Inside/Out: A Look Behind the Scenes at The King’s English in the Time of COVID-19: Photos & FAQs

by Michelle Macfarlane
How is the bookshop surviving in this time of COVID-19?

Until recently, a reader's freedom to come into the shop—to browse our carefully curated shelves, to chat with our booksellers, to hear an author read, to ultimately find a book, or two—has really been the most important thing about us. Matching books to readers has long been our mission. And how to continue fulfilling this mission in the face of COVID has been our primary goal these past few months. In order to hang on and go forward we have had to reinvent ourselves and our shop from the bottom up.

Once we closed our doors in compliance with the dictates of our governor and mayors, we fixed on curbside and home delivery and also amped up our ability to sell books online—all so that we could continue placing books in the hands of our customers. In the process, we've discovered a whole new routine for accomplishing that same goal. We still do special orders. However, now people can more easily visit our website, not only to place these orders, but also to find a myriad of recommendations from staff members or from past and present online issues of our Inkslinger. Or, they can click to Facebook and Instagram for all sorts of bookish news and ideas. And they can still call to speak one-on-one with a bookseller, whether to ask for suggestions or to leave a special order. Ordering those books, getting them out (delivery, shipping, curbside), and continuing to publish the Inkslinger in print and online to let you know what we recommend from this season’s new books are our daily preoccupations. In-person events are on hold. But Betsy’s conversation on Facebook with John Grisham is one fabulous example of the opportunities available in the virtual world. The lively, daily, virtual story hours by our booksellers and visiting authors are another.

Turns out we’re pretty versatile.

Community has always mattered at The King’s English. The demonstrations and protests of these last weeks, added to the events of these last few months, however, have reinforced even more how very important our community is to us. We know and love our customers, whether they drive across the city (and in some cases the state) to visit us or live in our neighborhood. We know, connect with, do business with, the schools and universities those customers attend, the charities and other not-for-profits they work with or the other local businesses they frequent, run, or are employed by. This is the map of our world. We hope to remain a vital part of it long after COVID-19 has come and gone.

What does The King’s English look like right now inside its closed doors?

It’s a mess. Instead of order—customers quietly browsing organized shelves of books—chaos reigns. Or so it appears. But don’t let that fool you. We are simply organized differently now. We have become a fascinating hybrid of bookstore/book-warehouse. The front door is closed. But inside, books are everywhere and booksellers are hustling. We may look frantic, frenetic. Think of us rather as a busy beehive or a well-ordered ant colony.

Why is the staff so reduced?

In the wake of COVID-19, our staff has reduced itself. Many booksellers haven’t felt comfortable taking the risks of being on the front-line for various reasons. One has a mother with cancer; some have children out of school or in at-home summer camp; some are 65; others have health risks, or their partners or children do. The good news is that we have been able to pay everyone’s salaries thanks to the federal PPP program of which we were lucky enough to be an early recipient.

Who is left (to tell the tale)?

Key players remain at the store on a full-time basis, all of whom are literally keeping the story alive: Anne (co-owner and store manager) who, among an infinite number of other tasks, orders adult books and does the scheduling and staffing; Margaret (children’s room manager) who orders all children’s books and organizes the Children’s Summer Reading program (going on virtually this summer); Rob (all-around impresario—and the friendly face you see every time you pick up a book) who manages adult events, children’s story hour, and marketing; Will (one of our hardest working young booksellers) who receives every single book that comes into the store, oversees ongo- ing inventory, new releases and back-stock alike, internet sales, and shipping; Sarah (bookkeeper and gift buyer) who keeps those puzzle orders rolling, along with the ever-essential rollercoaster picture of our finances; and Mackenzie (writer and bookseller) who manages our virtual programing and social media. We also have a small crew of seemingly indefatigable booksellers who, masked and gloved, still manage the front desk, handling computers, phones, orders, sales, problems (often all at once). This includes Paula (writer, bookseller, blurb of dark mysteries—when she isn’t writing them), Nathan, (children’s bookseller extraordinaire); Anne Louise (fairly new on the staff but a highly experienced bookseller); Ann (have you noticed the name Ann, in one form or another, is a common moniker at TKE?) who, when not writing newspaper columns or children’s books, can be found answering phones for us, along with Michelle, Kurstin and Lorrian; and last but hardly least, Annie (operations manager, bookseller) who keeps us in toilet paper and PPE among many other vital things.

How is the bookstore staff keeping safe while working?

Staff members wear masks and gloves and practice social distancing where/when possible. Most work in separate rooms when necessary.

If there are no customers browsing the shelves, are you still receiving new books?

YES! Boxes and boxes of books are stacked everywhere!

Why is The King’s English still closed when more and more Salt Lake City business are reopening?

The safety of our staff and our customers comes first. There are risks to opening too soon. Given the paucity of space in our bookstore, maintaining a safe distance would be difficult. And although on the one hand, one could say that our staff-bubble looks large, on the other hand, because we work with each other day in day out and pret- ty much go straight home to eat and rest before we show up for work the next day, we are not really exposed to too much outside the world of TKE. If we were to open our doors, however, our personal risk would increase exponentially. And should one of us come down with the virus, all of us would have to be quarantined. Consequently, all operations related to the bookstore would cease. For now, we feel we would all rather run the bookstore as we are—still connecting books with people in our newly invented fashion. But please know that we can’t wait to open our doors wide to let in the whole world again once we feel it is safe to do so.
When will The King's English reopen?

The bookshop will reopen when our city's curve has leveled off and stayed that way. Or when there is a vaccine.

What will The King's English's reopening look like?

Opening will be gradual. Hours will probably be reduced (due to reduced staff). We will require masks. Since our rooms are small we will likely both limit the number of people in the store and direct the flow of traffic throughout. And, because contact with physical surfaces is not deemed nearly as dangerous as first thought, gloves will not be required, but we will provide hand-sanitizer. Our discussion is ongoing as to what TKE will look like when we finally do open—some combination of before and after COVID-19 at a guess.

How are you continuing to connect individual booksellers with The King's English community of readers?

Internally, Anne's weekly, sometimes daily, “News You Can Use” keeps booksellers apprised of books and TKE news, while our website keeps our readers abreast of news of the book world in general and TKE book news in particular. There is also a calendar with scheduled events and storyline hours. In the shop, more than one bookseller is always on the phone. We are having conversations with distributors, publishers, publicists and authors themselves as we always have. But now, in particular, a phone conversation is our primary conduit for connecting one-on-one with individual customers. As in the past in person, only now by phone, booksellers and readers discuss, for example, which book a grandmother might buy for her 4-year-old grandson who loves dragons, or what a daughter might buy for her mother who's read all of Barbara Kingsolver's work and wants something similar. In lieu of browsing for a loved one's special occasion, we are creating hand-picked boxes of books perfect for Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduation. Email is another way in which we are still able to connect with customers who have questions, concerns, or who simply want to know what we think of Rebecca Solnit's latest book.

Online orders may feel impersonal. But please know that each order you place is handled directly—rung up, ordered, tracked, pulled, mailed, delivered, or bagged and set out for pick up—by staff working here in the store. We all miss the direct access we used to have with countless people in our lives. In the meantime, we turn more to the phone, to virtual hangouts, to Zoom, to Twitter, to Facebook, to Instagram. In this process, it is fascinating to discover the unknown possibilities available through the digital world we sometimes deplore. We have only to shift our paradigms, even slightly, to see what is still—differently, though sometimes more so—there. Our booksellers’ breadth and wealth of knowledge is still available. We are still here. Our community is still here. This is a moment to take stock and value what nourishes us most. What comfort!

The King's English is committed to fighting injustice through education, through storytelling and through making our store more inclusive and diverse. In light of recent events, we've reevaluated our practices and identified areas in which we can do better. Though these action items are not all things we can implement immediately due to the fact that we are still closed to browsing because of COVID-19, we are committed to long-term change that will better support black authors in particular, people of color in general, and provide diverse reading lists.

Here are some areas we'll be working on:

- We will be conducting overviews of every section in the bookstore and have as a goal making sure that a far more proportionate representation of ethnicity in our country is available on our shelves and in future Inklings.
- We will provide more specific resources for our staff so that we may all be better educated on anti-racism. We will encourage them to read more books by black and other ethnically diverse authors and feature them in staff picks and recommendations. To encourage this we will request more advance readers' copies of books by black and brown authors from publishers and make them available to our booksellers. We will make diversifying our shelves an active topic of our monthly staff meetings.
- We will increase the number of ethnically diverse people on our staff and will advertise through channels accessible to the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community.
- We will provide resources on our website referring customers to books by black and brown authors on topics relating to racism as well as stories of black lives across genres.

