

## Summer Reading Mission Statement

The intent of the Valley Regional High School summer reading program is to challenge students to become life-long readers and learners by encouraging them to read during non-instructional time. Through this reading program, the school promotes intellectual stimulation, social awareness, diversity of viewpoints, and independent thinking.

**Successful (passing standard) Summer Reading completion  
all four years is a graduation requirement.**

**Link to the VRHS Academic Expectations:**  
Students will comprehend written language  
Students will speak effectively

Books are available at VRHS, local libraries and the following bookstores:

Essex Books – Ivoryton  
R.J. Julia Booksellers - Madison  
Borders- Waterford - West Hartford  
Barnes and Noble - West Hartford

Books may also be purchased from online sellers such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).  
Most are available in paperback.

### 2011 Faculty and Student Committee

Erica Alexander  
Kevin Alvord  
Linnea Barbour  
Anna Marie Carlson  
Carolyn Crehan  
Tavo Dam  
Erin Dayton  
Cindy Downie

Aliza Dube  
Jessica Grote  
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Sarah McKinney  
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Sam Rosenberg  
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Kristie Schmidt  
Sarah Smalley  
Lizzie Smith  
Dylan Stempel

The faculty would like to thank students on the summer reading committee for their time, insight, and reviews. We appreciate your commitment to VRHS's summer reading program.

# Valley Regional High School Chester-Deep River-Essex

256 Kelsey Hill Road, Deep River, Connecticut 06417-1669

"Through the use of books, I had the whole world at my feet, could travel anywhere, meet anyone, and do anything." – Benjamin Carson

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We start with a list of over 75 books spontaneously generated by teachers and students. The process of reading and weeding then begins. After many enthusiastic and engaging conversations between faculty and students, a well-rounded list emerges. I am pleased to say that the work of the committee is, again, commendable. I appreciate both the student and faculty commitment to an outstanding list.

The committee attempts to select books encompassing multiple points of view, different cultures, and a myriad of experiences with a wide range of appeal. As you look over the list, know that summer reading is a graduation requirement and as such *must be passed all four years*. Please encourage your student to choose a book that will keep him or her engaged and perhaps present a new idea or different perspective.

This booklet reviews the available books and explains in detail the summer reading process. Summer reading projects will be presented the second and third days of the first week of school in your student's C.O.R.E. group. Please review this booklet with your student and encourage him/her to get the required first book early in the summer. Some books are available in the main office for borrowing. Come in to sign them out.

**The second book**, which is also a required part of summer reading, may be of your student's choice. This "free read" should challenge your student and provide insight for meaningful conversation when we return to school in the fall.

This year, for the first time, we are also recommending a read for parents, *The Winter of Our Disconnect: How Three Totally Wired Teenagers (and a Mother Who Slept with Her iPhone) Pulled the Plug on Their Technology and Lived to Tell the Tale* by Susan Maushart. We think parents will find Maushart's take on family and technology enlightening.

Access this booklet through our website at [www.reg4.k12.ct.us](http://www.reg4.k12.ct.us). Please call the school if you have any questions. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Kristina Martineau  
Principal

Kristie Schmidt  
English Teacher  
Coordinator, Summer Reading Committee

## Summer Reading Instructions for First Book

**Required first book- Choose from the approved list - Oral presentation with visual aid**

1. Preview your book selection. Review the summer reading booklet, including reading the reviews of each book, before making your decision.
2. Choose one book for your level from the Summer Reading list. Your level is the English class you will be in for the 2011-2012 school year. For example, if you will be in a level 2/3 English class, you should choose a level 2/3 book or one labeled all. If you would like to read up and choose a level 1 book, you may do so. If, however, you will be in a level 1 English class, you may NOT read a level 2/3 book for your required first book but you may read one labeled all.
3. Read the School-wide Oral Presentation Rubric to understand how you will be assessed.
4. Review the list of ideas for projects and select one lending itself to your particular book. **If you choose *127 Hours: Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, there is a required project—no choice.**
5. Keep in mind you must explain why you chose each image or event to present. Your choices should reflect the following:
  - Plot
  - Characters
  - Setting
  - Theme (What message is the author trying to convey?)
  - Significance (How does this connect to your own life and personal experiences?)

## Summer Reading Instructions for Second Book (book of choice)

**Required Second Book- Any appropriate high school level book- Book Talk**

*Direct any questions about appropriate choices to a summer reading committee member*

1. Please review the summer reading **second book** section of the rubric. You will be assessed using the summer reading rubric and **MUST** meet the requirement in order to pass.
2. Be prepared to participate in a "Book Talk". For the book talk, provide the author and title of the book as well as a brief summary of the plot, characters, setting, theme and significance. State your opinion of the

book, whether or not you would recommend it to someone else, and reasons why or why not.

