

# Midmonth BookNotes

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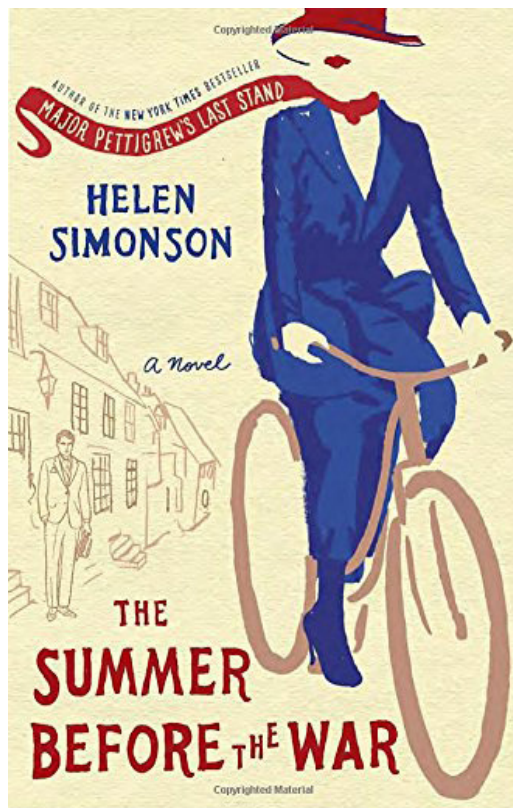
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## Ah, To Be in England

*Simonson, Helen. [The Summer Before the War](#) (Random \$28)*



A woman teaching Latin? As far as most of the residents of Rye are concerned, the very idea is outrageous. While a woman might be able to instruct students in a topic like home economics or even in a pinch English Literature, Latin requires a man's intellect. But Agatha Kent is determined to see to it that her candidate – intelligent and outspoken Beatrice Nash – is awarded the job, and Agatha is nothing if not resourceful. With a

bit of help from her two nephews – medical student Hugh Grange and poet/dilettante Daniel Bookham, Agatha does triumph over her rivals on the local school board, and Beatrice begins planning her new life in the small seaside town. However as the golden days of the summer of 1914 slowly pass by, change is on the horizon, and soon Beatrice and the other residents of the town of Rye will find themselves tested in ways they never could imagine by a war that no one ever expected to take place. Every once in a great while you come across a book that is truly special and stays with you long after you have turned the last page. Helen Simonson's first book *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* - the story of a retired British Army Major who falls in love with the widowed Pakistani shopkeeper in their village – was just that kind of book. I am delighted to say that Simonson's second novel – the quietly powerful and wonderfully moving *The Summer Before the War* – is equally superb. Simonson writes with a subtle grace and a sharp sense of humor about the denizens of Rye and their various struggles to accept a female Latin teacher. *The Summer Before the War* is lovely literary paean to the bucolic pleasures of the English countryside as well as many charms of life in a small town, but it is also a poignant acknowledgement of the real costs World War I exacted from those both on the frontlines and those back at home. If you are wondering what to do with yourself now that *Downton Abbey* has ended or you just want a splendidly written book that will transport you to another time and place, *The Summer Before the War* is not to be missed.

## More Fiction, Mysteries, and Romance

*Abbott, Kristi. [Kernel of Truth](#)* (Berkley \$7.99)

Opening a gourmet popcorn shop was never on Rebecca Anderson's bucket list. But after a failed marriage to a celebrity chef, she's ready for her life to open up and expand. She has returned to her hometown of Grand Lake, Ohio, with her popcorn-loving poodle Sprocket to start a new business—naturally called POPS. As a delicious bonus, Cordelia "Coco" Bittles, a close family friend who has always been like a grandmother to Rebecca, owns the chocolate shop next door, and the two are thinking of combining their businesses. But when Coco's niece, Alice, discovers her on the floor of her chocolate shop, those dreams go up in smoke. Suddenly, Rebecca finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation with suspects popping up all over the place! This debut mystery is perfect for anyone who enjoys small town cozies that are lightly seasoned with a dash of humor and a soupcon of romance.

