

# BETTENDORF PUBLIC LIBRARY 2023 FAVORITES





## **Adult Book Discussion Groups at the Bettendorf Public Library**

### **Get Lit**

for those adventurous souls who would like to read a little something different

### **Mystery Book Discussion**

for lovers of mysteries and thrillers

### **Contemporary Books Discussion Group**

for fans of contemporary (and, occasionally, classic) fiction and nonfiction

**Schedules are available at**  
**[www.bettendorflibrary.com/events](http://www.bettendorflibrary.com/events)**

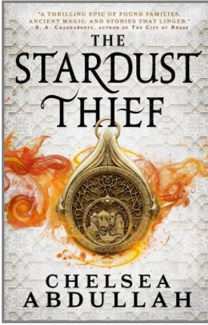


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# FICTION

## ***The Stardust Thief* (Chelsea Abdullah, SF/FAN ABDU)**



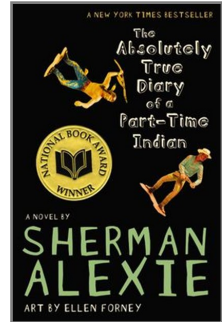
Apparently, I am a big fan of fantasy featuring the djinn. Every time I see one, I pick it up and devour it. *The Stardust Thief* tells of a woman who, with the help of her djinn bodyguard, finds and sells illegal djinn artifacts. She keeps a low profile until she saves a prince, and his father takes note.

— Maria Levetzow, Information Services

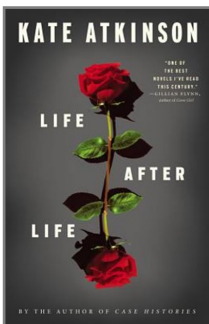
## ***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Sherman Alexie, YA FIC ALEX; also available in Playaway, eBook, and DIBS Book Club Kit formats)**

Another one that was long overdue on my to-read list, and one that's been challenged and banned. I really, really want the boy in this book to be real.

— Shannon Murcia, Technical Services



## ***Life After Life* (Kate Atkinson, FIC ATKI; also available in Playaway, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**

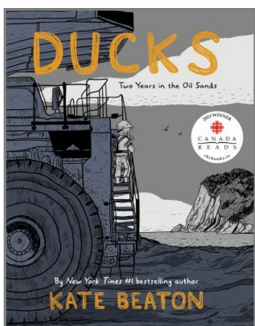


Ursula, a middle-class English girl, is stillborn in 1910. Then she is reborn, again and again, to new lives and new deaths, always as Ursula, but with some consequential shift, often the result of a lesson learned in a previous life. She lives and dies through World War II, sometimes as a volunteer in London, other times as a young wife stranded in Germany. Since each life offers Ursula another chance to change the outcome, what might she accomplish?

I listened to the audiobook of this novel and enjoyed Atkinson’s clever plot and distinctive characters, as well as Fenella Woolgar’s narration.

— Courtney Mongiat, Information Services

***Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands* (Kate Beaton, GRAPHIC BE)**



I never expected the experience, the story, the empathy, and to see how Beaton managed to keep her sense of humor after having to live in the oil sands. I was surprised that this story is much deeper and emotionally raw and reflective about what happened to her in a workplace dominated by men, this toxic environment that hurt everyone and the company they worked for. There is not a page wasted. The illustrations are presented in black and

white, a powerful choice. Images of beauty give you a moment to breathe, but the feeling that overtakes you when you see the ugliness of the oil sands reflects the story exactly.

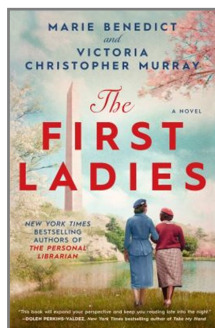
This is my favorite graphic memoir of the year!

— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services

***The First Ladies* (Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray, FIC BENE; also available in CD Book, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a champion for women and civil rights. She became close friends with educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune. Though their life experiences and struggles were unique, the bond they built propelled women’s and civil rights.

— Cyndi Kennedy, Circulation and Technical Services



### ***Thieves* (Lucie Bryon, YA GRAPHIC BR)**

I really fell in love with the art style, the expression, and the ease of the characters. They were super easy to like, and I was rooting for them all the way through their journey to return stolen objects and handle their secrets.

— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services



### ***Milkman* (Anna Burns, FIC BURN; also available in Large Print, CD Book, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**



This was one of Get Lit's selections for Global Gathering Ireland this past fall. I first read this book when it won the Booker Prize in 2018, and I loved it then. My second reading really deepened my appreciation of this novel and its many layers. Odd, darkly humorous, and not quite like anything else I've ever read.

— David Otten, Information Services

### ***Little Monarchs* (Jonathan Case, available through RiverShare Libraries)**

This is a "cozy dystopian." All the humans have sun-sickness and cannot go into the sun anymore, so our band of scientists is working together to find a cure! Our main character is really observant and independent, and we learn about the natural world with her, like how to find north by the stars or how you can go blind from milkweed. Everything comes around as she learns from every experience to survive the wilderness and escape kidnappers, which makes for an interesting coming-of-age story.

The art is a real treat and I found myself taking the time to admire it!

— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services

***Episode Thirteen* (Craig Dilouie, available through RiverShare Libraries)**



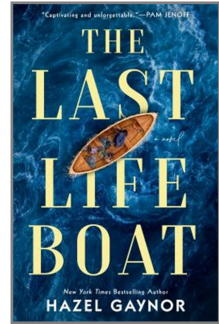
*Episode Thirteen* follows a husband and wife ghost hunting team as they investigate their thirteenth—and perhaps final—haunted location, the infamous Paranormal Society Building. Can they and their marriage survive what the location has in store for them?

If you're a fan of reality TV ghost hunting shows, this is the book for you! It's like a found footage movie in book form.

— Haley Dziuk, Circulation Services

***The Last Lifeboat* (Hazel Gaynor; available through RiverShare Libraries)**

There are lots of World War II novels out there. But this one tells a unique story, based on a true event, of the six child survivors of a torpedo blast that hit their evacuation ship and left them stranded in a lifeboat in the Atlantic Ocean. The story is fast-paced and harrowing, with Gaynor shifting perspectives between the mother of one of the lost children and the young teacher who is the only woman in the lifeboat. I can't imagine making the difficult choices that so many parents did during this war, and with so many world conflicts taking place in 2023, this story brought a current perspective and sense of gratitude for the blessings I often take for granted.



