

Rye Country Day School

English Department Upper School Summer Reading

To the Student: Our summer reading program has two parts: recommended reading and required reading.

Recommended Reading: It is our hope that you will find many books to enjoy and read all summer. The recommended list is our way of helping you get started. You are not required to read any of the books on the list. You may get even better recommendations from family and friends. It does not matter: just make it a goal to read every day!

Required Reading: We have selected one required book for each grade. We suggest that you read your required book at the end of the summer so it is fresh in your mind when you start school. Please be prepared: you will have an assessment on your book followed by discussion within the first 3 days of your return to school.

Required Summer Reading:

9th Sue Monk Kidd: *The Secret Life of Bees*

10th Robert Louis Stevenson: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

11th Richard Wright: *Black Boy (Part One)*

12th Yann Martel: *Life of Pi*

For rising Freshmen and Sophomores:

Kate Atkinson: *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* Ruby's family, busy running a pet shop and keeping up with everyday dramas, seems like a group of charming eccentrics, but there's a darker family secret that lurks beneath the surface.

Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice* A fascinating story "of manners, upbringing, education, and marriage" in the aristocratic society of early 19th century.

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility* Two sisters with totally differing views of marriage, one believing in the importance of social position and wealth, and the other in true love, struggle to find happiness in 19th century England.

J. L. Carr: *A Month in the Country* World War I veteran Tom Birkin spends a month in rural England, restoring a medieval mural in a local church and putting his own life back together.

Michael Chabon: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* Samuel Klayman's family takes in his cousin Josef Kavelier, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague, and the two boys create a new comic book with a super-hero to defeat Adolf Hitler.

Ernest Gaines: *A Lesson Before Dying* In a small Cajun community in 1940s Louisiana, a young black man is about to go to the electric chair for murder. Although the young man had not been

armed and had not pulled the trigger, in that time and place there was little doubt of the verdict or the penalty.

Mark Haddon: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* The narrator, a fifteen year-old who relates more easily to numbers and word problems than to people and real problems, tracks down the murderer of his neighbor's dog.

Carl Hiaasen: *The Sick Puppy* Carl Hiaasen's new "comedy of revenge" shows South Florida populated by some of "the greediest, slimiest, and most grotesque characters" in current fiction, at the same time providing important political commentary.

Ha Jin: *A Good Fall* This collection of short stories focuses on the Chinese immigrant experience and explores the emotions and experiences associated with finding one's way in America while maintaining one's Chinese identity.

Elmore Leonard: *Get Shorty* Chili Palmer, a self-described shylock, chases a debt runner from Miami to Los Angeles just a few steps ahead of a dangerous mobster who is still sore at Chili for punching him years ago over a stolen coat.

Norman Maclean: *A River Runs Through It* By turns raunchy, poignant, caustic, and elegiac, these are superb tales that express, in Maclean's own words, "a little of the love I have for the earth as it goes by."

Gabriel Garcia Marquez: *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* This is a mysterious and haunting tale of romance and murder in which a chillingly plausible plot gives way to the inscrutable nature of human passion.

James McBride: *The Color of Water* The memoir of a boy with an African-American father and a Jewish mother growing up in Brooklyn's Red Hook projects.

Frank McCourt: *Angela's Ashes* A haunting memoir which recounts scenes from the author's childhood in New York City and Limerick, Ireland. McCourt paints a brutal yet poignant picture of his early days when there was rarely enough food on the table, and boots and coats were a luxury.

J.D. Salinger: *The Catcher in the Rye* The classic story of a troubled young man who struggles to find happiness in the world around him.

Orson Scott Card: *Ender's Game* A gripping science fiction tale of war, this is a story that will redefine what you think you believe.

Dodie Smith: *I Capture the Castle* Written in the style of a dairy, this is the story of an adolescent girl who lives in a dilapidated castle. She and her family have dreams of grandeur even though their fortunes have crumbled.

