

Check inside for many great recommendations from the Summer Reading List. Find it online.

A Word from... YOUR Library

Many thanks to all the faculty and staff who contributed to this issue of Bookwatch. There are many great choices for reading over your summer vacation.

Congratulations to Susan McKenzie the winner of the \$20 gift certificate to the Campus bookstore.

Have a safe and restful summer and read lots of good books!

Western Reserve Academy

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Reading Recommendations from the John D. Ong Library

Faculty and Staff Recommendations:

Christine Borrmann recommends:

The Piano Teacher by Janice Y. K. Lee

"An interesting perspective on WWII from inside China. A worthwhile endeavor!"

Jeannie Kidera recommends:

Foe by J.M. Coetzee

"It's both post-modern and post-colonial in theme and structure and brings up some great questions about voice and authorship within both history and literature. It's a twist on Robinson Crusoe."

Lisabeth Robinson recommends:

The Forest Lover by Susan Vreeland

"The story of Emily Carr, an early twentieth-century painter of British Columbia as she tries to capture the vitality and spirit of Northwest American Indian totem poles while exploring the avant-garde techniques emerging from the art world. She battles her own frustrations of figuring out the mechanics and vibrancy of fauvism, and battles the Victorian mores of her times that dictate how she ought to spend her days enlivened only by domesticity."

Cherie Thomas recommends:

Haunting Rachel by Kay Hooper

"Ten years ago Rachel Grant's fiancé, Thomas, disappeared. His body was never found. Now there's a stranger in town, a man who could be Thomas's twin--or his ghost." *(Product description)*

Tom Vince recommends:

Unpacking the Boxes by Donald Hall

"A brief but absorbing memoir by the distinguished American poet that traces his 'life with poetry' from boyhood in New England in the 1930's, to life at Harvard and Oxford where he came to know other young writers who would make their mark, a teaching career, and finally retiring with his wife to the New Hampshire farm of his grandparents. This memoir will send the reader back to Hall's poetry and earlier books."

Gerard Manoli recommends:

The House at Riverton by Kate Morton

"Grace Bradley went to work at Riverton House as a servant when she was just a girl, before the First World War. For years her life was inextricably tied up with the Hartford family, most particularly the two daughters, Hannah and Emmeline. In the summer of 1924, at a glittering society party held at the house, a young poet shot himself. The only witnesses were Hannah and Emmeline and only they -- and Grace -- know the truth." *(Product description)*

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Faculty and Staff Recommendations

continued...

Dan Dyer recommends:

So Long As Men Can Breathe: The Untold Story of Shakespeare's Sonnets by Clinton Heylin

"The story of how the Bard's sonnets found their way into print."

The Book of William: How Shakespeare's First Folio Conquered the World by Paul Collins

"A wonderful, brisk account of how the *First Folio* (1623) was published, how it cemented the reputation of the Bard (who'd died in 1616), and how it is now the most expensive single title in the world--copies go for millions at auction."

Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare by Jonathan Bate

"An exploration of the furniture of Shakespeare's mind--what was he *thinking*? What did he *believe*? What had he *read*? Bate--one of the world's leading authorities on the Bard--has written a swift and engrossing story."

Brimstone by Robert B. Parker

"The latest Western from the creator of the detective Spenser--a sort of sequel to *Appaloosa*, which was released as a film just last year. Parker's Western heroes sound a bit like Spenser and Hawk, but he knows the terrain, knows that the darkness in a human heart has no geographical or chronological boundaries."

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson

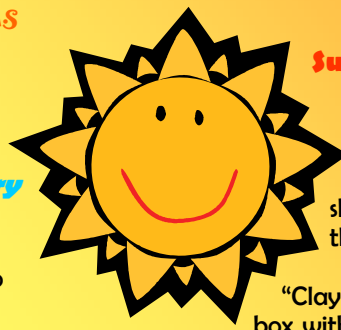
"A gripping mystery about a missing girl in Sweden--by a Swedish journalist who died unexpectedly not long ago. Now an international bestseller." (See review in *Bookwatch* Spring '09 issue.)



