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NOV 2020

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books**

ELIZABETH WEIN

JOHN GRISHAM

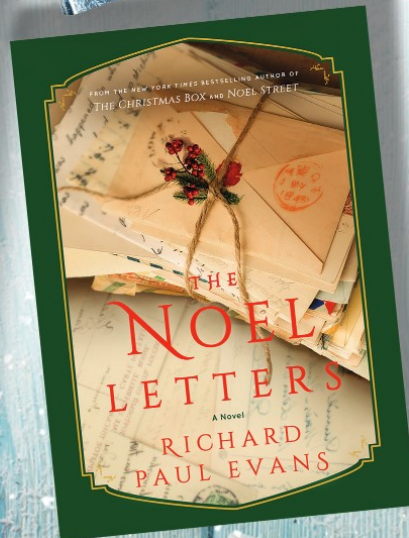
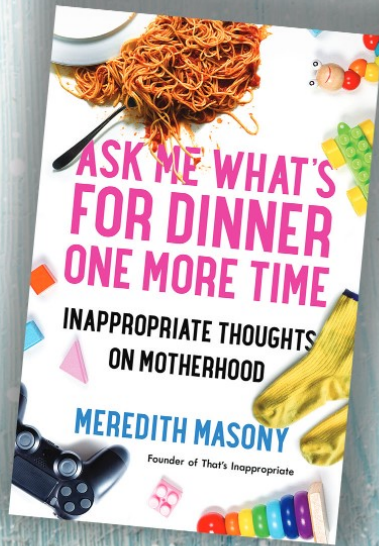
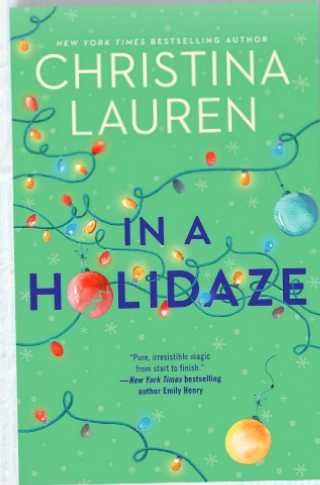
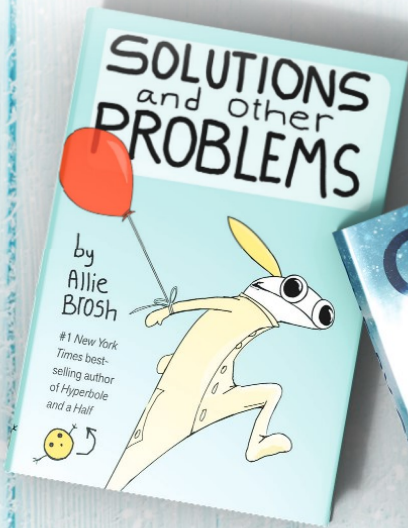
***GIFTS FOR
EVERY READER***




BRYAN WASHINGTON

The short story virtuoso on
his game-changing first novel

A Gift for Every Reader on Your List!



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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE
Suggestions for every reader on
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Cover image of Bryan Washington © Dailey Hubbard.
Gift guide design by Keith Johnson.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
Katherine Klockenkemper

CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Allison Hammond

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Roger Bishop

EDITORIAL INTERN
Eric Ponce

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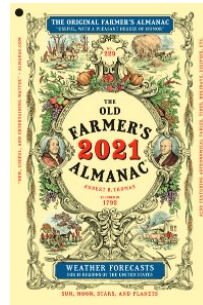
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The best reads for quarantine

Cuddle up with a cup of tea or coffee, your favorite blanket and a comfy chair, then check out these picks for best quarantine reads!

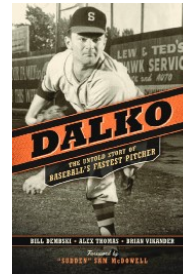
\$24.99–\$28.99 | Thomas Nelson



The Old Farmer's Almanac 2021

Enjoy useful, fascinating and fun facts for an entire year! Available in hardcover, paperback and at store.almanac.com.

\$8.95–\$16.95
Old Farmer's Almanac

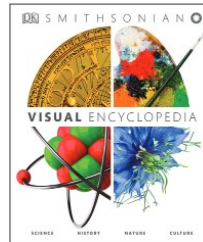


Dalko

Bill Dembski, Alex Thomas & Brian Vikander

The fascinating and tragic story of baseball's fastest pitcher and the forces that kept ultimate greatness just beyond his reach.

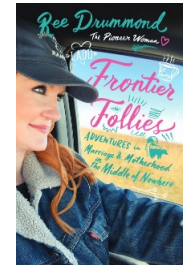
\$26.95
Influence Publishers



Visual Encyclopedia

Covering science, nature, space, history, the arts, technology and more, this landmark piece of reference publishing offers a reliable, visually stunning and family-friendly alternative to online information sources.

\$50 | DK



Frontier Follies

Ree Drummond

The #1 bestselling author and star of the Food Network show "The Pioneer Woman," Drummond shares down-to-earth, hilarious stories and musings on marriage, motherhood and country life.

\$26.99
William Morrow

Two stellar gifts

Choose from the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide to the world of wine, boasting more than 400 photographs and 100 maps, or an inspiring collection of photography that includes more than 250 images of the beautiful USA.

\$40–\$75 | National Geographic



The best gift books of the season

These great reads are perfect for everyone on your shopping list.

\$27.99–\$35
Flatiron

Great holiday gift books from Workman

This fantastic collection of books will appeal to every reader who hungers for interesting and thoughtful content. From astronauts to gorgeous car photography and inspiration for new hobbies, Workman has a book for everyone on your list!

\$15.95–\$75 | Workman | Artisan | Storey



True crime like you've never read it before

Becky Cooper's 10-year investigation into an unsolved murder at Harvard straddles the line between memoir and mystery.

In *We Keep the Dead Close* (Grand Central, \$29, 9781538746837), Becky Cooper uncovers the true story of Jane Britton, a graduate student in Harvard's anthropology department who was found dead in her apartment in 1969.

What is the significance of the book's title, *We Keep the Dead Close*?

When I first heard the story about Jane Britton's murder, the rumor was that she had been murdered by her adviser with whom she was allegedly having an affair. Though that rumor would eventually prove false, the professor was a real person who still taught at Harvard. I decided to audit his class, and during one of his lessons, he said, in reference to the people of 'Ain Mallaha, "They kept the dead close." The people of that settlement buried their loved ones under the living areas in their houses. In fact, archaeologists believe this ritual behavior—rather than agriculture—was the reason that people settled there. I loved the idea that remembering the dead was maybe one of the earliest marks of our humanity. I also loved how ambiguous the nature of "keeping something close" is: Are you hiding it? Are you defending yourself with it? Is it an act of nostalgia? A tribute?

What was your relationship to the true crime genre while working on this book?

I have trouble with true crime when it's salacious or gratuitously violent—when it's entertainment consumed without a sense of the victim's humanity and the loss suffered by their community, or when the genre glorifies the killer. I set out to write a book I would have wanted to read, and the books I'm drawn to are rich character studies and philosophical explorations of moral ambiguity.



Your kinship with Jane Britton is woven throughout the book. Do you still feel that closeness?

Jane still feels like a very dear friend, but I don't feel the same hallucinatory blurring I did at the height of researching and writing. This book captures me at a slightly younger stage of life. Part of the reason I was able to channel Jane was that she and I shared a lot of the same essential preoccupations: a fear of being unlovable in some fundamental way, an inexplicable loneliness, a yearning to feel like I was made of a cohesive whole. I knew instinctively that I had to finish the book before I forgot those worries and that yearning. In the year since finishing the first draft, I've felt more at peace with myself than I think Jane ever had the chance to feel. In other words, I was allowed to get older, and that fact only underlines the unfairness that Jane's world stopped at 23.

—Jessica Wakeman



Visit BookPage.com to read an extended Q&A with Becky Cooper and our starred review of *We Keep the Dead Close*.



The gifts they'll open over and over

These new titles from the bestselling series offer something for everyone. Learn how to use your dreams, celebrate life after 60 and feel that Christmas spirit!

\$14.95 each

Chicken Soup for the Soul



Fall in love with Virgin River

Have you watched the hit Netflix original series yet? Either way, you'll love these stories of small-town friendships, love and fresh starts.

\$9.99–\$27.99 | MIRA



Have yourself a cowboy country Christmas

Get your jingle boots rocked this holiday season with page-turning reads that celebrate the home in down-home.

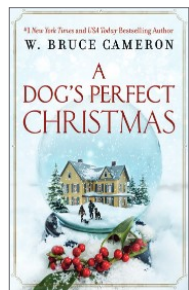
\$8.99–\$15.95
Kensington | Zebra | Pinnacle



Enrapturing Regency-era romance from Julie Klassen

A bestselling author with over 1 million copies sold, Klassen is the top name in inspirational Regency fiction. Her engaging tales will delight fans of "Poldark" and Jane Austen.

\$15.99–\$16.99 | Bethany House



A Dog's Perfect Christmas

W. Bruce Cameron

This is the perfect feel-good holiday gift from Cameron, the #1 bestselling author of the A Dog's Purpose series.

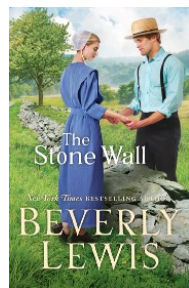
\$15.99 | Forge



Gratitude, giving, togetherness and a touch of holiday magic

This trio of heartwarming reads is a gift you'll want to give and receive this Christmas season.

\$15.95–\$26 | Kensington | Dafina



The Stone Wall

Beverly Lewis

With more than 17 million copies in print, "Beverly Lewis is the biggest name in Amish fiction" (Newsweek). This novel presents a heartwarming story of love and life-altering choices.

\$16.99
Bethany House



Murder, mayhem & Christmas cozy mysteries

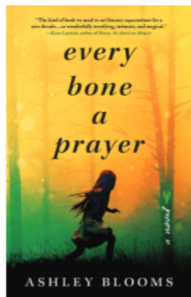
Kick back with something sweet and indulge in these holly-jolly Christmas capers from bestselling cozy mystery authors.

\$15.95–\$26 | Kensington

Blockbuster authors at the top of their game

With romance, thrills and sexy suspense, three bestselling authors put a new twist on what it means to go home.

\$28–\$29
Grand Central



Every Bone a Prayer

Ashley Blooms

"Blooms has taken the voice and names of Appalachia, tended, and evolved them, and created a book that is at once haunting and hopeful." —NPR

\$16.99 | Landmark



The Haunting of Ashburn House

Darcy Coates

From the rising queen of atmospheric horror Coates comes a haunting story of intrigue, misery and fear. Ashburn's dead are not at rest...

\$14.99
Poisoned Pen

A 20th-century thrill

Adventure awaits two brothers in Jess Walter's rollicking new novel.

In his latest novel, *The Cold Millions* (Harper, \$28.99, 9780062868084), bestselling author Jess Walter draws readers into a tale set just after the turn of the 20th century, as modernity and labor strife collide in the mining, agricultural and railroad hub of Spokane, Washington.

You have some strong personal connections to this story, being from Spokane, but also with your family history. Can you elaborate? I used to be ashamed of my working-class roots, but my family and hometown inform much of what I do. *The Cold Millions* is about two hobos just after the turn of the 20th century; a generation later, both my grandfathers were vagrant workers. My dad's dad, my namesake Jess Walter, arrived in Spokane on a train he'd hopped in the Dakotas. My dad was a steelworker and a union guy, and labor equality was as close to a religion as we had.

It's been eight years since your previous novel, *Beautiful Ruins*, was published. Can you give us some insight into the creation of the two novels? How was the process different? It always takes a while to realize that nothing I wrote before can help with this book. Eventually, familiar patterns and themes emerge, but early on, every novel feels like a first novel. *The Cold Millions* required more research than most of my books, so I spent months reading old newspapers and tracking down obscure books, articles and academic papers. Finally, at some point, I had to fire the whole research department (me) and rely more heavily on the fiction unit (also me). I guess if anything carried over from *Beautiful Ruins*, it was my interest in a more expansive kind of storytelling, in not being limited to a single point of view.



You've described *The Cold Millions* as "the last Western." How is that so?

Yikes, did I say that? Such self-importance! I should've included the word *gasp*, as in *last-gasp Western*, because the period I'm writing about—1909, cars sharing the roads with horses, a certain frontier lawlessness around the edges—marks the end of this mythic Western period. But with the class divisions, the blatant unfairness and the social unrest, I also felt like I was writing about now. Maybe what I meant was this is my last Western (my only Western). I used to demean that whole genre as "horse porn." But all I seem to do as a writer is break my own aesthetic rules and reverse every formerly unshakable opinion that has ever escaped my mouth.

—Grace Lichtenstein

Visit BookPage.com to read an extended Q&A with Jess Walter and our review of *The Cold Millions*.



Books for history buffs

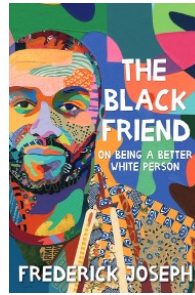
A moving tale set during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, the thrilling nonfiction narrative of a daring World War II raid and a Dickensian murder mystery in 1840s London—these stories from the past are perfect holiday gifts for history lovers.

\$16.99–\$27
Kensington | Citadel

Great gifts for the pop culture fan

Whether it's the best of manga or action role-playing games, these books will make the holidays special.

\$24.99–\$169.99 | VIZ



The Black Friend

Frederick Joseph

Joseph offers candid reflections on his own experiences with racism and conversations with prominent artists and activists in this essential anti-racist read.

\$17.99 | Candlewick Press



Furia

Yamile Saied Méndez

A Reese's Book Club YA Pick! Rising Argentinean soccer star Camila Hassan must risk everything—even a budding romance—to follow her dreams in this powerful, #ownvoices story.

\$17.95 | Algonquin

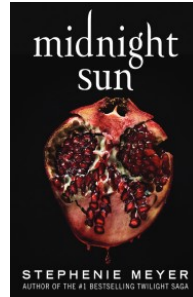


Punching the Air

Ibi Zoboi & Yusef Salaam

This essential novel in verse tells the story of a boy wrongfully incarcerated who finds refuge in art while fighting for the truth.

\$19.99 | Balzer & Bray



Midnight Sun

Stephenie Meyer

Return to the world of *Twilight* with this highly anticipated companion, which explores the iconic love story of Bella and Edward from the vampire's point of view.

\$27.99 | Little, Brown



Grab your signed copy of *The Cousins*

From the #1 bestselling author of *One of Us Is Lying* comes a new mystery about a family drowning in secrets and the cousins who will uncover everything.

\$17.99–\$19.99 | Delacorte



Give the gift of Junji Ito this holiday season

Thrill to spine-tingling, chilling stories and stunning art from the master of horror manga and Eisner Award winner!

