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The following descriptions are copied from the amazon.com website.

Non-Fiction

Cadillac Desert: the American West and its disappearing water by Marc Reisner 8 copies
In this timely work of history and investigative journalism, Reisner tells the story of conflicts over water policy in the West and the resulting damage to the land, wildlife and Indians. The history of the struggle to discover and control water in the American West is a tale of rivers diverted and damned, political corruption and intrigue, billion-dollar battles over water rights, and economic and ecological disaster. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed by Jared Diamond 10 copies
Jared Diamond's *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* is the glass-half-empty follow-up to his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. While *Guns, Germs, and Steel* explained the geographic and environmental reasons why some human populations have flourished, *Collapse* uses the same factors to examine why ancient societies, including the Anasazi of the American Southwest and the Viking colonies of Greenland, as well as modern ones such as Rwanda, have fallen apart. Not every collapse has an environmental origin, but an eco-meltdown is often the main catalyst, he argues, particularly when combined with society's response to (or disregard for) the coming disaster.

The Cowboy and His Elephant: the story of a remarkable friendship by Malcolm Macpherson 20 copies
This is the touching account of the incredible kindness and love shown by a real-life American cowboy toward an orphaned African elephant baby named Amy. The cowboy watched Amy grow and enjoy life until she was able to leave his ranch for the circus. Amy may have left the cowboy's life, but she never left his heart. This is a story of mutual friendship, of genuine love and compassion, but, foremost, this is a story with roots that run deep in the values and traditions of the American West.

Doc Susie: the true story of a country physician in the Colorado Rockies by Virginia Cornell 8 copies
Virginia Cornell's straightforward, accessible biography begins in 1907 when Susan Anderson, already a practicing physician, is dying of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-seven. She takes a death-defying train ride to the tiny, isolated high-altitude town of Fraser, Colorado, where she cures herself, then stays on for the next fifty-one years to treat the resident population of loggers, farmers, railroad personnel, and tunnel diggers. Virginia Cornell's years of research bring to life both Susan Anderson and her time, teaching the reader both about an independent, strong-willed woman and about the human cost of the logging and railroad industries that are integral to the history of the northwestern United States.

Dreams From My Father by Barack Obama 9 copies (plus CD)
Born in 1961 to a white American woman and a black Kenyan student, Obama was reared in Hawaii by his mother and her parents, his father having left for further study and a return home to Africa. Obama's not-unhappy youth is nevertheless a lonely voyage to racial identity, with one month-long visit when he was 10 from his commanding father. After college, Obama became a community organizer in Chicago. He slowly found place and purpose among folks of similar hue but different memory. Before going to law school, he finally visited Kenya; with his father dead, he still confronted obligation and loss, and found wellsprings of love and attachment.

Farewell, My Subaru by Doug Fine 9 copies (plus 2 CDs)
In this memoir of mishaps and lessons learned, Fine shares his yearlong trek to turn his newly bought New Mexico ranch into a green and sustainable environment with as little carbon fuel as possible. From using two very lovable goats for his organic food production to transitioning into a biofuel engine for his truck and even installing solar panels, Fine balances the troubling decisions Americans must consider while also revealing a host of unexpected benefits. He advocates that a gradual process, despite having to deal with moments of hypocrisy, is essential for it to work.

A Girl Named Zippy by Haven Kimmel 5 copies
In her first book, Kimmel has written a love letter to her hometown of Mooreland, IN, a town with an unchanging population of 300 in America's heartland. Nicknamed "Zippy" for her energetic interpretation of a circus monkey, she could not be bothered to speak until she was three years old, and her first words involved bargaining with her father about whether or not a baby bottle was still appropriate. Born in 1965, Zippy lived in a world filled with a loving family, peculiar neighbors, and multitudes of animals, including a chicken she loved and treated like a baby. Her story is filled with good humor, fine storytelling, and acute observations of small town life.

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond 10 copies
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is a work that answers the question of why the peoples of certain continents succeeded in invading other continents and conquering or displacing their peoples. The long and short of it, says Diamond, is biogeography. It just so happened that 13,000 years ago, with the ending of the last Ice Age, there was an area of the world better endowed with the flora and fauna that would lead to the take-off toward civilization: that valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There were found the wild stocks that became domesticated crops of wheat and barley. There was an abundance of large mammals that could be domesticated. Once agriculture is born and animals domesticated, a kind of positive feedback drives the growth toward civilization. People settle down; food surpluses can be stored so population grows. And with it comes a division of labor, the rise of an elite class, the codification of rules, and language. While you have heard many of these arguments before, Diamond has brought them together convincingly.

Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer by James L. Swanson 8 copies
For 12 days after his brazen assassination of Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth was at large, and in *Manhunt*, historian James L. Swanson tells the vivid, fully documented tale of his escape and the wild, massive pursuit. From April 14 to April 26, 1865, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, led Union cavalry and detectives on a wild twelve-day chase through the streets of Washington, D.C., across the swamps of Maryland, and into the forests of Virginia, while the nation, still reeling from the just-ended Civil War, watched in horror and sadness.

Mayflower: a story of courage, community and war by Nathan Philbrick 8 copies
Mayflower rethinks the events and players that gave rise to a national mythology about Pilgrims living harmoniously with their Indian neighbors. Instead, Philbrick tells a story of ethnic cleansing, bloody wars, environmental ruin, and the deterioration of English-Indian relations. While he introduces familiar elements, Philbrick also recasts well-known characters like Miles Standish, William Bradford, and Benjamin Church. Most critics agree that he provides a well-researched, unbiased revisionist history. *Mayflower* provides a harrowing account of survival and, despite its grim themes, a celebration of courage.

A Million Little Pieces by James Frey

9 copies

Adult/High School-Frey's high school and college years are a blur of alcohol and drugs, culminating in a full-fledged crack addiction at age 23. As the book begins, his fed-up friends have convinced an airline to let him on the plane and shipped him off to his parents, who promptly put him in Hazelden, the rehabilitation clinic with the greatest success rate, 20 percent. Frey doesn't shy away from the gory details of addiction and recovery; all of the bodily fluids make major appearances here.

Odd Girl Out: the hidden culture of aggression in girls by Rachel Simmons

10 copies

Odd Girl Out begins with the premise that girls are socialized to be sweet with a double bind: they must value friendships; but they must *not* express the anger that might destroy them. Lacking cultural permission to acknowledge conflict, girls develop what Simmons calls "a hidden culture of silent and indirect aggression." The author, who visited 30 schools and talked to 300 girls, catalogues chilling and heartbreaking acts of aggression. Simmons is skilled at describing destructive patterns and prescribing clear-cut strategies for parents, teachers, and girls to resist them.

Fiction

The Abstinence Teacher by Tom Perrotta

14 copies

Ruth Ramsey, divorced, is the human sexuality teacher at the local high school. She lands in hot water when an evangelical church, offended by her curriculum, forces the school board to include a section on abstinence. Tim Mason is the beloved soccer coach of Ruth's young daughter, Maggie. He is also a reformed stoner/loser and an entrenched member of the church that attacked Ruth. Things get interesting when Tim, in a moment of crisis, leads his team of girls in prayer, and Ruth publicly drags her daughter from the soccer field. Ironically, Ruth and Tim find they have more in common than they thought, and a shaky—at times humorous—interchange begins.

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

7 copies

This simple, yet eloquent parable celebrates the richness of the human spirit. A young Spanish shepherd seeking his destiny travels to Egypt where he learns many lessons, particularly from a wise old alchemist. The real alchemy here, however, is the transmuting of youthful idealism into mature wisdom. The blending of conventional ideas with an exotic setting makes old truths seem new again. This shepherd takes the advice Hamlet did not heed, learning to trust his heart and commune with it as a treasured friend.

The Almost Moon by Alice Sebold

10 copies

For years Helen Knightly has given her life to others: to her haunted mother, to her enigmatic father, to her husband and now grown children. When she finally crosses a terrible boundary, her life comes rushing in at her in a way she never could have imagined. Unfolding over the next twenty-four hours, this searing, fast-paced novel explores the complex ties between mothers and daughters, wives and lovers, the meaning of devotion, and the line between love and hate.

Aloft by Chang-rae Lee

10 copies

Lee's third novel approaches the problems of race and belonging in America from a new angle—the perspective of Jerry Battle, the semiretired patriarch of a well-off (and mostly white) Long Island family. Sensitive but emotionally detached, Jerry escapes by flying solo in his small plane even as he ponders his responsibilities to his loved ones.

Amber Room by Steve Berry

7 copies

A riveting cat-and-mouse game set within the world of international art thieves, assassins, and age-old rivalries. The Amber Room is one of the greatest treasures ever made by man: an entire room forged of exquisite amber, from its four massive walls to its finely crafted furniture. But it is also the subject of one of history's most intriguing mysteries. Originally commissioned in 1701 by Frederick I of Prussia, the Room was later perfected in TsarskoeSelo, the Russian imperial city. In 1941, German troops invaded the Soviet Union, looting everything in their wake and seizing the Amber Room. When the Allies began the bombing of Germany in August 1944, the Room was hidden. And despite the best efforts of treasure hunters and art collectors from around the world, it has never been seen again. Now, two powerful men have set their best operatives loose in pursuit, and the hunt has begun once more.

And Sometimes Why by Rebecca Johnson

6 copies

Vogue contributing editor Johnson examines in her heartbreaking debut the ties that bind and break in the face of tragedy. Darius, a Shakespeare scholar and professor, and his wife, Sophia, head of membership at a local art museum, are mired in the banal ebb-and-flow of family life they share with their two teen daughters—bookish Miranda and imperious social butterfly Helen. A sisterly tussle over use of the family car ends with Miranda attending college orientation and finding herself attracted to fellow freshman-to-be Jason, and Helen, while riding on the back of her just-dumped boyfriend's motorcycle, getting into a horrific traffic accident. As Helen lies in the ICU suspended between life and death, the author gives voice to the people Helen has touched: Darius and Sophia find little solace in each other; Harry Harlow, the game show host who was involved in Helen's accident, witnesses his life falling apart; and Miranda awkwardly navigates the feelings Jason has stirred within her. While the wandering focus on disparate characters pulls the novel in unwieldy directions, Johnson's portrayal of a family's grieving is exquisitely crafted.

Angry Housewives Eating Bon Bons by Lorna Landvik

6 copies

When Faith Owens's husband is transferred from Texas to the "stupid godforsaken frozen tundra" of Freesia Court, Minn., in 1968, her life looks like it's going to be one dull, snowy slog—until the power goes out one evening and a group of what appear to be madwomen start a snowball fight in her backyard. These dervishes turn out to be her neighbors: antiwar activist Slip; sexpot Audrey; painfully shy Merit; and widow Kari. They become fast friends and decide to escape their humdrum routine by starting the Freesia Court Book Club, later given the eponymous name by one of their disgruntled husbands. As the years pass, Audrey and Merit get divorced, Kari adopts her niece's illegitimate baby, all five of the women find work outside their homes and they even smoke a joint together. Their personal dramas are regularly punctuated by reflections on political milestones ("First Martin Luther King, Jr., then Bobby Kennedy.")

Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral by Kris Radish

10 copies

Annie passes away at the youthful age of 56, leaving her high-school friend, Katherine, responsible for organizing her traveling funeral. Katherine receives a UPS package with Annie's favorite pair of red high-top sneakers, which contain her ashes, and instructions to contact four other women who played pivotal roles in her life. All of the women either have met or heard of each other through Annie, and all agree to fulfill her request that they fly across the country together and disperse her ashes at places meaningful to Annie. The women encounter beauty in unlikely places and people who either knew Annie or were somehow touched by her, causing the women to miss Annie all the more and reevaluate themselves and their missed opportunities. The funeral party turns into a true celebration of the deceased and her wonderful life. Once again, Radish celebrates women's inimitable friendships in an ode to sisterhood that will make her many fans rejoice.

Bleeding Kansas by Sara Paretsky

6 copies

Bigotry comes naturally to the members of the Schapen clan, who worship at the Salvation Through the Blood of Jesus Full Bible Church and become apoplectic when Gina Haring, a New York lesbian and New Age Wiccan, moves into an old farmhouse and attempts to practice her beliefs. When they aren't harassing Gina as a "sodomite," Myra Schapen and her belligerent brood are railing against the "communist" notion of a co-op farmers' market and hatching plots to undermine their neighbors, the Grelliers, whose more tolerant ways just plain get under their skin.

Blessings by Anna Quindlen

10 copies

The eponymous *Blessings* is a stately house now gone to seed, inhabited by Mrs. Blessing, an 80-year-old wealthy semirecluse with an acerbic tongue and a reputation for hanging on to every nickel. Widowed during WWII, Lydia Blessing was banished to her socially prominent family's country estate for reasons that are revealed only gradually. Austere, unbending and joyless, Lydia has no idea, when she hires young Skip Cuddy as her handyman, how her life and his are about to change. Skip had promise once, but bad companions and an absence of parental guidance have led to a stint in the county jail. When Skip stumbles upon a newborn baby girl who's been abandoned at *Blessings*, he suddenly has a purpose in life. With tender devotion, he cares secretly for the baby for four months, in the process forming a bond with Mrs. Blessing, who discovers and admires his clandestine parenting skills.

Bridge of Sighs by Richard Russo

14 copies

It takes place over many decades in Thomaston, N.Y., where the tannery slowly laid off and poisoned residents until most of them died or moved away. But not all-around nice guy "Lucy" Lynch, who grew up here, never left and is now nearing retirement. He acquired that embarrassingly feminine nickname in kindergarten when the teacher called for "Lou C. Lynch." All this and much more is explained in a history he's writing of the town and his life, a project inspired by an upcoming trip to Italy, where he hopes to see an old friend. He tells his wife that it should take 50 pages, "a hundred, tops," but since we've got 500 to go, we know that's misleading. Lucy's other misdirections are harder to spot, although he admits early on that "it is tempting to lie [about] everything." Why such a blessed and well-liked man should feel tempted to lie about anything is one of the many mysteries that slowly unfold.

Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros

10 copies

The author's second novel is a sweeping, fictionalized history of her Mexican American family. When Celaya (or "Lala") Reyes takes a family vacation from Chicago to Mexico City, she begins a journey from girl to young adult and from the present to the past. Generous digressions trace roots and branches on the luxuriant family tree, telling the tales of ancestors, family members, and sometimes even walk-on players. The book's title refers to an unfinished, candy-colored *rebozo* (shawl) that comes to symbolize both the interconnectedness of all these individual histories and the author's act of weaving them together. Still, the focus is on Lala, her papa, and the grandmother. By book's end, the different threads of these three lives are snugged into a tight knot.

Change of Heart by Jodi Picoult

7 copies

Freelance carpenter Shay Bourne was sentenced to death for killing a little girl, Elizabeth Nealon, and her cop stepfather. Eleven years after the murders, Elizabeth's sister, Claire, needs a heart transplant, and Shay volunteers, which complicates the state's execution plans. Meanwhile, death row has been the scene of some odd events since Shay's arrival—an AIDS victim goes into remission, an inmate's pet bird dies and is brought back to life, wine flows from the water faucets.

The Choice by Nicolas Sparks

11 copies

Holter Graham gives a polished performance with his versatile skills and vocal range as he embraces the roles of Travis Parker, local veterinarian, and Gabby Holland, physician's assistant. In Part One, Graham captures the exquisite story of their attraction, love, and marriage with a warmth and rhythm that breathes life into the characters. Ten years later in Part Two, Graham portrays Travis's torment when Gabby falls into a coma after a car accident that is his fault. As Gabby fails to recover, Graham captures Travis's conflict over a decision he must make—a decision based on a promise Gabby extracted from him before her life took its tragic turn.

Cloud of Sparrows by Takashi Matsuoka

8 copies

Set in Edo in 1861, *Cloud of Sparrows* chronicles the arrival of a group of American missionaries into a land bristling with feudal clans nursing ancient grudges and a central shogunate trying to maintain control in the face of corrosive Western influences. The young Lord Genji, a modern heir to the embittered Okumichi clan and its rulers' gift of prophetic vision, receives the missionaries as his guests. Their visit coincides with an effort by the Shogun's secret-police chief to destroy Genji, which leads to the accidental killing of one of the missionaries. In response, Genji, his mad uncle Shigeru, and Genji's lover, the beautiful geisha Heiko, join forces with innocent American missionary Emily Gibson and Matt Stark, also an American, to stave off the imperial assassins and restore the honor of the clan.

Coastliners by Joanne Harris

10 copies

Passionate, stubborn Mado, whose "head is full of rocks," tries to save the livelihoods of the villagers of Les Salants by urging them to work together to save the beach from erosion, both natural and man-made. The villagers are an eccentric, curmudgeonly bunch, who eventually cooperate with the help of Flynn, a charismatic stranger with a shady past. He's not the only man of mystery in Mado's life; her father, taciturn Grosjean, has a secretive heart that's as "prickly and tightly layered as an artichoke," and local, wealthy businessman Brismand also seems to be hiding something. Mado does her best to unravel these mysteries, while attempting to keep a hold on her own sense of self in the claustrophobic, close community. It's not only the shore line that takes a buffeting. The villagers and the island are so vividly described that it's impossible not to become engrossed in Mado's story.

The Coffee Trader by David Liss

11 copies

Amsterdam, 1659: On the world's first commodities exchange, fortunes are won and lost in an instant. Miguel Lienzo, a sharp-witted trader in the city's close-knit community of Portuguese Jews, knows this only too well. Once among the city's most envied merchants, Miguel has suddenly lost everything. Now, impoverished and humiliated, living in his younger brother's canal-flooded basement, Miguel must find a way to restore his wealth and reputation. Miguel enters into a partnership with a seductive Dutchwoman who offers him one last chance at success—a daring plot to corner the market of an astonishing new commodity called "coffee." To succeed, Miguel must risk everything he values and face a powerful enemy who will stop at nothing to see him ruined. Miguel will learn that among Amsterdam's ruthless businessmen, betrayal lurks everywhere, and even friends hide secret agendas.

Commencement by J. Courtney Sullivan

5 copies

It isn't quite love at first sight when Celia, Sally, Bree and April meet as first-year hall mates at Smith College in the late 1990s. Sally, whose mother has just died, is too steeped in grief to think about making new friends, and April's radical politics rub against Celia and Bree's more conventional leanings. But as the girls try out their first days of independence together, the group forms an intense bond that grows stronger throughout their college years and is put to the test after graduation. Even as the young women try to support each other through the trials of their early twenties, various milestones—Sally's engagement, Bree's anomalous girlfriend, April's activist career—only seem to breed disagreement. Things come to a head the night before Sally's wedding, when an argument leaves the friends seething and silent; but before long, the women begin to suspect that life without one another might be harder than they thought. Sullivan's novel quickly endears the reader to her cast, though the book never achieves the heft Sullivan seems to be striving for.

The Commoner by John Burnham Schwartz

7 copies

The story of the life of Empress Michiko of Japan, the first commoner to marry into the Japanese imperial family. Haruko Tsuneyasu grows up in postwar rural Japan and studies at Sacred Heart University, where she excels—particularly and fatefully—at tennis, which provides her entrée to the crown prince, whom she handily beats in an exhibition match. After more meetings on and off the court, the prince asks Haruko to marry him. Persuaded by their mutual attraction and by assurances that the break with tradition will usher in a modern era, Haruko ultimately agrees, against her father's wishes, to become the first commoner turned royal. But, as her father had feared, her freedom and ambition suffer under the stifling rituals of court life. Eventually, Haruko succumbs to the inescapable judgment of the empress and her entourage, falling mute after the birth of her son, Yasuhito. Though the narrative loses some of its life after Haruko marries—perhaps mirroring Haruko's experience within the palace walls—urgency returns after Haruko chooses a wife for Yasuhito; the marriage tests Haruko's dedication to the crown.

The Crazy by Ha Jin

9 copies

Set during the Tiananmen Square uprising of 1989, *The Crazy*, a novel from Ha Jin, the award-winning author of the bestseller *Waiting*, unites a prominent Chinese university professor who suffers a brain injury and Jien Wen, a favorite student and future son-in-law who becomes his caretaker. As Professor Yang rants about his earlier life, his bizarre outbursts begin to strike Jien as containing some truth and, considering the uncertain times, he puzzles over their meaning. When Jien realizes that his additional responsibilities make sitting for his Ph.D. exams impossible, Meimei, his fiancée, promptly discards him, branding him as unloving, since passing the exams would have ensured they would both have attended graduate school in Beijing. Unmoored from the university, and unconnected to anything else, Jien joins the student movement and as a result becomes a police suspect.

