

New Fiction December 2011



11/22/63

By Stephen King

Like the similarly sprawling *Under the Dome* (2009), this novel was abandoned by King decades ago before he took another shot, and perhaps that accounts for both novels' intoxicating, early-King bouquet of ambition and swagger. In this distant cousin to *The Dead Zone* (1979), Jake Epping is living a normal schoolteacher's life when a short-order cook named Al introduces him to a time warp hidden in a diner pantry leading directly to 11:58 a.m., September 9, 1958. Al's dying of cancer, which means he needs a successor to carry out his grand mission: kill Lee Harvey Oswald so that the 1963 JFK assassination never happens. Jake takes the plunge and finds two things he never expected: true love and the fact that the obdurate past doesn't want to change. The roadblocks King throws into Jake's path are fairly ingenious some of them are outright gut-punches while history buffs will dig the upside-down travelogue of Oswald's life. This doesn't loom as large as some King epics; on the other hand, did we appreciate *It* in 1986 as much as we do now? Leave it at this: fans will love it. (*Booklist*)

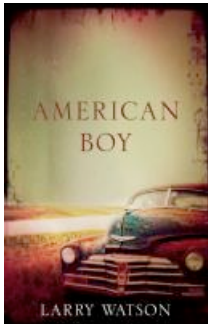


All These Things I've Done

By Gabrielle Zevin

It's 2083, and New York is not what it used to be. But as things go, 16-year-old Anya Balanchine has it pretty good. She lives in an apartment overlooking Central Park (what's left of it) with her bedridden grandmother, her mentally challenged older brother, and her clever younger sister. Because Anya's family was involved in organized crime, importing illegal chocolate among other things, they're still protected. Or are they? As Anya becomes involved with Win, the son of the new

state's district attorney, mob unrest is beginning to infringe upon her life. There are a number of details that could make readers say, Really? Seventy years from now, girls are still wearing uniforms to Catholic schools and eating in the cafeteria just like always, yet they don't remember what the Statue of Liberty was. But while some of the details are problematic, the sweep of the book is original and compelling. The talented Zevin writes Anya and Win's high-wire romance as jolting for both the participants and readers. She knows this is going nowhere good: he's a believer in love, and neither of them understands how outside influences are impacting their romance. The breath-catching ending will leave everyone looking forward to the next title in the Birthright series. *(Booklist)*



American Boy

By Larry Watson

Eighteen years ago, Milkweed published Watson's breakthrough novel, *Montana 1948*. Now the author returns to Milkweed with another powerful coming-of-age story about a teenage boy being shocked into maturity by a moment of sudden and unexpected violence. On Thanksgiving Day 1962 in Willow Falls, Minnesota, a young woman is shot by her drunken boyfriend, and Dr. Dunbar, the local physician, treats her wounds. Matthew Garth, best friend of the doctor's son, Johnny, is with the family when the shooting victim, Louisa Lindahl, is brought to the house. (I was seventeen years old when I first saw a woman's bare breasts. . . . But when you consider that I also saw my first bullet wound on that same body, you have a set of circumstances truly rare.) Louisa is Matthew's entree into the adult world of sex and violence, and his fascination with her never dims, even as she starts to look like a small-town femme fatale, and even as Matthew begins to wonder if the seemingly idyllic Dunbar family's life (so very different from his own wrong-side-of-the-tracks existence with his bitter single mother) may be in jeopardy. Like Holden Caulfield trying to catch innocent children before they fall off the cliff adjoining that field of rye, Matthew struggles to save the Dunbars and, in so doing, save himself. He fails, of course, but that's the point of much of Watson's always melancholic, always morally ambiguous fiction: coming-of-age is as much about failure as it is about growth.

(Booklist)



Anya's Ghost

By Vera Brosgol

Anya is a Russian girl who wants to fit in with her American classmates. She falls down a well and meets a ghost named Emily, who was murdered. They become friends and promise to help one another. Emily helps Anya get closer Sean, a boy she likes. In return, Anya promises to help solve Emily's 90-year-old murder. The story is rather dark and at times darkly humorous, especially when Anya fantasizes about Sean. It gets even darker when Anya realizes that Emily has been concealing a very dangerous truth about herself. Anya's character is not always sympathetic-she cheats on tests, she is often rude to her friends, and she refuses to help another Russian student because he's too "fobby" (Fresh Off the Boat). But her interactions with Emily and Sean change her and help her to evolve into a character whom readers can admire. The artwork is made up of clean, cartoony lines, reminiscent of that in Hope Larson's *Mercury* (S & S, 2010). The mix of mystery, horror, and the coming-of-age theme combined with the appealing graphic style will make Anya's Ghost an ideal choice for reluctant teen readers. (*School Library Journal*)



Art of Fielding

By Chad Harbach

Sports fiction has a built-in plot problem. The drama usually rides on a team's success or failure as it moves through a season to the Big Game. The team either overcomes adversity and wins, following in the cliché-strewn tradition of everything from *The Bad News Bears* to *Rocky*, or it loses, a literarily more resonant route, to be sure, but inevitably unsatisfying if the reader has become a fan along the way. First-novelist Harbach finds an inventive and thoroughly satisfying solution to the Big Game problem, and it works because the reader doesn't live or die with what happens on the field. This sprawling multiple-story saga follows the coming-of-age and midlife crises of five characters at Westish College, a small liberal-arts school in

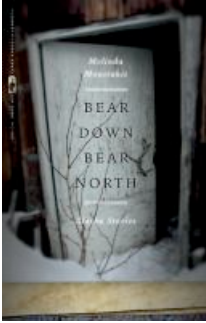
Wisconsin. At the center of it all is Henry Skrimshander, a shortstop of phenomenal ability who has led the school's baseball team to unprecedented heights. Then a wildly errant throw from Henry's usually infallible arm provides the catalyst for game-changing events not only in Henry's life but also in those of his roommate, Owen Dunne; his best friend and mentor, the team's catcher, Mike Schwartz; the school's president, Guert Affenlight; and the president's daughter, Pella. In an immediately accessible narrative reminiscent of John Irving, Harbach (cofounder of the popular literary journal *n+1*) draws readers into the lives of his characters, plumbing their psyches with remarkable psychological acuity and exploring the transformative effect that love and friendship can have on troubled souls. And, yes, it's a hell of a baseball story, too, no matter who wins. (*Booklist*)



Au Revoir, Crazy European Chick

By Joe Schreiber

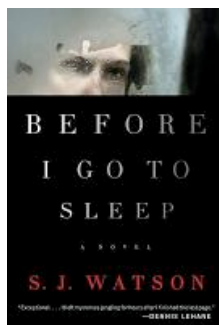
Perry Stormaire's parents are forcing him to take their gawky, Lithuanian foreign-exchange student to the senior prom. Always the dutiful son, Perry doesn't have the nerve to disappoint his overbearing father, even though his band has their first gig in New York City on the same night. As it turns out, the unassuming Gobi is really a beautiful assassin whose plans include killing five human targets in one night. Perry quickly becomes an unwilling hostage who is forced to drive his father's Jaguar as the getaway car. As the young woman drags him through the city, dodging criminals and taking down killers, Perry has to muster up his courage to save himself and his family. Schreiber's debut YA novel is a cinematic all-in-one-night action/adventure romp reminiscent of popular '80s movies, except this tale is more James Bond than *Adventures in Babysitting*. Gobi's switcheroo from dowdy peasant girl to vixen ninja assassin reveals a troubled individual caught up in a human-trafficking revenge plot. Meanwhile, Perry just needs to stand up to his dad. Readers may quickly move from laughing at the absurdities to recoiling from the bloodshed. The college-admissions essay questions that precede each chapter offer additional comic relief while simultaneously grounding the audience in Perry's reality. An exciting read with a satisfying conclusion, this novel will appeal to both male and female readers looking for a quick page-turner. (*School Library Journal*)



