

# Midmonth BookNotes

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## Dive Deep into a Cool Book

### Sleuthing with a Side of Snark

**Garrett, Kellye.** [Hollywood Ending](#)

Tinseltown's awards season is in full swing, and everyone is obsessed with dressing up, scoring free swag, and getting invited to the biggest awards shows of the year. But when celebrity publicist Lyla Davis is killed, the festive mood comes to an abrupt halt. Apprentice private eye Dayna Anderson thinks she's uncovered the killer. Unfortunately, what starts as an open-and-shut case turns out to be anything but. Diving deeper into the investigation, Dayna gets a backstage look at gossip blogging, Hollywood royalty, and one of entertainment's most respected awards shows—all while trying to avoid her own Hollywood ending. Garrett nabbed a well-deserved Edgar award for the first book, *Hollywood Homicide*, in this marvelously entertaining series, and her second mystery featuring the sharp-tongued and sharp-witted Dayna Anderson is every bit as good.

**Handler, David.** [The Man Who Couldn't Miss](#)

(William Morrow \$15.99)

Celebrity ghostwriter Stewart "Hoagy" Hoag and his faithful basset hound Lulu are hanging out in Connecticut, where Hoagy's ex-wife (and Oscar-winning actress) Merilee Nash is directing a stage production to benefit a local theater.



But when one of the many star-wannabe cast members is found murdered, it's up to Hoagy (and Lulu) to ring down the curtain on the killer. This is the tenth in the Edgar Award-winning series by Handler featuring Hoagy, and the author's deliciously dry sense of wit is just as entertaining as it was in the first of the series. If you like traditional mysteries served up with a generous slice of wry humor, you really can't afford to miss this (pun intended).

**Phillips, Adam Walker.** [The Big Con](#)

(Prospect Park \$16)

Chuck Restic, HR manager and part-time private investigator, has a problem: the consultant guru Julie St. Jean is the bane of his existence. Over his twenty-year HR career, he's been forced to partner with her on inane employee engagement programs whose only value has been to Julie's sizable bank account. When Julie is suddenly wanted for the murder of an associate, Chuck sees his chance to rid himself of her forever, until the corporate tables are turned on him and he must find the elusive figure or risk losing his job. The search uncovers a dark past of murder and stolen identity. And what begins as a search to save his corporate neck soon turns one a lot more literal. Take Emma Lathen's John Putnam Thatcher series and cross it with the television show *The Office*, and that will give you an idea of the literary flavor of this mystery. Anyone who has been forced to sit through corporate mandated staff training (or, worse yet "teambuilding exercises") will find much to love in the latest entry in Phillips' effortlessly engaging series.

## More Fiction, Mysteries, Romances, etc.

**Barclay, Linwood.** [A Noise Downstairs](#)  
(HarperCollins \$26.99)

Paul Davis thought he was helping out his friend and colleague Kenneth Hoffman when he followed Kenneth's car home late one night. From what Paul could tell from his driving, Kenneth seemed to have had a bit too much to drink. However, when Paul caught up to Kenneth on a dark and deserted road, he discovers his fellow professor isn't drunk but is instead a murderer trying to dispose of the bodies of two women. Fortunately, before Kenneth can make Paul his victim number three, a cop shows up. Now months later, Paul is still trying to get over the incident when his wife Charlotte decides to do something to help cheer him up by buying Paul a vintage typewriter, so that he can get started on that novel he has always wanted to write. Then late one night, Paul wakes up and he can swear he hears the sound of someone typing. But when Paul comes downstairs, there is no one there. Who knew a typewriter could be so scary? You will after reading this twisty, cleverly crafted suspense novel. Not only does Barclay deliver a storyline that will keep you up way past your regularly scheduled bedtime, he throws in not one but two jaw-dropping twists at the end as well.

**Brooks, Karen.** [The Locksmith's Daughter](#)  
(Harper \$15.99)

Locksmith's daughter Mallory Bright, who is just as good at cracking locks as her father, is drawn into the dangerous world of Queen Elizabeth's spy-master and begins to have second thoughts when she sees the brutal side of espionage. Australian author Brooks first came up with the idea for *The Locksmith's Daughter* when her husband accidentally broke off the key to his car in the ignition. While watching a locksmith repair the damage, Brooks became fascinated by the tools of his trade. If your idea of reading heaven is to immerse yourself in another time and place, then this is definitely the book for you.

