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List of Works We’ve Used in the Summer Seminars on Reading for Preaching
Sponsored by The Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary
(Many of the works, anyhow, plus some others we’ve considered)

http://www.aldaily.com/ for some of the best contemporary journalism, including articles, essays, reviews, columns, newspapers, remarkable stuff of all kinds

http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/ with Garrison Keillor for, among other things, a good poem per day

Bradbury, Ray. The Stories of Ray Bradbury (especially gifted teller of ghost stories, supernatural stories, science fiction stories, that upset your notions of where the lines of reality are drawn. Try, e.g., “The Man Upstairs” and “The Fog Horn”)

Caro, Robert. Master of the Senate (third vol. in a masterful series on LBJ)

de Unamuno, Miguel. Abel Sanchez (a cunning retelling of the story of Cain and Abel)

Dostoevsky, The Best Short Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky (one winner after another, including “An Honest Thief” and “Notes from the Underground,” which is as acute an analysis of human nature as anything ever thought of by a theologian)

Endo, Shusaku. Silence (story of betrayal of the gospel in a mission to Japan—or was it faithfulness to the gospel and not betrayal at all?)

Epstein, Joseph. A Line Out for a Walk: Familiar Essays (including “The Gentle Art of the Resounding Put-down” and “A Few kind Words for Envy”) or, another essay collection, Narcissus Leaves the Pool (including “An Extremely Well-Informed SOB” and “A Nice Little Knack for name-Dropping”)

Frost, Robert. The Poetry of Robert Frost (a plain-writing poet of considerable depth explores much under the sun, including marriage, rock walls, apple picking, the woods on a snowy evening, and the road not taken)

Hansen, Ron. Mariette in Ecstasy (story of a young nun who experiences supernatural phenomena from Jesus or fraudulently pretends to and, in any case, throws the convent into uproar)

Hoagland, Edward. Sex and the River Styx (beautiful essays by a naturalist who has never forgotten anything interesting he’s seen outdoors)
Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner* (a gripping story of friendship, betrayal, loyalty, and love set in contemporary Afghanistan and in California)

Hugo, Victor. *Les Miserables* (a long novel, almost always fascinating, of, among other things, a man with a past, and of the relentless legalist who hunts him)

Keizer, Garret. *A Dresser of Sycamore Trees* (a ministry memoir by a man incapable of writing a dead page, and who often moves the reader with the grace and discipline of his ministry)

Kenyon, Jane. *Otherwise* (a brilliant poet, very accessible, shines light unforgettably on aging, lying, calf-birthing, muddy spring, evening)

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies* (a wise observer of life among first, second, and third-generation immigrants to the U.S. from India tells us stories about them)

Lamott, Anne. *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (nobody like Lamott for sheer, angular, exasperating, charming aliveness)

Maugham, W Somerset. *Of Human Bondage* (a partly autobiographical story of a man’s bondage in unrequited love, written with deeply felt understanding of human longing)


Maclean, Norman. *A River Runs Through It* (an always title story whose direction you can guess from its famous first sentence: “In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing”)

Nabokov, Vladimir. *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov* (Nabokov was a genius when it came to telling a story and his command of English, his second language, is complete)

Nazario, Sonia. *Enrique’s Journey* (a remarkable piece of journalism by a brave and compelling writer, who tracks one of the Central American children who migrates north to the U.S. in search of his mother, and has to travel, dangerously, on top of boxcars)

Nemirovsky, Irene. *Suite Francaise* (an absorbing story of what Germany’s invasion of France does to French citizens who now have to compete with each other to prevail in life that is increasingly difficult and dangerous, and what it was like for French citizens accused of collaborating with the enemy)

Norris, Kathleen. *Dakota* (Norris’ unforgettable observation of village life on the plains)

O'Connor, Flannery. *The Complete Stories* (often quietly bizarre stories of grace by a Catholic author who wanted to call attention to grace and believed she needed to leave predictable paths to do it)

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead* (Pulitzer Prize-winning story of a 72-year-old minister of great, quiet depths and of lively humor)

Schmidt, Gary. *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (or any of his novels for the young. He’s one of the country’s great storytellers)

Shattuck, Roger. *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography* (an absorbing exploration of the question whether there are some things human beings ought not to know)

Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (an often amusing, always engaging tale of two boys displaced in China’s Cultural Revolution whose “re-education” turns out to be anything but state-sponsored)

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath* (one of the handful of greatest American novels)

Trillin, Calvin. *Remembering Denny* (a story of a golden boy from California at Yale and what happened to him)


Van Drehle, David. *Triangle* (the story of the fire at The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in 1911 and of the factors that led to the tragedy)