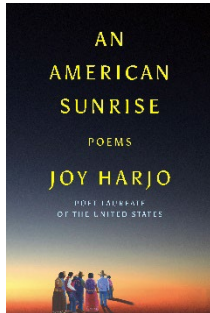


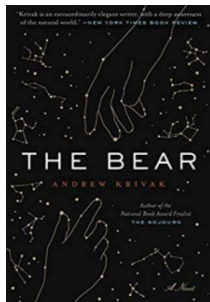
OUR NATURE

How Our Physical Environment Can Lead Us to Seek Hope, Courage, and Connection

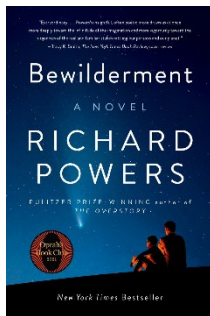
Selected titles explore in some way our relationship with the physical environment – from our cities and farms to our mountains and coastlines; from its nurturing beauty to its devastating power; from what we grow and eat to what roams the Earth; and from how it once was to what might be. Whether chosen or taken away or thrust upon us, our physical environment can challenge us in unexpected ways, shape our identities, and fill us with longing for human connection and community.



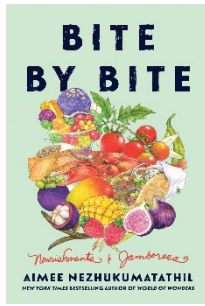
An American Sunrise is the eighth collection of poetry by Oklahoma-based writer, musician, NEA fellow, and former U. S. Poet Laureate **Joy Harjo** that revisits the homeland from which her ancestors were uprooted in 1830 as a result of the Indian Removal Act and explores the power of nature, memory, violence, and spirituality.



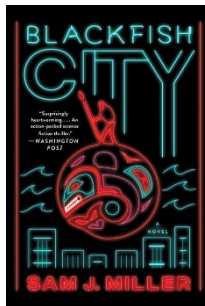
The Bear is a post-apocalyptic fable by New England author **Andrew Krivak** about a father and daughter, the last two people on Earth who live off the land in the shadow of a mountain, and a bear who appears as a guide when loss and grief bury the beauty of the surroundings and the gifts that a solitary life can offer.



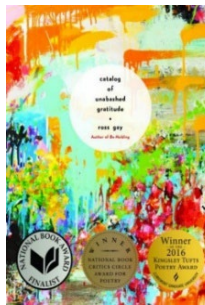
Bewilderment is a novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Richard Powers** set in Appalachia about an astrobiologist who finds an unusual way to help his troubled nine-year-old son control his emotions, connect with his deceased mother, and follow his passion to save the environment and its endangered species.



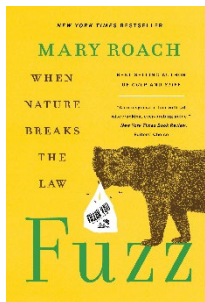
Bite By Bite: Nourishments and Jamborees is an illustrated, lyrical memoir told in short essays by Mississippi-based poet, essayist, and NEA fellow **Aimee Nezhukumatathil** about 40 different kinds of food that evoke her memories of childhood, friendships, travel, family, and connections to nature and the cultures of the Philippines and India, where her parents are from.



Blackfish City is an urban sci-fi novel by the Nebula Award-winning author **Sam J. Miller** set in a dystopian future on a floating, technologically advanced city in the Arctic Circle plagued by crime and corruption, which spawns unrest and motivates four of its inhabitants to resist the forces of destruction when a strange visitor appears on the back of an orca.



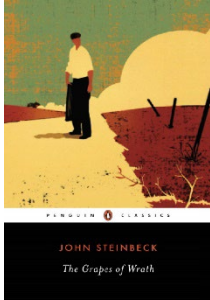
Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude is a poetry collection by Indiana-based poet and gardener **Ross Gay** that brims with warmth and an appreciation of the rhythms and abundance of the natural world and demonstrates that reflecting on sorrow and practicing gratitude can lead one to a place of tenderness and joy.



