West Valley College Summer Reading List, 2010

The Library asked West Valley College employees to share their 5 favorite books so that students could read something fun during the summer months. Below are the employees who participated, their picks and a hyperlinked call number to those books that we own.

Enjoy!

---------------------------------------------------------------

**Monet Payton, Library Media Technician**


**Review:** I never read this when I was a kid, and it’s probably a good thing, because I don’t think I would have appreciated it as much. I read it in my 20’s and it was a most excellent experience, which I have repeated several times.

2. Loitering With Intent – Muriel Spark

3. Fierce Invalids Home From Hot Places – Tom Robbins

4. Q’s Legacy – Helene Hanff

5. Bird by Bird – Anne Lamott

----------------

**Anonymous**


**Review:** This is an autobiography of the author’s early life in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Kenya, and about her flight to the Netherlands. Arriving as a refugee, she eventually ascends to a position in the Dutch parliament. Living constantly in fear of her life to this day, this is the harrowing story of a brave woman.

2. The Pacific & Other Stories - Mark Helprin

3. Cannery Row - John Steinbeck

4. A Christmas Memory - Truman Capote

5. The Illustrated Man - Ray Bradbury
**Suzanne Overstreet, ESL Instructor**

**Review:** I love these books, and if asked to find a common thread, I’d say they all contain a journey--of the heart, mind, body, or all three. All but 4 have been made into movies, but reading the original text is even more of an adventure.

1. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert Pirsig  
   **CT275.P648 A33 1979**

   **PR6051.D3352 H5 1981**

3. Frankenstein by Mary Shelley  
   **PR5397.F7 1992**

4. Time Traveler's Wife by Audrey Niffenegger

5. The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas  
   **PE1127.L6 D84 1989**

------------------------

**Pauline Clark, Counselor**

1. Rembrandt's Eyes by Simon Schama  
   **ND653.R4 S24 1999**

2. Red Sky At Morning by Richard Bradford  
   **PS3552 .R22 R4 1969**

3. The Shipping News by Annie Proulx  
   **PS3566.R697 S4 1994**

4. You Can't Go Home Again by Thomas Wolfe  
   **PS3545.O337 Y6**

5. A Confederacy of Dunces by John Kennedy Toole  
   **PS3570.O54 C66 1987b**

------------------------

**Pari Sadri, Accounting**

1. God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy  
   **PR9499.3 .R59 G63 1997**

2. The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold  
   **PS3619.E26 L68 2002**

3. Into Thin Air by John Krakauer  
   **GV199.44.E85 K725 1997**
Leslie Saito, English Instructor


Review: Yamanaka’s work might not be as well known as the other books I listed nor perhaps ranked as important in terms of the American literary canon, but it’s one of my favorites for its use of Hawaiian pidgin English; its raw and honest portrayal of some of the struggles of adolescence, poverty, and one’s desire to be something that one cannot be; and its humor. While the author’s body of work was under fire at one point for its portrayal of particular people and situations, I still think this novel is worth reading, especially if someone wants to experience just a taste of Hawaii, the language of the people, and the love for ‘ohana (family) and ‘aina (land) expressed on the pages.

2. Beloved by Toni Morrison  PS3563.O8749 B4 1987

3. Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison  PS3555.L625 I535 1952


5. Prince of Tides by Pat Conroy  PS3553.O5198 P7 1991

Sylvia Ortega, ESL Instructor

1. Eat, pray, love : one woman’s search for everything across Italy, India, and Indonesia by Elizabeth Gilbert.  G154.5.G55 A3 2007

Review: The writer documents one woman’s journey – a sort of walk about - to find herself again after many years in an unsatisfying marriage where she suppresses her needs and desires in order to lift up the man in her life. The story chronicles the woman’s experiences as she eats in Italy, prays in India, and loves in Indonesia. This book is a relaxing read for the beach or poolside and is currently being made into a movie starring Julia Roberts.

2. The Twilight Saga Collection by Stephenie Meyer. There are four titles in the collection: Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse, Breaking Dawn
Ginny Aragon, Dean, Student Support Services

1. Angle of Repose by Wallace Stegner  PS3537.T316 A5 1971b

Review: Strong writing and a story that is both symbolic and lyrical. Nobody tells a tale better than Mr. Stegner.

2. Land of Little Rain by Mary Austin  F866 .A9318 1969

Review: A type of ‘diary’ telling a story of the land quite near here – the eastern Sierras. Her evocative writing creates the total picture of being there!


Review: A deeply felt chronicle recounting the value of discovering what is off the beaten path along with the freedom of the open road.


Review: Find the inner pioneer through Ms. Cather’s writing. Durable and invincible are only 2 of the strong qualities she espouses in her Midwest tale.


