

Goodreads or Amazon Descriptions of Suggested Books (in alphabetical order):

Afterlives by Abdulrazak Gurnah

While he was still a little boy, Ilyas was stolen from his parents by the German colonial troops. After years away, fighting in a war against his own people, he returns to his village to find his parents gone, and his sister Afiya given away.

Another young man returns at the same time. Hamza was not stolen for the war, but sold into it; he has grown up at the right hand of an officer whose protection has marked him life. With nothing but the clothes on his back, he seeks only work and security – and the love of the beautiful Afiya.

As fate knots these young people together, as they live and work and fall in love, the shadow of a new war on another continent lengthens and darkens, ready to snatch them up and carry them away

Audacious Destiny by Grace Mulenga

What if everything that happens to us, good and bad, is leading to something much bigger than us? What if the discovery of our earthly purpose is hidden in the tapestry of seemingly coincidental occurrences? This inspirational and spiritual memoir by Grace Mulenga tells of her journey of faith, resilience, and the discovery of God's intentionality. She wrote it especially for those searching for purpose, and who are motivated to reach for the stars despite difficult circumstances. She hopes her story will compel you challenge the status quo, look at life's twisty roads differently, and perhaps confront some of life's most uncomfortable questions regarding God.

As you follow Grace on her life's journey, you might laugh, cry, and maybe even shout for joy. The encouraging and conversational stories she tells will gift you with the most important of all-the story of how much we are all loved as humanity. It is the story of a Father who is audacious about our future and our purpose on earth, no matter the path we find ourselves walking upon.

Readers are sure to connect and identify with Grace's personal and relatable testimony. By the time you get to the last chapter, you will feel confident about whatever circumstances you are facing. You should feel truly audacious!

Cloud Cuckoo Land by Anthony Doerr

How do we weather the end of things? Cloud Cuckoo Land brings together an unforgettable cast of dreamers and outsiders from past, present and future to offer a vision of survival against all odds.

Constantinople, 1453:

An orphaned seamstress and a cursed boy with a love for animals risk everything on opposite sides of a city wall to protect the people they love.

Idaho, 2020:

An impoverished, idealistic kid seeks revenge on a world that's crumbling around him. Can he go through with it when a gentle old man stands between him and his plans?

Unknown, Sometime in the Future:

With her tiny community in peril, Konstance is the last hope for the human race. To find a way forward, she must look to the oldest stories of all for guidance.

Bound together by a single ancient text, these tales interweave to form a tapestry of solace and resilience and a celebration of storytelling itself. Like its predecessor *All the Light We Cannot See*, Anthony Doerr's new novel is a tale of hope and of profound human connection.

Crying in H-Mart by Michelle Zauner

A memoir about growing up Korean American, losing her mother, and forging her own identity.

Michelle Zauner tells of growing up one of the few Asian American kids at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of a painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food.

As she grew up, moving to the East Coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, and performing gigs with her fledgling band--and meeting the man who would become her husband--her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live. It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys

Romania, 1989. Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren't free to dream; they are bound by rules and force.

Amidst the tyrannical dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in a country governed by isolation and fear, Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer. He's left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves—or use his position to creatively undermine the most notoriously evil dictator in Eastern Europe.

Cristian risks everything to unmask the truth behind the regime, give voice to fellow Romanians, and expose to the world what is happening in his country. He eagerly joins the revolution to fight for change when the time arrives. But what is the cost of freedom?

A gut-wrenching, startling window into communist Romania and the citizen spy network that devastated a nation, from the number one New York Times best-selling, award-winning author of *Salt to the Sea* and *Between Shades of Gray*.

Other Birds by Sarah Addison Allen

Between the real and the imaginary, there are stories that take flight in the most extraordinary ways.

Right off the coast of South Carolina, on Mallow Island, The Dellawisp sits—a stunning old cobblestone building shaped like a horseshoe, and named after the tiny turquoise birds who, alongside its human tenants, inhabit an air of magical secrecy.

When Zoey comes to claim her deceased mother's apartment at the Dellawisp she meets her quirky and secretive neighbors, including a young woman with a past, two estranged middle-aged sisters, and a lonely chef, and three ghosts. The sudden death of one of Zoey's new neighbors sets off a search that leads to the island's famous author and to a long-estranged relative of the sisters.

Each of them has a story, and each story has an ending which hasn't yet been written.

The Book of Form & Emptiness by Ruth Ozeki

This book won the 2022 Women's Prize for Fiction and is Ozeki's fourth novel.

After the tragic death of his beloved musician father, fourteen-year-old Benny Oh begins to hear voices. The voices belong to the things in his house—a sneaker, a broken Christmas ornament, a piece of wilted lettuce. Although Benny doesn't understand what these things are saying, he can sense their emotional tone; some are pleasant, a gentle hum or coo, but others are snide, angry and full of pain. When his mother, Annabelle, develops a hoarding problem, the voices grow more clamorous.

At first, Benny tries to ignore them, but soon the voices follow him outside the house, onto the street and at school, driving him at last to seek refuge in the silence of a large public library, where objects are well-behaved and know to speak in whispers. There, Benny discovers a strange new world, where "things happen." He falls in love with a mesmerizing street artist with a smug pet ferret, who uses the library as her performance space. He meets a homeless philosopher-poet, who encourages him to ask important questions and find his own voice amongst the many.

And he meets his very own Book—a talking thing—who narrates Benny's life and teaches him to listen to the things that truly matter.

With its blend of sympathetic characters, riveting plot, and vibrant engagement with everything from jazz, to climate change, to our attachment to material possessions, *The Book of Form and Emptiness* is classic Ruth Ozeki--bold, wise, poignant, playful, humane and heartbreaking.

