ASPIRE 2017
UPPER SCHOOL BOOK BLURBS

Read through the following blurbs, making a list of several choices, and then email those choices to nnonea@tampaprep.org. You will receive an email confirming the book you will be responsible for reading this summer. You may purchase the book in whatever format (digital or print) you desire.

PARENTS: We encourage you to investigate each work further to make your own determination about its suitability for your student. Specifically note those titles with an asterisk (**) as they contain mature content or themes. **STUDENTS MAY NOT CHOOSE A TITLE PREVIOUSLY READ.**

*Manage Your Day-to-Day: Build Your Routine, Find Your Focus, and Sharpen Your Creative Mind* by Jocelyn Glei  
Sponsor: Elle Ashworth
"Manage Your Day-to-Day by Jocelyn Glei, with contributions from various creative minds, is a good read for anyone wanting to improve their creativity and seeking more control over their lives. Among some of the more helpful points for me covered include:

1. Drawing a line between the world's demands and your own ambitions.
2. We can accomplish much by working slowly and consistently over a long period of time.
3. Setting a daily routine by regularly and reliably doing your work in an habitual way.
4. We are not designed to operate at high speeds for long periods of time.
5. Blocking off time for focused creative effort.
6. Multitasking is overrated.
7. Suggestions for improving self-control.
8. Being involved in the moment enhances your creativity.
9. Many people want success in so much haste that they do not take time to be true to themselves. (What good does it do to gain the whole world if you lose your soul in the process?)
10. Disengagement from a situation may provide a solution for your problem.

The book is a delightful read and may be completed in a few sittings. I will often refer to the book when needing either an inspiration or reminder of how to access creativity" (Amazon.com review).

*Dead Man Walking* by Sister Helen Prejean  
Sponsor: Kim Baggett
“In 1982, Sister Helen Prejean became the spiritual advisor to Patrick Sonnier, the convicted killer of two teenagers who was sentenced to die in the electric chair of Louisiana’s Angola State Prison. In the months before Sonnier’s death, the Roman Catholic nun came to know a man who was as terrified as he had once been terrifying. She also came to know the families of the victims and the men whose job it was to execute—men who often harbored doubts about the rightness of what they were doing.

Out of that dreadful intimacy comes a profoundly moving spiritual journey through our system of capital punishment. Here Sister Helen confronts both the plight of the condemned and the rage of the
bereaved, the fears of a society shattered by violence and the Christian imperative of love. On its original
publication in 1993, *Dead Man Walking* emerged as an unprecedented look at the human consequences of
the death penalty. Now, some two decades later, this story—which has inspired a film, a stage play, an
opera and a musical album—is more gut-wrenching than ever, stirring deep and life-changing reflection
in all who encounter it” (Amazon).

*Wit* by Margaret Edson
Sponsor: Jessica Calandra

Winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the
Drama Desk Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Lucille Lortel Award, and the
Oppenheimer Award

“Margaret Edson's powerfully imagined Pulitzer Prize–winning play examines what makes life worth
living through her exploration of one of existence's unifying experiences—mortality—while she also
probes the vital importance of human relationships. …

As the play begins, Vivian Bearing, a renowned professor of English who has spent years studying and
teaching the intricate, difficult Holy Sonnets of the seventeenth-century poet John Donne, is diagnosed
with advanced ovarian cancer. Confident of her ability to stay in control of events, she brings to her
illness the same intensely rational and painstakingly methodical approach that has guided her stellar
academic career. But as her disease and its excruciatingly painful treatment inexorably progress, she
begins to question the single-minded values and standards that have always directed her, finally coming to
understand the aspects of life that make it truly worth living” (Amazon).

*The Honest Truth About Dishonesty* by Dan Ariely
Sponsor: Carl Carlson

“Dan Ariely, behavioral economist and the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Upside of
Irrationality* and *Predictably Irrational*, examines the contradictory forces that drive us to cheat and keep
us honest, in this groundbreaking look at the way we behave: *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty*.

