

Book Club Bags
North Mankato Taylor Library

Included in each bag are at least 10 paperback copies of a single title along with discussion questions and author information.
Bags can be checked out on your library card for 6 weeks.

84, Charing Cross Road. Helene Hanff.

This book is the very simple story of the love affair between Miss Helene Hanff of New York and Messrs Marks and Co, sellers of rare and secondhand books, at 84 Charing Cross Road, London.

The Adoration of Jenna Fox. Mary Pearson.

Who is Jenna Fox? Seventeen-year-old Jenna has been told that is her name. She has just awoken from a coma, they tell her, and she is still recovering from a terrible accident in which she was involved a year ago. But what happened before that? Jenna doesn't remember her life. Or does she? And are the memories really hers? **DA**

The Alchemist. Paulo Coelho.

The Alchemist presents a simple fable, based on simple truths and places it in a highly unique situation. Brazilian storyteller Paulo Coelho introduces Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who one night dreams of a distant treasure in the Egyptian pyramids. And so he's off: leaving Spain to literally follow his dream. **A, E**

All Over but the Shoutin'. Rick Bragg.

A haunting memoir about growing up dirt-poor in the Alabama hills--and about moving on but never really being able to leave. The extraordinary gifts for evocation and insight and the stunning talent for story-telling that earned Rick Bragg a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 1996 are here brought to bear on the wrenching story of his own family's life....

Angry Housewives Eating Bon Bons. Lorna Landvik.

Five friends live through three decades of marriages, child raising, neighborhood parties, bad husbands and good brownies in this pleasant novel of female bonding. **LP, E**

At Home in Mitford. Jan Karon.

It's easy to feel at home in Mitford, North Carolina. In these high, green hills, the air is pure, the village is charming, and the people are friendly. Yet, Father Tim, the bachelor rector, wants something more. Enter a dog the size of a sofa who moves in and won't go away. Add an attractive neighbor who begins wearing a path through the hedge. Now, stir in a lovable but unloved boy, a mystifying jewel theft, and a secret that's sixty years old. Suddenly, Father Tim gets more than he bargained for.

Atonement. Ian McEwan.

On a hot summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant and Cecilia's childhood friend. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult movies—together with her precocious literary gifts—brings about a crime that will change all their lives. **LP**

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress. Dai Sijie

This is a beguiling fable that shines with the wonder of imagination, the beauty of romance, and the power of storytelling. Set during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the novel tells the story of two hapless city boys sent to a remote mountain village for reeducation.

Bee Season. Myla Goldberg.

The bestselling, critically acclaimed debut novel about an ordinary girl with an extraordinary talent for spelling. Eliza Naumann, a seemingly unremarkable nine-year-old, expects never to fit into her gifted family: her autodidactic father, Saul, absorbed in his study of Jewish mysticism; her brother, Aaron, the vessel of his father's spiritual ambitions; and her brilliant but distant lawyer-mom, Miriam....

Behind the beautiful forevers: life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity. Katherine Boo.

In this brilliant, breathtaking book by Pulitzer Prize winner Katherine Boo, a bewildering age of global change and inequality is made human through the dramatic story of families striving toward a better life in Annawadi, a makeshift settlement in the shadow of luxury hotels near the Mumbai airport. As India starts to prosper, the residents of Annawadi are electric with hope. **A, E**

Beneath a Marble Sky. John Shors.

Shors's spirited debut novel tells the story of the eldest daughter of the 17th-century emperor who built the Taj Mahal. From her self-imposed exile, Jahanara recalls growing up in the Red Fort; the devotion her parents, Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, had for each other; and the events that took place during the construction of the fabulous monument to their love.

Between, Georgia. Joshilyn Jackson.

Nonny Frett knows the meanings of "rock" and "hard place" better than any woman ever born. She's got two mothers, "one deaf-blind and the other four baby steps from flat crazy." She's got two men: her husband, who's easing out the back door; and her best friend, who's laying siege to her heart in her front yard. And she has two families: one who stole her and raised her right...and one who lost her and won't forget they've been done wrong. In the middle of a feud that's igniting a stash of highly flammable secrets, Nonny must now make some hard choices about who she wants to be—and which way is truly home. **A, E**

The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the fire that saved America. Timothy Egan.

When Theodore Roosevelt vacated the Oval Office, he left a vast legacy of public lands under the stewardship of the newly created Forest Service. Immediately, political enemies of the nascent conservation movement chipped away at the foundations of the untested agency, lobbying for a return of the land to private interests and development. Then, in 1910, several small wildfires in the Pacific Northwest merge into one massive, swift, and unstoppable blaze, and the Forest Service is pressed into a futile effort to douse the flames. Over 100 firefighters died heroically, galvanizing public opinion in favor of the forests--with unexpected ramifications exposed in today's proliferation of destructive fires. **A, E**

Black Like Me. John Howard Griffin.

Concerned by the lack of communication between the races and wondering what "adjustments and discriminations" he would face as a Negro in the Deep South, the late author, a journalist and self-described "specialist in race issues," left behind his privileged life as a Southern white man to step into the body of a stranger. In 1959, Griffin headed to New Orleans, darkened his skin and immersed himself in black society, then traveled to several states until he could no longer stand the racism, segregation and degrading living conditions. Griffin imparts the hopelessness and despair he felt while executing his social experiment. **E**

Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's forgotten walk across Victorian America. Linda Hunt.

In 1896, a Norwegian immigrant and mother of eight children named Helga Estby was behind on taxes and the mortgage when she learned that a mysterious sponsor would pay \$10,000 to a woman who walked across America.

Hoping to win the wager and save her family's farm, Helga and her teenaged daughter Clara, armed with little more than a compass, red-pepper spray, a revolver, and Clara's curling iron, set out on foot from Eastern Washington. **DA, E**

The Book Club. Mary Alice Monroe.

They are five women from different walks of life, embracing the challenge of change. And as they share their hopes and fears and triumphs, they will hold fast to the true magic of the book club—friendship.

Book of a Thousand Days. Shannon Hale.

When Dashti, a maid, and Lady Saren, her mistress, are shut in a tower for seven years for Saren's refusal to marry a man she despises, the two prepare for a very long and dark imprisonment. As food runs low and the days go from broiling hot to freezing cold, it is all Dashti can do to keep them fed and comfortable. But the arrival outside the tower of Saren's two suitors—one welcome, and the other decidedly less so—brings both hope and great danger, and Dashti must make the desperate choices of a girl whose life is worth more than she knows. **A**

The Book Thief. Markus Zusak.

Death meets the book thief, a 9-year-old girl named Liesel Meminger, when he comes to take her little brother, and she becomes an enduring force in his life, despite his efforts to resist her. "I traveled the globe . . . handing souls to the conveyor belt of eternity," Death writes. "I warned myself that I should keep a good distance from the burial of Liesel Meminger's brother. I did not heed my advice." As Death lingers at the burial, he watches the girl, who can't yet read, steal a gravedigger's instruction manual. Thus Liesel is touched first by Death, then by words, as if she knows she'll need their comfort during the hardships ahead. **A, DA, E**

Born to Run. Christopher McDougall.

Isolated by Mexico's deadly Copper Canyons, the blissful Tarahumara Indians have honed the ability to run hundreds of miles without rest or injury. In a riveting narrative, award-winning journalist and often-injured runner Christopher McDougall sets out to discover their secrets. **A, DA**

A Can of Peas. Tracy DePree. (Minnesota Author)

After the death of his grandfather, Peter Morgan and his new bride, Mae, face a life-changing decision: should they embrace the career-chasing ambitions of their family and friends in St. Paul or accept the absurd challenge of saving the family farm in Minnesota countryside? Enticed by the romance of simple, quiet life, the Morgans set out to follow in the footsteps of Peter's grandparents.

Chasing Lincoln's Killer. James L. Swanson.

Based on rare archival material, obscure trial manuscripts, and interviews with relatives of the conspirators and the manhunters, CHASING LINCOLN'S KILLER is a fast-paced thriller about the pursuit and capture of John Wilkes Booth: a wild twelve-day chase through the streets of Washington, D.C., across the swamps of Maryland, and into the forests of Virginia. This was the North Mankato Taylor Library Community Read for 2013. **DA**

Cleopatra: a life. Stacy Schiff.

Her palace shimmered with onyx and gold but was richer still in political and sexual intrigue. Above all else, Cleopatra was a shrewd strategist and an ingenious negotiator. Famous long before she was notorious, Cleopatra has gone down in history for all the wrong reasons. **A, DA, E**

The Coffee Trader: a novel. David Liss.

Amsterdam, 1659: On the world's first commodities exchange, fortunes are won and lost in an instant. Miguel Lienzo, a sharp-witted trader in the city's close-knit community of Portuguese Jews, knows this only too well. Once among the city's most envied merchants, Miguel has suddenly lost everything. Now, impoverished and humiliated, living in his younger brother's canal-flooded basement, Miguel must find a way to restore his wealth and reputation. **E**

Coming of Age in Mississippi. Anne Moody.

In this now classic autobiography, she details the sights, smells, and suffering of growing up in a racist society and candidly reveals the soul of a black girl who had the courage to challenge it. The result is a touchstone work: an accurate, authoritative portrait of black family life in the rural South and a moving account of a woman's indomitable heart.

The Corrections. Jonathan Franzen.

After almost fifty years as a wife and mother, Enid Lambert is ready to have some fun. Unfortunately, her husband, Alfred, is losing his sanity to Parkinson's disease, and their children have long since flown the family nest to the catastrophes of their own lives. Desperate for some pleasure to look forward to, Enid has set her heart on an elusive goal: bringing her family together for one last Christmas at home.

Cry the Beloved Country. Alan Paton.

A beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s. The book is written with such keen empathy and understanding that to read it is to share fully in the gravity of the characters' situations. It both touches your heart deeply and inspires a renewed faith in the dignity of mankind. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a classic tale, passionately African, timeless and universal, and beyond all, selfless. An Oprah Classics book club selection. **LP, A**

Cutting for Stone. Abraham Verghese.

