

## 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 bookstores including:  
Essex Books – Centerbrook and R.J. Julia Booksellers – Madison  
BAM- Waterford and 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.

### 2013 Faculty and Student Committee

Daniella Alvarado  
Linnea Barbour  
Acacia Bowden  
Avery Carlson  
Eme Carlson  
Teresa Cobb  
Carolyn Crehan  
Erin Dayton

Alexandra Dilger  
Cindy Downie  
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Jessica Grote  
MaryJo Helchowski  
Caitlyn Kelly  
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Josef Lenz  
Claire Madden  
Cindy Maiolo  
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Coral Rawn  
Spencer Russo  
Jordan Adams Sack  
Tyler Saunders  
Kristie Schmidt  
Kyra Streck  
Abby Wolff  
Julie Zablocki

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.

***The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larsen has been chosen by Chester Public Library as their summer discussion book: August 15, 2013.**

**Valley Regional High School  
Chester—Deep River--Essex**

**“The books that help you most are those which make you think the most...a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty.” --Pablo Neruda**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We start with suggestions of over 75 books spontaneously generated by teachers and students. The committee attempts to select books encompassing multiple points of view, different cultures, and a myriad of experiences with a wide range of appeal. After many enthusiastic and engaging conversations, a well-rounded list emerges.

This booklet reviews the available books and explains in detail the summer reading process. Please know that summer reading is a graduation requirement and as such *must be passed all four years*. Encourage your student to get the required first book early in the summer and to choose a book that will keep him or her engaged or perhaps present a new idea or different perspective. Books are available for previewing in the library during the month of June and later in the main office for borrowing. 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.

We are pleased that the Chester Public Library will again be offering a book discussion for credit during the month of August for one of our required list summer reading books, *The Devil in the White City*.

**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.

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 2013

## 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 2013-2014 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 *The Hobbit* 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 *The Hobbit* using the 2012 Peter Jackson film-**

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 Tolkien. 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.

**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 movie should follow your script 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  
during the first week of school.**

**Alternate Presentation Option:**

**What do extraordinary architecture, the Gettysburg Address, giant cheese wheels and serial killers have in common? The 1893 World's Fair, of course! We'll discuss *"The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America"* by Erik Larson at the Chester Public Library on Thursday, August 15, 2013, 5:00-6:30(ish); pizza provided (without giant cheese wheels, sorry.) This discussion *will* count towards your summer reading requirement.**

### 2013 VRHS Summer Reading Selections

Author	Title	Genre	Level
Alexander, Tasha	Tears of Pearl	Fiction	1
Boo, Katharine	Beyond the Beautiful Forevers	NF	1
Cain, Susan	Quiet: The Power of Introverts	NF	1
Carlson, Melody	Finding Alice	Fiction	1
Cohn, Rachael	Beta	Fiction	1,2
Deuker, Carl	Payback Time	Fiction	2,3
Fana, Elizabeth	Monstrous Beauty	Fiction	all
Fuller, Alexandra	Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier	NF	1
Giblin, James	When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS	NF	2,3
Green, John	Looking for Alaska	Fiction	1,2
Harvell, Richard	The Bells	Fiction	1,2
Helfer, Ralph	Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant Who Ever Lived	NF	all
Hughes, Dean	Soldier Boys	Fiction	3
Jackson, Jeremy	Life at These Speeds	Fiction	1,2
**Larsen, Erik (also Chester Lib disc.)	The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness	NF	1
Levithan, David	Every Day	Fiction	all
McDonald, Joyce	Swallowing Stones	Fiction	2,3
McGonigal, Jane	Reality's Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World	NF	1,2
McHale, DJ	Pendragon: Merchant of Death	Fiction	3
McNeil, Gretchen	Ten	Fiction	2,3
Murphy, Louise	The True Story of Hansel and Gretel	Fiction	1,2
Owen, Mark	No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission that Killed Osama Bin Laden	NF	all
Pink, Daniel	Drive	NF	1
Roach, Mary	Packing for Mars	NF	all
Selk, Jason	10 Minute Toughness	NF	all
Steifwater, Maggie	The Raven Boys: The Raven Cycle Book 1	Fiction	1,2
*Tolkien, J.R.R. (book/movie comp)	The Hobbit	Fiction	1,2
Tompkins, Michael	My Anxious Mind: Managing Anxiety	NF	all
Walls, Jeanette	The Glass Castle	NF	1,2
Zusak, Mark	The Book Thief	Fiction	all

