

This Bookshelf: 2020 Books

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Book of Books: An ebook of
books read, reviewed or
skipped from 1999 through
2020

Book of Books

This web page lists all 360 books reviewed by Steve Hopkins at <http://bkrev.blogspot.com> during 2020 as well as 189 books relegated to the Shelf of Ennui. You can click on the title of a book or on the picture of any jacket cover to jump to amazon.com where you can purchase a copy of any book on this shelf.

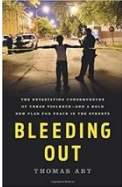
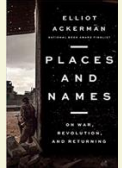
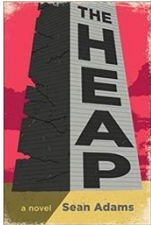
Key to Ratings:

*****	I love it
****	I like it
***	It's OK
**	I don't like it

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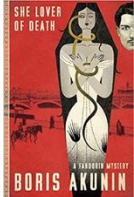
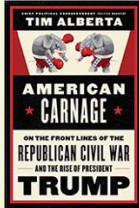
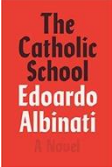
I hate it

Title (Click on Link to purchase at amazon.com)	Author(s)	Rating	Blog Date	Comments	Click on Picture to Purchase at amazon.com
Out of Mesopotamia	Abdoh, Salar	****	11/9/20	<p>Endless. For an immersive mediation on war, read Salar Abdoh's novel titled, Out of Mesopotamia. From the perspective of protagonist Saleh, a journalist, we struggle to make sense of those who are engaged in what seems like endless war. With great skill, Abdoh can be poetic and authentic in the same sentence. We're led into the darkness of war where we find some form of enlightenment about why we do what we do. Most readers will finish this novel somewhat weakened by proximity to the fragility of life.</p>	
Our Time Is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America	Abrams, Stacey	****	11/24/20	<p>Formidable. Stacy Abrams drew national interest when she ran for governor of Georgia and was beaten in a close race in 2018 by Brian Kemp, whom she claimed suppressed Democratic votes. In her book</p>	

				<p>titled, Our Time Is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America, she describes her life and the progress she's made in Georgia to register new voters and build a Democratic force for change. Readers of this book will find the story of a formidable woman whose work over the past decade in Georgia led to the state voting for Biden in 2020, and as I write this, awaiting the results of a runoff election on January 5, 2021 to select two U.S. senators.</p>	
Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence--and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets	Abt, Thomas	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Places and Names: On War, Revolution, and Returning	Ackerman, Elliot	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
The Heap	Adams, Sean	*****	7/15/20	<p>Recovery. Sean Adams' debut novel titled, The Heap, pulls readers into an examination of what we build, what collapses, and what it takes to restore what is important. Los Verticalés was a 500-story residential building in the desert that has collapsed. Protagonist Orville Anders works on a dig site where he is looking for his brother, Bernard, who survived the collapse and broadcasts a radio show from the rubble called the Heap. Adams explores what life in Los Verticalés was like before the collapse, and what was different for those on the outer units who had windows compared to those</p>	

on the inner units who relied on digital screens. The workers at the dig site form a community of their own in CamperTown, and Adams uses all three communities as fodder for his satire. Many readers will find this to be a compelling story, and others will come away from it ready to reflect on the creation of community life.

Amnesty	Adiga, Aravind	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Friday Black	Adjei-Brenyah, Nana Kwame	*****	6/10/20	Creative. There are twelve funny and crazy short stories in the debut collection by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah titled, Friday Black . These are sharp, finely written stories that show off the author's creativity and are likely to delight most readers. There's an emotional range on display in this collection that packs a punch. There's dark humor, human failings and issues galore. His writing surprised me often, always had my full attention, and gave me great reading pleasure.	
Homeland Elegies	Akhtar, Ayad	*****	12/9/20	Intense. If there was ever a year that demanded the lamentations we find in a finely written elegy, it is 2020. In his novel titled, Homeland Elegies , Ayad Akhtar offers an intense narrative about finding one's place in contemporary America, especially for those raised in a different culture. The novel draws us into the dynamics of a single family and their problems and issues, which provide a mirror in which we can see ourselves and others. This novel is an uncomfortable and cleareyed look at capitalism and the current reality of the	

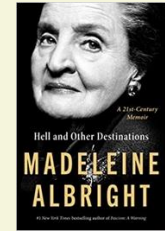
				<p>American dream. There is raw disillusionment on these pages, and heartbreak. By the end of the novel, our feelings for a father, a son, and for the United States have commingled and we join our voices in an intense song of lament at our common predicament.</p>	
<u>She Lover of Death</u>	Akunin, Boris	***	<u>5/26/20</u>	<p>Club. The eighth Fandorin mystery by Boris Akunin is a novel titled, <u>She Lover of Death</u>. A young and naïve protagonist, Masha Mironova, arrives in Moscow at the beginning of the 20th century and joins a club of mainly poets who are enamored with death. She becomes Columbine, wears a pet snake, and before long finds herself next in queue to commit suicide, thanks to the signs she has received. Events are heading off the cliff when Fandorin joins the club. Of course, you'll have to read the novel if you want to find out what happens. Akunin plays with words and names in this novel in ways that will entertain many readers.</p>	
<u>American Carnage : On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump</u>	Alberta, Tim	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Catholic School</u>	Albinati, Edoardo	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

[Hell and Other Destinations: A 21st-Century Memoir](#)

Albright, Madeline

[5/26/20](#)

Momentum. Madeline Albright's memoir titled, [Hell and Other Destinations: A 21st-Century Memoir](#), is packed with wit and wisdom. This former Secretary of State tells us of her life from 2001 to the present, a period for her that was packed with deciding what to do next and then after that, and then something else altogether. Her momentum is a force of nature as she accounts her life of ongoing service and engagement. Her prose is exciting, and her humor enchanting. Do something or get out of her way.

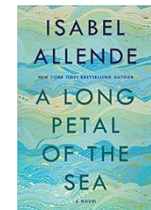


[A Long Petal of the Sea](#)

Allende, Isabel

[4/9/20](#)

Refuge. My frame of mind as I started reading Isabel Allende's novel titled, [A Long Petal of the Sea](#), involved feeling a little sorry for myself. Disrupted by a stay at home order to slow the spread of Covid 19, I felt thrown off kilter by constraints on my regular activities. After I few pages into this finely written novel, I lost all sense of my situation as I felt the plight of the protagonists needing to leave Spain during the civil war and becoming refugees in Chile. While at my own home, I thought about the importance of a sense of home in all our lives. Allende explores a relationship from the 1930s through the 1990s, and along the way, we understand more about the nature of hope, what constitutes belonging, and how love grows over time and across obstacles. Fans of well written literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.



<u>Afterlife</u>	Alvarez, Julia	****	<u>7/15/20</u>	<p>Sisterhood. Many novels help readers answer the question: how to we live, now? For Antonia Vega, the protagonist of Julia Alvarez' novel titled, <u>Afterlife</u>, this involves finding moorings again, following her retirement from teaching college and the sudden death of her husband, Sam, the beloved physician in their Vermont town. Life has a way of injecting our "now" with the next way to live. One of Antonia's three sisters has disappeared, so the siblings join together to find her. Antonia also provides refuge for a pregnant undocumented teenager. Alvarez leads readers into lives that are connected to one another as members of the same human family, and our sense of belonging relates to those closest to us and all the members of our human family. Whatever has brought us to this time in our lives gives us the courage and wisdom to do the next thing.</p>	
<u>Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line</u>	Anaparra, Deepa	****	<u>7/23/20</u>	<p>Missing. Disappearing children in Deepa Anaparra's debut novel titled, <u>Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line</u>, will make your blood run cold. Anaparra describes life in a city in India, and what parents, police and children do after children begin to go missing. The descriptive prose offers a setting in vivid detail, and the perspectives of different characters draw us into what for most of us will be an unfamiliar environment. The fine storytelling propels us to turn pages as we begin to care deeply about these characters, especially the children.</p>	

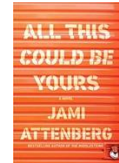
A Warning	Anonymous	****	2/7/20	<p>Credibility. Can you recall the time when many medical doctors smoked? If such a doctor warned a patient about the dangers of smoking, do you think the advice would be credible? After I finished reading the book titled, A Warning, by an anonymous author, I thought about the credibility of the writer and how I could possibly assess it. This book is an inside view of the Trump administration by a senior official. The story does not place Trump and his allies in a positive light. Concerned citizens may be aghast at parts of what is described on these pages. Supporters of President Trump may focus away from the content and toward the author. My assessment is that it will take time for historians to affirm or dismiss what this book describes about President Trump and those around him. In the meantime, those readers looking for an insider's assessment of the White House will find one view in this alarming book.</p>	
Salt Slow	Armfield, Julia	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Mostly Dead Things	Arnett, Kristen	***	4/23/20	<p>Taxidermy. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Kristen Arnett's debut novel titled, Mostly Dead Things. Narrator Jessa pulls readers into the family grief following the death of her father. As the title indicates, there's a lot of death around, and the taxidermy business is just one part of it. The prose is finely written, the characters complex and on the weird side.</p>	

All This Could Be Yours

Attenberg, Jami

1/24/20

Legacy. Is Jami Attenberg's novel titled, All This Could Be Yours, just another tale of family dynamics? Yes and no. Paterfamilias Victor Tuchman lies dying, and daughter Alex goes to New Orleans to be with her mother, Barbra, and to uncover the secrets of Victor's life. Alex's brother, Gary, decides to stay in Los Angeles and not come to the deathbed. Victor's legacy is complicated and takes different forms. Absent Attenberg's finely written prose, the outline of the story would produce a big yawn in most readers. As the secrets are revealed, we understand the source and form of this family's dysfunction. For some readers, me included, a depressing story about the Tuchman family can lift one's spirits. We're all messed up in some way or another, and we can survive most of what life's throws at us.

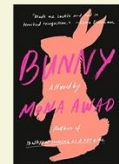


Bunny

Awad, Mona

1/10/20

Workshop. I've never been a fan of small group sharing. You know, everyone sits around in a circle and a variety of viewpoints are expressed. Samantha Heather Mackey is the protagonist of Mona Awad's novel, Bunny, and she's a scholarship student, an outsider in her MFA program at Warren University. A powerful clique in her fiction writing program call each other "Bunny" and workshop moves to a whole other level after Samantha is invited to join the clique. The prose is clever and sharp, and the novel will appeal to fans of finely written literary fiction. Just don't make us sit in a circle and share.

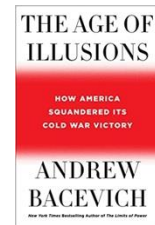


The Age of
Illusions: How
America
Squandered Its
Cold War Victory

Bacevich, Andrew J.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

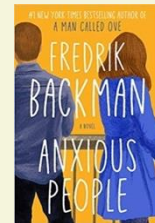


Anxious People

Backman, Fredrik

10/19/20

Bridge. No matter how well we think we know another person, there is always more to their story. In his novel titled, Anxious People, Fredrik Bachman introduces readers to a cast of characters who come together in both planned and unexpected ways and end up becoming a bridge for others to cross from one way of being to another. A physical bridge in the novel also provides a common thread to pull the story together. Most readers will laugh along with these interesting and compelling characters, and empathize with the anxiety that we share in common as we face what the world throws at us. If you're looking to read a novel that will help you feel good, consider reading this one.

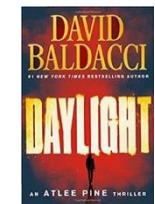


Daylight



Baldacci, David

12/21/20

Search. The third installment of David Baldacci's series featuring FBI agent Atlee Pine is a novel titled, Daylight. Pine and her sidekick, Carol Blum, have left Arizona to search for Atlee's missing sister, Mercy. As they follow leads, they stumble into the case of another recurring Baldacci protagonist, John Puller, and they combine forces to help each other. The action proceeds rapidly, as Pine and Puller utilize all their skills to defeat opponents and get the answers they are after. Fans of this series and crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.

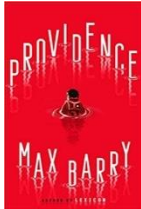
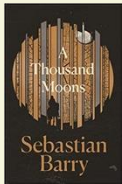


<u>Walk the Wire</u>	Baldacci, David	****	<u>5/26/20</u>	<p>Murders. The sixth Memory Man novel by David Baldacci featuring Amos Decker is a novel titled, <u>Walk the Wire</u>. Amos and partner Alex Jamison are sent by the FBI to North Dakota to investigate a murder. It takes lots of pages of exposition for us to know why this murder has brought in the FBI, and even Amos Decker's perfect memory has trouble keeping track of the mayhem at play in this novel. Layers of secrets are eventually uncovered, to the satisfaction of close readers who ache to see every murder solved and the story brought to a satisfying resolution. As a bonus to Baldacci fans, the author brings characters from another series, Will Robie and Jessica Reel, to North Dakota to help out Amos and Alex. Fans of crime fiction, this author, and this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.</p>	
<u>The Killing Tide</u>	Bannalac, Jean-Luc	****	<u>4/23/20</u>	<p>Discovery. The fifth Commissaire Dupin novel by Jean-Luc Bannalac is titled, <u>The Killing Tide</u>. I thought a good mystery would be ideal covid-19 reading, but instead I found myself bogged down with Dupin in a difficult case on an island where he did not want to be (either). Every now and then I could smell the sea air and salivate when the narrative turned to Brittany food. Murders are complicated in this installment, as is the possible discovery of an object of great value. Dupin and his team try to stay a step ahead and are thwarted at every turn. Fans of crime fiction and this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	

<u>Snow</u>	Banville, John	*****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Fury. Now that I've read the crime novel by John Banville titled, <u>Snow</u>, I remain unsure about exactly what the writer is up to. Banville had been writing crime fiction under a pseudonym, Benjamin Black, often imitating the style of Raymond Chandler. He presented a terrific protagonist, pathologist Garrett Quirke, and loyal readers enjoyed a series of novels featuring the increasingly complex Quirke. Banville has dropped the pseudonym and pulled a minor character, St. John Strafford, from one of the Quirke novels and gives him a book of his own. Detective Inspector Strafford has been sent from Dublin to County Wexford to investigate the murder of a priest. What follows is the fury that is a consequence of sexual abuse, both religious and class divisions, and the influence of the Catholic Church in 1957 when the novel is set. Instead of being a well-structured crime novel with a strong protagonist, or a finely written literary novel, we have something of a hybrid which may not satisfy fans of either genre. I was entertained enough but remain a bit bewildered by exactly what Banville was trying to do here.</p>	
<u>Ninth House</u>	Bardugo, Leigh	*****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Yale. If you have a high school junior looking at colleges this year, read Leigh Bardugo's novel titled, <u>Ninth House</u>, before heading to the Yale campus. In her first novel for adults, prolific YA author Leigh Bardugo uses her personal memories of life at Yale to introduce readers to a strong female protagonist, Alex Stern. We get secret societies in spooky settings, both real to the New Haven campus, along with ghosts and</p>	

magic. Some writers can't quite blend the real and the fantastic, but Bardugo does that to great effect in this novel.

<u>Eyes to the Wind: A Memoir of Love and Death, Hope and Resistance</u>	Barkan, Ady	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Man in the Red Coat</u>	Barnes, Julian	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Quitter: A Memoir of Drinking, Relapse, and Recovery</u>	Barnett, Erica C.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain</u>	Barrett, Lisa Feldman	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Night Boat to Tangier</u>	Barry, Kevin	*****	<u>3/13/20</u>	Criminals. There's some magic in the recipe Kevin Barry uses to assemble his novel titled, <u>Night Boat to Tangier</u> . We have two complex characters, Maurice Hearne and Charlie Redmond, lifelong criminals. Barry uses the setting of a waiting room at a ferry terminal to place them in a melancholy mood to reflect on their lives of crime. They are waiting a long time for the arrival of Maurice's daughter, Dilly, who may be coming or going from the terminal. Barry pulls us from the present to the past as we gradually revise our views of these two thugs.	

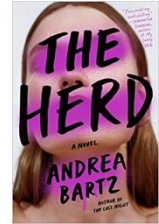
				<p>When Barry adds booze, drugs and romance to the recipe, and dialogue that sings, all the pieces blend together.</p> <p>Intelligence. Fans of science fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Max Barry's novel titled, Providence. Humans and the aliens they call salamanders are in a war for the survival of their respective species. Four humans are selected using artificial intelligence to take the war to the salamanders in a gigantic battleship controlled by artificial intelligence. Barry explores the roles of humans in this AI-directed environment and presents a thrilling and compact story. Barry also helps readers think about the behavior of the salamanders and the AI software and what that means for humans.</p>	
Providence	Barry, Max	*****	5/15/20		
A Thousand Moons	Barry, Sebastian	****	11/9/20	<p>Continuation. In a novel titled, A Thousand Moons, Sebastian Barry continues exploring lives he introduced in his novel titled, <i>Days Without End</i>. The protagonist is Winona Cole, a Lakota Sioux orphan, raised by Thomas McNulty and Thomas Cole, former Union soldiers. The setting is Tennessee after the Civil War. With finely written spare prose, Barry leads readers to fall in love with Winona, who is at the receiving end of terror, cruelty and prejudice. Barry helps readers come to terms with aspects of our past and exposes the reality behind comfortable myths. Winona is a terrific character that this reader and many others will remember for a long time.</p>	

The Herd

Bartz, Andrea

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

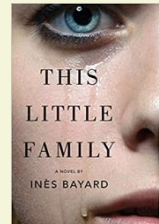


This Little Family

Bayard, Ines

9/19/20

Trauma. Steel yourself from being caught in an undertow as you read Ines Bayard's debut novel titled, This Little Family. We learn the irreversible action protagonist Marie takes within the first few pages of the novel. The remainder of the novel pulls us into trying to understand Marie's response to the trauma of rape. As the light goes out of Marie's life, we find ourselves in the darkness with her as she responds in the ways that make sense to her troubled mind. This finely written novel is difficult to read because of the content. Those readers who persist will find insight into the effects of trauma and the choices that seem inevitable but unnecessary.



Vacuum in the Dark

Beagin, Jen

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

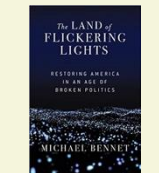


The Land of Flickering Lights: Restoring America in an Age of Broken Politics

Bennet, Michael

1/10/20

Earnest. Readers who care about American politics are those who will be rewarded by reading Michael Bennet's book titled, The Land of Flickering Lights: Restoring America in an Age of Broken Politics. The US Senator from Colorado (and presidential candidate) weaves his personal story into his insider view of the divisive state of politics. His critique is factual and cogent. His



				assessment is knowledgeable, and his suggestions for change are reasonable. Bennet exudes earnestness on every page of this book, and whatever your political allegiances, you may find something worthwhile to consider after reading this book.	
<u>The Vanishing Half</u>	Bennett, Brit	*****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Twins. Certain choices can define how our journey through life plays out. The twins in Brit Bennett's novel titled, <u>The Vanishing Half</u>, choose different paths, and readers get to enjoy each sister's life as the consequence of their difference choices. Sometimes we define ourselves, and other times we become identified by others as being a certain way. Sometimes a reinvention of identity can involve an erasure of the past to maintain the integrity of one's new identity. Bennet explores the lives of identical twin sisters from the 1950s through the 1990s as one sister chooses to be identified as White while her sister allows herself to be identified as Black. Bennet encourages readers to immerse ourselves into these disparate lives, as she demands that we think about racial and gender identity with an open mind.</p>	
<u>I'll Be Seeing You</u>	Berg, Elizabeth	****	<u>12/17/20</u>	<p>Aging. Novelist Elizabeth Berg has written a memoir titled, <u>I'll Be Seeing You</u>, which focuses on the family dynamics as her elderly parents faced the need to leave their home and move into an assisted living facility. While this is the story of one family, Berg helps us see ourselves and own families in this story, thanks to fine writing and candor about the range of positive and negative emotions, especially while trying to care for another from a long distance. The</p>	

				<p>introspection in this memoir leads to insight, and guilt leads to peace. Whatever your stage in personal aging or in caring for those who need assistance at the late stages of life, this memoir will lead to your personal reflections about love and caring and the different forms that takes over time.</p>	
<p><u>The Confession Club</u></p>	<p>Berg, Elizabeth</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>3/6/20</u></p>	<p>Support. The third novel by Elizabeth Berg set in the town of Mason, Missouri is titled, <u>The Confession Club</u>. Once again, Berg pulls readers into the lives of loveable characters and exposes the richness of friendship, love, and the support of others. Fans of the series will enjoy the return of beloved characters, supplemented by new and fascinating new ones. Berg is one of those authors whose writing leads us to feel good about ourselves and our neighbors, with all our shortcomings and imperfections.</p>	
<p><u>I Hold a Wolf by the Ears</u></p>	<p>Berg, Laura van den</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>9/22/20</u></p>	<p>Unhinged. I restricted myself to one story per day while I read the collection of eleven short stories by Laura van den Berg titled, <u>I Hold a Wolf by the Ears</u>. I often took a walk after finishing the story of the day, and found myself often agitated, or somewhat unhinged like many of the characters in this collection. Walking off the story cleared my brain. Van den Berg strips away everything from these characters except close examination of their fears. After we see these fears, and feel some part of the pain of suffering, something changes and we observe what's beautiful and see life transformed. There's no easy way out of tough stuff for any of us. With van den Berg as a guide, we somehow get through the tough part and come out with strength ready for another day.</p>	

Trump and His
Generals: The Cost
of Chaos

Bergen, Peter

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

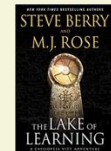


The Lake of
Learning

Berry, Steve

4/16/20

Cathars. I know very little about the Cathars, so when I picked up Steve Berry's novella titled, The Lake of Learning, I knew he'd teach me something, especially by his inclusion of author's notes separating fact from fiction. Recurring protagonist Cassiopeia Vitt is back, and while Cotton Malone makes just a brief cameo, fans of the series can see Vitt at her best as she finds herself in possession of a valuable key to a Cathar treasure. Readers who like action novels and are open to learning a thing or two about events in 13th century France are those most likely to enjoy this novella.



The Warsaw
Protocol

Berry, Steve

7/6/20

Blackmail. Leave it to protagonist Cotton Malone to be in the right place at the right time. Or is it the wrong place at the right time? In the fifteenth installment of the Malone series by Steve Berry, a novel titled, The Warsaw Protocol, Cotton happens to be present for the theft of a sacred object, so he leaps into the fray to catch the thieves and recover the object. Almost immediately, Stephanie Nelle invites him back for a short-term job. What follows is an adventurous plot that involves securing items that are planned to be used to blackmail the president of Poland. Politics, villains, castles and a salt mine are all in the mix for readers of this entertaining action novel.

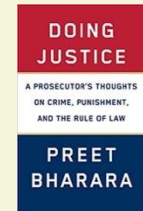


Doing Justice: A Prosecutor's Thoughts on Crime, Punishment, and the Rule of Law

Bharara, Preet

6/10/20

Overview. Criminal justice fans will enjoy the readable primer by former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, a book titled, Doing Justice: A Prosecutor's Thoughts on Crime, Punishment, and the Rule of Law. As a reader would expect from a well-organized attorney, the book is structured coherently in four sections: inquiry, accusation, judgment and punishment. Through clear writing and interesting case stories, issues in criminal justice come to life on these pages as does love and respect for the rule of law.



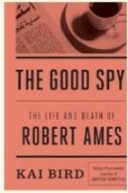

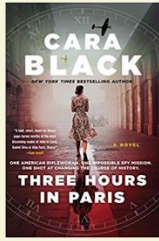
The New One: Painfully True Stories from a Reluctant Dad

Birbiglia, Mike

9/8/20

Vulnerability. Every expectant parent has been told that having children will change their lives forever. The naïve among us may minimize this fact or warning. My bride still reminds me that over four decades ago when she was pregnant with our firstborn, I assured her that we would still be spontaneous after we become parents. Stop laughing. Comedian Mike Birbiglia will bring some laughter to readers of his book titled, The New One: Painfully True Stories from a Reluctant Dad. Other parents will admire his vulnerability about the darker sides of his experience and feel some relief that their own experience isn't singular. So often there are expectations of what we "should" feel about our newborn children, and when we may not experience those feelings, we may feel alienated. Birbiglia's candor and willingness to talk about the dark side may help other parents appreciate that not everyone feels the same things in the same way at the same time.



The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames	Bird, Kai	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
The Secret Guests	Black, Benjamin	*****	10/19/20	<p>Princesses. John Banville, writing as Benjamin Black, imagines young Princess Elizabeth and her sister, Princess Margaret, being sent from London to rural Ireland in 1940 to escape the bombing. In his novel titled, The Secret Guests, Black helps readers see aspects of the personalities of Elizabeth and Margaret as children that resonate with their later lives. The action is set in Clonmillis Hall, the estate of the Duke of Edenmore, who could use funds to keep up the estate which has seen better days. The girls are in the care of a secret agent, Miss Celia Nashe, and an Irish detective. There's an interesting cast of characters, some drama and tension, and the kind of hijinks and peril that should have prevented such a scheme as hiding the princesses from ever taking place. They may have been safer under the bombing than in Ireland. I think Banville enjoyed writing about something he thinks is plausible, and readers who enjoy imaginative historical fiction may delight in spending time with his imagination.</p>	
Three Hours in Paris	Black, Cara	*****	5/5/20	<p>Yank. Why did Adolph Hitler spend only three hours in Paris in June 1940? Cara Black offers one reason in her finely written spy thriller titled, Three Hours in Paris. An American woman named Kate Rees with great shooting skill has been recruited by the British to parachute into France to</p>	

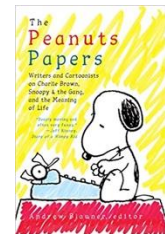
				<p>assassinate Hitler. As with most spy novels, nothing is ever quite as straightforward as that, so when Kate's mission fails on one level, her Yank ingenuity leads her toward success of another kind. A talented Nazi detective named Gunter hunts Kate with his great skills. Black develops these characters and others with depth, while never easing the tension or relaxing the plot momentum. Fans of well written crime or spy fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
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The Peanuts Papers: Writers and Cartoonists on Charlie Brown, Snoopy & the Gang, and the Meaning of Life

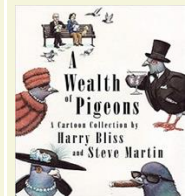
Blauner, Andrew

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



<p><u>A Wealth of Pigeons</u></p>	<p>Bliss, Harry and Steve Martin</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>12/21/20</u></p>	<p>Collaboration. Now more than ever, most of us can use a good laugh. One place to find humor is in the cartoon collection by Harry Bliss and Steve Martin titled, <u>A Wealth of Pigeons</u>. This book is a collaboration between a talented <i>New Yorker</i> cartoonist and a renowned humorist. The result of this effort led me to laugh a lot. There's nothing more exposed than a single cartoon panel: it either delivers the goods or it flops. These panels hit far more than they miss, and I found the tonic on these pages to be a perfect elixir to close out a distinctly unfunny year.</p>	
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Someone Will Love You in All Your Damaged Glory

Bob-Waksberg, Raphael

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

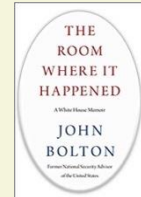


The Room Where
It Happened: A
White House
Memoir

Bolton, John

12/9/20

Paintball. John Bolton settles scores and brashly positions himself as the smartest of all in his book titled, The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir. The image I had while reading this book was Bolton holding a paintball gun and shooting at targets including Jim Mattis, Stephen Mnuchin, Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo and many others. I also had an image of the multiple yellow legal pads on which he recorded snippets in real time while working at the White House in preparation for this book. While some memoirs offer humble perspective, this book has Bolton's raw ego on display on every page. Readers interested in public affairs are those most likely to appreciate this contribution to recent political history.



Original Prin

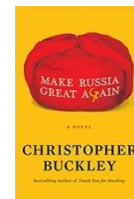
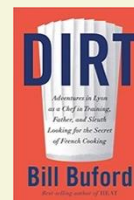
Boyagoda, Randy

4/23/20

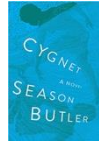
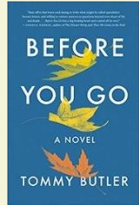

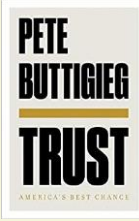
Antics. The pace begins with a sharp hook of a first sentence in Randy Boyagoda's novel titled, Original Prin. "Eight months before he became a suicide bomber, Prin went to the zoo with his family." With that opener, the antics begin and continue nonstop for another 225 pages, the first installment in what is intended to be a trilogy. Protagonist Prin is a middle aged academic at a failing university and he has been diagnosed with cancer. One minute he is a practicing Catholic, and the next he prepares to become a terrorist. I don't have a clue where the next installment will lead Prin and the rest of us, but this opener was fun to read and will appeal to those readers who enjoy satire.



<u>The Cat and the City</u>	Bradley, Nick	****	<u>11/17/20</u>	<p>Tokyo. Nick Bradley's versatility shines in his book titled, <u>The Cat and the City</u>. Set in Tokyo, we follow a cat in a changing landscape through tattoos, manga, footnotes and other unusual locations. We find ourselves connected at one section and estranged in another. We long to belong and then we desire an escape. There's always more to city life than a casual observer can ever see, and Bradley takes us to places in Tokyo that we might have never imagined, let alone visited. Along this journey, the vignettes explore many aspects of living at its best and worst.</p>	
<u>American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy and the Great Space Race</u>	Brinkley, Douglas	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>No Place to Die</u>	Broadfoot, Neil	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Desk 88: Eight Progressive Senators Who Changed America</u>	Brown, Sherrod	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Galway Girl</u>	Bruen, Ken	****	<u>1/24/20</u>	<p>Falcon. Protagonist Jack Taylor is back in the fourteenth novel by Ken Bruen to feature him. Titled <u>Galway Girl</u>, Jack finds himself the target of a team of young killers, led by a woman named Jericho. Bruen takes the bleak and darkens it, but don't let that</p>	

				discourage you from visiting Galway. Each of the killers has a separate beef with Taylor. Just when I felt I had settled in with the old Jack Taylor, he up and leaves Galway briefly and learns to be a falconer. Bruen uses the falcon to great effect, and Jack soars like the bird in this novel.	
<u>Make Russia Great Again</u>	Buckley, Christopher	*****	<u>10/19/20</u>	<p>Audience. I've been a fan of Christopher Buckley's satire for many years, so I was a key part of the target audience for his book titled, <u>Make Russia Great Again</u>. For many people in 2020, laughter has become a rare commodity. Political partisans are fighting hard this presidential election year, and some readers will perceive this book as another form of anti-Trump propaganda. For those readers who appreciate political satire and are open to laughter even about figures they support, this book is packed with wit and perfectly aimed plausible takes on contemporary American politics. I was entertained once again by this display of Buckley's humor.</p>	
<u>Dirt: Adventures in Lyon as a Chef in Training, Father, and Sleuth Looking for the Secret of French Cooking</u>	Buford, Bill	*****	<u>5/26/20</u>	<p>Essence. Readers with any interest in food, France, people, stories and relationships will find many things to enjoy while reading Bull Buford's book titled, <u>Dirt: Adventures in Lyon as a Chef in Training, Father, and Sleuth Looking for the Secret of French Cooking</u>. My taste for this book started when I read Buford's excerpt in <i>The New Yorker</i> about a baker named Bob in Lyon, France. When this book was released this month, I was prepared to devour it, and I did. Buford makes it all look easy. What he does is cook down people and stories until he uncovers the essence. It takes a while to realize that</p>	

				<p>what we get in this book is the distillation of many years of his engagement with chefs, cooking, and writing. I encountered chef Michel Richard from his Citronelle restaurant in Washington and thought of him as a creative and whimsical restaurateur. I learned, as Buford did, that the late Richard was a traditional French chef, who avoided cooking those things that he had not yet found a way to make better than the traditional method. His dishes were rooted in tradition and made better thanks to his skill and creativity. That's just one example from this book. Buford uses self-deprecating humor to move the story along, and his family's experience to balance work and home life as he tried to learn all he could about French cooking. Pick your favorite menu item: the view as husband, father, apprentice chef, mentee, writer, friend; and savor this book's richness.</p>	
The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal	Burns, William J.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Toil and Trouble	Burroughs, Augusten	****	1/10/20	<p>Witch. The latest memoir by Augusten Burroughs is titled, Toil and Trouble. His being a witch is one of the less strange aspects of this finely written and witty book. As with earlier books, he scrapes pieces of his life to reveal the power of love in our lives and the many ways in which we are all powerless. This memoir focuses on domestic life and his move to the country to an old house. He finds grist to mill with his terrific</p>	

				descriptive language in telling readers about hired workers, neighbors, dogs, storms, memories, storms, jewelry, diet and more.	
Cygnet	Butler, Season	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Before You Go	Butler, Tommy	*****	11/9/20	<p>Imperfect. I enjoyed the charming celebration of life in all its messiness as I read Tommy Butler's debut novel titled, Before You Go. Protagonist Eliot Chance becomes everyman as we see him on his journey through a life which could easily be ours. What seemed to be a design flaw in the creation of the human species turns out to be the secret of our survival and the path to a good life. Butler captures our existential longing and the ways in which we try to fill in the holes in our lives. The prose is finely written, and the insight into human behavior is wise.</p>	
I Have Something to Tell You	Buttigieg, Chasten	*****	10/19/20	<p>Candid. It won't take readers very long to read the memoir by Chasten Buttigieg titled, I Have Something to Tell You. He writes about his life with candor, humor, and an absence of embarrassment about his naivete and his struggles. There's kindness and warmth in every chapter, and a cheerful and endearing embrace of the adventures so far in his unexpected life.</p>	
Trust: America's Best Chance	Buttigieg, Pete	*****	12/21/20	<p>Process. Former South Bend Mayor and nominated Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg taps into the zeitgeist in a book titled, Trust: America's Best Chance. He describes that the most important work of our time ahead is the restoration (or creation) of trust among all citizens. He</p>	

			explores the steps and the process that we could use to make trust work again in American life. We need to place trust in our institutions, in each other and in our fragile experiment in democracy. New networks of trust need to be established to pull us together to address the most important issues of our time, including climate change, racial justice and economic justice. I found myself thinking of the many times in my life when others placed their trust in me, and when I extended my trust to others. I reflected on those times when my trust in someone was abused, and the challenge of trying to rebuild trust once it was lost. Readers interested in our democratic society and in public policy are those most likely to enjoy reading this timely book.	
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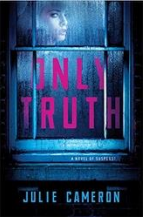
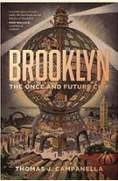
[How Charts Lie: Getting Smarter about Visual Information](#)

Cairo, Alberto

[3/26/20](#)

Primer. General readers looking for a primer on how to interpret visual information should consider reading Alberto Cairo's book titled, [How Charts Lie: Getting Smarter about Visual Information](#). Cairo explains and illustrates a variety of ways in which visual images can distort data to sway those who see the images. Armed with the information from this book, readers can become skilled at spotting distortions as well as using good visuals to convey complex stories effectively and honestly. Since I've created and read thousands of charts over decades, I didn't learn anything new from Cairo. Many readers will have their eyes opened in more ways than one after reading this book.



