



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2004

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



FICTION

Albom, Mitch. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*
Eddie is a wounded war veteran, an old man who has lived, in his mind, an uninspired life. His job is fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. On his 83rd birthday, a tragic accident kills him as he tries to save a little girl from a falling cart. He awakes in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a destination. It's a place where your life is explained to you by five people, some of whom you knew, others who may have been strangers. One by one, from childhood to soldier to old age, Eddie's five people revisit their connections to him on earth, illuminating the mysteries of his "meaningless" life, and revealing the haunting secret behind the eternal question: "Why was I here?" *Amazon.com*

Allende, Isabel. *Portrait in Sepia: A Novel*
In nineteenth-century Chili, Aurora del Valle suffers a brutal trauma that erases recollections of the first five years of her life. Aurora is tormented by horrible nightmares. When she is forced to recognize her betrayal of her husband, she explores the mysteries of her past, while gaining solitude. *Amazon.com*

Baxter, Charles. *Saul and Patsy*
Young newlyweds Saul and Patsy Bernstein are an enormously appealing couple. What more can one say of a novel whose opening scene features a scantily clad wife lying on the living room couch, gleefully awaiting her husband's arrival, with "Hi, Saul" spelled out in Scrabble letters across her chest? *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*
Robert Langdon, Harvard professor of art history and religious symbology, is in Paris to lecture. His visit coincides with the murder of the curator of the Louvre. The handsome professor teams up with beautiful Sophie Neveu, the curator's cryptologist granddaughter, to solve the murder amid a centuries-old religious conspiracy. Using the symbols and secrets of Leonardo, Brown creates an intricate, multi-level puzzle, daring the reader to put it together while traveling at the speed of light. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Edgerton, Clyde. *Lunch at the Piccadilly*
"With wry humor and priceless dialogue, Edgerton pulls off the near impossible—he turns a nursing home [Rosehaven Convalescent Home] into the most convivial of establishments, creating a screwball portrait of this 'life after life,' effortlessly convincing us that it's better, much better, to laugh than to cry about it." *Joanne Wilkinson in Booklist*

Faber, Michel. *The Crimson Petal and the White*
In the opening chapter the author says, "watch your step," and you must as you walk the streets of 1870s London. You visit Mrs. Castaway's house of ill repute and the gentleman's club of the perfume magnet, Mr. William Rackham. Our heroine, Sugar, connives to raise herself from the gutter to the heights of Victorian society in this Dickensian tale of confrontation with and denial of the flesh. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Hamill, Pete. *Forever: A Novel*
Cormac O'Connor has been given the gift of living forever. He washes up on the shores of Manhattan in 1740 - there to avenge the death of his father at the hands of the Earl of Warren. Through three centuries he searches out the Earl's descendants. To stay alive he must never leave the island of Manhattan. 9/11 nears and Cormac finds a woman who makes him rethink his immortality. Hamill pens a loving history of his city as it

moves from hamlet to the most powerful and most vulnerable city in the world. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Harris, Robert. *Pompeii: A Novel*
In this marvelous re-creation of the ancient world, the action spans the four days leading up to the eruption of Vesuvius. The novel's chief protagonist, the Aquarius, is in charge of the system of aqueducts for which the Roman Empire was famed. Of course, we know the story's climax; Harris's description of the volcano's eruption is harrowing and utterly convincing (and based in part on the recorded observations of Pliny the Elder). *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*
The narrative begins with a man looking back wistfully on his childhood. There is an intimation of some unimaginable sorrow and a burden of guilt in his past. This beautiful novel is, among other things, a magnificent re-creation of pre-war Afghanistan, which was apparently a lovely place peopled by many gracious souls before the Soviets and then the Taliban despoiled it. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Morrison, Tony. *Song of Solomon*
An Oprah Book Club Selection, *Song of Solomon* is a powerful and poetic exploration of an African American family during the early part of the twentieth century. Told through the eyes of "Milkman", the son of an upper-class businessman, eloquent family myths, ancestry, friendships, and African culture come to life. *Amazon.com*

