

Summer Reading List 2018

Dear Rising Sophomore,

You finished your first year of high school—and now you embark on your second. You're a pro at this already, so you probably know what this letter entails: It's your summer reading assignment for English class!

You likely already know that reading amounts to the best way to meet the rigor awaiting you next year. For that reason, we have created a diverse list of British Literature pieces for the summer. Similar to last year, we expect you to read a minimum of three books over the summer and among them involve a few specific pieces.

We require all sophomores, for example, to read Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. On the following pages of this sheet, you should also see assignments to guide your reading. You will use these assignments during the discussions that will take place in your English class in September. Even if you have previously read these works, you should view them with a different lens through rereading them and completing the assigned work.

Additionally, we also allow you, the student, to have some choice in what you read. Our goal involves having you read for pleasure, so we have provided a list of books that cover several subjects within the British Literature genre—with some even appearing short, but challenging. We are sure you will find something that appeals to you in each list.

If you should have any questions, feel free to email Ms. Esposito, the English Department Chairperson, at mesposito@prestonhs.org.

Have a great summer and see you in September!

Sincerely,
The Sophomore-Level Faculty

Assignment:

1. You are required to purchase and read the following book. You must bring this book with you to English class on the first days of school.

***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, by Mark Haddon**

Christopher, a fifteen-year-old boy with Asperger syndrome, lives with his father; his mother supposedly died two years before. He discovers the dead body of Wellington, his neighbor's dog, speared by a garden fork. Mrs. Shears, Wellington's owner, calls the police, and Christopher comes under suspicion. When a policeman touches him, he hits the policeman, and is arrested, then released with a caution. He decides to investigate the dog's death, despite his father's orders to stay out of other people's business. However, he is severely limited by his fears and difficulties when interpreting the world around him. Throughout his adventures, Christopher records his experiences in a book: a "murder mystery novel".

2. Read the three non-fiction supplements to *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* found on pages 3-11 of this document. The questions that follow on page 12 must be answered AND TYPED and will be submitted it to your English teacher on the first day of school for a grade.

3. Read at least two more books. Choose one book that appeals to you from the fiction selections and one from the non-fiction selections starting on this document's page 13. You are expected to have completed all these books by the first day of class in September. Read for understanding and enjoyment and to broaden your cultural background. But be prepared to write knowledgeably about these books during the first week of classes.

HANDOUT #1

Written by Stephen M. Edelson, Ph.D. Center for the Study of Autism, Salem, Oregon

Asperger's syndrome was first described by a German doctor, Hans Asperger, in 1944 (one year after Leo Kanner's first paper on autism). In his paper, Dr. Asperger discussed individuals who exhibited many idiosyncratic, odd-like behaviors (see description below).

Often individuals with Asperger's syndrome have many of the behaviors listed below:

Language:

- lucid speech before age 4 years; grammar and vocabulary are usually very good
- speech is sometimes stilted and repetitive
- voice tends to be flat and emotionless
- conversations revolve around self

Cognition

- obsessed with complex topics, such as patterns, weather, music, history, etc.
- often described as eccentric
- I.Q.'s fall along the full spectrum, but many are in the above normal range in verbal ability and in the below average range in performance abilities.
- many have dyslexia, writing problems, and difficulty with mathematics
- lack common sense
- concrete thinking (versus abstract)

Behavior

- movements tend to be clumsy and awkward
- odd forms of self-stimulatory behavior
- sensory problems appear not to be as dramatic as those with other forms of autism
- socially aware but displays inappropriate reciprocal interaction

Researchers feel that Asperger's syndrome is probably hereditary in nature because many families report having an "odd" relative or two. In addition, depression and bipolar disorder are often reported in those with Asperger's syndrome as well as in family members.

At this time, there is no prescribed treatment regimen for individuals with Asperger's syndrome. In adulthood, many lead productive lives, living independently, working effectively at a job (many are college professors, computer programmers, dentists), and raising a family.

