

# Sturgis Soundings

## All Time Favorite Books

### Dedicated to Gretchen Buntschuh

Poet, Teacher, Grant-Writer, IB Extended Essay Advisor

∞ A Tribute by Alicia Fenney  
Class of 2003 ~ Sturgis English Teacher

When I think of the best books, those favorites that call to me, beckoning me from my worldly duties, I think not of works of literature but of the person who made literature come alive for me, who made me love to read, and who made me want to share this passion for literature with others. Gretchen Buntschuh was my senior year English teacher at Sturgis, and even in the days before Sturgis held the prestige of an internationally recognized diploma program, Sturgis had its gem.

Although any fortune teller could have read my future in the cards long ago, I never had that moment of revelation, the split second where I realized who and what I was capable of becoming, until I sat in my first Socratic Circle in Room 101. Although I fondly remember (most of) the literature Gretchen presented to our class of restless seniors (let's just say I'm glad Tess Durbeyfield has found her home in the Sturgis basement), it wasn't the "what" but the "how" Gretchen taught that made me want to read more. In those Socratic Circles, we discussed the heroism in *Beowulf*, astrology and philosophy in *Grendel*, a cranky, rash, and immature prince in *Hamlet*, and, oh, the sad plights of women in *Antigone*, *The Doll's House*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Through the simple gesture of letting us loose on a work of literature, Gretchen helped me realize that I

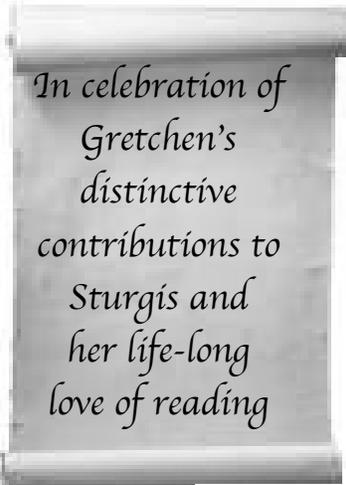
could see simple humanity in each work, and could analyze characters and action in a way that made "reading" literature an adventure.

If Socratic Circles made me want to study literature, project-based learning made me want to teach it. One of my favorite assignments from *The House of Bernarda Alba* was an art assignment in which she asked us to portray a scene from the play. I chose the suicide of the heroine and painted a symbolic

Raggedy-Anne, clad in green, hanging in a prison cell overlooking the ocean. Thinking about the effect of my art, I understood the effect authors try to create in theirs. Another "aha" moment occurred when Gretchen asked us to present a scene from *Hamlet*, recreating the direction, acting, and props. As the director, I loved manipulating the text and my actors to create meaning. While we had the class roaring in laughter at our *Star Wars* spoof when Princess Leia returned the "remembrances" (boxer shorts with "Han Solo" written on the tag) to Han Solo, we also made a connection to the

universal human emotions in the early modern play. Learning literature could be much more than reading and writing and I thank Gretchen for teaching me that.

A great book is one that teaches us something about ourselves and the world around us. And so this is my tribute to Gretchen Buntschuh, the teacher who helped me appreciate great books. Gretchen taught me to read (to really "read"), to teach, and to love every minute of it.



In celebration of  
Gretchen's  
distinctive  
contributions to  
Sturgis and  
her life-long  
love of reading



☞ Chris Andre, Associate Director  
*The Power of Myth* ~ Joseph Campbell

Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* is a book I really enjoyed and one which holds a special place for me. The book is actually the edited transcript of a series of interviews with Bill Moyers which originally aired on PBS shortly after Joseph Campbell's death. In his wide ranging discussion with Moyers, Campbell talks about universal themes in world religions, creation myths, and rites of passage from all corners of the globe. From Gilgamesh in Babylon, to the Mayan ball courts, to Luke Skywalker, Joseph Campbell is able to capture the essence of personal, societal and cultural journeys throughout recorded history.

I first read the book the year after I graduated college while teaching in Tarsus, Turkey. The combination of being on my own, far from home, and in an area of the world so essential to many of the stories and topics of the book gave it a special significance to me that has not waned with time. As I entered the 'adult' world, this book was a catalyst for developing a personal philosophy and value system as I tried to figure out what I wanted to do with my life and what would (hopefully) allow me to lead a happy, healthy and fulfilling life. Because of the transcript format, the book was very readable even though I was unfamiliar with some of the topics and information. I highly recommend the illustrated version which has stunning prints and reproductions of priceless works and artifacts from around the world.

☞ Scott Arcenas, Latin  
*A River Runs Through It* ~ Norman MacLean

"In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing. We lived at the junction of great trout rivers in western Montana, and our father was a Presbyterian minister and a fly fisherman who tied his own flies and taught others. He told us about Christ's disciples being fishermen, and we were left to assume, as my brother and I did, that all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly

fishermen and that John, the favorite, was a dry-fly fisherman." -Norman MacLean

At the age of eleven, I was not very religious. I lived nowhere near a decent trout stream and, most importantly of all, I did not know how to fly fish. A few weeks after my twelfth birthday, my parents finally grew tired of all the traffic and the fools who congested the roadways of Fairfield County and decided to head West.

My Uncle, Clay, whose emigrant example we were following, was an East Coast rebel who left Connecticut for Wyoming at the first opportunity. When he finally convinced the rest of us to follow, he made it his first order of business to sell us on his new, Western lifestyle. I wasn't all that interested in the cowboy lifestyle. I was deeply skeptical of the whole idea, but just before we finally loaded up our possessions for the move, my uncle sent me a copy of Norman MacLean's *A River Runs Through It*.

I didn't fall in love with either the book or my new home, but MacLean's abiding love for the land and—perhaps even more importantly—the simple morality practiced by its inhabitants did convince me right away that there was something fine and strong and profoundly right about the way of life he described. It showed me that both the West and fly fishing were more than worthy of my attention. Although it took several years of enforced separation—first at boarding school and then college—to do so, in the end, the novel did help me learn to love my changed surroundings.

