

May 2010

**Shawnigan Lake School
English Department
Summer Reading Programme**

For Grade 12

The English Department Summer Reading Programme is designed to supplement and enhance our students' reading interests, competence and pleasure. The ability to read with care and discernment and to take pleasure in reading is essential not only for success in high school but is also a necessary step towards reaching larger goals and aspirations. Assigned reading should be completed by the end of the summer. Assessment of reading is handled in a variety of ways: short essays, personal reflections, projects, and oral presentations. The required reading selections are starred (*). Students are strongly encouraged to choose an author or subject they genuinely enjoy. Enjoy your summer reading.

English 12 (Students read a minimum of two works, one of which must be *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien)

****The Things They Carried***, by Tim O'Brien

This is a powerful collection of linked short stories dramatizing the life of an American soldier during the Vietnam War.

Testimony, by Anita Shreve

A powerful tale of sexual misconduct set in a prestigious New England boarding school.

The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream, by Paulo Coelho

The Alchemist presents a simple fable about Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy, who dreams of a distant treasure in the Egyptian pyramids. He leaves Spain to literally follow his dream. Along the way he meets many spiritual messengers.

Old School, by Tobias Woolf

A scholarship boy at a New England prep school grapples with literary ambition and insecurity in this lucid, deceptively sedate novel, set in the early 1960s and narrated by the unnamed protagonist from the vantage point of adulthood. Each year, the school hosts a number of visiting writers, and the boys in the top form are allowed to compete for a private audience by composing a poem or story.

The Secret Agent, Joseph Conrad

According to Ford Madox Ford, this is "one of the best—and certainly the most significant—detective stories ever written." Set in late nineteenth-century London, Joseph Conrad's intense political thriller anticipates the espionage novels of such writers as Graham Greene and John le Carré.

One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The story follows 100 years in the life of Macondo, a village founded by José Arcadio Buendía and occupied by descendants all sporting variations on their progenitor's name: his sons, José Arcadio and Aureliano, and grandsons, Aureliano José, Aureliano Segundo, and José Arcadio Segundo. If it is possible for a novel to be highly comic and deeply tragic at the same time, then *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does the trick. Civil war rages throughout, hearts break, dreams shatter, and lives are lost, yet the effect is literary brilliance. This is definitely a challenging read.

Non-Fiction Selections

Blink, by Malcom Gladwell

Gladwell advances the theory that expertise, in large part, may be seen in the kind and quality of decisions made literally in the "blink of an eye."

A Short History of Nearly Everything, by Bill Bryson

Bryson has, quite simply, documented the advent of the universe in just under 500 pages, charting the evolution of man, planet Earth, its oceans and mountains, and all the atoms holding them together. And he explores the cosmos beyond. Bryson introduces pioneering researchers into the fray, giving face to some pretty impressive (in some cases outrageous) theories of why things are the way they are.

Ecological Intelligence, by Ian McCallum

A best seller in Africa, *Ecological Intelligence* defines a new way of thinking about the unprecedented environmental pressures of our day. McCallum offers a compelling argument that we must think differently about ourselves and the earth if we are to take seriously the survival of wilderness areas, wild animals, and the human race. *Ecological Intelligence* explores the relationship between humans and nature from both a biological and poetic perspective, arguing that understanding and reinforcing the evolutionary bonds that connect all life will lead to a greater sense of our place in the world.

AP English Literature & Composition (Students read a minimum of four works, one of which must be *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy)

The Road, by Cormac McCarthy

The agonizing story of a man and his young son fighting for their survival after a nuclear disaster has turned the world into a wasteland.

The Plague, by Albert Camus

When large numbers of rats come out of the woodwork and commence dying nasty, bloody deaths in the streets and houses, something is definitely wrong. In the port city of Oran, the population ignores the signs of danger and only grudgingly admits that an epidemic has erupted. The protagonist, Dr. Rieux, finally helps convince the authorities to take extreme measures in the interest of public safety and to eventually quarantine the entire town. Over the course of the novel, we get to observe the manner in which Dr. Rieux, his companions, and prominent men of the community react to the worsening plague and its social consequences.