*Causey, T M. [Saints of the Lost and Found](#)* (\$15)

Gift or curse? Most days, Avery Marie Broussard would argue that her ability to "see" lost things is definitely the latter. It certainly feels that way when, despite her best efforts, she makes a serious mistake, and her gift fails to help the FBI capture the Little Princess Killer. Now all Avery wants to do is escape from the endless images of loss she sees when she gets an unexpected phone call from her father that forces her to return home to St. Michael's. It has been 10 years since Avery has been back, and 10 years since she's spoken with her ex-husband, Jack Thibodaux, and she is in no hurry to bump into him. When Avery begins to get visions of Jack's ex-wife Marguerite lying dead, however, she realizes that her future, for better or worse, is still inexplicably tied up with him. Causey, who has also written the popular Bobbie Faye books as Toni McGee Causey, serves up a thrilling mix of suspense and a dash of romance along with a superbly etched setting

and a memorable cast of secondary characters.

*Chiaverini, Jen. [Mrs. Grant and Madame Jule](#)* (\$16)

In 1844, Missouri belle Julia Dent met dazzling horseman Lieutenant Ulysses S Grant. Four years passed before their parents permitted them to wed, and the groom's abolitionist family refused to attend the ceremony. Since childhood, Julia owned as a slave another Julia, known as Jule. Jule guarded her mistress's closely held twin secrets: She had perilously poor vision but was gifted with prophetic sight. So it was that Jule became Julia's eyes to the world. And what a world it was, marked by gathering clouds of war. The Grants vowed never to be separated, but as Ulysses rose through the ranks becoming general in chief of the Union Army so did the stakes of their pact. Yet Julia and Jule saw two different wars. While Julia spoke out for women Union and Confederate she continued to hold Jule as a slave behind Union lines. Upon the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, Jule claimed her freedom and rose to prominence as a businesswoman in her own right, taking the honorary title Madame. The two women's paths continued to cross throughout the Grants' White House years in Washington, DC, and later in New York City, the site of Grant's Tomb. If you have been fascinated by the new PBS *Mercy Street* and are looking for impeccably researched historical fiction set during the American Civil War, Chiaverini's latest novel is exactly what you need.

*Childs, Laura. [Devonshire Scream](#)* (Berkley \$26)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> addition to Child's "Tea Shop" series, Theodosia Browning is catering a high-class trunk show at Heart's Desire Jewelry when the party is crashed by a gang of masked muggers who steal the precious gems and jewels on display. The thieves disappear almost as quickly as they arrived, leaving shattered glass, scattered gemstones, and a dead body in their wake. Theo can't help but get involved when her dear friend Brooke, aunt of the victim and owner of Heart's Desire, begs for help in figuring out who committed the brutal burglary. Though the FBI believes this daring "smash and grab" is the work of an international gang of jewel thieves, Theo is con

vinced that the felon is someone much closer to home. Let's be honest. The cozy-to-the-max "Tea Shop" books do require more than the usual amount of willing suspension of disbelief but as long as you can buy into the plot, the author rewards you with a wonderfully realized Charleston setting, a charming cast of characters, and lots of yummy details (as well as a smattering of recipes) about the food and teas served in Theo's shop.

*Cooper, Marla. [Terror in Taffeta](#) (St Martins \$24.99)*

Wedding planner Kelsey McKenna is just a few hours away from wrapping up her latest job: a destination wedding in the charming, colonial Mexican town of San Miguel de Allende. The reception is all set up, the tequila donkey is waiting outside, and the bride and groom are standing on the altar, pledging their eternal love. But just as the priest is about to pronounce them husband and wife, one of the bridesmaids upstages the couple by collapsing into a floral arrangement. Worst of all, Kelsey discovers that she hasn't just fainted- she's dead! Sometimes as a reader, you just want to have fun, and Cooper's charming, cozy debut definitely fills that bill. This one is perfect for any reader who misses Tracy Kiely's "Elizabeth Parker" mysteries or who loved Donna Andrew's *Murder with Peacocks*.