☞ Marissa Barmash, Class of 2010  
*The Mists of Avalon* ~ Marion Zimmer Bradley

One of my favorite books is *The Mists of Avalon*. If you know the story of King Arthur, then I think you'll really enjoy it. It's basically the Arthurian legends told from the female perspective, mostly by King Arthur's sister, Morgaine le Fay. In most of the Arthurian legends, Morgaine le Fay is seen as an evil sorceress who wants to take King Arthur's power, but *The Mists of Avalon* shows a different side to the story. Morgaine in this retelling is a priestess who goes to live on the Isle of Avalon in a time when Celtic ways of life are diminishing and



Christianity is coming into view. This book is a feminist interpretation of the Arthurian legends and shows not only Morgaine's, but King Arthur's mother, aunt and wife, Gwenhwyfar. The women are the main characters, whereas King Arthur and his knights are supporting characters. I won't lie, it's a long book, 800 pages, but it's definitely worth it!

☞ Corey Bracken, Class of 2012  
*Night* ~ Elie Weisel

One of my favorite books is *Night* by Elie Weisel which describes his experience of going through the horrors of the Holocaust. I don't believe anyone can paint a better picture in your head than Weisel can of his childhood. Some of the images he conveys leave you thinking of them long after you put the book down. Anyone can read facts from a history book, but this story gives you first hand information from a Holocaust survivor who went through the atrocities of Auschwitz and lived to tell the story to make sure what happened to him and his people would never happen again. The story evokes many emotions. At some points you will want to cry and at others jump with joy. The book is not hard to read and is not very long, something you could easily tackle in a few days if you read about 30 pages a day. I guarantee you will not put this book down, and if you do, you will be thinking about it until you pick it back up.

☞ Megan Briggs, Spanish  
*Nine Stories and Franny and Zooey* ~  
J.D. Salinger

Someone asked me which fictional characters I would most like to meet, and after only a moment's thought, I answered that it would be J.D. Salinger's Glass family, a family that stars in *Franny and Zooey* and comes in *Nine Stories*. These two books entertained and enlightened me, no matter how many times I reread them.

If you think your family is weird, if you think your family has problems or is embarrassing—meet the Glass siblings, a clan of seven Jewish-Italian,

egocentric, eccentric geniuses who grew up on the Upper East Side of New York, one obsessed with Eastern mysticism, another suicidal, another a professor by age 20—and all of them brilliant alumni of the radio quiz show for prodigies, "It's a Wise Child."

I read *The Catcher in the Rye* for my sophomore English class—hated it in the process, but loved it the moment I finished it. I read it again that summer, and again the next summer, then promptly headed to the bookstore to see what else I could find by Salinger. There are only a few titles by this recluse, who is still alive but, lamentably, hasn't published since 1965. First I attacked *Nine Stories*, and it wasn't until I was in college that I finally read *Franny and Zooey*. Though I can't find anything concrete that I have in common with any Glass child (except, perhaps, that I enjoy reading), I still can't help but feel inextricably linked and connected to them on some deeply human level. They are so strange and perplexing that they must be real. And yet, they are only figments of Salinger's imagination, speaking, I think, to his own genius and his understanding of the quirks within us all, and within all our families.

☞ Julie Carman-Couhig, English  
*The Scarlet Letter* ~ Nathaniel Hawthorne

No matter how many times I read Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, I still find something new. And, trust me, I keep the work within close reach, no matter how many times I have moved or how many birthday candles I blow out. The tale of feisty Hester Prynne has become like an old drawer filled with 30 years of keepsakes. Hawthorne's language first seduced me when I was sixteen, reading the assigned book for English class. Having an English teacher who was feistier than Hester herself enabled me to discover a love for literary analysis. I remember writing a ten page paper on the imagery of the roses, thorns and weeds in the novel. This essay inspired the heart of my college essay. Opening the pages again in graduate school, my professor unpacked more layers of interpretation in our daily discussions. I was twenty-six at the time. When I turned thirty-six,



I found myself proudly clutching my Norton edition of the novel as I walked down the hallways to begin my career of teaching at Sturgis. What excited me most about my new job was being able to discuss the language and criticism of the novel with my new English Department Head, Gretchen Buntschuh. A literary bond was made. You must encounter Hawthorne on your own to fully appreciate the duality of human nature through his complex character development. Adultery, hypocrisy, redemption, sin, hatred, love, guilt and forgiveness, this novel stands prepped to be taught again.

☞ Miles Cook, Class of 2010  
*Going Postal* ~ Terry Pratchett

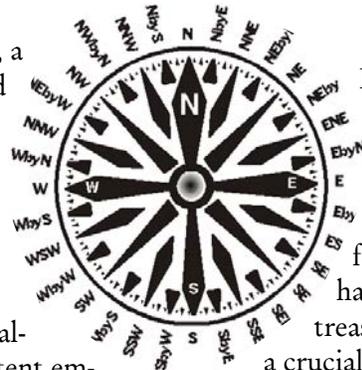
My most-loved book is *Going Postal* by British author Terry Pratchett. The main premise of the book is that Moist Lipwig, a con-man, is sentenced to death and hanged but wakes up in the office of the Patrician of the city of Ankh-Morpork, where he's offered a chance to redeem himself. The offer is that all charges will be dropped if he can revive the city's Postal service. Moist has to build up the Post-Office from almost nothing while dealing with low funds, corruption, incompetent employees, and the magical dangers of his own decaying and mysterious Post-Office. His is the most satisfying example of character development I've ever read. The plot is intricately constructed. The dialogue and description is brilliantly written and laced with smart humor of amazing consistency, as per usual from Pratchett, who takes the unusual idea of reviving a Post-Office and turns it into something unexpectedly grand and exciting. The book is a hilarious sociopolitical satire, but at the same time it's as exciting and emotionally engaging as any epic.

☞ Dawn Cope, Art  
*Little House in the Big Woods* ~ Laura Ingalls Wilder

I had a hard time deciding which book to choose. I love everything David Duncan and Martha Beck have written, and recommend them highly.

