



BHS English Staff Summer Reading Recommendations



We in the English Department would like to encourage all students to read for pleasure over the summer, and so we have created the following list of recommendations. There is something for every reader in the suggested titles, which relate to the course themes considered during the year. You will be able to make connections between the works you read over the summer and those you read in class, although you should by no means feel limited to the titles recommended for your grade. Take a look and see what interests you!

English I (Rising Freshmen)

HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES by Salman Rushdie

Set in an exotic Eastern landscape peopled by magicians and fantastic talking animals, Salman Rushdie's classic children's novel inhabits the same imaginative space as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. Haroun sets out on an adventure to restore the poisoned source of the sea of stories. On the way, he encounters many foes, all intent on draining the sea of all its storytelling powers. (Penguin)

CALEB'S CROSSING by Geraldine Brooks

Bethia Mayfield is a restless and curious young woman growing up in Martha's vineyard in the 1660s amid a small band of pioneering English Puritans. At age twelve, she meets Caleb, the young son of a chieftain, and the two forge a secret bond that draws each into the alien world of the other. Bethia's father is a Calvinist minister who seeks to convert the native Wampanoag, and Caleb becomes a prize in the contest between old ways and new, eventually becoming the first Native American graduate of Harvard College. (Amazon.com)

SUNRISE OVER FALLUJAH by Walter Dean Myers

Robin's parents aspire for him to go to college, but following September 11, he feels compelled to join the Army instead. In 2003, Robin is deployed to Iraq where he becomes part of a Civil Affairs Unit charged with building the trust of the Iraqi people to minimize fighting. (Amazon.com)

THE HISTORY OF LOVE by Nicole Krauss

Leo Gursky taps his radiator each evening to let his upstairs neighbor know he's still alive. But it wasn't always like this: in the Polish village of his youth, he fell in love and wrote a book... Sixty years later and half a world away, fourteen year old Alma, who was named after a character in that book, undertakes an adventure to find her namesake and save her family. With virtuosic skill and soaring imaginative power, Nicole Krauss gradually draws the stories of Leo and Alma together toward a climax of "extraordinary depth and beauty." (Barnesandnoble.com)

THIS BOY'S LIFE by Tobias Wolff

This unforgettable memoir introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move until they settle in Washington State in the late 1950s. As Toby fights for identity and self respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of recreating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. (Amazon.com)

English II (Rising Sophomores)

ZEITOUN by David Eggers

The Zeitouns run a housepainting business in New Orleans. In August of 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approaches, Kathy evacuates with their four young children, leaving Zeitoun to watch over the business. In the days following the storm he travels the city by canoe, feeding abandoned animals and helping elderly neighbors. Then, on September 6th, police officers armed with M16s arrest Zeitoun in his home. The true story of one family, caught between the war on terror and the response to Hurricane Katrina. (Amazon.com)

HOOP DREAMS: THE TRUE STORY OF HARDSHIP AND TRIUMPH by Ben Joravsky

For nearly five years a team of filmmakers chronicled the remarkable lives of Arthur Agee and William Gates. Roughly 250 hours of film were devoted to their journeys from the playgrounds to high school competition to college recruitment and whittled down to three hours it became the award winning film Hoop Dreams. Now journalist Ben Joravsky vividly brings to light all the richness and subtlety of their stories, and the impact their aspirations had on themselves, their families and their relationships. (Goodreads.com)

TELL THE WOLVES I'M HOME by Carol Rifka Brunt 1987

There's only one person who has ever truly understood fourteen year old June Elbus, and that's her uncle, the renowned painter Finn Weiss. Shy at school and distant from her older sister, June can only be herself in Finn's company; he is her godfather, confidant, and best friend. So when he dies, far too young, of a mysterious illness her mother can barely speak about, June's world is turned upside down. But Finn's death brings a surprise acquaintance into June's life—someone who will help her to heal, and to question what she thinks she knows about Finn, her family, and even her own heart. (Amazon.com)

EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE by Jonathan Safran Foer

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 (Amazon.com)

English III (Rising Juniors)

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE by Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut's absurdist classic *Slaughterhouse Five* introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden. (Goodreads.com)

THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE by Carson McCullers

A classic work that has charmed generations of readers, this collection assembles Carson McCullers's best stories, including her beloved novella "The Ballad of the Sad Café." A haunting tale of a human triangle that culminates in an astonishing brawl, the novella introduces readers to Miss Amelia, a formidable southern woman whose café serves as the town's gathering place. (Amazon.com)

TYPICAL AMERICAN by Gish Jen

A Chinese family moves temporarily to the United State in the 1940s, then stays on when Communists assume control of China. "As they begin to dream the American dream of self invention, they move poignantly and ironically from people who disparage all that is 'typical American' to people who might be seen as typically American themselves" (Amazon.com).

THE OTHER WES MOORE: ONE NAME, TWO FATES by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? (Amazon.com)

THE ART OF FIELDING by Chad Harcheb

At Westish College, a small school on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of five people are upended. An expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment to oneself and to others. (Amazon.com)

English IV: (Rising Seniors)

ATONEMENT by Ian McEwan

On a hot summer day in 1935, thirteen year old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives brings about a crime that will change all their lives. This novel is about secrets and stories, truth

and fiction. Brilliant in its depiction of childhood, love and war, England and class, the novel is a profoundly moving exploration of shame and forgiveness and the difficulty of absolution.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE by Jane Austen

The romantic clash between the opinionated Elizabeth and the sneering Mr. Darcy results in a lively romp through nineteenth English high society. Who is Proud? Who is Prejudiced? Austin's wit and clever characterization make this one of the most popular novels in the English language.

