

Jamesville-DeWitt High School  
Summer '09 Reading Suggestions – Students Entering 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Grades

**Biographies & Memoirs**

The Liars' Club by Mary Karr

The Syracuse University writing teacher tells about her early-1960s childhood in Texas with her older sister, an alcoholic mother and a storytelling father.

When I was Puerto Rican by Esmeralda Santiago

Memoirs of the author's childhood and youth in Puerto Rico and New York City.

Blind Side: Evolution of a Game by Michael Lewis

Details the life of University of Mississippi football player Michael Oher, who was raised by a crack addicted mother and adopted at the age of sixteen by a wealthy family, and explores the rising importance and salary of the offensive left tackle in the game of football.

Nicholas & Alexandra by Robert K. Massie

Told with scrupulous historical accuracy and stunning narrative power, Nicholas and Alexandra is a masterpiece of the biographer's art.

Mornings on Horseback by David McCullough

This is the story of a remarkable little boy, seriously handicapped by recurrent and almost fatal asthma attacks, and his struggle to manhood: an amazing metamorphosis seen in the context of the very uncommon household in which he was raised. His father was the first Theodore Roosevelt, a figure of unbounded energy, enormously attractive and selfless, a god in the eyes of his small, frail namesake. His mother, Mittie Bulloch Roosevelt, was a Southerner and a celebrated beauty but also considerably more, which the book makes clear as never before. There were sisters Anna and Corinne, brother Elliott (who becomes the father of Eleanor Roosevelt), and the lovely, tragic Alice Lee, TR's first love. And while Abraham Lincoln, Mrs. John Jacob Astor, and Senator Roscoe Conkling play a part, it is the diverse and deeply human Roosevelt family, all brought vividly to life, which give this book its remarkable power. (BOOK JACKET)

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert Pirsig

A narration of a summer motorcycle trip undertaken by a father and his son, this book becomes a personal and philosophical odyssey into fundamental questions on how to live. The narrator's relationship with his son leads to a powerful self-reckoning; the craft of motorcycle maintenance leads to an austere beautiful process for reconciling science, religion, and humanism. Resonant with the confusions of existence, this classic is a touching and transcendent book of life.

Prisoner of Tehran by Marina Nemat

The author describes the torture and pain she suffered as a political prisoner in Iran's notorious Evin prison during the early days of Ayatollah Khomeini's brutal Islamic revolution, her sentence of death for not releasing the names of her friends, and her forced relationship with one of her interrogators who eventually saves her life.

**Nonfiction**

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II by Robert Kurson

Two weekend scuba divers risk everything to solve a great historical mystery surrounding the wreckage of a World War II German U-boat off the coast of New Jersey, its ruined interior a macabre wasteland of twisted metal, tangled wires, and human bones.

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Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil by John Berendt

The enormously engaging account of life and death in secluded and hauntingly beautiful Savannah, Georgia, continues to take America by storm.

1776 by David McCullough

"David McCullough tells the story of those who marched with General George Washington in the year of the Declaration of Independence - when the whole American cause was riding on their success, without which all hope for independence would have been dashed and the noble ideals of the Declaration would have amounted to little more than words on paper." (BOOK JACKET)

Evolve Your Brain: The Science of Changing Your Mind by Joe Dispenza

It took one moment to change Joe Dispenza's life forever. A car sent him toppling off his bike, causing multiple fractures to his vertebrae. Several doctors said his only hope of walking again was to fuse some of the vertebrae in an operation that would leave him with a lifetime of pain and limited mobility. But as a chiropractor, Dispenza knew enough about spinal health and his own post-accident physical state to take a remarkable risk: he refused the operation and, along with a careful therapeutic program, literally thought his way to healing. Nine months later, he was able to walk and function as well as he had before the accident, and he credits a large amount of that recovery to the power of his own mind.

Dark Nights of the Soul: A Guide to Finding Your Way Through Life's Ordeals by Thomas Moore

There's an old saying that a devil is appealing at first but leaves you in despair, while an angel appears terrifying at first but leaves you refreshed and hopeful. This eighth book since Moore's extraordinarily successful Care of the Soul considers loss, pain, conflict, confusion, anger, excess, deviance and other disturbing feelings and behaviors not as devils to be exorcised but as angelic opportunities for deepening and altering the self.

