



Libraries

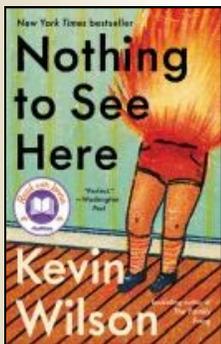
Readers' Advisory Committee

JANUARY 2020

STAFF PICKS

To find book suggestions on the web go to www.nccde.org/374

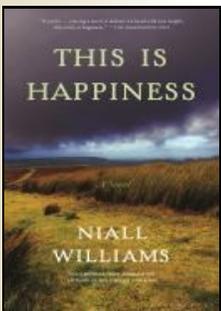
FICTION



NOTHING TO SEE HERE BY KEVIN WILSON

(PICKED BY SMC)

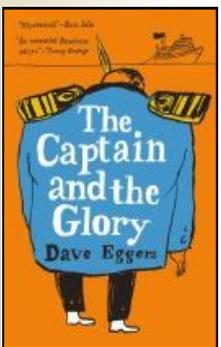
Lillian and Madison were unlikely roommates and yet inseparable friends at their elite boarding school. But then Lillian had to leave the school unexpectedly in the wake of a scandal and they've barely spoken since. Until now, when Lillian gets a letter from Madison pleading for her help. Madison's twin stepkids are moving in with her family and she wants Lillian to be their caretaker. However, there's a catch: the twins spontaneously combust when they get agitated, flames igniting from their skin in a startling but beautiful way. Lillian is convinced Madison is pulling her leg, but it's the truth. Over the course of one demanding summer, Lillian and the twins learn to trust each other—and stay cool—while also staying out of the way of Madison's buttoned-up politician husband. Surprised by her own ingenuity yet unused to the intense feelings of protectiveness she feels for them, Lillian ultimately begins to accept that she needs these strange children as much as they need her—urgently and fiercely. (272 pgs)



THIS IS HAPPINESS BY NIALL WILLIAMS

(PICKED BY SM)

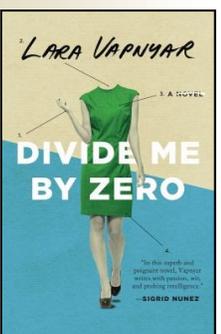
Change is coming to Faha, a small Irish parish that hasn't changed in a thousand years. For one thing, the rain is stopping. Nobody remembers when it started; rain on the western seaboard is a condition of living. But now – just as Father Coffey proclaims the coming of the electricity – the rain clouds are lifting. Seventeen-year-old Noel Crowe is idling in the unexpected sunshine when Christy makes his first entrance into Faha, bringing secrets he needs to atone for. Though he can't explain it, Noel knows right then: something has changed. As the people of Faha anticipate the endlessly procrastinated advent of the electricity, and Noel navigates his own coming-of-age and his fallings in and out of love, Christy's past gradually comes to light, casting a new glow on a small world. (400 pages)



THE CAPTAIN AND THE GLORY BY DAVE EGGERS

(PICKED BY SM)

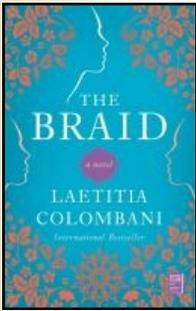
When the decorated Captain of a great ship descends the gangplank for the final time, a new leader, a man with a yellow feather in his hair, vows to step forward. Though he has no experience, no knowledge of nautical navigation or maritime law, and though he has often remarked he doesn't much like boats, he solemnly swears to shake things up. Together with his band of petty thieves and confidence men known as the Upskirt Boys, the Captain thrills his passengers, writing his dreams and notions on the cafeteria wipe-away board, boasting of his exemplary anatomy, devouring cheeseburgers, and tossing overboard anyone who displeases him. Until one day a famous pirate, long feared by passengers of the *Glory* but revered by the Captain for how phenomenally masculine he looked without a shirt while riding a horse, appears on the horizon . . . Absurd, hilarious, and all too recognizable, *The Captain and the Glory* is a wicked farce of contemporary America. (128 pgs)



DIVIDE ME BY ZERO BY LARA VAPNYAR

(PICKED BY SLS)

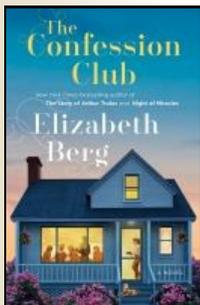
As a young girl, Katya Geller learned from her mother that math was the answer to everything. Now, approaching forty, she finds this wisdom tested: she has lost the love of her life, she is in the middle of a divorce, and has just found out that her mother is dying. Half-mad with grief, Katya turns to the unfinished notes for her mother's last textbook, hoping to find guidance in mathematical concepts. Katya traces back her life's journey: her childhood in Soviet Russia, her parents' great love, the death of her father, her mother's career as a renowned mathematician, and their immigration to the United States. She is, by turns, an adrift newlywed, an ESL teacher in an office occupied by witches and mediums, a restless wife, an accomplished writer, a flailing mother of two, a grieving daughter, and, all the while, a woman in love haunted by a question: how to parse the wild, unfathomable passion she feels through the cool logic of mathematics? (360 pgs)

