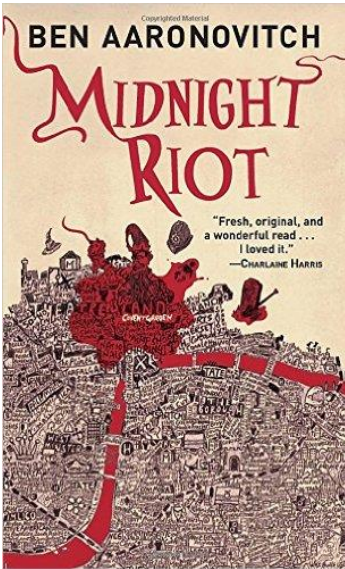


# Suggested Summer Reading List for High School and Faculty Saint Ann's School, 2016



Aaronovitch, Ben. **Midnight Riot**

All the right ingredients for a terrific mystery: a vivid city (London), a cool young black policeman, literate conversation about food, culture, history and music, and a series of strange and awful deaths. Oh yes, the policeman is also apprenticed to a wizard who works for Scotland Yard. It works; first in a series; I couldn't stop. (Marty Skoble)

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. **Americanah**

Moving novel of growing up in Nigeria, then running into culture differences and racism as a student and non-American blogger in the USA. (Mike Roam)

Als, Hilton. **White Girls**

"The muse is as open to suggestion as the artist who learns from the muse's receptivity, her no-big-deal willingness to be available to whatever you, the artist, might feel" (p. 84). Hilton Als writes about theater for *The New Yorker*. There is much of his life in these critical essays which, in the end, are about memory, "that wall, which is clean and wide and high" and, because we fall from this wall over and over, self-recognition. (Cathy Fuerst)

Amis, Kingsley. **Lucky Jim**

Recommended by a friend who said it was one of the only books to ever make her cry from laughter, *Lucky Jim* is a delightful satire on postwar British academic life that centers around a drunk and hapless professor of medieval history named Jim Dixon. The burnt bedclothes incident, the disastrous and drunken lecture on "Merrie England," Jim's catalog of oft-used and highly-specific facial expressions such as the "Edith Sitwell face" and the "Sex Life in Ancient Rome face.".....Oh God, I'm tearing up with laughter even as I type this. (Molly Sissors)

Anaya, Rudolfo. **Bless Me, Ultima**

This book explores the internal conflicts of a young Mexican American boy during the 1940s coming to terms with the two sides of his background. There is magical realism and much that I found to be embedded in the culture of my family when I read it at 17. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Arango, Sascha. **The Truth and Other Lies**

A fascinating tale of one man's efforts to prop up the elaborate facade behind which he has lived successfully for decades even as his own blundering efforts shake it and him. Great twists and turns in this page-turner. (Marty Skoble)

Atkinson, Kate. **A God in Ruins**

A sibling (not a sequel) to *Life After Life*, in which we follow the events that precede and follow the WWII experience of Teddy Todd, especially as they affect his parents, children, grandchildren and fellow warriors. All their stories are beautiful intertwined (as are most lives), and Atkinson's voice brilliantly guides us through the complex temporal layers that co-exist within us all. (Marty Skoble)

Austen, Jane. **Persuasion**

*Persuasion* was Jane Austen's last novel and was published posthumously. Because Austen was a little older and wiser when she wrote this, Anne Elliot is a different kind of heroine. She had been persuaded to reject a love match when she was young, and is suffering for it. Anne is a more contemplative and righteous character than many of Austen's heroines, and we see more depth than is usual for Austen's archetypal characters. (Eva Zasloff)

Access the digital library all summer long at [saintannsny.lib.overdrive.com](http://saintannsny.lib.overdrive.com)

The easiest way to read our ebooks is with a Kindle, Kindle app, or Overdrive app. Logging In: Students and faculty need a library card number and PIN to download books.

Look for an email from [library@saintannsny.org](mailto:library@saintannsny.org) containing yours. For instructions and other digital library tips, see the last page of this list.

Shaded titles on this list indicate that it is available in the digital library.

Baker, Annie. ***The Flick*** (play)

I loved *The Flick* when I read it, when I saw it, when I read it again, and when I directed it as part of Scene Marathon this year. A great play for cinephiles and a script of relatively few pages, the Off-Broadway production of this Pulitzer Prize winner (2014) ran three hours and fifteen minutes. This is due to Baker's specific stage directions: excessive pauses and actions in real time. *The Flick* is set in a Massachusetts movie theater that is being upgraded (though certainly the characters question whether 'upgrade' is the right term) from traditional film projection to a digital system. As the theater is going through changes, so are the inner lives and relationships of the play's three characters, Sam, Avery, and Rose, who work at the theater. To really appreciate this play, try reading it aloud! (Laura Barnett)

