

# Great Reads of 2019

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## Fiction

Island of Sea Women by Lisa See. While working as divers with the all-female diving collective on a small Korean island, Mi-ja and Young-sook find their friendship challenged by their differences and forces outside their control.

The River by Peter Heller. Two college students on a wilderness canoe trip find their survival skills and longtime best friendship tested by a wildfire, white-water hazards and two mysterious strangers.

In West Mills by De'Shawn Charles Winslow: A woman in mid-20th-century rural North Carolina, determined to live on her own terms in spite of community gossip, finds unexpected support from a veteran fixer who struggles with an inability to correct his own troubled past.

The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates: A Virginia slave narrowly escapes a drowning death through the intervention of a mysterious force that compels his escape and personal underground war against slavery

Red at the Bone by Jacqueline Woodson. As Melody celebrates a coming of age ceremony at her grandparents' house in 2001 Brooklyn, her family remembers 1985, when Melody's own mother prepared for a similar party that never took place in this novel about different social classes.

The Lager Queen of Minnesota by J. Ryan Stradal. A talented baker running a business out of her nursing home reconnects with her master brewer sister at the same time her pregnant granddaughter launches an IPA brewpub.

Delayed Rays of a Star by Amanda Koe Lee: A historical first novel that depicts the richly textured lives of Hollywood icon Marlene Dietrich, first Chinese-American star Anna May Wong and maligned director Leni Riefenstah

Things You Save in A Fire by Katherine Center: When a family emergency compels her move from Texas to Boston, a skilled firefighter becomes the only woman in her new firehouse and navigates discrimination, low funding and her private edicts about falling in love with another firefighter.

Recursion by Blake Crouch. Assigned to the case of a suicide victim who claimed her son's existence had been erased, investigator Barry Sutton follows leads to the outbreak of a memory-altering disease and the technological innovations of a controversial neuroscientist.

The Turn of the Key by Ruth Ware. When a high-paying nanny job at a luxurious Scottish Highlands home ends with her imprisonment for a child's murder, a young woman struggles to explain to her lawyer the unravelling events that led to her incarceration.

Daisy Jones and the Six by Taylor Reid Jenkins: When singer Daisy Jones meets Billy Dunne of the band The Six, the two rising 70s rock-and-roll artists are catapulted into stardom when a producer puts them together

The Night Tiger by Yangze Choo: A vivacious dance-hall girl in 1930s colonial Malaysia is drawn into unexpected danger by the discovery of a severed finger that is being sought by a young houseboy who would protect his late master's soul

## **Nonfiction**

Unbecoming: A Memoir of Disobedience by Anuradha Bhagwati: A raw, unflinching memoir by a former US Marine Captain chronicling her journey from dutiful daughter of immigrants to radical activist effecting historic policy reform.

The Unwinding of the Miracle by Julie Yip-Williams: After being diagnosed with terminal cancer at the age of thirty-seven, the author set out to write the story of her life. What began as the chronicle of an imminent and early death became something much more—a powerful exhortation to the living.

The Darkest Year: the American Homefront 1941-1942 by William K. Klingman. Social history of the American home front in the early months of World War II, a time of profound uncertainty and anxiety.

Nuking the Moon: and other intelligence schemes and military plots left on the drawing board by Vince Houghton. The International Spy Museum's Historian takes us on a wild tour of missions and schemes that almost happened, but were ultimately deemed too dangerous, expensive, ahead of their time, or even certifiably insane.

Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland by Patrick Radden Keefe: In December 1972, Jean McConville, a thirty-eight-year-old mother of ten, was dragged from her Belfast home by masked intruders. Her abduction was one of the most notorious episodes of the vicious conflict known as The Troubles. The author uses the McConville case as a starting point for the tale of a society wracked by a...war whose consequences have never been reckoned with.

The Vinyl Frontier: The Story of the Voyager Golden Record by Jonathan Scott. An interplanetary pop song of a book devoted to the six-week project led by Carl Sagan and astrophysicist Frank Drake in 1977 to create a playlist of music and sounds to accompany NASA's Voyager probe into space.

