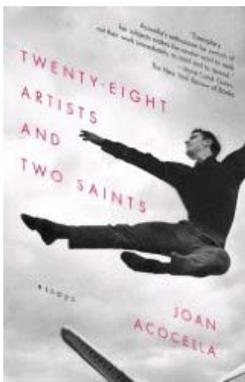


# High School & Faculty Suggested Summer Reading List Saint Ann's School, 2009



Acocella, Joan. **Twenty-Eight Artists and Two Saints**

Culture critic Joan Acocella has compiled 31 essays that examine the life and work of various influential artists (and two saints). In her introduction she writes: "There are many brilliant people—they are born every day—but those who end up having sustained artistic careers are not necessarily the most gifted...The ones who survived combined brilliance with more homely virtues: patience, resilience, courage." Acocella's engaging essays are a perfect summer read. You can put the book down, pick it up a week later and dive back into another fascinating life. (Amy Fontaine)

Albee, Edward. **Counting the Ways**

Carnavalesque, fun and subtly disturbing, as always. I love Albee, but he's definitely odd and not to everyone's taste. (Jane Avrich)

Albee, Edward. **Seascape**

Gorgeous, wacky, wistful. Did I mention that I love Albee? (Jane Avrich)

Baker, Deborah. **A Blue Hand: The Beats in India**

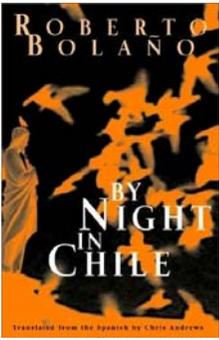
Wow! Meticulously researched yet totally readable, this informative book presents a deeply moving account of the spiritual, artistic, and personal journeys of the panoply of literary stars that became an international movement. Baker's smooth narrative, built on letters and journals (the last great paper age?), beautifully transmits the gritty reality as well as the heroic aspirations that drove these remarkable people at a critical juncture. (Marty Skoble)

Barbery, Muriel. **The Elegance Of The Hedgehog**

The premise grabbed me right away: a teenager and an apartment building's super are both secret intellectuals who don't think anybody else will understand the complexity and depth of their lives. (Mike Roam)

Benson, E.F. **Queen Lucia**

W.H. Auden is reported to have said he'd do anything for another "Lucia" book. See where the brilliant comedy begins. (Elise Meslow)



Bolano, Robert. **By Night in Chile**

An earlier book by the author of *2666*—just as amazing but much slimmer, so it can be carried on the subway with ease. Almost a prose poem rather than a novel—it is the partly fictional memoir of a Chilean priest. He is desperate to see himself as the innocent observer of the horrors perpetrated by Pinochet and his cohorts. (Jenny Halliday)

de Botton, Alain. **The Consolations of Philosophy**

A wonderfully friendly introduction to the lives and philosophical writings of Socrates, Epicurus, Seneca, Montaigne, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. The author is not only showing their thoughts, but showing how their lives shaped their thoughts, and how their thoughts matter to the eternal questions of daily life. (Mike Roam)

Cather, Willa. **My Mortal Enemy**

This dense little nugget of a novel is sharp, incisive and satisfying. You'll read it in one sitting. She sure was clever, that Willa. (Liz Fodaski)

Chauncey, George. **Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940**

Fascinating social history about the creation of the cultural category of homosexuality in the early twentieth century, and gay life back in the days when one might think that "the closet" was a massive, freestanding mahogany wardrobe. (Brian Deimling)

Child, Lee. **Bad Luck And Trouble**

Delightfully clever and exciting: Reacher comes to town to look for a friend who has sent a cryptic distress call, with no idea of her location, she's already waiting for him in the restaurant that he "happens" to pick for his pre-search dinner: and there's a wonderfully logical explanation, not a silly author's fluke. This or any other book by Lee Child is a guaranteed high-adventure story, with a hero who combines Sherlock Holmes and Bruce Lee while standing up for the innocent. (Mike Roam)

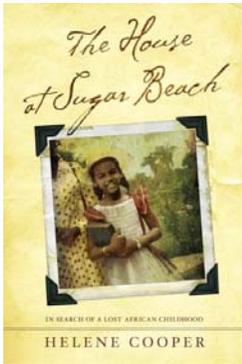
Chretien de Troyes. **Arthurian Romances**

A real Medieval page-turner! This is the source of the Lancelot and Guinevere love story, one of the best tellings of the Quest for the Holy Grail, and an endlessly entertaining catalogue of jousts, tournaments, monsters, magical occurrences and chivalrous deeds. (David Stevens)

