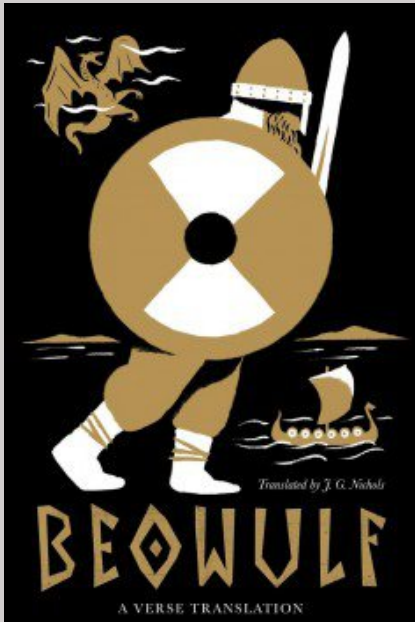




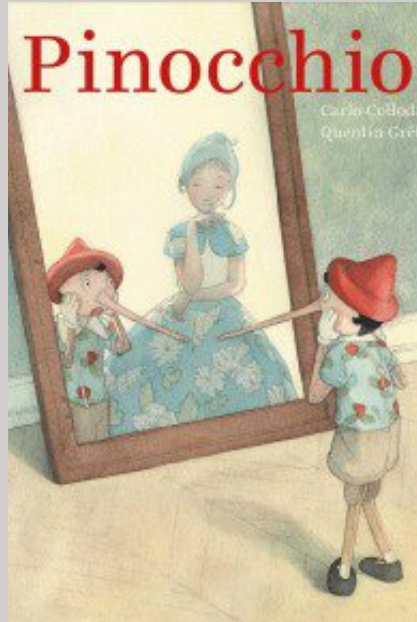
READER SPOTLIGHT

Stephen Carter



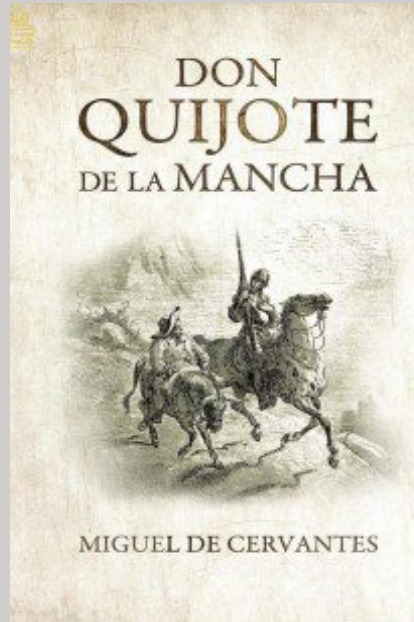
Beowulf
Translated by Seamus Heaney

This is quite a fascinating book, and it's not very long. The descriptions of early life are especially interesting to me, as someone who is not particularly interested in modern living. Sometimes people like to say, "what is the world coming to?!" There's so much horror today." Well, they should read Beowulf! (And other classics). Humans have always behaved this way. It turns out, we've always been wicked.



Pinocchio
Carlo Collodi

This is one of my favorite books. No, it was not created by Walt Disney. The Italian author, Carlo Collodi, has a gift for dialogue. Whenever a character speaks, you can hear it clearly in your head. Pinocchio carved by a poor and lonely old man to be a faithful son. But he turns out to be an insolent and mischievous rascal. He acts immediately on his selfish impulses... Naturally this is why we love him. He just does what we all want to do, but he does it in a pure and simple way.



Don Quixote de la Mancha
Miguel De Cervantes

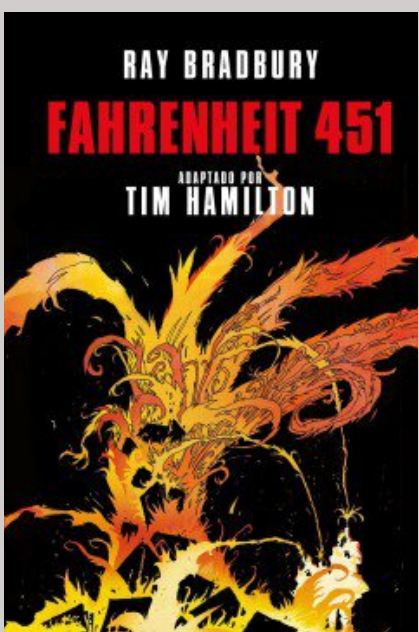
This is an appropriate book for a library, because it's the story of a man who goes mad from reading too much, and ends up in a constant state of philosophical befuddlement (and physical discomfort). I think it's a book that exhudes humanism, and compassion for the human condition.

It also contains the oldest description of Sicilian-style puppet theatre that anybody can find.



