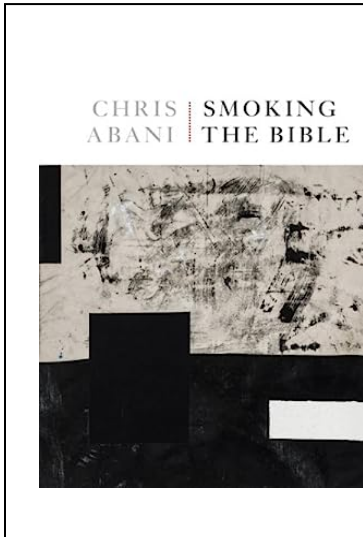
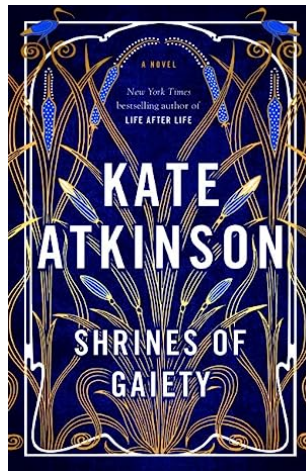


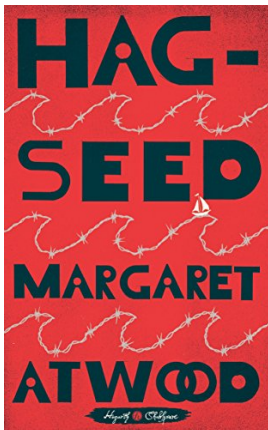
Saint Ann's School Suggested Summer Reading List for high school and faculty, 2023



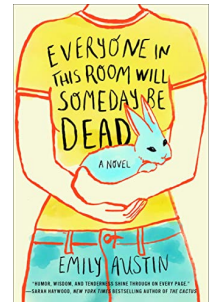
Abani, Chris. ***Smoking the Bible***. A poetry book centered on grief, for family, for a homeland, for a broken spirit. These are so heartfelt the book becomes a page turner. (Marty Skoble) 📖



Atkinson, Kate. ***Shrines of Gaiety***. This novel takes you to London between the wars and drops you into the lives of the Coker family, who run a string of nightclubs throughout the city. There is a giant cast of characters, including police officers (honest and on-the-take), runaway teens (an aspiring showgirl and her friend), and a former nurse trying to recover her life after WWI. The swirling plot lines all come together in the end, and I truly felt that I could hear the music and see the fashion of this roaring decade. (Stephanie Schragger) 📖🎧





Atwood, Margaret. ***Hag Seed***. *Hag Seed* is a retelling of *The Tempest*, with multiple Tempests overlapping. The plot lands at a theater program in a prison. It is a bright light. And very very funny. It is part of The Hogarth Shakespeare Series, for which a number of modern authors were commissioned to rewrite a Shakespeare play of their choosing for the “modern” audience. Other authors: Jeannette Winterson, Howard Jacobson, Anne Tyler, Jo Nesbø, Edward St Aubyn, Tracy Chevalier. I ripped through every one I could get my hands on. (Kate S Hamilton) 📖🎧





Austin, Emily. ***Everyone in This Room Will Someday Be Dead***. This was in a bunch of my friends’ “what I read in 2022” lists, and I really enjoyed it. A quick read, primarily due to the incredibly fast-paced inner-monologue of the severely anxious main character, Gilda. Includes topics such as: anxiety-ridden queer people, uncomfortably familiar family dynamics, and lying to the Catholic Church. (Sara Gunn) 📖


Read library books all summer with Saint Ann’s Digital Library!

Access it at <https://soraapp.com/library/saintannssny>. Many titles on this list are available on the digital library as an ebook, audiobook, or both. 📖 means ebook, 🎧 means audiobook, 📖🎧 means both. See the end of this list for more instructions.


Ausubel, Ramona. ***The Last Animal***. Ann Patchett meets Michael Crichton in this wildly original tale of a scientist mother and her teen daughters processing grief for their husband/father while on world-circling quests to maybe resurrect the extinct woolly mammoth. This is a hilarious and deep book that brilliantly pulls together many threads (Neanderthals! Interspecies mating! Longing! Sexism!) while delivering numerous delightful (though not always happy) surprises. Do read. (Denise Rinaldo)  


Bazterrica, Agustina. ***Tender is the Flesh***. It will take a couple of chapters to get past the nauseatingly specific descriptions of the life of a manager of a factory for "special" (human) meat. But beyond that is a story about what it means to make choices within the moral landscape we're born into. (Leda Fisher) 


Beaton, Kate. ***Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands***. (graphic novel) To pay off her college loans, Nova Scotia native Kate Beaton spent two years working the oil sands in Alberta. I'd probably still recommend this if it were only a brutal first-hand account of industrial capitalism, but Beaton fills the book with friendship and humor. But, yeah, it's pretty harrowing stuff. (Michael Pershan) 



