



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2005

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



FICTION

Atkinson, Kate. *Case Histories* - Murder mystery meets human comedy in this hilarious and unexpectedly moving novel, which, while resisting facile summation, is nonetheless captivating. Roberta Rood, HCL

de Kretser, Michelle. *The Hamilton Case* - In this sweeping novel, the island nation of Ceylon struggles to fulfill its destiny, ultimately emerging as Sri Lanka; against this turbulent backdrop, one family's destiny plays out with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Roberta Rood, HCL

Fowler, Karen Joy. *The Jane Austen Book Club: A Novel* - Fowler, a captivating and good-hearted satirist, exuberantly pays homage to and matches wits with Jane Austen in her most pleasurable novel to date by portraying six irresistible Californians who meet once a month to discuss Austen's six novels. Coyle shifting points of view, Fowler subtly uses her characters' responses to Austen as entree into their poignant and often hilarious life stories. Fowler shares Austen's fascination with the power of stories, and explores the same timeless aspects of human behavior that Austen so masterfully dramatizes, while capturing with anthropological acuity and electrifying humor the oddities of our harried world. Fellow Austenites will love Fowler's fluency in the great novelist's work; every reader will relish Fowler's own ebullient comedy of manners, and who knows how many book clubs will be inspired by this charming paean to books and readers. Donna Seaman, *Booklist*

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* - Fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone is mathematically gifted and socially hopeless, raised in a working-class home by parents who can barely cope with their child's quirks. He takes everything that he sees (or is told) at face value, and is unable to sort out the strange behavior of his elders and peers. Late one night, Christopher comes across his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork. Wellington's owner finds him cradling her dead dog in his arms, and has him arrested. After spending a night in jail, Christopher resolves--against the objection of his father and neighbors--to discover just who has murdered Wellington. He is encouraged by Siobhan, a social worker at his school, to write a book about his investigations, and the result--quirkily illustrated, with each chapter given its own prime number--is *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. Amazon.com

Isaacs, Susan. *Any Place I Hang My Hat* - The author confronts, more directly than any of her previous books, the psychological fallout from a classic Isaacs situation: that of a daughter who parents her parents. Maureen Corrigan, *Washington Post*

Jin, Ha. *War Trash* - The "war trash" of this hypnotic novel are Chinese soldiers who were taken prisoner by U.N. forces -- mainly American -- during the Korean War. Written in the modest, uninflected prose of a soldier's letter home, Ha Jin's story, a mixture of authentic historical detail and realistic invention, is a powerful work of the imagination whose psychic territory is not the hunger and humiliation of the prison camp but the haunted past that was the old, lost China and the mysterious future that is in the process of becoming Mao Zedong's chimerical new China. *The Washington Post's Book World*

Jones, Edward P. *The Known World*. In Jones' lacerating, unflinching portrayal of the slave owning South, kindheartedness is in short supply, while venality and cruelty run rampant. Roberta Rood, HCL

Munro, Alice. *Runaway* - The prose is so unadorned, the sentence structure so plain and straightforward, that the reader is left unprepared for that punched-in-the-gut moment of truth that each of these beautifully crafted stories delivers. Roberta Rood, HCL

Pamuk, Orhan. *Snow* - A Turkish poet who spent 12 years as a political exile in Germany witnesses firsthand the clash between radical Islam and Western ideals in this enigmatically beautiful novel. Ka's reasons for visiting the small Turkish town of Kars are twofold: curiosity about the rash of suicides by young girls in the town and a hope to reconnect with "the beautiful Ipek," whom he knew as a youth. But Kars is a tangle of poverty-stricken families, Kurdish separatists, political Islamists (including Ipek's spirited sister Kadife) and Ka finds himself making compromises with all in a desperate play for his own happiness. *Publishers Weekly*

Perrotta, Tom. *Little Children*. Perrotta's delicious skewering of suburban family values is a must-read for fans of "Desperate Housewives." Roberta Rood, HCL

Picoult, Jodi. *My Sister's Keeper* - Conceived to save her sister's life, the 13-year-old protagonist has provided stem cells and bone marrow over the years. However, she sues her parents when she is expected to give up one of her kidneys. Molly Kelley, HCPSS

Reid, Elwood. *D.B.* - Reid has written a tale in which he imagines what occurred before and following the 1971 real-life event of D. B. Cooper jumping from a plane he had just hijacked, never to be heard from again. Molly Kelley, HCPSS

