

Seekonk High School

Summer Reading Program 2007

It's summer - time for the beach and back yard. Time to read without pressure, **for fun!** Your English teachers have prepared a list of book titles below for your reading pleasure. All students in Standard English are required to read *at least* one selection from the list for their grade level. All students in College and Honors courses are required to read *at least* two selections from the list for their grade level.

In September, **you'll bring your book(s) to class the first day** and you'll receive assignments designed to show that you have completed your reading. During the first several weeks of class, you'll be asked to respond in a variety of ways to the stories and ideas you have encountered in your reading. These assignments will be worth 10% of your first quarter grade in Standard English, and 20% of your first quarter grade in all College and Honors English.

We hope you enjoy the book(s) you choose. If you finish your assignment and enjoyed the book(s), we hope you'll read even more of the book(s)! We have notified local libraries, Walden Books, and Borders Bookstores of this assignment, so you should find copies easily. **Purchase the books early in the summer!** Clearly, purchasing the books would make your fall assignments easier to complete.

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)

***Airborn*, Kenneth Oppel**

Matt Cruse is a cabin boy on the Aurora, a huge airship that sails hundreds of feet above the ocean, ferrying wealthy passengers from city to city. It is the life Matt's always wanted; convinced he's lighter than air, he imagines himself as buoyant as the hydrium gas that powers his ship. One night he meets a dying balloonist who speaks of beautiful creatures drifting through the skies. It is only after Matt meets the balloonist's granddaughter that he realizes that the man's ravings may, in fact, have been true, and that the creatures are completely real and utterly mysterious. In a swashbuckling adventure reminiscent of Jules Verne and Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Oppel, author of the best-selling Silverwing trilogy, creates an imagined world in which the air is populated by transcontinental voyagers, pirates, and beings never before dreamed of by the humans who sail the skies. (Book jacket)

***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)

***Autobiography of My Dead Brother*, Walter Dean Myers**

Funerals for young black men, both murdered in drive-by shootings, begin and end Myers' sobering story about contemporary Harlem teens. Fifteen-year-old Jessie has always seen slightly older Rise as a hero, and the boys made a blood-brother bond as children. Then Rise pulls away, starts dealing drugs and "fronting cool," and Jessie struggles to find his old friend beneath the new persona. His search leads him to art, which is his great talent, and he begins to create a biography of Rise in pictures. Frequent and striking black-and-white

illustrations, done by Christopher Myers, depict pivotal moments from the boys' youth; there are also comics-style panels, in which a bird-boy character asks how best to live and communicate truthfully. What will affect readers most is Jessie's sharp, sometimes poetic first-person voice and the spirited, rhythmic dialogue of other vivid characters, who ask piercing questions about how to survive the violence and hopelessness rooted through a neighborhood's generations. *Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association.*

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

Whale Talk, Chis Crutcher

T. J. Jones is black, Japanese, and white; his given name is The Tao (honest!), and he's the son of a woman who abandoned him when she got heavily into crack and crank. As a child he was full of rage, but now as a senior in high school he's pretty much overcome all that. With the help of a good therapist and his decent, loving, ex-hippie adoptive parents, he's not only fairly even-keeled, he has turned out to be smart and funny. Injustice, however, still fills him with fury.

Touching Spirit Bear, Ben Mikaelson

Cole Matthews is angry, defiant, smug--in short, a bully. Cole is facing a prison sentence. Then a Tlingit Indian parole officer named Garvey enters his life, offering an alternative called Circle Justice, based on Native American traditions, in which victim, offender, and community all work together to find a healing solution. Cole ends up banished for one year to a remote Alaskan island, where his arrogance sets him directly in the path of a mysterious, legendary white bear. Mauled almost to death, Cole awaits his fate and begins the transition from anger to humility.

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.

Fallen Angels, Walter Dean Myers

A riveting tale of the Vietnam war, *Fallen Angels* is realistic fiction at its best. In creating the characters of Richie Perry, Lobel, Johnson, Brunner, and Peewee, Walter Dean Myers gives his reader a look at what the experience of war is all about. (Young adult novel, realistic fiction)

The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd

This is the story of Lily Owen, growing up motherless in the South in the 1960's. She spends a great part of her early years trying in vain

to learn about the mother she lost. When she finally runs away from her heartless father T. Ray, she discovers the truth about her mother as well as a great deal more. This is a powerful and moving story of love and abandonment. (Realistic fiction)

Grade 11

***The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini**

This book follows the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. As children in the relatively stable Afghanistan of the early 1970s, the boys are inseparable. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever, and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted. Even after Amir and his father flee to America, Amir remains haunted by his cowardly actions and disloyalty. In part, it is these demons and the sometimes impossible quest for forgiveness that bring him back to his war-torn native land after it comes under Taliban rule.

***My Sister's Keeper*, Jodi Picoult**

Kate Fitzgerald has a rare form of leukemia. Her sister, Anna, was conceived to provide a donor match for procedures that become increasingly invasive. At 13, Anna hires a lawyer so that she can sue her parents for the right to make her own decisions about how her body is used when a kidney transplant is planned. Meanwhile, Jesse, the neglected oldest child of the family, is out setting fires, which his firefighter father, Brian, inevitably puts out. Picoult ably explores a complex subject with bravado and clarity, and comes up with a heart-wrenching, unexpected conclusion.

