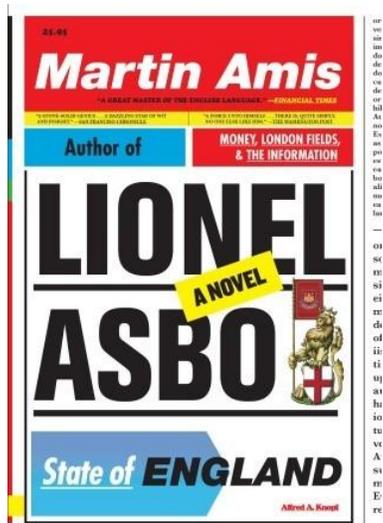


High School and Faculty Suggested Reading List, Summer 2013



Amis, Martin. *Lionel Asbo: State of England*

Amis does for Britain what Vonnegut does for America: distill and clarify by exaggeration and brilliant control of voice, the faults we live by. It's satire with bite (Tabasco)! And the essential goodness at its heart is a huge relief. (Marty Skoble)

Atkinson, Kate. *Life After Life*

This brilliant, reckless, sometimes raw novel opens with the main character's attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler and continues with the death at birth of that same main character, Ursula, whose subsequent lives (and deaths) are

narrated in an entirely realistic prose style. Certain elements of Ursula's experience remain consistent throughout: her love of an imperiled younger brother; her societal role as witness; her growing awareness, finally, of the significance of parallel, logically exclusive fates. The novel would be worth reading for the prose alone, but the way Atkinson treats the passage of time renders it joyous. (Beth Bosworth)

Austen, Jane. *Lady Susan*

Just when you thought you knew Jane Austen, you discover that she wrote a scandalously sexy epistolary novel about a middle-aged seductress! *Lady Susan* is the tale of an extraordinarily selfish (and attractive!) titular widow and her infamous interpersonal exploits. Replete with a vacuous teenage daughter and a bevy of suspicious hangers-on, this novella will shock the bonnet off of even the most experienced Austen reader. (Chloe Smith)

Baldwin, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk*

This 1974 novel still feels strikingly relevant. It's the story of a black man in New York who is wrongly accused of a crime, and it is mostly told from the perspective of his pregnant girlfriend, struggling to keep her own life together while proving her lover's innocence. Race, sexuality, city life, dysfunctional families, enduring love. What more could you want from your summer read? (Pam Newton)

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*

This exciting and thought-provoking novel will keep you guessing until the last page. Barnes exposes the casual cruelties of relationships as well as our desire to change the past for our own self-serving reasons. The novel will stay with you until you forget it completely. (Alex Levin)

Huge Summer Reading News!

Thanks to the Saint Ann's Digital Library, students and faculty can now check out e-books **all summer long!**

Access the digital library at saintannsny.lib.overdrive.com

The easiest way to read our e-books is with a Kindle or Kindle app (downloadable for free to phones, iPads, and computers).

Logging In: Students and faculty need a user name and PIN to browse the collection and download books. They can easily generate their own. For instructions and other digital library tips, see the last page of this list.

Books on this list that are available through the digital library are shaded—the way this sentence is.

Belluck, Pam. ***Island Practice: Cobblestone Rash, Underground Tom, and Other Adventures of a Nantucket Doctor***

Fascinating true profile of a tireless modern-day one-of-a-kind doctor on Nantucket who is stranger than fiction: he does surgery on animals smuggled in to the hospital, is scolded by his bosses, makes house calls to hidden caves, helps people find suicide counseling and illegal medical marijuana, loves guns and has joking posters about pain in his office. Written by a *New York Times* science writer who used to be the New England bureau chief. (Mike Roam)

Benioff, David. ***City of Thieves***

I would never have dreamed that a story set during the WWII Siege of Leningrad could be as engaging and darkly humorous as this book, but the author has done a fine job of bringing a diverse set of characters to life, two of whom have been given an impossible mission (find a dozen eggs!) in an unbearable situation (the Blockade of Leningrad, and its consequent famine). Is it serious? Yes. Is it a war story? Yes. Is it funny? Yes. Is it a coming of age story? Yes. Is it historically accurate? Yes. (Jen DiFiore)

Benioff, David. ***City of Thieves***

Super fun, quick read by the author who wrote *The 25th Hour*. Two complete opposites trolling through WWII Russia looking for a dozen eggs—how could it be bad? (Peter Zerneck)

