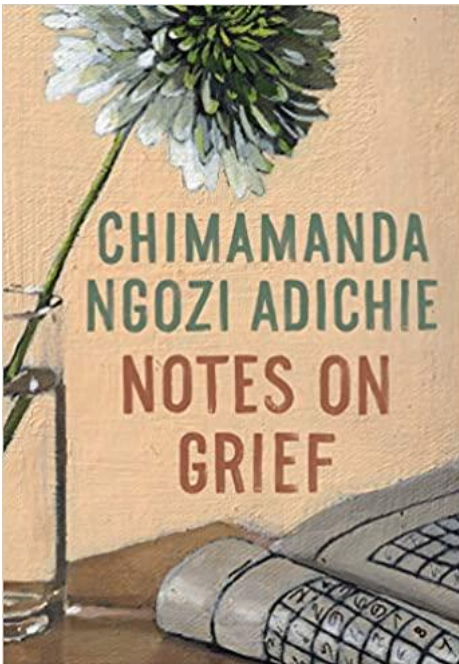


# Saint Ann's School

## Suggested Summer Reading List

for high school and faculty, 2021

**Titles that are shaded are available in the Saint Ann's Digital Library.  
See the last page of this list for instructions.**



Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. **Notes on Grief**. Like Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists*, this book is short, powerful, precise. Adichie writes of her grief following the death of her father in the summer of 2020. She contextualizes her personal loss, acknowledging herself as one of grieving millions during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the New York Times "*Notes on Grief* lays a path by which we might mourn our individual traumas among the aggregate suffering of this harrowing time." (Laura Barnett)

Alexievich, Svetlana. **Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets**. I think this would be a great choice for summer reading, in spite of its heart-wrenching nature. It's such an enriching account of the human spirit. I think that the patchwork of voices gives it a very warm feeling as well. A document of history as lived by people, with voices marked by events both sweeping and intensely quiet. (Eli Neuman-Hammond)

Askaripour, Mateo. **Black Buck**. Darren Vender becomes the only Black salesman and a rising star at a Manhattan startup when a gimlet-eyed entrepreneur plucks him from his job as a Starbucks barista. (Melissa Kantor)

Bailyn, Bernard. **The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson**. The American Revolution, seen as an act of reckless insanity through the eyes of a Loyalist. Try the eyes of the other side: it's how we see more clearly. (Liam Flaherty)

Baldwin, James. **Collected Essays**. I (finally!) read these last summer, and never have I stopped to underline passages so many times as I have with this book. James Baldwin's sharp and astute observations about American racism, the soul of the country, the nature of self, the nature of art, his accounts of his time in Paris, and many other things besides bespeak a man who spent some serious time introspecting. The prose is beautiful, the perspective is right-on, and it's all as relevant now as it was when he wrote these essays decades ago. (Jascha Narveson)

Bass, Emily. **To End a Plague: America's Fight to Defeat AIDS in Africa**. Full disclosure: this book was written by my wife. Fuller disclosure: it is an important and unheard story, beautifully told and full of vital perspectives on how activism becomes action, and on the limits and potentialities of America's goodwill. Pub date 7/6/2021. (Liam Flaherty)

Bechdel, Alison. **Are You My Mother?** Bechdel tells her father's story through Proust (in *Fun Home*) and her mother's through Winnicott and (Virginia) Woolf. Married to a closeted gay man, what was her mother's true self? What did Bechdel get from her mother? What did she want? This graphic novel is beautiful, sad, and scholarly. (Melissa Kantor)

Belieu, Erin. ***Come-Hither Honeycomb***. Ingeniously playful language engages the reader in every poem. (Marty Skoble)

Bennett, Brit. ***The Mothers***. This is a beautifully written novel about family and friendship and the choices that follow people throughout their lives. Going from suburban California to Ann Arbor and back again to the West Coast, Bennett explores the role of memory, decisions, and responsibility. She published this before *The Vanishing Half*, and any fan of her work should be sure to check this out. (Stephanie Schragger)

Bennett, Brit. ***The Vanishing Half***. One of the most beautifully-written books I've read in years. Lyrical, moving, and surprisingly queer, it was the perfect 2020 read. (Sarah Moon)

Bolaño, Roberto. ***The Savage Detectives***. I'm not certain I know how to properly explain what makes this such an utterly fascinating novel. Is it the way Bolaño so brilliantly captures Mexico City in 1975? Is it the gang of poets, known as the Visceral Realists, with whom the book's narrator—a young aspiring poet by the name of Juan Garcia Madero—becomes involved? Or is it that once the second section of the book begins, this narrator seems to disappear entirely, and the story is told by multiple different characters, each with some relation to the Visceral Realists? Is it the sense you get as you read it that you are trying to piece together these narratives to solve some mystery, but that you're not even quite sure what the mystery is? Or is it simply the stellar writing of Roberto Bolaño? This is the book that made me fall in love with South American literature, and I encourage anyone up for a bit of a challenge to give it a read. (Leo O'Brien)

Brody, Leslie. ***Sometimes You Have to Lie***. If you love *Harriet the Spy*, this biography of author Louise Fitzhugh is a must-read. Sometimes the life stories of your favorite writers disappoint you. They aren't as brave or brilliant or interesting as you imagine and wish for them to be. Louise is, and more. You can see in Louise's life the genesis of *Harriet*, *Ole Golly*, and others from the book. Louise was the child of parents who were like F. Scott Fitzgerald characters (but from the South). She grew up to become an artist-writer denizen of queer, bohemian New York in the 50s and 60s. So sad she died so young. (Denise Rinaldo)

Brown, Craig. ***Ma'am Darling: Ninety-Nine Glimpses of Princess Margaret***. I recommend this nonfiction book a lot and it's the perfect read for summer (not to mention the perfect read now that the Royal Family is so heavily in the headlines). This is an unconventional biography of Princess Margaret, told in 99 different vignettes about her life. The book may be a breezy read but it tells a sad story. It's also just a creative way to create a mosaic of this famous woman's life. (Lenny Sheppard)

Brown, Jericho. ***The Tradition***. Brown's poetry inhabits the familiar worlds of home and overlays them with the horrors and terrors that come with color in this country where for so many safety is an illusion. (Marty Skoble)

