

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTRA ABRIDGED VERSION

Organized by: category → genre → subgenre → subtopic (if any).

Last updated: March 23, 2024

FICTION

SCIENCE FICTION

APOCALYPSES + DYSTOPIAS

- *American War* by Omar el Akkad
- *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel
- *Severance* by Ling Ma
- *Vigilance* by Robert Jackson Bennett
- *How High We Go in the Dark* by Sequoia Nagamatsu
- *Chain-Gang All-Stars* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

CLIMATE DYSTOPIA

- *The Windup Girl* by Paolo Bacigalupi
- *The Water Knife* by Paolo Bacigalupi
- *Venomous Lumpsucker* by Ned Beaman

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

- *World War Z* by Max Brooks
- *Rise: The Complete Newsflesh Collection* by Mira Grant

SPACE, SPACE OPERAS, AND/OR ALIENS

- *Remembrance of Earth's Past* trilogy (*The Three-Body Problem*, *The Dark Forest*, and *Death's End*) by Liu Cixin
- *The Expanse* series by James S. A. Corey (*Leviathan Wakes*, *Caliban's War*, *Abaddon's Gate*, *Cibola Burn*, *Nemesis Games*, *Babylon's Ashes*, *Persepolis Rising*, *Tiamat's Wrath*, and *Leviathan Falls*)
- *Children of Time*, *Children of Ruin*, and *Children of Memory* by Adrian Tchaikovsky
- *A Fire Upon the Deep* by Vernor Vinge
- *Providence* by Max Barry
- *Ancillary Justice*, *Ancillary Sword*, and *Ancillary Mercy* by Ann Leckie
- Anything in the *Murderbot* series by Martha Wells

- *The Employees: A Workplace Novel of the 22nd Century* by Olga Ravn, translated by Martin Aitken
- *Counterweight* by Djuna, translated by Anton Hur
- *Walking Practice: A Novel* by Dolki Min, translated by Victoria Caudle

TIME TRAVEL

- *Version Control* by Dexter Palmer
- *The Gone World* by Tom Sweterlitsch
- *Sea of Tranquility* by Emily St. John Mandel

MILITARY SF

- *The Forever War* by Joe Haldeman

POLITICAL SF

- *The Centenal Cycle* trilogy by Malka Older (*Infomocracy*, *Null States*, and *State Tectonics*)

GENRE-BLENDERS

- *The Fireman* by Joe Hill (+horror, +thriller)
- *All the Birds in the Sky* by Charlie Jane Anders (+fantasy)
- *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday* by Saad Z. Hossain (+fantasy)
- *Cyber Mage* by Saad Z. Hossain (+fantasy)

OTHERS/MISC

- *The Tusks of Extinction* by Ray Nayler

SF SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS

- *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese SF in Translation*, edited and translated by Ken Liu
- *How Long 'til Black Future Month?: Stories* by N. K. Jemisin
- *Exhalation: Stories* by Ted Chiang
- *A People's Future of the United States: Speculative Fiction from 25 Extraordinary Writers* edited by Victor LaValle and John Joseph Adams
- *Friday Black* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah
- *Future Tense Fiction* by the Editors of *Future Tense*
- *The Hidden Girl and Other Stories* by Ken Liu (+fantasy)
- *To Hold Up the Sky* by Cixin Liu

FANTASY

- *The Paper Menagerie* by Ken Liu

- The *Divine Cities* trilogy by Robert Jackson Bennett (*City of Stairs*, *City of Blades*, and *City of Miracles*)
- *The Changeling* by Victor LaValle (+horror)
- *The Raven Tower* by Anne Leckie
- *Strange Beasts of China* by Yan Ge
- *Piranesi* by Susanna Clark
- The *Scholomance* trilogy by Naomi Novik (*A Deadly Education*, *The Last Graduate*, and *The Golden Enclaves*)
- *The Library at Mount Char* by Scott Hawkins

APOCALYPTIC

- The *Broken Earth* trilogy by N.K. Jemison (*The Fifth Season*, *The Obelisk Gate*, and *The Stone Sky*)

MILITARY/GEOPOLITICAL (BONUS SUBTOPICS: COLONIALISM, FEMALE PROTAGONISTS ON QUESTS OF REVENGE, PLENTY OF TRAUMA & VIOLENCE)

- The *Masquerade* series by Seth Dickinson (*The Traitor Baru Cormorant*, *The Monster Baru Cormorant*, *The Tyrant Baru Cormorant*) (+queer protag)
- The *Poppy War* series by R. F. Kuang (*The Poppy War*, *The Dragon Republic*, *The Burning God*)

HEISTS

- *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo
- The *Founders* trilogy by Robert Jackson Bennett (*Foundryside*, *Shorefall*, and *Locklands*) (+queer protag)

