Mill Hill School

CHRISTMAS BOOKCASE

Staff Recommended Reading

December 2013

Full details can be found on www.millhill.org.uk
The First Law Trilogy
By Joe Abercrombie
HHhH
By Laurent Binet
At Home - A Short History Of Private Life
By Bill Bryson
Travels Into Bokhara
By Sir Alexander Burnes
Quiet: The Power Of Introverts
By Susan Cain
In A World That Can’t Stop Talking
By Tom Chesshyre
A Tourist In The Arab Spring
By Anne De Courcy
Debs At War
By Peter Dicken
Global Shift
By Geoff Dyer
Apple Tree Yard
By Louise Doughty
But Beautiful
By Elanor Dymott
Every Contact Leaves A Trace
By Ben Elton
Two Brothers
Sports Gene: What Makes The Perfect Athlete
By David Epstein
Camo Agua Para Chocolate
By Laura Esquivel
How The Girl Guides Won The War
By Janie Hampton
All Hell Let Loose
By Max Hastings
The Sun Also Rises
By Ernest Hemingway
Book Of Negroes
By Lawrence Hill
May We Be Forgiven
By A M Homes
The Unlikely Pilgrimage Of Harold Fry
By Rachel Joyce
Night Jasmine Man
By David Lambkin
Making It Happen: Fred Goodwin
By Ian Martin
The Road
By Cormac McCarthy
Spinfluence
By Nick McFarlane
Sweet Tooth
By Ian McKewan
Kafka On The Shore
By Hanuki Muralmin
The Girl You Left Behind
By Jojo Moyes
The Buddha In The Attic
By Julie Otsuka
Shantaram
By Gregory David Roberts
Red Mars
By Kim Stanley Robinson
The Sea Change
By Joanna Rosititer
Seasons In The Sun
By Dominic Sandbrook
Command And Control
By Eric Schlosser
Sisterland
By Curtis Sittenfeld
The Grapes Of Wrath
By John Steinbeck
Of Mice And Men
By John Steinbeck
The Eleventh Day
By Anthony Summers And Robbyn Swan
A Secret History
By Donna Tartt
The Goldfinch
By Donna Tartt
Dark Star Safari
By Paul Theroux
Mondo Enduro
By Austin Vince
The Submission
By Amy Waldman
Stoner
By John Williams
Lying On The Couch: A Novel
By Irvin D.Yalom
My Dear I Wanted To Tell You
By Louisa Young
The First Law Trilogy
By Joe Abercrombie
Recommended By:-
Mr M.E. Jennings

If you like Game of Thrones then this is likely to appeal. A variety of characters are followed in this vivid epic fantasy series, they are complex, often gritty personalities, struggling with their purpose in life. Action and betrayal in abundance; the type of book that is highly addictive and very difficult to put down.

Synopsis
The First Law Trilogy is a fantasy masterpiece, now available in a stunning box set. It's a perfect gift for fans of A Game Of Thrones; a must-have for fans of Joe Abercrombie; and a great way for new readers to discover one of the most highly acclaimed fantasy trilogies of the past decade.

HHhH
By Laurent Binet
Recommended By:-
Mr M. Bardou

This is a highly engaging and original novel telling the story of the assassination of the Nazi criminal Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. Not only is the account of the assassination utterly gripping, but the author includes personal details of how he researched the book and he explores the extent to which the boundaries between fiction and reality are often blurred in a historical novel.

Synopsis
Two men have been enlisted to kill the head of the Gestapo. This is Operation Anthropoid, Prague, 1942: two Czechoslovakian parachutists sent on a daring mission by London to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich - chief of the Nazi secret services, 'the hangman of Prague', 'the blond beast', 'the most dangerous man in the Third Reich'. His boss is Heinrich Himmler but everyone in the SS says 'Himmler's brain is called Heydrich', which in German spells HHhH.

All the characters in HHhH are real. All the events depicted are true. But alongside the nerve-shredding preparations for the attack runs another story: when you are a novelist writing about real people, how do you resist the temptation to make things up? HHhH is a panorama of the Third Reich told through the life of one outstandingly brutal man, a story of unbearable heroism and loyalty, revenge and betrayal. It is improbably entertaining and electrifyingly modern, a moving and shattering work of fiction.
At Home - A Short History Of Private Life

Recommended By:-

Mr D.R. Woodrow

By Bill Bryson

A book which does not need to be read in its entirety but one you can return to over and over again. Just open at any page and start reading…

Synopsis

What does history really consist of? Centuries of people quietly going about their daily business - sleeping, eating, having sex, endeavouring to get comfortable. And where did all these normal activities take place? At home.

This was the thought that inspired Bill Bryson to start a journey around the rooms of his own house, an 1851 Norfolk rectory, to consider how the ordinary things in life came to be. And what he discovered are surprising connections to anything from the Crystal Palace to the Eiffel Tower, from scurvy to body-snatching, from bedbugs to the Industrial Revolution, and just about everything else that has ever happened, resulting in one of the most entertaining and illuminating books ever written about the history of the way we live.

Travels Into Bokhara: A Voyage Up The Indus To Lahore

Recommended By:-

Mr S. Ali

By Sir Alexander Burnes

In 1831 Captain Alexander Burnes began his journey as the first European to sail up the Indus River. His official story was that he was responsible for delivering a gift of horses to the royal court in Lahore on behalf of King William IV. In actual fact, he was a spy and a key player in ‘The Great Game’. Burnes's journeys were truly groundbreaking and his account, whilst occasionally banal and self-serving in places, contains many extraordinary episodes. On the one hand an adventure story, the narrative also provides insight into the tribal and geopolitical complexities of this region which persist to this day.

