

Summer Reading Recommendations

***The Book That Matters Most* by Ann Hood 2016**

Women's fiction recommended by Karen

A mother and a daughter seek balance in their broken lives while books provide them with comfort, clarity and clues to a mystery.

***Furiously Happy: A Funny Book About Horrible Things* by Jenny Lawson 2015**

Humorous biography recommended by Jennifer

Blogger Jenny Lawson explores her lifelong battle with mental illness through inimitable humor and honesty. This is a book about embracing everything that makes us who we are, both the beautiful and the flawed, and then using it to find joy in fantastic and outrageous ways. And who doesn't need a bit more of that.

***Watership Down* by Richard Adams 1972**

Science fiction recommended by Amanda

A group of rabbits must take an arduous journey to escape evil and establish a new and peaceful civilization for their future. In the same vein as *Lord of the Rings*, it is a classic, feel-good story of camaraderie and survival against all odds.

***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot 2010**

Nonfiction recommended by Julie

Rebecca Skloot discusses the science of cell culture during the mid-20th century from the perspective of the medical research community, from the perspective of cancer patient, Henrietta Lacks, and from that of Henrietta's family in the years following her death. Readers will be spurred to tackle bioethical issues, among them, whether human cells can be harvested for medical research without the consent and compensation of the patient, or patient's heirs.

***Walking the Dog* by Elizabeth Swados 2016**

Fiction recommended by Joan

Former child prodigy and rich-girl kleptomaniac, Ester. For two decades, time is the enemy. Her twenties and thirties crawl by in stifling isolation in prison. When finally pardoned & in New York, she finds a job wrestling spoiled canines as a dog walker in Manhattan. Determined to also prove herself a real person, Carleen tries to reconnect with her estranged daughter. This novel defies easy categorizing.

***Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult 2016**

A fiction novel based on a true story recommended by Karen

Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than 20 years' experience. During her shift Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists

and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request but the next day the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery? Does she obey orders or intervene?

***What If? Seriously Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions* by Randall Munroe 2014**

Science non-fiction book recommended by Jennifer

Previously part of NASA, Randall Munroe uses stick-figures to create hilarious and informative answers to important questions you probably never thought to ask, such as: How fast can you hit a speed bump while driving and live? And what would happen if the moon went away? His responses are full of clarity and hilarity, which often results in at least a big explosion.

***The Last American Man* by Elizabeth Gilbert 2002**

Nonfiction recommended by Amanda

The author of *Eat, Pray, Love's* biography of Eustace Conway, an outdoorsman who denounces technology and lives on a refuge in Appalachian North Carolina, is also a history and look into American masculinity and male culture. It also was a finalist for the National Book Award.

***The Boston Girl* by Anita Diamant 2014**

Historical Fiction recommended by Julie

Addie Baum, an 85-year-old grandmother, recounts her coming-of-age in Boston during the early 1900s as one of three daughters of immigrants. Her greatest obstacle: the unwillingness and fear of her parents to accept change, and to allow their offspring to make decisions for themselves.

***All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren 1946**

Fiction recommended by Joan

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this classic book is generally regarded as the finest novel ever written on American politics. It describes the career of Willie Stark, a back-country lawyer whose idealism is overcome by his lust for power and loosely based on the life of Huey Long of Louisiana.

***Raven Black: Book One of the Shetland Island Quartet* by Ann Cleeves 2008**

Mystery recommended by Karen

Set in the remote Schottish Shetland Islands, Cleeves's taut, atmospheric thriller, the first in a new series, will keep readers guessing until the last page. Det. Inspector Jimmy Perez investigates the murder of a teenage girl, found strangled on a snowy hillside shortly after New Year's.

***The Martian* by Andy Weir 2014**

Survival science fiction novel recommended by Jennifer

A freak accident leaves astronaut Mark Watney stranded on Mars with no way to even signal to Earth that he is alive. Everything is out to end him, whether it be the damaged machinery, the

unforgiving environment, or the limited supplies. But Mark is not ready to give up yet and tackles one obstacle after the next to try to make it off the planet alive.

***Where'd You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple 2012**

Fiction recommended by Amanda

Both in epistolary and hilarious narrative, precocious 14-year-old Bee wants to take a family trip to Antarctica, but her slightly unhinged suburban mom disappears just before they're supposed to leave. Twists, hilarity, and raw emotion, abounds as Bee and her father try and piece together what happened to Bernadette. I recommend the audiobook!

***Travels with Charley (In Search of America)* by John Steinbeck 1962**

Nonfiction recommended by Julie

At the age of 58, Steinbeck set out with his poodle, Charley, in a thoughtfully designed and well-equipped mobile residence, determined to expose all of his senses to the different regions of America, and the people who inhabit them. He offers the reader a seat from which to experience this journey vicariously.

***A Year By the Sea: Thoughts of an Unfinished Woman* by Joan Anderson 1999**

Autobiography recommended by Joan

Joan Anderson was a loving wife and supportive mother. She realized that she had neglected to nurture herself and to envision fulfilling goals for her future. As her husband received a job opportunity out-of-state, she refused to follow him to his new job and decided to retreat to a family cottage on Cape Cod. Over the course of a year, she gradually discovered that her life as an "unfinished woman" was full of possibilities. Who are we when we're not "wife" or "mother?"