**Summer Reading 2017**

**Al Franken, giant of the Senate** by Franken, Al. This is a great book about politics. No joke. (When Franken, former comedian and current U.S. senator from Minnesota, was elected in 2008, by 312 votes, practically every headline writer went with, “Franken Elected to Senate. No Joke.”) In this freewheeling memoir, the senator covers politics in the broadest sense: elections, expectations, punditry, the sausage factory known as Congress, and the lessons Franken keeps learning. The compulsively readable text contains laugh-out-loud lines in every chapter. But the fun is a side dish to a serious meal about important policy decisions, congressional gridlock, and the frustrations (many) and joys (some) of working for the people, which Franken seems to do with humility and gratitude. There is also a lot of fascinating stuff about other senators: “I like Ted Cruz more than most of my other colleagues like Ted Cruz. And I hate Ted Cruz.” Politicians often write books before they run for president. Ironically, Franken has already written, Why Not Me? (1999), about a fictional Franken presidency. If this is a stalking horse, it’s better than most.

**Astrophysics for people in a hurry** by Tyson, Neil deGrasse. What is the nature of space and time? How do we fit within the universe? How does the universe fit within us? There’s no better guide through these mind-expanding questions than acclaimed astrophysicist and best-selling author Neil deGrasse Tyson. But today, few of us have time to contemplate the cosmos. So Tyson brings the universe down to Earth succinctly and clearly, with sparkling wit, in tasty chapters consumable anytime and anywhere in your busy day. While you wait for your morning coffee to brew, for the bus, the train, or a plane to arrive, Astrophysics for People in a Hurry will reveal just what you need to be fluent and ready for the next cosmic headlines: from the Big Bang to black holes, from quarks to quantum mechanics, and from the search for planets to the search for life in the universe.

**The awkward age** by Segal, Francesca. Years after the heartbreaking death of her husband, Julia Alden has rediscovered the passion, companionship, and comfort that comes with true partnership. James Fuller is funny, friendly, and a perfect match for Julia. Even though Julia and James have fallen for one another, their teenage children seem to despise each other. Gwen and Nathan are a year apart, full of teenage angst and roiling hormones, and appear constitutionally unable to get along. Also orbiting this new relationship are Julia’s former in-laws and James’ ex-wife, as if there wasn’t enough pressure in their lives. As Julia and James figure out how to nurture their relationship in the middle of what feels like a fishbowl, everyone discovers how much growing up they all have left to do. Flitting among the perspectives of all three generations, author Segal allows all members of the family their turn in the spotlight. Julia might be the central character of Segal’s ode to the Sandwich Generation, but strong-willed Gwen steals the second half of the novel.

**The Baker’s secret** by Kiernan, Stephen P. By June fourth of 1944, Emma and her fellow villagers on the Normandy coast have known German occupation for years. The army takes the lion’s share of whatever is available, leaving the people hungry and wanting, and an atmosphere of despair has settled over the town. Emma was still a young woman when the Germans came and when she watched as they killed the kind Jewish baker to whom she was apprenticed. From that time forward, Emma has kept her head down, baking only the bread she is ordered to provide to the German officers, until a day when her ingenuity and fighting spirit lead her down a different path. Taciturn and full of dread, Emma manages to bring hope to her townspeople, finding solutions to their needs and delivering food to the starving and wish-list items to the downhearted. But even while helping others, Emma feels only a stubborn nihilism, wondering why she even bothers when there is no sign of relief on the horizon. Kiernan (The Hummingbird, 2015) invites readers to fully connect with his depressed and stoic heroine in this beautifully written account of the emotional and moral struggles of a people gripped by fear in the depths of WWII.
**Beartown** by Backman, Fredrik. Beartown, is an ice hockey town like many small American communities are football towns: no bigger event occurs than home games, where the good cheer of the supporting fans, former players, and sponsors, known as "The Pack," sometimes flares into violence against rivals. As the local youth team snags a possible chance at winning a junior championship, the narrative follows a cross-section of citizens. In their struggles with modern life, these dozen or so individuals face challenges, make decisions, and frequently surprise the reader. Backman's sketchy style always leaves his audience wanting more explanation, but he successfully draws a community portrait that manages to be both unique and universal. There is enough hockey action to satisfy sports fans and plenty of material for group discussion.

**Beneath a scarlet sky** by Sullivan, Mark T. Based on the true story of a forgotten hero, *Beneath a Scarlet Sky* is the triumphant, epic tale of one young man's incredible courage and resilience during one of history's darkest hours. Pino Lella wants nothing to do with the war or the Nazis. He's a normal Italian teenager—obsessed with music, food, and girls—but his days of innocence are numbered. When his family home in Milan is destroyed by Allied bombs, Pino joins an underground railroad helping Jews escape over the Alps, and falls for Anna, a beautiful widow six years his senior. In an attempt to protect him, Pino's parents force him to enlist as a German soldier—a move they think will keep him out of combat. But after Pino is injured, he is recruited at the tender age of eighteen to become the personal driver for Adolf Hitler's left hand in Italy, General Hans Leyers, one of the Third Reich's most mysterious and powerful commanders. Now, with the opportunity to spy for the Allies inside the German High Command, Pino endures the horrors of the war and the Nazi occupation by fighting in secret, his courage bolstered by his love for Anna and for the life he dreams they will one day share.

**Camino Island** by Grisham, John. A gang of thieves stages a daring heist from a secure vault deep below Princeton University's Firestone Library. Their loot is priceless, but Princeton has insured it for twenty-five million dollars. Bruce Cable owns a popular bookstore in the sleepy resort town of Santa Rosa on Camino Island in Florida. He makes his real money, though, as a prominent dealer in rare books. Very few people know that he occasionally dabbles in the black market of stolen books and manuscripts. Mercer Mann is a young novelist with a severe case of writer's block who has recently been laid off from her teaching position. She is approached by an elegant, mysterious woman working for an even more mysterious company. A generous offer of money convinces Mercer to go undercover and infiltrate Bruce Cable's circle of literary friends, ideally getting close enough to him to learn his secrets. But eventually Mercer learns far too much, and there's trouble in paradise as only John Grisham can deliver it.