QUEER PROTAGONISTS

- The *Amberlough Dossier* series by Lara Elena Donnelly (*Amberlough*, *Armistice*, and *Amnesty*)
- The *Tensorate Series* by JY Yang (*The Black Tides of Heaven*, *The Red Threads of Fortune*, *The Descent of Monsters*, *The Ascent to Godhood*)
- The *Locked Tomb* series by Tamsyn Muir (*Gideon the Ninth*, *Harrow the Ninth*, *Nona the Ninth*)
- *Black Water Sister* by Zen Cho

MYSTERY + THRILLER

- Anything by Tana French: the Dublin Murder Squad series (*Into the Woods*, *The Likeness*, *The Secret Place*, *Broken Harbor*, *Faithful Place*, and *The Trespasser*), *The Witch Elm* (standalone), *The Searcher* (standalone)
- *The Perfect Nanny* by Leila Slimani

- *The Old Woman and the Knife* by Gu Byeong-mo, trans. Chi-Young Kim

HORROR

- *The Shining* by Stephen King
- *The Deep* by Nick Cutter
- *The Hunger* by Alma Katsu
- *Little Heaven* by Nick Cutter
- *Melmoth* by Sarah Perry
- *This Thing Between Us: A Novel* by Gus Moreno
- *What Moves the Dead* by T. Kingfisher
- *Manhunt* by Gretchen Felker-Martin
- *Our Share of Night* by Mariana Enriquez, translated by Megan McDowell
- *The Silent Companions* by Laura Purcell

LIT/CONTEMPORARY FICTION

WAR, CONFLICT, ESCAPE

- *The Orphan Master's Son* by Adam Johnson
- *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen
- *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead
- *The Association of Small Bombs* by Karan Mahajan
- *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan
- *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid
- *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead

BEING A PERSON IN THE WORLD

- *Chemistry* by Weike Wang
- *Less* by Andrew Sean Greer
- *Sourdough* by Robin Sloan
- *Private Citizens* by Tony Tulathimutte
- The *Outline* trilogy by Rachel Cusk (*Outline*, *Transit*, and *Kudos*)

BEING A WOMAN IN CONTEMPORARY EAST ASIA

- *Little Gods* by Meng Jin
- *Breasts and Eggs* by Mieko Kawakami
- *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* by Cho Nam-Joo
- *If I Had Your Face* by Frances Cha
- *Idol, Burning: A Novel* by Rin Usami, translated by Asa Yoneda

VEGETARIANISM AS PLOT POINT

- *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang
- *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* by Olga Tokarczuk, translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones

CLIMATE

- *Weather* by Jenny Offill
- *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams* by Richard Flanagan

OTHER

- *Interior Chinatown* by Charles Yu
 - *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. John Mandel
 - *A Children's Bible* by Lydia Millet
 - *Little Eyes* by Samanta Schweblin
 - *Leonard and Hungry Paul* by Rónán Hession
 - *The Office of Historical Corrections: A Novella and Stories* by Danielle Evans
 - *Imposter Syndrome* by Kathy Wang
 - *Mouthful of Birds: Stories* by Samanta Schweblin
 - *Pew* by Catherine Lacey
 - *The Latecomer* by Jean Hanff Korelitz
 - *Detransition, Baby* by Torrey Peters
 - *Cursed Bunny: Stories* by Bora Chung, translated by Anton Hur
 - *When We Cease to Understand the World* by Benjamín Labatut, translated by Adrian Nathan West
 - *The MANIAC* by Benjamín Labatut
 - *A History of Present Illness: A Novel* by Anna DeForest
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NONFICTION

MEMOIRS

- *Life in Code: A Personal History of Technology* by Ellen Ullman
- *The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Memoir of War and What Comes After* by Clementine Wamariya
- *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover
- *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State* by Nadia Murad

- *Small Fry: A Memoir* by Lisa Brennan-Jobs
- *The Rules Do Not Apply* by Ariel Levy
- *Uncanny Valley: A Memoir* by Anna Wiener
- *In the Dream House* by Carmen Maria Machado
- *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller
- *Recollections of My Nonexistence* by Rebecca Solnit
- *Eat a Peach: A Memoir* by David Chang
- *Aftershocks: A Memoir* by Nadia Owusu
- *Becoming Duchess Goldblatt: A Memoir* by Anonymous
- *Seeing Ghosts: A Memoir* by Kat Chow
- *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald
- *Mala's Cat: A Memoir of Survival in World War II* by Mala Kacenberg
- *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt
- *I'm Glad My Mom Died* by Jennette McCurdy
- *All the Beauty in the World: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Me* by Patrick Bringley
- *Of My Mother!* by Connie Wang

