

Clayton High School Summer Reading Challenge 2016

Theme: *Disappearance*

Read one or all titles this summer; be ready to celebrate the theme and books as a whole school community when we return in August!

***Bunker Diary* by Kevin Brooks (Young Adult)**

Linus is a 16-year-old runaway living on the harsh English streets who wakes up one day in an unfamiliar underground bunker with no water or food while under constant surveillance by an unknown kidnapper. As each day passes, more people are kidnapped and are subjected to the same brutal conditions. When Linus and the rest try to escape and find out more about their situation and their kidnapper, they realize that, with their options dwindling, they may have to resort to the ultimate horror to survive. Brooks's controversial Carnegie Medal-winner is truly a psychologically harrowing book that will leave readers with a deep sense of unease. Linus's first-person narrative will make teens ask themselves what they would do in his situation. It's not a title for everyone: some may be unsettled by the harsh realities the protagonist faces, while others will be fascinated by the simple complexity of Brooks's prose and truly effective storytelling. *School Library Journal*, December 1, 2014

***Girl in the Blue Coat* by Monica Hesse (Historical Fiction)**

Amsterdam, 1943: in the wake of the German occupation of Holland, 18-year-old Hanneke has begun trafficking in the illegal black market, finding scarce goods like food and alcohol to sell. But she is taken aback when a customer implores her to find a person instead—a missing Jewish girl in a blue coat. Hanneke's reluctant decision to help sets in motion a chain of events that dramatically changes her life and the lives of others and raises the question, should she find the missing girl, what then? Hesse, a Washington Post journalist, does a fine job of reportage in this affecting novel. Her characters come alive, and what one of them says about photographs—that they make everything so current, just like real life—could describe the book itself, which is adept at verisimilitude, creating a closely observed setting that skillfully combines reality with fiction. Speaking of fiction, Hesse's pacing infuses her story with thriller suspense, enriching the narrative with dramatic surprises both small and large. As one character muses, "Nothing in this war is what it seems." Ultimately, Hesse takes her readers behind a misleading surface to discover the lurking truths.--*Booklist*, January 1, 2016

***Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* by Erik Larson (Nonfiction)**

The sinking of the British ocean liner Lusitania in 1915 is one of a trio (including the iceberg-wounded Titanic in 1912 and the Italian liner Andrea Doria, which collided with another liner on the high seas in 1956) of the most dramatic and most remembered maritime disasters of the twentieth century. With the narrative skills shown so effectively in his *The Devil in the*

White City (2003), a lively account of Chicago's 1893 World's Fair, Larson reconstructs the last and fatal voyage of what was widely considered the most beautiful ship of the day, the giant four-stacker Lusitania. Reader engrossment is tightly sustained as we move back and forth between the Lusitania on its return from New York City to its home port of Liverpool under a black cloud of warnings that the imperial German government considered the waters around Britain to be a war zone, and the rapacious German submarine U-20, stalking the seas for prey like a lion on the Serengeti. Factual and personal to a high degree, the narrative reads like a grade-A thriller. --*Booklist*, January 1, 2015

***Kill' Em and Leave: Searching for James Brown and the American Soul* by James McBride (Biography)**

National Book Award winner McBride (*The Good Lord Bird*, 2013, etc.) dissects the career, legacy, and myth of the Godfather of Soul. One of the most iconic figures in pop music, James Brown (1933-2006) is also one of the most unknown and falsely represented figures in American cultural history. Taking the recent biopic based on his life as an example, McBride shows how Brown's late-career downward spiral into drug abuse, erratic behavior, and jail time is exaggerated and how it overshadows his legacy as a hardworking and dedicated singer who was a positive cultural force. Part of this misrepresentation was caused by the mystery of Brown, which he perpetuated during his lifetime. As the author points out, Brown was constantly on the run from himself, careful never to reveal too much of his personality in public or private. As Brown put it to his young protege Al Sharpton, "come important and leave important." McBride traces Brown's philosophy of "keeping 'em guessing" through his upbringing in rural South Carolina and Georgia and back to a telling myth of a local ancestor. As the author sums it up: "you can't understand Brown without understanding that the land that produced him is the land of masks." An unconventional and fascinating portrait of Soul Brother No. 1 and the significance of his rise and fall in American culture. --*Kirkus Reviews*, February 15, 2016

***Where'd You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple (Contemporary Fiction)**

Bernadette Fox, practically a shut-in, who's hired a virtual assistant in India to remotely arrange every task, from hiring a gardener to planning the trip to Antarctica she's promised her star-student daughter, Bee seems pretty crazy. But don't be fooled. Suspicions that madcap Bernadette is as clever as her last name implies will be confirmed heartily. When she's party to some unfortunate events, her erratic behavior leads her husband, Microsoft guru Elgin Branch, to commit her to a local mental-health facility. But Bernadette intercepts his plan at the pass, escapes the staged intervention, and disappears without a trace. Though much of the story is told through documents—e-mails, letters, magazine articles—precocious young teen Bee as narrator is great company, entertaining and convincing in her comportment. TV writer Semple (*Arrested Development*) pokes fun at the Pacific Northwest as only a Seattlelite can and concocts a caper that, if seen from outer space, might be a mess but in the minutiae of its tangles is clear and

rewarding. Under the guise of a hilarious romp, Semple explores the universal questions of why we do what we do and love what we love to some sweet and unexpected ends.--*Booklist Starred*, July 2012