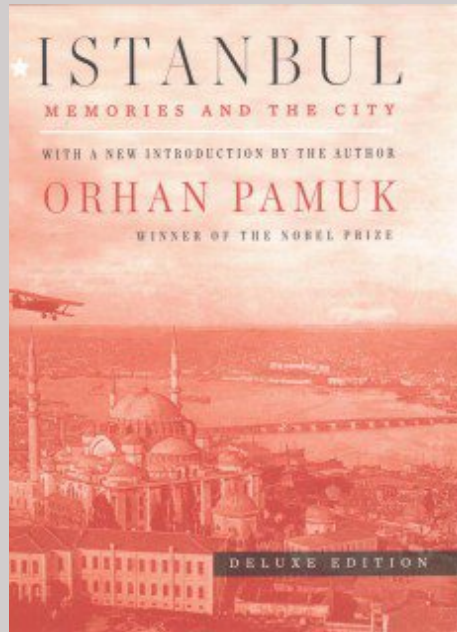
The Wind in the Willows
Kenneth Grahame

Another favorite of mine, which seems almost silly to recommend. But I wonder if it is as well known as it once was? This is ideally read aloud, one chapter at a time, every night before bedtime. Tea parties and mucking about in boats are the preferred activities of Mole and Rat, the philosopher-kings of the riverbank. No better psychiatric description can be found of manic-depression than in the chapter "Toad's Wild Ride." Fortunately toad survives and is apparently cured. It is all perfectly comprehensible to children.



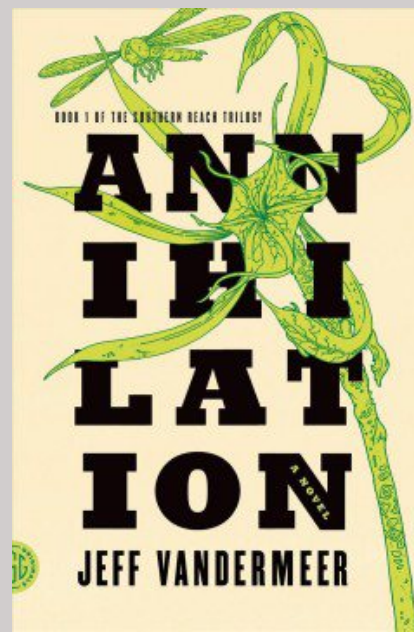
Fahrenheit 451
Ray Bradbury

I never regarded Bradbury as a really good writer, but then I picked this up and it struck me that he was making a conscientious attempt at writing poetic language, and the more I got into it, I began to think, "he did a pretty good job!" It's about thought-control through censorship of literature and language. This book, and 1984, made me wonder, 'if there wasn't a word for something, could you think it? If there was no word 'democracy,' would we be capable of formulating that idea?'



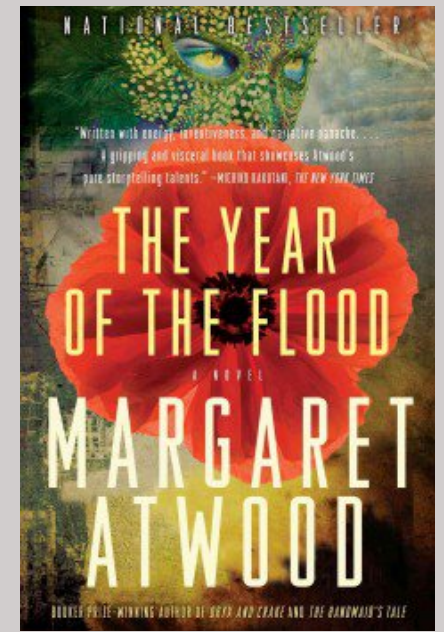
Istanbul
Orhan Pamuk

This is a wonderful work of non-fiction. Pamuk likes to reminisce about the Istanbul of the 1950s and '60s, when he was a child there. He has a nice, meditative, philosophical quality to his writing, which you find in most of his novels as well. This book leads me to suspect that, as a Turk, Pamuk is never sure if he's from the East or the West--the Turks feel a great tension around that. In a literary way, I'd say he gravitates towards a Western style



Annihilation
Jeff Vandermeer

This book is a little bit like watching paint dry... not very much happens; but it creates a kind of atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, and I like that. The other books in the trilogy have other qualities, almost as if they were written by different people, and I liked all of them. It's probably best to read these in chronological order.



The Year of the Flood
Margaret Atwood

I realize that I don't have many women writers on my list, but that's because in history, women didn't get to write very much until the modern era. Atwood is one of my favorite modern science fiction writers. Her writing is beautiful. This book particularly interests me because it reminded me of my daughter, who for a while lived very dangerously as a feral street child, and the world that she inhabited is kind of described in this book.... with the addition of biological mutants!