— Jill Hayes, Circulation Services

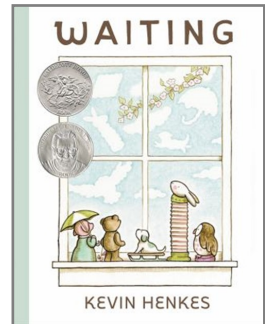
***The Forest of Vanishing Stars* (Kristin Harmel, FIC HARM; also available in CD Book, Playaway, and eAudiobook formats)**

A historical tale that begins with a kidnapping of a child that is raised in the forest during World War II. Yona opens her heart and teaches Jewish refugees how to survive in the forest while encountering love, loss, betrayal, and secrets from her past that will reveal her true identity.

— Tina Medina, Circulation Services

***Waiting* (Kevin Henkes, CALDECOTT HONOR BOOK)**

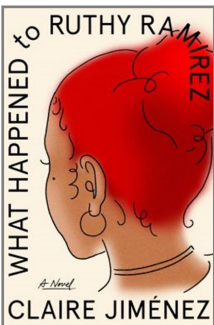
In this book, Henkes fills our heart with affection for these sweet, quirky toys sitting on the windowsill waiting and looking outside. I love the way the limited color palette in the illustrations shows the importance of waiting and patience. The colors give the book a lighthearted, happy feeling. It is a book that shows the beauty of just being, of mindfulness, of acceptance of your day. Yet it is also a book about the tug of wanting and wishing, about time passing, and about being friends in the most quiet and yet deep way.



— Anika Prakash, Youth Services

***What Happened to Ruthy Ramirez?* (Claire Jiménez, FIC JIME; also available in eBook and eAudiobook formats)**

This is one of those novels for which the original expectations you started with begin to melt away as the story goes along—but in the best way possible. Convinced a young woman starring in a trashy reality TV show is their sister Ruthy, who disappeared when she was only 13-years old, oldest sister Jessica and youngest sister Nina devise a plan to travel to where the show is filmed and convince her to come back to their home in Staten Island. But



when their overbearing mother, Dolores, and Dolores’s pot-stirring best friend Irene get wind of their plan, they make sure to crash Jessica and Nina’s road trip. This isn’t just a story unraveling the mystery of Ruthy’s disappearance, but rather a story of familial bonds, generational trauma, grief, race, and love. This book was funny and heartbreaking, and I genuinely missed each of the characters the moment I closed the book for the final time.

— Jillian Aschliman, Director

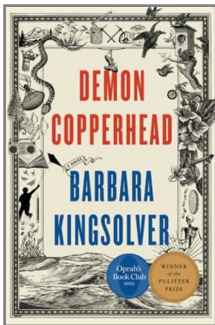
***Small Things Like These* (Claire Keegan, FIC KEEG; also available in eAudio-book format)**

Bill Furlong is the coal and timber merchant in the small town of New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland. It is 1985, and times are hard. As he prepares for Christmas with his wife and five daughters, Bill makes a delivery that could change everything for his family.

A review quote on the back of this short and finely wrought book reads, “A story you will want to read again and again.” I could not agree more. After a first read, try listening to the excellent audiobook, read by Aidan Kelly.



— Courtney Mongiat, Information Services



***Demon Copperhead* (Barbara Kingsolver, FIC KING; also available in Large Print, CD Book, Playaway, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**

The teenage son of an Appalachian single mother, who dies when he is eleven, uses his good looks, wit, and instincts to survive foster care, child labor, addiction, disastrous loves, and crushing losses. Pulitzer Prize winner for 2023!

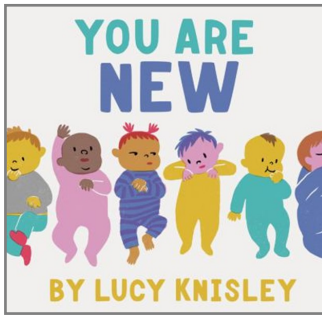
— Lucas Berns, Information Services

This stand-alone Pulitzer Prize-winning story is a modern retelling of Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, which starts with a boy born in Appalachia and follows his harrowing life through poverty and an opioid addiction. The sprawling epic is a study of the “morale of a people often disrespected and undervalued” in America. I promise you will root for Demon as he wins his battles.

— Julie Schenck, Circulation Services



***You Are New* (Lucy Knisley, Juvenile Picture Book 6 – GROWING UP)**



I was unprepared for how much this book would make me cry when I first read it to my daughter. Both funny and poignant, *You Are New* is sure to be a favorite no matter how old or new you are!

— Haley Dziuk, Circulation Services

***The River We Remember* (William Kent Krueger, MYS KRUE; also available in Large Print, CD Book, Playaway, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**

Another rich, complex, multi-layered story by this author. He has a way of capturing a place and time that makes it impossible to put his books down. I'm not sure he will ever be able to top *Ordinary Grace* or *This Tender Land* for me. However, I will continue to read everything William Kent Krueger puts out.

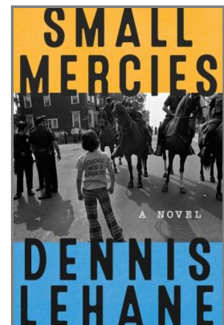
— Carol Crane, Technical Services

***Small Mercies* (Dennis Lehane, MYS LEHA)**

This is another raw, heartbreaking, lyrical read by this author. He does such a great job of drawing you into a different world and showing ordinary people at both their best and worst. This book is tough to read at times but impossible to put down.

*“What’s gonna change? When’s it gonna change?  
Where’s it gonna change? How’s it gonna change?”*

Powerful and unforgettable.

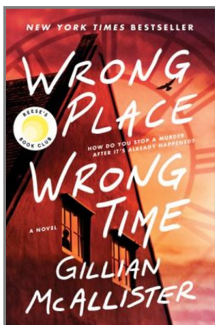
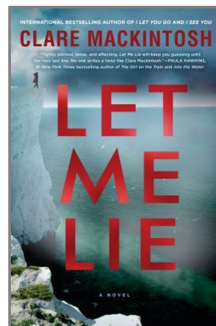


— Carol Crane, Technical Services

## ***Let Me Lie* (Clare Mackintosh, FIC MACK)**

An intense psychological thriller that consists of twists, turns, and a surprise ending on the very last page. I enjoyed every character, including Rita the dog.

— Tina Medina, Circulation Services



## ***Wrong Place, Wrong Time* (Gillian McAllister, FIC MCAL; also available in Large Print, CD Book, eBook, and eAudiobook formats)**

By far my favorite book that I read this year. If you enjoy mystery/thrillers, you will love this book. Imagine telling a story backwards from end to beginning. I'm in awe of this author's ability to maneuver this "up all night reading" kind of book.

