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# STAFF PICKS



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May 2024

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"A great book is not always on  
the best seller list, follow your  
own path to discovery."  
- Taylor Shawcross

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—Author's first book)  
\*Suggested for book groups

( ) Numbers shown in parentheses are the call numbers used by the library to locate the books.

*The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt (305.23 HAI) - In *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt lays out the facts about the epidemic of teen mental illness that hit many countries at the same time. He then investigates the nature of childhood, including why children need play and independent exploration to mature into competent, thriving adults.

*Anxious People* by Fredrik Backman (FIC BAC, LP FIC BAC) - A deeply funny and warm examination of how individual experiences can bring a random group of people together. Backman reveals each character's many imperfections with tremendous empathy, reminding us that people are always more than the sum of their flaws.

*Appetites: A Cookbook* by Anthony Bourdain (641.5 BOU) - This is Anthony's first cookbook in ten years. *Appetites* boils down thirty-plus years of professional cooking and globe-trotting and the result is a home-cooking, home-entertaining cookbook like no other. It includes personal favorites from his own kitchen and from his travels, translated into an effective battle plan that will help you terrify your guests with your breathtaking efficiency.

*The Art of Alice and Martin Provensen* by Alice Provensen (741.642 ART) - Renowned husband-and-wife illustrators Alice and Martin Provensen created dozens of beloved children's books over the span of seven decades, many of which appeared on the New York Times Best Illustrated Books of the Year lists. *The Art of Alice and Martin Provensen* showcases hundreds of their well-known

illustrations, as well as many never-before-seen paintings, drawings, and exquisite sketchbooks from their travels around the world.

***The Baby Scoop Era: Unwed Mothers, Infant Adoption, and Forced Surrender*** by Karen Wilson-Buterbaugh (362.734 BUT) - An exposé of unethical and coercive adoption industry practices during a short period in American history known as the Baby Scoop Era (Post WWII - 1972). These crimes against nature resulted in more than 1.5 million vulnerable new mothers being permanently separated from newborns that they might have parented had they been informed of their civil, legal, human and Constitutional rights.

***The Backyard Bird Chronicles*** by Amy Tan (598.072 TAN) - In 2016, author Amy Tan grew overwhelmed by the state of the world: Hatred and misinformation became a daily presence on social media, and the country felt more divisive than ever. In search of peace, Tan turned toward the natural world just beyond her window and, specifically, the birds flocking to the feeders in her yard. But what began as an attempt to find solace turned into something far greater, an opportunity to savor quiet moments during a volatile time, connect to nature in a meaningful way, and imagine the intricate lives of the birds she admired. Tracking the natural beauty that surrounds us, *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* maps the passage of time from before the pandemic to the days of quarantine through daily entries, thoughtful questions, and beautiful original sketches. With boundless charm and wit, Amy Tan charts her foray into birding and the natural wonders of the world.

***The Burnout*** by Sophie Kinsella (FIC KIN, LP FIC KIN) - Sparks fly in this delightful novel about two burned out professionals who meet at a ramshackle resort on the British seaside. *The Burnout* is a delightful novel that brings our protagonist to a place of peace as she attempts to turn her life around.

***The Covenant of Water*** by Abraham Verghese (FIC VER, LP FIC VER) - By the author of *Cutting for Stone* comes a stunning and magisterial epic of love, faith, and medicine, set in Kerala, South India, following three generations of a family seeking the answers to a strange secret. It is a hymn to progress in medicine and to human understanding, and a humbling testament to the difficulties undergone by past generations for the sake of those alive today. It is one of the most masterful literary novels published in recent years.\*

***The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*** by David Graeber and David Wengrow (901 GRA) - This book presents a dramatically new understanding of human history, challenging our most fundamental assumptions about social evolution from the development of agriculture and cities to the origins of the state, democracy, and inequality and revealing new possibilities for human emancipation.

***Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally*** by Emily Ladau (305.908 LAD) - An approachable guide to being a thoughtful, informed ally to disabled people, with actionable steps for what to say and do (and what not to do) and how you can help make the world a more inclusive place.

