

WESTOVER SCHOOL OFFICIAL SUMMER READING LIST – 2009

Students should choose a minimum of three books to read. You will be assigned to a reading group to discuss one book and to take a reading quiz. You are encouraged to choose at least one of the classics, which are marked with an asterisk (\*). Be sure that you do not choose a book that you have previously read for Summer Reading.

\*Austen, Jane

*Persuasion*

*Persuasion* explores the social issues of the times and paints a fascinating portrait of Regency England, especially when dealing with the class system. Rigid social barriers existed – and everyone wanted to marry “up” to a higher station – and, of course, into wealth. This is also a very poignant and passionate story of love, disappointment, loss and redemption. The point Austen makes here is that one should not ever be persuaded to abandon core values and beliefs, especially for ignoble goals. There are consequences, always.

Austen, Jane and Seth Grahame-Smith     *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance – Now with Ultra Violent Zombie Mayhem!*

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains.” So begins *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, an expanded edition of the beloved Jane Austen novel featuring all-new scenes of bone-crunching zombie mayhem. As our story opens, a mysterious plague has fallen upon the quiet English village of Meryton – and the dead are returning to life! Feisty heroine Elizabeth Bennet is determined to wipe out the zombie menace, but she is soon distracted by the arrival of the haughty and arrogant Mr. Darcy. (from amazon.com)

\*Austen, Jane

*Mansfield Park*

*Mansfield Park* looks at money and marriage, showing how strongly they affect each other. Shy, fragile Fanny Price is the consummate “poor relation.” Sent to live with her wealthy uncle Thomas, she clashes with his spoiled, selfish daughters and falls in love with his son. Their lives are further complicated by the arrival of a pair of witty, sophisticated Londoners, whose flair for flirtation collides with the quiet, conservative country ways of Mansfield Park. (from amazon.com)

\*Austen, Jane

*Northanger Abbey*

*Northanger Abbey* is both a perfectly aimed literary parody and a withering satire of the commercial aspects of marriage among the English gentry at the turn of the nineteenth century. But most of all, it is the story of the initiation into life of its naïve but sweetly appealing heroine, Catherine Morland, a willing victim of the contemporary craze for Gothic literature who is determined to see herself as the heroine of a dark and thrilling romance. (from amazon.com)

Barbery, Muriel

*The Elegance of the Hedgehog*

Michel is the dumpy, nondescript, 54-year-old concierge of a small and exclusive Paris apartment building. Paloma Josse also lives in the building. These two characters provide the double narrative of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*, and you will – this is going to sound corny – fall in love with both. (from washingtonpost.com. Reviewed by Michael Dirda Renée)

Barlow, Toby

*Sharp Teeth*

Werewolves are haunting the streets of L.A. in this free verse thriller that follows the story of a dog catcher, a detective, and the pack that is causing mayhem throughout the city. (from amazon.com)

Bass, Ruth

*Sarah's Daughter*

In *Sarah's Daughter*, Ruth Bass skillfully tells the tale of Rose, a 14-year-old in 19th century America coping with the loss of her mother. A timeless treasure, sure to please any young woman who yearns to understand that many generations before her have experienced the same things that she does ...and have triumphed! (Hannah Storm, as taken from review on amazon.com)

Baszile, Jennifer

*The Black Girl Next Door*

This book tells of the author's growing up in an affluent Southern California suburb as "the only black girl in my class, my grade, and my school besides my sister." In this craftily structured memoir, Baszile carries the reader at a leisurely, but in no way slack, pace through her girlhood and adolescence, maintaining both her young vulnerability and her sophisticated adult perspective. (adapted from *Publishers Weekly*)

Berger, John

*Ways of Seeing*

John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* is one of the most stimulating and the most influential books on art in any language. First published in 1972, it was based on the BBC television series about which the *London Sunday Times* critic commented, "This is an eye-opener in more ways than one: by concentrating on how we look at paintings ...he will almost certainly change the way you look at pictures." (from amazon.com)

Bernstein, Harry

*The Invisible Wall: A Love Story that Broke Barriers*

In his affecting debut memoir, the nonagenarian gives voice to a childhood version of himself who witnesses his older sister's love for a Christian boy break down the invisible wall that kept Jewish families from Christians across the street. Young Harry serves as a wide-eyed guide to a world since dismantled – where "snot rags" are handkerchiefs, children enter the workforce at 12 and religion bifurcates everything, including industry. Yet when major world events touch the poverty-stricken block, the individual coming-of-age is intensified without being trivialized, and the conversational account takes on the heft of a historical novel with stirring success. (*Publishers Weekly*)

Bradley, Alan

*The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*

It's the beginning of a lazy summer in 1950 at the sleepy English village of Bishop's Lacey. Up at the great house of Buckshaw, aspiring chemist Flavia de Luce passes the time tinkering in the laboratory she's inherited from her deceased mother and an eccentric great uncle. When Flavia discovers a murdered stranger in the cucumber patch outside her bedroom window, she decides to solve the crime herself, much to the chagrin of the local authorities. But who can blame her? What else does an eleven-year-old science prodigy have to do when left to her own devices? (Lauren Nemroff, from amazon.com)

\*Brontë, Charlotte

*Jane Eyre*

Immediately recognized as a masterpiece when it was first published in 1847, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is an extraordinary coming-of-age story featuring one of the most independent and strong-willed female protagonists in all of literature. Poor and plain, Jane Eyre begins life as a lonely orphan in the household of her hateful aunt. She becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she finds herself falling in love with her employer, the dark, impassioned Mr. Rochester. But an explosive secret tears apart their relationship. One of the world's most beloved novels, *Jane Eyre* is a startlingly modern blend of passion, romance, mystery, and suspense. (adapted from barnesandnoble.com)

\*Brontë, Emily

*Wuthering Heights*

Emily Brontë's only novel, *Wuthering Heights* remains one of literature's most disturbing explorations into the dark side of romantic passion. Heathcliff and Cathy believe they're destined to love each other forever, but when cruelty and snobbery separate them, their untamed emotions literally consume them. Set amid the wild and stormy Yorkshire moors, *Wuthering Heights*, is widely regarded as the most original tale of thwarted desire and heartbreak in the English language. (adapted from amazon.com)

Capra, Fritjof

*The Tao of Physics*

First published in 1975, *The Tao of Physics* rode the wave of fascination in exotic East Asian philosophies. Decades later, it still stands up to scrutiny. Those approaching Eastern thought from

a background of Western science will find reliable introductions here to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism and learn how commonalities among these systems of thought can offer a sort of philosophical underpinning for modern science. And those approaching modern physics from a background in Eastern mysticism will find precise yet comprehensible descriptions of a Western science that may reinvigorate a hope in the positive potential of scientific knowledge. (adapted from review by Brian Bruya, amazon.com)

Carr, J.L.

*What Hetty Did*

“One of the last novels of the late J.L. Carr. Its structure is basically that of a fairy tale. An eighteen-year-old girl, who turns out to have been adopted, runs away from the trolls, in this case her foster family, to go on a quest for her real parents.” After some bizarre and amusing incidents in the city of Birmingham where she encounters all manner of peculiar and engaging characters, she strangely concludes her adventure. (Byron Rogers, *The Last Englishman: The Life of J.L. Carr*)

\*Carter, Forrest

*The Education of Little Tree*

How would you feel if you were plucked from your natural surroundings and forced to learn a new way of life? Little Tree has been raised by his Cherokee grandparents but is suddenly sent to an Indian boarding school run by whites. Here, his perception of the Anglo world and his Cherokee ways clash, and Little Tree's education evolves.

Coetzee, J.M.

*Slow Man*

Nobel-winner Coetzee ponders life, love and the mind/body connection in his latest heavy-hitter; he also plays a little trick. When retired photographer Paul Rayment loses his leg in a bicycle accident, his lengthy, lonely recuperation forces him to reflect on a life he deems wasted. (from *Publishers Weekly*, Copyright © Reed Business Information.)

