

THE PEDDIE SCHOOL
English Department
Senior & PG English -- Summer Reading 2009

Students enrolled in Senior/PG English (Madness, Unheard Voices, Mighty Opposites) for the academic year of 2009-10 must complete the summer reading prior to the start of classes in September 2009. Students must read one required book and another one drawn from the list below.

REQUIRED: *The Lords of Discipline* by Pat Conroy (Bantam; ISBN: 0553271369)

This book is definitely available from Amazon.com, and you should be able to find it at one of the large chain bookstores, such as Barnes & Noble or Borders.

Choose one from this list:

You should be able to find all of them at a reputable bookstore (such as Barnes & Noble), and they are all available through Amazon.com.

The Razor's Edge by W. Somerset Maugham (Knopf; ISBN: 1400034205)

"*The Razor's Edge* is the story of Larry Darrell, who surrenders his chance at wealth and the woman he loves in order to seek a faith. His search carries him from the bistros of Paris to the far reaches of India, where, among the mystics, he finds the first beginnings of the answers he seeks. The haunting force of this most memorable novel comes from Larry's almost miraculous influence on three people—Isabel, a lusty beauty who exists for the material things in life; Elliot, whose sole aim is to improve his position in an amoral society; and Sophie, who is driven by tragedy to an utter and shameless degradation."

Freedomland by Richard Price (Dell; ISBN: 0440226449)

"A white woman, her hands gashed and bloody, stumbles into an inner-city emergency room and announces that she has just been carjacked by a black man. But then comes the horrifying twist: Her young son was asleep in the back seat, and he has now disappeared into the night. So begins Richard Price's electrifying new novel, a tale set on the same turf—Dempsey, New Jersey—as *Clockers*. Assigned to investigate the case of Brenda Martin's missing child is detective Lorenzo Council, a local son of the very housing project targeted as the scene of the crime. Under a white-hot media glare, Lorenzo launches an all-out search for the abducted boy, even as he quietly explores a different possibility: Does Brenda Martin know a lot more about her son's disappearance than she's admitting?"

Fifth Business by Robertson Davies (Viking; ISBN: 0141186151)

Ten-year-old Percy Boyd Staunton throws a snowball with a rock inside at his childhood friend Dunstan Ramsay, who sidesteps so that it strikes Mrs. Amasa Dempster in the back of the head. This injury provokes the premature birth of her son Paul and leads to her own descent into madness. So begins *Fifth Business*, the account of a brilliant Canadian politician, a famous magician, and the scholar and school teacher who tells this first version of a story which Davies continues in *The Manticore* and *World of Wonders*, the other two volumes in the Deptford trilogy.

Into Thin Air by John Krakauer (Anchor Books; ISBN: 0385492081)

Into Thin Air is a first-person account of an expedition group's attempt to climb Mount Everest in May of 1996. Faced with fowl weather in the form of a violent storm, survival becomes a struggle and a hope rather than a certainty. This book chronicles the difficulties—physical, moral, and emotional—that accompany man's decision to challenge nature's most powerful forces. Encountering defeat, injury, storms, and multiple deaths, Krakauer lives to tell his story of Mt. Everest, one in which the risk of death hovers uncomfortably close.

Black and Blue by Anna Quindlan (Dell; ISBN: 0440226104)

Black and Blue is a quick moving novel about a woman looking to escape her abusive husband. She and her 10 year-old child change their names and leave their familiar lives in New York to make a new start hundreds of miles away. Leaving behind the child's father, their relatives, and friends, Beth and Bobby "Crenshaw" may live miles from the abusive male in their family, but Beth lives with constant fear that her husband is tracking them down.

Bel Canto by Ann Patchett, (HarperCollins ISBN: 0060934417)

In an unnamed South American country, a world-renowned soprano sings at a birthday party in honor of a visiting Japanese industrial titan. His hosts hope that Mr. Hosokawa can be persuaded to build a factory in their Third World backwater. Alas, in the opening sequence, just as the accompanist kisses the soprano, a ragtag band of 18 terrorists enters the vice-presidential mansion through the air conditioning ducts. Their quarry is the president, who has unfortunately stayed home to watch a favorite soap opera. And thus, from the beginning, things go awry. Among the hostages are not only Hosokawa and Roxane Coss, the American soprano, but an assortment of Russian, Italian, and French diplomatic types. Reuben Iglesias, the diminutive and gracious vice president, quickly gets sideways of the kidnappers, who have no interest in him whatsoever. Meanwhile, a Swiss Red Cross negotiator named Joachim Messner is roped into service while vacationing. He comes and goes, wrangling over terms and demands, and the days stretch into weeks, the weeks into months. With the omniscience of magic realism, Ann Patchett flits in and out of the hearts and psyches of hostage and terrorist alike, and in doing so reveals a profound, shared humanity. Her voice is suitably lyrical, melodic, full of warmth and compassion

