

## *The English Department*

*Fox Lane High School / P.O. Box 390/ Bedford, NY 10506 / 914-241-6035*

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### **To Fox Lane High School Students *Summer Reading***

**For All Freshmen and Sophomores**

**For All Juniors and Seniors Not in AP Courses or English 3H**

One of our important goals is to help our students experience the pleasure of reading. We don't always succeed, of course. During the school year, we usually study required books and stories, and we attach grades to the activities that surround reading. While these activities are important, they do not always make reading a pleasure.

The summer can be different. **We are asking you to read two books during the vacation, but you have complete freedom to choose those books.** As in past years, we have compiled a list of titles – suggestions we hope students will enjoy. Teachers from other departments have also recommended some of their favorite books. You can find out more about these titles by visiting local book stores and libraries or by seeking information on the Internet. The list of recommended titles is also posted on the English Department's web site.

But you may also read two books that friends or family have recommended, two that you have been meaning to read for some time, or two that you stumble upon while browsing the shelves in a local library. **All that matters to the English Department is that you return to school with two books fresh in your memory.**

Different English teachers will ask you to reflect upon your reading in different ways. Some may ask you to write formally about the two books; some may form groups for students to share their responses to the reading; some may ask for informal journal writing about the stories or characters, the facts and ideas, you discovered in the reading. All English teachers, in one way or another, will use the summer reading to start a conversation about why individuals like to read, what they look for in a book, and how they approach particular kinds of reading. That's an important conversation at the beginning of an English class.

So find two books (fiction or non-fiction), read them thoughtfully, and return to school prepared to share and explain your thoughts and feelings about each one. And remember, if you start a book and don't like it within the first thirty or forty pages, set it aside and find another. This reading should be a pleasure.

Sincerely,

Del Shortliffe Coordinator of English [dshortliffe1876@bcsdny.org](mailto:dshortliffe1876@bcsdny.org)

## RECOMMENDED BY THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

### **The Anubis Gates** by Tim Powers

Tim Powers does a wonderful job blending the genres of science fiction, thriller, and fantasy into this novel. The action of the book moves, through time travel, to pre-1800 England. The protagonist, a scholar from our time, must learn to fend for himself and battle villains while trying to learn how to survive in a time period for which his modern upbringing leaves him unprepared. His encounters with literary figures of the time adds flavor to an already exciting and fast-paced book.

### **Blood Meridian** by Cormac McCarthy

In this shockingly brutal and beautiful historical novel, McCarthy deconstructs the myth of Manifest Destiny and the cowboy as hero. The novel presents a gang of men of varying races, ethnicities, and ideologies. They fight together and they fight each other. It is one of the most difficult of American novels and one of the most worthwhile for what it says about both evil and good in mankind.

### **Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame, Selected Poems 1955-73** by Charles Bukowski

If you like the Beat Generation approach to life, Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Kerouac's *On the Road*, then live with Bukowski for a while. These are gritty poems about being in a fist fight with life and getting your nose bloody. The poems will also make you laugh out loud because Bukowski is so rudely direct.

### **Ceremony** by Leslie Marmon Silko

Silko's narrative style and integration of her Acoma culture make this an important and historic novel. It is the life of a young Acoma man upon his return to his Indian reservation after serving in WWII. If you have an interest in understanding contemporary Native struggles, this is a great choice. If you are a creative writer or you want the challenge of a college-level read, this is also a great choice.

### **The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: A Memoir of Life in Death** by Jean-Dominique Bauby

This slim memoir tells the story of former *Elle* magazine editor-in-chief, Jean-Dominique Bauby, who suffered a massive stroke that left him completely paralyzed except for his left eye. Unable to escape the confinement of his own imagination, he develops a code of language, using his eyelid and eye movement to dictate his memoir letter by letter. This memoir is extraordinary, via the blink of an eye, Bauby is able to convey the sadness, desperation, humor, and warmth of his unique life. He gives us all hope.