Bear Down Bear North: Alaska Stories

By Melinda Moustakis

In Moustakis' interconnected stories, Alaskans go a little crazy while fishing on the Kenai River. So many end up in the emergency room that a woman doctor has festooned a naked mannequin with all the fishhooks, lures, and spinners she has extracted from their weathered bodies. The Kenai is the lifeblood that flows through Moustakis' arrestingly concise, subtly poetic, and piercing stories about several generations of an extended family. The characters are hot-tempered and cold-blooded, eccentric and enigmatic, deeply wounded and unshakably loyal. Fierce homesteaders Fox and Polar Bear's scrambling kids include gorgeous and scrappy Colleen, who, in her muscled, high-heeled prime, veers into tall-tale territory. Then there's the complex bond between self-destructive Jack and his good sister, Gracie. Big, stubborn fish, a hungry moose, a renegade sled dog--all challenge the skill and fortitude of vulnerable humans in stories that are funny and ironic (a guy living in a decrepit trailer builds himself a golden, onion-domed outhouse) until they abruptly turn dark and tragic. Moustakis' tales of desperate strategies for survival in a dramatically harsh, imperiled, and beautiful land are a perfect choice for the prestigious Flannery O'Connor Award. (*Booklist*)



Before I Go To Sleep

By S.J. Watson

Forty-seven-year-old Christine Lucas awakens each morning believing she is still in her twenties and single. She suffered a terrible accident that has severely impaired her memory. She doesn't recognize Ben, the man who tells her he is her husband; she doesn't remember that she had a son; and, worst of all, she does not feel comfortable in her own skin, appalled by her wrinkled face and old-lady clothes. But it turns out she has been getting some help with her memory problem. Dr. Nash calls her every day after Ben leaves for work to tell her where to retrieve her journal,

which contains key details about her previous life and work. The most upsetting thing she learns from her journal, however, is that certain facts don't match the story Ben has been telling her. But how can she be sure he is deceiving her when she can barely hold on to the threads of her own life? This mesmerizing, skillfully written debut novel from a British author works on multiple levels. It is both an affecting portrait of the profound impact of a debilitating illness and a pulse-pounding thriller whose outcome no one could predict. *(Booklist)*



Between

By Jessica Warman

At 18, Liz is popular, comfortable (let's face it she's spoiled), in love with lifelong friend Richie, and certain of her parents' and stepsister's love and caring. And then she wakes up dead. To make matters worse, she is also stuck in the company of another dead teen: unpopular, poor, and angry Alex, who was killed in a hit-and-run a year earlier. Warman employs tropes that have become shopworn - the dead narrator, the seemingly heartless and self-centered rich girl, the criminal undercurrent within the good crowd - and weaves them into a compelling tale that requires only a bit of suspension of disbelief. Liz and Alex embark on a detective effort in order to identify how Liz came to drown during her birthday party. There is a second mystery to resolve as well: what was causing her to feel increasingly troubled during her final months of life, and why did that change evoke concern from everyone around her except, possibly, her stepsister? Warman infuses what might have been a slight plot with some heady insights about the effects of parental behavior on children and about struggles with forgiveness, repentance, and religion. A perfect read for teens who like complex characters even if they are fabulously wealthy or supernaturally disturbed. *(Booklist)*

abandoned her four years earlier. Briefly taking up with a family of sod busters, Harriet is burdened with their newborn son after the parents are killed in a freak storm. As she strikes out on her own with the boy, Harriet makes her way to a small settlement where she ekes out a living as a shopkeeper, putting her in contact with the full panoply of drifters and grifters, soldiers and outlaws who are populating the new territory. Creating a western world as raucous and unpredictable as any imagined by Larry McMurtry, and teeming with characters as tragically heroic as those created by Willa Cather, Svoboda offers a vividly distinctive tale of the American frontier. *(Booklist)*

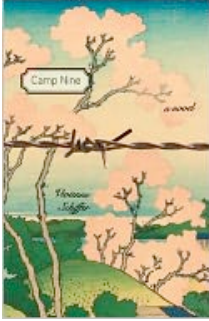


Boyfriends with Girlfriends

By Alex Sanchez

After meeting online, Sergio and Lance make a date to get together in person, bringing along their respective best friends, Kimiko and Allie. The first meeting is sweetly awkward, and while the boys hit it off all right, there's a problem. Sergio is bisexual, and Lance isn't sure he can handle that or whether he even believes it is possible to be attracted to both boys and girls. Actually, there are two problems. Kimiko is a lesbian and crushes on Allie who, though she has a devoted boyfriend, is questioning and finds herself increasingly attracted to her new friend. How will these four engaging kids resolve the mixed messages their hearts are sending to their brains? Leave it to Lambda Literary Award-winner Sanchez (for *So Hard to Say*, 2004) to sort it all out. In the process, he's written another innovative, important book that explores, with empathy and sympathy, largely ignored aspects of teen sexual identity. While lip service is routinely given to these aspects in the acronym GLBTQ, there have been only a handful of novels that so plausibly and dramatically bring the nature of bisexuality and sexual questioning to life. Sanchez does both, and in the process establishes welcome possibilities for other authors to explore.

(Booklist)



Camp Nine

By Vivienne Schiffer

In Schiffer's finely wrought debut novel—set in Rook, Ark. in 1942—12-year old Chess Morton's quiet life of plantations and bayous changes abruptly after her wealthy landowning grandfather sells some worthless land to the government. Housing 10,000 new residents, Camp Nine becomes one of many camps where West Coast Japanese were held in isolation during WWII. Chess's bored widowed mother, who had studied art in California, offers to teach art classes to the Japanese. After she enlists a reluctant Chess to help her, mother and daughter become friends with the Matsui family, including sons Henry and David. Henry enlists, but his father is imprisoned for failing to correctly answer a government questionnaire. Mrs. Matsui, shunned by the other women because they felt her husband brought dishonor to his family, has a nervous breakdown, and David attempts to romance a daughter from a hard-scrabble white sharecropper family. As she watches her mother thwart local conventions by championing the Japanese, Chess matures. Schiffer immerses readers in the thick bayou air and community tensions. (*Publishers Weekly*)



Compulsion

By Heidi Ayarbe

Told by the protagonist, using flashbacks and stream of consciousness, this story takes place over four days in the life of a teen with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Jake Martin is compelled to count, focusing on prime numbers. He can't leave the house without following his morning ritual. He is the star of the high school soccer team and they are poised to win their third straight championship, if only he can hold all the pieces of his life together for three more days. Readers are gradually clued in to deep secrets in the Martin family, but the nonlinear voice makes it difficult to follow all that is happening and has happened in Jake's life. His fear that he may be like his mother, a frightened ghost of a woman, keeps him from telling

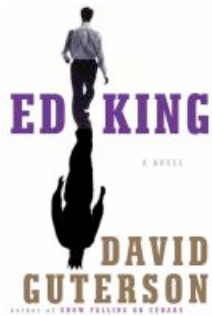
anyone about his compulsions and his obsession with primes. While it would be unrealistic to have a happy ending when so much is going wrong for Jake, the conclusion might make readers wish for more-more openness on Jake's part, more discernment on his father's part, more details on his mother's illness. While some readers may find the book confusing, the author succeeds at making it seem as though it were written by an OCD teen. A clever design touch: the chapters are numbered only with prime numbers. *(School Library Journal)*



Dogs Don't Lie (A Pru Marlowe Pet Noir)

By Clea Simon

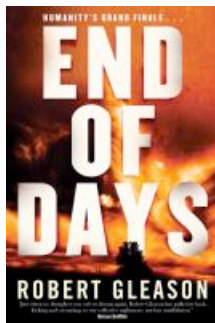
Pru Marlowe has recently returned to her hometown in the Berkshires, ostensibly to care for her dying mother. In reality, she fled New York when she was weeks away from completing her degree as an animal behaviorist, having endured a nervous breakdown caused by her sudden ability to hear animals. Only a few months later, after setting up shop as an animal trainer, Pru finds her best client dead, his throat ripped out, and his newly adopted pit bull, Lily, standing next to him, covered in blood. Spurred on by the desperate cries only she can hear, Pru commits herself to saving Lily and solving the murder. Simon writes a high-quality cozy mystery, well paced and plotted, with plenty of twists, and set in a New England small town full of intriguing characters. Pru's struggles to deal with her abilities make this stand out among other animal mysteries, and the sad story of Floyd, the heart-broken Persian, will touch the heart of cat lovers everywhere. Recommend this series to fans of Blaize Clement and Rita May Brown (especially those who have grown weary of the Mrs. Murphy novels). Watch this series closely. It could well sprint to the top of the animal-cozy genre. *(Booklist)*