**Campbell, Michele.** [She Was the Quiet One](#)  
(St. Martins \$26.99)

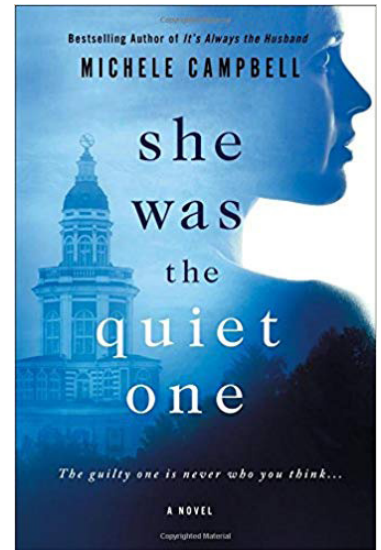
From the author of *It's Always the Husband* comes a riveting new suspense novel about privilege, pow-

er, and what happens when we let ambition take control. When twin sisters Rose and Bel Enright enroll in The Odell School, a prestigious New Hampshire boarding school, it seems like the opportunity of a lifetime. But the sisters could not be more different. The school brings out a rivalry between them that few ever knew existed. And the

school itself has a dark reputation as being a place where privileged kids run unchecked and uninhibited; of rituals and traditions that are more sinister than they seem; of wealth and entitlement that can only lead to disaster. For Sarah Donovan, wife of an ambitious teacher who has just been put in charge of shaping up Moreland Hall (a.k.a. the "slut dorm"), Odell also seems like a wonderful professional and personal opportunity for their small family. But how well does she really know her husband? What lengths will he go to achieve his goals? And when one dark night ends in murder, who is guilty, who knows the truth, and who has been in on it all along? Campbell writes a like a dream (thus proving should once and for all that crime fiction can also be literary fiction), but she also knows exactly how to delight suspense fans by delivering a subtly crafted plot that packs a powerful final punch. *She Was the Quiet One* is reminiscent of Patricia Highsmith or Margaret Millar at their best.

**Dalcher, Christina.** [Vox](#)  
(Berkley \$26)

The average human uses more than 16,000 words a day, but what if you were limited to only one hundred words per day to express yourself? That is the chilling premise behind this brilliantly original debut novel in which in a near-future America, the conservative government limits women – yes, just women – to no more than one hundred spoken words daily. Soon women's education and employment outside the home are outlawed as well. Now a former doctor resolves to be heard if only for the sake of her daughter. Dalcher, a linguist by training, originally wrote *Vox* as a 700-word piece of flash fiction for a writing

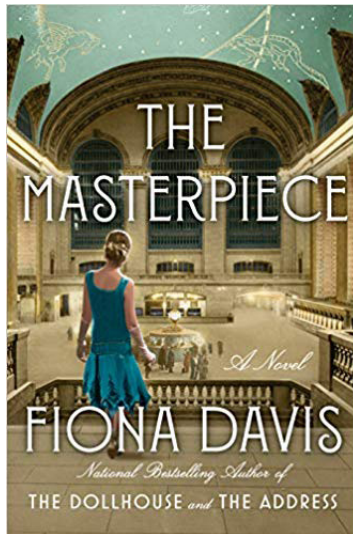


contest with a doomsday theme. Now the revised novel is garnering a number of starred reviews from professional sources as well as earning comparisons to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

**Davis, Fiona.** [The Masterpiece](#)

(Penguin \$26)

For the nearly nine million people who live in New York City, Grand Central Terminal is a crown jewel, a masterpiece of design. But for Clara Darden and Virginia Clay, it represents something quite different. For Clara, the terminal is the stepping stone to her future, which she is certain will shine as brightly as the constellations on the main concourse ceiling. It is 1928, and twenty-five-year-old Clara is teaching at the lauded Grand Central School of Art. A talented illustrator, she has dreams of creating cover art for *Vogue*, but not even the prestige of the school can override the public's disdain for a "woman artist." Brash, fiery, confident, and single-minded—even while juggling the affections of two men, a wealthy would-be poet and a brilliant experimental painter—Clara is determined to achieve every creative success. But she and her bohemian friends have no idea that they'll soon be blindsided by the looming Great Depression. Nearly fifty years later, in 1974, the terminal has declined almost as sharply as Virginia Clay's life. Recently divorced, Virginia has just accepted a job in the information booth in order to support herself and her college-age daughter, Ruby. But when Virginia stumbles upon an abandoned art school within the terminal and discovers a striking watercolor hidden under the dust, her eyes are opened to the elegance beneath the decay. She embarks on a quest to find the artist of the unsigned masterpiece—an impassioned chase that draws Virginia not only into the battle to save Grand Central but deep into the mystery of Clara Darden, the famed 1920s illustrator who disappeared from history in 1931. Davis is wonderfully creative when it comes to finding some piece of architecture around which she anchors her stories, including her two previous novels *The Dollhouse*,



which revolved around NYC's glamorous Barbizon Hotel for Women, and *The Address*, which was set at the famous Dakota building.

**Defino, Terri-Lynne.** [Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers](#) (Harper \$15.99)

Set on the water in one of New England's most beautiful locales, the Bar Harbor Home was established specifically for elderly writers needing a place to live out their golden years—or final days—in understated luxury and surrounded by congenial literary company. A faithful staff of nurses and orderlies surround the writers, and are drawn into their orbit, as they are forced to reckon with their own life stories. Among them are Cecibel Bringer, a young woman who knows first-hand the cost of chasing excess. A terrible accident destroyed her face and her sister in a split-second decision that Cecibel can never forgive, though she has tried to forget. Living quietly as an orderly, refusing to risk again the cost of love, Cecibel never anticipated the impact of meeting her favorite writer, Alfonse Carducci—or the effect he would have on her existence. In *Cecibel*, Alfonse finds a muse who returns him to the passion he thought he lost. As the words flow from him, weaving a tale taken up by the other residents of the Pen, Cecibel is reawakened to the idea of love and forgiveness.

