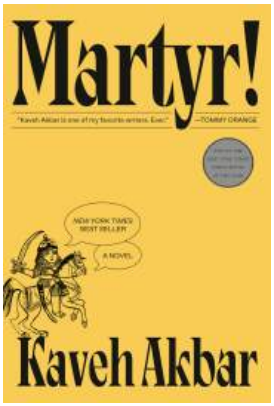
Saint Ann's School

Suggested Summer Reading List for High School, Faculty, and Staff, 2025



Akbar, Kaveh ***Martyr***. *Martyr* is one of the most amazing books I've ever read. It is the first prose work from a young poet from the Iranian diaspora, connecting the downing of the Iran Air Flight 655 (a passenger airplane shot down by a U.S. Navy guided missile killing all 290 aboard) to his struggles with addiction in the midwest and his work as an artist in Brooklyn. It is hilarious and genius and tragic, a true joy to read. (Golnar Adili) 📖

Alameddine, Rabih. ***The Wrong End of the Telescope.*** A transgender Lebanese doctor travels to volunteer in the infamous refugee camp of Moria on Lesbos, Greece. Crystal clear vision, pitch perfect voice. (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖

Babitz, Eve. ***Slow Days, Fast Company: The World, The Flesh, and L.A.*** Published in 1977, this collection of essays is a time capsule of Los Angeles in the 60s and 70s. Eve Babitz was an it girl, with movie star boyfriends and a handful of socialite friends who always seemed to be on some kind of bender at the Chateau Marmont. The trick to Babitz, though, is that she was also a brilliant writer. (Lenny Sheppard) 📖🎧

Balle, Solvej. ***On the Calculation of Volume (Book 1).*** What happens when one involuntarily steps off the train of time? For bookseller Tara Selter, it is November 18 for the 122nd time. They day repeats itself recursively—remixing, foreshadowing, re-membering—until…it's time to wake up. Again, it's November 18. Experimental fiction that for me defies genre. Spotted on 'Recommended by Booksellers' shelves at Greenlight, Center for Fiction, and Barnes & Noble. Thank you, Eliza Callahan '13, for suggesting this new Nordic fiction. (Laura Barnett) 📖

Banville, John. ***Doctor Copernicus.*** And for all of you wonderers out there, a must read! (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖🎧

Bechdel, Alison. ***Spent.*** I only started Alison Bechdel's newest comic novel, *Spent*, yesterday and I am already recommending it to everyone I know. Nearly impossible to explain, beyond meta, beyond smart, it's a wonderful send-up of both capitalism and the human ego. Alison does it again, as always. (Sarah Moon)

Brodesser-Akner, Taffy. ***Long Island Compromise.*** This sprawling page-turner, told from the perspectives of three siblings, was a satisfying read this long, cold winter; I think it would be even better over the summer. A fictionalized account of a 1974 kidnapping, the writer satirically and empathically takes on family dysfunction, Los Angeles, suburbia, and the long tentacles of intergenerational Jewish trauma, compartmentalization, and survival. It sounds heavy. It is very funny! And throughout, the metaphor of a dybbuk. (Laura Barnett) 📖

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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 📖🎧. See the end of this list for more instructions.

Brontë, Emily. ***Wuthering Heights.*** When it was announced that Jacob Elordi was cast as Heathcliff in Emerald Fennell's 2026 film adaptation I thought…. "Huh?!?! OK, I must finally read this classic, so that I too may join in on the collective outrage and confusion." And wow! I'm so glad that I did. What a hateful story about the most unkind and pitiful creatures ever put to print! Absolutely loved it, 10/10. (Sara Gunn) 📖🎧

Brooks, Geraldine. ***Horse.*** The racehorse Lexington (1850-1875) is the titular horse in this moving novel by Pulitzer-prize winner Brooks. Art historian Theo chances upon a portrait of a horse at a yard sale. Theo studies 19th century equestrian painting—notably the depiction of thoroughbreds and their enslaved Black groomers—through a post-colonial lens. Three intertwined stories, set in 1850s Kentucky, 1950s New York, and 2019 DC, unfold from various points of view. Compelling, upsetting, engrossing, and enlightening. One of the 381 books banned from the US Naval Academy library in March 2025. So…to be read. (Laura Barnett) 📖

Brown, Daniel James. ***The Indifferent Stars Above.*** This book tells the story of the Donner Party primarily through the lens of one of the female members of the "snowshoe party," a subgroup of the party that did not winter in the mountains but set out on foot in an attempt to rescue those who were trapped. I love a good wilderness survival story and this book did not disappoint. The author frequently pauses to discuss the psychology of survival and the mental fortitude it takes to even make the decision to journey West in the first place. (Elizabeth Sheridan-Rossi) 📖🎧

