

CBHS Pre-10th grade Summer 2008 Reading Choices

Title & Author	Genre / Type	Summary / Book Review Quote....	Topic & Expedition Connections	Challenge Level
*Nightfather by Carl Freidman	Personal History	Deceptively simple and astonishingly complex, <i>Nightfather</i> is a story narrated by the child of a survivor. Graceful in its simplicity this tale explores how difficult it is to get rid of the traces of evil once a deed has been done. The experience of Carl and her two brothers demonstrates that some of Hitler's victims were born in the wake of the Holocaust.	<i>Holocaust</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Very short and not hard to read</i>
*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood by Marjane Satrapi	Graphic novel, Memoir	<i>Persepolis</i> is Marjane Satrapi's wise, funny, and heartbreaking memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq.	<i>Middle East</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Pictures make it easy to read but it is sometimes complicated</i>
Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston & James D. Houston	True story	This is a true story of one spirited Japanese American family's attempt to survive the indignities of forced detention... and of a native-born American child who discovered what it was like to grow up behind barbed wire in the United States. A beautiful and very personal story...	<i>Japanese Internment</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Not too hard</i>
*True Notebooks by Mark Salzman	True story	A gifted writer turned volunteer teacher applies his lucid prose style to the killers at Central Juvenile Hall. Salzman encourages the boys to write their own stories. This forces these violent kids--most are in for murder--to locate other, better selves. One boy writes what it's like "when a .45-caliber bullet at high speed hits a tomato."	<i>Prison life, violence, gangs</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Not hard to read.</i> <i>Some graphic language and topics.</i>
*Dust Tracks on the Road by Zora Neale Hurston	Autobiography	"First published in 1942 at the height of her popularity, <i>this</i> is Zora Neale Hurston's candid, funny, bold, and poignant autobiography, an imaginative and exuberant account of her rise from childhood poverty in the rural South to a prominent place among the leading artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. As compelling as her acclaimed fiction, Hurston's very personal literary self-portrait offers a revealing, often audacious glimpse into the life -- public and private -- of an extraordinary artist, anthropologist, chronicler, and champion of the black experience in America.	<i>African American experience</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Very challenging to read.</i>
His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker by John P. Parker	Autobiography	"John Parker was born a slave in Virginia but managed to buy his freedom. He hated the injustice of slavery, and so for about 20 years before the Civil War devoted his life to the dangerous work of helping other blacks escape to freedom. This is one of only a few accounts of a black American's fight against slavery in his own words. Unpublished for nearly a century, it brings to life the American frontier of the mid-18th century."	<i>Underground Railroad</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Very challenging to read</i>
Hidden Roots by Joseph Bruchac	Novel	Small for his 11 years and the last picked for playground games, Harold doesn't much care that he's friendless. His mother is also a loner; his father works at the paper mill and everything about his job makes him angry. Life is hard in this upstate New York town during the early 1960s. Harold knows that his family has secrets; some are too threatening to make sense of while his mother tries to hide others. Uncle Louis visits mostly while his father is at work, showing Harold the wonders of this Adirondack wilderness. Bruchac's story takes its roots in the 1930s Native American sterilization program known as the Vermont Eugenics Program. This chilling reality haunted the Abenaki people, threatened their annihilation, and drove them into hiding for three decades.	<i>Native American studies</i> <i>Hidden Histories, When Worlds Collide</i>	<i>Not too hard to read</i>
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie	Novel	"Arnold Spirit, a goofy-looking dork with a decent jumpshot, spends his time lamenting life on the "poor-ass" Spokane Indian reservation, drawing cartoons (which accompany, and often provide more insight than, the narrative), and, along with his aptly named pal Rowdy, laughing those laughs over anything and nothing that affix best friends so intricately together. When a teacher pleads with Arnold to want more, to escape the hopelessness of the rez, Arnold switches to a rich white school and immediately becomes as much an outcast in his own community as he is a curiosity in his new one. He weathers the typical teenage indignations and triumphs like a champ but soon faces far more trying ordeals as his home life begins to crumble and decay amidst the suffocating mire of alcoholism on the reservation."	<i>Native American studies</i> <i>Hidden Histories, When Worlds Collide</i>	<i>Says it is for grades 7 - 10</i>