**Elkins, Aaron.** [A Long Time Coming](#)

(Thomas and Mercer \$15.95)

Met art curator Val Caruso's life – both personally and professionally – seems to have hit a bump in the road. In addition to being passed over for a promotion at work, Val is about to turn forty and his divorce is about to become final. So, the opportunity to literary get out of town couldn't have come at a better time. In just a few days, Val will be off to Milan to help coordinate the arrival in the US of an Italian art exhibit from the collections of the *Pinacoteca di Brera*, Milan's world-class art museum. Of course, since he will be in Milan, Val's old friend Esther Lindauer, the Director of the Institute for the Recovery of Stolen Art, has a little errand for him to run. Esther needs Val's help in negotiating the return (or at least the loan back) of a couple of Renoir paintings that were once owned by Holocaust survivor Sol Bezzacca's family. Val thinks he may just have found a way to convince everyone involved with the auction of the paintings to loan one piece back to Sol when things in Milan take a dangerous turn, and Val

discovers someone is trying desperately to paint him out of the picture. In addition to racking up a number of awards – including an Edgar, and Agatha, and Nero Wolfe – former anthropology professor Elkins is credited with starting the forensic mystery subgenre with the publication of his 1982 Gideon Oliver novel *A Fellowship of Fear*.

**Giffin, Emily.** [All We Ever Wanted](#)  
(Random \$28)

After the daughter of a single father becomes a victim due to a social media photograph taken by her son, Nina Browning, a member of Nashville's elite, must make a difficult choice when she finds herself relating more to the single father than to her husband and her wealthy community. Social class and social media become the main ingredients in Giffin's latest absorbing and thoughtful women's fiction novel.

**Griffin, Laura.** [Desperate Girls](#)  
(Gallery \$16)

When a vicious murderer she once helped prosecute resurfaces and launches a killing spree to avenge himself against those who put him behind bars, successful defense attorney Brynn Holloran is forced to investigate a disturbing case from her past and hire a private bodyguard to protect her. *PW* was just one of the other review sources that loved *Desperate Girls* saying "Griffin pulls out all the stops in a phenomenal twist ending that will leave readers stunned." If you like the kind of suspense Sandra Brown and Nora Roberts writes, Griffin will be right up your reading alley.

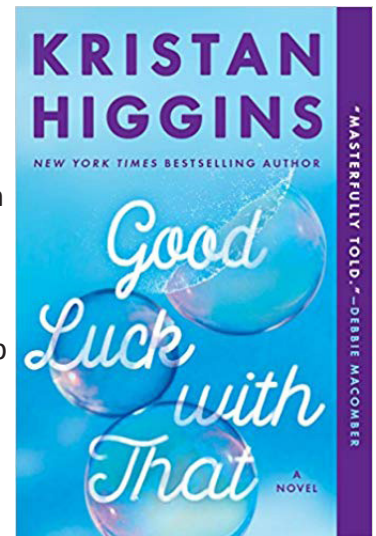
**Harris, Anstey.** [Goodbye Paris](#)  
(Touchstone \$26)

After her long-term partner breaks up with her, Grace Atherton, who owns a violin shop, is faced with feelings of intense loneliness, but when she becomes friends with an elderly musician and a young teenager they give her the strength to rebuild her life. This debut is quickly garnering great word of mouth and is styled as being another real find in the current "Feel Good" fiction trend.

**Higgins, Kristan.** [Good Luck with That](#)  
(Penguin \$16)

Emerson, Georgia, and Marley have been best friends ever since they met at a weight-loss camp as teens. When Emerson tragically passes away, she leaves

one final wish for her best friends: to conquer the fears they still carry as adults. For each of them, that means something different. For Marley, it's coming to terms with the survivor's guilt she's carried around since her twin sister's death, which has left her blind to the real chance for romance in her life. For Georgia, it's about learning to stop trying to live up to her mother's and brother's ridiculous standards, and learning to accept the love her ex-husband has



tried to give her. But as Marley and Georgia grow stronger, the real meaning of Emerson's dying wish becomes truly clear: more than anything, she wanted her friends to love themselves. Size does matter. At least, that is what every woman tells herself when it comes to her own body. Body image and self-acceptance are tough topics to write about, but Higgins does so with great insight and empathy in her latest intensely moving novel. Will you cry while reading this? Yes. Will you laugh as well? Yes. Will it change how you view others as well as yourself? Quite possibly. All of these things are a testament to RITA award-winning Higgins great gifts as a writer.

