Garwood O'Connor, '15

Last Team Standing
By Matthew Alego
In the midst of World War II, all able-bodied young men were sent off to fight, which meant that there weren't enough around to keep playing football. Matthew Algeo recounts the tale of how the Philadelphia Eagles and the Pittsburgh Steelers briefly joined forces to create the "Steagles" to ensure that the NFL could survive another season while facing a shortage of players. Not only is it an interesting bit of sports history, but it also provides a glimpse of everyday life in America during the chaos of war.

Scott Hibbs, '19

The Bronx Zoo: The Astonishing Inside Story of the 1978 World Champion New York Yankees
By Sparky Lyle and Peter Golenbeck
An inside account of the 1978 Yankees season narrated by then Cy Young Award winning relief pitcher Sparky Lyle. It is a book that I found impossible to put down.

Chris Rupertus

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies
By Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith
In this 2009 retelling of the Jane Austen classic, teenaged Eliza Bennet must wage a battle on two fronts: first, navigating the treacherous terrain of courtship and marriage in early-19th century, Regency-era England, and second, defending her family and community with her unparalleled fighting skills from the flesh-eating undead that wander the surrounding countryside. Which foe will prove more daunting - the aloof and arrogant Mr. Darcy or the zombie hordes with an insatiable appetite for human brains?

Riley Burns, '18

The Miracle of St. Anthony
By Adrian Wojnarowski
Wojnarowski follows legendary basketball coach Bob Hurley of St. Anthony High School in Jersey City, NJ, through a toughening and gripping season, as he perseveres to lead a disconnected team to glory through his unparalleled understanding of the game and endless determination to see no more children lost to the city streets.

Andy Cavacos

This Used to be Philadelphia
By Natalie and Tricia Pompilio
This non-fiction work features brief accounts of "ordinary" street corners and locations in Philadelphia and their rich historical significance. Everything from our nation's birth, baseball, the largest Civil War hospital, to the cradle of cheesesteaks and Tastykakes.

Dave Fortin

A Time to Love and a Time to Die
By Erich Maria Remarque
One of Remarque's later works, this novel follows a German soldier during WWII from the Eastern Front on leave. Remarque explores the complexities of good and evil, finding plenty of gray areas. The main character returns home to find his city in ruins, his family dead, and the only one who seems to help him is a sleazy Party member. After finding his old teacher, the soldier has to come to terms with what he has done.

Frank Rocchi

The Red Pony
By John Steinbeck
The Red Pony is an episodic novella written by American writer John Steinbeck in 1933. The first three chapters were published in magazines from 1933 to 1936. The stories in the book are tales of a boy named Jody Tiflin. The book has four stories about Jody and his life on his father's California ranch. A great primer for young men to introduce them to one of America's literary giants, but in a manageable scope and scale.

Christian Patragnoni

Our Town: A Play in Three Acts
By Thornton Wilder
This Pulitzer Prize–winning drama of life in the town of Grover 's Corners, an allegorical representation of all life, has become a classic. It is Thornton Wilder's most renowned and most frequently performed play.

Anne Smith

The Book Thief
By Markus Zusak
In superbly crafted writing that burns with intensity, award-winning author Markus Zusak has given us one of the most enduring stories of our time.

Kevin Gregorio

Peak: Secrets From the New Science of Expertise
By Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool
The culmination of more than twenty years of research, this book helps readers consider how to become an expert (or more expert) in anything. This is a fantastic book for anyone interested in being more intentional about learning and self-improvement.

Andrew Whelan

Short Cuts: Selected Stories
By Raymond Carver
Pulitzer Prize-nominee Raymond Carver portrays exquisitely the mundanity of life in this collection of short stories. With dry humor and enormous tenderness, this is the work of "one of the true masters" (*The New York Review of Books*). This select group of nine eerily intimate tales (and one poem) are the basis for the film *Short Cuts*, directed by Robert Altman.

Mike Scannapieco, '09

The Silence
By Don DeLillo
A dystopian science fiction novel about two married couples and an eccentric young teacher as a mysterious event occurs causing the collapse of all vital infrastructure and technological devices.

