

Staff Recommends 2017

- *As Good As Gone* by Larry Watson (Fiction)
Larry Watson has a way with place, conversation, relationships, and language that is straightforward and precise. Reminiscent of Kent Haruf's writing.
- *Not My Father's Son* by Alan Cumming (Memoir)
This is a celebrity memoir that really doesn't have much to do with celebrity. Instead it shares the hard won, difficult story of this resilient and open performer.
- *One Crazy Summer* (book #1 of the Gaither Sisters-Juvenile Fiction)
This book was written for and about young people, but it's a story for a reader of any age who wants to see the world through the eyes of a young African American girl growing up during the Civil Rights movement and learning to navigate the world with a set of rules that this reader never had to comprehend.
Book #2 P.S. Be Eleven and Book #3: Gone Crazy in Alabama
- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr (Historical Fiction)
Pulitzer Prize winner for Fiction 2015. A beautiful, stunningly ambitious story about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. The San Francisco Chronicle said, "Doerr's 'stunning sense of physical detail and gorgeous metaphors' are dazzling." By far, the best book I read in 2016.
- *The Chaperone* by Laura Moriarty (Historical Fiction)
This interesting and fun novel is inspired by the life of silent-film star Louise Brooks. Louise is a country girl who in 1922 heads from Witchita, Kansas for a summer in New York City and takes with her a respectable neighbor Cora Carlisle who is sent as a chaperone to keep her in line. Cora's eyes are opened for the first time to big city life liberating her in a whole new way. A great friendship book with a tribute to old Hollywood in the silent movie era.
- *The Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving* by Jonathan Evison (Fiction)
After losing virtually everything meaningful in life, Benjamin trains to be a caregiver, but his first client, a fiercely independent teen with muscular dystrophy, gives him more than he bargained for and the two set off on a road trip to visit the boy's ailing father.
- *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney (Picture Book)
This is one of my all-time favorite books about art, travel and making the world a more beautiful place. Even the dedication is wonderful as it is to St. Nicholas, patron saint of children, sailors, and maidens.
- *Rising Strong* by Brene Brown (Self-Help/Personal Achievement)
This is a powerful book about how an individual can make a difference in their own life and the world.

- *A Touch of Stardust* by Kate Alcott (Historical Fiction)
 If you enjoy old films and the celebrities of Old Hollywood then you will love this book. Julie Crawford leaves Indiana for Hollywood where she crosses paths with Clark Gable and Carole Lombard. She works for demanding producer David O. Selznick who is busy filming “Gone with the Wind”. She becomes friends with Carole Lombard who has a relationship with Gable even though he is technically married. You get a first-hand witness to Gable and Lombard, other actors, and directors of the era who are as colorful as the characters they portray. This would be a great read alone or as a companion novel to “All the Stars in the Heavens” by Adrianna Trigiani.
- *Sweetland* by Michael Crumley (Literary Fiction)
 Matching the setting, you can feel the remoteness and isolation experienced by Sweetland. His world is disappearing and he is resisting any way he knows how. Read-alike authors and why they are include: Anne Enright: character driven and topic of home, Richard Ford: family/interpersonal relationships, John Irving: misfit characters, and Annie Proulx: setting, language, and relationships.
- *Sarah’s Key* by Tatiana De Rosnay (Historical Fiction/Holocaust Fiction)
 Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel’ d’Hiv roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family’s apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. Paris, May 2002: On Vel’d’Hiv’s 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France’s past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl’s ordeal, from that terrible time in the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah’s past, she begins to question her own place in France and to reevaluate her marriage and her life. This is my favorite book on the Holocaust as I could not put it down and provoked so much thought on what to do when faced with moral dilemmas.
- *The Whole Town’s Talking* by Fannie Flagg (Fiction)
 Fannie Flagg sets this story in a town that you want to live in; where the people are friendly and care about each other. In the late 1890s we meet the Swedish immigrants that settle the land that eventually became the town of Elmwood Springs, Missouri. With Flagg’s storytelling prowess, the characters become real with the joys and disappointments of everyday life. As the years go by, follow the town peoples from courtship to marriage, children, and their deepening friendship with each other. Yes, you do find out what the whole town is talking about!
- *Rise of the Rocket Girls* by Nathalia Holt (Nonfiction)
 This is the story of women working at the Jet Propulsion Lab who helped propel the U.S. into space. The women were hired as “computers” to calculate jet velocities, missile trajectories, and finally space probes in the beginning of the

JPL's existence. The women who came through JPL were encouraged to take college classes to further their careers. Eventually these brilliant women became computer programmers and engineers for NASA. This is the book about women who had the "right stuff" so men could orbit the earth, land on the moon, and map the solar system. When the book was published in 2016, one of the women was still working at JPL.

