

Daniel Casse

Shadows on the Hudson

Isaac Bashevis Singer

I began listening to this novel more than two years ago, first sporadically, and then, this past summer, addictively. Singer, who won the Nobel prize for literature, was mostly known for his darkly comic short stories about Eastern Europe mystical life. *Shadows*, by contrast, is a sprawling novel, written in 1957 but not translated into English until forty years after it was written. What a belated and rewarding discovery! The story of Jewish refugees relocated to New York City after World War II takes on the greatest themes of the last century: dislocation, totalitarianism, immigration, the existence of God, assimilation, marriage, divorce, adultery, wealth, debt, and... America. Listening on Audible with its three master narrators, I kept rewinding to re-experience some of the epic monologues. A neglected masterpiece, on par with the greatest novels of Tolstoy or Dostoevsky.

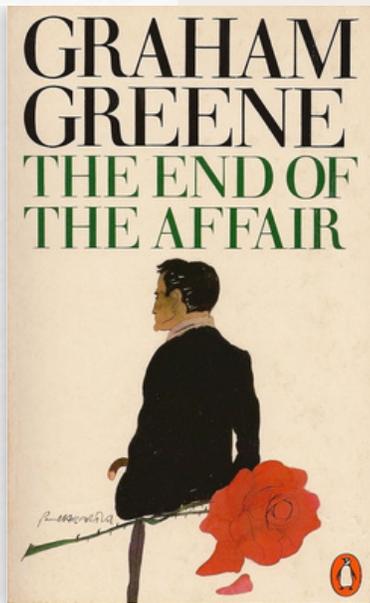
Olivia Clift

Sweet Tooth

Sarah Fennel

“Sweet Tooth” is great because it offers creative, approachable dessert recipes that anyone can enjoy, whether you’re an experienced baker or just getting started. It’s a fun, beautifully crafted cookbook that brings a little extra sweetness and inspiration to the holidays.





Mary Davis

The End of the Affair

Graham Greene

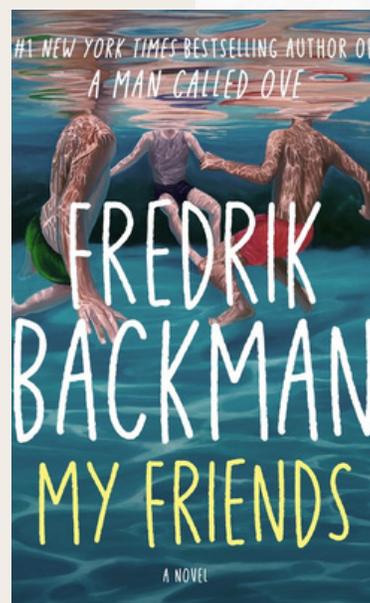
An exploration of love, faith, and human motivation, *The End of the Affair* follows Maurice Bendrix, a writer consumed by jealousy after his relationship with Sarah Miles abruptly ends during wartime London. Greene shapes the novel as both confession and investigation, as Bendrix's search for answers draws him into uncomfortable situations. Greene lingers on his characters' shifting emotions, tracing Bendrix's painful, reluctant path toward understanding—revealing how recognizing the truth about others requires a grace we're not naturally inclined to extend.

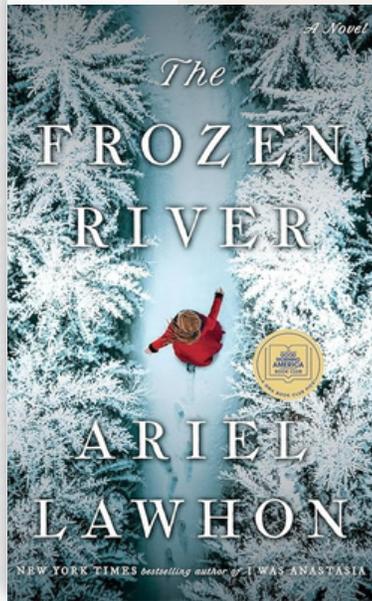
Alexis Diaz

My Friends

Fredrik Backman

A funny, beautiful novel about the power of childhood friendships, art, and wonder.





