

## Shady Side Academy Senior School Summer Reading List 2016

Summer Reading is an opportunity for students to explore some contemporary or classic books, challenging themselves with new ideas or becoming immersed in a gripping plot. You should choose books that appeal to you and enjoy the process of reading. This is not the time to choose the shortest book or scurry onto the internet for a bland and superficial summary; this is not a time to follow someone else's expert recommendation. Rather, this is a time when you lose yourself in a story, under a tree, basking in the beautiful summer. Dig in and enjoy!



This summer the Shady Side community will read one book together: *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, widely acclaimed as an exploration of history, medicine, psychology, and social conditions of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. In addition to this All-School Book, you will choose one book from the list for the form you will be in next year. As you read, think about a question that arises naturally from the text. What issues are in it that you would like to talk about with other students? Then pose and answer that discussion question in a 1-2 page written response, referencing and quoting from your book as appropriate. Write a question and response for each of your books. These questions will become part of the Summer Reading Day book discussions in the fall.

In summary: read *Dr. Mütter's Marvels* and one book of your choice from the list for your specific form. Craft a question for each of your two Summer Reading Books and a 1-2 page written answer to each of those questions by Summer Reading Day, which will take place in the morning on the second day of school.

### All-School Book:

#### ***Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, by Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz**

*Dr. Mütter's Marvels* is an acclaimed piece of non-fiction by Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz, prolific and award-winning poet, frequent visitor and friend to the SSA community since 2008. This book debuted at #7 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for Health and has been lauded by reviewers from the *Wall Street Journal* to the *LA Review of Books* to NPR – Amazon referred to this book as one of the best of 2014. Aptowicz, a native of Philadelphia, grew up visiting the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, wandering through its collection of “medical oddities” (e.g., world's largest colon, “The Soap Lady,” and Einstein's brain) as a student on a field trip. In writing the first biography of Thomas Dent Mütter, Aptowicz also writes the history of modern medicine. The material, centered around the medical innovations of the Civil War era, is far from a dull collection of facts. Aptowicz invokes a world before hand washing or anesthetic were aspects of surgery we could take for granted, one where Thomas Dent Mütter engages in political battles with the best physicians of his era and changes medicine itself as a result. Aptowicz complements Mütter's story with descriptions and details and anecdotes of the time – scientists and history buffs and anyone who enjoys a good story well told will enjoy this book.

## **Lower Form (forms III and IV):**

### ***Dracula*, by Bram Stoker**

Stoker crafts the definitive vampire tale that includes all your favorites: bites to the neck, stakes through the heart, and bats in the night. Stay up late and give yourself a good scare as you read this novel that's told through the letters of Count Dracula's victims and the reports of his hunters.

### ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon**

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* immerses the reader in the world of a young man, Christopher, with Asperger's Syndrome. Purportedly a murder mystery, the novel opens with an unsolved crime: the killing of the narrator's neighbor's dog. As Christopher pieces together evidence leading him to a motive and a murderer, we learn about the mental processes that distinguish the inner life of an Asperger's sufferer. At once an obstacle and an asset, Christopher's disorder allows him to solve the crime methodically and with factual accuracy. His critical detachment from his own life and his relations makes him a fascinating narrator. It also allows him to pursue a criminal investigation with unnerving objectivity. *The Curious Incident* will appeal to any reader who is fascinated with the mind and/or with forensics and crime investigations.

### ***Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, by Richard Carlson**

This book reveals ways to make your actions more peaceful and caring, with the added benefit of making your life more calm and stress-free. This book shows you how to keep from letting the little things in life drive you crazy. In thoughtful and insightful language, author Richard Carlson reveals ways to calm down in the midst of your incredibly hurried, stress-filled life. You can learn to put things in perspective by making the small daily changes he suggests, including advice such as "Think of your problems as potential teachers"; and "Do one thing at a time." You should also try to live in the present moment, let others have the glory at times, and lower your tolerance to stress. You can write down your most stubborn positions and see if you can soften them, learn to trust your intuitions, and live each day as if it might be your last. With gentle, supportive suggestions, Dr. Carlson reveals ways to make your actions more peaceful and caring, with the added benefit of making your life more calm and stress-free.