MEDICAL

- *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi
- *The Undying* by Anne Boyer
- *This Is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of A Medical Resident* by Adam Kay
- *The Shapeless Unease: A Year of Not Sleeping* by Samantha Harvey
- *Riding the Lightning: A Year in the Life of a New York City Paramedic* by Anthony Almojera

HUMOROUS

- *Priestdaddy* by Patricia Lockwood
- *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah
- *Sounds Like Titanic* by Jessica Chiccehitto Hindman
- *Dear Girls* by Ali Wong

NOT MEMOIRS

- *Alone Time: Four Seasons, Four Cities, and the Pleasure of Solitude* by Stephanie Rosenbloom
- *Sorry I'm Late, I Didn't Want to Come: One Introvert's Year of Saying Yes* by Jessica Pan
- *Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close* by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman

SCIENCE

- *The Lost City of the Monkey God* by Douglas Preston
- *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find The Good Death* by Caitlin Doughty
- *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, and Other Lessons from the Crematorium* by Caitlin Doughty

- Anything by Mary Roach (in order of publication date: *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*; *Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*; *Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex*; *Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void*; *My Planet: Finding Humor in the Oddest Places*; *Gulp: Adventures in the Alimentary Canal*; *Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War*; and *Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law*)
- *How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems* by Randall Munroe
- *Into the Planet: My Life as a Cave Diver* by Jill Heinerth
- *Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family* by Robert Kolker
- *The Book of Eels: Our Enduring Fascination with the Most Mysterious Creature in the Natural World* by Patrik Svensson
- *Rabid: A Cultural History of the World's Most Diabolical Virus* by Bill Wasik and Monica Murphy
- *Phallacy: Life Lessons from the Animal Penis* by Emily Willingham
- *Strangers to Ourselves: Unsettled Minds and the Stories that Make Us* by Rachel Aviv
- *Eight Bears: Mythic Past and Imperiled Future* by Gloria Dickie

EDUCATION

- *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* by William Deresiewicz
- *Beginners: The Joy and Transformative Power of Lifelong Learning* by Tom Vanderbilt

HISTORY, POLITICS, WAR

- *East West Street: On the Origins of "Genocide" and "Crimes Against Humanity"* by Philippe Sands
- *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* by Timothy Snyder
- *Ten Restaurants That Changed America* by Paul Freedman
- *Nervous States: Democracy and the Decline of Reason* by William Davies
- *The Fighters* by C.J. Chivers
- *Bottoms Up and the Devil Laughs: A Journey Through the Deep State* by Kerry Howley
- *Among the Braves* by Shibani Mahtani and Timothy McLaughlin

TECHNOLOGY

- *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are* by Seth Stephens-Davidowitz
- *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup* by John Carreyrou
- *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* by Shoshana Zuboff
- *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* by Jenny Odell
- *User Friendly: How the Hidden Rules of Design are Changing the Way We Live, Work, and Play* by Cliff Kuang with Robert Fabricant
- *Future Histories: What Ada Lovelace, Tom Paine, and the Paris Commune Can Teach Us About Digital Technology* by Lizzie O'Shea

- *You Look Like a Thing and I Love You* by Janelle Shane
- *The Ethical Algorithm: The Science of Socially Aware Algorithm Design* by Michael Kearns and Aaron Roth
- *Race After Technology* by Ruha Benjamin
- *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* by Virginia Eubanks
- *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life* by Adam Greenfield
- *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* by Cathy O'Neil
- *God, Human, Animal, Machine* by Meghan O'Gieblyn

SOCIETY

- *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America* by Jill Leovy
- *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* by David Epstein
- *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us* by Rachel Louise Snyder
- *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* by Anand Giridharadas
- *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* by Peter Pomerantsev
- *Why We're Polarized* by Ezra Klein
- *Notes from an Apocalypse: A Personal Journey to the End of the World and Back* by Mark O'Connell
- *The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal About Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power* by Deidre Mask
- *What Can a Body Do? How We Meet the Built World* by Sara Hendren
- *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and the Conspiracy to Protect Predators* by Ronan Farrow
- *Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America* by Conor Dougherty
- *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* by Sarah Jaffe

CULTURE

- *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* by Cathy Park Hong
- *The Longing for Less: Living With Minimalism* by Kyle Chayka
- *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life* by Twyla Tharp
- *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency* by Olivia Laing
- *Everybody: A Book About Freedom* by Olivia Laing
- *The Right to Sex: Feminism in the Twenty-First Century* by Amia Srinivasan

FOOD

- *An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace* by Tamar Adler

WRITING

- *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* by Roy Peter Clark

ESSAY COLLECTIONS

- *The Opposite of Loneliness* by Marina Keegan
- *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel: Essays* by Alexander Chee
- *Some of Us Are Very Hungry Now: Essays* by Andre Perry
- *Vesper Flights: New and Collected Essays* by Helen Macdonald