

## Free choice Books and Descriptions

**Directions:** Choose one of the following books to read in addition to *Gallows Hill*. Complete the Venn Diagram comparing *Gallows Hill* to your “free choice” book.

### ***Gallows Hill* by Lois Duncan (required of all English III regular and honors)**

When seventeen-year-old Sarah and her mother, Rosemary, have moved to a small, conservative town in the Ozarks because Rosemary has fallen in love with the hypocritical, still-married Ted. Sarah tries to fit in at the high school, but she has no friends until the too-perfect Eric asks Sarah to be a fortune-teller at the Halloween carnival. Speed ahead in the predictable plot, and Sarah finds that she really can read future disaster in the crystal ball. Soon, frightened classmates proclaim her a witch, put a dead crow in her locker and lure her to a remote gallows to meet her fate amid a crowd of unbalanced teens and a blazing bonfire.

### ***Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Melinda Sordino's freshman year is off to a horrible start. She busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, and now her friends--and even strangers—all hate her. She's the only person who knows the real reason behind her call: she was raped at the party by Andy Evans, a popular senior at her school. Months pass and things aren't getting better. She's a pariah. The lowest of the low. Avoided by everyone. Slowly, with the help of an eccentric and understanding art teacher, she begins to recover from the trauma, only to find Andy threatening her again.

### ***Pants on Fire* by Meg Cabot**

The summer before senior year, life looks good for Katie Ellison, girlfriend of football player Seth Turner. She's waitressing at the Gull 'n Gulp and making out on the sly with Eric Flutely, star of the school musical. With the cash she's sure to earn by placing in the Quahog Princess pageant. Then Tommy Sullivan returns to town. Katie and Tommy were close friends until he became a pariah after penning an expose about SAT cheating by football players. Tommy is no longer the skinny brainiac who left Eastport: he's tan, buff and ultra-confident. She may be in love with her boyfriend's archenemy. The lies Katie tells to keep her romantic indiscretions under wraps build until she realizes the truth is her only recourse. It may be a bit tough to conjure sympathy for a pageant contestant with a straight-A average and three hot guys in her orbit.

### ***Winning* by Lara Zeises Deloza**

Alexandra is a winner. Some may think that her pageant wins and popularity come naturally, but behind the scenes, she is practicing and plotting every move. When a new girl threatens her next scheme to be homecoming queen, Alexandra must take drastic measures. She enlists the help of her best friend and accomplice, Sam, and the two girls target a loner to help throw the competition. Sam and the new girl stumble into a romantic relationship. Together, they join up with Sloane, another girl ready to take down Alexandra, to exact revenge and crown the deserving queen. Although the loss causes Alexandra to reflect on what went wrong, she is unapologetic. Rather than learning the lesson that cheaters never win, she is more determined to rise from the ashes, perhaps more manipulative than before. Justice does prevail.

### ***My Life in Black and White* by Natasha Friend**

Lexi has always been beautiful, a fact she takes for granted. After finding her boyfriend, Ryan, cheating on her with her best friend at a party, Lexi gets into a car accident. She requires reconstructive facial surgery. Now a skin graft from her butt graces her cheek. What role does physical appearance play in relationships? Who are your friends and what actions constitute the line of demarcation between friend and foe? Can we unconsciously, unthinkingly bully? How can you like yourself in spite of your appearance?

### ***Cheater* by Michael Laser**

Straight-A-student Karl Petrofsky finds himself in over his head after an underground cheating ring, known as The Confederacy, recruits him. Initially lured by the popularity of The Confederacy's members, Karl dumps his nerdy friends and rationalizes that his cheating contributions are really a strike against a tyrannical assistant principal, Mr. Klimchock, who secretly uses security cameras to catch deceitful students. Then Klimchock nails Karl on tape and threatens to blacken his transcripts unless he coughs up the names of his coconspirators. Caught between The Confederacy and Klimchock, Karl tries to hatch a plan that will save his SAT scores and win back his best friend, Lizette. Laser's breezy prose and humorous dialogue balance his serious message about the perils of cheating and will hold the attention of reluctant readers. A well-developed cast of secondary characters, some intriguing high-tech cheating tools, and a late-breaking plot twist round out this entertaining debut that will go over well with fans of David Lubar and Gordon Korman.--Hubert, Jennifer

### ***Fighting in the Shade* by Sterling Watson**

In his latest novel, Watson (*The Calling; Sweet Dream Baby*) writes about the emotional conflicts of high school football players on Florida's Gulf Coast. It's 1964, and Billy Dyer arrives at Oleander's Carr High School with a chip on his shoulder. The rough-and-tumble junior lives on the other side of the tracks with his depressed father who smokes cigarettes at breakfast and drinks scotch for lunch. Billy is determined to beat out a rich kid for a starting receiver spot, but a night of drunken hazing ends with Billy ostracized from the team. Players are expected to fall in line and win, but the angry youth learns about Oleander's ugly underside as townies keep social corruption under wraps.

### ***Trapped* by Michael Northrup**

It's a setup just plausible enough to give you chills. High school sophomore Scotty Weem's narration reveals immediately that he survives southern New England's worst nor'easter ever recorded, but also that others in his group will die. A nor'easter, which will ultimately be known as the worst blizzard in U.S. history, sweeps into a rural New England community, trapping seven kids inside their high school for days. The students' gradual realization of their predicament all the more frightening. First the snow piles up past the windows; then the water pipes freeze; then the roof starts making ominous noises. What begins as a sort of life-or-death *The Breakfast Club* (there's the delinquent, the pretty girl, the athlete, and so on) quickly turns into a battle for survival. The power goes off. As hours, then days, pass, the water stops, the heat goes off, and they get increasingly hungry, cold, and scared. Readers might speculate about what they should have done, could have done, if stuck in their place.

### ***Payback Time* by Carl Deuker**

Senior Daniel True is short, pale, and round, hence his nickname the Michelin Man, or Mitch, for short. His former elementary school best friend, Horst Diamond, is the star quarterback and BMOC at their Seattle high school. Mitch's ambition is to be an ace investigative reporter, a la Woodward and Bernstein, but the new editor of the school newspaper assigns him to cover sports. Worse still, Coach McNulty makes it clear that Mitch's job is to be Horst's cheerleader. McNulty intends to ride his star player to a college coaching job, and he won't let Mitch do anything to jeopardize that opportunity. While covering a practice, Mitch notices Angel Marichal, a senior transfer student. Angel is clearly the best athlete in the school, but McNulty keeps him hidden, playing second string, changing his jersey number, and denying any interview requests. Mitch knows that McNulty and Angel are hiding something, and he is determined to get to the bottom of it. What he finds is far different from what he suspects, and along the way his personal and journalistic ethics are tested. Deuker has crafted another entertaining and readable football story. The game descriptions are well done and will appeal to players and fans.