

2027 Book Club Selection List for Survey

(In no particular order)

1. Liberty Street by Heather Marshall

1961: Emily Radcliffe works as an editorial assistant at *Chatelaine* magazine, surrounded by the best female reporters in the country, whose articles tackle the controversial topics no other women's publication dares to touch. When a bombshell letter from an inmate at the notorious Mercer Women's Prison lands on Emily's desk, she sees the scoop of a lifetime—one that could launch her career as a journalist. But after going undercover to investigate the inmate's shocking claims, Emily discovers that getting into the prison is the easy part; the real challenge will be getting back out . . .

1996: Unidentified female remains are discovered in an unmarked grave in a small-town Ontario cemetery, and Detective Rachel Mackenzie is tasked with unraveling the mystery. But when the investigation leads her to the now-shuttered Mercer Women's Prison, the family trauma she's kept buried for years threatens to surface.

Inspired by true events, *Liberty Street* is at once poignant and dazzling—an unforgettable, intertwining story about resilience, mental health, and the power of female connection.

2. How to Age Disgracefully by Clare Pooley

A senior citizens' center and a daycare collide with hilarious results in the new ensemble comedy from New York Times- bestselling author Clare Pooley

When Lydia takes a job running the Senior Citizens' Social Club three afternoons a week, she assumes she'll be spending her time drinking tea and playing gentle games of cards.

The members of the Social Club, however, are not at all what Lydia was expecting. From Art, a failed actor turned kleptomaniac to Daphne, who has been hiding from her dark past for decades to Ruby, a Banksy-style knitter who gets revenge in yarn, these seniors look deceptively benign—but when age makes you invisible, secrets are so much easier to hide.

When the city council threatens to sell the doomed community center building, the members of the Social Club join forces with their tiny friends in the daycare next door—as well as the teenaged father of one of the toddlers and a geriatric dog—to save the building. Together, this group's unorthodox methods may actually work, as long as the police don't catch up with them first.

3. A Different Kind Of Power by Miles Olsen

A stunning collection of stories that illuminate the power and beauty of everyday life, in *A different kind of power*, Miles Olsen shares tales of connection with humanity and the natural world that open the mind and expand our understanding of what it means to find love, to give love, and to embrace the precious lives we live.

From waiting on tables in a busy restaurant to wandering rainforests of centuries-old trees, Olsen's storytelling seamlessly carries readers between worlds with a brilliant tenderness that is humorous, captivating, and profound. Honest, raw, and inspiring, *A different kind of power* shares a vision of life that readers will find contagiously warm, sincere, and beautiful.

4. Monk and Robot by Becky Chambers

Becky Chambers' delightful, post-Utopian, Hugo Award-winning series gives us hope for the future.

It's been centuries since the robots of Panga gained self-awareness and laid down their tools; centuries since they wandered, en masse, into the wilderness, never to be seen again; centuries since they faded into myth and urban legend.

One day, the life of a tea monk is upended by the arrival of a robot, there to honor the old promise of checking in. The robot cannot go back until the question of "what do people need?" is answered.

But the answer to that question depends on who you ask, and how. They're going to need to ask it a lot.

Becky Chambers' series asks: in a world where people have what they want, does having more matter?

5. Theo of Golden by Allen Levi

One spring morning, a stranger arrives in the small southern city of Golden. No one knows where he has come from... or why...

His name is Theo. And he asks a lot more questions than he answers.

Theo visits the local coffeehouse, where ninety-two pencil portraits hang on the walls, portraits of the people of Golden done by a local artist. He begins purchasing them, one at a time, and putting them back in the hands of their "rightful owners." With each exchange, a story is told, a friendship born, and a life altered.

A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, *Theo of Golden* is a beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.

6. The Correspondent by Virginia Evans

Filled with knowledge that only comes from a life fully lived, *The Correspondent* is a gem of a novel about the power of finding solace in literature and connection with people we might never meet in person. It is about the hubris of youth and the wisdom of old age, and the mistakes and acts of kindness that occur during a lifetime.

Sybil Van Antwerp has throughout her life used letters to make sense of the world and her place in it. Most mornings, around half past ten, Sybil sits down to write letters—to her brother, to her best friend, to the president of the university who will not allow her to audit a class she desperately wants to take, to Joan Didion and Larry McMurtry to tell them what she thinks of their latest books, and to one person to whom she writes often yet never sends the letter.

Sybil expects her world to go on as it always has—a mother, grandmother, wife, divorcee, distinguished lawyer, she has lived a very full life. But when letters from someone in her past force her to examine one of the most painful periods of her life, she realizes that the letter she has been writing over the years needs to be read and that she cannot move forward until she finds it in her heart to offer forgiveness.

Sybil Van Antwerp's life of letters might be "a very small thing," but she also might be one of the most memorable characters you will ever read.

