

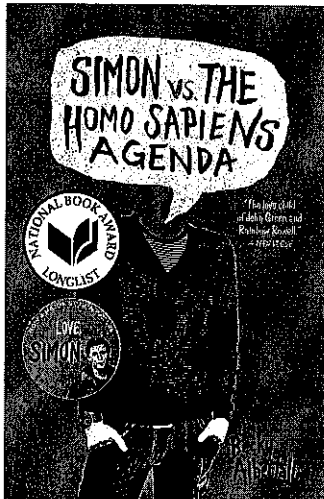
"Don't you think everyone should have to come out? Why is straight the default?" Comfortably gay but not "out" gay Simon Spier poses this question to his secret crush, "Blue," in an email. They started corresponding after Blue posted on Creeksecrets, the anonymous Tumblr page where Creekwood High teens post confessions, and Blue's post on loneliness struck a chord with Simon. One day, Simon forgot to log out of his email, and a classmate, Martin, read and took screenshots of the email correspondence in order to blackmail Simon into setting him up with his friend, Abby. Although Simon is not ashamed of his sexual identity, he is afraid of how being forced out might change his relationships with his friends, family, and possibly ruin his chances with his mysterious crush.

Far from a "gay utopia," like in David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy*, *Simon Vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is still a lovable, sweet, relatable book for young adults, especially LGBTQ+ teens. It has its share of the harsh reality of discrimination and homophobia, but in the end, friendship, family, and love prevail.

A major motion picture based on this book entitled *Love, Simon* premiered in 2018.

Albertalli, Becky. *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. Balzer + Bray, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2015.

Mindi Ashworth, Library Media Specialist, Oakwood High School



***Rising Above: Inspiring Women in Sports* Book Talk**

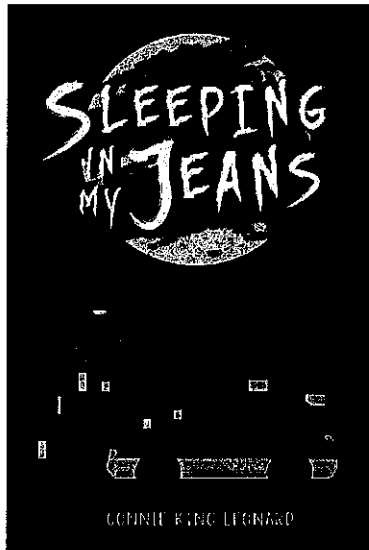
Gregory Zuckerman

If you're looking for true stories about people training hard to become some of the elite sports figures today, *Rising Above: Inspiring Women in Sports* is a great book to start off with. Inside, you'll find 10 short biographies telling the life stories of female athletes. How did Venus and Serena Williams grow up in Compton, a neighborhood in Los Angeles not exactly known for its county clubs and tennis courts, and make it to becoming dominate forces in professional tennis? How did Ronda Rousey go from having delayed speech in her youth to personally convincing the UFC to create a women's division? And how did Bethany Hamilton not hang up her surf board after she was bitten by a shark, which cost her an arm? There are plenty of other stories in this book too, from Simone Biles to Mo'ne Davis and more.

For those wanting a small peek into what it takes to become a champion, there'd be hard pressed to find better, more accessible, and more enjoyable book than this one.

Jeff Reid

Northmont Branch of Dayton Metro Library



***Sleeping in My Jeans* by Connie King Leonard**

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Ooligan Press (November 13, 2018)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1947845004

ISBN-13: 978-1947845000

Book Talk by Adrienne Amborski

Waterville Branch, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library

adrienne.amborski@toledolibrary.org

Have you ever slept in your jeans? Have you ever been hungry? Have you ever had to give up bathing for days on end? Have you ever been homeless and had to live in your car? Meet sixteen-year-old Mattie Rollins, a homeless honor student living day to day in her mother's car. Would you tell your friends, your teachers, and the boy that you want to date that you have no home? Mattie, her little sister, and mother face poverty and danger while living in their car, "Ruby".....will they ever find a real home?

