

2020 SUMMER READING LIST

The Summer Reading Program at Suffield Academy reflects several important aims. First, we want to encourage our students to read outside of the classroom and beyond the school year. Additionally, we value the shared experience of all faculty and students reading a common text. Students should annotate their books as they read and expect to write and discuss the selections during the first few weeks of fall term. At a minimum, students must read the community text and choose one book from the reading list. However, students are encouraged to read throughout the summer and urged to choose two books from the reading list. If you have any questions, please contact Sara Yeager at syeager@suffieldacademy.org.

COMMUNITY TEXT ALL GRADES

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates » This summer's community text, *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, will be used in support of our school theme of empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. *Between the World and Me* is written as a letter from the author to his teenage son about being black in America. It pivots between personal and historical, focusing both on America's racial history and current civil rights crisis. As we have seen again poignantly this spring, systemic racism in America devalues black lives. Racism diminishes, demoralizes, and dehumanizes. We hope to use this text and a series of programs to help Suffield's students and faculty engage in the realities of systemic racism and help strengthen our community and the world.

SUMMER READING: ONE REQUIRED FOR ALL GRADES

Beneath a Scarlet Sky by Mark Sullivan » Based on a true story, *Beneath a Scarlet Sky* is the epic tale of an Italian teenager set towards the end of WWII. Pino Lella wants nothing to do with the war; he is a normal teenage boy, interested in music, girls, food, and cars, but his innocence is short lived. Pino displays incredible courage and resilience as his homeland and family get wrapped into the war. The book begins when Pino's family home is destroyed by allied bombers hitting Milan for the first time. This is a riveting tale of history, suspense, and love.

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins » The newest installment in *The Hunger Games* adventure is centered around teenage President Snow and his quest to succeed as a Games mentor. His assignment to the sole female District 12 tribute is less than ideal, and the fate of his family rests on his shoulders. To what extent will he go in order to keep his tribute alive and win the Games?

Bonfire of the Vanities by Tom Wolfe » Tom Wolfe's modern American satire tells the story of Sherman McCoy, a Wall Street "Master of the Universe" who has it all: a Park Avenue apartment; a job that brings wealth, power and prestige; a beautiful wife; an even more beautiful mistress. Suddenly, one wrong turn makes it all go wrong, and Sherman spirals downward in a sudden fall from grace that sucks him into the ravenous heart of a New York City gone mad during the go-go, racially turbulent, socially hilarious 1980s.

Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen by Christopher McDougall » Isolated by Mexico's deadly Copper Canyons, the blissful Tarahumara Indians have honed the ability to run hundreds of miles without rest or injury. In a riveting narrative, award-winning journalist and often-injured runner Christopher McDougall sets out to discover their secrets. In the process, he takes his readers from science labs at Harvard to the sun-baked valleys and freezing peaks across North America, where ever-growing numbers of ultra-runners are pushing their bodies to the limit, and finally, to a climactic race in the Copper Canyons that pits America's best ultra-runners against the tribe. McDougall's incredible story will not only engage your mind but inspire your body when you realize that you, indeed all of us, were born to run.

The City of Brass by S.A. Chakrabarty » Step into *The City of Brass*, the spellbinding debut from S.A. Chakrabarty, an imaginative tale in which the future of a magical Middle Eastern kingdom rests in the hands of a clever and defiant young con artist with miraculous healing gifts. Nahri has never believed in magic. Certainly, she has power and on the streets of 18th-century Cairo she is a con woman of unsurpassed talent. But she knows better than anyone that the trades she uses to get by—palm readings, zars, and a mysterious gift for healing—are all tricks, both the means to the delightful end of swindling Ottoman nobles and a reliable way to survive. There is a reason it is said to be careful what you wish for.

Daring Greatly by Brene Brown » This is a book about courage and being vulnerable. It defies the notion that vulnerability is a weakness and instead argues that it is our most accurate measure of courage. When faced with uncertainty, we must be willing to put ourselves out there, take risks, and be vulnerable.