Bolaño, Roberto. ***The Savage Detectives*** (*Los Detectives Salvajes*). A robust and stimulating novel about a collective of young poets in Mexico City from the 1970s to the 1990s. The book is separated into 3 parts, detailing the exploits of aspiring poet Juan García Madero, the travels of "Visceral Realist" enthusiasts Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima, and the search for an obscure and elusive poet named Cesárea Tinajero. (Jamie Rutherford) 



Brooks-Dalton, Lily. ***The Light Pirate***. *The Light Pirate* tells an unexpected coming-of-age story about Wanda, a Florida girl whose life is shaped by climate change, loss, community, and just a touch of magic. (Ellen Friedrichs)



Burnet, Graeme Macrae. ***Case Study***. An ingeniously constructed novel that provides a provocative examination of what exactly constitutes a "self" and whether it is in fact an Identity. (Marty Skoble) 



Carson, Anne. ***Autobiography of Red***. The secret to Psychocandy, the early shoegaze album by the Jesus and Mary Chain, was to hide a pretty melody under blankets of distortion. Rebarbative at first listen, the songs soon disclose their sweetness, and you wonder why you ever found them hard. That is Carson's method in *Autobiography of Red*. A sweet, sorrowful, perfectly ordinary coming-of-age story is buried under so much language and style, so much literature, that it takes a few listens to hear the tune. A wonderful novel. Recommended for fans of My Bloody Valentine. (Ben Rutter) 



Chang, Victoria. ***Obit***. Grief made cosmic. Chang borrows a prose form to frame her beautiful meditations on loss and interleaves them with hopeful notes for the future. (Marty Skoble) 



Chee, Alexander. ***How to Write an Autobiographical Novel***. A wonderful collection of essays that I have read through a couple times since its publication in 2018. A good option to turn to during a reading slump or writer's block. One of the greatest recommendations for any book is having Chee's name in its acknowledgements. (Sara Gunn)  


Chou, Elaine Hsieh. ***Disorientation***. This book had me giggling on the subway, which I think is an embarrassing but solid metric for any funny read. One of the biggest joys and shocks of this book is discovering what it's actually about. If you're interested in academic satire or mystery (and frankly even if you're not) give this a try. (Sara Gunn)  



Cohen, Joshua. ***The Netanyahu's: An Account of a Minor and Ultimately Even Negligible Episode in the History of a Very Famous Family***. Oh my gosh—you'll have a blast with this book! Promise. (Margie Hanssens)  


Colette. Trans. by Rachel Careau. ***Cheri and The End of Cheri***. A new translation of two Colette books, written six years apart. In pre-war, lush, and languid Paris, an ex-courtesan has to give up her young lover on the eve of his wedding. The second book picks up right after The Great War. Together they are fabulous, dark with a bitter edge: a spectacularly pink bedroom, champagne, pearls, and the most beautiful, worthless aristocrat. The writing is sensual but trim, which I didn't know was possible. I savored it. (Aparna Sarkar)  

Collins, Wilkie. ***The Woman in White***. One of the great Victorian novels, with mistaken identities, lost orphans, shadowy houses, and pernicious aristocrats. It has perhaps the greatest villain of all time in the deliciously evil Count Fosco. (Michael Donohue)  


Connell, Evan S. ***Mr. Bridge***. A deep dive into the mind of a rigid, narrow, squeamish upper-middle-class white man in 1930s Kansas City. That might sound dull, but it's anything but. Big novel from the late 1960s, later made into a film with Paul Newman as Mr. Bridge. (Michael Donohue)  



Cummins, Jeanine. ***American Dirt***. The story is about a mother and her young son who flee Acapulco after the Cartel murders their entire family. They travel north to immigrate into the United States. The author did extensive research into the migrant experience to write this fictional book. It is eye-opening and I couldn't put it down. (Donna Grosman) 


Dederer, Claire. ***Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma***. *Monsters* is the best nonfiction book I read this spring. Dederer expands on her 2017 Paris Review essay, "What Do We Do With the Art of Monstrous Men?" She explores the flip side or the reality of what we flippantly label "cancel culture," the fact that often terrible actions go unpunished by popular, powerful men (and a few women). (Ebony Murphy)  



Doerr, Anthony. ***Cloud Cuckoo Land***. Don't be put off by the dumb title, this one's a great read. Doerr carries five different stories along simultaneously (until some of them unite and others overlap) but does such a good job that you're riveted by each one. As he pulls the loose ends together he is able to create endings that are both satisfying and shocking. The book seems to have a lot of pages (640!) but I was sorry to see them dwindling. (Liz Velikonja) 



