

2020 Summer Reading Book Reviews

Daring Greatly

Author: Brene Brown

I read two other books by Brene Brown and I felt like many ideas in this book were repeated ideas from *The Gifts of Imperfection* and *Braving the Wilderness*. I found the section on parenting new and very useful.

Once Upon a River

Author: Diane Setterfield

One dark and stormy night a stranger appears at a small inn along the Thames River. He brings a small injured child. Mystery and deception is interwoven throughout the book as the identity of the strangers and the child are revealed.

Sea of Memories

Author: Fiona Valpy

This is an easy summer read. It is the story of a woman who lived during WWII how her life was impacted forever by the winds of war. It tells the story of love...both of the sea and of partners. It had a few cliffhanger moments but overall, it had a predictable feel to the story. The story is told from a grandmother to her granddaughter via recorded tapes letters and photographs to try and right a relationship.

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek

Author: Kim Michele Richardson

This was an interesting fictional story about the Kentucky Pack Horse Library Project. The main character has blue skin. I was not familiar with the blue skinned people of Kentucky. I enjoyed reading this book and learning about Cussy, the main character and all of the characters on her route. Though it was a bit slow at times I did find it interesting.

Circe

Author: Madeline Miller

When I started to read it, I had mixed feelings. I persevered and stayed up until midnight for three nights in a row until I finished it. It is a mix of mythology and fiction. And what a cast of characters! The main character is Circe a goddess and daughter of Helios the Sun King. She casts a spell on a rival and turns her into the mythical beast Scylla. She is rejected by her family and exiled to a deserted island. Lions and wolves are her companions as she collects plants and flowers to make into her potions. She becomes a witch, casts spells and turns men who arrive on her island and abuse her hospitality into pigs. She has affairs with various men, some human, some gods, and by Odysseus she bears a human son. Penelope and her son come to the island for awhile. The ending was a surprise but understandable. The author's beautiful descriptive writing kept me spellbound.

Ghosted**Author: Rosie Walsh**

Happy-ending love story with mysterious happenings in the middle. They fell fast in love but then found out they were childhood acquaintances with a terrible past. It looks like he's the one of mystery but actually it's her and he takes time to forgive before he can give into his feelings.

City of Girls**Author: Elizabeth Gilbert**

I thought the plot was awesome, the characters were well developed. I enjoyed this feel good yet thought provoking story.

The last year of the war**Author: Meissner**

A very good historical fiction of a friendship made in an internment camp and how that friendship shaped the life of a young German American woman. The view of the war from a family that wasn't Jewish but punished because they were immigrants from Germany was a new perspective on the war.

Purity In Death**Author: JD Robb**

Purity In Death is book 15 in the series. I love how each book covers a new case to investigate by Lt. Eve Dallas and still cover the story lines of the other minor characters. In this book Peabody and McNabb had a larger role in the story by covering his injury and her caring for him which led to declarations of love. We also were introduced to the possibility of Peabody testing to be a detective. Definitely a great addition to the series. 5 out of 5 stars

Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters**Author: Chesley Sullenberger**

This memoir of the now famous pilot who skillfully landed a plane in the Hudson River saving 155 lives in 2009 is a must read for anyone who likes hearing the story behind real life headlines. Sullenberger recounts his childhood lessons and all of the flight training that he logged which he was able to draw upon in the few minutes of action that led to this amazing water landing. I am looking forward to seeing the movie now that I have a better understanding about what happened on this day.

So You Want To Talk About Race**Author: Ijeoma Oluo**

A must read for everyone. Educates about racism helps readers find ways to have honest conversations about race and calls us to action to weaken oppression.

The Underground Railroad**Author: Colson Whitehead**

I was struggling to finish this book and finally committed to it this week. There comes a turning point about a quarter of a way through this novel when you just can not put it down. It is a story of slavery that weaves history throughout while also taking some liberties with history. Amazingly well-written and worth sticking with it!!

