

Staff Picks Digital Edition

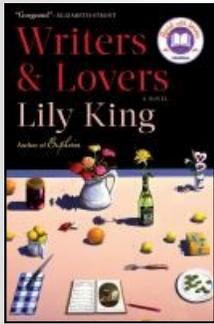
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FICTION

WRITERS & LOVERS BY LILY KING

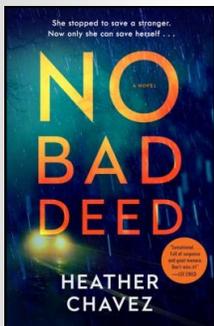
(PICKED BY SLS, SMC, SM)



Blindsided by her mother's sudden death, and wrecked by a recent love affair, Casey Peabody has arrived in Massachusetts in the summer of 1997 without a plan. Her mail consists of wedding invitations and final notices from debt collectors. A former child golf prodigy, she now waits tables in Harvard Square and rents a tiny, moldy room at the side of a garage where she works on the novel she's been writing for six years. At thirty-one, Casey is still clutching onto something nearly all her old friends have let go of: the determination to live a creative life. When she falls for two very different men at the same time, her world fractures even more. Casey's fight to fulfill her creative ambitions and balance the conflicting demands of art and life is challenged in ways that push her to the brink. *Writers & Lovers* is a transfixing novel that explores the terrifying and exhilarating leap between the end of one phase of life and the beginning of another. (320 pgs)

NO BAD DEED BY HEATHER CHAVEZ

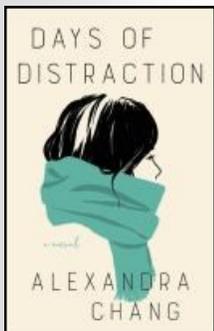
(PICKED BY SM)



Driving home one rainy night, Cassie Larkin sees a man and woman fighting on the side of the road. After calling 911, the veterinarian gets out of her minivan and chases after the violent man, trying to help his victim. When Cassie physically tries to stop him, he suddenly turns on her and spits out an ominous threat: "Let her die, and I'll let you live." While she's examining the unconscious victim, the attacker steals her car. Though they warn her to be careful, the police assure her that the perpetrator won't get near her. The next day—Halloween—her husband disappears while trick-or-treating with their six-year-old daughter. Are these disturbing events a coincidence or the beginning of a horrifying nightmare? Cassie's confrontation with the road-side attacker connected to her husband's disappearance? As she desperately searches for answers, Cassie discovers that nothing is as random as it seems, and that she is more than willing to fight to save her family and her marriage. (312 pgs)

DAYS OF DISTRACTION BY ALEXANDRA CHANG

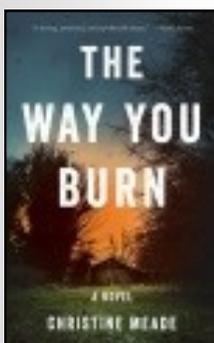
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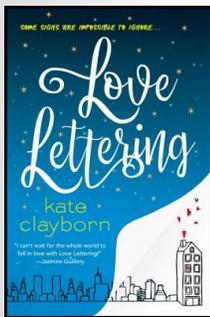
The plan is to leave. As for how, when, to where, and even why—she doesn't know yet. So begins a journey for the twenty-four-year-old narrator of *Days of Distraction*. As a staff writer at a prestigious tech publication, she reports on the achievements of smug Silicon Valley billionaires and start-up bros while her own request for a raise gets bumped from manager to manager. And when her longtime boyfriend, J, decides to move to a quiet upstate New York town for grad school, she sees an excuse to cut and run. Moving is supposed to be a grand gesture of her commitment to J and a way to reshape her sense of self. But in the process, she finds herself facing misgivings about her role in an interracial relationship. Captivated by the stories of her ancestors and other Asian Americans in history, she must confront a question at the core of her identity: What does it mean to exist in a society that does not notice or understand you? (320 pgs)

THE WAY YOU BURN BY CHRISTINE MEADE

(PICKED BY SM)



