

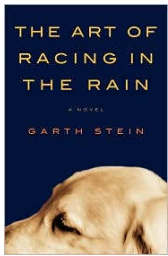
Bullitt County Public Library Recommended Reading

I didn't get out a new list in time for spring, so for the summer I have a huge, super-sized list that (hopefully) will keep you occupied for the rest of the season. There is a little bit of everything here—a contemporary/historical fiction mix that will sweep you into a love story that transcends time and nature, a delightful tale that will take you into the mind of an unforgettable dog named Enzo, a Southern romance filled with magic and family tradition, a chilling ghost story from the son of Stephen King, and much more! I hope you all enjoy these books as much as I did!

—Tracy Weikel, July 2008

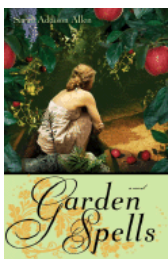
Tracy's List

THE ART OF RACING IN THE RAIN- Garth Stein *Adult Fiction*



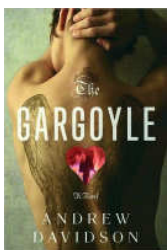
Funny, insightful, and heartwrenching, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is a novel that you won't soon forget. You see, its narrator is Enzo, an amazing dog whose passion is Formula One racing and who believes in reincarnation. He is a philosopher with a human soul, self-educated through extensive television viewing (he especially enjoys the Weather Channel and the Speed Channel). Plus he is intensely concerned about the lives of his people—Denny, a race car driver on the rise; Denny's wife Eve, who was diagnosed with cancer long after Enzo suspected her illness; and their daughter Zoë, whom he adores and protects religiously. Now, aware that his death is near, Enzo reflects on all the highlights and heartaches that he and his family have experienced. This book is the latest Starbucks Book Club Pick and an excellent choice for readers who loved *Marley & Me*. This one even has the happy, uplifting ending that *Marley & Me* did not.

GARDEN SPELLS- Sarah Addison Allen *Adult Fiction, Large Type & Audio CD*

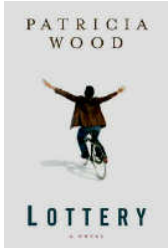


This book is magical realism (think *Chocolat* or *Practical Magic*), southern-style. *Garden Spells* is the delightful fairy tale of two sisters, decades of misunderstandings, and a really unusual garden. Abandoned by their mother as children, Claire and Sydney Waverly grew up resenting each other, and nothing changed when Sydney followed in their mother's footsteps and skipped town to see the world, leaving her family and strange heritage behind. You see, all of the Waverly women have a "gift." Cousin Evanelle, for example, has an uncanny ability to anticipate others' needs and is often compelled to hand out oddball items like yellow BIC lighters, strawberry Pop Tarts, and mango splitters—items which inevitably prove necessary to their recipients. But while Claire embraces her unique family heritage, Sydney just wants to be normal. (Which is funny considering their charming hometown of Bascom, North Carolina is peopled with all sorts of odd characters.) But when Sydney runs home to escape a dangerous domestic situation, Claire's safe world is shaken up and the two sisters find that they need each other after all.

THE GARGOYLE- Andrew Davidson *Adult Fiction*



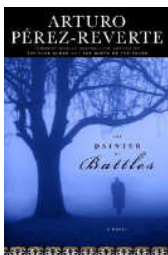
The first sentence grabbed me; by the end of the first few paragraphs, I found myself thinking *This could be one of the best books I've ever read*. *The Gargoyle* is the story of a severely burned man and the woman—who may or may not be insane—who shows up in his hospital room claiming they loved each other in the past. The unnamed narrator is cynical and jaded, but eventually he finds himself enthralled by Marianne Engel's stories of her life in a medieval monastery as well as tangential tales of a widowed Victorian lady, plague-stricken lovers in 14th-century Italy, a young maiden in feudal Japan, and Vikings in 9th-century Iceland. It is an ambitious, hypnotic, and often horrifying novel that I already plan to read again. The use of language and the narrator's connection to the reader are nothing short of astonishing. I have never read writing so visceral yet with just the right measure of caustic humor. This book has everything: adventure, romance, history, humor, and drama—all served up in literary masterpiece that is anything but dull.