Collins, Paul. **Not Even Wrong: Adventures in Autism** In this memoir/history, Collins chronicles the year after his son Morgan was diagnosed with autism, interweaving Morgan's story with a history of autism—ranging from Peter the Wild boy in the 1700s to geeks at Microsoft in the 2000s. A wonderful, inventive writer and a talented researcher, Collins makes ingenious connections as he writes touchingly about the sweet boy to whom he dedicates the book—"the best son in the world." (Denise Rinaldo)

Collins, Suzanne. **The Hunger Games**

In a futuristic society, a girl competes with other kids in a fight to the death (no, really!). Whoever wins gains fame, glory and money (for him/herself and his/her "district"). You won't be able to put this young-adult page turner down. (Melissa Kantor)



Cooper, Helene. **The House at Sugar Beach**

On a school holiday last fall, I read this book in one sitting—it was that hard to put down. (If the title sounds familiar, some of the first chapters were published in *The New York Times Magazine* last year.) I found this book to be both engrossing and heart-breaking. It is the story of Helene Cooper's harrowing experiences as she and her family escaped from her home in Liberia after the brutal 1980 coup, and how she eventually became the articulate *New York Times* reporter that we read today. *The House at Sugar Beach* is also important because it gives a thoughtful and insightful history of how Liberia came to be—two of Helene Cooper's ancestors came back from America to found the country in 1820. The author quite carefully

tries to explain how the simmering cultural divide between the Americo-Liberians and the tribal Liberians helped to fuel the terrible violence and unrest that has plagued her country for decades. (Christine Dunnigan)

Coetzee, J.M. **Disgrace**

Though I first came to it years ago, this book haunts me still. Harrowing and brutally honest, the story speaks of a South Africa one must perhaps be on the inside of to know completely, though one will find many universal truths of the human condition to relate to here. Beautifully, brilliantly written. (Liz Fodaski)

Daly, Michael. **The Book of Mychal**

The grace of Mychal Judge's "surprising life and heroic death" is perfectly matched by the grace of Michael Daly's writing. Besides being moved to tears (literally!) with remarkable frequency, the reader gains wonderful insights into the political subtleties of New York City municipal and diocesan government. Most important, this book is itself a spiritual journey. (Marty Skoble)

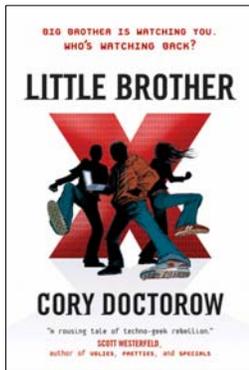
Davies, Robertson. **The Fifth Business** Ramsay Dunston is retiring after 45 years as assistant headmaster of a famous Canadian boys' school. He writes a letter to the headmaster, taking him to task for an idiotic, patronizing retirement "tribute" that reduces the magical adventure of Dunston's life to a dumb caricature. The letter becomes an autobiography—and this novel. I am stunned by Davies's storytelling every time I read this book, which I have done probably a dozen times. There are saints, charlatans, war, some magic, and a fictional literary term ("the fifth business") that ought to be real. This is the first book in a trilogy, so you don't have to slow down as you get to the end. (Denise Rinaldo)

Davis, Lydia. **Almost No Memory**

This is not Davis's latest, but a great collection from this master of the very, very short story. Each one is a small monument—terse but roomy, short but wide-reaching. A beautiful example of the power of simple language. (Liz Fodaski)

Derbyshire, John. **Unknown Quantity: A Real and Imaginary History of Algebra**

Math books tend to fall into two categories: ones that are too dense and obscure to be read by the uninitiated, and those that are fluffed up and popularized until there is little real mathematics in them. Derbyshire's account of the history of algebra from its beginnings in ancient Babylon to the present day is a welcome exception. While full of fun historical and biographical anecdotes, Derbyshire takes care to scaffold important mathematical concepts like vector spaces and field theory in inter-chapter "math primers." A brilliant, accessible survey. (Justin Lanier)



Doctorow, Cory. **Little Brother**

A modern, technologically advanced play on George Orwell's *1984*. Marcus, (aka W1n5t0n), is out on the streets of San Francisco gaming with his friends when they are caught in the middle of a terrorist attack. The Department of Homeland Security takes Marcus and his friends in for questioning as possible terrorist suspects. They are interrogated and held for days. In the aftermath of the attacks, the DHS take over San Francisco, turning it into a police state. Privacy is a thing of the past. Marcus, with his technological know-how, decides that he has to do something about it. (Young adult—but great for everyone.) (Ragan O'Malley)