Baker, Dorothy. ***Cassandra at the Wedding***

When her twin sister announces she is getting married, troubled, restless Cassandra heads home to be with her erudite family. Each moment in this (brief) novel shimmers with tension, and you can't not race to the end to see how it all works out. Then you immediately go back to the beginning and give each lapidary encounter its due. (Melissa Kantor)

Baldwin, James. ***The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings***

Reflections on art, the artist, and being in this society. Something I am looking forward to reading for the first time this summer. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Beard, Jo Ann. ***The Boys of My Youth***

I can't believe I didn't read this amazing collection of essays sooner. I would venture to say that reading this book will make you write better sentences. Beard is master of the sentence—that irreducible unit that builds every great story—and hers are complex, vivid, chilling, and direct. This is masterful and inspiring writing. The most brilliant essay in the collection, "The Fourth State of Matter," will take your breath away. (Liz Fodaski)

Bechdel, Alison. ***The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For***

You're familiar with *Fun Home* (as graphic novel and Broadway musical). But have you read Bechdel's earlier comics? This collection spans 1987-2008 and is the most brilliant piece of queer social history I've read. Featuring a cast of brilliant characters who are representative without being stereotypical, it tackles issues of love, work, politics, parenting, and more. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll root for the characters, you'll wish Bechdel were still writing the strip. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Bechdel, Alison. ***Fun Home***

Amazing illustrated biography and autobiography with parallel stories of her own and her parents' frustrated lives and artistic ambitions. Subtle, multi-layered: "comparing this to Nixon's resignation is heavy handed but perhaps accurate in a way..." with references to Proust, Oscar Wilde, and James Joyce. (Allison's mother was an actress, and her father ran a funeral home and was also a high school English teacher with secrets.) (Mike Roam)

Block, Lawrence. ***When the Sacred Ginmill Closes***

For those who are looking for an amusing page-turner, don't go for it. Lawrence Block doesn't produce common exciting action detective stories. He is a troubadour wandering in New York City, interested in writing urban noir. And *When the Sacred Ginmill Closes* is the diamond on the crown. The book walks its readers through the darkest corners of a likable alcoholic's mind while he was solving three small but tangled cases, with a bitter taste of justice, friendship and humanity at the very end. (Meredith Yinting Hu)

Carroll, Lewis. ***Alice in Wonderland***

Saint Ann's is 50. This book is 150. Both have a rich history down the rabbit hole. Go. (Cathy Fuerst)

Chayes, Sarah. ***Thieves of State***

Chayes went to Afghanistan after the US went to war with it in 2001, working first with our State Department, then with our military, then for herself in a local business. She returns with a tightly written, short and chilling story, interlaced with parts of her unfinished History-Political Science dissertation on Machiavelli and others, concluding that religious fundamentalism and global terrorism have far less to do with increasing violence and the failure of states than does simple corruption—corruption that authorities, including U.S. intervenors, condone and often sponsor. The "Arab Spring," she points out, began when a street vendor in Tunis decided that this would be the last bribe the corrupt police would ever extort from him, so he went home and burned himself to death. If you think that's an extreme reaction, just look around. Perceived injustice is the cause of most extreme reactions. (Bill Everdell)

Child, Lee. ***Make Me*** (A Jack Reacher Novel)

In this wonderful new thriller, Reacher is a bit outsmarted, battered, and emotionally involved. Also read *Reacher Said Nothing* by Andy Martin about the writing of *Make Me*, and then check out older Lee Child stories. This year I re-enjoyed several: \* *Worth Dying For* has non-stop action, a gang war in Nebraska that seems like the Marx brothers. \* *The Enemy* has cold war, treason, military rivalry, homophobia, racism, family, and a military battle tank. Also there's love in Paris, with the line "We'll always have North Carolina." \* *Without Fail* visits congressional secret service protection and things turn sour, needing intricate detective work. (Mike Roam)

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

Exciting teen story about a miserable future in which a poor but resourceful computer game player goes to virtual school and also tries to win a billion dollar prize. Cast includes dear friends, evil enemies, and intricate puzzles. (Mike Roam)

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. ***Between the World and Me***

One of the most talked-about books of the year, *Between the World and Me* weaves together personal and historical narrative. Written as a letter to Coates's son, this short but intense volume is an indictment of American racism and a celebration of the human spirit. A critical read in the context of important schoolwide and nationwide conversations. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Cowart, Jack and Juan Hamilton. ***Georgia O'Keefe: Art and Letters***

Beautifully presented with a generous number of reproductions along with some of her reflections on art and life via her letters to Sherwood Anderson. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Daoud, Kamel. ***The Meursault Investigation***

This is a retelling of Camus's *The Stranger* from an Algerian native's point of view, and gets very interesting in its second half with the Algerian independence war movement against the French. Read along with Camus's classic, which has a sparse, strange narration seemingly lacking affect and initiative, leaving room to read between the lines. (Mike Roam)

Doerr, Anthony. ***All the Light We Cannot See***

Teens in France and Germany in World War II, enchanted by stories on the radio while terrified by the armies around them. Amazing book. (Mike Roam)

