



## Summer Reading List for Staff - 2008

Created by Library Media Specialists from the Howard County Public School System and Librarians from Howard County Library



### FICTION



**Berne, Suzanne. *Ghost at the Table*** - Prodded by her sister, Cynthia reluctantly agrees to spend Thanksgiving with her family in New England. In this exploration of sibling rivalry, do the sisters face the ghost of their dead mother, the ghost of their dying father, or simply the ghosts of their childhood selves? Berne ladles up enough dysfunction to intrigue everyone. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

**Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union: A Novel*** - Drawing on the conventions of the Chandlerian private-eye novel, Chabon creates an epic-scale alternate history in which Alaska, not Israel, is the embattled Jewish homeland. Chabon manipulates his bulging plot masterfully, but what allows the novel to soar is its humor and humanity. -*Booklist* Editors' Choice: Adult Books, 2007

**Drew, Alan. *Gardens of Water*** - Cultural values collide as two families, one Muslim and the other Christian, struggle with a forbidden romance between their teenage children. Family bonds, parental responsibilities and the changing nature of society all clash in the aftermath of Istanbul's 1999 earthquake. An unforgettable ending will leave readers questioning their own values and personal beliefs. -Lynn Rashid, Marriotts Ridge High School

**Enger, Leif. *Peace Like a River*** - To the list of great American child narrators that includes Huck Finn and Scout Finch, let us now add Reuben "Rube" Land, the asthmatic 11-year-old boy at the center of Enger's first novel, *Peace Like a River*. Rube recalls the events of his childhood, in small-town Minnesota circa 1962, in a voice that perfectly captures the poetic, verbal stoicism of the northern Great Plains. "Here's what I saw," Rube warns his readers. "Here's how it went. Make of it what you will." And Rube sees plenty. -Claire Dederer, Amazon.com

**Finn, Melanie. *Away from You*** - Ellie is suddenly called back to Kenya when her father dies. Ellie begins to reconcile the truth about her father, a secretive and abusive man, and his relationships with his mistress and his family. Alternating between colonial Kenya and the present day, this novel paints a portrait of a woman struggling to escape her past only to be faced with the prospect of healing. -Lynn Rashid, Marriotts Ridge High School

**Haddon, Mark. *A Spot of Bother*** - George, recently retired, thinks talking is "overrated" and greets the death of a friend with relief "that they would not be playing squash again." Obsessed with his own mortality, he barely registers the dramas around him: his wife is having an affair, his daughter is marrying a man she's not sure she loves, and his son is afraid to bring his boyfriend to the wedding. -*New Yorker*

**Lawson, Mary. *Other Side of the Bridge*** - It's an age-old story--two brothers in love with the same woman--but in Lawson's masterful hands, the emotive tale of Arthur and Jake Dunn and the young woman who comes between them takes on a luminous originality. Set in a backwoods village in northern Canada, the story flashes back to 1930 to establish the tenacity of the Dunn brothers' relationship, and leaps forward to 1950, where Lawson cannily introduces a fourth element to the standard love triangle. -Carol Haggas, *Booklist*

**McCaig, Donald. *Rhett Butler's People*** - Was it strictly necessary to our understanding of *Gone With the Winds* dashing hero to flesh out his back-story, replay famous

GWTW scenes from his perspective, and crank the plot past the original's astringent denouement? Perhaps not, but it's still a fun ride. In this authorized reimagining, Rhett, disowned son of a cruel South Carolina planter, is still a jaunty worldly-wise charmer, roguish but kind; Scarlett is still feisty, manipulative and neurotic; and the air of besieged decorum is slightly racier. The result is an engrossing update of GWTW that fans of the original will definitely give a damn about. -*Publisher's Weekly*

**Michaels, Anne. *Fugitive Pieces*** - The human spirit emerges from a traumatic experience in fugitive pieces. Michaels, a poet, sings the interlocking stories of three men of different generations affected by WWII. Using stunning images, she mesmerizes the reader with a tale of breath-taking beauty and pain. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

**Russell, Mary Doria. *A Thread of Grace: A Novel*** - In 1943, teenaged Claudette Blum scales the Alps with her father, hoping to find sanctuary in Italy. It took the author of the highly regarded *The Sparrow* five years to research this book, which highlights the network of Italians who saved 43,000 Jewish lives during World War II. -*Library Journal*

**See, Lisa. *Snowflower and the Secret Fan*** - The author takes readers to 19<sup>th</sup> century China to explore a complex friendship between two women. Lily is the daughter of a farmer in Puwei Village, and Snow Flower is the daughter of a respectable family from Tongkou, and though the two girls have very different backgrounds, Madame Wang pairs the two as laotong, or old sames, a bond that will last them a lifetime. See's writing is intricate and graceful, and her attention to detail never wavers, making for a lush, involving reading experience. - Kristine Huntley, *Booklist*