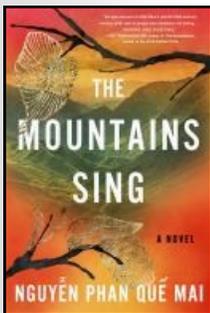
When David approaches his New Hampshire cabin one October night to find it engulfed in flames, he knows his girlfriend Hope set the fire. At least, he's pretty sure he knows. David first decides to upend the creature comforts of his post-collegiate life and try roughing it for a year after he inherits two acres of land and a rustic cabin from his deceased grandfather. Life at the cabin proves to be more difficult than expected, however, and it all starts with Hope—whose dark past is written in the twisting pink scars covering her body. Their relationship is challenged after his car slides through an intersection one dark night and, later, his realization that someone is out there, watching him through the trees. David struggles to maintain his relationship with Hope. Ultimately, in an attempt to understand the sacrifices she has had to make, he decides to rewrite their story. In doing so, he explores the lessons he's left with and the surprising bits of wisdom he finds in the ashes. (256 pgs)



LOVE LETTERING BY KATE CLAYBORN

(PICKED BY BS)

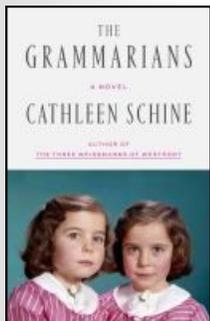
Meg Mackworth's hand-lettering skill has made her famous as the Planner of Park Slope, designing beautiful custom journals for New York City's elite. She has another skill too: reading signs that other people miss. Like the time she sat across from Reid Sutherland and his gorgeous fiancée, and knew their upcoming marriage was doomed to fail. Weaving a secret word into their wedding program was a little unprofessional, but she was sure no one else would spot it. She hadn't counted on sharp-eyed, pattern-obsessed Reid. A year later, Reid has tracked Meg down to find out how she knew that his future was about to implode. But with a looming deadline Meg doesn't have time for Reid's questions—unless he can help her find her missing inspiration. As they gradually open up to each other, both try to ignore the fact that their unlikely connection is growing deeper. But the signs are there, urging Meg to heed the messages Reid is sending her, before it's too late. (325 Pgs)



THE MOUNTAINS SING BY NGUYEN PHAN QUE MAI

(PICKED BY MG)

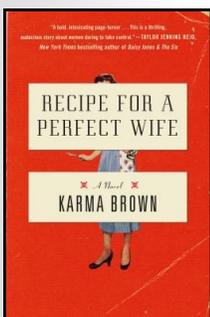
The Mountains Sing tells an enveloping, multigenerational tale of the Tran family, set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War. Tran Dieu Lan, who was born in 1920, was forced to flee her family farm with her six children during the Land Reform as the Communist government rose in the North. Years later in Hanoi, her young granddaughter, Huong, comes of age as her parents and uncles head off down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to fight in a conflict that will tear not just her beloved country but her family apart. Steeped in the language and traditions of Vietnam, *The Mountains Sing* brings to life the human costs of this conflict from the point of view of the Vietnamese people themselves, while showing us the true power of kindness and hope. This is celebrated Vietnamese poet Nguyen Phan Que Mai's first novel in English. (352 pgs)



THE GRAMMARIANS BY CATHLEEN SCHINE

(PICKED BY KT)

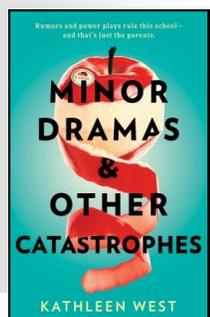
"The Grammarians" are Laurel and Daphne Wolfe, identical, inseparable redheaded twins who share an obsession with words. They speak a secret "twin" tongue of their own as toddlers; as adults making their way in 1980s Manhattan, their verbal infatuation continues, but this love, which has always bound them together, begins instead to push them apart. Daphne, copy editor and grammar columnist, devotes herself to preserving the dignity and elegance of Standard English. Laurel, who gives up teaching kindergarten to write poetry, is drawn, instead, to the polymorphous, chameleon nature of the written and spoken word. Their fraying twin-ship finally shreds completely when the sisters go to war, absurdly but passionately, over custody of their most prized family heirloom: *Merriam Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition*. (272 pgs)