THE HOBBIT by J. R. R. Tolkien

Now recognized as a timeless classic, this introduction to the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, the wizard Gandalf, Gollum, and the spectacular world of Middleearth recounts of the adventures of a reluctant hero, a powerful and dangerous ring, and the cruel dragon Smaug the Magnificent.

FEVER PITCH by Nick Hornby

Hornby's funny memoir is built around his hopeless fixation on the Arsenal Football Club and reveals the special intricacies of British "football" (soccer) fandom.

WATERSHIP DOWN by Richard Adams

One of the most beloved novels of our time, this is a powerful saga of courage, leadership and survival; an epic tale of a hardy band of adventurers forced to flee the destruction of their fragile community...and their trials and triumphs in the face of extraordinary adversity as they pursue a glorious dream called "home." A remarkable tale of exile and survival, of heroism and leadership...the epic novel of a group of adventurers who desert their doomed city, and venture forth against all odds on a quest for a new home, a sturdier future.

A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA by Anthony Marra

A Constellation of Vital Phenomena opens in a tiny, bloodsoaked village of Chechnya, that part of the world that drifts into our consciousness only briefly — when, say, the Russians crush it again or, more recently, when young zealots detonate pressure cookers in Boston. But the unforgettable characters in this novel are not federalists or rebels or terrorists. They aren't particularly religious or political; we see only glimpses of loyal Russian officers or fanatical Muslims. Instead, these are just fathers and mothers and children — neighbors snagged in the claws of history." (Ron Charles, *The Washington Post*)

CLAIRE OF THE SEA LIGHT by Edwidge Danticat

Claire of the Sea Light tells the story of a 7 year old Haitian girl who disappears on the night her father gives her away in the hopes of securing a better life for his only child. Presented as a haunting and magical narrative of interwoven tales and lives, the individual stories all connect back to young Claire, her parents, and to the small fishing village where they live. In telling the tale, the stunning novel explores the roles of parent, child, neighbor, and friend as well as the themes of love, loss, and redemption." (The Willmette Library)

A TALE FOR THE TIME BEING by Ruth Ozeki

“In Tokyo, sixteen year old Nao has decided there’s only one escape from her aching loneliness and her classmates’ bullying. But before she ends it all, Nao first plans to document the life of her great grandmother, a Buddhist nun who’s lived more than a century. A diary is Nao’s only solace. Across the Pacific, we meet Ruth, a novelist living on a remote island who discovers a collection of artifacts washed ashore in a Hello Kitty lunchbox.”(www.ruthozeki.com)

GIRLS OF RIYADH by Rajaa Alsanea

Written as a series of emails, “Alsanea’s tale of the personal struggles of four young upperclass women offers Westerners an unprecedented glimpse into a society often veiled from view. Living in restrictive Riyadh but traveling all over the globe, these modern Saudi women literally and figuratively shed traditional garb as they search for love, fulfillment, and their place somewhere in between Western society and their Islamic home.” (Amazon.com)

THE ELEPHANT’S JOURNEY by Jose Saramago

“History attests that in 1551, an elephant made the journey from Lisbon to Vienna, escorted first by officers of King João III of Portugal, then by officers of the Archduke Maximilian of Austria...In the novel, Solomon and his mahout Subhro (whom the archduke renames, with true Habsburg infelicity, Fritz) proceed through various landscapes at an unhurried pace, attended by various functionaries and military men, and meeting along the way with villagers and townsfolk who variously interpret the sudden enigma of an elephant entering their lives.” (Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Guardian*)

THE TIGER’S WIFE by Tea Obreht

Set in a Balkan country following years of conflict, Natalia, a young doctor arrives on a mission to help young orphans. Eventually she needs to confront the mysteries surrounding the death of her grandfather at the time of his mysterious death he was on his way to meet Natalia. She returns to the stories he told her when she was a young child a story he never told her, though, is the one she must uncover.

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE by Anthony Doerr

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award winning Anthony Doerr, the beautiful, stunningly ambitious instant *New York Times* bestseller about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. Deftly interweaving the lives of Marie-Laure and Werner, he illuminates the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another. (Amazon.com)

THE SOLOIST by Mark Salzman

The title character of this novel is a thirty six year old former cello prodigy whose promising performing career was derailed by a strange and debilitating aural phenomenon. He has become a music teacher whose life appears to be on hold until he serves on a jury deliberating the murder of a Zen Buddhist monk and, at the same time, meets and becomes the teacher of an unlikely nine year old prodigy. These two developments force him to reevaluate his life.

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY by J. L. Carr

"In J. L. Carr's deeply charged poetic novel, Tom Birkin, a veteran of the Great War and a broken marriage, arrives in the remote Yorkshire village of Oxgodby where he is to restore a recently discovered medieval mural in the local church.... Long after, as he reflects on the passage of time and the power of art, he finds in his memories some consolation for all that has been lost." (New York Review Books Classics)

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE by Virginia Woolf

The novel that established Virginia Woolf as a leading writer of the twentieth century, *To the Lighthouse* is made up of three powerfully charged visions into the life of one family living in a summer house off the rocky coast of Scotland. As time passes, the Ramsays face, alone and simultaneously, the greatest of human challenges and the greatest triumph the human capacity for change. A moving portrait in miniature of family life, it also has universal implications, giving language to the silent space that separates people and the space that they transgress to reach each other. (Goodreads.com)