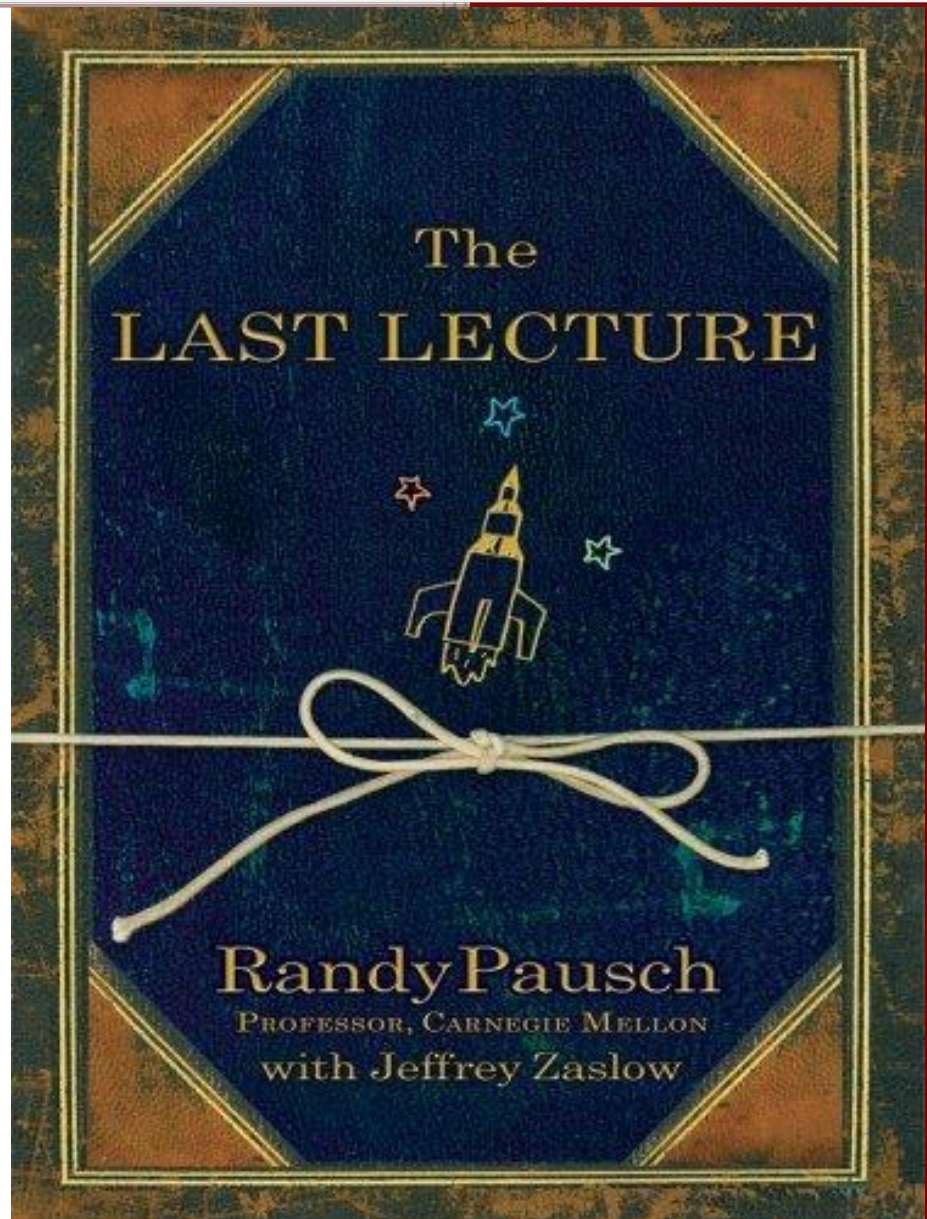


Common Read Book Selection



Inspiring a Culture of Reading & Discussion

Fourth Annual Event 2011

The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch & Jeffrey Zaslow

Thematic Elements & Essential Questions

Thematic Elements:

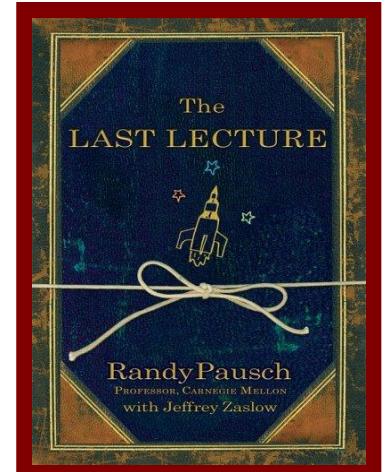
- "How you feel about your life is determined by how you choose to live your life"
- Celebration of Life
- Power of Childhood Dreams
- Examples of individuals doing seemingly simple but extraordinary things with their lives

Essential Questions:

- Why has this lecture/book struck a chord with so many people?
- Where is the speaker/author "coming from"?
- What are my childhood dreams? How might I achieve them?
- What were the dreams my parents had and how did they fulfill them?
- Who are mentors I can turn to? What lessons have they taught me?
- And what wisdom would I choose to impart to the world if it was my last chance? What are the lessons of my own life?

Culminating Activity Guiding Questions:

- What Makes a Great Book?
- Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. What elevates a book to greatness?
- Is this book a 'great story'?



Jeff Zaslow will be at Triton on November 30th, 2:00 – 3:30 for a professional development workshop discussing ways to use authentic literature in the classroom. Later that evening, beginning at 6:00, he will lead a discussion forum about the book and his work.