## 2013 VRHS Faculty and Student Reviews

**Alexander, Tasha. *Tears of Pearl*.** At long last, Lady Emily is marrying the love of her life, Colin Hargreaves. They are both diplomats of the British Empire and love to solve murder cases. To avoid Emily's mother's excessive wedding plans, they secretly set off to a cozy honeymoon in the Ottoman Empire, Turkey. There they make a new acquaintance, Sir Richard St. Clare, who works at the embassy in Constantinople. Discovering a corpse left in the courtyard of the sultan's gorgeous Yildiz Palace, the newlyweds dive into this mystery, figuring out much more than expected. Will Emily and Colin bring the murderer to justice, or will they fall victim along with the others? If you adore this book, then the book *A Fatal Waltz* by Tasha Alexander will have you hooked before you pass the first chapter.

**Boo, Katharine. *Beyond the Beautiful Forever*.** Katherine Boo's National Book Award winning portrayal of the daily life and survival of a group of residents in the impoverished Annawadi settlement of Mumbai, India. Living near the end of the city's international airport runway in make-shift housing, Annawadi residents such as teenagers Abdul and Kalu—collectors of recyclable garbage and scrap metal from the surrounding wealthier neighborhoods—share their struggles, mishaps, and triumphs. Through the skilled research and storytelling conducted by Boo over a three year period, her depiction of the “have nots” in Mumbai through a lens of humanity, compassion, and hard reality, highlights the many tumultuous changes occurring in modern-day India on a political, religious, and economic scale.

**Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*.** At least one-third of the people we know are introverts. They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking, who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion, who favor working on their own over working in teams. It is to introverts—Rosa Parks, Chopin, Dr. Seuss, Steve Wozniak-- that we owe many of the great contributions to society. Susan Cain argues that we dramatically undervalue introverts and shows how much we lose in doing so. She charts the rise of the Extrovert Ideal throughout the twentieth century and explores how deeply it has come to permeate our culture. She also introduces us to successful introverts—from a witty, high-octane public speaker who recharges in solitude after his talks, to a record-breaking salesman who quietly taps into the power of questions. Passionately argued, superbly researched, and filled with indelible stories of real people, *Quiet* has the power to permanently change how we see introverts and, equally important, how they see themselves. (Amazon.com)

**Carlson, Melody. *Finding Alice*.** Sliding into the Rabbit Hole... Would She Ever Return? On the surface, Alice Laxton seems no different from any other college girl: bright, inquisitive, excited about the life ahead of her. But for years, a genetic time bomb has been ticking away. Because of Alice's near-genius intelligence, teachers and counselors have always made excuses for her “little idiosyncrasies.” But during a stress-filled senior year at college, a new world of voices, visions, and unexplainable “knowledge” causes Alice to begin to lose her grip on reality. As Alice's schizophrenia progresses, she experiences a disturbing religious “awakening,” believing that God and angels and demons are speaking to her. When others attempt to intervene, Alice is subjected to a wide range of “treatments” even more frightening and painful than her illness. Powerfully raw and brutally honest, *Finding Alice* is a story of individual suffering and hope, a family's shared ordeal, and a search for true mental and spiritual healing. (Amazon.com)

**Cohn, Rachael. *Beta*.** *Beta* keeps readers turning pages with the suspense. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, it's "a terrific premise that is equally well executed... Readers can only hope [the sequel] will be as thrilling as this series kickoff." Melissa De La Cruz, *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Blue Bloods* series describes it as “a seductive, frightening, and riveting novel.” When Elysia, a sixteen-year-old girl first awakens, she has no memory of what happened. The reason? She's a clone, a simple image of her former self, or “First's” life. Created to serve the humans on the island of Demesne, she is pampered and treated like one of them. However, when she meets more of her kind, she begins to feel like one of them, and the sensation is clouding her mind. While “Perfection is her gift. Passion may be her undoing.”