Ed King

By David Guterson

How would a modern man go about killing his father and marrying his mother, just like Sophocles' Oedipus? Guterson's vivid re-creation begins with randy young father Warren, who launches his career as a serial philanderer by sleeping with Diane, his family's underage British nanny. It continues with Diane's inopportune pregnancy and callous abandonment of newborn Ed, who is quickly adopted by a nice Jewish couple. While the erstwhile innocent teen mother reinvents herself as a call girl, cocaine dealer, and trophy wife, young Ed thrives in his middle-class upbringing until a phase of teenage rebelliousness places him behind the wheel of a car that causes a fatal accident, after which he develops a predilection for older women and an uncommon acuity for algorithms and techno-logic. Getting Ed's and Diane's paths to cross at all requires a feat of Olympian proportions. How they then marry and revel in the fruits of Ed's phenomenal Internet success is a study in outsized avarice and arrogance. Exuberantly rambunctious, Guterson's bold pondering of the Greek classic is a fiendishly tantalizing romp. *(Booklist)*

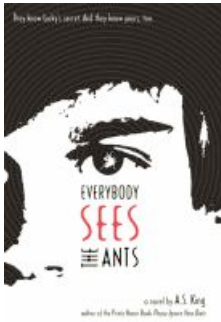


End of Days

By Robert Gleason

Gleason tackles Armageddon and emerges with one of the best end-of-the-world thrillers in quite some time. The enormous cast of characters includes reporter Kate Magruder; Kate's mother, Lydia Lozen (L. L.) Magruder, the great-granddaughter of an Apache shaman; and John Stone, maverick reporter on the trail of stolen nukes. L. L. has been dreaming of the end of the world since childhood, and she now lives in a kind of fortress in the Southwest, where she is prepared for the cataclysm she knows is coming. Meanwhile, Stone, hunting more tangible proof of Armageddon,

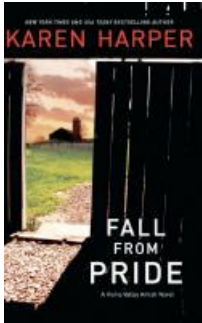
has disappeared, and it's up to Kate, his former lover, to find him and forestall the end. A couple of things set *End of Days* apart from other novels of its type: first, Gleason devotes more space than usual to the buildup, but he holds our interest all the way, generating suspense as he languishes over the details. Second, he excels at mixing biblical prophecy and the predictions of Nostradamus - both are regularly at the core of Armageddon-themed novels - with hard facts about the danger of nuclear proliferation. The combination of resonant myth and on-the-ground reality delivers a narrative knockout punch. Comparisons to Stephen King's *The Stand* and Robert McCammon's *Swan Song* are well founded, but Gleason's novel is in a class by itself. (*Booklist*)



Everybody Sees The Ants

By A.S. King

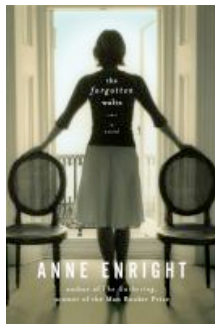
Lucky Linderman has been tortured by Nader McMillan since they were seven, when Nader inexplicably peed on him in a restaurant bathroom. Now it's the summer before sophomore year, and ever since Lucky unintentionally got the bully in trouble with his social-studies survey about suicide, Nader's harassment has escalated. What's more, everyone thinks Lucky is serious about killing himself, and in addition to this and the bullying, his parents' marriage is falling apart. The only way Lucky can escape his life is through a touch of mysterious magic, in which he dreams of communicating with his grandfather, who has been MIA since the Vietnam War. In his dreams, Lucky is strong and fearless, ready to stop at nothing to rescue him. When Nader smashes him into the concrete at the community pool, crushing his face and pride, Lucky's mom flies them to Arizona to stay with her brother and his wife for a few weeks. During his time away Lucky learns that he is okay with being a "momma's boy," that he can't keep escaping his life in the jungle of his dreams. King's heartfelt tale easily blends realism and fantasy. Through a man he never met, Lucky learns he can stand up for himself and stop Nader from terrorizing him and other students. Some mild language and discussion of male and female anatomy are included, but they are within the realm of the story and necessary for these teens to sound real. A haunting but at times funny tale about what it means to want to take one's life, but rising above it so that living becomes the better option. (*School Library Journal*)



Fall From Pride

By Karen Harper

All Sarah Kauffman wants to do is paint beautiful pictures, but her Amish community doesn't allow the making of graven images. Because of the flagging economy and the need to draw in more tourists, however, the church fathers let Sarah paint Amish quilt patterns on the sides of their barns. Then the fires begin. Someone is burning down the very buildings Sarah has decorated. State arson investigator Nate McKenzie has never been to Amish country, where outsiders are not trusted, and forgiveness is preferred to prosecution. Nate needs someone in Home Valley, Ohio, to act as his intermediary, and Sarah fills the bill. Nate's investigation is a hard sell to the Amish, who have suffered centuries of exile, torture, and persecution. And soon, Sarah finds herself in love with an Englisher. Does she choose Nate, and face the dreaded shunning? More important, will she survive long enough to make a decision? Harper, a master of suspense, keeps readers guessing about crime and love until the very end, while detailed descriptions of the Amish community and the Ohio countryside add to the enjoyment of this thrilling tale, the first in the Home Valley Amish Trilogy. (*Booklist*)



Forgotten Waltz

By Anne Enright

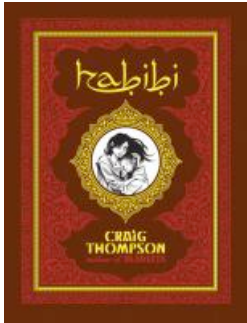
Although the story of an affair is certainly not an uncommon theme in fiction, for the reader to be so engrossed in such a tale by the writing style alone is a less-common situation. But in fairness, in balance, this stunning novel by a Booker Prize winner (for *The Gathering*, 2007) also offers up its brilliance by way of astonishingly effective storytelling. The setting is the author's native Ireland, which, ironically, because of the immaculate presentation of story and character, almost doesn't matter. Gina is married, holds a professional business position, and is now recalling an obsessive, selfish, and problem-riddled affair with the equally married Sean.

Enright suitably constructs her narrative to reflect the natural tendency of a person to remember events not necessarily in strict chronological order but in fits and starts and with backtracking and flash-forwarding, and only, eventually concluding at the end. The vicissitudes of extramarital love and the obstructions to its smooth flow including spouses, children, and the very clandestineness of the relationship are tracked by Enright with a raw clarity expressed in magnetically precise prose. The tension in the narrator's voice serves as the dramatic tension of the novel itself, irresistibly drawing the reader through these at-once gorgeous and ache-filled pages. *(Booklist)*



The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Latin American Poetry: An Anthology
Edited by Ilan Stavans

This ambitious anthology from critic and translator Stavans (*Dictionary Days*) attempts to introduce North American readers to the great strengths and the variety of Latin American modernity in verse. Beginning with the Cuban poet and patriot Jose Martí (1853–1895), Stavans's selection runs from the lushly formal nationalisms of a century ago (the Peruvian José Santos Chocano: "I sing American, in its wild and autochthonous state... When I feel Incan, I honor that king,/ the Sun"), through the world-renowned intellect of Jorge Luis Borges, the expansive passions of Pablo Neruda, and the tender bleakness of the great Brazilian Carlos Drummond de Andrade, to a wealth of less famous, more recent poets. The volcanic odes of the Mexican Gloria Gevartz ("The cages enclosing the perfumes, the limitless delights/ the voluptuousness of being born again and again") continue Neruda's visionary tradition, while the compressed bite of the Guatemalan Mayaquiche Humberto Ak'abal brings in another. While Stavans translates many poems himself, many more are reprinted from extant versions by famous names: Mark Strand, Elizabeth Bishop, Eliot Weinberger, Ursula K. Le Guin. Presented in facing-page format, Stavans's anthology inclines to the accessible; specialists may be frustrated by a few points, but Stavans aims, instead, to bring a whole tree of poems and traditions to U.S. readers who do not know it well. *(Publishers Weekly)*



