

## DANA HALL SCHOOL 2012 FACULTY & STAFF SUMMER READING BIBLIOGRAPHY

### FICTION

*11/22/63*, Stephen King (2011)

What if you could go back in time and change the course of history? What if the watershed moment you could change was the JFK assassination? King takes his protagonist Jake Epping, a high school English teacher from Lisbon Falls, Maine, 2011, on a fascinating journey back to 1958—from a world of mobile phones and iPods to a new world of Elvis and JFK, of Plymouth Fury cars and Lindy Hopping, of a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald and a beautiful high school librarian named Sadie Dunhill, who becomes the love of Jake's life, a life that transgresses all the normal rules of time. King weaves the social, political and popular culture of his baby-boom generation into an exercise in escalating suspense. (Publisher description)

*The Art of Fielding*, Chad Harbach (2011)

Though *The Art of Fielding* is his fiction debut, Chad Harbach writes with the self-assurance of a seasoned novelist. He exercises a masterful precision over the language and pacing of his narrative, and in some 500 pages, there's rarely a word that feels out of place. The title is a reference to baseball, but Harbach's concern with sports is more than just a cheap metaphor. *The Art of Fielding* explores relationships--between friends, family, and lovers--and the unpredictable forces that complicate them. There's an unintended affair, a post-graduate plan derailed by rejection letters, a marriage dissolved by honesty, and at the center of the book, the single baseball error that sets all of these events into motion. *The Art of Fielding* is somehow both confident and intimate, simple yet deeply moving. (Kevin Nguyen, Amazon)

*Binocular Vision: New and Selected Stories*, Edith Pearlman (2011)

In settings ranging from unnamed South American countries to the Boston suburbs, from the current day to the last century (e.g., the Russian Revolution, WWII), depictions of people, places, and manners are so perfect that Pearlman's stories become totally immersive. The characters, always interesting, are limned just as strongly whether female or male, young or old. The Latin American minister of health (called the Cow by her enemies) in "Vaquita" and the old man studying Japanese at age 75 in "Relic and Type" both linger in memory long after the book is closed. Stylistically, the stories are complex in their use of language, with technique incorporated seamlessly to engage and provoke readers. Many describe the lives of Jews who have integrated into the modern world and who examine the resonance of Judaism in their lives. The stories' disparate lengths are no impediment to these qualities. Give this wonderful collection to fans of such classic short story writers as Andre Dubus and Alice Munro and novelists like Nicole Krauss. They will thank you. (Ellen Loughran, *Booklist*)

*The Invisible Bridge*, Julie Orringer (2010)

Orringer possesses a rare talent that makes a 600-page story--which, we know, must descend into war and genocide--feel rivetingly readable, even at its grimmest. Building vivid worlds in effortless phrases, she immerses us in 1930s Budapest just as a young Hungarian Jew, Andras Lévi, departs for the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris. He hones his talent for design, works backstage in a theater, and allies with other Jewish students in defiance of rising Nazi influence. And then he meets Klara, a captivating Hungarian ballet instructor nine years his senior with a painful past and a willful teenage daughter. Against Klara's better judgment, love engulfs them, drowning out the rumblings of war for a time. But inevitably, Nazi aggression drives them back to Hungary, where life for the Jews goes from hardship to

horror. As in *Doctor Zhivago*, these lovers can't escape history's merciless machinery, but love gives them the courage to endure. (Mari Malcolm, Amazon)

*The Dovekeepers*, Alice Hoffman (2011)

Yael was born of a dead mother and father and knows how to become invisible. Revka learned silence when her grandsons lost their voices after witnessing their mother's brutal murder. Aziza became a boy to protect herself, and hates being forced to turn back into a woman. And Shirah will do anything to protect those she loves from the horrors of the world. The power and violence of these women is evident in every word of *The Dovekeepers*. Hoffman's prose is vivid and unforgettable, scorching like the desert heat, and will stay with you long after you finish the last page. A story of sacrifice, endurance, and above all, survival, *The Dovekeepers* is homage to anyone who's ever held fast to their beliefs in the face of nearly insurmountable adversity. (Malissa Kent, Amazon)