Kim Durante

The Frozen River

Ariel Lawhon

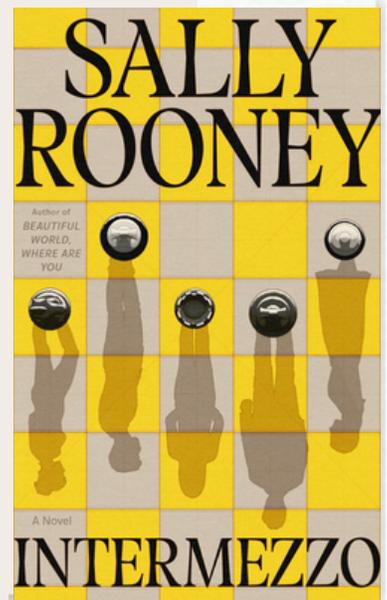
I chose *The Frozen River* after hearing my colleague Susannah recommend it last year, and it quickly became one of the most memorable books I've read recently. Ariel Lawhon's portrayal of Martha Ballard is exceptionally well done – grounded, complex, and quietly powerful. The novel captures the weight of her work and the constraints of her time with striking clarity. Martha's perspective was clear-eyed, grounded, and remarkably ahead of her time. I chose this book because it's not only a compelling read, but also one that offers a thoughtful and refreshing look at a woman whose impact is only now getting the attention it deserves.

Ellyson Glance

Intermezzo

Sally Rooney

A quietly emotional (but still charming -- I promise) look at the complexity that makes our relationships with family, loved ones, and ourselves both difficult and beautiful. This book also almost convinced me to try and get back into chess after a nearly 20-year hiatus -- almost.



Talking to Strangers



Malcolm Gladwell

#1 NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *OUTLIERS* and host of the podcast *REVISIONIST HISTORY*

Sabrina Hagler

Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know

Malcolm Gladwell

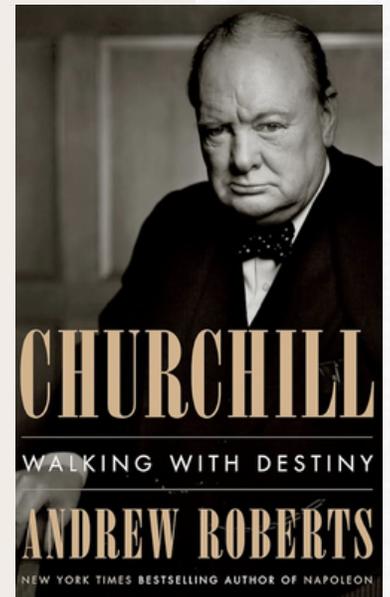
How do seasoned CIA officers, Wall Street regulators, and judges – the first lines of defense in our national security, global finance, and criminal justice systems – miss deception that seems obvious in hindsight? Malcolm Gladwell’s argument is that they’re not careless or incapable, but that they are doing exactly what we are wired to do; carry around the reasonable assumption that a stranger’s external emotions closely mirror their internal intentions. We think misunderstandings happen because we aren’t paying enough attention or because we lack the right instincts, but Gladwell argues that the real problem sits deeper in the faulty assumptions we bring into every unfamiliar interaction. Gladwell himself jokes that his book delivers all the pain of a self-help book without any of the joy. Talking to Strangers doesn’t tell readers how to solve human nature, but you leave with a clearer understanding of why so many tragedies begin with two people trying and failing to understand each other.

Mike Hodin

Churchill: Walking with Destiny

Andrew Brooks

A fascinating, definitive biography about one of the most courageous leaders from the 20th century.



SYLVIA PLATH



Mark Hoffmann

The Bell Jar

Sylvia Plath

You were probably assigned this book in high school. Like me, you probably didn't read it. That's a mistake. Plath's masterpiece is like ginger candy: at first, sweet and pleasing, then it bites. An exemplar of narrative evolution.