Judy Israelson recommends:

The Biology of Belief--Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter & Miracles by Bruce H. Lipton, Ph.D.

"The science of how thoughts control life... This book will forever change how you think about your own thinking. Stunning new scientific discoveries about the biochemical effects of the brain's functioning show that all the cells of your body are affected by your thoughts. Lipton, a renowned cell biologist, describes the precise molecular pathways through which this occurs. Using simple language, illustrations, humor, and everyday examples, he demonstrates how the new science of Epigenetics is revolutionizing our understanding of the link between mind and matter and the profound effects it has on our personal lives and the collective life of our species. This profoundly hopeful synthesis of the latest and best research in cell biology and quantum physics is being hailed as a major breakthrough, showing that our bodies can be *changed* as we retrain our thinking."



Susan McKenzie recommends:

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

"This teen lit book is compelling in its approach. This should be required reading for anyone who has anything to do with middle school or high school students."

"Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a mysterious box with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker--his classmate and crush--who committed suicide two weeks earlier. On tape, Hannah explains that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life. Clay is one of them. If he listens, he'll find out how he made the list." (Product description)

Eric Unhold recommends:

Candide by Voltaire

"Witty and caustic, *Candide* has ranked as one of the world's great satires since its first publication in 1759. In the story of the trials and travails of the youthful *Candide*, his mentor Dr. Pangloss, and a host of other characters, Voltaire mercilessly satirizes and exposes romance, science, philosophy, religion and government--the ideas and institutions men live by." (Product description)



Tom Germain recommends:

The Meadowlands: Wilderness Adventures at the Edge of a City by Robert Sullivan and Joshua Lutz

Just two miles west of Manhattan lies the Meadowlands, a 32-square-mile stretch of sweeping wilderness that evokes morbid fantasies of Mafia hits and buried remains. Under the pretext of searching for Jimmy Hoffa, photographer Joshua Lutz began exploring these lonesome wetlands ten years ago; what started as a strict documentary project soon evolved into something else entirely. (Product description)

The Soloists: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music by Steve Lopez

"This is the true story of journalist Steve Lopez's discovery of Nathaniel Ayers, a former classical bass student at Julliard, playing his heart out on a two-string violin on Los Angeles' Skid Row. Deeply affected by the beauty of Ayers's music, Lopez took it upon himself to change the prodigy's life--only to find that their relationship has had a profound change on his own life." (Product description)

Jeff Namiotka recommends:

Dune by Frank Herbert

"Frank Herbert's magnificent *Dune* novels stand among the major achievements of the human imagination as one of the most significant sagas in the history of literary science fiction." (Product description)



And for those of you who prefer your books in

Spanish:

Jim Fraser recommends:

Don Segundo Sombra

by Ricardo Güiraldes

"A very fine novel on the life of a gaucho (cowboy) in the Pampas of Argentina."

Martin Fierro by Jose Hernandez

"A great epic poem about this incredible gaucho."

Fiction Reviews from the Summer Reading List..

The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein

This poignant tale is narrated by Enzo, a mixed breed dog (part Lab, part who knows...) nearing the end of his days on earth. As he looks toward the end of his life, he has mixed emotions... He is melancholy about leaving his beloved owner, Denny, but he's also in pain and wants to go—and this desire is reinforced because he knows he will come back as a human in his next life (a Mongolian belief he readily accepted from a documentary on cable TV) and meet Denny again... As the end nears, he looks back on his life with Denny, Eva, and Zoe... and his recollections will bring tears to your eyes. A powerful, bitter-sweet narrative—required reading for all dog lovers!

(Review by Jacque Miller)

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Sometime in the future, North America has been ravaged by war and the new country, Panem, is ruled by the members of the Capitol, located in the Rocky Mountains. Surrounded by 12 districts (#13 has been annihilated to prove a point) who have been defeated and assigned their roles to support those in the Capitol, additional tribute must also be paid at the annually televised Hunger Games. The tribute? A boy and girl from each district must participate in a battle to the death with the participants from the other districts. Only the sole victor lives... (Review by Jacque Miller)

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

This is one of the most intense, heart-breaking, and well-written novels that I have read in a long time. Fourteen-year-old Edgar Sawtelle lives on his family's farm and is an active participant in the family business—breeding and training Sawtelle dogs. Born a mute, Edgar's keen sensibilities, indeed unique gifts, foster a unique relationship with the dogs he trains. When Edgar's perfect world is turned upside with

the death of his father, his life takes a drastic turn with unforgettable consequences. This is a must-read!