Review: Barbara Kingsolver writes perfect stories with every word in place. Her naturalist bent is the perfect framework for her magical writing.

------------------------

Lucy Clementi, Human Resources

1. Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell  PS3525 .I972 G6 1975

Review: An all around favorite....

2. Way of the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman

Review: I love the way that Dan Millman combines spirituality/consciousness with humor to enlighten and entertain.

3. Return to Love by Marianne Williamson

Review: Ms. Williamson takes a no nonsense approach to spirituality basing her teachings on “A Course In Miracles”.

4. Christy by Catherine Marshall

5. At Home in Mitford by Jan Karon
Rebecca Cisneros – Diaz, English Instructor

1. Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston  PS3515 .U789 A6 1995

**Review:** This is my favorite because it's the story of a woman who does not give up on the hope of finding romantic love. It's romantic, funny, tragic, and complex.


**Review:** My second favorite, because he recollects and vividly describes his unimaginably abusive childhood. I love his tone; it's matter of fact, flippant, and insightful. This book reminds me that one can survive almost anything, and even laugh about it later.

3. Angela's Ashes, by Frank McCourt  E184.I6 M117 1999

**Review:** This book is a page turner because again, he makes readers laugh out loud while we read about his poverty stricken, pious Irish Catholic upbringing. Alcoholism, masturbation, infant mortality, child labor, first love, death...all of this and more!

Helen Pivk, Re-entry counselor


**Review:** This book is the story of an old professor who influenced the life of Mitch through many simple and casual events. The book is written about Morie’s last months of life and filled with Morie’s recommendations for living a purposeful life.

2. Things I’ve Been Silent About by Azar Nafisi Azar Nafisi

**Review:** Her family secrets portray many historical turning points leading to Iran's 1979 revolution.

3. Cry of the Peacock by Gina Nahai

**Review:** This book voices Jews struggle in old Iran through a 200 year period. Peacock is the first Jewish woman who had the courage to leave her husband, and ...

4. The Lexus and the Olive Tree by Thomas Friedman

**Review:** This book demonstrates the struggle between the globalization and the culture in today’s world.

5. The September of Shiraz by Dalia Sofer

**Review:** This book demonstrates Iran’s post revolutionary events through following Sofer’s family escaping from Iran during 1981-1982 when I was still in Iran. The re-telling of events is very accurate and easily can be any of our stories.
**Cynthia Reiss, Art Instructor**

1. Unicorn by Iris Murdoch  **PR6063.U7 U55 1970**
2. Black Prince by Iris Murdoch
3. True Colors by Kristin Hannah
4. Summertime by JM Coetzee
5. Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela

-----------------------------

**Linda Newton, Interior Design Instructor**

1. The Natural House by Frank Lloyd Wright  **NA7208.W68 1954b**
   
   **Review:** If you like knowing how this famous architect designed and worked with his staff you will love this book. There is no forward written by another famous person. Mr. Wright was far too vain for that. This is a first person explanation of some of his most peculiar designs.

2. The five dysfunctions of a TEAM by Patrick Lencioni.
   
   **Review:** The story of a well managed team told backwards.

   
   **Review:** The last year of Georgia O’Keefe’s life; she was going blind and ailing and she didn’t take it well!

4. The Power of Design: A Force for Transforming Everything by Richard Farson
   
   **Review:** A self liberating text

5. Everyday Sacred by Sue Bender
   
   **Review:** “A search for meaning and finding it at every turn.” (this is a quote from the jacket cover)

-----------------------------

**Gail Barta, ESL Instructor**

1. The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency by Alexander McCall Smith  **PR6063.C326 N6 2002**

   **Other titles in the series:** Tears of the Giraffe, Morality for Beautiful Girls, Kalahari Typing School for Men, Full Cupboard of Life

   **Review:** The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, is one of my favorites because it is the first in the series of eleven novels about Precious Ramotswe, the first lady detective in Botswana, Africa. It introduces a kind,
gentle, wise woman who loves her country, its people, and its traditional values. Although set in an “exotic” locale, her cases could take place anywhere since they deal with everyday people and their concerns. The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, and the entire series, is not really a detective novel filled with violence and intrigue, but rather, a conversation about our common humanity and philosophy of life.

-----------------------------------

Leigh Burrill, English Instructor

1. Orlando by Virginia Woolf PR6045 .O72 O7 1973

Review: Woolf’s insightful wit cuts like a knife. This novel is one of my all-time favorites for its gender-bending—and gender-blending—protagonist, who begins as a male and becomes, in the middle of life, a woman. This clever narrative was way ahead of its time when it was originally published in 1928. The movie is interesting, but the novel tells the whole story, and what could be more delicious than spending a summer enjoying tasty Woolfian prose?

