FICTION

Aviator's Wife by Melanie Benjamin: A vivid historical novel written from the perspective of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife of Charles Lindbergh, and an aviator in her own right. I learned much about Anne's fascinating, and sometimes tragic life, and plan to read books she has written, as well as her letters and diaries. Davonne

Before the Fall by Noah Hawley: A riveting and fast-paced story about a small-engine plane crash with only two survivors -- a man/artist, and a boy who is the son of a billionaire. Accident or sabotage? Interesting characters exhibit familiar personalities similar to well-known celebrities. Davonne

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid: Interjecting surrealism into an uncomfortably realistic chaotic world, Hamid portrays the direct experience of refugees and immigrants striving to maintain emotional connections in the chaos of war-torn cities. Here is just one of many memorable quotes: 'We are all migrants through time.' Davonne

Fierce Kingdom by Gin Phillips: "The zoo is nearly empty as Joan and her four-year-old son soak up the last few moments of play-time. They are happy; the day has been close to perfect. But what Joan sees as she hustles her son toward the exit gate minutes before closing time sends her sprinting back into the zoo, her child in her arms. And for the next three hours-the entire scope of the novel-she keeps on running. A masterful thriller that explores motherhood. Fierce Kingdom asks where the boundary is between our animal instinct to survive and our human duty to protect one another." Kaylee

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles: Shortly after the Russian Revolution begins, a Count is placed under house arrest and lodged in the Metropole Hotel across from the Kremlin. His story takes place from the Revolution to the 1950’s. The Count is always the epitome of a gentleman, treating everyone with respect and kindness. He develops wonderful relationships with hotel employees, as well as guests. It is a great story filled with superb characters. I listened to it on audio and thoroughly enjoyed the reading by Nicholas Guy Smith. Sandi

The Heirs by Susan Rieger: “Thrilling, erudite and compulsively readable”, The Heirs entertains from the first paragraph on, with wonderful pacing and interesting twists and turns. The story of this upper class New York City family is revealed through the eyes of several of the characters as they grieve the death of the father and husband. Their lives are turned upside down when a woman sues the estate claiming she has two sons fathered by the patriarch. I loved how Rieger leads the reader down one path, then ends up revealing that the rationale for a behavior was the opposite of what was initially implied. Judith

Leavers by Lisa Ko – An eleven-year-old boy’s undocumented Chinese immigrant mother disappears from New York one work day not to be found until many years later, having been deported back to China. A white, well-meaning professorial couple adopts the boy, and struggles to insert him into a new life of opportunity. This fictional account rings of authenticity, likely because it is inspired by real people depicted in a 2009 New York Times article written by the author. Davonne

The Rise and Fall of D.O.D.O. by Neal Stephenson and Nicole Galland: A unique book about time travel and the quest to restore magic to the modern day world. The book is written from different points of view through diary entries, letters, emails, chat transcripts, and message boards so it is not a strict narrative which makes it a more interesting read, as well as giving a fuller picture of the organization, though never just spelling it out. Figuring out how everything fits together is half the fun for this book. Talia

The Scribe of Siena by Melodie Winawer: Fans of time travel should enjoy this well-crafted story of Beatrice, a neurosurgeon from New York City who travels to Siena, Italy to settle her brother’s affairs after his untimely death. A medieval historian, her brother had discovered some new information regarding the Plague in Siena in 1348. Along with his house Beatrice inherits his notes, and is compelled to continue his research. What follows is a captivating yarn with murder, suspense, disease, and mutual attraction between the scribe of Siena and a medieval artist who paints religious frescos, as Beatrice goes back in time to try to solve the mystery surrounding her brother’s research. Judith

The Trout by Peter Cunningham: Alex Smythe and his wife Kay grew up and met in Ireland but have lived in Canada for many years. One day Alex receives an envelope in the mail that contains nothing but a fishing fly. Opening that envelope also opens up memories and secrets Alex had long buried, and sets him on a journey through the past to uncover the truth. This is a haunting and poetical novel that weaves suspense and mystery into a story of how childhood trauma can mark a person forever. Beth
NON-FICTION:

*American Fire* by Monica Hesse: This one is for fans of true crime. Accomack County is the eastern most peninsula of Virginia with the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Chesapeake Bay on the other. A hundred years ago, it was one of the richest counties in America. Now it is a place where people struggle to make a living. In 2012, someone started setting fires in abandoned buildings – 67 in all. After more than six months, the arsonists were finally caught. Hesse, a feature reporter for the *Washington Post*, only started covering the story when she went down for the first trial. My husband was a policeman, firefighter, and finally Fire Chief during his 33-year career with the City of Charlevoix, so I clearly identified with the overworked, but deeply committed, volunteer firefighters and policemen. Their lives were hell for that six-month period. This is fast paced book, with lots of dialog and great investigative reporting which falls perfectly under the “truth is stranger than fiction” adage.  

*Judith*

*The Best Land Under Heaven* by Michael Wallis: The Donner party is definitely something that has become more legend than fact over the years. Wallis does a great job of pulling back the myth and exaggeration to create a true portrait of the Donner and Reed parties who were seeking their future in the great American west. Wallis also puts their journey into the context of Manifest Destiny and the feeling from the beginning of westward expansion. Definitely a great read for anyone interested in knowing more about this legendary story or western American history.  

*Talia*

*On Edge: A Journey Through Anxiety* by Andrea Petersen: Anxiety is something that most people seem to struggle with, even if they don’t recognize it as such. Andrea Petersen describes how anxiety works and affects the body and the brain as well as how to treat and overcome it. She is able to weave her personal experiences and troubles through all this in a compelling way. She also looks at the role of genetics as well as the different, and ineffective, ways anxiety has been treated in the past. This is a must read for anyone suffering from anxiety, thinking they suffer from anxiety, or knowing someone affected by it.  

*Talia*

*Option B* by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant: This is fast paced book, with lots of dialog and great investigative reporting. Sheryl Sandberg lost her husband suddenly while on vacation in Mexico. The book chronicles the journey of her acute grief and her path to strength, growth, and resiliency. Sharing her personal story interspersed with research, she does a beautiful job of showing that hope does exist. As someone who has experienced a sudden loss of a spouse, I found this book especially helpful.  

*Linda*

*The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America’s Shining Women* by Kate Moore: A fascinating story from the early 20th century where radium was treated very much like a miracle element. In factories, girls used radium to paint clock dials that would glow in the dark. Unfortunately for them, it was a time when very little was understood how radium affects your body and the very real harm it could cause. This book follows their story of suffering and fighting the companies that denied the truth of radium. You will root for these girls all the way to the end.  

*Talia*

*Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power* by Noam Chomsky: An extension of the information discussed in the documentary film of the same name that came out in 2015, this book, like the film, deals bluntly with the subject of income inequality, casting a clear, cold, patient eye on the economic facts of contemporary American life. Chomsky also discusses “the utopian ideology of neoliberalism, the absurd idea that markets should dictate all aspects of human society” (Chris Hedges) It inspires action. Chomsky, a MIT professor for fifty years, and currently Institute Professor Emeritus in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, has a valuable historical perspective that adds strength to his analysis of what needs to be done to deal with 21st century problems. This is not an academic slog, but rather a concise, succinct record of the ideas presented in the film.  

*Judith*