Cederström, Carl and André Spicer. ***Desperately Seeking Self-Improvement: A Year Within the Optimization Movement***. This is a light, weird, and kind of crazy read, the first-person narration of two men, one from Sweden, the other from New Zealand, who dedicate a year (January = Productivity / April = Relationships / October = Morality) and a lot of time and money to improving themselves through testing out popular "life-hacking" methods. I largely recommend this to highlight the progressive OR book site, where I found it. VISIT IT! THERE IS SO MUCH THERE! <https://www.orbooks.com> (Laura Barnett)

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. ***Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan***. When Biden announced the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by 9/11/21, I got to thinking: I don't know much of the history of this ~20-year-long war. Chandrasekaran presents an account of Obama's surge rooted in distant history, touching on military affairs, political issues, cultural currents, and social context. There's a big cast of characters to keep track of but it's a readable and interesting history of a war and a people I, for one, have managed to avoid thinking about enough. (Eli Forsythe)

Cho, Nam-Joo. **Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982**. This is a compact, odd, little book that will stay with you long after the last page. Jiyoung is a young, stay-at-home mother who, in occasional breaks from reality, begins to impersonate other women from her life, both dead and alive. Jiyoung's husband sends her to a psychiatrist and she recounts her life story—this novel being the product of her visits. Misogyny in South Korea is the focus, but honestly, it's universal. (Ragan O'Malley)

Clarke, Susanna. **Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell**. If Jane Austen and Terry Pratchett wrote a book together, and Jane kept Terry on a very tight leash, the result would be *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. Novelist Susanna Clarke reimagines a Georgian era England where magic is real but held in low regard, and the villain is the most delightful deceiver ever put on page. This book investigates themes of duty, racism, war, and societal divisions, all explored under a fine veil of deliciously British snark. (Grace Abele)

Cleary, Beverly. **Ramona the Pest**. Wonderful stories of Ramona in kindergarten: trying to be best sleeper, losing tooth, being baddest witch, chasing Davy, etc. RIP Beverly Cleary March 2021. (Mike Roam)

Crawford, Lacy. **Notes on a Silencing**. A memoir about a sexual assault at St. Paul's School in the early 1990s. After you get over your impulses to drive up to New Hampshire and set the school on fire, you'll realize what a brilliant piece of writing this is. (Michael Donohue)

Cummins, Jeanine. **American Dirt**. What happens before a migrant reaches American soil? Why does someone flee their own country? Who are these people and where do they come from? *American Dirt* is a story written like poetry and set in Mexico. It reaches into a cloud forest in Honduras and up to the Southern Border towns of the United States. Though the subject matter is tragic and at times triggering, *American Dirt* is a story of love, family, trust, and hope. It appeals to the empath, and pours off the pages like a song. (Liz Lord)

Demick, Barbara. **Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town**. If you've ever been interested in the history of modern Tibet but were too afraid to dive into the many academic books on the subject, this might be for you. Demick, known for *Nothing to Envy* (about North Korea), focuses here on a handful of individual Tibetans as they struggle to maintain their ways of life in the shadow of the modern Chinese state. (Michael Donohue)

Diaz, Natalie. **Postcolonial Love Poem**. Despite the title, a collection that is incredibly beautiful for its intensity, including some of the most erotic poems I have seen in a very long time. (Marty Skoble)

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. **The Brothers Karamazov**. Reading this classic requires you to enter a fascinating, immersive world that will lead you to think about existentialism, free will and ethics. But to me the best parts are the characters. They remind me of all the complicated people I have ever met. I love how subtle events—even conversations—set the characters on vastly different paths from one another. This long book is given momentum by fantastic passages and a gripping plot. The plot is quite modern in how it toys with the reader's sense of reality and notion of what it means for a person to be responsible for their actions. (Nick Fiori)

Dumas, Alexander. **The Count of Monte Cristo** (Robin Buss translation). I know, a 1,200+ page French novel from the 1800's widely regarded as a "classic" is a tough sell for a summer read. But it is a novel so compelling, so full of excitement, it is an outrage that it has not yet been made into an HBO miniseries! Never before had a book made me consistently late for work because I simply could not put it down. Never before had I screamed while reading a book simply because of the emotional intensity and shock of what was on the pages before me. "But what is it about?" *The Count of Monte Cristo* is the story of a young man by the name of Edmond Dantes who has it all. He's well liked, he just got made captain of the ship he works on, and he's about to marry the love of his life. But it's all taken from him when three of his so-called friends, in a fit of jealousy, frame him for treason. Edmond is locked away at the Château d'If, a horrifying prison on a remote island. In the adjacent cell lives a priest whom the guards regard as insane on account of

his many claims that he has a fortune buried on the island of Monte Cristo. Edmond befriends the priest, learns from him, and vows that if he is ever able to escape the Château d'If, he will find this treasure (if it is even real) and use it to exact revenge on those who wronged him. (Leo O'Brien)

Eilenberger, Wolfram. ***Time of the Magicians***. A deft examination of the German originators of modern philosophy and cultural studies. Heidegger made clear is no small task—here it is done, with fresh looks at Benjamin and Wittgenstein. (Liam Flaherty)

Estés, Clarissa Pinkol. ***Women Who Run with Wolves***. A great insightful archeological text on the “wild woman” archetype. An in-depth look into the female psyche. (Mahsa Shabani)

Evans, Danielle. ***The Office of Historical Corrections***. Absolutely fascinating and moving collection of stories, some comedy, much tragedy, with racist violence always a threat. Characters in one story notice who forgives, excuses, and tries to forget lynch mobs. Another asks how much proof one needs to believe an apparent historical truth. (Mike Roam)

Ferrante, Elena. ***The Lying Life of Adults***. This is a bold and absorbing book. Ferrante says things about friendship and family that often go unsaid. A stark look at family and the messy lives our parents lead, without romanticizing or embellishment. If you loved *My Brilliant Friend* you should definitely check this out. (Liz Fodaski)

