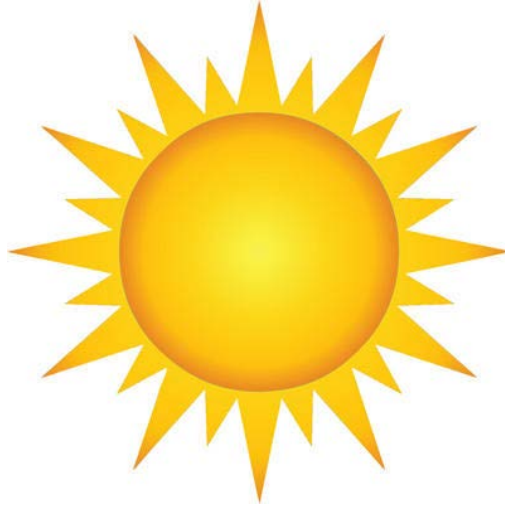


# *2023 Chelmsford High School Summer Reading Grades 9-12*



Over the summer we would like to encourage you to read as many books as you have the time and interest to read. Reading will improve your comprehension skills and keep you mentally “in shape” for next fall’s English class.

“Guidelines for Annotating Texts” are provided. If you choose to take notes, follow the recommendations for annotating texts and record answers to the guiding questions as you read. These notes will help you recall ideas as you read. **There is no required amount of text to read or assignment for the fall. Nothing will be collected or graded.**

The following books are suggested titles handpicked for high school students by our town librarian. Some of these books will be available at the Chelmsford Public Library.

Find your interest and read as much and as often as you can. Of course, please feel free to read books not on this list. Ask your family members and teachers for suggestions on books you would enjoy. We encourage parental involvement when students are making reading choices. The suggestions cover a wide range of topics (some containing challenging and/or mature subject matter).

If you have any questions, please feel free to email Abbey Dick, English Department Coordinator: [dicka@chelmsford.k12.ma.us](mailto:dicka@chelmsford.k12.ma.us)

Other places to find good books include <https://www.chelmsfordlibrary.org/kids/> and <http://www.ala.org> (The American Library Association).

Have a wonderful summer vacation!

### ***House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer**

In a possible near future, the United States and Mexico have dealt with their continuing border troubles by forming a third country called Opium. It is run by drug lords who control opium production using the labor of humanoid “eejits” with computer chips in their brains. Matt has spent the first six years of his life in isolation until the day he is discovered by three children and taken to the big house. The adults treat the boy like an animal, but with superficial deference once they realize he is a clone of El Patrón, the supreme ruler of Opium. Scientific advances have made it possible for the man to live to be 142, via transplanted organs harvested from clones, most of whom have their brains stunted at birth. Matt was spared this fate and is educated as a conceit of El Patrón. At 14, with the death of the old man, he is able to flee from Opium. He is caught and detained in a work camp/orphanage, but with the help of his new friends, he escapes and returns to Opium to try to right the wrongs of the past. The novel’s well-described, exotic setting is a background for imaginative science fiction that looks at the social implications of technological advances. The multilayered story raises many issues, and doesn’t always resolve them in obvious ways. Fans of Farmer’s work will seek out this title. Some readers may be put off by its length, but those who dive in will find it worth the effort.—*Susan L. Rogers, Chestnut Hill Academy, PA (Reviewed September 1, 2002) (School Library Journal, vol 48, issue 9, p224)*

### ***Daughter of Smoke and Bone* by Laini Taylor**

Blue-haired Karou is 17, and, in addition to her unusual tresses, has other intriguing aspects to her personality. She supports her life as an art student in Prague by running errands for her foster parent, a supernatural chimera named Brimstone. These errands, which take Karou through strange portals to strange places to meet with even stranger individuals, reap rewards not only of money, but also wishes. Taylor builds a thoroughly tangible fantasy world wherein a complex parallel universe competes with far-flung geographic locales for gorgeously evoked images. Karou herself is a well-rendered character with convincing motivations: artistic and secretive, she longs for emotional connection and a sense of completeness. Her good friend Zuzana goes some way toward mitigating Karou’s solitude, but a sour breakup with beautiful bad boy Kaz has left her feeling somewhat bereft. Taylor leads readers from this deceptively familiar trope into a turbulent battle between supernatural species: angel-beings seek the destruction of demonlike chimera in revenge for the burning of the archive of the seraph magi. The more Karou discovers about the battle, however, the less simple good and evil appear; the angels are not divine, the chimera are not evil, and genocide is apparently acceptable to both sides in this otherworldly war. Initially, the weakest part of the story appears to be the love story between Karou and Akiva, an angel of “shocking beauty;” there is little to support their instant bond until their true connection is disclosed. The suspense builds inexorably, and the philosophical as well as physical battles will hold action-oriented readers. The unfolding of character, place, and plot is smoothly intricate, and the conclusion is a beckoning door to the next volume.—*Janice M. Del Negro, GSLIS Dominican University, River Forest, IL (Reviewed November 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 11, p140)*

