# *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand

In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics. But when World War II began, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived, adrift on a foundering life raft. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will. (9 copies)

*American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in American History* by Chris Kyle

Kyle’s riveting first-person account of how he went from Texas rodeo cowboy to expert marksman and feared assassin offers a fascinating view of modern-day warfare and one of the most in-depth and illuminating looks into the secret world of Special Ops ever written. (22 copies)

*Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schlosser

On any given day, one out of four Americans opts for a quick and cheap meal at a fast-food restaurant, without giving either its speed or its thriftiness a second thought. Fast food is so ubiquitous that it now seems as American, and harmless, as apple pie. But the industry's drive for consolidation, homogenization, and speed has radically transformed America's diet, landscape, economy, and workforce, often in insidiously destructive ways. Schlosser wants you to know why those French fries taste so good and "what really lurks between those sesame-seed buns." (5 copies)

*Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores The Hidden Side of Everything*

 by Steven Levitt & Stephen Subner

Freakonomics is a groundbreaking collaboration between Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, an award-winning author and journalist. They set out to explore the inner workings of a crack gang, the truth about real estate agents, the secrets of the Ku Klux Klan, and much more. Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, they show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—how people get what they want or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing. (30 copies)

*Columbine* by Dave Cullen

In this remarkable account of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, Cullen not only dispels several of the prevailing myths about the event but tackles the hardest question of all: why did it happen? Drawing on extensive interviews, police reports and his own reporting, Cullen meticulously pieces together what happened when 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold killed 13 people before turning their guns on themselves. Readers will come away from Cullen's unflinching account with a deeper understanding of what drove these boys to kill, even if the answers aren't easy to stomach. (28 copies)

*The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Wells

Walls chronicles her upbringing at the hands of eccentric, nomadic parents--Rose Mary, her frustrated-artist mother, and Rex, her brilliant, alcoholic father. To call the elder Walls's childrearing style laissez faire would be putting it mildly. As Rose Mary and Rex, motivated by whims and paranoia, uprooted their kids time and again, the youngsters (Walls, her brother and two sisters) were left largely to their own devices. But while Rex and Rose Mary firmly believed children learned best from their own mistakes, they themselves never seemed to do so, repeating the same disastrous patterns that eventually landed them on the streets. (67 copies)

*The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brain* by Nicholas Carr

Building on the insights of thinkers from Plato to McLuhan, Carr makes a convincing case that every information technology carries an intellectual ethic—a set of assumptions about the nature of knowledge and intelligence. He explains how the printed book served to focus our attention, promoting deep and creative thought. In stark contrast, the Internet encourages the rapid, distracted sampling of small bits of information from many sources. Its ethic is that of the industrialist, an ethic of speed and efficiency, of optimized production and consumption—and now the Net is remaking us in its own image. We are becoming ever more adept at scanning and skimming, but what we are losing is our capacity for concentration, contemplation, and reflection. (10 copies)

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

From a single, abbreviated life grew a seemingly immortal line of cells that made some of the most crucial innovations in modern science possible. And from that same life, and those cells, Rebecca Skloot has fashioned in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* a fascinating and moving story of medicine and family, of how life is sustained in laboratories and in memory. Henrietta Lacks was a mother of five in Baltimore, a poor African American migrant from the tobacco farms of Virginia, who died from a cruelly aggressive cancer at the age of 30 in 1951. A sample of her cancerous tissue, taken without her knowledge or consent, as was the custom then, turned out to provide one of the holy grails of mid-century biology: human cells that could survive--even thrive--in the lab. Known as HeLa cells, their stunning potency gave scientists a building block for countless breakthroughs, beginning with the cure for polio. Meanwhile, Henrietta's family continued to live in poverty and frequently poor health, and their discovery decades later of her unknowing contribution--and her cells' strange survival--left them full of pride, anger, and suspicion. (9 copies)

*Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seam Team 10* by Marcus Lutteral

This is the story of fire team leader Marcus Luttrell, the sole survivor of Operation Redwing, and the desperate battle in the mountains that led, ultimately, to the largest loss of life in Navy SEAL history. But it is also, more than anything, the story of his teammates, who fought ferociously beside him until he was the last one left-blasted unconscious by a rocket grenade, blown over a cliff, but still armed and still breathing. Over the next four days, badly injured and presumed dead, Luttrell fought off six al Qaeda assassins who were sent to finish him, then crawled for seven miles through the mountains before he was taken in by a Pashtun tribe, who risked everything to protect him from the encircling Taliban killers. (25 copies)

*Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction* by David Sheff

From as early as grade school, the world seemed to be on Nic Sheff's string. Bright and athletic, he excelled in any setting and appeared destined for greatness. Yet as childhood exuberance faded into teenage angst, the precocious boy found himself going down a much different path. Seduced by the illicit world of drugs and alcohol, he quickly found himself caught in the clutches of addiction. *Beautiful Boy* is Nic's story, but from the perspective of his father, David. Achingly honest, it chronicles the betrayal, pain, and terrifying question marks that haunt the loved ones of an addict. (1 copy)

*Me Talk Pretty One* Day by David Sedaris

Caustic Sedaris mines poignant comedy from his peculiar childhood in North Carolina, his bizarre career path, and his move to France. Though his anarchic inclination to digress is his glory, Sedaris does have a theme in these reminiscences: the inability of humans to communicate. (2 copies)

*Black Boy* by Richard Wright

Wright recalls his difficult upbringing in the segregated South, emphasizing the limited choices of a young black

male yearning for equality in the early 20th century. The book is sometimes considered a fictionalized autobiography or an autobiographical novel because of its use of novelistic techniques. *Black Boy* describes vividly Wright's often harsh, hardscrabble boyhood and youth in rural Mississippi and in Memphis, Tenn. (5 copies)