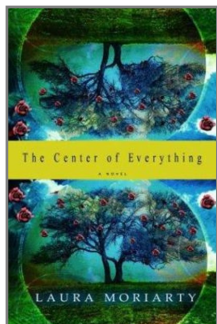
— Chris Little, Circulation and Technical Services

## ***Gone with the Wind* (Margaret Mitchell, FIC MITC; the 1939 film adaptation is available in Blu-Ray and DVD formats)**

This book has stuck with me since the first time I read it as a first-year graduate student. I fell in love with the character of Scarlett O'Hara, who always fought for what she thought she wanted. Although this book was published in a time when a woman who speaks her mind wasn't valued much in society, her character was strong enough to pursue her dreams and was a business-minded, ambitious woman who knew what she wanted. She was someone who reinvented herself, someone who knew failure but also rebuilt from the ashes, someone who was brave enough to stand up to naysayers. Beautiful portrayal of emotions, situations and characters.

— Anika Prakash, Youth Services

***The Center of Everything* (Laura Moriarty, FIC MORI; also available in Large Print and eBook formats)**



I purchased this book 10 years ago and finally decided now was the time to read it. It is a coming-of-age story for Evelyn in a small Midwestern town in the 1970s. She struggles with her young mother's poor choices, a mostly unrequited first love, and navigating through opposing religious and educational beliefs while discovering that so many issues are far from black and white.

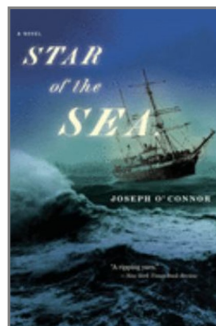
— Julie Schenck, Circulation Services

***Star of the Sea* (Joseph O'Connor, FIC OCON; also available in eBook format)**

This story of the voyage of the *Star of the Sea* from Ireland to New York in late 1847 concerns, on one level, the intersecting lives of several of the ship's passengers. Some of the main characters belong to the group of fifteen staying in the first-class quarters, while others come from the more than 400 in steerage. Among them is a murderer.

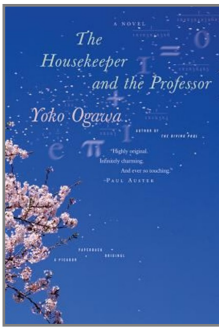
On another level, this book is about Ireland's Great Famine, both the brutality behind it and the desperation it created. And on still another level, it's about the relationship between fiction and history.

I read *Star of the Sea* along with other members of the Contemporary Books Discussion Group, and we had plenty to talk about! There's a lot packed into this absorbing historical novel, with its complex characters, intricate plot, and vivid period details.



— Courtney Mongiat, Information Services

***The Housekeeper and the Professor* (Yoko Ogawa, translated by Stephen Snyder, FIC OGAW)**

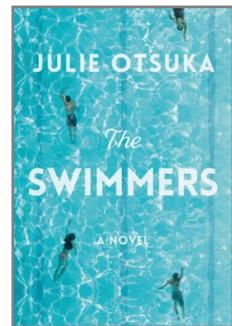


A quiet novel about the relationship that develops between a housekeeper, her son, and the former mathematics professor that the housekeeper has been assigned to care for. The mathematics professor suffered a traumatic brain injury following a car accident and is unable to create new memories. Within the housekeeper's agency he is known to be a difficult client, having had ten prior housekeepers, all of whom had been dismissed. Eleven is a significant number in the book, and the housekeeper, her son (nicknamed "Root"), and the professor form a special bond, despite the difficulties presented by the professor's inability to form new memories. He pins notes to his jacket so that he may remember the housekeeper and her son from day to day. This thin book, 180 pages in all, covers a lot of ground, exploring human connection, and the mysteries and poetry of mathematics.

— David Otten, Information Services

***The Swimmers* (Julie Otsuka, FIC OTSU)**

— Karly Lyle, Information Services

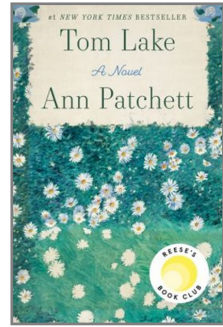


***Tom Lake* (Ann Patchett, FIC PATC; also available in Large Print, CD Book, Playaway, eBook, and eAudio-book formats)**

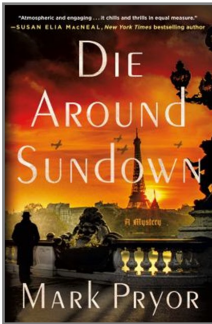
Patchett wrote that *Tom Lake* was inspired by one of my favorite plays, *Our Town*. Her prose is a stunning homage to Thornton's quiet tale of life and death in small town America. In *Tom Lake*, Lara and her three adult daughters navigate quarantine on their cherry farm in Michigan during the 2020

pandemic. Over the course of picking season, the girls ask their mother to detail the summer in her youth when she starred in *Our Town*, the play that led her to meet their father. As Lara reveals more about her romantic and platonic relationships with her costars, she ultimately decides what to share and what to withhold of her past.

— Jill Hayes, Circulation Services



### ***Die Around Sundown* (Mark Pryor, MYS PRYO)**

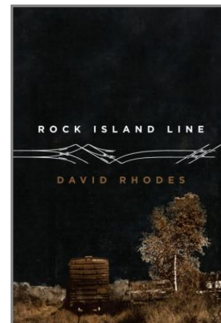


I loved Pryor’s previous series, featuring Hugo Marton, so I gave this a try. While also set in Paris, it’s a very different world, since this time we’re in WWII-era Paris, and the Nazis have just taken over the city. Henri Lefort, the main character, is a police officer, and has to try and solve crimes while staying out of the way of German officers. That’s a hard task when the German officers are bound and determined to tell him how to do his job.

— Maria Levetzow, Information Services

### ***Rock Island Line* (David Rhodes, FIC RHOD)**

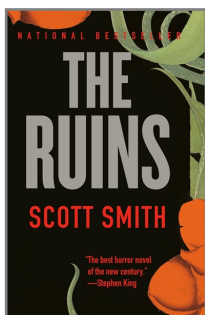
I was first captivated by David Rhodes when I read his later novels *Driftless* and *Jewelweed*, both set in the fictional town of Words, Wisconsin. It was in *Driftless* that I first encountered the character July Montgomery, and I was excited to explore this character’s origins in *Rock Island Line*, which follows July from unincorporated Sharon Center, Iowa, to Philadelphia and back again. The novel explores themes



of tragedy, redemption, and renewal, and, like Rhodes's later novels, is concerned with small-town rural communities that are populated with well-drawn, unique characters with rich interior lives. This was a flawed novel, one from a less mature writer than the one I first encountered while reading *Driftless*, however, it is filled with the same generosity of spirit that I've encountered in all his novels that I have read. Sadly, David Rhodes passed away last year, shortly after his final novel, *Painting Beyond Walls*, was published.

— David Otten, Information Services

### ***The Ruins* (Scott Smith, FIC SMIT)**



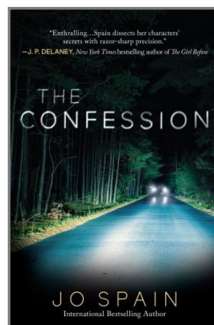
When a young group of Americans vacationing in Mexico decide to go off the beaten path, they find themselves trapped on a strange pyramid with no means of escape, surrounded by the remnants of previous expeditions to the ruins.

