to those living under tyranny, and art’s affirmative and subversive faith in the voice of the individual.” --The New York Times

“A quietly magnificent book...[Nafisi’s] passion is irresistible.” --LA Weekly

“A poignant, searing tale about the secret ways Iranian women defy the regime....[Nafisi] makes you want to rush back to all these books to experience the hidden aspects she’s elucidated.” --Salon

“[A] vividly braided memoir...Anguished and glorious.” --The New Republic

“Azar Nafisi’s memoir makes a good case for reading the classics of Western literature no matter where you are....[Her] perspective on her students' plight, the ongoing struggle of Iranian citizens, and her country’s violent transformation into an Islamic state will provide valuable insights to anyone interested in current international events.” --The Christian Science Monitor
“Transcends categorization as memoir, literary criticism or social history, though it is superb as all three....Nafisi has produced an original work on the relationship between life and literature.”  --Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“[A] sparkling memoir...A spirited tribute both to the classics of world literature and to resistance against oppression.” --Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“A memoir about teaching Western literature in revolutionary Iran, with profound and fascinating insights into both.  A masterpiece.” --Bernard Lewis

“Anyone who has ever belonged to a book group must read this book.  Azar Nafisi takes us into the vivid lives of eight women who must meet in secret to explore the forbidden fiction of the west.  It is at once a celebration of the power of the novel and a cry of outrage at the reality in which these women are trapped.  The ayatollahs don’t know it, but Nafisi is one of the heroes of the Islamic Republic.” --Geraldine Brooks

“An inspiring account of an insatiable desire for intellectual freedom.” --USA Today

---

**The Reluctant Fundamentalist**  by Mohsin Hamid

A New York Times Bestseller and Notable Book;  
A Washington Post and San Francisco Chronicle  Best Book of the Year


“At a café table in Lahore, a bearded Pakistani man converses with an uneasy American stranger.  As dusk deepens to night, he begins the tale that has brought them to this fateful encounter.... Changez is living an immigrant’s dream of America.  At the top of his class at Princeton, he is snapped up by an elite valuation firm.  He thrives on the energy of New York, and his budding romance with elegant, beautiful Erica promises entry into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore.  But in the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned and his relationship with Erica shifting.  And Changez’s own identity is in seismic shift as well, unearthing allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and maybe even love.”

“One of those achingly assured novels that makes you happy to be a reader.” --Junot Diaz

“Extreme times call for extreme reactions, extreme writing.  Hamid has done something extraordinary with this novel.” --Washington Post

“Brief, charming, and quietly furious...a resounding success.” --Village Voice

“Changez’s voice is extraordinary. Cultivated, restrained, yet also barbed and passionate, it evokes the power of butler Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*...brilliantly written and well worth a read.” -- *Seattle Times*

“Slender, smart, and subservive.” -- *Entertainment Weekly*

“[A] lucid, unsettling novel.” -- *New Yorker*

“A brilliant book...balanced by a love as powerful as the sinister forces gathering, even when it recedes into a phantom of hope. It is this balance, and the constant negotiation of the political with the personal, that creates a nuanced and complex portrait of a reluctant fundamentalist.” -- Kiran Desai, author of *The Inheritance of Loss*

“Fascinating, haunting...what makes this novel such an absorbing read is the unsettling dialogue it creates within the reader. Its minimalism, which leaves so much room for argument, also renders our complicity, forcing us to actively talk back, unable to retreat to our national borders with their complacent certainties.” -- *Brooklyn Rail*

“A tale of enormous tension...more exciting than any thriller I’ve read for a long time.” -- Philip Pullman, author of *The Golden Compass*

---

**The Road**  
by Cormac McCarthy

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize


“The searing, postapocalyptic novel destined to become Cormac 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. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other. *The Road* is a profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, ‘each the other’s world entire,’ are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation.”
“Trenchant and terrifying, written with stripped-down urgency and fueled by the force of a universal nightmare. *The Road* [has] stunning, savage beauty. This is an exquisitely bleak incantation—pure poetic brimstone...[Cormac McCarthy] gives voice to the unspeakable...Yet this narrative is also illuminated by extraordinary tenderness...This is art that both frightens and inspires...Its fearless wisdom is more indelible than reassurance could ever be.” --Janet Masline, *The New York Times*

“It may be the most haunting book...that you’ll ever read...gut-punching prose and bracing depictions of emotional longing...a beautiful...near-perfect work.” --Mark Holcomb, *The Village Voice*

“Devastating...McCarthy has never seemed more at home, more eloquent, than in the sere, postapocalyptic ash land of *The Road*...Extraordinarily lovely and sad...[A] masterpiece.” --Jennifer Reese

*The Road* is a Dantesian tour of hell that would make Dante himself shudder...*The Road* carries the power to echo through you for an entire lifetime.” --Jonathan Miles

“The novel is awesome, a kind of reality-based Beckett, moving and unbelievable believable in its portrayal of horror and dread and hopelessness in the next Dark Age...Transcendently bleak.” --Kurt Andersen, *New York Magazine*

*The Road* is a wildly powerful and disturbing book that exposes whatever black bedrock lies beneath grief and horror. Disaster has never felt more physically and spiritually real. In a way McCarthy is the last survivor of a vanished world. He is, essentially, a modernist, miraculously preserved like a literary coelacanth from the age of Hemingway and Faulkner, writers of high style and high purpose....There’s a stripped-down intensity to his work that is just awesome.” --Lev Grossman, *Time*

