



## Summer Staff Picks

The Summer Reading Program has concluded, but there's still a few more weeks of Summer left! That's plenty of time to find a new book to fall in love with! In case you need help deciding what to read, we've asked the Oostburg Library Staff to share the best books they've read this summer.

### Colleen:

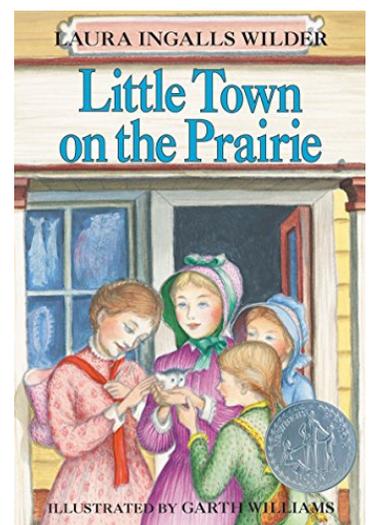
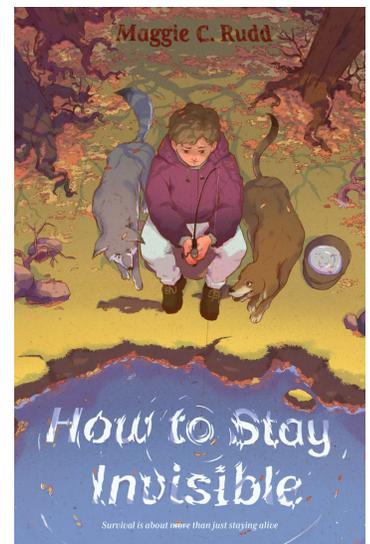
*How to stay Invisible* By Maggie C. Rudd - Outsiders meets Hatchet in this story that follows Raymond's problem: " How to both survive in the winter woods of North Carolina and attend middle school without anyone finding out how he lives".

After 12-year-old Raymonds parents abandoned him, he knows he does not want to be sent back to the children's home. Finding a hollow blown down tree to live in, he will do all he can to avoid that fate. Maggie C. Rudd give us a sobering yet inspirational urban take on the survival stories that have been enjoyed by kids for years.

*Little Town on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder - While picking some books for a road trip out west this summer, I thought it would be fitting to read Laura Ingalls Wilder's " Little town on the Prairie", as we were going to be passing very close to Desmet, South Dakota. As we sped along at 80 miles an hour in air-conditioned comfort, this story reminded me that the people that settled this land were SO strong. Not just physically but mentally as well.

The story opens in the spring after the "Long Winter" and ends as Laura becomes a schoolteacher ( at 15 !!) so she can help her sister, Mary stay at a school for the blind. When I read *The Long Winter* next, maybe it will keep me from complaining about the cold and snow as I sit in my warm house!

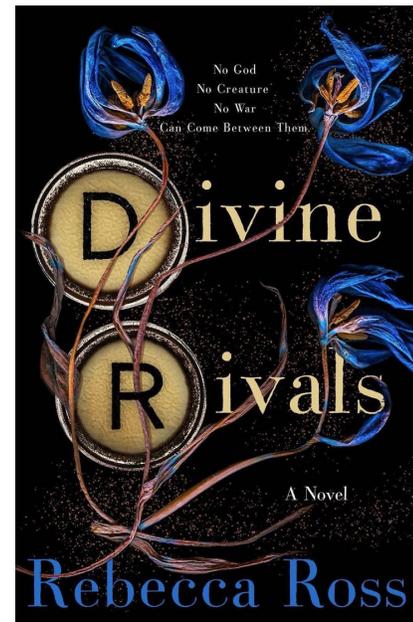
Though the books are classified as Jr. Fiction these are the types of books that all ages would enjoy.



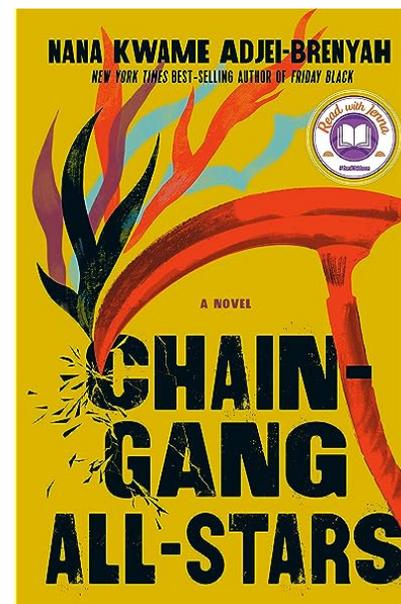
**Emma:**

The best book I read this summer was *Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross.

