



## Upper School Summer Reading

Rye Country Day School English Department

Dear RCDS Student,

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

**Required Reading:** Below is required reading by grade. We suggest that you read your required book during the second half of the summer, in order for it to be fresh in your mind when you start school. Please be prepared: within the first few days of your return to school, your English teacher will assess your work.

### Required Summer Reading:

**Grade 9** *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros AND *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

**Grade 10 (Regular and Honors):** *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

#### Grade 11

**Regular:** *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

**AP Language:** *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines AND

*Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson

#### Grade 12:

**Regular:** *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien King

**AP Language:** *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* by Stephen King

**AP Literature:** *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith

**Recommended Reading:** It is our hope that you will find many books to enjoy this summer. The short list below is our way of helping you get started, but you might also have recommendations from friends and family. 'Just make it a goal to read every day!

### Recommended for Rising Grade 9 and 10:

**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.

**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.

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

**Heidi Durrow:** *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*. Inspired by a true story of a mother's twisted love, this coming-of-age story reveals an unfathomable past and explores issues of identity at a time when many people are asking, "Must race confine us and define us?"

**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.

**Khaled Hosseini:** *And the Mountain Echoed*. In this tale revolving around not just parents and children but brothers and sisters, cousins and caretakers, Hosseini explores the many ways in which families nurture, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for one another; and how often we are surprised by the actions of those closest to us, at the times that matter most.

**Ha Jin:** *A Good Fall*. This collection of short stories focuses 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 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 which express, in Maclean's own words, "a little of the love I have for the earth as it goes by."

**Frank McCourt:** *Angela's Ashes*. In a haunting memoir that 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.

**Dodie Smith:** *I Capture the Castle*. Written in the style of a diary, 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.

**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:** *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*. This is 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 fantastical fairy tales.

**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 Grade 11 and 12:**

**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. Darkly comic, this historical drama explores 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 that 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.

**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 the lives of 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 Theodore 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 in grade 11.

**Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment*** (best translation by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky) Against the backdrop of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, this important work presents the moral dilemma of Rashkolnikov, the impoverished student who justifies murder for a greater good and who later must seek his own redemption.

**Laura Esquivel: *Like Water for Chocolate*** In a blend of the magical and the real, 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 is based on the lives of the author's parents, who—after escaping the Nazis—reveal a secret that haunts him and colors his entire life. *Memory* 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 93-year-old Jacob Jankowski looks back at his life and adventures with the Benzini Brothers circus, with its the animals, side-show freaks and roustabouts. His story unfolds with pervasive good humor, despite its emotionally wrenching depth.

**Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*** Striving for a balance between his Bengali heritage and his American home, Gogol must make important, often difficult choices regarding his Indian family and his American friends.

**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*** The 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.

**Yann Martel: *Life of Pi*** The story of a ship-wrecked Indian boy adrift for over a year with a 450-pound Bengal tiger, this is a tale of adventure, survival, and man's contemplation of life's big questions— all told with both humor and sensitivity.

**Vladimir Nabokov: *Invitation of a Small Guest*** 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 his memory aglow forever in prose and structure 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 was 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.

**John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*** An American classic, Steinbeck's narrative of the Job family's painful journey across the dust bowl to the promise of a better life in California is a brilliant evocation of the power of love and family during the Depression era of the 1930's.

**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.

**Ben Winters: *Underground Airlines*** This novel envisions a shudder-inducing alternate-reality version of present-day America, in which the Civil War never took place, and thus slavery continues to exist in four southern states. The narrator-protagonist is an African-American man who was born into slavery and now works for the US Marshal Service, infiltrating abolitionist groups and tracking down fugitive slaves.