Synopsis

Alexander Burnes travelled up the Indus to Lahore and to the Khanates of Afghanistan and Central Asia in the 1830s, spying on behalf of the British Government in what was to become known as the 'Great Game'. His account of these travels was a bestseller in its day and this brand new edition brings the heady sense of excitement, risk and zeal bursting from the pages.
In *Quiet*, the international best seller, Susan Cain shows how the brain chemistry of introverts and extroverts differs, and how society misunderstands and undervalues introverts. She gives introverts the tools to better understand themselves and take full advantage of their strengths. Passionately argued, superbly researched, and filled with real stories, *Quiet* will permanently change how we see introverts - and how you see yourself.

**Synopsis**

Our lives are driven by a fact that most of us can't name and don't understand. It defines who our friends and lovers are, which careers we choose, and whether we blush when we're embarrassed.

The introvert/extrovert divide is the most fundamental dimension of personality. And at least a third of us are on the introverted side. Some of the world's most talented people are introverts. Without them we wouldn't have the Apple computer, the theory of relativity and Van Gogh's sunflowers.

Yet extroverts have taken over. Shyness, sensitivity and seriousness are often seen as being negative. Introverts feel reproached for being the way they are.

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**A Tourist In The Arab Spring**

*By Tom Chesshyre*

Travel writer and journalist Tom Chesshyre goes on a journey through Tunisia, Egypt and Libya one year after Mohamed Bouazizi martyred himself, triggering off the first uprisings which led to the fall of three Presidents in quick succession. The book offers an illuminating insight into a rapidly changing world thanks to the author's candid style, his authoritative knowledge of the region and the fascinating discussions with the people that he meets along the way.

**Synopsis**

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, war reporters rushed to publish accounts of the uprising. Tom Chesshyre took a different approach - he jumped on a plane and became the first to return to the region as a tourist. The result is the fascinating, street-level tale of a lay traveller's journey through lands fresh from revolution. Chesshyre heads for tourist sites that few have seen in recent years, as well as new 'attractions' like Gaddafi's bombed-out bunker in Tripoli. In a book both touching and humorous, he also describes being abducted in Libya, listening to the sound of Kalashnikovs at night and talking to ordinary people struggling to get by. Extract from the introduction... 'I was travelling as a tourist, not as a foreign correspondent with a well-thumbed contacts book and a series of appointments. I would take the temperature of the region during a key period in its history - as a casual visitor. I would see what there was to see as a traveller with a guidebook. Yet by talking to people along the way, I'd get a sense of the bigger picture. That was my hope, at least. Being a tourist
would be my way of unlocking the countries. I would take in the wonderful Byzantine ruins of Tunisia, the famous Roman remains in Libya, and the treasures of the pharaohs in Egypt, plus some lovely beaches in the Sinai Peninsula. What would I find out about the Arab Spring as I pottered among the ancient sights? What does an Arab Spring feel like?

Debs At War 1939 -1945

By Anne De Courcy

Recommended By:- Ms P. Wright

I am really enjoying Debs At War (1939 -1945) it is an amazing insight to an upper class world where children and their parents lived apart and the interesting thing is that it wasn’t that long ago. The incredible wealth and privilege are fascinating to read about.

Synopsis

Pre-war debutantes were members of the most protected, not to say isolated, stratum of 20th-century society: the young (17-20) unmarried daughters of the British upper classes. For most of them, the war changed all that for ever. It meant independence and the shock of the new, and daily exposure to customs and attitudes that must have seemed completely alien to them. For many, the almost military regime of an upper class childhood meant they were well suited for the no-nonsense approach needed in wartime. This book records the extraordinary diversity of challenges, shocks and responsibilities they faced - as chauffeurs, couriers, ambulance-drivers, nurses, pilots, spies, decoders, factory workers, farmers, land girls, as well as in the Women's Services. How much did class barriers really come down? Did they stick with their own sort? And what about fun and love in wartime - did love cross the class barriers?

Global Shift

By Peter Dicken

Recommended By:- Mr J. Orme

It explains the geographic forces which are changing the global economy and provides a fascinating insight into the future economic landscape.

Synopsis

This sixth edition of Global Shift has been completely revised and updated using the latest available sources. Each chapter has been extensively rewritten and new chapters introduced to take account of recent empirical developments, new ideas on production, distribution, and consumption in the global economy and the implications of the global financial crisis. This now standard work on economic globalization provides:

The extensive use of graphics, lack of jargon and clear definition of terms, makes Global Shift the key resource on economic globalization in the social science literature.
Apple Tree Yard
*Recommended By:* Ms. S. Isaacs

**Synopsis**
Yvonne Carmichael has worked hard to achieve the life she always wanted: a high-flying career in genetics, a beautiful home, a good relationship with her husband and their two grown-up children. Then one day she meets a stranger at the Houses of Parliament and, on impulse, begins a passionate affair with him – a decision that will put everything she values at risk……..

But Beautiful
*Recommended By:* Mr. P. R. Lawson

This short book was bought for me by Philip Thonemann. It consists of eight vignettes about jazz luminaries, mostly from the golden, mid-century period, such as Charles Mingus and Thelonius Monk. The stories are fictional, but authentic detail is suffused right through them. The beleaguered and troubled lives of these men are wonderfully evoked. The landscape of their suffering is depicted as bonded with their art. Dyer’s writing is simultaneously stylish and earthy.

Every Contact Leaves A Trace
*Recommended By:* Mr. A. T. W. Frazer

A beautifully written, thoroughly involving novel about a solitary lawyer investigating his wife’s murder, the roots of which are to be found in their undergraduate years at an Oxford college.

**Synopsis**
Alex is a solitary London lawyer who is deeply in love with his beautiful wife, Rachel. When Rachel is brutally murdered one Midsummer Night in Oxford, all of his happiness vanishes. Shrouded in shock and grief, he returns to Oxford that winter and
begins to try to piece together the mystery surrounding Rachel's death, discovering in her wake a tangled web of sex and jealousy, of would-be lovers and spiteful friends, of blackmail, and of revenge.

