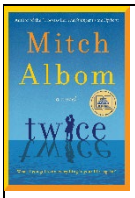
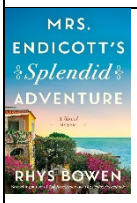
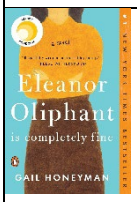
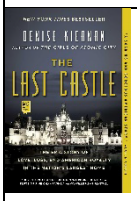
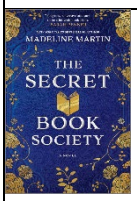
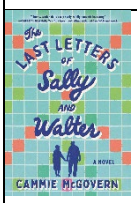
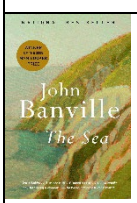
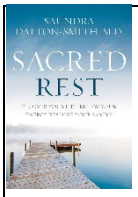
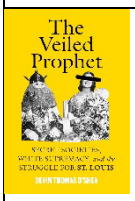
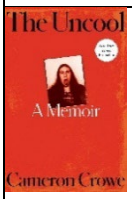
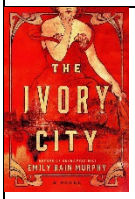
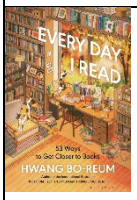
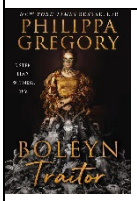
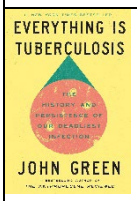
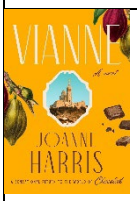
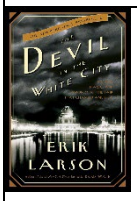
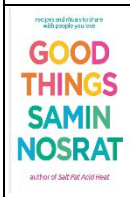
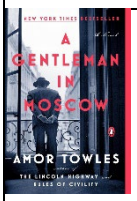
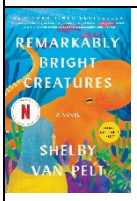
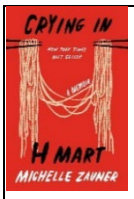
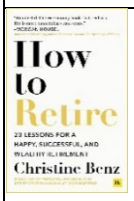
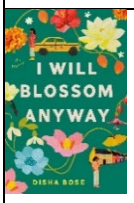
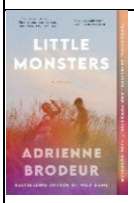
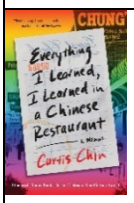
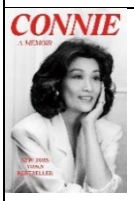
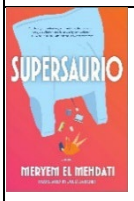
Best and Worst Books Read in 2026

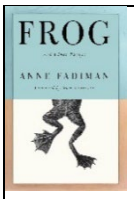
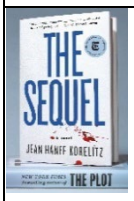
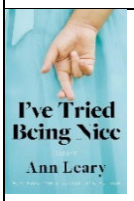
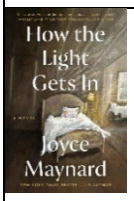
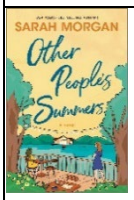
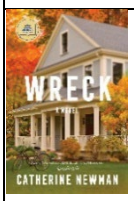
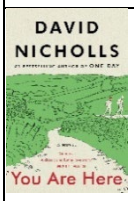
Recommended

