

2024 Upper Campus Faculty Picks - Book Chat Selections

Staff Member	Book (Title, Author)	Description
Veronica Pozas	<p><i>Clap When You Land</i> by Elizabeth Acevedo</p> <p>Grades 9-12</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>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...</p> <p>In New York City, 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.</p> <p>And then, when it seems like they've lost everything about their father, they learn of each other.</p> <p>Written by a Dominican-American poet and author, this novel-in-verse brims with grief and love. National Book Award-winning and New York Times bestselling author Elizabeth Acevedo writes about the devastation of loss, the difficulty of forgiveness, and the bittersweet bonds that shape our lives.</p>
Rashida Powell	<p><i>The Final Six</i> by Alexandra Monir</p> <p>Science fiction; best suitable for high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>When Leo and Naomi are drafted, along with twenty-two of the world's brightest teenagers, into the International Space Training Camp, their lives are forever changed. Overnight, they become global celebrities in contention for one of the six slots to travel to Europa—Jupiter's moon—and establish a new colony, leaving their planet forever. With Earth irreparably damaged, the future of the human race rests on their shoulders.</p> <p>For Leo, an Italian championship swimmer, this kind of purpose is a reason to go on after losing his family. But Naomi, an Iranian-American science genius, is suspicious of the ISTC and the fact that a similar mission failed under mysterious circumstances, killing the astronauts onboard. She fears something equally sinister awaiting the Final Six beneath Europa's surface.</p> <p>In this cutthroat atmosphere, surrounded by strangers from around the world, Naomi finds an unexpected friend in Leo. As the training tests their limits, Naomi and Leo's relationship deepens with each life-altering experience they encounter.</p> <p>But it's only when the finalists become fewer and their destinies grow nearer that the two can fathom the full weight of everything at stake: the world, the stars, and their lives.</p>
Topher Dunlap	<p><i>Treasure</i> by Clive Cussler</p>	<p>This is a book that I read in middle school that kicked off my love of reading. It's full of adventure and intrigue and is a real page-turner.</p> <p>Charts of lost gold...breathtaking art and rare volumes...maps of hidden oil and mineral deposits that could change the world's balance of power. Now Dirk Pitt discovers the secret trail of the treasures of Alexandria—a trail that plunges him into a brutal conspiracy for total domination of the globe.</p>
Emma Henson	<p><i>Fire</i> by Kristen Cashore</p>	<p>It is not a peaceful time in the Dells. The young King Nash clings to his throne while rebel lords in the north and south build armies to unseat him. The mountains and forests are filled with spies, thieves, and lawless men.</p>

	<p>Fiction; only suitable for high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>This is where Fire lives. With a wild, irresistible appearance and hair the color of flame, Fire is the last remaining human monster. Equally hated and adored, she had the unique ability to control minds, but she guards her power, unwilling to steal the secrets of innocent people especially when she has so many of her own. Then Prince Brigant comes to bring her to King City. The royal family needs her help to uncover the plot against the king. Far away from home, Fire begins to realize there's more to her power than she ever dreamed. Her power could save the kingdom.</p> <p>If only she weren't afraid of becoming the monster her father was.</p>
<p>Leah Schoenberg</p>	<p><i>White Bird</i> by R.J. Palacio</p> <p>Graphic novel; suitable for middle and high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>In R. J. Palacio's collection of stories <i>Auggie & Me</i>, which expands on characters in <i>Wonder</i>, readers were introduced to Julian's grandmother, Grandmère. Told in graphic-novel form, <i>White Bird</i> is Grandmère's story as a young Jewish girl hidden away by a family in Nazi-occupied France during World War II.</p>
<p>Adrienne Grafton</p>	<p><i>The River</i> by Peter Heller</p> <p>Fiction; best suited for high school students</p>	<p>Wynn and Jack have been best friends since college orientation, bonded by their shared love of mountains, books, and fishing. Wynn is a gentle giant, a Vermont kid never happier than when his feet are in the water. Jack is more rugged, raised on a ranch in Colorado where sleeping under the stars and cooking on a fire came as naturally to him as breathing. When they decide to canoe the Maskwa River in northern Canada, they anticipate long days of leisurely paddling and picking blueberries, and nights of stargazing and reading paperback Westerns. But a wildfire making its way across the forest adds unexpected urgency to the journey.</p> <p>One night, with the fire advancing, they hear a man and woman arguing on the fog-shrouded riverbank; the next day, a man appears on the river, paddling alone. Is this the same man they heard? And if he is, where is the woman? From this charged beginning, master storyteller Peter Heller unspools a headlong, heart-pounding story of desperate wilderness survival.</p>
<p>Brittany Mistretta</p>	<p><i>Land of Love and Drowning</i> by Tiphonie Yanique</p> <p>Fiction; only suitable for high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA and 8 physical copies available from GHS</p>	<p><i>Land of Love and Drowning</i> by Tiphonie Yanique, an award-winning VI author, is a multi-generational saga that intertwines family history, love, loss, and the magical realism of the Caribbean. Set in the Virgin Islands, it tells the story of the Bradshaw family through the 20th century, focusing on siblings Eeona and Anette as they navigate the complexities of life. As the narrative unfolds, it is revealed that the Bradshaw family harbors deep secrets, including those about their origins and connections to the island's myths and legends. The siblings' journey is marked by their entanglements with love and heartbreak, as well as their struggle to understand their place in a world that is constantly shifting around them. The novel offers an engaging look at how family dynamics, cultural background, and personal choices shape our identity, while also providing a window into the unique history and culture of the Caribbean.</p> <p>EXPLICIT CONTENT: Please be aware this book contains adult themes.</p>