**Two Brothers**

*Recommended By:* Mrs. J. Sanchez

Set in Pre WWII in Nazi Germany, this is an easy read that draws you into the characters, and gives you empathy with their plight. A humane story set with a Historical content.

**Synopsis**

Berlin 1920, Two babies are born. Two brothers. United and indivisible, sharing everything. Twins in all but blood.

As Germany marches into its Nazi Armageddon, the ties of family, friendship and love are tested to the very limits of endurance. And the brothers are faced with an unimaginable choice...Which one of them will survive?

Ben Elton's most personal novel to date, *Two Brothers* transports the reader to the time of history's darkest hour.

**Sports Gene: What Makes The Perfect Athlete**

*Recommended By:* Mr. A.T. Morton

If you enjoyed *Bounce: The Myth of Talent and the Power of Practice* then I'd recommend this book. By examining the role of genetics in sporting performance it directly challenges the 10,000 hour "rule" and considers the relative influence of nature and nurture in sporting success.

**Synopsis**

Is Usain Bolt a superhuman one-off? Are sports stars like Paula Radcliffe and Tiger Woods born or made? Could we all be Olympians if we trained hard enough? And is the answer to be found by looking at Alaskan huskies? In this ground-breaking and entertaining exploration of athletic success, award-winning writer David Epstein gets to the heart of the great nature vs. nurture debate, and explodes myths about why top sportsmen excel. Along the way Epstein exposes the flaws in the so-called 10,000-hour rule that states that rigorous practice from a young age is the only route to success. He shows why some skills that we imagine are innate are not - like the bullet-fast reactions of a baseball player - and why other characteristics that we assume are entirely voluntary, like an athlete's will to train, might in fact have important genetic components. Through on-the-ground reports at locations ranging from below the equator to above the Arctic Circle, revealing conversations with leading scientists and Olympic champions, and interviews with athletes who have rare genetic mutations or physical traits, Epstein forces us to rethink the very nature of sport.
I had seen the film a number of times but really wanted to sit down and force myself to read the original book in Spanish (used in A2 Spanish courses across the country as the literature option) about the trials and tribulations of a family of women in Mexico in the time of the Revolution (roughly at the same time as World War I). I enjoyed it very much and the aspect of the book for which it is famous – the use of food and recipes that ‘match’ and ‘complement’ the action going on as they are eaten – was especially enjoyable. My only disappointment was exactly the same as I have always had with the film: the central female character (Tita) is so strong and such a ‘heroine’ that the lead male character (Pedro) simply is not enough of a ‘hero’ to really deserve her and so the book’s conclusion left me a little flat.

Synopsis

Earthy, magical, and utterly charming, this tale of family life in turn-of-the-century Mexico became a best-selling phenomenon with its winning blend of poignant romance and bittersweet wit. The classic love story takes place on the De la Garza ranch, as the tyrannical owner, Mama Elena, chops onions at the kitchen table in her final days of pregnancy. While still in her mother's womb, her daughter to be weeps so violently she causes an early labour, and little Tita slips out amid the spices and fixings for noodle soup. This early encounter with food soon becomes a way of life, and Tita grows up to be a master chef. She shares special points of her favourite preparations with listeners throughout the story.

The Spanish language edition of the best-selling Like Water For Chocolate is a remarkable success in its own right. Now, in this mass market edition, thousands of new readers will be able to partake in the sumptuous, romantic, and hilarious tale of Tita, the terrific cook with an extra special something in her sauce.

It describes the roles that Girl Guides played in the Second World War (with some reference to the first). I hadn’t realised what responsible jobs they did and I found it fascinating.
Synopsis
A completely original history of one of the most extraordinary movements in the world -- the Girl Guides -- and how they helped win the war. The Girl Guides is one of the world's most extraordinary movements: millions of women have been members. But what have the Guides actually achieved, since they began 100 years ago? Do they do more than sell biscuits, sing around campfires, and tie knots? In this constantly surprising book, Janie Hampton shows that Girl Guides have been at the heart of women's equality since the early twentieth century - when they were garnering badges like Electrician and Telegraphist. Exploring modern-day girlhood through this very British institution's effect on global warfare, How the Girl Guides Won the War reveals, for the first time, the dramatic impact that the Guides had on the Second World War. When the Blitz broke out, they dug bomb shelters, grew vegetables and helped millions of evacuated children adjust to new lives in the country. Many were taken as prisoners of war and survived concentration camps. Told by the Guides themselves How the Girl Guides Won the War is packed with rich social history, fond and funny anecdotes, surprising archives, and the lingering taste of smoky tea in a tin mug. Providing a new slant on both the Guide movement, and World War II, Janie Hampton's remarkable book finally gives the Girl Guides the historical attention they deserve.

All Hell Let Loose

By Max Hastings

Recommended By:-
Mr A.T.W.Frazer

A broad, readable, deep and detailed history of the Second World War in all its theatres, with a focus on the wisdom of otherwise of writing strategy as well as a strong sense of how the lives of these at war were affected.

Synopsis
A magisterial history of the greatest and most terrible event in history, from one of the finest historians of the Second World War. A book which shows the impact of war upon hundreds of millions of people around the world- soldiers, sailors and airmen; housewives, farm workers and children.

Reflecting Max Hastings’s thirty-five years of research on World War II, All Hell Let Loose describes the course of events, but focuses chiefly upon human experience, which varied immensely from campaign to campaign, continent to continent.