Habibi

By Craig Thompson

Thompson's follow-up to the landscape-altering *Blankets* (2003), one of the generous handful of important comics of the past decade, shows that he has done anything but rest on his laurels. At root, this is a love story about two have-nots in a desert society: Dodola, a young woman whose only currency is her body, and Zam, a slave boy she rescues and tries to shelter. Passages from the Qur'an provide reflection on Dodola's and Zam's lives as they connect, break apart, and find each other again. Arabic lettering and magic-square mysticism offer rich foundations of visual symbolism and theosophical inquiry. And, not least, the fictional state of Wanatolia, where you can travel in time thousands of years simply by stepping from the midden slums to the sultan's palaces to the rapid encroachment of high-rise development, provides a polarizing backdrop of social conflict. The character depth, plot complexity, and storytelling in this lyrical, sexual, and scholarly epic would make any novelist proud. But no graphic novel lives on narrative alone, and through it all, Thompson strings compositions that are often more tapestry than comics and that balance graphic design, illumination, calligraphy, and cartooning in steady alignment. It is unfair to expect two masterpieces in a row from anyone, but here Thompson sits securely in that rarefied air. (*Booklist*)



How To Save a Life

By Sara Zarr

When high-school-senior Jill MacSweeney learns that her widowed mother has agreed to an open adoption - no lawyers, no agencies, no background checks, no binding agreements - she is appalled and even more grief-stricken. Of course, her mom is lonely, but you can't just replace your husband - her dad - with a baby! To make matters worse, the baby's mother, Mandy, will live with Jill and her mother in the last month of her pregnancy. Told in the alternating voices of Jill and Mandy, this

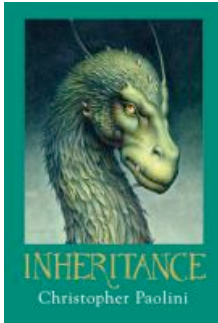
multilayered, complex story of life, death, and the meaning of family will simultaneously distress and gratify. The characters are achingly human. Jill, bewildered at the unexpected death of her father, has shut out her friends completely. Her mother, so ready to nurture and care for another, finds herself unable to cross the barrier of silence and grief Jill has constructed. Mandy needs a mother, not a baby, and cannot bear the thought of giving up this suddenly secure life that she has happened upon - a life her new baby will enjoy without her. Filled with so many frustrations, so many dilemmas needing reasonable solutions, and so much hope and faith in the midst of sadness, Zarr's novel is a rich tapestry of love and survival that will resonate with even the most cynical readers. (*Booklist*)



iBoy

By Kevin Brooks

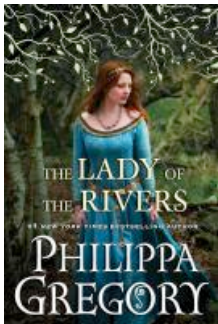
Brooks (*The Road of the Dead*, 2006) is a master at revealing ugly and brutal aspects of relationships among family and friends as well as plumbing each individual's capacity to reach deep within to find character traits that can lead to redemption. Here, South London teen Tom Harvey suffers a bizarre but compelling accident: when someone throws an iPhone at him from a 30-story public housing tower, his skull is split, and small pieces of the communications device cannot safely be retrieved during brain surgery. While recovering, Tom learns that his friend Lucy was brutally raped during the same incident. He also discovers that the bits of embedded iPhone have given him the power to search the web, listen to phone calls, and manipulate messages sent by cell, all through his thought processes. Motivated by the need to punish those who hurt Lucy, Tom sets out to identify and take revenge on local gang members. Brooks' writing, as always, is smooth; his dialogue realistic; and his characters and setting fully developed. The ethical issues Tom encounters during his crusade will resonate with readers of any social class, and this novel should lead to many a discussion about the unsteady fault line between good and evil. (*Booklist*)



Inheritance

By Christopher Paolini

Almost 10 years after Paolini self-published *Eragon* in 2002, he concludes the epic saga of the Inheritance Cycle with this thick fourth volume, the longest yet in the series. With Eragon, his dragon Saphira, and their many allies poised to do final battle against the evil emperor Galbatorix, there is still plenty of unfinished business to wrap up. Cities need to be liberated, enemy leaders (including Eragon's half-brother Murtagh) must be dealt with, prophecies await fulfillment, and a few game-changing secrets will be revealed. In full Tolkienesque style, Paolini luxuriates in excess details, side quests, and a lengthy denouement in which every last thread is wrapped up. The solidly entertaining plot is fleshed out with defining moments for every major character and a sense of completion (temporary or permanent) for all involved. While this final chapter is bogged down by an almost obsessive complexity with regard to the world-building, Paolini leaves readers with the satisfaction of a journey's end, along with the promise of new beginnings. It's a can't-miss for fans and completionists, and a worthy end to the story. (*Publishers Weekly*)

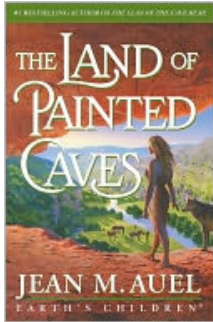


Lady of the Rivers

By Philippa Gregory

Jacquetta of Luxembourg, mother of Elizabeth Woodville (*The White Queen*, 2009), may be Gregory's most obscure royal heroine, but hers is an ideal vantage for observing the final stages of the Hundred Years' War and the origins of the Wars of the Roses. Descendant of the water goddess Melusina, Jacquetta befriends Joan of Arc and learns firsthand how their male-centered world fears women's supernatural gifts. The ethereal magic threaded through the story, more imaginative than historically based, contrasts nicely with the power politics that consume Jacquetta's later life. The tale is most compelling when Jacquetta defies the court with her second marriage to her late husband's squire, Richard Woodville. Theirs is

an enduring romance, but they're often separated while Richard serves the weak Lancastrian king, Henry VI, and Jacquetta keeps company with the long-suffering queen mother, Margaret of Anjou, who vigorously defends her son's inheritance. Jacquetta's plainspoken narration clearly lays out the circumstances that see her family rise and fall on fortune's wheel, but elimination of many repetitive phrases would have produced a tighter novel. (*Booklist*)



Land of Painted Caves

By Jean M. Auel

Thirty thousand years in the making and 31 years in the writing, Auel's overlong and underplotted sixth and final volume in the Earth's Children series (*The Clan of the Cave Bear*; etc.) finds Cro-Magnon Ayla; her mate, Jondalar; and their infant daughter, Jonayla, settling in with the clan of the Ninth Cave of the Zelandonaii. Animal whisperer and medicine woman Ayla is an acolyte in training to become a full-fledged Zelandoni (shaman) of the clan, but all is not rosy in this Ice Age setting; there are wild animals to face and earthquakes to survive, as well as a hunter named Balderan, who has targeted Ayla for death, and a potential cave-wrecker named Marona. While gazing on an elaborate cave painting (presumably, the Lascaux caverns in France), Ayla has an epiphany and invents the concept of art appreciation, and after she overdoses on a hallucinogenic root, Ayla and Jondalar come to understand how much they mean to one another, thus giving birth to another concept—monogamy. Otherwise, not much of dramatic interest happens, and Ayla, for all her superwomanish ways, remains unfortunately flat. Nevertheless, readers who enjoyed the previous volumes will relish the opportunity to re-enter pre-history one last time. (*Publishers Weekly*)

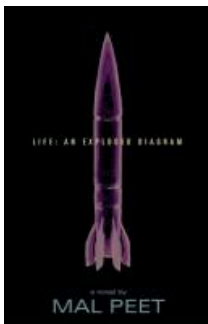


The Leftovers

By Tom Perrotta

One hundred people have disappeared from tiny Mapleton, New Jersey, in a Rapture-like event that has left the community visibly shaken. Some people are miffed at being left behind, while others are inconsolable over the loss of their loved ones. Mayor Kevin Garvey struggles to give the town a sense of community by adhering to such traditional rites as parades, yet his own family seems irrevocably broken. His son has joined a cult led by the charlatan Happy Wayne; his 16-year-old, straight-A daughter has morphed into a depressed goth; and his wife has become a member of the Guilty Remnant, a group of separatist fanatics who chain smoke, refuse to speak, and stalk Mapleton's citizens to ensure that they will never forget what happened. Perrotta brings to his sixth novel his gifts for satiric humor and compassion, ultimately depicting the universal feelings of people reacting to severe trauma, yet the book doesn't quite live up to the promise of its intriguing premise. Still, there is plenty to admire in its depiction of the apocalypse, suburban style. .

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: In somewhat of a departure, the latest from Tom Perrotta, the best-selling king of suburban angst, features a science fiction-like premise; with a hefty first printing and a major marketing campaign. (*Booklist*)



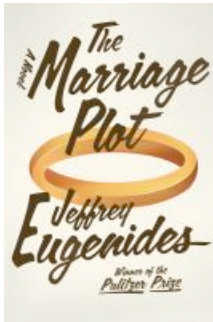
Life: An Exploded Diagram

By Mal Peet

Peet's arresting new novel begins in the destruction of WWII and ends in the explosive devastation of 9/11. In between, young Clem and his girlfriend, Frankie, find themselves de facto combatants in another conflict: England's class war.