## **Options for Summer Reading Oral Presentation Visual Aid Projects**

### **\*Special required project for 127 Hours: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place***

We recommend you read the book first and then pause frequently during movie viewing to take notes (Venn diagram or T-chart) about each of the following: how the director and screenwriter were true to the book (or not) in the following categories: plot, character, theme (message), setting (film location), costuming, and casting. Support with evidence from both text and film. Also discuss how the cinematography (wide, medium, close up shots, and editing) and soundtrack enhance or detract from the atmosphere created by Ralston. Discuss any scenes or dialogues that were enhanced, shortened, eliminated or had their chronological order changed, and the impact those changes had on the film. **Be very specific with your examples. Your work must prove that you did not simply watch the movie version or read a book summary.**

**Resume and Business Cards-** Research the proper format of a resume; in this case, a chronological resume will probably work best. Then choose two characters for whom you will prepare typed one-page resumes. For unknown information or for younger characters, you should create plausible entries based on your reading and be creative. You will also create five business cards for supporting characters. Through these pieces, you must show knowledge of plot, character, setting, theme, and significance. Business cards typically show name, job title, address and phone, email, fax, etc.

**Guide to (insert name of book here) for the Uninformed-** Create a guide to your book intended for those who have not read it. You must have the following five entries as a minimum: **Here's What Happened** (plot), **Here's Where It Happened** (setting, setting map), **Here's Who It Happened To** (character profiles), **Here's What It's All About** (theme), and lastly **Here's What I Think** (advice and/or personal connection). Design the booklet to look like a real guide, with illustrations, color, font, and text designed to grab the reader's interest and highlight information clearly.

**Diary-** Present a diary as if you were one of the characters in your book. In addition to other information, select a minimum of five quotes to explain in writing and/or act out the events you witness and experience. Diary presentations should also relate to five specific events minimum, taken from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. Language used should reflect the culture and age of the character.

**T. V. Guide-** Turn your book into a five or six-part miniseries. Prepare the TV guide entry for each night's episode. Episode entries must cover events from your entire book, beginning to end. Each synopsis must contain at least five exciting sentences designed to entice viewers without giving away spoilers. You must design a cover for your T.V. Guide. This should depict the characters, plot, setting, theme and significance of the book and should look like a real T.V. Guide cover.

**Mock (or real) Web Page-** Design your own mock (or real) web page (Word version is acceptable) detailing your book choice. Your web page must include links that depict the characters, plot, setting, theme, and significance of the book. Each link must contain a minimum of one paragraph explaining the five topics in the previous sentence. You must also choose three significant quotes from your book that you feel best represent the overall story and explain why.

**Timeline-** Create a timeline to illustrate the events in your novel. Your timeline should include 15 events—each event illustrated with captions. Your timeline should present a clear beginning, middle, and end. Captions/illustrations can be created using various mediums (hand drawn, computer generated, magazine cutouts, etc..) and captions must clearly indicate why you chose each event to illustrate.

**Movie Trailer or filmed Key Scene-** You must turn in a script to accompany your movie trailer or filmed key scene, and you may choose a few of your friends to assist you in filming this project but each is responsible for his/her own Summer Reading project. Your script should follow your movie exactly. Be sure you portray the characters, plot, setting, theme, and significance of your book. Add a soundtrack if necessary plus credits. Your trailer or key scene must be longer than three minutes and shorter than seven. Save on a DVD or laptop file. Mac users will need a converter to show their film on the classroom LCD.

**SUMMER READING Projects are presented in CORE  
on the second and third day of school in September**

### 2011 VRHS Summer Reading Selections

Author	Title	Genre	Level
Abdel-Fattah, Randa	Does My Head Look Big in This?	Fiction	2,3
Bender, Aimee	The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake	Fiction	1,2
Bradley, Alan	The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie A Flavia de Luce Mystery	Fiction	1
Cardello, Hank	Stuffed: An Insider's Look at Who's (Really) Making America Fat and How the Food Industry Can Fix It	NF	all
Casey, Susan	The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks and Giants of the Ocean	NF	1
Condie, Allie	Matched	Fiction	all
Connelly, Michael	City of Bones	Fiction	1
DelToro, Guillermo	The Strain	Fiction	1,2
Hamamura, John	The Color of the Sea	Fiction	2
Hillebrand, Lauren	Unbroken: A WWII Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption	NF	1
Hoban, Julia	Willow	Fiction	all
Jiang, Ji-Li	Red Scarf Girl	NF	2,3
Kenyon, Sherrilyn	Infinity: The Chronicles of Nick	Fiction	2,3
Keyes, Daniel	Flowers for Algernon	Fiction	1
Larbalestier, Justine	Liar	Fiction	1,2
Levin, Larry	Oogy: The Dog Only a Family Could Love	NF	All
Moore, Wes	The Other Wes Moore	NF	All
Oher, Michael and Yaeger, Don	I Beat the Odds: From Homelessness, to The Blind Side, and Beyond	NF	2,3
Patterson, James and Dugard, Martin	The Murder of King Tut	Fiction/NF	2,3
Piccolt, Jodi	House Rules	Fiction	all
Preston, Richard	The Hot Zone	NF	1
*Ralston, Aaron	*127 Hours: Between a Rock and a Hard Place	NF	1,2
Rapkin, Mickey	Theater Geek	NF	1,2
Riley, Daniel	Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions	NF	1
Skloot, Rebecca	The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks	NF	1
Smith, Roland	Peak	Fiction	3
Trump, Donald	How to Get Rich	NF	all
Zimbardo, Philip	The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil	NF	1