Crimson Petal and the White by Michel Faber

10 copies

A powerful portrayal of a young ambitious prostitute named Sugar who yearns to escape from the livelihood forced on her at age 13. Enter William Rackham, a besotted philanderer and idle heir to a family perfume business, who installs Sugar as his secret mistress in a fashionable hideaway. When the incompetent William is forced into managing the family firm, he initially seeks advice from Sugar, who, fearful of losing his affection, schemes to gain closer proximity to the Rackham family. She succeeds by becoming governess to William's only child, young Sophie, who is cruelly ignored by her father and his insane and sickly wife, Agnes. As William's interest in Sugar wanes, she seeks to maintain her position both by earning Sophie's respect and by gaining possession of the intimate diaries that Agnes has foolishly discarded. Faber's mastery of character, evocative descriptions of Victorian England, and rich dialog, together with his weaving of enduring themes throughout a complex plot, creates a remarkable novel.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

10 copies

Fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone is mathematically gifted and socially hopeless, raised in a working-class home by parents who can barely cope with their child's quirks. He takes everything that he sees (or is told) at face value, and is unable to sort out the strange behavior of his elders and peers. Late one night, Christopher comes across his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork. Wellington's owner finds him cradling her dead dog in his arms, and has him arrested. After spending a night in jail, Christopher resolves--against the objection of his father and neighbors--to discover just who has murdered Wellington. He is encouraged by Siobhan, a social worker at his school, to write a book about his investigations.

Dakota by Martha Grimes

11 copies

Bestseller Grimes's compelling second novel to feature the enigmatic young woman who calls herself Andi Oliver (after 1999's *Biting the Moon*) begins with Andi, who's still unaware of her real name or her past, adrift in the Dakota badlands. After rescuing an abandoned donkey, Andi makes a temporary home for herself in the small town of Kingdom, where she soon creates a stir by standing up to some local bullies. She really begins to shake things up in the placid community, however, when she takes a job at a pig farm to try to save the cruelly treated animals bred there. After sneaking into the farm's affiliated assembly-line slaughterhouse, Andi resolves to find a way, within the bounds of the law or not, to call to account the management of both places for violating humane animal treatment laws.

Dark Places by Gillian Flynn

5 copies

When Libby Day's mother and two older sisters were slaughtered in the family's Kansas farmhouse, it was seven-year-old Libby's testimony that sent her 15-year-old brother, Ben, to prison for life. Desperate for cash 24 years later, Libby reluctantly agrees to meet members of the Kill Club, true crime enthusiasts who bicker over famous cases. She's shocked to learn most of them believe Ben is innocent and the real killer is still on the loose. Though initially interested only in making a quick buck hocking family memorabilia, Libby is soon drawn into the club's pseudo-investigation, and begins to question what exactly she saw—or didn't see—the night of the tragedy. Flynn fluidly moves between cynical present-day Libby and the hours leading up to the murders through the eyes of her family members. When the truth emerges, it's so twisted that even the most astute readers won't have predicted it.

The Death and Life of Charlie St. Cloud by Ben Sherwood

3 copies

Charlie St. Cloud loves his kid brother, Sam, more than anything else in the world. So one day, he "borrows" their neighbor's car and takes Sam to see a Red Sox game, never dreaming that their escapade will end in a terrible accident that Sam does not survive. Thirteen years pass. Still keeping his promise to his brother that he'll never leave him, Charlie is the caretaker at Waterside, the cemetery where Sam is buried. Every evening, as soon as Waterside is secured for the night, Charlie goes to a hidden area of the memorial park and plays catch with his brother. Meanwhile, master sailor Tess is ready to make a solo trip around the world even though she loves the "snug little village" of Marblehead, Massachusetts. But in spite of her state-of-the-art vessel, her tip-top physical fitness, and the drive of an adventurer, she barely survives a disastrous trial run. Shaken, she visits her father's grave and meets Charlie, who is immediately drawn to her. However, he believes that because he robbed Sam of his life, he doesn't deserve love, but the more he's around the living, the weaker his link to the dead becomes.

The Defector by Daniel Silva

7 copies

"If an injury has to be done to a man it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared." The ninth book in Daniel Silva's smart, fast-paced series about enigmatic assassin and art restorer Gabriel Allon begins with an epigraph courtesy of Machiavelli. A fitting start to a twisty spy thriller chock full of clandestine meetings, tenuous alliances, and ruthless men. The beauty of Silva's series is that it is easy on acronyms and byzantine operations (so you don't have to be a spy novel aficionado to enjoy it), and each book gives you a discreet rundown on familiar characters and back-stories (so you don't have to start at the beginning). In *The Defector*, the disappearance of Russian defector and dissident Grigori Bulganov draws Gabriel out of semi-retirement and into the path of Ivan Kharkov, the former KGB agent and Russian oligarch from *Moscow Rules*. Exotic locales, intriguing characters, and a breakneck pace make for a riveting summer read.

Dirty Girls Social Club by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez

10 copies

The *sucias* ("dirty girls" in Spanish) have been friends since college and get together twice a year to catch up. The book opens at just such a meeting, six years after they've graduated from Boston University, and takes us through an eventful year in their late 20-something lives. The book addresses serious questions—prejudice, the difficulty of winning respect from Latino men—but balances them with enough budding (and dying) romances and descriptions of clothing and décor.

The Dive From Clausen's Pier by Ann Packer

10 copies

On Memorial Day, Carrie Bell and her fiancé, Mike Mayer, drive out to Clausen's Pier for their annual ritual, a picnic with their friends, a trip they make the way a middle-aged couple might, in grudging silence. Before their resentments can be aired, Mike dives into too shallow water, suffering injuries that change their lives. If Mike survives, he will survive as a quadriplegic, and Carrie faces unexpected responsibilities. Ultimately, Carrie does what is both understandable and unthinkable. She leaves her hometown of Madison, Wis., and shows up on the doorstep of a friend in New York City. There she discovers a different world, different friends and a different self. The hovering question about what Carrie will do provides genuine suspense. Abandon Mike or return to him?

Easter Island by Jennifer Vanderbes

10 copies

In 1912, Elsa Pendleton's father dies and leaves her to care for her 19-year-old sister, Alice, who is beautiful but not quite right in the head. To secure their position, 22-year-old Elsa marries Edward Beazley, a contemporary of her father's who is an anthropologist with the Royal Geographical Society in England. They travel to Easter Island, where Edward plans to study the giant moai sculptures, and Elsa finds herself immersed in a new and harsh culture. As she contends with revelations concerning her husband and her sister, she befriends the native islanders and becomes engrossed in unlocking the meaning of the symbols she finds on wooden tablets.

Empress Orchid by Anchee Min

3 copies

Orchid, a poor girl from rural China auditions for a job as royal concubine, winds up as emperor's wife number four, gives birth to the "last Emperor," rules China as regent for 46 years. Even after giving birth to the emperor's only son, Orchid feels trapped by the stultifying imperial rituals and persecuted by the other residents of the Forbidden City: six other royal wives, 3,000 invisible concubines and 2,000 scheming eunuchs. In addition to these powerful distractions, she has to discipline her overindulged son, outmaneuver the ruthless politician Su Shun (who wants her buried alive when the emperor dies) and advise the ailing emperor how to fend off both the Boxers and the Western "barbarians."

The English Major by Jim Harrison

6 copies

At the end of a class reunion that he didn't want to attend, poor Cliff notices that his wife has returned to the party with grass stains on her clothes. She soon deserts him to run off with an old high school flame and, in the bargain, pockets most of the profits from the sale of the Michigan farm where Cliff has raised cattle and tended orchards for the past 25 years. Oh, and his dog just died. With a dim future ahead, the 60-year-old protagonist of Jim Harrison's latest novel hits the open road like a superannuated Jack Kerouac in search of adventure and self-understanding. He's also propelled by his absurd "sacred project" of assigning new names to birds and to the 50 states. In his long-ago past, Cliff was an English major at Michigan State and spent 10 years as a high school teacher. Somewhere in Minnesota, he hooks up with a libidinous former student named Marybelle -- a married woman 17 years his junior -- and the two embark on a graphically described cross-country romp.

Everything Will Be Alright by Tessa Hadley

8 copies

Hadley's follow-up to her highly touted debut, *Accidents in the Home*, explores the many facets of womanhood as seen through the eyes of four generations of one English family. The narrative centers on Joyce, a sensitive child who studies the females around her, gradually building an image of the woman she wishes to become. Through Joyce's adolescence, motherhood, and middle age, Hadley paints a picture of unfulfilled high expectations as Joyce laments that her life has become "keeping everything looking nice, worrying about everyone else." Joyce's daughter proceeds quickly from Cambridge to motherhood but never loses sight of her professional goals. An acclaimed author, she somehow never connects with her own daughter, finally sending her to live with the girl's father, a self-centered intellectual.

Fall of Frost by Brian Hall

6 copies

In *Fall of Frost*, a novel, Brian Hall presents a vision of Robert Frost as an unsuccessful farmer, tormented father, distanced husband and, most of all, a poet who deals always with the hard pith of things. Hall's themes, like Frost's, are major: love, death, the anarchy of living, the tragedy implicit in creating children and poems. This is a book about a man confronting the world and struggling to make sense, through his work, of what he cannot otherwise grasp. Like Frost's poetry, Hall's novel is pungent, deceptively simple and magnificently sad.

Firefly Lane by Kristin Hannah

11 copies

In the summer of 1974, Kate Mularkey has accepted her place at the bottom of the eighth-grade social food chain. Then, to her amazement, the "coolest girl in the world" moves in across the street and wants to be her friend. Tully Hart seems to have it all---beauty, brains, ambition. On the surface they are as opposite as two people can be: Kate, doomed to be forever uncool, with a loving family who mortifies her at every turn. Tully, steeped in glamour and mystery, but with a secret that is destroying her. They make a pact to be best friends forever. Spanning more than three decades and playing out across the ever-changing face of the Pacific Northwest, *Firefly Lane* is the poignant, powerful story of two women and the friendship that becomes the bulkhead of their lives. For thirty years, Tully and Kate buoy each other through life, weathering the storms of friendship---jealousy, anger, hurt, resentment. They think they've survived it all until a single act of betrayal tears them apart and puts their friendship to the ultimate test.

The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom

6 copies

Eddie is a wounded war veteran, an old man who has lived, in his mind, an uninspired life. His job is fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. On his 83rd birthday, a tragic accident kills him as he tries to save a little girl from a falling cart. He awakes in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a destination. It's a place where your life is explained to you by five people, some of whom you knew, others who may have been strangers.

For One More Day by Mitch Albom

12 copies

In this second novel from *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* author Albom, grief-stricken Charles "Chick" Benetto goes into an alcoholic tailspin when his always-attentive mother, Pauline, dies. Framed as an "as told to" story, Chick quickly narrates her funeral; his drink-fueled loss of savings, job ("sales") and family; and his descent into loneliness and isolation. After a suicide attempt, Chick encounters Pauline's ghost. Together, the two revisit Pauline's travails raising her children alone after his father abandons them: she braves the town's disapproval of her divorce and works at a beauty parlor, taking an extra job to put money aside for the children's education. Pauline cringes at the heartache Chick inflicted as a demanding child, obnoxious teen and brusque, oblivious adult chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of a baseball career.

