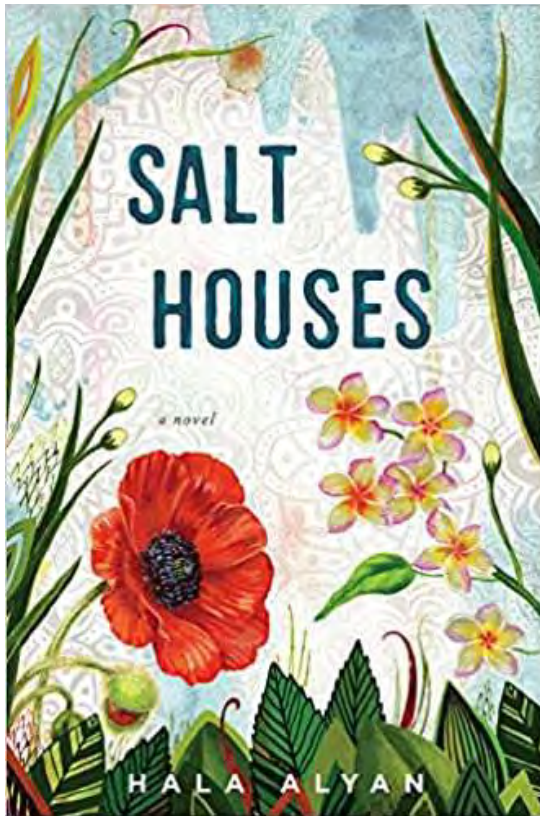


Saint Ann's School

Suggested Summer Reading List

for high school and faculty, 2020

**Titles that are shaded are available in the Saint Ann's Digital Library.
See the last page of this list for instructions.**



Alyan, Hala. **Salt Houses**. This powerful and beautifully written novel follows three generations of a Palestinian family as they are uprooted again and again. The book opens in Nablus in 1963 and sees the family fragmented and scattered throughout the Middle East. This is really a story about the struggle to stay connected and keep your cultural and personal identity when you can't go home or discuss the past. (Kristin Fiori)

Alyan, Hala. **Salt Houses**. Starting in Nablus with the War of 1967, three generations of one Palestinian family deal with their displacement in Kuwait, Jordan, and the US. The author is a poet and it shows. Lyrical and well-observed. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Atkinson, Kate. **Big Sky**. Few topics are more au courant than historical sex abuse, and Atkinson takes it on with gusto, weaving a complex web of characters whose lives intertwine in ways that surprise even them. It's a crime drama with teeth: a page turner. (Marty Skoble)

Atwood, Margaret. **The Testaments**. This is better than *The Handmaid's Tale*, to which it is a sequel. More interesting characters and a plot that really moves. If you worry that you need to re-read *The Handmaid's Tale* before you start it because you've forgotten everything—don't. Just glance at a synopsis then dig in. (Denise Rinaldo)

Baldwin, James. **Go Tell It on the Mountain**. I had never read Baldwin's autobiographical first novel before. It's dark, and sad, and haunting, and a fascinating insight into the origins of the thinker he eventually became. (Liz Giamatti)

Barry, Kevin. **Night Boat to Tangier**. Maurice Hearne and Charlie Redmond are waiting at the port of Algeiras, Spain, for a boat either coming or going to Tangier. They have reason to believe that Dilly, Maurice's daughter who has been missing for three years, will be on it (or planning to get on it). The time the two old-ish Irish men spend waiting offers them the opportunity to reminisce about what was and what will never be. They are two hard men who have led torturous lives filled with lust, violence, love, and longing. Kevin Barry's sentences are a thing of beauty. You will find yourself going back and rereading them because you want to savor every word again and again. (Ragan O'Malley)

Bass, Gary. ***The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide***. Pop quiz: what atrocities were perpetuated by the Nixon gang in Asia? Vietnam, Cambodia, wait...for extra credit...Laos? Add Bangladesh. A masterfully told tale of how Nixon and Kissinger reached unfathomable depths of ignorance, racism, and cynicism in allowing a genocide (yes) to happen as Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan. I read it this year on an all-day train ride between Kolkata and Dhaka, thinking of Kissinger's current faux status as master of diplomacy, filled with rage. (Liam Flaherty)

Berlin, Lucia. ***A Manual for Cleaning Women***. This semi-autobiographical collection of stories is simply beautiful. Reminds me a lot of the amazing Grace Paley. (Liz Giamatti)

Braithwaite, Oyinkan. ***My Sister, the Serial Killer***. Sibling rivalry is deep and complicated, especially when your sister (the beautiful one! the favorite one!) keeps asking you to clean up the mess she makes after she murders another one of her boyfriends. This nasty, clever book asks, What do we owe a sibling? And are we happiest when we meet those obligations or when we don't? (Melissa Kantor)

Burns, Anna. ***Milkman***. A *New York Times* review called this novel interminable and the reviewer said he wouldn't recommend it to anyone he liked, but I didn't want it to end and have recommended it to everyone I know. It's a stream of consciousness narrative set in the 1970s in Northern Ireland. It's dark, funny, and sad. I haven't yet found something to take its place. (Gillian Bagley)

Butler, Octavia. ***Kindred***. Super interesting read, and a page turner. Complex gender/sexual politics, but well worth unpacking. Butler is an interesting figure. (Liz Giamatti)

