

Seekonk High School

Summer Reading Program 2009

"Seekonk High School School-wide Read"

The Program- Now in its second year, the school-wide read is a simple, yet effective tool to motivate and encourage students to read over the summer. It is our hope that students will be inspired to read by the participation of all Seekonk High School teachers and administrators. In the fall, everyone in the high school community can engage in dialogue about the book. Students will complete a range of assessment activities in their classes once school begins in September. The title chosen for this year's "School-wide Read" is the Young Reader's Edition of *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. The novel is a compelling story about how one man was able to make a difference in the education of children in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Honors Students-Students who are enrolled in Honors English courses for the upcoming school year will complete the school-wide read as well as reading one more title from the lists below. In September, students should bring this book to English class on the first day in order to complete an assessment that will be the first test/project grade of the quarter. **It is strongly recommended that you take notes on the books, or use sticky notes to mark passages you find significant, confusing, amusing, or interesting. Think about: themes and messages, characters and relationships, settings and their contribution to the action, conflicts, imagery and figurative language.**

Advanced Placement Students-These students will complete the school-wide read and other reading assignments from their instructor.

HONORS READING LIST (CHOOSE ONE TITLE PLUS *Three Cups of Tea*)

Grade 9 *(All review Excerpts from Amazon.com)*

***Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson**

Melinda Sordino busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops. Now her old friends won't talk to her, and people she doesn't even know hate her from a distance. But there's something she's trying not to think about, something about the night of the party that, if she let it in, would blow her carefully constructed disguise to smithereens. (Young adult fiction)

***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon**

Mark Haddon's bitterly funny debut novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, is a murder mystery of sorts--one told by an autistic version of Adrian Mole. Fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone is mathematically gifted and socially hopeless, raised in a working-class home by parents who can barely cope with their child's quirks. He takes everything that he sees (or is told) at face value, and is unable to sort out the strange behavior of his elders and peers. (Young adult fiction)

***A Lesson Before Dying*, Ernest J. Gaines**

In this restrained but eloquent narrative, the author of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* again addresses some of the major issues of race and identity in our time. The story of two African American men struggling to attain manhood in a prejudiced society, the tale is set in Bayonne, La. (the fictional community Gaines has used previously) in the late 1940s. It concerns Jefferson, a mentally slow, barely literate young man, who, though an innocent bystander to a shootout between a white store owner and two black robbers, is convicted of murder, and the sophisticated, educated man who comes to his aid. When Jefferson's own attorney claims that executing him would be tantamount to killing a hog, his incensed godmother, Miss Emma, turns to teacher Grant Wiggins, pleading with him to gain access to the jailed youth and help him to face his death by

electrocution with dignity. As complex a character as Faulkner's Quentin Compson, Grant feels mingled love, loyalty and hatred for the poor plantation community where he was born and raised. He longs to leave the South and is reluctant to assume the level of leadership and involvement that helping Jefferson would require. Eventually, however, the two men, vastly different in potential yet equally degraded by racism, achieve a relationship that transforms them both. Suspense rises as it becomes clear that the integrity of the entire local black community depends on Jefferson's courage. Though the conclusion is inevitable, Gaines invests the story with emotional power and universal resonance. BOMC and QPB alternates.
Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. (Fiction)

Shadow Divers, Robert Kurson

Kurson's exciting account centers on two divers, John Chatterton and Robert Kohler, who in 1991 found an unidentified U-boat embedded in the ocean floor off the coast of New Jersey. The task of identifying it leads them to Germany, Washington, D.C., and the darkest corners of the submarine itself. Some of the most haunting moments occur on land, as when the divers research the lives of the doomed German sailors whose bones they swim among. Once underwater, Kurson's adrenalized prose sweeps you along in a tale of average-guy adventure. (Non-fiction)

Grade 10

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley

A literary classic, Huxley's novel is a satire of a future Utopia. Written in the 1930's, it presents a vision of the effect of science on the human condition. From the vantage point of the 21st century, we can look at Huxley's prophecies and judge for ourselves. (Classic literature)

