

2024 Books Read

Biography/Autobiography/Memoir: 7 (-11)

Bechdel, Alison - Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic

Filed under graphic novel

Bell, Darrin - The Talk

Filed under graphic novel

Irving, Debby - Waking Up White

I have to keep in mind that this is more of a memoir than it is a “what to do” book. She keeps saying how “in her house...” or “with her family...” which shows me this is one person’s journey into work around race. I thought this was more of an entry-level book, but some parts that aren’t will turn (scare?) off those entry-level readers. I’ll be reflecting on my own “white culture/norms” and how my family fits into the behaviors that hold racial barriers in place - and then try to notice (and adjust) those in the classroom when I’m back teaching. I wrote about it [here](#).

Locke, Tembi - From Scratch

Something different for me. Bawled in the second (long) chapter when she described how her husband was dying, and got tired of hearing (on the audio version) / reading “quintessentially Sicilian,” but I loved hearing a bit of what Sicilian life can be like. I enjoyed learning about how the author deals with her grief.

Mah, Adeline Yen - Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter

Was terribly sad. Then it got even sadder. I feel for children that are treated as she was.

Martin, Pedro - Mexikid

Filed under graphic novel

Moore, Kate - The Woman They Could Not Silence: One woman, her incredible fight for freedom, and the men who tried to make her disappear

Just what the title says. Elizabeth Packard, buried in Rosehill Cemetery (Chicagoland), did so much for women, and so much for those labeled “insane.” Amazing what she endured, how she persevered, and all she succeeded in doing after she was wrongfully made to live in an asylum for three years. Quote I’m keeping: “What is an insane person’s testimony worth? *Nothing*.” I’m glad this one was on audio, as well.

Moore, Wes - The Other Wes Moore

I’m glad I know this story - it will help me gain even more perspective, and it will help me wonder even more about our lives.

Obama, Michelle - Becoming

I do like memoirs. This one was accompanied (for me) by the audiobook read by the author. I loved learning about her story, learning a bit more about Barack Obama, and now I'm intrigued and would love to read other FLOTUS stories.

Ruhl, Sarah - The Story of a Face

I just happened to see this at the library as I was browsing for other books. I picked it up because of my own left side of my face and the trauma it went through a year and a half ago. The nerves on that side are still disappointing me in many ways, though not as a result of Bell's palsy. I'm glad she chronicled her story for us to see how she dealt for over a decade with her "fallen" face. She's inspired me to write a blog post about my own disappointment.

Saade, Ernesto - Just Another Story: A Graphic Migration Account

Filed under graphic novel

Fantasy: 3

Mass, Sarah J. - A Court of Thorns and Roses

Beauty and the Beast remade with more sex, violence, and secrets.

Messner, Kate - All the Answers

I'd put this one off for a long time. It's PERFECT for seventh graders. Half-way through, I gasped, and a student asked me what happened, and of course I couldn't tell her... This one had it all: anxiety, trial and error, friendships, heartbreak, and surprises. I shed a couple of tears, and it was such a quick read.

Yarros, Rebecca - The Fourth Wing (The Emphyrean #1)

With this book, I learned the term "romantasy." Very very much fantasy, which I can totally hack, but I didn't appreciate when they were at death's door that they would still think of one another in a sexual fashion. Seriously? A bit much for me, but maybe because I've read a lot of romances lately. I will not be checking out the second book, but I like how it ended with that twist, and the one redeeming part in the book for me was the message from her dad. Without that, the book wouldn't be a four-star for me. PS - the audio on this one is like a movie... I had to check it out, because my book was due, but I'd rather read the book then listen to this audio.

Graphic Novel: 6

Bechdel, Alison - Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic

Was it about the author's father? Her relationship with her father? Just a snippet of their lives together? The allusions to literature are non-stop, and I haven't read those books, so I was put off. As for the books or stories I had read that she alluded to, I didn't feel the need for those references. This was just... heavy. (My mistake - I thought it would be "fun." Don't guess a book's content by its title. I should've read "tragicomic," too.)

Bell, Darrin - The Talk

This one was so good - and so true - that I had to read it in one sitting. The illustrations added so much more to his story - so heartbreaking, and so full of life and passion.

Hill, Jonathan - Tales of a Seventh-Grade Lizard Boy

This one was...different. Suggested by a seventh-grader, and it took me no time. Lessons? Um... anyone can be anything? Befriend others who seem different? I liked the author's notes better than the book itself. The kids would like it.

Khan, Henna - We Are Big Time

Great, quick graphic novel based on the Salam School girls' varsity high school basketball team in Milwaukee, WI, during their 2018-2019 season.

Martin, Pedro - Mexikid

I snorted at a couple of parts! I also worried for his abuelito, being stopped at the border, digging up his abuela's body..... Loved this graphic novel memoir!

Saade, Ernesto - Just Another Story: A Graphic Migration Account

This is a graphic novel true account about a young man of 19 and his mom crossing the border from El Salvador into the U.S.

Historical Fiction: 15

Badani, Sejal - The Storyteller's Secret

I kept wondering... what other secrets is Ravi going to share in his tale of Jaya's grandmother, Amisha?? It was dramatic, sometimes predictable, and yet I was drawn into the story and wanted to know Jaya's grandmother's story. I know it led us to know more about her mother, Lena, but I finished the book wanting more of that tangent.