Death of a Salesman (a play), by Arthur Miller

The story of Willy Loman, whose career as an ambitious but largely unsuccessful salesman reveals the promise and illusions of the American Dream.

Grendel, by John Gardner

Grendel is a beautiful and heartbreaking modern retelling of the Beowulf epic from the point of view of the monster, Grendel, the villain of the 8th-century Anglo-Saxon tale.

Suite Française, by Irène Némirovsky

Two novellas, which came to light more than 50 years after the author's death at Auschwitz, illustrate life in France under the Nazis.

One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The story follows 100 years in the life of Macondo, a village founded by José Arcadio Buendía and occupied by descendants all sporting variations on their progenitor's name: his sons, José Arcadio and Aureliano, and grandsons, Aureliano José, Aureliano Segundo, and José Arcadio Segundo. The novel is both highly comic and deeply tragic at the same time. Civil war rages throughout, hearts break, dreams shatter, and lives are lost, yet the effect is literary brilliance. (**Note:** This is definitely a challenging novel).

The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini

An Afghan-American returns to Kabul to learn how a childhood friend he betrayed has fared under the brutal regime of the Taliban.

Atonement, by Ian McEwan

The novel lures its readers in with the promise of a morality tale set in an English country manor in 1935. There will be a crime, we learn, and so far the novel's furnishings are at once cozy and exciting; we expect a certain kind of entertainment from this setup, not an Agatha Christie mystery by any means –McEwan is a literary author with a reputation for the macabre—but a story that permits us to observe any wrongdoing from a comfortable distance.

Slaughterhouse Five, by Kurt Vonnegut

A combination of science-fiction thriller and war story, this novel follows the absurd life of Billy Pilgrim, whose nightmarish experience during World War II Vonnegut conveys in an unforgettable prose style. A quick read that stays with you.

Saturday, by Ian McEwan

By spending the day with successful London neurosurgeon Henry Perowne, we come away a little wiser and more humble about our world. On the surface the day appears ordinary and routine, but when a chance encounter occasions violence, the protagonist's most cherished values are suddenly threatened. Ian McEwan's novel examines what makes up life in the new century where the future seems uncertain. A day spent with *Saturday* is a day well spent.

A Fine Balance, by Rohinton Mistry

The time is 1975, the place India, in an unnamed city by the sea. The corrupt and brutal government has just declared a State of Emergency, and the country is on the edge of chaos. In these precarious circumstances, four strangers are forced to share one cramped apartment and an uncertain future.

Life of Pi, by Yann Martel

The protagonist Piscine "Pi" Molitor Patel, an Indian boy from Pondicherry, explores the issues of religion and spirituality from an early age and survives 227 days shipwrecked in the Pacific Ocean.

Alias Grace, by Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood takes the reader back in time and into the life and mind of one of the most enigmatic and notorious women of mid-nineteenth-century Canada. As the story begins, one-time maid-of-all-work Grace Marks is serving a life sentence in the Kingston Penitentiary for her involvement in the vicious murder of her employer, the wealthy Thomas Kinnear, and of Nancy Montgomery, his housekeeper and mistress.

Love in the Time of Cholera, by Gabriel García Márquez

This novel offers a story of a fifty-year love triangle between Fermina Daza, Florentino Ariza and Doctor Juvenal Urbino set in the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century (roughly 1880 to 1930). A picaresque tale of unrequited love, the novel explores the idea that suffering for love has a kind of nobility.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented, by Thomas Hardy

The story of a young woman whose love for and subsequent betrayal by two men reveal the hypocrisy of Victorian social mores.

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte

Jane Eyre, a penniless orphan, is engaged as governess at Thornfield Hall by the mysterious Mr. Rochester. Her integrity and independence are tested to the limit as their love for each other grows, and the secrets of Mr. Rochester's past are revealed.

