

## January 2021 Staff Picks

1. **Author: Edward Rutherfurd**

**Title: Sarum: The Novel of England**

This is an older book (copyright 1997) that will appeal to fans of Ken Follett's Kingsbridge series or James Michener's historical sagas. It traces a few fictional families in the Salisbury, England area from prehistoric times to the present, including the creation of Stonehenge, the Roman occupation, the building of Salisbury Cathedral, the effect of the industrial revolution, the impact of various wars on the region and much more. The fortunes of the featured families change over the years, sometimes rising in wealth and prestige, sometimes falling into poverty or disgrace. The novel offers a very human perspective on major events in British history and includes rich descriptions and interesting character interactions. Like most epic fiction, it is rather lengthy at about 900 pages, so the reader will need to be able to invest some time. Serious historical fiction fans will find it well worth the effort.

2. **Author: Rick Riordan**

**Title: Percy Jackson and the Olympians series**

For anyone who's wanted to be a hero, you should know that the life of a hero is hard. Normal people won't know what you're doing to save the world. Worse, they'll think you're a delinquent kid that's traveling cross-country stealing cars, attacking old ladies with a deadly pen, and blowing up national monuments. Most of that probably isn't your fault, but how do you explain to mortals that half the blame belongs to one of the immortal gods from Greek myth, a.k.a. your Mom or Dad? Percy Jackson and the Olympians shares the trials of the modern demigod (half-mortal, half-god) as they train to live in a world in which monsters can smell when you're near, mortals can't see the myths coming to life around them, and the only person in your corner is an all-powerful parent who's never been around.

3. **Author: Gail Honeyman**

**Title: Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine**

I recommend this underdog love story with twists and mystery.

4. **Author: Kiiko Yumi**

**Title: Library Wars: Love & War (vols 1-15)**

This series is one of my favorites for so many reasons! I don't usually read shoujo manga (Japanese-style graphic novels written for adolescent girls), but this is one series that I couldn't put down! Not only is this series a must read for book lovers and library aficionados, but the themes that resonate throughout this story will strike a chord with those of us who understand why libraries exist in the first place! Against a distinctly dystopian backdrop, we have a story that not only contains military drama and combative action, but also a bit of romance and espionage to keep readers engaged! Even if readers are not big fans of this format (the comic/graphic novel format), I think that the message of the story and the themes highlighted within (freedom of expression, government censorship, etc...) will supersede the medium. In short, I think Library Wars: Love & war has a bit of something for everyone.

5. **Author: Matt Ruff**                      **Title: Lovecraft Country**

A collection of interrelated stories that take place in the late 1950's. It starts with an African-American soldier coming back from the Korean War who has to go in search of his missing father. His journey is not easy, of course. He has to deal with a number of obstacles ranging from a super-secret occult society to mysterious monsters in the woods, but those pale in comparison to the mundane horrors he faces on his cross-country drive in Jim Crow's America. In Lovecraft County, Matt Ruff includes a number of elements of classic horror stories: spooky woods, a haunted house, a magical tome, shapeshifting - each with a little bit of a twist that you might not see coming. I strongly recommend this book for anyone looking for a good scary story whose most fearsome villains are not supernatural, but all too human.

6. **Author: Catherine Fisher**                      **Title: Incarceron**

Blood Brothers and members of the Comitatus, Finn and Keiro both have a privileged standing in Incarceron. They are nonetheless as the maestro reminds them--prisoners. No one can ever leave the living prison that is Incarceron. The prison has many eyes that watch them and a voice that taunts them. Faced-paced and exciting, this novel is a great fantasy for those who love suspense and plot twists.

7. **Author: Matt Ruff**                      **Title: Bad Monkeys**

One of Ruff's earlier novels, Bad Monkeys, will have you wondering just what the heck is going on all the way to the last few pages. It starts with a murder investigation. All the reader knows is that someone was killed and the suspect claims to belong to a secret organization devoted to eliminating Irredeemable Persons - the worst of the worst - or, as they call them, Bad Monkeys. As the questioning progresses, more and more elements of the suspect's confession don't seem to add up. Are they really part of quasi-governmental agency or just a serial killer with an overly active imagination? Read the book to find out.

