

March / April 2022 Staff Picks

Author: Annie Hartnett Title: Rabbit Cake

For this month's 2022 Adult Reading challenge, I chose *Rabbit Cake* by Annie Hartnett. In this humor-filled novel, the protagonist's sister enters a competition and tries to "Go the Distance." She attempts to break the world record for baking the greatest number of frosted rabbit cakes.

Why rabbit cakes? Eva Babbitt who is Lizzie's mother, always celebrated new beginnings by baking rabbit cakes. Eva's charisma is the glue that holds the Babbitt family together. After Eva "accidentally" drowns in the Chattahoochee River, her family unravels. Mr. Babbitt begins cross dressing, Lizzie's sleepwalking becomes markedly worst, and Elvis begins investigating her Mom's suspicious demise. Elvis, so named because she has Elvis Presley's hand-me-down spirit, cannot believe her Mom died doing something she did regularly. Along the way, Elvis interviews the town's eccentrics and learns a few secrets her Mom had been keeping. Like her mother, Elvis is an animal lover and thus she often recites a number of odd facts about wildlife. If you enjoy an outlandish cast with an eccentric cast of characters, this novel is for you.

Author: Syd Robinson Title: Wild Life!

Beautiful photography and information on unique species that are not as familiar to some. The book features animals from all seven continents that need extra protection. It also includes information on conservationists around the world who work to support wildlife.

Author: Megan Rossi Title: Love Your Gut

The buzz word around wellness is "Gut Health" and this book is a great resource. Written by a UK gut health specialist, this book has interactive quizzes, easy recipes, with a clear and colorful design to make creating your own personal plan simple.

Author: Clea Shearer & Joanna Teplin Title: The Home Edit

Known for their mesmerizing social media posts and Netflix series, this duo creates colorful organization from chaos. Even if my own house never looks as amazing, the book is a calming joy just to see the #housegoals.

Author: Rotten Tomatoes Title: The Ultimate Binge Guide

A binge-able bucket list of all the shows you need to see before you die (or just to be super-informed at your next dinner party). They cover series write-ups with engaging infographics, fun sidebars and deep-dive essays on the streaming wars, superproducers to know, and the evolution of our collective viewing habits. It's a great look at the evolution of TV. And can help to decide if you really do need to finally watch that show everyone is talking about!

Author: Chandler Baker Title: The Husbands

A *Stepford Wives* gender-swap storyline. A gripping, well-crafted mystery and an insightful critique of what it takes to "have it all" in motherhood and marriage in the modern age.

Title: Crayola

Looking through this book I can almost smell that fresh box of brand new crayons. This book is full of colorful images, interesting history, and nostalgic feelings. It is just a fun, quick education on a favorite brand.

Author: J.I. Baker and Sam Chase Title: Secrets of the Titanic

Believe it or not, researchers are still making new discoveries about the Titanic after more than 100 years! This book is the most visual and most up-to-date chronicle of the famous ship's development, voyage and ultimate tragedy, illustrated with numerous photos and drawings.

Author: Charles Todd Title: Irish Hostage

I really enjoy this series about amateur detective and skilled nursing sister Bess Crawford. This is #12 in the series but it isn't hard to jump into the storyline easily. For this book, Bess joins a friend's wedding party and runs into trouble and treachery in Ireland in the uneasy peace following World War I.

Author: Colson Whitehead Title: The Noble Hustle

If you like playing poker, or watching movies like Rounders or Ocean's Eleven you might like reading The Noble Hustle by Colson Whitehead. In 2011, Whitehead was asked by Grantland magazine to write about the World Series of Poker; they even paid the \$10,000 entrance fee, so how could he say no? Since the author had never played in a tournament, and he didn't want to make a complete fool of himself, he spent the next six months, leading up to the event in intense training. Most of the book is about Whitehead's introduction to poker culture and the various characters who inhabit it. He didn't end up winning the tourney, (spoiler), but he did come away with the seed of an excellent story about poker, winning, losing, and beef jerky.

Author: Colson Whitehead Title: Zone One

This is not Night of the Living Dead. It's not The Walking Dead. It's the zombie story you'd expect from a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist. A pandemic has swept across the earth, leaving the vast majority of the population mindless, insatiable monsters. The story takes place, for the most part, in lower Manhattan, where the protagonist is part of a three person crew, tasked with eliminating the stray zombies that remain in the city with the end goal of making the entire island livable for humans again. Whitehead has created a tense, chilling horror story with a distinct literary flair. It's a joy to read, especially when all the well-laid plans begin to unravel.

Author: Susan Jacoby Title: Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism

On one hand, the number of people in America who say they belong to no religion is rising; on the other, the Supreme Court is chipping away at the wall between church and state. In Freethinkers, Susan Jacoby dives into the history of secularism in America; the first government founded on human reason, not the authority of religion. She discusses many great American figures: Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and the once-famous Robert Ingersoll. Jacoby turns the spotlight on the once forgotten achievements of secularists who, allied with tolerant believers, have led the battle to protect religious liberty for all Americans.