Eisenberg, Jesse. ***The Revisionist*** (play)

A fascinating play by writer and actor (*The Squid and The Whale*, *The Social Network*) Jesse Eisenberg; it was seen Off-Broadway in 2013 with Eisenberg and Vanessa Redgrave. Twenty-something novelist David, brash, brusque, and solipsistic, visits Maria (a woman he believes to be his elderly cousin) in Warsaw. His goal: to rid himself of writer's block in a new environment. Though he claims interest in Maria's wartime experience, his bitter complaining about the bad *New York Times* review he received, reveals him as hopelessly self-involved, an archetype, perhaps, of his millennial generation. Maria, a Holocaust survivor, speaks both bluntly and elliptically; she is both a sad character and one who has great capacity for pleasure. *The Revisionist* makes us consider our capacity to understand the realities of wartime, the slipperiness of memory, and reflect on how we revise histories both personal and political. (Laura Barnett)

Faber, Michel. ***The Book of Strange New Things***

The best science fiction books create a completely palatable, plausible, rich world that seems familiar, but is not. The protagonist, Peter Leigh, is a Christian pastor who is sent by a mysterious corporation to a newly colonized world at the request of the native population. The novel plays with the familiar story of religious conversion and exploitation of a native population in a new land—but one that is light-years away from Earth. The story deals with the life and world Peter left behind (wife, cat) and its gradual disintegration, as well as the new world he inhabits, living with aliens thirsty for Christian theology. (Tom Hill)

Fadiman, Anne. ***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down***

This is a heartbreaking book that will both illuminate the intricacies of the Hmong culture of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, and bring to light the myriad ethnocentric tendencies in our own. It recounts the gut-wrenching (true) story of a young Hmong girl named Lia and her immigrant family as they navigate a deadly illness in a confusing and alienating setting. In essence, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* is a harrowing example of the ways in which cultural competence is critical not just on an emotional level, but on a practical one as well. You'll cry and you'll think and you'll probably cry some more... (Chloe Smith)

Ferrante, Elena. **My Brilliant Friend** (and the rest of the **Neopolitan** series)

A stunningly clear vision of what it's like to be poor, to be female, to be connected to another in a friendship that is almost mystical in its depth, and then to discover the world and one's place in it. Spellbindingly beautiful! The first in a quartet. You will want to read them all. The fourth, **The Story of a Lost Child**, is simply stunning. (Marty Skoble)

Frank, Thomas. **The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism**

For those suffering from *Mad Men* withdrawal, or those wanting a deeper understanding of 1960s counterculture and its collision with Madison Avenue, or those wondering how "hip" and "consumerism" ever started dating in the first place, this is the book for you. Frank offers a nuanced and sophisticated rethinking of the standard 1960s narratives. In place of the condemnations of the sixties offered up by conservative critics on the one hand, and lamentations on the left about the co-optation of the youthful counterculture by cynical businessmen and bureaucrats on the other, Frank shows how the worlds of business and cultural rebellion were dynamically interacting throughout the decade, with advertising often mediating the intersection of the two. It isn't exactly beach reading, but if you want to know how consumer goods—cars, clothes, cigarettes—became emblems of rebellion, look no further. (Vince Tompkins)

Franklin, Jonathan. **438 Days**

A non-fiction "beach read" that presents the compelling narrative of fisherman Jose Alvarenga, who survives at sea for - guess what?—438 days, floating 6,000 miles from the west coast of Mexico to the Marshall Islands on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. While a bit repetitive (being at sea for 14 months would be, I guess), it is a fascinating account of extreme solo survival and its mental and physical scars. (Tom Hill)

Gaitskill, Mary. **The Mare**

*The Mare* once again demonstrates Gaitskill's remarkable skill in developing the character of a teenage girl. She has that incredible knack of giving voice to a teenage girl and all the passion and anguish that she lives in. The story is about a relationship between Velveteen who is a Fresh Air Fund kid from Brooklyn with Ginger, a failed artist and recovering alcoholic. Gaitskill never tells a pretty story but rather she is always interested in relationships where characters are messy and intentions are unclear. An abusive mother, an unruly horse and the world of a small town stable are supporting characters in a book I couldn't put down. (Deirdre Keogh-Anderson)

Galbraith, Robert. **The Cuckoo's Calling**

If you like mysteries, London, celebrity-world dish and J.K. Rowling, read this book. It is the first entry in Rowling's detective series (written under the pseudonym of Robert Galbraith). The second (**The Silkworm**) is good. The third (**Career of Evil**) is perfect of its kind. (Denise Rinaldo)

Garrels, Anne. **Putin Country**

A witty and vivid account of present-day Russia, focusing on life in the second-tier city of Chelyabinsk. Garrels was an ABC correspondent in the USSR in the 70s and 80s, and for this book she returned in the 2010s to see what had changed since the rise of Putin. Highly recommended for those interested in Russia. (Michael Donohue)

