Staff Picks

Winter 2019

FICTION:

Charms for the Easy Life by Kaye Gibbons: This is my go-to book whenever I want to feel empowered and want to embrace life. I’ve read it several times over the years. The story follows three generations of women in the same family as they face the challenges of the backwoods in North Carolina, WWII, loves and losses. It speaks to the strength of women and entertains with passionate and quirky characters. - Linda

Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng: Intriguing depictions of the intense and volatile relationships between parents and children, siblings and friends; a microcosm of society. - Davonne

The Dinner List by Rebecca Serle: I picked up this book for light reading before bedtime because I was intrigued by its premise: In her junior year of college, Sabrina’s best friend and roommate, Jessica, challenged her to come up with a list of five people, living or dead, with whom she would like to share a meal. Years later, on her 30th birthday, Sabrina walks into a restaurant to have dinner with Jessica and finds not just her friend, but the other four people who had been on her list. As the dinner progresses from appetizers through dessert, it becomes clear that there’s a reason these six people have been gathered together. The dinner conversation alternates with chapters that detail Sabrina’s relationship to the five guests and ultimately is more than just light reading but a bittersweet tale of love, loss, and living with the memories. - Beth

Beauty Sleep and Sunlight and Shadow by Cameron Dokey: Clever and fast-paced re-tellings of the folk tales Sleeping Beauty and The Magic Flute. Enjoyable timeless tales. - Davonne

Time’s Convert by Deborah Harkness: In this book which is an adjunct to, but not officially part of, the “All-Souls Trilogy”, we continue to discover the vampire/witch/fae world - this time on the battlefields of the American Revolution, where vampire Matthew de Clermont meets Marcus MacNeil, a young surgeon from Massachusetts. Readers of the previous three books (A Discovery of Witches, 2011; Shadow of Night, 2012; The Book of Life, 2014) will recognize most of the players here, as well as a few of the vignettes as the story moves from the 18th century to present day where Marcus - now a vampire himself - is engaged to a human named Phoebe Taylor who undergoes the transformation to vampire as part of her journey to the altar. Imaginative read with some thought-provoking ruminations on the nature of choices. - Sara

Mr. Rochester by Sarah Shoemaker: For enthusiasts of Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte, this narrative from the perspective of Edward Rochester provides background details about his character, and his mysterious, complicated past. - Davonne
Non-Fiction:

Modoc by Ralph Helfer: Spanning several decades and three continents, this is one of the most amazing true animal stories ever told. Raised together in a small German circus town, a boy and an elephant formed a bond that would last their entire lives, and would be tested time and again; through a near-fatal shipwreck in the Indian Ocean, an apprenticeship with the legendary Mahout elephant trainers in the Indian teak forests, and their eventual rise to circus stardom in 1940s New York City. **This book was recommended by a co-worker 13 years ago when I first started working at CPL and it remains at the top of my list since. Warning! Keep tissues nearby...** - Rebecca

The Library Book by Susan Orlean: This book tells the story of the 1986 fire that damaged or destroyed 700,000 books in the Los Angeles Central Library and evolves into an enlightening history of the impact books and libraries (large and small) have had throughout time. In telling the story of this one library, Orlean reminds us of the spirit of all libraries and their mission to welcome and equalize; to appreciate and be appreciated. - Sara

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson: After recently reading the autobiography of Anthony Ray Hinton in The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row, I felt compelled to read about Bryan Stevenson, who worked on Hinton's case as well as many others. Stevenson's tireless efforts to fix our broken justice system through his Equal Justice Initiative, are inspiring. - Davonne

Harry, A History: by Melissa Anelli: A look-back at the Harry Potter phenomenon during its heyday through the eyes of Anelli, webmistress of the official Harry Potter fan site, The Leaky Cauldron. Enjoyable. - Carrie

Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania by Erik Larson: A riveting account of the events leading up to, including, and the aftermath of the sinking of the Lusitania, including individual accounts of people involved in the sinking as well as leaders during World War I. - Davonne

Leadership in Turbulent Times by Doris Kearns Goodwin: With her psychoanalytic approach to biography, Goodwin looks at Lyndon Johnson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and Theodore Roosevelt throughout their lives on the path to the Presidency. Fascinating look at decision-making theories as well as how great leaders are made. - Sara

Craig & Fred: A Marine, A Stray Dog, and How They Rescued Each Other by Craig Grossi: Craig's writing invites you in. He brings you along his life journey. Craig met Fred on his tour in Afghanistan and miraculously was able to bring him back to America. After his time as a Marine in the war, he took a road trip all over America with another Veteran and Fred. This memoir is gritty, real and enjoyable. - Laura