

St. Thomas Aquinas High School

Summer Reading 2021

The goals of the Summer Reading program at STA are to enhance the reading life of our students, to expand the curriculum and to promote the belief that reading is one of life's great pleasures. To that end, the Summer Reading Program consists of two parts. One is required of all students, while the other is completely optional and open to any student who might enjoy reading some of our staff's favorite books, while earning extra credit in advance in any class they will take this fall.

PART I – THE REQUIRED BOOK: Each student is required to read ONE book designated by grade level. That is, all 9th grade students will read the same book, etc. The books for each grade level have been chosen by one of the academic departments and will be discussed at the beginning of the school year in a given class. For instance, students in 12th Grade will be required to read a book for their English classes. (11th Grade-Social Studies; 10th Grade -Theology; 9th Grade-Science)
IMPORTANT: You will take a test on the required book during the first week of school next fall.

Grade 9: *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton

In 1990, Michael Crichton introduced the world to Dr. Hammond, an eccentric multimillionaire who builds a theme park with genetically re-engineered dinosaurs. The book focused on a wonderful mixture of science and fantasy, the borders of which are hard to discern. The infusion of chaos theory adds a great deal of scientific relevance and debate to the story.

Since 1990, a great deal has happened in the world of biotechnology and genetic engineering. Somatic cell nuclear transfer was used to create Dolly, the first cloned sheep in 1996. Subsequently, scores of other organisms have been cloned. The human genome has been mapped (completed in 2003). Other genomes continue to be mapped at a rapid pace thanks to technological advances in gene sequencing. There is now discussion about de-extinction projects where extinct organisms are brought back through cloning and genetic engineering. Genome editing with CRISPR is accelerating all aspects of genetic engineering. Is *Jurassic Park* becoming more of a reality than we thought possible?

Using *Jurassic Park* as a background, science teachers will engage students in studies dealing with systems and chaos theory, the reality of 21st Century genetics, and the moral and ethical questions raised by these technologies.

Grade 10: *Same Kind of Different as Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman who Bound Them Together* by Ron Hall, Denver Moore, and Lynn Vincent

A homeless drifter beaten by a hard life, friendless and dangerous, meets a well-off, jet setting art dealer thanks to the efforts of his down to earth wife. Through her deep faith and a deeply felt conviction about serving the poor, the two men share an unusual journey that leads them both to develop a friendship, learn from each other, and help each other in unexpected ways. Their relationship, faith and love transform all of them as they face life's trials.

Grade 11: Choose ONE of the following:

The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

This is a historical novel about the life of Sarah Grimke and her struggle against slavery in the South as well as her struggle for women's rights in the early 1800s. It starts her story on Sarah's eleventh birthday, in which she is given a slave girl named Hetty, or "Handful." Sarah struggles with the moral dilemma of slavery, southern society and values, and the "Cult of Domesticity", where women are expected to be mothers and housewives rather than have careers and identities of their own. The story follows Sarah and Hetty over the next 35 years as both strive for their own identities, freedom, and lives. The story is inspired by true events and real people, and brings to life the world of antebellum America.

The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara

Taking place during the American Civil War, this is a historical novel of the four most bloody and courageous days of our nation's history, in which the North and the South fought over whether the United States would stand for freedom or protect slavery. The novel details the three day battle from the points of view of the major historic figures involved, including Joshua Chamberlain, James Longstreet, Winfield Hancock, and Robert E Lee. Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece is a dramatic story of the battleground for America's destiny.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X, Alex Haley, and Attallah Shabazz

Originally published in 1964, Malcolm X, the Muslim leader, firebrand, and anti-integrationist, tells the extraordinary story of his life and the growth of the Black Muslim movement. His fascinating perspective on the lies and limitations of the American Dream, and the inherent racism in a society that denies its nonwhite citizens the opportunity to dream, gives extraordinary insight into the most urgent issues of our own time. The Autobiography of Malcolm X stands as the definitive statement of a movement and a man whose work was never completed but whose message is timeless. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand America.

Grade 12: *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien

Based on his own experiences as a soldier in Vietnam, O'Brien writes of the life of a soldier – an ordinary American boy, a human being faced with the terrible truths of war. In doing so, he also writes about writing, claiming that works of fiction convey human truth more effectively than do reality or memory. This is an amazing novel, one which is clearly a blend of the real experiences and straightforward voice of a soldier of the 1960's, with the imagination of a writer looking back and trying to understand his life. This is truly one of those books we all should read.