Coupland, Douglas

*Eleanor Rigby*

The 1997 night that Hale-Bopp streaks across the skies over Vancouver, Liz Dunn has nothing in her life but impending oral surgery and an armful of schmaltzy video rentals to get her through her solitary convalescence in her sterile condo. She's overweight, crabby, and plain, but behind her eyes lurk whole universes that she's never had the opportunity to express. Just as Liz makes a quiet decision to seek peace in her life rather than certainty, along comes another comet, in the form of a young man admitted to the local hospital with her name and number inscribed on his Medic Alert bracelet: In case of emergency, contact Liz Dunn. (adapted from bn.com)

Cristafano, David

*The Girl She Used to Be*

When Melody Grace McCartney was six years old, she and her parents witnessed an act of violence so brutal that it changed their lives forever. The federal government lured them into the Witness Protection Program with the promise of safety, but the program took Melody's name, her home, her innocence, and, ultimately, her family. She's stunned when a man confronts her and calls her by her real name. Jonathan Bovaro, the mafioso sent to hunt her down, knows her, the real her, and it's a dangerous thrill that Melody can't resist. (Barnes and Noble Review)

\*Dostoevsky, Fyodor

*The Idiot*

*The Idiot* tells the tragic story of Prince Lev Nikolayevich Myshkin. The story begins with Myshkin traveling back to Russia after spending time in a hospital in Switzerland. During a train ride, he meets a man named Rogozhin, and the two become friends. Rogozhin tells Myshkin of his passion for Nastasya Filippovna, a beautiful woman who has a bad reputation. The two men become rivals when Rogozhin offers Nastasya a large amount of money to follow him, and Myshkin, in order to save her, proposes to her immediately after. *The Idiot* explores what happens when a man behaves with only kindness and humility towards others.

Doty, Mark

*Dog Years*

Award-winning memoirist (*Firebird*) and poet (*School of the Arts*) Doty explores, with compassion and intelligence, the complicated, loving territory inhabited by devoted dogs and their loyal humans. The dog characters in the book are irresistible, and the arcs of their lives are delineated with the tenderness and passion of the truly smitten. With a marvelous ability to present the pain of mourning with a poet's delicate hand, and an irrepressible instinct for joy, Doty delivers a soulful love story which illuminates no less than the big human mysteries: attachment, death, grief, loyalty, happiness. (from *Publishers Weekly*)

\*Dumas, Alexandre

*The Count of Monte Cristo*

Thrown in prison for a crime he has not committed, Edmond Dantes is confined to the grim fortress of d'If. There he learns of a great hoard of treasure hidden on the Isle of Monte Cristo and he becomes determined not only to escape but also to unearth the treasure and use it to plot the destruction of the three men responsible for his incarceration. Dumas' epic tale of suffering and retribution, inspired by a real-life case of wrongful imprisonment, was a huge popular success when it was first serialized in the 1840s. (from amazon.com)

Endo, Shusako

*Silence*

Japanese novelist Shusako Endo crafts a spare and haunting historical novel in which a seventeenth century Portuguese priest is forced to confront the limits of his faith. Father Rodrigues attempts to comfort Christian converts as the Japanese feudal lords initiate a campaign of persecution and torture to drive the foreign religion from their land. Physically and culturally isolated, Rodrigues attempts to keep his faith in the midst of suffering and the silence of God. When at last asked to publicly renounce his God in order to save an entire village, he must decide whether to deny his faith is in fact the most Christian act of all.

Fadiman, Anne

*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Subtitled *A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*, this compelling story of intercultural misunderstanding and its tragic consequences for a little girl named Lia won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction.

\*Forster, E.M.

*The Longest Journey*

*The Longest Journey's* suspicious form and strange conclusions were quite accurately detected by Lionel Trilling, who declared this novel in comparison to Forster's others to be his least perfect, least compact, least precisely formed and, simultaneously, his most brilliant, most dramatic, and most passionate. (1907) (www.online-literature.com)

Foster, Ken

*Dogs Who Found Me: What I've Learned from Pets Who Were Left Behind*

After Foster adopts his first dog, Brando, from a shelter, he can't help noticing an alarming number of stray dogs, which he had never noticed before. Once he starts looking for them, he finds strays everywhere: on the side of the road, at the dog park, at gas stations and stuck in drainage grates. Interspersing vignettes on topics such as missing dog posters, shelters, heartworms and understanding dogs' body language, Foster fleshes out this charming account of a life among dogs while providing hints for would-be dog savers. (Mar. from *Publishers Weekly*)

Fusco, John

*Paradise Salvage*

What a great read John Fusco provides in his debut novel set in Saukiwog Mills, a fictionalized Waterbury, Connecticut. He pays tribute to his roots, but it is, despite uproariously funny passages, a somewhat mournful celebration. Once proud and strong, Waterbury's City Hall again

reels from charges of political corruption. So what could be more timely than the story twelve-year-old Nunzio Paradiso tells as he is wrenched from his innocence and thrust into the world of experience? For Nunzio and us, the novel is both a love-song to his people and a look at Waterbury as she used to be and as she has sadly become. (*Waterbury Republican-American*)

\*Garcia Marquez, Gabriel

*One Hundred Years of Solitude*

The story follows 100 years in the life of Macondo, a village founded by José Arcadio Buendía and occupied by descendants all sporting variations on their progenitor's name: his sons, José Arcadio and Aureliano, and grandsons, Aureliano José, Aureliano Segundo, and José Arcadio Segundo. Then there are the women – the two Úrsulas, a handful of Remedios, Fernanda, and Pilar – who struggle to remain grounded even as their menfolk build castles in the air. If it is possible for a novel to be highly comic and deeply tragic at the same time, then *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does the trick. (Excerpt from a review on amazon.com)

Gardam, Jane

*Bilgewater*

Marigold Green calls herself 'hideous, quaint and barmy'. Other people call her Bilgewater, a corruption of "Bill's daughter". Growing up in a boys' school where her father is housemaster, she is convinced of her own plainness and peculiarity. Groomed by the wise and loving Paula, upstaged by bad, beautiful Grace and ripe for seduction by entirely the wrong sort of boy, she suffers extravagantly and comically in her pilgrimage through the turbulent, twilight world of alarming adolescence. (from amazon.com)

Gardam, Jane

*Faith Fox: A Novel*

A motherless baby named Faith is the linchpin of this delightfully eccentric comedy of manners and miracles by Gardam, a two-time winner of the Whitbread Prize (*The Hollow Land; The Queen of the Tambourine*). First published in Great Britain in 1996 and set in the early 1990s in the moody Yorkshire moors and the gentrified climes of Surrey and London, the novel features a highly entertaining cast of dotty characters whose class, ethnic and religious differences are wonderfully deconstructed by Gardam's sharp, dark wit.

Gardam, Jane

*The Flight of the Maidens: A Novel*

It is the summer of 1946 in Yorkshire, England. Food and clothing are still being rationed, and everyone is struggling to cope with the changes brought about by World War II. To the delight of the town, three local girls, best friends from secondary school, have won prestigious scholarships to universities in London and Cambridge. But before they depart, they must survive the summer. While Hetty struggles to escape from her battle-scarred father and possessive mother by reading books, Una haltingly asserts her emerging womanhood with a young man from the wrong side of the tracks and of a decidedly leftist political bent. Meanwhile, Liselotte, a Jewish refugee living with a Quaker family since her arrival in 1939, is whisked off to California to meet her last surviving relative. Gardam has written a charming and sensitive story of friendship and emotional maturation in a direct, polished style not without humor and irony. (from amazon.com)

Gardam, Jane

*God on the Rocks*

During one glorious summer between the wars, the realities of life and the ritual dance of the adult world creep into the life of young Margaret Marsh. Her father, preaching the doctrine of the unsavory Primal Saints; her mother, bitterly nostalgic for what might have been; Charles and Binkie, anchored in the past and a game of words; dying Mrs. Frayling and Lydia the maid, given to the vulgar enjoyment of life; all contribute to Margaret's shattering moment of truth. And when the storm breaks, it is not only God who is on the rocks as the summer hurtles toward drama, tragedy, and a touch of farce. (Amazon Product Description). Jane Gardam is one of Britain's finest contemporary writers.