\$22.99–\$34.99 | VIZ Signature

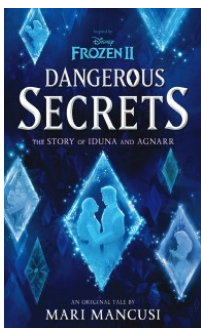


The Silver Arrow

Lev Grossman

From the bestselling author of *The Magicians* comes a wholly original middle grade debut that's perfect for fans of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Roald Dahl.

\$16.99
Little, Brown

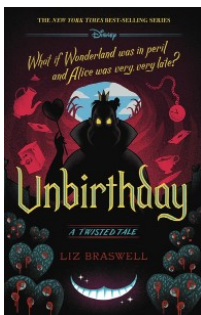


Frozen II: Dangerous Secrets

Mari Mancusi

This prequel to *Frozen* and *Frozen 2* follows two teens—one learning what it means to be king, and one trying to survive with secrets that could lead to her doom.

\$17.99 | Disney Press

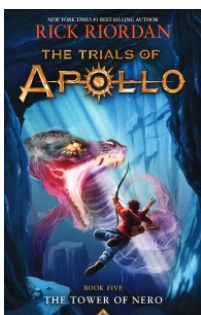


A Twisted Tale: Unbirthday

Liz Braswell

What if Wonderland was in peril and Alice was very, very late? The 10th installment in this popular series puts a twist on the classic Disney film.

\$17.99
Disney Hyperion



The Trials of Apollo: The Tower of Nero

Rick Riordan

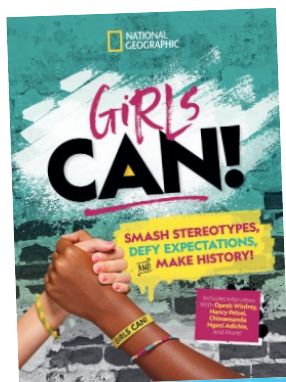
The fifth and final installment of Riordan's #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Trials of Apollo* series has Lester and Meg returning to where it all began: Camp Half-Blood.

\$19.99
Disney Hyperion

You've got the power . . . and the smarts!

Today's girls are showing that there's nothing they can't do! Celebrate can-do spirit, tackle science and middle school and dive into facts and fun with three great reads.

\$12.99–\$14.99 | National Geographic Kids



Comfort and fun for children

With faith-based classics and new favorites for kids to love, Zonderkidz brings inspirational books and Bibles from bestselling brands to families this holiday season.

\$9.99–\$39.99 | Zonderkidz



Activity books for kids

In the Find Out Files activity and sticker book series, children will explore what it means to be themselves with fun activities, interactive crafts, humorous illustrations and loads of stickers!

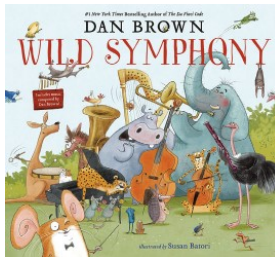
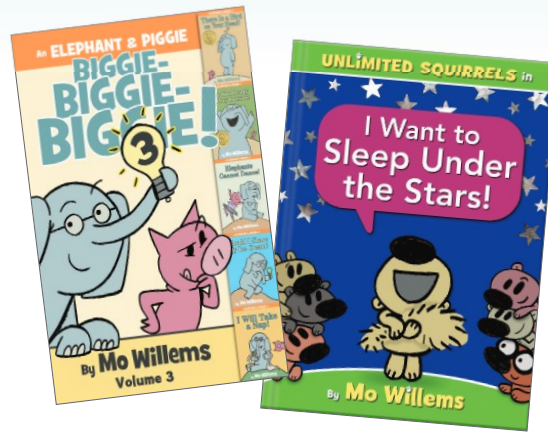
\$12.99 | Magination Press



Read mo' Mo!

An *Elephant & Piggie Biggie!* Volume 3 is the third volume in the popular Elephant & Piggie *Biggie!* five-book bind-up series from Mo Willems, who also delivers nutty laughs and facts in the Unlimited Squirrels series with *I Want to Sleep Under the Stars!*

\$12.99–\$16.99 | Hyperion Books for Children

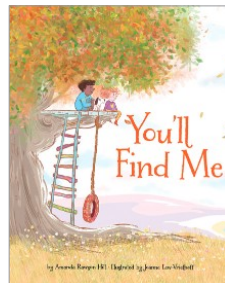


Wild Symphony

Dan Brown

Internationally #1 bestselling author Brown makes his picture book debut with this new instant classic! Download the free app to hear the accompanying original music while you read.

\$18.99 | Rodale Kids



You'll Find Me

Amanda Rawson Hill

Loss becomes remembrance in this soothing book that offers tender ways to remember those who may no longer be with us.

\$16.99 | Magination Press

Brain Candy for the HOLIDAYS!

AWESOME ADVENTURES

EXPLORER ACADEMY

Adventure, danger, and a thrilling global mission await in this exciting series, inspired by real Nat Geo explorers. ExplorerAcademy.com



IZZY NEWTON AND THE S.M.A.R.T. SQUAD

Find out how the power of science and friendship help this brainy bunch solve mysteries at Atom Middle School. Inspired by real scientists. SmartSquadBooks.com



ZEUS THE MIGHTY

Follow Zeus the hamster and his band of buddies from the Mount Olympus Pet Center in their hilarious quests across the kingdom, inspired by Greek mythology. ZeusTheMighty.com



SMART LITTLE GIFTS



WEIRD BUT TRUE!



FACT-PACKED FUN



FOR LITTLE KIDS



25+ titles
Collect 'em all!

By Sonia Manzano,
Sesame Street's
Maria

35+ titles
Collect 'em all!

Surprises for the seasoned reader

There's always room for more books on a literature lover's bookshelf, no matter how overflowing it seems to be.

This holiday season looks especially bright for bibliophiles. We've gathered five top-of-the-list titles that are sure to please ardent readers and literary trivia enthusiasts.

Cult Writers: 50 Nonconformist Novelists You Need to Know (White Lion, \$16.99, 9780711250642) celebrates a group of edgy, intrepid, slightly out-there authors—visionaries whose books may challenge and discomfit readers but never fail to thrill. This arresting little title is the latest entry in White Lion's Cult Figures series, which recognizes maverick artists in various media. Octavia Butler, Angela Carter, Ralph Ellison and Ursula K. Le Guin are among the individualists found in this volume.

In crisply written biographical profiles, critic Ian Haydn Smith looks at the attitudes and aesthetic approaches of these authors and provides helpful context. Readers will discover unabashed courtiers of controversy (Pauline Réage, Michel Houellebecq), quiet outsiders (Joan Didion, Denis Johnson) and brash iconoclasts (Virginia Woolf, William S. Burroughs). Illustrator Kristelle Rodeia captures the essence of each novelist in exceptional, impressionistic portraits. Vibrantly designed and discerningly assembled, **Cult Writers** is a standout gift selection.

Among the literary-minded, books can induce fever, compulsion and fanaticism. Illustrator Grant Snider understands this all too well. He explores the singular world of the book-obsessed through concise cartoons that have appeared in the *New York Times* and other publications. **I Will Judge You by Your Bookshelf** (Abrams ComicArts, \$16.99, 9781419737114) provides a sensational sampling of his work.

Snider dissects the peculiar habits and preoccupations of the literature addict with amazing economy. He classifies types of readers ("nocturnal," "reclusive," "indecisive"), offers ideas on arranging bookshelves (try organizing titles in rhyming couplets!) and reflects on a host of writerly topics, from lost pens to proof-reader's marks. His colorful panels convey just the right amount of information, seasoned with sly allusions and inside jokes aimed at the avid reader. Anyone with the book bug will savor Snider's brand of humor.

In the rousing anthology **Warriors, Witches, Women: Mythology's Fiercest Females** (White Lion, \$24.99, 9781781319260), Kate Hodges provides a fresh appraisal of 50 women from myth and folklore, demonstrating that they're as vital and inspiring today as they were centuries ago. Hodges presents backstories and biographical

information for each fierce female. Drawing on cultures from across the globe, she includes characters that many readers will recognize, as well as a host of less familiar figures.

Morgan le Fay, Baba Yaga, Circe, Artemis and Mami Wata are among the enchantresses highlighted in the book. As Hodges shows, these legendary women often wrestled with enduring concerns such as mortality and motherhood and now serve as symbols of strength for a new generation of readers. In her vibrant illustrations of these characters, Harriet Lee-Merrion contrasts delicate lines with rich colors and standout details. This exhilarating anthology brings a contemporary perspective to stories of iconic heroines.

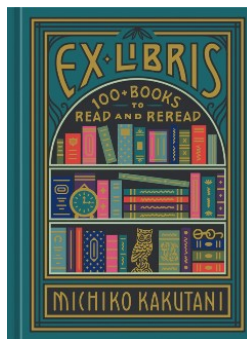
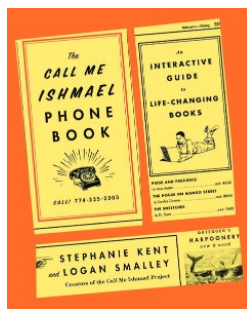
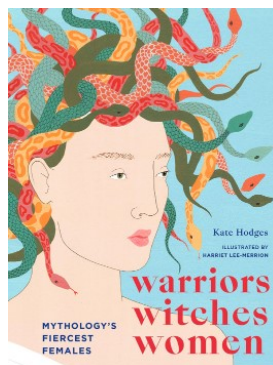
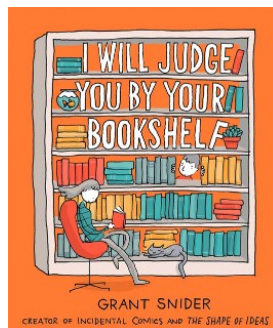
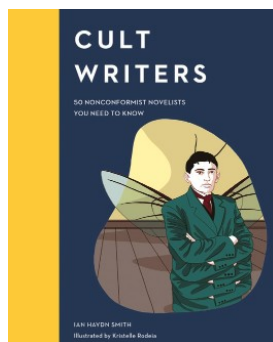
The Call Me Ishmael Phonebook: An Interactive Guide to Life-Changing Books (Avid Reader, \$20, 9781982140588) began as a lark. Stephanie Kent and Logan Smalley set up a phone number that book lovers could call in order to leave voicemails about their favorite titles. They received a flood of messages and had special rotary phones installed in schools, bookstores and libraries so that readers could record their impressions of significant books.

Those messages are compiled in **The Call Me Ishmael Phonebook**, which has been cleverly designed to resemble the print Yellow Pages of yesteryear and is packed with neat retro graphics, fun lists of phoned-in favorites, hidden literary references and other book-inspired surprises. From *A Little Princess* to *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the books that callers rave about run the gamut. An unbeatable gift for your favorite bookworm, this whimsical volume is a testament to the power of literature.

In **Ex Libris: 100+ Books to Read and Reread** (Clarkson Potter, \$25, 9780525574972), Michiko Kakutani, former chief book critic at the *New York Times*, offers a survey of important works and reveals why she finds them significant in brief, perfectly polished essays. From time-tested tales such as *The Odyssey* to contemporary masterworks like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Quartet, her selections are drawn from a variety of eras and genres.

Kakutani also gives consideration to children's books—Madeleine L'Engle and Maurice Sendak both get their due—and offers a witty appreciation of Dr. Seuss. The stunning book-jacket illustrations by Dana Tanamachi that appear throughout **Ex Libris** will delight die-hard bibliophiles. "In these pages, I'm writing less as a critic than as an enthusiast," Kakutani explains in the volume's introduction. Her mood shines through in this stirring tribute to the reading life.

—Julie Hale



Books that are good enough to eat

If you're looking for the perfect holiday gift for the gastronome in your life, these books will keep them engaged long after the table's been cleared.

Many gourmands are restless from hunkering down these past several months, and the added cold weather is enough to make anyone a bit stir-crazy. But never fear—we've rounded up five books that are sure to warm hearts as well as ovens.

Bread Therapy: The Mindful Art of Baking Bread (HMH, \$19.99, 9780358519034) couldn't have come at a better time. Ever since quarantine renewed people's interest in making home-cooked food for themselves and their loved ones, baking supplies have been flying off the shelves. Yeast is a rare and precious commodity. Sourdough starters are the stars of Instagram. As a university counselor, Pauline Beaumont understands the therapeutic qualities of baking, which

takes people out of their comfort zones and allows them to make mistakes. This book's seven chapters highlight these ideals, intertwining words of wisdom with some interesting bread recipes, such as spinach flatbread and dill and beet bread. As much a self-help book as a cookbook, **Bread Therapy** is a welcome instructional guide to practicing self-acceptance, staying grounded and making something delicious.

And what better to top your bread with than cheese? **A Field Guide to Cheese: How to Select, Enjoy, and Pair the World's Best Cheeses** (Artisan, \$27.95, 9781579659417) is a cheese lover's dream, educating aficionados through gorgeous pictures and fun, colorful graphics. Cheese expert and journalist Tristan Sicard lays out the book nicely, starting off with "A

Quick Chronology of Cheese" that spans from 5000 B.C. to the present day. This is followed by a diagram of dairy breeds—not only cow but also goat, sheep and even buffalo. The 11 families of cheese are also outlined, including information about color, texture, recommended serving tools and emblematic varieties. Finally, each cheese gets its own entry, with over 400 individual profiles in all, including the dairy breed, region of origin, an enticing illustration and a brief description. Further information

is given about pairing, preparing and serving cheese, and there's even a section about how to properly wrap cheese for storage.

Although cheese is usually paired with wine, a creative connoisseur might enjoy a slice with

some of the fun drinks featured in **Very Merry Cocktails: 50+ Festive Drinks for the Holiday Season** (Chronicle, \$19.95, 9781452184708). Food writer Jessica Strand (*Cooking for Two*) provides several helpful cocktail hints, including a list of useful bar tools (stocking stuffer ideas, anyone?), syrup and garnish recipes and tips on how to rim a glass with sugar or salt. Five chapters of holiday cocktail recipes follow, including champagne sippers, holiday party punches and nonalcoholic libations. The recipes are innovative and easy to follow, such as Christmas in July, a tropical-inspired drink featuring crème de coconut, pineapple juice and rum for "when you're craving warm summer days." There are also festive twists on old favorites, such as the Moscow Reindeer, a riff on the gingery Moscow Mule. All are complemented

by stylish midcentury-inspired photos that capture the season's celebratory sparkle.