Benjamin, Melanie. ***The Aviator's Wife***

This novel is a work of historical fiction about Anne Morrow Lindbergh and her more famous (but less sympathetic) husband, Charles Lindbergh. Anne Morrow gained some notoriety as a writer, but she spent the majority of her life in the shadow of her husband, the great aviator. Benjamin creates the world inside Anne's head, from her courtship with Charles until his death, and she shows the unique accomplishments of Anne Morrow Lindbergh. She imagines the world that Anne must have lived in, with a husband who was beyond famous and seemingly unknowable at the same time. This book also shows the lives of educated women in the early and mid-20th century; Morrow led a life of privilege and went to Smith, yet her aspirations were always secondary to those of her husband. The author, Melanie Benjamin, did a great deal of research into the lives of the Lindberghs, although she takes dramatic license to imagine the ideas and conflicts in their personal lives. It is refreshing to see the Lindbergh story told from the perspective of Anne, imagined though it may be, and this book makes for a fun and compelling summer read! (Stephanie Schragger)

Boo, Katherine. ***Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity***

An unforgettable story about survival in the Annawadi slum—a rickety hodge-podge of shacks nestled in the shadow of Mumbai's international airport. The stories of many memorable characters living in soul-crushing poverty are brought to life by Boo, a writer for the *New Yorker* and a Pulitzer Prize winner, who lived among the slum's residents for three years. (Ragan O'Malley)

Boo, Katherine. ***Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity***

As a high school exchange student to Indonesia I saw horrible slums, but this book about a neighborhood in India is the first occasion I've ever had for understanding what life might be like in there. The sensitive author must have had phenomenal patience, guides, trust, and translators. Friends of mine found the story and the poverty too depressing, but I'm glad I read it. (Mike Roam)

Brodsky, Joseph. ***Watermark***

For anyone who has ever been to Venice and anyone who would go in the future, this little book is IT. Brodsky's prose here is as powerful as his poetry, and his abiding love for this city, especially in winter, is profoundly poetic. (Marty Skoble)

Calvino, Italo. ***The Baron in the Trees***

Why read this? It's Peter Zerneck's favorite novel. He's right to love it—it's beautifully written and quite fantastic. (Will Geiger)

Cather, Willa. ***One of Ours***

I taught this in my elective this year, but I know there are lots of people out there who haven't read it and many who haven't even heard of it. It's been virtually wiped out of literary history by many an editor and anthologizer, even though it won Cather the Pulitzer Prize. A gorgeous book, heartbreaking and alive! (Liz Fodaski)

Chabon, Michael. ***Telegraph Avenue***

This is an amazingly rich novel, breathtaking in its depth; its characters (with widely varying racial and social experiences) struggle to live with each other and themselves. Music and movies make constant, witty, profound connections for them and for us. PLUS, Chabon's writing is extraordinary; nearly every single sentence is itself an ingenious tour-de-force. Don't miss this one! (Marty Skoble)

Child, Julia. ***My Life in France***

It's always fun to revisit this classic memoir by Julia Child, documenting her time in Paris and the south of France, where she fell in love with French culture and cuisine. Perfect summer reading that will inspire you to eat, cook and travel! (Natalie Hoch)

Cline, Ernest. ***Ready Player One***

The year is 2044. The economy has collapsed, the environment has gone to hell, the world is not a place you want to be. Sound familiar? It's not. Enter the OASIS, the online virtual reality in *Ready Player One*, where a billionaire has hidden clues to his inheritance for the one worthy of finding it. Teenager Wade and other "gunters" dedicate their lives to finding the fortune before corporations find it and take over the OASIS altogether. This debut novel is brilliantly imaginative, highly original, and loads of fun. If you love gaming or the 1980s, read it. If you don't, read it anyway. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Collins, Wilkie. ***The Woman in White***

One of the first thrillers ever written, *The Woman in White* helped to create the damsel in distress rescued by the dashing young hero stereotype. The villain, Count Fosco, is particularly dastardly and fascinating and the plot twists and turns. For those of you who like a book you can NOT put down...this is for you. (Matthew Bloom)

Dawidowicz, Lucy. ***The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945***

A factual reporting of the holocaust, the book's opening chapters recount the history of European anti-semitism. The book then goes on to explore the organizational structure and discipline of the Nazi effort to eliminate European Jewry. (Matthew Bloom)

Díaz, Junot. ***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

Beautiful book. Combines great fiction with some Dominican history that we don't hear much about. (Peter Zerneck)

