



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2007

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



FICTION

Dunant, Sarah. *In the Company of the Courtesan* – Dunant's latest historical romp follows the fortunes of a beautiful, flame-haired courtesan, Fiammetta Bianchini, who, after escaping from the 1527 pillage of Rome, sets up shop in Venice. The novel, narrated by Fiammetta's servant, a dwarf, chronicles the pair's horrific scrapes and their dizzying triumphs, which include Fiammetta's becoming Titian's model for his "Venus of Urbino." -*The New Yorker*

Edwards, Kim. *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* – When Norah Henry goes into labor on a wintry night, her orthopedic surgeon husband, David, must deliver their fraternal twins. Upon seeing that his daughter has Down's Syndrome, he decides to spare his drugged wife knowledge of the handicap. He instructs the nurse, Caroline Gill, to take the girl and place her in a local institution. Instead, Caroline takes Phoebe and raises her. Meanwhile, Norah is told that Paul's twin died at birth. "Edwards has written a deeply moving drama covering twenty-five years in the lives of two families and exploring the damage a single lie can do to all involved." -S.J.H. © AudioFile 2005, Portland, Maine

Fergus, Jim. *One Thousand White Women: The Journals of May Dodd: A Novel* – An American western with a most unusual twist, this is an imaginative fictional account of the participation of May Dodd and others in the controversial "Brides for Indians" program, a clandestine U.S. government-sponsored program intended to instruct "savages" in the ways of civilization and to assimilate the Indians into white culture through the offspring of these unions. Fergus is gifted in his ability to portray the perceptions and emotions of women. He writes with tremendous insight and sensitivity about the individual community and the political and religious issues of the time, many of which are still relevant today. -Grace Fill, *Booklist*

Ford, Richard. *The Lay of the Land* – This third novel featuring realtor Frank Bascombe, finds the beleaguered everyman in the "Permanent Period" of his life, where he's trying mightily to deal with present circumstances while dodging past regrets. Through Frank's acerbic opinions on a host of issues, from the presidential election of 2000 to the real-estate business, friendship, and the "treacherous" nature of holidays, Ford crafts a mesmerizing narrative voice—one that gives us, with offhanded eloquence and a kind of grim mirth, "the lay of the land." -Joanne Wilkinson, *Booklist*

Goodman, Allegra. *Intuition* – Gifted scientists and graduate students working at an elite research laboratory in Cambridge, Mass. fall prey to jealousy and resentment, with dire consequences. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Gregory, Philippa. *The Other Boleyn Girl* – Before Henry VIII ever considered making Anne Boleyn his wife, her older sister, Mary, was his mistress. Historical novelist Gregory uses the perspective of this "other Boleyn girl" to reveal the rivalries and intrigues swirling through England. Gregory captures not only

the dalliances of court but the panorama of political and religious clashes throughout Europe. -Kathy Pielh, *Library Journal*

Gruen, Sara. *Water for Elephants* – With its spotlight on elephants, Gruen's romantic page-turner hinges on human-animal bonds. The novel, told in flashback by nonagenarian Jacob Jankowski, recounts the wild and wonderful period he spent with the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth, a traveling circus he joined during the Great Depression. When 23-year-old Jankowski learns that his parents have been killed in a car crash, leaving him penniless, he drops out of Cornell veterinary school and parlays his expertise with animals into a job with the circus. He also falls in love with Marlena, one of the show's star performers—a romance complicated by Marlena's husband, the unbalanced, sadistic circus boss. -*Publishers Weekly*

McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Right Attitude To Rain* – Philosopher and amateur sleuth Isabel Dalhousie finds that her ability to analyze ethical dilemmas is not of much use where matters of the heart are concerned. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children* – Ten years after completing their education, three graduates of Brown University are still struggling to make a go of things, both personally and professionally. The place: New York City; the year: 2001...-Roberta Rood, HCL

