War Fiction/War Nonfiction

Atonement by Ian McEwan  Ex Libris Selection

A novel of great scope, Atonement takes in the intrigue of a jealous little sister, a tragic love affair, the human costs of World War II, and the power of forgiveness.

The End of the Hunt by Thomas Flanagan

This historical novel is set in Ireland just after the turn of the twentieth century. It deals with exciting events leading up to the separation of Ireland from Britain and the ensuing Civil War in the 1920s. The central character is “the Big Fellow”--Michael Collins--the hero of a recent film starring Liam Neeson.

For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway

An American professor of Spanish, Robert Jordan leaves the safety and security of his teaching job for the Spanish Civil War. He volunteers his services and his expertise with explosives to a group of guerillas, who are holding out against the fascists in the mountains of Spain. The book has everything one could hope for in a novel--adventure, intrigue, insight into human nature, and one of the most famous love stories in American literature.

Going After Cacciato by Tim O’Brien

The junior-year English anthology contains an excerpt from Tim O’Brien’s Going after Cacciato called “Night March.” In this chapter, Paul Berlin, recently drafted into the Vietnam War, tries to escape the war through mind games. But the novel begins with a more ambitious escape as Cacciato, the moon-faced soldier, goes AWOL, planning on walking to Paris. His platoon follows in chase. Much of the novel, however, takes place in the Observation Post, where Paul tries to piece together the chronology of his first few months in Vietnam. Philip Calputo calls it “the best novel about the Vietnam War.”

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ismael Beah

Living in Sierra Leone, Beah was once a typical child who played, listened to music, and enjoyed life. Then in an abrupt change of fortune, Beah and a group of other boys were captured by government troops and turned into soldiers--and drug addicts. Read about Beah’s escape, rehabilitation, and eventual role as an advocate for children’s rights.

The March by E.L. Doctorow

This work of historical fiction is based on Sherman's march through the South during the Civil War.

On Agate Hill by Lee Smith
In 1872, thirteen-year-old Molly Petree deals with a post-war world gone awry by keeping a diary, which is discovered during a historic renovation in 2003. The novel is a story of love, betrayal, motherhood, and a murder trial seen through the eyes of a young self-described “spitfire.”

*A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving

Owen Meany is distinctly different from everyone else in the world. The first noteworthy thing he does in his life is to kill his best friend’s mother by hitting her with a fly ball during a baseball game. The two boys are bound forever. Owen, undersized and possessing an enormous, strange voice, is the reason why his best friend believes in God. This is one of John Irving’s strangest and most powerful works.

*What Is the What* by Dave Eggers

This is the fictional account of a Lost Boy of the Sudan, who escapes the horrors of his homeland only to face the indignities of a menial job, a robbery, and a physical assault in his new home in America.

*We Were Soldiers Once…and Young* by Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway

This moving story of the Battle of Ia Drang, the first major engagement involving American combat forces, North Vietnamese regulars, and the Viet Cong, focuses on the individual soldiers on both sides as they attempt to negotiate the obstacles placed in their paths by political and military leaders.