Dunn, Katherine. ***Toad***. I wondered if Dunn's long-lost novel would leave even a fraction of the impression on me as *Geek Love* did. The plot felt nonexistent, the world less fantastical and the middle-aged, hermit protagonist far more "ordinary." But many things I loved about *Geek Love* were there: the dark humor, the vulgar characters, sentences about the human condition so true you could weep and the detailed descriptions



of every kind of disgust imaginable (not usually my thing but Dunn writes it in a way I can't look away from). It wasn't *Geek Love* but it's worth reading. (Molly Sissors) 


Edugyan, Esi. ***Washington Black***. This is the intriguing coming-of-age story of Washington Black. Born enslaved in Barbados in the 1830s, Wash becomes an assistant to a scientist, and together they flee the plantation in a flying machine called "The Cloud-Cutter." Wash travels the world—Virginia, England, the Arctic—and develops his skills as a painter of marine life. There is also romance and escape from a bounty hunter. An exciting adventure with surprising twists. (Eva Zasloff)  

Egan, Jennifer. ***The Candy House***. A sequel, of sorts, to *A Visit From The Goon Squad*, about the lives of minor characters from that first book. Beautifully written, and one of the most enjoyable books I've ever read. If you liked *Goon Squad* you'll like this—I even preferred it. (Peter Zerneck) 

Eggers, Dave. ***How We Are Hungry***. Fourteen short and very short (2-page) stories with one-word (Quiet) and many words (What It Means When a Crowd in a Faraway Nation Takes a Soldier Representing Your Own Nation, Shoots Him, Drags Him from His Vehicle and Then Mutilates Him in the Dust) titles. Narrators and points-of-view range from outrageously funny to cataclysmically sad to epigrammatic. The language astounds. (Laura Barnett)  



Eggers, Dave. ***Zeitoun***. *Zeitoun* is a nonfiction account of what happened to a family in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Abdulrahman is Syrian born with a loving family and thriving business in New Orleans. He decides to stay in the city while his family evacuates. Unfathomable chaos ensues. (Donna Grosman)  

Ernaux, Annie. ***The Years***. Over the course of this short book, Ernaux tells the story of her life in fits and starts. She begins in the French countryside in 1940 and gets all the way up to 2006, weaving together historical events, personal dramas, and internal musings. (Sophia Steinert-Evoy)  



Fang, Shangyang. ***Burying the Mountain***. A book of elegant poetry carved with hypnotic grace supported by deep connections to music and literature and the fine arts. Including calligraphy. (Marty Skoble) 


Fell, Mark. ***Structure and Synthesis: The Anatomy of Practice***. This is a meditation on people's relationship with their tools, and how our modes of working inform the way we experience time and see the world. This is done through the lens of electronic music, in particular the kind of hyper-algorithmic abstract house music that Mark Fell makes (under his own name, and as SND, Sensate Focus, and other monikers), so it helps to have an interest (or even a passion) for the experimental edges of techno. Mark's roots are Yorkshire working class, and the way he fuses this upbringing with his practice as a house producer who also makes art installations and quotes philosophical texts while talking about the nature of time makes for a compelling read. Not a book for everyone, but if any of the above resonates with you, then... possibly a book for you? (Jascha Narveson)



Fowler, Karen Joy. ***Booth***. *Booth* is an historical novel about the Booth family, their life in the theater, the position of John Wilkes within this complex family unit, and the collision course he runs with respect to



Lincoln. I learned an enormous amount about the politics and theater of the period and Fowler writes about it all with great skill. Best, Richard (Richard Mann)  



Freedland, Jonathan. ***The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World.***


Understood if a deep-dive into the Holocaust is not your idea of a beach read. However, this telling of the story of Rudolf Vrba, a young prisoner at Auschwitz who decided that he had to escape to tell the truth about the Nazi genocide, is compelling, interesting, and sheds new light on an under-reported aspect of Holocaust history. It goes into great detail about Vrba's life in the camp, the horrors he witnessed, and his ultimate decision that the only thing keeping the genocide going was that it was so secretive, none of the victims knew what awaited them at the end of the train voyage. This leads to his escape, that small aspect alone a feat of survival that left me gobsmacked. (Eli Forsythe)  



Gabriel, Mary. ***Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art.*** An utter upending of the tired male heroic saga of Abstract Expressionism and post WWII American Art, compulsively readable even as large assumptions and old art history class platitudes get thrown by the wayside. (Liam Flaherty) 

Garmus, Bonnie. ***Lessons in Chemistry.*** Well I figured I had to read it and give it a review, right? This book is a fun summer read. The plot moves along, there are lots of twists and interesting characters but nothing deep. The chemistry is awfully basic, and the portrayal of sexism is a little thin. But it's not meant to be serious, it's meant to be a summer romp. And the dog is definitely the best character. (Liz Velikonja)  