LOTTERY- Patricia Wood *Adult Fiction*

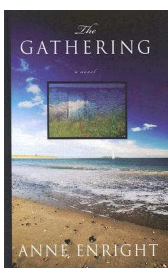
This is a wonderful, heartwarming story that makes it clear that “slow” doesn’t mean stupid. Perry Crandall is thirty-one and has an IQ of only 76. He grew up with his Gram, who taught him everything he needs to know: to save half his paycheck, to write things down so he won’t forget, and to be careful who he trusts. Specifically, he should NOT trust his spendthrift mother or money-obsessed siblings. When Gram dies, Perry finds his life strange and lonely, but luckily he has a few people he *can* trust: his best friend Keith, an overweight, somewhat crude but goodhearted Vietnam War vet; Gary, his boss and a longtime friend of his grandparents’; and Cherry, a troubled young woman who works at the Handy Mart and is the object of Perry’s secret crush. Then Perry’s world becomes even stranger—he wins \$12 million in the Washington State Lottery! All of a sudden people are taking Perry seriously, and his “family” want to acknowledge (and take advantage of) their connection for the first time in his life. With commonsense reasoning, Perry navigates through the new opportunities and challenges that come his way and proves that a genuine heart has a wisdom all its own.

HEART-SHAPED BOX- Joe Hill *Adult Fiction, Large Type & Audio Cassette*

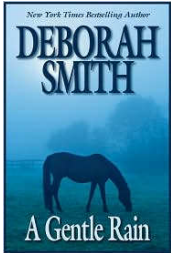
With *Heart-Shaped Box*, Joe Hill—son of horror guru Stephen King—makes a place of his own in the horror genre. This novel is a ghost story with a difference. Judas Coyne is a semi-retired rock star with a taste for collecting odd and twisted items—cartoon drawings by John Wayne Gacy, the confession of a woman burned for witchcraft, a real snuff film passed on to him by a police officer who was a fan. But with his most recent acquisition, Jude goes too far. Because the dead man’s suit he purchases from an online site comes complete with a ghost bent on vengeance—against Jude! Psychological terror combines with a road adventure when Jude and his (much) younger lover try everything to rid themselves of the dead man determined to destroy them.

THE PAINTER OF BATTLES- Arturo Pérez-Reverte *Adult Fiction*

Arturo Pérez-Reverte is an immensely popular author in Spain. His work is often compared to the thrillers of John Grisham and Stephen King, but this novel’s theme reminded me more of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*. It really made me think about the role and responsibility of those who observe an act of violence—and the book indirectly invites the reader to consider his own culpability. The book’s central character is Andres Faulques, a world-weary war photographer who has holed up in a crumbling tower on the coast of Spain, painting a giant circular mural on the upstairs interior wall. He hopes that painting will finally allow him to capture the “definitive image” to explain and make order out of the world’s chaos. The story truly begins when Faulques has an unexpected visitor: Ivo Markovic, a former Croatian soldier who was the subject of one of Faulques’s most iconic photographs. Markovic blames Faulques for the horrors perpetrated by the Serbian Army upon him and his family and plans to kill the photographer in retaliation. But first, Markovic says he needs for Faulques to “understand a few things.” What follows is an intense, yet somehow dispassionate, debate on the natures of war, observation, and art punctuated with the photographer’s own reminiscences of (and his own reaction/non-reaction to) the evils he has witnessed, recorded, and analyzed. This is not a plot driven story, but rather a powerful examination of ideas and character.