PART II -- THE OPTIONAL PORTION:

The second component is optional. Any student may choose to read a book from the list of "Faculty and Staff Favorites." In September, you will complete an assessment on the book(s) you read, to be given by the teacher who nominated the book. At that time, you will choose to have your score count as **an extra credit grade in any subject you wish.** (For example, you might read Mr. Tinney's book, but have it count for your Physics class.)

NOTE: **Students will be limited to THREE books for extra credit, but you can read as many books as you wish!

FACULTY AND STAFF FAVORITES

Mr. Adams - *One Summer: America, 1927* by Bill Bryson

NONFICTION

The summer of 1927 began with Charles Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Babe Ruth was closing in on the home run record. In Newark, New Jersey, Alvin "Shipwreck" Kelly sat atop a flagpole for twelve days, and in Chicago, the gangster Al Capone was tightening his grip on bootlegging. The first true "talking picture," Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, was filmed, forever changing the motion picture industry.

All this and much, much more transpired in the year Americans attempted and accomplished outsized things—and when the twentieth century truly became the American century. *One Summer* transforms it all into narrative nonfiction of the highest order. - From the publisher.

Mr. Adams - *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know* by Adam Grant

NONFICTION

Think Again is a must-read for anyone who wants to create a culture of learning and exploration, whether at home, at work, or at school... In an increasingly divided world, the lessons in this book are more important than ever." – Bill and Melinda Gates

The bestselling author of *Give and Take* and *Originals* examines the critical art of rethinking: learning to question your opinions and open other people's minds, which can position you for excellence at work and wisdom in life. - From the publisher

Mr. Adams - *Cast of Characters: Common People in the Hands of an Uncommon God* by Max Lucado

NONFICTION

Common people ... Story after story marked by scandal, stumble, and intrigue. Who are these people? They're the people of the Bible. And they're us. We find our stories in theirs. We find our hope where they found theirs. In the hands of an uncommon God. In the midst of them all ... hovering over them all ... is the hero of it all: God. Maker. Shaper. Rescuer of sinking hearts. God. Passing out high callings, second chances, and moral compasses to all comers and takers. In this gathering of inspiring stories from his numbers best-selling books, master storyteller Max Lucado revisits some of his favorite biblical characters -- all of whom were very human and imperfect, just like us. If God can find a place for them ... He might just have a place for us too. - Amazon

Mrs. Collins – *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

FICTION

This is one of the most beautiful novels ever written, and certainly the most perfect of the works of Charles Dickens. Set against the backdrop of the French Revolution, it tells of two men who look alike, but whose choices take them down very different roads. One is French and one is English, and both of them are in love with Lucy Manette, daughter of a man freed from the Bastille. The lives of the characters intertwine in ways they never could have imagined, with a grand finish that is both moving and profoundly meaningful.

Mrs. Collins – *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez

HISTORICAL FICTION

In the Dominican Republic of the 1950's, the dictator Trujillo ruled with an iron fist. The four Mirabal sisters grew up under his rule, gradually becoming aware of the oppression under which they lived. This story is told from four different perspectives, as we follow the story of the four women who became known as *Las Mariposas*, heroes of the revolution. I read this book several years ago and fell in love with it for its powerful story, the blend of history and fiction, and the amazing characters I met. I love a book that makes me look up history, maps, pictures and more. I hope you enjoy it too!

Mrs. Collins – *In the Heart of the Sea* by Nathaniel Philbrick

HISTORY

In 1821, the whaleship *Essex* out of Nantucket was attacked by a large sperm whale in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. All members of the crew boarded lifeboats as they watched their ship sink to the depths of the ocean; in the weeks that followed, they faced horrendous conditions and struggled to survive. The world was horrified to learn just how the survivors managed to find their way home. Nathaniel Philbrick draws on the history of shipbuilding in New England, the close knit Quaker community of Nantucket which formed the center of the whaling industry, and the power of nature over a crew of young men and boys, to tell a fascinating story of a pivotal incident in literature and maritime history. And yes, this *is* the story upon which Melville based *Moby-Dick*.