Caro, Robert A. ***The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York***. It's not new, but *The Power Broker* is an exciting, if epic, read. My personal recommendation is that all citizens of NYC should read the introduction, which is only 20-30 pages and gives a sweeping overview of Robert Moses's career, and is enough info on its own to give one a deeper sense of this city and its past. The book itself, despite being 1200+ pages, is fascinating, and heartbreaking, and frustrating, and awe-inspiring. To read about how our daily lives in NYC have been deeply shaped by the decisions of this one guy who just happened to be good at working the machinery of power is an object lesson that, alas, will always be relevant. Essential reading for anyone interested in politics, or NYC, or even just portraits of flawed and larger-than-life people. (Jascha Narveson)

Choi, Mary H. K. ***Emergency Contact***. Catchy YA story from dynamic author. The main character is Penny, who is lively and despairing in her first year of college, mad at her vivacious mom, and intrigued by Sam, whose texts "made her heart do a crazy dance. Not even a cute dance. More an erratic flailing, like those wind-sock things you see at car dealerships." (Mike Roam)

Collins, Michael. ***Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys***. Wow! Chatty book from one of the Apollo moon voyage astronauts—it's fun, unpretentious, caring, kind, and informative. He describes how bad he felt for the iguana they ate in desert (not "dessert") training, and worried about the rendezvous after his team-mates left the moon; if anything went wrong he would have to leave them behind to die, so he had two pages of procedures on a string around his neck saying what to do for almost any of the things that could go wrong with their crucial takeoff time and angle. (Mike Roam)

Criado-Perez, Caroline. ***Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men***. Full disclosure: Criado-Perez has done some problematic stuff on social media. As a book, this to me is well-researched, clear, and shows that the world was, in fact, not designed for women. From the workplace to the doctors office, she explains how data bias has influenced the world around us to the benefit of male-bodied folks. Infuriating, but a roadmap for change. (Gretta Reed)

Cusk, Rachel. ***A Life's Work: On Becoming a Mother***. What is it to be a mother? After you have a baby, do you go back to being (roughly) the same person you were before? Or are you changed forever? If the latter, what do you change into, exactly? A microscopic examination of the months before and after giving birth, Cusk's book is both an homage to the joys of motherhood and an effective method of birth control. A powerful read for mothers and anyone of woman born. (Melissa Kantor)

Cusk, Rachel. **Outline**. Fascinating, windy inroads into human tendency, need, instinct, (flawed) logic. Expert, taut, original writing. Nothing really happens, and you'll be riveted. (Liz Fodaski)

Day, Leslie and Ron Riepe, illustrated by Trudy Smoke. **Field Guide to the Neighborhood Birds of New York City**. With less traffic in the city this spring, I can now hear and see the birds, so I thought I would get to know them a little better. Beautifully illustrated. (Laura Barnett)

Defoe, Daniel. ***A Journal of the Plague Year***. I checked out the library's ancient copy of this book in January, when the first whisperings of coronavirus were making their way into the news. This is a man's chronicle of 1665 in London, when the last great wave of bubonic plague swept through the city. Defoe was only five at the time and the book is fiction, not autobiography, but he supposedly did a lot of research and drew on family stories to write it. It feels real, and there are moments that are frighteningly similar to what we have seen and read about over the past months. (Denise Rinaldo)

Delany, Samuel. ***The Motion of Light in Water***. Eminent sci-fi writer and queer theorist Samuel "Chip" Delany recounts his coming-to-self as an author, a queer person, a New Yorker, and more. Delany's reflections on attending the Bronx High School of Science might have some interest for Saint Ann's students. A classic New York memoir. (I'd recommend seeking out a used edition on Thriftbooks, as the University of Minnesota Press edition is quite bulky.) (Connor Spencer)

Dickens, Charles. ***Barnaby Rudge***. This was my pandemic-shutdown read. If you're new to Dickens, I might try *Great Expectations* or *Little Dorrit* instead. Remember when you were a kid, and just lost yourself in the boundless world of a book? Barnaby made me feel like a kid again. (Michael Donohue)

Di Lampedusa, Giuseppe Tomasi. ***The Leopard***. Don Fabrizio Corbera of Salina is the Prince of Lampedusa and the author's great grandfather. The novel depicts a noble family in decline during the uprisings of Giuseppe Garibaldi. The book is wonderfully ironic, sensual and lush. We witness the elaborate rituals of the Salinas, and visit their giant palaces. Don Fabrizi, tall, gallant, lofty and stoic, is a fascinating guide to the lost world of the Italian aristocracy. (Jane Avrich)

Dugatkin, Lee Alan and Trut, Lyumila. ***How to Tame a Fox (and Build a Dog)***. In the 1950s and 1960s, Genetics was officially outlawed in the Soviet Union, considered a Western lie that stood in opposition to Communist ideals. Stalin killed many scientists to enforce this position. In this atmosphere, a Russian scientist began a clandestine genetics experiment to understand the origins of domestication. He and his colleague (co-author Trut) started breeding foxes, selecting only the tamest, nicest foxes in each generation. Would they evolve to become kind and pet-like, as thousands of years ago wolves did? Yes, they did! And the experiment is still ongoing today. (Michael Pershan)

Edugyan, Esi. ***Washington Black***. This book is a journey from a plantation to the Arctic to Morocco, following a young boy of great talent. The story explores what freedom means. Who gets to "explore"? Who was able to publish and travel? (Gretta Reed)