**Deuker, Carl. *Payback Time*.** If you're a person who loves a mystery centered around a fast paced sport, this is definitely the book for you. When Mitch, a high school journalist, is assigned to write the sports section for his school's newspaper, he is thrown into a world he cares nothing about. But when a mysterious football player named Angel shows up at Lincoln High, Mitch becomes intrigued by his seemingly nonexistent past. The more he investigates Angel's past, the more he begins to wonder who Angel truly is and what he's done.

**Fana, Elizabeth. *Monstrous Beauty*.** Fierce, seductive mermaid Syrenka falls in love with Ezra, a young naturalist. When she abandons her life underwater for a chance at happiness on land, she is unaware that this decision comes with horrific and deadly consequences. Almost one hundred forty years later, seventeen-year-old Hester meets a mysterious stranger named Ezra and feels overwhelmingly, inexplicably drawn to him. For generations, love has resulted in death for the women in her family. Is it an undiagnosed genetic defect . . . or a curse? With Ezra's help, Hester investigates her family's strange, sad history. The answers she seeks are waiting in the graveyard, the crypt, and at the bottom of the ocean - but powerful forces will do anything to keep her from uncovering her connection to Syrenka and to the tragedy of so long ago. (Amazon.com)

**Fuller, Alexandra. *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*.** Many people picture war as a battle of good and evil, fought with machine guns, fighter planes, and grenades. What happens after peace is declared and independence is won often goes unnoticed. Against a dusty, battle scarred background of Africa, Alexandra Fuller attempts to come to terms with her past growing up during the Rhodesian War. Most people she meets are unwilling to talk about the brutality of the war, but Fuller is drawn to a man who lived through the war, an enigmatic and unpredictable white Rhodesian War veteran she calls "K", a man who was on the losing side and is still feeling that loss. The two form an uneasy but close friendship as they drive across Zambia through Zimbabwe and into Mozambique, both facing their troubled pasts head-on in heart-pounding flashbacks to K's war and Fuller's messy childhood. *Scribbling the Cat* is wrought with emotion, as the stories of soldiers and civilians wracked with PTSD and nightmares of the war unfold. Readers see through the eyes of people not only living through a savage and confusing war, but who are also still fighting through their daily lives. This book is not only for people who enjoy adventure, but also humor, historical facts, and incredibly honest writing. *Scribbling the Cat* was the winner of the 2005 Ulysses Award for Art of Reportage. Kirkus Reviews calls it "A worried, restless, and haunted piece of work, tattooed and scarred from beginning to end".

**Giblin, James. *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS*.** Rats, blisters, blood. Discussing the bubonic plague that killed about half the population of 14th-century Europe and smallpox epidemics that ravaged, among other sites, ancient China and the Americas during the Age of Exploration, Giblin sets the stage for the final section devoted to AIDS. While the Black Death, smallpox, and AIDS may seem to have little in common, Giblin draws parallels between them that are both striking and fascinating.

**Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*.** Everyone's had a crush before, right? That secret little swell in your heart that might last a few weeks? But have you ever fallen in love with a beautiful, psychotic, bipolar wonder woman? Well, Pudge has, and he's in over his head. Miles Halter, a lanky junior known as Pudge (courtesy of the Colonel) likes to memorize last words, and knows there is something bigger to life. He wants to find his Great Perhaps, and he does once he reaches Culver Creek Preparatory School. Its name is Alaska Young. Alaska is a sexy, clever, completely dangerous rebel who instantly steals Pudge's heart. Along with the Colonel, Tamuki, and Alaska, Pudge finds out what it's like to live on the outside, and what it's like to be a rebel as he learns of religion, pranks, and heartbreak. Fans of *The Fault in Our Stars* (soon to be a major film) and *An Abundance of Katharines* will love this book by [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) vlogger John Greene. Follow him on Twitter.

**Harvell, Richard. *The Bells*.** Ever just stop and listen to everything around you? Harvell brings music to your ears, not with sound, but with the words in his book, *The Bells*. *The Bells* is a story of a young boy raised by a deaf-mute bell ringing mother. Separated from his home and bells, Moses, with the most attuned hearing a person could have, and new-found friends join a monastery's Boy's Choir. Of course nothing for Moses is ever easy. Follow him through years of being the star soprano-1 of the choir while being bullied by the other boys, being loved by the director, and being put in danger because of his great voice. Will Moses stay with the monastery that turns on him? Will he fall in love, and run to help a friend? How far will his amazing voice bring him over the

edge between man and musico? You will only know if you read *The Bells*. Harvell brings music literally to the ears through description, and readers feel the rise and fall of the crescendos and decrescendos of the story of a man reflecting on his life. Whatever you do, don't forget to breathe, and don't miss out.