### ***Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury**

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury's classic, frightening vision of the future, firemen don't put out fires--they start them in order to burn books. Bradbury's vividly painted society holds up the appearance of happiness as the highest goal--a place where trivial information is good, and knowledge and ideas are bad. Fire Captain Beatty explains it this way, "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs.... Don't give them slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy." Guy Montag is a book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature. (From Amazon.com)

***The Girl with All the Gifts*, by M. R. Carey**

This sci-fi thriller focuses on Melanie, living with other children, scientists, and military personnel on the base, the only world Melanie has known. When the base is attacked, Melanie goes on the run with others from the base; she learns not only about the world in which she lives, but about who she is and who she can be. This book is more fun to read when you don't know too much about the situation, so I recommend that you NOT read a lot of background information on it. It expertly combines page-turning action with an exploration of what it means to be human and whether it is better to be smart or compassionate.

***Hiroshima*, by John Hersey**

John Hersey was a war correspondent who followed US troops into Sicily in WWII and who received commendations from the Secretary of the Navy for the help he provided wounded soldiers in Guadalcanal. The child of missionaries who grew up in China, Hersey began to cover the reconstruction of Japan for the *New Yorker* magazine when he began documenting the experiences of survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. He does not adopt a political stance in his documentation; rather, Hersey shapes the objective tone of the journalistic investigator to approach the human cost of this tragedy with dignity and reserve. The result of this understated style, as Hersey follows the experiences of six survivors – finishing the final chapter in 1985 – is powerful and thought provoking. Hersey's work has been highly acclaimed throughout his career; *Hiroshima* was recently named by New York University as “the best single work of reporting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

***The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*  
*The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*  
*Life, the Universe and Everything*  
by Douglas Adams**

The first three books in the *Hitchhiker's Guide* series (which eventually reached five volumes) are classics of comedic science fiction. The hero is everyman Arthur Dent, who one day finds himself leaving Earth in a hurry as it is being demolished to make way for an interstellar bypass, and he subsequently goes from one bewildering encounter to the next while trying to find the answers to life's most persistent questions (What is the answer to life, the universe, and everything? Who is in charge of the universe? Where shall we have lunch?). Along the way, he has use of the most mind-bogglingly useful book in existence, the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, as well as his towel. Come see what he finds on his adventures. You'll laugh. (And don't pay any attention to the page count: this is fast, easily-digestible prose, and you'll want more of it.)

***In the Time of the Butterflies*, by Julia Alvarez**

*In the Time of the Butterflies* is a work of historical fiction that takes place in the Dominican Republic in 1960, during the Rafael Leonidas Trujillo dictatorship. Using her own personal experiences of growing up in the Dominican Republic, Julia Alvarez weaves together the stories of the four Mirabal sisters and their involvement in the underground resistance movement against the dictatorship that has been in place for decades. The book follows the lives of the sisters and their triumphs and sacrifices, as they each decide to join the revolution in a search for freedom.

### ***Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, by Jesse Andrews**

Greg is an “outsider” high school student who is “surviving” high school with his only friend Earl. He escapes with his friend Earl into the world of film making, until his concerned mother forces him to rekindle his childhood friendship with Rachel who is dying of cancer. What follows is the story of a boy and girl negotiating the challenging road of deepening and real friendship, which also has the possibility of love.

### ***Noggin*, by John Corey Whaley**

Do you have a good head on your shoulders? Travis Coates does, even if those shoulders happen to belong to another person’s body. In his “first” life, cancer ravaged Travis’s body. When the doctors decided that there was nothing more they could do, Travis was approached by a scientist with a unique idea: they would cryogenically freeze Travis’s head, and once the technology had caught up and they had a suitable host, they would attach Travis’s head to this new body. Five years later, Travis wakes up feeling like only a day has passed, but with his head on the body of Jeremy Pratt (whose body was fine, but whose brain was not). The problem for Travis? He returns to the world as a 16 year old, but with a best friend and (ex) girlfriend who are both now 21 and living different lives. Cate is even engaged, a fact which Travis tries to ignore in his quest to win her back. Travis must learn to navigate the world of high school without his friends by his side, and figure out how he wants to use this second life he has been given. (\*Some explicit language and sexual references.)

