

Contemporary American Literature
Junior Honors Research Paper - Mrs. Smith

Author	Title	Call No.	Description
Abu-Jaber, Diana	Birds of Paradise (362 p.)	FIC ABU-JABER	Versatile Abu-Jaber explores the effects a teen's desertion has on her Miami family. At 13, Avis and Brian Muir's daughter, Felice, inexplicably started running away from home. Finally forced to accept their daughter's refusal to return home, Avis, a pastry chef, anxiously awaits her daughter's infrequent calls while Brian, a real-estate attorney, refuses to have anything to do with Felice. The couple's older child, Stanley, shares his mother's passion for food, but his interests don't especially please either parent, and his teen years were largely overshadowed by his sister's rebellion. Abu-Jaber drops the reader in on the Muir family just as Felice is about to turn 18, gradually revealing why Felice felt compelled to run away and how the reverberations of her actions are still affecting the rest of her family. Felice's contemplation of her future coincides with a big announcement of Stanley's regarding his own, sending yet another ripple through the family.
Alvarez, Julia	In the Time of the Butterflies (325 p.)	FIC ALVAREZ	During the last days of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, three young women, members of a conservative, pious Catholic family, who had become committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the regime, were ambushed and assassinated as they drove back from visiting their jailed husbands. Thus martyred, the Mirabal sisters have become mythical figures in their country, where they are known as las mariposas (the butterflies), from their underground code names. Alvarez has fictionalized their story in a narrative that starts slowly but builds to a gripping intensity. Each of the girls speaks in her own voice; their surviving sister, Dede, frames the narrative with her own tale of suffering and dedication to their memory. The sisters endure the arrests of their husbands, their own imprisonment and the inexorable progress of Trujillo's revenge. Alvarez captures the terrorized atmosphere of a police state, in which people live under the sword of terrible fear and atrocities cannot be acknowledged. As the sisters' energetic fervor turns to anguish, Alvarez conveys their courage and their desperation, and the full import of their tragedy.
Armstrong, Lance	Every Second Counts (246 p.)	B ARMSTRONG	In It's Not about the Bike Armstrong related his battle with cancer and his incredible Tour de France victory. In this book, he gives a gripping account of his second through (record-tying) fifth victories at the Tour. One sees that Armstrong has grown up quite a bit since his first book. However, he still has a reckless streak, as witnessed by his fondness for diving into a place called Dead Man's Hole. There are glimpses into his personal life and reflections on his illness, but this memoir is unabashedly about the thrill of racing and winning with the U.S. Postal Team. Armstrong talks about his teammates with humility and admiration. He also deals frankly, yet with remarkable restraint, with the accusations of doping by the French. The cyclist still works with his Lance Armstrong Foundation against cancer, but readers get the sense that he is definitely looking forward. Warm and informal in tone, Every Second Counts is a must-read for cycling fans.
Armstrong, Lance	It's Not About the Bike; My Journey Back to Life (289 p.)	B ARMSTRONG	People around the world have found inspiration in the story of Lance Armstrong, a world-class athlete nearly struck down by cancer, only to recover and win the Tour de France, the multiday bicycle race famous for its grueling intensity. Armstrong is a thoroughgoing jock, and the changes brought to his life by his illness are startling and powerful, but he's not interested in wearing a hero suit. While his vocabulary is a bit on the he-man side, his actions will melt the most hard-bitten souls: a cancer foundation and benefit bike ride, his astonishing commitment to training that got him past countless hurdles, loyalty to the people and corporations that never gave up on him. There's serious medical detail here, which may not be for the faint of heart, and athletes and coaches will benefit from the same extraordinary detail provided about his training sessions. It's Not About the Bike is the perfect title for this book about life, death, illness, family, setbacks, and triumphs, but not especially about the bike.

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Baggott, Julianna	Pure (431 p.)	FIC BAGGOTT	Pressia barely remembers the Detonations or much about life during the Before. She thinks about what is lost - how the world went from amusement parks, movie theaters, birthday parties, fathers and mothers to ash, dust, scars, permanent burns, and fused, damaged bodies. Now, at an age when everyone is required to turn themselves over to the militia to either be trained as a soldier or, if they are too damaged and weak, to be used as live targets, Pressia can no longer pretend to be small. She is on the run. There are those who escaped the apocalypse unmarked. Pures. They are tucked safely inside the Dome that protects their healthy, superior bodies. Yet Partridge, whose father is one of the most influential men in the Dome, feels isolated and lonely. Different. He thinks about loss - maybe just because his family is broken; his father is emotionally distant; his brother killed himself; and his mother never made it inside their shelter. Or maybe it's his claustrophobia: his feeling that this Dome has become a swaddling of intensely rigid order. So when a slipped phrase suggests his mother might still be alive, Partridge risks his life to leave the Dome to find her. When Pressia meets Partridge, their worlds shatter all over again.
Baldacci, David	The Collectors (436 p.)	FIC BALDACCI	People are dropping dead in Washington, D.C. First the Speaker of the House falls victim to a hitman in a carefully orchestrated murder in front of dozens of the city's power elite. Next, the director of the Library of Congress's Rare Books Room dies in a book vault, but no one knows how. Caleb Shaw, Camel Club member, nearly falls victim, too. Across the country, a gifted con woman assembles an A-list team to pull off one of the most audacious scams ever, against one of the most dangerous men in the world. When the worlds of Washington and the elite con collide head-on, the Camel Club finds itself teamed with a person they don't really trust but whose skill helps them unravel a secret that threatens to bring America to its knees.
Banks, Russell	Lost Memory of Skin (416 p.)	FIC BANKS	On probation after doing time for a liaison with an underage girl, the "Kid" is forbidden to live within 2500 feet of anywhere children might gather. With nowhere else to go he takes up residence under a causeway in a makeshift camp with other convicted sex offenders. Despite his crime the Kid is in many ways innocent, trapped by impulses and foolish choices he himself struggles to comprehend. The Professor, a university sociologist who has built his own life on secrets and lies, enters the scene and finds the Kid the perfect subject for his research. The two men forge a tentative partnership. But when the Professor's past resurfaces and threatens to destroy his carefully constructed world, the balance in the relationship shifts. Suddenly the Kid must reconsider everything he has come to believe and choose what course of action to take when faced with a new kind of moral decision. In this insightful novel Banks examines the indistinct boundaries between our intentions and actions.
Bascomb, Neal	The New Cool (325 p.)	629.8 BAS	Teen brainiacs and shop class wizards rule campus in this gripping alternative-sports saga. Journalist Bascomb follows the seniors of California's Dos Pueblos public school through the 2009 FIRST high school robotics tournament. Their gonzo competition task: build a robot rover that can dump balls into its opponents' baskets while traversing a very slick floor, in a cross between a basketball game and a high-tech medieval melee played on ice. Under a charismatic, innovative teacher, the D'Penguineers teammates design, manufacture, wire up, and program their mechanical gladiator while studying everything from the physics of friction to the latest CAD software. Bascomb's narrative is an engrossing tutorial in the industrial arts as the students surmount the fiendish engineering challenges of getting their device to move, maneuver, pick up balls, and fire them with uncanny accuracy. But he also provides plenty of suspense and pathos as the kids endure sleepless nights to finish their gizmo, perform frenzied last-second repairs, and concoct subtle game strategies. The result is an inspiring homage to the spirit of invention and a genuine sports epic, to boot.