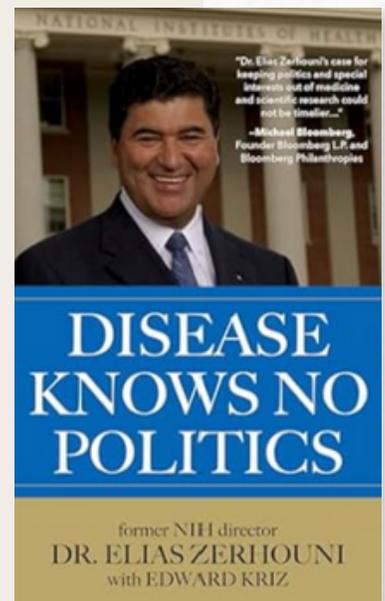
Drew Holzapfel

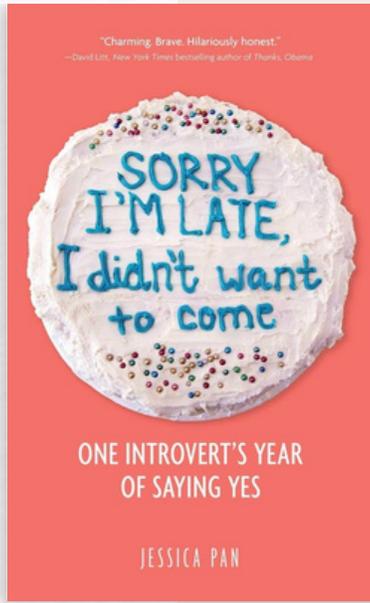
Disease Knows No Politics

Dr. Elias Zerhouni

Disease Knows No Politics is one of my favorite books of the year because it blends personal narrative with a powerful message about how science and public health must transcend partisanship — a theme that aligns closely with the life science strategy work we do at High Lantern Group. Dr. Zerhouni's journey from Algeria to leading the NIH highlights the importance of vision, integrity, and collaboration in driving meaningful progress in biomedical innovation.

It's also especially meaningful given that we work with Dr. Zerhouni, who sits on the board of one of our clients. His perspective — both in this book and in our engagements — reinforces the value of safeguarding scientific integrity and navigating complex policy environments with clarity and purpose, which is central to how we support our life science clients.





Kira Jones

Sorry I'm Late, I Didn't Want to Come

Jessica Pan

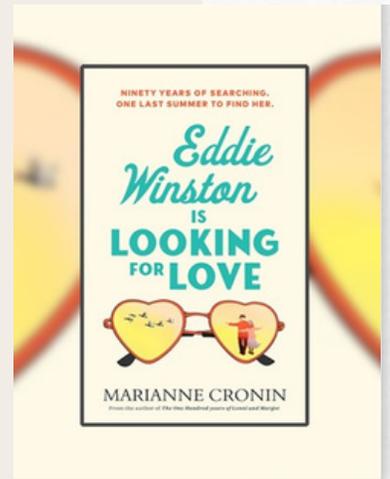
Filled with sharp wit and self-deprecating humor, *Sorry I'm Late, I Didn't Want to Come* is the tale of self-described shy introvert Jessica Pan's year of living like an extrovert. Each chapter is an anecdote (usually hilarious and always brutally honest) with advice from experts in various fields and references to research studies sprinkled throughout. It's a fun read that might just change how you interact with others. And, if not, at least it will make you laugh!

Jill Keasel

Eddie Winston Is Looking For Love

Marianne Cronin

This book is about a friendship between a 90-year-old, Eddie, who has never been kissed, and a 24-year-old, Bella, who is grieving her boyfriend. Soon, you realize that it isn't about romance, but more about connections, loss, and the unusual ways that we can help to heal one another. It is sweet and uplifting without being syrupy.



Seasonal Recipes for Everyday Luxury and Elevated Entertaining



Lindsay Kent

The Wishbone Kitchen Cookbook

Meredith Hayden

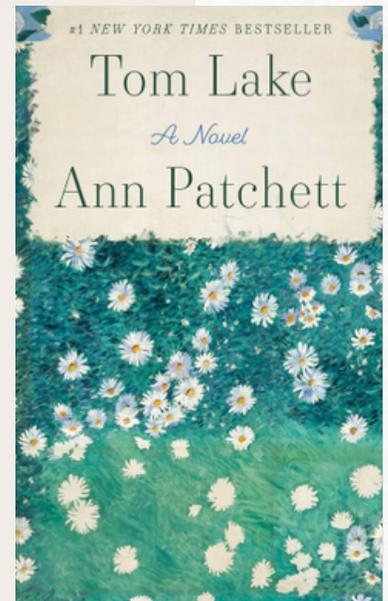
The Wishbone Kitchen Cookbook is colorful and clever in a way that immediately clicks. Swamp soup and the sungold tomato pasta became instant staples in my rotation, and the rest of the book has that same easy appeal. It's a countertop keeper.

