

## Galileo Summer Reading

One of the many things we love about summer is that it gives us a chance to read, and we love that reading give us the chance to experience lives and worlds beyond our own. With that in mind, we've compiled a list of non-fiction (true) books about growing up and living in places and circumstances very different from our own for you to choose from for your Galileo summer reading assignment. Choose any book from the list, find a copy at the library or bookstore, and enjoy!

Then, to account for your summer reading, and to prepare for book discussions when school starts in August, do the following writing. All work is due on the first day of school, and should be typed, double-spaced.

Devote at least one paragraph to each of the following questions:

1. Write about the *subject* of the book. What is it about, and what did you learn about the subject from reading the book?
2. Write about the *setting*. What did you learn about the place and time the author wrote about?
3. Write about the *people* in the book. How did the author get you interested in them?
4. Write about the way the author uses and quotes *experts*, if any. How convincing is he/she in seeming like an expert in the subject?
5. Write about the author's *purpose*. Is he/she trying to inform? Entertain? Convince you of something? How well does the author achieve his/her purpose?
6. What *audience* does the book appeal to? Are you part of that intended audience?

Use specific examples from the book as evidence. Your paper will be read by the teacher and by other members of the class, so display your best thinking and writing.

## Book List and Descriptions

### ***In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*** **Khada Karmi**

#### **From Publishers Weekly**

Karmi, a doctor and founding member of the British political group Palestine Action, relates her quest for cultural identity after her "fragile... and misfit Arab family" leaves Jerusalem for England during the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Ironically, they resettle in a Jewish neighborhood in London; Karmi, aged nine, quickly begins to assimilate-becoming an avid reader of English literature and befriending Jewish neighbors-despite her mother's insistence on traditional Palestinian culinary customs, dating mores and family codes. Over the next two decades, events in the Middle East make their non-Arab neighbors increasingly hostile and her Jewish friends' pro-Israel fervor grows; after the Palestinian terrorist hijackings of the 1970s, some acquaintances refuse to speak to her. Karmi becomes an impassioned pro-Palestinian activist, and in 1977 she begins practicing medicine in a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon-and finds that her Western upbringing and habits make her even less welcome there than she was in England.

#### ***Sold*** **Patricia McCormick**

#### **From School Library Journal**

Grade 9 Up – As this heartbreaking story opens, 13-year-old Lakshmi lives an ordinary life in Nepal, going to school and thinking of the boy she is to marry. Then her gambling-addicted stepfather sells her into prostitution in India. Refusing to be with men, she is beaten and starved until she gives in. Written in free verse, the girls first-person narration is horrifying and difficult to read. In between, men come./They crush my bones with their weight./They split me open./Then they disappear. I hurt./I am torn and bleeding where the men have been. The spare, unadorned text matches the barrenness of Lakshmi's new life. She is told that if she works off her family's debt, she can leave, but she soon discovers that this is virtually impossible. When a boy who runs errands for the girls and their clients begins to teach her to read, she feels a bit more alive, remembering what it feels like to be the number one girl in class again. When an American comes to the brothel to rescue girls, Lakshmi finally gets a sense of hope. An author's note confirms what readers fear: thousands of girls, like Lakshmi in this story, are sold into prostitution each year. Part of McCormick's research for this novel involved interviewing women in Nepal and India, and her depth of detail makes the characters believable and their misery palpable. This important book was written in their honor.–*Alexa Sandmann, Kent State University, OH*