**The burial hour : a Lincoln Rhyme novel** by Deaver, Jeffery. Lincoln Rhyme, the quadriplegic criminalist, calls New York City home. But occasionally he travels to other places. In *The Kill Room* (2013), he follows the trail of a killer to the Bahamas. Here, he's way outside his comfort zone: Naples, Italy, to be exact, where an unknown subject who nearly killed a man in New York has fled (and has, apparently, attacked another victim). When Rhyme and his partner, NYPD detective Amelia Sachs, turn up in Naples, they aren't exactly warmly received, especially by the prosecutor in charge of the case and the lead detective. But, as Rhyme and Sachs show just how good they are, they begin to win over their law-enforcement adversaries. Misdirection and plot twists abound, and the novel's theme (the European immigrant problem) feels, given recent events in American politics, timely and relevant. Another strong entry from the always-reliable Deaver.
**A dog's way home** by Cameron, W. Bruce  Soft-hearted medical student Lucas Ray has been keeping an eye on and setting out food for a colony of feral cats in a soon-to-be-demolished building across from the subsidized apartment he shares with his war-veteran mother. Along with the abandoned cats and kittens, however, is a lone puppy of indeterminate breed. For Lucas and the dog, it is love at first sight. Bella, as she comes to be called, also comes to be identified as a pit bull, a breed that has run afoul of Denver’s strict animal-control laws. One infraction too many sends Bella into foster care hundreds of miles away from her beloved Lucas and sanctuary home. Though Bella meets kind people during her separation, she has but one goal: to return to Lucas. Braving a 400-mile journey across coyote-infested wilderness and facing myriad urban dangers, Bella persists in her desire to be reunited with her human and home.

**Dragon teeth** by Crichton, Michael  Discovered in manuscript form among the late author’s files, this new novel tells the story of one of the most notorious rivalries in the history of science. Othniel Charles Marsh and Edward Drinker Cope were competing dinosaur-fossil hunters from the 1870s through the 1890s. Both were passionately motivated about finding and classifying new dinosaurs, but, at the same time, they often let personal antipathies and their own egos get in the way of scientific research. Crichton tells their fascinating story through the eyes of young William Johnson, an aimless boy from a wealthy family who winds up working with both men (he’s dropped from Marsh’s latest expedition because Marsh suspects he’s a spy working for Cope, so Johnson joins up with Cope instead). The book is sure to garner a lot of attention—a posthumous book about dinosaurs from the creator of Jurassic Park—but it’s more than just a literary curiosity. It’s also a very good novel; in fact, taken among all Crichton’s novels, it’s one of his best, a beautifully detailed, scientifically engrossing, absolutely riveting story about the early days of paleontology.

**Earthly remains** by Leon, Donna  Yes, the soul-destroying demands of fighting for justice in a fundamentally unjust world have been taking their toll on Venetian police commissario Guido Brunetti, and, yes, an uncharacteristically rash action during an interrogation has earned him a two-week leave of absence, but, Guido, really, shouldn’t you know that the heroes of crime-fiction series can’t take vacations? The hellhounds of that unjust world are on your tail always, even when you retreat to a small island on the far end of the lagoon for some therapeutic rowing. It all starts perfectly, as Guido settles in at a lavish villa owned by his in-laws and spends his days rowing with the villa’s caretaker, Davide, an enigmatic beekeeper with a troubled past. Then Davide disappears, and Guido is drawn into the search. Two of Leon’s most powerful themes—the all-pervasive corruption at the heart of Italian society and the environmental abuses that threaten Venice’s water—quickly bob to the surface. Soon Guido’s feeling of sun-drenched calm is clouded over with the melancholic pallor that he had hoped to leave behind at the office. Leon’s multifaceted portrait of a man overburdened with human tragedy emerges forcefully here, as the lagoon itself, beautiful on the surface but containing the seeds of its own destruction, stands as a gripping metaphor for the bad choices and intractable dilemmas that infect us all.

**The fix** by Baldacci, David  Decker witnesses a murder just outside FBI headquarters. A man shoots a woman execution-style on a crowded sidewalk, and then turns the gun on himself. Even with Decker’s extraordinary powers of observation and deduction, the killing is baffling. Decker and his team can find absolutely no connection between the shooter—a family man with a successful consulting business—and his victim, a schoolteacher. Nor is there a hint of any possible motive for the attack. Enter Harper Brown, an agent of the Defense Intelligence Agency, she orders Decker to back off the case. The murder is part of an open DIA investigation, one so classified that Decker and his team aren’t cleared for it. But they learn that the DIA believes solving the murder is now a matter of urgent national security. Critical information may have been leaked to a hostile government—or worse, an international terrorist group—and an attack may be imminent.
**A gentleman in Moscow** by Towles, Amor  
Towles grandly unfolds the life of Count Alexander Illyich Rostov in Soviet-era Moscow. The count is condemned by his past to permanent house arrest at the sumptuous Metropole Hotel, where he inhabits a tiny attic he's turned into a reflection of his rich interior life. Having expected to idle away his hours at his country estate, the count is initially at loose ends, his very values challenged. But he befriends little Nina, who teaches him the secrets of the Metropole and leaves him with a wonderful gift, and after a moment of despair launches on a whole new course. The count becomes head waiter at the Boyarsky, the hotel's fabled restaurant, forming a Triumvirate with Chef Emile and maître d' Andrey as he purveys taste, discretion, and culture in a bloodily upturned world. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union's many tragedies touch him at a distance, communicating a sense of life ever haunted and ever resilient. As urbane, cultured, and honey-smooth as the count himself, even as his situation inevitably creates suspense, this enthralling work is highly recommended even for those unfamiliar with Soviet history.

