

## Senior Summer Reading List

**Book:** *Big Year* by Mark Obmascik (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Brenden Maney

**Synopsis:** Every January 1, a quirky crowd storms out across North America for a spectacularly competitive event called a Big Year—a grand, expensive, and occasionally vicious 365-day marathon of birdwatching. For three men in particular, 1998 would become a grueling battle for a new North American birding record. Bouncing from coast to coast on frenetic pilgrimages for once-in-a-lifetime rarities, they brave broiling deserts, bug-infested swamps, and some of the lumpiest motel mattresses known to man. This unprecedented year of beat-the-clock adventures ultimately leads one man to a record so gigantic that it is unlikely ever to be bested. Here, prizewinning journalist Mark Obmascik creates a dazzling, fun narrative of the 275,000-mile odyssey of these three obsessives as they fight to win the greatest—or maybe worst—birding contest of all time.

**Book:** *Born Standing Up* by Steve Martin (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Sean Walsh

**Synopsis:** The riveting, mega-best-selling, beloved and highly acclaimed memoir of a man, a vocation, and an era named one of the ten best nonfiction titles of 2007 by Time and Entertainment Weekly.

In the mid-seventies, Steve Martin exploded onto the comedy scene. By 1978 he was the biggest concert draw in the history of stand-up. In 1981 he quit forever. This book is, in his own words, the story of “why I did stand-up and why I walked away.”

Emmy and Grammy Award–winner, author of the acclaimed New York Times bestsellers *Shopgirl* and *The Pleasure of My Company*, and a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, Martin has always been a writer. His memoir of his years in stand-up is candid, spectacularly amusing, and beautifully written.

**Book:** *The Silence of Murder* by Dandi Daley Mackall (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Nate Lamar

**Synopsis:** The Crime: The murder of John Johnson, beloved baseball coach.

The Accused: 18-year-old Jeremy Long, who hasn't spoken a single word in 12 years.

Witness for the Defense: 16-year-old Hope Long, the only person who believes her brother is innocent.

Other Suspects: The police have none. But Hope's list is growing. From author Dandi Daley Mackall comes a gripping murder mystery and a dark yet powerfully redemptive story of love, secrets, and silence.

**Book:** *Breaking Night* by Liz Murray (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Dana Brown

**Synopsis:** *Breaking Night* is the stunning memoir of a young woman who at age fifteen was living on the streets, and who eventually made it into Harvard. Liz Murray was born to loving but drug-addicted parents in the Bronx. In school she was taunted for her dirty clothing and lice-infested hair, eventually skipping so many classes that she was put into a girls' home. At age fifteen, Liz found herself on the streets when her family finally unraveled. She learned to scrape by, foraging for food and riding subways all night to have a warm place to sleep. When Liz's mother died of AIDS, she decided to take control of her own destiny and go back to high school, often completing her assignments in the hallways and subway stations where she slept. Liz squeezed four years of high school into two, while homeless; won a *New York Times* scholarship; and made it into the Ivy League. *Breaking Night* is an unforgettable and beautifully written story of one young woman's indomitable spirit to survive and prevail, against all odds.

**Book:** *On the Road to Character* by David Brooks (C)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Mary Ann Seager

**Synopsis:** Now, in *The Road to Character*, he focuses on the deeper values that should inform our lives. Responding to what he calls the culture of the Big Me, which emphasizes external success, Brooks challenges us, and himself, to rebalance the scales between our “résumé virtues”—achieving wealth, fame, and status—and our “eulogy virtues,” those that exist at the core of our being: kindness, bravery, honesty, or faithfulness, focusing on what kind of relationships we have formed.

**Book:** *Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Paul Marques

**Synopsis:** "The Tao of Pooh is a book written by Benjamin Hoff. The book is intended as an introduction to the Eastern belief system of Taoism for Westerners. It allegorically employs the fictional characters of A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh stories to explain the basic principles of philosophical Taoism."

**Book:** *Eleanor and Park* by Rainbow Rowell (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Miranda Libkin

**Synopsis:** Set over the course of one school year in 1986, this is the story of two star-crossed misfits--smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try. When Eleanor meets Park, you'll remember your own first love--and just how hard it pulled you under. A New York Times Best Seller!

