



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2010

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



BIOGRAPHY

Knight, Roger. *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson.* Entering the Royal Navy at 12 (the usual age), Nelson quickly demonstrated the skill, aggressiveness and charisma of a born leader. It didn't hurt that he had a genius for charming superiors, inspiring fierce loyalty from seamen and befriending colleagues. But Nelson was a man of his time, fawning over royalty, pursuing prize money, quick to defend slights to his rank and obsessively scheming for publicity and promotion. *Publishers Weekly*

FICTION

Alarcon, Daniel. *Lost City Radio.* Norma lives in stunned solitude in an enormous South American metropolis, mourning her missing husband, Rey. Blessed with a honeyed voice, she channels her grief into Lost City Radio, an immensely popular show dedicated to the country's countless disappeared, displaced, and disconnected. Then Victor, a thin, quicksilver boy fresh from the jungle, appears at the station with a list of missing people that undermines everything Norma cherishes. Donna Seaman, *Booklist*

Atkinson, Kate. *Behind the Scenes at the Museum.* Ruby Lennox is irreverent, her family is dysfunctional and a tragic secret lies just below the surface of their household above the pet shop in York, England. Woven through the present day story is the history of five generations of ancestors including a great-grandmother who left her children to run off with a French magician. Told with wit and poignancy. Sandy Gaffigan

Bazzel, Josh. *Beat the Reaper.* Want to know how a mafia applicant gets made or what grizzly happenings take place in a city hospital? Pietro "Bearclaw" Brmwa is a former hitman turned surgeon and he's in the witness protection program. Hilariously told in New Jersey street language, it's a race to the end to see if Bearclaw can really beat the reaper. Sandy Gaffigan

Brooks, Geraldine. *People of the Book.* When an Australian rare-book conservator named Hanna Heath finds a butterfly wing, a salt crystal, a white hair, and bloodstains in the recently rediscovered Sarajevo Haggadah, a late-medieval illuminated codex of uncertain provenance, she sets out to solve the mystery of the book's origins. Brooks, beginning where science leaves off, uses Hanna's finds as entry points to richly imagined historical landscapes peopled by the Haggadah's creators, protectors, and would-be destroyers. *The New Yorker*

Brown, Sandra. *Rainwater.* In 1934 Texas, Ella runs a small boardinghouse while coping with a difficult ten-year-old son. New boarder David Raintree shows a special interest in Ella's son. It's a foregone conclusion that he and Ella will become lovers. Some racial overtones are thrown in when a young black minister comes to town, and the story reaches a somber and violent conclusion. *Library Journal*

Dunant, Sarah. *Sacred Hearts.* The year is 1570, and the convent of Santa Caterina, in the northern city of Ferrara, is considered the crown jewel of Italian nunneries. In a time when the cost of a daughter's dowry is staggering, many noblemen choose to marry surplus daughters off to the church, a far less expensive option. Not surprisingly, not all the women are willing participants. This is the story of the unlikely friendship forged between two women: Serafina, the angry, rebellious novice forced into convent life after an illicit affair comes to light, and Zuana, the calm, capable head of the dispensary, who cannot forget her painful assimilation 16 years previously. *Library Journal*

Genova, Lisa. *Still Alice.* Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. At fifty years old, she's a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a world-renowned expert in linguistics with a successful husband and three grown children. When she becomes increasingly disoriented and forgetful, a tragic diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's disease changes her life. As the inevitable descent into dementia strips away her sense of self, fiercely independent Alice struggles to live in the moment. While she once placed her worth and identity in her celebrated and respected academic life, now she must reevaluate her relationship with her husband; her expectations of her children; and her ideas about herself and her place in the world. *Amazon.com*

Larsson, Stieg. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.* Mikael Blomkvist, a once-respected financial journalist, watches his professional life rapidly crumble around him. Prospects appear bleak until an unexpected (and unsettling) offer to resurrect his name is extended by an old-school titan of Swedish industry. The catch--and there's always a catch--is that Blomkvist must first spend a year researching a mysterious disappearance that has remained unsolved for nearly four decades. With few other options, he accepts and enlists the help of investigator Lisbeth Salander, a misunderstood genius with a cache of authority issues. Dave Callanan, *Amazon.com*

Mantel, Hilary. *Wolf Hall.* In *Wolf Hall*, Hilary Mantel pulls off a feat of conjuring so compelling that the reader feels totally immersed in the world she has created. That world is early 16th century England, where any involvement in the public sphere carries with it tremendous danger. One wrong move - one wrong word - and you could forfeit your life. This, in an era when executions were noted for their barbaric cruelty. Through these treacherous waters, the lowly born Thomas Cromwell navigates his way to the heights of power and influence. All this, while King Henry VIII is trying to rid himself of Katherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Lynn Rashid

