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[Borrowed Finery: A Memoir](#)

Biography, History, Society

[Gaudí: A Biography](#)

[The Lost Oasis: The Desert War and the Hunt for Zerzura](#)

[Shooting Under Fire: The World of the War Photographer](#)

[Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century](#)

[Hope Against Hope: A Memoir](#)

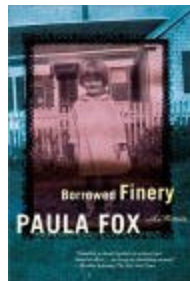
[Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy](#)

[Gardening for the Future of the Earth](#)

[Confessions of a Dangerous](#)

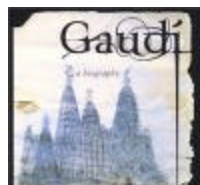
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Editor's Choice**Borrowed Finery: A Memoir**[Borrowed Finery: A Memoir](#)

Paula Fox
Owl Books; ISBN: 0805071849

Paula Fox is a novelist (e.g., [Desperate Characters](#)) and writer of award-winning children's books. As *Borrowed Finery* reveals, she had a singularly insecure childhood and lived to tell her tale, with open-eyed, unsentimental clarity and dry wit, self-deprecating where she deems appropriate. But for her first five years she was cared for by an intelligent and gentle country minister, a former journalist, and his elderly mother, who provided security, love, and mental stimulation. These years, so important in nurturing a child, gave her a sturdy foundation and a sense of what a coherent and fulfilling life could be. Her own mother couldn't tolerate her presence. Her mostly unreliable father, a writer who never stayed long in one place, did offer sporadic affection and guidance and showed some interest in her well-being. This beautifully-written book is a reminder of the effect on children of the self-preoccupations of the adults who gave them life. And it demonstrates the resilience of the human spirit, given just a bit of encouragement. It's full of the fresh observations a child makes as an understanding of life is gradually gleaned from sometimes harsh experience. A very rewarding book. [CW]

Biography, History, Society**Gaudí: A Biography**[Gaudí: A Biography](#)

Gijs Van Hensbergen
HarperCollins; ISBN: 0066210658

Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) is one of those

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[Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News](#)

[Where Are They Buried? How Did They Die? Fitting Ends and Final Resting Places of the Famous, Infamous, and Noteworthy](#)

[The Captive Mind](#)

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[The Three Stooges: The Triumphs and Tragedies of The Most Popular Comedy Team of All Time](#)

Fiction

[The Master of Go](#)

[Boonville](#)

[What Night Brings](#)

[To Your Scattered Bodies Go \(Riverworld Saga, Book 1\)](#)

[Auto-da-fé](#)

[Pattern Recognition](#)

[Spring Essence](#)

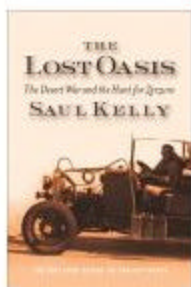
Children's Books

[Be a Friend to Trees](#)

[The House with a Clock in Its Walls](#)

legendary artists, not just an architect but a sculptor of buildings, whose work has doubtless caught the attention of anyone interested at all in architecture. He seemed to me, when I heard of him in college and saw photos of some of his buildings, to be a totally unique phenomenon in the history of architecture, and of course that's not quite true. This biography gives a sense of the man and describes the context out of which he developed as an architect. But still, his was a rare genius, and he brought to his work a solid grounding that allowed him to experiment and innovate a hundred years ago in buildings that are still amazing to see. Van Hensbergen explores Gaudí's deeply-rooted Catalan sensibility, his dedication to his work, his Catholicism, and his good fortune in having a patron so that he had more success than many architects in getting his designs built. For the most part a sound and informative biography (I quibble with the psycho-history chapter), there's a particularly vivid chapter on the political upheavals of 1908 and 1909, and one on the ambitious cathedral in Barcelona, La Sagrada Familia, begun in 1882 and continuing under construction today. Well worth reading for anyone interested in architecture, in the modern history of Catalonia, or who plans a trip to Barcelona. A useful bibliography and chronology conclude the book. [CW]

The Lost Oasis: The Desert War and the Hunt for Zerzura



[*The Lost Oasis: The Desert War and the Hunt for Zerzura*](#)