Dunant, Sarah. **The Birth of Venus**

Fourteen-year-old Alessandra, a smart girl of the Renaissance with a passion for drawing, is thrilled when her father brings back to their palazzo a young artist to paint the family chapel. She must be, however, married off to a wealthy, erudite, older man... This thrilling historical novel intertwines her life story with that of Florence under the Medicis (Lorenzo the Great), as it is taken over by the fundamentalist monk Savonarola and his reactionary followers. A great summer read. (Marielle Vigourt)

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

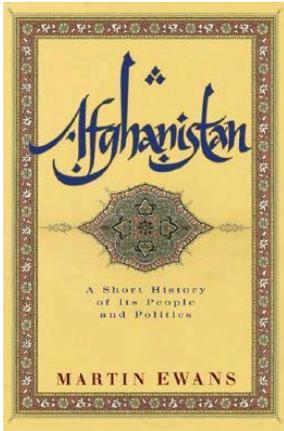
Pure, pure charm. This memoir of some of the zoologist's childhood days spent on the Island of Corfu is one of the most delightful, funny things you will ever read. I would use the word "heart-warming" if I didn't think I would throw-up. It is the perfect gift for any right-thinking individual. Give it to yourself first. And if you are a fan of Lawrence Durrell's tetralogy *The Alexandria Quartet*, this is written by his also renowned younger brother. (Carol Miller)

Eggers, Dave. **What is the What**

This is one of the more powerful books I've read in a long time. It's technically a novel, but Eggers has told, with near complete accuracy, the story of Valentino Achak Deng, a Sudanese refugee and one of the "Lost Boys" (a term that refers to the thousands of boys who lost their families and fled their villages during the long war between Sudan's government and a rebel group called the SPLA) who now lives in the United States. Deng's narrative is heartbreaking, harrowing, hopeful and all sorts of other "h" words I can't think of right now. He was 7 when war came to his village and he was forced to flee, a days-long run through lion-infested forests (yes—boys get eaten) that's only the beginning of Deng's decade-long journey to safety and manhood. You won't believe what he went through—even after he made it to America. The novel's a page-turner and an eye-opener, the kind of book that forces you onto the Internet at midnight, right after finishing, to see what else you can find out about its protagonist, the fate of his unbearably wounded country, and the lives of so many others that have been heretofore invisible to you. (Anna Ziegler)

Ephron, Nora. **Heartburn**

A laugh-out-loud romp through a heartbreaking end of a second marriage. There are inspired digressions and recipes thrown in for good measure. (Gabe Howard)



Ewans, Martin. **Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics**

Written by a British diplomat, this very readable little book briefly covers the entire history of the "graveyard of empires." While including good chapters on the Anglo-Afghan wars of the nineteenth century, the focus is on the twentieth century and how Afghanistan's internal development has continued to relate to outside imperialism and great-power struggles. (Brian Deimling)

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

Being single in your thirties in London. Funny: almost beyond belief at times. You will not read this in boredom if you saw the movie. Fantastic. Undemanding yet smart reading for the beach or airplane or on that maddeningly dull visit to distant relatives. (Carol Miller)

Fitzgerald, Penelope. **The Bookshop**

You know those knives that are so slim and sharp they barely leave a mark yet can create a cut that will cause a person to bleed to death? This book is one of those. A woman decides to open a bookshop.

What could be more lovely? More charming? Don't expect a happy ending but do prepare to be engrossed by this story of small-town life. Learn the hard way that good is not rewarded and evil is all too banal and bourgeois. (Melissa Kantor)

Flynn, Thomas F. **Bikeman: An Epic Poem**

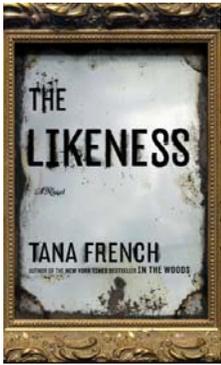
Genius at work: epic poem about 9-11, based on the personal adventures and encounters of a journalist caught in the confusion and collapse of the towers. Amazing connections and analogies, surprising word choices. (The poet is the husband of theater teacher Nancy Reardon.) (Mike Roam)

Ford, Jamie. **Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet**

This is a charming tale of innocent love that begins between two thirteen year olds—a Chinese-American boy and a Japanese-American girl. Set in Seattle in the early forties, as the young girl and her family are whisked away to internment camps, we become keenly aware of the old world/new world differences in feelings of nationalism, filial obligation, and love. (Coco vanMeerendonk)