Gay, Ross. ***The Book of Delights: Essays.*** The first nonfiction book by poet Ross Gay. Lyrical, personal mini essays that inspire more appreciation of the everyday. Written over the course of the year, some entries—about tomato seeds, air quotes—purely delight. Others address the complexities of identity, artistic practice, and loss. I recommend reading in morsels. From former Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith: “Ross Gay’s eye lands upon wonder at every turn, bolstering my belief in the countless small miracles that surround us.” Thanks to Sharon Lamazor for sharing this book with me. (Laura Barnett)  



Gessen, Keith. ***A Terrible Country.*** Gessen’s novel is a slow burn; a relatively young relatively failed Moscow-born American academic returns to Moscow to care for his ailing grandmother while his older brother (who normally cares for their grandmother) spends some time in London sorting out his business affairs. At first, you might not find the story very interesting, and then you will be unable to put it down. The novel is funny and also sad but also *really* funny. And also quite sad. (Melissa Kantor)  



Grossman, Vasily. ***Life and Fate.*** A sprawling, multi-voice narrative of the Battle of Stalingrad, with contemporary echoes sounding everywhere. (Liam Flaherty) 


Hsu, Hua. ***Stay True.*** In this beautifully written memoir, Hua Hsu will have you thinking about so much: friendship, family, life choices.... His description of a friendship he made in college poignantly brought me back to my eighteen-year-old self—this could be a perfect read for one who is about to go to college, or one who enjoys embracing the nostalgia of it! It also just won a Pulitzer Prize! (Felicia Kang)  


Jay - Z. **Decoded.** A compelling *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in Brooklyn and beyond. (Liam Flaherty)


Jemisin, N.K. **The City We Became.** This tale begins so abruptly and is so odd that I almost returned the book to Barnes and Noble when I was about 10 pages in. Good thing I didn't, because once you let it seize you it's hard to put down. Jemisin creates characters with strong and distinct personalities and the tale moves along like a thriller. Be forewarned that there's some Staten Island bashing, but after all, every thriller needs a villain. A fun New York read with strong female leads. (Liz Velikonja)



Joyce, James. **Dubliners.** These stories seem to have gone out of style, but I was in Dublin this spring and took my old copy along. Joyce's tales seemed fresh and brilliant, and the last piece in the collection, "The Dead," remains one of the best five or six stories I've ever read. (Michael Donohue)  



Kang, Han. **Greek Lessons.** Learning an unspoken language is the narrator's attempt to regain any ability at all to speak out loud; in the process, she discovers a bond with her teacher who is losing the ability to see. (Cathy Fuerst)  


Keegan, Claire. **Foster.** Author short-listed for Booker prize. Short and beautifully written—about children from a poor Irish family sent to relatives for the summer. (Nancy Reardon) 

Keegan, Claire. **Small Things Like These** and **Foster.** Two tiny, mighty novels. Beautiful writing. I'll read them again. And again. (Margie Hanssens) 



King, Stephen. **On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft.** Part memoir, part master class by one of the bestselling authors of all time, this book is a revealing and practical view of the writer's craft. (Yejing Gu) 


Kingsolver, Barbara. **Demon Copperhead.** *Demon Copperhead* is a retelling of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* reset in Appalachia in current times. Demon is born to a teenage single mother in a single-wide trailer and follows the story of his growing up into adulthood and his experiences through foster care, child labor, derelict schools, athletic success, addiction, disastrous loves, and crushing losses. It's long but I couldn't put it down. The story is gripping. (Elizabeth Sheridan-Rossi)  


Krauss, Nicole. **To Be a Man: Stories.** Trim sentences that bulge with insight into us humans—take your time with these stories. (Margie Hanssens)  



Kupperman, Michael. **All the Answers.** Michael Kupperman is a brilliantly funny Brooklyn cartoonist. (Check out his *Tales to Thrizzle*.) This dead-serious graphic memoir, however, is about his father, who was a star of radio and early TV on "Quiz Kids," a trivia show. Kupperman digs into his father's archives and explores the loss of his dad's childhood, drawing lines to his later emotional unavailability. Short, and packs a punch. (Michael Pershan) 


Laing, Olivia. **Crudo.** British essayist's (*The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone*; *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency*; *Everybody: A Book about Freedom*) debut novella is set in the hyper-specific summer of



2017. Trump tweets. Brexit paralyzes the UK. Political, social, natural, digital landscapes in perilous transition. Fascism on the rise. Laing's protagonist Kathy (critics note a striking resemblance to writer Kathy Acker) considers commitment in apocalyptic times. Fast-paced, frantic, a high-dive of a book with associative sentences that cover a page. We are in Kathy's head; we are in Tuscany; we are scrolling. Welcome, reader, to the whiplash that was that summer. (Laura Barnett)  



Lee, Andrea. ***Russian Journal***. Lee later became known as a fiction writer, but these are her New Yorker dispatches from Moscow in the late 1970s. Anyone interested in life in the USSR at that time will find these essays fascinating. (Michael Donohue) 



