


Conrad Schools of Science  
English Language Arts Department

Grade 9  
2009-2010 High School Summer Reading List

Core Reading List

*All incoming freshman are required to read the following \*book from the Core Summer Reading List prior to the start of the 2009-2010 school year. Please complete the Summer Reading Response: Journal Writing Guide requirements while reading this book (and the books below) in preparation for class discussion and written analysis during the first weeks of school. Enjoy!*

1. \**The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho (Fiction)

The charming tale of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who dreams of seeing the world, is compelling in its own right, but gains resonance through the many lessons Santiago learns during his adventures. He journeys from Spain to Morocco in search of worldly success, and eventually to Egypt, where a fateful encounter with an alchemist brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment.

Extended Book List

*In addition to the title listed above, all incoming freshman are required to select and read additional books from this Extended Book List prior to the start of the 2009-2010 school year. Please complete the Summer Reading Response: Journal Writing Guide requirements while reading each book in preparation for class discussion and written analysis during the first weeks of school. Enjoy!*

**Students enrolled in Honors (Hon) English, read at least three (3) additional books from the following list:  
**Students enrolled in College Prep (CP) English, read at least two (2) additional books from the following list:****

2. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (Historical Fiction)

Living in Germany during World War II, young Liesel Meminger 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.

3. *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok (Fiction)

In 1940s New York, an accident throws Reuven Malther and Danny Saunders together. Despite their differences the young men form a deep, if unlikely, friendship. Together they negotiate adolescence, family conflicts, and the crisis of faith engendered when Holocaust stories begin to emerge in the U.S., loss, love, and the journey to adulthood. The intellectual and spiritual clashes between fathers, between each son and his own father, and between the two young men, provide a unique backdrop for this exploration of fathers, sons, faith, loyalty, and, ultimately, the power of love.

4. *Cry of the Kalahari* by Delia and Mark Owens (Science)

This is the story of the Owens' travel and life in the Kalahari Desert. Here they met and studied unique animals and were confronted with danger from drought, fire, storms, and the animals they loved. This best-selling book is for both travelers and animal lovers.

5. *Death Be Not Proud* by John Gunther (Non-fiction/ Memoir)

This deeply moving book is a father's memoir of his brave, intelligent, and spirited son who was seventeen years old when he died of a brain tumor.

6. *March* by Geraldine Brooks (Historical Fiction)

Brooks's luminous second novel imagines the Civil War experiences of Mr. March, the absent father in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. This novel is written from Mr. March's perspective. An idealistic Concord cleric, March becomes a Union chaplain and later finds himself assigned to be a teacher on a cotton plantation that employs freed slaves. His narrative begins with cheerful letters home, but March gradually reveals to the reader what he does not to his family: the cruelty and racism of Northern and Southern soldiers, the violence and suffering he is powerless to prevent and his reunion with Grace, a beautiful, educated slave whom he met years earlier as a Connecticut peddler to the plantations. Brooks's affecting, beautifully written novel drives home the intimate horrors and ironies of the Civil War and the difficulty of living honestly with the knowledge of human suffering. \*Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

7. *The Mole People* by Jennifer Toth (Non-Fiction/ Homelessness)

Jennifer Toth tells the true story of the New York City homeless who have taken up residence in the subway tunnels and sub-basements of Manhattan. In clear, eloquent prose, Toth introduces the reader to the genuinely surreal existence of people who live out much of their lives in dark, man-made catacombs. With both the eye of a scientist and the compassion of a concerned human being, Toth examines what has driven these people underground, and how it is they exist in such an environment.

8. *Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA* by Brenda Maddox (Biography/ Science)

Few know Rosalind Franklin, yet she conducted crucial research that led to one of the most significant discoveries of the 20th century—the double helical structure of DNA. Until recently, Franklin was remembered only as the "dark lady"—a stereotypically frustrated and frustrating female scientist. She shows a woman of fiery intellect and fierce independence whom some saw as haughty, though to family and close friends she was warm and devoted.

9. *The Science of Sherlock Holmes: From Baskerville Hall to the Valley of Fear, the Real Forensics Behind the Great Detective's Greatest Cases* by E.J. Wagner (Science)

By using the immortal and well-known Sherlock Holmes stories as her starting point, forensic expert Wagner blends familiar examples from Doyle's accounts into a history of the growth of forensic science, pointing out where fiction strayed from fact. The author injects life into her narrative by weaving in true crime cases that either influenced Holmes's creator or may have been influenced by a published story from the Baker Street sleuth. Particularly memorable is a creepy 1945 murder of a man who, as a youth, had had an encounter with a spectral dog reminiscent of the hound of the Baskervilles.

10. *Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie* by David Lubar (Humor)

Scott Hudson chronicles the ups and downs of his eventful freshman year in high school, as he joins the newspaper, works as a stage manager for the spring play, learns a lot from his English teacher, tries to help a student who attempts suicide, is beaten up because of a girl, and goes to the spring dance. Along the way, he discovers that his mother is pregnant, and he writes a series of insightful letters to his soon-to-be sibling. By the end, Scott has outgrown his freshman insecurities, realizing that he has carved out a place for himself in the high-school world. The story delivers many messages as Scott learns one important lesson after another. Still, most readers will find plenty of amusing, accurate observations about freshman life, from the insecurities of first dates to the dangers of walking the hall between classes.

