

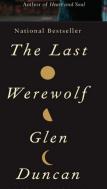


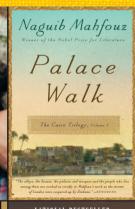
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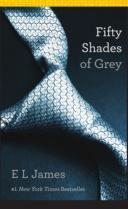
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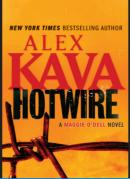


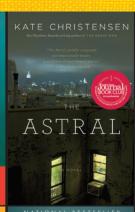




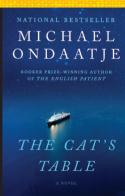




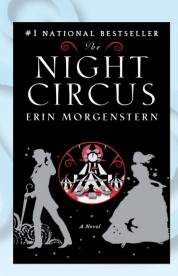












THE NIGHT CIRCUS Erin Morgenstern

The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not. But behind the scenes, a fierce duel between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, is under way. Unbeknownst to them both, this is a game in which only one can be left standing. Despite the high stakes, they soon tumble headfirst into love, leaving the lives of everyone hanging in the balance.

\$15.00 • 978-0-307-74443-2 • eBook 978-0-385-53464-2



Kelly Davidsor

The Night Circus arrives unannounced. Who knows where it will pop up next? The Night Circus was conceived during an exclusive midnight dinner attended only by a chosen few. Even if you have difficulty tracking down the mystical and elusive Night Circus, that shouldn't stop you from putting on a midnight dinner of your own! Bring the circus to you with these ideas:

Color Coordinate

In her book, Erin Morgenstern brings to life vivid images of fantastical places, scenery, and circus events. Set the scene by agreeing to all wear one color — especially red, white, or black. Head online and check out Diner en Blanc, a secret pop-up party phenomenon that's spreading ground the world, for ideas. Be sure to decide how formal you want your event to be, though, so no one feels under or overdressed!

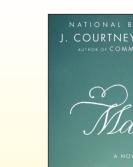
Finger Foods

Popcorn, candy apples, chocolate mice! Get creative with your food! Dark-chocolate strawberries with white-chocolate drizzles? Caramel corn? What are your favorite foods from the Big Top? Have fun re-creating them, and ask your friends to bring their own all-time top treats.

Delightful Decorations

Keep the colors to black, white, and red. Hit up a thrift shop or go through your back shelves to find jars of all shapes and sizes — from mason jars to perfume bottles, they'll all help set the scene! Fill them up or leave them empty. Add scarves and streamers to evoke the feeling of a circus tent. White Christmas lights will also add a sparkle to your party!

Discover more ideas for a midnight dinner, connect with the author, and more on ErinMorgenstern.com



MAINE

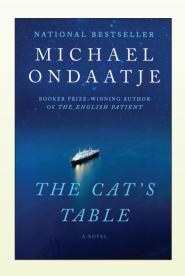
J. Courtney Sullivan

From the author of Commencement

For the Kellehers, Maine is a place where children run in packs, showers are taken outdoors, and old Irish songs are sung around a piano. As three generations of women arrive at the family's beach house, each brings her own hopes and fears. Maggie is thirty-two and pregnant, waiting for the perfect moment to tell her imperfect boyfriend the news; Ann Marie, a Kelleher by marriage, is channeling her domestic frustration into a dollhouse obsession and an ill-advised crush; Kathleen, the black sheep, never wanted to set foot in the cottage again; and Alice, the matriarch at the center of it all, would trade every floorboard for a chance to undo the events of one night long ago.



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THE CAT'S TABLE Michael Ondaatje

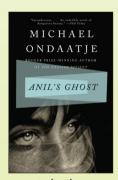
A captivating, transporting story from the author of *The English Patient* that begins when an eleven-year-old boy boards a ship in Colombo bound for England. At mealtimes he is seated at the "cat's table"—as far from the captain's table as can be—with a ragtag group of "insignificant" adults and two other boys, Cassius and Ramadhin. As the ship makes its way toward its destination, the boys tumble from one adventure to another, moving the narrative between the decks and holds of the ship and the boy's adult years. *The Cat's Table* tells a spellbinding story about the magical, often forbidden, discoveries of childhood and a lifelong journey that begins unexpectedly with a spectacular sea voyage.