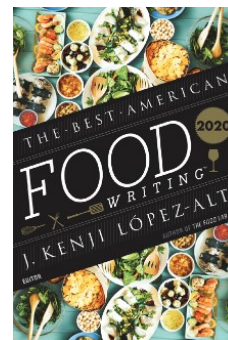
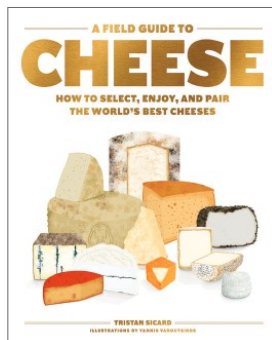
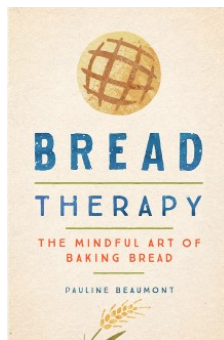
Perhaps the most unique spin on a cookbook for this holiday season is **Hungry Games: A Delicious Book of Recipe Repairs, Word Searches & Crosswords for the Food Lover** (Tiller, \$14.99, 9781982136130), essentially a cookbook of 50 recipes that each contain 10 mistakes for the reader to find. These "puzzles" are ranked in difficulty from easy (such as an apple crumble pie that instructs the baker to toss the apples with pears) to hard (a peach galette that says to mix water with red wine vinegar to make the dough, when it should actually be white distilled vinegar). Luckily there's an answer key to check your culinary skill, as well as lots of food-themed crosswords and word searches. The result is an unusual and fun gift for the foodie who has everything.

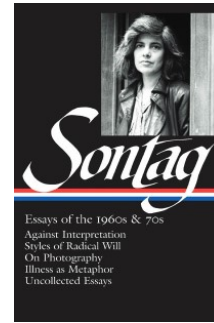
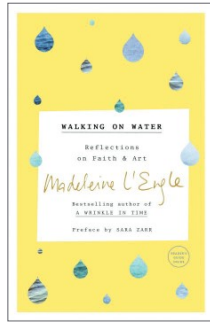
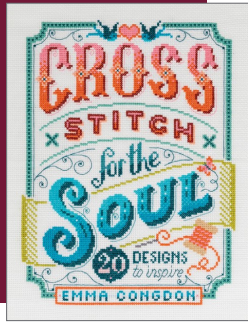
The 25 short essays in **The Best American Food Writing 2020** (Mariner, \$16.99, 9780358344582) were actually written in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, but that doesn't make them any less thoughtful or relevant. This year's editor, the chef and author J. Kenji López-Alt (*The Food Lab*), writes that although he's afraid "the book will read like a time capsule," the pieces he's selected are still significant to the future of food writing. Topics from substance abuse in restaurant kitchens and the burgeoning global market for baby food, to Jamie Oliver's eccentric stardom and how spring water is bottled are tackled with humor and consequence, as well as a bit of history mixed in to provide a touchstone between the past and present. All of these wide-ranging pieces were originally published in sources typically known for provocative food writing, such as *Eater*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Having them all in one place is a boon for the Epicurean reader.

—Becky Libourel Diamond



Illustration by Yannis Varoutsikos excerpted from **A Field Guide to Cheese** by Tristan Sicard (Artisan Books). Copyright © 2020.





Books to spark and nourish the creative spirit

Creativity is all about letting what's inside of us out. Whether you're searching for inspiration, looking for a step-by-step guide to a new hobby or eager for a glimpse into the creative life, these books will light the fire within.

Cross Stitch for the Soul

While visiting my parents in Texas for Christmas in 2017, I asked my mom, a devoted quilter, if she could teach me to cross-stitch. We went to a craft store the very next day, and by the time I left for home, I was hooked. I still consider myself a novice, so trust me when I say that the exquisite designs in **Cross Stitch for the Soul** aren't beyond the reach of beginners. Designer Emma Congdon applies her colorful typographic sensibility to 20 quotations and aphorisms and creates bold postmodern patterns, each paired with a short personal reflection. She also includes no-nonsense guides to the materials and techniques you'll need to get started. Stitching, Congdon writes, is "a chance to embrace slowness and create something beautiful at the same time." I'm grateful to have had the creative outlet of stitching my way through her book this year.

—Stephanie, Associate Editor

Loitering With Intent

Many novels about aspiring authors are, to be blunt, extremely obnoxious. They either portray the writing process with toothache-inducing twinkle or with such overblown and tortured Sturm und Drang as to make the entire thing ridiculous. Between these two poles lies Muriel Spark's **Loitering With Intent**, which trots happily alongside aspiring would-be novelist Fleur Talbot as she breezes through bedraggled postwar London. Fleur is young, highly educated and underemployed, but where others would succumb to ennui, Fleur finds inspiration. Her terrible landlord, her drifting friends and romantic prospects and, most of all, her bizarre boss are prime material for mockery and fictional examination. Nothing about her life is particularly glamorous, which somehow makes it all even more wildly appealing and quietly galvanizing.

—Savanna, Associate Editor

Walking on Water

If you're looking to spark your creative side, Madeleine L'Engle's book about spirituality and the creative process is both flint and tinder. Though it uses Christian language (L'Engle was devoutly Anglican), **Walking on Water** offers artistic nourishment for anyone who feels there's something mystical taking place when humans make art—the mystery of how ideas come to us, the miracle of making something where there was nothing before. Reading L'Engle's flowing prose feels devotional, as she meditates on the relationship between faith and art, art and artist. By her estimation, the artist's responsibility is merely to show up to the page, the canvas or the studio and be open to the work. The work already knows what it wants to be; all we have to do is follow its lead. In this way, the artist's role shifts from director to humble servant, freeing us up to participate in the collaborative art of creation.

—Christy, Associate Editor

The New Way to Cake

This year I joined the hordes of people coping with anxiety by mixing it, beating it and throwing it in the oven. For me, baking has become a way to touch base with loved ones—outside, at a distance—and, almost as importantly, a way to stay creatively inspired. This cake cookbook from Benjamina Ebuehi (whom you may know from "The Great British Bake Off") is all about exploring flavors, ingredients and textures in unexpected ways. Many of her recipes have me dreaming of the future: spiced sweet potato loaf, hot chocolate and halva pudding, date and rooibos loaf, cardamom tres leches cake and more. The lemon, ricotta and thyme mini-cakes are on permanent rotation, and I'll never make carrot cake ever again without adding some breakfast tea. Each bake is a chance to learn something new, find out what an unknown ingredient is like and discover how to do it better next time.

—Cat, Deputy Editor

Susan Sontag: Essays of the 1960s & 70s

The 2019 Met Gala didn't do camp any justice. A gaggle of elites trying to understand the intricacies of this strange, whimsical, dynamic aesthetic was sure to end in failure, but one can't help imagining Susan Sontag smiling at their attempt. Sontag coined the term in her essay "Notes on 'Camp,'" published in 1964 during a drastically different cultural moment. This collection of essays showcases the brilliant mind of one of the 20th century's most important writers and invites you to think about everything from aesthetics to death to feminism. Whatever the topic, Sontag is cool, compassionate and clear, not to mention impossible to be bored by. Reading this book reminds me of my favorite quotation of hers: "My idea of a writer: someone interested in everything." She certainly was, and her writing moves me to be, too.

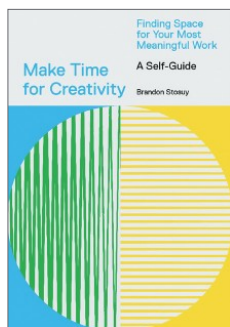
—Eric, Editorial Intern



★ The Power Age

Illustrations of luminaries such as Michelle Obama, Patti Smith and Zadie Smith are a delightful feature of **The Power Age: A Blueprint for Maturing With Style** (Apollo, \$29, 9781948062701), but it's the interviews with a wide range of inspiring, accomplished women—all over 40 and most of them 50-plus—that make me want to buy a copy of this book for every one of my girlfriends. “Entering your second act is not so scary as it once seemed,” writes Kelly Doust in the introduction. “It takes years

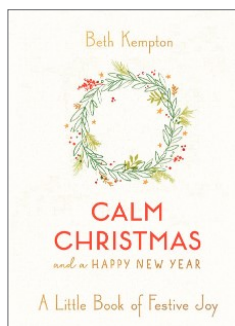
and years of trial and error, and life lessons, and loss, to come home to ourselves and figure out who we are.” Doust is an Australian writer, and many of the women she talks to are based in Australia or New Zealand, but their collective wisdom certainly knows no national boundaries and shines brightly enough to power a universe of its own.



Make Time for Creativity

In the world of creativity guides, Brandon Stosuy's **Make Time for Creativity** (Abrams Image, \$16.99, 9781419746536) feels fresh. Stosuy's got impeccable creds as the co-founder of the excellent web publication *The Creative Independent* and a collaborator with countless artists of all stripes. From this fertile ground he delivers a four-part look at the creative process, from work-life balance to necessary downtime, girded by insights from the writers, musicians, visual artists and others he has interviewed over the years. I especially like the “Daily Rituals”

section, designed to show “how rituals make you feel present for your creative practice and able to treat it like sacred time.”

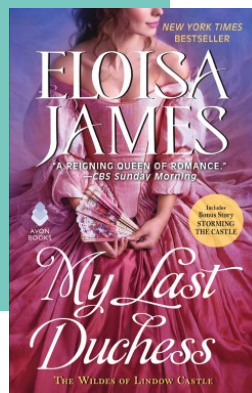


Calm Christmas and a Happy New Year

I wasn't ready to think about the holidays when I first picked up **Calm Christmas and a Happy New Year** (Scribner, \$22, 9781982151850), but now that I've read it, bring on the mulled wine and evergreen boughs. In soothing prose, Beth Kempton helps readers locate the elements they love most about the before, during and after of the season, with an emphasis on a hygge-type appreciation of the winter months. Kempton, the author of an excellent book on wabi sabi, helps us dial down the noise

of what doesn't appeal. She doesn't urge us to celebrate Christmas any one way but encourages us to “savor the hush” of the very end of the year—“the fleeting pause when time bends and magic hovers between the bookends of the season.”

Susannah Felts is a Nashville-based writer and co-founder of The Porch, a literary arts organization. She enjoys anything paper- or plant-related.



★ My Last Duchess

Eloisa James pens a truly delightful prologue to her popular Wildes of Lindow Castle series in **My Last Duchess** (Avon, \$7.99, 9780063036345), the love story of the family's patriarch and matriarch. Hugo Wilde has eight children from two duchesses and is now in need of a third wife. There's all those children, after all, ranging in age from 2 to 18. He had planned to make a sensible choice until he took one look at widow Lady Ophelia Astley. In keeping with Wilde family tradition, he falls in passionate love at first sight. But what does he have to offer her except the stultifying life of

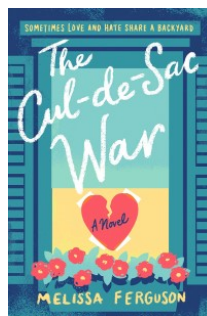
a duchess, not to mention those eight children? Their path to happiness is mostly smooth—who can resist a sexy, kind, besotted duke?—yet the journey is great fun all the same. The banter is witty, the secondary characters are exquisitely well drawn, and the glimpses of the children will cause readers who have read their stories to smile and entice those who have not.



A Lady's Guide to Mischief and Mayhem

Manda Collins smoothly blends romance and an English country-house whodunit in **A Lady's Guide to Mischief and Mayhem** (Forever, \$14.99, 9781538736135). Newspaper owner Lady Katherine Bascomb pens an article critical of Scotland Yard's investigation into the murders attributed to the “Commandments Killer,” causing Inspector Andrew Eversham to be pulled off the case. But he gets a second chance at stopping the villain when a similar killing occurs in a small village near the estate

where the very curious and very stubborn Kate currently resides. Despite the class barrier between them, the pair realizes they have equally clever minds and an undeniable physical chemistry. The twists and turns of the plot will keep readers guessing, but Kate's independent attitude and the interesting friends she gathers around her bring the story to vivid life.



The Cul-de-Sac War

Two neighboring houses, a big, slobbering dog without boundaries and one unwelcome attraction add up to a madcap romance in **The Cul-de-Sac War** (Thomas Nelson, \$15.99, 9780785231042) by Melissa Ferguson. From the moment hunky, stubborn contractor Chip moves in next door to the home that free spirit Bree inherited from a relative, alarm bells go off. When Chip refuses to move a fence line, sparks fly and pranks ensue until they're in a full-fledged war. But as these likable characters become better acquainted, they share serious

thoughts about happiness, death, family and work. Love follows, but can they admit to it? This kisses-only inspirational romance is a sweet treat with a soft center.

Christie Ridgway is a lifelong romance reader and a published romance novelist of over 60 books.

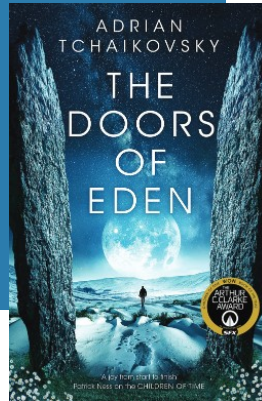
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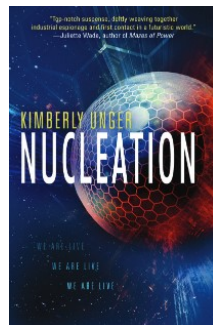
sci-fi & fantasy by chris pickens



★ The Doors of Eden

Adrian Tchaikovsky's mind-bending **The Doors of Eden** (Orbit, \$17.99, 9780316705806) melds *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with *The Lost World*. After watching a blurry online video of a bird-man in the outer reaches of England, monster hunters Lee and Mal venture forth to discover the truth. But they find more than they bargained for as Mal goes missing in the gloom of the moors, and soon the fates of a group of people and a mysterious multi-verse collide. The author of more than 30 novels, Tchaikovsky weaves

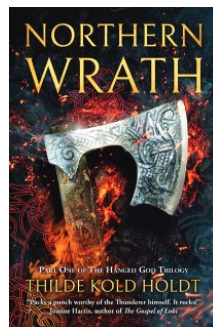
Carl Sagan-esque interludes into this strange, funny and irresistible book, but these scenes of the primordial world are wildly different from the history of Earth's living things. The sheer density of Tchaikovsky's ideas is awe-inspiring, and his heady concepts pay off thanks to top-notch characters and a welcome dose of humor.



Nucleation

As Kimberly Unger's tight and thrilling **Nucleation** (Tachyon, \$15.95, 9781616963385) begins, Helen Vectorvich, the operator of a robot aboard a facility deep in space, is remotely piloting an important mission. Then the facility, her machine and the comm channel to her partner, Ted, all fail, and she is yanked from consciousness. When she wakes up, Ted is dead, and the company she works for is looking for answers. Distraught and grounded by her boss, it's up to Helen to find out the sinister truth behind her mission's failure and Ted's death. Helen, a company woman starting

to see cracks in the corporate facade, is an engaging heroine, and Unger's experience producing virtual reality games lends verve and specificity to her depictions of the remote-operator experience.

