
Written with affection and respect by his great-granddaughter Elaine Parker Adams, the book’s reading level is appropriate for most high school readers, and the family of individuals that is its subject is indeed uplifting and inspiring. It would have strong appeal for a young person with an interest in ministerial careers. The text is satisfactorily scholarly to make it worthy of any library collection and it provides a good history of one facet of the Methodist church in Louisiana that may not be found in such detail. The first half of the book is devoted to the biography of Rev. Clark, born about 1859, who grew up in poverty in East Louisiana and overcame a sparse formal education. The second half of the book is a brief history of one branch of his family who settled in and became important contributors to New Orleans’ African American community. And as an added bonus the book contains poetry by several members of the Clark family.

In *The Kings of Casino Park*, Thomas Aiello tells the story of the Monroe Monarchs baseball team. The Monarchs were a national-caliber Negro League baseball team in the segregated southern city of Monroe during the early 1930’s. In 1932, the team was a contender for the national baseball championship. There is controversy surrounding the Monarchs as league officials award the National Championship to the Chicago American giants because more people would pay to see a Chicago team than one from the rural north Louisiana town. Dr. Aiello documents schedules, results, players and statistics that show the Monarchs were the rightful contenders. He also provides insight into the region during the depression and the 1932 Ouachita River flood of the cities of Monroe and West Monroe. There are extensive notes, a bibliographic essay, and an index in this well researched book. This book is a must for Louisiana History and baseball collections.


*Scent of Darkness* by Margaret Berwin may have special appeal for a more mature reader of Twilight series books—no vampires here, but mysticism, Tarot, and spookiness are. The central character Eva—is largely ignored by her single mother and but is devoted to a grandmother who has inclinations towards mystic arts, prepares herbal concoctions, and forbids Eva to enter a secret room in her house. Eva is distressed that she is not attractive enough to attract a boyfriend but her grandmother tells her she has the wrong perspective on things: “Love” the grandmother tells her, “is an olfactory experience, not a choice. Looks have little meaning in the world of desire.” In fact, the author’s allusions to scents—as the title suggests—are so extremely effective that aromas seemed to rise from the pages.

This book is written by a Louisiana librarian, who has won the LLA Modisette Award. Told in a series of flashbacks, the novel recounts the travails of the lovers Angelique Belair and Jean Marc Fontenot. Set in the prairie country of southwest Louisiana, the book faithfully portrays the folkways of a Cajun village in the early twentieth century: the dances, the food and farming habits, and the community bonds. The book, however, is more than an anthropological study. The story of the love triangle of Angelique Belair, Jean Marc Fontenot and Damon Vidrine is given impetus from the traditions and economic conditions of farmers living at that time. Based on the events in the lives of the author’s grandparents, the book is a loving evocation of a vanished world.


This book is a richly comic novel in the tradition of *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Set in New Orleans in 1999, it tells the story of the Weems family. Melba Weems is a widow who is in failing health and has two sons. The older son, Simpson, is a would-be poet caught between the imperatives of his ambition (he wants to escape to San Francisco to become a second Jack Kerouac) and his family’s dependence. The younger son Bartholomew, spent a year as a child at the state mental hospital. He is obese, self-centered, and refuses to go to a doctor to get his condition certified so that he can get Social Security disability payments. His mother is naturally concerned about what would happen after she dies, so she encourages him to get a job and wants Simpson to promise to take care of
his younger brother. The true-to-life family dynamics, well-drawn characters and the comic tone makes this a thoroughly enjoyable read.


Marybeth Lima is the Cliff and Nancy Spanier Alumni Professor of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at LSU. Fifteen years ago, she began the LSU Community Playground Project as a way to involve her engineering students in the larger Baton Rouge Community. It was one of the first service-learning programs for engineering students at the time of its inception. In her book, she recounts her successes and failures, and teaches us important lessons about listening, treating others with respect, and the importance of accepting failure as part of the learning process. The book concludes with appendices on how to make playgrounds safer and how to get connected with volunteer organizations on every level: local, state, national and international.

Set somewhere vaguely in Cajun country, this book tells the story of the Doucet family where another negligent mother, a no father, and an annoying older sister have made young Tara Doucet reliant on her beloved grandmother Claire for the kind of attention and affection she craves. Of course, Tara is devastated when her grandmother dies—*or does she really?* The mystery in the story keeps you on your guessing game. There is some sibling and parental reconciliation and a first romance to sweeten things, too. It's a good, fun junior high to high school acquisition and the reading level is not too difficult.