Gardam, Jane

*The People of Privilege Hill*

These 14 stories from English novelist Gardam follow the last of the intrepid, stiff upper lip WWII generation of British ladies and gentlemen. In the title story, octogenarian widower Edward Feathers, “cold and old and going out to lunch with a woman called Dulcie he never much liked” arrives at Dulcie’s Dorset house, where shared sensibilities go a long way in carrying them through some awkward moments. In *The Latter Days of Mr. Jones*, the aged titular protagonist collides with contemporary mores when his daily solitary walks on the Common, frequented by children, arouse suspicions. Set in 1941, *The Flight Path* proves a creepy, hilarious sendup of familial relations when young medical student Jim Smith travels to London for a terrible, memorable night during the blitz. And *The Last Reunion* finds a group of four toughened elderly dames, once college chums, returning unsentimentally to their school on the occasion of its closing.

Gautreaux, Tim

*The Missing*

This story combines mystery, suspense and historical authenticity to portray life along the Mississippi River in the 1920s. When a young girl goes missing, her employer, a World War One veteran, seeks to find her and instead finds himself lost among the wilderness of the landscape and his own family’s troubled history.

George, Margaret

*The Autobiography of Henry VIII*

Much has been written about the mighty, egotistical Henry VIII: the man who dismantled the Church because it would not grant him the divorce he wanted; who married six women and beheaded two of them; who executed his friend Thomas More; who sacked the monasteries; who longed for a son and neglected his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth; who finally grew fat, disease-ridden, dissolute. Now Margaret George brings us Henry VIII’s story as he himself might have told it, brilliantly combining history, wit, dramatic narrative, and an extraordinary grasp of the pleasures and perils of power. (adapted from the book cover)

George, Margaret

*Mary, Queen of Scotland and the Isles*

Like all tragic figures, Margaret George’s Mary Stuart has a flaw: a personal and political naïveté, misunderstood to the end, that leads to her downfall. Recreating the Elizabethan era with a sure eye for telling detail, George uses her entirely plausible vision of Mary’s private life to explain the failures of her public one. Readers will empathize with Mary’s pain over an unhappy first marriage, the wrenching upheaval of adultery and her searing realization of trust misplaced and loyalties lost, finally coming to know with her the peace of a soul at rest in God and the glory of a meaningful death. (edited from *Publishers Weekly*)

Gladwell, Malcolm

*Outliers: The Story of Success*

In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of “outliers” – the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band. Brilliant and entertaining, *Outliers* is a landmark work that will simultaneously delight and illuminate.” (from barnesandnoble.com)

Glover, Jane

*Mozart’s Women*

Jane Glover’s unusual approach sets this biography of Mozart apart from the other fine biographies. Why did she focus on the women of his life? The answer, as many of the answers for Mozart, can be found in his operas, where the women are wily, intelligent, self-confident and eminently attractive. Jane Glover is a highly respected conductor and musicologist who has put all this together in a biography that has been called “a joy to read.” (Booklist.)

Gordimer, Nadine

*July's People*

In this 1981 novel by the Nobel prize winning author, she presents her country of South Africa to us through the story of Bam and Maureen Smales. When South Africa is riven by war and the Smales, a white couple, take refuge in the village of their former servant July, their relationships are completely transformed. (from amazon.com)

Goudge, Elizabeth

*The Scent of Water*

Although Mary was only a child when she first met her somewhat mad elderly relative and namesake, Mary Lindsay, her older relative never forgets that little girl. Now a successful Londoner with a husband dead long ago in the war, Mary discovers that the now deceased Mary Lindsay has bequeathed her the house in the country village she visited only once, so long ago. Surprising everyone, mostly herself, Mary decides to retire early and begin a second, entirely new life in that country house, thus embarking on a voyage of discovery, helped by the new and surprisingly fascinating people she meets in the seemingly quiet village and the remarkable journals of her deceased relative. NOTE: You might likely find this title in your local library, or you could buy this novel early in the summer from amazon.com.

\*Greene, Graham

*The Quiet American*

Long before the United States entered a war with Vietnam, the French struggled to preserve its troubled rule of that country, which was one of its colonies. Graham Greene, one of the 20th century's finest novelists, fashions a story about an idealistic American whose well-intentioned blunders reveal the West's lack of understanding about Asia and Asians. His story revolves around a romantic triangle: a beautiful young Vietnamese woman, the young idealistic American, and an experienced reporter who tries to remain objective, but is drawn into a tragic drama.

\*Guthrie Jr., A.B.

*The Big Sky*

America's vast frontier is the setting for this romantic adventure. A young Boone Caudill grows to love the untamed land and a Blackfoot woman. With a raging hunger for life, he becomes known as the "White Savage," forging his way through the wilderness and his heart.

Hannah, Kristin

*True Colors*

The Grey sisters have always been close. After their mother's death, the girls banded together, becoming best friends. In a matter of moments, everything will change. The Grey sisters will be pitted against one another in ways that none could have imagined. With breathtaking pace and penetrating emotional insight, *True Colors* is an unforgettable novel about sisters, rivalry, forgiveness, redemption – and ultimately, what it means to be a family. (Barnes and Noble Review)

\*Hamsun, Knut

*Mysteries*

Isaac Bashevis Singer claimed that "the whole modern school of fiction in the twentieth century stems from Hamsun." In a small coastal town in Norway, a stranger arrives. Johan Nilsen Nagel proceeds to throw the respectable citizens of the town into disarray with impulsive conversations and fevered actions. Hamsun's stream of consciousness narration lays bare the impulses that propel the self into contradictory and self-negating action. As Nagel's actions reach a frenetic pitch, we are left ever more uncertain about his motivations and identity. Is the self a bottomless well of possibility or simply a series of facades with no man standing behind the curtain?

\*Hardy, Thomas

*Jude the Obscure*

Hardy's last work of fiction, *Jude the Obscure* is also one of his most gloomily fatalistic, depicting the lives of individuals who are trapped by forces beyond their control... (from Merriam Webster Encyclopedia of Literature)

\*Hardy, Thomas

*A Pair of Blue Eyes*

Elfride Swancourt is the daughter of the Rector of Endelstow, a remote sea-swept parish in Cornwall. Blue-eyed and high-spirited, Elfride has little experience of the world beyond and becomes entangled with two men: the boyish architect, Stephen Smith, and the older literary man, Henry Knight. The former friends become rivals, and Elfride faces an agonizing choice. Elfride's dilemma mirrors the difficult decision Hardy himself had to make with this novel: to pursue the profession of architecture, where he was established, or literature, where he had yet to make his name. (Adaptation of Alan Manford review from amazon.com)

Haruf, Kent

*Eventide*

Set in a rural community, *Eventide* follows the continuing saga of the McPherson brothers. When a bull kills Harold, Raymond must venture out of his singular existence and share his humanity with his neighbors. Rose, a social worker, becomes a romantic interest and several poor, but unforgettable children, weave their way into Raymond's life.

