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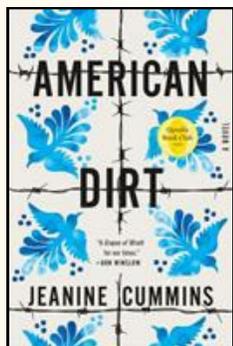
Readers' Advisory Committee

MARCH 2020

# STAFF PICKS

To find book suggestions on the web go to [www.ncde.org/374](http://www.ncde.org/374)

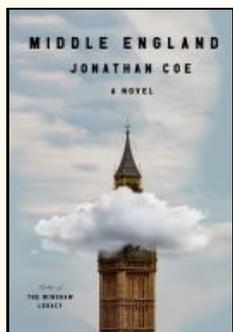
## FICTION



### **AMERICAN DIRT BY JEANINE CUMMINS**

**(PICKED BY SM & SLS)**

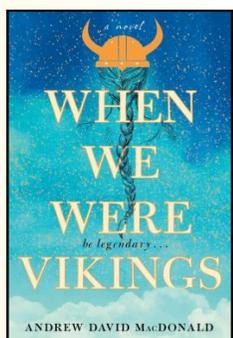
Lydia Quixano Pérez lives in the Mexican city of Acapulco. She runs a bookstore. She has a son, Luca, and a husband who is a journalist. While there are cracks beginning to show in Acapulco because of the drug cartels, her life is fairly comfortable. One day a man enters the shop to browse and comes to the register with a few books he would like to buy—two of them Lydia's favorites. Javier is erudite and charming. Unbeknownst to her, he is the jefe of the newest drug cartel that has gruesomely taken over the city. When Lydia's husband's tell-all profile of Javier is published, none of their lives will ever be the same. Forced to flee, Lydia and eight-year-old Luca soon find themselves miles and worlds away from their comfortable middle-class existence. Instantly transformed into migrants, Lydia and Luca ride la bestia—trains that make their way north toward the United States, which is the only place Javier's reach doesn't extend. As they join the countless people trying to reach el norte, Lydia soon sees that everyone is running from something. But what exactly are they running to? (400 pgs)



### **MIDDLE ENGLAND BY JONATHAN COE**

**(PICKED BY AB)**

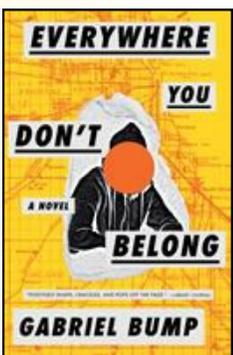
Beginning nine years ago on the outskirts of Birmingham, where car factories have been replaced by chain retail, and London, where both frenzied riots and Olympic fever plague the streets, Middle England tracks a brilliantly vivid cast of characters through the transformation of their society. There are newlyweds Ian and Sophie, who disagree about England's future and, possibly, their relationship; Doug, the political commentator who writes impassioned columns about austerity from his Chelsea townhouse while his radical, teenage daughter undertakes a relentless quest for universal justice; Benjamin Trotter, who embarks on an apparently doomed new career in middle age, and his father Colin, whose last wish is to vote LEAVE in the Brexit referendum. Through all these lives we see this very tentatively United Kingdom itself: a place of nostalgia and delusion, bewilderment and barely suppressed rage. (429 pgs)



### **WHEN WE WERE VIKINGS BY ANDREW MACDONALD**

**(PICKED BY KT & SM)**

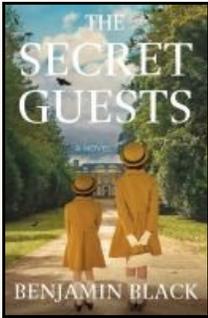
Sometimes life isn't as simple as heroes and villains. For Zelda, a twenty-one-year-old Viking enthusiast who lives with her older brother, Gert, life is best lived with some basic rules: a smile means "thank you for doing something small that I liked." fist bumps and dabs = respect, strange people are not appreciated in her home, sometimes the most important things don't fit on lists. But when Zelda finds out that Gert has resorted to some questionable—and dangerous—methods to make enough money to keep them afloat, Zelda decides to launch her own quest. Her mission: to be legendary. It isn't long before Zelda finds herself in a battle that tests the reach of her heroism, her love for her brother, and the depth of her Viking strength. (326 pgs)



