



Upper School English Summer Reading 2023

Congratulations on the successful completion of another action-packed year! Now we could all use a chance to breathe. We hope that no matter how you and your family are spending the summer vacation, the time away from school gives you an opportunity to relax, recover, and prepare for a new beginning in August.

We hope, also, that the summer gives you a chance to find a cozy corner in which to read a good book. Or two. Or

as many as you please! Your English teachers ask that you read **TWO BOOKS** this summer in order to keep your skills sharp and your mind engaged. We further ask that you purchase your own copies of the books and bring those books with you on the first day of class in August. **THE LIST** we have compiled for you (beginning on the next page) offers a range of wonderful options, sorted by interest and accompanied by blurbs we hope will entice you into trying them. Here is what we suggest:

Read something that interests you. There is absolutely no point in reading something you don't like, but you might have to do a little investigating before you hit on the right title. Books on the list are loosely organized by genre—Literary/ Realistic Fiction; Mystery/Thriller/Science Fiction; Historical Fiction; Nonfiction—in the hopes you may more easily find something to your liking. **YA (young adult) books are listed in the genre categories rather than in a category of their own.**

Read something that is new for you.

Read something that is at the right level for you, in terms of difficulty and content. As above, it may take a little looking around before you find just the right book. Every family and every reader will make different decisions.

Read something that is the right choice for you and for your family. Again, it may take a little looking around before you find just the right book. Every family and every reader will make different decisions based on content. You are making choices here.

Do not watch a movie or read an online summary (Spark Notes, Shmoop, Cliffs Notes) as a substitute for the books. This reading is not for us; it's for you. Don't shortchange yourself.

Important note: AP English Language and AP English Literature DO have specific summer reading assignments, which will be distributed separately.

If you have any questions, see your English teacher before the end of the school year. Many of the books on this list are already in our classrooms, so feel free to come by and peruse a title or two.

Have a wonderful summer! Happy reading!

TVS Upper School English Department

TVS Upper School English Summer Reading 2023

THE LIST!!!

~Literary/Realistic Fiction~

***Clap When You Land*, by Elizabeth Acevedo**

A tragic plane crash brings both endings and beginnings when it forces two young women from very different worlds to discover how much they have in common.

***Purple Hibiscus*, by Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie**

Kambili and Jaja live a life that looks perfect from the outside...but sometimes appearances can deceive. Political turmoil that splits them from their parents gives the siblings a whole new perspective on family in a novel Amazon calls this "an exquisite novel about the emotional turmoil of adolescence, the powerful bonds of family, and the bright promise of freedom."

***Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know*, by Samira Ahmed**

A little bit of time travel, a little bit of romance, a little bit of mystery and a whole lot of fun: the very 21st-century life of Khayyam Maquet intertwines with that of a mysterious young woman who lived two centuries earlier in Paris, the City of Light.

***Catalyst*, by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Kate Malone's laserlike focus on getting into MIT—the only thing she thinks matters—is completely disrupted when her life turns upside down in the most surprising ways. What's your bump plan when the only plan you ever made goes out the window?

***The Illustrated Man*, by Ray Bradbury**

This first-rate collection by a terrific storyteller has a little bit of everything, all based on the premise that a mysterious man's full-body tattoos come to life every night to tell eighteen wonderful and strange and wonderfully strange stories.

***Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte**

We are tempted to call this novel an "old" book—indeed, it is a "classic"—and yet when it was published, in 1847, it was radically progressive in its examination of class and gender and sensibility. Follow Jane on her compelling journey through oppression and challenge and, ultimately, to love. Kids are always surprised by how much they like this one.

***People of the Book*, by Geraldine Brooks**

Did you ever think a book could be the protagonist of a novel? Pulitzer Prize-winner Geraldine Brooks traces the journey of the exquisite Sarajevo Haggadah, an ancient Jewish text, through five hundred years in this novel that is part mystery, part historical fiction, and all based on a true story.

***The Great Santini or The Lords of Discipline*, by Pat Conroy**

Two books, one great author. Conroy is a master storyteller who draws powerful material from his own experiences. Whether you're looking for a story about the complexities of having a Marine drill sergeant for a father or a tale of honor, corruption, and yes, love at a military boarding school. these two books have you covered!