A sweeping novel that moves from India to Ethiopia to an inner-city hospital in New York City over decades and generations. Sister Mary Joseph Praise, a devout young nun, leaves the south Indian state of Kerala in 1947 for a missionary post in Yemen. During the arduous sea voyage, she saves the life of an English doctor bound for Ethiopia, Thomas Stone, who becomes a key player in her destiny when they meet up again at Missing Hospital in Addis Ababa. Seven years later, Sister Praise dies birthing twin boys: Shiva and Marion, the latter narrating his own and his brothers long, dramatic, biblical story set against the backdrop of political turmoil in Ethiopia, the life of the hospital compound in which they grow up and the love story of their adopted parents, both doctors at Missing. **A, E**

Dandelions in a Jelly Jar. Traci DePree.

Mae Morgan's flamboyant art teacher sister, Trudy Ploog, moves to the quiet, rural town of Lake Emily, Minnesota, to be closer to Bert Biddle, her shy, unassuming farmer boyfriend. Everything is perfect and then...the school board cuts the Gifted and Talented program and rumors of more cuts fly. Outraged, Trudy kicks up a whirlwind, beginning with a letter to the paper that questions the very foundation of small-town life—high school sports! Soon the whole town is talking, and Trudy and Bert are put to the test. Meanwhile, the Morgan family is recovering from the loss of a child and the death of a life-long dream as Virginia Morgan helps a father and daughter rediscover life.

Dewey the Library Cat: a true story. Vicki Myron.

One frigid Midwestern winter night in 1988, a ginger kitten was shoved into the after-hours book-return slot at the public library in Spencer, Iowa. And in this tender story, Myron, the library director, tells of the impact the cat, named Dewey@Readmore Books, had on the library and its patrons, and on Myron herself.

Digging to America. Anne Tyler.

Two families, who would otherwise never have come together, meet by chance at the Baltimore airport – the Donaldsons, a very American couple, and the Yazdans, Maryam's fully assimilated son and his attractive Iranian wife. Each couple is awaiting the arrival of an adopted infant daughter from Korea. After the instant babies from distant Asia are delivered, Bitsy Donaldson impulsively invites the Yazdans to celebrate: an "arrival party" that from then on is repeated every year as the two families become more and more deeply intertwined. Even Maryam is drawn in – up to a point. When she finds herself being courted by Bitsy Donaldson's recently widowed father, all the values she cherishes – her traditions, her privacy, her otherness—are suddenly threatened. **A, E**

The dinner: a novel. Herman Koch.

It's a summer's evening in Amsterdam, and two couples meet at a fashionable restaurant for dinner. Between mouthfuls of food and over the scrapings of cutlery, the conversation remains a gentle hum of polite discourse. But behind the empty words, terrible things need to be said, and with every forced smile and every new course, the knives are being sharpened. Each couple has a fifteen-year-old son. The two boys are united by their accountability for a single horrific act; an act that has triggered a police investigation and shattered the comfortable, insulated worlds of their families. As the dinner reaches its culinary climax, the conversation finally touches on their children. As civility and friendship disintegrate, each couple show just how far they are prepared to go to protect those they love. **E**

Dry Grass of August. Anna Jean Mayhew.

On a scorching day in August 1954, thirteen-year-old Jubie Watts leaves Charlotte, North Carolina, with her family for a Florida vacation. Crammed into the Packard along with Jubie are her three siblings, her mother, and the family's black maid, Mary Luther. For as long as Jubie can remember, Mary has been there - cooking, cleaning, compensating for her father's rages and her mother's benign neglect, and loving Jubie unconditionally. Bright and curious, Jubie takes note of the anti-integration signs they pass, and of the racial tension that builds as they journey further south. But she could never have predicted the shocking turn their trip will take. **E**

Ella Minnow Pea. Mark Dunn

Ella Minnow Pea is a girl living happily on the fictional island of Nollop off the coast of South Carolina. Nollop was named after Nevin Nollop, author of the immortal pangram,* "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog." Now Ella finds herself acting to save her friends, family and fellow citizens from the encroaching totalitarianism of the island's Council, which has banned the use of certain letters of the alphabet as they fall from memorial statue of Nevin Nollop. As the letters progressively drop from the statue they also disappear from the novel. The result is both a hilarious and moving story of one girl's fight for freedom of expression, as well as linguistic tour de force sure to delight word lovers everywhere. *pangram: a sentence or phrase that includes all the letters of the alphabet. **E**

Enrique's Journey. Sonia Nazario.

Enrique's mother, Lourdes, left him in Honduras when he was five years old because she could barely afford to feed him and his sister, much less send them to school. Her plan was to sneak into the United States for a few years, work hard, send and save money, then move back to Honduras to be with her children. But 12 years later, she was still living in the U.S. and wiring money home. That's when Enrique became one of the thousands of children and teens who try to enter the U.S. illegally each year. This was the Gustavus/St. Peter Reads book for fall 2009.

Everything I never told you: a novel. Celeste Ng.

"Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet." So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos. **A, DA, E**

The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew—three women search for understanding. Ranya Idliby.

When an American Muslim woman befriends two other mothers, one Jewish and one Christian, they decide to educate their children about their respective religions. None of them guessed their regular meetings would provide life-changing answers and form bonds that would forever alter their struggles with prejudice, fear, and anger.

Flight Behavior. Barbara Kingsolver.

Kingsolver's riveting story concerns a young wife and mother on a failing farm in rural Tennessee who experiences something she cannot explain, and how her discovery energizes various competing factions—religious leaders, climate scientists, environmentalists, politicians—trapping her in the center of the conflict and ultimately opening up her world. **LP, A, E**

The Fossil Hunter: dinosaurs, evolution and the woman whose discoveries changed the world. Shelley Emeling.

Mary Anning was only twelve years old when, in 1811, she discovered the first dinosaur skeleton--of an ichthyosaur--while fossil hunting on the cliffs of Lyme Regis, England. Until Mary's incredible discovery, it was widely believed that animals did not become extinct. The child of a poor family, Mary became a fossil hunter, inspiring the tongue-twister, "She Sells Sea Shells by the Seashore." She attracted the attention of fossil collectors and eventually the scientific world.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle-Stop Café. Fannie Flagg.

Folksy and fresh, endearing and affecting, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* is the now-classic novel of two women in the 1980s; of gray-headed Mrs. Threadgoode telling her life story to Evelyn, who is in the sad slump of middle age. The tale she tells is also of two women--of the irrepressibly daredevilish tomboy Igdie and her friend Ruth--who back in the thirties ran a little place in Whistle Stop, Alabama, a Southern kind of Cafe Wobegon offering good barbecue and good coffee and all kinds of love and laughter, even an occasional murder. And as the past unfolds, the present--for Evelyn and for us--will never be quite the same again... **E**

Giants in the Earth: a song of the prairie. Ole Rolvaag.

The story of Norwegian pioneers as they cross the Great Plains of America and the hardships they endure while trying to build a settlement. The greatness of this novel lies in the manner in which Rølvaag manages to bring out the emotions engendered in each of the pioneers -- how they reacted to the loneliness and desolation of the prairie and how they adjusted to it . . . or didn't.

Gilead. Marilynne Robinson.

Rev. John Ames is 77 years old in 1956, in failing health, with a much younger wife and six-year-old son; as a preacher in the small Iowa town where he spent his entire life, he has produced volumes and volumes of sermons and prayers, "[t]rying to say what was true." But it is in this mesmerizing account--in the form of a letter to his young son, who he imagines reading it when he is grown--that his meditations on creation and existence are fully illumined. **LP, A**

Girl in Translation. Jean Kwok.

A resolute yet naïve Chinese girl confronts poverty and culture shock with equal zeal when she and her mother immigrate to Brooklyn. Ah-Kim Chang, or Kimberly as she is known in the U.S., had been a promising student in Hong Kong when her father died. Now she and her mother are indebted to Kimberly's Aunt Paula, who funded their trip from Hong Kong, so they dutifully work for her in a Chinatown clothing factory where they earn barely enough to keep them alive. Despite this, and living in a condemned apartment, Kimberly excels at school, perfects her English, and is eventually admitted to an elite, private high school.

Girl Named Zippy. Haven Kimmel.

Named "Zippy" for the way she would bolt around her home, Kimmel's witty memoir takes readers back to a time when small-town America was caught in the amber of the innocent post-war period, where people helped their neighbors, went to church on Sunday, and kept barnyard animals in their backyards.

The girl you left behind. Jojo Moyes.

Paris, 1916. Sophie Lefèvre must keep her family safe while her adored husband, Édouard, fights at the front. When their town falls to the Germans in the midst of World War I, Sophie is forced to serve them every evening at her hotel. From the moment the new Kommandant sets eyes on Sophie's portrait--painted by her artist husband--a dangerous obsession is born, one that will lead Sophie to make a dark and terrible decision. Almost a century later, Sophie's portrait hangs in the home of Liv Halston, a wedding gift from her young husband before his sudden death. After a chance encounter reveals the portrait's true worth, a battle begins over its troubled history and Liv's world is turned upside all over again. **LP, A**

The Girls from Ames: a story of women and friendship. Jeffrey Zaslow.

Meet the Ames Girls: eleven childhood friends who formed a special bond growing up in Ames, Iowa. As young women, they moved to eight different states, yet managed to maintain an enduring friendship that would carry them through college and careers, marriage and motherhood, dating and divorce, a child's illness and the mysterious death of one member of their group. **LP, E**

The Glass Castle. Jeannette Walls.

Walls opens her memoir by describing looking out the window of her taxi, wondering if she's "overdressed for the evening" and spotting her mother on the sidewalk, "rooting through a Dumpster." Walls's parents--just two of the unforgettable characters in this excellent, unusual book--were a matched pair of eccentrics, and raising four children didn't conventionalize either of them. **LP, A**

The good food revolution: growing healthy food, people, and communities. Will Allen.