Frankie, a child of privilege, is the daughter of the wealthy landowner for whom Clem's father works. Peet breathes new life into this old story with the urgency of

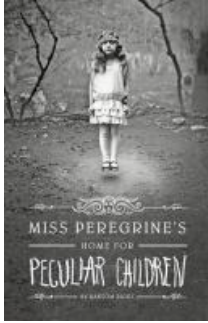
the two teens' attraction for each other and their terrible need for secrecy. In a separate plotline, the Cuban missile crisis is about to boil over, and in a bold move, Peet takes readers across the Atlantic and into the White House, making President Kennedy and his staff characters in the novel. Peet writes with a white hot fury at the idiocy of both America and Russia, and the political story is as beautifully written as that of Clem and Frankie. As he did in *Tamar* (2007), Peet again defies the rules of YA fiction. Many of his major characters are adults; in fact, the story is told in retrospect by an adult Clem. Without one iota of sentimentality, Peet creates an explosive world where love is frowned upon and the past has bloody teeth and bad breath. It is a world that demands deep examination and thought, and Peet has done a splendid job of creating it. *(Booklist)*



Marriage Plot

By Jeffrey Eugenides

In Eugenides' first novel since the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Middlesex* (2002), English major and devotee of classic literature Madeleine Hanna is a senior at Reagan-era Brown University. Only when curiosity gets the best of her does she belly up to Semiotics 211, a bastion of postmodern liberalism, and meet handsome, brilliant, mysterious Leonard Bankhead. Completing a triangle is Madeleine's friend Mitchell, a clear-eyed religious-studies student who believes himself her true intended. Eugenides' drama unfolds over the next year or so. His characteristically deliberate, researched realization of place and personality serve him well, and he strikes perfectly tuned chords by referring to works ranging from Barthes' *Lovers' Discourse* to Bemelmans' *Madeline* books for children. The remarkably a propos title refers to the subject of Madeleine's honors thesis, which is the Western novel's doing and undoing, in that, upon the demise, circa 1900, of the marriage plot, the novel didn't mean much anymore, according to Madeleine's professor and, perhaps, Eugenides. With this tightly, immaculately self-contained tale set upon pillars at once imposing and of dollhouse scale, namely, academia (College wasn't like the real world, Madeleine notes) and the emotions of the youngest of twentysomethings, Eugenides realizes the novel whose dismantling his characters examine. *(Booklist)*



Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children

By Ransom Riggs

On the brink of his sixteenth birthday, something terrible happens to Jacob something so terrible that it splits his life into two parts: Before and After. Before, he was an ordinary young man with a peculiar but doting grandfather. After, he discovers he isn't so ordinary after all. Nor are the peculiar children he meets at Miss Peregrine's home. Riggs' debut uses the framework of a horror novel to tell a more far-reaching tale with symbolic overtones of the Holocaust. Though the author's skill does not always match his ambition his pacing is particularly uneven his premise is clever, and Jacob and the children are intriguing characters. The book is made even more intriguing by the inclusion of a number of period photographs that seem almost Victorian in character and that expand the oddness of the proceedings. An open ending suggests the possibility of a sequel. *(Booklist)*

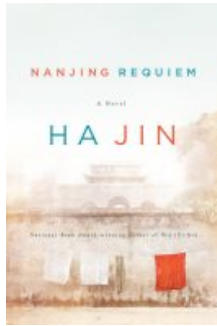


Mountains Bow Down

By Sibella Giorello

When newly engaged forensic geologist and FBI Special Agent Raleigh Harmon joins her mother, Nadine; aunt Charlotte, owner of a New Age boutique; and Charlotte's bizarre friend, self-declared psychic Claire the Clairvoyant, for an Alaskan cruise, Raleigh knows it won't be smooth sailing, especially since her mother's mental illness seems to be getting worse. But what Raleigh doesn't expect is to be involved in a murder investigation during her vacation, or that her old nemesis, FBI Special Agent Jack Stephanson, would be flown in to help her find out who killed Judy, wife of movie star Milo Carpenter, who's filming a movie onboard ship. Against her will, Raleigh forms a bond with Jack as their investigation twists and turns through a maze of not-so-usual suspects. Giorello has won the Christy Award and has received two Pulitzer Prize nominations. When you read this book, you'll see why. Libraries

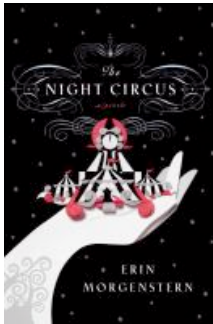
will want Giorello's latest, along with the others in the series, *The Stones Cry Out* (2007), *The Rivers Run Dry* (2009), and *The Clouds Roll Away* (2010). (*Booklist*)



Nanjing Requiem

By Ha Jin

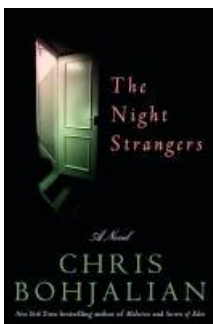
Ha Jin continues his scrupulous excavation of buried truths about Chinese life, paying homage to the unsung heroes of the Rape of Nanjing in this eviscerating novel. Anchored in a sea of blood to the American-run Jinling Women's College, this plainspoken tale of atrocities and courage focuses on the school's dean, Minnie Vautrin, a basketball-playing missionary from Illinois, who turned the bucolic campus into a refugee camp for thousands of imperiled women and children. Although the real-life Vautrin (1886-1941) kept a war diary, Ha Jin relies on an imaginary narrator, Anling Gao, Minnie's smart and steadfast second-in-command, who unflinchingly chronicles the occupying Japanese army's ferocious violence against Chinese civilians and the struggles of profoundly traumatized survivors. Although her own family is cruelly fractured and her faith in God shaken, Anling stands with Minnie as she confronts the enemy with uncommon valor and purpose. Readers with fortitude will discover in Ha Jin's explicit and unique dramatization precisely what it meant to endure this monumental historical hell and the crucial role Minnie and other foreigners played in protecting citizens and gathering evidence of war crimes. Writing with unnerving austerity, Ha Jin resolutely addresses inexplicable terror and miraculous resistance as Minnie, known in Nanjing as the Goddess of Mercy, counsels others not to let hatred run their lives. (*Booklist*)



The Night Circus

By Erin Morgenstern

This big and no, not bulky compelling first novel ushers in a menacing tone with its first sentence: The circus arrives without warning. Why would a circus arrive so quietly in town, and why would anyone need warning about this particular one? The time span here is 30 years, from 1873 to 1903, and the settings range from America to Europe. To a famous magician is delivered a little girl who, as it turns out, is his child, and fortunately for his future, she is possessed of magical powers. As it also happens, this magician has an archrival, who, in the face of the first magician's jackpot in the form of his little girl, seeks a young person for him to train to rival her. What the two magicians did not anticipate, as the years pass and the two young people, the girl and the boy whom the second magician found, are honed in their specialty for performance's sake and to outplay the other one, is that the young persons, when of an age, would meet and, surprising or not to the reader, fall in love. How will their destiny play out now? With appeal for readers not particularly geared to fantasy but who plainly enjoy an unusual and well-drawn story, this one will make a good crossover suggestion. (*Booklist*)

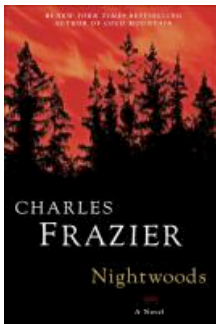


Night Strangers

By Chris Bohjalian

In his suspenseful thirteenth novel, Bohjalian wraps a family drama in an eerie ghost story. Pilot Chip Linton is haunted by the crash-landing of his 70-seat regional jet in the waters of Lake Champlain, which claimed the lives of 39 persons. He and his wife, Emily, decide to make a fresh start and move with their 10-year-old twin daughters to northern New Hampshire, where an eccentric group of women known