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Eats, Shoots & Leaves by Lynne Truss

You're smart enough to know your grasp of grammar and punctuation are weak, but don't know where to start fixing things. Well, begin with this quick read, which manages to make (re)learning the basics fun. No, REALLY!

Savage Inequalities by Jonathan Kozol

Examination of schools across the country whose children are from poor families in the inner city and the less affluent suburbs.

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

Economics is, at root, the study of incentives - how people get what they want, or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing. In Freakonomics, they set out to explore the hidden side of...well, everything. The inner workings of a crack gang. The truth about real-estate agents. The myths of campaign finance. The telltale marks of a cheating schoolteacher. The secrets of the Ku Klux Klan.

<b>Fiction</b>
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Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer

American college student Jonathan Safran Foer sets out, along with Ukrainian travel agent Alex Perchov, Alex's depressive grandfather, and the family dog, in an attempt to find the village where a Ukrainian woman might or might not have saved Jonathan's grandfather from the Nazis during World War II.

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The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

“...a novel about friendship, betrayal, and the price of loyalty. It is about the bonds between fathers and sons, and the power of fathers over sons - their love, their sacrifices, and their lies. Written against a backdrop of history that has not been told in fiction before. The Kite Runner describes the rich culture and beauty of a land in the process of being destroyed. But with the devastation, Khaled Hosseini also gives us hope: through the novel's faith in the power of reading and storytelling, and in the possibilities he shows for redemption.” (BOOK JACKET)

Atonement by Ian McEwan

Imaginative thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis, misinterpreting a scene between her older sister Cecilia and Robbie Turner, the housekeeper's son, later accuses Robbie of a crime she has no proof he committed and spends years trying to atone for her actions.

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

In the 1960s, a spiritual man named Jeremiah Land sets out from his Minnesota home with his young son and daughter to find his elder son, Davy, after he escapes jail on the morning of his sentencing for murder.

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving

In the summer of 1953, two 11-year-old boys--best friends--are playing in a Little League baseball game in New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills his best friend's mother. Owen Meany believes he didn't hit the ball by accident. He believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen after 1953 is extraordinary and terrifying. He is Irving's most heartbreaking hero. Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

The Historian by Elizabeth Kostova

A young woman discovers an ancient book and a cache of old letters in her father's library, and thus begins her adventurous quest for the truth about Vlad the Impaler, a search that will span continents and generations, and a confrontation with the darkest powers of evil.

Sophie's Choice by William Styron

In this ambitious bestseller (made into a major motion picture starring Meryl Streep), Styron tells of a young Southerner who wants to become a writer; of the turbulent love-hate affair between a brilliant Jew and a beautiful Polish woman; and of an awful wound in the woman's past, one that impels Sophie toward destruction. Copyright Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

T is for Trespass by Sue Grafton

"In what may be her most unsettling novel to date, Sue Grafton's T is for Trespass is also her most direct confrontation with the forces of evil. Beginning slowly with the day-to-day life of a private eye, Grafton suddenly shifts from the voice of Kinsey Millhone to that of Solana Rojas, introducing readers to a chilling sociopath. Rojas is not her birth name. It is an identity she cunningly stole, an identity that gives her access to private caregiving jobs. The true horror of the novel builds with excruciating tension as the reader foresees the awfulness that lies ahead. The suspense lies in whether Millhone will realize what is happening in time to intervene."--BOOK JACKET.

Plum Lucky by Janet Evonovich

"Stephanie Plum has a way of attracting danger, lunatics, oddballs, bad luck... and mystery men. And no one is more mysterious than the unmentionable Diesel. He's back and hot on the trail of a little man in green pants who's lost a giant bag of money. Problem is, the money isn't exactly lost. Stephanie's Grandma Mazur has found it, and like any good Jersey senior citizen, she's hightailed it in a Winnebago to Atlantic City and hit the slots. With Lula and Connie in tow, Stephanie attempts to bring Grandma home, but the luck of the Irish is rubbing off on everyone: Lula's found a job modeling plus-size lingerie. Connie's found a guy. Diesel's found Stephanie. And Stephanie has found herself in over her head with a