***Rebecca*, by Daphne DuMaurier**

A young wife finds herself living in a spectacular coastal home, not just with her new husband, but with the household's memory of and devotion to his first wife, the powerful and enigmatic title character. How do you assert yourself against a ghost?

***A Room With A View*, by E.M. Forster**

Are you thinking of joining TVS's summer trip to Italy in 2023? You NEED to read this gorgeous book. A chance encounter in a Florence hotel leads to a most unlikely series of events and discoveries for Lucy Honeychurch, a young Englishwoman who then has a hard time returning home to the life she thought she wanted to lead.

***Bee Season*, by Myla Goldberg**

The Neumanns are...interesting. *Bee Season* unfolds just how interesting they are as it investigates each of the family members' quirks and misadventures, all while chronicling young Eliza Neumann's national spelling bee aspirations. This description makes it sound like a funny book, which it isn't, but it is a good read.

***Water for Elephants*, by Sara Gruen**

Jacob Jankowski is 93 and in a nursing home when we first meet him, though most of the book features a flashback to when he was in his 20s and working as a vet with a travelling circus. Love, bad guys, and elephants—good story.

***The Mayor of Casterbridge*, by Thomas Hardy**

This story out of nineteenth century England sounds as though it belongs on daytime tv: a man gets drunk, argues with his wife and then auctions her and their daughter off at the town fair to a young sailor just traveling through. Repenting too late to recover his family, the man becomes (you knew this) the mayor of a town called (oh yes) Casterbridge, which he rules strictly but fairly for the short term, keeping the details of his mysteriously missing family conveniently vague. You know what's going to happen, though, don't you....?

***A Thousand Ships*, by Natalie Haynes**

This first-rate book is a re-telling of the story of the Trojan War (you know: Odysseus, Achilles, that huge wooden horse...) from the point of view of the women: the wives and sisters and mothers of the heroes who usually get all the air time. The story is told roughly backwards, beginning at the end of the war as all of the Trojan women are waiting to be distributed to the Greek men who will now control their lives. Towards the end of the book, before the war begins, the divine Gaia, Mother Earth, begs Zeus to relieve her of the weight of the humans who are becoming burdensome to her. The obvious solution is a war: a golden apple rolls to a stop in front of three powerful goddesses, a curly-haired shepherd must make a choice, and the rest, as they say, is ancient history...

***The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini**

This runaway bestseller traces the friendship of two biologically unrelated boys who grow up as brothers and whose journeys take them on differing paths through heartache and betrayal and, ultimately, to redemption and forgiveness.

***A Prayer for Owen Meany*, by John Irving**

John Wheelwright and Owen Meany grow up together in a small town in New Hampshire, and despite the many differences in their backgrounds and temperaments, their fast friendship sees them through the challenges of teenage years through the Vietnam War and beyond. The title character is interesting for so many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that he believes he is an instrument of God and that he knows—sort of—the date and circumstances of his own death. You'll have to read the book to find out whether he's right.

***The Weight of Ink*, by Rachel Kadish**

This novel opens in contemporary London, with the discovery of a trove of centuries-old papers of considerable value to scholars and clerics alike. The story then flashes back and forth from the efforts of present-day researchers to discover the identity of the mysterious scribe who penned the document to the fascinating and compelling story of the scribe herself: the brilliant and ambitious Ester Velasquez, who refuses to allow the fact that she is a woman in a conservative seventeenth century Jewish community to keep her from fulfilling her dreams.

***The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, by Stephen King**

Yes, that Stephen King. But this is not the Stephen King you're used to, and no creepy clowns will reach up out of the storm drains, I promise. But in this short tale of a simple yet potentially deadly mistake made for a completely ordinary reason on a normal afternoon hike, the menacing presence following nine-year-old Trisha might be a bear, might be a killer, might be something less...natural. The suspense will get you with this one, and the very ending is, as they say, to die for.

***The Bean Trees*, by Barbara Kingsolver**

Taylor Greer tries to run away from all that makes life so challenging, only to find that a completely unexpected gift offers her the biggest challenge—and the biggest gift—of all. This novel redefines family with humor, with urgency, and with compassion.

