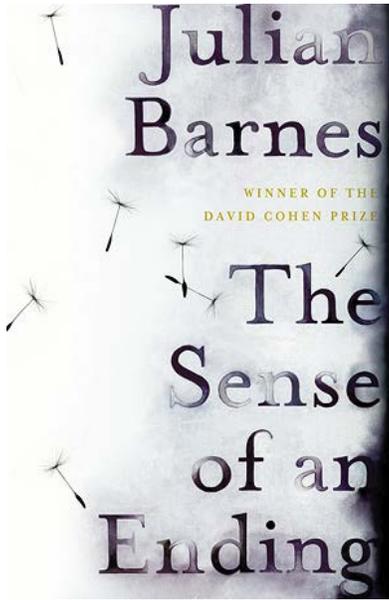


Saint Ann's School
High School/Faculty
Suggested Summer Reading List,
2012



Aira, César. *Ghosts*

This might be my very favorite novel of the last several years. Lighthearted, amusing, in love with everything including words, but not foolish—in other words, you poets, you can get your melancholy fix here. *Ghosts* is the story of Chilean laborers who have moved to Argentina, where they live, along with their children and a cohort of ghosts, in the skeletal luxury apartment building they are working on. In the first pages, we get this apothegm: “The real universe is measured in millimeters, and it is gigantic.” (Ben Gantcher)

Almond, David. *Skellig*

Everyone, bar none, whom I've taught or recommended this novel to has loved it. Loved it! It's about an English boy whose family moves into a fixer-upper just when his new sister is born prematurely. Upset about the many changes in his life, he wanders into the forbidden broken-down garage behind the house, where he finds what seems to be an old man lying against the wall, eating spiders. It turns out the old man isn't old, and isn't a man. (Ben Gantcher)

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*

1. Imagine discovering that all your assumptions/perceptions/certainties about your past were called into question. That's what happens to Barnes's protagonist. Coming to grips with who you really might be is a daunting task; Barnes makes it fun as we watch it unfold. (Marty Skoble)

2. Julian Barnes's Man Booker Prize winner, *The Sense of an Ending*, is also a winner in my book! From school days to adult friendship, life takes odd turns. As Tony Webster tries to recapture the past, he finds some surprises. Also try *Flaubert's Parrot*, another marvelous Barnes book. (Linda Kaufman)

Beard, Mary & Keith Hopkins. *The Colosseum*

This is part of the Harvard University Press “Wonders of the World” series (www.hup.harvard.edu/features/travel/wow.html) that I read in preparation for the Saint Ann's Rome trip this past April. It was the best thing I read for the trip and a great example of why Mary Beard is such an inspirational and successful classicist, able to speak as convincingly to the “pro” as to the amateur. She has an uncanny ability to always seem as though she is the very first to have put all the evidence in one place and the first to look at it in a fair and clear-eyed sort of way. Also, the authors have a knack for slipping a surprising fact you never knew about this most famous monument onto just about every page. How much would it cost in today's British pounds to lay the foundations of the Colosseum? Look no further. How many Christians were *actually* eaten by lions in there? The answer surprised me. I'm always wary of brief introductory books like this, and I won't vouch for the series as a whole, but this one delivers and doesn't cut corners. (Andrew Siebengartner)

Bolaño, Robert. *2666*

I hesitate to recommend this mammoth novel, even though it's one of my favorites, because the section called “The Part About the Crimes” details each in a series of unexplained murders of women in the fictional Mexican city of Santa Teresa, a stand-in for the real Ciudad Juarez, where serial murders of women continue to stump authorities. Nevertheless, you can skip that section; the other four parts of the novel are compelling individually, covering a wide range of territory and 20th century experience. Together the four sections would go a long way toward creating the intertwining sense of menace and transcendence that marks *2666*. (Ben Gantcher)

Bryson, Bill. **At Home**

You wouldn't think a history of rooms could be so insanely entertaining. Bryson is a historian of the neglected back-story, a connoisseur of the delicious small fact. Fireplaces, beds, pillows, alcoves are significant. Bryson can show you how and make you laugh. Did you know that *boudoir*, according to Bryson, originally meant a place to sulk? This is a classic Bryson gem. An addictive author. Read him and then *Notes from a Small Island* (about England) and *A Short History of Nearly Everything* and *Shakespeare: The World as Stage*. His story of how the authorship controversy took wing is amazing to consider. Bryson books are superb night-table books: they don't have to be consumed in one obsessive silent stretch. (Carol Miller)

Butterworth, Jez. **Jerusalem** (play)