Doctorow, Cory. ***Homeland***

Marcus (aka M1k3y) had found fame—but not fortune—when he had "led a techno-guerrilla army against the Department of Homeland Security...been arrested and tortured...and sued the government." Now, in this sequel to *Little Brother*, Marcus is a college dropout who can't find work and heads off to Burning Man with his girlfriend Ange. This bizarre yet believable desert setting is the perfect backdrop for the first 50 or so pages of Cory Doctorow's newest rebellious stick-it-to-'em novel. When fellow hacker Masha finds Marcus at the Burning Man temple, she hands him a flash drive full of files exposing government and corporate corruption, and tells Marcus to release them if she disappears. She does. But Marcus has just secured a web and social media job with San Francisco's only honest, independent politician. Is he willing to risk his job, his love, maybe even his life? This book will make you want to crypt your files and start a revolution. [Fun fact: All of Doctorow's books are available for free download on his website.] (Hannah Mermelstein)

Dos Passos, John. **U.S.A. Trilogy**

The period between the first and second world wars was one of the liveliest in the history of American letters, yet today most readers do not venture very far beyond the novels and short stories of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner in their literary explorations of this period. One writer whose work has slipped into obscurity is John Dos Passos, despite the fact that among his contemporaries he was regarded as a major figure in American fiction. Like Hemingway, Dos Passos was an ambulance driver in the First World War and dabbled in journalism. He spent much of the 1920s shuttling between the expatriate community of American writers in Europe and avant garde circles in New York and Provincetown. In the late 1920s and 1930s his involvement in left wing politics deepened, until his experience covering the Spanish Civil War soured him on the Soviet Union and led to a steady drift to the far right in the decades that followed. Dos Passos's U.S.A. Trilogy captures as well as any work of fiction some of the central currents of American culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. Monumental in scope, bold (if not always successful) in their experimentation with technique, and vivid in the portraits they offer of both fictional and historical figures, the novels that comprise this trilogy (*The 42nd Parallel* [1930], *1919* [1932], *The Big Money* [1936]), are worthy of rediscovery by anyone interested in tracing the arc of a nation through war, prosperity, and depression. (Vince Tompkins)

Egan, Jennifer. ***A Visit from the Goon Squad***

An ingeniously designed tapestry of intertwined lives; its multiple points of view create an entertaining and comprehensive spectacle. Gradually this witty satire of the music-and media-driven world launches us into a future that is terrifyingly, logically hilarious. (Marty Skoble)

Eliot, George. ***Adam Bede***

You may be intimidated at first by the length of this novel or by the rural 18th-century dialect of its characters (it was written in 1859 but set a hundred years earlier), but once it gets going, it is an unbelievably absorbing read. Eliot is a gorgeous prose writer and a piercing social critic, and best of all, her characters are all so messily and wonderfully human. This is one of my all-time favorites. (Pam Newton)

Eliot, George. ***Middlemarch***

IMHO *Middlemarch*, subtitled "A Study of Provincial Life," is one of the greatest reads ever in the history of the world. Period. Eliot is ever in tune, writing in pitch-perfect prose, with super-faceted nuance and superb irony, about the people and doings of the town Middlemarch in the 1830s. If you are reading on the subway you may find yourself laughing in a way not fit for the public eye. Eliot can deliver a comic moment that seems like a lightning bolt from the Gods, but she also, genius that she was, simply delivers deepest nourishment to mind and soul. All Hail. (Carol Miller)

Eugenides, Jeffrey. ***The Marriage Plot***

This novel is set primarily at Brown University in the 1980s, which is perhaps why I started reading it. Before the late 1990s, the city of Providence was a much grungier place. Eugenides captures the rawness of the city well and paints believable portraits of the three Brown seniors who carry *The Marriage Plot* forward. The plot centers on a love triangle, but to characterize the book as such would be a gross oversimplification. (Kristin Fiori)

Eugenides, Jeffrey. ***Middlesex***

What happens when a crucial feature of your identity is called into question? Cal, the protagonist of this novel has such an experience when adolescence hits and her sexual identity becomes murky. How important is gender? Is it determined by genetics? Is it a social construct? Eugenides addresses these questions in this beautifully crafted novel. Spanning Cal's grandparents' early lives in Asia Minor, the parents' lives in Detroit, and Cal's adulthood in foreign service in Germany, the genetic, historical, and cultural forces that shaped Cal are explored. Eugenides artfully and convincingly portrays Cal's transformation from a young girl to a forty-one-year-old man. (Kristin Fiori)