2. Sula by Toni Morrison PS3563 O8749 S838 1999

Review: Morrison is one of my favorite writers of all time. Her characters are rich and familiar and her themes are powerful and soul-moving. Though it’s perhaps more obscure than some of Morrison’s other novels, Sula is one of my favorites for its treatment of women’s lives and experiences, and its poetic critique of war and its repercussions. It’s also a novel that’s lyricism is accessible enough for reading on the beach. It entertains at the same time that it makes you think (and perhaps even act).

3. The Guardians by Ana Castillo.

Review: Ana Castillo is a prolific writer whose characters come to life and whose narrative style is so vivid that you feel like you’re watching a movie as you read. At the same time, she addresses a wide range of social concerns, particularly those facing Mexican-Americans and immigrants to the U.S. I also love the flavor of the southwest in Castillo’s writing and her rich symbolism. This is a wonderful book!

4. The Elegance off the Hedgehog by Muriel Barbery.

Review: This is an AMAZING book! Very artful and poetic, this novel about the intersection of diverse lives is also philosophical, which isn’t surprising given it’s written by a French philosophy professor. However, it’s very accessible and has been translated from French into more than 20 languages, including of course, English. GREAT SUMMER READ!

5. Girl in Landscape by Jonathan Lethem

Review: I love science fiction, and this is one of my favorite authors, too. I love reading, rereading and teaching this inventive book about a young woman coming of age as her family moves from a dystopian Earth to the Planet of the Archbuilders. And it’s an easy and fun read, too—perfect for summertime.
Jane Lily, Interior Design Instructor

1. Please Understand Me by David Kiersey and Marilyn Bates  BF698.3 .K45 1984

Review: This is a detailed description of the 16 personality types more commonly known as the Myers Briggs. The book includes a short version of the personality test and this allows the reader to obtain a personal experience of personality testing. The test was developed during World War II when many women entered ‘mens’ jobs). No one knew how to ‘manage women’ and the test was helpful to managers in finding out how best to communicate with them.

2. The Right Stuff by Tom Wolfe  TL789.8 .U5 W64 1979

Review: This description of the new space program is a classic tale of the introduction of any new technology that takes hold of the world mind.

3. The Art of Color by Johannes Itten  ND1280 I813 1973

Review: Itten’s look at color as a system not only gave rise to the 1980’s American fashion of assigning personal color according to the seasons. It has also helped countless designers and students to better understand the many factors that make up the human experience of color.

4. Lateral Thinking by Edward de Bono  BF408 .D4 1970b

Review: De Bono let the world know that ‘suspending judgment’ and looking at many sides of a problem could yield better and more useful results in problem solving.

------------------------------

Sara Patterson, Counselor


2. The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield

3. The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Zafon

------------------------------

Roberta Berlani, Biology Instructor

1. Of Human Bondage by Somerset Maugham  PR6025.A86 O4 1956

Review: Starts out depressing, gets worse, but when the hero hits rock bottom, there is a terrific ending. Oddly enough, a feel-good book after all!
2. A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L’Engle  

**Review:** A quick read, often taught in middle schools now, but still a fabulous, thought-provoking book. Maybe I just liked it because the geeky mathematical girl wins it all (ALL!!) in the end!

3. Good Omens by Nein Gaiman and Terry Pratchett

**Review:** I roared with laughter. I suspect it is even funnier to those people who had any formal religious training.

4. Five Sisters: the Langhornes of Virginia by James Fox

**Review:** I was sorry to reach the end! This is a story about five sisters who lived in fascinating times. Their experiences paved the way for many, many women coming after them.

5. I Capture the Castle by Dodie Smith

**Review:** Absolutely charming. A young woman from a quirky family finds her way.

-------------------

**Maggie Gould, WV Police – Office Coordinator**

1. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain  

**Review:** Not just for children! I read this in college and found that the research for my paper was the most interesting I had ever done. The book is full of fascinating superstitions and folklore. A delightful read that everyone can identify with at some level.

2. The Shack by William Young

3. Half The Sky by Kristoff & WuDunn

4. Women of the Silk by Gail Tsu

5. Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenids

-------------------

**Rebecca Wong, Math Instructor**

1. The Seven Story Mountain, by Thomas Merton  

**Review:** My favorite book, telling the journey of Thomas Merton from his wild youth to his life as a Trappist monk. A little deep – not quite a beach read, but a book that enriches me every time I read it.
2. Appointment with Death, by Agatha Christie  
**PR6005 .H66 A85 1981**

**Review:** Definitely a great beach read, as is any Agatha Christie mystery! Reading Agatha Christie got me hooked on the mystery genre (still one of my favorite types of books to read.)