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead* - From the first page of her second novel, the voice of Rev. John Ames mesmerizes with his account of his life-and that of his father and grandfather...Many writers try to capture life's universals of strength, struggle, joy and forgiveness-but Robinson truly succeeds in what is destined to become her second classic. *Publishers Weekly*

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America* - *The Plot Against America* is a credible, fully-realized picture of what could happen anywhere, at any time, if the right people and circumstances come together. *The Plot Against America* explores a wholly imagined thesis and sees it through to the end: Charles A. Lindbergh defeats FDR for the Presidency in 1940. Lindbergh, the "Lone Eagle," captured the country's imagination by his solo Atlantic crossing in 1927 in the monoplane, Spirit of St. Louis, then had the country's sympathy upon the kidnapping and murder of his young son. He was a true American hero: brave, modest, handsome, a patriot. According to some reliable sources, he was also a rabid isolationist, Nazi sympathizer, and a crypto-fascist. It is these latter attributes of Lindbergh that inform the novel. Amazon.com

Smiley, Jane. *Horse Heaven* - With a cast of hundreds and a tongue-in-cheek, Smiley lays open the horse breeding and racing world. These people, their animals and their stories are lots of fun, but you need a scorecard to keep track of the worldwide comings and goings. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE

Crichton, Michael. *State of Fear* - The thrills in Crichton's latest are interspersed with fascinating but occasionally dense ecological facts and data, but he backs his assertions about the unpredictability of climate change with copious research and footnotes. Perhaps his most serious and important book yet. *Booklist*

Fesperman, Dan. *The Warlord's Son* - A terrific novel of intrigue, duplicity and death in the shadow of the Khyber Pass . . . Fesperman is that rare journalist who is also a gifted novelist . . . *The Warlord's Son* deserves the attention of anyone who is open to first-rate fiction about war, journalism and the dark, dangerous worlds called Pakistan and Afghanistan. *The Washington Post*

Graham, Caroline. *Ghost in the Machine* - This novel is a page-turner, yet it is anything but shallow. Graham, a sort of cross between Agatha Christie and Ruth Rendell, breathes new life into that venerable subgenre, the English village mystery. Roberta Rood, HCL

Leon, Donna. *Death at La Fenice* - Many are the delights to be found in this first entry in the Commissario Guido Brunetti series: excellent writing, fully realized characters, sharp wit, and, of course, a vivid picture of one of the world's most unique and irresistible cities: Venice. Roberta Rood, HCL

McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Sunday Philosophy Club* This new detective series stars moral philosopher Isabel Dalhousie. "After witnessing fund manager Mark Fraser plummet from the balcony during a performance at the Edinburgh Concert Hall, Isabel feels a moral obligation to investigate the young man's demise." *Booklist*

Mortimer, John. *Rumpole and the Penge Bungalow Murders* - "One of the longest-running jokes in series fiction has been Horace Rumpole's oft-repeated reference to his triumph in the Penge Bungalow case, which he defended in the Old Bailey 'alone and without a leader.' Fans long tantalized by references to the great legal case of the postwar years now can have a novel-length bath in it." Connie Fletcher, *Booklist*

Patterson, James. *London Bridges* - In this suspense novel, psychologist-turned investigator Alex Cross heads a multi-agency force in tracking down terrorists who are threatening to blow up major world cities. Molly Kelley, HCPSS

Ruiz Zafon, Carlos. *The Shadow of the Wind* - In this sprawling tale of a young boy's coming of age in Franco's Spain, the author combines terrific storytelling with intensely realized characters, raucous humor, and two poignant love stories to create a triumphant work of art. Roberta Rood, HCL

Saylor, Steven. *The Judgment of Caesar* - The author of the acclaimed Roma Sub Rosa series moves the scene of skullduggery and intrigue from ancient Rome to exotic Alexandria. Roberta Rood, HCL