On the Road, by Jack Kerouac

Inspired by the jazz, poetry, and drug experiences of the 1950s, the novel dramatizes a mind-expanding road trip across America by two young men on the cusp of maturity.

AP English Language & Composition (Students must read a minimum of four works, two of which must be the non-fiction selections *A Race Against Time*, by Stephen Lewis, and *A Short History of Progress*, by Ronald Wright)

A Race Against Time, by Stephen Lewis

The AIDS pandemic of Africa has killed 19 million people, 4 million of them children. It is the world's worst health disaster since the Middle Ages. The problems are so staggering they seem incomprehensible. But Canadian diplomat Stephen Lewis manages to explain their roots, give them a human face, and outline solutions in this important book.

A Short History of Progress, by Ronald Wright

Five short essays examining the modern dilemmas associated with the drive for technological progress in contemporary life.

Atonement, by Ian McEwan

The first part of this novel ushers us into a domestic crisis that becomes a crime story centered around an event that changes the lives of half a dozen people in an upper-middle-class country home on a hot English summer's day in 1935. Young Briony Tallis, a hyperimaginative 13-year-old who sees her older sister, Cecilia, mysteriously involved with their neighbor Robbie Turner, a fellow Cambridge student subsidized by the Tallis family, points a finger at Robbie when her young cousin is assaulted in the grounds that night. On her testimony alone, Robbie is jailed.

On Beauty, by Zadie Smith

Howard Belsey is a middle-class white liberal Englishman teaching abroad at Wellington College. He is a Rembrandt scholar who can't finish his book and a recent adulterer whose marriage is now on the slippery slope to disaster. His wife, Kiki, a black Floridian, is a warm, generous, competent wife, mother, and medical worker. Their children are Jerome, disgusted by his father's behavior, Zora, Wellington sophomore firebrand feminist and Levi, eager to be taken for a "homey," complete with baggy pants, hoodies and the ever-present iPod.

The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

The story of Jay Gatsby, a poor boy from the Mid-west whose love for a rich young socialite fuels his dreams of sophistication, wealth and power.

The Blind Assassin, by Margaret Atwood

This is a tale of two sisters, one of whom dies under ambiguous circumstances. The survivor, Iris Chase Griffen, initially seems a little cold-blooded about this death in the family. But as Margaret Atwood's most ambitious work unfolds, we're reminded of just how complicated the familial game of hide-and-seek can be.

Additional Non-Fiction Selections

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time, by Jeffrey D. Sachs

Celebrated economist Jeffrey Sachs has a plan to eliminate extreme poverty around the world by 2025. His focus is on the one billion poorest individuals around the world who are caught in a poverty trap of disease, physical isolation, environmental stress, political instability, and lack of access to capital, technology, medicine, and education.

A Short History of Nearly Everything, by Bill Bryson

Bryson has, quite simply, documented the advent of the universe in just under 500 pages, charting the evolution of man, planet Earth, its oceans and mountains, and all the atoms holding them together. And he explores the cosmos beyond. Bryson introduces pioneering researchers into the fray, giving face to some pretty impressive (in some cases outrageous) theories of why things are the way they are.

The Polite Revolution: Perfecting the Canadian Dream, by John Ibbitson

A short history of Canadian politics told in a readable style. The author places qualities defined as uniquely Canadian—politeness, tact, flexibility—into a larger historical and political context.

Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics, by Gary Zukav

Zukav does a good job of explaining some very difficult scientific material, expressing the mysteries uncovered by high-energy physicists, and the tendency of quantum mechanics, more and more, to resemble statements made hundreds of years ago by the Eastern mystics.

A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America and the Appalachian Trail, by Bill Bryson

A naturalist's story told in a vividly personal manner. The author has thoroughly researched the history and the making of the Appalachian Trail, describing the destruction of many parts of the forest and warning of the continuing perils (both natural and man-made) the Trail faces. He speaks of the natural beauty and splendor as he and his companion pass through, and he recalls clearly the serious dangers the two face during their time together on the trail.