\*Hemingway, Ernest

*The Sun Also Rises*

A brilliant profile of the Lost Generation, Hemingway's first bestseller captures life among the expatriates on Paris's Left Bank during the 1920s, the brutality of bullfighting in Spain, and the moral and spiritual dissolution of a generation. (Barnes and Noble Review)

Horan, Nancy

*Loving Frank*

"I have been standing on the side of life, watching it float by. I want to swim in the river. I want to feel the current." So writes Mamah Borthwick Cheney in her diary as she struggles to justify her clandestine love affair with Frank Lloyd Wright. Four years earlier, Mamah and her husband had commissioned the renowned architect to design a new home for them. During the construction of the house, a powerful attraction developed between Mamah and Frank, and in time the lovers embarked on a course that would shock Chicago society and forever change their lives. Elegantly written and remarkably rich in detail, *Loving Frank* is a fitting tribute to a courageous woman, a national icon, and their timeless love story. (randomhouse.com)

Hua, Yu

*To Live*

Yu Hua, writing with masterful simplicity about the unfathomable complexities of existence, tells a galvanizing story that is at once a shattering indictment of China's ongoing nightmare and testimony to the tenacity of the human spirit. (Donna Seaman, Library Association of America)

\*Huxley, Aldous

*Island*

In *Island*, his last novel, Huxley transports us to a pacific island where for 120 years an ideal society has flourished. Inevitably, this island of bliss attracts the envy and enmity of the surrounding world. A conspiracy is underway to take over Pala, and events begin to move when an agent of the conspirators, a newspaper man, is shipwrecked there. What the man doesn't expect is how his time with the people of Pala will revolutionize all his values and – to his amazement – give him hope. (from barnesandnoble.com)

\*James, Henry

*Daisy Miller*

An American girl, Daisy Miller, travels to Europe, where she is courted by Winterbourne, a sophisticated European man of means. She is innocent and inexperienced and she soon finds herself in a conflict of American and European manners and sensibilities. The clash of American and European attitudes in the 19th century was a favorite subject of James, and "Daisy Miller" is one of his most popular explorations of this theme, and has been called "a poignant drama of emotional conflict." (Dell Books)

\*James, Henry

*Portrait of a Lady*

As the story begins, Isabel, resolved to determine her own fate, has turned down two eligible suitors. Her cousin, who is dying of tuberculosis, secretly gives her an inheritance so that she can remain independent and fulfill a grand destiny, but the fortune only leads her to make a tragic choice and marry Gilbert Osmond. Outwardly charming and cultivated, but fundamentally cold and cruel, Osmond only brings heartbreak and ruin to Isabel's life. Yet she survives as she begins to realize that true freedom means living with her choices and their consequences. (bn.com)

\*James, Henry

*What Maisie Knew*

...the novel is related from the perspective of Maisie, a preadolescent whose parents were divorced when she was six years old and who spends six months of the year with each parent. The only emotional constant in Maisie's life is Mrs. Wix, a motherly old governess...

(from *Merriam Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*)

\*Jenkins, Robin

*Fergus Lamont*

"From his origins as an illegitimate child in the slums of Glasgow, Fergus Lamont sets out to reclaim his inheritance and to remake his identity as soldier, poet and would-be aristocrat. Covering the years from the turn of the century to World War II, Fergus's unforgettable voice recounts a tale of vanity, success and betrayal which shines its own sardonic light on Scotland and the cultural and political issues of the day. How it turns out, and what he learns too late, adds a tragic dimension to the scathing humour of this, Robin Jenkins's most searching exploration of the modern psyche. Funny and heartachingly tragic at the same time, *Fergus Lamont* is arguably Jenkins' greatest novel and certainly one of the finest novels ever written in Scotland." NOTE: You won't find this title in bookstores or libraries, so buy this novel early in the summer from amazon.com or direct from its UK publisher, Canongate. (Adapted from the publisher's website)

Jenkins, Robin

*Matthew and Sheila*

"Robin Jenkins gets inside the soul of an isolated young boy, Matthew, who is abandoned by his painter father after his mother's death and is left to be brought up by his sternly religious relatives and a family housekeeper. At school Matthew encounters the seemingly angelic Sheila, a preternaturally bright child, who reveals to him that she has committed murder in the past – but has she or hasn't she? When Matthew's father returns to the household with a new wife, Matthew decides to put Sheila's claims to the test." NOTE: You won't find this title in bookstores or libraries, so buy this novel early in the summer from amazon.com or direct from its UK publisher, Polygon/Birlinn. (Adapted from the publisher's website)

Jenkins, Robin

*Willie Hogg*

Robin Jenkins' novel tells a contemporary but universal story which resounds with a sense of hope. An elderly man, Willie, and his wife, Maggie, travel to a Navajo reservation in the Arizona desert where Maggie's missionary sister, Elspeth, lies dying of cancer. An article on the couple in a Glasgow newspaper a few weeks previously had sparked off a great effort in the city to raise funds for the trip and Willie and his wife soon find themselves the target of unseemly publicity and envied by their neighbors. On their arrival in America, Willie finds his lifelong beliefs tested under the huge, empty sky of Arizona, and Maggie, it seems, has undergone a real transformation. NOTE: You won't find this title in bookstores or libraries, so buy this novel early in the summer from amazon.com or direct from its UK publisher, Polygon/Birlinn.

Just, Ward

*Forgetfulness*

This novel, Just's fifteenth, weaves themes of "personal loss and political criminality" in a way that is "haunting, clarifying, and imperative." (*Booklist* [starred review])

Kahf, Mohja

*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

The main character, Khadra Shamy, recalls growing up in an immigrant Syrian family in Indianapolis. Her devout parents raise her to be observant of Islamic customs. The inevitable culture clashes ensue, from taunts of “raghead” and “go back where you came from” to the varying interpretations of Islamic code among the community’s other Muslims. Khadra is forced to question what it means to be “Muslim” or “American.” (adapted from *Publishers Weekly*)

Kaku, Michio

*Physics of the Impossible*

In this latest effort to popularize the sciences, City University of New York professor and media star Kaku (*Hyperspace*) ponders topics that many people regard as impossible, ranging from psychokinesis and telepathy to time travel and teleportation. He explains how what many consider to be flights of fancy are being made tangible by recent scientific discoveries ranging from rudimentary advances in teleportation to the creation of small quantities of antimatter and transmissions faster than the speed of light. (from amazon.com)

Kallos, Stephanie

*Broken for You*

“The dead, Margaret thought. They can be so loud.” So muses the protagonist of this dreamy, powerful tale of familial warring, secrets and redemption. When Margaret Hughes discovers that she has a malignant brain tumor, she refuses treatment and decides to take a nice young tenant into her huge mansion for company. What she gets is Wanda Schultz, a tough-as-nails stage manager prone to inexplicable weeping. Wanda is intrigued by the museum-like house and its eccentric owner, but a dark history lurks; the houseful of gorgeous antique porcelain comes from Margaret’s father’s WWII pilfering of European Jewish homes. Meanwhile, Wanda’s father, who deserted her years ago, is on the road trying to heal, and Margaret’s mother’s ghost is haunting the mansion. Wrestling to keep the dead and the ghosts of their pasts at bay, the two women slowly build an extraordinary friendship. (from amazon.com)

Kapuscinski, Ryszard

*The Shadow of the Sun*

In 1957, Ryszard Kapuscinski arrived in Africa to witness the beginning of the end of colonial rule as the first African correspondent of Poland’s state newspaper. From the early days of independence in Ghana to the ongoing ethnic genocide in Rwanda, Kapuscinski has crisscrossed vast distances pursuing the swift, and often violent, events that followed liberation. What emerges is an extraordinary depiction of Africa – not as a group of nations or geographic locations – but as a vibrant and frequently joyous montage of peoples, cultures, and encounters. Kapuscinski’s trenchant observations, wry analysis and overwhelming humanity paint a remarkable portrait of the continent and its people. (randomhouse.com)

Kingsolver, Barbara

*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*

When Kingsolver and her family move from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they take on a new challenge: to spend a year on a locally produced diet, paying close attention to the provenance of all they consume. “Our highest shopping goal was to get our food from so close to home, we’d know the person who grew it. Often that turned out to be ourselves as we learned to produce what we needed, starting with dirt, seeds, and enough knowledge to muddle through. Or starting with baby animals, and enough sense to refrain from naming them.” (Barnes and Noble Review)

