



## St. Thomas Aquinas High School Summer Reading 2025

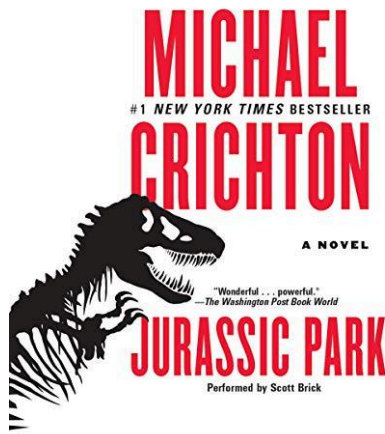
The goals of the Summer Reading Program at STA are to enhance the reading life of our students, expand the curriculum, and promote the belief that reading is one of life's great pleasures. To that end, the Summer Reading Program consists of two parts. One is required of all students, while the other is optional and open to any student who might enjoy reading some of our faculty and 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. 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. All 9th-grade students will read the same book for science class; all 10th-grade students will read the same book for theology; all 11th-grade students will read the same book for social studies; all 12th-grade students will read the same book for English.

**NOTE:** You will take a test on the required book during the first week of school next fall.

### Grade 9: *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton

#### [Reading Guide](#)

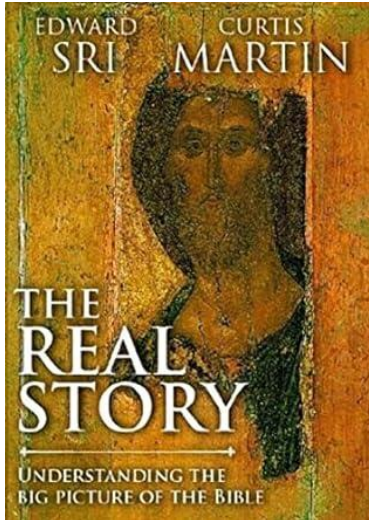


In 1990, Michael Crichton introduced the world to Dr. Hammond, an eccentric multimillionaire who builds a theme park with genetically reengineered dinosaurs. The book focuses on a wonderful mixture of science and fantasy, the borders of which are hard to discern. The infusion of chaos theory adds a great 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: *The Real Story: Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible***  
by Edward Sri and Curtis Martin  
[Reading Guide](#)



**"Do you know the real story of the Bible?"**

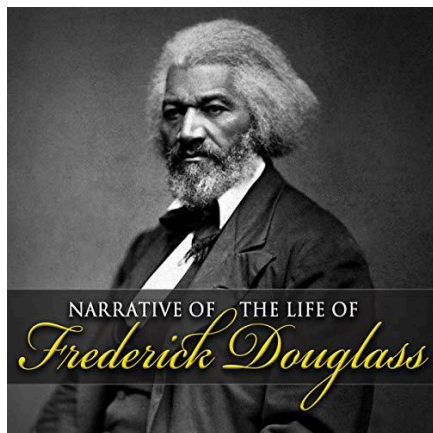
What do Adam and Eve, Moses, David, Jesus, and the Apostles have to do with my life?

In *The Real Story*, Edward Sri and Curtis Martin break open the Word to examine how all these pieces fit together into one cohesive narrative—a story of how, little by little, God has drawn His people into closer union with Himself, culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Church.

Through a closer study of the key characters and events in the larger biblical narrative, Sri and Martin show that the Bible ultimately isn't a collection of disjointed stories, but an epic saga of God's infinite love for us and His perfect plan for our salvation since the beginning of time."

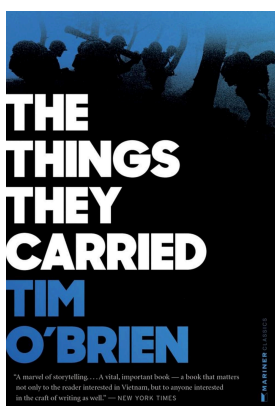
This engaging and accessible book will also help sophomores build a strong foundation for Scripture 1 and 2, giving them the tools to understand salvation history, recognize key themes across both Old and New Testaments, and approach the Bible with confidence and curiosity.

**Grade 11: *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave***  
by Frederick Douglass  
[Reading Guide](#)



*The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is the true story of how Frederick Douglass escaped from slavery and became a powerful voice against it. In this book, he describes the cruel treatment of enslaved people and shows how slavery harmed both those who were enslaved and those who owned slaves. His story connects to Catholic Social Teaching by emphasizing the dignity of every person, the need to stand together against injustice, and the responsibility to help those who are suffering. Readers should know that the book includes descriptions of violence and language that may be upsetting, as it reflects the realities of the time. However, reading Douglass's story helps us understand the past, think about the importance of justice, and admire his courage and determination.