“McCarthy evokes Beckett, using repetition and negation to crushing effect, showing us by their absence the things we will miss. Hypnotic and haunting, relentlessly dark, this is a novel to read in late-night solitude. Though the focus never leaves the two travelers, they carry our humanity, and we can’t help but feel the world hangs in the balance of their hopeless quest. A masterpiece.” --Keir Graff, *Booklist* (starred)

“Even within the author’s extraordinary body of work, this stands as a radical achievement, a novel that demands to be read and reread...A parable that reads like *Night of the Living Dead* as rewritten by Samuel Beckett...The relationship between father and son has a sweetness that represents all that’s good in a universe where conventional notions of good and evil have been extinguished....[McCarthy’s] prose combines the cadence of prophecy with the indelible images of poetry. A novel of horrific beauty, where death is the only truth.” --Kirkus Reviews (starred)

“No American writer since Faulkner has wandered so willingly into the swamp waters of deviltry and redemption...[*The Road*] is Beckett at its most gritty...The reader feels a bone-deep identification with the characters’ plight...And to its credit, you don’t see what has to be coming in this endgame novel—a moment of such simple goodness and humanity that even its elegiac fact is a thing of comfort...He has written this last waltz with enough elegant reserve to capture what matters most.” --Gail Caldwell, *Boston Globe*

 “[A] postapocalyptic tour de force...McCarthy establishes himself here as the closest thing in American literature to an Old Testament prophet, trolling the blackest registers of human emotion to create a haunting and grim novel about civilization’s slow death after the power goes out.” --*Publishers Weekly* (starred)

“A bare description of Cormac McCarthy’s new novel sounds painfully bleak...Yet for all this, *The Road* provides the mesmerized reader with exhilaration, even joy. What makes the novel so profoundly affecting is the intensity of McCarthy’s imaginative immersion.... *The Road* deserves to
last: It is an overwhelming achievement and may be the first truly great work of American art in the new century.” --O, The Oprah Magazine

“Cormac McCarthy may have just set to paper the definitive vision of the world after nuclear war...It is the love the father feels for his son, a love as deep and acute as his grief, that could surprise readers of McCarthy’s previous work...McCarthy has always written about the battle between light and darkness; the darkness usually comprises 99.9% of the world, while any illumination is the weak shaft thrown by a penlight running low on batteries. In The Road, those batteries are almost out—the entire world is, quite literally, dying—so the final affirmation of hope in the novel’s closing pages is all the more shocking and maybe all the more enduring as the boy takes all of his father’s (and McCarthy’s) rage at the hopeless folly of man and lays it down, lifting up, in its place, the oddest of all things: faith.” --Dennis Lehane

Runaway  by Alice Munro

A New York Times Book Review Best Book of the Year


“The incomparable Alice Munro’s bestselling and rapturously acclaimed Runaway is a book of extraordinary stories about love and its infinite betrayals and surprises. In Munro’s hands, the people she writes about—women of all ages and circumstances, and their friends, lovers, parents, and children—become as vivid as our own neighbors. It is her miraculous gift to make these stories as real and unforgettable as our own.”

“Alice Munro has a strong claim to being the best fiction writer now working in North America. Runaway is a marvel.” --The New York Times Book Review

“Munro is routinely called one of the finest living writers. You can turn to any of the eight stories in Runaway and see why.” --Time

“No one working today can write more convincingly about ‘the progress of love’ than Alice Munro....She stands as one of the living colossi of the modern short story, and her Chekhovian realism, her keen psychological insight, her instinctive feel for the emotional arithmetic of domestic life have indelibly stamped contemporary writing.” --The New York Times

“Perfect...Feels like a compressed collection of novels, so rich and deep and complete are the lives Munro evokes in these pages.” --Chicago Tribune

“[Munro is] one of the greats of the twentieth century.” --Newsday

“Radiant....Achingly wise....The stories are funny, grand, and tragic. They settle around the reader for hours afterward, like weather.” --Houston Chronicle

“Simply breathtaking.” --Fort Worth Star-Telegram

“It’s not common to find stories that hurt like a wound, that make you gasp. Not, that is, unless you read Alice Munro....These stories offer no bromides, no feel-good aphorisms about growing stronger
through adversity. They do, however, offer one of literature’s great gifts: making even unbearable things a little easier to bear.” --The Baltimore Sun

“Captivating….Munro does what most writers dream of doing and succeeds at it, page after page, story after story, collection after collection.” --The Oregonian

“In Alice Munro’s hands, the smallest moments contain the central truths of a lifetime.” --Maclean’s

“From a markedly finite number of essential components, Munro rather miraculously spins out countless permutations of desire and despair, attenuated hopes and cloudbursts of epiphany….Every one of these women is different, and that is the wonder of Alice Munro.” --The Village Voice

“She outjoices Joyce and checkmates Chekhov….Each of the stories in Runaway contains enough lived life to fill a typical novel….Her women are heroic….They endure in the mind of the reader.” --The Boston Globe

“As with so many of Munro’s stories, you read to have your premises altered and deepened. Could anything be better?…A beautiful new work.” --Los Angeles Times

