

Upper School Summer Reading – 2024

A Better Man by Michael Ian Black

In a world in which the word masculinity now often goes hand in hand with toxic, comedian, actor, and father Michael Ian Black offers up a way forward for boys, men, and anyone who loves them. Part memoir, part advice book, and written as a heartfelt letter to his college-bound son, *A Better Man* reveals Black's own complicated relationship with his father, explores the damage and rising violence caused by the expectations placed on boys to "man up," and searches for the best way to help young men be part of the solution, not the problem. "If we cannot allow ourselves vulnerability," he writes, "how are we supposed to experience wonder, fear, tenderness? Honest, funny, and hopeful, Black skillfully navigates the complex gender issues of our time and delivers a poignant answer to an urgent question: How can we be, and raise, better men?"

The Book of Urizen by William Blake

One of Blake's most interesting and powerful creations, *The Book of Urizen* represents a parody of the book of Genesis, in which the righteous figure of God is replaced by that of Urizen, the "dark power" and obstacle to spiritual life. With "the voice of honest indignation," Blake compels readers to recognize and overcome their inner adversary in order to rise to higher levels of perception.

The Caped Crusade: Batman and the Rise of Nerd Culture by Glen Weldon

Since his creation, Batman has been many things: a two-fisted detective; a planet-hopping gadabout; a campy Pop-art sensation; a pointy-eared master spy; and a grim and gritty ninja of the urban night. For more than three quarters of a century, he has cycled from a figure of darkness to one of lightness and back again; he's a bat-shaped Rorschach inkblot who takes on the various meanings our changing culture projects onto him. How we perceive Batman's character, whether he's delivering dire threats in a raspy Christian Bale growl or trading blithely homoerotic double-entendres with partner Robin on the comics page, speaks to who we are and how we wish to be seen by the world. It's this endlessly mutable quality that has made him so enduring.

And it's Batman's fundamental nerdiness—his gadgets, his obsession, his oath, even his lack of superpowers—that uniquely resonates with his fans who feel a fiercely protective love for the character. Today, fueled by the internet, that breed of passion for elements of popular culture is everywhere. Which is what makes Batman the perfect lens through which to understand geek culture, its current popularity, and social significance.

Child of My Heart by Alice McDermott

The beautiful child of older parents, raised on the eastern end of Long Island, Theresa is her town's most sought-after babysitter—cheerful, poised, an effortless storyteller, a wonder with children and animals. Among her charges this fateful summer is Daisy, her younger cousin, who has come to spend a few quiet weeks in this bucolic place. While Theresa copes with the challenges presented by the neighborhood's waiflike children, the tumultuous households of her employers, the attentions of an aging painter, and Daisy's fragility of body and spirit, her precocious, tongue-in-cheek sense of order is tested as she makes the perilous crossing into adulthood.

In her deeply etched rendering of all that happened that seemingly idyllic season, Alice McDermott once again peers into the depths of everyday life with inimitable insight and grace. As Margaret Atwood wrote in *The New York Review of Books*, *Child of My Heart* is “richly textured [and] intricately woven . . . A work not only of, but about, the imagination.”

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Jerry Renault ponders the question on the poster in his locker: Do I dare disturb the universe? Refusing to sell chocolates in the annual Trinity school fund-raiser may not seem like a radical thing to do. But when Jerry challenges a secret school society called The Vigils, his defiant act turns into an all-out war. Now the only question is: Who will survive? First published in 1974, Robert Cormier's groundbreaking novel, an unflinching portrait of corruption and cruelty, has become a modern classic.

The Courage to Be Disliked by Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga

The Courage to Be Disliked unfolds as a dialogue between a philosopher and a young man, who, over the course of five enriching conversations realizes that each of us is in control of our life's direction, independent of past burdens and expectations of others. Can people change themselves? Who do we actually compete against? How can we be free? What does happiness mean? Should we pursue being the best or embrace being ordinary? It is not difficult to find answers to these questions over the course of these five nights of conversation between a youth and a philosopher. In this dialogue, the youth represents you and me; the philosopher is an incarnation of the psychologist Alfred Adler. Together they explore some of life's fundamental truths. If you seek enlightenment and want to understand how you can live in a less complex and confusing way, with a freer and more joyous mindset, this book will be of great help.

Dear Martin by Nic Stone

Justyce is a good kid, an honor student, and always there to help a friend—but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs without cause.