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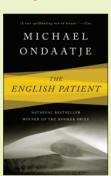
"'The 'Cat's Table' refers to the table in the dining room that's the farthest from the captain's table and one of the least privileged places for anyone

to sit on board a ship. For a boy of eleven years old being at this table makes him almost completely invisible. He can go to places that others can't go to and these three boys who get together are kind of having great adventures and, you know, slipping into the butcher's room and into the jails, and into all kinds of strange places." —*Michael Ondaatje*

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© Linda Spalding

Maine Lobster Salad

Maine, by J. Courtney Sullivan, is a book that perfectly evokes the joy of summer's long, lazy days by the beach. In our search for the perfect lobster recipe to complement Maine, we turned to the venerable Julia Child. Her book Julia's Kitchen Wisdom is an indispensible compendium of advice for the home cook. This Lobster Salad recipe is adapted from her Chicken Salad Master Recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups cooked lobster, cut up into good-sized pieces Salt and freshly ground white pepper

1 to 2 Tbs olive oil

2 to 3 Tbs fresh lemon juice

1 cup diced tender celery stalks

1/2 cup diced red onion

1 cup chopped walnuts

1/2 cup chopped parsley

1 tsp finely cut fresh tarragon leaves

(or 1/4 tsp dried tarragon)

2/3 cup or so mayonnaise

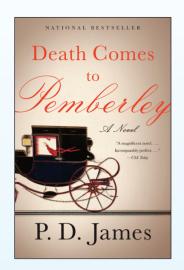
Fresh salad greens, washed and dried

METHOD:

Toss the lobster with salt, pepper, olive oil, lemon juice, celery, onion, and walnuts. Cover and refrigerate at least 20 minutes or overnight. Drain out any accumulated liquid; toss with the parsley and tarragon. Taste analytically and correct seasonings. Fold in just enough mayonnaise to enrobe ingredients. Shred the greens, arrange on a platter, and mound the salad on top.

Serves 6-8

A MURDER AND A CLASSIC



DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY P. D. James

It is 1803, six years since Elizabeth and Darcy embarked on their life together at Pemberley, Darcy's magnificent estate. Their peaceful, orderly world seems almost unassailable. They have two fine sons, and Elizabeth's sister Jane and her husband, Bingley,

live nearby; her father visits often; there is optimistic talk about the prospects of marriage for Darcy's sister Georgiana. And preparations are under way for their much-anticipated annual autumn ball.

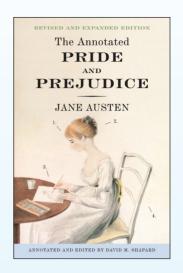
Then, on the eve of the ball, the patrician idyll is shattered. A coach careens up the drive carrying Lydia, Elizabeth's disgraced sister. She stumbles out of the carriage, hysterical, shrieking that her husband, Wickham, has been murdered. With shocking suddenness, Pemberley is plunged into a frightening mystery.

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A few discussion questions from the reading group guide of *Death Comes to Pemberley*:

- James has provided many links in the introductory chapters that provide both backstory and continuity with <u>Pride and Prejudice</u>. How successful is the bridge that she creates?
- James has some fun including references to other Jane Austen novels.

 Did you identify the references to *Emma* and *Persuasion?*



THE ANNOTATED PRIDE AND PREJUDICE Jane Austen

This first-ever fully annotated edition of one of the most beloved novels in the world is a sheer delight for Jane Austen fans. Here is the complete text of *Pride and Prejudice* with more

than 2,300 annotations on facing pages.

Of course, one can enjoy the novel without knowing the precise definition of a gentleman, or what it signifies that a character drives a coach rather than a hack chaise, but readers of *The Annotated Pride and Prejudice* will find that these kinds of details add immeasurably to understanding and enjoying the intricate psychological interplay of Austen's immortal characters.

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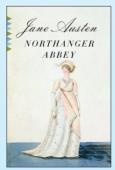
The debate is ongoing about which Jane Austen novel is the best. Read them all and decide for yourself!



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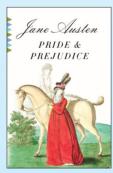
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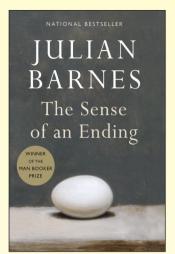
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PRIZES, AWARDS, AND ACCOLADES

Man Booker Prize Winner



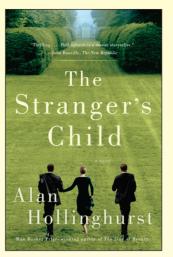
THE SENSE OF AN ENDING Julian Barnes

This intense novel follows Tony Webster, a middle-aged man, as he contends with a past he never thought much about—until his closest childhood friends return with a vengeance: one of them from the grave, another maddeningly present. Tony thought he left this all behind as he built a life for himself, but when he is

presented with a mysterious legacy, he is forced to revise his estimation of his own nature and place in the world.

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National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist



THE STRANGER'S CHILD Alan Hollinghurst

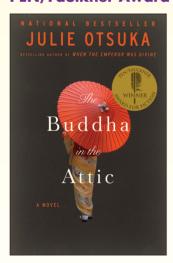
and Man Booker Prize Longlist Nominee

In the summer of 1913, George Sawle brings his Cambridge schoolmate—a handsome, aris-

tocratic young poet named Cecil Valance—to his family's home outside London. George is enthralled by Cecil, and soon his sister, Daphne, is equally besotted by him. That weekend, Cecil writes a poem that, after he is killed in the Great War and his reputation burnished, will become a touchstone for a generation, a work recited by every schoolchild in England. Over time, a tragic love story is spun, even as other secrets lie buried—until, decades later, an ambitious biographer threatens to unearth them.