The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters by Tom Nichols » Thanks to technological advances and increasing levels of education, we have access to more information than ever before. Yet rather than ushering in a new era of enlightenment, the information age has helped fuel a surge in narcissistic and misguided intellectual egalitarianism that has crippled informed debate on any number of issues. Today, everyone knows everything. With only a quick trip through WebMD or Wikipedia, average citizens believe themselves to be on an equal intellectual footing with doctors and diplomats. All voices, even the most ridiculous, demand to be taken with equal seriousness and any claim to the contrary is dismissed as undemocratic elitism.

The Dutch House by Ann Patchett » Ann Patchett doesn't want to make you sweat; she wants to make you care. As she explained in a recent interview, "I've been writing the same book my whole life—that you're in one family, and all of a sudden, you're in another family and it's not your choice and you can't get out." In *The Dutch House*, the family is built by both blood and love. It is a sibling story—that of Maeve and Danny Conroy, a brother and sister growing up comfortable in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in a house known throughout the community (and by the family) as the Dutch House. The book takes its reader on a journey through more than 50 years of their lives.

Emma by Jane Austen » A perennial darling of the Top Novel of All-Time lists, this light and funny work by Jane Austen is just the antidote to a summer filled with social distancing. Emma Woodhouse thinks of herself as a matchmaker, setting up couples in her village for her bored amusement. When things turn awry, however, she will need to take a step back and evaluate her motives and instincts. Full of funny characters, plot twists, and sunny summer days, this work is considered by most to be Jane Austen's best achievement and wittiest heroine. In fact, there are several successful movie versions and the 1980's hit film *Clueless* was fashioned after this work—a timeless, complex, and thoroughly enjoyable classic for the ages.

The Emperor of All Maladies by Siddhartha Mukherjee » Physician, researcher, and award-winning science writer, Siddhartha Mukherjee examines cancer with a cellular biologist's precision, a historian's perspective, and a biographer's passion. The result is an astonishingly lucid and eloquent chronicle of a disease humans have lived with—and perished from—for more than 5,000 years. The story of cancer is one of human ingenuity, resilience, and perseverance but also of hubris, paternalism, and misperception. Mukherjee recounts centuries of discoveries, setbacks, victories, and deaths told through the eyes of his predecessors and peers, training their wits against an infinitely resourceful adversary that, just three decades ago, was thought to be easily vanquished in an all-out "war against cancer." The book reads like a literary thriller with cancer as the protagonist.

***Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner** » In short, easy-to-read vignettes that can be read in any order, the authors uncover “all kinds of surprising truths (about every life and why people do what they do)—sometimes important ones, sometimes merely fascinating ones—by means of a smart, deep, rigorous, open-minded consideration of facts. It is...fun of the highest order.” -Kurt Anderson, public radio host

***Good Economics for Hard Times: Better Answers to Our Biggest Problems* by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo** » In this revolutionary book, renowned MIT economists Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo take on the challenge of building on cutting-edge research in economics explained with lucidity and grace. Original, provocative, and urgent, this book makes a persuasive case for an intelligent interventionism and a society based on compassion and respect. Immigration and inequality, globalization and technological disruption, slowing growth and accelerating climate change—these are sources of great anxiety across the world, from New Delhi and Dakar to Paris and Washington, DC. The resources to address these challenges are there but what we lack are ideas that will help us jump the wall of disagreement and distrust that divides us. If we succeed, history will remember our era with gratitude; if we fail, the potential losses are incalculable.

***Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* by J.D. Vance** » The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J.D.’s grandparents were “dirt poor and in love” and moved north from Kentucky’s Appalachia region to Ohio in hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility.

***The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams Earthman** » Earthman Arthur Dent is rescued by his friend, Ford Prefect—an alien researcher for the titular Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, an enormous work providing information about every planet in the universe—from Earth just before it is destroyed by the alien Vogons. After being tossed out of the Vogon ship that they hitched a ride on, Arthur and Ford are rescued by the Heart of Gold, a spaceship driven by Zaphod Beeblebrox, Ford’s semi-cousin and the President of the Galaxy. The ship’s crew—Arthur, Ford, Zaphod, a depressed robot named Marvin, and a human woman named Trillian—embark on a journey to find the legendary planet Magrathea, known for selling luxury planets.