Johnny "Rooster" Byron, an old hippie living in a caravan in the English woods, scandalizes the conventional folks back in town by selling drugs to youth, hosting scandalous parties, and defying orders to shut up and hit the road. Is he a Blakeian rebel from a mythic past of giants and universal energy? A Falstaffian carouser? A sleazy, satanic corrupter of youth? Wily, upsetting, transgressive, riotous, the play delivers brilliant emotional whiplash and literary double takes. (Ruth Chapman)

Canin, Ethan. **America America**

He wrote some great short stories years ago, but this proves he's got the talent for the novel too. It's a coming-of-age story set in the early 1970s about a young working class teenager in upstate New York who begins a relationship with a politically powerful local family. It's a poignant tale of his multiple awakenings—class, culture, sexuality and selfhood. As fiction it's compelling and its prose evocative; as a window into the link between local and national politics during the Nixon years it offers its own rich take on an era of great hope wiped out by cynicism. (Rob Goldberg)

Caro, Robert. **The Path to Power (Vol. 1 in The Years of Lyndon Johnson series)**

Masterful: epic journey of President Johnson—well worth a read, or reread if it has been a while. (Felicia Kang)

Carrera Andrade, Jorge. **Micrograms**

The quotation from Cesar Aira's *Ghosts* (the first book reviewed on this list) could have been pulled from Andrade's introduction to his marvelous poems which are influenced by haiku, *saeta*, the Spanish Golden Age giant Quevedo and modern French poetry, etc. Here's a microgram called "The Spider": "Floor spider: / epaulet / fallen from / time's shoulder." This book, like *Ghosts*, is the perfect size for a book, 5x7, less than a half-inch deep. The two gems should make up for the 2666 millstone. (Ben Gantcher)

Cashore, Kristin. **Bitterblue**

Filed with magic, creativity, wit, and the search for truth, *Bitterblue* features a full cast of likable characters, including 18-year-old Queen Bitterblue herself, several incidentally gay characters, and a librarian named Death (rhymes with "teeth"). This is one of those young-adult books I wish I'd written. Cashore is a skilled world-builder who flawlessly intertwines serious political issues with lighthearted playfulness. If you like books that deal with memory, storytelling, and reconciliation, and contain some pretty kick-ass ciphering schemes, pick up a copy of this brand new title! While it tells a complete story on its own, *Bitterblue* is a definite spoiler to *Graceling*, which takes place 8 years earlier and is another incredible novel. *Fire* was written second, takes place 30 years before *Graceling*, and is more of a companion novel than a prequel. Still, for the full experience, read them all: *Graceling*, *Fire*, and then *Bitterblue*. (Hannah Mermelstein)



Chesterton, G. K. **The Man Who Was Thursday**

Subtle and intriguing religious allegory, with maximum action and minimum preaching. (Mike Roam)

Cline, Ernest. **Ready Player One**

This book will take to you a future where gamers rule. I've never been one for video games myself, but the engaging characters and quirky plot drew me in nonetheless. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Davies, Robertson. **The Deptford Trilogy (Fifth Business, The Manticore, World of Wonders)**

Warm, wise, wonderful, and captivating. Moral growth, myth, pivotal moments, intelligent and thoughtful

characters. I am grateful to Robertson Davies for giving us these rich stories with their amazing adventures and introspective, loving, good-hearted narrators struggling to make sense of life. (Mike Roam)

Davis-Gardner, Angela. ***Butterfly's Child***

A haunting story of life in the 1800s, connecting Japan to American wheat fields by way of the "Madame Butterfly" opera. The drama is intense while the writing style itself is calm and minimal, almost Zen-like. (Mike Roam)

Dexter, Pete. ***Paperboy***

Pete Dexter's style immediately injects you into his created world. His characters are tightly imagined and credible. *Paperboy*, set in the backwoods of Florida in the 60s, is the story of the James brothers and the corrupt racist homophobic world they live in. Their father publishes the local newspaper and the novel focuses on the murder of a local sheriff and the conviction of a local redneck. Ward James, a successful reporter from *The Miami Times* and his partner Yardley Ackerman come back to their home town to investigate. Ward's younger brother, a dropout, who delivers the paper, acts as their driver. While the plot keeps you motivated, Dexter's signature style and characters are what will remain with you. (Matthew Bloom)

Didion, Joan. ***The Last Thing He Wanted***

A terrifically intriguing novel from this truly brilliant (and I hate overuse of that word!) writer. (Margie Hanssens)

Dos Passos, John. **U.S.A. Trilogy (*The 42nd Parallel, 1919, The Big Money*)**

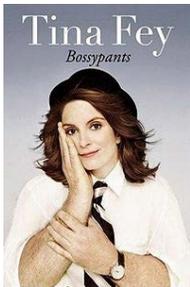
One of the great books of the 20th century by one of its great writers: innovative, dramatic, exciting. My vote for next year's H.S. Reading Marathon: Get a head-start. (Marty Skoble)

