Fiction

PS, I LOVE YOU by Cecelia Ahern  
FIC AHE, CD AUDIOBOOK  
In Ahern’s first novel, we meet Holly – a young Irish widow who has just lost the love of her life to brain cancer. In a creative plot twist, Holly’s husband Gerry has arranged for her to receive one letter a month from him during the first year after his death, each containing a task for her to complete or a goal for her to accomplish that month. These letters aid Holly in coping with her loss and urge her to move on with life in the face of her grief, which she does with the help of family and friends. A tear-jerker if ever there was one! Try some of her other titles for something lighter.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS by Maeve Binchy  
FIC BIN, OVERDRIVE EBOOK  
Best friends Benny Hogan and Eve Malone grow up in the small village of Knockglen – Benny is the plump loveable heroine who can’t wait to get out from under the watchful eye of her kind-yet-overbearing parents, and Eve is the spitfire orphan who was raised by nuns. The two head off to college in the big city of Dublin where their social circle widens and they do a lot of growing up. This is a great escapist read that takes you into the lives of college students in Ireland in the 1950s, moving back and forth between the small village and city life. The characters come alive amidst the romance, family bonds, treachery, and humor found in this gem of a novel.

TARA ROAD by Maeve Binchy  
FIC BIN, CD AUDIOBOOK, OVERDRIVE EBOOK  
This tale begins with Ria and Danny Lynch, a young couple in love, just starting a family and renovating a big old house on the esteemed Tara Road in Dublin. Years pass and life becomes complicated along the way, and eventually Ria finds herself switching homes with a friend from New England for the summer. Multiple storylines and characters abound, and in Binchy’s trademark style, the story feels timeless and the characters begin to feel like people we really know. Often recommended as one of the author’s best, this is a big thick book that you will lose yourself in.
CASTING OFF by Nicole Dickson  
FIC DIC  
This is a beautifully written story set on a small Irish island. A single mother comes to Ireland with her 6 year old daughter to study the history of Irish sweaters and visit the childhood home of her college roommate and best friend. Rebecca comes in the hopes of working and in the process starts to find a home and a place to feel safe as she is still trying to put a bad relationship with Rowan's father behind her.

HAUNTED GROUND by Erin Hart  
FIC HAR  
While digging in a peat bog a farmer discovers a perfectly preserved head of a young woman. An Irish archaeologist and American pathologist are called to the farm in County Galway to see what has been found. This is just the beginning as they start unraveling several mysteries. Who is she? How long has she been there? They stay at a local farmhouse to work and this brings up even more questions.

WITHOUT MERCY by Jack Higgins  
FIC HIG, CD AUDIOBOOK, LARGE PRINT  
This is just one of many in the exciting, plot-driven Sean Dillon Series. The locations of this series are not set strictly in Ireland, but there is always some time spent there as well other countries, usually England. Dillon and his team are up against Russian spies in this adventure and seeking revenge for their fallen team member.

THE YELLOW HOUSE by Patricia Falvey  
FIC FAL  
Set in Ireland in the early 1900's, this is the story of Eileen and her family in Northern Ireland in the house they built. It starts with her as a young girl at home with her family and follows her into her adult life, in and out of the house and the troubles and heartbreak they experience as a family.

DUBLINERS by James Joyce  
FIC JOY, CD AUDIOBOOK, OVERDRIVE EBOOK, OVERDRIVE AUDIOBOOK  
This collection of short stories was Joyce’s first published book, and his goal in writing them, when read in this particular order, was to paint a realistic, gritty portrait of life in Dublin in the early 1900s. He reveals both his disdain and his love for his country in these tales, each of which focuses on seemingly mundane events in the lives of ordinary people. A great introduction to a sometimes challenging author.
A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN by James Joyce
FIC JOY, CD AUDIOBOOK, OVERDRIVE AUDIOBOOK
This semi-autobiographical classic follows young Stephen Dedalus through his childhood and adolescence as he struggles to determine his identity, cultivate his status as a writer, wrestle with his family and his Dublin upbringing, and establish his place in the world. A highly stylized and literary venture from one of the greatest writers of the English language.

ULYSSES by James Joyce
FIC JOY, OVERDRIVE EBOOK, HOOPLA EBOOK, HOOPLA AUDIOBOOK
Not for the faint of heart, Ulysses is Joyce’s complex, controversial, and highly challenging-to-read modernist masterpiece – in it, he attempts to encompass the whole of human experience through the events of one man’s day. The day is June 16, 1904, the man is Leopold Bloom. Joyce takes us through Bloom’s day and we witness and feel every single detail right along with him. Each of the chapters takes its name from the Greek epic The Odyssey, as Bloom is a modern day Ulysses traveling through the stages of his own life on the streets of Dublin. This character is the quintessential “everyman,” and for those who choose to tackle it, this novel is extremely rewarding. Filled with music, vivid imagery, vulgarity, beauty, wonderful dialogue, stream-of-consciousness writing, and more, those who finish the book will feel a great sense of fulfillment and accomplishment.

GALWAY BAY by Mary Pat Kelly
FIC KEL
This beautifully written book tells the story of Michael and Honora Kelly beginning with how they met in Ireland and spans six generations. It proceeds through the potato famine of the mid 1850’s and how their struggle led them to leave their beloved country for America. As they move on and settle in Chicago this saga continues to tell of their survival and of the generations to come.

RACHEL’S HOLIDAY by Marian Keyes
FIC KEY
This is the story of Rachel Walsh, the insecure-yet-lovable middle-child of the Walsh clan found in other novels by Keyes. After a drug overdose in NYC, Rachel is dragged home by her family and checked into a rehab in Ireland, a place she hilariously mistakes for a fancy celebrity-filled rehab/spa. The story moves between Rachel’s life in treatment and longing flashbacks to her relationship with her now-ex-boyfriend, Luke. You’ll find yourself rooting for Rachel to find happiness as she comes to terms with her addiction and tries to move past it. Filled with humor, sadness, dysfunction, and more, this is not your run-of-the-mill chick lit novel!