Muriel Sparks: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* Jean Brodie is the most charismatic teacher at the Marcia Blaine School in Scotland, and she has a group of students who are devoted to her... or at least seem devoted.

Garth Stein: *The Art of Racing in the Rain* If you've ever wondered what your dog is thinking, this novel offers an answer. Enzo is a lab terrier mix plucked from a farm outside Seattle to ride shotgun with race car driver Denny Swift as he pursues success on the track and off.

John Steinbeck: *The Winter of Our Discontent* Working in a store once owned by his family, Ethan Hawley contends with the demands of family and society. In a pivotal moment he strikes out on an unexpected course to change his life... perhaps not for the better.

John Steinbeck: *Travels with Charley* In this non-fiction travelogue, an American writer sets out—with his beloved dog—to rediscover the America he has written about so eloquently. He finds much of what he has lost touch with, and he also discovers new aspects of the country.

Kurt Vonnegut: *Welcome to the Monkey House* A brilliant collection of short stories from one of America's greatest satirists since Mark Twain.

Jeannette Winterson: *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* Raised in a devoutly religious family, Jeanette struggles to establish her own identity. This autobiographical novel combines realistic storytelling with more fantastical fairy tales.

Jeanette Walls: *The Glass Castle* This memoir chronicles Walls's upbringing at the hands of eccentric, nomadic parents--Rose Mary, her frustrated-artist mother, and Rex, her brilliant, alcoholic father.

Tobias Wolf: *Old School* Set in a New England prep school in the early 1960s, the novel imagines a final, pastoral moment before the explosion of the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Marcus Zusak: *The Book Thief* The novel, narrated by Death himself, tells the story of Liesel, whose life in Germany grows more and more complicated as her friends, family, and neighbors are pulled into the violence and chaos of World War II.

Recommended for rising Juniors and Seniors

Kate Atkinson: *When Will There Be Good News?* Atkinson's mysteries develop naturally from her charmingly flawed characters and display her keen insight into human nature. Her control of the plot is absolute: it ratchets up the tension while the narrative accelerates to breakneck speeds.

Uwem Akpan: *Say You're One of Them* Akpan, born in Nigeria, writes vivid, searing short stories about the lives of African children and their families.

Paul Auster: *City of Glass* When a stranger calls on Daniel Quinn's phone asking to speak to Paul Auster (supposedly a detective), Quinn claims to be Auster and soon is drawn into a case involving a man who fears his father is trying to kill him. Auster (the author, not the fictional character) loves word games and mind games, and the novel is a fantastic puzzle.

T.C. Boyle: *World's End* Walter Van Brunt has a catastrophic motorcycle accident that sends him back on a historical investigation, eventually encompassing the frontier struggles of the late 1600s in this darkly comic historical drama exploring several generations of families in the Hudson River Valley.

A. S. Byatt: *Possession* Byatt's lush novel, part romance, part detective story, alternates between the story of two modern-day literature scholars and of the two nineteenth-century writers whose connection the scholars are trying to uncover. Byatt shifts seamlessly between time periods and among genres as she embeds poetry, letters, and short fiction within the larger narrative.

Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood* In this true crime novel, Capote gives the best documentary account of an American crime ever written. *In Cold Blood* is a work that transcends its moment, yielding poignant insights into the nature of American violence.

Jung Chang: *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* Through the vivid and at times shocking stories of three women who lived in China during the tumult of the 20th century, Chang emphasizes the strength and power of women whose lives were dictated by ruthless men as well as by the tide of history.

E. L. Doctorow: *Ragtime* Doctorow follows several families (one of whom lives in New Rochelle) whose lives intersect with one another and with more than a few famous Americans, including Emma Goldman, Booker T. Washington, and Teddy Roosevelt. At once a thoughtful character study and a reflection on American life at the start of the twentieth century, this is a terrific novel to read after you have taken U. S. history.

Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Brothers Karamazov* (best translation by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky) Arguably one of the greatest novels ever written, this prodigious work tells the tale of mystery, murder, and love against the dramatic and colorful background of 19th century Russia.

