

## UPPER SCHOOL SUMMER READING LIST (2019/20)

Upper School students must read **three** books from the summer reading list assigned for their particular (incoming) grade. Two of these books are mandatory reading, indicated by an asterisk; the third may be chosen from the list. Students may not substitute books on the reading list with those of their own choosing.

English classes will start the semester focusing on these works. Thus, it is essential all summer reading and assignments must be completed by the first day of school.

### Entering 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

*The Trip to Bountiful*—Horton Foote. This is the poignant story of Mrs. Watts, an aging widow living with her son and daughter-in-law in a three-room flat in Houston, Texas. Fearing that her presence may be an imposition on others, and chafing under the watchful eye of her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Watts imagines that if she can get away and return to her old home in the town of Bountiful, she is sure to regain her strength, dignity and peace of mind.

\**The Secret Life of Bees*—Sue Monk Kidd. A story of racism, loss, motherhood, childhood, love, and redemption.

*Caleb's Crossing*—Geraldine Brooks. A missionary's daughter forms a bond with a scholarly Indian in 17th Century New England. This tender story combines both early American history and coming of age themes.

*A Season on the Brink*—John Feinstein. Basketball coach Bobby Knight has been called a “Greek drama and comedy neatly wrapped in a red sweater.” Follow his drama through the ‘85–’86 championship run in Indiana.

*Unbroken*—Lauren Hillenbrand. The inspiring true story of a man who lived through a series of catastrophes almost too incredible to be believed, *Unbroken* tells the story of Louie Zamperini--a juvenile delinquent-turned-Olympic runner-turned-Army hero. During a routine search mission over the Pacific, Louie’s plane crashed into the ocean, and what happened to him over the next three years of his life is a story that will keep you glued to the pages, eagerly awaiting the next turn in the story and fearing it at the same time.

*Breath, Eyes, Memory*—Edwidge Danticat. Cultural conflicts between generations.

\**A Separate Peace*—John Knowles. Experiences of adolescents at a boarding school in the early years of WWII erode their innocence and change their world forever.

*The Eagle of the Ninth*—Rosemary Sutcliffe. The Ninth Legion marched into the mists of northern Britain—and they were never seen again. Four thousand men disappeared and their eagle standard was lost. It's a mystery that's never been solved, until now.... Marcus has to find

out what happened to his father, who led the Legion. He sets out into the unknown on a quest so dangerous that nobody expects him to return.

### **Entering 10<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**\**The White Tiger***—Aravind Adiga. A black comedy of the struggles and achievements of Balram Halwai, India's finest up-and-coming entrepreneur and emerging sociopath. Caught between the gleaming promise of global capitalism and the soul-sapping poverty of rural India, Balram Halwai finds the success he craves, but at a terrible cost.

**\**The Kite Runner***—Khaled Hosseini. Two boys from different backgrounds grow up together in Kabul. A powerful story about betrayal and redemption.

***The Namesake***—Jhumpa Lahiri. As the Gangulis make their way from Calcutta to New England, they experience the opposing pressures of cultural assimilation and familial obligations in this finely detailed novel.

***Beartown***—Fredrik Backman. A small Swedish town on the edge of the forest has dwindling resources but a collective dream of winning big in hockey. A small group of teenage boys carry the burden and hope of the town, only to have an act of violence tear at the very fabric of the community.

***Water for Elephants***—Sara Gruen. A page-turner set in a depression-era circus, where fantasy, danger, and romance come alive in alternating chapters of an old man looking back on his life's adventures and a young man living them. Enchanting characters and a compelling story make for a great read.

***Master Harold and the Boys***—Athol Fugard. This poignant drama explores the sometimes intimate, sometimes distant relationship between a boy and his servants during South Africa's Apartheid.

### **Entering 11<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**\**Americanah*** - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. When a young Nigerian woman moves to America, she is forced to examine not only who she is and who she loves, but also what it means to be black in America.

**\* *Goodbye, Columbus*** - Philip Roth. A novella and short stories about questions of Jewish identity in America.

***The Bell Jar***—Sylvia Plath. Set against the backdrop of the New York literary world, a promising young writer descends into madness.