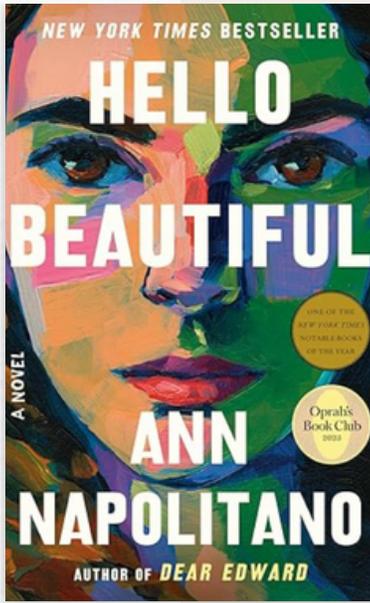
Kattie Krewer

Tom Lake

Ann Patchett

Tom Lake is a delightful novel that immerses readers in a vivid, atmospheric world, showcasing Ann Patchett's talent for building setting as a character in its own right. The story's seamless movement between past and present feels both playful and deeply reflective, inviting readers to consider how memories shape who we become. It's a compelling, warm, and emotionally resonant read.





Olivia LeSueur

Hello Beautiful

Ann Napolitano

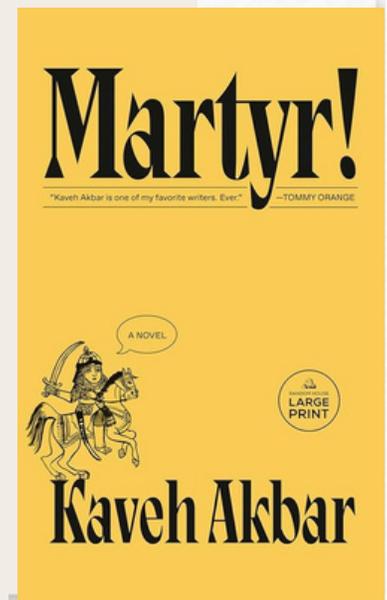
This book has stayed with me long after I put it down. It captures the complexities of family relationships with such honesty that you can't help but recognize pieces of yourself - both the tender and imperfect - in each character.

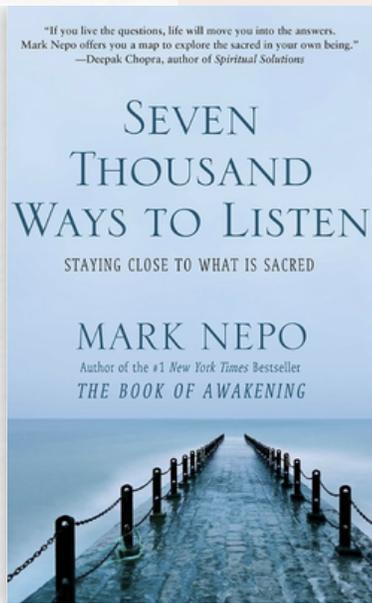
Charis Liu

Martyr!

Kaveh Akbar

What does it mean to carry an identity so heavily defined by grief? Martyr! is a beautifully written coming-of-age novel that follows the arrested development of a young Iranian-American poet navigating loss, love, and friendship. Such a brilliant read — perfect for those who love poetry or are looking for an introduction to it. I've been recommending this book left and right.





Emily Lizotte

Seven Thousand Ways to Listen: Staying Close to What Is Sacred

Mark Nepo

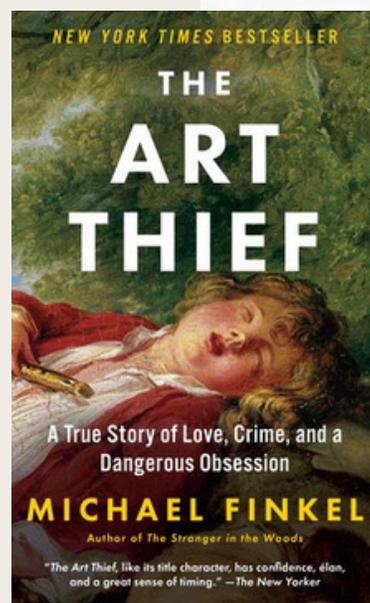
Nepo writes with a gentle, deeply human clarity that feels rare in a world obsessed with speed and productivity. His reflections remind us that listening is an intentional act of presence—one we’re often too busy to practice. This book serves as a quiet recalibration, inviting us to slow down, pay attention, and reconnect with what truly matters.