Durrell, Gerald. ***My Family and Other Animals***

This memoir of childhood must be read. When life is vile. When your sense of humor is in the crapper. When you're simply bored. This is the book. It is the tale of an English family that moves to Corfu to escape the rain. It makes a zoologist out of the writer, this trip. It is deeply funny at times. This story includes stories about Gerald's big brother, the wonderful writer Lawrence Durrell. (Carol Miller)

Egan, Jennifer. ***Look At Me***

This fascinating story starts with a fashion model in a car crash: she doesn't look quite as good afterward and is noticed less. That's when she starts thinking more about image culture, becoming a private detective, remembering her teen life, and getting her life tangled with the Internet. Great writing, with details that reward a second and closer reading. (Mike Roam)



Fey, Tina. ***Bossypants***

Fey's memoir had me laughing out loud. You might not want to read this book in public or people will stare at you. (Melissa Kantor)

Finkel, David. ***The Good Soldiers***

For those interested in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Also check out *The Forever War* by Dexter Filkins and *War* by Sebastian Junger. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

Fleming, Gerald J. ***A Night of Pure Breathing***

These are breathtaking poems. Prose poems, yes; and maybe you'll read them as short stories. However you see them, you will be enthralled. (Marty Skoble)

Fuller, Alexandra. ***Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness***

Like Fuller's first book *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, it centers on her eccentric English family during their years in Africa. As one description I read states: "A story of survival and madness, love and war, loyalty and forgiveness, *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness* is an intimate exploration of the author's family." You will find yourself asking how the kids made it to adulthood (well, not all of them did—spoiler alert!). It is also really, really funny. (Amy Fontaine)

Gran, Sara. ***Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead***

Every mystery story is a search for a truth; a good mystery involves a search for some larger truth. This novel, a well-

constructed mystery to be sure, also asks us to consider what exactly is truth and at what cost do we dare seek it. Sara Gran also gives us a stunningly vivid portrait of post-Katrina New Orleans, a study of despair (and hope), and a fascinating set of characters. (She is a Saint Ann's alum, 1987) (Marty Skoble)

Green, John. ***The Fault in Our Stars***

"It's not fair," complains 16-year-old Hazel. Indeed, life is not fair. Hazel and her new friend Gus both have cancer and, regrettably, Hazel's is terminal. Hazel also has a burning obsession: to find out what happens to the characters after the end of her favorite novel—*An Imperial Affliction* by Dutch author Peter Van Houten. It's about a girl named Anna who has cancer, and it ends in mid-sentence (presumably to indicate a life cut short), a stylistic choice that Hazel appreciates, but the ambiguity drives her crazy. Did the "Dutch Tulip Man" marry Anna's mom? What happened to Sisyphus the Hamster? Hazel is determined to find answers to these questions. Green's latest young adult masterpiece will leave you wishing you could spend more time with Hazel and Gus, laughing out loud, and, of course—crying. (Ragan O'Malley)

Groff, Lauren. ***Arcadia***

Set in a commune in upstate New York, *Arcadia* is not overwritten or underwritten—it's just written. It's about making choices and nature vs. nurture. It's a simple story and a breezy read which makes you feel full of light—just read it. (Daphne Klein, Cathy Fuerst and Laurie Duchovny)

Haas, Robert. ***The Apple Trees at Olema***

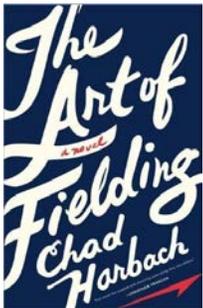
I'm a prose girl, so it's unusual for me to curl up each night with a book of poetry. But Haas' collection was both narrative enough to satisfy me and beautiful enough to stun me. Be prepared, however. You'll be oddly unfit to read anything else for a while after. (Melissa Kantor)

Hale, Shannon. ***Austenland***

Perfect summer fluff. Jane Hayes, 33, is a successful New York professional with a secret: She is in love with Mr. Darcy, in particular the Darcy portrayed by Colin Firth in the steamy BBC miniseries version of *Pride and Prejudice*. She's sure that her obsession is keeping her from finding real love with a real man. So, when an elderly aunt dies and leaves her a trip to a secret, high-priced replica of a Regency estate—where women wear gowns and actors play Firthlike roles—she hops a plane to London vowing to use the experience to move on once and for all. Then the story starts. (Denise Rinaldo)

Hamill, Pete. ***Snow in August***

Post war Brooklyn, 1946. Young Michael Devlin's father has died in the war. He is surrounded by ignorance and racism and turns to the world of his imagination for escape. This tale takes us through the development of a beautiful and unlikely friendship, which becomes the salvation of both its participants. A heartbreaking story of courage, the power of language, and love. (Margie Hanssens)