Admission, by Jean Hanff Korelitz

The cover of my copy features Tina Fey and Paul Rudd, who played the book's two main characters in the film....but I read it anyway, and was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the writing in this book. It's a great story, of intense relevance to our older students, especially, and when a book about admissions at Princeton is written by a former Princeton admissions officer, you kind of assume you're getting the real deal or something similar to it. A great summer read.

Life of Pi, by Yann Martel

You saw the movie, so you know Pi is a person. A person stuck in one of life's more unlikely scenarios: 227 days in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger named Mr. Parker. It only gets stranger from there...and that's only a third of the book!

Circe, by Madeline Miller

In most tellings of the story of the Odyssey, Circe is a "witch," famous only for turning Odysseus' men into pigs. Miller's book fleshes out this character in fascinating and gorgeous detail, allowing us a look behind the curtain into the experience of an immortal with very human questions and longings and ambitions. I do not know anyone who has read this book and not absolutely loved it.

Slay, by Brittney Morris

Amazon calls this title "*Ready Player One* meets *The Hate U Give*," and they're right. Kiera Johnson splits her time between the demands of high school/family/boyfriend and the online life she leads with hundreds of thousands of other teens in the online multiplayer VR RPG she wrote herself.

Where the Crawdads Sing, by Delia Owens

This runaway best seller--part murder mystery, part coming of age story--is a love song to the natural world as much as it is the story of Kya Clark, the mysterious "Marsh Girl" who lives alone in the marshes on the coast of North Carolina.

Me Before You, by JoJo Reyes

Louisa Grant—Lou—needs a job badly, so she jumps at the chance to work for the Traynor family. Soon, though, what she thought was a housekeeping and odd jobs assignment becomes something much more meaningful, much more urgent, and Lou realizes exactly how much depends on her creativity, her compassion, and her own personal stubbornness. Halfway through, the reader is led to believe the whole story may be headed in the direction of impossible coincidence and a corny ending. Not so, by a long shot.

Long Way Down, by Jason Reynolds

Sixty seconds is all it takes for Will to ride the elevator from his apartment down to the first floor of the building, and sixty seconds is all he has in which to make the biggest decision of his life.

Lost in the River of Grass, by Ginny Rorby

You will recognize a lot more about this book than just our own Everglades! Two teenagers ditch class for a day in the 'Glades and have to get out the hard way: on foot.

Challenger Deep, by Neal Shusterman

Shusterman's fictional account of a young man's psychotic break with reality and the family's struggle to help him find his way back is based on the real-life experience of the author's actual son, Brendan. The beginning of this book is confusing, but it's worth figuring out what's going on so you can follow along with the fictional Caden as he fights to climb out of the depths and back to the surface.

Dear Martin, by Nic Stone

Like *The Hate You Give* and *All American Boys*, Stone's novel is a "ripped from the headlines" story about the fraught relationship between some young black men and some police. This book does an exceptional job of introducing the reader to the full range of complex responses and attitudes towards the novel's central event: a terrible moment of confusion in which a good deed is misinterpreted as a predatory crime.

***Olive Kittredge*, by Elizabeth Strout**

This is an exquisite collection of short stories, all of which revolve around a retired math teacher in a small town in Maine. Strout's writing weaves a kind of a spell around you, and builds the characters' world so so persuasively that you can almost feel the texture of the knitted blanket on the bed. These are quiet stories, but this is as true as fiction gets.

***Sing, Unburied, Sing*, by Jesmyn Ward**

Amazon calls this one "an intimate portrait of three generations of a family and an epic tale of hope and struggle." They forgot to mention the ghosts, who are key players in this story: just when you think you've gotten used to the almost predictable appearance of one, another one comes along and blows your mind with truth and pain. It's the story of a journey, a family, and a young boy looking for role models.

~Mystery/Thriller/Fantasy/Science Fiction/Speculative Fiction~

***The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*, by Alan Bradley**

This book begins with the narrator—a precocious young scientist who has a particular fascination for poison—tied up in the closet, and spins out from there into a quirky and compelling murder mystery, filled with unlikely clues and surprising turns. You'll love the voice of Flavia de Luce, whom Amazon calls a "fearless, funny, and unflappable kid sleuth."

***Ender's Game*, by Orson Scott Card**

"Ender" Wiggin is a young boy whose preternatural quick thinking and leadership skills just might be the only defense the planet has against the attacking alien "Buggers." Honestly, the book is a lot better than the movie.