I've chosen instead a book that was read to me by my 5th grade teacher. *Little House in the Big Woods* was written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. It's the story of a young girl's life with her family during the 1870s, living in a log cabin in the deep woods of Wisconsin surrounded by wolves and bears. The father was a trapper and the mother made all of the family's food, including cheese and butter. The father played the fiddle for entertainment and Christmas gifts were simple and hand-made. The family had very little but their lives were quite creative since they did everything for themselves. This is a quick and easy read. You may find you'll want to read the entire series, following the family as they move west.

☞ Ben Doane, Class of 2010  
*Martian Chronicles* ~ Ray Bradbury



I read *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury after a summer vacation in Maine, six years ago. It is a number of short stories which detail mankind's ascension and development of the planet Mars, told through both mundane and fantastic events that the planet's new inhabitants experience. One of the reasons I treasure this book so much is that it embodies a crucial shift in my world perspective about the various meanings of humanity and all of its transitory properties. It made me consider that while my body exists, my actions make me what and who I am, and that was and still is important for me to remember.

☞ Alicia Fenney, English  
*The Kite Runner* ~ Khaled Hosseini

*The Kite Runner* is a story that follows the harrowing inner struggle of Amir, the son of a wealthy businessman in 1970s Afghanistan. Young Amir is no ordinary kite flier; he is remarkable thanks to his kite runner Hassan, the son of his father's servant and a degenerate in Afghanistan culture. Amir and Hassan are inseparable until the unthinkable happens to Hassan and Amir does nothing to stop it. Amir's life and Hassan's are forever changed in the same moment that the physical and psychological



landscape of Afghanistan is changed by the onslaught of the Taliban.

Amir and his Baba flee to California and begin a new life, lost of its old time grandeur, as stereotypical immigrants. Although America is a land of freedom for the two, neither is truly free. Amir struggles internally to reconcile his secret shame. Wracked by guilt and tormented by the memory of Hassan, Amir returns to Afghanistan, risking life and limb to atone for his sin.

*The Kite Runner* is a portrait of humanity during an extraordinary historical moment. Hosseini challenges us to ponder who the kite runners are in our own lives and to consider the consequences of ambition and fear.

☞ Matt Fetzer, History  
*Collected Essays of  
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Easily, my choice is the *Collected Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Few books in life are true game changers. At a pivotal point in my life on a cold January day, I chanced to pick up a copy that my parents had given me for Christmas. Two essays specifically spoke to me -- guided me in my values and my conduct: "Self-Reliance" and "History."

"History" speaks of a "universal mind" that transcends time -- that we can channel the past because we all share in the minds of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pindar, and everyone who has ever loved, hoped, dreamed or faced tragedy and despair. The universal mind is the language of the human race that speaks across time -- it allows the present to understand the past. It was then and there that I was born again as a Historian.

"Self-Reliance" is a guide for life, a splendid one for a 27-year-old trying to navigate through the real world of stress and bills and wondering if I would ever find a real job. It is about self-trust, walking forward when the winds of fate blow against you, about self-trust in a world of doubt. Always look forward; always find your own inner peace. Strength never makes excuses, but sees challenge as an opportunity for growth. I have never been the same.

☞ Andrew Fribush, Class of 2010  
*Slaughterhouse-Five* ~ Kurt Vonnegut

*Slaughterhouse-Five* is a book that surprised me. There is a very certain kind of book that makes it into the literary canon, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* is nothing like it. Irreverent and darkly humorous, *Slaughterhouse-Five* has been banned for blasphemy and pornography and was received with some scandal (some might be interested to know it's one of the first books to contain references to homosexuals and their victimization during the Holocaust). It follows the story of Billy Pilgrim, and through him of Kurt Vonnegut himself, beginning in World War Two (where Billy Pilgrim is captured and spends most of the war as a POW) and skips around to both earlier and later in Billy's life from there.

It's more than a bit absurd, and makes a mockery of any kind of sense, but without sacrificing accessibility.

Speaking of accessibility, I should warn you, though, that the narrative is non-linear (the story jumps through time seemingly at random as a plot point), but if you can put up with that, you don't need to analyze it on any literary level to enjoy it. If you do, you'll find a whole new world underneath, but you don't have to. All in all, it's probably the most accessible novel I've read that was on any reading list (it wasn't on one of mine, I read it because I wanted to). "I thank you for your attention, and I'm outta here. So it goes."

☞ Cindy Gallo, Biology  
*The Lord of The Rings* ~ JRR Tolkien

Bored growing up in suburban NY, I joined Bilbo's and Frodo's adventures through a magical land as I read *The Lord of The Rings* by JRR Tolkien. My friends and I became a bit obsessed - we spoke elvish and wrote in both elvish and dwarf runes. This was a great way to pass notes in class, as our teachers couldn't translate them. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept of passing notes in class, it was like texting messages to your friends, but without the cell phone. We actually wrote on paper.



The movies were fun, but the books are much better and include two of my favorite characters, Tom Bombadil and Goldberry who the movies neglected. When my children were little, we read the books aloud as a family and I got to see their eyes light up at the description of Ents and saw them quiver when they heard about the Balrog battling Gandalf. Dragons, treasure, friendship, battles of good versus evil (where good triumphs, of course) - what could be better? As a kid, I memorized all the poetry in the three books and am haunted by the fact that I can still recite them today. When I get together with my high-school friends or my poor younger brother who I indoctrinated into the obsession, we have contests to see who can remember the most.

*Elen sila lumenn omentielvo!*

☞ Heather Glenny, Class of 2012  
*Madeline* ~ Ludwig Bemelmans

The best book of all time is *Madeline*. The series follows the adventures of a mischievous young French girl in Paris. She lives at an orphanage with many other girls, but she is by far the smallest. Marching through the streets in rows of two was never exciting enough for Madeline, though. She quickly makes friends with a Spanish boy, Pepito, and together they make all of Paris their playground. Madeline, though small, is by far the bravest of all the girls at the orphanage. Just because she needs a stool to reach the sink doesn't mean she can't harass Pepito. The best part about the book is when she ends every adventure lying in her bed at the orphanage with her brown dog curled up beside her, and together, they peacefully drift off to sleep. Her stories are not only for children. They will warm your heart like a French pastry. With her blue pea coat and yellow brimmed hat, *Madeline* makes for the best book ever written.