***The Disaster Artist: My Life Inside The Room, the Greatest Bad Movie Ever Made*** by Greg Sestero (791.4372 SES) - *The Disaster Artist* is the hilarious, behind-the-scenes story of a deliciously awful cinematic phenomenon as well as the story of an odd and inspiring Hollywood friendship.

***Fallen Angel: The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*** by Robert Morgan (B POE) - Morgan masterfully weaves together the threads of Poe's life, literature, and legacy while uncovering the love-starved romantic too often hidden behind his popular image as a horror master. Though he died at age forty, Poe left behind works of great originality and vision that *Fallen Angel* explores with depth and feeling.

***The Frozen River*** by Ariel Lawhon (FIC LAW, LP FIC LAW) - This is a gripping historical mystery inspired by the life and diary of Martha Ballard, a renowned 18th-century midwife who defied the legal system and wrote herself into American history. *The Frozen River* is a thrilling, tense, and tender story about a remarkable woman who left an unparalleled legacy yet remains nearly forgotten to this day.\*

***The Garden of Eden*** by Ernest Hemingway (FIC HEM) - This book is a hidden gem that is overlooked by many who love "classics." It is the last uncompleted novel of Ernest Hemingway, published posthumously in 1986, that charts the life of a young American writer and his glamorous wife who fall for the same woman.

***Ghost Station*** by S.A. Barnes (FIC BAR) - Perfectly unsettling, *Ghost Station* scratches the itch for

space horror just right and doesn't shrink from the grisly consequences of exploring the unknown. Some consider it the best space horror since *Alien*.

***The Glass Kitchen*** by Linda Francis Lee (FIC LEE, LP FIC LEE, cd FIC LEE) - *The Glass Kitchen* is a delicious novel, a tempestuous story of a woman washed up on the shores of Manhattan who discovers that a kitchen like an island can be a refuge, if only she has the courage to give in to the pull of love, the power of forgiveness, and accept the complications of what it means to be family.

***Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*** by James McBride (FIC MCB, LP FIC MCB) - A vibrant tale of Chicken Hill, a working-class neighborhood of Jewish, Black, and European immigrant families in Pottstown, Pa., where the 1972 discovery of a human skeleton unearths events that took place several decades earlier.

***Hexenkopf: History, Healing, and Hexerei*** by Ned Heindel (133.4 HEI) - *Hexenkopf: History, Healing, and Hexerei* explores the history of Pennsylvania's Williams Township's most famous rock, the Hexenkopf or Witch's Head. The book expertly weaves together new maps with long passed down stories of Hexenkopf.

***How to Be Authentic: Simone de Beauvoir and the Quest for Fulfillment*** by Skye Cleary (142.78 CLE) - *How to Be Authentic* is a lively introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy of existentialism, as well as an exploration of the successes and failures that Beauvoir and other women have experienced in striving towards authenticity.

***How to Sell a Haunted House*** by Grady Hendrix (FIC HEN, LP FIC HEN) - A spirited nightmare story about death, but also, what comes after: grief, guilt, family secrets, and estate administration. This clever, creepy, rollicking book will tug at your horror and heart strings.

***James*** by Percival Everett (FIC EVE, LP FIC EVE) - A brilliant, action-packed reimagining of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, both harrowing and darkly humorous, told from the enslaved Jim's point of view.

***A Lady for a Duke*** by Alexis Hall (FIC HAL) - Hall explores difficult subjects with a sharpness matched only by the tenderness underpinning the

relationship between Viola and Gracewood. Fans of Lisa Kleypas and anyone looking for romance centering trans characters owe it to themselves to check this out.

***The Last Holiday*** by Gil Scott-Heron (B SCO) - The stunning memoir of Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award winner Gil Scott-Heron that brings back to life one of the most important voices of the last fifty years. It provides a remarkable glimpse into Scott-Heron's life and times, from his humble beginnings to becoming one of the most influential artists of his generation.

***Lessons in Chemistry*** by Bonnie Garmus (FIC GAR, LP FIC GAR, cd FIC GAR) - In Garmus's debut novel, a frustrated chemist finds herself at the helm of a cooking show that sparks a revolution. Welcome to the 1960s, where a woman's arsenal of tools was often limited to the kitchen and where Elizabeth Zott is hellbent on overturning the status quo one meal at a time. 😊\*

***Life for Sale*** by Yukio Mishima (FIC MIS) - A madcap story about a salaryman who decides to put his life up for sale in the classifieds section of a Tokyo newspaper after a botched suicide attempt.