Forever by Pete Hamill

10 copies

If September 11th was a terrible warning of New York's mortality, Hamill's entertaining panhistorical fantasy is a paean to its immortality. In 1740, an Irish Jew named Cormac O'Connor heads to New York in pursuit of the man who killed his father and gets tangled up in a rebellion against the English. Through a series of events involving an African slave with shamanistic powers, he is granted eternal life, provided that he never leaves Manhattan. There follows a tour of the city's history through Cormac's eyes: the political corruption and the poverty, but also the majestic growth of the metropolis through its culture, its buildings, and its people. The book's central conceit could almost have come from the pages of Twain or Bellamy, but Hamill pulls his story fiercely into the present by centering the final phase of Cormac's narrative on the World Trade Center attacks themselves.

Free Life by Ha Jin

7 copies

Ha Jin, who emigrated from China in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square, had only been writing in English for 12 years when he won the National Book Award for *Waiting* in 1999. His latest novel sheds light on an émigré writer's woodshedding period. It follows the fortunes of Nan Wu, who drops out of a U.S. grad school after the repression of the democracy movement in China, hoping to find his voice as a poet while supporting his wife, Pingping, and son, Taotao. After several years of spartan living, Nan and Pingping save enough to buy a Chinese restaurant in suburban Atlanta, setting up double tensions: between Nan's literary hopes and his career, and between Nan and Pingping, who, at the novel's opening, are staying together for the sake of their young boy. While Pingping grows more independent, Nan—amid the dulling minutiae of running a restaurant and worries about mortgage payments, insurance and schooling—slowly snuffs the torch he carries for his first love. That Nan at one point reads Dr. Zhivago isn't coincidental: while Ha Jin's novel lacks Zhivago's epic grandeur, his biggest feat may be making the reader wonder whether the trivialities of American life are not, in some ways, as strange and barbaric as the upheavals of revolution.

Gentlemen of the Road by Michael Chabon

8 copies

Chabon recreates 10th-century Khazaria, the fabled kingdom of wild red-haired Jews on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, in this sprightly historical adventure. Zelikman and Amram, respectively a gawky Frank and a gigantic Abyssinian, make their living by means of confidence tricks, doctoring, bodyguarding and the occasional bit of skullduggery along the Silk Road. The unlikely duo find themselves caught up in larger events when they befriend Filaq, the headstrong and unlikable heir to the recently deposed war king of the Khazars. Their attempts to restore Filaq to the throne make for a terrifically entertaining modern pulp adventure replete with marauding armies, drunken Vikings and rampaging elephants.

Girl With A Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier

7 copies

The illiterate young Griet, held captive by the strict social order of 17th-century Delft, becomes a maid in the household of Johannes Vermeer to help support her family. She knows her role well: tend the laundry, keep up with the housework, and make sure Vermeer's six children stay out of the way. Griet even thinks she can handle Vermeer's shrewd mother-in-law, his bitter, neglected wife, and the family's jealous servant. But what no one suspects is that Griet's quiet manner, uncanny perception, and fascination with her master's paintings will draw her inexorably into the painter's private world. And as Griet witnesses the creative process of a great master, her long-suppressed passion becomes the catalyst for a scandal that irrevocably changes her life.

Good in Bed by Jennifer Weiner

9 copies

Cannie is a 28-year-old Philadelphia Examiner reporter preoccupied with her weight and men, but able to see the humor in even the most unpleasant of life's broadsides. Even she is floored, however, when she reads "Good in Bed," a new women's magazine column penned by her ex-boyfriend, pothead grad student Bruce Guberman. Three months earlier, Cannie suggested they take a break. Apparently, Bruce thought they were through and set about making such proclamations as, "Loving a larger woman is an act of courage in our world." Devastated by this public humiliation, Cannie takes comfort in tequila and her beloved dog, Nifkin. Somehow, Cannie stays strong for family and friends, joining a weight-loss group, selling her screenplay and gaining the maturity to ask for help when she faces something bigger than her fears.

Happiness Sold Separately by Lolly Winston

13 copies

The marriage of Ted and Elinor Mackey, a yuppie podiatrist-lawyer couple in their early-40s living in Northern California, is pushed to the brink when Elinor learns that Ted is having an affair with his trainer, Gina Ellison. Elinor's reaction—pity—surprises her. And Gina's no bimbo: she has a loving but difficult relationship with Ted. When Elinor confronts Ted and Gina, Ted quickly ends the affair; neither is sure if infidelity or infertility should end their marriage. During their separation, Elinor takes a sabbatical from her law firm and casually dates Noah Orch. Ted haphazardly resumes his relationship with Gina. As he realizes that his connection to her is more than an escape from a bad marriage, all concerned have decisions to make.

Haunted by Kelley Armstrong

19 copies

Smart-mouthed Eve Levine, a witch with a reputation for breaking the rules, may be dead, but as she proves in this overstuffed paranormal romance (a follow-up to *Industrial Magic*), she can still raise hell in the hereafter—which, in this case, is a curiously ordinary dimension in which ghosts like Eve and her also deceased former lover, a sorcerer named Kris, can bicker, have sex and use their paranormal powers. The Fates, three elusive sisters, are the rulers of this otherworldly dimension, and they have a job for Eve. If she can defeat a demonic Nix who's wreaking havoc in the human realm by inducing people to kill, she'll earn her wings—literally. The catch: she can't capture the Nix without the powers that angelhood affords. Eve surmounts this hurdle by teaming up with a hunky and humanlike angel named Trsiel.

His Illegal Self by Peter Carey

6 copies

It is 1972 and seven-year-old Che Selkirk, the son of radical parents he has never met, lives in isolated privilege with his well-to-do grandmother. Denied access to television and the news, he picks up scraps of information about his outlaw mother and father from a teenage neighbor who assures Che that his parents will come and "break you out of here." When a woman named Dial arrives at the boy's Park Avenue apartment to take him on a day excursion, he assumes that she is his mother. Unfortunately, things go terribly awry and Che becomes a fugitive himself. He and Dial end up in the Australian bush in an inhospitable commune. Carey uses a stream-of-consciousness style that poignantly communicates Che's confusion about his life on the lam and what he really wants.

Hold Tight by Harlan Coben

7 copies

Mike and Tia Baye decide to spy on their son Adam, who has become moody and withdrawn since his friend's suicide. The software they install on his computer exposes every website visited, every e-mail and instant message sent or received. But each keystroke draws them deeper into a maze of mayhem and violence that could destroy them all. Then, just as the Baye's worries begin to ease, their world is jolted by a single cryptic six-word message: "Just stay quiet and all safe." When Adams goes missing, full-throttle terror enters their lives. A whodunit ripped from every parent's worst fear.

A Hole in the Heart by Christopher Marquis

10 copies

Celestine "Bean" Jessup is at loose ends when she graduates from college; she finally moves from San Francisco to teach in Eyad, Alaska, a tiny south coastal village. Bean struggles with the harsh conditions during her initial teaching stint, but life takes a turn for the better when she meets the handsome, athletic Mick. Not long after they marry, Mick disappears while climbing Mount McKinley, and Bean must once again fall back on her own resources.

Hotel Riviera by Elizabeth Adler

11 copies

American Lola Laforet was swept away in a whirlwind wedding and found herself the chef/owner of the Hotel Riviera. Her life seemed to be a dream come true. But then her husband disappeared one day with nothing more than a wave goodbye. Six months later, Jack Ferrar, an American ex-pat living on his boat, drops anchor in Lola's harbor and teaches her the true meaning of attraction. When various shady people-all claiming ownership of the Hotel Riviera-and the police appear, Lola and Jack have to track down the mysterious Patrick. And along the way, they fall in love. With great food, wonderful sensuality, and lush scenery, Elizabeth Adler holds you under her spell and transports you to one of the most romantic places on earth.

I'll Take You There by Joyce Carol Oates

10 copies

The time is the early '60s. Anellia is the last child of Ida and Eric. After Ida's death (for which Anellia is blamed by her three brothers), Eric leaves his daughter to be raised by his cold German Lutheran parents. Anellia wins a scholarship to Syracuse University around 1960. She becomes for a period a Kappa Gamma Pi. The conventionally girlish Kappas are a decidedly different breed from Anellia: she is intellectual, shy, careless of her looks and hygiene, poor. Eventually the Kappas and Anellia come to a violent parting of the ways. Next, Anellia has a depressing affair with a black philosophy graduate student, Vernor Matheius. Vernor is trying to hold himself aloof from the civil rights struggle making the evening news, yet necessarily becomes drawn in.

In Her Shoes by Jennifer Weiner

7 copies

The Feller sisters are equal but opposite. Maggie is the good-looking, dyslexic little sister who knows how to get anything she wants--but not how to keep it. Rose is the plump, practical, responsible older sister who knows about law but not much about her own happiness. When Maggie's latest eviction lands her in Rose's apartment, and Maggie insults Rose by seducing one of her sister's rare boyfriends, what follows is a chain of events by turns hilarious and heartbreaking. Embarrassed Rose evicts Maggie and begins a work sabbatical leading to a new livelihood and way of living. Maggie flees and runs away to Princeton. Masquerading as a student, she learns to love poetry and saves money for a trip to Miami--and a visit to a long-lost grandmother named Ella who might offer her a last shot at sanctuary.

In The Kitchen by Monica Ali

5 copies

Gabriel Lightfoot has a lot on his plate. As executive chef at London's luxurious Imperial Hotel, he must contend with demanding customers, a bully of a general manager, and a kitchen staff that runs the gamut from bellicose to perverse. So when a Ukrainian porter is found dead in the restaurant basement, Gabe knows his already challenging life is about to become even more so. Shortly after the porter's demise, Gabe encounters Lena, an eerie, ethereal young woman from Belarus who is clearly harboring secrets about the deceased. More trouble awaits on the domestic front: Gabe's father has been diagnosed with cancer. All this personal chaos threatens to foil Gabe's plans of opening his own restaurant. Man Booker Prize finalist Ali is at her best describing the din and drama of a hotel kitchen. Ali deftly interweaves a collection of compelling plots in this powerful portrayal of a man whose life is slowly spiraling out of control.

The Last Girls by Lee Smith

10 copies

In 1965, inspired by reading *Huckleberry Finn* for a favorite college teacher, a dozen young women took a raft trip down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Thirty-four years later, four of these former Mary Scott College coeds duplicate the trip, this time on a riverboat quite luxurious compared to the craft they used before. Their reunion is not merely a way for them to catch up on each other's lives; they also intend to spread the ashes of one in their group who recently died. There is the ever-repressed Harriet, the flamboyant romance writer Anna, the proper society lady Courtney, and the happily married Catherine, all of them accompanied, of course, by their memories of the irrepressible, irresistible, but manipulative Baby, now deceased.