Harbach, Chad. ***The Art of Fielding***

1. Beyond just Moby Dick and baseball fans —a compelling tale with memorable characters. (Felicia Kang)

2. I don't even particularly like baseball, but I longed to be a member of a baseball team while reading this amazing novel. It all starts with Mike Schwartz, aka Schwartzy, a sophomore at Westish College. Schwartzy spots Henry Skrimshander playing baseball at a summer tournament. Henry plays shortstop and is small and rather scrawny, but with an uncanny ability to field a baseball. Schwartz recruits the recent high school grad for the Westish Harpooners' Division III baseball team. Henry is not much of a student, in fact the only book he has ever truly *read* is his dog-eared copy of *The Art of Fielding* by Aparicio Rodriguez, in which Rodriguez, the greatest defensive shortstop who ever lived, manages to successfully equate the act of fielding a baseball with a Zen-like practice. When Henry arrives on campus and meets Owen, his beautiful, biracial, gay roommate, we, as readers, are reassured that Henry will survive his new circumstances when he spots Owen's own copy of *The Art of Fielding* on his meticulously kept bookshelves. Dear readers—it only gets better from here. (Ragan O'Malley)

Harden, Blaine. ***Escape from Camp 14***

Shin Dong-hyuk was born inside Camp 14, a North Korean political prisoner camp. At the age of twenty-two, he escaped through an electric fence—the first person ever to escape such a camp. His story, told with the help of journalist Blaine Harden, is a gripping tale of inhumanity and horror (he witnessed the execution of his mother and brother). Shin survived, but unfortunately over 200,000 people remain imprisoned in similar North Korean camps. (Ragan O'Malley)

Harding, Paul. ***Tinkers***

This is a meditative novel on death and man's fragile place in the world. It is at times very beautiful, and at other times very brutal. It is thrilling to read a writer who is so precise with his language and so unflinching in his descriptions. I "tink" you'll like it! (Alex Levin)

Harkaway, Nick. ***The Gone-Away World***

If you like books set in a post-apocalyptic world, this one's for you. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

Heilemann, John & Mark Halperin. ***Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin and the Race of a Lifetime***

I could happily relive the 2008 presidential campaign in real time, and this book comes pretty darn close to doing that. Heilemann and Halperin either had incredible access to the campaigns or made a heck of a lot of stuff up. Either way, prepare to go behind the (political) scenes as never before. (Melissa Kantor)

Highsmith, Patricia. ***Strangers on a Train***

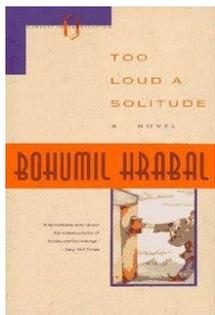
Highsmith's first novel is under-appreciated! Read it. It's great. (Margie Hanssens)

Himes, Chester. ***Cotton Comes to Harlem***

Himes wrote several books about Coffin Ed Johnson and Gravedigger Jones, who are brutal NYPD detectives determined to enforce their own special brand of justice in Harlem. In this novel, a conman steals \$87,000 from the community before being robbed himself by white hoodlums. Now everyone is after the money and the plot writhes around an array of Harlem's least fine. Vivid descriptions and idiosyncratic dialogue enable Himes to present Harlem in the 60s as a distinct nation with its own natives and language. If you like to read novels that expose you to different cultures, you'll enjoy Chester Himes. (Matthew Bloom)

Hochschild, Adam. ***King Leopold's Ghost***

This true story starts in the 1890s with a clerk noticing that Belgium is receiving all kinds of raw materials and wealth from African Congo while sending back nothing in exchange except soldiers and bullets. We learn how King Leopold of Belgium has managed to persuade the world that he is "civilizing" Africa and supporting a free state there while secretly running a slave plantation that is four times larger than Texas. (Mike Roam)



Hrabal, Bohumil. ***Too Loud a Solitude***

By the author of *Closely Watched Trains*, this short novella is the best look into the mind of a trash compactor that I've ever read. (Will Geiger)

Isaacson, Walter. ***Steve Jobs***

Even if you don't have strong memories of seeing your first Macintosh or iPod, Steve Jobs is such a weird and dynamic guy and Walter Isaacson is such a good writer that this story of the rise of the technological age that surrounds us will still be fascinating. (Mike Roam)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***Remains of the Day***

Accompany the narrator, a lifelong butler of a distinguished British estate, as he embarks on his first-ever road trip in post, WWII England. As he winds his way along a carefully plotted course, painstakingly planned from a beloved guide book, he simultaneously takes the reader through a recounting of his career. You are with him as he slowly reveals to himself that his lifetime of punctilious attention to every detail does not quite add up to the sum he'd thought. The book, while heartbreaking, is not hopeless or depressing—and it's absolutely beautiful. (Diana Lomask)

