GREAT BOOKS TO READ

Recommended by the Academic Success Center
Niagara University

“I can hardly wait for the day that I shall be able to comb through the books in a public library.”
in The Diary of Anne Frank by Anne Frank, p. 178,
written April 6, 1944, after 22 months in hiding.

* indicates that the book is available in the Niagara University Library

FICTION

* Adams, Richard. Watership Down. A wonderfully entertaining adventure story about rabbits who act a great deal like people. The plot may sound unlikely, but it will keep you on the edge of your seat.


* Albom, Mitch. The Five People You Meet in Heaven. A man dies and confronts five people in heaven who help him to understand and be at peace with himself.

Alexie, Sherman. Flight. A fifteen-year-old Native American boy, orphaned and in and out of foster homes, struggles with his identity. As he is about to commit a terrible act of violence, he travels back in time. His “visits” to earlier historical periods enables him to figure out who he is.

Andrews, V.C. Heart Song. Melody Logan’s mother dies in a car accident and she goes to live with wealthy relatives on Cape Cod. Her aunt sees her as a replacement for her dead daughter, and her uncle sees her as a reminder of shameful secrets.

Anthony, Piers. Xone of Contention. Breanna of the Black Wave and her new love, Justin Tree, seek to save the enchanted land of Xanth from a massive climatic meltdown. With Nimby and Chlorine, they use the 0-Xone computer to exchange bodies with a couple from Earth and make the dangerous journey into the mists of the past to save Xanth.

* Arnow, Harriette. The Dollmaker. A touching novel about an artistic woman from rural Kentucky, whose life radically changes when she, her husband and their 5 children move to Detroit in the 1930’s.
* Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale.* A chilling account of what the United States might be like if ultra-conservative religious fanatics were in control.

* Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility.* Elinor, who cannot live her life without reason and logic, falls in love with a man who is already engaged. Marianne, who rules the world with passion, falls for a womanizer.

Baldwin, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk.* A young African-American couple struggles because he was convicted of a crime that he didn't commit.

Bannerjee, Anjali. *Imaginary Men.* In an effort to please her parents, Lina Ray, born in India and raised in Francisco, weaves an imaginary fiancé. This story depicts how she tries to fit the perfect guy into her imaginary man.

Belfer, Lauren. *City of Light.* Buffalo native Lauren Belfer creates a suspenseful story set in Buffalo, New York in 1901, as the Pan-American Exposition is about to start and as electricity is beginning to be generated from Niagara Falls. She cleverly blends fictitious characters with actual historical figures.

Berry, Steve. *The Templar Legacy.* This is a thriller for those who enjoyed *The DaVinci Code.*

* Boyle, T. Coraghessan. *The Tortilla Curtain.* Two worlds unexpectedly collide: the world of Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher, who live a comfortable life in a gated community near Los Angeles, and the world of Candido Rincon and his pregnant wife America, who are illegal Mexican immigrants, homeless and living in a nearby canyon, barely eking out an existence from occasional day labor. The collision ends tragically.

* Brown, Dan. *Angels and Demons.* Symbologist Robert Langdon attempts to uncover the plans of a historic underground organization that plans to bomb Vatican City.

Brown, Dan. *The DaVinci Code.* A suspenseful novel that deals with paintings by Leonardo DaVinci and two people’s journey to find the truth about Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Brown, David H. *The Elusive Chauffeur.* In the mood for a good mystery? A wealthy businesswoman is found dead in her bedroom. Was it a suicide? Or murder? (Author David Brown is the father of NU Math professor Marlo Brown.)

Cary, Lorene. *The Price of a Child.* In 1855, a Virginia slave walks away from her master while on a trip to Philadelphia. Aided by a group willing to help former slaves, she wins freedom but her price is one of her children.

* Cather, Willa. *My Antonia.* No other American writer has written so beautifully and honestly about the experiences of the immigrants who settled the vast prairies of the Midwest. A man recalls his childhood growing up in the nineteenth century on the Midwestern plains, where the harsh winter can wipe out a whole family as easily as the crops.

Clancy, Tom. *Patriot Games.* In a story of thrills & suspense, a US government agent helps stop an act of terrorism. The terrorists then plot revenge on the agent and his family.

Clark, Mary Higgins. *The Cradle Will Fall.* A country prosecutor uncovers evidence that a famous doctor is killing women, not realizing that she herself is becoming his next target. (If you like novels with terror and suspense, many of Mary Higgins Clark's books are good choices.)

Clark, Mary Higgins. *You Belong To Me.* A listener calls in to Dr. Susan Chandler’s radio show with information on the mysterious disappearance of a woman from a luxury ocean liner. As Susan investigates, an assassin kills people who offer her clues.
Clarkson, John. *And Justice for One*. In this adventure thriller, a former Secret Service agent seeks revenge after his brother is almost killed and his lady friend is kidnapped. Because of corruption in the police force, the agent must take the law into his own hands. One review describes the book as "Supercharged! ...A constant stream of action... Dark, sexy, tough, & fast."

* Cleage, Pearl. *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*. After living in the “fast lane” in Atlanta for ten years, Ava Johnson, now HIV positive, sells her house and leaves for a short visit with her sister in rural northern Michigan. There she unexpectedly finds love and a new direction in her life.

* Cleave, Chris. *Little Bee*. In an attempt to patch up their marriage, Londoners Sarah and Andrew O’Rourke take a sudden vacation to a beach resort in Nigeria. They are unwittingly exposed to horrible violence in this oil-rich nation when they meet a 14-year-old Nigerian girl who will change their lives.

* Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One*. In this science-fiction novel set in 2045, teenager Wade Watts escapes his miserable life, via virtual reality, to OASIS. He is on a quest to solve a puzzle with a very tempting prize at the end. In 2018, Steven Spielberg made a film based on this book.

* Childress, Alice. *Like One of the Family*. This book was controversial when it was published in 1956. At a time when domestic work was one of the few occupations open to Black women, Childress described a feisty Black woman domestic through conversations with her neighbor & friend.

Cochrane, Mick. *Sport*. An adolescent boy with a turbulent life – his father drinks too much and moves out, his mother is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and his older brother disdains him and their family’s struggles – is befriended by his baseball coach.

* Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace*. David Lurie, professor of communication in Cape Town, suffers disgrace when he is dismissed for having an affair with a much younger student and when his daughter is raped. He also learns about relations between whites and blacks in post-apartheid South Africa.

Comier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*. This is a wonderful tale about a young boy's trials when he is the new kid on the block at a private boys' school.

Cunningham, Laura. *Sleeping Arrangements*. This is the wonderfully rich story Lily, whose mother died when she was 8. She is raised by 2 uncles in a most unconventional but loving Bronx household.

Danticat, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. At 12, Sophie Caco is sent from her poor village in Haiti to be reunited with her mother in New York City. There she discovers the secrets of her family and of a tradition among Haitian mothers and daughters that scars young women for life.

Daswani, Kavita. *The Village Bride of Beverly Hills*. This romantic novel give you an inside perspective on an Indian woman in an arranged marriage who immigrated to the US.


Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *One Amazing Thing*. Nine people in an American passport office – two employees and seven travelers heading to India – become trapped when an earthquake damages the building. To calm their fears and pass the time until they are found, they tell each other stories about their lives, the very stories that brought them to this office.

* Dove, Rita. *The Darker Face of the Earth*. This verse play, based on the story of Oedipus, is set on a plantation in ante-bellum South Carolina, it gives a moving insight into slavery.

