FRIENDS ACADEMY
Upper School
Recreational Reading, 2009

Fiction

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Read about the tribal life of Nigeria’s Ibo before and after colonialism in this novel, as Achebe uses the ruin of one proud man to stand for the destruction of an entire culture.

Albom, Mitch. *Five People You Meet in Heaven*. In this contemporary American fable, the reader is reminded of the things that really matter here on Earth, after 83-year-old Eddie loses his life saving a little girl at an amusement park.

Alexie, Sherman. *Reservation Blues*. The rise and fall of Coyote Springs, a Spokane Indian garage band, is chronicled with droll wit, and readers are shown the complexities and frustrations of contemporary American Indian life on and off the reservation.

Archer, Jeffery. *Kane and Abel*. Kane and Abel are literally and figuratively worlds apart, but when their paths cross, it does not go well.

Asimov, Isaac. *Foundation*. One of the great masterworks of science fiction, this story of our future begins with the history of Foundation and its greatest psychohistorian, Hari Seldon. To preserve knowledge and save mankind, Seldon gathers the best minds in the Empire—both scientists and scholars—and brings them to a bleak planet at the edge of the Galaxy to serve as a beacon of hope for future generations.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. In this masterpiece of wit and style, the reader is transported to 19th century England, where men hold all the power and status, and women need to negotiate as best they can.

Bradbury, Ray. *The Martian Chronicles*. In this collection of science fiction short stories, Earth dwellers leave our planet to investigate Mars, with disastrous results.

Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*. A mind-bending code hidden in the works of Leonardo da Vinci. A desperate race through the cathedrals and castles of Europe. An astonishing truth concealed for centuries... unveiled at last. Be pulled in by the intrigue and excitement of this mystery.

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game Boxed Set* (*Ender's Game*, *Ender's Shadow*, *Shadow of the Hegemon*). This sci-fi set has been recognized by the Hugo and Nebula Awards committees. Get hooked on *Ender's Game*, and then continue the journey with the rest of the series.
Chabon, Michael. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay.* Jewish cousins Sam and Joe team up to create the comic book hero The Escapist during the years of the Holocaust in Europe, from which Josef has escaped.


Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness.* In this masterpiece, often hailed as the first novel of the 20th century, Conrad presents a profound exploration of the human subconscious while also providing a terrifying portrayal of the dangers of the imperialism that had such disastrous effects on the African continent.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage.* Set in the American Civil War, this classic, upon its publication in 1895, quickly became a benchmark for modern anti-war literature.

Crichton, Michael. *The Andromeda Strain.* In this breathless thriller, contaminants from space are introduced to Earth, and a frantic scramble to contain a strange and deadly outbreak is undertaken.

Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield.* The story of David Copperfield, as he lives his life from the early years and into manhood, ultimately gaining fame and fortune, mirrors the life of one of Victorian England’s greatest authors.

Doctorow, E. L. *Ragtime.* Where else can a reader find Henry Ford, Harry Houdini, Sigmund Freud, J.P. Morgan, Emma Goldman, and Emiliano Zapata all in one story? This novel captures the spirit of America in the era between the turn of the 20th century and the First World War, and blurs the line between fantasy and historical fact, and between real and imaginary characters.

Edwards, Kim. *The Memory Keepers Daughter.* Read about the effects of deception and despair on a family where the father delivered twins and then gave away the Down’s Syndrome daughter, her existence unknown to her mother and twin brother, who think she died in childbirth.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man.* A classic from the moment it first appeared in 1952, *Invisible Man* chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless African American man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Middlesex.* Recommended by FA students, this is a fascinating gender-bender by the author of *Virgin Suicides,* which combines historical events with current cultural issues.

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury.* This is the rich, dark, scandal-ridden story of squandered fortune, madness, brain damage, theft, illegitimacy, and stoic endurance as told in the interior voices of the three Compson brothers, members of an august Mississippi family that fell on hard times after the Civil War.
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby.* This cautionary tale about the American Dream is arguably Fitzgerald’s best work, and one of the finest American novels ever published. In the author’s own words, it is “extraordinary and beautiful and simple.”

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* After Oskar Schell’s father dies on September 11th, he begins looking for answers through the streets of NYC. The author successfully uses humor as a deceptive, glitzy cover for a fairly serious tale about loss and recovery.

Frank, E. R. *Life is Funny.* Eleven kids with distinct voices and individual struggles narrate this impressive novel. Each of these interlocking stories springs to life in rich detail.

Gaines, Ernest J. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman.* Set in rural southern Louisiana, the novel spans 100 years of American history, from the early 1860s to the onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and follows the life of the elderly Jane Pittman, who was born into slavery and lived through all of those years.

