SHARED READING: Each student must read *State of Wonder* by Ann Patchett. *Fiction*. 2011. Dr. Marina Singh, a research scientist with a pharmaceutical company, is sent to Brazil after the death of her colleague to take up his mission of finding Dr. Annick Swenson, a ruthless woman who has been conducting research among the Lakashi tribe on a reputed miracle drug, and refuses to let anything stand in her way.

Please read *State of Wonder* late in the summer and bring a copy of it to the first days of class.

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Each student must also read TWO books from the list below:

*Desert Solitaire* by Ed Abbey. *Nonfiction; memoir*. 1968. Abbey’s story of his three seasons in the desert at Moab, Utah is a fascinating, sometimes raucous account of a place that has already disappeared but is worth remembering.


*Going to Meet the Man* by James Baldwin. *Fiction: Short stories*. 1965. By turns haunting, heartbreaking, and horrifying, these stories are informed by Baldwin’s knowledge of the wounds racism has left in both its victims and its perpetrators.

*Black is the Body: Stories from My Grandmother’s Time, My Mother’s Time, and Mine* by Emily Bernard. *Nonfiction, memoir*. 2019. In twelve interconnected essays, the Bernard reflects upon the complexities and textures of her life as an African American daughter, professor, wife, mother, friend, and writer.


*The Hours* by Michael Cunningham. *Historical fiction; short stories*. 1998. A trio of stories inspired by the writer Virginia Woolf, whose novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is also on this list.

*Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Classic fiction*. 1866. The poverty and hopelessness of pre-Revolutionary Russian society are tangible in this story of a student who murders two women and then tries to live with his crime.

*Finding Nour* by Zoe Ferraris. *Mystery*. 2009. Saudi Arabian desert guide Nayir al-Sharqi is hired to find a girl. When she turns up dead, he forms an unexpected partnership with a female technician at the coroner’s office to solve the case.

*Everything Is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer. *Historical fiction*. 2002. An American college student sets out with his grandfather and the family dog to find the village where a Ukrainian woman may have saved the grandfather from Nazis.


*Updated May 6, 2019*
Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro. Science fiction. 2005. Three people, living in a world slightly different from our own, look back upon their time at a sheltered private school and begin to realize exactly what the purpose of this school was.

Waiting by Ha Jin. Historical fiction. 2000. Lin Kong, a man living in two worlds, is struggling with the conflicting claims of two utterly different women as he moves through the political minefields of a society designed to regulate his every move.

The Trial by Franz Kafka. Classic literature. 1925. Chilling tale of a respectable bank officer who is suddenly arrested and put on trial for a charge about which he can get no information. If you liked 1984, this is a good choice.

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi. Nonfiction; memoir. 2016. While training as a neurosurgeon, Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. He reflects on being a medical expert, dying patient, and new father all at the same time.

The Geography of Nowhere by J.H. Kunstler. Nonfiction; journalism. 1994. The author traces America's evolution from a nation Main Streets and coherent communities to a land where every place is like no place in particular.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri. Realistic fiction. 2003. This novel follows the lives of an Indian couple who settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts and their attempts to assimilate into American culture, as well as the life of their son Gogol.

Crow Lake by Mary Lawson. Realistic fiction. 2002. Tragic, funny, and unforgettable, this is a deceptively simple, shimmering novel about families, siblings, dreams, and redemption, set in a rural community in the wild terrain of Northern Ontario.

The Memoirs of a Survivor by Doris Lessing. Dystopian fiction. 1974. In a near-future Britain where society has broken down due to an unspecified disaster, a middle-aged woman unexpectedly ends up with 'custody' of a teenage girl.

Black Hole Blues and Other Songs from Outer Space by Janna Levin. Nonfiction; science. 2016. In 1916, Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves: sounds without a material medium generated by the collision of black holes. Levin, herself an astrophysicist, recounts the surprising and fascinating story of the search, over the last fifty years, for these elusive waves.

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Classic fiction; Magical Realism. 1967. The rise and fall, birth and death of the mythical town of Macondo as told through the history of the Buendia family.

The Winter of Our Disconnect by Susan Maushart. Nonfiction; memoir. 2011. The subtitle of this book is “How three totally wired teenagers (and a mother who slept with her iPhone) pulsed the plug on their technology and lived to tell the tale.”

The Road by Cormac McCarthy. Dystopian fiction. 2006. In a post-apocalyptic world, a father and his young son make their way through a devastated American landscape, struggling to survive while preserving the last remnants of their own humanity.


We Were the Mulvaneys by Joyce Carol Oates. Realistic fiction. 1997. The Mulvaneys are a fortunate clan, with good looks, abundant charisma, and boundless promise, but each of them endures some form of exile—physical or spiritual.

Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki. Realistic fiction. 2013. A Hello Kitty lunchbox washes up on the shore of Vancouver Island. Inside are artifacts presenting a puzzle that when put together tell the vibrant story of the life of a Japanese teenager.

In Other Rooms, Other Wonders by Daniyal Mueenuddin. Realistic fiction; short stories. 2009. A linked set of short stories set in the present day about characters in and connected to a sprawling cosmopolitan family from Lahore, Pakistan.

What I Was by Meg Rosoff. Realistic fiction. 2008. Finn was a beautiful orphan. He was a prep school misfit. They met on the beach on the coast of England where Finn lived alone in a hut. He recounts, in his old age, the story of their coming of age.

Updated May 6, 2019

*Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* by Oliver Sacks. *Nonfiction, science.* 2008. Dr. Sacks, a neurologist, investigates the power of music to move us, to heal and to haunt us.


*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. *Nonfiction, journalism.* 2011. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—cultured without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine.


*Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese. *Historical fiction.* 2009. Twin brothers Marion and Shiva Stone come of age in Ethiopia, sharing a bond that helps them survive the loss of their parents and the country's political upheaval.

*The Genius Plague* by David Walton. *Science fiction.* 2017. What if the pandemic you thought would kill you made you more intelligent instead? In the Amazon, a disease is spreading. It grants enhanced brainpower—to those who survive.

*Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward. *Realistic fiction.* 2017. National Book Award. Jojo struggles with his mother's addictions and his grandmother's cancer before the release of his father from prison prompts a dangerous, hopeful road trip.

*Honeymoon in Pardah: An Iranian Journey* by Alison Wearing. *nonfiction, memoir.* 2001. Journeying far off the beaten path in her trip to Iran, they author explored the country and got to know the people who live there.

*Fences* by August Wilson. *Drama.* 1986. Troy Maxson has gone through life in an America where to be proud and black is to face pressures that could crush a man, body and soul. But the 1950s are yielding to a new spirit of liberation in the 60s.


*Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. *Classic literature.* 1925. Considered one of the most brilliant novels of its age, the story covers one day in the life of Mrs. Dalloway, but in that one day we see many of the threads that make up her life.

*Native Son* by Richard Wright. *Fiction, Social realism.* 1940. When a wealthy white family offers Bigger Thomas, a twenty-year-old black Chicagoan, a chauffeur's position, Bigger is torn between gratitude and resentment.