

FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL
STUDENT-TEACHER SUMMER READING (2015-2016)

last updated: June 1, 2015

Many teachers, not just English teachers, like to read and talk about books—and many different kinds of books, not just the kinds that occur to English teachers to select, stimulate great discussions. For more than 10 years, members of the Upper School faculty have created a list of diverse books to share and discuss with students in grades 9-12. We're confident that we've put together a collection that will appeal to all kinds of readers.

You'll find many books listed below, each with the name of a recommending teacher attached. After taking some time to peruse the list and check out several of the books, choose one and read it. When we come back to school in the fall, we'll organize book discussion groups—about a class block in length—where you will talk about the book with the teacher who recommended it and the other Upper School students who chose to read it.

In preparation for this discussion, we strongly encourage you to bring a copy of the book to the meeting (library books and e-versions are most welcome). Make sure you have a few things to say about the book when your group meets—you should expect to write down a few of your thoughts or reactions to the book before or during the discussion.

Please note that this is considered one of the first significant assignments of the academic year for your English class; if it's clear that you did not read a book, you will be assigned to read a book chosen by your English teacher. Occasionally, we offer books that have been on this list in previous years; we expect you to choose a different title than one you've read in the past. (Yes, we *do* keep track!)

How It Went Down by Kekla Magoon

Ms. Torpey

From *Booklist*: "An African American boy runs from the corner market, hunched over and wearing a hoodie. A man shouts, 'Come back here!' A car stops in the street, someone yells, 'He has a gun!' And suddenly, 16-year-old Tariq Johnson is on the ground, dead from two shots fired at his back. The shooter, a white man, is free after claiming self-defense, but police don't find a weapon on Tariq. Everyone has an opinion about what happened, but the only person who knows for sure no longer has a voice."

Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee

Dr. Patterson & Ms. Kelleher

From *Amazon*: *Go Set a Watchman* features many of the characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird* some twenty years later. Returning home to Maycomb to visit her father, Jean Louise Finch—Scout—struggles with issues both personal and political, involving Atticus, society, and the small Alabama town that shaped her.

Available July 14, 2015

We Were Liars by E. Lockhart

Dr. Schuster

From *Barnesandnoble.com*: A beautiful and distinguished family. A private island. A brilliant, damaged girl; a passionate, political boy. A group of four friends—the Liars—whose friendship turns destructive. A revolution. An accident. A secret. Lies upon lies. True love. The truth. Read it. And if anyone asks you how it ends, just LIE.

Chocolate and Zucchini: Daily Adventures in a Parisian Kitchen

Mr. Crauderueff

by Clotilde Dusoulier

Do you like to eat? Do you like to cook what you eat? Read this cookbook, then! Clotilde Dusoulier is a Parisian book author and blogger (chocolateandzucchini.com) who writes in English about the simple, delicious dishes that can be made with fresh ingredients our own kitchens. In the process, she also shares how food is important to her family and her sense of well-being. Join us for a discussion of this tasty cookbook. **Oh, and bring in your own culinary creation to share with the group! It doesn't have to be from this cookbook - only made by your own hands. It's the sharing that's important :-)**

Station Eleven by Emily St John Mandel

Ms. Novo

(available as an e-book now and in paperback in early June)

Dr. Eleven, a physicist, lives on Space Station Eleven after escaping an alien takeover of Earth in the comic book series that gives this book its title. The comic books provide a central link between the world in which they were created, before a devastating flu epidemic wipes out virtually all of humankind, and the world in which a small number of survivors near Chicago read them. Many of the people whose lives we follow are artists. A recurring message, “survival is insufficient,” is emblazoned on the side of the Traveling Symphony, an itinerant group of musicians and Shakespearean actors, and tattooed on the arm of Kirsten, one of its members and the owner of one of the two surviving sets of Dr. Eleven comics. In addition to its ingenious plot, connecting people and events from both sides of the apocalyptic divide, this novel takes on big questions about human existence. If survival is insufficient, what makes a human life worth living? In the face of incredible danger and loss, the brave characters of this novel move toward the future with resourcefulness, talent and hope.

