

2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners

The books included on this list open doors on new worlds, exciting ideas, eccentric personalities, unfamiliar cultures, and distant time periods. Use it to broaden your horizons as you prepare for college entrance exams and courses, to increase and update your knowledge in various subject areas, or to develop an appreciation for other cultures and times. Choose a title from a subject area that interests you or pick an area that you know little about; either way will deepen your understanding of the world.

Arts and Humanities:

Blumenthal, Karen. *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX: The Law That Changed the Future of Girls in America*, Juv 796.082 Blum

This nonfiction work looks at Title IX, the 1972 legislation mandating that schools receiving federal funds could not discriminate on the basis of gender, ensuring equal treatment and opportunity for girls in sports and education. Included are period photos, a time line, "then and now" commentary, extensive source notes, and suggested resources for further reading.

Bowker, John. *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored and Explained*, Ref 200.3 Ency

This comprehensive work introduces the reader to faiths of the world through religious artifacts, paintings, architecture, and annotations of sacred texts. It includes a time line comparing significant events and people.

Campbell, Joseph and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*, AVCD 201.3 Camp

A companion to the six part television documentary originally broadcast on PBS, this book covers such subjects as the role of mythology in the modern world, the journey inward, the hero's adventure, and tales of love and marriage.

Diamant, Anita. *The Red Tent: A Novel*, Fic Diamant

This novel recreates the biblical life of Dinah, daughter of Leah and Jacob, from her birth in Mesopotamia through her death in Egypt.

Follett, Ken. *Pillars of the Earth*, Fic Follett

This best-selling epic tale of ambition, anarchy, and absolute power set against the canvas of twelfth-century England depicts fascinating characters and provides a spellbinding introduction to medieval religion, architecture, politics, and daily life.

Greenberg, Jan. *Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth-Century American Art*, Juv 811.6 Heart

Can a painting speak? This collection of lyrical responses to famous American works of art provides answers.

Gruen, Sara. *Water for Elephants: A Novel*, Fic Gruen

Gruen creates a story full of enchanting circus lore, mystery, trains, romance, and danger with no-holds-barred.

Hemphill, Stephanie. *Your Own, Sylvia: A Verse Portrait of Sylvia Plath*, 811.6 Hemp

Hemphill creates a chronological biography in verse format from the viewpoint of others in Plath's life. This is a worthy homage to Plath as her legend lives on.



Martin, Steve. *Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life*, Bio Martin

In a memoir full of humor and candor, Martin shares his personal itinerary as he negotiates the maze of honing his profession and the pitfalls he avoided.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *John Lennon: All I Want is the Truth*, JBio Lennon

Partridge provides a wide-open view into the work and life of one of the most influential and complicated persons from the world's musical heritage.

Polly, Matthew. *American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Crotch: An Odyssey in the New China*, 796.8155 Poll

The author reflects on the childhood dream that led him, as an adult, to take a break from Princeton and travel to China's famed Shaolin Temple to study martial arts for two years.

Strickland, Carol. *The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from Prehistoric to Post-Modern*, 709 Stri

In an accessible format, this unique work provides a basic working knowledge of art and art history through short essays, sidebars, and photographs.

Weller, Sheila. *Girls Like Us: Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon—And the Journey of a Generation*, 782.42164 Well

In three interwoven biographies, Weller chronicles the life and times of three tradition-breaking women singer-songwriters who came of age in the late 1960s.

History and Cultures:

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* YA Fic Sherman

Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, was born an outsider with water on his brain, lopsided eyes, and an IQ oppressed by extreme poverty and a mediocre reservation education. After switching to an all-white high school he realizes that though he'll never easily fit in, self-determination and a solid personal identity will give him the chance to both succeed and transcend.

Bagdasarian, Adam. *Forgotten Fire: A Novel*, YA Fic Bagd

"Who will remember the Armenians?" Hitler asked, referencing the Armenian genocide as his inspiration for the final solution. This brutal hidden chapter of history is seen through the eyes of 12-year-old survivor Vahan Kendarian, whose world was shattered within a matter of days.