***The Things They Carried***—Tim O'Brien. Foot soldiers in Vietnam struggle to maintain their own moral compasses in the trenches of a war whose purpose is unclear.

***The Grapes of Wrath***—John Steinbeck. A family struggles for survival as they move from farm to farm. Simple, evocative writing.

***A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories***—Flannery O’Connor. Thought-provoking, profound, and sometimes violent short stories.

***Tales of the Jazz Age and Other Stories***—F. Scott Fitzgerald. Short stories set in the roaring twenties. Beautiful prose, complex themes.

***Love Medicine***—Louise Erdrich. Cross-generational contemporary look at life on a Native American reservation, where exquisite moments of beauty rise out of squalor. A good read.

***Naked***—David Sedaris. This scaldingly funny collection of writings by one of America’s great contemporary essayists reminds us of how important humor and the comedic temperament is in our own lives and others.

## Entering 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Prospective AP English students** should read ***The Invisible Man*\*\***, ***Billy Budd*\*\***, and **one** other book of their choosing. **Prospective Shakespeare students** should read ***Macbeth*** and two other books of their choosing. All other students should read **three** books of their choosing from the list below.

**\*\**Invisible Man***—Ralph Ellison. One of the 100 Best Novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the text follows a young African-American “model citizen” from the rural South to NYC and invisibility.

**\*\**Billy Budd***—Herman Melville. A seafaring tale of a “golden-youth” trapped between an act of iniquity and the rigidity of the British naval code.

***Hamlet***—William Shakespeare. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is home from school to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet, who has died two months earlier. ... The ghost of his father beckons Hamlet to follow him and reveals that his brother Claudius poisoned him in the ear. Hamlet vows to avenge his father’s murder.

***All the Light We Cannot See***—Anthony Doerr. A beautifully crafted story of a blind French girl and German boy trying to survive the chaos of World War II. Ten years in the writing and winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

***Beloved***—Toni Morrison. Slavery scars all involved, even years later.

***It Can’t Happen Here***—Sinclair Lewis. Is American democracy so fragile that fascism could actually take root? This chilling political satire written during the Great Depression offers a harrowing account of what still may be yet to come.

***Poems of New York***—ed. by Elizabeth Schmidt. An impressive, wide-ranging collection of poetry on the city we call home that spans the early, exuberant musings of Walt Whitman and Hart Crane to contemporary poets post-9/11.

***Up in the Old Hotel***—Joseph Mitchell. A collection of stories and essays, many reprinted from *The New Yorker*, that eloquently chronicle a New York that was, and maybe still is.

***July's People***—Nadine Gordimer. A black servant in Apartheid South Africa becomes a white family's savior during a civil war.

***Rule of the Bone***—Russell Banks. Teenage drifter finds father and responsibility in Jamaica.

***Cathedral***—Raymond Carver. Spare, understated short stories that began a new trend in literature. Moving tales about love, loss, loneliness and hard times. Accessible, provocative and challenging.

***1000 Splendid Suns***—Khaled Hosseini. Two generations of women are brought together by war and personal tragedies in the Afghani city of Kabul.

***White Noise***—Don DeLillo. One of the most influential American novels of the post-modern era, DeLillo's evocative, sometimes poetic and often humorous story includes professors of Elvis Presley and Hitler Studies, the most photographed barn in America, and an "airborne toxic event" that leads to the evacuation of the community.

***Friday Night Lights***—H.G. Bissinger: A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist spends a season with the Permian Panthers and vividly exposes the glory and the glorification of Texas high school football.

***Martyr***—Rory Clements. John Shakespeare, Elizabethan England's most remarkable investigator, and William Shakespeare's brother, is the protagonist in this tale of murder and conspiracy that succeeds brilliantly as both historical fiction and a crime thriller.

***Revenger***—Rory Clements. In the sequel to *Martyr*, the Queen needs John Shakespeare's services once more. England is still at war with Spain, but her court is riven by savage infighting among ambitious young courtiers. A fantastic novel by a master of historical suspense.