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PEN/Faulkner Award Winner



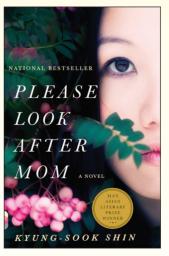
THE BUDDHA IN THE ATTIC Julie Otsuka

and National
Book Award Finalist

From the author of *When the Emperor Was Divine* comes the story of a group of young women brought from Japan to San Francisco as "picture brides" nearly a century ago. In unforgettable prose, *The Buddha in the Attic* traces the extraordinary lives of

these women, from before they boarded the boat, to their arrival in San Francisco and their tremulous first nights as new wives and beyond. Once again, Julie Otsuka has written a spellbinding novel about identity and loyalty, and what it means to be an American in uncertain times.

Man Asian Literary Prize Winner



AFTER MOM Kyung-sook Shin

PLEASE LOOK

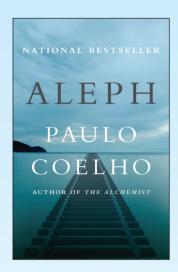
How well do we know our mothers? When the family matriarch disappears in the crowds of the Seoul subway, that is the question her family asks. As they begin the desperate search for her, secrets, regrets, and private sorrows begin to

emerge in the voices of her daughter, son, husband, and finally, the mother's own. *Please Look After Mom* is a universal story that brings to life the mysteries of motherhood and what it means to be a family.

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PAULO COELHO ON THE INSPIRATION IN ALL OF US:

"...Inspiration is something everybody has, not only writers. Everybody has what you, or she or he, do with love. It is connected to this energy that we don't understand...we can explain, explain, explain...but it is connected to the energy of love. If you enjoy what you are doing, you are going to be inspired to share with other people."

Connect with Paulo on PauloCoelho.com. For more of his advice on writing, love, and life, visit www.youtube.com/user/paulocoelhoTV



David Brabyn

Joan Didion From one of our mos

From one of our most powerful writers, a work of stunning frankness about losing a daughter

Richly textured with memories from her own childhood and married life with her husband, John Gregory Dunne, and daughter, Quintana Roo, this new book by Joan Didion is an intensely personal and moving account of her thoughts, fears, and doubts regarding having children, illness and growing old.

As she reflects on her daughter's life and on her role as a parent, Didion grapples with the candid questions that all parents face, and contemplates her age, something she finds hard to acknowledge, much less accept. *Blue Nights*, like *The Year of Magical Thinking* before it, is an iconic book of incisive and electric honesty, haunting and profound.

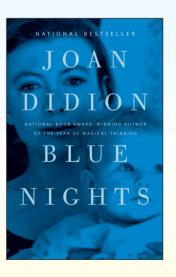
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Brigitte Lacombe

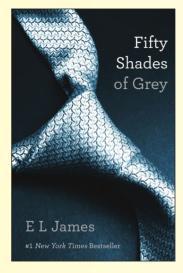
"Blue Nights", the long, light evening hours that signal the summer solstice, "the opposite of the dying of the brightness, but also its warning."

(Joan Didion)

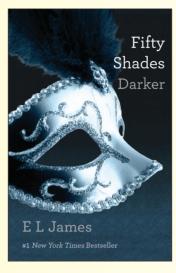


LOVE STORIES —THRILLING, SENSUAL, UNEXPECTED

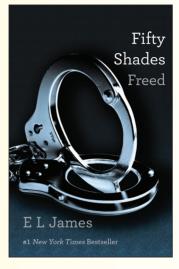
A LOVE STORY THAT HAS CAPTIVATED MILLIONS OF READERS



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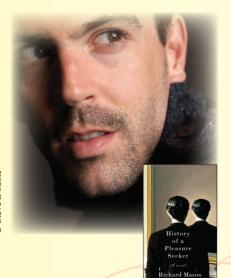
FIFTY SHADES OF GREY • FIFTY SHADES DARKER • FIFTY SHADES FREED E L James

E L James's New York Times #1 bestselling trilogy has been hailed by Entertainment Weekly as being "in a class by itself." Beginning with the GoodReads Choice Award Romance Finalist Fifty Shades of Grey, the Fifty Shades Trilogy is a modern romance, the love story of Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey. It will obsess you, possess you, and stay with you forever.

Intended for mature audiences only.



