Suggested Books

This month is all about ADE’s favorite books. Thanks for filling out the survey and sharing your favorites!

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett (Recommended by Tiffany) – When orphaned Mary Lennox comes to live at her uncle's great house, she finds it full of secrets. Mary discovers a secret garden, surrounded by walls and locked with a missing key. With the help of two unexpected companions, Mary discovers a way in—and becomes determined to bring the garden back to life.

Interview With the Vampire by Anne Rice (Recommended by Michele) - The confessions of a vampire. Hypnotic, shocking, and chillingly erotic, this is a novel of mesmerizing beauty and astonishing force -- a story of danger and flight of love and loss, of suspense and resolution, and the power of the senses.

Breathe Again by Adrienne Thompson (Recommended by Suzanne) – Maria lives in her tiny hometown, working the same job she's held since high school, and caring for her father. The moment NFL star, Malachi, lays eyes on Maria, he knows she's the woman he's been praying for. Maybe Malachi is just what she needs to learn how to breathe again.

My Grandmother Asked Me To Tell You She's Sorry by Fredrik Backman (Recommended by Ann) - Elsa is 7 and different. Her grandmother is 77 years old and crazy. She is also Elsa's best, and only, friend. At night Elsa takes refuge in her grandmother's stories, in the Land-of-Almost-Awake and the Kingdom of Miamas, where everybody is different and nobody needs to be normal. When Elsa’s grandmother dies and leaves behind a series of letters apologizing to people she has wronged, Elsa’s greatest adventure begins.

She Comes Undone by Wally Lamb (Recommended by Thomas)– Dolores is 13, wise-mouthed but wounded. Stranded in front of her bedroom TV, she spends the next few years nourishing herself with the Mallomars and potato chips that her anxious mother supplies. When she finally orbits into womanhood at 257 pounds, Dolores is no stronger and life is no kinder. But this time she's determined to rise to give herself one more chance before she really goes under.

The Rooster Bar by John Grisham (Recommended by Lisa) - They all borrowed heavily to attend a for-profit law school so mediocre that its graduates rarely pass the bar exam. After learning that their school is one of a chain owned by an operator who happens to own a bank specializing in student loans, the three know they have been caught in a scam. But maybe there’s a way to escape their debt, expose the bank and the scam, and make some money in the process. Leaving law school month before graduation would be crazy, right? Well, yes and no.

ADE Recommendations

Let's promote a culture of reading in the state of Arkansas! Share your favorite book and get an idea for a new, interesting read.

Editors: Cassandra Barnett & Jessica McIntosh-Brockinton

Name: Jessica McIntosh-Brockinton
Recommendation: Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living by Shauna Niequist
Why did you choose this book? Relevant to any person living in the rush mentality of the modern era, Shauna reminds the reader of what is really most important in life: living a life full of meaning and connection, rather than pushing for perfection and keeping up appearances. She writes about the path away from frantic pushing and proving towards a path of the essential self, the one you were created to be before you began proving and earning for your worth. Written in Shauna’s warm and vulnerable style, this collection of essays focuses on the most important transformation in her life, and maybe yours too: leaving behind busyness and frantic living and rediscovering the person you were made to be. Shauna offers an honest account of what led her to begin this journey, and a compelling vision for an entirely new way to live: soaked in grace, rest, silence, simplicity, prayer, and connection with people that matter most to us. In these pages, you will be invited to consider the landscape of your own life, and what it might look like to begin the life-changing practice of simply being present in the middle of the mess and the ordinariness of life.

Send your staff pick to Cassandra.Barnett@arkansas.gov.
**Suggested Books**

**Pride and Prejudice** by Jane Austen *(Recommended by Kelly)* - In a remote Hertfordshire village, far off the good coach roads of George III's England, a country squire of no great means must marry off his five vivacious daughters. At the heart of this all-consuming enterprise are his headstrong second daughter Elizabeth Bennet and her aristocratic suitor Fitzwilliam Darcy — two lovers whose pride must be humbled and prejudices dissolved.