Gregory, Phillipa. *The Queens Fool.* Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth are both vying for the talents of Hannah Green, a young Jewish girl in the time of the Inquisition, who is invaluable to them because of her gift of “Sight”, which allows her to see into the future.

Gregory, Phillipa. *The Other Boleyn Girl.* Read the story of Mary, Anne Boleyn’s less famous sister, and the sibling rivalry which led them to compete for the attentions of Henry VIII, who desperately needed someone to bear him a legitimate son and heir to the throne of England.

Gruen, Sara. *Water for Elephants.* This is the story of seventy years in the life of an almost-college-graduate who, upon the death of his parents in a tragic car accident, actually does run away with the circus.

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time.* The narrator of this story is a 15-year-old autistic boy who discovers his neighbor’s dog murdered and is then arrested for the murder. He is released from jail and vows to set the story straight.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Stranger in a Strange Land.* This Hugo Award-winning classic sci-fi novel is an emblem of the ’60s generation in its iconoclasm and its free-love themes.

Heller, Joseph. *Catch-22.* This is Joseph Heller’s classic satire on the murderous insanity of war: an utterly serious and sad, but very funny book.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises.* In this story of thirtysomething dissolute expatriates living in Europe after World War I - Brett and her drunken fiancé, Mike Campbell, the unhappy Princeton Jewish boxer Robert Cohn, the sardonic novelist Bill
Gorton—we have the quintessential lost-generation novel, which has since inspired several generations of Hemingway fans and imitators.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. This is the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, who live an idyllic life until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever.

Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In contrast to *The Kite Runner*, which is completely male-focused, this novel presents a vision of the potential horrors facing females in modern Afghanistan.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. In this vision of the future, the world is a capitalist civilization, reconstituted through the most efficient scientific and psychological engineering, and people are genetically designed to be passive and consistently useful to the ruling class.

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. Recommended by Friends Academy upper school students, this book is the soul of the Beat Generation, and speaks to the restlessness and desire for freedom felt by the young people of all generations.

Kesey, Ken. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. In reaction to the themes of rebellion against arbitrary authority and rejection of conformity prevalent in the '60s, this book has become a classic in American literature, as the reader's sympathy falls squarely with the psychiatric patients on a hospital's mental ward, and absolutely against the nurse who runs it.

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees*. The search for a mother, and the need to mother oneself, are crucial elements in this well-written coming-of-age story set in the early 1960s against a background of racial violence and unrest.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. This collection of stories about Indians and Indian Americans reveals the dislocation and disruption brought on its people by India's tumultuous history.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of racial injustice in a small southern town during the Depression follows three years in the life of 8-year-old Scout Finch, her brother Jem, and their father, Atticus--three years punctuated by the arrest and eventual trial of a young black man unjustly accused of raping a white woman.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Border Trilogy (All the Pretty Horses, Crossing, Cities of the Plain)*. In these three award-winning novels, the author gives readers a genuine American epic, beginning with *All the Pretty Horses* and continuing through *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain*. Two young men come of age in the Southwest and Mexico, in this sorrowful elegy for the American frontier.
McEwan, Ian. *Atonement.* An adolescent girl with a budding, hypersensitive imagination, aspires to write fiction, but when she creates a story that devastates the lives of her family, she must eventually come to terms with her mistakes.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved.* A dead child, a runaway slave, a terrible secret--these are the central concerns of this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, written by a Nobel laureate. This is a dense, complex novel in which Sethe's history and the horrifying circumstances of her baby's death start to make terrible sense. And as past meets present, a mysterious young woman, about the same age as Sethe's daughter would have been, suddenly appears.

Nemirovsky, Irene. *Suite Francaise.* In this extraordinary work set in German-occupied France, a Jewish-Russian immigrant writes of the lives of real people of the time, even as she was about to be removed to Auschwitz.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried.* In this brilliant combination of memoir, novel, and story collection, nominated for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, the author, with incredible beauty and humor, presents to the reader his vivid, hallucinatory images from the war in Vietnam.

Orwell, George. *1984.* In a grim city and a terrifying country, where everyone is carefully watched by Big Brother and the Thought Police can practically read your mind, Winston is a man in grave danger because his memory still functions. He joins a secret revolutionary organization called The Brotherhood, dedicated to the destruction of the Party, and risks his life in a deadly match against the powers that be.

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club.* Caustic, bleakly funny, violent, outrageous, and always unsettling, this utterly original novel will make a marked impression on everyone who picks it up. This book was repeatedly suggested by Friends Academy Upper School students on the library/English department reading survey.

Paolini, Christopher. *Inheritance,* 1-3 (*Eragon, Eldest, Brisingr*) Paolini began to write this fantasy trilogy at age fifteen, and all three of these works became instant *NY Times* best-sellers. He takes readers to a strange, dark world and into the eternal conflict of good vs. evil.