### **Everything Is Illuminated** by Jonathan Safran Foer

"With only a yellowing photograph in hand, a young man...sets out to find the woman who may or may not have saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Accompanied by an old man haunted by memories of war...and the unforgettable Alex, a young Ukrainian translator who speaks in an [hilariously]...butchered English, he is led on a ...journey over a devastated landscape and into an unexpected past" [from the paperback book jacket]. This book made its young author famous in 2002. It is brilliantly written, very entertaining, and full of heart and thoughtfulness.

### **The Glass Castle** by Jeanette Walls

This is a humorous and insightful memoir of a girl who was raised by bright, abusive, loving, homeless, and peculiar parents. It is a quick and captivating read.

### **Here, Bullet** by Brian Turner

A collection of powerful poems written by a soldier of the Iraqi War. In his poetry, Turner captures all the cultural and ironic complexity of the war yet all the poems are assessable. A great read for anyone who likes Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*.

**In the Time of the Butterflies** by Julia Alvarez

Alvarez is known for the popular novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. *In the Time of the Butterflies* follows the lives of the Mirabal sisters, known as "Las Mariposas" or "the Butterflies" who fought for independence under the Dominican dictator Trujillo. Alvarez takes these martyrs and makes them very human in her fictional account of their brief lives. She chooses the one surviving Mirabal sister as the narrator for this uplifting story of sisters who fight for a better world. Fans of Alvarez will enjoy this book as much as I did last summer. Juniors and seniors may be most suited for this particular book.

**Life of Pi** by Yann Martel

This highly original novel won the 2001 Booker Prize (the British Commonwealth's equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize in America). It deserved all that fuss. The narrator is a young Indian man who, suffering a shipwreck while moving his family zoo from India to Canada, must survive on the high seas – storm-wracked and filled with psychological terrors – while hoping for rescue in the lifeboat he shares with a tiger he was had rescued impulsively from the storm and sinking ship. A mind-bending surprise ending adds a whole new level of exciting adventure and meaning to this fantastic yet somehow believable tale.

**The Monkey Wrench Gang** by Edward Abbey

Abbey's novel is about a group of four members of an earth-first environmental movement. The four members, three men and one woman, go around the West sabotaging projects they deem ecologically unsound. Despite its strong message, the story and characters are very funny. It is the novel that inspired the formation of the infamous Earth First! movement and aroused all those folks who now do the important work of sitting in redwood trees.

**Ragtime** by E. L. Doctorow

Set primarily in Westchester County's New Rochelle, the novel follows the stories of real (Houdini and Freud) and fictional characters (Father, Mother, Younger Brother, and the Little Boy) as they move from innocence to disillusionment, from peace time to the beginnings of racial conflict and World War I. Meanwhile, the story of a counterpart family - Mameh, Tateh, and the Little Girl - unfolds in the ghetto, where the Jewish immigrant family struggles for survival. Unbeknownst to both families, their stories are linked by those of the others.

This novel is evocative of a time and place for which I'm nostalgic, even though it predates my personal history. Doctorow masterfully weaves together disparate stories while incorporating real events and people. It's beautifully written and engaging. I devoured it in two days' time.

**The Sirens of Titan** by Kurt Vonnegut

This novel, a mix of philosophy, science fiction, humor, and political commentary, tells the story of Malachi Constant, the wealthiest and most depraved man in the world. The protagonist is recruited by a branch of the military to serve on Mars in preparation for an attack on Earth. In the process, Malachi Constant is sent on a tour of the solar system, where he meets Tralfamadorian robots and Mercurian Harmoniums. Throughout the novel, the reader is left to ponder the question of free will and the overall forces that propel Constant toward his ultimate destiny. The novel is set in an alternate universe, where the absurd is commonplace and nothing is as it seems.

**RECOMMENDED BY THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT**

**Colleges That Change Lives** by Loren Pope

This book profiles forty excellent though less well-known colleges around the country, and Loren Pope makes a case for considering these schools over the brand-name schools that tend to preoccupy high school students and their families. These schools "outdo the Ivies and research universities in producing winners."

## RECOMMENDED BY THE MATH DEPARTMENT

### **Digital Fortress** by Dan Brown

This book tells the story of the NSA's cryptology department having a server so strong it could break any code given to it. It is a great book for people who are interested in learning about cryptology but is also a very interesting thriller along the same lines as *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*.