Gibran, Kahlil. **The Prophet**

A simple and perfect book for a family, delicate and soulful. It contains 28 poetic essays, discussing the topics of love, friendship, marriage, laws, joy and sorrow, good and evil, reason and passion, life and death, to name a few, with thought-provoking insights. (Meredith Yinting Hu)

Gidwitz, Adam. **Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back: So You Want to be a Jedi?**

Wonderful retelling of the *Star Wars* movie by a former Saint Ann's teacher. (Mike Roam)

Goffman, Alice. **On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City**

A controversial work by a rock-star young sociologist, this has been both heralded as the greatest thing since sliced bread and attacked as the end of all integrity in the field. Goffman lives with a group of guys in Philadelphia who move in and out of the criminal justice system. Her report is astounding. (Michael Donohue)

Gordimer, Nadine. **July's People**

Harrowing novella, published in 1981 at the height of South African apartheid (and banned in South Africa), in which Gordimer images a violent revolt that sends one white liberal family fleeing to their black servant's native village. (Michael Donohue)

Gould, Stephen Jay. ***Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin***

This book is only sort of about evolution and baseball but really about variance, trends and distributions. It's a seemingly ridiculous mix of topics that I enjoyed even more than I thought I would. One section is entitled "The Model Batter" while the next is "The Modal Bacter" (honestly, I'd read it for that pun alone) and between them a careful exploration into why there are no longer .400 hitters in baseball brings us to a better understanding of evolution. (Jared Cross)

Hadfield, Chris. ***An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth***

Fantastic story by a Canadian astronaut/musician with a warm, humane side. Wild adventures include finding a bee inside his helmet—while flying a jet in close formation at high speed. Another time he is in a space shuttle re-entering the atmosphere while trying to pry open the pilot's helmet, jammed shut with the communication cable disconnected. Lovely stories of friendship and humility, too. (Mike Roam)

Harari, Yuval Noah. ***Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind***

A synoptic history of the current state of knowledge about the origins of the species. I particularly recommend the history sketched in the first three or four chapters, from the emergence of Homo sapiens to the Neolithic revolution. Later chapters, which discuss from an anthropological angle the rise of human institutions—money, writing, religious belief—were more hectoring and less engaging. (Ben Rutter)

Hardie, Philip. ***The Last Trojan Hero: A Cultural History of Virgil's Aeneid***

Philip Hardie's newish book, *The Last Trojan Hero: A Cultural History of Virgil's Aeneid*, is an amazing tour of the impact of the *Aeneid* on, well, everything, written by one of the most talented elder statesmen of Virgilian studies, and strikes that elusive balance between seriously intense scholarship and totally engaging readability. (Andrew Siebengartner)

Hardy, Thomas. ***Far From the Madding Crowd***

Three suitors vie for and change the life of headstrong young heroine, Bathsheba Everdene. Set in the late 1800s, to a background of sheep farming in rural Southwest England, reversals of fortune, betrayal, tragedy, and love, i.e. all the usual traits of a Hardy novel, unfold in this beautifully-descriptive, poetically-written classic. (Kate F. Hamilton)

Higgins, Matt. ***Bird Dream: Adventures at the Extremes of Human Flight***

Excellent book by *New York Times* reporter about parachuting with wingsuits, BASE jumping, and attempts to land safely without a canopy. Up close with adventurous personalities (and wild equipment). (Mike Roam)

Huddle, David. ***The Faulkes Chronicle***

I have a friend whose sister made her promise to scatter her ashes in all her favorite places when she died. My friend is still making these trips to fulfill that wish. In this novel, instead, unwieldy family members and physicians make it possible for their dying mother/wife/patient to visit three beloved places in a buzzed-up school bus while still alive, leaving behind firefly-like glowing embers of their love. (Cathy Fuerst)

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

Love him, hate him, don't care about him? Doesn't matter, the book still makes a great read. Insane geniuses (or overrated snake-oil salesmen, depending on your mood) are often inscrutable, and never give you the satisfaction of saying sorry. With only a few missteps, Isaacson makes up for the things Jobs never could. (Eli Forsythe)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***The Buried Giant***

Is it better to remember or to forget? Which way does peace and honor lie? This superb novel draws on tribal memories as well as spiritual aspirations. It's totally mesmerizing. (Marty Skoble)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***Never Let Me Go***

Ishiguro begins his anxious story in the insulated, self-referring world of Hailsham, a prep school where the students—elite orphans—are trained for a life of high service whose dimensions are partially and painfully revealed. Art and friendship are supposed to be important in their lives; so is the stuff that they make, trade, and forage for. Kathy the narrator speaks with blinkered understanding about her early training and about life and love. We listen and have to fill in the colors she can't see. (Ruth Chapman)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. **Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall**

For some reason, even big Ishiguro fans (and I'm one of them) often neglect this little collection of stories. I finally got around to it, and I recommend it highly. (Michael Donohue)