The author emphasises the Russian front, where more than 90% of all German soldiers who perished met their fate. He argues that, while Hitler’s army often fought its battles brilliantly well, the Nazis conducted their war effort with ‘stunning incompetence’. He suggests that the Royal Navy and US Navy were their countries’ outstanding fighting services, while the industrial contribution of the United States was much more important to allied victory than that of the US Army.
The Sun Also Rises  
By Ernest Hemingway  
Recommended By: Mr N.J. Gregory

Takes you back to the early twentieth century and the apparently charmed lives of a group of wealthy Americans living in Paris – evocative of a totally different era and some very different perspectives on life. It was of particular interest to me because of the large part of the book dedicated to the running of the bulls in Pamplona in northern Spain. As the author himself did in real life, several of the characters also seemed to consume enormous quantities of alcohol during their social engagements and there were times reading it that I thought of Hunter S Thompson, even though the book is set in a very sophisticated Parisian context.

Synopsis
Paris in the twenties: Pernod, parties and expatriate Americans, loose-living on money from home. Jake is wildly in love with Brett Ashley, aristocratic and irresistibly beautiful, but with an abandoned, sensuous nature that she cannot change. When the couple drifts to Spain to the dazzle of the fiesta and the heady atmosphere of the bullfight, their affair is strained by new passions, new jealousies, and Jake must finally learn that he will never possess the woman he loves. Powerful, intense, visually magnificent, Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises is the novel which established Ernest Hemingway as a writer of genius.

Book Of Negroes  
By Lawrence Hill  
Recommended By: Ms S.Isaacs

Synopsis
Abducted from her West African village at the age of eleven and sold as a slave in the American South, Aminata Diallo thinks only of freedom - and of finding her way home again. After escaping the plantation, torn from her husband and child, she passes through Manhattan in the chaos of the Revolutionary War, is shipped to Nova Scotia, and then joins a group of freed slaves on a harrowing return odyssey to Africa.

May We Be Forgiven  
By A.M.Homes  
Recommended By: Mr D.T.Bingham

An unforgettable examination of modern American life in all its glory and despair. The dark humour pervading the novel makes some of the novel’s unpleasantness more bearable. Sprawling, but in the very best way.
Synopsis
Harry is a Richard Nixon scholar who leads a quiet, regular life; his brother George is a high-flying TV producer, with a murderous temper. They have been uneasy rivals since childhood. Then one day George loses control so extravagantly that he precipitates Harry into an entirely new life. In *May We Be Forgiven*, Homes gives us a darkly comic look at 21st century domestic life - at individual lives spiralling out of control, bound together by family and history. The cast of characters experience adultery, accidents, divorce, and death. But this is also a savage and dizzyingly inventive vision of contemporary America, whose dark heart Homes penetrates like no other writer - the strange jargons of its language, its passive aggressive institutions, its inhabitants' desperate craving for intimacy and their pushing it away with litigation, technology, paranoia. At the novel's heart are the spaces in between, where the modern family comes together to re-form itself. *May We Be Forgiven* explores contemporary orphans losing and finding themselves anew; and it speaks above all to the power of personal transformation - simultaneously terrifying and inspiring.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage Of Harold Fry
*By Rachel Joyce*

Recommended By:-

*Mr D.T.Bingham*

An incredibly if deceptively simple idea for a novel that manages to be moving, riveting and inspiring. Joyce has created an extraordinary fictional character.

Synopsis
When Harold Fry nips out one morning to post a letter, leaving his wife hoovering upstairs, he has no idea that he is about to walk from one end of the country to the other. He has no hiking boots or map, let alone a compass, waterproof or mobile phone. All he knows is that he must keep walking. To save someone else's life.

Night Jasmine Man
*By David Lambkin*

Recommended By:-

*Mr S.Dwyer*

Brilliant book that grips you from start to finish. Lambkin manages to mingle a bit of fantasy into the reality, making it a very easy read that captivates ones fantasy. Quite a harsh beginning but it sets the ruthless tone perfectly.
Synopsis

Acclaimed composer Richard Turnbull, grieving at his wife's slow descent into schizophrenia, is notified at this crisis point in his life that his daughter Pia has been murdered in East Africa. He travels to Kenya to investigate her death. His quest leads him to a beautiful island off the coast where he quickly becomes enmeshed in a nightmare world of hard drugs, ivory poaching and sexual intrigue. As the story moves rapidly to its apocalyptic climax, Turnbull clashes violently with the island's ruler, the charming but ruthless Sultan. On the surface a hard-paced thriller, *Night Jasmine Man* echoes with layer upon layer of meaning, built as it is on a bedrock of ancient myths. Orpheus and Eurydice are here, as is Theseus, and the Cretan myth of a bull-god risen from the sea. It is also shot through with reverence for the natural primal beauty of Africa - sun, sea, wind, elephant, buffalo, birds and fish. At once mystical and highly erotic, tender and sensuous, this compelling novel poses questions about the origin of good and evil and celebrates a passionate belief in the redeeming power of love.

**Making it Happen: Fred Goodwin, RBS and the Men Who Blew Up the British Economy**

*Recommended By:-*

Dr Dominic Luckett

A readable and intelligent analysis of the failures of RBS, government and regulators that led to the banking crisis. A cautionary tale that warns of the dangers of excessive corporate greed, individual ego and government complacency.

Synopsis

When RBS collapsed and had to be bailed out by the taxpayer in the financial crisis of October 2008 it played a leading role in tipping Britain into its deepest economic downturn in seven decades. The economy shrank, bank lending froze, hundreds of thousands lost their jobs, living standards are still falling and Britons will be paying higher taxes for decades to pay the clean-up bill. How on earth had a small Scottish bank grown so quickly to become a global financial giant that could do such immense damage when it collapsed? At the centre of the story was Fred Goodwin, the former chief executive known as "Fred the Shred" who terrorised some of his staff and beguiled others. Not a banker by training, he nonetheless was given control of RBS and set about trying to make it one of the biggest brands in the world. It was said confidently that computerisation and new banking products had made the world safer. Only they hadn't...Based on more than 80 interviews and with access to diaries and papers kept by those at the heart of the meltdown, this is the definitive account of the RBS disaster, a disaster which still casts such a shadow over our economy. In Making It Happen, senior executives, board members, Treasury insiders and regulators reveal how the bank's mania for expansion led it to take enormous risks its leaders didn't understand. From the birth of the Royal Bank in 18th century Scotland, to the manic expansion under Fred Goodwin in the middle of a mad boom and culminating in the epoch-defining collapse, Making It Happen is the full, extraordinary story.
The Road
Recommended By:-
Mr H. Webber

An excellently written book.