Flynn, Thomas F. ***Bikeman***. Twenty years since 9/11 ! *Bikeman's* publisher is printing a new anniversary edition, in PAPERBACK! The book will be out in July, so perfect for summer reading. Since it was published the first time around, it has been staged as a play taken directly from this epic poem. It opened first in South Africa then to London and then in New York City starring Robert Cuccioli. Tom Flynn, the author, my husband, was the first newsman down there. We normal folk run from the fire, my crazy journalist husband runs toward it. He was Dan Rather's writer producer at CBS and the first eyewitness to the collapse of the towers on television with Dan that morning...what he calls in the book, 'This forever September morning.' He was covered in that white ash. I still have the heartbreaking video of that broadcast. *Bikeman* is a short read, maybe an hour or so. But be seated please. It packs a wallop. (Nancy Reardon)

Fuller, Alexandra. ***Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight***. The memoir of British-Rhodesian author Alexandra Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* is an emotionally impactful tale of a white farming family subsisting in rural Zimbabwe prior to the country's independence. Fuller's reflections on war, hardship and cultural immersion at such a young age are incredibly striking, thanks to her extraordinary way with words. (Jamie Rutherford)

Glaude, Eddie S. Jr. ***Begin Again***. Reading James Baldwin urgently and repeatedly, Prof. Glaude reveals Baldwin's extraordinary powers to explicate American racism. Prof. Glaude aims “to think with Baldwin and to interrogate how an insidious view of race, in the form of Trumpism, continues to frustrate any effort to ‘achieve our country.’” The book creates seismic waves and the voltage to read Baldwin yourself. (Ruth Chapman)

Godfrey-Smith, Peter. ***Other Minds***. What is intelligence, how does it manifest itself, and why did it evolve? Octopuses are the answer! They are very smart, and quite evolutionarily distant from humans, which tantalizingly suggests that intelligence evolved twice on earth. But how? Godfrey-Smith points out that brains do two very different things. The first is what we might think of as the crucial function: it helps us sense and respond to the environment, for example noticing that a shark is coming towards us and that there is a little hidey hole behind that rock. But the second function of brains is a bit underappreciated. Brains help coordinate our bodies so that we can act in an integrated way. When we want to go hide behind a rock, our arms and legs and torso act in concert, and we're able to act as a unified body. Basically, Godfrey-Smith hangs out with a lot of octopuses and the experience makes him think that this second function of the brain is more crucial to intelligence and more evolutionary significant than we tend to think. My favorite book of the year. (Michael Pershan)

Gopnik, Adam. ***A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism***. If you don't like aphorisms, stay away from this book (and from Gopnik). But who doesn't like aphorisms? This book refashions the history and merits of liberalism by championing the lives of Michel de Montaigne, Frederick Douglass, and George Eliot (to name a few). A preview: "Between anarchy and authority lies argument." (Kate Bodner)

Green, Leah Naomi. ***The More Extravagant Feast***. These poems exude a youthful optimism and a deep abiding love for the natural world in elegant clear lines. (Marty Skoble)

Greenidge, Kaitlyn. ***Libertie***. A coming of age novel centered around the life of a free-born Black girl in pre-Civil War and Reconstruction era Brooklyn. The book reflects on difficult questions about motherhood, love, and freedom all in ways that center Black people, and Black women in particular, in all their complexity and outside of the white gaze. A fascinating and well researched depiction of a particular moment of American history, this book offers a much different look at Black history that expands into the African Diaspora with a storyline that takes place in Haiti. I loved learning about the connections between Weeksville (the historically Black Brooklyn neighborhood the book is set in) and Haiti (a very young republic at the time) and the exchange between Black people from here to there that is not often talked about. This book was a revelation! (Diane Exavier)

Haig, Matt. ***The Midnight Library***. I'm reading this book right now! It is very good. A somewhat light read that tackles a heavy subject. Also it's very philosophical, which I enjoy. (Mahsa Shabani)

Hannah, Kristin. ***The Nightingale***. A moving story about the French Resistance during WW2. It follows the lives of a father and his two daughters and the roles that each of them played during the war years. Not for the faint of heart but the payoff is emotionally rich and the story is extremely well researched and written. (Richard Mann)

Hannibal, Mary Ellen. ***Citizen Scientist: Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction***. This book explores the possibilities of community science. What can happen when we co-construct conservation biology projects? How do we design apps so that we can get high quality observations from anyone with a smart phone in their pocket? For anyone clamoring to bring science to the masses! (Gretta Reed)

Harrison, Stephanie. ***Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen***. Inside this book lie 35 short stories that have been adapted into films, making it both a wonderful collection in its own right and the perfect inspiration for a deep dive into a summer of cinematic exploration. It includes "In a Grove"—the source text for Akira Kurosawa's 1951 classic *Rashomon*, "Auggie Wren's Christmas Story", which morphed into Wayne Wang's funny and contemplative *Smoke* in 1995, and Philip K. Dick's sci-fi masterpiece "The Minority Report" which Steven Spielberg brought to the screen in 2002. With sections covering graphic novels, World Cinema, and even horror, this book is a fantastic way to connect with characters and situations that come to life in multiple forms. (Chloe Smith)

Heumann, Judith and Kristen Joiner. ***Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist***. *Crip Camp* was amazing, wasn't it? (If you haven't seen it, go watch it!) *Being Heumann* is the story of Judith Heumann, one of the main subjects of the film. From contracting polio before age two to being called a "fire hazard" and excluded from school, from protesting in the streets to working for the Obama Administration, Heumann writes of the tenacity she's been forced to develop just to be seen as, well, human. Most poignant to me was the power of intersectionality (years before the word was ever used); when disability rights activists took over the San Francisco Federal Building in 1977, it was the Black Panthers who brought them hot meals day after day. A quick read that will stay with you. (Hannah Mermelstein)

hooks, bell. ***All About Love***. It's a little gushy, but bell hooks' *All About Love* is so important for everyone to read. hooks gets at many unspoken human intimacy malfunctionings that are byproducts of a malfunctioning culture. She teaches us

how to love and have successful relationships, though her lessons also extend to daily and non-romantic life. *All About Love* is a helpful barometer on how one engages their emotions in relation to how they connect with and treat others. (Rami Adbul Karim)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***Klara and the Sun***. This novel burned into my brain like a vivid sunset as it moved languidly through its story of teenagers and their AI companions and the harrowed adults hovering around them in a place that felt familiarly nearby and a future that felt troublingly close. (Cathy Fuerst)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***A Pale View of Hills***. This is Ishiguro's first novel, and I'd read it way back in the old days. Re-read it last summer and found it holds up—definitely worth checking out if you're a fan of his better-known novels (*Never Let Me Go*, *The Remains of the Day*, etc.). (Michael Donohue)