Girls With Sharp Sticks**Author: Suzanne Young**

I thought this was a very entertaining and mysterious book all the way to the very end. At first the story seemed to be a journey of self-discovery but turned into a game of survival and wits. I particularly enjoyed the strength the main characters found in bond they shared. It powered them through the worst of times and helped them be strong even when they felt powerless. The horrific twists woven into the story kept me intrigued and definitely cast a dark tone that I hadn't expected. Overall, it was a very interesting book, one I would definitely like to read again.

Speak the Graphic Novel**Author: Laurie Halse Anderson**

This book tells the story of a young survivor of assault following a short period of her life after the traumatic event. In the aftermath of the assault almost everyone the main character knows turns on her none of them knowing or understanding what she's going through. The story details her daily struggle to cope with what's happened and find even a little bit of hope and friendship in the people around her. It's by no means a light-hearted story nor is the ending necessarily happy but she learns to set boundaries and stick up and fight for herself. It's a book that holds little back and leaves you in admiration for the girl's perseverance and strength.

The Midwife of Hope River**Author: Patricia Harman**

This book kept me captivated by hearing stories of this uplifting heroine. Patience the midwife was easy to connect to and empathize with which brought many feelings when reading her life experiences as a midwife in Appalachia. History was also incorporated and I learned a great deal about struggles throughout the Great Depression and men working the coal mines. Great and easy read!

With The Fire On High**Author: Elizabeth Acevedo**

The story of a teenaged mother who aspires to become a chef. She has many challenging decisions about her future to make while dealing with other struggles that come with being an adolescent and a mother. I listened to this book on audio. Once I started I didn't want to stop. I definitely plan on recommending this book to students at my school.

Time of Death**Author: Lucy Kerr**

This book was the first in a series. It had the element of suspense and was about corporate greed and appreciating having a home base.

The Decent Inn of Death**Author: Rennie Airth**

An excellent mystery! A retired British Detective Inspector begins investigating the death of a church organist. Was it an accident or murder? Enter another retired investigator a German police officer with painful memories a young female officer a snowed in country house a few staff and guests a mysterious letter are we dealing with a financial scam gone bad or a serial murderer! Easy to read and follow good characters! This is one in a series of books with this detective but an easy standalone book.

The Read-Aloud Family**Author: Sarah Mackenzie**

This book had some great suggestions for reading aloud with your family. It included great ideas for how to pick books for read aloud and some suggestions for good read-alouds for each age group.

Dragonfly**Author: Meacham**

Not too many books can make you want to scream at the characters but this one surely did! 5 young Americans are recruited to become spies during WWII. Their adventures leave you on the edge of your seat wanting to tell them no don't. If you like historical fiction this is a must!

The Bassoon King: My life in Art Faith and Idiocy**Author: Rainn Wilson**

My love of the television comedy series The Office has led me to want to read books by the actors. This book is written by the actor who portrayed Dwight Schrute. It was an enjoyable read that tells of his unique childhood experiences that led him to pursue acting. He recounts his journey to landing his infamous role on The Office and his return to the Baha'i faith of his upbringing. He now merges creativity and spirituality in his work with his YouTube channel SoulPancake.

Rose Under Fire**Author: Elizabeth Wein**

A teen historical fiction written about a young pilot who was captured and sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp. The story revolves around young Rose's poetry the Rabbits (the prisoners that were experimented on) and how her prison family vowed to tell the world what happened at the camp.

Murder Theory**Author: Andrew Mayne**

I started reading Andrew Mayne's Theo Cray series. I like these books as they tend to have a scientific bend to how he solves serial killer mysteries. I liked this one better than the previous version. He develops the characters well and uses science to help solve the mystery. These are modern day mysteries. This one took him all over to solve the mystery.

First Comes Love**Author: Emily Griffin**

This is a story of two sisters and the chapters go back and forth between the two. They suffered a tragedy in the past and it has affected how they live their lives. They each work through things in their own way to figure out love and life.

Sadie**Author: Courtney Summers**

I was intrigued by the format of this book. It is written as a podcast with chapters in narrative form sprinkled in from the point of view of the main character Sadie. Sadie disappears in seek of revenge after the murder of the 13-year old sister she raised in her mother's absence. The podcast follows the clues she's left behind while Sadie's narrative fills in the gaps. The story line is fairly suspenseful with occasional twists. Overall I would rate this book a 4 out of 5.