Ecological Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman

Wise advice for preventing environmental catastrophe.

Let Them Eat Flax: 70 All-New Commentaries on the Science of Everyday Food, by Joe Schwartz

The author explains the chemistry of food and life in a simple and amusing way.

Blink, by Malcom Gladwell

Gladwell advances the theory that expertise, in large part, may be seen in the kind and quality of decisions made literally in the “blink of an eye.”

Outliers: The Story of Success, by Malcolm Gladwell

The author investigates the circumstances that contribute to success by looking at The Beatles, Bill Gates and a variety of professional successes and failures.

Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen, by Christopher MacDougall

The story of a remote tribe in the Sierra Madre and their feats of ultra-distance running. An unusual page-turner -- for athletes and students of science alike.

A Sense of the Mysterious: Science and the Human Spirit, by Alan Lightman

A fascinating collection of short essays touching in one sense or another on the human dimensions of science—the passion it inspires, the use of mathematical abstraction in granting us the ability to grasp the material world, the wonder of Einstein's "sense of otherness."

Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! (Adventures of a Curious Character), by Richard P. Feynman, Ralph Leighton, Edward Hutchings, and Albert R. Hibbs

Fiercely independent, Feynman informs by entertaining. A collection of entertaining stories and yet underneath all the merriment simmers a running commentary on what constitutes authentic knowledge: learning by understanding, not by rote; refusal to give up on seemingly insoluble problems; and total disrespect for fancy ideas that have no grounding in the real world.

Additional Selections for Ambitious Readers

19th Century Novels

Madame Bovary, by Gustave Flaubert

This story dramatizes the life of Emma Bovary, the wife of a small-town French physician whose adulterous affairs and lavish spending provide a desperate remedy for the boredom and emptiness of provincial life.

The Scarlet Letter, by Nathaniel Hawthorne

This novel tells the story of beautiful and versatile Hester Prynne, who gives birth after committing adultery and struggles to create a new life of purpose and dignity in Puritan New England.

Mansfield Park, by Jane Austen

Unlike any of Austen's previous heroines, Fanny Price is a young woman from a poor family brought up in a splendid country house and possessed of a vast reserve of moral fortitude and imperturbability. Readers who enjoyed *Pride and Prejudice* will relish Price's purpose and persistence and vitality.

Crime and Punishment, by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The poverty-stricken Raskolnikov, believing he is exempt from moral law, murders an old woman only to face the consequences not only from society but also from his developing conscience. A story of justice, morality, and redemption from one of Russia's greatest novelists, it is a novel that repays careful reading.

Mill on the Floss, by George Eliot

As Maggie Tulliver approaches adulthood, her spirited temperament brings her into conflict with her family, her community, and her much-loved brother Tom. Still more painfully, she finds her own nature divided between the claims of moral responsibility and her passionate hunger for self-fulfillment.

Portrait of a Lady, by Henry James

When her wealthy Aunt brings Isabel Archer to Europe, it is expected that she will soon marry. But Isabel, resolved to determine her own fate, does not hesitate to turn down two eligible suitors. She then finds herself irresistibly drawn to Gilbert Osmond, who, beneath his veneer of charm, is cruelty itself.

The House of Mirth, by Edith Wharton

This novel reveals the hypocrisy of New York City's social circle on the character of Lily Bart. Impoverished but wellborn, Lily must secure her future by acquiring a wealthy husband; but her downfall—initiated by a romantic indiscretion—results in gambling debts and social disasters.

20th Century Novels

The World According to Garp, by John Irving

The World According to Garp is a comic and compassionate coming-of-age novel set in a prestigious New England boarding school.

Song of Solomon, by Toni Morrison

In *Song of Solomon*, Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison creates a new way of rendering the contradictory nuances of black life in America. The novel's earthy, poetic language and striking use of folklore and myth will inspire the imaginative, patient reader.

Under the Volcano, by Malcolm Lowry

A fascinating and disturbing narrative that dramatizes the slow and painful decline of Geoffrey Firmin, an alcoholic British consul in the small Mexican town of Quauhnahuac.