Jemisin, N.K. ***Fifth Season***. So there are these immensely powerful people called "orogenes" that have the ability to draw on warmth and energy and use it to manipulate the earth. They can create or eliminate tremors, move stones, cause tsunamis and so on. Their power is deeply feared by other humans and therefore they are quasi-enslaved by a bureaucracy that trains and employs them throughout the empire. This book is the story about these powerful orogenes as they struggle for a realer freedom than they are allowed. (Michael Pershan)

Jemisin, N.K. ***The City We Became***. New York is under attack from an alternate dimension. The protagonists are literal embodiments of the city's five boroughs. Manny (Manhattan) is a gay, multiracial 20-something man who forgets where he came from or who he was before. Brooklyn is a middle-aged Black DJ turned city councilperson and mother. Bronca (The Bronx), the oldest of the group, is a queer Lenape art gallery director. Padmini (Queens) is a young South Asian grad student and math genius. Aislyn (Staten Island) is the white racist daughter of a cop. Subtle? Nope. But clever and interesting. An epic love letter to NYC. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Jordan, June. ***Soldier: A Poet's Childhood***. In this lyrical memoir, poet June Jordan recalls her childhood growing up in Brooklyn and Harlem, particularly her complicated relationship with her father. (Melissa Kantor)

Kawakami, Mieko. ***Breasts and Eggs***. I just finished this and I very much recommend it. I love the way it's written. It was heavily praised by Haruki Murakami, a great author who I love as well. (Mahsa Shabani)

Keefe, Patrick Radden. ***Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Empire***. This book is so good. The story of the Sackler brothers, Arthur, Mortimer, and Raymond, their close-knit relationship, their brilliance and philanthropy (in particular Arthur), their rise within the pharmaceutical industry, and their eventual falling out. It is Mortimer and Raymond and their heirs who bear the brunt of the responsibility for the scourge of opioid addiction we are immersed in as a country today. Extremely readable nonfiction (although—full disclosure—I'm listening to the amazing audio version). (Ragan O'Malley)

Keene, John. ***Counternarratives***. A collection of exquisitely crafted short stories. (Coleman Collins)

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. ***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants***. Jackie Henderson recommended this last year and I reiterate that it is an excellent read. Robin Wall Kimmerer brings Indigenous science to the present-day in a book full of gems. New resonance in a year where access to outdoor space became even more important to our collective wellbeing. (Gretta Reed)

King, Charles. ***Gods of the Upper Air***. The story of how Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Zora Neale Hurston created modern anthropology and our conception of culture/s—dismantling the eternal verities on race and development that were shell games for bias and unscientific racism. (Liam Flaherty)

King, Lily. **Writers & Lovers**. Grief is a commitment; so is writing. When “real life” conflicts with those, things get messy and complicated, sometimes funny; sometimes scary. And then love comes along. “It’s not nothing!” King uses detail brilliantly in this riveting story. (Marty Skoble)

Kolbert, Elizabeth. **Under a White Sky**. In her newest book, Kolbert tackles the question of whether human ingenuity and scientific advances can help us fix the problems we caused or whether they will just dig us in deeper. Amazingly, this is not a depressing read—it is full of humor and warmth and interesting science explained well. She starts with the story of how the Chicago River was rerouted to prevent Chicago’s sewage from polluting Lake Michigan, which opened up the possibility of invasive species spreading from the Mississippi River into the Great Lakes. The solution is shocking (pun intended). Among other fascinating stories, Kolbert discusses research to prevent the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef through genetic engineering and the possibility of carbon sequestering and pumping aerosols into the atmosphere to mitigate the impending climate crisis. (Kristin Fiori)

Koonchung, Chan. **The Fat Years**. What if you suddenly realized that there was a month, a couple of years ago, that no one remembers? That’s the premise of this 2009 novel set in the “future” 2013. The students in Big City Lit read this last winter, and I think many would agree that this wild satirical ride through contemporary China is worth your time. (Michael Donohue)

Kritzer, Naomi. **Catfishing on CatNet**. Steph and her mom never stay in one place for long; it’s too risky, with Steph’s abusive father always potentially on their tail. Steph’s most lasting relationships are on CatNet, a place to share cat pictures and much more. Alternately narrated by Steph and a sentient AI, this fun and heartfelt thriller explores power, personhood, technology, and identity without being preachy. It’s a book that trusts kids, a book full of nerdy queer and queer-adjacent characters, a book you won’t be able to put down. And the sequel (**Chaos on CatNet**) is out now too! (Hannah Mermelstein)

Kroeber, Arthur R.. **China’s Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know**. Saint Ann’s grad Arthur Kroeber has lived in China for a couple of decades. I picked this up to get some background for the Big City Lit elective, and then found myself totally absorbed by its clear explanations of Chinese economic history and policy. (Michael Donohue)

Laing, Olivia. **Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency**. A nonfiction collection of previously published very short and short essays. Art and queer culture celebrated as forces of resistance and repair. Questions posed include: What use is art in a moment of crisis? What might art actually DO for someone? Artists Laing profiles include: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Georgia O’Keeffe, Sally Rooney, David Wojnarowicz, David Bowie, Freddy Mercury, Derek Jarman. (Laura Barnett)

Larson, Erik. **The Splendid and the Vile**. A remarkable and excitingly intimate portrait of the Battle of Britain focusing on Churchill, his family, and his government. A brilliant page turner. (Marty Skoble)

Lawrence, Tim. **Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor, 1980-1983**. The companion volume to Lawrence’s magisterial *Love Saves the Day*, this volume shows how hip hop culture infiltrated the dance floor, culminating in what those who knew know again: Afrika Bambaataa’s “Planet Rock” is a seminal text of the late 20th century. (Liam Flaherty)

Lee, Min Jee. **Pachinko**. *Pachinko* takes the reader on a multigenerational journey following a Korean family that moves to Japan. The story leaves you deeply invested in the lives of every character as they deal with stereotypes, racism, love, and loss. The novel is historical fiction, and a gripping page turner that will leave you wishing it had never ended. (Julia Binder)