Egan, Jennifer. **Manhattan Beach**. Who doesn't want to be transported somewhere else these days? Jennifer Egan's *Manhattan Beach* will whoosh you back in time to World War II-era Brooklyn, which also feels like a very different place. Following the travails of Anna, a woman who doesn't quite fit what is expected of a lady in the 40s, the book combines compelling storytelling and a rich historical texture that will give you a brief trip somewhere that is not now. *The digital library includes both the audiobook and the ebook.* (Eli Forsythe)

Eliot, George. **Adam Bede**. George Eliot's first novel (1859), revolves around the bright and upstanding carpenter, Adam Bede, the self-satisfied, attractive farm girl, Hetty Sorel, the village squire, Captain Arthur Donnithorne and the ardent Methodist preacher, Dinah Morris. Eliot's descriptions of nature are captivating, as are her depictions of work and fellowship in a vigorous rural community. (Jane Avrigh)

Evaristo, Bernardine. **Girl, Woman, Other**. When you pick up a book while browsing because you remember reading something positive about it, and you spy the "Winner of The Booker Prize 2019" sticker that tells you that it must be pretty good... and you put it up as one of your suggestions when it's your turn at book group... and it gets chosen! When I recommended this title that night, I really didn't know much more than what I read on the back of the book jacket: "... a magnificent portrayal of the intersections of identity and a moving and hopeful story of a group of black British women." The book starts out telling the story of one woman per chapter, each with her own interesting story, and as you get further along, you realize that all the women and all the stories are interconnected, stretching over two centuries (let me know if you'd like a copy of the spreadsheet I made to show all the relationships). An added bonus were all the mentions of food items, many originating in West Africa, where many of the women's families were from, as well as several English classics. The menu the night I hosted my book group included jollof rice and coconut cream trifle. (Sarah Richards)

Evaristo, Bernardine. **Girl, Woman, Other**. There is a reason this book won the Booker Prize in 2019—it's amazing. Evaristo's intertwined stories illuminate the lives of twelve black British women. The characters are richly drawn and each voice is unique. It's so good! (Ragan O'Malley)

Farrow, Ronin. **Catch and Kill**. A real life page turner, Farrow dives into the efforts to bring producer Harvey Weinstein to justice and reveals how, as a journalist, he got pulled into the fray. An important backstory to Weinstein's eventual trial and a reminder of how hard it is for survivors of sexual violence to have their voices heard. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. **Little Boy**. It's called "a novel;" forget the subtitle. At age 100(!), Ferlinghetti has made something new: intensely literate, intensely poetic, intensely beautiful. It's a thrilling ride, constantly accelerating. (Marty Skoble)

Finn, A.J. **The Woman in the Window**. This is a flawless thriller about an agoraphobic woman and a teenage boy written by a man who may be as unhinged as one of his characters. After you've finished the book (not before: spoilers), read the profile of him in the 2/11/19 issue of *The New Yorker*, which you can get for free on Flipster (access it through the library). Finally, look for the movie, delayed because of the pandemic, starring Amy Adams and a Saint Ann's alum. (Denise Rinaldo)

Flowers, Ebony. **Hot Comb**. I came across this recently while looking for new graphic novels. Black women's hair is the common thread in this collection of coming-of-age stories that grapple with issues of race, class, and identity. It's really good. (Ragan O'Malley)

Gaitskill, Mary. **This is Pleasure**. A charismatic, successful editor is brought down after he is accused of sexually harassing several women he worked with. Far from condemning (or exonerating) the accused, this novella (told from the point of view of the editor and a close female friend) reveals itself to be a moral mobius strip. (Melissa Kantor)

Garber, Romina. **Lobizona**. While this may seem like a shameless plug for my sister's book (and it kind of is), I also think the book is amazing and touches on some very important themes. Lobizona addresses issues of undocumented immigration while exploring a world of fantasy based on Argentinian folklore. It questions the rigidity of labels and the roles they impose, while peeling back the layers one must uncover to forge their own identity. And if you don't trust me, Publisher's Weekly gave it a starred review writing: "In a timely work of magical realism featuring references to Borges and Garcia Márquez, Garber tackles issues of nationalism, identity, and belonging." (Pub date 8/4/2020) (Meli Garber)

Gottlieb, Lori. **Maybe You Should Talk to Someone**. This is a good one folks! It's about a therapist who seeks out her own therapist to help with her current life circumstances. Along the way we meet several of her own patients and delve into their personal journeys. There is enlightenment along the way for the characters as they come to terms with issues that we might recognize in ourselves. (Donna Grosman)

Gottlieb, Lori. **Maybe You Should Talk to Someone**. This look at therapy through a therapist's eyes, both as a patient and a professional, is both heartwarming and heartbreaking. I felt myself going through what one might go through in their own therapy sessions: laughter, anger, denial, insecurity, sadness, and acceptance. It's a memoir that reads like a self-help book that reads like a novel. (Liz Lord)

Harjo, Joy. **An American Sunrise**. Never mind Woody Guthrie's possessive pronouns, Harjo eloquently reminds us that "We are this land." These are poems that remember a stolen land and a people's suppression; but they are also poems of reconciliation and grace. America's poet laureate speaks with a hopeful voice for all of us. *Digital library copy is the audiobook*. (Marty Skoble)