Parkhurst, Carolyn. *The Dogs of Babel*
One ordinary afternoon, Lexy, the wife of linguistics professor Paul Iverson, falls from a tree in their backyard and breaks her neck. Only their dog, Lorelei, witnessed Lexy's death, and in his grief Paul decides he's going to teach Lorelei to talk, so she can tell him whether Lexy fell accidentally from the tree or on purpose. The brilliance of Parkhurst's novel lies in the subtle buildup of emotion as Paul digs deeper and deeper to discover the truth about the woman he loved, who may have worn a mask even when with him. *Kristine Huntley in Booklist*

Sparks, Nicholas. *The Guardian*
Who would ever believe that 29 year old Julie Barenson finds an unexpected and uplifting gift – a Great Dane puppy – who becomes her guardian after her husband dies from a brain tumor. The new puppy, Singer, seems to know what is best for Julie: growing at Richard, the new man in her life, while happily accepting Mike, her best friend in the world. Will Julie follow Singer's intuition, and be with Mike? Or will she devote her heart to the sophisticated yet jealous Richard? Full of twists and turns, this light hearted story is surely a page turner. *Jessica Wroten, HCPSS*

Tyler, Anne. *The Amateur Marriage: A Novel*
They meet during the hectic days of Pearl Harbor, when the young men of Baltimore are clamoring to enlist. Then, decade by decade, Tyler peels back the layers of Michael and Pauline, gradually and meticulously revealing the little flaws that built their amateur marriage. The Anton family will break your heart. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Wolff, Tobias. *Old School*
In this engrossing coming-of-age story set in the early 1960's, an ambitious senior at an elite New England prep school is determined to beat his classmates in a high stakes writing competition. The setting of the novel and the intensity of emotion bottled up in this closed society of boys, who are on the verge of manhood but still have

plenty to learn about life, may put the reader in mind of *A Separate Peace*. Robert Frost and Ayn Rand make entertaining guest appearances. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE

Corbett, David. *Done for a Dime*
A hardboiled police procedural set in a grainy, grimy Project world near San Francisco, this isn't a simple crime story. Corbett juggles the themes of interracial relationships, racism, police corruption and the universal joy of the music maker while telling a riveting story. Dennis Murchison, a detective with the instincts of a bloodhound, pursues the killer of Raymond Carlisle, a fiery old jazz musician, while all hell breaks loose around him. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Fesperman, Dan. *Small Boat of Great Sorrows*
Vlado Petric, a former homicide detective in Sarajevo, is now a refugee living in Berlin with his wife and child. An American investigator for the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague asks for Vlado's help in the effort to apprehend a notorious war criminal. Vlado agrees reluctantly, and as the operation gets under way, it becomes apparent that his fears and anxieties are more than justified. Fesperman, a foreign correspondent for *The Baltimore Sun*, has written a compelling, literate novel of suspense. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Gerritsen, Tess. *The Surgeon*
A serial killer is on the loose in Boston. The victims are killed in particularly brutal ways. The killer, dubbed "the Surgeon", has obvious medical knowledge. As the suspense thickens with stunning twists and turns, we are held on the edge of our seats. The final victim, Dr. Cordell, becomes aware of the killer stalking her, leaving her unable to function – but she must, as she is the only person who can help the police catch the "Surgeon". *Amazon.com*

McCall Smith, Alexander. *Morality for Beautiful Girls*
Precious Ramotswe, founder and owner of the only detective agency for the concerns of both ladies and others, investigates the alleged poisoning of the brother of an important "Government Man," and the moral character of the four finalists of the Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest, the winner of which will almost certainly be a contestant for the title of Miss Botswana. Yet her business is having money problems, and when other difficulties arise at her fiancée's Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, she discovers the reliable Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is more complicated than he seems. *From the publisher*

Mortimer, John. *Rumpole and the Primrose Path*
The past decade has been a bit bumpy for fans of the irascible, keen-witted criminal defense barrister Rumpole. These six new stories showcase everything that is great and good in this long-running series: the sly characterizations of the denizens of Equity Chambers and the Old Bailey; Rumpole's crabby take on change and his incisive wit; and Mortimer's deft plotting. *Booklist*

Rendell, Ruth. *The Babes in the Wood: A Chief Inspector Wexford Mystery*
As the city of Kingsmarkham is threatened with flood due to recent heavy rains, the children of Roger and Katrina Dale disappear. What begins as an investigation of a possible accidental drowning leads to something far more sinister. As always in this splendid series of police procedurals, Inspector Reginald Wexford and his second in command, Mike Burden, are on the case. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Sansom, C.J. *Dissolution*