Brown, Rosalind. **Practice.** This is a short novel that basically follows 24 hours in the life of a student at Oxford writing an essay about Shakespeare's sonnets. That might sound heady and dull but it is not! It's all these splendid quick details about the physicality of sitting at a desk so long, getting up to do some yoga poses (the twists are compared to "two slow fish"), writing some more, going on a walk and letting yourself daydream about relationships for a while.
(Fiona Warnick) 📖

Bullwinkel, Rita. ***Headshot.*** Like the combatants in this novel, Bullwinkel's prose is punchy and fast moving. Teenage boxers (female) are a fascinating microcosm of Americana. (Marty Skoble) 📖🎧

Calhoun, Ada. ***Crush***. If you enjoyed Ada Calhoun's *Why We Can't Sleep, Wedding Toasts I'll Never Give* or *St. Marks Is Dead*, well *Crush* isn't at all like those, but it was in my top two fave fiction reads this spring. The narrator is a writerly, married mother in her 40s whose artist husband Paul doesn't seem to really appreciate her, so she reaches out to David from way back in their college years. Drama and lust ensue! Great pacing, kinda realistic dialogue. Nothing too bad happens. I LOVED IT! (Ebony Murphy) 📖🎧

Christie, Agatha. ***Evil Under the Sun.*** I won't rest until I get everyone I know to read at least one Agatha Christie book. If you haven't read any of her most-famous mysteries—*And Then There Were None*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*—start there. But if you want to dive deeper into her catalog of 66 detective novels, this book is a good place to start. A secluded island, major movie star, experimentation with voodoo, and, of course, the brilliant detective Hercule Poirot make this a fun read with a mystery that's (at least for me) impossible to solve. (Molly Sissors) 📖🎧

Clarren, Rebecca. ***The Cost of Free Land: Jews, Lakota, and an American Inheritance.*** A fascinating book which follows the author's investigation into the history of the South Dakota land where her family settled after escaping antisemitism in Russia. A thoroughly engrossing book detailing an aspect of American history that I'd never read about before.
(Lenny Sheppard) 📖

Collins, Wilkie. ***The Moonstone.*** This 1868 detective novel is especially recommended as an audiobook if you're taking a long road trip. We have a cursed diamond, a daring theft, and an incredible gallery of characters who might have done the crime. Collins also wrote *The Woman in White*, one of the great page-turners of the Victorian period.
(Michael Donohue) 📖🎧

Doerr, Anthony. ***Cloud Cuckoo Land.*** I think this may only be the second time I have contributed to the summer reading list recommendations (and I've been a teacher here since 1995). But I recently finished reading *Cloud Cuckoo Land* and it is not to be missed. Doerr brings us into the lives of five different characters stretched across time and space from 15th

century Constantinople, to 2020 Idaho, to a sometime-in-the-future spaceship. The threads of the stories weave together in the most magical of ways. There is heartbreak but also joy, redemption, and hope. It's got big ideas but it's not heavy or overly-intellectual. I loved it. Really really loved it. (Kate Savoca) 📖

Eigen, Jacob. ***The Twenty-First Century.*** Shimmering poems that explore what living means from many perspectives, through many personae. Deeply wise; utterly present and accessible. And Jacob is one of our own. (Marty Skoble)

Erpenbeck, Jenny. ***Go, Went, Gone.*** A newly retired German professor of classics, formerly from East Berlin, gets to know young African refugees who stage a hunger strike in Alexanderplatz. Again, I can only quote: "Wonderful, elegant, and exhilarating…" Yes, another pitch-perfect tale of the refugee crisis told from the perspective of the individual who no longer fully fits into the narrative he has always known himself to belong to. (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖

Espach, Alison. ***The Wedding People.*** I picked up this novel hoping for a low-stakes, forgettable comfort read but it's more than that, and I wound up really loving it. Phoebe's cat is dead. Her career as an (adjunct) English professor is tanking. Her professor husband (tenured) has left her for her friend—an act for which he blames Phoebe herself (she has failed to become pregnant). Wearing her loveliest dress but without luggage or even an overnight kit (she has some plans…), she travels to a luxe hotel in Newport for a last hurrah. But there, she collides with a wedding party and is assumed to be a guest. From this clash comes a story so smart, so funny, so full of heart—it took me by surprise. (Denise Rinaldo) 📖

Evenson, Brian. ***Last Days.*** This is a horror novel about a man who is abducted by an amputation cult. In this sect, amputations are signs of one's devotion to God. If you've got the stomach for any of this it's quite the read. (Michael Pershan) 📖

Everett, Percival. ***Wounded***. If you liked *James*, consider checking this one out. It's sort of a contemporary Western, told by a horse trainer who ends up offering protection to people who badly need it. (This and *Telephone* are my favorites by Everett.) (Michael Pershan) 📖