7. The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World by Robin Wall Kimmerer

As Indigenous scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer harvests Serviceberries alongside the birds, she considers the ethic of reciprocity that lies at the heart of the gift economy. How, she asks, can we learn from Indigenous wisdom and the plant world to reimagine what we value most? Our economy is rooted in scarcity, competition, and the hoarding of resources, and we have surrendered our values to a system that actively harms what we love. Meanwhile, the Serviceberry's relationship with the natural world is an embodiment of interconnectedness and gratitude. The tree distributes its wealth—its abundance of sweet, juicy berries—to meet the needs of its natural community. And this distribution ensures its own survival. As Kimmerer explains, "Serviceberries show us another model, one based upon reciprocity, rather than accumulation, where wealth and security come from the quality of your relationships, not from the illusion of self-sufficiency."

As Elizabeth Gilbert writes, Robin Wall Kimmerer is "a great teacher, and her words are a hymn of love to the world." *The Serviceberry* is an antidote to the broken relationships and misguided goals of our times and a reminder that "Hoarding won't save us. . . . All flourishing is mutual."

8. Ally Is a Verb: A Guide to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples by Rose LeMay

Your next step on the journey of reconciliation starts here.

What can you do to be a better ally for your Indigenous colleagues, community members, and friends? By actively listening to the history and current lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, you can take steps to address the inequities they continue to face. Author Rose LeMay notes that if you continually educate yourself, you will see many opportunities to be an ally.

This insightful book suggests how to enter the field of reconciliation in a good way, in your community and your workplace. You will learn:

- more about the true history shared by Indigenous peoples and colonial governments
- why reconciliation is mostly the responsibility of non-Indigenous people
- approaches to intervene when you see racism happening
- better ways to respond to emotions that come up when doing the work of an ally
- how to be an active team player for equity and inclusion

LeMay describes key principles to promote reconciliation, deepen your practice of allyship, and contribute to meaningful change.

9. The Cure for Drowning by Loghan Paylor

Evocative, magical and luminously written, *The Cure for Drowning* is not only a brilliant, boundary-pushing love story but a Canadian historical novel that boldly centres queer and non-binary characters in unprecedented ways.

Born Kathleen to an immigrant Irish farming family in southern Ontario, Kit McNair has been a troublesome changeling since, at ten, they fell through the river ice and drowned—only to be nursed back to life by their mother's Celtic magic. A daredevil in boy's clothes, Kit chafes at every aspect of a farmgirl's life, driving that same mother to distraction with worry about where Kit will ever fit in. When Rebekah Kromer, an elegant German-Canadian doctor's daughter, moves to town with her parents in April 1939, Rebekah has no doubt as to who 19-year-old Kit is. Soon she and Kit, and Kit's older brother, Landon, are drawn tight in a love triangle that will tear them and their families apart, and send each of them off on a separate path to war.

Landon signs up for the Navy.

10. Reconciling History: A Story of Canada by Jody Wilson-Raybould

The totem pole forms the foundation for this unique and important oral history of Canada. Its goal is both toweringly ambitious and beautifully direct: To tell the story of this country in a way that prompts readers to look from different angles, to see its dimensions, its curves, and its cuts. To see that history has an arc, just as the totem pole rises, but to realize that it is also in the details along the way that important meanings are to be found. To recognize that the story of the past is always there to be retold and recast, and must be conveyed to generations to come. That in the act of re-telling, meaning is found, and strength is built.

When it comes to telling the history of Canada, and in particular the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we need to accept that the way in which our history has traditionally been told has not been a common or shared enterprise. In many ways, it has been an exclusive and siloed one. Among the countless peoples and groups that make up this vast country, the voices and experiences of a few have too often dominated those of many others.

Reconciling History shares voices that have seldom been heard, and in this ground-breaking book they are telling and re-telling history from their perspectives. Born out of the oral history in *True Reconciliation*, and complemented throughout with stunning photography and art, *Reconciling History* takes this approach to telling our collective story to an entirely different level.

11. Theory of Water: Nishnaabe Maps to the Times Ahead by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Acclaimed Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson takes a revolutionary look at that most elemental force, water, and suggests a powerful path for the future.

For many years, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has found refuge in skiing—in all kinds of weather across different forms of terrain, often following the trail beside a beloved creek near her home. Recently, as she skimmed along this path and meditated on our world's uncertainty—including environmental devastation, the rise of authoritarianism, and the effects of ongoing social injustice—her mind turned to the ice beside her, and the snow beneath her feet. And she asked herself: What might it mean to truly listen to water? To know not only the land on which we live, but the water that surrounds and inhabits us? To coexist with and alongside water?

So begins this renowned writer's quest to discover, understand, and trace the historical and cultural interactions of Indigenous peoples with water in all its forms. On her journey, she reflects on the

teachings, traditions, stories, and creative work of others in her community—particularly those of her longtime friend Doug Williams, an Elder whose presence suffuses these pages; reads deeply the words of thinkers from other communities whose writing expands her own; and begins to shape a "Theory of Water" that reimagines relationships among all beings and life-forces.