**Tan, Amy. *Saving Fish from Drowning: A Novel*** - Fish is based on the real-life disappearance of 12 American tourists in Myanmar. The narrator is Bibi Chen, dealer in Chinese antiques, who had arranged an art-oriented tour for her friends. When she dies under mysterious circumstances, the others decide to proceed, saying that Bibi will join them in spirit--an invitation she accepts. Mostly well-meaning, but ignorant and naive, the group lands in one hilarious situation after another due to cultural misunderstandings. -Sandy Freund, Richard Byrd Library, Fairfax County, VA

**Vickers, Salley. *The Other Side of You*** - David McBride, a psychiatrist living in the south of England, has a thriving practice, a beautiful wife, and a congenial circle of friends and colleagues. As this novel opens, he is attempting to get a suicidal patient, Elizabeth Cruikshank, to open up to him. McBride finally achieves a breakthrough with the enigmatic Elizabeth, but as her story unfolds, its ramifications have a huge and totally unexpected impact on McBride himself, both professionally and personally. -Roberta Rood

**Wolitzer, Hilma. *Doctor's Daughter: A Novel*** - Alice's parents had a perfect marriage. Did they? Alice is doing the right thing by keeping her son's problems from her husband. Is she? Alice's world falls apart. In this many-layered novel of ordinary life, Wolitzer writes an intimate, yet universal tale of human frailty. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

### HISTORICAL FICTION



**Ackroyd, Peter. *Fall of Troy*** - Heinrich Schliemann is the present stand-in for Heinrich Schliemann, wealthy businessman and amateur archeologist, whose quest for the lost city of Troy becomes an obsession. By the time you finish this novel, you'll be more afraid of the wrath of

Schliemann/Obermann than of the celebrated wrath of Achilles! -Roberta Rood

**Cross, Donna. *Pope Joan*** - Cross's first novel, based on the life of the controversial historical figure Pope Joan, is a fascinating and moving account of a woman's determination to learn despite the opposition of family and society. Born in 9<sup>th</sup>-century Frankland, Joan demonstrates her brilliance early but must hide her learning from her missionary father, who considers the education of women sacrilegious and dangerous. Cross vividly creates the 9<sup>th</sup>-century world, fraught with dangers from Vikings and Saracens, bloody warfare between brothers for political power, and palace intrigue for political favors. Above all, she brings to life a brilliant, compassionate woman who has to deny her gender to satisfy her desire for learning. -Kathy Piehl, *Library Journal*

**Follett, Ken. *Pillars of the Earth*** - Spanning 1123 to 1174, this epic chronicles the building of an English gothic cathedral. Church and state scheme for power, rival monarchs battle, and peasants suffer on a monumental scale. Add blood and bodice ripping and it's a page-turner. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

**Leshem, Ron. *Beaufort*** - "An important novel.... This is a picture of war from a soldier's point of view. Its language is crude, the body count rises, and yet the tenderness of the bonds among the men is extraordinary." -*Library Journal*, starred review

### MYSTERY/SUSPENSE



**Bannister, Jo. *The Tinderbox*** - Lawrence Schofield of Birmingham has never stopped mourning his daughter Cassie, who disappeared seven years ago. He has almost given up searching for her when he thinks he sees her in a film about homeless men, women, and children who live in barren stretches of London beneath highway overpasses. Like a knight on a quest, he sets out to find the daughter that he has never stopped missing and loving. -Roberta Rood

**Curzon, Clare. *The Edge*** - On a dark and stormy night, a farm manager discovers a body displayed on bales of hay in the barn of a Thames Valley manor house and summons the police. In short order three more bodies are found inside the house. Among the victims are two young girls, stabbed in the heart while sleeping. The others are a male and a female adult, each stabbed repeatedly, the man also shot and the woman sexually assaulted. Curzon creates characters of interest...but does not dig deeply into anyone's psyche. This is a good thing for readers who like their mysteries fast paced. And with this particular story, they should find a fascinating case study of a teen with serious issues. -Robert Saunderson, *School Library Journal*

**Franklin, Ariana. *Mistress of the Art of Death*** - At the behest of King Henry II, a deputation of three individuals is dispatched from Salerno, Italy, to Cambridge, England. Their brief: to find the perpetrator of a series of child murders. The team of investigators consists of famed sleuth Simon of Naples; Mansur, a Saracen, and Adelia, a physician. In this novel, Ariana Franklin has done a tremendous job of summoning forth the ghosts of medieval England and bringing them to busy, bustling life. -Roberta Rood

