

CAC H.S. ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - SUMMER READING 2012

Please make an informed choice and read at least one of these titles before the first day of school (August 21), and be prepared to discuss and write about your reading.

NOTE: AP and IB Students – Refer to instructions for reading for your course (below).

ENGLISH 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,* Mark Haddon

Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow. This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.

The Laughing Sutra,* Mark Salzman

Salzman's novel follows the adventures of Hsun-ching, a naive but courageous orphan, and the formidable and mysterious Colonel Sun, who together travel from mainland China to San Francisco, risking everything to track down an elusive Buddhist scripture called The Laughing Sutra. Part Tom Sawyer, part Tom Jones, The Laughing Sutra draws us into an irresistible narrative of danger and comedy that speaks volumes about the nature of freedom and the meaning of loyalty.

Speak , Laurie Halse Anderson

Anderson uses keen observations and vivid imagery to pull readers into the head of an isolated teenager. Divided into the four marking periods of an academic year, the novel, narrated by Melinda Sordino, begins on her first day as a high school freshman. No one will sit with Melinda on the bus. At school, students call her names and harass her; her best friends from junior high scatter to different cliques and abandon her. Yet Anderson infuses the narrative with a wit that sustains the heroine through her pain and holds readers' empathy.

ENGLISH 10

The Bean Trees, Barbara Kingsolver

Clear-eyed and spirited, Taylor Greer grew up poor in rural Kentucky with the goals of avoiding pregnancy and getting away. But when she heads west with high hopes and a barely functional car, she meets the human condition head-on. By the time Taylor arrives in Tucson, Arizona, she has acquired a completely unexpected child, a three-year-old American Indian girl named Turtle, and must somehow come to terms with both motherhood and the necessity for putting down roots.

Childhood's End, Arthur C. Clarke

The Overlords appeared suddenly over every city--intellectually, technologically, and militarily superior to humankind. Benevolent, they made few demands: unify earth, eliminate poverty, and end war. With little rebellion, humankind agreed, and a golden age began. But at what cost? With the advent of peace, man ceases to strive for creative greatness, and a malaise settles over the human race. To those who resist, it becomes

evident that the Overlords have an agenda of their own. As civilization approaches the crossroads, will the Overlords spell the end for humankind . . . or the beginning?

Escape from Slavery,* Francis Bok

Seven-year-old Francis Piol Bol Buk was living happily on his family's southern Sudan farm. One day in 1986, he was sent on errands to the marketplace. There, a slave raid ripped him from his contented life and threw him into a wretched existence serving under a northern Sudanese Arab. After he escaped at age 17, Buk made his way to Cairo with a black market passport incorrectly listing his name as Bok and became a U.N. refugee allowed to settle in the U.S. in 1999. Although he found contentment in Iowa among other refugees, the following year Bok decided to work with an American antislavery organization, and testified before Congress about the atrocities in Sudan

Ishmael, An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit, Daniel Quinn

The narrator of this extraordinary tale is a man in search for truth. He answers an ad in a local newspaper from a teacher looking for serious pupils, only to find himself alone in an abandoned office with a full-grown gorilla who is nibbling delicately on a slender branch. "You are the teacher?" he asks incredulously. "I am the teacher," the gorilla replies. Ishmael is a creature of immense wisdom and he has a story to tell, one that no other human being has ever heard. It is a story that extends backward and forward over the lifespan of the earth from the birth of time to a future there is still time save. Like all great teachers, Ishmael refuses to make the lesson easy; he demands the final illumination to come from within ourselves.

AMERICAN LITERATURE (Grade 11)

The Color Purple,* Alice Walker

Celie is a poor black woman whose letters tell the story of 20 years of her life, beginning at age 14 when she is being abused and raped by her father and attempting to protect her sister from the same fate, and continuing over the course of her marriage to "Mister," a brutal man who terrorizes her. Celie eventually learns that her abusive husband has been keeping her sister's letters from her and the rage she feels, combined with an example of love and independence provided by her close friend Shug, pushes her finally toward an awakening of her creative and loving self.

The Language of Baklava: A Memoir, Diana Abu-Jaber

Abu-Jaber's father, who periodically uprooted his American family to transplant them back in Jordan, was always cooking. Wherever the family was, certain ingredients—sumac, cumin, lamb, pine nuts—reminded him of the wonderful Bedouin meals of his boyhood. He might be eating "the shadow of a memory," but at least he raised his daughter with an understanding of the importance of food: how you cook and eat, and how you feed your neighbors defines who you are. So Abu-Jaber tells the charming stories of her upbringing in upstate New York—with occasional interludes in Jordan—wrapped around some recipes for beloved Arabic dishes.

