

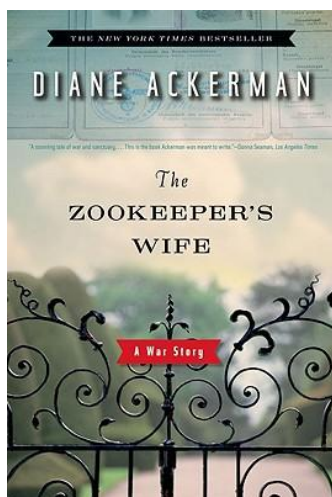
Cobra Readers Book Consideration List October, 2010

Below is a list of books that we are going to consider for our next two selections. Read through the list and on the last page you will find a ballot to vote for top choice in each category. You will have until next Friday, Oct. 15th to vote. Give your ballot to Ms. Stafford in the Media Center.

Book #1: Genre: Historical Fiction

Choose from the following three titles.

1. *The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story* by Diane Ackerman



When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw-and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Zabinski began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Another dozen "guests" hid inside the Zabinskis' villa, emerging after dark for dinner, socializing, and, during rare moments of calm, piano concerts. Jan, active in the polish resistance, kept ammunition buried in the elephant enclosure and stashed explosives in the animal hospital. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants-otters, a badger, hyena pups, lynxes. With her exuberant prose and exquisite sensitivity to the natural world, Diane Ackerman engages us viscerally in the lives of the zoo animals, their keepers, and their hidden visitors. She shows us how Antonina refused to give in to the penetrating fear of discovery, keeping alive an atmosphere of play and innocence even as Europe

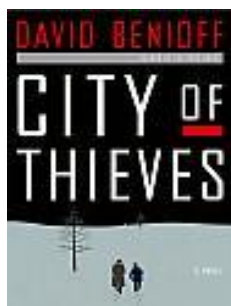
Soon, news of William's "magetsi a mphepo"--his "electric wind"--spread beyond the borders of his home, and the boy who was once called crazy became an inspiration to those around the world.

Here is the remarkable story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity. "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" will inspire anyone who

doubts the power of one individual's ability to change his community and better the lives of those around him.

Note: Winner of the 2010 Alex Award given to ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults.

2. *City of Thieves* by David Benioff

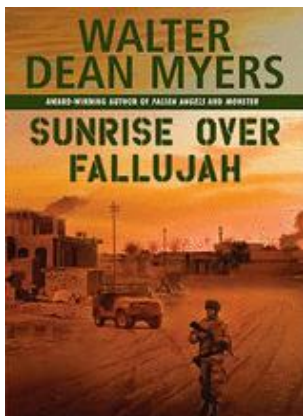


Publishers Weekly (February 25, 2008)

Author and screenwriter Benioff follows up *The 25th Hour* with this hard-to-put-down novel based on his grandfather's stories about surviving WWII in Russia. Having elected to stay in Leningrad during the siege, 17-year-old Lev Beniov is caught looting a German paratrooper's corpse. The penalty for this infraction (and many others) is execution. But when Colonel Grechko confronts Lev and Kolya, a Russian army deserter also facing execution, he spares them on the condition that they acquire a dozen eggs for the colonel's daughter's wedding cake. Their mission exposes them to the most ghoulish acts of the starved populace and takes them behind enemy lines to the Russian countryside. There, Lev and Kolya take on an even more daring objective: to kill the commander of the local occupying German forces. A wry and sympathetic observer of the devastation around him, Lev is an engaging and self-deprecating narrator who finds unexpected reserves of courage at the crucial moment and forms an unlikely friendship with Kolya, a flamboyant ladies' man who is coolly reckless in the face of danger. Benioff blends tense adventure, a bittersweet coming-of-age and an oddly touching buddy narrative to craft a smart crowd-pleaser. (May) Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

Note: Winner of the 2009 American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults Award.

3. *Sunrise Over Fallujah* by Walter Dean Meyer



School Library Journal (April 1, 2008)