<u>For the Record</u>	Cameron, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Only Truth</u>	Cameron, Julie	*****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Trauma. Threat looms over protagonist Isabel Dryland in the novel by Julie Cameron titled, <u>Only Truth</u>. Scarred by an event earlier in her life that she cannot remember, Isabel and her husband, Tom, are making a fresh start in the country. Something about their new home doesn't seem quite right. Cameron structures the novel in two time periods, allowing readers to understand the past trauma to Isabel and the current real threat. Isabel's nemesis could be any number of men, and Cameron lets each reader consider who in the cast of characters represents the lurking threat. Fans of crime thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this entertaining and creepy novel.</p>	
<u>Brooklyn, The Once and Future City</u>	Campanella, Thomas J.	*****	<u>5/5/20</u>	<p>Hardscape. If you've ever lived in Brooklyn, as I have, you know that your heart can and will break. In his book titled, <u>Brooklyn, The Once and Future City</u>, Thomas J. Campanella offers a large and loving picture of this special place. He focuses a lot on the physical space: buildings, parks, roads, while keeping the interest of readers through the heroes and villains of each time period he explores. If you love Brooklyn, you're likely to enjoy reading this book, and will wish Campanella told more about the life and love you know has penetrated this place for centuries.</p>	

[The Weight of a Piano](#)

Cander, Chris

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



[Hunter's Moon](#)

Caputo, Philip

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

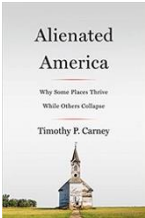


[Alienated America:
Why Some Places
Thrive While
Others Collapse](#)

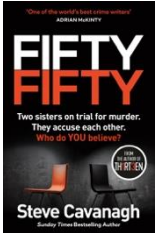
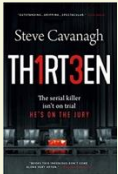
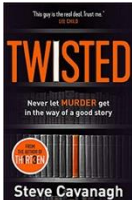
Carney, Timothy P.

[3/26/20](#)

Community. In his book titled, [Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse](#), Timothy P. Carney, makes a strong case that discomfort and alienation by some Americans may be less about income equality and more about social isolation. He describes what he found across the United States as he reported on this story: more Americans are or feel alone. The building blocks of community like churches, sports teams and volunteer organizations provide a foundation for a strong and engaged community life. In places without those support networks, individuals feel alienated because they lack the bonds that tie them to others. I write this review on the fourteenth day of sheltering in place to slow the spread of Covid-19. I live in a community where I do not feel isolated. I'm now six feet or more away from neighbors and friends, but I can feel the solidarity of all of us acting for the common good. Reading Carney's book helped me appreciate what I have in the community where I live, and I now better understand the plight of those who feel no social support from their own communities.

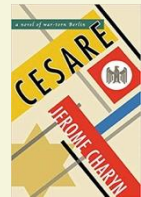


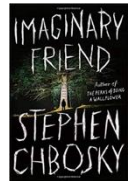
<u>Black Sun Rising</u>	Carr, Matthew	****	<u>9/19/20</u>	<p>Blood. In Matthew Carr's novel titled, <u>Black Sun Rising</u>, protagonist private detective Harry Lawton gets a plum assignment in London to investigate a murder in Barcelona and the circumstances surrounding a mysterious large payment made by the victim shortly before death. Set in 1909, the novel captures all the atmospherics of that time period. Harry uncovers other mysteries in Barcelona involving murders in which the victim's blood has disappeared. As the case progresses, we feel anxiety with Harry and his epilepsy, and we learn about the scientists who were promoting eugenics at that time. Readers who enjoy complex crime fiction with great plot twists are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>Something Deeply Hidden: Quantum Worlds and the Emergence of Spacetime</u>	Carroll, Sean	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>An Unlikely Journey: Waking Up from My American Dream</u>	Castro, Julian	****	<u>9/22/20</u>	<p>Opportunity. There was one individual I really wanted to meet after reading Julian Castro's memoir titled <u>An Unlikely Journey</u>: his mother. This no-nonsense loving person propelled Julian and his twin, Joaquin, to superior educational opportunities at Stanford and Harvard, and on to roles of service for others at high levels of government. This is a quintessential American story, and also a Latino assimilation story as big as all Texas. Whether you're politically aligned with Castro's views or not, reading this memoir</p>	

			will give you renewed hope in how the American dream remains alive.	
<u>Fifty-Fifty</u>	Cavanagh, Steve	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Thirteen: The Serial Killer Isn't on Trial. He's on the Jury.</u>	Cavanagh, Steve	*****	<u>1/2/20</u> Serial. While the novel by Steve Cavanagh titled, <u>Thirteen: The Serial Killer Isn't on Trial. He's on the Jury.</u> , is the third book to feature conman turned lawyer Eddie Flynn, this was my first exposure to the character. Flynn is the ideal protagonist: troubled and complex and talented. Fans of crime fiction will love this novel's plot involving a smart serial murderer who has been outsmarting the justice system. For his latest killing, he has gotten himself a seat on the jury of a trial of someone he framed for murder. Squeamish readers may find the graphically described violence disturbing. The characters are complex and interesting, the plot exciting, and the premise intriguing. This may be the first novel I've seen with a descriptive subtitle, which is clever and appealing.	
<u>Twisted</u>	Cavanagh, Steve	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	


<u>Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee</u>	Cep, Casey	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>If I Had Your Face</u>	Cha, Frances	*****	<u>7/15/20</u>	<p>Image. Frances Cha's debut novel is titled, <u>If I Had Your Face</u>, and features four young women in Seoul struggling to find their place in the world. Cha helps us understand the choices faced by women in Korea and how image can be something with which one is never satisfied. Readers can identify with the well-drawn characters and can feel the power of friendship and love that leads them through difficulties. Gender inequity in South Korea is portrayed with raw and unblinking imagery and stories. Economic inequality adds to the struggle for these characters both in terms of the cost of looking one's best and in being able to raise a child. Some book clubs will find this debut novel will open broad conversations about contemporary issues.</p>	
<u>Fight of the Century: Writers Reflect on 100 Years of Landmark ACLU Cases</u>	Chabon, Michael and Ayelet Waldman	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>As Long As We Both Shall Live</u>	Chaney, JoAnn	*****	<u>6/10/20</u>	<p>Marriage. Fans of crime thrillers will love the intensity of JoAnn Chaney's novel titled, <u>As Long As We Both Shall Live</u>. Matt tells park rangers that his wife, Marie, fell off a cliff. Detectives suspect Matt of murder. And we're off. Just when we think we're sure that Matt killed Marie, we think there might be</p>	

something else going on. Chaney keeps us thinking and reading as she never lets up. What is it about marriage that leads people to the very edge?

<u>Cesare</u>	Charyn, Jerome	*****	<u>8/5/20</u>	<p>Madmen. Open up Jerome Charyn's novel titled, <u>Cesare</u>, and be prepared to be caught up in life and death decisions in Berlin during the Second World War. A young naval cadet named Erik unwittingly saves the life of Admiral William Canaris, the head of German Military Intelligence. Set amid the horror of Nazi atrocities, the novel riffs on <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i>, making Erik the character of Cesare, and Canaris the mad doctor. Readers join in a nightmare situation where madness rules as they try to hide and protect Jews from the death camps. Erik's loyalty to Canaris drives much of the action. Madness increases when the setting changes to Theresienstadt. Historical fiction can take us to places and times that can be perceived as better or worse than our current ones. While this novel is one that takes us to a much worse time and painful places, Charyn's fine prose and imagery pull us along until we have had enough and must escape the madness and return to the relative sanity of our homes.</p>	
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<u>Imaginary Friend</u>	Chbosky, Stephen	*****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Biblical. There's a battle between good and evil that rages throughout the seven hundred pages of Stephen Chbosky's novel titled, <u>Imaginary Friend</u>. Readers can choose the lens through which one reads this book. The horror lens will focus attention on all of the truly gruesome scenes in the novel that will test the strongest stomachs for grisly images. The small town lens allows readers to focus</p>	
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on the cast of characters in a community who are weathering the normal ups and downs of life and who contain elements of good and evil within them. I chose the biblical lens in which protagonist Christopher can be viewed in a savior role and the roles of Eve and the Virgin Mary appear in the text. Chbosky focuses on the binds that hold us in fear and what it takes to be free. The devil is at play in the world and his wily ways entice us to align with him. Pick your lens and settle down for chills and frights in the woods and possibly take time to reflect on the ways in which your freedom is constrained and what you can do about that.

<p><u>The Bishop's Bedroom</u></p>	<p>Chiara, Piero</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>4/16/20</u></p> <p>Sultry. The cover of the late Piero Chiara's novel titled, <u>The Bishop's Bedroom</u>, announces the contents with clarity. Sailing around Lake Maggiore and seeing the fine houses invites a rise in sexual tension as a cast of sultry characters tack around each other supported or stalled by the winds of attraction. Set in 1946 in Northern Italy, the atmosphere that Chiara offers pulls readers into that place and time with great skill. The opaque characters lie to one another with ease, and readers are the observers of the loose bonds that new relationships provide. One can almost feel the rubbery nature of idleness that imbeds in their lives that summer following the world war. I read this novel in winter in Chicago and within these pages, everything was sultry.</p>	
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[The Hero](#)

Child, Lee

[3/6/20](#)

Story. In a rare foray into non-fiction, prolific author Lee Child offers fans a short book titled, [The Hero](#), that summarizes the long history of the story and the hero, in both oral and written traditions. This long essay helps readers think about Child's recurring protagonist, Jack Reacher, in the context of a very long storytelling tradition. Some of the quirky asides were as fascinating as his core premise. Now that I've better versed in the context, I'm ready for the next Reacher installment.



[The Sentinel](#)

Child, Lee and
Andrew Child

[12/17/20](#)

Russians. For the twenty-fifth installment in his Jack Reacher series, author Lee Child has teamed up with his brother, Andrew, a fellow writer, for a jointly written novel titled, [The Sentinel](#). The roaming Reacher takes a pause in his nomadic life when something interesting catches his attention. Soon after arriving in a town near Pleasantville, Tennessee, Reacher observes Rusty Rutherford, an IT manager, stumble into an ambush. After Reacher intervened with his skills and saved Rusty, his interest is piqued. Before long, he's sticking around running across Russian spies and a ransomware attack with a secret objective. I found the slower pacing of this installment to be different from the earlier novels, but the plot and entertainment value remained satisfying for this reader.

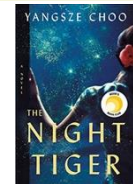


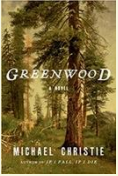
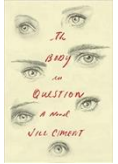
[The Night Tiger](#)

Choo, Yangsze

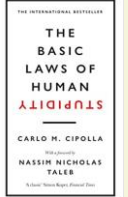
Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.





<u>Greenwood</u>	Christie, Michael	*****	<u>11/9/20</u>	<p>Legacy. Where have we come from and where are we going? In his novel titled, <u>Greenwood</u>, Michael Christie displays four generations of the Greenwood family and the island and forest legacy that connects the family members. We find love, loss, success, failure, and climate change. We find wealth and poverty, exploitation and stewardship. Christie plumbs the many different ways that we care for each other and our environment, and the ways we hurt each other and squander our inheritances. The prose is finely written, and the novel will appeal to those readers who are patient with frequent shifts in time periods, and a meandering way of getting to know the people and places. I was enchanted by this novel, the complexity of the characters, and the vivid life of the forest.</p>	
<u>The Body in Question</u>	Cimint, Jill	****	<u>4/23/20</u>	<p>Dalliance. Jill Cimint makes thinking about mortality and morality flow on the pages of her novel titled, <u>The Body in Question</u>. Protagonist Hannah, also known as juror C-2, finds herself with mixed feelings about being sequestered on the jury of a sensational murder trial. As the possibility of a dalliance with Graham, juror F-17, unfolds, she rationalizes this as a last fling, and minimizes any effect of this affair on her much older husband. Mortality inhabits every page of this novel, and the moral choices predictably lead to consequences. Cimint writes with great efficiency in this novel, and her insight into human nature unfolds with wisdom as the narrative progresses. There's really nothing casual</p>	

about a dalliance when Cimint gets her hands on it.

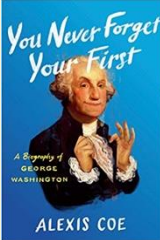
<u>The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity</u>	Cipolla, Carlo M.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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<u>Second Sight</u>	Clifford, Aoife	*****	<u>4/9/20</u>	<p>Revelations. Patient readers who can enjoy the slow simmering as a crime novel builds gradually are those most likely to enjoy Aoife Clifford's novel titled, <u>Second Sight</u>. Set in Australia, protagonist Eliza Carmody, returns to her hometown and stumbles into family secrets and revelations. The connection between crimes in the present and ones from the past make this novel complex and interesting. The search for the truth is worth the slow pace because there are rewards to be found when secrets are revealed.</p>	
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<u>Daddy</u>	Cline, Emma	*****	<u>12/21/20</u>	<p>Underneath. Emma Cline plumbs what's beneath the surface of the lives of interesting characters in her short story collection titled, <u>Daddy</u>. In each of the ten stories, Cline finds a way to touch the wounded place, or to home in on the key turning point that disturbs a life. As we read, we find authenticity underneath a veneer. Things are never as they initially appear. Fans of finely written literary short stories are those most likely to enjoy this collection.</p>	
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<u>The Boy from the Woods</u>	Coben, Harlan	*****	<u>9/19/20</u>	<p>Secrets. Can you think of a better name for a person who was found in the woods as a child and had no memory of his past than "Wilde?" That's the name of the protagonist of Harlan Coben's exciting novel titled, <u>The</u></p>	
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Boy from the Woods. Three decades after he came out of the woods, another child has gone missing, and now Wilde has been asked by a recurring Coben character, Hester Crimstein, to help find that child. Wilde agrees and finds himself returning to an uncomfortable place and he's focused on revealing the secrets that have been kept for a long time. The story is engaging, the plot has just the right twists, and the characters are compelling. Fans of Coben and crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.

<p><u>You Never Forget Your First: A Biography of George Washington</u></p>	<p>Coe, Alexis</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>8/25/20</u> Lively. If reading about dead people from earlier centuries isn't high on your list of priorities, try picking up a copy of Alexis Coe's lively and funny book titled, <u>You Never Forget Your First: A Biography of George Washington</u>, and learn that reading about dead people can be entertaining. With playful wit, Coe dispenses with the many myths about Washington, and presents a different view of the person behind the heroic marble façade. She carefully curates those aspects of his life that bring the man down to earth from a remote pedestal. This breezy and cheeky book entertained me thoroughly.</p>	
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Middle England

Coe, Jonathan

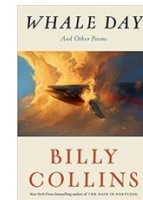

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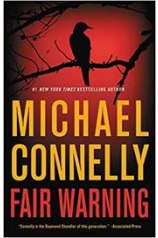
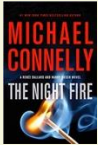
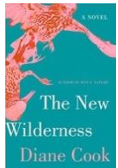
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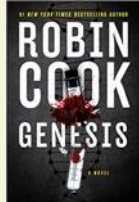
<u>The Death of Jesus</u>	Coetzee, J.M.	****	<u>7/6/20</u>	<p>Orphan. I'm undecided whether or not to recommend that you must read J.M. Coetzee's two novels titled <i>The Childhood of Jesus</i> and <i>The Schooldays of Jesus</i> before you read the third novel, <u>The Death of Jesus</u>. Normally, reading a series in sequence leads to greater understanding. For these three novels, there's no understanding, only lots of questions. The main question that David, the now ten-year-old protagonist, asks in this novel is: Why am I here? While Simon and Inez act as if they are his parents, he is an orphan, as we all are, since at some time we are all alone in the world with our unanswered questions about the meaning of life. I've read all three novels, and feel unsettled, which is probably the best outcome achievable from these unusual and finely written novels.</p>	
<u>Four Friends: Promising Lives Cut Short</u>	Cohan, William D.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>When No One Is Watching</u>	Cole, Alyssa	****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Rejuvenation. There's something fishy about the gentrification in progress in a Brooklyn neighborhood, and Alyssa Cole pulls us into a complicated scheme in her novel titled, <u>When No One Is Watching</u>. Protagonists Sydney and Theo represent the contrasts in the neighborhood as they alternate as narrators: the longtime resident and the newcomer. Both narrators face major challenges that become complicated as they uncover the unsavory and illegal ways in which neighborhood rejuvenation has accelerated. There's crime and exploitation</p>	

				<p>afoot, and Cole keeps thickening the muck in which the characters find themselves as we watch the scheme unfold.</p> <p>Aging. Curiosity and his own aging led Thomas R. Cole to seek out perspectives from men over eighty, a growing cohort in the United States. In his book titled, <u>Old Man Country: My Search for Meaning Among the Elders</u>, Cole provides snippets of interviews with about a dozen old men, and intersperses aspects of his own life throughout. This short book broaches a topic many old men avoid, but I can assure readers that it's safe to enter these waters. Whether a reader finds meaning or wisdom on these pages may depend on one's individual situation. Ask me when I'm ninety if any of this makes sense.</p>	
<p><u>Old Man Country: My Search for Meaning Among the Elders</u></p>	<p>Cole, Thomas R.</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>2/14/20</u></p>		
<p><u>The Churchgoer</u></p>	<p>Coleman, Patrick</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>10/12/20</u></p>	<p>Lost. Is a person who is lost himself capable of finding someone else who is lost? In his debut novel titled, <u>The Churchgoer</u>, Patrick Coleman gives readers fine writing, intriguing and unpleasant characters, twisting plot lines, and insights into our human condition. The protagonist and narrator, Mark Haines, is a surfer who had been a youth pastor and has reached a point in his life where he feels he has failed at everything. Cindy is a young drifter, who has gone missing, and Mark turns detective as he tries to find her. The California setting and noir feel invoke Raymond Chandler in some ways alongside religious fervor and laidback surfside life. Coleman deploys great skill in crafting these characters and placing tension and insight in just the right ways to satisfy many readers. An occasional perfectly</p>	

				crafted sentence will whack you on the head with something profound.	
<u>Whale Day and Other Poems</u>	Collins, Billy	****	<u>11/9/20</u>	<p>Alive. For many readers, 2020 has been a challenging year that has narrowed our travels and offered such repetition that days and weeks can seem indistinct. We can become attuned to things in our environment that in a “normal” year we might easily overlook. In the 59 poems in his collection titled, <u>Whale Day and Other Poems</u>, Billy Collins draws our attention to what seems ordinary and familiar. Thanks to him, we can laugh or wince as we look more closely at our surroundings. Fans will know that some of the poems will lead to laughter, while others celebrate the sheer joy of being alive in the places where we find ourselves at any given moment.</p>	
<u>The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes</u>	Collins, Suzanne	****	<u>7/6/20</u>	<p>Origin. Fans of the Hunger Games trilogy are those readers most likely to enjoy Suzanne Collins’ origin story of Coriolanus Snow in a novel titled, <u>The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes</u>. We meet eighteen-year-old Snow at the 10th Hunger Games, where he and other students are selected as mentors to the tributes. Snow is assigned to a female tribute from District 12 and their chance of winning seems remote. Collins presents readers with an immature Coriolanus and there are times when we think he might choose to do good. To the satisfaction of fans, we see the character traits of the villainous adult Snow appear in one form or another at every pivot in this selection from his formative years.</p>	

<u>Fair Warning</u>	Connelly, Michael	****	<u>9/19/20</u>	<p>Cyberstalking. Journalist and protagonist Jack McEvoy returns for the third time in Michael Connelly's novel titled, <u>Fair Warning</u>. A serial killer may be using a form of cyberstalking to select targets with great efficiency. Jack gets on the story because he had a one-night stand with the latest victim. Before long, readers are exposed to the dark web and to a fast-paced plot trying to reveal the identity of the killer. Fans of action thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>The Night Fire</u>	Connelly, Michael	****	<u>1/2/20</u>	<p>Perils. The twenty-second crime novel by Michael Connelly to feature Harry Bosch is titled, <u>The Night Fire</u>. Once again, LAPD Detective Renée Ballard is on hand to face new perils with Harry. The widow of Harry's mentor, Jack Thompson, gives him a murder book that Jack took home from the LAPD two decades earlier. Bosch and Ballard collaborate to get to the bottom of the case, which exposes them both to danger. Meanwhile, Harry is worried because his daughter faces peril at college, thanks to a stalker near campus. Harry is also collaborating with Mickey Haller, his half-brother, on a murder case which leads Bosch and Ballard toward added peril. Fans of this series and crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel and may look forward to the reprise of the Black Widow from this book in a future installment.</p>	
<u>The New Wilderness</u>	Cook, Diane	****	<u>12/21/20</u>	<p>Experiment. Diane Cook's ambitious debut novel titled, <u>The New Wilderness</u>, taps into themes that will satisfy many readers. We enjoy the dynamics of a complicated mother-daughter relationship in protagonists Bea</p>	

and Agnes. We explore the challenges of life in a not-too-distant future when an unhealthy urban environment leads Bea, Agnes and a group of eighteen fellow nomads to live in the wilderness as an approved experiment to learn if community survival can be achieved through this way of living. Cook examines power, survival and coming of age within an engaging and imaginative plot filled with interesting and complex characters.

<u>Genesis</u>	Cook, Robin	***	<u>1/24/20</u>	<p>Genealogy. The twelfth novel by Robin Cook to feature New York City medical examiners Laurie Montgomery and Jack Stapleton is titled, <u>Genesis</u>. As chief Medical Examiner, Laurie has her hands full, and in this installment, she has major personal issues to deal with as well. The theme in this novel involves the use of DNA and genealogical databases. Fans of medical thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.</p> 
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<u>Florida Man</u>	Cooper, Tom	****	<u>10/27/20</u>	<p>Crowe. The two words in the titled of Tom Cooper's novel titled, <u>Florida Man</u>, tell you what this book is all about. First is the place, Florida, more specifically Emerald Island, in the central swampy part of the state. Second, a man, protagonist Reed Crowe, who we see from the 1960s to the present, but mostly in the 1980s. Supporting the setting are the businesses Crowe has on Emerald Island: a motel and an attraction featuring amusement and animals. A broader cast of characters are all well described, bringing humor, love and terror in various doses. All of the characters orbit around Crowe, and he is the Florida man in all its eccentric</p>
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<u>Guillotine</u>	Corral, Eduardo C.	*****	11/17/20	<p>magnificence for those readers who enjoy imaginative character-based fiction.</p> <p>Body. I selected Eduardo Corral's poetry collection titled, <u>Guillotine</u>, from the longlist of the 2020 National Book Award for Poetry. His descriptions of the Sonoran Desert, tragedy, and grief are breathtaking. He selects words that form the body and presents the human condition with poignant insight. I realized after spending time with this collection that I just don't read enough poetry and will continue to add more poems to my reading queue.</p>	
<u>Blacktop Wasteland</u>	Cosby, S.A.	*****	12/17/20	<p>Bug. One of my favorite protagonists among the many books I've read in 2020 is Beauregard "Bug" Montage in S.A. Cosby's novel titled, <u>Blacktop Wasteland</u>. Bug is a talented auto mechanic, and he knows how to drive cars fast. Abandoned by his criminal father, Bug strayed for a while when he served as a wheelman in crimes. He now owns his own business and has a loving wife and children. Financial constraints lead to temptation, and the novel explores the tension with Bug as he's caught between the man he wants to be, and the identity he feels with his missing father who chose crime over family many years before. Cosby draws Bug as a complex character and readers will feel the tension as Bug tries to become the man he was born to be.</p>	
<u>The Angels' Share</u>	Crosby, Ellen	*****	8/5/20	<p>Madeira. The tenth wine country novel by Ellen Crosby is titled, <u>The Angels' Share</u>. Protagonist Lucie Montgomery finds herself in the center of the key events in this installment. She discovers the body of her neighbor in his wine cellar shortly after he</p>	

				<p>told her he wanted to buy bottles of Madeira dating back to Presidents Jefferson and Madison that her father had acquired. While Lucie was the executor of her father's estate, she knew nothing about this Madeira. While she searches for the wine, her neighbor's death was ruled a homicide and the killer poses a serious threat to Lucie. Fans of this series and crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel. I finished the book with an interest in tracking down some old Madeira myself.</p>	
<u>The Innocents</u>	Crummey, Michael	*****	<u>3/26/20</u>	<p>Isolation. I finished reading Michael Crummey's novel titled, <u>The Innocents</u>, on the day that the mayor of my town declared a shelter-in-place order to slow the spread of Covid-19. That context is helpful, considering that as a result of reading this novel, I had a positive view of the richness of life that can come even from isolation. In the novel, a brother and sister eke out ways of surviving in coastal Newfoundland where they live in primitive habitation far from other people. From the title, readers can expect that the isolation represents innocence on the part of these characters. I found the story riveting and well-told. Whether you are in isolation or not, you may be gripped by this story and how living for another day is rich in and of itself, whether your supplies are sufficient or running low.</p>	
<u>We're Better Than This: My Fight for the Future of Our Democracy</u>	Cummings, Elijah	*****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Inspirational. The memoir by the late Congressman Elijah Cummings titled, <u>We're Better Than This: My Fight for the Future of Our Democracy</u>, provides an inspirational call to action for those readers who want to make our country better. After we read of his</p>	

			life of serving others, most of us will want to be of some form of service to others. This is the story of an honorable man, rooted in faith, who did his best in building a stronger society.	
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American Dirt

Cummins, Jeanine

3/13/20

Anguish. As I read Jeanine Cummins novel titled, American Dirt, I felt the anguish of the main characters as they fled drug violence in Mexico and joined migrants trying to enter the United States. I concede that legitimate concern has been raised about cultural appropriation in that this was not necessarily Cummins' story to tell. Nonetheless, Cummins tells a compelling story very well, leading readers to care about these people. This is an individual story that is also universal in a time of anxiety when life can change in an instant. Cummins writes with great skill and I was moved by the story.

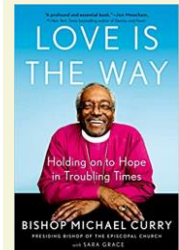


Love Is the Way:
Holding on to
Hope in Troubling
Times

Curry, Michael

11/17/20

Balm. Readers looking for a balm to sooth one's soul during troubled times should consider reading Bishop Michael Curry's book titled, Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times. The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church reached a wide global audience when he preached about love at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. In this book, he tells his personal story, and preaches to all of us that the path of love is the one that will lead us toward solving our personal and communal problems and challenges.



Coventry

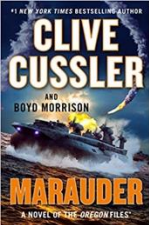
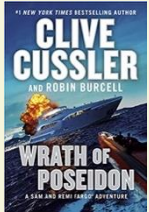
Cusk, Rachel

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Shelf of Ennui 2020.



<u>Celtic Empire</u>	Cussler, Clive	****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Pitts. The twenty-fifth installment in the Dirk Pitt adventure series by Clive Cussler is a novel titled, <u>Celtic Empire</u>. Pitt father and son are both back along with their familiar cohorts in a predictable adventurous romp around the world. We're grounded in something from history, in this case three-thousand-year-old Egyptian version, and tension comes when an evildoer is up to no good, and the Pitts come to the rescue. No plot spoilers there, that's the successful formula, and in this installment, I was predictably entertained.</p>	
<u>Final Option</u>	Cussler, Clive	***	<u>4/23/20</u>	<p>Nemesis. The fourteenth installment of Clive Cussler's Oregon Files series is a novel titled, <u>Final Option</u>. Chairman Juan Cabrillo and the crew of the Oregon face a doppelganger of their ship and a talented nemesis who has plotted his revenge against Cabrillo for a long time. As expected with formulaic fiction, Juan proves that he is a worthy adversary. The action will appeal to many readers, and the pace is always exciting.</p>	
<u>Journey of the Pharaohs</u>	Cussler, Clive	****	<u>9/22/20</u>	<p>Bloodstone. Protagonist Kurt Austen and friends have returned in a novel titled, <u>Journey of the Pharaohs</u>, the fifteenth installment in the NUMA series by Clive Cussler. Following the formula of the earlier novels, Kurt and team use their skills to great effect in combatting an enemy, this time called the Bloodstone Group. Fans of the series will find the familiar mayhem in the form of fast-paced action around the world. Two backstories, one from Egypt's distant past, and the other from the 1920s, add to the context for today's adventure. These</p>	

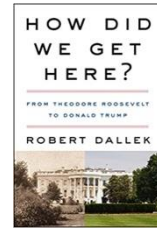
			books are quick to read and provide reliable entertainment to those who enjoy this genre and formula.	
<u>Marauder</u>	Cussler, Clive	****	<p><u>12/17/20</u></p> <p>Paralyzed. Chairman Juan Cabrillo and the other members of the Corporation have returned in a novel titled, <u>Marauder</u>, the sixteenth installment in The Oregon Files series by the Clive Cussler franchise. Following the damage in the last installment to their ship, The Oregon, a whole new craft has been built with even more powerful weapons and disguises. A worthy adversary has developed a chemical weapon that causes paralysis and it's up to Juan and the team to thwart the complicated plans to deploy the chemical on a large population center. As fans expect, the action moves rapidly, the characters are familiar, and the entertainment is satisfying.</p>	
<u>Wrath of Poseidon</u>	Cussler, Clive	****	<p><u>11/9/20</u></p> <p>Origin. The twelfth installment of the Sam and Remi Fargo series by Clive Cussler is a novel titled, <u>Wrath of Poseidon</u>. Fans of the series finally get to hear the story of how Sam and Remi met and fell in love and adventure. To deliver this backstory, the usual Cussler structure wraps around the Fargos telling the story to another recurring character in the Cussler family of action novels. Readers who enjoy the structure of these escapist novels are likely to enjoy this installment, boosted by the sweet origin story of these charming protagonists.</p>	

How Did We Get Here: From Theodore Roosevelt to Donald Trump

Dallek, Robert

Unread

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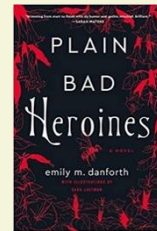


Plain Bad Heroines

Danforth, Emily M.

12/17/20

Yellowjackets. There's a lot going on inside the 640 pages of Emily M. Danforth's novel titled, Plain Bad Heroines. There's a book within a book including asides to we readers, and a movie within a movie that's within the books. There's devil's work being done, along with satire, in two time periods: 1902 and 2015. Every time the yellowjackets appear, and they show up regularly, it's time to pay close attention. After a while, some readers may almost anticipate the arrival of some buzzing or the sense of a swarm getting underway. The cast of woman characters who are intensely interested in each other will intrigue many readers. The gothic overtones increase and diminish until we become accustomed to the presence of ghosts and the will of the yellowjackets. Danforth pulls us into her joyful playfulness in this novel, and we find it easy to get comfortable with ghosts and curses. Readers who enjoy clever writing and are comfortable with ambiguity are those most likely to enjoy this creative novel.

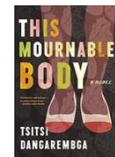


This Mournable Body

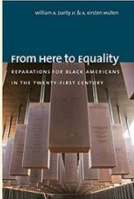
Dangaremba, Tsitsi

11/24/20

Zimbabwe. Sometimes a novel lets readers go to a place we've never been, spend time with people who seem very different from us, and come away with a fresh perspective about our shared human experience. In her novel titled, This Mournable Body, Tsitsi Dangaremba writes about the aftermath of



the transition in Zimbabwe from colonialism to capitalism through the experiences of protagonist Tambudzai Sigauke. In finely written prose and deep insight into human nature we feel the grief and struggle that Tambu faces as her world changes. Having left her village for a better life, her return home reveals how much has changed and how much has remained the same.