Esquivel, Laura. **Like Water for Chocolate.** In turn-of-the-century Mexico, Tita falls in love with Pedro, but Pedro marries her sister. Will they even be together? This novel, sprinkled with elements of fantasy as well as numerous recipes, will keep you in suspense.

Fergus, Jim. **One Thousand White Women.** This fictional book is May Dodd’s lively diary of her life among the Native Americans as a participant in a “Brides for Indians” program. In 1875, a US government program offered white (and some black) women full pardons or unconditional releases from jails, mental institutions and debtors’ prisons if they would marry Cheyenne warriors, live with them for at least two years, and bear their child.

* Foer, Jonathan Safran. **Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.** Nine-year-old Oskar Schell is on a quest to unlock a mystery related to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Follett, Ken. **Eye of the Needle.** A thriller about a Nazi spy - “The Needle” - & the woman who is the only person who can stop him.

* Golden, Arthur. **Memoirs of a Geisha.** This finely detailed novel describes the life of a famous geisha in pre-World War II Japan. It paints a vivid picture of Japan, while exposing women’s very limited roles.

* Golding, William. **Lord of the Flies.** Can a group of children, none over 12, survive by themselves on a tropical island in the midst of a world war? In this modern classic, Golding shows us that the real danger is not the war outside but "the beast" within us.

* Gregory, Philippa. **The Other Boleyn Girl.** Two sisters, Anne and Mary, contend for the affection of King Henry VIII. The story describes Mary Boleyn and her life trying to escape her horrible family.

Greene, Bette. **The Drowning of Stephen Jones.** 16-year-old Carla falls for handsome Andy Harris, whose irrational homophobia results in a terrible tragedy that changes Carla.

* Haddon, Mark. **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.** Fifteen-year-old Christopher is an autistic teen who, while trying to unravel the mysterious murder of a neighbor’s dog, also uncovers lies about his parents’ marriage.

* Hamilton, Jane. **A Map of the World.** Alice Goodwin’s life is turned upside down when the two-year-old daughter of her best friend drowns at her farm and when a child at the school where she works as a nurse accuses her of sexual harassment.

* Harper, M. A. **The Worst Day of My Life, So Far.** Jeanne Roth is a middle-aged woman caring for her mother who has Alzheimer’s disease, in a small Louisiana town. The story, told with humor, revolves around family relationships and memories.

* Harris, Thomas. **The Silence of the Lambs.** A psychotic killer is on the loose, and the FBI must rely upon the information provided by an evil genius to try to find him. Like some other books on this list, although this was made into a movie, it is not as good as the book.

Hartnett, Sonya. **Sleeping Dogs.** This young Australian author offers a fascinating but deeply disturbing look at family abuse, incest, and violence.

* Hawthorne, Nathaniel. **The Scarlet Letter.** Follow the difficult yet surprising life that Hester must lead as a result of her open sin.

* Hazelwood, Robin. **Model Student.** Emily Woods tries desperately to balance a hectic schedule as a freshman at Columbia University and as a New York City model. Then she has to make an important decision: modeling or Columbia?
* Heller, Joseph. **Catch 22.** The craziness of our culture - specifically, of war and the military - is precisely captured in this landmark novel. Once you get past the first 50 or so pages, you cannot stop reading it.

* Hemingway, Earnest. **For Whom the Bells Toll.** An American joins the anti-Fascist resistance in the Spanish Civil War. He falls in love and suddenly has something to love for, but will he survive the next mission, the most dangerous yet?

* Hemingway, Earnest. **The Old Man and the Sea.** One of Hemingway's most popular works, this short novel details the story of an old fisherman and his battle with a giant marlin.

* Herbert, Frank. **Dune.** In the science-fiction classic, Paul Atreides fights to regain his lost kingdom on a strange desert planet with warring factions, giant sandworms, and a magical spice.

Hoffman, Alice. **At Risk.** A vibrant eleven-year-old girl contracts AIDS, and her parents, brother, and community members come to terms with her fatal illness.

Hoffman, Alice. **Here on Earth.** March Murray and her fifteen-year-old daughter return to the small New England town where she grew up to attend a funeral. She returns to the world of her past, including a man on whom she once had a crush but who is now controlling and abusive.

* Hosseini, Khaled. **The Kite Runner.** Amir is the son of a wealthy businessman, and his childhood playmate, Hassan is the son of their house servant. But one day Amir betrays Hassan, a decision that haunts him into adulthood. This novel reveals much about life in pre- and post-war Afghanistan.

Hughes, Langston. **Tambourines to Glory.** Friends Essie and Laura discover that they can profit from the religious fervor of poor people in Harlem. One of these women is deeply religious, while the other is concerned only with preying on poor people.

* Hurston, Zora Neale. **Their Eyes Were Watching God.** This Black woman's novel, a product of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's, joyously affirms the lives of Blacks in rural Florida.

* Huxley, Aldous. **Brave New World.** In a futuristic society, science has virtually eliminated disease and illness and conquered technology. This book warns how society may be affected if this vision is created.

* Irving, John. **The World According to Garp.** A woman, not interested in a relationship with a man, has a child with a dying soldier so she won't have to “endure” having to deal with the father. This book is the life story of Garp, the child she bears and raises to be an eccentric and amusing adult.

Kamara, Mariatu, with Susan McClelland. **The Bite of the Mango.** Mariatu was just 12 when rebels attacked her Sierra Leone village and cut off her hands. She managed to survive, eventually living in a refugee camp and begging in the streets. After journalists wrote about Mariatu and other victims of brutal violence, a Canadian family heard about her plight and made it possible for her to immigrate to Canada.

* Keyes, Daniel. **Flowers for Algernon.** A scientific experiment turns a retarded man into a genius, but the results are a mixture of joy & heartbreak.

Khashoggi, Soheir. **Mirage.** Amira, a young woman in the Middle East, marries a wealthy prince. However, she quickly learns how oppressive her culture is to girls and women. Her husband's male dominance leads to such horrific abuse that she flees her country to save her life and that of her infant son.

* Kidd, Sue Monk. **The Secret Life of Bees.** It’s 1964, and fourteen-year-old Lily Owens yearns for her mother, who was killed ten years earlier. Amidst the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, Lily finds comfort and love among African-American women.
* Kincaid, Jamaica. **Annie John.** Annie, an adolescent growing up surrounded by love and doted on by a devoted mother, struggles with the growing up and growing away that so many teens struggle with, even if it means displeasing the mother who loves her so.

Kincaid, Jamaica. **Lucy.** A 19-year-old woman from the West Indies moves in with an affluent American family to care for their children. During this year, she struggles with her feelings for her own mother, & she discovers her sexuality.

King, Stephen. **Pet Semetary** and **Christine.** Through his fiction, Stephen King stimulates his readers to think about controversial issues.

* King, Stephen. **Bag of Bones.** After the death of his wife, Mike Noonan returns to a Maine summerhouse to find ghosts on the lake, haunting secrets, and an innocent child caught in a dramatic struggles.

King, Stephen. **The Shining.** A haunted hotel, a little boy with ESP and a deranged father - they're all together in a horror tale of isolation & insanity.

* Kline, Christina Baker. **Orphan Train.** Between 1854-1929, so-called orphan trains transported more than 200,000 orphaned, abandoned, and homeless children to the Midwest for “adoption.” Some children found loving families but many were used almost like indentured servants. In this novel, 17-year-old foster child Molly develops an unlikely friendship with a 91-year-old Vivian, who was an orphan train child decades ago. Gradually, Vivian reveals her past to Molly – and comes to terms with it herself.