*Evanovich, Stephanie. [The Total Package](#) (Harper \$26.99)*

Heartthrob star quarterback Tyson Palmer has a million-dollar arm and the promise of a Super Bowl ring. But football's biggest star is the ultimate comeback kid. After addiction derailed his career, Tyson recovered his talent and won back the fans. But one person remains unconvinced: Dani Carr, an ambitious sports journalist. Years ago she and Tyson shared a passionate night—but never spoke again. Tyson doesn't realize that the bombshell covering his games is the girl whose heart he broke. Will Tyson make a comeback with Dani? Can he use his million-dollar moves to get past her defenses—or will she sideline him for good? It's never too early to stock up on your beach reading!

*Gable, Michelle. [I'll See You in Paris Signed](#) (St Martins \$25.99)*

After losing her fiancé in the Vietnam War, nineteen-year-old Laurel Haley takes a job in England, hoping the distance will mend her shattered heart. Laurel expects the pain might lessen but does not foresee the beguiling man she meets or that they'll go to Paris, where the city's magic will take over and alter everything Laurel believes about love. Thirty years later, Laurel's daughter Annie is newly engaged and an old question resurfaces: who is Annie's father and what happened to him? Laurel has always been vague about the details and Annie's told herself it doesn't matter. But with her impending marriage, Annie has to know everything. Why won't Laurel tell her the truth? The key to unlocking Laurel's secrets starts with a mysterious book about an infamous woman known as the Duchess of Marlborough. Annie's quest to understand the Duchess, and therefore her own history, takes her from a charming hamlet in the English countryside, to a decaying estate kept behind barbed wire, and ultimately to Paris where answers will be found at last. If you missed Gable when she was here earlier this month, we still have a few signed copies left of her latest mesmerizing novel. I absolutely loved the deft way the author weaved together the novel's different storylines into one compelling tale of family, friendship, love, and secrets.

*Hatvany, Amy. [Somewhere Out There](#) (\$16)*

Natalie Clark knew never to ask her adoptive mother questions about where she came from. Natalie doesn't even know her birth mother's name. Now, Natalie's own daughter must complete a family tree project for school, and Natalie is determined to find out the truth about her roots. In this emotionally gut-wrenching novel, Hatvany explores how our childhood experiences shape who we become as adults as well as debating the idea of if it is possible to learn to build human connections as an adult if you were deprived of any real type of relationship as a child.



*Heaney, Katie. [Dear Emma](#)* (Grand Central \$14.99)

As the anonymous creator of the advice column Dear Emma, college junior Harriet imparts weekly wisdom to the students around her struggling with relationships, academics, and existential crises. But Harriet could really use some advice herself, especially since her Spanish Civilization classmate and crush Keith has gone radio silent on her. When Harriet discovers that Keith is dating the beautiful and brilliant Remy, the girl with whom Harriet shares a library work-study shift, she immediately decides her new co-worker is the enemy. Despite her best efforts to give Remy the cold shoulder, Harriet finds herself warming up to her. Then Remy provides Harriet with the opportunity to use her Dear Emma column to change the course of her relationship with Keith. But is it really worth it if she loses Remy's friendship? Heaney is the author of the critically acclaimed and wonderfully funny memoir *Never Have I Ever*, and her debut novel proves she is equally skilled at writing humorous fiction.

*Mallery, Susan. [Friends We Keep](#)* (Mira \$26.99)

After five years as a stay-at-home mom, Gabby Schaefer can't wait to return to work. Oh, to use the bathroom in peace! No twins clamoring at the door, no husband barging in, no stepdaughter throwing a tantrum. But when her plans are derailed by some shocking news and her husband's crushing expectations, Gabby must fight for the right to have a life of her own. Getting pregnant is easy for Hayley Batchelor. Staying pregnant is the hard part. Her husband is worried about the expensive fertility treatments and frantic about the threat to her health. But to Hayley, a woman who was born to be a mom should risk everything to fulfill her destiny no matter how high the cost. Nicole Lord is still shell-shocked by a divorce that wasn't as painful as it should've been. Other than the son they share, her ex-husband left barely a ripple in her life. A great new guy tempts her to believe maybe the second time's the charm but how can she trust herself to recognize true love? The latest in Mallery's "Mischief Bay" series is a heartfelt look at the many different relationships – friend, sister, wife, daughter, mother –

women must juggle in their lives. If you are a fan of Robyn Carr's or Debbie Macomber's empowering women's fiction and have yet to discover Mallery's books, you are in for a treat.