“The great Alice Munro proves again why short-story writers bow down to her.” --Vanity Fair

“Runaway is a big dish of Beluga caviar, sailing in on a sparkling bed of ice, with a mother-of-pearl spoon. You remember: This is why you eat, read, make love, whatever—to be left silly with admiration and delight.” --The Washington Post

A Separate Peace  by John Knowles


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

“A masterpiece.” --National Review

“A model of restraint, deeply felt and beautifully written.” --The Observer

“Beautifully written…great depth.” --San Francisco Chronicle

“A gem of controlled eloquence.” --New York World-Telegram and Sun

“Artistry of a high order.” --Saturday Review

“Exceptional power and distinction.” --The Times (London)
“A quietly vital and cleanly written novel that moves, page by page, toward a most interesting target.”
--Truman Capote

“Mr. Knowles has something to say about youth and war that few contemporary novelists have attempted to say and none has said better.” --Warren Miller

“I think it is the best-written, best-designed, and most moving novel I have read in many years. Beginning with a tiny incident among ordinary boys, it ends by being as deep and as big as evil itself.”
--Aubrey Menen

**The Shame of the Nation:**
*The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* by Jonathan Kozol

The *New York Times* Bestseller


“Over the last 15 years, the state of inner-city public schools has been in a steep and continuing decline. Since the federal courts began dismantling the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, segregation of black children has reverted to its highest level since 1968. In many inner-city schools, a stick-and-carrot method of behavioral control traditionally used in prisons is now used with students. Meanwhile, as high-stakes testing takes on pathological and punitive dimensions, liberal [arts] education has been increasingly replaced by culturally barren and robotic methods of instruction that would be rejected out of hand by schools that serve the mainstream of society. Filled with the passionate voices of children, principals, and teachers, and some of the most revered leaders in the black community, The *Shame of the Nation* pays tribute to those undefeated educators who persist against the odds, but directly challenges the chilling practices now being forced upon our urban systems.... In their place, Kozol offers a humane, dramatic challenge to our nation to fulfill at last the promise made some 50 years ago to all our youngest citizens.”

“A vividly written account from the frontlines of ‘apartheid education.’ It is impossible not to share Kozol’s outrage.” --*Chicago Tribune*

“Segregation is back, and only a writer of Jonathan Kozol’s wisdom and passion can assess its terrible price, one child at a time. It isn’t easy, but before we can craft a solution, we have to feel the shame.” --Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed*

“Shines a spotlight on poor, minority children, sabotaged and isolated by an educational system tilted to slight them...His outrage ought to infect us.” --*Los Angeles Times*

“The *Shame of the Nation* is a national wake-up call about what is happening to our children on our watch in schools across the country. It should be required reading.” --Marian Wright Edelman, CEO and founder, Children’s Defense Fund
“A powerful, morally enraged polemic in which [Kozol] argues that we have failed to deliver the promise of Brown v. Board of Education... We know that more funding and more integration would help poor African-American children, and we are not doing anything about it. That is indeed shameful. It is inspiring that after all these decades, Kozol is still angry about these inequalities, and eloquently so. His book will make you fighting mad, and it should.” --Newsday

“Alive with the compelling voices of students and educators Kozol has come to know in countless visits to inner-city schools—voices many of us otherwise would not hear.... His glimpses inside America’s second-class schools tell the story that numbers can’t.” --The Christian Science Monitor

“A real cry from the heart. Everybody who cares about children, about democracy, about citizenship, and about America’s future must read this book.” --Roger Wilkins, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor, George Mason University

**The Shipping News** by Annie Proulx

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award


“When Quoyle’s...wife meets her [demise], he retreats with his two daughters to his ancestral home on the starkly beautiful Newfoundland coast, where a rich cast of local characters and family members all play a part in [his] struggle to reclaim his life. As Quoyle confronts his private demons -- and the unpredictable forces of nature and society -- he begins to see the possibility of love without pain or misery. A vigorous, darkly comic, and at times magical portrait of the contemporary North American family, The Shipping News shows why Annie Proulx is recognized as one of the most gifted and original writers in America today.”

“The writing is charged with sardonic wit -- alive, funny, a little threatening; packed with brilliantly original images...and, now and then, a sentence that simply takes your breath away.” --USA Today

“Annie Proulx’s stunning, big-hearted The Shipping News thaws the frozen lives of its characters and warms readers.” --San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle

“Ms. Proulx blends Newfoundland argot, savage history, impressively diverse characters, fine descriptions of weather and scenery, and comic horseplay, without ever lessening the reader’s interest.” --The Atlantic

“An exciting, beautifully written novel of great feeling....” --Grace Paley

“Here is a novel that gives us a hero for our times.” --The Washington Post Book World

“The Shipping News is that rare creation, a lyric page-turner.” --The Chicago Tribune
“A funny-tragic Gothic tale, with a speed boat of a plot, overflowing with black-comic characters. But it’s also that contemporary rarity, a tale of redemption and healing, a celebration of the resilience of the human spirit, and most rare of all perhaps, a sweet and tender romance.” — The Toronto Star

Snow Falling on Cedars
by David Guterson

Winner of the PEN / Faulkner Award and the American Booksellers Association Book of the Year Award


“San Piedro Island, north of Puget Sound, is a place so isolated that no one who lives there can afford to make enemies. But in 1954 a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder. In the course of the ensuing trial, it becomes clear that what is at stake is more than one man’s guilt. For on San Piedro, memory grows as thickly as cedar trees and the fields of ripe strawberries—memories of a charmed love affair between a white boy and the Japanese girl who grew up to become Kabuo’s wife….Above all, San Piedro is haunted by the memory of what happened to its Japanese residents during World War II, when an entire community was sent into exile while its neighbors watched. Gripping, tragic, and densely atmospheric, Snow Falling on Cedars is a masterpiece of suspense...that leaves us shaken and changed.”