A Prayer for Owen Meany,* John Irving

In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills the other boy's mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn't believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen after that 1953 foul ball is extraordinary.

RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION (English 11)

Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho,* Jon Katz

Teenage hackers Jesse Dailey and Eric Twilegar are the heroes of *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet out of Idaho*, a thoughtful, affecting pop ethnography--and heroes is exactly what Jon Katz wants you to see them as. To the rest of the world, themselves included, they are geeks, which is a complicated thing to be these days. With the rise of the networked economy, the world and its wealth have become increasingly dependent on the expertise of *Star Wars*-loving, cola-swilling propellerheads everywhere. Yet at the same time, the typical geek--especially the typical adolescent geek--remains a consummate outsider, with passions for technological arcana that are both alienating and empowering.

It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life,* Lance Armstrong

This is the story of one man's journey through triumph, tragedy, transformation, and transcendence. It is the story of Lance Armstrong, the six-time winner of the Tour de France, and his fight against cancer. *People* magazine called it "inspiring." *The New York Times* called it "fascinating." But perhaps the *Cincinnati Enquirer* said it best: "It's not about the bike, or about the sport. It's about the soul."

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace... One School at a Time, Greg Mortenson

In 1993 Greg Mortenson was the exhausted survivor of a failed attempt to ascend K2, an American climbing bum wandering emaciated and lost through Pakistan's Karakoram Himalaya. After he was taken in and nursed back to health by the people of an impoverished Pakistani village, Mortenson promised to return one day and build them a school. From that rash, earnest promise grew one of the most incredible humanitarian campaigns of our time--Greg Mortenson's one-man mission to counteract extremism by building schools, especially for girls, throughout the breeding ground of the Taliban.

WORLD LITERATURE (Grade 12)

The Beginning and the End,* Naguib Mahfouz

This realistic 1949 novel reveals to Western readers the woes of a petit bourgeois family thrust into poverty in WW II Cairo. The Kamels' private battles, relayed here in engrossing detail, are a microcosm of the Egyptian nation's birth pangs in gaining independence. When their father dies, age-old conventions crumble--one social-climbing son reneges on a betrothal; drugs and illicit sex numb the grief of two self-hating siblings. Redolent of a culture verging on modernity, the work illumines courting rituals, weddings, funerals, food, dress, interior decor and and entertainment. According to Mahfouz, the plight of Egyptian women in the 1940s was complex. The widow Samira is respected, wise and controlling; her daughter Nefisa's physical ugliness is a virtual death sentence, and her skill at needlework a source of embarrassment, not pride.

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist--books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen

books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

***A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini**

Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation. With heart-wrenching power and suspense, Hosseini shows how a woman's love for her family can move her to shocking and heroic acts of self-sacrifice, and that in the end it is love, or even the memory of love, that is often the key to survival.

AP LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION (Grade 12)

Read two books

***A Streetcar Named Desire*, * Tennessee Williams**

Blanche DuBois arrives at her sister Stella's New Orleans apartment seeking refuge from a troubled past—but her ethereal spirit irks Stella's husband, the loutish Stanley Kowalski. Crudely, relentlessly, he unmasks the lies and delusions that sustain Blanche, until her frail hold on reality is shockingly severed.

***Snow Falling on Cedars*, * David Guterson**

On San Piedro, an island of rugged, spectacular beauty in Puget Sound, a Japanese-American fisherman stands trial for murder. Set in 1954 in the shadow of World War II, *Snow Falling on Cedars* is a beautifully crafted courtroom drama, love story, and war novel, illuminating the psychology of a community, the ambiguities of justice, the racism that persists even between neighbors, and the necessity of individual moral action despite the indifference of nature and circumstance.

IB COURSES

All IB English students are encouraged (but not required) to purchase a copy of the *IB Course Companion: English A Literature* by Hannah Tyson and Mark Beverley (Oxford University Press, 2011).

ENGLISH IB - SL 1 (Grade 11)

***Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, * Ghassan Kanafani and Hilary Kilpatrick (translator)**

This collection of important stories by novelist, journalist, teacher, and Palestinian activist Ghassan Kanafani includes the stunning novella *Men in the Sun* (1962), the basis of the film *The Deceived*. In the unsparing clarity of his writing, Kanafani offers the reader a gritty look at the agonized world of Palestine and the adjoining Middle East.

