

Summer reading list for Facing History 2010-2011

Instructions to all Facing History students: You must read one of the following books as part of your summer reading. You must complete this summer reading (but not the accompanying assignment—see attached document) before beginning Facing History in the fall.

[Important note: This book will count as one of the optional books required for English class, unless you are in AP Literature, in which case you must read one of these volumes in addition to your AP Lit required books.]

- Anne Applebaum, **Gulag: A History**. (New York: Anchor Books, 2004). Thanks to Solzhenitsyn's masterful book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, most Americans thought that they "knew" about the gulag system of prisons under the Soviet Union. More than 30 million—yes, 30 million—people passed through these gulags during their existence. What happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin's watch (and after) was nothing short of an incarcerated, starved, tortured sizeable percentage of the population. This is a magisterial, powerful, and eye-opening volume, justifying its considerable length.
- Iris Chang, **The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II** (New York: Penguin, 1998). The English-speaking world knew little of the horrors of what the Japanese perpetrated in Nanking in 1937 until Iris Chang published this landmark book in 1998. The product of extensive and meticulous research on the mass killings of thousands of Chinese in and around the city, her book was nevertheless challenged by Japanese government officials and historians. Ultimately the truth of her research prevailed and graphically demonstrated the merciless rule of the Japanese on the mainland of Asia. Tragically, Iris Chang died in her early 30s in 2004.
- Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, **Mao: The Unknown Story** (New York: Knopf, 2005). Biographies are not usually on the Facing History summer reading list. This one merits inclusion, because it is a startling account of the rise of Mao Tse-Tung to power in China, the totalitarian regime he imposed, and the alleged 70 million atrocities and deaths brought about by his regime. Banned in China, this book is not without its critics, but it promises to be the book against which all future books on Mao are measured.
- Jared Cohen, **Children of Jihad: A Young American's Travels Among the Youth of the Middle East** (New York: Gotham, 2008). Facing History 2008-2009 students heard Jared Cohen speak to us during that year's Washington, DC trip. His experience in the Middle East, meeting with youth to discuss video games, the Internet and cable TV, social networking sites, etc., in bars and McDonald's offers great insights into what the next generation of leaders and citizens in the region's nations may be thinking. Cohen now works for Hillary Clinton in the State department and one has to wonder: what influence have his findings had on American foreign policy in the Obama administration? This book is as dynamic as Jared Cohen is in person. His findings are simply eye-opening.
- Dave Eggers, **Zeitoun** (New York: Vintage, 2009). I cannot help but rave about this book; it's one of those "I can't put it down" books. The volume takes us to an event that current Facing History students all remember: Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The book tells the story of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a successful Syrian-born painting contractor, and his wife Kathy. He decides to stay in New Orleans and protect his property while his wife and children flee the oncoming storm. After the levees break, he uses a small canoe to rescue people and pets and to secure homes but he is suddenly arrested by an armed squad and kept in an outdoor cage, built as a prison in the center of New Orleans. One guard accuses him of being a member of Al Qaeda. How racism and anti-Muslim fervor meet economic and environmental catastrophe and destroy the lives of perfectly innocent New Orleans residents is the crux of this account. It is relevant to many aspects of next year's Facing History course.
- Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, **A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness** (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003). Psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela not only sat on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa, but she had the rare opportunity to spend months interviewing one of apartheid's leading perpetrators, Eugene de Kock, nicknamed "Prime Evil." Her account here is one in which we are afforded a look into the heart of evil and try to reach some form of forgiveness.
- Philip Gourevitch, **We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda** (New York: Picador, 1999). Gourevitch was one of the few journalists on the ground in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide that killed more than 80,000 people in fewer than 100 days. The series of harrowing, riveting stories that constitute this Pulitzer Prize-winning book chronicle the experiences of victims and survivors of the genocide.