☞ Alan Haynes, Class of 2010  
*A Clockwork Orange* ~ Antony Burgess

*A Clockwork Orange* analyzes the value of free will and the ethical implications of government programs which can take that free will away. It

follows several years in the life of Alex, a teenage street thug in a dystopian future society. For those who can stomach the ultra-violence in the book, it is a very interesting read. Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film adaptation is a fantastic film however it does soften some of the acts of violence.

☞ Jake Henry, Class of 2012  
*Conceptual Physics* ~ Paul G. Hewitt

I think the best book I have ever read is *Conceptual Physics*. Before reading it, I was blind. This book has enlightened me greatly and now I look at everything with a different perspective. *Conceptual Physics* treats a variety of topics including friction and momentum. The clear descriptions and colorful adjectives tantalize my thoughts and force me to think with a totally different mindset.



My favorite part of the book is the part that area plays on force, as it shows a picture of a man lying on a bed of nails with a "blanket" of nails on top of him while another man hits the "blanket" with a hammer. It shows that greater area causes less force, and the "victim" is not seriously injured because there is very little force. After reading parts of this book, I have been able to improve my grade in Introduction to Physics, which shows the true effect of this book on my luminous mind. This is the best book ever and I think everyone should read it.

☞ Eric Hieser, Director

For those interested in leadership, the cutting edge of education reform, and developing vibrant school cultures, I recommend the following books for providing me with many of the guiding principles for what we do at Sturgis:

- ◆ *Leadership from the Inside Out* ~ Kevin Cashman
- ◆ *The Human Side of School Change* ~ Robert Evans
- ◆ *Good to Great* ~ Jim Collins
- ◆ *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* ~ Seymour Sarason
- ◆ *The Fourth Way: the Inspiring Future for Educational Change* ~ Andrew Hargreaves
- ◆ *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls,*



*Paradoxes, and Promises* ~  
Terrence Deal & Kent D. Peterson

♦ *Working with Emotional Intelligence* ~  
Daniel Goleman

∞ Denise Hyer, Administrative Assistant  
*Clara Barton, Red Cross Nurse*

One of my all time favorite books was *Clara Barton, Red Cross Nurse*. I read it at least three times in my 4th and 5th grade years in school and credit it for my enjoyment of a good biography. I was fascinated with Clara's bravery in caring for soldiers on Civil War battlefields and I remember I discussed it in my first book report. Though I don't recall the author, I can still see the dark red hard cover with the thread bare edges that I carefully handled each time I borrowed it from the library, gently turning its pages as I learned about this remarkable young woman. I haven't read a book about Clara Barton since that time, but perhaps I should pursue that and gain a new appreciation for this woman who was a great heroine and humanitarian.

∞ Diane Klaiber, Librarian  
*Little Women* ~ Louisa May Alcott

Perhaps it is the season, but I chose *Little Women* as my favorite book. The March's parlor at Christmas where the family gathered to play, sing carols and recite poetry is so vivid to me. The book is filled with the joys, sadness and losses of the March girls growing up. I grew up with three siblings and similar struggles of poverty and relationships. It was easy to relate to Jo who was the middle child. We both seemed to keep our families together in difficult times. Jo's inner strength as a woman gave me a great role model. The setting of the book during the Civil War and Victorian era helped to make it my all time favorite because those time periods have always given me much to reflect and study.

While Louisa May Alcott has recently been critiqued on *Masterpiece Theater*, I still enjoy believing that she wrote *Little Women* as a way to emulate her own family values which were similar to my Mid-

Western upbringing. That is, we should help one another, love each other, care and share with others. These values are still ones that I try to achieve in daily living. That is why this book had such an impact on my outlook and relationship with my family. I truly believe what Ms. Alcott said so well: "*Life is my college. May I graduate well, and earn some honors!*"

∞ Bill Knittle, Chemistry  
*Robot* ~ Isaac Asimov

I read several series of novels but the one I like best is the *Robot* novels by Isaac Asimov. This series began as short stories in science fiction magazines which grew into stand alone novels and trilogies. Eventually Asimov tied all these works together into a series which explores the culture and ethics surrounding artificial intelligence as well as the growth and demise of various forms of civilization throughout the galaxy. The early novels are murder mysteries while the later ones are international thrillers set on a galactic scale. Unfortunately, many new readers of this series will come with preconceptions formed by the *I Robot* movie. The books are different. Asimov is an easy read and he deals with timeless issues. Read one.

∞ Debra Kochka, Business Assistant  
*Reading Lolita in Tehran* ~ Azar Nafisi

I loved *Reading Lolita in Tehran* due in part to my personal experiences of living in Saudi but I think it's more than that.

For a couple of years before she left Iran in 1997, Nafisi invited seven young women, all former students, to her house every week to read and discuss banned works of Western literature. They came from various backgrounds and experiences: conservative and religious families; progressive and secular homes. Several had been in jail. They began shyly, uncomfortable speaking their minds, but soon began to open up and share more freely about the novels and themselves, their dreams and disappointments. Their lives reflected and intertwined with their reading—*Pride and Prejudice*, *Daisy Miller* and *Lolita*—their





an insight and understanding few humans could ever possess. Prepare yourself to laugh, to cry, and to feel encouraged with hope. Enzo is a hero, and we are all richer for having known him.

☞ Steve McDowell, English  
*Catch-22* ~ Joseph Heller

Assigned as one of the texts in my high school English class during the sixties, *Catch-22* was a favorite of mine from the first read. Witty, irreverent, satirical, and just plain hilarious in its absurdity—the book became a friend and a kindred spirit. In college and then over the next few years, I must have re-read it a half a dozen times. Each time I could connect the absurdities that Yossarian encountered in the military with the daily chaos of the life I encountered in the various bureaucracies that make up our modern world. I often found myself muttering under my breath, "That's a nice catch, *Catch-22*!" It helped me keep some of the inexplicable absurdities of our existence in humorous perspective. And although I haven't re-read it for a long while, its world view is still a vital part of me. Nice catch? "It's the best there is!"