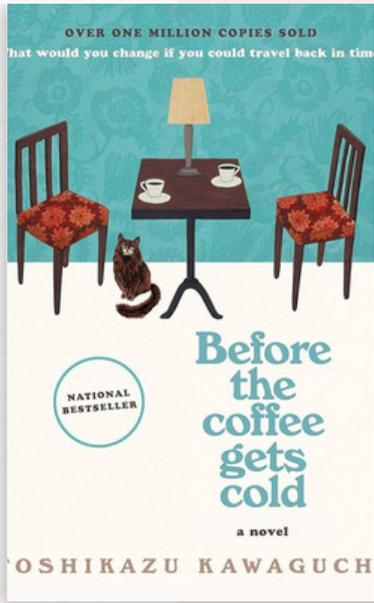
Susannah Loss

The Art Thief

Michael Finkel

I try to pick up nonfiction when I can, and *The Art Thief* is some of the best I’ve read. Well-paced, informative, and under 300 pages, it moves with the same precision and momentum as the heists it describes while digging into the strange psychology behind them. Who knows, maybe the Louvre thieves had this on their reading list, too!





Connor McLaughlin

Before the Coffee Gets Cold

Toshikazu Kawaguchi

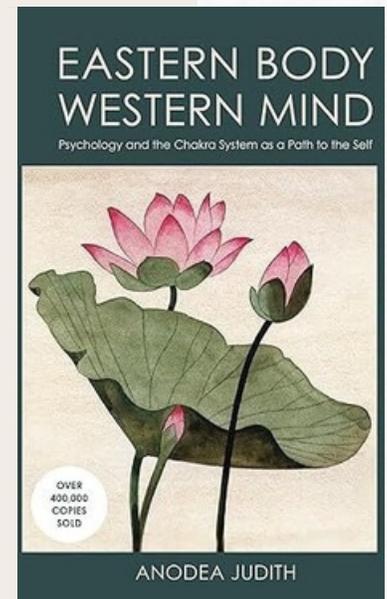
Before the Coffee Gets Cold is a short, heartfelt story that uses a time-travel café in Tokyo to dig into love, loss, and second chances. It left me thinking about the people in my own life and how quickly time moves.

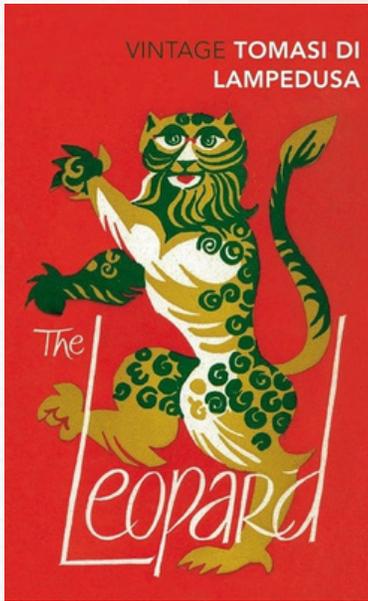
Cortland Mercer

Eastern Body, Western Mind

Anodea Judith

A deep dive on the chakra system and how to unleash the power within. Because not all knowledge is in your head.





Danny O'Keefe

The Leopard

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa

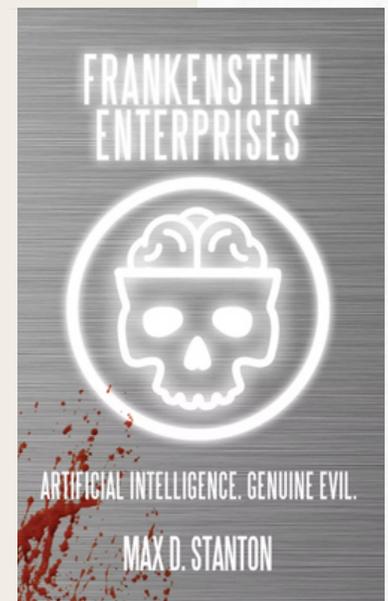
The Leopard is an elegy to aristocratic Sicily during the unification of Italy, as an aging prince watches his world crumble around him. The kind of book with an obsession to sensory details, it turns the splendor and decay of the period into something you can see and touch.