Magnificent Homespun Brown**Author: Samara Cole Doyon**

I've been looking for some books to teach my 5 and 2 year olds about social justice. Magnificent Homespun Brown. My daughter actually picked this one herself and we read it together. It has gorgeous illustrations of a Haitian girl and her family. Her brother is disabled she has aunts, uncles, and grandparents regularly in her life. She talks about the things that are brown about her and her world. From her hair and skin to honey a caramel apple and fall leaves. The vocabulary was extremely advanced and I loved that too. We were able to talk about the words and their meanings. My girls were contextually able to pick many of them up from the pictures and words. Amber brown. Like honey harvested from the hive in Auntie's yard. A sacred healing elixir a balm for beleaguered voices and aching throats born from billowing bustle of her industrious bees stretching into a soft squiggly line as it slips from the spigot to the bottle. How can you not think brown is magnificent? My girls said they loved her hair and her glasses. The activities her family was doing were similar to ones we do. It was a fantastic book for bringing other cultures into our home and into their experience.

The Complete Guide to Small Scale Farming**Author: Melissa Nelson**

Small-scale Farming was extremely informative and nearly all-inclusive. It went over the decision-making preparation housing day-to-day breeding illness and butchering of most farm animals. I like that it was a quick read and didn't have too many side notes. There were highlighted segments with farmer insights. Very helpful guide.

Desperate Measures**Author: Stuart Woods**

Wealthy attorney Stone Barrington again becomes entangled in not one but two mysteries in New York City. He befriends two beautiful women one of whom he hires to be his pilot and is attacked by a serial killer and another who literally falls in his lap while he is shopping and requires assistance in divorcing her angry husband. The author writes with a straight-forward manner and fun banter between the characters that makes for quick easy reading.

Child of the Dream**Author: Sharon Robinson**

Very interesting true story told from the viewpoint of the 13-year-old daughter of Jackie Robinson who had become involved in the vision of Martin Luther King Jr. in the summer of 1963. It was fascinating how the whole family became involved in helping to realize that vision.

Formula of Deception**Author: Carrie Parks**

Fun suspenseful novel about a woman in Alaska trying to solve mystery regarding bodies found from WWII

A Gentleman in Moscow**Author: Amor Towles**

The prose in this book was distinguished with every character and setting described in minute detail; however, it wasn't until the latter half of the novel that I truly understood what was taking place. The ending was full of the unexpected but ended too abruptly for my taste.

The Backyard Playground**Author: Phil Schmidt**

This is a great resource for play equipment plans. They are detailed and adaptable. Tips about materials and techniques.

Little House in the Big Woods**Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder**

I enjoyed going back in time to a more relaxed time with Laura Ingalls.

Little House on the Prairie**Author: Laura Ingalls Wilder**

Enjoyed this book it is nice to go to a more relaxed time.

Ordering Your Private World**Author: Gordon MacDonald**

The author discusses pathways to a peace-filled ordered inner spiritual world: being driven vs. called recapturing our time doing more listening, reading, and thinking and prioritizing a Sabbath rest. The book was good, but I felt like I was plowing through it didn't flow for me.

The Strange Case of Dr. Couney**Author: Dawn Raffel**

Very interesting subject. Never knew this before. This was a very smart person indeed.

The Oysterville Sewing Circle**Author: Susan Wiggs**

The main character Caroline returns from New York City to her hometown on the coast of Washington with her career in tatters and with two young children whose mother has died in tow. The three of them take up residence in Caroline's parent's home. Mom and dad help with the children as Caroline starts to reconstruct her life. She begins to design and market fashionable rainwear and establishes the Oysterville Sewing Circle. This group is not a sewing circle at all but rather a support group for battered women which Caroline started in memory of Angelique the children's mother who was a battered woman. At this point the book switches to Caroline's teen years and her friendship with Will. I found this to go on too long and was less interesting than what went before. Back to the present day. Will has married but this marriage fails and yes, he and Caroline do get together again. Caroline has grown to love the children and plans to adopt them. And then the children's father appears and wants the children. His plans go awry as members of the Sewing Circle and other battered women appear in the courtroom. This aspect of the ending was not expected however the marriage of Will and Caroline was predictable. A good women's literature summer read.