Little Children by Tom Perrotta

8 copies

Handsome stay-at-home dad Todd, dubbed the Prom King by the moms at the playground, secretly grooves to Raffi and loves staging horrific train wrecks with his young son; he has flunked the bar exam twice and can sense his wife's increasing exasperation, but he can't force himself to study. Although Sarah has a Ph.D. in feminist studies, she is completely flummoxed by her toddler's temper tantrums and her husband's seeming infatuation with a pornographic Web site. Sarah and Todd fall into an unlikely affair, and although they know they are acting out of desperation to escape problems on the home front, their relationship is full of electric sex and genuine emotion.

The Little Friend by Donna Tartt

10 copies

The death of nine-year-old Robin Cleve Dufresnes, found hanging from a tree in his own backyard in Alexandria, Miss., has never been solved. The crime destroyed his family: it turned his mother into a lethargic recluse; his father left town; and the surviving siblings, Allison and Harriet, are now, 12 years later-it is the early '70s-largely being raised by their black maid and a matriarchy of female relatives headed by their domineering grandmother and her three sisters. Although every character is sharply etched, 12-year-old Harriet-smart, stubborn, willful-is as vivid as a torchlight. Like many preadolescents, she's fascinated by secrets. She vows to solve the mystery of her brother's death and unmask the killer, whom she decides, without a shred of evidence, is Danny Ratliff, a member of a degenerate, redneck family of hardened criminals. Harriet's pursuit of Danny, at first comic, gathers fateful impetus as she and her best friend, Hely, stalk the Ratliffs, and eventually, as the plot attains the suspense level of a thriller, leads her into mortal danger.

The Little Giant of Aberdeen County by Tiffany Baker

5 copies

Truly is born into a life of suffering and tragedy. Her mother dies in childbirth, and her father is ill equipped to deal with either of his two daughters. Truly's sister, Serena Jane, is the acknowledged town beauty, while Truly suffers from an illness that causes her to grow way beyond normal size. When their father also dies, the girls are split up, and their lives diverge and reconnect in ways neither could imagine. Woven into the story of the sisters is a larger story of women and the ways they are forced to navigate the world.

Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett

19 copies

Detective Sam Spade's partner Archer is hot on a case, and as his partner, Spade must find the killer. The investigation becomes enmeshed with a search for The Maltese Falcon, a statue rumored to be of "incalculable" value. Spade's life is endangered and he is nearly destroyed by what turns up.

Maps for Lost Lovers by Nadeem Aslam

17 copies

Jugnu and his lover, Chanda, have disappeared. Though unmarried, they had been living together, embracing the contemporary mores of the English town where they lived but disgracing themselves in the eyes of their close-knit Pakistani community. Rumors about their disappearance abound, but five months go by before anything certain is known. Finally, on a snow-covered January morning, Chanda's brothers are arrested for the murder of their sister and Jugnu. Shock and disbelief spread through the community, and for Jugnu's brother, Shamas, and his wife, Kaukab, it is a moment that marks the beginning of the unraveling of all that is sacred to them. As the novel unfolds over the next twelve months, we watch Kaukab struggle to maintain her Islamic piety as the effects of the double murder prove increasingly corrosive to the life of her family.

The Meadow by James Galvin

12 copies

James Galvin depicts the hundred-year history of a meadow in the arid mountains of the Colorado/Wyoming border. Galvin describes the seasons, the weather, the wildlife, and the few people who do not possess but are themselves possessed by this terrain. In so doing he reveals an experience that is part of our heritage and mythology. For Lyle, Ray, Clara, and App, the struggle to survive on an independent family ranch is a series of blameless failures and un-acclaimed successes that illuminate the Western character.

Medusa by Clive Cussler

5 copies

In the eighth Kurt Austin adventure, a lethal flu virus emerges in China, and the Chinese and American governments join together to search for a vaccine to prevent a global pandemic. Research suggests the sea holds the cure, but when the vital deep sea research laboratory goes missing, NUMA's Special Assignments Team with Kurt Austin and Joe Zavala pursue leads into danger to recover the invaluable resources.

A Mercy by Toni Morrison

5 copies

In the 1680s the slave trade in the Americas is still in its infancy. Jacob Vaark is an Anglo-Dutch trader and adventurer, with a small holding in the harsh North. Despite his distaste for dealing in "flesh," he takes a small slave girl in part payment for a bad debt from a plantation owner in Catholic Maryland. This is Florens, who can read and write and might be useful on his farm. Rejected by her mother, Florens looks for love, first from Lina, an older servant woman at her new master's house, and later from the handsome blacksmith, an African, never enslaved, who comes riding into their lives. *A Mercy* reveals what lies beneath the surface of slavery. But at its heart, like *Beloved*, it is the ambivalent, disturbing story of a mother and a daughter—a mother who casts off her daughter in order to save her, and a daughter who may never exorcise that abandonment.

The Monkey Wrench Gang by Edward Abbey

9 copies

Ex-Green Beret George Hayduke has returned from war to find his beloved southwestern desert threatened by industrial development. Joining with Bronx exile and feminist saboteur Bonnie Abzug, wilderness guide and outcast Mormon Seldom Seen Smith, and libertarian billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., Hayduke is ready to fight the power—taking on the strip miners, clear-cutters, and the highway, dam, and bridge builders who are threatening the natural habitat.

My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult

10 copies

The difficult choices a family must make when a child is diagnosed with a serious disease are explored with pathos and understanding in this 11th novel by Picoult. The author, who has taken on such controversial subjects as euthanasia, teen suicide and sterilization laws, turns her gaze on genetic planning, the prospect of creating babies for health purposes and the ethical and moral fallout that results. Kate Fitzgerald has a rare form of leukemia. Her sister, Anna, was conceived to provide a donor match for procedures that become increasingly invasive. At 13, Anna hires a lawyer so that she can sue her parents for the right to make her own decisions about how her body is used when a kidney transplant is planned. Picoult uses multiple viewpoints to reveal each character's intentions and observations, but she doesn't manage her transitions as gracefully as usual; a series of flashbacks are abrupt. Nor is Sara, the children's mother, as well developed and three-dimensional as previous Picoult protagonists. Her devotion to Kate is understandable, but her complete lack of sympathy for Anna's predicament until the trial does not ring true. Nevertheless, Picoult ably explores a complex subject with bravado and clarity, and comes up with a heart-wrenching, unexpected plot twist at the book's conclusion.

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro

20 copies

As a child, Kathy-now thirty-one years old-lived at Hailsham, a private school in the scenic English countryside where the children were sheltered from the outside world, brought up to believe that they were special and that their well-being was crucial not only for themselves but for the society they would eventually enter. Kathy had long ago put this idyllic past behind her, but when two of her Hailsham friends come back into her life, she stops resisting the pull of memory. And so, as her friendship with Ruth is rekindled, and as the feelings that long ago fueled her adolescent crush on Tommy begin to deepen into love, Kathy recalls their years at Hailsham. She describes happy scenes of boys and girls growing up together, unperturbed-even comforted-by their isolation. But she describes other scenes as well: of discord and misunderstanding that hint at a dark secret behind Hailsham's nurturing facade. With the dawning clarity of hindsight, the three friends are compelled to face the truth about their childhood-and about their lives now.

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood

5 copies

The narrator of Atwood's riveting novel calls himself Snowman. When the story opens, he is sleeping in a tree, wearing an old bed sheet, mourning the loss of his beloved Oryx and his best friend Crake, and slowly starving to death. He searches for supplies in a wasteland where insects proliferate and pigoons and wolvogs ravage the pleeblands, where ordinary people once lived, and the Compounds that sheltered the extraordinary. As he tries to piece together what has taken place, the narrative shifts to decades earlier. How did everything fall apart so quickly? Why is he left with nothing but his haunting memories? Alone except for the green-eyed Children of Crake, who think of him as a kind of monster, he explores the answers to these questions in the double journey he takes - into his own past, and back to Crake's high-tech bubble-dome, where the Paradise Project unfolded and the world came to grief.

Our Lady of the Forest by David Guterson

11 copies

A darkly humorous contemporary novel of faith and redemption, focusing on an economically depressed community that suddenly becomes the center of hope for the despairing. After teenage runaway and itinerant mushroom picker Anne Holmes has a vision of the Virgin Mary in a nearby forest, her motley crew of friends and colleagues all respond in different ways, ranging from acceptance to utter disbelief. After word of her visions spreads, various miracle seekers gather on the site, throwing the local church and logging companies into a panic. News of Ann's visions brings in hordes of believers and the curious, including another local, a middle-aged man who has isolated himself since the accident that paralyzed his teenaged son.

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

10 copies

Born with no air in his lungs, it was only when Reuben Land's father, Jeremiah, picked him up and commanded him to breathe that Reuben's lungs filled. Reuben struggles with debilitating asthma from then on, making him a boy who knows firsthand that life is a gift, and also one who suspects that his father is touched by God and can overturn the laws of nature. The quiet 1960's midwestern life of the Lands is upended when Reuben's brother Davy kills two marauders who have come to harm the family. The morning of his sentencing, Davy — a hero to some, a cold-blooded murderer to others — escapes from his cell, and the Lands set out in search of him. Their journey is touched by serendipity and the kindness of strangers, and they cover territory far more extraordinary than even the Badlands where they search for Davy from their Airstream trailer.

People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks

10 copies

It's 1996 and Hannah Heath, an expert in rare books, has been lured from her laid-back life in Australia to Sarajevo, "where they just stopped shooting at each other five minutes ago." Hannah's job is to conserve and analyze the world-famous Sarajevo Haggadah, one of the earliest illuminated Jewish texts. The ancient manuscript, filled with images so rich and beautiful that it is now a priceless artifact, has appeared, vanished, and reappeared numerous times in its 500-year history. Its most recent rediscovery in war-torn Sarajevo, where a Muslim librarian has saved this Jewish holy book, is nothing short of a miracle. Hannah, at age 30 a cranky and demanding loner, is the first expert to handle the Haggadah in more than a hundred years. Though uneasy in the bombed-out city, she's ecstatic at the chance to preserve the rare volume.

Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

8 copies

For Milo, everything's a bore. When a mysterious tollbooth appears in his room, he drives through only because he's got nothing better to do. But on the other side, things seem different. Milo visits the island of Conclusions (you get there by jumping), learns about time from a ticking watchdog named Tock, and goes up against the dastardly Discord and Dynne. By the time Milo and Tock set off toward the Mountains of Ignorance to rescue the twin Princesses Rhyme and Reason, Milo realizes something astonishing. Life is far from dull. In fact, it's exciting beyond his wildest dreams.