**Grade 12: *The Things They Carried***  
by Tim O'Brien  
[Reading Guide](#)



*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien is a powerful collection of interconnected stories about a platoon of American soldiers fighting on the ground in the Vietnam War. The novel aligns with Catholic Social Teaching principles, particularly human dignity and solidarity, through its portrayal of soldiers bearing both physical and emotional burdens during wartime. The story follows Lieutenant Jimmy Cross and his platoon as they navigate the physical weight of their military equipment and the psychological weight of their experiences, fears, and memories. The narrative particularly emphasizes the sanctity of human life and the moral complexity of war, showing how each soldier's dignity remains intact despite the dehumanizing nature of combat. This masterful work serves as a meditation on the true cost of war and the essential humanity that persists even in the darkest circumstances.

## PART II -- The OPTIONAL Books: Faculty and Staff Favorites

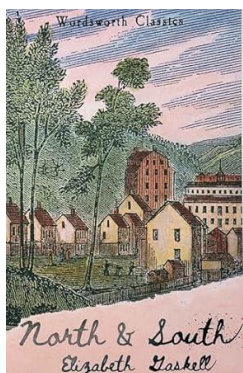
The second component is optional. Any student may choose to read a book from the list of "Faculty and Staff Favorites." In September, you will complete an assessment on the book(s) you read, to be given by the teacher who nominated the book. At that time, you will choose to have your score count as **extra credit in any subject you wish**. (For example, you might read Mr. Holtz's book, but have it count for your English class.) The extra credit grade will allow you to earn up to 5 points or percentage points (based on the teacher's grading system), which will be applied on an assessment for the first quarter. This has the potential of increasing the one assessment grade up half a letter grade.

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

Mr. Bishop	<i>Gilead</i> by Marilynne Robinson	Fiction
	<p>"Winner of the Pulitzer Prize (2005) and National Book Critics Circle Award, <i>Gilead</i> is a hymn of praise and lamentation to the God-haunted existence that Reverend Ames loves passionately, and from which he will soon part.</p> <p>In 1956, toward the end of Reverend John Ames's life, he begins a letter to his young son, an account of himself and his forebears. Ames is the son of an Iowan preacher and the grandson of a minister who, as a young man in Maine, saw a vision of Christ bound in chains and came west to Kansas to fight for abolition: He "preached men into the Civil War," then, at age fifty, became a chaplain in the Union Army, losing his right eye in battle." - Amazon</p>	
Ms. Cummings	<i>Eleven Seconds: A Story of Tragedy, Courage &amp; Triumph</i> by Travis Roy and E. M. Swift	Nonfiction
	<p>From Amazon: 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, <i>Eleven Seconds</i> 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.</p>	
Mr. Cunningham	<i>I Must Betray You</i> by Ruta Sepetys	Fiction
	<p>From GoodReads: Romania, 1989. Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren't free to dream; they are bound by rules and force.</p> <p>Amidst the tyrannical dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in a country governed by isolation and fear, Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer. He's left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves—or use his position to creatively undermine the most notoriously evil dictator in Eastern Europe.</p> <p>Cristian risks everything to unmask the truth behind the regime, give voice to fellow Romanians, and expose to the world what is happening in his country. He eagerly joins the revolution to fight for change when the time arrives. But what is the cost of freedom?</p>	

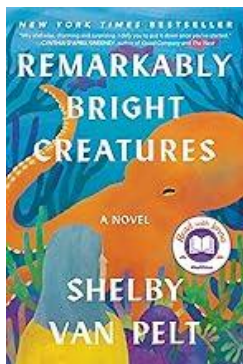


Mr. Cunningham	<i>North and South</i> by Elizabeth Gaskell	Fiction
----------------	---	---------



From GoodReads: When her father leaves the Anglican Church in a crisis of conscience, Margaret Hale is uprooted from her comfortable home in Hampshire to move with her family to the north of England. Initially repulsed by the ugliness of her new surroundings in the industrial town of Milton, Margaret becomes aware of the poverty and suffering of the local mill workers and develops a passionate sense of social justice. This is intensified by her tempestuous relationship with the mill-owner and self-made man, John Thornton, as their fierce opposition over his treatment of his employees masks a deeper attraction.

Mr. Cunningham	<i>Remarkably Bright Creatures</i> by Shelby Van Pelt	Fiction
----------------	---	---------

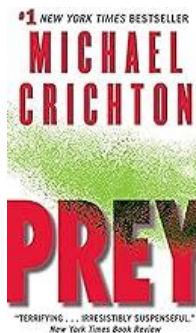


From GoodReads: After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago.

Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors--until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova.

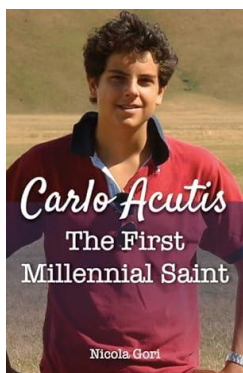
Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

Mr. Holtz	<i>Prey</i> 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. Marquis	<i>Carlo Acutis: The First Millennial Saint</i> by Nicola Gori	Biography
-------------	--	-----------



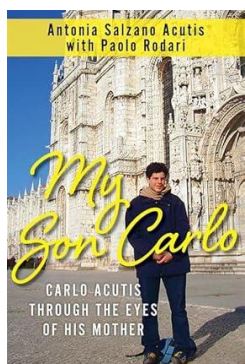
From Amazon: "Carlo Acutis, born May 3, 1991, fully embraced the gift of life. Known as a computer whiz, he also liked to play soccer, video games, and the saxophone. . . Yet Carlo was a little 'different' at school, in the pizzerias, and on the soccer field. What set Carlo apart was his constant pursuit of holiness. In addition to his fun hobbies, he spent time teaching catechism classes and serving in soup kitchens. Carlo loved to attend daily Mass and frequent Eucharistic adoration. The Word of God and the Eucharist were the center of his life. Carlo's unwavering devotion to the Eucharist inspired him to tell the story of Eucharistic miracles through a website he created just for fun. He wanted to deepen his own knowledge of these phenomena, to strengthen his devotion to Jesus, and to invite others to grow in love for the Eucharist. The website subsequently caught the attention of people across the globe, introducing countless people to Eucharistic miracles."

Mr. Marquis	<b><i>God's Influencer: Holy Advice from St. Carlo Acutis</i></b> by Antonia Salzano and Andrea Acutis	Nonfiction
-------------	---	------------



From Amazon: "In this astounding interview, you will marvel as Antonia and Andrea retrace the path they walked with Carlo and share fascinating moments in his life in which his faith matured, including the plan of life that he developed for himself on the day after his First Holy Communion. Reading these intimate stories, you will be struck by how very ordinary their life together was, how common and within reach, and how extraordinary it became once this amazing young man threw his arms open wide to God in his life."

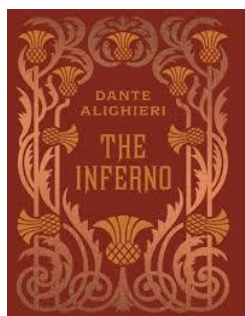
Mr. Marquis	<b><i>My Son Carlo: Carlo Acutis Through the Eyes of His Mother</i></b> by Antonia Salzano Acutis	Nonfiction
-------------	--	------------



From Amazon: "Antonia Salzano Acutis shares, in vivid detail, the intimate, private moments of her son's life, including his final days before he died from leukemia at the age of 15. In her own words, Antonia shares stories and memories as a mother who lost her son too early but was forever shaped by his remarkable life."

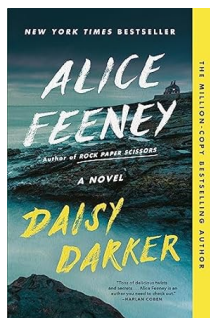
Carlo has quickly become a favorite patron in heaven, changing the lives of those who pray for his intercession. In this book, Antonia shares how Carlo desires to bring people to Jesus, as he did for her, helping her rekindle her faith: 'This was his secret: that he had a constant, intimate relationship with Jesus. He wanted everyone he encountered to have this kind of relationship like he did. He did not consider it to be something just for him. He was convinced that this relationship was accessible to all.'

Ms. Martin	<b><i>Inferno</i> by Dante Alighieri</b>	Epic
------------	--	------



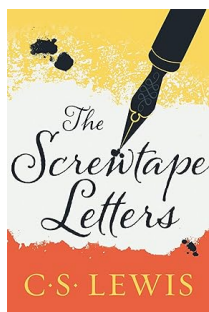
*Inferno* is the first part of *The Divine Comedy*, an epic poem by Dante Alighieri. It follows the journey of Dante through the nine circles of Hell, guided along the way by the Roman poet Virgil. Each circle represents a different sin and its corresponding punishment, illustrating the concept of divine justice. Along the way, Dante encounters historical, mythological, and contemporary figures, learning both moral and spiritual lessons. The poem explores themes of sin, redemption, and the human soul's path toward God.

