

## SSA Senior School Summer Reading 2019

This summer, you will have the opportunity to read **two** (2) books before returning to classes in the fall, one of which has been selected by your advisor and one of which you will choose for yourself.

Re: the **advisory** book: All Form III students will read the same book; students in Forms IV, V, and VI can find their texts listed below. You should plan on being prepared to discuss this book with your advisory group during an extended Designated Rooms meeting during the first week of classes. Your advisor may also ask you to write up something on your text in preparation for that discussion session, perhaps in a Google document of some kind; stay tuned for details when the opening of classes draws nearer. In the meantime, please enjoy the selection your advisor has made.

Re: the **free-choice** book: This book can be a work of fiction or non-fiction, and all literary genres are welcome (novel, short stories, poetry, essays, history, biography, fantasy, etc.). Please pick something book-length that you would genuinely like to read. The only requirement is that the selection be age-appropriate — nothing for younger readers, please. Upon returning to school, students will deliver a short talk on this book in their English classes during the first week or so. This talk must include a brief summary, but its primary focus should be on an evaluation of the book — what about it was most and least effective, enjoyable, confusing, inspiring, etc., supported by specific evidence. The talk should be about five minutes long — a minute for summary, a couple of minutes for discussion of at least two passages from the text, and a minute or two for Q & A. If you wish to provide printed handouts of the passages, feel free. This presentation will be assessed as a minor assignment in the class.

Immerse yourself in some reading this summer, and we will see you in August!

### All Form III Advisors

*A Very Large Expanse of Sea*, Tahereh Mafi

short blurb: It's 2002, a year after 9/11. It's an extremely turbulent time politically, but especially so for someone like Shirin, a sixteen-year-old Muslim girl who's tired of being stereotyped.

Shirin is never surprised by how horrible people can be. She's tired of the rude stares, the degrading comments—even the physical violence—she endures as a result of her race, her religion, and the hijab she wears every day. So she's built up protective walls and refuses to let anyone close enough to hurt her. Instead, she drowns her frustrations in music and spends her afternoons break-dancing with her brother.

But then she meets Ocean James. He's the first person in forever who really seems to want to get to know Shirin. It terrifies her—they seem to come from two irreconcilable worlds—and Shirin has had her guard up for so long that she's not sure she'll ever be able to let it down.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Very-Large-Expanse-Sea/dp/0062866567>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/a-very-large-expanse-of-sea-tahereh-mafi/1128058527>

## Upper-Form Advisors

**David Barndollar:** *Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy*, James Williams

short blurb: Winner of the inaugural Nine Dots Prize from Cambridge University Press: “James Williams launches a plea to society and to the tech industry to help ensure that the technology we all carry with us every day does not distract us from pursuing our true goals in life. As information becomes ever more plentiful, the resource that is becoming more scarce is our attention. In this ‘attention economy,’ we need to recognise the fundamental impacts of our new information environment on our lives in order to take back control. Drawing on insights ranging from Diogenes to contemporary tech leaders, Williams’s thoughtful and impassioned analysis is sure to provoke discussion and debate. This title is free to download.”

[https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/3F8D7BA2C0FE3A7126A4D9B73A89415D/9781108429092AR.pdf/Stand\\_out\\_of\\_our\\_Light.pdf?event-type=FTLA](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/3F8D7BA2C0FE3A7126A4D9B73A89415D/9781108429092AR.pdf/Stand_out_of_our_Light.pdf?event-type=FTLA)

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Stand-out-our-Light-Resistance/dp/110845299X>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/stand-out-of-our-light-james-williams/1127938038>

**Mercedes Dollard:** Ordine, Nuccio. *The Usefulness of the Useless*. Translated by Alastair McEwen, Paul Dry Books, Inc., 2017.

Nuccio Ordine convincingly argues for the utility of useless knowledge and against the contemporary fixation on utilitarianism—for the fundamental importance of the liberal arts and against the damage caused by their neglect.

Inspired by the reflections of great philosophers and writers (e.g., Plato, Dante, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Borges, and Calvino), Ordine reveals how the obsession for material goods and the cult of utility ultimately wither the spirit, jeopardizing not only schools and universities, art, and creativity, but also our most fundamental values—human dignity, love, and truth.