McBride, James. *Song Yet Sung.* Escaped slaves, free blacks, slave-catchers and plantation owners weave a tangled web of intrigue and adventure in McBride's intricately constructed and impressive second novel, set in pre-Civil War Maryland. Liz Spocott, a beautiful young runaway slave, suffers a nasty head wound just before being nabbed by a posse of slave catchers. She falls into a coma, and, when she awakes, she can see the future—from the near-future to Martin Luther King to hip-hop—in her dreams. *Publishers Weekly*

Morton, Kate. *The Forgotten Garden.* In 1913, a little girl arrives in Brisbane, Australia, and is taken in by a dockmaster and his wife. She doesn't know her name, and the only clue to her identity is a book of fairy tales tucked inside a white suitcase. Shifting back and forth over a span of nearly 100 years, this is a sprawling, old-fashioned novel, replete with family secrets, stories-within-stories, even a maze and a Dickensian rag-and-bone shop. Mary Ellen Quinn, *Booklist*

Ogawa, Yoko. *Housekeeper and the Professor.* A housekeeper goes to work for a math professor who has sustained a brain injury in an accident. The professor's memory may be impaired, but his passion for mathematics and his ability to share that passion remain in full force. When the housekeeper's young son joins the household, the dynamic is profoundly altered. This is a luminous novel about how love can grow and deepen in the stoniest of places. Roberta Rood

Phillips, Arthur. *The Egyptologist.* Ralph Trilipush, Pushy to his Oxford cronies, is determined to find the tomb of an apocryphal Egyptian king at the same time that Egyptologist Howard Carter is making the find of

the century - Tutankhamun's tomb. Phillips' tale is a satirical look at class, greed, ambition and the search for eternal life. Pushy's nemesis is Australian private eye, Harold Ferrell, who attempts to solve the multiple murders surrounding the doomed endeavor. Sandy Gaffigan

Scottoline, Lisa. *Look Again.* Scottoline scores another bull's-eye with this terrifying thriller about an adoptive parent's worst fear—the threat of an undisclosed illegality overturning an adoption. The age-progressed picture of an abducted Florida boy, Timothy Braverman, on a have you seen this child? flyer looks alarmingly like Philadelphia journalist Ellen Gleeson's three-year-old son, Will, whom she adopted after working on a feature about a pediatric cardiac care unit. *Amazon.com*

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help.* This optimistic, uplifting novel is set during the nascent civil rights movement in Jackson, Miss., where black women were trusted to raise white children but not to polish the household silver. Eugenia Skeeter Phelan is just home from college in 1962, and, anxious to become a writer, is advised to hone her chops by "writing about what disturbs you." The budding social activist begins to collect the stories of the black women on whom the country club set relies and mistrusts. The book Skeeter puts together based on their stories is scathing and shocking, bringing pride and hope to the black community, while giving Skeeter the courage to break down her personal boundaries and pursue her dreams. *Publisher's Weekly*

Waters, Sarah. *The Little Stranger.* Pity poor Dr. Faraday! He gets in over his head - way over his head - when he tries to help the Ayres family in their struggle to keep and maintain their ancestral property, Hundreds Hall. The action of this novel takes place against the backdrop of post-World War Two England. The landscape is bleak; living conditions for the inhabitants, bleaker still. Add to that, some strange and inexplicable occurrences at Hundreds Hall, and you have all the ingredients of a spooky neo-Gothic tale, richly served up by Sarah Waters. Roberta Rood

Zafon, Carlos Ruiz. *The Shadow of the Wind.* In post-World War II Barcelona, young Daniel is taken by his bookseller father to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a massive sanctuary where books are guarded from oblivion. Told to choose one book to protect, he selects *The Shadow of the Wind*, by Julian Carax. He reads it, loves it, and soon learns it is both very valuable and very much in danger because someone is determinedly burning every copy of every book written by the obscure Carax. Keir Graff, *Booklist*

Zusak, Marcus. *The Book Thief.* Death is the narrator of this lengthy, powerful story of a town in Nazi Germany. He is a kindly, caring Death, overwhelmed by the souls he has to collect from people in the gas chambers, from soldiers on the battlefields, and from civilians killed in bombings. Death focuses on a young orphan, Liesl; her loving foster parents; the Jewish fugitive they are hiding; and a wild but gentle teen neighbor, Rudy, who defies the Hitler Youth and convinces Liesl to steal for fun. After Liesl learns to read, she steals books from everywhere. Then the book thief writes her own story. Hazel Rochman, *Booklist*

MYSTERY

Bayard, Louis. *The Pale Blue Eye.* Bayard writes an intense and gripping novel set during Edgar Allan Poe's brief time as a West Point cadet. In 1830, retired New York City detective Gus Landor is living a quiet life at his Hudson Valley cottage, when Superintendent Thayer summons him to West Point to investigate the hanging and subsequent mutilation of a cadet. Poe aids Landor

by serving as an inside source into the closed world of the academy. The pair find themselves helpless to prevent further outrages; the removal of the victims' hearts suggests that a satanic cult might be at work. *Publishers Weekly*