THE GATHERING- Anne Enright *Large Type*

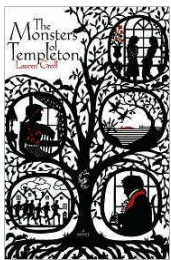
Truth, memory, and speculation converge in this evocative, lyrical novel that won the 2007 Man Booker Prize. It is the meditation of a 39-year-old Irishwoman after she learns that Liam, her favorite brother in a family of twelve children, has committed suicide. The shock—which, given Liam’s history, isn’t really all that much of a shock—sends her into a tailspin as she begins to assess her life, her marriage, and, most of all, her own past and family history. This novel is definitely one of the more “literary” picks on the list, but if you don’t mind dark subject matter and a somewhat convoluted narrative style, *The Gathering* makes for a memorable reading experience.

A GENTLE RAIN- Deborah Smith*Adult Fiction*

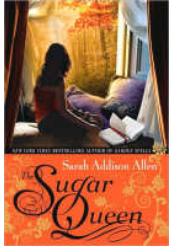
Sweet, funny, and full of family melodrama, *A Gentle Rain* is vintage Deborah Smith romance. This time, Smith travels to the swamp area of northern Florida, where her hero, Ben Thocco, runs a ranch populated by the mentally challenged, including his younger brother Joey who has Down syndrome and a weak heart. Her heroine is New England blue-blood Kara Whittenbrook, who discovers after her parents' sudden deaths that she was adopted. Kara's biological parents are Lily and Mac, longtime residents of Ben's ranch, and Kara wants to meet them. To keep her connection to the uber-rich Whittenbrooks a secret, Kara and the family lawyer Sedge set up a fake identity and Kara heads south in a beat-up car with only Mr. Darcy, her pet macaw, for company. The romance between Ben and Kara develops slowly—although their attraction is instant—and the story is stronger for it. Both characters are well developed and believable (despite Ben's unusual history in Mexico as a professional wrestler and soap actor, jobs he now feels embarrassed by but which allowed him to keep his brother from being institutionalized). There are also a number of richly developed secondary characters and subplots—a Seabiscuit-like story involving a Cracker mare saved by the ranch employees from becoming dog food; Mac's brother and his spoiled society daughter, who like to taunt the “retards” of the ranch and threaten the ranch's future; and life on the ranch, as Kara becomes part of their very special family. Although it is a bit schmaltzy and predictable at times, this is a beautiful, nuanced love story and Smith's finest work since *The Stone Flower Garden* (2002).

LULU MEETS GOD AND DOUBTS HIM- Danielle Ganek*Adult Fiction*

Ganek's debut novel is a colorful, satire-laced portrait of a world I find fascinating: the New York City art world. After the sudden death of unknown painter Jeffrey Finnelli, the cannibalistic art community takes notice and most of the frenzied interest centers around Finnelli's masterpiece, *Lulu Meets God and Doubts Him*. The story focuses on Mia, a “gallerina” at the minor Chelsea art gallery that controls Finnelli's work. Mia has been drifting aimlessly through life, telling herself her job is only a stopover in her journey to becoming a great artist. But when the interest in Finnelli's work heats up, Mia is jostled free of her comfortable non-life and finds herself in the center of the action. This book is a little bit chick lit, but it is also a smart, intuitive look at a woman who must reevaluate her dreams. And it's certainly a humorous and intriguing peek into a world that most of us will never experience elsewhere.