Also included is Abraham Flexner’s 1939 essay “The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge,” which originally prompted Ordine to write this book. Flexner—a founder and the first director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton—offers an impassioned defense of curiosity-driven research and learning.

Please consider buying from the publisher: <https://www.pauldrybooks.com/products/the-usefulness-of-the-useless>

Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/Usefulness-Useless-Nuccio-Ordine-ebook/dp/B06WRRDH1H>)

Barnes & Noble (<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-usefulness-of-the-useless-nuccio-ordine/1123623728>)

**Jessica Basta:** *Enrique’s Journey*, Sonia Nazario

short blurb: *Enrique’s Journey* recounts the unforgettable quest of a Honduran boy looking for his mother, eleven years after she is forced to leave her starving family to find work in the United States. Braving unimaginable peril, often clinging to the sides and tops of freight trains, Enrique travels through hostile worlds full of thugs, bandits, and corrupt cops. But he pushes forward, relying on his wit, courage, hope, and the kindness of strangers. As Isabel Allende writes: “This is a twenty-first-century Odyssey. If you are going to read only one nonfiction book this

year, it has to be this one.” Now updated with a new Epilogue and Afterword, photos of Enrique and his family, an author interview and more, this is a classic of contemporary America. -- <http://enriquesjourney.com/>

Amazon: [Buy me here](#) pdf--free download: <https://1.cdn.edl.io/u4kPGtNYQZlE86lyyaXlgNFCtHs5eP3eoMC37WX04LRLtbS.pdf>

Barnes & Noble: [Or here](#)

**Russell Grant:** *Ender's Game*, Orson Scott Card

Blurb from Amazon: Once again, the Earth is under attack. An alien species is poised for a final assault. The survival of humanity depends on a military genius who can defeat the aliens. But who? Ender Wiggin. Brilliant. Ruthless. Cunning. A tactical and strategic master. And a child. Recruited for military training by the world government, Ender's childhood ends the moment he enters his new home: Battle School. Among the elite recruits Ender proves himself to be a genius among geniuses. He excels in simulated war games. But is the pressure and loneliness taking its toll on Ender? Simulations are one thing. How will Ender perform in real combat conditions? After all, Battle School is just a game. Isn't it?

Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Enders-Ender-Quintet-Orson-Scott/dp/0765378485/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Enders-Ender-Quintet-Orson-Scott/dp/0765378485/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/enders-game-orson-scott-card/1100353963?ean=9780812550702#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/enders-game-orson-scott-card/1100353963?ean=9780812550702#/)

**Leah Powers and Julie Hertz:** *Educated: A Memoir*, Tara Westover

Blurb from Amazon: Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Educated-Memoir-Tara-Westover/dp/0399590501>

Barnes and Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/educated-tara-westover/1126358348#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/educated-tara-westover/1126358348#/)

**Natalie Bobek and Josh Baringer:** *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck

short blurb: They are an unlikely pair: George is "small and quick and dark of face"; Lennie, a man of tremendous size, has the mind of a young child. Yet they have formed a "family," clinging together in the face of loneliness and alienation. Laborers in California's dusty vegetable fields, they hustle work when they can, living a hand-to-mouth existence. For George and Lennie have a plan: to own an acre of land and a shack they can call their own. When they land jobs on a ranch in the Salinas Valley, the fulfillment of their dream seems to be within their grasp. But even George cannot guard Lennie from the provocations of a flirtatious woman, nor predict the consequences of Lennie's unswerving obedience to the things George taught him.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Mice-Men-John-Steinbeck/dp/0140177396/>

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/of-mice-and-men-john-steinbeck/1100154558?ean=9780140177398#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/of-mice-and-men-john-steinbeck/1100154558?ean=9780140177398#/)

**Dan Brill and Devon Renock:** *Einstein's Dreams*, Alan Lightman

short blurb: A modern classic, **Einstein's Dreams** is a fictional collage of stories dreamed by Albert Einstein in 1905, about time, relativity and physics. As the defiant but sensitive young genius is creating his theory of relativity, a new conception of time, he imagines many possible worlds. In one, time is circular, so that people are fated to repeat triumphs and failures over and over. In another, there is a place where time stands still, visited by lovers and parents clinging to their children. In another, time is a nightingale, sometimes trapped by a bell jar. Now translated into thirty languages, **Einstein's Dreams** has inspired playwrights, dancers, musicians, and painters all over the world. In poetic vignettes, it explores the connections between science and art, the process of creativity, and ultimately the fragility of human existence.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Einsteins-Dreams-Alan-Lightman/dp/140007780X>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/einsteins-dreams-alan-lightman/1100620817#/>