Krauss, Nicole

*The History of Love*

*The History of Love* spans a period of over 60 years and takes readers from Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe to present day Brighton Beach. Leo Gursky is a retired locksmith who immigrates to New York after escaping SS officers in his native Poland, only to spend the last stage of his life terrified that no one will notice when he dies. Fourteen-year-old Alma Singer vacillates between wanting to memorialize her dead father and finding a way to lift her mother’s veil of depression. At the

same time, she's trying to save her brother Bird from becoming a 10-year-old social pariah. As the connection between Leo and Alma is slowly unmasked, the desperation, along with the potential for salvation, of this unique pair is also revealed. (amazon.com review)

Lamott, Anne

*Hard Laughter*

Writer (and sometime housecleaner) Jennifer is twenty-three when her beloved father, Wallace, is diagnosed with a brain tumor. This catastrophic discovery sets off Anne Lamott's unexpectedly sweet and funny first novel, which is made dramatic not so much by Wallace's illness as by the emotional wake it sweeps under Jen and her brothers. With characteristic affection and accuracy, Lamott sketches this offbeat family as they draw ever closer in the intimacy Jen prizes "among the other estimable things: good music, good hard laughter... and good books." (powells.com)

\*Larsen, Nella

*Quicksand*

Born to a white mother and an absent black father, and despised for her dark skin, Helga Crane has long had to fend for herself. As a young woman, Helga teaches at an all-black school in the South, but even here she feels different. Moving to Harlem and eventually to Denmark, she attempts to carve out a comfortable life and place for herself, but ends up back where she started, choosing emotional freedom that quickly translates into a narrow existence. *Quicksand*, Nella Larsen's powerful first novel, evocatively portrays the racial and gender restrictions that can mark a life. (from amazon.com)

Larsson, Stieg

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

Cases rarely come much colder than the decades-old disappearance of teen heiress Harriet Vanger from her family's remote island retreat, nor does fiction debut hotter than this European bestseller by muckraking Swedish journalist Larsson. This first of a trilogy introduces a provocatively odd couple: disgraced financial journalist Mikael Blomkvist and Lisbeth Salander, a feral but vulnerable superhacker. Hired by octogenarian Henrik Vanger to find out what happened to his beloved great-niece, the duo gradually uncover a festering morass of familial corruption – at the same time, Larsson skillfully bares some of the similar horrors that have left Salander such a marked woman. (*Publishers Weekly*, © Reed Business Information, from amazon.com)

Lawrence, Starling

*Montenegro: A Novel*

This story is a work of historical fiction, set in the Balkans on the eve of World War One. Sent to investigate the weakening Ottoman Empire, a British spy is drawn into the simmering ethnic tensions through his contact with Serb nationalists. Even the secluded location of a valley in Montenegro provides no shelter for the characters as the various nations in Europe set a course for war.

Le Clézio, J.M.G.

*Wandering Star*

French novelist Le Clézio is a bewitching storyteller with a penchant for tales of survival that are at once acutely realistic and mythically romantic. In this novel, he tells the story of two young women uprooted by the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel. Esther and her parents are hiding from the Germans in a mountain village where the adults risk their lives in the Resistance movement. After much suffering, Esther embarks on an arduous journey to Jerusalem. But as she and her fellow exhausted travelers finally near their promised land, they pass a stream of equally despairing, newly displaced refugees, among them Nejma, a Palestinian girl. Nejma then chronicles the misery of a gravely ill-provisioned camp and her heroic escape. Le Clézio writes with high compassion and deep wonder of the boundless strength of the spirit. (adapted from a review by Donna Seama. from *Booklist*)

Lem, Stanislaw

*Futurological Congress: From the Memoirs of Ijon Tichy*

The future is a very, very bad place to be. Inconceivable overcrowding, deplorable living conditions, shortages of every imaginable form. How to cope? Drug the world! Democracy and

Socialism have given way to the government of the future: Pharmacocracy! But when terrorists put LSD into the water supply at the 116-story Costa Rica Hilton during the meeting of the world's foremost futurologists, the thin veneer holding society together becomes flayed. (from amazon.com)

Lisle, Laurie

*Westover: Giving Girls a Place of Their Own*

This book is a great read for anyone who is interested in the American history of girls education from the early 20th century to the present. For someone who graduated from Westover, this book is a must. It is the story of the school and the tale of the enormous dedication and effort of the women and men who made it happen. Tragedy, glory and a great future make this book hard to put down. (Eunice S. Groark, former Connecticut Lieutenant Governor and Westover '56 taken from review on amazon.com)

Matthiessen, Peter

*The Snow Leopard*

Published in 1978, *The Snow Leopard* is rightly regarded as a classic of modern nature writing. Guiding his readers through steep-walled canyons and over tall mountains, Matthiessen offers a narrative that is shot through with metaphor and mysticism, and his arduous search for the snow leopard becomes a vehicle for reflections on all manner of matters of life and death. In the process, *The Snow Leopard* evolves from an already exquisite book of natural history and travel into a grand, Buddhist-tinged parable of our search for meaning. By the end of their expedition, having seen many signs of the snow leopard but not the cat itself, one of the members muses, "We've seen so much, maybe it's better if there are some things that we don't see." (adapted from a reader review, amazon.com)

Meyer, Stephanie

*The Host*

*The Host* is a tantalizing SF thriller in which planet-hopping parasites are inserting their silvery centipede selves into human brains, curing cancer, eliminating war and turning Earth into paradise. But some people want Earth back, warts and all, especially Melanie Stryder, who refuses to surrender, even after being captured in Chicago and becoming a host for a soul called Wanderer. Melanie uses her surviving brain cells to persuade Wanderer to help search for her loved ones in the Arizona desert. When the pair find Melanie's brother and her boyfriend in a hidden rebel cell led by her uncle, Wanderer is at first hated. Once the rebels accept Wanderer, whom they dub Wanda, Wanda's whole perspective on humanity changes. (*Publishers Weekly*)

Mitchell, Margaret

*Gone With the Wind*

Margaret Mitchell's epic novel of love and the Civil War won the Pulitzer Prize and went on to give rise to two authorized sequels and one of the most popular and celebrated movies of all time. In the two main characters, the white-shouldered, irresistible Scarlett and the flashy, contemptuous Rhett, Margaret Mitchell not only conveyed a timeless story of survival under the harshest of circumstances, she also created two of the most famous lovers in the English-speaking world since Romeo and Juliet. (from amazon.com)

Monsarrat, Nicholas

*Cruel Sea*

One of the classic naval adventure stories of World War II, Monsarrat's novel tells the tale of two British ships trying to escape destruction by wolf pack U-boats hunting in the North Atlantic. The book was a smash when released in 1951, going through numerous printings. (Copyright 2000 Cahners Business Information. *Library Journal* [from barnesandnoble.com])

Motavalli, Jim

*Naked in the Woods: Joseph Knowles and the Legacy of Frontier Fakery*

From August to October 1913, 43-year-old Joseph Knowles went alone, naked and without supplies, into the Maine woods, vowing to live for two months by his own devices. The stunt later proved to be a hoax. Knowles got another chance to prove himself when William Randolph Hearst backed a second naked wilderness foray. A third expedition would have put Knowles in the Adirondacks with a naked woman, but this fizzled when she quit after realizing she would have to endure cold weather and kill wild animals. Motavalli paints a sympathetic picture of a man with a tragic flaw, showing how Knowles succumbed to media hype and tried to maintain his Nature Man image long after public interest in his wilderness experiment had subsided. (from *Publishers Weekly*)

\*Nabokov, Vladimir

*Speak, Memory*

The late Vladimir Nabokov always did things his way, and his classic autobiography is no exception. No dry recital of dates, names, and addresses for this linguistic magician – instead, *Speak, Memory* is a succession of lapidary episodes, in which the factoids play second fiddle to the development of Nabokov's sensibility. Nabokov is much too artful an autobiographer to present *Speak, Memory* as a slice of reality – a word, by the way, that he insisted must always be surrounded by quotation marks. (amazon.com)

\*Narayan, R.K.