Forgotten Country by Catherine Chung

Ms. Kelleher

From *Booklist*: “Chung’s superb debut examines the twin hearts of cruelty and compassion between sisters in particular and family in general. Korean immigrant and grad student Janie, born Jeehyun, and her younger sister, Hannah, known as Haejin in their native tongue, struggle to maintain even the veneer of a sisterly bond as they at times gracefully float together, then violently come apart, throughout their lives. When Hannah abruptly disappears from the family fold, Janie is charged by their father with finding her and bringing her back. Haunted by childhood memories of her grandmother’s story about the family being cursed with lost sisters for generations, Janie feels compelled to find Hannah yet bitterly resentful as well. A second harrowing blow to the family lends urgency to Janie’s search while providing deeper introspection about the fragile and implacable bonds that hold a family together even across the seemingly impassable chasm of different cultures and changing generations.”

The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China:
The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun

Carl Bradley

Penguin classics edition, translated by Julia Lovell

I have been wanting to read his collection for a long time. Lu Xun was born in 1881 - and died in 1936. He is considered one of the greatest and most radical writers from his era.

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen

Ms. Guerin

Austen's first novel follows the story of the lovely Dashwood sisters and their mother after the death of the patriarch of the family. Would Jane be a feminist if she was alive today? I think so ... funny and poignant, this novel follows the young ladies to their new home, a meagre cottage on a distant relative's property, where they experience love, romance, and heartbreak.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Alex Haley

Mr. Hall

From *Amazon*: Malcolm X's searing memoir belongs on the small shelf of great autobiographies. The reasons are many: the blistering honesty with which he recounts his transformation from a bitter, self-destructive petty criminal into an articulate political activist, the continued relevance of his militant analysis of white racism, and his emphasis on self-respect and self-help for African Americans. And there's the vividness with which he depicts black popular culture--try as he might to criticize those lindy hops at Boston's Roseland dance hall from the perspective of his Muslim faith, he can't help but make them sound pretty wonderful.

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

Dwight Dunston and Colin Angevine

In 2010, Michelle Alexander wrote this powerful piece about the justice system in America. Since its publication, the startling facts and comments presented have been the catalyst for many conversations, inside and outside of the classroom, in regards to America's political, economic, and, most importantly, moral and ethical standings in the 21st century. The contents of this book have Colin and Dwight, two graduates of Friends' Central School, reflecting on the past and envisioning a brighter future ... Will you dream with us?

Openly Straight by Bill Konigsberg

Mr. Vernacchio

I'm always interested in reading new works of fiction about LGBTQ teens. This novel tells a backwards coming out story. Here's a blurb about the story from *Booklist*, a journal published by the American Library Association: "Now a junior in high school, Rafe, who has been out since he was 14, is thoroughly sick of being labeled 'the gay kid.' So he does something bold: he leaves his Colorado school to enroll in a private boys' academy in New England, where no one knows he's gay and he can be a label-free, 'openly straight' part of a group of guys ... Lambda Literary Award winner Bill Konigsberg has written an exceptionally intelligent, thought-provoking coming-of-age novel about the labels people apply to us and that we, perversely, apply to ourselves ... *Openly Straight* is altogether one of the best gay-themed novels of the last 10 years." Sounds like fun, doesn't it? I look forward to talking with folks about this book in September.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

Mr. Kennedy

The sudden, shocking discovery of a neighbor's murdered dog sends Christopher Boone out on a quest for justice. No ordinary teen detective, Christopher's gifts -- extraordinary mathematical skills and a pattern-recognition talent equal to that of his hero, Sherlock Holmes -- are matched by some severe limitations -- he hates to be touched and does not understand everyday human emotions. His search for answers, both to the killing and how to get along in a world he sees as confusing and hostile, makes for an engaging, funny, and poignant read. A page-turner with a lot more on its mind than simply solving the crime, this novel is recommended for all.

I'll Give You The Sun by Jandy Nelson

Ms. Mazullo

I have two very good friends who each have a twin sibling, and their sibling relationships have fascinated me for the 30+ years we have been friends. Join me in a twin adventure about 13-year-old Jude and her twin brother, Noah, who grew up incredibly close and later find themselves barely speaking.

From the publisher: "Something has happened to wreck the twins in different and dramatic ways ... until Jude meets a cocky, broken, beautiful boy, as well as someone else—an even more unpredictable new force in her life. The early years are Noah's story to tell. The later years are Jude's. What the twins don't realize is that they each have only half the story, and if they could just find their way back to one another, they'd have a chance to remake their world."

Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions with Illustrations by the Author
by Edwin A. Abbott

Ms. Maraziti

Come join me on the journey where a new friend, A. SQUARE, tells us about the structure and social dynamics of his two-dimensional world. One day, he encounters worlds of other dimensions, and we will listen as he struggles to explain this new worldview to his more narrow-minded co-inhabitants of Flatland. Written over 100 years ago, this satire of society is timelessly applicable and particularly interesting to discussions of alternative cosmological geometries. If you like sci-fi and wit, this short book is for you. It's even fully available online at [http://www.geom.uiuc.edu/~banchoff/Flatland/!](http://www.geom.uiuc.edu/~banchoff/Flatland/)

The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Non-Believer

Mr. Dankoff

edited by Christopher Hitchens

This anthology includes both arguments that dispute the existence of God and some that demonstrate the ill effects of organized religion. As someone who teaches religion in a historical context, I know that many students are interested in this topic and want to live a moral life based on science and reason. Of course, you don't have to be an atheist to appreciate these short anti-religious excerpts; many clergy and believing scholars recommend *The Portable Atheist* to their students.

For Summer Reading, read the introduction and the following chapters: 8: John Stuart Mill, 17: Emma Goldman, 22: Albert Einstein, 23: George Orwell, 26: Bertrand Russell, 29: Carl Sagan, 34: Daniel Dennett, 36: Richard Dawkins, 39: Elizabeth Anderson, 40: Penn Jillette, 41: Ian McEwan, 43: Salman Rushdie, 46: A. C. Grayling.

The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace: A Brilliant Young Man Who Left Newark for the Ivy League by Jeff Hobbs

Mr. MacFarlane

(from *Amazon*) "A heartfelt and riveting biography of the short life of a talented young African-American man who escapes the slums of Newark for Yale University only to succumb to the dangers of the streets—and of one's own nature—when he returns home."

The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown

Ms. McConnell

This book is about the University of Washington's men's crew team and their quest to win the gold medal at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It's a sports story with psychological and historical underpinnings. I have chosen this book to read out of my interest in athletics as well as depression-era history. The book weaves the story of the relationship between the crew team, their coaches, and the boat maker.

Odd's End by Tim Wynne-Jones

Dr. Graham

A little creepy, Wynne-Jones' book is the story of a young man whose family lost their home when he was a child. Tortured by the loss of his family home -- and really, really angry at his father for losing the family fortune and home -- the young man travels the world to share other peoples' homes - usually while they are still in the home. It's a little bit creepy and it will make you think twice when you go home and your stuff isn't exactly where you left it.

Becoming Freud by Adam Phillips

Mme. Ostroff-Weinberg

Freud analyzed every component of his patients' minds. Ah! In this short, easy read, Phillips turns the table, analyzing Freud! Vivian Gornick, in her *New York Times* review, says it perfectly: "Adam Phillips is, I believe, one of the most engaging writers in the world on analysis and the analytic movement ... Phillips's own love of the beauty and power of psychoanalysis here serves both him and the reader wonderfully well." Provocative to have Freud on the analyst's couch, don't you think?

Armada by Ernest Cline (to be published on July 14)

Ms. Schwoebel

Last year, we read *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, and I feel compelled to read Cline's next book, *Armada*.

From *Amazon*: Zack Lightman has spent his life dreaming that the real world could be a little more like the countless science fiction books, movies, and videogames he's spent his life consuming. But hey, there's nothing wrong with a little escapism, right? After all, Zack knows the difference between fantasy and reality. And then he sees the flying saucer. Even stranger, the alien ship he's staring at is straight out of the video game he plays every night, a hugely popular online flight simulator called *Armada*--in which gamers just happen to be protecting the earth from alien invaders. It's Zack's chance, at last, to play the hero. But even through the terror and exhilaration, he can't help thinking back to all those science-fiction stories he grew up with, and wondering: Doesn't something about this scenario seem a little ... familiar?

A Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

Mr. Gruber

Penguin Books, available paperback, kindle edition, even audible

<http://www.amazon.com/Tale-Time-Being-Novel/dp/0143124870>

This very engaging novel weaves together two stories in complex layers. The first is the story of a young woman in Japan (Nao) who was born in California and struggles to find her place in her Japanese school and family. The second storyline follows a novelist in British Columbia (Ruth) who finds Nao's journal washed up on her Canadian beach. It is a beautiful and intricate tale that includes aspects of Japanese and Pacific Northwest cultures, elements of Zen Buddhist practice, and even some quantum physics. I love this story most as a way to bring to life the message of a 13th century teaching by Zen master Eihei Dogen. Dogen wrote an essay called "The Time Being," which connects with the novel's title and unique approach to the story.