From ticket-fixing in our police departments to test-score scandals in our schools, from our elected
leaders’ extra-marital affairs to the Ponzi schemes undermining our economy, cheating and dishonesty are
ubiquitous parts of our national news cycle—and inescapable parts of the human condition.

Drawing on original experiments and research, in the vein of *Freakonomics*, *The Tipping Point*, and
*Survival of the Sickest*, Ariely reveals—honestly—what motivates these irrational, but entirely human,
behaviors” (Amazon).

**Cuentos de Eva Luna by Isabella Allende (IN SPANISH)**
Sponsor: Santiago Carreno

“Eva Luna -- amante, revolucionaria, narradora -- reclinada en la cama con su amante, le cuenta una
historia ‘que nunca ha contado antes a nadie,’ en veintitres vívidos y fascinantes relatos sobre guerrilleros
y nigromantes, seductores y tiranos, diplomáticos y acróbatas. En esta estupenda colección de cuentos,
Isabel Allende continúa la magia de su muy elogiada novela *Eva Luna*” (Amazon).
**Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys**
*Sponsor: Donna Fowler*
Have you ever heard of the ship, the Wilhelm Gustloff? Ruta Sepetys, author of Between Shades of Grey, once again brings to light yet another rarely mentioned World War II event. This one is an even greater maritime disaster than either the Titanic or the Lusitania. The story is seen through the eyes of four young people whose paths converge as many thousands of refugees battle to reach the coast in an effort to escape The Red Army.

**Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult**
*Co-sponsors: Lisa Harman and Kerri Grosso*
“Jodi Picoult’s Small Great Things is about racism, choice, fear, and hope. The novel is based on the true story of a labor and delivery nurse who was prohibited from caring for a newborn because the father requested that no African-American nurses tend to his baby. In the fictional version, Ruth, the African-American nurse in question, finds herself on trial for events related to the same request made by a white supremacist father. Using the narratives of Ruth, the baby’s father, and the female public defender who takes Ruth’s case, Picoult examines multiple facets of racism. The topic of race in America is difficult to talk about, but in an honest and revealing way Picoult allows readers to draw their own conclusions about how we see ourselves and others in the world. Small Great Things is an important and thought-provoking novel about power and prejudice that deserves to be read, digested, and shared with others” (Seira Wilson, The Amazon Book Review).

**Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges by Amy Cuddy**
*Sponsor: Chrissy Jisha*
“Have you ever left a nerve-racking challenge and immediately wished for a do over? Maybe after a job interview, a performance, or a difficult conversation? The very moments that require us to be genuine and commanding can instead cause us to feel phony and powerless. Too often we approach our lives' biggest hurdles with dread, execute them with anxiety, and leave them with regret.

By accessing our personal power, we can achieve "presence," the state in which we stop worrying about the impression we're making on others and instead adjust the impression we've been making on ourselves. As Harvard professor Amy Cuddy's revolutionary book reveals, we don't need to embark on a grand spiritual quest or complete an inner transformation to harness the power of presence. Instead, we need to nudge ourselves, moment by moment, by tweaking our body language, behavior, and mind-set in our day-to-day lives. …

Brilliantly researched, impassioned, and accessible, Presence is filled with stories of individuals who learned how to flourish during the stressful moments that once terrified them. Every reader will learn how to approach their biggest challenges with confidence instead of dread, and to leave them with satisfaction instead of regret.” (Amazon)