Synopsis
By the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2007, this is the story of a father and son walking alone through burned America, heading through the ravaged landscape to the coast. It has been hailed as the first great masterpiece of the globally warmed generation. Here is an American classic which, at a stroke, makes McCarthy a contender for the Nobel Prize for Literature . . .

Spinfluence
Recommended By:-
Miss V.C. Dempster

This is a very political book based on Nietzsche theory of the herd, full of quotes and very cool graphic diagrams makes complex issues really easy to understand. It’s really scary when you recognize a theory that is so relevant to your everyday life!

Synopsis
Spinfluence will appeal to crooked politicians, media manipulators and corporate bigwigs alike, in fact anyone interested in how to exploit people for profit or power. Covering fun techniques and tactics such as emotional hijacking, brainwashing and hysteria harnessing - Spinfluence is a glorious and insightful read about how to bend the truth and subvert the will of the herd.

Sweet Tooth
Recommended By:-
Ms E.M. Coyle

The tale of a young woman named Serena Frome and her time in the secret service during a very different era. McKewan gets the period detail just right and makes Serena an interesting and unpredictable character. Things are never quite what they seem and this is a book about writing and writers as much as it is a spy thriller. Highly recommended.
**Synopsis**
Serena Frome, the beautiful daughter of an Anglican bishop, has a brief affair with an older man during her final year at Cambridge, and finds herself being groomed for the intelligence services. The year is 1972. Britain, confronting economic disaster, is being torn apart by industrial unrest and terrorism and faces its fifth state of emergency. The Cold War has entered a moribund phase, but the fight goes on, especially in the cultural sphere.

Serena, a compulsive reader of novels, is sent on a 'secret mission' which brings her into the literary world of Tom Haley, a promising young writer. First she loves his stories, then, she begins to love the man. Can she maintain the fiction of her undercover life? And who is inventing whom? To answer these questions, Serena must abandon the first rule of espionage - trust no one.

McEwan's mastery dazzles us in this superbly deft and witty story of betrayal and intrigue, love, and the invented self.

**Kafka On The Shore**  
*By Haruki Murakami*  
*Recommended By:* Mr A.T.W.Frazer

Set in Japan and full of exotic cool. A 15-year-old boy runs away from his brutal father, looking for the sister and mother he cannot remember, and finding much more than he bargained for.

**Synopsis**
Kafka Tamura runs away from home at fifteen, under the shadow of his father's dark prophesy. The ageing Nakata, tracker of lost cats, who never recovered from a bizarre childhood affliction, finds his pleasantly simplified life suddenly turned upside down.

As their parallel odysseys unravel, cats converse with people; fish tumble from the sky; a ghost-like pimp deploys a Hegel-spouting girl of the night; a forest harbours soldiers apparently un-aged since World War II. There is a savage killing, but the identity of both victim and killer is a riddle - one of many which combine to create an elegant and dreamlike masterpiece.

**The Girl You Left Behind**  
*By Jojo Moyes*  
*Recommended By:* Ms.K.Thompson

It is about a portrait painted by a Frenchman just before the First World War, which subsequently turns up in modern times. The story switches between the war and the present day and I guess is a kind of detective story, dealing with people involved and their interaction with the portrait.
Synopsis
France, 1916. Sophie Lefevre must keep her family safe whilst her adored husband Edouard fights at the front. When she is ordered to serve the German officers who descend on her hotel each evening, her home becomes riven by fierce tensions. And from the moment the new Kommandant sets eyes on Sophie's portrait - painted by Edouard - a dangerous obsession is born, which will lead Sophie to make a dark and terrible decision.

Almost a century later, and Sophie's portrait hangs in the home of Liv Halston, a wedding gift from her young husband before he died. A chance encounter reveals the painting's true worth, and its troubled history. A history that is about to resurface and turn Liv's life upside down all over again . . .

In The Girl You Left Behind two young women, separated by a century, are united in their determination to fight for what they love most - whatever the cost.

The Buddha In The Attic
By Julie Otsuka

This incredible little book reveals the heartbreaking story of Japanese mail-order brides in America the 1930s. It is a harrowing story (at times) that is narrated beautifully and originally. Poetic and poignant, it is guaranteed to resonate on a literary and emotional level.

Synopsis
Between the first and second world wars a group of young, non-English-speaking Japanese women travelled by boat to America. They were picture brides, clutching photos of husbands-to-be whom they had yet to meet. Julie Otsuka tells their extraordinary, heartbreaking story in this spellbinding and poetic account of strangers lost and alone in a new and deeply foreign land.

Shantaram
By Gregory David Roberts

Shantaram is narrated by Lin who escapes from a maximum security prison in Australia and flees to the bustling city of Bombay. It is based on a true story and draws you in right from the very beginning. Gregory David Roberts writes superbly and his descriptions of Bombay make you feel as if you are there with Lin working at a medical clinic in one of the poorest slums, serving the Bombay Mafia and finding love and peace. The book is lengthy but it is a journey of discovery that keeps you captivated throughout.