Lee, Min Jin. ***Pachinko***. *Pachinko* tells the story of one Korean family over several generations between 1910 and the late 1980s. We follow the trials and dreams of each of the finely rendered characters in minute and intimate detail. At the same time, Lee also pulls the camera back, giving the reader a wide view of her characters as tiny boats riding the waves of history, so we are always aware that they are constantly navigating forces well beyond their control. Beautifully written, I couldn't wait to hunker down with it every night, would stay up way too late reading it, and was very sad when it ended. (Diana Lomask) 

LeGuin, Ursula K. ***The Dispossessed***. In LeGuin's 1974 masterpiece (my opinion) she uses narrative to grapple with political philosophy. Outer space! Anarcho-syndicalism! Prison abolition! This book has it all. (Sophia Steinert-Evoy)  

Levy, Aidan. ***Saxophone Colossus: The Life and Times of Sonny Rollins***. An ultra-exhaustive bio of the great tenor player, but really—with so much interview material—an autobiography as well. Rollins grew up in Harlem, and the story of his early years there also tells a great story of the city. Follow the musical cues to his recordings and you've had a great summer. (Liam Flaherty) 

Mahler, Jonathan. ***Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City***. A great peek into 1970s New York when it felt as if the city was coming apart at the seams, and the only thing holding us together was the Yankees. (Sherwyn Smith)  

Makkai, Rebecca. ***I Have Some Questions for You***. Bodie, a successful podcaster, has a two-week gig teaching her craft at the New Hampshire boarding school she attended years ago. A student in her class decides to make a podcast about an old campus murder—and the victim happens to have been Bodie's junior-year roommate. Entertaining. (Liz Bernbach and Ragan O'Malley)  

Markham, Beryl. ***West With the Night***. A deeply absorbing memoir from aviation pioneer Beryl Markham chronicling her maturation from childhood in rural Kenya (then British East Africa) in the early 1900's. It's a wonderful read, detailing her earliest memories in the bush through to her historic solo flight across the Atlantic in 1936, with many surprising and inspiring remembrances in between. (Jamie Rutherford)  

McBride, James. ***Deacon King Kong***. This one's a captivating tale that is highly fictional but strangely recognizable as old South Brooklyn. McBride's characters are fully formed, his plot twists are sharp, and he

weaves a sober commentary about the brutal inequalities of race in America into this tale. Entertaining and believable while also being unbelievable—a really good read. (Liz Velikonja) 📖🎧

Naga, Noor. ***If An Egyptian Cannot Speak English***. Description: Technically a romance, set in present-day Cairo between an Egyptian-American woman and an Egyptian man from a very small town. Deals in diasporic confusion, longing in all directions, and the city of Cairo as its own vivid character. Gorgeous, easy read. Naga experiments with different forms in each of the three parts; I was riveted, and surprised through the end (!). (Aparna Sarkar) 🎧

Napolitano, Ann. ***Hello Beautiful***. Four sisters grow up in working-class Chicago developing their own identities and starting their own families. Love, loss, and healing are at the forefront of this *Little Women*-esque masterpiece of family dynamics. (Liz Bernbach) 📖🎧


Ng, Celeste. ***Our Missing Hearts***. This novel was a joy to escape into on an early spring weekend. I like how Ng plots and paces her fiction. Fun to compare not only to the style of *Little Fires Everywhere* but as an extension of its themes around motherhood and belonging. (Ronica Bhattacharya) 📖🎧


Nović, Sara. ***True Biz***. I enjoyed this story of a boarding school for deaf children and the inhabitants' attempts to build and maintain the lives they want. The book covers medical ethics, deaf history, anarchism, intra-community politics, and how to move through a world that isn't built for you. (Leda Fisher) 📖🎧



Nović, Sara. ***True Biz***. True Biz takes readers on a revelatory journey through the halls of River Valley School for the Deaf, where the students yearn for autonomy over their bodies and lives. Sara Novic's powerful novel introduces us to Charlie, a rebellious transfer student; Austin, the school's esteemed figure whose world is shaken by his hearing baby sister's birth; and February, the headmistress grappling with keeping the school and her marriage intact. As a series of crises both personal and political threaten to unravel each of them, Charlie, Austin, and February find their lives inextricable from one another's—and changed forever. Novic's writing explores sign language, civil rights, love, and resilience, offering a captivating and universal celebration of human connection. (Esther Zywica) 📖🎧



O'Brien, M.E. and Eman Abdelhadi. ***Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune 2052-2072***. What happens to New York City and its inhabitants after the global fall of capitalism? This book takes the form of an oral history project, conducted in the near future, by the academic authors of the book at the ages they'll be in 30-50 years. The clever premise and radical political vision delighted me as a reader of utopian/dystopian fiction, and as a person with hope for a different world. I stopped reading, mid-page, to buy a copy and have it shipped to a friend, so that we could discuss. Favorite book of this year. (B Mann) 📖