“A riveting tale about love and war and the ways men and women struggle for survival and redemption. Snow Falling on Cedars is a vivid and spellbinding novel, made unforgettable by Guterson’s mastery of detail and his wise and generous heart. I could not put this book down.” — Colin Harrison

“Intriguing....At various moments a courtroom drama, an interracial love story, and a war chronicle....Vividly written.” — San Francisco Chronicle

“Passionate....The novel’s grace is undeniable. Guterson has let the facts about the internment of Japanese-Americans speak for themselves. In the end, he retrieves an important part of this country’s history.” — Washington Times

“Here is a grand achievement: a compelling, serious, perfectly crafted novel of Puget Sound in the 1950s. The characters and the story and the setting make a fully formed, beautiful whole. I admired Snow Falling on Cedars and I could not put it down.” — Annie Dillard

“A powerful meditation on the nature of pride and prejudice and personal responsibility....Casts a deepening spell.” — Seattle Post Intelligencer

“Luminous....This is poetry masquerading as prose.” — People
“Elegant and lush. A chilling still-life rendering of petty prejudices and moral ambiguity, thwarted ambition and bitter resignation, crushing guilt and the possibility of redemption.” --San Diego Union-Tribune

“Guterson maps out the difficult topography of the islanders’ relations with one another, their hidden jealousies, resentments, and suspicions, and their surprising if unreliable capacity for generosity of spirit. He also keeps a loving eye on the details of both the natural and human world, capturing the moods of sea, forest, and field.” --Washington Post Book World

“Guterson uses a rich scenario and cast of characters to explore issues much deeper than the usual. Like the snowfall that is its constant refrain, Snow Falling on Cedars builds up gradually, steadily, surrounding the reader with its magic.” --Newsday

“Luminous... a beautifully assured and full-bodied novel [that] becomes a tender examination of fairness and forgiveness... Guterson has fashioned something haunting and true.” --Time

“Riveting....An intriguing [and] lyrical tale....” --San Jose Mercury News

“Haunting....A whodunit complete with courtroom maneuvering and surprising turns of evidence and at the same time a mystery, something altogether richer and deeper.” --Los Angeles Times

“With this beautiful novel, Guterson establishes himself as one of the most mature, important, and skillful young novelists at work today.” --Charles Johnson

Note: This selection contains mature themes and language. It may not be suitable for all students. Please discuss your selection with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan by Lisa See

National Bestseller


“In nineteenth-century China, in a remote Hunan county, a girl named Lily, at the tender age of seven, is paired with a laotong, or “old same,” in an emotional match that will last a lifetime. The laotong, Snow Flower, introduces herself by sending Lily a silk fan on which she has written a poem in nu shu, a unique language that Chinese women created in order to communicate in secret, away from the influence of men. As the years pass, Lily and Snow Flower send messages on the fan and compose stories on handkerchiefs, reaching out of isolation to share their hopes, dreams, and accomplishments. They both endure the agony of footbinding and together reflect upon their arranged marriages, shared loneliness, and the joys and tragedies of motherhood. The two find solace, developing a bond that keeps their spirits alive. But when a misunderstanding arises, their deep friendship suddenly threatens to tear apart.”
“Powerfully alive, unfolding like a waking dream, haunting, magical, and absolutely impossible to forget.” --The Boston Globe

“Vivid...See’s translucent prose style gleams with the beauty of nineteenth-century Chinese culture.” --Los Angeles Times

“Both heartbreaking and heartbreakingly lovely...immerses the reader in an unimagined world...The characters and their surroundings come vibrantly alive.” --The Denver Post

“An achingly beautiful, understated and absorbing story of love...[Snow Flower and the Secret Fan] evokes the work of Jane Austen.” --Cleveland Plain Dealer

“A triumph on every level, a beautiful, heartbreaking story.” --The Washington Post Book World

“Taut and vibrant...a richly textured account of how women might understand their own lives...a keenly imagined journey into the women’s quarters.” --Kirkus Reviews

“[A] haunting, beautiful and ineffably sad tale of longing...” --Baltimore Sun

“Magical, haunting fiction. Beautiful.” --Maxine Hong Kingston

“A marvel of imagination...so mesmerizing that the pages float away and the story remains clearly before us from beginning to end.” --Amy Tan, author of The Joy Luck Club

“An engrossing and completely convincing portrayal of a woman shaped by suffering forced upon her from her earliest years, and of the friendship that helps her to survive.” --Arthur Golden, author of Memoirs of a Geisha