Author: Ann B. Ross Title: Miss Julia Happily Ever After

This final entry to a delightful series did not disappoint. My recommendation is to give "Miss Julia" a read and see if she doesn't stir up some good laughs and also some thought provoking moments too.

Author: Brian Freeman Title: The Deep, Deep Snow

A very interesting suspense story. It was hard to put down, with twists that I thought I saw coming but kept getting surprised by.

Author: Jennifer Chiavirini Title: The Women's March: A Novel of the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession

Inspired by actual events, The Women's March offers a fascinating account of a crucial but little-remembered moment in American history, a turning point in the struggle for women's rights. This historical fiction weaves together the actions of three real women, advocating for social and legal change while also speaking to the tensions regarding race, class, and rhetorical arguments that prevent these groups from working together smoothly (if at all).

Author: Chanel Cleeton Title: The Most Beautiful Girl in Cuba

Filled with rich historical facts and strong-minded female characters, you'll want to keep Google open to learn even more about Cuba's struggle for independence. Using the brave acts of real-life historical women as inspiration—the reporter, the revolutionary, and the beauty—the author uncovers a fascinating bit of little-known history about the Spanish-American War and delivers the real-life story of Evangelina Cisneros in glorious, page-turning detail.

Author: Nicholas Sparks Title: The Wish

As with all of Sparks' novels, emotions play a huge part—be prepared to cry as a main character deals with a devastating medical diagnosis. Though a bittersweet story, The Wish is a thought-provoking chronicle of a few decades in the protagonist's life, the enduring legacy of first love, and the decisions that haunt us forever.

Author: Stephanie Garber Title: Caraval

In this high fantasy tale, a mysterious adventure awaits two sisters, Scarlett and Donatella Dragna. They receive an exclusive invitation to participate in Caraval, a series of mysterious party games that take place on a faraway island of decadence! However, upon arriving on the island (with the help of a strange man with questionable motives), Donatella is kidnapped and offered as a prize to the winner of the games! For Scarlett, enjoying Caraval becomes a secondary thought to winning the game and saving her sister. As Scarlett, Donatella, and possible allies and enemies try to maneuver their way through the ethereal revelries and decadence of Caraval, they realize that this "game" will change their lives and futures forever (if they survive)! There are so many reasons why I recommend this book! It's a fun high fantasy, fast-paced thriller, and captivating romance all in one! I love books that keep you guessing, and this book does an excellent job at making you guess what is going to happen next (and who is trustworthy among the various characters)! The author provides the reader with a convenient list of characters in the appendix to keep track of who is who and even provides maps so that the reader can follow the characters' paths! Once you read the first book, you are sure to want to follow the series!

Author: Stephanie Garber Title: Once Upon a Broken Heart

This story is set in the same decadent, high fantasy world as Garber's other best-selling series *Caraval*. However, unlike *Caraval*, this series introduces us to a new set of fun characters maneuvering through a different high-stakes set of games. Although a few familiar faces may make appearances, we meet a new cast in these books. This series introduces us to Evangeline Fox, a 16-year-old girl with rose gold hair who has found the love of her life in Luc. However, when Luc becomes engaged to her stepsister (and only friend), Marisol, Evangeline must make a desperate bargain to stop their wedding!

Evangeline pleads with the Fate known as the Prince of Hearts (also known as Jacks in *Caraval*) to win Luc back. However, Jacks will only grant Evangeline's request in exchange for three kisses (and the kisses are not exactly what Evangeline had in mind). As Evangeline, Marisol, Luc, and Jacks are drawn into a fantastical game of love, desperation, and trickery, they realize that all of their lives will be changed forever!

The strained relationship between the two stepsisters (and their manipulative stepmother) adds another layer of drama to this story. Readers of *Caraval* are sure to remember the whimsical Jacks, but his role in this saga is much more active and more of his personal narrative comes into play. This trilogy is off to a great start and I am excited to see it play out!

Author: Tana French Title: In The Woods

A creepily imaginative story. It is part whodunit, part psychological thriller with plot twists to bamboozle even the most astute reader.

Author: Dr. Olivia Audrey Title: A Week to Change Your Life

"Self-care" and "Wellness" are always hot topics and this book brings an interesting perspective to it. Written by a renowned naturopathic doctor to the stars, this book shares a life-changing seven-day plan personalized to you and your birth day that may radically improve your health and wellbeing. Over the course of a week, the human body goes through a cycle of self-regulation. Our energy levels, inflammation levels, capacity to focus, and even our immunity all fluctuate naturally based on this internal seven-day cycle, scientifically known as the circaseptan rhythm. Dr. Audrey provides details on what is physically happening on each day of the cycle and the corresponding actions you should take to align with this natural rhythm. Intriguing idea for how small changes (not necessarily diet related) can affect entire well-being.