

STAFF PICKS



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May 2023

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*"There are no faster or firmer
friendships than those formed
between people who love the
same books."* - Irving Stone

The staff at the Hershey Public Library would
like to share with you some of the wonderful
books we've been reading this past year.

Enjoy!

Key:

LP (Large Print) B (Biography)

cd (audio book on cd) PB (paperback)

J dmd (playaway) GN (graphic novel)

☺ (Debut-new author's first book)

*Book suggested for book groups

() Numbers shown at the end of book
summaries in parenthesis are the number of
staff who have recommended the book.

Animal Farm by George Orwell (FIC ORW, PB FIC ORW, GN FIC ORW) - A farm is taken over by its overworked, mistreated animals. With flaming idealism and stirring slogans, they set out to create a paradise of progress, justice, and equality. Thus the stage is set for one of the most telling satiric fables ever penned—a razor-edged fairy tale for grown-ups that records the evolution from revolution against tyranny to a totalitarianism just as terrible.

Apostle of Persuasion: Theology and Rhetoric in the Pauline Letters by James W. Thompson (227.06 THO) - This book is the culmination of a career of researching and teaching Paul's letters. Highly respected senior New Testament scholar, James Thompson, offers a unique approach to Pauline theology, focusing on Paul's attempts to persuade his audience toward moral formation.

Behind Bars: The Straight-Up Tales of a Big-City Bartender by Ty Wenzel (641.874 WEN) - Ty Wenzel offers a raw and clever account of slinging drinks in New York City on the Bowery, before and during its renaissance. Honest, clever, and often scathingly funny, this memoir offers outrageous tales, the dirty little secrets of the trade, and inspired commentary on bar culture and the human condition.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath (FIC PLA, PB FIC PLA) - The shocking, realistic, and intensely emotional novel about a woman battling mental illness and societal pressures, written by iconic American writer, Sylvia Plath. A deep penetration into the darkest and most harrowing corners of the human psyche, *The Bell Jar* is an extraordinary accomplishment and a haunting American classic.

Beyond That, the Sea by Laura Spence-Ash (FIC SPE, LP FIC SPE) - A sweeping, tenderhearted love story, *Beyond That, the Sea* by Laura Spence-Ash tells the story of two families living through World War II on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, and the shy, irresistible young woman who will call them both her own. *

Beyond the Crushing Waves by Lilly Mirren (FIC MIR, LP FIC MIR) - This story is based on one of Britain's most secret and shameful real-life scandals in which over 100,000 British children were forcibly deported to Canada, South Africa, and Australia over several decades. Lilly Mirren's heartbreaking, captivating and ultimately uplifting tale reminds us that no matter where the journey leads us, our heart will always find its way home to those we love. *

Big Panda and Tiny Dragon by James Norbury (158.1 NOR) - Big Panda and Tiny Dragon embark on a journey through the seasons of the year together. They get lost, as many of us do. But while lost, they discover many beautiful sights they'd never have found had they gone the right way. Told through a series of beautiful drawings and quiet, sometimes silly, conversations, the panda and the dragon explore the thoughts and emotions, hardships and happiness that connect us all.

Big Tree by Brian Selznick (J SEL, J dmd FIC SEL) - Brimming with humor, wonder, mystery, and a profound sense of hope, *Big Tree* is a trailblazing adventure, illustrated with nearly 300 pages of breathtaking pictures. It is Selznick's most imaginative and far-reaching work to date and a singular reading experience for the whole family.

Book Lovers by Emily Henry (FIC HEN, LP FIC HEN) - *Book Lovers* is the perfect title for this utterly romantic read featuring two book industry insiders with crackling chemistry. Heartfelt, funny, and full of joy, Emily Henry's novel is packed with surprising twists and turns that keep you rooting for Nora and Charlie, every step of the way.

The Brightest Star: A Novel by Gail Tsukiyama (FIC TSU) - Powerful, poignant, and imbued with Gail Tsukiyama's warmth and empathy, *The Brightest Star* reimagines the life of the first Asian American screen star whose legacy endures. It is the story of a remarkable and inspiring woman who broke barriers and became a shining light in Hollywood history. *

The Dead Romantics by Ashley Poston (FIC POS, LP FIC POS) - A disillusioned millennial ghostwriter who, quite literally, has some ghosts of her own, has to find her way back home in this sparkling novel from national bestselling author Ashley Poston.

Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You by Dolly Parton (158 PAR) - Expanding on the popular commencement speech Dolly Parton gave at the University of Tennessee, *Dream More* is a deeper and richer exploration of the personal philosophy she has forged over the course of her astonishing career as a singer, songwriter, performer, and philanthropist.

Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands by Kate Beaton (GN B BEA) - Katie Beaton's graphic memoir about working in the oil sands of Alberta shares an experience that feels both desperate and yet somehow hopeful. Frame by frame, it weaves together a complex tale about capitalism, environmental degradation, Indigenous rights, and the lengths that some people have to go for a fighting chance at a good life.

Duet by Elise Broach (J BRO, J dmd FIC BRO, J cd FIC BRO) - The life of a musically gifted goldfinch changes forever after she discovers the music of Chopin and helps a talented young pianist solve the mystery of a long-lost Chopin piano.

The Dust Bowl Orphans by Suzette Harrison (FIC HAR) - This is a devastating and captivating story of family torn apart, fighting to be reunited. Fans of *Orphan Train*, *Before We Were Yours*, and *Where the Crawdads Sing*, will never forget this powerful story of survival. *

Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage by Alfred Lansing (919.89 LAN) - Experience one of the greatest adventure stories of the modern age. This is the harrowing tale of British explorer Ernest Shackleton's 1914 attempt to reach the South Pole.

The Foundling: A Novel by Ann Leary (FIC LEA, LP FIC LEA) - This is a gripping and beautiful story of two friends, raised in the same orphanage, whose loyalty is put to the ultimate test when they meet years later at an institution. The book is based on a shocking and little-known piece of American history. *

The Garden of Small Beginnings by Abbi Waxman (FIC WAX, LP FIC WAX) - *The Garden of Small Beginnings* is a beautiful book full of humor, heart, and deep insight. It is an intimate and hilarious journey about a young mom moving on from grief that takes readers from tears to laughter as it depicts one woman's attempt to hold it all together for the sake of everyone else.

The Glass House: A Novel by Beatrice Colin (FIC COL, LP FIC COL) - In Britain, at the turn of the last century, orchids are all the rage and a fortune can be made by selling off the rarest specimens. But what drives the horticultural explorers in Beatrice Colin's *The Glass House* is more than the thrill of discovery or the excitement of outfoxing the competition. What motivates the women is even more complicated.

Golem Girl: A Memoir by Riva Lehrer (B LEH) - This is a vividly told, gloriously illustrated memoir of an artist born with disabilities who searches for freedom and connection in a society afraid of strange bodies. It is a profound portrait of the artist as a young and mature woman and an unflinching social history of disability over the last six decades.

The Hacienda by Isabel Cañas (FIC CAN) - In the aftermath of the Mexican War for independence, a new bride finds herself alone in a haunted house surrounded by people who don't believe her. *The Hacienda* is a blend of romance, terror, and the supernatural that tells a story highly embedded with Mexican culture.

Hamnet: A Novel of the Plague by Maggie O'Farrell (FIC OFA, LP FIC OFA) - *Hamnet* fictionalizes the life of William Shakespeare's family as they experience a deep grief in the wake of their son Hamnet's death. The novel examines the themes of family, loss, and grief from multiple perspectives, using both historical facts and imagined events.

Homecoming by Kate Morton (FIC MOR, LP FIC MOR) - An epic novel that spans generations, *Homecoming* asks what we would do for those we love, and how we protect the lies we tell. It explores the power of motherhood, the corrosive effects of tightly held secrets, and the healing nature of truth. *

The House of Lincoln by Nancy Horan (FIC HOR) - A sweeping historical novel that tells the story of Abraham Lincoln's ascendance from rump lawyer to U.S. president to the Great Emancipator through the eyes of a young asylum-seeker who arrives in Lincoln's home of Springfield, Illinois from Madeira, Portugal.

I Am Quiet by Andie Powers (JP POWERS) - This story honors and encourages the beauty of knowing ourselves for exactly who we are. Emile's world shows us that the mind of a quiet child can be as rich, expansive, and bold as that of any other more extroverted child.

Kaikeyi: A Novel by Vaishnavi Patel (FIC PAT, LP FIC PAT) - With a graceful, measured elegance, this lyrical novel reimagines the life of the infamous queen from the ancient epic the *Ramayana*, giving voice to an extraordinary woman determined to leave her mark in a world where gods and men dictate the shape of things to come.

Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro (FIC ISH, LP FIC ISH) - A deft dystopian fable about the innocence of a robot that asks big questions about existence. It is a genuinely innocent, egoless perspective on the strange behavior of humans obsessed and wounded by power, status and fear.

Knitting the National Parks by Nancy Bates (746.432 BAT) - From the brightly colored pebbles of Lake McDonald in Montana's Glacier National Park to the regal granite cliffs of El Capitan and Half Dome in California's Yosemite Valley, the US National Parks contain some of the most recognizable and iconic natural landmarks in the world. Capture the majesty each national park offers with original beanie patterns created by knitting designer and outdoor enthusiast, Nancy Bates.

Lady Tan's Circle of Women by Lisa See (FIC SEE, LP FIC SEE) - Inspired by the true story of a woman physician from 15th-century China, *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* is a captivating story of women helping other women. It is also a triumphant reimagining of the life of a woman who was remarkable in the Ming dynasty and would be considered remarkable today. *

The Last Russian Doll by Kristen Loesch (FIC LOE, LP FIC LOE) - *The Last Russian Doll* blends the best of two genres by embedding a riveting mystery within a masterfully researched historical narrative. History enthusiasts will enjoy piecing together this fresh perspective on 20th-century Russia, while fans of contemporary whodunits will relish the ever-increasing drama. It is a deeply emotional and irresistible story of what it takes to find one's way through a country with a story like none other. ☺

The Maid: A Novel by Nita Prose (FIC PRO, LP FIC PRO) - *The Maid* is a masterful, charming mystery that will touch your heart in ways you could never expect. The endearing, unforgettable Molly reminds us to challenge our assumptions about one another, and shows us how meaningful it is to feel truly seen in the world.

The Many Daughters of Afong Moy by Jamie Ford (FIC FOR, LP FIC FOR, cd FIC FOR) - *The Many Daughters of Afong Moy* is a searing and vibrant epic of generational love, trauma, and healing. In his trademark poignant prose, Ford breathes Afong Moy and her descendants to life with dimension and power. This is a book that will stay with readers and reshape how they engage with their own lives and legacies. *

Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Peña (JP DE LA PENA) - Pictures brimming with activity, an endearing main character, and threads for thinking about art, families, and what we see in others make this a remarkable story. The picture book offers a child's view of the impacts of incarceration on families and is a memorable, thought-provoking story poised to make a difference for many.

My Friend Dahmer by Derf Backderf (GN B DAH) - This is a haunting and original graphic novel, in which writer-artist, Backderf, creates a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a disturbed young man struggling against the morbid urges emanating from the deep recesses of his psyche--a shy kid, a teenage alcoholic, and a goofball who never quite fit in with his classmates. With profound insight, what emerges is a Jeffrey Dahmer that few ever really knew, and one readers will never forget.

A Mystery of Mysteries: The Death and Life of Edgar Allen Poe by Mark Dawidziak (B POE) - In this compelling, dual-timeline narrative, Mark Dawidziak sheds new light on the enigmatic master of macabre. *A Mystery of Mysteries* is a brilliant biography of Edgar Allan Poe that examines the renowned author's life through the prism of his mysterious death and its many possible causes.

Now is Not the Time to Panic by Kevin Wilson (FIC WIL, LP FIC WIL) - A bold coming-of-age story, written with Kevin Wilson's trademark wit and blazing prose, *Now Is Not the Time to Panic* is a nuanced exploration of young love, identity, and the power of art. It's also about the secrets that haunt us and, ultimately, what the truth will set free. (2)

The Nurse's Secret: A Thrilling Historical Novel of the Dark Side of Gilded Age New York City by Amanda Skenandore (FIC SKE) - Based on the little-known story of America's first nursing school, a young female grifter in 1880s New York evades the police by conning her way into Bellevue Hospital's training school for nurses, while a spate of murders continues to follow her as she tries to leave the gritty streets of the city behind. *

Once We Were Home by Jennifer Rosner (FIC ROS) - Based on the true stories of children stolen during wartime, this heart-wrenching novel raises questions of complicity and responsibility, belonging and identity, good intentions and unforeseen consequences, as it confronts what it really means to find home. *

Potato Pants by Laurie Keller (JP KELLER) - A potato and his eggplant nemesis struggle to find the perfect pants in this hilarious, heartwarming tale of forgiveness.