**Hollis, Lee.** [Poppy Harmon Investigates](#)  
(Kensington \$26)

When Poppy goes from complacent retiree to penniless widow in a matter of weeks, the idea of spending her golden years as the biggest charity case in Palm Springs renders her speechless. With no real skills and nothing left to lose, Poppy uses her obsession with true crime shows to start a career as a private eye. But after opening the Desert Flowers Detective Agency with help from her two best friends, Violet and Iris, Poppy realizes that age brings wisdom, not business—until she convinces her daughter's handsome boyfriend, Matt, to pose as the face of the agency. It's not long before Matt's irresistible act snags a client desperate to retrieve priceless jewelry burglarized from an aging actress at the Palm Leaf Retirement Village. Or before Poppy stumbles upon the bloodied body of the victim's arch rival. Looking for something fun to read this month? This series

launch by Hollis, who also writes the Hayley Powell series, is an absolute hoot. Think *The Golden Girls* crossed with *Remington Steele* (which isn't terribly surprising since Hollis has had previous experience in Hollywood writing for television).

**Honigford, Cheryl.** [Dig Deep My Grave](#)

(Sourcebooks \$15.99)

Radio star Vivian Witchell has finally mustered up the courage to invite her long-time love interest, Charlie, to meet her family at their luxurious cottage on Geneva Lake. But the visit goes terribly wrong when an old flame of Vivian's turns up dead--and it looks like Charlie might be the culprit. Set in the glittering world of the 1930s Chicago radio scene, Vivian is locked in a race against the clock to solve the murder and save the man she loves before she loses him forever. This is the third, preceded by *The Darkness Knows* and *Homicide for the Holidays*, in the series, and it is chock full of period atmosphere and plenty of snappy dialogue.

**Hoover, Colleen.** [All Your Perfects](#)

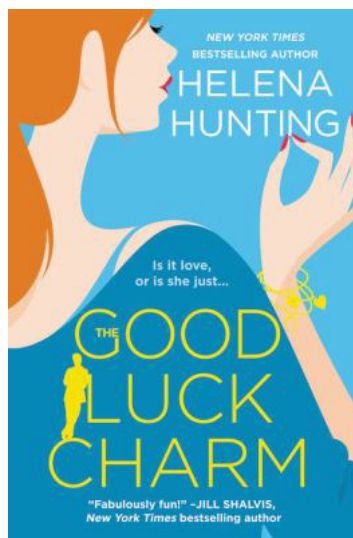
(Atria \$16)

Quinn and Graham's perfect love is threatened by their imperfect marriage. The memories, mistakes, and secrets that they have built up over the years are now tearing them apart. The one thing that could save them might also be the very thing that pushes their marriage beyond the point of repair. Want your contemporary romances served up with plenty of emotional angst and drama? Then Hoover will definitely be the one.

**Hunting, Helena.** [The Good Luck Charm](#)

(Grand Central \$14.99)

Eight years after he left his high school sweetheart Delilah Jane for a career with the NHL in Los Angeles, Ethan Kase returns home to Forest Lake, Minnesota when his father suffers a stroke. At first Lilah, who is working as a nurse in the hospital where Ethan's father is recuperating, wants nothing to do with Ethan. Long ago, Ethan realized



his mistake in breaking up with Lilah, and he is now doing his best to convince her to take him back. But given her past history with men – and in particular Ethan – Lilah just isn't sure. Especially once she discovers Ethan thinks of her as his "lucky charm" and may believe she is the key to his professional success.

**Jaeger, Meredith.** [Boardwalk Summer](#)

(Harper \$15.99)

When auburn-haired Violet Harcourt is crowned Miss California on the boardwalk of her hometown in the summer of 1940, she knows she is one step closer to her cherished dream: a Hollywood screen test. But Violet's victory comes with a price—discord in her seemingly perfect marriage—and she grapples with how much more she is willing to pay. In 2007, single mother Marisol Cruz lives with her parents in the charming beach cottage that belonged to her grandfather, Ricardo, once a famed performer on the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Drawn to the town's local history and the quaint gazebo where her grandparents danced beneath the stars, Mari sells raffle tickets at the Beach Boardwalk Centennial Celebration, and meets Jason, a California transplant from Chicago. When Mari discovers the obituary of Violet Harcourt, a beauty queen who died too young, she and Jason are sent on a journey together that will uncover her grandfather's lifelong secret—his connection to Violet—a story of tragedy and courage that will forever transform them.