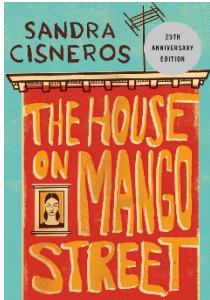
Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law is a book of essays by **Mary Roach** – a bestselling author known for her humor and science writing – about thieving macaques, trespassing bears, air travel-disrupting birds, and other human-wildlife conflicts that challenge us and teach us about ourselves and how we can learn to coexist.

FY2025-26 NEA BIG READ TITLES

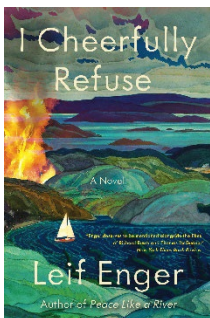
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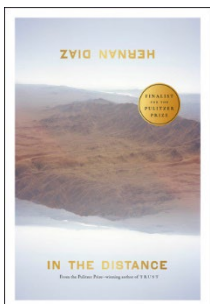
The Grapes of Wrath is a novel by **John Steinbeck** about a family of tenant farmers in Oklahoma who, devastated by the drought and dust storms that plagued the Midwest and Southern Great Plains in the 1930s, left their home and set out for California along Route 66 with thousands of other migrants in search of a better life.



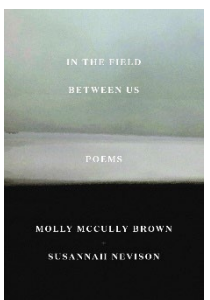
The House on Mango Street is a collection of coming-of-age vignettes by NEA fellow **Sandra Cisneros** about a year in the life of a 12-year-old Mexican American girl growing up in a Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago who finds confidence and invents herself anew against a poor and patriarchal community that she comes to understand will play a significant role in shaping her identity.



I Cheerfully Refuse is a novel by Minnesota-based author **Leif Enger** set in the not-so-distant future about a bereaving musician who leaves behind a broken world and an enemy in pursuit to set sail on a foggy, stormy Lake Superior where he is boosted by kind strangers, the lake's natural beauty, and an unexpected, feisty young girl who comes aboard his boat and becomes his trusted companion.



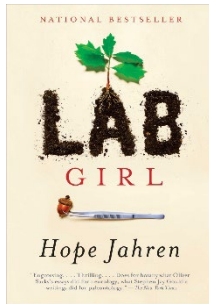
In the Distance is a reimagined western novel by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Hernan Diaz** about a young Swedish immigrant in the 1800s who travels east on foot across the vast, lonely, majestic American frontier against the current of gold-seekers pushing west, a journey peppered with swindlers and saloons that takes on mythic proportions and eventually makes him a legend, and an outlaw.



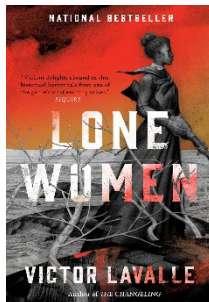
In the Field Between Us is a conversation in poems between two poets – Wyoming-based **Molly McCully Brown** and Virginia-based **Susannah Nevison** – who, through their friendship and poem-letters – ponder disability and the aftermath of lifelong medical intervention, reflect on how the natural world can mirror the traumas they have endured, and nurture each other through a spirit of communion.

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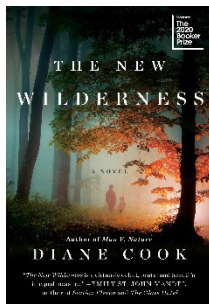
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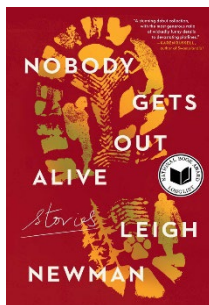
Lab Girl is a memoir by **Hope Jahren**, a geobiologist and passionate observer of the natural world who shares her love of plants and trees while recounting the setbacks and triumphs of her journey to becoming a scientist, from battling bipolar disorder to finding friendship in odd places.



