



Summer Reading List for Staff - 2006

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



FICTION

Barnes, Julian. *Arthur and George* - George Edalji, a young Englishman of Indian descent, has been convicted of a crime he did not commit. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle suspects that this miscarriage of justice was due in no small part to racial prejudice; he therefore resolves to find the means whereby to exonerate Edalji. Based on a true story, this book is an overstuffed pile of a novel, of a type much beloved by those of us who came of age reading Dickens, Eliot and Trollope. A triumph! -Roberta Rood, HCL

Caputo, Philip. *Acts of Faith* - Caputo has painted a portrait of Africa that avoids stereotype or cliché. *Acts of Faith* is a timely book about attempted heroism in the face of war, and a warning, noted in the epigraph from the 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal, that "Whoever tries to turn angel turns beast." -*Bookmarks Magazine*

Diamant, Anita. *The Last Days of Dogtown* - In a radical departure from the biblical setting of her best-selling *The Red Tent* (1997), Diamant turns her attention to the windswept shores of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. In the early days of the nineteenth century, a declining hamlet nicknamed Dogtown by detractors houses a pack of semi-feral dogs and an eclectic group of residents too stubborn, too poverty stricken, too worn down, or too old to relocate. As the interrelated stories of these unfortunate souls are recounted, the reader is irresistibly drawn into their orbit, becoming emotionally invested in both their individual and their collective lives. -Margaret Flanagan, *Booklist*

Doctorow, E.L. *The March* - Doctorow recreates the harrowing universe of the Civil War as it draws to a bloody close; he then drops the reader right into it. This splendid novel won the prestigious Pen/Faulkner Award for Fiction for year 2006. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Karon, Jan. *Light from Heaven* - For those "who'd rather be in Mitford" this is the final volume of the series. Much is asked of Father Timothy Kavanagh, the lovable Episcopal priest, who struggles to help the souls both inside and on the fringes of his flock. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

McEwan, Ian. *Saturday* - A day in the life of one Henry Perowne, a London neurosurgeon. Perowne is bemused in the morning but terrorized by nightfall, on a seemingly ordinary day that turns out to be anything but. What a pleasure it is to read McEwan's graceful, intelligent prose as he once again probes the essence of the human condition. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Miller, Sue. *Lost in the Forest* - Eva, the divorced and happily remarried mother of three, has finally put the disaster of her first marriage behind her and has even become good friends with her ex. Then her second husband is killed in a tragic accident, and the peace Eva has worked so hard to attain is instantly shattered as she succumbs to an overwhelming grief. Miller insightfully explores the shifting dynamics between parent and child, a married couple, ex-spouses, and siblings. -*Booklist*

Picoult, Jodi. *Vanishing Acts: A Novel* - Delia Hopkins has led a charmed life. Raised in rural New Hampshire by her beloved, widowed father, she now has a young daughter, a handsome fiancé, and her own search-and-rescue bloodhound, which she uses to find missing persons. But as Delia plans her wedding, she is plagued by flashbacks of a life she can't recall...until a policeman

knocks on her door, revealing a secret about herself that changes the world as she knows it -- and threatens to jeopardize her future. -*Amazon.com*

Ragen, Naomi. *The Covenant* - When Elise and Jon moved into their home in Maaleh Sara, Judea, they didn't realize that they would soon be considered 'illegal occupiers' and that terrorists might be 'laying in wait.' Indeed, one day the unthinkable happens: Jon and the couple's young daughter, Ilana, are taken hostage at gunpoint and ransomed for an impossible political price. When Elise calls her grandmother Leah in America, she sets in motion a series of sprawling events that spring, at least in part, from an oath made at Auschwitz. -Stephanie Zvirin, *Booklist*

Shreve, Anita. *Light on Snow* - Robert Dillon and his 12-year-old daughter, Nicky, discover a newborn baby abandoned in the snowy woods. As they rush the baby to the hospital, Nicky senses that the vulnerable infant has somehow unleashed her and her father's private demons. Nicky lost her mother and baby sister in an automobile accident more than a year earlier. The appearance of the baby's mother forces Nicky and her father to move beyond their personal tragedy. -Joanne Wilkinson, *Booklist*

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth* - ...a multigenerational, multiethnic, somewhat zany novel set in London and spanning more than 25 years, ...it presents the combined story of the Jones and Iqbal families... Smith has an excellent ear for dialect and a wonderfully descriptive sense (of) the multiethnic underclass. -*Booklist*