**Jefferies, Dina.** [The Sapphire Widow](#)

(Crown \$26)

Louisa Reeve always believed there were no secrets between herself and her husband Elliot. Then Elliot tragically dies, and Louisa discovers he has been hiding quite a few things from her including the real nature of his "business" visits to nearby Cinnamon Hills as well as a mountain of business debts with which Louisa must now deal. Now as Louisa tries to unravel the tangled web of lies Elliot left behind, she finds herself turning more and more to Leo McNairn, the distractingly handsome owner of Cinnamon Hills, for answers. As she did with her American debut novel *The Tea Planter's Wife* (2016), British author Jeffries proves she is unrivaled when it comes to whisking readers back to the exotic, intriguing world of Ceylon in the 1930s

**Kim, Crystal Hana.** [If You Leave Me](#)  
(HarperCollins \$26.99)

When the communist-backed army from the north invades her home, sixteen-year-old Haemi Lee, along with her widowed mother and ailing brother, is forced to flee to a refugee camp along the coast. For a few hours each night, she escapes her family's makeshift home and tragic circumstances with her childhood friend, Kyunghwan. Focused on finishing school, Kyunghwan doesn't realize his older and wealthier cousin, Jisoo, has his sights set on the beautiful and spirited Haemi—and is determined to marry her before joining the fight. But as Haemi becomes a wife, then a mother, her decision to forsake the boy she always loved for the security of her family sets off a dramatic saga that will have profound effects for generations to come. Kim was inspired by stories of her grandmother to write this haunting, bittersweet novel.

**MacNeal, Susan Elia.** [The Prisoner in the Castle](#)  
(Bantam \$26)

Forbidden Island is where the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) sends all of its problems. Of course, the SOE doesn't tell the agents it sends there the truth, but instead tells these future prisoners that they are being sent to the out-of-the-way island off the coast of Scotland for "special training." As the SOE's latest problem, Maggie Hope hates being on Forbidden Island. Maggie wants to be back in the thick of things doing her part to help win the war for the Allies instead of spending her days slowly being driven mad by boredom. However, any thoughts of *ennui* are soon banished when first one, then another, and then another of the small group of carefully trained agents on Forbidden Island begin dying. *The Prisoner in the Castle*, the eight stellar addition to MacNeal's exceptional Maggie Hope series, is another literary *tour de force*. From the book's perfectly calibrated plot to its incisively etched characters, everything is handled with perfect finesse by the author. Agatha Christie fans will especially ap-



preciate the deft way in which MacNeal tips her cap to the Queen of Crime's *And Then There Were None*, and the inventive manner in which MacNeal utilizes that classic mystery as inspiration for her own cleverly crafted storyline. The Poisoned Pen still has a few signed copies left of this marvelous book.

**Montefiore. Santa.** [The Secret of the Irish Castle](#)  
(HarperCollins \$15.99)

When Martha Wallace leaves her home in America to search for her birth mother in Dublin, she never imagines that she will completely lose her heart to the impossibly charming JP Deverill. But more surprises are in store for her after she discovers that her mother comes from the same place as JP, sealing her fate. Bridie Doyle, now Countess di Marcantonio and mistress of Castle Deverill, is determined to make the castle she used to work in her home. But just as she begins to feel things are finally going her way, her flamboyant husband Cesare has other ideas. Kitty Deverill has come to accept her life with her husband Robert, and their two children. But then Jack O'Leary, the love of her life, returns to Ballinakelly. And this time his heart belongs elsewhere. Montefiore began her Deverill Chronicles series at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with *The Girl in the Castle* and *The Daughters of Ireland*. If you love those long, juicy historical family sagas by authors like Barbara Taylor Bradford, Montefiore will be a real treat.

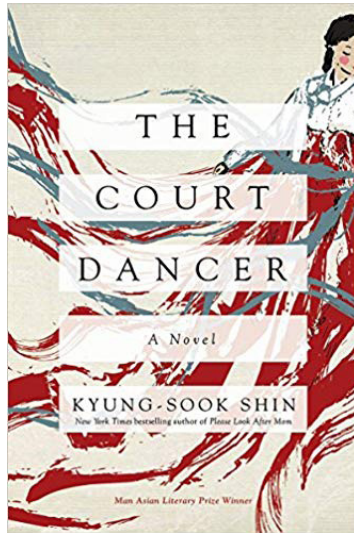
**Randall, Shari.** [Against the Claw](#)  
(St. Martins \$7.99)

Ballerina Allie Larkin is still back home at Mystic Bay, healing up from a broken ankle and lending a hand at her aunt's Lazy Mermaid Lobster Shack. But now that the famed restaurant is branching out into the world of catering, Allie's help is needed more than ever—even on the lobster boat. The last thing she expects to find once she's out on the bay, however, is the dead body of a beautiful young woman. When days pass and not even the police can ID the corpse, Allie takes it upon herself to learn the truth about what happened. Her investigation leads her all the way from the local piers to the secluded estates of Mystic Bay's posh elite. But how can she crack this case when everyone seems dead-set on keeping their secrets beneath the surface? Strong on setting and gifted with an entertainingly quirky cast of characters, this is Randall's second book featuring Allie Larkin, after *Curses, Boiled Again!*.