### ***The Scorpia Races* by Maggie Stiefvater**

On the sea-battered and wind-swept isle of Thisby, fall brings the famed and feared *capaill uisce*, or water horses, and with them, death. These animals are bigger and faster than their terrestrial cousins, and they are carnivorous and predatory. Many islanders have lost family members to the

beasts, including narrators Sean Kendrick and Kate Connely. For them, and others, the annual Scorpio Races are both a celebration and a grotesque spectacle. Island men test their mettle and risk their lives racing the water horses, capping a weeks-long festival. Sean, the island's foremost horse expert, races Corr to win the money to finally buy the horse from his boss, Benjamin Malvern. Kate, aka Puck, races her land horse to save her family home from foreclosure by the same man. Both cannot win, and it is doubtful that both will survive. While there is plenty of action, conflict, excitement, and a heart-stopping climax, it is the slowly developing relationship between Kate and Sean that makes the book remarkable. Though different, they are both products of the island and have an intense love for Thisby that is not shared by all of the residents. Stiefvater makes readers care deeply for them, their desolate island, and even the monstrous water horses. The author takes great liberties with the Celtic myth, but the result is marvelous.—*Anthony C. Doyle, Livingston High School, CA (Reviewed November 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 11, p140)*

### ***My Most Excellent Year* by Steve Kluger**

Three bright and funny Brookline, MA, eleventh graders look back on their most excellent year—ninth grade—for a school report. Told in alternating chapters by each of them, this enchanting, life-affirming coming-of-age story unfolds through instant messages, emails, memos, diary entries, and letters to celebrity divas and to a deceased mom. T.C. (Anthony Conigliaro) Keller, whose mother died when he was six, is in love with baseball and Alejandra (Alé) Perez. She and Augie Hwong, who is gay and in love with Andy Wexler, are passionate about the stage and screen, and Augie and T.C. have been “brothers” since they were six. The teens mount a fabulous talent show, launch a couple of grassroots political movements, and bring hope and love to a deaf, six-year-old foster child. What's more, Augie and T.C. have a refreshingly positive relationship with their parents. Similar in storytelling style to Kate Klise's classic *Regarding the Fountain: A Tale, in Letters, of Liars and Leaks* (Avon, 1998), this is a rich and humorous novel for older readers. The teen and adult characters are quirky and charming, and their adventures are involving without being over-the-top. A fun, feel-good story with star quality.—*Sharon Senser McKellar, Oakland Public Library, CA (Reviewed April 1, 2008) (School Library Journal, vol 54, issue 4, p143)*

### ***Born Confused* by Tanuja Desai Hidier**

Dimple Lala has spent her entire life trying to fit in. In India, she is too American, while in America she feels unable to conform, largely because of her parents' efforts to educate and involve her in Indian culture. By her 17th birthday, she feels incapable of making anyone happy and is hopelessly confused as to where she belongs. Her parents are unhappy about her obsession with photography and her dating activities, while Dimple herself feels that her best friend, Gwyn, is either ignoring her for a new boyfriend or trying to usurp Dimple's family. Her parents come up with what they think is a perfect solution—they introduce her to Karsh, a suitable boy. Dimple is turned off at the thought. Just when she is sure that things can't get more complicated, she meets him again, now involved in activities that would render him completely unsuitable to her parents but that interest her. By this time Gwyn decides that he seems like the perfect boyfriend for her and Dimple ends up with a number of tricky situations. This involving story, filled with detail about the protagonist's life and background, will reward its readers. The family background and richness in cultural information add a new level to the familiar girl-meets-boy story. Teens will be rooting for Dimple

and her quest to find her own place in her family and country.—*Betsy Fraser, Calgary Public Library, Canada (Reviewed December 1, 2002) (School Library Journal, vol 48, issue 12, p136)*

***The Mockingbirds by Daisy Whitney***

Alex wakes up in a strange bed, naked, and with a terrible headache, lying next to a boy whose name she doesn't know. A junior at an elite boarding school, she is used to a controlled and nearly perfect life. Among all the talented and special students at Themis Academy, Alex is a standout as a classical musician. How could she have been so stupid as to have sex—for the very first time—with this stranger? It takes several days, and the support of her roommates and friends, for her to piece together the events that led up to that horrible morning. The portrayal of the aftermath of alcohol-fueled sexual assault is particularly well drawn. Alex is confused, disoriented, and deeply shamed, but her friends help her understand that, no matter how drunk she was, sex without consent is rape. There is no help from the school authorities, who have failed to protect students from one another in the past, so Alex turns to the Mockingbirds. This semisecret society is an ingenious student-initiated justice system that holds individuals responsible for their actions. Just like in the world outside, the wheels of justice turn slowly, but ultimately Alex has the satisfaction of holding her assailant to account. Particularly poignant is Alex's growing relationship with a kind and caring boy who helps her regain her equilibrium and look to the future. Written with a deep awareness of post-trauma experience and a keen ear for high school dialogue, this novel makes an impassioned case for youth taking responsibility for the actions of their peers.—*Carolyn Lehman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA (Reviewed March 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 3, p175)*