### ***The Other Wes Moore*, by Wes Moore**

This book is the story of the fates of two people living in Baltimore with similar circumstances who have opposite results. The author rose out of a broken, impoverished family to study as a Rhodes Scholar and make an indelible mark on this world. His namesake became a convicted murderer. This memoir shows us that chance along with significant choices in life lead us to our fate. As the author writes: “The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.”

## **Upper Form (forms V and VI):**

### ***All the King’s Men*, by Robert Penn Warren**

Possibly based on the political career of the 40<sup>th</sup> governor of Louisiana, Huey P. Long, Robert Penn Warren’s novel is more than a political story, it’s an American story. The path paved by good intentions winds its way down the dark and dusty roads of the 1930s American South to corruption and graft. “You got to make good out of bad,” the story’s main character Willie Stark exclaims; that serves as a central theme throughout this American classic. Coming in at just under 500 pages, it is a considerable commitment, but a great read. Having studied the novel intensively in college, I have come to view it as an essential reading for all Americans interested in delving into the political psyche and character of the nation.

### ***Band of Brothers*, by Stephen Ambrose**

Stephen E. Ambrose’s iconic story of the ordinary men who became the World War II’s most extraordinary soldiers: Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, US Army. They came together, citizen soldiers, in the summer of 1942, drawn to Airborne by the \$50 monthly bonus and a desire to be better than the other guy. And at its peak – in Holland and the

Ardennes – Easy Company was as good a rifle company as any in the world. From the rigorous training in Georgia in 1942 to the disbanding in 1945, Stephen E. Ambrose tells the story of this remarkable company. In combat, the reward for a job well done is the next tough assignment, and as they advanced through Europe, the men of Easy kept getting the tough assignments. They parachuted into France early D-Day morning and knocked out a battery of four 105mm cannon looking down Utah Beach; they parachuted into Holland during the Arnhem campaign; they were the Battered Bastards of the Bastion of Bastogne, brought in to hold the line, although surrounded, in the Battle of the Bulge; and then they spearheaded the counteroffensive. Finally, they captured Hitler's Bavarian outpost, his Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden.

***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope***  
**by William Kamkwamba**

This is the biographical story of a young boy in Malawi who's curiosity about how a dynamo on a bicycle powers a light leads him to teach himself how to build one to power his radio and ultimately learn how to make a windmill which gives his family electricity and water. The story is gripping and the scenery well described, making this an easy read. You feel deeply for his difficult situation in Africa, which includes danger from lions, and drought which leads to famine, which leads to his family's inability to continue paying for school. The famine is heart-wrenching but eye-opening. After surviving this, the boy continues to strive for his dream by finding physics textbooks and, using diagrams only and haphazard parts from around town, ultimately succeeds in building a windmill using a bicycle wheel. Since that time he has given a TED talk and more relating to his story.

***The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics***  
**by Daniel James Brown**

Daniel James Brown's *The Boys in the Boat* is the kind of nonfiction book that reads like a novel. Centered around the life of Joe Rantz – a farmboy from the Pacific Northwest who was literally abandoned as a child – and set during the Great Depression, *The Boys in the Boat* is a character-driven story with a natural crescendo that will have you racing to the finish. In 1936, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team raced its way to the Berlin Olympics for an opportunity to challenge the greatest in the world. How this team, largely composed of rowers from “foggy coastal villages, damp dairy farms, and smoky lumber towns all over the state,” managed to work together and sacrifice toward their goal of defeating Hitler's feared racers is half the story. The other half is equally fascinating, as Brown seamlessly weaves in the story of crew itself. This is fast-paced and emotional nonfiction about determination, bonds built by teamwork, and what it takes to achieve glory. —Chris Schlupe of *Amazon.com*

***Brooklyn*, by Colm Toibin**

In his novel *Brooklyn*, Colm Toibin tells the story of Eilis Lacey as she travels from Enniscorthy, Ireland to Brooklyn, NY in the early 1950s. Leaving behind her family and country, Eilis is faced with adversity as she struggles to begin a new life in a foreign country. She slowly adjusts to life in her new home, as she falls in love and finds success in her job and studies. After learning about a death in her family, Eilis temporarily returns home to Ireland where she is confronted with new challenges, and is forced to make choices about the new life she has left behind in Brooklyn.