3. A Circle of Quiet, by Madeleine L'Engle

**Review:** The journal by the author of several of my favorite books when I was growing up. A beautiful recounting of lessons learned in daily life.

4. The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and “Women’s Work” by Kathleen Norris

**Review:** The title says it all-- finding the sacred in doing the laundry? A short read, but powerful.

5. Let the Great World Spin, by Colin McCann.

**Review:** Winner of the National Book Award for 2009!

-------------------

**Tanya Hanton, Senior Office Coordinator, Library**

1. Ishmael by Daniel Quinn  
**PS3567 .U338 I8 1995**

2. Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver

3. Turtle Moon by Alice Hoffman

4. The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

5. Salem Falls by Jodi Picoult

-------------------

**Anonymous**

1. At Swim Two Birds by Flann O'Brien  
**PR6029 .N56 A8 1960**

**Review:** This book is best considered as a late-modernist, transitionary text which critiques both realism and modernism in an openly deconstructive manner; a 1939 novel by Irish author Brian O’Nolan, writing under the pseudonym Flann O'Brien. It is widely considered to be O'Brien's masterpiece, and one of the most sophisticated examples of meta-fiction.
2. Rush to Judgment by Mark Lane  

Review: Mark Lane's thorough investigation, solid primary evidence and defense brief for Lee Harvey Oswald has stood the test of time; this book remains as a classic indictment of consensus/media-fed hysteria, government cover-up and conspiracy. History, as Napoleon Bonaparte once said, is a set of lies – agreed upon.

3. Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness by Robert E. Conot  

Review: As much New Journalism as incendiary sociology, this is Conot’s epic account of the six days of midsummer madness known as the 1965 Watts riots. 34 lives, $40 million in damage, and all the mayhem that was to come (Trenton, Detroit, Cleveland, etc.) are carefully detailed in an exhaustive compendium of human beings awash in corrosive despair, violent rage and lingering horror.

4. The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9-11 by David Ray Griffin  

Review: Griffin provides irrefutable evidence of government foreknowledge, cover-up, obstruction of justice, and direct complicity in the mass murders which took place on American soil September 11, 2001. It doesn’t take a conspiracy theory (such as the ‘official’ government version) in order to analyze and comprehend the ramifications of a monumental hoax as catalyst for endless war.

5. New Maps of Hell by Kingsley Amis  

Review: History and criticism of the science fiction genre of literature, circa 1960. The value of this early book-length study (aside from author Kingsley Amis being the very funniest of the Angry Young Men school of British authors) is in the unique historical and critical retrospective that it provided for fans and followers of what was then, still a much-maligned field of writing. In particular, Amis found inspiration in the works of Frederick Pohl, C.M. Kornbluth, and Robert Sheckley. Witty, funny and wonderfully scathing.

Lori Gaskin, President

1. Cadillac Desert by Marc Reisner  

Review: This is one of my favorite books because it juxtaposes something that we tend to take for granted – water – against a backdrop of intrigue and history associated with the politics, agriculture, geology, population growth, and land development of the American West.

2. The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons by John Wesley Powell  

3. Everest, The Hard Way by Chris Bonnington  


5. True North: A Memoir by Jill Ker Conway

-----------------------------

Betsy Sandford, Librarian

1. Outlander by Diana Gabaldon  CASSETTE 98-42

**Review:** Time travel! History! Romance! It has it all, plus great characters. This is the first in a multiple volume series. In 1945 Claire Randall walks through a cleft stone and a standing stone circle and ends up in 1743 Scotland. The books are long, but read very fast. The audiocassette version the library owns is abridged, so if you enjoy it you can read the full books available at any public library or bookstore.


**Review:** This book describes and shows with photographs what happens to buildings after they are built. Fascinating as architectural history and social history.

3. Cordelia’s Honor (or any book) by science fiction/fantasy writer, Lois McMaster Bujold.


**Review:** Anna Pigeon, national park ranger, conquers her claustrophobia and goes underground in Lechuguilla Caverns (near Carlsbad) in New Mexico. Part of a fun series of mysteries set in national parks all over the country.

5. Bootlegger’s Daughter by Margaret Maron

**Review:** First in mystery series set in North Carolina, featuring Deborah Knott, attorney (later judge) and daughter of an infamous North Carolina bootlegger. The audio book versions read by C.J. Critt are great!

-----------------------------

Maryanne Mills, Librarian

1. The Source by James Michener  PS 3525 .I19 S58 1967

**Review:** A present day archaeological dig (1960s) in Israel reveals a different generation with each artifact unearthed. The reader is transported back in time and introduced to the people, religion and society that existed. If you are a history buff, you will enjoy this novel.

2. Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry  PS 3563 .A319 L6 1986