Open Book**Author: Jessica Simpson**

This book was a surprising revelation into the actual reality of this pop star. She was open and honest about things that were both hidden from the spotlight and misrepresented by the media. She touches on topics of mental health, alcoholism, work family, love, betrayal, personal loss and personal growth. A very easy read that was enjoyable while it felt the author was speaking directly to the reader rather than simply putting words on paper.

The Daughter's Tale**Author: Armando Lucas Correa**

In 2015, an old woman a survivor of the Holocaust is approached by one of her descendants who has letters from her mother. The story begins in Berlin 1939. Amanda a Jewish woman whose husband has been taken to a camp manages to leave Berlin with her two young daughters. She reaches the port of Hamburg but only manages to get one daughter onto the ship the St.Louis which is bound for Havana where she has family. A heartbreaking decision. Amanda and her other daughter Lina get to a farm in Vichy France run by a woman Claire where she has been promised refuge. They are eventually taken to a camp by Nazis. Amanda takes desperate measures to free Lina from the camp. Lina gets back to the farm but she and Claire are rounded up and taken away. The Nazis assisted by French collaborators execute a massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane. Lina escapes to a monastery. The book explores the love of a mother for her children and the sacrifices she makes and also the goodness of many people who are living in a time of horror. I knew the story of the St. Louis which was filled with Jewish refugees. It was turned away at Havana and also turned away at Miami by order of FDR. The ship returned to Hanover and the refugees were sent to various countries. I did not know the story of Oradour-sur-Glane. This massacre occurred on June 10, 1944. The center of the town was never rebuilt; it stands as a reminder of Nazi atrocities who were unfortunately aided by France collaborators. The old woman in 2015 is of course Lina.

Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)**Author: Mindy Kaling**

This is a fun read if you want to get inside the head of Mindy Kaling writer and actress who gained fame for her work on The Office comedy series. I am always intrigued how people get their start from humble beginnings and work hard until they get their big Hollywood break.

Where the Crawdads Sing**Author: Owens**

What a mystery! Had me guessing till the very end. A young girl abandoned in the marshes of the south she learns through the observation of nature and her interactions with it. When a popular man is murdered all fingerprint to her. It is a very hard book to put down.

The German Girl**Author: Armando Lucas Correa**

This book bounces back and forth during the years of 1938 and 2014. A wealthy Jewish family waits till the last minute to board the St. Louis to take them to Cuba. Their daughter is 12 and is one of two main characters in the story. Jump to 2006 where we meet the other main character who lost her father in the towers during 9/11. How the 2 main characters become intertwined make a wonderful tale of survival after loss.

Smoke Screen**Author: Terri Blackstock**

Great story! I read it in one sitting. Relatable characters and interesting plot.

Healthyish**Author: Lindsay Hunt**

There are lots of recipes in here that I am ready to try out. They pair health with flavor all while looking delicious. I haven't tried any recipes from here yet, but I can't wait to! Especially some one-pan meals and the single-serving peanut butter cookie!

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference**Author: Malcolm Gladwell**

This social psychology book takes a look at how major changes in our society happen suddenly and unexpectedly. He calls them social epidemics and when they reach their critical mass and take off that is the Tipping Point.

Tyler Johnson Was Here**Author: Jay Coles**

Tyler Johnson Was Here tells the story of Marvin a black teenager whose twin brother is killed by a police officer after a party gets out of hand. To me the book felt like a "stream of consciousness" and seemed unorganized at times. This likely was intentional and serves the purpose of portraying Marvin's true overwhelming emotion through the trauma he and his family experience. However, the style did not resonate with me personally despite the powerful concept of the novel.

The Tuscan Child**Author: Rhys Bowen**

Set in the 1970s and during WWII this story flips between the story of a father and just daughter. It tells the story of the dad an English WWII pilot shot down over Italy and his daughter who wants to learn about her father during that time. It's a decent story but at times seemed predictable. I had the villain in the story pegged early on.