**Gwendy's button box** by King, Stephen  
Castle Rock, Maine, is known for the strange things that always seem to happen there. It has been a while since King let his imagination wander back to this beloved location, but with the help of award-winning author Chizmar, Castle Rock reveals one of its best secrets yet. Readers meet Gwendy in the summer of 1974, as she climbs the 305 Suicide Steps to the top of Castle View to find a man in a dark suit and hat waiting for her on a bench. He has something to give her, something beautiful but sinister: the button box. It dispenses valuable coins and amazing chocolate treats, but it can also be used to cause worldwide devastation—and Gwendy is charged with keeping the box safe for the foreseeable future. This coming-of-age novella is told in a tone that is both sweet and ominous. As she grows from a plump 12-year-old to a college graduate, Gwendy's time as the steward of the box is filled with its share of utter happiness and crushing sorrow. Where the story shines is in the universal questions it asks: how much of any of our lives is our own doing versus a result of intervention from an unseen force? And how much power do any of us have to save the world—or destroy it?

**Hillbilly Elegy A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis** by Vance, J. D  
Things could have so easily turned out differently for Vance. Growing up in a working-class family riven by strife and seemingly incapable of escaping its rural Kentucky roots, Vance spent his youth bouncing between homes, a succession of father figures, and ever more explosive situations. The story of how he overcame his upbringing to graduate from Yale Law School and embark on a stable and happy adulthood poses the bigger question of how the obstacles facing other such “hillbillies” can be surmounted. Vance compellingly describes the terrible toll that alcoholism, drug abuse, and an unrelenting code of honor took on his family, neither excusing the behavior nor condemning it. Instead, he pulls back to examine the larger social forces at work for white, working-class Americans with ties to Appalachia. The portrait that emerges is a complex one, where die-hard cultural beliefs contribute to a downward spiral for Vance’s family and those like them. Unerringly forthright, remarkably insightful, and refreshingly focused, Hillbilly Elegy is the cry of a community in crisis.

**A house among the trees** by Glass, Julia  
When the celebrated children's-book author and illustrator Mort Lear dies in a fall at his Connecticut home, complications quickly ensue. There's his will, for starters. In it, he leaves his estate to Tomasina “Tommy” Daulair, his personal assistant of many years, even though he had led Merry Galarza, curator of the Contemporary Book Museum, to believe the museum would be the legatee (it holds a large amount of Lear’s work on semi permanent loan). Then there is the motion picture that is to be made of Lear’s life, starring Oscar-winning British actor Nicholas Greene. The novel rotates among these three characters, interspersed with the occasional flashback that provides context, including the evolution of Tommy’s troubled relationship with her younger brother. Glass has created a compelling story with fully realized characters, though there is a whiff of the roman à clef; Lear’s work and the complications of his legacy will inevitably remind readers of Maurice Sendak, though there is much here that is different. But both real person and fictional character inhabited the world of children's books, which Glass nicely contextualizes, demonstrating that she has done her homework. The result is a fascinating look at a world in which a creative artist becomes a hot property to be both honored and exploited.
**The Identicals** by Hilderbrand, Elin

Identical twin sisters who couldn't look more alike...or live more differently. Harper Frost is laid-back, easygoing. She doesn't care what anyone thinks of her. She likes a beer and a shot and wouldn't be caught dead wearing anything fashionable. She's inherited her father's rundown house on Martha's Vineyard, but she can't hold down a job, and her latest romantic disaster has the entire island talking. Two beautiful islands only eleven miles apart. Tabitha Frost is dignified, refined. She prefers a fine wine and has inherited the impeccable taste of her mother, the iconic fashion designer Eleanor Roxie-Frost. She's also inherited her mother's questionable parenting skills—Tabitha's teenage daughter, Ainsley, is in full rebellion mode—and a flailing fashion boutique on Nantucket in desperate need of a cash infusion. One unforgettable summer that will change their lives forever. After more than a decade apart, Harper and Tabitha switch islands—and lives—to save what's left of their splintered family. But the twins quickly discover that the secrets, lies, and gossip they thought they'd outrun can travel between islands just as easily as they can. Will Harper and Tabitha be able to bury the hatchet and end their sibling rivalry once and for all? Before the last beach picnic of the season, there will be enough old resentments, new loves, and cases of mistaken identity to make this the most talked-about summer that Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket have experienced in ages.

**If not for you** by Macomber, Debbie.

After leaving her Chicago hometown for Portland, OR, and now far from her controlling mother's influence, music teacher Beth Prudhomme is tentatively spreading her wings. She even accepts a blind date with a man who would horrify her mother! But beneath his rough exterior, Sam Carney is a decent, caring guy, and although he's not into relationships, when a texting teen driver lands Beth in the hospital, it's Sam who's there when she needs him. A likable supporting cast (Beth's flamboyant, artistic Aunt Sunshine is a standout) keep the action moving and the plot intriguing in a well-crafted story that includes several romantic relationships and is rich with unresolved interpersonal issues. Wholesome and thoughtful, Macomber's latest is a heartwarming treat.