Sometimes people assume everyone who has autism and is high-functioning has Asperger's syndrome. However, it appears that there are several forms of high-functioning autism, and Asperger's syndrome is one form.

HANDOUT #2

Frequently Asked Questions about Autism
Temple Grandin, Ph.D.
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1. How do I know if my child has problems with sensory over sensitivity?

Sounds or visual stimuli that are tolerated by normal children may cause pain, confusion and/or fear in some autistic children. Sensory over sensitivity can vary from very slight to severe. If your child frequently puts his hands over his ears, this is an indicator of sensitivity to noise. Children who flick their fingers in front of their eyes are likely to have visual sensitivity problems. Children who enjoy a trip to a large super-market or a shopping mall usually have relatively mild sensory sensitivities. Autistic children with severe sensory sensitivities will often have tantrums and other bad behavior in a shopping mall due to sensory overload. These children are the ones who will most likely need environmental modifications in the classroom. Older children and adults, who remain nonverbal and have very little language, often have more severe sensitivities than individuals with good language. Children with auditory or visual sensitivity will often have normal hearing and visual acuity tests. The problem is in the brain, whereas the ears and eyes are normal.

2. What sights and sounds are most likely to cause sensory overload or confusion in the classroom?

Every autistic child or adult is different. A sound or sight, which is painful to one autistic child, may be attractive to another. The flicker of fluorescent lighting can be seen by some children with autism and may be distracting to them. It is mostly likely to cause sensory overload in children who flick their fingers in front of their eyes. Replacing fluorescents with incandescent bulbs will be helpful for some children. Many children with autism are scared of the public address system, the school bells or the fire alarms, because the sound hurts their ears. Screeching electronic feedback from public address systems or the sound of fire alarms are the worst sounds because the onset of the sound canNOT be predicted. Children with milder hearing sensitivity can sometimes learn to tolerate hurtful sounds when they know when they will occur. However, they may NEVER learn to tolerate UNexpected loud noise. Autistic children with severe hearing sensitivity should be removed from the classroom prior to a fire drill. The fear of a hurtful sound may make an autistic child fearful of a certain classroom. He may become afraid to go into the room because he fears that the fire alarm or the public address systems may make a hurtful sound. If possible, the buzzes or bell should be modified to reduce the sound. Sometimes only a slight reduction in sound is required to make a buzzer or bell tolerable. Duct tape can be applied to bells to soften the sounds. If the public address system has frequent feedback problems, it should be disconnected.

Echoes and noise can be reduced by installing carpeting -- carpet remnants can sometimes be obtained from a carpet store at a low cost. Scraping of chair legs on the floor can be muffled by placing cut tennis balls on the chair legs.

3. Why does my child avoid certain foods or always want to eat the same thing?

Certain foods may be avoided due to sensory over sensitivity. Crunchy foods such as potato chips may be too loud and sound like a raging forest fire to children with over sensitive hearing. Certain odors may be overpowering. When I was a child I gagged when I had to eat slimy foods like jello. However, some limited food preferences may be bad habits and are not due to sensory problems. One has to be a careful observer to figure out which foods cause sensory pain. For example, if a child has extreme sound sensitivity, he should not be required to eat loud, crunchy foods; but he should be encouraged to eat a variety of softer foods. When I was a child my parents made me eat everything except the two things which really made me gag. They were under-cooked slimy egg whites and jello. I was allowed to have a grilled cheese sandwich everyday for lunch, but at dinnertime I was expected to eat everything that was not slimy.

To motivate a child to eat something he does not like, it is recommended to have a food he really likes such as pizza right in front of him along with the food he dislikes. He is then told that he can have the pizza after he eats a few bites of peas. It is important to have the pizza right there in front of him to motivate eating something he does not like.

