

Summer Reading 2009 "You Choose" List

Fiction (12 titles)

1. Anderson, Laurie Halse Chains [historical fiction, female main character] *#



Slaves Isabel and Ruth are shipped to New York in May 1776. Isabel, overhearing her Loyalist master's scheme to kill George Washington, helps foil the plot. Her role forgotten by the Patriots, Isabel realizes it's up to her alone to find freedom. Anderson's novel is remarkable for its strong sense of place and nuanced portrait of slavery during the Revolutionary War. (1,2,3)

2. Bauer, Joan Peeled [realistic fiction, female main character]*#



Something's rotten in the rural apple-farming town of Banesville...and a doomsaying ghost (and the accompanying public panic) is only the tip of the iceberg. Ace reporter Hildy Biddle is determined to expose the ominous depths. Between her dogged pursuit of the truth, the gruff leadership of hardboiled, washed-up champion of journalistic integrity Baker Polton, and some serious dirt, Hildy's high school paper soon emerges as a legitimate media contender -- and a target. With the obfuscating mayor and the smug editor-in-chief of the town newspaper standing in her way, the odds of effecting any change are steep, but the more Hildy learns about the mystery at hand, the more important her mission becomes. (4)

3. Cashore, Kristin Graceling [fantasy, female main character]*



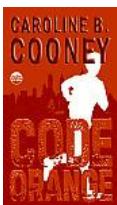
Lady Katsa was born with a hyper-developed talent for killing. She rebels against her thuggish uncle, the king, by forming the Council, a sort of social justice league, and is drawn into a mystery involving secrets, greed, and kidnapping. With creepy villains, romance, and a butt-kicking but emotionally vulnerable heroine, the story will appeal to fans of girl-power fantasy. (1,3,5,6)

4. Collins, Suzanne Hunger games [fantasy, female main character]*#



Katniss volunteers to represent her district in the Hunger Games, a compulsory, government-sponsored reality-TV show from which only one of twenty-four teenage contestants will emerge alive. A fierce, resourceful competitor, Katniss also displays great compassion and vulnerability. The twists and turns are addictive in this compulsively readable blend of science fiction, romance, and social commentary. (1,2,3,5,6,7)

5. Cooney, Caroline B. Code Orange



Mitty Blake is a talented but underachieving student in advanced biology at a New York City private high school. He is more interested in his friend Olivia than in completing his infectious-disease report, which could keep him from flunking. When he discovers a smallpox scab in an envelope in an old medical book, his research takes a somewhat urgent turn as he tries to determine whether he has contracted the disease. Searching for information on the Internet (thankfully, the high-achieving Olivia knows how to use a library), he inadvertently alerts a terrorist group to his situation. They kidnap Mitty with the intention of using him as a human biological weapon against the people of New York.

6. Doctorow, Cory Little brother [terrorism fiction, male and female char.]*#



Doctorow's impassioned consideration of the War on Terror dovetails with themes of teenage angst, rebellion, and paranoia. After a San Francisco terrorist attack, teen Marcus is interrogated. Released, he applies his formidable technological savvy to thwarting efforts to restrict personal liberty. The book makes interesting digressions into history, politics, social commentary, and technology; issues of friendship, romance, loyalty, and betrayal add layers. (1,3,5,6,8)

7. Heath, Jack

The Lab [science fiction, male main character]*



Agent Six of Hearts is the strongest, most effective agent in the Deck, a team of agents fighting to uphold justice in a corrupt futuristic world. Mission after mission, Six seems to be invincible. Only his true identity as the product of an illegal experiment by the Lab, a ruthless division of the corporation that now controls the world, can stop him. On a mission that leads him into the Lab, Six is captured and finds himself under the guard of Kyntak, a boy whose past is the same as his own. Together they must face the most dangerous mission yet. High adventure with lots of action makes this a novel boys will love. The epilogue leaves the story open for a sequel for girls. The 22-year-old author started writing this novel before he graduated from high school. (none)