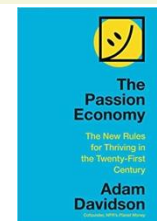
<p><u>From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century</u></p>	<p>Darity, William A. and A. Kirsten Mullen</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>8/5/20</u></p> <p>Injustices. Through describing a long litany of hundreds of years of injustice, William A. Darity and A. Kirsten Mullen made a case for justice in their book titled, <u>From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century</u>. You probably have formed an opinion about reparations already. I guarantee that if you read this book, you are very likely to reconsider your position. The authors present their case with clarity and turn our eyes to aspects of the past that most of us would rather not see or acknowledge. Even if you still think reparations are impractical, have nothing to do with you, or are just a bad idea after reading this book, you will have spent a least a little time opening your mind to the possibility that reparations are the right thing to do and there are ways to do it right.</p>	
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[The Passion Economy: The New Rules for Thriving in the Twenty-First Century](#)

Davidson, Adam

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



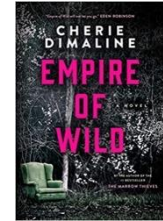
<u>Are Snakes Necessary?</u>	DePalma, Brian and Susan Lehman	***	<u>5/15/20</u>	<p>Remake. The novel by Brian DePalma and Susan Lehman titled, <u>Are Snakes Necessary?</u>, offers readers a homage to Alfred Hitchcock's classic film, <i>Vertigo</i>, in print form, without being any form of remake. In this novel, a sleazy politician abuses a staffer and she exerts her just revenge. Sometimes novels with a cast of unappealing characters can be a real kick to read. This time, I found it all sad, empty and shallow. Some readers who like crime fiction will enjoy this novel, but I found the writing to be weak. Perhaps I would have enjoyed it more if it had been a movie.</p>	
<u>Upheaval: Turning Points for Nations in Crisis</u>	Diamond, Jared	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Hardest Job in the World: The American Presidency</u>	Dickerson, John	****	<u>12/9/20</u>	<p>Descriptive. In his book titled, <u>The Hardest Job in the World: The American Presidency</u>, journalist John Dickerson calls on Americans to reevaluate how we define the role of United States President, what we expect of a president, and how to best select the best person to carry out that role for a specific period of time. Using loads of examples, Dickerson describes how the job has changed over time, and how the current expectations of any president makes that person be set up for failure. Readers interested in public affairs are those readers most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	

Empire of Wild

Dimaline, Cherie

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

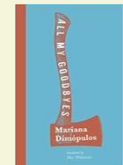


All My Goodbyes

Dimópulos, Mariana

3/26/20

Sadness. The protagonist of Mariana Dimópulos' novel titled, All My Goodbyes, has more than her share of sadness and sorrow. It seems like every time a human connection is made, it's time for it to be broken. Dimópulos explores in this novel our connections to people and places. There's a feeling of discomfort for readers as the chronology and location shifts erratically, giving us the same unsettled feeling as the protagonist. Most of us are oriented toward a person or a place, but some people are never so settled. It won't take long to read this short novel, but it has taken me a long time to become reoriented and to shake off the sadness from these finely written pages.

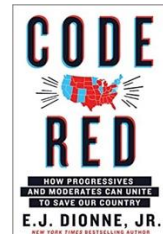


Code Red: How Progressives and Moderates Can Unite to Save Our Country

Dionne, Jr., E.J.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



One Last Lie

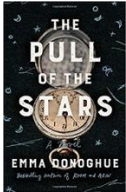
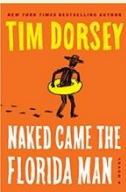
Doiron, Paul

12/9/20

Secrets. The latest installment in the Mike Bowditch series by Paul Doiron is a novel titled, One Last Lie. Fans of the Maine game warden will enjoy the return of a familiar cast of characters, and the revelation of long-held secrets. Retired warden Charley Stevens has gone missing, and Mike goes on a hunt to find him. Charley's daughter and Mike's



				<p>former girlfriend returns adding interest about a new spark for an old relationship. Fans of crime fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.</p> <p>Complexity. Fans of crime thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy Harry Dolan's novel titled, The Good Killer. After protagonist Sean Tennant shoots and kills a gunman who was wreaking havoc and death in a Houston shopping mall, the fast-paced action accelerates. Sean's act to kill garnered admiration by many, but he didn't hang around to receive it. He began to flee Texas and pick up his partner, Molly Winter, from a retreat in Montana, so they could start a fresh life someplace else. Sean knew that the photos of his good deed would spread and rouse interest in people from his past to come after him and Molly. Dolan keeps the action moving and creates believable and complex characters whose behavior is a complex mix of right and wrong.</p>	
The Good Killer	Dolan, Harry	****	5/5/20		
Exciting Times	Dolan, Naoise	****	10/27/20	<p>Roommates. Naoise Dolan's debut novel, Exciting Times, explores contemporary love and relationships. Protagonist Ava has arrived in Hong Kong from Dublin to teach English to privileged children. Before long, a banker named Julian begins a romantic relationship with Ava that is fraught with challenges. While Julian works abroad, Ava meets Edith, a lawyer, and they explore a relationship. Before long, the three characters are roommates trying to sort out what's next. Dolan finds ways to lead readers to care about what happens to these characters, and to think about modern love</p>	

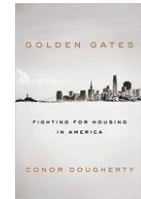
				<p>and the kinds of personal and financial transactions that can transform our lives.</p> <p>Pandemic. Consider taking a busman's holiday from the current pandemic to Emma Donoghue's finely written book set during the Great Flu of 1918, a novel set in Dublin and titled, The Pull of the Stars. As in her earlier novels, Donoghue doesn't need a lot of landscape in which to set her dramatic action: much of this novel is set in a hospital room over the course of three days. I was delighted by the point of view from narrator and protagonist Julia Power, a nurse. Donoghue's characters are deeply developed and reveal the depth of human nature and behavior. The prose is finely written, and the novel should appeal to any reader who enjoys the power of a well-told story and the selection of just the right words to convey it with love, care and precision.</p>	
The Pull of the Stars	Donoghue, Emma	*****	8/25/20		
Naked Came the Florida Man	Dorsey, Tim	****	3/6/20	<p>Rodeo. The twenty-third installment in Tim Dorsey's Serge Storms series is titled, Naked Came the Florida Man. The title alone should attract new readers, while fans of the series have already consumed this funny novel. Serge and Coleman tool around Florida and we learn about forgotten burial places. There's football and even a rodeo. The gold coins are a particular attraction, but the real joy comes in the new ways Serge finds to deliver justice. I can't wait for them to gas up the Plymouth and embark on adventure number twenty-four.</p>	

Golden Gates:
Fighting for
Housing in
America

Dougherty, Conor

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

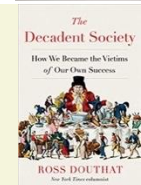


The Decadent
Society: How We
Became the
Victims of Our
Own Success

Douthat, Ross

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



Diary of a Dead
Man on Leave

Downing, David

1/2/20

Josef. Prolific novelist David Downing sets his stand alone novel titled, Diary of a Dead Man on Leave, in the town of Hamm, Germany in 1938. The book is structured as a diary that was found long after the war ended. The novel's narrator arrived in Hamm as a Russian spy calling himself Josef Hoffmann. He was sent to Germany to reactivate a communist cell. Josef knew that he should write nothing down, but he proceeds anyway. As he settles into Hamm, he grows close to a widow who rents him a room and he guides her son, Walter, in a fatherly way. Walter is the one who found the diary and his eyes are opened, as are ours, by this account from a fascinating character and overall good guy.



One Long River of
Song: Notes on
Wonder


Doyle, Brian


6/10/20

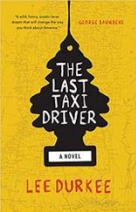
Essays. Brian Doyle died too young at age 60 from brain cancer, and I can only imagine how many more beautiful sentences he would be writing were he still alive. In a posthumous essay collection titled, One Long River of Song: Notes on Wonder, readers can gorge on his fine prose, and his acute and alert observations about life. Whether musing on basketball, his children or nature,



				Doyle has a way of opening our eyes and our minds to the wonders around us. Treat yourself to the finely written essays in this collection and view your life and the world around you with more clarity, humility and understanding.	
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<u>Threshold</u>	Doyle, Rob	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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<u>Stateway's Garden</u>	Drain, Jasmon	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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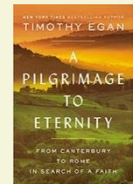
<u>The Last Taxi Driver</u>	Durkee, Lee	*****	<u>4/16/20</u>	<p>Insights. Every time I finished laughing about a scene in Lee Durkee’s novel titled, <u>The Last Taxi Driver</u>, I found myself reflecting about the insight into human nature that the funny scene captured. Protagonist Lou is a taxi driver in Mississippi working lots of hours and barely making ends meet. His kindness to others allows him to take on the unplanned role of wounded healer, as Carl Jung would describe him. He treats taxi passengers with respect and dignity hiding beneath his veneer of exasperation at the antics from others and his own descent into darkness. Durkee’s writing glistens on these pages, making this novel a real joy to read, especially for fans of literary fiction who also have a fully functioning funny bone.</p>	
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[A Pilgrimage to Eternity: From Canterbury to Rome in Search of a Faith](#)

Egan, Timothy

[3/26/20](#)

Companion. I read Timothy Egan's book titled, [A Pilgrimage to Eternity: From Canterbury to Rome in Search of a Faith](#), while I was under the Illinois shelter-in-place mandate to slow the spread of Covid-19. The mortality rate for this pandemic disease may lead many to think about the meaning of life and mortality. So, my mind was receptive to joining Egan as he explored matters of faith while he walked a medieval route called the Via Francigena from England to Rome. Egan blends his own discernment process with the history of the places where he and other pilgrims stop along the path. If life is pilgrimage, Egan reminds us through his journey that we can easily lose our way and suffer from blisters or whatever else causes pain. He also reminds us that we can find wonderful things in unexpected places. There are especially poignant scenes as he describes the segments of the journey when in succession he's joined by his son, his daughter and his wife. Whether you are confined to your home, or able to walk or hike your own pilgrimage paths outdoors, Egan can be a welcome companion with this finely written book.

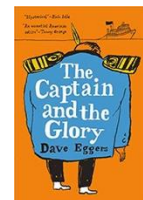


[The Captain and the Glory](#)

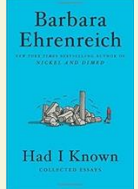
Eggers, Dave

[2/21/20](#)

Satire. Partisans love satire that pokes at opponents, and we bristle when satire hits any targets we support. In his satire titled, [The Captain and the Glory](#), Dave Eggers focuses on the incumbent United States President, so how you assess Trump will likely lead you toward or away from this book. It's clear that Eggers views the situation in the United States as dangerous and destructive to norms, values and the



institutions that form the fabric of democratic life. This is a look at how the ship of state is being steered, and Eggers concludes that the state of the union is perilous. Sometimes satire can make us smile or laugh. This satire makes us think. Approach or reject as you are inclined. I'm deep in thought.

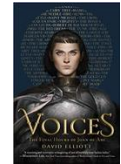
<u>Had I Known</u>	Ehrenreich, Barbara	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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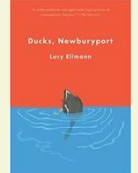
[Voices: The Final Hours of Joan of Arc](#)

Elliott, David

[3/26/20](#)

Verse. Readers looking for a book a bit off the beaten path should consider reading David Elliott's book titled, [Voices: The Final Hours of Joan of Arc](#). Elliott writes in verse, using a variety of medieval poetic forms. The voices from the title and in these poems include Joan of Arc as well as objects and people in her life. The voice of the fire is especially creepy.



<u>Ducks, Newburyport</u>	Ellmann, Lucy	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[Propelled: How Boredom, Frustration, and Anticipation Lead Us to the Good Life](#)

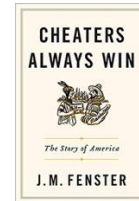
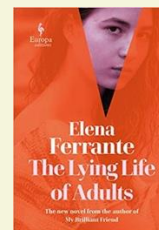

Elpidorou, Andreas

[10/19/20](#)

Motivation. Contentment and satisfaction may not help us achieve what we want in life, according to Andreas Elpidorou in his book titled, [Propelled: How Boredom, Frustration, and Anticipation Lead Us to the Good Life](#). Instead, discontent is what leads us toward progress. After you read this book, you'll be tempted to reply to someone who tells you they're frustrated or bored with the response,



<u>Girl, Woman, Other</u>	Evaristo, Bernardine	*****	7/6/20	<p>“good.” You may have to give them a copy of the book to explain the reason you said that.</p> <p>Ensemble. I enjoy a novel that provides insight into the essence of human behavior especially through the development of a single complex and interesting character. In her superb novel titled, <u>Girl, Woman, Other</u>, Bernardine Evaristo gives us a dozen such characters. Through this chorus readers join a celebration of humanity in a wide range of ages and diversity of identity. Along the way, their stories become part of our stories, and we acknowledge aspects of shared history and experience. I enjoyed every minute I spent in the company of these fascinating characters and this talented writer.</p>	
<u>Temper</u>	Fargo, Layne	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators</u>	Farrow, Ronan	*****	1/2/20	<p>Tactics. After I read Ronan Farrow’s book titled, <u>Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators</u>, I realized that there was so little I knew when I read his article in <i>The New Yorker</i> in 2017 about Harvey Weinstein and his sexual abuse and exploitation of women. I learned the ways in which NBC stifled or resisted Farrow’s reporting on this story when he worked for them. I learned about the tactics used by Weinstein throughout his career to commit crimes and to cover them up. I was floored when I read about the spies hired to follow Farrow, and what one of those spies did when he understood the nature of his assignment. There’s always more to a story,</p>	

			and in this book, Farrow delivers more than I expected.	
<u>Cheaters Always Win: The Story of America</u>	Fenster, J.M.	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Lying Life of Adults</u>	Ferrante, Elena	*****	<u>9/8/20</u> Bracelet. Children learn to navigate the world by observing closely the adults in their lives. Giovanna, the protagonist of Elena Ferrante's novel titled, <u>The Lying Life of Adults</u> , changes over the course of three hundred pages from a child to an adolescent to who she might observe as an adult. Ferrante draws readers into Giovanna's life through dissection of close family and romantic relationships. We feel the intensity of Giovanna's struggle to grow into herself. A bracelet worn at different times by multiple characters pulls the narrative together and provides key symbolism relating to the realities and the complications of adult life. Ferrante proves again that all of life can be revealed in a domestic story told well. The full cast of interesting and complex characters, their realistic dialogue and range of behavior kept me captivated from beginning to end.	
<u>Stay and Fight</u>	Ffitch, Madeline	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

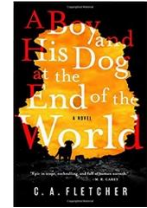
<u>The Last Passenger</u>	Finch, Charles	****	<u>4/9/20</u>	<p>Slavery. The third prequel to the popular Charles Lenox mystery series by Charles Finch is a novel set in 1855 titled, <u>The Last Passenger</u>. Young Charles matures in this installment as he falls in love while solving a complicated murder case. Finch focuses on an important issue of that time around the world: slavery. As usual, the fine writing exposes deep understanding of human nature. The characters are interesting and complex. The plot entertains and the mystery is clever. Fans of crime fiction and this series are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>House on Fire</u>	Finder, Joseph	****	<u>2/21/20</u>	<p>Overdose. The fourth novel by Joseph Finder featuring protagonist Nick Heller is titled, <u>House on Fire</u>. After an Army friend dies of an opioid overdose, Nick is approached by a renegade heir to a pharmaceutical family fortune who wants him to help her obtain evidence that her family was aware of the addictive nature of their main moneymaking drug. Fans of thrilling crime fiction will enjoy the plot twists and action.</p>	
<u>A Guest of the Reich: The Story of American Heiress Gertrude Legendre's Dramatic Captivity and Escape from Nazi Germany</u>	Finn, Peter	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

A Boy and His Dog
at the End of the
World

Fletcher, C.A.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



Christmas Cupcake
Murder

Fluke, Joanne

11/17/20

Sugary. If you haven't packed on extra covid weight in 2020, consider baking from the recipes as you read the 26th installment in Joanne Fluke's mystery series featuring baker Hannah Swensen, a novel titled, Christmas Cupcake Murder. While I find almost every recipe far too sugary for my taste (as are the recurring characters), you might find something here that matches your taste. In a departure from the formula in earlier novels in this series, Hannah doesn't find herself in peril, there's no murder, and the setting moves to a much earlier time period than most of the recent novels in the series. Longtime fans will have a hard time figuring out just what time period this is, since there are continuity problems that may distract close readers. If you like to spend time with nice small town people who eat a lot of sweets, this book and this series will be a delight for you to read.

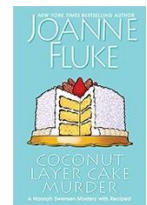


Coconut Layer
Cake Murder

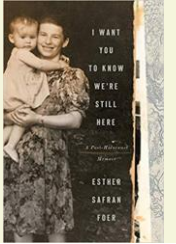
Fluke, Joanne

4/9/20

Predictable. The twenty fifth novel by Joanne Fluke to feature baker and amateur detective Hannah Swensen is titled, Coconut Layer Cake Murder. The formula provides comfort to those readers who enjoy a straightforward plot that involves a crime, and the ways in which Hannah is placed in personal jeopardy as she identifies the perpetrator. Part of the formula includes baking and recipes at the end of each



chapter. My record remains intact: I have not yet copied or made a single recipe. Even my sweet tooth can't indulge the way the characters in Lake Eden Minnesota pack down the cookies and cakes. Fans of the series will love the reprise of a large cast of beloved characters, and Hannah's trip to California provides a change of pace early in this installment. I think I'll go eat an apple.

<u>I Want You to Know We're Still Here: A Post-Holocaust Memoir</u>	Foer, Esther Safran	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[The Guest List](#)

Foley, Lucy

[10/27/20](#)

Atmospheric. The ingredients in Lucy Foley's crime thriller titled, [The Guest List](#), seem familiar: a remote island, multiple characters with reasons to kill, a storm and opportunity. The cast of unlikeable characters allows for an abundance of suspects after the murder takes place. Foley leaves a trail of clues for observant readers as different characters relate their version of events, building to a climax that for some readers will be obvious, and for others a total twist and surprise. Since we can't travel to a remote location off the coast of Ireland, we can visit in novels like this one, and while social distancing can give us some delight in that we are not in the company of the guests at the wedding that drew them together.

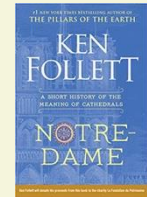


[Notre-Dame: A Short History of the Meaning of Cathedrals](#)

Follett, Ken

[2/14/20](#)

Weep. Fans of Ken Follett's lengthy novels may be shocked by his latest book titled, [Notre-Dame: A Short History of the Meaning of Cathedrals](#). In fewer than one hundred pages, Follett offers a love letter to Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Readers weep with him following the recent fire, and he reminds us of why this place is so important and special. The restoration is still considered a 50-50 possibility, so read this book to be reminded of why this structure means so much, and then make a donation to support the work ahead.

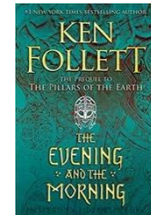


[The Evening and the Morning](#)

Follett, Ken

[10/19/20](#)

Prequel. Fans of Ken Follett's Kingsbridge series are those readers most likely to enjoy his new novel, a prequel titled, [The Evening and the Morning](#). This is an origin story, in a familiar place where there isn't a bridge until close to the end of the novel. As usual with this series, there's a great cast of interesting and complex characters, and loads of details about everyday life during this time period (starting in 997 AD). There's a builder, a priest and strong women, and every minute a reader spends in their world provides great entertainment. If you're looking for a big book to settle into, consider this one.

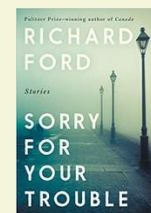



[Sorry For Your Trouble](#)

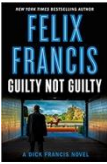
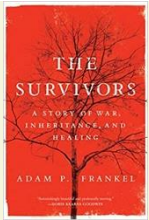
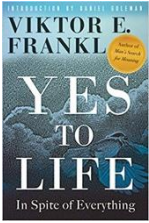
Ford, Richard

[7/23/20](#)

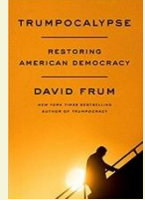

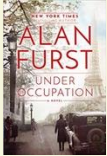
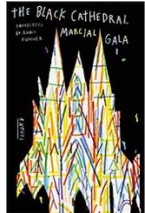
Characters. Fans of superb writing especially in short form fiction are those most likely to enjoy the collection by Richard Ford titled, [Sorry For Your Trouble](#), containing nine short stories. The characters in these stories face all sorts of contemporary troubles, and Ford's spare language captures their predicaments with precision and insight. There's complexity and subtlety in most sentences, and Ford builds his



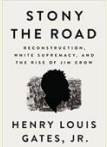
				<p>characters with great care into forms that we recognize and understand. These characters are people we know and at the same time are individuals we have never met. We've overheard the dialogue in these stories. We have seen these characters in our community, and yet Ford makes them fresh and offers us wise reflections that apply to our own lives.</p>	
<u>The Lonely Hour</u>	Fowler, Christopher	*****	<u>1/24/20</u>	<p>Intricate. The sixteenth Peculiar Crimes Unit novel by Christopher Fowler is titled, <u>The Lonely Hour</u>. Arthur Bryant is added and brilliant as always. Partner John May makes a mistake that will have serious consequences, and even Arthur may be unable to get the PCU out of a jam. The title refers to 4a.m., the time when a killer does his dirty deeds. The plot is intricate, and the familiar characters will delight fans of this series. New readers can start here or anywhere and find finely written crime fiction with clever plots and a cast of complex and interesting characters.</p>	
<u>Life Undercover: Coming of Age in the CIA</u>	Fox, Amaryllis	*****	<u>1/2/20</u>	<p>Service. The memoir by Amaryllis Fox titled, <u>Life Undercover: Coming of Age in the CIA</u>, focuses on her decade of service working for the CIA. I was struck by her youth and the price that her service extracted from her personal life. Many readers will reflect on what happens to an individual whose early work life involved doing big and important things. Readers interested in the workings of the CIA will find a description of training, office work and field operations engaging and interesting. We come to understand the courage it takes to engage in covert work and we can see how finding</p>	

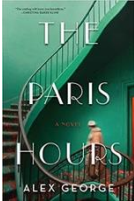
				<p>meaning in the little things in life can supersede the really big stuff.</p> <p>Siblings. Fans of the long running crime series by the Francis family may find something a bit different in the latest novel. Good and evil coexist within each of us. While Felix Francis emphasizes one aspect or the other in the major characters of his novel titled, <u>Guilty Not Guilty</u>, we can't escape the fact that we do both good and evil of one sort or the other, and none of us is wholly good or wholly evil. The connection to horse racing is limited in this novel, and a more dominant theme involves the relationship of siblings. Mystery fans will love the murder, and thoughtful readers will close this book and be led to think a bit rather than pick up something else to read.</p>	
<u>Guilty Not Guilty</u>	Francis, Felix	***	4/9/20		
<u>The Survivors: A Story of War, Inheritance, and Healing</u>	Frankel, Adam P.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything</u>	Frankl, Viktor E.	****	9/8/20	<p>Lectures. You may have had the same experience I did many years ago: reading Viktor Frankl's book titled, <i>Man's Search for Meaning</i>, and feeling optimism that human spirit can overcome the worst circumstances. Thanks to a new book titled, <u>Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything</u>, readers can experience the spirit of the lectures that Frankl delivered in Vienna in 1946, less than a year after he was released from a Nazi concentration camp. Three renamed presentations constitute this small book, and each lecture overflows with insight, intensity and the</p>	

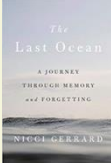
optimism, packed with the positive spirit that kept Frankl alive and vital.

<u>Trumpocalypse: Restoring American Democracy</u>	Frum, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Heroes: The Greek Myths Reimagined</u>	Fry, Stephen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Under Occupation</u>	Furst, Alan	*****	<u>1/24/20</u>	<p>Resistance. In his novel titled, <u>Under Occupation</u>, Alan Furst pulls readers into Paris in 1942. Protagonist Paul Ricard is a novelist and through him Furst takes us into many aspects of how the French resistance operated while under Nazi occupation. Ricard was swept into the resistance as were others. Once inside, his assignments provide the momentum for this novel. Readers can feel the darkness of that time and place through Furst's finely written descriptive prose. Fans of historical fiction, especially when set in this time period, are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>The Black Cathedral</u>	Gala, Marcial	***	<u>7/6/20</u>	<p>Cienfuegos. Lots of narrators of Marcial Gala's novel, <u>The Black Cathedral</u>, combine their voices to create a din that describes life in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Readers are treated or subjected to a barrage of fragments that reinforce a poor quality of life and the unrealistic hope that life will change after a new cathedral is built. The people in the town are caught up in violence and selfishness. After finishing the novel, many</p>	

readers like me may scratch our heads about this novel but concur that we just read an indictment of life in modern Cuba delivered by a rousing chorus of voices.

<u>Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow</u>	Gates, Jr., Henry Louis	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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<u>The Paris Hours</u>	George, Alex	*****	10/27/20	<p>Fire. The novel by Alex George titled, <u>The Paris Hours</u>, reveals the lives of four characters over the course of one day in Paris in 1927. George moves from one character to another as the day progresses, using each narrative turn to fill in the backstory for these people, primarily through the use of memory. We learn of love, loss, secrets, longing and connection. George pulls reluctant readers along as he adds colorful and well-known people living in that time and place, including Ernest Hemingway, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, and Josephine Baker. A motif involving fire connects the four individuals. Fans of fine writing and intricate plotting are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel, as will those who love both Paris and this time period.</p>	
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<u>The Last Ocean: A Journey Through Memory and Forgetting</u>	Gerrard, Nicci	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[Lose Well](#)

Gethard, Chris

[6/10/20](#)

Resilience. Failure can be a good thing. That's the message in Chris Gethard's self-help book titled, [Lose Well](#). It's a funny book, as one would expect from Gethard, but also contains a serious message about the value of resilience, and all that we can learn when our dreams are thwarted. All of us have suffered rejection of one form or another throughout our lives. Gethard encourages us to embrace the rejection and use it for what we do next. We're told to stop worrying about failure, believe in ourselves, get up and try again. Candor about his own setbacks allows his voice to be heard, whether a reader finds it funny or not. Read the book and give your dream another shot.

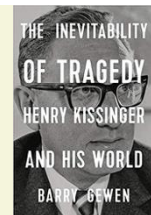


[The Inevitability of Tragedy: Henry Kissinger and His World](#)

Gewen, Barry

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



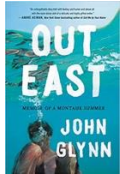
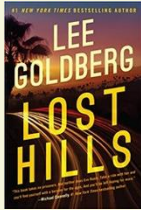
[Agency](#)


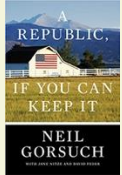

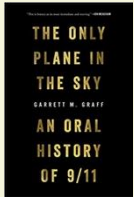
Gibson, William

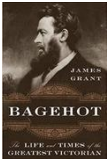
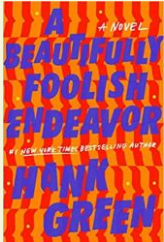
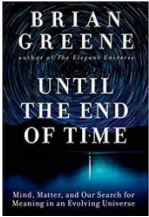
[2/21/20](#)

Eunice. In his novel titled, [Agency](#), William Gibson picks up an exploration of the future that he started about five years ago in his novel titled, *The Peripheral*. Artificial intelligence takes the form of an entity named Eunice whose autonomy plays into the fears of those who see conflict coming in the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence. Gibson adds a layer to the story from a more distant future in which hobbyists interact with the past to nudge toward certain outcomes. Gibson writes with great skill, imagination and insight. I find myself thinking about Eunice long after I finished this novel.



<u>Homewreckers: How a Gang of Wall Street Kingpins, Hedge Fund Magnates, Crooked Banks, and Vulture Capitalists Suckered Millions Out of Their Homes and Demolished the American Dream</u>	Glantz, Aaron	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Out East: Memoir of a Montauk Summer</u>	Glynn, John	**	<u>4/16/20</u>	<p>Shallow. My bride has known for decades that I will read anything. She continues to marvel that I actually do read anything. John Glynn's memoir titled, <u>Out East: Memoir of a Montauk Summer</u>, tells what he did one summer when he was in his twenties. Why should any reader care? Glynn faced truly first world situations in this recitation about a charmed life. While there is angst galore, the memoir is neither deep nor reflective. We read an account of a shallow young man finding his identity as he comes of age. He does this in a setting of great privilege. Read a sample before you commit to this memoir.</p>	
<u>Lost Hills</u>	Goldberg, Lee	****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Solo. Detective Eve Ronin gets the job done, even if she has to go solo to do it. Lee Goldberg's novel titled, <u>Lost Hills</u>, entertains readers with a "feel like you're there" police procedural set in Los Angeles. I consider this book as a one-hour television drama for readers. The action moves at a fast clip and you don't have to think too much as the author entertains you. I liked the characters,</p>	

				<p>especially Eve, and was entertained with enough twists to keep my interest to the end.</p> <p>Narrators. Nicola Maye Goldberg structures her novel titled, <u>Nothing Can Hurt You</u>, as different views from characters, each impacted by a single event. After we listen to another's point of view, can our perspective change? What keeps us bound to some life event and how is it that we can become so intensely focused on a single thing? Can we appreciate that some individuals closer to the event that us can move on? The multiple narrators in this novel provide their points of view in Goldberg's finely written prose. What we make of each of them and of ourselves when we finish the novel is up to us.</p>	
<u>Nothing Can Hurt You</u>	Goldberg, Nicola Maye	****	<u>10/19/20</u>		
<u>A Republic, If You Can Keep It</u>	Gorsuch, Neil M.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Maybe You Should Talk to Someone: A Therapist, HER Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed</u>	Gottlieb, Lori	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11</u>	Graff, Garrett M.	****	<u>2/21/20</u>	<p>Voices. I was overwhelmed as I read Garrett M. Graff's book titled, <u>The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11</u>. He presents many voices telling their story of that day as they lived it. This is a book about our human story, the individual story, the ordinary people who dealt with an extraordinary event in their own personal way. Be prepared to share emotions on the pages of this book. The range of voices is vast, and the feelings are intense. Every day unfolds in its own</p>	

				way, and this historic day unfolded for many people in both ordinary and extraordinary ways.	
<u>Bagehot: The Life and Times of the Greatest Victorian</u>	Grant, James	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>A Beautifully Foolish Endeavor</u>	Green, Hank	*****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Power. Hank Green concludes a story of technology, power and submission that he began in his debut novel, <i>An Absolutely Remarkable Thing</i>, with his novel titled, <u>A Beautifully Foolish Endeavor</u>. The Carls who appeared as robots in the first novel have disappeared, and Green explores the perspectives of multiple recurring characters as they adjust to the new world order and the ways in which power has been concentrated. Fans of the first novel are those readers most likely to enjoy the continuation of this engaging and thought-provoking story.</p> <p>Thinking. Brian Greene challenges readers of his book titled, <u>Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe</u>, to think about thinking. He aims to provide clarity, and I now have more questions than when I started, which is perfect. As he explores a variety of theories and points us to the cosmos, he also directs us inward on a search for meaning. Greene distills lots of big notions on these pages, any one of which lead a reader into decades of further study. He has a way of making connections that will encourage readers to continue thinking after we finish reading this book.</p>	
<u>Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe</u>	Greene, Brian	*****	<u>6/24/20</u>		

Beaten Down,
Worked Up: The
Past, Present, and
Future of American
Labor

Greenhouse, Steven

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



Cleanness

Greenwell, Garth

5/5/20

Happiness. What do we desire? In his book titled, Cleanness, Garth Greenwell pulls readers into episodes in the life of an American professor in Sofia, Bulgaria. Some of the glimpses seem ordinary, while others pack deep intensity. Each sentence reinforces Greenwell's writing skill and pulls readers into a structure that provides understanding about life. What we desire is happiness. It can come in surprising, ordinary, expected or dramatic ways. Bliss can be achieved when what we can do to make someone else happy also brings happiness to us. Fans of literary fiction who appreciate superb writing are those most likely to enjoy this book.

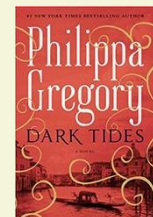


Dark Tides

Gregory, Philippa

12/17/20

Bridge. The second novel in the Fairmile series by Philippa Gregory is titled, Dark Tides. One of my gripes about reading the second novel in a series is the amount of repetition from the first installment. With this novel, I have no such complaint, but wish that the author had helped connect more of the dots. Protagonist Alinor Reekie from the first novel returns in a secondary role in a setting two decades after the first, with the Restoration as the backdrop. James Avery who left Alinor to fend for herself, is now a widower and returns expecting a warm welcome now that his family fortune has been recovered thanks to his support of the king. Instead of picking up on their



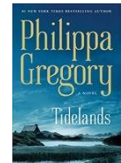
			<p>thread in any direct way, the action involves the wife of Alinor's son, Rob, a delightfully wicked manipulator and criminal named Livia. Another plot line involves the life of Alinor's brother, Ned, who lives in New England, caught in the uncomfortable shifting tides between the indigenous people and the English settlers. Many readers will look forward to hearing more about the adventures of 21-year-old twins Sarah and Johnnie, the children of Alinor's daughter, Alys. In the meantime, what we have here is likely a 450-page bridge between the introduction of the series in the previous novel, and the action to follow in the next. Patient fans of historical fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this installment and this series.</p>	
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Tidelands

Gregory, Philippa

7/23/20

Exciting. Philippa Gregory begins her Fairmile series with a novel titled, Tidelands. Set in Sussex during the English Civil War, protagonist Alinor is a hardworking midwife eking out a living for herself and her two children while not knowing whether her missing husband is dead or alive. A large cast of characters includes the activities of both Roundheads and Cavaliers. Gregory draws us into stories of how the divisions in the country play out even in the most remote locations. Just when Gregory leads us to think events are heading in one direction, there's a twist to carry us to a different place. We're left wondering what happens to Alinor next, the answer to which will wait until the next installment in the series, set during the Restoration. Fans of historical fiction that

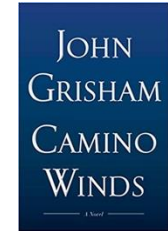



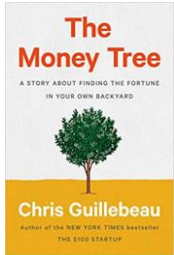

includes well-developed characters are those most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.

<u>I You We Them: Journeys Beyond Evil: The Desk Killers in History Volume 1</u>	Gretton, Dan and Ros Urwin	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>When All Is Said</u>	Griffin, Anne	*****	<u>5/26/20</u>	Toasts. I highly recommend pairing five drams of Black Bush as you visit Ireland and join eighty-four-year-old protagonist Maurice Hannigan in the five toasts he makes in Anne Griffin's debut novel titled, <u>When All Is Said</u> . There are secrets, love, loss, regret and great joy on these pages. Griffin writes with considerable skill and fleshes her characters with the complexity of behavior that readers recognize as authentic. Savor each toast and enjoy a grand story.	
<u>Now You See Them</u>	Griffiths, Elly	*****	<u>1/24/20</u>	Emma. My first exposure to Elly Griffiths' Magic Men series is the fifth installment, a novel titled, <u>Now You See Them</u> . Set in 1964, former Brighton detective Emma is married to Superintendent Edgar Stephens and she feels unsettled at home with three kids. Girls have been disappearing, and Emma sees a chance to get back into the action. Conflict between mods and rockers provides a colorful backdrop. I was entertained from beginning to end and expect that other fans of crime fiction will enjoy this novel and this series.	

