



Patrik Henry Bass

THE FOUR BEST BOOKS OF 2013

These reads earned your seal of approval and had other fans talking too

hear you! For most of 2013 you've sent me tweets, e-mails and handwritten letters about your favorite authors. Here are the titles you loved most.

No. 1

THE PAGE-TURNER

Terry McMillan returned to bookstores and made big noise with **Who Asked You?** (Viking, \$27.95), her satisfying social commentary on family and love. Using Los Angeles as a canvas, the top-selling author brilliantly sketched 15 characters in broad strokes to reveal a startlingly real portrait of Black life. **Honorable mention:** *Claire of the Sea Light* (Knopf, \$25.95) by Edwidge Danticat.



Alison Stewart

about her stints at MTV, ABC, MSNBC and NPR. Still, I'm glad she chose **First Class: The Legacy of Dunbar, America's First Black Public High School** (Chicago Review Press School Edition, \$26.95) as her first book.

Weaving lively historical anecdotes throughout, Stewart traces the rise, decline and rise again of this cherished institution, founded in 1870. **Honorable mention:** *Harlem Nocturne* (Basic Civitas Books, \$26.99) by Farah Jasmine Griffin.

No. 3

A GLOBAL GROOVE
I was walking to catch the



NoViolet Bulawayo

train for work one morning when a tall, slim female jogger says, "Love your picks." No more than two seconds later another stranger yells, "Why didn't you let people know about **We Need New Names** [Reagan Arthur Books, \$25]?" She was not alone. And you were all right. Debut novelist NoViolet Bulawayo delivers a one-two-three punch with this stunning story of life, set mostly in a Zimbabwean shanty town. **Honorable mention:** *Americanah* (Knopf, \$26.95) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.



Nikki Giovanni

at how Nikki Giovanni still takes words and gives them back to us in ways that enchant and empower. **Chasing Utopia: A Hybrid** (William Morrow, \$19.99), the distinguished poet's latest work, grew out of a dazzling 2011 meditation on Black culture, inspiration, family, food and nature. If you loved "nikki-rosa" (one of my all-time favorite poems), you will appreciate Giovanni's homage to our communal traditions. **Honorable mention:** *Angels of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry* (W.W. Norton & Co., \$24.95) by Charles Henry Rowell.

No. 4

THE RHYTHM AND RHYME

To borrow, if I may, from Mr. Countee Cullen, "Yet do I marvel"



Terry McMillan

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SEAN BURROWS; JAN COBB; SNEETA MAHANTI; MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH; STEPHEN VOSS; STILLIS; RAQUEL BOLER.