While we understand this is only the start and that our goals will be a work in progress, we are committed to educating and improving ourselves over time and to making our store a safe, inclusive space where black voices are welcomed, heard, and valued.
Last spring (see Spring Inkslinger at www.kingsenglish.com) we asked a number of adult authors this question: We've talked at length about what our customers at The King's English might want to read as they sit at home waiting for the viral clouds to lift—and what unread books on our own bedside tables we're looking forward to. Which led us to wonder about the books our favorite housebound authors have piled high to see them through the pandemic's reign. So, we decided to ask them. Have you gathered such a stack of books, if so how high is it and can you tell us what titles are on top? Their answers were fascinating, their fields of interest far-flung and they helped all of us enormously as we amassed our own stacks of books and helped our customers with theirs. In an attempt to help our kids (and yours) out this summer, Mackenzi Lee, a young adult author who sells books and tells stories virtually at TKE when she's not writing her own beyond wonderful books (among them Loki, This Monstrous Thing, A Lady's Guide to Piracy), asked some of her friends and fellow-authors the same question. Here are their answers:

Nic Stone, author of Shuri
This summer, in addition to my annual reread of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban and Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince (yes, I know those don't really go together), I am currently enjoying The Black Kids, a YA book by debut author Christina Hammonds Reed that's out in September--couldn't recommend more highly--and The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett.

Kaufman, author of Aurora Burning
After a period of finding myself unable to concentrate on any kind of reading for very long, I’ve begun to escape into books again, and my stack is as high as ever. I’m reading a bunch of things at once, which is always my habit. Some of the books balanced in a giant, teetering pile beside my bedside table right now are: The Fascinators by Andrew Eliopulos -- a wonderful contemp novel with a touch of actual magic and a wonderful sense of place, with complicated friendships, and some powerful stuff about figuring out who you are. And I’m just starting What I Like About You by Marisa Kanter -- it’s a debut about internet friendships and booknerds, with some great Jewish teen characters, which I’m really enjoying. And finally, I’m re-reading Mirage by Somaia Daud, an amazing space opera I loved the first time around, and felt the urge to return to.

Roshani Chokski, author of Aru Shah and The Tree of Wishes
Right now, I’m craving comforting rereads more than new stories. At the moment, I’m finishing up Nimona by Noelle Stevenson, which is joyous and light. I’m also rereading Catherynne Valente’s The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland because I am desperately in need of hope and the escape of wondrous language. My favorite reread, however, is Martine Leavitt’s Keturah and Lord Death...because who doesn't love an excellent Hades and Persephone-esque tale.

David Arnold, author of The Strange Fascinations of Noah Hypnotik
Reading is tricky right now. Not that I haven’t been reading— I have, and quite a bit. It’s more about finding the right book for my mental headspace. A difficult thing, when that headspace changes day to day. In addition to heady sci-fi (anything remotely akin to Ted Chiang or Ling Ma, and I am here for it), I’ve recently read and loved Still Life with Tornado by A.S. King and My Name Is Asher Lev by Chaim Potok. In the coming weeks, I plan to dig into Woven in Moonlight by Isabel Ibanez and Melissa Albert’s The Night Country. Upcoming releases I can’t wait for include Nina LaCour’s Watch Over Me and Arvin Ahmadi’s How it All Blew Up.

Sandhya Menon, author of Ten Things I Hate About Pinky
Currently I’m reading:
1. A Song Below Water by Bethany C. Morrow: A gorgeous, lyrical, thought-provoking story about Black sirens set in Portland, OR. Need I say more?
2. The Fascinators by Andrew Eliopoulos: Think Simon Vs. the Homosapiens Agenda but with magic. A really fun, sneakily deep story about high school, growing up, and growing apart.
3. House of Salt and Sorrows by Erin A. Craig: A haunting retelling of the 12 Dancing Princesses. This one made me long for Gothic moors and enchanted castles!

Christian McKay Heidecker, author of Scary Stories for Young Foxes
I recently read Eloise Jarvis McGraw’s The Moordoch, a slightly overlooked Newbery Honor book from 1997, and was absolutely enchanted while still being on the edge of my seat. I also finally read my first Neal Shusterman (co-written with his son). Dry was anything but, giving equal parts suspense, world-building, and humor. Finally, Greenglass House by Kate Milford was so absorbing and devilishly clever that I wept with jealousy. You could do a lot worse than any of these books.
In these bleak days when I am so endlessly tired and scared, I’ve sought refuge in the sort of books that I would have loved when I was a child. Here are a few that have provided comfort and escape: *The Secret Horses of Briar Hill* by Megan Shepherd feels like discovering another chapter of *The Secret Garden*. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place* series by Maryrose Wood is what might happen if Lemony Snicket had written *Jane Eyre*—but with a previously untapped and unbridled optimism. I savored Grace Lin’s *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, a novel filled with short tales of Chinese folklore that unite into something singular and wholly satisfying, as a bedtime treat over the course of one marvelous week. My next purchase will be its companion novels, *Starry River of the Sky* and *When the Sea Turned to Silver*, and my next read will be *The Only Black Girls in Town* by Brandy Colbert, which is currently tempting me from my nightstand. I love the way that Colbert writes about family and identity in her young adult novels, and this is her middle grade debut, which was just released. Perfect timing.

Becky Albertali, author of *Simon Vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*

It’s been a hard couple of months, but the slew of incredible recent YA releases has been my bright spot. I recently lucked into reading I.W. Gregorio’s *This Is My Brain in Love* alongside Jennifer Dugan’s *Verona Comics* – they pair so well together! I wholeheartedly recommend both for anyone looking for inclusive contemporary stories exploring mental health with depth and nuance.

For readers as desperate as I am for smart, funny, romantic YA, I’ve been obsessed with a few books by Australian authors (seriously, do NOT sleep on Australian YA). I adored *Only Mostly Devastated*, Sophie Gonzales’s m/m Grease retelling – not only did I laugh out loud while reading, I actually laughed out loud “remembering” some of my favorite lines. Jenna Guillaume’s *What I Like about Me* is a pitch-perfect empowering fat-positivity romance for summer. And I haven’t been able to stop thinking about Nina Kenwood’s achingly relatable coming-of-age love story, *It Sounded Better in My Head*. Another absolute favorite recent release was Kacen Callender’s flawless *Felix Ever After* – it’s one of the most moving explorations of love, friendship, art and identity I’ve ever read. I have to sneak a middle-grade book into this mix, because it’s so ridiculously wonderful: the *Once Upon an Eid* anthology, edited by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed. I just finished Jamie Pacton’s adorable, feminist, nerdfest of a debut, *The Life and (Medieval) Times of Kit Sweetly*. Next up for me are two VERY highly anticipated June releases: Katie Cotugno’s *You Say It First* and Leah Johnson’s *You Should See Me in a Crown*. And even though they aren’t out until a bit later, I highly recommend keeping Brandy Colbert’s *The Voting Booth* and Rachel Lynn Solomon’s *Today Tomor-
The Vanishing Half, Brit Bennett
Born identical twins, the Vignes sisters run away from their small, insulated Louisiana town—Mallard (nowhere on any map)—founded by a freed slave on land inherited from his white father, for men “like him, who would never be accepted as white but refused to be treated like Negroes.” Together at first, the sisters land in New Orleans. But their identical path in life sharply diverges from then on. Desiree, the bolder sister, finds her way to D.C. where she marries a lawyer; has a daughter, “black as tar;” escapes her abusive spouse; and moves them both back home 14 years later. Stella, the timid one, surprises even herself. Mistaken as white and hired by a department store executive as his secretary, she keeps her secret. They fall in love, marry, move to Boston, and then to L.A. Stella too has a daughter—“milky skin, wavy-blond hair, and eyes so blue they looked violet.” The Vanishing Half is a story of passing—of passing as black, of passing as white, of passing as a woman, of passing as a man—of passing one’s entire life “passing,” or not. Bennett’s wrenching portraits of individuals caught in the life-and-death crosshairs of racism and sexism are vivid evidence that we are far from through this. – Michelle Macfarlane, Riverhead, $27