<p>Bill LaMonte</p>	<p><i>The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom</i> by Don Miguel Ruiz</p> <p>Nonfiction; for any student who wants to become a better human</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>“<i>The Four Agreements</i>” by Don Miguel Ruiz is a book that outlines four principles for living a meaningful life. It encourages readers to consider their words, thoughts and actions as they meet the challenges of the world.</p>
<p>Francine Francis</p>	<p><i>Man Made Monsters</i> by Andrea Rogers</p> <p>Fiction; best suited for high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>Spanning generations, Rogers (<i>Mary and the Trail of Tears</i>) recounts the past, present, and future trials and tribulations of one Cherokee family in this spine-tingling horror collection. Though the stories presented can stand alone, each tale, arranged in chronological order, follows members of the Wilson family as they navigate myriad supernatural and real-life terrors. Opening the volume is “An Old-Fashioned Girl,” in which 16-year-old Ama Wilson is turned into a vampire while she and her family flee from Texas Rangers in 1839. Mythical creatures such as ghosts, zombies, werewolves, and even aliens abound, but most threatening are monster-like men who kidnap, abuse, and murder Native women. Striking white line art on black backgrounds by Cherokee artist Jeff Edwards, introduces each story, containing the tribe’s syllabary, adding to the haunting atmosphere, and synthesizing handwritten language with stunning visuals. While Rogers expertly crafts gripping grisly horror elements and cataclysmic paranormal phenomena via a deep understanding and appreciation for her Cherokee ancestry, the narrative’s strength lies in its powerful prose and thematic core: “How different were zombies from the soldiers and settlers who wanted our land?” Fresh, crisply written text, which alternates between first-, second-, and third-person tellings, artfully tackles themes of colonialism and its effects on entire generations, for a simultaneously frightening and enthralling read. A glossary and extensive family tree are included.</p>
<p>David Obando</p>	<p><i>Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations</i> by Alex & Brett Harris</p> <p>Based on a true story; suitable for middle and high school students</p>	<p>Combating the idea of adolescence as a vacation from responsibility, Alex and Brett Harris weave together insights, history, and modern examples to redefine the teen years as the launching pad of life and map a clear trajectory for long-term fulfillment and lasting impact.</p> <p>Written by teens for teens, <i>Do Hard Things</i> is packed with humorous personal anecdotes, practical examples, and stories of real-life rebelutionaries in action. This rallying cry from the heart of revolution already in progress challenges you to lay claim to a brighter future, starting today. Now featuring a conversation guide, 100 real-life examples of hard things tackled by other young people, and stories of young men and women who have taken the book’s charge to heart, <i>Do Hard Things</i> will inspire a new generation of revolutionaries.</p>

	Available on SORA	
Corey Nordike	<i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i> by Norton Juster Fiction; great for any age Available on SORA	Step into a world where boredom is banished and adventure awaits around every corner! Follow the story of a curious young boy who stumbles upon a mysterious tollbooth that transports him to a fantastical realm. There, he encounters a colorful cast of characters and embarks on a journey filled with wordplay, puns, and unexpected surprises. Join him as he navigates through strange lands and learns valuable lessons about curiosity, creativity, and the power of imagination. Perfect for readers of all ages, this captivating tale will whisk you away on an unforgettable adventure that will leave you laughing, pondering, and eagerly turning the pages until the very end.
Sam Normington	<i>At the Bottom of the River</i> by Jamaica Kincaid Short stories; good for the patient reader who enjoys the art of a well-placed word Audio on SORA	Jamaica Kincaid's <i>At the Bottom of the River</i> ... inspired, lyrical short stories Reading Jamaica Kincaid is to plunge, gently, into another way of seeing both the physical world and its elusive inhabitants. Her voice is, by turns, naively whimsical and biblical in its assurance, and it speaks of what is partially remembered, partly divined. The memories often concern a childhood in the Caribbean--family, manners, and landscape--as distilled and transformed by Kincaid's special style and vision. Kincaid leads her readers to consider, as if for the first time, the powerful ties between mother and child; the beauty and destructiveness of nature; the gulf between the masculine and the feminine; the significance of familiar things--a house, a cup, a pen. Transfiguring our human form and our surroundings--shedding skin, darkening an afternoon, painting a perfect place--these stories tell us something we didn't know, in a way we hadn't expected.
Janet Horgan	<i>Long Way Down</i> by Jason Reynolds Fiction, great for any age Available on SORA	As the elevator stops on the sixth floor, on comes Buck. Buck, Will finds out, is who gave Shawn the gun before Will took the gun. Buck tells Will to check that the gun is even loaded. And that's when Will sees that one bullet is missing. And the only one who could have fired Shawn's gun was Shawn. Huh. Will didn't know that Shawn had ever actually USED his gun. Bigger huh. BUCK IS DEAD. But Buck's in the elevator? Just as Will's trying to think this through, the door to the next floor opens. A teenage girl gets on, waves away the smoke from dead Buck's cigarette. Will doesn't know her, but she knew him. Knew. When they were eight. And stray bullets had cut through the playground, and Will had tried to cover her, but she was hit anyway, and so what she wants to know, on that fifth floor elevator stop, is, what if Will, Will with the gun shoved in the back waistband of his jeans, MISSES. And so it goes, the whole long way down, as the elevator stops on each floor, and at each stop someone connected to his brother gets on to give Will a piece to a bigger story than the one he thinks he knows. A story that might never know an END...if Will gets off that elevator. Told in short, fierce staccato narrative verse, Long Way Down is a fast and furious, dazzlingly brilliant look at teenage gun violence, as could only be told by Jason Reynolds.
Heather McGuire	<i>Solo Leveling</i>	Vol. 1: Known as the Weakest Hunter of All Mankind, E-rank hunter Jinwoo Sung's contribution to raids amounts to trying not to get killed. Unfortunately, between his mother's hospital bills, his sister's tuition, and his own lack of job prospects, he has no choice but to continue to put his life on the line.