Brother Carson, SJ

The Chosen or *The Promise*
By Chaim Potok
The Chosen established Chaim Potok's reputation as a significant writer. *The Promise* reaffirms it."–*The New York Times Book Review*
"A superb mirror of a place, a time, and a group of people who capture our immediate interest and hold it tightly." – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Nicholas Shields, '16

Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly
By Anthony Bourdain
Take an in-depth look at the frenetic world of professional kitchens in Anthony Bourdain's preeminent memoir. Whether you have an interest in the culinary world or not, Bourdain's humorous anecdotes will intrigue the reader and unveil a segment of society that is often overlooked by those without experience in the restaurant industry.

Joseph Coyle

Small Mercies
By Dennis Lehane
From the author of *Shutter Island* and *Mystic River*, comes this all-consuming tale of revenge, family love, festering hate, and insidious power, set against one of the most tumultuous episodes in Boston history (the desegregation of Boston public schools in 1974 and the busing riots that followed). *Small Mercies* is a superb thriller, a brutal depiction of criminality and power, and an unflinching portrait of the dark heart of American racism. Dennis Lehane was one of the main writers on HBO's *The Wire* and his newest novel, *Small Mercies*, provides another opportunity to witness his excellent storytelling skills.

Susie Cook

American Mother
By Colum McCann
As songwriter and political activist Sting writes, "*American Mother* is a book that will shake your soul out." Follow the story of Diane Foley–mother of American journalist Jim Foley, who was kidnapped, tortured, and killed by Isis in 2014. By the end of McCann's first-ever non-fiction narrative account, we see Diane Foley sitting across the table from her son's killer. This is a real-life tale of horror, grief, empathy, and grace bound to "shake your soul out."

Stew Barbera, '86

The Choice: Embrace the Possible
By Dr. Edith Eva Eger
An inspiring and transformative real-life account as told by Dr. Edith Eger about how she endured the holocaust and imprisonment at Auschwitz and went on a renowned career of helping others choose forgiveness, love, and possibility. This book will move the reader toward choosing an abundant life.

Ronan Kelly

Live to See the Day: Coming of Age in American Poverty
By Nikhil Goyal
A true story of three Puerto Rican families living in Kensington, Philadelphia. Especially emphasizes the role that neglect of the education system has played. The book is an easy read even though the material can be quite heavy at times. Very eye-opening.

Andrew Fabry

The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel: Genius Power and Deception on the Eve of World War I
By Douglas Brunt
Rudolf Diesel, the inventor of the diesel engine, developed this impressive technology through years of research, hard work, and relentless experimentation. He comes from extremely humble beginnings only to build an incredible legacy that is known to very few people. But what happened to Rudolf Diesel? His death/disappearance was a mystery. This book reaches a thought-provoking conclusion as to what happened to Rudolf Diesel.

Geoff Nunes

Angry Young Spaceman
By James Munroe
A thousand years from now, Sam Breen graduates from college, desperate for a way to pay off his student loans. So he takes a job teaching English as a foreign language–on another planet. This short novel is about space travel, living under water, interstellar terrorism, growing up, and (forbidden) interspecies love, but is really about the understandings and misunderstandings that form between very different cultures.

Phuong Le

A Separate Peace
By John Knowles
Now in his 30s, Gene Forrester returns to his old prep school 15 years later and reflects on his time at The Devon School during the 1940s. He seeks out two specific sites that greatly impacted his friendship with his best friend throughout school, Phineas. The novel explores adolescent friendship, jealousy, identity, and morality.

Kathleen Sullivan

The Boys in the Boat
By Daniel James Brown
On the surface*, The Boys in the Boat* is about nine working-class American boys who won the gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. However, on a deeper level, it captures the essence of the 1930s—the Depression, the elitism of the Ivy League, and the can-do spirit of America, all set against the backdrop of Hitler's Germany. It is a book the whole family can enjoy.

Andrew Milewski, S.J.

Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World
By Tara Isabella Burton
Tara Isabella Burton offers a compelling examination of America's contemporary spiritual landscape, showcasing a myriad of unconventional beliefs and practices that have surged in the wake of traditional religious decline. Through vivid exploration of techno-utopians, witches, wellness enthusiasts, and more, Burton reveals how Americans are forging new paths to meaning and community in an era defined by spiritual remixing and cultural upheaval.

Lisa Keeley-Cain

A Gentleman In Moscow
By Amor Towles
"How delightful that in an era as crude as ours this finely composed novel stretches out with old-World elegance." —*The Washington Post*

Tom Lederer, '13

The Fratricides
By Nikos Kazantzakis
Set during the Greek Civil War, communities are torn apart in a brutal struggle where both sides believe this is a vital battle between good and evil. Main character is a priest who struggles with how God can allow such suffering, and how people can carry out such violence in Christ's name.

Bill Conners, '80

Benjamin Franklin: An American Life
By Walter Isaacson
While 586 pages can be intimidating for high school readers, Isaacson is able to tell the tale of an amazing Philadelphian in a readable, witty, and well documented style. Although Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and Washington are more celebrated, Isaacson reminds us that Franklin was the most talented of our founders.

Fr. Steve Surovick, SJ

Treasure Island
By Robert Louis Stevenson
A fun summer-read. A coming-of-age story, and pirates!

Jonathan Pohlig, ’02

In the Distance
By Hernan Diaz
A young Swedish immigrant to America is separated from his brother on the way over from Europe and finds himself in California. He attempts to make his way towards New York on foot to reunite with his brother, but encounters one difficulty after another, in the form of both people and an unforgiving landscape. Set sometime in the 19th century, this book is unforgettable.

Leo Vaccaro, ’05

Five Days in London, May 1940
By John Lukacs
The late great historian John Lukacs once visited the Prep’s History Club. He did not write dry, boring history books and – with this particular book – Lukacs made bold and interesting conclusions about the shape of the twentieth century, and the consequences of Winston Churchill’s fateful decisions across one week. What Churchill did in London in May 1940, according to Lukacs, shaped the world as we know it today. It might be tempting to assume that a history book isn’t a great “summer read” – but this one is!

Jason Zazyczny, ’90

Man's Search for Meaning
By Viktor Frankl
Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. *Man's Search for Meaning* has become one of the most influential books in America; it continues to inspire us all to find significance in the very act of living.

Rich McCouch, S.J.

Once Upon a River
By Diane Setterfield
In a small tavern renowned among those telling tales at night, in the bleak midwinter, in an ancient tavern on the River Thames, everyone’s well-worn words are stilled when a stranger bursts in unannounced! Everyone reading this account, young and old, will find a hero to embrace as the drama unfolds. For anyone who has gathered around the kitchen table or in the cafeteria, or in your favorite meeting place, long hours whiled away narrating fables and fabulous freaks will find reward amidst these pages’ whispers and exclamations: *“A river no more begins at its source than a story begins with the first page,”* the author opines. When a lifeless child born in the arms of the stranger takes breath and lives again, no one can escape the miracle, the magic, the science, or the story revealed.

Caroline Becker

Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster
By Jonathan Auxier
I read this book aloud to my kids over Christmas 2020. We all loved it. We laughed, cried, got angry at and cheered for the various characters in the story. It contains elements of Jewish folklore (there's a golem), echoes of *Newsies* (here the child laborers are chimney sweeps) and deals with themes of friendship, sacrificial love, and courage. The author is a down-to-earth father of three who I used to attend church with in Pittsburgh.

Scott Mullen, '99

Between You & Me: Confessions of A Comma Queen
By Mary Norris
Mary Norris has spent more than three decades working in The New Yorker's renowned copy department, helping to maintain its celebrated high standards. In *Between You & Me*, she brings her vast experience with grammar and usage, her good cheer and irreverence, and her finely sharpened pencils to help the rest of us in a boisterous language book as full of life as it is of practical advice.