Saul Kelly

Westview Press; ISBN: 0813341035

This book is being promoted as the real story behind the [best-selling book](#) and [Oscar-winning film](#), *The English Patient*. On the surface this is a great marketing move, but in truth this book will appeal more to military history and desert exploration buffs than the romantics who fell in love with the love story. The real-life exploits of the explorers who mapped the North African desert in the 1920s and 1930s provide plenty of drama, and not just the drama of searching for ancient civilizations in the empty wastes. The multinational group of explorers eventually split their allegiances between the Axis and the Allies and both groups contributed valuable intelligence to their respective sides during WW II. Hungarian Count Ladislaus Almasy worked for the Germans, while Englishman Ralph Bagnold formed the famed Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) which contributed to the English victory in the North African Campaign. This is a fine and detailed history of a time and a place where there were still blank spots on the map and of the tough men who braved death to explore them. Incidentally, if you're interested in this book and the further exploits of the LRDG and its Axis rival, pick up Jon Latimer's first rate new book, the exhaustively researched and scholarly "[Alamein](#)". It covers the pivotal WW II

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Wayside School](#)

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There is no adequate
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against the impact of a new
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battle and discusses the important role played by the LRDG. A terrific book in and of itself. [AB]

Shooting Under Fire: The World of the War Photographer



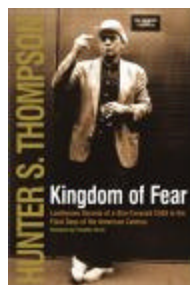
[*Shooting Under Fire: The World of the War Photographer*](#)

Peter Howe

Artisan; ISBN: 1579652158

Those of us who have never served in the armed services, or have not been in regions of conflict can never really know what it's like to be in combat. Fortunately (or unfortunately if the images are too disturbing for you), a small cadre of dedicated individuals has captured tiny moments in time and shared them with us through their work. War photographers bring the brutal, unimaginable reality of man's deadly craft to our protected lives. Howe showcases ten outstanding artists who take us through decades of deadly conflict. Page after page of starkly beautiful photographs are accompanied by descriptions, thoughts and feelings of the author and photographer. Not for the faint of heart, this is a coffee table book that will leave many cups of coffee sitting there, cold. These "witnesses to war" have given us a gift that's very difficult to unwrap. Once it's unwrapped it cannot help but change us forever. Wonderfully brilliant yet horrifying, this book will open your eyes to the horrors of war, only to have the view obscured by the flow of tears. [GB]

Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century



[*Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century*](#)

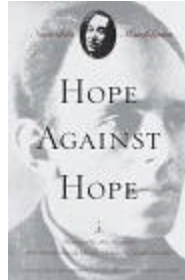
Hunter S. Thompson

Simon & Schuster; ISBN: 0684873230

Holy shit, Hunter S. Thompson is still alive? Yes he is, and he's the same [bastard](#) he always was. Has he slowed down at least? It doesn't seem so, by reading this, his autobiography. An autobiography of sorts anyway. Did all of this really happen? Inside or outside of his head? Does it matter? Not really, one doesn't read HST for the facts anyway. You read him for what he has to say, and you read him for his undeniable skill as a writer and humorist. He's funny and observant even when, or even especially when, it comes to his own life. Indeed nearly all of his writing is autobiographical at some level. "Gonzo Journalism" is characterized by the interjection of the writer into the story, at the expense of "objectivity." Of course the truth is that journalists are

always a part of their story, often the reason for the story, and that objectivity is a construct that tends to fall apart when poked too hard. There is a story early on in the book about a mailbox, FBI agents, and asking the pointed question. This seems to be the defining moment of Thompson's life. The lesson: authority backs down when confronted with the quest for truth. It's a good lesson. Read on to find out how he applies it to political opponents, judges, nutcase fame groupies, and weasels of every stripe. [MA]

Hope Against Hope: A Memoir



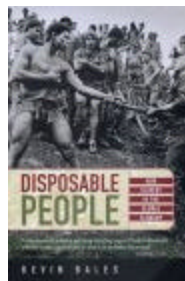
[Hope Against Hope: A Memoir](#)

Nadezhda Mandelstam

Modern Library; ISBN: 0375753168

Nadezhda, the author's first name, means 'hope' in Russian. The title is thus ironic and bitter. Osip Mandelstam, the author's husband and an extraordinary poet, suffered and eventually died due to his unwillingness to submit and conform. This book chronicles the couple's experiences during the worst period of Stalinism, in the 1930s. Osip Mandelstam dared to write [a poem about Stalin](#) which led to his being singled out for special treatment by Stalin personally. The tragedy at the core of this memoir poignantly explores uncompromising independent artistic nature which remains true to its ideals despite all costs. The book exceeds the scope of a memoir as it also contains many poignant essays, mostly reflections on the situation of life during a reign of terror. Despite the mundane and terrible details of their struggle to survive, we witness the brilliance and courage of two people, indeed an entire society, in the grip of a repressive apparatus. This book has received enormous praise for its accurate and probing assessment of life under Stalinism. The drama of the situation, expressed with Nadezhda's remarkable determination and clarity, makes this one of the most powerful books I know of. It is required reading for anyone who believes that there is any merit at all to be found in government based on the principal that the end justifies the means. [EG]

Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy



[Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy](#)

Kevin Bales

University of California Press; ISBN: 0520224639

Slavery as an institution and widespread practice ended in the nineteenth century, right? Unfortunately not, we find out in this penetrating book. Although written as the result of scholarly inquiry, the book has more in

common with excellent investigative journalism. Case studies introduce each context and location, for example a slave girl ensnared in the thriving Thai sex industry. Bales considers the historical, cultural, and above all the economic basis for forced labor. New slavery, unlike the old, has nothing to do with legal ownership of human beings. Instead, despite its being illegal, people are used as productive workers then discarded as soon as they are too old, sick, or undesirable. The connection with globalization arises from the complex chain of anonymous ownership. The immense power of foreign capital goes through several hands and subcontractors, always seeking the best bargain. Unfortunately, the cheapest labor is forced, the least expensive worker receives no compensation at all beyond minimal food and shelter. Bales makes no attempt to retain 'journalistic objectivity' in the sense of showing both sides of the issue: Slavery is indefensible. Rather, the conflict he confronts is how to dismantle and end the institution of bondage in all its forms - especially the newest pernicious mode. This book gives the reader practical advice on how to contribute to eradicating slavery. This struggle has momentum and some success already. It must be joined. [EG]

Gardening for the Future of the Earth



[Gardening for the Future of the Earth](#)

Howard-Yana Shapiro and John Harrison
Bantam Books; ISBN: 0553375334

This satisfying book combines the ideas and the practical experience of several longtime master organic gardeners from different parts of the world to promote sustainable organic gardening and improvement of soil and water quality, both locally and worldwide. Industrial agriculture, with its dependence on pesticides, herbicides, irrigation, and single crops, has increased land under cultivation. But even with a tenfold increase in pesticide use, crop loss due to insects has doubled and great areas of land are dying and eroding, while the pesticides poison our water. The methods described in this book increase the productivity and health of the soil, use significantly less water and less energy, and eliminate the expense of costly chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Chapters on garden design, soil, water, fostering biodiversity, composting, and seed saving provide practical information and the fruits of years of experience. Noting the ever-diminishing sources of supply (of the ten largest seed companies, three are primarily chemical companies and one a pharmaceutical business), the authors encourage seed-saving, especially of heirloom seeds, to maintain diversity. Illustrated with beautiful and informative color photos from both private and research gardens, the book concludes with a good bibliography and resources for seeds, trees, and sustainable gardening organizations. [CW]

Confessions of a Dangerous Mind Movie-Tie In: An Unauthorized Autobiography



[Confessions of a Dangerous Mind Movie-Tie In: An Unauthorized Autobiography](#)

Chuck Barris

Miramax; ISBN: 0786888083

I was a TV-kid. I remember Chuck Barris and his shows. He was far and away the craziest character on television. Not put-on crazy like the people on Laugh-In or the contestants on Let's Make a Deal; more like there's something-wrong-with-this-guy crazy. He'd stagger and lurch around the Gong Show stage wearing an oversized hat spouting dangerous nonsense. He was rude to his guests, his sidekicks, and his panelists. He was publicly denounced by commentators of his time as a dangerous and pernicious influence on the culture. They had no idea. Sam Rockwell utterly channels Chuck Barris in the movie version of *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, (directed by George Clooney). I experienced a delicious sense of deja vu watching reenactments of the Dating Game and Newlywed Game - cutting edge reality programming, as it turned out. And then there's the killings. According to Barris' "unauthorized autobiography" during all those game show years he was also a contract assassin for the CIA, dispatching communists while chaperoning contestants on their dream dates to exotic locations, like West Berlin. Is it true? After watching the movie, I wasn't so sure. After reading the book, I was nearly convinced. If it's a fantasy, it's a darned meticulous fantasy. [MA]

Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News



[Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News](#)

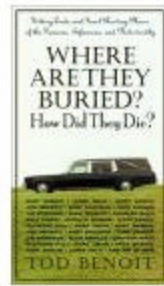
Bernard Goldberg

HarperPerennial Library; ISBN: 0060520841

Here's a book that will cause you to go through some emotional changes. You may begin reading out of skeptical curiosity. You'll continue to read out of incredulity, and then you may finally transition to outrage. All that from just 200-odd pages of first-person, documentary-style prose. The outrage may be because you agree with Goldberg, or perhaps because you disagree. Regardless, you cannot read this book and be untouched. Bernard Goldberg is an Emmy Award-winning reporter who had a "falling out" with the popular media machine and TV news in particular. In this book, he describes the extreme distortion of events created by the left-leaning filter of the media. He cites specific examples of what he came up against during his 25 plus years on the "inside" including the editorializing of AIDS, homelessness, terrorism,

the flat tax and many others. Goldberg names names and pulls no punches. A lot of people lost sleep during the weeks that this book was on the New York Times bestseller list. Very enlightening. [GB]