***Lost Boy: The True Story of Captain Hook*** by Christina Henry (FIC HEN) - *Lost Boy* is a dark retelling of Peter Pan from the point of view of the boy who would become Captain Hook.

***Manhunt*** by Gretchen Felker-Martin (FIC FEL) - *Manhunt* is an explosive post-apocalyptic novel that follows trans women and trans men on a grotesque journey of survival.

***The Manor House*** by Gilly MacMillan (FIC MAC, LP FIC MAC) - *The Manor House* is a thrill ride with twists and turns you could never see coming as well as an utterly readable tale of greed, avarice, and revenge. A treat for the author's fans, and for those who are new to her, a wonderful introduction to this fine writer.\*

***Mary and the Birth of Frankenstein*** by Anne Eekhout (FIC EEK) - A bold, hypnotic reimagining of Mary Shelley's youth, vividly exploring innocence, young love, gothic mystery and the roots of her literary masterpiece, *Frankenstein*.

***Masters and Servants*** by Pierre Michon (FIC MIC) - One of Pierre Michon's most powerful works, this

book imagines decisive moments in the lives of five artists of different times and places: Vincent van Gogh, Francisco Goya, Antoine Watteau, Claude Lorrain, and Lorentino, a little-remembered disciple of Piero della Francesca.

***A Mile at a Time*** by Travis and Marc Macy (616.83 MAC) - An inspiring memoir about a father and son entering the *World's Toughest Race: Eco-Challenge Fiji* despite one of them battling Alzheimer's.

***Mothered*** by Zoje Stage (FIC STA) - Zoje Stage expertly explores the blurred lines between memory and nightmare in this deliciously twisty and riveting page-turner. An eerily crafted chiller set against the claustrophobic isolation of the pandemic, *Mothered* is a must-read for psychological thriller fans.

***Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*** by Robin Sloan (FIC SLO, cd FIC SLO) - A hugely enjoyable story of friendship, living, and the lure of the mysterious. It's a good-hearted, optimistic book about the meeting of modern technology and medieval mystery and atonal road map to a positive relationship between the old world and the new. \*

***No Ex Before Marriage*** by Portia MacIntosh (FIC MAC, LP FIC MAC) - If you are looking for a heart-melting, charming, delightful, delicious, fantabulous and totally captivating rom-com, this is the book for you.

***The Outsider*** by Richard Wright (FIC WRI) - From Richard Wright, one of the most powerful, acclaimed, and essential American authors of the twentieth century, comes a compelling story of one man's attempt to escape his past and start anew in Harlem.

***Pelican Girls*** by Julia Malye (FIC MAL) - Inspired by a true story, this stunning US literary debut captures the never-before-told journey of the Baleine Brides: a ship full of young women plucked from a Paris asylum and sent to marry settlers in North America's rough Louisiana Territory. \*

***The Princess of Las Vegas*** by Chris Bohjalian (FIC BOH, LP FIC BOH, cd FIC BOH) - A Princess Diana impersonator and her estranged sister find themselves drawn into a dangerous game of money and murder in this twisting tale of organized crime, cryptocurrency, and family secrets on the Las Vegas strip. \*

***Project Hail Mary*** by Andy Weir (FIC WEI) - Two worlds in peril, a flawed and human man, a competent

alien, unending scientific puzzles to unravel, with humanity itself at risk, this one has everything fans of old school SF love. If you like a lot of science in your science fiction, Andy Weir is the writer for you.

***Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*** by Yuval Noah Harari (909 HAR, GN 909 HAR V.1) - In *Sapiens*, Harari delves deep into our history as a species to help us understand who we are and what made us this way.

***Scattershot: Life, Music, Elton, and Me*** by Bernie Taupin (B TAU) - Taupin tells the story of how he and Elton John developed the sound that would make them superstars and honestly chronicles life in the spotlight, for better and worse, giving readers a singular look behind the curtain of both incredible artistry and global superstardom.

