

Advanced Studies World History Summer Enrichment

The Upper School History Department Summer Enrichment is a list of recommended reading and other media. Students are expected to read at least one book and engage with at least one additional piece of media. While there is no specific assignment attached to student choices, the enrichment work will be considered in the coursework during the year.

Dear Students:

Understanding World History in today's world is critical. Our world has shrunk immeasurably and what affects other parts of the world affects the United States. This idea of connectivity feels new and yet it is not. In many ways, the world has always been a small place. Cultures, peoples, and ideas have always been intertwined. As you plan your summer, take the time to delve into some great reading. Spend time reflecting on the universe and your place in it.

You are expected to choose ONE of the following books to read and annotate. Here are some [guidelines for annotating](#). **At the beginning of the year, there will be an assignment directly related to the summer enrichment books.**

Gordon, Stewart. *When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the "Riches of the East"*

Gordon, a Senior Research Scholar at the University of Michigan, recalls Thomas Cahill's "Hinges of History" series in this accessible history-in-portraits. Covering "the thousand years from 500 to 1500, when Asia was an astonishing, connected, and creative place," Gordon bases each chapter on the actual memoir of someone who lived, worked, and traveled there. Each story has its own unique appeal, the most compelling of which is probably Abraham bin Yiju's: a Jewish spice trader living in southwestern India around 1140 CE, his life proves dramatic and transient, and his letters poignant, as in this plea for news of relatives caught up in the Crusades: "No letter... detailing who died and who remained alive, has arrived. By God, write exact details and send your letters to reliable people to soothe my mind." It's a rare joy-and a slight shock-to find such rich evidence of lives lived 1,000 years ago; given the way, time erases personal history, however, it makes sense that each man's story feels incomplete. Gordon lacks the vision and distinctive voice of a Cahill, but history buffs will find this book more than worthwhile.

Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*

Ask anyone who was the person that most influenced world history: few would mention Genghis Khan. Arguably, however, Genghis Khan and the Mongols were the dominant force that shaped Eurasia and consequently the modern world. Not for what they destroyed – though they wrought much destruction all over the continent – but for what they built. They came close to uniting Eurasia into a world empire, and in so doing they spread throughout it technologies like paper, gunpowder, paper money, or the compass – and trousers. They revolutionized warfare. More lastingly, in the words of the author: '...they also created the nucleus of a universal culture and world system. (...) With the emphasis on free commerce, open communication, shared knowledge, secular politics, religious coexistence, international law, and diplomatic immunity.'

Yousafzai, Malala. *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*

I Am Malala is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing*

Generation after generation, Yaa Gyasi's magisterial first novel sets the fate of the individual against the obliterating movements of time, delivering unforgettable characters whose lives were shaped by historical forces beyond their control. *Homegoing* is a tremendous reading experience, not to be missed, by an astonishingly gifted young writer.

Lalami, Laila. **The Moor's Account**

In 1527, the conquistador Pánfilo de Narváez sailed from the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda with a crew of six hundred men and nearly a hundred horses. His goal was to claim what is now the Gulf Coast of the United States for the Spanish crown and, in the process, become as wealthy and famous as Hernán Cortés. But from the moment the Narváez expedition landed in Florida, it faced peril—navigational errors, disease, starvation, as well as resistance from indigenous tribes. Within a year there were only four survivors: the expedition's treasurer, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca; a Spanish nobleman named Alonso del Castillo Maldonado; a young explorer named Andrés Dorantes de Carranza; and Dorantes's Moroccan slave, Mustafa al-Zamori, whom the three Spaniards called Estebanico. These four survivors would go on to make a journey across America that would transform them from proud conquistadores to humble servants, from fearful outcasts to faith healers.

Brown, Daniel James. **The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics**

Daniel James Brown's robust book tells the story of the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar crew and their epic quest for an Olympic gold medal, a team that transformed the sport and grabbed the attention of millions of Americans. The sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the boys defeated elite rivals first from eastern and British universities and finally the German crew rowing for Adolf Hitler in the Olympic games in Berlin, 1936. Drawing on the boys' own diaries and journals, their photos and memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, *The Boys in the Boat* is an irresistible story about beating the odds and finding hope in the most desperate of times—the improbable, intimate story of nine working-class boys from the American west who, in the depths of the Great Depression, showed the world what true grit really meant.

Conrad, Joseph. **The Heart of Darkness**

The 1899 masterpiece by Polish-British novelist Joseph Conrad is about a voyage up the Congo River into the Heart of Africa. The story is narrated by Charles Marlow, recalling his obsessive quest to locate the ivory trader Kurtz, who has become ensconced deep in the jungle managing a remote outpost. As he ventures further and further down the Congo, Marlow finds himself and his surroundings become increasingly untethered.

Goldberg, Michelle. **The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West**

When the woman who would become Indra Devi was born in Russia in 1899, yoga was virtually unknown outside of India. By the time of her death, in 2002, it was being practiced everywhere, from Brooklyn to Berlin to Ulaanbaatar. In *The Goddess Pose*, New York Times best-selling author Michelle Goldberg traces the life of the incredible woman who brought yoga to the West—and in so doing paints a sweeping picture of the twentieth century.

Kurlansky, Mark. **Salt: A World History**

In his fifth work of nonfiction, Mark Kurlansky turns his attention to a common household item with a long and intriguing history: salt. The only rock we eat, salt has shaped civilization from the very beginning, and its story is a glittering, often surprising part of the history of humankind. A substance so valuable it served as currency, salt has influenced the establishment of trade routes and cities, provoked and financed wars, secured empires, and inspired revolutions.