**Into the water** by Hawkins, Paula

Nel Abbott obsessed over the drowning pool, a spot in the river behind her family's Beckford, England, home where several women had lost their lives, as far back as her estranged sister, Jules, can remember. Nel was writing the dead women's stories, in fact, before her own body was discovered in the pool, prompting Jules' return to Beckford to care for Nel's prickly teenage daughter, Lena. As Nel's apparent suicide is investigated, past events surface—and some of them are barely past. Just months ago, Lena's best friend walked into the river with a weighted backpack, and the girl's grieving family blames Nel for glorifying the drowned women. Needless to say, nothing is quite as it appears, but those who know more have reasons to keep quiet. In her second thriller, Hawkins (The Girl on the Train, 2015) returns to the rotating-narration style of her breakout debut, giving voice to an even broader cast this time, and readers will see shades of Girl's Rachel in Jules. Hawkins' creepy small-town setting is a draw, too. As a called-in investigator notes of Beckford, "it seems like whichever way you turn, in whatever direction you go, somehow you always end up back at the river."

**The keeper of lost things** by Hogan, Ruth

Interlacing plots join this cozy, clever, contemporary English story, unveiling the layers of four lives brought together by the discovery of a biscuit tin full of human ashes found on a train. Laura, an unhappy 35-year-old divorcée, answers an ad for a writer's assistant. Years earlier, Eunice responds to a similar advertisement for a publisher's assistant. Enter -Anthony Peardew, the writer, and Bomber, the publisher, who both have their own complicated romantic and family histories. The story involves Anthony's collection of lost items he catalogs and stores in the locked study at Padua, the Victorian villa where he lives and writes. He acquires items he finds in gutters, parks, and trains: jigsaw puzzle pieces, hair ribbons, umbrellas, etc. The novel includes short tales with the narratives behind each lost item. Laura decides to create a website to find the owners of the artifacts, including the human ashes. Hogan's debut pulls in readers with each crafty chapter.
**Killers of the flower moon : the Osage murders and the birth of the FBI** by Grann, David

During the early 1920s, many members of the Osage Indian Nation were murdered, one by one. After being forced from several homelands, the Osage had settled in the late nineteenth century in an unoccupied area of Oklahoma, chosen precisely because it was "rocky, sterile, and utterly unfit for cultivation." No white man would covet this land; Osage people would be happy. Then oil was soon discovered below the Osage territory, speedily attracting prospectors wielding staggering sums and turning many Osage into some of the richest people in the world. Grann (The Devil and Sherlock Holmes, 2010) centers this true-crime mystery on Mollie Burkhart, an Osage woman who lost several family members as the death tally grew, and Tom White, the former Texas Ranger whom J. Edgar Hoover sent to solve the slippery, attention-grabbing case once and for all. A secondary tale of Hoover’s single-minded rise to power as the director of what would become the FBI, his reshaping of the bureau's practices, and his goal to gain prestige for federal investigators provides invaluable historical context. Grann employs you-are-there narrative effects to set readers right in the action, and he relays the humanity, evil, and heroism of the people involved. His riveting reckoning of a devastating episode in American history deservedly captivates.

**Kiss Carlo** by Trigiana, Adriana

Trigiani's 13th adult novel is set in early 1950s Philadelphia and follows the lives of two families, the Palazzinis and the Borellis. The Palazzini brothers, Dom and Mike, each run a cab company but do not speak to each other owing to a feud. Curmudgeon Dom is tempered by his sweet wife, Jo. Their three sons and their wives and Dom and Jo's nephew Nicky Castone also live in the family home. In the same neighborhood, Sam Borelli and his daughter, Calla, struggle to keep their small theater running. Nicky moonlights as a stagehand and affectionately spars with Calla. Things get a little crazy when Nicky breaks up with his fiancée and flees to Roseto, PA, to avoid her murderous father. A series of events involving both families and a cast of affecting secondary characters drive the narrative. While this may sound like a drawing room farce, the humor and heart of the story shine through. Verdict Entering the world of the Palazzinis and the Borellis is like taking a trip to a simpler time when families still lived, loved, and fought together, bound by tradition and affection.

**The light we lost** by Santopolo, Jill

A woman looks back on the highs and lows of her turbulent relationship with her first love. College students Lucy and Gabe meet on Sept. 11, 2001, and have an instant connection amid the tragedy and fear. But when Gabe reunites with an ex-girlfriend, Lucy assumes she'll never see him again...until she runs into him at a bar almost a year after graduation. Their passion for each other is surpassed only by their passions for their dreams—Gabe’s to be a photographer and Lucy’s to be a children's show producer. As Gabe’s talent flourishes, he gets his dream job as a war photographer in Iraq. Lucy is crushed when he leaves, but she moves on and marries Darren, a man who is stable and reliable where Gabe was exciting and driven. However, Darren never quite understands Lucy’s dedication to her career or her commitment to making the world a better place. Lucy has children and a career she loves, but whenever she runs into Gabe or sees one of his haunting photographs, she questions whether building a life with Darren was the right decision. Lucy and Gabe are, as she describes them, "a binary star...orbiting around each other." When Gabe is injured in Gaza City, Lucy rushes to be by his side, telling him the story of their relationship and questioning her choices along the way. Against the backdrop of recent historical events—Obama’s inauguration, bin Laden’s death—Santopolo explores passion, fate, love, and what it means to truly be a good person. She raises questions readers will find themselves pondering long after they’ve turned the last page: are our lives shaped by our own choices or by forces outside our control? Are first loves forever? And is it worth risking stability and comfort for a love that is unpredictable and explosive? This is a beautiful and devastating story that will captivate readers.
**Lilli de Jong** by Benton, Janet  A young woman finds the most powerful love of her life when she gives birth at an institution for unwed mothers in 1883 Philadelphia. She is told she must give up her daughter to avoid lifelong poverty and shame. But she chooses to keep her. Pregnant, left behind by her lover, and banished from her Quaker home and teaching position, Lilli de Jong enters a charity for wronged women to deliver her child. She is stunned at how much her infant needs her and at how quickly their bond overtakes her heart. Mothers in her position face disabling prejudice, which is why most give up their newborns. But Lilli can't accept such an outcome. Instead, she braces moral condemnation and financial ruin in a quest to keep herself and her baby alive. Confiding their story to her diary as it unfolds, Lilli takes readers from an impoverished charity to a wealthy family's home to the streets of a burgeoning American city. Drawing on rich history, *Lilli de Jong* is both an intimate portrait of love and loss and a testament to the work of mothers. "So little is permissible for a woman," writes Lilli, "yet on her back every human climbs to adulthood."