O'Brien, M.E. and Eman Abdelhadi. ***Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune 2052-2072***. This collection of speculative oral history interviews has landscapes that are disquieting in their familiarity. Landscapes are physical (Ditmas, Hunts Point, Tribeca) and systemic. The oral history format allows us to hear multiple first-person points-of-view while engaging with concepts that include abolitionism, collectivism, commodification, coercive gender roles, territory, and radical care. What is the psychic aftermath of the imminent crises of capital and climate? What could social, political, and topographical restructuring look



like? Though written in a “classic”—and sometimes dry—oral history/academic style, I found the introduction and the interviews to be tender, hopeful, painful, revelatory. Glad to have read with the Saint Ann's Library Book Group and recommend reading this with others. (Laura Barnett) 



O'Neill, Eugene. ***Long Day's Journey into Night***. (Written 1939-41, published posthumously 1956) The long day is in August 1912; the play, for which O'Neill won a posthumous Pulitzer, is a semi-autobiography, filled with addiction, self-reproach, psychic stress, and emotional miserliness. A portrait of one American family. Brilliantly written. Incredible roles for actors. With reinterpreted classics on Broadway (*Death of A Salesman*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*), I decided to re-read. (Laura Barnett) 



O'Toole, Fintan. ***We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History Of Modern Ireland***. An extraordinary book. Starting in 1958, the year of his birth, O'Toole takes us through the dramatic transformation of Ireland since then, giving us insights into well-known topics like the Troubles and the Celtic Tiger as well as lesser-known (or deeply concealed) moments of recent Irish history. (Chris Mellon)  

O'Toole, Fintan. ***We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History Of Modern Ireland***. This might get a few shout outs—an amazing tapestry of the personal, political, and cultural story of Ireland, and its lurching, incomplete passage to modernity. (Liam Flaherty)  



Palasi Andreades, Daphne. ***Brown Girls***. *Brown Girls* is a love letter that takes us from its subjects' girlhoods to their old age and beyond, but it's a love letter written by a lover with a gimlet eye. (Melissa Kantor)  



Poe, Edgar Allan. ***The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket***. A short novella (but I think the longest work of fiction Poe wrote), it's authentically scary. It all begins when a young man stows away on a boat, locking himself deep in the hold... Brace yourself for madness, terror, and even a little cannibalism. (Michael Donohue)  



Powers, Richard. ***Bewilderment***. A moving, warm-hearted and tragic story about a boy and his father and our Planet. There is a vulnerability in this novel that is unlike many of Powers' other (always amazing) novels. A quick, satisfying and tearful read. The publisher's description is apt: “With its soaring descriptions of the natural world, its tantalizing vision of life beyond, and its account of a father and son's ferocious love, *Bewilderment* marks Richard Powers's most intimate and moving novel. At its heart lies the question: How can we tell our children the truth about this beautiful, imperiled planet?” (Laura Gilbert)  



Rathbone, John Paul. ***The Sugar King of Havana: The Rise and Fall of Julio Lobo, Cuba's Last Tycoon***. Both a family memoir and an exploration of Cuban history, *The Sugar King of Havana* plots the life and incredible career of sugar tycoon Julio Lobo who was the richest man in pre-revolutionary Cuba. It was fascinating. (Lenny Sheppard)  


Ruge, Eugen. ***In Times of Fading Light***. A multigenerational saga of an East German family, told in parallel narratives by characters born as far apart as 1889 and 1977. Given that East Germany/GDR existed for 41 years (1949-1990), the book also serves as a history of the entire country. The word ‘saga,’ may seem dour and



off-putting; I found this ambitious book a compelling page-turner, relievedly lacking in *Ostalgie*, roughly translated as a nostalgic longing for the bad old Communist Bloc days. Winner of the 2011 German Book Prize and widely translated, the story is likely most relatable to German readers; though I was in East/West Berlin in the 80s, 90s, & 00s, there were many references I needed to look up. Reading this made me differently understand the antecedents and aftermath of the Cold War. Recommended to students of the Cold War and anyone who has been to or plans to go to Berlin. (Laura Barnett)  

Rushkoff, Douglas. ***Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age***. Essential Reading for all Users of the Internet! Rushkoff sets aside tired debates about the internet's societal "value." Rather, he addresses the medium's inherent biases. Distance is favored to proximity; forgetting is preferred to remembering; polarization to dealing with paradox. An excellent introduction to the poetics of new media, the book addresses issues of media literacy, cognitive liberty, ethics, and human autonomy. Subtitled *Ten Commands for a Digital Age*, the practices recommended have the potential to benefit and ripple. Rushkoff has published numerous books on cyberculture, capitalism, social currency, and media theory. (Laura Barnett)  