☞ Paul Marble, English  
*Where I'm Calling From* ~ Raymond Carver

Freshman year of college felt like a sucker punch. I struggled adjusting to what I discerned to be a vastly different world than my hometown, and soon found myself feeling distanced from those I knew and incapable of understanding those around me who I didn't know.

Thankfully, everything about Raymond Carver's short story collection *Where I'm Calling From* made sense to me at the time, though I couldn't comprehend how it made sense, or why it made sense. Nevertheless, reading those stories registered emotionally at a time when so little else did.

Move ahead ten years, or so, and I introduce Carver's text to my senior IB English class. We take two or three days on a given story, sharing our observations, asking thoughtful questions of each

other, listening and reflecting. My students notice the despair, the longing, the dysfunction, the rage, the trauma, the broken attempts at communicating, and so much more. They share these carefully gleaned interpretations, as I listen, and learn, intently.

From Carver, I think I've learned a great deal about my soul and my perception of the world. My students taught me much about his world, and about theirs.

I am thankful for everyone who has helped me to understand *Where I'm Calling From* and my own reaction to it, and especially to my students for their inspired emotional and communal investment in understanding the text, each other, and the intense and intricate human condition.

☞ Magaly Morais,  
Portuguese Instructor  
*Vidas Secas* ~ Graciliano Ramos

Reading Graciliano Ramos' novel, *Vidas Secas*, opened a new world for me. This book led me to understand the importance of communication. As humans we must be able to express our inner emotions and doubts, but also be able to defend our thoughts. The United States Constitution assures the right of free speech; however, I learned the importance of self expression and its impact from a dramatic story. After reading *Vidas Secas*, I have a new perspective about society, family and individuals.

The main narrative describes the life of a family in northeastern Brazil, where the climate burns out the soil, almost turning it into desert. Few families can survive there and usually move out, hoping for a better place with rain. The main characters are Mr. Fabiano, his wife, two children and a female dog called "Whale." Throughout the book, the reader is immersed in the suffering of that family. The only voice is the narrator's and the drama describes a family unable to express feelings and emotions through words. Their thoughts are confused; they try to express themselves by making gestures and noises. I thought it seemed like torture to be human and not be able to express oneself. Writing this essay in a second language and finding the right



words and sentences proves how deeply this story has touched me.

∞ Emily Morin, Class of 2012  
*The Lorax* ~ Dr. Seuss

One of my favorite books is *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. This book is the tale of the Lorax, and how the forest was destroyed by one businessman with no courtesy to the animals. I really loved this book when I was a child. I checked it out of my library all the time. In English class last year, we read some Dr. Seuss. The analysis changed my view of the story. As a child I never picked up on his political sub-plot. I feel a sense of gratitude to Seuss because of his views to save the planet's resources and lower man's impact. He was a man before his time, and that is why he is such a controversial figure. The book could persuade young readers to change their minds and opinions. This book is an example of Dr. Seuss' choice to vocalize his opinions and try to change the world. *The Lorax* is an excellent way to tell children about man's impact on the environment and how to be good stewards of what we are given.



∞ Patrick O'Kane, Spanish  
*Marathon Man* ~ William Goldman

Impossible. It is impossible to choose your all time favorite book. It's as impossible as choosing your favorite song. There are too many great ones out there. The question is unfair. Besides, when you choose an all time favorite book, others inevitably label you. Reading *Hoop Dreams*? You must be a jock. *Message in a Bottle*? You're a hopeless romantic. Communists read Marx. Peaceniks read Gandhi. Reading Kerouac? You must be a beatnik. I am not ready to be labeled by a single book.

The solution? I recall the words of a friend of mine who is a wine aficionado. When I asked him what his most prized bottle of wine was, he replied simply, "Whatever one I am drinking at the moment." So my favorite book of all time is... *Marathon Man*. (I'm up to page 126).

∞ Pamela Olson, Librarian (2002—2007)  
*Night Gardening* ~ E.L. Swann  
(Pseudonym for Kathryn Lasky)

This is a story about hope and miracles, no matter what your age. It is a love story woven together with the joys and wonders of gardening. Maggie and Tristan, the main characters, are drawn together through a chance encounter. (You might call it fate.) They give each other many gifts through their love of gardening and life itself.

Each chapter begins with a quote about gardening. Tidbits of information about different plants and types of gardens are part of the story. The descriptions through Maggie and Tristan's eyes as they "night garden" bring images to mind of what these gardens look like.

It is not a perfect story but it left me feeling inspired by the possibility of overcoming obstacles by having friends who support us with unconditional love. Of course, my love of gardening contributes to why *Night Gardening* is one of my all time favorite books and part of my personal bookshelf.

∞ Michelle Peck, History  
*Five Smooth Stones* ~ Anne Fairbairn

*Five Smooth Stones* is one of my favorite books. I read it in 1972 during the first year of my university studies at a time when I was searching for the "meaning of life." The book is the story of David Champlin, an African American growing up in New Orleans in the 1950s and 60s. It is a great commentary on the struggles of the Civil Rights movement in which the reader has a chance to follow characters who are really engaging. You cannot help but get attached to David as he struggles to confront the unfairness in life and tries to organize people to join the Civil Rights movement to make necessary changes in our country. This book pushed me to join organizations to confront the injustices in our society and to make a difference in life in a positive manner.



☞ Amy Peterson, Technology Coordinator  
*Good Night Moon* ~ Margaret Wise Brown  
 Illustrations by Clement Hurd

*Good Night Moon* has been a right of passage between parents and pre-language children since 1941. My first son and I traveled that journey together through 'the great green room' at least 500 times. The mouse explores the room with reckless abandon as the kittens engage in the last tussle of the day. The gradually brightening moon highlights the books on the shelves, the lit doll house on the floor, and the warm bowl of mush on the bedside table. The cadence of the book, as the protagonist bunny slowly climbs into the bed, provides warmth and security. We never tired of the story due to its diverse subplots and comfortable, recognizable objects.