Ms Cummings – *The Magnolia Story* by Chip Gaines, Joanna Gaines, with Mark Dagostino

NONFICTION

"Are you ready to see your fixer upper?" These famous words are now synonymous with the dynamic husband-and-wife team Chip and Joanna Gaines, stars of HGTV's *Fixer Upper*... *The Magnolia Story* is the first book from Chip and Joanna, offering their fans a detailed look at their life together. From the very first renovation project they ever tackled together, to the project that nearly cost them everything; from the childhood memories that shaped them, to the twists and turns that led them to the life they share on the farm today." - barnesandnoble.com

**Ms Cummings – *Eleven Seconds: A Story of Tragedy, Courage & Triumph*
by Travis Roy and E.M. Swift**

NONFICTION / SPORTS

"Within the 11 seconds that inspired this memoir, Travis Roy realized his dream, then smashed into his nightmare. On an October night in 1995, Roy, a talented young hockey player, skated onto the ice for his varsity debut with Boston University. Eleven fateful seconds later, he was paralyzed from the neck down. Aided by the sure touch of *Sports Illustrated* hockey writer E.M. Swift, Roy's moving account of his accident and his rehabilitation--confined to a wheelchair, he's gotten some use of his right arm back--avoids the maudlin. Instead, *Eleven Seconds* is filled with grit, hope, humor, and a thoughtful young man's introspection on the meaning of sports and the adjustments that follow when the ability to play them is taken away." --Amazon.com

Dr. DiPietro – *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* by James Martin

NONFICTION / FAITH

"James Martin, SJ, gifted storyteller . . . brings the Gospels to life in *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, and invites believers and seekers alike to experience Jesus through Scripture, prayer and travel. Combining the fascinating insights of historical Jesus studies with profound spiritual insights about the Christ of faith, Father Martin recreates the world of first-century Galilee and Judea to usher you into Jesus's life and times and show readers how Jesus speaks to us today. Martin also brings together the most up-to-date Scripture scholarship, wise spiritual reflections, and lighthearted stories about traveling through the Holy Land with a fellow (and funny) Jesuit, visiting important sites in the life of Jesus of Nazareth." -- Amazon.com

Dr. DiPietro -- *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson

NONFICTION / LAW

"Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever. *Just Mercy* is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice." -- Random House description

Dr. DiPietro -- *The Cuckoo's Calling* by Robert Galbraith

FICTION

Published under a pseudonym, J. K. Rowling's brilliant debut mystery introduces Detective Cormoran Strike as he investigates a supermodel's suicide in "one of the best books of the year." --*USA Today* "After losing his leg to a land mine in Afghanistan, Cormoran Strike is barely scraping by as a private investigator. Strike is down to one client, creditors are calling, and after a breakup with his longtime girlfriend, he's living in his office. You may think you know detectives, but you've never met one quite like Strike. You may think you know about the wealthy and famous, but you've never seen them under an investigation like this." --*Amazon.com*

Mrs. Durawa – *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

FICTION

In *The Hate U Give*, Starr Carter is constantly switching between two worlds -- the poor, mostly black neighborhood where she lives and the wealthy, mostly white prep school that she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is soon shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer. Facing pressure from all sides of the community, Starr must find her voice and decide to stand up for what's right.

Mrs. Durawa – *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson.

NONFICTION

The Warmth of Other Suns is the story of how and why millions of Black Americans left the South between 1915 and 1970 to escape the brutality of the Jim Crow Laws and find safety, better pay, and more freedom in what is known today as The Great Migration. This book dives into the riveting truth behind what drove this mass relocation. Through three separate first-hand accounts of black Americans, Wilkerson brings us an intimate look at the fears, hopes, and dreams they had.

Mrs. Durawa – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon.

FICTION

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time follows the story of Christopher Boone, an autistic 15-year-old, who is exceptional at Math but finds people confusing. The story opens with Christopher discovering a dead dog in his neighbor, Mrs Shears', garden. Despite his father, Ed, warning Christopher not to get involved, Christopher decides to investigate the death of the dog and the journey begins.