(Review by Jacque Miller)



More Fiction Reviews:

To Siberia by Per Petterson

The acclaimed author of *Out Stealing Horses* offers the eloquent story of a brother, Jesper, and his unnamed sister (the narrator) as they grow up in a small Danish town on the eve of WWII and go their separate ways as the war evolves and ends. Emotionally abandoned by their parents, the two rely on each other and develop a close emotional bond. Petterson's vivid descriptions and haunting language make this novel something special, indeed. (Review by Jacque Miller)

Lethal Legacy by Linda Fairstein

With the Alexandra Cooper series, Linda Fairstein offers a great mystery but her storylines also include interesting aspects of New York City's history. In *Lethal Legacy*, Fairstein takes the reader into the "hallow halls" of the New York Public Library and the world of rare books. As Assistant D.A. Alex Cooper investigates the death of a conservator of rare books and maps, she has to unravel why someone is willing to kill for an *Alice in Wonderland* book. Strange characters and family secrets are unveiled as Alex and her squad of detectives explore the behind the scenes workings of the NYPL.



Check out the book to discover the answer to this trivia question: In the 1930's what did NYC Mayor LaGuardia nickname the two lion statues that guard the main entrance to the NYPL? (Review by Holly Bunt)



American Wife by Curtis Sittenfeld

The author of *Prep* has published a new novel called *American Wife*. The story is "loosely" based on the life of Laura Bush. Who doesn't like Laura Bush? She's quiet, unassuming, wife, mother and daughter-in-law and, most importantly, a former librarian. Narrator Alice Blackwell is the Wisconsin-born star of the story. Her life has been enriched by books and reading which have given her "an awareness of the world as an odd and vibrant and contradictory place." Sittenfeld has written a controversial story about a political dynasty. (Review by Jane Spencer)

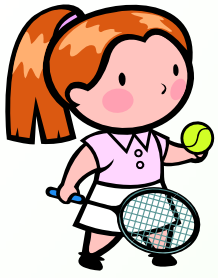
A Stopover in Venice by Kathryn Walker

This debut novel weaves mystery, love, historical fiction and self-discovery in a seemingly effortless way. A young American woman is traveling in Italy with her famous musician husband, and, in a moment of clarity and anger, she gets off the train and leaves him. Nel needs to clear her head and her life and returns to Venice to stay alone in a small hotel. While in Venice, she rescues a small dog that is being tormented by some young boys. Nel's saving of the dog leads her to the dog's owner, a countess who is living in an old palazzo that was formerly a convent, where the Countess and an artist, Matteo, have recently uncovered an ancient fresco. As these three try to solve the mystery of the fresco artist, the story weaves back and forth between Nel, her new friends, and the former occupants of the convent. Through the efforts of the Countess and Matteo, Nel makes her own discoveries of what is truly important in her life. (Review by Melissa Slager)

For more great reading suggestions check out the Summer Reading List online.

http://library.wra.net/library/publications/documents/summer_reading_program09.pdf

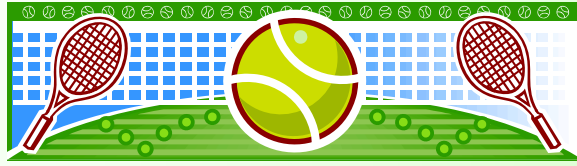




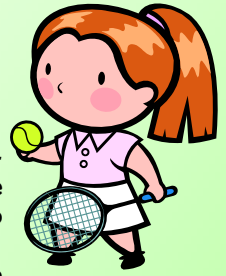
Fiction Reviews Cont...