In this essential and inventive work, Simpson artfully weaves Nishnaabeg stories with her own thought and lived experience—and offers a vision of water as a catalyst for transformation, today and into our shared future.

12. The Beginning Comes After the End: Notes on a World of Change by Rebecca Solnit

Rebecca Solnit offers a thrilling survey of the sheer breadth and scale of social, political, scientific, and cultural change over the past three quarters of a century.

In this sequel to her enduring bestseller *Hope in the Dark*, Solnit surveys a world that has changed dramatically since the year 1960. She argues that, despite the forces seeking to turn back the clock on history, change is not a possibility, it is an inevitability, and the nature of that change is determined by who participates and how.

The changes amount to nothing less than dismantling an old civilization and building a new one, whose newness is often the return of the old ways and wisdoms. In this rising worldview, interconnection is a core idea and value. But because the transformation has happened in so many disparate arenas, and within a longer arc of history, the scale of that change is seldom recognized.

While the backlash of white nationalist authoritarianism, Manosphere misogyny, and justifications for callousness, selfishness, economic inequality, and environmental destruction collectively drive individualism and isolation, the elements of this new world are related in their vision of more inclusion, equality, interconnection. This new vision embraces antiracism, feminism, a more expansive understanding of gender, environmental thinking, and indigenous and non-Western ideas, particularly Buddhism, as well as breakthroughs in the life sciences and neuroscience, pointing toward a more interconnected, relational world.

13. Land: A Novel by Maggie O'Farrell

On a windswept peninsula stretching out into the Atlantic, Tomás and his reluctant son, Liam, are working for the great Ordnance Survey project to map the whole of Ireland. The year is 1865, and in a country not long since ravaged and emptied by the Great Hunger, the task is not an easy one. Tomás, however, is determined that his maps will be a record of the disaster.

The British soldiers in charge are due to arrive any day, expecting the work to be completed, but Tomás is unexpectedly sent off course by an unsettling encounter in a copse. His life, and those of his family, will never be the same again. Liam is terrified by the sudden change in his taciturn father. What was it that caused such cracks to open in Tomás and how is Liam, aged only ten, going to finish the mapping, and get them both home?

Land is a novel about separation and reunion, tragedy and recovery, colonisation and rebellion. It is a story of buried treasure, overlapping lives, ancient woodland, persistent ghosts, a particularly loyal dog, and how, when it comes to both land and history, nothing ever goes away.

As spellbinding and various as the landscape that inspired it, *Land* is, above all, a story of survival, for our times, and for all time.

14. Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts by Margaret Atwood

How does one of the greatest storytellers of our time write her own life? The long-awaited memoir from the author of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*, one of our most lauded and influential cultural figures.

'Every writer is at least two the one who lives, and the one who writes. Though everything written must have passed through their minds, or mind, they are not the same.'

Raised by ruggedly independent, scientifically minded parents – entomologist father, dietician mother – Atwood spent most of each year in the wild forest of northern Quebec. This childhood was unfettered and nomadic, sometimes isolated (on her eighth 'It sounds forlorn. It was forlorn. It gets more forlorn.'), but also thrilling and beautiful.

From this unconventional start, Atwood unfolds the story of her life, linking seminal moments to the books that have shaped our literary landscape, from the cruel year that spawned *Cat's Eye* to the Orwellian 1980s Berlin where she wrote *The Handmaid's Tale*. In pages bursting with bohemian gatherings, her magical life with the wildly charismatic writer Graeme Gibson and major political turning points, we meet poets, bears, Hollywood actors and larger-than-life characters straight from the pages of an Atwood novel.

As we travel with her along the course of her life, more and more is revealed about her writing, the connections between real life and art – and the workings of one of our greatest imaginations.

15. Isola by Allegra Goodman

A young woman and her lover are marooned on an island in this epic saga of love, faith, and defiance from the bestselling author of *Sam*.

Heir to a fortune, Marguerite is destined for a life of prosperity and gentility. Then she is orphaned, and her guardian—an enigmatic and volatile man—spends her inheritance and insists she accompany him on an expedition to New France. Isolated and afraid, Marguerite befriends her guardian's servant and the two develop an intense attraction. But when their relationship is discovered, they are brutally punished and abandoned on a small island with no hope for rescue.

Once a child of privilege who dressed in gowns and laced pearls in her hair, Marguerite finds herself at the mercy of nature. As the weather turns, blanketing the island in ice, she discovers a faith she'd never before needed.

Inspired by the real life of a sixteenth-century heroine, *Isola* is the timeless story of a woman fighting for survival.

16. Black Bear: A Story of Siblinghood and Survival by Trina Moyles

When Trina Moyles was five years old, her father, a wildlife biologist known in Peace River as "the bear guy," brought home an orphaned black bear cub for a night before sending it to the Calgary Zoo. This brief but unforgettable encounter spurred Trina's lifelong fascination with *Ursus americanus*—the most

populous bear on the northern landscape, often considered a hindrance to human society. As a child roaming the shores of the Peace in the footsteps of her beloved older brother, Brendan, she understood bears to be invisible always present but mostly hidden and worthy of respect. Growing up during the oil boom of the 1990s, the threats in the siblings' hard-drinking resource town were more human, dividing them from a natural reverence for the land, and eventually, from each other.