A Burning, Megha Majumdar
The ways in which idle speculation and innocent dreams of glory can inadvertently ripple into riptides while calculating ambition can whip the winds of politics to cyclone force: all may be found in the twinning lives and voices of a young Muslim woman who flings words into cyberspace that say more than she means, the outcast transgender who fervently longs to be a star, and the self-seeking gym teacher with an eye for the main chance. The young woman, Javin, writes the fatal words that create the maestrom; Lovely prepares for his acting class, hope in his heart; and Pt. Sir re-writes the past in his own best interest, as the reader is hurtled for ward, as fearful for and at the same time as incredulous as is Jivan. A thriller on one level, a brilliantly crafted novel that perfectly captures the guilelessness of youth and its terrifying fragility on another, it is also a devastating portrayal of the corruption of the political state—in India or, for that matter, anywhere. – Betsy Burton, Knopf, $25.95

Night. Sleep. Death. The Stars, Joyce Carol Oates
Eerily—given our world these past weeks—Oates’ powerful novel opens when “Whitey” James Earle McClaren sees two white policemen repeatedly slamming a “dark” man against the hood of his car. “Stop! Officers! What are you doing?” The officers turn on Whitey. Instead of “knee on the neck,” they use tasers, a “boot on the belly.” And so, a powerful, well-loved, respected 67-year-old ex-mayor dies and police actions are tellingly probed, as is the grief of his widow, the fear and rage of his children. “No adult is anything but a kid when a parent dies.” The oldest son Thom vows revenge, and brings charges of murder against the police—who have not been held accountable. The anger of Beverly, oldest daughter, is uncontrolled, while Lorene, successful principal at the local high school, begins to pluck out her hair and eyebrows and faces a no-confidence vote from her faculty. Virgil, the hippie-artist son, worries that his father “died without having loved him,” and Sophia, youngest daughter, is also unjustly stopped by a local police officer, leaving the young woman shaken and ashamed. At the heart of Oates’ story, the reader journeys with the widow Jessalyn as she grieves, but—as the “strong one”—comforts each of her children, and then “sleepwalks” through her days, comforted by a squint-eyed feral cat. Throughout this almost 800-page novel, Whitey is ever-present—ghosting the hearts, dreams, even the conversations of each character. He judges, advises, listens—fulfilling his father-role in death as he did in life. A marvelous read, intimate and imaginative. – Carol Kranes, Harper Collins $29.99

Love, Roddy Doyle
Booker Prize-winner Roddy Doyle (Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha) returns with a magnificent tale of two almost-60-year-old men who, after 30 years, meet to drink in Dublin pubs as of yore. As the evening stretches through many pubs and the drinks accumulate, Joe tries to explain to his old pal Davy why he has recently become infatuated with a woman the two men had known briefly in their youth. Davy, recently back from England on a visit, and Joe, having never left Dublin, struggle as men do to voice their feelings about love for wives, children, parents and ultimately each other. At once comical, poignant and moving, Doyle does his Irish best with the ‘auld’ dialogue. Brilliantly so. – Sue Fleming, Viking, $27

Shadowplay, Joseph O’Connor
In his new novel O’Connor imagines the lives of three of the world’s most famous artists of the late 1800s: Henry Irving, actor and showman; Ellen Terry, Shakespearian actress and star; and Bram Stoker, author and creator of Dracula. The novel intertwines these three colossal characters and their lives in London’s Lyceum Theatre. They fought violently and regularly. Yet they loved and cared for each other in their own small, theatrical world. Their lives were frenetic and disheveled but, within the confusion, they seemed glued to the theatre and protective of their lives and reputations. The characters grow old within the pages of the book. With age comes a sadness and nostalgia for dreams found and lost. Lovers of theater and of Dracula will find the background story of these artists moving, no matter how factual the book may or may not be. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Europa Editions, $23
**Mother, Daughter, Widow, Wife**, Robin Wasserman

In a stunning one-page opening, the reader meets a live body: white, female, no memory, and no means of identification. She is assigned a name (Wendy Doe) and a diagnosis by the state—dissociative fugue—a temporary amnesia that could lift at any moment—or not at all. Attempts to untangle the mystery move back and forth in time from 1999 to the present and focus on four women who intimately connect with one another as they experience “love and betrayal, divorce and death, forgetting, transforming.” Wasserman’s style is smart, clever. Skillfully interwoven with the mystery of Wendy Doe is the exploration of what it is like to occupy a woman’s body in a world shaped by male power and desire. A page-turner in its pace, this novel provocatively presents a study of memory by studying forgetting: “If I won’t remember, it never happened.” And (no easy answer) what makes a woman happy? An inventive must-read! – Carol Kranes, Riverhead, $27

**Crooked Hallelujah**, Kelli Jo Ford

A tiered tale of mother love, this astonishing debut novel spangles the reader’s imagination with vivid scenes of life in Oklahoma’s Cherokee Nation and in the oil country of Texas as it follows the ever-restless Justine out of her religious mother’s life, daughter Reney in tow. Home can be hard to find, men (even the best of them) forever unreliable, poverty more brutal than the harsh rural landscape, but the bonds women form with their mothers and grandmothers, the bonds mothers forge with their daughters make life not just bearable but luminous. This is an astonishing debut novel, rich in Cherokee history and culture, full-bodied in terms of character, as bighearted as the women it portrays. – Betsy Burton, Grove, $26

**How Beautiful We Were**, Imbolo Mbue

Although the setting of Kosawa in the novel is fictional, the depredations of the equally fictional American oil company, its appropriation of an African village’s hunting ground, farmland, and water supply, the ensuing consequences—illness, political havoc, disappearance of community, environmental disaster, and ultimately many, many deaths—could not be wrought more truthfully. Told from the multiple perspectives of villagers living in Kosawa, Mbue’s story highlights one young woman whose vision leads her community’s struggle to stand up and demand what’s owed to them. Mbue is from Cameroon. Her first novel, Behold the Dreamers, won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. How Beautiful We Were, her second novel, is a must-read! Right now! – Michelle Macfarlane, Random House, $28

**The Party Upstairs**, Lee Conell (July)

The Elegance of the Hedgehog comes to the Upper West Side in this thoughtful look at class and privilege. Martin, the super of a wealthy co-op, and his daughter Ruby, recently graduated from college but saddled with debt, clash with each other and the building’s inhabitants over the course of one fateful day. You will love this gripping, wise and exquisite distillation of what happens when one insular ecosystem is finally forced to confront human dignity’s demand to be respected. – Michaela Riding, Penguin, $26

**Utopia Avenue**, David Mitchell

Set in the late 1960s amidst protests against everything from nuclear testing to the war in Vietnam to equal rights. An unlikely foursome of young musicians has been assembled by one manager. Psychedelic-folk-rock is their gig and they are “the strangest British band you’ve never heard of.” They call themselves Utopia Avenue: Elf Holloway, folk-singer and the lone female in the group; Jasper de Zoet, brilliant, tormented guitarist; Dean Moss, bassist and the band’s prettiest face; Griff, the drummer, reliable and good-natured. Sexuality, sexism, class, envy, and fierce competition—Mitchell’s newest novel charts the five-year course of the individual and interpersonal struggles of this group, their rise to stardom, their all-too-brief moments at or near the top of the music charts. Known, and later well-known musicians, actors, and artists like David Bowie, Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, Jerry Garcia, Michael Caine, and Lucian Freud, among others, make cameo appearances. This is Mitchell at his boisterous best. – Michelle Macfarlane, Random, $30

**All Adults Here**, Emma Straub

In this witty, deeply insightful novel, characters fall apart and come together—making the reader smile, nod her head, and laugh out loud. Seventy-year-old matriarch Astrid Strick is a straightforward, no-nonsense person, who worries she could have been a better mother to her three children. Youngest son Nicky is “a leaf in a river—content to float.” Middle child Porter, nearly 40, is expecting a sperm-bank daughter. Oldest son Elliot, owner of Strick Brick Construction Company, builds McMansions, “not a compliment.” Add to this, 13-year-old granddaughter Cecelia, not “officially expelled” from her Brooklyn school, who comes to live with Gammy. Packed into short chapters, this is page-turning in its pace, sharply focused in terms of its characters—all good, well-intentioned, kind—except for snarky teenager Sidney who gets hers in the end! You’ll love this one! – Carol Kranes, Riverhead, $27 Editor’s note: the writer Emma Straub and her husband own an independent bookstore, Books are Magic, in Brooklyn, New York.
**Fiction**

**The Paris Library**, Janet Skeslien Charles

Odile Souchet, who worked hard to become a part of the American Library in Paris in 1939 and throughout WWII, now lives in Montana. It is 1983. Her past and present worlds meet when she tells the story of Paris under Nazi occupation to Lily, a young teenager whose mother has recently died. As a reluctant storyteller, Odile becomes a second mother to Lily, using her own life to teach the adolescent how to live true to her values. Lily learns of the world outside of Montana from Odile, who survived the worst of those war years protecting people and books from harm. The author’s note reveals the actual librarians and Parisians whose story this is, bringing the book to life.

