



NONFICTION GENRE STUDY

The ARRT Genre Study Group studied the Nonfiction genre from 2007-2008.

Introduction

Beyond Subject Heading: Considering A Book's Appeal (Nonfiction)

Frame/Tone

How is the background detail presented? Does the book offer a scholarly or popular treatment of the topic?

Are there indexes, footnotes, bibliography, glossaries, maps, illustrations?

Is the setting contemporary or historical, exotic or familiar?

Does the frame/background detail affect the tone or atmosphere?

bittersweet, bleak, comfortable, contemporary, darker (tone), detailed setting, details of [insert an area of specialized knowledge or skill], edgy, evocative, evangelistic, exotic, foreboding, gritty, hard-edged, heartwarming, historical details, humorous, journalistic, literary, lush, magical, melodramatic, menacing, mystical, nightmare (tone), philosophical, political, popular, psychological, romantic, rural, scholarly, sensual, small-town, stark, suspenseful, timeless, upbeat, urban

Characterization

Is the focus on characters or events; do individuals play significant roles?

Is the focus on a single person or on several whose lives are intertwined?

Is the reader expected to identify with the people portrayed or observe them?

What is the point of view from which the story is told?

Are there memorable and important secondary characters?

Detailed, distant, dramatic, eccentric, evocative, faithful, familiar, introspective, intriguing secondary (characters), laudatory, lifelike, multiple points of view, quirky, realistic, recognizable, sympathetic, vivid, well-developed, well-drawn

Storyline

What is the author's intention in regard to story line? To document a situation/life or argue a point, for example?

Does the story emphasize people or situations and events?

Is the focus of the story more interior and psychological or exterior and action oriented?

Does the story take place on more than one level?

Is the story told in an exciting or even outrageous style, or is the presentation calm and objective?

action-oriented, character-centered, cinematic, complex, conclusive, domestic, episodic, explicitly violent, exposè, family-centered, folksy, gentle, humorous, inspirational,

investigative, issue-oriented, layered, linear, literary, multiple storylines, mystical, mythic, open-ended, plot-centered, plot twists, racy, rich and famous, romp, sexually explicit, steamy, strong language, thought-provoking, tragic

Pacing

What is the pattern of the pacing? Does the author pull readers quickly into the story or spend time providing background details? Is there an introduction to set up action and heighten curiosity?

Do descriptive details slow the pacing?

Is the author's approach scholarly or popular?

Is the book densely written? How much white space is there on pages?

Are there short sentences, short paragraphs, and short chapters? Do illustrations and/or figures break up the text?

Is there a straight-line plot or are there multiple plotlines, flashbacks, or alternating points of view

breakneck, compelling, deliberate, densely written, easy, engrossing, fast-paced, leisurely-paced, measured, relaxed, stately, unhurried

Other terms relating to style/language: *austere, candid, classic, colorful, complex, concise, conversational, direct, dramatic, dry, elaborate, extravagant, fervent, flamboyant, frank, graceful, homespun, jargon, laconic, metaphorical, natural, ornate, passionate, poetic, polished, prosaic, restrained, seemingly, showy, simple, sophisticated, stark, thoughtful, unaffected, unembellished, unpretentious, unusual*

Questions to Consider in Discussing Books

What does the author do best?

What makes the book popular?

What do readers talk about?

Does it emphasize people or events?

Do you fall into the book immediately or learn about what is going on at a more leisurely pace?

What other authors/titles does the book remind you of? Fiction? Nonfiction?

Who else might enjoy reading this book and why?

True Crime

True Crime vs. Crime Fiction

- True Crime focuses on reporting more than storytelling
- Crime Fiction is more selective in the background information included
- In Crime Fiction there is the potential for the plot to go in an unexpected direction
- Crime Fiction is “neater”—shorter and the details are more selective
- There is a lack of passion in much True Crime (except for “advocacy” titles), and that passion is a strong appeal factor for many Crime Fiction fans
- True Crime may appeal to Crime Fiction readers who like to read the ending first
- Crime Fiction is a “who-dunnit” whereas True Crime focuses on “why”

- In Crime Fiction the reader is invited to “play the game,” in True Crime the game is already over
- Because it is written with hindsight, True Crime can be frustrating for readers who lose patience with victims or investigators

Characteristics of True Crime

- True Crime can be repetitive—both in terms of the serial nature of the crimes and because books written by journalists have a “continuing story” feel
- True Crime has a sensationalist/voyeuristic appeal
- True Crime books are visual—the inclusion of pictures puts a face on the crimes
- True Crime books employ a “you are there” technique
- True Crime books are resolved at the end
- True Crime books follow a predictable structure: description of the crime, flashback to the victim, criminal and detective’s story (how they came together), and the process of criminal justice.
- In True Crime there are many crimes about which several books have been written (Jack the Ripper, Leopold and Loeb, Laci Peterson, etc.)
- A consideration in selecting or recommending True Crime is the orientation of the author—impartial journalist, victim or victim’s family member, investigator, prosecuting or defense attorney...
- True Crime lends itself to film adaptation

Appeal of True Crime

- For some readers the emotional appeal of True Crime is closer to that of horror fiction than that of Crime Fiction or mysteries – more visceral and personal.
- Authenticity
- Some readers like that they’re learning “the stuff left out of the newspaper stories”
- Some readers found True Crime **too** true—too easy to identify with. Several participants read True Crime in their teens and twenties, but found it too disturbing to read as they got older, especially after they became parents
- Some readers of True Crime, like readers in other nonfiction areas, are reading to get enough information to “make up their own minds” about a case

Thoughts on *In Cold Blood*

- Beautiful writing – “Capote is a great writer, after all.”
- True and has a Crime but not “True Crime” as we think of the genre now.
- One reader had expected more of a thriller and was disappointed with the pacing of the book and the excessive descriptions. She found it boring.

Books Read and Recommended

**Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* by Vincent Bugliosi

When Corruption Was King: How I Helped the Mob Rule Chicago, Then Brought the Outfit Down by Robert Cooley
Reversal of Fortune: Inside the Von Bulow Case by Alan Dershowitz
Death and Justice: An Expose of Oklahoma's Death Row Machine by Mark Fuhrman
Leopold and Loeb: The Crime of the Century by Hal Higdon
Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America by Erik Larson
Our Guys: The Glen Ridge Rape and the Secret Life of the Perfect Suburb by Bernard Lefkowitz
Are You There Alone: The Unspeakable Crime of Andrea Yates by Suzanne O'Malley
Best Crime Writing: 2004 ed. Otto Penzler
Bitter Harvest: A Woman's Fury, A Mother's Sacrifice by Ann Rule
Green River Running Red: The Real Story of the Green River Killer—America's Deadliest Serial Murderer by Ann Rule
American Taboo: A Murder in the Peace Corps by Philip Weiss

*Several participants felt that that *Helter Skelter* was good benchmark of “contemporary” true crime. (As one member put it, “It’s the trifecta. It’s got the rich and famous, a sensational trial, and an “insider’s” perspective.)

Natural History: Or, A Trip to the Field Museum

Scope of Natural History

- Field Museum exhibitions, earth sciences, archaeology, anthropology, zoology, ornithology, ecology, environmental issues, meteorology, seismology, weather, botany
- Non-medical, non-space

Appeal of Narrative Nonfiction:

- Can it be read for characterization? Are there enough human elements within the story for the author to develop this?
- Too much information for a non-science reader?
- As an audio listener, can one close out some of the story?
- Does the reader want facts or a first person narrator?
- How different are style and structure in fiction and nonfiction? Is a good storyteller the key to success in both types of writing?
- Pacing is important just as in fiction
- Does one need a hunger for knowledge to find nonfiction satisfying?
- Can nonfiction books be dipped into at whim?
- *Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color That Changed the World* by Simon Garfield and *Cod: A Biography of a Fish That Changed the World* by Mark Kurlansky

- Trendy, narrative nonfiction with lots of detailed, historical facts/like fiction, these microhistories offer human-interest stories as well.

Displays (considerations for nonfiction titles)

- Browser needs
- In-depth study or an overview of a subject (trivia)
- Entertaining narrative nonfiction or scholarly tomes

Simon Winchester –The Benchmark Author

The Crack at the Edge of the World

- Contains lots of history (too much for some readers, perhaps)
- Too many aspects of Winchester's tale relate to his own life
- Not necessarily a book about earthquakes. Perhaps the book was misnamed.
- Style is elegant and wonderful
- Annoyed with the parentheses and asides/Map was more linear than *Crack*
- *The Professor and the Madman* blended travel, memoir and history more smoothly than the two on our list.

The Map That Changed the World

- Great narrative tale with accurate, interestingly presented facts
- A polemic against Christianity/very offended by author's negative tone
- Annoyed by Winchester's constant reporting of his adventures
- Good biography of William Smith's life and his trials
- Interesting history of mapping, geology, plate tectonics, ecology
- Good overview of the time period covering the Industrial Revolution and the divisions among the social classes

Authors Similar to Simon Winchester

- John McPhee/science, landscape and characterizations are all part of his works, not just geology
- Diana Preston's *Lusitania: an Epic Tragedy*/great narrative with careful research
- James Michener
- Oliver Sachs

Books Read

Zoology

***The Grizzly Maze: Timothy Treadwell's Fatal Obsession with Alaskan Bears* by Nick Jans**

Cinematic/fast paced/ not scientific, but reads like a murder mystery/really a true crime tale for readers of disaster stories/good documentary/interesting facts about Alaska

included/appeal for Young Adults/characters are the bear *and* the man

***Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants* by Robert Sullivan**

Author is a curious journalist/ writing is amateurish/good research with tongue in cheek overtones/lots of tangents in storyline/ loads of information on rats and the history of New York City/a "Sure Bet" for some readers though not for the squeamish (pretty gross at times)/possibly for Young Adults/the reader and the author become discoverers in this saga/microhistory

Read-alikes: Urban myths and legends and the film Willard

***The Lady and the Panda: the True Adventures of the First American Explorer to Bring Back China's Most Exotic Animal* by Vicki Croke**

Good writing about fascinating people/Shanghai of the 1940s/not too scientific/travel narrative about a very determined female adventurer who compares East with the West/she is an amateur scientist/not for zoology fans/

Read-alikes: Elizabeth Peters

***To See Every Bird on Earth: A Father, a Son, and a Lifelong Obsession* by Dan Koepfel**

Dysfunctional family life/ people are obsessed with pursuing big birds/interesting story that engages the reader with world-wide travels and sightings/at the heart of the narrative is an attempt to mend a rift between the father and son/not only about bird watching but a strong, melancholy family.

***The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker* by Tim Gallagher**

Characters are obsessed with birds/personal story for birdwatchers

***Creatures of the Deep: In Search of the Sea's "Monsters" and the World They Live In* by Erich Hoyt**

Gorgeous coffee table book that describes life cycles and family trees of marine flora and fauna/browser friendly with short story appeal/ contains many fascinating vignettes

***The Rarest of the Rare: Stories Behind the Treasures as the Harvard Museum of Natural History* by Nancy Pick**

Browseable, coffee table title with lovely photographs and appealing stories to read aloud

Evolution

***I Have Landed: The End of a Beginning in Natural History* by Stephen Jay Gould**

Wonderful, varied collection of his articles/not bedtime reading/very accessible with a conversational style/personalized short pieces/

Read-alike: Jared Diamond (more straight forward than Gould)

***Tears of the Cheetah: And Other Tales from the Genetic Frontlines* by Stephen J.**

O'Brien

Fourteen fascinating stories uncovering the genetic histories of such species as the panda, the cheetah, the humpbacked whale and orangutan/information is very scientific but presented in an interesting, understandable style for the lay person/themes throughout are the close parallel between human and animal genetics and man's responsibility toward well being of both/good glossary /author is head of the Laboratory of Genomic Diversity at National Cancer Institutes.

***The Snow Leopard* by Peter Matthiessen**

Personal quest by author-traveler Matthiessen to reach Crystal Mountain (the last pure enclave of Tibetan Buddhism on earth) and to glimpse the most elusive and rarest of creatures, the snow leopard/Beautiful, evocative writing that reveals Matthiessen's a love and respect for this magical world.