Jansson, Tove. ***The Summer Book***

Sophia's grandmother is very old, achy, impatient, given to long naps, and cranky if she doesn't take them. Yet she is

game for any adventure with her six-year-old granddaughter Sophia who's not always in such a good mood herself. Together they wander the island, they swim, they row, they collect bones and driftwood and seashells, and they build Venice in the marsh pool and construct a forest sanctuary of carved creatures, "their wooden souls intact." Micro-magical worlds collide in this novel, a collection of painterly vignettes written with a clear eye to the delicate tracings of family relationships and lovely unexpected insights: "If you squinted and thought about something else, it might almost *be* a channel marker – an objective indicator that here was a change of course." (Cathy Fuerst)

Jones, Edward P. ***All Aunt Hagar's Children*** and ***Lost in the City***

Two collections of short stories. Some of the best I've ever read. All set in Washington, DC. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

Kadare, Ismail. ***The Three-Arched Bridge***

A brilliant parable: the historical mist clears to reveal an insightful picture of modern world and cultural conflict. This remarkable little novel, simply and directly told, presents the building of a bridge as the essence of change: beginning in superstition and ending in disaster. (Marty Skoble)

Kozol, Jonathan. ***Death at an Early Age***

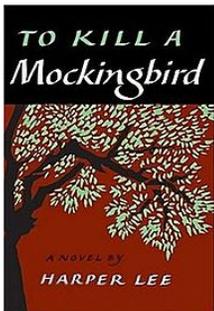
Kozol's book about teaching in the Boston Public Schools. Published in the late 60s, but still very relevant to discussions of the public school system today. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

Kushner, Tony. ***Angels in America***

One of the great things. America in the 80s: Reagan and AIDS and intimations of apocalypse. Tragic. But also comic. Wonderful dramatic writing from a contemporary playwright. (Carol Miller)

Le Carré, John. ***The Spy Who Came in from the Cold***

This is a short, exceptionally compelling early work by Le Carré, who was an English spy. Alec Leamas is a British agent in Cold War Berlin who is responsible for keeping the double agents under his care undercover and alive, but East Germans start killing them, so he gets called back to London by Control, his spy master. Control sends him back to Berlin disguised as a disgraced agent, a drunk and a failure everybody whispers about. That way, the English can see who approaches him. The book is short, tense and atmospheric. Read it in one sitting and then find every Le Carré novel featuring Smiley. (Matthew Bloom)



Lee, Harper. ***To Kill a Mockingbird***

We know how much you loved this book in the sixth grade! Why not re-visit an all-time favorite and return to Maycomb County during your own dog days of summer? You can catch up with your old friends Scout, Jem, and Dill, and, if you're lucky, catch a glimpse of Boo Radley. (Katie Haddock with Alex Levin)

Levy, Andrea. ***The Long Song***

In Jamaica, on a sugar plantation, before, during and after the emancipation of slaves, the story of July's life unfolds. Formerly a field slave, July is taken from her mother at a young age by the plantation owner's sister, Caroline Mortimer, and raised as a lady's maid. Everything changes when the young, idealistic Robert Goodwin joins the plantation as the overseer. Told with satirical asides to the reader throughout, gut-wrenchingly sad at times, the book is beautifully written. (Kate F. Hamilton)

Levy, Andrea. ***Small Island***

This book was recommended to me by dance teacher/librarian extraordinaire Kate F. Hamilton. It started somewhat slowly and I wasn't sure I liked it, but soon I became fully engrossed. The story takes place in Jamaica and England in 1948, and addresses post-WWII British attitudes toward race, class, and prejudice. It follows the intertwined lives of four characters, three of them black from Jamaica and one white from London. While none of the characters is exactly heroic, all of them are fascinating and believable. You care deeply about what happens to each, and the final plot twist is satisfyingly tidy. (Eva Zasloff)

Lively, Penelope. **How It All Began**

1. "The Butterfly Effect" brilliantly applied to life. One person's trauma changes all the people whose webs intersect. Playful, witty, often surprising; always sublimely satisfying. (Marty Skoble)

2. Penelope Lively's latest novel is definitely one of her best (although *Moon Tiger* is also terrific). The consequences of a mugging ripple through the lives of a number of carefully drawn, unrelated, and appealing characters. This is an intriguing story written by a master. (Linda Kaufman)

Lukas, J. Anthony. **Common Ground**

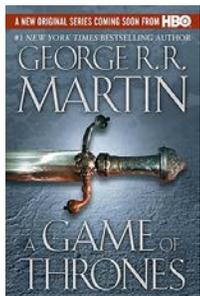
An in-depth and fascinating look at racial tensions and school busing in Boston in the 60s and 70s. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

