



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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*“Timeless: having
no beginning or end;
not affected by time.”*

[-Merriam-Webster.com](http://Merriam-Webster.com)

For most public libraries, summer means reading games or programs. All across the United States, thousands of children will participate in some sort of library-related program, designed to encourage summertime reading. Some of these libraries will offer prizes to those who play, others will have celebration parties at the end of the summer and some will simply keep track of all the hours the children read.

But whatever the format, there is an excitement in libraries that starts before school is even adjourned for the summer. Weeks before our official starting date of June 16 this year, parents and children asked about the game. Was there going to be one? When would it start? Would there be a game for teens?

This year, the Albany Library is - like the Berkeley Public and Contra Costa County libraries - participating again in the statewide theme of “Catch the Reading Bug.” We are using a bingo format for the actual

game: children read, keep track of their reading time by coloring in a ladybug for every 30 minutes of reading, and then come to the Library to spin and stamp a game board. Some children quickly use a pencil or pen for the coloring, while others have obviously spent considerable time carefully decorating each bug. I enjoy both styles, just as I love watching the children do the spinning - the quick hands of the pros and the little hands of those who are being introduced to the art.

Seven stamps in a row earns them the first prizes. For the final prizes, they have to stamp every one of the bugs on the board and get blackout. There are 49 squares and, at half an hour a spin, that’s a lot of reading.

On the back of the game-board are a few suggestions for good bug-related titles and there are more on our website (aclibrary.org), where parents and children can visit the summer reading game blog.

The teens have a reading

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program, as well. This year the Alameda County Library one is called “Freak Encounters: Explore the Unexplained.” Rather than play a game, it is a simple reading log, with prizes at 25 and 50 hours. Similar to children’s, there is an annotated list of recommended books, both on the reading log and on the teen reading blog (teensread.wordpress.com). Titles include books like Kathy Armstrong’s *Bitten*: “Elena Michaels comes to terms with her feral appetites as the world’s only living female werewolf.” The list also covers books about alien and paranormal events, ghost legends and modern urban legends.

For adults, the Albany Library has a summer reading game, too. Billed as “Timeless Reads,” it involves entering a drawing by filling out an entry form for each book read. Every week a form is drawn and the winner gets a \$15 gift card for a range of places, such as

Starbucks and iTunes. At the end of the game – on August 18 – two grand prize winners will receive \$25 gift cards to Barnes and Noble.

There have been some questions about the definition of “timeless reads.” A description like that can sound intimidating to some readers – does that mean having to go back and finally finish *Bleak House*? To help, a long list of suggested titles has been provided and the range is enormous – from Sherlock Holmes to Anya Seton’s *Green Darkness* to Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* to *Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey (one of my favorite authors). The overall message is: if you get lost in the book, it’s considered timeless. So, if you haven’t already, stop by your favorite library. Summer and a book: the perfect recipe.