RECIPE FOR A PERFECT WIFE BY KARMA BROWN

(PICKED BY SM)

When Alice Hale leaves a career in publicity to become a writer and follows her husband to the New York suburbs, she is unaccustomed to filling her days alone in a big, empty house. But when she finds a vintage cookbook buried in a box in the old home's basement, she becomes captivated by the cookbook's previous owner—1950s housewife Nellie Murdoch. As Alice cooks her way through the past, she realizes that within the cookbook's pages Nellie left clues about her life—including a mysterious series of unsent letters penned to her mother. Soon Alice learns that while baked Alaska and meatloaf five ways may seem harmless, Nellie's secrets may have been anything but. When Alice uncovers a more sinister—even dangerous—side to Nellie's marriage, and has become increasingly dissatisfied with the mounting pressures in her own relationship, she begins to take control of her life and protect herself with a few secrets of her own. (336 pgs)

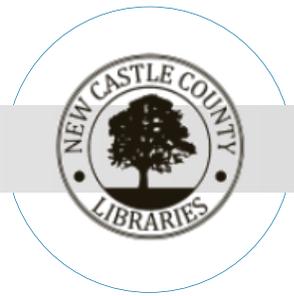


MINOR DRAMAS & OTHER CATASTROPHES BY KATHLEEN WEST (PICKED BY SLS)

Isobel Johnson knows helicopter parents like Julia Abbott come with the territory. Julia resents teachers like Isobel, who effortlessly bond with students, including Julia's own teenagers. Isobel has spent her teaching career in Liston Heights side-stepping the community's high-powered families. But when she receives a threatening voicemail accusing her of Anti-Americanism and a "blatant liberal agenda," she realizes she's squarely in the fray. Rather than cowering, Isobel doubles down on her social-justice ideals. Meanwhile, Julia, obsessed with the casting of the high school's winter musical, inadvertently shoves the female student lead after sneaking onto the school campus. The damning video footage goes viral and has far-reaching consequences for Julia and her entire family. With nothing to unite them beyond the sting of humiliation from public meltdowns, Isobel and Julia will find common ground where they least expect it. (384 pgs)

STAFF PICKS

MAY 2020

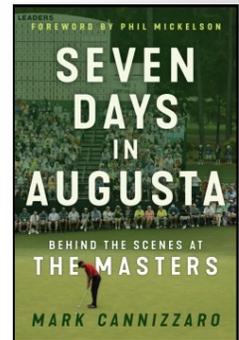


NON-FICTION

SEVEN DAYS IN AUGUSTA BY MARK CANNIZZARO

(PICKED BY SM)

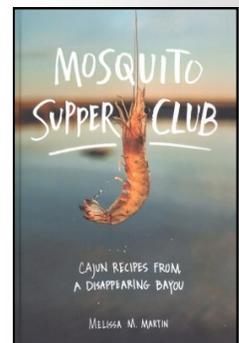
The Masters is unquestionably the crown jewel of golf's major tournaments, not only for the transcendent performances it has inspired over the years, but for the incomparable sights and sounds of Augusta National and its environs, each distinct element contributing to the storied, rarefied atmosphere which draws tens of thousands to Georgia each spring. *Seven Days in Augusta* spans everything from the par-3 contest, to Amen Corner, to Butler Cabin. Mark Cannizzaro goes behind the scenes of the exclusive competition, covering wide-ranging topics including green jacket rituals, tales from The Crow's Nest atop the clubhouse, the extreme lengths some fans have gone to acquire tickets, and what goes on outside the gates during Masters week. It also features some of the most memorable and dramatic moments from the tournament's history. (256 pg)



MOSQUITO SUPPER CLUB BY MELISSA MARTIN

(PICKED BY MG)

