

Waltham High School: 2011 Senior Summer Reading List

Honors – 4 books total

- 1 Required Classic: *1984* by George Orwell
- 1 Required All Levels Read: *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow
- 2 Choice Books: Choose two from following list:

C1 and C2 – 3 books total

- 1 Required All Levels Read: *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow
- 2 Choice Books: Choose two from following list:

- *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
- *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri
- *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver
- *The Mosquito Coast* by Paul Theroux
- *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi
- *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
- *Born to Run* by Christopher McDougall
- *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
- *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls

Required for All Levels to Read: *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow

When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture; he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave-- "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams"--wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because "time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think"). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living.

Required Classic for Grade 12 Honors: *1984* by George Orwell

Orwell's final novel, *1984*, is the story of one man's struggle against the ubiquitous, menacing state power ("Big Brother") that tries to dictate nearly every aspect of human life. The novel is a classic in anti-utopian fiction, and a trenchant political satire that remains as relevant today as when it was first published.

Choose Any Two from the Following List:

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

In his 16th year, Pi sets sail with his family and some of their menagerie to start a new life in Canada. Halfway to Midway Island, the ship sinks into the Pacific, leaving Pi stranded on a life raft with a hyena, an orangutan, an injured zebra and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. After the beast dispatches the others, Pi is left to survive for 227 days with his large feline companion on the 26-foot-long raft, using all his knowledge, wits and faith to keep himself alive.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

Hopscotching across 25 years, it begins when newlyweds Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli emigrate to Cambridge, Mass., in 1968, where Ashima immediately gives birth to a son, Gogol--a pet name that becomes permanent when his formal name, traditionally bestowed by the maternal grandmother, is posted in a letter from India, but lost in transit. Ashoke becomes a professor of engineering, but Ashima has a harder time assimilating, unwilling to give up her ties to India. A leap ahead to the '80s finds the teenage Gogol ashamed of his Indian heritage and his unusual name, which he sheds as he moves on to college at Yale and graduate school at Columbia, legally changing it to Nikhil.

The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver

In this risky but resoundingly successful novel, Kingsolver leaves the Southwest, the setting of most of her work (*The Bean Trees*; *Animal Dreams*) and follows an evangelical Baptist minister's family to the Congo in the late 1950s, entwining their fate with that of the country during three turbulent decades. Nathan Price's determination to convert the natives of the Congo to Christianity is, we gradually discover, both foolhardy and dangerous, unsanctioned by the church administration and doomed from the start by Nathan's self-righteousness.

The Mosquito Coast by Paul Theroux

In a breathtaking adventure story, the paranoid and brilliant inventor Allie Fox takes his family to live in the Honduran jungle, determined to build a civilization better than the one they've left. Fleeing from an America he sees as mired in materialism and conformity, he hopes to rediscover a purer life. But his utopian experiment takes a dark turn when his obsessions lead the family toward unimaginable danger.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Persepolis is Marjane Satrapi's wise, funny, and heartbreaking memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, is a daring, fast-paced monologue of a young Pakistani man telling his life story to a mysterious American stranger. It's a controversial look at the dark side of the American Dream, exploring the aftermath of 9/11, international unease, and the dangerous pull of nostalgia.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe describes "Things Fall Apart" as a response to Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness", which is, comparatively, a denser, perhaps less accessible read. The parallels are there: the ominous drumbeats Marlow describes as mingling with his heartbeat are here given a source and a context. We, as readers, are invited into the lives of the Ibo clan in Nigeria. We learn their customs, their beliefs, terms from their language. Okonkwo, the main character, is the perfect anti-hero. He is maybe Achebe's ultimate creation: flawed, angry, deeply afraid but outwardly fierce.

Born to Run by Christopher McDougall

Isolated by the most savage terrain in North America, the reclusive Tarahumara Indians of Mexico's deadly Copper Canyons are custodians of a lost art. For centuries they have practiced techniques that allow them to run hundreds of miles without rest and chase down anything from a deer to an Olympic marathoner while enjoying every mile of it. Their superhuman talent is matched by uncanny health and serenity, leaving the Tarahumara immune to the diseases and strife that plague modern existence.

Dracula by Bram Stoker

The punctured throat, the coffin lid slowly opening, the unholy shriek as the stake pierces the heart—these are just a few of the chilling images Bram Stoker unleashed upon the world with his 1897 masterpiece, *Dracula*. Inspired by the folk legend of *nosferatu*, the undead, Stoker created a timeless tale of gothic horror and romance that has enthralled and terrified readers ever since.

The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls

In her extraordinary memoir, Walls recalls her nomadic life with surprising affection—though she would not want to relive it. The title, which derives from her father's dream house, serves as an apt metaphor for the Walls' fragility. Yet Walls sheds no tears nor succumbs to self-pity—she probably learned early on they would get her nowhere. Instead of condemning her parents' foibles, she unblinkingly examines how they transformed hardship into family romance and adventure.