Winspear, Jacqueline. *Maisie Dobbs* - Maisie is a private investigator with a gifted, intuitive mind in post-WWI England. In her investigation into a retreat for war-damaged veterans, she uncovers the manipulations of a charismatic madman. Winspear paints a heartbreaking and compelling picture of the young people who served in the "war to end all wars." Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell: A Novel* - It's 1808 and that Corsican upstart Napoleon is battering the English army and navy. Enter Mr. Norrell, a fusty but ambitious scholar from the Yorkshire countryside and the first practical magician in hundreds of years. What better way to demonstrate his revival of British magic than to change the course of the Napoleonic wars? Mr. Norrell moves to London to establish his influence in government circles, devising such powerful illusions as an 11-day blockade of French ports by English ships fabricated from rainwater. But however skillful his magic, his vanity provides an Achilles heel, and the differing ambitions of his more glamorous apprentice, Jonathan Strange, threaten to topple all that Mr. Norrell has achieved. Regina Marler, *Amazon.com*

Finney, Jack. *Time and Again* - It's 1970 and Si Morley, an advertising agency artist, is tapped to be part of a government project to travel back in time to 1880s New York. He agrees to do it but doesn't expect to be accused of murder and fall in love with a girl from another time. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

McDevitt, Jack. *Polaris* - Sixty years after the crew of the starship *Polaris* vanished while observing a stellar event, antiquarian Alex Benedict is determined to discover what happened to the spaceship and who is gathering relics from it. Molly Kelley, HCPSS

BIOGRAPHY

Chernow, Ron. *Alexander Hamilton* - The author "brings to life the Founding Father who did more than any other to create the modern United States." Michael Lind, *Washington Post*

Hendra, Tony. *Father Joe: The Man Who Saved My Soul* - British humorist Hendra ((National Lampoon) chronicles his lifelong relationship with the Benedictine monk, Father Joseph Warrilow, who became his long-term mentor and spiritual guide. *Booklist*

Torvalds, Linus & Diamond, David. *Just for Fun: The Story of an Accidental Revolutionary* - This is the story of how a nerdy computer-obsessed kid from Helsinki became a folk-hero to millions after he created the Linux computer operating system and distributed it freely on the Internet. It's an in-the-trenches take on the technology revolution and a strongly put argument for open source code. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

NONFICTION

Burrough, Bryan. *Public Enemies: America's Great Crime Wave and the Birth of the FBI* - This true crime history appropriately balances violent shootouts and schemes for daring prison breaks with a detailed account of how the slow of robberies and headlines helped an ambitious federal bureaucrat named J. Edgar Hoover transform a small agency into the FBI we know today. *Publishers Weekly*

Cathcart, Brian. *The Fly in the Cathedral: How a Group of Cambridge Scientists Won the Race to Split the Atom* - If you want to understand how something works, you can dismantle it and study its pieces. But what if the thing you're curious about is too small to see, even with the most powerful microscope? Brian Cathcart's *The Fly in the Cathedral* tells the intriguing story of how scientists were able to take atoms apart to reveal the secrets of their structures. To keep the story gripping, Cathcart focuses on a time (1932, the annus mirabilis of British physics), a place (Cambridge's Cavendish Laboratory), and a few main characters (Ernest Rutherford, the "father of nuclear physics," and his protégés, John Cockcroft and Ernest Walton).

Amazon.com

Davis, Sampson, M.D. *The Pact* - Three young black men in the medical professions (a dentist, an emergency-room physician, and an internist) recall an informal pact they made as youths that guided them out of their inner-city Newark neighborhoods and into successful careers. They take turns describing their situations, which encompass poverty, unstable family lives, drug-addicted parents, gang influence, and minor skirmishes with the law. *Booklist*

Dumas, Vito. *Alone Through the Roaring Forties* - This is the classic story of Vito Dumas who, in June 1942, set off from Buenos Aires in his 31-foot ketch for a trip around the world - eastward over the "impossible route," the Roaring Forties of the Southern Ocean: south of the Cape of Good Hope, south of Australia, and south of Cape Horn. *The Publisher*

Evans, Harold. *They Made America* - From Robert Fulton and Samuel Morse, Estee Lauder and Walt Disney to Joan Ganz Cooney of Sesame Street and Pierre Omidyar of eBay, this is the history of American innovation. Evans celebrates the best of American genius, warts and all. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Gross, Terry. *All I Did Was Ask* - Conducting a good interview requires exhaustive research, good timing, the ability to steer the interview back on course when it meanders, a knack for close listening and thinking about the next question, flexibility and editing skills. Gross, the polite and generous host of NPR's Fresh Air, is a pro, and here she collects some of her favorite interviews with people in the arts. The result is a wide-ranging and entertaining look into the creative process. With a few exceptions, the interviews are from the show's national broadcast debut year in 1987, but they never seem dated, as many of the guests are still active or well known, and the topics are timeless. Whether she's asking Johnny Cash about the difference between a singer and a song stylist, discussing the role of class in British actor Michael Caine's life or examining the eternal intricacies of the human face with Chuck Close, Gross remains sensitive, engaged and informed. The two notable exceptions are her interviews with cable opinion-slinger Bill O'Reilly and Kiss front man Gene Simmons, whose pugnacity and sexism, respectively, unseat the usually collected host and challenge her to summon interview skills she rarely exercises. Overall, however, this is an often funny and completely fascinating anthology. *Publishers Weekly*

