

Text Selections for English 20-2; 2013 Blended Course

Novel Selection for the English 20-2 2013 Blended Course

- *Forbidden City* by William Bell involves a teenager, Alex, accompanying his father, a CBC news cameraman on a trip to China for what he thought would be a vacation. He is in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the date the world watched the government of China suppress a protest led by students. Alex sees the brutality of oppressive government control, but he also witnesses the compassion and friendliness of the common people. The first-person point of view is engaging although the Chinese names are difficult to many readers. 1990; 198 pages
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck involves two agricultural labourers during the 1930s moving from job to job. George understands Lennie despite his limitations. Like most people, they have dreams, but fears and circumstances prevent fulfillment of their dreams. Steinbeck comments upon a society in which those who could have accepted others' differences are unchanged and those who are different remain unappreciated. Steinbeck uses the level of language common to uneducated drifters and labourers, but such language may be offensive to some readers because of coarseness and blasphemy. 1937; 118 pages
- *Hate List* by Jennifer Brown involves a teenage girl, Valerie, who is dealing with the aftermath of a horrific school shooting implicating her boyfriend, and to a much lesser extent, herself. This is a first person story that describes the guilt and struggle the character experiences by not understanding or knowing what compelled her boyfriend's terrible crime, as well as coping with a traumatic injury. The plot describes the experiences and feelings of returning to her school to face her peers, the repairing of relationships with friends and family needed, and the struggle to heal and move forward in her life. This is a provocative and fast-paced novel containing some violence, difficult situations, and some coarse language. 2009; 408 incredibly engaging pages.
- *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos is an autobiographical novel about a teenager on the verge of being an adult in 1971, thinking about his future and how to get there. In one quick and ill-thought-out decision, he decides to try to earn a large sum of money for secondary school through an opportunity to smuggle and then traffic a shipment of illegal drugs to the USA. He is arrested for this terrible decision, and is sentenced for 6 years in prison at the age of 18. The novel is a reflection of his experiences within the legal system, and a re-telling of the events that landed him in jail. The protagonist reflects on his choices, and on the time spent incarcerated, and about how to move forward from this terrible mistake with some clarity to reclaim his life. This novel contains some violence, difficult situations, some drug references and coarse language. 2002; 208 pages.

The Graphic Novels for the English 20-2 2013 Blended Course

- *Essex County: Book Two Ghost Stories* by Jeff Lemire. This graphic novel centers around Lou, an old man who was once a Canadian semi-professional hockey player. He and his younger brother Vince are from Essex County, Ontario. Lou is facing the challenges of aging daily, and uses his time to recollect growing up with his younger brother and the love for hockey they shared. At one point, both brothers had nearly made the big leagues, but for a terrible event occurring at the peak of their hockey careers, threatening the relationship of the brothers for many years after. Now, in his old age as he remembers his youth, Lou's kind nurse tries desperately to keep him out of trouble and cared for on his isolated farm, where he lives, regretful and sometimes sad, but also mindful of the smaller beauties in life. This graphic novel contains some mildly coarse language, some adult situations, and one mildly suggestive scene. 2009; 221 pages.
- *How I Made it to Eighteen* by Tracy White. This plainly drawn graphic novel centers around the story of a girl named Stacey who has ended up at a youth psychiatrics wing for a 24 week stay after suffering a mental breakdown and injuring herself. Through Stacey's perspective and the accompanying perspectives of her friends, Stacey's story about attempting to discover the roots of her personal problems and destructive behaviours is explored. Through group therapy sessions, she makes some unsuspecting friendships, re-evaluates what a healthy relationship is, and learns some eye-opening truths about herself on her path to healing and finding answers. This graphic novel contains references to illegal substances, suicide and addictions, some coarse language and some adult situations. 2010; 151 pages.
- *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. This colourful graphic novel tells the story of Jin Wang, a Chinese-American boy who grows up in a primarily Caucasian neighborhood and school. Jin struggles with bullying and racism alongside all the normal issues of being a teenager, especially attempting to define who he is as a person and who he would like to be. A story that runs parallel to Jin's is the story of the Monkey King, a magical god-like Monkey that faces oppression from other Gods in the world because they do not view him as an equal. The Monkey king battles many foes, but also battles with himself about who he is, much like Jin does everyday in school as he tries to win the affection of a girl in his class, and live what he feels is a normal teenaged life. Both the Monkey King and Jin realize however that not being true to oneself can have a terrible price... This novel contains some mature topics centering around racism, explicit racial stereotypes, and some coarse language. 2006; 233 pages.