### ***Enrique's Journey*** **Sonia Nozario**

#### **From Publishers Weekly**

*Starred Review.* Soon to be turned into an HBO dramatic series, Nozario's account of a 17-year-old boy's harrowing attempt to find his mother in America won two Pulitzer Prizes when it first came out in the *Los Angeles Times*. Greatly expanded with fresh research, the story also makes a gripping book, one that viscerally conveys the experience of illegal immigration from Central America. Enrique's mother, Lourdes, left him in Honduras when he was five years old because she could barely afford to feed him and his sister, much less send them to school. Her plan was to sneak into the United States for a few years, work hard, send and save money, then move back to Honduras to be with her children. But 12 years later, she was still living in the U.S. and wiring money home. That's when Enrique became one of the thousands of children and teens who try to enter the U.S. illegally each year. Riding on the tops of freight trains through Mexico, these young migrants are preyed upon by gangsters and corrupt government officials. Many of them are mutilated by the journey; some go crazy. The breadth and depth of Nozario's research into this phenomenon is astounding, and she has crafted her findings into a story that is at once moving and polemical.

### ***The Other Side of the Sky*** **Farah Ahmed**

Farah Ahmed's "poignant tale of survival" (*Chicago Tribune*) chronicles her journey from war to peace. Equal parts tragedy and hope, determination and daring, Ahmed's memoir delivers a remarkably vivid portrait of her girlhood in Kabul, where the sound of gunfire and the sight of falling bombs shaped her life and stole her family. She herself narrowly escapes death when she steps on a land mine. Eventually the war forces her to flee, first over the mountains to refugee camps across the border, and finally to America. Ahmed proves that even in the direst circumstances, not only can the human heart endure, it can thrive.

*The Other Side of the Sky* is "a remarkable journey" (*Chicago Sun-Times*), and Farah Ahmed inspires us all.

***A Long Way Gone*  
Ishmael Beah**

**From Publishers Weekly**

*Starred Review.* This absorbing account by a young man who, as a boy of 12, gets swept up in Sierra Leone's civil war goes beyond even the best journalistic efforts in revealing the life and mind of a child abducted into the horrors of warfare. Beah's harrowing journey transforms him overnight from a child enthralled by American hip-hop music and dance to an internal refugee bereft of family, wandering from village to village in a country grown deeply divided by the indiscriminate atrocities of unruly, sociopathic rebel and army forces. Beah then finds himself in the army—in a drug-filled life of casual mass slaughter that lasts until he is 15, when he's brought to a rehabilitation center sponsored by UNICEF and partnering NGOs. The process marks out Beah as a gifted spokesman for the center's work after his "repatriation" to civilian life in the capital, where he lives with his family and a distant uncle. When the war finally engulfs the capital, it sends 17-year-old Beah fleeing again, this time to the U.S., where he now lives. (Beah graduated from Oberlin College in 2004.) Told in clear, accessible language by a young writer with a gifted literary voice, this memoir seems destined to become a classic firsthand account of war and the ongoing plight of child soldiers in conflicts worldwide.

***They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky*  
Alphonson Deng, Benson Deng, Benjamin Ajak and Judy A. Bernstein**

**From Publishers Weekly**

Raised by Sudan's Dinka tribe, the Deng brothers and their cousin Benjamin were all under the age of seven when they left their homes after terrifying attacks on their villages during the Sudanese civil war. In 2001, the three were relocated to the U.S. from Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp as part of an international refugee relief program. Arriving in this country, they immediately began to fill composition books with the memoirs of chaos and culture shock collected here. Well written, often poetic essays by Benson, Alepho and Benjamin, who are now San Diego residents in their mid-20s, are arranged in alternating chapters and recall their childhood experiences, their treacherous trek and their education in the camp ("People were learning under trees"). Other pieces remember the rampant disease and famine among refugees, and the tremendous hardship of day-to-day living ("Refugee life was like being devoured by wild animals"). When the boys arrived in America, Benson, upon seeing a Wal-Mart for the first time, remarked, "This is like a king's palace." Although some readers may wish for more commentary on what life in America is like for these transplants, this collection is moving in its depictions of unbelievable courage.

