

Upper School Summer Reading List 2023

Faculty Recommendations

Reading is how we become and remain lifelong learners, and we hope you use your summer in a way that allows you to “start getting closer and closer—that is, if you want to, and if you look for it and wait for it—to the kind of information that will be very, very dear to your heart” (J.D.Salinger). If you need some guidance in this pursuit, consider reading some of the books recommended by The Gregory School faculty and staff below. Happy Reading!

Kerry Adams: ***West with the Night*** by Beryl Markham. A memoir by the first woman to fly solo over the Atlantic (fun fact: Amelia Earhardt was the first woman *passenger*, not pilot!). This tale is about coming of age in Africa: hunting lions, raising horses, learning to fly planes and losing (at 16!) your home, country, friends. This collection of short vignettes reflects upon self-reliance, resiliency and staying observant, grateful, and grounded (pun intended!).

Mary Babbitt: ***The Magician’s Assistant*** by Ann Patchett. When Parsifal, a handsome and charming magician, dies suddenly, his widow Sabine—who was also his faithful assistant for twenty years—learns that the family he claimed to have lost in a tragic accident is very much alive and well.

Lisa Bodden: ***The Handmaid’s Tale*** by Margaret Atwood. I could not put down this almost-too-plausible and, frankly, terrifying, award-winning book. It’s a dystopian nightmare of a patriarchal society run amuck.

Michelle Borleske: ***The Warmth of Other Suns*** by Isabelle Wilkerson. In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize–winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life.

Anna Cain: ***The Once and Future King*** by T. H. White. The most acclaimed novel about King Arthur, it begins childlike and innocent, the source for Disney’s *The Sword in the Stone*. Yet the novel matures as Arthur does, and by the time you get to the grim final battle, you can hardly believe you are reading the same book.

Beth Cain: ***The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where We Go From Here*** by Hope Jahren. Jahren challenges all of us to think about how to make small, daily changes that can create large, global effects.

Jim Carlson: ***Boys in the Boat*** by Daniel James Brown, the true story of the University of Washington crew team which went on to win the gold medal at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, told primarily through the story of one young man, Joe Rance. It is also a fascinating personal history of the Great Depression. AND ***The Lincoln Highway*** by Amor Towles. A tale of cross country travel as told from multiple points of view, and multiple narrators, very little of which occurs on the Lincoln Highway, which is itself a character in the book.

Amy Clashman: ***The Jungle*** by Upton Sinclair. This is a fictional account of immigrants working in meat-packing plants in turn-of-the-century Chicago. I read this in high school and it stuck with me, as it helped me understand workers' rights, unions, and the origins of socialism. Every American needs to read this; it sheds light on modern politics.

Dennis Conner: ***How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems*** by Randall Monroe. It is a collection of interesting knowledge that you can impress your friends with that is written in the simplistic style of a comic book.

Angela Earnhart: ***Nineteen Minutes*** by Jodi Picoult, asks what it means to be different in our society, who has the right to judge someone else, and whether anyone is ever really who they seem to be.

Carey Eskesen: ***My Ántonia*** by Willa Cather. "The novel tells the stories of an orphaned boy from Virginia, Jim Burden, and the elder daughter in a family of Bohemian immigrants, Ántonia Shimerda, who are each brought as children to be pioneers in Nebraska towards the end of the 19th century."

Amy Haskell: ***These is my Words: The Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901*** by Nancy E. Turner. A saga of a girl traveling across the Arizona territories and landing in Tucson (more specifically Ft Lowell). If you like your historical fiction to be regionally relatable, then this is the book for you!

Blake Johnson: ***The Two Faces of American Freedom*** by Aziz Rana. A reinterpretation of the U.S. political tradition from the colonial period to the modern era that seeks to incorporate issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration into the history of the United States to better understand the ways in which visions of freedom in the U.S. have included differing practices of liberty and exclusion.

Steve Kraus: ***The Emperor of All Maladies*** by Siddhartha Mukherjee. This is a biographical account of humanity's battle to defeat cancer. The story documents an offensive that began thousands of years ago and one that is still raging in this 21st century. Mukherjee expertly illustrates how we have won and lost, discovered and dismissed, ground-through and stumbled upon, every inch of progress that has been made.

Stephen Krohn: ***Invisible Cities*** by Italo Calvino. Marco Polo shares surreal imagery of metaphorical cities from his travels to Genghis Khan, each city being a beautiful lie while profoundly insightful truths of all cities and the connections we build.

Jana Maiuri: ***The Vanishing Half*** by Brit Bennett. Twin sisters Desiree and Stella disappeared from their Louisiana home when they were teenagers. When Desiree returns home years later with her small daughter, the town must reckon with what happened to “the Vignes girls.” Explores themes of opportunity, colorism, independence, and family.

Mitch Milam: ***The Lord of the Rings*** by J.R.R. Tolkien. Often erroneously referred to as a trilogy, Tolkien’s seminal *The Lord of the Rings* is actually one incredibly long novel. When the hobbit Frodo Baggins of the Shire is tasked with destroying the evil Ruling Ring of Power, he must team up with a trusty band of diverse companions to cast the cursed object into the fiery cracks of Mount Doom.

Tim Milner: ***In Cold Blood*** by Truman Capote. This marked the creation of the true crime genre, and despite immense continued interest in this genre in multiple mediums, no work has come close to surpassing its quality and accomplishment.

Gabe Reyes: ***A Short History of Nearly Everything*** by Bill Bryson. A hilarious view of all things science from the perspective of a non-scientist. The book is a little older, but still pretty accurate.

Cara Reynolds: ***The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*** by Don Miguel Ruiz. Based on ancient Toltec wisdom that advocates freedom from self-limiting beliefs that may cause suffering and limitation in a person’s life. This book offers a guide to achieving personal freedom and happiness through four simple agreements.

Helen Reynolds: ***This Will Make You Smarter*** by Stephen Pinker, Daniel Kahneman, Brian Eno and many more. The world’s most influential thinkers answer the question ‘What scientific concept would improve everybody’s cognitive toolkit?’ in a series of very short readable essays. The results are inspiring, surprising, fascinating and useful in equal measure.

Julie Sherrill: ***A Gentleman in Moscow*** by Amor Towles. Set in early 20’s Russia, this is an engaging historical fiction about Count Alexander Rostov and the beautiful (and often humorous) relationships he builds while under house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin.

Tom Teegarden: ***Eye of the Needle*** by Ken Follett. In 1944, just prior to D-Day, the fate of World War II rests in the hands of two people: a master spy and a lionhearted woman.

Brad Vanek: ***Soul Catcher*** by Frank Herbert. The kidnapping of a young white boy by a highly educated Native American man sparks an intense spiritual and physical journey. Many aspects of life are brought into question and put to scrutiny: relationships, resilience, power, revenge. How far will a person go to fulfill what they see as their own divine mission?

John Willy: ***The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies*** by Jason Fagone. The title says it all.

Dan Young: ***Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style*** by W. David Marks. A book about how Ivy League style made it to Japan, and how Japan made it better.

Elizabeth Young: ***Rules of Civility: A Novel*** by Amor Towles. Imagine *The Great Gatsby* but a decade later during The Great Depression with a woman playing the lead role.