– Wendy Foster Leigh, Scribner, $28

**Florence Adler Swims Forever**, Rachel Beanland (July)

Drawn from the history of her own great-great aunt, Beanland’s story tells of two sisters: Fannie and Florence Adler. Fanny, the elder, who is pregnant with her third child, had lost her baby boy the summer before. When her younger sister Florence tragically drowns while training to swim the English Channel, the family chooses not to tell Fanny, fearing another premature birth. The story unfolds as each member of the family tells of his or her struggle to keep the secret in his or her different voice—from 7-year old Gussie, to Esther, to Joseph, the self-made Hungarian immigrant baker now prominent business owner in 1930s Atlantic City. But Florence’s tragic death is not the only secret this family harbors. Other characters who shed light on the mystery include Stuart, the swim coach and lifeguard wracked by guilt at his inability to save Florence, and Anna, the mysterious young woman recently arrived from Nazi Germany. A tender, familial story, lovingly told.

– Anne Stewart Mark, Simon & Schuster, $25.99

**Stranger in the Shogun’s City**, Amy Stanley

Hiding within the story of a rebellious Japanese woman is the history of Edo before Tokyo was born, and Japan, prior to the arrival of American Commodore Perry. Tsuneno is born into a Buddhist family in a village in snow country in northern Japan. Her family has privileges in this small city, as her father is the Buddhist priest and a respected leader. She fights for independence from her expected roles as wife and mother. She is not a rebel in the political sense but is strong-willed and impetuous, struggling with her choices and fighting to survive in the male-dominated world of her Buddhist family and the Samurai culture around her. This is a wonderful way of learning a little Japanese history while concentrating on one woman and her struggles.

– Wendy Foster Leigh, Scribner, $28

**Bright Precious Thing: a Memoir**, Gail Caldwell (July)

Caldwell’s aging and so is her dog, Tula. She’s long since lost her best friend (Let’s Take the Long Way Home) and battled misogyny, the bottle, depression to a standstill. She begins a book that is at once a letter to Tyler, the 5-year-old neighbor who has befriended her, and a feminist paean to women and to “the good sons who grow up to be good men.” Reading Caldwell’s first memoir, A Strong West Wind, felt eerily like reading my own autobiography, so parallel were our experiences and our thoughts and reactions coming of age in the West. And yet again in old age I’m in her skin as she hunkers down in her garden outwaiting the assault from the top that is battering our country right now, confident of the outcome. “Multiplied by many million, I am Donald Trump’s worst nightmare.” Ferocious in her love—of Tyler and Tula—perceptive in her retrospective memories, savoring present-day joy in the form of dog, child, garden, Caldwell weaves rue, acceptance, humor, shards of painful memory, and flashes of epiphany into a narrative arching toward wisdom—giving us some admixture of hope and peace in the process. Piercing in its insight and its beauty, this is an achingly good memoir.

– Betsy Burton, Random House, $27

**The Equivalents**, Maggie Doherty

Disguised as the personal story of five members of the newly formed Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study, the book grows into a portrayal of the expectations, dreams and successes of literary women of the 1960s to the present time. Although in the ‘60s a woman’s role was limited, Radcliffe, the sister school of Harvard, developed the Radcliffe Institute, an experimental program in women’s education.

Anne Sexton, Maxine Kumin, Barbara Swan, Marianna Pineda, and Tillsie Olsen were five of the participants who formed “the equivalents,” a friendship lasting the rest of their lives. They are the focal point of Doherty’s book, but the bigger story is that of all women who have dreamed of artistic or scholarly involvement and been hindered by social norms. This is a book as much for those who remember the ‘50s and ‘60s as for the modern young woman wishing to learn of the women who created their current 21st century creative community.

– Wendy Foster Leigh, Knopf, $28.95

**Memorial Drive**, Natasha Trethewey

What grief and love look like when you pull them out, layer by layer, word by poetic word: Natasha Trethewey, U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner, had her life upended at age 19 when her ex-stepfather murdered her mother. Here is Trethewey’s lyrical, moving, and deeply personal reckoning with that wound, a memoir of her mother. The story she needs to tell to survive.

– Michaela Riding, Ecco, $27
**Entangled Life**, Merlin Sheldrake

When the 2019 movie “Fantastic Fungi” opened a door into the world of mushrooms, we all walked through. Just in time to feed our growing interest, Sheldrake’s book will make mycologists of us all. Mycology, the study of fungi, examines a world we mostly cannot see—fungal organisms—mushrooms being the least of them. Sheldrake paints a fascinating picture of their pervasive presence, how they are constantly at work creating their own food via decomposition, the vital role they play in various sectors of our world from food to pharmacology to environmental repair. The scientific nature of that role and stories of people who have played a big part in mycology research such as Robert Wasson, Alexander Fleming, Toby Kiers and Paul Stamets are the stuff of this fascinating book. As a huge fan of mushrooms as well as books, I can testify that this one will fuel your interest in the fungal world as a place for something more than a good paste.– Margaret Brennan Neville, Random House, $28

**Night of the Assassins: The Untold Story of Hitler’s Plot to Kill FDR, Churchill, and Stalin**, Howard Blum

Toward the end of 1943, as the war seemed to be going badly for the Nazis, a bold plan was put in place to assassinate the three leaders of the Allies as they met in Tehran. Blum skillfully introduces the main players in this plan which would have changed the path of history. The story he portrays is as spellbinding and riveting as any fictional spy thriller and is actually more breathtaking because it really happened. The plot, which has been largely overlooked by history, illuminates a place and time where the actions of a small group of assassins could have changed the world. – Barbara Hoagland, Harper, $29.99

**Atomic Spy: The Dark Lives of Klaus Fuchs**, Nancy Thorndike Greenspan

During the epic struggle that was World War II, four countries—Germany, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States—were in pursuit of the ultimate weapon. Whether capable of unleashing an overwhelmingly destructive explosion OR leading to new medical cures and unlimited clean power, the atomic bomb would provide world hegemony. But Germany was so pulverized by bombing it could not compete for the bomb, while it was beyond the financial capabilities of Britain and the Soviet Union—leaving the U.S. to develop it through the Manhattan Project. Not to be left behind, the Soviets unleashed a squad of spies into the U.S. to try to steal the secrets of the bomb. This is the story of Klaus Fuchs, probably one of the best-known spies of the Cold War. But the kernel of tale is not just how he did what he did; it is why he did it. The facts are compelling, reminding us that people do bad things for the right reasons—at least right in their own minds. – Patrick Fleming, Viking, $30

**Desert Notebooks: A Roadmap for the End of Time**, Ben Ehrenreich (July)

The desert near Joshua Tree National Park, the Mojave as it spreads into Nevada and California, the cities of Las Vegas and Los Angeles: these are the physical territories journalist and novelist Ehrenreich inhabits and explores in his latest book. But he casts his net far wider than mere geography: his concern is for the planet, his fear, its collapse. Using the owls he spots on a park trail as guides he follows their flight-path into Mayan mythology and from there into the lore of other native tribes, to the cosmology of the Greeks, to Hegelian philosophy and that of Walter Benjamin. As Ehrenreich’s examines the belief systems of humankind, the growing physical evidence of the earth’s changing climate, the man he calls Rhino, named for the mindless destruction Trump wreaks as he crashes through the country and the world, adds to the case that we are unraveling. As a people. As a planet. This is an astonishing book, gorgeous and terrifying. – Betsy Burton, Counterpoint, $26

**The Man Who Ran Washington**, Peter Baker ad Susan Glasser

Son of a prestigious Texas family, James A. Baker III has spent most of his adult life at the heart of Republican politics. He managed Presidential campaigns and acted as advisor to four Presidents. He was a formidable political presence in the center of American politics from the Watergate era through the Iraq War. In all that time Baker maintained a practical and balanced view of America’s place in the world and the value of stability. His time and views seem almost quaint in today’s political chaos. James Baker was and is truly a man of his time and this outstanding biography illuminates that time and his place in it brilliantly. – Patrick Fleming, Viking, $30

