GRADES 8/9

Classics

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn - Betty Smith
The beloved American classic about a young girl's coming-of-age at the turn of the century, Betty Smith's A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is a poignant and moving tale filled with compassion and cruelty, laughter and heartache, crowded with life and people and incident. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan and her bittersweet formative years in the slums of Williamsburg has enchanted and inspired millions of readers for more than sixty years. By turns overwhelming, sublime, heartbreaking, and uplifting, the daily experiences of the unforgettable Nolans are raw with honesty and tenderly threaded with family connectedness -- in a work of literary art that brilliantly captures a unique time and place as well as incredibly rich moments of universal experience. 528 pages

The Hobbit – J.R.R. Tolkien
Bilbo Baggins is a hobbit who enjoys a comfortable, unambitious life, rarely traveling any farther than his pantry or cellar. But his contentment is disturbed when the wizard Gandalf and a company of dwarves arrive on his doorstep one day to whisk him away on an adventure. They have launched a plot to raid the treasure hoard guarded by Smaug the Magnificent, a large and very dangerous dragon. Bilbo reluctantly joins their quest, unaware that on his journey to the Lonely Mountain he will encounter both a magic ring and a frightening creature known as Gollum. 300 pages

Dreams from My Father – Barack Obama
In this lyrical, unsentimental, and compelling memoir, the son of a black African father and a white American mother searches for a workable meaning to his life as a black American. It begins in New York, where Barack Obama learns that his father a figure he knows more as a myth than as a man has been killed in a car accident. This sudden death inspires an emotional odyssey first to a small town in Kansas, from which he retraces the migration of his mother’s family to Hawaii, and then to Kenya, where he meets the African side of his family, confronts the bitter truth of his father’s life, and at last reconciles his divided inheritance. 464 pages

Nonfiction

Rumble Fish – S.E. Hinton
From the best-selling author of The Outsiders. Rusty-James is the number one tough guy among the junior high kids who hang out and shoot pool at Benny's. He's even proud of keeping up his reputation. Actually though, what he wants most of all is to be just like his older brother, the Motorcycle Boy. Rusty-James isn't book-smart, he relies more on his fists than his brains. When he gets in over his head, the Motorcycle Boy has always been there to bail him out. The day Rusty-James' world comes apart, the Motorcycle boy isn't around to pick up the pieces. What now? 144 pages

The Five People You Meet in Heaven – Mitch Albom
Eddie is a grizzled war veteran who feels trapped in a meaninglessness of fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. His days are a dull routine of work, loneliness, and regret. Then, on his 83rd birthday, Eddie dies in a tragic accident, trying to save a little girl from a falling cart. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by five people. These people may have been loved ones or distant strangers. Yet each of them changed your path forever. 196 pages

High interest

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The Running Dream - Wendelin Van Draanen
Jessica thinks her life is over when she loses a leg in a car accident. She's not comforted by the news that she'll be able to walk with the help of a prosthetic leg. Who cares about walking when you live to run? As she struggles to cope with crutches and a cyborg-like prosthetic, Jessica feels oddly both in the spotlight and invisible. People who don't know what to say act like she's not there. Jessica befriends Rosa who is going to tutor her through all the math she's missed. Rosa sees right into Jessica’s heart. With the support of family, friends, a coach, and her track teammates, Jessica may actually be able to run again. But that's not enough for her now. She doesn't just want to cross finish lines herself—she wants to take Rosa with her. 332 pages
Sports

*When the Game was Ours* – Larry Bird and Magic Johnson

From the moment these two legendary players took the court on opposing sides, they engaged in a fierce physical and psychological battle. In Celtic green was Larry Bird, the hick from French Lick, with laser-beam focus, relentless determination, and a deadly jump shot, a player who demanded excellence from everyone around him and whose caustic wit left opponents quaking in their high-tops. Magic Johnson was Mr. Showtime, a magnetic personality with all the right moves. Young, indomitable, he was a pied piper in purple and gold. And he burned with an inextinguishable desire to win. Their uncommonly competitive relationship came to symbolize the most thrilling rivalry in the NBA—East vs. West, physical vs. finesse, old school vs. Showtime, even white vs. black. Each pushed the other to greatness, and together Bird and Johnson collected eight NBA Championships and six MVP awards, helping to save a floundering NBA. At the start they were bitter rivals, but along the way they became lifelong friends. 368 pages