### ***Dead Wake*, by Erik Larson**

In the spring of 1915, World War I was raging in Europe, but the United States had yet not committed itself to the conflict. The *Lusitania*, a luxury liner dubbed a “greyhound” for its remarkable speed on the ocean, set sail in May of that year from New York to Liverpool. Filled with civilians, many of whom were U.S. citizens, the *Lusitania* was attacked and sunk by a German U-boat, hastening America’s entry into the war. *Dead Wake* by Erik Larson examines the characters involved in this epic event – with particular focus on William Turner, captain of the liner, and Walter Schwieger, who commanded the German U-boat that launched the attack. Larson’s story makes for a fascinating read as he chronicles the lives of various passengers while providing the geopolitical backdrop both domestically and worldwide connected to this event.

### ***Dying Every Day: Seneca in the Court of Nero*, by James Romm**

*Dying Every Day* is a portrait of Seneca’s moral struggle in the midst of madness and excess. In his treatises, Seneca preached a rigorous ethical creed, exalting heroes who defied danger to do what was right or embrace a noble death. As Nero’s adviser, Seneca was presented with a more complex set of choices, as the only man capable of summoning the better aspect of Nero’s nature, yet, remaining at Nero’s side and colluding in the evil regime he created. *Dying Every Day* is the first book to tell the compelling and nightmarish story of the philosopher-poet who was almost a king, tied to a tyrant – as Seneca, the paragon of reason, watched his student spiral into madness and whose descent saw five family murders, the Fire of Rome, and a savage purge that destroyed the supreme minds of the Senate’s golden age. (Amazon.com summary)

### ***Fever Pitch*, by Nick Hornby**

*Fever Pitch* is Nick Hornby’s tribute to a lifelong obsession, soccer. Part autobiography, part comedy, part incisive analysis of insanity, Hornby’s award-winning memoir captures the fever pitch of fandom; its agony and ecstasy, its community, its defining role in thousands of young men’s coming-of-age stories. If you want to understand why the rest of the world cares so deeply about soccer, why Arsenal fans suffer so acutely from irrational hope, or even how soccer fandom can interfere with one’s romantic ambitions, *Fever Pitch* is the book for you.

### ***Foucault's Pendulum*, by Umberto Eco**

Three clever editors (who have spent altogether too much time reviewing crackpot manuscripts on the occult by fanatics and dilettantes) decide to have a little fun. On a lark, the editors begin randomly feeding esoteric bits of knowledge into a computer in order to invent connections between all of their entries. What they believe they are creating is a long, lazy game for occultists and conspiracy theorists – until the game starts to take over . . . It's a novel that takes you on an incredible journey of thought, history, memory, and fantasy. What makes something actually "true"?

### ***The Goldfinch*, by Donna Tartt**

Here are the awards this novel has won: the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2014; Amazon’s 2013 Best Book of the Year; the 2013 National Book Critics Circle Award and the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction shortlists (runners-up); the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction for 2014; and one of The New York Times Book Review’s 10 Best Books of 2013. It has been compared to Dickens in its scope and richness. Dive in and revel in the beauty of this book. The Amazon.com synopsis: “Theo Decker, a 13-year-old New Yorker, miraculously survives an accident that kills his mother. Abandoned by his father, Theo is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. Bewildered by his strange new home on

Park Avenue, disturbed by schoolmates who don't know how to talk to him, and tormented above all by his longing for his mother, he clings to the one thing that reminds him of her: a small, mysteriously captivating painting that ultimately draws Theo into the underworld of art. As an adult, Theo moves silkily between the drawing rooms of the rich and the dusty labyrinth of an antiques store where he works. He is alienated and in love – and at the center of a narrowing, ever more dangerous circle.”

### ***My Brilliant Friend*, by Elena Ferrante**

This is the first of the four books in the Neopolitan novels series by Ferrante. This novel explores class, gender roles, competition, family influence, and many other topics through Elena Greco's friendship with the wild, unpredictable, powerful Lila Cerullo. Set in Naples in the 1950s, this novel captures the dangers, passion, violence, and excitement of childhood and the intensity of childhood friendships. Though this novel is sometimes difficult to follow because of the many characters (and their many nicknames), it will be worth the effort, as Ferrante explores how we are formed by the world around us and how we manage, at times, to escape the pressures and expectations of that world.