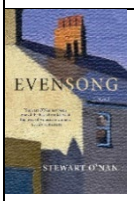
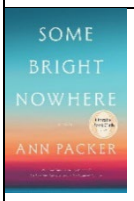
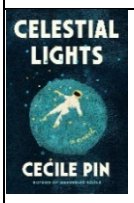
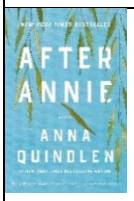
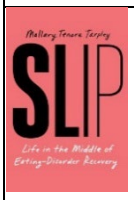
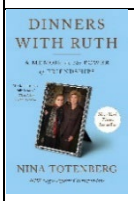
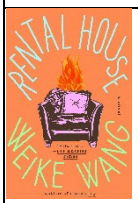
	Albom M. *Twice*. Harper; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Bowen, R. *Mrs. Endicott's Splendid Adventure*. Lake Union Publishing; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Honeyman G. *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. Penguin Books; 2018.	Lisa Balbes	
	Kiernan D. *The Last Castle (Biltmore Estate)*. Reprint; 2018.	Lisa Balbes	
	Martin M. *The Secret Book Society.* Hanover Square Press; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	McGovern C. *The Last Letters of Sally and Walter*. Sourcebooks Landmark; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	
	Banville J. *The Sea*. Vintage International; 2006.	Dana Delibovi	"Gorgeous, complex novel of a widower and his exquisite memories of adolescence, with a trademark Banville plot twist. Won the Booker."

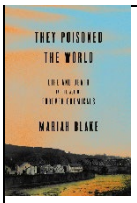
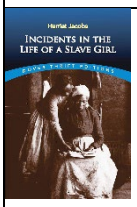
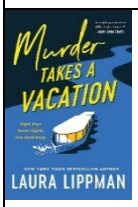
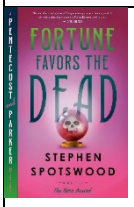
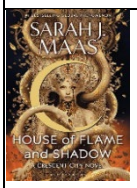
	Dalton-Smith *S. Sacred Rest.* FaithWords; 2019.	Dana Delibovi	"Eye-opening; so many of us are now incapable of actually taking a rest for a few minutes during the day. This book makes you think about seven kinds of rest: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, sensory, social, and creative. This book is a challenge to those of us who MUST get that next load of laundry in…and then get that dish in the dishwasher…and that microwave wiped and... before we take a break (which never comes)."
	O'Shea DT. *The Veiled Prophet: Secret Societies, White Supremacy, and the Struggle for St. Louis.* Haymarket Books; 2026.	Dana Delibovi	"A sweeping history of St, Louis from just after the Civil War to the present, through the lens of The Veiled Prophet, the society of STL elites that was part KKK, part labor-union busters, part debutante ball. Crazy in the way only our city can be."
	Crowe C. *The Uncool*. Simon & Schuster; 2025.	Charlotte Kelley	"A memoir written by director Cameron Crowe, it discusses his experiences starting out as a music journalist in his early teens and interviewing music legends of the 1970s. Many stories inspired his movie *Almost Famous*, and it is a very entertaining read—I highly suggest it!"
	America's Test Kitchen. *The Sheet Pan: 150+ Easy, Creative Meals from Your Most Versatile Pan.* America's Test Kitchen; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"I don't know if I would call these recipes easy, but they are very tasty."
	Bain Murphy E. *The Ivory City.* Union Square & Co; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"This story is set in St. Louis at the 1904 World's Fair."
	Barr N. *Burn.* Minotaur; 2010. *The Rope.* Minotaur; 2012. *Destroyer Angel*. Minotaur; 2014. *Boar Island*. Minotaur; 2016.	Joanne McAndrews	"These are books #16–19, respectively in the Anna Pigeon mystery series. I've now finished the series and need to find some other books set in U.S. National Parks!"
	Hwang BR. *Every Day I Read: 53 Ways to Get Closer to Books*. Bloomsbury; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"This book of short essays has many excellent ideas to add more reading to your life (#7, Always Have a Book with You; #8, Choose Books, Not the Internet; #19, Visiting the Library; #32, Reading Multiple Books at Once, etc."