Climate

***Weather: A Visual Guide* by Bruce Buckley**

Lots of photographs with good, basic information/coffee table book/offers history and development of weather prediction science/well written/chapters describe different natural disasters throughout history including hurricanes (especially Andrew)/recommended for Young Adults who need to read a science book.

Sure Bets (Authors)

Rick Bass
Wendell Berry
Annie Dillard
Stephen Jay Gould
James Herriott
Barry Lopez
John McPhee
Terry Tempest Williams

Very Far From Anywhere Else: Or, A Rough Guide to Travel Nonfiction

Suggested Selection Guides:

The Real Story: A Guide to Nonfiction Reading Interests by Sarah Statz. 2006 (Good Categories)

The Traveler's Reading Guide: A Ready-Made Reading List for the Armchair Traveler by Maggy Simony (OP)

1. Appeal of Armchair Travel:

- Reading about the *expat* experience offers a different perspective from that of the traveler/tourist
- An introspective, personal approach that is an adventure, perhaps a spiritual one
- These books are not really guides but help the reader relate to and appreciate the daily life of a given country
- May be fantastical or reveal the “soul of a place”
- Feeling of permanence rather than “just passing through” permeates the writing
- What make one a true resident?
- Contains elements of plot in that the narrator needs to survive/carry on
- Stories are about relationships rather than descriptions of going from A to B (Very enjoyable)
- Sense of personal discovery with an emotional investment in a place makes the narrative rich
- Authors accomplish what we dream about doing / high risks for the writer and low ones for the reader.
- Endings are often happy, with a rather romantic view presented of a given place
- Creative, narrative nonfiction offers the author a wide berth in regards to opinions, travels.....open-mindedness? flexibility? sarcastic? humorous? Consider Paul Theroux or Bill Bryson)
- Bill Bryson’s writing is serious when discussing the aboriginals. Reader often remembers the historic information as well as the humorous episodes in some travel narratives
 - *The Art of Travel* by Alain De Botto
 - Why do we travel? To learn patience? humility? De Botton ‘s book explores a philosophical approach to travel. Is it more interesting to read about a place you have never been versus one that you have seen? What is the reader looking for in travel writing?

2. Aspects of Travel Writing

- Some questions to ponder?
 - Is the book insightful? Do you feel the “essence of a place” Is it a soul searching experience? Are you reliving former travels? What have you learned? Do you wish your travels to be perfect? If so, then perhaps you should remain at home.
- Pacing, setting, characters are all vital factors and they vary with individual authors. Goal can be affected by the story’s pacing.
- Structure can also be important. Does the reader need a rigid itinerary or do random travels entice one?
- Travel can be both solitary and not...
- As with any adventure, there are risks...at what point does an adventure become dangerous? Where are the places in which the traveler can die?
 - Some narratives are actually meant to “disturb/warn” a reader.
- Embracing another culture can remove one’s comfort zone. The reader is safe, but not necessarily the writer. The latter needs to be flexible.

- The travel writer's need to travel is often the basis of a plot

3. Discussion of Individual Titles:

Wandering Home: A Long Walk Across America's Most Hopeful Landscape, Vermont's Champlain Valley and New York's Adirondacks by Bill McKibben

- Nature / travel writing
- Author walks in the Adirondacks
- Dry, droll humor
- Discusses the cultures of Lake Champlain and New York

A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush by Eric Newby

- Self deprecating humor
- First half of the story is quite funny, but the last half is serious and explores the impoverished lives of the local citizens
- Newby's humor can be said to predate Bill Bryson's writing.
- The author is an ill-prepared traveler on his expedition through the Himalayas and the wilds of Afghanistan

Assassination Vacation by Sarah Vowell

- Politics of Vowell are very liberal
- Travelers and readers of American history will find book rewarding

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story by John Berendt

- Narrative centers around a key event and characters involved with it
- Celebration of a city (Savannah could be considered the main character)
- Setting is the most important element in the tale

A Year in the World: Journeys of a Passionate Traveler by Frances Mayes

- Story revolves around a rich woman who can have whatever her heart desires.
- She is a snob...who really cares about these people?
- A tedious narrative

Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy by Frances Mayes

- Audio version of this story is poorly executed
- Good writing about the pleasures of living in Italy
- Lots of detail about local food and wines.
- Interesting details (for some readers) about her attempts at creating a "home" and her experiences with the local tradesmen

Two for the Road: Our Love Affair with American Food by Jane Stern

- For people who enjoy the Food Channel
- Food is the culture and main character in this story

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia by Elizabeth Gilbert

- Sprawling travelogue of soul-searching and self-discovery
- Combines elements of romantic fiction with those of journalistic reporting
- Light, anecdotal in tone with lots of information about the culture and history of three countries
- Author honestly confronts personal troubles.

Nine Nations of North America by Joel Garreau

- Book is OP (1981)
- Dated, social and cultural explanation about selected areas of North America
- Author creates his own boundaries that define the nine regions
- Somewhat humorous, some predictions are true and others a bit outlandish

The World: Travels 1950-2000 by Jan Morris

- Collection of travel essays by a revered and imitated world travel writer
- The book is divided into five decades and its author creates a vivid portrait of the twentieth century
- A disappointing feature of the collection is the brevity of many of her essays

Displays and Patron Recommendations

- Should we offer the traditional nonfiction guides as well as the travel narratives? Guides are certainly more objective and lack the elements of story and personal anecdote.
- With the travel narrative, reader is more a part of the story (Henry James, Marco Polo, Mark Twain, Tom Wolfe. Their books can also be classified as memoirs). These narratives in which the author injects himself into action make the story very interesting.
- Reading Maps, Travel/Adventure and facts about famous places are great displays ideas.

Additional titles for the travelogue list:

- *The Traveler's Reading Guide: Ready-Made Reading Lists for the Armchair Traveler* by Maggie Simony. (Facts on File, 1987) OP
- *Shitting Pretty: How to Stay Clean and Healthy While Traveling* by Jane Wilson-Howarth. (Travelers' Tales Guides, 2000)

"But Enough About You"...Popular Biography

Biography Advantages

- Readers learn about one another's hidden secrets, individual life/details of another world, i.e. glitz and glamour, gossip, inspiration (you almost feel better when reading about how difficult some people's lives are)
- Biographies are histories, natural stories regardless of the book's time period/Readers know this genre/Biographies subjects are people who have made an impact on the culture.
- Main character's sidekick may also be an interesting person in his/her own right.
- Motivates reader to study about another time period/Very discussable (quirky features about the subject's life are good discussion openers.

Structure of the Narrative (2 tiers)

1. Story: Popular with Americans/ Anecdotes help to personalize a life

2. History: Scholarly, tone is usually academic. Detailed footnotes may be overwhelming. Pictures, table of contents, primary sources, glossaries, indexes, charts, maps often interwoven with anecdotal tidbits are fun and in many stories necessary/ (McCullough does this quite well)/Facts should take you THERE/Pacing should be crisp/Readers Should experience a clear sense of the beginning and the end of the story/Imagination is for fiction...no pictures needed. Pictures are necessary for nonfiction because they take you there.

Side Comments

- Exhaustive detail may be relished by some readers and a drawback for others
- Accuracy is very important, especially to the reader of an 800 page book. Less is more? Can you trust historical fiction and nonfiction? Would those who read biography really trust historical fiction?
- Where should biographies be shelved within the library? 700s 800s 500s? If a given book is the entire life of a person, some libraries place it in BIOGRAPHY
- Consideration of the cataloger?
- Where do people browse?

There is a distinction between scholarly authors (historians) and journalists (authors)

- Purchase of biography: Subject matter only may be significant.
- Media alerts / Library Journal, Booklist, Publishers'Weekly / Is book well-received? Popular movies may create interest in subject.
- Some patrons are not particularly selective but are interested in specific people (Diana, the Kennedys, movie stars, etc.) and events.

- It is good to know your clientele.
- Does the author need to be so comprehensive? 800 pages or so? Should the author digress?
- Are these books sometimes poorly edited or maybe not edited at all? Who is able to edit a biography? Another “expert” on the subject? Less is more? What is considered relevant?
- What is a definitive biography? Is it meant to be popular? Its appeal may be to a limited audience. Some readers skim and select what they read within a given title.
So many different types of biographies. What does the reader want? An intrusive author? Hagiography/subject should be brought to life. Biographies of living persons are usually presented from a distinct point of view. Money may also be a factor.

Tone

- Amusing and chatty? Is the author subjective (needs to be convincing in order to make his point, i.e., take a stand) or objective?
- Does he/she have an agenda? Author does not necessarily have to like his character.

Biography Interview

- What don't you like? Patrons have very definite tastes in biography. Respectful versus gossipy? What is important: author, character, time period, length? Memoir or biography? Does the story need to be well written, accurate? Biography or autobiography? Some patrons may not understand the difference? Word of mouth.....person or event in the news may generate interest in a particular book.
- Adults usually know what they want.....Teens may need suggestions.
- What does the reader want? Tell-all, MTV specials, interesting facts and revelations?

Give me something good to read.....

Memoir / short book / published letters /notorious people /collected biographies / men only? women only?

Specific Authors

David McCullough

Allison Weir

Kitty Kelly ~ Sally Smith ~ Andrew Morton ~ Donald Spoto ~ Edward Klein ~

Christopher P. Anderson

“Tell all” celebrity expose / popular culture depicted / gossipy (a sub category of biography) 20th-21st centuries....subjects

Antonia Fraser, Alison Weir, Carolly Erickson

Royalty

Doris Kearns Goodwin, A. Scott Berg, David McCullough, Ron Chernow, Barbara Goldsmith, Robert A. Caro

Specific subject/ time period

Charles Higham

Story may revolve around a specific political, cultural event as well as a personality

NB: Sometimes the author becomes the celebrity. (Doris Kearns Goodwin ~ David McCullough, eg.)

Points for Consideration

- Character ~ Time Period ~ Style of living depicted in story ~ Secondary Characters
- Writers listed below are quite competent. Their characters were/are the centers of their worlds...witnesses to their times.

Sure Bets

Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay by Nancy Mitford

Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up by Bob Colacello (Great story that reveals his influence on popular culture)

Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo by Hayden Herrera

Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee by Charles J. Shields

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt

Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship Based upon Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers by Joseph Lash

Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Ladies by J. B. West

Little Gloria...Happy at Last by Barbara Goldsmith

You Might as Well Die: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker by John Keats

The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire by Baiev Khassan

Suggestion: Biographies are great for book discussions. Tie in a fiction title with a nonfiction one as in the following example:

The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl by Timothy Egan (nonfiction)

Whose Names Are Unknown: a Novel by Sanora Babb

The Search for Meaning : Inspiration and Personal Change

Self Help Titles

- Subject matter is not boring, but often timely
- Inspirational titles are not a hard sell

- People who need them can usually find them
- Self help and personal change each offers different types of advice
- Broad-based, open-ended questions should be used to determine patron's needs
- Librarian should be sensitive to individual requests and belief systems
- Are your patrons interested in personal journals, histories (Lost Gospels)

Sometimes they just need to be offered a "place to start"

- Reading lists are a small part of this area/ Religious writing seems to be "political" now
- Bookstores often merchandise self books as "trendy" and books on religion tend to be arranged according to various faiths
- Self help books can also be described as "prescriptive"
- Does the reader need to relate to the individual author in order for these books to "purposeful"?
- Authors such as Billy Graham, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren can be trendy, offer religious self-help titles and have a built-in audience.
- People want the above authors / they are known / their message is comforting, encouraging / they provide positive steps for conquering 21st century moral and psychological problems (alcoholism/ drug addiction / divorce, etc.)
- Some self help/ inspirational authors are expert business persons and know exactly how to market their products
- People want to improve and canWhat are they searching for? Truth? Overcoming adversity? Self help versus inspiration? A fast fix? Pop psychology?

Quick solutions? Theoretical and or analytical information? Inspirational memoirs? Positive thinking?
Emotional stability? Scientific authority?