The Social Animal, Ninth Edition  by Elliot Aronson

Winner of the APA National Media Award


“Elliot Aronson is one of the most eminent and versatile psychologists of our time. He is the only person in the 110 year history of the American Psychological Association to have won all three of its major awards: Distinguished Research (1999), Distinguished Teaching (1980), and Distinguished Writing (1975). In addition, among his many honors are the Gordon Allport Prize for his contributions to the betterment of intergroup relations, and the Donald Campbell Award for distinguished research in social psychology. In 1981, he was named Professor of the Year by the American Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. Inducted in 1992, he is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.”
“Still the best….The ideas [Aronson] so eloquently presents are timeless in the field of social psychology....The Social Animal is a masterpiece.” --Contemporary Psychology

“A rare gem of a book, easy to read but also scientifically sophisticated.” --Contemporary Sociology

“The...most entertaining introduction to social psychology. It is as though the reader is having a conversation with a stimulating, learned scholar with a good sense of humor.” --CC Social Science Quarterly

“Aronson writes with an astonishing combination of passion, wisdom, and humor. The Social Animal is a great book.” --Grazyna Wieczorkowska, Director, Institute for Social Studies, Warsaw University, Poland

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams


“Tennessee Williams’ magnificent play has won one of the widest audiences in contemporary dramatic literature. In its first year of presentation in New York, A Streetcar Named Desire received the Pulitzer Prize, the Donaldson Award and The New York Drama Critics Award. A national company toured the United States, and the play has also been produced in England, France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Cuba and Mexico. The film version of Streetcar, starring Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando, was also a triumphant success, winning the New York Film Critics Award as well as a handful of ‘Oscars’ from the Motion Picture Academy....[A Streetcar Named Desire] created an immortal woman in the character of Blanche DuBois, the haggard and fragile southern beauty whose pathetic last grasp at happiness is cruelly destroyed. It shot Marlon Brando to fame in the role of Stanley Kowalski, a sweat-shirted barbarian, the crudely sensual brother-in-law who precipitated Blanche’s tragedy.”

“An achievement of unusual and exciting distinction.” --Saturday Review of Literature
“Richard Feynman, who won the Nobel Prize in physics, was one of the world’s greatest theoretical physicists and thrived on outrageous adventure. His eyebrow-raising behavior once shocked a Princeton dean’s wife to exclaim: ‘Surely you’re joking, Mr. Feynman!’ Feynman was surely the only person in history to solve the mystery of liquid helium, to be commissioned to paint a naked female toreador, and to crack the uncrackable safes guarding the atomic bomb’s most critical secrets. He traded ideas with Einstein and Bohr, discussed gambling odds with Nick the Greek, and accompanied a ballet on the bongo drums. Here, woven with scintillating views on modern science, is Feynman’s astonishing life story—a combustible mixture of high intelligence, unlimited curiosity, eternal skepticism, and raging chutzpah.”

“A storyteller in the tradition of Mark Twain, [Feynman] proves once again that it is possible to laugh out loud and scratch your head at the same time.” --The New York Times Book Review

“Books like this are temptations—to give up reading and devote life to rereading....The book is a litmus paper: anyone who can read it without laughing out loud is bad crazy.” --Los Angeles Times Book Review

“Buzzes with energy, anecdote, and life. It almost makes you want to become a physicist.” --Science Digest

“A chain reaction is not a bad analogy for Feynman’s life. From a critical mass of gray matter it goes off in all directions, producing both heat and light.” --Time

“Feynman is legendary among his colleagues for his brilliance and his eccentricity....It’s hard not to smile all the way through.” --Newsweek

[Another recommended title by Dick Feynman: “What Do You Care What Other People Think?”]
"Three Junes" by Julia Glass

National Book Award Winner


“A luminous first novel, set in Greece, Scotland, Greenwich Village, and Long Island, that traces the members of a Scottish family as they confront the joys and longings, fulfillments and betrayals of love in all its guises.”

“Julia Glass’s talent sends chills up my spine; Three Junes is a marvel.” --Richard Russo

“Three Junes almost threatens to burst with all the life it contains. Glass’s ability to illuminate and deepen the mysteries of her characters’ lives is extraordinary.” --Michael Cunningham

“Three Junes brilliantly rescues, then refurbishes, the traditional plot-driven novel....Glass has written a generous book about family expectations—but also about happiness.” --The New York Times Book Review

“Gorgeous...Three Junes goes after the big issues without a trace of fustiness and gives us a memorable hero.” --Los Angeles Times Book Review

“Three Junes is a novel that bursts with the lives of its characters. They move into our hearts, taking up permanent residence, the newest members of the reader’s family of choice.” --The Times-Picayune

“Radiant...an intimate literary triptych of lives pulled together and torn apart.” --The Chicago Tribune

“Observant....Rigorous....This first novel treats family ties, erotic longing, small children and prolonged deaths from AIDS and cancer with a subtlety that grows from scrupulous unsentimentality.” --Newsday

“The fluid, evolving nature of family history is at the heart of this assured first novel.....A sophisticated cat’s cradle of crisscrossing desires and disappointments.” --Time Out New York

“Sophisticated...Engrossing....Catches the surprising twists and turns in family relationships, amid love, loss, hope and regret.” --Seattle Post-Intelligencer

“The sort of sparkling debut that marks a writer as one to watch....The characters are drawn with a crystalline precision that stamps their stories in your brain.” --Daily News

“Formidable....The traditional novel of social relations is very much alive in Three Junes. Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen, among other exemplars, would surely approve.” --Kirkus Reviews

“Brimming with a marvelous cast of intricate characters set in an assortment of scintillating backdrops, Glass’s philosophically introspective novel is highly intelligent and well-written.” --Booklist

“Seductive....In this dazzling portrait of family life, Glass establishes her literary credentials with ingenuity and panache.” --Publishers Weekly (starred)
“The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. Just as a single sick person can start an epidemic of the flu, so too can a small but precisely targeted push cause a fashion trend, the popularity of a new product, or a drop in the crime rate. This widely acclaimed bestseller, in which Malcolm Gladwell explores and brilliantly illuminates the tipping point phenomenon, is already changing the way people throughout the world think about selling products and disseminating ideas.”

