**2014** Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners

**Avasthi, Swati.** Chasing Shadows. Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. Corey, Holly, and Savitri act as one until a random act of violence destroys their group. Holly and Savitri must find their own way to deal with the tragedy without becoming undone.

**Bray, Libba.** Going Bovine. Delacorte Press, 2009. When Cameron is diagnosed with Mad Cow Disease, he sets out on an adventure with a video game obsessed dwarf and a Viking god trapped in a yard gnome in the hopes of finding a cure.

**Butler, Octavia.** Kindred. Beacon Press, 2003. Dana is torn away from her home in California and taken back in time to Antebellum South where she is a slave. Each time Dana is pulled into the past, her stay there grows longer and she fears that she might not survive.

**Crystal, David.** Spell it Out: The Curious, Enthralling, and Extraordinary History of English Spelling. St. Martin’s Press, 2013. A fascinating and entertaining history of English spelling that also examines the evolution of writing, printing, and the language itself.

**Fforde, Jasper.** The Eyre Affair. Viking, 2002. The first in a series set in a zany alternative Swindon, Thursday Next (Special Ops—Literary Division) is on the case when characters are kidnapped from their original manuscripts—potentially changing literature forever.

**Giovanni, Nikki, ed.** The 100\* Best African American Poems: (\*But I Cheated). Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2010. This anthology, edited by award-winning poet Nikki Giovanni, contains more than one hundred poems by classic and contemporary African-American poets. Also included with the text is an audio CD with some selections of poetry read aloud.

**Katcher, Brian.** Almost Perfect. Delacorte, 2009. Logan’s friendship with Sage, the new girl at school, begins to evolve into more until she reveals her secret. This story of acceptance is not just about how we love, but the surprise of who we love.

**Keillor, Garrison, ed.** Good Poems. Viking, 2002. Selected from Keillor’s radio show, The Writer’s Almanac, this anthology of both contemporary and classic poetry is the first in a set of three. Poems range from quirky to quaint and everyone is sure to find at least one favorite in this accessible collection.

**King, A. S.** Please Ignore Vera Dietz. Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. After her best friend Charlie’s death, Vera Dietz struggles to stay anonymous when Charlie begins haunting her, demanding that she clear his name.

**Levithan, David.** The Lover’s Dictionary. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. In simple dictionary entries a story of friendship, passion, and love comes to life.

**Lewis, Catherine.** Thrice Told Tales: Three Mice Full of Writing Advice. Antheum Books for Young Readers, 2013. One nursery rhyme is used to explain nearly one hundred elements of literature and writing in a fun, clever way.

**Lockhart, E.** The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks. Hyperion, 2008. When fifteen-year-old Frankie finds out her boyfriend is lying to her, she vows to infiltrate and take down his boys-only secret society to prove what a girl can really do.

**Marchetta, Melina.** Finnikin of the Rock. Candlewick, 2010. Ten years after the royal family of Lumatere is brutally murdered, nineteen-year-old Finnikin sets out on a journey to discover whether or not the rumors of a surviving heir are true.

**McCall, Guadalupe Garcia.** Under the Mesquite. Lee & Low Books, 2011. When Lupita’s mother is diagnosed with cancer, it falls to Lupita to care for the rest of her Mexican-American family. In this free-verse novel, Lupita comes of age and finds strength in sharing her thoughts and opinions

**Miller, Madeline.** Song of Achilles. Ecco, 2012. Achilles and Patroclus have been through many tough situations as they’ve grown up together. The battle at Troy may be their final challenge. This beautiful retelling of their story brings the Iliad to life.

**Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux.** No Crystal Stair: A Documentary Novel of the Life and Work of Lewis Michaux, Harlem Bookseller. Carolrhoda Lab, 2012. Through the use of illustrations, photos, and newspaper clippings, the struggle and triumph of Lewis Michaux’s passion to get people to read led him to found the National Memorial African Bookstore, which became the intellectual hub and the place to be during the Harlem Renaissance.

**Newman, Lesléa.** October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard. Candlewick, 2012. Through different points of view and different forms of poetry, Newman explores both the crime and tragedy of Matthew Shepard’s death.