- Consider the above as appeal factors...TONE may be one of them:

Is the author an enthusiastic cheerleader? (Joyce Meyer)

Reality based? (Anne Lamott)

Intellectual? (C. S. Lewis)

Popular scientist? (optimistic, encouraging, rather sweet reminders (Robert Fulghum, Richard Carlson)

Emotional stability? Scientific authority?

(People tend to exhaust all self help titles in a given category)

- We need a variety of these books. They spill over into many area: 200 /600 / 700 /800
- Audios make the reader feel she/he is being personally addressed by the author
- What makes some of these titles last?

Specific Titles

Look Great, Feel Great by Joyce Meyer

Chapters arranged in steps toward Christian growth and development. Level of spirituality of an individual important for success with this book. Where are you in your spiritual life? Answers are not black or white.

You: The Owner's Manual by Michael F. Roizen

The focus is almost entirely on the self.

Traveling Mercies/Plan B/Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott

Gift of the Sea Anne Morrow Lindbergh

The Art of Happiness Dalai Lama XIV

Philosophical and easy to read

But Enough About You, Part Two: Memoir

The Memoir

More focused than biography/a series of vignettes, episodes not unlike short stories that you can stop reading and pick up later without losing the flow of the narrative/a slice of life with great emotional impact/ personal memory.

Elements of research are apparent as in James McBride's *Color of Water* and Jill Ker Conway's *The Road from Coorain*.

Must memoirs be accurate? Is the assumption that they are based upon truth valid? They are based upon memory also. Should the reader have doubts when reading memoirs? Some authors tell all and reveal themselves in a very poor light.

Memoirs in the audio format can be an interpretative performance. If the narrative is first person, the listener often makes an immediate connection to the author and the audio may even have a stronger appeal than the book.

Subject matter may upset patrons, so librarian needs to discern level of sensitivity of patron. Matching the patron with the memoir is important. *The Liar's Club* (Mary Karr), *A Round-Heeled Woman* (Jane Juska) and *Blackbird: A Childhood Lost and Found* (Jennifer Lauck) are not tender stories.

- "Poor me," can be a running theme within this genre.
- Is there an emotional distance between reader and writer?
- Level of consciousness of main character is very important in memoirs.
- What is the perspective of each of the characters?

Must the subject of the memoir be a famous person (Jimmy Carter/Maureen O'Hara/or an unknown personality? (J. R. Moehringer's *The Tender Bar*) or *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog*, John Grogan). As in the latter two books, subject matter, setting and a good storyline make some memoirs as readable as novels.

Teens would probably prefer celebrity memoirs. Interesting subcategories for them might include the following: eating disorders, child abuse, cutting, gangs, etc. (*Girl Interrupted*, Susanne Kaysen, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America*, Elizabeth Wurtzel, *A Child Called It*, Dave Pelzer.)

Why do people want to read about dysfunctional families?

- We can get through this
- The drama of a LIFE
- This is not happening to me
- Subject character is a REAL LIVE person
- Just because the story is TRUE

Some famous memoirists do not offer disclaimers for their works.

Nonfiction readers may not enjoy the "too personal" revelations found in memoirs.

Those who dislike biography may or may not enjoy the memoir with its narrower focus.

Many memoirs as with novels are popularized by word of mouth.

Because memoirs cover almost every aspect of life (travel, personal history, great discoveries, a particular era), it is sometimes difficult to know where to shelve them. (Biography, 800s/200s/500s/641/900)?

Memoirs are a slice of life/great emotional contact.

Biographies or autobiographies generally cover an entire life, whereas, the memoir is a part of a life.

Individual Titles:

Running with Scissors Augusten Burroughs

Though bizarre some family structure is evident.

Material for this book is not FUNNY, because it is a true story. How much of it is really true?

Detested this book...a sitcom on child abuse.

Offended by the motherly instincts.

Burroughs pokes fun at himself and my laughing at him disturbed me.

Author is in advertising/ a slick writer with a snappy turn of phrase.

Why do people find this book humorous?

Some say the audio version is easier to take than the book. (Burroughs is the narrator)
Is he a victim? He seems to have serious mental health issues.

The Glass Castle Jeanette Walls

The author does not see the harm in her upbringing until she moves to West Virginia.
The children actually rescue themselves/ reader wants to protect them.

Tender at the Bone Ruth Reichl

The author is gentle with her parents. Who do you crash and burn and take down with you?

The Prizewinner of Defiance, Ohio: How My Mother Raised 10 Kids on 25 Words or Less Terry Ryan

No judgment of the father/ a statement of what he is-was.

The Language of Baklava Diana Abu-Jaber

Heartwarming, charming story of the author and a father who loved to cook. Where is home (Jordan? or New York?)... an issue in this memoir.

Lipstick Jihad Azadeh Moaveni

Offers readers a vicarious experience in discovering another way of life rather than read about read about in a current events book. Author has two identities to deal with: born in California, yet living in a family with traditional Iranian values.

Moving Violations: War Zones, Wheelchairs and Declarations of Independence John Hockenberry

How personal a story does the reader want? Memoir of a social, political disabled individual in a non-disabled world.

Titles of self-justification:

Ava's Man Rick Bragg

All Over but the Shoutin' Rick Bragg

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood Alexandra Fuller

Things I Didn't Know: A Memoir Robert Hughes

Through Charley's Door Emily Kimbrough

Life in 1920's Chicago. Chatty, humorous. Wonderful line drawings and writing as well.

Family of Strangers Susan Beth Pfeffer

A family of Jewish immigrants who do not wish to be found. A genealogical memoir.
Learning Joy from Dogs Without Collars: A Memoir Lauralee Summer

A homeless child growing up in poverty and foster homes/Author eventually enters Harvard/Reveals social messages.

Sure Bets

Never Have Your Dog Stuffed: And Other Things I've Learned Alan Alda
The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir Bill Bryson
My Life in France Julia Child
The Road from Coorain Jill Ker Conway
Sleeping Arrangements Laura Cunningham
Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters First 100 Years Sarah Louise Delaney
Looking for Mary, or, The Blessed Mother and Me Beverly Donofrio
Cheaper by the Dozen Frank B. Gilbreth
Wait Till Next Year Doris Kearns Goodwin
Rocket Boys Homer Hickham
West with the Night Beryl Markham
Angela's Ashes Frank McCourt
Population: 485: Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time Michael Perry
Truck: A Love Story Michael Perry

Adventure and Survival

Appeal of Adventure

- Consider what makes a story an adventure/ what are patrons looking for?
- An adrenalin factor / fast paced / excitement / high risk situations / not just sports, but "extreme sports" It's There! / card games/gambling
- Reader experiences cold, danger and vicarious thrills
- Compelling tension that escalates within the narrative even though one may know the outcome
- Illustrations of the survivors add a reality/human dimension to the characters / the reader actually cares about them
- Provides insight into the mental state of the character acting under extreme conditions When does one give up and why? A study of the survival
- An exterior as well as an interior journey (wisdom)
- Author's account/ presence can lend credibility to events and different points of view.
- Epilogue is important because the reader wants to know what has happened to the characters (Too many characters may detract from story line)
- Author should set stage for ensuing horrors (cannibalism)
- Long-lasting adventures (most frequently read) seem to involve moral dilemmas? What would I do in similar circumstances? Hindsight is a strong element
- Often the reader/heroine is left on her/his own within the narrative
- Readers love stories of rescue, that is, victim versus survival
- Are these books the ultimate adventure? Adventure is survival and survival is the adventure
- What does this genre reveal about the characters? Are they arrogant? Humble?
- Readers love the element of peril / are some adventurers obsessive?
- Is nature the true adventure?
- May convey inspiration, durable themes and the ramifications of our decisions

- Describes elements of leadership
- If the author is the narrator, the story may be more emotional/personal and less factual. Is this a problem? Does the author need to embellish the facts so that the tale is not boring ala textbook?
- Creation of dialogue destroys the story's credibility for some
- This genre offers a logical link to fiction and the creation of Reading Maps, yet some readers of nonfiction may not find this connection appealing
- Reading maps can assist Readers Services librarian in suggesting a variety of topics (both fiction and nonfiction)
- Some readers may move from fiction to nonfiction but not from nonfiction to fiction
- The gift of story may be present in these tales but the writing may be poor
- The reward of the Adventure Genre is that the reader will want to discover more information on the subject
- Movies often encourage people to read about these events (Titanic, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, Endurance)

Teen Appeal

- Natural disasters and history
- Personal narrative
- May enjoy the following authors: Ralston, Krakauer, Child, Read, Callahan and The Crystal Shore by Ruby Rollins

Individual Titles

The Places in Between Rory Stewart

- Great adventure about a walk across Afghanistan under extreme situations.
- Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster
- Into the Wild
- The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea Jon Krakauer
- His books are best sellers because they appeal to a wide age group and appear soon after timely events
- Most books about Mount Everest are compelling
- Mountain climbing is no longer a sport for the wealthy only / people sometimes on an ego trip
- Nature is the great leveler / people get what they deserve, if they fail to use common sense
- Most of his adventurers are men
- Are these people heroes or are they crazy?
- Polar Dream Helen Thayer
- In 1988, at the age of 50, Helen Thayer (the first woman ever) successfully skied solo to the North Pole with her Huskie, Charlie
- In Harm's Way: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis and the Extraordinary Story of Its Survivors Doug Stanton

- Harrowing account of America's worst naval disaster and the men who lived to relate their rescue.
- Captain commits suicide, but his crew wants to clear his record and continue the mission
- Full Tilt: From Dublin to Delhi with a Bicycle Dervla Murphy
- Though the book is somewhat dated, the author has been chronicling her adventures on a bicycle through various parts of the world for forty years.
- Off the Map: Tales of Endurance and Exploration Fergus Fleming
- Collection of fascinating short stories (45)
- Presents a slice of a given time period
- Relates exploits of Magellan, Polo, Shackleton, Peary, Hudson, Columbus and many others
 - The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey Candice Millard
- For people who love adventure
- White man's arrogance?
- Roosevelt is a self-taught naturalist and rampant imperialist
 - In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex Nathaniel Philbrick
 - Harrowing account of the nineteenth whaling industry in the Pacific

Touching the Void: The True Story of One Man's Miraculous Survival Joe Simpson

- Similar to Shackleton's adventures
- Peruvian-Andes mountain expedition
- Extreme conditions /beauty/power/terror of mountains described
- Part two reveals the humanity of the individual
- Over the Edge: The True Story of Four American Climbers' Kidnap and Escape in the Mountains of Central Asia Greg Child
- Four-well equipped American climbers fail to evaluate the political situation *before* their journey
- They are victims of terrorists
- The Last Ridge: The Epic Story of the U. S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and the Assault on Hitler's Ridge McKay Jenkins
- Exciting adventure of World War II military history
- Based upon interviews from the survivors
- Only American Alpine unit to fight in World War II
- The Children's Blizzard David Laskin
- Historical adventure with creative dialogue
- The history of a natural disaster / human folly / fate
- Event took place in 1888:hundreds of people including many children(on their way home from school) were killed
- Railroads had promoted the beauties of the prairies to impoverished Europeans
- Between a Rock and a Hard Place Aron Ralston

- Author's remarkable adventure of becoming trapped in a Utah mountain canyon when an 800-pound boulder pinned his arm. Ralston narrates six unbelievably horrific days battling physical and psychological challenges.
- Four Corners: A Journey into the Heart of Papua New Guinea Kira Salak
- Surrounded by breathtaking landscapes and exotic wildlife, Salak embarks on what is considered the "last frontier" by dugout canoe and foot to explore this remote Pacific island.
- Too much inner dialogue
- Much danger is involved, but narrative is also boring in parts

Popular Science: Or, A Trip to the Museum of Science and Industry

Appeal of Popular Science (The Hot Zone by Richard Preston)

Negative

"Icky;" frightening;" "too graphic"

Author's intent was to scare his audience / could not finish.

Author threw red herrings; built suspense, only to have nothing happen regarding the issues.

Might have been better as an article.