### **EVERYWHERE YOU DON'T BELONG BY GABRIEL BUMP**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

Claude McKay Love isn't dangerous or brilliant—he's an average kid coping with abandonment, violence, riots, failed love, and societal pressures as he steers his way past the signposts of youth: childhood friendships, basketball tryouts, first love, first heartbreak, picking a college, moving away from home. Claude just wants a place where he can fit. As a young black man born on the South Side of Chicago, he is raised by his civil rights-era grandmother, who tries to shape him into a principled actor for change; yet when riots consume his neighborhood, he hesitates to take sides, unwilling to let race define his life. He decides to escape Chicago for another place, to go to college, to find a new identity, to leave the pressure cooker of his hometown behind. But as he discovers, he cannot; there is no safe haven for a young black man in this time and place called America. (264 pgs)



### ***THE SECRET GUESTS* BY BENJAMIN BLACK**

**(PICKED BY SH)**

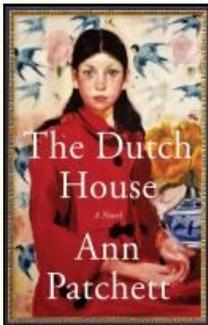
Ahead of the German Blitz during World War II, English parents from every social class sent their children to the countryside for safety, displacing more than three million young offspring. In *The Secret Guests*, the British royal family takes this evacuation a step further, secretly moving the princesses to the estate of the Duke of Edenmore in "neutral" Ireland. A female English secret agent, Miss Cella Nashe, and a young Irish detective, Garda Strafford, are assigned to watch over "Ellen" and "Mary" at Clonmillis Hall. But the Irish stable hand, the housemaid, the formidable housekeeper, the Duke himself, and other Irish townspeople, some of whom lost family to English gunshots during the War of Independence, go freely about their business in and around the great house. Soon suspicions about the guests' true identities percolate, a dangerous boredom sets in for the princesses, and, within and without Clonmillis acreage, passions as well as stakes rise. (289 pgs)



### ***OONA OUT OF ORDER* BY MARGARITA MONTIMORE**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

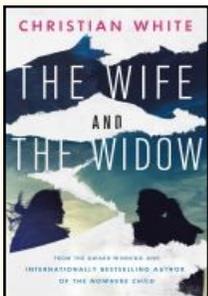
It's New Year's Eve 1982, and Oona Lockhart has her whole life before her. At the stroke of midnight she will turn nineteen, and the year ahead promises to be one of consequence. Should she go to London to study economics, or remain at home in Brooklyn to pursue her passion for music and be with her boyfriend? As the countdown to the New Year begins, Oona faints and awakens thirty-two years in the future in her fifty-one-year-old body. Greeted by a friendly stranger in a beautiful house she's told is her own, Oona learns that with each passing year she will leap to another age at random. And so begins *Oona Out of Order*... Hopping through decades, pop culture fads, and much-needed stock tips, Oona is still a young woman on the inside but ever changing on the outside. Who will she be next year? (352 pgs)



### ***THE DUTCH HOUSE* BY ANN PATCHETT**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

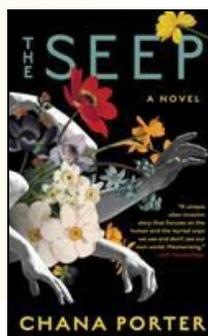
At the end of the Second World War, Cyril Conroy combines luck and a single canny investment to begin an enormous real estate empire, propelling his family from poverty to enormous wealth. His first order of business is to buy the Dutch House, a lavish estate in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia. Meant as a surprise for his wife, the house sets in motion the undoing of everyone he loves. The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, the brilliantly acerbic and self-assured Maeve, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures. Set over the course of five decades, *The Dutch House* is a dark fairy tale about two smart people who cannot overcome their past. (337 pgs)