**Helfer, Richard. *Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant Who Ever Lived*.** *Modoc* is the joint biography of a man and an elephant born in a small German circus town on the same day in 1896. Bram was the son of an elephant trainer, Modoc the daughter of his prize performer. The boy and animal grew up devoted to each other. When the Wunderzircus was sold to an American, with no provision to take along the human staff, Bram stowed away on the ship to prevent being separated from his beloved Modoc. A shipwreck off the Indian coast and a sojourn with a maharajah were only the beginning of the pair's incredible adventures. They battled bandits, armed revolutionaries, cruel animal trainers, and greedy circus owners in their quest to stay together. They triumphed against the odds and thrilled American circus audiences with Modoc's dazzling solo performances, only to be torn apart with brutal suddenness, seemingly never to meet again. The emotional retelling of this true-life adventure epic will make pulses race and bring tears to readers' eyes. (Amazon.com)

**Hughes, Dean. *Soldier Boys*.** A rough-and-tumble story of patriotism, optimism, sorrow, hope, and promise. The story follows two young boys, Dieter Hedrick, a 15-year-old member of the German army, and Spencer Morgan, a 16 year old fighting for the Americans. Both boys are sent into battle during World War II. Dieter, though young, is blindly patriotic, willing to do anything for his country to please Hitler and protect his people. Spencer, on the other hand, went to war for the thrill. He was not worried about dying. He drops out of high school to begin training as a paratrooper to show his parents and the girl he loves that he isn't a coward even though he wishes many times he had not enlisted. The story switches back and forth between Dieter and Spence, giving readers a unique look at both sides of the war. The story is accurate in describing the horrors of war, but is also spot on in the way it conveys feeling and the emotion of the soldiers on both sides, and how, even in death, the hope for freedom and love not only one's country, but also one's fellow man, lives on.

**Jackson, Jeremy. *Life at These Speeds*.** If tragedy struck, what would you do to cope with it? Kevin Schuler has a wonderful girlfriend and is known for being the fastest runner on his school's track team. After all, "When you're at the top, there is nothing above." However, in one night that changes. After a track meet Kevin rides home with his parents, but the van carrying his team crashes, and everyone on it is killed. After this tragedy, he emerges as an incredible runner. He breaks records in track and cross-country at his new school. Everything seems like it's going good for him again but on the inside, he's still coping with the loss of his friends. Follow Kevin as he tries to answer questions about himself. Will running help him heal? Is fame a too great distraction? Is the solitude of running another way to disconnect from the world? The author is a Henfield Prize winner and a former James A. Michener Fellow. Terry Kay, author of *Taking Lottie Home* and *To Dance with the White Dog* said, "Most rite-of-passage novels are offered as a stroll through youth. Jeremy Jackson's *Life at These Speeds* is a race-literally and metaphorically. The story of a gifted boy runner confronted by numbing consequences of reality, Jackson's debut novel is filled with rich prose that has the unique power of compelling the reader to stay the distance with wonder and celebration. The young Kevin Schuler is a character to be remembered."

**Larsen, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*.** What do extraordinary architecture, the Gettysburg Address, giant cheese wheels and serial killers have in common? The 1893 World's Fair, of course! The unbelievably true story of two opposite yet coexisting worlds in Chicago in 1893. The first is of the architects building the fair itself and all of their trials and tribulations from the first ferris wheel ever invented to huge storms threatening the mere existence of the fair, to the ground being unable to hold the flowers, let alone each exhibit's gigantic buildings. The second and equally as mesmerizing account was that of a serial murderer. The man built a grand hotel, specifically for the young women traveling far from home to experience such a wonder as the world fair, to exploit and manipulate each and every one of them. This critically-acclaimed book is great for any reader that loves historical fiction. Larson writes in such a way that makes the book seem novelistic and keeps you on the edge of your seat. Once hooked, you will not put the book down. Praise for *The Devil in the White City*: "A dynamic, enveloping book. . . . Relentlessly fuses history and entertainment to give this nonfiction book the dramatic effect of a novel. . . . It doesn't hurt that this truth is stranger than fiction." (New York Times) "So good, you find yourself asking how you could not know this already." (Esquire) "In a style that is suspenseful as well as entertaining, Larson shows us how both our highest

aspirations and our most loathsome urges figured in the creation of the modern world.” (People)