**Lincoln in the bardo** by Saunders, George Short story master Saunders (Tenth of December) eagerly awaited first novel may not be what fans of his dystopic, sf-like short stories have expected. It begins with snippets of historical fact, accompanied by citations-presumably both actual and fictionalized—that set the novel at the time of the death of Abraham Lincoln's son Willie. The entries shift to quips made by individuals, and we realize we are hearing conversations among spirits that haunt the Washington graveyard where Willie is buried. When Lincoln returns for a grieving nighttime visit, these apparitions attempt to reunite Willie's spirit with his father. Bardo is a term from Tibetan Buddhism referring to the transitional state between death and the next realm; the wraiths in this amorphous space chatter, float about, see visions, and change shape in disorienting ways. Yet they are confined, both by their previous lives and by a fear of final judgment, of which Saunders provides a truly horrifying glimpse. A stunningly powerful work, both in its imagery and its intense focus on death, this remarkable work of historical fiction gives an intimate view of 19th-century fears and mores through the voices of the bardo's denizens.

**The lost order** by Berry, Steve. The latest Cotton Malone adventure, combines the history of a secret society with a look inside the Smithsonian Institution. Before the Civil War, an organization known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, worked behind the scenes to try and establish a separate country. When war broke out, those plans were thwarted and a peaceful solution to achieve the group’s goals was thwarted. The vast amount of wealth in the group’s clutches disappeared and most of it was never found. In the present, former Justice Department agent Cotton Malone is recruited to go on a treasure hunt to find the missing loot. What Malone doesn’t realize is that the group considered defunct, is still in operation, and protections are in place to insure the treasure is never found. To complicate matters, two factions of the organizations are working to achieve different goals. Malone is linked to everything, including a distant relative who was a spy in the Confederacy.

**My life with Bob : flawed heroine keeps book of books, plot ensues** by Paul, Pamela Since high school, Paul has entered every book she's read (beginning with Kafka's The Trial) in a battered journal she named Bob (Book of Books); continuing the habit in far-flung destinations in the 1980s and '90s (Cambodia, China, France, Thailand, Vietnam), she recorded the books that she took along with her. Unlike a diary of thoughts and events she'd like to forget, Bob contains info she wants to remember. Paul was a book-smart, unsociable child growing up on Long Island, the sole girl among seven brothers whose parents divorced when she was “three or four”; books were and remain her refuge, companions, and obsession. She worked at bookstore chain B. Dalton and then in marketing, and eventually landed a job at the New York Times Book Review. After the birth of her third child, she remained in the hospital an extra day to finish The Hunger Games, later finding breastfeeding to be a perfect opportunity for reading. Gazing back through Bob's pages, Paul is inspired to question why we read, how we read, what we read, and how reading helps us create our own narratives. Readers will be drawn to this witty and authentic tribute to the extraordinary power of books.
**Nevertheless : a memoir** by Baldwin, Alec The renowned actor and Trump bugaboo opines about filmmaking, politics, and sundry other matters in this cheerful but not entirely amiable memoir. Baldwin grew up amid difficult circumstances: a houseful of squalling siblings, parents without resources, fraught conditions—but all of it gave him a certain freedom, since, as he writes, “my father had no money to buy things, and thus no power to manipulate us by withholding those same things.” That freedom, plus a bookish and artistic bent, led him to acting, an art that he describes as scarcely understood to outsiders and particularly to the executives in charge of film studios. A generally nice but not cuddly guy in these pages, the author emerges as a careful student of film and film history, and his observations on the craft will be of particular interest to would-be actors. Baldwin also addresses head-on some of the thornier points on his resume, including the infamous voicemail he left for his young daughter and a spectacularly ugly tabloid divorce. He has much to say on current events as well, and though he is cagey on the question of running for office, he sounds a nice note for the hustings by remarking toward the end, “it is imperative that we replace those who think they own this country with those who built it.” Baldwin reveals himself to be a man of parts. A pleasure for his many fans, though the sitting president doubtless won’t be placated—but that, Baldwin notes, is for another book.

**Norse mythology** by Gaiman, Neil In his fiction, Gaiman (American Gods; Sandman) frequently explores the themes and tropes of mythology from around the world. Here, he operates within narrower confines, retelling the classic stories of Norse mythology but with no less humor, sense of adventure, and imagination than when he’s playing in worlds of his own making. Here the adventures and misadventures of the Norse gods and goddesses function as short stories that, together, build an arc that leads the reader onward to Ragnarök, the twilight of the gods. Giants, ogres, dwarves, fantastical beasts, and the occasional human freely mingle with Thor, Odin, Loki, Freya, and other, less well-known gods and goddesses, all of whom are passionate, flawed, weird, and divinely entertaining.