Mrs. Gauthier- *Into Thin Air* by John Krakauer

NONFICTION

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more--including Krakauer's--in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster. "A harrowing tale of the perils of high-altitude climbing, a story of bad luck and worse judgment and of heartbreaking heroism." --*PEOPLE*

Ms Graham -- *The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women* by Kate Moore

NONFICTION

The Curies' newly discovered element of radium makes gleaming headlines across the nation as the fresh face of beauty, and wonder drug of the medical community. From body lotion to tonic water, the popular new element shines bright in the otherwise dark years of the First World War. Meanwhile, hundreds of girls toil amidst the glowing dust of the radium-dial factories. The glittering chemical covers their bodies from head to toe; they light up the night like industrious fireflies. With such a coveted job, these "shining girls" are the luckiest alive — until they begin to fall mysteriously ill. But the factories that once offered golden opportunities are now ignoring all claims of the gruesome side effects, and the women's cries of corruption. And as the fatal poison of the radium takes hold, the brave shining girls find themselves embroiled in one of the biggest scandals of America's early 20th century, and in a groundbreaking battle for workers' rights that will echo for centuries to come. --Goodreads.com

Ms Graham – *This is How you Lose the Time War* by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone

SCIENCE FICTION

Among the ashes of a dying world, an agent of the Commandant finds a letter. It reads: *Burn before reading*. Thus begins an unlikely correspondence between two rival agents resolved to secure the best possible future for their warring factions. Now, what began as a taunt, a battlefield boast, grows into something more. Something epic. Something romantic. Something that could change the past *and* the future. Except that the discovery of their bond would mean death for each of them. There's still a war going on, after all. And someone has to win that war. --Goodreads.com