* Knowles, John. **A Separate Peace.** Two schoolboys enjoy a close friendship until one grows jealous of the other's many talents - & tragedy results.

Koontz, Dean. **Velocity.** In this mystery-thriller, a man is hunted down by a killer who can’t see.

Koontz, Dean. **Watchers.** An incredibly suspenseful story about a dog that undergoes lab experiments. It becomes a monster programmed to kill, and seeks to track down the couple that knows its secret.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. **The Namesake.** The Ganguli family, immigrants from Calcutta, tries to adjust to life in the U.S. while pining for home. They give a special name to their firstborn son, which causes him conflicts into adulthood.

* Lalami, Laila. **Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits.** Four Muslims illegally cross the Strait of Gibraltar in an inflatable boat headed for Spain. This novel explores the reasons, such as unemployment and abusive relationships, which drive them to take such a risk to improve their lives.

* Lamb, Wally. **She's Come Undone.** Dolores Price is robbed of her childhood at 13, plops in front of the TV and eats junk food until she weighs 257 pounds. This coming-of-age odyssey takes the reader through her next 25 years of tragedies, imperfections, and humorous situations.

L’Amour, Louis. **The Haunted Mesa.** Mike Raglan is called to a Southwestern desert plateau to find out why the Anasazi, a race of cliff-dwelling Indians, suddenly disappeared from the area.

Lee, Gus. **Honor and Duty.** A cadet at West Point who is not accepted because of his race is asked to infiltrate a cheating scandal. The book's themes are respecting one's elders, honor, and duty.

* Lee, Harper. **To Kill a Mockingbird.** A controversial trial involving a Black man falsely accused of raping a white woman is the centerpiece of this story about adolescence.
Letts, Billie. *Where the Heart Is*. Seventeen and pregnant, Novalee Nation is secretly living in a Wal-Mart in Oklahoma, with less than $10 to her name. She discovers a group of caring people willing to help a homeless pregnant teen.


* Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*. An aging player makes a comeback that stuns the baseball world. (The movie version of this novel was filmed in Buffalo's old War Memorial Stadium.)

* Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The rise and fall of the village of Macondo unfolds through the history of the Buendia family. Colonel Buendia, a man accused of murder, founded the town and later his house is haunted by the man he killed. The family endures civil wars and heartbreaks as the story is told with magical realism.

Mathis, Ayana. *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*. Like many African Americans in the early 20th century, Hattie Shepard moved from the south (Georgia) to the north (Philadelphia). Sadly, she lost her first two children, twins, to a preventable disease, and her husband was never a good provider or supporter. She had nine more children, and this book weaves together their stories as they move into adulthood.

* McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. This is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, “each the other’s world entire,” are sustained by love.

* McDermott, Alice. *Charming Billy*. Billy Lynch has just died from alcoholism. A gathering of his family and friends in a Bronx bar for his funeral breakfast provides the opportunity for them to reminisce about his lost love from years earlier and a lie told by his cousin and close friend Dennis, both of which affected the rest of Billy's life.

McMillan, Terry. *Waiting to Exhale*. Four thirty-something Black women hope that Mr. Right will appear, but that doesn't stop them from living their lives. One reviewer notes that McMillan "has such a wonderful ear for story & dialogue. She gives us four women with raw, honest emotions that breathe off the page."

Mengestu, Dinaw. *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. Sepha Stephanos immigrated to the US from Ethiopia 17 years earlier, after his father was murdered in a violent government takeover. His little grocery shop barely provides a living, he lives alone in a poor Washington DC neighborhood, and he seems to have little to look forward to. His only connections are with his two friends Joseph and Kenneth, immigrants from other African nations – until Judith and her 11-year-old daughter Naomi move in next-door. As the neighborhood faces “gentrification,” residents resist and Sepha faces an awakening.


Miller, Frank. *Batman: The Dark Night Returns*. A well-written, well-illustrated graphic novel that’s riveting because of its noir spin on a classic character.


* Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. The unforgettable characters and places in this book - Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, Tara - have become part of our culture.

* Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. A poignant and riveting account of the lengths to which Black slave women might resort to keep their children from facing a life of slavery.
* Morrison, Toni.  *Sula*.  Sula and Nel have been best friends since they were 12, sharing their secrets and feelings as they grew up in the Bottom, a poor section of a small Ohio town.  Sula leaves for ten years and then returns to find her friend has married and accepted conditions that before she spoke against.  Sula, however, cannot accept this and the people fear her, yet need her help.

* Morrison, Toni.  *The Bluest Eye*. Eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove is a Black child in an America whose love for its blond, blue-eyed children can devastate all others. This is the story of the nightmare at the heart of her yearning and the tragedy of its fulfillment.

Moyes, Jojo.  *Me before You*.  Louisa Clark, 26, lives at home and helps support her working-class family. After losing her job, she accepts a position as a caregiver to wealthy 35-year-old quadriplegic Will Traynor. When Louisa learns that Will plans to commit suicide, she sets out to change his attitude.  In the process, she changes in ways that she could not have expected.

* Naylor, Gloria.  *The Women of Brewster Place*. Even if you saw the made-for-television movie, be sure to read the novel. Naylor's characterizations come to life on the page.

Nesbit, TaraShea.  *The Wives of Los Alamos*. In 1943 when top scientists were brought to the New Mexico desert to develop the atomic bomb, their wives and families accompanied them. This novel describes the daily lives of these women who knew little or nothing of what their husbands were working on. Strangers at first, they formed a community in the shadow of the “most monumental research” in modern history.

O’Brien, Tim.  *In the Lake of the Woods*. Veteran John Wade has just lost an important political primary, and his wife has disappeared.  Are these events connected to the secret that the press has uncovered about John’s stint in the Vietnam War?


* Okada, John.  *No No Boy*. Ichiro, a post-World War II era Japanese-American male, struggles with his identity in American society. He served time in internment camps and refused to fight the war against his own people and Japan. This novel discusses the torn identity he felt being ostracized by both Americans and Japanese.

* Oliver, Lauren.  *The Delirium series*. Lena lives in a society where love has been outlawed. She always follows the rules until she meets a boy named Alex.

* Orwell, George.  *1984*. A futuristic vision of a society totally controlled by the government, written in 1949. Especially interesting to read since the year 1984 has passed.

Otsuka, Julie.  *When the Emperor Was Divine*. The author reveals how life in a Japanese internment camp in Utah during World War II affects a woman and her two young children -- and how they yearn for the father, who was arrested after Pearl Harbor simply for being Japanese.

* Pamuk, Orhan.  *Snow*. An exiled poet returns to Turkey and travels to a forlorn city. His ostensible purpose is to report on a wave of suicides among religious girls forbidden to wear their head-scarves.  But he is also drawn by his memories of the radiant Ipek, now recently divorced.

Parker, Robert B.  *Early Autumn*. A boy is a victim in a bitter divorce struggle between his parents. A private eye named Spencer, who is the hero of many of Parker's books, takes the boy into the Maine woods to give the frail fifteen-year-old a crash course in survival.
Peck, Robert Newton. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. A boy raises a pig that is intelligent and affectionate. Will the boy follow orders and send the animal off to be slaughtered? The author has beautifully written this story of a young boy's journey to manhood.

Preston, Douglas, and Child, Lincoln. *Brimstone*. A chilling mystery beginning in New York City and following Sergeant D’Agosta and the mysterious Agent Pendergast as far as Italy in search of the answer to the question: Could the apocalypse really be starting in New York City?

* Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*. This is a fantasy tale of a young girl thrown into a dangerous and exhilarating adventure filled with mystery, intrigue, and vivid emotion.

* Quindlen, Anna. *One True Thing*. 24-year-old Ellen Gulden returns home to care for her mother, who is dying of cancer, and whom she thought she knew so well. This is a compelling novel about family relationships, life choices, and mercy killing.

* Quindlen, Anna. *Black and Blue*. For 18 years, Fran Benedetto kept her secret. How could she and her 10-year-old son manage to escape the brutal abuse of her police-officer husband? And how would escape alter their lives?


Roth, Philip. *Everyman*. This short novel depicts the human demise – growing old, having serious health problems, and facing death after a vigorous adulthood.

* Roth, Philip. *Goodbye, Columbus*. The funny title story in this collection is about a poor boy, a rich girl, & their ill-fated love affair.

* Roth, Veronica. *The Divergent series*. This is a girl living in a society split into factions. She needs to find her place, but she realizes she may be too different to fit in.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter books*. Not just for children, these books are part adventure, part mystery, and part magic. They are incredibly well written and highly addictive.

* Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. The frustrations & turmoil of being an adolescent have never been captured so well as in this book. The main character, Holden Caulfield, is honest, funny, affectionate, obnoxious, and tormented.

Salzman, Mark. *The Soloist*. A cello prodigy as a child, 36-year-old Renne Sundheimer's life is dramatically altered by two very different events: serving on the jury for a murder trial, and teaching a 9-year-old boy, also a cello prodigy.

* Schlink, Bernhard. *The Reader*. Fifteen-year-old Michael Berg is seduced by Hanna, a woman twice his age. Some years later while a law student, Michael witnesses a trial in which Hanna is the defendant for a horrible crime she committed during World War II. Michael also discovers another secret about her.

* Sebold, Alice. *The Lovely Bones*. A fourteen-year-old girl is brutally raped and murdered. From heaven, she looks down on her family and friends as they grapple with her death and search for her murderer.

* Shaara, Michael.  **The Killer Angels.**  An excellent story depicting every facet of Gettysburg. A “must-read” for anyone interested in the Civil War, history, or human nature and preservation.

Shields, Carol.  **Small Ceremonies.**  Judith Gill, a writer of biographies, is at a turning point in her life, as she faces struggles in her marriage, her relationships with her growing children, and her interactions with fiction writer who is a colleague of her husband.

Shigekuni, Julie.  **A Bridge between Us.**  Four generations of Japanese-American women make their home in San Francisco, united by obligations of family and tradition, and bound together by fierce intimacy and long-held secrets.

* Shreve, Anita.  **The Pilot’s Wife.**  Kathryn Lyons learns that her husband Jack is dead, and so is everyone in the plane that he was flying. His plane exploded off the coast of Ireland. Soon the lives of Kathryn and their fifteen-year-old daughter Mattie are turned upside down with grief and with the unfolding story of Jack’s double life.

Sparks, Nicholas.  **The Wedding.**  The follow-up novel to Sparks’  *The Notebook* follows Noah Calhoun’s son-in-law through his struggle to revitalize his marriage. You won’t be able to put down this great love story.

Steel, Danielle.  **Granny Dan.**  After Granny Dan dies, her granddaughter discovers a box with satin toe shoes that unlock the story of a secret past. A motherless young girl becomes a great Russian ballerina, but an extraordinary man, an illness, and a revolution force her to make heartbreaking choices.

* Stockett, Kathryn.  **The Help.**  The novel reveals what life was like for African American maids in the south in the 1960s – and how a young woman writer whose family employed maids set out to tell their story.

* Tolkien, J. R. R.  **The Lord of the Rings.**  Enter an amazing world of little creatures known as Hobbits; you, like thousands of other readers, may never want to leave.

Tsukiyama, Gail.  **Women of the Silk.**  In rural China in the 1920s, girls as young as eight years old are sent away from their families to work in silk factories. One group of young women leads the first strike the village has ever seen.

* Clemens, Samuel Langhorne (Twain, Mark).  **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.**  A great classic, this adventure is one that you definitely don’t want to miss!

Voigt, Cynthia.  **Seventeen against the Dealer.**  This is a novel about a young woman & her struggles to follow her dream. The author portrays the complications of the real world in a believable manner.

* Vonnegut, Kurt.  **Slaughterhouse Five.**  This novel cleverly depicts a World War II mental battle.

* Walker, Alice.  **The Color Purple.**  A dramatic & vivid portrayal of the lives of African American women & the forces they struggle to overcome.

Waller, Robert James.  **The Bridges of Madison County.**  Rural Iowa in the mid-1960s is the setting for a brief, unexpected but intensely passionate love affair.

Watkins, Graham.  **Virus.**  Patients flood into Duke Hospital with a strange new disease. When Dr. Mark Roberts and psychiatrist Alexander Walton discover the origin, the Centers for Disease Control will not believe them, the suspected corporation threatens then, and they fear a worldwide epidemic.

* Wharton, Edith.  **Ethan Frome.**  An engrossing story about a love triangle involving a middle-aged farmer, his shrewish wife, and the pretty young cousin who comes to live with them.
Wiseman, Ellen Marie. *The Life She Was Given.* In the early 1930s, Lilly, an albino child, is locked away in her parents’ attic. Then they cruelly sell her to a traveling circus. Twenty years later, another daughter, Julia, inherits the house and tries to unravel the mystery of Lilly.

* Wright, Richard. *Native Son.* The author reflects the poverty and feeling of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country. He also describes what it means to be Black in America.

Yezierska, Anzia. *Bread Givers.* This novel is as powerful now as it certainly was when it was written in 1925. A young Jewish immigrant woman struggles against the patriarchal traditions of her religion and the sexist demands of her traditional father.

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief.* It’s World War II Germany, and foster child Liesel Meminger can’t resist books. Her family also harbors a Jewish man in their basement.

### AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND OTHER NONFICTION

Abbott, Shirley. *The Bookmaker's Daughter.* In this autobiography, Abbott describes her relationship with her father, who took horse-race bets as his livelihood, and who was also a book lover.

* Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays With Morrie.* A fast-paced Detroit sportswriter renews an old acquaintance with Morrie Schwartz, his sociology professor from college, who is dying. In this touching account, Albom rediscovers the value of life and friendship from someone full of life even as he faces death.

Ali, Nujood with Delphine Minoui. *I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced.* The author, a native of Yemen, was just 10 when her father arranged her marriage to a man in his 30s. After enduring abuse and rape, she managed to get a divorce, with the help of local advocates and the press.

* Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* The author writes with love, humor, and honesty about growing up Black and female.

Angelou, Maya. *The Heart of a Woman.* In this fourth volume of her autobiography, Angelou describes her life in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, when she worked as a singer-dancer, became northern coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and moved to Africa with her African husband, all while raising her adolescent son.

Angelou, Maya. *Even the Stars Look Lonesome.* In the most recent volume of her autobiography, Angelou turns her considerable descriptive powers to the subject of aging.

Appleman-Jurman, Alicia. *Alicia: My Story.* Alicia was a Jewish girl living with her family in Poland when the Germans invaded in 1941. Her utterly compelling and heartbreaking story shows some of the best & worst that human beings are capable of.

Bacall, Lauren. *Lauren Bacall by Myself.* A Hollywood star tells how she broke into movies, married tough guy Humphrey Bogart, and picked up the pieces of her life when he died.