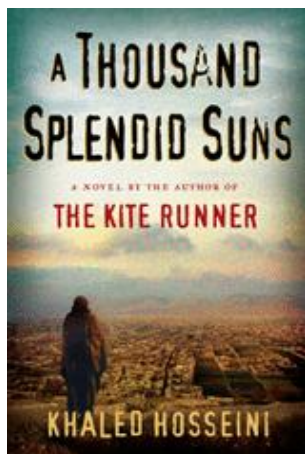
Gr 8 Up-Instead of heading to college as his father wishes, Robin leaves Harlem and joins the army to stand up for his country after 9/11. While stationed in Iraq with a war looming that he hopes will be averted, he begins writing letters home to his parents and to his Uncle Richie, the main character from Myers's acclaimed Vietnam War novel, *Fallen Angels* (Scholastic, 1988). Robin finds himself in a diverse Civil Affairs unit of both men and women, with a mission to serve as a buffer between winning over the Iraqi people and concurrent military operations. As the war unfolds, the military angle of Robin's job escalates, and he experiences increasing horrors of violence, death, destruction, insecurity, sorrow, and extreme fear. Ultimately, he comprehends the reasons Uncle Richie never wanted to talk to their family about what happened in Vietnam, saying, "-are there really enough words to make them understand?" Myers brilliantly freeze-frames the opening months of the current Iraq War by realistically capturing its pivotal moments in 2003 and creating a vivid setting. Memorable characters share instances of wry levity that balance the story without deflecting its serious tone. Through precise, believable dialogue as the catalyst, tame compared to that warranted in *Fallen Angels*, Myers's expert portrayal of a soldier's feelings and perspectives at the onset of this controversial war allows the circumstances to speak for themselves.-Diane P. Tuccillo, Fort Collins Regional Library District, CO Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

Note: Winner of the the American Library Association's "2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound".

Book #2: Genre: Multicultural Fiction/Nonfiction

Choose from the following three titles.

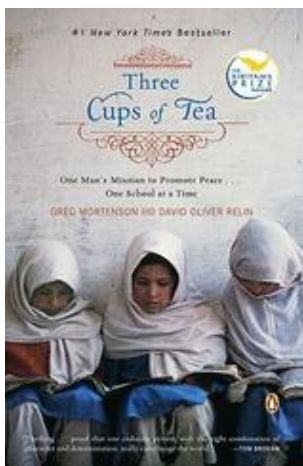
1. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini



Booklist starred (March 1, 2007 (Vol. 103, No. 13))

Hosseini's follow-up to his best-selling debut, *The Kite Runner* (2003) views the plight of Afghanistan during the last half-century through the eyes of two women. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of a maid and a businessman, who is given away in marriage at 15 to Rasheed, a man three times her age; their union is not a loving one. Laila is born to educated, liberal parents in Kabul the night the Communists take over Afghanistan. Adored by her father but neglected in favor of her older brothers by her mother, Laila finds her true love early on in Tariq, a thoughtful, chivalrous boy who lost a leg in an explosion. But when tensions between the Communists and the *mujahideen* make the city unsafe, Tariq and his family flee to Pakistan. A devastating tragedy brings Laila to the house of Rasheed and Mariam, where she is forced to make a horrific choice to secure her future. At the heart of the novel is the bond between Mariam and Laila, two very different women brought together by dire circumstances. Unimaginably tragic, Hosseini's magnificent second novel is a sad and beautiful testament to both Afghani suffering and strength. Readers who lost themselves in *The Kite Runner* will not want to miss this unforgettable follow-up.

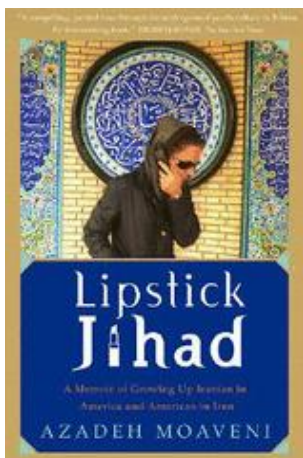
2. *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson



Publishers Weekly (January 9, 2006)

Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts. (Mar.) Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

3. *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* by Azadeh Moaveni

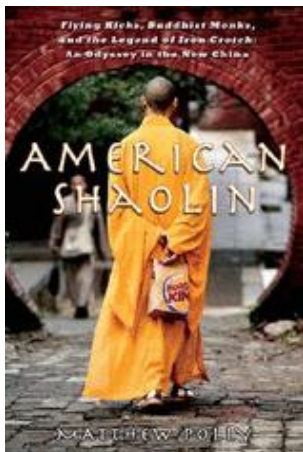


From Publishers Weekly

Time reporter Moaveni, the American-born child of Iranian exiles, spent two years (2000–2001) working in Tehran. Although she reports on the overall tumult and repression felt by Iranians between the 1999 pro-democracy student demonstrations and the 2002 "Axis of Evil" declaration, the book's dominant story is more intimate. Moaveni was on a personal search "to figure out my relationship" to Iran. Neither her adolescent ethnic identity conundrums nor her idyllic memories of a childhood visit prepared her for the realities she confronted as she navigated Iran, learning its rules, restrictions and taboos—and how to evade and even exploit them like a local. Because she was a journalist, the shadowy, unnerving presence of an Iranian intelligence agent/interrogator hovered continually ("it would be useful if we saw your work before publication," he told her). Readers also get intimate glimpses of domestic life: Moaveni lived among family and depicts clandestine partying, women's gyms and the popularity of cosmetic surgery. Eventually, Moaveni became "more at home than [her mother] was" in Iran, and a visit to the U.S. showed how Moaveni, who now lives in Beirut, had grown unaccustomed to American life, "where my Iranian instincts served no purpose." *Lipstick Jihad* is a catchy title, but its flippancy does a disservice to Moaveni's nuanced narrative. *Agent, Diana Finch*. (Mar.) Forecast: This work, as well as Afschineh Latifi's *Even After All This Time*, reviewed above, joins the recent explosion of memoirs by women about living in Iran, and could be displayed alongside Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No* and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