Edugyan, Esi - Washington Black

I liked this one a lot. It intrigued me most of the way. (I wasn't a fan of the ending. In fact, I don't know, really, what it meant.) I loved how the author put words together to create the meaning that often had me awed. 1830s from Barbados to the far North to England and then to Morocco. I also listened to this one - the reader on the audio version is good.

Grodstein, Lauren - We Must Not Think of Ourselves

I had to keep reading. (I also had this one on audio via Libby, and it was so good via audio.) This was based on the Oneg Shabbat Archive (thanks to Emanuel Ringelblum) in Warsaw, and it takes place entirely in the Warsaw Ghetto from 1940-1942, during the first of the mass deportations.

Hannah, Kristin - The Four Winds

I could say it was too depressing (1921 when the main character isn't loved, then 1934 Dust

Bowl, loss, floods, unfair wages, etc.), but I kept wanting to read more. I could say that I didn't learn any valuable lesson, but out of the many, one right now is about how you just have to keep working, even when it feels like too much - and that lesson is not about love and passion, which I think the book was really about. I wouldn't have chosen this book on my own - a student's mom gave it to me for winter break - but I liked the main character, Elsa. We should all be a bit more like her.

Hood, Susan - Alias Anna: A True story of outwitting the Nazis

Written in prose, we learn about "Anna" (who is really Zhanna) and her struggles as a Jew in Ukraine during WWII. Have you heard of the killing field of Drobitsky Yar? Me neither. There's a monument in Ukraine for the 4,300 known names of the 16,000 people who died there, and Zhanna's name is on it. She was supposed to have died. How did music save her - and her sister? I have this labeled "historical fiction," but it's really NONfiction. This is a fast book that taught me a lot in a short amount of time. Another facet of WWII that many might not know.

Jackson, Linda Williams - Midnight Without a Moon

Loved this book, even if it's much too mature for my current 7th graders. The language comes direct from 1955 Mississippi. The themes are mature for my students, even though the main character is thirteen. She (Rose), too, is way more mature than my 7th graders. Great book - real, honest, scary, and based on the truth.

Kesey, Ken - One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

I'm putting this under "historical fiction" because it's been 60 years, and hopefully things have changed for the better. I was too young to watch the movie, but I remember clips of Jack Nicholson, and I've always been intrigued. I thought it was going to be scary, but it was sadder than I thought it would be. I didn't know how it would end - what would McMurphy decide to do next, and where would it get the men in the ward? I'm going to watch the movie soon - I'm sure the book will be much better.

Marsh, Katherine - The Lost Year

I loved this. The pre-teen in 2020, his GG (great grandma) from Ukraine, and three girls from Ukraine in 1933 are such characters! I love how the story had me guessing at who was who (at the start) and who was going to stay in the story or not... I learned about the Holodomor and life in Stalin-ruled Ukraine in 1933, as well. I'd never heard of the Ukrainian famine in my life. I'm going to give this one 5 stars, which I rarely do. It just had so much (reporting and primary sources, and writing and interviewing, too) and kept me intrigued.

Richardson, Kim Michelle - The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek

It's true, as one character said, "A sneaky time thief is in them books." A book about a woman and Kentucky hill folk of Appalachia who love books? Yes, please. I picked this one up because someone who lived in Appalachia thought it was one of the ten books about it better than *Hillbilly Elegy*. It showed the struggles of all the humans who lived there in the 1930s, and it also showed the struggles of "colored" people and a family who was "colored" blue. Based on the

Fugate family who had what doctors later called “methemoglobinemia” and the struggles of getting books (education!) to those who lived in the hills, I loved this book. I thought it would end a little too perfect, but then more true-to-life historical issues came up. I love a good book that steals my time...

Rutledge, Lynda - West with Giraffes

This one gets five stars from me - no question about it. I'm in love with Wild Girl and Boy (the giraffes), Woody Nickel (the boy-turned-man), Old Man, and Red, too. So much adventure, so many intense moments, and so much love pours from this tale from 1938.

Schlitz, Laura Amy - Amber and Clay

I didn't know what to think when I started this book. It grew and grew on me, though. I used the audio version for some parts, too, and it's a good voice. I loved learning about some customs, and I loved it when Sokrates was included. "Be your own master." Yes. There was a touch of stoicism in this novel.

Velchin, Eugene - Breaking Stalin's Nose

I enjoyed the author's note more than the book itself. It did what the author wanted it to do for me, for sure - I could see how the fear could permeate their lives.

Verghese, Abraham - The Covenant of Water

I saved this behemoth until the end of the year, knowing that I didn't have to finish in 2024. I haven't read a “big” book in awhile. Tracing the family and friends and their stories and dates was a bit tricky, but I didn't take notes to help me, and I got through it alright. I can see how talking it over with a group when we were finished would be helpful -and would bring back memories that probably make readers remember connections better. It was... soothing. There were many parts that were surprising/shocking, and many characters perished or had someone close to them perish, but overall, it was soothing. I saved four quotes, and this one is probably the lesson I should learn from it (from the Bible): “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...”