Baker, Russell. *Growing Up.* Russell Baker's mother, a giant presence in his life, insisted that he make something of himself. In his autobiography, this prize-winning journalist shows that he did, with an engrossing account of his own family and growing up.

* Beals, Melba Pattillo. *Warriors Don’t Cry.* The author was one of the first nine students to be escorted into the first desegregated school in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1954. Her memories were so painful that she couldn't write about them until nearly 40 years later.
* Beals, Melba Pattillo. *White is a State of Mind: A Memoir*. Written 30 years after integrating Central High School, this biography chronicles the next few years of Melba's life. Anyone who has read *Warriors Don’t Cry* will enjoy learning what happened to Melba and how that traumatic year affected her life.

* Bissinger, H. G. *Friday Night Lights*. This nonfiction account details Bissinger’s year with a high school football team in his quest for a state championship. Exploring the players’ lives, the role of football, gender, and race in the lives of the Odessans, and the pre-suspense of the team’s quest, this book will appeal to football fans and non-football fans alike.

* Bok, Francis. *Escape from Slavery*. In 1986, seven-year-old Francis Bok was captured by Arab raiders in southern Sudan and enslaved in northern Sudan for the next ten years. He never saw his family again. At 17, he managed to flee to Egypt and eventually to the United States.

Brenner, Claudia, with Hannah Ashley. *Eight Bullets: One Woman’s Story of Surviving Anti-Gay Violence*. In May 1998, Brenner was camping on the Pennsylvania’s Appalachian Trail with her partner Rebecca Wight, when an unprovoked assailant wounded her and killed her partner. Miraculously, Brenner survived to tell the story of homophobic hatred and brutal murder.

* Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. The harsh treatment that Native Americans have received at the hands of white culture is vividly detailed in this history.

* Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *The Body Project An Intimate History of American Girls*. A journey through the historical roots of the acute and psychological pressures that many girls feel today.

* Bruni, Frank. *Born Round: The Secret History of a Full-Time Eater*. Frank Bruni was always a hungry and often overweight child in an Italian family surrounded by delicious meals in copious quantities. He struggled with his weight into adulthood. Ironically, in 2004 he became restaurant critic for the *New York Times*, yet he finally managed to learn to eat in moderation and exercise regularly.

Bumiller, Elisabeth. *The Secrets of Mariko*. This is the life of a Japanese women living outside Tokyo: her struggles, her dilemmas, and her triumphs over politics, familial obligations, and social stature of women. Bumiller, a journalist who studies Mariko for over a year, provides revealing historical background with the war, traditions, and other Japanese customs through the eyes of a middle-aged housewife.

Buss, Fran Leeper. *La Partera: Story of a Midwife*. Jesusita Aragon tells the story of her life as a midwife in rural New Mexico. Beginning at 14, she delivered over 12,000 babies. She and other women healers and health care workers gained the respect of the Anglo medical community.

* Caine, Lynn. *Widow*. Few people are prepared for the loss of a loved one. Caine tells how devastating it can be to be left alone.

* Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood*. A frightening story about the murder of a family that is also an investigation into what made their killers tick.

Carcaterra, Lorenzo. *Sleepers*. This is the true story of a friendship that runs thicker than blood. In this memoir, the author recreates the events of his childhood that forever changed his life and the lives of his three best friends as they grew up in Hell’s Kitchen.

Carson, Ben, with Cecil Murphy. *Gifted Hands*. This is an inspiring story of an inner-city kid with poor grades and little motivation who turned his life around. Dr. Carson is now a world-famous neurosurgeon; his book tells how he got to where he is today.
Carter, Dominic. *No Momma's Boy*. The author, a well-known New York City television journalist, chronicles his childhood with a very abusive mother. Only after her death does he learn the full extent of her mental illness.

Cary, Lorene. *Black Ice*. As a teenager in 1971, the author was admitted to St. Paul’s, a prep school in New Hampshire. She left her home in Philadelphia to become one of the first females and African Americans to attend this prep school.

Codell, Esme Raji. *Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*. 24-year-old Esme is a creative, enthusiastic, and unorthodox fifth-grade teacher in inner-city Chicago. Despite children from troubled homes and a difficult principal, she manages to inspire her children to learn.

* Comer, James P. *Maggie's American Dream*. Dr. Comer, an educational psychologist, chronicles the life of his mother, whose American dream brought her from abject poverty in the rural south to become the mother of five outstanding achievers.

Cross, June. *Secret Daughter: A Mixed-Race Daughter and the Mother Who Gave Her Away*. The author was born in 1954 to an aspiring white actress and a Black musician. At age four when she could no longer pass for white, her mother sent her to live with a childless Black couple. This book describes June’s confusion over race, the tug between her adoptive parents and birth parents, and her understanding, as an adult, of her mother’s decision.

Daley, Robert. *Prince of the City*. This book, about a New York City police detective who is forced to expose corruption, focuses on our obligations to others and our choices in life.

* Davis, Sampson, et al. *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream*. Three boys growing up in rough New Jersey neighborhoods become friends. As adolescents, they made a pact to support each other through school and avoid the lure of crime and drugs. Their pact succeeded: two are physicians and one is a dentist.

Deraniyagala, Sonali. *Wave*. In 2004, at a beach resort in Sri Lanka, the author and her parents, her husband, and her two young sons were swept away by a tsunami. Only Sonali survived to tell their tale.


Dobie, Kathy. *The Only Girl in the Car: A Memoir*. The oldest girl in large family, Kathy changed dramatically when, at 14, she discovered that she could attract boys. But this discovery led to serious problems.

Donofrio, Beverly. *Riding in Cars with Boys*. The subtitle of this book is "A bad girl who makes good." The author spent her teen years riding around in cars, drinking, smoking pot, & rebelling against authority. After a teenage marriage failed, she decided to take her son & go off to college.

* Dorris, Michael. *The Broken Cord*. The author, of Native American ancestry, adopts a Native American son & discovers that his son is a victim of fetal alcohol syndrome. Dorris does all he can to help his son lead a productive life.

* Eggers, Dave. *Zeitoun*. In 2005, contractor and property owner Abdul Zeitoun remained in New Orleans to face Hurricane Katrina, while his wife and children left town. The flooding and devastation were terrible, but Zeitoun’s unexpected arrest was much worse.
Eighner, Lars. *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets*. The author suddenly finds himself homeless. Accompanied by his dog Lizbeth, he lives on the streets and in an abandoned bar for over two years.

* Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. In 1998, the author stepped into the life of a minimum-wage worker, working as a waitress, a maid, and a salesclerk in Wal-Mart and discovered how difficult it is to make ends meet.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes From a Decade of Greed*. This collection of essays by Ehrenreich describes the high points of the 1980's with sharp wit, yet with dead seriousness.

Ellerbee, Linda. *Move On*. A well-known television journalist writes about the ups and downs of her life, including her stay at the Betty Ford Center for treatment of alcoholism.

Ferrill, Lisa. *A Far Cry from Home*. Lisa Ferrill, committed social worker, lived and worked side-by-side with homeless women, as the Program Director of a shelter. Her powerful book describes the obstacles faced by homeless women as well as their struggle to maintain their dignity.

* Feynman, Richard P. *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Fenyman!* The apt subtitle of this book by a Nobel prizewinning scientist is "Adventures of a Curious Character." Feynman has a boundless curiosity, enthusiasm, and love of life. In no way a "stuffy scientist," he, like his book, is utterly delightful.

* Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*. To escape the Nazi death camps, Anne Frank & her family hid for years in an Amsterdam attic. Her journal is a story of love, fear, and courage.

* Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. How do people go on when they have been stripped of everything, including human dignity? The author describes his time in a concentration camp and what he learned there about survival.

* Freedman, Samuel G. *Small Victories: The Real World of a Teacher. Her Students. and Their High School*. The author followed a teacher at Seward Park High School in Manhattan, from 1987-1988. He describes an old, overcrowded school with many new immigrants, one ranked among the worst 10% in New York State, yet with a high percentage of graduates who go to college.

* Fulghum, Robert. *All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. A cleverly written and readable book explaining that most all the standards by which we should live are actually learned in kindergarten.

Gilbert, Roland, and Tyehimba-Taylor, Cheo. *The Ghetto Solution*. After a troubled youth, Roland Gilbert turned his life around and developed SIMBA, a rites-of-passage training program designed to mentor poor, urban, African-American boys. This book includes the life stories of several people whose lives have been changed by the goals and philosophy of SIMBA.

Gottleib, Annie. *Do You Believe in Magic?* A fascinating account of what it was like to come of age in the 1960's. Gottleib discusses how events and experiences of the 1960s have affected people who were adolescents and young adults at that time.

Grealy, Lucy. *Autobiography of a Face*. After childhood cancer surgery and chemotherapy, Lucy's face was disfigured. Only after enduring over 30 surgeries did she finally come to accept her face and overcome the cruelty of others.

* Greene, Bob. *Be True to Your School*. Bob Greene is a celebrated, popular, nationally-syndicated newspaper columnist. This book, based on a diary he kept when he was a teenager, will remind you of some of the happiness, hurt, and struggle to grow up that you experienced in high school.
* Gregory, Dick.  **Nigger.** Dick Gregory, a social activist, writes about the experience of being Black in a racist society.

Hari, Daoud.  **The Translator: A Tribesman’s Memoir of Darfur.** Daoud, from a small village in the Darfur region of Sudan, learned English in high school and offered to translate for journalists trying to document the genocide occurring in Darfur. He witnessed many horrors and was arrested and tortured, narrowly escaping death.

* Harris, Paul A.  **Diary from the Dome: Reflection on Fear and Privilege During Katrina.** The author, who happened to be visiting New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, spent several days in crowded condition in the Superdome, along with thousands of others. His first-hand account is revealing.

Herriott, James.  **All Creatures Great and Small.** Written by a veterinarian working in Yorkshire in the 1930's, this book is one of four sets of collected stones dealing with his personal experiences. It is warm, touching and humorous.

* Hersey, John.  **Hiroshima.** 100,000 people were killed when the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. Miraculously, some survived. Hersey describes 6 of these survivors: what they were doing at the moment the bomb dropped, how they dealt with the unspeakable devastation, and what became of them later in life.

Huston, Jeanne Wakatsuki.  **Farewell to Manzanar.** As a seven-year-old, Jeanne Wakatsuki and her family were uprooted from their Southern California home and business and sent to Manzanar, a hastily-constructed internment camp for Japanese-Americans. Leaving their belongings behind, they remained for there for three years.

If tin, Abdi Nor.  **Call Me American.** The author grew up in war-torn Somalia, learning English by watching American action movies. Eventually, he escaped the horrors of war, poverty, and hunger and the restrictions of radical Islamist control, first fleeing to Kenya and eventually immigrating to the US. He now lives in Maine.

Jaramillo, Mari-Luci.  **Madame Ambassador: The Shoemaker’s Daughter.** The author, daughter of a Mexican immigrant shoemaker, chronicles her rise from living in poverty in rural New Mexico to becoming U.S. Ambassador to Honduras – and the first woman to hold that post – and a lifetime of work as a civil rights’ advocate.

Jenkins, Peter.  **A Walk Across America.** The author decided to walk his dog across America to find out for himself what his country was really about. Along the way, he spent time with a hermit mountain man, lived with a Black family in North Carolina, worked in a Southern mill, and almost died on a mountaintop.

* Jones, LeAlan and Newman, Lloyd, with Isay, David.  **Our America: Life and Death of the South Side of Chicago.** LeAlan and Lloyd, 13-year-old residents of an impoverished housing project in Chicago, were given tape players by journalist David Isay and asked to record a journal of their lives. The tapes first became radio documentaries, and then this book. The boys honestly describe themselves, their families, and others in their community, including the chilling death of a five-year-old pushed out a high-rise window by two other children.

Katz, Bob.  **Elaine’s Circle.** Elaine Moore, a caring and innovative fourth-grade teacher, rallies her students to support a classmate with terminal brain cancer.

* Keegan, Marina.  **The Opposite of Loneliness.** Tragically, Marina Keegan, a promising writer, died just days after graduating from Yale. This book, published posthumously, contains her essays and short stories.
* Keller, Helen. *The Story of My Life.* The story of how Keller, a blind and deaf girl who lived in isolation and frustration, discovered a path to learning & knowledge.

Kerr, M. E. *Me Me Me Me Me.* A charming, easy-to-read account of a young woman's growing up. The author provides a series of warm and witty stories that will be enjoyed by people of all ages.


* Kohl, Herbert. *Thirty-Six Children.* An idealistic and caring young teacher describes some of the challenges he faced in trying to help his students survive and learn in the hard world of an inner-city school.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Ordinary Resurrections.* Over a period of several years, educator Jonathan Kozol gets to know poor children at an after-school program in the South Bronx. His information about poverty, incarceration rates of male relatives, low high school graduation rates, limited funding for public schools relative to suburban schools, larger class size, and rates of asthma are shocking.

* Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild.* So much better than the movie! This book described the pilgrimage of a young man who, in 1992, left his family and the comforts of home, to venture into the Alaskan wilds to try to live on his own. Four months late, he was dead.

Kramer, Jerry. *Distant Replay.* Whether or not you're a sports fan, you will be captivated by this portrait of stars of the Green Bay Packers football team, coached by Vince Lombardi, which won the first 2 Super Bowls. You learn what happens to them in the 20 years after their football victories.

Kristof, Nicholas D. and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.* The authors believe that the most effective remedy for world poverty is empowering women. They share stories of how poorly women are treated in many countries and what some women (and men) are doing to improve women’s lives.

Landis, Floyd. *Positively False: The Real Story of How I Won the Tour de France.* Landis was stripped of his Tour crown when he got caught for doping. His book tells how he won legitimately, from his youth to his Tour de France win, and how the anti-doping agencies are against him.

* LaNier, Carlotta Walls, with Lisa Frazier Page. *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School.* At age 14, Carlotta Walls became one of the “Little Rock Nine,” the first African-Americans to integrate a formerly all-white high school, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. After a harrowing year of harassment, threats, and abuse followed by a year when all Little Rock high schools were shut down, Carlotta returned to Central as a senior. But as her graduation approached, segregationists threw a bomb into her house. Her father was questioned and beaten, and a neighborhood friend was falsely convicted and imprisoned for nearly two years.


* LeDuff, Charlie. *Detroit: An Autopsy.* It’s hard to believe that a large, once prosperous American city can suffer such decline. Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Charlie LeDuff moves his family back to his hometown of Detroit and tries to uncover what went wrong. He combines stories of Detroit’s bureaucratic corruption, crime, and neglect with ways that it affected his own family.
* Lemmon, Gayle Tzemach. *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana.* When the Taliban sized control of Afghanistan in the 1990s, women’s rights were severely limited. Few could attend school or work outside the home. This true story of how Kamila Sidiqi began a dressmaking business in the secrecy of her home illustrates the power of entrepreneurship and resiliency.

