Laura's Best of Reading Lists:
The First 29 Years
Alphabetized by Author

Fiction
Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
Doris Betts, *Souls Raised from the Dead* (dying and coping)
Olive Anne Burns, *Cold Sassy Tree* (coming of age; South)
Joyce Cary, *The Horse’s Mouth* (Blake in the 20thc.)
E.L. Doctorow, *The World's Fair* (historical fiction); *Ragtime*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Norton Critical edition, Constance Garnet translation)
Mark Dunn, *Ella Minnow Pea* (for lovers of language)
John Dunning, *Two O’Clock Eastern Wartime* (radio mystery)
Leif Enger, *Peace Like a River* (11 year old witness to miracles)
Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain* (Civil War)
Ernest J. Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying* (racial conflict)
George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (19thc. British)
Graham Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* (religious issues)
Jon Hassler, *North of Hope* (and other titles)
Oscar Hijuelos, *Mr. Ives’ Christmas* (suffering/religious themes)
John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (God’s will; Vietnam)
Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees* (young girl seeking forgiveness finds healing)
E.L. Konigsberg, *The Crazy Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (children who run away to the museum)
Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Jonathan Lethem, *Motherless Brooklyn* (detective with Tourette’s)
David Lodge, *Nice Work* (nasty British satire)
Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (perspective and race)
Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried* (Vietnam stories)
Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernal* (French Revolution)
Sembene Ousmane, *God’s Bits of Wood* (French West Africa 1947)
E. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News* (pain and healing)
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (pastor’s wisdom to his young son; 2005 Pulitzer); *Housekeeping* (set in Sandpoint, ID)
Mary Doria Russell, *A Thread of Grace* (WWII in Italy; English Endowed Reader fall 2006)
Ferrol Sams, *The Whisper of the River* (1930’s; coming of age at college in the South)
Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (Robin Hood; Richard the Lionhearted)
Alice Sebold, *The Lovely Bones* (difficult subject; unique point of view)
Carol Shields, *Unless* (couple copes with child who chooses to beg on the streets)
Lee Smith, Fair and Tender Ladies (Appalachian)
Muriel Spark, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (for teachers)
Wallace Stegner, Angle of Repose (American west); Crossing to Safety (faculty lives)
Alexander McCall Smith, The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency (and others in this series)
Anne Tyler, The Amateur Marriage (tough assessment of a marriage); The Accidental Tourist
Alice Walker, The Color Purple (race, gender, religious issues; grace and love)
Robert Penn Warren, All the King’s Men (integrity; politics)
Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth (the American Girl in late 19thc. America)

Non-Fiction
Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (autobiography)
Jill Ker Conway, The Road from Coorain (autobiography, Australian)
Doris Kearns Goodwin, Wait Till Next Year (memoir of 1950s in NY; baseball)
Melissa Fay Greene, Praying for Sheetrock (civil rights; Georgia coast)
Laura Hillenbrand, Seabiscuit
Anne Lamott, Bird By Bird (writing advice from one of the best); Traveling Mercies (essays on faith)
Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and the Madness at the Fair that Changed America (Chicago World’s Fair)
Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (travel, life in the 70’s)
Dava Sobel, Galileo’s Daughter
Wole Soyinka, Ake: the Years of Childhood (Nigerian; memoir; Nobel Prize winner)
Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler (a 17thc. Walden)
Simon Winchester, The Professor and the Madman (Oxford English Dictionary)