Lemoine, Sanaë. **The Margot Affair**. Antidote to Francois Mauriac’s *The Knot of Vipers* (also a great read). (Marty Skoble)

Loewen, James. **Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong.** I read this book in the summer before taking AP US History in High School. It's a wonderful criticism of what is (and is not) covered in history classrooms from the lens of the texts that are used in those classes. The original version, written in 1995, was a thought-provoking page turner that blew my mind. I'm excited to read the latest revision (2007) which has chapters on 9/11 and the ensuing war that we are still in the midst of as a nation. (Kalim Khogiani-Nguyen)

L' Official, Peter. **Urban Legends.** A Bronx native tells the story of how his borough has been represented, misrepresented, luridly imagined and configured as the last word in urban failure: and how its protean energy has always brought it back. (Liam Flaherty)

McBride, James. **Deacon King Kong.** This novel opens with Sportcoat, a cranky old church deacon, shooting the neighborhood drug dealer in the ear. The year is 1969 and this is a Brooklyn worth knowing. The characters are incredible (my favorites are Sportcoat and his best friend Sausage) and the plot is complex and rich—and covers topics from the Baptist Church to the Italian mob (with some rare art in the mix). McBride is a masterful storyteller. I'm in awe. (Ragan O'Malley)

McCarthy, Cormac. **Blood Meridian.** McCarthy's seminal work of historical fiction, *Blood Meridian* or *The Evening Redness in the West* follows a band of scalp-hunting mercenaries through US-Mexican borderlands circa roughly 1850. Beautiful, often brutal and thoroughly absorbing, it's a uniquely existential adventure story not to be overlooked. The lead antagonist, Judge Holden, is one of the most fascinating and unsettling characters you're ever likely to encounter in print. (Jamie Rutherford)

McCluskey, Molly. **Straying.** Finding your way often involves taking paths that surprise even the taker. Leaving one life for another over and over again, McCloskey's narrator beautifully explores the strange terrain of agency. (Marty Skoble)

McEwan, Ian. **Machines Like Me.** One gets the sense that McEwan was reading Kazuo Ishiguro and thought, "Hey, I should write something like that." Yes, it does feel like Ishiguro Lite, but it's still a gripping (and creepy) read about a man's relationship with a new luxury good: a very lifelike robot. (Michael Donohue)

McGee, Harold. **Nose Dive: A Field Guide to the World's Smells.** If you are entranced by aroma, or haven't thought much about scent at all, this might be the book for you. Part poetry, part chemistry, with ten years of research behind it, you can approach this work in a myriad of ways. This is not an easy book, but you can make it your own by approaching just what you need to become a scent hound. Just to read the introduction is an eye opener. "Smell arises from two patches of sensitive skin placed out of sight in the front of our head, behind and a little below our eyes. Their total area . . . is around a square inch. Its four hundred or so different kinds of odor receptors recognize molecules carried in the air we breathe in and out." "When we smell another person's body, we literally bring a portion of that body into our own body.. This is true whether we smell a lover or a stranger, a sewer or a rose. When we smell something, it's because particles of that thing—its vaporized, airborne, volatile molecules—enter us and momentarily become part of us." Reading this work, one becomes super sensitized to the world in a new way, and appreciative of the foul scents as well as the sweet. An amazing journey. (Deborah Dobski)

Millard, Candice. **The River of Doubt.** It's a very wild book. It's about Teddy Roosevelt, and he decided...I mean he was not the greatest in a lot of ways, but a very daring person. He decided, after he lost the election to Woodrow Wilson, that he would go and explore an unknown territory in Brazil. And he took a boat into the wild and almost died a bunch of times. And it's hard to imagine that he did that, but it's an absolutely incredible story. It's a wild one. (Paul Goldfinger)

Miller, Lulu. **Why Fish Don't Exist.** This is a lovely book and quite unique. It's definitely a memoir since the reason the author wrote it was to try to bring some order to and make sense of her life. It's also a biography of David Starr Jordan, a



biologist (really an ichthyologist) who became the first president of Stanford University. (Some decidedly shady history is revealed here—I won't elaborate because anything else is a spoiler of sorts.) And lastly, it's about fish. But there is so much more. How do these three seemingly distinct topics fit together? Well, you'll have to read the book or listen to the audiobook read by the author to find out. (Ragan O'Malley)

Mitchell, David. **Utopia Avenue.** Brilliant, fascinating, it prompted tears several times. Mitchell captures the energy of intense people in a rock band in the 1960s: musicians playing off one another, egging each other on, reaching beyond what they knew they could do, flying because they're together. This book has multitudes of moods and observations, and shows issues ranging from how/whether songs can be political, to how political movements get their ideas and energy, to people trying to be their best, making poor decisions, having impulses and regret, love and soul. (Mike Roam)

Mizuki, Shigeru. **Showa: A History of Japan 1926 - 1989.** Shigeru Mizuki's brilliant four-part graphic history of modern Japan profoundly weaves the personal and historical. Ribald, merciless, fascinating, comprehensive and true—this is the greatest graphic work I've ever encountered. (Liam Flaherty)

Moon, Sarah. **Middletown.** Okay, Sarah, I know this will give you feelings, but it's a great book! Our very own Sarah Moon wrote this tender story of two siblings navigating their mom's admittance to court-ordered rehabilitation. They explore identity, growing up, and asking for help in this wonderfully written story. (Gretta Reed)

Moran, Caitlin. **How to Build a Girl.** A fun and sometimes raunchy coming-of-age story about a girl trying to become a cool and independent young woman in the West Midlands of England, with struggling parents and twin infant siblings she occasionally has to take care of. She reinvents herself as a writer and makes her way to London and onto the staff of a rock music magazine. A romp! (Liz Fodaski)

Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. **Gods of Jade and Shadow.** Strong female protagonist in a quest that is never predictable or shy. Filled with the scents and imagery of Mexico along with indigeneous folklore and gods and a meeting in the underworld. Loved it. (Sarah Shey)

Mueenuddin, Daniyal. **In Other Rooms, Other Wonders.** Linked stories by a writer of excellent sentences explore the traffic in status, titles, mopeds, bangles, and intimacy between the landowning class of the Pakistani Punjab and their cooks, butlers, and sweepresses. A strong collection. Recommended for pessimists. Everything here is for sale. (Ben Rutter)