Where Are They Buried? How Did They Die? Fitting Ends and Final Resting Places of the Famous, Infamous, and Noteworthy



[*Where Are They Buried? How Did They Die? Fitting Ends and Final Resting Places of the Famous, Infamous, and Noteworthy*](#)

Tod Benoit

Black Dog & Leventhal Pub; ISBN: 1579122876

It's amazing how fascinating 500 corpses can be. Actually, the [corpses themselves](#), despite whatever residual fascination they may hold, are not the main focus of this neat and addictively browsable compilation. Yes, you do find out where they're stashed, but it's really the corpses' lives that make you want to keep reading. It would be pointless in a short item like this to enumerate all the names, but suffice it to say that they are neatly arranged in categories - politicians, sports figures, actors, singers, authors. Each famous or infamous person gets a short review of their life, the manner of their death, any posthumous history of the body, and the detailed location of their grave. It's futile to tackle such a grim subject without considerable humor, something author Tod Benoit provides in liberal doses. He frequently throws in very funny asides on subjects ranging from evading graveyard security to extracting information from tabloid-weary families. Take our advice and bring the book on your next trip. You're sure to have a fun adventure trying to find a famous person's last resting place somewhere near. We can only hope Benoit will produce another volume of this awfully fun little book. In fact, we can sincerely hope to wind up in some future version of his work. Very, very cool. [AB]

The Captive Mind



[*The Captive Mind*](#)

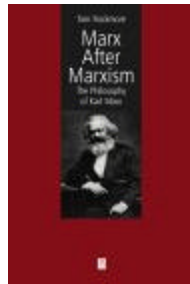
Czeslaw Milosz

Vintage Books; ISBN: 0679728562

This book was my awakening, at twenty, to the practical politics of intellectuals. Milosz relates the arrival of Soviet communism and its effect on writers. His account includes his own experiences but concentrates on a series of illustrative cases. The real choices for intellectuals were to flee to the West, compromise, keep silent or be crushed. The writing is rich and provocative, a mix of anecdotes, literary and cultural analysis, and gritty reality. Milosz wrote this

book while his native Poland was still in the grip of Stalinism. It has a freshness and urgency which is difficult to find in historical writing. The audience for this book, I presume, was the western intellectual reader - ignorant for the most part of the reality of the coercive pressures experienced in central Europe at that time. Some of Milosz's potential readers were leftward leaning, even perhaps having some sympathy with Stalinism. It serves a broader audience now, of those concerned with intellectual freedom in general, confronted with alluring rewards for compromise - of producing what is expected on demand. Though not polemical, this book severely indicts totalitarian rule and those who make their peace with it. Ideology tends to mesmerize and draw in a society, when the government can work in concert, dominate, or even control the press, institutions of education, and the funding of the arts. Discourse ceases when dissenting views can only be viewed as dangerous deviations from the dominating ideology. It is this aspect of the book which makes it valuable and insightful for us now, as we witness many academics and journalists enjoying the fruits of adhering to ideology and contributing to incremental loss of civility and reason in our public life. [EG]

Marx after Marxism: The Philosophy of Karl Marx



[*Marx after Marxism: The Philosophy of Karl Marx*](#)

Tom Rockmore

Blackwell; ISBN: 0631231900

Tom Rockmore's intent here is to distinguish the philosophy of Karl Marx from what has been codified as Marxism, in a book intended for a non-specialist reader. Marx's philosophy encompassed more than the economic philosophy, developed with his longtime friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels, for which he is now mostly known. But Engels was not trained in philosophy, didn't earn a college degree, and he, like the Marxists who followed, was less concerned with philosophical questions than with drawing conclusions. The term Marxism was not used in Marx's lifetime and many elements of Marxism now ascribed to him are not to be found in his writings. As a student of the history of philosophy, his PhD dissertation concerned with Democritus and Epicurus's views of nature, Marx was for much of his life involved with a response to the thinking of his predecessor Hegel and extended Hegel's view (going back to Aristotle) of the link between economics and ethics, of political economy as concerned with human needs. Writing in the 1850s as the industrial revolution was gathering steam, Marx was concerned with understanding surplus value, the damaging effect of increasing mechanization on workers, the instability to be expected from the capitalist system, and the tenacious problem of poverty. This brief book invites the reader to a better understanding of one of the most-quoted thinkers of our time, lays to rest some misconceptions, and stimulates one's own reexamination of the problems with which Marx grappled. [CW]