11. *Sold* by Patricia McCormick (Realistic Fiction)

As this heartbreaking story opens, 13-year-old Lakshmi lives an ordinary life in Nepal, going to school and thinking of the boy she is to marry. Then her gambling-addicted stepfather sells her into prostitution in India. Refusing to be with men, she is beaten and starved until she gives in. Written in free verse, the girl's first-person narration is horrifying and difficult to read. The unadorned text matches the barrenness of Lakshmi's new life. She is told that if she works off her family's debt, she can leave, but she soon discovers that this is virtually impossible. When a boy who runs errands for the girls and their clients begins to teach her to read, she feels more alive, remembering what it is like to be the number one girl in class again. An author's note confirms what readers fear: Thousands of girls, like Lakshmi in this story, are sold into prostitution each year. Part of McCormick's research for this novel involved interviewing women in Nepal and India, and her depth of detail makes the characters believable and their misery palpable. This important book was written in their honor.

12. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith (Fiction)

Francie Nolan, avid reader, penny-candy connoisseur, and adroit observer of human nature, has much to ponder in colorful, turn-of-the-century Brooklyn, New York. She grows up with a sweet, tragic father, a severely realistic mother, and an aunt who gives her love too freely—to men, and to a brother who will always be the favored child. Francie learns early the meaning of hunger and the value of a penny. She is her father's child—romantic and hungry for beauty. But she is her mother's child, too—deeply practical and in constant need of truth. Like the Tree of Heaven that grows out of cement or through cellar gratings, resourceful Francie struggles against all odds to survive and thrive. Betty Smith's poignant, honest novel created a big stir when it was first published over 50 years ago. Her frank writing about life's squalor was alarming to some of the more genteel society, but the book's humor and pathos ensured its place in the realm of classics—and in the hearts of readers, young and old.

13. *The Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula LeGuin (Fantasy)

Often compared to Tolkien's *Middle-earth* or Lewis's *Narnia*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* is a stunning fantasy world that grabs quickly at our hearts, pulling us deeply into its imaginary realms. It is about a reckless, awkward boy named Sparrowhawk who becomes a wizard's apprentice after the wizard reveals Sparrowhawk's true name. Le Guin challenges her readers to think about the power of language, how in the act of naming the world around us we actually create that world. Teens, especially, will be inspired by the way Le Guin allows her characters to evolve and grow into their own powers.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading Response Journal Writing Guide

Rising ninth grade English students are expected to write their reflections and reactions in journal form while reading their summer selections. These may be written in a bound journal OR typed and bound. The journal assignments, *one for each of the required three books (for CP level students) or four books (for Honors level students)*, will be *due on the first day of school. Each journal writing assignment will be counted as a grade.* Thorough, thoughtful, and reflective responses to the following prompts are to be provided in the journal. Again, neatly written or typed work is expected. In order to earn the highest grade, students should complete all of the following requirements carefully and completely:

1. Identify the book's title, author's name, copyright date, and number of pages. Underline or italicize the title.
2. In 200 words, write a brief summary of the plot, including the beginning, the middle, and the end.
3. Explain the significance of the title. Authors rarely choose a title randomly. Dig for symbolic meaning. The title may be a metaphor or it may represent some specific incident in the book. In any case, consider carefully the significance of the title and explain your thinking.
4. Make a list of the main characters and list five adjectives to describe each one. Describe your first impressions of the *protagonist*. Describe your first impressions of the *antagonist*. Cite at least three text examples that support your response.
5. Are the protagonist and antagonist *dynamic* or *static*, *round* or *flat* characters? Describe how these characters change or remain the same throughout the story. Tell what happens to make the character change or explain why and how he/she remains static. For example, does the character have to make a choice, is there a conflict or problem that needs resolution, does the character have to be courageous, etc..., or does something specific in his/her life change?
6. Cite (that is, *quote word for word using quotation marks*) and note the page number of a special passage from the book that you think is important or worth rereading. (Maybe it explains something about the character, or perhaps it describes a very special event, or perhaps it holds a certain resonance or connection with you, the reader.) You must explain why you chose this passage. Dig deep for a connection here.
7. Sketch a scene from the book. Stick figures are fine, but work to impress your teacher on this one! Feel free to add detail and color your scene. \*\*Hard work pays! Extra credit will be awarded to deserving illustrators.
8. To highlight the significance of this book, write a 5-8 sentences response to each of the following:
  - A. What life lessons have you learned (or have been reinforced) from reading this book?
  - B. What did you like and dislike the most about this book? Explain using details and examples from the selection.

*Note to Students:* Ninth grade English is an introductory course on the different genres of literature and their connections to the lives of today's student. It is my hope that you find intellectual and personal enjoyment during your summer reading. I tried to incorporate titles that connect to your life, broaden your horizons, and embody a redeeming social message. I am looking forward to meeting each one of you!

Sincerely,  
☺ Mrs. McDonald