Felix, Camonghne. ***Dyscalculia: A Love Story of Epic Miscalculation.*** Part poetry, part memoir, this slim book is a blunt, elliptical, elegant reflection on what it feels like to trust and have one's heart broken. The shards cut deep, and Felix leads us to some deep places, including childhood trauma, mental health issues, her problematic relationship with her mother, and mathematics. The writing is experimental; some pages have only a few words. I was familiar with Felix as an essayist, very glad to read her work in this form. Thank you, Ebony Murphy, for suggesting. (Laura Barnett) 📖🎧

Franklin, Rob. ***Great Black Hope***. My friend and former roommate wrote a book! It comes out on June 10th and tells the story of a hot New York City summer full of grief, tension, and glamour. (Sophia Steinert-Evoy) 📖

Garber, Romina. ***Lobizona*** (No.1 in the "Wolves of No World" series). I thought I'd bring back my recommendation for my sister's book because it felt relevant to the current political conversation on immigration in the U.S. *Lobizona* is a YA book that tackles issues on being undocumented while also 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. Feel free to follow it up with *Cazadora* (Book 2 in the series). (Meli Garber) 📖

Garmus, Bonnie. ***Lessons in Chemistry.*** I almost didn't make it past chapter 3 (IYKYK), but really there was nowhere to go from there but up. The story follows Elizabeth, who you will find to be simultaneously off-putting and your spirit animal, through her journey to be recognized as the brilliant scientist she is in an era when women were assumed, by virtue of two X chromosomes, to be physically incapable of comprehending science. Her journey takes us through parenthood, love, loss, friendships, a painful past, a dog with an extended vocabulary? and a nationwide syndicated cooking show somehow? As the novel progresses, you will come to love Elizabeth, her growing family, and rowing. That is not a typo. (Bianca Roberson) 📖

Gelman, Annelyse. ***Vexations.*** In one haunting musical poem crafted after Satie, Gelman weaves familial, ecological, and social stresses into a uniquely beautiful fabric. Spellbinding. (Marty Skoble)

Grandin, Greg. ***America, América: A New History of the New World***. I don't know if I can recommend this if I haven't finished it, but a bunch of us in the history department are planning to read this over the summer. Grandin's previous book, *The End of the Myth*, was tremendously influential to my own thinking about the United States as an empire and idea, and this one (from the two chapters that I have read so far) promises to be similarly seismic.
(Sophia Steinert-Evoy) 📖

Grann, David. ***The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny, and Murder*****.** I have a soft spot for tales of adventures gone wrong. (*Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* by Jon Krakauer and *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing, for example.) *The Wager*, a British ship that left England in 1740 on a secret mission during a war with Spain, ran into lots of troubles and shipwrecked on a desolate island off the coast of Patagonia. The sailors, after starving for months, built a boat of sorts and sailed for more than a hundred days, travelling nearly 3,000 miles home. They were greeted as heroes in England, but six months later another boat of castaways landed from *The Wager* and they had a different story to tell...just be glad you weren't a sailor in the 1800s. (Ragan O'Malley) 📖🎧

Greer, Sierra. ***Annie Bot.*** What happens when a robot girlfriend designed to learn and adapt to her owner's needs begins to evolve beyond him? Hints of *Ex Machina*, *The Stepford Wives*, and *Klara and the Sun*. (Leda Fisher) 📖🎧

Groff, Lauren. ***Fates and Furies.*** In this split novel, we meet Lotto (Fate's perspective) and Mathilde (Fury), who fall in love in college and are dreamily/nightmarishly married for 24 years, depending on whose wildly different perspective the reader tracks. I found the characters compellingly rendered and the prose almost implausibly well-written. The narrative strikes the balance of being recognizable (is this life as we know it?) and epic. Could not put it down. (Laura Barnett) 📖

Hammad, Isabella. ***Enter Ghost***. An actress returns to her sister's home in Palestine to recover from a relationship and make some decisions about her life. While there she is drawn into a production of *Hamlet* that recontextualizes her relationship with her family, acting, and the West Bank. (Leda Fisher) 📖🎧

Hanff, Helene. ***84, Charing Cross Road***. An epistolary memoir from an American writer trying to track down out-of-favor literary classics from an antiquarian bookshop in London. Delightful. I cried at the end. Gave me one of my great life ambitions which is to read every book Hanff orders from Marks and Co. (Josie Ingall) 📖🎧

Heaney, Seamus. ***Beowulf.*** I've been thinking a lot about masculinity, hierarchies, and the stubbornness of violence in the human psyche recently and feeling drawn towards re-reading ancient epics. *Beowulf* is an Old-English epic poem about a Scandinavian hero who saves another kingdom from the legendary monster Grendel, returns to his kingdom, and dies in old age fighting a dragon—or, as the book jacket puts it, "the poem is about encountering the monstrous, defeating it, and then having to live on in the exhausted aftermath." Seamus Heaney's translation—a fascinating, tangy poem in its own right, a delight for someone interested in English poetry and the history of languages—swept me along quickly, and made what I had assumed might be a heavy read into a fast-moving, absorbing treat. (Daphne Bissette) 📖🎧