**Paul Ejzak:** *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok

short blurb: From Amazon: It is the now-classic story of two fathers and two sons and the pressures on all of them to pursue the religion they share in the way that is best suited to each. And as the boys grow into young men, they discover in the other a lost spiritual brother, and a link to an unexplored world that neither had ever considered before. In effect, they exchange places, and find the peace that neither will ever retreat from again.

Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Chosen-Novel-Chaim-Potok/dp/0449213447/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?keywords=the+chosen&qid=1559755777&s=books&sr=1-2](https://www.amazon.com/Chosen-Novel-Chaim-Potok/dp/0449213447/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=the+chosen&qid=1559755777&s=books&sr=1-2)

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/chosen-chaim-potok/1001892982?ean=9780449213445#/>

**Sophie Lau, Kristi Cooper, and Carol Schneider:** *The Power*, Naomi Alderman

short blurb: From Amazon: In THE POWER, the world is a recognizable place: there's a rich Nigerian boy who lounges around the family pool; a foster kid whose religious parents hide their true nature; an ambitious American politician; a tough London girl from a tricky family. But then a vital new force takes root and flourishes, causing their lives to converge with devastating effect. Teenage girls now have immense physical power--they can cause agonizing pain and even death. And, with this small twist of nature, the world drastically resets.

From award-winning author Naomi Alderman, THE POWER is speculative fiction at its most ambitious and provocative, at once taking us on a thrilling journey to an alternate reality, and exposing our own world in bold and surprising ways.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Power-Naomi-Alderman/dp/0316547611/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=The+pwoer&qid=1556710692&s=gateway&sr=8-1-spell](https://www.amazon.com/Power-Naomi-Alderman/dp/0316547611/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=The+pwoer&qid=1556710692&s=gateway&sr=8-1-spell)

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-power-naomi-alderman/1125454421?ean=9780316547604#/>

**Lauren Lieberman, Sherry Amaya, and John Landreth:** *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, William Deresiewicz

short blurb: From Amazon: As a professor at Yale, Bill Deresiewicz saw something that troubled him deeply. His students, some of the nation's brightest minds, were adrift when it came to the big questions: how to think critically and creatively, and how to find a sense of purpose.

*Excellent Sheep* takes a sharp look at the high-pressure conveyor belt that begins with parents and counselors who demand perfect grades and culminates in the skewed applications Deresiewicz saw firsthand as a member of Yale's admissions committee. As schools shift focus from the humanities to "practical" subjects like economics and computer science, students are losing the ability to think in innovative ways. Deresiewicz explains how college should be a time for self-discovery, when students can establish their own values and measures of success, so they can forge their own path. He addresses parents, students, educators, and anyone who's interested in the direction of American society, featuring quotes from real students and graduates he has corresponded with over the years, candidly exposing where the system is broken and clearly presenting solutions.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Excellent-Sheep-Miseducation-American-Meaningful/dp/1476702721/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?keywords=xcellent+Sheep%3A+The+Miseducation+of+the+American+Elite+and+the+Way+to+a+Meaningful+Life&qid=1559756072&s=books&sr=1-1-fkmr0](https://www.amazon.com/Excellent-Sheep-Miseducation-American-Meaningful/dp/1476702721/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?keywords=xcellent+Sheep%3A+The+Miseducation+of+the+American+Elite+and+the+Way+to+a+Meaningful+Life&qid=1559756072&s=books&sr=1-1-fkmr0)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/excellent-sheep-william-deresiewicz/1117795304?ean=9781476702728#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/excellent-sheep-william-deresiewicz/1117795304?ean=9781476702728#/)

**Mary Lynch:** *There There*, Tommy Orange

short blurb: "Tommy Orange's shattering novel follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to each other in ways they may not yet realize. There is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and working to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, who is pulling his life back together after his uncle's death, has come to work at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old Orvil has come to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American—grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and laugh-out-loud funny, utterly contemporary and always unforgettable." From [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/there-there-tommy-orange/1127085371#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/there-there-tommy-orange/1127085371#/)

