

St. Thomas Aquinas High School

Summer Reading 2023

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 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: *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Fredrick Douglass

"First appearing in 1845 *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, with its painfully vivid depiction of life in bondage, was both a bestseller in its day and one of the most powerful, authoritative texts lending support to the abolitionist movement. The author traces his life from an infant born into slavery and taken from his mother at birth, to a displaced child hungry for knowledge, to an abused and beaten laborer seeking freedom and a chance to marry the woman he loved. Offering bright, cameo glimpses into a world that should not be forgotten, Douglass chronicles both the cruel violence of a system that saw him as little more than livestock, and the brighter moments of success, of courageous support from friends and allies. Initially greeted by some with doubt that it could have been written by a black man and former slave, the book had a profound effect on American society, making the author something of a celebrity and his cause less an abstract ideal and more of an urgent human concern. Solemn, powerful and passionate *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is more than an important historical document—it is a personal account of striving for human freedom in a world where the author was regarded as neither free nor human."

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 every American 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. Holtz's book, but have it count for your English class.)

NOTE: **Only THREE books may be used for extra credit, but you can read as many books as you wish!

FACULTY AND STAFF FAVORITES

**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

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

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

Ms McAden -- *Death in the Air: The True Story of a Serial Killer, the Great London Smog, and the Strangling of a City* by Kate Winkler Dawson

NONFICTION

In winter 1952, London automobiles and thousands of coal-burning hearths belched particulate matter into the air. But the smog that descended on December 5th of 1952 was different; it was a type that held the city hostage for five long days. Mass transit ground to a halt, criminals roamed the streets, and 12,000 people died. That same month, there was another killer at large in London: John Reginald Christie, who murdered at least six women. In a braided narrative that draws on extensive interviews, never-before-published material, and archival research, Dawson captivantly recounts the intersecting stories of these two killers and their long-standing impact on modern history. - Amazon.com

Ms McAden - *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (The Chronicles of Narnia)* by C.S. Lewis

FICTION

"Four adventurous siblings--Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie--step through a wardrobe door and into the land of Narnia, a land frozen in eternal winter and enslaved by the power of the White Witch. But when almost all hope is lost, the return of the Great Lion, Aslan, signals a great change . . . and a great sacrifice." -Amazon.com

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)

Ms Pate -- *Warrior Girl Unearthed* by Angeline Bouley

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Love a good mystery? Want to learn more about Indigenous life? This novel follows Perry as she "learns about the 'Warrior Girl,' an ancestor whose bones and knife are stored in the museum archives, and everything changes. Perry has to return Warrior Girl to her tribe. Determined to help, she learns all she can about NAGPRA, the federal law that allows tribes to request the return of ancestral remains and sacred items. The university has been using legal loopholes to hold onto Warrior Girl and twelve other Anishinaabe ancestors' remains, and Perry and the Misfits won't let it go any longer" (Goodreads Summary).

Ms Pate -- *Homecoming* by Kate Morton

FICTION

One of my favorite authors is Kate Morton. I look forward to reading her newest novel this summer! She creates suspense by weaving together the past and present. In this novel, "Jess discovers a true crime book chronicling a long-buried police case: the Turner Family Tragedy of 1959. It is only when Jess skims through its pages that she finds a shocking connection between her own family and this notorious event – a mystery that has never been satisfactorily resolved" (Amazon Summary). A shocking crime. A deeply buried secret. A journalist in search of a story. What will Jess uncover?

Mrs. Petelo -- *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

NONFICTION

I stumbled upon a recommendation for *Braiding Sweetgrass* during some curriculum planning for AP Environmental Science. I bought the paperback copy but ended up listening to the audiobook last summer. Join me this summer as I double back and reread *Braiding Sweetgrass*. You will not be disappointed, it is bursting with wisdom. Wall Kimmerer writes beautifully and tells the story of the inexplicable connections among all of God's creation. "The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don't yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together."

Dr. Schneider - *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

FICTION

The Alchemist is an enchanting fantasy about Santiago, a Spanish shepherd boy, who desires to see the world, and dreams of a hidden treasure. This sets him off on a quest through which he discovers his own strengths and gifts, the value of friendship and the power of love. His quest for experience and treasure becomes a spiritual journey on which he discovers that the entire world is filled with signs of its creator. He also discovers the divine spirit within himself.

Dr. Schneider - *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey

NONFICTION

"*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* has been to millions of teens. . . a handbook to self-esteem and success. Now updated for the digital age, this classic book applies the timeless principles of 7 Habits to the tough issues and life-changing decisions teens face. Covey provides a simple approach to help teens improve self-image, build friendships, resist peer pressure, achieve their goals, and appreciate their parents, as well as tackle the new challenges of our time, like cyberbullying and social media. In addition, this book is stuffed with cartoons, clever ideas, great quotes, and incredible stories about real teens from all over the world." -- *Amazon*

Dr. Schneider - *Quiet Power: The Secret Strength of Introverted Kids* - Susan Cain

NONFICTION

After *Quiet*, her study of the value of introverts in the adult world became a bestseller a few years ago, Caine recognized a need to address the same issue for kids. Using her own story and those of young people who dealt with the challenges of school, extracurricular activities, family and friends in their own quiet way, she offers insight and strategies to negotiate a loud world and make a difference in it.

Dr. Schneider - *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* by Sonia Nazario

NONFICTION

Enrique's mother left Honduras for America when he was seven, hoping to find work and send money home. Ten years later, Enrique embarks on a search for her with little information and few resources, facing many dangers along the way. This book tells the heart wrenching story of Enrique's journey and offers a window into the experiences faced by migrants from Latin America seeking refuge in the United States. Novelist Isabelle Allende wrote: "This is a twenty-first-century Odyssey. If you are going to read only one nonfiction book this year, it has to be this one." (*Amazon* description)