	<p>Volumes 1-3 translated by Hye Yound Im, etal.</p> <p>Comic Manga/Manhwa</p> <p>Great for video game lovers and anime fans of all ages</p>	<p>So when an opportunity arises for a bigger payout, he takes it...only to come face-to-face with a being whose power outranks anything he's ever seen! With the party leader missing an arm and the only healer a quivering mess, can Jinwoo somehow find them a way out?</p> <p>Vol. 2: Ever since he woke up in the hospital, Jinwoo's been thrown into a world of cryptic messages, daily quests, and strange dungeons overflowing with creatures he's never even heard of. As he tests out his new abilities, it starts to sink in that he is no longer the Weakest Hunter of All Mankind. Maybe he can finally attain what he's always wanted-enough power to protect himself-but a run-in with an unexpected foe forces Jinwoo to consider just how far he's willing to go to obtain it!</p> <p>Vol. 3: Thus far, Jinwoo has managed to keep his rapid evolution hidden from his fellow hunters. When he arrives at his latest assignment, though, he is greeted by a group of familiar faces-Joohee, Mr. Song, and the other survivors of the double dungeon are gathered for the raid, and his comrades can't help but notice Jinwoo's drastic change in stature! Jinwoo intends to act the weakling he was before, but when their party is joined by a group of criminals and their association minder, Jinwoo may have no choice but to push his newly acquired skills to the limit if he and his friends want to get out alive!</p>
Liz Kinsella	<p><i>King and the Dragonflies</i> by Kacen Callender</p> <p>Fiction, great for any age</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>Twelve-year-old Kingston James is sure his brother Khalid has turned into a dragonfly. When Khalid unexpectedly passed away, he shed what was his first skin for another to live down by the bayou in their small Louisiana town. Khalid still visits in dreams, and King must keep these secrets to himself as he watches grief transform his family. It would be easier if King could talk with his best friend, Sandy Sanders. But just days before he died, Khalid told King to end their friendship, after overhearing a secret about Sandy.</p> <p>But when Sandy goes missing, sparking a town-wide search, and King finds his former best friend hiding in a tent in his backyard, he agrees to help Sandy escape from his abusive father, and the two begin an adventure as they build their own private paradise down by the bayou and among the dragonflies. As King's friendship with Sandy is reignited, he's forced to confront questions about himself and the reality of his brother's death.</p>
Andrea Milam	<p><i>Station Eleven</i> by Emily St. John Mandel</p> <p>Fiction, best suitable for high school students</p> <p>Available on SORA</p>	<p>An audacious, darkly glittering novel set in the eerie days of civilization's collapse—the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity.</p> <p>Kirsten Raymonde will never forget the night Arthur Leander, the famous Hollywood actor, had a heart attack on stage during a production of <i>King Lear</i>. That was the night when a devastating flu pandemic arrived in the city, and within weeks, civilization as she knew it came to an end.</p> <p>Twenty years later, Kirsten moves between the settlements of the altered world with a small troupe of actors and musicians. They call themselves <i>The Traveling Symphony</i>, and they have dedicated themselves to keeping the remnants of art and humanity alive. But when they arrive in <i>St. Deborah by the Water</i>, they encounter a violent prophet who will threaten the tiny band's existence. And as the story takes off, moving back and forth in time, and vividly depicting life before and after the pandemic, the strange twist of fate that connects them all will be revealed.</p>

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