***Everybody Sees the Ants by A.S. King***

Lucky Linderman has been tortured by Nader McMillan since they were seven, when Nader inexplicably peed on him in a restaurant bathroom. Now it's the summer before sophomore year, and ever since Lucky unintentionally got the bully in trouble with his social-studies survey about suicide, Nader's harassment has escalated. What's more, everyone thinks Lucky is serious about killing himself, and in addition to this and the bullying, his parents' marriage is falling apart. The only way Lucky can escape his life is through a touch of mysterious magic, in which he dreams of communicating with his grandfather, who has been MIA since the Vietnam War. In his dreams, Lucky is strong and fearless, ready to stop at nothing to rescue him. When Nader smashes him into the concrete at the community pool, crushing his face and pride, Lucky's mom flies them to Arizona to stay with her brother and his wife for a few weeks. During his time away Lucky learns that he is okay with being a "momma's boy," that he can't keep escaping his life in the jungle of his dreams. King's heartfelt tale easily blends realism and fantasy. Through a man he never met, Lucky learns he can stand up for himself and stop Nader from terrorizing him and other students. Some mild language and discussion of male and female anatomy are included, but they are within the realm of the story and necessary for these teens to sound real. A haunting but at times funny tale about what it means to want to take one's life, but rising above it so that living becomes the better option.—*Lauren Newman, Northern Burlington County Regional Middle School, Columbus, NJ (Reviewed October 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 10, p140)*

### ***Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* by Kristin Cronn-Mills**

Elizabeth Williams knows he has always been a guy, and if he can only get through graduation in a few weeks, he can begin his new life as Gabe. He is transitioning, but his family refuses to acknowledge him, and his classmates bully him. The only person who supports him is his BFF, Paige, and, predictably, he has a crush on her but can't take a chance on ruining their friendship. Gabe is a music geek, and his ultra-cool, grandfatherly neighbor John, a former DJ, lands him a community radio show, *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*. Gabe DJs as himself, and after working up the courage to tell John, who is fine with him being a "triangle," they put together a show about A sides and B sides, which becomes popular with the Ugly Children Brigade fan club and a running theme in the book. But when Gabe has a date with one of his fans, and she recognizes him as Liz, word spreads and some fans drop out of the Facebook club, while others get violent. When John is critically hurt defending Gabe at an Ugly Children event, the offenders are arrested, John's long-lost daughter shows up, Gabe's parents have a change of heart, and Paige and Gabe may have a chance together. While this transgender coming-of-age tale wraps up a bit too quickly, the quirky relationship between Gabe and John and their shared music obsession elevates this story above the average problem novel.—*Betty S. Evans, Missouri State University, Springfield (Reviewed January 1, 2013) (School Library Journal, vol 59, issue 1, p104)*

### ***Pirate Cinema* by Cory Doctorow**

Trent McCauley, 16, makes films. The problem is that his films are composed of bits and pieces of other copyrighted material. He's a thief of intellectual property and in this near-future Great Britain, the consequences for this sort of action are severe. He leaves home for London after his online piracy has caused his entire family to lose their vital Internet connection for a year. He soon meets Jem, who shows him the ropes of being homeless, and in no time they are sharing a posh flop with Trent's new mates. Back online, he makes films that are a smash hit on the underground scene where he rechristens himself "Cecil B. DeVil." He falls in love with beautiful and brilliant 26, who opens his eyes to the political ramifications of his filmmaking. Soon Cecil and his entire crew are in a political and artistic fight to dismantle legislation criminalizing their type of creativity, legislation written by film studios and passed by the studios' Parliament lackeys. This amazing book combines young love, terrific humor, great British slang, and crazy parties with astute commentary on intellectual property and emerging modes of creativity. Doctorow's characters are well-defined individuals, all with some facet, quirk, or activity to give them color. Language-arts and civics teachers could co-teach the heck out of this novel, and debaters will find a goldmine of monologues. It's funny, thought-provoking, and glorious.—*Eric Norton, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (Reviewed October 1, 2012) (School Library Journal, vol 58, issue 10, p130)*