*Mallery, Susan. [Girls of Mischief Bay](#)* (Mira \$14.95)

In this trade paperback reprint of the first of the Mischief Bay books, three very different women find the answers to some of their family problems through friendship—including Nicole, who faces a difficult choice involving her dependent husband; Shannon, who must choose between love and career; and Pam, whose marriage is tested by an unexpected change.

*Martin, Kat. [Into the Fury](#)* (Kensington \$7.99)

After a group of lingerie models are threatened, Ethan Brodie is brought on to protect them, and when one is murdered, he finds himself drawn closer to the breathtaking Valentine Hart, as he gets closer to the answers he needs to solve the crime.

*McMillan, Tracy. [Multiple Listings](#)* (Gallery \$26)

Nicki Daniels owns a home appraisal business, and real estate is her true passion. Nicki lives for open houses, and she knows her way around a floor plan, which is especially fortunate since she is finally ready to find the perfect home for herself, her teenage son Cody, and her much younger boyfriend Jake. What Nicki doesn't know is that she should be trying to find a home with an extra bedroom since her father Ronnie – a longtime inmate at a nearby correctional facility- has just been released from prison and plans on moving in with her!

*Mitchard, Jacqueline. [Two If By Sea](#)* (SimonSchuster \$25.99)

Joining the volunteer rescue effort in Brisbane when his family is swept away by the Christmas Eve tsunami, American expat and former police officer Frank Mercy is transformed by his rescue of a telepathic little boy, who he illegally takes back with him to America and struggles to protect against ominous adversaries. Mitchard's debut novel *The Deep End of the Ocean* was the

first book chosen by Oprah for her book club, so you know what to expect – literary writing with a gut-wrenching emotional plot- from her latest novel. Keep a box of Kleenex handy for this one!

*Myers, Ann. [Cinco De Mayhem](#)* (Harper \$7.99).

When the local restaurateur who attempted to take over all of the food carts in town winds up dead under her friend Linda's famous tamale truck, Rita—a chef preparing for Cinco de Mayo in Santa Fe, New Mexico—must turn up the heat on the real killer before her friend gets burned for the crime. I loved the author's first book featuring Rita (*Bread of the Dead*), and her latest is equally entertaining. If you like Diane Mott Davidson's culinary mysteries or those by Lou Jane Temple, you will definitely want to give Ann's books a try.

*Pataki, Allison. [Sisi Empress on Her Own](#)* (Random \$28)

In *Sisi*, Pataki picks things up where she left off in her first novel *The Accidental Empress*. Sisi finally seems to have achieved some measure of happiness as she peacefully spends her time at Godollo Palace in Hungary, away from the intrigue and gossip of the court in Vienna. There Sisi enjoys visits from the dashing Hungarian statesman Count Andrassy, the man with whom she is slowly falling in love. However, tragic news forces Sisi to return to Vienna, where she must fight to assert her right to a place on the throne by her husband as well as to try and save her empire. Empress Elizabeth of Austria – or Sisi to her closest friends – was known as the most beautiful woman in the world during her life (which vexed Empress Eugenie of France to no end). What are especially interesting are the parallels between Sisi's life story and that of a more modern day royal loved by her people: Princess Diana. Sisi tried to make the best of a less-than-happy marriage to Emperor Franz Joseph while enduring the constant scrutiny of her overly critical mother-in-law, Sophie, who insisted on supervising the raising of Sisi's two oldest children herself. To her credit, Sisi did everything that was expected of a Hapsburg royal, and she was loved by her subjects. In addition, Sisi was

more than just a pretty face. She is universally acknowledged with brokering the Austro-Hungarian Compromise that kept Hungary in the Hapsburg Empire even as other dynastic monarchies in Europe were seeing their royal borders shrink. Anyone who enjoys richly detailed historical fiction that can bring an era vividly to life - the kind of books Irving Stone used to write - will not want to miss Pataki's novels. I especially loved the way the author deftly weaved real historical figures into her latest story including Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria, whose breathtaking castles inspired the design of the Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland, and who was a childhood friend of Sisi and ends up marrying Sisi's youngest sister Sophie-Charlotte.