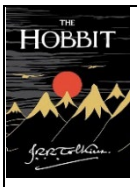
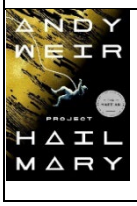
	Espach A. *The Wedding People.* Henry Holt and Co; 2024.	Joanne McAndrews	
	Gregory P. *Boleyn Traitor.* William Morrow; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"The latest book in the author's Plnatagenet and Tudor novels."
	Green J. *Everything is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection*. Crash Course Books; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"This was a fascinating book!"
	Harris J. *Vianne*. Pegasus; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	"This is the prequel to her wonderful novel *Chocolat*."
	Larson E. *The Devil in the White City*. Crown; 2003.	Joanne McAndrews	"Nonfiction book about the 1896 Chicago World's Fair."
	Nosrat S. *Good Things: Recipes and Rituals to Share With People You Love.* Random House; 2025.	Joanne McAndrews	
	Towles A. *A Gentleman in Moscow*. Penguin; 2019.	Joanne McAndrews	"It took me a while to get into this book, but then I really liked it! I need to track down the miniseries."
	Van Pelt S. *Remarkably Bright Creatures.* Ecco; 2022.	Joanne McAndrews	"I had never read a book with an octopus as a narrator before, but I really loved it. It has been made into a film starring Sally Field."

	Zauner M. *Crying in H Mart*. Knopf; 2021.	Joanne McAndrews	“Wonderful memoir about the author's time spent with her mom, who was dying of cancer.”
	Alam R. *Leave the World Behind*. Ecco; 2020.	Leslie Neistadt	“Intriguing story of 2 families thrust together at the start of an apocalyptic event.”
	Benz C. *How to Retire*. Harman House; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	“Interviews with 20 experts on various aspects of retirement.”
	Bose D. *I Will Blossom Anyway*. Ballantine Books; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	“Coming-of-age story about an Indian woman who leaves her loving but overbearing family to take a job in Ireland.”
	Brodeur A. *Little Monsters*. Avid Reader Press; 2023.	Leslie Neistadt	“Family secrets are revealed.“
	Chin C. *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*. Little, Brown and Co; 2023.	Leslie Neistadt	“Another coming-of-age story, this one about a gay Asian-American.“
	Chung C. *Connie*. Grand Central Publishing; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	“Interesting memoir from the pioneering Asian-American journalist.”
	El Mehdati M. *Supersaurio*. Hanover Square Press; 2022.	Leslie Neistadt	“An intern learns about the corporate world.”

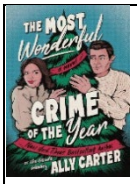
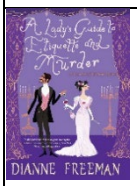
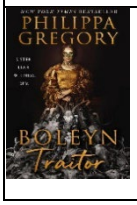
	Fadiman A. *Frog and Other Essays.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 2026.	Leslie Neistadt	"A wonderful collection of essays on topics ranging from pets (hence the title) to polar expeditions, with lots of literary nods along the way."
	Hanff Korelitz J. *The Sequel.* Celadon Books; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"The widow of a famous writer, Anna drafts her own successful novel, which prompts unwanted people from her past to come forward."
	Khong R. *My Dear You*. Alfred A. Knopf; 2026.	Leslie Neistadt	"Inventive and thought-provoking short stories."
	Leary A. *I've Tried Being Nice.* Mary Sue Rucci Books; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"Essays by a 'woman of a certain age.'"
	Maynard J. *How the Light Gets In*. Deckle Edge; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"The sequel in a family saga, but you need not have read the previous book to enjoy this, as the author provides the background."
	Morgan S. *Other People's Summers*. Canary Street Press; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	"Friendship, family, and careers. Complications ensue, but all ends well."
	Newman C. *Wreck*. Harper; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	"Slice of life about a woman who's trying to keep up with her busy life while an undiagnosed illness keeps causing new symptoms."
	Nicholls D. *You Are Here.* HarperCollins; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"Two isolated people meet on a walking tour."