*Swami and Friends*

In this book, tiny Swaminathan enables us to feel a deep tenderness not only for him but for all children, including ourselves. Swami loves (and hustles) his mamaji, loves (and trembles needlessly before) his father, loves (and stoutly patronizes and instructs) his Granny, generally conducting his life in school and among his friends with endearing courage, aplomb, cheek, incomprehension, and vulnerability. This book illustrates how Narayan has come to command the respect of writers and the love of readers throughout the world. (reader review from amazon.com)

Nemerovsky, Irene

*David Golder*

"*David Golder*, the brief account of a Jewish migrant's last and troubled days, was published in 1929. Anecdotal, it dwells on incidental encounters and reflections: conversations with his predatory, adulterous wife, her longtime lover, his fickle, pleasure-loving daughter, a business partner; a tour of the Jewish quarter with an old mate; a trip to his origins which, in a style reminiscent of the mature Nemirovsky, ends in a moving portrayal of a final, unrecognised friendship and the picture of another hapless migrant's voyage." (excerpt from a review on amazon.com)

Nemirovsky's novels drew renewed attention several years ago with the publication of *Suite Francaise*, two novellas Nemirovsky wrote while in hiding from the Nazis in occupied France during World War II and discovered more than half a century after her death in a Nazi concentration camp.

Niffenegger, Audrey

*The Time Traveler's Wife*

This clever and inventive tale works on three levels: as an intriguing science fiction concept, a realistic character study and a touching love story. Henry De Tamble is a Chicago librarian with "Chrono Displacement" disorder; at random times, he suddenly disappears without warning and finds himself in the past or future, usually at a time or place of importance in his life. This leads to some wonderful paradoxes. The book alternates between Henry's and (his wife) Clare's points of view, and so does the narration. (*Publisher's Weekly*, from amazon.com)

Nothomb, Amélie

*Fear and Trembling: A Novel*

Amélie, a young Belgian woman who spent the first five years of her life in Japan, moves to Tokyo to work at a prestigious Japanese company. Her time at the company goes well, until her

unfamiliarity with the subtleties of the Japanese work cultures lands her in the middle of several disputes. After that, she is demoted over and over again, eventually ending up cleaning the toilets. Throughout her adventure she maintains her determination and sense of humor, learning more than she ever thought about her own culture and the complexities of cultural misunderstandings. Based on the real experiences of the author. Winner of the Grand Prix of the Académie française.

Ondaatje, Michael

*Divisadero*

*Divisadero* is a deeply ordered, full-bodied work, and the fragmented characters, severed from their shared past, persevere in relation to one another, illuminating both what it means to belong to a family and what it means to be alone in the world. The notion of twins, of one becoming two, pervades the novel, and so the farm in California is mirrored by a farm in France, the setting for another plot line in the second half of the book and giving us, in a sense, two novels in one. But the stories are not only connected but calibrated by Ondaatje to reveal a haunting pattern of parallels, echoes, and reflections across time and place. Episodes are boiled down to their essential elements, distilled but dramatic, resulting in a mosaic of profound dignity, with an elegiac quietude that only the greatest of writers can achieve. (review by Jhumpa Lahiri as guest reviewer, amazon.com)

\*Orne Jewett, Sarah

*The Country of the Pointed Firs*

In this little gem of a book by Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), a young woman from the city tells about a summer she spent in a Maine coastal village, a summer made memorable by the people she came to know and care about.

Ousmane, Sembene

*God's Bits of Wood*

A lyrical and beautifully written narrative of the struggle between the local railroad workers' union and their French overseers during a strike against the Dakar-Niger Railroad. Set in 1947 this novel describes a timeless environment which has gone unchanged in post-colonial West Africa. Given the heightened awareness of the plight of Africans today, this novel gives a great insight into the history and background of their deprivation and poverty. (D.J.Weaks review. amazon.com)

Parkin, Lance

*Doctor Who: The Eyeless*

At the heart of the ruined city of Arcopolis is the Fortress. It's a brutal structure placed here by one of the sides in a devastating intergalactic war that's long ended. Fifteen years ago, the entire population of the planet was killed in an instant by the weapon housed deep in the heart of the Fortress. Now only the ghosts remain. The Doctor arrives, determined to fight his way past the Fortress' automatic defences and put the weapon beyond use. But he soon discovers he's not the only person in Arcopolis. What is the true nature of the weapon? Is the planet really haunted? Who are the Eyeless? And what will happen if they get to the weapon before the Doctor? (amazon.com, product description)

Parrado, Nando

*Miracle in the Andes*

In October of 1972, a plane carrying an Uruguayan rugby team crashed in the Andes. The survivors of the crash had to survive for 72 days. Nando Parrado, one of the survivors, has written his own account of the Andes crash and the time spent on the mountain. Parrado lost both his sister and mother in the crash, but found reasons to keep going and find a reason to live, even in the harshest of possible environments, and without knowing whether rescue would arrive. It is a story of friendship, tragedy, and perseverance. (*Publishers Weekly*, amazon.com)

\*Paton, Alan

*Cry, the Beloved Country*

A beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s. The book is written with such keen empathy and understanding that to read it is to share fully in the gravity of the

characters' situations. It both touches your heart deeply and inspires a renewed faith in the dignity of mankind. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a classic tale, passionately African, timeless and universal, and beyond all, selfless.

Pausch, Randy

*The Last Lecture*

What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave – “Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams” – wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because “time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think”). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living. (from barnesandnoble.com)

Picoult, Jodi

*The Pact: A Love Story*

Until the phone calls came at 3:00 A.M. on a November morning, the Golds and their neighbors, the Hartes, had been inseparable. It was no surprise to anyone when their teenage children, Chris and Emily, began showing signs that their relationship was moving beyond that of lifelong friends. But now seventeen-year-old Emily has been shot to death by her beloved and devoted Chris as part of an apparent suicide pact – leaving two devastated families desperate for answers about an unthinkable act and the children they never really knew. (from barnesandnoble.com)

Proulx, Annie

*Close Range*

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning and bestselling author of *The Shipping News* and *Accordion Crimes* comes one of the most celebrated short story collections of our time. Annie Proulx's masterful language and fierce love of Wyoming are evident in these breathtaking tales of loneliness, quick violence and the wrong kinds of love. (from the book jacket)

\*Rand, Ayn

*Atlas Shrugged*

As passionate as it is profound, *Atlas Shrugged* is one of the most influential novels of our time. In it, Rand dramatizes the main tenets of Objectivism, her philosophy of rational selfishness. She explores the ramifications of her radical thinking in a world that penalizes human intelligence and integrity. Part mystery, part thriller, part philosophical inquiry, part volatile love affair, *Atlas Shrugged* is the book that confirmed Ayn Rand as one of the most popular novelists and most respected thinkers of the 20th century. (from barnesandnoble.com)

Rebeck, Theresa

*Three Girls and Their Brother*

The novel is a humorous and satirical look at “celebrity culture” from a Hollywood and Broadway insider. Rebeck explores the impact of celebrity on three teenage sisters as they are plunged into the media's spotlight. (from amazon.com)

Roberts, Nora

*Vision in White*

Wedding photographer Mackensie “Mac” Elliot is most at home behind the camera, but her focus is shattered moments before an important wedding rehearsal when she bumps into the bride-to-be's brother...an encounter that has them both seeing stars. A stable, safe English teacher, Carter Maguire is definitely not Mac's type. But a casual fling might be just what she needs to take her mind off bridezillas. Of course, casual flings can turn into something more when you least expect it. And Mac will have to turn to her three best friends – and business partners – to see her way to her own happy ending. (from amazon.com)