Camino Winds Grisham, John **** 5/26/20

Storm. John Grisham gives readers an exciting return to Camino Island in his novel titled, Camino Winds. A major hurricane lands on the island causing major damage. Protagonist Bruce Cable's bookstore and home come through the storm ok, but one of the island's authors has died. Bruce and his posse suspect foul play, and the action of the novel involves their dogged investigation into this case. Fans of Grisham and action thrillers are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.



<u>Wyoming</u>	Gritton JP	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Money Tree: A Story About Finding the Fortune in Your Own Backyard</u>	Guillebeau, Chris	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>A Lover's Discourse</u>	Guo, Xiaolu	****	<u>11/17/20</u>	Compromise. With a nod to Roland Barthes, Xiaolu Guo writes about modern marriage and compromise in her novel titled, <u>A Lover's Discourse</u> . Through dialogue, we see differences in culture and how to live together in places that require each individual to give up something for the sake of the other. Guo explores what it means to belong in the context of the area in which we live, our domicile, and our family unit. Guo lays out a host of questions for readers to ponder as we listen to the fragments of dialogue between a husband and wife.	

Transcendent Kingdom

Gyasi, Yaa

9/22/20

Contrasts. I keep thinking about the powerful contrasts that Yaa Gyasi offers in her novel titled, Transcendent Kingdom. Science and religion are contrasted as protagonist Gifty looks to her work as a neuroscientist to answer life's questions as she also recalls her childhood in the evangelical church. We see the different worlds of Ghana and Alabama. We feel the family pain when shortly after Gifty's brother, Nana, finds comfort playing high school basketball, he becomes addicted to OxyContin following an injury. There's contrast between Gifty and her mother, both coping with loss in their own ways. Gyasi's prose will appeal to those readers who enjoy literary fiction, and her insights into the immigrant experience and into the wide range of human behavior will keep readers like me thinking about life long after we finish reading this finely written novel.



Reinhardt's Garden

Haber, Mark

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

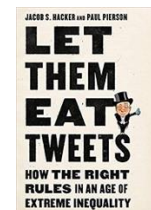


Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality

Hacker, Jacob S. and Paul Pierson

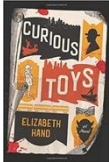
8/5/20

Plutocrats. Spend a little while reading Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson's book titled, Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality, and you'll begin to marvel about how a tiny minority of successful American plutocrats have gotten unpopular things done to their advantage. Hacker and Pierson describes the methods by which a few rich and powerful individuals have commandeered the levers of political power and built up unlikely



coalitions to protect or enhance wealth and power for the few. This effort has been building over a long period of time and the current environment is the consequence of gradual changes and incremental steps. Readers interested in public policy and political science are those most likely to enjoy this engaging book. In case you haven't noticed, this is a great time in America to be a plutocrat. The authors of this book explain why and how that happened.

<u>With All Due Respect: Defending America with Grit and Grace</u>	Haley, Nikki	****	<u>1/24/20</u>	<p>Blunt. Nikki Haley's memoir titled, <u>With All Due Respect: Defending America with Grit and Grace</u>, is a political novelty. She doesn't speak out of school and settles few scores on these pages (one or two worthy targets get their comeuppance again, bless their hearts.) Based on timing, this is also not the opening salvo in a political campaign. It is a blunt appraisal of many contemporary issues, and a personal story about how Haley's life experience and principles guided her actions in public life. Agree or disagree with her positions, but read her story with an open mind, willing to listen to a story of what made her the person she is today.</p> 
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<u>Curious Toys</u>	Hand, Elizabeth	*****	<u>4/16/20</u>	<p>Pin. You don't need to be familiar with the Chicago amusement park, Riverview, to enjoy Elizabeth Hand's novel titled, <u>Curious Toys</u>. Set in the Summer of 1915, protagonist Pin is the fourteen-year-old daughter of a fortune teller, and she has the run of the park, often dressed like a boy. An environment of fun and some mischief turns dark after a girl is murdered. All the characters are finely drawn, and even Charlie Chaplin makes an appearance. The settings</p> 
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are described vividly, the characters are complex and compelling, and the plot is thrilling. Pin is an absolute delight. Fans of historical fiction, especially of this time period, are those most likely to enjoy this finely written novel.

<p><u>The Rabbit Effect: Live Longer, Happier, and Healthier with the Groundbreaking Science of Kindness</u></p>	<p>Harding, Kelli</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>7/23/20</u></p> <p>Kindness. I find it hard to not apply a covid-19 lens to what I read during the pandemic. So, when I read Kelli Harding's book titled, <u>The Rabbit Effect: Live Longer, Happier, and Healthier with the Groundbreaking Science of Kindness</u>, I couldn't help but think how a little bit of kindness to others would go a long a way these days. After all, we're just being asked to wash our hands, practice social distancing, and wear a mask when indoors with others or at times when we can't keep a safe distance away. These are times when many of us will benefit from thinking about our health in new ways. This book helps us understand the interaction of body and mind, and the ways in which we may be missing pieces of what's critical to our health. Harding learned this through a rabbit study, and readers of this book can learn some missing pieces that can make our lives happier and healthier. Also, wash your hands, maintain physical distance from others, and wear the damn mask. How hard is it to be nice?</p>	
<p><u>The Beauty in Breaking</u></p>	<p>Harper, Michele</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>8/25/20</u></p> <p>Healing. I can think of no better time than now to read some life lessons from an emergency room physician. In her memoir titled, <u>The Beauty in Breaking</u>, Michele Harper blends patient and personal stories in ways that will engage and encourage most</p>	

readers. Harper helps us pay attention to those places where each of us is broken in one way or another and offers us a path toward healing. We can learn about better ways to live in many ways, and this book will provide comfort to anyone engaged in a struggle and looking for a voice of experience to find a way to find healing.

<u>The Second Sleep</u>	Harris, Robert	*****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Awake. Things are not as they appear in Robert Harris' novel titled, <u>The Second Sleep</u>. We're told the year is 1468. Protagonist Christopher Fairfax is a young priest who has been sent by the bishop to a small village in Wessex, England, to conduct the funeral of Father Lacy, who spent many years as the village priest. This would be his first funeral as a priest, so Fairfax wanted to get it right. Thanks to Harris' great plotting, we learn along with Fairfax about Father Lacy and as a result our eyes are opened to the real story in this novel. Harris knows how to tell a gripping story, and in this novel, he focuses us on the past, present and future.</p> <p>Miami. I was amused by Thomas Harris' crime thriller titled, <u>Cari Mora</u>. Set in Miami, the protagonist, Cari Mora, is a housekeeper at a drug kingpin's house. Stored and booby trapped beneath the house is a stash of gold. A colorful cast of characters wants to heist the gold and Cari Mora. Harris gives us a terrific villain, a strong female protagonist, and keeps momentum by playing the desires of the characters that include greed and avarice. I read this book quickly and became inured to the violence quickly. Fans of crime fiction looking for a quick, amusing, violent book are those most likely to enjoy this one.</p>	 
<u>Cari Mora</u>	Harris, Thomas	****	<u>3/6/20</u>		

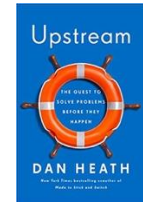
<u>The Warehouse</u>	Hart, Rob	*****	<u>1/2/20</u>	<p>Dystopia. I usually prefer novels about a bleak future to be set in a distant future time, not today or the near future. When I started reading Rob Hart's satire titled, <u>The Warehouse</u>, I began to warm to a very dystopian take on contemporary American culture. A company named Cloud has become the dominant business enterprise in the United States. The thriller aspects of this novel dominate the satirical social commentary. Hart lets the story speak for itself, and Cloud does what it is has been built to do. Hart gives us workplace conditions that exploit, corporate behavior that's predatory, and a culture of surveillance that's downright creepy. The characters are finely drawn and complex. My discomfort from reading this novel arises from the sensation that everything Hart describes is plausible. A company that gives people what they want. What could be wrong with that?</p>	
<u>Die, My Love</u>	Harwicz, Ariana	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Deep State</u>	Hauty, Chris	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

Upstream: The Quest to Solve Problems Before They Happen

Heath, Dan

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

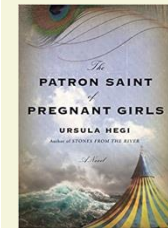


The Patron Saint of Pregnant Girls

Hegi, Ursula

12/9/20

Symbolism. No symbol is subtle in Ursula Hegi's novel titled, The Patron Saint of Pregnant Girls. Set on an island off Germany in the late nineteenth century, the joy from a traveling circus turns to despair after a giant wave drowns three children. The novel opens with that dramatic action, then develops the characters of three surviving mothers and how they deal with loss. Life on a small island means that there's no escape from the looks on the faces of everyone who knows what the wave took away from you. Hegi allows the unfolding of joy in a beautiful setting while maintaining the presence of pain that will never go away. The novel celebrates these women, and every reader can gain strength from spending time with them in this novel.

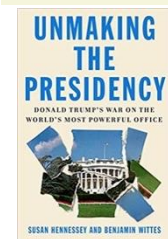


Unmaking the Presidency: Donald Trump's War on the World's Most Powerful Office

Hennessey, Susan and Benjamin Wittes

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



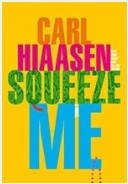
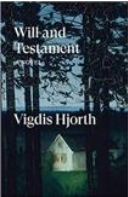
St. Ivo

Hershon, Joanna

9/19/20

Longing. The emotional intensity surrounding the characters in Joanna Hershon's novel titled, St. Ivo, increases as we understand more about the circumstances of two families. In domestic situations, there's always more to the story than what can be gleaned from observations



				and limited contact. The suffering, struggle and loss that Hershon draws readers into are real and intense. Many readers will reflect on how they would respond to the situations facing these characters. Those readers who enjoy fine writing, deep insights into human behavior, and are comfortable with the unresolved reality common to all of us, will find a lot to enjoy by reading this novel.	
<u>The Convert</u>	Hertmans, Stefan	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Squeeze Me</u>	Hiaasen, Carl	*****	<u>9/8/20</u>	<p>Pythons. Just when I needed a good laugh, I picked up Carl Hiaasen's comic novel titled, <u>Squeeze Me</u>. Set as always in Florida, this time we get the combination of a great protagonist, Angie Armstrong, and political satire about President Trump, Mar-a-Lago and its wealthy members. When a python does what a big snake is prone to do, Angie is the wildlife expert called in to take care of the problem. A great cast of characters, include the return of Skink, will delight Hiaasen fans. Florida at its oddest comes to life for those readers who aren't overly sensitive to political satire.</p>	
<u>Will and Testament</u>	Hjorth, Vigdis	*****	<u>5/15/20</u>	<p>Siblings. The parents and four siblings in the dysfunctional family described in Vigdis Hjorth's novel set in Norway titled, <u>Will and Testament</u>, will draw readers into their world and then leave us thinking about them for a long time. Often in the novel it seemed as if each individual were a member of a family different from the one described by any one</p>	

of the members. Perhaps that is true on some level for all families: certain formative experiences provide the lens through which all family life is viewed. The lens for one sibling in this novel is the sexual abuse she suffered from her father, and some siblings and her mother do not believe it really happened. Hjorth explores matters of what we inherit, and the effort by parents to treat children fairly when it comes to their estate. What recompense, though, for abuse? How can incest be weighed against the value of holiday cabins? There's an emotional punch delivered on many pages of this finely written novel.

[The Gifted School](#)

Holsinger, Bruce

[2/7/20](#)

Deception. People have secrets and Bruce Holsinger pulls us into a swirl of deception in his novel titled, [The Gifted School](#). After a Boulder, Colorado-like suburb announces competitive testing for a new school, the race is on for those families who want to secure places. Holsinger lets us gradually come to know four families, and their connected relationships. As we get to know the characters, we are drawn into a world of privilege and ambitions inside a community divided by income and class. Our feelings about different characters change over the course of the novel, and what causes us to laugh in one section can lead us to sadness in another. Spouses have kept secrets from each other. Children are not who we think they are. Readers can reflect about friendship and ambition while considering the steps we are willing to take for our children, and whether those steps are really for us or for the kids.



Concordance

Howe, Susan

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed bin Salman

Hubbard, Ben

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

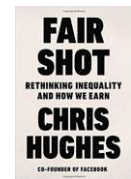


Fair Shot: Rethinking Inequality and How We Earn

Hughes, Chris

5/15/20

Pitch. Facebook co-founded Chris Hughes pitches his recommendation for a guaranteed basic income for all Americans in his book titled, Fair Shot: Rethinking Inequality and How We Earn. In the context of the current high unemployment rate thanks to the efforts to reduce deaths from covid-19, the notion of a safety net in the form of guaranteed income will appeal to many individuals. The form Hughes describes might not be the best solution, but it is well worth taking into account as we explore alternatives to providing a baseline level of support through good times and bad.

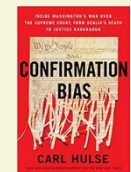



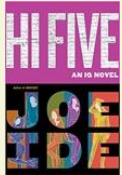
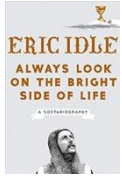
Confirmation Bias: Inside Washington's War Over the Supreme Court, from Scalia's Death to Justice Kavanaugh

Hulse, Carl

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

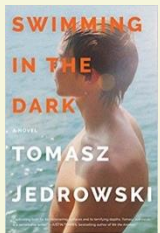


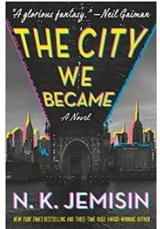
<u>Into the Fire</u>	Hurwitz, Gregg	****	<u>3/13/20</u>	<p>Transition. The fifth thrilling Orphan X novel by Gregg Hurwitz is titled, <u>Into the Fire</u>. This time out, every time Nowhere Man Evan Smoak thinks he gets the job done, he ends up back in the dangerous fray or the place described in the title. Protagonist Smoak continues to develop in complexity as the series progresses, and in this novel, there seems to be a longing in him to make a transition from his current life to something else. We will have to wait for the next installment to find out what happens. In the meantime, thriller fans will enjoy reading this novel.</p>	
<u>Hi Five</u>	Ide, Joe	****	<u>3/13/20</u>	<p>Multiple. Private Investigator Isaiah Quintabe is back for the fourth installment in the IQ series by Joe Ide, a novel titled, <u>Hi Five</u>. A murder suspect named Christiana challenges IQ to prove her innocence. An obstacle for IQ is that because she has multiple personalities, no one of whom saw everything that happened on the night of the murder. Fans of crime fiction and this series will enjoy the complexity of this novel and the skills of the detective whose life becomes more complicated with every installment.</p>	
<u>Always Look on the Bright Side of Life: A Sortabiography</u>	Idle, Eric	****	<u>6/10/20</u>	<p>Smiles. Most readers will be entertained by the great stories and jokes in Eric Idle's book titled, <u>Always Look on the Bright Side of Life: A Sortabiography</u>. You'll smile a lot (Smilealot?) by the hilarious memories that Idle offers in this book and be amazed at the charmed life he's led. He's rubbed shoulders with lots of interesting people, and he gives a funny inside look at lots of them in this book. Just thinking about what I read about Spamalot brings a smile to my face as I write</p>	

this. Any reader who needs a good laugh should consider reading this memoir.


<u>The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company</u>	Iger, Robert	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Imperfect Union: How Jessie and John Frémont Mapped the West, Invented Celebrity, and Helped Cause the Civil War</u>	Inskeep, Steve	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Wow, No Thank You</u>	Irby, Samantha	*****	<u>4/23/20</u>	Deadpan. I could not drink any beverage while reading Samantha Irby's book titled, <u>Wow, No Thank You</u> . Liquid in my mouth was prone to gush out as I was compelled to laugh with gusto at an image, word or finely turned phrase in this funny book. Whenever she describes her awkwardness in a social situation, readers can be confident that she will mine that feeling for all the possible humor that could be present. When she starts a riff, you're never sure when you will laugh out loud, but chances are high that you will. Readers with a funny bone that could use a good tickle are those most likely to enjoy the fine and funny writing in this book.	
<u>Make It Scream, Make It Burn</u>	Jamison, Leslie	*****	<u>7/15/20</u>	Range. There's a wide range of topics in the collection of essays by Leslie Jamison titled, <u>Make It Scream, Make It Burn</u> . Her writing is what's constant: a sharp eye and the ability to choose words with care and precision. There's a sensation of loneliness that captures a reader, whether found in a whale	

or a person. There's a close examination of the self and a way of seeing distant places in a new way. There were times while reading this that I felt as if I were following Jamison's own curiosity, examining something until sense began to penetrate her big brain. Intelligent readers are those most likely to enjoy these finely written essays.

<u>Swimming in the Dark</u>	Jedrowski, Tomasz	*****	<u>7/15/20</u>	<p>Choices. In his debut novel titled, <u>Swimming in the Dark</u>, Tomasz Jedrowski brings readers to 1980s Poland and into the lives of two young men who fall in love as they spend time together in the countryside after attending a summer agricultural camp. Ludwik and Janusz choose different paths when they return to Warsaw. One does what is expected to rise in the Communist party, and the other protests against the government. The story is compelling, the writing somewhat melancholy, and the situation relatable for many people around the world who search for both love and freedom.</p>	
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<u>The City We Became</u>	Jemisin, N.K.	*****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Avatars. The first installment in N.K. Jemisin's planned Great Cities Trilogy is a novel titled, <u>The City We Became</u>. Anyone who has lived in a great city knows that the place seems alive and has a certain set personality. I don't read a lot of fantasy fiction, but there are times we need to escape our world and Jemisin offers that with her writing skills. In the novel, she reveals avatars for New York's five boroughs and pits them against an alien from the multiverse. Each borough's personality shines in these characters. Avatars for São Paulo and Hong Kong show up to help New York out. For a</p>	
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<u>Simon the Fiddler</u>	Jiles, Paulette	****	<u>5/5/20</u>	<p>great escape that also captures contemporary life, consider reading this novel and the others in the series when they are released.</p> <p>Pursuit. Paulette Jiles sets her novel titled, <u>Simon the Fiddler</u>, in Texas as the Civil War is ending. Protagonist Simon Boudlin is a twenty-three-year-old musician who has avoided military service for both sides, thanks to his artistic skill. He pursues an indentured Irish servant with whom he falls in love. Jiles offers readers an enjoyable love story, surrounded by the atmosphere of life in post-war Texas. Fans of historical fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>Little Gods</u>	Jin, Meng	****	<u>5/15/20</u>	<p>Generations. The debut novel by Meng Jin titled, <u>Little Gods</u>, explores a question pondered often by the children of immigrants: where do we come from? Jin reveals the answer for protagonist Liya in the same way readers discover the story: in pieces, backwards and forwards, a gradual unveiling of events and memories to achieve understanding. We learn about physics, relationships and what inheritance means across generations. There are memories and ghosts, grief and joy. This novel offers more than the usually fraught mother-daughter relationship. Readers learn what's involved in accepting reality and making decisions that we think are best.</p>	
<u>Trouble the Saints</u>	Johnson, Alaya Dawn	****	<u>12/9/20</u>	<p>Magical. Alaya Dawn Johnson presents the perspectives of three characters in her novel titled, <u>Trouble the Saints</u>. In the first section, we meet an assassin named Pea whose hands have an unexplained, inherited, magical power. Pea's lover, Dev, comes next, and we</p>	

				learn more about Pea and others from his perspective. By the time a dancer named Tamara gives her perspective, we know her well enough to increase our appreciation of her humanity and complexity. The prose often sings, and the setting in New York in the 1940s is drawn with great skill.	
Sisters	Johnson, Daisy	****	10/27/20	<p>Siblings. Love and competition are often intertwined in sibling relationships. In her novel titled, Sisters, Daisy Johnson haunts readers with the lives of July and September as they face trauma and abuse. Johnson's prose keeps readers unsettled as she spills out her story in dribs and drabs, building to a surprising twist at the end. On the journey from beginning to end, Johnson's prose is beguiling and will be appreciated by those readers who enjoy finely written literary fiction and can tolerate meandering.</p>	
Window Seat on the World: My Travels with the Secretary of State	Johnson, Glen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Enemy of All Mankind: A True Story of Piracy, Power, and History's First Global Manhunt	Johnson, Steven	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Stillicide	Jones, Cynan	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

[A Very Punchable Face](#)

Jost, Colin

[11/17/20](#)

Range. The title of Colin Jost's memoir, [A Very Punchable Face](#), leads a reader to anticipate self-deprecating humor, and the narrative delivers that and more. From Staten Island to Harvard to Saturday Night Live, Jost delivers readers a range of vignettes and life lessons that will appeal to many readers, whether fans of Jost and SNL or not. It takes vulnerability to succeed in comedy, and Jost finds lots of ways to express that in this entertaining book.

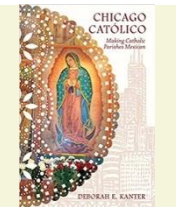


[Chicago Católico: Making Catholic Parishes Mexican](#)

Kanter, Deborah E.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

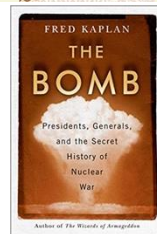


[The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War](#)

Kaplan, Fred

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

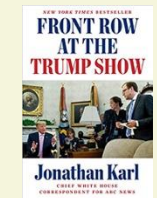


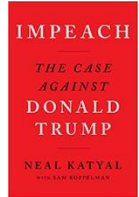

[Front Row at the Trump Show](#)

Karl, Jonathan

[8/5/20](#)

Observer. ABC News' Chief White House correspondent Jonathan Karl has written a book titled, [Front Row at the Trump Show](#). Karl's contact with Trump goes back to New York City when the two men were in different roles. From that foundation, Karl offers what he has observed over decades about the relationship between Donald Trump and the media. For those readers interested in contemporary politics, Karl's book offers a closely observed view of Trump and the White House. The anecdotes related in the book are interesting and the author's



				<p>perspective valuable in gaining insight about the current U.S. President.</p> <p>Foreign. Neal Katyal is a Georgetown law professor who has represented both the United States and individual clients at the Supreme Court. Readers of his book titled, <u>Impeach: The Case Against Donald Trump</u>, may doubt his non-partisan claim at the beginning of the book, but those who read to the end, including the appendix, are likely to come away with a greater appreciation of the Constitution, the intentions of the Founders, and why the “perfect” phone call between Presidents Trump and Zelensky documents the kind of offense that merits the pursuit of impeachment and removal because of the specific request for foreign help by President Trump not to support the interests of the United States, but to assist in a re-election campaign. Katyal describes why the Founders were concerned with foreign interference, and why the impeachment remedy is appropriate, and why waiting for the next election is not appropriate. Open minded and informed citizens can read this short book and become better informed about what is at stake in 2020.</p>	
<u>Impeach: The Case Against Donald Trump</u>	Katyal, Neal	*****	<u>1/24/20</u>		
<u>Zed</u>	Kavenna, Joanna	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

Tyll

Kehlmann, Daniel

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



Marguerite

Kemp, Marina

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



If I Had Two Wings

Kenan, Randall

11/24/20

Authenticity. Readers who enjoy finely written short stories are those most likely to enjoy the collection by Randall Kenan titled, If I Had Two Wings. Set mostly in a fictional North Carolina town, the ten stories present interesting and complex characters, full of life, and behaving in ways that are totally true to themselves. Over the course of just a few pages, Kenan enlivens his prose with finely chosen words, and pulls readers into authentic lives with great efficiency and skill. There's humor, invention, and overall empathy for how we make our way in the world.

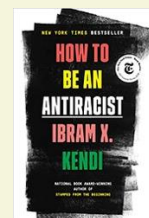


How to Be an Antiracist


Kendi, Ibram X.

11/9/20

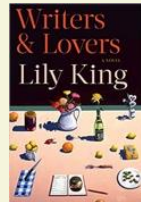

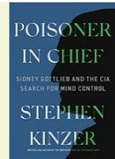
Awakening. If very few, if any, citizens consider themselves racist, why are so many individuals treated as less than fully human because of their race? In his book titled, How to Be an Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi helps all citizens examine our social constructs, the power dynamics in society, and our individual and collective mindsets. Close readers will experience an awakening of



				some sort, leading perhaps to a different way forward for all of us.	
<u>Death in Avignon</u>	Kent, Serena	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Fly Already</u>	Keret, Etgar	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief</u>	Kessler, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Divided States of America: Why Federalism Doesn't Work</u>	Kettl, Donald F.	****	<u>8/25/20</u>	<p>Inequality. Timing can be everything when it comes to non-fiction. The uneven responses among different cities and states to the novel coronavirus provide one more example of the main points Donald F. Kettl makes in his book titled, <u>The Divided States of America: Why Federalism Doesn't Work</u>. The sharing of power between the national government and individual states began as a creative compromise to create the United States of America. Kettl describes how that compromise built inequality into the balance, especially because of slavery. In this finely written book, Kettl argues that it is past time to reform our political system, and he offers some alternative solutions to what he sees as the problems of the current</p>	

				<p>system. Where one lives makes the world of difference when it comes to education, health care, infrastructure and the risk of dying from a virus that some political leaders have not taken seriously. Any reader interested in public affairs should read this thoughtful book.</p>	
<u>The Book of Longings</u>	Kidd, Sue Monk	****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Ana. In her novel titled, <u>The Book of Longings</u>, Sue Monk Kidd introduces readers to a strong female protagonist named Ana who led a remarkable life in the middle east during the Roman occupation. Also, Ana's husband was Jesus who was crucified by the Romans. The novel helps readers reimagine a familiar story in the context of how a woman navigated a society in which all women are undervalued. Some readers will enjoy the "what if" element of the plot, while others may be uncomfortable with the notion that Jesus had a wife. I found the story compelling, saw Ana as a fascinating and complex character, and came away from the novel with all my beliefs intact.</p>	
<u>The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West</u>	Kilcullen, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in</u>	King, Charles	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

the Twentieth
Century

<u>Writers & Lovers</u>	King, Lily	*****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Crossroads. Casey Peabody, the thirty-one year old protagonist of Lily King's novel titled, <u>Writers & Lovers</u>, feels all the confusion and vulnerability of being adrift. Casey's mother died suddenly. A romantic relationship fell apart. The novel she's been working on for six years still isn't finished. She lives in a hovel. At age thirty-one she works as a waitress to survive. Thanks to King's fine writing, readers care deeply about Casey, and root for her as she forges ahead. She falls in love with Oscar and Silas at the same time, both writers and very different personalities. Will she choose one or the other? Can she continue to pursue her dream of writing? Will she ever get out from under her debt? Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this finely written novel.</p>	
<u>If It Bleeds</u>	King, Stephen	****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Novellas. The four novellas in the collection by Stephen King titled, <u>If It Bleeds</u>, will appeal to all readers who enjoy his imaginative storytelling. I especially enjoyed the return of Holly Gibney from the Bill Hodges trilogy in the title story. I found each novella satisfying and read them too quickly, as I usually do with King's work.</p>	
<u>Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control</u>	Kinzer, Stephen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

Why We're Polarized

Klein, Ezra

4/9/20

Identity. The key message by Ezra Klein in his book titled, Why We're Polarized, is that we are getting the political environment that we have consciously created since the 1960s after the Civil Rights Act led southern Democrats to become Republicans, and instead of both parties having liberal and conservative members, the parties moved to the poles of one being conservative and the other liberal. If you're not fed up yet, things will only get worse. Even so-called independents identify more often with one political party over the other. Klein makes identity the lens to which we can observe what has polarized us. Klein has a knack for synthesis and for being a good explainer. It all makes sense as one reads it. On further reflection, what seemed conclusive becomes simplistic and a realization strikes that there are other lenses with which one can examine polarization in American life. That said, any reader interested in public affairs should consider reading this book to incorporate Klein's synthesis into one's own thinking about contemporary life.

Why
We're
Polarized
Ezra
Klein

On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal

Klein, Naomi

7/23/20

Collaborative. I confess to waiting to read Naomi Klein's book titled, On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal, until a stifling heat wave arrived. Warm or cold, Klein's message resonates: people all over the world need to collaborate to address climate change. This book is a collection of her essays over the course of two decades. She pulls together the connections between the climate crisis, underregulated capitalism, economic inequality, systemic racism, adverse health conditions, emigration for



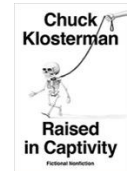
				survival and more. Whether you agree or disagree with Klein's views, you are likely to find that she describes her position with clarity and passion. It seems reasonable that we collaborate to work toward better outcomes for all.	
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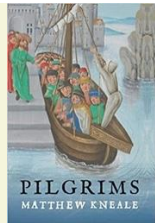
[Raised in Captivity](#)

Klosterman, Chuck

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



<u>Pilgrims</u>	Kneale, Matthew	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[Vera Kelly Is Not a Mystery](#)

Knecht, Rosalie

[7/15/20](#)

Felix. Having told readers who ex-CIA agent Vera Kelly is through an earlier novel, she certainly is not a mystery in Rosalie Knecht's novel titled, [Vera Kelly Is Not a Mystery](#). Vera is the kind of private investigator and human being who you want on your side. For a lost boy named Felix, Vera is just the right person to be on his side. After being asked by an old couple to find this missing boy, Vera goes to great lengths in her search, including taking a job at a home for boys, and going to the Dominican Republic to find his parents and their family home. Vera's own life intrudes along the way, adding depth to the character and to the plot momentum. I was thoroughly entertained by the story and the writing.

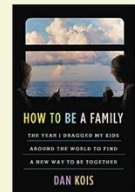


How to Be a Family: The Year I Dragged My Kids Around the World to Find a New Way to Be Together

Kois, Dan

10/12/20

Nurture. The ground in which things grow plays a big role in how something thrives or withers. For a family, that ground is a neighborhood, community or town. In his book titled, How to Be a Family: The Year I Dragged My Kids Around the World to Find a New Way to Be Together, Dan Kois describes the year he, his wife, and their two daughters spent living in four different places. Packed with candor and humor, Kois mines the ups and downs of family dynamics at play as they depart their home in Arlington, Virginia to spend three-month stints in New Zealand, Holland, Costa Rica and Hays, Kansas. The culture in each place supports the ways in which families live and interact with neighbors. If you've ever thought about packing up and living in a place different from what's been familiar, you're likely to find this book instructive and interesting. General readers can enjoy the vicarious pleasure and pain of how Kois and his family learned what nurture looks like in different places.

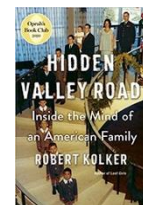


Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family


Kolker, Robert

6/24/20

Schizophrenia. Readers won't soon forget the Galvin family after completing Robert Kolker's exposition in his book titled, Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family. Don and Mimi Galvin had twelve children starting in the mid-1940s and ending in the mid-1960s. Six of the children developed schizophrenia. Through extensive interviews with family members, scientists and others, Kolker offers life stories that describe situations that will make most readers uncomfortable. Once a reader opens the door to come inside, it will be hard to



leave the Galvin family dynamics. While telling a personal story, Kolker also describes the development of science over the same time period and how the Galvin family influenced research and treatment for this disease.

To Be a Man	Krauss, Nicole	****	12/21/20	<p>Voices. The ten stories in the collection by Nicole Krauss titled, To Be a Man, seemed to speak to each other as well as to readers. Across multiple times and places, the stories explore identity in ways that are familiar and strange. The prose is finely written, and the insights into human nature are often profound. I felt the tension among relatable characters as they engage with each other. These are our voices in the stories, this is our life, this is our experience.</p>	
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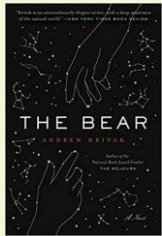
[Catfishing on CatNet](#)

Kritzer, Naomi

Unread



Shelf of Ennui 2020.