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/There-novel-Tommy-Orange/dp/0525520376>

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/there-there-tommy-orange/1127085371#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/there-there-tommy-orange/1127085371#/)

**Rachel McCool, Tara O'Brien, and Pam Boehm:** *The Man in the High Castle*, Philip K. Dick

short blurb (adapted from Amazon): "The single most resonant and carefully imagined book of Dick's career." —*New York Times*

America, 1962. As we expect, a standoff between the world's two remaining superpowers is in full swing. However, something is wrong. Slavery is legal once again. The few Jews who still survive hide under assumed names. In San Francisco, the *I Ching* is as common as the *Yellow Pages*. You can travel to the moon, but there's no television. All because some twenty years earlier the United States lost a war—and is now occupied by Nazi Germany and Japan.

Now the subject of an Amazon Prime series, Philip K. Dick's Hugo Award winning novel examines what would happen if the Allies had lost World War II. The Nazis dominate large swaths of the world, having wiped out their "racial inferiors." The Japanese eliminated many of their enemies, but in North America, they established the Pacific States of America, with a Rocky Mountain neutral zone between their territory and the Nazi-aligned east coast. An underground resistance is struggling to survive, and their members are eager to get their hands on a mysterious book that describes the Allied victory, just not the one we know to be true. *The Man in the High Castle* is not just a fascinating alternate history, but also a philosophical examination of the interpretation and intersection of true and false realities, as well as questions of justice and injustice, gender and power, cultural identity and inferiority, and the long-term effects of the totalitarian devaluation of human life.

Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Man-High-Castle-Philip-Dick/dp/0547572484/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Man-High-Castle-Philip-Dick/dp/0547572484/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

Barnes & Noble:

[https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/man-in-the-high-castle-philip-k-dick/1100273498;jsessionid=C5747477171E9F75EF429E813B3E92BC.prodny\\_store02-atgap18?ean=9780547572482#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/man-in-the-high-castle-philip-k-dick/1100273498;jsessionid=C5747477171E9F75EF429E813B3E92BC.prodny_store02-atgap18?ean=9780547572482#/)

**Jeff Miller, Azucena Alvarez, and Stan Nevola:** *The Catcher in the Rye*, J. D. Salinger

short blurb: If there are five American novels that are must-reads, *The Catcher in the Rye* is one of them. This novel, first published in 1951, changed the course of fiction to this day. It is the story of Holden Caulfield and his struggles to navigate through his complicated life. With the structure of a flashback Holden details "this madman stuff that happened to me [him] last Christmas" (page 3). It is a deeply personal story that is both funny and sad. This is a story that is to be read alone in the summer.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Catcher-Rye-J-D-Salinger/dp/0316769177/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=The+Catcher+in+the+Rye&qid=1559756131&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Catcher-Rye-J-D-Salinger/dp/0316769177/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=The+Catcher+in+the+Rye&qid=1559756131&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/catcher-in-the-rye-j-d-salinger/1100192775?ean=9780316769488#/>

**Lindsey Myers and Bob Grandizio:** *The Martin Chronicles*, John Fried

short blurb (from Amazon): Martin Kelso's comfortable world starts to change at the age of eleven. Girls get under his skin in ways he never noticed before. His cousin Evie, who used to be Marty's closest confidante--the one who taught him the right way to eat a pizza and how to catch tadpoles--has grown up into a stranger, mysterious and unpredictable. Marty and his best friends once inhabited fantasy worlds of their own making, full of cowboys and cops and robbers, where the heroes always won the day. But now, as neighborhood kids are attacked on their walk to school, they find themselves wanting to play a new game that better prepares them for real life.

As life changes quickly and Marty feels less secure with himself, the difference between games and reality, friend and foe, and right from wrong becomes much more difficult to distinguish. At the same time, this new world offers possibilities as exciting as they are frightening.

This poignant debut perfectly captures the intense emotion, humor, and earnestness of young adulthood as Marty, age eleven to seventeen, navigates a series of life-changing firsts: first kiss, first enemy, first loss, and, ultimately, his first awareness that the world is not as simple a place as he had once imagined.