This is such a fast-paced read! The book has no chapter or section breaks, making the unrelenting brutality of the character's plight all the more palatable.

— Haley Dziuk, Circulation Services

### ***The Confession* (Jo Spain, MYS SPAI)**

I personally enjoy psychological thrillers. This book reminded me of a TV show called *Motive* because the killer turns himself in, and then the reader tries to determine the motive. Who doesn't enjoy a suspenseful read with an unexpected twist?

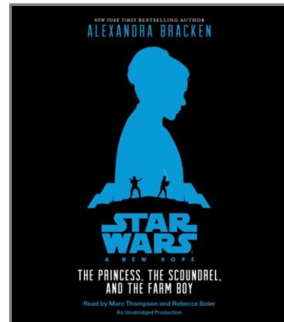


— Tina Medina, Circulation Services

***The Princess, the Scoundrel, and the Farm Boy: An Original Retelling of Star Wars: A New Hope* (Alexandra Bracken, STAR WARS JSF/FAN BRAC; also available in CD Book format)**

***So You Want to Be a Jedi?: An Original Retelling of Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (Adam Gidwitz; available in print and CD Book formats through RiverShare Libraries)**

***Beware the Power of the Dark Side!: An Original Retelling of Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (Tom Angleberger, CDBOOK JSF/FAN ANGL; also available in print format through RiverShare Libraries)**



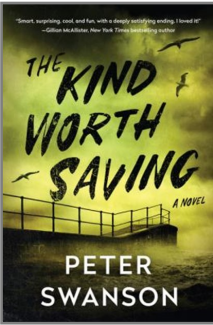
These are original retellings of Episodes IV, V, and VI of the Star Wars series of films. We listened to these audiobooks on a road trip this summer, and they are great!

— Lucas Berns, Information Services

***This Time Tomorrow* (Emma Straub, FIC STRA; also available in CD Book, Playaway, and eAudiobook formats)**

Alice is quite content with her life. She has a good job, a nice boyfriend, a great apartment and has maintained a close relationship with her best friend from childhood. Yet, as her father's health is failing, she feels something is still missing. The day of her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, she wakes up in 1996 as her 16-year-old self and has an opportunity to revisit the people and things she loves in life again as a teenager, but through a 40-year-old's lens. I loved Straub's dive back into a 90s nostalgic world and the blend of warmth and humor in her writing. As I start to approach my 40s, this book made me reflect more on my relationships with my loved ones and how to be comfortable with expectations of life and adulthood changing as you get older.

— Jillian Aschliman, Director



***The Kind Worth Killing and The Kind Worth Saving*  
(Peter Swanson, FIC SWAN)**

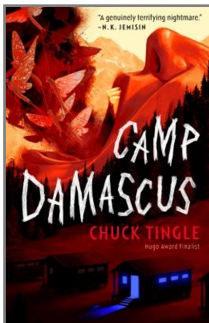
Dark and twisty series that does not disappoint.

— Carol Crane, Technical Services

***Roaming* (Jillian and Mariko Tamaki, GRAPHIC TA)**

A slice-of-life graphic novel detailing three college students' Spring Break trip to New York City. The artwork is superb. I especially enjoyed the simple and unique color palette comprised of pale pinks and grey blues.

— David Otten, Information Services



***Camp Damascus* (Chuck Tingle, FIC TING)**

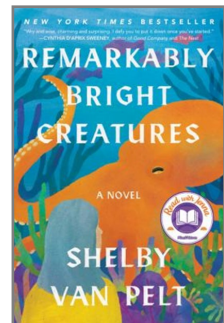
I can't believe I am recommending a Chuck Tingle book, but here we are. *Camp Damascus* takes everyday horrors to new demonic levels. If you're a fan of horror and LGBTQ+ literature, you do not want to skip this one.

— Jenna Isbell, Youth Services

***Remarkably Bright Creatures* (Shelby Van Pelt, FIC VAMP; also available in eBook and eAudiobook formats)**

I don't think I can even describe to you how adorable this story is. The characters are so charming that you are literally sad when the story is over.

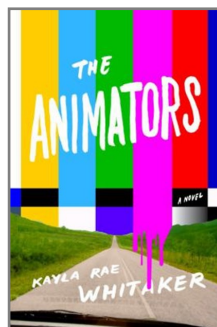
— Chris Little, Circulation and Technical Services



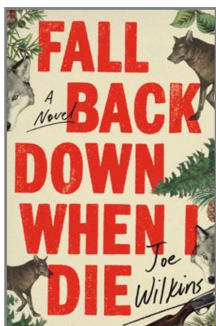


***The Animators* (Kayla Rae Whitaker, FIC WHIT)**

— Karly Lyle, Information Services



***Fall Back Down When I Die* (Joe Wilkins, available through RiverShare Libraries)**



Honestly, this was on my to-read list for a while before I got to it, and then when I did, I wasn't sure I'd stick with it. Not because it was bad but because it took a minute to get used to the character's voice.

BUT! It was so worth it. It was so beautifully written and heartbreaking in about a hundred different ways. The characters and the setting, in Montana, became real. I'm pretty sure I cried.

— Shannon Murcia, Technical Services

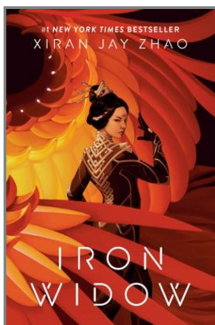
***I Want to Be Spaghetti!* (Kiera Wright-Ruiz; illustrated by Claudia Lam; Juvenile Picture Book 15 – WHAT WE DO)**

*I Want to Be Spaghetti!* deals with the all-too-common feeling of wanting to be someone different, someone more INTERESTING. But sometimes we need someone else to point out to us that we are already interesting just by being ourselves.

— Jenna Isbell, Youth Services



## ***Iron Widow* (Xiran Jay Zhao, YA SF/FAN ZHAO)**



*Iron Widow* has giant mechs, an alien invasion, and Chinese mythology, all in one novel. It doesn't get better. This is by far my favorite read from 2023.

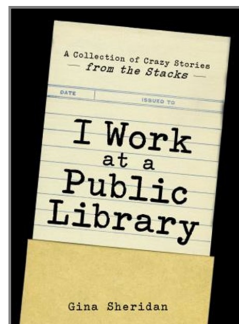
— Jenna Isbell, Youth Services

# NONFICTION

## ***I Work at a Public Library: A Collection of Crazy Stories from the Stacks* (Gina Sheridan, 027.0207 SH)**

This book had me laughing out loud in public to the point of snorting! Sheridan shares her tales of working in a public library. I'm sure my co-workers all have a memory.

