Suggested Summer Reading 2017

I compiled this list from books I’ve read recently that students at Weston High School will likely enjoy. I tried to include different types of literature: science fiction, graphic novels, realistic fiction, and nonfiction. Many of these skew to the weighty, serious side, so please feel free to round out with fun bestsellers you find in bookstores and online. Read one, read ten, it’s up to you. Enjoy and have a great summer.

Alida Hanson, Librarian, Weston High School
May 25, 2017

Fiction

**All American Boys** by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
Fiction
Grades 9-12

“I cannot think of a more timely story--as this account of an arrest gone terribly wrong resonates perfectly with the Black Lives Matter movement. While our sympathies are always with Rashad, the teen brutally beaten when his innocent actions are mistaken for theft and assault; the authors weave in a context that lets the reader think about how these events happen and the complicated impact they have on all members of the community. The story is told in alternating chapters by Rashad and Quinn, a white witness to the arrest, who just happens to know and admire the arresting officer. I listened to the audiobook, and the narrators were spot-on. I came away with empathy for both boys, and a greater understanding of how far we still have to go to address racial issues in the US.” (Judy Paradis, GoodReads)

**Burn Baby Burn** by Meg Medina
*Historical Fiction*
Grades 9-12

“It starts slow and builds quickly into a compelling page turner. Nora lives in Queens with her mother and brother in the disastrous summer of 1977--Son of Sam, the blackout, graduating from HS with no plan, a little brother with scary problems beyond the abilities of Nora and her mother to acknowledge out loud, much less "handle." Themes of feminism and the fallout from physical abuse made me think about this book long after it was over.” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)
The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

*Fiction*

*Grades 9-12*

“Starr Carter straddles two worlds, living in all Black Garden Heights and attending a mostly white private school. When she goes to a neighborhood party and leaves with an old friend, they are pulled over by the police and he is shot and killed. She has to figure out what role she’ll play in the ensuing legal and media spotlight while dealing with her trauma.

Even though the book deals with serious themes, a complex plot with many likeable characters, good natured humor and family love make it bearable. A wonderful companion to ALL-AMERICAN BOYS. “(Alida Hanson, Goodreads)

Lucy and Linh by Alice Pung

*Fiction*

*Grades 9-12*

“I am partial to a well written mean girl story, and when set in a top shelf private girls school--bonus points! Plus this is set in Australia and I love the Chris Lilley TV series "Jamee, Private School Girl." More bonus points! It also reminds me of THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE because it features a deliciously evil clique (of course they are the prefects) who rule by sneaky long term terror operations against students and faculty. How many bonus points can one book get?

Lucy wins the first scholarship for Laurinda school, and commutes every day from her working class suburb of Melbourne (Australia). The daughter of a seamstress and a supermarket clerk whose childhoods were transformed by the Vietnam War, she is fascinated by and attracted to the wealth, self confidence and polish of her new peers. She is also repelled by the violence, anger, and bullying underneath this beautiful veneer. Her politics teacher explains that politics is the study of people and power, and that is what Lucy does. (Mrs. Hanson, Goodreads)

The Mortality Doctrine Series: The Eye of Minds; The Rule of Thoughts; The Game of Lives

*By James Dashner*

*Science Fiction/Fantasy*

*Grades 9-12*

“Have you ever thought of the internet being a physical world, that you can touch and interact with? The three books that make up The Mortality Doctrine series is based in the Virtnet, the internet and virtual reality combined. The ending of the book was an insane plot twist that I did not see coming. I really liked the way it was pieced together, enough to keep me thinking about what will happen in the next book. It made me stay up just thinking about it, and all the possibilities. My favorite part honestly had
to be the ending, because of the major plot twist that completely made the reader rethink the entire book.

I recommend this to anyone interested in the future of the internet, and enjoys the Maze Runner and Ready Player One." (Jory C., Goodreads)

The Reckoners Series: Steelheart; Firefight; Calamity
by Brandon Sanderson
Science Fiction/Fantasy
Grades 9-12
“The story takes place here on approximately present-day Earth, about ten years after an unexplained burst in the sky (subsequently referred to as 'Calamity') caused the appearance of 'Epics'. Epics are humans that have abilities, amazing superhero-like powers, and tend to use them for personal gain and power. They are so powerful that nobody fights them. Nobody except the 'Reckoners'. Epics are essentially bullies (bullies with incredible destructive power) but each one has a weakness, and thus can be fought by ordinary folks like us.