[Amazon Link](#)

[Barnes & Noble](#)

**Brittany Pack and Dawson Haytock:** *A Walk in the Woods*, Bill Bryson

short blurb: Back in America after twenty years in Britain, Bill Bryson decided to reacquaint himself with his native country by walking the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail. For a start there's the gloriously out-of-shape Stephen Katz, a buddy from Iowa along for the walk. Despite Katz's overwhelming desire to find cozy restaurants, he and Bryson eventually settle into their stride, and while on the trail they meet a bizarre assortment of hilarious characters. Bryson's acute eye is a wise witness to this beautiful but fragile trail, and as he tells its fascinating history, he makes a moving plea for the conservation of America's last great wilderness.

[Amazon](#)

[Barnes & Noble](#)

**Scott Peterson:** *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*, E. B. Sledge

short blurb: "In all the literature on the Second World War, there is not a more honest, realistic or moving memoir than Eugene Sledge's. This is the real deal, the real war: unvarnished, brutal, without a shred of sentimentality or false patriotism, a profound primer on what it actually was like to be in that war. It is a classic that will outlive all the armchair generals' safe accounts of—not the 'good war'—but the worst war ever."—Ken Burns

Amazon: [Amazon.com](#)

Barnes & Noble: [Barnes and Noble](#)

Library: [Carnegie Library](#)

**Kelly VandenBosche:** *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Arthur C. Clarke

short blurb: *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a science fiction novel exploring many themes including the perils of technology and nuclear war, artificial intelligence, human intelligence, and the relationship between humans and space travel. While being fiction, it grapples with several interesting concepts in science such as evolution and orbital mechanics with excellent scientific detail. It is also simply a compelling and fun book to read.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/2001-Space-Odyssey/dp/0451457994>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/2001-arthur-c-clarke/1101956512>

**Greg Weiss:** *Soonish: Ten Emerging Technologies That'll Improve and/or Ruin Everything*, Kelly & Zach Weinersmith

short blurb: As the title implies, this book describes ten different technologies that may come to be within your lifetimes or perhaps never at all. The authors provide enough scientific background to make complicated ideas understandable, and Zach peppers the book with his irreverent wit

and funny comic strips. The book tries to offer both how these technologies offer hope for a different future and fears for how these frontiers can result in doom, *Black Mirror*-style.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Soonish>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/soonish-zach-weinersmith/1125856149?ean=9780399563829#/>

Library: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/soonish-ten-emerging-technologies-thatll-improve-and-or-ruin-everything/oclc/981907964>

**Matt Weiss:** *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*, Richard Bach

short blurb: From Barnes & Noble: In the cloud-washed airspace between the cornfields of Illinois and blue infinity, a man puts his faith in the propeller of his biplane. For disillusioned writer and itinerant barnstormer Richard Bach, belief is as real as a full tank of gas and sparks firing in the cylinders . . . until he meets Donald Shimoda—former mechanic and self-described messiah who can make wrenches fly and Richard's imagination soar. . . .

In *Illusions*, the unforgettable follow-up to his phenomenal bestseller *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Richard Bach takes to the air to discover the ageless truths that give our souls wings: that people don't need airplanes to soar . . . that even the darkest clouds have meaning once we lift ourselves above them . . . and that messiahs can be found in the unlikeliest places—like hay fields, one-traffic-light midwestern towns, and most of all, deep within ourselves.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Illusions-Adventures-Reluctant-Richard-Bach/dp/0099427869/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Illusions%3A+The+Adventures+of+a+Reluctant+Messiah&qid=1559756181&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Illusions-Adventures-Reluctant-Richard-Bach/dp/0099427869/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Illusions%3A+The+Adventures+of+a+Reluctant+Messiah&qid=1559756181&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/illusions-richard-bach/1100831868?ean=9780440204886#/>

**Sue Whitney, Michele Ament, and Carol-Jean McGreevy-Morales:** *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar . . . : Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes*, Thomas Cathcart & Daniel Klein

short blurb: Outrageously funny, *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar...* has been a breakout bestseller ever since authors—and born vaudevillians—Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein did their schtick on NPR's *Weekend Edition*. Lively, original, and powerfully informative, *Plato and a Platypus Walk Into a Bar...* is a not-so-reverent crash course through the great philosophical thinkers and traditions, from Existentialism (*What do Hegel and Bette Midler have in common?*) to Logic (*Sherlock Holmes never deduced anything*). Philosophy 101 for those who like to take the heavy stuff lightly, this is a joy to read—and finally, it all makes sense!