Hartman, Saidiya. **Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals**. I have a whole crush on this book! In this poetic, and as a friend has shared, "sensually historic" text, the influence and wisdom of Black women writers who I have been reading since forever (Toni, Alice, Audre, Lucille) or since just last year (Harryette) is discernible to the discerning as phrases and formulations that are at the heart of Intersectional Feminism and sing throughout the book. The lives of the people detailed, Black women and girls in the urban North in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries are made discernible to those living in their wake. It is at once a richly layered and engrossing read that inspires and invites re-reading, reading aloud, and artmaking of all sorts. Google Simone Leigh and Okwui Okpokwasili's engagements with the work or read it and be inspired to create something wonderful. (Shalewa Mackall)

Hartman, Saidiya. **Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals**. Residing somewhere between fiction and history—categories that Hartman applies pressure to at all turns—this book traces the "beautiful experiments" in living that Black Americans forged in leaving the racial terror of the South for New York City at the turn of the 20th century. It's a book that will make you a more capacious thinker, a more attentive listener, a keener observer. Essential for anyone interested in the history of photography, too. (Connor Spencer)

Heaney, Seamus. **Death of a Naturalist**. A beautiful collection of poems where Heaney declares, "I rhyme / to see myself, to set the darkness echoing." The poems are gripping and transcendent. They are tender and jagged. Heaney journeys into the past to capture "the music of what happened" during his vivid and formative years in Ireland. Poems like "Digging," "Mid-Term Break" and "Death of a Naturalist" make this book a timeless and necessary read. (Dolapo Demuren)

Honeyman, Gail. ***Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine***. Eleanor Oliphant is NOT completely fine, but it is easy to develop a full relationship with her. At first glance, Eleanor is a sobbish, socially awkward wallflower. Through the book and the beauty of human compassion, the reader will fall in love with Eleanor. It is a book that quietly reminds us that everyone has a story behind the scars. (Liz Lord)

Honeyman, Gail. ***Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine***. Meet Eleanor Oliphant: She struggles with appropriate social skills and tends to say exactly what she's thinking. Nothing is missing in her carefully timetabled life of avoiding social interactions, where weekends are punctuated by frozen pizza, vodka, and phone chats with Mummy. This is a story of friendship and human connection and I found it to be really heartwarming. (Elizabeth Sheridan-Rossi)

Jackson, Shirley. ***Life Among the Savages***. I confess I didn't read this whole book. But I read the first third and it's hilarious. It's a memoir written by a writer and wife and mother in rural Vermont in the 1950s. It captures a certain small-town sensibility as seen by a New Yorker who heads out to the country with her family for more space and to let her kids run wild. She is super witty and no one goes untouched by her sarcasm. An episode about giving birth to her third child is uproarious. Why didn't I finish it? Well, I'll just say I'm still working on it. It's sitting by my bed. It may be that it's such a good story I can pick it up anytime and happily be back in her world. No cliffhangers. If that's what you like. Just funny stories of the idiosyncrasies of each private world of family and the ways the moment it seems right side up it goes upside down. At least that's what the first third is about! (Rob Goldberg)

Johnson, Denis. ***Largess of the Sea Maiden***. Thanks to Rob Goldberg for recommending this to me, Johnson's last book and a follow-up, of sorts, to the classic *Jesus' Son*. (Michael Donohue)

Johnson, Uwe. ***Anniversaries***. A revelation. A major work of modernist fiction revived by the sainted New York Review of Books label. A day by day diary of a German woman in Manhattan at the end of the 1960s, woven with the story of a German family in the 1930s: framed by daily dispatches from the *New York Times*. If you are old like me you'll be thrilled on seeing your birthdate. If not you will love plunging into an open and deft meditation on time, displacement, guilt, the unceasing strength of our city and how one must never, ever, miss the day's Times. (Liam Flaherty)

Kadish, Rachel. ***The Weight of Ink***. A discovery of documents from the 17th century is made under a stairwell in England, triggering a 21st century effort to decode the contents and the life of the scribe who left the documents behind. This takes you into a fascinating exploration of the life of Jewish woman living in London during this time. Beautifully written, incredibly well researched, with important references to the work of Spinoza, Shakespeare and the plague, you will be enthralled by this historical mystery story. (Richard Mann)

Kean, Sam. ***The Bastard Brigade: The True Story of the Renegade Scientists and Spies Who Sabotaged the Nazi Atomic Bomb***. Wow, what a tale! Such a page turner that I lost sleep reading this one. It combines famous and interesting historical figures with daring and improbable deeds in World War II. Plenty of spies, Nazis and regular people sucked into extraordinary circumstances. Oh, and a decent helping of physics and chemistry so that you understand the mission. Terrific! (Liz Velikonja)

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. ***Braiding Sweetgrass; Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants***. Two creation stories: Skywoman falling to earth, held up by the birds while the other animals create land for her; Adam and Eve banished from the garden for eating the fruit from the tree of life. How do these two contrasting creation stories play out in our relationship to nature and our approach to science? Botanist, professor of environmental biology, and citizen of the Potawatomi Nation Robin Wall Kimmerer explores this and other questions in this book of essays. Kimmerer offers an alternate view that is influenced by her Native American heritage, as well as science, on topics as varied as maple trees producing syrup, gratitude, the honorable harvest, immigrants, and Superfund sites. I wasn't

always sure how an essay was going to be relevant (Is this really just a story about strawberries?), but in the end every essay delivered. (Jackie Henderson)