The Book of Hope by Jane Goodall

In this urgent book, Jane Goodall, the world's most famous living naturalist and Doug Abrams, internationally-bestselling author, explore--through intimate and thought-provoking dialogue--one of the most sought after and least understood elements of human nature: hope. In *The Book of Hope*, Jane focuses on her "Four Reasons for Hope": The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit.

Told through stories from a remarkable career and fascinating research, *The Book of Hope* touches on vital questions including: How do we stay hopeful when everything seems hopeless? How do we cultivate hope in our children? Filled with engaging dialogue and pictures from Jane's storied career, *The Book of Hope* is a deeply personal conversation with one of the most beloved figures in today's world.

The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times by Michelle Obama (to be released Nov 15)

In an inspiring follow-up to her critically acclaimed, #1 bestselling memoir *Becoming*, former First Lady Michelle Obama shares practical wisdom and powerful strategies for staying hopeful and balanced in today's highly uncertain world.

There may be no tidy solutions or pithy answers to life's big challenges, but Michelle Obama believes that we can all locate and lean on a set of tools to help us better navigate change and remain steady within flux. In *The Light We Carry*, she opens a frank and honest dialogue with readers, considering the questions many of us wrestle with: How do we build enduring and honest relationships? How can we discover strength and community inside our differences? What tools do we use to address feelings of self-doubt or helplessness? What do we do when it all starts to feel like too much?

Michelle Obama offers readers a series of fresh stories and insightful reflections on change, challenge, and power, including her belief that when we light up for others, we can illuminate the richness and potential of the world around us, discovering deeper truths and new pathways for progress. Drawing from her experiences as a mother, daughter, spouse, friend, and First Lady, she shares the habits and principles she has developed to successfully adapt to change and overcome various obstacles--the earned wisdom that helps her continue to "become." She details her most valuable practices, like "starting kind," "going high," and assembling a "kitchen table" of trusted friends and mentors. With trademark humor, candor, and compassion, she also explores issues connected to race, gender, and visibility, encouraging readers to work through fear, find strength in community, and live with boldness.

"When we are able to recognize our own light, we become empowered to use it," writes Michelle Obama. A rewarding blend of powerful stories and profound advice that will ignite conversation, *The Light We Carry* inspires readers to examine their own lives, identify their sources of gladness, and connect meaningfully in a turbulent world. (less)

The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women by Kate Moore

The Curies' newly discovered element of radium makes gleaming headlines across the nation as the fresh face of beauty, and wonder drug of the medical community. From body lotion to tonic water, the popular new element shines bright in the otherwise dark years of the First World War.

Meanwhile, hundreds of girls toil amidst the glowing dust of the radium-dial factories. The glittering chemical covers their bodies from head to toe; they light up the night like industrious fireflies. With such a coveted job, these "shining girls" are the luckiest alive—until they begin to fall mysteriously ill.

But the factories that once offered golden opportunities are now ignoring all claims of the gruesome side effects, and the women's cries of corruption. And as the fatal poison of the radium takes hold, the brave shining girls find themselves embroiled in one of the biggest scandals of America's early 20th century, and in a groundbreaking battle for workers' rights that will echo for centuries to come.

Written with a sparkling voice and breakneck pace, *The Radium Girls* fully illuminates the inspiring young women exposed to the "wonder" substance of radium, and their awe-inspiring strength in the face of almost impossible circumstances. Their courage and tenacity led to life-changing regulations, research into nuclear bombing, and ultimately saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt

Why can't our political leaders work together as threats loom and problems mount? Why do people so readily assume the worst about the motives of their fellow citizens? In *The Righteous Mind*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt explores the origins of our divisions and points the way forward to mutual understanding.

His starting point is moral intuition—the nearly instantaneous perceptions we all have about other people and the things they do. These intuitions feel like self-evident truths, making us righteously certain that those who see things differently are wrong. Haidt shows us how these intuitions differ across cultures, including the cultures of the political left and right. He blends his own research findings with those of anthropologists, historians, and other psychologists to draw a map of the moral domain. He then examines the origins of morality, overturning the view that

evolution made us fundamentally selfish creatures. But rather than arguing that we are innately altruistic, he makes a more subtle claim—that we are fundamentally groupish. It is our groupishness, he explains, that leads to our greatest joys, our religious divisions, and our political affiliations. In a stunning final chapter on ideology and civility, Haidt shows what each side is right about, and why we need the insights of liberals, conservatives, and libertarians to flourish as a nation.

The Splendid and the Vile by Erik Larson

On Winston Churchill's first day as prime minister, Adolf Hitler invaded Holland and Belgium. Poland and Czechoslovakia had already fallen, and the Dunkirk evacuation was just two weeks away. For the next twelve months, Hitler would wage a relentless bombing campaign, killing 45,000 Britons. It was up to Churchill to hold his country together and persuade President Franklin Roosevelt that Britain was a worthy ally--and willing to fight to the end.

In *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson shows how Churchill taught the British people "the art of being fearless." It is a story of political brinkmanship, but it's also an intimate domestic drama, set against the backdrop of Churchill's prime-ministerial country home, Chequers; his wartime retreat, Ditchley, where he and his entourage go when the moon is brightest and the bombing threat is highest; and of course 10 Downing Street in London. Drawing on diaries, original archival documents, and once-secret intelligence reports--some released only recently--Larson provides a new lens on London's darkest year through the day-to-day experience of Churchill and his family: his wife, Clementine; their youngest daughter, Mary, who chafes against her parents' wartime protectiveness; their son, Randolph, and his beautiful, unhappy wife, Pamela; Pamela's illicit lover, a dashing American emissary; and the advisers in Churchill's "Secret Circle," to whom he turns in the hardest moments.