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Plato-Platypus-Walk-into-Understanding/dp/0143113879/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Plato+and+a+Platypus+Walk+into+a+Bar+.+.+%3A+Understanding+Philosophy+Through+Jokes&qid=1559756287&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Plato-Platypus-Walk-into-Understanding/dp/0143113879/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Plato+and+a+Platypus+Walk+into+a+Bar+.+.+%3A+Understanding+Philosophy+Through+Jokes&qid=1559756287&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/plato-and-a-platypus-walk-into-a-bar-thomas-cathcart/1100409966?ean=9780143113874#/>

**Minhnoi Wroble:** *Normal People, A Novel*, Sally Rooney

*Normal People* is a coming of age novel about the struggles of relationships across secrets, societal expectations, and time. Insecurities of one's teens and early twenties are profound for the characters as they journey from high school to university. As NPR wrote, "*Normal People* is an compulsively, psychologically astute will-they-or-won't-they love story involving two of the most sympathetic people you're liable to meet between covers." ISBN-13: 9781984822178

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Normal-People-Novel-Sally-Rooney/dp/1984822179>

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/normal-people-sally-rooney/1129141966#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/normal-people-sally-rooney/1129141966#/)

**Amy Yam, Kyle Smith, and Joe Martens:** *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work*, Matthew B. Crawford

short blurb: From Barnes & Noble: Those of us who sit in an office often feel a lack of connection to the material world and find it difficult to say exactly what we do all day. For those who felt hustled off to college, then to the cubicle, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* seeks to restore the honor of the manual trades as a life worth choosing.

Based on his own experience as an electrician and Mechanic, Matthew Crawford makes a case for the kind of work that requires mastery of real things. Surprisingly, such work can be more intellectually demanding than the sort that deals in abstractions. Maintenance and repair work also cultivate certain ethical virtues, fostering habits of individual responsibility. *Shop Class as Soulcraft* rouses us from the passivity and dependence of consumer culture with a bracing call for self-reliance. It is a moving reflection on how we can live concretely in an ever more abstract world.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Shop-Class-Soulcraft-Inquiry-Value/dp/0143117467/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Shop+Class+as+Soulcraft%3A+An+Inquiry+Into+the+Value+of+Work&qid=1559756345&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Shop-Class-Soulcraft-Inquiry-Value/dp/0143117467/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Shop+Class+as+Soulcraft%3A+An+Inquiry+Into+the+Value+of+Work&qid=1559756345&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/shop-class-as-soulcraft-matthew-b-crawford/1100997709?ean=9780143117469#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/shop-class-as-soulcraft-matthew-b-crawford/1100997709?ean=9780143117469#/)

**John Wizzard:** *How Not to Be Wrong: The Power of Mathematical Thinking*, by Jordan Ellenberg

Short Blurb: From Amazon: The math we learn in school can seem like a dull set of rules, laid down by the ancients and not to be questioned. In *How Not to Be Wrong*, Jordan Ellenberg shows us how terribly limiting this view is: Math isn't confined to abstract incidents that never occur in real life, but rather touches everything we do—the whole world is shot through with it.

Math allows us to see the hidden structures underneath the messy and chaotic surface of our world. It's a science of not being wrong, hammered out by centuries of hard work and argument. Armed with the tools of mathematics, we can see through to the true meaning of information we take for granted: How early should you get to the airport? What does "public opinion" really represent? Why do tall parents have shorter children? Who really won Florida in 2000? And how likely are you, really, to develop cancer?