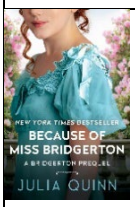
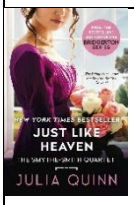
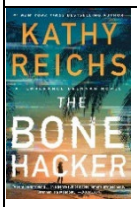
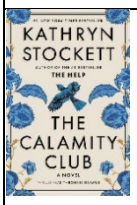
	Offill J. *Weather*. Vintage; 2021.	Leslie Neistadt	"Unusual format: stream of consciousness from a woman navigating modern life."
	O'Nan S. *Evensong.* Atlantic Monthly Press; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	"Reminds me of Elizabeth Strout's works in the engaging depiction of ordinary people doing ordinary things."
	Packer A. *Some Bright Nowhere*. HarperCollins; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	"A husband, wife, and her friends navigate the wife's final days."
	Pin C. *Celestial Lights*. Henry Holt and Company; 2026.	Leslie Neistadt	"The commander of the first mission to Jupiter reflects on his life and career during the years-long journey."
	Quindlen A. *After Annie*. Random House; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"A family copes with the loss of its matriarch."
	Tenore Tarpley M. *Slip*. Simon Element; 2025.	Leslie Neistadt	"Ongoing recovery from an eating disorder augmented by the research in the field."
	Totenberg N. *Dinners With Ruth*. Simon & Schuster; 2022.	Leslie Neistadt	"Fascinating memoir of NPR correspondent Totenberg's friendship with RBG."
	Wang W. *Rental House*; Riverhead Books; 2024.	Leslie Neistadt	"If you like the author's previous works (*Chemistry*, *Joan is Okay*), you'll like this one, too."

	Blake M. *They Poisoned the World: Life and Death in the Age of Forever Chemicals*. Crown; 2025.	Jan Niehaus	"You will learn about two extremely dangerous and damaging corporations and several brave and honorable individuals who persisted (against all odds) to alert residents, the government, and the corporations to the dangers and damage and to secure some, never enough, remedy."
	Jacobs H. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Dover Publications; 2001.	Jan Niehaus	"The first-person story of a brave and honorable woman who persisted and succeeded in securing freedom for herself and her children!"
	Lippman L. *Murder Takes a Vacation.* William Morrow; 2026.	Jo Seltzer	"The main character is a wonderful 68-year-old woman who goes on her first cruise. The mystery is not great, but it is a great light read. We discussed it in our Detective Fiction class at WashU's lifelong learning."
	Spotswood S. *Fortune Favors the Dead*. Vintage Crime; 2021.	Jo Seltzer	"This is the first of a series about 'a female Nero Wolfe and Archie Bunker,' but much less formulaic. Although set in the 40's, it is quite modern. The *NY Times* book review thought the latest in the series is the best."
	Kawaguchi T. *Before the Coffee Gets Cold.* Hanover Square Press; 2020.	Tara Steffen	"Sobbed [my] way through"
	Hart C. *Quicksilver*. Forever; 2024.	Tara Steffen	"Wish [I] could discuss with the author"
	Maas SJ. *House of Flame and Shadow*. Bloomsbury Publishing; 2025.	Tara Steffen	
	Ogawa Y. *The Memory Police.* Vintage; 2020.	Tara Steffen	"Sobbed [my] way through, can't stop thinking about, want everyone to read, and wish [I] could discuss with the author"

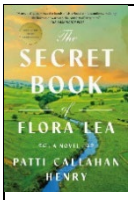
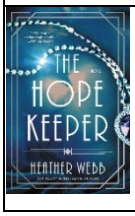
	Tolkien JRR. *The Hobbit*. George Allen and Unwin; 1937.	Tara Steffen	
	Weir A. *Project Hail Mary*. Ballantine; 2021.	Tara Steffen	"Laughed out loud, want everyone to read, and wish [I] could discuss with the author"