Krauss, Ruth. Pictures by Maurice Sendak. ***A Hole is to Dig***. Published in 1952, this tiny book is minimal in every way except in the abundance of heart and love that went into creating it. One or two sentences per page peppered with Sendak's lively illustrations. "Toes are to dance on" "Hands are to hold" "Hunh! Rugs are so dogs have napkins" There are no periods on any page. It is a book that my imagination fell into when I was very young, literally inhabiting the pages that were so very real to me. Now they echo as poems full of truth. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Krug, Nora. ***Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home***. Like "Zeigeist," and "Weltzschmerz," the German word "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" is hard to translate! Roughly, it means "Germany's process of overcoming the past, as it relates to culture, collective identity, and pre-1945 history." BELONGING is the narrative of one woman's search—into the archive and the soul – to find out her family's wartime history. Illustrated with objects, documents, photographs, handwritten journal entries, collage, and illustration, it is an impeccably designed graphic novel memoir. (Laura Barnett)

Kushner, Tony. ***Angels in America***. The AIDS plague in the 80s. Many parallels to this plague we are going through now. Also sheer fun and if your focus seems shorter these days try Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Murder at The Rue Morgue" from which Arthur Conan Doyle paid his homage with Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. *The digital library has the audiobook*. (Nancy Reardon)

Laux, Dorianne. ***Only As The Day Is Long***. In these beautiful poems, Laux continually surprises us with insight and irony. (Marty Skoble)

Lawrence, Tim. ***Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979***. The history of late 20th-century dance music is also the history of black, brown, and queer cultural production. Lawrence offers a revealing account of the clubs and soundtracks that made up alternative culture in 1970s New York City. The book teems with some great playlists, too. (Connor Spencer)

le Carré, John. ***Agent Running in the Field***. This is le Carré's most recent book, having just come out last year, and it's also the first one of his that I read. Le Carré deserves his reputation, not just as a writer of thrillers but as a writer, period—the prose is full of sharp observations about characters' states of mind, and society more generally. In keeping with his habit of staying relevant the story is filled with references to Brexit, Trump, and current events, and he unfolds the plot at a slow, steady, understated pace that nonetheless maintains the suspense—he's very good at communicating the larger significance behind tiny surface details. At 88 years old le Carré is still relevant and masterful—may we all age so gracefully! (Jascha Narveson)

le Carré, John. ***Agent Running in the Field***. This writer is almost ninety years old, and he still writes like this. Reading it is like eating a chocolate bar. (Michael Donohue)

Lerner, Ben. ***The Topeka School***. A novel of autofiction, written by switching back and forth between the first person of various characters, *The Topeka School* is one of the best new books I've read from an American author from my generation. Funny, dark, personal—Lerner provides an intimate portrait of what it was like growing up Jewish with two psychoanalyst parents in Topeka, Kansas. Can't recommend it enough. (Peter Zernick)

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. ***Tristes Tropiques***. In this interior time when we are only remotely connected, yet—in the most hopeful reading—beginning again, our stasis may deliver to us a new reckoning of our appropriation of what we blindly assume is ours. In *Tristes Tropiques* anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss recounts his journeys through the Amazon where he witnesses indigenous peoples in the process of being erased by the pandemic called Western culture. Part monograph, part travelogue, part memoir and farewell. (Ruth Chapman)

Levy, Deborah. ***The Man Who Saw Everything***. It's 1988 and a man is grazed by a car while he stands at the corner of Abbey Road, about to reenact that album cover so his girlfriend can photograph him doing it and he can bring the photo as a gift to a woman who lives in the GDR and is obsessed with the album. Glitches in the straight-forward narrative's matrix begin to indicate that all is not as it seems. This novel about love, Post WW II Europe, art and masculinity (among other things) is a slow burn. (Melissa Kantor)

Lewis, C. S. ***A Grief Observed***. A cry from the heart after the death of his beloved sparkling wife, it is a journal Lewis kept as he wrestled with pain, with joyful memories, and with enormous doubts about religion and the God who could do such a thing. (Mike Roam)

Lipton, James. ***An Exaltation of Larks: The Ultimate Edition***. This book is an explosion of language, a celebration of words coming from the practice evolved from hunting language in the 1400 and 1500s in Europe. The illustrations are from the same time period and are opulent to say the least. Lipton pairs old definitions, which in themselves are tickling to the ear, with more recent ones and challenges the reader to make up their own. "A Cast of Hawks" "A Leash of Merlins" "A Flight of Goshawks" all come from the earliest terms of venery, or hunting terms. While "A Convocation of Eagles" is from an article in 1925. This book begins with the "The Beginning" "The Known" "The Unknown" and then the "Unexpected." I quite enjoyed reading "A Glorifying of Liars" The more contemporary parts explore all aspects of life from Medical to Quotidian to Romance, Religion, Politics... Wait aren't these things we are not supposed to talk about in polite company? Best of course, is Lipton's commentary throughout embedded in the citations for the history of various "nouns of multitude." This book is, in fact, a book of poetry reveling in the richness and opportunistic nature of the English language with an invitation to go forth and create. (Anna Maria Baeza)

Mandel, Emily St. John. ***The Glass Hotel***. After reading *Station Eleven* (I highly recommend this novel too, but it might hit a bit close to home now) last year and loving it, I was eagerly awaiting Mandel's new novel. *The Glass Hotel* doesn't disappoint. It was almost impossible to put this book down as it tells the story of an eclectic collection of people loosely tied together through their involvement in a Bernie Madoff-inspired Ponzi scheme. The novel seamlessly switches perspectives and timeframes as each character's moral compass is probed and ghosts are unearthed. (Kristin Fiori)