Ender's Shadow, Orson Scott Card

Nearly starving to death on the streets of a future Earth, Bean is anxious to go to battleschool, where he meets up with Ender, another child genius. In this future world, they become part of a children's army. A parallel novel to the popular story *Ender's Game*, this is a must read. (Science Fiction)

Kaffir Boy, Mark Mathabane

In this powerful account of growing up black in South Africa, a young writer makes us feel intensely the horrors of apartheid. Living illegally in a shanty outside Johannesburg, Johannes (renamed Mark) Mathabane and his illiterate family endured the heartbreak and hopelessness of poverty and the violence of sadistic police and marauding gangs. He describes his drunken father's attempts to inculcate his tribal beliefs and to prevent his son from getting an education, the one means by which he might escape from the ghetto. Encouraged by his determined mother and grandmother, Mathabane taught himself to read English and play tennis, and, through the assistance of U.S. tennis star Stan Smith and his own efforts and intelligence, obtained a tennis scholarship from a South Carolina college in 1978. Now he is a freelance writer in New York. In the course of relating his inspiring story, he explains the anger and hate that his country's blacks feel toward white people and the inevitability of their rebellion against the Afrikaner government. *Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. (Non-fiction)*

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison

Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl, prays every day for beauty. Mocked by other children for the dark skin, curly hair, and brown eyes that set her apart, she yearns for normalcy, for the blond hair and blue eyes that she believes will allow her to finally fit in. Yet as her dream grows more fervent, her life slowly starts to disintegrate in the face of adversity and strife. A powerful examination of our obsession with beauty and conformity, Toni Morrison's virtuosic first novel asks powerful questions about race, class, and gender with the subtlety and grace that have always characterized her writing. (Fiction)

Grade 11

Lords of Discipline, Pat Conroy

Aspiring novelist and basketball player, Will McLean, finds himself a college student at the Carolina Military Institute (The Citadel--thinly disguised). Will was not interested in the military, but he promises his dying father that he will attend his alma mater. Will doesn't exactly excel in military studies, but he's a decent student, an athlete, and his professors and peers recognize him for his integrity and his sense of fairness. Still, this is not an easy time to be a student in a military academy--especially in the South. The Viet Nam War was raging, the military was unpopular and desegregation was knocking on the doors of Southern schools. The Fourth Class system is brutal at best, and most cadets will look on their freshman year and Hell Night as living nightmares. There are also rumors of a powerful and clandestine group of Institute students and alumni called The Ten. While nothing has come forward to prove their existence, the possibility of such a group casts a cloud over the Corps of Cadets. --
Cynthia K. Robertson (Fiction)

The Great Santini, Pat Conroy

The Colonel rules his fighter squadron and his family with an iron fist. While this technique is successful in motivating his pilots, it has disastrous effects on his wife and children. His cruelty (both mental and physical) is enough to crush even the

strongest soul. [Meanwhile his son Ben must fit in at yet another new school; he searches for encouragement there since he cannot find it at home]. -- *Cynthia K. Robertson* (Fiction)

Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison

A world where fathers fly in clouds of rose petals, and women can cast spells... Morrison... lays out before us the complex lives and backgrounds of four generations of black family life in the south. Central is the character Milkman--an unfortunate nickname owed to his lengthy nursing period and delayed coming of age. Although a late starter, Milkman develops into a fundamentally strong person, who eventually learns to cherish his family and the importance of his roots. The narrator breathes life into an intriguing and diverse set of characters--from violent criminals to devout parents. Through them Morrison explores complex social and racial issues using luscious lyrical language. (Fiction)

The Hundred Secret Senses, Amy Tan

Again grounding her novel in family and the workings of fate, Tan (*The Kitchen God's Wife*) spins the tale of two sisters, two cultures, and several acts of betrayal. Kwan, who came to San Francisco from China when she was 18, remains culturally disjointed, a good-natured, superstitious peasant with a fierce belief that she has "yin eyes," which enable her to see ghosts. Kwan's younger half-sister Olivia (or Libby-ah, as Kwan calls her) is supremely annoyed by Kwan's habit of conversing with spirits and treats her with disdain. Despite herself, however, Libby is fascinated by the stories Kwan tells of her past lives, during one of which, in the late 1800s, she claims to have befriended an American missionary who was in love with an evil general. Kwan relates this story in installments that alternate with Libby's narration, which stresses her impatience with Kwan's clinging presence. *Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.* (Fiction)