Nice Light Read

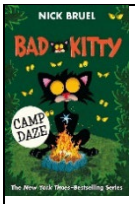
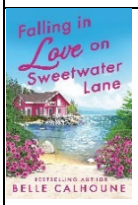
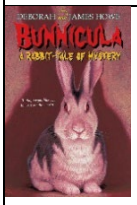
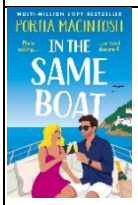
	Carter A. *The Most Wonderful Crime of the Year (Kiss, Merry, Kill, #1).* Avon; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Eden SM. *Seeking Persephone* (The Lancaster Family, #1). Shadow Mountain; 2011. *Courting Miss Lancaster* (The Lancaster Family, #2). Shadow Mountain Publishing; 2010. *Romancing Daphne* (The Lancaster Family, #3). Covenant Communications, Inc; 2017. *Loving Lieutenant Lancaster* (The Lancaster Family, #4). Covenant Communications, Inc; 2015. *Christmas at Falstone Castle* (The Lancaster Family, #4.5). Covenant Communications, Inc; 2023. *Charming Artemis* (The Lancaster Family, #5). Shadow Mountain; 2021.	Lisa Balbes	
	Freeman D. *A Lady's Guide to Etiquette and Murder (*Countess of Harleigh Mystery, #1*).* Kensington; 2019.	Lisa Balbes	
	Gregory P. *Boleyn Traitor (*The Plantagenet and Tudor Novels, #11*).* William Morrow; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	

	Larsen S. *A Novel Disguise* (A Lady Librarian Mystery, #1). Crooked Lane Books; 2023. Larsen S. *Once Upon a Murder* (A Lady Librarian Mystery, #2). Crooked Lane Books; 2024.	Lisa Balbes	
	Quinn J. *Because of Miss Bridgerton* (Rokesbys, #1). Avon; 2023. Quinn J. *The Girl with the Make-Believe Husband* (Rokesbys, #2). Avon; 2023. *The Other Miss Bridgerton* (Rokesbys, #3). Avon; 2023. *First Comes Scandal* (Rokesbys, #4). Avon; 2023.	Lisa Balbes	
	Quinn J. *Just Like Heaven* (Smythe-Smith Quartet, #1). Avon; 2011. *A Night Like This* (Smythe-Smith Quartet, #2). Avon; 2012. *The Sum of All Kisses* (Smythe-Smith Quartet, #3). Avon; 2013. *The Secrets of Sir Richard Kenworthy* (Smythe-Smith Quartet, #4). Avon; 2015.	Lisa Balbes	
	Reichs K. *The Bone Hacker* (Temperance Brennan, #22). Scribner; 2024.	Lisa Balbes	
	Stockett K. *The Calamity Club*. Spiegel & Grau; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	

Mildly Interesting

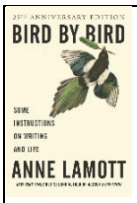
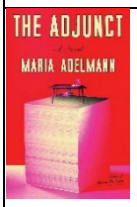
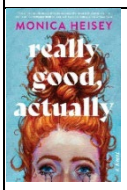
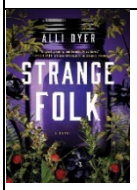
	Henry PC. *The Secret Book of Flora Lea*. Atria Books; 2024.	Lisa Balbes	
	Webb H. *The Hope Keeper.* Sourcebooks Landmark; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	

