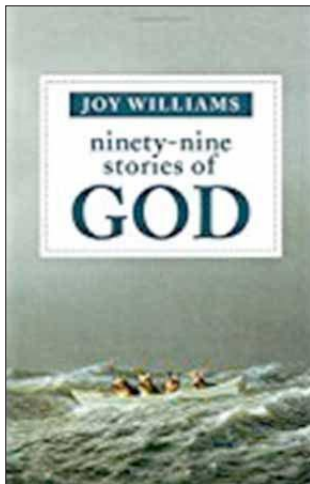




Books & Writers

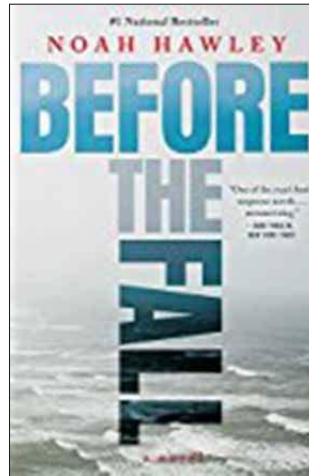


Bestsellers, what's coming & A blank page for 2017



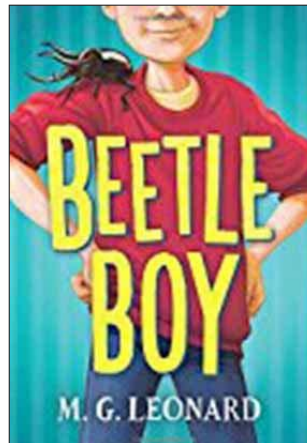
By David R. Altman
Books & Writers Editor

Best Sellers in 2016—According to the New York Times Bestsellers List (which also mirrors the Amazon list), the top selling books in America included J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and Bill O'Reilly's *Killing the Rising Sun*. Others in the Top 10 included (both non-fiction and fiction) the Bruce Spring-



steen biography *Born to Run*, *Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernov, *The Whistler* by John Grisham and Nicholas Sparks' *Two by Two*.

And, no, I have not read those last two, as I gave up on Grisham years ago when he kept weaving his political views into what would otherwise be good beach fiction. As for Mr. Sparks, my wife and daughters have read most his books, so his corny love stories are, unfortunately, never far away.



For you younger readers, tops in the Publishers Weekly (PW) Middle Grade category was *Beetle Boy*, about a boy named Darkus who tries to find his missing father, by the British writer M.G. Leonard. In the Young Adult category, PW's top honors went to Anna and the *Swallow Man*, by Gavriel Savit, a novel about a seven-year-old girl whose father is taken by the Nazis in WWII and the magical person who appears and helps her survive.

The Latest Read—I just

finished Noah Hawley's brilliant thriller *Before the Fall*, and if you liked reading *Gone Girl* and *Girl on the Train*, you will love this one.

One recommendation: quickly get your hot chocolate or your bourbon ready because this book's first three chapters will not allow you to stop reading. It begins on a late summer night in foggy Martha's Vineyard with two families and a stranger who board a private jet for a short flight to New York. Anything else I could tell you would give away too much—but the intensity of the writing and its unlikely conclusion will keep you in suspense.

Coming in 2017—Paula Hawkins's follow-up novel to *Girl on the Train* is called *Into the Water*, a psychological thriller about a single mother who turns up dead at the bottom of the river that runs through town. If it's anything like 'Train,' it will be worth your time.

Plus, John Williams of the

New York Times writes that the second novel of Korean author Han Kang is due in 2017. Han had her first novel translated into English last year; it was called *The Vegetarian*, and was selected by Williams as one of the year's best. This one is on my 'want to read' list.

Yawn's Picks—Local Canton bookseller and publisher Yawn's Books & More has its own recommendations out on its very cool website (www.yawnsbooks.mybooksandmore.com). Among Yawn's unique picks are: *Atlas Obscura*, described as "a tour of the world's most unique and amazing places, highlighting natural wonders and weird and magical structures" and *A Gentleman in Moscow*, by Amor Towles, who wrote *Rules of Civility*.

Plus, Yawn's has all the best sellers listed on-line. While you may buy from Amazon or the struggling Barnes & Noble, make it one of your News Year's Resolutions to buy at least one book (preferably two) from your local bookseller and publisher.

I just ordered Joy Williams's *99 Stories of God* from Yawn's Books & More, (it was \$15.30 plus a buck for shipping at Yawn's, and \$13.22 at amazon.com, with free two-day shipping if you have Prime—but it's worth a little extra to shop local!).

A Blank Page -- The gift of writing expresses itself in many forms, and begins with a blank page or, to some of us, a blank piece of paper. Some of the treasured gifts I receive are those occasional, unexpected letters or cards from old friends (a high school basketball bud) or distant family members (a cousin in Maine) or even a neighbor or former colleague (one of whom, at age 76, had moved from Albany to Woodstock because he loved the spirit of the town). When I got an email from him, I was thrilled.

Think about the gift of joy your letter or card will bring to those in your life whom you think about, but seldom reach out to. My guess is that they, too, are thinking of you. Don't let the blank page deter you. Write to them now—while the New Year is young and your Resolutions are still valid.

Blessings to each of you in 2017 and beyond!

[David R. Altman writes about books & writers for the *Progress*. His first book of poetry was published in 2014, when he was nominated for Georgia Author of the Year. He also writes about bass fishing at georgiabigstick.com. He can be reached at altmandavidr@gmail.com or www.davidraltman.com.]