

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 1
BATCH 1



BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK
BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK

BOOK THOUGHTS: BATCH 1
BOOK THOUGHTS: BATCH 1

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 1



1. A COMPLICATED KINDNESS - MIRIAM TOEWS
2. EVERYBODY'S SON - THRITY UMRIGAR
3. ONE MORE THING - B.J. NOVAK
4. SQUIRREL SEEKS CHIPMUNK - DAVID SEDARIS
5. A VISIT FROM THE GOON SQUAD - JENNIFER EGAN
6. THE AUDACITY OF HOPE - BARAK OBAMA
7. HILLBILLY ELEGY - J.D. VANCE
8. WHAT BELONGS TO YOU - GARTH GREENWELL
9. THE CATCHER IN THE RYE - J.D. SALINGER
10. THE ALCHEMIST - PAULO COELHO

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

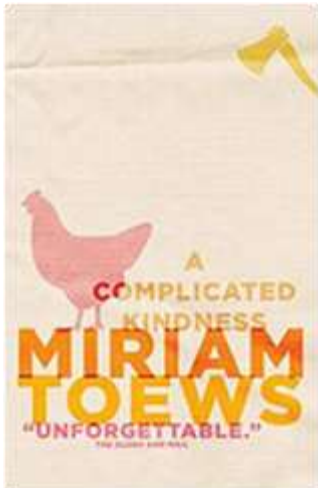
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

A COMPLICATED KINDNESS

MIRIAM TOEWS



A poignantly bittersweet, sardonic, dark, and side-splittingly funny; trip into life in a religious backwater.

How did the book make me feel/think?

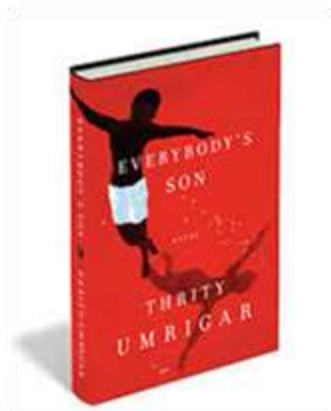
Miriam created Nomi, a damaged 14-year-old girl, to help us understand life in the tragedy of misguided faith.

A Complicated Kindness will have you fall out of your seat laughing while cringing as you think about the insanity of life in a Mennonite community: a place where grooving to the music is condemned – but it is okay for a brother to be a cousin.

That's how this book made me feel/think.

EVERYBODY'S SON

THRITY UMRIGAR



A look into what happens to people when a broken, powerful, wealthy white family with good intentions (?) tries to resurrect a black child whose mother is trapped in the throes of addiction.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Anton, a nine-year-old black child, is locked in his home alone for seven days as his mother chases her crack addiction. So, we think. A white knight – a State Governor who lost his son in an accident, saves him. **Everybody's Son** is a riveting look at what may happen when race, good intention, and politics; are thrown into a simmering pot together, leading to questionable decisions as a fine line between unconditional love, projections, and ownership cloaked together in the shadows. What's right or wrong gets smashed to pieces as they slowly stripped identity from the young boy – missing parts from his life become lost in misguided love. In the end, the boy who belongs to everyone finds he truly only belongs to →

ONE MORE THING

B.J. NOVAK



Luckily for us, B. J. Novak is delightfully bleeped up. I don't want to be Kate Moss, but I now know how.

How did the book make me feel/think?

One More Thing invites the reader into Novak's twisted mind.

I accepted the invite.

I crawled in.

Thoughts were flashing past me at an unrelenting pace.

A car honked doggedly at the vehicle in front of it (the driver was doing the honking, not the car).

The front vehicle couldn't go—unless the driver mowed down several pedestrians. A man next to me began screaming for the honking driver to stop. His voice was piercing.

I looked his way and said, "You know you're not helping."

He turned to me and said with a perplexed look adorning his face, "What?"

"Your scream isn't making things quieter," I said.

"Oh," he mumbled back at me. He stopped screaming.

B.J. gives us 280 pages of observations that will have you pissing, not pissing, but wetting yourself with powdered laughter as you try to figure out how he's made it this far in life.

Gotta run, or cycle: I'm meeting a friend who will give me valuable lessons on

EVERYTHING in the world—my personal Wikipedia Brown!

READ THIS BOOK.

Why am I yelling?

A VISIT FROM THE GOON SQUAD

JENNIFER EGAN



A PUNCHY, SALACIOUS, SEX-FILLED, SCANDALOUS, DELICIOUSLY EXHILARATING RIDE!

How did the book make me feel/think?

This book's prose explodes in flavourful descriptive bursts like perfectly ripened cherry tomatoes popping in the readers' mouths, bringing life to every page.

Toxic characters—fucked up—reality struggles, living-large; barely surviving. You cheer.

SQUIRREL SEEKS CHIPMUNK

DAVID SEDARIS



How can one not love a book in which: An owl, hippopotamus, and gerbil become good friends?

How did the book make me feel/think?

David Sedaris is sick.

I love him—in the proper reader/writer sort of way—completely.