After years of working for human rights organizations, Trina returned to northern Alberta for a job as a fire tower lookout, while Brendan worked in the oil sands, vulnerable to a boom-and-bust economy and substance addiction. In 2019, she was assigned to a tower in a wildlife corridor. Bears were alarmingly visible and plentiful there, wandering metres away on the other side of an electrified fence surrounding the tower. Over four summers, Trina begins to move beyond fear and observe the extraordinary essence of the maligned black bear—a keystone species who is as subject to the environmental consequences of the oil economy as humans. At the same time, she searches for common ground with Brendan on the land that bonded them.

Impassioned and eloquent, *Black Bear* is a story of grief and a vision of peaceful coexistence in a divided world. It captures the fragility of our relationships with human and nonhuman species alike, and the imperative to protect wild ecosystems, as well as the people we hold closest.

17. The Things We Never Say by Elizabeth Strout

Artie Dam is living a double life. He spends his days teaching history to eleventh graders, expanding their young minds, correcting their casual cruelties, and lending a kind word to those who need it most. He goes to holiday parties with his wife of three decades, makes small talk with neighbors, and, on weekends, takes his sailboat out on the beautiful Massachusetts Bay. He is, by all appearances, present and alive. But inside, Artie is plagued by feelings of isolation. He looks out at a world gone mad—at himself and the people around him—and turns a question over and over in his mind: How is it that we know so little about one another, even those closest to us?

And then, one day, Artie learns that life has been keeping a secret from him, one that threatens to upend his entire world. Once he learns it, he is forced to chart a new course, to reconsider the relationships he holds most dear—and to make peace with the mysteries at the heart of our existence.

Elizabeth Strout, as we have come to expect, delivers a moving exploration of the human condition—one that brims with compassion for each and every one of her indelible characters. With exquisite prose and profound insight, *The Things We Never Say* takes one man's fears and loneliness and makes them universal. And in the same breath, captures the abiding love that sustains and holds us all.

18. The Other Side of Change: Who We Become When Life Makes Other Plans by Maya Shankar

A revelatory exploration of how we can find meaning in the tumult of change, from a renowned cognitive scientist and host of the critically acclaimed podcast *A Slight Change of Plans*

Life has a way of thwarting our best-laid plans. Out of nowhere, we're confronting the end of a relationship, an unexpected diagnosis, the loss of a job, or some other twist of fate. In these moments, it can feel like we're free-falling into the unknown.

As a cognitive scientist, Maya Shankar has spent decades studying the human mind. When an unwanted change in her own life left her reeling, she sought out people who had navigated major disruptions. In *The Other Side of Change*, Shankar tells their riveting, singular stories and weaves in scientific insights to illuminate universal lessons hidden within them. The result is a rich portrait of our complex reactions to change and a deep well of wisdom we can draw from during these experiences.

Shankar invites us to rethink our relationship with change altogether. When a big change happens to us, it can lead to profound change *within* us. The unique stresses and demands of being thrust into a new reality can lead us to uncover new abilities, perspectives, and values, transforming us in extraordinary ways. What if we saw moments of upheaval as an opportunity to reimagine who we can be, rather than as something to just endure? What potential could we unlock within ourselves?

Whether you're processing a past change, grappling with a present one, or bracing for a future one, this book is a wise and thought-provoking companion to help you discover who you can become on the other side of change.

19. A Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession, and Shipwreck by Sophie Elmhirst

Maurice and Maralyn make an odd couple. He's a loner, awkward and obsessive; she's charismatic and ambitious. But they share a horror of wasting their lives. And they dream – as we all dream – of running away from it all. What if they quit their jobs, sold their house, bought a boat, and sailed away?

Most of us begin and end with the daydream. But in June 1972, Maurice and Maralyn set sail. For nearly a year all went well, until deep in the Pacific, a breaching whale knocked a hole in their boat and it sank beneath the waves.

What ensues is a jaw-dropping fight to survive in the wild ocean, with little hope of rescue. Alone together for months in a tiny rubber raft, starving and exhausted, Maurice and Maralyn have to find not only ways to stay alive but ways to get along, as their inner demons emerge and their marriage is put to the greatest of tests. Although they could run away from the world, they can't run away from themselves.

Taut, propulsive, and dazzling, *A Marriage at Sea* pairs an adrenaline-fueled high seas adventure with a gutting love story that asks why we love difficult people, and who we become under the most extreme conditions imaginable.

20. The Wedding Dress Sewing Circle: A Novel by Jennifer Ryan

After renowned fashion designer Cressida Westcott loses both her home and her design house in the London Blitz, she has nowhere to go but the family manor house she fled decades ago. Praying that her niece and nephew will be more hospitable than her brother had been, she arrives with nothing but the clothes she stands in, at a loss as to how to rebuild her business while staying in a quaint country village.