Will Allen cashed in his retirement fund for a two-acre plot just outside Milwaukee's largest public housing project. Despite financial challenges and daunting odds, Allen built the country's preeminent urban farm to food and educational center that now produces enough produce and fish year-round to feed thousands. This was the 2015 MSU Common Read. **E**

Grand Opening. Jon Hassler.

The Foster family; Catherine, Hank, their 12-year-old son, Brendan, and Catherine's elderly father are urging a 1928 De Soto toward the town of Plum, Minn., and a time-honored American Dream: ownership of a business (they have purchased a dilapidated grocery store), a home and a sense of belonging. But Plum turns out to be a lemon; sour in spirit, pitted with religious bias and general mistrust.

Grapes of Wrath. John Steinbeck.

Controversial, even shocking, when it was written, the work continues to be so even today. It poses fundamental questions about justice, the ownership and stewardship of the land, the role of government, power, and the very foundations of capitalist society. As history, this brings the Dust Bowl years to life in a most memorable way. **A**

Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows.

The letters comprising this small charming novel begin in 1946, when single, 30-something author Juliet Ashton (nom de plume Izzy Bickerstaff) writes to her publisher to say she is tired of covering the sunny side of war and its aftermath. When Guernsey farmer Dawsey Adams finds Juliet's name in a used book and invites articulate--and not-so-articulate--neighbors to write Juliet with their stories, the book's epistolary circle widens, putting Juliet back in the path of war stories. **LP, A, DA, E**

Half the sky: turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide. Nicholas D. Kristof And Sheryl WuDunn.

From two of our most fiercely moral voices, a passionate call to arms against our era's most pervasive human rights violation: the oppression of women and girls in the developing world. With Pulitzer Prize winners Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn as our guides, we undertake an odyssey through Africa and Asia to meet the extraordinary women struggling there, among them a Cambodian teenager sold into sex slavery and an Ethiopian woman who suffered devastating injuries in childbirth. Drawing on the breadth of their combined reporting experience, Kristof and WuDunn depict our world with anger, sadness, clarity, and, ultimately, hope.

The Healing. Jonathan Odell.

Plantation mistress Amanda Satterfield's intense grief over losing her daughter crosses the line into madness when she takes a newborn slave child as her own and names her Granada. Troubled by his wife's disturbing mental state and concerned about a mysterious plague that is sweeping through the plantation's slave quarters, Master Satterfield purchases Polly Shine, a slave woman known as a healer who immediately senses a spark of the same gift in Granada. Soon, a domestic battle of wills begins, leading to a tragedy that weaves together three generations of strong Southern women. **E, LP.**

Heaven is for Real: a little boy's astounding story of his trip to heaven and back. Todd Burpo.

Heaven Is for Real is the true story of the four-year old son of a small town Nebraska pastor who during emergency surgery slips from consciousness and enters heaven. He survives and begins talking about being able to look down and see the doctor operating and his dad praying in the waiting room. The family didn't know what to believe but soon the evidence was clear. **A, DA, E**

The Help. Kathryn Stockett.

In Jackson, Mississippi, in 1962, there are lines that are not crossed. With the civil rights movement exploding all around them, three women start a movement of their own, forever changing a town and the way women--black and white, mothers and daughters--view one another. **LP, A, DA, E**

The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again. J.R.R. Tolkien.

Bilbo Baggins is a hobbit who enjoys a comfortable, unambitious life, rarely traveling any farther than his pantry or cellar. But his contentment is disturbed when the wizard Gandalf and a company of dwarves arrive on his doorstep one day to whisk him away on an adventure. They have launched a plot to raid the treasure hoard guarded by Smaug the Magnificent, a large and very dangerous dragon. Bilbo reluctantly joins their quest, unaware that on his journey he will encounter both a magic ring and a frightening creature known as Gollum. **A**

Homestead. Rosina Lippi.

Each life has its place, and every variation ripples the surface of the tiny alpine villages called Rosenau. Be it a mysteriously misaddressed love letter, or a girl's careless delivery of two helpless relatives into Nazi hands, the town's balance is ever tested, and ever tender. Here is a novel spanning eighty years – years that bring factories and wars, store bought cheese, and city-trained teachers – weaving the fates of the wives, mothers, and daughters in this remote corner of Austria.

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet. Jamie Ford.

Henry Lee, a Chinese-American in Seattle who, in 1986, has just lost his wife to cancer. After Henry hears that the belongings of Japanese immigrants interned during WWII have been found in the basement of the Panama Hotel, the narrative shuttles between 1986 and the 1940s in a story that chronicles the losses of old age and the bewilderment of youth. Henry recalls the difficulties of life in America during WWII, when he and his Japanese-American school friend, Keiko, wandered through wartime Seattle. Keiko and her family are later interned in a camp, and Henry, horrified by America's anti-Japanese hysteria, is further conflicted because of his Chinese father's anti-Japanese sentiment. **A, E**

The Hunger Games. Suzanne Collins.

In a not-too-distant future, the United States of America has collapsed, weakened by drought, fire, famine, and war, to be replaced by Panem, a country divided into the Capitol and 12 districts. Each year, two young representatives from each district are selected by lottery to participate in The Hunger Games. Part entertainment, part brutal intimidation of the subjugated districts, the televised games are broadcasted throughout Panem as the 24 participants are forced to eliminate their competitors, literally, with all citizens required to watch. When 16-year-old Katniss's young sister, Prim, is selected as the mining district's female representative, Katniss volunteers to take her place. She and her male counterpart, Peeta, the son of the town baker who seems to have all the fighting skills of a lump of bread dough, will be pitted against bigger, stronger representatives who have trained for this their whole lives. This is Book 1 of a trilogy. **LP, A, DA**

I am Malala. Malala Yousafzai.

When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school, and few expected her to survive. Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she became a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest nominee ever for the Nobel Peace Prize. **A, E**

I Capture the Castle. Dodie Smith.

The Story of a seventeen-year-old Cassandra and her family, who live in not-so-genteel poverty in a ramshackle old English castle. Here she strives, over six turbulent months, to hone her writing skills. She fills three notebooks with sharply funny yet poignant entries. Her journals candidly chronicle the great changes that take place within the castle's walls, and her own first descent into love. By the time she pens her final entry, she has "captured the castle" – and the heart of the reader – in one of literature's most enchanting entertainments.

I Feel Bad About My Neck: and other thoughts on being a woman. Nora Ephron.

With her disarming, intimate, completely accessible voice, and dry sense of humor, Nora Ephron shares with us her ups and downs in *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, a candid, hilarious look at women who are getting older and dealing with the tribulations of maintenance, menopause, empty nests, and life itself. **A, DA, E, LP.**

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Maya Angelou.

In this first of five volumes of autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. **LP, A**

The Immortal life of Henrietta Lacks. Rebecca Skloot.

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew. **LP, A, E**

In the Heart of the Sea. Nathaniel Philbrick.

In 1820, the whaleship *Essex* was rammed and sunk by an angry sperm whale, leaving the desperate crew to drift for more than ninety days in three tiny boats. Nathaniel Philbrick uses little-known documents and vivid details about the Nantucket whaling tradition to reveal the chilling facts of this infamous maritime disaster. **E**

In the Wind. Barbara Fister.

Anni Koskinen is out of a job. After ten years in the Chicago Police Department, her moral compass led her across the thin blue line to testify against a fellow cop – and, in the aftermath, she lost the only career she ever wanted. As she is putting a new life together, a gentle church worker appears on her doorstep and asks for a ride out of town. It's not until the FBI gets involved that Anni realizes she has helped a fugitive escape. And not just any fugitive.

Into thin air: a personal account of the Mount Everest disaster. Jon Krakauer.

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more—including Krakauer's—in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.

An Invisible Thread. Laura Schroff.

She was a successful ad sales rep in Manhattan. He was a homeless, eleven-year-old panhandler on the street. He asked for spare change; she kept walking. But then something stopped her in her tracks, and she went back. And she continued to go back, again and again. They met up nearly every week for years and built an unexpected, life-changing friendship that has today spanned almost three decades.

The Kitchen Boy. Robert Alexander.

Drawing from decades of work, travel, and research in Russia, Robert Alexander re-creates the tragic, perennially fascinating story of the final days of Nicholas and Alexandra as seen through the eyes of the Romanovs' young kitchen boy, Leonka. Now an ancient Russian immigrant, Leonka claims to be the last living witness to the Romanov's brutal murders and sets down the dark secrets of his past with the imperial family. Does he hold the key to the many questions surrounding the family's murder?

The language of flowers. Vanessa Diffenbaugh.

The Victorian language of flowers was used to convey romantic expressions: honeysuckle for devotion, asters for patience, and red roses for love. But for Victoria Jones, it's been more useful in communicating mistrust and solitude. After a childhood spent in the foster-care system, she is unable to get close to anybody, and her only connection to the world is through flowers and their meanings. Now eighteen and emancipated from the system with nowhere to go, Victoria realizes she has a gift for helping others through the flowers she chooses for them. But an unexpected encounter with a mysterious stranger has her questioning what's been missing in her life. And when she's forced to confront a painful secret from her past, she must decide whether it's worth risking everything for a second chance at happiness. **LP, A, E.**

Last of her Kind. Sigrid Nunez.

Two women meet as freshmen on the Columbia campus in 1968. Georgette George does not know what to make of her brilliant, idealistic roommate, Ann Drayton, and her obsessive disdain for the ruling class into which she was born. She is mortified by Ann's romanticization of the underprivileged class, which Georgette herself is hoping college will enable her to escape....

Left Neglected. Lisa Genova.

Sarah Nickerson, like any other working mom, is busy trying to have it all. One morning while racing to work and distracted by her cell phone, she looks away from the road for one second too long. In that blink of an eye, all the rapidly moving parts of her over-scheduled life come to a screeching halt. After a brain injury steals her awareness of everything on her left side, Sarah must retrain her mind to perceive the world as a whole. In so doing, she also learns how to pay attention to the people and parts of her life that matter most. **A, LP**

A Lesson Before Dying. Ernest J. Gaines.