Rutherford, Adam. ***Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics***. Rutherford is a geneticist and skilled science communicator. This book is a fascinating and thoughtful look at both the history of eugenics, from the UK to the US to Nazi Germany, and how its underlying ideas are still being used today. I would also recommend his podcast series "Bad Blood: The Story of Eugenics" from the BBC. (Nicholas Harbison)  



Ryan, Donal. ***The Queen of Dirt Island***. Four generations of Irish women fight to save their homestead. Short piercing chapters piece together the narrative. I loved these characters. (Cathy Fuerst)  


Sedaris, David. ***Calypso***. I'm a fan of Sedaris—his wry observations and improbable anecdotes suck me in and make me laugh. This book is a bit less wacky and light-hearted than his earlier ones as Sedaris occasionally considers his mortality and that of others. He invites you to join him as he observes these weightier topics and then, before the mood can darken, wallops you with something hilarious and delicious. Easy to read, too, as each anecdote is like a short story. (Liz Velikonja) 

Sepetys, Ruth. ***I Must Betray You***. A #1 NYTimes and national bestseller by a Lithuanian American author who focuses on global issues of social injustice. Set in 1989 Romania at the end of the Communist dictatorship, the story is about the live-or-die choices of a group of teenage friends. Compelling, riveting, and beautifully researched. Historical thrillers in the YA genre are not my usual "go-to" reading. I couldn't put it down. (Laura Barnett)  



Seth, Vikram. ***A Suitable Boy***. This is the kind of book that can just take over your summer, in the best possible way. A 1500-page epic set in early 1950s India, the book follows four different families as the members of the post-Independence, post-Partition generation try to find their places in the world. One of the most absorbing books I've read in ages. (Michael Donohue)

Sittenfeld, Curtis. ***Romantic Comedy***. Did you ever wonder what it's like behind the scenes at *Saturday Night Live*? Well, spend some time with Sally Milz, writer for TNO (aka *The Night Owls*, a comedy show that is


remarkably similar to SNL in that it airs live every Saturday night at 11:30 and is hosted by a different celebrity each week) and get a behind-the-scenes (albeit imaginary) glimpse into the process. Sally is a very funny and incredibly likable character, and you'll definitely root for her as she tells jokes (many of which are scatological in nature) and dabbles in romance. This is a totally fun read. (Ragan O'Malley)  


Solnit, Rebecca. ***River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West***. A revelatory telling of the invention of motion pictures and the ways our ideas about time and space are shaped by technology. Also the Wild West, adultery, and murder for good measure. Meditative and beautifully written. (Patrick Stayer) 


Spence, Jonathan D. We lost a great scholar of China this year. You can't go wrong with any of his works, but ***The Memory Place of Matteo Ricci, Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of K'ang-Hsi***, and ***Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture*** are great places to start. (Liam Flaherty)


Straub, Emma. ***This Time Tomorrow***. Never mind the time travel chatter, this brilliant book is about making choices and impermanence. Emma's characters are on a Buddhist journey of self discovery and self realization. I couldn't put it down. You should definitely pick it up. (Marty Skoble)  

Suleri, Sara. ***Meatless Days***. A deft examination of South Asian childhood, writ large and small. (Liam Flaherty)



Tartt, Donna. ***The Secret History***. I am recommending this book because it got me through the end of winter this year. A mysterious murder, a melancholy take on how friendships can fall apart, a detailed and often very funny portrait of college life in the 80s, some great studies of personality and influence, and a wild blend of the tragic, witty, and philosophical. Plus, you can brush up on your Latin! By the end, I felt like I knew all the characters so well that I was sad to see them go. I'd call very few books I read "page turners," but I couldn't stop reading this one! (Emily Eagen) 



Taylor, Elizabeth. ***Angel***. Not *that* Elizabeth Taylor. This Elizabeth Taylor is an English novelist who, for reasons that I don't understand, went out of print. She's rightly compared to Barbara Pym by some of your favorite writers. In *Angel*, a teenage girl decides she can't return to school after an embarrassing incident and will instead become a famous writer. It works, and she becomes a bestselling author even though her prose and plots are utterly dreadful. Or maybe because of that. (Melissa Kantor) 



Theroux, Paul. ***The Great Railway Bazaar***. In the early 1970s the writer travels by train from London to India and then Southeast Asia. He then flies to Japan and explores it by rail, and comes back west on the Trans-Siberian. Weirdly addictive reading. And Theroux liked doing it so much that he wrote another half dozen books of a similar nature, on a few other continents. (Michael Donohue) 


Theroux, Paul. ***Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China***. This is Theroux's China book, where he rides the rails all over the country in about 1987. If you're interested in China, this book offers a vivid portrait of the country in the years just before Tiananmen. (Michael Donohue) 