4. How do I toilet train my autistic child?

There are two major causes of toilet training problems in children with autism. They are either afraid of the toilet or they do not know what they are supposed to do. Children with severe hearing sensitivity may be terrified of the toilet flushing. The sound may hurt their ears. Sometimes these children can learn if they use a potty chair which is located away from the frightening toilet. Due to the great variability of sensory problems, some children may like to repeatedly flush the toilet but they are still not trained. The thinking of some autistic children is so concrete that the only way they can learn is to have an adult demonstrate to them how to use the toilet. They have to see someone else do it in order to learn. Some children with very severe sensory processing problems are not able to accurately sense when they need to use the bathroom. If they are calm they may be able to feel the sensation that they need to urinate or defecate, but if they experience sensory overload they cannot feel it. This may explain why a child will sometimes use the toilet correctly, and other times he will not.

5. Why do some autistic children repeat back what an adult has said or sing TV commercials?

Repeating back what has been said, or being able to sing an entire TV commercial or children's video is called 'echolalia.' Echolalia is actually a good sign because it indicates that the child's brain is processing language even though he may not be understanding the meaning of the words. These children need to learn that words are used for communication. If a child says the word 'apple,' immediately give him an apple. This will enable the child to associate the word 'apple' with getting a real apple. Some autistic children use phrases from TV commercials or children's videos in an appropriate manner in other situations. This is how they learn language. For example, if a child says part of a breakfast cereal slogan at breakfast, give him the cereal.

Autistic children also use echolalia to verify what has been said. Some children have difficulty hearing hard consonant sounds such as "d" in dog or "b" in boy. Repeating the phrase helps them to hear it. Children who pass a pure tone hearing test can still have difficulty hearing complex speech sounds. Children with this difficulty may learn to read and speak by using flash cards that have both a printed word and a picture of an object. By using these cards they learn to associate the spoken word with the printed word and a picture. My speech therapist helped me to learn to hear speech by lengthening hard consonant sounds. She would hold up a ball and say "bbbb all." The hard consonant sound of "b" was lengthened. Some autistic children learn vowel sounds more easily than consonants.

6. How should educators and parents handle autistic fixations on things such as lawn mowers or trains?

Fixations should be used to motivate schoolwork and education. If a child is fixated on trains, use his interest in trains to motivate reading or learning arithmetic. Have him read about trains or do arithmetic problems with trains. The intense interest in trains can be used to motivate reading. It is a mistake to take fixations away, but the child needs to learn that there are some situations when talking about trains is not appropriate.

The idea is to broaden the fixation into a less fixated educational or social activity. If a child likes to spin a penny then start playing a game with the child where you and the child take turns playing with the penny. This also helps to teach turn taking. A train fixation could be broadened in studying history. A high-functioning child would be motivated to read a book about the history of the railroad. One should build and broaden fixation into useful activities. My career in livestock equipment design started as a fixation on cattle chutes. My high school science teacher encouraged me to study science to learn more about my fixation.

High functioning autistic and Asperger teenagers need mentors to help them develop their talents into a career skill. They need somebody to teach them computer programming or graphic arts. A local computer professional could serve as a mentor or the individual may be able to take a programming class at a community college. Many parents

wonder where they can find a mentor for their teenager. Try posting a notice on a bulletin board at a university computer science department or strike up a conversation with the man in the supermarket checkout line who is wearing a badge with the name of a computer company on it. I found one of my mentors in the business world when I met the wife of his insurance agent.

7. What is the difference between PDD and autism?

Autism and PDD are behavioral diagnoses. At the present time there are no medical tests for autism. Autism is diagnosed based on the child's behavior. Both children diagnosed with autism and PDD will benefit from education programs designed for autistics. It is essential that children diagnosed as PDD receive the same education as children diagnosed with autism. Both autistic and PDD children should be placed into a good early education program immediately after diagnosis. Children diagnosed with PDD tend to fall into two groups: (1) very mild autistic symptoms, or (2) some autistic symptoms in a child who has other severe neurological problems. Therefore, some children diagnosed as PDD may be almost normal; and others have severe neurological problems such as epilepsy, microencephaly or cerebral palsy. The problem with the autism and PDD diagnoses is that they are NOT precise. They are based only on behavior. In the future, brain scans will be used for precise diagnosis. Today there is no brain scan that can be used for diagnosing PDD nor autism.