**Levithan, David. *Every Day*.** This is a love story between A and Rhiannon. However, this is not a typical love story. While Rhiannon is a normal teenager, A is not. Every day A awakes in a different body and every day he lives a different life. A has no warning about where his new life will be or whose it will be. Though faced with this abnormal lifestyle, A has made peace with his situation and through trial-and-error established guidelines by which to live: to never get attached, to avoid being noticed, and not to interfere. However, the three simple rules are harder to follow once he meets Rhiannon through the body of Justin, Rhiannon’s boyfriend. From that moment on, those rules by which A had been living no longer apply. When A eventually makes his move to explain his existence, does Rhiannon believe A? Does A have the chance to finally be with the one person that he’d tell the truth to? Are we still the same person if our body changes?

**McDonald, Joyce. *Swallowing Stones*.** The lives of four teenagers are drastically changed by a freak Fourth of July accident. From then on, Michael finds it impossible even to remember what it felt like to be free and joyful. When he fires his new rifle into the air on his seventeenth birthday, he never imagines that the bullet will end up killing someone. But a mile away, a man *is* killed by that bullet as he innocently repairs his roof. And Michael keeps desperately silent while he watches his world crumble. Meanwhile Jenna, the dead man's daughter, copes with desperation of her own. Through her grief, she tries to understand why she no longer feels comfortable with her boyfriend and why a near stranger named Michael keeps appearing in her dreams. In alternating chapters, Michael and Jenna creep inexorably toward their inevitable confrontation. Suspenseful and powerfully moving, this is the unforgettable story of an accidental crime and its haunting web of repercussions. Reminiscent of Michael Cadnum's work in the violent underpinnings of the plot and intensity of the characters' emotional lives, *Swallowing Stones* may also remind readers of Eve Bunting's *Such Nice Kids* (Houghton, 1990) and Robert Cormier's *We All Fall Down* (Delacorte, 1991).

**McGonigal, Jane. *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*.** With 174 million gamers in the United States alone, we now live in a world where every generation will be a gamer generation. But why should games be used for escapist entertainment alone? In this groundbreaking book, McGonigal shows how we can leverage the power of games to fix what is wrong with the real world—from social problems like depression and obesity to global issues like poverty and climate change—and introduces us to cutting-edge games that are already changing the business, education, and nonprofit worlds. Written for gamers and non-gamers alike, *Reality Is Broken* shows that the future will belong to those who can understand, design, and play games. (Amazon.com)

**McHale, DJ. *Pendragon: Merchant of Death*.** Bobby Pendragon is an average 14 year old boy concerned about school, sports, and girls. Everything seems to be falling into place. He's on his way to the state basketball finals, and the girl he likes just admitted her feelings toward him. But then, everything begins to crumble when his eccentric Uncle Press shows up. He tells Bobby that he must come with him, and takes him on his motorcycle to an abandoned subway station. Here, they are whisked away to the world of Denduron. Bobby discovers he was never destined to live a normal life, and that he is a traveler; a individual who must travel between different worlds to maintain peace. Join Bobby as he meets the other Travelers of various worlds, and tries to thwart the efforts of the villainous Saint Dane. The Pendragon Series is full of action, romance, and excitement, as Bobby follows his destiny. This ten book series is sure to keep anyone entertained and wanting more as all of the characters change drastically throughout the series, and there are sad moments as well as moments of victory, but there isn't a dull moments to be found.