THE MONSTERS OF TEMPLETON- Lauren Groff*Adult Fiction & Audio CD*

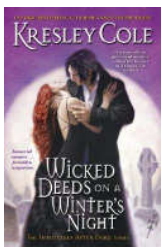
This was one of the nuttiest, most unusual books I have ever read. Groff's imagery and her deft creation of quirky, engrossing characters are nothing short of brilliant. The central character is the temperamental, admittedly snobbish Willie Upton, who has pretty much demolished her academic career by sleeping with her professor then trying to run his wife (who also happens to be dean of the college) over with an airplane. So Willie goes home to Templeton—a quaint New England town named for her great-great-great-grandfather—to lick her wounds and arrives the same day that a Loch Ness monster-type creature is discovered in the town's lake. When Willie decides to dig into her own family history she uncovers a number of dark family secrets ranging from infidelity and prostitution to arson and murder. The novel is half contemporary fiction, half historical fiction and is liberally peppered with voices from the past—a Natty Bumpo character who is a legend in Templeton; Willie's possibly schizophrenic great-grandmother, who killed herself by wading into Lake Glimmergloss to drown à la Virginia Woolf; and two Victorian-era cousins who confess by letter their less-than upright activities. It all fascinated me, although at times I found the excursions into the past a little overlong and Groff's heavy-handed gothic devices somewhat superfluous. The many plots and subplots don't all come together with perfect satisfaction (perhaps Groff was a little overambitious), but *The Monsters of Templeton* is still a compelling and imaginative novel well worth reading.

THE SUGAR QUEEN– Sarah Addison Allen *Large Type*

Allen's second novel has a lot in common with her first effort, *Garden Spells*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller. At the novel's opening, shy, plain-Jane Josey Cirrini wakes up to discover that a slightly notorious waitress from the local greasy spoon has made herself at home in Josey's closet—yes, her *closet!*—sometime during the night. Josey agrees (reluctantly and only after a touch of blackmail) to let Della Lee stay put. Della Lee then ends up playing a sort of fairy godmother role in Josey's life. She convinces Josey to come out of her shell and orchestrates a friendship between Josey and Chloe, another lonely young woman who is coping with a recent breakup with her longtime boyfriend. For me, the magical realism that made *Garden Spells* such an enchanting tale comes off a little awkward in Allen's second book. For example, whenever Chloe is attracted to Jake (the ex-boyfriend, who she still loves although he cheated on her), the water in the coffee pot boils over in a poor imitation of Laura Esquivel's wonderful novel *Like Water for Chocolate*. Other bits, like Chloe's odd ability to always attract the perfect book from nowhere are original and work wonderfully. In some ways, I think I prefer *The Sugar Queen* to *Garden Spells*. The fairy tale references were fun to spot and the characters and relationships seemed better developed. Regardless, both books make for a light-hearted, enjoyable read.

OUT STEALING HORSES– Pers Petterson *Adult Fiction*

This is a subtle, quietly powerful novel by “one of the greatest living writers” in Norway. Sound intimidating? It's not. It's actually a brief, relatively simple novel, though there are undertones of complexity and resonance for those who like to delve deeper. Essentially, it is the coming-of-age story of Trond Sander, a 67-year-old man who has chucked his life in Oslo for an isolated existence at a cabin without modern conveniences like indoor toilets. When he encounters his new neighbor, Trond finds himself remembering the summer of 1948, a pivotal time he spent with his adored but somewhat mysterious father at yet another isolated place when he was only fifteen. Trond's story is artfully told, seamlessly intermingling the past and present and carefully unfolding to reveal the tragedies and intrigues of that fateful summer.

IMMORTALS AFTER DARK SERIES– Kresley Cole *Adult Fiction**

In case you haven't noticed, paranormal romances are everywhere nowadays. There are vampires, werewolves, ghosts—just about every supernatural being authors can dream up. In my opinion, many of the series out there are unoriginal and, by book two or three, completely boring. Kresley Cole's Immortals After Dark series is different. Cole's stories about the “Lore”—a community of supernatural beings that includes the ever-popular vampires and werewolves, plus witches, phantoms, demons, Valkyries and more—are grounded by solid explanation. They are an excellent example of world-building; each new book pulls you deeper into a fascinating alternate universe. And while the titles are becoming increasingly silly and interchangeable, the stories are not. Each book stands on its own, although I love how favorite characters pop up throughout the series and are just as three-dimensional and interesting as they are in the books where they first appear. The dialog is smart and snappy, and the stories are sexy and funny without ever becoming trite or silly. These books also offer a wonderful element of adventure (*No Rest for the Wicked* takes place during a sort of Amazing Race for supernatural beings) and the heroines are just as capable as the heroes—if not more so.