**Pullman, Philip.** Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm: A New English Version. Viking, 2012.  
Ever wonder about the classic fairy tales you heard as a child? Pullman retells and traces the history of some of the most well known—and some obscure—stories of our time.

**Rowell, Rainbow.** Fangirl. St. Martin’s Griffin, 2013. As a college freshman, Cath struggles to find her place as she tries to balance her chaotic home life, her fan-fiction writing, and school, while discovering what life is like without her twin sister.

**Sloan, Robin.** Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. This story of complex code breaking, global conspiracy, and adventure all starts with a lonely bookstore and one unemployed web designer.

**Stiefvater, Maggie.** Scorpio Races. Scholastic, 2011. Every November, riders attempt to stay on their water horses long enough to win the Scorpio Races. Puck Connolly is the first girl to ever compete and she is in no way prepared for the race or the returning champion, Sean Kendrick.

**Stiefvater, Maggie, Tessa Graton, and Brenna Yovanoff.** The Curiosities: A Collection of Stories. Carolrhoda Lab, 2012. Three young adult authors challenged each other to write a piece of short fiction every week. The Curiosities is a collection of their stories, with comments from each author about their writing.

**Suma, Nova Ren.** Imaginary Girls. Dutton Books, 2011. Chloe adores her big sister Ruby, and lives to win Ruby’s approval. In fact, Ruby seems to have this effect on everyone in their little town. But just what is the power that Ruby holds over them? The author’s use of language may keep us from seeing the truth in this eerily compelling story.

**Teller, Janne and Martin Aitken, trans.** Nothing. Antheum Books for Young Readers, 2010.  
When Pierre Anthon announces that nothing matters, his classmates set out to prove him wrong, with chilling consequences.

**Yang, Gene Luen.** American Born Chinese. First Second, 2006. Intertwining three very different stories, this graphic novel tackles the problems young Chinese-Americans face when trying to adapt to popular culture.

**2009** Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners

**Anderson, M.T**. The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. 1: The Pox Party. 2006. Candlewick.   
The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. II: The Kingdom on the Waves. 2008. Candlewick. Set during the American Revolution, Octavian is raised as a pampered African prince by a society of Enlightenment philosophers who view him as an experiment. Realizing that his freedom is an illusion, Octavian sets off on a journey to find freedom and a place in the world. These books will challenge everything you have ever learned about the Revolutionary War.

**Bond, Jenny and Chris Sheedy.** Who the Hell is Pansy O’Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World’s Best-Loved Books. 2008. Penguin. Did you ever wonder what an author was thinking when they wrote their book? Explore the quirky back-stories of some of the world’s most famous 50 books.

**Cameron, Peter.** Someday This Pain Will be Useful to You. 2007. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.   
James hates everyone except his grandmother. Take a look at life through this brilliant and mischievous New York teen’s eyes as he tries to figure out life and his place in it.

**Dunn, Mark.** Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters. 2002. Knopf/Anchor. The people of Nollop are good citizens, but as the use of more and more letters in the alphabet is outlawed, how will its residents communicate?

**Foer** **, Jonathan Safran.** Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close. 2006. Houghton Mifflin.   
Oskar Schell, a gifted 9-year old, explores the mystery of his father’s death during the 9/11 attack.

**Gaines, Ernest.** A Lesson Before Dying. 1997. Knopf/Vintage . When Jefferson's attorney states, "I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this," disillusioned teacher Grant Wiggins is sent into the penitentiary to help Jefferson gain a sense of dignity and self-esteem before his execution.

**Green, John.** Looking for Alaska. 2005. Penguin. Join Miles Halter, who is intrigued by famous last words, as he heads off to boarding school in search of the “Great Perhaps.” What he finds is a beautiful but troubled girl named Alaska.

**Haddon, Mark.** The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time. 2004. Knopf/Vintage .   
Christopher has two mysteries to solve: who killed Wellington the dog and what happened to his mother. But Christopher, who has Asperger Syndrome, a form of autism, approaches these mysteries and the world itself in a unique and special way.

**Hosseini** **, Khaled.** The Kite Runner. 2004. Penguin/Riverhead. Years after he flees Afghanistan, Amir, now an American citizen, returns to his native land and attempts to atone for the betrayal of his best friend before he fled Kabul and the Taliban.