Walker, Alice - The Color Purple

I had no clue what this book was about - I just dove in. And I read it in two days, because there was so much depth (in really few words) that I had to keep reading. Then I picked up the Sparks/Cliff notes to gain further understanding. SPOILER ALERT: As the notes say, “we have seen the remarkable transformation of an impoverished, abused woman of color into a successful proprietor entrepreneur who delights in her own sexuality and is enmeshed in a supportive, -loving community.” They also say, “For Walker, the most basic indication of victory is the ability to tell one's story.”

And I love how the gender roles became mixed at the end, as well. “Shug act more manly than most men...he say. You know Shug will fight, he say. Just like Sofia. She bound to live her life and be herself no matter what.

Mr. _____ think all this is stuff men do. But harpo no like this, I tell him. You not like this.

What Shug got is womanly it seem like to me. Specially since she and Sofia the ones got it.”

Woodson, Jacqueline - Remember Us

Fast, short read. I felt sad for most of it, even if the end showed hope and movement. The author's note is important, and I'm glad she shared that information.

How To and/or Self Help: 10

Andrews, Andy - The Noticer

Sweet story. My #OneWord for this year is “notice,” and I liked this one. I read it almost all in one setting.

Collins, Tim - Live More Sloth: Slow Down, Chill Out and Live in the Sloth Lane

Cute.

Duncan, Shannon - Present Moment Awareness: A Simple, step-by-step guide to living in the now

I've read about the things in this book in other books. Nothing new for me - except for the Focus Tool" that I decided to try (with an intermittent timer app on my phone) that may help me stay in the present moment when I hear that chime. My (brief) notes are [HERE](#).

Heath, Chip & Dan - The Power of Moments

Sounded like a sales pitch, and yet a lot of ideas made a lot of sense. I recognized my own moments that mattered in my life so far - attaching the different elements they share to them. I started thinking about how I could use this for teaching, and small ideas crept up as I read. My notes are [HERE](#).

Jackson, Regina & Saira Rao - White Women: Everything You Already Know About Your Own Racism and How to Do Better

Wow. This book pulls no punches. I'm done now, and I STILL keep thinking of the first three chapters. Thinking of reading it? Look at the subtitle. It's true, yet I needed these two authors to show me how true it is. Now I'm more aware, which I consider a start. If you've read White Fragility or So You Want to Talk about Race, this may be your next one. I liked it even better than Me and White Supremacy (which was another one that pulls no punches). This one, directed right at white women - so powerful for me. It will help me continue on my journey. Thank you to Regina Jackson and Saira Rao. My post about it is [here](#).

McAlary, Brooke - Slow: Simple living for a frantic world

Cute. Nothing new in here, just a simple book of steps to help me slow down my life a bit more.

Robertson, Donald - Stoicism and the Art of Happiness: Practical wisdom for everyday life

When I finished the 366 Days of Stoic Meditation book, I needed to know more. I wanted

something concrete to DO, so that I could remember the main points of stoicism. So I picked up this book. It was very detailed, so instead of trying to understand every word, I just kept reading in parts. I think it will help me grow further. I kept notes for it [HERE](#).

Saad, Layla - Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Better Ancestor

I didn't just jump into this book. I did some work beforehand, so I maybe it was easier for me to digest than others that read it. If you don't want to start your antiracist journey on such a strong note, try WHITE FRAGILITY or SO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT RACE first. This one is good to try in a book club, as I did. I'm more committed to trying to do my best - again - after reading this one. #1 Don't hide what I'm reading from my parents or my colleagues. #2 Don't use my privilege to hide from the difficult conversations. #3 Keep learning from BIPOC.

Sanders, George - Congratulations, by the way

It's not really a book - it's a Syracuse University graduation speech (2013). And I LOVED IT! I'm so glad it was on my list of "books" to read! I read the entire thing to my husband as we were waiting for the meatloaf to be done. He asked me what that was on my phone, and so I opened the "book," started reading, and we thoroughly enjoyed reading it together. (I had no clue it was so short - we read it on Libby.)

Wahl, Patrick - Magic Words and Life Lessons: What to say and what to do at work, at home, & everywhere

Happiness is a moral obligation. Practice gratitude. Give specific praise. Help others. Make people feel important. Say "I GET to." Make eye contact when speaking. Fine - I get it. This is a list of how to act and what to say... and it's supposed to be funny. To me, it seemed a waste of time to read. I'm glad it was short.

Manga: 0

Author - Title

Description

Mystery: 6 (-9)

Backman, Fredrik - Anxious People

I have mixed feelings about this one. I don't know why I thought it would be an easy read, but it really took a lot of my brain power (that I don't have a lot of at the end of the school year). I'm glad I read it, as it was a challenge for me, and I feel a bit for each character - amazing how the author developed so many characters (eleven??).

Crouch, Blake - Pines (#1)

Whatever. So much was soooo odd, and you don't find out until the very end what it was really all about. One of those books that if you read it again, it might be better, but there's no way I'm

putting myself through that again. Just too much for me, and I didn't even really care about the main character or whether he'd ever see his family again or not.