Her niece, Violet Westcott, is thrilled that her famous aunt is coming to stay—the village has been interminably dull with all the men off fighting. But just as Cressida arrives, so does Violet's conscription letter. It couldn't have come at a worse time; how will she ever find a suitably aristocratic husband if she has to spend her days wearing a frumpy uniform and doing war work?

Meanwhile, the local vicar's daughter, Grace Carlisle, is trying in vain to repair her mother's gown, her only chance of a white wedding. When Cressida Westcott appears at the local Sewing Circle meeting, Grace

asks for her help—but Cressida has much more to teach the ladies than just simple sewing skills.

Before long, Cressida's spirit and ambition galvanizes the village group into action, and they find themselves mending wedding dresses not only for local brides, but for brides across the country. And as the women dedicate themselves to helping others celebrate love, they might even manage to find it for themselves.

21. The Smiling Land: All Around the Circle in My Newfoundland and Labrador by Alan Doyle

From one of Canada's most beloved and celebrated Newfoundlanders comes a rollicking insider's guide to the province, told as only Alan Doyle can tell it.

Few Canadian musicians or authors are as synonymous with their home province as Alan Doyle is with Newfoundland. And now Alan wants to introduce the rest of the world to his home, taking readers on a freewheeling, eclectic trip through the province. From Fogo Island to the Southwest Coast, Labrador to Ferryland and everywhere in-between, Alan's Newfoundland awaits.

There are plenty of stops along the way to admire the sites and take in the history and culture. Among the stops, a discussion of Newfoundland's eccentric place names, which include Horse Chops Island, Bread and Cheese Cove, and, the (in)famous, Dildo. There are visits to wind-swept coastlines and towering crags, former Beothuk, Viking and Basque settlements, as well as more recent settlements, such as Foley's Shed, a jaunty live-music pub that—as its name suggests—happens to be located in some guy named Foley's shed. There are savvy insider tips, such as how to score fish and chips and a free ride by hopping into the delivery person's car as they deliver your food to your desired destination. And what tour of Alan's Newfoundland could be complete without a short history of what can best be described as "icebergs that look like things," an illustrious history that includes an exact replica of the Virgin Mary that once washed into St. John's harbour, and the more recent—and far less holy—"Dickie Berg," which made international headlines for looking like . . . well, not the Virgin Mary.

Wildly entertaining, informative and brimming with Alan's classic brand of storytelling and romping good fun, *The Smiling Land* is sure to delight even the most travel-adverse reader among us.

22. The Calamity Club by Kathryn Stockett

Oxford, Mississippi, 1933.

Abandoned by her mother one Christmas Eve, eleven-year-old Meg Lefleur has learned the hard way to rely on no one. Now one of the unadoptable "big girls" at the Lafayette County Orphan Asylum, she fights each day to keep her spirit unbowed.

Birdie Calhoun, unmarried and outspoken, has come to Oxford to ask her socialite sister to help the struggling family she's left behind. But as the Depression tightens its grip, Birdie discovers her sister's seemingly charmed life is a tapestry of lies.

Then, Birdie encounters Charlie, a woman running low on luck with little left to lose. When their fates—and Meg's—converge, Charlie comes up with an audacious plan to claim what's rightfully theirs. But in a place and time where hypocrisy is rife and women's freedom is fragile, even the smallest act of defiance can have dangerous consequences.

The Calamity Club will make you laugh, cry, and cheer—an epic testament to underestimated women who know that calamity can be the spark of new beginnings. This is Kathryn Stockett at her most confident, heartfelt, and hilarious—the triumphant return of one of the most beloved storytellers of our time.

23. All Consuming: Why We Eat the Way We Eat Now by Ruby Tandoh

How, in the space of a few decades, has food gone from fact of life to national past time; something to be thought about—and talked about—24/7?

In this startlingly original, deeply irreverent cultural history, Ruby Tandoh traces that transformation, exposing how cult cookbooks, bad TV, visionary restaurants, and new social media have all wildly overhauled our appetites. *All Consuming* explores:

- The rise of the TikTok food critic
- What makes a hype restaurant go viral
- Bubble tea's world domination
- The dream of the modern dinner party
- The limits of the cookbook
- The history of the supermarket
- Wellness drinks—and where they come from
- The rise and fall of the automat

Our tastes have been radically refashioned, painstakingly engineered in the depths of food factories, and hacked by craveable Instagram recipes. They've been pulled into supermarket aisles and seduced by Michelin stars, transfixed by Top Chefs and shaped by fads. A deep dive into the social, economic, cultural, legislative, and demographic forces that have reshaped our relationship with food, *All Consuming* questions how our tastes have been shaped—and how much they are, in fact, our own.

24. A Room Made of Leaves by Kate Grenville

What if Elizabeth Macarthur—wife of the notorious John Macarthur, wool baron in early Sydney—had written a shockingly frank secret memoir?