## 2011 VRHS Faculty and Student Reviews

**Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Does My Head Look Big in This?*** A very funny fictional read with a somewhat misleading cover. Amal lives in Australia with her parents and struggles with typical teenage concerns all day long. At 16, she loves shopping, watches *Sex and the City*, and IMs her friends about her crush on a classmate. She also wants to wear the hijab to be strong enough to show a badge of her deeply held faith, even if she confronts insults from some at her snotty prep school, and is refused a part-time job in the food court (she is "not hygienic"). Should she go along with the crowd by not wearing a headscarf or should she follow her instincts and religious guidelines and do so?

If you have ever had to make a very hard decision involving following rules or your friends, read this humorous, enjoyable book. Without heavy preaching, the issues of faith and culture are part of the story, from fasting at Ramadan to refusing sex before marriage. More than the usual story of the immigrant teen's conflict with her traditional parents, the funny, touching contemporary narrative will grab teens everywhere. The first-person present-tense narrative is hilarious about diversity, and sometimes heartbreaking.

**Bender, Aimee. *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*.** Calling all cake fans, lemon cake to be exact. The cover (and title) of this book may be deceiving, but in truth, anyone who enjoys an upbeat story that encompasses a delicious treat will enjoy this read. Bender's phenomenal story features a young girl, Rose, who discovers she has the ability to taste the emotions of the person who baked the food she eats. Her new ability emerges on her ninth birthday when she indulges in a piece of her mother's lemon cake, but to her surprise cannot enjoy it because she only tastes sadness. The feelings that overcome her are horrifying at first, but with the help of George, Rose comes to realize the gifts of her ability. George calls Rose a "magic food psychic," while Rose doesn't know what to think of this very abnormal situation. When Rose soon realizes she can taste her mother's secrets, she discovers the mystery behind her mother's sadness.

As the Washington Post comments, "Aimee Bender has written a novel of depth and power. Caged in the simple sense of taste is a transformative world." This is undoubtedly one of the most unique stories you will ever pick up and the endearing protagonist makes for a most pleasurable read.

**Bradley, Alan. *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*.** One of the most unusual, funny, and surprising narrative voices in recent fiction. Flavia de Luce, the precocious protagonist, is not your typical eleven-year old girl. She has a passion for adventure *and chemistry*. In her English manor house, Flavia has a personal laboratory where she happily experiments with poisons and schemes against her older, annoying sisters. Despite the death of her mother when she was merely a baby, she leads a good life. But when a mysterious bird is found dead at her doorstep, her aloof father is set into a catatonic state. Flavia realizes there is a deeper meaning to this conundrum when later in the day, she finds her self side by side with a dying man in the de Luce cucumber patch. A fully-fledged investigation begins and Flavia's father is arrested for the man's murder. Outraged and convinced of her father's innocence, Flavia begins an investigation of her own, armed with only her wits and her bicycle, Gladys. This witty and entertaining page turning mystery is the first in the Flavia de Luce series by Alan Bradley. Books two and three, *The Weed that Strings the Hangman's Bag* and *A Red Herring Without Mustard*, are also currently available.

**Cardello, Hank. *Stuffed*.** A great book difficult to put down! *Stuffed* examines where groceries come from, provides a rare look into the lives of chickens, reveals totally surprising statistics about just how much we eat, and offers a unique view into the media and how they sell our food. Touching upon gimmicks, grossness, and profits, every single page is jam packed with food smarts and statistics. Example: Where exactly did the TV dinner originate? Turns out it was all because of a turkey company who bought too many birds and had nothing to do with them after Thanksgiving. Like that fact? There are a ton more. The reader experiences the action inside a McDonald's, the adventure of your average beef patty, and the super ninja powers of 'Stealth Health'! Though the book talks about a wide range of subjects concerning fast food, and food in general, the book centers on the American obesity epidemic. Readers even learn about school lunches and who really chooses what goes out to our schools. Forbes.com says the book is "thought provoking" and "filled with clever ideas."