- Mr. Greenslade -- *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer** **NONFICTION / NATURE**
Into the Wild is a poignant and compelling book about a young man, Chris McCandless, who gives away all of his savings and forsakes his comfortable life for a road trip that ends in tragedy in the Alaskan wilderness. Jon Krakauer retraces McCandless' journey by interviewing those who came in contact with him, relates stories of other people who have ventured into the wilderness, and explores the motivations that drive people to take extreme risks, all in an attempt to understand how McCandless lived and died.
- Mr. Holtz -- *Prey* by Michael Crichton** **FICTION**
Prey tells the story of a mechanical plague and the desperate attempts of several scientists to destroy it. "A cloud of nanoparticles - microrobots - has escaped from the laboratory. This cloud is self-sustaining and self-reproducing. It is intelligent and it learns from experience. For all practical purposes, it is alive. It has been programmed as a predator. It is evolving swiftly, becoming more deadly with each passing hour. Every attempt to destroy it has failed. And we are prey." -- from the book cover
- Mr. Holtz -- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot** **NONFICTION / SCIENCE**
 "From a single, abbreviated life grew a seemingly immortal line of cells that made some of the most crucial innovations in modern science possible. And from that same life, and those cells, Rebecca Skloot has fashioned in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* a fascinating and moving story of medicine and family, of how life is sustained in laboratories and in memory. Henrietta Lacks was a mother of five in Baltimore, a poor African American migrant from the tobacco farms of Virginia, who died from a cruelly aggressive cancer at the age of 30 in 1951. A sample of her cancerous tissue, taken without her knowledge or consent, as was the custom then, turned out to provide one of the holy grails of mid-century biology: human cells that could survive--even thrive--in the lab. Known as HeLa cells, their stunning potency gave scientists a building block for countless breakthroughs, beginning with the cure for polio. Meanwhile, Henrietta's family continued to live in poverty and frequently poor health, and their discovery decades later of her unknowing contribution--and her cells' strange survival--left them full of pride, anger, and suspicion. For a decade, Skloot doggedly but compassionately gathered the threads of these stories, slowly gaining the trust of the family while helping them learn the truth about Henrietta, and with their aid she tells a rich and haunting story that asks the questions, Who owns our bodies? And who carries our memories?" --Tom Nissley -- Amazon review
- Mrs. Kirsch -- *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green** **FICTION**
 "It all begins with a fugitive billionaire and the promise of a cash reward. *Turtles All the Way Down* is about lifelong friendship, the intimacy of an unexpected reunion, Star Wars fan fiction, and tatar. But at its heart is Aza Holmes, a young woman navigating daily existence within the ever-tightening spiral of her own thoughts." --Goodreads.com
- Mrs. Kirsch -- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo** **FICTION**
 "Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking. But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman . . ." Thus begins the summary of this dynamic new novel by Elizabeth Acevedo on *Amazon.com*. Join me in discovering the journey Xiomara makes as she tries to reconcile her strict religious upbringing with the realities of being a young woman in high school, and ultimately to her discovery of her voice as a poet.
- Mr. Mueller -- *Dune* by Frank Herbert** **SCIENCE FICTION**
 "Frank Herbert's classic masterpiece - a triumph of the imagination and one of the bestselling science fiction novels of all time. Set on the desert planet Arrakis, *Dune* is the story of the boy Paul Atreides, heir to a noble family tasked with ruling an inhospitable world where the only thing of value is the "spice" melange, a drug capable of extending life and enhancing consciousness. Coveted across the known universe, melange is a prize worth killing for...When House Atreides is betrayed, the destruction of Paul's family will set the boy on a journey toward a destiny greater than he could ever have imagined. And as he evolves into the mysterious man known as Muad'Dib, he will bring to fruition humankind's most ancient and unattainable dream. A stunning blend of adventure and mysticism, environmentalism and politics, *Dune* won the first Nebula Award, shared the Hugo Award, and formed the basis of what is undoubtedly the grandest epic in science fiction."
- Mr. Mueller-- *The Obstacle Is The Way* by Ryan Holiday** **NONFICTION**
 "We are stuck, stymied, frustrated. But it needn't be this way. There is a formula for success that's been followed by the icons of history - from John D. Rockefeller to Amelia Earhart to Ulysses S. Grant to Steve Jobs - a formula that let them turn obstacles into opportunities. Faced with impossible situations, they found the astounding triumphs we all seek. . . .These men and women were not exceptionally brilliant, lucky, or gifted. Their success came from timeless philosophical principles laid down by a Roman emperor who struggled to articulate a method for excellence in any and all situations. This book reveals that formula for the first time - and shows us how we can turn our own adversity into advantage."
- Ms Pate -- *Game Changer* by Neal Shusterman** **YOUNG ADULT FICTION**
 The *Arc of the Scythe* trilogy is one of my favorites, so I am excited to read Neal Shusterman's newest book release: *Game Changer*. This book follows Ash, a football player, who bounces to other dimensions when he is hit on the football field: "The changes start small, but they quickly spiral out of control as Ash slides into universes where he has everything he's ever wanted, universes where society is stuck in the past. . . universes where he finds himself looking at life through entirely different eyes" (Amazon). It is through Ash's eyes that the reader is able to consider other perspectives and "[to start asking] big questions about their own role in the universe" (Amazon).
- Ms Pate -- *Instructions for Dancing* by Nicola Yoon** **YOUNG ADULT FICTION**
 Did you love reading *Everything, Everything* or *The Sun is Also a Star*? If so, then this is your next summer reading book because Nicola Yoon's third novel is releasing in June. "Evie Thomas doesn't believe in love anymore. Especially after the strangest thing occurs one otherwise ordinary afternoon: She witnesses a couple kiss and is overcome with a vision of how their romance began . . . and how it will end. After all, even the greatest love stories end with a broken heart, eventually. As Evie tries to understand why this is happening, she finds herself at La Brea Dance Studio, learning to waltz, fox-trot, and tango with a boy named X. X is everything that Evie is not: adventurous, passionate, daring. . . . Falling for X is definitely not what Evie had in mind. If her visions of heartbreak have taught her anything, it's that no one escapes love unscathed. But as she and X dance around and toward each other, Evie is forced to question all she thought she knew about life and love. In the end, is love worth the risk?" (Amazon Summary)

Mr. Prince – *The True Story of Fatima* by Fr. John de Marchi

NONFICTION / FAITH

Surprisingly few people know about the story of Fatima, when the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children in Portugal in 1917. It is very important to read about what happened to the children at Fatima. It is very intimate and beautiful. It takes you straight to the heart of God in Fatima, so I think it's important that it be one of your first experiences of Fatima. So much of the material you find on the internet about Fatima is either difficult, or challenging, or controversial, that it's always good to come back, in a sense, to the source. The story of the children is easy to take as sticky-sweet, sentimental, and old-fashioned, but in reality those children are models for us as we consider our own reception of Our Lady's actual and decisive intervention at Fatima into our "modern" world.

I have only one copy of this book that I can loan for the summer. I used to have many, but now I am having difficulty getting more. The book can be read online at and/or downloaded from <http://fatima.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-True-Story-of-Fatima.pdf>. It can also be bought from Amazon for \$12. I am told that you can also purchase the book for \$3 by phone by dialing 1-800-263-8160. Another option would be to bring me a thumb drive and I can copy the pdf file from my computer.