From the author of *A Gathering of Old Men* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* comes a deep and compassionate novel. A young man who returns to 1940s Cajun country to teach, visits a black youth on death row for a crime he didn't commit. Together they come to understand the heroism of resisting. **E**

The life intended. Kristin Harmel.

After her husband's sudden death over ten years ago, Kate Waithman never expected to be lucky enough to find another love of her life. But now she's planning her second walk down the aisle to a perfectly nice man. So why isn't she more excited? At first, Kate blames her lack of sleep on stress. But when she starts seeing Patrick, her late husband, in her dreams, she begins to wonder if she's really ready to move on. Attempting to navigate between dreams and reality, Kate must uncover her husband's hidden message. Her quest leads her to a sign language class and into the New York City foster system, where she finds rewards greater than she could have imagined. **E**

Life of Pi. Yann Martel.

Pi Patel is an unusual boy. The son of a zookeeper, he has an encyclopedic knowledge of animal behavior, a fervent love of stories, and practices not only his native Hinduism, but also Christianity and Islam. When Pi is sixteen, his family emigrates from India to North America aboard a Japanese cargo ship, along with their zoo animals bound for new homes.... **LP, A, E**

The life we bury. Allen Eskins.

College student Joe Talbert has the modest goal of completing a writing assignment for an English class. His task is to interview a stranger and write a brief biography of the person. With deadlines looming, Joe heads to a nearby nursing home to find a willing subject. There he meets Carl Iverson, and soon nothing in Joe's life is ever the same. Carl is a dying Vietnam veteran--and a convicted murderer. With only a few months to live, he has been medically paroled to a nursing home, after spending thirty years in prison for the crimes of rape and murder. As Joe writes about Carl's life, especially Carl's valor in Vietnam, he cannot reconcile the heroism of the soldier with the despicable acts of the convict. Joe, along with his skeptical female neighbor, throws himself into uncovering the truth, but he is hamstrung in his efforts by having to deal with his dangerously dysfunctional mother, the guilt of leaving his autistic brother vulnerable, and a haunting childhood memory. **E**

The Lighthouse Road. Peter Geye.

The story moves back and forth in time from the arrival of Thea from her isolated village in arctic Norway in search of a new life in the near wilderness of a small town and logging camp on the shore of Lake Superior to the travails of her orphaned son, Odd, some twenty years later. **E**

A Long Year of Silence. Kathryn Adams Doty.

A sixteen-year-old minister's daughter, Emma faces relationship challenges with her parents and her peers when the United States enters World War I and anti-German hysteria sweeps through New Ulm, Minnesota.

Long-Shining Waters. Danielle Sosin.

Grey Rabbit, an Ojibwe woman living by the lake in 1622, is a mother and wife whose dream-life has taken on fearful dimensions. As she struggles to understand "what she is shown at night," her psyche and her world edge toward irreversible change. In 1902, Berit and Gunnar, a Norwegian fishing couple, also live on the lake. Berit is unable to conceive, and the lake anchors her isolated life and tests the limits of her endurance and spirit. And in 2000, when Nora, a seasoned bar owner, loses her job and is faced with an open-ended future, she is drawn reluctantly into a road trip around the great lake. **E**

Looking for Lost Bird: A Jewish Woman Discovers her Navaho Roots. Yvette Melanson.

While growing up as an adopted child in a Jewish family, the author of this compelling memoir never quite fit in with expectations of who she was supposed to be. On the Internet, with help she attributes to both kind strangers and the Great Spirit, Melanson discovers the reason she didn't fit in, uncovering the bizarre truth that she is, in fact, Navajo.

Loving Frank. Nancy Horan.

A fictionalization of the life of Mamah Borthwick Cheney, best known as the woman who wrecked Frank Lloyd Wright's first marriage. Despite the title, this is not a romance, but a portrayal of an independent, educated woman at odds with the restrictions of the early 20th century.

Major Pettigrew's Last Stand. Helen Simonson.

In her witty and wise debut novel, newcomer Helen Simonson introduces the unforgettable character of the widower Major Ernest Pettigrew. The Major epitomizes the Englishman with the "stiff upper lip," who clings to traditional values and has tried (in vain) to pass these along to his yuppie son, Roger. The story centers around Pettigrew's fight to keep his greedy relatives (including his son) from selling a valuable family heirloom--a pair of hunting rifles that symbolizes much of what he stands for, or at least what he thinks he does. **LP, A, DA, E**

The man in the window. Jon Cohen.

Since he was disfigured in a fire sixteen years ago, recluse Louis Malone has remained hidden from the prying eyes of his neighbors in the small town of Waverly. Across town, Iris Shula, a lonely and unlovely nurse, knows at thirty-seven it is unlikely that her Prince Charming will ever appear. But Iris is about to learn how wrong she is. When Louis accidentally falls out of his second-story window, these two kindred souls are brought together. What unfolds is a most unlikely love story. One that will make you laugh and that will break—and remake—your heart.

Me Before You: A Novel. Jojo Moyes.

Louisa Clark is an ordinary girl living an exceedingly ordinary life—steady boyfriend, close family—who has barely been farther afield than their tiny village. She takes a badly needed job working for ex-Master of the Universe Will Traynor, who is wheelchair bound after an accident. Will has always lived a huge life—big deals, extreme sports, worldwide travel—and now he's pretty sure he cannot live the way he is. Will is acerbic, moody, bossy—but Lou refuses to treat him with kid gloves, and soon his happiness means more to her than she expected. When she learns that Will has shocking plans of his own, she sets out to show him that life is still worth living. **LP, E**

The Memory of Running. Ron McLarty.

By all accounts, especially his own, Smithson "Smithy" Ide is a loser. An overweight, friendless, chain-smoking, forty-three-year-old drunk, Smithy's life becomes completely unhinged when he loses his beloved parents and long lost sister all within the span of one week. Rolling down the driveway of his parents' house in Rhode Island on his old Raleigh bicycle in an effort to escape his grief, the emotionally bereft Smithy embarks on an epic, hilarious, luminous, and extraordinary journey of discovery and redemption. **LP, A**

Memory Keeper's Daughter. Kim Edwards.

On a winter night in 1964, Dr. David Henry is forced by a blizzard to deliver his own twins. His son, born first, is perfectly healthy. Yet when his daughter is born, he sees immediately that she has Down's Syndrome. Rationalizing it as a need to protect Norah, his wife, he makes a split-second decision that will alter all of their lives forever. He asks his nurse to take the baby away to an institution and never to reveal the secret.... **LP, A**

Moloka'i. Alan Brennert.

This debut novel tracks the grim struggle of a Hawaiian woman who contracts leprosy as a child in Honolulu during the 1890s and is deported to the island of Moloka'i, where she grows to adulthood at the quarantined settlement of Kalaupapa.

My Sister's Keeper. Jodi Picoult.

Kate Fitzgerald has a rare form of leukemia. Her sister, Anna, was conceived to provide a donor match for procedures that become increasingly invasive. At 13, Anna hires a lawyer so that she can sue her parents for the right to make her own decisions about how her body is used when a kidney transplant is planned. Meanwhile, Jesse, the neglected oldest child of the family, is out setting fires, which his firefighter father, Brian, inevitably puts out. Picoult ably explores a complex subject with bravado and clarity, and comes up with a heart-wrenching, unexpected plot twist at the book's conclusion. **LP, A**

Night Birds. Thomas Maltman.

In 1862, led by Chief Little Crow and incited by the government's failure to provide their annuity, the Dakota Sioux staged an uprising in Minnesota, slaughtering hundreds of settlers. As a result, 38 Dakota men were hanged, the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Maltman's promising first novel bounces between the years leading up to this atrocity-laden conflict and 1876, when the James-Younger gang would stir up its own brand of bloody mayhem in Minnesota. **E**

A Night to Remember. Walter Lord.

First published in 1955, *A Night to Remember* remains a completely riveting account of the *Titanic's* fatal collision and the behavior of the passengers and crew, both noble and ignominious. Some sacrificed their lives, while others fought like animals for their own survival. Wives beseeched husbands to join them in lifeboats; gentlemen went taut-lipped to their deaths in full evening dress; and hundreds of steerage passengers, trapped below decks, sought help in vain. This book was selected as the 2012 North Mankato Community Read. **A, E**

Oh my Stars. Lorna Landvik.

As this folksy novel opens, the sadness in Violet's life is as thick as the cream on top of the milk bucket. Faced with abandonment, cruelty and a life-altering accident, Violet has an empty heart but also finds herself open to change, which enters in the form of a parade of characters. **LP, E**

Olive Kitteridge. Elizabeth Strout.

Thirteen linked tales present a heart-wrenching, penetrating portrait of ordinary coastal Mainers living lives of quiet grief intermingled with flashes of human connection. **A, E**

Once Upon a Town: The Miracle of the North Platte Canteen. Bob Greene.

Millions of American soldiers, many of whom had never left their hometowns before, crossed the nation by rail during the years of World War II on their way to training camps and distant theaters of battle. In a little town in Nebraska, countless thousands of them met with extraordinary hospitality--the "miracle" of veteran journalist Bob Greene's title. **LP, E**

Ordinary Grace. William Kent Krueger.

New Bremen, Minnesota, 1961. The Twins were playing their debut season, ice-cold root beers were selling out at the soda counter of Halderson's Drugstore, and Hot Stuff comic books were a mainstay on every barbershop magazine rack. It was a time of innocence and hope for a country with a new, young president. But for thirteen-year-old Frank Drum it was a grim summer in which death visited frequently and assumed many forms. Accident. Nature. Suicide. Murder. **LP, A**

Orphan train: a novel. Christina Baker Kline.

Penobscot Indian Molly Ayer is close to "aging out" out of the foster care system. A community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping Molly out of juvie and worse...As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren't as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance. Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life -- answers that will ultimately free them both. **LP, A, E.**

The Other Wes Moore: the story of one name and two fates. Wes Moore.

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? **E**

Over the Earth I Come. Duane Schultz.

December 26, 1862. On the day after Christmas, in Mankato, Minnesota, thirty-eight Indians were hanged on the order of President Lincoln. This event stands today as the greatest mass execution in the history of the United States. In *Over The Earth I Come*, Duane Schultz brilliantly retells one of America's most violent and bloody events--the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862.