The Piano Tuner by Daniel Mason

10 copies

Edgar Drake lives a quiet life in late 19th-century London as a tuner of rare pianos. When he's summoned to Burma to repair the instrument of an eccentric major, Edgar bids his wife goodbye and begins the journey east. The first half of the book details his trip, and while Mason's descriptions of the steamships and trains of Europe and India are entertaining, the narrative tends to drag; Edgar is the only real character readers have met, and any conflicts he might encounter are unclear. Things pick up when Edgar meets the unconventional Carroll, who has built a paradise of sorts in the Burmese jungle. Edgar ably tunes the piano, but this turns out to be the least of his duties, as Carroll seeks his services on a mission to make peace between the British and the local Shan people. During his stay at Carroll's camp, Edgar falls for a local beauty, learns to appreciate the magnificence of Burma's landscape and customs and realizes the absurdity of the war between the British and the Burmese.

Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett

9 copies

Tom Builder's dream is to build a cathedral, but in the meantime, he must scrounge about to find a lord that will hire him. His search pulls him and his family into the politics of 12th-century England, as different lords vie to gain control of the throne in the wake of the recently deceased king. Prior Phillip, a man raised in the monastery since childhood, also finds himself drafted into the brewing storm as he must protect the interests of a declining church. The ambitions of three men merge conflict and collide through four decades during which social and political upheaval and the internal politics of the church affect the progress of the cathedral and the fortunes of the protagonists.

Pope Joan by Donna Woolfolk Cross

5 copies

Cross makes an entertaining case in her work of historical fiction that, in the Dark Ages, a woman sat on the papal throne for two years. Born in Ingelheim in A.D. 814 to a tyrannical English canon and the once-heathen Saxon he made his wife, Joan shows intelligence and persistence from an early age. One of her two older brothers teaches her to read and write, and her education is furthered by a Greek scholar who instructs her in languages and the classics. Her mother, however, sings her the songs of her pagan gods, creating a dichotomy within her daughter that will last throughout her life. The Greek scholar arranges for the continuation of her education at the palace school of the Lord Bishop of Dorstadt, where she meets the red-haired knight Gerold, who is to become the love of her life. After a savage attack by Norsemen destroys the village, Joan adopts the identity of her older brother, slain in the raid, and makes her way to Fulda, to become the learned scholar and healer Brother John Anglicus. After surviving the plague, Joan goes to Rome, where her wisdom and medical skills gain her entrance into papal circles. The book brims with fairs, weddings and stupendous banquets, famine, plague and brutal battles. Joan is always central to the vivid action as she wars with the many sides of herself, "mind and heart, faith and doubt, will and desire."

The Pursuit of Alice Thrift by Elinor Lipman

8 copies

Lipman tells the tale of the maladroit, socially inept, and very appealing Alice Thrift. Alice, an intern in a Boston hospital, hopes to one day perform plastic surgery on the poor and disenfranchised. Her roommate is the hunky and charming Leo Frawley, a nurse in neonatal intensive care. Leo does his best to help Alice adapt to the politics and strife of the hospital and to become less of a social basket case. His quest is interrupted by his own love life and the entrance of Ray Russo, a man who decides Alice is for him. To call Ray awful and icky, and to shudder while saying so, is to compliment him. A traveling fudge salesman, he shows up all the time and somehow gets Alice to do what he wants.

Rain Gods by James Lee Burke

5 copies

In a heat-cracked border town, the bodies of nine illegal aliens are unearthed in a shallow grave. Haunted by a past he can't shake and his own private demons, Hack attempts to untangle the grisly case, which may lead to more bloodshed. Damaged young Iraq vet Pete Flores, who saw too much before fleeing the crime scene, and his girlfriend, Vikki Gaddis, are running for their lives. Sorting through the lowlifes who are hunting down Pete, and with Preacher Jack Collins, a God fearing serial killer for hire, in the mix, Hack is caught up in a terrifying race for survival—for Pete, Vikki, and himself.

A Real Basket Case by Beth Groundwater

7 copies

Drugs and jealousy add up to a Rocky Mountain murder. Claire Hanover, a Colorado Springs empty-nester whose husband Roger's self-image is tied to climbing the corporate ladder, is restless and lonely. Although Claire's gift-basket business is fun and profitable, her divorced friend Ellen, who helped with the startup, suggests that gym classes will improve her mood and looks. When a buff aerobics instructor comes on to Claire, her old pal thinks a little fling would be just the thing. But after Enrique talks Claire into a massage at her home, he's shot there, and Roger arrives in their bedroom holding the murder weapon. Claire can only watch stunned when he's arrested for murder

Redwall by Brian Jacques

11 copies

It has been ten years since readers around the world discovered the amazing creatures of Mossflower Wood. Ten years since they met the wicked one-eyed rat Cluny the Scourge and his battle-seasoned horde who vowed to conquer peace-loving Redwall Abbey. The question in this epic first volume is resoundingly clear: What can the peace-loving mice do to defend themselves against Cluny and his army of rats? If only they had the sword of Martin the Warrior, they might have a chance. But the legendary weapon has long been forgotten -- except, that is, by the bumbling young apprentice Matthias, who becomes the unlikeliest of heroes. Teeming with riddles, humor, unforgettable characters, and high bounding adventure, the Redwall epic, now in nine volumes, has become an internationally beloved classic.

Rhett Butler's People by Donald McCaig

12 copies

Fully authorized by the Margaret Mitchell estate, *Rhett Butler's People* is the novel that parallels *Gone With The Wind*. Here you'll meet Rhett as a boy, a free spirit who loved the marshes and tidewaters of the Low Country, and learn of the ruthlessness of Rhett's father, whose desire for control resulted in unspeakable. Through Rhett's eyes, you'll encounter those who shaped him in other ways: the Overseer's daughter, Belle Watling; Rosemary, Rhett's brave and determined sister; Tunis Bonneau, the son of freed slaves who understood the young Rhett like no one else; and Jack Ravanel, whose name became inextricably linked to heartbreak. And then there's Katie Scarlett O'Hara herself—the headstrong, passionate woman whose life is inextricably entwined with Rhett's: more like him than she cares to admit; more in love with him than either of them will ever know.

The Road by Cormac McCarthy

8 copies

A man and a boy, father and son, "each the other's world entire," walk a road in "the ashes of the late world." In this stunning departure from his previous work, McCarthy (*No Country for Old Men*, 2005) envisions a postapocalyptic scenario. Cities have been destroyed, plants and animals have died, and few humans survive. The sun is hidden by ash, and it is winter. With every scrap of food looted, many of the living have turned to cannibalism. The man and the boy plod toward the sea. The man remembers the world before; as his memories die, so, too dies that world. The boy was born after everything changed. The man, dying, has a fierce paternal love and will to survive--yet he saves his last two bullets for himself and his son. Although the holocaust is never explained, this is the kind of grim warning that leads to nightmares. Its spare, precise language is rich with other explorations, too: hope in the face of hopelessness, the ephemeral nature of our existence, the vanishing worlds we all carry within us. McCarthy evokes Beckett, using repetition and negation to crushing effect, showing us by their absence the things we will miss. Hypnotic and haunting, relentlessly dark, this is a novel to read in late-night solitude. Though the focus never leaves the two travelers, they carry our humanity, and we can't help but feel the world hangs in the balance of their hopeless quest. A masterpiece.

Road Dogs by Elmore Leonard

6 copies

Jack Foley and Cundo Rey are road dogs: trusted jailhouse comrades watching each other's back. They're so tight, Cundo's using his own money and his shark lady lawyer to get Foley's sentence reduced from thirty years to three months. And when Jack gets out, the wealthy Cuban criminal wants him to stay in Cundo's multimillion dollar Venice Beach house—right across from the one where Cundo's common-law wife, professional psychic Dawn Navarro, resides. There will certainly be some payback expected, though Jack can't figure out what. Sexy Dawn's intentions are a lot clearer. But Cundo's coming home earlier than anticipated, and Jack smells a double-cross cooking—the kind that could turn a road dog into road kill.

Rude Awakenings of a Jane Austen Addict by Laurie Viera Rigler

Laurie Viera Rigler's debut novel, *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict*, was a hit with fans and critics, and a bestseller. While *Confessions* took twenty-first-century free spirit Courtney Stone into the social confines of Jane Austen's era, *Rude Awakenings* tells the parallel story of Jane Mansfield, a gentleman's daughter from Regency England who inexplicably awakens in Courtney's overly wired and morally confused L.A. life. For Jane, the modern world is not wholly disagreeable. Her apartment may be smaller than a dressing closet, but it is fitted up with lights that burn without candles, machines that wash bodies and clothes, and a glossy rectangle in which tiny people perform scenes from her favorite book, *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane relishes the privacy, independence, even the power to earn her own money. But how can she navigate a world in which entire publications are devoted to brides but flirting and kissing and even the sexual act itself raise no matrimonial expectations? It's enough to make her wonder if she would be better off in her own time, where at least the rules are clear—that is, if returning is even an option.

Run by Ann Patchett

12 copies

Boston lawyer and ex-politician Bernard Doyle has nurtured his three sons—Sullivan, 33, and African American Tip, 21, and Teddy, 20, brothers adopted 20 years earlier—since the death of his beloved wife, Bernadette, some 15 years ago. Then, one snowy evening, Tip, inattentive and annoyed at his father, is pushed out of the way of an oncoming vehicle by a woman, herself hit and badly injured, who turns out to be the boys' birth mother and who's been watching the boys for years, along with her 11-year-old daughter, Kenya. The drama of a single day is given an unreal quality by the snow that curtails normal activity, as these vividly portrayed characters struggle with their circumstances: Sullivan, the prodigal whose mistake his father lied about; smart Tip; sweet Teddy; speedy runner Kenya; and her mother, Tennessee, whose dreamlike sequence in her hospital room reveals another twist in the family muddle.

Say You're One of Them by Uwem Akpan

10 copies

Nigerian-born Jesuit priest Akpan transports the reader into gritty scenes of chaos and fear in his rich debut collection of five long stories set in war-torn Africa. An Ex-mas Feast tells the heartbreaking story of eight-year-old Jigana, a Kenyan boy whose 12-year-old sister, Maisha, works as a prostitute to support her family. Jigana's mother quells the children's hunger by having them sniff glue while they wait for Maisha to earn enough to bring home a holiday meal. In Luxurious Hearses, Jubril, a teenage Muslim, flees the violence in northern Nigeria. Attacked by his own Muslim neighbors, his only way out is on a bus transporting Christians to the south. In Fattening for Gabon, 10-year-old Kotchikpa and his younger sister are sent by their sick parents to live with their uncle, Fofu Kpee, who in turn explains to the children that they are going to live with their prosperous godparents, who, as Kotchikpa pieces together, are actually human traffickers. Akpan's prose is beautiful and his stories are insightful and revealing, made even more harrowing because all the horror—and there is much—is seen through the eyes of children.