Margaret Wise Brown lived and worked among the bohemians who cultivated the Age of Modern Art at the turn of the twentieth century. She affected children's literature by refuting the recapitulation of fairytales and fables and embracing a writing style that depicted stories germane to a child's own experiences and age-appropriate points-of-view. Clement Hurd participated equally in the communication process with illustrations that have the ability to tell the story standing on their own. Brown recognized the importance of the illustrator's visual power to children's literature and broke the norm by demanding that her illustrators be recognized with royalties equal to her own.

The experience of sharing *Good Night Moon* with my son gave me the opportunity to witness the burgeoning cognitive awareness of my child and as a result, to grow personally, as a parent, and eventually as an educator.

☞ Arthur Pontes, English and History  
*The Razor's Edge* ~ W. Somerset Maugham

There are favorite books and there are books that are something more than "favorite." I have had different books influence the way I thought and lived at different stages of life. The New Testament of the Bible, Albert Camus' *The Rebel*, Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* all made changes in my sense of what

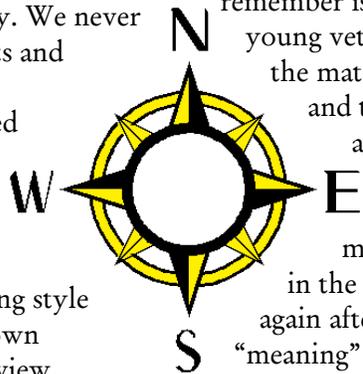
life is or could signify. I find it interesting in that none of these is a novel. Yet interest in all of them came from having read a novel. It was a novel that was the source for much else and was a reason that I ended up studying both English Literature and History in college. This work was W. Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*. I read this when I was fifteen years old and never could return to the self I was from before having read it.

I have not been able to bring myself to read the work again (knowing that I will not find the same things in it at my age that I found at fifteen) though I read it two or three times when young. What I remember is that the protagonist is a disillusioned young veteran of the First World War who rejects the materialistic values of the Roaring Twenties and travels across parts of Europe and Asia in an effort to make sense of his experience at war. He loses his girlfriend in the process and she marries another for money and social position only to lose it all in the depression of the thirties. They meet again after her "fall" from society and evaluate the "meaning" of their respective quests.

The book made me aware that life did not have an obvious meaning and that one had to actively decide on what kind of life was worth living. It made me aware that material success was not the same as success in living life. It made me interested in the world outside of the USA and made me want to find out about the histories and religions of the world. Most of all, it made me see that, by reading books, I could find both questions and answers that truly matter.

☞ Connor Read, Class of 2012  
*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* ~ Sherman Alexie

One of my favorite books is *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. It is an absolutely hilarious book about a boy with a poor family and a hectic life. He's very much your typical teenage boy in many ways, but at the same time his situation is unique. His goal is to go to an all-white high school outside of his reservation but that is frowned upon because he's bound to be bullied there. His best friend





is tough, really tough. He throws a book at one of his teachers. He has a lisp, gets frequent seizures, and has over-sized extremities. He's poor, and his family rarely has money for gas. Yet, these things don't bother him; he gets through his life by fulfilling his passion for cartooning. You'll see some funny examples of this in the book. I like this book because, well, I really don't like reading. The only time I read something is if it's assigned, comical, or different from your average book. *The Absolutely True Diary* is both funny and unique. If you're a teenager who wants a quick, easy, and extremely entertaining read, then this is the book for you!

∞ Peter Richenburg, Art  
*The Uncommon Reader* ~ Alan Bennett

How does Her Majesty, The Queen of England feel about artist David Hockney? How does the Royal Household tolerate her recent fondness for a worker from the kitchens and his recommendations for reading material? How does the Prime Minister deal with Her Majesty's new-found passion for book reading? All is revealed in this 120 page satirical romp.

∞ Gabe Roderick, Class of 2011  
*Slaughterhouse-Five* ~ Kurt Vonnegut

If I could choose a book that changed who I am today, it would be *Slaughterhouse-Five*. I must have read it a dozen times. This book is one of my favorites because it goes where no book has gone before in plot, theme, and character development. In a weird way, I think we can all relate to Billy Pilgrim, the main character. I think of the book as a fictional Bible because Billy sees his death and birth numerous times and knows when he dies that he will be born again. He even says, "You can be dead in one moment and alive in another." When I first read this novel, I honestly didn't understand it. After I lost someone close to me, *Slaughterhouse-Five* made true sense. He is basically saying that a person may be dead at one moment but in other moments, they are still alive.

It changed my outlook to see life as continuous, like a circle that never ends. If you are interested in this, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is your ticket. It's a great read.

∞ Chloe Roselander-Ginn, History  
*The Good Earth* ~ Pearl S. Buck

In considering which books fall under the category of my "all time favorites," I drifted towards that select group of books I've made room for in crowded dorm rooms and cars headed for cross country moves. Among these, I've always made space for *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck. This book was first read to me in the Roselander family book club, which consisted of my Mom reading to my brother and me everyday after school while I pigged out on chips and salsa. Every book my family read together during my elementary school years holds some sentimental value for me, but *The Good Earth* is the book I have returned to the most throughout the years. I have appreciated the story of Wang Lung and his family's changing fortunes in a different way each time I revisit the book. In its ability to inspire compassion and curiosity in me as an eight year old, high school student, and now supposed adult, *The Good Earth* underscores the ability of literature to give a powerful glimpse into the human experience. Score one for literature, if a squirrely eight year old chomping on chips and salsa can become invested in the struggles of a rural peasant family in 1930's China.

∞ Sean Sabella, Class of 2010  
*Till We Have Faces* ~ C.S. Lewis

It takes me a bit to think of my favorite book. My first process of elimination is to think of my favorite authors, how they've affected me, what impact they've had on my life with their works. This, for me, isn't much of a stumbling block: at the end of the day the writer I always admire, imitate, and envy the most is C.S. Lewis. However, choosing a favorite from his body of work is a much larger challenge, made difficult by the fact that Lewis has had his hand





in every genre from allegory to satire to fantasy to science-fiction. However, his most mature, lucid, layered work has to be *Till We Have Faces*, a work that contains elements of myth and fantasy, written in an autobiographical first person style, ultimately taking the form of a giant accusation against fate from a bitter, lonely old woman at the end of her life. The story is sweeping and powerful, tackling a multitude of human issues. Some of its interesting elements are a combination of different cultures (with Greek and something that seems Northern European at the center), an extravagant, allegorical rewriting of the myth “Psyche and Cupid” as a plot and thematic center, and an enormous exploration of the human capacity for running from our true emotions. It is ultimately a powerful and deep read, yet at the same time is written with a perfectly understandable style. It is personally significant to me because, more than any other book, *Till We Have Faces* has taught me the power of words. I have learned the damaging power that words spoken to ourselves and to others can have, and because of this have taken my ability to affect people’s lives with what I say much more seriously.