Synopsis
In the early 80s, Gregory David Roberts, an armed robber and heroin addict, escaped from an Australian prison to India, where he lived in a Bombay slum. There, he established a free health clinic and also joined the mafia, working as a money launderer, forger and street soldier. He found time to learn Hindi and Marathi, fall in
love, and spend time being worked over in an Indian jail. Then, in case anyone
thought he was slacking, he acted in Bollywood and fought with the Mujahedeen in
Afghanistan . . . Amazingly, Roberts wrote *Shantaram* three times after prison guards
trashed the first two versions. It's a profound tribute to his willpower . . .

**Red Mars**
*By Kim Stanley Robinson*

*Recommended By:* Mr P.H.Thonemann

This is a remarkable, extended attempt to imagine how the
colonization of Mars might occur. It includes terra-forming of the
planet, and some other scientific stuff, combined with economic,
political, social, and psychological, aspects – all stitched into the form
of a novel. It is the first part of a trilogy.

**Synopsis**
The Future History of Mars - Part One - 1969: Neil Armstrong becomes the first man
to set foot on the Moon. 2020: John Boone becomes the first man to set foot on Mars.
2027: The first mass-landing arrives on Mars. It's the greatest challenge mankind has
ever faced. In 2027, the Ares, the biggest space-worthy craft ever built by man,
reaches high orbit around Mars. Inside is a crew who will become the first one
hundred people to land on the planet's surface.

Among them are the Russian team, led by the magnetic Maya Toitovna and radical
socialist Arkady Bogdanov with their pragmatic engineer Nadia Cherneshevsky;
Hiroko Ai - a Japanese biologist; and the Americans, led by Boone and the ambitious
Frank Chalmers. Their mission: terraform a frozen wasteland with no atmosphere into
a new Eden. Their mission must succeed. The future of human civilization depends on
it.

**The Sea Change**
*By Joanna Rositter*

*Recommended By:* Ms S.Isaacs

**Synopsis**
Yesterday was Alice's wedding day. She is thousands of miles away from the home
she is so desperate to leave, on the southernmost tip of India, when she wakes in the
morning to see a wave on the horizon, taller than the height of her guest house on
Kanyakumari beach. Her husband is nowhere to be seen.
Seasons In The Sun
Recommended By:- Mr R.W.Searby

This is a vast and hugely entertaining journey through the political traumas, changes of government, strikes, terrorist outrages, blackouts and sheer terrible weather of the 1970s, the decade in which I grew up in and (sort of) fondly remember. Sandbrook offers a huge canvas – if you want to know about the politics, sport, cultural and musical scenes of Britain at the time it is all here. It is a veritable history of serious analysis, engrossing narrative and rich in anecdote. A heavyweight but really worthwhile item for a Christmas stocking – it’ll keep the recipient quiet for weeks!

Synopsis
In the mid-1970s, Britain’s fortunes seemed to have reached their lowest point since the Blitz. As inflation rocketed, the pound collapsed and car bombs exploded across London, as Harold Wilson consoled himself with the brandy bottle, the Treasury went cap in hand to the IMF and the Sex Pistols stormed their way to notoriety, it seemed that the game was up for an exhausted nation. But what was life really like behind the headlines?

In his gloriously colourful new book, Dominic Sandbrook recreates this extraordinary period in all its chaos and contradiction. Behind the lurid news stories, the late 1970s were the decisive point in our recent history. Across the country, a profound argument about the future of the nation was being played out, not just in families and schools but in everything from episodes of Doctor Who to singles by the Clash. These years marked the peak of trade union power and the apogee of an old working-class Britain – but they also saw the birth of home computers, the rise of the ready meal and the triumph of a Grantham grocer’s daughter who would change our history forever.

Command and Control
Recommended By:- Mr C.Watterson

Command and Control is a fascinating and horrifying history of the United States of America’s nuclear weapons program with an emphasis on the accidents which have occurred and the astounding resistance faced by all who sought to reduce the chances of an accidental or unauthorised nuclear detonation. This book offers an insight into the physics, history, politics and philosophy of nuclear weaponry.

Synopsis
From famed investigative journalist Eric Schlosser, author of Fast Food Nation, comes Command and Control a ground-breaking account of the management of nuclear weapons

A groundbreaking account of accidents, near-misses, extraordinary heroism and technological breakthroughs, Command and Control explores the dilemma that has existed since the dawn of the nuclear age: how do you deploy weapons of mass
destruction without being destroyed by them? Schlosser reveals that this question has never been resolved, and while other headlines dominate the news, nuclear weapons still pose a grave risk to mankind.

At the heart of Command and Control lies the story of an accident at a missile silo in rural Arkansas, where a handful of men struggled to prevent the explosion of a ballistic missile carrying the most powerful nuclear warhead ever built by the United States. Schlosser interweaves this minute-by-minute account with a historical narrative that spans more than fifty years. It depicts the urgent effort by American scientists, policymakers, and military officers to ensure that nuclear weapons can't be stolen, sabotaged, used without permission, or detonated inadvertently. Looking at the Cold War from a new perspective, Schlosser offers history from the ground up, telling the stories of bomber pilots, missile commanders, maintenance crews, and other ordinary servicemen who risked their lives to avert a nuclear holocaust.

Drawing on recently declassified documents and interviews with men who designed and routinely handled nuclear weapons, Command and Control takes readers into a terrifying but fascinating world that, until now, has been largely hidden from view. It reveals how even the most brilliant of minds can offer us only the illusion of control. Audacious, gripping and unforgettable, Command and Control is a tour de force of investigative journalism.

Sisterland

Recommended By:-

By Curtis Sittenfeld

Ms S.Isaacs

Synopsis

Identical twins, Kate and Violet are about as unlike as two peas from the same pod can be. Except in one respect - they share a hidden gift they call 'the Senses', a special kind of intuition that can allow them to see things that are yet to come. After Kate inadvertently reveals their secret when they are thirteen years old, they are set on diverging paths into their adult lives.