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, 956.7044 Chan

A journalist explores the pristine "Emerald City," the American government's enclave in the middle of war-torn Baghdad.

Chang, Iris. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, 951.042 Chan

Barely a postscript in official Japanese history, the horrific torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens took place over the course of just seven weeks.

Chotjewitz, David. *Daniel Half-Human: And the Good Nazi*, YA Fic Chot

From Hitler Youth to hunted "mischling," Daniel's world unravels when he discovers his mother's hidden history "taints" him with Jewish blood and marks him for extermination.

Diamond, Jared. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 304.28 Diam

What do the lack of Icelandic fisherman, the 2008 Chinese Olympics, and Easter Island tree cutters all have in common? Much more than you might think. *Collapse* explores the political, technological, and ecological decisions which merge in order to sustain or destroy societies.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Fic Diaz

"Ghetto nerd," outcast, and anime-loving Oscar Wao is the latest in a long line of doomed generations to suffer the dreaded fuku curse of his native Dominican Republic. With humor and talent as his weapons, he perseveres, knowing "you can never run away. Not ever. The only way out is in."

Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*, 978 Egan

Award winning *New York Times* reporter Egan tackles the great dust bowl phenomenon of the 1930's and 40's in this multi-tiered account. He shares incredible eye-witness accounts as well as the overwhelming convergences of failed agricultural practices, ill-fated government policies, and the costs of "get rich quick" schemes.

Eggers, Dave. *What is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng: A Novel*, Fic Eggers

As a young boy Valentino witnessed Arab militia men destroy his village, hid from hungry lions, wandered through wasted, desert landscapes, and narrowly escaped fatal disease, capture, starvation, and enlistment. The will to survive displayed here is almost as miraculous as this Sudanese "Lost Boy's" ability to recount the harrowing genocide of home and people with such thoughtfulness and grace.

Jones, Edward P. *The Known World*, Fic Jones

In this Pulitzer Prize winning novel Jones approaches a little explored chapter in antebellum history, that of African American slave owners. Set several decades before the beginning of the Civil War, this title skillfully weaves plot, time, and perspective amongst a diverse and powerful cast of characters in order to explore the moral complexities inherent to human freedom (or the lack thereof).

Horwitz, Tony. *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*, 970.01 Horw

Pulitzer prizing winning journalist Horwitz uses humor and candor to literally follow in the footsteps of the first American explorers—from the Vikings and French utopians to America's first African-American trailblazer—whose discoveries took place hundreds of years *before* the mythical landing on Plymouth Rock.

Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*, 364.1523 Larson

The 1893 Chicago World's Fair captured the imagination of the whole world, and also provided a playground for a cunning serial killer.

Roberts, Gene and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*, MP3D 70.4493 Robe

When Harry Reasoner thrust a microphone at an angry mob, and yelled "I don't care what you're going to do to me, but the whole world is going to know it!" he spoke for all the reporters and photographers, black and white, north and south, who played a critical role in bringing the reality of the Civil Rights movement into the living rooms and consciousness of the American public.

Saenz, Benjamin Alire. *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood*, YA Fic Saenz

This Hollywood is a barrio in 1968 New Mexico, where the students at Las Cruces High School struggle through heartbreak, loss, and an entrenched racial divide to find their place in the world.

Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*, 955.0542 Star

Marjane Satrapi's memoir of her childhood in Iran during the Islamic Revolution is beautifully rendered in this graphic novel series.

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, YA Fic Spie

A man struggles to come to terms with his parents' brutal past at Auschwitz in this seminal graphic novel.

Ung, Loung. *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*, 959.6 Ung

The perils of life under the brutal Pol Pot regime change a young woman's life forever, as she and her family find themselves fugitives of war, without even their names to remind them of what they lost.

Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, 927.1273 Wein

With considerable research and extensive interviews, Tim Weiner shows the grave miscalculations that have plagued the Central Intelligence Agency since its inception.

Literature and Language Arts:

Anderson, M.T. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. 1: The Pox Party*, YA Fic Anderson

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. II: The Kingdom on the Waves, YA Fic Anderson
Set during the American Revolution, Octavian is raised as a pampered African prince by a society of Enlightenment philosophers who view him as an experiment. Realizing that his freedom is an illusion, Octavian sets off on a journey to find freedom and a place in the world. These books will challenge everything you have ever learned about the Revolutionary War.