The Bear	Krivak, Andrew	*****	3/13/20	<p>Harmony. No other people are here. That's the setting for Andrew Krivak's finely written novel titled, The Bear. A father grieves the death of his wife and raises his daughter so she will know how to survive after he dies. Most readers will be drawn at once into the lives of these survivors, and thanks to Krivak's lyrical prose, we will walk with them and hunt and fish and struggle. We will feel the cold and smell the mountain and sea. Survival requires harmony with nature, and the girl achieves her place in this world without other people in a way that she never</p>	
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				seems lonely or empty. Fans of literary fiction and those who appreciate well-crafted prose are those most likely to enjoy this outstanding novel.	
<u>Arguing with Zombies: Economics, Politics, and the Fight for a Better Future</u>	Krugman, Paul	****	<u>4/9/20</u>	<p>Clarity. Among economists, including other Nobel prize winners, Paul Krugman writes with clarity. Over the past two decades, he uses the platform of <i>The New York Times</i> to convey his voice about a variety of issues with stark, often blunt, clarity, and he takes on foes mercilessly. In a book titled, <u>Arguing with Zombies: Economics, Politics, and the Fight for a Better Future</u>, Krugman organizes a collection of past columns by topic, and opens each theme with his current perspective, often involving how he was right then and he is right now. Whether you agree or disagree with Krugman, he writes with great skill and, as the title indicates, he continues to do battle with dead ideas: the zombie notions that have been proven wrong again and again but never seem to die. So, read about tax cuts, deficits, trade wars, social security, inequality, austerity, the climate and more. Smile when you agree, fume when you disagree, but admire his clarity.</p>	
<u>Sex and Vanity</u>	Kwan, Kevin	****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Formula. Kevin Kwan offers fans another comic novel featuring crazy rich people and their decadent lives. There's a romance at the center of this novel titled, <u>Sex and Vanity</u>. While Kwan uses the formula about cultural clash and the behavior of some superrich people that has worked for him in prior novels, he also enhances the complexity of the main characters in this novel so that</p>	

				<p>readers can feel some nuance which makes the comedy work even better.</p> <p>Stories. The late John L’Heureux didn’t seem to spend a lot of time thinking about the small questions in life. Instead, in his collection of stories titled, <u>The Heart Is a Full-Wild Beast</u>, readers find thoughtful examination of those moments that change lives. This collection is packed with joy, love, humor and celebrates the range of human behavior that brings the world pleasure. No topic seems to be off limits, as L’Heureux finds the love or the connection or the reasons to live and to carry on. I’ll miss the ways in which this talented writer helped me and other readers wrestle with what life throws us.</p>	
<u>The Heart Is a Full-Wild Beast</u>	L’Heureux, John	****	<u>7/6/20</u>		
<u>Pew</u>	Lacey, Catherine	*****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Silence. What makes you uncomfortable? The characters in Catherine Lacey’s novel titled, <u>Pew</u>, face what makes them uncomfortable, and Lacey’s fine writing leads readers toward understanding about human nature and life in modern society. When a family arrives in church one Sunday, they find someone stretched out in their pew. Their religious values lead them to reach out to help this person who seems to be homeless and seems to need help. All the inquiries of this person are met with silence, leaving the community discomfited. What do we call someone who does not disclose a name? They decide to call the person, “Pew.” Is Pew a man or a woman? After being taken for a medical exam, Pew refuses to remove clothing, leaving the gender classification unresolved. Skin color does not unequivocally establish the sorting</p>	

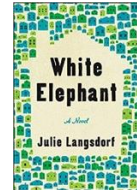
				<p>classification that some in the community desire. Without the answers from Pew relating to identity, the community members are very uncomfortable. Lacey leads the narrative forward toward the community forgiveness ritual that pulls the story together in ways that may not satisfy all readers. Lacey's prose is finely written, and this novel will appeal to those readers who appreciate thought-provoking literary fiction.</p>	
<p><u>Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America</u></p>	Lalami, Laila	*****	12/21/20	<p>Us. Sometimes it takes the talent of a gifted writer to describe experiences of living that illuminate both those who have similar experience as well as those who think the world just isn't that way. In her book titled, <u>Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America</u>, Laila Lalami describes her experience in the United States in the context of being a citizen and also receiving messages that she doesn't belong here. If you continue to think in terms of a melting pot, you're likely to revise that view after reading this book. Lalami holds us all to task at the reality of who we mean whenever we say, "we." What does it mean today to be "one of us?" How welcoming are we to fellow citizens who don't look or sound like "us?" What are the things we do every day to welcome others or to send them the message that they do not belong?</p>	
<p><u>The Outsider: Pope Francis and His Battle to Reform the Church</u></p>	Lamb, Christopher	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

White Elephant

Langsdorf, Julie

5/15/20

Neighbors. Some of us want to fit in and others want to stand out. In her debut novel titled, White Elephant, Julie Langsdorf brings us into a suburban neighborhood and the conflict between one homeowner whose new behemoth house dwarfs the neighbors, and irritates those who want things to remain the way they've been since the 1920s. The houses and the neighborhood provide the backdrop for the human relationships that are sparked by this conflict and the ways in which we are attracted and repelled. We don't get to choose our neighbors, and in Langsdorf's mix the results of an unintentional grouping provide an entertaining novel.



The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

Larson, Erik

4/16/20

Persistent. Whether you know a lot or a little about Winston Churchill, you're likely to enjoy Erik Larson's book titled, The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz, an account of the prime minister's first year in that role beginning in May 1940, a time of great peril. Larson presents the intensity of that time with skill. We can almost feel the German bombs falling on England. Lord Beaverbrook, Professor Lindemann and many others deliver for Churchill and country. Larson captures Churchill's persistence in the face of opposition at home and from the enemy. Churchill's mastery of American relations with Roosevelt, Hopkins, and Harriman come to life thanks to Larson's lively writing. Readers who enjoy well written history for general audiences are those most likely to enjoy this book.



[Dragon Pearl](#)

Lee, Yoon Ha

[10/27/20](#)

Quest. While I am not the target demographic for a middle school science fiction novel (although some of my grandchildren are), I find that there are times when any adult can be very satisfied by reading a book in this genre. I thoroughly enjoyed Yoon Ha Lee's novel titled, [Dragon Pearl](#), in which thirteen-year old protagonist Min goes on a quest to find out why her older brother uncharacteristically left his Space Forces battle cruiser. There's adventure on these pages, ghosts, lots of action and reinforcement of family values. Min uses fox magic and deceit at many turns to complete her quest. Consider reading this fun story as a distraction from whatever place may be calling for your escape.



[Luster](#)

Leilani, Raven

[12/9/20](#)

Edie. Raven Leilani's debut novel titled, [Luster](#), features a Black protagonist named Edie, an artist who navigates through a world that has left her unmoored. I found myself rereading sentences that are exquisitely crafted and express in art the life that is Edie. Before we know it, readers are awash in the waves that Edie tries to ride as she spends her 20s trying to find her place in the world. We encounter issues about race, class and fidelity. We watch as Edie takes one step after another toward becoming herself. Fans of finely written fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.



[Transaction Man:
The Rise of the
Deal and the
Decline of the
American Dream](#)

Lemann, Nicholas

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

A small table showing book statistics for 'Transaction Man' and 'The Rise of the Deal and the Decline of the American Dream' by Nicholas Lemann. The table includes columns for book title, author, and various statistics like ASIN, price, and ratings. The data is as follows:

Book Title	Author	ASIN	Price	Ratings
Transaction Man	Nicholas Lemann	B0112748	0.34%	25R 0.9%
The Rise of the Deal and the Decline of the American Dream	Nicholas Lemann	B0112748	0.34%	25R 0.9%

Trace Elements	Leon, Donna	*****	5/26/20	<p>Water. Fans will enjoy the return of Commissario Guido Brunetti in the twenty-ninth installment of the series by Donna Leon, a novel titled, Trace Elements. Set in Venice during a hot summer, Leon takes readers and Brunetti on an exciting murder case involving the quality of the water supply for Venice. The familiar cast of characters returns in this installment, and thanks to Leon's writing skills, we feel that we are in Venice and we struggle with Brunetti in deciding the right things to do in the search for justice. Fans of crime fiction, especially of this series, are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
Kochland: The Secret History of Koch Industries and Corporate Power in America	Leonard, Christopher	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
This America: The Case for the Nation	Lepore, Jill	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
They Don't Represent Us: Reclaiming Our Democracy	Lessig, Lawrence	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth	Levin, Josh	*****	2/7/20	<p>Criminal. I thought the trope of the Chicago welfare queen was a racist whistle used by politicians, especially Ronald Reagan, to drum up votes. While there were plenty of lies and a framework of racism at play, there actually was a woman who</p>	

				committed major fraud among other crimes in Illinois. In his book titled, The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth , Josh Levin tells us the true story of Linda Taylor (who used lots of names), and the truth is sad. Taylor was a con artist, a welfare cheat, and probably a murderer. Her evil deeds are presented in detail in this book, and if it were fiction, we would find it too improbable. The true story lands as a recital of a troubled life and a criminal who treated everyone with contempt and used others for her own ends.	
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[A Time to Build: From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream](#)

Levin, Yuval

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



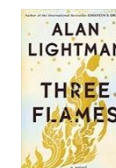
The Man Who Saw Everything	Levy, Deborah	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[Three Flames](#)

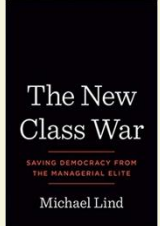
Lightman, Alan

[11/17/20](#)

Hope. In his novel titled, [Three Flames](#), Alan Lightman develops a half-dozen characters in three generations of rural Cambodians over the past fifty years. Their lives are a struggle, and each individual is strengthened by hope. Cruelty requires a response. Children are assets that can be used to repay debts. The modern world challenges the culture of the past. Redemption is possible. We must endure



what we face in the present to be here for a better future. If any of that sounds interesting to you, you're likely to enjoy reading this novel.

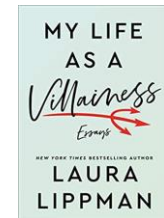
<u>The New Class War: Saving Democracy from the Managerial Elite</u>	Lind, Michael	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[My Life as a Villainess](#)

Lippman, Laura

[8/25/20](#)

Verve. Just the word “villainess” in the title gives readers a taste of the verve with which Laura Lippman writes in her collection of essays titled, [My Life as a Villainess](#). I’ve read her fiction for years, especially her Tess Monaghan crime series set in Baltimore. I thoroughly enjoyed the wit and enthusiasm of her non-fiction in these essays. Sometimes, she’s relating the experience of Everywoman in recent decades. Other times, she offers a glimpse into her own life in ways that will entertain most readers. We get to see among other topics, some of her childhood, life in school, finding work as a journalist, and her experience being an older mother. Readers who enjoy a wry take on our crazy world, good writing, and some real verve, should consider reading these essays.

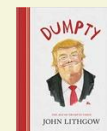


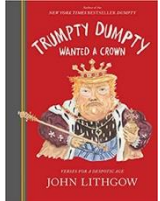
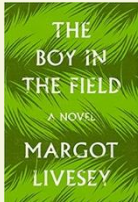
[Dumpty: The Age of Trump in Verse](#)

Lithgow, John

[1/2/20](#)

Partisan. Political satire through text and illustration have a long history. Actor John Lithgow has expanded beyond his acting chops to display his writing and drawing skill in his book titled, [Dumpty: The Age of Trump in Verse](#). The illustrations by the author are terrific, and the verse contains a partisan bite that will delight some readers



				and annoy others. If you like watching <i>The Late Show with Stephen Colbert</i> , you're likely to enjoy Lithgow's book which the author read in part on that show.	
<u>Trumpty Dumpty Wanted a Crown: Verses for a Despotie Age</u>	Lithgow, John	****	<u>10/27/20</u>	<p>Doggerel. President Franklin Roosevelt wanted to be sure that artists were employed during the Depression because he knew that if left adrift their skills could do damage. In his second book of political satire in verse and line drawings, sheltering-at-home actor John Lithgow displays again his wit as he turns his attention to the despotic tendencies of President Trump. While reading doggerel may not suit a vast audience, I found his book titled, <u>Trumpty Dumpty Wanted a Crown: Verses for a Despotie Age</u>, to be a quick read and a biting indictment of some of the recent highlights (or lowlights) of the Trump administration. Trump supporters will experience raised blood pressure and some fury if they read this book. Readers who can't wait for the end of the Trump regime may laugh and cry at the sharp wit in the poems and images in this book.</p>	
<u>The Boy in the Field</u>	Livesey, Margot	****	<u>10/19/20</u>	<p>Interior. Fans of finely written prose are those most likely to enjoy Margot Livesey's novel titled, <u>The Boy in the Field</u>. Each character's depth and interior life becomes revealed over the course of a well-structured plot. Three siblings are coming of age and observing their parents and others in new ways. Even the dog's interior life plays a part as the story progresses. The siblings are finding their places in the world and in relationships. Livesey draws us into these lives and we find ourselves caring about them deeply.</p>	

Heaven, My Home

Locke, Attica

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

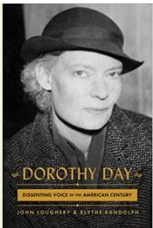


Dorothy Day:
Dissenting Voice of
the American
Century

Loughery, John and
Blythe Randolph

Unread

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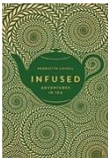


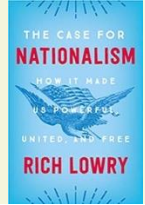

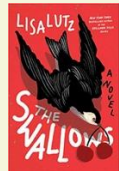
Infused:
Adventures in Tea

Lovell, Henrietta

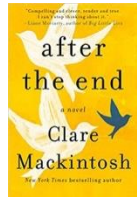

5/15/20

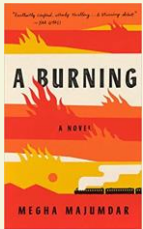
Care. I admit to being a tea snob, so reading Henrietta Lovell’s book titled, Infused: Adventures in Tea, was right up my alley. I nodded at all the ways in which she’s passionate about good tea, and the care with which we should treat the finest tea leaves to capture the depth of flavor. As I’m writing this sentence, my bride has just arrived with a pot of Makaibari Estate Darjeeling, II Flush FTGFOP-1. It’s brewed perfectly, tastes marvelous and has a light golden color that captures my eye. Whether you’re a tea snob or not, if you like to taste delicious things, consider reading this book and expanding your tea consumption into some of the examples she describes along with her stories about the places and people who take care to bring us fine tea. When you’re ready to select tea to suit your palate, consider ordering from great tea merchants, my friends Bill and Janet Todd, at <http://www.todd-holland.com/>. Next, I’m thinking about brewing a nice China oolong from the mountains.



<u>The Case for Nationalism: How It Made Us Powerful, United, and Free</u>	Lowry, Rich	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Lost Children Archive</u>	Luiselli, Valeria	****	<u>2/7/20</u>	<p>Found. Fans of finely written literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy Valeria Luiselli's novel titled, <u>Lost Children Archive</u>. I can't begin to describe the ways in which Luiselli uses multiple elements to contribute to an imaginative and coherent whole. A family of four travels out West to document sounds and search for children who have been lost crossing the Southern border. The prose remains powerful throughout, and the raw humanity in multiple situations will break your heart. We can feel tension building on the journey, and by the time the tension is relieved, we will all have found something important. Through the voices of the ten-year-old boy and five-year-old girl, we learn about ourselves, one of the many reasons we read fiction.</p>	
<u>The Swallows</u>	Lutz, Lisa	***	<u>4/9/20</u>	<p>Objectification. The prep school as a petri dish for growing diseased human behavior may be overdone in fiction, but Lisa Lutz uses the setting with skill in her novel titled, <u>The Swallows</u>. After Alexandra Witt reluctantly joins the faculty at Stonebridge Academy, her creative writing assignment becomes a reagent to identify the rot of abhorrent behavior at this coed school. We're drawn into a toxic environment in which female students are objectified by males in an organized and systematic way. We see the power dynamics at work in the school and</p>	

			<p>the escalation of the resistance by the female students to the system. There were times I felt guilty for laughing and wondered if Lutz led me successfully into that trap. Some of her phrases made me stop as she caught me by surprise. Provided your appetite for reading about oral sex exists, this novel is a way of seeing MeToo in yet one more dimension.</p>	
Vesper Flights	Macdonald, Helen	****	<p>9/8/20</p> <p>Outside. I spent a half hour sitting on the screened back porch yesterday morning watching a hummingbird rest at our feeder, sheltered from the rain, and slurping our sugar water. I had just finished reading Helen Macdonald's essay collection titled, Vesper Flights, so I was primed to observe birds or other aspects of nature and not pay attention to the passing of time. Each of her essays in this collection contains fine writing and close observations about our world and ourselves. As I write this quick review, I'm back on the porch looking up often from the laptop to watch a bird in flight, a squirrel leaping from one branch to another, a Monarch landing on the milkweed and a rabbit scooting to a hiding place under a shrub. Grand!</p>	
In the Dream House	Machado, Carmen Maria	****	<p>4/16/20</p> <p>Abuse. In her memoir titled, In the Dream House, Carmen Maria Machado explores emotional abuse from a variety of perspectives. Thanks to her fine writing and persistent wit, readers are unlikely to become morose or depressed after reading this book. We can read memoirs to understand things about human nature, including behavior in forms we have not experienced ourselves. The result is a greater</p>	

				<p>appreciation and empathy for what each of us can face, and insight into those interpersonal dynamics that can operate at many different levels.</p>	
<u>After the End</u>	Mackintosh, Clare	*****	<u>7/23/20</u>	<p>Divergent. Clare Mackintosh's emotionally taut novel is titled, <u>After the End</u>. Parents Max and Pip face a difficult choice in how to treat their brain damaged child, Dylan. The tension in the novel comes when the parents diverge in choosing the best approach in caring for Dylan. Mackintosh explores these relationships, the heart wrenching decisions that need to be made, and the meaning of quality of life. She reveals ways in which the divergent paths might play out over time. I learned at the end of the novel that the story is a personal one for the author who faced a similar situation. Writers are often advised to write about what they know, and it is with emotional depth and great skill and personal knowledge that Mackintosh describes the most difficult choices that parents may ever make.</p>	
<u>Blue Ticket</u>	Mackintosh, Sophie	*****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Destiny. Fiction can help readers think about the different ways in which society could be organized and the ways in which individuals respond to social constraints. In her novel titled, <u>Blue Ticket</u>, Sophie Mackintosh describes a world in which motherhood is determined at the time of menarche when a young woman goes to a machine that spits out either a white ticket to set her on the path toward motherhood or a blue ticket that leads her to the insertion of permanent birth control. Protagonist Calla has been given a blue ticket, and the novel</p>	

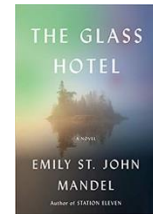
				explores the ways in which she responds to this destiny.	
<u>The Mountains Sing</u>	Mai, Nguyen Phan Que	*****	<u>5/15/20</u>	<p>Sacrifice. The first novel in English by poet Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai is titled, <u>The Mountains Sing</u>. The multigenerational story of the rise and fall and rise of members of the Trần family in Việt Nam will appeal to any reader or book group that loves to dive into fine writing that draws readers into the lives of people who sacrifice and suffer to obtain a better life. We follow members of the family from their land ownership and wealth prior to the rise of the Communists through the devastation that came from land reform and the wreckage of the Việt Nam War to the present time. This well-told story pulls us into family life and the actions taken to survive and reunite after separation.</p>	
<u>A Burning</u>	Majumdar, Megha	****	<u>7/15/20</u>	<p>Aspirations. Three central characters in Megha Majumdar's debut novel titled, <u>A Burning</u>, have aspirations that they hope will be met. Set in contemporary India, the novel presents three points of view which combine to help readers absorb the complexity of their lives. Javin is a Muslim woman who has been imprisoned falsely for a terrorist attack. PT Sir was Javin's teacher whose state in life has been ascending because of what he has done for a politician. Lovely is an outcast who wants to be a movie star, and she can provide the alibi to release Javin. Majumdar pulls readers into issues of justice, fate, corruption and desire while using beautiful prose and exhibiting deep insight into human nature.</p>	

[The Glass Hotel](#)

Mandel, Emily St.
John

[4/16/20](#)

Revelations. The canvas of Emily St. John Mandel's novel titled, [The Glass Hotel](#), involves the whole world from 1958 to 2029. I apologize for that spoiler, because the canvas takes a while to uncover. Mandel delivers scenes, narrators and time periods that gradually reveal their connections. The complex characters are so finely drawn that we can anticipate behavior well in advance as we participate through reading in the revelations of what may have been present all along. Protagonist Vincent is a talented bartender in a remote luxury hotel. She is also a prolific filmmaker whose structure involves five minute takes of what seems like nothing. The owner of the hotel, Jonathan Alkaitis, heads a successful investment firm that manages money. We learn early on that his success comes from the Ponzi scheme he has been running. Vincent leaves the hotel to join Alkaitis in a role where most consider her as his wife. As the opaque becomes transparent and what seems transparent become opaque, Mandel leads readers on a delightful reading journey that I enjoyed from beginning to end.



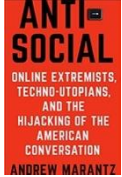
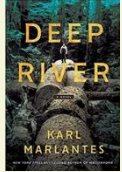
[The Mirror and the Light](#)

Mantel, Hilary

[3/26/20](#)

Finale. Spoiler alert: in the third installment of Hilary Mantel's novels featuring Thomas Cromwell, he dies. Readers who loved the first two novels may be pleased that it takes almost eight hundred pages to wrap up his story in the finale titled, [The Mirror and the Light](#). Even for those readers who already know the details of the historical period covered, Mantel finds ways to maintain our interest in whether King Henry will die before Cromwell. Mantel also



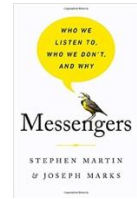
			finds ways to help readers understand both the consistency of the main characters and how they change over time. Cromwell's machinations in service of the king have made him weary. The same ways in which he vanquished adversaries are now used by his enemies to bring Cromwell down. Fans of historical fiction can admire the ways in which Mantel brings the people and time to life as we read all three books. Historians may quibble about her hits and misses, but for readers looking to escape and be entertained, this book will be a pleasure.	
<u>Antisocial: Online Extremists, Techno-Utopians, and the Hijacking of the American Conversation</u>	Marantz, Andrew	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Deep River</u>	Marlantes, Karl	*****	<u>2/7/20</u>	<p>Saga. Don't look past Karl Marlantes' novel titled, <u>Deep River</u>, because of the size. He needs all seven hundred pages to pull us into the lives of determined people, living in rough places, working hard, and building families and communities. Three siblings leave Finland and settle in southern Washington state at the end of the nineteenth century. Marlantes describes logging, salmon fishing, and conflict between workers and owners. We spend decades with these siblings and a growing cast of characters facing a range of life events and challenges that propel the narrative. Fans of historical fiction that's well-written are those readers most likely to enjoy this moving American story.</p> 

Messengers: Who We Listen To, Who We Don't and Why

Martin, Stephen and Joseph Marks

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

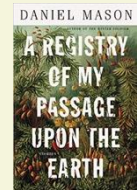


A Registry of My Passage Upon the Earth

Mason, Daniel

11/9/20

Survival. There are nine well-crafted short stories in the collection by Daniel Mason titled, A Registry of My Passage Upon the Earth. Each story involves characters who find ways to survive in response to struggles. Mason excels at revealing a character's state of mind that provides the roadmap to satisfying our curiosity about the lives of others. Mason takes readers to time periods and places that provide a vivid backdrop for his exploration of the core of what it takes for each of us to survive and thrive.

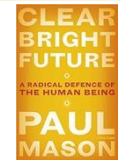


Clear Bright Future

Mason, Paul

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



And Their Children After Them

Mathieu, Nicolas

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

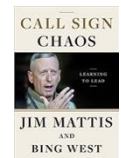


Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead

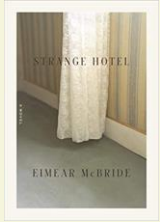
Mattis, Jim and Bing West

2/7/20

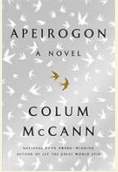
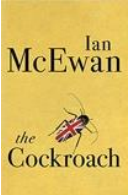

Instructive. Former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis has too much class to write a tell-all book about his time in the Trump Administration, one of the many lessons he offers in his book titled, Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead. Mattis is a thoughtful reader and a lifelong learner. He packs this book with stories from his own life and insights that can apply to all readers. Mattis



tells us of his childhood and the journey in the Marines to become a four-star general. Many of his lessons were hard won, and become instructive for all of us, especially those in leadership roles.

<u>Strange Hotel</u>	McBride, Eimear	****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Memories. What triggers your memories? The unnamed protagonist of Eimear McBride's novel titled, <u>Strange Hotel</u>, launches into a stream of consciousness recollection of her memories after she returns to a hotel room she had stayed in years earlier. Fasten your seat belt, and stick with the recitation of places, things and people that flow past rapidly, as happens whenever our memories are triggered. The journey with this novel won't take long, it will often be strange, and by the last page one reaction might be like mine: that was really something. I'm just not sure what.</p>	
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<u>Deacon King Kong</u>	McBride, James	*****	<u>4/9/20</u>	<p>Sportcoat. Readers looking for a funny novel with terrific characters, spot perfect dialogue and all around great writing should pick up James McBride's novel titled, <u>Deacon King Kong</u>. The title refers to the protagonist, a church deacon with a penchant for the moonshine called King Kong, and whom everyone calls Sportcoat. Set in a Brooklyn housing project in 1969, the novel is packed with a cast of engaging characters, living and dead, and relationships that pass the test of time. I kept copying phrases like "...your cheese done slid off your cracker." (p. 44) Add to the recipe guns, drugs, the mob, and a long-held secret, and the result is hours of hilarious reading pleasure.</p>	
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<u>Apeirogon</u>	McCann, Colum	*****	<u>3/13/20</u>	<p>Facets. The core of the novel titled, <u>Apeirogon</u>, by Colum McCann, is based on the lives of two real men, Palestinian Bassam Aramin and Israeli Rami Elhanan. Rami's daughter, Smadar, was killed by suicide bombers, and Bassam's daughter, Abir, was killed by a rubber bullet. Their shared grief and loss draw them together to become messengers for peace. McCann constructs a multi-faceted structure to pull readers into this story. Chapters rise in number from 1-500, followed by 1001, then descend in number from 500. These pieces and fragments combine into a complete novel that does what all the best novels do: holds up life for us to examine and try to make sense of it all. This is the writer as artist producing what I consider a masterpiece.</p>	
<u>The Cockroach</u>	McEwan, Ian	****	<u>11/9/20</u>	<p>Satire. Readers who enjoy both political satire and literature are those most likely to enjoy Ian McEwan's skewering of Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brexit in a novel titled, <u>The Cockroach</u>. With a nod to Kafka, McEwan spews invective with precision on Johnson and on the gullible people who believe what he says. If you need a good laugh, reading about reverse-flow economics will do the trick. To whatever extent McEwan wrote this novel to help us laugh at these crazy upside-down times, he succeeded with me, especially when his prose was so finely structured that the satire extended beyond politics to overwrought literary facades.</p>	
<u>Joy and 52 Other Very Short Stories</u>	McGraw, Erin	****	<u>2/21/20</u>	<p>Insight. Erin McGraw knows people in all our rich humanity, and she knows how to put together a phrase. In her collection titled, <u>Joy and 52 Other Very Short Stories</u>,</p>	

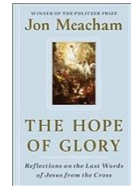
			<p>McGraw treats us to her insight about people and draws out laughter regularly. Treat this collection as you would a prized box of Belgian chocolates or a rare single malt Scotch. Dole out the stories in small doses, so the pleasure lasts longer. She does more in a page or two than some writers can accomplish in multiple volumes. In the pause between stories, I found my imagination running away using McGraw's words as a starting block, and the open track ahead for me to use the insight I gained to wonder about us and our world.</p>	
Zucked: Waking Up to the Facebook Catastrophe	McNamee, Roger	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope	Meacham, Jon	*****	<p><u>12/9/20</u></p> <p>Beloved. No matter how much you think you know about the late John Lewis, you're likely to learn something new about him after reading Jon Meacham's book titled, His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope. From his early life in rural Alabama preaching to chickens through his service in the United States House of Representatives, you'll learn about all the different kinds of good trouble this beloved man got into in a full life of service to others. Against powerful forces, especially in the struggle for civil rights, Lewis maintained a steady focus on ideals and values, not wavering from taking the next step toward achieving a more perfect union.</p>	

The Hope and the Glory: Reflections on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross

Meacham, Jon

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

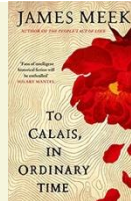


To Calais, In Ordinary Time

Meek, James

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

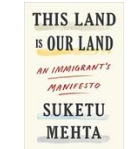


This Land Is Our Land: An Immigrant's Manifesto

Mehta, Suketu

Unread

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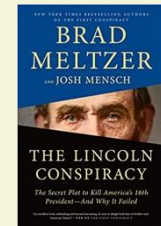


The Lincoln Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill America's 16th President--and Why It Failed

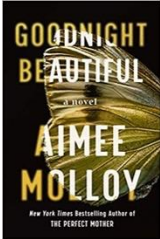
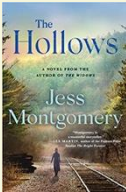
Meltzer, Brad and Josh Mensch

12/17/20

Gripping. If you avoid reading history because you find it dull, consider picking up a copy of a book titled, The Lincoln Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill America's 16th President--and Why It Failed, by novelist Brad Meltzer and historian Josh Mensch. The book tells the story of a plot by a Baltimore secret society to kill Abraham Lincoln on his journey by train to Washington, DC in 1861 to assume the duties of the United States Presidency. I had never heard of this plot before, so I found the narrative gripping to read and was excited to find out something new about Abraham Lincoln. An added bonus involves the way Allan Pinkerton was involved, how he kept the secret, and that he employed a woman to play a key role in protecting Mr. Lincoln.



<u>The Capital</u>	Menasse, Robert	****	<u>4/23/20</u>	<p>Pigs. Robert Menasse presents readers with an astute take on the tension between nationalism and union in Europe in his novel titled, <u>The Capital</u>. Set in Brussels, we get to enjoy the dysfunction of the bureaucracy, in which Auschwitz is selected as the best location for a celebration, and pigs take center stage in the plot. While comic in many respects, the novel helps readers reflect on the importance of those institutions that can bridge our differences. We need novels like this one to hold up for us our absurdities and lead us to think about what's important.</p>	
<u>Ecstasy and Terror: From the Greeks to Game of Thrones</u>	Mendelsohn, Daniel	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Religion As We Know It</u>	Miles, Jack	***	<u>2/14/20</u>	<p>Brief. Jack Miles has written a lot about religion, and his latest book titled, <u>Religion As We Know It</u>, may be the briefest and most accessible. While he points readers toward <i>The Norton Anthology of World Religions</i>, for which he is general editor, it seemed to me that he's using this little book to include things he couldn't write in the anthology. Readers with a general interest in religion are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	
<u>A Children's Bible</u>	Millet, Lydia	****	<u>6/24/20</u>	<p>Storms. The parents in Lydia Millet's novel titled, <u>A Children's Bible</u>, have abdicated responsibility so a group of twelve children of various ages fend for themselves after storms devastate the summer house where the extended group has been staying. The children leave their hedonistic parents in the damaged house and head into chaos. If your appetite is for dark humor in troubled times,</p>	

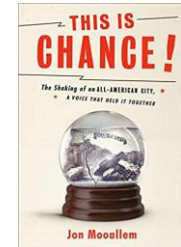
				<p>you're likely to love reading this novel. Nature, man, animals and their relationships are fodder for Millet's fine writing and observations about the state of our lives and our world.</p>	
<u>Goodnight Beautiful</u>	Molloy, Aimee	****	<u>12/9/20</u>	<p>Twists. Fans of suspense novels will enjoy being deceived by the narrative in Aimee Molloy's novel titled, <u>Goodnight Beautiful</u>. Protagonists Sam Statler and his new wife, Annie Potter, leave New York City to make a new life in Sam's quiet hometown upstate. What follows builds in suspense, especially after Sam goes missing. Just when a reader follows the clues, Molloy switches gears and there's a new puzzle to figure out. I enjoyed every time I had to accept that what I thought was going on just wasn't the case. This novel offers readers a few hours of good entertainment.</p>	
<u>The Hollows</u>	Montgomery, Jess	****	<u>3/6/20</u>	<p>Integration. Jess Montgomery reprises characters from her debut novel, <i>The Widows</i>, in a new novel titled, <u>The Hollows</u>, also set in the 1920s. The past doesn't always stay buried in the Appalachian hills of Southeast Ohio, and Sheriff Lily Ross finds herself uncovering disturbing evidence of KKK activity and conflict in the community over integration. Lily's character continues to develop in this novel, and her choices along with those of her friends provide most of the plot momentum. Fans who love historical fiction with strong female characters are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	

[This Is Chance!: The Shaking of an All-American City, A Voice That Held It Together](#)

Mooallem, Jon

[5/5/20](#)

Earthquake. Readers who enjoy uplifting stories about people helping others are those most likely to enjoy Jon Mooallem's book titled, [This Is Chance!: The Shaking of an All-American City, A Voice That Held It Together](#). Mooallem tells the story of the Great Alaskan Earthquake of 1964, much of it from the perspective of Genie Chance, a radio broadcaster who found herself able to help others by staying on the radio in Anchorage and keeping people informed and helping point people in the direction of helping one another. This is a great character study of Genie Chance, of the can-do attitude of newcomers in Anchorage, and the human goodness of people who just step up to do what needs to be done.

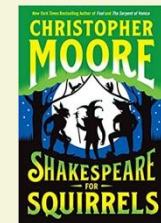


[Shakespeare for Squirrels](#)

Moore, Christopher

[8/19/20](#)

Dream. The latest romp with Shakespeare and Christopher Moore is a novel titled, [Shakespeare for Squirrels](#), the author's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The more you know Shakespeare, the funnier this novel is, and the squirrels are the icing on the cake. Characters from Moore's earlier Shakespearean ventures are reprised to the satisfaction of readers of the previous two novels in this set. If you liked Pocket in the earlier novels, you'll love him in this one as he works his magic. Readers looking for a relaxing diversion are those most likely to enjoy this novel.



[Five Days: The Fiery Reckoning of an American City](#)

Moore, Wes

[7/6/20](#)

Changemakers. Robin Hood Foundation CEO Wes Moore pulls readers of his book titled, [Five Days: The Fiery Reckoning of an American City](#), into the long weekend of Freddie Gray's death in Baltimore in April 2015. We learn about the city of Baltimore,



the root sources of discontent that led to the violence following Gray's death, and the hopeful signs of a better future. We are introduced to changemakers who we'll root for and support as they try to make Baltimore a better place. This is one more book that helps privileged white men like me understand better what Black Lives Matter is about, to commit to supporting those trying to effect lasting impact, and to change what I can to make things better.

<u>The Starless Sea</u>	Morgenstern, Erin	*****	<u>1/2/20</u>	<p>Doors. With apologies (or thanks) to Dr. Seuss, oh the places we'll go and the things we'll see. That's the welcome readers will receive when opening the five hundred page novel by Erin Morgenstern titled, <u>The Starless Sea</u>. There are keys to be found as shown on the book jacket and doors to be opened. We are taken inside a secret world and get to sail on a starless sea. We are on a journey, and this imaginative book will give interested readers a delightful magical tour. Morgenstern's descriptive prose brings this world alive for us. Close readers will love the symbolism and the beauty of the writing and the references to other imaginative works of fiction. I loved the adventure of the journey and I admire the quality of the prose.</p> 
<u>The Awkward Black Man</u>	Mosley, Walter	*****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Portraits. I've read a lot of Walter Mosley's novels, and I consistently enjoy his fine writing and the ways in which his characters are complex, interesting, and exhibit human behavior that's always recognizable. In a collection of seventeen short stories titled, <u>The Awkward Black Man</u>, Mosley exhibits his talent at character portraits with great skill and efficiency. Within the constraints of the</p> 

short story structure, Mosley presents vulnerability, struggles, awkwardness in the world and relationships, and strength in moving ahead. There are terrific characters presented in these stories, and many readers will see themselves and others presented with insight and sensitivity by the fine writing of this talented author.