**THE BRAID BY LAETITIA COLOMBANI****(PICKED SM)**

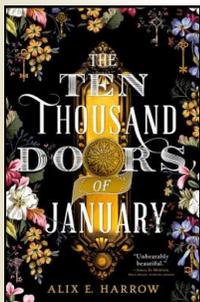
Three women from very different circumstances around the world find their lives intertwined by a single object and discover what connects us—across cultures, across backgrounds, and across borders. In India, Smita is an untouchable. Desperate to give her daughter an education, she takes her child and flees her small village with nothing but resourcefulness, eventually heading to a temple where she will experience a rebirth. In Sicily, Giulia works in her father's wig workshop, the last of its kind in Palermo. She washes, bleaches, and dyes the hair provided by the city's hairdressers, which is now in short supply. But when her father is the victim of a serious accident, she discovers that the company's financial situation is dire. Now she must find a way to save her family's livelihood. In Canada, Sarah is a successful lawyer and twice-divorced mother of three children whose identity is wrapped up in her work. Just as she expects a big promotion, her life is shattered when she's diagnosed with cancer. (224 pgs)

**MEG & JO BY VIRGINIA KANTRA****(PICKED BY BS & SM)**

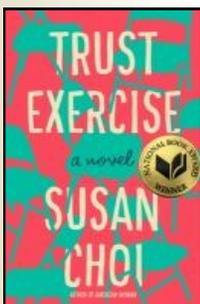
The March sisters—reliable Meg, independent Jo, stylish Amy, and shy Beth—have grown up to pursue their separate dreams. When Jo followed her ambitions to New York City, she never thought her career in journalism would come crashing down, leaving her struggling to stay afloat in a gig economy as a prep cook and secret food blogger. Meg appears to have the life she always planned—the handsome husband, the adorable toddlers, the house in a charming subdivision. But sometimes getting everything you've ever wanted isn't all it's cracked up to be. When their mother's illness forces the sisters home to North Carolina for the holidays, they'll rediscover what really matters. One thing's for sure—they'll need the strength of family and the power of sisterhood to remake their lives and reimagine their dreams. (400 pgs)

**THE CONFESSION CLUB BY ELIZABETH BERG****(PICKED BY SH)**

When a group of friends in Mason, Missouri, decide to start a monthly supper club, they get more than they bargained for. The plan for congenial evenings—talking, laughing, and sharing recipes, homemade food, and wine—abruptly changes course one night when one of the women reveals something startlingly intimate. The supper club then becomes Confession Club, and the women gather weekly to share not only dinners, but embarrassing misdeeds, deep insecurities, and long-held regrets. They invite Iris Winters and Maddy Harris to join, and their timing couldn't be better. Iris is conflicted about her feelings for a charming but troubled man, and Maddy has come back home from New York to escape a problem too big to handle alone. The club offers exactly the kind of support they need to help them make some difficult decisions. (304 pgs)

**THE TEN THOUSAND DOORS OF JANUARY BY ALIX HARROW****(PICKED BY KT)**

In the early 1900s, a young woman embarks on a fantastical journey of self-discovery after finding a mysterious book. In a sprawling mansion filled with peculiar treasures, January Scaller is a curiosity herself. As the ward of the wealthy Mr. Locke, she feels little different from the artifacts that decorate the halls: carefully maintained, largely ignored, and utterly out of place. Then she finds a strange book. A book that carries the scent of other worlds, and tells a tale of secret doors, of love, adventure and danger. Each page turn reveals impossible truths about the world and January discovers a story increasingly entwined with her own. (374 pgs)

**TRUST EXERCISE BY SUSAN CHOI****(PICKED BY SLS)**

In an American suburb in the early 1980s, students at a highly competitive performing arts high school struggle and thrive in a rarified bubble, ambitiously pursuing music, movement, Shakespeare, and, particularly, their acting classes. When two freshmen, David and Sarah, fall headlong into love, their passion does not go unnoticed—or untoyed with—by anyone, especially not by their charismatic acting teacher, Mr. Kingsley. The outside world of family life and economic status, of academic pressure and of their future adult lives, fails to penetrate this school's walls—until it does, in a shocking spiral of events that catapults the action forward in time and flips the premise upside-down. What the reader believes to have happened to David and Sarah and their friends is not entirely true—though it's not false, either. It takes until the book's stunning coda for the final piece of the puzzle to fall into place—revealing truths that will resonate long after the final sentence. (257 pgs)