8. Jones, V. M.

Out of reach [fiction, male main character]*



Pip McLeod is pressured by his aggressively competitive father to play soccer, but finds fulfillment and success by secretly pursuing indoor rock climbing, a sport he actually enjoys. (none)

9. Korman, Gordon

Juvie Three [realistic fiction, male main character]*



Three boys who have nothing in common except for the trouble they have caused find themselves sharing a very unique experience. Taken from different detention facilities, these boys are selected for an experimental halfway house in New York City with only one adult supervising them. The boys know they must follow the rules in order to have a chance at starting over. Just as they begin their new life, their supervisor is accidentally injured and has amnesia as a result. While he is hospitalized, the boys know that if anyone suspects their supervisor is not living with them, they will go back to their original "juvie" assignments. The author does a good job of presenting a realistic plot, and realistic outcomes. Male readers, especially, will enjoy that the author does not gloss over the crimes, or the life that each boy experiences while in "juvie." (none)

10. Lupika, Mike

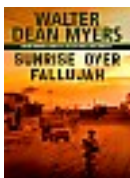
The Big Field



Keith Hutchinson, 14, plays in the American Legion 17-and-under league with the Boynton Beach Cardinals. His dream includes taking his team to the Florida state finals and sharing his passion with his father, a local shortstop legend whose failed major league career has left him aloof, despondent, and incommunicative. After losing his beloved shortstop position to cocky, talented newcomer Darryl Williams, Hutch becomes a standout at second base and is elected team captain. However, when he finds his father working out with Darryl, jealousy and anger threaten to derail Hutch's dream, team, and family.

11. Myers, Walter Dean

Sunrise over Fallujah (Iran war) [historical fiction African-American male main character]*



Instead of heading to college as his father wishes, Robin leaves Harlem and joins the army to stand up for his country after 9/11. While stationed in Iraq with a war looming that he hopes will be averted, he begins writing letters home to his parents and to his Uncle Richie, the main character from Myers's acclaimed Vietnam War novel, *Fallen Angels* (Scholastic, 1988). Robin finds himself in a diverse Civil Affairs unit of both men and women, with a mission to serve as a buffer between winning over the Iraqi people and concurrent military operations. As the war unfolds, the military angle of Robin's job escalates, and he experiences increasing horrors of violence, death, destruction, insecurity, sorrow, and extreme fear. Ultimately, he comprehends the reasons Uncle Richie never wanted to talk to their family about what happened in Vietnam, saying, "are there really enough words to make them understand?" (3,5)

12. Pearson, Mary

The adoration of Jenna Fox [fantasy, female main char.]*#



The ethics of bioengineering in the not-so-distant future drives this story. Jenna, 17, severely injured in a car crash, is saved by her heartbroken father, a scientist who illegally uses the latest medical technology to help her. Only 10 per cent of her original brain is saved, but Dad has programmed her by uploading the high-school curriculum. She could live two years, or 200. Is she a monster or a miracle? Why have her parents hidden her away? The science (including allusions to the dangerous overuse of antibiotics) and the science fiction are fascinating, but what will hold readers most are the moral issues of betrayal, loyalty, sacrifice, and survival. Jenna realizes it is her parents' love that makes them break the law to save her at any cost. (1,4,5)

13. Rorby, Ginny

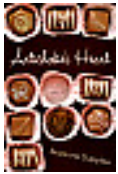
Hurt go happy [realistic fiction, female main character]*



After befriending baby chimpanzee Sukari and her kindly caretaker, thirteen-year-old Joey, deaf since she was six, learns to sign-against her mother's wishes. Complex characters and a humanizing exploration of diverse issues make this a rewarding and rarely didactic read. The broad timespan forces Rorby to abandon some tantalizing tangents, but the story nevertheless inspires an awareness of animal rights. (none)