### ***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, by Ken Kesey**

Nurse Ratched's ward in the mental hospital runs like clockwork until Randle Patrick McMurphy is committed. The red-headed gambler incites the patients to disobedience, thus earning the disapprobation of the head nurse. But there are ways to deal with troublemakers. Boisterous, bawdy, and ultimately shattering, Kesey's work is the seminal novel of the 1960's that has left an indelible mark on literature. Here is the unforgettable story of a mental ward and its inhabitants, especially the tyrannical Big Nurse Ratched and Randle Patrick McMurphy, the brawling, fun-loving new inmate who resolves to oppose her.

### ***The Poisonwood Bible*, by Barbara Kingsolver**

*The Poisonwood Bible* takes the reader on an epic romp through the Belgian Congo beginning in the 1960s and ending several decades later. The novel follows an American missionary family of six as they confront the hardships of living in a poor and war torn African nation. Chapters alternate narrators, so the reader is able to experience the Congolese-American culture clash through five contrasting points of view. The family's patriarch, Nathan Price, is the object of much of the family's criticism. Notably, he does not get to narrate chapters in his own defense. *The Poisonwood Bible* will appeal to adventure seekers and any reader with an interest in Africa, missionary mishaps, and multiple versions of the same events.

### ***Ready Player One*, by Ernest Cline**

In a dystopian future, much of life is a grim urban wasteland, so Wade Watts spends most of his time in the virtual reality known as the OASIS. When the OASIS's founder dies, he leaves behind a contest in this virtual world with a billion dollar fortune going to its winner. Wade enters this contest that requires an in-depth knowledge of the films and video games of the founder's 1980s childhood. Escape into this cutthroat contest with Wade as he solves puzzles and makes alliances to not only win the game but save his life. Read the book before the Spielberg film adaptation comes out in 2018!

### ***Rebecca*, by Daphne Du Maurier**

*Rebecca*, by Daphne Du Maurier, is a novel that I have loved since high school – gothic, creepy, love story, murder mystery. The mystery unfolds as conflicts arise between the newlyweds – cultural differences between a young American woman and her older, British husband. The ghost of Rebecca, the first wife, elevates these conflicts and tension mounts until the novel reaches its dramatic and thrilling climax. If you choose this novel, allow yourself to enjoy the lush descriptions as Du Maurier evokes the world of the grand country manor with its housekeeper, the sinister Mrs. Danvers, and a large cast of memorable characters.

### ***Siddhartha*, by Hermann Hesse**

This “coming-of-age” novel was recommended to me on one of my hitch-hiking trips in 1970. I was picked up by an enlightened man who was against the Vietnam War. As we talked, he gave me a list of must-read books, and *Siddhartha* was one of them. In this short novel, Hesse explores Eastern philosophy by depicting a major character, Siddhartha, who is an unhappy teenager, although he has every reason to be happy. Despite his family’s protests, he leaves his family and goes on the great journey of his life, which will test his strengths and enlighten him about his weaknesses. Along the way he will discover many truths about how we all can find happiness and fulfillment.

### ***The Underground Girls of Kabul: in Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* by Jenny Nordberg**

Jenny Nordberg, an investigative journalist, has written an engaging and extremely timely account of the lives of women in Afghanistan and the practice of transforming young girls into *bacha posh*. This phenomenon involves dressing up young girls as boys in order to grant honor and prestige to a family that does not have any male children, or to allow the “male” child to escort the mother or daughters when in public. Nordberg discusses a few different instances in which this occurs but focuses much of her story on the life of female parliamentarian Azita and her young daughter turned *bacha posh*, Mehran. Nordberg must use her skills as a journalist to locate and interview many *bacha posh*, because though the lifestyle is common it has not been formally documented. By sharing their stories, Nordberg comments on and questions the treatment of women in a male-dominated society.

### ***When Breath Becomes Air*, by Paul Kalanithi**

At the age of 36, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. To this point he was a successful neurosurgeon, finishing his sixth and final year of training. This memoir chronicles Kalanithi’s life as a husband and scholar, studying at Stanford, the University of Cambridge, and Yale School of Medicine. This swift turn from healthy young man to cancer patient leads the reader through a range of questions of mortality, purpose, and courage. “You that seek what life is in death, / Now find it air that was once breath” (Baron B. F. Greville). This is a beautifully written memoir.