— Shar Hedin-Campbell, Circulation Services



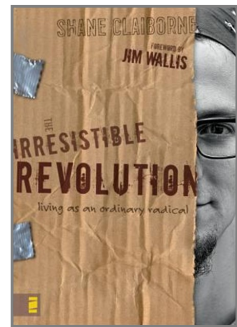
***The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Shane Claiborne, available through RiverShare Libraries and in eBook and eAudiobook formats through the Bridges statewide consortium for Iowa public libraries)**

***Red Letter Revolution: What If Jesus Really Meant What He Said?* (Shane Claiborne and Tony Campolo, available to Bettendorf patrons via the Mobyus combined catalog; also available in eBook and eAudiobook formats through the Bridges statewide consortium for Iowa public libraries)**

***Rethinking Life: Embracing the Sacredness of Every Person* (Shane Claiborne, available to Bettendorf patrons via the Mobius combined catalog; also available in eBook and eAudiobook formats through the Bridges statewide consortium for Iowa public libraries)**

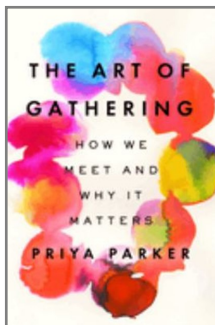
I read these three books by Shane Claiborne this year, and all three were absolutely convicting reads for me. I just kept thinking, Yes. This. Absolutely this.

What if Christians actually lived like Christ said to live? What if He meant what He said? These books have me rethinking what I thought I “knew” on almost every topic, from immigration to the stewardship of our planet, to the economy, politics, capitalism, and the difference it would make if Christians lived out their faith in the image of Christ. Shane Claiborne does exactly that—focusing on the words and love of Christ, and living his life out in a beautiful testament to his faith.



— Terri Law, Circulation Services

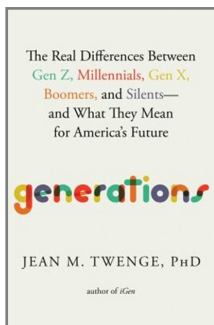
***The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters* (Priya Parker, available through RiverShare Libraries)**



If you plan (or attend) events, from casual to formal, then I recommend this book. I'm currently planning a wedding and wanted a bit more of a philosophy-type of gathering book compared to one just about planning the details. This was a breath of fresh air and has really improved my understanding on what makes a good gathering happen. I've used these skills especially with my D&D Gatherings!

— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services

***Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents--and What They Mean for America's Future* (Jean M. Twenge, 305.2 TW)**

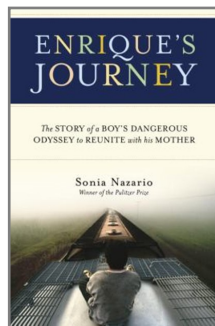


The culmination of a huge research project, *Generations* breaks down the characteristics and trends that define people born into each of the six generations in the U.S. since the 1920s. Twenge not only lists these traits, but details which historical events and cultural shifts have influenced them. This book was fascinating in scope and detail and helped me understand why people from other generations have beliefs, tendencies, and viewpoints that sometimes conflict with mine.

— Jill Hayes, Circulation Services

***Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with his Mother* (Sonia Nazario, 305.2308 NA)**

This book chronicles the plight of a family in Honduras, their life and their experience of immigrating illegally to the United States. It was a heartbreaking read, and I struggled to think how I would react or respond to the dynamics of family, loss, meeting basic needs, trauma, and the cyclical pattern of the lives of those affected.



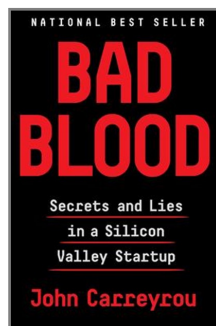
It was brutal to read the true story of Enrique, how he lost his mother, who left him to find work in the United States. The abandonment he felt, as well as the determination to reunite with her. The difficult decisions, situations, and the repetitive nature of his journey as he tried and failed, got caught and was deported and yet continued to try again.

Understanding the difficulty in leaving one's home, family, language, and culture just to be able to meet the basic needs of your life and your children's lives, from the viewpoint of those who actually lived it, adds a much-appreciated perspective to the topic of illegal immigration.

— Terri Law, Circulation Services

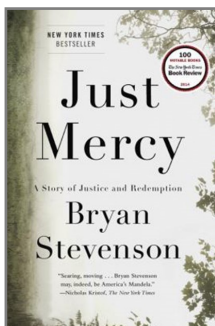
***Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup* (John Carreyrou, 338.7 CA; also available in eAudiobook format)**

I am fascinated by Elizabeth Holmes and the Theranos scandal. How does someone go from an idealistic college dropout to the youngest female billionaire ever to one of the most infamous con artists of our time? Written by the journalist who first broke the story, *Bad Blood* gives all the details of what went wrong in the Silicon Valley startup.



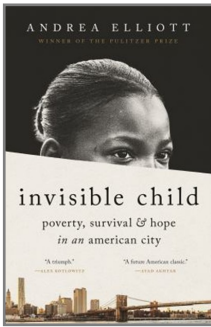
— Haley Dziuk, Circulation Services

***Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (Bryan Stevenson, 353.48 ST; also available in eAudiobook and DIBS Book Club Kit formats; an adaptation for young adults is available in print, CD Book, eBook, and eAudiobook formats; the 2019 film adaptation is available on Blu-Ray and DVD)**



I listened to this book, read by the author. It's the story of attorney Bryan Stevenson's determination to be a champion for those who have been falsely accused, incarcerated, and sentenced to death row.

— Cyndi Kennedy, Circulation and Technical Services



***Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival, and Hope in an American City* (Andrea Elliott, 362.77569 EL)**

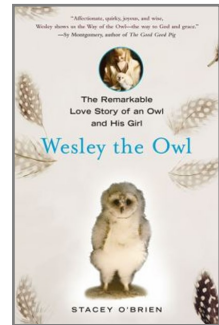
— Hayleigh Covella, Administrative Assistant

***Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl* (Stacey O'Brien, 598.97 OB)**

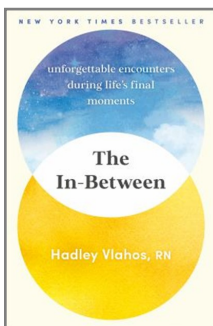
It'll make you want an owl. Even though you know you can't actually have an owl.

But then you'll find yourself talking to the owls in the trees in your neighborhood, even though you can't see them, but you can hear them, and you know they're there. And it'll give you all the feels.

And it might have made me cry.