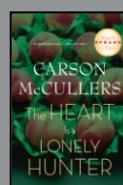
Supporting Activities

A series of programs and events will be planned throughout the year to support this initiative, for example,

- Campus Discussions
- Community Discussions
- "Celebration of Life" Poster Presentation
- Culminating activity: **What Makes a Great Book?**
- and much more.....

Previous Common Read Selections

2010



2009

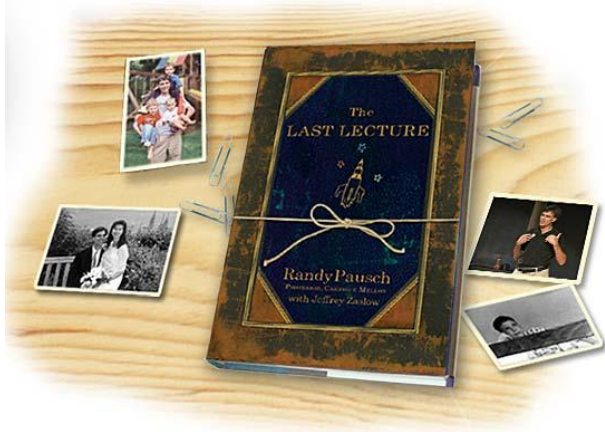


2008



Questions to Guide Your Reading

1. What drew you to read *The Last Lecture*? Did you see Randy Pausch's YouTube video? Did you hear about the video or the book from friends? Why do you think his lecture, and the book that followed, struck a chord with so many people?
2. In the book's introduction, Randy talks about the lecture as a means of expression, and a way to reach his kids: "If I were a painter, I would have painted for them. If I were a musician, I would have composed music. But I am a lecturer. So I lectured." There are so many ways to communicate. What are your own avenues for self-expression?
3. What are some of your own childhood dreams? Have you achieved any of them? Are there some you'd revisit now that you're an adult?
4. Randy names several people in his life who deeply influenced and shaped him. Who are the mentors you turn to in your own life? What have you learned from them?
5. What details from Randy's childhood do you think led to the successes he had later in life? Are there lessons in Randy's story for people who've had less fulfilling childhoods, or absentee parents? What advice might you give to those who didn't win the "parent lottery"?
6. Randy believed our critics are often the ones saying they still care about us. How, in your own life, has a critic helped you become a better person? Do you offer criticism to those you love? How do they feel about receiving this kind of feedback from you?
7. Have there been people in your own life who've faced the challenge of serious illness? What did you learn from them? How has Randy's journey made you consider how you'll approach your own mortality?
8. Randy says parents don't realize the power of their words: "Depending on a child's age and sense of self, an offhand comment from Mom or Dad can feel like a shove from a bulldozer." Did you ever feel that way as a child? If you're a parent, do you recognize the strength and impact that your words have?
9. It is clear in the book that Randy and Jai have a deep love for one another. And yet, like other married couples, they've had to work hard on their relationship. Randy's illness also created additional challenges. In reading about how they've faced the issues between them, what did you learn about getting along with others, about mutual respect, and about the power of love?
10. Randy credits his professor Andy van Dam, in Chapter 14, with telling him the tough-love things he needed to hear. What was it about Dr. van Dam's delivery and message that resonated with Randy? Who in your own life has told you things about yourself that made you reconsider your actions or behavior?
11. Talk about Jeffrey Zaslow's role in this book, as someone who set out to chronicle the last intentions and advice of a dying man. Would you have been able to do what Zaslow did in co-writing *The Last Lecture*? Do you imagine it was a difficult task on an emotional level?
12. What wisdom would you choose to impart to the world if it was your last chance?
13. What are the lessons of your own life that you feel would benefit others?



The Last Lecture is a memoir, a celebration of life, and a testament to the power of childhood dreams. But it is also, perhaps most of all, a book of lessons.

The book is filled with all the ideas and observations that Randy Pausch wanted to share with his three young children. “These are the things I won’t get the chance to tell them over the next twenty years,” he said. “I’m trying to put myself in a bottle that will one day wash up on the beach for them.”

After the book was released, Randy was most moved and pleased to learn that educators — middle- and high-school teachers, as well as college professors — were showing the video of his lecture to their students, and then using the book as a companion teaching tool. Randy was also thrilled to receive countless emails from parents saying that the lessons in the book were resonating in their households, too — that they were using the book to spark a dialogue with their own children.

There are several ways to access both the book and lecture as teaching tools. The lecture itself is available for free on YouTube, Google Video at www.cmu.edu/uls/journeys/randy-pausch/index.html. On the [Last Lecture](http://www.thelastlecture.com) site, you can also order a DVD from Carnegie Mellon University. Videos featuring highlights from the lecture — including footage from The Oprah Winfrey Show, ABC News, and The Wall Street Journal Online—are also available.

Many educators choose to first show their students the lecture, or clips from it. That way students are familiar with Randy, the cadence of his voice, and the humor and heart to be found in his delivery. When students then read the book, it’s as if they can hear the Randy they saw on stage.

Web Resources

- Main Resource: www.TheLastLecture.com
- Reader Guide: <http://www.thelastlecture.com/pdf/LastLectureRGG.pdf>
- Educator Guide: http://www.thelastlecture.com/pdf/LastLecture_EdGuide.pdf

Faculty Resources

Additional resources are available on Blackboard. User name and password = **onebook**



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