So far, the titles include:

“The Warlord Wants Forever” (short story in *Playing Easy to Get*)

A Hunger Like No Other

No Rest for the Wicked

Wicked Deeds on a Winter's Night

Dark Needs at Night's Edge

Dark Desires After Dusk

**Some titles are still on order; in the meantime, you can borrow older titles through our Interlibrary Loan network*

The last five installments have all made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list. According to Cole's Web site, the next book is due out February 2009.

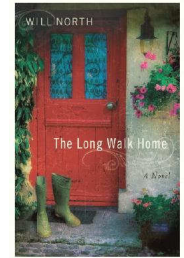
More Great Picks from Library Staff

Barbara C. (Ridgway Memorial)

THE KITE RUNNER- Khaled Hosseini

Adult Fiction, Large Type & Audio CD

An Afghan boy is haunted by his betrayal of a childhood friend in this long-time bestseller.



LONG WALK HOME- Will North

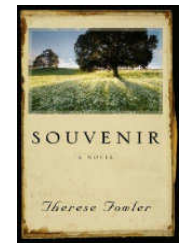
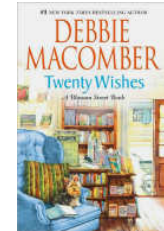
Adult Fiction

A New York man walks from London to Wales to scatter his dead ex-wife's ashes, and he meets the married owner of a bed-and-breakfast on his journey. Reminiscent of *The Bridges of Madison County*.

TWENTY WISHES- Debbie Macomber

Adult Fiction

In Macomber's latest Blossom Street novel, recent widow Anne Marie Roche and several other widows each compose a list of twenty wishes, inspiring Anne to learn to knit, to volunteer at a local school, and to look for love again.



SOUVENIR- Therese Fowler

Adult Fiction

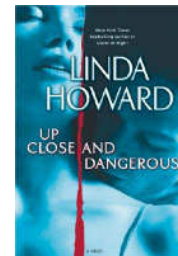
A married woman struggling to cope with the needs of her troubled teenage daughter and her own medical condition is confronted with the return of her first love. This debut author is already being compared to Nicholas Sparks and Jodi Picoult.

Tobee (Ridgway Memorial)

UP CLOSE AND DANGEROUS- Linda Howard

Mystery, Large Type & Audio CD

A year after her late husband's will leaves her in control of her stepchildren's inheritance, Bailey Wingate's plane goes down under suspicious circumstances. Now Bailey is stranded in the Idaho wilderness with a sexy pilot and, possibly, a killer.



Cindy (Ridgway Memorial)

SHUTTER ISLAND- Dennis Lehane *Adult Fiction & Audio CD*

Two U.S. marshals (one with a secret agenda) follow the trail of a murder suspect to Shutter Island and end up investigating a hospital for the criminally insane. The film version, renamed *Ashcliffe*, will be released in 2009.



THE WINTER ROSE- Jennifer Donnelly *Adult Fiction*

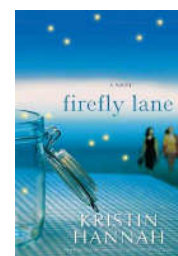
In this second book of *The Tea Rose* trilogy, the Finnegan family is back, and Fiona's black-sheep brother meets India Selwyn, a physician and social reformer.

Pam (Lebanon Junction)

FIREFLY LANE- Kristin Hannah

Adult Fiction, Large Type & Audio CD

Hannah's latest novel of love, loss, and friendship focuses on two friends, Tully and Kate, who choose different paths and whose friendship is repeatedly tested by jealousy and ambition.



To check for availability, ask at your local library location
or search for it on the Web at <http://pac.bcplib.org>