### **Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions** by Edwin Abbot

This classic masterpiece of mathematical fiction describes the adventures of A. Square, an inhabitant of a two-dimensional world.

### **Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So** by Ian Stewart

A sequel to *Flatland*, this book explores our present understanding of the shape and origin of the universe, the nature of space, time, and matter, as well as modern geometries and their applications.

### **The French Mathematician** by Tom Petsinis

A novel about the life of Evariste Galois, the young, overemotional, impetuous, and headstrong genius whose quest for truth led him to tragedy.

### **IN CODE: A Mathematical Journey** by Sarah Flannery

Sarah Flannery, overall winner of the 1999 Intel Competition and Ireland's Young Scientist of the Year 1999 writes about how she moved from simple math puzzles to her winning project in Cryptography.

### **The Lady Tasting Tea: How Statistics Revolutionized Science in the Twentieth Century**

by David Salsburg

At a summer tea party in Cambridge, England, a guest states that tea poured into milk tastes different from milk poured into tea. This and other wonderful anecdotes tell the story of how Statistics became a Science.

### **The Man Who Knew Too Much: Alan Turing and the Invention of the Computer** by David Leavitt

Turing's Famous 1936 doctoral dissertation proposed an imaginary programmable calculating machine. Turing went on to be one of the people who cracked the Nazi's Enigma Code, thus ensuring the Allies victory in WWII. After the war, Turing became a champion of Artificial Intelligence, formulating the famous Turing Test that challenges our ideas of human consciousness.

### **The Man who Loved Only Numbers** by Paul Hoffman

This is the story of Paul Erdos, his genius, oddness, warmth, and wonderful sense of humor.

### **A Mathematician's Apology** by G.H. Hardy

An account of his life, and what it is like to be a creative artist.

### **Whom the Gods Love: The story of Evariste Galois** by Leopold Infeld

This wonderful biography of the young French Mathematician was written by a famous physicist.

## RECOMMENDED BY THE SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

### **Cadillac Desert : The American West and Its Disappearing Water** by Marc Reisner

An extraordinarily well-written look at the events that threaten the American West with crisis and collapse. Water- Earth's most precious resource- has been at the center of social, political, economic, and human drama since the settling of the West. Reisner captures this drama through the telling of fascinating anecdotes and a broad overview of American history.

**Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World** by Mark Kurlansky This book details the "life" of a fish that has had an enormous impact on human history. In *Cod*, Kurlansky challenges the reader to think about a fishery from a variety of angles- economic, social, political, and environmental. This is a wonderful read for anyone with familial ties to the New England tradition.

**The Double Helix** by James D. Watson

Watson was one of the three 1960 Nobel Prize recipients, who were first to describe the shape of DNA, the discovery that launched us into the modern age of genetics, leading to a better understanding of genetic diseases and the mapping of the human genome. Here Watson writes to appeal to non-scientists who might not be familiar with the technicalities of the research. The book was immediately controversial among scientists, with several colleagues strongly chastising Watson for presenting the journey in a way which demeaned important contributors to the discovery. It is also burdened by some blatant chauvinistic statements made about female colleagues and cutting insults regarding the personalities, sisters, and professional integrity of his friends. Still, the spirit of discovery is strong throughout the book, and although we all know the outcome, there are passages near the end that leave your heart beating faster and keep you turning the pages. It's also an immensely important book about how science is done.

**Eva** by Peter Dickinson

Thirteen year old Eva wakes up in the hospital unable to remember anything since the picnic on the beach. Her mother leans over the bed and begins to explain. A traffic accident, a long coma... But there is something, Eva senses, she is not being told, some other price she must pay to be alive at all. What have they done, with their amazing medical techniques, to save her?

**The Giver** by Lois Lowery

In a utopian community where there are no choices – where everyone has his or her place in the world assigned according to gifts and interests – the time has come for 12-year-old Jonas to become the new Receiver of Memory. He will be the one to bear the collective memories of a society that lives only in the present, where "Sameness" is the rule. But Jonas soon recognizes the losses and discovers the lie that supports his community. He decides he will change his world – but he cannot predict how that change will come about, or what that change will mean for himself and the "newchild" Gabriel, whom he has resolved to protect.