∞ Lydia Shannon, Class of 2010  
*The Andromeda Strain* ~  
Michael Crichton

*The Andromeda Strain* is one of the best science fiction novels I have ever read. It is particularly good because it is unique from the average, fantasy-based sci-fi books. *The Andromeda Strain* is based in realistic science and integrates some rather complex and interesting scientific ideas into the main plot of its story. This formula makes for an intellectually stimulating, yet still dramatic and entertaining book. It is a good read for those of you who enjoy science fiction novels with a more rational and sensible foundation.

∞ Robin Singer, Math  
*Foundation Trilogy* ~ Isaac Asimov

When I was asked to select my favorite book, I was daunted by the task. So many were enjoyable;

so many shaped my understanding of the world. Which one was most significant, or most influential?

I chose Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation Trilogy*. These stories tell of the rise and fall of the Galactic Empire and of mathematician Hari Seldon who invented “psychohistory,” a theory which postulates that the future can be predicted on the basis of the predictability of human behavior, if the sample size is the population of the entire galaxy. In other words, statistical analysis can be used to predict highly probable future events, just as quantum mechanics can be used to predict the highly probable positions of electrons.

I read this series some 40 years ago and these ideas are still central whenever I think about human history. I barely remember the empires, planets, events or characters in Asimov’s tales. But the concept of the predictability of human events based on the behavior of humans, not as individuals but as populations, has stayed with me.

Today’s central conflicts, i.e. the “war on terrorism,” were predicted decades ago by historians looking at demographics, population growth, economic trends, and resource dynamics. The ability of scientists to use mathematical analysis to see the future and help leaders steer us past the shoals of social disruption, may be the key to our civilization’s survival.

In the *Foundation Trilogy*, Asimov weaves stories of the future around a frame of fascinating theory and truth, applicable to our own lives and times.

∞ Peter Steedman, TOK and IB Coordinator  
*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* ~  
Alex Haley

I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as a freshman in college, and to this day it is the book that has had the most profound impact on my life. The book was assigned to me by my African-American studies professor, in part because many in the class had been influenced by the 1995 documentary, *Eyes on the Prize*. The PBS program led many of us to believe that the vision of Dr. King and the SCLC was the only acceptable path towards integration in the U.S.



I had also heard that Malcolm X was a racist. Reading about how Malcolm Little, born in Omaha but raised in Roxbury, transformed his life from petty thief and drug addict to a national spokesman for the Nation of Islam had me riveted from page one. His life story was, like most, impossible to compartmentalize. His complexity as a man is beautifully told by Alex Haley, who wrote the book years before he published *Roots*. Although Malcolm X was blessed with intelligence and eloquence, his naïveté towards the power structure of the Nation of Islam would shatter him. Following his disillusionment with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm is able to evolve once again by taking the pilgrimage to Mecca, or the Hajj, where he is introduced to an Islam that does not tolerate racial prejudice or bigotry. By sharing prayers with people of all colors and races, Malcolm returns to the U.S. with a fresh vision for the urban civil rights movement. Unfortunately for Malcolm, his new organization was seen as a threat by militants and he was assassinated a few months upon his return from Saudi Arabia. Haley's book of struggle, revelation and redemption will serve as a testament to the power of personality over circumstance. I would suggest that anyone interested in this book should try to find an edition that includes the eulogy given by actor Ozzie Davis at Malcolm's funeral. Davis' words will move you as he asks us to re-evaluate any preconceived notions one may have had of the Civil Rights icon.

☞ Jim Stewart, Latin  
*Ball Four* ~ Jim Bouton

My favorite book is *Ball Four*. Although it is not a book one would consider an all time classic, there are several reasons for my selection. First and foremost was that my parents had forbidden me to read the book when it was published in 1970, as it was seen at the time to be extremely controversial for going inside the locker room of baseball and discussing what went on in there. I got around the ban when we were in Europe in 1972, purchasing the book without my parents' knowledge at the Army PX in Germany, on our weekly trip to get US

magazines and reading material. I took it with me when my brother and I went to the UK to see the 1972 British Open- no parental supervision!

What I found fascinating, and still do, was the inside story of what goes on inside the world of professional baseball. I had grown up with heroes like Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays. Bouton showed in his book that they had flaws and were every bit as human as I was. For a teenager in the early 70's, this was an experience that awakened me to the world. But I also found the stories witty - and to this day have a copy of the book (autographed by Mr. Bouton) in my library. The 1969 Seattle Pilots, around whom his tale is woven, have become one of my favorite baseball teams, and the players on that team are as well known to me today as they were when I first read the book.

At times today, I will pick up the book and thumb through certain sections, reading about the practical jokes that went on in the clubhouse, the songs players would come up with about the manager and the relationships that are part of any professional organization.

☞ Rachel Todoroff, Administrative Assistant  
The Bible

My favorite book is one that changed my life, one I re-read, one I keep on my book shelf (several copies, in fact), one I carry with me most everywhere I go. Every morning, I sit in my chair with my first cup of coffee and read this book. The margins are marked up, the text is often underlined or highlighted, and the binding is falling apart. I'm sure you've guessed by now that I am speaking about the Bible.

James is one of my favorite books in the Bible. I have actually memorized the entire book because it struck me as so important. It starts with the key to all understanding: "If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (remember that as you prepare for I.B. exams). Chapter 2 should guide all religion: "Faith without works is dead" and "For he shall have judgment without mercy that shows no mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment!" I wish all the



governments of the world would live with mercy as their core policy. In James, you will find the Royal Law: "Love your neighbor as yourself". Then, there is the sobering thought "For what is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes".