Queen of Air and Darkness by Cassandra Clare

This book is # 3 in the Dark Artifices series that is the post series of her Mortal Instruments series that has 6 books (this has been turned into a fantastic show called Shadowhunters which starts back up on Feb 25th). The last book leaves readers with Ty Blackthorn's twin sister, Livia, dead by the hand of the resurrected shadow hunter Annabeth. Livia's innocent blood spilled on the steps of the government of all show hunters, the Clave, sends the Clave onto the brink of a civil war. The Blackthorn family is starting to splinter as some of them flees to Los Angeles, seeking to discover the source of the disease that is destroying the race of warlocks and the brother in charge, Julian, struggles with his own problems. Julian and his parabatai Emma take desperate measures to put their forbidden love aside and undertake a perilous mission to Faerie to retrieve the Black Volume of the Dead. What they find in the Courts is a secret that may tear the Shadow World apart. Caught in a race against time, Emma and Julian must save the world of Shadowhunters before the deadly power of the parabatai curse destroys them and everyone they love.

Book Talk

By: Alyssa Fisher

Turtles All The Way Down by John Green published 10/10/17

Aza is a sixteen year old highschool student trying her best to live her life but also struggling to cope with the overwhelming mental illness that is trying to constantly consume her every thought. Aza's best friend and initiator of shenanigans, Daisy, discovers that there is a fugitive billionaire on the run with a reward of \$100,000 and is eager to investigate because Aza was a childhood friend with the billionaire's son, Davis. What Aza and Daisy didn't expect were the complicated emotions that would arise and give Aza's mental illness more fuel for her spiraling out-of-control thoughts.

Will Aza be able to come to grips with these thoughts and track down Davis' father for the \$100,000 reward?

Book Talk for *A Shadow Bright and Burning* by Jessica Cluess

Kerrie Hrycko
Youth Services Librarian
Muskingum County Library System

A Shadow Bright and Burning is the first installment of the Kingdom on Fire series by Jessica Cluess. The book starts out in the dreary countryside in England with Henrietta Howell, a girl who can set herself on fire. Believing her to be the prophesied one to end the war-as the first female sorcerer in 100 years-she is taken to London to learn to control magic. Her life radically changes from being a quiet oppressed governess, to being a mysterious and powerful sorceress. This books is a great example of a coming of age story, dealing with major life changes, self-discovery and self-acceptance.

The world she lives in is parallel to victorian England, with one major change: magic is real and there are terrifying monsters trying to tear the world (and people!) apart. I found it compelling, the dark changes makes for an entertaining, dystopian version of our own world. In my opinion the best part of this book is the rich characters. The fatherly sorcerer who takes her in, the quirky sorcerers-in training, a secret druid healer, an outlawed thieving magician, and quite a few potential love interests.

I would highly recommend reading this book or listening to the audiobook. The audiobook is narrated by Fiona Hardingham, who is a fount of accents. Alone, she really creates a vivid scene with the authentically accented characters that she is able to produce.

"A glorious, fast-paced romp of an adventure. Jessica Cluess has built her story out of my favorite ingredients: sorcery, demons, romance, and danger."

--Kelly Link, author of *Pretty Monsters*

Book Talk written by Casey Binik-Thomas of MidPointe Library Monroe

Sadie by Courtney Summers

This thrilling story is presented through the eyes of an investigative reporter via his podcast and through the eyes of Sadie, a girl who has gone missing. Sadie's 13 year old sister, Mattie, was recently found murdered. Now Sadie is missing.

May Beth Foster, Sadie and Mattie's surrogate grandmother, will not stop trying to find her even though the police have declared Sadie a runaway. She enlists the help of reporter, West McCray. He did not want to take on this story. "Girls go missing all the time. Restless teenage girls, reckless teenage girls. Teenage girls and their inevitable drama. We've heard this story before." He asks May Beth why he should take this case and May Beth says "I can't take another dead girl." So, he digs deep into Sadie's disappearance until he can piece together where, when and who Sadie has been in contact with since she went missing.

Did Sadie get kidnapped by Mattie's killer or is she simply a teenage runaway? Will Sadie be found dead or alive because... I can't take another dead girl.