**Casey, Susan. *The Wave*.** “What’s as tall as a small office building, snaps large vessels in half and inspires a small tribe of brethren to strap on fiberglass and launch themselves into an unholy maelstrom for a glimpse of transcendence? Giant waves. The bigger the better — or way worse — depending on who’s talking.” (*New York Times Book Review*) Bestselling author Susan Casey follows a group of tow surfers who travel the globe seeking out monster ocean waves for the ultimate experience in extreme sport. Casey’s introduction to this culture of risk and adventure is led by famed tow surfer, Laird Hamilton. Hamilton allows Casey to follow his journey from his Hawaiian home to Tahiti and Mexico where he and his fellow thrill seekers search for the highest waves to ride in their quest to break records and achieve status in the surfing community. Interspersed throughout the book Casey explores the experiences of seafarers with “freak” or “rogue” waves, discusses historical incidents of rogue waves and their destruction, and spends time with scientists who dedicate their lives and research to uncovering the mysteries of these ocean phenomenon and their possible causes. Covering topics as diverse as the Indonesian tsunami, the effects of climate change on ocean behavior, and the vicarious adrenaline rush of riding a seventy-foot wave, Casey’s book is a compelling and engaging look at our oceans and the ferocious power of *The Wave*.

**Condie, Allie. *Matched*.** Said to be the next *The Hunger Games*, *Matched* is the classic forbidden love story with a twist of suspense and adventure. How would you feel if your whole life was decided for you? When what you eat, where you work, who you love, and when you die is not in your own control because it’s society’s decision? In *Matched*, the government’s goal is to stabilize a utopian world. Cassia has turned seventeen and has her Match Banquet, the celebration in which Cassia’s matched soul mate will be revealed on the Matching Screen. Her destined partner is her best friend Xander, but when Cassia views the chip that contains her match a second time, there is a glitch and another boy’s face appears for a short moment. Who will be the one? Will Cassia devote her life to Xander or rebel against her society?

The beginning of a riveting trilogy, *Matched* was awarded the Publisher’s Weekly Best Children’s Books of 2010 and Amazon’s Best Books of the Month in December 2010. Cassandra Clare, author of the *Infernal Devices* and *The Mortal Instruments* series says, “This futuristic fable of love and free will asks: Can there be freedom without choice? The tale of Cassia’s journey from acceptance to rebellion will draw you and leave you wanting more.” For more information, go to the book’s official website, [www.match-book.com](http://www.match-book.com). If you fall in love with *Matched*, the trilogy continues in *Crossed* to be released November 1, 2011.

**Connelly, Michael. *City of Bones*.** Are you patient and eager enough to solve even the most unfathomable puzzles? Do crime shows such as *Bones* and *CSI* keep your interest? If so, this fast-paced novel is guaranteed to maintain your interest. A bone discovered by a retired doctor in a Los Angeles Suburb takes both detective Harry Bosch and Connelly’s audience back 20 years to investigate the overlooked homicide of a 12 year old foster child. It’s no great surprise when the investigation takes a couple of nasty turns, right up through the adrenaline filled last chapter. Will Bosch be forced to give up the confidentiality of his own life in the foster system to help solve this case? Will he be forced to dwell on his aching past in order to crack the case? Follow Detective Bosch as he probes the case that has haunted the Los Angeles community for over two decades and haunts him as well.

Connelly, one of the foremost authors of crime and mystery, has had cameos during the mystery author poker games of ABC’s *Castle*. Over forty-two million copies of his books have sold worldwide and he has been translated into thirty-six foreign languages. He has won the Edgar Award, Anthony Award, Macavity Award, and Los Angeles Times Best Mystery/Thriller Award. Connelly was President of the Mystery Writers of America organization in 2003 and 2004.

**Del Toro, Guillermo. *The Strain*.** The first in a trilogy written by the acclaimed Mexican filmmaker best known for *Pan’s Labyrinth*. *The Strain* is everything you want from a horror novel--dark, bloody, and packed full of mayhem and mythology. Whenever Dr. Eph Goodweather is called to the scene, everyone knows something bad is happening. The epidemiologist reports to JFK airport, where Flight 753 from Berlin has just landed. While taxiing down the runway, the mighty Boeing 777 suddenly goes completely dark. The people aboard are believed to be dead and the plane has entirely shut down. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) are immediately called to the scene.