James, Marlon. **A Brief History of Seven Killings**

This Man Booker Prize winning book by Marlon James definitely lives up to its hype! The fictional book takes you on a journey with multiple characters as they grapple with Jamaica's political turmoil during the 70s through early 90s, including the attempted assassination of Bob Marley and the gang wars that ensued. James captivates the readers from beginning to end with his gritty, violent, and jaw-dropping tales of survival in 'Babylon.' Brace yourself for the heavy duty content because it will surely blow your mind! (Kenya Wagstaffe)

James, Marlon. **A Brief History of Seven Killings**

I have never read anything like this book. *A Brief History of Seven Killings* is a powerfully funny, smart, gruesome, emotional novel centered around the attempted assassination of Bob Marley (the Singer) in 1976. It's not nearly as simple as that. The book is semi-fictional and while its plot surrounds that single event, it has five parts, a ton of unforgettable characters and reveals the tumultuous social and political landscapes of Jamaica and NYC in the 1970s-1990s. It's quite a long book but the time spent reading is well worth it. (Kayla Brazee, aka Goodson)

Johnson, Adam. **The Orphan Master's Son**

Fictional account of North Korea's boasting leadership, ugly prison camps, poverty, and paranoia. I felt for the main character and his moving struggle for survival, love, and—if possible—truth. (Mike Roam)

Khan, Ali S. **The Next Pandemic**

For 20+ years, Khan was a public health first responder traveling around the world investigating infectious disease outbreaks. Some outbreaks occurred naturally (like the recent Ebola outbreak in Western Africa) and others were the result of bioterrorism (like the 2001 anthrax scare in the U.S.); whatever the cause, Khan was on the scene. This is fascinating stuff. A page-turning science and travelog mashup. (Ragan O'Malley)

Kincaid, Jamaica. **A Small Place**

This is a book-length essay (or an essay-length book) about Antigua, where Kincaid grew up. It tells the history of the island and how it was perceived and impacted by colonization (in the past) and is perceived and impacted by tourists (in the present). The story begins, "If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see..." and its split screen conjures the experience of being an American or European visitor to the West Indies and of being a person who makes her home there. You'll finish it in one sitting and never see the world (or the experience of traveling the world) quite the same way again. (Melissa Kantor)

Krakauer, Jon. **Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town**

Excellent, reasoned; convincing about how rape charges are often not strongly investigated, prosecuted, or convicted. The author fairly and thoughtfully points out that even the rare false charges would be more quickly found by good thorough investigations rather than by dismissive or hostile-to-survivor responses. (Mike Roam)

Manning, Olivia. **The Balkan Trilogy**

I can't believe it took me so long to discover these World War II-era novels about British expats in Eastern Europe. You're in Bucharest, Romania, with a fantastic gallery of characters, and the war is just about to start... I'm ready to do the next trilogy, The Levant Trilogy, this summer. (Michael Donohue)

McCullough, David. **The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris**

An amazing, engaging and entertaining book about people who traveled from America to Paris in the 1800s. Fascinating stories about the adventures of American artists, writers, politicians, medical professionals, and socialites. Their tales come alive like you're traveling with them in time and across the ocean. (Katya Arnold)

Mead, Rebecca. **My Life in Middlemarch**

Hailing from the south of England, Rebecca Mead is a writer and journalist living in Brooklyn who first read *Middlemarch* as a teenager preparing for her A levels. The book traces Mead's love affair with *Middlemarch* over the years, and her serendipitous connections with George Eliot. (Savannah Roberts)

Mnookin, Wendy. ***The Moon Makes Its Own Plea***

A superb poetry collection, grounded in a personal reality that connects cosmic and universal contexts with wit and wisdom. (Marty Skoble)

Modiano, Patrick. ***Suspended Sentences: Three Novellas***

Patrick Modiano won the Nobel literature prize in 2014. I'd never heard of him—it was time to read him—and Will Geiger recommended *Suspended Sentences: Three Novellas*. An excellent starter. Modiano returns like a geographer to the place of an experience, brilliantly excavating the Occupation, memories of it, and people lost to it. His stories read like mysteries that don't get solved, that thread many streets. The narrator, at once driven and impassive, orients you by throwing a yoyo into the past. You follow its arc while people and time mysteriously flicker. A couple disappears. The narrator finds the red door where they once lived. He doesn't find them but does find his parents. Paris becomes an archipelago of villages—strung out and haunting. (Ruth Chapman)

Mullane, Mike. ***Riding Rockets: The Outrageous Tales of a Space Shuttle Astronaut***

True story of a NASA astronaut including pranks, humor, hard work, and learning to appreciate the women who were in his 1978 class of astronauts: Mullane is candid about having grown up (boys school, West Point, Air Force) with women not being equal rank colleagues, and he now thinks his humor and expectations were sometimes very inappropriate. Great storytelling: especially when his astronaut friends including Judy Resnik are killed by the explosion of Space Shuttle *Challenger*. He tells us that yes, astronauts fear the blast off, Barbara Bush was outrageously funny during his White House visit, and NASA management did many things right and some things horribly wrong. (Mike Roam)