Mantel, Hilary. ***The Mirror and the Light***. As you probably already know, things don't end well for Thomas Cromwell, which might be why the final book in Mantel's Booker-prize-winning trilogy feels elegiac from the start. Though I missed Anne Boleyn (her beheading opens the novel), I was glad to spend a bit more time with Mantel's protagonist as he works tirelessly to spread the gospel and find more wives for Henry to abandon (or execute). (Melissa Kantor)

Marías, Javier. ***Berta Isla***. About those left behind when spies wander, rich with ideas, moods, and persuasive characters but not much plot. (Mike Roam)

McEwan, Ian. ***Machines Like Me***. Quantum physics postulates infinite alternate universes where history plays out differently. McEwan postulates one in brilliant detail, the backdrop for a novel in which human desire for perfection and love collide with reality (human imperfection). The irony is precise, profound, poignant. (Marty Skoble)

McKinty, Adrian. ***The Cold Cold Ground***. For those who read Patrick Radden Keefe's *Say Nothing*, about the Irish Troubles, last year, this is the natural next step: a detective series set in early-1980s Northern Ireland. Our droll narrator detective, Sean Duffy, tries to find a serial killer while navigating a world of IRA car bombs, riots, and hunger strikes. This is the first book in a long series. (Michael Donohue)

Morgenstern, Erin. ***The Night Circus***. This entrancing novel weaves together history and magic, as it follows the creation and evolution of a circus that travels the world, and operates only during the nighttime. It's not a "typical" fantasy novel, yet it requires you to suspend any disbelief in order to enter the world of the circus, where magic is much more than an illusion, and people devote their entire lives to entertaining their audiences. Behind the circus acts, there is a fierce competition between two magicians that has deep roots in a rivalry, and their story (which has some romance, and some tragedy), keeps you fully immersed through the entire book. A great summer read! (Stephanie Schragger)

Moshfegh, Ottessa. ***My Year of Rest and Relaxation***. Months after finishing this strange Oblomovian novel, I still find myself thinking about it. In other words, highly recommended. (Michael Donohue)

Murakami, Haruki. ***IQ84***. It is Murakami's alternate version of 1984. Love story, mystery, thriller, if you are willing to take the turn with the author into alternate realities, I'm sure this 930-page saga will keep you spellbound. (Richard Mann)

Murdoch, Iris. ***The Bell***. A mid-twentieth-century novel about a Christian cult, a nightmarish marriage, and a bell that might or might not be at the bottom of a muddy lake. What's not to love? (And if you like Murdoch's wonderful weirdness, try *The Unicorn* next.) (Michael Donohue)

Noah, Trevor. ***Born A Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood***. An autobiographical portrait of Soweto under apartheid, an ode to Noah's strict, loving mother Patricia, and the origin story of the sage commentator and comedian whose work I know and love from The Daily Show. It is very sad and very funny and I couldn't put it down. (Laura Barnett)

Offerman, Nick. ***Paddle Your Own Canoe***. This book had me laughing out loud! If you are a fan of Nick Offerman (*Parks and Recreation*) or not, this actor/comedian is as down to earth as they come. In this memoir, he is humble, grateful, and no nonsense. Nick embodies the anti-celebrity while still working every day for the next big thing. (Liz Lord)

Ogilvy, David. ***Confessions of an Advertising Man***. A very dated, but often timeless business "how to" from a very influential mad man (by way of the UK). (Charlie Shelton)

Owens, Delia. ***Where The Crawdads Sing***. *Where the Crawdads Sing* stole my heart from the first page. This novel has it all. It sings of the beauty of nature and science, the power of love and the resilience of the human spirit! Follow the story of the marsh girl and your spirit will also take flight! (Mary Louise Gower)

Pastan, Linda. ***Insomnia***. Beautiful poems elegantly crafted. Good poets show us the familiar in new ways; Pastan makes them extraordinary. (Marty Skoble)

Patchett, Ann. ***Run***. In Patchett's beautifully optimistic novel love trumps race, class, time and even death. Family, one way or another is all. (Marty Skoble)

Patchett, Ann. ***The Dutch House***. *The Dutch House* is an opulent glass-fronted mansion in a suburb of Philadelphia. It is more than a setting for the novel—it is part metaphor, part obsession, and part nemesis for Danny and Maeve, siblings who are the central characters of the novel. After their saintly mother abandoned them, Danny and Maeve were raised in the house by their distant and work-obsessed father, loving staff, and archetypically evil step-mother. Patchett probes themes of family, obsession, greed and forgiveness and the impact of each on a person's character. (Kristin Fiori)

Patchett, Ann. ***The Dutch House***. This was a dream quarantine book—I couldn't put it down! It's the saga of a distinctive house in Philadelphia, with a focus on two occupants, siblings Danny and Maeve, who grow up there. The novel is a first-person narration from the perspective of Danny. His calm, somewhat oblivious narration leaves room for the reader to discover layers in the characters and place. It's a wonderful tale! (Eva Zasloff)

Paul, Pamela and Maria Russo. ***How to Raise a Reader***. As a parent of a little one who has realized letters exist, this book has been a great resource for thinking about growing a love of reading! It starts with babies and moves through ages and stages with tips and book recommendations. (Gretta Reed)

Phillips, Julia. ***Disappearing Earth***. It took me awhile to be convinced by this novel's structure, a seemingly loosely linked connection of stories. Ultimately those connections deepened my experience of the central narrative, which has a profound loss at its heart. Also, where and how else would I ever have come to understand that Kamchatka is not just a place on the *Risk* board? (Liz Giamatti)