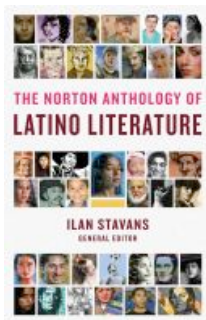
as herbalists welcomes them and seems especially interested in the twins. Not long after, Chip discovers a mysterious door in the basement, sealed shut with 39 carriage bolts. Increasingly haunted by memories of the crash and by the belief that he can hear three dead passengers speaking to him, Chip is a far-diminished version of the confident man he used to be, causing his family to fear him even as they grieve the father and husband they have lost. Bohjalian pits the vulnerability of a traumatized family against the cold manipulation of the herbalists in a page-turner of uncommon depth. Guilt, egotism, and fear all play parts in the genre-bending novel, which rivals the spooky twists and turns of Stephen Irwin's *The Dead Path*.
(Booklist)



Nightwoods

By Charles Frazier

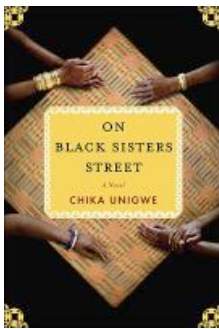
In late 1950s North Carolina, Luce is living in a dilapidated mountain lodge as its caretaker. When her sister, Lily, is murdered by her abusive husband, Bud, Luce becomes the guardian of Delores and Frank, Lily's seriously disturbed twins. At the same time, Stubblefield, who carries a torch for Luce, arrives to check out his inheritance the lodge. While Luce tries to tame and draw out the twins, Stubblefield tries to tame Luce, and the four come dangerously close to being a family. Then, Bud shows up, convinced that the children know where his hidden money is. When he discovers that the children are learning to speak, he becomes worried that they will tell what he did to their mother and to them. This is a taut narrative of love and suspense, told against a gritty background of bootlegging and violence. The characters are rich and unforgettable, and the prose almost lyrical. This is Charles Frazier at his best. (Booklist)



Norton Anthology of Latino Literature

Ilan Stavans, General Editor

As we go through yet another time of questioning what it means to be American, the Latino community is thriving. This beautifully clarifying keystone anthology, therefore, couldn't be more timely in its illumination of the full Latino spectrum in exceptional literature rooted in Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and Dominican American cultures, as well in other Spanish-speaking countries. Prolific and versatile Stavans and his fellow editors have gathered a glorious chorus of 201 voices spanning five centuries and diverse traditions. Stavans lays the groundwork: First, at its core, Latino literature is about the tension between double attachments to place, to language, and to identity. Stavans and company subsequently track the interaction between Hispanic and Anglo perspectives as they succinctly yet vividly cover the historical and political events that have shaped and fueled Latino writing both reportorial and imaginative. With a great array of writers celebrated and too little known, and invaluable supporting materials, this grand and affecting treasury of culturally rich and aesthetically dynamic poems, fiction, drama, letters, diaries, and essays illuminates every aspect of Latino life. While the great poet José Martí writes of weapons of the mind, which vanquish all others, journalist Rubén Martínez begins his chronicle of the Mexican-U.S. border with a sentence laced with profound implications: I am close to the line. (*Booklist*)



On Black Sisters Street

By Chika Unigwe

Unigwe's gripping tale chronicles the lives of four African women working as prostitutes in Antwerp's red-light district. Sisi, Efe, Ama, and Joyce live together,

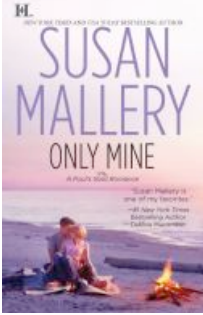
forced to repay their debt to the Lagos man who trafficked them under the pretense of a better life. Much of the action circles around the ambitious Sisi, an educated young woman who arrives in Belgium to escape the poverty of her hometown and seek her fortune in Europe. When Sisi is murdered, her death becomes a catalyst for the others to reveal their harrowing pasts. As an unwed teenage mother, Efe had few options for supporting her son after they were abandoned by the boy's father. Ama overcomes an abusive childhood, and, tired of the predictability of daily life, longs to see the world. Joyce loses her family to unthinkable violence and is later betrayed by the man she loves. As Unigwe tells her characters' stories in interweaving narratives and time lines, the women embody depths of fear and displacement, as well as the will to survive and prosper. *(Booklist)*



Once Upon a River

By Bonnie Jo Campbell

This second novel by National Book Award finalist Campbell (*American Salvage*) is set in Murrayville, a rural Michigan town far removed from the modern world. Inhabitants have lived off the Stark River for generations, including 16-year-old Margo Crane's family. She's been taught the best fishing spots and knows the hidden dangers downstream from the Murray Metal Fabricating Plant. Her carefree existence ends when her mother, a depressed alcoholic, leaves town, and Margo is raped by her uncle Cal. Margo's unique revenge leads to her father's death, a tragic event that never-the-less sets her free from being at the mercy of the Murrays. Equipped with ammunition, food, her father's ashes, and a pink envelope with her mother's return address, she takes her father's boat downstream, determined to find her mother. Margo survives by hunting, fishing, and garden pilfering and by distrusting people. Her river odyssey ultimately leads to self-preservation on her terms. VERDICT A truthful and deeply human story that pulls us in and won't let go. Readers looking for superior fiction are in for an uplifting, first-rate story. *(Booklist)*



Only Mine

By Susan Mallery

Pilot Finn Anderssen is furious when he discovers his twin brothers, Stephen and Sasha, whom he's raised since the death of their parents eight years earlier, have dropped out of college in their final semester to be in a reality television show, *True Love or Fool's Gold*. Finn leaves his transport business in South Salmon, Alaska, with his partner and turns up unannounced on the set of the show. Unfortunately, since the twins are over 18, there's not much Finn can do but sit on the sidelines and glower. Dakota Hendrix, child-development specialist, has been recruited by the mayor of Fool's Gold to watch out for the interests of the town during the taping. Although Dakota finds herself drawn to Finn, she knows that as soon as the show wraps up, he'll be gone. Once again, Mallery (*Finding Perfect*, 2010; *Chasing Perfect*, 2010; *Almost Perfect*, 2010) excels at creating varied, well-developed characters and an emotion-packed story gently infused with her trademark wit and humor. Fans of reality television are going to love this one. (*Booklist*)



Outside Boy

By Jeanine Cummins

Christy, nearly 12, is an Irish Traveller, a Pavee, a child of motion who, with his family, journeys restlessly from town to town, never staying in any place long enough to call it home. But when his beloved Grandda dies, family secrets begin to spill out, and things begin to change, perhaps irrevocably. Set in Ireland in 1959, Cummins' first novel (she's also the author of the memoir *A Rip in Heaven*, 2004) is a deeply moving and elegiac look at a vanishing culture. Told in Christy's vernacular but often poetic first-person voice, *The Outside Boy* is gorgeously written and an implicit celebration of Irish storytelling. And it offers a convincing and evocative look at a way of life little known or understood by the many foreign to it. Though Cummins' treatment of the Pavee may sometimes seem idealized, she is quick to

acknowledge their occasional petty thefts and tradition of mooching. Her overriding, beautifully realized theme is larger than that, however: it is the universal desire to find a place where one belongs and people whether one's own family or as-yet-unknown others whose presence provides essential comfort, contentment, and completion. (*Booklist*)



Paper Covers Rock

By Jenny Hubbard

At the beginning of his junior year of high school, Alex loses a good friend to an accidental and drunken death, and by the end of that first semester, he has lost his moral innocence as well. After Alex's friend dies, he retreats emotionally while also allowing his new, young, and pretty English teacher to coax out his poetic abilities. Meanwhile, Glenn, another student and former friend, tortures Alex with doubts about Alex's own motives related to both the dead boy and the English teacher, encouraging Alex to question his very self. Although Alex knows that his admiration for the teacher is fanciful and not connected to the fact that she may have witnessed certain events related to the death, he recognizes that he is socially outclassed by the powerful Glenn. Can Alex muster the will to counter Glenn's manipulations to oust the teacher? Both plotting and characters are thoroughly crafted in this stellar first novel. The poetry that Hubbard produces from Alex's pen is brilliant, and the prose throughout is elegant in its simplicity. Although the novel takes place in the early 1980s, it could indeed unfold at almost any time, and its boarding-school setting is specific yet accessible to readers in any school setting. Reminiscent of John Knowles' classic coming-of-age story, *A Separate Peace* (1959), this novel introduces Hubbard as a bright light to watch on the YA literary scene. (*Booklist*)



