

Synopses of Book Club Options

***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie**

Grades 11 & 12

Sponsored by: Mrs. Lauber

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: "Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live."

***At the End of the Santa Fe Trail* by Sister Blandina Segale**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mr. Kovacic and S. Teresa

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "*At the End of the Santa Fe Trail* is Sister Blandina Segale's account of her life in the southwestern U.S. from 1872 to 1892. Sister Blandina (1850-1941), born in Italy and emigrating with her family to Cincinnati when she was a child, worked with the poor, the sick, immigrants, prisoners, and Native Americans while in Trinidad, Colorado, and in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico (and later in Ohio). The book is based in large part on her journal and on the letters she exchanged with her sister Justina, who was also a religious sister in Ohio. At a time when lawlessness and brutality were the norm, Sister Blandina displayed courage, tough-mindedness, and a deep religious faith in service to the less-fortunate."

***Calling Me Home* by Julie Kibler**

Grades 11 & 12

Sponsored by: Mrs. Samoya

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "Eighty-nine-year-old Isabelle McAllister has a favor to ask her hairdresser Dorrie Curtis. It's a big one. Isabelle wants Dorrie, a black single mom in her thirties, to drop everything to drive Isabelle from her home in Arlington, Texas, to a funeral in Cincinnati. With no clear explanation why. Tomorrow. Curious whether she can unlock the secrets of Isabelle's guarded past, she agrees, not knowing it will be a journey that changes both their lives... Isabelle confesses that, as a willful teen in 1930s Kentucky, she fell deeply in love with Robert Prewitt, a would-be doctor and the black son of her family's housekeeper—in a town where blacks weren't allowed after dark. The tale of their forbidden relationship and its tragic consequences makes it clear Dorrie and Isabelle are headed for a gathering of the utmost importance and that the history of Isabelle's first and greatest love just might help Dorrie find her own way."

***The Choice: A Surprising New Message of Hope* by Og Mandino**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Ms. Paff

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "Choice! The key is *Choice*. You have options. You need not spend your life wallowing in failure, ignorance, grief, poverty, shame, and self-pity. But, hold on! If this is true then why have so many among us apparently elected to live in that manner? The answer is obvious. Those who live in unhappy failure have never exercised their options for a better way of life because they have never been aware that they had any *Choices!*"

***Clara and Mr. Tiffany* by Susan Vreeland**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Metz

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "It's 1893, and at the Chicago World's Fair, Louis Comfort Tiffany makes his debut with a luminous exhibition of innovative stained-glass windows that he hopes will earn him a place on the international artistic stage. But behind the scenes in his New York studio is the freethinking Clara Driscoll, head of his women's division, who conceives of and designs nearly all of the iconic leaded-glass lamps for which Tiffany will long be remembered. Never publicly acknowledged, Clara struggles with her desire for artistic recognition and the seemingly insurmountable challenges that she faces as a professional woman. She also yearns for love and companionship, and is devoted in different ways to five men, including Tiffany, who enforces a strict policy: He does not employ married women. Ultimately, Clara must decide what makes her happiest—the professional world of her hands or the personal world of her heart."

**Students who select this book are encouraged to view the Cincinnati Art Museum exhibit, "Tiffany Glass: Painting with Color and Light," on their own or via a summer field trip with Mrs. Metz.

***The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* by Erik Larson**

Grades 11 & 12

Sponsored by: Mr. Kellerman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "Erik Larson intertwines the true tale of the 1893 World's Fair and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Erik Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction."

***The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom**

Grades 9 & 10

Sponsored by: Ms. Brauch

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Ms. Brauch: A man dies after a lifetime of feeling worthless. It isn't until after his death that he learns the true meaning of his life.

***The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College* by Jacques Steinberg**

Grades 11 & 12

Sponsored by: Mr. Brauch

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Mr. Brauch: A *New York Times* reporter follows a college admissions officer for a year in order to give an inside look at the college admissions process.

**Students who select this book *may* have the option to participate in a "college tour" field trip with Mr. Brauch.

***Girl, Stolen* by April Henry**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mr. Wurzelbacher and Mr. Zerhusen

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: "Sixteen year-old Cheyenne Wilder is sleeping in the back of a car while her mom fills her prescription at the pharmacy. Before Cheyenne realizes what's happening, their car is being stolen--with her inside! Griffin hadn't meant to kidnap Cheyenne, all he needed to do was steal a car for the others. But once Griffin's dad finds out that Cheyenne's father is the president of a powerful

corporation, everything changes—now there's a reason to keep her. What Griffin doesn't know is that Cheyenne is not only sick with pneumonia, she is blind. How will Cheyenne survive this nightmare, and if she does, at what price?"

***Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Parts I and II* by J.K. Rowling**

Grades 9 & 10

Sponsored by: Mrs. Hinker and Ms. Schwarz

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: "It was always difficult being Harry Potter and it isn't much easier now that he is an overworked employee of the Ministry of Magic, a husband and father of three school-age children. While Harry grapples with a past that refuses to stay where it belongs, his youngest son Albus must struggle with the weight of a family legacy he never wanted. As past and present fuse ominously, both father and son learn the uncomfortable truth: sometimes, darkness comes from unexpected places."

***Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Social Studies Department

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: "Starting in World War II and moving through to the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and the Space Race, *Hidden Figures* follows the interwoven accounts of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Christine Darden, four African American women who participated in some of NASA's greatest successes. It chronicles their careers over nearly three decades they faced challenges, forged alliances and used their intellect to change their own lives, and their country's future."