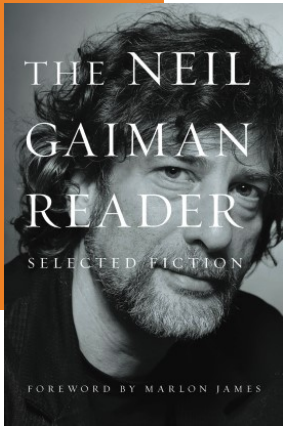


Northern Wrath

There's no scenario in which Vikings aren't cool. But what's really cool are Vikings plus magic. Fall headlong into a mystical world of runes, blood and rage in **Northern Wrath** (Solaris, \$11.99, 9781781088197), the first in a planned trilogy from debut author Thilde Kold Holdt. Einer, a young man with a mysterious power, and Hilda, a woman determined to become a warrior, are destined to walk two different paths. But when Southerners invade their lands, Einer, Hilda and their people must fight back and harness the power of the gods to avenge the dead. The action is, in a phrase,

bloody brilliant; Holdt doesn't hold back from the gore, which might make some readers squeamish, but it reinforces the hard and violent lives her characters lead. Sink into this one, and let it carry you away.

Chris Pickens is a Nashville-based fantasy and sci-fi superfan who loves channeling his enthusiasm into reviews of the best new books the genre has to offer.



The Neil Gaiman Reader

Neil Gaiman is generally categorized as a writer of fantasy or speculative fiction, but as the 52 selections in **The Neil Gaiman Reader** (William Morrow, \$40, 9780063031852) confirm, the beloved storyteller's gifts defy neat classification. This doorstop-size volume will surely be welcomed by Gaiman's legion of fans, but its greater purpose may be to introduce his work to those who are not yet acolytes. Spanning his career from 1984 to 2018, these stories, novellas and excerpts from novels

are presented in chronological order and offer a broad overview of his talent for fiction.

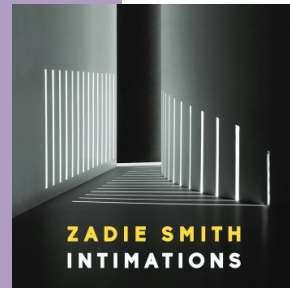
When it came time to select the stories included here, Gaiman delegated the job to his fans, who voted for their favorites online. The novel excerpts, on the other hand, were chosen by the author and his editor and include extracts from some of his most popular works, including *American Gods*, *Anansi Boys* and *Neverwhere*. For die-hard fans who have already read his entire opus, Gaiman throws in one previously unpublished story,

This abundant selection of short fiction celebrates the breadth and depth of beloved writer Neil Gaiman's career.

“Monkey and the Lady,” a whimsically philosophical fable. The end product is a hefty volume that warrants dipping into rather than devouring cover-

to-cover, an approach that Gaiman himself encourages in his preface. There is something here for nearly every taste. While the heart of a Gaiman story always contains an element of the fantastical, there is also always something rudimentarily human at its core. This quality, along with his superior narrative skills, may be what most separates Gaiman from less polished writers in the fantasy genre. A story such as “Chivalry,” wherein a pensioner buys the Holy Grail at a thrift shop for 30 pence and is then visited by an excruciatingly polite and valorous Sir Galahad, is at turns hilarious and surprisingly touching. “The Goldfish and Other Stories” brilliantly captures the vagaries and absurdities of the film business while being about so much more: quickly fading history, unexpected friendship and the cultural mythology that can be created despite documented proof to the contrary. The devastating loss of memory to senility propels “The Man Who Forgot Ray Bradbury,” which is also a backdoor homage to Gaiman's masterful literary progenitor. “Snow, Glass, Apples” may leave you rethinking every fairy tale you have taken at face value since childhood.

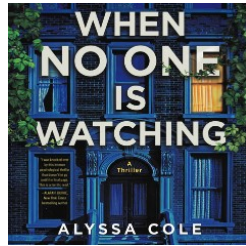
The Neil Gaiman Reader is filled with far too many riches to explore here. In his foreword, Marlon James writes that the ghost of Jorge Luis Borges, the great fabulist, hovers over these stories, but really, Gaiman's influences are more numerous and far-flung. Indeed, this volume provides evidence that Gaiman has transcended those influences to become the influencer himself, creating fictional landscapes that inspire and move us as much as they entertain.



★ Intimations

Written just a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, Zadie Smith's **Intimations** (Penguin Audio, 2 hours) captures our current moment with astute observations, imagination and empathy. Through personal essays that focus on small moments to reveal profound truths, Smith notes how the virus is changing the be-

havior of her New York City neighbors. She also explores the ways that racism rages unchecked, as if it were another type of virus. It's astounding that Smith, an award-winning writer of both fiction and nonfiction, has already gained such perspective on the present, an accomplishment that typically requires more time and distance. She is a gifted storyteller, and her narration makes it feel all the more personal. This is a worthy listen, even if just for the various New York characters who interrupt Smith's proper British narration.



★ When No One Is Watching

The first suspense novel from critically acclaimed romance author Alyssa Cole, **When No One Is Watching** (Harper-Audio, 8.5 hours) is a social thriller about gentrification gone extra bad. Sydney Green is living in her mother's Brooklyn home when she notices the neighborhood beginning to change. She reluctantly teams up with Theo, one of her

many new white neighbors, to research the history of the neighborhood for a tour she's planning to give. When the neighborhood's Black residents start disappearing in suspicious ways, Sydney knows there must be more going on. This raucously funny, shocking thriller, narrated by Susan Dalian and Jay Aaseng, will ring eerily true to anyone who's lived in a gentrifying neighborhood. Dalian's narration gives us a sense of Sydney's no-nonsense attitude and sharp wit, while Aaseng gives Theo a chill, cool-dude vibe.



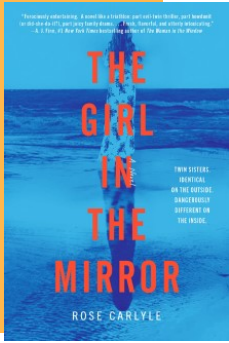
The Switch

In Beth O'Leary's **The Switch** (Macmillan Audio, 10 hours), career-focused Leena is forced into a two-month sabbatical from work, so she decides to home-swap with her newly divorced grandmother, Eileen. Leena learns how to slow down and connect with her new Yorkshire neighbors, while Eileen has a thing or two to teach everyone in the big city of London—

and they both have fun exploring the men in their new surroundings. Narrators Alison Steadman and Daisy Edgar-Jones alternate chapters between the two perspectives. Steadman may be familiar to listeners as Mrs. Bennet from the BBC's 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, and she brings the same level of sass to her role as Eileen. Edgar-Jones recently won over viewers in her starring role in “Normal People,” and she does a great job adding dimension to Leena.

Robert Weibezahl is a publishing industry veteran, playwright and novelist. Each month, he takes an in-depth look at a recent book of literary significance.

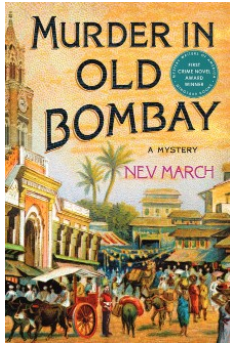
Anna Zeitlin is an art curator and hat-maker who fills her hours with a steady stream of audiobooks.



The Girl in the Mirror

Every time I read a mystery novel about twins, my mind goes right to the trope of one of them posing as the other for nefarious purposes. Let's address that notion right here at the beginning: In Rose Carlyle's **The Girl in the Mirror** (William Morrow, \$27.99, 9780063030145), that's gonna happen, but not how you think. When wealthy Aussie businessman Ridge Carmichael dies, his will features a strange stipulation. His \$100 million fortune will go to the first of his six children to bring a grandchild into the world. He is amenable to a female child, as long as she retains the Carmichael name on her birth certificate. Two of Ridge's kids are too young to be meaningful competition for the prize, and a third has no interest in the money. But the race is on between the other three, although good luck getting any of them to cop to it. Two of them, Iris and Summer, are twins. One of them is going to get pregnant. One

of them is going to die. One of them is going to assume the other one's identity, with some disastrous results. And one of them is going to surprise the hell out of you at the end of the book. Good luck figuring out which one. . . .

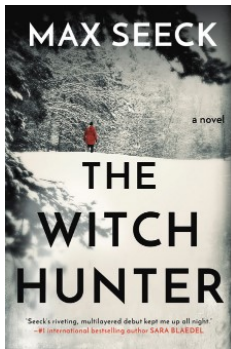


Murder in Old Bombay

Based on a true incident, at the time declared to be "the crime of the century," Nev March's **Murder in Old Bombay** (Minotaur, \$26.99, 9781250269546) is a tale of intrigue, duplicity and, as the title suggests, murder. In 1892, the mystery of the clock tower deaths (sounds like a Nancy Drew title, doesn't it?) is the stuff of headline news worldwide. Two girls from a good family fall from the Rajabai Clock Tower at Bombay University. Initially, suicide is widely rumored, but then a young Indian man is arrested for murder, tried and speedily acquitted in what many people feel was a sham trial and a gross miscarriage of justice. The official government report ultimately lists the cause of death as accident or suicide. Enter Anglo-Indian army captain James Agnihotri, who offers his investigative services to the grieving family and has a nose for truth not unlike that of his hero, Sherlock Holmes. First-time author March deftly uses James' biracial background to depict the societal structure of

India during the British Raj and, by extrapolation, to indict other societies in which race and caste are sources of discrimination.

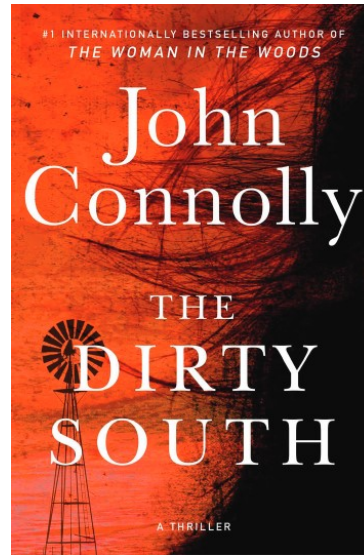
Sign up for our mystery newsletter at BookPage.com/enews.



The Witch Hunter

Finnish author Max Seeck's debut novel, **The Witch Hunter** (Berkley, \$17, 9780593199664), provides further proof that some of the best contemporary mysteries come from Europe's frozen north. The book's protagonist, author Roger Koponen, has made his mark with a trilogy of tales about modern-day witches. During a meet-and-greet at a local bookstore on the other side of the country from his Helsinki home, an audience member poses an unsettling question: "Are you afraid of what you write?" If Roger is not now, he is about to be, as the murders begin to pile up, each one mirroring a scene in the Witch trilogy. It falls to Helsinki cop Jessica Niemi to investigate the first murder, that of Roger's wife, whose face was sewn into a demonic, deathly grin with well-concealed fine thread. Jessica has demons of her own to deal with as well, some of which are revealed in a flashback parallel narrative in which she embarks on a dangerous affair with an Italian violinist in Venice. (Trust me, I will not be the only one to

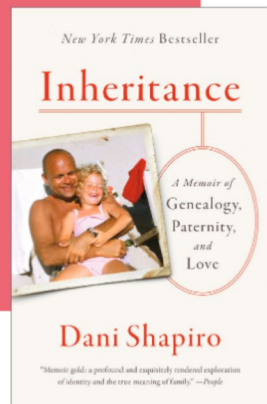
equate violins and violence before said flashback reaches its flashpoint.) Atmospheric to the max, the gray skies and snowy city streets of Seeck's Helsinki would be enough to give you the shivers on their own, but the killer (or killers) at play here are the stuff of nightmares.



★ The Dirty South

When haunted former NYPD detective Charlie Parker first hangs out his shingle as a private investigator, he has only one client: himself. He's determined to find the killer of his beloved wife and daughter and bring that person to justice of one sort or another, and reports of a similar string of murders lead him to rural Burdon County, Arkansas. **The Dirty South** (Emily Bestler, \$28, 9781982127541) is a prequel to John Connolly's supernatural noir series, and in it a raw, brash, 20-years-younger version of Parker moves through unfamiliar territory, his progress mired at every turn by forces of good and evil alike. Parker realizes "the fix is in" when a young woman's death is ruled accidental, despite the presence of some rather graphic evidence to the contrary. A huge business is looking to put down roots locally, and any suggestion of a murder in the vicinity might be enough to cause them to pull out of negotiations. There are powerful locals who will go to whatever lengths necessary to prevent that from happening—if needed, much further than simply falsifying cause-of-death reports. Despite its mystical elements, the Charlie Parker series is still more James Lee Burke than Stephen King. No vampires or zombies populate these pages, but the ghosts of restless spirits, residing for a time in the minds of the living, hovering in the corners of Parker's eyes, most certainly do.

Bruce Tierney lives outside Chiang Mai, Thailand, where he bicycles through the rice paddies daily and reviews the best in mystery and suspense every month.



Behind the family facade

Acclaimed memoirist Dani Shapiro was very close to her father, Paul, who died when she was 23. After a DNA test revealed that Paul wasn't her real father, Shapiro's world was turned upside down. In **Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity, and Love** (Anchor, \$16.95, 9780525434030), Shapiro writes about searching for her biological father, who donated sperm to a clinic that her parents visited for fertility

treatments. It's an electrifying story, and Shapiro uses it as a springboard into explorations of identity and selfhood, family ties and the human

Four memoirs explore family tensions and long-held secrets that ripple across generations.

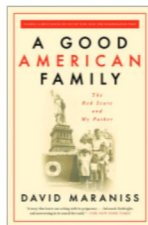
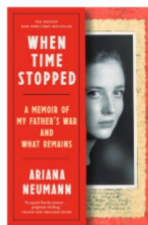
need for closure. Honest, tender and moving, her memoir combines a stranger-than-fiction plotline with insights readers will savor.

Ariana Neumann provides a riveting account of her Jewish family's experiences during World War II and the extraordinary life of her father, Hans Neumann, in **When Time Stopped: A Memoir of My Father's War and What Remains** (Scribner, \$18, 9781982106386). Hans spied for the Allies in Berlin before going on to make his fortune in Venezuela as an industrialist, but the author didn't learn about Hans' past until after his death. Her book is at once a suspenseful tale of survival and a poignant tribute to her father.

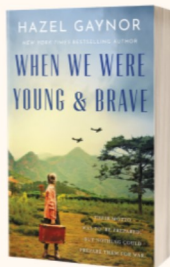
In **A Good American Family: The Red Scare and My Father** (Simon & Schuster, \$17, 9781501178399), David Maraniss tells the story of his father, Elliott Maraniss, who led a unit of Black soldiers during World War II and was accused of being a communist in the 1950s. Maraniss was under FBI surveillance and was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, losing

his journalism job as a result. In crafting a moving narrative of his father's life during an era of fear, the author explores themes of patriotism and loyalty, racism and activism. He blends history with personal narrative to create a richly rewarding memoir.