*Pullen, M J. [Regrets Only](#)* (St Martins \$24.99)

At 33, Suzanne Hamilton has no regrets. A successful event planner with a swanky condo in a hot Atlanta neighborhood, she's got a close group of friends and a list of men a mile long who would happily bend over backwards to win her heart. Plus, she's just landed the event that will take her career to the next level. Then a freak accident changes everything. Humiliated with her career in tatters, Suzanne's lost her business not to mention her self-respect. She's managed, however, to retain the surprising support of her newest celebrity client: the sexy, country music star, Dylan Burke. Against her better judgment but without any better offers, Suzanne agrees to plan a wedding for one of the Burke sisters. But when she comes to realize her freak accident was anything but, her catalog of past relationships turns into a list of suspects and Suzanne must question everything-her career, her friendships, and most acutely, her own dating rules. As it turns out she might have quite a bit to regret after all. Pullen's latest is romance in the style of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

*Quinn, Julia. [Because of Miss Bridgerton](#)* (Harper \$7.99)

Sybilla "Billie" Bridgerton blames the cat. If the dratted cat had not somehow got itself stuck in a tree, Billie would not have ended up trapped on

the roof of a farmhouse. The fact that the feline did not seem to be even a smidgeon grateful for Billie's assistance was really the icing on the cake. Fortunately, Billie knows that all she needs to do is wait patiently, and someone will come along and help her get down. Of course with the way Billie's luck has been running that day, who should happen to be the very first person she spies but George Rokesby. The Bridgertons and the Rokesbys have been neighbors for centuries, and Billie would welcome the assistance of anyone of the Rokesbys. Well, anyone but the insufferably arrogant, know-it-all George. Of course when George subsequently ends up stuck on the roof with Billie, that's when the fur really begins to fly. I love Quinn's sparkling sense of humor, and the latest in her popular Bridgerton Regency-set series is actually a prequel of sorts as the author skips back a generation to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*Rebeck, Theresa. [I'm Glad About You](#)* (Putnam \$26.95)

After falling in love in high school and then separating, Allison Moore becomes a famous actress and Kyle Wallace becomes a suburban pediatrician with a family, but their lives still continue to intersect in significant ways proving the author's theory that you never really get over your first love. Rebeck has written a number of prize-winning plays as well as being the creator of the television show *Smash*, so she does know a thing or two about the actor's life and the world of showbiz. She also writes with a sharp sense of humor and has a real flair for creating realistically flawed characters. Just don't expect the usual happily-ever-after-ending for these star-crossed lovers.

*Ribchester, Lucy. [The Hourglass Factory](#)* (Norton \$25.95)

London, 1912. The suffragette movement is reaching a fever pitch, and Inspector Frederick Primrose is hunting a murderer on his beat. Across town, Fleet Street reporter Frances "Frankie" George is chasing an interview with trapeze artist Ebony Diamond. Frankie finds herself fascinated by the tightly-laced acrobat and follows her to a Kensington corset shop that seems to be hiding secrets of its own. When Ebony Diamond

mysteriously disappears in the middle of a performance, Frankie and Primrose are both drawn into the shadowy world of a secret society with ties to both London's criminal underworld and its glittering socialites. Ribchester sets her brilliantly written debut historical mystery against the fascinating backdrop of the British suffragette movement, and she gifts readers with a cavalcade of great characters including the aging courtesan-turned-columnist Twinkle, who practically steals the show.

*Roberts, Nora. [Liar](#)* (\$7.99)

Shelby Foxworth lost her husband. Then she lost her illusions. The man who took her from Tennessee to an exclusive Philadelphia suburb left her in crippling debt. He was an adulterer and a liar, and when Shelby tracks down his safe-deposit box, she finds multiple IDs. The man she loved wasn't just dead. He never really existed. Shelby takes her three-year-old daughter and heads south to seek comfort in her hometown, where she meets someone new: Griff Lott, a successful contractor. But her husband had secrets she has yet to discover. Even in this small town, surrounded by loved ones, danger is closer than she knows and threatens Griff, as well. And an attempted murder is only the beginning...