***How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi** » Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value; its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin color to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class and culture and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves. This book takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas—from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities—that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves.

***I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown** » Austin Channing Brown’s first encounter with a racialized America came at age seven, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, “I had to learn what it means to love blackness.” This a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America’s racial divide as a writer, speaker, and expert who helps organizations practice genuine inclusion.

***Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson** » This book recounts the true story of Walter McMillian, an African-American pulpwood worker in Alabama who was wrongly accused of murder and sentenced to death. Beyond this story, Stevenson (author and lawyer for McMillian) explores the unfairness and inequity of the American justice system. Additionally, the book looks into the history of the American justice system and the inequalities throughout American history as a collective whole. Lastly, and just as significant, is the message of how powerful compassion and hope are throughout trying times.

***The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini** » The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant caught in the tragic sweep of history, *The Kite Runner* transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the value of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, and lies.

***Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath** » Have you ever wondered why one idea takes off while another does not? *Made to Stick* is an essential read for students learning and communicating in the information explosion era. This book will change the way you communicate ideas. It demonstrates how to apply six simple principles to make the information and ideas one conveys in writing, discussions, and presentations memorable and “stick.”

***Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris** » David Sedaris' collection of essays tells a most unconventional life story. It begins with a North Carolina childhood filled with speech-therapy classes (“There was the lisp, of course, but more troubling than that was my voice itself, with its excitable tone and high, girlish pitch”) and unwanted guitar lessons taught by a midget. From budding performance artist (“The only crimp in my plan was that I seemed to have no talent whatsoever”) to “clearly unqualified” writing teacher in Chicago, Sedaris' career leads him to New York City and eventually, of all places, France. His move to Paris poses a number of challenges, chief among them his inability to speak the language. Arriving a “spooky man-child” capable of communicating only through nouns, he undertakes language instruction that leads him ever deeper into cultural confusion. Whether describing the Easter bunny to puzzled classmates or watching a group of men play soccer with a cow, Sedaris brings a view and voice like no other to every unforgettable encounter.

***The Passion of Artemisia* by Susan Vreeland** » Recently rediscovered by art historians, and one of the few female post-Renaissance painters to achieve fame during her own era, Artemisia Gentileschi led a remarkably “modern” life. Susan Vreeland tells Artemisia's captivating story, beginning with her public humiliation in a rape trial at the age of 18, and continuing through her father's betrayal, her marriage of convenience, motherhood, and growing fame as an artist. Set against the glorious backdrops of Rome, Florence, Genoa, and Naples, inhabited by historical characters such as Galileo and Cosimo de' Medici II, and filled with rich details about life as a 17th-century painter, Vreeland creates an inspiring story about one woman's lifelong struggle to reconcile career and family, passion and genius.

***The Pearl* by John Steinbeck** » Set in La Paz, Baja California Sur, *The Pearl* dives into greed, human nature, and the desire to defy societal norms. Kino, a poor pearl fisherman living a simple life, must find a way to pay for a doctor after his son is injured. In a desperate attempt to find money, Kino successfully finds a large pearl to pay for his son's health, but is quickly overtaken by greed and the prospect of continued good fortune. An ensuing series of events highlights the outcome and impact of his decision. A short, yet compelling read exhibits Steinbeck's ability to engage a reader and consider judgement and potential greed through reflection.

***The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay** » In 1939, as Hitler casts his enormous, cruel shadow across the world, the seeds of apartheid take root in South Africa. There, a boy named Peekay is born. His childhood is marked by humiliation and abandonment, yet he vows to survive and conceives heroic dreams—which are nothing compared to what life actually has in store for him. He embarks on an epic journey through a land of tribal superstition and modern prejudice where he will learn the power of words, the power to transform lives, and the power of one.

***The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert** » This book explores previous mass extinction events to put into context the unique situation causing the sixth mass extinction event. Kolbert describes the threat to biodiversity posed by human behavior using stories from researchers working to document and save species under threat.