The Queens of Animation: The Untold Story of the Women Who Transformed the World of Disney by Nathalia Holt (791.4334 HOL) - With gripping storytelling, and based on extensive interviews and exclusive access to archival and personal documents, *The Queens of Animation* reveals the vital contributions these women made to Disney's Golden Age.

Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland by Patrick Radden Keefe (364.152 KEE, LP 364.152 KEE) - *Say Nothing* investigates the mystery of a missing mother and reveals a still-raw, violent past. The book often reads like a novel, but, as anyone familiar with his work for *The New Yorker* can attest, Keefe is an obsessive reporter and researcher, who is a master of narrative nonfiction. It is an incredible story.

The Shore: A Novel by Katie Runde (FIC RUN) - *The Shore* is about the ugly, hard parts of loving someone, about the vacation town once the vacation is over, the awkwardness of growing up and the un-fun wisdom you learn to hold onto instead of push away. * 😊

Sister Stardust by Jane Green (FIC GRE, LP FIC GRE, cd FIC GRE) - Full of vibrant historical details about London and Morocco in the 1960s, Green portrays the scenery and atmosphere so vividly that readers will be instantly transported. It is a provocative story about youth culture during the 1960s, overflowing with sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

A Snake Falls to Earth by Darcie Little Badger (Y LIT) - An Apache teen girl and a bespectacled snake come together to save friends and family in this imaginative tale of long-parted worlds. Steeped in science and mythology, *A Snake Falls to Earth* unfolds very much on its own terms as author Little Badger faces her complex, engaging characters with a lot of surprising challenges.

The Spectacular by Fiona Davis (FIC DAV, LP FIC DAV) - Fiona Davis returns with yet another dazzling novel taking place in one of New York City's most iconic venues: Radio City Music Hall. Set in the 1950s, Marion Brooks is the Rockette's newest dancer, but she soon learns that the stage is a cutthroat place for a young woman and so is the big city. When an elusive bomber targets Radio City, Marion begins to hunt for the truth, but doing so puts herself and her family in peril, especially after she realizes her family has hidden a few truths of their own. *

The Star-Crossed Sisters of Tuscany by Lori Nelson Spielman (FIC SPI, LP FIC SPI) - Against the backdrop of wandering Venetian canals, rolling Tuscan fields, and enchanting Amalfi Coast villages, this is a beautifully told tale of the desire for love, the destruction of an old family "curse" and three determined women who discover long-buried family secrets among the beauty of a country made for romance.

Survivor Song: A Novel by Paul Tremblay (FIC TRE) - In *Survivor Song*, Paul Tremblay offers an unsettling journey across New England as two women, one a doctor, the other her pregnant best friend, try to outrun a rabies-like virus. It's both an achingly lovely exploration of female friendship and a terrifying race against time.

Swine Not? : A Novel Pig Tale by Jimmy Buffett (FIC BUF, LP FIC BUF) - Fiction's favorite pirate spins a colorful novel about a Southern family determined to hide their pet pig in a fancy four-star hotel in New York City while a meat-loving chef is sharpening his carving knife downstairs.

Things I Wish I Told My Mother by Susan Patterson (FIC PAT, LP FIC PAT) - *Things I Wish I Told My Mother* is the emotional, irresistible and uplifting story of a mother and daughter separated by secrets and brought together by love.

A Thousand Ships by Natalie Haynes (FIC HAY) - Natalie Haynes amplifies the muted voices of women in her all-female retelling of the Trojan War. From slaves to queens to muses to deities, she takes the scraps of women Homer offers us in *The Iliad* & *The Odyssey* and patches them into full characters with powerful stories.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin (FIC ZEV, LP FIC ZEV) - Spanning thirty years, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Venice Beach, California, and lands in between and

far beyond, Gabrielle Zevin's *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* examines the multifarious nature of identity, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, our need to connect: to be loved and to love.

Too Bright to See by Kyle Lukoff (J LUK) - This coming-of-age and coming-out story takes a needed departure from other stories about transgender youth. It is a hopeful examination of grief and gender, and a good ghost story to boot.

The Ultimate Flower Gardener's Guide by Jenny Rose Carey (635.96 CAR) - *The Ultimate Flower Gardener's Guide* tells you exactly how to get started combining plants for the most spectacular effects, and how to keep your garden going from year to year.

Victory City by Salman Rushdie (FIC RUS, LP FIC RUS) - *Victory City* is a book in which you will find global travelers, rapacious kings, cave dwellers, prophets of doom, and, at its fierce and eloquent heart, a storyteller who reminds us that death may take away a lot of things, but never the power of our words.