**One perfect lie** by Scottoline, Lisa A handsome stranger moves to the small Pennsylvania town of Central Valley and his name is Chris Brennan. He’s applying for a job as a teacher and varsity baseball coach at the local high school, and he looks perfect, on paper. But his name is an alias, his resume is false, and everything about him is a lie. And he has a secret plan - for which he needs a pawn on the baseball team. Susan Sematov loves her younger son Raz, the quirky and free-spirited pitcher of the team. But Raz’s adored father died only a few months ago, and the family is grief-stricken. Secretly, Raz is looking to fill the Daddy-shaped hole in his heart. Heather Larkin is a struggling single mother who’s dedicated to her only son Justin, the quiet rookie on the team. But Justin’s shy and reserved nature renders him vulnerable to attention, including that of a new father-figure. Mindy Kostis is the wife of a busy surgeon and the queen bee of the baseball boosters, where her super-popular son Evan is the star catcher. But she doesn’t realize that Evan’s sense of entitlement is becoming a full-blown case of affluenza, and after he gets his new BMW, it’s impossible to know where he’s going or whom he’s spending time with. The lives of these families revolve around the baseball team and Chris Brennan. What does he really want? How far will he go to get it? Who among them will survive the lethal jeopardy threatening them, from the shadows?
**Papi: My Story** by Ortiz, David; Holley, Michael  
Looking back at the end of his legendary career, Ortiz opens up fully for the first time about his last two decades in the game. Unhindered by political correctness, Ortiz talks colorfully about his journey, from his poor upbringing in the Dominican Republic to when the expansion Florida Marlins passed up a chance to sign him due to what was essentially tennis elbow. He recalls his days in Peoria, Arizona, his first time in the United States; tense exchanges with Twins manager Tom Kelly in Minnesota; and his arrival in Boston. Readers go behind the scenes for the many milestones of his Red Sox career—from the huge disappointment of the Red Sox losing to the Yankees in 2003, ending the curse in 2004 with the infamous “band of idiots,” including his extraordinary clutch hitting to overcome a 3-0 series deficit against the Yankees, to earning a second title in 2007 and a third in 2013. Along the way, he was tainted by the infamous banned substances list in 2009; he used his passion and place to fortify a city devastated by the Boston Marathon bombings; and he dominated pitchers right up through his retirement season at age 40. Papi, as he became so affectionately called, gave his fans big hits when they needed them most. He was an even bigger presence: He was a champion who rallied a team, a city, and a sport in a way that no one will ever forget.

**The Operator: firing the shots that killed Osama bin Laden and my years as a SEAL Team warrior** by O'Neill, Robert  
A stirringly evocative, thought-provoking, and often jaw-dropping account, *The Operator* ranges across SEAL Team Operator Robert O'Neill’s awe-inspiring four-hundred-mission career, which included his involvement in attempts to rescue “Lone Survivor” Marcus Luttrell and abducted-by-Somali-pirates Captain Richard Phillips and which culminated in those famous three shots that dispatched the world’s most wanted terrorist, Osama bin Laden. In these pages, O’Neill describes his idyllic childhood in Butte, Montana; his impulsive decision to join the SEALs; the arduous evaluation and training process; and the even tougher gauntlet he had to run to join the SEAL’s most elite unit. After officially becoming a SEAL, O’Neill would spend more than a decade in the most intense counterterror effort in US history. For extended periods, not a night passed without him and his small team recording multiple enemy kills—and though he was lucky enough to survive, several of the SEALs he’d trained with and fought beside never made it home. *The Operator* describes the nonstop action of O’Neill's deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, evokes the black humor of years-long combat, brings to vivid life the lethal efficiency of the military’s most selective units, and reveals firsthand details of the most celebrated terrorist takedown in history.

**A piece of the world** by Kline, Christina Baker  
Applying her research from writing her best seller Orphan Train as well as her own experiences growing up in Maine, Kline has created an authentic portrayal of Christina Olson, the real-life inspiration for Christina’s World, one of Andrew Wyeth's most iconic paintings. Wyeth and his young wife summered near the Olson homestead between the 1930s and 1960s, and he often used Olson and her brother as models in his work. In this novel, Christina’s story is told in first person and includes flashbacks to help readers better understand how differently her life might have turned out if not for her circumstances. Christina and her brother Al sacrifice chances of finding true love and, in her case, the opportunity to become a teacher, because they have to keep the family farm running and care for their ailing parents. Day-to-day survival with no electricity in rural Maine is described in vivid detail. Such an unforgiving environment would be challenging enough for someone able-bodied but was far more difficult for Christina, who had a painful degenerative disease that eventually made it impossible for her to walk. Her struggles are portrayed in Christina’s World, where she is shown dragging herself across a field. Thoughtful teens who appreciate literary fiction will find Christina’s pragmatism and pride admirable.
**Proving ground** by Blauner, Peter

David Dresden, a crusading criminal attorney who has plagued the NYPD by providing skilled counsel for people the cops want behind bars, is murdered outside his Brooklyn home. For his son, Nathaniel, aka Natty Dread, who developed PTSD in Iraq, there is sorrow, but he’s been estranged from his father for a long time, and nearly anything can trigger nightmarish thoughts of Sadr City. For David’s combative law partner, Ben Grimaldi, it means that David’s $12 million suit against the FBI has become his case. For Lourdes Robles, an ambitious young detective in an overwhelmingly male environment, catching the Dresden case is either a great opportunity or a career ender. For his son, Nathaniel, aka Natty Dread, there is sorrow, but he’s been estranged from his father for a long time, and nearly anything can trigger nightmarish thoughts of Sadr City. For David’s combative law partner, Ben Grimaldi, it means that David’s $12 million suit against the FBI has become his case. For Lourdes Robles, an ambitious young detective in an overwhelmingly male environment, catching the Dresden case is either a great opportunity or a career ender. Proving Ground has a lot of moving parts. The primary characters (including Brooklyn itself) are vividly drawn and compelling, and character drives the plot, which is convoluted but ultimately believable. Fine entertainment for crime-fiction lovers.