**The Physics of Star Trek** by Lawrence M. Krauss

Everyone knows Star Trek is fiction, but warp drives and transporters and holodecks don't seem altogether implausible. Are any of these futuristic inventions fundamentally outlawed by physics as we understand it today? *The Physics of Star Trek* takes a lighthearted look at this subject, speculating on how the wonders of Star Trek technology might actually work--and, in some cases, revealing why the inventions are impossible or impractical even for an advanced civilization. (Example: "dematerializing" a person for transport would require about as much energy as is released by a 100-megaton hydrogen bomb.)

**The Physics of Superheroes** by James Kakalios

*The Physics of Superheroes* applies the reality of physics to the fantasy of comic books. James Kakalios explores the scientific plausibility of the powers and feats of the most famous superheroes—and discovers that in many cases the comic writers got their science surprisingly right. Along the way he provides an engaging and witty commentary while introducing the lay reader to both classic and cutting-edge concepts in physics, including:

- What Superman's strength can tell us about the Newtonian physics of force, mass, and acceleration
- How Iceman's and Storm's powers illustrate the principles of thermal dynamics
- The physics behind the death of Spider-Man's girlfriend Gwen Stacy
- Why physics professors gone bad are the most dangerous evil geniuses!

**Silent Spring** by Rachel Carson

Often credited with jump-starting the modern environmental movement, Carson's eye-opening expose of the toll that pesticides and related chemicals take on our environment is a foundational work in environmental science. On one hand, she describes the wondrous beauty that can be found throughout our nation, while on the other, she details the foolish, short-sited human mistakes that threaten its existence.

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT**

**A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier** by Ishmael Beah

16 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list. The true story of Beah's traumatic life as an orphaned twelve-year-old in the terrifying civil war in Sierra Leone. Lost and afraid in a chaotic and murderous land, he is forced into a militia, kept constantly high on drugs, and turned into a mindless killer. Yet he is saved by the United Nations, rehabilitated, and discovered by a program dedicated to helping child victims of war. This startling memoir takes readers into horror but brings them back to a sense of remarkable hope.

**Amazing Grace: Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation** by Jonathan Kozol.

This is the true accounting of the state of public education in the United States. It really makes one question the concepts of equality, justice and fairness in the United States.

**The Beatles: A Biography** by Bob Spitz (2005).

Definitive biography of four working class youths from Liverpool that changed popular music forever. More than a fan-zine, romanticized account of people, places and songs, this beautifully written, engaging book lets you experience all the highs and lows of the Beatles' remarkable career up to their breakup. Not just for Beatles fans, this is a big book with a big pay-off.

**Confessions of an Economic Hit Man: How the U.S. Uses Globalization to Cheat Poor Countries Out of Trillions** by John Perkins

Perkins reflects on his past career as an economic consultant who describes his work as immoral, calling himself a former economic hit man - a highly paid professional who cheated countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. A good read for Eco/Gov and SUPA Economics students.

**Eastern Approaches** by Fitzroy McClean.

This is the fascinating memoir of a British agent, who recalls his work with a handful of irregulars behind the lines in Rommel's Africa, Nazi-leaning Persia, and Tito's splintered Yugoslavia. More than ever, this book reinforces the contention that it's the work of a few that determines the course of history.

**Lonesome Dove** by Larry McMurtry (1985).

An epic story of the American West with a cast of characters you will never forget. You'll laugh, you'll cry, and you won't be able to put this book down. This perfect summer read won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

**My Name is Iran** by Davar Ardalan

This is the memoir of a woman living through the Iranian Revolution. Publisher's Weekly, quoted at amazon.com, writes that, "while her prose is plain, Ardalan's testimony to the feminist spirit of the pioneering women in her family, and in the face of centuries-long strictures against the advancement of women, is a supreme achievement."

**My Sister's Keeper** by Jodi Piccoult.

This is an inspiring novel about family relationships and ethical/moral dilemmas. It would be a great summer read as it is impossible to put down. Required reading for FLHS bioethics and some college philosophy courses.