Nielsen, Kim. **A Disability History of the United States.** This book's title may have the ring of a textbook but it's not dull, nor is it attempting to be comprehensive. Thematic chapters move chronologically forward, beginning with Indigenous notions of disability and ending with the disability rights movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Nielsen beautifully layers the discussion with anecdotes from real people's lives as they paralleled, shaped, and were shaped by key shifts in cultural definitions of disability over the last 400 years. If the book touches on familiar events in US history, it totally reframes them, while never losing sight of the shaping role of race, class, gender, age and sexuality in how disabled people have experienced the world. Nielsen applies a social model of disability to her analysis, rather than a medical one. Her premise is that disability is socially constructed: it's the society that needs to be remade when it is inaccessible, not the people. I will never look at or teach the history of abolition or slavery or immigration or the rights movements of the postwar era the same way again. (Rob Goldberg)

Nunez, Sigrid. **The Friend.** I admit, the premise of this novel doesn't sound good: a writer adopts a dog. Even worse, it's the Great Dane that used to belong to her recently deceased writer friend. But this book won me (and apparently many others) over, and it's weirdly deep and provocative for such a breezy read. (Michael Donohue)

Obama, Barack. **A Promised Land.** I recommend the audiobook, which is available thanks to the amazing Saint Ann's Digital Library. As read by the author, it's an interesting look back at the Obama years, from just one biased perspective. But aside from the questionable impressions of foreign leaders, Obama presents a comprehensive first draft of his own history-making presidency. I am sure reading it yourself would be great too, but listening to Obama read it in the waning days of Trump was a sorely needed salve. (Eli Forsythe)

Obama, Barack. **A Promised Land.** The first volume of the former president's memoirs take us from his childhood to about the middle of his first term. A must-read, if you want to understand the development of this major political figure or just the state of American politics in the post-Bush era. (Michael Donohue)

Odell, Jenny. **How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy.** I was drawn to the bright flowers on the book jacket, though the title felt a bit gimmicky. Then, I read the back cover, saw that President Obama included it in his Top 10 Books List of 2019, and decided to give it a go. Wow. My copy, read several times last summer, is covered with highlighting and margin notes. Erudite yet approachable, defiant yet generous, complex, philosophical, practical, aligning. A book—and sometimes manifesto—about interiority, culture production, nature, technology, commodification, and taking and giving time. (Laura Barnett)

Patchett, Ann. **The Dutch House.** What does “saintly” mean when it becomes personal? And how does one find peace when one’s ego gets in the way? Though the house is a main character, this is a human story. It’s Patchett at her best, spinning a multigenerational yarn in which the ground keeps shifting under the feet of the narrator as well as the reader. (Marty Skoble)

Penny, Louise. **Still Life.** This is the first in a series of murder mysteries that take place in Quebec in a small village called Three Pines. Everyone is quirky, kind of a band of misfits. I love the series partly because I love this part of the country, but also because Louise Penny takes you into the lives of each of the characters and they all have blemishes, just like all of us. Get started and you'll get hooked. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Phillips, Julia. **Disappearing Earth.** *Disappearing Earth* takes place in the Russian province of Kamchatka, a peninsula that is almost inaccessible to the rest of the country. The story follows a mother's desperate search for her two missing daughters. But this is not only a mystery. Throughout the course of the novel, the reader learns a great deal about the region including the impact of being a former military zone, and the discrimination against the area’s Indigenous peoples. As a parent, I often shy away from stories about missing kids. But I am happy I made an exception for this lovely and powerful book. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Laksh. **Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice.** This book of essays explores ways to cultivate disability justice. Piepzna-Samarasinha gives glimpses into mutual aid before COVID-19, in which people of a variety of disabilities in her community formed care webs, ventured into accessible (no, *actually* accessible) conferences and events, and created performance art. This book asks important questions about the transformations that can exist when we center leadership of disabled queer, trans, Black, and brown people. (Gretta Reed)

Pinckney, Darryl. **Busted in New York and Other Essays.** Twenty-five pieces of adroit critical genius. Essays include an ace appraisal of *The Devil Finds Work*, a damage assessment of Hurricane Katrina, and a tuneful requiem for Miss Aretha Franklin. Foreword by Zadie Smith, who observes that Pinckney "exists himself at the intersection, as the young folks say, of several identities—black, gay, bougie—and so is familiar with how quickly a 'we' can become a 'you' and an 'us.'" See also the novel *High Cotton* (1992). (Troy Patterson)

Rooney, Sally. **Normal People.** Very interesting and complex story with characters developing from the beginning of the novel when they are teenagers in Ireland to the end as they reach adulthood. A well put-together, entertaining, serious, and engaging book. (Katya Arnold)

Rooney, Sally. **Normal People**. Fascinating: intense on & off love story of outsiders, starting as teenagers. They themselves see how they have changed each other while loving, hating, growing, and having sex. (Mike Roam)

Rovelli, Carlo. **The Order of Time**. This is a beautifully written physics book that only has one formula in it, and he even apologizes for putting it in. (G Giraldo)

Saunders, George. **Lincoln in The Bardo**. Bardo, in Tibetan Buddhism, the intermediate place between life and rebirth, the time of which can be variable. This novel, which won the Man Booker Prize, takes place in a single day but is temporally quite experimental. The book is comprised solely of dialogue spoken by the 166 ghosts/narrators who supernaturally prance, chatter, inhabit, and haunt the novel's pages. Saunders did substantial historic research on President Lincoln and the era. Known for his short stories, this is Saunders' first novel. I have never read anything like it. (Laura Barnett)

Seferis, George. **George Seferis: Collected Poems**. If in this past year you've longed to be elsewhere, to miss home and not be in it, to feel the sweet and indulgent pang of displacement, Seferis understood it all very well. (Liam Flaherty)