Lone Women is a novel by **Victor LaValle** set in the harsh territory of Montana in 1915 that blends history, horror, suspense, adventure, murder, and magical realism as it tells the tale of a female homesteader with a secret past that follows her to the isolated northwest and threatens to upend the friendships she has formed and the new life she has made.



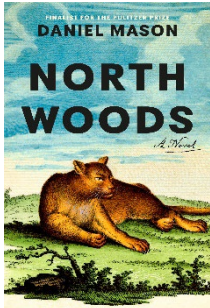
The New Wilderness is a speculative novel by NEA fellow **Diane Cook** about a mother who saves her young, dying daughter from an overly polluted city by joining a group of volunteers as part of a controlled experiment to live as nomadic hunter-gatherers in the last swath of untouched wilderness and learns not just about survival but about love, loss, sacrifice, and resilience.



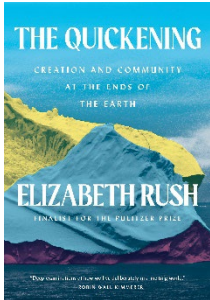
Nobody Gets Out Alive is a collection of linked short stories by **Leigh Newman** about Alaska, where long highways and remote rivers, log cabins and railroad camps set the scene and big-game hunters and bush pilots surface in the lives of young girls and women struggling to survive the isolation, loneliness, and legacy of an upbringing in a beautiful, devastating landscape.

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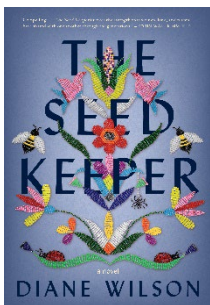
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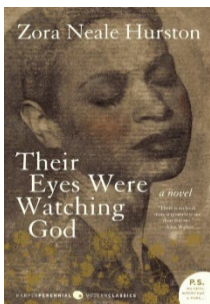
North Woods is a novel by **Daniel Mason** – an NEA fellow and psychiatrist – about a single house in the woods of New England, told through the lives of those who inhabit it across three centuries of American history using at times poems, medical logs, letters, and speeches as a way of demonstrating the myriad, magical ways in which we’re connected to our environment, to history, and to one another.



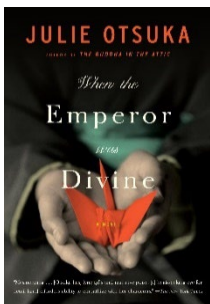
The Quickening: Antarctica, Motherhood, and Cultivating Hope in a Warming World is a work of creative nonfiction by NEA fellow **Elizabeth Rush** about a scientific voyage in 2019 to the Thwaites Glacier at Antarctica’s western edge that ponders the effects of global warming, foregrounds voices often left out of heroic Antarctic expeditions, and shares a personal journey of uncertainty and hope for the future.



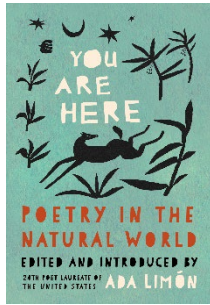
The Seed Keeper is a novel by **Diane Wilson** – a Mdewakanton descendant enrolled on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota – about a Dakhóta woman who, after losing her family and living on a farm devastated by drought and chemicals, returns to her childhood home, buoyed by the connected stories of the women who came before her and their perseverance through generations of trauma.



Their Eyes Were Watching God is a novel by **Zora Neale Hurston** about a woman’s journey toward strength and independence in 1930s Florida as she moves from her grandmother’s plantation shack to a joyless marriage with the mayor of an All-Black community to the Everglades, where she enjoys true love before the area is hit by a devastating hurricane.



When the Emperor Was Divine is a novel by **Julie Otsuka** about a Japanese American family forced to move from their home in California to an incarceration camp in the Utah desert following the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor and who return home after two years to find that their old neighborhood is neither familiar nor hospitable.



You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World is an anthology of poems edited by Kentucky-based **Ada Limón** during her time as the U. S. Poet Laureate featuring 50 poems from some of the nation’s most accomplished poets that engage with the forests, parks, valleys, waterways, canyons, mountains, backyards, scenic overlooks and built environments of their local landscapes.