French, Tana. **In the Woods**

If you're looking for a beach read that will keep you on the edge of your seat (or beach towel), this mystery is for you. Twenty years ago, three children went for a walk in the woods outside of Dublin... but only one returned, with blood on his shirt and in his shoes. The lone survivor has no recollection of what happened, but now, as a detective, he's forced to confront the past when a murder takes place in the same woods. Despite the premise, this book isn't gory, and its twists and turns will keep you guessing until the end. French is a talented mystery writer, and her descriptions and insights keep the book thrilling... and whatever you do, do not read the amazon.com reviews, as they give the ending away! (Stephanie Schragger)



French, Tana. **The Likeness**

If you enjoyed *In the Woods*, run (do not walk) to your nearest library or bookstore to pick up this sequel. One of the main characters reappears and takes on a job working undercover to solve a murder. The plot is even more complicated and engrossing than the previous novel, as the main character gets drawn into her undercover life. Will she return to her life on the police force? Did the crime from *In the Woods* change her forever? Can she find the murderer? Again, French provides a look into Irish history and life that makes for a great suspenseful summer read. (Stephanie Schragger)

Fuller, R. Buckminster. **Operating Manual For Spaceship Earth**

Inspiring and accessible. Exciting points: there is enough food, energy, work, and life support for everybody if we're smart about it. Knowledge gives us power, leverage, potential... and is part of a chain reaction of better tools for building better tools, for the good of everybody and there is no need for anybody to hog it. (Mike Roam)

Furst, Alan. **The Spies Of Warsaw**

Based on journals of survivors and resistance fighters of World War II, this is another of Alan Furst's engaging novels of espionage in wartime. (Mike Roam)

Ghosh, Amitav. **The Calcutta Chromosome**

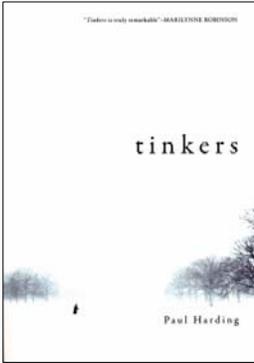
An eminently readable blend of science fact (historical), fiction (a not too far distant computer generation) and quest for truth (or silence, its spiritual alternative), this book is as engrossing as it is disturbing. Ghosh gives us an exciting page turner: a vivid glimpse of two generations of life in India, a fresh view of laboratory research, and a lot to think about when we're done. (Marty Skoble)

Goodman, Allegra. **Intuition**

This is the only novel I've heard of that takes place in a research lab environment, More specifically, the lab studies center. The plot centers around a struggling postdoc's sudden production of spectacular data, which leads to an accusation of fraud by another postdoc. While I thought the plot went in an overly-dramatic direction, I enjoyed the portrayals of the characters, especially of the lab directors. (Navid Karimeddiny)

Hall, Brian. **Fall of Frost**

As historical novelists weave facts into their fiction, Hall weaves biographical details, culled from letters, memoirs, poems, etc., into a novel of the life of Robert Frost. Thus, a towering literary figure becomes the central character in this moving, often sad tale that is beautifully and poetically told. Hall's brief chapters are like poems; they jump around chronologically to flesh out themes and events, including Frost's trip to Russia trying to broker a poet's peace between Kennedy and Khrushchev, his frayed family life, and his ongoing struggle to balance passion with poetry. I kept thinking of Stanley as I read this beautiful, strange book. (Marty Skoble)



Harding, Paul. **Tinkers**

A very striking book, not that easy to read, but enthralling, in the Proustian way. As time collapses into memory, an old dying man revisits his New England youth, his family relationships, especially with his epileptic father, in an elegiac exploration of the human soul which never stops being life-affirming. Somehow a very American version of the Proustian way in its celebration of love, loss, and nature. (Marielle Vigourt)

Hartley, L.P. **The Go-Between**

Set in the summer of 1900, this sensuous and detailed story of a boy drawn into a forbidden relationship carries you along to its tragic conclusion. Somewhat autobiographical, and from the perspective of middle age, the author describes (in luminous prose) a time in his childhood that was on the one hand idyllic and on the other excruciatingly, and formatively, painful. (Gabe Howard)

Holding, Elizabeth Sanxay. **The Blank Wall**

As nerve-wracking a noir as I've read, this is also a really moving portrait of motherhood. (Elise Meslow)

Hollinghurst, Allan. **The Line of Beauty**

A social satire with intended shades of *The Great Gatsby* and *Brideshead Revisited*. A young man makes his way through four years of Thatcher's Britain—pursuing beauty and having a much more difficult time with truth. (Jenny Halliday)

