



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2003

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



FICTION

Bennett, Alan. *The Clothes They Stood Up In*

In this charming parable, Maurice and Rosemary Ransome return to their London flat from the opera to find they have been burgled of all possessions – down to the casserole warming in the oven. Stripped of everything they own, they must reinvent themselves. It's an amusing account of misanthrope Maurice; shriveling, and innocent, lovable Rosemary; blossoming. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Crafts, Hannah. *The Bondwoman's Narrative*

In this intriguing novel's introduction, distinguished Harvard historian Henry Louis Gates sets the context of the book's historical importance. The autobiographical novel, overwritten and melodramatic but engrossing to the end, follows a female slave in her circumscribed existence on a North Carolina plantation and her flight to freedom in the North. It is, according to Gates, "the first novel written by a female fugitive slave and perhaps the first novel written by any black woman at all." *Booklist*

Franzen, Jonathan. *The Corrections*

The Corrections tells a spellbinding story with sexy comic brio, and evokes a quirky family akin to Anne Tyler's, only bitter. Franzen's great at describing Christmas homecomings gone awry, cruise-ship follies, self-deluded academics, breast-obsessed screenwriters, stodgy old farts and edgy Tribeca bohemians equally at sea in their lives, and the mad, bad, dangerous worlds of the Internet boom and the fissioning post-Soviet East. All five members of the Lambert family get their due, as everybody's lives swirl out of control. *Amazon.com*

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees*

Fleeing her father's emotional abuse, Lily, 14, and her loving housekeeper, who is recovering from a racially motivated beating, are taken in by three black sisters who hold the key to memories of Lily's mother. A story infused with the strength of female friendship and love. *School Library Journal*

Lowell, Elizabeth. *Running Scared*

Elizabeth Lowell won the hearts of fans worldwide with her wonderful bestselling novels, including her wildly popular Donovan series. Now she brings us a brand-new novel of romantic suspense, the second in her Rarities series following *Moving Target*. Set amid the shimmering neon and wild desert beauty of Las Vegas, *Running Scared* is a spellbinding tale of intrigue, passion, and danger centered around Rarities Unlimited, an exclusive appraisal house. Filled with the wonderful elements that are her hallmark -- true-to-life characters, tingling suspense, and thrilling sensuality -- this latest bestseller is Elizabeth Lowell at her stunning best. *Adapted from the book jacket*

MacDonald, Ann-Marie. *Fall on Your Knees*

A sprawling saga about five generations of a family from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. This epic tale of family history, family secrets, and music centers on four sisters and their relationships with each other and with their father. Set in the coal-mining communities of Nova Scotia in the early part of this century, the story also shifts to the battlefields of World War I and the jazz scene of New York City in the 1920s. *Amazon.com Reviews*

Martel, Yan. *Life of Pi*

Life of Pi is a magical reading experience, an endless blue expanse of storytelling about adventure, survival, and ultimately, faith. The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths for size, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father

packs up the family and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. After much gore and infighting, Pi and Richard Parker remain the boat's sole passengers, drifting for 227 days through shark-infested waters while fighting hunger, the elements, and an overactive imagination. *Amazon.com*

McDermott, Alice. *Child of My Heart*

Alice McDermott's haunting and enchanting new work of fiction is narrated by a woman who was born beautiful. Her parents decided that her best chance in life was to marry a wealthy man, so she was raised on the east end of Long Island, among the country houses of the rich. On the cusp of fifteen, she is the town's most sought-after babysitter--cheerful, beloved, a wonder with children and animals, but also a solitary soul with an already complex understanding of human nature. The narrator's witty, piquant, deeply etched evocation of all that was really transpiring under the surface during that seemingly idyllic season gives her wry tale--infused with suppressed passion, disappointment, and enduring hope--its remarkable vividness and impact. *From the publisher*

Nabb, Magdalen. *Some Bitter Taste*

Exceedingly tactful and patient, Marshal Guarnaccia of the Florentine police has at last lined up a case against a man accused of importing and exploiting Albanian prostitutes. But he is distracted when a seemingly paranoid old woman who had complained to him about people entering her apartment winds up murdered. Though not strictly a detective, the marshal begins to reconstruct the life of the victim, an early refugee from the Nazis. Sedate, comforting prose belies the inner resolve of the marshal and the surprising plot twists he uncovers. *Library Journal*