**Shin, Kyung-Sook.** [The Court Dancer](#)

(WW Norton \$25.95)

When a novice French diplomat arrives for an audience with the Emperor, he is enraptured by the Joseon Dynasty's magnificent culture, then at its zenith. But all fades away when he sees Yi Jin perform the delicate traditional Dance of the Spring Oriole. Though well aware that women of the court belong to the palace, the young diplomat confesses his love to the Emperor, and gains permission for Yi Jin to accompany him back to France. A world away in Belle Epoque Paris, Yi Jin lives a free, independent life, away from the gilded cage of the court, and begins translating and publishing Joseon literature into French with another Korean student. But even in this new world, great sorrow awaits her. Yi Jin's grieving and suffering is only amplified by homesickness and a longing for her oldest friend. But her homecoming was not a happy one. Betrayal, jealousy, and intrigue abound, culminating with the tragic assassination of the last Joseon empress—and the poisoned pages of a book. Shin, South Korea's most widely read novelist and the *New York Times* best-selling author of *Please Look After Mom*, based this richly detailed historical novel on a true story.



**Spencer, Lavyrle.** [Fulfillment](#)

(Harper \$15.99)

Two brothers work a rich and bountiful land—and one extraordinary woman shares their lives. To Jonathan Gray, Mary is a devoted and giving mate. To Aaron, she is a beloved friend. But seven childless years of marriage have forced Jonathan to ask the unthinkable of his brother and his wife—binding the two people he cares for most with an act of desire born of compassion . . . awakening Mary to the pain of infidelity, and to all the bittersweet joy and heartache that passionate love can bring. Harper has been reprinting some of Spencer's novels from the past including *Fulfillment*, which was her debut romance originally published in 1979. Spencer set the book on her family's farm in Minnesota, and when she was

done with the first draft, she sent it off to Kathleen Woodiwiss (the reigning Queen of Historical Romances at the time), who was so impressed with the manuscript she sent it to her editor at Avon. And the rest, as they say, is publishing history.

**Walsh, Rosie.** [Ghosed](#)

(Penguin \$26)

When Sarah meets Eddie in London, they connect instantly and fall in love. To Sarah, it seems as though her life has finally begun. And it's mutual: It's as though Eddie has been waiting for her, too. Sarah has never been so certain of anything. So, when Eddie leaves for a long-booked vacation and promises to call from the airport, she has no cause to doubt him. But he doesn't call. Sarah's friends tell her to forget about him, but she can't. She knows something's happened—there must be an explanation. Minutes, days, weeks go by as Sarah becomes increasingly worried. But then she discovers she's right. There is a reason for Eddie's disappearance, and it's the one thing they didn't share with each other: the truth. "Gut-wrenching." Heartbreaking." "Truly surprising." "Bittersweet." These are just some of the words used to describe this remarkable debut novel, which focuses on the modern dating concept of "ghosting," that has been garnering a considerable amount of both pre and post publication buzz.

**Wiggs, Susan.** [The Summer Hideaway](#)

(Mira \$15.99)

Private nurse and protected witness Claire Turner lives by the motto "never get attached." Now in the twilight of his life, George Bellamy makes it his final wish to reconcile with an estranged brother. He and Claire journey to Willow Lake—where it all went wrong for him fifty years ago. George's grandson, Ross, is ruled by a fierce devotion to family and a deep mistrust of the mysterious Claire...yet sparks fly whenever she's near. In the face of wrenching loss, amid the enchantment of Willow Lake, Ross and Claire dare to risk everything for love.

**Youngson, Anne.** [Meet Me at the Museum](#)

(Flatiron \$23.99)

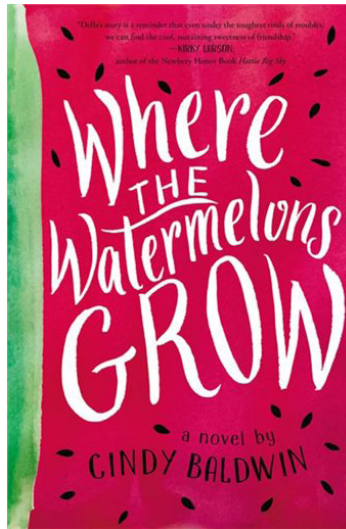
Two people find their lives forever changed when they begin exchanging letters with each other in this charming, quietly powerful epistolary novel. Stuck on an isolated farm in East Anglia, Tina Hopgood writes to Professor Glob, archaeologist and author

of *The Bog People* fifty years after the publication of his book which celebrated the finding of the Tollund Man. Since Professor Glob has long departed from the mortal world (not surprising given that his book was published more than fifty years earlier) Tina's letter is answered by Professor Anders Larsen of the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark. Now brought together by their shared fascination for the Tollund Man, Tina and Anders begin communicating with each other through a series of letters that demonstrate despite the fact they come from two very different worlds, they have much more in common with one another than they ever could have imagined. Exquisitely subtle and unexpectedly heartwarming, this lovely little novel will remind readers – in the best possible way – of such other “letter” books as *84 Charing Cross Road* and *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*.