**Book:** *Running with the Mind of Meditation* by Sakyong Mipham (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Erin Craven

**Synopsis:** "As a Tibetan lama and leader of Shambhala (an international community of 165 meditation centers), Sakyong Mipham has found physical activity to be essential for spiritual well-being. He's been trained in horsemanship and martial arts but has a special love for running. Here he incorporates his spiritual practice with running, presenting basic meditation instruction and fundamental principles he has developed. Even though both activities can be complicated, the lessons here are simple and designed to show how the melding of internal practice with physical movement can be used by anyone - regardless of age, spiritual background, or ability - to benefit body and soul."

**Book:** *Since You've Been Gone* by Morgan Matson (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Christine Grillon

**Synopsis:** Emily is bereft when her bubbly and energetic best friend, Sloane, leaves without saying goodbye at the beginning of what should have been the best summer of their lives. Sloane was the one who planned their adventures and befriended everyone they met, and Emily is feeling more than a little lost when a letter arrives from Sloane containing a list of tasks for Emily to do over the summer. Hoping that the list contains clues to Sloane's whereabouts that will become clear as she crosses items off, Emily tackles the challenges, making new friends, overcoming her fears, and gaining confidence as the summer goes on. Readers will root for Emily as she gets a new job, skinny dips, uses the fake ID Sloane got for her, crashes a wedding, and kisses a stranger. Though marred by a few leaps of logic and the occasionally clunky turn of phrase, this is a thoroughly enjoyable book with a terrific romantic subplot and an ending that ties up the loose ends believably and satisfyingly.

**Book:** *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace: A Brilliant Young Man Who Left Newark for the Ivy League* by Jeff Hobbs (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Lucia Musili

**Synopsis:** A heartfelt, and riveting biography of the short life of a talented young African-American man who escapes the slums of Newark for Yale University only to succumb to the dangers of the streets—and of one's own nature—when he returns home. When author Jeff Hobbs arrived at Yale University, he became fast friends with the man who would be his college roommate for four years, Robert Peace. Robert's life was rough from the beginning in the crime-ridden streets of Newark in the 1980s, with his father in jail and his mother earning less than \$15,000 a year. But Robert was a brilliant student, and it was supposed to get easier when he was accepted to Yale, where he studied molecular biochemistry and biophysics. But it didn't get easier. Robert carried with him the difficult dual nature of his existence, "fronting" in Yale, and at home.

**Book:** *The Art of Fielding* by Chad Harbich (C)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Evan Mauser

**Synopsis:** At Westish College, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league until a routine throw goes disastrously off course. In the aftermath of his error, the fates of five people are upended. Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. College president Guert Affenlight has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen Dunne becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike Schwartz realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella Affenlight returns to Westish after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life. As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. Written with boundless intelligence and filled with the tenderness of youth, "The Art of Fielding is mere baseball fiction the way *Moby Dick* is just a fish story" (Nicholas Dawidoff). It is an expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment--to oneself and to others.

**Book:** *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Vol. 1: The Pox Party* by M.T. Anderson (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Kevin Kilbride

**Synopsis:** Young Octavian is being raised by a group of rational philosophers known only by numbers -- but it is only after he opens a forbidden door that learns the hideous nature of their experiments, and his own chilling role them. Set in Revolutionary Boston, M. T. Anderson's mesmerizing novel takes place at a time when Patriots battled to win liberty while African slaves were entreated to risk their lives for a freedom they would never claim. The first of two parts, this deeply provocative novel reimagines past as an eerie place that has startling resonance for readers today.

**Book:** *Pre: The Story of America's Greatest Running Legend, Steve Prefontaine* by Tom Jordan

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Chris Mastrangelo

**Synopsis:** For five years, no American runner could beat him at any distance over a mile. But at the age of 24, with his best years still ahead, long-distance runner Steve Prefontaine finally lost. Driving alone at night after a party, Prefontaine crashed his sports car, putting a tragic, shocking end to the life and career of one of the most influential, accomplished runners of our time.

More than 20 years later, Pre continues to influence the running world.

