

Great Adult Summer Reads

Compiled by Richardson ISD Librarians
Summer 2008



The Appeal by John Grisham

A Mississippi jury awards a widow \$41 million in a lawsuit against a chemical company that is accused of dumping huge amounts of toxic waste in a small town's water system. What unfolds after this judgment is an intricate web of conspiracy, greed, and deceit to take over the judicial system and politics in the state.

Before You Know Kindness by Chris Bohjalian

The book spotlights animal rights' activist Spencer McCullough who is shot with a hunting rifle by his twelve-year-old niece, Charlotte. As the family tries to come to terms with what happened, Spencer's employers file a lawsuit against the owner of the weapon. Before You Know Kindness is now in development as an independent film. *** **2008 Richardson Reads One Book- Bohjalian will be appearing in the RHS Auditorium on Tuesday, September 16 at 7:30 PM.**

The Bone Garden: A Novel by Tess Gerritsen

The discovery of the skeleton of a woman murdered two centuries earlier sends medical examiner Maura Isles on the trail of a long-dead serial killer who terrorized Boston with crimes in which Norris Marshall, a Harvard Medical School student, had become the prime suspect.

Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad

Asne Seierstad recounts the experiences she had while staying with a bookseller named Sultan Khan and his family in Afghanistan just after the fall of the Taliban, describing what it was like for families in Afghanistan to adjust to a new way of life and a new government. (CIP)

Bowie in Berlin: A New Career in a New Town by Thomas Jerome Seabrook

During a professional and personal crisis in the mid-1970's, David Bowie and Brian Eno create three landmark records while living in the divided Berlin.

Change of Heart: A Novel by Jodi Picoult

Her life shattered by a devastating act of violence, June Neelson is forced to make a pivotal choice that involves her twelve-year-old daughter and a salvation-seeking criminal.

Chasing Justice: My Story of Freeing Myself After Two Decades on Death Row for a Crime I Didn't Commit by Kerry Max Cook

Cook recounts the story of freeing himself after twenty years on death row for a gruesome mutilation murder he didn't commit. Very difficult to read, but compelling. Powerful. Painful. Eye-opening.

Daughter's Keeper by Ayelet Waldman

This book is the story of a young woman who battles America's drug laws. Twenty-two year-old Olivia Goodman is in a bind when her boyfriend, an illegal Mexican immigrant, is persuaded to participate in a drug deal, and Olivia's vague complicity sweeps her into an intense legal battle when she is arrested with him.

The Double Bind: A Novel by Chris Bohjalian

(Another title by the Richardson Reads One Book 2008 author)

Withdrawing into her photography and a job at a homeless shelter after being attacked while riding her bike, student Laurel Estabrook encounters Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of secret photos. When Bobbie dies suddenly, Laurel is certain that the photos hide a dark family secret and embarks on an obsessive, potentially dangerous search for the truth.

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia by Elizabeth Gilbert

This is a sprawling travelogue of soul-searching and self-discovery. At the age of thirty-one, Gilbert moved with her husband to the suburbs of New York and began trying to get pregnant, only to realize that she wanted neither a child nor a husband. Three years later, after a protracted divorce, she embarked on a yearlong trip of recovery, with three main stops: Rome, for pleasure; an ashram outside of Mumbai, for spiritual searching; and Bali, for "balancing." These destinations are all on the beaten track, but Gilbert's exuberance and her self-deprecating humor enliven the proceedings: recalling the first time she attempted to speak directly to God, she says, "It was all I could do to stop myself from saying, 'I've always been a big fan of your work.'"

Hold Tight by Harlan Coben

In this brand new mystery, seemingly unrelated events have an unexpected common thread. Suburban parents trying to find their missing teen-aged son install a spying device on his computer, and a tracking device on his cell phone, and search for an explanation for his recent unusual behavior.

I Love You, Beth Cooper by Larry Doyle

Valedictorian and resident high school nerd Denis Cooverman uses his graduation speech as a platform to declare his love for Beth Cooper, the super popular (and super hot) head cheerleader. His declaration sets off a chain of events worthy of its cinematic brethren. In a tribute to teenage coming-of-age movies, Doyle (TV writer for *Beavis and Butt-head* and *The Simpsons*) interweaves stock scenes, famous movie dialog, and stereo-typical characters to create a raunchy, but fun, comedy.