Davidhizar, Megan - Silent Sister

Fast paced! Not too YA for my students, and I was able to figure out a part of it half way through, which helped me really want to finish it. (Glad I did, so I didn't have to re-read it to see how the author did that!)

Kubica, Mary - Local Woman Missing

Filed under THRILLER

Lally, Megan - That's Not My Name

Filed under THRILLER

Marsh, Katherine - The Lost Year

Filed under HISTORICAL FICTION

Michaelides, Alex - The Silent Patient

I guess I expected a lot more. Scarier, more cliff hangers, more leads gone wrong... It didn't live up to the hype. (And I was wrong about my own predictions of the twist near the end.)

Rico, Lauren E. - Familia

Loved it. Glad it was on a list for Hispanic Heritage Month. I loved how the story was revealed slowly - all the way through to the last chapter. I didn't expect such a twisty-turvy story! (I was also proud to be able to translate the Spanish - even though the author did for us, too.)

Willingham, Stacy - A Flicker in the Dark

I really loved the first half of this book, but then it seemed that EVERYONE was a suspect. I didn't like how much action there was in the last 10th, and how so many things didn't seem to fit - until they did. I thought that Chloe made some very poor decisions, and thought it was going to be like one of those bad horror movies where they go into the tool shed to hide... I was riveted through most of it, though.

Nonfiction: 12 (-14)

De Robertis, Carolina - Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times

I read this after a recommendation from someone I follow on TikTok. It was published just after Trump got elected in 2016. I thought it would be full of hope. Yet I read it after he'd been elected AGAIN in 2024 (as she suggested), and most of the writings thought there's no way Americans would make that mistake again, so... it didn't bring me much hope, and it took me a long time to get through it. My take away: Keep persisting and doing good in the small circle you're in - it will make a difference in those lives you touch. I took a few notes, and they're [here](#).

Egan, Timothy - *A Fever in the Heartland: The Ku Klux Klan's Plot to Take Over America, and the Woman Who Stopped Them*

I saw the size of this book and almost didn't even begin. As soon as I read the prologue, however, I had to see D.C. Stephenson ousted from his position in the Ku Klux Klan. I learned a lot about the 1920s midwestern Klan organization. Against Blacks, Jews, Catholics, and immigrants worldwide, they stoked hate in many, promoting "values" and "purity" while guzzling booze and raping women. I kept seeing parallels to Trump - what he's said, who backs him, how he lies (and somehow charms) and gets away with so much - because he (thinks he?) has no consequences coming to him. He believes he IS the law, much like D.C. Stephenson. It makes me sick how "well-meaning Americans" support those who spew hate.

Equal Justice Initiative - *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*

Read online as part of this 30-day challenge - <https://theantiracisttable.com/>

Equal Justice Initiative - *Slavery in America: The Montgomery Slave Trade*

Read online as part of this 30-day challenge - <https://theantiracisttable.com/>

Griffin, John Howard - *Black Like Me*

I've learned to read books about race by only BIPOC authors. However, the last book I read about race by a BIPOC author had this one on their list of further reading. I didn't know what it was about, but was disappointed it was written by a white man - until I started reading it, and I was floored. This book had me scared, worried, jubilant, relieved, reflective, depressed, sick... all the feels, as was intended. I took copious notes, and it's still not enough. So many things were reiterated here as in the other books I've been reading on in order to be a better ally or advocate for BIPOC. I'm glad this book sold so many copies, and I'm angered that it took a white man to say what the black man HAD ALREADY BEEN SAYING in order to be heard by white readers. My notes are [HERE](#).

Harriet, Michael - *Black AF History: The Unwhitewashed Story of America*

I'm not a history buff, but I stuck with this one, as I feel it was important information for me to know. I loved the author's notes about his family, and the notes that were supposed to be funny throughout (even though many were sadly true). An important book, especially now before this next election.

Hood, Susan - *Alias Anna: A True story of outwitting the Nazis*

Filed under historical fiction (even though it's nonfiction).

Hopkinson, Deborah - *Race Against Death: The Greatest POW Rescue of WWII*

(I'm not giving it a star rating, as I'm not a history buff. I'm sure many history buffs would rate this one high.) I'd never heard of the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, and I didn't have a clue that "in Germany in WWII, POWs died at a rate of 1.2%. In the Philippines, POWs died at a rate of 40%." The more I read, the more it sounded like POWs were treated like Jewish citizens in the concentration camps. This book was full of personal accounts, tactical details, photos and

maps, and I'm glad it followed a few people through the 1941-1945 (and beyond if they survived).

Prickett, Pamela & Stefan Timmermans - The Unclaimed: Abandonment and Hope in the City of Angels

It wasn't the most *well-written* book, but I enjoyed how it moved from one subject to the next. It started with stories of actual people who may become "unclaimed," and then moved on to how different people wanted to help those who did become unclaimed. From babies to veterans to all those that within three years were still unclaimed. I loved reading about the care many people behind the scenes took with the bodies and ashes. This book provokes readers to ask about their own life and how much it matters.