Ng, Mei. ***Eating Chinese Food Naked***

A story about a young Chinese American woman returning after graduating from Columbia University to live in her parents' home above their laundry business in Queens, NY. Readers get a glimpse into the urban Chinese American experience across two generations. The protagonist battles with her identity as a Chinese American woman, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and a lover. (Leah Allen)

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. ***The Sympathizer***

Fascinating novel about a young mixed-race French/Vietnamese man trying to find his way as an outsider (and maybe a spy) in the 1970s in Vietnam and the USA as the war crashes to an end. (Mike Roam)

Novey, Idra. ***Ways to Disappear***

A Portuguese translator gets caught up in a mystery when her author vanishes. As a language dork and a mystery lover, nothing made me happier than reading this book. (Sarah Moon)

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

I find it hard to imagine anyone has had more fun writing a novel than O'Brien had writing this one. It is a wildly funny, mythological, drunken, subversive, and mind-bendingly experimental novel that pulsates with energy and a distinctly Irish appreciation for the ridiculous. Characters drug their author and revolt. Handball is played off a giant's backside. The plot...well...there are cowboys and Irish devils called Pookas and wheels within wheels, narratively speaking. (Patrick Stayer)

Park, Patricia. ***Re Jane***

This *Jane Eyre*-inspired tale of an orphaned young woman raised in Queens is a perfect summer read. Jane was born in Korea, raised in Flushing, and finds herself becoming a nanny in Park Slope. There are several twists and turns, and you will be surprised where this story goes—the crazy wife in the attic is now alive and a women's studies professor, and Mr. Rochester is not quite as noble as he was in the original. From Flushing, to Park Slope, to Seoul and back, this book will keep you guessing—and entertained. (Stephanie Schragger)

Patchett, Ann. ***Bel Canto***

When a novel begins with the arrival of terrorists, we expect the worst. Instead, Patchett gives us the best of human beings, a reminder of the transcendent and transformational power of art. A giant WOW! (Marty Skoble)

Plutarch. **Parallel Lives**

Written in the late 1st century AD, this work by Plutarch explores a cast of antiquity's most famous/infamous figures. These range from his contemporaries to the giants of ancient Roman and Greek history. His vignettes go beyond your average history, as Plutarch's goal is to locate each individual's ethics and how they shaped the decisions that made these figures popular, or not. His biographies are filled with celebrated accomplishments and scathing judgment. *Parallel Lives'* historical importance aside, this is a book that has been read for the last 2000 years. Join the club! (Andrew Neville)

Price, Richard and Harry Brandt. **The Whites**

A gritty noir-ish thriller, great for a quick escapist read. You'll enjoy being able to picture all of the NYC landmarks and maybe a neighborhood haunt or two. The cop language makes for some great inside-baseball. (Eli Forsythe)

Rahman, Zia Haider. **In the Light of What We Know**

Money and market manipulation, theoretical and practical mathematics, politics and prejudice, love and friendship and betrayal, history and revision: this psychologically complex and literary novel is stunning. (Marty Skoble)

Rankine, Claudia. **Citizen: An American Lyric**

Lyric essays and images. "Leaving the day to itself, you close the door behind you and pour a bowl of cereal, then another, and would a third..." (p. 79). This book is about being black, but it might also be about being full and still being hungry. About appetite and sweat. Somehow, it might also be about tennis. About seeing and not seeing. And about not being seen. (Cathy Fuerst)

Ruhl, Sarah. **Dear Elizabeth** (audio book version of the play available on digital library)

A love affair in letters between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell.

BISHOP

We wished our two souls  
might return like gulls  
to the rock.

LOWELL

In the end,  
the water was too cold for us.

(Cathy Fuerst)

Sattouf, Riad. **The Arab of the Future: A Childhood in the Middle East, 1978-1984**

Beautiful illustrated/comic story of childhood of mixed culture child (French mother, Syrian father) growing up in France, Libya, and Syria, where he hopes to find friends, and sees sad casual violence and religious hatred. (Mike Roam)

Sherr, Lynn. **Sally Ride: America's First Woman in Space**

This is a wonderful bio of the USA's first woman in space. Sally Ride, a PhD astrophysicist at Stanford and nationally ranked tennis player, was among six women to join the NASA astronaut corps in 1978. After years of training (and wrestling with a fighter pilot culture that was not used to working with women as equals), she flew into space several times and then continued her science-based public career by serving on government committees. She investigated the fatal crashes of shuttles *Columbia* and *Challenger*, worked at Stanford as a nuclear weapons policy specialist, was a physics professor, and started "Sally Ride Science" which encourages youth to view science as cool. (Mike Roam)