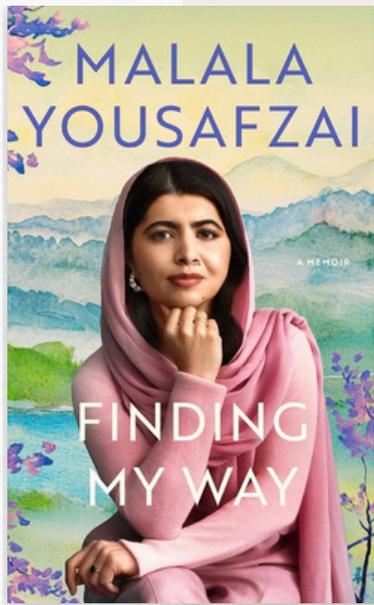
Dan Pawson

Frankenstein Enterprises

Max D. Stanton

All the best stories are told in allegories, and this book is a vivid allegory - sometimes uncomfortably so - of the growth of artificial intelligence in our lives. What if it weren't machines we were turning this work over to? What if it were the living dead? Sam and Elon may not be pulling the strings from an Eastern European castle - yet - but I often find myself thinking back to these stories as AI becomes more and more a part of our lives.





Chandler Pearson

Finding My Way: A Memoir

Malala Yousafzai

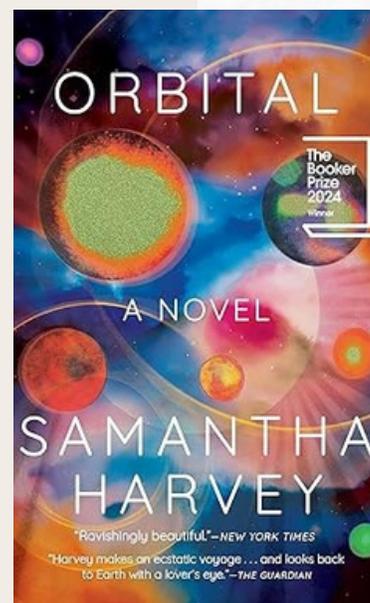
I may not be the youngest Nobel Prize laureate in history, but Malala's new memoir still felt surprisingly relatable. Her story feels like grabbing coffee with an old friend who sees you for who you are and loves you anyway. It's vulnerable and disarming to watch her own her mistakes, crack jokes under international scrutiny, and navigate the deeply human experience of defining who you are amid everyone else's expectations. I highly recommend listening to the audiobook - hearing her words in her own voice makes it even more powerful.

Charles Pennell

Orbital

Samantha Harvey

More and more, I want a really long, narrative-heavy book I can sink my teeth into, or a really short, striking book that shines at the sentence level. (I think due to attention span erosion). This is the second kind of book. 6 astronauts circle earth and have big, deep astronaut thoughts. ~200 pages. Chug the wonder in the course of an afternoon, or sip it slowly through the long, brutal Atlanta winter. Up to you.





Michiel Peters

Daggerheart Core Set

Spenser Starke, Rowan Hall, Matthew Mercer

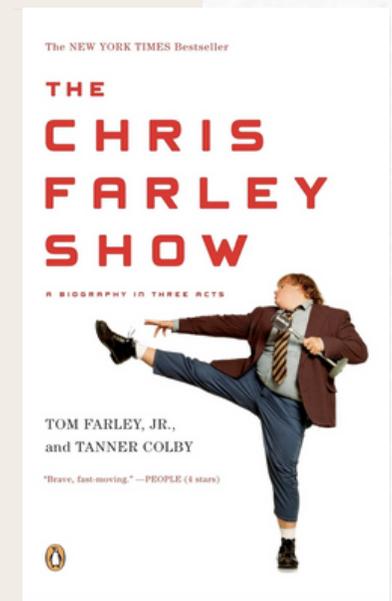
This year I wanted to learn a new skill that would give me a more creative outlet. Running a tabletop RPG has long been on my mind, and when I realized that the storytelling framework most game systems use mirrors the four-part structure we use in our communications trainings, where we go from the current situation to the problem and then from the solution to the next steps, it really clicked for me. I decided on Daggerheart as the system of choice because it's less focused on rules and more on creating a great adventure with your group. If you're interested in doing something fun with your family, friends or random strangers and hone your communications skills at the same time this is an easy pick.

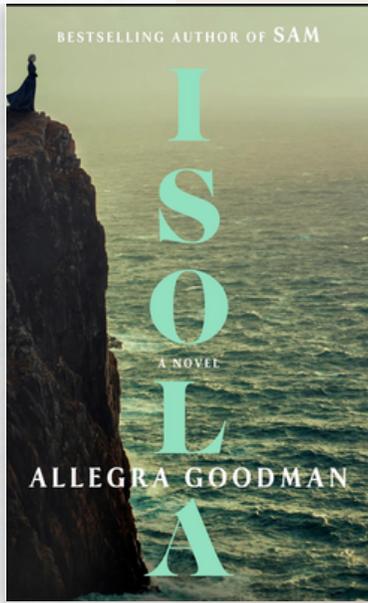
Schuyler Pringle

The Chris Farley Show

Tom Farley, Jr. and Tanner Colby

Comprised of anecdotes from family and friends, this biography beautifully depicted how Farley honed his comedic craft over the years while never losing his grit, determination and generous, lovable spirit. A must read for any SNL fan!