James, Henry. **The Princess Casamassima**

I love James, although I didn't like this one as much as some of his others. It has a great protagonist in Hyacinth Robinson, however, and a great satirical tone. (Jane Avrich)

Kurzweil, Ray. **The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology**

The future isn't what it used to be: this intense essay tracks the increasing complexity of "data processing" all the way from the origins of life up to now and into an oncoming era of artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and genomics. (Mike Roam)

Lahiri, Jhumpa. **Unaccustomed Earth**

A wise, gentle book where relationships are traced with fingertips, Lahiri's prose is brilliant and seductive. Part one is five short stories all of which leave you wanting more, and in the second half she gives us three linked stories, so the structure is satisfying too. (Gabe Howard)

Letham, Jonathan. **You Don't Love Me Yet**

What Letham did with Brooklyn, speech tics, and petty crime in *Motherless Brooklyn*, he does here with LA., music and sexual awakening. Lucinda Hoekke, bassist in a rock and roll band and operator answering a complaint line in an art project, encounters a voice that gives her band its vision even as it "unstrings" her. And then there is the kangaroo.... Great writing, of course, and a fun read. (Marty Skoble)

Levithan, David & Rachel Cohn. **Naomi and Ely's No Kiss List**

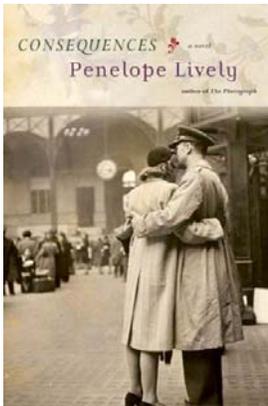
What happens when your best friend (a boy) and your boyfriend kiss? A lot, that's what. This book isn't perfect, but it's a fun, quick summer read and the character of Bruce, the straight guy who just might not be is tremendously appealing. (young adult) (Melissa Kantor)

Levinson, Marc. **The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger**

Amazing, intriguing story about the containerized shipping that changed manufacturing, labor, and shipping worldwide. Incredible chapters tell about battles among unions, the decline of traditional but non-competitive ports everywhere from London to New York City, and the role of military shipments during the Vietnam war, in which unloading ships into tiny boats made month-long bottlenecks. Hard to imagine that ships used to be loaded and unloaded by people carrying bags up and down gang planks! (Mike Roam)

Lewis, C.S. **The Magician's Nephew**

Students who liked the postmodern Victorianism of Harry Potter might want to try this one, actually set in the days "when Mr. Sherlock Holmes still kept his rooms at Baker Street." The opening chapter, with row houses and back gardens, could be set in Brooklyn. (Brian Deimling)



Lively, Penelope. **Consequences**

She traces three generations of women starting with Lorna, whose story begins in 1935 when she is eighteen. Molly survives the sixties and Ruth brings us to the turn of the century. It's a story of time and place and life and death—heart rending, affirming and beautifully written, and a page turner to boot. (Gabe Howard)

Lively, Penelope. **Judgment Day**

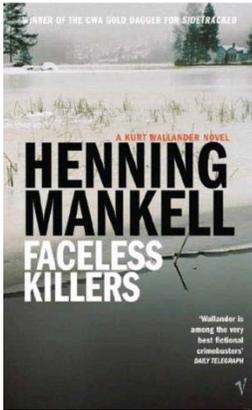
The vicar and congregation of a small suburban town set about raising funds to restore their ancient church. Lively looks at faith and the lack thereof, community and the lack thereof with a cool eye and a clear voice. Then tragedy hits you over the head with a two by four. She's brilliant. (Gabe Howard)

Lockhart, E. **The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks**

A national book award finalist and a Prinz honor book, this novel tells the story of a girl who wants to run with the big dogs. On e-mail no one knows you're a girl, so Frankie is able to convince a secret society of guys at her posh boarding school to do her bidding. (young adult) (Melissa Kantor)

London, Jack. **The People of the Abyss: The Underworld in the East End of Victorian London, 1902**

For research, London lived among the dejected in the squalor of the East End slums for a few months, sleeping in workhouses and on the street. Take a walk in his shoes and get a glimpse of how the lower class lived in London at the turn of the century. (Maria Falgoust)



Mankell, Henning. **Faceless Killers** (first in the series)

Kurt Wallander is a Swedish detective stuck in the morass of middle-aged life—divorced, overweight, and discontent. He would love to give up police work but he is always drawn back into the investigation of horrible and mysterious crimes. These stories take you into Swedish cities and countryside, and sometimes all over Europe. They are expertly crafted. Start with *Dogs of Riga* or anywhere else. (Richard Mann)