GRADES 10/11

Classics

*The Good Earth* – Pearl Buck

Though more than seventy years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. In *The Good Earth* Pearl S. Buck paints an indelible portrait of China in the 1920s, when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-Lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during the last century. 368 pages

*The Sun Also Rises* – Ernest Hemingway

A brilliant profile of the Lost Generation, Hemingway's first bestseller captures life among the expatriates on Paris's Left Bank during the 1920s, the brutality of bullfighting in Spain, and the moral and spiritual dissolution of a generation. Hemingway's first bestselling novel, it is the story of a group of 'Lost Generation' Americans and Brits in the 1920s on a sojourn from Paris to Pamplona, Spain. The novel poignantly details their life as expatriates. 256 pages

Nonfiction

*Into Thin Air* – Jon Krakauer

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more—including Krakauer—in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for this epic account of the May 1996 disaster. 332 pages

*Mountains Beyond Mountains* – Tracey Kidder

In medical school, Paul Farmer found his life’s calling: to cure infectious diseases and to bring the lifesaving tools of modern medicine to those who need them most. Kidder’s magnificent account takes us from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia as Farmer changes minds and practices through his dedication to the philosophy that “the only real nation is humanity.” At the heart of this book is the example of a life based on hope and on an understanding of the truth of the Haitian proverb “Beyond mountains there are mountains”—as you solve one problem, another problem presents itself, and so you go on and try to solve that one too. 332 pages

*A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*–Bill Bryson

The Appalachian Trail stretches from Georgia to Maine and covers some of the most breathtaking terrain in America: majestic mountains, silent forests, sparking lakes. If you're going to take a hike, it's probably the place to go. And Bill Bryson is surely the most entertaining guide you'll find. He introduces us to the history and ecology of the trail, to some of the other hardy (or just foolhardy) folks he meets along the way, and to a couple of bears. Already a classic, *A Walk in the Woods* will make you long for the great outdoors (or at least a comfortable chair to sit and read in). 397 pages
High interest

The Fault in Our Stars – John Green
Hazel is sixteen, with terminal cancer, when she meets Augustus at her kids-with-cancer support group. The two are kindred spirits, sharing an irreverent sense of humor and immense charm, and watching them fall in love even as they face universal questions of the human condition--How will I be remembered? Does my life, and will my death, have meaning?--has a raw honesty that is deeply moving. 352 pages

Peace Like a River – Leif Enger
Young Reuben Land has little doubt that miracles happen all around us, suspecting that his own father is touched by God. When his older brother flees a controversial murder charge, Reuben, along with his older sister and father, set off on a journey that will take them to the Badlands and through a landscape more extraordinary than they could have anticipated. Enger’s novel is at once a heroic quest and a haunting meditation on the possibility of magic in the everyday world. 320 pages

Sports

Eleven Seconds – Travis Roy
In this heartfelt testament to the power of love and the strength of the human spirit, Travis Roy, who suffered a devastating injury eleven seconds into his first college hockey game, reveals how he has managed to cope after the accident and, with the help of family and friends, overcome tremendous barriers to begin a new life. 226 pages