***The Girl With All The Gifts*, by M.R. Carey**

In myth, of course, the girl with all the gifts is Pandora, whose infamous jar released all manner of evil into the world. In this fascinating story, the girl with all this gifts is Melanie: young, intelligent, affectionate, and apparently incredibly dangerous, based on how she is treated by those around her. Melanie and a ragtag group of soldiers and scientists are launched on a desperate race to survive a gruesome fate. The only question is whether Melanie is their savior or their enemy. Mrs. Redondo recommended this one to me and I could not put it down.

***The Hunt for Red October*, by Tom Clancy**

Clancy's first thriller might still be his best: a rogue Soviet submarine is trying to defect to the United States...or is it attacking? Cold War era politics complicate matters in this suspenseful thriller.

***Prey*, by Michael Crichton**

Writers of science fiction have always been interested in the possibility of technology that can think for itself—think H.A.L., from Arthur C. Clarke's epic *2001: A Space Odyssey*—thereby becoming a potential threat to humanity. This novel spins out the story of what happens when robots can communicate and think with each other, and their collective target is us.

***The Marrow Thieves*, by Cherie Dimaline**

In this alternative history, a group of Native Americans—old and young, family and strangers—run for their lives, heading north to evade hunters who seek to harvest their bone marrow. Because in the devastation of a post-global warming landscape, only the indigenous people still have the ability to dream, an ability in great demand and worth a lot of money to anyone who can manage to procure it.

***Stepsister or Poisoned*, by Jennifer Donnelly**

These two are fun reads, both retelling a classic fairy tale (Cinderella and Snow White, respectively) but with a twist that is born of the characters' contemporary traits, issues, and dialogue.

***The Circle*, by Dave Eggers**

Mae just landed a plum job at a fictional company that sounds a lot like a cross between Apple and Google. This fast-paced thriller touches on very contemporary issues of privacy and internet freedom, identity, and security as it explores the sometimes alarming complexities of our relationship with and dependence on technology.

***The Never Ending Story*, by Michael Ende**

Can Bastian save the imaginary world of Fantastica when his extraordinary book comes to life? You loved the movie: now enjoy the book! BTW people who know both swear that the book is much, much better... I have it on good authority that if you are going to read this, it's worth finding the edition that uses two different color inks, one for the real world and one for Fantastica.

***Neverwhere*, by Neil Gaiman**

This novel is so hard to describe! Richard Mayhew rescues a young and injured girl—a complete stranger—on the streets of London, and his life becomes an epic quest through a strange, fictionalized underworld that quickly weaves its spell around him and around the reader.

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

Autistic 15-year-old Christopher Browne, the narrator of this popular book, has an amazing memory and a biting sense of humor. When he is falsely accused of killing his neighbor's poodle, he takes it upon himself to discover who really did it. The result is a funny, poignant, compelling novel that students love.

***Dune*, by Frank Herbert**

This novel is the beginning of an epic science fiction series chronicling the struggles for political and economic power in a parallel universe in which "spice" is a rare and valued commodity. It's kind of like Star Wars meets Game of Thrones on a distant desert planet. With giant worms.

***Wool*, by Hugh Howey**

Near as a reader can tell at the beginning of this amazing book, a large number of people are living in a silo that is deeply sunk into the ground, while all around the silo a poisoned landscape stretches, barren and desolate, as far as anyone can see into the distance. The harshest punishment meted out by this community's justice system involves sending people out to clean the windows at the top of the silo, knowing that nothing can protect them for long from the toxic air. The silo, a spiral staircase winding up its center like DNA, holds everything necessary to maintain life, including vast hydroponic gardens and a vital water supply system. It also holds some pretty significant secrets about how and why everyone ended up trapped in this strange cylindrical world. Howey wrote the first chapter of this book online and fans loved it so much they clamored for more. The result is three volumes called the *Silo Series*. The book is currently being made into an Apple+ series starring Tim Robbins, David Oyelowo, Common, and Rebecca Ferguson. I can't wait!

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

It's hard to figure out why the atmosphere at Hailsham, an exclusive prep school in England, is so strained, so strange, so strangely strained. Once the students start figuring out the ultimate purpose of their education, things get a lot clearer. Or not.