**Breath, the New Science of a Lost Art**, James Nestor

What we all thought was an automatic action, one that we repeat 25,000 times a day, is anything but that. We humans have lost the ability to breathe correctly, much to our detriment. This fascinating account of the rights and wrongs of breathing, coupled with detailed physiology, shows us ways to improve our athletic performance, stop snoring, and improve asthma along with many other ailments brought on by our inability to breathe correctly. Sounds boring? It isn’t. A truly great read. – Jan Sloan Tempest, Riverhead Books, $28
Dead Reckoning, Dick Lehr

"Killing a man is murder unless you do it to the sound of trumpets" - Voltaire. This saying has no greater significance than in Lehr’s tale of the targeted killing of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor in World War II. Lehr tells the story of the assassination through the eyes of Major John Mitchell, U.S. Army, who planned and lead the mission, as well as several of the pilots who took part. Having intercepted a message detailing Yamamoto's upcoming inspection trip to bases in the South Pacific the Americans realized they had a chance to kill him. The agonizing decision to do so, the actual mission and the aftermath, the infighting over the credit for shooting Yamamoto down make this a fascinating read. An interesting corollary is that the 'targeted killing' of Yamamoto was the legal justification used by the Obama administration in hunting down and killing Osama bin Laden. – Jack Mark, Harper, $28.99

Cult of Glory: The Bold and Brutal History of the Texas Rangers, Doug J. Swanson

Texas in the 1820s, still part of Mexico, was a violent and lawless land with constant conflicts between Native Americans, Mexicans and settlers from the U.S. The original mission of the Texas Rangers was to bring a semblance of order to the territory. In doing so, they fought outlaws and Comanches, as well as serving in the U.S. military during the Mexican War. Throughout their history they forged liaisons with the power elite of Texas which were invariably white and privileged. The 200-year history of the Texas Rangers is filled with daring exploits as well as misdeeds. Swanson bares all in this insightful history of this legendary force. – Barbara Hoagland, Viking, $28

Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency, Olivia Laing

Laing has written for newspapers and art galleries. She brings to life the personalities and the major events of our lifetime. When reading the profiles of artists such as O’Keefe and Rauschenberg I felt as though I were walking through a gallery with a charming docent whispering in my ear. Laing’s thoughtful and thought-provoking comments on such topics as immigration, Trump and Brexit provide the reader with personal reactions to the large issues of the day. She can turn a trip on the ferry into an homage to a beautiful unknown musician and his slide into death. The essays and profiles are perfect examples of showing the abstract in concrete pictures. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Norton, $26.95

The Delightful Life of a Suicide Pilot, Colin Cotterill

Cotterill's Dr. Siri cannot resist the curious and bizarre; therefore, when he receives a diary written by a Japanese soldier during WWII, he recruits his wife and friends to investigate the reasons why it has been delivered to him and just what happened to the soldier. The Dr. Siri mysteries are addictive. For anyone who has read the early books, this latest addition will be irresistible. Cotterill’s novels, a fast-paced look at crime in Laos and surrounding countries, further complicated by the fact the doctor and his friends themselves become the victims of crime, are also a lesson in geography, history, and the supernatural. My advice is to start with #1, The Coroner’s Lunch, and work your way through all 15 books. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho Press, $27.95

Remain Silent, Susie Steiner

Manon Bradshaw, my favorite fictional detective of recent times, is still in the fugue state of a new mother—sleep-deprived, inebriated by the cruel raptures of toddlerhood—yet wicked of tongue and not as appreciative as she might be of the man she’s recently married. Worse, she’s mired in despondency thanks to her now part-time career looking into cold cases. What better force to snap a backwater detective back to reality than unexplained death? The third in a string of hangings initially presumed suicides is looking more and more like murder, even though the captive Lithuanians who are the backdrop for the case have ample motivation for suicide, held hostage month after month as they are and worked quite literally to death. Manon is a piece of work—deeply cynical, laugh-out-loud funny, lying to herself one minute, jolted into sudden honesty—or open affection—the next, whether for spouse, adopted son, toddler or colleague. Steiner is a piece of work too, bringing you to tears with her portrayal of the horrors of immigrant slave labor, whipping you into a lather with her blinding narrative force, making you mad, making you laugh, making you care. If I only had one of these to read every week I’d stay sequestered for good. – Betsy Burton, Random House, $27
Mystery/Thriller

*Fair Warning*, Michael Connelly
Journalist Jack McEvoy (*The Poet, The Scarecrow*) is working for a consumer protection publication and trying to patch together his personal and professional lives when a woman held had a one-night stand with is murdered. Suspected of homicide, he begins an investigation that pulls him into the shadowy worlds of the dark web and serial murder as he tugs at the tenuously connected threads of DNA tracing and online dating. A fascinating exposé of the nascent and entirely un-regulated genetics analytics industry, this will, I give you fair warning, not only excite your curiosity and stir your adrenaline until sleep is impossible, it will also leave disturbing questions about DNA tracing to bother your waking hours. – Betsy Burton, Little, Brown, $29

*Shakespeare for Squirrels*, Christopher Moore
Moore has taken "A Midsummer Night’s Dream" and turned it into a wickedly funny bawdy whodunnit. Pocket is the ‘hero’ of this tale; a professional Fool who is quite handy with a throwing knife. Cast adrift by his latest lady love, Pocket and co are sunk and almost drowned on the shores of Athens. Saved by fairies and then set upon by the watch commander, Pocket must solve the murder of one Robin Goodfellow. At stake, the life of Pocket’s apprentice. Most of the suspects will be very familiar to fans of the bard. The denouement is both bloody and hilarious, and did I mention squirrels? – Paula Longhurst, Forge, $28.99

*The Last Trial*, Scott Turow
At 85, Sandy Stern is at the end of a long and distinguished legal career. He’s ready to retire but there’s one last case to be defended. Stern’s client (and lifelong friend), a renowned drug company CEO accused of murder, insider trading, and fraud, has begged Stern and his daughter Marta’s law firm to act as counsel. Marta thinks the case is too much for Stern, who has only recently recovered from a serious road accident. Once the trial is underway, amidst the familiar cut and thrust of argument and counter-argument, Stern finds himself wondering if he really knows the defendant at all, and what bombshells the witnesses for the prosecution will drop next. – Paula Longhurst, Grand Central, $28.99

*The Shooting at Chateau Rock*, Martin Walker
For those addicted to the Bruno, Chief of Police novels, here is another chance to watch Bruno solve a crime, all the while producing fantastic meals paired with perfect wines. The Dordogne is now prime real estate for EU members and Russian oligarchs. Senior citizens are a new market for unscrupulous businessmen, and Bruno sets out to right a wrong inflicted on a local family. He also enjoys friendship with an aging rock star and his musical family at Chateau Rock. Into that mix comes the daughter of a Russian oligarch who is newly engaged to the son of the rock star. Separate plots become one as money and love blend. While reading a Martin Walker novel, it is good to have paper and pencil for writing down the marvelous recipes which seem to grow organically within the mystery. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Knopf, $25.95

*Execution*, S.J. Parris
Bruno’s self-imposed French exile has come to an end. Sent back to England to his old spymaster, Walsingham, with news of a plot to murder a queen, he is asked to infiltrate the conspiracy posing as a Spanish priest. Walsingham’s past double dealings have come back to haunt him whilst Bruno’s past love life, in the comely form of Sophia Underhill, may prove to be his undoing. – Paula Longhurst, Little, Brown, $26.99

*The Eighth Detective*, Alex Pavesi
Editor Julia Hart travels to a stunning but remote Greek island. Her firm, Blood Type Books, is eager to republish a series of murder mysteries by now-retired mathematician Grant McAllister based on his research paper, “The Permutations of Detective Fiction.” Julia’s job is to go over the stories with him and write a new introduction. She finds Grant charming but secretive, and his mysteries, like his life, have inconsistencies that Julia finds so maddening she turns to his stories to find the truth, and then she sets a trap... – Paula Longhurst, Henry Holt, $26.99