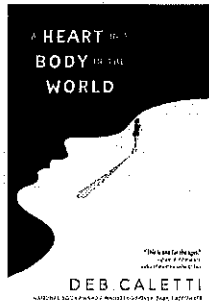
Book talk: The Hazel Wood by Melissa Albert

The Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Anderson, Althea Proserpine-everyone has grown up knowing the names of these almost mythic authors of the world's most famous fairy tales. Althea Prosperine's dark, creepy *Tales from the Hinterland* is a cult favorite all over the world. But Alice Prosperine, granddaughter of Althea, has never even read them. Nor has she ever met her famous reclusive grandmother, or been to her mysterious estate, the Hazel Wood.

Alice has spent the entire 17 years of her life constantly on the move with her mother Ella. Whenever they settle in one place for too long, bad luck and strange circumstances seem to catch up with them, whether it is their rented house flooding on a rainless night, odd people following Alice, or people they interact with dying under mysterious circumstances.

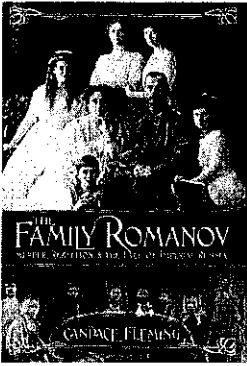
When they receive word that Althea has died, Ella tells Alice that they are finally free. They put down roots in New York City, where Alice meets classmate Ellery Finch, a *Tales from the Hinterland* superfan. When her mother is abducted by people claiming to be from the Hinterland, leaving Alice with only a note that says, "Stay away from the Hazel Wood", she turns to Finch for help. The more they investigate the stranger things become, until they begin to suspect that Althea did not create her fairy tales at all- she simply reported events as she had witnessed them.....

Teen Think Tank Book Talk: *A Heart in a Body in the World* by Deb Caletti
Reviewed by Sara Hardin, Dayton Metro Library



Danger was confusing. As a girl...she was told that she needed to be on guard against 50 percent of the human race, and she carried that awareness everywhere, ready to make use of it every time a car slowed next to her as she was walking, or she was driven home by the dad after babysitting. Every time she waited at a bus stop or was at a party with boys and alcohol or was just plain alone, she felt the high alert of vigilance. You could forget that some people don't live this way. Part of the population rarely even thinks like this. They just walk around without fear and wait at bus stops and go to parties. But what are you supposed to do when you're also required to be kind and helpful as well as vigilant? To give directions to the driver in the car slowing beside you, to be polite to the father of the kids you babysat, to be friendly and fun at the party? It was hard to hear very well through the buzz of constant watchfulness.

If only Annabelle knew the answer to that dilemma, maybe none of it ever would have happened. Maybe *he*, The Taker, would not have happened. But it did; *he* did; and now every choice she made, every kindness she bestowed, plays in a never-ending reel through her mind, riddling her with grief, guilt, and fear. When a stranger drunkenly makes a pass at her in a fast food restaurant, Annabelle runs. She runs 16 miles and makes the decision not to stop; she will run from her home in Seattle across the United States to Washington DC, 16 miles a day. Accompanied by her RV-driving Italian grandfather, Annabelle becomes the unwilling face of a movement. With each mile she puts behind her, she evolves from running away from what happened to running towards acceptance. Told in present-tense with flashbacks that gradually detail the events of the previous year, this powerful Printz Honor book will stay with you long after you have finished.



BOOKTALK

The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia by Candace Fleming.

Submitted by Tamara Menninger, MidPointe Library System Trenton;
tmenninger@midpointelibrary.org

“Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia” – sounds like the makings of a great fiction story full of intrigue, mystery and romance, right? Only everything in this book actually happened. If you are a historical fiction reader looking for engaging non-fiction, I highly recommend you look at Candace Fleming's excellent portrait of the Romanov Family, the contrast of the imperial life versus the life of peasants and working poor and the events leading to the Russian revolution of 1917.