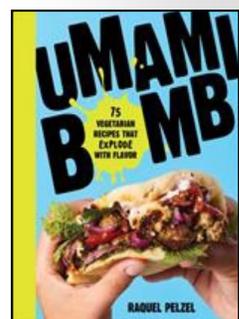
Every hour of the day, Louisiana loses a football field's worth of land to the Gulf. Before her hometown disappears entirely, chef Melissa Martin wants to document the recipes, ingredients, and customs of the Cajun people. Cocoderie, Louisiana, may soon no longer be listed on maps, but the incredible traditions of the region should remain. She has organized the book into 12 chapters highlighting the key ingredients of this cuisine—from shrimp and oysters to poultry and sugarcane—and the recipe and customs that surround each. The 100 recipes are for accessible home-cooked meals that readers can make on a weeknight or for a celebration—with stories to be savored along with the food. Each chapter is punctuated with an essay explaining the context for the ingredient, whether it's picking and putting up blackberries each February to shrimping every August or celebrating Fat Tuesday with a king cake. The underlying messages of heeding environmental warnings and highlighting the Cajun woman's authority in the kitchen showcase the book's compelling media hooks and the many dozens of ways to make a Cajun gumbo. (368 pgs)



UMAMI BOMB BY RAQUEL PELZER

(PICKED BY PB)

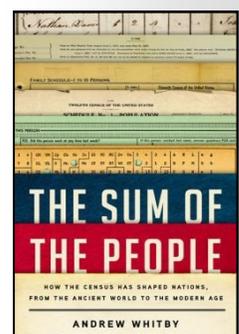
Ingenuously built around the use of eight umami-rich ingredients—aged cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms, soy sauce, miso, caramelized onions, smoke, and nutritional yeast—*Umami Bomb's* 75 recipes are bursting with the sublime, savory fifth taste—and they're vegetarian! Turn mushrooms into "lardons" for a bold take on Southern black-eyed peas and greens. Caramelize onions to use in the best grilled cheese ever. Add a secret spoonful of soy sauce to the frosting of your next chocolate cake—the soy taste disappears but leaves behind an unexpected depth of flavor. Part of the brilliance of *Umami Bomb* is how the recipes layer these key ingredients to amplify their effect—like adding miso to an already cheesy cacio e pepe sauce for pasta so savory and delicious you'll do a double take. (256 pgs)

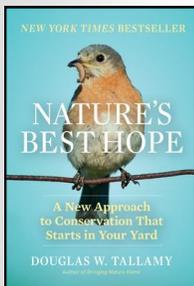


THE SUM OF THE PEOPLE BY ANDREW WHITBY

(PICKED BY SMC)

In April 2020, the United States embarks on what has been called "the largest peacetime mobilization in American history": the decennial population census. It is part of a tradition of counting people that goes back at least three millennia and now spans the globe. In *The Sum of the People*, data scientist Andrew Whitby traces the remarkable history of the census, from ancient China and the Roman Empire, through revolutionary America and Nazi-occupied Europe, to the steps of the Supreme Court. Marvels of democracy, instruments of exclusion, and, at worst, tools of tyranny and genocide, censuses have always profoundly shaped the societies we've built. Today, as we struggle to resist the creep of mass surveillance, the traditional census – direct and transparent – may offer the seeds of an alternative. (368 pgs)

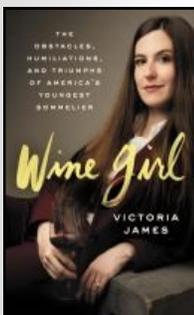




NATURE'S BEST HOPE BY DOUGLAS TALLAMY

(PICKED BY SLS)

Nature's Best Hope advocates for homeowners everywhere to turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats. This home-based approach doesn't rely on the federal government and protects the environment from the whims of politics. It is also easy to do, and readers will walk away with specific suggestions they can incorporate into their own yards. *Nature's Best Hope* is nature writing at its best—rooted in history, progressive in its advocacy, and above all, actionable and hopeful. By proposing practical measures that ordinary people can easily do, Tallamy gives us reason to believe that the planet can be preserved for future generations. (256 pgs)



