FICTION

Citizen: an American Lyric by Claudia Rankine: Finalist for a National Book Award, this long poem in a small and beautiful book published by Graywolf Press is extremely powerful. The combination of prose, poetry, and images provide a realistic perspective of race in our county.

Judith’s pick

A Heart Revealed by Josi S. Kilpack: For all those who enjoy the genre, this regency romance has themes that are still valuable. The writing is very good, and the conflict interesting, as Amber Sterlington, top belle of the season, is publically humiliated and exiled to the country in York by her family with only her maid to attend her. Will she stay the spoiled, haughty girl or grow into an intelligent and kind woman, less concerned with appearances and the social expectations of the Ton? Judith’s pick

I’ll Give You the Sun by Jandy Nelson: Although this young adult novel was published in September of last year, it has recently been gathering attention through awards like the 2015 Michael L. Printz. This story jumps between twins Noah and Jude. Noah tells the story of the early years, and Jude tells the story when they are older. The two different perspectives intertwine beautifully, but what really makes this story stick out is the art involved: Noah’s drawing and Jude’s sculpting. This is a story of grief, love, and family with Nelson’s vivid and passionate prose. I haven’t been in love with a novel like this for a very long time. KayLee’s pick

The Martian by Andy Weir. When I was a child I became separated from my parents in a large store. The protocol for being lost was to stay in one place, but in my panic this was hard to do. (I still feel anxious if I think I have missed connections or cannot find someone I am supposed to meet). It is a good thing astronaut Mark Watney kept his wits about him when he regained consciousness after being injured in a sandstorm on Mars and found that the rest of his Ares mission crew had left the planet without him. Mark’s engineering skills and sheer determination are what keep him going (and a good sense of humor helps, too) as the NASA crew on Earth scramble to devise a rescue plan. Kirkus Reviews calls this book “sharp, funny and thrilling, with just the right amount of geekery”, and I wholeheartedly agree. Beth’s pick

Me Before You by Jojo Moyes: A young woman, Louisa Clark, embarks on a new job caring for wheelchair bound Will Traynor. She is an ordinary young women living an ordinary life, and he is a wealthy man living an active and extraordinary life until his tragic accident. The story provokes the question – what makes life worth living? The movie is in production, scheduled to be released next summer. Davonne’s pick

My Sunshine Away by M.O. Walsh: Lyrical writing and first person narrator Nick – provides a unique perspective on a horrific event. 15 year-old Lindy, the object of obsession of most of the boys in the neighborhood, is raped one night. Four males are suspects, including the narrator. Slowly they are all investigated, and through this we see how the rape effects the entire neighborhood as well as Lindy. Why would anyone want to read about this? The insights, Walsh’s beautiful sentences, and the realistic revelation of the healing necessary- and achieved- by many of the characters compelled me to the end. Judith’s pick
**Nightbirds by Alice Hoffman**: A mixture of mystery and fantasy, lovely imagery, a friendship tale of outsiders finding each other, along with a dose of magic spells and curses propels this tale to a happy ending, encouraging us to embrace our individuality. *Davonne’s pick*

**The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah**: This novel outweighs anything else I have read by Hannah. It tells the story of two French sisters, and how they deal with the struggles of World War II. At first, Vianne and Isabelle seem like two sides of a coin; however, they both find ways to serve in the French underground and then find a way back to each other. The story sticks with historical accuracy and is well detailed, along with bits of romance and social activism which kept me turning the pages. *KayLee’s pick*

**Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward**: Set in the fictional town of Bois Sauvage near the Mississippi coast in the days leading up to and right after Hurricane Katrina, the book tells the story of a dirt poor African American family as they prepare to ride-out the storm. Fifteen-year-old Esch, who views her hardscrabble world through the lens of Greek mythology, narrates her family’s fierce struggle where birth and death are closely aligned. This book won the 2011 National Book Award. *Davonne’s pick*

**Once We Were Brothers by Ronald H. Balson**: In this intriguing perspective of Holocaust survivors, the tale weaves back and forth between contemporary life and World War II. Two brothers survive, and one accuses the other of being a part of the Nazi SS. Ben Solomon, the accuser, urges attorney Catherine Lockhart to take his case, revealing that Otto Platek was abandoned as a child and raised by Solomon’s family only to betray them during the Nazi occupation. Two lives, two worlds sixty years apart are on course to collide in a fast-paced legal thriller. *Audrey’s pick*

**NON-FICTION**

**A Brief History of Everything by Ken Wilber**: is a journey of many topics of current interest and controversy, including the gender wars, modern liberation movements, multiculturalism, ecology and environmental ethics, and the conflict between this-worldly and otherworldly approaches to spirituality. It is an adventure using a question and answer narrative to discuss evolution. Take the journey with your thinking cap on and your curiosity set free...there is no final exam, so you’ll come to know a lot more about “Everything”. *Dwain’s pick*

**Fallen Leaves: Last Words on Life, Love, War, and God by Will Durant (1885-1981)**: Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the Medal of Freedom, Durant is well-known for his eleven volume set chronicling the history of the world titled *The Story of Civilization*. Within this incredible body of work, he strove to report history objectively. However in his nineties, he decided to finish *Fallen Leaves*, a short book he had been working on sporadically expressing his opinions about those big questions: Life, Love, War, God, and the major subtopics within each category. His manuscript was rediscovered thirty years after his death, so we now have these short essays that are succinct pieces of thought refined over 96 years. I found much that was uplifting, and a bit that was off-putting. Even so, I’m glad it was unearthed. There are still pearls from his perspective that are valuable for the 21st century. *Judith’s pick*

**Love Sex and 4-H by Anne-Marie Ooman**: Written by a local author, this memoir is about growing up in the 1960’s in a rural area of Michigan. As Oomen learns how to do a perfect stitch for her 4-H club, she witnesses the unrest and realities of the national social and political scene in America. *Linda’s pick*

**So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed by Jon Ronson**: A significant commentary on a new generation of public shaming, this book is centered around individuals who have been publicly shamed using the power of Twitter and other social media. Some of these people are guilty of the transgressions they have been shamed for. Others were shamed for random (albeit unthoughtful) comments and/or jokes that they had made, not meaning any harm or offense to anyone, but that got blown out of proportion by the masses on social media. I think it is an important read, especially right now, when we are just starting to figure out the consequences of virtual socialization. Sites like Twitter and Facebook give power to an otherwise voiceless faction of our society, and it is important that we learn not to abuse that power. *Amy’s pick*

**What Comes Next and How to Like It: A Memoir by Abigail Thomas**: Such an interesting book! I read the entire thing in a weekend. It is a portrait of an older woman looking back at her life with wit and grace. Thomas writes using a unique, non-chronological structure that works really well, and she has wonderful insights. *Linda’s pick*. 