

**Oakhurst Library Committee**

**2009 Summer Reading Recommendations** (rev 1)

(Compiled & Edited by Carolyn Copenhaver)

**adult fiction (all genres)**

A Thread of Grace by Mary Doria Russell

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand

Broken for You by Stephanie Kallos

Children of Godby Mary Doria Russell

Coal Run by Tawni O'Dell

Cutting Stone by Abraham Verghese

Ender's Game (as well as the other books in this series) by Orson Scott Card.

Gilead byMarilynne Robinson (2005 Pulitzer Prize)

Home by Marilynne Robinson

Life Sentence by Laura Lippman

Mystic River by Dennis Lehane

Out of the Silent Planet by C.S. Lewis

Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus by Orson

Perelandra by C.S. Lewis

Sarah's Key by Tatiana de Rosnay

Sellevision by Augustin Burroughs (Movie upcoming)

Someone Knows My Name by Lawrence Hill

Tea Time for the Traditionally Built by Alexander McCall Smith

That Hideous Strength by C. S. Lewis

The Given Day by Dennis Lehane

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai

The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara (1975 Pulitzer Prize)

The Private Patient by P.D. James

The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell

The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield

The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox by Maggie O'Farrell

**Adult Nonfiction**

Afoot&AfieldAtlanta: A Comprehensive Hiking Guide by Marcus Woolf

A History of Beauty by Umberto Eco

A Short History of Nearly Everything by Bill Bryson

Human: The Science Behind What Makes Us Unique by Michael S. Gazzaniga

In Defense of Food: An Eaters Manifesto by Michael Pollan

On Ugliness by Umberto Eco

Social Intelligence by Daniel Goldman

The Anatomy of Hope by Jerome Groopman

The Botony of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan

The Dumbest Generation by Mark Bauerline

The Ethical Brain by Michael S. Gazzaniga

The Omnivore's Dilemma: a Natural History of Four Mealsby Michael Pollan

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

The Political Mind by George Lakoff

Second Opinions by Jerome Groopman

Social Intelligence by Daniel Goldman

**memoirs & AUTOBIOGRAPHIES**

A Rumor of War by Phillip Caputo

A Girl Named Zippy by Haven Kimmel

All over but the shouting by Rick Bragg

Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India by Madhur Jaffrey

DRY by Augustin Burroughs

Look me in the eye by John Elder Robison

LET MY PEOPLE GO SURFING: THE EDUCATION OF A RELUCTANT BUSINESSMAN byYvon Chouinard

My Stroke of Insight by Jill Bolte Taylor

Never Have Your Dog Stuffed and Other Things I've Learned by Alan Alda

Running with scissors by Augustin Burroughs

She Got Up Off the Couch by Haven Kimmel

The Prince of Frogtown by Rick Bragg

The Year of Living Biblically by A.J. Jacobs

Things overheard while talking to myself by Alan Alda

When You Are Engulfed in Flames by David Sedaris

**inspirational & religious**

A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story by Dianna Butler Bass

An Altar in the World by Barbara Brown Taylor

Eat Pray Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness by Marc Ian Barasch

First Paul by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan

Redbird by Mary Oliver (Poems)

Saving Jesus From the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus by Robin R. Meyers

Seeking Peace: Chronicles of the Worst Buddhist in the World by Mary Pipher

Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters --and How to Talk About It by Krista Tippett

**Juvenile & Young Adult Fiction**

39 Clues (series of fantasy adventure books published by Scholastic)

How to Steal a Dog by Barbara O'Connor

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George

Sewer, Gas and Electric:The Public Works Trilogy by Matt Ruff

THE LIGHTNING THIEF by Rick Riordan

**Books Selected This Year by the Oakhurst Book Club**

The Shack by William Young

Borrowed Time by Robert Goddard

The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell

Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983 by Barbara Kingsolver

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

Labryinth by Kate Mosse

The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon

**NOTES & REVIEWS FROM OBC READERS (Alphabetical by last name)**

**John Aberle-Grasse**: If you like pictures to go with your reading, I just finished **A History of Beauty**, and **On Ugliness**, both narrated and edited by Umberto Eco. They are fun and his commentary on western aesthetics and our impressions and understanding of symbols in art and pop culture are really great reading. Honest. Not just looking at the pictures

**TRINA BALDWIN:** Assuming that you have a very looonnnggg summer vacation, I recommend Ayn Rand's classic, **Atlas Shrugged**. It is very timely regarding the take-over of industry. I'm just over half-way through it (unabridged on CD).