**The radium girls : the dark story of America’s shining women** by Moore, Kate

In 1917, the Radium Luminous Materials Corporation willingly employed young women, paid far better than most businesses, and had many enticing perks—including the glow. Radium girls, most in their teens and early twenties, painted watch dials with a luminescent paint mixed with radium dust, which clung to their hair and clothes and produced a telltale glow about them as they walked home each evening. At the time, radium was used in cancer treatments and touted in expensive tonics, so the girls didn’t question smoothing the radium-laden paintbrushes in their mouths, as instructed, or even painting their nails with them. But the women would soon suffer horrific pain and grotesquely shattered bones and teeth, and the company, it would be discovered, had known better. In 1928, just eight years after women had earned the right to vote, a group of former radium girls brought suit against the companies whose knowledge of radium’s hazards, and careless disregard for them, had endangered and harmed them. This timely book celebrates the strength of a group of women whose determination to fight improved both labor laws and scientific knowledge of radium poisoning. English author Moore, who directed a play about the girls, writes in a highly readable, narrative style, and her chronicle of these inspirational women’s lives is sure to provoke discussion—and outrage—in book groups.

**The reminders** by Emmich, Val

Emmich’s quirky first novel tracks the developing friendship between 10-year-old Joan and 30-something Gavin as they unite to try to win a songwriting contest. Joan, who lives with her musician dad and teacher mom in urban New Jersey, is one of a few dozen people in the world with a condition called highly superior autobiographical memory, which means that she remembers everything that has ever happened to her and on what day. TV actor Gavin has just lost his partner, Sydney, to a heart attack. He flees California to grieve at the home of his college friends, Joan’s parents, who are facing their own issues about finances and career choices. When Gavin learns that Joan has met Syd, they agree that he will help her write a song, and she will recall every meeting she had with Syd in detail. As Gavin listens, he must face a mystery about Syd’s last few months. Told in the alternating voices of Joan and Gavin, and illustrated with doodled line drawings from Joan’s journal, the breezy novel raises intriguing questions about the nature of memory.
Since we fell by Lehane, Dennis  Rachel Childs, the protagonist in this slalom course of a tale, is a mess. She was once a rising television journalist, but an on-camera meltdown sent her career into free fall and left her a virtual shut-in, obsessed with finding her father, who vanished from her life as a child. Everything changes when she falls in love with her own Mr. McDreamy, Brian Delacroix, and he slowly pulls her out of her shell. Then the slalom course takes its most jarring turn: Is Brian hiding something? Well, yes, he’s hiding plenty. A lot of thrillers boast twisty plots, but Lehane plies his corkscrew on more than the storyline. The mood and pace of the novel change directions, too, jumping from thoughtful character study to full-on suspense thriller, like a car careening down San Francisco’s Lombard Street, cautiously at one moment, hell-bent at another. But this narrative vehicle never veers out of control, and when Lehane hits the afterburners in the last 50 pages, he produces one of crime fiction’s most exciting and well-orchestrated finales—rife with dramatic tension and buttressed by rich psychological interplay between the characters.

The silent corner by Koontz, Dean  When FBI agent Jane Hawk’s husband inexplicably kills himself, she wants to know why. After some digging, she discovers that a lot of people have been taking their own lives lately, people who by all accounts had no apparent reason for ending them prematurely. Knowing she could be signing her own death warrant, Jane puts her career and life on the line to find out who’s behind this wave of suicides. Billed as the first in a new series, this gripping thriller grabs readers from the first few pages and sweeps them along to the rousing finale. Long an A-list best-seller, Koontz has always delivered the goods, whether he’s tackling science fiction, horror, or thrillers (notably the Odd Thomas series). That varied bibliography now adds a new series and an exciting new heroine. Expect the usual clamor for copies among the faithful, who are certain to embrace Jane Hawk immediately and eagerly await the next installment.

Saints for all occasions by Sullivan, J. Courtney  Patrick is dead, a victim of his own drunk driving. His mother, Nora, stoically delivers the bad news to Patrick’s siblings and makes the arrangements for a traditional Irish wake and funeral. She also calls her sister, Theresa, a nun living in a convent in New Hampshire, and steels herself to reveal the family secret she has been hiding for 50 years. Then the story line jumps back to Nora’s immigration with Theresa from Ireland to Boston in 1957. Nora is not sure she wants to continue with the plans that brought her to America, but the young and naïve Theresa is eager to start her new life. When Theresa discovers that she is pregnant, Nora devises a plan to save her reputation, with the consequences revealed in scenes that alternate between past and present. Best-selling author Sullivan (Commencement) brings her characters to life, capturing the complexities and nuances of family, tradition, and kept secrets.

The stars are fire by Shreve, Anita  After the wettest spring in memory, the summer of 1947 is dry and scorching in coastal Maine. Grace welcomes the long days that allow her to get out with her two young children, but at home, they only heighten the turbulence in her struggling marriage. Life changes overnight when wildfires sweep down the coast, destroying everything in their path. Through a terror-filled night, Grace manages to save herself and her children, but by morning, their home is gone and her husband is missing. With little education or job experience, Grace takes a risk by moving her family to a new town and taking work where she can find it. She thrives in her new surroundings, but rebuilding one’s life does not mean that the past won’t find you. Though the characters lack dimension, best-selling Shreve’s (Stella Bain, 2013) portrayal of a community in a natural disaster is on point, and Grace’s self-discovery in her time of need is genuine. Ultimately, this is a suspenseful and heartwarming story of not just overcoming but also growing in the face of great difficulty.
### The Sunshine Sisters by Green, Jane
The latest from Green (Jemima J; Falling) is a well-realized portrait of a dysfunctional family. Ronni Sunshine, the magnetic and distant actress mother of three daughters, came from England as a young woman to make her big break in Hollywood, but she never quite achieves superstar status. She marries and has three daughters, whose stories are told in snippets from their own viewpoints. We see young, teenage, and then adult versions of Nell, the oldest; Meredith, the classic middle child; and Lizzy, the youngest. The damage that Ronni has done to each daughter is laid bare in their stories. In the present, Ronni calls her daughters to her bedside with bad news. The Sunshine girls are each having significant problems in their own lives. Now, because of their mother, they finally are able to see and help one another instead of fighting. Green does a wonderful job of creating realistic and lovable (despite themselves) characters. Fans of the author and readers who enjoy Elin Hilderbrand and Kristin Hannah will love this book.