Michael Lionstan



HISTORY OF A PLEASURE SEEKER Richard Mason

An opulent, romantic drama set at the height of Europe's Belle Époque. Piet Barol is a young man with an instinctive appreciation of sensual pleasure. He acquires the position of tutor to the troubled son of Europe's leading hotelier by charming the father and seducing the mother, Jacobina. As his liaisons with Jacobina become more frequent and sexually daring, he is welcomed and embraced by this glittering privileged world and quietly, steadily learns its secrets. But he soon discovers that even his seductive charm might not be enough.

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Steve Double

ESCAPE TO WONDERFUL PLACES..

"The alleys, the houses, the palaces and mosques and the people who live among them are evoked as vividly as the streets of London were conjured up by Dickens."

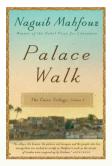
—Newsweek

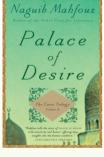
PALACE WALK • PALACE OF DESIRE • SUGAR STREET

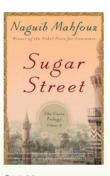
The three novels of The Cairo Trilogy

Naguib Mahfouz

Winner of the Nobel Prize







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Egypt—its families, customs, and history—is revealed in Naguib Mahfouz's masterwork,

his magnificent epic trilogy of one Muslim family in colonial Egypt: The Cairo Trilogy, now with breathtakingly beautiful new covers.

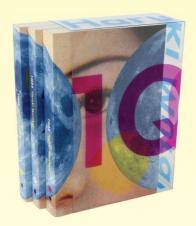
The Cairo Trilogy traces three generations of the family of tyrannical patriarch al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, who rules his household with a strict hand while living a secret life of self-indulgence.

Palace Walk introduces us to his gentle, oppressed wife, his cloistered daughters, and his three sons. Al-Sayyid Ahmad's rebellious children struggle to move beyond his domination in Palace of Desire, as the world around them opens to the currents of modernity and political and domestic. Sugar Street brings Mahfouz's vivid story to a dramatic climax as the aging patriarch sees one grandson become a Communist, one a Muslim fundamentalist, and one the lover of a powerful politician.

Naguib Mahfouz was born in 1911 in the crowded Cairo district of Gamaliya. He wrote nearly forty novel-length works, hundreds of short stories, and numerous cinema plots and scenarios. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988. He died on August 30, 2006.

A question for discussion from the reading group guide for *Palace Walk*:

• The women spend much of their time looking out at the street through the latticed screen on the house's balcony. Do they feel imprisoned or envious of the men in the family? How do the women react to, and deal with, their highly traditional sexual and domestic roles?



1Q84 Haruki Murakami

The complete novel in a deluxe three-volume paperback boxed set

A young woman named Aomame follows a taxi driver's enigmatic suggestion and begins to notice puzzling discrepancies in the world around her. She has entered, she realizes, a parallel existence, which she calls 1Q84—"Q is for 'question mark.' A world that bears a question." Meanwhile, an aspiring writer named Tengo takes on a suspect ghostwriting project. He becomes so wrapped up with the work and its unusual author that soon his previously placid life begins to come unraveled. As Aomame's and Tengo's narratives converge over the course of this single year, we learn of the profound and tangled connections that bind them ever closer in Murakami's most ambitious undertaking yet.

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Explore the Japanese locales found in 1Q84:

Set in **Tokyo** in 1984, the world of 1Q84 is complex: although there are familiar landmarks in the book, the line between fantasy and reality is thin.

The **Metropolitan Expressway**—Route 3, specifically—plays a significant role in 1Q84. The Expressway is a series of elevated toll roads in Tokyo.

Shinjuku is one of Tokyo's busiest neighborhoods, a business district and entertainment center that is loaded with shops, restaurants, large department stores, and bars.

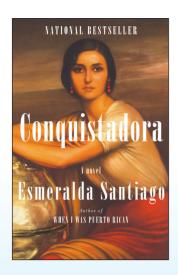
Roppongi: Despite its reputation as an after-hours haven, Roppongi has some notable daytime landmarks, including Tokyo's National Art Center, a modern and contemporary art museum that opened in 2007, and Tokyo Midtown, a "city within a city" that includes the largest building in Tokyo.

Koenji, a small residential neighborhood whose hip residents are documented on local fashion blogs. It is also a hub for Japan's live music scene.

Chikura is a town that no longer exists. It was a seaside town in the south of Chiba that was absorbed into the city of Minamib in 2006!

For more, visit the Armchair Adventurer at: www.ReadingGroupCenter.com

AS THE PAGES TURN.



CONQUISTADORA Esmeralda Santiago

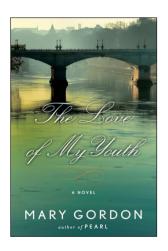
As a young girl growing up in Spain, Ana Larragoity Cubillas is powerfully drawn to Puerto Rico by the diaries of an ancestor who traveled there with Ponce de León. And in handsome twin brothers Ramón and Inocente—both in love with Ana—she finds a way to get there. Marrying Ramón at the young age of eighteen, she travels across the ocean to Hacienda los Gemelos, a remote sugar plantation the brothers have inherited on the island. But soon the Civil War erupts in the United States, and Ana finds her livelihood, and perhaps even her life, threatened by the very people on whose backs her wealth has been built: the hacienda's slaves, whose richly drawn stories unfold alongside her own in this epic novel of love, discovery, and adventure.