Hillman, Brenda. ***In a Few Minutes Before Later.*** Hillman's poems shimmer with intellect and risk but remain accessible as she traverses the fraught landscape of pandemic, wildfire, social justice, and love. (Marty Skoble) 📖

Hollinghurst, Alan. ***Our Evenings.*** The new novel by the author of *The Line of Beauty* (which is, in my view, the best 21st-century novel so far) tells of a half-Burmese Englishman navigating life as an actor from the 1960s to the Covid era. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Howe, Marie. ***New and Selected Poems.*** Profound yet always personal, these poems insist on being heard in our hearts as well as our minds. Beautifully crafted. (Marty Skoble)

Jones, Idwal. ***High Bonnet: A Novel of Epicurean Adventures.*** The title refers to a chef's toque, the tall white hat here symbolically construed as a crown our hero plans to seize. The plot of this 1945 novella concerns a character apprenticing himself to the great chefs of Paris, but the marvelous thing about it is that plot and characterization are

subordinated to exhilarating descriptions of succulent feasts and evocative depictions of cooks worked to the bone. Some passages are richer than foie gras. (Troy Patterson) 📖

Jordan, Pat. ***My Father's Con***. A legendary Sports Illustrated writer in the 1970s, Pat Jordan is now best known as the author of *A False Spring*, one of the greatest American memoirs (read that, too, if you haven't). This new book, which is a little hard to find, is an unappreciated masterpiece about Jordan's father, Patsy Giordano, a con artist in and around Bridgeport, Connecticut. (Michael Donohue)

Keegan, Claire. ***Small Things Like These.*** A very short and gripping novella, readable in one sitting, about an Irishman who discovers, while making his daily deliveries of coal, a Magdalene laundry where young women are enduring terrible cruelty. (Michael Donohue) 📖🎧

Kehlmann, Daniel. ***Measuring the World.*** A hysterically funny (and heartbreaking) fictionalized account of the lives of the German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss and the German geographer Alexander von Humboldt, two figures who in the 19th century developed groundbreaking methods for measuring the Earth. What a joy it was to read it! (Kehlmann's *Tyll* blew my mind. This is how I discovered him last year.) (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖

Kennedy, Louise. ***Trespasses.*** This book follows a Catholic girl named Cushla living in Belfast during the Troubles. She teaches at the local parochial school and works in her family's bar at night—a bar whose clientele is a mix of Protestant soldiers and down on their luck local Catholics. She ends up in an affair with a Protestant and taking care of a little boy who is bullied at school. Cushla is a very likeable narrator and the chaos surrounding her certainly keeps things interesting! (Celia Frey) 📖🎧

Khalidi, Rashid. ***The Hundred Years' War on Palestine.*** It is a sobering summer read for those who are unfamiliar with the facts, or simply need to refresh their memories about the occupation of Palestine; this is a timely one amidst the unfolding tragedy. I highly recommend it! (Golnar Adili) 📖

Klein, Naomi. ***Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World.*** This nonfiction work by a Canadian activist and public intellectual made me understand the world-run-amok times we are living through. I read it and annotated like mad. I listened to it and rewound. Then I read again. Thank you, Jack Allen Greenfield '23 for recommending.
(Laura Barnett) 📖

Lacey, Catherine. ***Biography of X.*** A purported biography (like Woolf's *Orlando*) about X, a fictional performance artist, who lives in a speculative future in an Alternate Timeline, USA. Real artists and places brilliantly, slyly inhabit Lacy's literary collage. The "footnotes" at the end are their own fascinating narrative. Winner of the 2023 Brooklyn Public Library Prize for fiction and recognized last year as one of *The Atlantic* magazine's "Great American Novels." Thanks to B Mann and Laura Winnick for recommending. (Laura Barnett) 📖🎧

Landau, Alexis. ***Those Who Are Saved***. A historical fiction novel that takes place before and during the Nazi occupation of France. Vera decides to leave her young daughter Lucie with her governess instead of taking her into an internment camp. The book is about the fear, guilt, and anguish of separation and the search for missing children at the end of the war. This book was of special interest to me because my mother-in-law was a hidden child during WWII.
(Donna Grosman) 📖

Le Guin, Ursula K. ***The Dispossessed.*** A book for the highly corruptible but inherently good. Read this if you want a punch to the gut, followed by a warm hug, over and over again. Essential sci-fi! (Sara Gunn) 📖🎧

Levenson, Tom. ***So Very Small: How Humans Discovered the Microcosmos, Defeated Germs—and May Still Lose the War Against Infectious Disease***. An accessible, captivating, and occasionally amusing history of humanity's battle with germs and our struggle to understand them. In a time when public health, scientific research, and even germ theory itself are under attack, this book reminds us how vitally important they are. (Rebecca Johnson) 📖🎧