***Dry*, by Neal Shusterman**

Neal Shusterman is the master of asking "what if....?" and then answering his own question with a book readers love. So...what if you turned on the water faucet...and nothing came out? How would we react? behave? survive? Kirkus Reviews sums it up by saying that "no one does doom like Neal Shusterman."

***Gamechanger*, by Neal Shusterman**

One nasty collision on the football field is all it takes to knock Ash into another dimension...and then another, and then another.... In a novel that begins "You're not going to believe me" and end with "Bring it on," the narrator guides us through the mind-bending iterations of universes and selves that result from that one fateful helmet-to-helmet hit.

***Scythe*, by Neal Shusterman**

If a world in which humanity has rid itself of all disease and death sounds too good to be true, that's because it is. This first book in a well-loved series introduces us to "scythes," whose responsibility it is to cull the population through a series of dispassionate and unbiased murders. It's a perfect solution. Except scythes are human, and humans, by definition, are not perfect.

11/22/63: A Novel, by Stephen King

What would happen if someone discovered a way to move back and forth between the present and a moment right before a major historical event—in this case, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy—and tried to change the course of history by preventing the event from happening at all? What if that person also fell in love in the past? Read this great story to find out.

Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore, by Robin Sloan

What a fun read! This is a book that combines the possibilities of cutting-edge technology with a mystery buried in a musty old used book store...except the title establishment isn't really a bookstore, it's more of a lending library, and the books all seem to be in some kind of code, and the customers aren't really buying them so much as they are investigating them. It's complicated...but that's part of what makes it interesting!

Station Eleven, by Emily St. John Mandel

This one hits pretty close to home in an age of COVID: an airborne pandemic races across the globe, wiping out millions and jeopardizing practically everything humanity has ever created or stood for. When everything is at stake, how do you hold on to what makes us human?

The Age of Miracles, by Karen Thompson Walker

This is the ultimate "what if?" story: what if the earth just started to slow down in its rotation so that the days grew incrementally longer and longer? How would humans adjust? keep time? follow routines? Find out what happens when discover you might not be able to depend on the most basic things you took for granted.

Project Hail Mary, by Andy Weir

You know what a "hail Mary" pass is in football: the final, desperate, no-holds-barred chance to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. There's nothing less at stake here than the future of humanity, and yet astronaut Ryland Grace can't even remember his name when he wakes up on the spaceship, let alone begin to figure out how to unravel the layers of mystery and challenge he must face in order to accomplish his task. And there's no one out there to help him. Maybe.

The Martian, by Andy Weir

You've seen the movie: now read the book. An intense Martian dust storm separates botanist Mark Watney from his crew, and assuming he is dead, they blast off and head for home. Except he is not dead, and he doesn't exactly feel like dying yet. Equipped with serious scientific skills and an abundance of determination and good humor, Watney sets about making a life for himself on a hostile planet.

Alif the Unseen, by G. Willow Wilson

This one is a great mix of technology, suspense, contemporary politics, myth, and romance, from a wonderful new writer. "Alif" is the handle of a young computer hacker who finds himself drawn against his will into intrigue and danger.

~Historical Fiction~**Once We Were Brothers, by Ronald Balson**

This great piece of storytelling begins with an extraordinary confrontation at the opera in present-day Chicago, and quickly rewinds the tape to tell a tale that is part family drama, part historical fiction, part romance, and all interesting. A great read!

The Girl With the Pearl Earring, by Tracy Chevalier

This fictionalized account of the story behind a famous painting by Johannes Vermeer takes us to 17th century Holland. Sixteen-year-old Griet works as a maidservant in the painter's household, cooking and cleaning and helping with the children, even while she develops her own eye for color, line, and space and becomes the model for the painting.

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

Amazon calls this Pulitzer Prize winner a “beautiful, stunningly ambitious instant *New York Times* bestseller about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.”

Anything by Jennifer Donnelly: *Revolution*, *A Northern Light*, *These Shallow Graves*, *The Tea Rose Trilogy*

Whether they are living through the French Revolution or the American Gilded Age, Donnelly's protagonists are strong and clear-sighted young women determined to confront any challenge to fulfill their dreams. Great stories.