Turow, Scott. *Ordinary Heroes: A Novel* - Turow trades the courtroom for the battlefield in this tale of a son probing the dark depths of his soldier father's past. Poignant and gritty, the novel is narrated by David Dubin, a JAG in Patton's army, and by Stewart, Dubin's son, who, after his father's death, discovers wartime letters detailing his court-martial, imprisonment, and mysterious exoneration. -Allison Block, *Booklist*

Weisberger, Lauren. *The Devil Wears Prada* - Andrea Sachs, just out of Brown, has landed the job a million girls would die for - assistant to the editor of a top fashion mag. One problem - Miranda Priestly is the over-the-top boss from hell. Weisberger takes us on a rollicking jaunt through the insane world of high fashion. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Wells, Ken. *Meely LaBauve* - All the flavors of the bayou are here in this coming-of-age novel narrated by Meely, a 15-year-old motherless, Cajun boy. He's got a gator-hunting daddy who often succumbs to drink and women, but nevertheless instills integrity in his son. Wells handles poverty and race relations with humor. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE

Connelly, Michael. *The Closers* - In Los Angeles in 1998, a 16-year-old girl who had disappeared from her home was later found dead with a single gunshot wound to the chest. The death appeared at first to be a suicide, and although detectives on the case found clues that pointed toward murder, no one was ever charged. Detective Larry Bosch, newly returned to the LAPD with the job of closing unsolved cases, gets the report of a new DNA match that makes the case very much alive again. -*Amazon.com*

Dams, Jeanne M. *Crimson Snow* - At the turn of the last century, South Bend, Indiana was home to a variety of immigrant groups, primarily Poles, Swedes, Irish. They co-

existed, albeit uneasily. Against this backdrop we meet Hilda Johansson, who is "in service" to a wealthy family but aspires to something more. Added to that, this feisty, resourceful young Swede is engaged to (gasp!!) an Irishman!! -Roberta Rood, HCL

Fairstein, Linda. *Death Dance* - Linda Fairstein takes readers behind the scenes of New York City's theater world -- from Lincoln Center to the lights of Broadway -- in a riveting new novel, rich with her trademark blend of cutting-edge legal issues, skillful detective work, and heart-stopping suspense. Teaming up with longtime friends -- NYPD's Mike Chapman and Mercer Wallace -- Assistant DA Alex Cooper investigates the disappearance of world-famous dancer Natalya Galinova, who has suddenly vanished backstage at Lincoln Center's Metropolitan Opera House -- during a performance. -*Amazon.com*

Grafton, Sue. *S Is For Silence* - So just how good is this series as it heads into the home stretch alphabet-wise? Judging by this entry -- better than ever! Right from the get go, you know that this story of the search for a missing woman will be anything but simple, yet the plot evolves naturally, almost inevitably. Above all, it is a pleasure to be once again in the company of the resourceful, empathetic, and enormously appealing Kinsey Millhone. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Haddam, Jane. *The Headmaster's Wife: A Gregor Demarkian Novel* - After years of investigations, Gregor Demarkian has run out of steam. The retired FBI agent just isn't interested anymore in murders, dead bodies, victims, and perpetrators. But all that changes after he gets a call from the 15-year-old son of a friend. Young Mark DeAvecca is a student at a private school; his roommate has just hung himself in their dorm room, and Mark found the body. As he weaves his way through an elaborate web of deceit and confusion, Gregor rediscovers his own passion for investigation. -David Plitt, *Booklist*

James, P.D. *The Lighthouse* - Adam Dalgliesh is called upon to unravel a murder on an island off England's Cornish coast. The island, a haven for over-stressed, high-powered professionals, has found its security shattered with a second murder. Time is of the essence to sort out the motives and solve the brutal crimes. James doesn't disappoint. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Jennings, Maureen. *Night's Child* - Jennings sets her William Murdoch novels in Toronto in the late 1800's. In this outstanding entry in the series, people are entranced by the relatively new art of photography. Unfortunately, it is not long before pornography rears its ugly yet seemingly inevitable head. What makes this development especially shocking is its presence in a society that is, if anything, even more rigid and straitlaced in its mores than Victorian Britain. -Roberta Rood, HCL

Rankin, Ian. *Fleshmarket Alley: An Inspector Rebus Novel* - In his latest case, Edinburgh copper John Rebus lands a case of the murder of an "asylum-seeker" - an illegal immigrant hoping to be granted political asylum but forced to live in a virtual prison while the lumbering Scottish bureaucracy determines his fate. As Rebus begins to dig into the murder, he is confronted by the new face of racism. The forces come together in an Edinburgh public-housing project, where racial tensions are at the breaking point, and where the people-smuggling industry thrives. -Bill Ott, *Booklist*