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A view of historic Puerto Rico

When the heroine of *Conquistadora*, Ana Larragoity Cubillas, gets her first view of Puerto Rico, one of the things she sees is San Felipe del Morro, the sixteenth-century citadel that protects the city of San Juan. Located on the northwestern point of San Juan, San Felipe del Morro was built by the Spanish in order to guard the port from other conquering nations. If you're lucky enough to be visiting on the third Sunday of the month, you can take in a special cannon-firing demonstration at El Morro. For a unique glimpse of history, walk the Paseo del Morro trail.

For more, visit the Armchair Adventurer at ReadingGroupCenter.com!



THE LOVE OF MY YOUTH

Mary Gordon

Miranda and Adam, high school sweethearts now in their late fifties, bump into each other in Rome, a city where they once spent a summer deeply in love. At an awkward reunion, Adam suggests that they meet for daily walks and get to know each other again. Both have their own sense of who betrayed whom and long-held interpretations of the events that caused them not to marry. But gradually, as they take in the pleasures of the city and the drama of its streets, they discover not only what matters to them now but also what happened to them long ago.

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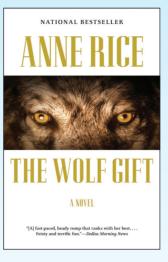
Visiting Rome: Top sights to see

- 1. **Coliseum** You can't go to Rome without stopping by the iconic Coliseum, the largest amphitheater ever built in the Roman Empire, constructed in 80 AD. An unofficial symbol of Rome and a major tourist attraction, it's impossible to miss.
- 2. **St. Peter's Basilica** The largest Christian church in the world, St. Peter's is located in Vatican City. Filled with priceless artistic and historical treasures, touring through St. Peter's should be high on your list.
- 3. Trevi Fountain Many legends surround Trevi Fountain—some tell of true love, others tell of a return to Rome. Whichever version you want to believe, don't miss tossing a coin into the renowned fountain of baroque design, featured in paintings, books, and movies worldwide.
- 4. **The Pantheon** One of the best preserved of Rome's ancient monuments, the pagan temple has stood the test of time. Used continuously throughout history, it remains open and available for touring. Go wonder at the massive and iconic dome, or pay a visit to the grave of the great painter Raphael.
- 5. **Spanish Steps** The 136 Spanish Steps leading up to the sixteenth-century Trinita dei Monti Church are a picturesque and beautiful landmark of Rome, and not to be missed. On a busy summer day, sit and people-watch or climb to the top and take in some of the most breathtaking views the city has to offer.

HANDSOME, PASSIONATE, AND WITH A BITE YOU

Even a man who is pure in heart
And says his prayers by night
May become a wolf
When the wolfbane blooms
And the autumn moon is bright.

— The famous rhyme from the film The Wolf Man (1941)



THE WOLF GIFT Anne Rice

A young reporter has been sent to write about a magnificent family home located in an isolated area in a towering redwood forest. The owner is a beautiful woman who wants to urgently sell everything, including rare artifacts left behind by her eccentric uncle who disappeared. But the night is shattered by horrific, unimaginable violence, the

young man inexplicably attacked—bitten—by a beast he cannot see in the darkness. This violent episode sets in motion a terrifying yet seductive transformation, as the young man, caught between ecstasy and horror, between embracing who he is evolving into and fearing what he will become, soon experiences the thrill and burden of the wolf gift.

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HOTWIRE Alex Kava

Maggie O'Dell investigates when two teenagers are electrocuted during their drugfueled party. Meanwhile, Colonel Benjamin Platt is at the scene of a deadly outbreak at a Virginia elementary school. When the two cases collide, Maggie and Platt uncover a threatening conspiracy that was meant to stay hidden forever.

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THE TROUBLED MAN Henning Mankell

A retired navy officer has vanished in a forest near Stockholm, and Kurt Wallander is soon pursuing his own brand of detective work on someone else's case. He finds a complex situation that may have ties back to Cold War espionage. But having turned sixty, he's become convinced that his memory is failing. As he pursues this baffling case, he must come to grips not only with the facts at hand, but also with his own troubling situation.

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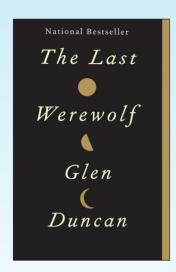


DARKNESS, MY OLD FRIEND Lisa Unger

Novelist Bethany Graves is recovering from a bitter divorce when she decides to move back to her small hometown, The Hollows. But when Graves and her daughter become tangled up in a twenty-five-year-old investigation, more townspeople get involved, including a local psychic whose dire visions warn that pursuing this case may just be the last thing they do.