I have just been told I do not have the credentials to diagnose just about → anything. What I do know: I think his mind may be on a different plane than the rest of us. I think life may have perfectly damaged him. That damage is a blessing to readers.

How he goes from weaving personal stories to writing the most hilariously disturbing series of fairy/nursery/demented children's stories cannot be described as anything but **GENIUS**.

Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk is beautifully (albeit disturbingly) illustrated.

Pick it up.

I am confident you will read it in one sitting.

HERE'S A TASTE

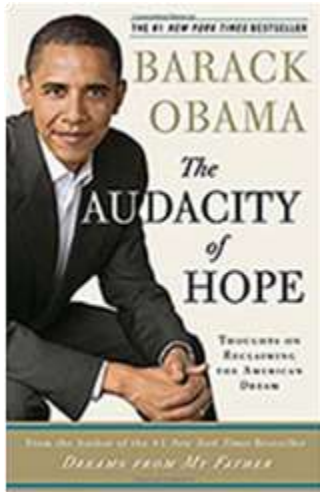
In one story, a mouse adopts a baby corn snake “—“A rescue snake—“and in another, Christmas is coming, and a cow draws a turkey and becomes the turkey's secret Santa.

Queue the Guffaws

Oh, the gerbil volunteers to help evict leeches from the hippopotamus's →

THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

BARACK OBAMA



Whether you are a Democrat, Republican, or anything else...who cares when hope has been replaced by →

How did the book make me feel/think?

Without question, Barack Obama is a brilliant, eloquent, incredibly well-spoken man – *education in Kenya has far surpassed schooling in the USA.*

The last sentence may contain a hint of sarcasm laced in absurdity. **The Audacity of Hope** is a beautifully written and moving look into the possibilities of a better world if the world's great democracies come together and embrace the voices of all citizens, who for most, are just trying to get through life, hopefully with love, health, and a serving of happiness.

Barack delicately touches on the importance and complexities of race, faith, and family – and how we may all be created equal – but they cut few from the same cloth and how the difference in fabric affects political discourse.

HOPE – is a crucial word in the title – especially in today's day when hope seems to be ravaged by the sickness of divisiveness.

Love your family.

Be a champion to your friends.

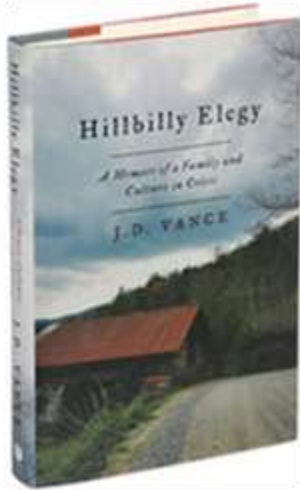
Treat all others with respect.

Don't accept hatred and racism.

If you screw up – do not be too hard on yourself – simple lessons that know no political bounds.

HILLBILLY ELEGY

J.D. VANCE



The result of chasing a flawed American Dream when you are a product of generations of dysfunction.

How did the book make me feel/think?

REVIEW UPDATE 12 SEPTEMBER 2021

J.D. Vance is an anti-Covid-safety measure douchebag who will put people's lives at risk.

In the book, he claims to come from hardship. But, for someone who supposedly struggled through life, it seems he couldn't wait to show his White Privilege and entitlement.

What an incredible fraud and flawed human.

Hillbilly Elegy, first off: I now know what elegy means. I am not sure if most, or any, maybe a few of the people Mr. Vance speaks of in this book, do – or have the wherewithal or interest to learn the meaning of the word.

The book is mind-opening. However, logically, especially for a Yale-educated lawyer (the author), who without question overcame the greatest of odds – it is not as mind-opening as it first appears.

What's the story about: well, what happens to the population in towns where industries have been dying for decades that are products of a failing education system?

Mix in substance abuse. Throw in generations of crippling family dysfunction, where the children are subjected to yelling matches, nightly – erasing ambition and normalcy with every raised voice – and in J.D.'s case, a revolving door of male father figures as his mother struggles with her existence. Violence and the rule of the land (hillbilly honour) are commonplace.

To screw up matters more: sell the **American Dream** of homeownership. As towns die in one state and manufacturers set up shop in another, forcing those who are not too broken to emigrate to new lives – never genuinely feeling like they belong – well, the forgotten people become broken – differently.

The dream becomes a failing reality. They purchased a house – trapping the purchasers in dying communities. Months later, the local manufacturer shuts down. The jobs leave – as do the wealthy and the educated. They brought hope in the form of employment – and then took hope away when the world moved on. **Coal died.**

What's left behind: no jobs, worthless homes, and generations of poorly educated

unemployed (“I love the poorly educated”) people – many of which haven’t wanted to work in decades as blame replaced motivation. However, many need to blame someone or something for their demise. The book is not mind-opening, but it highlights the different rules between rich and poor?

I enjoyed this book, especially the parts about overcoming life’s hurdles. Any time an author dares to share their pain is breathtaking. Escaping into another person’s life often opens windows into your own. J.D. is lucky. Without question, he knows it.