Bond, Jenny and Chris Sheedy. *Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books*, 809 Bond

Did you ever wonder what an author was thinking when they wrote their book? Explore the quirky back-stories of some of the world's most famous 50 books.

Cameron, Peter. *Someday This Pain Will be Useful to You*, YA Fic Cameron

James hates everyone except his grandmother. Take a look at life through this brilliant and mischievous New York teen's eyes as he tries to figure out life and his place in it.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Caramelo*, Fic Cisneros

LaLa learns the stories of her Awful Grandmother and weaves them into a colorful family history. The "caramelo," a striped shawl begun by her Great-Grandmother, symbolizes their traditions.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Fic Foer

Oskar Schell, a gifted 9-year old, explores the mystery of his father's death during the 9/11 attack.

Gaines, Ernest. *A Lesson Before Dying*, Fic Gain

When Jefferson's attorney states, "I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this," disillusioned teacher Grant Wiggins is sent into the penitentiary to help Jefferson gain a sense of dignity and self-esteem before his execution.

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*, YA Fic Green

Join Miles Halter, who is intrigued by famous last words, as he heads off to boarding school in search of the "Great Perhaps." What he finds is a beautiful but troubled girl named Alaska.

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Fic Haddon

Christopher has two mysteries to solve: who killed Wellington the dog and what happened to his mother. But Christopher, who has Asperger Syndrome, a form of autism, approaches these mysteries and the world itself in a unique and special way.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*, Fic Hosseini

Years after he flees Afghanistan, Amir, now an American citizen, returns to his native land and attempts to atone for the betrayal of his best friend before he fled Kabul and the Taliban.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*, Fic Ishiguro

Only special students are chosen to attend Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school tucked away in the English countryside. The chilling truth of their special nature slowly unfolds as we follow the stories of three former students.

Jones, Lloyd. *Mister Pip*, Fic Jones

Matilda's Pacific Island village has been torn apart by civil war. Against this harsh backdrop, Mr. Watts, a lonely British expatriate, maintains calm by reading Dicken's *Great Expectations* aloud to the village children, transforming their lives.

Keillor, Garrison, ed. *Good Poems*, 811.008 Good

An essential and accessible anthology of some of the best contemporary and classic poetry.

Kidd, Sue Monk. *Secret Life of Bees*, Fic Kidd

Searching for the truth about her mother's life and death, a grieving Lily finds the answers, love, and acceptance where she least expects it.

Kyle, Aryn. *The God of Animals*, Fic Kyle

Twelve-year old Alice must face issues beyond her years. Her sister has run off, her mother won't get out of bed, and the family horse farm is failing. Can she keep the family from falling apart?

Maguire, Gregory. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, Fic Maguire

The Wizard of Oz retold from the point of view of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. You'll never think of Oz the same way again.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*, Fic McCarthy

After an apocalyptic catastrophe, a father and his young son embark on a grim and perilous quest following the road to the sea.

Murakami, Haruki. *Kafka on the Shore*, Fic Murakami

Reality and fantasy converge in this story of a Japanese runaway's quest to find his long-lost sister and mother.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Sunrise Over Fallujah*, YA Fic Myers

Robin believes in his country and volunteers to fight in Iraq; but when he arrives he realizes that fighting for freedom is not always black and white.

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America*, Fic Roth

This is a fascinating alternate history that takes a hard look at one of America's legendary heroes, Charles Lindbergh, and at how bigotry and fear can shape politics.

Sebold, Alice. *Lucky: A Memoir*, 364.1532 Sebold

"You save yourself or you remain unsaved." With these words, Sebold recounts the brutal rape that she was "lucky" to survive. Tragedy and hope combine as she makes her way through a survivor's maze of emotions.

Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*, YA Fic Thom

A young man questions his faith and experiences bittersweet first love in this autobiographical and groundbreaking graphic novel.