8. Why is Early Intervention important?

Both scientific studies and practical experience have shown that the prognosis is greatly improved if a child is placed into an intense, highly structured educational program by age two or three. Autistic children perform stereotypic behaviors such as rocking or twiddling a penny because engaging in repetitive behaviors shuts off sounds and sights which cause confusion and/or pain. The problem is that if the child is allowed to shut out the world, his brain will not develop. Autistic and PDD children need many hours of structured education to keep their brain engaged with the world. They need to be kept interacting in a meaningful way with an adult or another child. The worst things for a young two to five year old autistic child is to sit alone watching TV or playing video games all day. His brain will be shut off from the world. Autistic children need to be kept engaged; but at the same time, a teacher must be careful to avoid sensory overload. Children with milder sensory problems often respond well to Lovaas-type programs. However, children with more severe sensory processing problems may experience sensory overload. There are two major categories of children. The first type will respond well to a therapist who is gently intrusive and pulls them out of their world. I was this type. My speech therapist was able to "snap me out of it" by grabbing my chin and making me pay attention. The second type of child has more neurological problems, and they may respond poorly to a strict Lovaas program. They will require a gentler approach. Some are 'mono-channel' because they cannot see and hear at the same time. They either have to look at something or they have to listen. Simultaneous looking and listening may result in sensory overload and shutdown. This type of child may respond best when the teacher whispers quietly in a dimly illuminated room.

A good teacher needs to tailor his/her teaching method to the child. To be successful, the teacher has to be gently insistent. A good teacher knows how hard to push. To be successful, the teacher has to intrude into the autistic child's world. With some children the teacher can jerk open their "front door;" and with other children, the teacher has to sneak quietly in their "back door."

9. Why does my child want to wear the same clothes all the time?

Stiff scratching clothes or wool against my skin is sandpaper ripping off raw nerve endings. I am not able to tolerate scratching clothes. Autistic children will be most comfortable with soft cotton against their skin. New underwear and shirts will be more comfortable if they are washed several times. It is often best to avoid spray starch or fabric softeners that are placed in the dryer. Some children are allergic to them. [Note: Caretakers and teachers should also avoid the use of perfume because some children hate the smell and/or they are allergic to it.]

Even today at the age of 49, I have had to find good clothes and work clothes that feel the same. It takes me up to two weeks to habituate to the feeling of wearing a skirt. If I wear shorts during the summer, it takes at least a week before long pants become fully tolerable. The problem is switching back-and-forth. Switching back-and-forth can be made more tolerable by wearing tights with skirts. The tights make the skirt feel the same as long pants.

HANDOUT #3

The Savant Syndrome: Islands of Genius

Darold A. Treffert, M.D.

Savant Syndrome is a rare, but spectacular, condition in which persons with various developmental disabilities, including Autistic Disorder, have astonishing islands of ability or brilliance that stand in stark, markedly incongruous contrast to the over-all handicap. In some, savant skills are remarkable simply in contrast to the handicap (talented savants). In others, with a much rarer form of the condition, the ability or brilliance is not only spectacular in contrast to the handicap, but would be spectacular even if viewed in a normal person (prodigious savant). There are fewer than 100 reported cases of prodigious savants in the world literature. The condition was first named Idiot Savant in 1887 by Dr. J. Langdon Down (better known for having named Down's Syndrome). He chose that term because the word "idiot" at that time was an accepted classification level of mental retardation (IQ below 25) and the word "savant" meant knowledgeable person derived from the french word savoir, meaning "to know". The term idiot savant has been largely discarded now, appropriately, because of its colloquial, pejorative connotation and has been replaced by Savant Syndrome. Actually Idiot

Savant was a misnomer since almost all of the reported cases have occurred in persons with IQs of 40 or above. The condition can be congenital or acquired in an otherwise normal individual following CNS injury or disease. It occurs in males more frequently than in females in an approximate 6:1 ratio.