Lindsay Singleton

Isola

Allegra Goodman

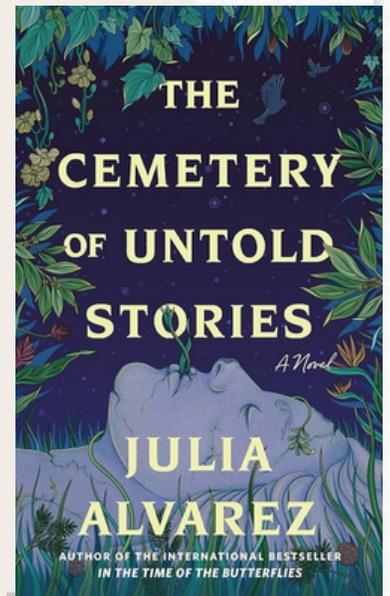
This is the story of a woman who fights against all odds to not only exercise her own free will, but to survive. On it's own, it is a beautifully crafted bildungsroman of resilience, but even more incredible because it is based on a true story. Don't be dissuaded by Reese's stamp of approval.

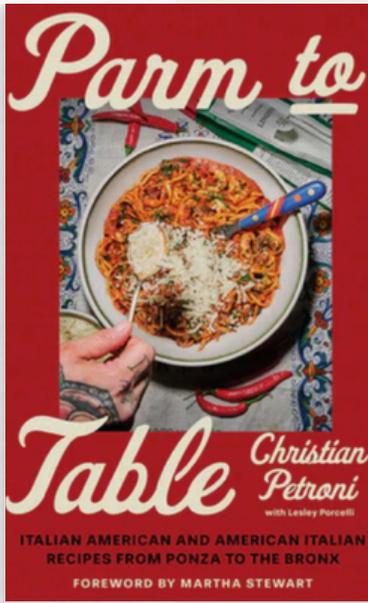
Katy Schneider Riddick

The Cemetery of Untold Stories

Julia Alvarez

My mom recommended The Cemetery of Untold Stories because it beautifully honors forgotten voices and unfinished stories. She knew I'd connect with its themes of memory, identity, and reclaiming what we once set aside.





Emily Scholler

Parm to Table

Christian Petroni

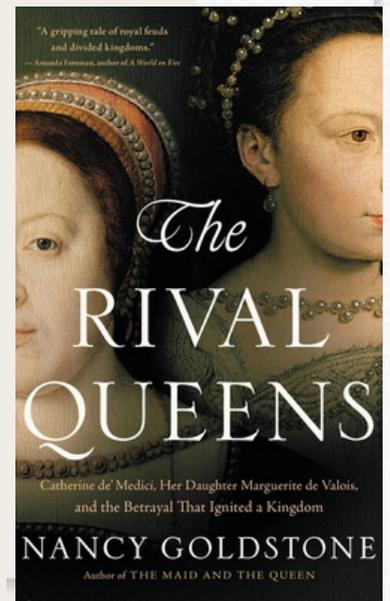
“Parm to Table” offers a mix of recipes and stories that make you feel like you’ve been adopted into a very loud, very loving family. It’s easy to read, fun to cook from, and packed with dishes that make you look far more talented in the kitchen than you actually are. Plus, its a great gift that won’t spark controversy unless someone starts a debate about the correct way to make meatballs.