Patty Jane's House of Curl. Lorna Landvik.

Maybe Patty Jane Dobbin should know better than to marry a man as gorgeous as Thor Rolvaag. Soon, with a baby on the way, Thor is gone. It's a good thing Patty Jane has her irrepressible sister, Harriet, to rely on. Before long, the sisters have opened a beauty parlor, a place where women

Peace Like a River. Leif Enger

Hailed as one of the year's top five novels by *Time*, and selected as one of the best books of the year by nearly all major newspapers, national bestseller *Peace Like a River* captured the hearts of a nation in need of comfort. Enger tells the story of eleven-year-old Reuben Land, an asthmatic boy who has reason to believe in miracles. Along with his sister and father, Reuben finds himself on a cross-country search for his outlaw older brother who has been controversially charged with murder. **LP**

The Pearl. John Steinbeck.

A fisherman finds the great pearl, only to lose it again.

A Pearl in the Storm: how I found my heart in the middle of the ocean. Tori Murden McClure.

In June 1998, Tori McClure began rowing across the Atlantic Ocean solo in a twenty-three-foot plywood boat with no motor or sail. Within days she lost all communication with shore but decided to forge ahead -- not knowing that 1998 would turn out to be the worst hurricane season on record in the North Atlantic. When she was nearly killed by a series of violent storms, Tori was forced to signal for help and head home in what felt like disgrace. But then her life changed in unexpected ways. She was hired by Muhammad Ali, who told her she did not want to be known as the woman who "almost" rowed across the Atlantic. This is the Gustavus Common Read for 2013. **E**

The pianist: the extraordinary story of one man's survival in Warsaw, 1939-45. Wladyslaw Szpilman.

On September 23, 1939, Wladyslaw Szpilman played Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp minor live on the radio as shells exploded outside--so loudly that he couldn't hear his piano. It was the last live music broadcast from Warsaw: That day, a German bomb hit the station, and Polish Radio went off the air. Though he lost his entire family, Szpilman survived in hiding. In the end, his life was saved by a German officer who heard him play the same Chopin Nocturne on a piano found among the rubble. Written immediately after the war and suppressed for decades, *The Pianist* is a stunning testament to human endurance and the redemptive power of fellow feeling. This was the 2015 North Mankato Community Read title. **E**

Pope Joan. Donna Woolfolk Cross.

One of the most controversial women of history is brought to brilliant life in Donn Woolfolk Cross's tale of Pope Joan, a girl whose origins should have kept her in squalid domesticity. Instead, through her intelligence, indomitability and courage, she ascended to the throne of Rome as Pope John Anglicus.

Population 485: Meeting your neighbors one siren at a time. Michael Perry

Being a volunteer EMT is no small challenge, even in a town as small as New Auburn, Wisconsin. Perry mixes his tales of heroic rescues with his stories of small-town life. His book opens with his team attempting to rescue a teenage girl from a disastrous car wreck on a dangerous bend of road. As part of the volunteer fire department, Perry--along with his brother and mother-- pulls people from mangled cars and answers 911 calls from critically ill people. Tragic at times, funny at others, Perry's memoir will appeal to anyone curious about small-town life.

Power of the Dog. Thomas Savage

A Major rediscovery! This gripping domestic drama set in the 1920s Montana is the finest, most powerful work by a much-admired (and unjustly overlooked) novelist of the American West. It tells the story of two brothers -- and a woman and her son, whose arrival on the brothers' ranch shatters an already uneasy peace.

Pride and Prejudice. Jane Austen.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters. "My dear Mr. Bennet," said this lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" **A**

The Princess Bride. William Goldman.

Rich in character and satire, the novel is set in 1941 and framed cleverly as an "abridged" retelling of a centuries-old tale set in the fabled country of Florin that's home to "Beasts of all natures and descriptions. Pain. Death. Brave men. Coward men. Strongest men. Chases. Escapes. Lies. Truths. Passions."

Prodigal Summer. Barbara Kingsolver.

In a beautiful hymn to wildness, Kingsolver celebrates the prodigal spirit of human nature and of nature itself. Over the course of one humid summer, as the urge to procreate takes over the countryside, the novel's characters find their connections to one another in the forested mountains of southern Appalachia. **E**

Red Earth, White Earth. Will Weaver.

Unresolved relationships with his family and friends and a heritage of farming come into focus when Guy Pehrsson, a California computer entrepreneur, returns to Minnesota 12 years after he ran away at age 18. His childhood "blood brother," Tom Little Wolf, a Chippewa Indian, is now a tribal lawyer intent on reclaiming farmlands mishandled in past treaties, lands which include the Pehrsson's homestead. This conflict tests but never breaks the bond between the two men.

River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey. Candice Millard.

A year after Roosevelt lost a third-party bid for the White House in 1912, he decided to chase away his blues by accepting an invitation for a South American trip that quickly evolved into an ill-prepared journey down an unexplored tributary of the Amazon known as the River of Doubt. The small group, including T.R.'s son Kermit, was hampered by the failure to pack enough supplies and the absence of canoes sturdy enough for the river's rapids. An injury Roosevelt sustained became infected with flesh-eating bacteria and left the ex-president so weak that, at his lowest moment, he told Kermit to leave him to die in the rainforest.

The Road. Cormac McCarthy.

A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other. **A**

Rock Island Line. David Rhodes.

Raised in an idyllic Iowa town, young July Montgomery is rocked by the tragic death of his parents. Fleeing to Philadelphia, he fashions a ghostly existence in an underground train station. When a young woman appears to free him from his malaise, they return together to the Iowa heartland, where the novel soars to its heartrending climax.

Room. Emma Donoghue.

In many ways, Jack is a typical 5-year-old. He likes to read books, watch TV, and play games with his Ma. But Jack is different in a big way--he has lived his entire life in a single room, sharing the tiny space with only his mother and an unnerving nighttime visitor known as Old Nick. For Jack, Room is the only world he knows, but for Ma, it is a prison in which she has tried to craft a normal life for her son. When their insular world suddenly expands beyond the confines of their four walls, the consequences are piercing and extraordinary. **LP, A, DA**

A room of one's own. Virginia Woolf.

Why is it that men, and not women, have always had power, wealth, and fame? Woolf cites the two keys to freedom: fixed income and one's own room. "A Room of One's Own" is an extended essay by Virginia Woolf. **DA.**

Sarah's Key. Tatiana de Rosnay.

De Rosnay's U.S. debut fictionalizes the 1942 Paris roundups and deportations, in which thousands of Jewish families were arrested, held at the Vélodrome d'Hiver outside the city, then transported to Auschwitz. Forty-five-year-old Julia Jarmond, American by birth, moved to Paris when she was 20 and is married to the arrogant, unfaithful Bertrand Tézac, with whom she has an 11-year-old daughter. Julia writes for an American magazine and her editor assigns her to cover the 60th anniversary of the Vél' d'Hiv' roundups. Julia soon learns that the apartment she and Bertrand plan to move into was acquired by Bertrand's family when its Jewish occupants were dispossessed and deported 60 years before. She resolves to find out what happened to the former occupants: Wladyslaw and Rywka Starzynski, parents of 10-year-old Sarah and four-year-old Michel. **LP, A**

The Scarlet Letter. Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The harsh world of seventeenth-century Puritan New England is revealed in Hawthorne's story of adultery, revenge, and redemption.

Secret Life of Bees. Sue Monk Kidd.

Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the town's fiercest racists, Lily decides they should both escape to Tiburon, South Carolina – a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters who introduce Lily to the mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna who presides over their household. This is a remarkable story about divine female power and the transforming power of love – a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come. **LP, A, DA, E**

The Secret Life of Violet Grant. Beatriz Williams.

Fresh from college, irrepressible Vivian Schuyler defies her wealthy Fifth Avenue family to work at cutthroat Metropolitan magazine. But this is 1964, and the editor dismisses her...until a parcel lands on Vivian's Greenwich Village doorstep that starts a journey into the life of an aunt she never knew, who might give her just the story she's been waiting for. **E**

The Sex Lives of Cannibals. J. Maarten Troost.

Troost's chronicle of his two-year sojourn in a forgotten world is a comic masterwork of travel writing and a revealing look at a culture clash.

Snow Child. Eowyn Ivey.

Alaska, 1920: a brutal place to homestead, and especially tough for recent arrivals Jack and Mabel. Childless, they are drifting apart--he breaking under the weight of the work of the farm; she crumbling from loneliness and despair. In a moment of levity during the season's first snowfall, they build a child out of snow. The next morning the snow child is gone--but they glimpse a young, blonde-haired girl running through the trees. **E**

So brave, young, and handsome. Leif Enger.

A lively, big-hearted redemption tale; an unforgettable, picaresque Western yarn.

In 1915 Minnesota, writer Monte Becket has lost his sense of purpose. His only success long behind him, Monte lives simply with his wife and son until he befriends outlaw Glendon Hale. Plagued by guilt over abandoning his wife two decades ago, Glendon aims to go back West on a quest for absolution. **A, DA**

Someone knows my name. Lawrence Hill.

Kidnapped as a child from Africa, Aminata Diallo is enslaved in South Carolina but escapes during the chaos of the Revolutionary War. In Manhattan she becomes a scribe for the British, recording the names of blacks who have served the King and earned freedom in Nova Scotia. But the hardship and prejudice there prompt her to follow her heart back to Africa, then on to London, where she bears witness to the injustices of slavery and its toll on her life and a whole people.

Soundings: the remarkable woman who mapped the ocean floor. Hali Felt.

Her maps of the ocean floor have been called "one of the most remarkable achievements in modern cartography", yet no one knows her name.

Still Alice. Lisa Genova.

Alice Howland has a career as an esteemed psychology professor at Harvard, living a comfortable life in Cambridge with her husband, John, arguing about the usual (making quality time together, their daughter's move to L.A.) when the first symptoms of Alzheimer's begin to emerge. First, Alice can't find her Blackberry, then she becomes hopelessly disoriented in her own town. Alice is shocked to be diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's (she had suspected a brain tumor or menopause), after which her life begins steadily to unravel. **LP, A**

The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry. Gabrielle Zevin.