In her introduction Kate Grenville tells, tongue firmly in cheek, of discovering a long-hidden box containing that memoir. What follows is a playful dance of possibilities between the real and the invented.

Grenville's Elizabeth Macarthur is a passionate woman managing her complicated life—marriage to a ruthless bully, the impulses of her own heart, the search for power in a society that gave her none—with spirit, cunning and sly wit.

Her memoir reveals the dark underbelly of the polite world of Jane Austen. It explodes the stereotype of the women of the past—devoted and docile, accepting of their narrow choices. That was their public face—here's what one of them really thought.

At the heart of this book is one of the most toxic issues of our times—the seductive appeal of false stories. Beneath the surface of Elizabeth Macarthur's life and the violent colonial world she navigated are secrets and lies with the dangerous power to shape reality.

A Room Made of Leaves is the internationally acclaimed author Kate Grenville's first novel in almost a

decade. It is historical fiction turned inside out, a stunning sleight of hand that gives the past the piercing immediacy of the present.

25. Winter Garden by Kristin Hannah

Meredith and Nina Whitson are as different as sisters can be. One stayed at home to raise her children and manage the family apple orchard; the other followed a dream and traveled the world to become a famous photojournalist. But when their beloved father falls ill, Meredith and Nina find themselves together again, standing alongside their cold, disapproving mother, Anya, who even now, offers no comfort to her daughters. As children, the only connection between them was the Russian fairy tale Anya sometimes told the girls at night. On his deathbed, their father extracts a promise from the women in his life: the fairy tale will be told one last time—and all the way to the end. Thus begins an unexpected journey into the truth of Anya's life in war-torn Leningrad, more than five decades ago. Alternating between the past and present, Meredith and Nina will finally hear the singular, harrowing story of their mother's life, and what they learn is a secret so terrible and terrifying that it will shake the very foundation of their family and change who they believe they are.

26. The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon

Maine, 1789: When the Kennebec River freezes, entombing a man in the ice, Martha Ballard is summoned to examine the body and determine cause of death. As a midwife and healer, she is privy to much of what goes on behind closed doors in Hallowell. Her diary is a record of every birth and death, crime and debacle that unfolds in the close-knit community. Months earlier, Martha documented the details of an alleged rape committed by two of the town's most respected gentlemen—one of whom has now been found dead in the ice. But when a local physician undermines her conclusion, declaring the death to be an accident, Martha is forced to investigate the shocking murder on her own.

Over the course of one winter, as the trial nears, and whispers and prejudices mount, Martha doggedly pursues the truth. Her diary soon lands at the center of the scandal, implicating those she loves, and compelling Martha to decide where her own loyalties lie.

Clever, layered, and subversive, Ariel Lawhon's newest offering introduces an unsung heroine who refused to accept anything less than justice at a time when women were considered best seen and not heard. *The Frozen River* is a thrilling, tense, and tender story about a remarkable woman who left an unparalleled legacy yet remains nearly forgotten to this day.

Inspired by the life of Martha Ballard, a renowned 18th-century midwife who defied the legal system and wrote herself into history.

27. The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell by Robert Dugoni

Sam Hill always saw the world through different eyes. Born with red pupils, he was called “Devil Boy” or Sam “Hell” by his classmates; “God’s will” is what his mother called his ocular albinism. Her words were of little comfort, but Sam persevered, buoyed by his mother’s devout faith, his father’s practical wisdom, and his two other misfit friends.

Sam believed it was God who sent Ernie Cantwell, the only African American kid in his class, to be the friend he so desperately needed. And that it was God’s idea for Mickie Kennedy to storm into Our Lady of Mercy like a tornado, uprooting every rule Sam had been taught about boys and girls.

Forty years later, Sam, a small-town eye doctor, is no longer certain anything was by design—especially not the tragedy that caused him to turn his back on his friends, his hometown, and the life he’d always known. Running from the pain, eyes closed, served little purpose. Now, as he looks back on his life, Sam embarks on a journey that will take him halfway around the world. This time, his eyes are wide open—bringing into clear view what changed him, defined him, and made him so afraid, until he can finally see what truly matters.

28. Good People by Patmeena Sabit

Zorah Sharaf could do no wrong. Zorah Sharaf brought shame upon her family. What’s the truth? Depends on who you ask.

The Sharaf family is the picture of success. Successful, rich, happy. They came to this country as refugees with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. And now, after years of hard work, they live in the most exclusive neighborhood, their growing family attending the most prestigious schools. Zorah, the eldest daughter, is the apple of her father’s eye.

When an unthinkable tragedy strikes, everyone is left reeling and the family is thrust into the court of public opinion. There is talk that behind closed doors the Sharafs’ happy household was anything but. Did the Sharaf family achieve the American dream? Or was the image of the model immigrant family just a façade?

Like a literary game of ping-pong, *Good People* compels the reader to reconsider what might have happened even on the previous page. Told through a kaleidoscope of perspectives, it is a riveting, provocative, and haunting story of family—sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, and the communities that claim us as family in difficult times.