**The Girl with the Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier**
*Sponsor: Margie McDuffie*
“Griet is only 16, in 1664, when she’s hired as a maid in the grand Delft household of [painter] Johannes Vermeer, who practices the Catholic faith and has a family consisting of wife, mother-in-law, cook, and 5 children (by story’s end there will be 11). Griet’s own faith is Protestant, and her humble family has been made even poorer since her father, a tile-painter, had an accident that left him blind. Hard-working and sweet-tempered Griet is taken on, then, partly as an act of charity, but the austere and famous painter is struck by her sensitive eye for color and balance, and after a time he asks her to grind paints for him in his
attic studio—and perhaps begins falling in love with her, as she certainly does with him. … There’s a limit, though, to how much hiding can be done in a single house however large, and when Griet begins sitting for Vermeer, suspicions rise. That’s as nothing, though, to the storm that sweeps the house and all but brings about Griet’s very ruin when [Vermeer’s wife] Catharine discovers that the base-born maid has committed the thieving travesty of wearing her pearl earrings. Courageous Griet, though, proves herself a survivor in this tenderhearted and sharp-eyed ramble through daily life—and high art—in 17th-century Delft. Another small and Vermeer-inspired treasure” (Kirkus Reviews).

**Truevine: Two Brothers, a Kidnapping, and a Mother's Quest: A True Story of the Jim Crow South**
by Beth Macy

Co-Sponsors: Donald Morrison and Matt Edmonds

“NATIONAL BESTSELLER
The true story of two African-American brothers who were kidnapped and displayed as circus freaks, and whose mother endured a 28-year struggle to get them back.

The year was 1899 and the place a sweltering tobacco farm in the Jim Crow South town of Truevine, Virginia. George and Willie Muse were two little boys born to a sharecropper family. One day a white man offered them a piece of candy, setting off events that would take them around the world and change their lives forever.

Captured into the circus, the Muse brothers performed for royalty at Buckingham Palace and headlined over a dozen sold-out shows at New York's Madison Square Garden. They were global superstars in a pre-broadcast era. But the very root of their success was in the color of their skin and in the outrageous caricatures they were forced to assume: supposed cannibals, sheep-headed freaks, even "Ambassadors from Mars." Back home, their mother never accepted that they were "gone" and spent 28 years trying to get them back.

Through hundreds of interviews and decades of research, Beth Macy expertly explores a central and difficult question: Where were the brothers better off? On the world stage as stars or in poverty at home? TRUEVINE is a compelling narrative rich in historical detail and rife with implications to race relations today.” (Amazon)

**The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life And Business** by Charles Duhigg

Sponsor: Barry Parks

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NPR BESTSELLER • WASHINGTON POST BESTSELLER • LOS ANGELES TIMES BESTSELLER • USA TODAY BESTSELLER • PUBLISHERS WEEKLY BESTSELLER

“In The Power of Habit, Pulitzer Prize–winning business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. Distilling vast amounts of information into engrossing narratives that take us from the boardrooms of Procter & Gamble to sidelines of the NFL to the front lines of the civil rights movement, Duhigg presents a whole new understanding of human nature and its potential. At its core, The Power of Habit contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, being more productive, and achieving success is understanding how habits work. As Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives” (Amazon).
Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (IN FRENCH)
Sponsor: Sherri Queen
“Un petit garçon, venu d'ailleurs, se lie d'amitié avec un pilote d'avion qu'il rencontre dans le désert. Au fil du récit de ses voyages sur différentes planètes, l'enfant partage avec le pilote sa découverte de ce qui fait l'essentiel dans la vie” (from a Canadian bookstore).

Bacchae by Euripides, translated by Paul Woodruff
Sponsor: Julia Roper
You are Pentheus, king of Thebes, a really good person and a really good ruler. You respect law and order and the gods. And you are really proud that you are a really good person. And then your crazy cousin Dionysos comes to town saying he’s a god and everyone must worship him. That his father is Zeus (his mother was that poor aunt you try not to talk about who was incinerated.) And his worship demands that all the rules go away. It’s dangerous. Your palace is destroyed. Respectable women are turning into Bacchae—savage, raving creatures. And he is becoming insanely popular. Your own mother gets sucked in. Now what?

There are Greek Tragedies (serious plays) and there are Greek Tragedies. This one is both. Euripides presents two sides of being human: thinking and order versus feeling and expression in personal conflict that ends (spoiler alert) with madness and horror as Dionysos and the Bacchae bring revenge on his birthplace and the family who rejected him.