Middleton, David *The Fiddler of Driskill Hill: Poems*.

I don’t “do” poetry easily, so the fact that many of these poems were easy for me to slip into and understand at a literal level made for pleasant reading and I expect would for most young adults, too. I won’t attempt to interpret or evaluate the literary merits of his poems, but will instead mention that readers in north Louisiana will recognize and relate to names of places, images from around Shreveport, and to the country cemeteries that are topics of some of his poems. Beyond that, I was excited to find a “north Louisiana” book in this year’s list of titles—seems like Cajun culture and New Orleans get more than their share of writers’ attention.

Moynihan, Lindsay. *The Waiting Tree*.

18-year-old protagonist Simon (orphaned, of course!) lives in dried up “Waynesboro”, Louisiana. The story centers around Simon’s struggle to come to terms with his sexual identity—he is gay and in love with his
life-long best friend Stephen. His brothers, the community, and two different churches serve as vehicles to help readers explore attitudes about honesty, sincerity, friendship, responsibility, and love. Many YA readers will relate to Simon’s loneliness, his frustrations with his job and his coworkers, and his struggle to find his place in a world he cannot escape. Readers from small towns like Waynesboro will find a lot of resonance—such as the bleak options for social activity and shopping (there’s not even a Dairy Queen!). This will not be a comfortable read for some but I find this a worthwhile read for any young adult dealing with the inevitable struggles of his or her own identity.


Through a series of twelve letters, a swamp rabbit tells about himself and his life in a northern Louisiana swamp. Each letter is followed by questions and activities: Includes glossary and answer key. The letters are written from the view of Swamper, a Swamp rabbit. The book contains a glossary with definitions of words found in boldface in the letters. Each of the 12 letters has questions and activities. The book contains an answer key for questions from each chapter, photographs, a map and illustrations. While categorized as juvenile fiction, this book would be interesting to animal and nature lovers – both young and old. It would also be a good resource for teachers. Because it relates directly to the north Louisiana area it is recommend it for all libraries in north Louisiana and libraries with a Louisiana collection.

Miss Kay, the matriarch of the Robertson family of Duck Dynasty fame is well known for her cooking. This book has recipes and notes from her and other members of the famous Robertson family. Some of the recipes are for simple everyday foods to be made with ingredients on hand and others are fit for parties, company and special occasions. Recipes are divided into eleven chapters, each beginning with a Bible scripture. It is indexed and contains photographs of the food as well as the family, many pre-dating the Duck Dynasty days. This book really is about what is stated on the cover - Faith, Family & Food: Bringing Our Home to Your Table. It is recommended for regional cookbook collections, Louisiana collections and anyone who collects cookbooks.

Sims, Bennett. A Questionable Shape: a novel. [Columbus, OH]: Two Dollar Radio [2013].

One of the other members of the committee who is not presenting today put it best: “If anyone had ever told me that I would read a zombie novel, I would have laughed at them. If they had told me I would need a dictionary to do so, I would have laughed harder still.” Set in Baton Rouge after a zombie apocalypse, this novel is not your typical horror novel. Blood and gore are notably absent. Instead, with its references to Wittgenstein and quotations from Wordsworth, it is instead a mediation on what it means to be alive and human and pays tribute to the power of memory. Micahael Vermaelen, has been recruited by his friend Matt to join him in his quest to find his father, who has been bitten and become one of the “infected.” Their travels around Baton Rouge and Denham Springs provide the framework on which Vermaelen’s mediations are attached. Besides displaying an enormous breath of erudition, the book is not without its comic moments: the pamphlet with instruction on how people can protect themselves from
zombies that is given out by the Louisiana Disease Control Center is entitled “Fight the Bite.” This book is a thoughtful and engaging read that is sure to be a classic in the years to come.


Kim Vaz, a Woman's Studies scholar, provides insight into the role of The Baby Dolls in New Orleans carnival tradition and Louisiana’s cultural history. One of the few sources on the Baby Dolls that date back to 1912, it provides photos, articles, interviews, appendices, notes, an extensive bibliography and an index. There are chapters on the Mardi Gras Masking Tradition, Gender, Race and Masking in the Age of Jim Crow, Women Dancing the Jazz, “Oh You Beautiful Doll” The Baby Doll as a National Sex Symbol in the Progressive Era, A New Group of Baby Dolls Hits the Streets and “We are No Generation” Resurrecting the Central Role of Dance to the Creation of New Orleans Music. It is recommended for Louisiana history and culture, woman’s studies and jazz collections.