**Susan Collins:** I am currently enjoying and being challenged by **Saving Jesus From the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus** by Robin R. Meyers

**Carolyn Copenhaver:** Here are some of the books I enjoyed this year:

**Human: The Science Behind What Makes Us Unique** by Michael S. Gazzaniga

**The Ethical Brain** by Michael S. Gazzaniga

**The Political Mind** by George Lakoff

**Tea Time for the Traditionally Built** by Alexander McCall Smith

**The Year of Living Biblically** by A. J. Jacobs

**My Stroke of Insight** by Jill Bolte Taylor

**Redbird** by Mary Oliver (Poems)

**Social Intelligence** by Daniel Goldman (Re-read)

**Lou clymore:** Here are the titles of some books I have recently read:

**Broken for You** by Stephanie Kallos

**Someone Knows My Name** by Lawrence Hill

**Seeking Peace: Chronicles of the Worst Buddhist in the World**by Mary Pipher.

**Mary Jo Crawford:** I have been waiting to be asked to recommend books. At the top of my list is **Gilead**by Marilynne Robinson. I loved this book for a multitude of reasons, primarily because it is beautifully written. This woman has a real gift for the use of words. **Gilead** is the story of an elderly Methodist minister, from a long line of ministers, who is dying of cancer. He knows it, and his much younger wife, his friends, and his congregation also knows of his prognosis. The premise of the book is that he is writing to his young six or seven year old son, who has not yet comprehended that his father is dying. It is the intention of the father to leave behind for his son all the stories and information that he thinks his son will want to know about his father and his heritage (familial and cultural) as the child grows up. The setting of the book is the South post-World War II. I related to this book on many levels, especially when the old preacher recorded stories of his family when he was growing up. You know what kind of stories I refer to if you grew up in the South; think Jerry Gentry writing from Mississippi. I wasn't only entertained by this book; I also spent a good bit of time reflecting on my personal theology as this old preacher argued theological issues or particular points of view within himself. Yes, this book is thought-provoking, but I also learned from this book. Several times I found myself in the midst of one of these theological treatises thinking, "I didn't know that!" One such moment was the explanation for placing crosses on church steeples. This is a slender volume. It can be read quickly; the prose is gorgeous and incredibly lyrical. You will want to take your time and cherish this reading experience. My copy is now annotated, and it took me two months to read!

I am a huge fan of P. D. James, a British mystery writer, who writes what I refer to as "intelligent" mysteries. She has a couple of series, the most famous of which is probably the *Adam Dalgliesh, an Inspector with Scotland Yard*. You may have seen a couple of these novels adapted for television on PBS' "Masterpiece Theatre” I recommend James' newest novel, ***The Private Patient.*** After 30 some years, a successful author unexpectedly decides to have a disfiguring facial scar removed from her face because she "no longer needs it.” The night before the surgery is scheduled, she arrives at the high-priced private plastic surgery clinic where her every wish is a command, and her privacy is of the utmost importance. The clinic is a completely secure facility in a remote location, and there is no concern that there will be any problems protecting her privacy. The intimate setting can only accommodate three clients at a time. With only one other client on the premises, no one anticipates how violently this cherished privacy will be disrupted.

***A Rumor of War*** by Phillip Caputo is my third recommendation. This is a book I picked up in an airport bookstore somewhere. The Vietnam War was my first real experience with questioning national military and international policy, albeit sort of on the sly. Being raised as an independent, perhaps even liberal, thinker in a conservative state like Kentucky, one was judicious in questioning the status quo. Nonetheless, I was thrilled that my brother and later my husband did not have to serve in Vietnam. As I have grown older and presumably wiser, I developed strong pacifist views. This book is a memoir written by a college-educated man who volunteered for the Marines and served in Vietnam. Why would I ever want to read this book? The following quotation on the back cover answers that question. "To call it the best book about Vietnam is to trivialize it. ***A Rumor of War*** is a dangerous and even subversive book, the first to insist--and the insistence is all the more powerful because it is implicit--that the reader ask himself these questions: How would I have acted? To what lengths would I have gone to survive? The sense of self is assaulted, overcome, subverted, and leaving the reader to contemplate the deadening possibility that his own moral safety net might have a hole in it. It is a terrifying thought, and ***A Rumor of War*** is a terrifying book.” (John Gregory Dunne, *Los Angeles Times Book Review)* That excerpt was followed by this one: "Caputo's troubled, searching meditations on the love and hate of war, on fear, and the ambivalent discord warfare can create in the hearts of decent men, are among the most eloquent I have read in modern literature." (William Styron, *The New York Review of Books*.) The first review was like a glove slapping me across the face challenging me to a duel. The second review was stimulating: I deeply appreciate well-written literature. This book was endorsed by William Styron, for heaven's sake! I certainly do not regret the time I spent with this book and I won’t forget it for a long time.