*How Not to Be Wrong* presents the surprising revelations behind all of these questions and many more, using the mathematician's method of analyzing life and exposing the hard-won insights of the academic community to the layman—minus the jargon. Ellenberg chases mathematical threads through a vast range of time and space, from the everyday to the cosmic, encountering, among other things, baseball, Reaganomics, daring lottery schemes, Voltaire, the replicability crisis in psychology, Italian Renaissance painting, artificial languages, the development of non-Euclidean geometry, the coming obesity apocalypse, Antonin Scalia's views on crime and punishment, the psychology of slime molds, what Facebook can and can't figure out about you, and the existence of God.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/How-Not-Be-Wrong-Mathematical/dp/0143127535/ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_sspa?keywords=How+Not+to+Be+Wrong%3A+The+Power+of+Mathematical+Thinking&qid=1559757031&s=books&sr=1-1-spons&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/How-Not-Be-Wrong-Mathematical/dp/0143127535/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?keywords=How+Not+to+Be+Wrong%3A+The+Power+of+Mathematical+Thinking&qid=1559757031&s=books&sr=1-1-spons&psc=1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/how-not-to-be-wrong-jordan-ellenberg/1117225089?ean=9780143127536#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/how-not-to-be-wrong-jordan-ellenberg/1117225089?ean=9780143127536#/)

**Katie Mihm:** *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Short Blurb: From Barnes & Noble: A powerful, tender story of race and identity by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the award-winning author of *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America, where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion—for each other and for their homeland.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Americanah-Chimamanda-Ngozi-Adichie/dp/0307455920/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Americanah&qid=1559757009&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Americanah-Chimamanda-Ngozi-Adichie/dp/0307455920/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Americanah&qid=1559757009&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/americanah-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie/1110955416?ean=9780307455925#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/americanah-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie/1110955416?ean=9780307455925#/)

**Lucas Frankel:** *Justice*, Michael Sandel

Short blurb: *Justice*, a 2009 nonfiction book written by Harvard professor Michael J. Sandel, grew out of a popular course of the same name that Sandel teaches, in which he “exposes students to some of the great philosophical writings about justice, and also takes up contemporary legal and political controversies that raise philosophical questions” (293). In this book, Sandel does the same, comparing and contrasting several important approaches to justice and applying them to contemporary legal and political issues.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Justice-Whats-Right-Thing-Do-dp-0374532508/dp/0374532508/ref=mt\\_paperback?\\_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=](https://www.amazon.com/Justice-Whats-Right-Thing-Do-dp-0374532508/dp/0374532508/ref=mt_paperback?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=1559757009&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/justice-michael-j-sandel/1115099994?ean=9780374532505#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/justice-michael-j-sandel/1115099994?ean=9780374532505#/)

**Ryan Logue and John Cappa:** *Ego is the Enemy* by [Ryan Holiday](#) (Author)

Many of us insist the main impediment to a full, successful life is the outside world. In fact, the most common enemy lies within: our ego. Early in our careers, it impedes learning and the cultivation of talent. With success, it can blind us to our faults and sow future problems. In failure, it magnifies each blow and makes recovery more difficult. At every stage, ego holds us back.

*Ego Is the Enemy* draws on a vast array of stories and examples, from literature to philosophy to history. We meet fascinating figures such as George Marshall, Jackie Robinson, Katharine Graham, Bill Belichick, and Eleanor Roosevelt, who all reached the highest levels of power and success by conquering their own egos. Their strategies and tactics can be ours as well.

In an era that glorifies social media, reality TV, and other forms of shameless self-promotion, the battle against ego must be fought on many fronts. Armed with the lessons in this book, as Holiday writes, “you will be less invested in the story you tell about your own specialness, and as a result, you will be liberated to accomplish the world-changing work you’ve set out to achieve.”

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Ego-Enemy-Ryan-Holiday/dp/1591847818>

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-ego-is-the-enemy-ryan-holiday/1122680805?ean=9781591847816#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-ego-is-the-enemy-ryan-holiday/1122680805?ean=9781591847816#/)

**Chad Fularz:** *The Rhythm Section* by Mark Burnell

From Barnes & Noble website: Soon to be a major motion picture, from the producers of the James Bond film series, starring Jude Law and Blake Lively. She has nothing to lose and only revenge to live for. She thought her life was over... Stephanie Patrick's life is destroyed by the crash of flight NE027: her family was on board and there were no survivors. Devastated, she falls into a world of drugs and prostitution – until the day she discovers that the crash wasn't an accident, but an act of terrorism. Filled with rage, and with nothing left to lose, she joins a covert intelligence organization. But throughout her training and operations she remains focused on one goal above all: revenge.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Rhythm-Section-Mark-Burnell/dp/0006513379>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/rhythm-section-mark-burnell/1003700217>

**Chad Green and Kelsey Williams:** *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

Short Blurb: From Amazon: In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Into-Wild-Jon-Krakauer/dp/0385486804>

