Fiction:

Before We Were Yours by Lisa Wingate: Telling the story of the Foss family in the 1930s and the Stafford family in present day, this book chronicles the effects of a common practice by the Tennessee Children's Home Society (1930-50’s) of stealing poor children and selling them to wealthy families. They claimed to be helping orphaned children, but it was actually human trafficking. Wingate is a master storyteller and the book takes you right into the world of the two families. I was so absorbed in their story, I didn’t put the book down until I finished it. Based on similar true events, but the details are fiction. – Linda

Transcription by Kate Atkinson: I have been a fan of this author since reading “Life after Life” a few years ago. In her newest novel Atkinson returns to the theme of London during the second world war, but follows her protagonist, a young woman named Juliet who was recruited by MI-5, through the post-war years. It seems that once you are a spy, your life may never again be your own. What was Juliet’s true involvement during the war—and after? These are the questions posed in this beautifully crafted and intriguing book. - Beth

Washington Black by Esi Edugyan: George Washington Black is an 11yr old field slave in 1830 on a Barbados sugar plantation when he is chosen as a manservant to his master’s brother. The eccentric Christopher Wilde turns out to be a naturalist, explorer, inventor, and abolitionist. Because of a murder, "Wash" and Christopher must abandon everything. What follows is an extraordinary adventure of a life - including hot air balloons, voyage by ship, a remote outpost in the Arctic, and the deserts of Morocco. Wash even falls in love in this amazing story of adventure, betrayal, love, and redemption. An interesting sideline is finding out who his mother really is. - Pam

Bird Box by Josh Malerman: Of course, I had to read the book before watching the Netflix movie, and (as expected) the book provides much more plot detail and intricate character development than the movie. Told through flashbacks during three time periods and full of suspense and tension, Malorie, while blind-folded, strives to transport her children to safety while evading post-apocalyptic predators. - Davonne

Warlight by Michael Ondaatje: Another fine novel that takes place in the shadow of WWII in England, this is a story of secrets and loss. In 1945 the parents of 14 year-old Nathaniel and his older sister Rachel announce they are going away for a year and the siblings will be left in the care of a strange acquaintance the teens call The Moth. Is The Moth a criminal, as the children speculate? And what about the other unusual ‘friends’ who enter their lives in the absence of their parents (that stretches on for years)? ‘Contemplative’, ‘mysterious’, and ‘mesmerizing’ are just a few of the words used to describe this coming-of-age story about secrets and how they can affect lives—for a lifetime. - Beth

Challenger Deep by Neal Shusterman, Jarrod Shusterman: A fascinating depiction of mental illness experienced from the viewpoint of Caden Bosch, who feels caught between two worlds; that of a brilliant high-school student whose friends notice odd behavior, and also as an artist on a ship headed for the dangerous, deepest known part of the earth, Challenger Deep. Which world will Caden choose? A 2015 National Book Award winner for Young People's Literature. - Davonne
**NON-FICION**

*Enlightenment Now* by Steven Pinker: What is the "real" state of today's world? Is the ideal of a better world just so much talk? Steven Pinker replaces cynical headlines with long term, scientific based facts and trends that push us toward a much more dynamic future of predictability and opportunity - if we as a society choose to follow the direction of Enlightenment. In seventy-five concise graphs and accompanying statistical breakdowns, Pinker shows that life, health, prosperity, safety, peace, knowledge, and happiness are on the rise everywhere. And not just because he "says" so, but because of the research and information he has collected shows it so. The Enlightenment, we now know, has worked. With confidence, verbal acuity and understanding, *Enlightenment Now* is a source of reason, science, and humanism: the tools of progress and the "manifest" of dreams as old as humanity itself - that can be our future. - **Dwain**

*Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Anger* by Rebecca Traister: Traister, a political journalist, explores societal perceptions which judge men’s anger in a more positive, significant light than when assessing women’s anger. The author outlines the history of women’s anger in achieving political influence, such as the suffragette movement, and discusses its role in the current political climate. An enlightening study of interest to all humans who experience and express this emotion. - **Davonne**

*Inner Life of Animals: Love, Grief, and Compassion—Surprising Observations of a Hidden World* by Peter Wohlleben: The second book in The Mysteries of Nature Trilogy explores the idea that animals experience what people consider to be human emotions. Many of us who have observed our pets are not completely surprised about these findings, yet are probably not aware of the depth and similarities to our human experience. (I previously recommended the first in the series: *The Hidden Life of Trees.*) - **Davonne**

*God: A Human History* by Reza Aslan: In an overwhelming attempt to understand how God has evolved through the ages, this book takes us from cave art to monotheism. It lays some foundation for the influences of history, politics, and spirituality on our multi-faceted understanding of God today. The author, Dr. Aslan is currently professor of at the University of California, Riverside, with a joint appointment in the departments of religion and creative writing. - **Linda**

*The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century* by Kirk W. Johnson: Proving that "truth is stranger than fiction", this true account of a 2009 Tring Natural Museum (UK) burglary and all the resultant ripples reads like a novel. An amateur fly tyer and musician, Edwin Rist stole hundreds of skins (feathers) of rare and extinct birds in hopes of profit as well as to fulfill a “recipe” for a complicated salmon fishing fly-tie. The low-tech, almost naïve, ease with which he took the 299 skins is interesting in itself and you do not need to be a fisherman to enjoy this story. What happens during the criminal investigation as well as the multi-layered, fascinating world of rare feathers keeps the book moving forward at a brisk pace. Fun. - **Sara**