*The Bookseller of Kabul* by Asne Seierstad

After living for three months with the Kabul bookseller Sultan Khan in the spring of 2002, Norwegian journalist Seierstad penned this portrait of a nation recovering from war, undergoing political flux, and mired in misogyny and poverty. As a Westerner, she has the privilege of traveling between the worlds of men and women, and though the book is ostensibly a portrait of Khan, its real strength is the intimacy and brutal honesty with which it portrays the lives of Afghani living under fundamentalist Islam. Seierstad also expertly outlines Sultan's fight to preserve whatever he can of the literary life of the capital during its numerous decades of warfare (he stashed some 10,000 books in attics around town). (1 copy)

*Complications* by Atul Gawande

Gently dismantling the myth of medical infallibility, Dr. Atul Gawande's *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* is essential reading for anyone involved in medicine--on either end of the stethoscope. Medical professionals make mistakes, learn on the job, and improvise much of their technique and self-confidence. Gawande's tales are humane and passionate reminders that doctors are people, too. His prose is thoughtful and deeply engaging, shifting from sometimes painful stories of suffering patients (including his own child) to intriguing suggestions for improving medicine with the same care he expresses in the surgical theater. (2 copies)

*Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and my Journey from Homeless to Harvard*

by Liz Murray

From runaway to Harvard student, Murray tells a story about turning her life around after growing up the neglected child of drug addicts. When Murray was born in 1980, her former beatnik father was in jail for illegally trafficking in prescription painkillers, and her mother, a cokehead since age 13, had just barely missed losing custody of their year-old daughter, Lisa. Murray writes that drugs were the "wrecking ball" that destroyed her family. By age 15, with the help of her best friend Sam and an elusive hustler, Carlos, she took permanently to the streets, relying on friends, sadly, for shelter. With the death of her mother, her runaway world came to an end. (38 copies)

*Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers

Through the story of one man’s experience after Hurricane Katrina, Eggers draws an indelible picture of Bush-era crisis management. Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a successful Syrian-born painting contractor, decides to stay in New Orleans and protect his property while his family flees. After the levees break, he uses a small canoe to rescue people, before being arrested by an armed squad and swept powerlessly into a vortex of bureaucratic brutality. When a guard accuses him of being a member of Al Qaeda, he sees that race and culture may explain his predicament. Eggers, compiling his account from interviews, sensibly resists rhetorical grandstanding, letting injustices speak for themselves. His skill is most evident in how closely he involves the reader in Zeitoun’s thoughts. Thrown into one of a series of wire cages, Zeitoun speculates, with a contractor’s practicality, that construction of his prison must have begun within a day or so of the hurricane. (10 copies)

*Gang Leader for a Day* by Sudhir Venkatesh

In the late 1980s and 1990s, rogue sociologist Venkatesh infiltrated the world of tenant and gang life in Chicago's Robert Taylor Home projects. He found a complex system of compromises and subsistence that makes life (barely) manageable. Venkatesh excellently illustrates the resourcefulness of impoverished communities in contrast to a society that has virtually abandoned them. He also reveals the symbiotic relationship between the community and the gangs that helps sustain each. Reg Rogers reads with great emphasis and rhythm. His lilting, cadence and vocal characterization of tenants is enjoyable. Rogers's first-person narrative establishes a deep intimacy with the reader. Venkatesh reads the final chapter, but he lacks the subtly and nuance that Rogers projects throughout his reading. The insubstantial author interview on the last disc mostly covers material already discussed in the book. (1 copy)

*The Hot Zone* by Richard Preston

The dramatic and chilling story of an Ebola virus outbreak in a surburban Washington, D.C. laboratory, with descriptions of frightening historical epidemics of rare and lethal viruses. More hair-raising than anything Hollywood could think of, because it's all true. (2 copies)

*Charlatan* by Pope Brock

John Brinkley, who grew up poor in rural North Carolina but attended Rush Medical College in Chicago, got his start touring as a medicine man hawking miracle tonics and became famous for transplanting goat testicles into impotent men. Brinkley built his own radio station in 1923, hustling his pseudoscience over the airwaves and giving an outlet to astrologers and country music. His nemesis was Dr. Morris Fishbein, the buoyant, compulsively curious editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* whose luminary friends included Sinclair Lewis, Clarence Darrow and H.L. Mencken. Fishbein took aim at Brinkley in *JAMA*, lay publications and pamphlets distributed by the thousands. Even after the Kansas State Medical Board yanked his medical license in 1930, Brinkley ran twice for governor of Kansas and almost won. (2 copies)

*The Lost City of Z* by David Grann

In 1925, renowned British explorer Col. Percy Harrison Fawcett embarked on a much publicized search to find the city of Z, site of an ancient Amazonian civilization that may or may not have existed. Fawcett, along with his grown son Jack, never returned, but that didn't stop countless others, including actors, college professors and well-funded explorers from venturing into the jungle to find Fawcett or the city. Among the wannabe explorers is Grann, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, who has bad eyes and a worse sense of direction. He became interested in Fawcett while researching another story, eventually venturing into the Amazon to satisfy his all-consuming curiosity about the explorer and his fatal mission. Largely about Fawcett, the book examines the stranglehold of passion as Grann's vigorous research mirrors Fawcett's obsession with uncovering the mysteries of the jungle. By interweaving the great story of Fawcett with his own investigative escapades in South America and Britain, Grann provides an in-depth, captivating character study that has the relentless energy of a classic adventure tale. (1 copy)