Summer 2021

Staff Picks for Adults

**Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo**

Alex says:

Told from the perspective of twelve black women that are all somehow connected, *Girl, Woman, Other* takes you on a feminist, intergenerational emotional adventure. This book gives readers a glimpse of the black British experience through the love, pain, joy, and loss each of the characters experience. Evaristo touches on the complexities of problems related to sexual identity, race, socioeconomic class, and abuse but also throws in humor to lighten the mood. Readers walk out from the book with a better sense of community, togetherness, and forgiveness.

**Happiness Becomes You, Tina Turner**

Elke says:

An important self-help book from the singer/performer who has been my idol for many years. Even in her 60s she was strutting her stuff in high heels, a forerunner of today's top female entertainers. Now in her 80s and after a life of parental neglect, abuse by her ex-husband, deep depression, cancer and more, she is still standing and encourages us to find happiness. Her guiding principles are based on Buddhist beliefs using the chant "Nam-myoho-ренge-kyo". The book is sprinkled with beautiful words of wisdom by diverse people and Tina says, "If you find inspiration in my life, then I hope you will remember that you are equally capable of changing poison into medicine in your life, too" and "Life itself is the most precious of treasures." Tina speaks of the human revolution, the revolution of the heart. Try this slim volume, it might help your mental makeup. Listen to all her old songs and watch her shows, but also try listening to something from Beyond Music, the non-profit she founded in 2018. She also suggests humming, since that is the song of the soul. I cannot sing, but I often hum.

**My Brother's Husband, Gengoroh Tagame**

Megan says:

A Japanese family finds their lives disrupted and enriched by the arrival of their estranged relative's Canadian husband. Gengoroh Tagame is one of Japan's most prominent gay cartoonists, and his first foray into mainstream graphic novels is a nuanced exploration of homophobia in Japan and what it truly means to be a family. This is an excellent title for discussion with family members ages preteen and up.

**The Journalist of Castro Street, Andrew Stoner**

Cailín says:

Learn about Aurora’s own Randy Shilts in this relatively new biography of the journalist. Shilts graduated from West High in 1969 and headed West. He eventually landed at the San Francisco Chronicle where he investigated the nascent AIDS epidemic. While writing the critically acclaimed best-seller, *And the Band Played On*, he ran up against an incredible lack of concern surrounding the disease in general and a lack of government action specifically. Sadly, his life was cut short by the disease he wrote so much about. A great read in general but may be of particular interest to fans of local history.
**Summer 2021 Staff Picks for Adults**

**Driving Miss Norma, Tim Bauerschmidt**

Elke says:

A Facebook sensation several years ago, I came across this biography in a reader's advisory meeting and it piqued my interest. A 90-year-old woman, Miss Norma, refuses to undergo cancer treatments and her family, ardent RV campers, asks her if she'd be willing to travel the US with them, i.e. say "yes" to living and enjoy the good life as long as possible. Join Miss Norma and her family on this wonderful road trip through the USA. See how the family manages to get Norma on a rainbow-striped balloon ride that pulls the color from a brilliant sunrise and is the grandest splendor visible in the morning sky. Discover how the Native American connection and the value of community, not only to earthly wealth but to what he believes is the one true and everlasting treasure. Follow the journey of the DJs of Country 16 as they become entangled in the lives of the hunters and the search itself.

**Trouble the Saints, Alaya Dawn Johnson**

Megan says:

Set in an alternate 1940s New York, Trouble the Saints moves through the lives of three characters employed by a notorious mob boss: Dev, the bartender; Tamara, the dancer; and Phyllis, the "angel", whose supernatural skill with knives has made her the perfect mob assassin. This is a tricky work of speculative fiction with characters who are hiding secrets from their coworkers, their lovers and sometimes even themselves. Take your time sinking into this book.

**A Year in Provence, Peter Mayle**

Cailín says:

If you're craving a bit of vicarious living, look for Peter Mayle's books about Provence. His classic work, A Year in Provence, describes his first year in the south of France after moving there permanently from England. The book portrays a host of characters, from neighbors to builders to winemakers to local chefs. It describes a life full of simple pleasures and adapting to the pace of a new culture.