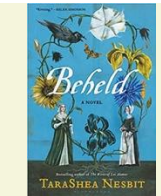
<u>Trouble Is What I Do</u>	Mosley, Walter	****	<u>3/13/20</u>	<p>Catfish. The seventh novel in the Leonid McGill series by Walter Mosley is titled, <u>Trouble Is What I Do</u>. After a ninety-two-year old man named Catfish comes to New York from Mississippi with what seems like a simple request, P.I. McGill agrees to help. No good deed goes unpunished. What follows in the story pulls together all the complexity of this complicated protagonist. While packed with lots of action, this short novel seemed to end too quickly. Fans of crime fiction and this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this installment, and with me, look forward to more pages in the next novel.</p>	
<u>The Revisionaries</u>	Moxon, A.R.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>How to Forget: A Daughter's Memoir</u>	Mulgrew, Kate	****	<u>4/16/20</u>	<p>Grief. As another child of an alcoholic Catholic father, I felt an empathy with the author as I read Kate Mulgrew's memoir titled, <u>How to Forget: A Daughter's Memoir</u>. I approached the book expecting less candor than the talented actor delivers in this emotional and vulnerable book. Written from a place of grief following the death of</p>	

				both parents, the book is packed with love and caring as well as understanding while still disclosing the suffering among so many of the individuals described. There's wit and self-deprecation and the telling of interesting family stories. Most of all, this is a tribute by a daughter infused with love.	
Please See Us	Mullen, Caitlin	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
Earthlings	Murata, Sayaka	*****	12/21/20	Outsider. Don't let the cute cover image of Sayaka Murata's novel titled, Earthlings , lull you. This is a dark story of a troubled woman named Natsuki who feels like an alien within her own family and society. When in Tokyo, she is scolded by her mother, and abused by a young teacher. She finds refuge during Summer, which she spends on a Nagano mountaintop at the home of her grandparents. Her cousin Yuu and her plush toy Piyyut claim to be from the planet Popinpopopia and being on the mountain may bring them closer to their real home. Murata pulls readers into Natsuki's troubled and dark life as each succeeding episode makes us understand her difficulties in new and disturbing ways. This novel seems to want to tell us about the troubles of contemporary society and does so in ways that will be haunting for many readers.	

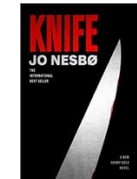
<u>The Cactus League</u>	Nemens, Emily	****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Ensemble. Whether you love baseball or not, you're likely to enjoy the interesting ensemble of characters in Emily Nemens' debut novel titled, <u>The Cactus League</u>. Nemens gives us an overview of all kinds of people drawn to spring training including an aging batting coach and his wife, a star player, a rookie player, an agent, and a woman looking for a fling. The observations about each character entertained me and Nemens reveals human behavior in all its quirky wonder.</p>
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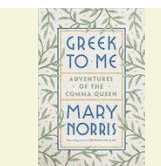
<u>Beheld</u>	Nesbitt, TaraShea	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.
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<u>Knife</u>	Nesbø, Jo	****	<u>6/2/20</u>	<p>Twists. Jo Nesbø's twelfth novel featuring Harry Hole is titled, <u>Knife</u>. Crime fiction fans will enjoy almost five hundred pages of plot twists and Harry's ups and downs. The only woman Harry has ever loved, Rakel, has been murdered with a knife, and Harry is a suspect. His excessive drinking hurts him again, as he can't remember much about the night Rakel died. Nesbø pulls readers into the story, complicates matters superbly, and leads us toward a surprising and satisfying conclusion.</p>
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<u>Greek to Me</u>	Norris, Mary	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.
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[A Keeper](#)

Norton, Graham

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



[Dad's Maybe Book](#)

O'Brien, Tim

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



[Shadowplay](#)

O'Connor, Joseph

[7/23/20](#)

Bram. Are you missing live theater during the covid-19 pandemic? Spend a few hours with Joseph O'Connor's novel titled, [Shadowplay](#), and you'll be in London's West End during the time of Jack the Ripper and walking alongside Bram Stoker at work in the theater. Sometimes we read fiction for a glorious escape from contemporary life, and O'Connor gives that to us in this finely written novel. While this is a Dracula backstory, it is also a story of passion and ambition in a setting that will delight most readers, but especially theatregoers who long to return to those wonderful places. Night becomes a time of danger and opportunity in Victorian England, and Stoker is in the middle of things that will spark the imagination of readers of this entertaining novel.



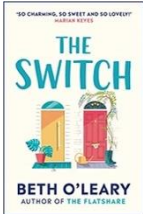
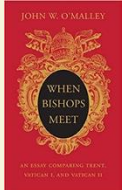
[Hamnet](#)

O'Farrell, Maggie

[10/19/20](#)

Stratford. Readers who enjoy historical fiction are those most likely to enjoy Maggie O'Farrell's novel titled, [Hamnet](#), based on the lives of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway in Stratford, England. The story focuses on Agnes (Anne) and the love and loss that define her life. O'Farrell's prose helps place us in the time and place and in



				<p>the context of the plague. With great skill, O'Farrell draws us into a portrait of marriage in the sixteenth century, and the ways in which an artist acquires inspiration to express in one's work the most important things in life.</p> <p>Exchange. While some readers may be skeptical of the premise of Beth O'Leary's novel titled, <i>The Switch</i>, it won't take long to overcome that and luxuriate in the lives of two women named Eileen Cotton. Younger Eileen Cotton (Leena) works nonstop in London as she grieves the death of her sister, Carla, who died of cancer recently. Leena's grandmother, Eileen Cotton, the grandmother, faces life changes at age 80, sharing grief at Carla's death, and adrift following her husband's departure for another woman. After Leena's boss demands that she take a two month holiday from work, grandmother and granddaughter decide to switch places, with Leena leaving her flat in London to live in her grandmother's rural home, and Eileen looking for a chance to love again in the big city. This is a heartwarming story that will satisfy many readers and enliven any book club's discussion about life's possibilities at any age.</p>	
<u>The Switch</u>	O'Leary, Beth	****	<u>10/27/20</u>		
<u>When Bishops Meet: An Essay Comparing Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II</u>	O'Malley, John W.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

The Hook

O'Mara, Tim

4/23/20

Rehab. The fifth novel by Tim O'Mara to feature former cop Raymond Donne is titled, The Hook. The dramatic action opens on the roof of the school where Donne teaches, the place where Maurice MoJo Joseph is shot to death with an arrow. Mojo's life seemed to be turning around after a stint in rehab, but at the time he died, heroin was in his system. While Donne investigates, his girlfriend Allisson writes stories about White Nationalists, thanks to a runaway and insider who has confided in her. The plot pulls readers into the action quickly, and fans of thrillers and this series are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

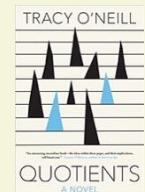


Quotients

O'Neill, Tracy

8/19/20

Secrets. My best advice to readers of Tracy O'Neill's novel titled, Quotients, is to give yourself over to whatever it is she is doing and don't worry too much about what's going on. Enjoy the precise sentences without worrying too much about why this one follows that one. By the end, you will have watched a work of art being assembled and can close the book with impressions about contemporary life, about the power of secrets, about love and family, and about what it takes to make one's way in this world. At least that's what I think I read about.



Inland

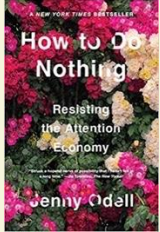
Obreht, Téa


7/23/20


Camel. I typically skip reading any books set in the past in the American West because the myths they present can be so predictable and weary to plod through. So I stared at Téa Obreht's novel titled, Inland, for months before I opened it. Fans of fine literary fiction will enjoy her gorgeous prose, even when ghosts are involved. Readers who enjoy interesting and complex characters will

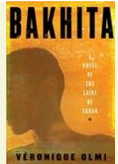
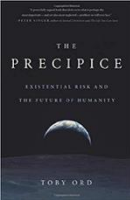





appreciate both Nora who struggles after her husband left and Lurie who runs from his past but is well known because of the camel he rides. I never felt the plot was predictable, and I never tired of her prose. Those of us who travel with Obrecht to Arizona in the 1890s are richly rewarded with fine writing about interesting people in a well-described place.

<u>How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy</u>	Odell, Jenny	*****	<p>Quality. Many of us spend much of our daily time and mindful attention responding to what others present to us for our attention. In her book titled, <u>How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy</u>, Jenny Odell offers for readers' consideration a different way of engaging with the world. She proposes resistance to addictive technology and media and engaging with people and places close to us. If your quality of life involves a lot of time with devices, consider ways of breaking your patterns and pay attention to nature instead. I wonder what Odell would think of how I absorbed her book: walking outside and listening to the audiobook.</p>	
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<u>Weather</u>	Offill, Jenny	*****	<p>Fragments. In her short novel titled, <u>Weather</u>, Jenny Offill spits out fragments of the life of a librarian named Lizzie. As readers flit from piece to piece, we laugh, scratch our heads, and occasionally re-read a sentence or two with great joy. Offill can make climate change funny, and for that reason alone, some readers are grateful for her skills. No fragment lasts long, so like the weather, it changes quickly whether you're in the sunshine or in a storm. Fans of</p>	
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<u>The Memory Police</u>	Ogawa, Yoko	****	2/7/20	<p>contemporary literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p> <p>Disappearance. Have you ever gone by a vacant lot and found yourself at a loss when you try to remember what had been on the site? Yoko Ogawa's novel titled, <u>The Memory Police</u>, is set on an island where a powerful surveillance state causes items to disappear and for the memory of those items to be unlawful. People also disappear, especially those who have the ability to recall the disappeared items. After a struggling writer hides her editor from the police, fear and loss increase dramatically. The premise is frightening, the prose elegant, and the novel disturbing in all the right ways.</p>	
<u>The Sacrament</u>	Olafsson, Olaf	****	1/24/20	<p>Memory. What triggers our recollection of memories? In Olaf Olafsson's novel titled, <u>The Sacrament</u>, the trigger for protagonist Sister Johanna, a French nun, is her return to Iceland. Two decades after her first investigation into allegations of clerical sexual abuse, a Vatican official from her past asks her to go to Iceland to investigate another allegation. With finely written prose, and insight into human nature, Olafsson draws readers into an examination of memory and secrets. The author sneaks us around the edges of Sister Johanna's recollections as we learn all that he wants us to observe. Johanna shows readers how nuns inside the institutional Catholic church can be powerless in some respects and vital in others. While there is an examination of suffering in this novel, there's also deep insight into the nature of love.</p>	

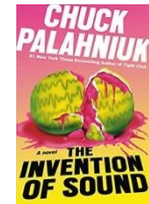
<u>Bakhita: A Novel of the Saint of Sudan</u>	Olmi, Veronique	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.		
<u>The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity</u>	Ord, Toby	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.		
<u>Maggie Brown & Others</u>	Orner, Peter	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.		
<u>Joe Biden: The Life, the Run, and What Matters Now</u>	Osnos, Evan	*****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Resolute. Whatever you think you know about President-elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr., you're likely to learn something new if you read Evan Osnos' brief book titled, <u>Joe Biden: The Life, the Run, and What Matters Now</u>. I always look for Evan Osnos' writing in <i>The New Yorker</i>, and in this book, he draws on extensive interviews with Biden and many others. While I found ample examples of Biden's leadership, strategy, empathy and morality throughout this book, I finished reading it with a deeper understanding of how resolute this man is, and in what good hands the United States Presidency will be in during his tenure.</p>		
<u>The Factory</u>	Oyamada, Hiroko	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.		

The Invention of Sound

Palahniuk, Chuck

11/24/20

Foley. A few decades ago, in a ploy to get my sons to sit tight as a movie ended to let the crowd clear, I would encourage them to look at the credits and find the names of the Foley artists. We began to recognize some of these artists, and we all came to know what the role of the Foley artist entails. While it was a delight, then, to see Foley artists in the book by Chuck Palaniuk titled, The Invention of Sound, the context involved screams, horror and the usual nausea inducing sensibility that Palaniuk brings to his art. If you are a fan of Palaniuk's work, and have a strong stomach, you will find in this book a thoughtful exploration of suffering and the power of art.

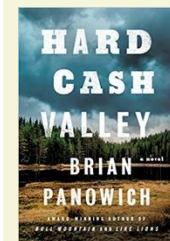


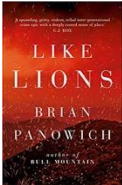

Hard Cash Valley

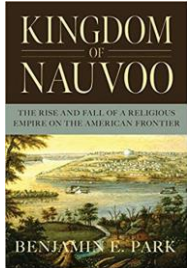
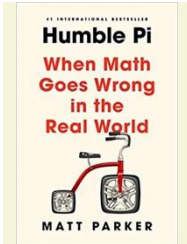
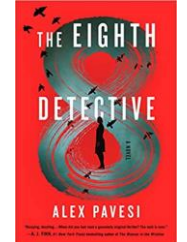
Panowich, Brian

8/25/20

Loss. Brian Panowich returns to Bull Mountain and McFalls County for the third time in a novel titled, Hard Cash Valley. Squeamish readers should be cautious when approaching this thriller, since the violence includes both murder and torture. Protagonist Dane Kirby has suffered a lot of loss during his life in McFalls County. His boss has assigned him to work with the FBI on a brutal murder in another state, but the trail leads him back home to a world of chickens bred for fighting, criminal treachery and the hunt for a boy on the autism spectrum. The pace of the novel is rapid, and Panowich builds heavy layers of complexity onto each main character to intensify the stakes and accelerate the action. Fans of crime fiction with a stomach for gore are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel. Through all the loss, there is also love, and that helps point Kirby and other characters



				<p>in the direction of redemption and recovery. Meanwhile, the bad guys face justice to the satisfaction of readers who have put up with a lot from these criminals.</p>	
Like Lions	Panowich, Brian	****	2/7/20	<p>Women. The violence on Bull Mountain from Brian Panowich's debut novel of that name returns with revenge in his novel titled, Like Lions. Sheriff Clayton Burroughs finds himself in pain and withdrawing from life with his wife, Kate, and their child. The legacy of crime in his family and in this location weighs heavily. Because Clayton's brother is dead, there's a void in the criminal playing field, and those trying to fill the void provide the plot momentum for this novel. The novel is a story of revenge and retribution. Three women are the stars of this book: Kate, a character named Vanessa, and the ailing widow of the head of another crime family. Readers who enjoy crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
Dead Land	Paretsky, Sara	****	8/5/20	<p>Power. The twentieth installment in the V.I. Warshawski series by Sara Paretsky is a novel titled, Dead Land. There's a secret power play to develop the lakefront on Chicago's South Side, and Vic's goddaughter Bernie pulls her into the middle of the action. The familiar cast of characters enhance the novel for longtime fans, and links to Kansas and South America broaden the story beyond Chicago. When bodies start to pile up, Vic's sense of urgency accelerates, especially when she herself becomes a target. I enjoyed every minute spent reading this entertaining novel and appreciated the continuing development of this familiar cast</p>	

<u>Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier</u>	Park, Benjamin E.	*****	<u>5/26/20</u>	<p>of characters alongside their engagement with new people.</p> <p>Rejection. Historian Benjamin E. Park uses newly released archival information from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to offer readers a concise view of the violent struggles on the American frontier in the 19th century in his book titled, <u>Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier</u>. Park offers readers a serious look at the early years of the Mormons, and places them in the context of that time. For a brief period, they found acceptance and refuge in Illinois where they built a large utopian city, Nauvoo. Park describes the variety of forces that led to the abandonment of the city of Nauvoo and the rejection of the Mormons living in Illinois, forcing them to head West. Readers who enjoy history are those most likely to enjoy this book that blends well a national story with the growing power and popularity of a religion.</p>	
<u>Humble Pi: When Math Goes Wrong in the Real World</u>	Parker, Matt	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Eighth Detective</u>	Pavesi, Alex	*****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Puzzles. Fans of mysteries are those readers who will love Alex Pavesi's novel titled, <u>The Eighth Detective</u>. The setup is that a mathematician has determined that there are seven ways that a mystery can work, and he wrote seven stories to prove his thesis. An editor visits him on a remote island, and she</p>	

<u>All the Devils Are Here</u>	Penny, Louise	*****	<p>plays our role: reading the stories to solve the puzzles. She provides an exciting twist to it all, showing inconsistencies and providing a puzzle of her own to delight readers.</p> <p>Paris. For the sixteenth installment in Louise Penny's series featuring Quebec's Chief Inspector Armand Gamache, the action moves from Canada to Paris, where Armand and his wife, Raine-Marie, have gone to await the birth of a new grandchild. In the novel titled, <u>All the Devils Are Here</u>, Armand is called on to use all his skills to solve a case with great personal impact. While many readers will miss the familiar setting of Three Pines in this installment, the action is delightfully complex, the twists surprising, and the resolution satisfying. Penny allows parallel development of the relationship between Armand and his son, Daniel; Armand and his godfather; and as always, the relationship between Armand and his son-in-law, Jean-Guy. Fans of this series will love the latest installment, and new readers who enjoy character-driven crime fiction that's well-written can start here or with any other Gamache novel in this series.</p>	
<u>Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men</u>	Perez, Caroline Criado	*****	<p>Default. Many readers will be outraged after reading Caroline Criado Perez's book titled, <u>Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men</u>. Women die because in multiple ways men are used as the default for data analysis and women are ignored. Drugs are tested on men, even drugs intended for women alone. Crash tests use dummies based on men not women. Perez offers loads of evidence and multiple examples of many of the ways in which</p>	

women are invisible and the consequence is dire. Women already know much of what's in this book because of a lifetime of working around a world designed with men as the default. Men should read this book and join the outrage. Then, do something to make this nonsense stop.

<u>Nothing Is Wrong and Here is Why</u>	Petri, Alexandra	****	<div data-bbox="947 680 1062 717" data-label="Text"> <p><u>9/8/20</u></p> </div> <div data-bbox="1064 388 1717 1003" data-label="Text"> <p>Poignant. The voice of Alexandra Petri as a political satirist finds that sweet spot for me: crisp, funny and poignant. In her collection of essays titled, <u>Nothing Is Wrong and Here is Why</u>, the range of her skills can be observed in their fullness. Some of the essays are new, and many are adapted from her column in <i>The Washington Post</i>. Whenever something comes out of the White House that can send me into a rage, I know I can count on Petri's next column to express a reaction far better than my feeble responses. Our finest writers, like Petri, find ways to help thoughtful people make sense out of the garbled nonsense what we often see and hear. This essay collection provides an abundance of that good sense.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1728 599 1877 792" data-label="Image"> </div>
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<u>Un-Trumping America: A Plan to Make America a Democracy Again</u>	Pfeiffer, Dan	****	<div data-bbox="936 1208 1068 1245" data-label="Text"> <p><u>9/22/20</u></p> </div> <div data-bbox="1064 1003 1717 1445" data-label="Text"> <p>Playbook. I listen to the <i>Pod Save America</i> podcast, so I was part of the target audience ready to read co-host Dan Pfeiffer's playbook for 2020, a book titled, <u>Un-Trumping America: A Plan to Make America a Democracy Again</u>. Trump supporters should read this book to reflect on what to expect from the Democrats. Democrats should take some of the actions that Pfeiffer proposes in this novel. Any reader interested in public policy should listen to some of the bold and aggressive proposals made in this book.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1728 1109 1877 1339" data-label="Image"> </div>
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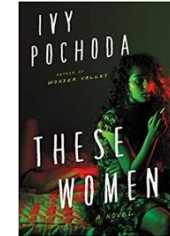
<u>The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets</u>	Philippon, Thomas	*****	<u>3/6/20</u>	<p>Concentration. If you think that the United States continues to be an exemplar of a free market economy, you may change your mind after reading Thomas Philippon's book titled, <u>The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets</u>. Philippon makes the case that American consumers suffer the ill effects of corporate concentration and corporate lobbying that has given large companies pricing power and market dominance. The past three decades have altered the landscape of free markets in dramatic ways. Philippon explains how.</p>	
<u>The King at the Edge of the World</u>	Phillips, Arthur	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Capital and Ideology</u>	Piketty, Thomas	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Last Thing You Surrender: A Novel of World War II</u>	Pitts, Leonard	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>A Citizens Guide to Beating Donald Trump</u>	Plouffe, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

These Women

Pochoda, Ivy

7/6/20

Voices. Amid the chaos involved with the terror of a serial killer, we hear the voices of a cast of women who know what must be learned, if only someone will listen to them. In her novel titled, These Women, Ivy Pochoda gives five key women clear voices, and adds to the murder mystery tension by having the murderer be the one individual paying attention to the women. The Los Angeles backdrop for this story becomes vivid, and readers will become invested in each of the women that Pochoda presents.



Poilâne: The Secrets of the World-Famous Bread Bakery

Poilâne, Apollonia

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

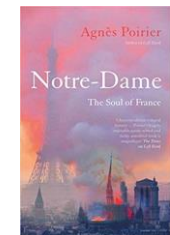


Notre-Dame: The Soul of France

Poirier, Agnès

9/22/20

Context. If France is such a secular country, and few people there attend religious services, why has there been such an outpouring of support to restore the Cathedral of Notre-Dame after the fire in 2019? In her book titled, Notre-Dame: The Soul of France, Agnès Poirier explains all the ways in which Notre-Dame has been the soul of France for eight hundred years. Readers will be gripped by her account of the fire and the actions by many to save as much of the structure and contents as possible. After that opening section, Poirier places the contemporary building in context by framing key events in the history of France relating to the building that is a church and much more. She explores Henry IV's conversion to Catholicism, how Napoleon crowned himself emperor there while the Pope was present, how Victor Hugo's writing and its



adaptations made the building beloved to many, and how Charles de Gaulle used the building to unite the country after the war, and how his state funeral was held at Notre-Dame. In these episodes and more, Poirier shows how important Notre-Dame has been to the citizens of France. I laughed at one anecdote: in the Revolution mobs did damage to Notre-Dame as a response to the power of the Catholic Church. While much harm was done to the building, the organist played the Marseillaise loudly as a crowd approached. That kept the mob somewhat at bay and saved the structure from even greater pillage.

Revelations. We present a façade to the world and the “truth” we tell even ourselves may not get to the root of who we are. In her novel titled, The Authenticity Project, Clare Pooley uses a clever conceit to lead characters to reveal their true selves: a plain journal in which individuals have disclosed themselves and left the journal for others to find. What follows is part romantic comedy and part deep insight into the nature of our human connections. If reading this book doesn’t uplift you, I don’t know what to suggest, except perhaps reading another novel by the prolific Alexander McCall Smith.



The Authenticity Project

Pooley, Clare

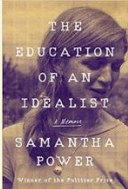
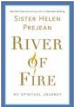

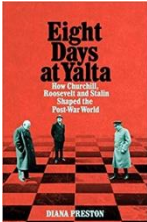
7/15/20

Topics of Conversation

Popkey, Miranda

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

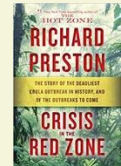
<u>The Education of an Idealist</u>	Power, Samantha	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey</u>	Prejean, Sister Helen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Secrets We Kept</u>	Prescott, Lara	*****	<u>2/21/20</u>	<p>Pasternak. Take the vodka bottle out of the freezer, and pour yourself a healthy drink as you settle down to read Lara Prescott's debut novel titled, <u>The Secrets We Kept</u>. She gives us Boris Pasternak living under Soviet oppression, and unsure that he will ever see the publication of <i>Dr. Zhivago</i>. We see his complicated life with both wife and mistress. Prescott also describes the situation of women in the CIA during the cold war, when their roles as secretaries exposed them to secrets of all sorts, and some of them were able to pursue spy craft. We see the effort to use <i>Dr. Zhivago</i> as a way to turn Soviet citizens against communism. Thanks to Prescott's fine prose and effective character development, we are pulled into places and times that merge the historical and fictional with skill. As I raised my glass of vodka upon finishing the novel, I toasted Pasternak: "Vechnaya pamyat" (let him be remembered forever). <i>Na zdorovye</i>.</p>	
<u>Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin Shaped the Post-War World</u>	Preston, Diana	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

Crisis in the Red Zone: The Story of the Deadliest Ebola Outbreak in History, and of the Outbreaks to Come

Preston, Richard

6/2/20

Mutations. For a real change of virus from Covid-19 to Ebola, I decided to read Richard Preston's book titled, Crisis in the Red Zone: The Story of the Deadliest Ebola Outbreak in History, and of the Outbreaks to Come. The book reads like a thriller, packed with an interesting cast of characters. In addition to the focus on the 2013-2014 Ebola pandemic, he brings readers back to earlier Ebola outbreaks in Africa. Readers become caught up with the stories of the victims of the virus, the caregivers and the scientists. There's a heightened sensitivity to the issues Preston raises in this book especially about mutations, the uncertainty of treatments and vulnerability during the Covid-19 pandemic. I'm still thinking about the difficult choices about limited resources, drugs and making decisions about who receives treatment.

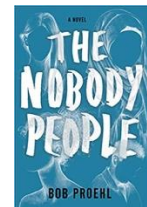


The Nobody People

Proehl, Bob

1/2/20

Different. Fans of science fiction and dystopian novels are those readers most likely to enjoy Bob Proehl's novel titled, The Nobody People. Proehl introduces us to individuals called Resonants who have a wide range of special abilities. The five hundred pages of this novel describe the ways in which the Resonants interact with the larger population. The novel explores how we treat those who are perceived as different, and how good and evil co-exist, sometimes in the same individual. This is a story of love, community and hope alongside fear, hatred and violence. The five hundred pages required patience at times, and resolution of the story will have to wait until the next novel which is to be released in Fall 2020.

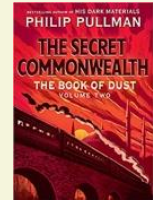


[The Book of Dust:
The Secret
Commonwealth](#)

Pullman, Philip

[7/15/20](#)

Journey. The second installment of Philip Pullman's Book of Dust trilogy is a novel titled, [The Book of Dust: The Secret Commonwealth](#). Don't even think about reading this without having read the earlier novel. For returning fans, Lyra and Malcolm are back, and over the course of 650 pages, they are on a journey. As with most middle novels of a trilogy, there's lots of exposition and little resolution in this installment. We're left with a cliffhanger and an unknown publication date for the finale. Some journeys take longer than others, so we wait. Maybe George R.R. Martin will fill our time with something new.



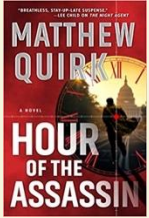
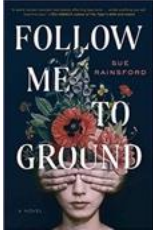
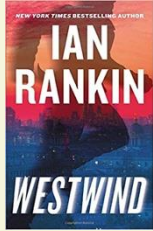
[The Missing
American](#)

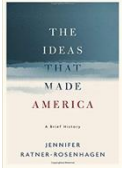
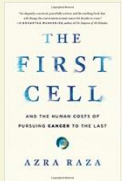
Quartey, Kwei

[8/5/20](#)

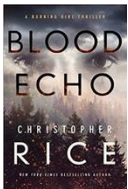

Emma. Kwei Quartey has started a new crime fiction series featuring a young private detective in Accra, Ghana named Emma Djan. In this first novel titled, [The Missing American](#), Emma finds herself sacked by the police department after she refused sexual advances from a senior officer and is then hired by a private investigator who values her detecting skills. Her first case involves, as the title indicates, a missing person. Quartey pulls readers into the world of successful internet scams as well as political corruption. Most readers will enjoy how all the threads of the plot come together and how easy it is to spend time with Emma and to enjoy the ways in which she gets the job done and achieves satisfaction.



<u>Hour of the Assassin</u>	Quirk, Matthew	*****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Scapegoat. Be careful about what you eat and drink before and while reading Matthew Quirk's novel titled, <u>Hour of the Assassin</u>. The violence and blood in the narrative can be off-putting, especially for delicate stomachs. Within the first few pages of the novel protagonist and former Secret Service agent Nick Averose realizes that he has been set up as the scapegoat for a murder he didn't commit. Quirk keeps the action moving quickly as Nick uses all his skills to find out what's going on and come out of his predicament alive. Fans of crime thrillers are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>Follow Me to Ground</u>	Rainsford, Sue	*****	<u>2/14/20</u>	<p>Cures. Will the Earth heal us? In her debut novel titled, <u>Follow Me to Ground</u>, Sue Rainsford creates a setting where short or long periods buried in the ground cure people. Protagonist Ada and her father provide healing to the people who come to them, who they call "Cures." Ada lives with her father at the outer edge of a village, and they are neither inside nor outside the community. The sick are pleased to be healed. Ada is caught between working with her father and finding love with a man. What does it mean to be a woman? Is burying in the ground a prelude to resurrection? Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this unusual novel.</p>	
<u>Westwind</u>	Rankin, Ian	*****	<u>2/14/20</u>	<p>Prescient. Ian Rankin wrote the novel, <u>Westwind</u>, in 1990, but it was first published in the United States in 2020. This is a thrilling story of alliances and betrayal that stands up well thirty years later, and in many ways was prescient about today's world. While this novel is nothing like the author's</p>	

				<p>Rebus series, the plot is entertaining, the characters interesting and the story plausible.</p> <p>Survey. In her book titled, <u>The Ideas That Made America: A Brief History</u>, Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagan offers a brisk survey of key thinkers and ideas from the Enlightenment to today, and how those ideas have helped shape the United States of America. After I finished reading the book, I was mildly satisfied. I didn't necessarily learn anything new. I felt I was exposed to one person's assessment of some influential ideas and placed them in context with evolving life in America and with each other idea. If a reader knows a lot about any of the ideas she surveys in this book, that section may seem too light. I think the purpose of the book was to give an overview, and let readers decide where they would do more reading. I realized it's time for me to revisit some of the transcendentalists. Read a sample and decide where your thinking about thinking needs to go next.</p>	
<u>The Ideas That Made America: A Brief History</u>	Ratner-Rosenhagan, Jennifer	***	<u>3/26/20</u>		
<u>The First Cell: And the Human Costs of Pursuing Cancer to the Last</u>	Raza, Azra	****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Blunt. Experienced oncologist Azra Raza offers in her book titled, <u>The First Cell: And the Human Costs of Pursuing Cancer to the Last</u>, an informed and personal assessment of the state of cancer treatment. Her blunt conclusion is that we need to do a reset. We are wasting resources. Our cancer treatments come too late and do a lot of harm to healthy cells. We should refocus on early detection and prevention. Widespread and targeted late stage treatment has costs that she describes through cases presented in this book, including her husband's leukemia.</p>	

				<p>When I finished this book, I had the sense that this doctor knows her stuff, and that the President of the United States should appoint Raza to direct the allocation of cancer research funds from the government.</p> <p>Preparation. End of life care in the United States takes many different forms based on where one lives. In her book titled, <u>When My Time Comes: Conversations About Whether Those Who Are Dying Should Have the Right to Determine When Life Should End</u>, Diane Rehm interviews lots of people about the issue and presents support for her position, medical help in dying, while allowing space for those who have other views. We do all kinds of preparation in our lives, and end of life planning is just one more consideration for each of us to make. Any reader interested in gathering information on this topic can find a strong case for the author's viewpoint as well as a wide enough range of alternatives to assist in making personal decisions or advocate changes in laws.</p>	
<u>When My Time Comes: Conversations About Whether Those Who Are Dying Should Have the Right to Determine When Life Should End</u>	Rehm, Diane	*****	11/17/20		
<u>Late Migrations: A Natural History of Love and Loss</u>	Renkl, Margaret	*****	3/6/20	<p>Observations. I guarantee that after you read Margaret Renkl's book titled, <u>Late Migrations: A Natural History of Love and Loss</u>, you will notice more as you meander through the world. If at the least, you look up from a screen and into the great outdoors, you will observe something beautiful. As we read the ways in which she explores her own grief, using finely crafted prose, we can reflect about our own losses with new insight. I may never again consider something in nature common or ordinary. I endeavor to notice more and recognize with</p>	

				<p>clarity my place in the world for however long it lasts.</p> <p>Pacing. The second novel in Christopher Rice's Burning Girl series is titled, Blood Echo. If you've not read the first novel, go ahead and start there. In this book, Burning Girl Charlotte Rowe is back with her superpower and on a mission that brings trouble to her hometown. Rice starts this novel with a rapidly paced plot and maintains momentum that will keep readers turning the pages for longer than one planned. Just when we're invested in one plot line, things turn and get very interesting. Fans of fast-paced thrillers and this series are those most likely to enjoy this installment and look forward to the next.</p>	
Blood Echo	Rice, Christopher	****	6/10/20		
Tough Love: My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For	Rice, Susan	****	3/13/20	<p>Optimistic. Some memoirs come across as inauthentic and lacking candor, especially when struggles are skipped over in favor of successes. In her memoir titled, Tough Love: My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For, Susan Rice comes across as candid and complete: the good, the bad and the ugly are all presented for our consideration. The result is a book that lays out the high expectations she faced as she grew up, family troubles, and a smart and thoughtful career of service to the United States. Her life has been one rooted in optimism, and that spirit remains through the end of this memoir as she shares the lessons of her life with readers.</p>	

Jack

Robinson, Marilynne

12/17/20

Prodigal. For the fourth time, Marilynne Robinson takes readers to the fictional town of Gilead, Ohio to tell us things about ourselves that we need to know. The novel titled, Jack, features John Ames Boughton, the wayward son of the Presbyterian minister in earlier novels. The long opening of the novel is a spellbinding conversation conducted overnight in a cemetery between Jack and a Black woman named Della Miles, a local high school teacher. Their love blooms quickly, despite their inability to marry at that time. The conversation in the cemetery is a masterpiece of carefully constructed sentences that engage the two characters and all readers in a deep dialogue about life. The first three novels in this series brought us to this cemetery and to the challenges that Jack and Della have to face in the world, despite their abiding love for each other. Robinson compels us to feel with them as they turn away from the world toward each other and into what is most important.