Packer, Ann. *The Dive from Clausen's Pier*

Carrie Bell is 23 and has lived in Madison, Wisconsin, all her life. She is engaged to her high-school sweetheart, Mike, and all seems well--to everyone but Carrie, who is falling out of love with Mike, with Madison, with everything. On Memorial Day she numbly watches Mike dive off of Clausen's Pier and break his neck in the too-shallow water, leaving him a quadriplegic. She is stricken with grief, guilt, indecision, and fear--she wants to be supportive and faithful, but she cannot make herself love him again. After a painful summer of hospital vigils, she flees to New York City and tries on a new life, a new relationship. She cannot escape what she's left behind, though, and must eventually face those who feel she has betrayed them. *Carrie Bisseey, Booklist*

Patchett, Ann. *Bel Canto*

This novel is based on the 1996 Tupac Amaru takeover of the Japanese ambassadorial residence in Lima, Peru. It traces the hostages' adjusting attitudes during the torpor of a months-long siege. Relief from their tedium takes the form of luscious world-class soprano Roxane Coss, who had been entertaining an international assortment of diplomats and businesspersons when the terrorists took the Peruvian vice president's house. Everybody loves her, eventually--a Russian diplomat, the Japanese tycoon who paid for her performance, one of the teenage hostage-takers, and so on. The medium for all professions of admiration and love is polylingual Gen Watanabe. As Watanabe flits from conversation to conversation, Patchett develops the characters'

thoughts. Watanabe, for example, takes a shine to a child-soldier terrorist, Carmen, who comes to share the fate of an operatic earlier bearer of her name. Unhurriedly, even languorously, Patchett brings readers into the minds of the characters. *Gilbert Taylor, Booklist*

Read, Piers Paul. *Alice in Exile*

Alice Fry is a young student living with her parents in London. The year is 1913, and while radical ideas are fast taking hold in certain segments of society, most notably among the young, the nearly oblivious upper classes continue to enjoy their time-honored rituals with an infuriating sense of entitlement. An ill-fated love affair and its consequences force Alice to flee England; eventually she secures a post as governess with a family of Russian aristocrats. Talk about going from the frying pan to the fire! Yes, there are echoes of Doctor Zhivago here, as war and revolution engulf much of Europe. In this engrossing narrative, the reader encounters no multilayered narratives, no flashbacks, no lengthy interior monologues - just solid, full-steam-ahead storytelling at its most irresistible. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Roberts, Nora. *Carolina Moon*

With its blend of evil killers, handsome heroes, and feisty, sensitive heroines, Nora Roberts's latest thriller meets the same standards of terror and romance that made last year's *River's End* a bestseller. This time, our heroine Tory Bodeen has returned to her hometown of Progress, South Carolina, to face the fearsome memories of her childhood friend Hope's death and rebuild her life in a town that once betrayed her. *Amazon.com*

Russo, Richard. *Empire Falls*

Miles Roby has been slinging burgers at the Empire Grill for 20 years, a job that cost him his college education and much of his self-respect. What keeps him there? It could be his bright, sensitive daughter Tick, who needs all his help surviving the local high school. Or maybe it's Janine, Miles' soon-to-be ex-wife, who's taken up with a noxiously vain health-club proprietor. Or perhaps it's the imperious Francine Whiting, who owns everything in town--and seems to believe that "everything" includes Miles himself. In *Empire Falls* Richard Russo delves deep into the blue-collar heart of America in a work that overflows with hilarity, heartache, and grace. *Adapted from the book jacket*

Stead, Christina. *The Man Who Loved Children*

Vivid language and terrifying emotions gush forth as the Pollit family disintegrates in depression era Washington and Baltimore. Sam, the tyrant, fancies himself a man of extraordinary compassion; Henny is bitterness embodied. Their many children are the victims in this family from hell. Stead masterminds the Pollit madness in magnificent detail. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Trapido, Barbara. *The Traveling Horn Player*

The death of 17-year old Lydia Dent in a car accident is the catalyst that links the members of several dysfunctional families. Jonathan, the middle aged writer, Stella, his musically gifted daughter, and Ellen, Lydia's sister, are part of a cast of strange and sometimes wicked English eccentrics. Their lives eventually collide in a surprise ending. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE

Barnes, Linda. *The Big Dig*

In this latest installment in a long running series set in Boston, sleuth/cab driver Carlotta Carlyle takes on an investigation that involves one of Beantown's perennial hot issues; namely, the Central Artery/Ted Williams tunnel project. The Big Dig, as it is commonly called, has thus far

experienced cost overruns amounting to several billion dollars. It's the most expensive public works project in American history, and at this point, probably the most notorious as well. According to the refreshingly irreverent Carlotta, Rep. Barney Frank at one point quipped that it would be cheaper to elevate the entire city than to build a tunnel under it! *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Cleverly, Barbara. *The Last Kashmiri Rose*