The Idiot Girl's Action-Adventure Club: True Tales From A Magnificent and Clumsy Life by Laurie Notaro

Notaro, formerly a humor columnist, has put together a collection of fun and zany life experiences as she "matures from wild teenager to disheveled adult" (Publishers Weekly). Her stories range from her mother, to her days as a party girl, to public bathrooms, and to her high school reunion. You'll be sure to laugh!

Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil by Deborah Rodriguez and Kristin Ohlson

After the fall of the Taliban, Deborah, who lives in Michigan, joins the Care for All Foundation to help the people of Afghanistan. When she is taken to a local salon by an Afghan woman, she sees the meager supplies, surroundings, and skills with which the women are working. She enlists the help of the Care for All Foundation and solicits donations from American companies to begin her own beauty school. She becomes completely immersed in the culture, and falls in love with the country and its people.

The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow

The story of Randy Pausch, a Professor of Computer Science, Human Computer Interaction, and Design at Carnegie Mellon University. From 1988-1997, he taught at the University of Virginia. After his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer he is asked to give a lecture at a series called the "Last Lecture." He is married with three preschool children.

Little Children by Tom Perrotta

The eponymous children in this satirical novel are actually adults who, chafing at the burdens of parenthood, try to re-create their unencumbered youth. Sarah, an overeducated young homemaker, likens her tantrum-prone daughter to a "brooding Russian epileptic" out of Dostoevsky, and pines for lost college days of feminism and bisexuality. While her husband orders used panties online, she has furtive sex with a stay-at-home dad whose repeated failure to pass the bar has earned him the contempt of his gorgeous wife.

The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 by Lawrence Wright

A history of the events leading to 9/11. A groundbreaking look at the people and ideas, the terrorist plans and the Western intelligence failures that culminated in the assault on America. (Winner of the Pulitzer Prize.)

Love Walked In by Marisa de los Santos

Cornelia is an overqualified coffee waitress trying to determine her life goals and dreams. Clare is eleven & trying desperately to make her life seem normal as her mother's behavior becomes more and more erratic. Told in alternating voices, these two plots become one as Cornelia and Clare's lives unexpectedly become intertwined.

Luncheon of the Boating Party by Susan Vreeland

Tells the story of Auguste Renior and his models as he conceives, plans, and paints the 1880 masterpiece *Luncheon of the Boating Party*.

My Grandfather's Son: A Memoir by Clarence Thomas

Whether you're a liberal who hates him or a conservative who adores him, this guy has a very interesting story to tell. Raised by his grandparents, he grew up exceedingly poor in the Deep South during segregation. Today, he occupies a seat on our nation's highest court. This book is, however, more than a rags-to-riches story. After reading, you will have a better understanding as to why this black man opposes Affirmative Action, welfare, and left-leaning government policies. Whether or not you agree with his assessment, you will be moved by his openness about his personal struggles with debt, alcohol, and guilt. For those who don't care for politics, fear not. This is no political diatribe but an honest account of one man's life - and a fascinating one as well.

Murder of a Botoxed Blonde: A Scumble River Mystery by Denise Swanson

Scumble River is a small town with lots of murders; it's a good thing they have Skye Denison, school psychologist, to help solve them in a hilarious manner. Sit back, drink some tea, and enjoy this light hearted series that almost makes you want to move to Scumble River.

No Time for Goodbye by Linwood Barclay

Twenty-five years after her entire family vanishes without a trace, Cynthia Archer is struggling to live a normal life with her husband and daughter, until sinister clues, all pointing to her missing family, begin to reveal the dark secrets of the past.

On Writing by Stephen King

If you're interested in improving your writing, regardless of your chosen style, or simply a fan of King's, this is a great little book.

People of the Book: A Novel by Geraldine Brooks

Hannah Heath, Australian rare-book expert, is called on to restore a prized Jewish prayer book. Lost for over a decade, she finds herself entranced with the history behind this treasured artifact, in love with an unsuspecting man, and confronted by the trials and tribulations of her relationship with her mother. It is the unique objects she finds that spur her into investigations leading her across three continents.

Physics of the Impossible: A Scientific Exploration into the World of Phasers, Force Fields, Teleportation, and Time Travel by Michio Kaku

Kaku explores the real world likelihood of common science fiction devices.