**Lippman, Laura. *What the Dead Know*** - Following a hit-and-run incident, a woman with no ID hints at details about an old crime that only someone involved in the offense would be likely to know. The suspenseful story shifts from the past to the present, revealing the viewpoints of the various characters. A Baltimore native (and WLHS graduate) and former "Sun" writer, Lippman used elements of the still-unsolved 1970s abduction of two teenage sisters in suburban Maryland to craft this page-

turner. -Molly G. Kelley, Office of Media and Educational Technology

**Oates, Joyce Carol. *Museum of Dr. Moses*** - A jogger meets a shocking fate, a husband gives his wife a gruesome welcome, children try to understand their serial-killer father. Oates presents a collection of studies in evil. They are intense, spooky, macabre, amusing and chillingly written by a master storyteller. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

**Penzler, Otto, ed. *The Black Lizard Big Book of Pulps*** "A detective long on brains and a copper long on brawn team up on a big-loot, murder case" (p. 65). This introduction to the story "Double Check" by Thomas Walsh gives the reader an indication of the types of stories to be found in this wonderful collection. - Ellen Levin, Hammond Middle School

**Rickman, Phil. *The Remains of an Altar*** - When the good people of Wychehill believe there's a ghost in their midst, the Reverend Merrily Watkins, a "Deliverance Minister," is called in to assist the local vicar. Wychehill is in the shadows of England's beautiful Malvern Hills. The composer Edward Elgar once lived there and drew inspiration from the surrounding countryside. And the ghost seems to be none other than Sir Edward himself! Meanwhile, Merrily's spirited teen-age daughter Jane is fighting her own battle to save the Malverns from ruinous development. -Roberta Rood

**Temple, Peter. *The Broken Shore*** - In Temple's beautifully written eighth crime novel, Joe Cashin, a city homicide cop recovering from an injury, returns to the quiet coastal area of South Australia where he grew up. There he investigates the beating death of elderly millionaire Charles Bourgoyne. After three aboriginal teens try to sell Bourgoyne's missing watch, the cops ambush the boys, killing two. When the department closes the case, Joe, a melancholy, combative cynic sympathetic to underdogs, decides to find the truth on his own. His unauthorized inquiry, which takes him both back in time and sideways into a netherworld of child pornography and sexual abuse, leads to a shocking conclusion. -*Publisher's Weekly*

## NONFICTION

**Ackerman, Diane. *The Zookeeper's Wife*** - The 1939 Nazi bombing of Warsaw left its beloved zoo in ruins with many of its animals killed or wounded. Worse was to come when Berlin zoo director Lutz Heck had surviving rare species shipped back to Germany as part of a Nazi breeding program and held a New Year's Eve hunting party for German officers to finish off the remaining animals. Witnessing this horror was the zookeeper's wife, who wondered, as she recalled later in her memoirs, how many humans would die in the same manner in the coming months. As Antonina Zabinski and her husband, Jan, soon learned, the Nazis had targeted Poland's large Jewish population for extermination, and the couple, who were already supplying food to friends in the Warsaw Ghetto, pledged to help more Jews. And help they did. -Wilda Williams, *Library Journal*

**Cheever, Susan. *American Bloomsbury: Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau: Their Lives, Their Loves, Their Work*** - A request to write a new introduction to Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* inspired the author to explore the literary atmosphere of Alcott's childhood. Cheever constructs a many-layered contemplation of this distinctive collection of American literary icons in their formative periods, and encompasses day-to-day events and the character of their attractions. -Gilbert Taylor, *Booklist*

**Dirda, Michael. *Classics for Pleasure*** - In this casually brilliant collection of great book recommendations, Dirda, a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for the *Washington Post* "Book World," discusses titles ranging from well-known favorites such as *Sherlock Holmes* and *Beowulf* to more obscure writers such as Jaroslav Hasek and John Masefield. -*Publisher's Weekly*

**Forshaw, Barry. *Rough Guide to Crime Fiction*** - In this deceptively small volume, Barry Forshaw has set himself a huge task; namely, to cover all the sub-genres in crime fiction and select the best representative titles in each. He ranges freely over the past century's output and comes up with some great recommendations, both for aficionados and those new to the genre. -Roberta Rood

**Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*** - Chris McCandless, an idealistic young man, abandoned all of his possessions and journeyed into the Alaskan wilderness in 1992, only to be found by hunters months later, dead. Author Krakauer begins his account with McCandless's tragic death. He then backtracks, outlining his subject's family history, travels, and inner life following McCandless's graduation from Emory University in 1992. This exploration of McCandless's odyssey in search of a "raw transcendent experience" provides some insight for families in similar crises and will prove popular with outdoor, recreation, and nature lovers. -Sandy Glover, *Library Journal*