When faced with injustice, Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. But do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out. Then comes the day Justyce and a friend spark the fury of an off-duty cop. Words fly, shots are fired, and the boys get caught in the crosshairs. But in the media fallout, it's Justyce who is under attack.

Early Departures by Justin A. Reynolds

What if you could bring your best friend back to life—but only for a short time? Jamal's best friend, Q, doesn't know that he died, and that he's about to die . . . again. He doesn't know that Jamal tried to save him. And that the reason they haven't been friends for two years is because Jamal blames Q for the accident that killed his parents. But what if Jamal could have a second chance? A new technology allows Q to be reanimated for a few weeks before he dies . . . permanently. And Q's mom is not about to let anyone ruin this miracle by telling Q about his impending death. So how can Jamal fix everything if he can't tell Q the truth? *Early Departures* weaves together loss, grief, friendship, and love to form a wholly unique homage to the bonds that bring people together for life—and beyond.

Every Summer After by Carley Fortune

They say you can never go home again, and for Persephone Fraser, ever since she made the biggest mistake of her life a decade ago, that has felt too true. Instead of glittering summers on the lakeshore of her childhood, she spends them in a stylish apartment in the city, going out with friends, and keeping everyone a safe distance from her heart. Until she receives the call that sends her racing back to Barry's Bay and into the orbit of Sam Florek—the man she never thought she'd have to live without. For six summers, through hazy afternoons on the water and warm summer nights working in his family's restaurant and curling up together with books—medical textbooks for him and work-in-progress horror short stories for her—Percy and Sam had been inseparable. Eventually that friendship turned into something breathtakingly more, before it fell spectacularly apart. When Percy returns to the lake for Sam's mother's funeral, their connection is as undeniable as it had always been. But until Percy can confront the decisions she made and the years she's spent punishing herself for them, they'll never know whether their love might be bigger than the biggest mistakes of their past. Told over the course of six years and one weekend, *Every Summer After* is a big, sweeping nostalgic story of love and the people and choices that mark us forever.

The Fifth Season by N. K. Jemisin

This is the way the world ends. . .for the last time.

It starts with the great red rift across the heart of the world's sole continent, spewing ash that blots out the sun. It starts with death, with a murdered son and a missing daughter. It starts with betrayal, and long dormant wounds rising up to fester.

This is the Stillness, a land long familiar with catastrophe, where the power of the earth is wielded as a weapon. And where there is no mercy.

Read the first book in the critically acclaimed, three-time Hugo award-winning trilogy by NYT bestselling author N. K. Jemisin.

Ghachar Ghochar by Vivek Shanbhag

'It's true what they say — it's not we who control money, it's the money that controls us. When there's only a little, it behaves meekly; when it grows, it becomes brash and has its way with us.'

From a cramped, ant-infested house to a spacious bungalow, a family finds itself making a transition in many ways. The narrator, a sensitive young man, is numbed by the swirl around him. All he can do is flee every day to an old-world cafe, where he seeks solace from an oracular waiter. As members of the family realign their equations and desires, new strands are knotted, others come apart, and conflict brews dangerously in the background. Masterfully translated from the Kannada by Srinath Perur, *Ghachar Ghochar* is a suspenseful, playful and ultimately menacing story about the shifting consequences of success.

Happy Place by Emily Henry

Harriet and Wyn have been the perfect couple since they met in college—they go together like salt and pepper, honey and tea, lobster and rolls. Except, now—for reasons they're still not discussing—they don't.

They broke up five months ago. And still haven't told their best friends.

Which is how they find themselves sharing a bedroom at the Maine cottage that has been their friend group's yearly getaway for the last decade. Their annual respite from the world, where for one vibrant, blissful week they leave behind their daily lives; have copious amounts of cheese, wine, and seafood; and soak up the salty coastal air with the people who understand them most.

Only this year, Harriet and Wyn are lying through their teeth while trying not to notice how desperately they still want each other. Because the cottage is for sale and this is the last week they'll all have together in this place. They can't stand to break their friends' hearts, and so they'll play their parts. Harriet will be the driven surgical resident who never starts a fight, and Wyn will be the laid-back charmer who never lets the cracks show. It's a flawless plan (if you look at it from a great distance and through a pair of sunscreen-smear sunglasses). After years of being in love, how hard can it be to fake it for one week...in front of those who know you best?