Picoult, Jodi. *Nineteen Minutes: a Novel.* In nineteen minutes, ten students are killed and nineteen are wounded in a school shooting by a troubled student who has been mercilessly bullied by his classmates for years.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar.* This largely autobiographical novel by a world-class poet tells the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown, which began during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s.
Potok, Chaim. *Chosen.* In 1940s Brooklyn, New York, Reuven Malther, a Modern Orthodox Jew, and Danny Saunders, the brilliant son of a Hasidic rebbe, become friends, and despite differences form a deep, if unlikely, friendship. The intellectual and spiritual clashes between fathers, between each son and his own father, and between the two young men, provide the backdrop for this exploration of fathers, sons, faith, loyalty, and, ultimately, the power of love.

Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials (The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, The Amber Spyglass)* The fate of the universe is in the hands of Lyra, Pantalaimon, and Will in this epic fantasy trilogy. Read *Golden Compass* first, and you'll be hooked!

Rand, Ayn. *The Fountainhead.* This book presents the universal themes of the strength of the individual, good vs. evil, and the threat of oppression. These themes, along with the amazing writing, create its enduring influence.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Youthful, enthusiastic Paul Baumer enlists in the German army during World War I, but as the horrible war continues year after year, he vows to fight against the hate that meaninglessly pits young men in different uniforms against each other.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter's (all)* If you haven’t already read these books, you must read the adventures of the first six years that Harry and his friends have spent at Hogwarts, as they learn to perfect their wizardry and fight evil. This series comes highly recommended by so many of your FA schoolmates.

Sachar, Louis. *Holes.* When Stanley is sent to Camp Green Lake, a barren juvenile detention center which has neither green nor lake, much is learned, as the inmates are forced to dig holes to develop and improve their character.

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye.* This classic coming-of-age story of a young male high school student in the 1950’s is told in the first person by the now-famous Holden Caulfield.

Sebold, Alice. *The Lovely Bones.* This is the story of a family devastated by a gruesome murder -- a murder recounted by the teenage victim, Susie. She watches from heaven as her family and friends struggle to cope with the circumstance of her disappearance and death.

Sijie, Dai. *Balzac & the Little Chinese Seamstress.* This is the story of two teens, childhood friends and sons of doctors and dentists, who have been sent to a small Chinese village for "re-education" during Mao's Cultural Revolution, and who manage through ruse to obtain contraband Western literature to keep them going.

Sittenfeld, Curtis. *Prep.* Read the story of Lee Fiora, who leaves South Bend, Indiana for Boston's prestigious Ault School, and witness firsthand the triumphs and tragedies that shape her coming-of-age.
Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath.* In another Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, Steinbeck portrays the Joad family’s refusal to let go of their faltering hold on human dignity as they move west in the hopes of escaping the Depression and the devastation of the dust bowl in Oklahoma.


Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit & The Lord of the Rings Trilogy (The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, Return of the King)* Lose yourself in Tolkien’s rich fantasy world of Hobbits and elves, magic rings and powerful wizards, ents and orcs.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* In perhaps Tolstoy’s greatest novel, we see Anna, miserable in her loveless marriage, do the nearly unimaginable and give in to her desire for the dashing Count Vronsky.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five.* Partially based on Vonnegut’s experience as an American prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany during the firebombing of 1945 that killed thousands of civilians, this is the story of a traveler in time and space, and describes Billy Pilgrim’s long visit to the planet Tralfamador.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple.* This book won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1983, and was praised for the depth of its main characters and for its eloquent use of African American English vernacular. It is the story of two sisters, a missionary in Africa, and a child-wife living in the South, who sustain their loyalty to and trust in each other across time, distance, and silence.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway.* Meet Clarissa Dalloway on a fine June morning in London, as she prepares for her upcoming dinner party, while present day contacts bring forth conflicts and musings of the past and the men and women she has loved.

Wright, Richard. *Native Son.* In this first novel to successfully tell the painful and unvarnished truth about American social and class relations, a young black man in the Chicago of the ’30s has no way out of the walls of poverty and racism that surround him, and after he murders a young white woman in a moment of panic, the walls begin to close in.
Nonfiction

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays With Morrie*. Be privy to the touching reconnection of a student and his professor and mentor, as the older man continues to share his wisdom and love, even in his final hours.

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. In this 1963 work, Baldwin calls for "full and shared acceptance" of the multiracial society of the United States, in order to end the racial nightmare he saw here.

Burroughs, Augusten. *Running with Scissors*. With an alcoholic father and an unstable mother who gave him up for adoption to her therapist, Burroughs spent his adolescence as part of the therapist's eccentric extended family, and there developed his buoyant approach to life.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. This 1962 book opened eyes to the widespread degradation of the planet and its life, and brought environmental awareness to the fore, sparking the ecological movement still alive today.

Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul on Ice*. This collection of brilliant essays illuminates the racial hurt, struggle and pride of African Americans in the United States during the 20th century.

Deloria, Vine. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Learn how a member of the Sioux feels about his white oppressors, while he destroys the stereotypes and myths that still survive today.

Eggers, Dave. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. This very funny autobiography describes the life of a young, hip Gen-Xer who takes on the responsibility of raising his younger brother after the death of both of their parents.

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: the Diary of a Young Girl*. In this beloved classic, you become privy to the vivid, insightful journal of a Jewish girl hiding in Amsterdam, before the Nazis found and transported her family to the death camps during World War II.

Frey, James. *A Million Little Pieces*. In this autobiographical work, Frey describes his time spent in rehab for an appalling alcohol and drug abuse problem that seriously threatened his very existence.
Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time: From Big Bang to Black Holes.* From the most brilliant theoretical physicist since Einstein comes this eminently readable and very accessible story of the ultimate quest for knowledge: the ongoing search for the tantalizing secrets at the heart of time and space.

Hersey, John. *Hiroshima.* Read stories of survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima, starkly and objectively presented by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

Kakalios, James. *Physics of Superheroes.* Engaging and witty, the author explains both classic and cutting-edge physics concepts while exploring the plausibility of the powers and feats of the most famous superheroes.

Kaysen, Susanna. *Girl, Interrupted.* In this autobiographical collection of essays on her two-year stay in a Boston psychiatric hospital, Kaysen reveals with darkly funny clarity her observations of hospital life and the complex province of brain and mind.

Kennedy, John F. *Profiles in Courage.* In this book which "deserves reading by every American," John Kennedy presents eight senators from US history who found themselves standing alone under tremendous political and social pressure, but who maintained their integrity by making decisions they felt were right.

Klosterman, Chuck. *Sex, Drugs and Cocoa Puffs.* Another suggestion from FA Upper Schoolers, this is an entertaining and unusual collection of essays on pop culture, from a Gen-Xer's frame of reference.

Krakauer, John. *Into the Wild.* What leads a young college graduate to give away all his possessions and head for the Alaskan wilderness, only to struggle and slowly die of starvation? The author speculates on how and why this promising intellect and athlete decided to drop out of society, and ended up desperately fighting to survive.

Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope.* The presidential hopeful shares his "personal views on faith and values and offers a vision of the future that involves repairing a political process that is broken and restoring a government that has fallen out of touch with the people."

Obama, Barack. *Dreams From my Father.* The U.S. Senator has written this memoir of an individual who has seen and been part of a variety of cultures, and he explains how this perspective shaped his views.

Plato. *The Republic.* What does it mean to be good? What enables us to distinguish right from wrong? And how should human virtues be translated into a just society? These are the questions that Plato sought to answer in this monumental work of moral and political philosophy.
Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Tales and Poems.* Enjoy this collection of macabre stories and poems by one of America’s most popular 19th century writers, a master of Gothic horror, and a sensuous, hypnotic lyric poet, who also had great influence over the modern science fiction and detective story genres.

Sacks, Oliver. *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain.* Become a little more conscious of the role of music in your life by reading these case studies of the neurology patients of Dr. Sacks, and their connections to music.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood.* This autobiography in graphic format describes a young girl's life in Iran during the Islamic Revolution.

Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal.* Schlosser’s incisive history of the development of American fast food indicts the industry for some shocking crimes against humanity, including its systematic destruction of the American diet and landscape, and undermining our values and our economy.

Sedaris, David. *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim.* In this collection of 27 essays, Sedaris gives us examples of some of his best and funniest writings to date. Learn about his dysfunctional family, what it taught him, and what you too can learn, about life and humanity.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale.* After interviewing his father, a Holocaust survivor, the author then translated his story into a graphic novel which portrays the Jews as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the French as frogs, and the Americans as dogs.

Tammet, Daniel. *Born on a Blue Day.* In this autobiographical work by an autistic savant with Asperger's Syndrome, the reader learns the struggles of life on the autistic spectrum and also gets a glimpse of the uniqueness of being a mathematical savant.

Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle.* In this memoir, Walls describes in fascinating detail what it was to be a child of a brilliant, alcoholic father and a frustrated-artist mother who basically left their children to their own devices. The details go from the embarrassing to the horrific, and are told with great good humor.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night.* A scholarly, pious teenager is wracked with guilt at having survived the Holocaust while the rest of his family was lost. For him, this experience has raised the intolerable question of how the God he once so fervently believed in could have allowed these monstrous events to occur?