“A fascinating book that makes you see the world in a different way.” --*Fortune*

“Undeniably compelling...terrifically rewarding.” --*Seattle Times*

“The Tipping Point is one of those rare books that change the way you think about, well, everything. The book sets out to explain nothing less than why human beings behave the way they do, and, astonishingly, Malcolm Gladwell has the smarts and panache to pull it off.” --Jeffrey Toobin

“It’s hard not to be persuaded by Gladwell’s thesis. Not only does he assemble a fascinating mix of facts to support his theory—from the impact of Paul Revere to a rash of suicides in Micronesia—but he also manages to weave everything into a cohesive explanation of human behavior. What’s more, we appreciate the optimism of a theory that supports, as another pundit once called it, the power of one.” --*Business Week*

“It’s the flight of Gladwell’s thought that captures your imagination.” --*Boston Phoenix*

“As informative and thought-provoking a book as I have read in some time...Gladwell’s arguments and examples are persuasive. The chapter on children’s TV programs is riveting.” --*Management Today* (UK)

“Genuinely fascinating and frequently startling....It’s the kind of book from which you’ll be regaling your friends with intriguing snippets for weeks to come, in addition to being, potentially, a powerful, practical tool for anyone with an idea to peddle or a campaign to promote.” --*Scotland on Sunday* (UK)

“What someone once said about the great Edmund Wilson is as true of Malcolm Gladwell: he gives ideas the quality of action. Here he’s written a wonderful page turner about a fascinating idea that should affect the way every thinking person looks at the world.” --Michael Lewis

“Startling and convincing....Gladwell may be about to start an intellectual epidemic that could shake up the way we think about everything from selling shoes to planning cities.” –*Liz Seymour*

“Hip and hopeful, *The Tipping Point* is like the idea it describes: concise, elegant, but packed with social power. A book for anyone who cares about how society works and how we can make it better.” --George Stephanopoulos
“Yifeng has come to America to study to be an engineer and then return to China. But soon his name is Ralph Chang, and he has been joined by his ambitious sister Theresa. She in turn finds him a perfect wife in beautiful and docile Helen. Together they set out to make the American dream come true in every way: making money in fast food, buying a bargain house in the suburbs, making excursions into adultery. Theirs is the story of a family coming together and coming apart, and of miracles real and imagined. The American dream will never be the same again. This brilliant, deeply moving yet witty novel marks the stunning debut of an important new voice in contemporary American fiction.”

“The immigrant experience will never be the same...a comedy...a tragedy...a pure delight.” --Boston Globe

“No paraphrase could capture the intelligence of Gish Jen’s prose, its epigrammatic sweep and swiftness....The author just keeps coming at you line after stunning line.” --The New York Times Book Review

“Bittersweet, absorbingly told, deeply moving and funny...The emotional impact is stunning.” --New York Newsday

“A real gem—so carefully crafted that every page contains a pearl of humor and insight.” --The Miami Herald

“Heartbreaking...sidesplitting...A rich addition to the ever-growing body of immigrant literature, lovingly imagined, thoroughly satisfying.” --The Washington Post Book World

“A marvelously insightful roller coaster ride to the dark heart of the American dream. Compounded by heartbreaking humor and exhilarating tragedy, it rings true as the stories my own relatives would recite in hushed tones around the adult banquet table.” --David Henry Hwang

“Elegant, vibrant, dramatic...Grander and more moving than The Joy Luck Club.” --Arizona Daily Star

“Wry...compassionate...darkly humorous...fresh and startling...Gish Jen proves herself a virtuoso raconteur of the Chinese-American experience.” --Publishers Weekly

“A thoroughly captivating novel...rattlingly good...full of sharp characterizations and skillful plot twists. Jen deploys her exquisite images with the breathtaking legerdemain of a master poet.” --Boston Sunday Herald

“Typical American is indeed an American story, and Gish Jen’s immensely intelligent, thunderously funny, truly heartbreaking novel is perhaps the best story of contemporary immigrant experience ever to grace our literature.” --Jayne Anne Phillips
Wonder Boys  by Michael Chabon


“Grady Tripp is a middle-aged philanderer with a penchant for pot and failed marriages, who is unable to complete the long-awaited follow-up to his award-winning novel. His brilliant student James Leer is a troubled young writer obsessed with Hollywood suicides and prone to fabrication and petty thievery. In their odyssey through the streets of Pittsburgh, Grady and James are joined by Grady’s pregnant mistress, his hilariously bizarre editor and an achingly beautiful student lodger. The result is a wildly comic, poignantly moving and ultimately profound search for past promise, future fame and a purpose to Grady’s life.”