Mantel, Hilary. **Wolf Hall**

What do you do if you're the King of England who's got the hots for someone other than his wife? I'll tell you what you do—you break away from the Pope and start your own church. Oh, and get Thomas Cromwell to make sure all the paperwork's in order. Mantel's detailed, riveting novel is more satisfying than a chocolate bar, but it's just as delicious. Luckily, you won't have to wait for the sequel (it's already out). (Melissa Kantor)

Mantel, Hilary. **Bring up the Bodies**

So you've been married to Anne Boelyn for a while, but you just can't seem to conceive a son. What's a king to do? I'll tell you what—off with her head. Need someone to handle the nasty details? Thomas Cromwell will do it. Who's Thomas Cromwell you ask? Read *Wolf Hall* to find out. (Melissa Kantor)



Martin, George R.R. **A Song of Fire and Ice series (A Game of Thrones, A Clash of Kings, etc.)**

1. Book 1, *A Game of Thrones*, is an intense multi-stranded story with cliff-hangers and ethical complexity, a page-turner with political ambiguity, fascinating characters, wolves, dragons, and swords. For example, a queen is trying to end slavery but gets resistance not only from the rich within her capital city but from the neighbors who threaten war. Meanwhile, zombie-like "others" attack from the frozen North... I know, I know, it almost sounds stupid or silly, but it really isn't. I'm already on the 5th book and can't wait to see what happens next. (Mike Roam)

2. Terrific blend of historical fiction and fantasy literature, this series presents the most fully realized vision of an alternative medieval world since *The Lord of the Rings*. The first book is *A Game of Thrones*. (Dave Stevens)

McCall Smith, Alexander. **The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series**

These are quiet, delightful books. Set in Botswana, the novels involve the detective cases the ladies undertake but also the delectably humorous dynamics of the workplace, with its rituals and family feeling and petty jealousies. Precious Ramotswe, who founds the agency, is so vivid a character it's difficult to grasp she's fictitious. (Carol Miller)

Mitchell, David. **Cloud Atlas**

If last year's summer reading recs didn't get you to read *Cloud Atlas*, I doubt I will, but here's a shot. This fascinating, gorgeous book is the story of several historical time periods that may or may not be connected through a single character who may or may not be a single spirit (soul? person?) reincarnated. It's strange and dizzying but not annoyingly so. The book's a powerful one, and it stays with me still. (Melissa Kantor)

Mitchell, David. **Number9Dream**

1. A psychedelic blend of fantasy daydream and nightmare reality. Eiji Miyake searches for his unknown father in present-day Tokyo. His journey, both real and imagined, takes him on a strange trip through childhood memories, family secrets, the yakuza underworld, love, sex, pizza delivery, and even the WWII Japanese kamikaze submarine program. In fact, now that I remember how much fun it was, I'm going to read it again! (Paul Lockhart)

2. Mitchell, author of the amazing *Cloud Atlas*, tells the story of a young Japanese man on a quest in Tokyo. The man is a John Lennon fan, a thinker, and a liar with a huge imagination. From the first page his daydreams tangle with his reality, eventually bringing him into contact with gangsters, private detectives, a goat who writes stories, a WWII youth on a suicide mission (who has the same birthday), video games, and a piano-playing waitress with a perfect

neck. Every page has striking images, including people riding parallel in side-by-side subway cars. (Mike Roam)

Mitchell, David. ***The Thousand Autumns of Jacob De Zoet***

A Dutch clerk visiting Japan in the 1700s meets a Japanese woman who justifies her desire to learn medicine by pointing out that you can blame the river gods when people drown, or you can build a bridge! This amazing story includes an incredibly evil Japanese warlord, a thieving ship captain, and a broad range of characters who speak with emotion and philosophy. (Mike Roam)

Moon, Sarah (editor). ***The Letter Q: Queer Writers' Notes to Their Younger Selves***

Edited by our very own Sarah Moon, *The Letter Q* had me at the words, "I lived in the middle of nowhere and was an enormous homosexual." As Sarah says in her intro, supportive letters from older queer adults helped her get through rough days as a teenager. This book is her offering back to the world, specifically to teens today who could benefit from a letter or two themselves. Featuring Amy Bloom, Michael Cunningham, David Levithan, Armistead Maupin, Brian Selznick, Jacqueline Woodson, and dozens of others. Prepare to laugh, prepare to cry, prepare to want to buy a copy or two for those you love. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Moses, Robert P. & Charles E. Cobb. ***Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project***

For anyone interested in education and education reform. (Emma Nolan-Abrahamian)