The Faithful Spy Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Plot to kill Hitler**Author: Hendrix**

An interesting read that leaves you asking what if. Had the 3 attempts to stop Hitler have worked how did people not see how toxic Hitler's plan truly was and more. Not a big reader of biographies but this one surely opened my eyes.

The Dinner List**Author: Rebecca Serle**

I didn't enjoy this book as much as the first one that I read by the same author In Five Years. Although this book had an interesting twist towards the end, it just didn't hold my attention throughout the story.

In the Shadow of the Valley**Author: Bobi Conn**

I picked this book because it was set in the Appalachian area I grew up in. I was not prepared to read so much about drug usage, but I also understand it is the truth of today's world. In that area of Kentucky (for me it was WV) it is a known truth that no one has bothered to deal with. Everyone who can do something turns a blind eye. I enjoyed reading her candid story of her life being poor, abused by her father and her constant struggle to stay afloat in a world she couldn't understand. I was a little confused with the back and forth stories through time and some things were left unsaid that I wish I could hear more about.

A Happy Catastrophe**Author: Maddie Dawson**

This book tells the tale of Marnie and Patrick who are in love but struggling with issues from the past. Early in the book Tessa arrives from Patrick's past with a decision in her own life that impacts them all. The story alternates viewpoints in each chapter.

The Poisonwood Bible**Author: Barbara Kingsolver**

This book drew me in and I couldn't stop reading it! I fell in love with the characters and the character development was excellent. Also gave an inside view on what it was like in the Congo during those turbulent times.

The Orphan Train, Author:

This book told me about a part of history I was unaware of in a way that gripped me- I couldn't put it down!

Mrs. Lincoln's Sisters**Author: Jennifer Chiaverini**

Mary Todd Lincoln is primarily known as the wife of the 16th President of the US a spendthrift and who went mad. This book of historical fiction details her private life as well as her sisters and provides a new understanding of the lady. She lost her mother at an early age, her young stepmother did not want the children from his first marriage, lost 3 sons, her husband was shot in front of her, considered a traitor to the union because she was from Kentucky, clearly she suffered from depression and may have had additional mental health issues. Hardly insane, yet the mental health community did not have the understanding and the skills at that time to help her. The sisters are interesting their reactions to each other and their situations believable. An enjoyable book.

Chirp**Author: Kate Messner**

This book was really well done. It carefully covered the topics of both gender discrimination and unwanted touch. Female empowerment was a strong message as well as the challenges of being self-employed.

The English Wife**Author: Lauren Willig**

An enjoyable read! Who is Annabelle/Georgie? A wealthy English lady or the illegitimate daughter of the deceased owner of Illyria? Is her cousin looking for her for money or to accuse her of murder? A look at the Knickerbocker families at the turn of the century where being old family is more important than new wealth. Can Bayard's sister Janie discover the truth and find love with the questionable newspaper reporter? What is his relationship with her vivacious cousin? Can anyone survive Bayard's and Janie's mother? An easy read.

The Secret of the India Orchid**Author: Nancy Campbell Allen**

A mystery set in India with a dashing Lord and the Lady he loves. The header of a proper romance should have been enough of a warning. It was interesting to read of some of the Indian culture at the time. There is a princess in the book too. Overall, I felt the mystery was predictable the romance a standard tale and the heroine had a modern day feel.

Dragon Teeth: A Novel**Author: Michael Crichton**

On the back cover I quote [Crichton] could make most readers lose sleep all night and call in sick the next day. I'm writing this review at 3 AM since I couldn't put it down. Dragon teeth was written by Crichton in 1974 and published posthumously. Historical fiction it tells of a cutthroat world of early paleontology. The main character is fictitious but the paleontologists were real and fairly accurately depicted. I loved the way Crichton was able to make me think deeply about what it must feel like to discover brontosaurus teeth and for the first time grasp just how small we really are. I also like the discussion of how dinosaurs like most scientific discoveries seemed to be heresy before it was accepted. On page 148 Religion explains what man cannot explain. But when I see something before my eyes and my religion hastens to assure me that I am mistaken that I do not see it at all... No, I may no longer be a Quaker after all. Thankfully with time most things we can see with our eyes are believed and no longer feel threatening. This story also made me think more deeply about the struggle between colonizing the west and the destruction of Native American society. A subtle look at racial injustice. While I enjoyed the fictitious story line of a spoiled boy becoming a man in the wild west, I do feel that the story veered a bit too long off in that direction. Overall an excellent read that was enjoyable while making me think.