A. J. Fikry's life is not at all what he expected it to be. He lives alone, his bookstore is experiencing the worst sales in its history, and now his prized possession, a rare collection of Poe poems, has been stolen. But when a mysterious package appears at the bookstore, its unexpected arrival gives Fikry the chance to make his life over--and see everything anew. **A, E**

Strength in What Remains. Tracy Kidder.

Tracy Kidder gives us the story of one man's inspiring American journey and of the ordinary people who helped him, providing brilliant testament to the power of second chances. Deo arrives in the United States from Burundi in search of a new life. Having survived a civil war and genocide, he lands at JFK airport with two hundred dollars, no English, and no contacts. He ekes out a precarious existence delivering groceries, living in Central Park, and learning English by reading dictionaries in bookstores. Then Deo begins to meet the strangers who will change his life, pointing him eventually in the direction of Columbia University, medical school, and a life devoted to healing. Kidder breaks new ground in telling this unforgettable story as he travels with Deo back over a turbulent life and shows us what it means to be fully human. This is the MSU Common Read for 2013. **A, LP, DA, E**

Things Fall Apart. Chinua Achebe.

Things Fall Apart tells two intertwining stories, both centering on Okonkwo, a "strong man" of an Ibo village in Nigeria. **A, E**

The Things They Carried. Tim O'Brien

Depicts the men of Alpha Company: Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and of course, the character Tim O'Brien who has survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three. They battle the enemy (or maybe more the idea of the enemy) and occasionally each other. **A, E**

The Thirteenth Tale. Diane Setterfield.

When her health begins failing, the mysterious author Vida Winter decides to let Margaret Lea, a biographer, write the truth about her life, but Margaret needs to verify the facts since Vida has a history of telling outlandish tales. **A**

Those Who Save Us. Jenna Blum.

An unsentimental look at the Holocaust. The narrative alternates between the present-day story of Trudy, a history professor at a Minneapolis university collecting oral histories of WWII survivors (both German and Jewish), and that of her aged but once beautiful German mother, Anna, who left her country when she married an American soldier. Ultimately, present and past overlap with a shocking yet believable coincidence. **LP**

To Kill a Mockingbird. Harper Lee.

Set in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Depression, *To Kill a Mockingbird* follows three years in the life of 8-year-old Scout Finch, her brother, Jem, and their father, Atticus – three years punctuated by the arrest and eventual trial of a young black man accused of raping a white woman. Though her story explores big themes, Harper Lee chooses to tell it through the eyes of a child. The result is a tough and tender novel of race, class, justice, and the pain of growing up. **LP, A**

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. Betty Smith.

Francie Nolan, avid reader, penny-candy connoisseur, and adroit observer of human nature, has much to ponder in colorful, turn-of-the-century Brooklyn. She grows up with a sweet, tragic father, a severely realistic mother, and an aunt who gives her love too freely--to men, and to a brother who will always be the favored child. Francie learns early the meaning of hunger and the value of a penny. **A**

Tuesdays with Morrie. Mitch Albom.

The best-selling author recounts his weekly visits with a dying teacher who years before had set him straight. It reminds us of the affection and gratitude that many of us still feel for the significant mentors of our past. **LP, E**

Unbroken: a World War II airman's story of survival, resilience, and redemption. Laura Hillenbrand.

In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics. But when World War II began, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived, adrift on a foundering life raft. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will. **LP, A, DA, E.**

The Unforgiving Minute: a soldier's education. Craig M. Mullaney.

West Point grad, Rhodes scholar, Airborne Ranger, and U. S. Army Captain Craig Mullaney recounts his unparalleled education and the hard lessons that only war can teach. While stationed in Afghanistan, a deadly firefight with al-Qaeda leads to the loss of one of his soldiers. Years later, after that excruciating experience, he returns to the United States to teach future officers at the Naval Academy. Written with unflinching honesty, this is an unforgettable portrait of a young soldier grappling with the weight of war while coming to terms with what it means to be a man. This has been selected as the MSU Reading in Common title for 2012. **DA**

Unless. Carol Shields.

Reta Winters, 44-year-old successful author of light summertime fiction has always considered herself happy, even blessed. That is, until her oldest daughter, Norah, mysteriously drops out of college to become a panhandler on a Toronto street corner – silent, with a sign around her neck bearing the word “Goodness” **E**

Waiting for White Horses. Nathan Jorgenson.

The gentle morning breeze was beginning to blow the cloud of fog off the lake in puffs. Each small fragment of the fog seemed to tumble and gallop across the water before it disappeared. At first she didn't see it. 'He got me out of bed to watch fog,' she thought. For a moment she wasn't sure if he was serious. Then she saw the horses. **E**

A Walk in the Woods. Bill Bryson.

Three to four sentences into this book, you immediately get a hint of the humor that lies ahead, such as one of the innumerable reasons he longed to walk as many of the 2,100 miles of the Appalachian Trail as he could. "It would get me fit after years of waddlesome sloth". By the time our storyteller recounts his trip to the Dartmouth Co-op, suffering serious sticker shock over equipment prices, you'll be hooked. **E**

Water for Elephants. Sara Gruen.

A novel of star-crossed lovers, set in the circus world circa 1932. When Jacob Jankowski, recently orphaned and suddenly adrift, jumps onto a passing train, he enters a world of freaks, grifters, and misfits, a second-rate circus struggling to survive during the Great Depression, making one-night stands in town after endless town. A veterinary student who almost earned his degree, Jacob is put in charge of caring for the circus menagerie.... **LP, A, DA, E**

We Need to Talk About Kevin. Lionel Shriver.

Two years ago, Eva Khatchadourian's son, Kevin, murdered seven of his fellow high-school students, a cafeteria worker, and a popular algebra teacher. Telling the story of Kevin's upbringing, Eva addresses herself to her estranged husband through a series of letters.... **E**

We'll be the Last Ones to Let You Down. Rachael Hanel.

At times heartbreaking and at others gently humorous and uplifting, *We'll Be the Last Ones to Let You Down* presents the unique, moving perspective of a gravedigger's daughter and her lifelong relationship with death and grief. But it is also a masterful meditation on the living elements of our cemeteries: our neighbors, friends, and families—the very histories of our towns and cities—and how these things come together in the eyes of a young girl whose childhood is suffused with both death and the wonder of the living.

What was Lost. Catherine O'Flynn.

Stirring and beautifully crafted, this debut novel recounts how the repercussions of a girl's disappearance can last for decades. In 1984, Kate Meaney is a 10-year-old loner who solves imaginary mysteries and guesses the dark secrets of the shoppers she observes at the Green Oaks mall. Fast forward to 2003, where it's revealed through Lisa, Adrian's sister, that Kate disappeared nearly 20 years ago, and Adrian, blamed in her disappearance, also vanished.

Where am I eating?: an adventure through the global food economy. Kelsey Timmerman.

This book takes a human-centered approach to food, investigating the lives of the people at the other end of the global food economy, observing the hope and opportunity—or lack thereof—that results from our reliance on imports. *Where Am I Eating?* is a touching, insightful, informative look at the origins of our food.

Where'd you go, Bernadette? Maria Semple.

Bernadette Fox is notorious. To her Microsoft-guru husband, she's a fearlessly opinionated partner; to fellow private-school mothers in Seattle, she's a disgrace; to design mavens, she's a revolutionary architect, and to 15-year-old Bee, she is a best friend and, simply, Mom. Then Bernadette disappears. It began when Bee aced her report card and claimed her promised reward: a family trip to Antarctica. But Bernadette's intensifying allergy to Seattle--and people in general--has made her so agoraphobic that a virtual assistant in India now runs her most basic errands. A trip to the end of the earth is problematic. To find her mother, Bee compiles email messages, official documents, secret correspondence--creating a compulsively readable and touching novel about misplaced genius and a mother and daughter's role in an absurd world.

LP, A, DA, E.

The whip. Karen Kondazian.

The Whip is inspired by the true story of a woman, Charlotte "Charley" Parkhurst (1812-1879) who lived most of her extraordinary life as a man in the old west. As a young woman in Rhode Island, she fell in love with a runaway slave and had his child. The destruction of her family drove her west to California, dressed as a man, to track the killer.

Wicked. Gregory Maguire.

When Dorothy triumphed over the Wicked Witch of the West in L. Frank Baum's classic tale, we heard only her side of the story. But what about her arch-nemesis, the mysterious Witch? Where did she come from? How did she become so wicked? **A**

Wild: From lost to found on the Pacific Crest Trail. Cheryl Strayed.

At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone. Told with suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* powerfully captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her. **A, LP, E**

Winter garden. Kristin Hannah.

Meredith and Nina Whitson are as different as sisters can be. One stayed at home to raise her children and manage the family apple orchard; the other followed a dream and traveled the world to become a famous photojournalist. But when their beloved father falls ill, Meredith and Nina find themselves together again, standing alongside their cold, disapproving mother, Anya, who even now, offers no comfort to her daughters. As children, the only connection between them was the Russian fairy tale Anya sometimes told the girls at night. On his deathbed, their father extracts a promise from the women in his life: the fairy tale will be told one last time—and all the way to the end. Thus begins an unexpected journey into the truth of Anya's life in war-torn Leningrad, more than five decades ago. **A, E**

Wishin' and hopin': a novel. Wally Lamb.

An unforgettable novella that captures the warmth and joy of the holiday season. Poignant and hilarious, in a vein similar to Jean Shepherd's *A Christmas Story* and David Sedaris's *The Santaland Diaries*, Lamb's Christmas tale focuses on a feisty parochial school fifth grader named Felix Funicello—a distant cousin of the iconic Annette! **LP, A, DA, E.**

The Worst Hard Time: the untold story of those who survived the great American dustbowl. Timothy Egan.