***The School for Good Mothers*** by Jessamine Chan (FIC CHA) - In this debut novel about the launch of a government program meant to correct "bad" mothering, Chan collects the judgments and pressures that society places on women who deign to be multifaceted and translates them into a propulsive, perceptive story. ☺ \*

***The Seven Year Slip*** by Ashley Poston (FIC POS, LP FIC POS) - Warm, funny and heartbreakingly hopeful, *The Seven Year Slip* is a magical love story, a devastating portrait of grief, and a loving ode to what it means to grow, evolve, and blossom.

***Sisters of Fortune: A Riveting Historical Novel of the Titanic Based on True History*** by Anna Lee Huber (FIC HUB) - Based on the true story of the Fortune sisters, three women each at a crossroads when they boarded the RMS Titanic in the spring of 1912 and how that maiden voyage would transform their lives in profound and unexpected ways. \*

***South Central Pennsylvania Legends and Lore*** by David Puglia (398.2 PUG) - In this book, Folklorist David J. Puglia reveals tales that are part of the lore of South Central from the Powwow practitioners of York County, the headless ghost of a murdered girl that roams the back roads of Schuylkill County and the Hummelstown Hermit who still lingers in Indian Echo Caverns .

***The Spectacular*** by Fiona Davis (FIC DAV, LP FIC DAV) - This propulsive novel is a fast-paced race throughout 1950s New York City to stop a deadly bomber from striking again. Set against the backdrop of the legendary Radio City Music Hall, Fiona Davis brings some of New York City's most memorable

landmarks to life as a Rockette is entangled in the mystery.\*

***The Stranger in the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit*** by Michael Finkel (974.1 FIN) - The remarkable true story of a man who lived alone in the woods of Maine for 27 years, making this dream a reality, not out of anger at the world, but simply because he preferred to live on his own.

***Swan Song*** by Elin Hilderbrand (FIC HIL, LP FIC HIL) - The last of Elin Hilderbrand's bestselling Nantucket novels, *Swan Song* is a propulsive medley of glittering gatherings, sun-soaked drama, wisdom and heart, featuring the return of some of her most beloved characters, including, most importantly, the beautiful and timeless island of Nantucket itself.\*

***Take the Long Way Home*** by Rochelle Alers (FIC ALE, LP FIC ALE) - Rich with history and timeless emotion, here is an epic tale of rising through poverty, racism, and heartbreak, and the awesome role of our most significant relationships throughout our lives.\*

***The Turtle House*** by Amanda Churchill (FIC CHU) - Moving between late 1990s small-town Texas to pre-World War II Japan and occupied Tokyo, this is an emotionally engaging literary debut about a grandmother and granddaughter who connect over a beloved lost place and the secrets they both carry. 😊\*

***Weaveworld*** by Clive Barker (FIC BAR) - *Weaveworld* is an epic work of dark fantasy and horror. It is an adventure of the imagination that begins with a carpet in which a world of rapture and enchantment is hiding; a world which comes to life, alerting dark forces and beginning a desperate battle to preserve the last vestiges of magic which Humankind still has access to.

***What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma*** by Stephanie Foo (616.852 FOO) - *What My Bones Know* is Stephanie Foo's aching exquisite memoir that takes us on a journey through complex trauma, illuminating her path of self-discovery and providing real hope for those who long to heal.

***When the Jessamine Grows*** by Donna Everhart (FIC EVE, LP FIC EVE) - An evocative, morally complex novel set in rural 19th century North

Carolina, as one woman fights to keep her family united, her farm running, and her convictions whole during the most devastating and divisive period in American history. It is perfect for readers of *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier and *Enemy Women* by Paulette Jiles.\*

***When You Open a Book*** by Caroline Derlatka (JP DERLATKA) - *When You Open a Book* is a stunning ode to the world's grandest adventure of all: reading a book. Gorgeous artwork by Italian illustrator Sara Ugolotti depicts dragons, forests, pirates, merfolk, lollipop trees, lemonade tides, and more as a child journeys through page upon page of the written word.