*Home*, Toni Morrison (2012)

It takes only a page or two of *Home*, Morrison's finely-wrought 10th novel, before you find yourself relaxing into the hands of a master. Nobody owns a sentence like Ms. Morrison. Completely at ease in her craft, she spins slender, lyrical prose around a Korean War vet named Frank Money, who retreats into violent memories to escape his fractured present; his sister, Cee, abandoned by her husband and abused by a medical experiment; and the racial, economic, and emotional oppression fostered by their era and situation. In the understated act of saving Cee—he walks calmly into a house and removes her—Frank brings both of them full circle. Nursed by the local women who watched her grow up, Cee emerges robust and newly aware and, as Frank puts it, “mended.” If you pay attention, *Home* may quietly do the same for you. (Mia Lipman, Amazon)

*The Secrets of Mary Bowser*, Lois Leveen (2012)

Based on a remarkable true story, *The Secrets of Mary Bowser* is an inspiring tale of one daring woman's willingness to sacrifice her own freedom to change the course of history. All her life, Mary has been a slave to the wealthy Van Lew family of Richmond, Virginia. But when Bet, the willful Van Lew daughter, decides to send Mary to Philadelphia to be educated, she must leave her family to seize her freedom. Life in the North brings new friendships, a courtship, and a far different education than Mary ever expected, one that leads her into the heart of the abolition movement. With the nation edging toward war, she defies Virginia law by returning to Richmond to care for her ailing father—and to fight for emancipation. Posing as a slave in the Confederate White House in order to spy on President Jefferson Davis, Mary deceives even those who are closest to her to aid the Union command. Just when it seems that all her courageous gambles to end slavery will pay off, Mary discovers that everything comes at a cost—even freedom. (Publisher description) [NB: Leveen attended graduate school with and is a friend of Karen Keely.]

## NONFICTION

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, Katherine Boo (2012)

Katherine Boo spent three years among the residents of the Annawadi slum, a sprawling, cockeyed settlement of more than 300 tin-roof huts and shacks in the shadow of Mumbai's International Airport. From within this “sumpy plug of slum” Boo unearths stories both tragic and poignant—about residents' efforts to raise families, earn a living, or simply survive. These unforgettable characters all nurture far-fetched dreams of a better life. As one boy tells his brother: “Everything around us is roses. And we're

like the s\*\*t in between.” A *New Yorker* writer and recipient of a Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur “Genius” grant, Boo’s writing is superb and the depth and courage of her reporting from this hidden world is astonishing. At times, it’s hard to believe this is nonfiction. (Neal Thompson, Amazon)

*The Journal of Best Practices: A Memoir of Marriage, Asperger Syndrome, and One Man’s Quest to Be a Better Husband*, David Finch (2012)

Based on a popular *New York Times* article, a hilarious and compulsively readable memoir by a former Second City writer who combats his Asperger Syndrome and reinvents himself by creating a list of “best practices” to manage his quirky behavior and try to save his marriage. Five years into his marriage, David and his wife Kristen learn that he has Asperger Syndrome, an autism spectrum condition characterized by egocentricity, unusual and sometimes repetitive behaviors, and impaired social reasoning. The diagnosis explains David’s life-long quirks, his difficulty socializing, and his need for things to go according to plan. But it doesn’t make him any easier to live with. Determined to change that, David embarks on an ambitious journey to understand and rein in the symptoms of the disorder which have wreaked havoc on his marriage. Wickedly funny and undeniably winning, *The Journal of Best Practices* offers a unique window into living with an autism spectrum disorder and proof that a true heart can conquer all, even the brain. (Publisher description)

*NurtureShock: New Thinking about Children*, Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman (2009)

The central premise of this book is that many of modern society’s most popular strategies for raising children are in fact backfiring because key points in the science of child development and behavior have been overlooked. Two errant assumptions are responsible for current distorted child-rearing habits, dysfunctional school programs and wrongheaded social policies: first, things work in children the same way they work in adults and, second, positive traits necessarily oppose and ward off negative behavior. These myths, and others, are addressed in 10 provocative chapters that cover such issues as the inverse power of praise (effort counts more than results); why insufficient sleep adversely affects kids’ capacity to learn; why white parents don’t talk about race; why kids lie; that evaluation methods for giftedness and accompanying programs don’t work; why siblings really fight (to get closer). The chatty reportage and plentiful anecdotes belie the thorough research backing up numerous cited case studies, experts’ findings and examination of successful progressive programs at work in schools. (Publishers Weekly)

*Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, Susan Cain (2012)

How many introverts do you know? The real answer will probably surprise you. In our culture, which emphasizes group work from elementary school through the business world, everything seems geared toward extroverts. Luckily, introverts everywhere have a new spokesperson: Susan Cain, a self-proclaimed introvert who’s taken it upon herself to better understand the place of introverts in culture and society. Cain explores introversion through psychological research old and new, personal experiences, and even brain chemistry, in an engaging and highly-readable fashion. By delving into introversion, Cain also seeks to find ways for introverts and extroverts to better understand one another—and for introverts to understand their own contradictions, such as the ability to act like extroverts in certain situations. Highly accessible and uplifting for any introvert—and any extrovert who knows an introvert (and over one-third of us are introverts)—*Quiet* has the potential to revolutionize the “extrovert ideal.” (Malissa Kent, Amazon)

*Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir*, Wael Ghonim (2012)  
A fast-paced and engrossing new memoir of political awakening...Ghonim's memoir is a welcome and clear-eyed addition to a growing list of volumes that have aimed (but often failed) to meaningfully analyze social media's impact. It's a book about social media for people who don't think they care about social media. It will also serve as a touchstone for future testimonials about a strengthening borderless digital movement that is set to continually disrupt powerful institutions, be they corporate enterprises or political regimes...Ghonim's writing voice is spare and measured, and marked by the same earnest humility he has displayed in media appearances...His individual story resonates on two levels: it epitomizes the coming-of-age of a young Middle Eastern generation that has grown up in the digital era, as well as the transformation of an apolitical man from comfortable executive to prominent activist. (*The New York Times Book Review*)

*Situations Matter: Understanding How Context Transforms Your World*, Sam Sommers (2011)  
An "entertaining and engaging" exploration of the invisible forces influencing your life-and how understanding them can improve everything you do. The world around you is pulling your strings, shaping your innermost instincts and your most private thoughts. And you don't even realize it. Every day and in all walks of life, we overlook the enormous power of situations, of context in our lives. Just as a museum visitor neglects to notice the frames around paintings, so do people miss the influence of ordinary situations on the way they think and act. But frames—situations—do matter. Your experience viewing the paintings wouldn't be the same without them. The same is true for human nature. In *Situations Matter*, Sommers argues that by understanding the powerful influence that context has in our lives and using this knowledge to rethink how we see the world, we can be more effective at work, at home, and in daily interactions with others. He describes the pitfalls to avoid and offers insights into making better decisions and smarter observations about the world around us. (Publisher description)  
[NB: Sommers is a popular psychology professor at Tufts and is married to the daughter of long-time Dana Hall science department member Linda Samuels.]

*The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*, Stephen Greenblatt (2011)  
One of the world's most celebrated scholars, Stephen Greenblatt has crafted both an innovative work of history and a thrilling story of discovery, in which one manuscript, plucked from a thousand years of neglect, changed the course of human thought and made possible the world as we know it. Nearly six hundred years ago, a short, genial, cannily alert man in his late thirties took a very old manuscript off a library shelf, saw with excitement what he had discovered, and ordered that it be copied. That book was the last surviving manuscript of an ancient Roman philosophical epic, *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius—a beautiful poem of the most dangerous ideas: that the universe functioned without the aid of gods, that religious fear was damaging to human life, and that matter was made up of very small particles in eternal motion, colliding and swerving in new directions. The copying and translation of this ancient book—the greatest discovery of the greatest book-hunter of his age—fueled the Renaissance, inspiring artists such as Botticelli and thinkers such as Giordano Bruno; shaped the thought of Galileo and Freud, Darwin and Einstein; and had a revolutionary influence on writers such as Montaigne and Shakespeare and even Thomas Jefferson. (Publisher description)

Compiled by Liz Gray  
Library Director / Dana Hall School  
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