## Young Adult Novels

**Baldwin, Cindy.** [Where the Watermelons Grow](#)  
(HarperCollins \$16.99)

When twelve-year-old Della Kelly finds her mother furiously digging black seeds from a watermelon in the middle of the night and talking to people who aren't there, Della worries that it's happening again—that the sickness that put her mama in the hospital four years ago is back. That her mama is going to be hospitalized for months like she was last time. With her daddy struggling to save the farm and her mama in denial about what's happening, it's up to Della to heal her mama for good. And she knows just how she'll do it: with a jar of the Bee Lady's magic honey, which has mended the wounds and woes of Maryville, North Carolina, for generations. But when the Bee Lady says that the solution might have less to do with fixing Mama's brain and more to do with healing her own heart, Della must learn that love means accepting her mama just as she is. A lyrically written and thoughtful look at mental illness that in the closing



words of *Kirkus'* review is “as sweet as Della's daddy's watermelons but never saccharin.”

**Barton, Bree.** [Heart of Thorns](#)  
(HarperCollins \$17.99)

In the ancient river kingdom, where touch is a battlefield and bodies the instruments of war, Mia Rose has pledged her life to hunting Gwyrach: women who can manipulate flesh, bones, breath, and blood. The same women who killed her mother without a single scratch. But when Mia's father announces an alliance with the royal family, she is forced to trade in her knives and trousers for a sumptuous silk gown. Determined to forge her own path forward, Mia plots a daring escape, but could never predict the greatest betrayal of all: her own body since Mia possesses the very magic she has sworn to destroy. This debut novel quickly caught the attention of review sources including PW, which concluded their starred review with “A gripping, complex narrative balances emotion and logic in this trilogy opener, while vividly crafted characters and cinematic details create a world readers will want to get lost in.”

## Nonfiction

**Bailey, Chris.** [Hyperfocus](#)  
(Viking \$27.99)

Our attention has never been as overwhelmed as it is today. Many of us recognize that our brains struggle to multitask. Despite this, we feel compelled to do so anyway while we fill each moment of our lives to the brim with mindless distraction. *Hyperfocus provides profound insights into how you can best take charge of your attention to achieve a greater sense of purpose and productivity throughout the day* by exploring topics such as identifying and dealing with four key types of distraction and interruption and learning when to pay attention and when to let your mind wander wherever it wants to.

**Beiser, Vince.** [The World in a Grain](#)  
(Riverhead \$28)

After water and air, sand is the natural resource that we consume more than any other—even more than oil. Every concrete building and paved road on Earth, every computer screen and silicon chip, is made from sand. From Egypt's pyramids to the Hubble telescope, from the world's tallest skyscraper to



the sidewalk below it, from Chartres' stained-glass windows to your iPhone, sand shelters us, empowers us, engages us, and inspires us. It's the ingredient that makes possible our cities, our science, our lives--and our future. And, incredibly, we're running out of it. *The World in a Grain is the compelling true story of the hugely important and diminishing natural resource that grows more essential every day, and of the people who mine it, sell it, build with it--and sometimes, even kill for it.* If you love single subject histories like Mark Kurlansky's *Cod* (highly recommended by the way) or just want to learn more about those particles that pass through an hourglass, this is a fascinating and engaging book about a substance so many of us take for granted.

**Chertoff, Michael.** [Exploding Data](#) (Grove/Atlantic \$26)

The most dangerous threat we—individually and as a society and country—face today is no longer military, but rather the increasingly pervasive exposure of our personal information; nothing undermines our freedom more than losing control of information about ourselves. And yet, as daily events underscore, we are ever more vulnerable to cyber-attack. In this bracing book, Michael Chertoff, the former Secretary of Homeland Security, makes clear that our laws and policies surrounding the protection of personal information, written for an earlier time, need to be completely overhauled in the Internet era.

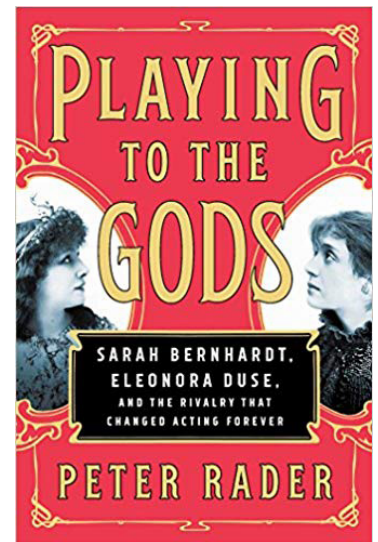
**Lamont, Peter and Jim Steinmeyer.** [The Secret History of Magic](#) (Perigee \$28)

Two renowned historians of stage magic team up to produce this definitive, engaging, gorgeously illustrated history of stage magic, from Ancient Egypt to David Copperfield. If you read the standard history of magic, you learn that it begins in ancient Egypt, with the resurrection of a goose before the Pharaoh. You discover how magicians were tortured and killed during the age of witchcraft. You hear colorful tales of conjurers who used their unique skills to deceive the enemy in war. The history of magic is full of such stories, which turn out not to be true. Behind the smoke and mirrors, however, lies the real story of magic. It is a history of people from humble roots, who made and lost fortunes, and who deceived kings and queens. In order to survive, they concealed many secrets, yet they revealed some and they stole others. They exposed the methods of mediums and

psychics. They engaged in deception, exposure, and betrayal, in a quest to make the impossible happen. An ongoing series of technological wonders appeared, which previous generations would have considered magical. And yet in a world in which the most sophisticated technology is now taken for granted, we can still be astonished by tricks that were performed hundreds of years ago.