**Ishiguro, Kazuo.** Never Let Me Go. 2005. Knopf. Only special students are chosen to attend Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school tucked away in the English countryside. The chilling truth of their special nature slowly unfolds as we follow the stories of three former students.

**Jones, Lloyd.** Mister Pip. 2008. Dell Publishing/Dial Press. Matilda’s Pacific Island village has been torn apart by civil war. Against this harsh backdrop, Mr. Watts, a lonely British expatriate, maintains calm by reading Dicken’s Great Expectations aloud to the village children, transforming their lives.

**Kidd, Sue Monk.** Secret Life of Bees. 2008. Penguin. Searching for the truth about her mother’s life and death, a grieving Lily finds the answers, love, and acceptance where she least expects it.

**Kyle, Aryn.** The God of Animals. 2007. Simon & Schuster/Scribner. Twelve-year old Alice must face issues beyond her years. Her sister has run off, her mother won’t get out of bed, and the family horse farm is failing. Can she keep the family from falling apart?

**Maguire, Gregory.** Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West. 2007. HarperCollins. The Wizard of Oz retold from the point of view of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. You’ll never think of Oz the same way again.

**McCarthy, Cormac.** The Road. 2008. Knopf/Vintage. After an apocalyptic catastrophe, a father and his young son embark on a grim and perilous quest following the road to the sea.

**Murakami, Haruki.** Kafka on the Shore. 2006. Knopf/Vintage. Reality and fantasy converge in this story of a Japanese runaway’s quest to find his long-lost sister and mother.

**Myers, Walter Dean.** Sunrise Over Fallujah. 2008. Scholastic. Robin believes in his country and volunteers to fight in Iraq; but when he arrives he realizes that fighting for freedom is not always black and white.

**Roth, Philip.** The Plot Against America. 2005. Knopf/Vintage. This is a fascinating alternate history that takes a hard look at one of America’s legendary heroes, Charles Lindbergh, and at how bigotry and fear can shape politics.

**Stoppard, Tom.** Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead. 1994. Grove Press Two bit players from Shakespeare's Hamlet are thrust into a terrifying and surreal new situation.

**Thompson, Craig .** Blankets. 2003. Top Shelf Productions. A young man questions his faith and experiences bittersweet first love in this autobiographical and groundbreaking graphic novel.

**Zusak** **, Marcus.** The Book Thief. 2006. Random House/Knopf. Living in Nazi Germany, young Liesel and her family choose to lie and steal to protect a Jewish refugee hiding in their basement. Narrated by Death, this is not your typical World War II story.

**2004** Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners

**Abelove, Joan**. *Go and come back*. New York: Puffin, 2002.  In a story of mutual culture shock, Alicia, a young Isabo girl in a remote area of Peru, is just as fascinated by the American anthropologists, Joanna and Margarita, as they are with the ways of her people.

**Allison, Dorothy**. *Bastard out of Carolina*. New York: Dutton, 1992.  Bone confronts illegitimacy, poverty, the troubled marriage of her mother and stepfather, and the stigma of being considered “white trash” as she comes of age in South Carolina.

**Alvarez, Julia**. *In the Time of Butterflies*. New York: Algonquin, 1994.  The four Mirabel sisters were called the Mariposas, or butterflies.   Dede, the only survivor, tells the story of courage that helps liberate the Dominican Republic from the dictator Trujillo.

**Anderson, Laurie Halse**. *Speak*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999.  Calling the police to a party is a tough choice, but what made Melinda call is the devastating secret that keeps her locked in silence.

**Anderson, M.T.**   *Feed*. New York: Candlewick, 2002.  In this society your brain cyberfeed provides an endless stream of information, entertainment and advertising. When Violet’s feed is disrupted, she’s cast adrift and everyone is forced to examine the power of the feed in his/her life.

**Bagdasarian, Adam**. *Forgotten Fire*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2000.  Based on a true story from the Armenian Holocaust, this is an eloquent, touching and heart-wrenching portrait of pain and triumph during a time of tragedy.