Positive

|Fast read / written like a thriller / appeal to fans of Robin Cook, Michael Crichton and the horror genre. Difficult to look away / Will anyone care in 10 years?

Great facility with narrative detail / Investigative approach rebuilds a life from tiny, biological detail.

Narrative is very good as well as background on characters / Could be your neighbors /

Author's approach is journalistic in style / Book started as an article then expanded into book form. Is this typical of the genre? Different approach if author is a professional journalist concentrating on science, or a scientist who is a writer/

Other books by Preston are not as graphic or gory: i.e., The Demon in the Freezer. The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring is a stylistic subject departure / will appeal to fans of Jon Krakauer's adventure thrillers / Tree climbers attempt to understand the canopy.

General Comments on Popular Science

- More appealing if author has an affection/passion for subject / Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking are pioneers in field of making their passion accessible to mainstream reader / Similarly, subject achieves iconic status in popular culture (Chuck Yeager in Tom Wolfe's The Right Stuff) /Opening for transcendence.
- Must be well-written to hold interest of a non-science reader.

- Renders cold, impersonal topic in a warm and humanistic way; esp., medical topics / Harvard surgeon Atul Gawande (writes beautifully), Oliver Sachs and Perri Klass.
- Author must care about the characters or else the story becomes textbook-like.
- Setting is often minimal; i.e., a laboratory, or other closed environment.
- Explores grand ideas that make reader look more closely at something to discover / Intricate, multi-levels.
- Often inspired by “memes,” individual ideas that spread (like a virus) through the zeitgeist by word-of-mouth, media attention and the Internet.
- What is the reader’s expectation of accuracy or authenticity? We want to know author’s credentials / Is book a result of author’s desire to pursue his/her own pet theory, or is it based on solid research and reportage?
- Timeliness of subject is a factor: current scientific theory vs. outdated crisis or thinking / Current subjects bring a sense of immediacy, like an incident report.
- Appeal to readers accustomed to pursuing information / Finding the scientist within us.
- Cautionary tales / this could happen to you as situations do change.
- May have a tendency to digress too much into historical background and offer tangential details; esp. diagrams, charts and equations / Scientific terms repeatedly used without offering definitions or forcing readers to refer to the glossary.
- Production values / Multi-columnar layouts can be suggestive of textbooks.
- Appeal/ tie-in to viewers of specialty TV programming such as The Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel or The Weather Channel.
- Readers may have assumptions challenged / cut-and-dried scientific subjects handled in a literary and eloquent manner.
- Focuses on science in an individual story when personal. Anecdotal evidence offered (would appeal to fans of memoirs)/ Oliver Sachs, Norman Cousins’ Anatomy of an Illness.
- Length is an appeal factor / Shorter is better.

Individual Titles

The Omnivores Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan
 Social agenda handled in an unthreatening manner. Multiple appeal: food, history, alternative lifestyles, social elements, personal choices, industry. High “did you know” factor / Affects meat-eaters / We are corn people.

A Short History of Nearly Everything by Bill Bryson
 Like taking a trip to your 6th grade science class/ Reminds you of what you already know / Factoids. Also available as an illustrated version / Jumps from topic to topic (could be a negative appeal). Good starting point for someone who wants to learn more about scientific topics. Not a thriller / Fascinating information but reader retains very little / Humor mitigates some of the horror. Bryson does not talk down to his readers but makes them feel good about learning something.

Best Science Writing of (Year) series. Observations by Gilbert Taylor in Booklist. Deals with conversational topics, eccentric characters, interesting oddities. Lively and humorous writing.

The Midnight Disease by Alice Flaherty

Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament by Kay Redfield Jamison. Too many diagrams.

An Alchemy of Mind: The Marvel and Mystery of the Brain by Diane Ackerman. Literary retrospectives that reveal the beauty of science through the elegance of writing and philosophy expressed. (Esp. Ackerman) Appeal is to readers who want to learn more about themselves. Similar authors include Oliver Sachs and Sherman Nuland. These are science of the mind books / Authors have very different styles / Books are not strictly informational, but evoke an emotional response as well.

The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History by John M. Barry. Mind-boggling examination of a forgotten episode in history / Author's personal agenda is too apparent at the end of the book / 100 million people died / May have started in Kansas or Nebraska and seemed to attack young people primarily. / Press kept quiet.

Sure Bets

- Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking; "Best of" collections. Maybe start with scientific periodicals or photographic/ Pictorial books, especially in essay form. (Just as we heard on Morning Edition).
- Environmental and forensic sciences are popular/ Best thing about science nonfiction: what comes *after* the colon (book's subtitle).

History and Microhistory

Appeal of Microhistory (Characteristics)

- Intriguing, good icebreakers in conversation ~ Less intimidating than the entire subject ~ Interesting spin-offs on a huge area, i.e. Marie Antoinette versus the French Revolution
- Not really trivial books, some have major implications, similar to Reading Maps in that one thing often leads you to another. *Did you know?*
- Accessibility: on impulse, browse able, staff picks, often well-reviewed, word of mouth, fun covers
- Bookmarks and displays will promote circulation
- Thread from one author may lead to another to determine the accuracy of facts.[Fiction can lead to nonfiction and vice versa]
- A few have staying power, i.e., McCullough's works

- Debunks some time-honored myths ~ May have appeal and interest because they are written in this time period. Times change information and current authors may have found a new angle to interpret events, etc. [Comment was made in regards to Thomas Cahill's latest book, *Mysteries of the Middle Ages: The Rise of Feminism, Science and Arts from the Cults of Catholic Europe* ~ author's previous works were excellent, but *Mysteries* offered few new insights or revelations]
- Some are narrative, others straightforward
Relationships are established between the reader and author because both care about the subject at hand ~ Find an author whose information you trust and style you love, e.g., Doris Kearns Goodwin, Stephen Ambrose, David McCullough, Joseph Ellis. [Remember that history is written by the winners.]

Miscellaneous Thoughts on Microhistory

- What control does the publisher exert on fiction or nonfiction microhistories?
- Microhistories are easy to recommend; patrons seem to be interested in their "subject." (Ken Burns, e.g.)
- One thing leads to another ~ Books may be read in chronological order or the reverse
- These authors do not set themselves up as experts but real people with specific interests
- Present trends include the two World Wars, the Civil and Revolutionary Wars ~ Will the Vietnamese and Korean Wars be next microhistories?
- History is *not* what is happening in *my* time ~ How accurate are today's newspapers? [Or those from other eras as well?]
- Necessary to read multiple books in order to arrive at some truths ~ Reader has her/his own agenda ~ Some readers believe in the absolute validity of the written word.
- Good for discussion: Yes and No ~ Depends on the group's background, interests ~ Trendy microhistory can generate good discussion because usually everyone has read the book.

Individual Titles

A Scented Palace: A Secret History of Marie Antoinette's Perfumer by Elisabeth de Feydeau

Story is that of Marie Antoinette's gardener and perfumer ~ Narrow focus

Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World by Mark Kurlansky

A commodity book.

Salt: A World History by Mark Kurlansky

Another commodity book ~ Everyone has salt on the table ~ Did you ever realize that there could be this much to learn about salt.

The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan
Personal history with the reader in mind.

The Little Book of Plagiarism by Richard A. Posner

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles Mann
Author is a journalist who attempts to debunk traditional thinking about early inhabitants and their lifestyles ~ Lots of science.

Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer by James L. Swanson
Presents an added to side to common knowledge.

The Rape of Nanking by Iris Chang
Her story has been hidden from the world and needs to be told ~ Readable ~ An unknown facet of World War II brought to light ~ More incidents are waiting to be discovered and revealed.

Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce by Stanley Weintraub

1776 by David McCullough (Audio)
Not much continuity ~ Liked details, but rather monotonous ~ Nonfiction readers are usually good ~ Was like listening to your grandpa ~ Enjoyed the grisly details and learning about the courage of those Americans who came so close to failing ~ Readers have various levels of tolerance for detail ~ Factual accounts are not gripping ~ Information needs to be qualified ~ A study of people, geography and fate ~ New focus on this field war is the philosophical/military politics and the Declaration ~ Not a page turner ~ History repeats itself; Sadaam, Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini ~ Letters and reminiscences were cumbersome for some and a joy for others ~ Author's style carries the reader forth ~ Enjoyed character portrayal of Washington [A flawed man, control freak, worthy of respect]
Read-alikes for David McCullough: Doris Kearns Goodwin, Shelby Foote, David Halberstam, Stephen Ambrose, Ken Burns.

The Greatest Stories Never Told: 100 Tales from History to Astonish, Bewilder, and Stupefy by Rick Beyer
Stories reveal the good and bad in human nature ~ Small pictures illustrate events ~ Anecdotal tales that are accurate and adult ~ Good story for beginning listeners ~ Events presented in chronological order.

How to Buy (Series)
Acclaimed reviews ~ Often popular authors ~ Patrons enjoy these books ~ They are special interest titles with cross-over appeal.

Don't Know Much About (Series)
Often starter books, not for people who read McCullough or other serious nonfiction

1968: *The Year That Rocked the World* by Mark Kurlansky

Difficult to see the broad spectrum while living through various events ~ This book takes everything in ~ *Year Books* do the same as in: 1000, 1491, 1492, 1688.

Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution into the Americas by Isabel Vincent

(Consider Nathan Englander's *The Ministry of Special Cases* in conjunction with Vincent's book)

I Thought My Father Was God and Other True Tales from NPR's National Story Project by Paul Auster

An entertaining personal history ~ Author (pleasant voice) reads this entertaining personal history

Sure Bets

- *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson and the Opening of the West* by Stephen E. Ambrose
- *How the Irish Saved Civilization* by Thomas Cahill
- Daniel Boorstin
- *Gilgamesh: A New English Version*
- *Pompeii: The Living City* by Alex Butterworth
- Robert Caro
- Barbara Tuchman
- William Manchester

Food, Football, and Other Fun Reads

Appeal of "Food, Football, and Other Fun Reads"

- Universal recognition factor: everybody has engaged in or witnessed obsessive behavior: "that could be me!"; appeal derived from comparing personal level of obsession to the author's/subject's: "whew! I'm not *that* bad!"
- "Freak" books centering on one subject (i.e., candy, word games, etc.): how do they differ from microhistory? Higher level of author's own personal involvement and a greater universal appeal factor of subject (chocolate versus cod);
- Unthreatening books; no horrible truths revealed; bright, pleasant (for the most part) covers; safe recommendations – who doesn't like candy? Words? Games?
- Some of these books seem so "American" – can't imagine other cultures such as France elevating a subject to iconic status.
- Gives an insider's view of the subject; living vicariously; often deals with tale of an amateur attempting to match expertise with professionals; works of late George Plimpton could serve as benchmarks, esp. *Paper Tiger*.
- Condenses the experience – we can read in a few days about something it took the author months or years to accomplish.

- What would be a good display title? “Freaks and Geeks;” “Freaks Like You ‘n’ Me;” “Passion or Perversion?”
- Titles have high entertainment value; usually themes have strong American connection; makes you want to read more about a subject to get another perspective;
- Not as concerned with pacing or other elements of fiction or meeting the “nonfiction-that-reads-like-fiction” criteria; titles are more character/characters driven.

Books Read

- *Candyfreak* by Steve Almond -- will appeal to fans of “Unwrapped” on the Food Network; a personal journey, told in a humorous fashion; lacks objectivity; high nostalgia factor – trip down memory lane to find favorite candies from his youth; regionalism of food/object of pride for town that produced it;
- *The Emperors of Chocolate* by Joel Brenner – in emphasizing the relationship between Mars and Hershey, it offers more history and related trivia about chocolate;
- *Word Freak: Heartbreak, Triumph, Genius, and Obsession in the World of Competitive Scrabble Players* by Stefan Fatsis – author not quite as obsessive as Steve Almond; more inquisitive about people who play Scrabble;
- *Brainiac: Adventures in the Curious, Competitive World of Trivia Buffs* by Ken Jennings – goes beyond author’s own experiences as “Jeopardy” contestant to explore the broader world of trivia buffs. Good read-alike: *The Know-it-all: one man’s humble quest to become the smartest person in the world*, by A. J. Jacobs; man who read entire encyclopedia; gives background details about what author’s lifestyle was like during his quest

Other books about games or freaks:

Freaks and Fire: The Underground Reinvention of Circus by J. Dee Hill and Phil Hollenbeck; *Seeing is Believing: America’s Side Shows* by A. W. Stencell

- Explore a subculture: books on hair, tattoos, and other extreme forms of self-expression where subjects take themselves out of the mainstream culture by embracing forms of attention-getting physical modifications; provide a way of understanding the more extreme members of a society;

Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho by Jon Katz -- term “geeks” can be synonymous with “freaks” in that these are people who explore their passion to the exclusion of other (i.e., “normal”) human interests.