The Girl with a Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier (Plume ISBN: 0452282152)

With precisely 35 canvases to his credit, the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer represents one of the great enigmas of 17th-century art. The meager facts of his biography have been gleaned from a handful of legal documents. Yet Vermeer's extraordinary paintings of domestic life, with their subtle play of light and texture, have come to define the Dutch golden age. His portrait of the anonymous *Girl with a Pearl Earring* has exerted a particular fascination for centuries--and it is this magnetic painting that lies at the heart of Tracy Chevalier's second novel of the same title.

Girl with a Pearl Earring centers on Vermeer's prosperous Delft household during the 1660s. When Griet, the novel's quietly perceptive heroine, is hired as a servant, turmoil follows. First, the 16-year-old narrator becomes increasingly intimate with her master. Then Vermeer employs her as his assistant--and ultimately has Griet sit for him as a model. Chevalier vividly evokes the complex domestic tensions of the household, ruled over by the painter's jealous, eternally pregnant wife and his taciturn mother-in-law. At times the relationship between servant and master seems a little anachronistic. Still, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* does contain a final delicious twist.

The Emperor of Ocean Park by Stephen L. Carter. (Vintage ISBN: 0375712925)

A complex, smart mystery filled with intrigue, drama, and more than a little danger awaits in Stephen L. Carter's engaging debut novel, *The Emperor of Ocean Park*. After the funeral of his powerful father (a federal judge whose nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court became a public scandal), Talcott Garland, an African American law professor at an Ivy League university, is left to unravel the meaning of a cryptic note and carry out "the arrangements" his father left behind. Armed with fortitude and familial devotion--though paranoid of his wife's fidelity--Talcott soon finds himself in an investigation that entangles him with a number of questionable Washington, D.C., denizens, including attorneys and government officials, law professors, the FBI, shady underworld figures, chess masters, and friends and family. All the while Talcott tries not to hurt his attorney wife's chance for a judicial nomination--and their fragile marriage--but the closer he comes to unraveling his father's dark secrets, the more dangerous things become.

House of the Spirits by Isabelle Allende (Dell Publishing ISBN: 0553383809)

Chilean writer Isabel Allende's classic novel is both a symbolic family saga and the story of an unnamed Latin American country's turbulent history. Allende constructs a spirit-ridden world and fills it with colorful and all-too-human inhabitants. The Trueba family's passions, struggles, and secrets span three generations and a century of violent change, culminating in a crisis that brings the proud and tyrannical patriarch and his beloved granddaughter to opposite sides of the barricades. Against a backdrop of revolution and counterrevolution, Allende brings to life a family whose private bonds of love and hatred are more complex and enduring than the political allegiances that set them at odds.

The Forger by Paul Watkins (Picador Books, ISBN: 0312276966)

A semi-sequel to his book *In the Blue Light of African Dreams*, Watkins' literary thriller tells the story of David Halifax, the son of the protagonist in that previous novel, a promising young American painter brought to Paris in 1939 via a mysterious scholarship which sets him up to study with a bizarre Russian painter, Pankratov. The first part of the story focuses on David's attempt to make it as an artist in Paris, living a spendthrift existence in a small apartment. Soon, however, he becomes friends with his two other fellow students and a shady gallery owner. One of the books' major strengths is how these characters-and all others, no matter how fleeting their role-spring to life under Watkins' pen. Gradually the threat of invasion looms larger and larger, and David decides not to leave, ... (leading) to his involvement in an elaborate scheme to hide valuable French artwork from the Nazis, who have been systematically looting the countries they sweep through. The scheme involves forging old master paintings and trading them to the Germans for confiscated "degenerate" Impressionist and post-Impressionist masterpieces destined for destruction. (This book, by Peddie's Writer in Residence, may not be readily available. If you are interested in this book, try your local library).