### ***The Tragedy Paper* by Elizabeth Laban**

Laban's debut novel (Knopf, 2013) presents the parallel stories of two students at the Irving School: Duncan, a current senior, and Tim Macbeth, an albino teen who transferred to the elite boarding high school mid-semester the previous year. Duncan has been assigned to Tim's old dorm room. According to tradition, Tim left Duncan a treasure to find the first day of class—a set of CDs on which Tim tells Duncan the complete story of his last semester. Duncan only knows the part of the story that involved him. Tim fills in the events from the moment he met Vanessa, a popular and beautiful student at Irving who he met at the airport on the way to school, through their secret

romance and the tragic day that changed all of their lives. He does so within the framework of the annual Tragedy Paper that students in Mr. Simon's class must complete. Listeners will be as captivated and disturbed by the revelation of the truth behind Tim's story as Duncan is. The dual narration by Nick Chamian and Jesse Bernstein poignantly and expertly brings story to life. Their voicing of the characters' emotions is spot-on, and listeners will be drawn into the tale. The transitions between past and present are as stark and dramatic for listeners as they are for Duncan. An intense experience listeners won't soon forget. Give this audio to fans of Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* (Razorbill, 2007).—*Stephanie A. Squicciarini, Fairport Public Library, NY*

### ***Copper Sun* by Sharon Draper**

This action-packed, multifaceted, character-rich story describes the shocking realities of the slave trade and plantation life while portraying the perseverance, resourcefulness, and triumph of the human spirit. Amari is a 15-year-old Ashanti girl who is happily anticipating her marriage to Besa. Then, slavers arrive in her village, slaughter her family, and shatter her world. Shackled, frightened, and despondent, she is led to the Cape Coast where she is branded and forced onto a "boat of death" for the infamous Middle Passage to the Carolinas. There, Percival Derby buys her as a gift for his son's 16th birthday. Trust and friendship develop between Amari and Polly, a white indentured servant, and when their mistress gives birth to a black baby, the teens try to cover up Mrs. Derby's transgression. However, Mr. Derby's brutal fury spurs them to escape toward the rumored freedom of Fort Mose, a Spanish colony in Florida. Although the narrative focuses alternately on Amari and Polly, the story is primarily Amari's, and her pain, hope, and determination are acute. Cruel white stereotypes abound except for the plantation's mistress, whose love is colorblind; the doctor who provides the ruse for the girls' escape; and the Irish woman who gives the fugitives a horse and wagon. As readers embrace Amari and Polly, they will better understand the impact of human exploitation and suffering throughout history. In addition, they will gain a deeper knowledge of slavery, indentured servitude, and 18th-century sanctuaries for runaway slaves.—*Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC (Reviewed January 1, 2006) (School Library Journal, vol 52, issue 1, p130)*

### ***Lost* by Jaqueline Davies**

It's the early 1900s and 16-year-old Essie Rosenfield works tirelessly at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan, but her meager wages are hardly her biggest problem. After she befriends the mysterious new girl, she learns that Harriet is a runaway and an heiress. Uncertain about revealing the girl's secret and thus losing a friend, Essie finds herself torn between what she believes is wrong and what she can't accept—the truth of her own sister's disappearance. When a devastating fire ravages the factory, Essie is too late in realizing that money isn't as important as family and friends. The chapters flip from Essie's past recollections with her sister to her present friendship with Harriet. Once the rhythm is understood, this unusual pacing adds depth and intrigue as the plot unfolds. There are many layers to this story, which will appeal to a variety of interests and age levels.—*Kimberly Monaghan, formerly at Vernon Area Public Library, IL (Reviewed April 1, 2009) (School Library Journal, vol 55, issue 4, p132)*

### ***Revolution* by Jennifer Donnelly**

Andi Alpers's younger brother died two years ago and his death has torn her family apart. She's on antidepressants and is about to flunk out of her prep school. Her mother spends all day painting

portraits of her lost son and her father has all but disappeared, focusing on his Nobel Prize-winning genetics work. He reappears suddenly at the beginning of winter break to institutionalize his wife and whisk Andi off to Paris with him. There he will be conducting genetic tests on a heart rumored to belong to the last dauphin of France. He hopes that Andi will be able to put in some serious work on her senior thesis regarding mysterious 18-century guitarist Amadé Malherbeau. In Paris, Andi finds a lost diary of Alexandrine Paradis, companion to the dauphin, and meets Virgil, a hot Tunisian-French world-beat hip-hop artist. Donnelly's story of Andi's present life with her intriguing research and growing connection to Virgil overshadowed by depression is layered with Alexandrine's quest, first to advance herself and later to somehow save the prince from the terrors of the French Revolution. While teens may search in vain for the music of the apparently fictional Malherbeau, many will have their interest piqued by the connections Donnelly makes between classical musicians and modern artists from Led Zeppelin to Radiohead. *Revolution* is a sumptuous feast of a novel, rich in mood, character, and emotion. With multiple hooks, it should appeal to a wide range of readers.—*Eric Norton, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (Reviewed September 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 9, p150)*