Rosenberg, Scott

*Dreaming in Code*

*Dreaming in Code* attempts to document the state of software, the Internet, and everything circa 2006 through the lens of Chandler, an as-yet-unfinished software application for the management of personal information. Rosenberg takes on the big questions: How do software development teams work (or not)? Why does the reuse of software modules rarely work altogether correctly? Does open-source development by volunteers on the Internet lead to innovation or just insanely bifurcated chaos? Chandler helps his readers think more clearly about all of these issues; however, "answers" to these questions are, of course, not to be had, which is one of his points. (from amazon.com)

Rothfuss, Patrick

*The Name of the Wind*

"My name is Kvothe, pronounced nearly the same as 'quothe'. Names are important as they tell you a great deal about a person. I have had more names than anyone has a right to ... You may have heard of me..." So begins the tale of Kvothe. In these pages you will come to know Kvothe as a notorious magician, and accomplished thief, a masterful musician and an infamous assassin. But the *Name of the Wind* is so much more - for the story reveals the truth behind Kvothe's legend. (adapted from the book flaps.)

Russo, Richard

*Nobody's Fool*

A novel that "follows the unexpected operation of grace in a deadbeat town in Upstate New York - and in the life of one of its unluckiest citizens, Sully, who has been doing the wrong thing triumphantly for fifty years.... With its sly and uproarious humor and a heart that embraces humanity's follies as well as its triumphs, *Nobody's Fool* is storytelling at its most generous." (cover blurb to Vintage paperback edition).

Safran Foer, Jonathan

*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

This book stars one Oskar Schell, a nine-year-old amateur inventor and Shakespearean actor whose father, whom he worshipped, perished in the World Trade Center on 9/11. In his dad's closet a year later, Oskar finds a key mysteriously labeled "Black." So he goes searching after the lock it opens, visiting everyone in the phone book with the surname Black. A subplot about Oskar's mute grandfather isn't as compelling as Oskar's quest for the lock, but when the stories finally come together, the result is an emotionally devastating climax. (adapted from *Booklist*)

\*Sartre, Jean-Paul

*The Words*

Jean-Paul Sartre's famous autobiography of his first ten years has been widely compared to Rousseau's *Confessions*. Written when he was fifty-nine years old, *The Words* is a masterpiece of self-analysis. Born into a gentle, book-loving family and raised by a widowed mother and doting grandparents, he had a childhood which might be described as one long love affair with the printed word. Ultimately, this book explores and evaluates the whole use of books and language in human experience. (from amazon.com)

Savage, Thomas and Annie Proulx

*The Power of the Dog: A Novel*

Set on a Montana ranch in 1924-25, this book tells of a domestic drama involving two brothers and the tensions that quickly develop when one of them marries a widow with a teenage son. The driving emotional force in the novel (and the "dog" of the title) is the older, unmarried brother, a fascinating study in western machismo, who is both sharply intelligent and capable of merciless cruelty. The opening scene of the novel, with a vivid description of castrating calves, graphically characterizes him as cutting and brutal, while wounded both emotionally and sexually. Savage is breathtakingly insightful in his portrayal of this man, exploring his darkest thoughts and carefully observing his behavior. (adapted from a review by Ronald Scheer, amazon.com)

Schine, Cathleen

*The New Yorkers: A Novel*

Inspired by the author's account in *The New Yorker* of adopting a profoundly troubled dog named Buster, *The New Yorkers* is a brilliantly funny story of love, longing, and overcoming the shyness that leashes us. On a quiet little block near Central Park, five lonely New Yorkers find one another, compelled to meet by their canine companions. (adapted from the back cover)

Scottoline, Lisa

*Look Again*

When reporter Ellen Gleeson gets a "Have You Seen This Child?" flyer in the mail, she almost throws it away. But something about it makes her look again, and her heart stops – the child in the photo is identical to her adopted son, Will. She investigates, uncovering clues no one was meant to discover, and when she digs too deep, she risks losing her own life – and that of the son she loves. (barnesandnoble.com)

Shaffer, Mary Ann and Annie Barrows *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*

The letters comprising this small charming novel begin in 1946, when single, 30-something author Juliet Ashton writes to her publisher to say she is tired of covering the sunny side of war and its aftermath. Guernsey farmer Dawsey Adams finds Juliet's name in a used book and invites articulate – and not-so-articulate – neighbors to write Juliet with their stories, including the formation of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society while Guernsey was under German occupation. Juliet finds in the letters not just inspiration for her next work, but also for her life – as will readers. (*Publishers Weekly*, © Reed Business Information, from amazon.com)

Shapiro, Dani

*Black and White*

A mother struggles to protect her young daughter from the dark secrets of her past. Haunting and insightful, *Black & White* explores the notions of family and motherhood, inspiration and obligation.

Sittenfeld, Curtis

*Prep: A Novel*

Curtis Sittenfeld's debut novel, *Prep*, is an insightful, achingly funny coming-of-age story as well as a brilliant dissection of class, race, and gender in a hothouse of adolescent angst and ambition. Lee Fiora is an intelligent, observant fourteen-year-old when her father drops her off in front of her dorm at the prestigious Ault School in Massachusetts. Ultimately, Lee's experiences coalesce into a singular portrait of the painful and thrilling adolescence universal to us all. (reading-groupguides.com)

Sokolove, Michael

*Warrior Girls*

Girls are suffering ACL injuries at an alarming rate in soccer and similar sports. Sokolove reviews the evidence about these injuries and suggests valuable training reforms that might spare these girls from such devastating injuries. Devoted to the ideal of team, and deeply bonded with teammates, these tough girls don't want to leave the field even when confronted with serious injury and chronic pain. Well-documented, opinionated, and controversial, *Warrior Girls* shows that all girls can safeguard themselves on the field without sacrificing their hard-won right to be there. (adapted from amazon.com)

\*Stevenson, Robert Louis

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

"Robert Louis Stevenson's masterpiece of the duality of good and evil in man's nature sprang from the darkest recesses of his own unconscious – during a nightmare from which his wife awakened him, alerted by his screams. More than a hundred years later, this tale of the mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll and the drug that unleashed his evil, inner person – the loathsome, twisted Mr. Hyde – has lost none of its ability to shock. Stevenson's enduring classic demonstrates a remarkable understanding of the personality's inner conflicts – and remains the irresistibly terrifying stuff of our worst nightmares." (from the back cover of the Penguin Books Edition, 2003.)

Stockett, Kathryn

*The Help*

This optimistic, uplifting debut novel is set during the nascent civil rights movement in Jackson, Miss., where black women were trusted to raise white children but not to polish the household silver. Eugenia Skeeter Phelan is just home from college in 1962, and, anxious to become a writer, the budding social activist begins to collect the stories of the black women on whom the country club set relies but whom they mistrust. The book Skeeter puts together is scathing and shocking, bringing pride and hope to the black community, while giving Skeeter the courage to break down her personal boundaries and pursue her dreams. (from amazon.com))

\*Stoker, Bram

*Dracula*

When Jonathon Harker visits Transylvania to help Count Dracula purchase a London house, he makes horrifying discoveries in his client's castle. Soon afterwards, disturbing incidents unfold in England: an unmanned ship is wrecked; strange puncture marks appear on a young woman's neck; and a lunatic asylum inmate raves about the imminent arrival of his 'Master'. In the ensuing battle of wits between the sinister Count and a determined group of adversaries, Bram Stoker created a masterpiece of the horror genre, probing into questions of identity, sanity and the dark corners of Victorian sexuality and desire. (from the back cover of the Penguin Books Edition, 2003)