Savant skills occur within a narrow but constant range of human mental functions, generally in six areas: calendar calculating; lightning calculating & mathematical ability; art (drawing or sculpting); music (usually piano with perfect pitch); mechanical abilities; and spatial skills. In some instances unusual language abilities have been reported but those are rare. Other skills much less frequently reported include map memorizing, visual measurement, extrasensory perception, unusual sensory discrimination such as enhanced sense of touch & smell, and perfect appreciation passing time without knowledge of a clock face. The most common savant skill is musical ability. A regularly re-occurring triad of musical genius, blindness and autism is particularly striking in the world literature on this topic. Premature birth history is commonly reported in persons with Savant Syndrome.

In some cases of Savant Syndrome a single special skill exists; in others there are several skills co-existing simultaneously. The skills tend to be right hemisphere in type--nonsymbolic, artistic, concrete, directly perceived--in contrast to left hemisphere type that tend to be more sequential, logical, and symbolic including language specialization.

Whatever the special skills, they are always linked with phenomenal memory. That memory, however, is a special type--very narrow but exceedingly deep--within its narrow confines. Such memory is a type of "unconscious reckoning"--habit or procedural memory--which relies on more primitive circuitry (cortico-striatal) than higher level (cortico-limbic) cognitive or associative memory used more commonly and regularly in normal persons.

Approximately 10% of persons with Autistic Disorder have some savant abilities; that percentage is much greater than in other developmental disabilities where in an institutionalized population that figure may be as low as 1:2000. Since other developmental disabilities are much more common than autism, however, the actual percent of persons with Savant Syndrome turns out to be approximately half Autistic Disorder and half other Developmental Disabilities.

Theories to explain Savant Syndrome include eidetic imagery, inherited skills, concrete thinking and inability to think abstractly, compensation & reinforcement, and left brain injury with right brain compensation. Newer findings on cerebral lateralization, and some imaging and other studies that do show left hemisphere damage in savants, suggest that the most plausible explanation for Savant Syndrome to be left brain damage from pre-natal, peri-natal or post-natal CNS damage with migratory, right brain compensation, coupled with corresponding damage to higher level, cognitive (cortico-limbic) memory circuitry with compensatory take over of lower level, habit (cortical-striatal) memory. This accounts for the linking of predominately right brain skills with habit memory so characteristic of Savant Syndrome (Treffert, 1989). In talented savants, concreteness and impaired ability to think abstractly are locked in a very narrow band but, nevertheless, with constant practice and repetition can produce sufficient coding so that access to some non-cognitive structure or unconscious algorithms can be automatically attained. In prodigious savants, some genetic factors may be operative as well, since practice alone cannot account for the access to vast rules of music, art or mathematics that seems innate in these persons. Once established, intense concentration, practice, compensatory drives and reinforcement by family, teachers and others play a major role in developing and polishing the savant skills and memory linked so characteristically and dramatically by this unique brain dysfunction.

One of the pre-natal CNS injury mechanisms, which has implications not only for Savant Syndrome but other disorders as well in which male sex is over-represented, is the neurotoxic effect of circulating testosterone on

the left hemisphere in the male fetus based on observations and reported by Geschwind and Galaburda. Since the left brain completes its development later than the right brain, it is at risk for CNS damage for a longer period of time to circulating-testosterone (which can be neurotoxic) in male fetuses and that left CNS damage, with right brain compensation, may account for the high male:female ratio not only in Savant Syndrome, but in autism, stuttering, hyperactivity and learning disabilities as well.

The movie *Rain Man* depicted an autistic savant and that term became almost a household word. It is important to remember, however, that not all autistic persons are savants, and not all savants are autistic. What one sees in *Rain Man* are savant skills (lightening calculating, memorization etc.) grafted on to autism (narrowed affect, obsessive sameness, rituals etc). It is also important to point out that the savant in the movie is a high functioning person with autistic disorder, but the disorder consists of an entire spectrum of disabilities ranging from profoundly disturbed to high functioning; not all autistic savants function at such a high level.

