

For immediate release Aug. 15, 2018
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MS Book Festival plots ‘page-turner’ of a party

JACKSON, Miss. — The Mississippi Book Festival delivers a page-turner of a celebration Saturday, Aug. 18, at the Mississippi State Capitol as more than 240 authors and thousands of book lovers convene for a fourth annual “literary lawn party” in downtown Jackson. Salman Rushdie, Jesmyn Ward, Jon Meacham, Rick Bragg, Julia Reed, and Angie Thomas join a sparkling lineup of authors onsite, with talks and panels to engage and entertain, all in air-conditioned comfort.

This free and family-friendly festival is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, inside the historic State Capitol and neighboring Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church, plus outdoors on the shady Capitol lawn and adjacent city streets. An outdoor book mall, Authors Alley, book signings, exhibitors, children’s and teen fun, live music and more than 10 food trucks create a lively and festive air.

The result, each year, is magic, says Holly Lange, festival director since its 2015 start. The event’s growing reputation and a crowd that last year topped 6,400 has turned into a wonderful celebration of Mississippi’s rich literary history.

“People mark their calendars for this event,” Lange said. “Top authors weigh in on the hottest contemporary issues, as well as trends we’re all dying to know more about, on dozens of panels throughout the day— always with a special focus that hits home. It’s a chance to mix, mingle and chat with authors, booksellers and fellow fans, get insights on your favorite stories and, even better, hear so many new ones.

“This is the best chance all year to bond over books.”

The many highlights for 2018 include: Mississippi Writers Trail’s first markers unveiled; teen actress/author Quvenzhané Wallis (*Beasts of the Southern Wild*) reads from her book series in Kids Corner; Jackson’s own Thomas shares her rise with best seller-to-movie *The Hate U Give*; writers and scholars consider race and identity, a year after Charlottesville; Meacham and Karl Rove discuss overcoming division in American politics; engaging visionary Rushdie highlights his own start in writing; James Beard Award winners dish on cooking.

More than 40 panel discussions — provocative, intriguing, funny and wise — bring guest authors and moderators to the table, tackling topics that swing from food to photography, politics to poetry, civil rights to Southern Gothic, music to mysteries, sports to self-discovery, art to alienation and much, much more.

Parking is free on public streets and in parking garages at Woolfolk and Walter Sillers buildings.

Find the full schedule and more details at www.msbookfestival.com.