Fielding, Helen. ***Bridget Jones's Diary***

Forget the movie, though it was funny enough. This is a ridiculously fun, smart account of a single woman's life in London. In diary form, this is a great quick read when that is what the doctor (life) orders. Enjoy. Can be read in two long subway rides or one plane trip to Middle America. (Carol Miller)

Flynn, Gillian. ***Gone Girl***

Thrilling story of love going sour, with major twists and mood shifts. (Mike Roam)

Foer, Jonathan Safran. ***Eating Animals***

Great book. Fabulous piece of journalism. (Peter Zerneck)

Ford, Richard. ***Canada***

I highly recommend *Canada*. The writing is masterful, the characters fascinatingly drawn. Reading it was torture, because I could not put it down, yet I didn't want it to ever end. It is a dark and deep tale and impossible to forget. (Jonathan Elliot)

Frankl, Viktor E. ***Man's Search for Meaning***

One of the first post-holocaust memoirs, *Man's Search for Meaning* explores the author's determination to survive as he endured life in the death camps. Despite its terrible topic, this short book is inspiring and full of hope. (Matthew Bloom)

Franzen, Jonathan. ***Freedom***

Letting his characters grow, love, squabble, and yearn through the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s, Franzen kept me hooked—partly with conflicts (neighbor vs. neighbor over construction noise, for starters, "and also keep your trashy daughter away from our golden son!")—and partly with incidents that include weapons for Iraq, cat haters, bad-boy musicians, athletic women, wanna-be writers, etc. Liz Arum recommends this too! (Mike Roam)

French, Tana. ***Broken Harbor***

Guilt, anger, madness, obsession: French is the queen of mysteries featuring dysfunctional families. This novel is beautifully driven by elegant prose and deeply introspective and insightful characterization. (Marty Skoble)

French, Tana. ***The Likeness***

I really enjoyed reading all of the books in this series (*In the Woods*, *The Likeness*, *Faithful Place*, and *Broken Harbor*), but *The Likeness* was my favorite. I'm not usually a murder mystery/detective novel fan, but Tana French does a great job crafting characters and relationships. The story is less about what happened than why and how it happened and what the case does to all the people involved. As an added bonus, the story provides an interesting characterization of Dublin, Ireland just after its recent economic boom. (Kristin Fiori)

Furst, Alan. ***Night Soldiers***

Furst's novels take place around the beginning of the Second World War and feature marginal characters pulled into the world of espionage. They are intensely atmospheric. *In Night Soldiers*, a Bulgarian anti-fascist is recruited by the Russians as a spy and is then forced to flee to Paris to avoid Stalin's terror. (Matthew Bloom)

Haddon, Mark. ***The Red House***

It's a view into the lives of a complicated family trying and failing to act "like a family" over the course of a weekend away. It's beautiful and smart and honest. (Sarah Moon)

Hamsun, Knut. ***Under the Autumn Star***

It's a little book with little characters. Two travelers traipse through the countryside of Norway a century ago—doing odd jobs, meeting odd people, forming calluses, and getting to know each other and themselves. It's about simplicity, the value of labor, and how we all come to terms with mediocrity. (Rob Goldberg)

Haruf, Kent. ***Plainsong***

Beautiful, funny, sad—the stories of a handful of characters in the fictional small town of Holt in central Colorado. Haruf's writing mirrors the landscape of the plains: it feels simple and stark, but holds a beauty and weight beyond the first glance. Well worth a read, and part of a trilogy, so if you enjoy it you've got more Holt ahead of you. (Blair Carswell)

Heinlein, Robert A. ***Tunnel in the Sky***

If you liked *The Hunger Games* trilogy, you might enjoy this sci-fi survival story that was written many years earlier: teenagers travel through space gates to test their survival skills on hostile planets, and end up struggling to team up and fighting about how to establish a government when they aren't rescued as expected. (Mike Roam)

Holmes, Richard. ***The Age of Wonder: The Romantic Generation and the Discovery of the Beauty and Terror of Science***