Rose, Tricia - Metaracism

This one is heavy - as it should be. I thought it would be above my intellect, but I understood most of it fine. (I did have to read some paragraphs more than once.) The more I read about systemic racism, the more I understand and hopefully can recognize. Good job to my local library for displaying this one and catching my eye. My notes are [HERE](#).

Schlosser, Eric & Charles Wilson - Chew On This: Everything you don't want to know about fast food

I guess I already knew much of this. It went quickly at first, then I got bogged down in things I didn't need to know. I almost skipped the chapter on obesity, because I didn't want to worry about my sister so much, but I read it. Everyone should read it. This book will scare me away from fast food for a while - too bad the "heavy hitters" that eat fast food 3-4 times a week aren't all reading it, so we can shut them all down.

Traister, Rebecca - Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger

So. It got me mad. I couldn't read it before bed, or my mind would be spinning. I feel even more anger towards those who voted for Trump (AGAIN!!), and even more anger towards him and all the white men who (try to) run this country while simultaneously sexually harassing women. And she's calling on me to ACT - to get involved in organizations and even politics. I know I will not stifle my anger - maybe (instead of crying) I'll attach the sickly sweet smile to my words of anger next time.

Yeager, David - 10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People: A groundbreaking approach to leading the next generation - and making your own life easier

Filed under Professional.

Zamperini, Louis - Don't Give Up, Don't Give In

I liked *Unbroken* much, much better.

Poetry/Prose/Novels in Verse: 6

Baptist, Kelly J. - Eb & Flow

I listened to this one, but the readers were good - I could hear the prose. A couple of times it felt a bit like Long Way Down when I thought the drama wouldn't end with the two main characters, but I like how it ended. I think the dreams they had near the end were important - it kind of forced them to use their "what if" brains... It had an overall sad feeling to it all, however (for me, at least), and I wish there had been more hope sprinkled through.

Caprara, Rebecca - Spin

I enjoyed this retelling of Arachne's story. The novel in verse kept me turning pages, and I'm glad the author showed her disgust for how women are treated as "less than..." I think I've always liked stories about Arachne, and this one did not disappoint.

Culley, Betty - The Name She Gave Me

I liked this one, even if it left some questions unanswered. I love the relationships Rynn grows with family friends and then others. I was thinking of character development, and even though the main character Rynn is not well-developed (in my opinion), other characters were, and they helped me want to continue reading.

Fipps, Lisa - And Then, Boom!

Great book! Stole a few pages to use in class someday (hopefully), and loved the messages. Reach out for help - even Superman needs help sometimes. The pages describing 11-year-old Joe's hunger were very powerful, and any seventh grader would feel for him.

Greene, Shari - Missing Mike

Geared towards younger readers - 5th grade or so.

Williams, Alicia D. - Mid-Air

I didn't know this was the same author who wrote *Genesis Begins Again*. I liked it. I loved that it was a novel in verse, and I felt like I was on a mountain bike trail with all the ups and downs and twists and bumps... I love how it ended, even though there are some unanswered questions (like life), Isaiah had some understanding of SELF.

Professional: 1

Yeager, David - 10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People: A groundbreaking approach to leading the next generation - and making your own life easier

My notes are [HERE](#).

Realistic Fiction: 20 (-21)

Adams, Sara Nisha - The Reading List

A book about books? Yes, please. I loved the rhythm of this one - switching off between 17-year-old Aleisha and 80-year-old Mukesh, with the setting mostly being the quiet local library

(that needs saving). I didn't feel pressured to remember the other characters sprinkled about who'd found the list, nor all of Mukesh's gazillion relatives and friends. The list of books in this book was interesting, and it had me thinking of my own list, of course. (But how could I choose?!) Not my favorite book, but decent by all accounts for me. (The audio book on Libby was excellent.)

Biles, Chrystal - Not An Easy Win

What I liked about this book was the metaphors comparing chess and life. I also liked how Lawrence figured out how his grandma works.

Bow, Erin - Simon Sort of Says

This one had me hooked from the first chapter. The writing is witty, and if you're not paying attention, you could miss some jokes or references that made me admire the writing even more. I could recommend this to some 7th graders, but they'd have to either be really interested in science, want to be able to deal with some of their trauma in a different way, or be able to stick with it when the story may seem to drag on for a bit. I didn't expect it to feel so long, and after a bit I just wanted it to hurry up and finish - maybe the author was trying to squeeze too much in? (I guess I liked the first half better than the second half, yet I really did enjoy so many different parts of it.) I chuckled aloud at a couple of pages, and I also had some tears. In the week after yet another school shooting (this one in GA), I hate the fact that we now have books that include trauma from school shootings.

Bowling, Dusti - 24 Hours in Nowhere

This one caught me by surprise. A seventh grader thought I'd like it. It was a fast-moving adventure in real time, yet slow in my brain. Each "hour" in the book lasted a bit, and the longer chapters made it feel slow to me, but they really weren't all that long. I loved the lessons and the camaraderie.

Culley, Betty - The Name She Gave Me

Filed under "novels in verse."

Flournoy, Angela - The Turner House

The more I read, the more I wanted to know about this family - of the 13 siblings, and of the haint. I loved sharing the parts about Detroit with my suburb-of-Detroit-raised hubby. I listened to some of the audio book, too, and it, too, was good.