Nemesis by Jo Nesbo

Nesbo's latest novel is a gripping thriller that will keep you on the edge of your seat. Norwegian police inspector, Harry Hole, is still recovering from the brutal murder of his former partner, Ellen Gjelten, (*The Redbreast*, 2007) when a string of bank robberies begins in Oslo. In the first robbery, a bank teller is brutally murdered for no apparent reason...and Harry enlists the help of a master bank robber in prison to help solve the case. At the same time, a love interest from Harry's past gets in touch with him—but as the old flame starts to rekindle, she is found dead... Is it suicide or murder? And how can Harry solve the case when he was the last one to see her alive? (Review by Jacque Miller)



Shimmering Images: A Handy Little Guide to Writing Memoir by Lisa Dale Norton



This is a great little non-fiction book for all those who think they'd like to start a journal but haven't taken the time. It's inspirational. It has practical suggestions and tips on what to write and what not to write. It's also small, to the point, and makes writing memoirs seem simple and fun. *Shimmering Images* would be a good gift for graduation or for a friend that you suspect has a ton of memoirs to share. With time this summer, why not try it out? It might lead to a book someday. You could be famous. (Review by Sue Donnelly)

Non-Fiction Reviews:

The Bitter Sea: Coming of Age in a China Before Mao by Charles N. Li

This autobiography about a young boy struggling to survive with his family in Communist China is one of my favorite books read this year. Li's familial relationships break down, and he is faced with many challenges at home, in school and eventually with the government. Unexpectedly in the end, someone close to him comes to his rescue and he is able to break away. It's a wonderful success story, one of struggle and endurance during the "turbulent early years of modern China." Here is history and triumph in one great book. A gem! (Review by Sue Donnelly)

America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It by Mark Steyn

Controversy abounds over this book: critics say it is racist, anti-Islam, and it was even under consideration for banning in Canada due to Islamic protests! Journalist Steyn (contributor to *Macleans* and *National Review* among others) uses his trademark wit and caustic humor to present the argument that the "War on Terror" is not a religious war, but a cultural one—and that by the end of the 21st century America will likely stand alone in its efforts to maintain western civilization as we know it—but only if we want to... So what is this book really about? Demographics! Citing the drastic reduction in western European populations, along with the Russian Federation, China, and Japan, and the continuing increase in Islamic populations, eventually the culture with the most people will dictate societal values around the globe. His argument is thoughtful and logical; his examples are numerous and thought-provoking... This book deserves consideration regardless of your political persuasion. (Review by Jacque Miller)



The Well-Dressed Ape: A Natural History of Myself by Hannah Holmes

This is a humorous, yet poignant, anthropological study of *Homo sapiens*' positive and negative impact on other species and the earth. Holmes felt that by researching and writing about her "animal self" it would allow her to realize how she fit into the world. (Review by Kim Barsella)

All But My Life by Gerda Weissmann Klein

This powerful autobiographical work from the Holocaust is unforgettable. It is a tremendously moving story, one of compassion, torn familial relationships and a bonding that emerges out of the depths of horrific, inhumane treatment at the hands of the SS. If you want an emotional reading experience, read this book. It is a true story of unbelievable spirit and survival by an amazing writer. (Review by Sue Donnelly)

MacNolia by A. Van Jordan

In 1936, thirteen year old MacNolia Cox became the first African-American to reach the final round of the National Spelling Bee. Yet the promising young student would be sabotaged by Southern judges, who presented her with a word not on the official list. Dreams dashed, she returns home to Akron, Ohio where she lives out the rest of her life, becoming not the doctor she'd once dreamed of, but a maid in a physician's home. In his stunning collection, poet A. Van Jordan imagines the life of MacNolia Cox and those around her, detailing the racism of the spelling bee and the life that followed. Filled with echoes of the blues and making use of cinematic techniques, Jordan's poems sing as they play with form and use history to explore the edges of a life and time. Beyond all of the stunning language, Jordan tells a gripping story, one that quivers all the more because it is true. Winner of the 2004 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and a 2004 Whiting Award. (Review by Cathy Fahey-Hunt)