Megan Phelps-Roper came of age in the conservative Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. As a zealous member of the congregation, she opposed homosexuality, espoused anti-Semitic views and became known for engaging critics on Twitter. But after her viewpoints shifted, she broke away from the church, a journey she documents in **Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving Extremism** (Picador, \$18, 9781250758033). Phelps-Roper writes with unflinching honesty about questioning long-held beliefs and the process of building a new life. Book clubs will encounter substantial topics for discussion in her courageous, hopeful narrative.



BOOK CLUB READS FOR FALL



WHEN WE WERE YOUNG & BRAVE

by Hazel Gaynor

"Gaynor's story of courage and strength will make you believe in the heroic spirit in each of us."

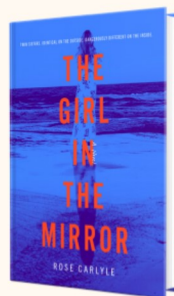
—LISA WINGATE,
#1 New York Times bestselling author

THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

by Rose Carlyle

"Ferociously entertaining. A novel like a triathlon: part evil-twin thriller, part whodunit (or did-she-do-it?), part juicy family drama."

—A.J. FINN,
#1 New York Times bestselling author



A MOST ENGLISH PRINCESS

by Clare McHugh

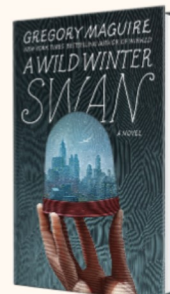
"This sweeping novel draws readers into the mesmerizing world of the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria as she emerges into a powerful force in her own right."

—MARIE BENEDICT,
New York Times bestselling author

A WILD WINTER SWAN

by Gregory Maguire

The bestselling author of *Wicked* turns his unconventional genius to Hans Christian Andersen's "The Wild Swans," transforming this classic tale into a girl's poignant coming-of-age story.



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THE GAME CHANGER

Bryan Washington's debut novel asks the reader to participate in a major way—and it's absolutely worth it.

Life has become a lot more complicated since Bryan Washington started writing his debut novel, **Memorial**. The United States is contending with a global pandemic, civil unrest, climate change and a contentious political atmosphere—but not everything is terrible. This past winter, former President Barack Obama included *Lot*, Washington's 2019 collection of short stories, on his year-end reading list—a bump that placed **Memorial** high on many lists of the most anticipated books of 2020. *Lot* also recently won the New York Public Library's Young Lions Fiction Award, an annual prize given to a fiction writer who is 35 or younger.

"For the most part, things are going good in the immediate vicinity," Washington says during a Zoom call to his home in Houston, Texas. But especially regarding **Memorial**, things seem to be going great. The book has received praise from authors like Jia Tolentino and Ocean Vuong, who called **Memorial** "a new vision for the twenty-first century novel" that "made [him] happy." It's apparent that Washington has struck a chord within the literary

community, but Washington especially leans in to the latter part of Vuong's praise. "As weighty as that particular diagnosis is, the fact that it made him happy means so much, if not more, to me, because it is a tricky novel tonally," he says. "I was trying to hit a mark that was not quite straight down the middle."

Memorial focuses primarily on the intricate relationship between Black day care worker Benson and his boyfriend, Japanese American chef Mike, two young men in love who are being torn apart by the separate forces of their lives. On the same day that Mike's Japanese mother, Mitsuko, arrives to stay with him and Benson in their home in the Third Ward, a historically Black neighborhood in Houston, Mike announces that he's leaving. He's going to Osaka, Japan, to visit his sick father—"Just for a few weeks, he says. Or maybe a couple of months"—leaving Benson and Mitsuko behind. The two reluctant roommates form a bond, sharing delicious meals in their one-bedroom apartment, while Mike journeys to the other side of the globe. Emotionally and physically,

the young lovers are drifting apart, a process that readers experience in intimate first-person narration that alternates between the two men.

Memorial makes the reader feel a lot of feelings and ask a lot of questions, not just about the book's narrative but also about the state of love and relationships today. Washington grappled with many of these questions while writing the book, but there's one question he says he wrestled with the most: Will they or won't they stay together? This quintessential back-and-forth between Benson and Mike is what drives **Memorial**. "I always had that question in the back of my head," he says, "knowing that I would have to answer it, even if I didn't know what the answer would look like from the outset."

But **Memorial** is bigger than any one question, and Washington's motivations for writing the book show deep respect for his myriad communities and found families. When he began drafting, Washington realized his book would "not have a lot of thematic or plot [comparisons] in contemporary American literature." Rather

than being disheartened by this absence, however, he embraced it. “The fact that it’s a departure is what encouraged it,” he says.

One major departure from other queer fiction is the way **Memorial** handles trauma within the story. “There’s a way that narratives in contemporary American literature—if they do feature queer characters, and especially queer characters of marginalized communities—are trauma-based,” Washington says, “and it was very important for me not to center trauma in the midst of the novel. . . . Within the various traumas that people experience, you still have the things that make you laugh and the things you enjoy eating and your crushes and your first loves and the acceleration of relationships and the deterioration of relationships. I wanted to find a way to center community without solely underlining the traumas in the story.”

Decades of literary discussions and debates preceded Washington’s creation of a book like **Memorial**, and he’s aware of the special place it holds in the chronology of queer literature. From Langston Hughes to James Baldwin, all the way to contemporary writers like poet Danez Smith, the conversation around how queer characters and communities are depicted in American literature has been going on for a long time, and **Memorial** continues that lineage. “A lot of other people had to have written the books that they wrote in order for the possibility of a novel like **Memorial** to even get to the precipice of publication,” Washington says. “It feels nice to be able to contribute another facet, I hope, to the conversation.”

Washington’s unique place in literature isn’t something he’s overly concerned about, though. It was only after writing **Memorial** that he could look back and ask himself which writers he had been in conversation with. During the writing process, he just wanted to make the best book he could.

In fact, when I ask him what books inspired him, he can’t think of any. All that come to mind are films. He mentions the 2019 dramedy *The Farewell*, starring Akwafina, as a standout inspiration, particularly for its relationship with the audience. “We get the events and we get the things that happen,” Washington says, “but we aren’t told how to feel about it.” Films like Edward Yang’s *Yi Yi* and Céline Sciamma’s *Girlhood* helped him to be less proscriptive in his writing, and to strike a balance between showing and not showing.

Another goal of the novel was to foster communication with readers, making them think critically and deeply about modern love and relationships. Washington describes this as an especially difficult part of the writing process, as he tried “to find a way to direct every conversation and every gesture . . . toward not answering [the reader’s] questions. I don’t think I’m really interested in answering questions so much as lengthening the conversation, so that the reader can take what they have and do what they want with it.”

I pitch him a metaphor, about how experiencing art is like hearing a gavel strike, a moment to decide whether or not to pass judgment. “I’m certainly interested in holding the gavel, but I don’t need to be the person who actually makes contact with

it,” Washington says. “I’d prefer if that’s the reader. The final judgment can be what they want. Then the narrative relationship becomes symbiotic, and it’s not just me saying *this is what happened*.”

This consideration of the individual reading experience isn’t new in the world of literature, but it transforms Washington’s intimate novel into an opportunity for reflection, for the reader to glimpse into their own mind, rather than some kind of indoctrination by the author. However, this style of storytelling stands out as unique in the information age. When so much mass media is trying to tell us what to think and do and buy, it’s refreshing to be encouraged to think for ourselves.

Books like **Memorial**, which require emotional investment and internal inquiry by the reader, hold a lot of power, and Washington wields it with grace. It’s not that he doesn’t have the answers to the questions he raises in this book; it’s that he’s more interested in all of us searching for them together. “There is a difference between a narrative that simply refuses to illuminate what it’s going after, and a narrative

that comes to a logical conclusion that is still open to the world of the reader by way of their personal experiences and that allows them to fall into that world,” he says.

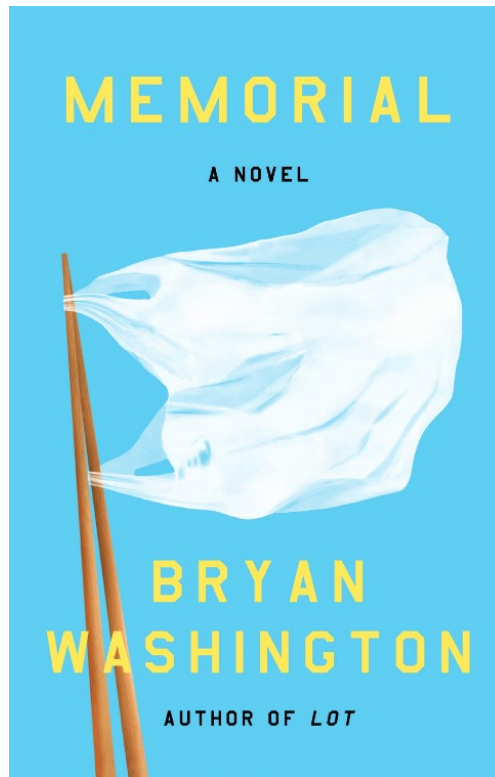
Empathy is the goal here. All these open-ended questions encourage readers to understand the characters’ motivations and their own reactions to those characters. “By the end of the drafting process,” Washington says, “I felt as though I understood where [the characters] were coming from, but I didn’t need to like them. . . . If I knew where they were coming from, I had a better understanding of why they did the things they did.”

To Washington, shifting interpretative authority to the reader is a vital element of literature. “You really don’t need to answer every question for a reader or for someone in the audience. As long as you are extremely calculated in how you are giving information and details on the page, everyone will end up in the general pocket,” he says. “I feel like narratives that really stick with me are those that allow space for the readers.”

—Eric Ponce



Visit BookPage.com to read our starred review of **Memorial**.



Memorial
Riverhead, \$27, 9780593087275

Coming of Age

★ One Night Two Souls Went Walking

By Ellen Cooney

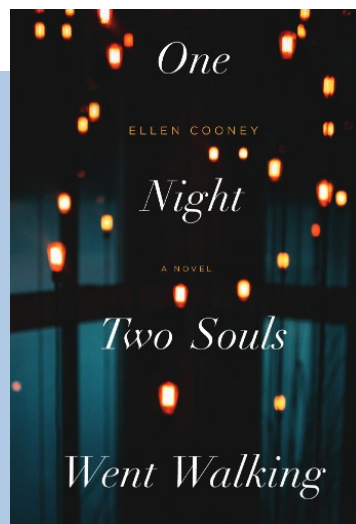
Literary Fiction

Many novels aim for the soul or search for the meaning of life, but Ellen Cooney's poetic 10th novel gets to the heart of the matter with more informal candor and wit than most.

Due to budget cuts at the medical center where she works as chaplain, the unnamed narrator of *One Night Two Souls Went Walking* (Coffee House, \$16.95, 9781566895972) has been relegated to the night shift. As the daydreaming, frizzy-haired youngest of a large, sporty family, the chaplain is used to standing out and keeping oddball company. For a while, she was accompanied on her visits with patients

and families by Bobo Boy, a rescue mutt turned therapy dog. But Bobo Boy has died, and now a new dog joins her on nocturnal visits both real and extraordinary.

One Night Two Souls Went Walking is a stroll and a meander, following the errant trail of the chaplain's questions: What is a soul? What is holy? The chaplain's meetings with people who are injured or dying reveal a host of varied answers, and the narrative slips between characters' stories as easily as a



shadow glides along a wall.

The novel reads like a diary confession, its casual writing style studded with pop culture references and exclamatory asides. As patients open up to the chaplain, she in turn opens up about her family, love life and dreams, engendering in readers the same open, gentle manner with which she ministers.

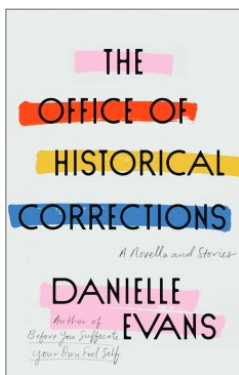
If the book has a climax, it is a mysterious trip taken by the chaplain and the dog during an influx in the emergency room. Cooney's novel expands the concept of what's possible, imagining hope where there is

none and pointing always toward the light.

—Mari Carlson

The Office of Historical Corrections

By Danielle Evans



Short Stories

Racism is an insidious beast. It can find its way into any situation, as Danielle Evans shows in the stories and novella in *The Office of Historical Corrections* (Riverhead, \$27, 9781594487330). Evans emerged as an important voice in American literature with her 2010 debut short story collection, *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self*, and she once again demonstrates impressive artistry and humor as she chronicles shocking episodes of discriminatory behavior.

In "Happily Ever After," Lyssa works in the gift shop for a replica of the *Titanic*, but she never gets to work the museum's princess parties because, her boss says, of historical accuracy: There were no Black princesses on the *Titanic*. In "Boys Go to Jupiter," a white college student poses for pictures in a Confederate-flag bikini and is surprised by the pain it causes Black students. Other stories dig deeper, such as "Anything Could Disappear," about a Black woman forced to care for a 2-year-old Black child who is deliberately left next to her on a

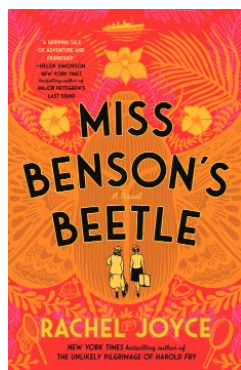
bus by the child's white caregiver.

Not every story deals with race, as with the funniest story, "Why Won't Women Just Say What They Want," in which a "genius artist" stages public apologies to the women he has wronged. However, most stories do, and the sharpest piece is the title novella, about a government agency that adds emendations to incorrect placards at historical sites, a job that becomes surprisingly dangerous. As a child, the novella's protagonist consoled a Black friend who had lost a debate tournament, declaring her a better debater than her white competitors. "But it's never going to be enough," replied the friend. Evans' book shows that that painful truth hasn't disappeared.

—Michael Magras

Miss Benson's Beetle

By Rachel Joyce



Benson's Beetle (Dial, \$18, 9780812996708),

Historical Fiction

Rachel Joyce's first novel, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* (2012), follows main character Harold on an improbable long walk across England as he comes to terms with his failures. Similarly, *Miss*

Joyce's fifth novel, tracks main character Margery Benson as she aims to make her own unlikely journey to an island called New Caledonia in the southwestern Pacific, to track down an elusive golden beetle.

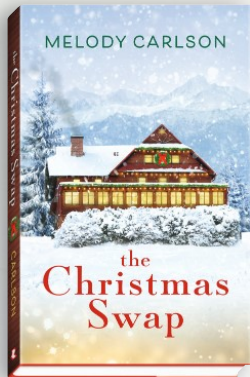
In 1950, the war is over, but rationing and shortages continue in London. Margery is a lonely 40-something soul, teaching home economics to snarky high school girls. When the girls go too far in making fun of her, Margery snaps and flees the school, snatching a pair of lacrosse boots in fury and frustration, an act that reminds her of her long-deferred goal of finding the golden beetle of New Caledonia.

