

Librarian's Shelf by Heather St. Clair

Notable Non-fiction

Every year the Notable Books Council selects twenty-five "very good, very readable" books for their Notable Books for Adults List. Comprised of fiction, poetry and nonfiction, this year's list has twelve non-fiction titles and the Columbus Public Library owns nine of those titles.

In addition to being on the Notable Books List, each of the following books has received a starred review from "Publishers Weekly" and in many cases at least one other starred review from other publications such as "Booklist" and "Library Journal" and have been on the "New York Times Bestseller" list.

In "Citizens of London" Lynne Olson writes about the Americans who helped to create the alliance between Britain and the United States during World War II. She focuses on three Americans, the most famous being Edward R. Murrow, and their connection to and influence on Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.

Recently featured in the Ken Burn's documentary "Prohibition," Daniel Okrent's book "Last Call" discusses the factors that led to Prohibition (women's suffrage, anti-German attitudes, income tax, to name a few) as well as the events during Prohibition.

In "The Tiger," by John Vaillant, travel to Russia to learn of a man-eating tiger and the quest to kill it. Also read about Siberian tigers, and how man has come to coexist with them.

Staying in Russia, Ian Frazier's "Travels in Siberia" tells of Siberia's influence on history, those who have been exiled there (including Dostoyevsky, Lenin, and Stalin), and what has happened since the fall of the USSR. Interestingly, for all its history and the focus of this book, Frazier begins the book with, "Officially, there is no such place as Siberia."

Barbara Demick tells the stories of six North Koreans over a fifteen year span in "Nothing to Envy." Follow their lives during "a chaotic period that saw the death of Kim Il-sung," his son, Kim Jong-il, become Supreme Leader, and a famine that left one-fifth of North Koreans dead.

The Columbus Public Library Book Club will be discussing one of these notable books in May. In "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks," Rebecca Skloot weaves science, history, family, bioethics and more into a narrative about a Henrietta Lacks, her life, death in 1951, family and her cells, which revolutionized medical research, and their unique properties, which allow them to be grown and used for research today.

Written by Ron Chernow, "Washington: A Life" is "a landmark biography provid[ing] insights into the complexities of this founding father's character, and brings him fully to life within the context of his times."

Between 1915 and 1970 nearly six million Americans relocated from the South to other parts of the U.S. In "The Warmth of Other Suns," Isabel Wilkerson tells the tales of three individuals who were part of this "great migration" and their trials while trying to improve their lives.

Finally, we have "The Last Stand," by Nathaniel Philbrick. Using new sources Philbrick goes beyond the myth and conveys the story of the Battle of Little Bighorn through not only George Armstrong Custer and Sitting Bull, but also through Crazy Horse, Wooden Leg, and some of Custer's officers. He tells it as not only Custer's last stand, but also that of the Sioux and Cheyenne.

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