Melville, Herman. **Moby Dick**

I spent one of the best summers of my life reading this complex, strange, experimental and sometimes hilarious novel. The adventure story is truly adventurous and the existential angst Ahab inspires is good for a wallow. Finally, it's a really hard book, and we all know that those are the best ones to read! (Alex Levin)

Meyer, Michael. **The Last Days of Old Beijing**

Life in a “hutong” (back alley) neighborhood south of the Forbidden City in Beijing. The author was an English teacher in a local elementary school who lived with the local residents and fell in love with the small lanes and tiny shops in the old city. His interactions with neighbors, students, and their parents are riveting and give an inside look into the lives of common people in the capitol city. (Bob Swacker)

Meyer, Stephenie. **Breaking Dawn** You know you want it, so why not surrender? Honestly, this final (?) novel was a major improvement over the other three where as far as I could tell, all Bella did was cry, fall down or beg Edward to make her a vampire. Finally we get to see this girl kick some serious ass. (Melissa Kantor)

Mortimer, John. **Rumpole of the Bailey**

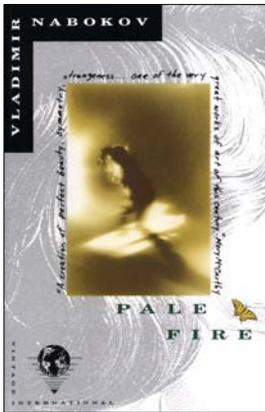
We lost the mighty John Mortimer early this year so it's a particularly fit time to celebrate his shining, riotous Rumpole stories. A rumped, Falstaffian hero who defends his clients against the witless forces of combines and conventions, Rumpole outmaneuvers and out-argues most of his adversaries—and he has a lot of them. Pure pleasure. (Ruth Chapman)

Morton, Kate. **The House at Riverton**

This falls under the category of an intelligent summer read... there's romance, suspense, and many crimes in this family drama set in England during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Riverton House has its share of tragedies and secrets in the years before and after WWI, as its parties and celebrations hid its darker aspects. The novel is set in the present, as one of the former Riverton House servants recalls her time there... will she be the one to divulge the truth after all these years? This will keep you entertained as you try to guess the ending! (Stephanie Schragger)

Mosley, Walter. **Easy Rawlins Mysteries**

Whether it is an Easy Rawlins mystery or anything else, Mosley's stories are always gripping and they probe deeply into the underbelly of American life. Told from the point of view of a member of the under class who, despite best intentions, cannot keep his hands clean, these stories are “noire” without trying. Start with *Goin' Fishin* and you'll be happy with what you catch. (Richard Mann)



Nabokov, Vladimir. **Pale Fire**

Fantastic, intricate, compelling! I loved re-reading this book with its self-absorbed narrator, its nostalgia, its analysis of poetry, and its insistence that we read between the lines. Passionate, graceful, and challenging. (Mike Roam)

Nakazawa, Keiji. **Barefoot Gen (graphic novel series)**

The series is loosely based on Nakazawa's childhood before, during and after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. A brilliant, eye-opening, and simply unforgettable read. (Maria Falgoust)

Obama, Barack. **Dreams From My Father**

This is a wonderful autobiography of growing up and looking for "home" and a place to fit in. Did you know our new president spent his first—ever night in New York City sleeping in an alley? Obama is an engaging and subtle thinker/writer: he knows the easy answers don't apply to complicated lives. Coco joins me in recommending this book. (Mike Roam)

O'Brien, Flann. **At Swim-Two-Birds**

Demons, faeries, cowboys, drunks, Irish folk tale heroes and assorted other creatures collide in this wild and amazing novel. The author begins his tale with three entirely different openings, and his assorted fictional characters proceed to conspire against him, plotting his demise. Comically horrifying things unfold. Unique and brilliant in every way, you won't forget this one. (Angelo Bellfatto)

Pausch, Randy & Jeffrey Zaslow. **The Last Lecture**

A surprisingly cheerful autobiography and inspirational farewell speech to his family from a professor wrestling with terminal cancer. (Mike Roam)

Portis, Charles. **True Grit**

A delightful, fast-paced read for any age. I have to admit, before I read *True Grit* (and saw the John Wayne movie) I didn't think I'd like the Western genre – I was wrong. The plucky narrator, 14-year old Mattie Ross, goes into wild country with one-eyed deputy marshal Rooster Cogburn to avenge the death of her father. Everything you would want and expect from a Western classic. (Eva Zasloff)