***First They Killed My Father*  
Loung Ung**

Written in the present tense, *First They Killed My Father* will put you right in the midst of the action--action you'll wish had never happened. It's a tough read, but definitely a worthwhile one, and the author's personality and strength shine through on every page. Covering the years from 1975 to 1979, the story moves from the deaths of multiple family members to the forced separation of the survivors, leading ultimately to the reuniting of much of the family, followed by marriages and immigrations. The brutality seems unending--beatings, starvation, attempted rape, mental cruelty--and yet the narrator (a young girl) never stops fighting for escape and survival. Sad and courageous, her life and the lives of her young siblings provide quite a powerful example of how war can so deeply affect children--especially a war in which they are trained to be an integral part of the armed forces. For anyone interested in Cambodia's recent history, this book shares a valuable personal view of events. --*Jill Lightner*

***An Ordinary Man*  
Paul Rusesabagina, Tom Zoellner**

*Starred Review.* For former hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, words are the most powerful weapon in the human arsenal. For good and for evil, as was the case in the spring of 1994 in Rwanda. Over 100 days, some 800,000 people were slaughtered, most hacked to death by machete. Rusesabagina, the inspiration for the movie *Hotel Rwanda*, used his facility with words and persuasion to save 1,268 of his fellow countrymen, turning the Belgian luxury hotel under his charge into a sanctuary from madness. Through negotiation, favor, flattery and deception, Rusesabagina managed to keep his "guests" alive another day despite the homicidal gangs just beyond the fence and the world's failure to act. Narrator Hoffman delivers those words in a stirring audio performance. With a crisp African accent, Hoffman renders each sentence with heartfelt conviction and flat-out becomes Rusesabagina.

### ***Red China Blues***

Jan Wong

This superb memoir is like no other account of life in China under both Mao and Deng. Wong is a Canadian ethnic Chinese who, in 1972, at the height of the cultural revolution, was one of the first undergraduate foreigners permitted to study at Beijing University. Filled with youthful enthusiasms for Mao's revolution, she was an oddity: a Westerner who embraced Maoism, appeared to be Chinese and wished to be treated as one, although she didn't speak the language. She set herself to become fluent, refused special consideration, shared her fellow-students rations and housing, their required stints in industry and agriculture and earnestly tried to embrace the Little Red Book. Although Wong felt it her duty to turn in a fellow student who asked for help to emigrate to the West, she could not repress continual shock at conditions of life, and by the time she was nearly expelled from China for an innocent friendship with a "foreigner," much of her enthusiasm, which lasted six years, had eroded. In 1988, returning as a reporter for the Toronto Globe Mail, she was shocked once again, this time by the rapid transformations of the society under Deng's exhortation: "to be rich is glorious." Her account is informed by her special background, a cold eye, a detail. Her description of the events at Tiananmen Square, which occurred on her watch, is, like the rest of the book, unique, powerful and moving.

### ***There Are No Children Here***

Kolowitz, Alex

The devastating story of brothers Lafayette and Pharoah Rivers, children of the Chicago ghetto, is powerfully told here by Kolowitz, a Wall Street Journal reporter who first met the boys in 1985 when they were 10 and seven, respectively. Their family includes a mother, a frequently absent father, an older brother and younger triplets. We witness the horrors of growing up in an ill-maintained housing project tyrannized by drug gangs and where murders and shootings frequently occur. Lafayette tries to cope by stifling his emotions and turning himself into an automaton, while Pharoah first attempts to regress into early childhood and then finds a way out by excelling at school. Kolowitz's affecting report does not have a "neat and tidy ending. . . . It is, instead, about a beginning, the dawning of two lives." These are lives at a crossroads, not totally without hope of triumphing over their origin.

### ***The Flame Trees of Thika***

Elspeth Huxley

In an open cart Elspeth Huxley set off with her parents to travel to Thika in Kenya. As pioneering settlers, they built a house of grass, ate off a damask cloth spread over packing cases, and discovered--the hard way--the world of the African. With an extraordinary gift for detail and a keen sense of humor, Huxley recalls her childhood on the small farm at a time when Europeans waged their fortunes on a land that was as harsh as it was beautiful. For a young girl, it was a time of adventure and freedom, and Huxley paints an unforgettable portrait of growing up among the Masai and Kikuyu people, discovering both the beauty and the terrors of the jungle, and enduring the rugged realities of the pioneer life.