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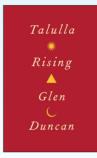


THE LAST WEREWOLF Glen Duncan

Jake Marlowe is the last werewolf. Now just over two hundred years old, Jake has an insatiable appreciation for good scotch, books, and the pleasures of the flesh, which include a voracious libido and a hunger for meat that drives him crazy each full moon. There are two dangerous groups that are relentlessly hunting him—one new, one ancient—and Jake's resolve is wearing out. He has slipped into a deep existential crisis, considering taking his own life and ending a legend that has lived for thousands of years. But the two groups won't let that happen as they have reasons of their own for wanting Jake very much alive.

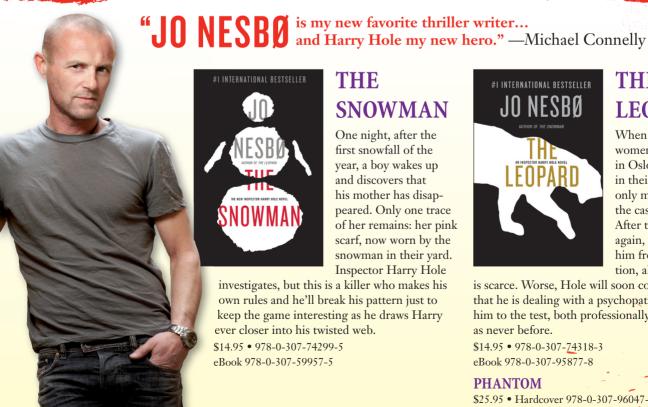
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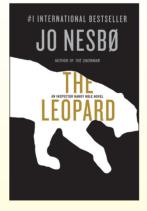
THE **SNOWMAN**

One night, after the first snowfall of the year, a boy wakes up and discovers that his mother has disappeared. Only one trace of her remains: her pink scarf, now worn by the snowman in their yard. Inspector Harry Hole

investigates, but this is a killer who makes his own rules and he'll break his pattern just to keep the game interesting as he draws Harry ever closer into his twisted web.

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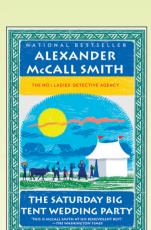
GIRLS IN WHITE DRESSES Jennifer Close

Isabella, Mary, and Lauren feel like everyone they know is getting married. Sunday after Sunday they attend bridal shower after bridal shower. They wear pastel dresses and drink champagne by the case, but amid the celebration the realities of everyday life creep in: Isabella is working at a dead-end job, Mary is dating a nice guy with an awful mother, and Lauren is waitressing at a Midtown bar and attracted to a sleazybartender.

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"In the summer of 2008, I was a bridesmaid in three different weddings.... Looking back, it's no surprise that Girls in White Dresses started to come together during that summer. In almost every chapter of the book there is some mention of a wedding. Still, it always surprises me when people describe Girls in White Dresses as a book about weddings. I think of it as a book about being in your twenties. And in your twenties (whether you're getting married or not) weddings are a part of your life; weddings are just something that happen to you.... For me, the most important relationships in the book are the ones between the girls. While their lives are going in these different directions, their friendships have to adjust. Some of them are closer by the end and others have sort of faded away.... To this day, nothing makes me happier than when a reader says, 'I was reading a book about my friends.'" —Jennifer Close





THE SATURDAY BIG TENT WEDDING PARTY Alexander McCall Smith

In this latest installment in the charming, bestselling series, as Mma Ramotswe investigates the deaths of cows at a cattle post outside Gaborone, she finds herself also pursuing other mysteries

closer to home. One of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's apprentices appears to have gotten a girl pregnant, and has run away to avoid marrying her. Meanwhile, Precious sees her beloved old van—sent to the junkyard long ago—trundling around the city again. Has the van been miraculously revived, or is she hallucinating? Further complicating matters are Grace Makutsi's growing fears that she'll never be able to marry her fiancé, Phuti Radiphuti, if she can't find the perfect pair of wedding shoes. As ever, Precious will draw on her trademark grace and wisdom as she helps unravel all these tangled threads.

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Wedding Ps and Qs from Mma Ramotswe (and Alexander McCall Smith)

Mma Ramotswe's Top 5 Things to Do at a Wedding:

- 1. Compliment the bride's mother on her hat.
- Show an interest in the stories told by relatives, even if you have heard them five times before.
- 3. Stay at the wedding until the bride and groom have left.
- 4. Leave enough wine in one's glass to be able to toast the bride and groom.
- 5. Laugh at all the jokes made in the speeches.