The real star of this exceptionally accomplished first novel is the setting: the British Raj in the early years of the 20th century. A Scotland Yard detective is sent to India to investigate the suspicious deaths of five "memsahibs" - all wives of British officials. An exotic setting, intriguing characters, and a bittersweet love story all combine to make this mystery a surefire winner. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Harvey, John. *In a True Light*

Sloane, a British painter in his sixties, has just been released from prison, having served time for art forgery. No sooner is he out of the slammer than he gets an urgent summons from Jane Graham, a fellow artist and former lover who is now on her deathbed. She reveals a secret that causes him to return to New York City, their old stomping ground, on an urgent quest, one that will ultimately prove life-changing. *In a True Light* is filled with wonderful vignettes of artists who achieved fame during an exceptionally vibrant and tumultuous period, and that makes it great fun to read, but even more importantly, Sloane is a complex, intriguing character whose moves are hard to anticipate. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Law, Janice. *The Lost Diaries of Iris Weed*

Jason Larson (Lars) leads a charmed life as a university professor of Romantic poetry. He has an understanding wife, an adorable daughter, and a penchant for pretty coeds. Enter Iris, independent-study student of independent mind. Lars is smitten by her talent and by her ivory skin. Her murder endangers everything he holds dear, until he can unravel what happened to Ms. Weed. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Nabb, Magdalen. *Some Bitter Taste*

Part Maigret, part Columbo, the blue-collar Guarnaccia, stationed in Florence but a native of southern Italy, solves crimes almost in spite of himself, overcoming "his tendency to think he could only be in the way during any important investigation." Here he seems to have ample reason to doubt himself; his failure to take an elderly woman's fears seriously may have hastened her death, leaving Guarnaccia determined to figure out who was responsible. The trail leads in multiple directions, one involving Jewish refugees during World War II, another concerning the plight of today's Albanian immigrants. *Bill Ott, Booklist*

Smith, Alexander McCall. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*

Precious Ramotswa, in her thirties and an escapee from an abusive husband, uses her inheritance to set herself up as the only female private detective in Botswana. Determined and resourceful, she is at the same time subdued and introspective. Above all, like her creator, she has a deep love of her native country. Smith said in a recent interview that "...I want to portray the positive side of life in Africa. Mainly in the press we get wars and disasters, but there are mostly good people leading good lives." This offbeat mystery manages to be both sweet and hilarious; the author's affection for the country and its people is everywhere apparent. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

SCIENCE FICTION

Robinson, Kim Stanley. *The Years of Rice and Salt*

Kim Stanley Robinson delivers a thoughtful and powerful examination of cultures and the people who shape them. How might human history be different if 14th-century Europe was utterly wiped out by plague, and Islamic and Buddhist societies emerged as the world's dominant religious and

political forces? *The Years of Rice and Salt* considers this question through the stories of individuals who experience and influence various crucial periods in the seven centuries that follow. The credible alternate history that Robinson constructs becomes the framework for a tapestry of ideas about philosophy, science, theology, and politics. *Amazon.com*

Rucker, Rudy. *Spaceland*

The product manager for a Silicon Valley startup, Joe Cube thinks the best way to enter the new millennium is to stay safely home with his wife and watch the year 2000 come in on an experimental television/interactive device "borrowed" from work. His wife, however, is less than pleased. And after Jena passes out from too much New Year's imbibing, Joe discovers the under tested device has opened a gateway to a new universe: he is contacted by a fourth-dimensional woman named Momo. *Cynthia Ward, Amazon.com*

NON-FICTION

Dawidoff, Nicholas. *Baseball: A Literary Anthology*

Baseball offers a lively mix of stories, memoirs, poems, news reports, and insider accounts about all aspects of the great American game, from its pastoral nineteenth-century beginnings to its apotheosis as the undisputed national pastime. Here are the major leaguers and the bush leaguers, the umpires and broadcasters, the wives and girlfriends and would-be girlfriends, fans meticulously observant and lovingly, fanatically obsessed. Here too are the teams of storied greatness—the Yankees, the Dodgers, the Red Sox—and the luminaries who made them legendary. *From the publisher*