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien

A finalist for both the 1990 Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, *The Things They Carried* marks a subtle but definitive line of demarcation between Tim O'Brien's earlier works about Vietnam, the memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone* and the fictional *Going After Cacciato*, and this sly, almost hallucinatory book that is neither memoir nor novel nor collection of short stories but rather an artful combination of all three. Vietnam is still O'Brien's theme, but in this book he seems less interested in the war itself than in the myriad different perspectives from which he depicts it. Whereas *Going After Cacciato* played with reality, *The Things They Carried* plays with truth. The narrator of most of these stories is "Tim"; yet O'Brien freely admits that many of the events he chronicles in this collection never really happened. He never killed a man as "Tim" does in "The Man I Killed," and unlike Tim in "Ambush," he has no daughter named Kathleen. But just because a thing never happened doesn't make it any less true. In "On the Rainy River," the character Tim O'Brien responds to his draft notice by driving north, to the Canadian border where he spends six days in a deserted lodge in the company of an old man named Elroy while he wrestles with the choice between dodging the draft or going to war. The real Tim O'Brien never drove north, never found himself in a fishing boat 20 yards off the Canadian shore with a decision to make. The real Tim O'Brien quietly boarded the bus to Sioux Falls and was inducted into the United States Army. But the truth of "On the Rainy River" lies not in facts but in the genuineness of the experience it depicts: both Tims went to a war they didn't believe in; both considered themselves cowards for doing so. Every story in *The Things They Carried* speaks another truth that Tim O'Brien learned in Vietnam; it is this blurred line between truth and reality, fact and fiction that makes his book unforgettable. --*Alix Wilber* (Fiction/Non-fiction)

Grade 12

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak

Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood of tough kids, acid-tongued mothers, and loving fathers who earn their living by the work of their hands. The child arrives having just stolen her first book--although she has not yet learned how to read--and her foster father uses it, *The Gravediggers Handbook*, to lull her to sleep when she's roused by regular nightmares about her younger brother's death. Across the ensuing years of the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Liesel collects more stolen books as well as a peculiar set of friends: the boy Rudy, the Jewish refugee Max, the mayor's reclusive wife (who has a whole library from which she allows Liesel to steal), and especially her foster parents. --*Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA* (Fiction)

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress, Dai Sijie

This beautifully presented novella tracks the lives of two teens, childhood friends who have been sent to a small Chinese village for "re-education" during Mao's Cultural Revolution. Sons of doctors and dentists, their days are now spent muscling buckets of excrement up the mountainside and mining coal. But the boys -- Luo and the unnamed narrator -- receive a bit of a reprieve when the villagers discover their talents as storytellers; they are sent on monthly treks to town, tasked with watching a movie and relating it in detail on their return. It is here that they encounter the little seamstress of the title, whom Luo falls for instantly. When, through a series of comic and clever tricks and favors, the boys acquire a suitcase full of forbidden Western literature, Luo decides to "re-educate" the ignorant girl whom he hopes will become his intellectual match. (Fiction)

***Hot Zone*, Richard Preston**

A highly infectious, deadly virus from the central African rain forest suddenly appears in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. There is no cure. In a few days 90 percent of its victims are dead. A secret military SWAT team of soldiers and scientists is mobilized to stop the outbreak of this exotic "hot" virus. "The Hot Zone" tells this dramatic story, giving a hair-raising account of the appearance of rare and lethal viruses and their "crashes" into the human race. Shocking, frightening, and impossible to ignore, "The Hot Zone" proves that truth really is scarier than fiction. (Fiction)

***A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini**

This book tells the dramatic story of an unlikely friendship between two women, Mariam and Laila, who are married to the same man. The story takes us through each of their lives before the Russians enter Afghanistan, into the horrible years of Taliban rule, and beyond. Watching these women grow in their relationship, we are given a picture of what it has meant to be a woman in Afghanistan during the last four decades. The novel lifts the veil of these women and shows the reader the female face of Afghanistan's population. (Fiction)