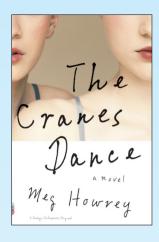
Mma Ramotswe's Top 5 Things NOT to Do at a Wedding:

- 1. Wear the same dress as the bride's mother.
- 2. Wear a larger hat than the bride's mother.
- 3. Tell stories about the groom's bachelor days.
- 4. Try out new dance steps.
- 5. Make reference to any previous weddings of the bride or groom.

Mma Ramotswe's Top 5 Small Pleasures in Life:

- 1. Red bush tea drunk in the garden while admiring plants early in the morning.
- 2. Discussing the past with old friends after not having seen them for ten years or more.
- Serving one's husband and family the dish that you know is their very favorite.
- 4. Buying a new pair of shoes, opening the box at home and admiring the shoes before putting them on.
- 5. Waking in the morning and hearing one's husband making tea in the kitchen and knowing that the tea is for you.

FAMILY & FRIENDS



THE CRANES DANCE Meg Howrey

I threw my neck out in the middle of Swan Lake last night.

So begins the tale of Kate Crane, a soloist in a celebrated New York City ballet company who is struggling to keep her place in a very demanding world. At every turn she is haunted by her close relationship with her younger sister, Gwen, a fellow company dancer whose career quickly surpassed Kate's, but who has recently suffered a breakdown and returned home.

Alone for the first time in her life, Kate is anxious and full of guilt about the role she may have played in her sister's collapse. Funny, dark, intimate, and unflinchingly honest, *The Cranes Dance* is a book that pulls back the curtains to reveal the private lives of dancers and explores the complicated bond between sisters.

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From Meg Howrey: My list of 5 favorite backstage novels

I love being backstage. I spent a good portion of my life on the performer's side of the curtain and it never really lost its magic for me.

- Ballet Shoes by Noel Streatfeild: The first of the classic "Shoes" series. Pauline, Petrova, and Posy Fossil, three orphaned girls in London, are sent to the Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training in the hopes that they might earn their living as child performers.
- 2. Light Thickens by Ngaio Marsh: New Zealand-born Ngaio Marsh wrote thirty-two detective novels and quite a few take place at a theater. My favorite is Light Thickens. Marsh was a director and producer, and the descriptions here are so vivid and layered [of the West End theater where the murder takes place].
- 3. Theatre by W. Somerset Maugham: In my late teens I shared an apartment in New York with a girl who was majoring in English at Fordham. She turned me on to Maugham. Maugham is famous for having had four plays running simultaneously in London, and actors appear frequently in his fiction.

- 4. Tempest-Tost by Robertson Davies: Robertson Davies' first novel about a group of amateurs engaged in putting on a play is both hilarious and touching. Though Davies' satirical touch spares no one, it is never dismissive.
- 5. Artistic Differences by Charlie Hauck: Since I live in Los Angeles now it makes sense to include a backstage Hollywood novel. This one is about a television writer engaged in getting a new half-hour comedy off the ground, written by a television writer of many successful situation comedies. You can basically open it up to anypage and start laughing.

Go to ReadingGroupCenter.com for the complete reviews.



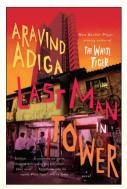


FRIENDS LIKE US Lauren Fox

For Willa Jacobs, looking at her best friend Jane is like looking in a mirror on a really good day. Strangers assume they are sisters, and they share everything: an apartment, clothing, and groceries, and the challenge of making rent on part-time jobs. Together they are a fortress of private jokes and shared opinions, with a friendship so close there's hardly room for anyone else. But when Ben, Willa's oldest friend, reappears and falls in love with Jane, Willa wonders: Can she let her two best friends find happiness with each other if it means they leave her behind?

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MORE WONDERFUL READS



LAST MAN IN TOWER Aravind Adiga

From the Man Booker Prizewinning author of *The White Tiger*

Larger-than-life Dharmen Shah is a dangerous man to refuse. But he meets his match in retired schoolteacher Masterji. Shah offers a generous buyout to Masterji and his neighbors in a once respectable, now crumbling apartment building on which site Shah's high-rise would be built.

But Masterji refuses to abandon the building he has long called home. As the demolition deadline looms, desires mount; neighbors become enemies, and acquaintances turn into conspirators who risk losing their humanity to score their payday.

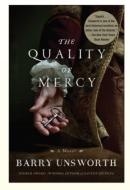
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MINDING FRANKIE Maeve Binchy

When Noel learns that his terminally ill former flame is pregnant with his child, he reluctantly agrees to take care of the baby girl. Along with the help of a caring network of friends, family, and neighbors, Noel adapts to his new responsibilities. But when a nosy social worker decides to get involved, she threatens to ruin everything. It will be up to Noel to persuade her that everyone in the neighborhood has something to offer when it comes to minding Frankie.