### ***THE WIFE AND THE WIDOW* BY CHRISTIAN WHITE**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

Set against the backdrop of an eerie island town in the dead of winter, *The Wife and The Widow* is an unsettling thriller told from two perspectives: Kate, a widow whose grief is compounded by what she learns about her dead husband's secret life; and Abby, an island local whose world is turned upside down when she's forced to confront the evidence of her husband's guilt. But nothing on this island is quite as it seems, and only when these women come together can they discover the whole story about the men in their lives. Brilliant and beguiling, *The Wife and The Widow* takes you to a cliff edge and asks the question: how well do we really know the people we love? (352 pgs)



### ***THE SEEP* BY CHANA PORTER**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

Trina Goldberg-Oneka is a fifty-year-old trans woman whose life is irreversibly altered in the wake of a gentle—but nonetheless world-changing—invasion by an alien entity called The Seep. Through *The Seep*, everything is connected. Capitalism falls, hierarchies and barriers are broken down; if something can be imagined, it is possible. Trina and her wife, Deeba, live blissfully under The Seep's utopian influence—until Deeba begins to imagine what it might be like to be reborn as a baby, which will give her the chance at an even better life. Using Seep-tech to make this dream a reality, Deeba moves on to a new existence, leaving Trina devastated. Heartbroken and deep into an alcoholic binge, Trina follows a lost boy she encounters, embarking on an unexpected quest. In her attempt to save him from The Seep, she will confront not only one of its most avid devotees, but the terrifying void that Deeba has left behind. A strange new elegy of love and loss, *The Seep* explores grief, alienation, and the ache of moving on. (203 pgs)

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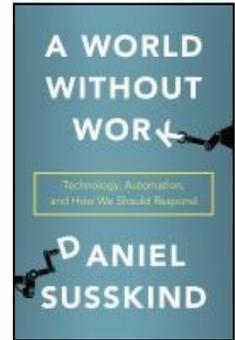
Libraries

## NON-FICTION

### **A WORLD WITHOUT WORK BY DANIEL SUSSKIND**

**(PICKED BY SMC)**

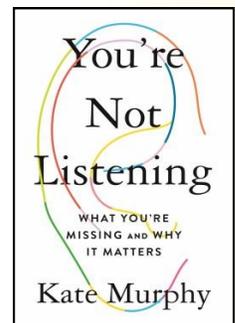
From mechanical looms to the combustion engine to the first computers, new technologies have always provoked panic about workers being replaced by machines. For centuries, such fears have been misplaced, and many economists maintain that they remain so today. But as Daniel Susskind demonstrates, this time really is different. Breakthroughs in artificial intelligence mean that all kinds of jobs are increasingly at risk. Susskind argues that machines no longer need to think like us in order to outperform us. As a result, more and more tasks that used to be far beyond the capability of computers – from diagnosing illnesses to drafting legal contracts, from writing news reports to composing music – are coming within their reach. The threat of technological unemployment is now real. Technological progress could bring about unprecedented prosperity, solving how to make sure that everyone has enough to live on. The challenges will be to distribute this prosperity fairly, to constrain the burgeoning power of Big Tech, and to provide meaning in a world where work is no longer the center of our lives. (320 pgs)



### **YOU'RE NOT LISTENING BY KATE MURPHY**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

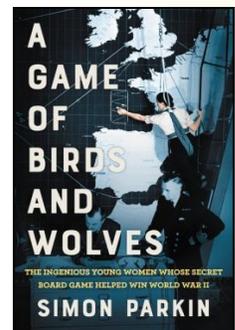
Despite living in a world where technology allows constant digital communication and opportunities to connect, it seems no one is really listening or even knows how. And it's making us lonelier, more isolated, and less tolerant than ever before. A listener by trade, *New York Times* contributor Kate Murphy wanted to know how we got here. In this always illuminating and often humorous deep dive, Murphy explains why we're not listening, what it's doing to us, and how we can reverse the trend. She makes accessible the psychology, neuroscience, and sociology of listening while also introducing us to some of the best listeners out there (including a CIA agent, focus group moderator, bartender, radio producer, and top furniture salesman). It's time to stop talking and start listening. (288 pgs)