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4. *American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Crotch* by Matthew Polly



Kirkus Review (November 15, 2006)

Memoir of the author's quest for personal growth and wisdom by way of a trip to the birthplace of Zen and kung fu. Polly confesses to having become obsessed with martial arts at age nine, when he saw an episode of Kung Fu. David Carradine's character, he writes, "seemed to be as strange and helpless as I felt, and yet he was a total badass." Leaving hometown Topeka to attend Princeton, he started taking kung fu classes and studying Mandarin. But he still didn't feel like much of a badass, so in 1992 he headed for the ultimate sleep-away sports camp, the fabled Shaolin Temple Wushu Center in Henan Province in the heart of Communist China. The tall, blue-eyed laowai (foreigner) found Shaolin, established some 1,500 years before, a bit seedy. His Zen masters could curse as well as fight; Polly learned drinking games and dirty jokes along with fighting techniques. Getting whacked upside his head, Bao Mosi (as he was called in Chinese) became tough, dispensing some nasty blows himself. Polly met specialists Master Wu, Coach Big Wang and Monk Dong (don't ask about his specialty). He ogled beautiful Lotus, one of only five female students, and shook his head over assorted foreign nut cases. Bao Mosi found the combat sports beautiful, "the height of civilization." His adventure in a Cultural Exchange Mutual Benefit exercise proved that he definitely wasn't in Kansas anymore. A nicely developed narrative.

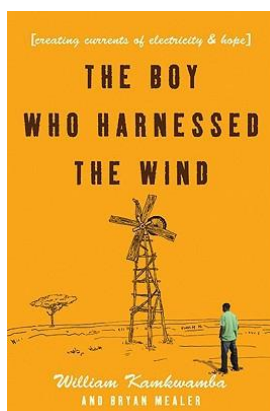
Note: Winner of the the American Library Association's "2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound".

Book #3: Genre: Memoir

Choose from the following three titles.

1. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind : Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope*

by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

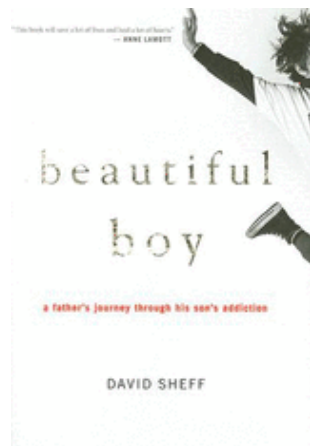


William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi, a country where magic ruled and modern science was mystery. It was also a land withered by drought and hunger, and a place where hope and opportunity were hard to find. But William had read about windmills in a book called *Using Energy*, and he dreamed of building one that would bring electricity and water to his village and change his life and the lives of those around him. His neighbors may have mocked him and called him *misala*--crazy--but William was determined to show them what a little grit and ingenuity could do.

Enchanted by the workings of electricity as a boy, William had a goal to study science in Malawi's top boarding schools. But in 2002, his country was stricken with a famine that left his family's farm devastated and his parents destitute. Unable to pay the eighty-dollar-a-year tuition for his education, William was forced to drop out and help his family forage for food as thousands across the country starved and died.

Yet William refused to let go of his dreams. With nothing more than a fistful of cornmeal in his stomach, a small pile of once-forgotten science textbooks, and an armory of curiosity and determination, he embarked on a daring plan to bring his family a set of luxuries that only two percent of Malawians could afford and what the West considers a necessity--electricity and running water. Using scrap metal, tractor parts, and bicycle halves, William forged a crude yet operable windmill, an unlikely contraption and small miracle that eventually powered four lights, complete with homemade switches and a circuit breaker made from nails and wire. A second machine turned a water pump that could battle the drought and famine that loomed with every season.