*Divine Rivals* is a combination of multiple genres including historical fiction, romance, and fantasy. It follows Iris Winnow who is struggling through life after her brother left to fight in the war against the Gods. Iris is a journalist who is competing for a columnist spot against her rival, Roman Kitt. The only comfort Iris finds is by writing letters to her brother with her typewriter. She knows the letters won't get to him but she continues to do it anyways, slipping the letters beneath her wardrobe where they seem to disappear. One day, Iris receives a response to her letters and she finds herself writing back and forth with this mysterious person and forging a connection. Iris's last thought is that the mysterious letter sender would be her rival Roman Kitt. As the war forges on, Iris has to discover what she believes in and if she is willing to find love in a world full of loss.

**Jesse:**

*Chain Gang All-Stars* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah was one of the most brutal, devastating novels I have ever read. Set in a near future where criminals are allowed to be pardoned for their crimes if they survive a three year gauntlet in the titular extreme sport of Chain Gang All-Stars, a sadistic blend of gladiator matches and *Hunger Games*-esque reality television. The narrative is sweeping, focusing on the competitors, their fans, the owners of the franchise, and the activists fighting to shut the whole thing down. The writing is packed tight with thrilling descriptions of an all too possible world and well developed characters that you're afraid to get too attached to, as anyone on the Chain could be the next to be brutally dismembered. I haven't stopped thinking about it since I finished it, sweaty and out of breath from the ride it took me on.



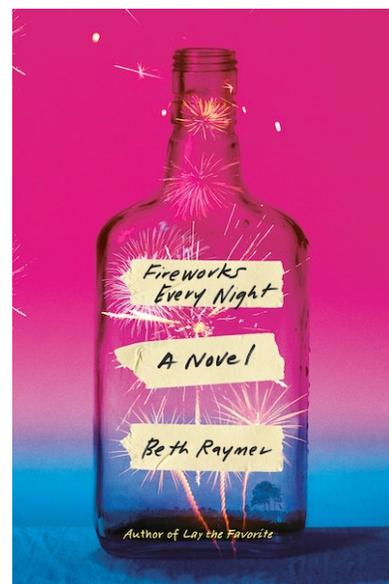
## Not a fan of these Staff Recommendations? Try out some Patron Recommendations instead!

During our Adult Summer Reading Program, we received over 300 reviews! Laurie worked tirelessly to compile a complete list of the recommended titles, and now that complete list, along with a select number of the books on it, are available to view at the Oostburg Public Library! Stop by and find a new favorite today!

**Laurie:**

The best book (for adults) that I read this summer was *Fireworks Every Night* by Beth Raymer (Random House, June 2023).

The book begins with C.C. Borkoski at an engagement party being thrown by her old-money wealthy future in-laws. C.C. is shocked when her fiancé's mother informs her that they have tracked down and invited her estranged mother. The rest of the novel is told with alternating flashbacks to C.C.'s childhood, starting at age 12 when her family moved to Florida from Ohio after their home and car dealership burned down under mysterious circumstances. From there we see how her family's fortunes surge but eventually come crashing down with one tragic misfortune after another. Raymer's prose is both hilarious and sharp and drew me into C.C.'s story with its painful examination of an unbelievably self-destructive patriarch. I rooted so hard for C.C. to build herself a



future from the ashes of her father's American dream-turned-nightmare. Raymer makes this journey both entertaining and in the end, hopeful for C.C. There's plenty of 90's nostalgia as well as commentary on some of the unique aspects of Florida culture. When I finished, I wished I could stay with the main character longer - so much so that if I didn't already have a thousand books on my TBR (To Be Read) pile - I would have read it a second time! I highly recommend this novel.