**A Piece of the Moon, Chris Fabry**

Karen says:

What would you do with a million dollars? That's the question listeners of Country 16 are asked as the hunt for eccentric millionaire Gideon Quidley's treasure heats up. Gideon uses clues from the Bible to lead the hunters not only to earthly wealth but to what he believes is the one true and everlasting treasure. Follow the journey of the DJs of Country 16 as they become entangled in the lives of the hunters and the search itself.

**Performances, in New Mexico. Dive into each state's culinary specialties and the impact of social and cultural elements of food. See how authentic and supportive connections with people are fostered over tables and kitchen islands. See how saying 'yes' to kindness offered by total strangers that might be separated by religion, politics, race and age will make the divisions blur and fade until you find the truth in people. If you cannot bear the end (since everything has to come to an end), skip the last two chapters, but even those have their beauty. It was a marvelous ride and as Tim B. said, "I did not rob myself of the opportunity to get to know my mom," a woman who embraced the sublime and absurd, who did not shy away from experience.**
**The Magic Fish, Trung Le Nguyen**

Phoebe says:

It's hard enough trying to communicate with your parents, but Tiêu doesn't even have the right words because his parents are struggling with their English. Is there a Vietnamese word for what he's going through? Instead Tiêu and his mother use stories to communicate. Real life isn't a fairy tale, but it may let them say what they don't have words for. The Magic Fish weaves together the story of Tiêu, a young boy trying to come out, his mother, a Vietnamese immigrant, and fairy tales from both their cultures. This is an absolutely beautiful book, recommended for fans of fairy tales or stories about family.

**You Should See Me in a Crown, Leah Johnson**

Caitlin says:

Liz has spent her high school years trying not to be noticed in her small Indiana town, including keeping her sexuality on the down-low. But after losing out on scholarship money to attend her mother's alma mater, she has no choice but to join the highly competitive race for prom queen to win that $10,000 scholarship. But in her town, prom is everything and the smallest thing may impact her chances. Does she even have a chance at winning? Will she lose out on love with new girl Mack to keep her standing in the race? Fun and full of heart, Liz is a character you'll be rooting for from beginning to end!

**Draw the Line, Laurent Linn**

Phoebe says:

Great book, with lots of complex characters, about learning to stand up and speak up, without making it seem like there is a “right way.” Adrian makes a point of blending into the background. The main way he expresses himself is through drawing his superhero Graphite (who incidentally has the power of invisibility). However, when Adrien witnesses a hate crime, he is not invisible anymore and has to decide if he can be a real life hero as well. Adrien's art and scenes from his comic are interspersed throughout the novel. This book would relate to anyone who has ever felt like an outsider, or that they could not be themselves.

**Notes from the Dog, Gary Paulsen**

Phoebe says:

This is a fun quick read for anyone looking for a summer book with relatable characters. Finn's plan for summer break is to speak to as few people as possible, then Johanna moves in next door. She's ten years older, cool, funny, and she treats Finn as an equal. When she hires Finn to create a garden, he ends up helping her deal with the side effects of her cancer treatment as well. Finn's social anxiety and string of great ideas that turn out to be very very bad, will speak to just about anyone. There are some real feels and complex relationships here, but overall the book stays light, with a good dose of humor and a lot of positive relationships.
**Impostors, Scott Westerfeld**

Karen says:

If you enjoy young adult fiction, this series is for you! It has everything: romance, adventure, mystery, intrigue and suspense! The best part is that the series is already published in its entirety and is waiting for you!

**Displacement, Kiku Hughes**

Phoebe says:

This is a phenomenal graphic novel about a modern day, Japanese American girl, who gets "displaced" through time and ends up in the Japanese internment camps of WWII. The magical elements provide a backdrop that allow Kiku to explore her family's history and her own roots. At the beginning of the story Kiku does not think much about her Japanese heritage, but through her displacement Kiku learns the things that her family lost and gave up, and why. This story is about family, friendship, community, and learning to stand up when something needs to be said. Recommended for anyone who is interested in American history or social justice.