The story takes place in England during the reign of Henry VIII. Lawyer Matthew Shardlake is sent to investigate a murder at an abbey that is shortly to be disbanded. In this vivid evocation of 16th century England, duplicitous dealings abound both at the abbey and in the highest circles of government. But the anguish felt by the faithful at the dismantling and destruction of their long-held faith is genuine enough, and deeply affecting. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

SCIENCE FICTION**Bach, Richard. *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah***

A light-hearted, inspirational account of an encounter with a modern-day messiah, Bach allows us to discover the truths that give our "souls wings" – that people don't need airplanes to soar – and that messiahs can be found in the unlikely places – hayfields, towns, and most of all, within ourselves. *Amazon.com*

Card, Orson Scott *Pastwatch*

Under the auspices of Pastwatch, a 23rd-century organization dedicated to viewing the past, three individuals journey to 15th-century Meso-America. They intend to prevent the European conquest of the Americas by altering the circumstances surrounding Columbus's historic voyage. Card's novel posits a bold and compassionate alternative history filled with believable historical and fictional characters. *Library Journal*

Forde, Jasper. *The Eyre Affair: A Novel*

In Jasper Forde's Great Britain, circa 1985, time travel is routine, cloning is a reality (dodos are the resurrected pet of choice), and literature is taken very, very seriously. England is a virtual police state where an aunt can get lost (literally) in a Wordsworth poem and forging Byronic verse is a punishable offense. All this is business as usual for Thursday Next, renowned Special Operative in literary detection. But when someone begins kidnapping characters from works of literature and plucks Jane Eyre from the pages of Brontë's novel, Thursday is faced with the challenge of her career. *From the publisher*

Hilton, James. *Lost Horizon*

Set in the hidden mountains of the Blue Moon, a place where nobody ages, the plot of *Lost Horizon* is mysterious and suspending. Four people are brought against their will to mysterious Shangri-La after their airplane crashes. First they are prisoners, then willing captives as they discover "hidden paradise." *Amazon.com*

Niffenegger, Audrey. *The Time Traveler's Wife*

On the surface, Henry and Clare Detamble are a normal couple living in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. Henry works at the Newberry Library and Clare creates abstract paper art, but the cruel reality is that Henry is a prisoner of time. It sweeps him back and forth at its leisure, from the present to the past, with no regard for where he is or what he is doing. It drops him naked and vulnerable into another decade, wearing an age-appropriate face. In fact, it's not unusual for Henry to run into the other Henry and help him out of a jam. *Elsa Gaztambide in Booklist*

NONFICTION**Alexander, Caroline. *The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty***

More than two centuries have passed since Master's Mate Fletcher Christian mutinied against Lieutenant Bligh on a small, armed transport vessel called *Bounty*. Why the details of this obscure adventure at the end of the world remain vivid and enthralling is as intriguing as the truth behind the legend. *Amazon.com*

Ambrose, Steven. *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson and the Opening of the American West*

Though principally a biography of Meriwether Lewis, this narrative also provides fascinating portraits of Thomas Jefferson and William Clark, Sacagawea, and other members of the group of explorers who journeyed from the Ohio River to the Pacific Ocean in the years 1803-1806. While scholarly and well documented, this account is at the same time a great adventure story, and Ambrose generates a sense of excitement and anticipation that mirrors, at least to some degree, the feelings Lewis and Clark must have had as they began their journey. *Molly Connolly in School Library Journal*

Borg, Marcus J. *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*

For the millions who have lost faith but are looking to reclaim a belief, Borg shows why the Christian life can remain a transforming relationship with God. Borg explores how prayer, worship, Sabbath, pilgrimage, and more can be experienced. *Amazon.com*

Bryson, Bill. *A Short History of Nearly Everything*

From primordial nothingness to this very moment, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* reports what happened and how humans figured it out. To accomplish this daunting literary task, Bill Bryson uses hundreds of sources, from popular science books to interviews with luminaries in various fields. His aim is to help people like him, who rejected stale school textbooks and dry explanations, to appreciate how we have used science to understand the smallest particles and the unimaginably vast expanses of space. *Amazon.com*