### **A GAME OF BIRDS AND WOLVES BY SIMON PARKIN**

**(PICKED BY SMC)**

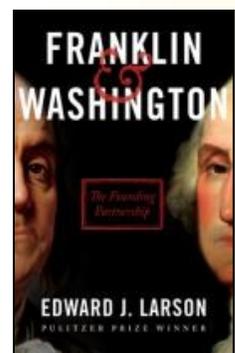
By 1941, Winston Churchill had come to believe that the outcome of World War II rested on the battle for the Atlantic. A grand strategy game was devised by Captain Gilbert Roberts and a group of ten Wrens (members of the Women's Royal Naval Service) assigned to his team in an attempt to reveal the tactics behind the vicious success of the German U-boats. Played on a linoleum floor divided into painted squares, it required model ships to be moved across a make-believe ocean in a manner reminiscent of the childhood game, Battleship. Through play, the designers developed "Operation Raspberry," a countermeasure that helped turn the tide of World War II. Combining vibrant novelistic storytelling with extensive research, interviews, and previously unpublished accounts, Simon Parkin describes for the first time the role that women played in developing the Allied strategy that, in the words of one admiral, "contributed in no small measure to the final defeat of Germany." (320 pgs)

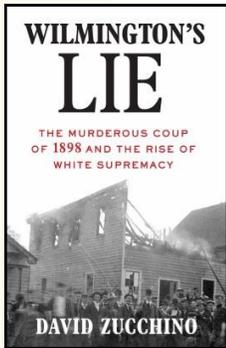


### **FRANKLIN & WASHINGTON BY EDWARD LARSON**

**(PICKED BY SH)**

There was a three-decade-long bond that would forge the United States. Vastly different men, Benjamin Franklin—an abolitionist freethinker from the urban north—and George Washington—a slaveholding general from the agrarian south—were the indispensable authors of American independence and the two key partners in the attempt to craft a more perfect union at the Constitutional Convention. Edward J. Larson shows that theirs was truly an intimate working friendship that amplified the talents of each for collective advancement of the American project. After long supporting British rule, both became key early proponents of independence. Rekindled during the Second Continental Congress in 1775, their friendship gained historical significance during the American Revolution. In the 1780s, the two sought to strengthen the union, leading to the framing and ratification of the Constitution, the founding document that bears their stamp. Franklin and Washington—the two most revered figures in the early republic—staked their lives and fortunes on the American experiment in liberty and were committed to its preservation. (352 pgs)

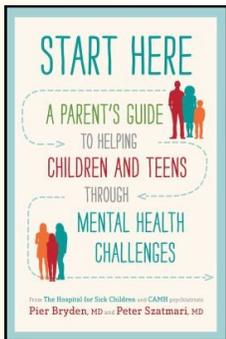




### **WILMINGTON'S LIE BY DAVID ZUCCHINO**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

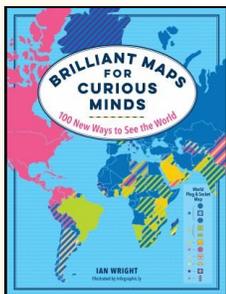
By the 1890s, Wilmington was North Carolina's largest city and a shining example of a mixed-race community. It was a bustling port city with a burgeoning African American middle class. But across the state—and the South—white supremacist Democrats were working to reverse the advances made by former slaves and their progeny. Led by prominent citizens, white supremacists rolled out a carefully orchestrated campaign that included raucous rallies, race-baiting editorials, and sensational, fabricated news stories. With intimidation and violence, the Democrats suppressed the black vote and stuffed ballot boxes (or threw them out), to win control of the state legislature. City officials were forced to resign at gunpoint and were replaced by mob leaders. Prominent blacks—and sympathetic whites—were banished. Hundreds of terrified black families took refuge in surrounding swamps and forests. This brutal insurrection is a rare instance of a violent overthrow of an elected government in the U.S. It halted gains made by blacks and restored racism as official government policy, cementing white rule for another half century. (336 pgs)



