

Reading List – Battle of the Books 2023/2024

We are very grateful for the generous support from Thalia Nürnberg, who so kindly made a huge book donation so that we can offer FIVE BRAND-NEW books this year!!

Each of the following books was chosen to encourage students to learn about and engage with global challenges facing our societies today. Book topics include authoritarianism, war, family, death, poverty, education, racism, religion, feminism, immigration, LGBTQIA+ rights, and more. When selecting a book, students should consider the books' major themes, year of publication, and how the book might be understood differently now than when it was first published. They should be prepared to share their opinion on the book during the intro meetings. This year, we are also excited to share with students the power of storytelling through graphic novels. They may not take as long to read, but do not be fooled—these books' quiz questions will be just as difficult as the others—if not more! 😊

***Grey Bees* by Andrey Kurkov, 2018**

49-year-old safety inspector-turned-beekeeper Sergey Sergeich, wants little more than to help his bees collect their pollen in peace. But Sergey lives in Ukraine, where a lukewarm war of sporadic violence and constant propaganda has been dragging on for years. His simple mission on behalf of his bees leads him through some the hottest spots of the ongoing conflict, putting him in contact with combatants and civilians on both sides of the battle lines: loyalists, separatists, Russian occupiers, and Crimean Tatars.

***Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt, 2005**

In bold and spirited prose featuring his irreverent wit and heartbreaking honesty, McCourt records the trials, triumphs, and surprises he faces in public high schools around New York City. His methods anything but conventional, McCourt creates a lasting impact on his students through imaginative assignments (he instructs one class to write "An Excuse Note from Adam or Eve to God"), singalongs (featuring recipe ingredients as lyrics), and field trips (imagine taking twenty-nine rowdy girls to a movie in Times Square!). *Teacher Man* shows McCourt developing his unparalleled ability to tell a great story as, five days a week, five periods per day, he works to gain the attention and respect of unruly, hormonally charged, or indifferent adolescents.

***A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, 2007**

A Thousand Splendid Suns is at once an incredible chronicle of thirty years of Afghan history and a deeply moving story of family, friendship, faith, and the salvation to be found in love. Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever-escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation.

***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, 1899**

When first published in 1899, *The Awakening* shocked readers with its honest treatment of female marital infidelity. Audiences accustomed to the pieties of late Victorian romantic fiction were taken aback by Chopin's daring portrayal of a woman trapped in a stifling marriage, who seeks and finds passionate physical love outside the confines of her domestic situation. Although the theme of marital infidelity no longer shocks, few novels have plumbed the psychology of a woman involved in an illicit relationship with the perception, artistry, and honesty that Kate Chopin brought to *The Awakening*.

***Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo, 2020**

Camino Rios lives for the summers when her father visits her in the Dominican Republic. But this time, on the day when his plane is supposed to land, Camino arrives at the airport to see crowds of crying people. In NYC, Yahaira Rios is called to the principal's office, where her mother is waiting to tell her that her father, her hero, has died in a plane crash. Separated by distance—and Papi's secrets—the two girls are forced to face a new reality in which their father is dead, and their lives are forever altered. And then, when it seems like they've lost everything of their father, they learn of each other.

***Persepolis I and II* by Marjane Satrapi, 2008**

Persepolis is the story of Satrapi's unforgettable childhood and coming of age within a large and loving family in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution; of the contradictions between private and public life in a country plagued by political upheaval; of her high school years in Vienna facing the trials of adolescence far from her family; of her homecoming—both sweet and terrible; and, finally, of her self-imposed exile from her beloved homeland. It is the chronicle of a girlhood and adolescence at once outrageous and familiar, a young life entwined with the history of her country yet filled with the universal trials and joys of growing up.

***A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, 1939**

A Farewell to Arms is the unforgettable story of an American ambulance driver on the Italian front and his passion for a beautiful English nurse. Set against the looming horrors of the battlefield - the weary, demoralized men marching in the rain during the German attack on Caporetto; the profound struggle between loyalty and desertion—this gripping, semiautobiographical work captures the harsh realities

of war and the pain of lovers caught in its inexorable sweep. Ernest Hemingway famously said that he rewrote his ending thirty-nine times to get the words right.

***The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, 2009**

In Jackson, Mississippi, there are lines that are not crossed. Black maids raise the white children, but no one trusts them not to steal the silver. Aibileen is a Black maid, raising her seventeenth white child, but with a bitter heart after the death of her son. Minny is the sassiest woman in Mississippi; she can cook like nobody's business, but she can't keep her lip buttoned. And Skeeter is a white woman with a degree but no ring on her finger. Home from college, Skeeter discovers her beloved maid Constantine has disappeared without a trace. And as different as they may be, these three women will come together for a clandestine project that will put all of them at risk.

***Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman, 2019**

Charlie Spring is in Year 10 at Truham Grammar School for Boys. The past year hasn't been too great, but at least he's not being bullied anymore. Nick Nelson is in Year 11 and on the school rugby team. He's heard a little about Charlie - the kid who was outed last year and bullied for a few months - but he's never had the opportunity to talk to him. They quickly become friends, and soon Charlie is falling hard for Nick, even though he doesn't think he has a chance. But love works in surprising ways, and sometimes good things are waiting just around the corner...

***The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, 1967**

No one ever said life was easy. But Ponyboy is pretty sure that he's got things figured out. He knows that he can count on his brothers, Darry and Sodapop. And he knows that he can count on his friends - true friends who would do anything for him, like Johnny and Two-Bit. But not on much else besides trouble with the Socs, a vicious gang of rich kids whose idea of a good time is beating up on greasers like Ponyboy. At least he knows what to expect until the night someone takes things too far.

There is one copy of each book listed on eBooks USA (dependent on availability). Please contact the DAI library for more information. "Heartstopper" and "Persepolis" are currently unavailable.

Book summaries have been taken from Good Reads and Thalia.

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