29. The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances: A Novel by Glenn Dixon

In a near future where even the smallest of appliances are sentient, a robotic vacuum sets out to save the humans of her house from a rising technological power

In a self-running, smart house, a young and sentient robotic vacuum listens as her owner, Harold, reads aloud to his dying wife, Edie. Mesmerized by *To Kill a Mockingbird* and craving the human connection she hears in Harold’s stories, the little vacuum renames herself Scout and embarks on a journey of self-discovery.

But when Edie passes away, Scout and her fellow sentient appliances discover that there are sinister forces in their midst. The omnipresent Grid monitors every household in the City, and it seeks to remove Harold from his home, where he’s lived for fifty years.

With the help of Adrian, a neighbourhood boy, as well as Kate, Harold’s formerly estranged daughter, the humans and the appliances must come together to outwit the all-controlling Grid lest they risk losing everything they hold dear.

For fans of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, *The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances* is a compelling, touching, and highly original novel that will make you care deeply about a vacuum.

30. Yesteryear by Caro Claire Burke

Natalie lives a traditional lifestyle – and her followers are sick with envy. Her charming farmhouse on her working ranch is artfully cluttered, her husband is a handsome cowboy, her homemade sourdough boules are each more beautiful than the last. So what if there are nannies and producers and industrial-grade ovens behind the scenes? What her followers don't know won't hurt them.

Then, one morning, Natalie wakes up in a strange, horrible version of reality. Her home, her husband, her children—they're all familiar, but something's off. Is this a hoax? A reality show? A test from God? Natalie knows just two things for sure: this isn't her perfect life, and she must escape, by any means possible.

As darkly funny as it is shocking and gripping, *Yesteryear* is an electrifying examination of tradition, fame, faith and the grand performance of womanhood, from a thrilling new talent in fiction.

31. The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins

The Woman in White famously opens with Walter Hartright's eerie encounter on a moonlit London road. Engaged as a drawing master to the beautiful Laura Fairlie, Walter becomes embroiled in the sinister intrigues of Sir Percival Glyde and his 'charming' friend Count Fosco, who has a taste for white mice, vanilla bonbons, and poison. Pursuing questions of identity and insanity along the paths and corridors of English country houses and the madhouse, *The Woman in White* is the first and most influential of the Victorian genre that combined Gothic horror with psychological realism.

Matthew Sweet's introduction explores the phenomenon of Victorian 'sensation' fiction, and discusses Wilkie Collins's biographical and societal influences. Included in this edition are appendices on theatrical adaptations of the novel and its serialisation history.

32. The Names by Florence Knapp

In the wake of a catastrophic storm, Cora sets off with her nine-year-old daughter, Maia, to register her son's birth. Her husband, Gordon, respected in the community but a controlling presence at home, intends for her to follow a long-standing family tradition and name the baby after him. But when faced with the decision, Cora hesitates...

Spanning thirty-five years, what follows are three alternate and alternating versions of their lives, shaped by Cora's last-minute choice of name. In richly layered prose, *The Names* explores the painful ripple effects of domestic abuse, the messy ties of family, and the possibilities of autonomy and healing.

Through a prism of what-ifs, Florence Knapp invites us to consider the "one . . . precious life" we are given. Full of hope, this is the story of three names, three versions of a life, and the infinite possibilities that a single decision can spark. It is the story of one family and love's endless capacity to endure, no matter what fate has in store.

The book's brilliantly imaginative structure, propulsive storytelling, and emotional power are certain to make *The Names* a modern classic.

33. My Friends by Fredrik Backman

You have to take life for granted, the artist thinks, the whole thing: sunrises and slow Sunday mornings and water balloons and another person's breath against your neck. That's the only courageous thing a person can

do.

In the corner of one of the most famous paintings in the world three tiny figures sit at the end of a pier. Most people don't even notice them. Most people think it's just a depiction of the sea. But Louisa, an aspiring artist herself, knows otherwise.

Twenty-five years earlier, in a distant seaside town, a group of teenagers seek refuge from their bruising home lives by spending long summer days together. They tell jokes, they share secrets, and they commit small acts of rebellion. These lost souls find in each other a reason to get up each morning, a reason to dream, a reason to love.

Out of that summer emerges a transcendent work of art, a painting that will unexpectedly be placed into 18-year-old Louisa's care. Determined to learn how it came to be and to decide what to do with it, Louisa embarks on a cross-country journey. But the closer she gets to the painting's birthplace, the more nervous she becomes.

In this stunning testament to the transformative, timeless power of friendship and art, Louisa is proof that happy endings don't always take the form we expect.

34. The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will be busier still.

By her brother's graveside, Liesel's life is changed when she picks up a single object, partially hidden in the snow. It is The Gravedigger's Handbook, left behind there by accident, and it is her first act of book thievery. So begins a love affair with books and words, as Liesel, with the help of her accordion-playing foster father, learns to read. Soon she is stealing books from Nazi book-burnings, the mayor's wife's library, wherever there are books to be found.