Maas, Sarah. ***A Court of Thorns and Roses***. For my YA fantasy fiction fans (you know who you are), this story opens in a world where faeries and humans are separated by a magical wall after a bloody war that freed humans and carved out a space for them to rebuild their own society after centuries of slavery. The wall is faltering, opening the possibility for humans to be enslaved again as Feyre, a human, is pulled into the faerie world as retribution for a murder. Even as she learns that faeries are and are not the monsters she had always been taught they were, she finds there is some kind of magical plague twisting faerie magic and destroying their people and lands. As the story unfolds, we realize the truth and lies behind the creeping plague while Feyre risks her life to save both humans and faeries alike.
(Bianca Roberson) 📖🎧

Makkai, Rebecca. ***The Great Believers.*** This book is set primarily in 1980s Chicago following a gay man named Yale as he navigates the AIDS crisis as well as in contemporary Paris, where it follows Yale's friend's sister, Fiona. It may be my all-time favorite novel. As someone who was not alive during the AIDS crisis it conceptualized it in a way I had never quite understood before. It's both heartbreaking and hopeful driven by both plot and character development. Read it! (Celia Frey) 📖

Makkai, Rebecca. ***I Have Some Questions For You.*** The rumors are true: I'm a Rebecca-Makkai-head. This book follows an alum of a fancy boarding school as she revisits her past and attempts to solve the 1985 mystery of who really killed her classmate. A Black athletic trainer takes the fall and is incarcerated for the crime but the evidence is lacking. I loved this book! The plot kept me interested, the characters were complex and charismatic and it takes some twists and turns as the narrator contemplates her own life and relationship. Definitely a good read! (Celia Frey) 📖

Mandel, Eli Payne. ***Grid***. Literate, playful poetry, drawing from a wide range of sources. Mandel brings us surprising insights. He is also one of our own. (Marty Skoble) 📖

Mann, Thomas. ***Buddenbrooks.*** This was surprisingly absorbing. Mann's first novel, it tells of the decline of a once-prosperous family of merchants in the German town of Lubeck. It's essentially a story about the collapse of Victorian-age norms and sensibilities, and of the casualties of that collapse. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Mann, Thomas. ***The Magic Mountain.*** Simply a necessary read for all readers out there. Yes, magical it certainly is! I wish I had read it when I was way younger. (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖🎧

Mann, Thomas. ***Doctor Faustus.*** I can only quote the jacket copy: "Mann not only gave us his most profound writing on the very nature and heart of all art—how it is created and how it impinges on every aspect of our experience . . . but also forced his countrymen [the novel was first published in 1947] to come face-to-face with how they had fallen prey to all that was most lethal in their heritage." (Larissa Tokmakova) 📖🎧

Mascarenhas, Alisha. ***A Catalog of Risk.*** Beautiful poetry woven from a psychological meditation on connection with the self and the other: risky yet absolutely necessary. (Marty Skoble)

Matar, Hisham. ***The Return: Fathers, Sons, and the Land in Between.*** Great book about the author's return to Libya in search of answers about the fate of his father, an anti-Gaddafi intellectual. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Mitford, Nancy. ***The Pursuit of Love*** and ***Love in a Cold Climate***. A communist, a Nazi, a novelist of penetrating social insight, and several glamorous debutantes walk into a bar—it's Asthall Manor, the Mitford family home. The wildly divergent life paths of the six Mitford sisters are fascinating, but I am most especially fond of Nancy's two most famous fictionalized accounts of their childhood. Read these before watching *Outrageous*, the forthcoming Mitford TV series. (Josie Ingall) 📖🎧

Moore, Liz. ***The God of the Woods.*** This book is thrilling. I began it on audiobook at the gym, and I couldn't wait to get to the end, so I checked out the physical copy and finished in two days. It’s a mystery about the disappearance of Barbara Van Laar, a 13-year-old oddball who is in constant conflict with her fragile mother. Barbara goes missing from her bunk at her family's summer camp, in the same woods where her older brother Bear went missing 14 years before. In the frantic

search for Barbara, we hear from multiple perspectives and get to the heart of both Van Laar mysteries. This is a fascinating drama about a wealthy, secretive, dysfunctional family in the 1960s and 70s. (Eva Zasloff) 📖🎧

Moore, Liz. ***Long Bright River.*** You may have read last summer's hit, *The God of the Woods*, which combined a sweeping family saga through the generations with a contemporary mystery (if you haven't read it, I highly recommend that one as well—don't be put off by the harrowing premise that kids go missing from summer camp!). *Long Bright River* is one of Moore's earlier works, from 2020, and it also has familiar threads of family secrets, generational struggles, and a mystery. Set on the streets of Kensington, Philadelphia, the novel looks at the real toll that drug addiction takes on family and communities, seen through the eyes of the main character, Mickey, a Philadelphia police officer. It's her sister, Kacey, who has lived on the streets for years and is now missing, and Mickey is determined to find her sister and to reveal police corruption along the way. This fast-paced novel is full of suspense and heart, and perfect as a summer read! (Stephanie Schragger) 📖