**McNeil, Gretchen. *Ten*.** From *Possess* author Gretchen McNeil comes this teen horror novel inspired by Agatha Christie’s *And Then There Were None*. Perfect for fans of Christopher Pike’s *Chain Letter* and Lois Duncan’s *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Ten* will keep readers on the edge of their seats until the very last page! It was supposed to be the weekend of their lives—an exclusive house party on Henry Island. Best friends Meg and Minnie are looking forward to two days of boys and fun-filled luxury. But what starts out as fun turns twisted after the discovery of a DVD with a sinister message: *Vengeance is mine*. And things only get worse from there. With a storm raging outside, the teens are cut off from the outside world . . . so when a mysterious killer begins picking them off one by one, there’s no escape. As the deaths become more violent and the teens turn on one another, can Meg find the killer before more people die? Or is the killer closer to her than she could ever

imagine? (Amazon.com)

**Murphy, Louise. *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*.** A typical motorcycle ride can be exhilarating, wind snatching at your hair, face muscles tense being pulled back, the hazardous swerves to evade obstacles in the road. But for Hansel and Gretel, this ride is not for fun; they're on the run from Nazis who are closing in. The man driving the motorcycle looks back at his kids one last time and tells them to get ready. Abruptly, he skids off the road, gives the kids instructions to run into the forest and find a farm while their stepmother yells new Polish names for them. Magda, a stubborn old woman called 'witch' by the townspeople, takes them in, determined to save these children, even if it means hiding them from a German officer. Run for your lives or be killed, or worse. If you adore this book, a good book to read next is *The Classic Fairy Tales (Norton Critical Edition)* edited by Maria Tatar. It takes *Little Red Riding Hood, Beauty and the Beast, Snow White, Cinderella, Bluebeard, and Hansel and Gretel* and presents multicultural variants and sophisticated literary descriptions.

**Owen, Mark. *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission That Killed Osama Bin Laden*.** The world may forget the date, but they will never forget the target: Osama bin Laden. If the secret operations of America's most elite military force interests you, then *No Easy Day* should be first on your reading list. Going under the pen name of Mark Owen, a U.S. Navy SEAL gives the reader his first hand experience from his first days at basic training to his battle through Hell Week at the training center for Green Team, and finally to the mission that changed the face of the war. This work won no literary awards but shortly dominated the *New York Times* best seller list with over one million copies sold in the first week of its print run. *No Easy Day* made its mark sparking heated controversy entailing specific details from the classified operation. If you truly enjoy the heart pounding thrill in military action books, then you will absolutely eat up the uncensored American history in *No Easy Day*.

**Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*.** *Drive* is based off of four decades of scientific research aimed at figuring out just what motivates us to learn, to work, to love, to succeed. One of the biggest challenges, Pink explains, is our contemporary emphasis on money and rewards. Rather than luring or bribing students and workers into completing their tasks, it is more important for all to find their own motivation. Contrary to popular belief, creativity and complex thinking cannot be encouraged by a large reward; in fact, they ultimately make performance worse. This book is packed with information aimed at helping and understanding the roots of motivation. It changes your whole idea about why we do the things we do. If you are a fan of science, economics or psychology, this may be the book for you.

**Roach, Mary. *Packing for Mars*.** Space is devoid of the things we need to live and thrive: air, gravity, hot showers, fresh produce, privacy. Space exploration is in some ways an exploration of what it means to be human. How much can a person give up? How much weirdness can they take? What happens to you when you can't walk for a year? Smell flowers? What happens if you vomit in your helmet during a space walk? Is it possible for the human body to survive a bailout at 17,000 miles per hour? To answer these questions, space agencies set up all manner of quizzical and startlingly bizarre space simulations. As Mary Roach discovers, it's possible to preview space without ever leaving Earth. From the space shuttle training of toilet use to a crash test of NASA's new space capsule (cadaver filling in for astronaut), Roach takes us on a surreally entertaining trip into the science of life in space and space on Earth.

**Selk, Jason. *10 Minute Toughness.: The Mental Training Program for Winning Before the Game*.** Jason Selk takes readers through a three phase system for athletes who want to achieve a tough state of mind. Any athlete knows that the stress of competition and the desire to win can leave you nervous and unprepared. After reading this book you will be in a winning state of mind. The author describes how exercising your mind before a game, match, race, or practice is just as crucial as physical performance. This book includes goal setting activities which involve mental imagery, positive self-talk, and controlled breathing. "The mental side of the game is extremely important." "10-Minute Toughness" helps players develop the mental toughness needed for success; it really makes a difference."