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/into-the-wild-jon-krakauer/1100618301?ean=9780385486804#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/into-the-wild-jon-krakauer/1100618301?ean=9780385486804#/)

**Liz Garvey:** *Zone One* by Colson Whitehead

**Short Blurb: From Amazon:** A pandemic has devastated the planet, sorting humanity into two types: the uninfected and the infected, the living and the living dead. After the worst of the plague is over, armed forces stationed in Chinatown's Fort Wonton have successfully reclaimed the island south of Canal Street—aka Zone One. Mark Spitz is a member of one of the three-person civilian sweeper units tasked with clearing lower Manhattan of the remaining feral zombies. *Zone One* unfolds over three surreal days in which Spitz is occupied with the mundane mission of straggler removal, the rigors of Post-Apocalyptic Stress Disorder (PASD), and the impossible task of coming to terms with a fallen world. And then things start to go terribly wrong...

At once a chilling horror story and a literary novel by a contemporary master, *Zone One* is a dazzling portrait of modern civilization in all its wretched, shambling glory.

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Zone-One-Colson-Whitehead/dp/0307455173/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=38L9MY5T5EJ9I&keywords=colson+whitehead+zone+one&qid=1558615284&s=gateway&prefix=colson+%2Caps%2C128&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Zone-One-Colson-Whitehead/dp/0307455173/ref=sr_1_1?crid=38L9MY5T5EJ9I&keywords=colson+whitehead+zone+one&qid=1558615284&s=gateway&prefix=colson+%2Caps%2C128&sr=8-1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/zone-one-colson-whitehead/1101742182?ean=9780307455178#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/zone-one-colson-whitehead/1101742182?ean=9780307455178#/)

**Kate Binnie:** *The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair: A Novel* by Joel Dicker

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, May 2014: A successful young author suffering from writer's block journeys to New Hampshire to visit his former professor. Shortly after he arrives, the bones of a girl are found buried in the professor's backyard. Now the professor has been arrested for the murder of the girl--who disappeared in 1975 at the age of fifteen--and the author has an idea: he will write a book based on the case that will ultimately exonerate his professor and jumpstart his writing. Already a massive best seller in Europe (and translated into 32 languages), *The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair* arrives in North America amid such wild praise you might expect something groundbreaking. Instead, what you get is a wonderful, fun, and boisterous read, a book with an uncanny ability to both fascinate and amuse you. Twists and turns and oddball characters make this a rollicking bullet-train of a novel. --Chris Schlupe

Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Truth-About-Harry-Quebert-Affair/dp/0143126687/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=The+Truth+About+the+Harry+Quebert+Affair%3A+A+Novel&qid=1559756643&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Truth-About-Harry-Quebert-Affair/dp/0143126687/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=The+Truth+About+the+Harry+Quebert+Affair%3A+A+Novel&qid=1559756643&s=books&sr=1-1)

Barnes & Noble: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-truth-about-the-harry-quebert-affair-joel-dicker/1117661160?ean=9780594615033#/#/](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-truth-about-the-harry-quebert-affair-joel-dicker/1117661160?ean=9780594615033#/)

**Cari Batchelar:** *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

"In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Owens juxtaposes an exquisite ode to the natural world against a profound coming of age story and haunting mystery. Thought-provoking, wise, and deeply moving, Owens's debut novel reminds us that we are forever shaped by the child within us, while also subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.

The story asks how isolation influences the behavior of a young woman, who like all of us, has the genetic propensity to belong to a group. The clues to the mystery are brushed into the lush habitat and natural histories of its wild creatures."

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Where-Crawdads-Sing-Delia-Owens/dp/1984827618/>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/where-the-crawdads-sing-delia-owens/1127681226?ean=9780735219090#/>

**Mike Solomon:** *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler

*Darkness at Noon* stands as an unequalled fictional portrayal of the nightmare politics of our time. Its hero is an aging revolutionary, imprisoned and psychologically tortured by the Party to which he has dedicated his whole life. As the pressure mounts for him to confess preposterous crimes, he relives a career dedicated to a totalitarian movement masking itself as an instrument of deliverance.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Darkness-at-Noon-Arthur-Koestler/dp/1416540261>

Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/darkness-at-noon-arthur-koestler/1100366252>