Read, Piers Paul. ***Alive***. A small plane carrying you and your best friends crashes in a snowy mountain range. There's no chance of rescue. This true story took the world by storm when it first came out, in the 1970s. I chanced upon it this year and found it riveting. (Michael Donohue)

Reid, Kiley. ***Such a Fun Age***. Alternating between the voice of a young black woman and the older white woman whose child she babysits, *Such a Fun Age* is a very funny and sometimes wince-inducing exploration of its characters' attempts to forge authentic interracial relationships. (Melissa Kantor)

Reynolds, Jason and Ibram X. Kendi. ***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You***. Kendi wrote an important 600-page book in 2016 called *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. In this remix of the award-winning book, Reynolds makes it accessible for everyone. (Ragan O'Malley)

Rooney, Sally. ***Normal People***. The friendship between Connell and Marianne is intense to say the least. It begins when they are in high school—he's a socially secure cool boy at school (despite his lack of money) and she is a rich social outcast. The two make it through secondary school and end up at Trinity College together in Dublin where the tables turn. After reading the novel (or listening to the excellent audiobook available on the digital library), watch the series on Hulu. (Ragan O'Malley)

Rooney, Sally. ***Conversations with Friends***. Now that you've finished binge-watching *Normal People* and you're depressed that it's over, why not read Sally Rooney's other book? You'll be just as invested in the troubled characters' lives, but this time you can imagine what they look like. (Liz Fodaski)

Rosengarten, Theodore. ***All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw***. *All God's Dangers* is the biography of Nate Shaw, an 84-year-old black man, and son of former slaves. Two white graduate students from Massachusetts met him while researching the Alabama Sharecropper's Union. Mr. Shaw had been a member of the union in the 1930's. Interviews with Nate Shaw began in Alabama in 1969 and the biography was published in 1974. In Nate Shaw, "Rosengarten had found a black Homer, bursting with his black Odyssey and able to tell it with awesome intellectual power, with passion, with the almost frightening power of memory in a man who could neither read nor write but who sensed that the substance of

his own life, and a million other black lives like his, were the very fiber of the nation's history." H. Jack Geiger, *New York Times Book Review*. Highly recommended! (Jackie Henderson)

Ruefle, Mary. ***Dunce***. New work from a masterful poet. These are strange and surprising, full of wonderful leaps. (Marty Skoble)

Ruhl, Sarah. ***100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write on Umbrellas and Sword Fights, Parades and Dogs, Fire Alarms, Children, and Theater***. I read this in April. The final two lines of Essay 80 made me cry: "*Teaching is unbounded by the classroom. Just as love is unbounded by time.*" Read this book and then read aloud Ruhl's plays: *The Clean House*, *Stage Kiss*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Eurydice* and more... (Laura Barnett)

Rum, Etan. ***A Woman is No Man***. *A Woman is No Man* tells the overlapping tales of three generations of Palestinian women for whom tradition and gender are defining factors. Surprising, painful and riveting, Rum's voice brings a powerful story to life. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Russo, Richard. ***The Risk Pool***. Given to me by a friend in the late BC (before Coronavirus) era, this is Russo's second novel, first published in 1988. It is a coming of age story and a tale of the decline of a blue collar town, the fictional Mohawk, New York, in the decades after World War II. At once humorous and poignant, Russo's novel is full of characters on the edge—of alcoholism, despair, flight, and defeat. A different take on risk at a moment when that is a daily preoccupation. (Vince Tompkins)

Schwitzgebel, Eric. ***A Theory of Jerks and Other Philosophical Misadventures***. What is the "essence of jerkitude"? Do we aim to be morally mediocre? Should philosophers be concerned if they aren't more ethical than others? Is the United States literally conscious? Should "philosophy of hair" be an area of active study? These essays are bite-sized nuggets of accessible philosophy. Not cutesy, always serious, often deep. (Michael Pershan)

Shoneyin, Lola. ***The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives***. (Also titled *The Secret Lives of the Four Wives*.) This fictional book is an entertaining and thought-provoking page turner that focuses on the polygamous relationship of a Nigerian businessman and his four wives. The book takes us on a journey into Baba Segi's private household; showing us how family dynamics, religion, and rivalries overlap in a fun, yet emotional way. (Kenya Wagstaffe)

Sissay, Lemn. ***My Name is Why***. Blake says the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Sissay makes it clear that it is other people who wind up in that hell, put there by an entire society with "good intentions." A moving account of survival graced by an occasional (rare) encounter with human decency. (Marty Skoble)

Smith, Zadie. ***Grand Union***. Smith is one of the few writers whose books I immediately buy in hardcover. This one doesn't come out in paperback till the fall, but I wouldn't wait. There's a little unevenness among these 19 stories, but at least a dozen are very, very good. (Michael Donohue)

Stein, Sam. ***The Jordan Rules: The Inside Story of One Turbulent Season with Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls***. Because before Michael Jordan's phantom produced gauzy encomiums to his undeniable greatness on ESPN, Stein gave the real deal on Jordan, Phil Jackson, and the incomparable 90's Bulls. (Liam Flaherty)