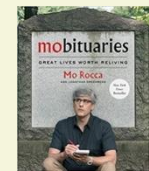


Mobituaries: Great Lives Worth Reliving

Rocca, Mo

3/26/20

Eclectic. Personally, I can't get enough of Mo Rocca's eclectic and humorous stories. In a collection titled, Mobituaries: Great Lives Worth Reliving, he tells readers about the lives of people, some of whom we know well, and others we're glad to know thanks to his storytelling. This is a fun book to read and is often at its best when you feel the quirky nature of Rocca's observations and insights. Read one or two of these, and I expect you'll want to read them all. I was well-entertained.

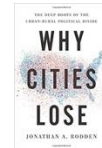


Why Cities Lose:
The Deep Roots of
the Urban-Rural
Political Divide

Rodden, Jonathan A.

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

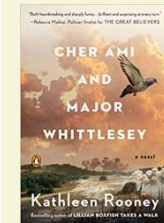


Cher Ami and
Major Whittlesey

Rooney, Kathleen

9/8/20

Pluck. I didn't expect that I would have the patience to allow much time for a pigeon narrator to keep my attention while reading Kathleen Rooney's novel titled, Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey. Thanks to Rooney's fine writing, I easily warmed to the voice of a homing pigeon and anticipated the return to that voice after Major Whittlesey provided his point of view as the alternating narrator. The pair were joined together in World War I when the pigeon Cher Ami flew through enemy lines to deliver a message that the major and his battalion were cut off from the rest of the army and were the objects of friendly fire. Rooney took this historical event and brought it to life through imagining those times from two very different perspectives. She explores the wounds to both narrators and the deep cost of war.

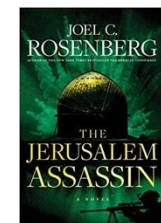


The Jerusalem
Assassin

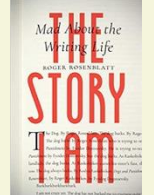
Rosenberg, Joel C.

6/24/20

Tense. The third novel by Joel C. Rosenberg to feature former U.S. Secret Service agent Marcus Ryker is titled, The Jerusalem Assassin. Unknown terrorists are meeting with success in targeting key players, so when President Clarke announces a new Mideast peace plan and wants to go to Jerusalem, Ryker is engaged to try to keep the President and others safe. The tension remains taut throughout this thriller, and the terrorists are worthy adversaries, usually keeping a step ahead of Ryker and others. As always, a reader feels the plot comes straight



from recent headlines, and Rosenberg situates the issues among different countries in the region with great skill. Now that my heart rate has come back down, I can say I was thoroughly entertained by this novel.

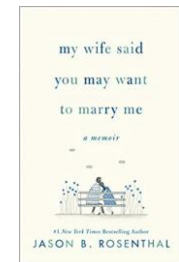
<u>The Story I Am: Mad About the Writing Life</u>	Rosenblatt, Roger	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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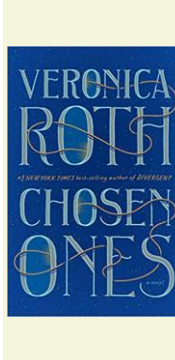
[My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me](#)


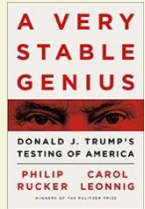
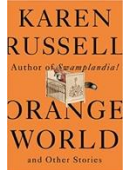
Rosenthal, Jason B.



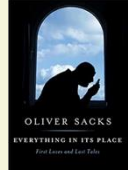
[5/26/20](#)

More. Have tissues or a handkerchief nearby as you read Jason B. Rosenthal's book titled, [My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me](#). Two weeks before she died of ovarian cancer, Jason's wife, Amy Krause Rosenthal, wrote an op-ed piece for the Modern Love column in *The New York Times* titled, "You May Want to Marry My Husband." This book is the story of Amy's vibrant life, their marriage and family life, and the ways in which she made our world better through everything she did. Amy's first word was "more." Jason tells this story with grace and skill, pulling all readers into leading a meaningful life.



<u>Chosen Ones</u>	Roth, Veronica	*****	<u>6/24/20</u>	Dark. Fans of thrilling and twisting stories are those readers most likely to enjoy Veronica Roth's novel titled, <u>Chosen Ones</u> . Set in a slightly altered Chicago with a parallel darker Chicago attached, this imaginative novel keeps a fast-paced plot moving along while we get to enjoy the development of interesting and complex, nuanced characters. Protagonist Sloane heads toward a nemesis, the Dark One, and	
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			feels the heavy weight of responsibility to prevent chaos.	
<u>The American Story: Conversations with Master Historians</u>	Rubenstein, David	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America</u>	Rucker, Philip and Carol D. Leonnig	*****	<u>5/5/20</u> Chaos. Since I read Philip Rucker and Carol D. Leonnig's book titled, <u>A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America</u> , during the April 2020 coronavirus White House briefings, the context for their book became for me “the good old days.” The authors are journalists at <i>The Washington Post</i> , so some readers will dismiss them as fake news and consider their book fiction or certainly biased. Other readers will find detailed reporting of the chaos during the first few years of the Trump administration. The authors clearly sourced material from people who were “in the room” and present readers with lots of material about the president and those around him. Many potential readers are weary of the chaos, but those interested in public affairs will find this book to be one of the best to report this ongoing story.	
<u>Orange World and Other Stories</u>	Russell, Karen	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

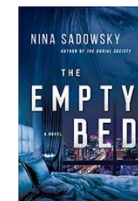
<u>Chances Are</u>	Russo, Richard	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Last Day</u>	Ruta, Domenica	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Everything in its Place</u>	Sacks, Oliver	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

The Empty Bed

Sadowsky, Nina

7/15/20

Twists. The twisting and thrilling action in Nina Sadowsky's novel titled, The Empty Bed, starts on the first few pages and never lets up. We meet Eva and Peter in Hong Kong where they have come from London to celebrate their wedding anniversary. When Peter wakes up the morning after their arrival, Eva is missing. As we learn more, we begin to wonder about both Peter and Eva. Peter asks his London boss, Forrest "Holly" Holcomb, for help finding Eva, so Holly calls his former lover, Catherine, who runs the Burial Society, a group that hides people from evildoers. Catherine dispatches two agents to Hong Kong while she heads to Mexico City to protect others. Sadowsky keeps weaving a web of intrigue, tosses a few red herrings, and keeps us wanting to find out more. Fans of suspense thrillers are those most likely to enjoy this novel and the others in the Burial Society series.



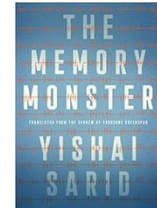
<u>Home Before Dark</u>	Sager, Riley	****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Baneberry. I find that a creepy novel with strange happenings in an old house provides just the right dose of chills to break the heat of summer. In Riley Sager's novel titled, <u>Home Before Dark</u>, the house is Baneberry Hall, and stuff that happened there in the past and present can give slowly paced chills to readers. Protagonist Maggie Holt lived in the house briefly when she was a child. After her father's death twenty-five years later, she inherits Baneberry Hall which she didn't know her father still owned. He profited from a book about their brief time in the house, and that story within a story breaks the pace of this novel by alternating the past and present events in the house. There are just enough twists to satisfy most readers, and for those of us who live in old houses, we might do one more check tonight before heading to bed.</p>	
<u>The Method to the Madness: Donald Trump's Ascent as Told by Those Who Were Hired, Fired, Inspired--and Inaugurated</u>	Salkin, Allen	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Sarah Jane</u>	Sallis, James	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

The Memory
Monster

Sarid, Yishai

12/21/20

Holocaust. In his novel titled, The Memory Monster, Yishai Sarid presents the report of an unnamed narrator to the head of Yad Vashem describing his life as a historian and his immersion into every detail of the Holocaust. We read about what the historian learned about extermination methods and processes at the death camps, and how he presented what he learned to groups visiting the sites of the Holocaust. As we turn the pages, we feel the building presence of hate, and how obsession changes over time. We see the combination of hate and power and the ease with which a path to murder can occur. The power of the past dominates the present for this historian, and we observe how the force of memory can overpower one's will.

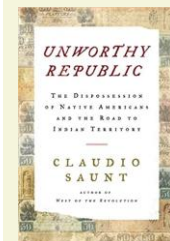


Unworthy
Republic: The
Dispossession of
Native Americans
and the Road to
Indian Territory

Saunt, Claudio

5/15/20

Expulsion. Fans of well-written history for general readers will appreciate the book by Claudio Saunt titled, Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory. This University of Georgia teacher delivers a sober presentation of the expulsion of Native Americans from their homes and land. Saunt examines the rationale used to justify the displacement of people and documents the violence and cruelty as the policies were carried out. As contemporary readers, we discover some of the foundations of white supremacy in the United States, and the ways in which greed and incompetence can lead to disastrous results.



Say Say Say

Savage, Lila

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

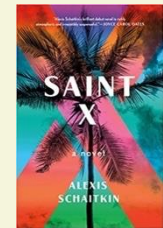


Saint X

Schaitkin, Alexis

5/26/20

Repercussions. One key event has repercussions in the many lives presented by Alexis Schaitkin in her debut novel titled, Saint X. At the end of the Thomas family's vacation on a Caribbean island, eighteen-year-old Alison disappears and is found dead, changing forever the lives of her parents and her seven-year-old sister, Claire. Schaitkin carries readers along with a plot and multiple narrators weaving forward and backward in time as we learn what happened from various points of view. Claire is the novel's protagonist, and her life has become consumed with learning what really happened to Alison and what her big sister was really like. Beneath the plot level, Schaitkin delves into issues of white privilege, racism and class differences. Through the impact of Alison in life and death on a number of minor characters, we see the repercussions of one person's life on many others. The examination of multiple lives takes patience, but close readers will emerge from this novel with a heightened sense of the impact of any single event on multiple lives, for better or for worse, but certainly forever.



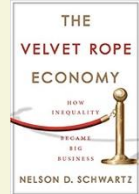


The Grammarians




Schine, Cathleen

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



<u>The Velvet Rope Economy: How Inequality Became Big Business</u>	Schwartz, Nelson D.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>What It Takes: Lessons in the Pursuit of Excellence</u>	Schwartzman, Stephen A.	*****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Discipline. In his book titled, <u>What It Takes: Lessons in the Pursuit of Excellence</u>, Blackstone chairman, CEO and co-founder Stephen Schwartzman shares the lessons he's learned throughout his life. He describes his dreams and explains the discipline he exercised as he made those dream happen. His success in business has been extraordinary and his impact in philanthropy is huge and just beginning. No matter who you are or what you do, there's something Schwartzman has to say in this book that will apply to you and will resonate.</p>	
<u>The Volunteer</u>	Scibona, Salvatore	*****	<u>1/10/20</u>	<p>Abandoned. After most readers absorb the first dozen pages or so of Salvatore Scibona's novel titled, <u>The Volunteer</u>, we are hooked. After I was clobbered by the reality of a father abandoning his son at an airport, I wanted to know what this was all about. After many more pages, across multiple generations in many different places, I began to get comfortable with the ways a life can go wrong and how we can abandon others and they can abandon us. The prose is finely written, and fans of literary fiction will find much to like in this novel.</p>	
<u>The Seine</u>	Sciolino, Elaine	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

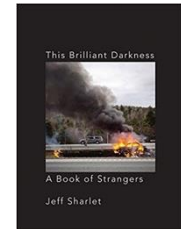
<u>The Best of Me</u>	Sedaris, David	*****	<u>11/24/20</u>	<p>Curated. Whenever I read David Sedaris, I find that I laugh and then I think. In his book titled, <u>The Best of Me</u>, readers get a curated collection of what Sedaris considers his best work from the past three decades. Whether you've read some of these stories and essays before, or if they are new, you're likely to find yourself laughing. While a unique voice, Sedaris also presents reflections that reveal our common humanity and the ways in which we live together, warts and all. Many readers will finish this collection with eyes open a little wider to the world around us, and to the members of our families.</p>	
<u>The Revisioners</u>	Sexton, Margaret Wilkerson	****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Heritage. We stand on the shoulders of the ancestors who came before us, many of whom we have never met, and whose stories we don't know. Three strong black women are connected in Margaret Wilkerson Sexton's novel titled, <u>The Revisioners</u>. The first-person voices alternate from 2017 (Ava) to 1924 (Josephine) to 1855 (Josephine as a child) and back again. The characters during all the time periods face danger, react quickly, and plan for a better future. Sexton lets these women talk, and our job as readers is to listen to these mothers and understand heritage and act today based on what we learn from their strength and perseverance.</p>	
<u>10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World</u>	Shafak, Elif	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

[This Brilliant Darkness: A Book of Strangers](#)

Sharlet, Jeff

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



[Narrative Economics: How Stories Go Viral and Drive Major Economic Events](#)

Shiller, Robert J.

[8/25/20](#)

Contagion. The novel coronavirus has gotten many of us to think about the concept of herd immunity. In his book titled, [Narrative Economics: How Stories Go Viral and Drive Major Economic Events](#), Nobel Prize winning economist Robert J. Shiller offers an adjacent theory: that the spread of stories has a powerful role in economic behavior. I know a CEO who will often frame a decision-making conversation in terms of what one would have to believe for the outcome to be probable. The beliefs of the herd can spread, and like lemmings, we can follow others into economic behavior that builds momentum from beliefs that are not necessarily supported by data. Shiller's writing for general audiences is always clear and cogent. Readers interested in business, finance and economics will find something to think about after reading this book.

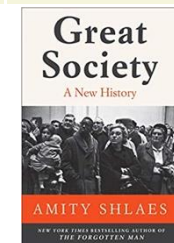


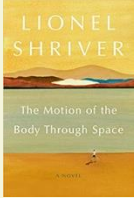
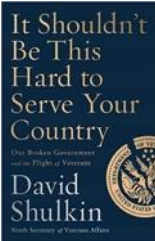
[Great Society: A New History](#)

Shlaes, Amity

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



<u>The Motion of the Body Through Space</u>	Shriver, Lionel	*****	<p>Vulnerability. Lionel Shriver skewers the cult of fitness in her novel titled, <u>The Motion of the Body Through Space</u>, while she places the topics of marriage and aging under her perceptive microscope. Sixty-year-old Serenata has exercised daily for decades and has been procrastinating scheduling knee surgery. Her husband, Remington, has led a sedentary life, but when he finds himself in early involuntary retirement, he decides to run a marathon. When a personal trainer spots hapless Remington, she sees a goldmine for her business. If she can get him to finish MettleMan, a hyper-triathlon, she'll get all the clients she can handle. Shriver captures with precision and grace the vulnerabilities we face as we age, and the peaks and valleys in long term marital relationships. Readers who enjoy finely written prose, whether fitness buffs or couch potatoes, are those most likely to appreciate this novel.</p>	
<u>It Shouldn't Be This Hard to Serve Your Country: Our Broken Government and the Plight of Veterans</u>	Shulkin, David	*****	<p>Politicals. Dr. David Shulkin has first-hand experience of the exercise of political power, and that's what he writes about in his book titled, <u>It Shouldn't Be This Hard to Serve Your Country: Our Broken Government and the Plight of Veterans</u>. After success as a physician and in health administration roles, Shulkin joined the Obama Administration in 2015 as Under Secretary for Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs. His focus was on veterans and he is proud of his accomplishments. President Trump asked Shulkin to stay on in government to become Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Before long, Shulkin experienced the vise of political</p>	

power squeeze him. A Florida pal of the president's became a regular point of contact, and a group of "politicals" ran a parallel policy operation within the VA with their focus on privatization. The title describes the tone of the book, and veterans will read this and understand the threats they face from the exercise of raw political power at the VA.

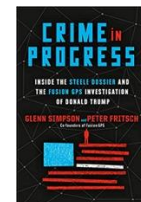
<u>The Order</u>	Silva, Daniel	****	<u>8/25/20</u>	<p>Conspiracy. For the twentieth installment of his Gabriel Allon series, Daniel Silva sends the Israeli spy back to a place where Gabriel made close friends in high places in the past, Vatican City. In the novel titled, <u>The Order</u>, Gabriel is asked by the late pope's private secretary to come to Rome to investigate a conspiracy involving the Holy See. A group called the Order of St. Helena with much support from the European right may be engaged in a conspiracy to rig the election of the next pope. Fans of this series are those readers most likely to enjoy this latest installment featuring a complex and interesting protagonist who always seems to choose whatever it takes to do the right thing.</p> 
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[Crime in Progress:
Inside the Steele
Dossier and the
Fusion GPS
Investigation of
Donald Trump](#)

Simpson, Glenn and
Peter Fritsch

[4/9/20](#)

Vindicated. For those readers who have the appetite for an inside story about one of the misunderstood and overspun stories of recent years, Fusion GPS founders Glenn Simpson and Peter Fritsch offer a book titled, [Crime in Progress: Inside the Steele Dossier and the Fusion GPS Investigation of Donald Trump](#). These former *Wall Street Journal* reporters started a business in 2010 that conducts investigations, finding data for the use of their clients in business and



politics. When a client approached them to investigate Donald Trump's finances, they uncovered a treasure trove of information including lawsuits and shady dealings with Russian oligarchs and gangsters. Readers can sense the weariness that settled on the authors when their little business became the focal point for political machinations. Read the book to unspin what you think you know, and you're likely to conclude, as I did, that their work product represented accurate research and investigations that were later proven to be true. The authors may rightly feel vindicated, but they will never recover the lost time and expenses involved in defending themselves from partisan attacks.

<u>Don Tillman's Standardized Meal System: Recipes and Tips from the Star of the Rosie Novels</u>	Simsion, Graeme	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Great Democracy: How to Fix Our Politics, Unrig the Economy, and Unite America</u>	Sitaraman, Ganesh	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Rodham</u>	Sittenfeld, Curtis	*****	<u>9/8/20</u>	Clever. It's fun to watch a talented writer take a prominent real person and veer their life path just a bit off the known trajectory. In her novel titled, <u>Rodham</u> , Curtis Sittenfeld imagines what Hillary Rodham's life would have been like had she not married Bill. I read this during this summer's unique political conventions, and it provided an entertaining diversion. I especially enjoyed	

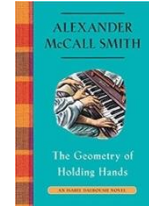
				<p>Sittenfeld's take on how Bill's life might have played out. Whether you love or hate the real Hillary, it's very likely that you'll enjoy the character in Sittenfeld's novel.</p> <p>Fieldwork. Good writing about an unfamiliar place makes Jonathan Slaght's book titled, Owls of the Eastern Ice: A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl, a delight to read. I was a bit hesitant to open this book about a scientist's fieldwork in finding fish owls in Primorye, a province in the far eastern part of Russia. After just a few pages, I was hooked on learning about Slaght's fieldwork searching for a two-foot-tall owl with a six-foot wingspan. Readers can almost feel what Shaght experiences while living in a tent under freezing conditions, crossing rivers packed with melting ice, finding the owls in multiple locations, drinking vodka, and relaxing in a banya. Readers with any interest in scientific fieldwork or conservation will find a lot to enjoy in this finely written book.</p>	
Owls of the Eastern Ice: A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl	Slaght, Jonathan C.	*****	12/17/20		
Little Weirds	Slate, Jenny	***	3/6/20	<p>Essays. I had the feeling that I entered directly into Jenny Slate's mind as I read her collection of essays titled after one of them, Little Weirds. As a talented comedian, she made me laugh. As a writer, I admired her phrases and images. As an artist, I appreciated the scope of her vast creativity, and how it plays out in each of these essays. The time I spent inside her mind while reading this novel was quite an adventure and escape. I enjoyed the book while I read it with a clear head, but I have the impression that if one were to read these essays while high, the experience might be enhanced.</p>	

[The Geometry of Holding Hands](#)

Smith, Alexander
McCall

[10/12/20](#)

Complications. Readers who enjoy Alexander McCall Smith's Isabel Dalhousie series will love the 13th installment, a novel titled, [The Geometry of Holding Hands](#). I kept waiting to understand the title, and it came at the very end of the book, so be patient. As always, there are ethical concerns that philosopher Isabel grapples with, and her musician husband, Jamie, offers love and clarity to all the complications that develop in this novel. Smith has the ability to present readers with domestic situations, add conflict and complexity, and leave us very satisfied with human nature by the end of the book.

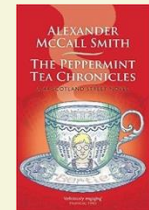


[The Peppermint Tea Chronicles](#)

Smith, Alexander
McCall

[2/14/20](#)

Kindness. I admit to being a tea snob, and I can't think of a more vile concoction than peppermint tea. I'm also a fan of Alexander McCall Smith's writing, so I thoroughly enjoyed reading his latest compilation of pieces about the recurring cast of characters from 44 Scotland Street that were serialized in *The Scotsman*. The new book is titled, [The Peppermint Tea Chronicles](#), and kindness abounds providing pleasure to fans of this series. Irene remains absent, to the delight of Stuart and Bertie. Lots of big and little things are happening to every member of the cast of characters, and fans will close the last page with a sigh as we await the next installments. Readers who enjoy fiction that lifts one's spirits can start with this book and become enchanted and ready to read the series.

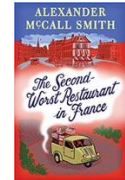


The Second-Worst Restaurant in France

Smith, Alexander
McCall

4/23/20

Redemption. The second novel in the Paul Stuart series by prolific writer Alexander McCall Smith is titled, The Second-Worst Restaurant in France. Paul joins his cousin, Chloe, at a rented house in the French countryside where he intends to work on writing a cookbook. Once settled into the local community, all thought of writing disappears, as Paul does all he can to help turnaround a restaurant and a village. As always with Smith, the theme is upbeat. Characters are finding themselves, and there is a leap toward redemption that will make all readers feel good about themselves, their neighbors, and human nature overall.

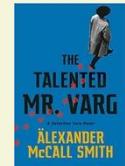


The Talented Mr. Varg

Smith, Alexander
McCall

9/19/20

Choices. The second installment of Alexander McCall Smith's Detective Varg series is a novel titled, The Talented Mr. Varg. Smith fans will enjoy the author's dry wit, moderate pacing, and compassion for all characters. Things are never as they appear for the Department of Sensitive Crimes, and Varg chooses to investigate and help in ways that are not often linear. Varg often tends to choose mercy rather than justice. As always with Smith, the way things turn out always seem to be just right.



Spring

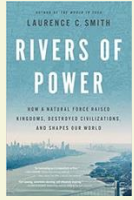
Smith, Ali

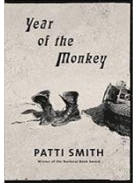
1/24/20

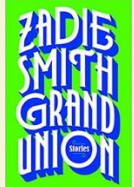
Growth. The third installment in Ali Smith's quartet on the seasons is titled, Spring. This was the installment that I wanted to read first, but Smith surprised me with choosing Autumn as the opener. Spring is a season of surprises and of sprouting. We come to see the new growth of what we had planted and what arrived by unknown means. Smith shows the evidence of what we have planted in society: detention centers

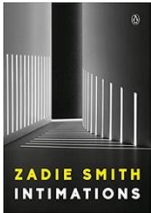


and the demonization of immigrants. Surrender to Smith's take on contemporary life and dream with her on the pages of this finely written novel. This is us. This is now. I can't wait for the final installment.

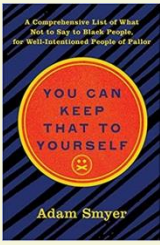
<u>Rivers of Power: How a Natural Force Raised Kingdoms, Destroyed Civilizations, and Shapes Our World</u>	Smith, Laurence C.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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<u>Year of the Monkey</u>	Smith, Patti	*****	<u>2/14/20</u>	<p>Artist. Treat yourself by spending time reading Patti Smith's memoir titled, <u>Year of the Monkey</u>. This multi-dimensional talented artist offers readers her memories, dreams, impressions, and experiences of 2016. We travel with her during this year and thanks to her poetic language, we feel what she felt. Thanks to her photographs, we see a few of the things that her artistic eye captured. Most of all, we get to admire a talented artist use many of her skills to try to reveal herself to us and to help us reveal ourselves to the world.</p>	
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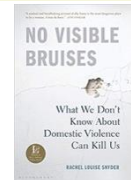
<u>Grand Union</u>	Smith, Zadie	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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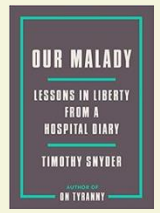
<u>Intimations</u>	Smith, Zadie	*****	<u>8/25/20</u>	<p>Vibrant. It's time to treat your addled covid brain with six fresh and vibrant essays by Zadie Smith in a collection titled, <u>Intimations</u>. Artists of all sorts help us make sense of the world. In these finely written essays, Smith uses all her artistic writing skill</p>	
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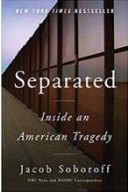
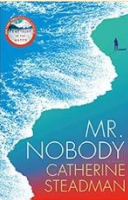
to help us think about this unusual time. I felt communal empathy in her words, and kindness about our current predicament in respect to the pandemic, racism and immigration. We've all asked ourselves scores of questions in 2020, and in these essays, Smith reveals the questions she has asked herself and how she is thinking about contemporary life.

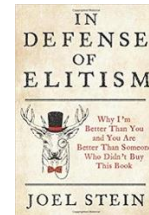
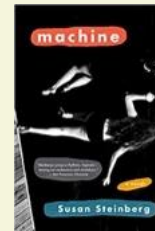

<u>You Can Keep That to Yourself: A Comprehensive List of What Not to Say to Black People, for Well-Intentioned People of Pallor</u>	Smyer, Adam	****	<u>11/17/20</u>	<p>Humor. I laughed a lot as I read Adam Smyer's book titled, <u>You Can Keep That to Yourself: A Comprehensive List of What Not to Say to Black People, for Well-Intentioned People of Pallor</u>. I quickly thought of the gift possibilities for this book to a lot of different people. I can imagine a large number of corporate training sessions in which this book could be used to facilitate conversations about race relations. I am one of the well-intentioned people of pallor for whom this book should find a receptive audience.</p>	
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[No Visible Bruises](#) Snyder, Rachel Louise Unread Shelf of Ennui 2020.

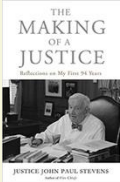


<u>Our Malady: Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary</u>	Snyder, Timothy	****	<u>10/19/20</u>	<p>Health. I can think of no better time to read a reflection on the fragility of health. Timothy Snyder's short book titled, <u>Our Malady: Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary</u>, describes the illness he experienced in December 2019 (spoiler: not coronavirus), and how important health is in the context of all our civil liberties, a topic about which the author is an expert. This book makes a compelling case for universal health care being a basic human right and how such a</p>	
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			system will help mend some places in which our society has torn apart.	
<u>Separated: Inside an American Tragedy</u>	Soboroff, Jacob	*****	<p>Cruelty. Prepare to be outraged and to cry as you read Jacob Soboroff's book titled, <u>Separated: Inside an American Tragedy</u>. No matter how much you think you know, or how well you have followed the separation of children from their parents on our southern border, there will be aspects of this situation that you'll learn by reading this book. We can become distracted by so many things, and the story of the day displaces what happened before it. Over the course of the four hundred pages of this book, you will meet the people who suffered cruelty because of this policy, you'll learn about those who tried to hide what was going on, and the occasional person whose actions made a huge difference. Any reader interested in public policy should consider reading this book.</p>	
<u>Mr. Nobody</u>	Steadman, Catherine	****	<p>Memory. Catherine Steadman teases out the plot of her novel titled, <u>Mr. Nobody</u>. A man is found on a beach in Norfolk and neither he nor anyone else remembers who he is. Neuropsychiatrist Emma Lewis has been asked to examine the man, since his condition seems to line up perfectly with her expertise. Despite her professional interest in the case, Emma is reluctant to return to Norfolk because something happened there years ago that caused her and her family to leave and change their identities. Steadman leaves readers waiting a long time to find out about Emma's past, and to reveal what's up with the man found on the beach. Readers</p>	

			who enjoy psychological suspense novels are those most likely to appreciate this book.	
<u>In Defense of Elitism: Why I'm Better Than You and You're Better Than Someone Who Didn't Buy This Book</u>	Stein, Joel	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Machine</u>	Steinberg, Susan	*****	<u>9/19/20</u> Summer. Susan Steinberg's debut novel titled, <u>Machine</u> , sends readers to the shore in summer to spend time with a group of teenagers. It may take some readers a while to settle into Steinberg's grammar and language as she structures this novel in creative ways. The sentences shift structure when the mood changes, alerting readers to tension and progress. Some of her meter is poetic and that adds to the pace of reading, accelerating or slowing down in ways that fit the narrative. I enjoyed every semicolon. Beneath the beautiful language, we see a reflection of teenage life in summer: the average locals and the privileged wealthy transients. The culpability of the individual and the community for events and situations alternate in ways that lead a reader to reflect after we've finished reading, beyond Steinberg's pacing to our own.	
<u>The Last Tourist</u>	Steinhauer, Olen	*****	<u>11/9/20</u> Revived. Olen Steinhauer introduced readers to protagonist Milo Weaver and a CIA assassination squad called The Department of Tourism in a trilogy that ended in 2012. In a novel titled, <u>The Last Tourist</u> , Steinhauer has more to say about the tourists. Information is the lifeblood of spy craft. Milo Weaver has been running an	

enterprise called The Library which his father started within the United Nations. The Library provides client countries with sensitive information. Corporations are the real repositories of power in contemporary life, and Weaver finds himself challenged by a worthy corporate adversary. The action moves quickly in the novel, and by the time we arrive in Davos, all the pieces are coming together. Readers who enjoy thrillers are likely to enjoy this novel, whether familiar with the earlier ones or not.

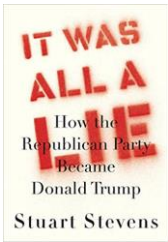
The Making of a Justice: Reflections on My First 94 Years	Stevens, John Paul	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
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[It Was All a Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump](#)

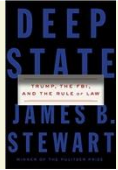
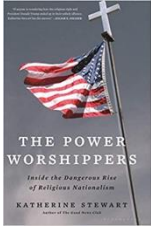
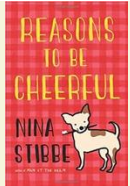
Stevens, Stuart

[12/21/20](#)

Decades. Longtime Republican operative Stuart Stevens reflects on the past five decades of political life and draws conclusions that disclose his complicity in what has become a long con. In a book titled, [It Was All a Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump](#), Stevens describes his participation in and observation of the modern Republic Party and candidly assesses the lies that have displaced the principles on which his party was based. Anyone interested in politics should consider reading this book. Rather than stories or invective, this book presents analysis. Some Republicans may bristle at Stevens' assessment or brand it as fake, and some Democrats may be inclined toward agreement and glee, but any citizen can examine the past few decades and observe much of what Stevens presents in this book,



whether we want to face those facts or not. Hearing from an active participant with such candor makes this book different.

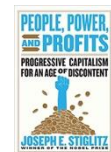
<u>Deep State: Trump, the FBI, and the Rule of Law</u>	Stewart, James B.	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism</u>	Stewart, Katherine	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Reasons to be Cheerful</u>	Stibbe, Nina	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

[People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent](#)

Stiglitz, Joseph E.

[7/23/20](#)

Progressive. If you think everything is peachy these days, don't bother reading Nobel prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz' book titled, [People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent](#). Assuming that most readers will see a smidgen or two of trouble ahead for the world, those who pick up this book will find a cogent prescription which Stiglitz calls "progressive capitalism." Those readers interested in public policy will find in this book a clear description of trends and a way to enjoy the benefits from markets while building a system of effective controls and balances. There's no waffling ambiguity in this book. All readers can understand exactly what Stiglitz thinks we should do next.

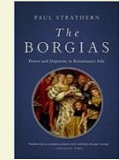


[The Borgias: Power and Depravity in Renaissance Italy](#)

Strathern, Paul

[2/21/20](#)

Infamy. Consider escaping from contemporary stories of power and depravity and spend some time with Paul Strathern's book titled, [The Borgias: Power and Depravity in Renaissance Italy](#). Whether you know a lot or a little about the Borgias before opening this book, you are likely to re-read some passages when what Strathern says in a straightforward way sinks in. Treachery, entanglements of all sorts, violence and schemes abound on these pages. We hear about boundless ambition, the purchase of the papacy, and the exercise of power.

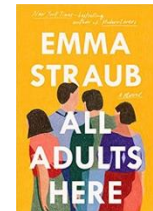



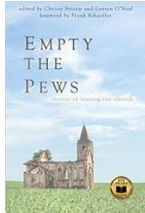
[All Adults Here](#)

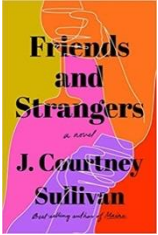
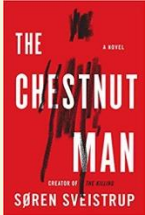
Straub, Emma

[6/24/20](#)

Love. After spending time reading about three generations of the Strick family in Emma Straub's novel titled, [All Adults Here](#), most readers will feel an extra spark of love for our own parents, siblings, children and grandchildren. Most of us will be more thankful for our relations and their issues when compared to the cast of characters in this novel. Sixty-eight-year-old matriarch Astrid Strick leads the ensemble, and her teenage granddaughter, Cecilia, may be the most mature member of the family. Straub packs a host of contemporary issues into this family and the small town in which Astrid lives. I loved the sibling dynamics in the novel, and the insight that as parents we may do our best but know there are things we've done that require an apology to our children. Wisdom comes from not guessing what those things are, because they may not be the events or actions we recall.