The Scarecrow by Michael Connelly

5 copies

Forced out of the Los Angeles Times amid the latest budget cuts, newspaperman Jack McEvoy decides to go out with a bang, using his final days at the paper to write the definitive murder story of his career. He focuses on Alonzo Winslow, a 16-year-old drug dealer in jail after confessing to a brutal murder. But as he delves into the story, Jack realizes that Winslow's so-called confession is bogus. The kid might actually be innocent. Jack is soon tracking a killer who operates completely below police radar--and with perfect knowledge of any move against him.

The Seduction of Water by Carol Goodman

10 copies (&cassette)

An aspiring writer delves into the long-buried mystery of her novelist mother's death. Water, from Iris Greenfeder's perspective, is the Hudson River. She has a view of it from her five-story walkup in New York City's westernmost Greenwich Village, and it shimmers in the distance from the Equinox, the Catskills hotel where Iris grew up. Her father, Ben, was the manager at the Equinox; her mother, Kay, a former maid, wrote two fantastical novels there. Driving the plot is the not-so-simple question: did Kay write a third novel, and is it hidden at the Equinox? Back at the hotel for the summer, Iris plans to write the story of her mother's life and search for the missing manuscript. As she attempts to solve the mystery, she is abetted and thwarted by a large cast of characters, including her mother's famous literary agent, the mega-millionaire owner of a hotel chain, the daughter of a famous suicidal poet, an all-knowing gardener and the delicious Aidan Barry, whom Iris meets while he's still in prison. Mystery, folklore, a thoroughly modern romance, a strong sense of place make this novel a treat.

The Senator's Wife by Sue Miller

10 copies

Meri is newly married, pregnant, and standing on the cusp of her life as a wife and mother. Delia—wife of the two-term liberal senator Tom Naughton—is Meri's new neighbor in the adjacent New England town house. Tom's chronic infidelity has been an open secret in Washington circles, but despite the complexity of their relationship, the bond between them remains strong. Soon Delia and Meri find themselves leading strangely parallel lives, as they both reckon with the contours and mysteries of marriage: one refined and abraded by years of complicated intimacy, the other barely begun.

Songs Without Words by Ann Packer

6 copies

Liz and Sarabeth's childhood friendship deepened following Sarabeth's mother's suicide when the girls were 16. Now the two women are in their 40s and living in the Bay Area. Responsible mother-of-two Liz has come to see eccentric, bohemian Sarabeth as more like another child than as a sister or mutually supportive friend. When Liz's teenage daughter, Lauren, perpetuates a crisis, Liz doubts her parenting abilities; Sarabeth is plunged into uncomfortable memories; and the hidden fragilities of what seemed a steadfast relationship come to the fore. Packer adroitly navigates Lauren's teen despair, Sarabeth's lonely longings and Liz's feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

Souvenir by Therese Fowler

6 copies

Meg Powell turned her back on the love of her life, Carson McKay, to marry Brian Hamilton, the scion of a banking family who saved her parents' farm from foreclosure in exchange for her hand. Now, 16 years later, Meg and Brian are so busy with their careers that they overlook their 16-year-old daughter, Savannah, who has typical adolescent concerns about being pretty and popular. Carson, meanwhile, has become a rock star and is now on the verge of marrying a much younger surfing champion, but he's never gotten over Meg. Trouble comes as Meg is diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease and Savannah meets an unsavory 23-year-old man online who woos her with the kind of positive reinforcement she wants to hear.

Spot of Bother by Mark Haddon

13 copies

George, recently retired, thinks talking is "overrated" and greets the death of a friend with relief "that they would not be playing squash again." Obsessed with his own mortality, he barely registers the dramas around him: his wife is having an affair, his daughter is marrying a man she's not sure she loves, and his son is afraid to bring his boyfriend to the wedding. Mild-mannered George, meanwhile, despairing over his health, slinks into a depression; his major coping strategies involve hiding behind furniture on all fours and lowing like a cow.

Street of a Thousand Blossoms by Gail Tsukiyama

11 copies

Tsukiyama, of both Chinese and Japanese descent, has explored the history and culture of both lands, here imagining life in Japan during its most catastrophic time as experienced by the orphaned brothers Hiroshi and Kenji. Raised by their loving grandparents in Yanaka, a residential area of Tokyo, they are opposites. Big, strong, and confident, Hiroshi believes he is destined to be a sumo wrestler. Slight, quiet, and artistic, Kenji discovers his love for mask making and Noh theater by accident. They each secure mentors, but just as the brothers embark on their demanding apprenticeships, war breaks out. Tsukiyama writes about the horrific deprivations and tyranny of war, the firebombing of Tokyo, the American occupation, and the rapid evolution of modern Japan. As her characters attempt to adjust to the new while preserving the old, Tsukiyama evokes a classic vision of a blasted world returning to life.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski

21 copies

Born mute, speaking only in sign, Edgar Sawtelle leads an idyllic life with his parents on their farm in remote northern Wisconsin. For generations, the Sawtelles have raised and trained a fictional breed of dog whose thoughtful companionship is epitomized by Almondine, Edgar's lifelong friend and ally. But with the unexpected return of Edgar's paternal uncle, Claude, turmoil consumes the Sawtelles' once peaceful home. When Edgar's father dies suddenly, Claude insinuates himself into the life of the farm--and into Edgar's mother's affections. Grief-stricken and bewildered, Edgar tries to prove Claude played a role in his father's death, but his plan backfires. Forced to flee into the vast wilderness lying beyond the farm, Edgar comes of age in the wild, fighting for his survival and that of the three dogs that follow him.

The Story Sisters by Alice Hoffman

5 copies

This is a many-storied novel about storytellers, brimming with magic and despair, atonement and redemption. The Story sisters, Elv, Meg, and Claire, are dark-haired beauties clustered in the attic of their old Long Island house, while their lonely mother broods below. Their all-female household, a sly variation on *Little Women*, is under a grim fairy-tale spell, and not even sojourns with their fairy-godmother-like grandmother in Paris can protect them. As always in Hoffman's glimmering universe, nature is an awesome presence reflected in the mercurial human heart, and consequently, the Story girls are preternaturally sensitive to storms, ghosts, and plant and animal spirits. The dazzling Hoffman has outdone herself in this bewitching weave of psychologically astute fantasy and shattering realism, encompassing rape, drug addiction, disease, and fatal accidents. Her alluring characters are soulful, their suffering mythic, and though the sorrows are many and the body count high, this is an entrancing and romantic drama shot through with radiant beauty and belief in human resilience and transformation.

Sudden Country by Karen Fisher

15 copies

From pieces of a journal written by an 11-year-old, Fisher weaves the story about Emma Ruth Ross and her family, the Mitchells, on the Oregon trail. "On April 15, 1847 we started from near Cedar Rapids Iowa," little Emma wrote. "After traveling six miles we were detained by a snow storm. We made a company of 42 wagons. . . . Past Missouri River was a violent storm the wind caught one of our wagons and overturned it, a man who was our driver killed beneath it. He had been with us 3 days." An estimated 2,000 people crossed the Missouri that April to journey on the Oregon Trail, in wagons drawn by oxen or horses or even on foot for great stretches of time, and it is in Fisher's fictionalized account of the Mitchells' journey, and, in particular, the story of Emma's mother, Lucy Mitchell, that *A Sudden Country* is at its best.

Swan by Frances Mayes

5 copies

J.J. Mason lives like a hermit in the woods outside the town of Swan, Georgia; his sister Ginger Mason works as an archaeologist in Italy. Their family has been in Swan forever; the whole town mourned when Caroline, Ginger, and J.J.'s mother committed suicide. Now the town joins in shock when Caroline's body is mysteriously and crudely exhumed. Ginger returns from Italy; J.J. comes into town. Over the course of a week in July 1975, and against a backdrop of townspeople, relatives, gossipy old biddies, and mill workers, the siblings explore the dark history of their mother's death.

Then We Came to the End by Joshua Ferris

7 copies

The dot-com bubble has burst and rolling layoffs have hit an unnamed Chicago advertising firm, sending employees into an escalating siege mentality as their numbers dwindle. As a parade of employees depart, bankers boxes filled with their personal effects, those left behind raid their fallen comrades' offices, sifting through the detritus for the errant desk lamp or Aeron chair. Written with confidence in the tricky-to-pull-off first-person plural, the collective fishbowl perspective of the "we" voice nails the dynamics of cubicle culture--the deadlines, the gossip, the elaborate pranks to break the boredom, the joy of discovering free food in the break room.

Thin Man by Dashiell Hammett

12 copies

Nick and Nora Charles, accompanied by their schnauzer, Asta, are lounging in their suite at the Normandie in New York City for the Christmas holiday, enjoying the prerogatives of wealth: meals delivered at any hour, theater openings, taxi rides at dawn, rubbing elbows with the gangster element in speakeasies. A lawyer-friend asks Nick to help find a killer and reintroduces him to the family of Richard Wynant, a more-than-eccentric inventor who disappeared from society 10 years before. His former wife, the lush and manipulative Mimi, has remarried a European fortune hunter who turns out to be a vindictive former associate of her first husband and is bent on the ruin of Wynant's family fortune. Wynant's children, Dorothy and Gilbert, seem to have inherited the family aversion to straight talk. Dorothy, who has matured into a beautiful young woman, has a crush on Nick, and so, in a hero-worshipping way, does mama's boy Gilbert. Nick and Nora respond kindly to their neediness as Nick tries to make sense of misinformation, false identities, far-fetched alibis, and, at the center of the confusion, the mystery of *The Thin Man*, Richard Wynant. Is he mad? Is he a killer? Or is he really an eccentric inventor protecting his discovery from intellectual theft?

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini 13 copies
The heroic plight of two women of different generations married to the same savagely abusive male. Born out of wedlock, Mariam was forced to marry 40-year-old Rasheed when she was only 15. Then, 18 years later, her still childless husband angrily takes an even younger wife. Hosseini renders the story of Mariam and her "sister/daughter," Laila, with persuasive detail and consummate humanity. Their abject situation leaves them no emotional space for idle philosophizing; their resistance is from the very core of their being.