Hollin by Garrett Ruley

Hollin is a thirteen year old part human, part tree-spirit, and like all boys his age, he wants to be powerful. When his enlightened tree-spirit grandfather, Blueberry, encourages Hollin to pursue his own tree-spirit side, adventures and new relationships begin. Aided by his witty and fierce griffin, Maple, Hollin learns Spiritspeak, earth-based healing, and the art of drawing mental focus and physical strength from nature's forces. Ultimately, Hollin is called on to use these powers to fight Máitradúlor, earth's enemy. Through battle, relationships, and self-doubt, Hollin comes to realize truths about himself, the earth, and the nature of real power.

House of Leaves by Mark Z. Danielewski

A young family moves into a small home on Ash Tree Lane where they discover something is terribly wrong: their house is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. Of course, neither Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Will Navidson nor his companion Karen Green was prepared to face the consequences of that impossibility, until the day their two little children wandered off and their voices eerily began to return another story—of creature darkness, of an ever-growing abyss behind a closet door, and of that unholy growl which soon enough would tear through their walls and consume all their dreams.

****Please be mindful of yourself as you read and stop if you need to as this book explores many difficult themes.****

Trigger warnings: graphic depictions of violence, character death, animal death, cheating, sexually explicit scenes including rape and implied child rape, child abuse and neglect.

Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth by Noa Tishby

Israel. The small strip of arid land is 5,700 miles away but remains a hot-button issue and a thorny topic of debate. But while everyone seems to have a strong opinion about Israel, how many people actually know the facts?

Here to fill in the information gap is Israeli American Noa Tishby. But “this is not your Bubbie’s history book” (Bill Maher, host of Real Time with Bill Maher). Instead, offering a fresh, 360-degree view, Tishby brings her “passion, humor, and deep intimacy” (Yossi Klein Halevi, New York Times bestselling author of Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor) to the subject, creating an accessible and dynamic portrait of a tiny country of outsized relevance. Through bite-sized chunks of history and deeply personal stories, Tishby chronicles her homeland’s evolution, beginning in Biblical times and moving forward to cover everything from WWI to Israel’s creation to the disputes dividing the country today. Tackling popular misconceptions with an abundance of facts, Tishby provides critical context around headline-generating controversies and offers a clear, intimate account of the richly cultured country of Israel.

The Lemon Tree by Sandy Tolan

In 1967, Bashir Khairi, a twenty-five-year-old Palestinian, journeyed to Israel with the goal of seeing the beloved stone house with the lemon tree behind it that he and his family had fled nineteen years earlier. To his surprise, when he found the house he was greeted by Dalia Eshkenazi Landau, a nineteen-year-old Israeli college student, whose family left Europe for Israel following the Holocaust. On the stoop of their shared home, Dalia and Bashir began a rare friendship, forged in the aftermath of war and tested over the next half century in ways that neither could imagine on that summer day in 1967. Sandy Tolan brings the Israeli-Palestinian conflict down to its most human level, demonstrating that even amid the bleakest political realities there exist stories of hope and transformation.

Lisey's Story by Stephen King

Lisey Debusher Landon lost her husband, Scott, two years ago, after a twenty-five-year marriage of the most profound and sometimes frightening intimacy. Scott was an award-winning, bestselling novelist and a very complicated man. Early in their relationship, before they married, Lisey had to learn from him about books and blood and bools. Later, she understood that there was a place Scott went -- a place that both terrified and healed him, that could eat him alive or give him the ideas he needed in order to live. Now it's Lisey's turn to face Scott's demons, Lisey's turn to go to Boo'ya Moon. What begins as a widow's effort to sort through the papers of her celebrated husband becomes a nearly fatal journey into the darkness he inhabited. Perhaps King's most personal and powerful novel, *Lisey's Story* is about the wellsprings of creativity, the temptations of madness, and the secret language of love.

Mad Honey by Jennifer Finney Boylan and Jodi Picoult

Single mom and domestic abuse survivor Olivia has escaped her past and built a new life for herself and her son, Asher, in a small town. When Asher is arrested for the murder of his girlfriend, Lily, she risks everything to defend him – even as it turns her life upside down.

Martyr! by Kaveh Akbar

Kaveh Akbar's *Martyr!* is a paean to how we spend our lives seeking meaning—in faith, art, ourselves, others—in which a newly sober, orphaned son of Iranian immigrants, guided by the voices of artists, poets, and kings, embarks on a search that leads him to a terminally ill painter living out her final days in the Brooklyn Museum.