*Roberts, Sheila. [Home on Apple Blossom Road](#)* (Mira \$7.99)

When Colin Wright and Mia Blair inherit something jointly from Colin's late grandmother, they must embark on a treasure hunt by following a series of clues that take them to the orchard on Apple Blossom Road where they get an unexpected second chance at love. If you enjoy sweeter love stories like the kind Debbie Macomber writes, Roberts' series set in the small town of Icicle Falls is just the ticket.

*Sherry, Maureen. [Opening Belle](#)* (Simon-Schuster \$25)

Belle Cassidy, a managing director at an investment banking company in NYC, spends her life juggling a number of different balls. Working at Feagin Dixon means constantly dealing with impossibly sexist colleagues. Coming home means trying to find time for her children while dealing sensitively with her husband, who doesn't



want to take on the role of at-home parent but who doesn't really contribute financially either. Now in order to get her kids into a prestigious preschool, Belle must resort to calling in a favor from the man who dumped her years ago, which sets the stage for her to wonder if she married the right man after all. It is easy to sympathize with the horrible working conditions Belle and her fellow female co-workers must endure at their "frat-boy" firm, but it becomes less easy to empathize with Belle when she whines about how difficult it is to manage her household budget on her six figure annual income (plus seven figure bonuses) as well as deal with her slacker husband. Still, there are plenty of juicy details about the business of making money on Wall Street even as the financial collapse of 2008 looms on the horizon.

*Wallace, Aurale. [Skinny Dipping with Murder](#)* (St Martins \$7.99)

Erica Bloom is in no rush to return to Otter Lake, the site of her mother's spiritual retreat for women. Erica met her inner goddess years ago and she's happy to have forged a new identity on her own, thank you very much. But her new-age-y, well-meaning mother is losing her grip on the business, and needs Erica's help. So she heads back to her New Hampshire hometown, where nothing much has changed-except for maybe the body in the well...Readers who enjoy their amateur sleuth series served up with plenty of wit, and abundance of quirky characters, a nicely done small town New Hampshire setting, and a soupcon of romance will love Wallace's debut mystery.

*Webb, Heather. [Fall of Poppies](#)* (Harper \$14.99)

November 11, 1918. After four long, dark years of fighting, the Great War ends at last, and the world is forever changed. For soldiers, loved ones, and survivors, the years ahead stretch with new promise, even as their hearts are marked by all those who have been lost. As families come back together, lovers reunite, and strangers take solace in each other, everyone has a story to tell. In this moving, unforgettable collection, nine top historical fiction authors share stories of love, strength, and renewal as hope takes root in a

fall of poppies. This stellar anthology includes contributions from nine historical fiction writers including Lauren Willig, Beatriz Williams, Jennifer Robson, and Heather Webb.

## *Brontecopia*

In anticipation of Lindsey Faye's visit to the bookstore later this month for her new book *Jane Steel* (an interesting - in the best sense of the word - take on *Jane Eyre*), here are some more Bronte literary treats.

*Bronte, Charlotte. [Jane Eyre](#)* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition \$18)

After a sad and neglected childhood as an orphan, Jane Eyre is hired by Edward Rochester as governess for his ward. Jane is pleased with the quiet country life at Thornfield, with the beautiful old manor house and gardens, with the book-filled library, and with her own comfortable room. But there are stories of a strange tenant, a woman who laughs like a maniac, and who stays in rooms on the third floor. The moody Rochester rebuffs her attempts to find discover more, ordering her to keep silent on the matter. An unlikely relationship blooms between the two, however, and Jane is thrilled to accept Rochester's proposal of marriage. But the quiet ceremony is shockingly halted by a stranger who claims that Rochester was already married—to the raving maniac Jane had heard crying in the house. If you have never read Bronte's best-known romance, this elegant new edition by Penguin is stunning. The book features cover art by famed fashion illustrator Ruben Toledo. The same type of deluxe edition of *Wuthering Heights* is also available (and it makes the perfect companion to Case's book below).