It was 1800. Science was young, and still writing sonnets. Humphrey Davy was, at least. A pleasure-seeking self-taught chemist from the wilds of Cornwall, he ended up making all sorts of important discoveries. But as a young man he got work at a Pneumatic Institute in Bristol huffing gases for money and writing down his impressions. (The institute's hypothesis: huffing gases, of whatever kind, will cure diseases.) First up: carbon monoxide. Several bladders worth. Crikey, nearly died. Next up: nitrous. Very lively! Write a sonnet: ("On breathing the nitrous oxide.") Send it to Coleridge? Send for Coleridge! He likes it too. (Send for some ladies. Oh dear, rumors.) That's the funniest chapter but not the best in this terrific book, an episodic history of the "second scientific revolution," a series of advances in chemistry and astronomy that remade the image of the world (Herschel and the infinity of the universe) or at least lent fresh images (Shelley, Frankenstein, and the 'vitalism' debate) to the writers of Romantic England and France. Holmes, a celebrated biographer of Percy Shelley and Coleridge, knows a lot about poetry and just enough about the science. A terrific read. (Ben Rutter)

Kawabata, Yasunari. ***Beauty and Sadness***

Less well known than *Snow Country*, this offering from the Japanese novelist is even sexier and more dangerous. You'll read it in a day. (Will Geiger)

Leon, Donna. **Commissario Guido Brunetti series**

Donna Leon's mystery series is set in Venice. Start with any of her twenty-five books and meet the big-hearted Commissario, Guido Brunetti. Dine with him and his family and have a grappa or two while discussing a day at school or work. Travel with him on the vaporetto down the canals of Venice, past the Grand Palazzo, into a world where favoritism and corruption make justice impossible and seeking the truth an act of monumental courage. (Richard Mann)

Levi, Primo. ***The Periodic Table***

Primo Levi grew up Jewish in Mussolini's Italy and, though his essential character was that of a poet, he saw the poetry in science as well as in language and he became a chemist. This amazing book is a kind of memoir, in which he uses twenty-one elements from the periodic table as jumping off points or inspiration for stories relating to his life before, during, and after World War II—including his love-affair with chemistry, his experiences fighting with the Italian resistance, and his imprisonment in Auschwitz. Enchanting and brilliant. One of the best books I've ever read. (Denise Rinaldo)

Lindsay, Sarah. ***Twigs and Knucklebones***

Poems that shimmer with intellect, imagination, and a stunningly cosmic perspective. (Marty Skoble)

Logue, Christopher. ***War Music***

For a long time people had recommended to me Christopher Logue's "accounts" (explicitly not "translations") of Homer's *Iliad*, loose poetic versions, based not on the Greek itself (Logue, who died in 2011, didn't know ancient Greek), but instead on conversations with Classicists and extensive reading of previous, more traditional, translations. "Loose" doesn't do justice to the version of translation we are talking about here. Last summer I finally did have a look and ended up liking his work so much that I decided to have my *Iliad* students read it this year. He wrote his accounts in sections over a long period of time, but you can get a great sense of what he's all about by looking at *War Music* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), which collects several of those sections in one book. No more "I sing the wrath of Achilles" here, but instead this opener: "Picture the east Aegean sea by night, / And on a beach aslant its shimmering / Upwards of 5,000 men / Asleep like spoons beside their lethal Fleet." It's wonderful poetry and a totally inspiring way of managing to let Homer sing something new for us. (Andrew Siebengartner)

Machart, Bruce. ***The Wake of Forgiveness***

“Brutal” is the only word for the life of Czech immigrants in turn of the 20th century Texas. “Moving” is the only word for the deeply affective portrait Machart presents of the struggle to make sense of one’s purpose, affirming family as well as self. “Beautiful” is the only word to describe this author’s remarkable prose. There are moments when your heart pounds as you read! (Marty Skoble)

Maitland, Leslie. ***Crossing the Borders of Time***

The author now writes for the *New York Times*, but two generations of her family escaped the Holocaust, and, in every way, that makes an absolutely compelling adventure story. It's a political story, it's a love story, and also one of courage and family. For a family that could save and carry so little, the pictures, travel documents and various ID cards add authenticity to their story. (Barbara Everdell)

Makkai, Rebecca. ***The Borrower***

A dazzling deep and light-hearted road trip and escape featuring a children's librarian and a precocious good kid whose parents don't want him wasting his time with non-religious books. (Mike Roam)

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

This is next in the Thomas Cromwell series, picking up where the mighty *Wolf Hall* left off. We are, once again, in the court of King Henry the VIII with Cromwell handling the often child-like king and his nasty solutions to his heir-to-the-throne problems (though he had already in hand daughter Elizabeth, future queen, she of Elizabethan England). Mantel has a nearly spooky ability to create, credibly, a sense that we are actually in the room with these long-ago people. A big satisfying book, possibly even better than *Wolf Hall*. (Carol Miller)