The Midnight Witness**Author: Sara Blaedel**

Sara Blaedel is an incredible storyteller. Her main character Louise Rick is a character that you feel like you know and you are constantly on pins and needles as she is solving cases. Highly recommend this book!

The Silent Women**Author: Sara Blaedel**

This is my favorite Sara Blaedel book yet! I could not put this down!!!! Louise Rick is incredible and such an amazing character. Love her relationship with her coworkers. She is such a strong character. Highly recommend!!!!

The Girl in the Locked Room**Author: Mary Downing Hahn**

This book is entertaining although doesn't have the scary edge to it that Mary Downing Hahn's stories usually hold. A good short read anyway.

Where the Crawdads Sing**Author: Delia Owens**

Great read with heartbreaking moments and a twist ending.

The Perfect Couple**Author: Elin Hilderbrand**

Fun and easy read with lots of surprises woven into the story.

Already Gone**Author: Ken Ham and Britt Beemer**

A sad commentary about why young adults are leaving the church but also encouragement for parents, educators youth pastors and pastors about what we can do about it.

Wherever She Goes**Author: Kelley Armstrong**

This was a decent suspense novel. It was an enjoyable read about a woman who witnessed a kidnapping of a young boy. Problem is no one has reported a child missing and so the police aren't interested in the case. Aubrey knows what she saw and starts her own investigation into solving this crime. Was a child really taken and if so, can Aubrey figure out this mystery and also keep her family safe while doing it? Read to find out!

Outlander**Author: Diana Gabaldon**

I saw the tv show during the covid quarantine and decided I wanted to read the series. This is the first book and it was very enjoyable. It was a nice escape from the reality in which we are now living. The characters were believable. I would recommend this book for a nice summer read perhaps at the beach!

Maggie Smith**Author: Michael Coveney**

This book was a struggle to read. The author didn't really write a biography about the life of Maggie Smith. He wrote about all the stage and movies she made and her co-stars. I continued to read it long after I had lost interest simply because I kept hoping it would get better. It didn't.

The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up**Author: Marie Kondo**

Interesting read on how to de-clutter your house. I followed her tips and reasoning behind tidying and it has helped me organize my house. A decluttered mind brings organization to the rest of your life so I'm hopeful that it will be a help in other areas of my life. This is a quick self-help read.

The Baker's Secret**Author: Stephen P. Kiernan**

She learned from the best and as she witnessed his execution because he was a Jew she promised herself that she would take care of the village people. Using her baking skills, she developed a network of bartering and stealing to make sure the village people she cared about did not starve thus putting herself in deeper lines of trouble. The longer the war continued the more focused she became in saving her friends and the more negative she came toward the thought of being rescued by the Allies. A great historical fiction story of courage and determination.

Unspeakable Things**Author: Jess Lourey**

This book was definitely a page turner. I was deep in the excitement of the book the whole time. There were a few holes that didn't seem to get closure in my mind such as Cass's disturbing relationship with her dad officer Bauer and his behavior and poor Mr. Connelley. One last chapter filling in those details would have really make the story awesome.

Ordinary Hazards**Author: Nikki Grimes**

A gut-wrenching memoir written in verse that was hard to read but so honest and insightful. What Nikki went through and her willingness to share it and to have made it as a writer is truly inspiring.

Hurricane Season**Author: Lauren Denton**

Betsy and Ty own a dairy farm and work hard. Betsy's sister Jenna is a single mom who works hard at a coffee shop but wants more in her life. She is offered an opportunity to focus on her photography which results in Betsy and Ty watching her kids for awhile. The story alternates back and forth among their perspectives as all learn and grow.