***The Women*** by Kristin Hannah (FIC HAN, LP FIC HAN, cd FIC HAN) - *The Women* is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era. It is a moving, gripping tale that pays tribute to the under-appreciated skill and courage of combat nurses.\*

#### 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 pink and the other books in the series appear in black print.

***Eilis Lacey Series*** by Colm Toibin (FIC TOI, LP FIC TOI, cd FIC TOI)

1. **Brooklyn**

2. **Long Island** - This is a spectacularly moving and intense novel of secrecy, misunderstanding, and love. It is the story of Eilis Lacey, the complex and enigmatic heroine of *Brooklyn*, Tóibín's most popular work twenty years later.\* Note that you don't need to have read *Brooklyn* to enjoy this follow-up.

***Empyrean Series*** by Rebecca Yarros (FIC YAR)

1. **Fourth Wing** - An expertly woven tale in a riveting world of dragons, life-or-death competition, and betrayal, Rebecca Yarros hits all the high notes and delivers a thrilling new romantic fantasy that readers will devour.

2. **Iron Flame**

3. **Onyx Storm (TBR 1/21/25)**

***Light and Life Series*** by Marta Molnar (FIC MOL)

1. **The Secret Life of Sunflowers: A Gripping, Inspiring Novel Based on the True Story of Johanna Bongor, Vincent van Gogh's Sister-in-Law** - Molnar offers a delightful story about an American woman's possible connection to the family of Vincent van Gogh.\*

## 2. *Girl Braiding Her Hair*

**Lockwood & Co. Series** by Jonathan Stroud (J STR)

1. ***The Screaming Staircase*** - Three young ghost trappers take on deadly wraiths and solve an old murder case to kick off Stroud's new series. The work is fraught with peril, not only because a ghost's merest touch is generally fatal, but also, as it turns out, none of the three is particularly good at careful planning and preparation. A heartily satisfying string of entertaining near-catastrophes, replete with narrow squeaks and spectral howls.

2. ***The Whispering Skull***

3. ***The Hollow Boy***

4. ***The Creeping Shadow***

5. ***The Empty Grave***

**Poppy War Series** by R.F. Kuang (FIC KUA)

1. ***The Poppy War*** - A brilliantly imaginative talent makes her exciting debut with this epic historical military fantasy, inspired by the bloody history of China's twentieth century. It is an original and engrossing tale of the coming of age of a talented young soldier amid the horrors of invasion and genocide.

2. ***The Dragon Republic***

3. ***The Burning God***

**Sunshine Vicram Series** by Darynda Jones (FIC JON, LP FIC JON)

1. ***A Bad Day for Sunshine*** - *A Bad Day for Sunshine* is everything you want from Darynda Jones and more! Laugh-out-loud funny, intensely suspenseful, and page-turning fun with a sassy new heroine you will love.

2. ***A Good Day for Chardonnay***

3. ***A Hard Day for a Hangover***

## Graphic Novels

***Bea Wolf*** by Zach Weinersmith (J WEI) - A modern middle-grade graphic novel retelling of *Beowulf*, featuring a gang of troublemaking kids who must defend their tree house from a fun-hating adult who can instantly turn children into grown-ups.

***The He-Man Effect: How American Toymakers Sold You Your Childhood*** by Brian "Box" Brown (GN 688.72 BRO) - *The He-Man Effect* shows how corporate manipulation brought muscular, accessory-stuffed action figures to dizzying

heights in the 1980s and beyond. Bringing beloved brands like He-Man, Transformers, My Little Pony, and even Mickey Mouse himself into the spotlight, this graphic history exposes a world with no rules and no concern for results beyond profit.

***The Magic Fish*** by Trung Le Nguyen (GN Y NGU) - In this gorgeous graphic novel, fairy tales are the only way one boy can communicate with his Vietnamese immigrant parents. But how will he find the words to tell them that he's gay? A powerful read about family, identity and the enduring magic of stories.

***Sunshine*** by Jarrett J. Krosoczka (GN Y KRO) - Jarrett tenderly depicts his formative experiences in 1994 as a 16-year-old camp counselor at a summer camp for children with severe illnesses, who attend with their families. He is closest to a young child, Eric, who has acute lymphoblastic leukemia, and Diego, a younger teen with who is losing cognitive and motor skills because of a brain tumor. Krosoczka brings empathy and personal attention to every camper and family member he can, in hopes that they enjoy their limited time away from hospitals and treatments.

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

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

Reading List:



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