Marlantes, Karl. ***Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War***

Amazing book set during the Vietnam War, with thoughtful characters responding emotionally to each other and their situation: sometimes sensitively and sometimes aggressively. Intense plot and action and surprise, too. (Mike Roam)

McLain, Paula. ***The Paris Wife***

If you were ever curious about Hemingway's private life after reading, say, *The Sun Also Rises* in your elective, here's a fun, fictional (but based on real life) account of at least some of the years, from the perspective of Hadley (his first wife), as imagined by a capable author. (Liz Fodaski)

Milford, Nancy. ***Zelda: A Biography***

If you're an F. Scott Fitzgerald fan you may find this an important work. *Zelda* is a fascinating, ultimately tragic biography of Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald written by a great researcher, Nancy Milford. It provides a window into the Fitzgeralds' lives and the collision of their talents but also into their America(s). Very readable, very fascinating. (Carol Miller)

Morrison, Toni. ***Beloved***

Beloved, based on the story of a recaptured slave who kills her two-year old daughter rather than let her be a slave, is deeply moving and quite literally haunting. This is the sort of novel that stays with you forever. A sobering, beautiful work, and a Pulitzer Prize winner, it deserves time and space and quiet reading. (Carol Miller)

Mueenuddin, Daniyal. ***In Other Rooms, Other Wonders***

This collection of stories (the title one is the best, I think) illustrates the social structure and history of Pakistan. Great for history, current events, and simply reading pleasure. (Brian Deimling)

Nasaw, David. ***The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Turbulent Times of Joseph Kennedy***

A lucid and compelling biography of a man who was larger than life. From a comfortable Boston Irish home, Kennedy progressed to wealth and political influence on a global scale. The biography captures the man who made a fortune in the 1920s and then ran the newly created SEC in the 1930s before moving into the international arena where he tried to keep Britain and then the United States out of World War II. (Matthew Bloom)

Nesbø, Jo. **Headhunters**

In the recent wave of Swedish mystery/detective novels, this quick read stands out for its irreverence, humor and outlandishness. An aggressive, perfectionistic corporate headhunter who dabbles in art theft gets entwined in a plot that focuses on framing him, taking him from one improbable circumstance to another across the Swedish countryside. A fun, fast read (that might get you hooked on those Swedish detective novels). (Tom Hill)

Oliver, Mary. **Evidence**

Each of these elegant poems is a celebration. Her deeply spiritual appreciations and apprehensions show us where the Romantic poets were headed. I love these poems! (Marty Skoble)

Petterson, Per. **It's Fine by Me**

Audun, the narrator and protagonist of this short novel, hides his eyes behind a pair of old sunglasses to create a protective shield between him and the world due to the trauma of the violent events of his youth. As a 17-year-old living in working class Oslo during the 1970s, Audun suppresses and avoids his past with school, jobs, weightlifting and literature discussions with his one friend, Arvid. The spare, detached, prose beautifully highlights Audun's inertia in moving forward in the face of an overwhelming past. (Tom Hill)

Picoult, Jodi. **My Sister's Keeper**

Looking for the perfect beach read? Look no further. Anna was born to keep her older sister, Kate, alive. Engineered by her parents (with the help of a lab) to be a perfect genetic match for Kate who was dying of leukemia, Anna began her life by donating stem cells from her umbilical cord. Each time Kate relapsed, Anna donated; first it was just platelets, then bone marrow. Eventually it becomes clear that Anna's parents expect her to donate a kidney in order to save Kate's life once again—that's when, at the age of 13, Anna sues for medical emancipation from her parents. Who's right? Anna? Her parents? (Ragan O'Malley)

Roberts, Gregory David. **Shantaram**

You've got to read this book! Adventure, philosophy, love and great writing. The farfetched premise of this amazing novel is that a nice guy escapes from Australian high security prison (okay, he committed a bunch of armed robberies while addicted to heroin, could happen to anyone) and flees to Bombay with a fake passport. He starts a clinic in a slum, serves as a soldier and then chief of counterfeiting for a mafia group, is nicknamed "the peaceful one," fights the Russians in Afghanistan, loves a mysterious woman, and has more adventures than seem possible... but all of this is the real story of the author. A student told me, "You've got to read this!" and he was right and now I'm passing that message along. (Mike Roam)

Ruefle, Mary. **Madness, Rack, and Honey**

I keep buying this book for people; everyone who loves language and literacy should read it. The remarkable lectures that comprise this work are wide-ranging in their references and always totally familiar at the same time. Ruefle's prose, like her poetry, reaches deep into our minds and hearts. (Marty Skoble)