Cahill, Thomas. *How the Irish Saved Civilization*

This is one of the author's "Hinges of History" volumes that tell the story of transition from one great epoch to another. In this case, written knowledge hangs by a thread during the Dark Ages. Isolated monks on a lonely island on the edge of civilization copy and thus save the knowledge of antiquity. Cahill shines a new and fascinating light on the how and why of European history. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Cohen, David Elliot. *One Year Off: Leaving It All Behind for a Round-The-World Journey with Our Children*

David Cohen, on the brink of turning 40, has an epiphany. Why not sell the house, close the business, and travel the world for a year with a wife and three children. He did it and traversed six continents. There's lots of humor, scary moments and some poignant ones. They learned a lot. For example, home schooling was a disaster so they stopped off for a term of formal schooling in Australia. Would he do it again – most definitely, but hold the luggage. *Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS*

Di Robilant, Andrea. *A Venetian Affair*

This rapturous, utterly captivating story was re-created with the help of a treasure trove of love letters. The lovers in question lived in eighteenth century Venice; the era of masked balls and palace intrigue in that fabled city comes vividly to life in these pages. *Roberta Rood, HCL*

Greenlaw, Linda. *The Lobster Chronicles: Life on a Very Small Island*

After 17 years at sea, Linda Greenlaw decided it was time to take a break from being a swordboat captain, the career that would earn her a prominent role in Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm* and a portrayal in the subsequent film. Greenlaw decided to move back home, to a tiny island seven miles off the Maine coast. There, she would pursue a simpler life as a lobsterman, find a husband, and settle down. But all doesn't go as planned. The lobsters refuse to crawl out from under their rocks and into the traps she and her father have painstakingly set. Fellow islanders draw her into bizarre intrigues, and

the eligible bachelors prove even more elusive than the lobsters. But just when she thinks things can't get worse, something happens that forces her to reevaluate everything she thought she knew about life, luck, and lobsters. *Amazon.com*

Jonnes, Jill. *Empires of Light: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse, and the Race to Electrify the World*

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, three brilliant and visionary titans of America's Gilded Age—Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, and George Westinghouse—battled bitterly as each vied to create a vast and powerful electrical empire. In *Empires of Light*, historian Jill Jonnes portrays this extraordinary trio and their riveting and ruthless world of cutting-edge science, invention, intrigue, money, death, and hard-eyed Wall Street millionaires. *Amazon.com*

Kipnis, Laura. *Against Love: A Polemic*

"Will all the adulterers in the room please stand up?" So begins Laura Kipnis's profoundly provocative and waggish inquiry into our never-ending quest for lasting love, and its attendant issues of fidelity and betrayal. In the tradition of social critiques such as Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, *Against Love* keenly examines the meaning and cultural significance of adultery, arguing that perhaps the question concerns not only the private dilemma of whether or not to be faithful, but also the purpose of this much vaunted fidelity. *Amazon.com*

Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*

Not long after Jack the Ripper haunted the ill-lit streets of 1888 London, H.H. Holmes (born Herman Webster Mudgett) dispatched somewhere between 27 and 200 people, mostly single young women, in the churning new metropolis of Chicago; many of the murders occurred during (and exploited) the city's finest moment, the World's Fair of 1893. Larson's breathtaking new history is a novelistic yet wholly factual account of the fair and the mass murderer who lurked within it. *Publishers Weekly*

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*

Nafisi, a former English professor at the University of Tehran, decided to hold secret, private classes at her home after the rules at the university became too restrictive. She invited seven insightful, talented women to participate in the class. At first they were tentative and reserved, but gradually they bonded over discussions of *Lolita*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *A Thousand and One Nights*. Nafisi's book is an absorbing look at primarily Western classics through the eyes of women and men living in a very different culture. *Kristine Huntley in Booklist*

Swofford, Anthony. *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles*

When the U.S. Marines -- or "jarheads" -- were sent to Saudi Arabia in 1990 for the first Gulf War, Anthony Swofford was there. He lived in sand for six months; he was punished by boredom and fear; he considered suicide, pulled a gun on a fellow marine, and was targeted by both enemy and friendly fire. As engagement with the Iraqis drew near, he was forced to consider what it means to be an American, a soldier, a son of a soldier, and a man. *From the publisher*

Walsch, Neale D. *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue*

Walsch asks several questions to God concerning religious thoughts and questions, and touches on "why the world is like this" and "how to find peace". For pure enlightenment and spiritual renewal, *Conversations with God* brings peace and joy without regard to any particular religion. *Amazon.com*