Courtney Pinto

The Firekeeper's Daughter
By Angeline Boulley
TFD is a coming-of-age novel that addresses the challenges of life on the Sault Ste. Marie Indian Reservation. The main character, hockey-obsessed Daunis Fontaine, must find her identity in the midst of the violent crimes and substance abuse that are affecting her community. Seeking solace from both sides of her mixed-race background, Daunis must find a way to rise above the chaos that surrounds her. In addition to strong character development and a riveting plot, the novel also ties in many aspects of modern Ojibwe culture, including language and ceremony.

Ines Aßmann

In Times of Fading Light
By Eugen Ruge
The story revolves around the Umnitzer family, spanning several decades from the 1950s to the early 2000s. The novel explores themes such as loyalty, betrayal, love, and the search for identity against the backdrop of a rapidly changing political landscape. Through the perspectives of various family members, you gain insight into the complexities of life in East Germany and the challenges faced by individuals trying to reconcile their personal aspirations with the demands of the state. It offers a nuanced portrayal of life in East Germany and the profound impact of historical events on the lives of ordinary people.

Mark Kravetz

To the White Sea
By James Dickey
It's a story of Muldrow, an American tail gunner who parachutes from his burning airplane into Tokyo in the final months of World War II.

Kathy Quinter

The Hunt for Red October
By Tom Clancy
It is a Cold War thriller in which both the US and the Soviet Union are searching for a Soviet submarine, *Red October*. It is the newest generation and class of Soviet nuclear submarines, but it has gone missing. One wrong move by either country and nuclear war could be imminent! The novel's description of the military technology and the clash of ideologies in the 1980's is very realistic. It is also an entertaining novel. Watch out for the "Crazy Ivan" maneuver!

Dino Pinto

The Relic Master
By Christopher Buckley
This work of historical fiction takes us into the European world at the time of the Protestant Reformation. It follows the journey of Dismas, a relic hunter who procures religious relics for wealthy and influential clients. To save himself, Dismas must procure the Shroud of Turin for Albrecht of Mainz. He, and his artist friend, devise a plan to steal the shroud and replace it with a copy. *The Relic Master* is filled with fascinating details about art, religion, politics, and science; Vatican intrigue; and Buckley's signature wit "holds the reader till the very last page" (*The New York Times Book Review*).

Dominic Galante

The Moor's Account
By Laila Lalami

The Sealwoman's Gift
By Sally Magnusson

Circe
By Madeline Miller

All three novels are variations of writing a known story from a different perspective. Two are historical and one mythological. Lalami's *The Moor's Account* and Magnusson's *The*

Sealwoman's Gift bring to life real people who made only marginal marks on the historical record. Estabanico was an enslaved Moroccan who survived the 16th century Spanish Narvaez expedition to the New World; he is mentioned in just a couple sentences from two primary source accounts of the expedition. Lalami rebuilds the faint historical outline of Estabanico into a fully-fledged character and story. Estabanico survives shipwrecks and another round of enslavement by Native Americans, then travels into what would become the American West.

Similarly, Asta Thorsteinsdottir was an actual 17th century Icelandic woman who was enslaved by Barbary pirates and brought to Algiers. Her husband mentions her in his memoir of their capture but many details are omitted, particularly when he was separated from Asta. Magnusson tells her story. Both novels explore how to stay connected to one's self and others in the face of adversity, and how to navigate new worlds and foreign cultures.

Finally, Miller's *Circe* tells the story of the witch Circe, best known from Homer's *Odyssey*. Instead of the Greek's perspective, we get hers, and hear about her life long before and after Odysseus' visit to her island.

Sheri San Chirico

The Great Divorce
By C.S. Lewis
This is a short book envisioning a busload of people from hell taking a field trip to heaven. The "ghosts" from hell encounter friends and strangers in the foothills of heaven. Some can go no further, some choose to return to hell, and some decide to stay. This novel overturns our ideas of what heaven and hell are like, and why we would choose to stay or go, but is admittedly by the author a dream, not really a true theological claim.

Tara McFadden

The Women
By Kristin Hannah

Author of *The Nightingale* and *The Four Winds*, Hannah shares a riveting story of a combat nurse serving in Vietnam for 2 years. This powerful novel sheds light on the treatment of veterans, women, and the lack of acceptance to those who valiantly served our nation during turbulent times.