***Cold Mountain*, by Charles Frazier**

The South is a mess at the end of the Civil War—a dangerous, bloody, chaotic mess—and through this mess walks a wounded soldier named Inman, determined to return home and rejoin Ada, the woman he loves and the only thing that keeps him going. She, meanwhile, has been struggling to run a farm and make a life out of the rubble. Neither knows for sure whether the other is even still alive, but hope and determination keep them both alive.

***The Invention of Wings*, by Sue Monk Kidd**

This is a beautiful novel about friendship and self-efficacy and human dignity that traces the friendship of two women joined by an unlikely bond.

***To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee**

One of fiction's most memorable narrators—seven-year-old Scout Finch—tells the story of one of fiction's wisest and most beloved characters—her father, Atticus Finch. Called upon to defend a man unjustly charged with a terrible crime, Atticus teaches, not just his children, but the entire town of Maycomb, Georgia and indeed, all of us, how to open our hearts wide enough to let someone else in.

***Song Yet Sung*, by James McBride**

This book is a great, great read—it has a cinematic feel to it in terms of its visualization of landscape and its characters seem larger than life, almost Shakespearean. The protagonist, Liz Spocott, is a Harriet Tubmanesque young woman, a slave on the run just before the Civil War. The beautifully written novel traces her journey north via the Underground Railroad, moving at a relentless pace right up to the explosively surprising ending of the book.

***Hamnet: A Novel of the Plague*, by Maggie O'Farrell**

One of the most famous men in the history of the entire planet—William Shakespeare—features in this entrancing book and yet is never named. He is simply a husband to the strong and resourceful Agnes and a father to Susanna, Judith, and the title character, Hamnet. One of the very few things we know about the historical figure of Shakespeare is that he had three children and Hamnet, the boy, died when he was eleven. And four years later his father wrote a play called *Hamlet*: a play about fathers and their sons, about family, about loss and loyalty and identity. This is a gorgeous book, and you do not have to have read a single play by Shakespeare to appreciate it.

***The Buddha in the Attic*, by Julie Otsuka**

This slim book is a gem. It is the story of the young women who were brought from Japan to marry Japanese men in San Francisco early in the years before World War II. Otsuka tells all their stories with a bit of writing magic: the women's voices are heard in chorus, detailing their individual experiences while using the first person plural “we.” It's a magical read. If you like it, read *When The Emperor Was Divine*, also by Otsuka.

***The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society*, by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows**

Guernsey, an island in the English Channel between southern England and France, was rather famously occupied and fortified by the Germans during World War II. The Literary and Potato Peel Society of this book's title is born out of the islanders' attempts to subvert the occupiers, and the novel features correspondence between Juliet Ashton, a writer in London, and Society members seeking the answer to a mystery.

***The Book Thief*, by Marcus Zusak**

This extraordinary book, narrated by Death itself, tells with compassion and even humor the compelling story of Liesl, her adopted parents, her best friend, and a desperate young man, all trying to survive the relentless horror of the Holocaust.

~Nonfiction: Science/Nature~

***The Canon: A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science*, by Natalie Angier**

This completely readable and thoroughly enjoyable set of essays explores the sciences in the world around us.

***The Everglades: River of Grass*, by Marjorie Stoneman Douglas**

Before 1947, the area of South Florida we now call the Everglades was deemed by most to be mere wasteland, worthy of nothing but human management and exploitation. Douglas's visionary book supported President Harry Truman in his effort to protect the complex and unique ecosystem; Everglades National Park was established in that same year.

***Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*, by Richard Feynman**

Richard Feynmann won the Nobel Prize in Physics, and it wasn't because he thinks inside the box! This collection of wacky episodes and extraordinary narratives will make you laugh...and think.

***Ignorance: How it Drives Science*, by Stuart Firestein**

According to the author, Columbia University professor Stuart Firestein, it is ignorance and not knowledge that drives research. The process of scientific inquiry and discovery is, he says, like "looking for a black cat in a dark room." You may never find the cat—the cat may not even be there, and you just don't know—but what's potentially most interesting is what you DO find, or MIGHT find, or CAN find!

Anything by Stephen Jay Gould: *Ever Since Darwin*, *Hen's Teeth and Horses' Toes*, *The Book of Life*, *Time's Arrow*, *Time's Cycle*...