***The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson** » Erik Larson's latest non-fiction, *The Splendid and the Vile*, will likely spend most of summer at the top of *The New York Times* Best Seller list, and our future book club meeting will explore how this great writer pleases so many different types of readers with compelling and comprehensive subjects. Join us for this great read as we appreciate the historic significance of Winston Churchill's career as well as Erik Larson's storytelling skills.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien » *The Things They Carried* has often been credited as the most accurate and authentic narratives of the Vietnam War despite being a complete work of fiction. Tim O'Brien uses a collection of interwoven short stories that sometimes frustrate the reader in their, and the author's, quest for truth. While O'Brien's narrative feels deeply personal and is unique to the soldier's experience in Vietnam, drawing on his own time as a rifleman in the war, he also writes of universal truths that touch all wars, the young men and women who fight in them, and everyone else who just cannot get out of the way. To O'Brien in *The Things They Carried*, "A true war story is never moral... As a first rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil."

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate by Naomi Klein » Klein exposes myths about the climate debate related to fossil fuels and current economics. She presents the case for how the reduction of greenhouse gas emission paired with reimagining current democracies and economies is humanity's best chance at surviving climate change. She describes inspiring movements that have begun this process and makes the point that capitalism is the threat preventing economic systems from transforming into something better.

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger » The Lincoln School is a pitiless place in 1932 Minnesota where hundreds of Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to an orphan named Odie O'Banion, a lively boy whose exploits earn him the superintendent's wrath. Forced to flee, he and his brother Albert, their best friend Mose, and a brokenhearted little girl named Emmy steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi and a place to call their own. Over the course of one unforgettable summer, these four orphans will journey into the unknown and cross paths with others who are adrift—from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds. With the feel of a modern classic, *This Tender Land* is an en-thralling, big-hearted epic that shows how the magnificent American landscape connects us all, haunts our dreams, and makes us whole.

Tortilla Flat by John Steinbeck » *Tortilla Flat*, John Steinbeck's first critical success published in 1935, follows the lives of several friends seeking the easy life in Monterey, California in post-World War I America. In the tradition of King Arthur, Danny and his friends embark on various deeds and (mis)adventures, discovering along the way that the most important thing they have is camaraderie and friendship.

The Ugly American by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick » Set in a fictional country in Southeast Asia—Sarkhan in the 1950s—this novel is a scathing criticism of United States foreign policy during the early Cold War. While the work is fiction, it was based on both men's experiences and disgust with the American diplomatic corps who hoped to inspire change in US policy when leaders were becoming involved in Vietnam. This book inspired President Kennedy's creation of the Peace Corps.

Upheaval by Jared Diamond » Jared Diamond, author of popularly successful reads such as *Guns, Germs, & Steel*; *Collapse*; and *The Third Chimpanzee* looks at the varying responses nations facing major crises have used in responding to them. He analyzes the traits of successful as compared to less successful responses. Among the crises he analyzes are Japan after Commodore Perry's visit, Germany after WWII, and Chile under Allende and Pinochet. He also considers Postwar America's challenges. This is a very entertaining read for those interested in modern history and political science.

Wolfpack by Abby Wambach » *Wolfpack* is written by Abby Wambach, two-time gold medal Olympian and FIFA World Cup Champion. Based originally on her Commencement speech to the Barnard College graduating Class of 2018, *Wolfpack* is all about leadership. Wambach specifically calls on women to "to unleash their individual power, unite with their pack, and emerge victorious together." An incredible soccer champion, Wambach is also a wise, inspiring leader.

Wool by Hugh Howey » For suspense-filled, post-apocalyptic thrillers, *Wool* is more than a self-published ebook phenomenon; it's the new standard in classic science fiction. In a ruined and toxic future, a community exists in a giant silo underground, hundreds of stories deep. There, men and women live in a society full of regulations they believe are meant to protect them. Sheriff Holston, who has unwaveringly upheld the silo's rules for years, unexpectedly breaks the greatest taboo of all and asks to go outside. His fateful decision unleashes a drastic series of events. Juliette, a mechanic with no training in law and whose special knack is fixing machines, is an unlikely candidate appointed to replace him. Juliette is entrusted with fixing her silo and will soon learn just how badly her world is broken. The silo will now confront the uprising its history has only hinted at and its inhabitants have never dared to whisper.