For many years it was feared that helping the savant achieve a higher level of functioning with treatment--"eliminating the defect"--would result in a loss of special skills, i.e. there would be a trade-off of right brain special skills for left brain language acquisition, for example. That has not turned out to be the case. Quite to the contrary, "training the talent" is a valuable approach toward increasing socialization, language and independence. Thus the special skills of the savant, rather than being seen a odd, frivolous, trivial or distracting, become a useful treatment tool as a conduit toward normalization in these special persons. Some schools have begun to include persons with Savant Syndrome into classes for the gifted and talented as a method of enhancing further this conduit toward normalization.

There are probably fewer than 25 prodigious savants living at the present time. Some of those include Leslie Lemke (music), Alonzo Clemens (sculpting), Richard Wawro (painting), Stephen Wiltshire (drawing), Tony DeBlois (music) to name some. Other prodigious savants more recently described are in England, Austrailia and Japan. A 1983 60 Minutes program on Savant Syndrome was particularly useful in bringing this remarkable condition to more general attention and of course the move *Rain Man* catapulted the condition to national prominence. There have been a number of other television specials and several movies about Savant Syndrome over the past 10 years. My book *Extraordinary People: Understanding Savant Syndrome* reviews the condition in depth.

Name: _____

Teachers Name: _____

Date: _____

English 10 Summer Reading/Writing Assignment

After reading the three articles discussing Asperger's syndrome that are attached below, answer the following 10 questions. Please submit this to your teacher on the first day of school in September.

1. Name three characteristics of a person with Asperger's syndrome?
2. Why do researchers believe that Asperger's syndrome may be hereditary?
3. What is the difference between Asperger's syndrome and autism?
4. Describe three problems that might arise due to sensory or over sensitivity.
5. What is meant by the term echolalia?
6. Do all people with autism exhibit the same symptoms?
7. What is a savant?
8. What are the six skills that are characteristic of a savant?
9. The novel you are about to read is told through the point of view of a boy with Asperger's syndrome. What do you expect from this novel?
10. Do you know anyone that is autistic or who has Asperger's syndrome? If so, explain what they are like. If you do not know someone personally, have you ever read about or seen a person with autism in a movie?

Section One: Choose at least one title from this fiction section. Feel free to read more.

***The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams**

Join Douglas Adams's hapless hero Arthur Dent as he travels the galaxy with his intrepid pal Ford Prefect, getting into horrible messes and generally wreaking hilarious havoc. Aliens snatch Dent from Earth moments before a cosmic construction team obliterates the planet to build a freeway. You'll never read funnier science fiction; Adams is a master of intelligent satire, barbed wit, and comedic dialogue.

Rebecca, by Daphne DuMaurier

This is a novel of mystery and passion, a dark psychological tale of secrets and betrayal, dead loves, and an estate called Manderley that is as much a presence as the humans who inhabit it.

The Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Encountering ruthless trolls, beastly orcs, gigantic spiders, and hungry wolves, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins discovers within himself astonishing strength and courage. And, at the ultimate confrontation with the fearsome dragon Smaug, the hobbit braves the dangers of dark and dragon fire alone and unaided. This story is the prequel to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, by Arthur Conan Doyle**

From "A Scandal in Bohemia," in which Sherlock Holmes is famously outwitted by a woman, the captivating Irene Adler, to "The Five Orange Pips," in which the master detective is pitted against the Ku Klux Klan, to "The Final Problem," in which Holmes and his archenemy, Professor Moriarty, face each other in a showdown at the Reichenbach Falls, the stories that appear in *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* bear witness to the flowering of author Arthur Conan Doyle's genius.

***A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens**

Dickens painted a vivid picture of the French Revolution with melodrama set on a background of villainy and violence, built on the coincidence of an Englishman and a Frenchman who look alike. Dickens created a moving tale. In the end, a dissolute man, raised by a woman's love, becomes the hero.