**Steifwater, Maggie. *The Raven Boys*.** What would you do if you were told you would kill your true love? Maggie Stiefwater reveals a world where the supernatural brings unlike people together. Blue Sargent, the daughter of a psychic, lives with her mom and other psychics who not only see into the future, but can also

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see the soon-to-be dead. Blue especially hates the “Raven Boys” who go to Aglionby, the local private school but Blue’s life turns upside down when a raven boy comes to her mother looking for psychic help. Drawn to him, she becomes involved in a supernatural hunt taking them to places none of them were ready for. The journey is full of hesitant love, anger, determination, curiosity, and danger. As you turn the pages, you will find yourself crying at characters’ sorrows and smiling at their successes. The danger will feel all too real and you will not be able to put the book down. Those skeptical of the supernatural may start wondering if it may actually exist as they experience Stiefvater's mysterious world. If you enjoy literature by J.K. Rowling and Stephanie Meyers, Stiefvater's Raven Boys series is perfect for you.

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**\*Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*.** “I’m going on an adventure.” Bilbo Baggins, a mild mannered Hobbit, has spent his entire life at home enjoying the comforts of his hobbit-hole, entertaining guests, enjoying five meals a day and tending to his garden. He never expects a wizard to come knocking on his door asking Bilbo to be a burglar on an adventure. He joins 12 dwarves on a quest to retake their home. In this precursor to the *Lord of the Rings* series, Gandalf, the wizard leads this unlikely band across the land to retake the Lonely Mountain, a giant castle filled with gold and jewels - the catch it is guarded by a giant fire breathing dragon, Smaug. Follow Bilbo’s adventure as he fights goblins, trolls, wolves, dragons and even a certain Golem, a poor twisted creature fond of riddles, and in possession of a certain ring. \*Required book to movie project.

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**Walls, Jeanette. *The Glass Castle*.** Spending 261 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, this memoir touches the heart of many. From a young age, Jeanette and her siblings have to take care of themselves. Their dysfunctional parents consist of an alcoholic dad, and a mom who wants no responsibilities. The Walls’ family is poverty stricken. They choose to be so because it makes their lives an “adventure.” Every few months the Walls “skedaddle” when they leave their temporary home without paying any of their bills and search for a new free living space. As Jeanette grows older, she begins to realize that her life is not the free wheeling adventure her parents claim it to be. She declares her parents irresponsible and not even capable of taking care of themselves. Then Jeanette and her siblings take their teenage years into their own hands and toward a successful future. Walls entrances the reader with a story of surviving the worst and maintaining unconditional family love at the same time. This book won the Christopher Award, the American Library Association’s Alex Award, and the Books for a Better Living Award.

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**Zusak, Mark. *The Book Thief*.** For countless generations, humanity has tried to understand Death. But in *The Book Thief*, Death struggles to understand humanity. As the narrator, Death reveals that he has a heart, but he can’t find one in the millions of humans he’s laid to rest. Then, he encounters a girl named Leisel Meminger. She’s not unlike any other humans he’s met, but she intrigues him and he watches her long enough to tell her story. He starts at the funeral of Leisel’s brother, where she steals her first book, *The Grave Digger’s Handbook*. Leisel treasures the book because it’s all she has to remember her brother by. Soon after, Leisel arrives in the small town of Molching, Germany, to live with her foster parents Hans and Rosa Hubermann. Haunted by nightmares, Hans stays with her until she can fall asleep again and eventually teaches her to read. It is then Leisel discovers her love of words, leading her to steal books as a way of coping with grief. But the simple tale of a girl’s infatuation with books becomes more complex when WWII reaches its height and Leisel’s perception of good and evil becomes challenged almost everyday. This isn’t the kind of book you’ll want to read just to get it over with. This is a book that paint a world with words, that will draw you in and put you right into the hearts of the characters. It’s captivating and emotional, a story bound to make you laugh and cry. Don’t just take my word for it- the book has won a *Publisher’s Weekly* Best Book of the Year Award, a *Kirkus Reviews* Editor’s Choice Award, a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year Award, and more. With the exquisite language and the heart-warming story, this is one book you don’t want to miss out on.

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