**An Enchantment of Ravens, Margaret Rogerson**

Phoebe says:

When Isobel paints sorrow a portrait of a fairy prince, she gets dragged into the fairy courts where something is seriously wrong. Fairies in this story are tricksters, obsessed with power and appearances, but unable to feel true emotions or create (more Grimm than Disney). The great thing about this book is that humans have the real power. Ingenuity, creativity, and emotional drive have a power that rival magic. If you are looking for something with romance, fantasy, or adventure, this is a good choice.
Summer 2021
Staff Picks for Children

Amari and the Night Brothers, B.B. Alston

Caitlin says: Amari is having a very bad year. Her older brother Quinton is still missing and she was expelled from school for defending herself against a bully. Amari then receives a suitcase from a mysterious man who claims it's from Quinton. From that suitcase, she discovers that our world is full of magical creatures that live among us in secret and that she has been nominated to compete for a junior role within the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. Her mission is to stick around in the competition long enough to find out what happened to her brother. Full of magic, adventure and heart, this book is perfect for fans of Rick Riordan and Kwame McAlia.

Katie the Catsitter, Colleen A.F. Venable

Elke says: Middle graders! You will love this graphic novel in the style of Telgemeier's SMILE. I know you love superheroes and supervillains. In this novel we have an owl guy named THE EASTERN SCREECH. We also have THE MOUSETRESS and her minions. I hope you are a cat lover because there are 217 cats and each cat has a superpower such as computer hacking, YouTube tutorials, robotics, smoke bombs and bath bombs. How did our main character Katie get into all of this? Well, she needed a job to earn money to go to camp with her friends, but nothing worked out until she got the job to cat-sit 217 cats. This is a fast-paced, laugh-out-loud story that teaches you about animal care with 217 cats whose names exemplify their superpowers and know how to "meow" in different languages. It is super fun. #2 in the series will be published in 2022.

Bear Bottom, Stuart Gibbs

Karen says: Another fun, fast-paced adventure and mystery entry in the middle grade series, FunJungle. This can also be read as a standalone. While on vacation in Yellowstone National Park, Teddy and his family encounter one “touron” after another that needs rescuing! As if that’s not enough, a giant bear breaks into the house they are staying in. It’s up to Teddy to find out how the bear got in there! But wait, there’s more! A multi-million dollar necklace goes missing and someone is stealing bison! Can Teddy find the answers to all of these mysteries before a raging bull at the rodeo attacks him and before the cave he’s digging his friends out of collapses on him too?

Before the Ever After, Jacqueline Woodson

Karen says: Stories about concussions and the damage that they cause are becoming more commonplace. There was a time when this serious brain injury was dismissed and thought to cause little difference in the person suffering from one or more. This is the story of ZJ and his father, who is a professional football player until one too many concussions sidelines him for good. ZJ and his parents have to learn to navigate their new reality and together they face the challenges of traumatic brain injury.

Crocodile Rescue, Melissa Christina Marquez

Elke says: The title Crocodile Rescue (Wild Survival #1) suggests a gripping thriller of an animal rescue story, and it’s an adrenaline rush that will get middle graders hooked! Adriana’s parents are wildlife preservationists and are invited to produce a suspenseful TV show about the legendary “Mega Croc” of Cuba. There are some scary scenes during a night dive. The story asks questions like, “Can you be bit by a croc through a scuba suit?”, “What’s an exploratory bite?” and “What’s the difference between an alligator and a crocodile?” Besides the main heart-pounding story you will learn about mangrove trees, poisonous flamingo tongue snails, manatees, cuban rock iguanas, elfin bee hummingbirds, green sea turtles, and more. The author, a Latina marine biologist, demonstrates her love of endangered creatures (even dangerous ones) and describes the habitat of wild animals where we humans are the intruders. The story is a little scary but teaches you to respect nature and gives you tips on how to behave if you encounter a crocodile in the wild. I loved this book and cannot wait until the 2nd book in the series, Swimming with Sharks, comes out since the author is also called “Mother of Sharks.”