***The Dark is Rising*, by Susan Meyer**

In this book, Will Stanton begins to have strange experiences on his eleventh birthday, just before Christmas. He soon learns he is one of the Old Ones, a guardian and warrior for The Light. He learns that he must help find the four Things of Power for The Light in order to battle the forces of The Dark. The first of these Things of Power is the Circle of Six Signs. This book is the key book for the main character, Will Stanton. It is in this book that he collects the six signs, which become the Circle of Signs, one of the Things of Power, by finding the additional five mandala (he has been given one earlier) and uses the completed Circle to ward off the forces of The Dark. This book received the 1974 Newbury Honor.

***Cat's Eye*, by Margaret Atwood**

Controversial painter Elaine Risley vividly reflects on her childhood and teenage years. Her strongest memories are of Cordelia, who was the leader of a trio of girls who were both very cruel and very kind to young Elaine, in ways that tint Elaine's perceptions of relationships and her world—not to mention her art—into the character's middle years. The novel unfolds in Canada of the mid-20th century, from World War II to the late 1980s, and includes a look at many of the cultural elements of that time, including feminism and various modern art movements. This book was a finalist for the 1988 Governor General's Award.

Section Two: Choose at least one non-fiction book from this section. Feel free to read more.

***Shout: The Beatles in Their Generation*, by Phillip Norman**

Journalist and novelist Norman (*Rave On: The Biography of Buddy Holly*) here updates and revises his 1981 Beatles biography, which sold 125,000 copies. The book now includes information on Paul McCartney's and Ringo Starr's recent activities, details the tragic end of George Harrison's life, and seeks to present a more objective view of the contributions made by each Beatle (the 1981 edition was decidedly anti-McCartney). Norman also includes new insight into the complex relationship between John Lennon and Yoko Ono, the result of several interviews with Ono in recent years. While Norman's revision still seems a tad harsh on Harrison as a guitarist and McCartney as a human being, it is the most balanced, detailed, and highly analytical of the popular biographies of the Beatles. Priced to find its way into the home libraries of Beatles fans, this is also well worth purchasing as a replacement by libraries owning the first edition. From "Library Journal."

Down and Out in London and Paris, by George Orwell

What was a nice Eton boy like Eric Blair doing in scummy slums instead of being upwardly mobile at Oxford or Cambridge? Living *Down and Out in Paris and London*, repudiating respectable imperialist society, and reinventing himself as George Orwell. His 1933 debut book (ostensibly a novel, but overwhelmingly autobiographical) was rejected by that elitist publisher T.S. Eliot, perhaps because its close-up portrait of lowlife was too pungent for comfort.

In Paris, Orwell lived in verminous rooms and washed dishes at the overpriced "Hotel X," in a remarkably filthy, 110-degree kitchen. He met "eccentric people--people who have fallen into solitary, half-mad grooves of life and given up trying to be normal or decent." Though Orwell's tone is that of an outraged reformer, it's surprising how entertaining many of his adventures are: gnawing poverty only enlivens the imagination, and the wild characters he met often swindled each other and themselves. The wackiest tale involves a miser who ate cats, wore newspapers for underwear, invested 6,000 francs in cocaine, and hid it in a face-powder tin when the cops raided. They had to free him, because the apparently controlled substance turned out to be face powder instead of cocaine.

In London, Orwell studied begging with a crippled expert named Bozo, a great storyteller and philosopher. Orwell devotes a chapter to the fine points of London guttersnipe slang. Years later, he would put his lexical bent to work by inventing Newspeak, and draw on his down-and-out experience to evoke the plight of the Proles in [1984](#). Though marred by hints of unexamined anti-Semitism, Orwell's debut remains, as *The Nation* put it, "the most lucid portrait of poverty in the English language." --*Tim Appelo*

Blame my Brain, by Nicola Morgan

From the Q & A with author Nicola Morgan.

Q: What is it (Blame My Brain) about?

A: What's going on in your head. Why. Why it's important. How long it will last. And what you can do about it.

Q: What's so interesting about that? It's just a brain.

A: Yes, but there's fantastic new research into the teenage brain and what scientists have discovered in the last few years will amaze you. And reassure you. And amaze and reassure your parents.