“With this, his second novel and third book, Chabon leaves no doubt that he is the young star of American letters, ‘star’ not in the current sense of cheap celebrity, but in the old one of brightly shining hope….I welcome Chabon as that most unlikely of anachronisms, a serious writer who actually connects.” --The Washington Post Book World

“Michael Chabon can write like a magical spider, effortlessly spinning out elaborate webs of words that ensnare the reader with their beauty and their style.” --The New York Times

“A wonderful, beautiful and very funny novel, nearly perfect except for that single flaw every wonderful novel has: it ends.” --Houston Chronicle

“What makes this wise, wildly funny story much more than a novelist’s novel about a novelist is the fact that Chabon is a flat-out wonderful writer—evocative and inventive, pointed and poignant.” --Chicago Tribune

“An impeccably constructed novel that sparkles with inventiveness and wit neatly permeated with rue....Throughout, Chabon’s elegant prose, breathtaking imagery and wickedly on-target dialogue precisely illuminate his characters’ absurdities....Above all, this is a feast for lovers of writing and books.” --Publisher’s Weekly

“Chabon writes the kind of sentences you want to sew onto banners and fly outside your window for the world to see....Wonder Boys captures better than any novel I have read the shame and terror of authorship, the restlessness and aching void of creativity, the intense, flaring, fleeting joy of getting it right.” --The Memphis Commercial Appeal

“If it’s true that God is in the details, then Michael Chabon’s prose is knocking at heaven’s gate....Chabon’s sentences are gorgeous.” --Elle

“Chabon’s talent—sharp yet compassionate, fluid and funny and fair—is too valuable and rare. His writing is so effortlessly substantial, so perfectly inevitable even in its most absurd moments, that it makes you wonder why we aren’t all writing novels like this, why the market isn’t flooded with wonder boys and wonder women spilling out page upon page of such familiar strangeness, such understandable mysteries.” --Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

“A fabulous romp, a satire of fake and former prodigies written by the real thing.” --Newsweek
“Flawlessly crafted...his prose floats, settles and at times stings with the lasting ointment of truth.”

--Detroit News & Free Press

Note: This selection contains mature themes and language. It may not be suitable for all students. Please discuss your selection with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

[Another recommended title by Michael Chabon: The Mysteries of Pittsburgh]
Advanced Placement English Language and Composition  
Dr. Kemp and Mr. Gerber

Summer and Outside Reading: Project Cornucopia

Thank you for reading books from our list of recommended titles. We hope that you will enjoy your books and that you will also enjoy crafting written responses. Please examine the following project options and select whichever appeal to you.

Option 1: Critical Review in a Leading Newspaper

Cast yourself in the role of a book critic who writes a column for the Chicago Tribune, the New York Times, or another newspaper of your choice. As the Senior Book Critic, your role is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of new books. Some of the issues you might consider as you read and evaluate each new book are as follows:

- Is the author's handling of characterization effective? Are the characters original, well-rounded, believable? Are any characters clichéd or stereotypical? Does the author's handling of dialogue reveal interesting facets of the characters?
- Is the author's theme fresh and powerful? Does the book have a clear persuasive slant or is its message implicit and subtle?
- Does the author have a knack for descriptive details? Is the author's imagery fresh and evocative?
- Does the author hook our attention from the very beginning? Is there a satisfying resolution of the plot? Does the author utilize flashbacks, foreshadowing, stream-of-consciousness or any other techniques to enliven the plot structure?
- How challenging is this book? Would it be appropriate for all ages and interests or should this book be targeted to a more specific kind of reader?
- How does this book compare to others that address similar themes? Ultimately, does this book deserve your recommendation?
As the Senior Book Critic, you may choose to address whatever issues you consider to be most relevant to the evaluation of the book. Indeed, you may choose to ignore most of the issues listed above, focusing instead upon one or two aspects of your chosen book that you consider to be of greatest importance. Some judiciously chosen quotations from the book itself will undoubtedly enhance your review. In any case, your critical review will be a well-crafted piece of writing, a full-fledged column that will be read with interest by the subscribers to your newspaper.

Please keep in mind that the readers of your critical review will be drawing conclusions not only about the book you are evaluating, but also about you, the critic. You will want your critical review to demonstrate your own intelligence, insight, thoughtfulness, creativity, and writing prowess. (Who knows? Maybe you’ll be promoted to Editor-in-Chief some day….)

**Option 2: Dueling Critics Transcript**

Sometimes when a newly released book is particularly provocative, a newspaper will commission two separate critical reviews that run side by side, offering competing visions of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Occasionally, instead of running two separate columns, a newspaper will invite two critics to sit down together in a formal “conversation” about the book. A battle of the critics ensues, with each trying to convince the readership that his or her views of the book are correct. The newspaper then publishes a transcript of the dialogue between the critics, thus:

*Critic A:* Sara, I just can’t understand why you would want to defend this author’s ending. It completely undermines the evolving characterization….

*Critic B:* Well, Michael, you have to keep in mind that….

*Critic A:* Don’t tell me you weren’t put off by the stereotypical treatment of the butler in Chapter Two….

*Critic B:* Now that you mention it….