Pym, Barbara. **Excellent Women**

This is hard to do justice in description. *Excellent Women* and her other novels are set in the English village and center around the world of the church. Before you yawn: Excellent women help out at jumble sales, do good works, and so on. OK. No sale? Consider one more thing: quietly, these books are completely hysterical. They require rereading for the sheer joy of it every ten years or so. You might as well start now. (Carol Miller)

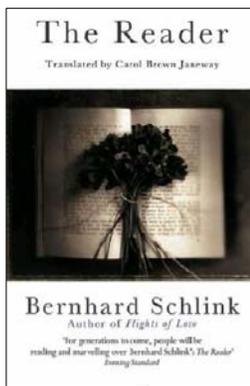
Rich, Adrienne. **Diving into the Wreck**

An exciting, innovative book of poetry—before Rich becomes thumpingly dogmatic. (Jane Avrich)

Robinson, Marilynne. **Gilead**

Part memoir, part journal and part fatherly advice, *Gilead* is straightforward in its form and soothing in its content. While I cozied up with it in the depths of mid-winter, its pace is equally suited to the long languid days of summer. Robinson has so thoroughly conceived and expressed the voice of her main

character, John Ames, that I found myself irrationally envious of his fictional son, the boy to whom this meandering epistle is addressed. Though the whole book pivots around the imminent death of the narrator, it is far from depressing. On the contrary, it is uplifting, beautiful and often poignantly funny. Whether read while on an adventure in far off lands or in front of a fan in the hot sticky city this book will draw you in and carry you off. (Diana Lomask)



Schlink, Bernhard. **The Reader**

This book touches the deepest recesses of the soul with delicacy and intelligence. As a search for truth, its imparting and sharing of knowledge is done with sobriety and "justesse". Briefly: a 15-year-old boy becomes the lover of a 35-year-old woman, and one of their rituals is that he reads aloud to her every day. Seven years after she disappears, as he has become a law student, he recognizes her among the defendants in a trial he attends... This book is definitely a labor of the most passionate, honest, respectful and soul-searching kind of love, and makes us more knowledgeable and compassionate. (Marielle Vigourt)

Schulz, Bruno. **The Street Of Crocodiles And Other Stories**

Surreal and magical scenes of small-town European life in the 1930's: wallpaper images begin moving, pelicans fly out of closets. (Mike Roam)

Sebald, W. G. **The Emigrants**

In a haunted effort to remember and recover the lives of his four subjects—all survivors and ghosts of the Holocaust—the narrator slowly collects their stories through extended interruptions, sidelong glances, overlays, and chance encounters. Sebald's book—fiction/travelogue/memoir/history/meditation/snapshot/chamber music—travels through half-lights to recompose lives and pass them on. His writing is a masterful act of transplanting these lives in us. (Ruth Chapman)

Oyama, Shiro. **A Man with no Talents: Memoirs of a Tokyo Day Laborer**

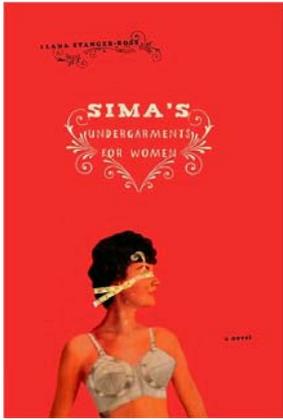
Rejecting the mainstream lifestyle of a salaryman, Oyama Shiro (pseudonym) chooses to pursue a life as a day laborer at age forty. He moves to the notorious San'ya district of Tokyo and lives in a doya (bunkhouse) sharing a cramped room with seven other smelly men. Shiro is a highly intelligent and complex character; he's chock full of contradictions and he tells his story in a resigned, almost meditative voice. Although he has mindfully chosen to be a loner, in the most extreme sense (he hadn't been in contact with his family in twenty years and he has never had sex with a woman who wasn't a prostitute), Shiro is a sharp observer. Beautifully written, Shiro flatly describes the daily life of the subculture of Japanese day laborers. (Maria Falgoust)

Sittenfeld, Curtis. **American Wife**

Why, you ask, would you want to read a fictionalized account of Laura Bush's life? Because it is amazing. Captivating and well-written, you won't be able to put this down. (Ragan O'Malley)

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. **Cancer Ward**

Our tech-wizard, Joe Marabotto, calls this Solzhenitsyn's *Love Story* and the flirting doctors are one of the many pleasures of the book. The main character's intense independence makes him a charismatic and poverty-stricken refugee from a prison camp. (Mike Roam)