STAFF PICKS

JANUARY 2020



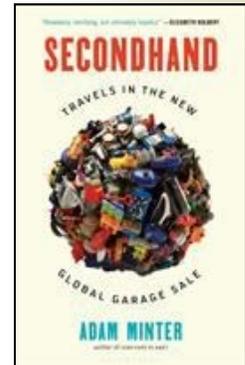
Libraries

NON-FICTION

SECONDHAND BY ADAM MINTER

(PICKED BY SMC & SLH & SLS)

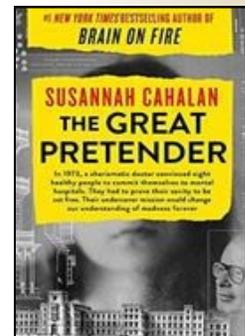
Downsizing. Decluttering. A parent's death. Sooner or later, all of us are faced with things we no longer need or want. But when we drop our old clothes and other items off at a local donation center, where do they go? In *Secondhand*, journalist Adam Minter takes us on an unexpected adventure into the often-hidden, multibillion-dollar industry of reuse: thrift stores in the American Southwest, flea markets in Southeast Asia to used-goods enterprises in Ghana, and more. Along the way, Minter meets the people who handle-and profit from-our rising tide of discarded stuff, and asks a pressing question: In a world that craves shiny and new, is there room for it all? A history of the stuff we've used and a contemplation of why we keep buying more, *Secondhand* also reveals the marketing practices, design failures, and racial prejudices that push used items into landfills instead of new homes. *Secondhand* shows us that it doesn't have to be this way, and what really needs to change to build a sustainable future free of excess stuff. (320 pgs)



THE GREAT PRETENDER BY SUSANNAH CAHALAN

(PICKED BY SLS)

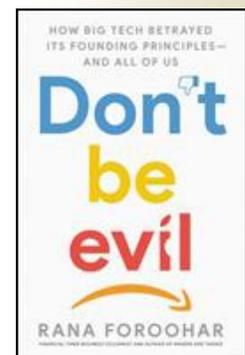
For centuries, doctors have struggled to define mental illness-how do you diagnose it, how do you treat it, how do you even know what it is? In search of an answer, in the 1970s a Stanford psychologist named David Rosenhan and seven other people – sane, normal, well-adjusted members of society – went undercover into asylums around America to test the legitimacy of psychiatry's labels. Forced to remain inside until they'd "proven" themselves sane, all eight emerged with alarming diagnoses and even more troubling stories of their treatment. Rosenhan's watershed study broke open the field of psychiatry, closing down institutions and changing mental health diagnosis forever. But, as Cahalan's explosive new research shows, very little in this saga is exactly as it seems. What really happened behind those closed asylum doors, and what does it mean for our understanding of mental illness today? (400 pgs)



DON'T BE EVIL BY RANA FOROOHAR

(PICKED BY SMC)

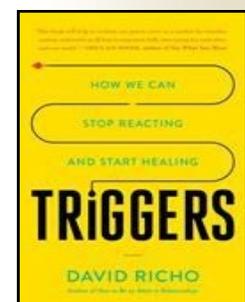
"Don't be evil" was enshrined as Google's original corporate mantra back in its early days, when the company's cheerful logo still conveyed the utopian vision for a future in which technology would inevitably make the world better, safer, and more prosperous. Unfortunately, it's been quite a while since Google, or the majority of the Big Tech companies, lived up to this founding philosophy. Today, the utopia they sought to create is looking more dystopian than ever: from digital surveillance and the loss of privacy to the spreading of misinformation and hate speech to predatory algorithms targeting the weak and vulnerable to products that have been engineered to manipulate our desires. *Financial Times* global business columnist Rana Foroohar tells the story of how Big Tech lost its soul. She shows the true extent to which behemoths like Google, Facebook, Apple, and Amazon are monetizing both our data and our attention, without us seeing a penny of those exorbitant profits. Finally, Foroohar lays out a plan for how we can resist, by creating a framework that fosters innovation while also protecting us from the dark side of digital technology. (328 pgs)

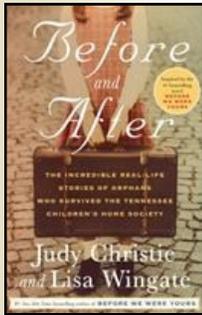


TRIGGERS BY DAVID RICHIO

(PICKED BY BS)

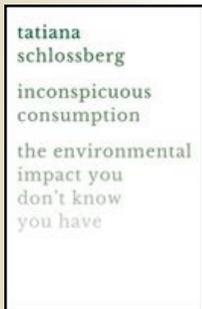
Psychotherapist David Richio examines the science of triggers and our reactions of fear, anger, and sadness. He helps us understand why our bodies respond before our minds have a chance to make sense of a situation. By looking deeply at the roots of what provokes us--the words, actions, and even sensory elements like smell--we find opportunities to understand the origins of our triggers and train our bodies to remain calm in the face of traumatic experiences. (160 pgs)