— Shannon Murcia, Technical Services



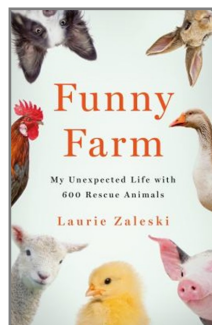
***The In-Between: Unforgettable Encounters During Life's Final Moments* (Hadley Vlahos, RN, 616.029 VL; also available in eBook and eAudiobook formats)**

Written by a hospice nurse, this deeply touching memoir is for anyone open to learning more about the end-of-life process and making your life matter more now.

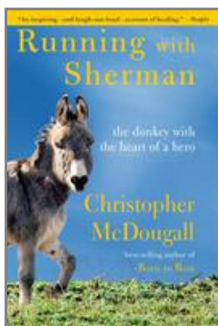
— Julie Schenck, Circulation Services

***Funny Farm: My Unexpected Life with 600 Rescue Animals*  
(Laurie Zaleski, 636.0832 ZA)**

It's not that often that I read a nonfiction book that I want to rave about or pass along, but I loved this book. If you're a lover of animals and reading memoirs, I think you will find the quirky characters, both human and furry/feathered, of this book very enchanting. This is not a new book by any means and had been on my want to read list for some time.



— Chris Little, Circulation and Technical Services



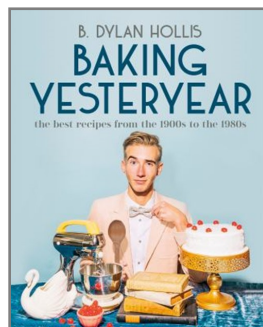
***Running with Sherman: The Donkey with the Heart of a Hero* (Christopher McDougall, 636.182 MC)**

It'll make you want a donkey.

— Shannon Murcia, Technical Services

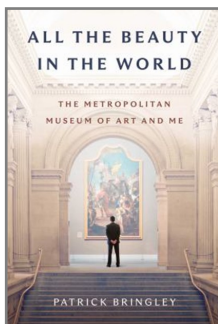
***Baking Yesteryear: The Best Recipes from the 1900s to the 1980s*  
(B. Dylan Hollis, 641.815 HO)**

Dylan Hollis grew to fame through hilarious YouTube videos where he tests historical recipes that seem strange and sometimes unpalatable to our modern tastebuds. This book collects all of the winners with a short introduction for each. Hollis's funny, snark-filled banter translates well to the page. I highly recommend the potato chip cookie recipe!



— Haley Dziuk, Circulation Services

***All the Beauty in the World: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Me* (Patrick Bringley, 708.1471 BR)**

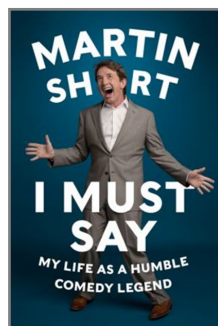


A fascinating, revelatory portrait of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and its treasures by a former *New Yorker* staffer who spent a decade as a museum guard. This touching story shows how grief redirects the trajectory of the author's work and life.

— Lucas Berns, Information Services

***I Must Say: My Life as a Humble Comedy Legend* (Martin Short, 791.4502 SH; also available in CD Book format)**

You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll think. What else can you ask for? This captivating autobiography follows Short's journey to the top, combining witty writing with candid (and often hilarious) spotlights on his personal and professional experiences, allowing the reader to learn more about the man behind the iconic characters we love. If you choose the audio version, you'll be delighted to hear that the narrator is none other than Mr. Short.



— Cody Noble, Information Services

***Vacuuming in the Nude: And Other Ways to Get Attention* (Peggy Rowe, 813.6 RO)**

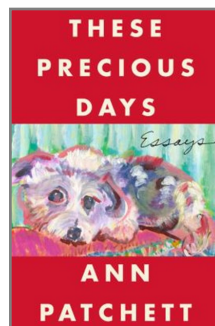
The author is the mother of Mike Rowe of the TV series *Dirty Jobs*. She started writing after retirement and thought being the mom of a famous person would help her sell and publish a book. Much to her surprise . . . everyone loves her style, and she becomes a best seller.

— Shar Hedin-Campbell, Circulation Services

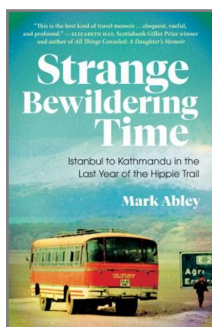


***These Precious Days: Essays* (Ann Patchett, 814.6 PA; also available in CD Book and eBook formats)**

— Karly Lyle, Information Services



***Strange Bewildering Time: Istanbul to Kathmandu in the Last Year of the Hippie Trail* (Mark Abley, 915.04427)**



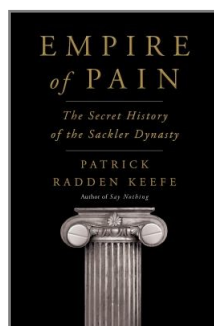
This book chronicles the travels of two young friends fresh out of university as they travel the Hippie Trail during a time when travel through the Near East to India and Nepal was far more accessible, and right on the verge of the times between peace and turbulence in that area. It was a perspective that was so interesting to read, and I stopped quite a few times to read more about landmarks, buildings, and cities that weren't familiar to me. It was exciting to learn about

these countries' rich history and natural and cultural beauty. The book is written from the author's decades-old travel journals, interspersed with wisdom and reflection from his older self, which provided a blend of historical and current information on the region, as well as a younger versus more mature point of view on his travels.

— Terri Law, Circulation Services

***Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* (Patrick Radden Keefe, 929.2 KE; also available in eBook format)**

— Karly Lyle, Information Services



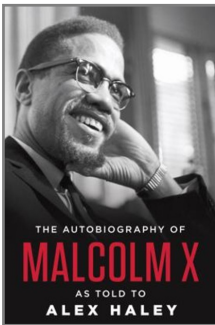
***Elon Musk* (Walter Isaacson, BIOG MUSK; also available in CD Book and eBook formats)**

Those whose names act as lightning rods for conversations are bound to lead fascinating lives. Isaacson has written a thorough, well-balanced book about a man that has changed our planet’s technology. Highly recommended.

— Crystal Kehoe, Information Services



***The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Malcolm X and Alex Haley, BIOG X; also available in eBook format)**



An incredible work that not only provides the narrative for how one of the most important civil rights figures evolved as a person, but also sheds light on American society during this time period, from a viewpoint that is not often represented.