<u>This Could Be Our Future: A Manifesto for a More Generous World</u>	Strickler, Yancey	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Empty the Pews: Stories of Leaving the Church</u>	Stroop, Chrissy and Lauren O'Neal	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Shuggie Bain</u>	Stuart, Douglas	*****	<u>8/25/20</u>	<p>Alcoholic. Douglas Stuart's debut novel titled, <u>Shuggie Bain</u>, packs a wallop. Set in Glasgow, the novel offers a detailed exploration of the relationship between an alcoholic mother, Agnes Bain, and her son, Shuggie. Any reader who has lived in a household where alcohol was a problem will recognize Stuart's insight into family dynamics and what happens when children have to assume responsibilities far beyond what's age appropriate for them. Stuart excels at character development in this novel, and through multiple detailed descriptions of dysfunctional domestic life readers can share just a small bit of what it is like to live in a house with an alcoholic adult. Stuart seems to keep pounding away at readers with one sad episode after another that can make us weary. That's part of the impressive power of this book: the text itself recreates the repetitive experiences of this family's life. I highly recommend this novel to those readers who appreciate finely written literary fiction and those who find depth and insight from descriptions of</p>	

				domestic life, whether the same as what we've known ourselves or completely different.	
<u>Friends and Strangers</u>	Sullivan, J. Courtney	*****	<u>8/5/20</u>	<p>Privilege. The combination of finely written prose and psychological insight elevate J. Courtney Sullivan's novel titled, <u>Friends and Strangers</u>, from domestic drama to literary fiction that encapsulates our current time and place. After two decades in New York City, protagonist and journalist Elisabeth moves with her husband and child to the rural town where his parents live. Many readers will identify with Elisabeth staying linked to her Brooklyn Moms group, while she steps slowly into the Moms group in her new community. Sullivan touches all the right nerves when it comes to motherhood. She also explores significant issues about privilege in this novel, and the ways in which insensitivity to the reality of privilege can inhibit the ability of one to see what other lives are like. Is the relationship between Elisabeth and her young babysitter friendship? After the babysitter finds a mentor in Elisabeth's father-in-law, what does that mean for relationships all around? Fans of finely written literary fiction, especially mothers, are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
<u>The Chestnut Man</u>	Sveistrup, Søren	****	<u>3/6/20</u>	<p>Creepy. The debut novel by Søren Sveistrup is a creepy thriller titled, <u>The Chestnut Man</u>. The characters are interesting and complex, flawed in all the ways we recognize and appreciate. The crimes are bloody and violent and the criminal meticulous and dogged. The plot moves at a pace that after a while sustains a reader's elevated heart rate</p>	

				level that jumps when a new twist arrives. Most readers will hug their children a little tighter after reading this book. Fans of crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
<u>Here We Are</u>	Swift, Graham	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking</u>	Syed, Matthew	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Turbulence</u>	Szalay, David	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Mrs. Mohr Goes Missing</u>	Szmiczkowa, Maryla	****	<u>8/19/20</u>	Vocation. The best murder mysteries in the Agatha Christie tradition have a protagonist detective that's beloved by readers. Maryla Szmiczkowa provides one named Zofia Turbotyńska in a novel titled, <u>Mrs. Mohr Goes Missing</u> . Zofie is a bored socialite in Cracow whose current task is a fundraiser for a local care home and the nuns who operate it. After a resident is found dead, Zofia leaves her boredom behind and comes to life as a passionate detective. She excels at this vocation, to the pleasure of readers like me who are entertained by this genre. Zofia has the wit and flair of some of the greatest fictional detectives who precede her, and I	

			was delighted to stumble on this novel and look forward to Zofia's next case.	
<u>Three Women</u>	Taddeo, Lisa	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Hate, Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another</u>	Taibbi, Matt	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Riches of This Land, The Untold, True Story of America's Middle Class</u>	Tankersley, Jim	Unread	Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership</u>	Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta	****	<u>8/5/20</u> Systemic. Readers of Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's book titled, <u>Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership</u> , will gain a deep understanding of systemic racism and its impact for Black American homeowners. Learn about how redlining worked, how people are exploited, and the long-term consequence of inequality in access to housing. There are human stories here alongside policy analysis. No matter how much you think you know about racial discrimination and predatory lending, this book will teach you a lot more.	

Men to Avoid in Art and Life

Tersigni, Nicole

9/22/20

Mansplaining. For those readers whose attention span has been shortened because of anxiety and lifestyle changes as a result of the novel coronavirus, a book to consider is Nicole Tersigni's Men to Avoid in Art and Life. In fewer than one hundred pages, she pairs artwork with contemporary phrases and will deliver well-needed belly laughs. Many readers will want to share a page or more on Zoom or FaceTime with another reader who will appreciate the subjects, especially the mansplaining. If deadpan wit tickles your funnybone, be sure to read this book.

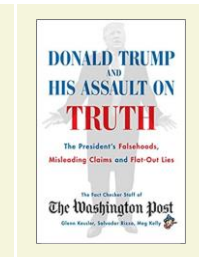


Donald Trump and His Assault on Truth: The President's Falsehoods, Misleading Claims and Flat-Out Lies

The Washington Post Fact Checker Staff

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



First: Sandra Day O'Connor

Thomas, Evan

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

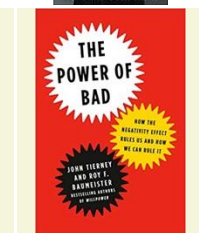


The Power of Bad: How the Negativity Effect Rules Us and How We Can Rule It

Tierney, John and Roy F. Baumeister

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

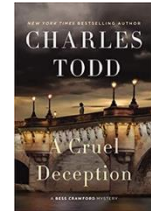


[A Cruel Deception](#)

Todd, Charles

[2/14/20](#)

Paris. The eleventh Bess Crawford novel by the writing duo called Charles Todd is titled, [A Cruel Deception](#). This time out, the Great War has wound down, and the need for nurses has diminished. Bess remains conflicted about her future when Matron at The Queen Alexandra's asks her to go to Paris on a personal mission regarding Matron's son, Lawrence. Bess finds the man abusing laudanum, and AWOL from his job at the Peace Conference. Competent and diligent as always, Bess investigates what has troubled Lawrence, and her adventures in Paris and environs are exciting and dangerous. Fans of the series, and anyone who likes historical fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

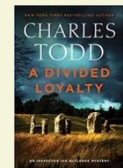


[A Divided Loyalty](#)

Todd, Charles

[3/6/20](#)

Twists. The twenty-second installment in the Inspector Ian Rutledge mystery series by the writing team named Charles Todd is a novel titled, [A Divided Loyalty](#). Fans of historical crime fiction and this series will love the twists throughout this installment as well as the complexity of the case and the continued development of the complex detective as a troubled and talented person. Despite the willingness of the chief inspector to close a cold case that Rutledge has worked on, the final few details to wrap up lead to a very different outcome. Any worker whose boss never seems to recognize talent and success will find a lot in common with Inspector Rutledge.



Women Talking

Toews, Miriam

2/7/20

Response. We know the situation that led to the Mennonite women coming together to plan their future: they have realized that over the past two years they were drugged and raped by men in their isolated community. The novel titled, Women Talking, by Miriam Toews takes the true story of a community of women, and offers a fictional entry in the ways in which women relate to each other, take control of their loves, and exert power. There are different viewpoints expressed among the women gathered to consider their response: stay or leave; fight or flee. Toews writes with insight, sensitivity and wit as the resilience of the women in the novel show readers a path in life that may resonate for many.




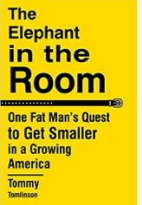
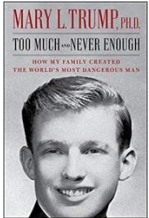
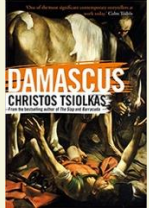
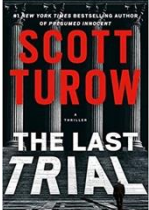
Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead

Tokarczuk, Olga

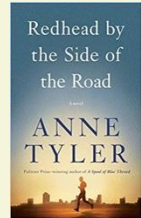
1/10/20

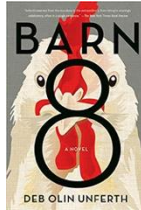
Blake. Every reader knows (or is) a character like Janina Duszejko, the protagonist of Olga Tokarczuk's novel titled, Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead. On some pages, Janina's narration makes me laugh. I observe her translation of William Blake on another page (the book's title comes from Blake), and step back several paces at her reaction to the death of her neighbor, whom she calls Big Foot. On some pages, I questioned her sanity, or checked in to verify my own. Janina loves animals more than people and her interactions with humans reflect that, while her cogent observations reveal her assessment of their characters. I'm a big fan of listening to eccentric voices, and not underestimating them. When more neighbors turn up dead, Janina writes to the police that the animals are pursuing justice. This novel is a perfectly paced thriller filled



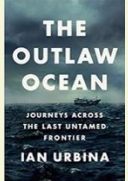


				with superb writing and deep insight into human nature.	
<u>Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion</u>	Tolentino, Jia	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Elephant in the Room: One Fat Man's Quest to Get Smaller in a Growing America</u>	Tomlinson, Tommy	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man</u>	Trump, Mary	*****	<u>9/8/20</u>	<p>Deprivation. I finished reading Mary Trump's book titled, <u>Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man</u>, with tremendous gratitude that Fred Trump, Sr. was not my father. I almost began to feel a little bit sorry for Donald Trump who has felt deprivation for his entire life, influenced so strongly as it was by his tyrannical father. While the prominent figure to attract readers to this book is Donald, the family story's central character is Fred, Sr. and this is a sad story indeed. I'm glad I read it, but now I really need to disinfect.</p>	
<u>Damascus</u>	Tsiolkas, Christos	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>The Last Trial</u>	Turow, Scott	*****	<u>8/19/20</u>	<p>Finale. It won't surprise fans of Scott Turow's fiction that the latest novel titled, <u>The Last Trial</u>, is set in Kindle County, and recurring character Sandy Stern is back for what is positioned as his last trial. At age eighty-five, Sandy is not in prime physical</p>	

condition, but he knows how to operate in the courtroom, and the best parts of this novel show Sandy weaving his magic before a jury. The client is a friend, and the evidence against him is formidable. Turow shares his insights into our human condition and the legal system in ways that are empathetic about frailty and the humanity woven into the system. I enjoyed every page of this novel, and every minute spent with Turow and Sandy Stern.

<u>Redhead by the Side of the Road</u>	Tyler, Anne	*****	<u>5/5/20</u>	<p>Connections. Micah Mortimer, protagonist of Anne Tyler's novel titled, <u>Redhead by the Side of the Road</u>, strives for order and perfection. Tyler tosses surprises into Micah's life and incomplete interpersonal connections become transparent. Each of us needs someone in our lives who helps us see ourselves as we really are. Sometimes our routine becomes more important than paying attention to the love in our lives. The portrait of Micah may not look like any of us, but his complexity and humanity will be familiar and offer a glimpse into what lives can become when we are open to love. As always, Tyler draws us into the story, keeps us close, and brings us home by the end.</p> 
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<u>Barn 8</u>	Unferth, Deb Olin	****	<u>6/24/20</u>	<p>Chickens. Things don't always turn out the way we plan. In her novel titled, <u>Barn 8</u>, Deb Olin Unferth introduces readers to a group of activists who plan to rescue a million chickens from the barns on a factory farm. What could possibly go wrong? Unferth's writing leads us to care about the cast of characters and to love the chickens, while allowing the madcap action to unfold. I like a funny story that has an important message</p> 
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and this book had me laughing and thinking. There's really no limit to the things we'll do for love. Fans of imaginative and well-written fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this novel.

<u>The Outlaw Ocean: Journeys Across the Last Untamed Frontier</u>	Urbina, Ian	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>A Peculiar Peril</u>	VanderMeer, Jeff	*****	<u>12/17/20</u>	<p>Magic. Fans of Jeff VanderMeer won't think twice about falling into his latest world, a 650-page YA novel titled, <u>A Peculiar Peril</u>. When protagonist Jonathan Lambshead arrives at the mansion he inherited from his grandfather, a wild adventure begins featuring a gateway to place called Aurora, a different version of Earth. On the adventure, we find talking animals, and versions of Napoleon, Charlemagne and Kafka. Jonathan comes to appreciate his role to keep Aurora and Earth separated. The strange characters are delightful, especially the talking marmots, the fantasy enjoyable, and the writing weird and lighthearted.</p>	
<u>Dead Astronauts</u>	VanderMeer, Jeff	***	<u>10/27/20</u>	<p>Versions. Jeff VanderMeer, in his novel titled, <u>Dead Astronauts</u>, continues a riff that he began in his science fiction novel titled, <i>Borne</i>, describing ways in which ruthlessness leads to trying and trying again as multiple versions of life forms attempt progress, whatever that means. There are villains and rebels on these pages, and a creepy world that no matter how parts are remade remains a horror. Fans of literary science fiction are those readers most likely to enjoy this strange and imaginative novel.</p>	

The Lines

Varallo, Anthony

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



The Great Offshore Grounds

Veselka, Vanessa

12/9/20

Freedom. What every parent wants most of all is for their child to be happy. In her novel titled, The Great Offshore Grounds, Vanessa Veselka throws readers into the messy lives of parents and children. Thanks to rich character development and vivid description, patient readers can cross the world with these fascinating people as they learn about what's really important in life. Financial insecurity might be a better inheritance than the inability to love or the absence of freedom. Whether on land or the sea, sibling bonds are strong, and a mother's love and care is constant. Readers who love complexity and depth in a novel will find a lot to enjoy in this finely written novel.

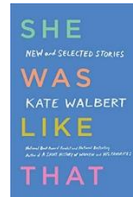


She Was Like That

Walbert, Kate

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

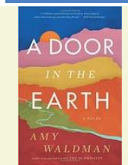


A Door in the Earth

Waldman, Amy

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

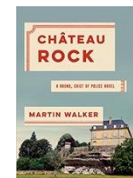


The Shooting at Château Rock

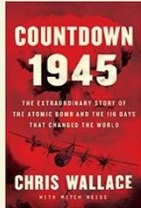
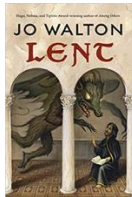

Walker, Martin

9/22/20

Russia. Fans of Martin Walker's Bruno Chief of Police series set in the small French town of St. Denis in the Périgord are those most likely to enjoy reading this year's novel titled, The Shooting at Château Rock. One minute, Bruno is gathering ingredients for a



meal, riding a horse, spending time with friends, and the next he's caught up in crime involving Russia way above his pay grade. While the plot spends a lot of time with a rock star and a Russian oligarch, the biggest challenge for Bruno in this installment involves mating his dog. I am entertained by every minute I spend reading the novels in this series. Reading is one way to visit the Dordogne while covid-19 travel restrictions are in place.

<u>Countdown 1945: The Extraordinary Story of the Atomic Bomb and the 116 Days That Changed the World</u>	Wallace, Chris and Mitch Weiss	****	<u>10/12/20</u>	<p>Momentum. Readers who enjoy twentieth century history meant for a general audience will enjoy Chris Wallace and Mitch Weiss's book titled, <u>Countdown 1945: The Extraordinary Story of the Atomic Bomb and the 116 Days That Changed the World.</u> There's momentum and drama in this book that is structured starting four months before the atomic bombs were released on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I learned more about Truman's decision-making process after reading this book, and the stories of the pilots and others made the account personal.</p>	
<u>Lent</u>	Walton, Jo	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Love and Other Thought Experiments</u>	Ward, Sophie	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	

One by One

Ware, Ruth

11/17/20

Snoop. Any reader who has attended a corporate offsite retreat will find delight while reading the murder mystery by Ruth Ware titled, One by One. Alcohol, entitlement, and secret agendas provide the ingredients for mischief, and the rustic chalet in the French Alps may take your breath away, literally. By the time an avalanche strikes, most readers will be hooked on this exciting novel, even if it seems like a very familiar plot.

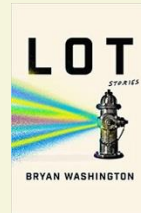


Lot

Washington, Bryan

6/10/20

Impressions. There are thirteen finely written short stories in the debut collection by Bryan Washington, the middle story of which is used as title for the collection, Lot. We get impressions in these stories, sometimes fragments, of Houston life. Some of the stories are connected. Many involve losses, and the struggle for survival. All the stories are finely written and will appeal to any reader who appreciates literary fiction.

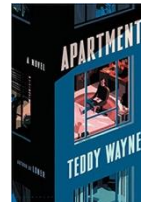


Apartment

Wayne, Teddy

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.





The Truants

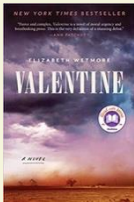
Weinberg, Kate

6/10/20

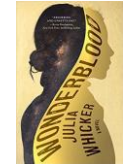
Teacher. Intelligent readers will find a lot to like in Kate Weinberg's debut novel titled, The Truants. Protagonist Jess Walker can't wait to be on her East Anglia university campus and experience the skills of a charismatic teacher, Dr. Lorna Clay, an expert on Agatha Christie. Weinberg develops a cast of fascinating characters and structures the novel in ways that Christie would recognize. Jess becomes part of a



				<p>small fun-loving group and Lorna Clay becomes the major influence on how Jess thinks and lives. We're treated to love triangles, significant coming of age moments, murder, pages of clever writing and just the right amount of plot twisting tension.</p>	
Uncanny Valley	Weiner, Anna	****	3/13/20	<p>Outsider. Most readers don't work in Silicon Valley, so for us outsiders, Anna Weiner's memoir titled, Uncanny Valley, gives us a view into one person's perspective on what it might be like to work for startups in that place. Weiner entered the Valley as an outsider, moving from New York to San Francisco, and not bringing with her the highly valued tech skills that dominate the region. Instead, she brought smarts, emotional intelligence, and the ability to communicate with customers. Weiner's writing makes the book engaging and interesting for those readers who want a glimpse inside the culture of Silicon Valley startups.</p>	
Big Summer	Weiner, Jennifer	***	8/5/20	<p>Friend. Female friendships can be complicated things, and there's plenty of complexity in Jennifer Weiner's novel titled, Big Summer. Protagonist Daphne Berg is surprised when estranged high school friend Drue Cavanaugh contacts her six years after a dramatic breakup and invites her to be the maid of honor at a huge society wedding in outer Cape Cod. Daphne ends up feeling sorry for friendless Drue, so she agrees. What follows is a whirlwind of Instagram posts to plus-size Daphne's followers, and to all the buzz around Drue and her fiancée. There are rom com elements in this novel</p>	

			<p>that will make readers laugh, and enough seriousness to keep turning pages to the end. For those with covid-19 diminished attention, this novel is likely to be a fun and satisfying distraction.</p>	
<p><u>One Day: The Extraordinary Story of an Ordinary 24 Hours in America</u></p>	<p>Weingarten, Gene</p>	<p>*****</p>	<p><u>2/21/20</u> Herculean. Treat yourself to a celebration of life by reading Gene Weingarten's finely written book titled, <u>One Day: The Extraordinary Story of an Ordinary 24 Hours in America</u>. Pulitzer-prize winning Weingarten had strangers pick a random date, and then he went out looking for human interest stories from that date. His process involved conducting hundreds of interviews over the course of six years. The result is a glimpse into all kinds of lives and their stories. Weingarten approaches the complexity of human behavior and presents real people and their interesting and compelling stories.</p>	
<p><u>Valentine</u></p>	<p>Wetmore, Elizabeth</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>6/24/20</u> Odessa. The five female narrators of Elizabeth Wetmore's debut novel titled, <u>Valentine</u>, never flinch as they describe their lives in Odessa, Texas during the 1970s oil boom. After an opening scene involving the brutal rape of a young Mexican by a violent oil worker, the pace never stops as Wetmore lets these women tell us of their struggle for survival in a culture that stacks the deck against them at every turn in life. Wetmore develops complex characters and leads readers to hear their stories with compassion and feel their struggle with empathy.</p>	

<u>Wonderblood</u>	Whicker, Julia	****	<u>4/23/20</u>	<p>Magic. In her debut novel titled, <u>Wonderblood</u>, Julia Whicker presents a future United States where we have turned away from science and toward magic. Science failed half the world's population as it did not protect people from disease. We turn to faith and interpret portents and provide blood sacrifice to ward off danger. Violent factions struggle for control and the locus for worship becomes Cape Canaveral, a relic of a time long past. Whicker offers interesting characters, political machinations, and an apocalyptic vision that will make many readers shiver.</p>
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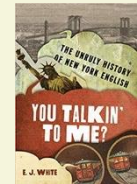


[You Talkin' To Me?: The Unruly History of New York English](#)

White, E.J.

[9/22/20](#)

Linguistics. As a speaker of New York English, Brooklyn 1950s variety, I learned new things about my native tongue after reading E.J. White's book titled, [You Talkin' To Me?: The Unruly History of New York English](#). Between the tidbits of delight, there's a lot of pages to travel that are steeped in linguistics. While I had views about social class differences in language, White helped me understand context for that. Media depictions that have selected from the broad New York patois have spread the language and reinforced certain aspects over others. If you have any interest in language and its spread, you may find this book interesting and informative.

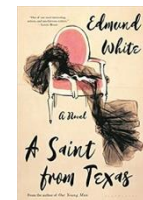


[A Saint from Texas](#)

White, Edmund

[9/19/20](#)

Sisters. In a novel by Edmund White titled, [A Saint from Texas](#), identical twin sisters take different roads away from their East Texas start in life. Their daddy's land provided an oil fortune to nurture their dreams. Yvonne decides to join Parisian society, while Yvette aligns with the poor in



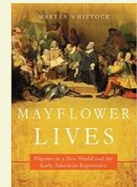
Columbia. White takes us across a half century and treats us to fine writing infused with great wit and joy. There's Texas-sized exuberance on these pages, and wisdom about the nature of human behavior. White's characters are finely drawn with all the complexity and foibles of all of us.

Mayflower Lives:
Pilgrims in a New
World and the
Early American
Experience

Whittock, Martyn

7/23/20

Personal. Thanks to covid-19, there will be no vacation trip to Cape Cod in Summer 2020, so I took a virtual journey to that area thanks to reading Martyn Whittock's book titled, Mayflower Lives: Pilgrims in a New World and the Early American Experience. Whittock profiles fourteen individuals as a way to personalize the lives of the saints and strangers who came to the New World in the 17th century. One of those profiled is my namesake, Stephen Hopkins, one of the strangers and not a saint, probably the only thing we have in common. Every time I read a book about this time and place, I learn something new. Fans of history are those readers most likely to enjoy the well-told stories in this book.



Kent State

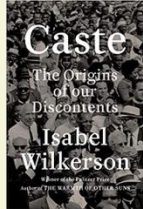
Wiles, Deborah

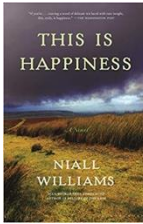
6/24/20

Voices. Even fifty years after the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, there remain conflicting accounts of what happened then over the course of several days of protests. In her book titled, Kent State, Deborah Wiles allows multiple voices to relate different perspectives using free verse. We hear from white and black students, National Guard troops, and residents of Kent. As is the case with many books written for younger audiences, this book removes what's unessential to the

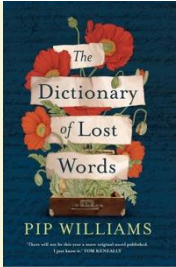

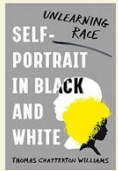


narrative. The result is a mining of multiple memories of the past that provide another context for discussing contemporary protests and violent responses to peaceful as well as disruptive activities.

<u>Caste: The Origins of our Discontents</u>	Wilkerson, Isabel	*****	<u>9/8/20</u>	<p>Hierarchy. Sometimes all it takes is a small shift in perspective for the lightbulbs to shine on a complicated subject. In her finely written book titled, <u>Caste: The Origins of our Discontents</u>, Isabel Wilkerson describes the ways in which the United States has established a hierarchy that explains many of our historic and contemporary divisions and challenges. Having studied global caste systems thoroughly, Wilkerson examines how life in America reflects the eight pillars typical of caste alignments. Under caste, it is necessary to have a bottom rung of society, creating a comparison of superiority and inferiority. The system is meant to maintain status and caste so that those defined as inferior remain on the bottom rung. Her stories are vivid and gripping, and by moving away from the loaded language of racism, she may help many readers alter perspective and think about issues differently and accept responsibility to move society forward.</p>	
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<u>This Is Happiness</u>	Williams, Niall	*****	<u>2/14/20</u>	<p>Change. Change is in the air in the rural Ireland town of Faha, and not just because the electricity is coming. Niall Williams pulls readers into Faha and its people in his finely written novel titled, <u>This Is Happiness</u>. Williams writes beautiful sentences that capture the setting and the people in ways that may lead a reader to underline or reread. Since the next sentence is usually as good as or better than the last, this can</p>	
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become rhythmic and we begin to feel as if we are in Faha among these fascinating people. Fans of literary fiction are those readers who will enjoy every hour spent in Ireland on the pages of this finely written novel.

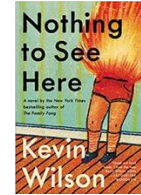
<u>The Dictionary of Lost Words</u>	Williams, Pip	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Erosion: Essays of Undoing</u>	Williams, Terry Tempest	Unread		Shelf of Ennui 2020.	
<u>Self-Portrait in Black and White: Unlearning Race</u>	Williams, Thomas Chatterton	*****	<u>6/10/20</u>	<p>Categories. If Thomas Chatterton Williams can't convince you that our racial constructs are meaningless, no one can. In his book titled, <u>Self-Portrait in Black and White: Unlearning Race</u>, Williams uses the backdrop of his own identity and the strains of black and white and how he is perceived as a way to ditch some categories as he applies principles that make sense. This book should lead most readers to rethink our notions of race. Some readers may find his book controversial. I didn't. I listened to the struggle of a son and a father trying to unlearn the categories relating to race. Williams writes of big things in a light way, inviting readers to join him in moving ahead.</p>	

[Nothing to See Here](#)

Wilson, Kevin

[1/2/20](#)

Children. We parents want our children to become their best selves. Each child is unique and needs love and support from people who care for them. In his book titled, [Nothing to See Here](#), Kevin Wilson presents us with twin ten-year-olds whose uniqueness is expressed when they spontaneously burst into flames. While the twins are unharmed when this happens, there can be collateral damage. Stepmother Madison hires an acquaintance from school, Lillian, to care for the twins. Lillian comes from poverty and Madison from privilege. As Lillian narrates this story, we laugh and enjoy Wilson's finely crafted prose. We begin to understand the friendship between Madison and Lillian and reflect on the responsibilities we take on when we care for others. Readers who appreciate wacky and finely written literary fiction, rooted in deep understanding of human nature are those most likely to enjoy this imaginative and insightful novel.



[Before We Were Yours](#)

Wingate, Lisa

[5/15/20](#)

Sisters. Lisa Wingate based her novel titled, [Before We Were Yours](#), on the true story of an adoption agency that sold children. She gives readers a compelling and emotional story, packed with characters that readers will come to know and love or hate. The sisters in this story will stir your heart and might even produce a tear or two. You'll be caught up in this novel from the beginning to the end and will come away carrying something of an emotional overload. If that's what you're looking for in a novel, this is the book for you.

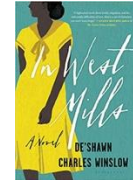


In West Mills

Winslow, De'Shawn
Charles

2/7/20

Knot. I fell in love with the people and the place so finely presented in De'Shawn Charles Winslow's debut novel titled, In West Mills. Protagonist Azalea "Knot" Centre is a force to be reckoned with, sober or otherwise. Readers move into the small town and we come to understand the secrets and complications of normal lives in this tender and warm story. We love and we want to be loved. We want to be free and we are often selfish. We may not know where we came from or where we are going, so we plod along doing our best. Love endures.

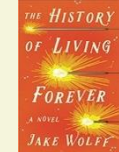


The History of Living Forever

Wolff, Jake

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.



Rage

Woodward, Bob

10/27/20

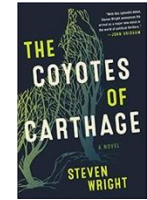
Hubris. Having declined interviews with Bob Woodward for his 1998 book, *Fear*, Donald Trump decided to make himself available to the journalist for a new book titled, Rage. Full of blinding hubris, Trump must have assumed that he could talk his way through whatever Woodward asked and ensure that a favorable view of the American President would follow in the book, unlike the earlier book which made the President look bad. Instead, what we get from Woodward are Trump's own rambling, disconnected and unhinged words as recorded in seventeen on the record interviews. On topics including the pandemic, racial unrest and international relations, we revisit things we think we know, and learn a little more about the reality behind the statements and stories. We



observe denial, combat, bluster and occasional revelations of the difference between what the President knew and what he told the rest of us. In addition to the Trump meetings, Woodward spent hundreds of hours interviewing witnesses to the events related along with their notes, emails, diaries and other documents. He also read twenty-five letters from Kim Jong Un that reveal how manipulation was used to soften up Trump in his dealings with North Korea. Readers interested in public affairs and politics are those most likely to enjoy this enlightening book.

<u>The End of October</u>	Wright, Lawrence	*****	<p>Pathogens. If living through a real pandemic makes you hungry to read about a fictional one, be sure to read Lawrence Wright's novel titled, <u>The End of October</u>. I had to keep reminding myself that Wright wrote this novel well before anyone knew about covid-19 because he gets so much of our contemporary experience right. That said, we read fiction for other reasons. Protagonist Dr. Henry Parsons provides one of those reasons. Wright enflashed this flawed hero with all the human qualities that make us fascinated by other people. This skilled epidemiologist does so much right, makes some big mistakes, and tries to move along, just like us. This thrilling novel provides lots of suspense and a cast of interesting characters, full of good and malice, focused often on the wrong things. Pathogens and nature are powerful forces, as we're learning, and our human inclinations are not always focused on doing what's best for ourselves and for others.</p>	
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[The Coyotes of Carthage](#) Wright, Steven **** 5/5/20 **Dark.** A small town election in South Carolina provides the backdrop for Steven Wright's debut novel titled, [The Coyotes of Carthage](#). Protagonist Dre Ross has been sent by his firm with dark money to manipulate politics in the interest of a mining company client. Wright offers complex characters, a fast-paced plot, and a glimpse inside local politics and the ways in which outsiders can swing votes for hidden causes.

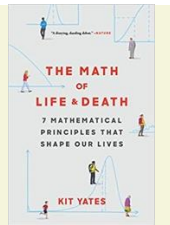


[The Math of Life and Death: 7 Mathematical Principles That Shape Our Lives](#)

Yates, Kit

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

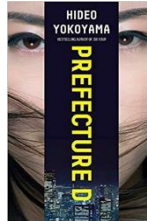


[Prefecture D](#)

Yokoyama, Hideo

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

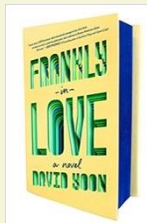


[Frankly in Love](#)

Yoon, David

2/21/20

Senior. David Yoon's debut novel titled, [Frankly in Love](#), pulls readers back to high school where senior Frank Li is dating Brit Means. Frank's Korean name is Sung-Min Li, but no one uses it, and growing up in Southern California, he doesn't speak much Korean. Yoon describes the tension between the expectations of parents to maintain heritage and an individual's exploration of one's identity. Yoon's characters are relatable to all readers, the prose often witty, and the situations typical to all of us during our formative years.

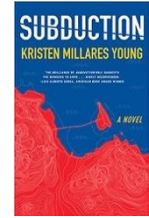


Subduction

Young, Kristen
Millares

Unread

Shelf of Ennui 2020.

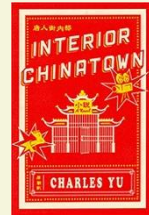


Interior Chinatown

Yu, Charles

9/19/20

Roles. Charles Yu's playful, satirical and insightful novel titled, Interior Chinatown, explores many dimensions of the roles we play and those to which we aspire. Sometimes the role we want to play fails to meet our expectations. Other times, we are defined by others because of roles or stereotyping. Protagonist Willie Wu performs the everyman role in this novel, aspiring to be Kung Fu Guy, but usually relegated to Generic Asian Guy. Readers who enjoy creative and imaginative fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.



Verge

Yuknavitch, Lidia

7/6/20

Resilience. There are twenty short stories in the collection by Lidia Yuknavitch titled, Verge. The characters in these stories live on the margins. In lives that are battered from so many sources, there is truth and beauty if one looks in the right places, and an untraveled path out of a current setback can be found. Yuknavitch write prose that sings in celebration of the resilience of the characters she creates.

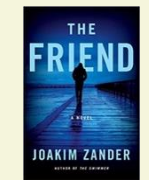


The Friend

Zander, Joakim

3/26/20

Terrorism. Readers who enjoy thrillers with interesting and complex characters are those most likely to appreciate the novel titled, The Friend, by Joakim Zander. What would you be willing to do for a friend? How well do you know a friend? Can someone surprise us when they unexpectedly help us out of jam? Zander gives us two plot lines



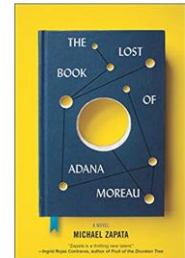
			that develop slowly and then merge as tension rises. Jacob Seger is a young Swede who arrives at his country's embassy in Beirut to start an internship. On his first night in Lebanon, he meets a man named Yassim at a party and falls head over heels in love. Is Yassim the photographer he claims to be or is he a terrorist? Friends Klara and Gabriella notice that they are being watched, and after Gabi is arrested under suspicion of terrorism, Klara enlists George, an acquaintance from her past, to help her clear Gabi's name. There are Russian spies in the mix, and lots of close calls as the full cast of characters face life or death decisions. I was thoroughly entertained by this novel.	
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The Lost Book of Adana Moreau

Zapata, Michael

4/16/20

Structure. I enjoyed reading Michael Zapata's debut novel titled, The Lost Book of Adana Moreau, for several key reasons. I'm a sucker for great storytelling, and the multiple stories and time periods that Zapata connects in this novel kept me fully engaged. The scope of this work could have led some writers to bloat the prose, but Zapata uses great discipline throughout this novel and his finely written prose included no wasted words. The overall structure of the novel is complex enough to challenge the closest reader, and Zapata seems to build the universes he creates with ease. Fans of literary fiction are those readers most likely to appreciate this finely written novel.



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Key to Ratings:

- ***** I love it
- **** I like it
- *** It's OK
- ** I don't like it
- * I hate it