From his humble origins in Coos Bay, Oregon, Pre became the first person to win four NCAA titles in one event. Year after year, he was virtually unbeatable. Instead of becoming one of the new breed of professional track athletes, Pre chose to stay amateur and fight for the adequate funding he felt American amateur athletes deserved.

A man of incredible desire and energy, Pre trained relentlessly. In his drive to be the best, he spurred others to do their best. As one racer said, "He ran every race as if it were his last."

But Pre not only touched runners; his exciting technique as well as his maverick lifestyle made him a favorite of the fans. A race with Prefontaine in it was automatically an event. His brief but brilliant life - documented by author Tom Jordan - is the tale of a true American hero. This is his story.

**Book:** *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Elizabeth Smith

**Synopsis:** Past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stops at the signal that allows her to daily watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. She's even started to feel like she knows them. "Jess and Jason," she calls them. Their life—as she sees it—is perfect. Not unlike the life she recently lost.

And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Unable to keep it to herself, Rachel offers what she knows to the police, and becomes inextricably entwined in what happens next, as well as in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

Compulsively readable, *The Girl on the Train* is an emotionally immersive, Hitchcockian thriller and an electrifying debut.

**Book:** *About a Boy* by Nick Hornby (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Melissa Macey

**Synopsis:** Will Freeman may have discovered the key to dating success: If the simple fact that they were single mothers meant that gorgeous women – women who would not ordinarily look twice at Will – might not only be willing, but enthusiastic about dating him, then he was really onto something. Single mothers – bright, attractive, available women – thousands of them, were all over London. He just had to find them.

SPAT: Single Parents – Alone Together. It was a brilliant plan. And Will wasn't going to let the fact that he didn't have a child himself hold him back. A fictional two-year-old named Ned wouldn't be the first thing he'd invented. And it seems to go quite well at first, until he meets an actual twelve-year-old named Marcus, who is more than Will bargained for...

**Book:** *Thin Space* by Jody Casella (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Dave Holland

**Synopsis:** A twin, dazed and confused by the loss of his brother feels he must correct a mistake made on that fateful day. He teams up with a new girl in town who happens to have moved into the house he believes may be the key to correcting his mistake. A fast-paced novel that mixes the mundane and the fantastic together.

**Book:** *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen (C)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Ryan Gallagher

**Synopsis:** "A profound, startling, and beautifully crafted debut novel, *The Sympathizer* is the story of a man of two minds, someone whose political beliefs clash with his individual loyalties.

It is April 1975, and Saigon is in chaos. At his villa, a general of the South Vietnamese army is drinking whiskey and, with the help of his trusted captain, drawing up a list of those who will be given passage aboard the last flights out of the country. The general and his compatriots start a new life in Los Angeles, unaware that one among their number, the captain, is secretly observing and reporting on the group to a higher-up in the Viet Cong. *The Sympathizer* is the story of this captain: a man brought up by an absent French father and a poor Vietnamese mother, a man who went to university in America, but returned to Vietnam to fight for the Communist cause. A gripping spy novel, an astute exploration of extreme politics, and a moving love story, *The Sympathizer* explores a life between two worlds and examines the legacy of the Vietnam War in literature, film, and the wars we fight today."

**Book:** *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier (D, GN)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Jessica Haralson

**Synopsis:** Callie loves theater. While she would totally try out for her school's production of "Moon over Mississippi," she's a terrible singer. Instead she's the set designer for the stage crew, and this year she's determined to create a set worthy of Broadway on a middle-school budget. But how can she, when she doesn't know much about carpentry, ticket sales are down, and the crew members are having trouble working together? Not to mention the onstage and offstage drama that occurs once the actors are chosen, and when two cute brothers enter the picture, things get even crazier!

**Book:** *Where did you go Bernadette?* by Marie Semple (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Julie Mullane

**Synopsis:** Bernadette Fox is notorious. To her Microsoft-guru husband, she's a fearlessly opinionated partner; to fellow private-school mothers in Seattle, she's a disgrace; to design mavens, she's a revolutionary architect, and to 15-year-old Bee, she is a best friend and, simply, Mom.