WINE GIRL BY VICTORIA JAMES

(PICKED BY SM)

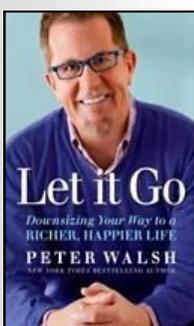
At just twenty-one, the age when most people are starting to drink, Victoria James became the country's youngest sommelier at a Michelin-starred restaurant. Even as Victoria was selling bottles worth hundreds of dollars during the day, passing sommelier certification exams with flying colors, and receiving distinction from all kinds of press, there were still groping patrons, bosses who abused their role and status, and a trip to the hospital emergency room. It would take hitting bottom at a new restaurant and restorative trips to the vineyards where she could feel closest to the wine she loved for Victoria to re-emerge, clear-eyed and passionate, and a proud "wine girl" of her own Michelin-starred restaurant. Exhilarating and inspiring, *Wine Girl* is the memoir of a young woman breaking free from an abusive and traumatic childhood, an ethnography of the glittering, high-octane, but notoriously corrosive restaurant industry; and above all, a love letter to the restorative and life-changing effects of good wine and good hospitality. (336 pgs)



DON'T OVERTHINK IT BY ANNE BOGEL

(PICKED BY BS)

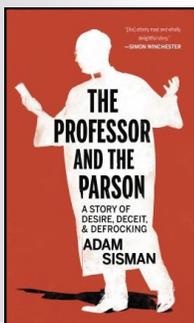
We've all been there: stuck in a cycle of what-ifs, plagued by indecision, paralyzed by the fear of getting it wrong. Nobody wants to live a life of constant overthinking, but it doesn't feel like something we can *choose* to stop doing. It feels like something we're wired to do, something we just can't escape. But is it? Anne Bogel's answer is *no*. Not only can you overcome negative thought patterns that are repetitive, unhealthy, and unhelpful, you can replace them with positive thought patterns that will bring more peace, joy, and love into your life. In *Don't Overthink It*, you'll find actionable strategies that can make an immediate and lasting difference in how you deal with questions both small and large. *Don't Overthink It* offers you a framework for making choices you'll be comfortable with, using an appropriate amount of energy, freeing you to focus on all the other stuff that matters in life. (217 pgs)



LET IT GO BY PETER WALSH

(PICKED BY SM)

Sorting through a lifetime's worth of accumulated possessions can be a daunting and stressful process that millions of Americans confront every year. Decluttering guru Peter Walsh knows the difficulty of downsizing firsthand. Along with six of his siblings, he went through the process of downsizing his family home and dividing his late parents' possessions. He realized that making these decisions about mementos and heirlooms creates strong emotions and sometimes sibling rivalries. After this experience, he downsized his *own* home. Peter doesn't see downsizing as a difficult chore – rather, it's a freeing, rejuvenating process. In *Let It Go*, you'll access Peter's many tips and practical takeaways. He will walk you through every step of the process and show you how to use downsizing as a positive experience that sets you up to better enjoy the opportunities that the next phase in your life will offer. (256 pgs)



THE PROFESSOR AND THE PARSON BY ADAM SISMAN

(PICKED BY SLH)

One day in November 1958, the celebrated historian Hugh Trevor-Roper received a curious letter. It was an appeal for help, written on behalf of a student at Magdalen College, with the unlikely claim that he was being persecuted by the Bishop of Oxford. Curiosity piqued, Trevor-Roper agreed to a meeting. It was to be his first encounter with Robert Parkin Peters: plagiarist, bigamist, fraudulent priest, and imposter extraordinaire. *The Professor and the Parson* is a witty portrait of eccentricity, extraordinary narcissism, and a life as wild and unlikely as any in fiction. Motivated not by money but by a desire for prestige, Peters lied, stole, and cheated his way to academic positions and religious posts from Cambridge to New York. Frequently deported, and even more frequently discovered, he left a trail of destruction including seven marriages (three of which were bigamous) and an investigation by the FBI.(256)