Food books:

- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver: family moves from Arizona to farm in rural Appalachia where they can be self-sufficient

- *The \$64 Tomato* by William Alexander: man analyzes costs involved in becoming vegetable gardener on his suburban lot;
- *The United States of Arugula: How We Became a Gourmet Nation* by David Kamp: excellent book for “foodies;” offers history of cookbooks and profiles personalities such as East Coast culinary icons James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Julia Child, then shifts to the West Coast and Alice Waters; explores the idea of chef as “rock star” and the popularity of cable television’s Food Network; looks at America as a whole through the specific lens of its food; “wish the book could have been longer.”
- *How I Learned to Cook* by Kimberly Witherspoon: disappointing in comparison; essays, purportedly written by popular chefs were probably ghostwritten by someone else; dry;
- *Home Cooking* by Laurie Colwin: perennial favorite; with recipes; charming;
- “Road Food” books by Jane and Michael Stern
- *Chocolate & Zucchini: Daily Adventures in a Parisian Kitchen* by Clotilde Dusolier

Entertainment Industry

- *Everyone Comes to Elaine’s* by A. E. Hotchner – compilation of individual memoir’s by people who were regulars at one of the early “see and be seen” New York restaurants; browsable; quick read; wonderful for celebrity-watchers;
- *Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafes, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* by Joan E. DeJean: connects Louis XIV and his efforts to bring manufacturers of everything “required” by French court to France as a matter of economic necessity, and how this evolved into the fashion, textile, wine, fragrance, and other industries we rely upon today;
- *Hollywood Babylon* by Kenneth Anger: one of the early gossip/exposes of movie industry and its stars, written in the style of an insider/raconteur; with photographs; “a guilty pleasure;”
- *You’ll Never Nanny in this Town Again* by Suzanne Hansen: dishes gossip, names names; what you’ve always suspected is the real/inside behavior of stars who use their children as photo op props; if the same subject were covered as fiction, reader would tend to discount it’s veracity, but nonfiction classification takes away those doubts: “it’s true!”
- *Songbook* by Nick Hornby
- *Coming Attractions: Hollywood, High Tech, and the Future of Entertainment* by Phillip Meza: history of how Hollywood deals with new technology, often viewing it as a threat to its profitability;
- *The Gift of Jazzy*, by Cindy Adams: relationship of New York gossip columnist with dog that provides companionship after her husband’s death; life of privilege; neither Cindy nor dog are particularly likable, but good recommendation for celebrity-watchers.

Other Titles:

- *Not Buying It: My Year Without Shopping* by Judith Levine: couple decide to forego purchases for anything but necessities for a year.
- *Wonderland: a Year in the Life of an American High School* by Michael Bamberger: chronicles how students at one Pennsylvania high school prepares for their prom; will appeal to fans of TV show, “Friday Night Lights;” gives stories of individual students and what they do to get ready for prom: asking for a date; buying dress; coming up with unique modes of transportation;
- *Prom Night: Youth Schools and Popular Culture* by Amy Best: looks at the institution of the prom from a sociological viewpoint; told in the voices of the students themselves, directly quoting conversations;
- *The Radioactive Boy Scout: the Frightening True Story of a*
- *Whiz Kid and his Homemade Nuclear Reactor* by Ken Silverstein: boy scout has out-of-control obsession with science that translates into quest to build a nuclear reactor in his back yard.

Politics and Current Events

Current Events

- Book trends created by media? (Oprah, Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Alan Greenspan) (Good idea for a display)
- Authors do a great job of pitching their works
- Memoirs and politics seem to be the most popular topics ~ Though information may be erroneous, it is not libelous ~ Feeds public’s desire to know someone’s personal history. Can be fascinating and well-written.
- The voice and slant of the narrator/author are very important (TONE)
- Are people really reading these books or does the listener feel he/she has heard/read enough, especially if an author(s) is interviewed? (NPR)
- Are these books too long to actually be read? For those truly interested in a given subject, they may be not long enough.
- Topics reflect the most popular events/trends of their times: on a national level ~ Nixon, Kennedy, Katrina, Vietnam, etc. Regional ~ Cargill, Ivins, and Royko.
- Questions to think about...Does the media control the press? If I read enough, can I attain the truth? Is nonfiction more interesting now than in the past? Should the reader consider author’s “spin” or polarization elements underlying nonfiction?
- (Many titles are written by journalists)
- Sensationalism is very important!
- Readers can read both sides of a theme nowadays, but wherein does credibility lie? (Subjectivity versus Objectivity) What is the truth? We often read what (whom) we agree with (Al Franken, Anne Coulter)

***All the President’s Men* by Carl Bernstein**

- Bernstein's book continues to be read though the newspaper industry has changed since the sixties (money, Internet, cell phones, need to protect sources)
- Journalists publish too quickly today, but the public *is* interested in NEWS/Information.
- The book made these authors celebrities.

Individual Titles

The Great Deluge by Douglas Brinkley

Timeline used to good advantage here ~ Book reveals that people in power are human, vulnerable and capable of evil. Today's readers are more cynical about politicians.

The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet Is Killing Our Culture Andrew Keen
The internet (blogs) has created a society without objective standards ~ Anyone's opinion has authority regardless of accuracy of information.

Off the Record: The Press, the Government, and the War over Anonymous Sources Norman Pearlstine

Reveals the small picture ~ Readers do not feel the importance of protecting ones sources ~ Detailed and dry.

How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must): The World According to Ann Coulter Ann Coulter
Mean spirited.

The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream Barack Obama
Author's cautious liberalism based on centrist American values is explored in detail. Argues strongly against mainstream politics.

Lies (and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them) Al Franken
Did not read ~ Book did not appeal to me.

The New American Story Bill Bradley

Critical of the media ~ Illustrates its bias, especially in newspapers ~ Rather dry.

Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting by in America Barbara Ehrenreich

Good writer though there is too much of herself in the story ~ Her perspective is about jobs (or lack) for women.

The Working Poor: Invisible in America by David K. Shipler

Debunks the great American myth that if you work hard, you will reap rewards.

God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything Christopher Hitchens

Everything meaning, war, politics, religion.....author's personal activism is on display. Entertaining, confrontational, deliberately provocative. WHY is he writing this? Well written but not very interesting. Reveals bad things Church has committed and gotten away with through the ages. Anti-Eastern and Western. Index with some bibliographic sources.

Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: An Entrepreneur's Odyssey to Educate the World's Children John Wood

Positive in tone and theme ~ Books are brought to needy children in Nepal. Author believes that change comes "one person at a time," through meeting other cultures.

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time Greg Mortensen

Grass roots approach to change. Gripping first person account. Optimistic author reveals the good side of human nature. His organization's success due to individual efforts.

Foreign Babes in Beijing: Behind the Scenes of a New China Rachel DeWoskin

Realistic study of China's cultural clashes over the last thirty years.

How Starbucks Saved My Life: A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else Michael Gill

White man experiences a financial comedown. Chatty study of current economics. People are being fired left and right. Warm first-person narrative...outsider looking in.

American Theocracy: The Perils and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the Twentieth-First Century Kevin P. Phillips

Exhaustive study of the current Republican coalition's policies and its loss of respect in the world. Offers historical parallels that are interesting and author's arguments are convincing.

The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century Thomas L. Friedman

Discusses his theories about the "flattening of the world" and "globalism of the local." Friedman believes the new economy strengthens regional concepts rather than dilutes them. Book reveals and discusses the 10 forces responsible for the latter.

Race

General Thoughts on *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride

- Diverse opinions offered on Amazon
- Reads like fiction
- Would not want her for a mother as she is cold and detached
- Mother passed on good values to her children and did foster an independent spirit and self-knowledge in James
- Basic theme is mother - son relationship: Racial prejudice towards African-Americans and the Jews is second theme
- A damaged mother ~ keeps a messy house, but yes, her children did attend college and all are accomplished citizens ~ She experienced more prejudice

than her children did, but her attitude of playing down the race issue seems to have empowered the children ~ The concept of 12 children is a problem for some

- A success story ~ a survivor's narrative ~ A comfortable read for "whites"

What defines us? Our community? Does McBride's story teach tolerance?

- A touch of melodrama....story almost did not happen ~ You did learn about African American and Jewish relations at the time of the story ~ But people were not as open about their feelings then as they are today
- Investigative Saga ~ illustrates a fine line that can exist between fiction and nonfiction ~ Consider *Roots* (Alex Haley)
- McBride reveals prejudices that still exist today, regardless of the region of the country
- *Audience*: High School assignments, book discussion groups or those who have experienced discrimination
- *An aside*: The "N" word ~ Who is permitted to say it? Academics? Those interested in language?

Individual Titles

Who's Afraid of a Large Black Man
Charles Barkley

Good story for fans entertained by Barkley ~ Also for teens who enjoy discovering what others think, especially celebrities

Each short chapter focuses on a different personality ~ Humorous and easy to read

Race issue is discussed as it should be ~ Good choice for discussion groups

Not autobiographical ~ Tales move along

Subjects include: Bill Clinton, Ice Cube, Barack Obama, Morgan Freeman, Samuel Jackson, Tiger Woods

One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life—A Story of Race and Family Secrets
Bliss Broyard

Author's father (Anatole) passed as white ~ What is racism? Bliss (daughter) says she is black ~ What is identity? Anatole kept silent so his children would be able to enjoy privileges of white children

Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years
Sarah Louise Delaney

Presents a good perspective on racial issues and explores the hierarchy within the black community/family The Delaney parents made sure their children were educated and appreciated family values Though mother could have passed for white, she chose not to One of the few really good books about black women Their narrative describes a

century's worth of the black experience from two women who considered themselves to be ordinary people
A survivor story told from the sisters' point of view

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria |
Beverly D. Tatum

Race is an issue for blacks, not whites
Children do not have positive role models from the past
Blacks say "Black" ~ Whites do not think of themselves as "White"

Is Bill Cosby Right?: Or Has the Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?
Michael Eric Dyson

Some say Cosby is not a credible speaker/spokesman for the African-American community, because he has not taken part in demonstrations and, therefore, has not earned his stripes ~ He is a comedian who has made a lot of money

Bento Box in the Heartland
Linda Furiya

Main character's father is a Japanese-American; she is the only Asian in Versailles, Indiana
Her parents never discussed their Japanese past
Food was the family's only path of identification with another culture, and the reader does learn a great deal about food from this narrative/memoir

Nisei Daughter
Monica Sone

Story describes the childhood of a young girl of Japanese descent from the state of California
The reader follows her life and that of her family through the American internment camps of World War II
A short book suitable for a young girl

Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America
Firoozeh Dumas

Pre-hostage story set in the seventies about a father who wins a Fulbright Scholarship and comes to the United States (California)
In the post-hostage era, father encounters much prejudice ~ An immigrant's story
It is really the daughter's story: a light-hearted chronicle of family life and cross-cultural misunderstandings

Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment
Dorothea Lange

Not to be missed photographic diary of Japanese Americans placed in American detention camps during World War II

Just Americans: How Japanese Americans Won a War at Home and Abroad: The story of the 100th Battalion 442nd Regimental Combat Team in World War II
Robert Asahina

Author's Agenda: Profile of the 442nd Battalion, comprised of Japanese-Americans during World War II ~ Most highly decorated unit of the war
Author has harsh words for President Roosevelt
Detailed battle descriptions are presented as well as the prejudices Japanese soldiers endured upon their return home at the war's end

Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, World War II's Forgotten Heroes
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Fast-paced narrative about this African-American unit. Great book for discussion

Enrique's Story
Sonia Nazario

Harrowing saga of events still part of ordinary life in Honduras and Mexico--Honduran children flee their homeland to search for parents who have found employment in Mexico--These children are then preyed upon by Mexicans
Horrible, factual expose of racism as it affects the lives of these children--Investigative, third person style of journalism--A good book for discussion groups

The Devil's Highway: A True Story
Luis Alberto Urrea

Another harrowing story about immigrants passing through Mexico

American Skin: Pop Culture, Big Business and the End of White America
Leon Wynter

Title found on high school and academic reading lists
Book expands the framework of success for the black community

Author's Premise: We are no longer a white country
Beige ~ Brown ~ white will soon be part of the same pool
White ~ Black ~ Another generation
Race ~ Ethnicity ~ Heritage

Questions to consider: What is our present culture? What role/control does ethnicity play in media and advertising?

Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance
Barack Obama

Memoir of the son of a black African father and a white American mother. Author's journey takes him to Kansas, Hawaii, Kenya and Chicago and reveals some memorable passages along the way. While attempting to find meaning and purpose in life as a black American, Obama covers the issues of race, family, personal identity and class without flinching. Insightful study of a prominent person.

Gender

General Comments on Gender Titles and Deborah Tannen's YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND

Books are often stereotypical or too clinical

Concerned with language: women create community: men do not

Often jokes are meaningless; small disturbing elements

Discuss popular issues ~ What are today's serious issues?

Sweeping generalizations

To her credit Tannen does not over generalize in her book

Tone is a very important factor

Tannen is too scientific, but her book is not necessarily meant to be a self-help book

Difficult read though headings make it easy to flip through chapters

Conversational in tone and style

Benchmark in the self-help category when it first appeared

Used by the business community

All are aware of these ideas

Class plays a big role in the book: husbands and wives: economic groups

Only a woman could have written such a book, because she is interested in such things

Books Read:

WHY MEN DON'T HAVE A CLUE AND WOMEN ALWAYS NEED MORE SHOES: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE OPPOSITE SEX

Allan and Barbara Pease

Explores research on the differences between men and women; men are good at problem solving, and women are good at processing...this will never change!

Tone is clinical and at other times flip: behaviors of both sexes are often stereotypical

WHY MARS AND VENUS COLLIDE: IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS BY UNDERSTANDING HOW MEN AND WOMEN COPE DIFFERENTLY WITH STRESS

John Gray

We expect too much from men; that's the big problem

Women upset the status quo and create stress for themselves by entering the work force

Covers work related relationships, especially for men

Not a feminist book

Academic anecdotes

People enjoy insights presented by this type of book

Good coverage of the underlying dynamics we all feel

Does all this information transfer to other countries?
We are all human...blame is not placed upon anyone
Dr. Phil and Laura...where are you???

AS NATURE MADE HIM: THE BOY WHO WAS RAISED AS A GIRL

John Colapinto

Disturbing, sad story

Through a bad circumstance a young boy lost his genitals and was reared as a girl

A study in nature versus nurture

Enormous problems for the family, especially at the hands of Johns-Hopkins Dr. Money, the true villain in the story

Dr. Money played God with his patients

Parents seemed utterly helpless in his hands

Arrogance of the medical profession is sharply drawn

MIDDLESEX by Jeffrey Eugenides can be considered a fictional account of this story

SHE'S NOT THERE: A LIFE IN TWO GENDERS

Jennifer Finney Boylan

Good writer: haunted house formed his/her identity

English professor at Colby College Maine: Richard Russo plays an integral part in his secret life ~ The former marries, has children and finds it extremely difficult to reveal his secret life to Russo

Many issues are uncovered in this story

Boylan's wife actually handles what the author is going through better than Russo does

TRANSISTOR RADIO by Christopher Bohjalian is a companion fiction piece Not an issue of sexuality but one of gender...

How do we discuss these issues? Biology ~~~psychology ~~~ What happens to the person?

He/she has a support group ~ the wife does stay with him.

Is this type of support something of a generational feature? Ala Miss Manners...that is, kindness under all circumstances?

THE DARING BOOK FOR GIRLS

Sandra J. Buchanan

Very sexist ~recalls old-fashioned pleasures, that is, jump rope, telling scary stories...

THE DANGEROUS BOOK FOR BOYS

Conn Iggulden

Again, wonderful recollections and very sexist. Very square...a touch of nostalgia recalling life in the forties and fifties...

Discuss ways to amuse a child...scouting, etc.

Do children need, want, use these types of books today?

May be entertaining for grandparents

Perhaps they are too gender specific and diverse

Publishers of the last few years seem to divide the sexes.

Think about the role of culture where gender/biology is concerned

Pink for girls? Blue for boys?

Range of behaviors and personalities do not seem to be taken into consideration with older titles

GOING GRAY: WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT BEAUTY, SEX, WORK, MOTHERHOOD, AUTHENTICITY, AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT MATTERS

Anne Kreamer

Who cares? But, there are politics involved in going gray...a huge issue

How many Hollywood people have gray hair?

Jobs, gender, professionals, money...all considerations in such a situation

Do you accept yourself? Are you attempting to make a political stance? An example for your children?

Author posted before and after photos of herself on the web...honesty factor very comforting

A cultural thing...Do you take care of yourself or are you letting yourself go?

VERY different issues for men!

US GUYS: THE TRUE AND TWISTED MIND OF THE AMERICAN MAN

Charlie Le Duff

Road trip into the heart of the American male (worksites, primarily) by New York Times reported Le Duff

Explores the lives of ordinary men with humor, pathos, anger and disillusionment

Independent chapters about men who have different types of jobs: model, circus performer, rodeo, fighter, etc.

WHERE MEN HIDE

James B. Twitchell

Fascinating: small photo essays from The New York Times that chronicle places men go for escape, comfort and company

Includes the following: Bars, Union League, Elks Club, hunting lodges, barber shops, etc...all rapidly disappearing in today's America

People apparently are not interested in this type of organization.

What is a Men's Club? Like a Beauty Salon for women?

SELF MADE MAN

Norah Vincent

Los Angeles Times op-ed columnist who disguised herself as a man for eighteen months

Very readable narrative: Story is arranged chronologically

Author covers the following male arenas: Friday night bowling, all male retreats, a monastery

While walking down the street as a man, she felt invisible, but as a woman felt highly visible and vulnerable.

WHY MEN NEVER REMEMBER AND WOMEN NEVER FORGET

Marianne J. Legato

Author is an expert in gender-specific medicine and proves that men and women's brains are different in structure and chemistry; thus each handles life's problems and experiences differently

Legato offers solutions and advice for overcoming these differences

REVIVING OPHELIA: SAVING THE SELVES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Mary Pipher

RAISING CAIN: PROTECTING THE EMOTIONAL LIFE OF BOYS

Daniel Kindlon

Books about politics and aggression anger people ~ they often patronize stereotypes.

Two titles that fall into this category are RAISING CAIN AND REVIVING OPHELIA

We are trying to protect our children not sacrifice one gender at the expense of another

IN A DIFFERENT VOICE: PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Carol Gilligan

From Freud to Piaget, psychologists have consistently misunderstood women

Older developmental theories have treated women as if they were men and ignored the differences of the female personality from the male's

Gilligan's book parallels the differences in each sex and presents meaningful questions arising from her views and research

Author's research is built around historical and literary voices of contemporary men and women

Concludes with a more rounded picture of human nature than her male predecessors

BLOWING MY COVER: MY LIFE AS A CIA SPY

Lindsay Moran

Memoir of a former writing teacher who became a CIA operative for five years

Early illusions Moran may have had about the glory of spy work were eventually replaced by her mature observations and questions of the bureau's *modus operandi*: preying on the emotional lives and vulnerabilities of others

Not really a very noble calling

Few insights

MOMMIES WHO DRINK: SEX, DRUGS, AND OTHER DISTANT MEMORIES OF AN ORDINARY MOM

Beth Paesel

True stories about the nature of friendship among women: what solidifies it and what breaks it

Covers a mother's world and the issues of adoption, daycare, pre-school .

A funny book dealing with sad circumstances in a realistic manner, not just gossip

Possible slated for a Television sitcom

ODD GIRL OUT

Rachel Simmons

Author uses real life examples of girls who bully others and women who have endured such humiliations

A conscious awakening to this painful and very common situation

For junior high students... "You are not alone" is the message

Good also for parents of teenaged girls; book offers solutions for dealing with this problem

THE BITCH IN THE HOUSE: 26 WOMEN TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT SEX,
SOLITUDE, WORK, MOTHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE

Cathi Hanauer (ed.)

A witty, honest, poignant portrayal of women's lives

A "you are not alone" for adults

I KNOW JUST WHAT YOU MEAN: THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP IN WOMEN'S
LIVES

Ellen Goodman

Reveals the sense of satisfaction that friendships among women brings

Sports

General Comments:

Consider the season appeal of sports for displays.

An area of reading for those interested in sports to begin with.

Patrons enjoy the minutiae and history of sports as well as game analysis.

How does one excel in a sport? Personality? Skill? Drive?

If you are modest, can you excel in sports?

You can be neutral if you are not a fan.

Living through a particular era may change your attitude.

Peripheral information also impacts fans/readers, for example, Civil Rights stories about Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron.

Are there any classics in this collection? Do they need weeding? Some are fads?

What is the angle now? Post 1990, sports present a negative feeling.

Some mini-bios in Youth Services, though they discuss the same sports figures.

Boxing, wrestling....usually not on weekend television ...figures are usually poor from poor neighborhoods.

Bare-knuckle boxing seems to be a new fad.....Boxing films such as The Great White Hope (Jack Johnson) are wonderful movies.....the visual impact can be powerful.

Education and sports are really a school culture designed to create and maintain winning teams.

Cheerleading books often discuss its glitz, gymnastics and athleticism.

Volleyball, tennis, and swimming.....sports for boys and girls. Title 9 VIP.

Sports played abroad are not taught in American schools.

Italy: Soccer Japan: Baseball Ireland: Rugby (National).

American television, newspapers and other media have made sports a business in America.

NASCAR: person oriented and sometimes fans are fanatics ~ Usually a family event and children are involved at a young age ~ a slice of Americana ~ Aerodynamics of the car is the key draw ~ lots of peripheral and expensive items

Marketing ~ ESPN ~MBA.

“FUN” should always be a key element in sport.....has it been lost?

Magazines are great ~ especially for teens ~ the fact that many sports have their own publications adds to their popularity ~ Those who want in-depth information can turn to books ~ Selection of books and magazines depends on season, sport, region and characters.

Books Read:

The Girls of Summer: The U.S. Women's Soccer Team and How It Changed the World Jere Longman.

The chief Olympics correspondent for the New York Times writes a compelling story of the women who won the World Cup Soccer Match in 1999 ~ places the victory in its cultural context.

The Natural Bernard Malamud

Classic baseball story about a “natural” during the era of “daylight” baseball ~ Interesting behind-the-scenes information.

Seabiscuit: An American Legend Laura Hillenbrand

Memorable stories for those interested in racing at Arlington Park and Maywood Park ~Rich information on the characters and history of the United States at the time ~ Depression ~ underdog ~ the jockey is an athlete.

My Turf: Horses, Boxers, Blood Money and the Sporting Life William Nack

Great book, smartly written ~ Wonderful information from Sports Illustrated writer Nack with poignant profiles on a variety of sports' characters including Sonny Liston, Rocky Marciano, Bobby Fischer, Secretariat and Keith Hernandez ~ “Tales of soaring humanity.”

Who's Your Caddy? Rick Reilly

Book that is humorous and enjoyable even if you do not love golf ~ Well written

Playing for Keeps David Halberstam

Great human interest story but book is too long ~ Index would have been helpful

It's Not About the Bike Lance Armstrong

Author is cocky, boastful and arrogant ~ An out-of-control spent youth ~ Aggressive and abandoned by his father.

Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics Jeffrey Schaap

Book reveals the purity and healthy competition of sports without contemporary issues of gambling, steroids, and drug use ~ An underdog who succeeds at the Olympics.

The Best Game Ever: Giants V.S. Colts, 1958, and the Birth of the Modern NFL Mark Bowden

People remember where they were at the time! Book is an example of one individual's outspoken agenda, that is, my team, my sport

Shoeless Joe W. P. Kinsella

Contains elements of the novel in that the level of tension pulls reader in~ Again the underdog who succeeds because of hard work ~ Baseball is the vehicle in Field of Dreams whereas Eight Men Out is about the game ~ Comment about Shoeless Joe: sentimental, poorly written and boring.

The Teammates: A Portrait of a Friendship David Halberstam

Explores the friendship of four very different but extraordinary men on a remarkable Boston Red Sox team, who stayed close to each other for more than sixty years ~ Some "what ifs."

The Boys of Summer Roger Kahn

Story of boys who played baseball in small towns and then moved on to professional teams ~ Now they are men are looking back on past glories ~ Rivalry among teams ~ Color barrier ~ Seasonal story.

The Education of a Coach David Halberstam

Portrait of the style, work ethic and leadership capabilities of Bill Belichick, intriguing coach of the New England Patriots ~ Historical account.

The Amateurs: The Story of Four Young Men and Their Quest for an Olympic Gold Metal David Halberstam

Remarkable story of four young oarsmen men who hoped to gain fame with each other rather than the world of fabulous salaries and commercial endorsements that are so much a part of the Olympic realm ~ About amateur sculling.

The Summer of '49 David Halberstam

Narrates a time in which baseball dominated America life while the country was recovering from World War II ~ The race for the pennant and "rivalry" between Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams bring into focus the sense of normalcy that baseball offered to American sports fans ~ Author's interest in storyline is too personal ~ Boston.

A Good Walk Spoiled: Days and Nights on the PGA Tour John Feinstein

Not enough about the sport itself ~ Poorly edited and author delved too deeply into subject ~ Same people with highly specialized interests.

My Losing Season Pat Conroy

Author's time at the Citadel where he played basketball ~ Really about the powerful friendships that develop among team members as well as the lessons learned from loss ~ Emotional impact of his fiction does not carry into this nonfiction story.

She's Got Next: A Story of Getting in, Staying Open, and Taking a Shot Melissa King
Story of a girl who likes to play basketball with the boys ~Not really about a sport but the etiquette of sports.

Little Girls in Pretty Boxes Joan Ryan

A young adult/ youth story about young girls involved in figure skating and gymnastics who are pressured by parents and coaches to succeed regardless of the price (loss of childhood, health) ~ Book is about children in sports ~ A very short season~ Focus is on the individual, not a team...you are judged as an individual.

True Believers: The Tragic Inner Life of Sports Fans Joe Queenan

Queenan delves into the culture of the sports fan and attempts to answer such questions as why people root for tragically inept teams and what do they gain from such fanatical support?

The Great Swim Gavin Mortimer

Relying on primary sources, diaries, and family interviews, Gavin documented the story of four American athletes who in 1926 became the first women to swim the English Channel.

Friday Night Lights H. G. Bissinger

Importance of football in America's small towns ~ An amazing story about an America I knew nothing about ~ High school football ~ racism ~ local politics ~ Kids are interested but you do not need to know about the sport ~ Often on summer reading lists.

Wilt, 1962: The Nights of 100 Points and the Dawn of a New Era Gary M. Pomerantz
Story of the fascinating game of basketball and a bigger-than-life character.

Can I Keep My Jersey? : 11 Teams, 5 Countries, and 4 Years in My Life as a Basketball Vagabond Paul Shirley

Memoir of a professional league basketball player and his attempt to become a professional athlete ~ Author spends years in America, Spain and Siberia practicing his sport ~ Personality of the author is apparent.

The Miracle of Castel di Sangro Joe McGinniss

Story takes place in an Italian village near Abruzzi where the home soccer team accomplishes a miracle by qualifying for the second best professional team ~ Lots of local drama and a chance for this home team to compete against larger Italian cities.

The Boys of Winter: The Untold Story of a Coach, a Dream, and the 1980 US Olympic Hockey Team Wayne Coffey

Carefully researched story by New York Daily News sportswriter Coffey of the 1980 Olympic gold-medal winning hockey team of coach Herb Brooks ~ Coffey shows how Brooks, used both psychological tactics and a system based on speed and motion to defeat the Soviets ~ wonderful sense of place, time, an era...your childhood.

Triumph and Tragedy in Mudville: A Lifelong Passion for Baseball Stephen Jay Gould
Collection of essays that places baseball in a different context by the famed paleontologist and evolutionary ~ Gould writes as a fan who probably knows more than anyone about all aspects of the game and its players.

The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg Nicholas Dawidoff
Dawidoff researched his subject thoroughly in writing this biography of baseball catcher Moe Berg ~ a factual account of Berg's life including his career as a lawyer and a spy for the OSS to uncover Nazi nuclear capabilities ~ Berg's life ends rather sadly as he lived off the kindness of friends.

Your Brain on Cubs: Inside the Heads of Players and Fans Dan Gordon
Entertaining essays explore the relationship between players and fans, especially the Chicago Cubs and their fans who have remained loyal despite their never having won a World Series in almost a hundred years ~ Gordon really delves into the connection between the human brain and baseball.

Mining the 800s

General comments on David Sedaris and humor:
Makes a difference to hear him talking on audio ~ A true performance artist, a showman with a great sense of humor and delivery
Some say it is better to listen to him rather than read him ~ With humor, timing is everything ~ Difficult to pick up on in a book
Once you read Sedaris, you do "hear" his voice when reading his books
Puts his family on the line
Humorists to recommend: Bailey White, Dave Barry, Erma Bombeck [what do your patrons consider "funny"?]
The family seems to be a strong component of this genre or "fair game"
Self-absorption versus minutiae?
It is important for the voice of the writer to be very sharp!
Does humor appeal to men more than women?
Is Sedaris's appeal universal?
Sometimes humor should be taken in small doses [ala Dave Barry's columns]

Thoughts on the 800s:
Great "list" books
Books about books
Often the 800s are a "catchall" for libraries ~ Enormous variety of subjects ~ World Classics, How to Write Science Fiction, Fantasy, Mystery, Romance, etc. ~ World anthologies~ Poetry, essay, the short story, drama, literary criticism, toasts, public speaking ~ Difficult area to browse

1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die by Peter Boxall [great display idea]
Keep booklists fresh and remember to include fiction and nonfiction

One may write about almost anything subject and have it placed in the 800's ~ A totally unique perspective ~ You remember something, an emotional response about what you have read~ Very personal ~ An opportunity to gain insight.

One could create a "Career" display on books in the 300s, 600s and 800s ~ for example, Po Bronson, Sherwin B. Nuland.

Individual Titles:

Stop Dressing Your Six-Year-Old Like a Shank: And Other Words of Delicate Southern Wisdom Celia Rivenbark

Southern, female humorist ~ Not too offensive ~ 32 short, humorous essays on the ridiculousness of modern life from a self-proclaimed "slacker mom" ~ Pokes fun at the South's excesses and contradictions

Not That You Asked: Rants, Exploits and Obsessions Steve Almond

Whiney, dull in tone and not as funny as Candyfreak ~ Supposedly funny essays that discuss some of the moral contradictions of the 21st century

I Was Told There'd Be Cake Sloane Crosley

For those in their twenties-thirties ~ Old ideas made fresh ~ Best essay is on the bridesmaid ~Charming, witty style ~ Fans of Sarah Vowell will appreciate this collection

The Selected Essays of Gore Vidal Gore Vidal

24 short, intelligent essays that include politics, memoir, and some "getting even" Readable and recommended

Blue Jelly: Love Lost and the Lessons of Canning Debby Bull

A condensed version of Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert ~ Covers a part of the author's life in which canning played a big role ~ "I felt like canning after I finished the book" ~ Fast and funny read

At Large and At Small: Familiar Essays Anne Fadiman

Personal literary essays on the author's life and her obsessions including Lamb and Coleridge, the natural world and letter writing ~ Wonderful collection

The Nature of Generosity William Kittredge

Good quotes at the book's beginning, but rest is a mind numbing travelogue/dialogue ~ Drawing on various histories, Kittredge believes that diversity encourages the best of social possibilities for mankind's survival

"Storytelling is a technique we have long used in our efforts to determine our true situation. We define ourselves with two fundamental kinds of stories: cautionary tales, which warn us and celebratory ones, in which we acknowledge what has announced itself as invaluable." (p.7-8)

"We ride the stories like rafts, or lay them out on the table like maps. They always, eventually, fail and have to be reinvented. The world is too complex for our forms ever to encompass for long." (p.9)

"If our willingness to think afresh deserts us, or if we refuse outright, we are left adrift."

"A thing I learned in boyhood--not that I made sense of it until decades later--was never to betray yourself by refusing to acknowledge what you want." (p.22)

****Mary Munday's significant quotes from Kittredge.

An Uncertain Inheritance: Writers on Caring for Family Nell Casey (editor)
Great on tape ~ Casey, a mental health worker, collected these original essays from writers who have cared for themselves or family members during serious illnesses ~ Stories reveal humor, wisdom and heroism.....though best read or listened to in small doses.

Here If You Need Me Kate Braestrup
Don't miss the chapter on miracles! ~ Very funny ~ Brief, heart-warming memoir about the author's experiences as a chaplain with Maine's fish and game wardens ~ Braestrup's love for her work is apparent in her lively yet soothing narrative.

How Reading Changed My Life Anna Quindlen
Explores the importance of books in her life and their role in society: learn about other realities, alleviate loneliness and challenge the status quo ~ Strong plea for intellectual freedom and pursuit of personal reading tastes ~ Interesting lists of her "10" ~ Tone and style are similar to her New York Times columns.

How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read Pierre Bayard
Some may read this book to make themselves feel educated or able to understand what is going on

Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and Those Who Want to Write Them Francine Prose
Great book ~ Author uses the various writers to support her point of view ~ Careful reading creates good writing ~ Also discusses the "nuts and bolts" of writing and encourages people to return to the classics ~

The Florist's Daughter Patricia Hampl
Hampl's beautiful memoir ~ She is a good daughter attending her dying mother~ Wonderful, engaging and realistic portrayals of the author's family and the St. Paul society ~ Book is a tribute to the power of an "ordinary life" ~ Funny at times and meditative in thought and tone.

A Walk with Jane Austen: A Journey into Adventure, Love & Faith Lori Smith
Personal well researched travelogue in which author attempts to steep herself into the

places and the heart of Jane ~ Lots of biographical anecdotes about Austen's family and small circle of friends ~

A Patriot's Handbook: Stories, Poems, Songs and Speeches Celebrating the Land We Love Caroline Kennedy

Book highlights great moments in American History ~ Author believes we need to pass on American ideals~ Material is arranged according to its historical significance and literary merit with unusual insight ~ One can browse through the book or study it more carefully.

Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith Anne Lamott

Vintage Lamott covering all her favorite topics.....faith, love, motherhood, politics and work ~ Funny, evocative and at times poignant and iconoclastic ~ A strong sense of place geographically and spiritually.