GRADE 12

Classics

The War of the Worlds – H.G. Wells
The novel begins ominously, as the lone voice of a narrator tells readers that "No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's..." Things then progress from a series of seemingly mundane reports about odd atmospheric disturbances taking place on Mars to the arrival of Martians just outside of London. At first the Martians seem laughable, hardly able to move in Earth's comparatively heavy gravity even enough to raise themselves out of the pit created when their spaceship landed. But soon the Martians reveal their true nature as death machines 100-feet tall rise up from the pit and begin laying waste to the surrounding land. Wells quickly moves the story from the countryside to the evacuation of London itself and the loss of all hope as England's military suffers defeat after defeat. With horror his narrator describes how the Martians suck the blood from living humans for sustenance, and how it's clear that man is not being conquered so much a corralled. 138 pages

Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen
“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." So begins Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen's witty comedy of manners--one of the most popular novels of all time--that features splendidly civilized sparring between the proud Mr. Darcy and the prejudiced Elizabeth Bennet as they play out their spirited courtship in a series of eighteenth-century drawing-room intrigues. 279 pages

Nonfiction

Steve Jobs – Walter Isaacson
Based on more than forty interviews with Jobs conducted over two years—as well as interviews with more than a hundred family members, friends, adversaries, competitors, and colleagues—Walter Isaacson has written a riveting story of the roller-coaster life and searingly intense personality of a creative entrepreneur whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing. 656 pages
**Freakonomics – Dubner & Levitt**

Which is more dangerous, a gun or a swimming pool? What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common? How much do parents really matter? These may not sound like typical questions for an economist to ask. But Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He studies the riddles of everyday life—from cheating and crime to parenting and sports—and reaches conclusions that turn conventional wisdom on its head. 315 pages

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**Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption-Laura Hillenbrand**

On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane’s bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War. The lieutenant’s name was Louis Zamperini. In boyhood, he’d been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman, embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will. 473 pages

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**A Prayer for Owen Meany – John Irving**

In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills the other boy's mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn't believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen, after that 1953 foul ball, is extraordinary. 646 pages

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**Still Alice – Lisa Genova**

Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children and a house on the Cape, is a celebrated Harvard教授 at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, she receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away. In turns heartbreaking, inspiring and terrifying, Still Alice captures in remarkable detail what it's like to literally lose your mind. 292 pages

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**Bel Canto – Ann Patchett**

At a birthday party for Japanese industrialist Mr. Hosokawa somewhere in South America, famous American soprano Roxanne Coss is just finishing her recital in the Vice President's home when armed terrorists appear, intending to take the President hostage. However, he is not there, so instead they hold the international businesspeople and diplomats at the party, releasing all the women except Roxanne. Captors and their prisoners settle into a strange domesticity, with the opera diva captivating them all as she does her daily practicing. Soon romantic liaisons develop with the hopeless intensity found in many opera plots. 352 pages

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**Sports**

**King of the Court: Bill Russell and the Basketball Revolution—Aram Goudsouzian**

Bill Russell was not the first African American to play professional basketball, but he was its first black superstar. From the moment he stepped onto the court of the Boston Garden in 1956, Russell began to transform the sport in a fundamental way, making him, more than any of his contemporaries, the Jackie Robinson of basketball. This beautifully written book—sophisticated, nuanced, and insightful—reveals a singular individual who expressed the dreams of Martin Luther King Jr. while echoing the warnings of Malcolm X. 448 pages
Every summer, in ten small towns across Cape Cod, the finest college baseball players in the country gather in hopes of making it to “The Show.” The hopes are justifiably high: The Cape Cod Baseball League is the best amateur league in the world, producing one out of every six major league players, from Nomar Garciaparra and Frank Thomas to Jeff Bagwell and Barry Zito. Jim Collins chronicles a season in the life of one team—the Chatham A’s, perhaps the most celebrated team in the league. We learn about everything from the physics of wooden bats and the physiology of elbows to the psychology of slumps and the lure of drugs. In the course of a single dramatic season, with euphoric wins and devastating losses, we come to know the intricacies of the major league scouting network and the rapidly changing profile of major league baseball. The Last Best League is about dreams fulfilled and dreams denied, about Cape Cod and the rites of summer, and about the way one small town grows to love a group of young men coming of age in America. 312 pages