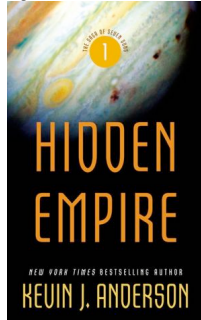
Reamde

By Neal Stephenson

Not many writers can make a thousand-page book feel like it's over before you know it, but Stephenson, author of *Cryptonomicon* (928 pages), *Anathem* (981), and the three-volume *Baroque Cycle* (about 900 each), is a master of character, story, and pacing. Here, an unknown miscreant has created a computer virus, Reamde, a possibly deliberate misspelling of read me, a common file name and is using it to extort money from users of a multiplayer online game. Meanwhile, a plan to sell stolen credit-card numbers to a Russian mobster goes horribly awry, catapulting a hacker and her cohorts into a race for their lives. The book feels like a video game characters bouncing from one action set piece to another; new villains introduced out of left field; a sprawling, compelling, completely seductive story that keeps the reader flipping pages at near light-speed. As always, Stephenson has created a cast of three-dimensional characters with their own voices, motivations, and behavior patterns. If a well-drawn character can step off the page, then these guys positively lunge off it, leaping into our heads and making us feel as though we're watching some elaborate game being played out on the screens of our minds. Another wild adventure from a true literary genius. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Stephenson's continues to turn out door-stop-size genre-benders that, against the odds, become commercial successes. His latest has his track record behind him as well as a digital promotional campaign that will leave no byte unbitten. (*Booklist*)

The Saga of the Seven Suns Series – 7 Books

By Kevin Anderson



Hidden Empire – Book 1

In this stellar launch of a new series, bestseller Anderson (*Dune* spinoffs with Brian Herbert; X-Files and Star Wars books) delivers action, engaging characters and credible fantastic worlds in spades or ekti, the fuel vital for spaceships in the year 2427. The Terran Hanseatic League, in a heady rush of manifest destiny, turns Oncier, a huge gas planet, into a sun so its four moons can be used for colonization. In the process, the Terrans disturb the ancient but dwindling Ildirans, their uneasy allies, whose leader, the Mage-Imperator, suspects that Terrans are far too eager to take over the spiral arm. Still worse, by inadvertently destroying Oncier's hitherto unknown colonists, the powerful hydrogues, the conversion of Oncier sets off a catastrophic conflict that threatens the existence of all Terrans and Ildirans. The Earth Defense Forces of the Terran Hanseatic League, the Worldtrees and Green Priests of Theroc, the gypsy Roamers who mine ekti all must unite with the Ildirans to fight the alien menace. Book one sizzles with a fast-moving plot woven tightly with vivid characterizations: the space cowboys Jess, Ross and Tasia Tamblyn; the exotic Ildirans; the grotesque Mage-Imperator and his handsome Prime Designate son, Jora'h; Beneto Theron, his clan and the bewitching Nira Khali; the appealing and not-so-appealing humans, Raymond/Peter and Chairman Basil Wenceslas; and many others, all conspiring to make this fascinating future epic one not to be missed. (*Publishers Weekly*)

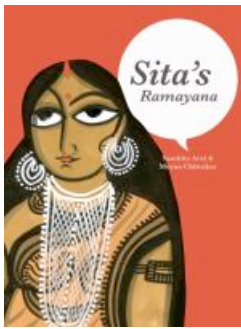


Second Nature

By Jacquelyn Mitchard

Mitchard's latest ought to come with a warning: make no immediate plans, because this book will take over your life. In the first five hold-your-breath chapters alone,

fate pummels Chicagoan Sicily Coyne with five life-shattering punches as the young teen loses her fireman father in the fire that burns off most of her face. Two years later, her mother dies. Fast-forward a decade, and despite being neither sweet nor 16 and never-been-kissed, Sicily is enmeshed in an unlikely engagement to her childhood sweetheart that is doomed, ending in a crushing revelation. Set in the not-too-distant future, Mitchard's spot-on first-person narrative exposes Sicily's every raw nerve as the young woman reels under each blow, falls, hits the canvas, then staggers back to her feet. It is impossible not to root for her when the opportunity to undergo a face transplant promises a whole new life. For the first time, Sicily, though more mature than most women her age in some aspects but socially inexperienced, can taste what she's been missing. From tacos to kisses and more, she is both delightfully and excruciatingly fast-tracked through life experiences guaranteed to have readers alternately loving and hating but never forgetting this remarkable heroine. *(Booklist)*



Sita's Ramayana

By Samhita Arni & Moyna Chitrakar

The Ramayana is the story of the exiled prince Rama and his beautiful wife, Sita. When she is kidnapped by a love-struck demon king, her husband's efforts to rescue her result in a war that eventually involves not only demons and mortals, but also gods, monsters, and even animals. The story has been told and retold, performed and translated in every medium imaginable. Here, a Patua scroll painter has adapted it as a fast-paced, brilliantly bold graphic novel. All of the suspense, treachery, sorcery, and pathos of this epic is depicted in homemade natural dyes layered onto paper in energetic lines, rhythmic patterns, and fields of hot, bright colors. Taut but soulful narrative and dialogue help to tell the story, especially for readers unfamiliar with Hindu iconography. The layout merits particular mention: large panels on pages with abundant white space are interspersed with busier, more action-packed pages. Panels with diagonal edges indicate movement, while round dialogue bubbles and rectilinear swatches of narration are used as compositional elements, sometimes captioning a panel, sometimes stitching two panels together. But even if this book were not created in a little-known traditional medium, even if its story were not one of the most prominent epics in South Asian culture, even if the authors had not made the unusual choice of presenting the Ramayana from Sita's point of view-this book would be a must-purchase based on the strength of its dramatic story and arresting art, enhanced by superior design and high-quality production. Brilliant and fresh. *(Booklist)*

Song of Ice and Fire Series – 5 books

By George R.R. Martin



Game of Thrones – Book 1

The first volume in Martin's first fantasy saga, A Song of Ice and Fire, combines intrigue, action, romance, and mystery in a family saga. The family is the Starks of Winterfell, a society in crisis due to climatic change that has created decades-long seasons, and a society almost without magic but with human perversity abundant and active. Martin reaches a new plateau in terms of narrative technique, action scenes, and integrating (or not injecting) his political views into the story. He does not avoid a dauntingly large cast and a daunting number of viewpoint shifts, but these are problems seemingly inseparable from the multivolume fantasy genre. Accordingly, one doubts there will be any other comfortable entry point into this example of the genre except at the beginning. Judging by this beginning, however, it promises to repay reading and rereading, from first volume to last, on account of its literacy, imagination, emotional impact, and superb world-building. (*Booklist*)

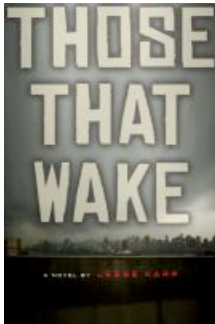


Spoiled

By Heather Cocks and Jessica Morgan

Brooke Berlin, daughter of movie star Brick Berlin, is eagerly anticipating her sixteenth birthday party when her famous dad reveals that he has a love child, Molly, who is also 16 and is moving to live with Brooke and Brick in L.A. following the death of her mother. To make matters worse, Brick is planning to introduce Molly to the public on Brooke's big birthday night. Molly, who grew up without a father, is excited about starting a new life, but Brooke has no intention of sharing the spotlight, and she plans to make Molly so miserable that she'll return to Indiana. Then Brooke's nemesis, Shelby, the daughter of a tabloid publisher, befriends Molly, setting off a series of betrayals, both deliberate and unintended. As trouble

escalates, Brooke and Molly learn more about themselves, each other, and the meaning of compassion, honesty, and the unique bonds of sisterhood, but can they repair the damage that's already been done? The authors, creators of the popular celebrity-fashion blog Go Fug Yourself, offer a pitch-perfect satire of the glitz-and-glam world of the rich and famous in their YA debut. Brooke and Molly are complex and sympathetically drawn, and their alternating narratives add dimension and resonance to universal dilemmas, from loneliness and longing for family connection to romance to unsettling issues of who to trust. With deftly interwoven humor, hyperbole, and poignant, authentic moments, this is a wholly entertaining, thought-provoking offering. *(Booklist)*