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caper involving thrice-stolen money, a racehorse, a car chase, and a bad case of hives." (BOOK JACKET)

### The Alienist by Caleb Carr

The year is 1896, the place, New York City. On a cold March night New York Times reporter John Schuyler Moore is summoned to the East River by his friend and former Harvard classmate Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, a psychologist, or "alienist." On the unfinished Williamsburg Bridge, they view the horribly mutilated body of an adolescent boy, a prostitute from one of Manhattan's infamous brothels. The newly appointed police commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt, in a highly unorthodox move, enlists the two men in the murder investigation, counting on the reserved Kreizler's intellect and Moore's knowledge of New York's vast criminal underworld. They are joined by Sara Howard, a brave and determined woman who works as a secretary in the police department. Laboring in secret (for alienists, and the emerging discipline of psychology, are viewed by the public with skepticism at best), the unlikely team embarks on what is a revolutionary effort in criminology-- amassing a psychological profile of the man they're looking for based on the details of his crimes. Their dangerous quest takes them into the tortured past and twisted mind of a murderer who has killed before and will kill again before the hunt is over. Fast-paced and gripping, infused with a historian's exactitude, The Alienist conjures up the Gilded Age and its untarnished underside: verminous tenements and opulent mansions, corrupt cops and flamboyant gangsters, shining opera houses and seamy gin mills. Here is a New York during an age when questioning society's belief that all killers are born, not made, could have unexpected and mortal consequences.

### Eventide by Cindy McCormick Martinusen

Carrie left behind--but never got over--the summer of 1989. Now that she's dying young and still haunted by the secret of that summer, her friend Lauren is determined to soothe Carrie's scars. In the unraveling of lives and exposure of old secrets, a quiet miracle comes in the gathering grace.

### Plainsong by Kent Haruf

In the small town of Holt, Colorado, a high school teacher is confronted with raising his two boys alone after their mother retreats first to the bedroom, then altogether.

### Mystik Lake by Martha Brooks

Written in spare, elegant prose and told from multiple points of view, this novel explores the lives of three generations of women in one family, revealing what happens when each woman cannot find the courage to follow her heart--and what can happen when she does.

### Einstein's Dream by Alan Lightman

In this provocative national bestseller, first-time novelist Lightman takes us back to 1905 and into the dreams of a young patent clerk named Albert Einstein, just as he was completing his theory of relativity. "Lightman lets the reader in on the workings of a creative scientific mind". -Kirkus Reviews.

### Messenger of Truth by Janet Winspeare

London, 1931. The night before an exhibition of his artwork opens at a Mayfair gallery, controversial artist Nick Bassington-Hope falls to his death. The police rule it an accident, but Nick's twin sister, Georgina isn't convinced, so she seeks out a fellow college graduate, Maisie Dobbs, psychologist and investigator, for help. Before long the case leads Maisie to the beaches of Dungeness, and into the sinister underbelly of the city's art world where she uncovers the perilous legacy of the Great War in a society struggling to recollect itself.

### Some Danger Involved by Well Thomas

An atmospheric debut novel set on the gritty streets of Victorian London, Some Danger Involved introduces detective Cyrus Barker and his apprentice, Thomas Llewelyn, as they work to solve the gruesome murder of a young scholar. When a student bearing a striking resemblance to artists' renderings of Jesus Christ is found murdered -- by crucifixion -- in London's Jewish ghetto, 19th-century private

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detective Barker must hire an assistant to help him solve the sinister case. Out of all who answer an ad for a position with "some danger involved," the eccentric and enigmatic Barker chooses downtrodden Llewelyn, a gutsy young man whose murky past includes recent stints at both an Oxford college and an Oxford prison. As Llewelyn learns the ropes of his position, he is drawn deeper and deeper into Barker's peculiar world of vigilante detective work, as well as the dark heart of London's teeming underworld. Together they pass through chophouses, stables, and clandestine tea rooms, tangling with the early Italian mafia, a mad professor of eugenics, and other shadowy figures, inching ever closer to the shocking truth behind the murder. Brimming with wit and unforgettable characters, and steeped in authentic period detail, Some Danger Involved is a captivating page-turner that introduces an equally captivating duo while signaling the start of an exciting career for Will Thomas.