A Thread of Grace by Mary Doria Russell 10 copies
Busy, noisy and heartfelt, this sprawling novel by Russell chronicles the Italian resistance to the Germans during the last two years of WWII. Three cultures mingle uneasily in Porto Sant'Andrea on the Ligurian coast of northwest Italy—the Italian Jews of the village, headed by the chief rabbi; the Italian Catholics; and the occupying Germans invited by Mussolini's crumbling regime. In the last camp is the drunken, tubercular Nazi deserter, Doktor Schramm, a broken man who confesses to Don Osvaldo that while working in state hospitals and Auschwitz, he was responsible for murdering 91,867 people. Meanwhile, Jewish refugees in southern France, including Albert Blum and his teenage daughter, Claudette, are fleeing across the Alps to Italy, hoping to find sanctuary there. Russell pursues numerous narrative threads, including the Blums' perilous flight over the mountains; Italian Jew Renzo Leoni's personal coming to terms with his participation in the Dolo hospital bombing during the Abyssinian campaign in 1935; the dangerous frenzy of the Italian partisans; and the bloody-mindedness of German officers resolved to carry out Hitler's murderous racial policy despite mounting evidence of its futility. The action moves swiftly, with impressive authority, vibrant personalities and meticulous, unexpected historical detail. The intensity and intimacy of Russell's storytelling, her sharp character writing and fierce sense of humor bring fresh immediacy to this riveting WWII saga.

Three Weeks to Say Goodbye by C.J. Box 9 copies
Jack McGuane and his wife suddenly discover that demonic Garrett Morland, the birth father of their dearly loved nine-month-old daughter, Angelina, didn't sign away his parental rights. Garrett and his powerful father, a sitting federal judge, give the McGuanes three weeks to return Angelina. Box's convincing villains—gangsters, murderers, child pornographers—each provide a different face of evil, and each individual has to decide how best to get at the truth.

Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson 6 copies
This is the story of Skip Sands—spy-in-training, engaged in Psychological Operations against the Vietcong—and the disasters that befall him thanks to his famous uncle, a war hero known in intelligence circles simply as the Colonel. This is also the story of the Houston brothers, Bill and James, young men who drift out of the Arizona desert into a war in which the line between disinformation and delusion has blurred away. Unfolding like a fever dream, *Tree of Smoke* captures a uniquely turbulent time in powerful images that linger long after the story ends.

Twelve Times Blessed by Jacquelyn Mitchard 10 copies
It is True Dickinson's birthday and her best friends have gathered on this snowy night to celebrate—yet True has never felt more alone. Though her small business is thriving and her young son is happy, the death of her husband eight years ago has left an empty space in her life that friends and family cannot fill. Suddenly it seems that youth and beauty are slipping away while True is busily taking care of everyone else. But on this night, an accident on an icy road will offer True the golden opportunity to let love back into her life—if she can somehow conquer her fears.

Unaccustomed Earth by Jhumpa Lahiri

9 copies

This collection's five powerful stories and haunting triptych of tales about the fates of two Bengali families in America map the perplexing hidden forces that pull families asunder and undermine marriages. "Unaccustomed Earth," the title story, dramatizes the divide between immigrant parents and their American-raised children, and is the first of several scathing inquiries into the lack of deep-down understanding and trust in a marriage between a Bengali and non-Bengali.

Villa Incognito by Tom Robbins

9 copies

Imagine there are American MIAs who chose to remain missing after the Vietnam War. Imagine a family in which four generations of strong, alluring women share a mysterious connection to an outlandish figure from Japanese folklore. Imagine them part of a novel that only Tom Robbins could create—a magically crafted work as timeless as myth yet as topical as the latest international threat. But no matter how hard you try, you'll never imagine what you'll find inside the Villa Incognito: a tilt-a-whirl of identity, masquerade, and disguise that dares to pull off "the false mustache of the world" and reveal the even greater mystery underneath. For neither the mists of Laos nor the Bangkok smog, neither the overcast of Seattle nor the fog of San Francisco, neither the murk of the intelligence community nor the mummery of the circus can obscure the pure linguistic phosphor that illuminates every page of one of America's most consistently surprising and inventive writers.

The Voice of the Butterfly by John Treadwell Nichols

7 copies

Charley McFarland, an aging but politically active hippie, has a new cause. He and his friends are trying to prevent the powers-that-be in Suicide City from erecting a highway that will cut through a section of land that is home to an endangered species of butterfly. He is joined in his effort by his 92-year-old friend, Lydia; his punk son, Luther; Susan, an eccentric newspaper reporter; and his estranged, alcoholic wife, Kelly. Together they form the Butterfly Coalition. But they are facing a determined bureaucracy led by some of the town's most powerful politicians. The Butterfly Coalition faces problems from the inside, too: Kelly, their gifted speechwriter, is quickly destroying herself with alcohol. When the coalition finally gets some press after Kelly crashes their van into a fast-food joint, the highway vote suddenly attracts national attention. Nichols has a distinguished publishing career, but his latest novel is so over-the-top that at times it's hard to care about the characters or the cause they represent. Still, there are some truly humorous moments, and fans of Nichols will probably be curious.

When the Emperor was Divine by Julie Otsuka

8 copies

Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine* tells one Japanese American family's story of internment in a Utah enemy alien camp during World War II. We never learn the names of the young boy and girl who were forced to leave their Berkeley home in 1942 and spend over three years in a dusty, barren desert camp with their mother. Occasional, heavily censored letters arrive from their father, who had been taken from their house in his slippers by the FBI one night and was being held in New Mexico, his fate uncertain.

When Will There be Good News? By Kate Atkinson

10 copies

On a hot summer day, Joanna Mason's family slowly wanders home along a country lane. A moment later, Joanna's life is changed forever. On a dark night thirty years later, ex-detective Jackson Brodie finds himself on a train that is both crowded and late. Lost in his thoughts, he suddenly hears a shocking sound. At the end of a long day, 16-year-old Reggie is looking forward to watching a little TV. Then a terrifying noise shatters her peaceful evening. Luckily, Reggie makes it a point to be prepared for an emergency. These three lives come together in unexpected and deeply thrilling ways.

While I'm Falling by Laura Moriarty

5 copies

Moriarty exposes the underbelly of family strife in this coming-of-age college drama set near Lawrence, Kans. One day, Veronica Von Holten is happy, med-school bound, in love with her boyfriend and not far from her supportive family. Then her father finds another man in the bed he shares with his wife of 26 years. As a messy divorce ensues, Veronica struggles to keep her own life in check while her mother's unravels, and a car accident, a house-sitting gig gone bad and an illicit kiss turn Veronica's personal life upside down. Things come to a head when her mother shows up on Veronica's dorm doorstep with the elderly family dog, Bowzer. Veronica is faced with the difficult task of navigating personal strife on top of her family's struggle to define itself anew. Moriarty (*The Rest of Her Life*) delves into this realistic but narrow world with an inviting honesty and creates a cast of vivid and flawed characters that will hold readers rapt with a queasy sense of unease.

The White Mary by Kira Salak

5 copies

A young reporter embarks on a dangerous adventure in Salak's gripping debut novel, a blend of *Heart of Darkness* and *Tomb Raider*. Like her protagonist, Marika Vecera, award-winning journalist Salak has traveled solo—and narrowly escaped death—in the world's most remote and terrifying places, including war-torn Congo and the interior of Papua New Guinea. Marika, an ambitious journalist, travels to discover the truth about war correspondent Robert Lewis, who has observed some of the modern world's greatest atrocities. He is believed to have committed suicide, but a letter from a missionary leaves Marika thinking he may still be alive in the wilds of Papua New Guinea. She sets off on her quest, and eventually malaria, ritual murder and arduous trekking through the wilderness lead Marika to some startling discoveries and a pathway out of her own past trauma. While the book can be harrowing (the graphic descriptions of torture are sobering and hard to put out of mind), it offers Marika a redemptive optimism in the face of the worst humanity has to offer.

Wicked Prey by John Sanford

5 copies

The 2008 Republican convention serves as the backdrop for bestseller Sandford's amped-up, ultra-violent 19th thriller to feature Lucas Davenport of the Minneapolis Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (after *Phantom Prey*). An assassination plot aimed at John McCain turns out to be just a sidebar to another criminal operation—extremely slick thieves have come to the twin cities to rob Republican political operatives loaded down with millions of dollars of street money, illegal handouts for low-level campaign workers. Mastermind Rosie Cruz handles the gang's complicated planning, while gangster Brutus Cohn does the robbery and killing aided by a couple of lesser thugs. A subplot involving Davenport's teenage ward, Letty West, who's provided interesting complications in the series, establishes her as a brave and intrepid investigator. A slam-bang shootout climax proves that Davenport still has what it takes when it comes to guts and gunplay.

World Without End by Ken Follett

9 copies

World Without End takes place in the town of Kingsbridge, two centuries after the townspeople finished building an exquisite Gothic cathedral. The cathedral and the priory are at the center of a web of love and hate, greed and pride, ambition and revenge, but this sequel stands on its own. This time the men and women of an extraordinary cast of characters find themselves at a crossroad of new ideas— about medicine, commerce, architecture, and justice. In a world where proponents of the old ways fiercely battle those with progressive minds, the intrigue and tension quickly reach a boiling point against the devastating backdrop of the greatest natural disaster ever to strike the human race—the Black Death.

Children's and Teen Books

A Corner of the Universe by Ann M. Martin

11 copies

It is 1960, Hattie Owen is about to turn 12, and her world is about to be turned upside down. She loves her small town and the boarding house her parents run (enabling her father to pursue his art), in part because of the security and familiarity her surroundings represent. The boarders seem to be as much a part of the family as her grandparents, who live in a mansion and literally look down their noses at the Owens. But Hattie's perceptions of life in general--and her life in particular--change when 21-year-old Uncle Adam returns to town after his residential school closes. Adam seems to be manic-depressive, and he's a savant when it comes to dates. He's news to Hattie, but he mostly delights her, and she feels she can help him. His problems, however, are more than anyone--including Adam--can handle. **Grades 6-8**

The Giver by Lois Lowry

14 copies

In the "ideal" world into which Jonas was born, everybody has sensibly agreed that well-matched married couples will raise exactly two offspring, one boy and one girl. At age 12 the children will receive an appropriate career assignment, sensibly chosen by the community's Elders. This is a world in which the old live in group homes and are "released"--to great celebration--at the proper time; the few infants who do not develop according to schedule are also "released," but with no fanfare. Until the time that Jonas begins training for his job assignment--the rigorous and prestigious position of Receiver of Memory--he, too, is a complacent model citizen. But as his near-mystical training progresses, and he is weighed down and enriched with society's collective memories of a world as stimulating as it was flawed, Jonas grows increasingly aware of the hypocrisy that rules his world. **Grades 6-8**

The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman

14 copies

Lyra, apparently an orphan, lives among the scholars at Jordan College, Oxford. She becomes aware of a plot to steal children and transport them to the far north. As Lyra is drawn deeper and deeper into this mystery, she finds that the children are being made to suffer terribly. What she does not, and must not know, is that she is the keystone in an ancient prophecy. Her destiny is to save her world and to move on into a parallel universe. She dives headlong into harrowing adventures, totally unaware of her importance. She also discovers the identity of her parents, who are major players in the unfolding drama. **Grades 6-8**