*Case, Alison. [Nelly Dean](#)* (Pegasus \$25.95)  
Debut author Case reimagines life at *Wuthering Heights* through the eyes of the Earnshaw's loyal servant, young Nelly Dean. Nelly grows up with the Earnshaw children Cathy and Hindley but when orphan Heathcliff is adopted into the family, she finds herself pushed to the sidelines. Nelly later becomes the housekeeper to the Earnshaws and then tragically becomes roman

tically involved with Hindley, who never fulfills his promise that he will marry her. Fortunately, the local doctor's son is on hand to provide wise counsel and friendship. *Nelly Dean* is a fascinating, leisurely paced take on Emily Brontë's classic novel, and it gives readers a different perspective on the tragic family while also succeeding as novel in its own right.

*Coakley, Lena. [Worlds of Ink and Shadow](#) (Amulet \$17.95)*

Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne. The Brontë siblings find escape from their constricted lives via their rich imaginations. The glittering world of Verdopolis and the romantic and melancholy world of Gondal *literally* come to life under their pens, offering the sort of romance and intrigue missing from their isolated parsonage home. But at what price? As Branwell begins to slip into madness and the sisters feel their real lives slipping away, they must weigh the cost of their powerful imaginations, even as the characters they have created—the brooding Rogue and dashing Duke of Zamorna—refuse to let them go. This interesting mix of fact and fiction opens up a window into the Brontë family dynamics as well as their creative processes.

*Lowell, Catherine. [The Madwoman Upstairs Signed](#) (Touchstone \$25.99)*

As the last remaining descendant of the Brontë family, Samantha Whipple is rumored to have inherited a vital, mysterious portion of the Brontës literary estate—diaries, paintings, letters, and early novel drafts—a hidden fortune that's never been shown outside of the family. But Samantha has never seen this rumored literary treasure, and as far as she knows, it doesn't exist. But everything changes when Samantha enrolls at Oxford University and bits and pieces of her past start mysteriously arriving at her doorstep, beginning with an old novel annotated in her father's handwriting. As more and more bizarre clues arrive, Samantha soon realizes that her late father has left her an elaborate scavenger hunt using the world's greatest literature. With the aid of a handsome and elusive Oxford professor, Samantha must plunge into a vast literary mystery and an untold family legacy, one that can only be solved by decoding the clues hidden within the

Brontë's own writing. Brontë fans will gobble up this debut novel, which includes some interesting theories on the author's part about the family of writers. However, even if you have never read *Wuthering Heights* and have no idea who Heathcliff is, you can still enjoy Lowell's novel as a fun biblio-mystery seasoned with a generous dash of romance. In some ways it reminded me of the delightful early books Elizabeth Peters wrote like *Borrower of the Night* and *The Camelot Caper* before she began her Amelia Peabody series

## *History and Nonfiction*

*Duffy, James P. [War at the End of the World](#) (NAL \$27.95). New Guinea, 1942-45*

One American soldier called it "a green hell on earth." Monsoon-soaked wilderness, debilitating heat, impassable mountains, torrential rivers, and disease-infested swamps—New Guinea was a battleground far more deadly than the most fanatical of enemy troops. Japanese forces numbering some 600,000 men began landing in January 1942, determined to seize the island as a cornerstone of the Empire's strategy to knock Australia out of the war. Allied Commander-in-Chief General Douglas MacArthur committed 340,000 Americans, as well as tens of thousands of Australian, Dutch, and New Guinea troops, to retake New Guinea at all costs. What followed was a four-year campaign that involved some of the most horrific warfare in history. At first emboldened by easy victories throughout the Pacific, the Japanese soon encountered in New Guinea a roadblock akin to the Germans' disastrous attempt to take Moscow, a catastrophic setback to their war machine. For the Americans, victory in New Guinea was the first essential step in the long march towards the Japanese home islands and the ultimate destruction of Hirohito's empire. Winning the war in New Guinea was of critical importance to MacArthur. His avowed "I shall return" to the Philippines could only be accomplished after taking the island.