#### Shutter Island by Dennis Lehane

In 1954, a storm threatens to strand U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels on Shutter Island, home to a federal institution for the criminally insane.

#### A Drink Before the War by Dennis Lehane

As richly complex and brutal as the terrain it depicts, here is the mesmerizing, darkly original novel that heralded the arrival of Dennis Lehane, the master of the new noir -- and introduced Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro, his smart and tough private investigators weaned on the blue-collar streets of Dorchester. A cabal of powerful Boston politicians is willing to pay Kenzie and Gennaro big money for a seemingly small job: to find the missing cleaning woman who stole some secret documents. As Kenzie and Gennaro learn, however, this crime is no ordinary theft. It's about justice. About right and wrong. But in Boston, finding the truth isn't just a dirty business ... it's deadly.

#### Gone Baby Gone by Dennis Lehane

Boston private investigators Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro delve into the disappearance of a four-year-old girl who was abducted while her mother was out drinking in a search that takes them into Boston's underworld of drug dealers, kidnappers, and pedophiles.

#### Daddy's Little Girl by Mary Higgins Clark

Ellie Cavanaugh was seven years old when her older sister was murdered. Twenty years later she attempts to prove, again, the man convicted of the crime really did it.

#### The Apprentice Lover by Jay Parini

When Alex Massolini's brother is killed in Vietnam, he drops out of school and leaves his family behind to become secretary to world famous writer Rupert Grant. Told with wry humor in an elegant prose style, The Apprentice Lover is a remarkable piece of fiction that includes appearances by such colorful literary figures as Graham Greene and W. H. Auden. Copyright; Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

#### What Girls Learn by Karin Cook

A sensitive and emotional debut novel about girls and their mothers, sibling rivalry and kinship, and the mysterious tug between love and antagonism that lies at the heart of every family.

#### Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

A story of a futuristic World State where all emotion, love, art, and human individuality have been replaced by social stability. An ominous warning to the world's population, this literary classic is a must-read.

#### Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

In the 1960s, a spiritual man named Jeremiah Land sets out from his Minnesota home with his young son and daughter to find his elder son, Davy, after he escapes jail on the morning of his sentencing for murder.

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The Space Between Us by Thrity Umrigar

Poignant, evocative, and unforgettable, *The Space Between Us* is an intimate portrait of a distant yet familiar world. Set in modern-day India, it is the story of two compelling and achingly real women: Sera Dubash, an upper-middle-class Parsi housewife whose opulent surroundings hide the shame and disappointment of her abusive marriage, and Bhima, a stoic illiterate hardened by a life of despair and loss, who has worked in the Dubash household for more than twenty years. A powerful and perceptive literary masterwork, author Thrity Umrigar's extraordinary novel demonstrates how the lives of the rich and poor are intrinsically connected yet vastly removed from each other, and how the strong bonds of womanhood are eternally opposed by the divisions of class and culture.

<b>Classics</b>
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A Passage to India by E.M. Forster

Among the greatest novels of the twentieth century and the basis for director David Lean's Academy Award-winning film, *A Passage to India* tells of the clash of cultures in British India after the turn of the century. In exquisite prose, Forster reveals the menace that lurks just beneath the surface of ordinary life, as a common misunderstanding erupts into a devastating affair.

All the Kings' Men by Robert Penn Warren

Set in the 1930s, this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel traces the rise and fall of Willie Stark, who resembles the real life Huey "Kingfish" Long of Louisiana.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

By turns romantic and harshly realistic, Hemingway's story of a tragic romance set against the brutality and confusion of World War I cemented his fame as a stylist and as a writer of extraordinary literary power. A volunteer ambulance driver and a beautiful English nurse fall in love when he is wounded on the Italian front. Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

In Dubious Battle by John Steinbeck

Jim Nolan, a new member of the Communist Party, struggles to keep a cool head when he leads nine hundred migratory workers in a strike against landowners in California's apple country.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

When a penniless governess falls in love with the brooding master of Thornfield, she is unaware of the tragic events that will follow.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

The orphan, Pip, and the convict, Magwitch, the beautiful Estella, and her guardian, the embittered and vengeful Miss Havisham, the ambitious lawyer, Mr. Jaggers -- all have a part to play in the mystery.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

A poignant and moving tale filled with compassion and cruelty, laughter and heartache, crowded with life and people and incident. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan and her bittersweet formative years in the slums of Williamsburg has enchanted and inspired millions of readers for more than sixty years. By turns overwhelming, sublime, heartbreaking, and uplifting, the daily experiences of the unforgettable Nolans are raw with honesty and tenderly threaded with family connectedness -- in a work of literary art that brilliantly captures a unique time and place as well as incredibly rich moments of universal experience.