Then Bernadette disappears. It began when Bee aced her report card and claimed her promised reward: a family trip to Antarctica. But Bernadette's intensifying allergy to Seattle--and people in general--has made her so agoraphobic that a virtual assistant in India now runs her most basic errands. A trip to the end of the earth is problematic.

**Book:** *All Souls* by Michael Patrick MacDonald (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Robin Doherty

**Synopsis:** A breakaway bestseller since its first printing, *All Souls* takes us deep into Michael Patrick MacDonald's Southie, the proudly insular neighborhood with the highest concentration of white poverty in America. Rocked by Whitey Bulger's crime schemes and busing riots, MacDonald's Southie is populated by sharply hewn characters like his Ma, a miniskirted, accordion-playing single mother who endures the deaths of four of her eleven children. Nearly suffocated by his grief and his community's code of silence, MacDonald tells his family story here with gritty but moving honesty.

**Book:** *Profiles of Courage* by John F. Kennedy (C)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Rebecca Corcoran

**Synopsis:** Written in 1955 by the then junior senator from the state of Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* served as a clarion call to every American. The inspiring true accounts of eight unsung heroic acts by American patriots at different junctures in our nation's history, Kennedy's book became required reading, an instant classic, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Now, a half-century later, it remains a moving, powerful, and relevant testament to the indomitable national spirit and an unparalleled celebration of that most noble of human virtues.

**Book:** *Moneyball* by Michael Lewis (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Damian Aufiero

**Synopsis:** *Moneyball* is a quest for the secret of success in baseball. Following the low-budget Oakland Athletics, their larger-than-life general manager, Billy Beane, and the strange brotherhood of amateur baseball enthusiasts, Michael Lewis has written not only "the single most influential baseball book ever" (Rob Neyer, *Slate*) but also what "may be the best book ever written on business" (*Weekly Standard*).

**Book:** *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Susan Lessard

**Synopsis:** Enzo knows he is different from other dogs: a philosopher with a nearly human soul (and an obsession with opposable thumbs), he has educated himself by watching television extensively, and by listening very closely to the words of his master, Denny Swift, an up-and-coming race car driver. Through Denny, Enzo has gained tremendous insight into the human condition, and he sees that life, like racing, isn't simply about going fast. Using the techniques needed on the race track, one can successfully navigate all of life's ordeals.

A heart-wrenching but deeply funny and ultimately uplifting story of family, love, loyalty, and hope, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is a beautifully crafted and captivating look at the wonders and absurdities of human life...as only a dog could tell it.

**Book:** *Scarlet Gospels* by Clive Baker (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mrs. Natalia Brennan

**Synopsis:** The gates to Hell are open and something beckons... The last of Earth's magicians are living in fear. A Cenobite Hell Priest known as Pinhead is killing them off, gorging on their knowledge to enhance his own magical powers as part of a quest to takeover Hell. Meanwhile, Private Investigator Harry D'Amour is fulfilling the final wishes of the dead, who communicate with his business associate, the blind medium Norma Paine. But while investigating one such case, Harry inadvertently opens up a rift between hell and the real world. When nemesis Pinhead emerges through the portal, a vicious battle ensues. After failing to enlist Harry as one of his Scarlet Gospels, an elite group of indefatigable messengers who will witness his takeover of hell, Pinhead captures Norma and Harry realizes he must go through hell - literally - to save her.

**Book:** *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Álvarez (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Diane Brookes

**Synopsis:** In this debut novel, the García sisters—Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofía—and their family must flee their home in the Dominican Republic after their father's role in an attempt to overthrow a tyrannical dictator is discovered. They arrive in New York City in 1960 to a life far removed from their existence in the Caribbean. In the wild and wondrous and not always welcoming U.S.A., their parents try to hold on to their old ways, but the girls try find new lives: by forgetting their Spanish, by straightening their hair and wearing fringed bell bottoms. For them, it is at once liberating and excruciating to be caught between the old world and the new. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* sets the sisters free to tell their most intimate stories about how they came to be at home—and not at home—in America.