Sanderson is known for his unique, complex magic systems that he constructs for his novels. So, of course, the system that he has built for superheroes is equally complex and interdependent. He doesn't just come up with weird cool powers and sprinkle superheroes around. Epics' powers work the way they work for a reason and discovering just how they relate to each other is pure fun." (Benjamin Thomas, Goodreads)

Still Life With Tornado by A.S. King
Fiction
Grades 9-12
“Prime AS King! Our main character is suffering a mental break caused by lifelong trauma—the sneaky kind that you don't think happens to you, you don't admit it and it breaks you. King judiciously works in her trademark magical realism—not enough to take over the whole book and make it hard to understand (like I Crawl Through It) but just the right amount that expands and lifts the story and make it unforgettable and deeply affecting." (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)
The Sun is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon
Fiction
Grades 9-12
“Natasha's about to be deported to Jamaica, and Daniel is on his way to his Yale interview. They fall in love and we meet their families and lots of supporting players in a sophisticated love story that explores fate, chance, poetry and science. Almost all the action takes place in one day, and short chapters show us the lives of the main characters as well as supporting players like drivers of cars who pass them and security guards. By the author of *Everything, Everything.*” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)

Swing Time by Zadie Smith
Fiction
Grades 11-12
“Please, let's add a sixth star for this one! It's compelling, up to the minute, perceptive, funny, sad, timely. I particularly recommend to people who enjoyed *Americanah* and *My Brilliant Friend.*

Swing Time uses dance, friendship, old musicals, family, celebrity and the African diaspora to tell the story of the present, past and future of our narrator, who grew up in South London, best friends with Tracey. They both have one black parent and one white parent and grew up in the projects but their details diverge from there. While our narrator goes on to college, Tracey attends a professional school to be a West End (like Broadway) dancer. Our narrator ends up being the fourth assistant to a Madonna-like pop star who builds a girls’ school in an unnamed African country, where the bulk of the novel unfolds.” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)

The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen
Historical Fiction
Grades 11-12
“This book, while fiction, is an education about Vietnam and the US. It's set right after the Vietnam war. Our narrator is a biracial man, son of a French priest and a Vietnamese girl. He is intelligent, well educated, and a spy for the communists working for a South Vietnamese general.

It reminded me of Graham Greene in its satirical treatment of serious questions of good and evil. The author directly mentions Greene in the text. This is no homage: it's told from the Vietnamese viewpoint. It's heavy and beautiful. And funny.” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)
**Wonder** by R. J. Palacio  
*Grades 5-10*  
*Fiction*  
*(Movie coming out this summer)*

“Everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their lives because we all overcometh the world.” - Auggie Pullman

“August Pullman or “Auggie” is a young boy most unlike any normal kid. There is no easy way to say it. He was born with facial abnormality. Auggie said it himself in the beginning of the story. It’s hard to describe what he looks like because it’s probably worse than whatever we might be thinking. **Auggie has won my heart right there at the first page of the book.**

The things this young boy had to endure—the name calling, people’s constant fear, rejection and alienation and not to mention, his physiological difficulties like trouble in hearing, eating and even talking and the dozens of surgeries he has undergone. He is no doubt the bravest young character I have met to be so sport about his condition that he would even make up jokes about what he looks like. **Funny, cool, adorable kid. A certified wonder kid. You are going to adore him.**

The plot of the story mainly revolves around Auggie’s fifth grade experience as this is his first time to go to school being home schooled the rest of his previous years. Sounds simple? For a boy like Auggie, nothing in life will ever be simple. This story is one that will completely captivate your heart and challenge your perceptions. **By far, one of the most meaningful stories I have read my entire life.”** (A.J. the Ravenous Reader, Goodreads)

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**The Girl in the Blue Coat** by Monica Hesse  
*Historical Fiction*  
*Grades 9-12*

“A deeply moving story set in Amsterdam in 1943 during WWII. Many intricacies, questions and mysterious twists present themselves to the reader to solve along with the teenaged narrator, Hanneke. Betrayals and decisions made in haste, in fear, in wanting to do what’s noble, all in the face of an occupation and a war. As I read this book, I could not help but feel that Monica Hesse put her entire heart and soul into this story. Beautiful prose!” (Diane, Goodreads)
NONFICTION

**The Art of the Deal by Donald Trump**
*Autobiography/Memoir*
*Grades 9-12*

“Trump’s book was a really interesting read. He provides lots of insight into his deals, from what he considers a good one to the intricate steps of the dance that is making a complex deal. Moreover, Trump provides insight into his own thoughts and attitudes, his feelings on the world he lives in, and his place in it.

It's easy to see Trump as a greedy rich man, but I think this book shows him as more human and less of a caricature. At heart, Trump is a good guy, and a smart one. The reasons for his success are clear in his book- between his persistence, his instincts, and his prowess in the real estate world, Trump is positioned well to succeed on a large scale.

It was unusual and striking to read this book over 25 years after its publication- knowing the fate of the USFL and Television City, the future of Doug Flutie and Jim Kelly, and the fact that Ivana Trump is no longer the beloved wife Donald speaks so highly of, was all a very strange experience.” (Emily, Goodreads)

**Ashley’s War by Gayle Tzemach Lemmon**
*Nonfiction*
*Grades 9-12*

“This is one of those "if you don't read anything else this year, read this" books. Lemmon does a superb job of writing about the first women in the Cultural Support Team (CSTs) who qualified for and then carried out the goal of getting critical intel with Rangers on their missions in Afghanistan. Because they were able to speak with women and children when male soldiers could not, they contributed to the success of the missions and saved lives.

