

Innovation Academy High School
Summer 2008 Reading Requirements

Dear Students,

Summer is a time to hit the beach, go fishing, and immerse yourself in great books. This summer your academic responsibility is to read one of four books selected by the high school staff. Our staff picked these books because we have either loved reading them previously or have been looking forward to reading them this summer. Please consider reading and discussing these books with friends or family members, as all of these have great themes to explore.

In our first week of school next fall, you will be meeting in book groups to discuss main ideas and/or complete written assignments that relate to the book you decide to read. Because you will need the books for your reading groups, it will be easiest to buy yourself a paperback copy. Alternatively, you can get a copy from a local library, but make sure you are able to bring it to school for the first week.

Have a great summer. Happy Reading!!

IACS High School Staff

Summer 2008 Summer Reading Selections

All descriptions are from Barnes and Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com)

1) Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America
by Barbara Ehrenreich (Author)

From Barnes & Noble

To understand life beyond boom-time America, Barbara Ehrenreich spent months laboring as a cleaning woman; as a waitress; and as a Wal-Mart sales clerk. Her revelations about these hard, supposedly "unskilled" jobs and the difficulty of making ends meet in the U.S. gives this book a powerful, personal edge.

From the Publisher

Acclaimed as an instant classic upon publication, Nickel and Dimed has sold more than 1.5 million copies and become a staple of classroom reading. Chosen for "one book" initiatives across the country, it has fueled nationwide campaigns for a living wage. Funny, poignant, and passionate, this revelatory firsthand account of life in low-wage America—the story of Barbara Ehrenreich's attempts to eke out a living while working as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and Wal-Mart associate—has become an essential part of the nation's political discourse.

Now, in a new afterword, Ehrenreich shows that the plight of the underpaid has in no way eased: with fewer jobs available, deteriorating work conditions, and no pay increase in sight, Nickel and Dimed is more relevant than ever.

2) Being Peace
by: Thich Nhat Hanh

From the Publisher

Thich Nhat Hanh delivered the words on this compact disk to an assembly of 700 gathered at Green Gulch Zen Center in Muir Beach, California, on November 3, 1985, and inspired the creation of the best selling book, Being Peace. The teachings contained here provide a crucial antidote to our busy lives, and because of Hanh's experience with the war and his willingness to face the realities of our time, these teachings are also about suffering, reconciliation, and peace.

This collection of teachings by noted Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh will be eagerly read by those concerned about world peace. Rev. Thich claims that world peace starts with the individual's acquiring inner peace. He challenges the reader in warm and anecdotal dialogues: "Have we wasted our hours and days? Are we wasting our lives? . . . Practicing Buddhism is to be alive to each moment." Meditation, says the author, is not an escape from the difficult present but an active form of service to society, directing us to understanding and compassion toward all suffering humanity. The author terms this "engaged Buddhism." Free of jargon and eminently practical, this wise and joyous book celebrates the spirituality inherent in daily life. For academic and public libraries. Alphonse Vinh, Yale Univ. Lib.

3) Watership Down by: Richard Adams

From Barnes & Noble

Fleeing the intrusion of man and the certain destruction of their ancestral home, a band of rabbits encounters harrowing trials posed by predators and hostile warrens — driven only by their vision to create a perfect society in a mysterious promised land known to them as Watership Down. First published in 1972 to world-wide rave reviews and now a modern classic, this is a powerful tale about the destructive impact of our society on nature — written in the same vein as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

From the Publisher

A phenomenal worldwide bestseller for over thirty years, Richard Adams's *Watership Down* is a timeless classic and one of the most beloved novels of all time. Set in England's Downs, a once idyllic rural landscape, this stirring tale of adventure, courage and survival follows a band of very special creatures on their flight from the intrusion of man and the certain destruction of their home. Led by a stouthearted pair of brothers, they journey forth from their native Sandleford Warren through the harrowing trials posed by predators and adversaries, to a mysterious promised land and a more perfect society.

4) Freakonomics by: Steven Levitt

From the Publisher

Which is more dangerous, a gun or a swimming pool? What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common? Why do drug dealers still live with their moms? How much do parents really matter? How did the legalization of abortion affect the rate of violent crime?

These may not sound like typical questions for an economist to ask. But Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He is a much-heralded scholar who studies the riddles of everyday life—from cheating and crime to sports and child rearing—and whose conclusions turn conventional wisdom on its head.

Freakonomics is a groundbreaking collaboration between Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, an award-winning author and journalist. They usually begin with a mountain of data and a simple question. Some of these questions concern life-and-death issues; others have an admittedly freakish quality. Thus the new field of study contained in this book: *Freakonomics*.

Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, Levitt and Dubner show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—how people get what they want, or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing. In *Freakonomics*, they explore the hidden side of . . . well, everything. The inner workings of a crack gang. The truth about real-estate agents. The myths of campaign finance. The telltale marks of a cheating schoolteacher. The secrets of the Ku Klux Klan.

What unites all these stories is a belief that the modern world, despite a great deal of complexity and downright deceit, is not impenetrable, is not unknowable, and—if the right questions are asked—is even more intriguing than we think. All it takes is a new way of looking.

Freakonomics establishes this unconventional premise: If morality represents how we would like the world to work, then economics represents how it actually does work. It is true that readers of this book will be armed with enough riddles and stories to last a thousand cocktail parties. But *Freakonomics* can provide more than that. It will literally redefine the way we view the modern world.