Cyrus Shams is a young man grappling with an inheritance of violence and loss: his mother's plane was shot down over the skies of Tehran in a senseless accident; and his father's life in America was circumscribed by his work killing chickens at a factory farm in the Midwest. Cyrus is a drunk, an addict, and a poet, whose obsession with martyrs leads him to examine the mysteries of his past—toward an uncle who rode through Iranian battlefields dressed as the Angel of death to inspire and comfort the dying, and toward his

mother, through a painting discovered in a Brooklyn art gallery that suggests she may not have been who or what she seemed.

Electrifying, funny, wholly original, and profound, *Martyr!* heralds the arrival of a blazing and essential new voice in contemporary fiction.

A Memory Called Empire by Arkady Martine

Summary: Ambassador Mahit Dzmare is posted far from her mining station's home, to the Empire's glorious capital. Yet when she arrives, she discovers her predecessor was murdered. But no one will admit his death wasn't accidental – and she might be next. Mahit must navigate the capital's deadly halls of power while hunting the killer. She must also somehow stop the Empire from annexing her fiercely independent colony. As she sinks deeper into this seductive yet unfamiliar culture, Mahit engages in intrigues of her own. For she's hiding an extraordinary technological secret, one which might destroy her station and its way of life. Or it might save them all from annihilation.

The Naturalists by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

The book follows Cassie, a teenager with a natural talent for profiling people based on a careful study of their behavior. Cassie meets other teenagers with similar abilities when she joins a special FBI program meant to use their skills to solve murders.

Now Is Not the Time to Panic by Kevin Wilson

Sixteen-year-old Frankie Budge— aspiring writer, indifferent student, offbeat loner—is determined to make it through yet another summer in Coalfield, Tennessee, when she meets Zeke, a talented artist who has just moved into his grandmother's house and who is as awkward as Frankie is. Romantic and creative sparks begin to fly, and when the two jointly make an unsigned poster, shot through with an enigmatic phrase, it becomes unforgettable to anyone who sees it. The edge is a shantytown filled with gold seekers. We are fugitives, and the law is skinny with hunger for us. The posters begin appearing everywhere, and people wonder who is behind them and start to panic. Satanists, kidnappers—the rumors won't stop, and soon the mystery has dangerous repercussions that spread far beyond the town.

Twenty years later, Frances Eleanor Budge gets a call that threatens to upend her carefully built life: a journalist named Mazzy Brower is writing a story about the Coalfield Panic of 1996. Might Frances know something about that?

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man was ranked by Modern Library as the third greatest English-language novel of the 20th century. It is a semi-autobiographical novel chronicling the spiritual and intellectual awakening and rebellion of Stephen Dedalus against the conventions into which he was born. Exuberantly inventive in style, the novel subtly and

beautifully orchestrates the patterns of quotation and repetition instrumental in its hero's quest to create his own character, his own language, life, and art: "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."

Shosha by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Shosha is a hauntingly lyrical love story set in Jewish Warsaw on the eve of its annihilation. Aaron Greidinger, an aspiring Yiddish writer and the son of a distinguished Hasidic rabbi, struggles to be true to his art when faced with the chance at riches and a passport to America. But as he and the rest of the Writers' Club wait in horror for Nazi Germany to invade Poland, Aaron rediscovers Shosha, his childhood love-still living on Krochmalna Street, still mysteriously childlike herself-who has been waiting for him all these years.

The Toll by Neil Shusterman

It's been three years since Rowan and Citra disappeared; since Scythe Goddard came into power; since the Thunderhead closed itself off to everyone but Grayson Tolliver. In this pulse-pounding conclusion to New York Times bestselling author Neil Shusterman's Arc of a Scythe trilogy, constitutions are tested and old friends are brought back from the dead.

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

The classic gothic tale of passion and obsession. Lockwood, the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange, situated on the bleak Yorkshire moors, is forced to seek shelter one night at Wuthering Heights, the home of his landlord. There he discovers the history of the tempestuous events that took place years before. What unfolds is the tale of the intense love between the gypsy foundling Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. Catherine, forced to choose between passionate, tortured Heathcliff and gentle, well-bred Edgar Linton, surrendered to the expectations of her class. As Heathcliff's bitterness and vengeance at his betrayal is visited upon the next generation, their innocent heirs must struggle to escape the legacy of the past.