Ozick, Cynthia. ***Puttermesser Papers.*** An absurd, absurdly smart and sometimes scary novel (but a novel of disconnected parts about the same people—compare to Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*. The "Puttermesser and Xanthippe" chapter stands brilliantly on its own). Not a beach read in the least but good for gearing up for the mayoral election. I am making "Elect Puttermesser" shirts if you want one. (Josie Ingall) 📖🎧

Perlstein, Rick. ***Reaganland.*** Timely read about the rise of the far right in the 1970s. Many of the features of today's right are recognizable in the Reagan movement of the time. And Perlstein tells a gripping narrative about how Jimmy Carter, Ted Kennedy, and other Democratic leaders of the time failed to counter the rise of ultra-conservative politics. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Perry, Imani. ***Black in Blues: How a Color Tells the Story of My People.*** In a text which incorporates popular history, memoir, criticism, and speculative fiction, Perry delves into the intersections between culture, history and the many possible ways of entering into rigorous study by following Blue (as color, genre and affect) through time, and around the African diaspora. (Shalewa Mackall) 📖

Picoult, Jodi and Jennifer Finney Boylan. ***Mad Honey.*** A high school senior boy is accused of murdering his girlfriend. The story is told in chapters that alternate between the boy's mother (third person, chronologically forward) and the dead girl (first person chronologically backwards). The result is uncannily seamless, deeply informative as we learn about bees, domestic violence, the complex landscape of gender, and what it means to love. (Marty Skoble) 📖

Pluto, Terry. ***Loose Balls: The Short, Wild Life of the American Basketball Association.*** An oral history that is the riotous and definitive word on the pro basketball league that was ahead of its time in it's short time to be. (Liam Flaherty) 📖

Powers, Richard. ***Playground***. Another wonderful novel by Powers that shuttles between life in the deep sea and the world of AI. Beautiful writing, great plot and unforgettable characters. And like all his novels, you come away haunted by big questions. (Laura Gilbert) 📖🎧

Ratliff, Evan. ***The Mastermind: Drugs. Empire. Murder. Betrayal.*** This is non-fiction. It's about a fellow who started out as a computer programmer and ended up smuggling weapons for warlords through Iran. Wild stuff! (Michael Pershan) 📖🎧

Rooney, Sally. ***Normal People.*** This book follows Connell and Marianne through high school, college, and beyond as they struggle with themselves, their past, their future, and their inexorably progressing lives through a relationship that is, at turns, nonexistent, affirming, dysfunctional, supportive, and sublimely enduring. For those of us who have experienced the beauty and pain of being drawn to that one supremely imperfect person who understands you in ways no one else does, that you can't escape, can't unlove...and maybe don't want to, this will ring very true. (Bianca Roberson) 📖🎧

Rooney, Sally. ***Normal People.*** Sally Rooney is an Irish writer; I loved this novel, very smooth read, hard to put down. It was deep and relatable. (Setare Arashloo) 📖🎧

Ross, Alex. ***Listen to This.*** A great range of essays on music, many from *The New Yorker*—from Radiohead to Schubert and back. (Liam Flaherty) 📖

Ross, Loretta. ***Calling In.*** A memoir-manifesto-handbook by reproductive justice activist, feminist, and MacArthur Fellow Loretta Ross. I have been waiting for this book since I first read Ross's *New York Times* Op-Ed "I'm a Black Feminist. I Think Call-Out Culture is Toxic" in the summer of 2019. Ross charts a way through and forward. (Laura Barnett) 📖

Salinger, J.D. ***Franny and Zooey.*** Every summer, I read a classic that I somehow missed in high school and college. I was so glad I did. Staggeringly tender. (Laura Barnett) 📖

Saunders, George. ***A Swim in a Pond in the Rain.*** The best book about writing out there. The book is a written version of Saunders's class on Russian short stories that he teaches to creative writing MFA students at Syracuse. It consists of seven classic stories by Chekhov, Gogol, Tolstoy, etc., with an essay by Saunders on each one. In these essays, Saunders starts by analyzing the story itself, and then uses this analysis as a springboard into a discussion of writing in general. It's a must-read not only for short story writers, but for writers of all kinds (it's a sacred text in my playwriting group)—frankly, for anyone who likes to read. I have quotes from this book written on Post-it notes all over my apartment. (Susan Yassky) 📖

Sharpe, Christina. ***In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.*** Sharpe is reconceptualizing Blackness right before our eyes—this will be taught for a long time to come. (Liam Flaherty)