Zusak, Marcus. *The Book Thief*, YA Fic Zusak

Living in Nazi Germany, young Liesel and her family choose to lie and steal to protect a Jewish refugee hiding in their basement. Narrated by Death, this is not your typical World War II story.

Science and Technology

Adams, Scott. *God's Debris: a Thought Experiment*, 110 Adams

Take a metaphysical journey into man's first science, the search for meaning, as you try to deliver a package to the smartest man in the world who won't take it until you understand.

Anderson, M.T. *Feed*, YA Fic Anderson

In this society your brain cyberfeed provides an endless stream of information, entertainment and advertising. When Violet's feed is disrupted, she's cast adrift and everyone is forced to examine the power of the feed in his/her life.

Bryson, Bill. *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, LP 500 Brys

A renowned travel writer brings complex scientific concepts to life by describing how the universe and life as we know it came to be.

Casey, Susan. *The Devil's Teeth: A True Story of Obsession and Survival Among America's Great White Sharks*, 597.33 Case

While studying migratory birds on the remote Farallones Islands, 30 miles off the coast of San Francisco, biologists noticed red blotches in the surrounding waters. These sightings evolve into a full blown scientific study of great white sharks revealing unknown secrets of this prehistoric beast.

Doctorow, Cory. *Little Brother*, YA Fic Doct

In near future San Francisco, 17-year-old Marcus, also known as w1n5t0n (or Winston), is running from the Department of Homeland Security after he is detained under suspicion of participating in a terrorist attack. Marcus and his friends are using technology to further their cause.

Firlik, Katrina. *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside*. 2007. Random House.

Firlik brings honest appraisal of her work with less heroism and more day-to-day problem solving as she moves from intern to doctor. Along the way she removes a nail in a carpenter's head and allows maggots to clean pus out of an infected brain in this humorous and candid memoir.

Flannery, Tim. *The Weather Makers: How Man Is Changing the Climate and What It Means for Life on Earth*, 363.73874 Flan

What are melting glaciers, disappearing frogs and a season of perfect storms trying to tell us about the conditions of the planet we call home and what can we do to prevent a catastrophe?

George, Rose. *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why it Matters*, 363.72 Geor
It isn't hidden behind the bathroom door or quietly flushed down the toilet in this book: a look at the dirty details of what happens to human waste around the globe and how it affects our health and sanitation.

Hoose, Phillip M. *The Race to Save the Lord God Bird*, 596.72 Hoose

The ivory-billed woodpecker is thought to be extinct, but some disagree. Hoose documents the scientific and bird-watching communities' attempts to find this lost species and save its habitat in the Southern United States.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*, 508.72 Leopold

This classic of environmental and nature writing, arranged by season, provides a poetic view through the window of the Leopold family farm in the Wisconsin meadows. Even 60 years after this book's original publication, Leopold's closing comments on land ethic and conservation are surprisingly relevant.

Macaulay, David. *The Way We Work: Getting to Know the Amazing Human Body*, Juv 612 Macaulay Concerned about taking freshman biology? Get a leg up on the course by letting Macaulay take you on a whirlwind tour of the human body with detailed illustrations and succinct explanations of its building blocks and systems.

McKibben, Bill, ed. *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*, 810.8036 American

Experience the growth of the environmental movement in poetry, essay, song, and prose from its infancy to present day through the eyes of its champions.

Pollan, Michael. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World*, 304.27 Poll

Through the sweetness of apples, the beauty of tulips, the intoxication of marijuana, and potato control; Pollan proves mankind manipulates plants and they, in turn, entice us to do their bidding.

Preston, Richard. *The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring*, LP 585.8 Pres

Three buddies on spring break climb into a California redwood and discover a new ecosystem atop the trees. Join this group of young scientists in the canopy as they learn safe climbing techniques for the oldest and tallest trees of North America, and encounter new species of plants, animals, and love.

Roach, Mary. *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, 611 Roach

Discover the amazing life-after-death adventures of human bodies in this examination of how medical and research scientists use cadavers to make our lives better.