Twenty years later Kate is a suburban housewife who suppresses her premonitions in the hope of leading a normal family life, while Violet lives alone and works as a psychic medium. Then one day Violet ignites a media storm by predicting a major earthquake in the St Louis area where they live.

As the day Violet has announced for the earthquake draws nearer, the sisters must grapple with the legacy of the past, the confusion of the present, and the unsettling glimpses they both have of the future.
The Grapes of Wrath
Recommanded By:
Mrs E.A. Grainger

This novel is set in the 1920s and tells of the travels of thousands of migrant families who are forced to seek work in the promised land of California. We follow the hardships faced by the Joad family and witness how they cope with the death of family members and starvation on their travels. Their sense of family unity when helping strangers in the same situation, then the last page of this book is one that will reinforce the ultimate act of human kindness in the face of death.

Synopsis
An astonishing novel following a poor family of sharecroppers as they travel to California in search of a better life.

Of Mice And Men
Recommanded By:
Mrs T. Jeganathan

This book is used for GCSE English. When I first read it, I felt touched. It is about two men that are very good friends looking for a job in 1930s, a very depressing time. They come from extremely poor backgrounds. Whilst crossing the country on foot to find work, they eventually find work in a farm. However George and Lennie (the main characters) struggled during their stay at the farm due to Lennie’s childish behaviour. The novel revolves around Lennie's love of soft things. One day Lennie pets the hair of the farmer's wife but she gets scared. In the resulting struggle Lennie kills her and runs away. The ending of this story is very tragic. This is a book I will never forget.

Synopsis
Streetwise George and his big, childlike friend Lennie are drifters, searching for work in the fields and valleys of California. They have nothing except the clothes on their back, and a hope that one day they'll find a place of their own and live the American dream. But dreams come at a price. Gentle giant Lennie doesn't know his own strength, and when they find work at a ranch he gets into trouble with the boss's daughter-in-law. Trouble so bad that even his protector George may not be able to save him ...
The Eleventh Day
By Anthony Summers And Robbyn Swan
Recommended By:- Dr Dominic Luckett

Countering the many ill-informed accounts and willfully misleading conspiracy theories circulating on the internet and elsewhere, this is a scholarly, lucid and exhaustive exposition of 9/11, the background to the attacks and the response of the US government.

Synopsis
Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan have written the definitive account of 9/11. The shockwaves of the September 11, 2001 attacks in America reverberate to this day. Though Osama Bin Laden has been killed, questions remain. What exactly happened? Could 9/11 have been prevented? How and why did so much acrimony and misinformation arise from the ashes of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a quiet field in Pennsylvania? And what has yet to be revealed?

The Eleventh Day, written with access to thousands of recently released official documents, is updated for this edition - and reports on a development which the former chairman of Congress' 9/11 probe describes as the 'most important in years'.

The Secret History
By Donna Tartt
Recommended By:- Mr D.T.Bingham

A thriller for sure, but a very literary thriller. I read this book fifteen years ago and I still think about it every day.

Synopsis
Under the influence of their charismatic classics professor, a group of clever, eccentric misfits at an elite New England college discover a way of thinking and living that is a world away from the humdrum existence of their contemporaries. But when they go beyond the boundaries of normal morality their lives are changed profoundly and for ever.

The Goldfinch
By Donna Tartt
Recommended By:- Ms B.D.Banks

Donna Tartt takes about ten years to write each of her books and this is her third. The narrator, Theo Decker, loses his mother to a random act of terrorism at the Metropolitan Museum. During the confusion that follows he performs one small act of kindness which has an impact on the rest of
his life. Forced to grow up bereft of loving, adult support, Theo snatches at the security offered by the most unlikely of allies. The relationships that he forms are brilliantly described, particularly his friendship with the amoral Boris and the cultured, creative Hobie. This is really two books in one. The first half, although dealing in complex issues, was lighter and totally mesmerising but the more darkly plotted final section was disturbing as by then I had become too emotionally involved with the characters. Finishing the book was like closing a chapter of my own life.

**Synopsis**

Aged thirteen, Theo Decker, son of a devoted mother and a reckless, largely absent father, survives an accident that otherwise tears his life apart. Alone and rudderless in New York, he is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. He is tormented by an unbearable longing for his mother, and down the years clings to the thing that most reminds him of her: a small, strangely captivating painting that ultimately draws him into the criminal underworld. As he grows up, Theo learns to glide between the drawing rooms of the rich and the dusty antiques store where he works. He is alienated and in love - and his talisman, the painting, places him at the centre of a narrowing, ever more dangerous circle.

*The Goldfinch* is a haunted odyssey through present-day America and a drama of enthralling power. Combining unforgettable vivid characters and thrilling suspense, it is a beautiful, addictive triumph - a sweeping story of loss and obsession, of survival and self-invention, of the deepest mysteries of love, identity and fate.

**Dark Star Safari**

*Recommended By:-*

Paul Theroux journeys from Cairo to Cape Town by land and once again conjures up vivid images of the people and places he encounters on the way. As ever, he is insightful, entertaining and challenging; never more so than when sharing his views on foreign aid in Africa.

**Synopsis**

Travelling across bush and desert, down rivers and across lakes, and through country after country, Theroux visits some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth, and some of the most dangerous. It is a journey of discovery and of rediscovery -- of the unknown and the unexpected, but also of people and places he knew as a young and optimistic teacher forty years before. Safari in Swahili simply means "journey", and this is the ultimate safari.

**Mondo Enduro**

*Recommended By:-*

*Mondeo Enduro is a truly entertaining book, easy to read in a diary format and hard to put down. It shows that with a bit of grit and determination, anyone can achieve the round the world experience, even if you don’t want to do it on a motorbike! Read this book and you will learn that no matter where you travel, the vast majority of people are*
kind and welcoming to travellers, and willing to share what they have with strangers. This book is compiled with all the diary entries from the Vince brothers and friends, and as Austin Vince was a Maths teacher at Mill Hill School, the expedition began and finished at the School.