Beaton, M.C. *The Skeleton in the Closet*. When diffident fortyish virgin Fellworth Dolphin's mother dies, he finds himself surprisingly relieved and freed from a bondage he was only partially aware of. That's nowhere near the astonishment he feels when he learns that, in spite of their penurious existence, he's heir to a large sum. In a moment of panic, when it seems an aunt might assume the tyrannical role his mother once played, Fell pretends an engagement to mousy waitress Maggie Partlett. In fits and starts, Maggie and Fell begin their separate transformations—she to a swan, he to a drake. *Amazon.com*

Block, Lawrence. *Hit and Run*. In *Hit Parade*, we met Keller and his partner Dot. They run a very successful murder for hire business, with Keller doing the actual killing while Dot minds the store back in White Plains, New York. In *Hit and Run*, Keller is framed for a murder that he in fact did not commit. Suddenly he's on the lam, hiding from both his partner, the law, and various unsavory characters. And then a completely unexpected and remarkable thing happens to Keller, causing him to embark on a whole new way of life. It's an audacious gamble. Will he be able to pull it off? The stakes could not be higher. Roberta Rood

Eagles, Cynthia Harrod. *Fell Purpose*. In this present day London police-procedural series, Inspector Bill Slider solves his 12th mystery. Sixteen-year-old straight-A, gifted student Zella Wilding is found dressed in uncharacteristically revealing clothing and strangled. Slider sifts through Zella's family conflicts and discovers her secret life in this keep-them-guessing-until-the-last-page mystery. Roberta Rood

Fairstein, Lisa. *Lethal Legacy*. Fairstein dedicates this mystery, set at the New York Public Library, to "librarians – guardian angels of the mind and soul." Alexandra Cooper, assistant district attorney, sets out to solve the murders of two young women. Evidence leads to the library and the privileged world of rare book collectors. Readers will enjoy a bounty of historical tidbits and the layered panorama of New York from gritty street to elegant brownstone. Sandy Gaffigan

Johnson, Craig. *The Cold Dish*. Walt Longmire, sheriff of Wyoming's Absaroka County, knows he's got trouble when Cody Pritchard is found dead. Two years earlier, Cody and three accomplices had been given suspended sentences for raping a Northern Cheyenne girl. Is someone seeking vengeance? Longmire faces the most volatile and challenging case in his twenty-four years as sheriff and means to see that revenge, a dish that is best served cold, is never served at all. From the publisher

Lovesey, Peter. *Skeleton Hill: An Inspector Peter Diamond Investigation*. During a recreation of an English Civil War battle outside Bath, Rupert Hope, an academic who's playing a cavalier, and another participant discover a human femur. Presented with this minor puzzle, the police eventually unearth the entire skeleton, minus the skull. After someone bludgeons Hope to death, Diamond wonders whether Hope's murder and the headless skeleton are connected, and his team redoubles their efforts to identify it. *Publishers Weekly*

Parker, Robert B. *The Professional*. Boston PI Spenser agrees to help a quartet of married women fend off extortion demands from stud Gary Eisenhower, with whom each has had an affair. Meanwhile, the husband of one of the women under blackmail threat hires some thugs to deal with the matter. *Publishers Weekly*

Penny, Louise. *A Brutal Telling*. Armand Gamache is a poetry-loving inspector who dines on mouthwatering meals while solving mysteries in a quaint Canadian village. Penny's is a sophisticated literary mystery in which the inspector meticulously peels away layers of deceit to look into the souls of his suspects and in the end nail the culprit. Sandy Gaffigan

Slaughter, Karin. *Triptych*. Nobody would care about Aleesha Monroe, the prostitute slain in an Atlanta housing project, if her killer hadn't bitten off her tongue. But because Aleesha's the fourth such victim in recent months, Detective Michael Ormewood is under intense pressure from his lieutenant to close the case. Slaughter has the courage to detonate her biggest bombshells early on, keeping even the wariest readers off-balance and leaving the last act for a settling of accounts. *Kirkus Review*

NONFICTION

Bongiorni, Sara. *A Year Without "Made in China"*. This book provides a thought-provoking and thoroughly entertaining account of how the most populous nation on Earth influences almost every aspect of our daily lives. Author Sara Bongiorni fills this book with engaging stories and anecdotes of her family's attempt to outrun China's reach-by boycotting Chinese made products—and does a remarkable job of taking a decidedly big-picture issue and breaking it down to a personal level. From the publisher