Frankel, Laurie - Family Family

This is a great book about families - adoptive or not. I loved the writing, and I'm proud I got some of the references I might not usually understand. I wondered at some of the twists, but know now they had to be included. And now I like to imagine how these families will keep in touch throughout the years ahead of them. (I liked the other book I read by her better - *This Is How It Always Is* - but this one was totally worth it.)

Jiménez, Claire - What Happened to Ruthy Ramirez?

I loved this quick read!! It went in so many directions, and I was able to follow them because I was so invested. Using the audio every other chapter or so was fun, too. Perfect choice for Hispanic Heritage Month! Goodreads had it on their list and my local library had it displayed.

Jones, Tayari - An American Marriage

I don't know what it was about it, but I loved this one. It wasn't "riveting" or fast-paced, but I dove into it nonetheless and really wanted to see where it would take me. There was something so REAL about it all, and there were so many ideas that really had me thinking about all the different perspectives. Roy's incarceration wasn't glossed over, nor was it explained in too much detail. Same goes for all the relationships in the book. I was worried as to how it would end, but I believe it ended very realistically, and I appreciate that. It's labeled a "book club" book on the front and at my library, and I do wish I had someone to chat with about it. I'm glad it was featured on a list of "best books by Black authors" from the last few years.

Kinney, Jeff - Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End #15

So... this seems a lot like some of my students' writing... it keeps going and going and going and finally at the end kind of wraps it all up. What I liked about it is I chuckled in many places. I also liked that the pictures gave more information about what Greg just shared. My 7th graders liked that I was reading it, and it took me one day of 3 20-min stints to read it. (And that was with some distractions from students.)

Kinney, Jeff - Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Big Shot #16

So... this still seems a lot like some of my students' writing... it keeps going and going and going and finally at the end kind of wraps it all up. What I liked about it is I chuckled in many places, and I even found one of our vocabulary words - "fundamental." I also liked that the pictures gave more information about what Greg just shared. My 7th graders liked that I was reading it, too.

Kinney, Jeff - Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Diper Överlöde #17

Ugh. Only chuckled at the very end. So... this still seems a lot like some of my students' writing... it keeps going and going and going and finally at the end kind of wraps it all up.

Lim, Rebecca - Tiger Daughter

I love picking up a book and not knowing what it's about. This one grabbed me from the start, and I didn't finish it quickly only due to a headache. Wen is someone I wish I could know. She has a heart that knows what's right. I love that the author knows exactly what Wen is going through, because she was that migrant girl in Australia. I hated her father, and I loved how the book ended.

McAnulty, Stacy - Millionaires for the Month

I wanted to like this one. I loved MISCALCULATIONS OF LIGHTNING GIRL, but this one made me angry. I was mad at Laura Friendly, and thought the unfairness of it all was too much. Plus, it kind of dragged on, but maybe 12 year olds will really love to know all the things they bought.

The receipts were neat to see. There were a lot of questions unanswered at the end. This was a summer reading choice for my school. (SPOILER: And c'mon, Laura - 1 cent per??? Seriously.)

McMillan, Terry - It's Not All Downhill from Here

I really liked this one. I was saddened at the start, after being introduced to the myriad characters, but I loved learning from Loretha's journey through her grief. I loved the relationships among the characters, the utterly realness of how they acted and what they shared, and I loved all the hope they all gave me at the end. It was what I needed at this point in my life, even though I'm years away from 68. Looks like I'll be reading more from this (popular) author!

Moriarty, Liane - Here One Moment

Great book to read at the end of a year. I chose this one as my last because my hold came in and I've loved two others by her. I knew it would hold my attention! I'm normally reflective at the end of a calendar year, and this one had me even more reflective - and more grateful - about/for the lives we live. I loved how it began - with no one knowing about the woman on the plane - and how each (short!) chapter had a different perspective. Maybe I loved this one because I loved thinking, "Is this when it happens?" as I wondered about how each person might die. I was thinking of a twist on the "fortune teller's" cause of death. I realized that's what the author wanted me to think. I'm also glad this one was on Libby as an audiobook. The narrators were superb.

Mott, Jason - Hell of a Book

It confused me at first, and then I put some of the pieces together, which made me stay involved through the rest of it. I know if I read it again I'd get more out of it. I listened to the audio book at times, too, which was valuable. I can see this being a good book club book - keep the discussions going!!

Pla, Sally J. - The Fire, The Water, and Maudie McGuinn

This one dragged me in quickly, even though I didn't know what it would be about. I cared for Maudie from page one, as I know I've met a few "Maudie's" in my life. Her secret is easy to figure out early, and so the reader wants to see her succeed. Maudie's California dad is one of my favorite characters, and I'm so glad Etta was there to be patient and take her under her surfer's wing.

Varadarajan, Gita & Sarah Weeks - Save Me a Seat

This one is perfect for 5th grade. The two boys had real issues that I've seen other kids have, and the ending wraps up in a neat little bow.

Waters, Charles & Traci Sorell - Mascot

I loved this novel-in-verse from alternating narrators. Some of it was stereotypical, which is expected, and some of it was too easy of an answer, but most of it was spot on how I think 8th graders would think and act regarding whether the mascot should stay or go. Perfect for my 7th graders.