Soon Eph concludes that a new virus is sweeping over New York City, one identified only by a small mark in the victim’s carotid artery and by its ability to turn man into beast in a matter of hours. “In one week, Manhattan will be gone. In one month, the country. In two months... the world.” All that stands between us and a grotesque

end are a couple of scientists, an old man with a decades-old vendetta, and a young boy. This first installment moves fast and sets up the major players, counting down to the beginning of the end. Great summer reading.

**Hamamura, John. *Color of the Sea*.** A WWII fictional story about the oft forgotten and rarely talked about nonfictional US Japanese internment camps. Born in Hawaii to Japanese parents, Sam Hamada is not destined to follow in his father's footsteps as a mere plantation worker. Education, both traditional schooling and martial arts training, is Sam's ticket out, leading him to college on the mainland, where he meets Keiko, the beautiful, willful daughter of Japanese immigrants. While Keiko and Sam are falling in love, their adopted and native lands are preparing for war. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Keiko's family is incarcerated in internment camps while Sam is drafted into the U.S. Army. To be a Japanese American in mid-twentieth-century America was to be perceived as neither Japanese nor American, and it is this conflict that informs Hamamura's ambitious coming-of-age novel, in which the fate of two people amid the devastation of war reveals how the promises of honor and the security of love can rescue souls and restore faith. (amazon.com)

**Hillebrand, Lauren. *Unbroken*.** "One of the most spectacular odysseys of this [WWII] or any other war." (*New York Times*) Hillenbrand gives the same attention to detail she gave her award-winning book *Seabiscuit*, this time tracing the amazing life of Louis Zamperini from birth to old age. Zamperini, now age 93, set American records in the mile and 5,000, and was an Olympic distance runner on the 1932 U.S. Olympic team. In '36 and '40, World War II takes additional Olympic competition from Louis, and his dreams of competing in his prime die with Zamperini's subsequent drafting into the U.S. Armed Forces. As an Air Force bombardier, he sees the Pacific theater from the belly of a B-24 Liberator. In 1942, while on a routine air mission, Zamperini's plane goes down. From there his tale becomes one too unbelievable to do justice to in a summer reading blurb. From man-eating sharks night and day, to the loss of 50% of body mass, to killing and eating a bird with his bare hands, to enduring POW torture too psychotic and disgusting to repeat, Louis Zamperini's tale is nothing short of amazing, one of a man who at 93, is unbroken.

**Hoban, Julia. *Willow*.** Everyone has their ups and downs, but what happens when you get down and can't get back up? Some teens talk to best friends, others to parents. But when you're like Willow Randall and have lost everyone close to you, what are you supposed to do? Willow takes the memories that haunt her day and night and drives them away the only way she knows how, through physical pain. Just getting through each day leaves Willow with scars that would reveal her secret to anyone who would take the time to look. Will anyone in her life finally open their eyes and see what is really going on? Will anyone be able to help Willow face her demons and find a new way to deal with them? Willow has to find her own answers to these questions.

**Jiang, Ji-Li. *Red Scarf Girl*.** *Red Scarf Girl* is a page-turner. This autobiography details the author's experiences as a teenager during the Cultural Revolution in China. Such memoirs are usually filled with murders, suicides, mass brainwashing, cruel and unusual bullying, and injustices. *Red Scarf Girl* is no exception. Where Jiang scores is in her lack of self-pity, her candor, and the vividness of her writing. Readers watch her grow into a thoughtful person who privately questions the powers that be. She witnesses neighbors being beaten to death, her best friend's grandmother's suicide, the degradation of her father, and endless public humiliations. She makes it very clear that the atrocities were the result of confusion and fanaticism. Ultimately, her philosophy attaches no blame: this is what happens when power is grossly abused. The writing style is lively and the events often have a heart-pounding quality about them. (San Francisco Public Library)

**Kenyon, Sherrilyn. *Infinity*.** Imagine having the power to destroy the world and not even know it? Meet Nick Gautier (pronounced Go-Shay), a 14 year-old poor student who lives in the slums of New Orleans and who gets repeatedly beaten at a school for the rich and snotty. Nick's only friends are the assumed "crazies", Mark and Bubba, who fix computers by day and hunt zombies by night.

One night, Nick turns on thugs mugging tourists. Before they can end his life, a strange man saves Nick. Indebted, Nick's life changes even more when he returns to school only to find school canceled because a member of the football team tried to eat another student, and another player ate the principal! It is a race against the clock as Nick gets chased by the football team zombies. He teams up with Bubba and Mark, some new friends, and some enemies to take down the zombies. But who can he trust when everything gets turned upside down and things Nick didn't even believe could happen, happen?