Leading Geeks: How to Manage and Lead the People Who Deliver Technology



[Leading Geeks: How to Manage and Lead the People Who Deliver Technology](#)

Paul Glen

John Wiley & Sons; ISBN: 0787961485

You got your degree in something or other and then clawed your way up the corporate ladder. Responsibilities grew until lo and behold, you've got people reporting to you! Smart people. Technologically savvy people. Nerds, geeks, computer jockeys, engineers or "knowledge workers," whatever they're (we're!) called, these folks may not necessarily respond to traditional management methods. Help is on the way. Paul Glen describes the care and feeding of one of our most valuable business resources. He describes behavior and belief pattern held by geeks, and how who they are is intricately intertwined in the nature of the work they do. Glen helps us to understand what makes them tick. He answers questions of motivation, organizational models, and how geek leaders work within their own groups. This book is rich with practical tips on making the most of available brainpower. Don't let the title fool you; it is a serious study of how to manage technical human resources. It is well written and superbly organized to make it a valuable management reference tool. A nice added feature is the appendix, which outlines the models and lists covered in the text. Expect to see this on a best-seller list for corporate America sometime soon. [GB]

Bringing Down the House: The Inside Story of Six MIT Students Who Took Vegas for Millions



[Bringing Down the House: The Inside Story of Six MIT Students Who Took Vegas for Millions](#)

Ben Mezrich

Free Press; ISBN: 0743225708

Self-appointed Morals Czar [William Bennett's](#) recent exposure as a major gambler did not come as a shock to too many people. Rich, important, smart, powerful people need an outlet. What comes as a shock is that his game of choice was high-stakes slot machines. A sucker's game. There's only one game of skill played against the house in the gambling halls of the world: blackjack. It's the only game where skill and teamwork can give you an advantage over the casino. *Bringing Down the House* tells the tale of an MIT team who used role-playing, card counting, and human engineering to win millions from Las Vegas. Mysterious backers front the money to a picturesquely motley crew of non-descript brainiacs led by a secretive mad scientist who

teaches them all how to break the bank scientifically. It works. They make millions for the team. They're comped into the ritziest casinos in the USA. They date supermodels. They are betrayed. Someone, never revealed, sells them out. They get caught, threatened, and beat up. Apartments are searched and trashed. If it all seems too much like a movie to be real, I can tell you that I play poker with one of the characters ("Andrew Tay") and he really is a tall, arrogant dufus who plays a mean mean game of cards. [MA]

The Real Freshman Handbook: A Totally Honest Guide to Life on Campus



[The Real Freshman Handbook: A Totally Honest Guide to Life on Campus](#)

Jennifer Hanson

Mariner Books; ISBN: 0618163425

There is an abundance of resources available to help ease the pain of the college freshman year. One sits behind the desk at the Career Center in your local high school, but access is a little inconvenient. Still other resources can be found at your favorite (virtual) bookstore, and most are chock-full of useful information. The problem is that if they're not fun and interesting to read, the target audience won't bother with them. (Teens are a tough crowd to please.) Hanson has solved this problem: this is a book they'll stick with just because it's an entertaining read. Her wit adds an insightful twist to just about every aspect of college life. The decidedly female perspective doesn't detract from the fact that all freshmen can avoid many pitfalls with a little foreknowledge and planning. From dorm life (roommates!), course selection, transportation, finances, security, frats and sororities, partying and sleep, Hanson uncovers many of the mysteries awaiting the unsuspecting "newbie." Amongst the real gems lies quite a bit of silliness, but it just adds to the charm of a decidedly readable book. This would make a great add-on high school graduation gift come June. [GB]

The Three Stooges: The Triumphs and Tragedies of The Most Popular Comedy Team of All Time



[The Three Stooges: The Triumphs and Tragedies of The Most Popular Comedy Team of All Time](#)

Jeff Forrester, Tom Forrester, Joe Wallison

(Editor)

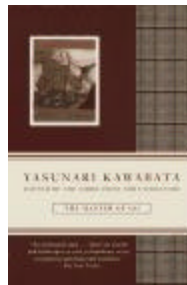
Donaldson Books; ISBN: 0971580103

Is it really just a guy thing? Is there something inherently unfunny about the Stooges' brand of physical humor to those folks without copious testosterone flowing

through their veins? Science may never know the answers to these Stoooge-related questions, but this book answers quite a few others. It has information that even hard-core Stoooge-a-philes will find truly fascinating, and the casual Stoooge user will be completely blown away. Photos, photos, and more photos adorn pages filled with a never-before-told history of Stooogedom from the very beginnings on stage in the 1920s to the almost frightening geriatric incarnations in the early 1970s. It explores Stoooge influences from their early lives and vaudeville, and looks at what the Three Stoooges have meant to comedy teams that followed. The three guys billed as the Stoooges may have varied a little in their popular movies, but that was just the tip of the iceberg: there were Stoooges that you've never even heard of, and this book introduces them all in classic pictures and poignant words. The Forresters have written other Stoooge works, but this one is truly outstanding. Stoooges fans, this is a must for your library. [GB]

Fiction

The Master of Go



[*The Master of Go*](#)

Yasunari Kawabata, Edward G. Seidensticker
(Translator)

Simon & Schuster; ISBN: 0679761063

I've been [learning to play Go](#), but not very successfully. I don't really know anyone who plays, so I've been reading books, and playing a bit online.