**Rader, Peter.** [Playing to the Gods](#) (Simon and Schuster \$26)

Actresses Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse are the Katy Perry and Taylor Swift of the nineteenth century. The two women could not be more different, and the feud between Bernhardt and Duse was legendary. Audiences across Europe and the Americas clamored to see the divine Sarah Bernhardt swoon—and she gave them their money's worth. The world's first superstar, she traveled with a chimpanzee named Darwin and a pet alligator that drank champagne, shamelessly supplementing her income by endorsing everything from aperitifs to beef bouillon, and spreading rumors that she slept in a coffin to better understand the macabre heroines she played. Eleonora Duse shied away from the spotlight. Born to a penniless family of itinerant troubadours, she disappeared into the characters she portrayed—channeling their spirits, she claimed. Her new, empathetic style of acting revolutionized the theater—and earned her the ire of Sarah Bernhardt in what would become the most tumultuous theatrical showdown of the nineteenth century. Bernhardt and Duse seduced each other's lovers, stole one another's favorite playwrights, and took to the world's stages to outperform their rival in her most iconic roles.



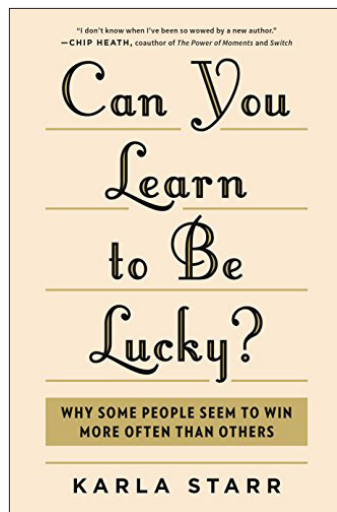
**Rioux, Anne Boyd.** [Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters](#) (WW Norton \$27.95)

Just in time to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Little Women*, comes this insightful look at the novel and its impact on American society.

Soon after publication on September 30, 1868, *Little Women* became an enormous bestseller and one of America's favorite novels. Its popularity quickly spread throughout the world, and the book has become an international classic. When Anne Boyd Rioux read the novel in her twenties, she had a powerful reaction to the story. Through teaching the book, she has seen the same effect on many others. In *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy*, Rioux recounts how Louisa May Alcott came to write *Little Women*, drawing inspiration for it from her own life. Rioux also examines why this tale of family and community ties, set while the Civil War tore America apart, has resonated through later wars, the Depression, and times of changing opportunities for women.

**Starr, Karla.** [Can You Learn to Be Lucky?](#) (Penguin \$27)

An award-winning journalist describes how the invisible biases of the world work together to create what is perceived as both good luck and bad luck and explains how to harness the possibilities and improve your fortunes.



**Stevens, Nell.** [The Victorian and the Romantic](#) (Knopf \$26.95)

In 1857, English novelist Elizabeth Gaskell completed her most famous work: the biography of her dear friend Charlotte Brontë. As publication loomed, Mrs. Gaskell was keen to escape the reviews. So, leaving her dull minister husband and dreary provincial city behind, she set off with her daughters to Rome. There she met a dazzling group of artists and writers, among them the American critic Charles Eliot Norton. Seventeen years her junior, Norton was her one true love. They could not be together--it would be an unthinkable breach of convention--but by his side and amidst that splendid circle, Mrs. Gaskell knew she had reached the "tip-top point of [her] life." In 2013, Nell Stevens is embarking on her PhD--about the community of artists and writers living in Rome in the mid-19th century--and falling head over heels for a soulful American screenwriter in another city. As her long-distance romance founders and her passion for academia never quite materializes, she is drawn

to Mrs. Gaskell. Could this indomitable Victorian author rescue Nell's pursuit of love, family and a writing career?

Wolf, Maryanne. [Reader, Come Home](#) (HarperCollins \$24.99)

Is the internet changing the way we read books? Yes, according to Wolf, a neuroscientist specializing in reading and language development as well as the author of *Proust and the Squid*. The constant stream of information we encounter today – presented more and more often in easily digestible bits (or bytes) that can fit neatly onto the myriad of device screens we use – is reshaping our minds (and not necessarily for the better). Or, in the easily understandable words of Wolf “it is rewiring the circuitry of our brain.” At the heart of the book is Wolf’s fear that we are losing the ability for “deep reading” or the ability to process the information we take in and synthesize this into “wisdom.” This skill for deep reading is what also allows us as readers to ponder different worlds and cultures and to learn how to empathize with others. Given the reduction in deep reading is it any surprise there seems to be much more civil discourse and partisan discord in the world today? Fortunately, Wolf does offer her prescription for building a “biliterate” brain. Necessary reading for anyone who cares about the future of books and society.