Sherrilyn Kenyon is known for her Dark Hunters series about vampire slaying immortals. She is also the author of the B.A.D. Agency and The League series. Her novels have sold over 20 million copies in 30 countries. She has been on the top of the Publishers Weekly, USA Today, and New York Times lists. Infinity is the first book in the *The Chronicles of Nick* series, a spinoff of Kenyon's popular Dark Hunters series. Fans of the Dark Hunters will enjoy seeing their favorite characters as well as some new faces come together to form a hilarious story filled with sarcasm, sarcasm... and some more sarcasm along with some light horror tendencies and many twists that will keep you hanging on for dear life. The second book to *Chronicles of Nick* is out now for those who wish to continue reading on in the series.

**Keyes, Daniel . *Flowers for Algernon*.** Imagine having no control over your life, not knowing when you are being mocked, or when someone genuinely likes you, not being able to judge love from hate or a lie from a truth. This was the life of Charlie Gordon...that is, until doctors came and took it away.

In this fiction story, the reader witnesses a miraculous transformation. Through the power of modern science, doctors send a mouse's IQ to previously unknown levels. They now search for the mouse's, Algernon's, human counterpart. This leads researchers to Charlie. At thirty-two years of age, Charlie works in a bakery, cleaning. He is laughed at by fellow employees, but doesn't have the capacity to know he is being mocked, so instead he simply laughs along with them. Yet, after a new and intensive procedure, Charlie slowly begins to see what he once was, and as his intelligence grows, so does his understanding. When he reaches the pinnacle of his learning, he discovers something horrifying: Algernon, the lab mouse, has reverted to his previous mental state. As the sun begins to set on Charlie's intelligence, he rushes to learn all he can, not only intellectually, but emotionally. He simply hopes he won't be too late.

During this story of love and trials, you will be caught in tears in one moment, and laughing the next as you witness what happens every day to people with disabilities. Charlie's words speak louder than any other's.

**Larbaestier, Justine. *Liar*.** *If you could create stories that everyone believed, would you?* We have all told lies whether we meant to or not. It's expected. We're only human. But what happens when you lie so much, you start to believe them yourself? *Liar* takes you on a journey through the inner workings of a mind torn between what is and what isn't really the truth.

A natural born liar, Micah has always deceived people and when caught, would lie to cover it up. Example: Micah spent the first two days of freshman year pretending to be a boy. She also made everyone believe her dad was an arms dealer. Lying was second-nature and the words spilled out with each breath she took. But one day, someone dies, someone important. Is she the killer? And if she is, was it intentional or something that just happened unexpectedly?

Micah's world is turned upside down and she stumbles with each lie she tells. As a reader you're forced to figure out for yourself whether you really believe her or not. Faced with an unreliable narrator, each line is questioned. Is *this* the truth?

**Levin, Larry. *Oogy*.** When Oogy, a rare Dogo Argentine puppy, was four months old, he was tied to a stake and used as bait for a pit bull. After the fight, the left side of his face, including most of his ear, had been torn away and he had been bitten so hard that his jaw had been crushed. Rescued by the police, he was taken to the Ardmore Animal Hospital in Philadelphia where a team of doctors operated for hours to save him. Miraculously, and against all odds, Oogy survived. This is the story of Oogy's life with Laurence and Jennifer Levin who, after a chance encounter with a scarred and crippled yet joyful puppy, immediately adopted him. It is the story of the Ardmore Animal Hospital and the staff who saved Oogy and spent years operating on him, striving to improve his quality of life without accepting a penny. It is about family, and looking after each other, and the thousands and thousands of animals who are saved by people with a special place in their hearts for the unprotected, the defenseless and the abused. (amazon.com)

**Moore, Wes. *The Other Wes Moore*.** In 2000 a small town newspaper article featured a man named Wes Moore who won a Rhodes scholarship. In that same newspaper was an article about four boys who had killed a police officer after a robbery. Oddly enough, one of the boy's names was also Wes Moore. This book is about two people who have the same name but lead completely different lives. They grew up just a few blocks from each other. And while one Wes grew up to be a Rhodes scholar, a combat veteran, white house fellow, and business leader, the other Wes is serving a life sentence in jail for committing murder.

**Oher, Michael and Yeager, Don. *I Beat the Odds*.** Michael Oher, the famous NFL football player for the Baltimore Ravens and the subject of the movie, *The Blind Side*, is now telling his life story in *I Beat the Odds: From Homelessness, to The Blind Side, and Beyond*. Feeling the need to set the record straight after the blockbuster movie and Lee Ann Tuohy's book, *In a Heartbeat*, Oher details his life as a homeless child in Memphis to his successful NFL football career. Not just a book for football fans, Oher speaks to children in America faced with poverty, addiction, homelessness, and the hopelessness that trapped his family for so long. He recounts growing up in the projects and running from child services and foster care over and over again in search of a way out. His message is clear: there are ways to break the cycle and beat the odds. Sometimes funny and often times sad, Michael Oher's book gets to the heart of his life story and leaves readers feeling hopeful.