The dust storms that terrorized America's High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since, and the stories of the people that held on have never been fully told. Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times journalist and author Timothy Egan follows a half-dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, going from sod homes to new framed houses to huddling in basements with the windows sealed by damp sheets in a futile effort to keep the dust out.... **E**

Year of Wonders. Geraldine Brooks.

When an infected bolt of cloth carries plague from London to an isolated village, a housemaid named Ann Frith emerges as an unlikely heroine and healer. Through Anna's eyes, we follow the story of the fateful year of 1666, as she and her fellow villagers confront the spread of disease and superstition. As death reaches into every household and villagers turn from prayers to murderous witch-hunting, Anna must find the strength to confront the disintegration of her community and the lure of illicit love. **A**

Zeitoun. Dave Eggers.

Through the story of one man's experience after Hurricane Katrina, Eggers draws an indelible picture of Bush-era crisis management. Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a successful Syrian-born painting contractor, decides to stay in New Orleans and protect his property while his family flees. After the levees break, he uses a small canoe to rescue people, before being arrested by an armed squad and swept powerlessly into a vortex of bureaucratic brutality. When a guard accuses him of being a member of Al Qaeda, he sees that race and culture may explain his predicament. **E**

The Zookeeper's Wife. Diane Ackerman.

After their zoo was bombed, Polish zookeepers Jan and Antonina Zabinski managed to save over three hundred people from the Nazis by hiding refugees in the empty animal cages. With animal names for these "guests," and human names for the animals, it's no wonder that the zoo's code name became "The House Under a Crazy Star." **A, DA**

Junior Books—Great Reading for Adult Groups, too!

Because of Mr. Terupt. Rob Buyea.

Only Mr. Terupt, the new and energetic teacher of seven 5th graders, seems to know how to deal with them all. He makes the classroom a fun place, even if he doesn't let them get away with much . . . until the snowy winter day when an accident changes everything—and everyone. **A**

Because of Winn-Dixie. Kate DiCamillo.

When ten-year-old India Opal Buloni moves to Naomi, Florida, with her preacher father, she doesn't know what to expect. She is lonely at first—that is until she meets Winn-Dixie, a stray dog who helps her make some unusual friends. Because of Winn-Dixie, Opal begins to let go of some of her sadness and finds she has a whole lot to be thankful for. **LP, A, E**

Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown. Maud Hart Lovelace.

Betsy, Tacy and Tib are twelve – old enough to do lots of things... even go downtown on their own. There they see their first horseless carriage, discover the joys of the public library, and see a real play at the Opera House. They even find themselves acting in one! Best of all, they help a lonely new friend feel at home in Deep Valley—the most wonderful place in the whole world to grow up. Ever since the first publication in the 1940s, the Betsy-Tacy stories have been loved by each generation of young readers.

Boston Jane. Jennifer Holm.

Sixteen-year-old Jane Peck has ventured to the unknown wilds of the Northwest to wed her childhood idol, William Baldt. But her impeccable training at Miss Hepplewhite's Young Ladies Academy in Philadelphia is hardly preparation for the colorful characters and crude life that await her in Washington Territory. Thrown upon her wits in the wild, Jane must determine for herself whether she is truly proper Miss Jane Peck of Philadelphia, faultless young lady and fiancée, or Boston Jane, as the Chinook dub her, fearless and loyal woman of the frontier. **A**

Bridge to Terabithia. Katherine Paterson.

Jess Aarons is eager to start fifth grade. He's been practicing his sprints all summer, determined to become the fastest runner at school. All seems to be on track, until the new girl in class (who also happens to be Jess's new next-door neighbor), Leslie Burke, leaves all the boys in the dust, including Jess. After this rather frustrating introduction, Jess and Leslie soon become inseparable. Together, they create an imaginary, secret kingdom in the woods called Terabithia that can be reached only by swinging across a creek bed on a rope. But one morning a tragic accident befalls Leslie as she ventures alone to Terabithia, and Jess's life is changed forever. **A**

Bud, Not Buddy. Christopher Paul Curtis

It's 1936 Flint, Michigan. Times may be hard, and 10-year-old Bud may be a motherless boy, but Bud's got a few things going for him: 1. He had his own suitcase full of special things; 2. He's the author of "Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself"; 3. His momma never told him who his father was, but she left a clue: posters of Herman E. Calloway and his band of renown, the Dusky Devastators of the Depression. Bud is sure those posters will lead him to his father. Once he decides to hit the road, nothing can stop him, not hunger, not fear, not would-be vampires, not even Herman E. Calloway himself. **LP, A, E**

Charlotte's Web. E.B. White.

An affectionate, sometimes bashful pig named Wilbur befriends a spider named Charlotte, who lives in the rafters above his pen. A prancing, playful bloke, Wilbur is devastated when he learns of the destiny that befalls all those of porcine persuasion. Determined to save her friend, Charlotte spins a web that reads "Some Pig," convincing the farmer and surrounding community that Wilbur is no ordinary animal and should be saved. In this story of friendship, hardship, and the passing on into time, E.B. White reminds us to open our eyes to the wonder and miracle often found in the simplest of things.

City of Ember. Jeanne Duprau.

It is always night in the city of Ember. But there is no moon, no stars. The only light during the regular twelve hours of "day" comes from floodlamps that cast a yellowish glow over the streets of the city. Beyond are the pitch-black Unknown Regions, which no one has ever explored because an understanding of fire and electricity has been lost, and with it the idea of a Moveable Light. " But now there are more and more empty shelves--and more and more times when the lights flicker and go out, leaving them in terrifying blackness for long minutes. What will happen when the generator finally fails? **A, E**

Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat. Lynne Jonell.

Emmy's world has turned upside down. Since her family inherited a fortune, her parents have become obsessed with status and money, her teachers and fellow students ignore her, and her welfare has been left in the hands of her coldhearted nanny, Miss Barmy. Now, she can hear the class pet, a rat, talking. What's going on?

Firegirl. Tony Abbott.

Tom, a seventh grader, tells about the arrival of Jessica, a new student who was badly burned in a fire and is attending St. Catherine's while she gets treatments at a local hospital. The students in Tom's class are afraid of her because of her appearance but little by little he develops a friendship with her that changes his life. **A**

Flora and Ulysses: the illuminated adventures. Kate DiCamillo.

It begins, as the best superhero stories do, with a tragic accident that has unexpected consequences. The squirrel never saw the vacuum cleaner coming, but self-described cynic Flora Belle Buckman, who has read every issue of the comic book *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!*, is just the right person to step in and save him. What neither can predict is that Ulysses (the squirrel) has been born anew, with powers of strength, flight, and misspelled poetry — and that Flora will be changed too, as she discovers the possibility of hope and the promise of a capacious heart. **A, E**

Football Genius. Tim Green.

Troy White is every football team's dream...even if they don't know it yet. Although he's in middle school, he is a great quarterback on his rec team, and he's got a secret talent—he can watch any football game and, after a few plays, he can call the subsequent plays before they happen. When Troy's mom, Tessa, gets a job as PR assistant for the Atlanta Falcons, Troy thinks he'll get the chance to use his gift and help his favorite team to a winning season. The boy finally manages to convince the star player of his hidden talent, but when it rubs the team's defensive coordinator the wrong way, Tessa's job is threatened. The race is on to try to save the Falcons' season as well as Tessa's job. **A**

The Giver. Lois Lowry.

Jonas's world is perfect. Everything is under control. There is no war or fear of pain. There are no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the community. When Jonas turns 12, he is singled out to receive special training from the Giver. The Giver alone holds the memories of the true pain and pleasure of life. It is time for Jonas to receive the truth. **LP, A, E**

Gregor the Overlander. Suzanne Collins.

What if Alice fell down an air vent in a New York City apartment building instead of down a rabbit hole? Collins considers a similar possibility in her exceptional debut novel, a well-written, fast-moving, action-packed fantasy. Eleven-year-old Gregor expects a long, boring summer of baby-sitting his two-year-old sister, Boots, and his senile grandmother. Distracted with thoughts about his father, who disappeared three years ago, Gregor belatedly notices that Boots has crawled into an air vent in the laundry room... **A**

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. J.K. Rowling.

Harry Potter has no idea how famous he is. That's because he's being raised by his miserable aunt and uncle who are terrified Harry will learn that he's really a wizard, just as his parents were. But everything changes when Harry is summoned to attend an infamous school for wizards, and he begins to discover some clues about his illustrious birthright. From the surprising way he is greeted by a lovable giant, to the unique curriculum and colorful faculty at his unusual school, Harry finds himself drawn deep inside a mystical world he never knew existed and closer to his own noble destiny. **LP, A, E**

Hatchet. Gary Paulsen.

Thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson is on his way to visit his father when the single engine plane in which he is flying crashes. Suddenly, Brian finds himself alone in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but his clothing, a tattered windbreaker, and the hatchet his mother has given him as a present—and the dreadful secret that has been tearing him apart ever since his parent's divorce. But now Brian has no time for anger, self-pity, or despair – it will take all his know-how and determination, and more courage than he knew he possessed, to survive. **A**

Holes. Louis Sachar.

Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes: five feet wide and five feet deep. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment – and redemption. **A, E**

Homework Machine. Dan Gutman.

Brenton is a computer genius, but the other three members of his work group think he's a nerd. So, when he tells them that he has invented a machine that does homework, they taunt him until he agrees to demonstrate. The machine actually works, and Kelsey, Sam, and Judy convince him to let them use it. At first, they are delighted with their freedom, but things quickly get out of hand.

A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt. C. Coco DeYoung.

In 1933, eleven-year-old Margo Bandini, her parents and young brother, Charlie, face losing their house if they do not find a way to pay back the bank loan used to cover hospital expenses for Charlie's emergency leg operation. In a letter, Margo appeals to Eleanor "Everywhere" Roosevelt, the person she admires most, for help.

Little House on the Prairie. Laura Ingalls Wilder.

The Adventures continue for Laura Ingalls and her family as they leave their little house in the Big Woods of Wisconsin and set out for Kansas. They travel for many days in their covered wagon until they find the best spot to build their little house on the prairie. Soon they are planting and plowing, hunting wild ducks and turkeys, and gathering grass for their cows. Pioneer life is hard, but Laura and her folks are always busy and happy in their new little house.