The late Dr. Gould was a scientist at Harvard and a prolific writer of thoughtful, funny, thoroughly engaging essays about science and our world.

***Rocket Boys*, by Homer Hickam**

The funny, hair-raising, inspiring true story of a group of friends and a teacher determined to chart a different path than their families and town provided for them.

***Lab Girl*, by Hope Jahren**

According to Amazon, this one is "Warm, luminous, compulsively readable...*Lab Girl* vividly demonstrates the mountains that we can move when love and work come together."

***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, by William Kamkwamba**

Despite every single challenge his world presents him—hunger, drought, lack of schooling and lack of resources—14-year-old William Kamkwamba perseveres and ultimately prevails in a quest to change forever the lives of his family and village in Malawi.

***Mountains Beyond Mountains*, by Tracy Kidder**

A Haitian proverb tells us that "Beyond mountains, there are more mountains." Dr. Paul Farmer's global quest to cure infectious diseases serves as an object lesson in the power of hope and the human spirit as Dr. Farmer tackles one obstacle—one mountain—after another, after another, after another. An inspiring tale about the power of one person to make a difference in the world.

***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot**

The woman initially known only as HeLa donated—without her knowledge, without her consent, and certainly without any remuneration—cells that have proved instrumental in many major scientific advances of the twentieth century. And the ultimate irony? When this enormously popular book was published, her family could not afford health insurance. This is a story at the intersection of science and ethics and race: very timely, indeed.

***Longitude*, by Dava Sobel**

This story of one man's response to the challenge of his age will open your eyes, as so much good writing does, to things we take for granted every day.

***The Lives of a Cell*, by Lewis Thomas**

This collection of classic essays explores, in characteristically clear and personable prose, the complexity and interconnectedness of life on earth. If you enjoy this friendly voice, you might also like *Ever Since Darwin*, or some of the other marvelous essays by Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard biology professor and science essayist.

~Nonfiction: Military/Memoir/Florida/Social Issues~

***Tuesdays With Morrie*, by Mitch Albom**

It's amazing what you can learn when you know you don't have much time in which to learn it. The author spends precious time with a former professor learning life's most precious lesson in the teacher's last "class."

***Band of Brothers*, by Stephen Ambrose**

Author Stephen Ambrose interviewed surviving members of the 101st Airborne's E Company to put together this compelling history of an extraordinary group of warriors and friends from basic training through D Day and beyond.

***Black Ice*, by Lorene Cary**

Lorene Cary was in tenth grade in a Philadelphia public school when she was offered the opportunity to attend St. Paul's School, a prestigious New England boarding school. As an African American female at a school that had educated only white males for over a hundred years, Cary experiences an intense academic and social journey that she relates in prose that just sings.

***Zeitoun*, by Dave Eggers**

Arrested without explanation, caged publicly in the town square, prevented from contacting family or legal support and accused of being a terrorist: it's hard to imagine this happened right here in the United States, in the 21st century. But it did. Eggers' account of one man's experience in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina will open your eyes to the complex and sometimes terrifying aftereffects of the breakdown of familiarity and order.

***Unbroken*, by Laura Hillenbrand**

It's not surprising that the author of *Seabiscuit* would be intrigued by the life story of Louie Zamperini, and that his story would grip the imaginations of so many readers and movie-goers. This book chronicles the history of a scrappy juvenile delinquent turned Olympic athlete turned prisoner of war: the ultimate survivor.

***Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt**

How could a personal memoir about growing up devastatingly poor, and persistently hungry, with a violent alcoholic for a father, be...funny? This one definitely is. Frank McCourt is a gifted storyteller and a wise soul—let this great read take you away from the Florida heat and humidity to the dank gloom of Ireland in the 1930s.

***Reading Lolita in Tehran*, by Azar Nafisi**

Lest we take our freedom to read and think and speak for granted, have a look at this wonderful narrative about reading and thinking and speaking in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The author, an English professor at the University of Tehran, guides her students through Western classics such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Great Gatsby*. You will enjoy discovering these familiar works all over again through the lens of young people who fight every moment for things that are a part of our daily lives.

***Amusing Ourselves to Death*, by Neil Postman**

When Postman wrote this book in 1985, the internet didn't even exist yet, and yet his description of the insidious effects of screens (TV or computer) on virtually every aspect of our lives is chillingly prophetic.