**Patterson, James. *The Murder of King Tut*.** If your interests overlap anywhere between the construction of pyramids and the resurrection of mummies, then this book is for you. Egyptology has fascinated thousands of scholars throughout the ages. This author clearly shares the love many people have for Egyptology *and* thrillers. Professionals from a vast array of career paths often digress from their own profession to study the history and culture of ancient Egypt. But a Sci-Fi/Detective Literature author?

James Patterson has mesmerized millions with his novels such as the *Alex Cross* series and *Maximum Ride*. Although reviews suggest Patterson's books are "superficial" and "shallow", the same can certainly not be said about his recent book: *The Murder of King Tut*. We follow both the famed Howard Carver in his hunt to find the tomb of the renowned Pharaoh, and King Tut himself through his youth and leading up to his unclear and untimely death. Patterson writes from the perspectives of both individuals – one, searching for the tomb and another coping with the royalty he has unwillingly inherited. Will the truth about King Tut's youthful death ever surface? Not only does this book present a surplus of information regarding Egypt and Tut, but it begs the reader to question: do we really know how and why Tut passed?

**Piccoult, Jodi. *House Rules*.**

*"They tell me I'm lucky to have a son who's so verbal, who is blisteringly intelligent, who can take apart the broken microwave and have it working again an hour later. They think there is no greater hell than having a son who is locked in his own world, unaware that there's a wider one to explore. But try having a son who is locked in his own world, and still wants to make a connection. A son who tries to be like everyone else, but truly doesn't know how."*

Jacob Hunt is a teenage boy with Asperger's syndrome. He struggles to read social cues or express himself well to others, and like many kids with AS, Jacob has a special focus on one subject--in his case, forensic analysis. He's always showing up at crime scenes, thanks to the police scanner he keeps in his room, and telling the cops what they need to do...and he's usually right. But then his town is rocked by a terrible murder and, for a change, the police come to Jacob with questions. All of the hallmark behaviors of Asperger's--not looking someone in the eye, stimulatory tics and twitches, flat affect--can look a lot like guilt to law enforcement personnel. Suddenly, Jacob and his family feel the spotlight shining directly on them. For his mother, Emma, it's a brutal reminder of the intolerance and misunderstanding that always threaten her family. Over this small family looms the soul-searing question: Did Jacob commit murder? (amazon.com)

**Preston, Richard. *The Hot Zone*.** Richard Preston writes graphically in this story about an outbreak of the Marburg, or Ebola, virus within the U.S. Currently, the Center for Disease Control uses four biosafety levels, BSL-1 being the least severe. The HIV virus, or AIDS, is ranked at BSL-3. One cannot begin to imagine what a BSL-4 virus must be like. Yet this is exactly what Richard Preston does in the #1 New York Times Bestseller *The Hot Zone*. Originating in Africa, the Ebola virus kills nine out of ten of its victims so quickly and gruesomely that even biohazard experts are terrified of it. It is airborne, extremely contagious, and in the winter of 1989, about to burn through the suburbs of Washington D.C. Preston describes the terrible procession of symptoms from this deadly virus as a "human virus bomb". This process is one that 90% of its victims experience, a rapid deterioration of the inner organs that almost always results in a very messy death. Once you've started, you'll be hooked. A fair warning to those who enter: this story is not only a page turner, but it is also based on a true story of an outbreak of the virus in D.C. in the late 1980s.

**\*Ralston, Aaron. *127 Hours*.** The incredible story of a twenty-seven year old experienced outdoorsmen trapped in a canyon by an eight-hundred-pound boulder that crushed his right hand and wrist against a canyon wall. With no one aware of his whereabouts, limited water and food, and a cheap pocketknife as his only tool, Ralston eliminates his options one by one. On the sixth day, Aron realizes that if he can use the rock's vise-like hold to break his arm bones, his blunted pocketknife could serve as a surgeon's blade. Could you cut off your own arm if it were the only way to save yourself? (Washington Post)

Nominated for Best Motion Picture of the Year 2011, the movie, starring Best Actor Oscar nominee James Franco, was directed by Danny Boyle of *Slumdog Millionaire* fame. \*This choice requires you to read the book *and* watch the movie.