### ***Kaffir Boy***

Mark Mathabane

### ***From Publishers Weekly***

In this powerful account of growing up black in South Africa, a young writer makes us feel intensely the horrors of apartheid. Living illegally in a shanty outside Johannesburg, Johannes (renamed Mark) Mathabane and his illiterate family endured the heartbreak and hopelessness of poverty and the violence of sadistic police and marauding gangs. He describes his drunken father's attempts to inculcate his tribal beliefs and to prevent his son from getting an education the one means by which he might escape from the ghetto. Encouraged by his determined mother and grandmother, Mathabane taught himself to read English and play tennis, and, through the assistance of U.S. tennis star Stan Smith and his own efforts and intelligence, obtained a tennis scholarship from a South Carolina college in 1978. Now he is a freelance writer in New York. In the course of relating his inspiring story, he explains the anger and hate that his

### ***Dreams From My Father***

Barack Obama

Elected the first black president of the Harvard Law Review, Obama was offered a book contract, but the intellectual journey he planned to recount became instead this poignant, probing memoir of an unusual life. Born in 1961 to a white American woman and a black Kenyan student, Obama was reared in Hawaii by his mother and her parents, his father having left for further study and a return home to Africa. So Obama's not-unhappy youth is nevertheless a lonely voyage to racial identity, tensions in school, struggling with black literature?with one month-long visit when he was 10 from his commanding father.

After college, Obama became a community organizer in Chicago. He slowly found place and purpose among folks of similar hue but different memory, winning enough small victories to commit himself to the work?he's now a civil rights lawyer there. Before going to law school, he finally visited Kenya; with his father dead, he still confronted obligation and loss, and found wellsprings of love and attachment. Obama leaves some lingering questions?his mother is virtually absent?but still has written a resonant book.

### ***Three Cups of Tea***

Greg Mortensen, Oliver Relin

#### **From Publishers Weekly**

*Starred Review.* Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts. (Mar.)

### ***Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Paul Farmer, the Man Who Would Cure the World***

Tracy Kidder

*Mountains Beyond Mountains* takes us from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia as Farmer changes minds and practices through his dedication to the philosophy that "the only real nation is humanity" - a philosophy that is embodied in the small public charity he founded, Partners In Health. He enlists the help of the Gates Foundation, George Soros, the U.N.'s World Health Organization, and others in his quest to cure the world. At the heart of this book is the example of a life based on hope, and on an understanding of the truth of the Haitian proverb "Beyond mountains there are mountains": as you solve one problem, another problem presents itself, and so you go on and try to solve that one too.

### ***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down***

Ann Fadiman

#### **From School Library Journal**

A compelling anthropological study. The Hmong people in America are mainly refugee families who supported the CIA militaristic efforts in Laos. They are a clannish group with a firmly established culture that combines issues of health care with a deep spirituality that may be deemed primitive by Western standards. In Merced, CA, which has a large Hmong community, Lia Lee was born, the 13th child in a family coping with their plunge into a modern and mechanized way of life. The child suffered an initial seizure at the age of three months. Her family attributed it to the slamming of the front door by an older sister. They felt the fright had caused the baby's soul to flee her body and become lost to a malignant spirit. The report of the family's attempts to cure Lia through shamanistic intervention and the home sacrifices of pigs and chickens is balanced by the intervention of the medical community that insisted upon the removal of the child from deeply loving parents with disastrous results. This compassionate and understanding account fairly represents the positions of all the parties involved. The suspense of the child's precarious health, the understanding characterization of the parents and doctors, and especially the insights into Hmong culture make this a very worthwhile read. Frances Reiher, Fairfax County Public Library, VA