## More Great Reads from 2019

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### **Fiction**

The Right Swipe by Alisha Rai. Cynical dating app creator Rhiannon Hunter must decide whether or not to give former pro-football player Samson Lima, who wooed her during one magical night and then disappeared, a second chance despite the fact that his in league with a business rival.

The Chelsea Girls by Fiona Davis. A 20-year friendship between a playwright and an actress with Broadway ambitions is tested by the impact of McCarthy-era witch hunts among the creative residents of New York City's Chelsea Hotel.

My Lovely Wife by Samantha Downing. A seemingly typical suburban husband discloses the secret ways that his wife of 15 years and he keep their marriage alive and chase away domestic boredom by orchestrating creative ways to get away with murder.

Finding Dorothy by Elizabeth Letts. Reimagines the story behind the creation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* from the perspective of L. Frank Baum's intrepid wife, whose hardscrabble life on the Dakota prairie inspires her husband's masterpiece and her advocacy of an exploited Judy Garland.

The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead. Follows the harrowing experiences of two African-American teens at an abusive reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

Black Leopard, Red Wolf by Marlon James. Hired to find a mysterious boy who disappeared three years before, Tracker joins a search party that is quickly targeted deadly creatures. It's like *Game of Thrones* in Africa.

Kingdom of the Blind by Louise Penny. Gamache tries to understand why someone connected to a mysterious will is killed, while he and Beauvoir race against time to stop a deadly shipment of drugs from hitting the streets. Penny digs deep into her familiar characters in what may be her most personal book.

The Testaments by Margaret Atwood. In this sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, author Margaret Atwood answers the question that has tantalized readers for decades: What happens to Offred?

Fatal Cajun Festival by Ellen Byron. Louisiana B&B owner Maggie Crozat kicks up her heels at a country music festival--but she'll have one foot in the grave if she can't bring the killer of a diva's hanger-on to heel.

The Long Call by Ann Cleeves. When a man with a significant tattoo is found murdered in North Devon, Detective Matthew Venn is forced to return to the strict evangelical community of his childhood to uncover deadly secrets.

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger. Fleeing the Depression-era school for Native American children who have been taken from their parents, four orphans share a summer marked by struggling farmers, faith healers and lost souls.

## Nonfiction

Will My Cat Eat My Eyeballs?: big questions from tiny mortals about death by Caitlin Doughty. Every day, funeral director Caitlin Doughty receives dozens of questions about death. The best questions come from kids.

Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee by Casey Cep. Cep brings this true story to life, from the shocking murders to the courtroom drama to the racial politics of the Deep South. At the same time, she offers a deeply moving portrait of one of the country's most beloved writers and her struggle with fame, success, and the mystery of artistic creativity.

The Amusement Park: 900 Years of Thrills and Spills, and the Dreamers and Schemers Who Built Them by Stephen M. Silverman. Experience the electrifying, never-before-told true story of amusement parks, from the middle ages to present day, and meet the colorful (and sometimes criminal) characters who are responsible for their enchanting charms.

Parkland: Birth of a Movement by Dave Cullen. An incisive study of one of the past year's most significant mass shootings, with publication tied to the one-year anniversary.

Appalachian Reckoning: a Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy ed. Anthony Harkins & Meredith McCarroll. Appalachian writers and scholars rebut the "gross simplifications and stereotypes" of J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* (2016).

CSNY: Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young by Peter Doggett. An enthusiastic history of one of rock music's most significant supergroups.

The British are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777 by Rick Atkinson. The Pulitzer Prize-winning historian shifts his focus from modern battlefields to the conflict that founded the United States.

How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi . A combination memoir and extension of *Atlantic* columnist Kendi's towering *Stamped From the Beginning* (2016) that leads readers through a taxonomy of racist thought to anti-racist action.

Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know by Malcom Gladwell. Readers expecting another everything-you-think-you-know-is-wrong page-turner will not be disappointed, but they will also encounter some unsettling truths.

Becoming by Michelle Obama. The former first lady opens up about her early life, her journey to the White House, and the eight history-making years that followed.



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