**Becky Drysdale:** I recently enjoyed two novels set during WWII, one in France and one in Italy. **Sarah's Key*,*** by Tatiana de Rosnay, tells how the French rounded up French Jews in Paris and put them in French concentration camps for eventual transport to Auschwitz. In contrast, **A Thread of Grace** by Mary Doria Russell is a story of how the Italians hid Jews from the Nazis.  Both are highly readable accounts that will hold your interest.

**PAUL FICKLIN-ALRED**: Here are a few books that I have read recently that are inspiring and well-written:

**The Botony of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World** by Michael Pollan. Pollan's more recent books, **The Omnivore's Dilemma** and **In Defense of Food**, have deservedly gotten a lot of attention, but this study of the bond between humans and four particular plants (apples, tulips, marijuana, and potatoes) is fascinating.

**The Anatomy of Hope**, and **Second Opinions**, both by Jerome Groopman. Groopman is a physician, professor of medicine, and skilled writer who has incredible insights into compassion, hope, and the rights of the patient in the healing process.

**Ender's Game** (as well as the other books in this series), and **Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus**, by Orson Scott Card. I read a good bit of science fiction, and think that Card is the most gifted sci-fi writer living. His books, although they are often set in the future or alternate realities, focus on the core of what makes us human (and what can strip us of our humanity) and the redemptive nature of community.

And I know that other people have recommended it in previous summer reading lists, but if you haven't read **Three Cups of Tea** by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin yet, please add it to your summer reading list. Mortenson, if he hasn't already, should be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. His story is amazing.

A few comments on authors recommended by other Oakhurstians: **Home** by Marilynne Robinson is the perfect companion to **Gilead**. Elements of the same story are told from other perspectives; reading it reminded me of the Professor's comment to the Pevensie children that sometimes you enter Narnia through a different way. Two earlier books by Mary Doria Russell, author of the incredible **A Thread of Grace**, are among my all-time favorites. **The Sparrow** and **Children of God** are classified as science fiction, but the themes they explore (suffering, grace, redemption, community, and the friction at the intersection of different cultures) translate to any human interaction.

**Nancy Flippin:** I just finished **Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India** by Madhur Jaffrey..Centered on food, it is a very enjoyable read--plus it has great recipes for Indian food in the back!

**Angela hale:**

**Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman** by Yvon Chouinard

**The Prince of Frogtown** by Rick Bragg  
**Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness** by Marc Ian Barasch

**Eat Pray Love**, an inspirational travelogue by Elizabeth Gilbert

Juvenile Books:

**How to Steal a Dog** by Barbara O'Connor

**My Side of the Mountain** by Jean Craighead George

**Lord of the Flies**, William Golding

**Sewer**, **Gas and Electric**: **The Public Works Trilogy** by Matt Ruff

**Carolyn Hall:** A couple of books that I think would be good for vacation reading are **The Thirteenth Tale** by Diane Setterfield and **The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox** by Maggie O'Farrell **The Thirteenth Tale** is a British mystery that has a fascinating family story in it with a huge surprise. **The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox** is about a young woman who receives a phone call from a psychiatric hospital informing her that she must pick up her great aunt (who has been hospitalized there for decades) because the hospital is closing. The young woman did not even know that this great aunt existed. She picks the aunt up but has no idea what to do with this stranger. The family history unfolds, and this book, too, has a huge surprise at the end. Another good book, **The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society** by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, is mainly set on the Channel Island of Guernsey during World War II. The Germans occupied this island for about 5 years. This book recounts what life was like during that time in an interesting way. But it is not a heavy, depressing book at all- quite the opposite. It has extremely interesting characters.