* Light, Richard J. *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds.* The author, a Harvard professor, interviewed 1,600 undergraduates and compiled their recollections about college. The sections on memorable faulty members, good advising, critical thinking skills, and how diversity can enhances one’s college experience are especially noteworthy.

* Lomborg, Bjorn. *Cool It.* A groundbreaking book that transforms the debate about global warming by offering a fresh perspective based on human needs as well as environmental concerns.

* Mahmoody, Betty with William Hoffer. *Not Without My Daughter.* American Betty Mahmoody married an Iranian doctor living in the U.S. When they took their daughter to Iran for a two-week vacation in 1984, her husband decided not to allow his family to return to the U.S. Suddenly Betty was plunged into a culture where women have no rights and wives can be beaten into submission. After many harrowing months, Betty manages to escape with her six-year-old daughter.

Mahmoody, Betty with Arnold D. Dunchock. *For the Love of a Child.* Find out what happened to Betty and her daughter Mahtob after their daring escape from Iran, and read about the struggles of other parents in transnational marriages.

* Malcolm X and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.* The controversial Black leader, who was assassinated by one of his followers, writes about the experiences that drove him to a leadership role in the Black Muslims.

* Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy.* A powerful description of what it was like to be black and live in a South African ghetto and experience apartheid first-hand.

Martin, James. *In Good Company: The Fast Track from the Corporate World to Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.* After college, Martin worked in the corporate world for six years and earned a good salary but was dissatisfied with the values. Despite a limited education in Catholicism, he left his job and become a Jesuit priest, working with the poor.

* Martin, Ralph. *Jennie.* This is a biography of the American mother of Winston Churchill, a strong, fascinating woman in her own right, whose circle included some of the most famous and influential people of the time.

McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother.* McBride grew up with eleven siblings in an all-black housing project in Brooklyn, the son of a Black minister and a white mother who shunned her Jewish heritage. This memoir is a tribute to a mother who, despite being widowed twice, managed to see all her children through college. It recounts McBride's search for his Jewish roots.

* McCourt, Frank. *Angela’s Ashes.* A story about growing up poor in Limerick, Ireland in the 1930s and 1940s – both funny and heartbreaking.


* Messner, Michael A., & Sabo, Donald F. *Sex, Violence & Power in Sports.* These articles critique how participation in sports affects both men and women, and how our attitudes toward sports and athletes are related to our attitudes toward gender roles, power, and even violence.
Miller, Donald. *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*. These non-Christian thoughts on Christian spirituality may inspire those who are searching.

* Moon, William Least Heat. *Blue Highways*. After losing his job and separating from his wife, the author got in his van & explored the US. His book is a fascinating & vividly written account of the many sights, sounds, and intriguing people he met around the country.

* Moore, Wes. *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*. Wes Moore and his sisters were raised by his single mother after his father’s early death. He received a good education and became a successful adult. Another man with the same name, about the same age and also from Baltimore, is in jail for life after the murder of a police office. This book explores how the lives of two men who share a name are so different.

Nazario, Sonia. *Enrique’s Journey*. Out of sheer desperation, poor women in Honduras come to the United States to earn money, leaving their children in the care of relatives. Some children miss their mothers so much that they ride on top of trains through Mexico to try to steal into the US. Journalist Sonia Nazario traces the dangerous journey of one such boy, Enrique.

Nazer, Mende, and Damien Lewis. *Slave*. Mende’s happy childhood in her Sudanese village ended abruptly in 1993 when Arab raiders captured her and sold her to a wealthy Arab family. She was subjected to horrible physical, emotional, and sexual abuse until she was finally able to escape after seven long years.

* Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*. Comedian Noah Trevor recounts his childhood growing up South Africa as the child of a black mother and white father.

* Obama, Barack. *Dreams from My Father*. In 2004, Barack Obama delivered a riveting keynote address at the Democratic Convention and became the fifth African American elected to Congress. This articulate Harvard-educated politician who describes himself as the “man with the funny name” is biracial, the son of a white woman from Kansas and a Kenyan goat herder. His autobiography traces his childhood in Hawaii and Indonesia, his work as a community organizer in Chicago’s poor neighborhoods, and his visit to Kenya in search of his roots.

Opdyke, Irene Gut. *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. As a young woman during World War II, Irene, a Polish Catholic, was so horrified by what was happening to the Jews that she saved lives by hiding some Jewish people and helping others flee and survive in the forest.

Owens, Mark and Owens, Delia. *Cry of the Kalahari*. A husband and wife give up the comforts of academic life and go to Africa to study wildlife and try to save some animals from destruction. They describe their adventures with hyenas, lions, and a more dangerous species of predator - humans.

Patterson, Romaine, with Patrick Hinds. *The Whole World Was Watching: Living in the Light of Matthew Shepard*. In 1998, Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered in Wyoming. His friend Romaine Patterson and others dressed in large angel costumes to shield Matthew’s family from seeing hate-mongering protestors outside the court.

Pelzer, Dave. *A Child Called “It.”* The author recreates the hideous child abuse that he endured from his unstable alcoholic mother.

Perdue, Charles L., Barden, Thomas E., & Phillips, Robert K., eds. *Weevils in the Wheat*. In the 1930’s, the Virginia Writer’s Project interviewed over 300 elderly ex-slaves in Virginia. Now these 3 editors have compiled what remains of these authentic interviews, to produce a detailed picture of the lives of slaves.

* Prejean, Helen. *Dead Man Walking*. A Roman Catholic nun in Louisiana becomes spiritual advisor to a man on death row, convicted of the brutal murder of two young people. She became a strong opponent of the death penalty.
Preston, Richard. *Hot Zone*. This is a true story of a horribly dangerous airborne virus that began in a remote jungle cave in Africa and ended up in an Army research facility outside Washington D.C. in 1989.

Radner, Gilda. *There's Always Something*. Before her death, this comedienne from "Saturday Night Live" wrote about the trials & fortunes of her life, and she described how everything changed when she learned she had ovarian cancer.

* Rapp, Anthony. *Without You: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and the Musical “Rent.”* The lead star in the musical *Rent* shares the story of his life and family in the time that this musical was emerging.

* Rhodes, Richard. *A Hole in the World*. Little more than a year old when his mother killed herself, Rhodes has ever since been conscious of "a hole in the world" where his mother's love should have been. In this true and terrifying memoir, he describes how he managed to survive.


Rooney, Andy. *Not That You Asked...* Well-known for his commentaries on "60 Minutes," Andy Rooney has also expressed his views in this book and several other books of short essays. Rooney has many everyday things to complain about and poke fun at, and he does so in an admirable writing style that is clear, simple, and to the point.

Ruta, Domenica. *With or Without You*. The author was raised by a single mother who took and sold drugs in a cluttered, dirty house. Ruta vacillates between disdain for her mother and love for a mother who clearly loves her. As an adult, Ruta grapples with her own alcoholism and eventual sobriety.

Ryan, Terry. *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio: How My Mother Raised 10 Kids on 25 Words or Less*. What happens to a clever woman in the 1950s-1960s with ten kids and a husband barely able to support them? She uses her intellect and her writing skills to enter the many contests of that era – and her wins are remarkable.

* Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. This autobiography, told in comic-strip style, is a poignant coming-of-age story of a precocious and outspoken young Iranian girl during the Islamic Revolution.

Schwalbe, Will. *The End of Your Life Book Club*. Reading has always been important to Will Schwalbe and his family. While his mother is being treated for cancer, to pass the time they discuss the books they are reading. Soon he and his mother decide to read the same books, and their informal “book club” begins. Despite her physical decline, Will’s mother maintains her curiosity and interest in books and the world.

* Sebold, Alice. *Lucky*. As a freshman at Syracuse University in the 1980s, the author was brutally raped.

* Sedaris, David. *Me Talk Pretty One Day*. This collection of 28 short amusing essays describes the author’s unconventional childhood, his young adulthood, and his life in France, including his struggles to learn French.

Sixsmith, Martin. *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee: A Mother, Her Son and a Fifty-Year Search*. In 1952, pregnant teen Philomena Lee was sent to an Irish convent to give birth. After three years, she was coerced into signing her son away for adoption. He was adopted by an America family but struggled in many ways during his life. For decades, Philomena searched to find out what became of her son.
* Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks, an African American mother of five, died an agonizing death at age 31 from fast-moving cervical cancer. Without her consent, doctors removed some of her cells and kept them alive for research. Her cells multiplied prolifically and contributed significantly to scientific research, including developing a vaccine for polio. But her family never knew her cells were being used. This true story is about science, race, social class, and family.

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World*. In her autobiography, Sotomayor, the third woman and first Hispanic Supreme Court justice, chronicles her childhood and professional life before reaching the Supreme Court in 2009. She honestly describes the many obstacles she overcame, including her juvenile diabetes and the death of her father when she was just nine.

Stacey, Judith, Bereaud, Susan, & Daniels, Joan, editors. *And Jill Came Tumbling Down: Sexism in American Education*. Forty-two brief articles on how girls and women fare in American schools, from kindergarten through college.

Sumrall, Amber Coverdale, ed. *Catholic Girls*. Honest and revealing first-hand accounts of what it is like to grow up Catholic.

St. Pierre, Mark. *Madonna Swan: A Lakota Woman’s Story*. This is the story of a Lakota woman on the Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Despite suffering tuberculosis at 16, and 7 years in a sanitarium, Madonna Swan survived to teach in the reservation’s Head Start Program. A symbol of courage, she was named North American Indian Woman of the Year in 1983.

* Stratton, Joanna. *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier*. Stratton constructed historical accounts of pioneer families, their hardships, and their contributions to American history from the letters and diaries of women that she found in attics, basements and trunks.

Suskind, Ron. *A Hope in the Unseen*. Cedric Jennings graduated from Ballou Senior High in crime-infested Washington D.C. in 1995. Raised by a single mother, he excelled in school and entered Brown University, where he found himself far behind most of the other freshmen. He allowed journalist Suskind to chronicle his compelling story, full of pride and hope.

Szpilman, Wladyslaw. *The Pianist*. In September 1939, pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman played the last live music broadcast before the fall of Warsaw. Although his parents and siblings were killed in concentration camps, he was able to escape and managed to survive in the ruins of Warsaw for four years. In the end, he was assisted by a German officer who secretly disagreed with the Nazi extermination of Jews.

Tarbox, Katherine. *Katie.com*. Thirteen-year-old Katie started conversing with twenty-three year-old “Mark” in an on-line chat room. When they eventually met in a hotel room, he turned out to be a much older pedophile. She wrote this book to warn that people who sound nice on-line can be sexual predators.

* Terkel, Studs. *Working*. For three years, Terkel traveled the US interviewing all kinds of people, to find out how they feel about their jobs, their lives and themselves. Fascinating first-hand accounts from workers in almost any occupation you can think of.

* Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*. Life in a Puerto Rican ghetto is shown vividly and with understanding by one who experienced it.

Thompson-Cannino, Jennifer, Cotton, Ronald, and Torneo, Erin. *Picking Cotton: Our Memoir of Injustice and Redemption*. In 1984, Ronald Cotton was tried and sentenced for a crime he didn’t commit. He was imprisoned for 11 years until DNA testing absolved him. After his release, he and the woman who had mistakenly identified him as her attacker became friends. They now speak out against false imprisonment.
* Thurber, James. My Life and Hard Times. James Thurber may be the funniest writer of all time; he writes about the absurd, the fantastic, and the eccentric with enough skill to make readers laugh out loud.

* Tucker, John C. May God Have Mercy. This book about death-row inmate Roger Keith Coleman describes his case, conviction, and time on death row leading up to his execution. Your heart breaks, whether or not you believe he’s guilty.

Wadler, Joyce. My Breast. A vibrant journalist in her early 40's, Wadler faced breast cancer. Yet she managed to tell her story with humor.

Wagler, Ira. Growing Up Amish: A Memoir. The author, the ninth of 11 children, was born into a strict Amish family but as a teenager he decided to run away. For years, he vacillated between leaving the restrictive Amish community and returning to his family and the familiar religion and culture.

* Walker, Lou Ann. A Loss for Words. In her memoir, Walker recounts growing up the oldest hearing child of two deaf parents. Although her loving parents raised her in a warm and happy home, as an adult she confronts her responsibility as a child: interpreting for her parents and sheltering them from the ignorance of others.

* Walls, Jeannette. The Glass Castle. The author’s parents lived like nomads, often ran out of money, and seemed to neglect their four children. Her father drank. Yet as she describes her difficult childhood, it is clear that she loved her parents.

Wapner, Joseph A. A View from the Bench. The star of popular TV show "The People's Court," Judge Wapner offers a series of real-life legal tales. He also shares insights into human nature based on his many years as a municipal and superior court judge.

*Westover, Tara. Educated. This memoir describes Tara Westover’s survivalist Christian fundamentalist family in rural Idaho that did not send their children to school or seek medical treatment, even for serious injuries. Eventually Tara was able to distance herself for her family, first to attend college and eventually to attend Cambridge University in England. She also had to distance herself from an older abusive brother.

* Wideman, John Edgar. Brothers and Keepers. Wideman, an African-American writer and professor who grew up in a poor section of Pittsburgh, explores “the bonds of blood, tenderness, and guilt” connecting him to his brother Robby, sentenced to life in prison for attempted murder. As he tells each brother’s story, moving between Robby’s voice and his own, he offers a scathing critique of systemic racism in the US.

Williams, GregAlan. Boys to Men: Maps for the Journey. Once on a self-destructive path of drugs and alcohol, Emmy Award-winning actor GregAlan Williams talks honestly to men about what manhood should really be.

Yen Mah, Adeline. Falling Leaves. Born in 1937 in China, Adeline was the fifth child in an affluent family. But her mother died in childbirth, and when her father remarried, her childhood became one of terrible emotional abuse. Despite achievements as a student and a professional, she struggled all her life for parental acceptance.

This book list was compiled by Sharon Green, Coordinator of Instructional Services in the Academic Success Center at Niagara University. She welcomes additional suggestions. If you’ve read a good book, please email the exact title, author, and a 1-2 sentence description to sgreen@niagara.edu.
Social networking sites for readers:

http://www.goodreads.com/
www.librarything.com
http://smallworldreads.blogspot.com/
http://www.shelfari.com

Web sites with descriptions of books and readers’ comments:
http://www.readingwoman.com/index.html
http://www.bookwire.com/
http://www.bookglutton.com/

“Television captures the imagination, but does not liberate it. A good book at once stimulates and frees the mind.” ~Bruno Bettelheim