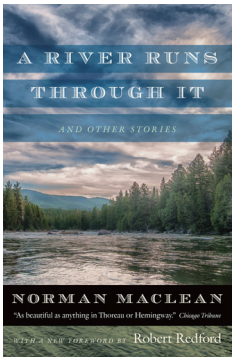
2027-28 Book Library

National Endowment for the Arts Big Read

Read Like a Champion: Celebrating Great American Sports Stories

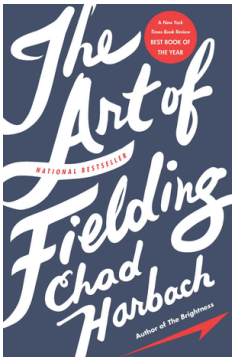




A River Runs Through It
by Norman Maclean

Fly Fishing

A classic, semi-autobiographical novella about two brothers in western Montana raised by their Presbyterian father to revere the art of fly fishing. They take comfort in the activity years later when one brother returns home from college and finds the other drinking, gambling, and in debt.



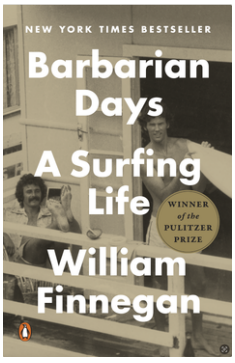
The Art of Fielding
by Chad Harbach

Baseball

A coming-of-age novel centered around a baseball team at a small college in Wisconsin. After a bad throw by the star shortstop causes a crisis in confidence, it leads to troubling reverberations in the lives of his roommate, his coach, the dean of the college, and the dean's daughter as they navigate the complexities of love and friendship.

FY2027-28 Library

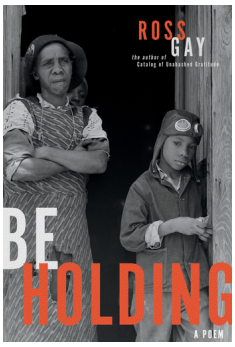
National Endowment for the Arts Big Read



Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life
by William Finnegan

Surfing

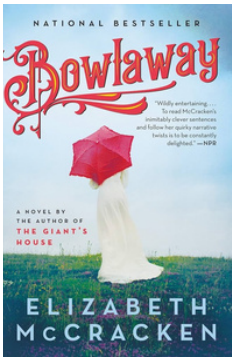
A Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir about surfing: the risks, the obsession, the techniques, the culture, the thrills, the stories, and the people. From his childhood in 1960s Hawaii and California to his travels in Africa, the South Pacific, and other locales, Finnegan searches for waves while he builds his career as a distinguished journalist.



Be Holding: A Poem
by Ross Gay

Basketball

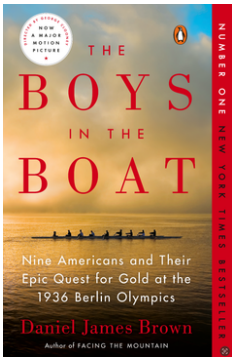
This poem by Indiana-based Ross Gay lingers on a famous move—the "flying reverse lay-up"—in the 1980 NBA finals by basketball legend Julius Erving (Dr. J) of the Philadelphia 76ers. The move is a springboard for Gay's meditation on the sport, the man, the personal and historical, and the violent and loving moments that can lead us to grace.



Bowlaway
by Elizabeth McCracken

Bowling

A multi-generational novel centered around a candlepin bowling alley in a small town in Massachusetts. It follows the story of a mysterious woman who owns and operates the alley at the turn of the 20th century and the family secrets, scandals, lies, and loyalties that emerge in the decades following her death.



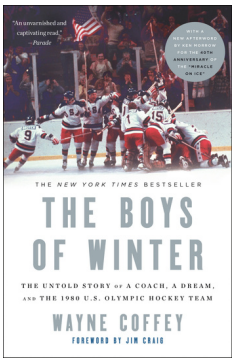
The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics
by Daniel James Brown

Rowing

A work of narrative nonfiction about how the rowing team at the University of Washington in Seattle—the working-class sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers—battled their way to a gold medal in a dramatic showdown that stunned the world. The book follows the trajectory of one rower in particular who, abandoned by his family in adolescence, finds community among his teammates.

FY2027-28 Library

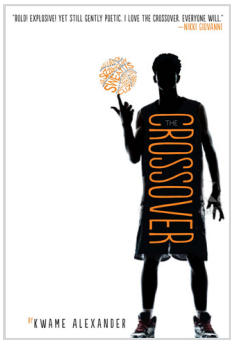
National Endowment for the Arts Big Read



The Boys of Winter: The Untold Story of a Coach, a Dream, and the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team
by Wayne Coffey

Hockey

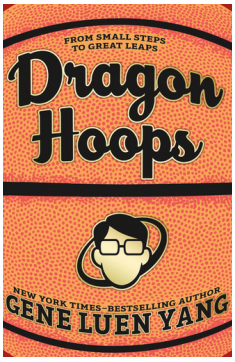
A work of narrative nonfiction about "the miracle on ice," the U.S. team's improbable victory over the Soviet Union to win the gold in ice hockey in Lake Placid, New York, at the height of the Cold War. Key moments from the game are interspersed with the backstories of the U.S. players and their beloved coach.



The Crossover
by Kwame Alexander

Basketball

A coming-of-age novel-in-verse about basketball and growing up. The story follows twin brothers in middle school, the sons of a former professional basketball player and an educator, who dominate on the basketball court but whose relationship is strained by sibling rivalry, first love, and family crisis.



Dragon Hoops
by Gene Luen Yang

Basketball

A graphic memoir by Gene Luen Yang about his transformation from a non-sports fan to a superfan. As he gets to know the players on the varsity basketball team at the Oakland, California, high school where he teaches, he follows the team's quest to win the state championship—an experience he finds changes the course of his career.