Winston, Sherri - Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution

I loved this gem. I thought the ending was kind of cut off - I wanted more of a defined resolution, but a lot of life is like that. (I wish there'd been more against Adolpho's posts.) The anger bubbled in me throughout, and I wondered why no one was speaking up for 7th-grader-gifted-musician Lotus earlier than they did. What rings true is how long some things take to come to light and then to DO something about it. Thank you to the author, too, for showing me a glimpse into how much work it must take to maintain a beautiful 'fro.

Romance: 9

Gilliland, Raquel Vasquez - Witch of Wild Things

Loved it. Cute. Fantastical. A bit more romance than I'm used to, and also a bit more fake... what with Sky's ghost +... (not spoiling it). I liked her writing style. Perfect for Hispanic Heritage month (or any month)!

Han, Jenny - To All the Boys I've Loved Before

Oh, the DRAMA! I just read this one because my seventh graders read it. Not for me.

Kwan, Kevin - Crazy Rich Asians

I liked this one. One of my seventh graders read it this year, so I added it to the list. I could just imagine each part that was "adult" when she said, "This is a VERY mature book." Yup! I had to keep looking back at the family tree during the book - thankful the author added it. Some things I wasn't sure were jokes or not, but when I got the joke, I did chuckle aloud. More "adventure" than "romance." :)

Napolitano, Ann - Hello Beautiful

Once again, I didn't look up what this was about - I just jumped in on a rec from someone, somewhere... The writing was such that I had to keep reading, even if I didn't know where the story was going. Once the story got going, however, I had to see how the sisters would figure things out. SPOILER ALERT: Good lessons here about how to live your life (*No Bullshit; No Secrets*) and how to love. I felt like those two had the kind of love my own love and I have, so it was 18 tissues for me the last 50 pages or so.

Poston, Ashley - The Seven Year Slip

Not for me. I'm not a romance reader, and I got tired of her saying her aunt had died six months prior. WE KNOW. I like the premise, but I got tired of the repetitions (again, we get it - they met seven years in the past - we know!). I loved reading about Iwan, but Clementine was a hollow character for me. I didn't love her aunt at the start of the story - so Clementine's grief for her didn't affect me as it should've. The author's note helped me appreciate it better.

Ryan, Kennedy - Before I Let Go

I'm not a huge romance reader, so I guess I'm actually glad this was a "second-chance

romance" novel, and they'd been married. I knew how it would end, and I learned to skim through the "hot" stuff that I don't normally read. ;)

Schneider, Robyn - Extraordinary Means

Too YA for my 7th graders (IMHO). I listened to this one while making bookmarks and read the print version, so it went quickly. I'm not sure what I think about it, but I did appreciate the author's note about TB. (My mom's mom had TB, and my mom grew up thinking her mom would die of it.) The romance was okay, but for me the story lacked good writing.

Tahir, Sabaa - All My Rage

Another romance I didn't ask for, but it sucked me in. Less romance, really, and more angst. Salahudin and Noor just keep getting hit with problems. I'm glad it didn't wrap up with a pretty, neat bow at the end - it was more realistic than I thought it would be - and I'm glad there are resources at the back of the book for those in need.

Zevin, Gabrielle - Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow

I'm not sure what I think. I know I read it quickly - it pulled me in. I also know I missed a TON of references - game references, Shakespeare references, and who knows what else. It's written well, that's for sure.

Science Fiction: 3

Collins, Christina - The Town with No Mirrors

I liked this one. I read it as a new "dystopian" for myself during our dystopian unit, but it was a bit too easy for my 7th graders to do as a book club option. I think they'd love the book, however, because we seem to be so obsessed with how everyone looks these days... I was surprised the author saved the actual reason for the town until more than half-way through the book, but of course I'm glad it finally came out. I kind of wish there was more closure with how Zailey is doing now, and with family she may be connecting with, as well.

Huxley, Aldous - Brave New World

I wanted to read an adult dystopian novel I hadn't yet read. This was DEFINITELY it. Set 600 years into the future (now about 500 years, as it was published in 1932), I appreciated all the references to Ford and the industrial revolution. I didn't need all the pleasure and talk of sex. I think John "Savage" could've been developed more, along with the Controller. I can see some of our own society in the talk of not having to overcome obstacles and only wanting pleasure, but the manipulation / creation of humans so alike to only want what society wants them to want, in bottles upon bottles... I'm not even sure that was his main point. I didn't understand a lot of it, and I wonder if reading it in high school in a class would've helped me understand more of it. I did get the big picture, and I know I need pain and suffering in order to truly feel happiness and satisfaction when it comes.

McCarthy, Cormac - The Road

My massage therapist said this was a great book. Then I saw a teen reading it on the beach when we went camping. So... it was next on my list. I flew through it, and I had some tears, but most of the time I was reading I was wondering... where is this book going? What will be the point of it? What will be the lesson? I've got an idea of the love that kept them alive and moving, but this wasn't the book for me.