Tumminia, Diana, ed. ***Alien Worlds: Social and Religious Dimensions of Extraterrestrial Contact***. Tumminia is a sociologist who studies the California-based new religion called Unarius Academy of Science. Unarius is centered around direct communication with extraterrestrial beings known as "Space Brothers," whom followers anticipate will come to earth and initiate a spiritual awakening. In this book, Tumminia gathers a number of scholars and researchers across religious studies, the social sciences, and beyond to investigate new religious movements like Unarius as well as related phenomena like UFOs, alien abductions, and other avenues of human-extraterrestrial contact. I love this book because of the mind-boggling new mythologies and belief systems it explores, as well as the compelling frameworks it puts forward for thinking about the intersections of religious belief, science, and technology. (Stephen Higa)



Umrigar, Thrity. ***The Space Between Us***. This story is about the intertwinings of a household servant and the family she serves for decades in Bombay (now Mumbai!), India. A moving story of women, choices, and class. This story still haunts me. (Jackie Henderson)  



Vuong, Ocean. ***Time is a Mother***. Killer poems from a master. Loss, trauma, redemption: truly an "American" journey. (Marty Skoble)  



Wang, Weike. ***Joan is Okay***. In Wang's *Joan is Okay*, the titular character's complexity is beautifully portrayed through the enigmatic term "okay." Joan, a Chinese American doctor, embodies the stereotypical image of a reserved and diligent individual, devoid of personal desires. The novel explores Joan's stoic response to her father's death and her return to work without missing a beat. Through Joan's interactions with colleagues and neighbors, the author challenges preconceived notions rooted in race, culture, and gender. Wang's writing is thought-provoking, encouraging readers to question societal norms and biases. With wit and introspection, she crafts a narrative that delves into Joan's emotional journey, underscoring the importance of understanding beyond surface-level assumptions. (Esther Zywica)  



Washburn, Kawai Strong. ***Sharks in the Time of Saviors***. A gorgeous novel about a native Hawain family whose child has magical healing powers that both unite and divide the family members. Deeply heartfelt. It's been a year since I've read this book and I still think about these characters every day. (Laura Winnick) 



White, Adam. ***The Midcoast***. Great summer page-turner, especially if you love Maine. Class and crime beautifully developed as they combine until they don't. (Marty Skoble)  



White, Tyriek. ***We Are a Haunting***. A coming-of-age story set in East New York whose narrator shares his mother's and grandmother's gift for communing with the ghosts who trouble their living. (Cathy Fuerst)  


Williams, Pip. ***The Dictionary of Lost Words***. Growing up, Esme realizes that words and meanings relating to women's and "common" peoples' experiences often go unrecorded. Esme begins her search, collecting words that capture these experiences, with the hope of making her own Dictionary of Lost Words. A fictional homage to the female researchers of The Oxford English Dictionary, whose work went largely unrecognized, I appreciated the novel for its central plot conceit (lost words, who decides what is recorded and remembered) and insights into the Australian women's suffrage movement. (Laura Barnett)  

Wilson, Kevin. ***Nothing to See Here***. A funny and weird account of a woman struggling to take care of her friend's new step children, who burst into flames when they get upset. It's a quick read with an interesting perspective on how "difficult" children bring out the best and worst in us. (Leda Fisher)  

Wilson, Kevin. ***Nothing to See Here***. The premise of this book may stop you short: twins who have been abandoned by their caretakers are brought to live with an up-and-coming politician who must keep them a secret. Why must they be hidden away? They catch on fire whenever they get agitated. Despite this somewhat strange setup, *Nothing to See Here* is a readable and beautiful story, moving easily between past and present, and touching on family, friendships, secrets, and anxiety. Besides the twins, the main characters are two old friends, one of whom is married to the politician, and one of whom is her old friend who has washed out of life. Their relationship is especially well-drawn and kept me riveted. (Eli Forsythe)  

Wolff, Tobias. ***Old School***. Set in a snooty male boarding school where the students seem to all have literary aspirations, the boys encounter Robert Frost, Ayn Rand, and Ernest Hemmingway. The Ayn Rand bits are so funny, and Wolff takes on weighty topics with a delightful touch. (Michael Pershan)  

Zevin, Gabrielle. ***Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow***. I have loved all of Gabrielle Zevin's books—they are literary confections—but this feels like the one where everything comes together and magical brilliance is achieved. As you have probably heard, it's about three friends making video games together over decades, and explores the intersections of love, friendship, and artistic creation. I just adored it. (Denise Rinaldo)  

Zucker, Rachel. ***The Poetics of Wrongness***. This is a superb study of the "confessional" arc in modern poetry. Zucker is incisive, relentlessly honest, and lucid, especially as she engages with the often unappreciated work of marginalized poets. (Marty Skoble) 

Zweig, Stefan. ***The World of Yesterday***. The world of intellectual and artistic Vienna, before the place went politically mad in the 1930s, is beautifully evoked here. If you saw Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt* on Broadway this year, this is a good follow-up read. (Michael Donohue)



Thanks to all the
contributors!
Happy reading.

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