Synopsis

Mondo Enduro is amongst the handful of books that were written with no intention that it should ever be published. The typed up diaries have become a cult adjunct to the pre-existing TV programme of the same name. It was only published as fans of the show clamoured for the 'full' story behind this legendary DIY expedition. Mondo is famous for several reasons least of all being that it was the basis for Ewan MacGregor's Long Way Round production. In 2004, when this world famous actor and his entourage drove into Magadan in Russia's remote far eastern Kolimar province there was much celebration but little mention of the fact that they had merely followed a trail blazed by the Mondo Enduro team in August 1995. Far from being square-jawed explorers the seven man Mondo team is filled with a superbly bland cross section of nobodies who, with no idea what they are doing, set off to establish a new long distance travel record. The phenomenal underground success of the Mondo story is rooted in the fact that they pulled it off with no sponsorship, backing or internet to fall back on. It's the last great analogue adventure. Being the first people to ride their second hand dirt bikes from London to Magadan put them in the record books. They then rode from Alaska to the bottom of Chile, then from Johnannesburg back to London, non-stop. Why the rush? Because they wanted to see if it could be done. You couldn't make this stuff up...

The Submission

By Amy Waldman

Recommended By:-

Mr A.T.W.Frazer

It's a novel exploring the consequences of an American Muslim being chosen to design a memorial garden to the victims of a jihadist terror attack.

Synopsis

A jury gathers in Manhattan to select a memorial for the victims of a devastating terrorist attack. Their fraught deliberations complete, the jurors open the envelope containing the anonymous winner's name - and discover he is an American Muslim. Instantly they are cast into roiling debate about the claims of grief, the ambiguities of art, and the meaning of Islam. The memorial's designer is Mohammad Khan, an enigmatic, ambitious architect. His fiercest defender on the jury is its sole widow, the mediagenic Claire Burwell. But when the news of his selection leaks to the press, Claire finds herself under pressure from outraged family members and in collision with hungry journalists, wary activists, opportunistic politicians, fellow jurors, and Khan himself. All will bring the emotional weight of their own histories to bear on the urgent question of how to remember, and understand, a national tragedy.
Stoner
By John Williams
Recommended By: Mr T.W.Corbett

The novel tells the life story of an unassuming American literary scholar called William Stoner. The subject matter might be unremarkable but as The New York Times Book reviewer, Morris Dickstein, wrote: "It is a perfect novel, so well told and beautifully written that it takes your breath away." Ian McEwan called it a "marvellous discovery for everyone who loves literature". Despite its rather bland title it is indeed an extraordinarily well-written and deeply moving - a must read.

Recommended By: Mr J.A.Barron
An unremarkable story that has a remarkably lasting effect on you, leaving you thinking and contemplating the story for several weeks after you have finished the novel.

Synopsis
William Stoner enters the University of Missouri at nineteen to study agriculture. A seminar on English literature changes his life, and he never returns to work on his father's farm. Stoner becomes a teacher. He marries the wrong woman. His life is quiet, and after his death his colleagues remember him rarely.

Yet with truthfulness, compassion and intense power, this novel uncovers a story of universal value. Stoner tells of the conflicts, defeats and victories of the human race that pass unrecorded by history, and reclaims the significance of an individual life. A reading experience like no other, itself a paean to the power of literature, it is a novel to be savoured.

Lying On The Couch: A Novel
By Irvin D.Yalom
Recommended By: Mrs R.E.Bradley

I haven’t enjoyed any of the books I’ve read recently, so…here’s an old one….

Synopsis
Yalom writes a provocative exploration of the unusual relationships three therapists form with their patients. Seymour is a therapist of the old school who blurs the boundary of sexual propriety with one of his clients. Marshal, who is haunted by his own obsessive-compulsive behaviours, is troubled by the role money plays in his dealings with his patients. Finally, there is Ernest Lash. Driven by his sincere desire to help and his faith in psychoanalysis, he invents a radically new approach to therapy -- a totally open and honest relationship with a patient that threatens to have devastating results. Exposing the many lies that are told on and off the psychoanalyst's couch, Lying on the Couch gives readers a tantalizing, almost illicit, glimpse at what their therapists might really be thinking during their sessions. Fascinating, engrossing and relentlessly intelligent, it ultimately moves readers with a denouement of surprising humanity and redemptive faith.
As next year will have been 100 years since the start of the First World War, I thought I should read some books on this subject. Although this book is fiction, it has been well researched and the characters and events probably happened to many couples hoping to marry when the war was over. It is amazing to read how a face can be reconstructed with plastic surgery and the complex feelings of a man not wanting to subject his loved ones to his injuries.

**Synopsis**

While Riley Purefoy and Peter Locke fight for their country, their survival and their sanity in the trenches of Flanders, Nadine Waveney, Julia Locke and Rose Locke do what they can at home. Beautiful, obsessive Julia and gentle, eccentric Peter are married: each day Julia goes through rituals to prepare for her beloved husband’s return. Nadine and Riley, only eighteen when the war starts, and with problems of their own already, want above all to make promises - but how can they when the future is not in their hands? And Rose? Well, what did happen to the traditionally brought-up women who lost all hope of marriage, because all the young men were dead?

Moving between Ypres, London and Paris, *My Dear I Wanted to Tell You* is a deeply affecting, moving and brilliant novel of love and war, and how they affect those left behind as well as those who fight.
Thank you to all members of staff who contributed to this reading list.

Wishing You All A Very Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year

Mrs Elizabeth A. Grainger
Piper Library
December 2013