The Wedding Dress Sewing Circle by Jennifer Ryan (FIC RYA, LP FIC RYA) - A charming tale that will satiate a lot of different tastes in which three plucky women lift the spirits of home-front brides in wartime Britain, where clothes rationing leaves little opportunity for pomp or celebration, even at weddings. This heartwarming novel is based on true events.

When Women Were Dragons by Kelly Barnhill (FIC BAR) - A rollicking feminist tale set in 1950s America where thousands of women have spontaneously transformed into dragons, exploding notions of a woman's place in the world and expanding minds about accepting others for who they really are.

Women Talking by Miriam Toews (FIC TOE, LP FIC TOE, dvd FIC WOM) - Based on real events and told through the "minutes" of the women's all-female symposium, Toews's masterful novel uses wry, politically engaged humor to relate this tale of women claiming their own power to decide.

Books in a Series

Listed below are books that were also selected, but are part of a series. The title of the book recommended appears in **green** and the other books in the series appear in black print.

Betwixt and Between Series by Darynda Jones

1. **1. *Betwixt: A Paranormal Women's Fiction Novel*** (FIC JON) - Darynda Jones brings her original style to paranormal women's fiction as she takes readers on a heartwarming, spellbinding journey packed full of intrigue.
2. ***Bewitched***
3. ***Beguiled***
4. ***Moonlight and Magic***

An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good Series by Helen Tursten

1. **1. *An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*** (FIC TUR) - Eighty-eight-year-old Maud, freely dispatches greedy neighbors, selfish lovers, and potential thieves that push elderly empowerment to grimly funny heights in this Swedish cult favorite.
2. ***An Elderly Lady Must Not Be Crossed***

Finlay Donovan Series by Elle Cosimano

1. **1. *Finlay Donovan is Killing It*** (FIC COS, LP FIC COS) - This is a fast-paced, deliciously witty, and wholeheartedly authentic novel depicting the frustrations and triumphs of motherhood in all its messiness, hilarity, and heartfelt moments.
2. ***Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead***
3. ***Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun***

Good to the Last Death Series by Robyn Peterman

1. **1. *It's a Wonderful Midlife Crisis*** (FIC PET) - A Paranormal Women's fiction story with a bit of class, and a lot of sass, for anyone who feels like age is just a number! It is a cute, funny and quirky tale.
2. ***Whose Midlife Crisis Is It Anyway?***
3. ***A Most Excellent Midlife Crisis***
4. ***My Midlife Crisis, My Rules***
5. ***You Light Up My Midlife Crisis***
6. ***It's A Matter of Midlife and Death***
7. ***The Facts of Midlife***
8. ***It's A Hard-Knock Midlife***
9. ***Run for Your Midlife***
10. ***It's a Hell of a Midlife***

Arc of a Scythe Series by Neal Shusterman

1. **1. *Scythe*** (Y SHU) - In this dystopian future series, Shusterman explores the themes of morality, power, loyalty, the impact of advanced technology, and the value of a human life.
2. ***Thunderhead***
3. ***The Toll***

Show Me a Sign Trilogy by Ann Clare LeZotte

1. **1. *Show Me a Sign*** (J LEZ) - *Show Me A Sign* is the rare book by a Deaf writer illuminating the Deaf experience for young readers and a story inspired by the true history of a thriving deaf community on Martha's Vineyard in the early 19th century.
2. ***Set Me Free***
3. ***Sail Me Away Home***

Six of Crows Series by Leigh Bardugo

1. **1. *Six of Crows*** (Y BAR) - Filled with lush descriptions, intriguing magic, and plenty of twists, this memorable adventure offers action and intrigue mixed with an undercurrent of romance and danger. It is set in a world that will be familiar to fans of the author.
2. ***Crooked Kingdom***

Villains Series by V.E. Schwab

1. **1. *Vicious*** (FIC SCH) - In *Vicious*, V. E. Schwab brings to life a gritty comic-book-style world in vivid prose: a world where gaining superpowers doesn't automatically lead to heroism, and a time when allegiances are called into question.
2. ***Vengeful***

Book summaries have been compiled from *Publishers Weekly*, *Book Pages*, *Bookmarks*, *Amazon* and *Book Browse*.

Reading List:

Many of these staff picks can be found in eBook and eAudio on Libby!



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