14. Supplee, Suzanne

Artichoke's Heart [realistic fiction, female main character]*



Cursed with the nickname "the Artichoke" after wearing an ill-chosen green jacket to school way back in sixth grade, Rosemary continues to cope with the cool kids' disdain by making food her friend. It's a treacherous ally, though, and when she tops 200 pounds, she decides to make radical changes and begins to lose some serious weight. Then, Rosemary discovers that an A-list girl wants to befriend her, the boy she adores returns her feelings, and (most incredible of all) her mother has cancer. Rosemary's wry first-person narration deftly portrays characters in her single-parent family, her high school, her mother's beauty salon, and her Tennessee town. Jolted by fears of losing her mother, Rosemary begins to look beyond her previous preoccupations to see other people's vulnerabilities as well as their more evident flaws. (4)

Nonfiction (4 titles)

Busby, Cylin

The year we disappeared [363.2 Bus]*



Before August 31, 1979, nine-year-old Cylin's biggest worry was avoiding her grumpy neighbor. Then her family's life changed forever when her father, a Cape Cod policeman, was shot on his drive to work. Horribly injured, with most of his lower jaw blown away, John Busby somehow managed to stop his car and run for help. Although John was convinced he knew his attacker's identity, the investigation mysteriously stalled, and the Busby family was given 24-hour protection during the long experimental effort to reconstruct John's face. Eventually the family went into hiding, starting over in another state. In alternating chapters, John and Cylin Busby tell the story of John's ordeal and the devastating impact on his family. John's laconic, just-the-facts-ma'am style underscores the horror he was enduring, while Cylin's perspective drives home the fear and emotional misery the family suffered. The appalling physical injuries may deter the squeamish, but this riveting story will stay with readers, particularly its message that John's anger and desire for revenge were the hardest wounds to heal. (3)

Ellis, Deborah

Off to war; voices of soldiers' children (303.6)*



Ellis interviews American and Canadian children whose parents have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Chapters begin with an introduction; the rest is told in the children's words. Especially interesting is their honesty about what happens when the parent comes home. Readers will empathize with these young people whose lives have been upended by circumstances beyond their control. (none)

Kuklin, Susan

No choirboy, murder, violence and teenagers on death row (364.66)*



"Are you the sum total of your worst acts?" asks Bryan Stevenson, an anti-death penalty attorney, in the epigraph. The book opens with candid interviews that introduce three inmates, all of them teenagers when they committed their crimes. Next we meet family

members of victims and inmates to see how these crimes and sentences affect them, and finally return to Stevenson again to learn about his advocacy efforts. These profiles paint an unrelentingly cruel picture of the prison system and capital punishment, and while the book is neither comprehensive nor balanced in its treatment of the issues, it is remarkably successful at putting human faces on them, while raising the point that punishment often has as much to do with race, class, prejudice, and compromise as it does with justice. This eye-opening account will likely open minds and hearts. (1,5,7,10)

Mortenson, Greg

Three cups of tea (371.8)*#(adult edition)



Greg Mortenson and coauthor David Oliver Relin recount Mortenson's crossroad and what he did about it. After a near fatal attempt to climb Himalayan peak K2, Mortenson was nursed and sheltered by villagers in a remote area of Pakistan. Following his recovery, he promised to return and build the village its first school. That project has now grown to include more than 50 schools across Pakistan and Afghanistan, with a particular focus to bring educational opportunities to young girls. (Adult version) (**none**)

Reading Book Lists

Below you will find the list of notable book lists from various sources. The numbers correspond to those in parenthesis following the description of each book.

1. Best Books for Young Adults - 2009
2. Notable Children's Books 2009 - Older Readers
3. PW's Best Books of the Year 2008
4. Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers - 2008
5. Best Books of the Year 2008
6. Booklist Books for Older Readers - 2008
7. Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers 2009
8. Best Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror 2007
9. Notable Books for a Global Society - 2008
10. Top Ten Picks - 2009 (Teen Choice)

* = in St. Louis County Library

= audio version available SLCL