Anil's Ghost, by Michael Ondaatje

The novel follows the life of Anil Tissera, a native Sri Lankan who leaves to study in the United States on a scholarship. During her time away she becomes a forensic anthropologist, later returning to Sri Lanka in the midst of its merciless civil war as part of a Human Rights Investigation by the United Nations.

Lives of Girls and Women, by Alice Munro

An intensely readable, touching, and very funny story, this novel depicts the life of Del Jordan, a young woman who journeys from the carelessness of childhood through an uneasy adolescence in search of love and sexual experience.

A Passage to India, by E.M. Forster

Subtle and rich in symbolism, the novel works on several levels. On the surface, it is about India—at the time a colonial possession of Britain—and about the relations between British and Indian people in that country.

The Comedians, by Graham Greene

A story about a hotelkeeper who tries to run his business under the brutal regime of Haiti's Papa Doc Duvalier.

Possession, by A.S Byatt

The only thing Maud Bailey and Roland Michell have in common is a love of Victorian poets. They've dedicated their lives to finding out as much as they can about two obscure poets when their paths unexpectedly cross. Their independent research reveals that their respective subjects once shared a passionate love affair. At first they're upset that this information will change all their past research, but soon they become consumed by the romance of long-ago and work feverishly together to unearth every detail.

Fifth Business, by Robertson Davies

Ramsay's passion for hagiology and his guilty connection to Mary Dempster provide most of the impetus and background for this novel. He spends much of the book struggling with his image of Mary Dempster as a fool-saint and dealing with issues of guilt that spawned from a childhood accident.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, by Milan Kundera

Set in Prague in 1968, the novel details the circumstances of the lives of artists and intellectuals in Communist Czechoslovakia in the wake of the Prague Spring, and the subsequent invasion by the USSR. The book centers on Nietzsche's idea of eternal return - that is, the idea that the universe and all the events therein have all happened before, and will continue to recur ad infinitum.

The Sound and The Fury, by William Faulkner

This novel tells the story of the beautiful and tragic Caddy Compson through separate monologues by her three brothers—the idiot Benjy, the neurotic suicidal Quentin and the monstrous Jason.

Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley

Despite the instantaneous pleasures of drug-induced serenity, the main character, Bernard Marx, feels something is missing and senses his relationship with a young woman has the potential to be much more than the confines of their existence allow.

Catch-22, by Joseph Heller

At the heart of *Catch-22* resides the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero endlessly inventive in his schemes to save his skin from the horrible chances of war. His efforts are perfectly understandable because as he furiously scrambles, thousands of people he hasn't even met are trying to kill him.

The Bonesetter's Daughter, by Amy Tan

A San Francisco career woman who makes her living by ghostwriting self-help books, Ruth has little idea of her mother's past or true identity. What's more, their relationship has tended to be an angry one. The novel takes place in China in the remote, mountainous region where anthropologists discovered Peking Man in the 1920s. Here superstition and tradition rule over a succession of tiny villages

Sophie's Choice, by William Styron

A young man's literary aspirations and a turbulent love-hate affair lie at the centre of this darkly fascinating novel set against the horror of the Holocaust.

De Niro's Game, by Rawi Hage

This novel recounts the fate of two childhood friends in war-ravaged Beirut. Bassam dreams of leaving Beirut, where there is not enough money for cigarettes and food, and escaping to Rome, where even the pigeons "look happy and well fed." To fund his escape, he enters into a scheme with his best friend, George, to skim funds from the poker arcade where George works.

The Shipping News, by Annie Proulx

A sensitive and misguided father, Quoye's move from New York to Newfoundland in search of his family roots and inner peace pits him against the odds in a small, remote fishing village.

Midnight's Children, by Salman Rushdie

The novel is a loose allegory for events in India both before and, primarily after, the independence and partition of India, which took place at midnight on August 15, 1947. The protagonist and narrator of the story is Saleem Sinai, a telepath with an extraordinary nose.