*Egginton, William. [The Man Who Invented Fiction](#) (Bloomsbury \$27)*

In the early seventeenth century, a crippled, graying, almost toothless veteran of Spain's wars against the Ottoman Empire published a book. It was the story of a poor nobleman, his brain addled from reading too many books of chivalry, who deludes himself that he is a knight errant and sets off on hilarious adventures. That book, *Don Quixote*, went on to sell more copies than any other book beside the Bible, making its author, Miguel de Cervantes, the single most-read author in human history. Cervantes did more than just publish a bestseller, though. He invented a way of writing. This book is about how Cervantes came to create what we now call fiction, and how fiction changed the world. *The Man Who Invented Fiction* explores Cervantes's life and the world he lived in, showing how his influences converged in his work, and how his work—especially *Don Quixote*--radically changed the nature of literature and created a new way of viewing the world. Finally, it explains how that worldview went on to infiltrate art, politics, and science, and how the world today would be unthinkable without it. 2016 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Cervantes, and Egginton's book is an excellent introduction as well as tribute to the author and to the book that many critics have called the greatest novel of all time.

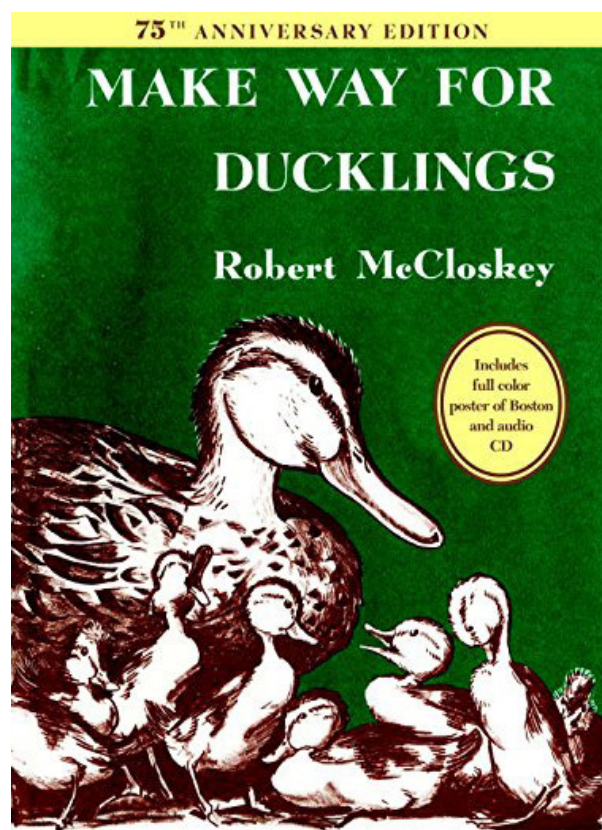
*Jeffery, Keith. [1916 A Global History](#) (Bloomsbury \$30)*

Starting in January with the end of the catastrophic Gallipoli campaign, Jeffrey recounts the massive struggle for Verdun in February and March; the Easter Rising in Ireland in April that almost pulled England out of the war; dramatic events in Russia in June on the eastern front; the largely untold story of the war in East Africa, where some 200,000 Africans may have died; and the November U.S. presidential race in which Woodrow Wilson was re-elected on a platform of keeping the United States out of the war--a position he reversed within three months. Incorporating the stories of civilians in all countries, both participants in and victims of the war, *1916: A Global History* provides a vivid account of some of the significant political and historical events that took place in the different countries around

the globe involved in World War I while at the same time bringing them down to a personal level through the stories of various individuals, who were swept up in the tide of history.

## *Happy Birthday Ducklings!*

*McCloskey, Robe. [Make Way for Ducklings 75th Anniversary Edition](#) (Viking \$24.99)*



Seventy-five years ago, a family of ducks waddled off the page and into the hearts of readers everywhere. The brilliantly illustrated tale of mallards on the move received the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished picture book of the year, and has been a favorite of generations of readers. Now celebrate the anniversary of *Make Way for Ducklings* with this special slipcased edition, which includes an audio CD as well as a landmark poster of the ducklings' Boston by Caldecott Award-winner Paul Zelinsky.