But these are dangerous times. When Liesel's foster family hides a Jew in their basement, Liesel's world is both opened up, and closed down.

In superbly crafted writing that burns with intensity, award-winning author Markus Zusak has given us one of the most enduring stories of our time.

35. Keeper'n Me by Richard Wagamese

When Garnet Raven was three years old, he was taken from his home on an Ojibway Indian reserve and placed in a series of foster homes. Having reached his mid-teens, he escapes at the first available opportunity, only to find himself cast adrift on the streets of the big city.

Having skirted the urban underbelly once too often by age 20, he finds himself thrown in jail. While there, he gets a surprise letter from his long-forgotten native family.

The sudden communication from his past spurs him to return to the reserve following his release from jail. Deciding to stay awhile, his life is changed completely as he comes to discover his sense of place, and of self. While on the reserve, Garnet is initiated into the ways of the Ojibway—both ancient and modern—by Keeper, a friend of his grandfather, and last fount of history about his people's ways.

By turns funny, poignant and mystical, *Keeper'n Me* reflects a positive view of Native life and philosophy—as well as casting fresh light on the redemptive power of one's community and traditions.

36. His Whole Life by Elizabeth Hay

Starting with something as simple as a boy who wants a dog, *His Whole Life* takes us into a richly intimate world where everything that matters to him is at risk: family, nature, home.

At the outset ten-year-old Jim and his Canadian mother and American father are on a journey from New York City to a lake in eastern Ontario during the last hot days of August. What unfolds is a completely enveloping story that spans a few pivotal years of his youth. Moving from city to country, summer to winter, wellbeing to illness, the novel charts the deepening bond between mother and son even as the family comes apart.

Set in the mid-1990s, when Quebec is on the verge of leaving Canada, this captivating novel is an unconventional coming of age story as only Elizabeth Hay could tell it. It draws readers in with its warmth, wisdom, its vivid sense of place, its searching honesty, and nuanced portrait of the lives of one family and those closest to it. Hay explores the mystery of how members of a family can hurt each other so deeply, and remember those hurts in such detail, yet find openings that shock them with love and forgiveness. This is vintage Elizabeth Hay at the height of her powers.

37. People Watching in the Desert by Cali Adeline

Sonny Magee has spent most of her life alone, finding comfort in quiet solitude and scribbling in the private pages of her notebook. She lost her loving but troubled mother in childhood and was raised by an indifferent, sometimes cruel grandmother who left her scarred and naïve about life.

When Sonny mysteriously comes into a large sum of money, she finds herself in Arizona, at the luxury Sanctuary Resort & Spa. Out of her element and her comfort zone, she struggles with the spa's doting staff and the unfamiliar wealth and constant small talk of her fellow guests.

Forced proximity introduces her to a cadre of eccentrics, and something akin to romance blossoms with a resort employee. Yet Sonny still feels most at peace when people watching from the margins, headphones on and scrawling in her notebook. But when a freak accident disturbs Sanctuary's carefully curated tranquility, a shocking twist crumbles Sonny's inner world, and she finds herself unexpectedly—and maybe even pleasantly—surprised by the people around her.

38. Whistler by Ann Patchett

When Daphne Fuller and her husband Jonathan visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art, they notice an older, white-haired gentleman following them. The man turns out to be Eddie Triplett, her former stepfather, who had been married to her mother for a little more than year when Daphne was nine. Now fifty-three, Daphne hasn't seen Eddie for many years, not since the fateful event that changed the direction of both their lives. Meeting again, time falls away; while their relationship was brief, it had a profound impact on them both, and now that they are reunited, they have no intention of ever being separated again.

Whistler is a story about two adults looking back over the choices they made, and the choices that were

made for them. It's a story about bravery, memory, the often small yet consequential moments that define our lives, and the endless stream of loss that in time comes for us all. Beautiful in its simplicity, it is ultimately about how love endures, and how the feeling of being known by one other person, even for a short period of time, can change everything.

39. The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World by Dalai Lama

The occasion was a big birthday. And it inspired two close friends to get together for a talk about something very important to them. The friends were His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The subject was joy. Both winners of the Nobel Prize, both great spiritual masters and moral leaders of our time, they are also known for being among the most infectious happy people on the planet, despite having experienced great personal and national suffering.

From the beginning the book was envisioned as a three-layer birthday cake, the first being their personal stories and teachings about joy. Both the Dalai Lama and Tutu have been tested by extraordinary adversity, oppression, and conflict. The second layer consists of the exciting research into joy as well as the other qualities essential for any enduring happiness, like gratitude, humility, humour, compassion, generosity, and forgiveness. And the third encompasses practical exercises and guidance based on the Dalai Lama's and Tutu's own daily practices, which anchor their emotional and spiritual lives.

Most of all, during that landmark week in Dharamsala, they demonstrated by their own exuberance, compassion, and even wise-cracking humour, how joy can be transformed from a fleeting emotion into an enduring way of being.