The book details the life of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, his wife the Empress Alexandra, and their children Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Marie and Anastasia and their only son Tsarevich Alexei. While it concentrates on the lives of the royal family, Fleming also provides rich glances into the lives of the peasants and working poor in sections titled “Beyond the Palace Gates.” These accounts are rich in detail about how the majority (94%) of the 130 million souls Nicholas ruled over struggled to survive while the nobility (1.5% of the Russian population) “envisioned peasants living in simply yet cozy huts” in some idyllic country paradise.

As Nicholas and Alexandra struggle for a male heir, they finally welcome the birth of Alexei only to have him suffer from hemophilia, a secret they work to keep. The royal family grows more and more isolated, at one point becoming puppet-mastered by the mystic Rasputin. At times, Nicholas seems clueless about the state of his empire and his subjects. The state in which the Russian Army was unprepared for the long siege of World War I probably becomes the straw that breaks the Empire's back in a climate ripe for revolution under the likes of Vladimir Lenin.

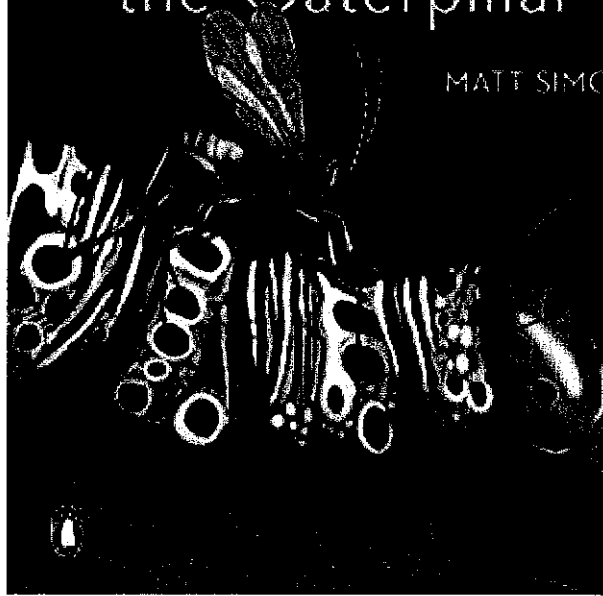
Fleming presents the narrative like fiction with the objectivity of non-biased journalism at its best—a refreshing read in these days of “fake news” when it comes to anything political including the politics of the past.

This book is suitable for teens in grades 7 & up as well as adults interested in history and biography. There is the violence of revolution, World War I and cold-blooded politically motivated murder.

EVOLUTION'S MOST UNBELIEVABLE
SOLUTIONS TO LIFE'S BIGGEST PROBLEMS

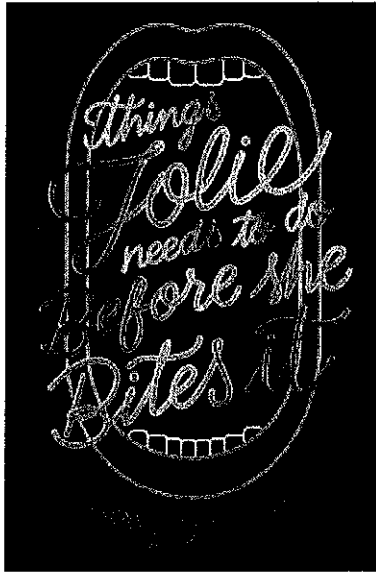
The Wasp That Brainwashed the Caterpillar

MATT SIMON



- Did you know that the male antechinus, an small Australian marsupial, will mate so frequently that they'll begin to bleed internally, their immune system fails, their hair falls out, they'll go blind, and then die?
- Did you know that there is a species of fly that hatches as a maggot inside of an ant, uses hormones to control the ant's body, then eats the brain, and uses the carcass as a macabre crib until the it's ready to fly away?
- Did you know the pearlfish will swim up a sea cucumbers anus, eat its gonads, and uses the cucumber as shelter from predators?

There is a rhyme and a reason for each of the behaviors of these animals—evolution. Sure, life sucks and then you die, but for each of these animals and 40 more, Matt Simon illustrates nature's problems and the majestic answers that evolution brings about. Written with laugh out loud wit, accessible language, and short chapters, this title will be a quick read you'll be dying to tell your friends all about.