ENGLISH IB – HL1 (Grade 11)

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

Depicting the men of Alpha Company—Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and the character Tim O'Brien, who survived his tour in

Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three—the stories in *The Things They Carried* opened our eyes to the nature of war in a way we will never forget. It is taught everywhere, from high school classrooms to graduate seminars in creative writing, and in the decades since its publication it has never failed to challenge our perceptions of fact and fiction, war and peace, and courage, longing, and fear.

+At least one additional choice book of literary merit

ENGLISH IB - SL2 (Grade 12)

***The Great Gatsby*,* F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The mysterious Jay Gatsby embodies the American notion that it is possible to redefine oneself and persuade the world to accept that definition. Gatsby's youthful neighbor, Nick Carraway, fascinated with the display of enormous wealth in which Gatsby revels, finds himself swept up in the lavish lifestyle of Long Island society during the Jazz Age. Considered Fitzgerald's best work, *The Great Gatsby* is a mystical, timeless story of integrity and cruelty, vision and despair. The timeless story of Jay Gatsby and his love for Daisy Buchanan is widely acknowledged to be the closest thing to the Great American Novel ever written.

ENGLISH IB - HL2 (Grade 12)

Category A (at least one)

***Catch-22*,* Joseph Heller**

Catch-22 is like no other novel we have ever read. It has its own style, its own rationale, its own extraordinary character. It moves back and forth from hilarity to horror. It is outrageously funny and strangely affecting. It is totally original. It is set in the closing months of World War II, in an American bomber squadron on a small island off Italy. Its hero is a bombardier named Yossarian, who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he hasn't even met keep trying to kill him. (He has decided to live forever even if he has to die in the attempt.) His problem is Colonel Cathcart, who keeps raising the number of missions the men have to fly.

***One Hundred Years of Solitude*,* Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family. Inventive, amusing, magnetic, sad, and alive with unforgettable men and women -- brimming with truth, compassion, and a lyrical magic that strikes the soul -- this novel is a masterpiece in the art of fiction.

Category B (at least one of the following):

***The Great Gatsby*,* F. Scott Fitzgerald**

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***Ceremony*,* Leslie Marmon Silko**

Tayo, a young Native American, has been a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, and the horrors of captivity have almost eroded his will to survive. His return to the Laguna Pueblo reservation only increases his feeling of estrangement and alienation. While other returning soldiers find easy refuge in alcohol and senseless violence, Tayo searches for another kind of comfort and resolution. Tayo's quest leads him back to the Indian past and its traditions, to beliefs about witchcraft and evil, and to the ancient stories of his people. The search itself becomes a ritual, a curative ceremony that defeats the most virulent of afflictions -- despair.

***The Stranger*,* Albert Camus**

Since it was first published in English, in 1946, Albert Camus's extraordinary first novel, *The Stranger* (*L'Étranger*), has had a profound impact on millions of American readers. Through this story of an ordinary man who unwittingly gets drawn into a senseless murder on a sun-drenched Algerian beach, Camus was exploring what he termed "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd."

***The Nonexistent Knight*,* Italo Calvino**

Two novellas: the first, a parody of medieval knighthood told by a nun; the second, a fantasy about a nobleman bisected into his good and evil halves. "Bravura pieces... executed with brilliance and brio" (*Chicago Tribune*).

Corelli's Mandolin is the story of a timeless place that one day wakes up to find itself in the jaws of history. The place is the Greek island of Cephallonia, where gods once dabbled in the affairs of men and the local saint periodically rises from his sarcophagus to cure the mad. Then the tide of World War II rolls onto the island's shores in the form of the conquering Italian army. Caught in the occupation are Pelagia, a willful, beautiful young woman, and the two suitors vying for her love: Mandras, a gentle fisherman turned ruthless guerilla, and the charming, mandolin-playing Captain Corelli, a reluctant officer of the Italian garrison on the island.

*** CAC English Department has copies of this book.**

These texts are available locally, though they may need to be ordered. Local resources include: Al Khotob Khan (on Lasilky Street in Maadi). The Book Spot (Road 9 in Maadi), and Diwan (Zamalek, Heliopolis). Most of the bookstores have a website for online ordering and will deliver to your home. If you intend to order locally, do so right away to better ensure getting the book soon.