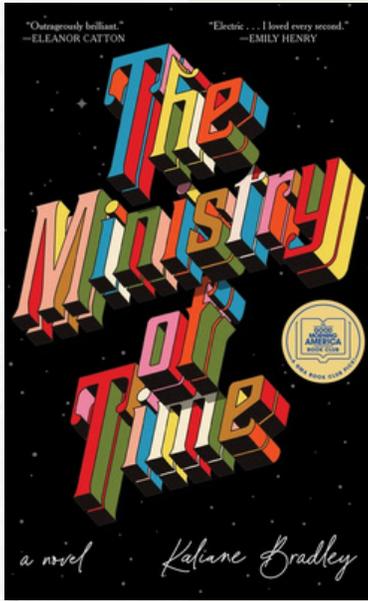
Jane Schumacher

The Rival Queens

Nancy Goldstone

I went on a non-fiction Catherine de Medici binge inspired by the TV show “The Serpent Queen.” I love a good period drama, but I also like to back up my historical fiction consumption with some non-fiction fact checking (I’m very fun at parties). The Rival Queens isn’t as sensational as The Serpent Queen, but there’s definitely some mind-boggling (historical) drama. Nancy Goldstone’s non-fiction work reads like a novel (I also read her “Daughters of the Winter Queen,” about a much less famous set of historical female royals, and “Rebel Empresses” after an Empress Elisabeth binge also inspired by a much-less-good TV show), and may not hold up to the most stringent historian’s standards, but it’s great fun!





Emma Stutts

The Ministry of Time

Kaliane Bradley

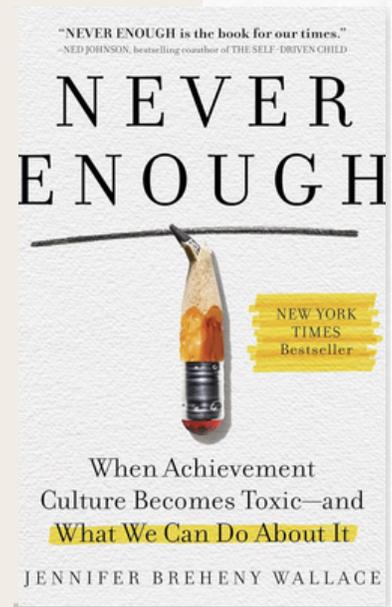
A genre-bending, chaotic ride that hits you in the brain and the heart. A British civil servant accepts a role on a top-secret project helping "expats" from history adjust to the modern day to see whether humans can truly handle time travel. The writing is clever and beautiful, and the plot manages to touch on a massive number of hard-hitting topics in a way that doesn't feel forced or shallow. The story takes some unexpected turns -- some fun, some confusing (as time travel always is) -- that force the narrator to reconsider her own agency and the ripple effects of her seemingly unimportant decisions.

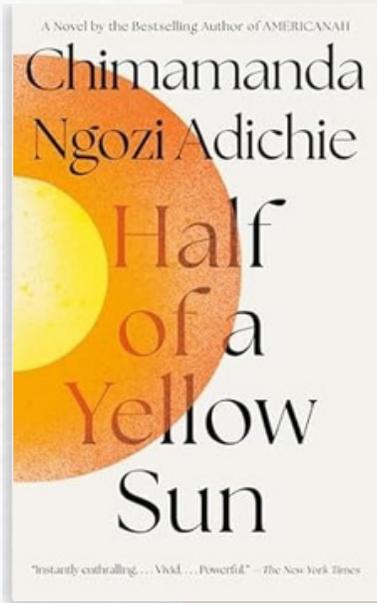
Ben Tiede

Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic and What We Can Do About It

Jennifer Breheny Wallace

I came across this book when it was circulating among parents in our neighborhood. Although it's framed as a parenting guide, its insights are just as applicable to work and everyday life—particularly in recognizing achievement pressure and finding supportive ways to redefine success.





Parm Thind

Half of a Yellow Sun

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

I chose *Half a Yellow Sun* because it's one of those rare books that pulls you in so completely you forget you're reading. Adichie's writing is so vivid and textured that I felt fully immersed in the world she created, almost as if I were seeing everything through each character's eyes. Beyond the beauty of the writing, I love the way the book balances the personal with the political. It brings the Biafran War to life not through distant historical facts, but through intimate relationships and the everyday choices people make under extraordinary pressure. The characters' intersecting lives reveal so much about inequality, class, loyalty, and the human cost of conflict. It's a story that stays with you long after you finish it.

Daphne Wong

The Emperor of Gladness

Ocean Vuong

I savored every page of Ocean Vuong's second novel. Set in a small Connecticut town, the story centers around a young man, grief-stricken and struggling with addiction, serving as an informal caretaker to an elderly woman and as an employee at the (fictional) dining chain, Home Market. The characters are vividly imperfect and familiar, tenderly painted with unrelenting honesty, empathy, and without patronization. Vuong creates such a tactile reading experience; his sensory descriptors lift a place and its people off the page, embellished with subtle humor and fraught with earnestness. I was particularly moved by the book's portrayal of caregiving, family, and the non-traditional ways we often seek and form community, all motivated by the same thing: finding a sense of belonging.