Egan, Timothy. *The Big Burn*. This unique chronicle of the 1910 forest fire that burned more than three million acres in two days, killed at least 80 people, and destroyed five towns, tells a complex and intriguing story: the confrontation between wealthy industrialists who built railroads and stripped the land of its natural resources and those men, including President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, who diligently worked to preserve the West's vast forest resources. *Library Journal*

Eggers, Dave. *Zeitoun*. With Hurricane Katrina bearing down on New Orleans, Abdulrahman Zeitoun sends his wife Kathy and their children away, while he himself stays in the city to look after their home and business. Soon he finds himself rescuing trapped people and feeding stranded pets. He comes to believe that God has willed him to stay behind, in order to carry out this mission of mercy. But suddenly, Kathy finds herself unable to contact her husband on his cell phone - or on any phone, for that matter. Has Abdulrahman been overtaken by disaster? What happens next will strain your credulity - and arouse your sense of outrage as well. Roberta Rood

Hewitt, Ben. *The Town That Food Saved*. *Gourmet* calls Hardwick, Vermont "one of the most important food towns in America." The discussion about the sustainability of large scale agriculture is not new. However, the conversation almost exclusively occurs within a small group of like minded individuals who make it their personal priority to support local food producers. Hewitt's story of the developing local food economy in Hardwick could launch the discussion into the mainstream. Complete with historical details, compelling characters and competing view points Hewitt creates a highly readable account of the creation of a new agricultural business model. Lynn Rashid

Holmes, Richard. *The Age of Wonder*. This capacious chronicle of exploration and discovery begins in the mid-1700's and concludes some one hundred years later. In the course of a riveting narrative, you will encounter, among others, naturalist Joseph Banks (who sailed to the South Seas with Captain Cook), composer and astronomer William Herschel and his gifted sister Caroline, the Montgolfier brothers and other daring balloonists, pioneering chemist Humphry Davy, and Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. Their stories are cunningly interwoven, and in Holmes's gifted hands,

spring vividly to life. This is one of the most consistently illuminating and entertaining books I've ever read. Roberta Rood

Keynes, Randal. *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution*. If you're curious about Charles Darwin, the man, look no further than Randal Keynes' touching biography of his great-great-uncle. It's all here: from the Darwin's marriage and first home in London to the details of life at Down House, Emma's widowhood, and Annie's Box. *Amazon.com*

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. This book chronicles the year that Barbara Kingsolver, along with her husband and two daughters, made a commitment to become locavores—those who eat only locally grown foods. This first entailed a move away from their home in non-food-producing Tuscon to a family farm in Virginia, where they got right down to the business of growing and raising their own food and supporting local farmers. Jenny Gasset, Orange County Public Library, CA, *School Library Journal*

Lewis, Michael. *The Blind Side*. Lewis shows how changes in the pro game wrought by 49ers head coach Bill Walsh's efficient passing attack and a defense emphasizing Lawrence Taylor-style speed rushers from the quarterback's blind side mean that the offensive left tackle position now rivals the quarterback both in importance and in pay scale. Lewis's discussion of evolving strategy is woven into the true focus of his book, a profile of African American football prodigy Michael Oher. One of 13 children of a drug-addicted mother, Oher was homeless in Memphis when he was placed in the Briarcrest Christian School and then adopted by a wealthy white family. He found a sense of belonging and a future. He now plays for the Baltimore Ravens. His strange, sad, and yet inspiring tale is grippingly told here. *Library Journal*

Pickett, Kate. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. Public health experts Wilkinson and Pickett assemble data collected by institutions such as the United Nations and the U.S. Census Bureau to illustrate the negative social effects of unequal income distribution in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Supported with graphs and references, their research reveals that as the income disparity between the richest and poorest citizens of a country increases, health problems and social issues increase across all income groups in the population. The last part of the book focuses on the global implications of the ills created by unequal societies while also detailing specific policies to help redistribute income. Among other suggestions, the authors discuss the need for increased employee ownership of companies and a carbon regulatory system as ways to redistribute income in the more unequal societies. Whether or not they agree with the authors' conclusions, readers will find themselves compelled to talk about and debate the issues raised in this thought provoking book. Lynn Rashid

Silber, Joan. *The Art of Time in Fiction; As Long As It Takes*. In this extended essay, the author of *Ideas of Heaven* explains the way in which "...a story is entirely determined by what portion of time it chooses to narrate." This could be it a day, a season, or a lifetime. Silber illustrates her thesis with a mix of works, from the famous (*The Great Gatsby*) to the obscure. Roberta Rood

Tough, Paul. *Whatever it Takes*. Geoffrey Canada has captured national attention with his bold effort to offer a cradle-to-college Harlem Children's Zone program for thousands of underprivileged children in Harlem. This is an engrossing look at a visionary man and a bold experiment that has caught the eye of a wide range of politicians, including Barack Obama, who has promised to replicate the program throughout the U.S. if elected. *Booklist*