*Gone By Midnight*, Candice Fox
In this third in the highly entertaining Crimson Lake series, Sara Farrow’s son vanishes from a locked hotel room where three other kids were sleeping. Enter Crimson Lake’s most unlikely pair of investigators, disgraced cop Ted Conkaffey and his partner, convicted killer Amanda Pharrell. Although this is just the kind of puzzle that gets Amanda’s blood up, after the death of detective Pip Sweeney on the last case, the police chief doesn’t want her involved. But this is Amanda we’re talking about. Ted’s top concern is with finding the boy but he’s also just been granted a few precious days with his daughter and doesn’t want to jeopardize his chances of more visits. And yet, every day that passes means less chance of the Farrow boy being found alive... – Paula Longhurst, Forge, $27.99
MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Finisher, Peter Lovesey (July)
Detective Peter Diamond of the Bath Constabulary has been assigned crowd control for the Bath Half Marathon, where he notices a man—convicted years before for a violent assault—running next to a shapely young woman, Maeve Kelly. Diamond begins to worry when Maeve doesn’t cross the finish line. He begins the search for both the runner and the criminal in the course of which he ends up with one broken foot and one dead body. The Finisher addresses problems of illegal immigrants and Russian oligarchs. There is never a dull moment in a Lovesey mystery. It is the 50th anniversary of his first novel, Wobble to Death. Lovesey, now a Mystery Writers of America Grand Master, is still writing taut, page-turning novels. Perhaps it is a good time to read the Diamond series from its beginning, to allow Diamond to become a curmudgeonly friend. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho Press, $27.95

Mystery/Thriller in Paper

Mesa Verde Victim, Scott Graham
1891 Colorado: Joey leaves the Cannon farm on a secret mission for a foreign archaeologist, never to return. Present day Durango: Chuck Bender and his brother-in-law Clarence become suspects in a friend’s murder on the same day that another colleague summons Chuck to a private dig close to Mesa Verde National Park. The team’s findings could rock the archaeological world to its foundations—if they live to tell about them. – Paula Longhurst, Torrey House Press, $15.95

Speculative Fiction

Devolution, Max Brooks
The house sitting at Green Loop—a small exclusive planned community in the Cascades—is just what Kate Holland needs. Fresh air, nature out your window. Mount Rainier in the distance. Yes it’s isolated, supplies come in by drone but it’s also self-sufficient, solar powered and high tech. Kate starts journaling to have fodder for her Skype therapy sessions, while husband Dan hunches over his Ipad. No one at Green Loop expected Mount Rainier to erupt and what it unleashed wasn’t just ash clouds and boiling mudslides...Months later Kate’s journal is discovered in the devastated remains of Green Loop. That journal and interviews with Kate’s brother, Frank and Senior Ranger Josephine Schell enable Max Brooks, author of World War Z, to piece together what happened and who—or what was responsible and the lines between fiction and non-fiction are officially blurred. – Paula Longhurst, Del Ray, $28

Losses in the King’s English Family

Jeff Metcalf | The One and Only
Metcalf loved to remind us that he was our first customer with a House Account. No matter how much he spent each month, we’d receive a check with a note of thanks and his trademark funny drawing on it. We’d look up from what we were doing, see him in the store and just grin, knowing that a story was in the offing and it was sure to be a belly laugh! Sometimes we even asked for the same story again because there was always something new, a twist here, a new character there. We were delighted to host him for readings over the years for everything from Requiem for the Living: A Memoir to Backcast: Fly-fishing and Other Such Matters. In the past year we were honored and grateful to publish his hilarious novel, Wacko’s City of Fun Carnival and his crazy holiday story, “The Great Christmas Tree Lot Fiasco.” Each of us at TKE has different Metcalf stories; we’ll miss him terribly and our hearts are broken by his death.

Barbara Tanner | The 103-year-old Wunderkind
The mother of TKE co-owner Deon Hilger, Barbara Tanner was an avid reader and an ardent supporter of TKE. She was an even more ardent supporter of The Utah Symphony/Opera, Planned Parenthood, various institutions of Higher Education in Utah, and, among many other organizations, the Tanner Center for Human Rights which she co-founded with her youngest daughter, Deb Sawyer. When, at age 100, she gave an extemporaneous acceptance speech for the Honorary Doctorate she received from the University of Utah, it was articulate, wise, impassioned and never for an instant wandered from its cogent, moving themes. Ever a supporter of women, she was also a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat who, instead of despairing at the present political climate, fought tooth and nail to change it. At 103 she was still formidable, walking a mile or two a day, tending to her garden, and always ready to discuss everything from politics to movies to the latest books she’d read. It’s hard to mourn someone who lived life so fully for so long, but we’ll miss her sorely and will remind ourselves, whenever we grow discouraged aged how she would have kept on keeping on, an inspiration to us all.
Ronan the Librarian, Tara Luebbe and Becky Cattie, illustrated by Victoria Maderna
Ronan the Barbarian does what barbarians do best. He invades. He raids. And when he returns home with his pillage, he trades—that is until he brings back a book which nobody wants because, of course, barbarians don't read. Ronan, however, discovers that books are their own kind of treasure, an insight he hopes to share with his fellow barbarians. Will he succeed? This delightfully funny book is a new staff favorite. – Roaring Brook Press, $17.99

Goodnight, Little Superhero and Goodnight, Little Dancer, Jennifer Adams, illustrated by Alea Marley
TKE's very own superstar author Jennifer Adams has written two new picture books, perfect for reading at nighttime. As the day draws to an end, children who are dancers and superheroes are invited to say goodnight to their masks and their capes, their leotards and tutus, before crawling into bed where they will dream sweet dreams until morning comes again. – Roaring Brook Press, $14.99

How to Read to a Grandma or Grandpa, Jean Reagan, illustrated by Lee Wildish
How do you read to a grandparent? Fortunately, local author extraordinaire Jean Reagan is here to give us the 411. First, you have to find a good book . . . and then you take it from there. It's a testament to both Reagan and Wildish that their popular "how to" series still feels fresh. – Random, $17.99

The Bell Rang, James E. Ransome
Every day the master rings the bell and every day a family of slaves performs their duties . . . until one day when the bell rings, the family realizes their son and brother, Ben, has run away. Will he be captured? Or will he find freedom like the children of Israel? This is a stunning, important book. We can't recommend it highly enough. – Atheneum, $17.99

Fire Truck vs. Dragon, Chris Barton, illustrated by Shanda McCloskey
Our own master storyteller Rob Eckman introduced me to Barton's Shark vs. Train a number of years ago, and I have joyfully hand sold it to young customers (and their adults!) ever since. I'm happy to report that Barton's new companion book, Fire Truck vs. Dragon, is just as much fun as the original. In this story, Fire Truck and Dragon are best friends instead of competitors—friends who can't understand why children don't seem to appreciate the things at which they excel. Telling stories around campfires, for example. Or preparing free-range potato salads. Or breaking open piñatas. Or handing out snow cones. WHAT MORE COULD A KID WANT? Barton, of course, provides the answer in this winning story. – Little, Brown, $17.99

My Best Friend, Julie Fogliano, illustrated by Jillian Tamaki
And speaking of friendship, Julie Fogliano focuses on a special kind of bond, unique to young children. The unnamed narrator tells (and shows!) us all the reasons why her best friend is . . . well . . . her best friend. This book, enhanced by wonderfully imaginative artwork, is one of our favorites. Fogliano never disappoints. – Simon & Schuster, $17.99

Everyone's Awake, Colin Meloy, illustrated by Shawn Harris
Ever wonder what the people—Dad, Mom, Grandma, your brother, your sister, the cat—in your house are up to after YOU go to bed? This raucous new picture book, fantastic for reading aloud, is full of surprising (and hilarious) insights. Harris's energetic illustrations practically leap off the page. – Chronicle Books, $17.99
**Who Will You Be?** Andrea Pippins

“Who will you be when you are grown, Little One?” a mother asks her beloved child. Someone who is as kind or as bold or as curious as other family members? The mother’s wish is this: that the child be all these things and more, “for no one in the world has ever been like you.” This sweet, good-hearted book would make a perfect baby gift. – Random House, $17.99

**Be You!** Peter H. Reynolds

Be ready. Be curious. Be adventurous. Be different. Be persistent. Be all the things that YOU were meant to be. Reynolds’ appealing new picture book is a big, bright, colorful pep talk—one that’s good for all ages. – Scholastic, $17.99

**Roy Digs Dirt**, David Shannon

David Shannon’s new picture book is a dog’s love letter to dirt. Why does Roy love dirt so much? Because it’s good for digging and burying treasures and rolling around in because as every dog knows, dirt MAKES YOU HANDSOME! Which is why Roy digs dirt! There’s not much of a storyline here, but the concept and the delightful illustrations make for a happy reading experience. And dog lovers are sure to recognize their own pets in Roy. – Scholastic, $17.99

**Prairie Days**, Patricia MacLachlan, illustrated by Micha Archer

“Where I was born, there was a sky so big, there was no end of it.” In her nostalgic new picture book, MacLachlan takes us back in time to enjoy a prairie childhood filled with night games, bottled sodas from the gas station, and hay wagon rides. Archer’s illustrations, created with layers of papers, give the book a rich, textured look. – McElderry Books, $17.99