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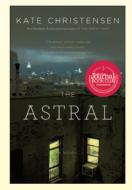
THE QUALITY OF MERCY Barry Unsworth

From the Man Booker Prizewinning author of Sacred Hunger

It is the spring of 1767, and the vengeful Erasmus Kemp has had the mutinous sailors of his father's ship brought back to London to stand trial on piracy charges. Much to Kemp's dismay, the Irish fiddler Sullivan has escaped, and retrieving him proves too much in the midst of overseeing a new

business venture in Thorpe. But the two men's paths are about to collide once again, for Sullivan is also on his way to Thorpe to fulfill the dying wish of his shipmate.

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THE ASTRAL Kate Christensen

In the gentrifying neighborhood of Greenpoint, Brooklyn lives poet Harry Quirk, his wife, Luz, and their two children. But when Luz finds poems that ignite her long-simmering suspicions of infidelity, Harry is kicked out, leaving him to reckon with the consequence of his literary, marital, and parental failures.

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MORE WONDERFUL READS



HOME Toni Morrison

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, and *A Mercy*

Home is the story of a brother and sister who are profoundly lost, divided from each other and from themselves. When Frank Money joined the army to escape his too-

small world, he left behind his cherished and fragile little sister, Cee; after the war, his shattered life has no purpose until he hears that Cee is in danger. As he journeys back to his native Georgia in search of Cee, it becomes clear that their troubles began well before their wartime separation. Together, they return to the source, to their rural hometown of Lotus, where buried secrets are unearthed and hard truths faced. Here is where Frank learns at last what it means to be a man, what it takes to heal, and—above all—what it means to come home.

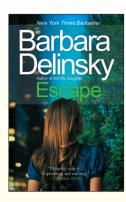


THE NEWLYWEDS Nell Freudenberger

A hundred years ago, Amina Mazid would have been called a mail-order bride. But this is an arranged marriage for the twenty-first century: Amina is wooed by—and woos—George Stillman online. For Amina, George, who lives in Rochester, New York, offers a chance for a new life and a different kind of happiness than she might find back

home in Bangladesh. For George, Amina is a woman who doesn't play games. But each of them is hiding something: someone from the past they thought they could leave behind. It is only when they put an ocean between them—and Amina returns to Bangladesh—that she and George find out if their secrets will tear them apart, or if they can overcome them and build a future together.

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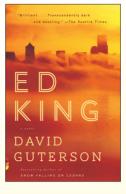


ESCAPE Barbara Delinsky

Emily Aulenbach is an idealistic young lawyer who once dreamed of representing victims of corporate abuse. Instead, she now spends her days in a cubicle arguing victims of corporate greed out of their rightful claims. One day, she snaps, heading north to Bell Valley, New Hampshire, where she once spent a life-altering college summer. There, she will set out to forge

new relationships with lovers, long-lost friends, and the person she once wanted to become.

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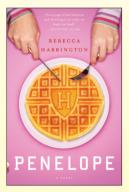


ED KING David Guterson

In Seattle of 1962, Walter Cousins sleeps with Diane Burroughs, the sexy, not-quite-legal British au pair who's taking care of his children for the summer. When Diane gets pregnant and leaves their baby on a doorstep, it sets in motion a tragedy of epic proportions. Their orphaned child grows up to become a billionaire Internet tycoon and an international celebrity—the "King of Search"—who unknowingly, but inexorably,

hurtles through life toward a fate he may have no power to shape.

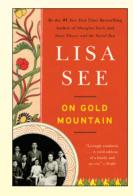
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PENELOPE Rebecca Harrington

When Penelope O'Shaunessy steps into Harvard Yard for the first time she has lots of advice from her mother. She is the kind of girl who passes through much of her life with coffee spilled on her white shirt, who can't quite tell when people are joking, and who, inevitably, always says the wrong thing. But no amount of coaching will prepare Penelope for the people she meets at school.

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ON GOLD MOUNTAIN Lisa See

From the author of Snow Flower and the Secret Fan

Lisa See grew up playing in her family's antiques store in Los Angeles's Chinatown, listening to stories of missionaries and prostitutes, movie stars and Chinese baseball teams. With these stories and her own years of research, Lisa See chronicles the one-hundred-year-odyssey of her Chinese-

American family, a history that encompasses racism, romance, secret marriages, and much more, as two distinctly different cultures meet in a new world.

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Tess, an aspiring seamstress, thinks she's had an incredibly lucky break when she is hired by famous designer Lady Lucile Duff Gordon to be a personal maid on the *Titanic*'s maiden voyage. Once onboard, Tess catches the eye of two men,

one a roughly hewn but kind sailor and the other an enigmatic Chicago millionaire. But then disaster strikes, and amidst the chaos and desperate urging of two very different suitors, Tess is one of the last people allowed on a lifeboat. Set against a historical tragedy and told from a completely fresh angle, *The Dressmaker* is an atmospheric delight filled with all the period's glitz and glamour; all the raw feelings of a national tragedy and all the contradictory emotions of young love.

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