Saunders, George. **CivilWarLand in Bad Decline**

Bizarre funny nightmares of well-intentioned ineffective characters in strange dystopian disasters. Imagine a person scraping together a living by impersonating a caveman for tourists, having to skin dead goats for show—when the zoo keepers remember to feed him—and also having to fill in daily bureaucratic surveys about the enthusiasm of his fellow enactors. (Mike Roam)

Saunders, George. **Pastoralia**

Hilarious. Weird. Disturbing. You will laugh—at the characters, the scenarios, yourself, your culture. (Liz Fodaski)

Scheerbart, Paul. ***The Perpetual Motion Machine***

This new translation of a 1910 published journal is a quick and fun romp. Though the course of disjointed journal entries, the author describes his attempts to build a perpetual motion machine, making use of the constant force of gravity and scoffing at the law of conservation of energy. Most entertaining, and philosophically interesting, is how readily he fantasizes about the utopias, dystopias, wealth, and poverty that his machine will bring, even when he has no indication that he is close to a working device. Though doomed to failure, his attempts are fascinating, and the reader is shown lots of curious diagrams. Ultimately, it is an enjoyable read because the author's giddy optimism that he is close to something monumental is alluring. (Nick Fiori)

Sedaris, David. ***Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls***

What better little treasure to have with you on the beach and on the plane and on the bedside table? This is another hilarious collection of family stories that includes "Attaboy," a riveting tale of suburban life in the old-fashioned times, when any adult could chastise any child with impunity and in which we learn, P.S., of the Sedaris father's custom of dining after work, which is sans pants. If you read enough Sedaris you may begin to feel that the Sedaris memories are yours. (Carol Miller)

Shepard, Jim. ***Like You'd Understand, Anyway***

A collection of short stories, all told in the first person. The narrators appear in a wide variety of settings—Chernobyl, Hadrian's Wall, a Texas high school football team—and are all either desperate or lonely. Their stoic descriptions of their absurd lives are a riot, although, admittedly, they get depressing after a while. (Matt Poindexter)

Shipstead, Maggie. ***Seating Arrangements***

A seemingly-perfect WASPy family gathers at a New England summer home in the days leading up to the oldest daughter's wedding. Dysfunctionality! Humor! Drama! Great summer reading. (Molly Scissors)

Smith, Patti. ***Just Kids***

Let Patti Smith take you "dancin' barefoot" through the beat-charged streets of NYC in the late 60s and early 70s as she describes her unusual relationship and adventures with her long-time friend, the artist Robert Mapplethorpe. Thanks Patti. I felt like a kid again! (Mary Lou Kylis)

Smith, Zadie. ***On Beauty***

Zadie Smith is a genius at taking the taboo and most painfully self-conscious moments and rendering them funny, poignant, and universal. Laugh-out-loud funny without ever overshadowing the distinct personality and humanity in each character. (Diana Lomask)

Sotomayor, Sonia. ***My Beloved World***

The autobiography of a poor girl, born in the Bronx to Puerto Rican parents, who became the third woman and the first Hispanic to become an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. It is an inspiring story about faith, courage, family and what education can do for you. I think every teacher and high school student should read this book, not only because it is well written, but also because it is an honest American story. (Barbara Everdell)

Stavans, Ilan and Steve Sheinkin. ***El Iluminado***

This graphic novel takes us into the world of crypto-Jews in the Southwest as we learn about the life of Luis de Carvajal, a Spanish converso who was executed by the Inquisition in Mexico in the 17th century. Fascinating! (Vivian Swain)

Straub, Emma. ***Laura Lamont's Life in Pictures***

Oh my, what a joyful, complete book! What a delight! A stunning visualization of what it means to be 1) a woman, 2) a mother, 3) a movie star in the changing world of early American cinema. Straub channels an incredible array of human experience and spins a delightful and satisfying tale. I couldn't put it down and didn't want it to end. (Marty Skoble)

Sullivan, Robert. ***My American Revolution***

A wonderfully personal and utterly readable take on the love of history and how hard it is to really know it in a human sense. Read all the notes too; they are as richly entertaining as the text. (Marty Skoble)

Tevis, Walter. ***The Queen's Gambit***

A fun and suspenseful story from the author of *The Hustler*. Eight-year-old orphan Beth Harmon learns to play chess from the grouchy orphanage custodian. She gradually comes to realize her own phenomenal talent as she takes the chess world of the mid-sixties by storm. Her interior chess thinking is beautifully handled and realistic, as is her descent into alcoholism and drug dependency. If you like chess and orphanages, this is the book for you! (Paul Lockhart)

