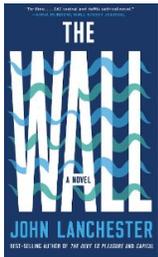


**WINTER BREAK
BOOK AND MOVIE RECS
FROM YOUR FRIENDLY ENGLISH TEACHERS
(AND THE NOT SO FRIENDLY ONES, TOO!)**

Mr. Charps



The Wall, John Lanchester: A thinly veiled metaphor for current issues of xenophobia and immigration, this **dystopian** tale can be read *just for plot* and themes like love, trust, betrayal and survival. This short(er) novel is set in the not so distant future where the climate crisis threatens the existence of national borders, borders which must be protected from the Others at all costs by--you guessed it--a WALL. **This one can be read in just a couple of sittings!**



Stranger Than Fiction: Ever feel like someone else is writing your life story? Like things are **out of your control**? This clever and original **rom-com** explores that idea in a funny and poignant way. And **Will Ferrell**, right? Need I say more? A more subtle and complex comedic role than, say, *Anchorman*--a fine and Oscar-worthy film in its own right, of course.

Ms. Binder



The Vanishing Half, Brit Bennett: I loved this book about **identity**, and about the ways in which we both choose our identities and also have them chosen for us by society. This book looks at race, colorism, sexual orientation, gender identity and more, all packaged inside a really good, **thoughtful and well-written** novel about three generations of one family.



Star Wars: My family watches all the *Star Wars* movies every year at around this time. A great and **epic tale** with classic themes, great plot lines and at least one **tragic hero**! Watch the movies in the order in which they were released, not in numerical order--the story is better that way (trust me on this, I'm an English teacher).

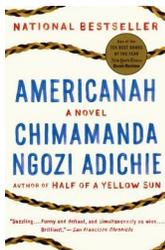
Mrs. Moody

***Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi:** Gyasi's newest novel follows an **immigrant family** from Ghana to Alabama, where they have settled in the US. The novel follows the two paths of the children, exploring the effects and pressures of racism and **making a new life** as immigrants.

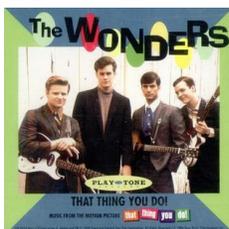


***Black Panther:* Chadwick Boseman's** untimely passing this summer begs for another look at this **masterpiece**, along with the many themes surrounding the film, which remain relevant today, like being an outsider, the role of women, pan-Africanism, and more. Anyone can appreciate a good **superhero** story! Ta-Nehisi Coates authored the *Black Panther* graphic novels, but he announced that this is his last year working with **Marvel** on the *Black Panther* series, so check out this beautiful movie.

Mr. Haile



***Americanah* by Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie:** It's such a stunning book--just having re-read it with my AP class, I am drawn afresh to the quality of the writing with its page-turning clarity and narrative drive. It's a love story, it's a **brilliant** piece of social commentary, it's a deeply **human** book.



That Thing You Do: A Haile family favorite for a decade, this highly underrated **light comedy** about a one-hit wonder **rock-n-roll** band from the mid-sixties is a true gem, written and directed by **Tom Hanks**, who also plays a major role. Wonderful soundtrack.

Ms. Donoho

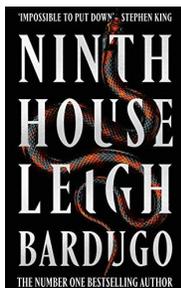


Red, White and Royal Blue, Casey McQuiston. **The first female US President's** son and the Queen of England's son fall into a Romeo and Juliet-esque **modern romance** (minus the tragedy). It was a great, refreshing beach read about a more inclusive and **happy** world. I laughed, I cried, I read it a second time. It went viral in 2019!

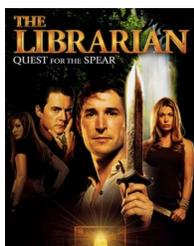


The Family Stone. It's a **Christmas** movie but I watch it year-round. Not only does it have an amazing cast--it's like watching a real family's home videos. Plus the house it's filmed in is gorgeous (and the college/jewelry store is in **my hometown!**). It's one of those movies you watch when you need a feel-good, big-bellied sob.

Dr. Seals

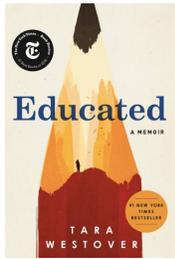


Ninth House, Leigh Bardugo. I am always interested to see how an author makes the shift from YA literature to writing for an adult audience. This book is Bardugo's first venture into writing for **mature audiences**, and if you enjoy **dark fantasy** (almost bordering on horror), the reading is worth every minute of your time. This tale of a heroic anti-hero navigating Yale's secret societies and **talking to dead people** as she solves murders and mysteries is so worthwhile I wrote and presented a paper about it at a pop culture conference last month!