The Hairdresser of Harare by Tendai Huchu

Mr. Fisher

A story set in a hairdressing salon in Harare, Zimbabwe. The story is not easy to classify. The book is relatively short and offers some intriguing characters. Great glimpse into modern class and culture of modern Zimbabwe.

Re Jane by Patricia Park

Ms. Benjamin

A contemporary retelling of *Jane Eyre*, from the perspective of a half-Korean, half-American orphan in New York City, and then Seoul. I loved *Jane Eyre* when I first read it, and I'm looking forward to reading this different perspective. The *New York Times* says, "*Re Jane* grapples with real issues of identity, race and culture from global and historical perspectives — even as it concerns itself with whether Jane and Ed will make a go of it. In fact, it's often more engaging, for those of us less versed in Korean culture, to learn about concepts such as nunchi (traditional manners and sense of hierarchy) and tap-tap-hae (a frustrating sense of claustrophobia, either physical or emotional) than it is to fret about Jane and Ed's fraught union."

Steppin' Razor: The Life of Peter Tosh by John Masouri

Mr. Keaton

One of the world's most famous reggae musicians, Peter Tosh left his mark on the world with his music, as a crusader for justice, a Rastafarian and cultural icon. If Bob Marley (Tosh's musical partner in the original Wailers) was an MLK figure emerging from the developing world in the 70s, Tosh was most certainly Malcolm X or Huey P. Newton. Finally, Masouri has penned the biography that so many Tosh enthusiasts have been waiting for.

Burial Rites by Hannah Kent

Dr. Harnett

I have become fascinated with Iceland since my trip there this past February. This is a historical novel written about Agnes Magnusdottir, who was convicted in Iceland for the murders of two men in 1828 and publicly beheaded; she is the last person to have been executed in Iceland. Letters and documents translated from Icelandic at the beginning of each chapter provide primary sources on which the work is based. The author states, "Many known and established facts about Agnes's life and the murders have been reproduced in the novel, and events have either been drawn directly from the record, or are the result of speculation; they are fictional likelihoods."

Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic by Bette Bao Lord

Mr. Rosengarten

Bette Bao Lord was born in China, moved to the United States at age 8, became a successful novelist, and married the U.S. ambassador to China. She ended up going back to China with her husband and was there during the student uprisings in 1989 (Tiananmen Square). This book was published in 1991 and is, I'm told, a mosaic of different voices of Chinese people she met who reflected about life in China - both in the recent past and the book's present. Mr. Calder said that it was the best piece he had read about the Cultural Revolution, in particular. I'm eager to read it to continue my education about this fascinating, growing, and turbulent country through the eyes of those who live there. I would love some company (especially some of our students from China?) with whom to discuss it.

Singletasking by Devora Zack

Dr. Hanson

From *Amazon: Your Mind Can't Be Two Places at Once*. Too many of us have become addicted to the popular, enticing, dangerously misleading drug of multitasking. Devora Zack was once hooked herself. But she beat it and became more efficient, and you can too. There is a better way to deal with all the information and interruptions that bombard us today. *Singletasking* explains exactly how to clear and calm your mind, arrange your schedule and environment, and gently yet firmly manage the expectations of people around you so that you can accomplish a succession of tasks, one by one—and be infinitely more productive. *Singletasking* is the secret to success and sanity.

The Road to Character by David Brooks

Mr. Sellers

From *Amazon: In The Road to Character*, David Brooks focuses on the deeper values that should inform our lives. Looking to some of the world's greatest thinkers and inspiring leaders, Brooks explores how, through internal struggle and a sense of their own limitations, they have built a strong inner character. Labor activist Frances Perkins understood the need to suppress parts of herself so that she could be an instrument in a larger cause. Dwight Eisenhower organized his life not around impulsive self-expression but considered self-restraint. Dorothy Day, a devout Catholic convert and champion of the poor, learned as a young woman the vocabulary of simplicity and surrender. Civil rights pioneers A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin learned reticence and the logic of self-discipline, the need to distrust oneself even while waging a noble crusade. Blending psychology, politics, spirituality, and confessionals, *The Road to Character* provides an opportunity for us to rethink our priorities, and strive to build rich inner lives marked by humility and moral depth.