***The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and The Crime That Changed Their Lives*, by Dashka Slater**

A ride home on the same bus seems to be all that Sasha and Richard share until the fateful day when one of them makes a decision that changes a lot of lives forever. This is a completely riveting and beautifully written book.

***The Right Stuff*, by Tom Wolfe**

This exploration of America's determination to explore space is part gripping journalism, part meticulous research, and all good read. Wolfe's portraits of these early space pioneers—Grissom, Yeager, Glenn, and more—are compelling in their gentle honesty and thorough truth.

***This Boy's Life*, by Tobias Wolff**

This darkly funny memoir provides the backstory of the author's twisted family and his escape from a sadistic stepfather and a town called...oh yes....Concrete.

***Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson**

This memoir in poems presents the half-in half-out existence of Woodson as a young girl torn between two very different ideas of home. The poetry is beautiful and very readable.

~Nonfiction: Sports and Outdoors~***Friday Night Lights*, by H.G. Bissinger**

The book that led to the series, this is the true story of high school football for the winningest team in Texas: the Permian Panthers. In Odessa, Texas, football isn't just for the players on the team or even the members of the high school: the whole community lives and dies according to the fortunes of the Panthers. The author followed the team for a full season, and the result is a great read and a gripping story.

***The Boys in the Boat*, by Daniel James Brown**

In 1936, a University of Washington rowing crew featuring sons of working-class families in the American Northwest stunned the world with an upset victory in Hitler's Berlin Olympics. Follow their very American story of grit and idealism and sheer determination.

***The Wave*, by Susan Casey**

Casey travels with legendary surfer Laird Hamilton in search of the world's biggest waves, and as she does, she reconstructs historical tales of waves that have swallowed ships and drowned villages.

***Seabiscuit*, by Laura Hillenbrand**

The book is named after the horse, but the horse's jockey and trainer and owner all compete for the reader's attention in this all-American story of all-American values: courage, stubbornness, and idealistic determination against all odds.

***Fire*, by Sebastian Junger**

Junger, the author of *The Perfect Storm*, takes us places we would not want to go ourselves, all in the name of adventure and good writing. This collection of essays begins at a breakneck pace with the smokejumpers of Colorado and finishes in war-ravaged Afghanistan. This is human interest reporting at its best.

***The Perfect Storm*, by Sebastian Junger**

Faced with a lose-lose situation, Billy Tyne and his crew make the only decision they can, only to come face-to-face with monster and lose. This book tells the true story of the Andrea Gail but is also a tribute to the gutsy men and women who make a hard living on an unforgiving sea.

***Shoeless Joe*, by W.P. Kinsella**

Baseball is the great American pastime—everyone knows that. Everyone should also know this all-American story about a man with a vision—an obsession—to build a baseball diamond in the middle of an Iowa cornfield. And that this book is about a lot more than a game. This book was the inspiration for the popular movie, *Field of Dreams*.

***Into Thin Air*, by Jon Krakauer**

This is a really good read: Krakauer writes well, and the story of this ill-fated journey will grab you right away and whisk you away from tropical heat and humidity to the slopes of Mt. Everest in 1997, when the author was part of a competitive and disastrous attempt to summit the world's highest mountain.

***Moneyball*, by Michael Lewis**

The true story of how the Oakland A's and manager Billy Beane won championships by paying more attention to numbers than to baseball.

***Muck City*, by Bryan Mealer**

Belle Glade—practically in our back yard—has sent no fewer than 27 football players to the NFL in just under 30 years. Did you know that?! This book tells the story, not just of the team and the program, but of a town facing formidable challenges and finding the courage and the character to beat the odds.

***Finding the Game*, by Gwendolyn Oxenham**

Follow this author on her global odyssey in search of pick-up soccer games. Oxenham was the youngest D1 athlete in NCAA history at 16, but soon after she graduated, women's professional soccer was no more; her back-up plan, such as it was, became this book.

***In the Heart of the Sea*, by Nathaniel Philbrick**

Moby Dick meets *The Perfect Storm* in this gripping true story of the whaleship Essex, rammed by a whale on its way to the South Pacific, leaving the crew at the mercy of the elements...and each other.