***The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fight in Heaven*, Sherman Alexie**

This work chronicles modern life on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Victor, through whose eyes we view the community, is strongly aware of Native American traditions but wonders whether his ancestors view today's Indians--mired in alcohol, violence, and an almost palpable sense of despair--with sympathy or disgust. In spite of the bleakness of reservation life, the text brims with humor and passion as it juxtaposes ancient customs with such contemporary artifacts as electric guitars and diet Pepsi. The author of two previous poetry collections, Alexie writes with grit and lyricism that perfectly capture the absurdity of a proud, dignified people living in the squalor, struggling to survive in a society they disdain.

***Monster*, Walter Dean Myers**

"Monster" is what the prosecutor called 16-year-old Steve Harmon for his supposed role in the fatal shooting of a convenience-store owner. But was Steve really the lookout who gave the "all clear" to the murderer, or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? In this innovative novel by Walter Dean Myers, the reader becomes both juror and witness during the trial of Steve's life. To calm his nerves as he sits in the courtroom, aspiring filmmaker Steve chronicles the proceedings in movie script format. Interspersed throughout his screenplay are journal writings that provide insight into Steve's life before the murder and his feelings about being held in prison during the trial.

***A Walk in the Woods*, Bill Bryson:**

Back in America after twenty years in Britain, Bill Bryson decided to acquaint himself with his native country by walking the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine. The AT offers an astonishing landscape of silent forests and sparkling lakes--and to a writer with the comic genius of Bill Bryson, it also provides endless opportunities to witness the most bizarre and hilarious antics of his fellow human beings.

***My Name is Asher Lev*, Chaim Potok**

Here is the original, deeply moving story of Asher Lev, the religious boy with an overwhelming need to draw, to paint, to render the world he knows and the pain he feels, on canvas for everyone to see. A loner, Asher has an extraordinary gift that possesses a spirit all its own. It is this force that must learn to master without shaming his people or relinquishing any part of his deeply felt Judaism. It will not be easy for him, but he knows, too, that even if it is impossible, it must be done. (New York Times Book Review)

Grade 12

***A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Ismael Beah**

Adult/High School—This gripping story by a children's-rights advocate recounts his experiences as a boy growing up in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, during one of the most brutal and violent civil wars in recent history. Beah, a boy equally thrilled by causing mischief as by memorizing passages from Shakespeare and dance moves from hip-hop videos, was a typical precocious 12-year-old. But rebel forces destroyed his childhood innocence when they hit his village, driving him to leave his home and travel the arid deserts and jungles of Africa. After several months of struggle, he was recruited by the national army, made a full soldier and learned to shoot an AK-47, and hated everyone who came up against the rebels. The first two thirds of his memoir are frightening: how easy it is for a normal boy to transform into someone as addicted to killing as he is to the cocaine that the army makes readily available. But an abrupt change occurred a few years later when agents from the United Nations pulled him out of the army and placed him in a rehabilitation center. Anger and hate slowly faded away, and readers see the first glimmers of Beah's work as an advocate. Told in a conversational, accessible style, this powerful record of war ends as a beacon to all teens experiencing violence around them by showing them that there are other ways to survive than by adding to the chaos.—*Matthew L. Moffett, Pohick Regional Library, Burke, VA* Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc.

***The Alchemist*, Paula Coelho**

This story, dazzling in its simplicity and wisdom, is about an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried in the Pyramids. Along the way he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself king, and an Alchemist, all of whom point Santiago in the direction of his quest. No one knows what the treasure is or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles along the way. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a meditation on the treasures found within. The story of Santiago is an eternal testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

***Shanda's Secrets*, Allan Stratton**

Chanda's family troubles began after her father was killed in the diamond mines. Her first stepfather abused her; the second died of a stroke; the third is a drunken philanderer. Although Chanda lives in a world in which illness and death have become commonplace, it is not one in which AIDS can be mentioned. The horror and desperation of families facing this disease are brought home when she realizes that she might be infected herself. The details of sub-Saharan African life are convincing and smoothly woven into this moving story of poverty and courage, but the real insight for readers will be the appalling treatment of the AIDS victims.

***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.

***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. Distributed by Syndetic Solutions, Inc.

***Born Confused*, Tanuja Dessai Hidier**

Dimple Lala has spent her entire life trying to fit in. In India, she is too American, while in America she feels unable to conform, largely because of her parents' efforts to educate and involve her in Indian culture. By her 17th birthday, she feels incapable of making anyone happy and is hopelessly confused as to where she belongs. Her parents are unhappy about her obsession with photography and her dating

activities, while Dimple herself feels that her best friend, Gwyn, is either ignoring her for a new boyfriend or trying to usurp Dimple's family. Her parents come up with what they think is a perfect solution—they introduce her to Karsh, a suitable boy. Dimple is turned off at the thought. Just when she is sure that things can't get more complicated, she meets him again, now involved in activities that would render him completely unsuitable to her parents but that interest her. By this time Gwyn decides that he seems like the perfect boyfriend for her and Dimple ends up with a number of tricky situations. *Betsy Fraser, Calgary Public Library, Canada* Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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.