Simmons, Dan. ***Summer of Night.*** What better way to saunter off into summer vacation than a chilling horror story about...summer vacation. Dan Simmons crafted a long but highly quaffable tale that takes the reader back to a lazy summer in the midwest in the 60s. You'll get to know an interesting group of friends as they get to know the secrets buried within the walls of their recently closed school. (Eli Forsythe) 📖

Stålenhag, Simon. ***The Electric State***. A surrealist illustrated art book and post-apocalyptic novella. In 1997, a runaway teenager and her robot sidekick travel toward an undisclosed destination through an alternate ~~California~~ Pacifica, scarred with the ruins of gigantic battle drones and haunted by the hardwired, virtual-reality addicted remains of humanity. You need to see these landscapes. You probably don't need to watch the new movie adaptation, which I admittedly haven't seen, but whose aesthetic doesn't live up to the gorgeousness of the book. (B Mann) 📖

Steinbeck, John. ***The Moon is Down.*** This is a short (188 page) novel about resistance and the endurance of the human spirit. It takes place in an unnamed European country during an unspecified war, but Steinbeck makes it obvious that it's based on the German occupation of Norway during WWII. It's not a "front lines" narrative, though. It focuses on the citizens and the mayor of a small, strategically-located village with abundant natural resources, and the different ways in which they refuse to comply with the invading force. No real gore or heightened dramatics, just regular people trying to survive an occupation, which is why I think I found it so powerful when I read it after Russia invaded Ukraine. First published in 1942 to motivate resistance groups, it was immediately banned in Nazi-occupied countries and had to be secretly translated and published across Europe. Pretty impressive for <200 pages! (Emma Rippee) 📖🎧

Stewart, Jeffrey C. ***The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke.*** This is a BIG book at 944 pages. It traces intellectual thought, art, activism from the late Victorian period through the earliest moments of the mid 20th century Black Freedom Movement through the lens of Locke's life. Locke is fascinating, infuriating, prescient, and a figure whose contributions helped to seed the development of the Harlem Renaissance, and Black Studies. (Shalewa Mackall) 📖

Stoller, Matt. ***Goliath: The 100-Year War Between Monopoly Power and Democracy***. Matt Stoller is part of a growing "anti-monopoly" movement, and his work with this book and his Substack newsletter ("BIG") and his podcast ("Organized Money") has changed how I think about U.S. politics, and also how I understand the New Deal era and the Neoliberal era that came after. Learning to see the effects of concentrated corporate power helps me make more sense of things as disparate as the rise of authoritarianism and the rise of food deserts, the disruption of stable supply chains

and the disruption of civil society. It's one thing to "be against oligarchy" but this book helps to give actual policy-wonk heft to the cause, helping me know what to argue for. Fascinating, important, and timely! (Jascha Narveson) 📖

Strout, Elizabeth. ***Tell Me Everything.*** Buddhists say life is suffering. Strout embraces that premise and shows us the beauty that permeates, endures, and, however briefly, transcends the suffering with love in its many manifestations. Start reading and you can't stop. (Marty Skoble) 📖🎧

Sullivan, Robert. ***Double Exposure: Resurveying the West with Timothy O'Sullivan, America's Most Mysterious War Photographer.*** "Resurveying the West," part of the subtitle, is an understatement. This book will break your heart as it shows how American history is truly a war story (against many peoples, against its own principles, and against the land). Beautifully written, meticulously researched, it grabs you and won't let go. (Marty Skoble) 📖🎧

Szpilman, Wladyslaw. ***The Pianist.*** The basis of the 2002 film, this memoir tells of Szpilman's life in Warsaw during World War II. The city was comprehensively razed in the last year of the war, a punitive measure for the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and Szpilman was one of only a few hundred people left hiding in the rubble in the war's last months. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Thorpe, Rufi. ***Margo's Got Money Troubles.*** Margo is a 20-year-old single mother trying to navigate life with a newborn, the fallout from an affair with her English professor (resulting in said newborn), and finding a decent-paying job without any reliable childcare. The things and people that end up "saving" Margot are unexpected: a burgeoning OnlyFans account that leaves Margo navigating the world of sex work for the first time; her former pro-wrestler father with an opioid addiction who becomes a (mostly) wonderful live-in grandfather; her LARPing, cosplay-enthusiast, reclusive roommate who turns into a real friend and support system to Margo. Her journey to making a new life for herself is both hilarious and heartbreaking. Almost every character in this novel could probably have a spin-off written about them. A delight. (Molly Sissors) 📖🎧

Thorpe, Rufi. ***Margo's Got Money Troubles.*** My favorite late-summer read last year and the book most recommended by me to library patrons this year seeking something fun but not vapid. Margo's community-college English professor teaches her about narrative voice. Then they have a fling, she gets pregnant, and he totally cuts her off when she decides to keep the baby. Desperate for an income stream with flexible hours, she lands on OnlyFans, where her writing skills serve her shockingly well. Still barely surviving, she is relieved/concerned when her loving but opioid-challenged ex-professional wrestler father comes to her rescue. Hug. (Denise Rinaldo) 📖🎧