**JIM HOLMES:** For those not in the Divine Feminine Class (like me) I can recommend Barbara Brown Taylor's new book, **An Alter in** **the World**. Here is an excerpt I particularly liked from her chapter entitled "The Practice of Carrying Water": “Many readers of this story [Genesis] have somehow gotten the idea that physical labor is part of God's curse--labor pains for the woman and field labor for the man--until labor itself gets all mixed up with the punishment. Clearly, this is not so. The earthling's first divine job is to till the earth and keep it. If you have ever tilled a rose garden, much less a garden of Eden, then you know that this is difficult to do without getting sore shoulders. Keeping the earth is hard work. You get dirty doing it. You break fingernails and wear holes in the knees of your pants. You wear yourself out. You also remember where you came from, and why. You touch the stuff your bones are made of. You handle the decomposed bodies of trees, leaves, birds, and fallen stars. Your body recognizes its kin. If you have nerve enough, you also foresee your own decomposition. This is not bad knowledge to have. It is the kind that puts other kinds in perspective. Feel that cool dampness. Welcome back to earth, you earthling. Smell that dirt Welcome home, you beloved dust-creature of God." [p. 151]

I am currently reading **The Dumbest Generation**by Emory Professor Mark Bauerline. His book is about the disastrous effects of the digital age on the intellectual development of young people. Bauerline argues that in an "information age" young people are clueless as to how to process and prioritize information intellectually.  So far he has identified trends of illiteracy developing in the youth culture as they "plug in" to cell phones, i-pods, and disengage from reading and analytical thought. This is a good book for educators to read.

**Kate Hauk:** I think there is some value in re-discovering an old book--read long ago, at another time in your life --simply because you've changed since the first reading. It can work both ways, of course. Sometimes you wonder what the fuss was about. Other times, however, you can marvel at writing that has seemed to deepen over time. Two recent re-reads that I've loved more the second time around are **The Grapes of Wrath** by John Steinbeck and **The Killer Angels** by Michael Shaara.

**Katelyn Murphy-McCarthy:** I love memoirs, so that is the genre I read most frequently. Here are some of my recent and not so recent favorites, along with a novel or two I've enjoyed. I liked **Look Me in the Eye** by John Elder Robison, brother of Augustin Burroughs (author of **Running with Scissors**, also very good). It's a memoir about having Aspergers (a form of autism) and not being diagnosed until age 40. The hardcover is the original, and the paperback has cleaned-up language so that it can be used in schools. I also liked **Sellevision**, a very funny novel by Burroughs, soon to be made into a movie. More difficult by far was **Dry**, his memoir of his alcoholism and recovery. I loved **When You Are Engulfed in Flames** by David Sedaris and everything else by this writer. **A Girl Named Zippy** and **She Got Up Off the Couch** by Haven Kimmel are both excellent, and I think about them a lot, even though I read them a couple of years ago. I just listened to **Coal Run** by Tawni O'Dell and was shocked to really like it. I'm from coal country in PA and Penn State is my alma mater, both true of the main character in this book, so maybe that's why I liked it so much. I am enjoying my 10-year-old's reading out loud to me **The Lightening Thief** by Rick Riordan. And my son really likes the **39 Clues** series of fantasy adventurebooks for kids.

**Roy quincy:** I recommend **Cutting Stone** by Abraham Verghese

**Terri Sarratt:** I thought the book, ***The Given Day*** by Dennis Lehane, author of ***Mystic River***, was awfully good.

**ken stone:** Well, I can't say I've read much recently, but while we're dancing around sci-fi/fantasy and the outskirts of Narnia, let me suggest ***Perelandra***, ***Out of the Silent Planet***, and ***That Hideous Strength*** all by C. S. Lewis. The details blur together since it has been about 20 years since I read them, but the story thread that stands out has a Christian man from Earth, named Ransom, arriving on Venus shortly before the Temptation of Venus' First Man and First Woman. All three books are entertaining as summer reads, but also have intricacies of thought and word-imagery that enriched my experience of Christian revelation.

**Bill swinson**: Fran recommended that I read ***Things Overheard While Talking to Myself*** by Alan Alda (Large Print Edition). It is a nice train ride read. (I'm almost through.) It is a reflection of what he has learned from the speeches he has given and from his friends and family.

**Karen Thomas Smith:**  My book club read Kiran Desai's **The Inheritance of Loss**. It's a devastating critique of post-colonial India, the way colonialism gets into the soul and presides over the falling apart of community. I argued with my friends over whether or not it was hopeful enough. Her use of language is fabulous.

**Rebecca Waugh**: Here are a few really good books:

**Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness** by Marc Ian Barasch

**Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters --and How to Talk About It** by Krista Tippett

**A Short History of Nearly Everything** by Bill Bryson

**WARREN WOOLF:** When I saw the note from Angela Hale in which she suggested Rick Braggs' **The Prince of Frogtown**, I decided that I would like to suggest another by the same author, **All Over But the Shouting*.*** Rick was born and grew up near my hometown in Alabama. Some may remember the column he wrote for the *NYTimes* about a hurricane which destroyed a little Methodist church in that community and also killed the daughter of the woman minister of the church. It won a Pulitzer Prize. He is an engaging writer. Ihad not thought of it for this suggested list, but I was encouraged to make another suggestion: Marcus Woolf is the grandson of my brother, and he has written a book which should have some appeal to those of you who enjoy trail-walking.  His book, **Afoot and Afield** gives very detailed descriptions of walking trails all over the North Georgia area--I think he describes more than 100 of those trails. No, I don't receive any of the royalties!