Mrs. Richburg – *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown

NONFICTION / SPORTS

Just over eighty years ago the boys from Washington State paddled out of Puget Sound and into Hitler's 1936 Berlin Games, representing the USA alongside Jesse Owens (of the 2016 film, *Race*) and Louis Zamperini (of Laura Hildebrand's *Unbroken*). Brown's story tells of their challenges and successes as athletes and Americans. Athlete or not, one can learn from the story about teamwork, loyalty, dedication, perseverance and commitment. Whether leading or just joining a team, many secrets to success lie in and between the lines. This is a highly recommended read for STA student athletes.

Mrs. Richburg – *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom

MEMOIR

The story begins at Brandeis University in 1975, where Professor Morrie Schwartz and his students began a relationship that extended from the classroom to the Shapiro Dining Hall and beyond. The author, Mitch Albom, graduated from Brandeis in 1979, and became a popular Chicago sports writer before penning his story of ongoing friendship with Morrie. On the *NY Times* Best Seller List for four years, it is now considered the most widely read memoir ever.

Mrs. Richburg – *The First Phone Call from Heaven* by Mitch Albom

FICTION

What you believe and whether you believe it all the time comes to question in this title by Mitch Albom, who pushes on the veil between heaven and earth and spins a fine wire from one to the other.

Mr. Tinney – *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

FICTION

"We rely, in this world, on the visual aspects of humanity as a means of learning who we are. This, Ralph Ellison argues convincingly, is a dangerous habit." This novel, published in 1952 as a first novel, won the National Book Award. Its confrontation with the questions of race that still trouble our country is more than relevant today. As the narrator takes us through his experience as a black man in America – the community of his youth, an all-black college that expelled him, and the experience of life in the city, he shows us how it feels to be in a world where he *feels* invisible. While the narrator's focus is on race, the topic he explores is much bigger: that of *identity*, and how we, different as we all are, can be individuals in a society that may not be perfect. **NOTE: Be sure to read *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, and not the one by H.G. Wells.**

Mrs. Wade – *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

NONFICTION

In *Caste*, Isabel Wilkerson argues that the current social and political landscapes in America derive from the infrastructure of human hierarchy developed 400 years ago when Europeans first came to this land. This hierarchy placing whites at the top and black people at the bottom is the American caste system, and although no one alive today is responsible for starting it, we have inherited it and perpetuated it for generations. Wilkerson examines the different caste systems around the world and how they damage the lives of everyone involved, even those at the top. She believes that to understand how to move forward, we must examine the past and the racial structures that keep progress as a nation at bay.

Mrs. Wade – *Circe* by Madeline Miller

FICTION

In the house of Helios, god of the sun and mightiest of the Titans, a daughter is born. But Circe is a strange child -- not powerful, like her father, nor viciously alluring like her mother. Turning to the world of mortals for companionship, she discovers that she possesses the power of witchcraft. Threatened, Zeus banishes her to a deserted island, where she hones her occult craft, tames wild beasts and crosses paths with many of the most famous figures in all of mythology, including the Minotaur, Daedalus and his doomed son Icarus, the murderous Medea, and, of course, wily Odysseus. With unforgettably vivid characters, mesmerizing language, and page-turning suspense, *Circe* is a triumph of storytelling.

Mrs. Wade – *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa

FICTION

Set against one of the twentieth century's most intractable political conflicts, *Mornings in Jenin* is a multi-generational story about a Palestinian family. Forcibly removed from their olive-farming village by the newly formed state of Israel in 1948, the Abulhejos are displaced to live in canvas tents in the Jenin refugee camp. The reader follows the Abulhejo family as they live through a half century of violent history. Amidst the loss and fear, hatred and pain, as their tents are replaced by more forebodingly permanent cinderblock huts, there is always the waiting, waiting to return to a lost home. The novel's voice is that of Amal, the granddaughter of the old village patriarch. Through her eyes, we get the story of her brothers, one who is kidnapped to be raised Jewish, one who will end with bombs strapped to his middle. But of the many interwoven stories, none is more important than Amal's own- one of love and loss, of childhood and marriage and parenthood, and finally the need to share her history with her daughter, to preserve the greatest love she has.