The Librarian: Quest for the Spear: This movie is **utterly ridiculous** and **highly enjoyable**--a real family favorite. My family particularly enjoys this movie because it's part of the movie franchise that launched *The Librarians* *television series* (which was quite well done, even though it was also ridiculous). There's something to be said for a hero who is a perpetual student with a stack of PhDs, who then ends up taking a job as a librarian (but not that kind of librarian)--tracking down and protecting **magical artifacts**.

Ms. Perkins

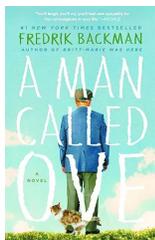


Educated, Tara Westover: This memoir--set in the '90s and early 2000s--recounts the life of a girl born into an isolated fundamentalist survivalist family in the mountains of Idaho. Tara yearns to learn, but her father mistrusts the government so "regular school" is not an option. The extreme nature of her upbringing (given that this is a **contemporary story**) and the lengths she goes to for her education are bracing reminders of the diversity of lives Americans lead, and the **resilience and hope** so many possess, despite seemingly insurmountable odds. If you liked *The Glass Castle*, this is your next read.



Hunt for the Wilderpeople: Director Taika Waititi's clear-eyed view of **human nature** is on full display in this comedy that does not flinch from life's challenges. The improbable protagonist--a child of the New Zealand foster system with a penchant for **hip-hop and haiku**--is funny and determined, and the film reminds us that though hardship and sorrow will undoubtedly touch us, they need not define us.

Mr. Benson

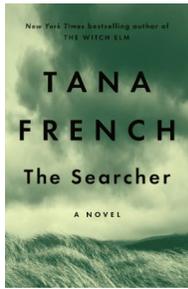


A Man Called Ove, Fredrik Backman: A **grumpy old man** who just wants to be left alone. New neighbors who are loud, have **lots of cats**, and two lovable young daughters. An unlikely friendship that is **hilarious** and heartwarming. An easy, lighthearted read that will get a good laugh, and offers a good reminder that "life is sweeter when shared with other people."

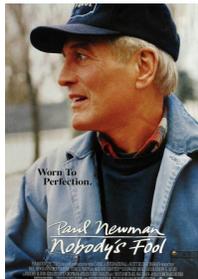


Big Fish (2003): Starring Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Billy Crudup, Jessica Lange and Helena Bonham Carter. Directed by Tim Burton. A **fantastical story** about one amazing life. Rich, diverse characters stoke the **imagination**, and **push the boundaries** of what you thought was possible in this world.

Mr. Callahan



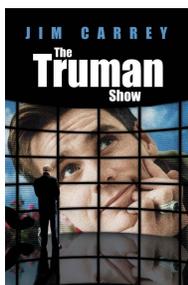
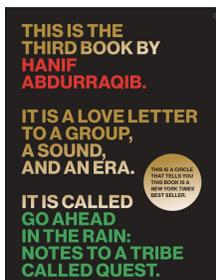
The Searcher, Tana French: The newest **mystery/thriller** by my (current) favorite writer takes place, like all her books, in **Ireland**. This one was inspired by the themes and atmosphere of **American westerns**, is brilliantly paced, and captures the look and feel of rugged and remote western Ireland.



Nobody's Fool: It's not often that a movie improves on a book, but *Nobody's Fool* certainly comes close. Based on the novel by Richard Russo, the movie's all-star cast is headed by Paul Newman in (I think) his best role, and includes Jessica Tandy, Bruce Willis, Melanie Griffith, Philip Seymour Hoffman. Quite a lineup.

Mr. McVeigh

Go Ahead In The Rain: Notes To A Tribe Called Quest, Hanif Abdurraqib Hanif Abdurraqib is a poet, a critic, and a huge fan of **A Tribe Called Quest** (my own favorite group growing up)...and his book is part biography, part memoir, and part historical account of **hip hop** in the 80's/90's (and how it continues to evolve today). You don't need to be an ATCQ fan: Hanif Abdurraqib will make you one. It is the author's personal account of what it means to be a true fan of an artist, and the private and intimate way in which that artist's work can become a prism through which to view the entire world. Whatever Abdurraqib is feeling or what might be happening in his life, he is constantly reminded that "there's a song for that."



The Truman Show: One of the smartest, most inventive movies in recent memory, *The Truman Show* predicted the rise of reality TV, ratings driven media, and 21st century content generation. The movie layers humor and laughs over some deeper and darker undercurrents, and Jim Carrey (in an uncharacteristically subtle, nuanced performance) crushes the role of Truman. *The Truman Show* finds a way to be funny, heartwarming, tragic, and thought provoking all at once, and it is just so wonderfully rewatchable--it stops me in my tracks whenever I stumble across it, and I pick up something new every time.