This interesting (confessional) work is a foreshadowing of his political aspirations (?)

IS THIS A WHITE POVERTY ISSUE?

That is the way they sold the book. That is a little naïve. It is a matter of “have” and “have not” – “rich and poor.” Wouldn’t the world be a grander place if we could get past race and culture to accept many of the rich only care about the colour of money – and just maybe, dividing the rest of us.

As towns spiral into poverty when the industries leave, there is no government on the planet immune to corruption and greed. It seems politics has tripped into career survival more so than representing the constituents – *tell voters what they want to hear*. The world is changing every moment of life. If trapped in a cycle of dysfunction, no politician or company is going to ride in on a horse and save you. If stuck in a town with a dying industry and a worthless home, and drunk; or worse: role models – one day, you may just give up and blame others for your plight.

The world owes us nothing.

It never has.

It never will.

If you do not summons the strength to fight through your quagmire of dysfunction – then maybe one day, you will take a seat on the sidewalks of life, begging every passerby for spare change.

I am sure Appalachia is a beautiful place – but without a transformation – the world seems to be leaving it behind, in a time; that is never coming back.

Hillbilly Elegy may simply reinforce things we already know. If only we stopped pretending a saviour is coming to fix something that no longer exists, just maybe, we could all move on and learn to be kinder to each other!

At the least understand, we are not all born equal in opportunity.

This book yells that **LOUD AND CLEAR!**

O STARS

WHAT BELONGS TO YOU

GARTH GREENWELL



*Desire + Lust + Bulgaria + Loneliness + Drugs + A Street Hooker =
Neediness + Good Decisions?*

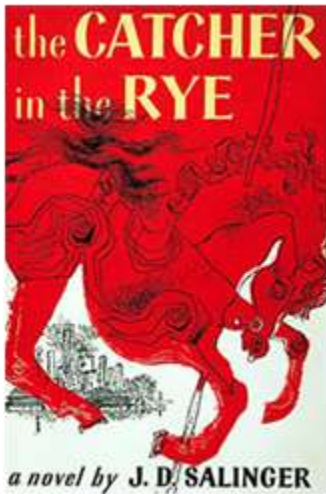
How did the book make me feel/think?

A richly unforgettable novel about what happens when a lonely teacher, in a foreign land, meets Mitko, a street hooker, and allows desire, lust, and loneliness (to) lead him precariously close to self-destruction as the combination mixed into a toxic broth delivers him to pathetic and needy. **WHAT BELONGS TO**

YOU is a breathtakingly well-written story depicting the overwhelming need for love and acceptance—and the unshakable belief that if you save someone else, you will save yourself?

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

J.D. SALINGER



A classic coming-of-age story about a lonely, introverted boy desperately trying to become an extrovert.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Holden Caulfield is screwing up.

He really is.

He's failing at school, hiding his realities from his parents, and desperately searching for acceptance—when, in fact, he's not likeable.

He really isn't.

He's an introvert trying hard to be an extrovert.

He fails mostly because his troubled teenage mind is laced with judgement—the root of his unlikability. Holden is challenged. Autistic? Just perhaps—I do not have the credentials to diagnose.

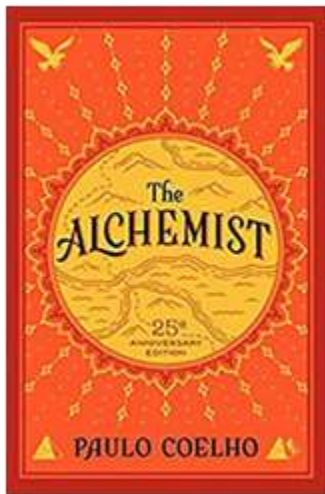
For 277 pages, he takes readers on a lengthy conversation. Like said, I did not much care for him. I really didn't. But, somehow, by the end of his journey, I cheered for him, maybe because, throughout his travels, he taught me: it's best not to judge when listening is a grander option.

CATCHER IN THE RYE is a classic.

I enjoyed it. I really did!

THE ALCHEMIST

PAULO COELHO



I think I'd burn in Hell if I didn't give this book 5 Stars...

How did the book make me feel/think?

I don't want to go to Hell. I don't think I'd like it.

I COULD JUST IMAGINE

"Sir, we're sentencing you to an eternity in Hell."

"Oh crap, I better bring a big book."

I read **THE ALCHEMIST** because I think we're supposed to. I liked (loved) it. It's chock-full of valuable lessons on how to navigate life. It's **AWESOME** to have these lessons painted excitingly, as Paulo does in this classic work.

The story is riveting. The lessons are gospel. It's hard to write thoughts on this book without giving the story away. What's so beautiful about this story is that it is

UNIVERSAL that we forget as we struggle through the constant bombardment of noise filling our souls every day.

Although the lesson is simple – I believe: Anyone going through struggles would do themselves a solid, by reading for the first time, or the tenth; resulting in their eyes being cracked wide open, allowing life to turn struggles into dreams.

I think by reading **THE ALCHEMIST**, you may avoid a trip to Hell.