Seuss, Dr. **The Lorax**. Most of you reading this have probably read *The Lorax* at some point. But have you reread *The Lorax* as an adult? I end up rereading *The Lorax* about twice a year, and every time I'm left dumbfounded, specifically by the story's antagonist: the Onceler, the faceless villain powered by spite and greed in whose confession we get the bulk of the story. To me, the Onceler is one of the most fascinating villains in all of literature. Despite his wicked acts, there is something frighteningly human about him. The reader gets the privilege of seeing the Onceler's transformation throughout his own confession, until the stunning conclusion, where he realizes the meaning of the Lorax's chilling final word: "unless." Do yourself a favor and give this one another read; I promise you won't be disappointed. (Leo O'Brien)

Shapiro, James. **Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us About Our Past and Future**. This book is constantly surprising and fascinating—about the ways in which Shakespeare's plays have been used, have informed, and have intersected with cultural and political moments in the U.S. It's a great audiobook choice. Each of the eight chapters centers on a year, a play, and an issue (race, gender, immigration, etc.), and feel a bit like individual podcasts. You find yourself regaling friends with anecdotes from the book and wishing you could tell a story like Shapiro. (Denise Rinaldo)

Smith, Patti. **Just Kids**. I love memoirs. Especially written by artists and musicians, and especially taking place in New York City. *Just Kids* tells the story of the beautiful, intimate, pure, bohemian, punk, Rimbaudian, intense relationship between poet and musician, Patti Smith and late photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe. (Eugene Wang)

Smith, Tracy K.. **Life on Mars**. Reading Smith's collection of poems from 2011 is akin to looking up at a mountain; humanity is small, confused, and maybe refreshingly beside the point next to all the unsolvable questions we have about space, time, death. Grief mixes with wonderment, and the quotidian is a window into the extraordinary. A great book to keep around and reread. (Kate Bodner)

Smith, Zadie. **Intimations**. Six essays written during early lockdown. When an unfamiliar world arrives, what does this mean about the world that came before it? Though we know we are always living through history, this book written in the moment truly speaks to the times. The following, from the chapter, Something To Do, reverberates: "... even if you believe in the potential political efficacy of art—as I do—few artists would dare count on its timeliness. It's a delusional painter who finishes a canvas at two o'clock and expects radical transformation by four. The people demand change. They never demand art. As a result, art stands in a dubious relationship to necessity—and to time itself." (Laura Barnett)

Steele, Claude. ***Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do***. Through dramatic personal stories, Claude Steele shares the experiments and studies that show, again and again, that exposing subjects to stereotypes impairs their performance in the area affected by the stereotype. A fascinating read that really can help to inform how subtle choices in how we interact with students can have a big impact. (Elizabeth Sheridan-Rossi)

Steele, Claude. ***Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do***. Claude Steele has researched what he has coined the “stereotype threat” for decades, and this book provides a great summary of this research for the general reader. I highly recommend this book for all teachers, learners, and anyone who cares about helping everyone use their talents as effectively as possible. Most of the book discusses research by Steele and others to establish the existence of stereotype threat and its impact on different identity groups in a wide variety of settings, but the best part is the chapter on institutional changes and individual practices that can decrease its negative effect. (Kristin Fiori)

Straub, Emma. ***All Adults Here***. How ever did she get so wise? This novel made me laugh and cry on virtually every page because Straub has such incredible understanding of what it’s like to be old or middle aged or adolescent trying to get “it” right against all odds. (Marty Skoble)

Suzuki, Shunryu. ***Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind***. Ever wish you were more zen? There's a book for that. You can read from front to back, or just pop into any section at random: "When the water returns to its original oneness with the river, it no longer has any individual feelings to it; it resumes its own nature, and finds composure" (page 94). (Alex Darrow)

Swamy, Shruti. ***The House is a Body***. The style in which this book of stories is written feels very Chekhovian to me. It is realistic and simple, but psychologically complicated. I also loved the short stories themselves. Each story feels like a little gem, as in Chekhov's. Though the author is American, she writes about the Indian culture and what it is to be multicultural, which, as I am multicultural, applies to me and I recognized a lot of things. I loved the book. (Katya Arnold)

Sze, Arthur. ***Sightlines***. Like calligraphy, each line (or stroke) changes everything. Sze’s poems take us to surprising and enlightening places within and between each marvelous piece. (Marty Skoble)

Tevis, Walter. ***The Queen’s Gambit***. If you loved the series this is even more compelling. And you will also marvel at the brilliant casting and environmental design of the show. (Nancy Reardon)

Townsend Warner, Sylvia. ***The Corner that Held Them***. This novel deals with the passage of time. It's a narrative about a convent in the 14th and 15th centuries, and just phenomenally funny and gorgeously written. No real protagonists to speak of, just the shape of a haphazard community and its architecture as it moves through the decades. (Eli Neuman-Hammond)

Tough, Paul. ***The Inequality Machine***. Does college reduce or increase existing inequalities in the US? This book eliminates any doubt. It's built around heartbreaking stories of teenagers studying for the SAT, trying to gain admission, and then struggling to graduate. As the stories pile up, it becomes absolutely clear that poorer students are at an immense disadvantage. (Michael Pershan)

Trump, Ph.D., Mary L. ***Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man***. Devastating, compelling, intense. From personal examples to high level review, Mary Trump paints a horrifying and believable story of the life of Donald—from toddler through stream of failures up to current dotage. He was neglected by his frequently hospitalized mother and cold sociopath father, he cleverly dodged the scorn that his eldest brother got, he tormented his younger brother, and won his father's approval by lying and cheating: Donald is basically a Ponzi scheme. (Mike Roam)

Tyler, Anne. **Redhead by the Side of the Road.** It's so easy to get stuck and so hard to unstick yourself. Tyler illustrates thus in poignant detail. A sweet, sad, funny novel. (Marty Skoble)

Walker, Nico. **Cherry.** Broke from his heroin addiction, a soldier returned from war turns to the only logical solution: rob banks. (Melissa Kantor)

Waln, Nora. **House of Exile.** I read this book 25 years ago and it is still my favorite memoir. Nora Waln was a remarkable American journalist who, among other things, wrote about Hitler and Nazi Germany, accompanied Patton's troops in WWII, and was embedded with troops during the Korean war. In this memoir, Waln chronicles her time living in China with the Lin family in the 1920s. This time period, before the Japanese invasion of China and the eventual Chinese communist revolution, is beautifully told and Waln brings the culture and family to life in extraordinary and vivid detail. (Jenny Marshall)