Short Stories: 1

Darraj, Susan Muaddi - Behind You Is the Sea

I don't normally read short stories, but I love how this author wove them together with at least one character I knew connecting them. I know nothing about Palestinian American culture (in Baltimore), and I enjoyed learning more through these stories - knowing still that there is no one way to be Palestinian American, just like for any culture. It was written well, and it made me think a lot. That may be why I took my time with this one.

Sports: 1 (-2)

Bishop, Jenn - Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up

So much was going on at the start of this book that I was confused at first. Throughout, I had to keep check of who was narrating and who had which dad and for what team?? But by half-way through I guess I got it. I'm not sure about the writing, but I enjoyed the storyline, the courage of the girls and the secrets, as well. Aside from all the coincidences, it was very believable and hopefully very relatable to current eighth graders. A sports book for everyone.

Khan, Henna - We Are Big Time - Filed under Graphic Novel

Spy: 1

Barnes, Jennifer Lynn - The Fixer

Not my favorite book of hers - I even almost abandoned it half way through - but I pushed through and it kept me reading the last ¼ of it. This was one of our suggested summer reads.

Thriller/Horror: 4

Kubica, Mary - Local Woman Missing

This was definitely a page-turner. I read it from noon one day until noon the next. However... it was so far-fetched once we find out what really happened. Plus, I kept trying to figure out where she was writing about, because I, too, live in the 630 area code. I thought that part would be neat for me to see, but... nope.

Lally, Megan - That's Not My Name

FAST read. Loved the suspense. A few f-bombs dropped, but not much else is YA about it - except maybe for some gore... Glad an 8th grader and her mom recommended it to me!

Liggett, Kim - The Grace Year

I almost abandoned it after the first 50 pages (when all I could think about was *Mean Girls* + *The Hunger Games* + sex??), but then I read the praise on the back from some respected authors. Too mature for me to buy it for my 7th graders (almost too mature for ME). Really took forever for the author to make her point about how girls/women are oppressed. I don't think a few parts were needed, either. Gruesome, terrorizing, and yet had a couple of sweet times, too.

Unger, Lisa - The New Couple in 5B

Not my type. Seems as if the author made sure everyone was a suspect. And everyone wants that darn apartment in the Windermere in NYC.

Read for 2024:

Bio/Auto/Memoir: 7 (-11)

Fantasy: 3

GN: 6

Hist Fic: 15

How To and/or Self Help: 10

Manga: 0

Mystery: 6 (-9)

NF: 12 (-14)

Poetry / Prose / Novels in Verse: 6

Prof: 1

Realistic Fic: 20 (-21)

Romance: 9

SciFi: 3

Short Stories: 1

Sports: 1 (-2)

Spy: 1

Thriller/Horror: 4

Total: 105

Picture Books: 0

- **Author - Title**
Description

Abandoned: 12

Bush, Laura - Spoken from the Heart - pg 77. I figured her memoir was next after I read *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, but she was all over the place and it was boring to me, too. I was amazed to learn about the accident (in which a teen from Midland TX died) she had when she was 17, but even that part wasn't written very well.

Dee, Barbara - Unstuck - pg 55. (The secret is in the chapter called "The Secret" on pg 47.) I flipped through the rest of the book, and I don't think I could stand reading so much about her character in the quagmire because she's got writer's block. I think my few students who love to write might like this story, but it's not for me at this point in my life.

De La Peña, Matt - We Were Here pg 186. I tried. Many times. Once I figured it was way too mature for my 7th graders, I tried again. And I just couldn't.

Greenidge, Kaitlyn - We Love You, Charlie Freeman pg 136. No no no no no. I knew it was going in weird places, but... nope. Not for me.

Jimenez, Abby - Part of Your World - pg 34. I just don't read books about abuse anymore.

Kelly, Erin Entrada - The First State of Being - pg 58. I might like it better if I wasn't so tired of reading middle grade books. I didn't read 58 pages and then jumped to the end. Looks like it has good messages (live in the moment and do your best kind of thing), but I have an adult book I'd like to read next.

Oliver, Mary - Devotions pg 179 - just can't read an entire book of poetry. Give me one or two at a time.

Roberts, Barbara Carroll - Nikki on the Line pg 138. Basketball, basketball, basketball. IDK if she'll develop the different-colored eyes story or the sperm-donor dad story, but right now it's just basketball. Not for me.

Ruffin, Maurice Carlos - We Cast a Shadow pg 166 - confusing. I guess I don't understand satire. I only know the big picture in this one.

Sánchez, Reymundo - My Bloody Life: The Making of a Latin King - half-way through. Written like a list of things he did, and I couldn't stomach the sex, drugs, and murder any more.

Simmons, Kristen - Article 5 - pg 95. Not written well, no explanation of why life is so different, just a ton of torture of young girls for no reason. Blech.

Stockdale, Jim - Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot 32% finished - difficult for me to understand it all, but I think I get the gist and don't want more repetition.

Thompson, Mary G. - Evil Fairies Love Hair - pg 65. Weird.

Tochluk, Shelly - Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk about Race and How to Do It

My Hoopla kept crashing on this book before I could read chapter 4. I could see how it fit with the other books I've been reading about race - and yet it was taking me FOREVER to read it anyway, so I'm abandoning it. (pg 55 or so) My notes are [HERE](#).