<p>Code Talker: A Novel about the Navajo Marines of World War Two by Joseph Bruchac</p>	<p>Novel</p>	<p>“Six-year-old Ned Begay leaves his Navajo home for boarding school, where he learns the English language and American ways. At 16, he enlists in the U.S. Marines during World War II and is trained as a code talker, using his native language to radio battlefield information and commands in a code that was kept secret until 1969. Rooted in his Navajo consciousness and traditions even in dealing with fear, loneliness, and the horrors of the battlefield, Ned tells of his experiences in Hawaii, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.”</p>	<p>War, Native American studies</p> <p>Hidden Histories, When Worlds Collide</p>	<p>Short novel</p> <p>Easy to get through</p>
<p>A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah</p>	<p>Memoir</p>	<p>This gripping story by a children's-rights advocate recounts his experiences as a boy growing up in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, during one of the most brutal and violent civil wars in recent history. Beah, a boy equally thrilled by causing mischief as by memorizing passages from Shakespeare and dance moves from hip-hop videos, was a typical precocious 12-year-old. But rebel forces destroyed his childhood innocence when they hit his village, driving him to leave his home and travel the arid deserts and jungles of Africa. After several months of struggle, he was recruited by the national army, made a full soldier and learned to shoot an AK-47, and hated everyone who came up against the rebels. Told in a conversational, accessible style, this powerful record of war ends as a beacon to all teens experiencing violence around them by showing them that there are other ways to survive than by adding to the chaos.</p>	<p>War</p> <p>When Worlds Collide, Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Challenging</p> <p>Includes graphic and disturbing true stories</p>
<p>Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut</p>	<p>Science Fiction Novel</p>	<p>Kurt Vonnegut's absurdist classic Slaughterhouse-Five introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden.</p>	<p>War</p> <p>Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Easy to read but challenging to understand</p>
<p>19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East by Naomi Shihab Nye</p>	<p>Poetry</p>	<p>“These sixty poems describe the warm details of Middle Eastern family life, which endure despite the region’s political division, and recount the conflicted experiences of Arab Americans growing up in the United States. Published within a year of the September 11th terrorist attacks—an event acknowledged in the author’s introduction and the volume’s first poem—the book makes a poignant plea for peace and healing”</p>	<p>Arab American experience</p> <p>Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Easy to read but challenging to understand</p>
<p>*The Book Thief by Markus Zusak</p>	<p>Novel</p>	<p>Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood of tough kids, acid-tongued mothers, and loving fathers who earn their living by the work of their hands. The child arrives having just stolen her first book—although she has not yet learned how to read—and her foster father uses it to lull her to sleep when shes roused by regular nightmares about her younger brothers death. Liesel collects more stolen books as well as a peculiar set of friends: the boy Rudy, the Jewish refugee Max, the mayors reclusive wife, and especially her foster parents.</p>	<p>Holocaust</p> <p>Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Challenging but really worth it</p>
<p>American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang</p>	<p>Graphic Novel</p>	<p>Indie graphic novelist Gene Yang's intelligent and emotionally challenging American Born Chinese is made up of three individual plotlines: the determined efforts of the Chinese folk hero Monkey King to shed his humble roots and be revered as a god; the struggles faced by Jin Wang, a lonely Asian American middle school student who would do anything to fit in with his white classmates; and the sitcom plight of Danny, an All-American teen so shamed by his Chinese cousin Chin-Kee (a purposefully painful ethnic stereotype) that he is forced to change schools. Each story works well on its own, but Yang engineers a clever convergence of these parallel tales into a powerful climax that destroys the hateful stereotype of Chin-Kee, while leaving both Jin Wang and the Monkey King satisfied and happy to be who they are.</p>	<p>Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Easy and entertaining to read</p>