Laura Esquivel: *Like Water for Chocolate* In a blend of the magical and the concrete, Esquivel weaves a captivating story of family, love, and betrayal that will keep you turning the pages both for its story and for the unexpected twists that the protagonist's mouth-watering recipes provide.

Richard Ford: *The Sportswriter* At 38, Frank Bascombe finds himself at loose ends: his marriage has ended, his girlfriend is not pleased with him, his friends are fairly miserable, and his dream of being a novelist has turned into the reality of writing profiles of athletes. Over a single Easter weekend, Bascombe wonders whether he will find a way to turn things around.

E. M. Forster: *A Room with a View* When she returns home to England after a trip to Florence, Lucy Honeychurch is determined to put the temptations of Italy behind her and return to her life as a respectable middle-class girl, but this proves to be a challenge. Forster's classic novel is, on the surface, a comedy and a love story, but it is also interested in bigger questions about the choice between passion and discipline.

Philippe Grimbert: *Memory* This deceptively simple story, based on that of the author's parents—Parisian Jews escaping the Nazis—has a universal theme about the lies we tell ourselves in order to survive the cruelty of man's inhumanity.

Sarah Gruen: *Water for Elephants* Cantankerous, still-sharp 93-year-old Jacob Jankowski looks back at his incredible life and adventures with the Benzini Brothers circus -- the animals, side-show freaks and roustabouts. His story unfolds in a way that is emotionally wrenching, and yet flashes of good humor pervade throughout.

Zora Neale Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* One of the most important works of twentieth-century American literature, this classic is an enduring Southern love story sparkling with wit, beauty, and heartfelt wisdom, told by a woman who refuses to live in sorrow, bitterness, fear, or foolish romantic dreams.

Erik Larson : *Devil in the White City* This is a non-fiction account that reads like a novel: Larson traces the lives of two men, one a great architect and one a serial killer, against the backdrop of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Naguib Mafouz: *Palace Walk* This first volume in the author's *Cairo Trilogy* describes the disintegrating family life of a tyrannical, prosperous merchant, his timid wife and their rebellious children in post-WW I Egypt.

Bernard Malamud: *The Natural* Often cited as the best baseball novel ever, *The Natural* explores the mythic world of baseball and recounts the brief glory and ruin of baseball player Roy Hobbs.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* This is a sweeping history of a single family; the seven generations of Buendias experience every imaginable permutation of joy, regret, passion, betrayal, magic, and violence.

Toni Morrison: *Beloved* In the troubled years following the Civil War, the spirit of a murdered child haunts the Ohio home of a former slave. This angry, destructive ghost breaks mirrors, leaves its fingerprints in cake icing, and generally makes life difficult for Sethe and her family.

Vladimir Nabokov: *Invitation of a Memory* Famed author of *Lolita* and other influential works, Nabokov reveals in this amazing memoir his deep understanding of the importance of capturing one's past, setting it aglow forever in a form that reads like an engrossing novel.

Ann Patchett: *Bel Canto* In an unnamed South American country, a ragtag band of 18 terrorists storm into a concert in the vice-presidential palace. Their target is the president, but unfortunately he stayed home to watch his favorite soap opera. They take the rest of the audience hostage instead.

Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* On the night when India and Pakistan are divided into two nations, two boys born in the same Bombay hospital are switched at birth; the novel follows their fates in a vivid depiction of modern India.

Kathryn Stockett: *The Help* Newly graduated from Ole Miss with a degree in English, the narrator returns to her parents' cotton farm in Jackson. Although it's 1962, during the early years of the civil rights movement, she is largely unaware of the tensions gathering around her town.

John Updike: *Terrorist* Ahmad Mulloy Ashmawy is 18 and attends Central High School in working class city of New Prospect, N.J. He is the son of an Egyptian exchange student who married a working-class Irish-American girl and then disappeared when Ahmad was three.