The Lightning Thief. Rick Riordan.

Mythological monsters and the gods of Mount Olympus seem to be walking out of the pages of twelve-year-old Percy Jackson's textbooks and into his life. And worse, he's angered a few of them. Zeus's master lightning bolt has been stolen, and Percy is the prime suspect. Now, he and his friends have just ten days to find and return Zeus's stolen property and bring peace to a warring Mount Olympus. **A, E.**

Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane. Kate DiCamillo.

Edward Tulane is an exceedingly vain, cold-hearted china rabbit owned by 10-year-old Abilene Tulane, who dearly loves him. Her grandmother relates a fairy tale about a princess who never felt love; she then whispers to Edward that he disappoints her. His path to redemption begins when he falls overboard during the family's ocean journey. **A, E**

Mr. Terupt Falls Again. Rob Buyea.

Fifth-grade was full of unforgettable events for Mr. Terupt and his class at Snow Hill School. Seven students were particularly affected by Mr. Terupt. Now those seven students are back, and they've been granted the rare opportunity to spend one more year with their beloved teacher before they graduate from elementary school. **A**

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH. Robert C. O'Brien.

There's something very strange about the rats living under the rosebush at the Fitzgibbon farm. But Mrs. Frisby, a widowed mouse with a sick child, is in dire straits and must turn to these exceptional creatures for assistance. Soon she finds herself flying on the back of a crow, slipping sleeping powder into a ferocious cat's dinner dish, and helping 108 brilliant, laboratory-enhanced rats escape to a utopian civilization of their own design, no longer to live "on the edge of somebody else's, like fleas on a dog's back."

My Side of the Mountain. Jean Craighead George.

Every kid thinks about running away at one point or another; few get farther than the end of the block. Young Sam Gibley gets to the end of the block and keeps going—all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he sets up house in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel for companions and his wits as his tool for survival.

No Girls Allowed (Dogs Okay). Trudi Strain Trueit.

Scab knows exactly what he wants: a dog. But if his "smart times ten" twin sister, Isabelle, keeps tattling on him, he's never going to get his pet. The sister repellent spray he invents is effective and profitable—until a broken bottle spells mega-stinky disaster. **A**

Out of my Mind. Sharon M. Draper.

Melody is not like most people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she can remember every detail of everything she has ever experienced. She is smarter than most of the adults who try to diagnose her and smarter than her classmates in her integrated classroom—the very same classmates who dismiss her as mentally challenged, because she cannot tell them otherwise. But Melody refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. And she's determined to let everyone know it...somehow. **E**

The Penderwicks: a summer tale of four sisters, two rabbits, and a very interesting boy. Jeanne Birdsall.

This summer the Penderwick sisters have a wonderful surprise: a holiday on the grounds of a beautiful estate called Arundel. Soon they are busy discovering the summertime magic of Arundel's sprawling gardens, treasure-filled attic, tame rabbits, and the cook who makes the best gingerbread in Massachusetts. But the best discovery of all is Jeffrey Tifton, son of Arundel's owner, who quickly proves to be the perfect companion for their adventures. **A, E**

Redwall. Brian Jacques.

What can the peace-loving mice of Redwall Abbey do to defend themselves against Cluny the Scourge and his battle-seasoned army of rats? If only they had the sword of Martin the Warrior, they might have a chance. But the legendary weapon has long been forgotten—except, that is, by the bumbling young apprentice Matthias, who becomes the unlikely hero.

Ruby Holler. Sharon Creech.

"Trouble twins" Dallas and Florida are orphans who have given up believing there is such a thing as a loving home. Tiller and Sairy are an eccentric older couple who live in the beautiful, mysterious Ruby Holler, but they're restless for one more big adventure. When they invite the twins to join them on their journeys, they first must all stay together in the Holler, and the magic of the place takes over. Two pairs of lives grow closer and are changed forever.

Rump: the true story of Rumpelstiltskin. Liesl Shurtliff.

In a magic kingdom where your name is your destiny, 12-year-old Rump is the butt of everyone's joke. But when he finds an old spinning wheel, his luck seems to change. Rump discovers he has a gift for spinning straw into gold. His best friend, Red Riding Hood, warns him that magic is dangerous, and she's right. With each thread he spins, he weaves himself deeper into a curse. To break the spell, Rump must go on a perilous quest, fighting off pixies, trolls, poison apples, and a wickedly foolish queen. The odds are against him, but with courage and friendship—and a cheeky sense of humor—he just might triumph in the end. **E**

Sarah, Plain and Tall. Patricia MacLachlan.

In the late 19th century a widowed midwestern farmer with two children—Anna and Caleb—advertises for a wife. When Sarah arrives she is homesick for Maine, especially for the ocean which she misses greatly. The children fear that she will not stay, and when she goes off to town alone, young Caleb—whose mother died during childbirth—is stricken with the fear that she has gone for good. But she returns with colored pencils to illustrate for them the beauty of Maine, and to explain that, though she misses her home, "the truth of it is I would miss you more." The tale gently explores themes of abandonment, loss and love. **A**

Savvy. Ingrid Law.

Thirteen is when a Beaumont's savvy hits—and with one brother who causes hurricanes and another who creates electricity, Mibs Beaumont is eager to see what she gets. But just before the big day, Poppa is in a terrible accident. And now all Mibs wants is a savvy that will save him. In fact, Mibs is so sure she'll get a powerful savvy that she sneaks a ride to the hospital on a rickety bus with her sibling and the preacher's kids in tow. After this extraordinary adventure—full of talking tattoos and a kidnapping—not a soul on board will ever be the same. **A**

Secret of the Old Clock. Carolyn Keene.

Nancy Drew's keen mind is tested when she searches for a missing will. **A**

Small Steps: the year I got polio. Peg Kehret.

This heartfelt memoir takes readers back to 1949 when the author, at age 12, contracted polio. Using fictionalized dialogue, she describes her seven-month ordeal—her diagnosis and quarantine, her terrifying paralysis, her slow and difficult recuperation—and the people she encountered along the way.

Stargirl. Jerry Spinelli.

"She was homeschooling gone amok." "She was an alien." "Her parents were circus acrobats." These are only a few of the theories concocted to explain Stargirl Caraway, a new 10th grader at Arizona's Mica Area High School who wears pioneer dresses and kimonos to school, strums a ukulele in the cafeteria, laughs when there are no jokes, and dances when there is no music. **E**

Tale of Despereaux. Kate DiCamillo.

The Tale of Despereaux tells the story of several unlikely heroes: Despereaux, a brave mouse banished to the dungeon for speaking with a human; Roscuro, a good-hearted rat who loves light and soup, but is exiled to darkness; Pea, a Princess in a gloomy castle who is prisoner to her father's grief; and Mig, a servant girl who longs to be a Princess, but is forced to serve the jailer. **LP, A, E**

The Trouble with Chickens. Doreen Cronin.

J.J. Tully is a former search-and-rescue dog who is trying to enjoy his retirement after years of performing daring missions saving lives. So he's not terribly impressed when two chicks named Dirt and Sugar (who look like popcorn on legs) and their chicken mom show up demanding his help to find their missing siblings.

Tuesdays at the castle. Jessica Day George.

Every Tuesday Castle Glower takes on a life of its own—magically inventing, moving, and even completely getting rid of some of its rooms. Good thing Princess Celie takes the time to map out these never-ending changes. Because when the castle is ambushed and Celie's parents and oldest brother go missing, it's up to Celie to protect their home and save their kingdom. A great new series that readers will devour!

The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963: a novel. Christopher Paul Curtis.

Enter the hilarious world of ten-year-old Kenny and his family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. There's Momma, Dad, little sister Joetta, and brother Byron, who's thirteen and an "official juvenile delinquent." When Momma and Dad decide it's time for a visit to Grandma, Dad comes home with the amazing Ultra-Glide, and the Watsons set out on a trip like no other. They're heading South to Birmingham, Alabama, toward one of the darkest moments in America's history. **A**

Where the Red Fern Grows. Wilson Rawls.

Billy and his precious coonhound pups romp relentlessly through the Ozarks, trying to "tree" the elusive raccoon. In time, the inseparable trio wins the coveted gold cup in the annual coon-hunt contest, captures the wily ghost coon, and bravely fights with a mountain lion. When the victory over the mountain lion turns to tragedy, Billy grieves, but learns the beautiful old Native American legend of the sacred red fern that grows over the graves of his dogs. **A, E**

Word Eater. Mary Amato.

Life is miserable for sixth-grader Lerner Chansé at her new school, where the MPOOE (Most Powerful Ones on Earth) Club ruthlessly rules over the SLUGs (Sorry Losers Under Ground). Then Lerner accidentally discovers that her pet worm Fip eats paper - with startling results...When he eats a label with the words "Mack's Thumbtacks", all Mack's thumbtacks instantly vanish and papers slip from bulletin boards everywhere! It seems that if Fip eats a word, that item simply disappears from the world - forever. Now that Lerner knows about Fip's magic, she has some extraordinary powers of her own - and some big decisions to make. Should she eliminate crime? Her mean neighbour Bobby Nitz's evil dog? Or simply wipe Cleveland Park Middle School off the face of the earth? Or will destroying anything cause effects that she can't imagine or predict? Lerner soon discovers that extraordinary power brings extraordinary responsibility - but will she learn her lesson in time?

A Wrinkle in Time. Madeleine L'Engle.

Meg Murray, her little brother Charles Wallace, and their mother are having a midnight snack on a dark and stormy night when an unearthly stranger appears at their door. He claims to have been blown off course, and goes on to tell them that there is such a thing as a "tesseract," which, if you didn't know, is a wrinkle in time. Meg's father had been experimenting with a time-travel when he suddenly disappeared. Will Meg, Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin outwit the forces of evil as they search through space for their father? **A**

LP = Large Print

A = Audiobook

DA = Downloadable Audiobook

E = eBook