<p>*The History of Love by Nicole Krauss</p>	<p>Novel</p>	<p>Leo Gursky is a retired locksmith who immigrates to New York after escaping SS officers in his native Poland, only to spend the last stage of his life terrified that no one will notice when he dies. Fourteen-year-old Alma Singer vacillates between wanting to memorialize her dead father and finding a way to lift her mother's veil of depression. At the same time, she's trying to save her brother Bird, who is convinced he may be the Messiah, from becoming a 10-year-old social pariah. As the connection between Leo and Alma is slowly unmasked, the desperation, along with the potential for salvation, of this unique pair is also revealed.</p>	<p>World War II</p> <p>Hidden Histories</p>	<p>Challenging</p>

<i>Daniel Half Human : And the Good Nazi</i> by David Chotjewitz		In June 1945, a U.S. soldier working as an interpreter for the Royal British Army visits the ruins of his childhood neighborhood in Hamburg and reflects on the events that changed his life forever. The author skillfully alternates between the protagonist's brief, first-person descriptions of his return to Germany and lengthier, third-person narratives of his life before Kristallnacht, the turning point that convinced his father to flee his homeland at last. The book's intense final scene is a fitting culmination to its exploration of the choice between official duty and loyalty to one's friends"	<i>Holocaust</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Not too hard and very engaging to read</i>
*Into the Arms of Strangers: The Stories of the Kindertransport by Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer	Non-fiction	"For nine months prior to World War II, Britain conducted an extraordinary rescue mission, opening its doors to 10,000 children at risk from the Nazi regime—ninety percent of them Jewish—from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Told in the words of the survivors, these are their stories"	<i>Holocaust</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Not too hard</i>
Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedel Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin by Susan Goldman Rubin	Picture book	"In December of 1942, during World War II, Friedel Dicker-Brandeis, a Bauhaus trained designer and artist, packed her bags for the last time, being forced to move to the Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. Once in Terezin, she used her art supplies and her training to bring a world of beauty and fantasy to hundreds of children. Filled with photographs and reproductions of the astonishing art work created by Friedel, her colleagues, and her students at Terezin, this book is a testament to the power of art to sustain hope" (Holiday House Books.)	<i>Holocaust</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Beautiful images.</i>
<i>The Poisonwood Bible</i> by Barbara Kingsolver	Novel	n this risky but resoundingly successful novel, Kingsolver leaves the Southwest, the setting of most of her work (The Bean Trees; Animal Dreams) and follows an evangelical Baptist minister's family to the Congo in the late 1950s, entwining their fate with that of the country during three turbulent decades. Nathan Price's determination to convert the natives of the Congo to Christianity is, we gradually discover, both foolhardy and dangerous, unsanctioned by the church administration and doomed from the start by Nathan's self-righteousness.	<i>When Worlds Collide</i>	<i>Very Challenging</i>
<i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i> by Julia Alvarez	Novel	This sensitive story of four sisters who must adjust to life in America after having to flee from the Dominican Republic is told through a series of episodes beginning in adulthood, when their lives have been shaped by U. S. mores, and moving backwards to their wealthy childhood on the island. Adapting to American life is difficult and causes embarrassment when friends meet their parents, anger as they are bullied and called "spics," and identity confusion following summer trips to the family compound in the Dominican Republic.	<i>Immigration</i> <i>Hidden Histories</i>	<i>Not too challenging.</i> <i>A fast and entertaining book.</i>
<i>Secrets in the Fire</i> by Henning Mankell	Novel	Running with her sister in the fields near their village in Mozambique, southern Africa, Sofia steps on a landmine. She loses both her legs, and her sister dies. Swedish writer Mankell, recognized for his adult mysteries, knows the real Sofia and her country, and his novel, originally published in Sweden and translated here with simple clarity, dramatizes the landmine horror, especially its devastating toll on children. With the help of a dedicated doctor, a priest, and hospital caregivers, Sofia is fitted with two artificial legs and learns to walk again.	<i>War</i> <i>When Worlds Collide</i>	<i>Quick and compelling!</i>
<i>Good Omens</i> by Neil Gaiman & Terry Pratchett	Sci-Fi Novel	This zany tale of the bungling of Armageddon features an angel, a demon, an 11-year-old Antichrist and a doomsaying witch; unmistakably British humor is in abundance.	<i>Coming of Age</i>	<i>Challenging</i>