But it's a preposterous dream. Margery has no academic credentials, no passport, no knowledge of New Caledonia and no money. Nevertheless, she persists, planning her journey and interviewing assistants. What follows is an epic, obstacle-filled journey from London to Australia and at last to New Caledonia, which in 1950 is a French colony. Margery and her assistant, Enid Pretty, arrive on the island woefully underprepared for the final part of their quest.

Miss Benson's Beetle balances the light—including comic moments that highlight the discrepancies between stolid Margery and flighty Enid—with the dark, such as Margery's trauma-filled youth. As with *Harold Fry*, the main character's inner journey is the real one. Margery finds human connection she didn't know she was missing and, through that connection, a deeper purpose in life. The novel also has a marvelous, economical way of contrasting the drab gray of postwar London with the vivid colors, sounds and smells of New Caledonia.

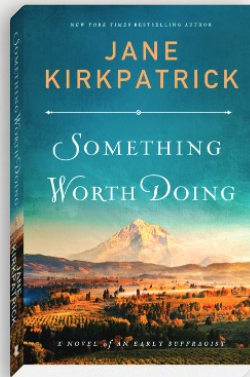
Joyce's fiction has been slotted into "uplit," a

Books Are the Gifts That Entertain and Enrich



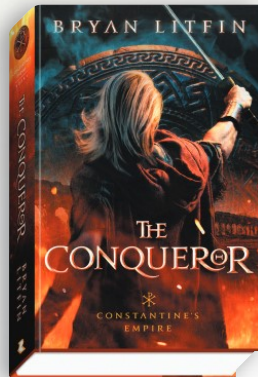
Christmas Swap
by Melody Carlson

Fall in love this Christmas.



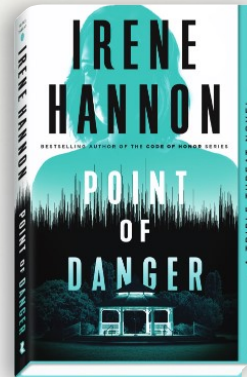
Something Worth Doing
by Jane Kirkpatrick

Some things are worth doing—even when the cost is great.



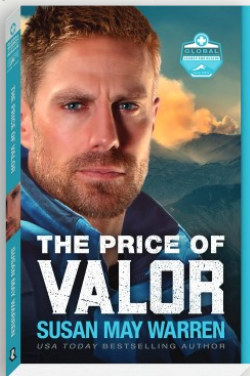
The Conqueror
by Bryan Litfin

"Bryan Litfin makes history come alive."—Chris Fabry, author and radio host



Point of Danger
by Irene Hannon

Hate mail was one thing. This was quite another.



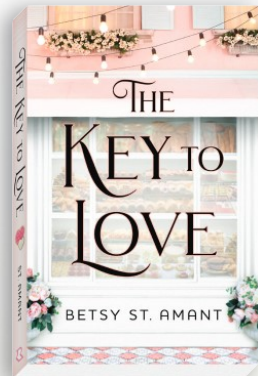
The Price of Valor
by Susan May Warren

A high-octane mix of love and adventure.



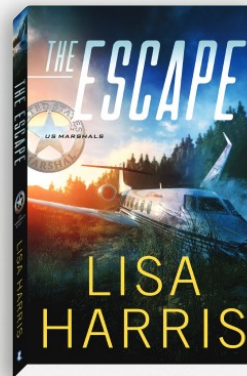
Nine
by Rachelle Dekker

Some secrets can't stay hidden.



The Key to Love
by Betsy St. Amant

Love doesn't always look the way we expect.



The Escape
by Lisa Harris

How do you catch a fugitive with nothing to lose?

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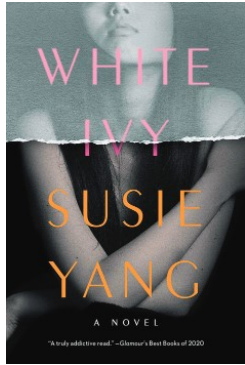
Available wherever books and ebooks are sold.

publishing term for novels that contain some dark moments but ultimately offer an uplifting ending. For readers who seek escape, **Miss Benson's Beetle** is just right.

—Sarah McCraw Crow

White Ivy

By Susie Yang



Coming of Age

Ivy Lin is no monster, but sometimes, when sufficiently motivated, she does monstrous things. She doesn't just covet what others have; she is consumed by cravings for wealth, status

and a boyfriend whose all-American (in her mind, this means white and patrician) good looks are nothing like her own.

In Chinese American author Susie Yang's debut novel, we meet Ivy at several different stages of life. She grows from fretful child to moody and self-loathing junior grifter. By her late 20s, she has evolved into a smooth, sophisticated adult, determined to attain her American ideal by any means necessary. Her looks and circumstances have improved, but her desperation never fully evaporates.

Rather than a traditional thriller, **White Ivy** (Simon & Schuster, \$26, 9781982100599) is a slow-burning, intricate psychological character study and coming-of-age story full of family secrets and foreboding. Ivy isn't an outsider simply because she's an immigrant; she stands out even within her own deeply dysfunctional Chinese American family. Their treatment of Ivy exposes the minor harms of everyday life—the tiny slights and subtle hits that leave marks that never fade. Alienation appears to be Ivy's natural state, and this is never more clear than when she is closest to getting what wants: popularity, respect and, most of all, a romantic relationship with her childhood crush, the beautiful scion of an old-money New England family.

Despite the book's inevitable ending, Yang allows her main character ambiguity. Ivy is strangely, uncomfortably relatable and ultimately unknowable. Her transgressions are mostly minor, yet her sometimes vicious inner monologue shows that she has the capacity for far harsher misdeeds. Perhaps that is the point—that the dividing line between ordinary wrongs and acts of true evil is razor thin. So when signs start to suggest that something

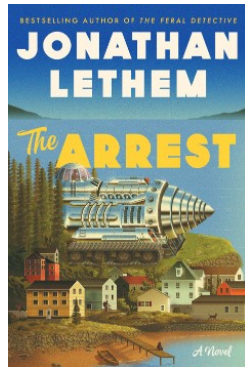
very bad is about to happen, the violent act is all the more jarring.

Ivy brings to mind other desperate, liminal characters, such as Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley. Readers will find a lot to appreciate in this sharply observed psychological thriller.

—Carole V. Bell

The Arrest

By Jonathan Lethem



Speculative Fiction

In his 12th novel, Jonathan Lethem returns to speculative fiction to tell a provocative tale of an isolated Maine peninsula after an apocalypse.

In this particular apocalypse, known as “the Arrest,” some mysterious process has incrementally disabled the world's supply of gasoline, pixels and gunpowder. There's no TV, no internet, no internal combustion engines, no firearms. This is a challenge for all the residents on the peninsula, but it is especially hard for Alexander “Sandy” Duplessis, known as Journeyman, who once had a successful career as a Hollywood script doctor but now works as a butcher's assistant and a bicycle deliveryman, pedaling in the shadow of his younger sister, Maddy, a local communal farmer.

The peninsula's isolation is enforced by a surly group of tribute-demanding bullies called the Cordon. Are they keeping outsiders out or insiders in? Is there life, civilization or, better yet, electricity beyond their barricades? Busting past the Cordon comes Peter Todbaum in his nuclear-powered vehicle called the Blue Streak. Peter is Journeyman's former Yale roommate and movie-making collaborator, and he arrives hoping to rekindle his estranged relationships with Journeyman and Maddy as well as his lifelong movie project, *Yet Another World*, a dystopian, apocalyptic love story. He comes bearing an endless supply of the rarest of rare—brewed coffee. He first entralls and then alienates almost everyone with his endless stories and fabrications.

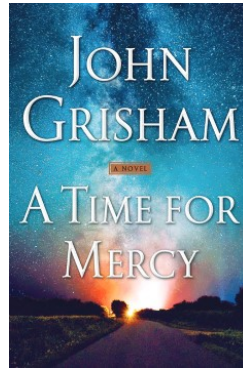
And this is just the beginning. Lethem is a beguiling and very smart writer. Told in short, breezy chapters, **The Arrest** (Ecco, \$27.99, 9780062938787) vibrates with sharp, satiric observations and layers upon layers of strange, often funny mashups of popular 1970s and '80s end-of-the-world books and movies.

Ultimately, Lethem's plot resolves itself, but in ways that do not fully satisfy. This is deliberate. As his fans know, Lethem often plays a deeper game. There are some answered and many unanswered questions in **The Arrest**—so many that Lethem seems to be suggesting that even at the end of days, the familiar shapes of stories are insufficient, and life itself offers fewer resolutions than we hope for.

—Alden Mudge

★ A Time for Mercy

By John Grisham



Thriller

With nationwide calls for police reform and defunding, literary giant John Grisham's novel **A Time for Mercy** (Doubleday, \$29.95, 9780385545969) is undoubtedly timely, as it explores the ways that violence

committed by or against law enforcement officials can complicate the pursuit of justice.

Jake Brigance—the hero of Grisham's 1989 debut, *A Time to Kill*—is court-appointed to represent 16-year-old Drew Gamble in the shooting death of his mother's boyfriend, deputy sheriff Stu Kofer. There's no question that Drew pulled the trigger, but Jake faces an ethical challenge over whether the shooting was justified. Drew contends that he shot Stu in self-defense after believing Stu had killed his mother. Drew, his younger sister and their mother lived in constant fear of beatings by Stu, who often returned home in a drunken stupor.

Jake only wants to handle preliminary matters for the Gamble case until a permanent public defender can be appointed. But deep down, he realizes he's the best chance the Gamble family has. With public sentiment and fellow police officers standing behind Stu and his family, Jake's efforts to keep Drew from being tried as an adult and facing possible execution put him at odds with the community.

While there are lulls during some of the legal procedural bits, Grisham's mastery of the courtroom thriller is never in question. As usual, he presents as smooth a read as you'll ever experience. The dialogue is sharp and pointed, layered with genuine emotions that make the characters pop off the pages of this morally complex story.

—G. Robert Frazier

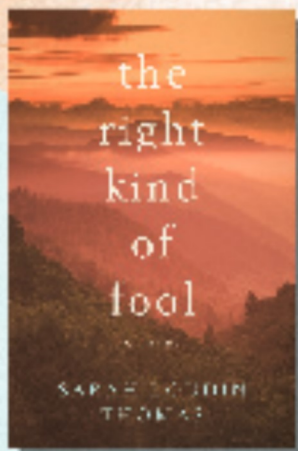
Engrossing and Groundbreaking

INSPIRATIONAL FICTION



When paths cross between a fifteen-year-old student and a life-changing tragedy, they discover what truly matters in life and how it's never too late for a second chance. "Pronger delivers life lessons that will linger long after the last page."

Library Journal
starred review
The Sowing Season
by Kalle Pronger



Unexpectedly pulled into a murder investigation involving his deaf son, an adoptive father finds that he will have to do more than save a child if he wants to win it's love. "An uplifting novel that strikes all the high points of redemptive love."

—*Booklist* starred review
The Right Kind of Fool
by Sarah Louisa Thomas




Disquieted and torn between marriage and herself, a woman walks on the faded Casino playground, where everyone's called into a deep soul searching that thins out their best-laid plans. "Prove that carries us to the edge of our soul." —*Patricia Callahan, New York Times* bestselling author
The Promised Land
by Elizabeth Meyer



With a rapidly-evolving front the WWII home front, the lines between compassion and treason are blurred, and a young man and woman must decide where their hearts truly lie. "A remarkable and moving exploration of prejudice and friendship."

—*Library Journal* starred review
Things We Didn't Say
by Amy Leigh Green

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★ The Book Collectors

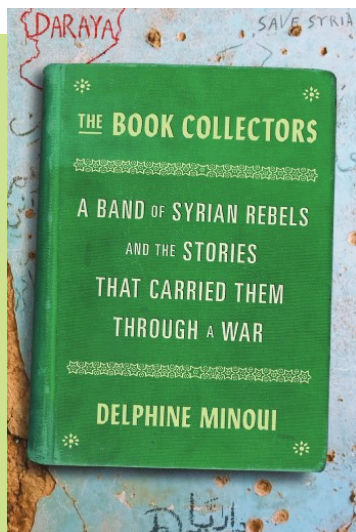
By Delphine Minoui

Biography

“Books bring us closer together. They’re a bridge between us,” Hussan Ayash tells journalist Delphine Minoui over Skype. Ayash belongs to a group of rebels in Syria who spent four years, from 2012 to 2016, under siege in Daraya, a suburb of Damascus. In 2013, they discovered a cache of books in the ruins of a bombed house and decided to rescue them. They dug through the wreckage of other buildings as well, salvaging 6,000 books in one week, and created a secret library in the basement of an abandoned building. In precise yet passionate prose, Minoui tells this remarkable story in **The Book Collectors: A Band of Syrian Rebels and the Stories That Carried Them Through a War** (FSG, \$25, 9780374115166).

With a French mother, an Iranian father and a home base in Istanbul, Minoui understands the region well and has won awards for her reporting on the Middle East. When she saw a photo of

the library bunker, her first instinct was to travel to Daraya and start interviewing these unusual librarians. That journey would be impossible, however, so she began communicating with several of the young men online and formed an unusual relationship with them, worrying constantly about their safety. This personal connection forms the heart of the book, deepening the story while laying bare the sacrifice and deprivation of



the rebels. For those four years, Daraya was besieged by bombs and poison gas, food was scarce, and there was no running water or electricity. As she communicated via video chat, Minoui remained careful to keep her coffee and snacks out of the camera's view.

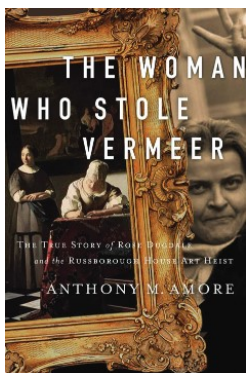
“The library is their hidden fortress against the bombs,” Minoui writes. “Books are their weapons of mass instruction.” Although a good many of the library’s founders hadn’t grown up as readers, they became book lovers during the long siege. The library’s most popular titles form an eclectic mix: Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*, *The Little Prince*, Mustafa Khalifa’s *The Shell*, *Les Misérables* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

The Book Collectors is a phenomenal story of hope in the midst of complete devastation. As 23-year-old Abu el-Ezz told Minoui in 2015, “Reading helps me think positively, chase away negative ideas. And that’s what we need most right now.”

—Alice Cary

The Woman Who Stole Vermeer

By Anthony M. Amore



True Crime

In **The Woman Who Stole Vermeer: The True Story of Rose Dugdale and the Russborough House Art Heist** (Pegasus Crime, \$27.95, 9781643135298), Anthony M. Amore expertly combines extraordinary history with

gripping true crime. Amore, author of *The Art of the Con* and director of security at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, is an authority on art crimes and homeland security. His new book recounts the life of heiress Rose Dugdale, one of few women in the world to pull off a great art heist. The book starts with her privileged beginnings in England and college years at Oxford studying philosophy and economics, and progresses through her radical transformation into an incredible art thief.