- Adam Hochschild, **King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa** (New York: Mariner Books, 1999). Adam Hochschild, a leading historian and journalist, provides a detailed account of the consequences of colonialism in the Congo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when it was controlled not by a nation but by one man: King Leopold of Belgium. King Leopold considered the Congo his personal fiefdom and used its population as his personal slave labor force to harvest ivory and then rubber. The book reveals how one man, a modest shipping clerk in Brussels, unearthed the truth of what was happening in the heart of Africa and informed the world. (If you read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for English, this is an excellent companion volume.)
- Tracy Kidder, **Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, The Man Who Would Cure the World** (New York: Random House, 2004). Few books aptly capture what it truly means to make a conscious decision in your life to make a difference in the world; this one is perhaps the best of its kind. Paul Farmer made a life-changing trip to Haiti early in his college career and realized that, step-by-step, act-by-act, he could help to improve health care and the lives generally of Haitians in a region by developing a novel approach to health care and community improvement. Farmer, a doctor based both at Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital, founded Partners in Health, a Boston-based organization that now operates clinics in various parts of the world, all transforming health care in their local communities. This is an inspirational story about how to make a profound change in the world with individual effort and passion.
- Clea Koff, **The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo** (New York: Random House, 2005). Someone has to unearth mass graves and identify the victims and Clea Koff, beginning in her late 20s, found herself at the epicenters of the world's recent atrocities: Bosnia and Rwanda. Koff takes us inside the life of a forensic anthropologist so that we see what it takes to dig away, day after day, at suspected sites of mass internment. A compelling book that offers us insights into how we get the information we have about genocide.
- Ilan Pappé, **The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine** (New York: Oneworld Publications, 2007). Pappé documents in exceptional detail the "ethnic cleansing" of what became Israel between 1948-1949. A celebrated historian in Israel, Pappé illustrates in this book how the Israeli military, beginning in the late 1940s, forcibly expelled approximately 800,000 Palestinians to refugee camps. Homes were demolished and hundreds of villages were depopulated. The stories of families facing trauma and upheaval are horrifying to read. The Palestinians call this period "Al Nachba" ("the catastrophe") while Israelis refer to it as their "war for independence." This account demonstrates why the two sides see the same events so differently and "face their histories" in such different fashions.
- Randy Shilts, **And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic (1980-1985)** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987; 20th anniversary edition, 2007). Randy Shilts was a crusading reporter in San Francisco as the AIDS crisis burst onto the American scene. He was tireless in reporting the rapidly escalating deaths from the AIDS virus, not only in San Francisco's gay community but also nationally. Shilts unearthed overwhelming evidence of the US government's deliberate effort in the 1980s to ignore the epidemic that had been nicknamed the "gay plague" as well as the international medical community's infighting over how to diagnose and then treat the disease. Tragically, in 1994, Shilts died from complications of AIDS.
- Chuck Sudetic, **Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia** (New York: WW Norton, 1998). This is a harrowing tale of the Celik family's harrowing struggle to survive amid the Bosnian war of 1992-1995. Eventually they find themselves in Srebrenica, a town that becomes the locus for the worst mass killing on the continent of Europe since the Holocaust. Sudetic was a former New York Times reporter and this is one of the best books on the genocide in Bosnia.
- Sandy Tolan, **The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East** (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006). This is the story of a house with a lemon tree in the town of Ramla (Al Ramla). Built in what is today central Israel in the 1930s for a Palestinian family who had long-standing roots in the region, it was lived in after 1948 by a Jewish family of refugees from post-World War II Europe. The Palestinian family had been forcibly removed, along with their fellow villagers, to a refugee camp in Ramallah in what is now the west bank in Palestine. Who owns the house? Who has rights to land? Is this about nations or individuals or property rights? And how does one resolve what is ultimately individual conflicts over a place? This is a powerful and moving story that some of the Facing History classes in 2008-2009 "test drove" and found compelling. It offers enormous insights into the complexity of the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Loung Ung, **First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers** (New York: Harper Collins, 2000). Loung Ung recounts the experience she and her family had when they were forced to flee from the Khmer Rouge in 1975. Her tale of hiding and surviving the regime, despite the deaths of her parents, is unforgettable. Examining the brutal regime brought to power in so-called "Democratic Kampuchea" between 1975 and 1979 provides insight into how groups seize power and destroy societies and other nations simply watch in horror.