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**Rapkin, Mickey. *Theater Geek*.** Gleeks and VRHS musical participants will love this true story of an Adirondack theater camp in the 70s and 80s which spawned the careers of Jon Cryer (*Two and a Half Men*), Robert Downey Jr. (*Sherlock Holmes*) and Natalie Portman (*Black Swan*) to mention just a few. Rapkin's account is a chatty, stage-struck combination of history complete with anecdotes of overly-dramatic directors and lax adult oversight (the camp has been a Catskills fixture for more than three decades) and human interest. The senior editor at GQ follows three campers as they rehearse for major roles in Sondheim shows. Follow along as they mount such Broadway musicals unabridged with a cast and crew of teenagers. Rapkin stresses the importance of Stagedoor Manor as a place that provided a haven for any child with a love of the arts who . . . felt "other." He also writes of the changes that this age of *American Idol* and YouTube have visited on the Stagedoor culture. Overall this is an unabashed love letter to a facility that remains a microcosm of the New York theater scene. Theater geeks will, well, . . . geek out over it.

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**Riley, Daniel. *Predictably Irrational*.** Why do our headaches persist after we take a one-cent aspirin but disappear when we take a fifty-cent aspirin? Why do we splurge on a lavish meal but cut coupons to save twenty-five cents on a can of soup? When it comes to making decisions in our lives, we think we are making smart, rational choices. But are we? In this newly revised and expanded edition of the groundbreaking *New York Times* bestseller, Dan Ariely refutes the common assumption that we behave in fundamentally rational ways. From drinking coffee to losing weight, from buying a car to choosing a romantic partner, we consistently overpay, underestimate, and procrastinate. Yet these misguided behaviors are neither random nor senseless. They're systematic and predictable—making us predictably irrational.

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**Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.** In the 1950's, the U.S., and the world were in the grip of the Polio Virus, one of the worst viruses to ever strike mankind. The world was in need of hope, hope that the darkness and pain that was slowly creeping through nations and continents would end. That hope came in the form of a cell, a cell with amazing powers of regeneration: the HeLa Cell. With the ability to multiply to hither-to unknown capacities, the HeLa Cell provided the key to the cure. Yet who was the mysterious donor of the HeLa Cell? And why do we not know HER as the true source of the cure?

These questions plagued Rebecca Skloot through her early scientific career, and in her later one in journalism. She always wondered what the story was behind the woman who literally saved the world. Her book is the recovery of Henrietta Lacks's lost and forgotten history and Rebecca's personal journey to bring to life the story behind the HeLa cell, integral to modern science, and a main commodity in a multi-billion dollar health industry. The immortal HeLa lives on in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

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**Smith, Roland. *Peak*.** Have you ever thought about climbing the tallest mountain in the world? Well, neither did a 14 year-old boy named Peak Marcello. In this fictional novel, Peak is arrested for climbing a building in New York City. The court orders the daredevil to go live with his father in Thailand where he can no longer endanger himself. What Peak does not know is that his mountaineering father has set up a once in a lifetime experience for him to be the youngest person to climb Mt. Everest. He must struggle to overcome the altitude, weather, and sickness. Peak learns he may not be the only one on the journey attempting to be the youngest person to reach the summit. He also discovers his father's true motives for the climb. Will Peak even reach the summit before his birthday and survive to tell the tale?

Roland Smith tells the gripping story of this rigorous 29,028-foot climb to the top of the world from Peak's point of view. *Booklist* called *Peak* "a thrilling, multifaceted adventure story . . . A winner at every level." *Peak* has earned much acclaim and has been named an American Library Association's Best Book for

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Young Adults, a *Booklist* Editors' Choice, and a National Outdoor Book Award Winner. Some of Roland Smith's other noteworthy works include *The Captains Dog: My Journey with the Lewis and Clark Tribe*, *Jack's Run*, and *Cryptid Hunters*.

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**Trump, Donald. *How to Get Rich*.** What teen isn't interested in making more money? When Donald Trump tells you how to get rich, you know you should listen. Trump tells you how to start and set up a business, and how to actually reach dreams you always believed were too hard to reach. He goes in-depth about relationships with other famous entrepreneurs around the world, and explains how becoming close with other people in the same type-of business can really increase your wealth. He also discusses his daily schedule, and how he uses it to balance both free time and work, so that he can spend time with his family and still earn the money he wants.

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**Zimbardo, Philip. *The Lucifer Effect*.** Have you ever wondered what empowers people to act in a way that is against what is considered to be good? Philip Zimbardo, the author of *The Lucifer Effect*, has spent his life answering this very question. The book specifically chronicles more than thirty years of his own research on what creates the "perfect storm" that can compel ordinary people to engage in evil actions.

Internationally recognized as the leader in what he calls contemporary psychology, Zimbardo's research has been widely viewed through his PBS-TV series, *Discovering Psychology*, as well as featured on countless media appearances and in best selling books. The most widely known of his research is the classic Stanford Prison Experiment where Stanford students played the roles of prison guards. The trial became so out of control that Zimbardo was forced to terminate the study after only six days. This non-fiction text reads like a novel keeping all interested while still informing readers about the inner working of people's minds.

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