The Storm**Author: Elizabeth Hunter**

The sixth book of The Iron Chronicles tell the stories of two Iron Scribes Max and Leo and their mates. This books were like two books in one. The first half about Max and the second about Leo and Max. In both parts there is a thread of forgiveness. Forgiveness of self and others so you can move on. I do recommend reading the rest of the series first and you might not understand how these Iron got their power from Forgiven angels or the power from the Fallen Angels.

Bathing Beauty: A Novel of Marie Prevost**Author: Laini Giles**

If you enjoy 1920s Hollywood this is the book for you. During the silent era of movies Marie Prevost was a great star. Sadly, she experienced many trials and tribulations and did not transition well to talkies. Sadly, this was not due to her voice but Hollywood's unrealistic standards concerning weight. I love this period in history and highly recommend this book which delves into Marie's humble beginnings becoming a star and her demise at the relatively young age of 38.

Killing the SS**Author: Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard**

I love the straightforward nature of the Killing series. These books are factual and give so many little tidbits of information. I love reading them! This was an especially good book as it covered Nazi Hunters and those SS who escaped after the war.

The Backyard Homestead Book of Building Projects**Author: Spike Carlsen**

I'm starting my own homestead. This book has many important and useful projects. I completed some similar projects before reading this. I wish I hadn't. There are a lot of tips to help you identify pitfalls at the start. A great resource.

The One and Only Ivan**Author: Katherine Applegate**

This Newberry-winning chapter book (for children's literature) was a great read. Its concept came from real life events involving a silverback gorilla named Ivan who was confined in a mall circus for many years. This fictionalized version of his story is told from Ivan's point of view in free verse poetry form. Read to find out how Ivan helps himself and some circus friends gain a better life.

How to Be a Good Creature**Author: Sy Montgomery**

This book had me tearing up on a couple occasions. As a lover of animals myself, I connected with the stories especially when the author wrote about her dogs. It was interesting to take a deeper look into the connections that we form with animals and how they shape our lives for the better.

The Drowned Girl (previously published as Only One Life, Louise Rick Series (3))**Author: Blaedel Sara**

Another amazing book by Sara Blaedel. If you love mystery suspense and just all-around good reading you will love this book!

The Witness, Author: Nora Roberts

The storyline behind this book is wonderful! I loved how it was broken down into sections based on who the main focus would be on yet still easily flowed through the timeline. My only complaint is that the end really seemed rushed. Things flowed so nicely through the story until it got to the ending court hearings and all of a sudden BAM everything was rushed into such a short time. It comes across as okay getting tired of writing this book so let's just cut to the chase.

The Flight Girls**Author: Salazar**

A young lady obsessed with flying takes a job in Hawaii training pilots. Seeing the devastation after the attack on Pearl Harbor she joins the WASP program. As the war progresses she become more and more aware of the destruction and deaths that are all around her. As she deals with these things her dreams become questions.

The Butterfly and the Violin**Author: Kristy Cambron**

A different look at WW II historical fiction. A daughter of a wealthy family a who is a violin prodigy finds herself involved with the resistance. Jump to current times and meet Sera an art historian who is obsessed with finding a painting of a young concentration camp violinist. The story tells a tale of both these ladies and how eventually their lives become entwined.

Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes**Author: Suzanne Collins**

I felt this novel was a bit superfluous for the series. It didn't seem necessary to have an entire 500+ page novel all about President Snow and his myriad flaws. I already disliked his character and this merely intensified those feelings.

The Little Mexican Donkey Boy**Author: Madeline Brandeis**

A 1931 children's book about children and life in Mexico. I doubt it would be politically correct these days but this series of books about life in other countries was popular back then. I found this among my mother's favorite books when I was cleaning out her house.

Tunnel of Bones**Author: Victoria Schwab**

Young Adult book but very entertaining. Second book in a continuing series so I plan to go back and read the first.

The Whispered Word

Author: Ellery Adams

This book is part of a series with a group of remarkable women as the main characters. Each woman has had major challenges in life that they have overcome and become stronger in the process.