O'Brien, Patrick. *Master and Commander* – It has been said that this series is some of the finest historical fiction of our time . . . Aubrey and Maturin have been described as better than Holmes and Watson, the equal of Quixote and Panza . . . All this is true. -*Los Angeles Times*

Roiphe, Anne. *An Imperfect Lens* – During an outbreak of cholera in Alexandria, Egypt in 1885, Louis Pasteur sends scientists from his renowned institute to the besieged city to see if they can isolate the microbe that is causing the epidemic. Based on a true story. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Sijie, Dai. *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* – This is a boy-meets-girl story set in the time of Mao's cultural revolution. The little seamstress is a beauty. She blossoms into a woman as her suitor opens up the world outside her rural village as he relates stories from western literature. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Tyler, Anne. *Digging to America* – When Bitsy and Brad Donaldson and Sami and Ziba Yazdan both adopt Korean infant girls, their chance encounter at the Baltimore airport the day their daughters arrive marks the start of a long, intense if sometimes awkward friendship. Stretching from the babies' arrival in 1997 until 2004, the novel is punctuated by each year's Arrival Party, a tradition manufactured and comically upheld by Bitsy; the annual festivities gradually reveal the families' evolving connections. -*Publishers Weekly*

Waters, Sarah. *Affinity* – There are two kinds of mystery novels. The first gives us the crime and the clues; the guilty party is then unmasked and the mystery solved. In the other, the crime is solved but not the mystery, which arises from a dark corner of the

human condition. *Affinity* is both of these—and also a wrenching love story. -Nancy Willard, *The New York Times Book Review*

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE



Boyd, William. *Restless* – Sally Gilmartin believes that someone is trying to kill her. Daughter Ruth is bewildered by this seemingly irrational fear. Little does Ruth suspect that she will soon learn the whole stunning truth about the mother she thought she knew. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Francis, Dick. *Under Orders* – It starts with three deaths in one afternoon at the races. As former jockey Sid Halley tries to unravel the case, he and his girlfriend are violently targeted. Francis exposes the dark side of racing with the added complication of Internet gaming. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Grimes, Martha. *The Old Wine Shades* – A man walks into a wine bar...So begins the strange tale that Harry Johnson relates to Detective Inspector Richard Jury. A woman, her son, and their dog disappear; one year later, the dog turns up minus his human companions. What gives?? -Roberta Rood, HCL

Lippman, Laura. *No Good Deeds: A Tess Monaghan Novel* – When Tess Monaghan's boyfriend tries to help out 16-year-old Lloyd Jupiter, the good deed backfires, and the Charm City investigator finds the bodies piling up and herself in danger. Baltimorean author Lippman uses the recent real-life high-profile murder of a federal prosecutor to craft this suspense-filled story. -Molly Kelley, HPCSS

Penny, Louise. *Still Life* – Why would anyone murder sweet, elderly Jane Neal, lifelong resident of the village of Three Pines in Quebec? Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his team struggle to find the answer to this and other baffling questions. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Vine, Barbara. *The Minotaur* – When Kerstin, a young Swedish woman, comes to England to help the Cosway women care for John, a mentally disabled family member, she soon finds that he just might be the sanest member of an extremely eccentric household. -Roberta Rood, HCL

NONFICTION



Alison, Jay. *This I Believe: Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women* – In the 1950s, the Edward R. Murrow-hosted radio program This I Believe prompted Americans to briefly explain their most cherished beliefs, be they religious or purely pragmatic. Since the program's 2005 renaissance as a weekly NPR segment, Allison (the host) and Gediman (the executive producer) have collected some of the best essays from This I Believe then and now. "Your personal credo" is what Allison calls it in the book's introduction, noting that today's program is distinguished from the 1950s version in soliciting submissions from ordinary Americans from all walks of life. These make up some of the book's most powerful and memorable moments, from the surgeon whose illiterate mother changed his early life with faith and a library card to the English professor whose poetry helped him process a traumatic childhood event. -*Publishers Weekly*