If we could be guided by the principles laid down in the book of James, we would be humble, treat others with love and respect, meet the needs of widows and orphans, show no partiality, and bring our worries to God in prayer all while keeping the perspective that life is short and should be lived with a clean conscience towards both man and God.

∞ Marion Weeks, Librarian  
*West with the Night* ~  
Beryl Markham

Beryl Markham grew up on a farm in East Africa and lived a life of high adventure as a bush pilot and horse trainer. *West with the Night* chronicles her exceptional life. The memoir opens with stories of her hunting barefoot as a young child with the Nandi Murani. The Murani taught "Beru" how to track animals, and more importantly, how to be perceptive and self-reliant. By the time she was twenty, Markham was known in Kenya as a successful trainer of thoroughbreds. She took up flying and worked as a bush pilot delivering supplies and mail to remote areas. Her descriptions of the early days of aviation in a wildly undeveloped landscape are fascinating. In 1936, she became the first pilot to fly solo west across the Atlantic.

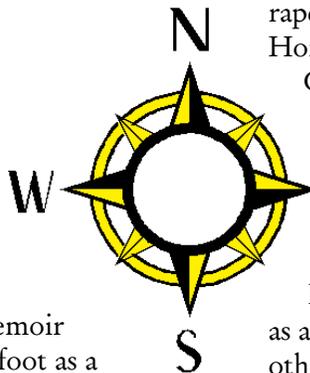
*West with the Night* is not just a great story; it is also gorgeously written. Hemingway once wrote to a friend: "Markham has written so well, and marvelously well, that I am completely ashamed of myself as a writer...she can write rings around all of us who consider ourselves writers."

I discovered her book in 1983 while I was living in Africa. Now, more than 25 years later, I am reading it again for the Audible Local Ledger, a radio service for the visually impaired. Reading out loud helps you savor every word. As I record *West With the Night*, I feel like I'm visiting an old friend who

tells her fantastic stories of Africa so well, I could listen to them over and over again.

∞ Marsha Yalden, English  
*To Kill a Mockingbird* ~ Harper Lee

This is a VERY hard question to answer, but if pressed I would have to say my all time favorite book is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Obviously the storyline is a memorable one: The story of a young white girl growing up in the deep South while her father, a lawyer, defends a black man who has been wrongfully accused of rape. Obviously the characters are memorable: Honorable Atticus, Gentle Tom, Motherly Calpurnia, Boastful Dill, and, of course, naive but sincere Scout. But the thing about *To Kill a Mockingbird* that is the most memorable and what keeps me riveted every time I read it (and as an English teacher I've read it MULTIPLE times) is Lee's writing style. The story is told by Scout as a flashback, and I have to say I don't think any other author I've ever read has so accurately captured the true essence of viewing the world through a child's eye. Scout is so sincere in her telling of her tale, but can't help being hilarious in her naivete of the world around her. Most of my students miss the subtle humor Lee injects into the story. For example, when Scout calls the snowman she, Jem, and Dill have built an "absolute morphadite" most people miss why Atticus is truly horrified (if you don't know what I'm referring to, look it up and figure it out!). Lastly, *To Kill a Mockingbird* reminds us all why we must all fight for what we know is right, even if we lose the battle before it even begins. When Reverend Sykes turns to Scout in the courtroom and says "Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'" the reader is filled with a sense of awe for the kind of man Atticus is to command such respect from so many. The story may be a work of fiction, but there is nothing fictional about the lessons learned and pure joy that comes from reading such a true masterpiece.



## *Gretchen Buntschuh ~ A Profile*

By Alicia Fenney, Grade 12

She explains herself as "a seasons person." When her dog Zephyr wakes her up in the morning, the first thing she thinks of is how light or dark the room is, and how long the light days will last before winter takes over. Mrs. Gretchen Buntschuh: mother to three, grandmother to two has always loved teaching.

Her three daughters are Ingrid, Erika, and Lise. Erika lives in Germany with her two children ages eight and ten, to whom Mrs. Buntschuh adores reading. She also has a foster grandson who lives in New York with her oldest daughter, Ingrid. She was born in a small town in Ohio where she lived with her two brothers, but first got out into the world when she spent four years in a Wisconsin prep-school.

After college she moved to Boston and began her teaching career. It was in Boston that she married and had her three children. After living in Bedford for fifteen years, the family moved to Chester, Vermont. It wasn't long before her oldest daughter went to college, and their family moved out to sunny California.

Both in Boston and in California, Mrs. Buntschuh worked as a model, and an actress in the theater, independent films and commercials. For five years she worked at a rare book auction house and brushed up on her own collection of first editions,

including works by Charles Dickens. However, she missed the everyday contact of people. In San Francisco, she acquired a job teaching at an all French school where the only English spoken was in English class! She remained there for eleven more years before moving back to the East Coast.



Now what does she really think about teaching? "I've never gotten tired of it. It's wonderful. Working in a place like Sturgis doesn't happen everyday." Mrs. Buntschuh taught at public schools in Lexington and at private schools in San Francisco. Sturgis was a perfect fit, "the best of both."

Often she falls asleep after reading, puzzling over a mystery or the characters in a novel. She likes each type of writing on its own: Victorian literature for its density and complexity, ancient medieval pieces, and classics like the *Odyssey*. She enjoys reading Shakespeare, Dickens, Byatt, and Gardner, but she cannot choose between them. "I love beautiful words. I love to dance through the language."

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October 2002

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### *All Time Favorite Books*

Is dedicated to  
Gretchen Buntschuh  
Who inspired the creation of *Sturgis Soundings*

*Sturgis Soundings* is a compilation of book reviews that reflect  
the various interests and enthusiasms of the Sturgis community.

Editors: Gretchen Buntschuh and Marion Weeks  
Graphic Design: Amy Kaye Peterson

*Sturgis Soundings* is also available online: [www.sturgischarterschool.org/Soundings](http://www.sturgischarterschool.org/Soundings)

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