**Chambers, Aidan**. *Postcards from No Man’s Land*. New York: Dutton, 2002.  Seventeen is an age of self-discovery, and Jacob has gone to Amsterdam to explore his life. His quest strangely parallels discoveries about his grandfather’s life there during World War II.

**Cisneros, Sandra**. *Caramelo*. New York: Knopf, 2002.  LaLa learns the stories of her Awful Grandmother and weaves them into a colorful family history. The “caramelo,” a striped shawl begun by her Great-Grandmother, symbolizes their traditions.

**Frank, E. R**. *Life is Funny*. New York: DK Publishing, 2000.  Growing up in New York can be agonizing, humorous, and always a challenge for the teens who tell their stories.

**Freymann-Weyr, Garret**. *My Heartbeat*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Can Ellen get the boy who loves her brother?

**Foster, Thomas**. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: a Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.  Every author leaves clues to lead readers deeper into the inner meanings of their writings.  Learn how to follow literary breadcrumbs in any story.

**Kaplow, Robert**. *Me and Orson Welles*. San Francisco: Macadam/Cage, 2003.   What would it be like to spend a week with the great Orson Welles, even sleeping in his pajamas? Richard Samuels, a budding teenaged actor, gets the opportunity to see what life on stage, and behind the stage, is really like on Broadway in 1937.

**Kingsolver, Barbara**. *The Bean Trees*. New York: HarperTorch, 1998.  Taylor Greer leaves Kentucky and heads west to find a new life. When a baby is abandoned in her car, she learns that responsibilities and independence are not mutually exclusive in this story of family and community.

**Lamott, Anne**. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor, 1995.  Advice to the fledgling writer: “Just take it bird by bird.” A gentle, anecdotal guide for beginning authors.

**Mah, Adeline**. *Chinese Cinderella: the True Story of an Unwanted Daughter.* New York: Delacorte, 1999.  Wu Mei, also called Adeline, is the Fifth Younger Sister of her family, and the one who bears the blame for all their bad fortune. In her inspirational tale of survival in 1940’s China, she triumphs against all odds.

**Myers, Walter Dean**. *Monster*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.  Steve Harmon is accused of being an accomplice to murder. He creates a screenplay of his wrenching experiences at the crime scene, in jail, and on trial.

**Nye, Naomi Shihab**. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.  Another world, another culture -- poems that personalize the conflicts and people, deepening understanding of the impact of September 11 th.

**O’Connor, Patricia**. *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to Better English in Plain English*. New York: Putnam, 1996.  When there’s something important to say, how you say it counts. Pronouns, antecedents and more grammar-ology made fun and painless.

**Pullman, Philip**. *The Golden Compass*. New York: Knopf, 1996.  Lyra Belacqua, a young girl living in an alternate Oxford, and her daimon, Pantalaimon, set out to find her kidnapped playmate and uncover a sinister plot. Now Lyra must use her special powers to thwart evil and redeem the world.

**Reynolds, Sheri**. *A Gracious Plenty*. New York: Harmony Books, 1997.  What happens to us when we die? Finch Nobles, a cemetery keeper with horrible burn scars, talks to the dead, and helps them examine what keeps them tied to the earth.

**Sapphire**. *Push*. New York: Knopf, 1996.  Precious Jones is a survivor. She had her father’s baby at 12 and now, at 16, she is pregnant by him again. But an alternative school, a dedicated teacher, and classmates who understand help her fight back.

**Satrapi, Marjane**. *Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2002.  Growing up in Iran wasn’t all that bad, or all that different, except that Marjane wanted to be a prophet when she grew up. Dramatic black-and-white illustrations tell her story.

**Sebold, Alice**. *Lucky*. New York: Scribner, 1999.  “You save yourself or you remain unsaved.” With these words, Sebold recounts the brutal rape that she was “lucky” to survive. Tragedy and hope combine as she makes her way through a survivor’s maze of emotions.

**Shakur, Tupac.** *A Rose that Grew from Concrete.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.  Written when Tupac was 19 and not yet a star, these poems bring emotion, power and passion to the experience of becoming yourself.

**Smith, Anna Deveare.** *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights and Other Identities.* New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1999.  A dramatic look at the Crown Heights riots and race in the United States through the voices of 23 fascinating and unique characters, based on interviews with real people.