Those That Wake

By Jesse Karp

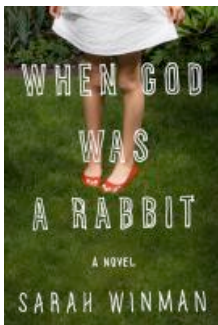
New York has become a grimly dystopian city in the wake of another apocalyptic explosion. The four-block impacted area has been covered by a huge dome that reminds New Yorkers of the devastation, even as they bury their eyes in the omnipresent handheld devices that beam endless consumer messages to them. Teen bruiser Mal receives an urgent call for help from his estranged brother, who then promptly disappears. Meanwhile, Laura discovers her parents inexplicably no longer know her. Their respective quests for the truth bring them together, along with a disaffected teacher and an agent for a mysterious organization investigating strange occurrences that are threatening not only New Yorkers but all of humanity. This first novel is an ambitious, cautionary and even paranoid story of the soul-destroying power of a consumer society run amok and the near-cosmic forces it unleashes. It's a fascinating premise, and though the page-turning action slows a bit in the second half to explore some of the more abstruse causes behind the mind-bending effects, that doesn't detract from the great many intriguing, original, and thought-provoking ideas at play here. *(Booklist)*



Watch That Ends the Night: Voices From the Titanic

By Allan Wolf

With the 100-year anniversary of the Titanic disaster approaching, expect a new flood of works addressing the infamous disaster, though it's difficult to believe any will surpass this masterpiece. Using free-form poems from the points of view of two dozen travelers, Wolf has composed a multi-octave chorus of voices that is alternately sometimes simultaneously spirited, angry, frightened, and mournful. There is the crew (But my Titanic, she is a graceful whale, says Captain E. J. Smith), the first-class elite (The only ice I knew of / was in the gin and tonic that I lifted, says businessman Bruce Ismay), the third-class rabble (We waited for someone to show us to our boats, says hopeful immigrant Olaus Abelseth), and, in two brilliant, audacious moves, a ship rat that seems to represent the desperate will to live (follow the food) and the iceberg itself, a godlike monolith that acts as omniscient narrator and Greek chorus (I am the ice. / I see tides ebb and flow. / I've watched civilizations come and go.). Wolf leaves no emotion unplumbed, no area of research uninvestigated, and his voices are so authentic they hurt. Nothing recommends this to a YA audience, in particular, but who cares? Everyone should read it. Outstanding, insightful back matter completes this landmark work. *(Booklist)*



When God Was a Rabbit

By Sarah Winman

Elly never feels complete without her older brother, Joe. It's Joe who learns what happened between 5-year-old Elly and the 80-year-old man next door, marking her life, and then gets her a proper friend, a large Belgian hare Joe names God, which comforts Elly until the rabbit's untimely death. Solitary English children, Elly and Joe each find, then lose, a fast friend. Charlie, Joe's rugby mate, whom, when a teen, he loves deeply, moves to Dubai with his divorced father, and Jenny Penny, Elly's quirky schoolmate, is left behind after Elly and Joe's family moves to Cornwall. Both

will be found again as the years progress to Elly's midthirties. But no bare-bones plot summary can do justice to this wonderfully wise and compellingly readable tale of love and friendship in all their forms, of family uncircumscribed by biological bonds, and of loss worse than death all laced with humor that can border on black. In crisp prose, English actress Winman vividly limns the characters, including Elly playing the blind innkeeper and Jenny the octopus in their school's Christmas pageant; Arthur, the boarder who becomes kin, with his yogi's prediction of when and how he will die; and the tortured aftermath of 9/11. A remarkable first novel, worth savoring. (*Booklist*)



When She Woke

By Hillary Jordan

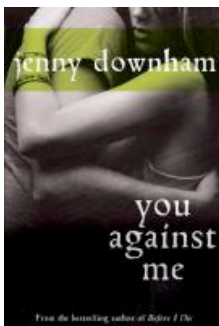
In overtly dystopian take on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Jordan's (*Mudbound*, 2008) second novel grabs readers from the moment Hannah Payne wakes up in the Chrome Ward, having been injected with a virus to turn her skin red. Hannah has been found guilty of murder for aborting her unborn child, a crime in the U.S. in the near future after a scourge rendered a large percentage of women infertile. Hannah has been sentenced to live for 14 years as a Red, her skin tone advertising to all what her crime was. During her trial, Hannah refused to name her lover, a famous, married pastor whom she still loves. After 30 days in the Chrome Ward, Hannah is released, but her deeply religious family refuses to take her in. She winds up in a halfway house, but living there becomes intolerable, so Hannah flees, trying her luck in a society that is becoming increasingly dangerous for women. Jordan blends hot-button issues such as separation of Church and State, abortion, and criminal justice with an utterly engrossing story, driven by a heroine as layered and magnetic as Hester Prynne herself, and reminiscent, too, of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Absolutely a must-read. (*Booklist*)



The White Devil

By Justin Evans

Readers of this thoroughly upsetting horror-mystery hybrid will find their nightmares imprinted with several unshakable images, the worst of which is that of a withered child hunched over a bed, vomiting bile into the mouth of a sleeping girl. The child known as the Lot Ghost by students of England's esteemed Harrow School is revealed to be an early gay lover of Lord Byron, brought back to bloodthirsty life by the arrival of 17-year-old Andrew Taylor, who has fled his American school following a disastrous drug incident. Andrew is the spitting image of Byron, which gets him cast as the lusty poet in a school production written by housemaster Piers Fawkes, ex-genius and current alcoholic. Two boys who befriend Andrew are abruptly taken with a horrific respiratory illness, the details of which dovetail with the play's foremost concern: Who was Byron's greatest love? Evans' crackling literary mystery is resolutely academic; part of the climax actually involves the writing of an essay. If that sounds dry, fear not: the scourge of tuberculosis provides visceral, icky counterpoints, while Harrow itself contains Shirley Jackson levels of gloomy passages and dark secrets. Smart, scary, sexy, and gorgeously written to boot. *(Booklist)*

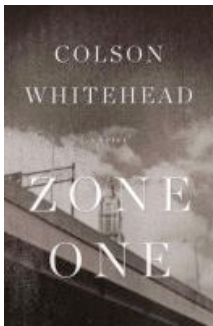


You Against Me

By Jenny Downham

Mikey's 15-year-old sister, Karyn, is holed up in the family's apartment, unwilling to go out or see anyone since accusing an older boy of sexual assault. Feeling helpless and outraged, Mikey vows to seek revenge for his sister, even as the court case against Tom Parker continues. Meanwhile, Tom's sister, Ellie, the only witness to the

alleged crime, feels unsure about her statement to the police. When Mikey (who at first hides his identity) meets Ellie, their attraction to each other only exacerbates matters. The family dynamics of their very different home lives powerfully dictate the moves each makes: Mikey lives with a drunken single mother in subsidized housing, while Ellie comes from a family of privilege. Ellie's dilemma is especially harrowing, threatening to separate her from one or both of her parents as the day of her testimony approaches. Each time, Ellie and Mikey draw close, pull apart, then draw close again, Downham puts readers inside their heads, feeling and understanding their complicated emotions as she masterfully shifts points of view. This excellent sophomore effort from the author of *Before I Die* (2007) should have broad appeal for teens looking for weighty issues tied to their romance. (*Booklist*)



Zone One

By Colson Whitehead

As different in focus and approach as each of Whitehead's novels are, from *The Intuitionist* (1998) to *Sag Harbor* (2009), all percolate with his brilliant wordplay and arresting metaphors, stinging humor and fluency in pop culture. In this jump-in-with-both-feet zombie apocalypse tale, which owes much to master zombie filmmaker George Romero, Whitehead's dark lyricism works in chilling contrast to the macabre plot and doomsday comedy. A zombifying plague has ravaged the land. New York City has been sealed off, the marines have eradicated the pustulant hordes, and now, as part of the much-diminished government's propagandistic American Phoenix project, sweepers are eliminating the stragglers, lone, inexplicably bewitched zombies unable to leave their old haunts. Our guide through this ravaged world is sweeper Mark Spitz (he earns his ironic alias under harrowing circumstances), a self-identified paragon of mediocrity who possesses a surprising knack for apocalypse, which is actually a proclivity for compassion. This diabolically smart, covertly sensitive, ruminative, and witty zombie nightmare prods us to think about how we dehumanize others, how society tramples and consumes individuals, how flimsy our notions of law and order are, and how easily deluded and profoundly vulnerable humankind is. A deft, wily, and unnerving blend of pulse-elevating action and sniper-precise satire. (*Booklist*)