The problem with online play, though, is that it's hard to ask people what's actually going on; why are they making particular moves. However, I have learned enough to follow the game that is the heart of *The Master of Go* by Yasunari Kawabata. This is a slightly fictionalized version of a famous Go match played by the elderly ranking master and an upstart young pretender to the throne. Played over six months in fourteen different sessions at various locations in 1938, the match was eagerly followed all over Japan and reported on by the author. The match itself is only the foreground of this book; the real story is the change in Japan from its traditional ways to the modern era. Set just before war with the US, this story is both a narrative and a glimpse into a time and culture very foreign to most western readers. *The Master of Go* won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968, and should be read by anyone familiar with the game, or anyone interested in Japanese culture. [MA]

Boonville



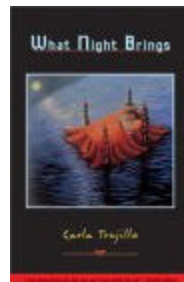
[*Boonville*](#)

Robert Mailer Anderson

Creative Arts Book Company; ISBN: 0887394795

Anderson, 34, lives in San Francisco. This, his first novel, is about the social life of Boonville. The actual Boonville, population 700, is in the Anderson Valley of Mendocino County, about 100 miles north of San Francisco. It is known, if at all, for its local dialect "Boontling," much studied by academic linguists, for the good quality and cheap price of the marijuana sold there, and for the fact that even Hell's Angels avoid the place, if at all possible. It is where Anderson grew up and he gives us, the readers, not only a wildly funny novel, but a participant-observer's anthropological description of life in the weird lane. His male protagonist, John Gibson, is a bit of a foil: a young businessman from Florida who inherits property in Boonville, moves there, tries to make sense of the place, and in doing so discovers more about himself. His female protagonist, Sarah McKay, is a very level-headed young native trying to make sense of her life when all she has ever known are dope dealers, bar fighters, retrohippies and the like. You may not care much for John, but you will love Sarah. The real hero of the story is, of course, Boonville itself. Recommended if you are up for 258 pages of high comedy. [WW]

What Night Brings



[What Night Brings](#)

Carla Trujillo

Curbstone Press; ISBN: 1880684942

What Night Brings is a year in the life of an independent-minded kid who's trying to figure out how to cope with a macho, self-righteous dad who beats her and her sister and how to get God to turn her into a boy. As she ponders adult hypocrisy and begins to realize that God is not responding, she works to solve her problems. She makes good use of the local library, not only for stories for entertainment and escape, but also for a karate how-to and books on gender identity that begin to shed some light. And she borrows a camera from her uncle and plays detective in the hope of waking her mother up to her dad's two-timing. Trujillo gets the voice of a smart, determined, in some ways still naive 11-year-old just right - her resilience and will to protect herself and her younger sister, her frustration at their mother's credulity, her resourcefulness. Funny, painful, hopeful - the novel arouses a mix of emotions but leaves one confident its young narrator is a survivor who'll find her way. [CW]

To Your Scattered Bodies Go (Riverworld Saga, Book 1)



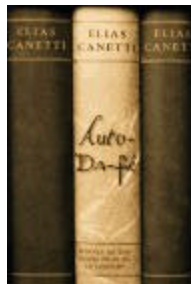
[To Your Scattered Bodies Go \(Riverworld Saga, Book 1\)](#)

Philip José Farmer

Del Rey; ISBN:0345419677

If you happened to catch the Riverworld miniseries on TV, you got a taste of the wondrous universe created by Philip José Farmer over thirty years ago. This modern television adaptation can't compare to the original: Farmer's classic tale is still best experienced through his books. This is the first in a series of five novels that takes us on a journey up a seemingly endless river on a strange planet that is very much like the Earth. It may be like Earth, but it has some decidedly unearthly differences: everyone who ever lived has been resurrected in a youthful body at the prime of life. They possess all of their Earthly memories, and are thrown together to make the best of very odd circumstances. You'll find caricatures of historic figures. One of them is our hero Richard Burton (the explorer, not the actor.) Burton scrapes together a hearty band of fellow adventurers who try to find the source of the river as well as the creators of the amazing and mysterious objects they find along the way. The compelling premise of resurrection makes for some interesting conflicts and drives a story that is epic in proportion. Well written, entertaining and a joy to read, this classic series has something for just about everybody. [GB]