Things Jolie Needs to Do Before She Bites It

Kerry Winfrey

Feiwel and Friends

ISBN: 9781250119544

Published: 7/2018

Jolie's a lot of things, but she knows that pretty isn't one of them.

Sixteen-year-old Jolie has mandibular prognathism, which is the medical term for underbite. Chewing is a pain, headaches are a common occurrence, and she's never been kissed. She also speaks with a lisp. She's months out from having a procedure to correct her underbite, and she cannot wait to be fixed. She's even thinking that post-surgery she might be as pretty as her older sister.

Then Jolie becomes paralyzed with the fear that she could die under the knife. She and her best friends, Evelyn and Derek, decide to make a "Things Jolie Needs to Do Before She Bites It (Which Is Super Unlikely, but Still, It Could Happen)" list. Things like: eat every appetizer on the Applebee's menu and kiss her crush Noah Reed. But since when did everything ever go exactly to plan?

Romance/Humor

Grades 7-9, ages 12-14

Nevertheless, We Persisted: 48 Voices of Defiance, Strength, and Courage

Your coffee maker quits working. You have to stop for gas so you're late for work. The battery in your phone dies. Life is pretty tough some days, right? *Nevertheless, We Persisted* was published in 2018. This amazing collection of autobiographical stories shines a more realistic light on what a hardship really is. The true chronicles of 48 different people representing a myriad of genders, races, ages, and situations demonstrate the resiliency of the human spirit. A few are familiar names, like Melissa Marr (author of young adult fantasy) and Maulik Pancholy (television actor known for a number of shows including *30 Rock* and *Phineas and Ferb* – and born in Dayton, Ohio!). But most are unsung heroes that you may never have heard of had it not been for this book.

Jess Markt was a 19 year old college athlete when a car crash took away the use of his body from the waist down. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, he worked hard to take on the challenge first of finishing his college degree, then going on to become an accomplished wheelchair athlete. Today he coaches a team for the National Wheelchair Basketball Association and starts sports programs for physically disabled people in war and conflict zones around the world.

Danielle Vabner's little brother Noah was killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in 2012. This heartbreaking chapter describes how she took this devastating anguish and turned it into a drive to be a passionate advocate for gun violence prevention.

When James Lecesne was 5 years old he knew he was different. Growing up in the 1970's he had to hide the fact that he was gay, convinced that he was NOT a criminal, a sinner, or crazy. Fortunately, when he was 15 he met a whole new group of people when he worked at a summer stock theater, and met his first openly gay person. As the years went by he knew he had to help other young people who felt isolated in their identities. He founded the Trevor Project in 1998, which provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ young people nationwide.

Some stories are told in verse, some as conversations, some as letters, one is even written in pictures as a graphic novel. Many can bring you to tears, some are humorously written, and some are almost unbelievable. All the accounts are compelling and every single one is undeniably awe-inspiring. Would I have the courage and the fortitude to travel those same paths?

This book will most assuredly put your broken coffee maker into perspective.



Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful

Arwen Elys Dayton

ISBN: 9780525580966

Published in 2018

Black Mirror and *Westworld* are complex television shows about technology and humanity. *Detroit: Become Human*, *Deus Ex*, and the upcoming *Cyberpunk 2077* have done the same in the video game realm. *Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful* by Arwen Elys Dayton is a mosaic of a future in which humanity's definition is in chronic flux.

This book of six interconnected stories demonstrates how far humanity will go to adapt itself to become better in every measurable way. But is it ethical to remake ourselves into longer living individuals through genetic manipulation or cybernetic implantation? No matter if you answer yes or no to that question, at least one or two of these stories may convince you otherwise.

Is a boy who is donated his twin sister's heart less human than before? What about a teenager who is cryogenically frozen and then reanimated when there illness is curable through technology?

Thought provoking but never boring, *Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful* is for anyone who enjoys science fiction and technology, especially those who have relished dystopian novels like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, as well as those who want to ponder what makes us human.