Rich in tantalizing details, **The Woman Who**

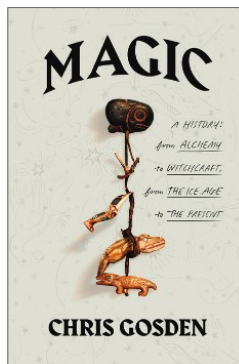
Stole Vermeer is filled with personal anecdotes from those who knew Dugdale the best—old college friends, colleagues and political compatriots who all remember her as wholly original and completely fearless. Several dramatic events in Dugdale’s life led her to follow revolutionary politics, but none affected her more than Bloody Sunday in 1972, when British soldiers killed more than two dozen demonstrators at a protest march in Northern Ireland. From then on, she became dedicated to ending British imperialism and helping the Irish Liberation Army.

The reasons for Dugdale’s prolific art heists were complicated and surprising, but they were never selfish. In 1973, to help fund her political causes, Dugdale stole valuable artwork from her family’s estate. As her crimes escalated, she stole a helicopter and attempted to bomb a police station. In 1974, along with three other people, she entered Ireland’s Russborough House, which was then the home of a British Member of Parliament, and stole 19 priceless paintings, including Johannes Vermeer’s “The Lady Writing a Letter With Her Maid.” In striking detail, Amore describes how Dugdale was identified as the one who orchestrated the heist. Her subsequent arrest, theatrical trial and most dramatic crimes are also vividly explained. This exciting biography of a singular woman is for anyone who loves true crime, art, politics and history.

—Sarojini Seupersad

Magic

By Chris Gosden



History

In **Magic: A History: From Alchemy to Witchcraft, From the Ice Age to the Present** (FSG, \$30, 9780374200121), Oxford professor of archaeology Chris Gosden treats readers to a history of humanity through

the lens of magic. Gosden defines magic as human participation in the universe through ritual and art. From Paleolithic cave art and Egyptian burial practices to 19th-century spiritualism and 20th-century paganism, magical objects and rituals have always been a part of the human experience. Even in cultures guided predominantly by the two other great belief systems, religion and science, magic has often persisted alongside them.

In this beautifully illustrated and written book, Gosden offers an encyclopedic compendium of magical practices across the globe and throughout history. Readers will gain much

New perspectives on American history

Two books challenge assumptions about slavery before the Civil War.

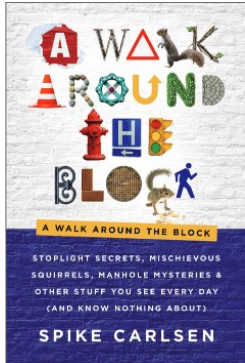
from the transhistorical perspective Gosden offers. For example, the shamanism practiced on the Eurasian Steppe in 5000 B.C. traveled from Mongolia to Iron Age Western Europe, where it was practiced by the Celts. This history can be traced through the objects found in ancient burial sites and under excavated stone circles, examples of which are reproduced throughout the text.

The global and historical reach of Gosden's knowledge is astonishing and makes this book an essential reference work. But Gosden has another compelling trick up his sleeve. The book's humane, urgent conclusion suggests that magic may even offer some clues for surviving our current global climate crisis. Many of the magical rituals and practices discussed here rely on the notion of an animate and sentient natural world. "To be human is to be connected," Gosden argues. If we can re-awaken our sense of connection to the natural world—to trees and animals and oceans—we may be able to encourage more humans to practice living lightly and harmoniously with the world around us.

—Catherine Hollis

★ A Walk Around the Block

By Spike Carlsen



Science

In these unprecedented days of the COVID-19 pandemic, we may find our house-bound selves more curious than ever about what's going on outdoors in our neighborhoods and across our cities and towns.

Where does electricity come from? What happens to our trash and recyclables when they leave our curb? How is our water cleaned? Consider the road signs, and think about what is in and on those roads. Ponder the manholes, their purpose and shape. Observe the ubiquitous squirrels and their mating habits. **A Walk Around the Block: Stoplight Secrets, Mischievous Squirrels, Manhole Mysteries & Other Stuff You See Every Day (and Know Nothing About)** (HarperOne, \$24.99, 9780062954756) reads like a very fun trot, with chapters that flow and entertain. Spike Carlsen's relentless curiosity about everything leads us on to learn more—and more, and more.

In the conventional understanding of American history, enslaved people fled north to "free" states or to Canada. And many did—between 30,000 and 100,000 people. But others, probably no more than 3,000 or 5,000 people, went south to Mexico. Although a relatively small group, their collective story had strategic and political significance out of proportion to their numbers. Historian Alice L. Baumgartner details the reasons why in her deeply researched and eloquently argued **South to Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War** (Basic, \$32, 9781541617780). Her book shows that "enslaved people who escaped to Mexico . . . contributed to the outbreak of a major sectional controversy over the future" of slavery in the U.S.

Baumgartner focuses on a complex series of events between Mexico and the U.S. in the 19th century, often related to property rights and individual freedom, including the Texas Revolution, the annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War. American slaveholders relentlessly pushed for the expansion of slavery through their elected officials, while Mexico gradually restricted and then abolished slavery in 1837. Complicating matters even more, the Mexican government had 49 presidents, including some dictators, between 1824 and 1857.

Many individuals on all sides are portrayed here, but the most compelling stories are those of enslaved people who, at considerable risk, escaped for what they hoped would be a better life in Mexico. Sadly, not all of them found improved conditions. They had few options for work or military service, but they did have the opportunity to choose.

Baumgartner's fast-paced yet detailed exploration is consistently illuminating and offers a new way to understand the past. It is a must-read for anyone seeking a fuller awareness of our history.

—Roger Bishop

Urbane and bustling, New York City is often considered the epitome of "Northern-ness." However, in the decades before the Civil War, the city's interests were very much in line with those of Southern cotton farmers. Through its finance, insurance and shipping industries, New York probably profited from slave labor more than any other city in the country. The city would do almost anything to appease the Southern states, even if it meant sending its own citizens into slavery.

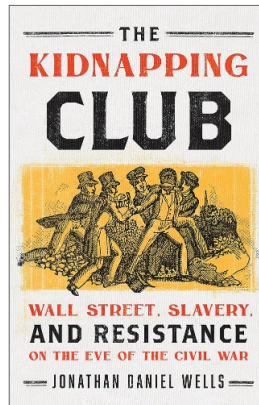
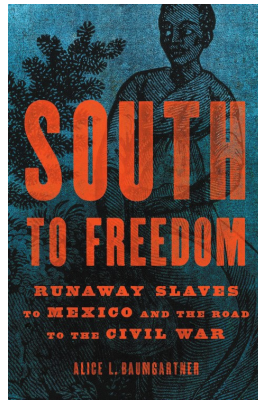
The Kidnapping Club: Wall Street, Slavery, and Resistance on the Eve of the Civil War (Bold Type, \$30, 9781568587523) by Jonathan Daniel Wells is an eye-opening history of antebellum New York. Wells meticulously details two of New York City's dirtiest secrets: the city's illicit backing of the illegal transatlantic slave trade and the Kidnapping Club that helped reinforce it. From the 1830s until the start of the Civil War, and with the support of the city's judiciary, vigilantes in the Kidnapping Club as well as the police abducted Black New Yorkers on the pretext that they were escaped slaves. With little or no due process, hundreds of men, women and even children were snatched, jailed and then sent south.

There are many villains in this thoroughly researched and fascinating history. Yet **The Kidnapping Club** is more than a story of villainy. It's also a history of heroes, including David Ruggles, a Black abolitionist who put his body between the victims and their snatchers;

Elizabeth Jenkins, who fought against segregated transportation over a century before Rosa Parks; and James McCune Smith, an abolitionist and the first African American to hold a medical degree.

Most important of all, **The Kidnapping Club** restores the names of the abducted: Ben, Hester Jane Carr, Isaac Wright, Frances Shields, John Dickerson and countless others whose lives were destroyed and humanity erased—until now.

—Deborah Mason



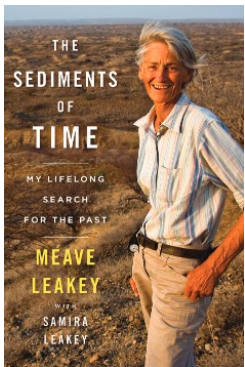
Straying far from his block in Stillwater, Minnesota, this editor, author, carpenter and woodworker (he's also the author of *A Splintered History of Wood*) tours the graffiti-adorned alleys and sewers (yes, you can) of Paris and a trash museum in New York. Closer to home, there's a local water treatment plant, recycling operation, traffic control center and post office. There's also the Mail Recovery Center, which consolidates 90 million undeliverable and nonreturnable mail items annually. Carlsen introduces a snow plower, mail sorter and deliverer, graffiti artist and pigeon professional. The makings of asphalt and concrete are explored, the shapes of road signs are explained, and the history of front porches is revealed. Ever wonder about roadkill? Street names? Roundabouts versus traffic lights? It's all here. Statistics and cultural histories boost the facts, but the anecdotes carry the day. The people Carlsen meets along the way—the ones who have likely never crossed our minds—become unforgettable.

A Walk Around the Block succeeds in making the mundane fascinating, opening our minds (and front doors) to an everyday world easily taken for granted. As Carlsen writes, "I've learned knowledge is power; and when you know more about how the world works, you make better decisions as you walk through it."

—Priscilla Kipp

★ The Sediments of Time

By Meave Leakey



Memoir

Attentive readers of Meave Leakey's masterful memoir, **The Sediments of Time: My Lifelong Search for the Past** (HMH, \$30, 9780358206675), will learn a few details about her personal life. She was recruited by

the great Louis Leakey for paleontological research in Africa in 1965, after sexism prevented her from working as a marine biologist. After completing her Ph.D., she returned to Kenya in 1969 for good. She fell in love with Louis' son, Richard Leakey, despite his obnoxious reputation and the fact that he was then in an unhappy marriage. They had two daughters, who spent "field season" in remote areas of Kenya hunting fossils with their parents and their collaborators. After Richard was named the head

of Kenya's wildlife conservation department to end a rampage of elephant poaching, Meave became head of the field research operation and spent much of her life apart from him, especially as he became more involved in politics. Years later, long after Richard had lost his legs in a plane crash, she donated a kidney to him. And so on.

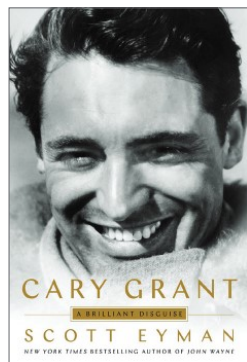
But the main and most illuminating parts of **The Sediments of Time** are about the tedious, painstaking years spent hunting for the fossilized remains of our species' precursors. Drawing on field notes, interviews and research papers, Meave recounts the work that led to some of her and her team's greatest discoveries. She demonstrates the astonishing amount of knowledge that can be gained, for example, through meticulous examination of something as seemingly unimportant as a prehistoric baby tooth. She writes of the shoe-string budgets paleontologists operate on, the competition for research grants and the need for significant discoveries to maintain funding—and of the collaborative nature of the field's efforts despite the competition for money. She also hails the positive impact of new communication and digital technologies in the field.

Best of all, Meave and her co-writer, her youngest daughter Samira Leakey, write clearly and compellingly about what these discoveries mean. In a fascinating chapter inspired by the birth of her grandchildren, Meave explores the advantages for our species of having parents who live long beyond childbearing years. Other chapters concern the development of our most distinguishing features: walking on two feet, the amazing mobility of our hands and the size of our brains. Some readers may find this all goes too deep into the sands of time, but many more will find it a thrilling account.

—Alden Mudge

Cary Grant

By Scott Eyman



Biography

Film historian Scott Eyman takes a fresh look at a movie legend in the sparkling biography **Cary Grant: A Brilliant Disguise** (Simon & Schuster, \$35, 9781501192111). Drawing upon extensive

interviews and archival materials, includ-

ing the star's personal papers, Eyman shows that Grant (1904–1986), king of the romantic comedy and the very definition of dashing, was a man of contrasts forever troubled by his working-class past.

Born into a poor household in Bristol, England, Grant, whose real name was Archibald Leach, did not have a happy childhood. His father was an alcoholic. His depressed mother spent decades in an institution, while Grant was told that she was dead. At 14, he engineered his own expulsion from school in order to chase a career in show business. From stilt walking, acrobatics and pantomime in English music halls to American vaudeville revues and the Broadway stage, he didn't stop until he'd landed in Hollywood.

There was no bill Cary Grant didn't fit. During the late 1940s, writes Scott Eyman in his sparkling biography, "Grant had first crack at nearly every script that didn't involve a cattle drive or space aliens."

In 1932, Grant made his first big film, *Blonde Venus*, with Marlene Dietrich. By 1939, he was a full-blown star. Absent-minded scientist (*Bringing Up Baby*), wisecracking socialite (*The Philadelphia Story*), ice-cold government agent (*Notorious*)—there was no bill he didn't fit. During the late 1940s, Eyman writes, "Grant had first crack at nearly every script that didn't involve a cattle drive or space aliens."

But Grant's past seems to have left him permanently scarred. Although he maintained a suave public persona and was widely cherished by friends and fellow actors, the truth about him was, of course, more complicated. As the author reveals, Grant had a reputation for stinginess and self-absorption and could be a mean drunk. On set, he was often anxious and tense.

Eyman's consideration of the inner conflicts that drove Grant results in a wonderfully nuanced study of his life. Along with the star's many marriages and bitter divorces, Eyman explores the rumors surrounding his sexuality and his LSD use, recounting it all in clean, unaffected prose. He mixes Grant's personal story with several decades' worth of Hollywood history, and his film analyses are eye-opening. Grant was "a man for all movie seasons." They don't make 'em like that anymore.

—Julie Hale

★ The Enigma Game

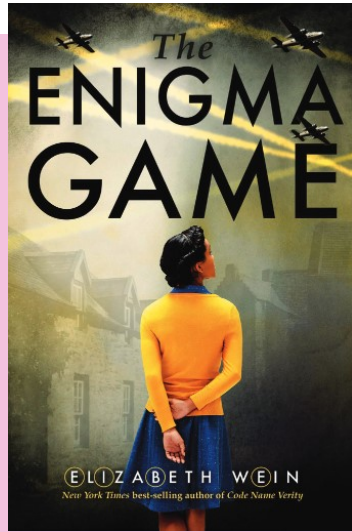
By Elizabeth Wein

Historical Fiction

Scotland, 1940: At the Limehouse pub, the paths of the four protagonists of Elizabeth Wein's gripping **The Enigma Game** (Little, Brown, \$18.99, 9781368012584) intersect. The proprietor hires recently orphaned Louisa as a personal assistant to her elderly, feisty Aunt Jane, an arrangement that benefits them both; getting a job has been difficult for Jamaican-born Louisa due to her dark skin, and no one wants to care for a German woman who might have once been a spy. Meanwhile, Ellen relishes the opportunity to conceal her Scottish Traveler heritage behind her respectable job as a military driver, and Flight Lieutenant Jaime Beaufort-Stuart simply hopes to bring his crew home alive after each mission. He and his fellow airmen from the nearby base each leave a sixpence in a crack in the Limehouse's soft wood beams. If they return from their missions, they'll use the

money to buy themselves a drink; if their planes are shot down, their coins will remain as tokens, small marks upon the world.