Toíbín, Colm. ***Long Island.*** The best book I read last summer. If you read *Brooklyn*, or even if you didn't (but do), run and get a copy of *Long Island—y*ou will have trouble putting it down. Toíbín's pellucid prose is utterly absorbing, and the characters in this book feel knowable and real and inspire excruciating sympathy. A beauty. (Liz Fodaski) 📖

Toíbín, Colm. ***Long Island.*** My favorite read of last summer. It's a sequel to Brooklyn, but you don't need to have read the first one to follow this brilliant story of Eilis, an Irishwoman who leaves her American family and returns to her hometown. (Michael Donohue) 📖

Tolle, Eckhart. ***The Power of Now***. If you're looking for a book that offers deep insight into mindfulness and presence, this book has the potential to shift how you experience life. It's a gentle yet profound guide to breaking free from the mental noise of the past and future, and finding peace in the present moment. (Yejing Gu) 📖

Turchi, Peter. ***Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer.*** As an artist interested in maps, even though this is written with maybe writers in mind, I first thought this had something to do with maps. I was doing research on maps and liked the reviews and thought to read it. It was amazing, and full of awesome tips about the process of making—specifically, creativity and the writer/artist process. (Golnar Adili) 📖

Villavicencio, Karla Cornejo. ***Catalina.*** Villavicencio tells the story of an undocumented Harvard senior who is navigating her final year of college as debates rage over DACA—a policy that grants temporary protection from deportation and

work authorization to certain immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children. Romance, family conflict, unpaid internships, and ICE raids all feature in this funny and thought-provoking novel. (Ellen Friedrichs) 📖🎧

Warnick, Fiona. ***The Skunks.*** This is a warm and thoughtful novel which I enjoyed reading very much. In the story, the narrator, Isabel, having recently graduated from college, reflects on her new life in her old hometown. The author has a wonderful turns of phrase—at times whimsical and at other times quite insightful. And yes—there are skunks in the story! In playful and clever ways, the author incorporates the visiting skunks' lives into Isabel's own observations about the world around her. You'll have to read the book to see how the author does this! (By the way, this novel is by Saint Ann's very own faculty member, kindergarten teacher Fiona Warnick!) (Christine Dunnigan) 📖🎧

Wharton, Edith. ***Ghosts.*** Gilded Age ghouls, why not? This is an elegant and playful set of ghost stories told from varied upstairs/downstairs perspectives. I enjoyed working out where the plots were heading and being carried along effortlessly by a master storyteller. I guarantee you'll find yourself thinking about how to adapt your favorite story into a short film with your friends. If you like luxurious interiors and being a bit creeped out, give this one a try. (Julia Fields) 📖

Whitehead, Colson. ***Harlem Shuffle.*** This and its sequel, *Crook Manifesto*, tell the story of Ray Carney, a furniture dealer in mid-20th-century Harlem who occasionally gets drawn into the criminal world. The descriptions of 1950s/60s Harlem alone are worth the price of the book, but Ray Carney is a classic character whose voice you never want to stop reading. (Michael Donohue) 📖🎧

Wideman, John Edgar. ***You Made Me Love You: Selected Stories, 1981-2018.*** A master. (Liam Flaherty) 📖

Wilkerson, Charmaine. ***Good Dirt.*** A tragic childhood, a broken heirloom, and a search for identity—*Good Dirt* follows Ebby Freeman's journey across continents and centuries as she searches for meaning. Her discovery of a shattered family heirloom—a centuries-old stoneware jar—becomes a symbolic starting point for healing after the loss of her brother. At its core, the novel explores a fractured family and a broken legacy, shaped by violence, grief, and the enduring impact of racism. (Esther Zywica) 📖

Wilson, Kevin. ***The Family Fang.*** This is really a recommendation for all of Kevin Wilson's books. They even nod and connect to each other in fun little ways. This one is the story of a family of two performance artist parents and their two children who are often unwilling participants in their art. It's an odd but great story. (Elizabeth Sheridan-Rossi) 📖

Winn, Alice. ***In Memoriam.*** That WWI had more battlefield casualties than all the other wars in human history COMBINED is only a vague concept until you read this book. A beautifully composed blend of epistolary, narrative, and printed documents, this novel is also a glorious romance about challenging perceived/accepted gender "norms." (Marty Skoble) 📖

Zhao, Xiran Jay. ***Iron Widow***. This is a sci-fi exploration of war and sexism that draws inspiration from Chinese history and mythology. Wu Zetian is seeking revenge for her sister's death at the hands of an intensely patriarchal military system. I loved Zetian's anger and selfishness, and all the great action scenes! (Leda Fisher) 📖🎧

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