### ***Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys**

This novel is based on extensive research and inspired by the author's family background. Told by 15-year-old Lina, a Lithuanian teen with penetrating insight and vast artistic ability, it is a gruesome tale of the deportation of Lithuanians to Siberia starting in 1939. During her 12 years there, Lina, a strong, determined character, chronicles her experiences through writings and drawings. She willingly takes chances to communicate with her imprisoned father and to improve her family's existence in inhuman conditions. Desperation, fear, and the survival instinct motivate many of the characters to make difficult compromises. Andrius, who becomes Lina's love interest, watches as his mother prostitutes herself with the officers in order to gain food for her son and others. To ward off starvation, many sign untrue confessions of guilt as traitors, thereby accepting 25-year sentences. Those who refuse, like Lina, her younger brother, and their mother, live on meager bread rations given only for the physical work they are able to perform. This is a grim tale of suffering and death, but one that needs telling. Mention is made of some Lithuanians' collaboration with the Nazis, but for the most part the deportees were simply caught in a political web. Unrelenting sadness permeates this novel, but there are uplifting moments when the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for compassion take over. This is a gripping story that gives young people a window into a shameful, but likely unfamiliar history.—*Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ (Reviewed March 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 3, p17)*

### ***The Burn Journals* by Brent Runyon**

One February day in 1991, Runyon came home from eighth grade, had a snack, soaked his full-length bathrobe in gasoline, and set himself on fire. He intended to kill himself. Everything shortly after is written in short bursts as the author takes readers in and out of his various states of consciousness: the helicopter ride; the parade of nurses, doctors, therapists, and orderlies at Children's Hospital in Washington, DC, and the regimented details of his care divided among them; and the pain of the burns on 85 percent of his body. The entries lengthen and the story builds like a novel as the author takes readers along as co-patients. The dialogue between Runyon and his nurses, parents, and especially his hapless psychotherapists is natural and believable, and his inner

dialogue is flip, often funny, and sometimes raw. The details of the surgery, therapy, and painstaking care that go into healing burns are fascinating, and are likely to grip teens with a taste for gore or melodrama. Runyon's brave willingness to relive this horrifying year in unflinching detail is perhaps even more fascinating, as is the slowly unfolding mystery of the sadness that made a smart, popular, funny, loving boy try to take his own life. Depression, regret, and rebirth are the themes that tie the narrative together, and the subtle tension among the three are beautifully related, offering no neat resolution. The authentically adolescent voice of the journals will engage even those reluctant to read such a dark story.—*Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library (Reviewed November 1, 2004) (School Library Journal, vol 50, issue 11, p172)*

### ***Chinese Cinderella* by Adeline Yen Ma**

This absorbing autobiography tells the story of an unwanted child in upper-class 1940s China. Because her mother died at her birth, Wu Mei (Fifth Younger Sister, renamed Adeline) was a “bad luck” daughter, never forgiven by her father or her four older siblings. When she was a year old, her father remarried. Her Eurasian stepmother produced two more children, who became the favored ones. Wu Mei's efforts to attract her father's attention by consistent top marks at school were ignored and ridiculed except by her Aunt Baba, who shared a similar outcast status in the family. Her aunt's constant affection and encouragement provided the only relief to the girl's daily humiliation and emotional abuse. Determined to separate the two, her parents sent the 11-year-old to boarding school. This was 1948; the Communists were consolidating their power. Soon she was the only student left, abandoned and forgotten by her parents when they fled to Hong Kong. Luckily, an aunt rescued her and returned her to her unwelcoming family. There, enrolled in another Catholic school, she finally gained her father's permission to study in England. Mah has told this story before, in her best-selling autobiography, *Falling Leaves* (Wiley, 1998). This version for younger readers is more sharply focused, seen through the lens of the story of Ye Xian, a version of the “Cinderella” tale dating back to the ninth century. Fourteen pages of front matter and the slow beginning necessary to introduce the unfamiliar setting may deter some readers, but those who persevere will be rewarded by the rich depiction of a very different world.—*Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC*

### ***Bad Boy* by Walter Dean Myers**

This superb memoir begins simply with an account of Myers's family history and his boyhood. Vivid detail makes the Harlem of the '40s come alive, from the music and children's games to the everyday struggle for survival. As Myers grows older, however, his story also grows in complexity. Soon readers are caught up in his turbulent adolescence and his slow, painful development as a writer. Even while performing poorly in school, the teen endlessly devoured great works of literature, often in secret. He also wrote, sometimes quitting out of discouragement but always beginning again. Eventually he attended school less and less often, sometimes fighting roaming gang members or delivering “packages” for drug dealers. After dropping out of high school, he enlisted in the army. Sadness and bewilderment infuse these last chapters as Myers faces a bleak future. Intellectually, he's left his family and friends far behind, but his race and circumstances seem to give him few choices. After years of menial jobs, Myers remembered a teacher's advice—“Whatever you do, don't stop writing”—and in time his persistence paid off. This memoir is never preachy; instead, it is a story full of funny anecdotes, lofty ideals, and tender moments. The author's growing awareness of racism and of his own identity as a black man make up one of the most



interesting threads. Young writers will find inspiration here, while others may read the book as a straightforward account of a colorful, unforgettable childhood.—*Miranda Doyle, San Francisco Public Library (Reviewed May 1, 2001) (School Library Journal, vol 47, issue 5, p169)*

***Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: A Friendship That Changed the World* by Penny Colman**

These women met on a street corner in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1851. Their sympathy for one another was instantaneous, despite their differences—Stanton married mother of five and Anthony an unmarried career woman—and their association would result in immense changes for American women. Beginning with alternating chapters on her subjects' early years, the author builds clear portraits of both figures, leading to the momentous 1851 meeting. The impact of the abolition movement and the cross over between freedom for slaves and equal treatment for women is clearly delineated. Subsequent chapters deal with their joint history at the tiller of the suffrage movement. Building the characters of the individuals through their experiences and their own words, Colman has created nuanced pictures of both Stanton and Anthony, as well as of the sociopolitical climate in which they functioned. Readers will be surprised by the limits on women's rights and informed as to the nearly martial nature of the (still ongoing) struggle to attain equality. Including black-and-white photographs of major figures of the time, an epilogue, a detailed chronology, a list of places to visit, source notes, and a lengthy bibliography, this volume will take a bit of promotion to ensure circulation. Presenting a lively story along with a sound dose of history, it's a unique title that's worth the effort.—*Ann Welton, Helen B. Stafford Elementary, Tacoma, WA (Reviewed May 1, 2011) (School Library Journal, vol 57, issue 5, p131)*

***Titanic: Voices from the Disaster*, written by Deborah Hopkinson**

Hopkinson offers a thorough account (Scholastic, 2012) of the April 15, 1912 sinking of the Titanic. Background information is interspersed with stories of survivors and witnesses, including primary source quotes. The author weaves together the voices of children, passengers in all classes, the captain, and crew members to provide a unique account of the tragedy. What makes this chronicle of events unique is the direct quotes from survivors which are seamlessly inserted throughout and successfully handled by talented voice actors Mark Bramhall, Peter Altschuler, and others. Listeners will be enthralled by the effective use of personal details. Have the print version available so listeners can peruse the photos, art work, diagrams, and maps.—*Mary Medinsky, Red Deer College, Alberta, Canada(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. —This text refers to the Audio CD edition.*

***Steve Jobs: The Man Who Thought Different*, a biography by Karen Blumenthal**

An admiring though not entirely adulatory view of our era's greatest technology celebrity, rightly dubbed (by U2's Bono) "the hardware software Elvis." Blumenthal weaves her portrait on the thematic frame used by Jobs himself in his autobiographical 2005 Stanford commencement address. She "connects the dots" that led him from his adoption as an infant through his "phone phreaking" days to a spectacular rise and just as meteoric fall from corporate grace in the 1980s. Following a decade of diminished fortunes and largely self-inflicted complications in personal relationships, he returned to Apple for a spectacular second act that also turned out to be his final one. Despite getting bogged down occasionally in detail, the author tells a cohesive tale, infused with dry wit ("He also considered going into politics, but he had never actually voted, which would have been a

drawback”). The book is thoroughly researched and clear on the subject’s foibles as well as his genius. A perceptive, well-wrought picture of an iconic figure well worth admiring—from a distance. (*Biography*. 11-14)(*Kirkus Reviews*, February 15, 2012)

***The Notorious Benedict Arnold: A True Story of Adventure, Heroism, & Treachery* by Steve Sheinkin**

American history is brought to life in this engaging story of revolution and treason. Most people know very little about Benedict Arnold—only that he was a traitor during the American War of Independence. Sheinkin recounts the tale of a larger-than-life persona, from his uncertain boyhood to his immense popularity as an unpredictable, yet brilliant, commander in the American army, and finally, to his end days, living in London, despised and disgraced. The story of Arnold’s bravery and his rise in the esteem of the colonists is played out against the political squabbling and fears the Continental Congress had about military figures becoming too powerful and upsetting the delicate democracy they were busy creating. Through letters, journals, historic accounts, and other resources, Sheinkin keeps readers wanting to know what will happen next. Short, episodic chapters titled with relevant dates are an effective way to pace various battles—on the field and off—and understand their place in the larger picture of the war. Other key figures are well developed in the narrative. Seeing a glimpse of these personalities makes their subsequent actions believable and meaningful. The Notorious Benedict Arnold is likely to make readers want to learn more about the American Revolution and its players, great and small. Source notes at the end of the book allow them to do just that.—*Karen Elliott, Grafton High School, WI (Reviewed November 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 11, p142)*

***Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom and Science* by Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos**