Shikibu, Murasaki. **The Tale of Genji** and **The Pillow Book** by Sei Shonagon

Widely considered to be the world's first novel, *The Tale of Genji* is a sprawling, multigenerational epic masterpiece, loosely based on the historical court intrigues of late 10th-century imperial Japan. Rich and vivid in detail, Genji brings the world of the Heian period aristocracy to life. I feel as though I've spent the last two months there, breathing in the elegant, incense-perfumed air, perhaps engaging in witty and sophisticated repartee with an enchanting lady-in-waiting, accompanied by the delicate tones of the thirteen-string koto. If the nuances of refined medieval Japanese culture are your cup of tea—chrysanthemums heavy with dew like the tear-drenched sleeves of an abandoned lover; the shimmering moon emerging from behind the clouds like a seductive glance over a lacquered fan—then Genji is the book for you. And if thirteen hundred pages of concubines, clandestine affairs, and the minutiae of hair, dress, and social hierarchy are not enough for you, there is *The Pillow Book*, the intimate diary of a palace gentlewoman of the same period. Charming, funny, and saturated with detailed observations of society, *The Pillow Book* provides a delightful and entrancing window into a lost world of grace, elegance, and meticulous aesthetic sensibility. (Paul Lockhart)



Shilts, Gary. ***And The Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic***

The history of the AIDS epidemic written by investigative journalist Randy Shilts, who himself died of the disease seven years after the book was published in 1987. The book consists of arresting stories of people affected by the disease, interspersed with crusading political commentary. Shilts argues that the epidemic was allowed to happen by people who could have taken action to stop it, but did not. In so many ways, the band continues to play on. (Denise Rinaldo)

Simic, Charles. ***The Lunatic***

Marvelous poems from a master poet. Enough said. (Marty Skoble)

Sittenfeld, Curtis. ***Eligible***

Loved Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*? Well, even if you haven't yet read the legendary classic, you won't be disappointed with Sittenfeld's hilarious riff on it. Liz and Jane, the two oldest of the five Bennett sisters, return home to Cincinnati for the summer while their father recovers from a heart attack. Having all five daughters under one roof seems to exacerbate Mrs. Bennet's frustration that not even one of them has managed to find a suitable husband. Also includes witty repartee, reality television, a spider infestation and, of course, Fitzwilliam Darcy. (Ragan O'Malley)

Smith, Patti. ***M Train***

A slender, beautifully written glimpse into one little known aspect of the life of this multi-talented artist. The photographs are wonderfully idiosyncratic. (Marty Skoble)

Stevenson, Bryan. ***Just Mercy***

A couple of my old students who are now public defenders recommended this to me. Stevenson is a defense attorney who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated mainly to helping the wrongly convicted. As Stevenson shows, there are a lot of wrongly convicted out there in the American justice system. (Michael Donohue)

Strout, Elizabeth. ***My Name is Lucy Barton***

Anyone who is a mother or a daughter or has one, or loves someone who is or has a mother or daughter, might enjoy this very beautiful and patient novel about a mother and daughter. It is both quiet and deep, and I found it extremely moving. (Liz Fodaski)

Sweeney, Cynthia D'Apris. ***The Nest***

This debut novel explores the complicated relationships between four siblings who have just learned that their long-awaited trust fund—"The Nest"—will no longer appear. Rather than being annoying, the characters in this book (well, some of them) are endearing, and the stories of the four different families are ultimately compelling and engaging as they navigate some major life changes. (Stephanie Schragger)

Talbott, Jeff. ***The Submission*** (play)

First presented Off-Broadway in 2011. Self-described "very, very gay" Danny tries to hire Emilie, a young black actress, to 'go undercover.' Danny asks Emilie to pretend to be the writer of his script that has recently been accepted by Humana, a prestigious theater festival. Hoping to increase his chance of production, Danny submitted the play under the pen name Shaleeha G'ntamobi. He summarizes the play as being about "an alcoholic black mother and her card-sharp son trying to get out of the Projects." Emilie finds his proposition suspect ("... and what happens to me when you are revealed to be the white dude who pretended to be Shaleeha Nohgo – whatever"). Yet, attracted to the play's story and potential for financial gain, Emilie hesitatingly agrees to the ruse. Eventually, one lie leads to another. *The Submission* is fast-moving, unsentimental and provocative, raising topics of identity, authorship/ownership, artistic practice, economics, race, gender, and prejudice both quiet and overt. Talbott's language is stylistically rhythmic, yet colloquial; one has the feeling of overhearing conversation. (Laura Barnett)

Tango, Tom. Mitchel Lichtman and Andy Dolphin. ***The Book: Playing the Percentages in Baseball***

In baseball, "the book," an unwritten book, has always loomed large. It told managers when to bunt, when to pinch hit for their slumping batters, who should bat leadoff and when to guard the lines. It was based on instinct and "feel" and, yes, occasional moments of wisdom, and passed down through the generations. The book recommended here is "the book" rewritten with the power of mathematics, logic and controlled comparisons. Beware, it will change the way you watch the game and might even make you question the many received wisdoms we all take for granted. (Jared Cross)