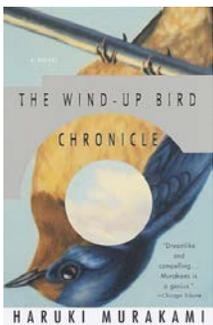
Mukherjee, Siddhartha. ***The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer***

The story of cancer and the medical profession's attempts to defeat it, told alongside the author's personal story (he is an oncologist). The descriptions of the early trials of drugs to treat childhood leukemia are harrowing but inspiring. I found the book's dedication wildly poignant. It reads: "To Robert Sandler (1945-1948) and to those who came before and after him." When he was two years old, Robert was diagnosed with leukemia, a death sentence at the time. He was one of the first people successfully treated with an anti-cancer drug. It extended his life—by two months. That was the beginning of the beginning. What an amazing book. (Denise Rinaldo)

Murakami, Haruki. ***1Q84***

1Q84 left me thinking for a long while after. (Felicia Kang)

Murakami, Haruki. ***The Wind-Up Bird Chronicles***



Murakami tells a compelling story about such seemingly ordinary characters. Nevertheless, though these characters seem plain, Murakami paints them so rich with character. The way he gets inside their heads—how he reasons alongside them, how he considers the same questions, and how he relays their perplexity—paradoxically shows that, really, ordinary is nothing. I think that Murakami is saying that we're all neurotic. I don't disagree with that. What I love about Toru Okada (the protagonist) is how honest he is. Though he hardly has anything figured out, he's at least self-aware about his ignorance. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicles* is a masterful narrative that follows Okada through various settings and other people's stories. The novel is easy to read and captivating. Have fun with it! (Steven Chu)

Nakhjavani, Bahiyih. ***The Woman Who Read Too Much /La Femme Qui Lisait Trop***

The Woman Who Read Too Much is set in the middle of the 19th century. Divided into four parts with revolving points of view, of mother, sister, daughter and wife, it traces the capture, incarceration, torture and final execution of a highly intelligent, educated and saint-like Persian poetess, while exploring her impact on mayor, minister, mullah and monarch in a world of intrigue and corruption in Qajar Persia. A fascinating book. Strong and subtle. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I read it in French and am not sure it has been translated into English yet. French and Spanish definitely. (Marielle Vigourt)

Obreht, Téa. ***The Tiger's Wife***

A richly woven tale of a young doctor and her relationship with her grandfather in a war-torn Balkan country, *The Tiger's Wife* contains stories within stories that blend the lines between magic, myth, and reality. You'll find yourself looking forward to meeting up with the Deathless Man, Fra Antun, and the Tiger's Wife as they meander through Natalia's story. (Katie Haddock)

O'Brien, Edna. ***Girls in Their Married Bliss***

This slim volume is little but fierce. Both provocative and moving, it is beautifully written, feisty, and smart. (Liz Fodaski)

O'Melveny, Regina. ***The Book of Madness and Cures***

In medieval Europe, a doctor struggles to overcome several formidable obstacles: our protagonist is a woman, and the physicians of her world regard that as anathema; she is searching for her missing father who may not wish to be found; and travel is dangerous in the extreme and more so if you are a woman (and a doctor). The quest is always for the truth about oneself. Wonderfully vivid detail. (Marty Skoble)

Ondaatje, Michael. ***The Cat's Table***

A tale about the real voyage an eleven-year-old boy takes from Ceylon to England and his metaphorical journey through life. There is mystery, adventure, and poignancy awaiting the reader. Ondaatje also wrote *The English Patient*. (Linda Kaufman)

O'Rourke, Meghan. ***The Long Goodbye***

As a longtime colleague and admirer of Barbara O'Rourke, whose death from cancer inspired this "cry from the heart" by her daughter Meghan, I didn't read this memoir as a neutral reviewer. I loved the book, and think anyone who knows the O'Rourkes (or has lost a parent) will admire the writing and the issues, including the scene in which Meghan thinks she hears a familiar voice in the wind. (Mike Roam)

Orringer, Julie. ***The Invisible Bridge***

The Invisible Bridge is truly wonderful! Beautiful descriptions of Paris in the 1930s. A gripping, yet devastating experience of Hungarians during WWII. (Felicia Kang)

Potok, Chaim. ***My Name is Asher Lev***

Postwar Brooklyn. Asher Lev must be an artist—this is not a matter of choice—and that which he is driven to capture in his work will threaten the life he cherishes, his relationship to God and family. (Margie Hanssens)

Pym, Barbara. ***Excellent Women***

The small, hilarious politics of the rural English parish. Jumble sales. Self-important clergymen. A joy forever. (Carol Miller)