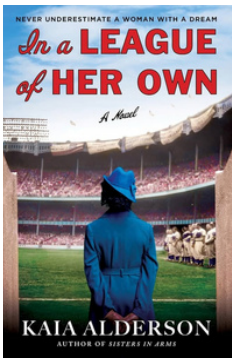
Headshot
by Rita Bullwinkel

Boxing

A novel about eight teenage girls who come together over one weekend to compete in a boxing championship in a dingy ring in Reno, Nevada. As they fight, the complex and varied circumstances and emotions that draw each of them to the sport—and what each will do to win—come into focus.

FY2027-28 Library

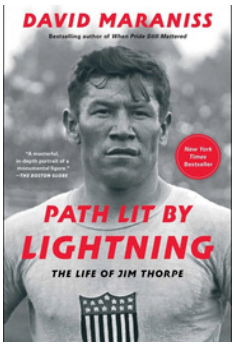
National Endowment for the Arts Big Read



In a League of Her Own
by Kaia Alderson

Baseball

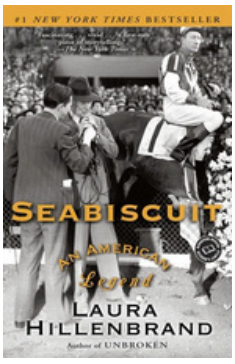
A historical novel about Effa Manley, a Black businesswoman and tireless civil rights advocate in 1930s New York and New Jersey who co-owned and managed the Newark Eagles in the Negro National League. In a baseball industry dominated by men, Manley led the team from 1935 to 1948, securing her place as the first and only woman inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Path Lit by Lightning: The Life of Jim Thorpe
by David Maraniss

Multisport

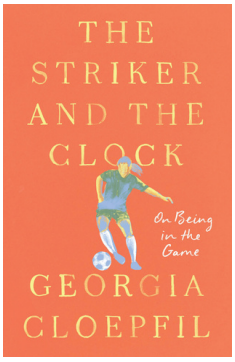
A biography by Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Maraniss about the talented all-around athlete and member of the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma. Jim Thorpe faced a lifetime of discrimination and yet became a legend in professional football, baseball, and track and field—winning gold medals in the decathlon and pentathlon at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics.



Seabiscuit: An American Legend
by Laura Hillenbrand

Horse Racing

A work of narrative nonfiction about an unlikely racehorse who, guided by a resilient jockey, an unconventional trainer, and a dynamic owner, became a Depression-era sensation and symbol of hope. When Seabiscuit beat the 1937 Triple Crown winner in the 1938 Pimlico Special match race in Baltimore, Maryland, he helped turn horseracing into a national obsession.



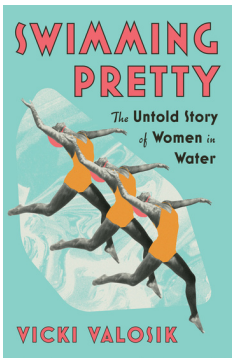
The Striker and the Clock: On Being in the Game
by Georgia Cloepfil

Soccer

A memoir by Oregon-based writer and former professional soccer player Georgia Cloepfil. In 90 short entries that mimic the 90 minutes of a game, Cloepfil recounts her soccer career across six years and six countries, reflecting on her lifelong love of the sport and the challenges and triumphs of being a writer and athlete in the world of professional women's soccer.

FY2027-28 Library

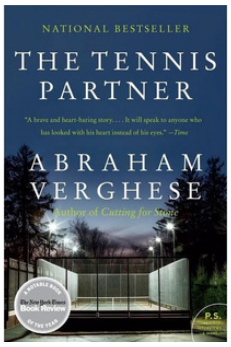
National Endowment for the Arts Big Read



Swimming Pretty: The Untold Story of Women in Water
by Vicki Valosik

Swimming

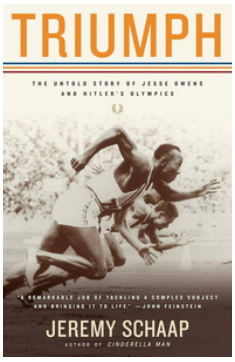
A narrative history that follows the century-long rise in popularity of synchronized swimming. The book traces how women like Esther Williams helped bring the sport from vaudeville to the Olympics, and how "swimming pretty" bolstered the women's rights movement and encouraged girls and women across the country to learn to swim and compete.



The Tennis Partner: A Doctor's Story of Friendship and Loss
by Dr. Abraham Verghese

Tennis

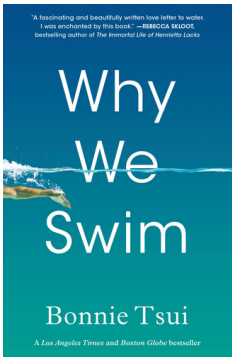
A memoir set during the author's time working as a professor of internal medicine and expert in infectious diseases in El Paso, Texas. In the midst of a failing marriage, he befriends one of his medical students through their shared love of tennis and discovers his friend's past drug addiction casts a dark shadow over the present.



Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics
by Jeremy Schaap

Track & Field

A work of narrative nonfiction about Jesse Owens, the African American track and field athlete. The son of sharecroppers in Ohio, Owens made history when he won four gold medals and set records at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, negating Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy.



Why We Swim
by Bonnie Tsui

Swimming

A hybrid work of history, journalism, and memoir about swimming by writer and former competitive swimmer Bonnie Tsui. Drawing from stories of wildly varying places and people across the globe, she explores how humans learned to swim to survive, and why we turn to swimming for enjoyment and exercise, to challenge ourselves, and to heal and connect.