Walton, Dawnie. **The Final Revival of Opal & Nev.** At the center of this novel, written as a rockumentary, is Sarah Lena Sunny Shelton, the first Black editor of a Rolling Stone-esque magazine. This amazing book takes on themes potent to our present moment as it traces the movements of Opal & Nev, an iconic 70's punk rock band, and the ways in which Sunny's father, a drummer with the duo, intertwine. How appropriate that graduation this year is slated to happen at Cyclone stadium. This is a thrilling roller coaster of a story. I fell in love with every page. (Cathy Fuerst)

Ward, Jesmyn. **The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks About Race.** Envisioned as a response to James Baldwin's 1963 essay collection *The Fire Next Time*. Editor and two-time National Book Award for Fiction writer Ward invited eighteen contemporary writers to reflect and speak to the past, present, and future of race in America. Essays, poems, fiction. Contributors include: Carol Anderson, Jericho Brown, Edwidge Danticat, Kevin Young, Claudia Rankine, and Isabel Wilkerson. Essential, as are Ward's novels and own essays. (Laura Barnett)

Weir, Andy. **Project Hail Mary.** From the author of *The Martian*, for people who like nerdy, science-positive sci-fi. Imagine, as if we don't have enough to worry about, that human life on earth is threatened by a space microbe that's blocking the sun. Global cooling is the problem, and an ice age is just around the corner. Main character Ryland Grace, a brilliant middle-school science teacher, awakens in an amnesiac state with two other people, both dead, on a spaceship hurtling to somewhere. Turns out it's a suicide mission to save humanity. A truly cool and moving friendship with an alien ensues, and ... read to find out if we (or Ryland Grace) survive. (Denise Rinaldo)

Whitehead, Colson. **Sag Harbor.** Brilliant and laugh-out-loud funny autobiographical novel about being a teenager in the Black community in Sag Harbor circa 1985. (Michael Donohue)

Whitman, Walt. **Song of Myself.** What do you do in the summer? Taking Whitman's advice, "I loafe and invite my soul, I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass." You can read all 52 sections in order, or just poke around here and there for some inspiring words on what it means to be a self in the world. (Alex Darrow)

Wilkerson, Isabel. **Caste.** Readers of *The Warmth of Other Suns* will want to read Wilkerson's latest, published last summer. It's a much more personal book than *Warmth*, a blend of social analysis and memoir as Wilkerson makes a formidable argument about the history of racism in America. (Michael Donohue)

Wright, Richard. **Native Son.** I decided to reread this book during this important year for issues of race in America. It was as gripping and as meaningful this time as when I first read it as a teenager, even though this time I already knew the shocking storyline. While this book was critiqued by some, including Wright's mentee James Baldwin, my own perspective from today is that Wright's characters demonstrate many of the nuances of systemic racism. Their own concepts of race are complex and believable. There are no heroes. None of the characters, from seemingly altruistic

wealthy progressives to the least enfranchised victims of South Chicago's 1930s extreme poverty, are spared from being blinded by their limited perspectives. Warning: this book contains violence and highly disturbing events—once you pick it up you will not be able to put it down, so you need to be psychologically braced and ready for some very intense plot elements once you begin. (Nick Fiori)

Zevin, Gabrielle. ***The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry***. These excerpts from Goodreads say it best: "As surprising as it is moving, *The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry* is an unforgettable tale of transformation and second chances, an irresistible affirmation of why we read, and why we love." And also, "A. J. Fikry's life is not at all what he expected it to be. His wife has died; his bookstore is experiencing the worst sales in its history; and now his prized possession, a rare collection of Poe poems, has been stolen." Lastly, "And then a mysterious package appears at the bookstore. It's a small package, though large in weight—an unexpected arrival that gives A.J. the opportunity to make his life over, the ability to see everything anew." Be warned, you might cry. (Bianca Roberson)

Zhang, C Pam. ***How Much of These Hills is Gold***. In this beautifully written debut novel, two Chinese siblings, Sam and Lucy, find themselves orphaned and friendless in California during the Gold Rush. Each in their own way, Sam and Lucy fight the brutal landscape and the constraints of race and gender. (Kristin Fiori)

Zhuangzi (author), Burton Watson (Translator). ***Zhuangzi: Basic Writings***. Zhuangzi (369?-286? B.C.) was a leading philosopher representing the Daoist strain in Chinese thought. Central to his ideas is the belief that only by understanding Dao (the Way of Nature) and dwelling in its unity can man achieve true happiness and freedom, in both life and death. It is my favorite book and I am excited to share it with you! (Yejing Gu)

Zola, Émile. ***Germinal***. I enjoyed this book most for its bleak, detailed portrayal of life in a French coal-mining settlement in the 1800s. Zola's rich, visceral description represents the height of the naturalism movement. Within this setting, the stage is set for a progressive narrative about idealism, labor strikes, and the rights of workers. Warning: this is a realistic depiction of a 19th century French coal mine, so despite its inspiring themes of proletariat empowerment it also describes unsettling patriarchy and misogyny. (Nick Fiori)

## **Saint Ann's Digital Library at Overdrive**

**Access** the digital library at [saintannsny.lib.overdrive.com](http://saintannsny.lib.overdrive.com) or locate it by Googling the phrase *Saint Ann's Digital Library*. The easiest way to read our e-books is with a Kindle, Kindle app, Overdrive app, or Sora app. Logging in: Students and faculty need a library card number and PIN to check out books. **Look** for an email from [library@saintannsny.org](mailto:library@saintannsny.org) with yours (though you may have it already).

**FYI:** Your library card number is simply your Saint Ann's ID number with an "S" in front if you are a student or "FAC" in front if you are a faculty member. So, if your student ID number is 18840, your library card number is S18840. If your faculty ID is 18840 your library card number is FAC18840. Your PIN is your first and last initials, lower case, followed by the same ID number. So, if your name is Eleanor Roosevelt and your ID number is 18840, your PIN is er18840. Got it, Eleanor? Now, go read some books!

**Note:** If you are a graduating senior or a departing faculty member, your library card number and PIN will work through the end of July. Please use the digital library! Find more info in the [help](#) section of the digital library. Current and past lists available at: [Reading Lists](#).

**Thanks to everyone who contributed. Happy reading!**