A rogue German pilot leaves a mysterious object behind at the pub. It looks a bit like a typewriter but has additional switches and dials. Its keys, when pressed, light up, but the letter illuminated on the letter plate doesn't match the letter typed. Louisa and Ellen work together to



master the Enigma machine in order to break the German codes and feed Jaime the information he needs to save his pilots' lives. But the codes themselves are sometimes in code, and an even larger intelligence mission waits in the wings.

Readers will enjoy **The Enigma Game** as a standalone thriller or as a prequel to Wein's 2013 Printz Honor book, *Code Name Verity*, and 2017's *The Pearl Thief* (watch for a favorite character to appear—in disguise). Highly distinct narrative voices spin a story of suspense and intrigue, including several remarkable incidents taken directly from historical records, as Wein explains in her detailed "Declaration of Accountability." **The Enigma Game** furthers Wein's streak of excellent historical fiction.

—Jill Ratzan



Visit BookPage.com to read a Q&A with Elizabeth Wein.

★ Magic Dark and Strange

By Kelly Powell



Historical Fantasy

By day, Catherine works in a print shop. At night, her boss sends her to the cemetery to raise the dead and give families a final hour with their loved ones—but each raising takes an hour off her life. It's an unfor-

fortunate bargain, but Catherine is at the mercy of her employer, who can toss her out on the street at any moment—and he does when Catherine and her friend Guy, a watchmaker, fail to unearth a magical timepiece buried in a boy's coffin. Instead, they inexplicably revive the boy permanently. Though he can't remember anything about his life, the boy is their only link to the timepiece, and finding it is the only way they can save Catherine's livelihood.

Set in an alternate Victorian England, **Magic Dark and Strange** (Margaret K. McElderry, \$18.99, 9781534466081) combines mystery, magic and a touch of the macabre while underscoring the harsh conditions of the working

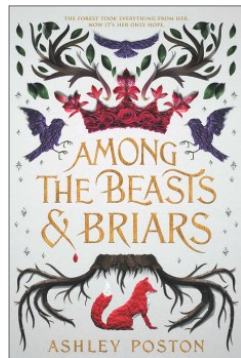
class. Catherine depends on her employer for income and lodging, and her quest for the timepiece gains urgency from her fear of destitution. Guy and his father struggle to keep their shop afloat, and the revived boy must find an apprenticeship or risk the poorhouse.

A lack of rules to govern the magical elements of this story may frustrate detail-oriented fantasy fans. Nonetheless, the novel's moody, gothic atmosphere, appealing romance and brisk mystery plot will satisfy readers who enjoy storytelling that blends genre conventions with ease.

—Kimberly Giarratano

★ Among the Beasts & Briars

By Ashley Poston



Fantasy

Cerys lives an idyllic life in the serene, prosperous kingdom of Aloriya. She supports her best friend, Princess Anwen; tends flowers with her father, the royal gardener; and befriends a spunky fox who's taken a shine to her. All

seems well, though Cerys wonders whether her

future role as royal gardener is what she really wants. But when evil forces invade Aloriya on the day of Anwen's coronation, Cerys flees into the Wildwood, a dark forest that has already claimed many lives. As everything she took for granted crumbles around her, Cerys must uncover the truth about herself and Aloriya to save the people she loves.

Ashley Poston's **Among the Beasts & Briars** (Balzer + Bray, \$17.99, 9780062847362) reads like a classical fairy tale in the best way. Fantasy readers will appreciate how Poston conjures familiar elements but employs them with thrilling originality and flair. She turns tropes such as the damsel in distress and the dangerous curse upside down: What if the heroic prince disappears before the action starts? Could evil creatures have noble intentions? What if the heroine's magical power is useless in a battle between darkness and light?

Poston depicts how beautiful things such as flowers or princesses can suddenly become terrifying. She paints a vivid yet dreamlike world of regal palaces, lively festivals and foreboding forests, inviting readers to admire the beauty of ballgowns while forcing them to confront the creepiness of crawling creatures and rotting flesh. But Poston also grounds the book's decadent atmosphere in realistic, well-drawn characters and the relationships between them, ensuring that the fantastical trappings of her story never interfere with its wholly human heart.

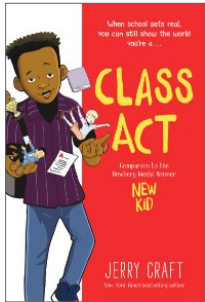
—Tami Orendain

Middle school, in graphic detail

Two graphic novels navigate the hallways and hormones of tween life.

Ah, middle school. That time of great, exciting change we all must go through, willingly or not, when every day can be thrilling, terrifying or downright weird—all before lunchtime.

Filled with empathy and humor, Jerry Craft's **Class Act** (Quill Tree, \$22.99, 9780062885517, ages 8 to 12) is a warm hug of a book that chronicles a school year in the life of aspiring artist and eighth grader Jordan Banks. Jordan starred in Craft's Newbery Medal-winning *New Kid*, which followed his first year at the private Riverdale Academy Day School in the Bronx. Now Craft's focus expands to include Jordan's best friend, Drew Ellis, and their classmate Liam.



Jordan and Drew deal with typical tween issues, such as Jordan's insecurities about being smaller (and hilariously, less stinky) than the other kids and Drew's discomfort with a classmate's amorous attentions. But as Black kids at Riverdale, they must also contend with racist microaggressions and colorism. Class differences crop up, too. In their neighborhood, Jordan and Drew are teased for being too fancy, but at school, classmates comment on their relative poverty. In an especially compelling storyline, a visit to white, wealthy Liam's home causes Drew to grapple with conflicted feelings about friendship with someone who lives in a mansion.

Class Act's modeling of thoughtful communication and its celebration of friendship are appealing and heartfelt. Craft's expressive characters, strong command of vibrant color and hits of visual humor—including references to popular books in the double-page spreads that open each chapter—are downright delightful.

Twins (Graphix, \$24.99, 9781338236170, ages 8 to 12), written by Varian Johnson and illustrated by Shannon Wright, speaks to a younger experience, opening on the first day of sixth grade for twins Maureen and Francine Carter. Francine is ready to roll, complete with a funky new hat, a plan to run for class president and a determination to go by "Fran" from now on. In contrast, Maureen is anxious about middle school; she and Francine only have a few classes together, and she's been assigned to Cadet Corps instead of gym class.

As the girls struggle to reconcile their fierce love and strong bond with a new desire to be recognized as individuals, they must also navigate "Jock Mountain" and the "Valley of Burps & Smells." Maureen finds her footing and learns to stand up for herself, but her decision to run against Francine for class president throws the girls' relationship even more off balance.

Wright's art skillfully captures the emotion and physicality of tense car rides, anxiety-inducing classroom scenes and a variety of school hallway hijinks. In his first graphic novel, Johnson, author of the 2019 Coretta Scott King Honor book *The Parker Inheritance* (and a twin himself!), creates a cast of engaging characters, including a family that's by turns supportive, frustrated and funny. The lead-up to the election is suspenseful, and Johnson's depiction of the girls' parents' willingness to listen to their daughters is both moving and inspiring. **Twins** marks an auspicious start to a new series.

—Linda M. Castellitto



We gather together

Celebrate the joy of working in harmony for a greater cause.

Two picture books inspired by real-life community organizations demonstrate the great things we can achieve when we all pitch in.

Based on Jillian Tamaki's experience of volunteering at a community kitchen in Brooklyn, **Our Little Kitchen** (Abrams, \$17.99, 9781419746550, ages 4 to 8) follows a mother and child who help a group of volunteers prepare and serve a meal for their community.

As the story begins, everyone

springs into action

to assemble ingredients from a

garden as well as

the kitchen's cupboard and refrigerator. The group's

leader heats up

day-old bread

until it's "soft and

warm, as good as

new!" then ponders what to do

with canned beans

for the third week

in a row. Once the

cooking starts, the

pages burst with

onomatopoeias in

huge, sprawling

letters ("glug glug

glug" and "chop

chop chop chop")

When the leader shouts "FIFTEEN MIN-

UTES!" in a spiky speech bubble

that nearly fills the whole page, the

energy and urgency is palpable.

Every page sizzles and pops

as Tamaki captures the kitchen's

hustle and bustle. Lively, detailed

visuals abound, often depicted

from unusual perspectives such

as extreme close-ups and overhead

angles. Even the book's endpapers

feature illustrated recipes. Tamaki's

thoughtful author's note is the icing

on this treat: "We are often told

that a single person can change

the world. Just think what many

of us can accomplish—with our

bodies, voices, votes, and hearts—

together." **Our Little Kitchen** is an

inspiring call to action that will

warm readers' hearts and tummies.

Cooking a community dinner

can be a haphazard, improvised

affair, but stitching a community

quilt is a measured and precise endeavor. Such contrasting processes

make **The All-Together Quilt** (Knopf, \$17.99, 9780375822049, ages 5 to 8) the perfect counterpoint to **Our Little Kitchen**.

Lizzy Rockwell has more than 30 books to her name, but **The All-Together Quilt** is especially personal. Her author's note describes her involvement with a

Connecticut-based

quilting group

called Peace by

Piece. Senior citizens, kids from the neighborhood and adult volunteers like

Rockwell meet two

afternoons each

week at a senior

housing facility to

stitch. Their quilts

hang in public libraries, a community college and a children's museum.

Zeroing in on

small acts of collaboration between

kids and adults,

Rockwell depicts

the group making

a quilt from start to finish. Her

images are informative as well

as narrative and include labeled

diagrams of sewing tools and illustrations of classic quilt blocks.

There's even an explanation of the

origins of each fabric used, from

an African wax print to a Scottish

plaid. The strong how-to component may encourage young readers

to learn to make their own quilts.

The book's communal spirit is epitomized in a glorious spread

that shows a diverse group of

people of all ages gathered around

a quilting frame, working together

to create something beautiful. "It

takes a long time to quilt the quilt,"

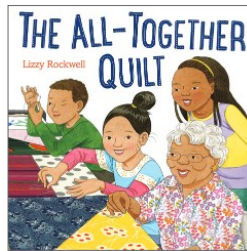
the text reads. "Everybody lends a

hand." **The All-Together Quilt** is

an exemplary, colorful and moving

blend of fact and fiction.

—Alice Cary



★ The Little Mermaid

By Jerry Pinkney

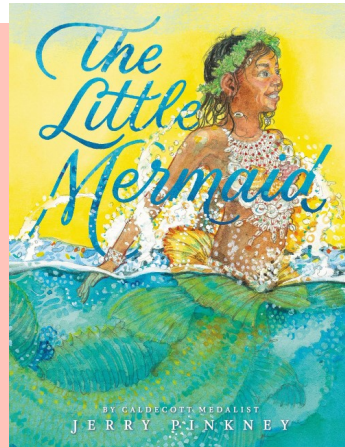
Picture Book

Our most beloved stories seem to grow each time we tell them, expanding to encompass new ideas we've come to treasure as well as familiar elements we hold dear. Jerry Pinkney brings a well-trod tale to the surface and fills it with new life in **The Little Mermaid** (Little, Brown, \$18.99, 9780316440318, ages 4 to 7).

Pinkney has been a fixture in children's literature for more than five decades. His distinctively detailed watercolor illustrations lend a sense of majesty and depth to every book he touches. Many of his acclaimed titles are adaptations of folk and fairy tales, including his Caldecott Medal-winning *The Lion and the Mouse* and the Caldecott Honor books *John Henry* (written by Julius Lester) and *The Ugly Duckling*.

In **The Little Mermaid**, Pinkney creates a lav-

ish and vibrant world—three worlds, actually. Underwater, the merfolk's kingdom teems with life, bubbling and busy. Amid cool blues and greens, intriguing ocean creatures, including fish, eels and turtles, fill the pages, hiding in every nook and cranny. Above the surface, waves roll onto a sandy beach under a warm yellow sun as gulls swoop through the air. Finally, deep down below in a skeletal lair, a truly terrifying Sea Witch and hissing serpents



are sure to induce shudders.

Though **The Little Mermaid** would be a success solely on the merits of Pinkney's illustrations, his writing is equally strong. He employs vivid language that gives the book an unusually elevated, sophisticated tone. There's a marvelous sense that Pinkney is telling this story exactly the way he would if he could gather us together around a crackling fireplace to trade tales late into the night.

The combination of rich language and lush artwork could overwhelm a less experienced creator, but in Pinkney's accomplished hands, it's exactly right. **The Little Mermaid** stands out as an impressive addition to the body of work of one of the most acclaimed children's book creators of all time, and as a worthy rendition of a classic tale that has lured readers and storytellers alike for generations.

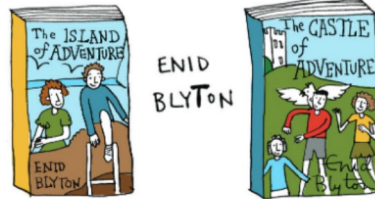
—Jill Lorenzini

meet KERI SMITH

How would you describe your book?



What books did you enjoy as a child?



Who has been the biggest influence on your work?



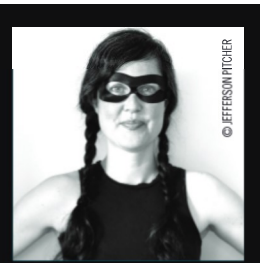
What one thing would you like to learn to do?



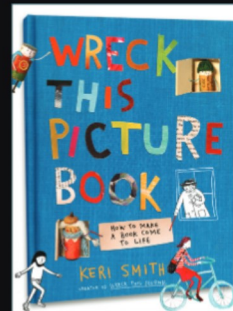
Who was your childhood hero?



What message would you like to send to young readers?



Wreck This Picture Book (Dial, \$17.99, 9780593111024, ages 5 to 8) is an interactive adventure that brings reading to life, as Keri Smith engages readers' senses and imaginations for a reading experience that's different every time. The author-illustrator of *Wreck This Journal* and other books about creativity, Smith divides her time between Massachusetts and Canada.



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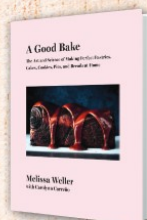


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