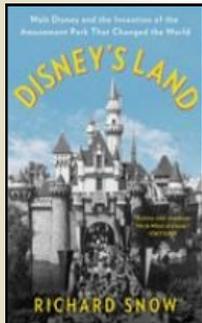
BEFORE AND AFTER BY JUDY CHRISTIE & LISA WINGATE (PICKED BY SMC)

From the 1920s to 1950, Georgia Tann ran a black-market baby business at the Tennessee Children's Home Society in Memphis. She offered up more than 5,000 orphans tailored to the wish lists of eager parents—hiding the fact that many weren't orphans at all, but stolen sons and daughters of poor families, desperate single mothers, and women told in maternity wards that their babies had died. The publication of Lisa Wingate's novel *Before We Were Yours* brought new awareness of Tann's lucrative career in child trafficking. Adoptees who knew little about their pasts gained insight into the startling facts behind their family histories. Encouraged by their contact with Wingate and journalist Judy Christie, who documented the stories of fifteen adoptees in this book, many determined Tann survivors set out to trace their roots and find their birth families. (320 pgs)



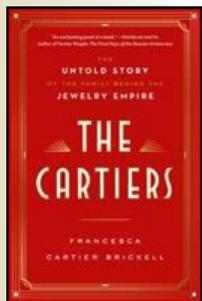
INCONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION BY TATIANA SCHLOSSBERG (PICKED BY SM)

Former *New York Times* science writer Tatiana Schlossberg explains that far from being a distant problem of the natural world created by the fossil fuel industry, climate change is all around us, lurking everywhere in our convenience-driven society, all without our realizing it. By examining the unseen and unconscious environmental impacts in four areas—the Internet and technology, food, fashion, and fuel - Schlossberg helps readers better understand why climate change is such a complicated issue, and how it connects all of us: How streaming a movie on Netflix in New York burns coal in Virginia; how eating a hamburger in California might contribute to pollution in the Gulf of Mexico; how buying an inexpensive cashmere sweater in Chicago expands the Mongolian desert; how destroying forests from North Carolina is necessary to generate electricity in England. Schlossberg makes the climate crisis and its solutions interesting and relevant to everyone who cares, even a little, about the planet. (288 pgs)



DISNEY'S LAND BY RICHARD SNOW (PICKED BY SLH & BS)

One day in the early 1950s, Walt Disney stood looking over 240 acres of farmland in Anaheim, California, and imagined building a park where people “could live among Mickey Mouse and Snow White in a world still powered by steam and fire. No one wanted Disney to build such a park. He was told that he would only be heading toward financial ruin. But Walt persevered, initially financing the park against his own life insurance policy and later with sponsorship from ABC and the sale of thousands and thousands of Davy Crockett coonskin caps. On July 17, 1955, Disneyland opened its gates...and the first day was a disaster. But the curious masses kept coming, and the rest is entertainment history. Eight hundred million visitors have flocked to the park since then. In *Disney's Land*, Richard Snow brilliantly presents the entire spectacular story. (432 pgs)



THE CARTIERS BY FRANCESCA CARTIER BRICKELL (PICKED BY SLH)

The Cartiers is the revealing tale of a jewelry dynasty. At its heart are the three Cartier brothers whose motto was "Never copy, only create" and who made their family firm internationally famous in the early days of the twentieth century, thanks to their unique and complementary talents: Louis, the visionary designer who created the first men's wristwatch to help an aviator friend tell the time without taking his hands off the controls of his flying machine; Pierre, the master dealmaker who bought the New York headquarters on Fifth Avenue for a double-stranded natural pearl necklace; and Jacques, the gemstone expert whose travels to India gave Cartier access to the world's best gems. *The Cartiers* also offers a behind-the-scenes look at the firm's most iconic jewelry and the long line of stars from the worlds of fashion, film, and royalty who wore them. (656 pgs)



DEAR GIRLS BY ALI WONG (PICKED BY KT)

In her hit Netflix comedy special *Baby Cobra*, an eight-month pregnant Ali Wong resonated so heavily that she became a popular Halloween costume. Wong told the world her remarkably unfiltered thoughts on marriage, sex, Asian culture, working women, and why you never see new mom comics on stage but you see plenty of new dads. The sharp insights and humor are even more personal in this completely original collection. She shares the wisdom she's learned from a life in comedy and reveals stories from her life off stage, including the brutal singles life in New York, reconnecting with her roots in Vietnam, tales of being a wild child growing up in San Francisco, and parenting war stories. Though addressed to her daughters, Ali Wong's letters are absurdly funny, surprisingly moving, and enlightening for all. (224 pgs)