

Summer Reading, Grade 12

Downers Grove South High School

May 2009

Author

Title

Bohjalian, Chris

Midwives

Sibyl Danforth has an unusual job as a midwife, delivering babies for mothers who wish to have their children at home. She, her husband, and their teenage daughter Connie have a busy but happy life until disaster strikes. On a stormy winter night in 1981, one of her home births ends in terrible tragedy and Sibyl is charged with manslaughter. Her daughter Connie tells the gripping story of her ensuing courtroom drama and the fracturing of her family. As Connie looks back on these events, she struggles with the truth of what *really* happened that night, and if things can ever be the same again.

Brockmeier, Kevin

The Brief History of the Dead

On earth, researcher Laura Byrd is trapped in Antarctica in extreme weather conditions. She is alone, and her radio, the only means for her to communicate with the outside world, is failing. Her supplies are running low, and she is running out of time to find a way to survive. Alternating with Laura's story is the tale of the City and its inhabitants. The residents of the City are the recently departed who remain in this version of the afterlife as long as they are remembered by someone who is still living. Just like the cities on earth, the City is full of diverse characters. Among the current residents are Marion and Phillip Byrd, a couple who are falling in love again after decades of marriage; Luka Sims, the printer of the City's only newspaper, which reports on happenings back on earth; and Coleman Kinzler, a homeless man. The interweaving of these two tales raises questions about survival, human relationships, and life after death.

Bryson, Bill

The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid

This memoir of an All-American childhood is laugh-out-loud funny. Bryson's crazy family (his mother burns food instead of cooking it) provides plenty of stories that will make readers laugh. The author pretends to be a superhero called the Thunderbolt Kid, and as he shares his fantasy superhero life, we get a real picture of the 1950s in mid-America.

De los Santos, Marisa

Loved Walked In

It was just like a movie. Scene: the Café Dora, a trendy coffee house, sunlight filtering through the window, soft jazz playing in the background, and Cornelia Brown (our heroine) bustling around taking care of her customers. Then Cary Grant strolls through the door. Well, not really Cary Grant, but a man who looks just like him. Cornelia's dream man. The complication? He's not alone; he comes with Clare, an energetic and intelligent 11-year-old daughter. What Cornelia must discover is how to work through the challenges that life throws at her and still be happy.

Durant, Michael

In the Company of Heroes

Mogadishu, Somalia, 1993-Michael Durant lived through the crash of his Blackhawk helicopter, breaking his back and one leg, and then was held captive for ten days. Readers will feel as if they are with Durant in a hot, guarded room, using knowledge gained in the armed forces and "special operations." In addition, Durant will take readers to other battles in other places to help them know what to do to survive. Readers with an interest in survival stories, the military or recent history will greatly enjoy this book.

Koontz, Dean

Odd Thomas

Odd Thomas is truly odd. At the age of twenty, he lives in a small town and serves as a short-order cook in the local diner. Cooking, however, is not his real talent. Instead, Odd has the uncanny ability to see dead people and foretell future events related to death. One morning, he senses bad spirits connected to one of the townspeople, and he foresees mass murder devastating his small town. Odd must use his natural abilities to help save those he loves from this imminent, approaching doom.

Lewis, Michael

The Blind Side

Michael Oher has never had a break in his life. As one of 13 children of a drug-addicted mother, he does not even know his real name or his birthday. Though homeless and uneducated, his luck begins to change. He gets a chance to attend a private school, and through this opportunity –meets a family who will adopt him and change his life. At his new school he begins to play football, and he excels at playing left tackle. Michael Lewis tells the story of the left tackle position and its influence on professional football while he shares the story of Michael who becomes one of the leading recruits in the nation.

Sakey, Marcus**The Blade Itself**

Growing up on the south side of Chicago, Danny Carter made a living as a petty criminal. After his best friend Evan is sent to prison for a burglary gone bad, Danny decides he's had enough and turns his life around. Seven years later, Evan is released from prison and he goes directly to Danny in hopes of picking up where they left off. Danny has to decide whether to turn his back on his new life to pay back his debt to Evan, or to fight for what he loves. This journey leads him back into dangerous territory as everything he has built for himself is threatened.

Setterfield, Diana**The Thirteenth Tale**

When a young, fairly sheltered biographer receives a letter from a very famous novelist seeking a writer to tell her story, she embarks on an eye-opening adventure that changes her life significantly. Margaret Lea is a reserved young woman who prefers her father's rare bookstore to life in the fast lane. But she is summoned by the mysterious Vida Winter who has read previous biographies of long dead writers that Margaret had lovingly chronicled. She has selected Margaret to tell her life story, one very complicated by the fact that she has previously told myriad different versions of her life in interviews. Ms. Winter is a popular novelist whose most famous book is titled *The Thirteen Tales*, but upon reading it, Margaret discovers that the book only contains twelve stories. It will be her job to obtain that thirteenth tale, the very story of Ms. Winter's own life. However, Ms. Winter will not be very forthcoming with the facts nor will she easily unfold her life history. Margaret will have her work cut out for her to unravel the mystery of Vida Winter!

Walls, Jeannette**The Glass Castle**

"Being homeless is an adventure," says the mother of Jeanette Walls, but for Jeanette, it was just her way of life. Raised by eccentric and nomadic parents, Jeanette and her three siblings learned to fend for themselves. They held their clothes together with safety pins, colored their skin with markers so the holes wouldn't show, and went to school faithfully so that they could have a meal-even if it meant digging through the dumpsters. Despite such hardship, Walls' story manages to be magical and moving. Her artist mother and alcoholic father are more troubled dreamers than monsters, and among her father's many elaborate fantasies is to build the family a glass castle. One by one, Jeanette and her siblings learn that if there is going to be a better place for them, they must create it for themselves.