

# Waltham High School: 2011 Sophomore Summer Reading List

## Honors – 4 books total

1 Required Classic: *The Once and Future King*, Book 1: "The Sword and the Stone") by T.H. White

1 Required All Levels Read: *The Color of Water* by James McBride

2 Choice Books: Choose two from following list:

## C1 and C2 – 3 books total

1 Required All Levels Read: *The Color of Water* by James McBride

2 Choice Books: Choose two from following list:

- *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Benejee Divakaruni
- *Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger
- *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines
- *A Death in Belmont* by Sebastian Junger
- *Shadow Divers* by Robert Kurson
- *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck

## Required for All Levels to Read:

*The Color of Water* by James McBride

This book is a tribute to the author's mother. In it, the author, a man whose mother was white and his father black, tells two stories: that of his mother and his own. Tautly written in spare, clear prose, it is a wonderful story of a bi-racial family who succeeded and achieved the American dream, despite the societal obstacles placed in its way.

## Required Classic for Grade 10 English Honors: Book 1: "The Sword and the Stone" in *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White

The world's greatest fantasy classic is the magical epic of King Arthur and his shining Camelot, of Merlyn and Guinevere, of beasts who talk and men who fly, of wizardry and war. It is the book of all things lost and wonderful and sad. It is the fantasy masterpiece by which all others are judged.

## Choice Books - All levels select two from the following list:

*The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

It's graceful and real, a compulsively readable story of three women who watch the Mississippi ground shifting beneath their feet as the words of men like Martin Luther King Jr. and Bob Dylan pervade their genteel town.

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

***Water for Elephants*** by Sara Gruen

Jacob Jankowski says: "I am ninety. Or ninety-three. One or the other." At the beginning of *Water for Elephants*, he is living out his days in a nursing home, hating every second of it. His life wasn't always like this, however, because Jacob ran away and joined the circus when he was twenty-one. It wasn't a romantic, carefree decision, to be sure.

***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*** by Sherman Alexie

Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he thought he was destined to live.

***Sister of My Heart*** by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

*Sister of My Heart* is less reliant on enchantment but no less enchanting as it tells the tale of two cousins born on the same day, their premature births brought on by a mysterious occurrence that claims the lives of both their fathers. Sudha is beautiful, Anju is not; yet the girls love each other as sisters, the bond between them so strong it seems nothing can break it. When both are pushed into arranged marriages, however, each discovers a devastating secret that changes their relationship forever.

***Peace Like a River*** by Leif Enger

To the list of great American child narrators that includes Huck Finn and Scout Finch, let us now add Reuben "Rube" Land, the asthmatic 11-year-old boy at the center of Leif Enger's remarkable first novel, *Peace Like a River*. Rube recalls the events of his childhood, in small-town Minnesota circa 1962, in a voice that perfectly captures the poetic, verbal stoicism of the northern Great Plains. "Here's what I saw," Rube warns his readers. "Here's how it went. Make of it what you will." And Rube sees plenty.

***A Lesson Before Dying*** by Ernest Gaines

Set in a small Cajun community in the late 1940s, "A Lesson Before Dying" is a novel of one man condemned to die for a crime he did not commit and a young man who visits him in his cell. In the end, the two men forge a bond as they both come to understand the simple heroism of resisting--and defying--the expected. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction.

***A Death in Belmont*** by Sebastian Junger

In the spring of 1963, the quiet suburb of Belmont, Massachusetts, is rocked by a shocking murder that fits the pattern of the infamous Boston Strangler, still at large. Hoping for a break in the case, the police arrest Roy Smith, a black ex-con whom the victim hired to clean her house. Smith is hastily convicted of the murder, but the Strangler's terror continues. And through it all, one man escapes the scrutiny of the police: a carpenter working at the time at the Belmont home of young Sebastian Junger and his parents—a man named Albert

***Shadow Divers*** by Robert Kurson

For John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, deep wreck diving was more than a sport. Testing themselves against treacherous currents, braving depths that induced hallucinatory effects, navigating through wreckage as perilous as a minefield, they pushed themselves to their limits and beyond, brushing against death more than once in the rusting hulks of sunken ships.

***Travels with Charley in Search of America*** by John Steinbeck

With his dog Charley, John Steinbeck set out in his truck to explore and experience America in the 1960s. As he talked with all kinds of people, he sadly noted the passing of region speech, fell in love with Montana, and was appalled by racism in New Orleans.