— Cody Noble, Information Services

# MOVIES and TELEVISION

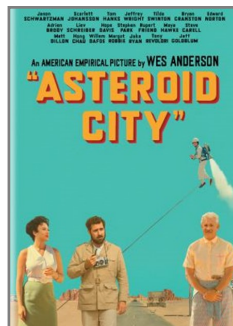


***Airplane!*** (written and directed by Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, and Jerry Zucker; starring Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Leslie Nielsen, and Lloyd Bridges; BLU-RAY COMEDY AIRPLANE; also available in DVD format; if you're a big fan, you may want to check out David Zucker's 2023 book *Surely You Can't Be Serious: The True Story of Airplane!* which is shelved under 791.4372 ZU)

— Mark Edwards, Circulation Services

***Asteroid City*** (written and directed by Wes Anderson and starring an ensemble cast, BLU-RAY COMEDY ASTEROID; also available in DVD format)

If you don't already enjoy Wes Anderson films, you aren't going to enjoy this movie. This is full-flavor Wes Anderson film. The movie is very intricate, and I know I didn't fully grasp everything on my first viewing. This one felt like a bit of a chore, and I haven't returned for a subsequent viewing(s) to untangle all the layers of the film. However, the film is immaculately composed, every scene has that Anderson aesthetic, and not a stitch is out of place.



— David Otten, Information Services

**Barbie** (directed by Greta Gerwig and starring Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling, and America Ferrera, BLU-RAY COMEDY BARBIE; also available in DVD format)

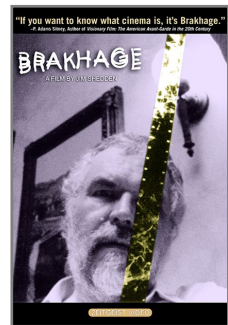


*Barbie*: Bright and a delight! This satirical comedy comes with its own sincerity, especially regarding the idea of identity. The first time I watched through Barbie's perspective, and the second time I concentrated on Ken's perspective and found it just as meaningful! It has a nice layer when you understand how these two perspectives come together.

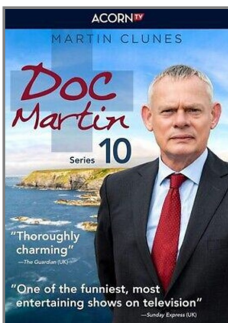
— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services

**Brakhage** (directed by Jim Shedden; available through Kanopy)

This is a short documentary about Stan Brakhage. Stan Brakhage was an experimental filmmaker from the 60s on. This is just one of many streamable films that patrons have access to with their Bettendorf Public Library card!



— Lucas Berns, Information Services



**Doc Martin** (starring Martin Clunes, DVD TV DOC)

A brilliant London surgeon, Martin Ellingham, develops hemophobia (the fear of blood) and must resign from operating. He accepts a job as a General Practitioner in a small village, Port Wenn, where he spent summers as a young boy on his aunt's farm. The story follows Doc Martin as he

attempts to settle into a community where everyone knows everyone's business, tries to manage his phobia while treating his patients, and falls in love. It's a great series!

— Cyndi Kennedy, Circulation and Technical Services



**A Haunting in Venice** (directed by Kenneth Branagh and starring an ensemble cast, **BLU-RAY ON-ORDER**; also available in DVD format; the source material, by Agatha Christie, is available through RiverShare Libraries)

This is the first one of Kenneth Branagh's Poirot movies that I've enjoyed. I knew he must have it in him!

— David Otten, Information Services

**House of the Dragon** (starring Paddy Considine, Matt Smith, Rhys Ifans, and Emma D'Arcy, **BLU-RAY TV HOUSE**; also available in DVD format; the source material, *Fire and Blood*, by George R.R. Martin, is shelved under **SF/FAN MART**)

Feeling a bit burned on how the ending of *Game of Thrones* came together, I was a bit hesitant to start the prequel series, but I'm so glad I tuned in! Taking place 200 years before *Game of Thrones*, this series follows the events leading to the fall of House Targaryen. In true *Game of Thrones* fashion, this is not a program for the faint of heart, but I loved the suspense, imperfect/complicated characters (understatement of the century), and the political



intrigue taking place in a fantasy setting. Since this series is based on a fully developed source material (*Fire and Blood* by George R.R. Martin) AND the showrunners have announced a projected cap of just four seasons, I am a little more optimistic to see where this one goes.

— Jillian Aschliman, Director



***Infinity Pool* (written and directed by Brandon Cronenberg and starring Alexander Skarsgaard, Mia Goth, and Cleopatra Coleman, BLU-RAY HORROR INFINITY; also available in DVD format)**

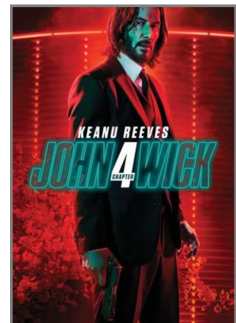
A mind-bending horror film from Brandon Cronenberg. Mia Goth turns on the menace like flicking a light switch.

— David Otten, Information Services

***John Wick. Chapter 4* (directed by Chad Stahelski and starring Keanu Reeves, BLU-RAY ACTION JOHN; also available in DVD format)**

A fitting end (?) for this highly stylized action franchise. At nearly three hours, it's a miracle that the movie didn't feel bloated or overstuffed. Shoot-em-up perfection.

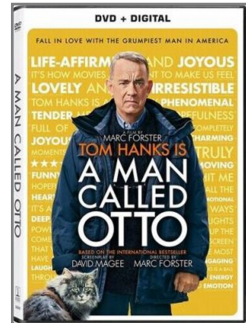
— David Otten, Information Services



***A Man Called Otto*** (directed by Marc Forster and starring Tom Hanks, BLU-RAY DRAMA MAN; also available in DVD format; the source material, Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* and its Swedish film adaptation, are also available)

Hanks did a great job portraying Otto, a grumpy old man who "scares" his neighbors with his attitude. It provides laughs as well as tears. A must see!

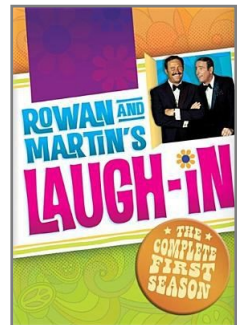
— Shar Hedin-Campbell, Circulation Services



***Pee-wee's Big Adventure*** (directed by Tim Burton and starring Paul Reubens, available through RiverShare Libraries)

— Mark Edwards, Circulation Services

***Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*** (starring an ensemble cast, including Dan Rowan, Dick Martin, Goldie Hawn, Lily Tomlin, and Judy Carne; the first season is available through RiverShare Libraries, and Bettendorf patrons may request additional seasons from libraries outside the system through the Mobyus combined catalog)



— Mark Edwards, Circulation Services

## Scooby-Doo movies (available through RiverShare Libraries)



*Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* is a 1969 Hanna - Barbera cartoon series featuring a dark atmosphere and a unique concept: meddling kids and a talking dog solve mysteries. It's such a cultural icon that it persists today with over 37 movies! (Not including TV series.) Where do you start if you want to watch a Scooby-Doo movie? There is not a wrong way to jump in, the characters and story formula mix well with kooky and spooky fun, but it's like spinning a wheel because the movies can range in quality. Let me offer my opinion, because I did take it upon myself this year to watch every Scooby-Doo movie. I will offer you six movies that I enjoyed, because I don't get to have a separate booklet to dedicate to my dissertation on all of them!