This meticulously researched, brutally honest, compelling book offers readers a different way to look at many events over the past 200 years or so. The title says it all. From the slave trade through abolition; from revolutions (American, French, and Haitian) to the Louisiana Purchase; from the decline of honey to the rise of saccharine, these events and many more are directly traced to the cultivation and production of sugarcane around the world. With a focus on slavery, Aronson and Budhos demonstrate how this one crop, with its unique harvesting needs, helped to bring about a particularly brutal incarnation of slavery. What makes this such a captivating read is that the book has a jigsaw-puzzle feel as the authors connect seemingly disparate threads and bring readers to the larger picture by highlighting the smaller details hidden within. Primary-source materials such as photographs, interview excerpts, and maps are included throughout, making this an indispensable part of any history collection. The chapter entitled “How We Researched and Wrote This Book” will be of particular interest to teachers and librarians.—*Jody Kopple, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA (Reviewed October 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 10, p130)*

***Janis Joplin: Rise Up Singing* by Ann Angel**

It was 40 years ago this October that the rock singer died from an overdose of alcohol and drugs at the age of 27. From interviews with her friends and letters that Joplin wrote home, Angel pieces together her subject’s short life, contrasting her conservative upbringing in a small Texas town with the wild 1960s, vividly portrayed both in descriptions and in excellent-quality, full-color and black-and-white photos on almost every page. Joplin’s husky, passionate singing voice was

appreciated by other musicians and by her audiences. She loved to sing the blues with the misery and pain that dominated the lyrics. Bessie Smith and Odetta were her heroines. The author points out that despite the fame and fortune that she achieved, Joplin was basically insecure and in need of acceptance. This book is well researched with more than 100 notes referring to specific quotes from friends, family, and magazines. Teens will be intrigued by the life of this cult figure. Her memory has been kept alive by her recordings and an off-Broadway show, *Love, Janis*, based on letters she wrote to family and friends during her career, which continues to be staged throughout the country.—*Peggy Fleming, formerly at Churchville-Chili High School, Churchville, NY (Reviewed October 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 10, p130)*

***They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartlett**

This richly documented, historically contextualized account traces the origin and evolution of the Ku Klux Klan from a small mischievous social club into a powerful, destructive organization. With compelling clarity, anecdotal detail, and insight, Bartoletti presents the complex era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877, that gave rise to the KKK. After the Civil War, the defeated South was a simmering cauldron of political, economic, and social instability. As the federal government struggled to provide law and order and to protect the rights of freed slaves, secret groups of Southern whites banded together to vent their anger over lost property, prosperity, and power. From six men in a law office in Pulaski, TN, KKK dens spread across the South targeting freed blacks and their supporters. Although the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 was meant to end violence, KKK activity persisted through the 20th century, diminishing in the last 30 years as civil rights became a reality for all Americans. Bartoletti includes excerpts from slave narratives, archival illustrations, and historical quotes to convey the human drama of KKK terrorism. An annotated bibliography and source notes illuminate the variety and significance of reference works. Additional secondary titles include Chester L. Quarles’s scholarly *The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racist and Antisemitic Organizations* (McFarland, 2008). Bartoletti effectively targets teens with her engaging and informative account that presents a well-structured inside look at the KKK, societal forces that spawn hate/terrorist groups, and the research process.—*Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC (Reviewed August 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 8, p117)*

***Every Bone Tells a Story: Hominin Discoveries, Deductions, and Debates* by Jill Rubalcaba and Peter Robertshaw**

The authors have taken an unusual approach in this look at members of the human family tree. Rather than sketch all of human prehistory, they focus on four particular discoveries, noting the deductions that scientists have made and the debates that these conclusions have sparked. The finds that they detail are Turkana Boy, Lapedo Child, Kennewick Man, and Ötzi the Iceman. This approach will be helpful for students as it makes clear the type of work done by paleontologists, archaeologists, and their ilk. There is a lot of painstaking effort and a lot of careful thought. It is particularly interesting to learn what sorts of debates an activity as innocent-seeming as archaeology can engender. Full-color photos, an occasional map or diagram, and an illustrated timeline enhance the presentation. As they have focused on only four individuals, readers may miss their personal favorites, such as “Lucy” and the recently discovered *Homo floresiensis*, nicknamed “hobbits.” There are also some scientific points that aren’t explained as well as they might be. In their discussion of genetics, for example, the authors refer to C, G, A, and T without ever explaining that

these are the initials of cytosine, guanine, adenine, and thymine. While there are a few print sources from recent years, many go back 10 years or more. Despite a few quibbles, this is an excellent look at an engaging area of science that should find broad readership and use.—*Eric Norton, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (Reviewed March 1, 2010) (School Library Journal, vol 56, issue 3, p180)*

***Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith* by Deborah Heiligman**

Beginning with Darwin's notorious chart listing reasons to wed and not to wed, Heiligman has created a unique, flowing, and meticulously researched picture of the controversial scientist and the effect of his marriage on his life and work. Using the couple's letters, diaries, and notebooks as well as documents and memoirs of their relatives, friends, and critics, the author lets her subjects speak for themselves while rounding out the story of their relationship with information about their time and place. She shows how Darwin's love for his intelligent, steadfast, and deeply religious cousin was an important factor in his scientific work—pushing him to document his theory of natural selection for decades before publishing it with great trepidation. Just as the pair embodied a marriage of science and religion, this book weaves together the chronicle of the development of a major scientific theory with a story of true love. Published for young adults, this title will be equally interesting to adults drawn to revisit Darwin on his 200th birthday.—*Ellen Heath, Easton Area Public Library, Easton, PA (Reviewed January 1, 2009) (School Library Journal, vol 55, issue 1, p126)*

***Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* written by Karen Blumenthal**

When Congress passed the 18th Amendment, prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcohol, supporters were convinced it would create a stronger, more moral nation. Instead, it ushered in an era of corruption and lawlessness, here brought to life with a fast-paced, gripping narrative and period photographs. The story opens dramatically in 1929 with the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the murder of seven Chicago men that epitomized the gangland violence that became a routine by-product of bootlegging. Blumenthal then chronicles the rise of the temperance movement in the late 1800s, the passage of and life under Prohibition and its repeal in 1933. The story is populated with colorful and notorious characters, such as the hatchet-wielding Carry Nation, gangster Al Capone and Morris Sheppard, the golden-tongued senator and champion of Prohibition. Drawing from period newspaper accounts, personal anecdotes and other primary sources, the author puts a human face on history, chronicling how parents brewed booze in their bathtubs and children smuggled the hooch. Blumenthal acknowledges that Prohibition was successful in some notable ways: Arrests for public intoxication declined as did alcohol-related diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver. Whatever positive outcomes there were, however, were eclipsed by the widespread corruption and violence of bootlegging. An informative, insightful account of a fascinating period of American history. (*Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 2011*)

***No Choirboy: Murder, Violence, and Teenagers on Death Row* by Susan Kuklin**

Kuklin tells five stories here; four are about young men who committed murder before they reached the age of 18, and one is the story of a victim's family. Each narrative presents a picture of a troubled youth who did something he later regretted, but something that could not be undone. Within these deftly painted portraits, readers also see individuals who have grown beyond the

adolescents who committed the crimes. They see compassion, remorse, and lives wasted within the penal system. Some of the stories tell of poverty and life on the streets, but others are stories of young men with strong, loving families. One even asks readers not to blame his family for his act of violence. Most of the book is written in the words of the men Kuklin interviewed. Their views are compelling; they are our neighbors, our nephews, our friends' children, familiar in many ways, but unknowable in others. Kuklin depicts the penal system as biased against men of color, and any set of statistics about incarceration and death-row conviction rates will back her up. She also emphasizes that being poor is damning once a crime is committed. She finally introduces Bryan Stevenson, a lawyer who has worked on the cases of two of the interviewees, who talks about his efforts to help those who are on death row. This powerful book should be explored and discussed in high schools all across our country.—*Wendy Smith-D'Arezzo, Loyola College, Baltimore, MD*

## Guidelines for Annotating Texts

**There is not one “right” way to annotate as you read, but there are some general principles for good annotating that you should keep in mind. You should write marginal notes in the text that consist of questions and comments, essentially your dialogue with the text itself.**

**Review this guide frequently as you are completing your assigned reading. Close reading takes more time than quick, superficial reading, but doing so will save you time and anxiety later as you prepare to discuss and write about the literature.**

1. **Always read with a pen or pencil in hand.** Doing so helps you to focus and to stay alert.
2. Always **take your time** as you begin a new text. Ask yourself many questions as you begin: Who is telling the story? What is the setting? What details does the author provide about characters when they are first introduced?
3. **Abbreviate** as you take notes. Use **initials** for characters. Try to develop your own set of **symbols** for important ideas. For example, you might place a **star** next to key passages.
4. Keep a **list of characters** and their **key traits**. A good place for this is the inside cover of the book. You can add brief notes to your lists as you read. **\*Front and back covers** as well as the first and last “blank” pages are also good places to jot notes about important settings, key ideas, and key page numbers.
5. Look for **patterns** as you read. What ideas do you see repeated? What **connections** can you draw between different characters and different events?
6. Try to make a **quick note at the end of each chapter**, indicating the most important points it contained.
7. Think of a **memorable title for each chapter** and write it down at the beginning. (You can still make your own title even if the author has provided one.)
8. On the first or last page of a chapter, **bullet-point the key events** as a summary of that section.
9. **Use question marks.** Be alert to what puzzles you. Good readers do not zip along without stopping to monitor their comprehension. They stop to think and to note what they don’t understand. You should also write down questions you would like to discuss.
10. Of course, you should always pay attention to **vocabulary**. A strong vocabulary comes from *reading*, not from memorizing lists. Your text includes many words that will be new to you. Circle or star these words. Try to determine meaning from the context. If you are really puzzled by a word, look it up.

**\*We suggest that you use sticky notes in addition to writing marginal notes in order to give you enough space for your thoughts.**