**The Keeper of Wild Words**, Brooke Smith, illustrated by Madeline Kloepper

What happens to words that are used less and less? They disappear, which is why Grandma Mimi asks her granddaughter Brook to be the “keeper” of some of her favorite words—to know them, to use them herself. Dedicated to the poet Mary Oliver, this book is filled with nature-inspired wonder. Beautiful! – Chronicle, $18.99

**Bad Dog**, Mike Boldt

Rocky (who has cute pointy ears and a cute little nose) doesn’t fetch, heel, or sit. Why? Because Rocky is a bad dog who’d rather climb a shower curtain or sleep. A lot. Also, Rocky is a bad dog because it turns out that Rocky is actually—WAIT FOR IT!—a cat. Young children will love being “in on the joke” with this one. – Doubleday, $17.99

**Attack of the Underwear Dragon**, Scott Rothman, illustrated by Pete Oswald

When the Underwear Dragon (yes, you read that right) attacks the kingdom, it’s up to Cole, a brand new knight-assistant, to save the day after all the other knights run for cover. Fortunately, Cole has mad kingdom-saving skills. Oswald, who has illustrated several of Jory John’s clever books, is in fine form here. – Random, $17.99

**One Little Bag: An Amazing Journey**, Henry Cole

This lovely wordless picture book follows the life cycle of a single recycled paper bag in its many iterations—as a lunch sack, a gift bag, a tote for a young child’s toys. Cole was inspired to create this book in memory of his first Earth Day observance. On that day, he says, he decided “not to throw away my bag after lunch. Instead, I folded it and slipped it into my back pocket. . . The next day, I used that same little bag to carry my lunch to school again. And the next day. And the next day. For three years.” – Scholastic, $18.99
Swing, Michael Hall
When the letter “V” asks the letter “L” if they can play together, “L” says no. Why? Because “V” is different. “L” is in the middle of the alphabet, while “V” is toward the end. Can they find a way to accommodate each other . . . and all the other letters that subsequently arrive on the playground? Hall’s imaginative treatment gives new life to a familiar theme—that we can find ways to get along in spite of our differences. – Harper, $17.99

Together We Grow, Susan Vaught, illustrated by Kelly Murphy
Their home destroyed by a storm, a mother fox and her kits seek shelter in an already crowded barn filled with animals who are reluctant to welcome this displaced family. Compassion for fellow creatures in need, however, wins the day and the family is invited to stay. The result? Everyone grows together. Murphy’s art is beautifully appealing. – Simon & Schuster, $17.99

Almond, Allen Say
Almond is both intrigued by and jealous of the new girl at school who can play the violin like a dream. Almond’s mother tells her not to worry, that one day she will discover her own talents. “Sometimes,” she explains, “it takes time.” Almond isn’t so sure—until an opportunity arises that invites her to stretch her wings and fly. – Scholastic, $18.99

In A Jar, Deborah Marcero
“Llewellyn was a collector. He collected things in jars.” Llewellyn collects ordinary things like feathers, buttercups, and heart-shaped stones, and whenever he looks at them, he remembers all the lovely things he’s seen and done. One day he shares his collection with a girl named Evelyn who becomes his best friend and fellow collector. But can their friendship survive when Evelyn moves away? This gorgeous picture book will be treasured by children and adults alike. – Putnam, $17.99

And, for children of all ages, Margaret Brennan Neville recommends:
Our Favorite Day of the Year, A. E. Ali
Our favorite holidays are made up of traditions, food and family. Follow Musa through kindergarten as he discovers that the best days can be different, and fun! Sharing what makes us different makes everyone better off. This picture book is a delight. – Simon & Schuster, $17.99 (all ages)
Thieves of Weirdwood, William Shivering and Christian McKay Heidicker
A creepy doll is kissing people in Kingsport. The insane asylum is filling up. And the “Balance” is changing. Cue the scary music and buckle your seat belts. Readers will be thrilled with the magic, horror and weirdness all wrapped up in one book. This might be Christian Heidicker’s (local Newbery Honor winner for Scary Stories for Young Foes) signature combo. Two young thieves, Arthur and Wally, are struggling to fix something in their own lives, while trying to keep their cruel and evil gang leader off their backs. Arthur thinks he has found the answer to all of their problems when he observes the well-to-do leaving a very old and dilapidated mansion that is begging to be broken into. But the boys get way more than they bargained for! – Holt, $16.99 (9 and up)

Louder than Words, Kathy Kacer
Dina and her family are struggling to find a safe place in the Ukraine during WWII. Nazis have taken her father and burned down their house. When their Christian nanny makes a very courageous choice, Dina and her sisters might have a chance to survive. Based on a true story, this is another powerful example of what being a hero really means. – Annick Press, $9.95 (10 and up)

Clan, Sigmund Brouwer
Atlatl is like the runt of his tribe; his limp prevents him from being a hunter. He is relegated to helping with the little kids until a chance meeting with a saber-tooth tiger and cub sets his life on a different path. He brings the cub into the tribe but can only keep it until it is old enough to survive on its own. Growing tension and conflict lead to Atlatl’s banishment. But when catastrophe strikes Atlatl must figure out how to do more than just throw a spear. This fast-paced adventure story has several plot twists that will keep readers turning its pages until the end. – Little Brown, $16.99 (10 and up)

The One and Only Bob, Katherine Applegate
The One and Only Ivan is a classic, award-winning novel; hard to imagine a sequel that could have the same impact. Yet Applegate does it again as she takes readers into the story of Bob, the homeless dog who was part of the gorilla Ivan’s lonely life in a mall. The new book starts after Ivan and Ruby the baby elephant have finally made it to a safer place, the local animal sanctuary, and Bob has been adopted by Ivan’s caretaker. Things look pretty good. But big storms are looming (literally a hurricane is approaching) as Bob tries to figure out if there is anything he could have done for his sister. Applegate does a brilliant job of extending Ivan’s story and of sharing more of Bob’s. A terrific read that kids will love. – Tundra, $16.99 (9 and up)

Bloom, Kenneth Oppel
What is going on in the world? It started with rain. Then brambles grew on black stalks overnight. Alien invasion? The big picture is that sentient plants communicate with each other, invulnerable to anything humans can throw at them. They are deadly in many terrible ways but it turns out the picture is even more complex than it at first appears and that maybe the aliens actually seeded the planet 14 years earlier. Three teenagers on the Gulf Islands seem immune, however, so maybe there is a way to save earth and humankind. Engaging on so many levels, this book is also a perfect read for a single sitting. Kids will love it! – Random House, $16.99 (10 and up)

Black Brother, Black Brother, Jewell Parker Rhodes
Brothers, one light, one dark, and biracial parents, are the foundation of Rhodes’ latest, must-read novel. Donte is targeted at school because he is not like his brother, Trey. He’s darker than his brother and the people around him cannot deal with it. Barely handling the pressure, Donte decides he can change the way his community sees him by taking them on—with his brother’s help. Once again Rhodes challenges readers to examine their own biases. She is one of my favorite authors. – Little Brown, $16.99 (10 and up)

The Blackbird Girls, Anne Blankman
This is a story about resilience in situations that are beyond most of our experiences. Blankman carefully crafts and reveals terrifying moments in history through the viewpoints of two young girls, whose lives change forever when the reactor explodes at Chernobyl, and that of a Jewish grandmother, who survives the Nazi’s destruction of western Russia. Over and over again this book shows how kindness can make a difference. For those readers who loved The War That
**Middle Reader**

***Wink,*** Rob Harrell

Seventh grade is a time when all kids want to do is fit in. But Ross Maloy has a weird, rare cancer in his eyes. He can't imagine anything worse than what he is going through. And although the reactions of his friends, classmates, and the adults confirm this, instead of a slow, sad story, here is one that surprises. From an up-close-and-personal viewpoint, it is laugh-out-loud funny. Maybe middle schoolers know something grownups don't about dealing with difficulties. This illustrated novel has a smart authenticity, perhaps because Harrell has loosely based it on his own experiences with childhood cancer.

– Penguin, $16.99 (9 and up)

**Prairie Lotus,*** Linda Sue Park

In 1880, Hanna and her dad move to LaForge in the Dakota Territory. After her mom's death they are looking for a place to put down some roots, work, go to school. All Hanna wants is a friend—and to be able to sew. She is half Chinese, and a lot of people have a problem with that. When the town's prejudices become increasingly apparent, Hanna and her dad have some tough decisions to make. Linda Sue Park brings all of her personal experience of prejudice, as well as her love of *Little House on the Prairie,* to this touching historical fiction.

– Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, $16.99 (10 and up)

**Goodbye from Nowhere,*** Sara Zarr

Things are coming up roses for Kyle Baker. In addition to having a girlfriend and a spot on his high school's baseball team, he also has the perfect family that includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Well, maybe the family isn't perfect, but at least it's happy. Then he discovers the shattering news that his mother is having an affair—a fact of which his father is aware. Kyle's parents want him to keep this knowledge to himself, but doing so comes at an enormous personal cost. How long can he carry the burden of this secret to protect the rest of the family? And should he? When it comes to writing realistic fiction for young adults, local author and National Book Award finalist, Sara Zarr, is one of the best. As always, her carefully crafted prose is tight and smooth and her characters remarkable for their flawed humanity.

– Ann Cannon, Harper, $18.99

**Shielded,*** KayLynn Flanders

Another local author debut! Jennesara has always had to hide her magic from her kingdom. But when her father the king sends her off to marry a prince she has never met, Jenne has no choice. She is forced to figure out very quickly what she is really capable of and what she is willing to do to survive. Fantasy, adventure, a little romance, and the promise of a sequel will make readers very happy.

– Random House, $17.99 (12 and up)

**We Are Not From Here,*** Jenny Torres Sanchez

Fleeing Guatemala is one of the scariest things that Chico, Pulga and Pequena have ever done. Due to the life-threatening situations at home, however, it is their only choice. Hoping to get safely to America, they follow the rail line of the Beast. How they survive this journey makes for a gritty, riveting story (crossing the American border might be even harder, but that is another book). The best and the worst of humankind shows up in each of these brave kids’ stories. Unforgettable!

– Penguin, $18.99 (12 and up)

**They Went Left,*** Monica Hesse

Readers can depend on Hesse for excellent historical fiction. Her latest book explores the overwhelming difficulties of surviving a concentration camp. Zofia has found her way to a displaced persons camp after being freed from Auschwitz and she is desperate to find her little brother. With life reduced to what is most meaningful, everyone at the camp is desperately trying to figure out what comes next. To complicate the situation, now that survival is no longer the primary motivator, Zofia has to navigate her own needs and feelings along with those of her camp mates. Another unique point of view for the WWII canon.

– Hachette, $17.99 (12 and up)

**Girl from Nowhere,*** Tiffany Rosenhan

Sophia has had a VERY unusual upbringing, and when her parents decide that it is time for a “normal” life, they all move to Waterford, Montana. At first, Sophia is nervous, uncomfortable, yet hopeful. A few new friends and one really cute guy later, she feels she might be able to do this. But you are who you are, no matter where you are, and when her family’s old life shows up with a bang, the story literally turns on its head. This debut novel
from another Utah author is so much fun to read—action, mystery, romance, all rolled into one! – Bloomsbury, $17.99 (12 and up)

My Long List of Impossible Things, Michelle Barker

There are not many stories out there about the difficulties faced by the German people after WWII. Katje and her family have fled their home and are trying desperately to stay ahead of the Russians. Their journey is full of heartbreak, and their new circumstances are not much better. Katje’s “list of impossible things” just gets longer as the story goes on. Like so many other YA WWII novels, this one deals with confusion, identity, loss and the grief that comes with all of those things. – Annick Press, $9.95 (12 and up)

The Enigma Game, Elizabeth Wein

1940: young Jamaican Louisa Adair moves from a war-torn London to the windy wilds of the Limehouse pub in Scotland as a paid companion to Jane Warner. Jane is in her eighties; she is a former opera singer; and she’s German. The pub is close to RAF Windyedge where Squadron Leader Jamie Beaufort-Stuart’s team has been picking up some strange transmissions recently. One night a mysterious visitor arrives at the airbase with a classified decoding machine. Unable to give it to his contact, ‘Calypso,’ the man hides the device somewhere in the pub, and gives Louisa the ‘key.’ Louisa becomes friends with Volunteer Ellen McEwen, who is no stranger to prejudice herself. Beaufort-Stuart is convinced there is a spy operating at Windyedge and, defying his commanding officer, joins forces with Ellen, Louisa and Jane to strike back at the enemy. But is the intelligence sound, or is this a carefully crafted trap? – Paula Longhurst, Disney-Hyperion, $18.99

Superman Smashes the Klan, Gene Luen Yang

The Lee family has moved out of Chinatown to Metropolis. Teenagers, Roberta and Tammy, have a lot to adjust to. But when their family wakes up to the Klan of the Fiery Cross surrounding their house, they both know that they are going to have to dig deep to make a stand. Yang has been busy! His new work is a great addition! – DC Graphics, $16.99 (10 and up)

When Stars Are Scattered, Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

Jamieson (All’s Faire in Middle School) teams up with Omar Mohamed to give kids a real look at the struggles of Somali refugees. His poignant saga combined with her storytelling/art skills will challenge readers to look at refugee and immigrant stories more carefully and compassionately. – Penguin, $12.99 (9 and up)

Stepping Stones, Lucy Knisely

When her parents divorce, Jen has to adjust to a different life. City-to-farm is hard enough, but to make things worse, she has a new stepdad and step-sisters as well. As Jen tries to figure out whether she can fit in, she finds that family is more than where you live. Realistic fiction, touches of humor, a great start to a new series. – Random House, $12.99 (9 and up)
**GRAPHIC NOVELS**

*The Magic Fish*, Trung Le Nguyen

In this combination of *Hey Kiddo* and *The Prince and the Dressmaker*, Tiến loves his family and his friends…but he has a secret he's been keeping from them, and it might change everything. This story deals with the complexity of family and the ways stories can bring us together. – Random House, $16.99 (12 and up)

*Diana: Princess of the Amazon*, Shannon and Dean Hale

Diana, the only child on the island of Themyscira, really just needs a friend. Lonely, she takes things into her own hands—with some interesting results. This future Wonder Woman is growing up, and hopefully that means more books. Shannon and Dean Hale come through (again!) with a story that is as thoughtful as it is fun to read. – DC Comics/Random House, $9.99 (8 and up)

**NONFICTION**

*Why Do Dogs Sniff Butts?*, Dr. Nick Crumpton

In picture book format, this book presents a ton of facts and images about man’s best friend. Its funny title is just one of its many interesting angles on why a dog does what a dog does! Forty-four sections cover a lot of dog information—behaviors, breeds, commands, to name just a few. The illustrations are wonderful, adding charm and whimsy. – Thames & Hudson, $16.95 (dog lovers of any age)

*Equality’s Call, The Story of Voting Rights in America*, Deborah Diesen

Starting with the Founding Fathers, Diesen puts together a comprehensive picture of voting in America. It follows the push by women and people of color to get their right to vote and it ends with the continued fight by all Americans, including immigrant and LGBTQ communities. Timely, and written with an eye to young audiences, this book tells the stories that all Americans should know about protecting their freedom, and their responsibility, to vote. The stylized art reinforces the narrative to make it even more inclusive. – Simon & Schuster, $17.99 (7 and up)

*Into the Clouds, The Race to Climb the World’s Most Dangerous Mountain*, Tod Olson

K2 has long been acknowledged as the most dangerous of the world’s highest peaks. Olson explores the early history of K2 expeditions and all the horrifying results. In 1953 Charlie Houston was obsessed with getting to the top of the second highest mountain. He and his team were vulnerable, determined and scared; the low oxygen and cold were killing them—each decision critical, often brutal. Repeated failures, loss of life, ice and snow, storms more violent than readers can imagine, human ego and frailty, all add up to a great read for adventure seekers! – Scholastic, $18.99 (10 and up)

*On the Horizon*, Lois Lowry

Lowry shares childhood memories with beautifully crafted, polished poetry that reads smoothly, examining what she didn’t really know when she was young about both Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. Refusing to shrink from the horror and brutality on either side, she inspires readers to look for understanding and unbiased acceptance. Evocative illustrations complement the text. – Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, $16.99 (9 and up)

*Young Readers Are Our Future* by Margaret Brennan Neville

The King’s English has worked hard through the years to find the best books out there for our young readers. We attend book fairs, make lists, place orders, organize book groups, create summer reading programs, hold author events and readings, and most of all, listen to our customers all in the effort to maintain a strong and vibrant selection of diverse books. In doing so, we believe we are, and can continue to be, a force for change, one story at a time. Our focus going forward will be to challenge ourselves and all our readers to become better informed and more empathetic to the narratives of our fellow citizens of color, book by book. Their history is our history.
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