**Lori:**

*Spare* - Prince Harry

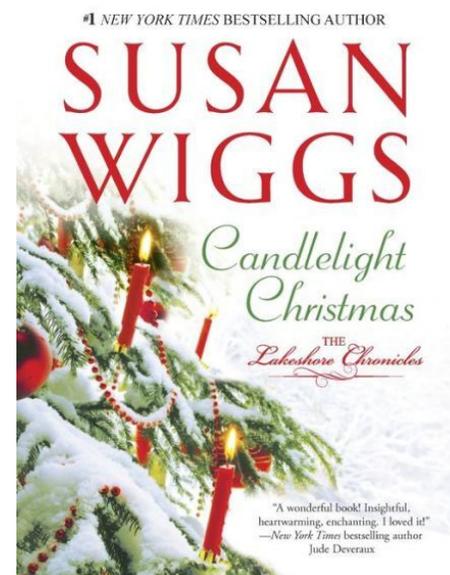
I wasn't planning on reading this autobiography since I'm not a huge fan of British Royalty, but when I saw it sitting on our New Book shelf, I scooped it up and read it over the weekend.

I found it to be a well-written and not

overly dramatic account from Harry's point of view. It definitely makes me more sympathetic to his struggles starting with the tragic loss of his mom, and being hounded by the paparazzi for his entire life!

**Nancy:**

*Candlelight Christmas* by Susan Wigg is a delightful Christmas story and an easy read. Just enough time is spent on describing scenes to keep the story moving. It has a lighthearted feel to it, while managing to still touch on some rather heavy issues. It keeps you wondering till the end if the happy ending is going to happen.



**Tricia:**

*The Girl in Red* - Christina Henry

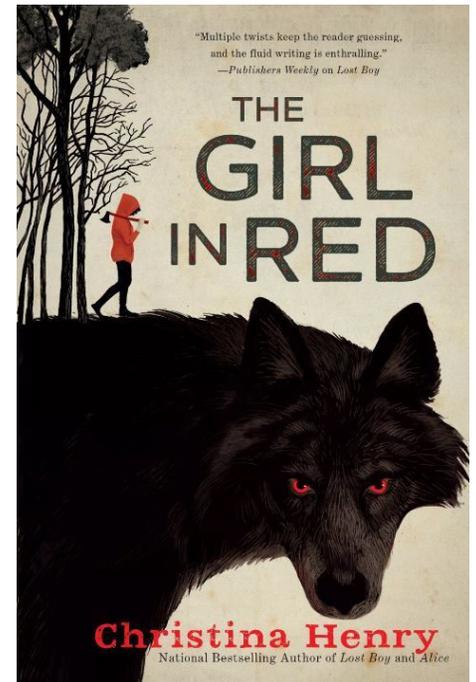
To be honest, I've been struggling a bit with books this summer. Ridiculous, unbelievable plots... underdeveloped, one dimensional characters... or simplistic, surface level writing has left me feeling rather "meh" about my book choices. And then I picked up *The Girl in Red* by Christina Henry. Found on a list of horror and dark fantasy books, I was intrigued. Add in it being a twisted fairy tale with post apocalyptic drama, and I was sold!

This book is NOT for the faint of heart! It has graphic violence as Red needs to defend herself from the human "wolves" that are on the prowl (at one point she threatens "I am going to my grandma's house, and if you try to stop me I will slice off whatever I can reach and leave you here to bleed to death.")

But Red's adventures through the woods to get to her grandma's house had me ignoring my family while I devoured this book, and then immediately requesting all of Christina Henry's other books from the library as soon as I finished it!

**Vicki:**

(Vicki was on vacation when Jesse asked this question, and was therefore unable to submit a response, but I am sure she'd be happy to tell you her favorite book of the summer if you ask her!)

**A Note from the Director**

It's been a busy summer at the library, and August gives us an opportunity to slow down for a bit, reflect on what we've accomplished, and start brainstorming for the rest of the year. This being my first summer, my most important takeaway is that I should never try to get anything done in the summer! If it wasn't planned months in advance, it simply isn't getting done! (By the way, that's a motto you can use at your own place of employment. Try it out next summer and tell them Jesse said it was okay.)

In all seriousness, I'm so proud of everything our wonderful staff has accomplished this summer. They truly go above and beyond to keep everything running smoothly. If you enjoyed any of our programming this summer, give them a big thank you next time you see one of them. And if your kids had fun at the Summer Reading Program, make sure to give an extra big thank you to Lori Walker. I could not be more impressed with her work planning and executing our youth programming. We're very lucky to have her!

Being the end of our busiest time of year, there's not too much to report here. But I've heard that no news is good news, and for everyone reading this, I'd argue that it's great news. After all, how often do you get eight book recommendations from some of the most well read people you know?



Jesse Rogers  
Library Director