Stevens, Daniel. ***The River Cottage Bread Handbook***. Funnily enough I came across this gem whilst shelving it in the early days of being a library assistant. After skimming through it I realized it needed not to be shelved, but rather checked out immediately, and upon further study came to the conclusion that I would never return it and therefore must buy it! The author is informative and provides succinct instructions and reasons as to why you slash the top of loaves before cooking for example—the science of gluten tension! One of my favorite aspects of the book is the sprinkling throughout of the

author's playful asides: "You can leave your loaves naked, but they will be much more grateful—and feel much more beautiful—if you give them a lovely coat to wear. Select a flour, or choose grains or seeds." I made my first sourdough starter from this book and have also successfully made bagels, focaccia, roti, flatbreads and doughnuts over the years. (Kate Hamilton)

Sullivan, Lou. ***We Both Laughed in Pleasure: The Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan***. Lou Sullivan (b. 1951 - 1991) was a transgender man who played a vital role in organizing grassroots movements for trans men and FTM (female-to-male) communities in the 1980s. These diaries offer a fascinating, rare glimpse into the life of a committed activist and transgressor—and Sullivan himself is an irresistible charmer. (Connor Spencer)

Toews, Miriam. ***Women Talking***. A fictionalized version of a real event, Toews retells the events of a fringe Canadian Mennonite community that relocated to Bolivia. Over the course of a decade hundreds of girls and women were knocked unconscious and raped by men in the sect, but were told by the religious elders that they had been attacked by demons as punishment for their sins. In a community where women are barred from learning how to read or write, the women must turn to a male scribe to record their stories. The result is *Women Talking*, a book which forces the reader to confront multiple levels of human harm, while allowing its subjects humanity and depth. (Ellen Friedrichs)

Tolstoy, Leo. ***War and Peace***. Yes, this book is extremely long; it's just about as long as the Napoleonic Wars themselves. The characters make it all worthwhile. Tolstoy fashions compelling, extremely believable, often funny characters and plunks them before you, alive and breathing. Big characters and small, there are hundreds in the book, all with Russian names, so you might want to make a list of them. And what riveting scenes he presents—on a battlefield, in a ball room, at a deathbed. (Jane Avrigh)

Torres, Edwin. ***XoeteoX***. Wonderfully inventive poetry defying the gravity of form to make sonic and visual art. The lesson on Latinx lexicon is a bonus. (Marty Skoble)

Trollope, Anthony. ***Barchester Towers***. Having saved Trollope for my middle age, I was not disappointed. I started with *The Warden*, to which *Barchester* is the sequel. I suggest you just start with *Barchester*, a hilarious novel about the way low stakes often lead to intense politics. (Michael Donohue)

Veloso, Caetano. ***Tropical Truth***. The great musician and founder of Brazil's Tropacalia movement doesn't burden us with what his mother made for breakfast: this smart, beguiling, and openly structured memoir plays like one of his compositions. How could such music come from a time of military dictatorship, light from dark times? Veloso doesn't tell us how but maybe shows us. (Liam Flaherty)

Vuong, Ocean. ***On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous***. A novel of so many layers: the story of three generations, two countries, alienation and assimilation, intellectual and sexual awakening, heartbreakingly beautifully told. (Marty Skoble)

Walden, Tillie. ***On a Sunbeam***. Feeling a desire to leave this planet for a while right about now? Then pick up this graphic novel: a sweet, heartfelt, and very queer romp through the galaxy. An all female and nonbinary crew repairs old buildings on planets near and far as characters navigate love in two parallel storylines. A beautiful rendering of the power of chosen family. (Hannah Mermelstein)

Welty, Eudora. ***The Optimist's Daughter***. Crisp and uncluttered tale about a woman brought back to her childhood home by a death in the family. Great book to read in one sitting. (Michael Donohue)

Whitehead, Colson. ***Nickel Boys***. Harrowing, haunting story. Beautifully written. You know these people but you don't. This book should be required reading for all white people. (Marty Skoble)

Wilson, Kevin. **Nothing To See Here.** A woman living a disappointing life gets a call from a high school friend, a department store heiress married to a US senator. The senator's children from his first marriage need looking after. The job is complicated by the fact that, when agitated, the children burst into flames. A spot-on and *hilarious* exploration of the complexities of women's friendships and of what it means to love a child. (Melissa Kantor)

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Red at the Bone.** A lyrical page-turner about three generations of women. (There are men in the story too, but the focus is really on Melody and her mother Iris, who becomes pregnant as a teenager.) The novel explores race and class, and the strong people who need to make choices about what paths to take. Woodson's writing is beautiful—I love how we get inside the head of each character. (Eva Zasloff)

Yu, Charles. **Interior Chinatown.** Willis Wu lives in an SRO above a Chinese restaurant that's the set for *Black and White*, a popular cop show on which he and his neighbors play a range of stereotypical Chinese characters. Wu hopes to graduate to the role of Kung Fu guy (the highest rung on the ladder for an Asian-American actor), but striving to achieve someone else's platonic ideal of your race comes at a cost. Dark as its subject matter is, this novel-written-as-screenplay has moments of hilarity. (Melissa Kantor)

Zagajewski, Adam. **Without End: New and Selected Poems.** A heir to the great Polish poetic tradition, Zagajewski can deliver an epigram, an uncanny line, and set scenes of strange exile where nothing is right yet somehow everything makes sense. (Liam Flaherty)

Zapruder, Matthew. **Father's Day.** Moving, skillful poems grounded in real life, our real lives as children, parents, citizens, humans. (Marty Skoble)

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Thanks to everyone who contributed. Happy reading!