**Option 3: Mock Interview or Trial**

If you had an opportunity to interview the author, what questions might you ask? How might he or she respond? Produce a transcript of this imagined interview. Your questions—and the author’s responses, of course—will reveal deep engagement with the complexities and conundrums posed by the book. Alternately—and even more speculatively—you might interview chosen characters from the book, brought to life just to address your questions and concerns.

In some instances, a “trial” might prove more apropos than an interview. Assign a prosecutor, a defense attorney, witnesses, jury, and judge. Produce a transcript of the “Trial of the Century”—a trial in which author and/or characters are tried for their alleged “crimes.” Direct quotations from the book itself will serve as “evidence” to convict or acquit the defendant. All rise… the court is now in session.
Option 4: Essential Question, Essential Answer

Q: What is an “essential” question? A: An essential question probes complex, often ambiguous elements of a literary work. It invites divergent responses; it resists easy resolution; it is genuinely debatable. Let’s consider two examples of essential questions based upon Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*:

Essential Question—Example #1: Does Romeo Truly Love Juliet?

Let us remember that Romeo attends the Capulet ball infatuated with the lady Rosaline. Mere moments later, his gaze shifts to a new object—Juliet. In their famous balcony scene, Romeo proceeds to swear (by the “inconstant” moon) that he truly loves Juliet. Does he? Or are his feelings merely the “lovestruck” infatuation of a teenager whose hormones are raging out of control? Your verdict is….

Essential Question—Example #2: What causes the play’s catastrophic outcome?

Alas, Romeo and Juliet, our “pair of star-crossed lovers,” meet an untimely death. But what causes this catastrophic outcome? Where, oh where, should we point the finger of blame?

*Theory A:* The lovers’ own personalities and/or the poor choices they make lead to their downfall.

*Theory B:* The feud between the families is clearly to blame. Don’t point the finger at the lovers!

*Theory C:* ’Tis Fate, cruel Fate, (a.k.a. Destiny, Fortune, the Stars) that we should blame. It’s cosmic!

In order to fulfill Project Option #4, you should develop an essential question based upon your chosen book, and then attempt to “answer” that question, providing detailed evidence from the text in support of your claims.

Option 5: Gender, Race, or other “Categorical” Analysis

Many literary works are interesting or even provocative in their portrayals of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, social class, age, political affiliation, occupation, physical appearance, or other “categorical” facets of the self. In order to fulfill Project Option #5, you should analyze how the author of your chosen book presents characters who “represent” various categories of selfhood. Let’s consider some examples, one based upon *Romeo and Juliet,* and another based upon *Huckleberry Finn:*

Example #1—Gender Analysis:

Based upon your reading of *Romeo and Juliet,* can you infer Shakespeare’s assumptions about gender? How are “manhood” and “womanhood” presented in the play? Are Shakespeare’s portrayals of women and men traditional or nontraditional? Are they stereotypical or revisionist? What “point” does the play advance regarding gender issues?
Example #2—Race Analysis:

Based upon your reading of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, to what extent does Twain’s portrayal of Jim [an African-American slave] “humanize” him in the eyes of the reader? To what extent does his portrayal fall into the trap of harmful stereotyping? When all facets of characterization are weighed in the balance (and viewed within the larger context of the novel as a whole), does Twain’s portrayal of Jim serve to challenge racist beliefs, or contribute to them, or both?

Option 6: *Craft-Your-Own-Project*

If you would like to respond to your outside reading book in a format other than those offered here, please contact your teacher with your proposal. Let us know where your imagination takes you....

All Options—Format Choices:

- A formal essay
- A mock newspaper item (in columns, including masthead and/or images)
- A web page (including images and/or music)
- A video file on CD (with written transcript submitted separately)
- Another format that you prefer (approved in advance by your teacher)

Please keep in mind that all projects involve intensive writing and a detailed analysis / evaluation of facets of your chosen book. Most projects exceed three pages, double spaced (or the equivalent in your chosen format). In-depth treatment of ideas is seldom possible in a project of lesser length. Some projects are significantly longer than three pages. We will be happy to accept a more substantial project, but do keep in mind that quantity *per se* is irrelevant; it is quality—the creative, substantive development of worthy ideas—that we seek. Thank you in advance for your extraordinary efforts.
Structural Organization: The best projects engage our attention from the beginning and proceed in systematic fashion to develop their claims. Projects with exemplary structural organization display the qualities of sequence (ideas are presented in an effective order), unity (ideas are focused around a central organizing claim), and flow (ideas are connected by smooth transitions built out of the content of the project).

Development: The best projects provide extraordinarily detailed, well-chosen evidence in support of claims. This evidence takes the form of highly specific references to the text, including the use of mini-quotations woven into the fabric of the student’s own ideas. The relationship between evidence / quotations and the claims they support is clearly established.

Stylistic Maturity: The best projects incorporate creative and effective rhetorical devices, including parallelism, imagery, word clusters, metaphors, etc. Varied sentence structures also contribute to the stylistic impact of exemplary projects.

Originality: The best projects go beyond conventional wisdom, conventional insights, conventional points of view. They find a fresh, creative approach to familiar topics. They address complex issues from interesting, authentic points of view. They surprise and inspire us with the quality of their ideas.

Mechanics: The best projects are carefully edited in order to eliminate errors in conventions. They are also formatted properly, using correct documentation style whenever appropriate.