Embarrassed That I Read It

	Bruel N. *Bad Kitty Camp Daze* (Bad Kitty Chapter Book, #11).	Lisa Balbes	
	Calhoune B. *Falling in Love on Sweetwater Lane* (Mistletoe, Maine, #3). Forever; 2023.	Lisa Balbes	
	Howe D. *Bunnicula: A Rabbit-Tale of Mystery* (Bunnicula, #1). Atheneum Books; 2006.	Lisa Balbes	
	MacIntosh P. *In the Same Boat.* Boldwood Books; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	
	Score L. *Things We Never Got Over* (Knockemout, #1). Bloom Books; 2022.	Lisa Balbes	

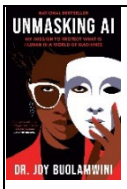
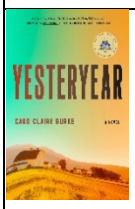
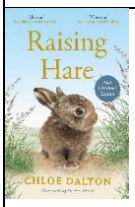
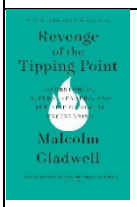
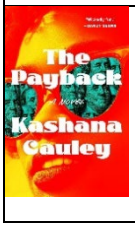
	Andersen C. *Kate! The Courage, Grace, and Power of the Woman Who Will Be Queen.* Gallery Books; 2026.	Leslie Neistadt	"More than you ever wanted to know about her but gossipy fun."

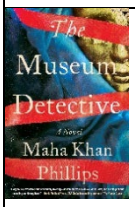
Not Recommended

	Lamott A. *Bird by Bird.* Vintage; 1995.	Dana Delibovi	"Finally read it and I ground my teeth through two thirds before I said 'enough.' I know lots of people love it but I found it precious, corny, irritating, and utterly impractical for most writers."
	Adelmann M. *The Adjunct*. Scribner; 2026.	Leslie Neistadt	"Grim look at adjunct professors trying to eke out a living."
	Heisey M. *Really Good, Actually*. William Morrow; 2023.	Leslie Neistadt	"I didn't love this. After the breakup of her marriage, a woman makes numerous bad decisions. "
	Dyer A. *Strange Folk.* Atria; 2024.	Tara Steffen	
	Sanderson B. *The Hero of Ages*. (Mistborn, #3). Tor Book; 2023.	Tara Steffen	

Not as Good as the Hype

	Benedict M. *The Mitford Affair.* Sourcebooks Landmark; 2023.	Lisa Balbes	

	Buolamwini J. *Unmasking AI: My Mission to Protect What Is Human in a World of Machines.* Random House; 2024.	Lisa Balbes	
	Burke CC. *Yesteryear.* Knopf; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	
	Dalton C. *Raising Hare: A Memoir* . Canongate Books; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	
	Dobson M. *The Lost Story of Via Belle.* Tyndale Fiction; 2026.	Lisa Balbes	
	Gladwell M. *Revenge of the Tipping Point: Overstories, Superspenders, and the Rise of Social Engineering.* Little, Brown; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Godfrey J. *The List of Suspicious Things*. Sourcebooks Landmark; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Harris J. *Vianne* (Chocolat, #0). Pegasus Books; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Cauley K. *The Payback*. Atria Books; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	

	Levi A. *Theo of Golden*. Atria Books; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	
	Phillips MK. *The Museum Detective.* Soho Crime; 2025.	Lisa Balbes	

Others Lisa Read:

Auel JM. *The Clan of the Cave Bear.*

Barr N. *Hunting Season* (Anna Pigeon, #10).

Bellows MG. *The Lost Women of Science*.

Brake M. *The Science of The Big Bang Theory: What America's Favorite Sitcom Can Teach You about Physics, Flags, and the Idiosyncrasies of Scientists*.

Clarke R. *Now She's Dead.*

Cole PJ. *The Once and Future Queen (The Lives of Guinevere, #1).*

De Socio M. *Morally Straight: How the Fight for LGBTQ+ Inclusion Changed the Boy Scouts—and America*

McFadden F. *Dear Debbie*.

Patchett A. *Commonwealth*.

Radloff J. *The Big Bang Theory: The Definitive, Inside Story of the Epic Hit Series*.