***A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Childers and Ms. Schlosser

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from the cover of the book: "At first sight Ove is almost certainly the grumpiest man you will ever meet, a curmudgeon with staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. Ove's well-ordered, solitary world gets a shake-up one November morning with the appearance of new neighbors, a chatty young couple and their two boisterous daughters, who announce their arrival by accidentally flattening Ove's mailbox with their U-Haul."

***The Martian* by Andy Wier**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mr. Laiveling

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Mr. Laiveling: Stranded and left for dead on Mars, botanist Mark Watney must figure out how to survive while a rescue mission is put together. This race against time puts a premium on scientific accuracy and real-to-life possibilities for survival on a foreign planet.

***Night* by Elie Wiesel**

Grades 9 & 10

Sponsored by: Mrs. Rider

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: "*Night* is Elie Wiesel's masterpiece, a candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps... *Night* offers much more than a litany of the daily terrors, everyday perversions, and rampant sadism at Auschwitz and Buchenwald; it also eloquently addresses many of the philosophical as well as personal questions

implicit in any serious consideration of what the Holocaust was, what it meant, and what its legacy is and will be.”

***Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* by Rachel Simmons**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Academic Advising Department

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: “When *Odd Girl Out* was first published, it ignited a long-overdue conversation about the hidden culture of female bullying. Today the dirty looks, taunting notes and social exclusion that plague girls' friendships have gained new momentum in cyberspace. In this revised and updated edition, educator and bullying expert Rachel Simmons gives girls, parents and educators proven and innovative strategies for navigating social dynamics online, as well as brand new classroom initiatives and step-by-step parental suggestions for dealing with conventional bullying. Including the latest research and real-life stories, *Odd Girl Out* continues to be the definitive resource on the most pressing social issues facing girls today.”

***Our Lady of Kibeho: Mary Speaks to the World from the Heart of Africa* by Immaculee Ilibagiza**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Corey

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: “Thirteen years before the bloody 1994 genocide that swept across Rwanda and left more than a million people dead, the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ appeared to eight young people in the remote village of Kibeho. Through these visionaries, Mary and Jesus warned of the looming holocaust, which (they assured) could be averted if Rwandans opened their hearts to God and embraced His love... The prophetic and apocalyptic warnings tragically came true during 100 horrifying days of savage bloodletting and mass murder. Much like what happened at similar sites such as Fatima and Lourdes, the messengers of Kibeho were at first mocked and disbelieved. But as miracle after miracle occurred in the tiny village, tens of thousands of Rwandans journeyed to Kibeho to behold the apparitions. After the genocide, and two decades of rigorous investigation, Our Lady of Kibeho became the first and only Vatican-approved Marian (related to the Virgin Mary) site in all of Africa. But the story still remained largely unknown. Now, however, Immaculee Ilibagiza has changed all that. She has made many pilgrimages to Kibeho, both before and after the holocaust, has personally witnessed true miracles, and has spoken with a number of the visionaries themselves. What she has discovered will deeply touch your heart!”

***Second Glance* by Jodi Picoult**

Grades 9 & 10

Sponsored by: Mrs. Vanover

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: “One day in Vermont, an old man puts a piece of land up for sale and unintentionally raises protest from the local Abenaki Indian tribe, who insist it’s a burial ground. When odd, supernatural events plague the town of Comtosook, a ghost hunter is hired by the developer to help convince the residents that there's nothing spiritual about the property. Enter Ross Wakeman, a suicidal drifter who has put himself in mortal danger time and again after his fiancée’s death in a car crash eight years ago. Ross now lives only for the moment he might once again encounter the woman he loves. But in Comtosook, the only discovery Ross can lay claim to is that of Lia Beaumont, a skittish, mysterious woman who, like Ross, is on a search for something beyond the boundary separating life and death. Thus begins Jodi Picoult's enthralling and ultimately astonishing story of love, fate, and a crime of passion.”

***Secrets of a Charmed Lime* by Susan Meissner**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Doll & Mrs. Ritter

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: “*Current day, Oxford, England.* Young American scholar Kendra Van Zant, eager to pursue her vision of a perfect life, interviews Isabel McFarland just when the elderly woman is ready to give up secrets about the war that she has kept for decades...beginning with who she really is. What Kendra receives from Isabel is both a gift and a burden—one that will test her convictions and her heart. *1940s, England.* As Hitler wages an unprecedented war against London’s civilian population, hundreds of thousands of children are evacuated to foster homes in the rural countryside. But even as fifteen-year-old Emmy Downtree and her much younger sister Julia find refuge in a charming Cotswold cottage, Emmy’s burning ambition to return to the city and apprentice with a fashion designer pits her against Julia’s profound need for her sister’s presence. Acting at cross purposes just as the Luftwaffe rains down its terrible destruction, the sisters are cruelly separated, and their lives are transformed...”

***The Secrets of the Night Sky: Most Amazing Things in the Universe You Can See with the Naked Eye* by Bob Berman**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Jett

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: “From blue moons to Betelgeuse, it's all in this witty, fact-packed, profusely illustrated guide to the heavens by the author of *Discover* magazine's popular ‘Night Watchman’ column.”

***We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart**

All Grade Levels

Sponsored by: Mrs. Brookbank

Reading Level: Easy

Synopsis from Amazon: “A beautiful and distinguished family. A private island. A brilliant, damaged girl; a passionate, political boy. A group of four friends—the Liars—whose friendship turns destructive. A revolution. An accident. A secret. Lies upon lies. True love. The truth.”

***Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed**

Grades 11 & 12

Sponsored by: Mrs. Johnson

Reading Level: Intermediate

Synopsis from Amazon: “At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother’s death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone. Told with suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* powerfully captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her.”