Four Seasons in Rome Anthony Doerr

Doerr's account of his family's (newborn twins) year-long stay in Rome as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts ~ The Eternal city is the dominant character with its old world beauty, faith and classical culture ~ Wonderful anecdotes about the locals and their help with the twins ~

Jasmine and Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran Fatemeh Keshavarz

The author is a Scholar and Professor of Persian Literature and Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literature at St. Louis's Washington University ~ Fascinating, informative and intelligent study of Iran as a vibrant place with a rich cultural life ~ She offers a far different Iran from Azar Nafisi's Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books

The Animal Kingdom

Appeal Factors

General

- Often humorous
- Animals who do extraordinary/heroic things
 - Animal rescues, stories of survival – zoos in Iraq; hurricane Katrina
- Impart life lessons – humans learn how to be a better person through living with/observing/going through traumatic experience with an animal
 - Intersperse animal anecdotes with episodes from author's personal experience
- Many tend toward sentimentality; have high tear-jerker factor
 - Some readers want to know in advance if the animal lives; helps to have advance warning to avoid intense emotional reaction
 - My Dog Skip – Willie Morris

- Incredible Journey – Shelia Every Burnford
- Where the Red Fern Grows – Wilson Rawls
- authors often open up their own vulnerability, emotions, and sentimentality
- appeal to people looking for stories of inspiration – i.e., Tuesdays with Morrie
- appeal to seniors, homebound – unthreatening; generally no offensive language, sex
- animals in the wild – adventure, exotic animals (grizzly bears, gorillas)
- often brief, anecdotal, lacking story arc
- not necessarily authoritative – information based on personal observation rather than empirical research
- mostly deal with domestic animals – dogs, cats, some horses; very few titles on birds, possibly because birds are longer-lived creatures so authors don't have the episodic/learn-from-their-companionship
- validate the emotional experience of the reader – animals appeal to human innocence, our
- is this human or animal a character I would like to know more about?
- Appeal to owners of new pets or those getting into raising/caring for pets as a hobby, business (pet sitting, etc.); gives an opportunity to learn as much as one can, esp. the little-reported behavior and habits
- So many memorable books from childhood are animal stories (Black Beauty, Misty); this is a way to “keep that going”
- How do readers find these titles? Unless there is word-of-mouth buzz, helps to put on display; can often be overlooked when browsing animal/pet care areas
- How do you develop collection? – more of a browsing collection; usually covers with strong appeal

Marley and Me

- Popularity attributed to moral lessons and positive character attributes
- Forgiving portrait of people who have had trouble raising/living with dogs
- Humorous: readers will like the dog, even if they don't like the people
- Some reviewers (Kirkus, esp.) found the book maudlin

Other Titles

- Cat People – Michael Korda: more about people than animals; animal provided the excuse to write a memoir
- Uncle Boris in the Yukon – Daniel Pinkwater: dog story; demonstrates the heart of animals
- A Dog Year – Jon Katz; better written than “Marley and Me;” not as humorous; appeal to people who are extremely involved with their animals
- Merle's Door: Lessons From a Freethinking Dog – Ted Kerasote: concentrates on canine behavioral psychology; deeper than “Marley and Me;” must be a dog lover and have interest in their behavior; can learn a lot about canine intelligence; discusses human control over animal's basic nature; “a 12-hanky book” – real tear-jerker; overly anthropomorphizes dog.

- Travels with Charley – John Steinbeck: more of a travel book, although it reinforces the companion nature of dogs
- The Tribe of Tiger – Elizabeth Marshall Thomas; Of Woman and Horses – GaWaNi Pony Boy; When Elephants Weep - J. Moussaieff Masson; The Soul of a Horse – Joe Camp: these books deal with the emotional lives of animals in general; deal with an animal's feelings; often told from the animal's perspective; can tend to be too "New Age-y"
- James Herriott – more about people and less about animals; clinical perspective from Herriott's point-of-view as a veterinarian; lots of scenes involving animals' deaths
- Living a Dog's Life: Jazzy, Juicy, and Me – Cindy Adams: sickeningly sweet
- A Cat Abroad: The Further Adventures of Norton – Peter Gethers: personalities of people are exaggerated, oversized; author too full of himself; cute humor
- Chosen by a Horse – Susan Richards: tear-jerker; woman very self-absorbed; author trying to learn more about herself
- The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary life of Christopher Hogwood – Sy Montgomery: well-written
- Fowl Weather – Bob Tarte: interweaves human stories – mother with Alzheimer's; earlier book very funny – didn't try quite so hard to be as funny in this one [NOTE: I may have this backwards?]
- Shaggy Muses: The Dogs Who Inspired Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, etc. – Mureen B. Adams: animal companions of famous writers who brought them out of depression; writers often use their dogs as bridges to other people; dogs as rescuers; many literary aspects of book; author is a psychologist; good audiobook.
- First Dogs: American Presidents and Their Best Friends – Roy Rowan: more about the presidents than the animals
- The Rhino with Glue-On Shoes: And Other Surprising True Stories of Zoo Vets and Their Patients – Lucy H. Spelman and Ted Y. Mashima: short essays by 300 vets, recounting their strange experiences with either zoo or wild animals; Shedd Aquarium and Brookfield Zoo featured; great for those "did you know?" conversations; good YA appeal – challenges of zoo veterinarians, careers; easy reading
- Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived – Ralph Helfer: similar to "Seabiscuit" in that it reads like fiction; episodes involving circus freaks; tear-jerker
- Grayson – Lynne Cox: appeal to readers who are more interested in wild than domesticated animals
- You Belong in a Zoo! Tales from a Lifetime Spent with Cobras, Crocs, and Other Extraordinary Creatures – Peter Brazaitis: focuses on zoo management; episodic – can be picked up and put down at random; humorous; appeal to people who enjoy visiting zoos; author comes across as a fun person who loves what he does
- What the Dog Did: Tales from a Formerly Reluctant Dog Owner – Emily Yoffe: very funny; author is an "extreme" person; spends enormous sums of

money on maladjusted dog; will appeal to someone who tells their own funny pet stories

- Good Dog, Stay – Anna Quindlen: reflections on her aging dog; not her best work; very short
- Meow Wow: Curiously Compelling Facts, True Tales, & Trivia Even Your Cat Won't Know – Marty Becker: cute; content probably trustworthy but cute illustrations and production values make it seem more entertaining than informative

Sure Bets

The Genre of the Sure Bet

Special Populations ~ Teens ~ Race ~ Sociology~ Psychology ~ Biography (Personal Story)

Non fiction books have no plots; for this reason I do not enjoy them!

Factoids ~ Ground-breaking books ~ Titles you may have missed

Sure Bets work on many levels: for example, Angela's Ashes (horrible childhood) ~ All

Creatures Great and Small (veteran/pet narrative) ~ Reviving Ophelia ~ Ominvores'

Dilemma ~ Slow Food Nation ~ The United States of Arugula: How We Became a

Gourmet Nation ~ Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

Readers are fascinated with the why and how of "true crime" ~ Often attracted to a "bad character" ~ Watching versus participating" ~ Vicarious thrills!

The individual is important, but other things need to be going on also: this is not just a "personal story" (Serendipity)

Read-alike list for that "special title:

Sure Bets

Pivotal Books (Silent Spring, Angela's Ashes, Reviving Ophelia)

Inspiration Books (heroic people overcoming great difficulties (Here If You Need Me, Profiles in Courage)

Sure Bet requirements:

Well-written

Character-driven

Story-line needs to be compelling

Examples of Sure Bets:

The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lucky Stiffs and the Perverse Pleasure of Obituaries by Marilyn Johnson

About writing obituaries and remembering the good times (obituary writers even have their own convention) ~ Well-written book with many character-driven stories ~ For trivia buffs ~ about famous people ~ Not a page-turner, but great bed-time reading~ About the obituary in its diversity and psychology

Read-alikes:

The American Way of Death Jessica Mitford

Necropolis Tim Waggoner

Final Exam: A Surgeon's Reflections on Mortality Pauline Chen (How do you treat patients you know will not survive?)

My Own Country: A Doctor's Story of a Town and Its People in the Age of AIDS
Abraham Verghese

Money, a Memoir: Women, Emotions, and Cash Liz Perle

Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping Paco Underhill
Both books discuss our emotional attachment to what we own.

The Hot Zone Richard Preston
The main character is the virus - villain

Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's John Elder Robison and Running with Scissors Augusten Burroughs
Memoirs by two brother ~ some readers enjoy these books while other do not appreciate dark humor

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace-----One School at a Time Greg Mortenson
Timely story about the power of the individual ~ a personal, inspirational, adventure story ~ can be read on many levels including the exploration of different cultures.

Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: An Entrepreneur's Odyssey to Educate the World's Children John Wood (similar to Mortenson's)

Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil Deborah Rodriguez
One can achieve a goal despite challenges

Eat, Pray Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia Elizabeth Gilbert
Popular with some, yet controversial

Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln Doris Kearns Goodwin
A fresh approach to Lincoln ~ Get diverse people to work with you, but you are the boss!

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft Stephen King

The Blind Side: Evolution of the Game Michael Lewis

The Hot Zone Richard Preston

Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants Robert Sullivan

1776 David G. McCullough

***The above titles may appeal to teenage boys ~ ***Nonfiction titles in audio format are usually good

A Girl Named Zippy: Growing up Small in Moreland, Indiana and She Got up off the Couch: And Other Heroic Acts from Mooreland, Indiana Haven Kimmel
Poignant, humorous tales of the author's offbeat/"normal" childhood

Expecting Adam: A True Story of Birth, Rebirth and Everyday Magic Martha Nibley Beck

Moving personal story about a child born with Down Syndrome

Deaf Sentence David Lodge

A language professor is losing his hearing ~ insightful, funny and honest in its portrayal of the diminishment accompanying "oldness"

The Deafening Frances Itani

Canadian author ~ Young girl loses her hearing ~ Insightful portrait of what it feels like to be going deaf

Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War Joe Bageant
Journalist's encounter with the red and blue states

Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team and a Dream H. G. Bissinger

Urbanites need to appreciate and understand the culture of small towns ~ there are cultures within our own cultures (Might make a great display)

Free- Range Chickens Simon Rich Humorous essays

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal Eric Schlosser

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II Robert Kurson

Devil's Highway: A True Story Luis Alberto Urrea

26 Hispanic immigrants...some survived, others did not ~ reveals both sides of the story

The Blue Death: Disease, Disaster and the Water We Drink Robert D. Morris (Read-alike for The Hot Zone)

***Prescriptive elements in the above selections

I'd Rather Eat Chocolate: Learning to Love My Low Libido Joan Sewell

Books similar to this title and those about drinking, addictions, prozac etc. are articles

that have been fleshed out ~ nothing new or compelling ~ reader knows all after the first fifty pages

The Glass Castle Jeanette Walls
Not so self-indulgent or whiney ~ character driven story line

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference Malcolm Gladwell

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything Steven D. Levitt
Nothing much to discuss in either title but they are entertaining

The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story Diane Ackerman
Fascinating story of a woman who shelters Polish Jews in her zoo during the Nazi occupation of Krakow ~ writer's style is wonderful

Breathing for a Living: A Memoir Laura Rothenberg
Story of a 21-year old with cystic fibrosis ~ Written in letter form ~ Personal identification with the author ~ Well Written ~ Tragedy ~ Stem cell research
****I love ANY books about the following subjects: Jackie Onassis, Hitler, Nixon, Second World War!

Serve the People! Lianke Yan

Life and Death in Shanghai Nien Cheng

The Courage to Stand Alone: Letters from Prison and Other Writings Ching-sheng Wei

The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed Michael J. Meyer

Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China Jung Chang
***Books old and new are compelling

How Starbucks Saved My Life: A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else Michael Gill
Inspirational tale

Thunderstruck Erik Larson
Story from the author of The Devil in the White City and Isaac's Storm

Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster Jon Krakauer

Into the Wild Jon Krakauer

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story John Berendt
***Above contain necessary elements of the *Sure Bet*

Dancing on My Grave: An Autobiography Gelsey Kirkland
A powerful story about an obsession ~ micro histories and art books are filled with such stories

The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II Iris Chang

The Snow Leopard Peter Matthiessen

Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape Barry Holstun Lopez

April 1865: The Month That Saved America Jay Winik

The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother James McBride

If You Lived Here, I'd Know Your Name Heather Lende

Eleni Nicholas Gage

Anne Lamott

Annie Dillard

Rick Bragg

Final thoughts on forthcoming pivotal nonfiction books:
Depression of 2009 with financial, economic crises?
What does linger and what does not?
Narrative nonfiction is a relatively new genre (15 years or so)
Will the new nonfiction be more scary/cautionary ala Silent Spring? Or entertaining?

Nonfiction online resources:

EarlyWord.com

Citizenreader.com