Thompson, Craig. **Blankets**

A heart-breaking love story of young (teens and 20s) characters from Christian families. A graphic novel. (Mike Roam)

Tyler, Anne. **The Beginner's Goodbye**

A brilliant first line sets the table: "The strangest thing about my wife's return from the dead was how other people reacted." The rest would delight Kilgore Trout and will, I promise, make you shake your head in happy wonder. (Marty Skoble)

Walker, Andrew. **"Eat the Heart of the Infidel": The Harrowing of Nigeria and the Rise of Boko Haram**

The title tries to make use of the headlines, but the book goes way behind those headlines. It is a well-researched, entertainingly-written narrative history of the Western Sudan, the area south of the Sahara and north of the rainforest from the west coast of Africa to Lake Chad, which was civilized from the 10th century, converted to Islam in the 12th, made a center of learning in the 16th, and last brought together in one empire in the early 19th century by Dan Fodio and the Sokoto caliphs, before being redivided by European powers. Now that the remake of "Roots" has taken account of the fact that Kunta Kinte was a Muslim from a fair-sized city in this region, enslaved by fellow Mandinkas before being sold to Englishmen in Virginia; and the newspapers have been reporting that Salafist Islamic jihadist groups have launched an atrocity-filled civil war there, it is great to have the long back story that focuses on those events and helps explain them. (Bill Everdell)

Warner, Sylvia Townsend. **Lolly Willowes**

One of the oddest novels I've ever read, this 1926 cult classic tells of an unmarried Englishwoman who gradually decides to leave bourgeois society and become a witch. Yes, you read that right. (Michael Donohue)

Wilkerson, Isabel. **The Warmth of Other Suns**

Deeply absorbing narrative history of the Great Migration. Wilkerson focuses on three people—their lives in the Jim Crow South, their decisions to migrate to the North or West, and finally the complex difficulties they faced in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. An absolute must-read. (Michael Donohue)

Williams, John and John McGahern. **Stoner**

This may be the most profound tragedy of a true hero I have ever encountered. With a narrative flowing smoothly and effortlessly with subtlety, the book displays the ordinary life of an ordinary scholar, whose journey was paved with love and virtues but led to emptiness and sadness. A master as he is, John Williams didn't illuminate the life of Stoner, the main character, with any plot twists. To read this book is to struggle with Stoner, who always tried to live and give, despite the fact that his day-to-day existence was filled with vain attempts and endless regrets. (Meredith Yinting Hu)

Wilson, G. Willow, and Adrian Alphona. **Ms. Marvel: No Normal**

Wonderful comic book from Marvel comics featuring outsider superhero Kamala Khan, a young Muslim woman from Jersey City. (Mike Roam)

Woodard, Colin. **American Nations**

This book is like peering under the hood of US political discourse. 50 states? Red vs Blue? North vs South? Not so fast, says Colin Woodard, who argues that the USA can be understood as eleven distinct and geographically well-defined "nations," each bearing the cultural mark of the original Europeans who first colonized the area. One example: European settlers in the deep south were English slavers from the Bahamas who wanted to build a new slave-state on the continental US, while the Europeans who settled New England were Puritans. What was the role of government for each group? For the Puritans, "government" meant collective self-government with voluntary taxation to pay for churches and schools, while for the slavers "government" meant an armed force designed to protect the elites and help oppress the workers. Can you see echoes of this in contemporary Democratic and Republican economic policy? I think you can. The list goes on. Fascinating stuff. (Jascha Narveson)

Wulf, Andrea. **The Invention of Nature**

This biography of the German naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt is recommended to those interested in the origins of ecological thought—Humboldt invented the Gaia hypothesis—and to those interested in the transition from 18th-century Enlightenment thought to 19th-century Romanticism. It's no *Age of Wonders*, and it drags in the second half, but the opening adventures—nerding out with Goethe, scaling Chimborazo with fragile bulb of mercury for an altimeter—are great. (Ben Rutter)

Yashima, Taro. **Crow Boy**

One of my favorite childhood books, beautifully illustrated and written by Taro Yashima about a boy out of sync with his classmates, but in tune with other aspects of life. A child's book for all ages. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Young, Larry and Brian Alexander. **The Chemistry Between Us: Love, Sex and the Science of Attraction**

This book talks about the chemistry of love, of addiction, of fidelity, and why we do what we do as human beings. It's so interesting! (Daniel Radoff)

Zunshine, Lisa. **Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel**

A theoretical work that is highly readable. Zunshine tries to explain why we bother reading fiction, and her explanations are not philosophical but scientific. Her account of the cognitive benefits and pleasures of fiction may surprise you. Along the way she offers interesting discussions of *Lolita*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and other novels. (Michael Donohue)

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