### **START HERE BY PIER BRYDEN**

**(PICKED BY SMC)**

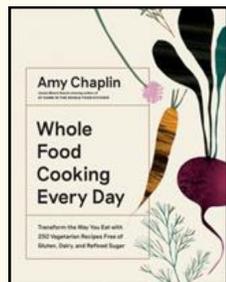
As parents, we worry about our children—about their physical health, performance at school, the types of friends they have, and, of course, their mental health. Every day seems to bring new and expanding issues and disorders and troubling statistics about the rise of mental illness in children and teens. Pier Bryden and Peter Szatmari, break down the stigma of mental health illness and walk parents through the warning signs, risk factors, prevention strategies, and the process of diagnosis and treatment for mental health challenges such as: eating disorders, anxiety, substance use disorders, depression, trauma etc... You and your child are not alone. Wellness is a continuum, and there is a lot parents can do to bring their child back to a place of safety. The road ahead isn't always easy or straightforward, but this guidebook offers essential advice that every parent needs to advocate for their child. (288 pgs)



### **BRILLIANT MAPS FOR CURIOUS MINDS BY IAN WRIGHT**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

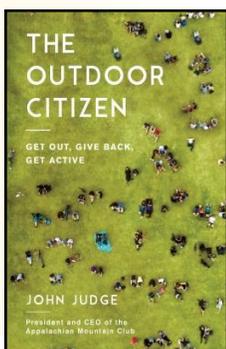
Which countries don't have rivers? Which ones have North Korean embassies? Who drives on the "wrong" side of the road? How many national economies are bigger than California's? And where can you still find lions in the wild? You'll learn answers to these questions and many more in *Brilliant Maps for Curious Minds*. This one-of-a-kind atlas is packed with eye-opening analysis (Which nations have had female leaders?), whimsical insight (Where can't you find a McDonald's?), and surprising connections that illuminate the contours of culture, history, and politics. (208 pgs)



### **WHOLE FOOD COOKING EVERY DAY BY AMY CHAPLIN**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

Eating whole foods can transform a diet, and mastering the art of cooking these foods can be easy with the proper techniques and strategies. In 20 chapters, Chaplin shares ingenious recipes incorporating the foods that are key to a healthy diet: seeds and nuts, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and plant-based foods. Chaplin shares her secrets for eating healthy every day: mastering some key recipes and reliable techniques and then varying the ingredients based on the occasion, the season, and what you're craving. Once the reader learns one of Chaplin's base recipes, the ways to adapt and customize it are endless. Chaplin encourages readers to seek out local and organic ingredients, stock their pantries with nutrient-rich whole food ingredients, prep ahead of time, and, most important, cook at home. (400 pgs)



### **THE OUTDOOR CITIZEN BY JOHN JUDGE**

**(PICKED BY SMC)**

John Judge delivers a remarkably persuasive argument for why we must all become citizens of the natural world and instilling in the next generation a keen interest in outdoor leadership. This is a call to action to commit to an active outdoor lifestyle and make the outdoors an epicenter of our communities. Judge, an international leader in conservation stewardship, covers how to turn our cities into Outdoor Cities, with a wide range of green spaces, outdoor recreation activities, eco-friendly transportation, and sustainable food sources; how to globally transition to green energy sources; what environmental policies must be urgently implemented and how to enact them; and how to fund a sustainable economy. The continued use of carbon emissions will lead to devastating, irreversible effects on the earth. This book is a game changer for saving our planet and an entry point into a world of healthier and happier people. (280 pgs)