Teresi, Dick. *Lost Discoveries: The Ancient Roots of Modern Science--From the Babylonians to the Maya*, 509 Teresi

Living in our modern technological society it's easy to believe ancient cultures had little scientific or mathematical knowledge. Teresi, however, demonstrates that modern science is much older than we think, and shows how scientific and mathematical concepts of ancient cultures are the foundation of today's technology.

Social Sciences:

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: an Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*, Bio Schwartz

Meet one-of-a-kind college professor Morrie Schwartz, who teaches us all to live fully as he lies dying, and his former student Mitch Albom, who gets a chance to rediscover life through the death of his mentor and friend.

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Bio Beah

A Long Way Gone is the riveting, firsthand account of Ishmael Beah, a 12-year-old child soldier, hopped up on drugs and wielding an AK-47, who gets swept up in the horrors of civil war in his African homeland.

Bolles, Richard Nelson. *What Color Is Your Parachute? 2009: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*, Career 650.14 Boll

With a proven track record of more than thirty years in publication, this top-selling career guide has been updated and revised to help first-time job seekers discover and get the right work for them.

George, Mary W. *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know*, 25.524 George

Succinct and practical, this guide provides students with the tactics, tools and confidence they need to successfully conduct college level research.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, 302 Gladwell

Through entertaining anecdotes Gladwell explains the phenomena of fads, or how little actions can ripple outward until a "tipping point" is reached which results in a dramatic change.

McCormick, Patricia. *Sold*, YA Fic McCormick

When 13-year-old Lakshmi is sold into prostitution by her stepfather, she ends up in a brothel in the slums of Calcutta, where her life becomes a nightmare from which she cannot escape. Although a novel, this story reflects a situation that many girls around the world endure today.

Menzel, Peter and Faith D'Aluisio. *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*, 641.3 Menz

Hungry Planet is a photo-chronicle of families around the world, the food they eat, and how uncontrollable forces like poverty, conflict and globalization affect our most elemental human need – food.

Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace One School at a Time*, 371.822 Mort

Lost and near death following an unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, Mortenson is sheltered and nursed in a remote mountain village. Out of gratitude, he vows to return to build schools throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Picoult, Jodi. *Nineteen Minutes*, Fic Picoult

Seventeen-year-old Peter Houghton wakes up one day, loads his backpack with four guns, walks into the school cafeteria, and kills nine students and one teacher in the span of nineteen minutes. Why?

Pipher, Mary. *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community*, 305.906914 Piph

They come from Laos, Bosnia, Northern Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, and the former Soviet Union. War-scarred refugees, searching for freedom, move into cities across the American heartland to face one more challenge -- adjusting to life in a strange new land.

Rogers, Elizabeth and Thomas Kostigen. *The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time*, 363.7 Roge

Celebrities Ellen DeGeneres, Jennifer Aniston, Tim McGraw, Dale Earnhardt, Jr. and others contribute suggestions of small changes you can make daily to have a positive impact on the health of our planet. Learn how you too can live green!

Sheff, David. *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey through His Son's Addiction*, 362.29 Sheff

A father's anguished account of his promising son's meth addiction and its painful impact on the entire family is honest, raw, and full of information about the realities of drug addiction.

Sheff, Nic. *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines*, 362.299 Sheff

Nic Sheff is destined for a rich life and career until drugs derail him. This wrenchingly honest account of life as a meth addict is the companion book to *Beautiful Boy*.

Stern, Jessica. *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, 303.625 Ster

Seeking to understand how religious ardor leads to violence, Stern recounts her dramatic encounters with Christians and Muslims who use terrorism in the name of God.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*, 304.873 Urre

Thousands of illegal immigrants yearly scramble across the U.S.-Mexican border and into an area of the Arizona desert known as the Devil's Highway. Many do not make it out alive. This is the human story of illegal immigration told with facts, anger, and poetry.

Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle: A Memoir*, 362.82 Wall

This is Jeannette Walls' memoir of growing up in chaos and poverty with a family that prized freedom and unconventionality over comfort and safety.

Wheelan, Charles. *Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science*, 330 Wheelan

This intriguing and approachable introduction to the field of economics is for all readers who have rejected the topic as tedious, boring and incomprehensible.