Everitt, Anthony. *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician*

Okay, so just as you're beginning to marvel at how like us the ancient Romans were, with their free speech and lively political discourse, not to mention the frequent occurrence of bribery, adultery, and divorce - you come to a sentence like this one, describing the festival of the Lupercalia: "The Luperci were a college of priests, young men of good family who every year on this day ran through the city naked except for goatskin loincloths." Oh well - no matter! This is history at its most compelling and readable. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Ferris, Timothy. *Seeing in the Dark: How Backyard Stargazers are Probing Deep Space and Guarding Earth from Interplanetary Peril*

Amateur astronomers are the heroes of this latest opus from one of the country's best-known and most prolific science writers. Ferris (Coming of Age in the Milky Way) has a special place in his heart for these nonprofessionals who gaze into space out of wonderment and end up making discoveries about comets, the moon and the planets that change our understanding of the galaxy. *Publisher's Weekly*

King, Stephen. *On Writing: a Memoir*

This is like chatting for a few hours with the master of horror - and he's such a nice, comfortable guy. King expounds on his childhood, his marriage, his struggling years and gives common sense advice on the craft of writing. About the accident that nearly took his life: he wonders, did one of his characters jump off the shelf to do him in? *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Menzies, Gavin. *1421: The Year China Discovered America*

On March 8, 1421, the largest fleet the world had ever seen sailed from its base in China. Their mission was "to proceed all the way to the end of the earth to collect tribute from the barbarians beyond the seas" and unite the whole world in Confucian harmony. When they returned in October 1423, the emperor had fallen,

leaving China in political and economic chaos. The great ships were left to rot at their moorings and the records of their journeys were destroyed. Lost was the knowledge that Chinese ships had reached America seventy years before Columbus and circumnavigated the globe a century before Magellan. Also concealed were how the Chinese colonized America before the Europeans and transplanted to America, Australia, New Zealand and South America the principal economic crops that have fed and clothed the world. Gavin Menzies, who spent fifteen years tracing the astonishing voyages of the Chinese fleet, shares the remarkable account of his discoveries and the incontrovertible evidence to support them. *Adapted from the book jacket*

Morgan, Edmund S. *Benjamin Franklin*

This wonderful biography of an extraordinary man results from a perfect marriage of subject and scholar (Yale professor emeritus Morgan). Rather than focusing on Franklin's role as classic, representative American, Morgan instead gives us a portrait of his public life, almost a third of it spent abroad. The author takes us into Franklin's thinking and activities as diplomat and politician and into the way his winning personality served his country so well at the moment it needed him. It's hard to imagine a better life study of a man we've all heard about but who is barely known. *Publishers Weekly*

Ripert, Eric. *A Return to Cooking*

A Return to Cooking is...a journey in four different seasons to four different locales to "cook the landscape" and "cook from the guts," using local seasonal ingredients in home kitchens and experiencing the joys - and occasional disappointments - of this spontaneous, creative act. Dozens of essays on subjects such as handling raw fish, the power of vinaigrette, the virtues of Tabasco, shallots, and lemon confit enhance this eminently practical book's richly flavorful recipes. *Adapted from the book jacket*

Schooler, Lynn. *The Blue Bear: A True Story of Friendship, Tragedy, and Survival in the Alaskan Wilderness*

With a body twisted by adolescent scoliosis and memories of the brutal death of a woman he loved, Lynn Schooler kept the world at arm's length, drifting through the wilds of Alaska as a commercial fisherman, outdoorsman, and wilderness guide. In 1990 Schooler met Japanese photographer Michio Hoshino and began a profound friendship forged by a love of adventure and cemented by their mutual obsession with finding the elusive glacier bear, an exceedingly rare creature. But it was only after Hoshino's tragic death from a bear attack that Schooler succeeded in photographing the animal -- and only then that he was able to complete his journey and find new meaning in his own life. Set amid the wild archipelagoes, glittering fjords, and dense primordial forests of Alaska's Glacier Coast, *The Blue Bear* is an unforgettable book that shines with purity and passion. *Adapted from the book jacket*

Shales, Tom. *Live from New York. An Uncensored History of Saturday Night Live*

Actors, writers, producers, staff, guest hosts--all weigh in to give readers an in-depth, revealing portrait with a you-are-there quality. There's also more dirt here than there are stars in the SNL firmament: the rivalries, the fights, and the romances, although that may be too, well, romantic a word. Founding (and current) producer Lorne Michaels comes across as a particularly fascinating character, a father figure to some, a preening enigma to others; the final chapter, which is entirely devoted to what people think of him, doesn't seem nearly enough. ...Like the proverbial box of chocolates, this is full of tasty tidbits and hard to put down. *Ilene Cooper, Booklist*