Tharps, Lori

*Kinky Gazpacho: Life, Love and Spain*

Magazine writer and editor Lori Tharps was often the only person of color in her school and neighborhood. At an early age, Lori decided that her destiny would be discovered in Spain... Arriving in the country as an optimistic college student, however, Lori soon discovers Spain's particular attitude toward Blackness – and her innocent dreams of a place where race doesn't matter are shattered. The story would end there, except Lori meets and marries a Spaniard, and that's when her true Spanish adventure really begins. (simonandschuster.com)

\*Thompson, Flora

*Lark Rise to Candleford: A Trilogy*

Flora Thompson (1876-1947) wrote what may be the quintessential distillation of English country life at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1945, the three books – *Lark Rise* (1939), *Over to Candleford* (1941), and *Candleford Green* (1943), were published together in one volume. This is the story of three closely-related Oxfordshire communities – a hamlet, a village, and a town – and the memorable cast of characters who people them. Based on Thompson's own experiences as a child and young woman, it is keenly observed and beautifully narrated, quiet and evocative. (amazon.com)

Tirone Smith, Mary-Ann

*Girls of Tender Age: A Memoir*

With beauty, power, and remarkable wit, Mary-Ann Tirone Smith interweaves a bittersweet portrait of growing up among the working stiffs of 1950s Hartford, Connecticut, with the chilling progress of a serial pedophile who threatens to shatter her small town's innocence. (From the back cover)

\*Tolkien, J.R.R.

*The Hobbit*

In this precursor to the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, J.R.R. Tolkien gives us our first glimpse into Middle Earth and its interesting creatures called Hobbits. It tells the tale of Bilbo Baggins, who is convinced by our friend Gandalf the Grey to undertake a journey with 13 dwarves. "The dwarves' goal is to return to their ancestral home and reclaim a stolen fortune from the dragon Smaug. Along the way, they meet giant spiders, hostile elves, ravaging wolves and, most perilous of all, a subterranean creature named Gollum from whom Bilbo wins a magical ring." (from amazon.com)

Townsend Warner, Sylvia

*Lolly Willowses, or The Loving Huntsman*

In this 1926 novel, Townsend Warner turns her attention with humor and whimsy to the limits of women's choices in the early twentieth century. As an aging spinster in London finally makes a break from her controlling family, she receives assistance from a surprising supernatural agent. Townsend Warner combines lyric description of the English countryside with a touch of the odd and fantastic.

\*Turgenev, Ivan *A Sportsman's Notebook*  
Turgenev's evocative stories beautifully convey Russia's "sublime" landscape and the harshness of life in the country's nineteenth century. (from amazon.com)

\*Turgenev, Ivan *Fathers and Sons*  
A novel that "concerns the inevitable conflict between generations and between the values of traditionalists and intellectuals. The physician Bazarov, the novel's protagonist, is the most powerful of Turgenev's creations. He is a nihilist, denying the validity of all laws save those of the natural sciences. Uncouth and forthright in his opinions, he is nevertheless susceptible to love and by that fact doomed to unhappiness." (Amazon Review). A controversial book at the time of its publication, this is one of the great classics of Russian literature.

Waldherr, Kris *Doomed Queens: Royal Women Who Met Bad Ends, from Cleopatra to Princess Di*

*Doomed Queens* is a charming little collection of anecdotes about fifty female royals, all of whom met an untimely end. Traversing pretty much all of recorded human history, this book covers well-known women, like Cleopatra, Maria Antoinette, and Princess Di, as well as a plethora of lesser-known women, such as Theodora of Trebizond, Empress Xu Pingjun, and Alexandra Romanov. (reviewer on Amazon)

Walker, Alice *The Way Forward is With a Broken Heart*  
"These are the stories that came to me to be told after the close of a magical marriage to an extraordinary man that ended in a less-than-magical divorce. I found myself unmoored, unmated, ungrounded in a way that challenged everything I'd ever thought about human relationships. Situated squarely in that terrifying paradise called freedom, precipitously out on so many emotional limbs, it was as if I had been born; and in fact I was being reborn as the woman I was to become." So says Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker about her beautiful book. Filled with wonder at the power of the life force and of the capacity of human beings to move through love and loss and healing to love again, *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* is an enriching, passionate book by "a lavishly gifted writer" (*The New York Times Book Review*, from amazon.com)

Watts, Alan *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*  
*The Book* delves in to the the cause and cure of the illusion that the self is a separate ego, housed in a bag of skin, which confronts a universe of physical objects that are alien and stupid. According to Dr. Watts, this illusion underlies the misuse of technology for a violent and hostile subjugation of man's environment, leading to its eventual destruction. *The Book* basically considers the ancient Eastern Philosophical and Religious teachings of Vedanta to address these issues.

\*Waugh, Evelyn *Brideshead Revisited*  
Considered one of the great 20th century classics, this book is the story of an aristocratic and eccentric family living on the English countryside in the decades between the world wars. Seen through the eyes of an admiring outsider we witness the sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic milestones of the various family members as their personalities and interests conflict.

Weber, David *In Fury Born*  
The planet-wrecking pirates made a big mistake when they raided ex-commando leader Alicia DeVries' home, murdered her family, and then left her for dead. Alicia decided to turn 'pirate' herself in her vendetta against those who destroyed her family. Her fellow veterans think she's gone crazy, the Imperial Fleet has shoot-on-sight orders, and, of course, the pirates want her dead, too. But Alicia has two allies nobody knows about, allies as implacable as she is: a self-aware computer, and a creature from the mists of Old Earth's most ancient legends. And this trio of furies won't rest until somehow vengeance is served. (Adapted from amazon.com)

Winspear, Jacqueline

*Maisie Dobbs*

The daughter of a struggling green grocer, Maisie Dobbs was only thirteen when she was sent to work as a maid for wealthy London aristocrats. But being bright and thoughtful beyond her years, Maisie studies her way to Cambridge, then serves as a nurse on the Front during the Great War. Now, it's the spring of 1929 and Maisie has just opened up her own detective agency. Her first assignment, a seemingly open-and-shut infidelity case, will reveal a much deeper, darker mystery, forcing Maisie to revisit the horrors of the war and the ghost she left behind. (from the back cover)

\*Wright, Richard

*Black Boy*

This incredible bestselling classic is Richard Wright's unforgettable and eloquent autobiography of growing up in the Jim Crow South. (Barnes and Noble Review)

Wroblewski, David

*The Story of Edgar Sawtelle: A Novel*

It's gutsy for a debut novelist to offer a modern take on Hamlet set in rural Wisconsin – particularly one in which the young hero, born mute, communicates with people, dogs, and the occasional ghost through his own mix of sign and body language. But David Wroblewski's extraordinary way with language in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* immerses readers in a living, breathing world that is both fantastic and utterly believable. Edgar's tale takes you to the extremes of what humans must endure, and when you're finally released, you will come back to yourself feeling wiser, and flush with gratitude. (adapted from a review by Mari Malcolm on amazon.com)

Young, William P.

*The Shack*

After Mackenzie Allen Philips' youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation, evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him back to that shack for a weekend. What he finds there will change Mack's world forever. In a world where religion seems to grow increasingly irrelevant, *The Shack* wrestles with the timeless question, "Where is God in a world so filled with unspeakable pain?" The answers Mack gets will astound you and perhaps transform you as much as they did him. (from amazon.com)

Zusak, Markus

*The Book Thief*

Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood. The child arrives having just stolen her first book – although she has not yet learned how to read – and her foster father uses it, *The Gravediggers Handbook*, to lull her to sleep when she's roused by regular nightmares about her younger brother's death. Across the ensuing years of the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Liesel collects more stolen books as well as a peculiar set of friends. Death is not a sentimental storyteller, but he does attend to an array of satisfying details, giving Liesel's story all the nuances of chance, folly, and fulfilled expectation that it deserves. An extraordinary novel. (from amazon.com. Written by Francisca Goldsmith, in *School Library Journal* [Berkeley: Public Library, CA].)