Great Summer Books

Librarians at Fairfield University’s DiMenna-Nyselius Library have put together a list of 11 fabulous book recommendations—everything from a dystopian thriller that’s impossible to put down to the secrets of some of the world’s greatest artists. Enjoy the summer!


The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics by Daniel James Brown (2013). Fast-paced and inspiring story of the determination, drive, endurance, trust, sacrifice and teamwork by the eight-man rowing team of the University of Washington who beat all odds to win the 1936 Olympics in Berlin by six tenths of a second. Recommended by Joan Overfield, University Librarian.

The Burgess Boys (2013) and Olive Kitteridge (2008, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction), both by Elizabeth Strout. You can take the boy out of Maine, but you can’t take the Maine out of the boy – no one does New England family angst like Elizabeth Strout! Recommended by Jackie Kremer, Reference Department.

Daily Rituals: How Artists Work edited by Mason Currey (2013). Work-life balance is always tricky to master, so it is fascinating to read about the ways that famous historical creators – artists, writers, philosophers, scientists, and more – structured their days. Recommended by Brooke Duffy, Reference Department.

Divergent by Veronica Roth (2011). A young-adult dystopian novel, set in Chicago, is a story of thrilling choices and hard consequences. The novel is the first in a trilogy and is now a movie to rival Hunger Games. Recommended by Christina McGowan, Assistant University Librarian.

Holding on Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore by Linda Leavell (2013). This is the first major biography of this American Poet. A review in Choice Magazine notes: “This biography is honest, elegant, and circumspect, not controversial or confessional.” Recommended by Keith Stetson, Collection Development Department.


Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation by Dan Fagin (2013, Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction). Author Dan Fagin seamlessly weaves together aspects of history, technology, ecology, medicine and community to tell the story of one of the most harrowing of realities a townspeople can face. Recommended by John Cayer, Interlibrary Services Department.

You’re Not You by Michelle Wildgen (2007). In this novel, Bec, an adrift college junior, takes a job caring for a woman with ALS. They form an interesting, complex relationship that forces Bec’s life into focus in unexpected ways. Great writing and a very moving story. Recommended by Curtis Ferree, Reference Department.

The Financial Lives of the Poets: A Novel by Jess Walter (2009). The hilarious plot of this novel serves as a commentary on contemporary life and will have you laughing out loud at times. Recommended by Joan Clark, Reference Department.