Robb, Candace. *The Nun's Tale* - Robb is incredibly skilled at evoking medieval England in all its beauty and danger. As spy and agent for the Archbishop of York, Owen Archer must rely on his wits to obtain the desired intelligence while keeping out



of harm's way. He treasures life, not just for its own sake, but because his young wife Lucie Wilton, a skilled apothecary, is soon to give birth to their first child. – Roberta Rood, HCL

Scottoline, Lisa. *Devil's Corner* - Assistant U.S. attorney Vicki Allegretti's meeting with a confidential informant goes terribly wrong when the routine appointment turns into a bloodbath. Vicki's bosses tell her to move on to her next case, but Vicki launches her own investigation, taking on an unlikely partner, Reheema, an African woman from Devil's Corner, an aptly named, drug-riddled Philly neighborhood, whose mother was killed in a drug-related murder that may connect to Vicki's case—make an unlikely but very appealing pair. –Mary Frances Wilkens, *Booklist*

NONFICTION



Akbar, Said Hyder. *Come Back to Afghanistan: A California Teenager's Story* – Hyder Akbar tells how his ordinary suburban California life was turned upside-down after 9/11. Hyder's father sold his business—a hip-hop clothing store in Oakland—and left for Afghanistan, where he became President Hamid Karzai's chief spokesman and later, the governor of Kunar, a rural province. Seventeen-year-old Hyder convinced his father to let him join him on three successive summers. Working alongside his father at the presidential palace and in Kunar has given Hyder a rare front-row seat at the creation of democratic government in Afghanistan. – *Amazon.com*

Apple, Sam. *Schlepping Through the Alps: My Search for Austria's Jewish Past with Its Last Wandering Shepherd* - A case of truth being stranger than fiction, this travelogue is uniquely appealing for having as its central subject the larger-than-life shepherd, Hans Breuer. The mood of the book grows somber towards the end, as Apple, an extremely sympathetic young man who is actively committed to his Jewish faith, confronts Austrians about their Nazi past. –Roberta Rood, HCL

Berendt, John. *City of Falling Angels* - Angels tumble from its churches, sea salt erodes its foundations; Venice is falling apart. Berendt uses this beautiful, precarious setting to tell an intriguing tale of contemporary Venetians and others who love this city to death. It's stranger than fiction. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS.

Bird, Kai. *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* – Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who oversaw the creation of the atomic bomb, was lauded as a patriot after the United States dropped the bomb on Japan, but nine years later he was disgraced, accused of Communist sympathies and "substantial defects of character." This commanding biography reevaluates that character, and delivers the most complex portrait of Oppenheimer to date. -*The New Yorker*

Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking* - In 2003 Didion lost her husband of forty years and nursed her daughter through a catastrophic illness. Here she attempts to make sense of the "weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness...about marriage and children and memory...about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself." She succeeds with honesty and openness. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Dowd, Maureen. *Are Men Necessary?* - She says she doesn't understand men. Then she explains them to the rest of us. Whether you are kicking back in the suburbs or climbing the corporate ladder, Miss Dowd, with her signature wit, provides controversial food for thought on the battle of the sexes. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* - Gladwell "illustrates an aspect of our mental lives that we utterly rely on yet rarely analyze, namely our ability to make snap decisions or quick judgments. Adept at bridging the gap between everyday experience and cutting-edge science, Gladwell maps the 'adaptive unconscious,' the facet of mind that enables us to determine things in the blink of an eye." --Donna Seaman in *Booklist*

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* – Goodwin offers fresh ground by which to judge the almost overdone sixteenth president. She is fascinated by the "growth of Lincoln's political genius," which resulted in two rather startling situations having to do with his career. First, that despite "coming from nowhere," he won the 1860 Republican nomination and won the election, he brought his three rivals into his cabinet and built them into a remarkable team to lead the Union during the Civil War, none of whom overshadowed the prairie lawyer turned president. Goodwin finds meaningful comparisons and differences in not only the four men's careers but also their personal lives and character traits. –*Amazon.com*

Harr, Jonathan. *The Lost Painting: the Quest for a Caravaggio Masterpiece* - This story of the search for a lost Caravaggio hits the ground running and never loses its narrative momentum. It's the kind of nonfiction writing of which reviewers say, "It reads like fiction!" But then readers expect no less from the author of *A Civil Action*. –Roberta Rood, HCL

Jenkins, McKay. *Bloody Falls of the Coppermine: Madness, Murder, and the Collision of Cultures in the Arctic, 1913* - Two Catholic priests journey north – very far north - hoping to Christianize members of an Eskimo tribe in Arctic Canada. Their efforts end in murder. This is investigative journalism at its most compelling, as well as true crime at its most spellbinding. –Roberta Rood, HCL