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**Foreign Language - French**

Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The narrator, a pilot downed in the Sahara Desert who is trying frantically to repair his plane. His efforts are interrupted by the appearance of a little blonde boy, “the Prince,” who describes the adventures of his journey from planet to planet, each one a tiny world inhabited by a single adult. The author uses satire to poke fun at universal character types who represent some futile aspect of adult existence. Available in French and in English.

Le Petit Nicolas by Jean-Jacques Sempé (Auteur), René Goscinny (Traduction)

The crazy adventures of little Nicolas and his companions never fail to surprise and entertain adults and children equally, even though his parents and his governess need lots of patience to live with such a mischievous little boy. The writing mimics everyday speech as Nicolas recounts his tales with naïveté and candor. Available in French and in English.

Le Secret de Dillon by Kate Banks

Nature lover Dillon is a bit of a dreamer. He and his family spend the summer at their big home on a lake, where he explores an island that quickly becomes his world and his refuge. But this summer will be like no other: Dillon will make a discovery that will shake his whole world and make an unforgettable vacation.

La Gloire de Mon Père (My Father’s Glory) by Marcel Pagnol

Highly autobiographical, Marcel as a young boy learns new respect, understanding and pride of his father when his family spends vacation in Provence.

Le Chateau de Ma Mère (My Mother’s Castle) by Marcel Pagnol

In the sequel to *La Gloire de Mon Père*, Marcel returns to the hills where he and his family now spend every weekend. It is a reflection of his childhood friendships and first love.

**Poetry**

Electric Light by Seamus Heaney

The Irish poet's 11th collection travels widely in time and space, visiting the sites of the classical world and revisiting the poet's childhood: rural electrification and the light of ancient evenings are reconciled within the orbit of a single lifetime. Copyright Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

The Collected Poems by Sylvia Plath

A Book of Luminous Things: An International Anthology of Poetry with introduction by Czeslaw Milosz

Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz selects and introduces 300 of his favorite poems in this magnificent collection that ranges widely across time and continents, from eighth century China to contemporary Americana (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry by Edward Hirsch

“Read a poem to yourself in the middle of the night. Turn on a single lamp and read it while you're alone in an otherwise dark room or while someone sleeps next to you. Say it over to yourself in a place where silence reigns and the din of culture—the constant buzzing noise that surrounds you—has momentarily stopped. This poem has come from a great distance to find you.” So begins this astonishing book by one of our leading poets and critics. In an unprecedented exploration of the genre, Hirsch writes about what

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poetry is, why it matters, and how we can open up our imaginations so that its message-which is of vital importance in day-to-day life-can reach us and make a difference.

**Graphic Novel**

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Contains black-and-white comic strip images in which the author shares the story of her life in Tehran, Iran, where she lived from ages six to fourteen while the country came under control of the Islamic regime.

Persepolis II by Marjane Satrapi

Contains black-and-white comic strip images in which the author continues the story of her life, discussing her move from Iran to Vienna in 1984, her feelings of alienation in the foreign country, and her return home where she starts college, falls in love, and questions whether she can continue to live in the repressive society.

Maus: A Survivor's Tale & Maus II: Here My Troubles Began by Art Spiegelman

A memoir about Vladek Spiegleman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and about his son, a cartoonist who tries to come to terms with his father, his story, and with history itself. Cartoon format portrays Jews as mice and Nazis as cats.

**Suggested Authors:**

- Michael Crichton
- Tim O'Brien
- Margaret Atwood
- Robin Cook
- Kurt Vonnegut
- Toni Morrison
- Dennis Lehane