**Book:** *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Abbey Dick

**Synopsis:** In *The Power of Habit*, Pulitzer Prize-winning business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. Distilling vast amounts of information into engrossing narratives that take us from the boardrooms of Procter & Gamble to sidelines of the NFL to the front lines of the civil rights movement, Duhigg presents a whole new understanding of human nature and its potential. At its core, *The Power of Habit* contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, being more productive, and achieving success is understanding how habits work. As Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives.

**Book:** *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Matt Sadowski

**Synopsis:** Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a mysterious box with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker—his classmate and crush—who committed suicide two weeks earlier. On tape, Hannah explains that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life. Clay is one of them. If he listens, he'll find out how he made the list. Through Hannah and Clay's dual narratives, debut author Jay Asher weaves an intricate and heartrending story of confusion and desperation that will deeply affect teen readers.

**Book:** *Jitterbug Perfume* by Tom Robbins (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Caroline Lorenz

**Synopsis:** *Jitterbug Perfume* is an epic.

Which is to say, it begins in the forests of ancient Bohemia and doesn't conclude until nine o'clock tonight (Paris time). It is a saga, as well. A saga must have a hero, and the hero of this one is a janitor with a missing bottle. The bottle is blue, very, very old, and embossed with the image of a goat-horned god. If the liquid in the bottle actually is the secret essence of the universe, as some folks seem to think, it had better be discovered soon because it is leaking and there is only a drop or two left.

**Book:** *War Room: The Legacy of Bill Belichick and the Art of Building the Perfect Team* by Michael Holley (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Pasquale DiBenedetto

**Synopsis:** Bill Belichick is one of the titans of today's game of football. Now, sports commentator and bestselling author Michael Holley follows three NFL teams—the New England Patriots, Kansas City Chiefs, and Atlanta Falcons—from training camp 2010 through the Super Bowl and into the April draft, opening a new window into Belichick's influence on the game. This one-of-a-kind exploration takes football fans behind the scenes of the most popular sport in America, with unprecedented insider access to the head coaches, scouts, trainers, and players who make the game what it is—including new insights from Bill Parcells, Todd and Dick Haley, and Belichick himself.

**Book:** *ALLEGIANT* by Veronica Roth (D)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Allen Phelps

**Synopsis:** What if your whole world was a lie? What if a single revelation—like a single choice—changed everything? What if love and loyalty made you do things you never expected? The explosive conclusion to Veronica Roth's #1 New York Times bestselling *Divergent* trilogy reveals the secrets of the dystopian world that has captivated millions of readers in *Divergent* and *Insurgent*.

**Book:** *A World Lit Only By Fire* by William Manchester (C)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Mr. Pat Dailey

**Synopsis:** From tales of chivalrous knights to the barbarity of trial by ordeal, no era has been a greater source of awe, horror, and wonder than the Middle Ages. In handsomely crafted prose, and with the grace and authority of his extraordinary gift for narrative history, William Manchester leads us from a civilization tottering on the brink of collapse to the grandeur of its rebirth-the dense explosion of energy that spawned some of history's greatest poets, philosophers, painters, adventurers, and reformers, as well as some of its most spectacular villains- the Renaissance.

**Book:** *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams (P)

**Sponsoring Teacher:** Ms. Ashley Freeman

**Synopsis:** Seconds before the Earth is demolished to make way for a galactic freeway, Arthur Dent is plucked off the planet by his friend Ford Prefect, a researcher for the revised edition of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* who, for the last fifteen years, has been posing as an out-of-work actor.

Together this dynamic pair begin a journey through space aided by quotes from *The Hitchhiker's Guide* ("A towel is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have") and a galaxy-full of fellow travelers: Zaphod Beeblebrox--the two-headed, three-armed ex-hippie and totally out-to-lunch president of the galaxy; Trillian, Zaphod's girlfriend (formally Tricia McMillan), whom Arthur tried to pick up at a cocktail party once upon a time zone; Marvin, a paranoid, brilliant, and chronically depressed robot; Veet Voojagig, a former graduate student who is obsessed with the disappearance of all the ballpoint pens he bought over the years.

Where are these pens? Why are we born? Why do we die? Why do we spend so much time between wearing digital watches? For all the answers stick your thumb to the stars. And don't forget to bring a towel!