2. *Beautiful Boy : A Father's Journey through His Son's Addiction* by David Sheff

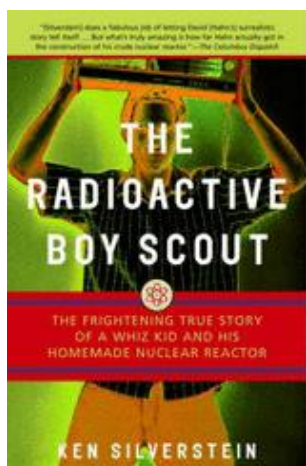


Publishers Weekly (April 30, 2007)

Expanding on his New York Times Magazine article, Sheff chronicles his son's downward spiral into addiction and the impact on him and his family. A bright, capable teenager, Nic began trying mind- and mood-altering substances when he was 17. In months, use became abuse, then abuse became addiction. By the time Sheff knew of his son's condition, Nic was strung out on meth, the highly potent stimulant. While his son struggles to get clean, his second wife and two younger children are pulled helplessly into the drama. Sheff, as the parent of an addict, cycles through denial and acceptance and resistance. The author was already a journalist of considerable standing when this painful story began to unfold, and his impulse for detail serves him personally as well as professionally: there are hard, solid facts about meth and the kinds of havoc it wreaks on individuals, families and communities both urban and rural. His journey is long and harrowing, but Sheff does not spare himself or anyone else from keen professional scrutiny any more than he was himself spared the pains-and joys-of watching a loved one struggling with addiction and recovery. Real recovery creates-and can itself be-its own reward; this is an honest, hopeful book, coming at a propitious moment in the meth epidemic. (Aug.) Copyright 2007 Reed Business Information.

Note: Winner of the the American Library Association's "2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound".

3. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The Frightening True Story of a Whiz Kid and Homemade Nuclear Reactor* by Ken Silverstein



Growing up in suburban Detroit, David Hahn was fascinated by science, and his basement experiments—building homemade fireworks, brewing moonshine, and concocting his own self-tanning lotion—were more ambitious than those of other boys. While working on his Atomic Energy badge for the Boy Scouts, David's obsessive attention turned to nuclear energy. Throwing caution to the wind, he plunged into a new project: building a nuclear breeder reactor in his backyard garden shed.

In **The Radioactive Boy Scout**, veteran journalist Ken Silverstein recreates in brilliant detail the months of David's improbable nuclear quest. Posing as a physics professor, David solicited information on reactor design from the U.S. government and from industry experts. (Ironically, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was his number one source of information.) Scavenging antiques stores and junkyards for old-fashioned smoke detectors and gas lanterns—both of which contain small amounts of radioactive material—and following blueprints he found in an outdated physics textbook, David cobbled together a crude device that threw off toxic levels of radiation. His unsanctioned and wholly unsupervised project finally sparked an environmental catastrophe that put his town's forty thousand residents at risk and caused the EPA to shut down his lab and bury it at a radioactive dumpsite in Utah.

An outrageous account of ambition and, ultimately, hubris that sits comfortably on the shelf next to such offbeat science books as *Driving Mr. Albert* and stories of grand capers like **Catch Me If You Can**, **The Radioactive Boy Scout** is a real-life adventure with the narrative energy of a first-rate thriller.

Note: Winner of the the American Library Association's "2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound".

4. *My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young CEO Learned on His Journey through Silicon Valley* by Ben Casnocha



From [Booklist](#)

When Casnocha, a first-time entrepreneur and author, shares his life story chronicling a jam-packed 19 years, it's clear he listens to Oprah's encomium "live your best life." What's even more jaw opening is the level of wisdom and self-awareness he displays. Each brief chapter features at least one personal, headlined sidebar about, say, customer feedback, advisory boards, or the power of mentors. There are also short "braintrust" synopses from Casnocha's ever-expanding network; venture capitalist Heidi Roizen weighs in on taking responsibility, while writer Chris Yeh muses about the right blend of work and life. In between the snippets lies a compelling narrative, from the author's first meander into customer focus groups to hard-earned lessons about technology and bootstrapping. A simply written yet remarkably direct, honest, and, yes, a bit heart-wrenching account about a lost teenagerhood. *Barbara Jacobs*

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Note: Winner of the the American Library Association's "2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound".

Name: _____

Voting Ballot—Due by Friday, October 16, 2010

From each group below put an “X” by your top choice. Turn in your ballot to Ms. Stafford in the Media Center.

Book #1: Genre: Historical Fiction

_____ 1. *The Zookeeper’s Wife: A War Story*

_____ 2. *City of Thieves*

_____ 3. *Sunrise Over Fallujah*

Book #2: Genre: Multicultural Fiction and Nonfiction

_____ 1. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

_____ 2. *Three Cups of Tea*

_____ 3. *Lipstick Jihad*

_____ 4. *American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Crotch*

Book #3: Genre: Memoir

_____ 1. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

_____ 2. *Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey Through his Son’s Addiction*

_____ 3. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The True Story of a Boy and his Backyard Nuclear Reactor*

_____ 4. *My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young CEO Learned on His Journey through Silicon Valley*