Stanger- Ross, Ilana. **Sima's Undergarments for Women**

This is the first novel by Saint Ann's alumna Ilana Stanger-Ross. In it, Stanger-Ross tells the story of a Boro Park lingerie store and its damaged owner—Sima, a 60-something woman carrying a lifetime's worth of secrets and shame. But the arrival of a young Israeli seamstress changes Sima's outlook and allows her to confront her past in unexpected ways. Whether or you're into bras (or even Brooklyn) *Sima's Undergarments* is well worth the read. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Thompson, Craig. **Blankets**

This coming-of-age graphic novel memoir is enchanting, funny and heart-wrenching. Growing up in a strict Christian family in the Midwest, Thompson poignantly captures what it feels like to be an awkward teenager. (Maria Falgoust)

Trollope, Anthony. **The Way We Live Now**

Trollope's novel of 1870's England rushes along with financial criminals, status-grabbing snobs, jealous farmers, and even a glamorous, mysterious, outrageous American who is rumored to have shot her own husband. Great fun. (Mike Roam)

Updike, John. **Rabbit, Run**

I'm sad to say that it took until Updike's death this year for me to read any of his work. I found it to be very detail-obsessed and sexist—but surprisingly enjoyable. Harry Angstrom is a 26-year-old former high school basketball star who sells a kitchen peeler for a living. He is married and has a 2-year-old son. One evening, after a game of pick-up basketball with some kids, Harry, aka "Rabbit" arrives home to find Janice, his wife, drunk. Harry takes off and the question throughout the remainder of the novel is, "Will Harry keep running?" (Ragan O'Malley)

Walker, Martin. **Bruno, Chief of Police**

I wish I lived in this small Perigord town, where Bruno's biggest challenge is keeping the EU inspectors from ruining the weekly market. But the peace and the past are disturbed when an elderly Algerian man who fought for France in World War II is found murdered, with a swastika carved on his chest. The American author lives part-time in Southwest France and he skillfully evokes both the charm of small-town French life and the horrors suffered in Occupied France. (Rebecca Johnson)

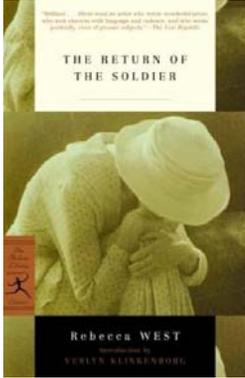
Warren, Robert Penn. **All the King's Men**

While perhaps particularly poignant to this native son of Louisiana, Warren's novel beautifully intertwines a gripping tale of American politics, striking passages of poetic prose, memorable and even haunting characters, and reflection on the hearts of men that touches the universal. If you loved *The Great Gatsby*, this is for you. (Justin Lanier)

Waugh, Evelyn. **The Sword of Honor Trilogy: Men at Arms, Officers and Gentleman, The End of the Battle**

World War II. The prose of Evelyn Waugh. Add to these protagonist Guy Crouchback, an English Catholic and aristocrat in his thirties, who tries very hard to join the army and winds up eventually in, well, an old, odd, rather peripheral regiment, The Royal Core of the Halbrdiers. This can be, at times, so

funny that you might really come close to actually painful laughing. On the other hand, in the manner of Waugh, it can also be simply deeply disconcerting. Waugh is a dizzyingly, brilliant satisfying writer. These are amazing books. Also much beloved also by Elise Meslow and Victor Marchioro (who gave me a set of it twice, once in the eighties and then two years ago). Consider it your final assignment from Mr. Marchioro. (Carol Miller)



West, Rebecca. **The Return of the Soldier**

In this slim novel, a shell-shocked soldier returns from the front with no memory of the past ten years of his life. Still (suddenly?) in love with an ex-girlfriend and totally bewildered by his marriage to a beautiful woman for whom he feels nothing, Chris Ellis must decide if he will accept his real life or the life he remembers.

Prepare to be depressed. (Melissa Kantor)

This is a beautiful and chilling and tight little book about a shell-shocked soldier's return home. Unforgettable. (Carol Miller)

Wharton, Edith. **The Reef**

Perhaps less wrenching than *The House of Mirth*, this novel is still brutal in its depiction of class and the moral climate for young women in the aughts. (Elise Meslow)

Wright, C.D. **Rising, Falling, Hovering**

When politics has become a disease, like cancer, when the body count on our streets and in the news keeps rising, when keeping love alive is also a struggle, one might say "this is no time for poetry." Instead C. D. Wright enables the reader to "...stop looking for meaning and begin rifling among the folds of feeling..." The stunning urgency of this vivid and deeply moving book will stay with you for a long time. It's not often a book of poems is a page-turner; read it! (Marty Skoble)

*Happy Reading!*  
*Thanks for all the recommendations.*