Auto-da-fé



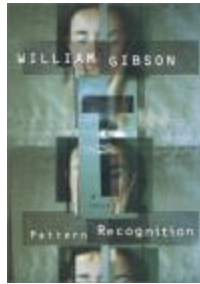
[Auto-da-fé](#)

Elias Canetti

Noontday Press; ISBN: 0374518793

Enlightenment can be grim business. This complex novel concerns the limits of wisdom cut off from the world. The protagonist Peter Kien lives alone with his massive library, devoting his life to the study of Chinese sages. Not only is Kien easily duped, his responses to brutality and acquisitiveness show how close insanity and mastery of philosophy can be. After having been seduced by his housekeeper, Kien begins a protracted struggle in which his wife, now his adversary, progressively overcomes his pleasant retreat from the world. The characters in this novel are like evil cartoons, funny and terrible at the same time. A series of horrible yet amusing situations ease the reading experience somewhat, though the heavy symbolism and allegory is hard to miss. The sections of this book 'A Head Without A World,' 'Headless World' and 'The World in the Head' chronicle Kien's descent. These could coincide with the central biblical themes of redemption, revelation and creation, here turned upside down. Canetti took a long hard look at the limits of reason, scholarship, and philosophy as a means to confront adversity and hard reality. The result is a fascinating though grotesque inverted salvation story. [EG]

Pattern Recognition



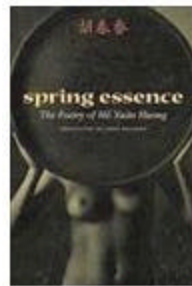
[*Pattern Recognition*](#)

William Gibson

Putnam Pub Group; ISBN: 0399149864

William Gibson has been one of my favorite authors since I bought [Neuromancer](#) to read on the plane to England on our honeymoon. There wasn't anything quite like it up til then, and he's consistently been one of my favorite science fiction authors ever since, never disappointing and often revealing a new vista of the near future. Therefore it was with some trepidation I picked up his first non-science-fiction novel. Was Gibson going for "respectability?" Was he trying to climb out of the sci-fi ghetto and go for the Kathy and Regis book tour? The first few pages weren't reassuring, too much [Bret Easton Ellisonian](#) brand name dropping. And then it was 4:00 in the morning. Gibson no longer needs to write about the future, it's already here. Video phones are a mass-market item. Information is ubiquitous. Paranoia is the new reality. Memotic viruses spread through the population faster than biologic viruses, sometimes indistinguishable from each other. Organized crime, organized politics, and organized religion are all faces of the same power structure which the vast majority of us react to, but do not participate in. It's a dystopian future we live in, true, but the toys are really cool. [MA]

Spring Essence



[*Spring Essence*](#)

Ho Xuan Huong, John Balaban (Editor)

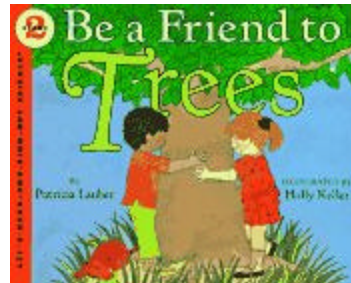
Copper Canyon Press; ISBN: 1556591489

It's no secret that translating poetry is difficult. The difficulty goes up considerably when the poet and the poems are far removed in space, time and culture from the world of the translator. In the case of the reader all those factors may well contribute to the surprising pleasure of the poetry. It's difficult to get much further away from modern Western traditions than to the world of Ho Xuan Huong. She was a woman whose life spanned the latter years of the 18th and early years of the 19th century in far-away Vietnam. She may or may not have been married to Vietnamese provincial governor, but clearly she was highly literate and outspoken - rare among women in that culture. Indeed very little is known about her real life, but the poems she left behind leave tantalizing hints that it was rich in passion, both erotic and social. Her skill is reflected in her fame as a consummate stylist and mistress of the double meaning. Her poems, frequently disguised as metaphors about nature, are about love, the pleasures of sex, and about relationships both romantic and social. And even though she is so far removed from us in space, time and culture, her poems speak to our basic human natures giving us as

much pleasure as they surely did her contemporaries. Sadly, this slim book of short poems is virtually all that's left of Ho Xuan Huong's legacy. And even though native Vietnamese speakers may quibble with the translation - as some do in the Amazon reviews - Ho Xuan Huong's witty, erotic and wise poetry surely deserves a wider audience. [AB]

