

**Contemporary American Literature
Junior Honors Research Paper - Mrs. Smith**

Author	Title	Call No.	Description
Abu-Jaber, Diana	Birds of Paradise (362 p.)	FIC ABU-JABER	Versatile Abu-Jaber explores the effects a teen's desertion has on her Miami family. At 13, Avis and Brian Muir's daughter, Felice, inexplicably started running away from home. Finally forced to accept their daughter's refusal to return home, Avis, a pastry chef, anxiously awaits her daughter's infrequent calls while Brian, a real-estate attorney, refuses to have anything to do with Felice. The couple's older child, Stanley, shares his mother's passion for food, but his interests don't especially please either parent, and his teen years were largely overshadowed by his sister's rebellion. Abu-Jaber drops the reader in on the Muir family just as Felice is about to turn 18, gradually revealing why Felice felt compelled to run away and how the reverberations of her actions are still affecting the rest of her family. Felice's contemplation of her future coincides with a big announcement of Stanley's regarding his own, sending yet another ripple through the family.
Alvarez, Julia	In the Time of the Butterflies (325 p.)	FIC ALVAREZ	During the last days of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, three young women, members of a conservative, pious Catholic family, who had become committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the regime, were ambushed and assassinated as they drove back from visiting their jailed husbands. Thus martyred, the Mirabal sisters have become mythical figures in their country, where they are known as las mariposas (the butterflies), from their underground code names. Alvarez has fictionalized their story in a narrative that starts slowly but builds to a gripping intensity. Each of the girls speaks in her own voice; their surviving sister, Dede, frames the narrative with her own tale of suffering and dedication to their memory. The sisters endure the arrests of their husbands, their own imprisonment and the inexorable progress of Trujillo's revenge. Alvarez captures the terrorized atmosphere of a police state, in which people live under the sword of terrible fear and atrocities cannot be acknowledged. As the sisters' energetic fervor turns to anguish, Alvarez conveys their courage and their desperation, and the full import of their tragedy.
Armstrong, Lance	Every Second Counts (246 p.)	B ARMSTRONG	In It's Not about the Bike Armstrong related his battle with cancer and his incredible Tour de France victory. In this book, he gives a gripping account of his second through (record-tying) fifth victories at the Tour. One sees that Armstrong has grown up quite a bit since his first book. However, he still has a reckless streak, as witnessed by his fondness for diving into a place called Dead Man's Hole. There are glimpses into his personal life and reflections on his illness, but this memoir is unabashedly about the thrill of racing and winning with the U.S. Postal Team. Armstrong talks about his teammates with humility and admiration. He also deals frankly, yet with remarkable restraint, with the accusations of doping by the French. The cyclist still works with his Lance Armstrong Foundation against cancer, but readers get the sense that he is definitely looking forward. Warm and informal in tone, Every Second Counts is a must-read for cycling fans.
Armstrong, Lance	It's Not About the Bike; My Journey Back to Life (289 p.)	B ARMSTRONG	People around the world have found inspiration in the story of Lance Armstrong, a world-class athlete nearly struck down by cancer, only to recover and win the Tour de France, the multiday bicycle race famous for its grueling intensity. Armstrong is a thoroughgoing jock, and the changes brought to his life by his illness are startling and powerful, but he's not interested in wearing a hero suit. While his vocabulary is a bit on the he-man side, his actions will melt the most hard-bitten souls: a cancer foundation and benefit bike ride, his astonishing commitment to training that got him past countless hurdles, loyalty to the people and corporations that never gave up on him. There's serious medical detail here, which may not be for the faint of heart, and athletes and coaches will benefit from the same extraordinary detail provided about his training sessions. It's Not About the Bike is the perfect title for this book about life, death, illness, family, setbacks, and triumphs, but not especially about the bike.

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Baggott, Julianna	Pure (431 p.)	FIC BAGGOTT	Pressia barely remembers the Detonations or much about life during the Before. She thinks about what is lost - how the world went from amusement parks, movie theaters, birthday parties, fathers and mothers to ash, dust, scars, permanent burns, and fused, damaged bodies. Now, at an age when everyone is required to turn themselves over to the militia to either be trained as a soldier or, if they are too damaged and weak, to be used as live targets, Pressia can no longer pretend to be small. She is on the run. There are those who escaped the apocalypse unmarked. Pures. They are tucked safely inside the Dome that protects their healthy, superior bodies. Yet Partridge, whose father is one of the most influential men in the Dome, feels isolated and lonely. Different. He thinks about loss - maybe just because his family is broken; his father is emotionally distant; his brother killed himself; and his mother never made it inside their shelter. Or maybe it's his claustrophobia: his feeling that this Dome has become a swaddling of intensely rigid order. So when a slipped phrase suggests his mother might still be alive, Partridge risks his life to leave the Dome to find her. When Pressia meets Partridge, their worlds shatter all over again.
Baldacci, David	The Collectors (436 p.)	FIC BALDACCI	People are dropping dead in Washington, D.C. First the Speaker of the House falls victim to a hitman in a carefully orchestrated murder in front of dozens of the city's power elite. Next, the director of the Library of Congress's Rare Books Room dies in a book vault, but no one knows how. Caleb Shaw, Camel Club member, nearly falls victim, too. Across the country, a gifted con woman assembles an A-list team to pull off one of the most audacious scams ever, against one of the most dangerous men in the world. When the worlds of Washington and the elite con collide head-on, the Camel Club finds itself teamed with a person they don't really trust but whose skill helps them unravel a secret that threatens to bring America to its knees.
Banks, Russell	Lost Memory of Skin (416 p.)	FIC BANKS	On probation after doing time for a liaison with an underage girl, the "Kid" is forbidden to live within 2500 feet of anywhere children might gather. With nowhere else to go he takes up residence under a causeway in a makeshift camp with other convicted sex offenders. Despite his crime the Kid is in many ways innocent, trapped by impulses and foolish choices he himself struggles to comprehend. The Professor, a university sociologist who has built his own life on secrets and lies, enters the scene and finds the Kid the perfect subject for his research. The two men forge a tentative partnership. But when the Professor's past resurfaces and threatens to destroy his carefully constructed world, the balance in the relationship shifts. Suddenly the Kid must reconsider everything he has come to believe and choose what course of action to take when faced with a new kind of moral decision. In this insightful novel Banks examines the indistinct boundaries between our intentions and actions.
Bascomb, Neal	The New Cool (325 p.)	629.8 BAS	Teen brainiacs and shop class wizards rule campus in this gripping alternative-sports saga. Journalist Bascomb follows the seniors of California's Dos Pueblos public school through the 2009 FIRST high school robotics tournament. Their gonzo competition task: build a robot rover that can dump balls into its opponents' baskets while traversing a very slick floor, in a cross between a basketball game and a high-tech medieval melee played on ice. Under a charismatic, innovative teacher, the D'Penguineers teammates design, manufacture, wire up, and program their mechanical gladiator while studying everything from the physics of friction to the latest CAD software. Bascomb's narrative is an engrossing tutorial in the industrial arts as the students surmount the fiendish engineering challenges of getting their device to move, maneuver, pick up balls, and fire them with uncanny accuracy. But he also provides plenty of suspense and pathos as the kids endure sleepless nights to finish their gizmo, perform frenzied last-second repairs, and concoct subtle game strategies. The result is an inspiring homage to the spirit of invention and a genuine sports epic, to boot.

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Bender, Aimee	The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake (292 p.)	FIC BENDER	Taking her very personal brand of pessimistic magical realism to new heights (or depths), Bender's second novel careens splendidly through an obstacle course of pathological, fantastical neuroses. Bender's narrator is young, needy Rose Edelstein, who can literally taste the emotions of whoever prepares her food, giving her unwanted insight into other people's secret emotional lives—including her mother's, whose lemon cake betrays a deep dissatisfaction. Rose's father and brother also possess odd gifts, the implications of which Bender explores with a loving and detailed eye while following Rose from third grade through adulthood. Bender has been called a fabulist, but emerges as more a spelunker of the human soul; carefully burrowing through her characters' layered disorders and abilities, Bender plumbs an emotionally crippled family with power and authenticity. Though Rose's gift can seem superfluous at times, and Bender's gustative insights don't have the sensual potency readers might crave, this coming-of-age story makes a bittersweet dish, brimming with a zesty, beguiling talent.
Blake, Sarah	The Postmistress (361 p.)	FIC BLAKE	Weaving together the stories of three very different women loosely tied to each other, debut novelist Blake takes readers back and forth between small town America and war-torn Europe in 1940. Single, 40-year-old postmistress Iris James and young newlywed Emma Trask are both new arrivals to Franklin, Mass., on Cape Cod. While Iris and Emma go about their daily lives, they follow American reporter Frankie Bard on the radio as she delivers powerful and personal accounts from the London Blitz and elsewhere in Europe. While Trask waits for the return of her husband--a volunteer doctor stationed in England--James comes across a letter with valuable information that she chooses to hide. Blake captures two different worlds--a naive nation in denial and, across the ocean, a continent wracked with terror--with a deft sense of character and plot, and a perfect willingness to take on big, complex questions, such as the merits of truth and truth-telling in wartime.
Bohjalian, Chris	Before You Know Kindness (429 p.)	FIC BOHJALIAN	Bohjalian's novel is a focused look at how a family copes with a tragic accident and how their own deeply held beliefs and desires affect their relationships with each other. Every summer, Nan Seton has her daughter and son and their respective families up to her New Hampshire summer home. Her daughter, Catherine, is married to Spencer, an animal rights activist, and the two have a precocious 12-year-old daughter, Charlotte. Her son, John, has two children, quiet 10-year-old Willow and baby Patrick, with his wife, Sara. John also has a secret; he's taken up hunting. When Charlotte, under the influence of stolen beer and pot from a teenage party, finds John's gun, she fires it at what she thinks is a deer in the distance but is actually her father. Though Spencer lives, the damage caused by the gun leaves him crippled, and the company he works for, FERAL, wants to use his injury to rail against guns and hunters, which creates significant rifts in the extended family. Bohjalian's elegant, refined writing makes even the most ordinary details of family life fascinating, and his characters leap off the pages as very real, flawed, but completely sympathetic human beings.
Bohjalian, Chris	Midwives (372 p.)	FIC BOHJALIAN	Bohjalian blends moral, medical, and political issues into a coming-of-age story in this account of the murder trial of a midwife, as witnessed by her daughter. From the day when Sibyl Danforth stepped forward in an emergency to help a pregnant friend give birth, she dedicated herself to a calling as a lay midwife. But as her daughter, Connie, points out, Sibyl never bothered to obtain certification as a nurse-midwife. Still, neighbors who wanted to have their babies at home felt comfortable calling on her. Among Sibyl's patients was Charlotte Bedford, a woman whose difficult labor led to a stroke and what appeared to be her death. Prevented by a snowstorm from getting Charlotte to a hospital, Sibyl tried to save the baby's life by performing an emergency cesarean on the presumably dead woman. Later folks asked if Charlotte was actually dead. In a strong voice Connie re-creates that year when many folks seemed to conspire to put Sibyl and the entire practice of home birthing on trial. Connie, fearing witch-hunt-style reprisals, eventually broke the law to protect her mother's freedom. This novel is compelling and complex.

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Bohjalian, Chris	The Double Bind (368 p.)	FIC BOHJALIAN	Laurel Estabrook, a young social worker living in Vermont, becomes obsessed with a box of photographs that belonged to a deceased homeless man, Bobbie Crocker. An amateur photographer herself, Laurel wonders how someone as destitute as Crocker came to possess such high-quality photos, many of them featuring famous people and, bizarrely, Laurel's childhood town. As she devotes more and more time to researching Crocker's past, her friends and family become concerned for her mental well-being. Six years previously, Laurel was attacked by two men in the woods while riding her bike, and though she recovered enough to finish college and get a job, she remains fragile. Bohjalian, whose <i>Midwives</i> was an Oprah Book Club selection, adds original and creative elements to this tale by blending the story of <i>The Great Gatsby</i> with Laurel's story and including photographs by a real-life homeless man named Bob Campbell. Far from being simply a mystery story, this is a complex exploration of the human psyche and its efforts to heal and survive in whatever manner possible.
Bowden, Mark	Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War (486 p.)	967.7305 BOW	This is an account of the 1993 operation in Mogadishu that left 18 American soldiers dead and many wounded. This disaster for the Clinton administration led to the resignation of the Defense Secretary and troop withdrawal from Somalia. Bowden provides a chronicle of what happened in the air and on the ground. His narrative tells how Rangers and Delta Force troops embarked on a mission to capture two high-ranking deputies to warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid only to find themselves surrounded in a hostile city. Their high-tech MH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and a number of other miscues left them trapped through the night. Bowden describes Mogadishu as a place of Mad Max-like anarchy--implying strongly that there was never any peace for the supposed peacekeepers to keep. He makes full use of the defense bureaucracy's extensive paper trail--which includes official reports, investigations, and radio transcripts--to describe the combat with great accuracy. He supplements this with hundreds of his own interviews, turning <i>Black Hawk Down</i> into a completely authentic nonfiction novel, a lively page-turner that will make readers feel like they're standing beside the troops.
Bowden, Mark	Guests of the Ayatollah (680 p.)	955.05 BOW	Bowden has written a riveting, definitive chronicle of the Iran hostage crisis, America's first battle with militant Islam. On November 4, 1979, a group of radical Islamist students, inspired by the revolutionary Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran. They took 52 Americans hostage, and kept nearly all of them hostage for 444 days. Mark Bowden tells this sweeping story through the eyes of the hostages, the soldiers in a new special forces unit sent to free them, their radical, naïve captors, and the diplomats working to end the crisis. Bowden takes the reader inside the hostages' cells and inside the Oval Office for meetings with President Carter and his exhausted team. The reader travels to international capitals where shadowy figures held clandestine negotiations, and to the deserts of Iran, where a courageous, desperate attempt to rescue the hostages exploded into tragic failure. Bowden dedicated five years to this research, including numerous trips to Iran and countless interviews with those involved on both sides. <i>Guests of the Ayatollah</i> is a detailed, brilliantly re-created, and suspenseful account of a crisis that gripped and changed the world.
Bowden, Mark	Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw (296 p.)	364.1 BOW	This book describes the rise and fall of Pablo Escobar, a notorious Colombian drug lord who became one of the narcotic trade's first billionaires. Pablo started out as a petty thief and wound up running a massive smuggling empire. At his height in the 1980s, he owned fleets of boats and planes, plus 19 separate residences, each with its own helipad. Violence marked everything he did. He bought off police, politicians, and judges throughout his country, and killed many others who wouldn't cooperate. The Colombian government tried to capture him, but he evaded them time after time. He made powerful enemies in both Colombia and the U.S. The final straw came when Pablo's men murdered a popular politician and, later, planted a bomb on a plane. <i>Killing Pablo</i> describes what happened when the U.S. government put its resources behind the hunt for Pablo. Bowden describes the search in gripping detail, from the massive electronic-surveillance effort to bureaucratic infighting between rival U.S. agencies. This is a real-life thriller!

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Bragg, Rick	All Over But the Shoutin' (329 p.)	B BRAGG, R.	On Palm Sunday, 1994, a tornado ripped through a church in Piedmont, AL, killing 20 people. This is Bragg's hometown, and he began his story on the tragedy for the New York Times as follows: "This is a place where grandmothers hold babies on their laps under the stars and whisper in their ears that the lights in the sky are holes in the floor of heaven. This is a place where the song 'Jesus Loves Me' has rocked generations to sleep, and heaven is not a concept, but a destination." It is writing of this quality that won the author his job as a national correspondent and the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. He grew up in poverty, the second of three sons of an alcoholic, abusive father and a loving mother. The early chapters give a beautiful description of warm and happy moments he enjoyed with her and his family even as she struggled to provide for them after they'd been abandoned. Bragg's strong voice reminds us that one's past and background leave an indelible mark on each of us whether we want to acknowledge that or not.
Brown, Dan	The Da Vinci Code (489 p.)	FIC BROWN	A murder in the silent halls of the Louvre museum reveals a sinister plot to uncover a secret that has been protected by a clandestine society since the days of Christ. The victim is a high-ranking agent of this ancient society who, in the moments before his death, manages to leave gruesome clues at the scene that only his granddaughter, cryptographer Sophie Neveu, and Robert Langdon, a famed symbologist, can untangle. The duo become both suspects and detectives searching for not only Neveu's grandfather's murderer, but also the stunning secret of the ages he was charged to protect. Mere steps ahead of the authorities and the deadly competition, the mystery leads Neveu and Langdon on a breathless flight through France, England, and history itself. Brown has created a thriller that also provides an amazing interpretation of Western history. Brown's hero and heroine embark on a lofty and intriguing exploration of some of Western culture's greatest mysteries--from the nature of the Mona Lisa's smile to the secret of the Holy Grail. Though some will quibble with the veracity of Brown's conjectures, therein lies the fun. This is an enthralling read that provides rich food for thought.
Brown, Dan	The Lost Symbol (639 p.)	FIC BROWN	In this stunning follow-up to the global phenomenon The Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown demonstrates once again why he is the world's most popular thriller writer. The Lost Symbol is a masterpiece of storytelling that finds famed symbologist Robert Langdon in a deadly race through a real-world labyrinth of codes, secrets, and unseen truths . . . all under the watchful eye of Brown's most terrifying villain to date. Set within the hidden chambers, tunnels, and temples of Washington, D.C., The Lost Symbol is an intelligent, lightning-paced story with surprises at every turn.
Burns, Olive Ann	Cold Sassy Tree (391 p.)	FIC BURNS	This story, full of warm humor and honesty, is told by Willy Tweedy, a 14-year-old boy living in a small, turn-of-the-century Georgia town. Will's hero is his Grandpa Rucker, who runs the town's general store. When Grandpa Rucker suddenly marries his store's young milliner barely three weeks after his wife's death, the town is set on its ear. Will Tweedy matures as he watches his family's reaction and adjustment to the news. He is trapped in the awkward phase of rising to adult expectations - driving the first cars in town - while still orchestrating wild pranks and starting scandalous gossip through his childish bragging. He seeks the wisdom of his grandpa and has his eyes opened to southern "ways" under the tutelage of Grandpa's new Yankee wife, Miss Love. Still, Will "couldn't figure out...why in the heck she would marry the old man." But Miss Love's influence seems to be transforming Grandpa into a younger man, and the answer unfolds slowly and sweetly as Will Tweedy becomes the confidante and staunch defender of this unlikely couple. The lessons of life and death, of piousness and irreverence, form the basis of memorable characters and a story that is difficult to put down.

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Caldwell, Bo	The Distant Land of My Father (400 p.)	FIC CALDWELL	Caldwell's first novel begins in 1930s Shanghai, a city where enterprising foreign entrepreneurs can quickly become millionaires and just as quickly lose everything as victims of the volatile political climate. Six-year-old Anna Schoene tells the tale of her insurance salesman/smuggler father, Joseph, the son of American missionaries, whose life-long obsession with the city's opportunities gains him great riches, though it ultimately costs him his family and almost his life. Anna worships her father. Her life in Shanghai has been one of privilege, thanks to his shady business dealings. But after a harrowing kidnapping incident, and frightened by the Japanese invasion of China, her mother flees home to California, taking Anna with her. Joseph is convinced that his connections will keep him safe and refuses to leave. Imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese and subsequently the Chinese Communists, he survives, although he loses everything and is finally deported to America. Over the years Anna has distanced herself emotionally from her father, realizing he needed money and power more than he needed his family. But when the physically broken and spiritually reborn Joseph returns to California, he reconciles with the grown Anna.
Campbell, Bonnie Jo	Once Upon A River (346 p.)	FIC CAMPBELL	Bonnie Jo Campbell has created an unforgettable heroine in sixteen-year-old Margo Crane, a beauty whose unflinching gaze and uncanny ability with a rifle have not made her life any easier. After the violent death of her father, in which she is complicit, Margo takes to the Stark River in her boat, with only a few supplies and a biography of Annie Oakley, in search of her vanished mother. But the river, Margo's childhood paradise, is a dangerous place for a young woman traveling alone, and she must be strong to survive, using her knowledge of the natural world and her ability to look unsparingly into the hearts of those around her. Her river odyssey through rural Michigan becomes a defining journey, one that leads her beyond self-preservation and to the decision of what price she is willing to pay for her choices.
Cisneros, Sandra	Caramelo (439 p.)	FIC CISNEROS	A rich family tale, based on Cisneros's own childhood. The story has a compelling coming-of-age theme and an array of eccentric, romantic characters. Celaya Reyes, called LaLa, is the youngest and the only girl among seven siblings. The book follows her from infancy to adolescence as she grows up in a noisy and loving clan of Mexican Americans struggling to be successful in the U.S. while remaining true to their cultural heritage. The Reyes's annual car journey from Chicago to Mexico City for a visit with the matriarch known as "The Awful Grandmother" is both a trial and a treat for LaLa. The imaginative and sensitive girl often feels lost within the family hilarity and histrionics, but she gradually forms an uneasy bond with her grandmother, inheriting from her the family stories, legends, and scandals.
Clancy, Tom	Patriot Games (503 p.)	FIC CLANCY	The "first" Ryan book explodes from the beginning pages. The story begins with Ryan and his wife and daughter in London on a working vacation. Ryan happens upon an IRA terrorist attempt on the car driving the Prince of Wales and his wife. He thwarts the attempt, suffering grave injury, and recovers to testify in the trial of one of the terrorists, who escapes while being transported to prison. Ryan's family returns to the U.S., where they feel safe and their lives apparently return to normal. The remainder of the story follows the escaped terrorist's plot for revenge on Ryan, ending with a full scale assault on Ryan's home by terrorists while Ryan is entertaining the Prince Of Wales and his wife! High adventure throughout with righteous violence and cold anger as well as heroism prevailing.
Clancy, Tom	Red Storm Rising (725 p.)	FIC CLANCY	Red Storm Rising, a World War III novel, begins in a blazing oil field in Russia, plunging readers into a gripping story of plots, strategies, wise men, and idiots that winds the tension ever tighter. Vivid characters emerge through the chaos of battles planned and fought. Sacrifices, heroes, great strategy confounded by bad weather, lack of supplies, and incomplete information draw readers into the adventure and the suspense of reversals. There are no Rambo's here; the heroes are ordinary young people caught by chance on the turning edge of war. Sheer grit and perseverance turn the tide in this chilling, fleshed-out war game.

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Crichton, Michael	Next (415 p.)	FIC CRICHTON	The subjects here are genetic engineering, genetic tampering, cross-cultural gene experiments, and stem cell research. Crichton screeches down the genetic highway at breakneck speed, tossing out truth and fiction in equal amounts. Can an African Grey parrot be able to carry on conversations with its owners? What about experiments to place commercial advertising on animals and fish? Throughout these flights of fancy are several story lines that bring the gene question down to a human level, pitting firm believers against equally firm opponents. Lawsuits that touch on the furthest reaches of genetic research confuse the jury and irritate the judges. <i>Next</i> blends fact and fiction into a breathless tale of a new world where nothing is what it seems and a set of new possibilities can open at every turn. Crichton challenges our sense of reality and notions of morality. Balancing the comic and
Diffenbaugh, Vanessa	The Language of Flowers (318 p.)	FIC DIFFENBAUGH	A mesmerizing, moving, and elegantly written debut novel, <i>The Language of Flowers</i> beautifully weaves past and present, creating a vivid portrait of an unforgettable woman whose gift for flowers helps her change the lives of others even as she struggles to overcome her own troubled past. The Victorian language of flowers was used to convey romantic expressions: honeysuckle for devotion, asters for patience, and red roses for love. But for Victoria Jones, it's been more useful in communicating grief, mistrust, and solitude. After a childhood spent in the foster-care system, she is unable to get close to anybody, and her only connection to the world is through flowers and their meanings. Now eighteen and emancipated from the system, Victoria has nowhere to go and sleeps in a public park, where she plants a small garden of her own. Soon a local florist discovers her talents, and Victoria realizes she has a gift for helping others through the flowers she chooses for them. But a mysterious vendor at the flower market has her questioning what's been missing in her life, and when she's forced to confront a painful secret from her past, she must decide whether it's worth risking everything for a second chance at happiness.
Doig, Ivan	The Whistling Season (345 p.)	FIC DOIG	Doig's latest foray through Montana history begins in the late 1950s, with Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Milliron on the verge of announcing the closure of the state's one-room schools, seen as hopelessly out of date in the age of Sputnik. But quickly the narrative takes us back to Paul's pivotal seventh-grade year, 1910, when he was a student in one of those one-room schools, and two landmark events took place: the Milliron family acquired a housekeeper, and Halley's comet came to Montana. Throughout his long career, Doig has been at his best when chronicling the passing of a season in the lives of a Montana family, usually farmers at around the turn of the century. As in all of his books, he digs the details of his historical moments from the dirt in which they thrived. Paul, his father, and his two brothers struggle to make a life on their farm in the wake of their mother's death, and they are shocked when they lay eyes on their new housekeeper, a recent widow who looks nothing like what they expected. The saga of how this stranger from Minneapolis and her brother (soon to become the new teacher) change lives in unexpected ways has all the charm of old-school storytelling.
Donnelly, Jennifer	Revolution (471 p.)	FIC DONNELLY	Brooklyn: Andi Alpers is on the edge. She's angry at her father for leaving, angry at her mother for not being able to cope, and heartbroken by the loss of her younger brother, Truman. Rage and grief are destroying her. And she's about to be expelled from Brooklyn Heights' most prestigious private school when her father intervenes. Now Andi must accompany him to Paris for winter break. Paris: Alexandrine Paradis lived over two centuries ago. She dreamed of making her mark on the Paris stage, but a fateful encounter with a doomed prince of France cast her in a tragic role she didn't want - and couldn't escape. Two girls, two centuries apart. One never knowing the other. But when Andi finds Alexandrine's diary, she recognizes something in her words and is moved to the point of obsession. There's comfort and distraction for Andi in the journal's antique pages - until, on a midnight journey through the catacombs of Paris, Alexandrine's words transcend paper and time, and the past becomes suddenly, terrifyingly present. Jennifer Donnelly artfully weaves two girls' stories into one unforgettable account of life, loss, and enduring love. <i>Revolution</i> spans centuries and vividly depicts the eternal struggles of the human heart.
Edwards, Kim	The Memory Keeper's Daughter (401 p.)	FIC EDWARDS	David Henry's life was turning out as he hoped. He was a doctor, married to a beautiful woman, Nora, with a baby on the way. But everything changed overnight because of one fateful decision. On a winter evening in 1961, a blizzard brewing, Nora goes into labor. Due to the weather, they could only make it to the clinic, not the hospital, and only Caroline, the nurse, arrived to help deliver the baby. David delivers his own child, a perfectly healthy son. But when Nora continues her labor, David realizes she is carrying twins; and the second child, a girl, is born with Down syndrome. Wanting to protect his wife from the devastating news, David gives the child to Caroline to take to an institution, asking her never to reveal the secret. Caroline takes the baby and disappears. Unfolding the plot over the course of 25 years, Edwards tells a moving story of two families bound by a secret that both eats away at relationships and eventually helps to create new ones.

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Egan, Jennifer	A Visit from the Goon Squad (340 p.)	FIC EGAN	Bennie is an aging former punk rocker and record executive. Sasha is the passionate, troubled young woman he employs. Here Jennifer Egan brilliantly reveals their pasts, along with the inner lives of a host of other characters whose paths intersect with theirs. With music pulsing on every page, <i>A Visit from the Goon Squad</i> is a startling, exhilarating novel of self-destruction and redemption.
Eggers, Dave	What is the What? (538 p.)	FIC EGGERS	Valentino Achak Deng, real-life hero of this engrossing epic, was a refugee from the Sudanese civil war-the bloodbath before the current Darfur bloodbath-of the 1980s and 90s. In this fictionalized memoir, Eggers makes him an icon of globalization. Separated from his family when Arab militia destroy his village, Valentino joins thousands of other "Lost Boys," beset by starvation, thirst and man-eating lions on their march to squalid refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, where Valentino pieces together a new life. He eventually reaches America, but finds his quest for safety, community and fulfillment in many ways even more difficult there than in the camps: he recalls, for instance, being robbed, beaten and held captive in his Atlanta apartment. Eggers's limpid prose gives Valentino an unaffected, compelling voice and makes his narrative by turns harrowing, funny, bleak and lyrical. The result is a horrific account of the Sudanese tragedy, but also an emblematic saga of modernity-of the search for home and self in a world of unending upheaval.
Enger, Leif	Peace Like A River (312 p.)	FIC ENGER	To the list of great American child narrators that includes Huck Finn and Scout Finch, let us now add Reuben "Rube" Land, the asthmatic 11-year-old boy at the center of Enger's remarkable first novel. Rube recalls the events of his childhood, in small-town Minnesota circa 1962, in a voice that perfectly captures the poetic, verbal stoicism of the northern Great Plains. "Here's what I saw," Rube warns his readers. "Here's how it went. Make of it what you will." And Rube sees plenty. In the winter of his 11th year, two schoolyard bullies break into the Lands' house, and Rube's big brother Davy guns them down with a Winchester. Shortly after his arrest, Davy breaks out of jail and goes on the lam. Swede is Rube's younger sister, a precocious writer who crafts rhymed epics of romantic Western outlawry. Shortly after Davy's escape, Rube, Swede, and their father, a widowed school custodian, hit the road too, swerving this way and that across Minnesota and North Dakota, determined to find their lost outlaw Davy. In the end it's not Rube who haunts the reader's imagination, it's his father, torn between love for his outlaw son and the duty to do the right, honest thing.
Enger, Leif	So Brave, Young and Handsome (287 p.)	FIC ENGER	A gritty western couched in the easy storytelling style of a folk ballad, Leif Enger's second novel tells the story of outlaw Glendon Hale's quest to right his past, as seen through the eyes of his unlikely companion Monte Becket. So Brave, Young, and Handsome begins with Becket, a struggling novelist bewildered by the success of his first book, who has pledged to his wife, son, and publisher to "write one thousand words a day until another book is finished." Four years and six unfinished novels later, Becket sits on the porch of his Minnesota farmhouse about to give up on number seven, when he spies a man standing up in his boat "rowing upstream through the ropy mists of the Cannon River." Eager to set aside his waning tale about handsome ranch hand Dan Roscoe, Becket calls out to the mysterious white-haired boatman and his life changes forever. At turns merry and wistful, romantic and tragic, So Brave, Young, and Handsome is as absorbing as a campfire tale, full of winking outlaws and relentless villains--the sort of story to keep you on the edge of your seat with hope in your heart.
Eugenides, Jeffrey	The Marriage Plot: a Novel (406 p.)	FIC EUGENIDES	Importantly but unobtrusively set in the early 1980s, this is the tale of Madeleine Hanna, recent Brown University English grad, and her admirer Mitchell Grammaticus, who opts out of Divinity School to walk the earth as an ersatz pilgrim. Madeleine is equally caught up, both with the postmodern vogue (Derrida, Barthes)-conflicting with her love of James, Austen, and Salinger-and with the brilliant Leonard Bankhead, whom she met in semiotics class and whose fits of manic depression jeopardize his suitability as a marriage prospect. Meanwhile, Mitchell winds up in Calcutta working with Mother Theresa's volunteers, still dreaming of Madeleine. In capturing the heady spirit of youthful intellect on the verge, Eugenides revives the coming-of-age novel for a new generation The book's fidelity to its young heroes and to a superb supporting cast of enigmatic professors, feminist theorists, neo-Victorians, and concerned mothers, and all of their evolving investment in ideas and ideals is such that the central argument of the book is also its solution: the old stories may be best after all, but there are always new ways to complicate them.

**Contemporary American Literature
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Feinstein, John	Last Dance: Behind the Scenes at the Final Four (384 p.)	796.323 FEI	The Final Four is the culmination of the NCAA men's college basketball season and the number-two American sports event, trailing only the Super Bowl. Feinstein, arguably the best book-length sports journalist working today, employs the 2005 weekend as the catalyst to discuss the history of the event, the key people, and, most significantly, the effect that involvement in the Final Four has had on participants' lives. The book is centered almost exclusively on the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big East Conference. Feinstein's jingoism translates to lots of Duke, North Carolina, Maryland, and Syracuse, with scant attention to the rest of the country with the exception of UCLA and coach John Wooden. That caveat aside, this is a terrific book. Feinstein goes behind the scenes to examine such matters as the often-controversial selection marathon, and the sometimes-petty rivalries between coaches. The anecdotes are entertaining, and the insights into the tournament's logistics fascinating, but what will linger most are the remembrances of players, especially those who ended up on the losing side. The best books take us to places we've never been and let us feel what life there is like. Welcome to the Final Four, courtesy of Feinstein.
Flagg, Fannie	Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café (403 p.)	FIC FLAGG	When Ninny Threadgoode and Evelyn Couch meet in the visitors lounge of an Alabama nursing home, they find themselves exchanging the sort of confidences that are sometimes only safe to reveal to strangers. At 48, Evelyn is falling apart: none of the middle-class values she grew up with seem to be important in today's world. On the other hand, 86-year-old Ninny is still being nurtured by memories of a lifetime spent in Whistle Stop, a pocket-sized town outside of Birmingham, which flourished in the days of the Great Depression. Most of the town's life centered around its one cafe, whose owners, gentle Ruth and tomboyish Idgie, served up grits (both true and hominy) to anyone who passed by. How their love for each other and just about everyone else survived visits from the sheriff, the Ku Klux Klan, a host of hungry hoboes, a murder and the rigors of the Depression makes lively reading.
Frazier, Charles	Cold Mountain (449 p.)	FIC FRAZIER	Sorely wounded and fatally disillusioned in the fighting at Petersburg, a Confederate soldier named Inman decides to walk back to his home in the Blue Ridge mountains to Ada, the woman he loves. His trek across the disintegrating South brings him into intimate and sometimes lethal converse with slaves and marauders, bounty hunters and witches, both helpful and malign. At the same time, the intrepid Ada is trying to revive her father's derelict farm and learning to survive in a world where the old certainties have been swept away. As it interweaves their stories, Cold Mountain asserts itself as an authentic odyssey, hugely powerful, majestically lovely, and keenly moving.
Frazier, Charles	Thirteen Moons (422 p.)	FIC FRAZIER	Thirteen Moons is an endearing story of an old man reminiscing about his life, loves, and adventures. Frazier's detailed descriptive phrases are almost melodious. He skillfully employs inference to stir imaginatios, and he subtly injects humor into many situations. Will Cooper was orphaned at a young age, indentured to a storekeeper, and adopted by a Cherokee Indian chief. He became a lawyer and lobbyist for Indian rights, a businessman, a reluctant accomplice to the relocation of the Cherokee Indians to Oklahoma (over the Trail of Tears), a landowner, a politician, a soldier, and more. He found his first love at the age of 17 and pined for her through most of his life.
Friedman, Thomas	Hot, Flat and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution -- and How We Can Renew Our Global Future (448 p.)	333.79 FRI	Friedman takes a provocative look at two of the biggest challenges we face today: America's loss of focus and national purpose since 9/11; and the global environmental crisis. In this account of where we stand now, he shows how the solutions to these problems are linked--how we can restore the world and revive America at the same time. Friedman explains how global warming, rapidly growing populations, and the astonishing expansion of the world's middle class through globalization have produced a planet that is "hot, flat, and crowded." The earth is being affected in ways that threaten to make it dangerously unstable. In just a few years, it will be too late to fix things--unless the U.S. steps up now and takes the lead in a worldwide effort to replace our energy practices with a strategy for clean energy, energy efficiency, and conservation. Friedman makes it clear that the green revolution we need will be the biggest innovation project in American history. But the payoff will be more than just cleaner air. It will inspire nation-building in America--by summoning the intelligence, creativity, boldness, and concern for the common good that are our nation's greatest natural resources.

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Friedman, Thomas	The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century (488 p.)	303.48 FRI	What Friedman means by "flat" is "connected": the lowering of trade and political barriers and the exponential technical advances of the digital revolution that have made it possible to do business, or almost anything else, instantaneously with billions of other people across the planet. This in itself should not be news to anyone. But the news that Friedman has to deliver is that just when we stopped paying attention to these developments--when the dot-com bust turned interest away from the business and technology pages and when 9/11 and the Iraq War turned all eyes toward the Middle East--is when they actually began to accelerate. Globalization 3.0, as he calls it, is driven not by major corporations or giant trade organizations like the World Bank, but by individuals: desktop freelancers and innovative startups all over the world (but especially in India and China) who can compete--and win--not just for low-wage manufacturing and information labor but, increasingly, for the highest-end research and design work as well.
Frost, Mark	Grand Slam: Bobby Jones, American and the Story of Golf (493 p.)	796.352 FRO	Before Arnold, Jack and Tiger, there was Bobby. After winning the Grand Slam of golf in 1930, Jones stood like a colossus over the American sporting scene. He is the only individual to have been recognized with two ticker tape parades down Broadway's Canyon of Heroes. Frost has written a swift, surefooted account of Jones's remarkable life and career. From Jones's precocious early days on the Atlanta links to his sudden retreat from the media spotlight, Frost covers every detail. The self-taught Jones began playing serious tournaments at 14 and quickly moved into the ranks of the world's best players. In 1930, he won the four major tournaments of the time: the British Amateur, the British Open, the U.S. Open and the U.S. Amateur, which sportswriters dubbed the Grand Slam. Following this success, Jones promptly retired. Later diagnosed with a rare nerve illness, he lived out his life as golf's elder statesman. This is a great read for avid golfers!
Gaines, Ernest	A Lesson Before Dying (256 p.)	FIC GAINES	This is the story of two African American men struggling to attain manhood in a prejudiced society and is set in Bayonne, La. in the late 1940s. It concerns Jefferson, a mentally slow, barely literate young man, who, though an innocent bystander to a shootout between a white store owner and two black robbers, is convicted of murder, and the sophisticated, educated man who comes to his aid. When Jefferson's own attorney claims that executing him would be tantamount to killing a hog, his incensed godmother, Miss Emma, turns to teacher Grant Wiggins, pleading with him to gain access to the jailed youth and help him to face his death by electrocution with dignity. Grant feels mingled love, loyalty and hatred for the poor plantation community where he was born and raised. He longs to leave the South and is reluctant to assume the level of leadership and involvement that helping Jefferson would require. Eventually, however, the two men, vastly different in potential yet equally degraded by racism, achieve a relationship that transforms them both. Suspense rises as it becomes clear that the integrity of the entire local black community depends on Jefferson's courage.
Gaines, Ernest	The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (245 p.)	FIC GAINES	Set in rural southern Louisiana, this novel spans 100 years of American history--from the early 1860s to the onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s--in following the life of the elderly Jane Pittman, who witnessed those years. A child at the end of the Civil War, Jane survives a massacre by former Confederate soldiers. She serves as a steadying influence for several black men who work hard to achieve dignity and economic as well as political equality. After the death of her husband, Joe Pittman, Jane becomes a committed Christian and a spiritual guide in her community. Spurred on by the violent death of a young community leader, Jane finally confronts a plantation owner who represents the white power structure to which she has always been subservient.
Grann, David	The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon (513 p. large print)	918.1 GRA	In 1925, renowned British explorer Col. Percy Harrison Fawcett embarked on a much publicized search to find the city of Z, site of an ancient Amazonian civilization that may or may not have existed. Fawcett, along with his grown son Jack, never returned, but that didn't stop countless others, including actors, college professors and well-funded explorers from venturing into the jungle to find Fawcett or the city. Among the wannabe explorers is Grann, a staff writer for the <i>New Yorker</i> , who has bad eyes and a worse sense of direction. He became interested in Fawcett while researching another story, eventually venturing into the Amazon to satisfy his all-consuming curiosity about the explorer and his fatal mission. Largely about Fawcett, the book examines the stranglehold of passion as Grann's vigorous research mirrors Fawcett's obsession with uncovering the mysteries of the jungle. By interweaving the great story of Fawcett with his own investigative escapades in South America and Britain, Grann provides an in-depth, captivating character study that has the relentless energy of a classic adventure tale.

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Greenlaw, Linda	Hungry Ocean: A Swordboat Captain's Journey (265 p.)	639.2 GRE	Linda Greenlaw, the world's only female swordfish boat captain, is one of the most successful fishermen in the Grand Banks commercial fleet, though until the publication of Sebastian Junger's <i>The Perfect Storm</i> , "nobody cared." Greenlaw's boat, the <i>Hannah Boden</i> , was the sister ship to the doomed <i>Andrea Gail</i> , which disappeared in the mother of all storms in 1991 and became the focus of Junger's book. The <i>Hungry Ocean</i> , Greenlaw's account of a month-long swordfishing trip over 1,000 nautical miles out to sea, tells the story of what happens when things go right--proving, in the process, that every successful voyage is a study in narrowly averted disaster. There is the weather, the danger of mechanical failure, the perils of controlling five young fishermen in close quarters, not to mention the threat of a bad fishing run: "If we don't catch fish, we don't get paid." Greenlaw's straightforward prose underscores the qualities that make her a good captain: fairness, physical and mental endurance, attention to detail. Ultimately, Greenlaw proves that the love of fishing--in all of its grueling, isolating, suspenseful glory--is a matter of the heart and blood, not the mind.
Greenlaw, Linda	The Lobster Chronicles (238 p.)	B GREENLAW	Greenlaw gave up swordfishing to return to her parents' home on Isle Au Haut off the coast of Maine and fish for lobster. Her plainspoken essays paint a picture of a grueling life as she details maintaining her boat and equipment, setting and hauling hundreds of traps with a crew of one, contending with the weather and surviving seasons when the lobsters don't bother to come around. She intersperses her narrative with plenty of eccentrics who live on her tiny island. Among them are Rita, the inveterate borrower who's such a nuisance that Greenlaw's parents hide behind the couch when they see her coming; George and Tommy of <i>Island Boy Repairs</i> , who make a horrendous mess of every job they undertake; and Victor, the cigar-eating womanizer who imports a red-headed flasher from Alabama. One of Greenlaw's themes is her desire to find a husband but, according to her friend Alden, she intimidates men: she's tough talking, feisty and very self-assured, which is no doubt why the other lobstermen readily accept her as one of them. Self-speculation and uncertainties such as these balance her delightfully cocky essays of island life.
Grisham, John	A Painted House (465 p.)	FIC GRISHAM	Lucas Chandler is a seven-year-old boy who lives in an unpainted house on an Arkansas farm with his parents and grandparents in the early 1950s. He loves Coca-Cola, baseball, and the St. Louis Cardinals, and he plans on using the money he earns picking cotton to buy a shiny baseball jacket from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Soon after the hired crews of Mexicans and "hill people" arrive to help pick the Chandler family's 80 acres of cotton, Lucas sees things that cause him to lose his innocence much earlier than he should and long for the days when he did not have to keep secrets or worry about his and his family's safety. Featuring vivid descriptions, bits of humor, and a thrilling pace, this is a suspenseful and satisfying read.
Grisham, John	The Associate (373 p.)	FIC GRISHAM	Kyle McAvoy grew up in his father's small-town law office in York, Pennsylvania. He excelled in college, was elected editor-in-chief of <i>The Yale Law Journal</i> , and his future has limitless potential. But Kyle has a secret, a dark one, an episode from college that he has tried to forget. The secret, though, falls into the hands of the wrong people, and Kyle is forced to take a job he doesn't want--even though it's a job most law students can only dream about. Three months after leaving Yale, Kyle becomes an associate at the largest law firm in the world, where, in addition to practicing law, he is expected to lie, steal, and take part in a scheme that could send him to prison, if not get him killed. With an unforgettable cast of characters and villains--from Baxter Tate, a drug-addled trust fund kid and possible rapist, to Dale, a pretty but seemingly quiet former math teacher who shares Kyle's "cubicle" at the law firm, to two of the most powerful and fiercely competitive defense contractors in the country--and featuring all the twists and turns that have made John Grisham the most popular storyteller in the world, <i>The Associate</i> is vintage Grisham.

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Grisham, John	The Confession (418 p.)	FIC GRISHAM	For every innocent man sent to prison, there is a guilty one left on the outside. Travis Boyette doesn't understand how the police and prosecutors got the wrong man, and he doesn't care. He can't believe his luck. Time passes and he realizes that the mistake will not be corrected: the authorities believe in their case and are determined to get a conviction. He may even watch the trial. He is relieved when the verdict is guilty. He is content to allow an innocent person to go to prison, to serve hard time, even to be executed. In 1998, in a small East Texas city, Boyette abducted, raped, and strangled a high school cheerleader. He buried her body so that it would never be found, then watched in amazement as police and prosecutors arrested and convicted Donte Drumm, a local football star, and sent him to death row. Now nine years have passed. Travis has been paroled in Kansas for a different crime; Donte is four days away from his execution. Travis suffers from an inoperable brain tumor. For the first time in his miserable life, he decides to do what's right and confess. But how can a guilty man convince lawyers, judges, and politicians that they're about to execute an innocent man?
Grisham, John	The Litigators p.) (385	FIC GRISHAM	Grisham's entertaining modern-day legal thriller offers a biting farcical look at lawyers at the bottom of the food chain. David Zinc, an associate at a Chicago mega-firm who's sick of the sweatshop he's been laboring in for five years, flees the office one morning and ends up spending all day in a bar. Soon after the bartender finally kicks him out, Zinc spots an ad on a city bus for a firm of ambulance-chasers, Finley & Figg, and resolves to join their hapless practice. Meanwhile, Wally Figg, one of Finley & Figg's two partners, thinks he's found a goldmine after learning that a client who died recently was taking an anti-cholesterol drug called Krayoxx. Zinc, who has zero litigation experience, aids Finley & Figg, who likewise lack litigation experience, in filing suit against the huge pharmaceutical company that produces Krayoxx. Grisham makes Zinc's personal transformation more convincing than his professional one. Some readers may feel the fairv tale ending clashes with the dark humor of the opening.
Hamilton, Jane	A Map of the World (390 p.)	FIC HAMILTON	The story centers on a few months in the lives of Alice and Howard Goodwin and their little girls, Emma and Claire. The Goodwins live on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, a few hundred acres surrounded by housing tracts. Because they are the only farm family left, and because they are somewhat eccentric and proud of their self-sufficiency, they are isolated from most of their neighbors. Their only friends are the Collins family. One day, Theresa Collins brings her daughters to stay at the farm while she goes to work. In the few minutes that Alice spends looking for a bathing suit, two-year-old Lizzie Collins runs to the pond and drowns. Alice blames herself for Lizzie's death, but that's not all. The mother of Robbie Mackessy, a little boy who is one of Alice's most frequent patients in her job as a part-time school nurse, accuses her of sexual child abuse, and Alice is arrested. The rest of the book traces Alice's time in jail, her family's efforts to cope while she is gone, and her trial. Hamilton has a great gift for characterization. Hearbreaking, harrowing, extremely well done.
Harbach, Chad	The Art of Fielding (512 p.)	FIC HARBACH	At Westish College, a small school on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of five people are upended. Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. College president Guert Affenlight, a longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen Dunne, Henry's gay roommate and teammate, becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike Schwartz, the Harpooners' team captain and Henry's best friend, realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella Affenlight, Guert's daughter, returns to Westish after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life. As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one another find their true paths. Written with boundless intelligence and filled with the tenderness of youth, The Art of Fielding is an expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment--to oneself and to others.

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Hill, Joe	Heart-Shaped Box (376 p.)	FIC HILL	Hill delivers a terrifyingly contemporary twist to the traditional ghost story with his first novel. Aging rock star Judas Coyne is a collector of bizarre and macabre artifacts: a used hangman's noose, a snuff film, and rare books on witchcraft. When he purchases a suit billed in an online auction as the haunted clothes of a recently deceased man, Coyne finds more than he bargained for. Everywhere he looks he sees the twisted spirit of an old, evil man following him and dangling a deadly razor on a chain. He learns that the suit belonged to Craddock McDermott, the stepfather of a former lover who committed suicide shortly after Coyne tossed her out of his life. McDermott, a professional hypnotist prior to his death, swore to destroy Coyne's rock-star life of self-indulgence to avenge her death. The behind-the-scenes look at stardom alongside the frightening pyrotechnics of McDermott's ghost will draw readers who like a good scare. But like all good ghost stories, Hill also crafts a deftly plotted mystery as McDermott's true motivations and powers unfold. The depth of character hidden in the dark shadows of both men lifts this thriller to an impressive debut.
Hillenbrand, Laura	Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption (496 p.)	940.54 HIL	The author of Seabiscuit has written this biography of World War II prisoner of war survivor Louis Zamperini (b. 1917). A track athlete at the 1936 Munich Olympics, Zamperini became a B-24 crewman in the U.S. Army Air Force. When his plane went down in the Pacific in 1943, he spent 47 days in a life raft, then was picked up by a Japanese ship and survived starvation and torture in labor camps. Eventually repatriated, he had a spiritual rebirth and returned to Japan to promote forgiveness and healing.
Hoffman, Alice	The Dovekeepers: a Novel (501 p.)	FIC HOFFMAN	In 70 C.E., 900 Jews held out for months against armies of Romans on Masada, a mountain in the Judean desert. According to the ancient historian Josephus, two women and five children survived. Based on this tragic and iconic event, Hoffman's novel is a spellbinding tale of four extraordinarily bold, resourceful, and sensuous women, each of whom has come to Masada by a different path. Yael's mother died in childbirth, and her father, an expert assassin, never forgave her for that death. Revka, a village baker's wife, watched the horrifically brutal murder of her daughter by Roman soldiers; she brings to Masada her young grandsons, rendered mute by what they have witnessed. Aziza is a warrior's daughter, raised as a boy, a fearless rider and an expert marksman who finds passion with a fellow soldier. Shirah, born in Alexandria, is wise in the ways of ancient magic and medicine, a woman with uncanny insight and power. The lives of these four complex and fiercely independent women intersect in the desperate days of the siege. All are dovekeepers, and all are also keeping secrets about who they are, where they come from, who fathered them, and whom they love.
Hoffman, Alice	The Story Sisters (325 p.)	FIC HOFFMAN	Hoffman's novel follows the dark family saga of Elv, Megan and Claire Story, sisters plagued by uncommon sadness. As a child, Elv spun fairy tales of a magical world for her sisters, but a period of savage sexual abuse—information about which slowly leaks out—sends her spiraling into years of drug addiction and painful self-abuse. Tragedy after tragedy befalls the family—Elv's commitment to a juvenile rehab facility, a deadly accident, a fatal illness and betrayal after betrayal. The last third of the book turns to focus on Claire, who has been so damaged by the family crises that she refuses to speak. Hoffman's prose is as lovely as ever: the imagined and real worlds of the Story sisters are rich and clear.
Huston, Charlie	Sleepless; a novel (353 p.)	FIC HUSTON	A new epidemic of fatal insomnia has washed across the globe, and there is no known cure. The only medication that helps is called Dreamer, and there is not nearly enough to comfort all the dying. As the economy grounds to a halt and society tumbles down around him, undercover L.A. cop Parker Haas tries desperately to infiltrate the drug ring that is selling underground Dreamer, not just because Park is a dedicated cop but also because his wife is one of the afflicted. With hundreds of extra hours on their hands, the sleepless have become heavy gamers and spend hours in virtual worlds similar to many of today's fantasy role-playing games. As in Cory Doctorow's Little Brother the virtual-gaming world is used to manipulate events in the real world. With a strong noir tone and a dystopian story line, Sleepless works fine as a thriller.

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Irving, John	A Prayer for Owen Meany (543 p.)	FIC IRVING	The narrator remembers when he and Owen Meany were both 11 years old in Gravesend, New Hampshire. Best pals, they were in Little League together when Owen hit a foul ball that struck the narrator's mother in the left temple and killed her on the spot. End of friendship between the boys? Hardly. Owen, after the accident, believes himself an instrument of God; the narrator, Owen's friend throughout his life, follows Owen to religion. Piling anecdote upon anecdote, Irving documents this everlasting friendship--as Owen, God's instrument, brings divine intervention into the narrator's life.
Jones, Tayari	Silver Sparrow (340 p.)	FIC JONES	With the opening line of Silver Sparrow , "My father, James Witherspoon, is a bigamist", author Tayari Jones unveils a breathtaking story about a man's deception, a family's complicity, and two teenage girls caught in the middle. Set in a middle-class neighborhood in Atlanta in the 1980s, the novel revolves around James Witherspoon's two families -- the public one and the secret one. When the daughters from each family meet and form a friendship, only one of them knows they are sisters. It is a relationship destined to explode when secrets are revealed and illusions shattered. As Jones explores the backstories of her rich, yet flawed, characters, she also reveals the joy, as well as the destruction, they brought to one another's lives. At the heart of it all are the two lives at stake. Jones portrays the fragility of these young girls with raw authenticity as they seek love, demand attention, and try to imagine themselves as women, just not as their mothers.
Katovsky, Bill	Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq (422 p.)	956.7044 KAT	In comparison to the Gulf War of 1991, in which the Pentagon controlled the news as tightly as possible, the war of 2003 was a wide-open affair for reporters. This was partly done to counteract propaganda coming from the Iraqi government; it was also an attempt to control and influence the news by keeping journalists under close watch. To this end, the Pentagon developed a "slick new public relations concept known as embedding." Embedded journalists lived, ate, and traveled with the troops. They also came under enemy fire with the troops. In fact, as a group, the roughly 2,700 journalists in Iraq were more likely to be killed in combat than the quarter million American and British soldiers. Traveling with troops was generally safer and afforded better access, but what about journalistic ethics? That is question at the core of this fascinating book and one proves to have many different answers.
Kennedy, Edward	True Compass: A Memoir (732 p.)	B KENNEDY, E.	In this landmark autobiography, five years in the making, Senator Edward M. Kennedy tells his extraordinary personal story--of his legendary family, politics, and fifty years at the center of national events.
Kidd, Sue Monk	The Mermaid Chair (332 p.)	FIC KIDD	Kidd's follow-up to The Secret Life of Bees, while quite different in plot, shares some themes with its predecessor. Forty-three-year old Jessie Sullivan is pulled out of her staid life in Atlanta with her husband and daughter, back to her childhood home on Egret Island after her mother, Nelle, cuts off one of her own fingers. Jessie has been uneasy with the island since her beloved father died when she was nine in a boating accident, a tragedy Jessie has always felt partially responsible for. At the behest of her mother's best friend, Jessie journeys back to the island to try to reconnect with the mother she's never been close to. Jessie wants to know what drove her obviously disturbed mother to sever her finger, and she thinks Father Dominic, one of the monks who resides in a nearby monastery, might know more about her mother's state of mind. But it is another monk who claims Jessie's attention-- Brother Thomas, who ignites in Jessie a passion so intense it overwhelms her, leading her to question her marriage and rediscover her artistic drive. Kidd's second book is just as gracefully written as her first and possesses an equally compelling story.
Kidd, Sue Monk	The Secret Life of Bees (302 p.)	FIC KIDD	Kidd's warm story is set in the sixties, just after the civil rights bill has been passed. Fourteen-year-old Lily Owens is haunted by the accidental death of her mother 10 years earlier, which left her in the care of her brutal, angry father but also Rosaleen, a strong, proud black woman. After Rosaleen is thrown into jail for standing up to a trio of racists, Lily helps her escape from the hospital where she is being kept, and the two flee to Tiburon, a town Lily believes her mother had a connection to. A clue among her mother's possessions leads Lily to the Boatwright sisters, three black women who keep bees. They give Lily and Rosaleen the haven they need, but Lily remains haunted by her mother's death and her own involvement in it. Although she fears her father is looking for her, Lily manages to find solace among the strong women who surround her and, eventually, the truth about her mother that she has been seeking.

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Kingsolver, Barbara	Animal Dreams (342 p.)	FIC KINGSOLVER	A young woman returns to her hometown to care for her father and, without knowing it, herself. As usual, Codi is seeking to avoid life, but instead she finds plenty of it. She begins a complicated romance with a former boyfriend, corresponds with her sister, Hallie, who is kidnapped and then murdered in Nicaragua, tries to convince her father that his declining mental abilities are interfering with his work as a physician, and attempts to save the town from the evil Black Mountain Mining Company, which is poisoning the river and threatening the region's future. In alternating chapters, Kingsolver gives us Codi and her father, Homer, adroitly melding two viewpoints of one history. The book's southwestern setting proves particularly evocative: lush hot springs, dramatic vistas, and ancient pueblos are ideal envelopes for characters in deep introspection or loving embrace. The mixed Anglo and native American culture is equally colorful and unusually well developed.
Kingsolver, Barbara	The Lacuna (507 p.)	FIC KINGSOLVER	Kingsolver's novel focuses on Harrison William Shepherd, the product of a divorced American father and a Mexican mother. After getting kicked out of his American military academy, Harrison spends his formative years in Mexico in the 1930s in the household of Diego Rivera; his wife, Frida Kahlo; and their houseguest, Leon Trotsky, who is hiding from Soviet assassins. After Trotsky is assassinated, Harrison returns to the U.S., settling down in Asheville, N.C., where he becomes an author of historical potboilers and is later investigated as a possible subversive. Narrated in the form of letters, diary entries and newspaper clippings, the novel achieves a rare dramatic power that reaches its emotional peak when Harrison wittily and eloquently defends himself before the House Un-American Activities Committee (on the panel is a young Dick Nixon). Employed by the American imagination, is how one character describes Harrison, a term that could apply equally to Kingsolver as she masterfully resurrects a dark period in American history with the assured hand of a true literary artist.
Kingsolver, Barbara	The Poisonwood Bible (543 p.)	FIC KINGSOLVER	This intense family drama is set in an Africa on the verge of independence and upheaval. In 1959, evangelical preacher Nathan Price moves his wife and four daughters from Georgia to a village in the Belgian Congo, later Zaire. Their dysfunction and cultural arrogance proves disastrous as the family is nearly destroyed by war, Nathan's tyranny, and Africa itself. Told in the voices of the mother and daughters, the novel spans 30 years as the women seek to understand each other and the continent that tore them apart. Kingsolver has a keen understanding of the inevitable and often violent clashes between white and indigenous cultures.
Kirkpatrick, David	The Facebook Effect: The Inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World (372 p.)	338.7 KIR	In little more than half a decade, Facebook has gone from a dorm-room novelty to a company with 500 million users. It is one of the fastest growing companies in history, an essential part of the social life of millions of adults. As Facebook spreads globally, it creates surprising effects—even becoming instrumental in political protests. Veteran technology reporter David Kirkpatrick had the full cooperation of Facebook's key executives in researching this fascinating history of the company and its impact on our lives. Kirkpatrick tells us how Facebook was created, why it has flourished, and where it is going next. He chronicles its successes and missteps, and gives readers the most complete assessment anywhere of founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the central figure in the company's remarkable ascent. Kirkpatrick shows how Zuckerberg steadfastly refused to compromise his vision, insistently focusing on growth over profits and preaching that Facebook must dominate Internet communication. In the process, he and key executives have created a company that has changed social life in the U.S. and elsewhere, a company that has become ubiquitous in marketing, altering politics, business, and even our sense of our own identity.
Koryta, Michael	So Cold the River (508 p.)	FIC KORYTA	It started with a beautiful woman and a challenge. As a gift for her husband, Alyssa Bradford approaches Eric Shaw to make a documentary about her father-in-law, Campbell Bradford, a 95-year-old billionaire whose past is wrapped in mystery. Eric grabs the job even though there are few clues to the man's past--just the name of his hometown and an antique water bottle he's kept his entire life. In Bradford's hometown, Eric discovers an extraordinary history--a glorious domed hotel where movie stars, presidents, athletes, and mobsters once mingled, and hot springs whose miraculous mineral water cured everything from insomnia to malaria. Neglected for years, the resort has been restored to its former grandeur just in time for Eric's stay. Just hours after his arrival, Eric experiences a frighteningly vivid vision. As the days pass, the frequency and intensity of his hallucinations increase and draw Eric deeper into the town's dark history. He discovers that something besides the hotel has been restored--a long-forgotten evil that will stop at nothing to regain its lost glory. Brilliantly imagined and terrifyingly real, So Cold the River is a tale of irresistible suspense with a racing, unstoppable current.

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Kurson, Robert	Crashing Through (306 p.)	362.4 KUR	This is a true story of one man's heroic odyssey from blindness into sight. Blinded at age three, Mike May defied expectations by breaking world records in downhill speed skiing, joining the CIA, and becoming a successful inventor, entrepreneur, and family man. He had never yearned for vision. Then, in 1999, a chance encounter brought startling news: a revolutionary stem cell transplant surgery could restore May's vision. It would allow him to drive, to read, to see his children's faces. He began to contemplate an astonishing new world: Would music still sound the same? Would sex be different? Would he recognize himself in the mirror? Would his marriage survive? Would he still be Mike May? The procedure was filled with risks, some of them deadly, others beyond May's wildest dreams. Even if the surgery worked, history was against him. Fewer than 20 cases were known worldwide in which a person gained vision after a lifetime of blindness. Each of those people suffered desperate consequences we can scarcely imagine. There were countless reasons for May to pass on vision. He could think of only a single reason to go forward. Whatever his decision, he knew it would change his life.
Kurson, Robert	Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II (397 p.)	940.54 KUR	Deep-wreck divers are used to operating with almost no headroom and in zero visibility, navigating by touch alone; it is a compliment to be told "When you die, no one will ever find your body." Despite the dangers, wreck divers are typically weekend warriors, men who leave families and jobs behind to test themselves at two hundred feet down. Kurson's exciting account centers on two divers, John Chatterton and Robert Kohler, who in 1991 found an unidentified U-boat embedded in the ocean floor off the coast of New Jersey. The task of identifying it leads them to Germany, Washington, D.C., and the darkest corners of the submarine itself. Some of the most haunting moments occur on land, as when the divers research the lives of the doomed German sailors whose bones they swim among. Once underwater, Kurson's adrenalized prose sweeps you along in a tale of average-guy adventure.
Kyle, Aryn	The God of Animals (305 p.)	FIC KYLE	Horses and lost love propel this confident debut novel about Alice Winston, a young loner with family troubles in Desert Valley, Colorado. Her mother hasn't left her bed since Alice was a baby; her father struggles to keep their horse ranch solvent; and her beautiful older sister, Nona, has eloped with a rodeo cowboy. Alice resists befriending the rich girl who takes riding lessons from her father, becomes obsessed with a classmate who drowns in a nearby canal and entangles herself with adults whose motives are suspect. Unprepared for the increasingly adult role she finds herself playing, Alice starts telling lies, and soon finds herself in a complicated relationship with her alienated English teacher. This is a powerful tale of a girl coming of age amid a dying way of life.
LaPlante, Alice	Turn of Mind (305 p.)	FIC LAPLANTE	Part literary novel, part thriller, LaPlante's haunting first novel traces the deterioration of orthopedic surgeon Jennifer White, who at 64 is suffering severe dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. Told entirely from her viewpoint, this is an often startling portrait of a fiercely intelligent woman struggling mightily to hold on to her sense of self. As her lucidity waxes and wanes, her dire circumstances increasingly come to light. Her husband has recently died, and she lives with a caretaker in her handsome house on Chicago's North Side. She has two children who seem to be battling over her money. Most distressing, her best friend, Amanda O'Toole, has just been murdered, her body found in her home with four fingers surgically removed. Now the police consider Jennifer a person of interest, and even Jennifer herself does not know whether she killed Amanda. It appears their friendship was a difficult one, marred by frequent arguments, and Jennifer's seemingly happy marriage was full of secrets and betrayal, all of which Amanda seemed to know about. This masterfully written debut is fascinating on so many levels, from its poignant and inventive depiction of a harrowing illness to its knowing portrayal of the dark complexities of friendship and marriage.

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Maraniss, David	Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero (401 p.)	B CLEMENTE	When Roberto Clemente died on New Year's Eve 1972 while delivering relief aid to the victims of a Nicaraguan earthquake, his legacy as both cultural and sporting icon was secured for the ages. His baseball credentials were never in doubt--he was indisputably the best right fielder of all time. He was also the first great Latin American baseball star. Maraniss chronicles the life story of a man who passionately valued his heritage and inspired others to do so. He championed other Latin players and used his fame to make the U.S. a more tolerant home for all Latinos, regardless of athletic abilities. Along with the inspirational and multicultural side of Clemente's story, Maraniss delivers a mother lode of wonderful baseball lore: the fact that Clemente's unorthodox "basket" catch came about as a result of playing softball as a youngster; the remarkable saga of how, despite being signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers, he came to be a Pittsburgh Pirate. Maraniss chooses his sports subjects carefully. As Lombardi represented the best of a time past, Clemente embodies the best of what we dream for the future: dignity, pride, tolerance, and an obligation to make the world a better place.
McCain, John	Worth The Fighting For (432 p.)	B MCCAIN	McCain picks up where his Faith of My Fathers left off, after his release from a North Vietnamese POW prison. After two decades in Congress, he has plenty of stories to tell, beginning with his first experiences on Capitol Hill as a navy liaison to the Senate, where he became friends with men like Henry "Scoop" Jackson and John Tower. He revisits the "Keating Five" affair that nearly wrecked his career, pointedly observing how the investigating Senate committee left him dangling for political reasons long after he'd been cleared of wrongdoing. There's much less on his 2000 presidential campaign than one might expect; a single chapter lingers on a self-lacerating analysis of how he lost the South Carolina primary. Self-criticism is a recurring motif, as the senator berates himself for speaking recklessly or letting his temper get the best of him. He nevertheless takes pride in his status as a maverick and pays tribute to inspirational figures like Theodore Roosevelt, Ted Williams and Robert Jordan, the fictional protagonist of Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls. Luckily for McCain, he's such an engaging storyteller most readers will readily accept these digressions from his own remarkable history.
McCall, Nathan	Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America (416 p.)	B MCCALL	An autobiography that captures the pain, anger, and fierce determination of a black journalist writing today for the Washington Post. McCall's open and honest description of his life as a boy in a black neighborhood in Portsmouth, VA, his participation in violent criminal acts, and his eventual imprisonment for armed robbery seem somehow to be an expression of the rage of so many young people in America's urban areas. While imprisoned, he worked as inmate librarian and was so moved by Richard Wright's books that he became fascinated by the power of words and decided to become a writer. Though he's made a successful career against great odds, he makes it plain that he doesn't feel completely at ease with his peers in the establishment or those on the streets.
McCarthy, Cormac	No Country for Old Men (309 p.)	FIC MCCARTHY	In 1980 southwest Texas, Llewelyn Moss, hunting antelope near the Rio Grande, stumbles across several dead men, a bunch of heroin and \$2.4 million in cash. The bulk of the novel is a gripping man-on-the-run sequence relayed in terse, masterful prose as Moss, who's taken the money, tries to evade Wells, an ex-Special Forces agent employed by a powerful cartel, and Chigurh, an icy psychopathic murderer armed with a cattle gun and a dangerous philosophy of justice. Also concerned about Moss's whereabouts is Sheriff Bell, an aging lawman struggling with his sense that there's a new breed of man (embodied in Chigurh) whose destructive power he simply cannot match. In a series of thoughtful first-person passages interspersed throughout, Sheriff Bell laments the changing world, wrestles with an uncomfortable memory from his service in WWII and—a soft ray of light in a book so steeped in bloodshed—rejoices in the great good fortune of his marriage. While the action of the novel thrills, it's the sensitivity and wisdom of Sheriff Bell that

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McCourt, Frank	Angela's Ashes (363 p.)	B MCCOURT	Despite impoverishing his family because of his alcoholism, McCourt's father passed on to his son a gift for superb storytelling. He told him about the great Irish heroes, the old days in Ireland, the people in their Limerick neighborhood, and the world beyond their shores. McCourt writes in the voice of the child 'with no self-pity or review of events' and just retells the tales. He recounts his desperately poor early years, living on public assistance and losing three siblings, but manages to make the book funny and uplifting. Stories of trying on his parents' false teeth and his adventures as a post-office delivery boy will have readers laughing out loud. Young people will recognize the truth in these compelling tales; the emotions expressed; the descriptions of teachers, relatives, neighbors; and the casual cruelty adults show toward children. Readers will enjoy the humor and the music in the language. A vivid, wonderfully readable memoir.
McCourt, Frank	Tis: A Memoir (367 p.)	B MCCOURT	In McCourt's followup to Angela's Ashes, he chronicles his return to New York. A high-school dropout with a thick brogue, terrible teeth and skin, and red and infected eyes, he is easy pickings for a priest who helps him get settled, then attempts to molest him. This introduction to life in America kicks off an almost unbelievable series of humiliations and hardships as McCourt works soul-crushingly menial jobs for pittance and is confronted both with vicious anti-Irish prejudice and tedious Irish pride. McCourt stubbornly dreams of becoming a teacher and writer but often retreats from the demands of college and work into the comforting haze of alcohol, the bane of his family. Finally, after a stint in the army and years of being mocked for his bookish ways, he succeeds in becoming a teacher, and his riveting accounts of his experiences in a Staten Island vocational high school at the height of McCarthyism are not to be missed. His family is present, too, of course. His mother remains depressed even under her sons' care. His father is impossible right up to the day he dies, and McCourt's brothers live "bright carefree" lives, while he does everything the hard way, the only way he knows how, and the only
McLain, Paula	The Paris Wife (314 p.)	FIC MCLAIN	History is sadly neglectful of the supporting players in the lives of great artists. Fortunately, fiction provides ample opportunity to bring these often fascinating personalities out into the limelight. Paula McLain brings Hadley Richardson Hemingway out from the formidable shadow cast by her famous husband. Though doomed, the Hemingway marriage had its giddy high points, including a whirlwind courtship and a few fast and furious years of the expatriate lifestyle in 1920s Paris. Hadley and Ernest traveled in heady company during this gin-soaked and jazz-infused time, and readers are treated to intimate glimpses of many of the literary giants of the era, including Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. But the real star of the story is Hadley, as this time around, Ernest is firmly relegated to the background as he almost never was during their years together. Though eventually a woman scorned, Hadley is able to acknowledge without rancor or bitterness that "Hem had helped me to see what I really was and what I could do." Much more than a woman-behind-the-man homage, this beautifully crafted tale is an unsentimental tribute to a woman who acted with grace and strength as her marriage crumbled.
McWhorter, Diane	Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution (602 p.)	976.1 MCW	"The Year of Birmingham," 1963, was a cataclysmic turning point in America's long civil rights struggle. That spring, child demonstrators faced down police dogs and fire hoses in huge nonviolent marches for desegregation. A few months later, Ku Klux Klansmen retaliated by bombing the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and killing four young black girls. Diane McWhorter, journalist and daughter of a prominent Birmingham family, weaves together police and FBI documents, interviews with black activists and former Klansmen, and personal memories into an extraordinary narrative of the city, the personalities, and the events that brought about America's second emancipation.
Mendelsohn, Daniel	The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million (503 p.)	973.04924 MEN	Daniel Mendelsohn's The Lost is the deeply personal account of a search for one family among his larger family, the one barely spoken of, only to say they were "killed by the Nazis." Mendelsohn, even as a boy, was always the one interested in his family's history, but when he came upon a set of letters from his great uncle Schmiel, pleading for help from his American relatives as the Nazi grip on the lives of Jews in their Polish town became tighter and tighter, he set out to find what had happened to that lost family. The result is both memoir and history, an ambitious and gorgeously meditative detective story that takes him across the globe in search of the lost threads of these few almost forgotten lives.

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Meyer, Stephenie	The Host (624 p.)	FIC MEYER	In this tantalizing SF novel, planet-hopping parasites are inserting their silvery centipede selves into human brains, curing cancer, eliminating war and turning Earth into paradise. But some people want Earth back, warts and all, especially Melanie Stryder, who refuses to surrender, even after being captured in Chicago and becoming a host for a soul called Wanderer. Melanie uses her surviving brain cells to persuade Wanderer to help search for her loved ones in the Arizona desert. When the pair find Melanie's brother and her boyfriend in a hidden rebel cell led by her uncle, Wanderer is at first hated. Once the rebels accept Wanderer, whom they dub Wanda, Wanda's whole perspective on humanity changes. The narrative is a mature and imaginative thriller and shines with romantic intrigue.
Millard, Candice	River of Doubt (416 p.)	918.1 MIL	In a gripping account, Millard focuses on an episode in Teddy Roosevelt's search for adventure that nearly came to a disastrous end. A year after Roosevelt lost a third-party bid for the White House in 1912, he decided to chase away his blues by accepting an invitation for a South American trip that quickly evolved into an ill-prepared journey down an unexplored tributary of the Amazon known as the River of Doubt. The small group, including T.R.'s son Kermit, was hampered by the failure to pack enough supplies and the absence of canoes sturdy enough for the river's rapids. An injury Roosevelt sustained became infected with flesh-eating bacteria and left the ex-president so weak that, at his lowest moment, he told Kermit to leave him to die in the rainforest. Millard, a former staff writer for National Geographic, nails the suspense element of this story perfectly, but equally important to her success is the marvelous amount of detail she provides on the wildlife that Roosevelt and his fellow explorers encountered on their journey, as well as
Morgenstern, Erin	The Night Circus (387 p.)	FIC MORGENSTERN	Debut author Morgenstern doesn't miss a beat in this smashing tale of greed, fate, and love set in a turn of the 20th-century circus. Celia is a five-year-old with untrained psychokinetic powers when she is unceremoniously dumped on her unsuspecting father, Hector Bowen, better known as Le Cirque des Reves' Prospero the Entertainer. Hector immediately hatches a sinister scheme for Celia: pit her against a rival's young magician in an epic battle of magic that will, by design, result in the death of one of the players, though neither Celia nor her adversary, Marco, is informed of the inevitable outcome. What neither Hector nor his rival count on is that Celia and Marco will eventually fall in love. Their mentors-Marco's mentor, Alexander, plucked him from the London streets due to his psychic abilities-attempt to intervene with little success as Celia and Marco barrel toward an unexpected and oddly fitting conclusion. Supporting characters-such as Bailey, a farm boy who befriends a set of twins born into the circus who will drastically influence his future; Isobel, a circus employee and onetime girlfriend of Marco's; and theatrical producer Chandresh Christophe Lefevre-are perfectly realized and live easily in a giant, magical story destined for bestsellerdom.
Morrison, Toni	Song of Solomon (337 p.)	FIC MORRISON	Song of Solomon is a powerful, sensual, and poetic exploration of four generations of a family mistakenly named Dead. Told through the eyes of "Milkman," a rare male protagonist in Morrison's wonderful catalog of unforgettable characters, we discover a century's worth of secrets, ghosts, and troubles. Milkman is faced with resolving the differing memories of his parents and his mysterious aunt Pilate, while questioning the historically charged realities thrown at him by the death of real-life victims of racism like Emmett Till as viewed by his lifelong friend Guitar.
Mortenson, Greg	Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan (420 p.)	371.823 MOR	Greg Mortenson, the author of the #1 bestseller "Three Cups of Tea", continues the story of his efforts to promote peace through education. This book details how he was able to establish over 130 schools--mostly for girls--in remote regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan with the backing of the Central Asia Institute--a nonprofit organization. Filled with rich, personal stories and insights into the Middle East, this book is an inspiration--and a call to action.
Mullen, Thomas	The Last Town on Earth (432 p.)	FIC MULLEN	It is the autumn of 1918 and a world war and an influenza epidemic rage outside the isolated utopian logging community of Commonwealth, Wash. In an eerily familiar climate of fear, rumor and patriotic hysteria, the town enacts a strict quarantine, posting guards at the only road into town. A weary soldier approaches the gate on foot and refuses to stop. Shots ring out, setting into motion a sequence of events that will bring the town face-to-face with some of the 20th-century's worst horrors. Mullen's ambitious debut is set against a plausibly sketched background, including events such the Everett Massacre (between vigilantes and the IWW), the political repression that accompanied the U.S. entry into WWI and the rise of the Wobblies. But what Mullen supplies in terms of historical context, he lacks in storytelling; though the novel is set in 1918, it was written in a post 9/11 world where fear of bird flu regularly makes headlines, and the allegory is heavy-handed (the protagonist townie, after all, is named Philip Worthy). The grim fascination of the narrative, however, will keep readers turning the pages.

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Mulvihill, Kristen and David Rohde	A Rope and a Prayer: A Kidnapping from Two Sides (384 p.)	958.104 ROH	For a harrowing seven months of captivity, Rohde, a Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times foreign correspondent on assignment in war-torn Afghanistan, survived after being kidnapped, with two Afghan colleagues, by the Taliban in November 2008, suffering from all of the cruel terrorist maneuvering and hapless government countermoves during the crisis. Rohde wrote a series of articles for the Times about his experiences, but here Rohde alternates chapters with Mulvihill, to whom he had been married for two months at the time of his kidnapping. In suspenseful prose, he recounts his abduction and she describes her efforts, along with those of the Times, to secure his release by writing everyone in government and negotiating with the Taliban. Rohde's escape, with one of his colleagues, received major media coverage. Possibly the most informative segments of the book are the masterly observations of life with the jihadists, the chaotic Pakistani tribal areas and the topsy-turvy war itself. This potent story of love and conflict ends well, but not without making some smart and edgy commentary on terrorism, hostage negotiation, political agendas, and the human heart.
Nazario, Sonia	Enrique's Journey (336 p.)	305.23 NAZ	Nazario's account of a 17-year-old boy's harrowing attempt to find his mother in America won two Pulitzer Prizes when it first came out in the Los Angeles Times. Greatly expanded with fresh research, the story also makes a gripping book, one that viscerally conveys the experience of illegal immigration from Central America. Enrique's mother, Lourdes, left him in Honduras when he was five years old because she could barely afford to feed him and his sister, much less send them to school. Her plan was to sneak into the United States for a few years, work hard, send and save money, then move back to Honduras to be with her children. But 12 years later, she was still living in the U.S. and wiring money home. That's when Enrique became one of the thousands of children and teens who try to enter the U.S. illegally each year. Riding on the tops of freight trains through Mexico, these young migrants are preyed upon by gangsters and corrupt government officials. Many of them are mutilated by the journey; some go crazy. The breadth and depth of Nazario's research into this phenomenon is astounding, and she has crafted her findings into a moving story.
Niffenegger, Audrey	The Time Traveler's Wife (546 p.)	FIC NIFFENEGGER	On the surface, Henry and Clare Detamble are a normal couple living in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. Henry works at the Newberry Library and Clare creates abstract paper art, but the cruel reality is that Henry is a prisoner of time. It sweeps him back and forth at its leisure, from the present to the past, with no regard for where he is or what he is doing. It drops him naked and vulnerable into another decade, wearing an age-appropriate face. In fact, it's not unusual for Henry to run into the other Henry and help him out of a jam. Sound unusual? Imagine Clare Detamble's astonishment at seeing Henry dropped stark naked into her parents' meadow when she was only six. Though, of course, until she came of age, Henry was always the perfect gentleman and gave young Clare nothing but his friendship as he dropped in and out of her life.
Oates, Joyce Carol	Because It Is Bitter and Because It Is My Heart (405 p.)	FIC OATES	Oates treats the seedy side of a working-class city in upstate New York in the 1950s. Iris Courtney is the only child of a broken home, gambling father, and alcoholic mother; she's waif-like, intelligent, and sensitive and carries with her the air of a victim. When a black classmate--handsome, academic, athletic Jinx Fairchild--murders mean "white trash" Little Red Garlock to protect Iris from Red's lewd advances, Iris carries the secret through her adolescence. The Courtney, Garlock, and Fairchild families are used to explore racism at a time of awakening social consciousness. Oates is a master at realizing the social forces that twist the fates of her characters.
Oates, Joyce Carol	We Were the Mulvaney (454 p.)	FIC OATES	Oates' novel is a tragic, compelling tale of the fall of the House of Mulvaney. The Mulvaneys, six of them, had been riding high; they lived on a prosperous farm in upstate New York and lived well. Now an adult, Judd, the youngest Mulvaney, recounts the events during which "everything came apart for us and was never again put together in quite the same way." At the core of the family troubles was one grievous incident, the rape of Judd's sister. Consequently, Judd, his father, and one of his brothers commit criminal deeds, and the family eventually loses the farm. The author's impeccable psychological understanding of violence--its roots and ramifications--lies at the heart of a troubling yet ultimately inspiring story of how far down people can go but, holding on together as a family, rise to the surface again.

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Obama, Barack	Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance (442 p.)	B OBAMA	Elected the first black president of the Harvard Law Review, Obama was offered a book contract, but the intellectual journey he planned to recount became instead this poignant, probing memoir of an unusual life. Born in 1961 to a white American woman and a black Kenyan student, Obama was reared in Hawaii by his mother and her parents, his father having left for further study and a return home to Africa. So Obama's not-unhappy youth is nevertheless a lonely voyage to racial identity, tensions in school, struggling with black literature, with one month-long visit when he was 10 from his commanding father. After college, Obama became a community organizer in Chicago. He slowly found place and purpose among folks of similar hue but different memory, winning enough small victories to commit himself to the work. He's now a civil rights lawyer there. Before going to law school, he finally visited Kenya with his father dead, he still confronted obligation and loss, and found wellsprings of love and attachment. Obama looks at race
Obama, Barack	The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream (594 p.)	973 OBA	Obama engages themes raised in his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, shares personal views on faith and values and offers a vision of the future that involves repairing a "political process that is broken" and restoring a government that has fallen out of touch with the people.
O'Brien, Tim	Going After Cacciato (336 p.)	FIC OBR	The theater of war becomes the theater of the absurd as a private deserts his post in Vietnam, intent on walking 8,000 miles to Paris for the peace talks. His remaining squad members go after him. Told from the perspective of squad member Paul Berlin, the search for Cacciato soon enters the realm of the surreal as the men find themselves following an elusive trail of chocolate M&M's through the jungles of Indochina, across India, Iran, Greece, and Yugoslavia to the streets of Paris. The details of the journey alternate with memories of the war--men maimed by landmines, killed in tunnels, engaged in casual acts of brutality that would be unthinkable anywhere else. The novel is a mix of ferocious comedy and bleak horror that shows the complex
O'Brien, Tim	If I Die In a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Ship Me Home (209 p.)	959.704 OBR	Before writing his award-winning Going After Cacciato, Tim O'Brien gave us this intensely personal account of his year as a foot soldier in Vietnam. The author takes us with him to experience combat from behind an infantryman's rifle, to walk the minefields of My Lai, to crawl into the ghostly tunnels, and to explore the ambiguities of manhood and morality in a war gone terribly wrong. Beautifully written and searingly heartfelt, If I Die in a Combat Zone is a masterwork of its genre.
O'Brien, Tim	The Things They Carried (273 p.)	FIC O'BRIEN	O'Brien offers a collection of related stories that have the cumulative effect of a unified novel. The "things they carry", literally, are amphetamines, M-16s, grenades, good-luck charms, Sterno cans, toilet paper, photographs, C-rations. But the men in O'Brien's platoon--Curt Lemon, Rat Kiley, Henry Dobbins, Kiowa, and the rest--also carry things such as disease, confusion, hatred, love, regret, fear, what passes for courage; in short, the psychological profile of the youthful Vietnam vet. The prose ranges from staccato soldierly thoughts to raw depictions of violent death to intense personal ruminations by the author that don't appear to be fictional at all.

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Odell, Jonathan	The Healing (330 p.)	FIC ODELL	Mississippi plantation mistress Amanda Satterfield loses her daughter to cholera after her husband refuses to treat her for what he considers to be a "slave disease." Insane with grief, Amanda takes a newborn slave child as her own and names her Granada, much to the outrage of her husband and the amusement of their white neighbors. Troubled by his wife's disturbing mental state and concerned about a mysterious plague sweeping through his slave population, Master Satterfield purchases Polly Shine, a slave reputed to be a healer. But Polly's sharp tongue and troubling predictions cause unrest across the plantation. Complicating matters further, Polly recognizes "the gift" in Granada, the mistress's pet, and a domestic battle of wills ensues. Seventy-five years later, Granada, now known as Gran Gran, is still living on the plantation and must revive the buried memories of her past in order to heal a young girl abandoned to her care. Together they learn the power of story to heal the body, the spirit and the soul.
Packer, Ann	The Dive from Clausen's Pier (413 p.)	FIC PACKER	Packer's first novel is a sensitive exploration of the line between selfishness and self-preservation. Carrie Bell is 23 and has lived in Madison, Wisconsin, all her life. She is engaged to her high-school sweetheart, Mike, and all seems well--to everyone but Carrie, who is falling out of love with Mike, with Madison, with everything. On Memorial Day she numbly watches Mike dive off Clausen's Pier and break his neck in the too-shallow water, leaving him a quadriplegic. She is stricken with grief, guilt, indecision, and fear--she wants to be supportive and faithful, but she cannot make herself love him again. After a painful summer of hospital vigils, she flees to New York City and tries on a new life, a new relationship. She cannot escape what she's left behind, though, and must eventually face those who feel she has betrayed them. There are no easy answers for Carrie, but her struggle to do what's right and her revelations about the life she wants for herself will keep readers turning page after eloquently written page.
Patchett, Ann	Bel Canto	FIC PATCHETT	Somewhere in South America, at the home of the country's vice president, a lavish birthday party is being held in honor of the powerful businessman Mr. Hosokawa. Roxane Coss, opera's most revered soprano, has mesmerized the international guests with her singing. It is a perfect evening—until a band of gun-wielding terrorists takes the entire party hostage. But what begins as a panicked, life-threatening scenario slowly evolves into something quite different, a moment of great beauty, as terrorists and hostages forge unexpected bonds, and people from different continents become compatriots. Friendship, compassion, and the chance for great love lead the characters to forget the real danger that has been set in motion . . . and cannot be stopped.
Patchett, Ann	Run (320 p.)	FIC PATCHETT	The question of what makes a family is central to this novel. Boston lawyer and ex-politician Bernard Doyle has nurtured his three sons—Sullivan, 33, and African Americans Tip, 21, and Teddy, 20, brothers adopted 20 years earlier—since the death of his beloved wife, Bernadette, some 15 years ago. Then, one snowy evening, Tip, inattentive and annoyed at his father, is pushed out of the way of an oncoming vehicle by a woman, herself hit and badly injured. She turns out to be the boys' birth mother and has been watching the boys for years, along with her 11-year-old daughter, Kenya. The drama of a single day is given an unreal quality by the snow that curtails normal activity, as these vividly portrayed characters struggle with their circumstances: Sullivan, the prodigal whose mistake his father lied about; smart Tip; sweet Teddy; speedy runner Kenya; and her mother, Tennessee, whose dreamlike sequence in her hospital room reveals another twist in the family muddle. In extraordinarily fluid prose, Patchett unfolds this story to its epiloguelike final chapter as she illuminates issues of race, religion, duty, and desire.
Perrotta, Tom	The Leftovers (355 p.)	FIC PERROTTA	What if the Rapture happened and you got left behind? Or what if it wasn't the Rapture at all, but something murkier, a burst of mysterious, apparently random disappearances that shattered the world in a single moment, dividing history into Before and After, leaving no one unscathed? How would you rebuild your life after such a devastating event? This is the question confronting the citizens of Mapleton, a formerly comfortable community that lost over 100 people in the Sudden Departure. Kevin Garvey, the mayor, wants to speed up the healing process, to bring a sense of renewed hope and purpose to his traumatized neighbors, even as his own family falls apart. His wife has left him to enlist in the Guilty Remnant, a cult whose members take a vow of silence but haunt the streets of town as living reminders of God's judgment. His son is gone, too, dropping out of college to follow a sketchy prophet by the name of Holy Wayne. Only his teen daughter remains, and she's not the sweet "A" student she used to be. Through the prism of one family, Perrotta illuminates a familiar America made strange by grief and apocalyptic anxiety. This is a powerful and deeply moving book about people struggling to hold onto a belief in their futures.

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Pessl, Marisha	Special Topics in Calamity Physics (514 p.)	FIC PESSL	After 10 years of traveling with her father, a perennial visiting lecturer at various, obscure institutions of higher learning, Blue Van Meer finally settles in as a senior at the St. Gallway School in Stockton, North Carolina. There she finds herself part of a group of popular kids called the Bluebloods, who are eccentric geniuses, and the protege of the mysterious film-studies teacher, Hannah Schneider. When a friend of Hannah's dies at a party the kids have crashed, this self-conscious coming-of-age novel turns into a murder mystery. As Blue becomes enmeshed with Hannah and the Bluebloods, the novel becomes so intricately plotted that, after absorbing the late-chapter revelations, readers will be tempted to start again at the beginning in order to watch the tiny clues fall into place.
Pham, Andrew X.	The Eaves of Heaven: A Life in Three Wars (320 p.)	B PHAM	In a narrative set between the years of 1940 and 1976, Pham recounts the story of his once wealthy father, Thong Van Pham, who lived through the French occupation of Indochina, the Japanese invasion during WWII, and the Vietnam War. Alternating between his father's distant past and more recent events, the narrative take readers on a haunting trip through time and space. This technique lends a soothing, dreamlike quality to a story of upheaval, war, famine and the brutality his father underwent following a childhood of privilege (And that strange year, the last of the good years, all things were granted. Heaven laid the seal of prosperity upon our land. We were blessed with the most bountiful harvest in memory). For those not familiar with Vietnamese history, Pham does an admirable job of recounting the complex cast of characters and the political machinations of the various groups vying for power over the years. In the end, he also gracefully delivers a heartfelt family history.
Philbrick, Nathaniel	In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex (302 p.)	910 PHI	Heart of the Sea illuminates a little-known piece of history through a series of captivating incidents and engaging personalities. It examines the 19th-century Pacific whaling industry through the story of the sinking of the whaleship Essex by a boisterous sperm whale. The story that inspired Melville's Moby-Dick has a lot going for it--derring-do, cannibalism, rescue--and Philbrick proves an amiable and well-informed narrator, providing both context and detail. The epicenter of the whaling industry was Nantucket, a small island off Cape Cod; most of the whales were in the Pacific, necessitating a huge journey around the southernmost tip of South America. The story tells about how Nantucket's culture was affected by the whaling industry boom, from its economy to its social habits. The horrific heart of the narrative details the fate of the 20 sailors who attempted to sail several thousand miles back to Chile using only three pathetic open boats. Reaching home 93 days later, only eight sailors survived the ordeal of thirst, starvation and despair.
Picoult, Jodi	Salem Falls (434 p.)	FIC PICOULT	A handsome stranger comes to the sleepy New England town of Salem Falls in hopes of burying his past: Once a teacher at a girls' prep school, Jack St. Bride was destroyed when a student's crush sparked a powder keg of accusation. Now, washing dishes for Addie Peabody at the Do-Or-Diner, he slips quietly into his new routine, and Addie finds this unassuming man fitting easily inside her heart. But amid the rustic calm of Salem Falls, a quartet of teenage girls harbor dark secrets -- and they maliciously target Jack with a shattering allegation. Now, at the center of a modern-day witch hunt, Jack is forced once again to proclaim his innocence: to a town searching for answers, to a justice system where truth becomes a slippery concept written in shades of gray, and to the woman who has come to love him.

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Proulx, Annie	Accordion Crimes (381 p.)	FIC PROULX	Proulx uses the fate of an accordion, built by an ambitious Sicilian immigrant in 1890, to connect colorful and hair-raising tales that ultimately span a century of American madness. The accordion maker had hoped to bring his entire family to America, but after his wife is struck by a mysterious malady--the first of many bizarre ailments that bedevil Proulx's unlucky characters--only he and his youngest son make it to New Orleans, where they discover a city seething with corruption, hate, and violence. Even music is subject to bigotry, and the accordion maker ends up dying in an anti-Italian riot. In what becomes a wildly ironic sequence of freak accidents, bizarre illnesses, weird suicides, odd coincidences, bad karma, dumb scams, and poor judgment, the accordion surfaces in North Dakota, Texas, Maine, and Chicago. It is coveted, held, and squeezed by people of Italian, African, German, Mexican, French, Polish, and Irish descent, giving voice to their laments and dreams.
Proulx, Annie	Shipping News (337 p.)	FIC PROULX	Because of Proulx's storytelling skills this tale of a miserable family starting a new life in a miserable Newfoundland fishing village has an enchanted quality, despite its harrowing details of various abuses. It is also funny. Big, big-hearted Quoyle, is the unlikely protagonist who has never done anything right and who doesn't recognize love unless it brings pain and misery. Raging unfaithful Petal Bear, Quoyle's beloved and oft-forgiven wife, is the center of his misery. When Petal's flame burns out (shortly after selling their kids to a child pornographer), Quoyle is set in motion, if not exactly free just yet. Along with his elderly aunt, her toothless dog, and his rescued offspring, he heads north for his godforsaken ancestral home to take a job on a nasty little newspaper that features car wrecks, sexual-abuse stories, and giant fake ads. Proulx creates an amazing world in Killick-Claw, Newfoundland--a cold, rocky place that nevertheless is populated by a fascinating variety of big-hearted, unlikely heroes who are revealed to have all manner of special talents. Quoyle and company, who have never belonged anywhere, gradually fit right in.
Remnick, David	King of the World: Muhammed Ali and the Rise of an American Hero (326 p.)	B ALI	King of the World shows Ali with all the freshness and vitality this legendary fighter displayed in his prime. Beginning with the pre-Ali days of boxing and its two archetypes, Floyd Patterson (the good black heavyweight) and Sonny Liston (the bad black heavyweight), Remnick sets the stage for the emergence of a heavyweight champion the likes of which the world had never seen: a three-dimensional, Technicolor showman, fighter and minister of Islam, a man who talked almost as well as he fought. But mostly Remnick's portrait is of a man who could not be confined to any existing stereotypes, inside the ring or out. Follow young Cassius Clay from his boyhood and watch him hone and shape himself to a figure who would eventually command center stage in one of the most volatile decades in our history.
Rodriguez, Deborah	Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil (301 p.)	305.48 ROD	A terrific opening chapter—colorful, suspenseful, funny—takes the reader into the curious closed world of Afghan women. A wedding is about to take place, arranged, of course, but there is a potentially dire secret—the bride is not technically a virgin. How Rodriguez, an admirably resourceful and dynamic woman, set to marry a nice Afghan man, solves this problem makes a great story, embellished as it is with all the traditional wedding preparations. Rodriguez went to Afghanistan in 2002, just after the fall of the Taliban, volunteering as a nurse's aide, but soon found that her skills as a trained hairdresser were far more in demand, both for the Western workers and, as word got out, Afghans. On a trip back to the U.S., she persuaded companies in the beauty industry to donate 10,000 boxes of products and supplies to ship to Kabul, and instantly she started a training school. Political problems ensued ("too much laughing within the school"), financial problems, cultural misunderstandings and finally the government closed the school.

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Roth, Philip	The Plot Against America (391 p.)	FIC ROTH	In the Newark, NJ, household of a young Jewish boy named Philip Roth, the anxiety is palpable: Lindbergh has been nominated for the Presidency. What's more, the traitorous Rabbi Bengelsdorf has thrown his support to the air hero, arguing that the war against Hitler is Europe's war. In due course, Lindbergh is elected; Philip's cousin, Alvin, goes to Canada so that he can join the fight against Hitler (returning an embittered amputee); Philip's brother, Sandy, dazzled by Lindbergh, joins the Just Folks program, which purports to bring urban youth to the heartland but is clearly the first of several steps toward the destruction of the Jewish community; and America signs a nonaggression pact with Germany. This may be alternative history, but it is chillingly and convincingly realistic in its portrayal. The reader watches, horrified yet totally absorbed, as America spirals down the path toward fascism.
Roy, Lori	Bent Road (352 p.)	FIC ROY	After a self-imposed exile, Arthur Scott moves his wife and children from the tumult of 1960s Detroit to the wind-swept plains of his hometown in Kansas. A secret is lurking in this small village, and it has something to do with the Scott family. Years ago, Arthur's beautiful older sister died mysteriously. Now, another young girl disappears without a trace. There are also rumors of an escaped convict on the loose. Meanwhile, Arthur's only living sister is beaten by her abusive husband and must seek refuge. Celia, Arthur's wife, watches as events unfold around her, all the time questioning whether they are somehow related. In her debut mystery, Roy excels at creating the kind of ominous mood that is unique to the novel's small-town setting, in which the church holds sway, and family secrets are locked-up tight. Terrifying and touching, the novel is captivating from beginning to end.
Salisbury, Gay	The Cruellest Miles: The Heroic Story of Dogs and Men in a Race Against an Epidemic (303 p.)	614.5 SAL	In 1925, a deadly diphtheria epidemic swept through icebound Nome, Alaska. The life-saving serum was a thousand miles away, and a blizzard was brewing. Airplanes could not fly in such conditions: only the dogs could do it. Racing against death, twenty dog teams relayed the serum across the Alaskan wilderness as newspapers nationwide headlined the drama, enthraling an entire generation. The heroic dash to Nome inspired the annual Iditarod Dog Sled Race in Alaska and immortalized Balto, the lead dog whose arrival in Nome over a snow-blown trail was an American legend in the making. His bronze statue still stands in New York City's Central Park, in dedication to the "Endurance, Fidelity and Intelligence" of the dogs that saved Nome. This is their story, the greatest dog story never fully told, until now.
Sebold, Alice	The Lovely Bones (328 p.)	FIC SEBOLD	14-year-old Suzy Salmon is murdered on her way home from school. Suzy narrates the story from heaven, viewing the devastating effects of her murder on her family. Each member reacts differently: her gentle father grieves quietly, intent on finding her killer; her aloof mother retreats from the family; her tough younger sister, Lindsey, keeps everything inside, except for the occasional moment when she tentatively opens up to her boyfriend; and her young brother, Bucky, longs for his older sister and can't comprehend her absence. Suzy also watches Ray Singh, the boy who kissed her for the first time, who represents all of her lost hopes, and Ruth Connors, who became obsessed with death and murder after Suzy's passing. Under Suzy's watchful eye, the members of her family individually grow away from her murder, each shaped by it in their own way. In heaven, Suzy herself continues to grapple with her death as well, still longing for her family and for Earth, until she is finally granted a wish that allows her to fulfill one of her dreams. Sebold's beautiful
See, Lisa	Peony in Love: A Novel (320 p.)	FIC SEE	In seventeenth-century China, Peony, a sheltered and obedient young girl, is allowed to see the controversial opera The Peony Pavilion as part of her sixteenth-birthday celebration. During the performance, which takes three evenings to complete, she meets and falls in love with a mysterious young man. Already promised in marriage, she mourns for the love she cannot have, only to discover as she is dying that her stranger is her betrothed, Wu Ren. After her death, the burial rituals are unfinished, and she cannot go to her ancestors. Instead, she haunts her lover and uses Ren's new wife to write commentary on the opera to try to reach him, beginning a long and harrowing journey toward fulfillment and eternal rest. See brings the Chinese culture of the Manchu dynasty to life, using the wedding and burial customs to further the plot. Her novel takes on the feel of ancient writing and rivals The Peony Pavilion in romance and political commentary. But through it all, she manages to make her characters real and sympathetic and the plot twists compelling.

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See, Lisa	Shanghai Girls: A Novel (314 p.)	FIC SEE	Pearl and her younger sister, May, enjoy an upper-crust life in 1930s Shanghai, until their father reveals that his gambling habit has decimated the family's finances and to make good on his debts, he has sold both girls to a wealthy Chinese-American as wives for his sons. Pearl and May have no intention of leaving home, but after Japanese bombs and soldiers ravage their city and both their parents disappear, the sisters head for California, where their husbands-to-be live and where it soon becomes apparent that one of them is hiding a secret that will alter each of their fates. As they adjust to marriage with strangers and the challenges of living in a foreign land, Pearl and May learn that long-established customs can provide comfort in unbearable times.
Shaara, Jeff	The Last Full Measure (612 p.)	FIC SHAARA, J.	This is a sequel to <i>Killer Angels</i> (written by Michael Shaara, Jeff's father). In this book Shaara writes about the course of the Civil War in Virginia from Lee's retreat from Gettysburg to his surrender at Appomattox Court House. Ulysses S. Grant has come East to assume command of all Federal forces and to confront Lee, and the war they make is marked by such horrendous battles as The Wilderness and Spotsylvania. Shaara re-creates the dialogue and attitudes of some of the Civil War's famous military figures: Lee, James Longstreet, Grant, and Joshua Chamberlain. He shows the pressures in these leaders' lives: Lee expresses his frustrations about the course and length of the war within a fatalistic, thy-will-be-done religiosity, and Grant expresses his by bemoaning the incompetence of his officers. This aspect of the novel is supported by the texture of his battle scenes, rendered loudly, muddily, and bloodily. The novel's swift pace and great accuracy make for a vivid, and sometimes moving, review of a defining moment in American
Shreve, Anita	Sea Glass (378 p.)	FIC SHREVE	Shreve's novel is a story about marriage and love played out during the early months of the Depression. At age 20, in the summer of 1929, Honora marries Sexton Beecher, a traveling typewriter salesman. Although the first months of their marriage are idyllic, Honora begins to lose respect for her husband when she realizes that he plays fast and loose with the truth in both his business dealings and with her. After Sexton loses his sales job, he finds work at a local New Hampshire mill, where he becomes involved with a group of union organizers protesting the terrible working conditions. When Honora meets McDermott, a union activist, and Francis, an 11-year-old mill worker whom McDermott has befriended, her life takes an unexpected turn. As Honora's disenchantment with Sexton grows more serious, she is increasingly drawn to McDermott, with tragic consequences.
Simon, Rachel	The Story of Beautiful Girl (346 p.)	FIC SIMON	In this enthralling love story, Linnie, a young white developmentally disabled woman with limited speech, and Homan, a deaf African-American man, meet at the Pennsylvania State School for the Incurable and Feeble-minded in the late 1960s. Despite strict rules, poor conditions, an abusive staff, and the couple's lack of language, Linnie and Homan share tender moments. After their escape, a few days of freedom not only enables the secretly pregnant Linnie to give birth outside the walls of the corrupt institution, it also secures the couple's admiration for one another. Fears of discovery force them to leave the baby in the hands of a nurturing widow, Martha Zimmer. Soon after, the school's staff apprehend Linnie, while Homan flees. Although their stories diverge and unfold independently of one another, memories of their short time together sustain them for more than 40 years as they develop the confidence to eventually parent, learn to sign and speak, and finally, reunite. Simon, who grew up with a developmentally disabled sister, has written an enormously affecting read, and provided sensitive insight into a complex world often dismissed by the "abled."
Skloot, Rebecca	The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (369 p.)	616 SKL	This distinctive work skillfully puts a human face on the bioethical questions surrounding the HeLa cell line. Henrietta Lacks, an African American mother of five, was undergoing treatment for cancer at Johns Hopkins University in 1951 when tissue samples were removed without her knowledge or permission and used to create HeLa, the first "immortal" cell line. HeLa has been sold around the world and used in countless medical research applications, including the development of the polio vaccine. Science writer Skloot, who worked on this book for ten years, entwines Lacks's biography, the development of the HeLa cell line, and her own story of building a relationship with Lacks's children. Full of dialog and vivid detail, this reads like a novel, but the science behind the story is also deftly handled. While there are other titles on this controversy (e.g., Michael Gold's <i>A Conspiracy of Cells: One Woman's Immortal Legacy and the Medical Scandal It Caused</i>), this is the most compelling account for general readers, especially those interested in questions of medical research ethics

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Smiley, Jane	A Thousand Acres (405 p.)	FIC SMILEY	Larry Cook, an Iowan farmer who has worked a thousand acre plot owned by his family for generations, abruptly decides to leave his farm to his three daughters and retire. His two eldest daughters are pleased with the decision but his youngest daughter has been cut out by her father and is angry. As the daughters' activity on the land progresses, they notice a change in their father. Events begin to unfold that will threaten and destroy the family and their farm.
Stein, Garth	The Art of Racing in the Rain (356 p. Large Print)	FIC STEIN	Enzo knows he is different from other dogs: a philosopher with a nearly human soul, he has educated himself by watching TV and by listening closely to his master, Denny, a race car driver. Enzo has gained tremendous insight into the human condition, seeing that life, like racing, isn't simply about going fast. Using techniques needed on the race track, one can successfully navigate all of life's ordeals. On the eve of his death, Enzo takes stock of his life, recalling all that he and his family have been through: the sacrifices Denny made to succeed; the death of Denny's wife; the battle over their daughter, Zoë, whose maternal grandparents pulled every string to gain custody. In the end, despite what he sees as his own limitations, Enzo comes through heroically to preserve the Swift family, holding in his heart the dream that Denny will become a racing champion with Zoë at his side. Having learned what it takes to be a compassionate and successful person, Enzo can barely wait until his next lifetime, when he is sure he will return as a man. A heart-wrenching but funny and ultimately uplifting story of family, love, loyalty, and hope, this is a beautifully crafted and captivating look at the wonders and absurdities of human life, as only a dog could tell it.
Stockett, Kathryn	The Help (451 p.)	FIC STOCKETT	This novel is set during the beginning of the civil rights movement in Jackson, Miss., where black women were trusted to raise white children, but not to polish the household silver without it being counted afterward. Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan is just home from college in 1962, and, anxious to become a writer, is advised to hone her chops by writing about "what disturbs you". The budding social activist begins to collect the stories of the black women on whom the country club sets relies and mistrusts, enlisting the help of Aibileen, a maid who's raised 17 children, and Aibileen's best friend Minny, who's found herself unemployed more than a few times after mouthing off to her white employers. The book Skeeter puts together based on their stories is scathing and shocking, bringing pride and hope to the black community, while giving Skeeter the courage to break down her personal boundaries and pursue her dreams. This is a bestseller full of heart and history.
Sullivan, J. Courtney	Maine (385 p.)	FIC SULLIVAN	Sullivan's novel introduces four female characters bound by the serpentine tangle of family. At the beginning of summer, three generations of Kelleher women descend on the family's beach home in Maine, as they have for half a century already. Changing point-of-view from one to another of the four protagonists, Sullivan creates deeply observed and believable, if not altogether sympathetic, characters, and as much is learned about one woman through the eyes of the three others as from her own perspective. Moody matriarch Alice, her uninvolved hippie daughter Kathleen, brown-nosing daughter-in-law Mary Ann, and newly-single, thirty-something granddaughter Maggie each have a simmering-below-the surface inner-monologue that lights a spark, and Sullivan makes sure we can only anticipate an explosion. Sullivan gracefully meets the challenge of crafting a cast clearly pulled from the same DNA soup, without a clunk or hitch in the machinery.
Tabor, James	Forever on the Mountain: The Truth Behind One Of Mountaineering's Most Controversial and Mysterious Disasters (400 p.)	796.522 TAB	Tabor's exhaustive look at the doomed 1967 expedition to scale Alaska's Mt. McKinley is a gripping, detailed account of the infamous climb that remains controversial. Only 5 of the 12-man team survived the ascent to the summit, making it one of the deadliest mountaineering disasters in North America. The journey was fraught with tension from the beginning: the National Park Service (NPS) required a group of 9 men, led by Joe Wilcox, to merge with a three-member party of Coloradoans, led by Howard Snyder. Wilcox and Snyder clashed almost immediately. Both men survived and went on to retell the trip in books: Snyder mostly blamed Wilcox's leadership; Wilcox cited an overpowering storm as the culprit in the deaths. Tabor shows that the NPS was slow to react and might have saved the climbers with quicker response. His writing about the brutal difficulties of climbing Mt. McKinley in subfreezing temperatures with hurricane-like wind in blizzard conditions is breathtaking. His profiles of the expedition's survivors 40 years later make for a strong conclusion to the book.

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Tan, Amy	The Hundred Secret Senses (406 p.)	FIC TAN	Tan's novel tackles themes of loyalty, connectedness, and what it means to be a family. When Olivia Yee's half-sister, Kwan, arrives from China, Olivia's life is irrevocably changed. For one thing, Kwan has yin eyes--she can see ghosts. Every night as they were growing up, Kwan told Olivia bedtime stories about the same group of yin people: a woman named Banner, a man named Cape, a one-eyed bandit girl, and a half-and-half man. Kwan is also a perpetual source of embarrassment to Olivia due to her endless questions, fractured English, and boundless optimism. When Olivia separates from her husband, Simon, Kwan schemes to get them back together, and the three take a trip to China to visit the village where Kwan grew up and to learn the secret of their connection to the yin people.
Tan, Amy	The Joy Luck Club (337 p.)	FIC TAN	This first novel by Amy Tan has its roots in the author's own incredible life story. It tracks four Chinese women who in 1949 fled warfare in their homeland and came to San Francisco, where they instituted a weekly ritual: gathering--even in the midst of sorrow--to celebrate life, play mah-jongg, and tell "stories." Each of these four friends has a continuing story to tell about her life. When one of the four members of the Joy Luck Club dies after 40 years of meetings, her American-born daughter takes her place, learning some astonishing truths about her mother's life in China and discovering the value of tradition--and in so doing, recovers a part of herself. This beautifully crafted and inventive novel effectively folds these many personal stories into one, creating a moving narrative that testifies to the layering of memories that occurs not only within one's own life but also within successive generations of families.
Tan, Amy	The Kitchen God's Wife (532 p.)	FIC TAN	Tan's second novel delves deeper into mother-daughter relationships, the vagaries of luck, and the will to survive. The catalyst for the tale is a longtime friend's demand that Winnie finally reveal the whole truth about her life in China to her grown, American-born daughter. She unveils her past in a torrent of words, unburdening herself of angers and fears, re-creating her violent, war-torn youth and the brutal tyranny of her first marriage. Abandoned by her mother, who fled the oppressive, hopeless life of a second wife, Winnie was raised indifferently by relatives who married her off to a savage man. As Tan traces the many twists and turns of Winnie's saga, she dramatizes the inhumanity of arranged marriages and the subjugation of women. Details of everyday life conjure up the chaos in China during the 1940s as the ancient feudal order crumbled and the Japanese attacked. It becomes clear that the often unspoken yet unshakable loyalty and devotion of women friends sustained Winnie, made her triumphant liberation possible, and now has brought her closer to her daughter. A vivid, unforgettable tale of womanhood, endurance, and love.
Tolan, Sandy	The Lemon Tree: an Arab, a Jew and the Heart of the Middle East (362 p.)	956.9405 TOL	To see the tragic collision of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, Tolan focuses on one small stone house. Built in 1936 by an Arab family but acquired by a Jewish family after the Israelis captured the city in 1948, this simple stone house has anchored the hopes of both its displaced former owners and its new Jewish occupants. With remarkable sensitivity to both families' grievances, Tolan chronicles the unlikely chain of events that in 1967 brought a long-dispossessed Palestinian son to the threshold of his former home, where he unexpectedly finds himself being welcomed by the daughter of Jewish immigrants. Though that visit exposes bitterly opposed interpretations of the past, it opens a real--albeit painful--dialogue about possibilities for the future. Tolan details the hostilities that have scarred both families, but also shows their courage trying to understand their enemy. Such courage has made possible the surprising conversion of the contested house into a kindergarten for Arab children and a center for Jewish-Arab coexistence. What has been achieved in one small building remains fragile in a land where peacemaking looks increasingly futile.
Towles, Amor	Rules of Civility (324 p.)	FIC TOWLES	In his smashing debut, Towles details the intriguing life of Katherine Kontent and how her world is upended by the fateful events of 1938. Kate and her roommate, Evelyn Ross, have moved to Manhattan for its culture and the chance to class up their lives with glamour -- be it with jazz musicians, trust fund lotharios, or any man with a hint of charm who will pay for dinner and drinks. Both Kate and Evelyn are enamored of sophisticated Tinker Grey, who they meet in a jazz club; he appears to be another handsome, moneyed gent, but as the women vie for his affection, a tragic event may seal a burgeoning romance's fate. New York's wealthy class is thick with snobbery, unexpected largesse, pettiness, jealousies, and an unmistakable sense of who belongs and who does not, but it's the undercurrent of unease -- as with Towles's depiction of how the upper class can use its money and influence to manipulate others' lives in profoundly unsavory ways -- that gives his vision depth and complexity. His first effort is remarkable for its strong narrative, original characters and a voice influenced by Fitzgerald and Capote, but clearly true to itself.

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Tsukiyama, Gail	Street of a Thousand Blossoms (422 p.)	FIC TSUKIYAMA	Tsukiyama is a mesmerizing storyteller who focuses on family, tradition, and the solace of nature and art. In this story she imagines life in Japan during its most catastrophic time as experienced by the orphaned brothers Hiroshi and Kenji. Raised by their grandparents, they are opposites. Big, strong, and confident, Hiroshi believes he is destined to be a sumo wrestler. Slight, quiet, and artistic, Kenji discovers his love for mask making and Noh theater by accident. They each secure mentors, but just as they embark on their apprenticeships, war breaks out. Tsukiyama's spare prose reflects the clean-lined, distilled-to-the-essence aesthetic of Japanese art as she writes appreciatively and informatively about the arts of sumo and Noh, and piercingly about the horrific deprivations and tyranny of war, the firebombing of Tokyo, the American occupation, and the rapid evolution of modern Japan. As her endearing characters attempt to adjust to the new while preserving the old, Tsukiyama evokes a vision of a blasted world returning to life. Her historically detailed and plot-driven story of resilience, discipline, loyalty, and right action is popular fiction at its most intelligent, appealing, and rewarding.
Tsukiyama, Gail	The Samurai's Garden (211 p.)	FIC TSUKIYAMA	The daughter of a Chinese mother and a Japanese father, Tsukiyama uses the Japanese invasion of China during the late 1930s as a somber backdrop for her unusual story about a 20-year-old Chinese painter named Stephen who is sent to his family's summer home in a Japanese coastal village to recover from a bout with tuberculosis. Here he is cared for by Matsu, a reticent housekeeper and a master gardener. Over the course of a remarkable year, Stephen learns Matsu's secret and gains not only physical strength, but also profound spiritual insight. Matsu is a samurai of the soul, a man devoted to doing good and finding beauty in a cruel and arbitrary world, and Stephen is a noble student, learning to appreciate Matsu's generous and nurturing way of life and to love Matsu's soulmate, gentle Sachi, a woman afflicted with leprosy.
Tsukiyama, Gail	Women of the Silk (278 p.)	FIC TSUKIYAMA	This sensitively written, impressively researched novel covers 20 years in the life of Pei, a Chinese girl sent to work in a silk factory during the first decades of the 20th century. Quick-witted, inquisitive, spirited Pei spends her early childhood on a poverty-stricken fish farm; her uncommunicative parents consign her to the factory for the wages she will send home. Initially terrified, Pei soon settles into the communal routine, and finds the 12-hour factory day made bearable by the kindness of supervisors and fellow workers. Along with her best friend, Lin, she decides at 16 to go through the hairdressing ceremony, in which girls pledge to dedicate their lives to silk work instead of marrying, and move into the peaceful milieu of the "sisters' house." Details of the process of spinning silk, the close bonds among the sisterhood, and contrasts between the tradition-steeped existence the young women enjoy and the upheaval attending the new communist regime create a compelling narrative. Tsukiyama's simple, elegant and fluid prose weaves a vivid picture of rural China. In delicately evoking the silk workers' world, she has opened a window onto an aspect of China few outsiders ever see.
Tyler, Anne	The Accidental Tourist (342 p.)	FIC TYLER	Scarred by grief after their 12-year-old son's senseless murder (he was shot by a holdup man in a Burger Bonanza), Macon and Sarah Leary are losing their marriage too. Macon is unable to cope when she leaves him, so he settles down "safe among the people he'd started out with," moving back home with two divorced brothers and spinster sister Rose. Author of a series of guidebooks called "Accidental Tourist" for businessmen who hate to travel, Macon is Tyler's focus here, as she gently chronicles his journey from lonely self-absorption to an "accidental" new life with brassy Muriel, a dog trainer from the Meow Bow Animal Hospital, who renews and claims his heart. Not a character, including Macon's dog Edward, is untouched by delightful eccentricity in this charming story, full of surprises and wisdom.
Tyler, Anne	Breathing Lessons (338 p.)	FIC TYLER	From the moment that Maggie Moran picks up the newly repaired family Dodge at the garage, becomes distracted by the radio, and speeds into the path of a Pepsi truck, it is clear that the day described by Anne Tyler in her novel will not be uneventful. In fact, the Saturday when Ira and Maggie Moran travel ninety miles from Baltimore to Deer Lick, Pennsylvania, in order to attend a funeral, becomes a summary of the twenty-eight-year marriage of two people who are opposites in temperament and interests, who are constantly at cross-purposes, and who are plagued by difficult in-laws and disappointing offspring. No wonder that the day is marked by quarrels, confrontations, detours, accidents, and disasters; however, like the marriage, it is saved by the fact that Maggie and Ira keep falling helplessly in love.

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Tyler, Anne	Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant (326 p.)	FIC TYLER	Ezra Tull runs his "Homesick Restaurant," an establishment where he'll "cook what other people felt homesick for," Ezra sometimes hopefully sets a table for family occasions. But "the family as a whole never yet finished one of his dinners--it was as if what they couldn't get right they had to keep returning to." The family has never been "right" since the day when Ezra's father Beck left them for good. Overburdened with raising three children, lonely and friendless, Ezra's mother Pearl became an angry sort of mother, raising them each with a "trademark flaw." Older brother Cody is handsome, bland, a prankster who hides the unloved rage of an unfavorite son--and this drives him to steal Ezra's fiancée for his own wife. Sister Jenny, deserted by her second husband, given to child abuse, hurt and overworked, is rescued by the family. Gentle Ezra is stuck with mother Pearl. And when Cody's son Luke hitchhikes, on the crest of one of Cody's rages, from the Virginia home to Ezra in Baltimore, he too is inundated with family miseries. Finally Pearl dies and the family gathers again at the restaurant. But this time they'll be joined by old Beck Tull: can he now be part of the family?
Tyler, Anne	Saint Maybe (337 p.)	FIC TYLER	Although Tyler is again writing about families--the way they cleave together in times of trouble and muddle through with stoic courage--her eminently satisfying new novel breaks her familiar mold, giving us ordinary, not eccentric characters who are shaped by disastrous events into quietly heroic behavior. The Bedloes are cheerful and count their blessings, even if they are far from rich and live on a slightly seedy street in Baltimore. But when 17-year-old Ian rashly informs his older brother Dan that the latter's wife was undoubtedly pregnant before their marriage, Dan commits suicide, and Ian is left with profound guilt--especially since Dan's wife dies soon after. Asking God's forgiveness, he receives spiritual guidance at the endearingly shabby Church of the Second Chance. He drops out of college, becomes a carpenter and helps his parents care for the three orphaned children; as the years pass, that burden falls primarily on Ian's shoulders. Wondering when God will signal that his atonement can end, Ian has an epiphany: "You could never call it a penance, to have to care for those three." Ian eventually does construct a life for himself, in one of Tyler's most appealing endings.
Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher	A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary 1785-1812 (444 p.)	B BALLARD	Between 1785 and 1812 a midwife and healer named Martha Ballard kept a diary that recorded her arduous work (in 27 years she attended 816 births) as well as her domestic life in Hallowell, Maine. On the basis of that diary, Ulrich gives an intimate portrait of Martha Ballard and her society -- a portrait that sheds light on its medical practices, religious squabbles and sexual mores.
Verghese, Abraham	Cutting for Stone (667 p.)	FIC VERGHESE	Focusing on the world of medicine, this epic first novel by well-known doctor/author Verghese follows a man on a mythic quest to find his father. It begins with the dramatic birth of twins slightly joined at the skull, their father serving as surgeon and their mother dying on the table. The horrorstruck father vanishes, and the now separated boys are raised by two Indian doctors living on the grounds of a mission hospital in early 1950s Ethiopia. The boys both gravitate toward medical practice, with Marion the more studious one and Shiva a moody genius and loner. Also living on the hospital grounds is Genet, daughter of one of the maids, who grows up to be a beautiful and mysterious young woman and a source of ruinous competition between the brothers. After Marion is forced to flee the country for political reasons, he begins his medical residency at a poor hospital in New York City, and the past catches up with him. The medical background is fascinating as the author delves into fairly technical areas of human anatomy and surgical procedure. This is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine and ordinary miracles, and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined.

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Waldman, Amy	The Submission (299 p.)	FIC WALDMAN	Ten years after 9/11, this novel reimagines its aftermath. A jury gathers in Manhattan to select a memorial for the victims of a devastating terrorist attack. Their deliberations complete, the jurors open the envelope containing the anonymous winner's name--and discover he is an American Muslim. Instantly they are cast into roiling debate about the claims of grief, the ambiguities of art, and the meaning of Islam. Their conflicted response is only a preamble to the country's. The memorial's designer is an enigmatic, ambitious architect named Mohammad Khan. His fiercest defender on the jury is its sole widow, the self-possessed and mediagenic Claire Burwell. But when the news of his selection leaks to the press, she finds herself under pressure from outraged family members and in collision with hungry journalists, wary activists, opportunistic politicians, fellow jurors, and Khan himself--as unknowable as he is gifted. In the fight for both advantage and their ideals, all will bring the emotional weight of their own histories to bear on the urgent question of how to remember, and understand, a national tragedy. In this deeply humane novel, the breadth of Waldman's characters is matched by her startling ability to conjure their perspectives.
Wilson, Kevin	The Family Fang (309 p.)	FIC WILSON	Caleb and Camille Fang are performance artists who set up unsettling situations in public places. Their two children, Annie and Buster, have been trained from birth to participate in these events. As they mature the children realize that their lives are not exactly normal. Their attempts to break away from their parents are unsuccessful until their parents disappear, possibly as victims of a serial killer. Is it a stunt or a tragic accident? Even Annie and Buster can't say for sure. Taking Annie and Buster's side throughout, Wilson mixes dire humor and melancholy in the dysfunctional family chronicle that is the novel's ostensibly real-world basic structure. On that he mounts satire of modern-becoming-postmodern art (the Fangs' performances are exercises in making public disturbances, in which ordinary people are unwitting player-victims) and an implicit, scathing critique of how the baby-boom generation maltreated Gen X. Don't be surprised if this becomes one of the most discussed novels of the year!
Wolff, Tobias	This Boy's Life: A Memoir (304 p.)	B WOLFF	This unforgettable memoir, by a gifted writer, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. His various schemes - running away to Alaska, forging checks, and stealing cars - lead eventually to an act of outrageous self-invention that releases him into a new world of possibility.
Wood, Monica	Any Bitter Thing (368 p.)	FIC WOOD	After surviving a near-fatal accident, thirty-year-old Lizzy Mitchell faces a long road to recovery. She remembers little about the days she spent in and out of consciousness, save for one thing: She saw her beloved deceased uncle, Father Mike, the man who raised her in the rectory of his Maine church until she was nine, at which time she was abruptly sent away to boarding school. Was Father Mike an angel, a messenger from the beyond, or something more corporeal? Though her troubled marriage and her broken body need tending, Lizzy knows she must uncover the details of her accident--and delve deep into events of twenty years before, when whispers and accusations forced a good man to give up the only family he had. With deft insight into the snares of the human heart, Monica Wood has written an intimate and emotionally expansive novel full of understanding and hope. (Review in Aug. 2005 Down East and BookLoons online)
Wood, Monica	When We Were the Kennedys (256 p.)	FIC WOOD	1963, Mexico, Maine. The Wood family is much like its close, Catholic, immigrant neighbors, all dependent on a father's wages from the Oxford Paper Company. Until the sudden death of Dad, when Mum and the four closely connected Wood girls are set adrift. Funny and to-the-bone moving, When We Were the Kennedys is the story of how this family saves itself, at first by depending on Father Bob, Mum's youngest brother, a charismatic Catholic priest who feels his new responsibilities deeply. And then, as the nation is shocked by the loss of its handsome Catholic president, the televised grace of Jackie Kennedy--she too a Catholic widow with young children--galvanizes Mum to set off on an unprecedented family road trip to Washington, D.C., to do some rescuing of her own. An indelible story of how family and nation, each shocked by the unimaginable, exchange one identity for another.

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Wroblewski, David	The Story of Edgar Sawtelle (566 p.)	FIC WROBLEWSKI	A literary thriller, this stunning debut is bound to be a bestseller. In the backwoods of Wisconsin, the Sawtelle family -- Gar, Trudy and their young son, Edgar -- carry on the family business of breeding and training dogs. Edgar, born mute, has developed a special relationship and a unique means of communicating with Almondine, one of the Sawtelle dogs, a fictional breed distinguished by personality, temperament and the dogs' ability to intuit commands and to make decisions. Raising them is an arduous life, but a satisfying one for the family until Gar's brother, Claude, a mystifying mixture of charm and menace, arrives. When Gar unexpectedly dies, mute Edgar cannot summon help via the telephone. His guilt and grief give way to the realization that his father was murdered; here, the resemblance to Hamlet resonates. After another gut-wrenching tragedy, Edgar goes on the run, accompanied by three loyal dogs. His quest for safety and support provides a classic coming-of-age story with an ironic twist. Sustained by a momentum that has the crushing inevitability of fate, the narrative will have readers sucked in all the way through the breathtaking final scenes.
Zuckoff, Mitchell	Lost in Shangri-La (326 p.)	940.54 ZUC	Zuckoff presents an engaging story about the survival and ultimate rescue of three American service people who crashed in the dense jungles of New Guinea toward the end of World War II. While that is exciting enough in its own right, what makes Zuckoff's story an essential read is the interaction between these survivors and the indigenous tribe they encountered after crashing. Humorous and at times dangerous misunderstandings arose between the Americans and the indigenous people during the 46-day ordeal in the jungle. The tribe had never encountered white people before and assumed their "guests," including a young female WAC corporal, were spirits whose arrival fulfilled a prophecy of the end of the world. In a sense, this prophecy was true as after the rescue and the war, the Americans, Europeans, and Indonesians returned and changed the way of life that these tribes had followed for centuries.