Tóibín, Colm. ***New Ways to Kill Your Mother: Writers and Their Families***

Despite its macabre title, this superb book of literary essays continues Tóibín's insightful exploration of familial relationships. Beginning with James and ending with Barack Obama, Tóibín gently and wisely probes the intense interrelationship between each writer and his family. He is a superb, often original reader, a sympathetic and informative guide to Hart Crane, James Baldwin, Luis Borges and many other eminent figures, and, of course, an enthralling story-teller himself. A fun read that's also really intellectual? Why not! (Marty Skoble)

Tóibín, Colm. ***The Testament of Mary***

Beautiful, skeptical, strange monologue, but beware—it has the most emotional and sympathetic description of the raw horror of crucifixion that I've ever heard. (Mike Roam)

Tolstoy, Leo. ***Anna Karenina***

Now that summer is almost upon us, I think about which books I want to return to. *Anna Karenina* got me through several summers in high school, and each time I read it I found something different. I love the book for its small, Jane Austen-like social interactions, for the nuances of the characters, the love, lust, pain, and self-doubt they experience. I became engaged in the inner workings of Levin's mind and the development of his social conscience, though I must admit that I skimmed many of the agrarian chapters just as I skimmed the Napoleonic Wars in *War and Peace*. I always experienced the ending as happy, though of course not for Anna, but it's Kitty and Levin with whom I identified. In college, I took a Tolstoy class and learned that after he finished writing *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy went through a religious rebirth (becoming a cult leader of sorts), and disavowed the book and all the immorality it represented. He wrote in his journal that the character of Anna had gotten away from him, and was unintentionally sympathetic. I like to think that the characters in *Anna Karenina* have lives of their own, and can't be controlled by a judgmental author. It's definitely time for a reread. (Eva Zasloff)

Twain, Mark. ***Pudd'nhead Wilson***

Twain's novella is as funny as it is telling and relevant. With an almost Shakespearean plot of mistaken identity and babies switched at birth, Twain explores all his familiar themes of race and slavery. You'll read this book in no time. (Jesse Kohn)

Vergheese, Abraham. ***Cutting for Stone***

The author was raised in Ethiopia with parents from India, like many of the characters in this moving story. It brought me face to face with a post-colonial history that I knew too little about. (Mike Roam)

Vidal, Gore. ***Myra Breckinridge***

A disgusting camp-fest devoid of metaphors and packed with a deep and abiding passion for mid-century American cinema. Gore Vidal is one of our more ruthless satirists and is forgotten at our peril. Next read the sequel *Myron*, a time-traveling shock and schlock fest. (Shawn Nacol)

Walter, Jess. ***Beautiful Ruins***

Very enjoyable story of a poor Italian dreamer in the 1960s who meets an actress in hiding, with repercussions that echo down through the years into wild side stories about Hollywood screenwriters. (Mike Roam)

Wei, Wei. *Tracing Our Footsteps*

This amazing memoir is written by a friend of mine. It's about three generations of Chinese immigrants in Santa Cruz. It chronicles the culture shock, the conflicts, and the challenges inherent when two value systems collide. (Yuming Guo)

Wickenden, Dorothy. *Nothing Daunted*

In 1916, two Smith graduates who'd made the grand tour of Europe, dabbled in dating, and tired of social work and tea parties, decided to travel west to take jobs teaching at a new one-room schoolhouse in the wild mountains of northwest Colorado. This book, written by the granddaughter (and namesake) of one of the women, is their story reconstructed from interviews, letters, and more. The story itself is remarkable and riveting, but even moreso is the way the author (an editor at *The New Yorker*) puts it into context with amazing anecdotes and bundles of information about: the history of women's education, the settling of the West, and lots of other great stuff. (Denise Rinaldo)

Wolfe, Tom. *The Right Stuff*

Who would want to blast into space? Why? In the 1950s, test pilots (the precursors to astronauts) were crashing and dying at the rate of one a week! This book is classic Tom Wolfe journalism, about the early days of the space program and the astronauts on the first Mercury missions. You'll feel like you're there looking up at the sky with cool lone wolf Chuck Yeager, brilliant Gus Grissom, and goody-goody John Glenn. The book is about the people and the public's perceptions of them—not the machines. (Denise Rinaldo)

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