Ravel, Edeet. ***Ten Thousand Lovers***

Set in the tragically hopeful Israel of the 1970s, *Ten Thousand Lovers* is the work of Israeli/Canadian author Edeet Ravel. The novel follows Lily, a new immigrant full of lefty idealism, who finds her worldview shaken when she falls in love with an army interrogator. Heartbreaking and lovely, *Ten Thousand Lovers* takes the reader to a time when few could have imagined how much worse the situation between Israelis and Palestinians would become. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Reid, T.R. ***The Chip: How Two Americans Invented the Microchip and Launched a Revolution***

Great story about the people who invented the microchip, and the steps they followed along their path of discovery. What I especially enjoyed about the book is that it also explains how microchips actually work, which is something I had never really figured out before. It made me more appreciative of all these gadgets we're surrounded by, and the incredible ingenuity that's gone into creating them. (Navid Karimeddiny)



Russell, Karen. ***Swamplandia!***

Writing that is almost giddy with excitement, personality and surprises. For starters, much of the action takes place at an alligator-wrestling show in the Everglades, and includes a crazed sister, a determined brother, a brilliant and ethical observer, and tour guides who might be imaginary. Deep and fun, simultaneously. (Mike Roam)

The Saga of the Volsungs The principal source for Wagner's Ring Cycle, this tale has dragons, heroes, valkyries, and lots of bloody vengeance. (Dave Stevens)

Sayers, Dorothy. ***Gaudy Night***

This mystery is set in the 1930s at a women's college in Oxford. This is a psychologically fascinating, well-told story. I sat down to read it and then left everything undone until I had finished it hundreds of pages later. Let the dishes languish and the beds go unmade! Superb. (Carol Miller)

Spiotta, Dana. ***Stone Arabia***

Which is one's true life: the external or the interior; circumstance or imagination? Spiotta's main character wrestles with this question as she examines the complex nature of her relationship to her brother and to his life (or lives). A fascinating, well-told, moving and musical novel. (Marty Skoble)

Stark, Richard. ***The Hunter***

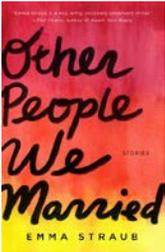
The first of a series, this novel introduces Parker, a career criminal. Parker is a professional, a hard core noir antihero who does what needs to be done to protect himself and earn a living. In this book, Parker is released from jail determined to exact revenge and, more importantly, his money from his woman and the man with whom she betrayed him. Unfortunately for the Mafia, his nemesis is a member and when he refuses to repay Parker, Parker moves up the organization's ladder until he gets his way. Stark's prose is as lean, hard and relentless as his antihero. He makes no attempt to soften or explain Parker, who is portrayed as an elemental force. If you read this first novel, you'll find yourself hooked on the series. (Matthew Bloom)

Stead, Christina. ***The Man Who Loved Children***

Unlike any other book I have read. Beautiful, heartbreaking, fascinating. Amazing writing! (Liz Fodaski)

Stephenson, Neal. ***Reamde***

Neal Stephenson, who writes "speculative fiction" (some call it sci-fi), has concocted a wild and intelligent thrill ride in which video game designers get tangled up with Chinese hackers, Russian mafia, American militia families (going back to nature with guns and God), British spies, and social media. All of them are thinking about what they're doing, and their cross-over connections are important and fun. (Mike Roam)



Straub, Emma. ***Other People We Married***

In a well-crafted short story what is unsaid is as important as the narrative itself, and knowing when to stop is key. Emma Straub does all this impeccably, giving the reader a wide range of authentic-feeling characters. Great voices, lots of fun: three thumbs up! (Saint Ann's alum, 2001) (Marty Skoble)

Tolstoy, Leo. ***The Kreutzer Sonata***

Strange and intriguing, a voyeuristic pleasure. Plus, I love stories that take place on trains. (Liz Fodaski)

Twain, Mark. ***Innocents Abroad***

Twain's tour of Europe with a group of Americans. At times quite hilarious. He was a very silly man at times. I read it on my phone in the odd moments of life (dentist, F-train, insomnia, etc.). (Carol Miller)

Updike, John. ***Rabbit, Run***

I love John Updike. His prose captures the pain and joy of the human condition like no other author. If you start with *Rabbit Run*, you'll likely want to/need to read the entire *Rabbit* series, which is compelling, sad, and funny, each book dealing with the struggles of the main character in different periods of his life (early adulthood thru senior citizen-ry). The books were all written in, and take place in, different decades and are very much of the time and the place (the second half of the 20th century, urban and suburban America). If you enjoy the *Rabbit* series, I'd also strongly recommend Updike's short fiction and essays, but start here and then even re-read it. (Blair Carswell)

Vladislavic, Ivan. ***The Loss Library and Other Unfinished Stories***

A brilliant book! The stories behind the unwritten stories are utterly fascinating. Don't miss this treat! (Marty Skoble)

Happy Reading
Thanks to everyone who contributed!