Hilldorfer, Joseph. *The Cyanide Canary* - The author, an environmental-crime specialist for the EPA, recounts efforts to determine what led to an industrial accident resulting in severe brain damage for a 20-year-old fertilizer plant worker. Molly Kelley, HCPSS

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage* - In this trenchant analysis, spies and secret agents created by Eric Ambler, Graham Greene and John LeCarre, among others, are compared to their real life counterparts. Roberta Rood, HCL

Jager, Eric. *The Last Duel: A True Story of Crime, Scandal, and Trial by Combat in Medieval France* - France in the Middle Ages springs to vibrant, often terrifying life in this riveting book, reminiscent of Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*. Roberta Rood, HCL

Kurson, Robert. *Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II* - Who knew that German submarine U-869, long thought to have been sunk off Gibraltar in 1945, was actually sunk by its own torpedo less than 60 miles from Brielle, New Jersey? No one--until 1991, when two death-

cheating wreck-divers began exploring the boat's wrecked hull, 230 feet underwater. Death-cheating? In the seven years between its discovery and its positive identification, U-869 claimed the lives of three experienced wreck divers and scared away many more. Though Kurson's historical narrative is compelling on its own, it is nearly overshadowed by his adventure story--two brave and driven men chased by deep-water divers' narcosis, decompression sickness, sharks, and an entire wrecked sub full of snags to ensnare divers until their tanks run out. It's also a fascinating look at the sometimes communal, sometimes bitterly competitive psychology of wreck-divers, weekend warriors in wet suits whose dangerous hobby is often an antidote to the frustrations of the workaday world. All of these elements--military history, mystery, action tale, ethnography--combine to make this book very hard to put down. Brendan Driscoll, *Booklist*

Livingston, Gordon. *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart* - With kindness and directness, Livingston, a Columbia, Maryland, psychiatrist, gives us thirty essays on things we sometimes learn too late. "We are what we do" and "It's a poor idea to lie to oneself" are two poignant essays in his collection. Elizabeth Edwards' eloquent forward underscores the advice from this twice-bereaved parent. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Mankoff, Robert (ed). *The Complete Cartoons of the New Yorker* - What could be better than a gigantic 656-page collection of 2,004 (get it?) of the best cartoons published in the *New Yorker* over the last 80 years? Perhaps a double CD set with all 68,647 cartoons ever published in the magazine. This improbably large offering is a bonanza of wry Manhattan-centric comic commentary on urban life and much else in American culture over the years. There's Peter Arno's 1948 ink-and-wash cartoon of a mildly concerned matron, book in hand, asking her newspaper-reading husband, "Is there a Mrs. Kinsey?" Or Peter Steiner's now famous cartoon drawing of two dogs chatting in front of a computer. "On the Internet," says one canine to the other, "nobody knows you're a dog." This is an absolutely fabulous collection of sophisticated silliness that will soon take its rightful place on coffee tables all over the country. *Publishers Weekly*

Silverstein, Ken. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The True Story of a Boy and His Backyard Nuclear Reactor* - Sounds incredible? Sure - but it actually happened as told in this story of what must be one of the all time strangest merit badge projects in scouting history. Roberta Rood, HCL

Till-Mobley, Mamie. *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* - In August 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till, visiting from Chicago, was lynched in Mississippi after whistling near a white woman. His mother here recalls his life and her determination "to find meaning in the life and murder of her young son." Vernon Ford, *Booklist*

Wells, Ken, ed. *Floating Off the Page: the Best Stories from The Wall Street Journal's "Middle Column"* - WSJ is the last word in financial news. But it is also known for the quirky stories that appear on page one in what is called the middle column. This is a compilation of some of the best from the last six decades. These well-crafted stories are odd, like the one on sheep orthodontia, and whimsical, like the one about throwing a piano 125 yards. But they all float off the page. Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS