**STAFF PICKS 2016-17**

**Geo** recommends:

*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*  
by Benjamin Alire Sáenz  
*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* is a coming-of-age teen novel. It has wonderful LGBT representation and is a very modern book about love and friendship. I loved reading this artsy novella with funky characters you learn to love along the way. Highly recommend!

**The Raven Cycle** by Maggie Stiefvater  
*The Raven Cycle* is a four book series that I read recently. This teen novel has good LGBT representation (but not the main characters). The fantasy novel focuses around dreams, love, and communicating with the dead idols of our past. Loved these novels!

**Mr. Zainea** recommends:

*The Soul of an Octopus* by Sy Montgomery  
I read *The Soul of An Octopus* by Sy Montgomery and it was wonderful! It would be a great book for anyone who loves animals, nature, or the complexities of any living being. In the book, the author forms a special connection with three different octopuses housed in the Boston Aquarium. Through their interactions, she learns that octopuses and humans have much more in common that one might think. It was a beautiful exploration of what it means to be conscious and alive in this world.

**Miss Lutz** recommends:

*Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, And Dying In The National Parks* by Andrea Lankford  
In *Ranger Confidential* Andrea Lankford gives a straightforward, humorous and often heartbreaking look into the National Parks system. As someone who loves our National Parks I found it fascinating to find out what the day-to-day lives of park rangers actually look like. Rangers do an amazingly hard and often thankless job where people's lives are literally on the line. This book made me respect our rangers even more than I used to.
Mrs. Putnam recommends:

*How it Went Down* by Kekla Magoon

I loved that this novel doesn't seek to answer questions or to preach at readers. It attempts to shed light on the complexity of people and situations and how even when an event seems very cut-and-dried, it rarely is and even when we feel we know someone well, there is always more to learn.

Some summary tidbits from the internet:

- *How it Went Down*, by Kekla Magoon, tells the story of a community that is thrown into tumult after a young black man, Tariq Johnson, is gunned down by a white man on the sidewalk one evening. As a result of this tragedy many of those living in the community must face the ultimate reality of their situation, and light is brought to shine on a larger, more racially charged, issue that rocks many impoverished areas in America, today.
- A racially charged shooting reveals the complicated relationships that surround a popular teen and the neighborhood that nurtured and challenged him.....As each character reflects on Tariq, a complex young man is revealed, one who used his considerable charm to walk the tightrope of life in his neighborhood. Magoon skillfully tells the story in multiple, sometimes conflicting, voices.

Miss Wismont recommends:

*The Forgetting* by Sharon Cameron

What would life be like if, every 12 years, everyone in your small, safe, predictable city forgets everything? Residents of the city of Canaan live this reality, and have precise procedures set up to ensure life can go along after everyone forgets. These procedures include recording daily life (truths) in your own personal book, not venturing outside the walls of the city, and trusting the directives of the Council members. But Nadia, the main character, can remember, and she discovers truths that challenge everything she thought she knew. If you like dystopian fiction, character driven books, and a fast-paced story line, check it out!

Mrs. Lodewyk recommends:

*Securing your Financial Future: Complete Personal Finance for Beginners* by Chris Smith

Complete personal finance for beginners in simple terms. This guide contains advice and easy to understand analogies for multiple money topics such as budgeting, handling debt and investment advice. Target audience is 20-30 year olds yet may interest Students in Econ, Personal Finance or any college bound senior.
Mr. Mitchell recommends:
*The Boys in a Boat* by Daniel James Brow
It's about the University of Washington row team in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. It also discusses the depression and how Hitler tried to hide the atrocities from the world during the Olympics.

Mrs. Putnam recommends:
*In the Unlikely Event* by Judy Blume
I loved Judy Blume as a kid so I had to read this - her first book in quite a long time. Written for adults, not pre-teens, it is still Blume at her best - an easy read but complex ideas that make you sit back and think.

Mr. Forsberg recommends:
*The Hobbit* by J.R.R.Tolkien
I have an old paperback copy of the book my uncle left me and I love to occasionally re-read it and remember him. I also wanted to read it before I finally got around to watching the last Hobbit film. It amazes me how detailed J.R.R. Tolkien was in creating a fantasy world complete with unique races, cultures, languages, geography and history.

Mrs. Kent recommends:
*The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt
An amazing ride I would not want to experience firsthand.

*Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins
Gives a wonderful glimpse into the psychological reasons behind a crime. Also, a cautionary tale.

*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr
A unique story set in France during WWII.

Mr. Zainea recommends:
*Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers
I.COULD. NOT. PUT. THIS. BOOK. DOWN. *Zeitoun* is the true story of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a Syrian-American man from New Orleans who stayed in the city during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 with little knowledge of the unbelievable challenges he would face in the days and weeks following the
storm. This book made me feel many things: anger, happiness, hope, love, disappointment, and uncertainty. Eggers's writing is easy to read and always engaging. Seeing as how this year is the ten-year anniversary of Katrina, I felt that this was a good way to reflect on the short term and long term effects of the storm.

**Miss Wismont** recommends:

*The Rosie Effect* by Graeme C. Simsion
If you like *The Rosie Project*, this sequel follows Don, a professor with Asperger's (although he doesn't realize this), into the US and his next stage of life. I read it on a plane and was laughing out loud!

*Go Set A Watchman* by Harper Lee
I can't give it a ringing endorsement because it is basically a first draft of the far better *To Kill A Mockingbird*, but it is certainly an interesting, if sometimes frustrating, read. Read it to get a look at Harper Lee's initial views of Scout (as an adult) and Atticus (as a far less perfect parent).

*The Martian* by Andy Weir
A very engaging main character gets stranded on Mars with only his ingenuity and limited supplies. Everyone I've recommended it to has loved it.

**Miss Lutz** recommends:

*Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
I loved this book. This heartbreakingly accurate portrayal of human cruelty is perfectly balanced by showing our capacity for kindness - all within the confines of a fifth grade class.

*Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
This is an amazing look at American, Nigerian, and British cultures through the lens of an easy-to-read story. This is a great pick for those Comparative Government folks out there and for people who are just looking for a good book.

**Mrs. Bareis, Mrs. Reiser, & Mr. Pedlow** recommend:

*The Nightingale: a novel* by Kristin Hannah
Mrs. Reiser says: It's a very moving and story. The author does a fantastic job of getting the reader emotionally invested in the characters.
Mr. Pedlow says: It's a story with a strong female character set during WWII in occupied France. I thought the book was absolutely wonderful; I think students will love this book as well.

**Mrs. Reiser & Mr. Pedlow** also recommend:

*Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel
Mr. Pedlow says: Although I'm definitely not a science fiction type fan, this book grabbed me and kept me captivated throughout. It's a story of a group of people who have survived a virus that has wiped out most of humanity. They travel searching for other survivors and the story is told masterfully.

**Mrs. Reiser** also recommends:

*The Boston Girl* by Anita Diamant

**Mr. Pedlow** also recommends:

*Small Mercies* by Eddie Joyce
It's a story about a family who lost a son in the 9/11 attacks who is still coming to grips with his death. It takes place over the course of a week and the storytelling is phenomenal.

*The Long and Faraway Gone* by Lou Berney
This is crime fiction told from the point of view of two survivors of horrible events- a man who survived a shooting at a theater and a woman whose sister disappeared from a fair when they were both young. Now they're older and the story weaves around these events.

*What She Left Behind* by Ellen Marie Wiseman
Although I didn't love this book, I think most students would enjoy reading about the parallel lives of Izzy and Clara. The story bounces between the 1930's and the 1990's and the two girls have similar issues dealing with mental illness and tragedy. Great story overall, and a great look at how we used to deal with mental illness back then and today.

*Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger
This is the story of a 13 year old boy in Minnesota who deals with tragedies during the summer. It's a great narrative and the author deals with redemption and mercy. If you like stories that talk about small towns and the characters that inhabit them, you'll love this book.

*Did You Ever Have A Family* by Bill Clegg
The night before her daughter’s wedding, June Reid loses her daughter, her daughter’s fiancé, her ex-husband, and her boyfriend in a house fire. June
then flees for a trip out west to a seaside hotel to deal with her loss. Each chapter is told through the voice of a different character who has somehow dealt with this tragedy. Great book - one of the best of 2015.

**Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of A Fist** by Sunil Yapa  
In 1999, the World Trade Organization held their first ever trade summit in Seattle, and was met with violent protests. This is the story of seven characters that are all at the protests, including a pot dealing teenager, his estranged father who is the chief of police, and others who are dealing with the chaos around them. Currently a Best Book of January 2016.

**Thirteen Ways of Looking** by Colum McCann  
I will read anything by Colum McCann; he's one of the greatest authors alive. This series of four short stories is wonderfully told. Trust me, read this and move on to TransAtlantic or Let The Great World Spin. Great stuff...

**Mr. Pedlow & Miss Wismont** recommend:  
**The Orphan Master's Son** by Adam Johnson  
Mr. Pelow says: If anyone wants to learn about the sheer horror of what it's like to live in North Korea, this novel is for you. It won the Pulitzer Prize and I think it will give students a true look into the "Hermit Kingdom".

Miss Wismont says: Wow, what a writer Adam Johnson is! He paints a realistic, shocking, and totally engrossing picture of life in North Korea. I didn’t know much about this country before, but after reading this book, I’m so interested in the culture and people of this isolated country. If you like learning about new cultures and/or stories with compelling characters, check it out!

**Mr. French** recommends:  
Any book written by Clive Cussler

**Mrs. Byrne** recommends:  
**Their Eyes Were Watching God** by Zora Neale Hurston  
I was attracted to the writer’s biography and the influence she had as an African American in the 1930-40s.

**Mrs. Bremer** recommends:  
**The Red Tent** by Anita Diamant

**The Kite Runner** by Khaled Hosseini
**You: A Novel** by Caroline Kepnes
I read it in 2 days! I think our students would like it because of the social media references, and it's creepy! The book is narrated by the villain, and in a weird twist, you find yourself rooting for him!

**The Memory Box** by Eva Lesko Natiello
It was a page turner in that I kept trying to figure out what was going on. I didn't see the twist coming, so it made for a fun read.

Chuck Griffin recommends:
**Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe** by Fannie Flagg
The movie is one of my favorites, but the book lets you get so much more into the story. Very entertaining read, with a fantastic story behind it.

Mrs. Watson recommends:
**Winds of War** by Herman Wouk
A Masterpiece of Historical Fiction–The Great Novel of America's "Greatest Generation" Herman Wouk's sweeping epic of World War II, which begins with *The Winds of War* and continues in *War and Remembrance*, stands as the crowning achievement of one of America's most celebrated storytellers. Like no other books about the war, Wouk's spellbinding narrative captures the tide of global events - and all the drama, romance, heroism, and tragedy of World War II - as it immerses us in the lives of a single American family drawn into the very center of the war's maelstrom. – from Amazon.com

Mrs. Krug recommends:
**The Night Circus** by Erin Morgenstern
Magical realism with spatial descriptions that allow you to get completely swept up into the Night Circus – you want it to be real – you want it to appear without warning – you want to smell the caramel and drift in and out of each tent, where all is black and white; or is it...

It is also a game; a contest – and there will be no winner unless the opponent dies. He has discovered that she is his adversary - she doesn’t discover it is him until too late; but is it...

What will become of all their friends, especially Widget and Poppet, the twins whose birth coincided with the opening night, binding them to the Night Circus, their flaming red hair a defiant contrast to the black and white surroundings...

Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage
by Alfred Lansing & Nathaniel Philbrick
Imagine the coldest day in winter, being outside completely bundled and mostly dry. As you become colder, you simply decide to go inside.

Now (grab some steaming hot cocoa) imagine only having a tent, sinking knee-deep in ice-cold water throughout the day, curling up in your wet clothes to sleep, having eaten only a meal of seal meat to warm you, and knowing you are on an ice floe in the Weddell Sea, with no sign of land in sight, drifting as the winds decide, listening to pressure crush the boat you sailed on from Europe for a great Trans-Antarctica exploration. Imagine living on that ice floe for eight-plus months, ice-bound on all sides; whiteness in all directions; and then the loss of sunlight because it is the Antarctica winter.

Welcome to the incredible voyage of polar explorer Ernest Shackleton and his crew, with excerpts from their personal diaries, as they fought to survive for over a year as their boat, The Endurance, became locked in on all sides with the ice in the Antarctic seas, and was eventually crushed.

Shackleton is relentless in his ability to lead his men through this time and arrogant enough to never let the idea of failure enter his mind.

Illuminae (The Illuminae Files_01) by Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff
Full of black & white graphics that help you become immersed in the story; this is an artistic as well as a literary experience.

The entire book is framed as a file compiled by the mysterious Illuminae Group providing proof of the horrific events that began as an attack on a small planet & ended up with the destruction of thousands of people.

A sci-fi thriller/ horror/ fast-paced survival story about the price of truth, learning just how far you would go to be with the ones you love or how much you would sacrifice to help them survive.

Spaceships, humans infected with Phobos (a virus changing survivors into psychopathic killers), an Artifical Intelligence system that has ‘come alive’, hacked computer systems, a warship in hot pursuit, & a teen romance with plot twists...& this is just book 1 of this trilogy – Check it out!
**Mrs. Putnam** recommends:

*Bellweather Rhapsody* by Kate Racculia
Really interesting characters and crazy events to keep you hooked. It is a great read

"Fifteen years ago, a murder/suicide in room 712 rocked the grand old Bellweather Hotel and the young bridesmaid who witnessed it. Now hundreds of high school musicians, including quiet bassoonist Rabbit Hatmaker and his brassy diva twin, Alice, have gathered in its cavernous, crumbling halls for the annual statewide festival; the grown-up bridesmaid has returned to face her demons; and a snowstorm is forecast that will trap everyone on the grounds. Then one of the orchestra’s stars disappears—from room 712. Is it a prank, or has murder struck the Bellweather once again?

The search for answers entwines a hilariously eccentric cast of characters—conductors and caretakers, failures and stars, teenagers on the verge and adults trapped in memories. For everyone has come to the Bellweather with a secret, and everyone is haunted."

**Miss Lutz** recommends:

*Beyond the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo
As I read this book I kept checking to make sure it was actually non-fiction. It reads so much like a story and you feel so invested in the lives of the people being written about that it is hard to put down.

**Miss Minnick** recommends:

*Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

**Mrs. Valle** recommends:

*Island of the Lost: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World* by Joan Druett

*Angels in the Wilderness: The True Story of One Woman’s Survival Against All Odds* by Amy Racina
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Mrs. Byrne recommends:
*The Rosie Project: a novel* by Graeme Simsion

Mr. Zainea recommends:
*The Fab Five* by Mitch Albom

"The Fab Five" was arguably the greatest collection of college basketball recruits to come to the same school, and it just so happened they played at Michigan during the heyday of my childhood. I feel so bad for my students who didn't get to watch them play in person; they completely changed the culture of college basketball and were an in-your-face, dominating force. This book takes an intriguing look behind the scenes of their story. If you're at all like me, you will spend hours on YouTube looking up clips of the games described in the book. They were just awesome.

Mrs. Bremer recommends:
*Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
This is a young adult book, and not what I'd consider a difficult read. It's about a girl who commits suicide, and then leaves behind 13 reasons why she did it. The reason I would recommend this, especially to young adults, is that it really shows how people's actions and words affect others.

*The Light Between Oceans* by M.L. Stedman
This is not a book that I would typically pick on my own. It was suggested to me, and it has become one of my favorites. It is about a lighthouse keeper and his wife. They live alone on an island, and a baby washes up on their shores. They keep the baby, and the book is about the repercussions of that decision. Your heart goes into all the characters, and the moral decisions that are made are wrenching.

*Divergent* series by Veronica Roth
I liked Hunger Games too, but I was disappointed in the 3rd book. Both books have strong, female characters. In the Divergent series, the main female character, Tris, stays true to her character throughout the series. I found this series appealing for young adults because it showcases a young girl who goes against everything she knows, to be the person she is truly meant to be. She doesn't accept what she's told, but fights for what is right.


**Panic** by Lauren Oliver
This is a young adult book that is fast paced, and a fun read. It's about a high school senior who plays a dangerous, small town game. The goal is to win money, and to entertain the rest of the students. It has a little bit of everything: secrets, revenge, romance, reality, heartbreak.

**The Round House** by Louise Erdrich
I thought this was an excellent coming of age story. The story is about a boy, Joe, whose mother is attacked, but unable to relive the crime. This story appealed to my strong sense of justice, as there appears to be none for the family. Joe is unhappy with the fact that no one knows what happened to his mother, and he grows up quickly when he seeks justice on his own.

**Mr. Pedlow** recommends:

**The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace** by Jeff Hobbs
This is a great story of a kid who came from a rough background and the challenges facing him as he goes to college and prepares for his life.

**Wild** by Cheryl Strayed
*Only recommend for Juniors / Seniors*
This is a wonderful true story of one woman’s journey hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in California. It is a great tale of redemption and dealing with loss.

**All the Light We Cannot See** by Anthony Doerr
A wonderful story that takes place during WWII between a boy serving in the German army and a blind French girl.
(Mrs. Krug adds: “Look up the book on Amazon and watch the video of the author explaining his inspiration for the story – this completely drew me in and I cannot wait to read it!”)

**Everything I Never Told You** by Celeste Ng

**The Book of Unknown Americans** by Cristina Henriquez

**Miss Lutz** recommends:

**Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close** by Jonathan Safran Foer
Read the first page of this book...the way it is written is totally unique. Reading this book is like being inside the head of someone who sees the world in a completely different way. This story is set in New York around the time of September 11, 2001. *Extremely Loud* is quirky and funny. It is also extraordinarily sad and moving. I loved it.
**Born to Run** by Christopher McDougall  
Even if you're not a runner, this is a great book. McDougall travels to Mexico to find out the secrets of the Tarahumaran "superathletes" who can run hundreds of miles without fancy running shoes, without rest and without injury. He travels there with some of the best US ultramarathoners to stage a race through the Copper Canyons. It is as engaging as it is informative - you will want to keep reading just to find out who wins the race.

**Mrs. Holmes** recommends:  
**Water for Elephants** by Sara Gruen  
“Though he may not speak of them, the memories still dwell inside Jacob Jankowski's ninety-something-year-old mind. Memories of himself as a young man, tossed by fate onto a rickety train that was home to the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. Memories of a world filled with freaks and clowns, with wonder and pain and anger and passion; a world with its own narrow, irrational rules, its own way of life, and its own way of death. The world of the circus: to Jacob it was both salvation and a living hell.

Jacob was there because his luck had run out—orphaned and penniless, he had no direction until he landed on this locomotive "ship of fools." It was the early part of the Great Depression, and everyone in this third-rate circus was lucky to have any job at all. Marlena, the star of the equestrian act, was there because she fell in love with the wrong man, a handsome circus boss with a wide mean streak. And Rosie the elephant was there because she was the great gray hope, the new act that was going to be the salvation of the circus; the only problem was, Rosie didn't have an act—in fact, she couldn't even follow instructions. The bond that grew among this unlikely trio was one of love and trust, and ultimately, it was their only hope for survival.” - amazon.com

**Mr. Forsberg** recommends:  
**Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
These short stories are both gripping and easy to get through. Each will immerse you in the shady world of criminal London where Sherlock Holmes and his trusted partner Dr. Watson battle the hidden forces of evil. You will be amazed at the investigative genius of Holmes. It has long been a favorite of mine.
Mrs. Krug recommends:
*The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights* by Steve Sheinkin
This was an interesting, quick, and informative read about a moment in history that played a key role in ending segregation in the military; a piece of history I knew nothing about. I went through moments of complete shock as I read through the treatment, events leading up to the disaster, and the court hearings and outcome. If you are at all interested in bits and pieces of history surrounding civil rights, check this book out!

The following is my top ten(+) list of books that I recommend (these books made a difference in my life at various points for various reasons):

*Shardik* by Richard Adams

*The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco

*Ocean Sea* by Alessandro Baricco

*The Baron in the Trees* by Italo Calvino

*Still Life with Woodpecker* by Tom Robbins

*1984* by George Orwell & *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley

*Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling

*Lord of the Rings* series by J.R.R. Tolkien

*His Dark Materials* series by Philip Pullman

*Siddartha* by Hermann Hesse

*Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach (audio and book)

*Love in the Time of Cholera* & *100 Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

*The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams and all subsequent books (audio and book) –

There’s a reason my daughter is named Trilian...

And many more...