Q: Explain.

A: Well, scientists used to think that when we are born we have all the brain cells (neurons) we'll ever have. Now they know it's not true. And especially that just before puberty large numbers of extra ones suddenly grow. Then, during the rest of adolescence, about the same amount are cut back drastically. During adolescence, bits of your brain develop at different speeds. Your teenage brain is in a state of physical change, probably greater than at any time since you were two years old and greater than at anytime you will experience again.

The Number Devil: A Mathematical Adventure, by Hans Magnus Enzenberger

Bad dreams plague Robert until a mysterious creature called the Number Devil appears to him one night. Robert, who hates everything to do with numbers, thinks it just another nightmare, but, surprisingly, finds himself fascinated by the intricacies of mathematics as taught by the exacting but always enthusiastic Devil. In a series of 12 dreams, Robert (and the reader) are introduced to ever more complex theories, from different kinds of infinity to triangular numbers.

In Number Hell/Number Heaven, Robert and the Devil meet famous mathematicians of the past and Robert is inducted into the ranks of number apprentices. Surreal touches (numbers flying in the air, floating in a swimming pool), fanciful names for mathematical terms (prima-donna numbers for prime numbers) and problems posed directly to the reader contribute to the playful tone. The generous and strategic use of color, however, provides the biggest boost: even mathematical equations look festive here, hand-printed in warm muted tones. The string of mathematical concepts may well daunt many readers, unused to a novel of ideas, particularly because the reasoning behind several of the "tricks" demonstrated by the Devil is not fully explained. However, for certain kinds of readers (chess players & puzzle enthusiasts) this will be a favorite.

Beethoven's Hair, by Russell Martin

A well-publicized 1994 Sotheby's auction listed, among other musical artifacts and ephemera on the block, a lock of Beethoven's hair. The high-bidders for the hair, two Beethoven enthusiasts, were easy enough to identify by their oddball names: one was a doctor named Che Guevara, the other a retired real estate developer named Ira Brilliant. But the real story is how did the lock end up on the auction block? More important, can we learn anything from a 175-year-old snippet of hair? Russell Martin has created a rich historical treasure hunt, an Indiana Jones-like tale of false leads, amazing breakthroughs, and incredible revelations. This unique and fascinating book is a moving testament to the power of music, the lure of relics, the heroism of the Resistance movement, and the brilliance of forensic science.

Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations, by Georgiana Howell

She was an English writer, traveler, political officer, administrator in Arabia, and an archaeologist who explored, mapped, and became highly important to British imperial policy-making due to her extensive travels in Greater Syria, Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and Arabia. She was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1917. Bell, along with T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), helped establish the Hashemite dynasties in Jordan as well as in Iraq. She played a major role in establishing and helping administer the modern state of Iraq utilizing her unique perspectives from her travels and relations with tribal leaders throughout the Middle East. During her lifetime, she was highly beloved and trusted by British officials and given an immense amount of power for a woman in that time.

The House of Windsor, by Andrew Roberts

The fifth volume in a five volume History of England, *The House of Windsor* has at its centre insights into and biographies of England during the tumultuous twentieth century. The book traces the lives of monarchs of living memory and near past, from George V to the current Elizabeth the Second.

The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, & the Modern World, by Steven Johnson

In 1854, when the existence of bacteria and the concept of waterborne disease are still unknown, two men, one a physician and the other a clergyman, successfully trace the source of a cholera epidemic to a contaminated well in an impoverished part of London.

***Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt**

Born in Brooklyn in 1930 to recent Irish immigrants Malachy and Angela McCourt, Frank grew up in Limerick after his parents returned to Ireland because of poor prospects in America. It turns out that prospects weren't so great back in the old country either. Mix in abject poverty and frequent death, and illness and you have all the makings of a truly difficult early life. Fortunately, in McCourt's able hands it also has all the makings for a compelling memoir.

If you should have any questions, feel free to email Ms. Esposito, the English Department Chairperson, at mesposito@prestonhs.org.