Anyone who has ever trained for a goal after being told she/he couldn't do it will understand the intelligence, intensity, and sheer physical strength of these first CST women along with their early frustrations. Their performance was so pathbreakingly good it opened the administration to allowing all women to enter all armed forces jobs for which they qualified.” (L.A. Starks, Goodreads)
**Enrique’s Journey** by Sonia Nazario  
*Nonfiction*  
*Grades 9-12*  
*Also available in a young reader’s version*  
“Everyone in the US should read this book in order to understand the dangerous journey that Central American immigrants make in order to work in the US. This is not a book that tries to persuade you to feel one way or another about immigration. It is simply about one boy’s journey through Mexico on top of trains and the perils that surround him. He has many flaws, but a deep desire to reunite with his mother (who immigrated to the US when he was 6) and to send money back home to his family in Honduras. This book reminds us that as much as we speak about immigration in terms of economic costs/benefits, it is ultimately a human issue. “(Amber, Goodreads)

**Furry Logic** by Matin Durrani, Liz Kalaugher  
*Nonfiction*  
*Grades 9-12*  
“A book like no other. It is a science book and a book about animals but the way the authors put it together makes it different. The wording alone is different. The love they have for the animals makes the words flow over the page like a gentle breeze and I felt comforted by their words. They are very humorous in their approach and I found myself laughing or snickering many times. The authors also make the physics, that animals use in everyday life, make this understandable for the everyday Joe's and Jane's out here. We want just to know enough to know what is going on and not more. But we don't want to be talked down to either, tough line to walk for an author. These authors do it well. Learned a lot of interesting things in this book from the bottom of the sea to the insects that fly. If you just want hard science, this is not for you. If you just want an animal book, this is not for you. If you want a book the guides the two to a perfect blend then stirs in a mix of humor and love then this is certainly for you.” (Monzalee Whittman, Goodreads)

**Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War** by Mary Roach  
*Nonfiction*  
*Grades 9-12*  
“Having served in the Marines (the entire time in an infantry battalion no less), reading about military gear and health research had me chuckling more than a dozen times, only because of having spent many nights in the rain, or the snow, or a desert, or a jungle, dealing with crap gear, tasteless food, and health risks.

Although much of the book is lighthearted, such as when talking about pooping in the field, the subjects are really life and death serious, which is probably why military members
joke about these sorts of topics. How else can anyone deal with it other than laughing about it? One paragraph in the book clearly stood out; a Marine amputee said that his worst injury was hearing loss, because "he couldn't communicate with his wife and kids."

I do not think non-military can ever fully appreciate the risks involved in merely serving in the military, let alone combat. Hollywood does no justice either with blockbuster movies never showing the military combat soldier having to deal with less-than-perfect gear, unsanitary conditions for days, or pushing through illness or injury to accomplish a mission. It is good to read something that brings to light the people behind the military soldier working hard to make the soldier's job a bit more bearable.

Kudos to Mary Roach for talking about subjects that most citizens tend to avoid talking about, things like having diarrhea in battle…" (Brett Shavers, Goodreads)

Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman
Nonfiction
Grades 9-12
“The book is a perfect introduction to Norse mythology. It was an extremely interesting read, especially seeing that so many writers have drawn their inspiration from Norse mythology, especially in the fantasy genre. Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones? You name it. They all have obvious connections to Norse mythology. Even Lewis Carroll the writer of Alice in Wonderland, seems to have taken out little elements, like the three sisters (past, present, future or Skuld, Verdandi and Urd)." (Madamereadsalot, Goodreads)

Snowden by Ted Rall
Graphic Novel
Grades 9-12
“A quick and interesting graphic novel about the life, motivation and strategies of NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. Discusses both sides of the issue and firmly supports Snowden. A strong critique of the way our government works against its citizens.” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)
We Should Hang Out Sometime: Embarrassingly, a True Story by Josh Sundquist
Autobiography/Memoir
Grades 9-12
“I laughed out loud a few times reading this memoir by a 25 year old guy trying to figure out why he never had a girlfriend. He uses the following method to investigate: he writes one chapter about the girl he had a crush on, their "relationship" and how it ended. Next, he poses a brief hypothesis extended with a chart about how the actions could be interpreted. Last, he writes a chapter about the present-day meeting he has with the girl to discuss the past and find out what her true feelings were. Even the girls from middle school! Absurd, entertaining, and good natured.” (Alida Hanson, Goodreads)

Weaponized Lies: How to think critically in the post-truth era by Daniel J. Levitin
Nonfiction
Grades 10-12
“I want to buy a copy for everybody. EVERYBODY. I can't, of course, but I can urge you to go out and get your own copy or try to get it from the library. This is the crucial guide to navigating the "information age", which has rapidly become the "counterinformation age". It's a crash course in basic statistics and critical thinking, and hopefully can help us all ask better questions and demand better answers.” (Katherine, Goodreads)