**Lord Valentine's Castle** by Robert Silverberg *(Recommended by Liz)* - He is a man with no past—a wanderer without memory of his origins. He calls himself Valentine. As a member of a motley group of entertainers, he travels across the magical planet of Majipoor, always hoping he will meet someone who can give him back what he has lost. And then, he begins to dream—and to receive messages in those dreams. Messages that tell him that he is far more than a common vagabond—he is a lord, a king turned out of his castle. Now his travels have a purpose—to return to his home, discover what enemy took his memory, and claim the destiny that awaits him...

**The Bluest Eye** by Toni Morrison *(Recommended by Virginia)* - Pecola Breedlove prays every day for beauty. Mocked by other children for the dark skin, curly hair, and brown eyes that set her apart, she yearns for normalcy, for the blond hair and blue eyes that she believes will allow her to finally fit in. Yet as her dream grows more fervent, her life slowly starts to disintegrate in the face of adversity and strife. A powerful examination of our obsession with beauty and conformity, Toni Morrison's virtuosic first novel asks powerful questions about race, class, and gender with the subtlety and grace that have always characterized her writing.

**The Cay** by Theodore Taylor *(Recommended by Carlette)* - Phillip is excited when the Germans invade the small island of Curaçao. War has always been a game to him, and he's eager to glimpse it firsthand—until the freighter he and his mother are traveling to the United States on is torpedoed. When Phillip comes to, he is on a small raft in the middle of the sea. Besides Stew Cat, his only companion is an old West Indian, Timothy. Phillip remembers his mother’s warning about black people: “They are different, and they live differently.” But by the time the castaways arrive on a small island, Phillip’s head injury has made him blind and dependent on Timothy.

**The Dog of the South** by Charles Portis *(Recommended by Cindy)* - Ray Midge is waiting for his credit card bill to arrive. His wife, Norma, has run off with her ex-husband, taking Ray's cards, shotgun and car. But from the receipts, Ray can track where they’ve gone. He takes off after them, as does an irritatingly tenacious bail bondsman, both following the romantic couple’s spending as far as Mexico. There Ray meets Dr. Reo Symes, the seemingly down-on-his-luck and rather eccentric owner of a beaten up and broken down bus, who needs a ride to Belize. The further they drive, in a car held together by coat-hangers and excesses of oil, the wilder their journey gets. But they’re not going to give up easily.

**The Lightning Thief** by Rick Riordan *(Recommended by Gina)* - Percy Jackson is about to be kicked out of boarding school again. His wife, Norma, has run off with her ex-husband, taking Ray's cards, shotgun and car. But from the receipts, Ray can track where they’ve gone. He takes off after them, as does an irritatingly tenacious bail bondsman, both following the romantic couple’s spending as far as Mexico. There Ray meets Dr. Reo Symes, the seemingly down-on-his-luck and rather eccentric owner of a beaten up and broken down bus, who needs a ride to Belize. The further they drive, in a car held together by coat-hangers and excesses of oil, the wilder their journey gets. But they’re not going to give up easily.

**Mere Christianity** by C.S. Lewis *(Recommended by Ed)* - In the classic, C.S. Lewis explores the common ground upon which all of those of Christian faith stand together. Bringing together Lewis’ legendary broadcast talks during World War Two from his three previous books *The Case for Christianity, Christian Behavior, and Beyond Personality*, *Mere Christianity* provides an unequaled opportunity for believers and nonbelievers alike to hear this powerful apologetic.

**The Mists of Avalon** by Marion Zimmer Bradley *(Recommended by Cassandra)* - In this masterpiece, we see the tumult of Camelot's court through the eyes of the women who bolstered the king's rise and schemed for his fall. We follow the lives of these women and the characters that surround them as the great Arthurian epic unfolds stunningly before us. Morgaine and Guinevere fight over the fate of Arthur’s kingdom, the Knights of the Round Table begin their quest, Merlin and Viviane wield magic, and the mystical Isle of Avalon slips further into oblivion as the old pagan religions and the new Christian religion struggle for control.