- *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards (Realistic Fiction)
This is a beautiful story of love, family, and accepting differences. It starts in 1964 when a doctor is delivering his own twins. One twin, a son, is perfectly healthy and the other twin, a daughter, has Down Syndrome. He asks his nurse to take the baby with Down Syndrome to an institution. Instead she disappears into another city to raise the child as her own. The story follows the families as time goes on and ends with how they end up interweaving. This is an unforgettable page-turner full of emotion. I loved it!
- *Did You Ever Have a Family* by Bill Clegg (Literary Fiction)
Surviving a disaster that kills everyone in her family, June relocates West and settles into a directionless existence while other people impacted by the tragedy struggle with new circumstances. (Not as depressing as it sounds.)
- *The Last Days of Night* by Graham Moore (Historical Fiction)
Fascinating legal thriller takes the reader in into the last 1800's, a period of dramatic scientific, engineering and social change. Imagine a time when the night was truly dark. Candle and gaslight did not pierce the darkness. Genius, ambition, creativity, and passion drove some of the greatest minds of the century, as did deceit, trickery, and corruption. Based on the real lives of Thomas Edison, George Westinghouse, Nikola Tesla and a young attorney, Paul Cravath, this book is a captivating page turner. Even those familiar with the Edison/Westinghouse wars will be stunned by the extremes they went to, bringing an end to a world without light at night! Underlying it all is a love story. Coming to us soon as a major motion picture, this book is a cracking good tale.
- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle (Science Fiction)
A 1963 Newberry Medal Winner.
- *Shakespeare: The World as Stage* by Bill Bryson (Non-fiction Audio Book)
Who was Shakespeare? What was it like to live in his time? Bill Bryson takes these questions on with his characteristic wit. You will remember more from this book than any history class on Shakespeare. You will learn things like: "why the water is more turbulent under a bridge" and that Shakespeare coined many phrases we use today, such as "vanish into thin air."
- *At the Water's Edge* by Sara Gruen (Fiction)
Gruen tells the story of a society woman who learns about life during a trip to Scotland. In 1944, Ellis and Maddie are financially cut off from their family after

behaving badly at a party. In order to gain favor with their family, Ellis, Maddie, and their friend Hank decide to find the Loch Ness Monster. The trio flies to Scotland and set out to find the legendary monster. It is Maddie who makes a life changing discovery during the trip-and it isn't the monster!

- *Orphan Train* by Christina Baker Kline (Realistic and Historical Fiction)
This is a page-turner as I could relate so with the Maine connection and the multigenerational friendship between Vivian and Molly. I also loved the historical connection of the immigrant children and orphan trains. It was great writing; interesting, heartwarming, and thought-provoking. Someone please make a movie out of this book!!!
- *How I Write: Secrets of a Bestselling Author* by Janet Evanovich (Nonfiction audio book)
This book is funny, full of writing and publishing tips, and probably enjoyable even if you aren't a writer. For example, how do you research the dating lives of twentysomethings if you're a middle aged woman? You make your daughter take you out to nightclubs.
- *Blind Goddess* by Anne Holt (Mystery)
First book in the Hanne Wilhelmsen mystery series. Setting: Oslo, Norway, police department in the 1990s. Hanne is a detective with a sharp wit, exceptional investigative skills, and a crew of officers who want to either date her or be like her. She is also a lesbian who hides her personal life from her coworkers, not unusual for the job and times. There are currently 8 books in the series, covering up to 2007. The plotting and characters are good, but the real joy of the books is how the series unravels the complex character of Hanne Wilhelmsen. Start the series with this book
- *Snow Day* by Billy Coffey (Inspirational Realistic Fiction)
A genuinely sweet and inspiring book about a husband and father who worries that his job will be cut in a small West Virginia town and how on one snow day discovers what is truly important through the people he meets at the store, neighbors, and his own family. This is the perfect book for a snow day as it is at times humorous but always heartfelt.
- *The Story of Holly and Ivy* by Rumer Godden (Picture Book)
I discovered this book when I was in college and it has become a tradition to read it around Christmas with my family. It is a book about wishes and making your own reality. Plus the illustrator is Maine's own Barbara Cooney!
- *Sleeping Giants* by Sylvian Neuvel (Science fiction)
When Rose was a child she fell through a crevice in the earth and landed on a giant robotic hand. As an adult Rose is now a physicist researching the artifact. Her team includes army officers and a graduate student. All bring different strengths and potential weaknesses to the group as they try to solve the enigma.

As they race to solve the mystery a question looms over them: if they solve the mystery will it benefit humanity or harm humanity? The story is told in transcripts, interviews, and journal entries. Be warned this story is a trilogy! The second is coming late spring!

- *Mr. Emerson's Wife* by Amy Belding Brown (Historical fiction)
Beautiful writing that is like stepping into a time machine to Concord during the Transcendentalist period. The reader will come to know Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and his wife, like old friends. It is the perfect blend of history and romance with a literary love triangle that I didn't see coming!
- *The Shoemaker's Wife* by Adriana Trigiani (Historical fiction that brings the reader to present day)
It is a breathtaking multigenerational love story that spans two continents, two World Wars, and the quest of two star-crossed lovers to find each other again. It follows an Italian family from Italy to Little Italy in America and their triumphs and struggles. This is one of my favorite books and authors. My favorite book by this author, I have to admit.