**Steve Vellines:** Here are 4 suggestions from my reading this past year that I think would be good summer reading fare (2 fiction and 2 nonfiction religious): **Life Sentence** by Laura Lippman. Main character writer Cassandra Fallows achieved critical and commercial success with a memoir of her Baltimore childhood growing up in the 1960s and a follow-up memoir dealing with her adult marriages and affairs. But the merely modest success of her debut novel leads her back to nonfiction and the possibility of a book about a grade school classmate Calliope Jenkins. Accused of murdering her infant son, Jenkins spent seven years in prison steadfastly declining to answer any questions about the disappearance and presumed death of her son. Fallows (white) tries to reconnect with three former classmate friends (black) to compare memories of Jenkins and research her story. In the process, she discovers the gulf (partially racial) that separates her memories of events from her black classmates.

**The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society** by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. January, 1946: London is emerging from the shadow of the Second World War, and writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. Who could imagine that she would find it in a letter from a man she's never met, Dawsey Adams, a native of the island of Guernsey, who has come across her name in a book. As Juliet and her new correspondent exchange letters, Juliet is drawn into the world of Dawsey and his friends and what a wonderfully eccentric world it is***. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*** *is* a book club born as a spur-of-the-moment alibi when its members were discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying their island boasts an outstanding cast of characters, from pig farmers to phrenologists, literature lovers all. Juliet begins a remarkable conversation in letters with the Society's members, learning about their lives, their island, their taste in books, and the impact the recent German occupation has had on all of them. Over time, and despite a demanding and dramatic life in London, she finds herself drawn to the self-contained Dawsey Adams, and to the story of Elizabeth, a young woman whose bright spirit and strength live on in the daughter she left behind when she was sent to a concentration camp. Juliet knows she has found the subject of her book, and possibly much more, and sets sail for Guernsey, changing the course of her life forever. A celebration of the written word in all its guises, ***The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*** is the debut novel by the aunt-and-niece team of Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows.

***First Paul***by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Paul is second only to Jesus as the most important person in the birth of Christianity, and yet he continues to be controversial, even among Christians. How could the letters of Paul be used both to inspire radical grace and to endorse systems of oppression condoning slavery, subordinating women, and condemning homosexual behavior? Borg and Crossan use the best of biblical and historical scholarship to explain the reasons for Paul's mixed reputation and reveal to us what scholars have known for decades: that the later letters of Paul were created by the early church to dilute Paul's egalitarian message and transform him into something more "acceptable." Borg and Crossan argue there are actually "Three Pauls" in the New Testament: "The Radical Paul" (of the seven genuine letters), "The Conservative Paul" (of the three disputed epistles), and "The Reactionary Paul" (of the three inauthentic letters). By closely examining this progression of Paul's letters from the authentic to the inauthentic, the authors show how the apostle was slowly but steadily "deradicalized" to fit Roman social norms in regard to slavery, patriarchy, and patronage. In truth, Paul was an appealing apostle of Jesus and remarkably faithful to the message of Jesus himself –as expressed in his vision of life “in Christ.”

***A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story*** by Dianna Butler Bass. Reviewer Matthew Shaer (The *Washington Post's* *Book World*), explains Bass’s thesis: "Western Christianity is suffering from a bad case of spiritual amnesia," Diana Butler Bass writes in her illuminating new history. The barb is aimed not at conservatives -- "those asserting certainty" -- but liberal Christians, assailed by "secular humanists and their self-assured religious cousins" and caught between "rejecting the past and bearing its weight." Bass's primary goal in this book is to restore what she calls "Great Command Christianity," a reference to the tale of the Good Samaritan and Jesus’ subsequent admonition to "go and do likewise." Bass explores the myriad ways in which that teaching has been interpreted and embodied. The result is sometimes subversive and often joyful: In Bass's telling, Jesus is a "religious revolutionary" who led a People's Crusade of "humility, hospitality, and love." Readers seeking a scholarly approach may want to look elsewhere; the writing here is deeply personal and airily structured. What emerges is a persuasive argument that the real traditions of the church are "faith, hope, and love entwined."