**Pete's Staff Pick**

"The Nickel Boys" by Colson Whitehead (available on Overdrive as ebook or audiobook with a short wait)

I am finding it difficult to adequately review this book.  Not because I'm afraid of spoilers -- the author is crystal clear on what's coming in the first line of the prologue: "Even in death the boys were trouble." And later: "You can hide a lot in an acre, in the dirt."  Of course, just knowing it's a novel about a black boy sent to reform school in segregated Florida in the early 1960s is practically a spoiler.  The hard part is trying to reconcile seemingly oxymoronic descriptions and convincing you to read something that is at once poignant, painful, moving, maddening, disturbing, shameful, and yet somehow brilliantly sprinkled with hope and determination.  This is a beautifully-written novel that hooks you early and keeps you going until the end.  It's a fairly quick book, but somehow "easy to read" doesn't seem to fit, even though it kind of is.  Neither does "enjoyable", even though it kind of is.  It is not graphic, yet "tasteful" doesn't seem appropriate either. It's brutally charming and charmingly brutal, which doesn't seem to make sense, but it kind of does.  Bottom line, this is an excellent read. Highly recommended.