The Poet by Michael Connelly

Jack McEvoy's beat for the Rocky Mountain News is death. His quest for the story becomes personal when his twin Sean is found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Jack doesn't believe his brother committed suicide. Using his investigative skills as a reporter, he begins to unravel a nationwide series of cop suicides that may be murders.

Queen of Babble series by Meg Cabot

Cabot is the author of the young adult series *The Princess Diaries*. Her adult fiction is also fluffy romantic comedy. This "chick-lit" series stars Lizzie Nichols as she makes her way through life after college graduation, often saying a little too much in the most inconvenient circumstances. The third installment, Queen of Babble Gets Hitched, is due June 2008.

The Red Necklace by Sally Gardner

Yann, of Roma blood, has been raised by the dwarf Têtu, and together they assist a famed stage magician. When the evil Count Kalliovski murders the magician, hoping to discover the secret of his astounding automaton, Yann is smuggled off alone to London, to safety and education. He returns to a Paris on the brink of revolution, seeking not only Têtu but Sidonie, a young aristocrat whose unhinged father loathes her and has promised her to the Count. (Kirkus Review starred)

Same Kind of Different As Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together by Ron Hall and Denver Moore

Meet Denver, a man raised under plantation-style slavery in Louisiana in the 1960s; a man who escaped, hopping a train to wander, homeless, for eighteen years on the streets of Dallas, Texas. No longer a slave, Denver's life was still hopeless- until God moved. First came a godly woman who prayed, listened, and obeyed. Then came her husband, Ron, an international arts dealer at home in a world of Armani-suited millionaires. Then they all came together.

Thunderstruck by Erik Larson

Larson, the author of The Devil in the White City, crafts a tale that builds in suspense as two seemingly unconnected stories come together to illustrate how the invention of wireless communication leads to the capture of a fugitive.

Twilight by Stephenie Meyer

When Bella Swan moves to Washington to live with her father and escape her mother's new marriage, she is instantly drawn to the Cullen family, a family that is secretive, secluded and not popular with her peers. As she develops a turbulent relationship with the youngest Cullen boy, Edward, she soon realizes he and his family are vampires. She must then decide if loving Edward puts her at risk, and if so, at risk of what? (This is book one of a young adult series.)

What is the What by Dave Eggers

Valentino Achak Deng, real-life hero of this engrossing story, was a refugee from the Sudanese civil war of the 1980s and 90s -- the bloodbath before the current Darfur bloodbath. Separated from his family when Arab militia destroy his village, Valentino, a 7 year-old-boy, joins thousands of other "Lost Boys," beset by starvation, thirst and man-eating lions on their march to squalid refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, where Valentino pieces together a new life and eventually reaches America. Eggers' fictionalization of Deng's story preserves his compelling voice and makes his harrowing, bleak narrative lyrical and funny as well.

World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War by Max Brooks

A futuristic history describing a desperate global battle against zombies, as told in first person accounts. The title pretty much says it all.

World Without End by Ken Follett

Follett returns to Kingsbridge, England, site of the 1989 novel Pillars of the Earth. The cathedral and the priory remain the center focus as the church and town struggle with human issues of love and hate, greed and pride, and change and status quo against the backdrop of the Black Plague. This epic novel can easily stand on its own, although some readers may want to read Pillars first.

The Yiddish Policeman's Union: A Novel by Michael Chabon

A fascinating alternate history/detective story set in the Jewish homeland... of Alaska. According to Amazon.com, it is "a murder-mystery speculative-history Jewish-identity noir chess thriller."

The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story by Diane Ackerman

Ackerman tells the remarkable WWII story of Jan Zabinski, the director of the Warsaw Zoo, and his wife, Antonina, who, with courage and coolheaded ingenuity, sheltered 300 Jews as well as Polish resisters in their villa and in animal cages and sheds. Using Antonina's diaries, other contemporary sources and her own research in Poland, Ackerman takes us into the Warsaw ghetto and the 1943 Jewish uprising and also describes the Poles' revolt against the Nazi Occupation in 1944. Throughout the horrors of the German destruction of the city and the attempts of the Warsaw Uprising, the couple maintained an atmosphere of calm and grace.