Children's Books

Be a Friend to Trees



[Be a Friend to Trees](#)

Patricia Lauber; illustrated by Holly Keller
HarperCollins; ISBN: 0064451208

Here's a fine book to introduce a child to the essential role trees play in our environment and in our lives and the

lives of animals, insects and birds, in the weather, and the ecosystems of our planet. In addition to showing the dependence of various birds and animals on trees, the author and illustrator explain and illustrate photosynthesis. The book concludes with suggestions of how children can protect trees by using less paper, reusing paper bags and sheets of paper, recycling newspapers etc., and even helping to plant a tree. In a low-key way, the book plants the seeds of a sense of living sustainably - a valuable goal and important to nourish even in young children. Good, clear, informative and appealing illustrations accompany a text that conveys a lot of information invitingly. This is a book in the Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series, intended for children 5 to 9, in the primary grades.[CW].

The House with a Clock in Its Walls



[The House with a Clock in Its Walls](#)

John Bellairs
Puffin Books; ISBN: 014036336X

One rarely finds Gothic horror for children. In Gothic horror one expects attention paid to nuanced characters, gradually increasing tension, and highly personal conflict against powerlessness and isolation.

The children's chills and thrills horror genre (very far from these Gothic elements) has seen a glut of good books in recent years, mostly by R. L. Stine. His books can be funny creepy page turners, full of cliff hangers, thrills, and simple character development. Bellairs offers lighter humor and a less bombastic fear experience than Stine, while equally entertaining. Lewis Barnavelt, the protagonist, arrives at the beginning of the novel, at his uncle's house. He learns that his uncle is

a sorcerer and that he is dreadfully worried about a cursed clock ticking somewhere in the house. Despite this, Lewis's problems and concerns are quite mundane - he is unpopular in school and unathletic. In order to impress others, he makes very unwise use of his uncle's magical library, with awful consequences. The story balances the motivations and logic of a ten-year-old with the grim and increasingly dangerous forces set in motion. Unlike most horror authors, Bellairs lays off morality. He lets Lewis confront his mistakes without directly correcting himself or improving. Lewis has strengths and flaws like any kid, that's that. The unimpressive cover cannot compare with the evocative interior illustrations by Edward Gorey, whose style captures normal yet painfully wrong situations; a brilliant match for the esthetics of this impressive book. [EG]

One-Eyed Cat



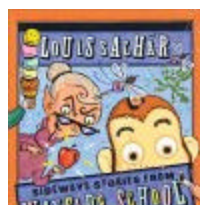
[*One-Eyed Cat*](#)

Paula Fox

Aladdin Paperbacks; ISBN: 0689839707

Six months can encompass great changes in a child's life, even one that seems stable and uneventful. The consequences of his uncle's unexpected birthday gift of a Daisy air rifle turns 11-year-old Ned into an anxious, secretive child, with no one in whom he can confide, after he takes the gun out late one night. His worries ease when he goes in the afternoons to help an aging neighbor who lives alone. Together they sort through Mr. Scully's boxes, Ned chops wood for the coming winter, and they try to feed and offer care to a feral cat with a damaged eye that Ned thinks he may have shot that night. But Ned passes the winter in anxiety and shame, making up stories to account for his preoccupation and losing touch with his parents as he tries to cover his guilt. His parents' confidence in him eventually provides the opportunity to confess the source of his worry and restore his sense of well-being. Paula Fox writes with great sensitivity to the tenderness of a child's feelings and the difficulty of expressing fears or worry. It's not hard to see why this book won virtually all the children's book prizes for fiction. If read to a child by an adult, the adult will find Paula Fox's memoir, reviewed above, fascinating to read as well to see how she makes use of her own experiences in shaping her fiction. [CW]

Sideways Stories from Wayside School



[*Sideways Stories from Wayside School*](#)

Louis Sachar

Avon; ISBN: 0380731487

Twisted, rather than sideways, would better

describe this collection. The school, thirty stories high, merits a book thirty stories long. Each concentrates on a student or staff member of the school, telling a whimsical story, or relating an absurd situation. Paradoxes, puzzles, and word play make for a challenging and engaging reading experience. Sachar uses charming simple language, so the writing is highly accessible to a pre-adolescent reader despite its heady themes. A few surreal chapters combine humor and horror, as when a visitor in the classroom removes layers of progressively smelly coats only to reveal that there nothing underneath them. Most stories concern children with difficult uniqueness. This is where the book shines the most, as it rings true. Most kids have characteristics which make them challenging, amusing, and delightful at the same time. Sachar succeeds in spotlighting this observation with remarkable character portraits, over-the-top teaching methods and true-to-life playground situations. This book celebrates the humor and power of unconventional thinking. [EG]

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