

Stimulate the mind with a good book

by Levi Higgs, *Smoke Signal* Sports Editor

Reading is something that students generally dread. There is an obvious reason for this, the content we read can be boring. It does not flex or stimulate our minds. Sometimes it cannot even hold our attention.

Senior Alex Pope has a couple of suggestions for students' outside reading pleasure. The first is an entertaining and mind-expanding novel by Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice*. Pope gave his thoughts of the book for the *Smoke Signal*.

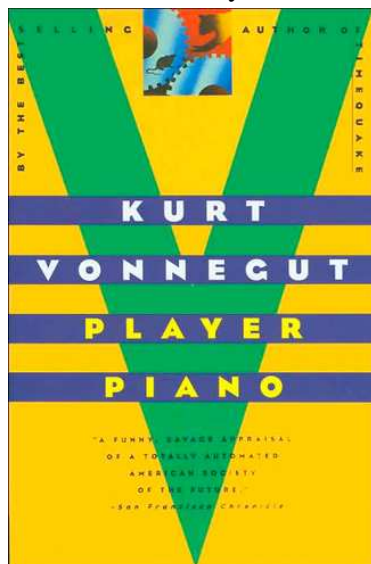
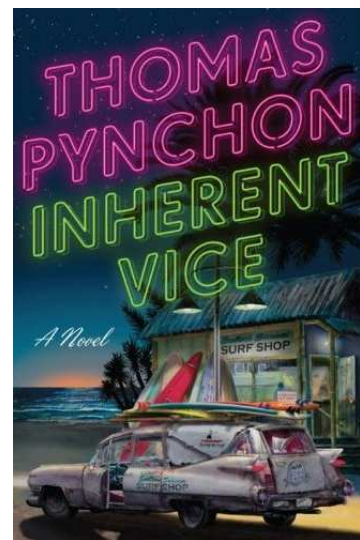
A love story on crutches, *Inherent Vice* is a tale of crime, passion, and hallucinogens. Doc, a free-lance private eye, is on a job to discover the true derivation of the circumstances leading up to a psych ward stay for a leading business man. On his journey he encounters a mustached hippie hater by the name of "Bigfoot" Bjornsen and Coy, an elusive hippie who is constantly strung out on Jazz rifts and heroin. The benevolent Doc is constantly agreeing to outrageous favors and consequently the story rolls with fervor from alpha to omega.

This book doesn't rest exclusively on the back of a tie-dyed T-shirt though; it's also an historical account of a fearsome nation hiding from another Manson Family attack. A congregation of hippies, in the eyes of normal civilians, looked like a beaded, afro-ed army. This created a tension; a divide that cost innocent lives.

Thomas Pynchon was an eccentric novelist from New York. Since he wrote fiction, he believed that he should be a man of fiction, meaning that he didn't want people to know him as a person or an author but rather a character, he wanted to be one with his books. He even went so far as to not show his face in public. Also, he rarely did interviews. Some of his biggest fans question his existence, claiming that it was a group of people behind the books all under one pseudonym. He was a complete enigma.

Another suggestion from Pope is *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut.

***Player Piano* is a story for the little man. The setting is in the near future. America has been divided into two; North and South. In the North, reigns the intelligent, the crafty, and consequently the wealthy. The south is therefore flooded with people who do not meet the requirement for residency in the North. Paul Proteus is the main character. He recognizes the hardships of the South, and he longs to reside there; to read again, to enjoy a fireplace, to sit in a rocking chair. But instead of admitting this, he keeps it under wraps, for if he didn't the consequences would be similar to those for heresy. Once**



Paul is accosted by a revolutionist, though, he allows himself to live fiercely, to indulge, and to live as though there are no consequences to his actions. The end of Player Piano, is very memorable. I won't give too much away, but like I said: this story is for the little man.

“I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center.” – Kurt Vonnegut

Vonnegut has been deemed one of the best modern writers by many, greatly because of his closeness to the edge. His books have inspired many young writers. And they are a great alternative to a textbook. Read and enjoy.