### The tea girl of Hummingbird Lane: a novel by See, Lisa
In a remote mountain village, the survival of an Akha tribe, one of China's 55 ethnic minorities, depends on tea. Rigid traditions prohibit Li-yan from keeping her newborn. She saves her daughter by leaving her in a nearby town, wrapped in blankets with a tea cake that hints at her distinctive heritage. Over the course of decades, See (China Dolls, 2014) reveals Li-yan’s exceptional story of departure and eventual return. Interspersed with Li-yan's peripatetic experiences are those of her daughter, the titular tea girl, divulged by medical reports, letters, even the transcript of a group therapy session for adopted Chinese teens. See, partly of Chinese ancestry, creates a complex narrative that ambitiously includes China's political and economic transformation, little-known cultural history, the intricate challenges of transracial adoption, and an insightful overview of the global implications of specialized teas. As this is her first book since losing her own mother, bestselling author Carolyn See (to whom it is dedicated), See's focus on the unbreakable bonds between mothers and daughters, by birth and by circumstance, becomes an extraordinary homage to unconditional love.

### Theft by finding: Diaries (1977-2002) by Sedaris, David
For forty years, David Sedaris has kept a diary in which he records everything that captures his attention—overheard comments, salacious gossip, soap opera plot twists, secrets confided by total strangers. These observations are the source code for his finest work, and through them he has honed his cunning, surprising sentences. Now, Sedaris shares his private writings with the world. Theft by Finding, the first of two volumes, is the story of how a drug-abusing dropout with a weakness for the International House of Pancakes and a chronic inability to hold down a real job became one of the funniest people on the planet. Written with a sharp eye and ear for the bizarre, the beautiful, and the uncomfortable, and with a generosity of spirit that even a misanthropic sense of humor can't fully disguise, Theft by finding proves that Sedaris is one of our great modern observers. It's a potent reminder that when you're as perceptive and curious as Sedaris, there's no such thing as a boring day.

### The Thirst by Nesbo, Jo
Somehow it had to happen: Harry Hole up against a vampire. Don’t panic. Nesbo's internationally best-selling crime-fiction series, while often intensely horrific, has always remained unfailingly realistic, and so it is here, in this eleventh installment. Not a genre mash-up, then, but a gripping, way-scarier crime novel in which former Oslo police detective Hole, now teaching at Norway's police college, is called back to active duty to track down a “vampirist,” that is, a person who craves blood and exhibits behavior similar to that expected of a vampire. Harry has battled some cunningly evil serial killers in the past, but this is the first to employ a specially designed set of black dentures that make it possible to kill with a perfectly placed vampiric bite. Different, yes, but there's something about this killer, who targets victims on Tinder, that reminds Harry of his nemesis, the one who got away. Could it be? As in previous Hole novels, Nesbo moves his narration around a bit, putting us into the nightmarish mind of the killer without revealing his or her identity. And, of course, this being a novel about the most demon-wrecked hero in crime fiction, Harry has troubles of his own, including a mysterious disease that has felled his wife, Rakel, and, yes, another tussle with Harry’s longtime sparring partner, Jim Beam. In the end, it's all about thirst—the vampirist's for blood, of course, but also Harry's for booze and for the thrill of the chase. Vampires don't exist, we all know that, but thirst is very real indeed, bringing together hunter and hunted. This one will keep readers awake deep into the night.
To the bright edge of the world by Ivey, Eowyn. Ivey's highly anticipated second novel, following The Snow Child (2012), is again set in the wilds of her native Alaska. She portrays a fictional 1885 expedition, led by Colonel Allen Forrester of the U.S. Army, into the newly acquired Alaska Territory to map the area's rivers and gather information about the Native populations. By means of the colonel's journal entries and letters between him and his wife, Sophie, who remains at the Vancouver barracks, Ivey deftly draws the reader into the perils of the journey. Forrester is accompanied by only two other officers and a few Indian guides they enlist en route; their goal as they embark in February 1885 is to return to Vancouver before the next winter. Forrester describes the challenges he faces, in a late-nineteenth-century style Ivey captures perfectly, including traveling on rivers of ice, dodging huge ice boulders loosened by the spring thaw, re-routing around narrow canyons, and suffering near-starvation and gut-wrenching illnesses. Sophie is a strong character as well; a feminist who chafes at the social restrictions of the barracks, she teaches herself photography in her husband’s absence. Ivey presents a compelling historical saga of survival.

The women in the castle by Shattuck, Jessica The last party at the ancient von Lingenfels castle is the occasion of a meeting of a group that is committed to resisting the Nazis. Among them is Marianne von Lingenfels’ husband. Another resister is her childhood sweetheart, who extracts from her a promise to look after Benita, his pregnant wife-to-be. When the resisters are executed in 1944 for their part in the plot to assassinate Hitler, Marianne rescues Benita and her son from dire conditions in Berlin and takes them to the castle to live with her and her own three children. Later, they are joined by Ania, who has been identified as another resister’s widow and has fled with her two sons from the Russian advance in the east. The narrative unfolds in a fluid way, with most of the action taking place in 1945, when the women struggle through the harrowing last days of the war, and 1950, when they adjust to new, postwar realities. The reader is fully immersed in the experiences of these women, the choices they make, and the burdens they carry.

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Compiled by Joyce Polucha
Cumberland High School
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