Bryson, Bill. *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir* - Bryson's latest, filled with laugh-out-loud recollections of his 1950s Des Moines, Iowa, childhood also holds "nostalgia for one's youth, suffused with comic hyperbole."
-Publishers Weekly

Campbell, T. Colin. *The China Study* - If you are wondering what is wrong with the American diet, Dr. Campbell has the answer. His findings from the largest diet-to-disease-risk study ever undertaken are startling. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Child, Julie and Alex Prudhomme. *My Life in France* - More than four decades ago, Julia Child first brought her joie de vivre—and classic recipes—to American kitchens with cookbooks that included *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961) and a handful of immensely popular cooking shows, beginning in 1963 with the decade-long run of *The French Chef*. In *My Life in France*, an engaging, nuanced addition to the body of her work, Child was assisted by great-nephew Alex Prudhomme, who allowed Child's distinctive voice to ring throughout. Child herself worked diligently on the manuscript during the last year of her life. The result is a memoir that brings to life the jocular, grandmotherly guide who introduced so many Americans to the joy of peerless meals conceived and prepared with élan and rich imagination. -Bookmarks Magazine

Chouinard, Yvon. *Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman* - Chouinard, founder and owner of Patagonia Inc., presents his philosophy for a "new style of responsible business" along with a chronicle of his personal and company history in this sincere and fascinating account. -Publishers Weekly

Enslar, Eve. *Insecure at Last: Losing It in Our Security-Obsessed World* - Enslar, most famous for the *Vagina Monologues*, now proves to be as galvanizing an oral historian and essayist as she is a dramatist in this forthright inquiry into our obsession with security both personal and national. Forging a potent brew of candid memoir and hard-hitting reportage, she considers the harsh reality that security is nothing more than an illusion, and that, perversely, the pursuit of security actually increases threats against our well-being. -Donna Seaman, Booklist

Fessler, Ann. *The Girls Who Went Away* - Perhaps it's no surprise that this story has gone untold for so long, considering the personal nature of the subject and the moral dilemma heaped upon the young women who gave their babies up for adoption. What is astonishing is that Fessler, a photographer and video installation artist writing her debut book, manages to tell this compelling story with a perfectly honed sense of restraint and respect. She handles the large volume of source material nimbly, letting each individual story breathe. -Bookmarks Magazine

Friedman, Thomas L. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* - What Friedman means by "flat" is "connected": the lowering of trade and political barriers and the exponential technical advances of the digital revolution that have made it possible to do business, or almost anything else, instantaneously with billions of other people across the planet. This in itself should not be news to anyone. But the news that Friedman has to deliver is that just when we stopped paying attention to these

developments--when the dot-com bust turned interest away from the business and technology pages and when 9/11 and the Iraq War turned all eyes toward the Middle East--is when they actually began to accelerate. -Amazon.com

Grogan, John. *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog* - "Oh my. I don't think I've ever seen anything so cute in my life." Thus author Grogan's wife sealed their fate when they "just went to look" at a litter of Labrador retriever puppies and ended up picking out Marley. Although Marley got kicked out of obedience training after he dragged the instructor across the parking lot and terrorized his pet sitter, he also landed a minor role in a straight-to-video movie. Marley, incorrigible though he was, had inserted himself into the author's life in a way no normal dog could. -Nancy Bent, Booklist

Grossman, Anne. *Lobscouse & Spotted Dog* - Patrick O'Brian fans hungering for another installment in his nautical adventure series can tide themselves over with this splendid cookbook. With lively wit and keen ear for the wonderful—and wonderfully awful—names of foods, the authors serve up authentic dishes from the 18th and 19th centuries. -Publishers Weekly

Hanson, Eric. *Stranger in the Forest: On Foot Across Borneo* - A gracefully written and passionate--account of a strange world made palpable, written with disarming modesty and rare sensitivity. -The New York Times Book Review

Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas. *The Monsters: Mary Shelley and the Curse of Frankenstein* - In the early 1800's, Mary Shelley and her circle flouted the rules of conventional society in ways we might find shocking even today. Not for nothing was Lord Byron called "the most dangerous man in Europe." -Roberta Rood, HCL

Levitt, Steven. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* - In *Freakonomics*, Levitt contends that many apparent mysteries of everyday life don't need to be so mysterious: they could be illuminated and made even more fascinating by asking the right questions and drawing connections. Numerous real-world examples are detailed in this interesting work. -Amazon.com

Lucey, Donna M. *Archie and Amelie: Love and Madness in the Gilded Age* - The story of the disastrous marriage of John Armstrong "Archie" Chanler, heir to the Astor fortune, and Amelie Rives, a Southern belle with some decidedly odd proclivities, proves yet again that truth is often stranger - and more engrossing - than fiction. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Obama, Barack. *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* - Three years after completing college, Obama, the son of a white American mother and of a black Kenyan father finally went to Kenya, to find the world of his dead father, his "authentic" self. His search for himself as a black American is rooted in the particulars of his daily life; it also reads like a wry commentary about all of us. -Hazel Rochman, Booklist

Orlean, Susan. *The Orchid Thief* - Take a tribe of Seminole Indians, passionate plant people, an orchid-filled swamp in Florida and one crazy white man. Orlean says John Laroche is cut from flammable cloth. That he is and it makes a darn good story. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *Mayflower* - The pilgrims couldn't have survived their first winter without the help of Native Americans. Fifty years later the relations between Plymouth Colony and the Indians deteriorated into King Philip's War - one of the bloodiest in American history. 375 years later the lesson of what happens when two cultures cease trying to work it out is of utmost importance. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Tedlow, Richard S. *Andy Grove: The Life and Times of an American* - Andy Grove fled to America from his native Hungary in 1956. He went on to take part in the founding of Intel Corporation; under his leadership, Intel became one of the most important, powerful, and successful businesses in Silicon Valley. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Zoellner, Tom. *The Heartless Stone: A Journey through the World of Diamonds, Deceit, Desire* - Historically, the workings of the diamond industry, heavily controlled until recently by the De Beers cartel, have been filled with clandestine meetings and covert operations, and its myths even pervades popular culture. Zoellner has traveled the globe learning about the remarkably large supply of diamonds both mined and manufactured for industrial cutting and the jewelry trade. In the countries where they are mined, they represent both auspicious wealth and abject poverty. The citizens have long been exploited by international corporate investors and bloodthirsty local warlords anxious to supply the public with a token of eternal love. -School Library Journal



STORY COLLECTION

Dahl, Roald. *Collected Stories* (Everyman's Library) - Largely known for his children's books, Dahl also had a genius for adult short fiction. Dahl was brilliant at provoking in his readers the overwhelming desire to know what happens next—and at satisfying that desire in ways that feel both surprising and inevitable. Filled with devilish plot twists, his tales display a tantalizing blend of macabre humor and the absurdly grotesque. Dahl's creations amuse and shock us in equal measure, gleefully reminding us of what might lurk beneath the surface of the ordinary. -From the publisher

Fuguet, Alberto. *Shorts: Stories* -Fuguet's characters offer a perspective on young Latin Americans not fully at home in the U.S. or Latin America, captivated by pop culture and technology and hooked on fantasies about life in America that will inevitably lead to disappointment. -Molly Kelley, HCPSS

Jones, Edward P. *All Aunt Hagar's Children: Stories* - Set in the Washington, DC area, these short stories have an other-worldly quality. Jones spins heartbreaking tales into lyrical prose. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS



CLASSICS

And let's not forget how rewarding a return to the classics can be. One good way to revisit some of your old favorites is through recorded books. Here are some suggestions:

Austen, Jane. *Emma*

Steinbeck, John. *Grapes of Wrath*

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*

James, Henry. *Washington Square*