Updated 8/16
WATERMELON by Marian Keyes
FIC KEY
Claire’s husband leaves her for another woman on the day she gives birth to their first child. In order to heal her broken heart, she moves back in with her parents in Dublin; there she struggles with her new status as a single mother but eventually finds herself to be a stronger, happier woman than she was at the start. Claire’s quirky, lovable family will remind the reader how important it is to rely on our loved ones to help us in tough times. A hilarious, charming tale of how one woman overcomes heartbreak with the help of a supportive family.

CIVIL & STRANGE by Clair Ni Aonghusa
FIC NIA
This story is set in a small Irish town where Ellen relocates after a divorce. This is the town where she spent her summers as a child. She spends time with her Uncle Matt who is also going through some difficult times. She doesn’t quite fit in with the locals, but she keeps trying. They don’t understand why she would want to leave Dublin for such a small town.

AN IRISH COUNTRY DOCTOR by Patrick Taylor
FIC TAY, CD
This book transports the reader to Northern Ireland in the early 1960’s, where Barry Laverty, a recent medical school graduate, joins the village practice of Dr. Fingal Flahertie O’Reilly, an experienced practitioner who shows the young physician that caring about the patients as individuals is just as important as diagnosing their illnesses. I enjoyed this book so much that I am now reading the sequel, An Irish Country Village.
Non-Fiction
THE STORY OF CHICAGO MAY by Nuala O’Faolain
B DUIGNAN, M.
Award-winning memoirist O’Faolain takes a new direction with her latest book, a biography of Chicago May, who was an unremarkable Irish country girl until she stole her family’s earnings and ran off to America. She began a life of crime as a prostitute in 1890s Chicago, and from there crime and a new moniker followed her to New York to London to Paris. Along the way, May fell in and out of love and crossed paths with criminals and historical figures alike. O’Faolain's search for May's soul, told with her usual mesmerizing, lovely prose, is the most touching aspect of her biography. In O'Faolain's hands, May, a moderately infamous character in Irish and American tall tales, is revealed to be intelligent and emotional, and most of all a product of her time. This is not only a thorough portrait of a woman on the wrong path; it is also a fresh and informative view of turn-of-the-twentieth-century America, and fascinating testimony to the need to tell and preserve true stories from all walks of life. – Booklist

ARE YOU SOMEBODY?: THE ACCIDENTAL MEMOIR OF A DUBLIN WOMAN by Nuala O’Faolain
B O’FAOLAIN, N.
On its own, Are You Somebody? is a vivid journey through the life of an ordinary/extraordinary "Dublin woman." Married in a grand passion, O'Faolain’s parents grew apart as their nine children grew up: journalist-gossip columnist O’Faolain had affairs and mistresses while his wife read and drank too much, and their children largely raised themselves. Education was Nuala's outlet; she became a university professor, moved into educational and later general programming at the BBC and in Ireland, and finally became one of the first female columnists at her native country's most respected newspaper. Famous names dot the pages of O'Faolain's memoir, but the center of her story is the enduring impact of her unhappy childhood and her search, in middle age as in youth, for love, satisfaction, and meaning in an often lonely life. – Booklist

ANGELA’S ASHES by Frank McCourt
B MCCOURT, F., LARGE PRINT
"Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood." This famous line helps kick off McCourt’s modern classic about his impoverished upbringing in Limerick, Ireland in the 1930s and 40s. The McCourt family endured great hardships, including an alcoholic father, infant death, frequent illness, hunger, and a standard of living that can best be described as squalor. While this is not a feel-good read by any means, McCourt’s gift with language brings it all to life with humor and perspective.
IRISH AMERICA: COMING INTO CLOVER by Maureen Dezell
305.89162 DEZ
A fascinating look at the past and present of people with Irish Catholic ancestry in the United States. While Irish-Americans are often stereotypically associated with alcohol, St. Patrick’s Day, and the color green, Dezell paints a more complex picture of this ethnic group that includes its flaws and also highlights the fact that Irish Americans rank among some of the most affluent and educated people in the U.S. She discusses their contributions and strengths as well as their weaknesses and failures, focusing on history, religion, immigration, politics, pop culture, and more, while attempting to touch upon the experiences of Irish Americans all over the country. This slim volume will be of great interest to all Irish Americans and anyone who knows them.

FOR THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY: A THOUSAND YEARS OF IRELAND’S HEROES by Terry Golway
941.5 GOL
Golway, an historian and political columnist at the New York Observer, offers an essential short course in Irish history, spanning 1,000 years and encompassing events familiar to every Irish high school student but not well-known outside the Emerald Isle. – Publishers Weekly

HOW THE IRISH SAVED CIVILIZATION by Thomas Cahill
941.501 CAH, CD AUDIOBOOK
Cahill's absolutely fascinating narrative details the pivotal role the Irish played in preserving and transmitting the classical literature of both Greece and Rome. As the once vast and mighty Roman Empire disintegrated into chaos and ruin during the course of the fifth century, illiteracy became the standard, all the great continental libraries vanished, and scholarship ceased to exist. Operating on the fringe of Europe, the newly literate Irish scribal scholars began the monumental task of copying every piece of Western literature they could uncover. In addition to transcribing this profound cultural legacy, Irish monks in exile, inspired by the legendary St. Patrick, reestablished literacy on the continent, providing a critical bridge between ancient Rome and medieval Europe. An utterly absorbing and entertaining chronicle of a virtually neglected episode in the annals of Western civilization. – Booklist