McCourt, Frank. *Teacher Man* - This master storyteller weaves comic and heartbreaking tales of the inmates (in front of and in the class) of the NYC Public School System. McCourt learned over thirty years of doggedness and run-ins with administrators how to be a teacher man - an entertaining how-to manual on dealing with adolescents. - Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

O'Keefe, Kevin. *The Average American: The Extraordinary Search for the Nation's Most Ordinary Citizen* - The author, realizing that he had no idea who the oft-mentioned/oft-quoted "average American" was, embarked on a nationwide quest to find him (or her). The book explores the whole notion of *average*. At the end of the book, O'Keefe reveals the identity of the Average American, but it is the search itself—and the author's exploration of the whole concept of being average—that makes this curious book so illuminating and enjoyable. -- David Pitt, *Booklist*

Packer, George. *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* - Packer, a staff writer for the New Yorker who has traveled extensively in Iraq during the war has written a work that strives for balance, fairness, and understanding in surveying the causes and course of the ongoing Iraqi war. He covers a broad range of topics, beginning with an analysis of the mind-set of some of the neocons who ardently championed the ousting of Saddam Hussein. Packer compassionately describes the anguish of returning Iraqi exiles...and he describes the effects of war on individual American soldiers and their families, as well as on Iraqi civilians. –Jay Freeman, *Booklist*

Pletka, Bob. *My So-Called Digital Life: 2,000 Teenagers, 300 Cameras, and 30 Days to Document Their World* - High school students from Southern California's Covina-Valley School District were given the challenge "to capture, with words and images, their lives during a month at school. The intimate images reach far beyond the headlines and hype about teen trends and emphasize the enormous pressures students face. - Gillian Engberg, *Booklist*

Roach, Mary. *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers* – Roach has done the nearly impossible and written a book about cadavers that is as informative and respectful as it is irreverent and witty. Roach delves into the many productive uses to which cadavers have been put, from medical experimentation to applications in transportation safety research to work by forensic scientists quantifying rates of decay under a wide array of bizarre circumstances. – *Publishers Weekly*

Smiley, Jane. *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel* - Sort of an odd autobiography – Smiley lets us into the novelist's world, shows us why a novel secedes or doesn't and explores the intimacy of reading. She presents 100 novels she has read as examples of the long, rich tradition of this genre. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Wells, Ken. *Travels with Barley: a Journey through Beer Culture in America* - Wells traveled the Mississippi River with side trips to the west and east in search of the perfect beer joint. Along the way he met up with drinkers and sellers, makers and philosophers – a spirited crew in the truly American saga of our most popular alcoholic beverage. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

Smith, Dennis. *San Francisco is Burning: The Untold Story of the 1906 Earthquake and Fires* - It's been 100 years since that fateful day, April 18, 1906. Smith chronicles the three horrific days during which 3,000 died and 28,000 buildings disappeared in flames. There's plenty of corruption, cowardice and stupidity to go around. There is also courage. -Sandy Gaffigan, HCPSS

BIOGRAPHY



Delbanco, Andrew. *Melville: His World and Works* – Delbanco attempts to place Herman Melville and his work in the context of his time - no easy task, since Melville, after the early success of his South Seas adventures "Typee" and "Omoo," was regarded by most of his contemporaries as a freakish failure. "Moby-Dick" was widely panned. His own publishers suspected that he was going mad. Delbanco writes about Melville with a sympathy and passion that illuminate both his sad life and the more obscure corners of his writings. Melville's very "dissonance in his own time," Delbanco writes, makes him seem at home in ours. -*The New Yorker*

Reichl, Ruth. *Tender at the Bone: Growing Up At the Table* – New York Times restaurant critic Ruth Reichl shares lessons learned at the hands (and kitchen counters) of family members and friends throughout her life, from growing up with her taste-blind mother to the comfort of cream puffs while away at boarding school on "Mars" (Montreal seemed just as far away). Reichl's wry and gentle humor pervades the book, and makes readers feel as if they're right at the table, laughing at one great story after another (and delighting in a gourmet meal at the same time, of course). –*Amazon.com*

Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle: A Memoir* - "In this remarkable recollection of growing up, Walls remembers the poverty, hunger, jokes, and bullying she and her siblings endured, and she looks back at her parents: her flighty, self-indulgent mother, and her father, troubled, brilliant Rex. Shocking, sad, and occasionally bitter, this gracefully written account speaks candidly, yet with surprising affection, about parents and about the strength of family ties—for both good and ill. --Stephanie Zvirin, *Booklist*