Ms. McAden	<b><i>Daisy Darker</i> by Alice Feeney</b>	Fiction
------------	--	---------



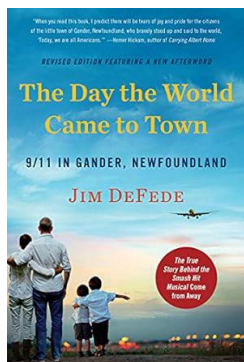
"Daisy Darker was born with a broken heart. Now after years of avoiding each other, Daisy Darker's entire family is assembling for Nana's 80th birthday party in her crumbling gothic house on a tiny tidal island. The family arrives, each of them harboring secrets. When the tide comes in, they will be cut off from the rest of the world for eight hours. But at the stroke of midnight, as a storm rages, Nana is found dead. And an hour later, the next family member follows... Trapped on an island where someone is killing them one by one, the Darkers must reckon with their present mystery as well as their past secrets, before the tide goes out and all is revealed."

Ms. McAden	<i>The Screwtape Letters</i> by C.S. Lewis	Fiction
------------	--	---------



"C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* has entertained and enlightened readers the world over with its sly and ironic portrayal of human life and foibles from the unique vantage point of Screwtape, a highly placed assistant to 'Our Father Below.' At once wildly comic, deadly serious, and strikingly original, C.S. Lewis gives us the correspondence of the wordly-wise devil to his nephew Wormwood, a novice demon in charge of securing the damnation of an ordinary young man. *The Screwtape Letters* is the most engaging account of temptation—and triumph over it—ever written."

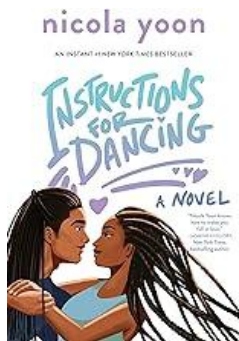
Ms. Pate	<i>The Day the World Came to Town</i> by Jim DeFede	Nonfiction
----------	---	------------



From Amazon: When 38 jetliners bound for the United States were forced to land at Gander International Airport in Canada by the closing of U.S. airspace on September 11, the population of this small town on Newfoundland Island swelled from 10,300 to nearly 17,000. The citizens of Gander met the stranded passengers with an overwhelming display of friendship and goodwill.

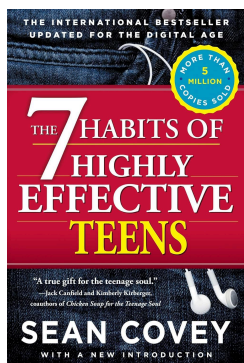
Over the course of those four days, many of the passengers developed friendships with Gander residents that they expect to last a lifetime. As a show of thanks, scholarship funds for the children of Gander have been formed and donations have been made to provide new computers for the schools. This book recounts the inspiring story of the residents of Gander, Canada, whose acts of kindness have touched the lives of thousands of people and been an example of humanity and goodwill.

Ms. Pate	<i>Instructions for Dancing</i> by Nicola Yoon	Young Adult Fiction
----------	--	---------------------



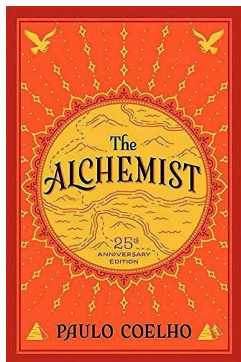
Did you love reading *Everything, Everything* or *The Sun is Also a Star*? If so, then this is your next summer reading book: "Evie Thomas doesn't believe in love anymore. Especially after the strangest thing occurs one otherwise ordinary afternoon: She witnesses a couple kiss and is overcome with a 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

Dr. Schneider	<i>The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens</i> by Sean Covey	Nonfiction
---------------	---	------------



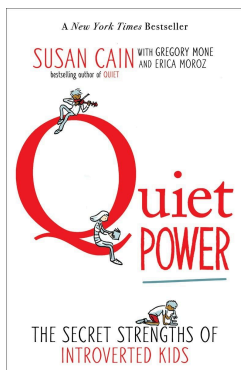
*Effective Teens* has been to millions of teens. . . a handbook to self-esteem and success. Now updated for the digital age, this classic book applies the timeless principles of 7 Habits to the tough issues and life-changing decisions teens face. Covey provides a simple approach to help teens improve 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	<i>The Alchemist</i> 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	<i>Quiet Power: The Secret Strength of Introverted Kids</i> by 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.