**Levin, Mark. *Rescuing Sprite: A Dog Lover's Story of Joy and Anguish*** - Although Mark Levin is known as a constitutional lawyer and a nationally syndicated broadcaster, he is, first and foremost, a dog lover. In 1998, he and his family welcomed a half-Border Collie/half-Cocker Spaniel they named Pepsi into their lives. Six years later, his wife and son persuaded him to adopt a dog from the local shelter, a Spaniel mix. It turned out he was older than originally thought, and he was the most beautiful dog they'd ever seen. Their lives would never be the same. -*Editorial Review*

**McGinnis, Joe. *Never Enough*** - McGinnis (*Fatal Vision*) has produced another page-turning true-crime blockbuster. This surreal story of successful investment banker Robert Kissel and his compulsive-shopper wife Nancy living the seemingly perfect "expat" life in Hong Kong with their three children features plenty of money, sex, and greed. In McGinnis's compelling account, the Kissel family - full of potential but riven by endless battles - represent the American tragedy in which ambition and the pursuit of wealth turn deadly. -*Library Journal*

**Roiphe, Katie. *Uncommon Arrangements*** - "Desperate Housewives" meets its match in the antics of real life British literary luminaries. Roiphe is captivating in her exploration of the stranger-than-fiction marriages of the likes of H.G. Wells, Katherine Mansfield, and Rebecca West. -Sandy Gaffigan, Applications and Research Lab

**Stafford, David. *End Game, 1945: The Missing Final Chapter of World War II*** - The formal German surrender on May 8, 1945, did not end the violence and suffering in Europe. Sporadic fighting continued against diehard Axis units for several weeks, and the ordeal for civilians, forced laborers, concentration-camp inmates, and countless displaced persons continued. This is a riveting and powerful account of the winding down of a worldwide conflagration. -Jay Freeman, *Booklist*

## SCIENCE FICTION

**Brooks, Terry. *Armageddon's Children*** - The author envisions a chilling near-future U.S., where civilization has collapsed from environmental degradation, plagues, global warfare and supernatural threats. Longtime Brooks fans and newcomers will be riveted as the fate of the human and Elven worlds hangs in the balance. -*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

**Card, Orson Scott. *Magic Street*** - Mack Street is born in incredible circumstances in a prosperous Los Angeles African American neighborhood. Adopted by a single woman, Mack wanders the streets, spending time with neighborhood families, loved by all. Though Mack has always sensed his "otherness," one day he finds an entryway into another realm. Using Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night Dream* as a guide into the vast, timeless fantasy world, Mack becomes a player in an epic drama. Understanding this drama is Mack's challenge. His reward, if he can survive the trip, is discovering not only who he really is... but why he exists. --From the publisher, DelRey Books, Random House

**McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*** - Haunting and disturbing, McCarthy's apocalyptic novel chronicles the journey of a father and a son as they walk the road towards the sea. Facing the aftermath of a catastrophic event, father and son are left to scavenge for food while warding off other cannibalistic survivors. The nature of good versus evil is redefined as the father declares himself and his son to be the "good guys" while also fiercely protecting his son. -Lynn Rashid, Marriotts Ridge High School



## BIOGRAPHY

**bin Laden, Carmen. *Inside the Kingdom*** - Addicted to the "I-married-the-Mob" genre? Try this variation: smart women who marry Islamic fundamentalists. In 1973, Swiss-born Carmen fell in love with Yeslam bin Ladin, Osama's older brother; after a fairy-tale courtship, including a semester together at USC, the two married in Saudi Arabia. Alas, it wasn't long before the fantasy turned sinister. In 1988, Yeslam divorced Carmen, but by bringing charges against her in Saudi Arabia, made certain she feared for her life—and her daughters' freedom—if she ever again entered an Islamic country. Beyond Carmen's terrible story hovers the larger, later tragedy of 9/11. Remember, Carmen warns, the bin Laden brothers have always supported each other, financially and socially. When Osama dies, he'll certainly be replaced. The gravity of the events Carmen writes of, her insider's perspective and her engaging style make this memoir a page-turner - *Publisher's Weekly*

**Thomas, Abigail. *Three Dog Life*** - In these exquisitely written essays Thomas reflects on how her marriage had to be reinvented after the night her husband, Richard, took their dog, Harry, out for a walk, and Harry came home alone. Richard had been hit by a car. The traumatic head injury he suffered didn't kill him, but it rendered him susceptible to large-scale memory loss, hallucinations, and such wild rages that Thomas was forced to commit him to an institution. Thomas has elevated what could be, at best, an overemotional sermon or, at worst, a grim romp in self-pity, to a high plain of true inspiration. --Donna Chavez, *Booklist*

**Thomas, Clarence. *My Grandfather's Son*** - "I've never doubted the greatness of a country in which a person like me could travel all the way from Pinpoint to Capitol Hill." Clarence Thomas tells the remarkable story of his journey from poverty and hunger to success as a Supreme Court Justice. - Ellen Levin, Hammond Middle School



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