8. **Author: M.C. Beaton**                      **Title: Agatha Raisin and the Haunted House**

This falls under the category of cozy murder mystery but with what I think are better than average characters. Agatha Raisin is so perfectly flawed in just the right ways that you can't help but like her. And laugh at and with her. In fact, you could say that many of the regular characters in this series have their fair share of faults but all (or at least most) of them come through in the end. Add in a good mystery to solve and a lovely idyllic setting and you are off to the land that never heard of social distancing, bills to be paid, or dirty dishes. Enjoy!

9. **Author: Stuart Turton**                      **Title: The 71/2 Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle**

A nontraditional Sci-Fi / Mystery that keeps you guessing every chapter. Very unique storytelling that had me saying "Wait....what?" and re-reading to fully grasp the twists and connect the plot.

**10. Author:**

**Title: I'll be Gone in the Dark**

Compelling non-fiction account of one woman's quest to discover the Golden State Killer in California.

**11. Author: Jean Hegland**

**Title: Into the Forest**

After the fall of society, two sisters must fight to survive together.

**12. Author: William R. Forstchen**

**Title: One Second After**

A small town in North Carolina must fight for survival after an electromagnetic pulse hits the US.

**13. Author: Taylor Jenkins Reid**

**Title: Daisy Jones and the Six**

I started this book at the airport and couldn't put it down the whole vacation. You immediately get drawn into this wild drama of the band members. Each chapter is a different character point of view which creates a real intimacy for the plot.

**14. Author: Gretchen Rubin**

**Title: The Four Tendencies**

If you enjoy learning more about yourself from Enneagram or Meyers Briggs tests, then this new personality profile book will entertain you.

**15. Author: Martha Wells**

**Title: All Systems Red**

This is the first book in the Murderbot Diaries. The main character is a part-human, part-construct security bot that goes by the name Murderbot. To be honest Murderbot strikes me as a cross between teenage Groot (attitude), Data from StarTrek (blessed with significant processing speed and the ability to multi-task) and the terminator (lethal capability). This is a great sci-fi book with interesting world-building and a lot of action that makes you think about identity, free will, the difference between being a "person" and being human and all kinds of other things. You should read it!

**16. Author: Martha Wells**

**Title: The Cloud Roads**

A really lovely fantasy adventure with some of the most unique world-building I've ever experienced. This is a tale of survival and identity and the main character is very much a stranger in a strange land. This is not a fantasy that is modeled after European civilization, set on planet earth or one in which any of the characters are "human". Super cool flying dragon-like people that live in a matriarchal hive-like society. There's nothing else quite like it.

**17. Author: Naomi Novik**

**Title: Deadly Education**

This is a book about a school for magic where the rule is survival of the fittest. There are monsters lurking around every corner ready to take down the unwary and students with the resources of a powerful Enclave or powerful magic are the ones most likely to survive. El doesn't come

from an Enclave with money or power but she does have significant magical ability. Unfortunately her magical affinity lends itself to mass destruction. I really enjoyed this book, it gave me a dark Hogwarts and a main character with Hermione/Maleficent vibes.

**18. Author: Naomi Novik**

**Title: Uprooted**

An original fantasy that has an interesting, slightly dark fairy-tale vibe.

**19. Author: Kim Michele Richardson Title: The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek**

I loved this story about the pack horse librarians of the Appalachian Mountains and the Blue people of Kentucky. An amazing story of the resilience of people in overcoming prejudices and the kindness of people in the worst of times. Historical fiction at its best.

**20. Author: Angie Kim**

**Title: Miracle Creek**

This book captured me from the very beginning. A book about family, friends, parenthood, grief, and disability. It's a fantastic courtroom drama and it will rip your heart out.

**21. Author: Kristin Hannah**

**Title: The Great Alone**

I thought about this book long after I finished it but then I love all of Kristin Hannah's books. This one takes place in the 1970's after the Vietnam War in Alaska. The main character has PTSD from the war and takes it out on his family. It is definitely a survival story. You won't be able to put it down.