From the late 90s set of movies: The gang has a slight time skip, so the characters are a bit older, and the monsters are real.

*Scooby Doo on Zombie Island* (1998). *Zombie Island* and *The Witch's Ghost* (see below) are a lot of people's favorite movies, and they are also highly ranked on my personal list. It's easy to see why these stand out, with top-notch animation and a darker storytelling tone, with added monsters. Putting the gang in danger from the supernatural is thrilling by Scooby-Doo standards.

*Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost* (1999). If *Zombie Island* is the darkest movie, *The Witch's Ghost* is just a step below. Tim Curry's voice performance really steals the show, and they introduce The Hex Girls, who, as fan favorites, eventually became recurring characters.

There were a lot of lackluster Scooby-Doo movies until the Warner Premiere distribution era. Or what I like to call The Scooby-Doo Renaissance!



These movies date from 2008 to 2014. They return to a darker atmosphere artistically and start to develop charming character dynamics with the whole gang. There is some clear experimenting with the storytelling, leading to some silly, goofy humor. There are a lot of good ones in this period, but here are my favorites! This would be the creation of modern Scooby-Doo.

*Scooby-Doo! Camp Scare* (2010). Easily made Fred my favorite character, who was pretty bland before. And it had a mystery that I genuinely didn't see coming.

*Scooby-Doo! Legend of the Phantosaur* (2011). What if Shaggy was hypnotized to be a tough guy? Also there are dinosaurs over-running a town. This movie is where the popular "Ultra Instinct Shaggy" meme originated, making it a cult classic for many.

*Big Top Scooby-Doo!* (2012). Shaggy and Scooby are an iconic duo, and this movie plays with that dynamic by having a strain in their relationship. There is a big conflict between them in this movie, which is oddly refreshing because they are very rarely shown not getting along.

*Scooby-Doo! Frankencreepy* (2014). The villain is not looking for personal gain—instead it's a REVENGE story! The gang stay at a haunted castle, and they all seem to be losing themselves. This may be the most bizarre Scooby-Doo movie, with quick flash gags and with twists and turns I never expected. The less you know going in, the better, but if you liked this, come find me so we can talk about it! The only thing I would change is that there is some fat-shaming of Daphne, otherwise fantastic!

— Ashley Buck, Circulation Services

***The Shop Around the Corner* (directed by Ernst Lubitsch and starring James Stewart, Margaret Sullavan, and Frank Morgan, DVD ROMANCE SHOP)**



With its clever dialogue and endearing performances, this romantic comedy is a classic that continues to enchant viewers through its timeless exploration of love and connection.

— Cody Noble, Information Services

***Young Sheldon* (starring Iain Armitage and Jim Parsons, DVD TV YOUNG)**

— Mark Edwards, Circulation Services



A promotional banner for Kanopy. The top half has a black background with the word 'kanopy' in a white, lowercase, serif font. The bottom half has a dark blue background with colorful bokeh lights. It features the YouTube play button icon in a red rounded square, followed by the text 'Now Streaming' in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

# MUSIC

## ***the record* (boygenius, CD ROCK/POPULAR BOYGENIUS)**

Once again, I'm behind the rest of the cool crowd and only recently fell in love with Phoebe Bridgers, years after her smash album *Punisher* was re-released in 2020. But I was delighted when earlier this year I happened to find



myself in Ragged Records (local record store) the day boygenius, a super group with indie singer-songwriters Phoebe Bridgers, Julien Baker, and Lucy Dacus, released their full debut album on vinyl. If mellow, chill indie rock with whip-smart lyrics is of interest to you, boygenius, and all three artists independently, are worth checking out.

— Jillian Aschliman, Director

## ***The Greater Wings* (Julie Byrne, CD ROCK/POPULAR BYRNE)**

Gorgeous, ethereal folk.

— David Otten, Information Services



***Desire, I Want to Turn Into You* (Caroline Polachek, CD ROCK/POPULAR POLACHEK)**



Released early in 2023, this album had a lot of early critical buzz as a potential album of the year. And, I confess, I didn't get it. A friend described the record as "If Enya made an art-pop record" and I knew I had to give it another try. I did and it's been growing on me since.

— David Otten, Information Services

***Live at the Bon Soir* (Barbra Streisand, available through RiverShare Libraries)**

— Mark Edwards, Circulation Services



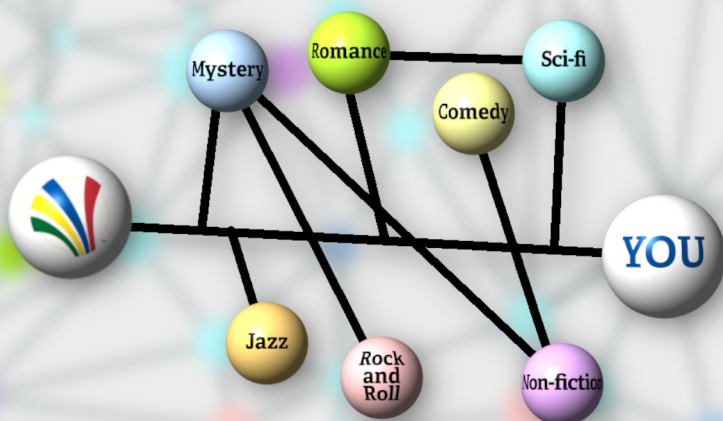
# MORE!

***Atomic Ranch Magazine*** (digital title available through the Bridges statewide consortium for Iowa public libraries; ask at the Information Desk if you need help setting up the Libby app to access digital materials through Bridges and/or RiverShare Libraries)

— Karly Lyle, Information Services



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at the Bettendorf Public Library



Do you have a favorite author you would like to share with our patrons? The Bettendorf Public Library's **Adopt An Author** program lets you sponsor the purchase of one copy of each title published by your adopted author for one calendar year. You will purchase the books at cost—usually a 40% discount. You may renew from year to year if you wish.

By adopting an author, you get to be the first to check out your author's

books. Each adopted book will have a bookplate with your name to recognize your sponsorship.

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James Lee Burke  
Melissa Caruso  
Genevieve Cogman  
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Krista Davis  
Louise Erdrich  
Rivka Galchen

Kristin Hannah  
Amy Hatvany  
Helena Hunting  
Sue Monk Kidd  
Lydia Kiesling  
Dean Koontz  
Susan Mallery  
G.A. McKeveatt  
Amy Patricia Meade

Jo Nesbø  
James Patterson  
Louise Penny  
Kwei Quartey  
Ian Rankin  
Taylor Jenkins Reid  
Jason Reynolds  
Kevin Wilson  
Jacqueline Winspear



# Bettendorf Public Library

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