

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 16



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

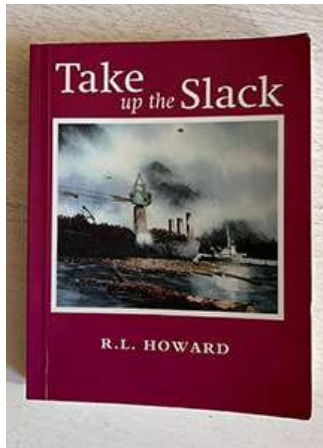
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

TAKE UP THE SLACK

R.L. HOWARD



A ragtag crew comes together when things matter most.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Wow. What a surprise.

My friend Jim lent me his copy of this captivating read.

Anyway, a tugboat navigates the untamed waters of the British Columbia coastline for decades. It is crewed by a ragtag crew of misfits from across the land.

They are rough around the edges, and at times, make readers question whether they can even stand one another for a second.

1 Somehow, collectively, they mesh together in the understanding the sum truly is greater than the parts. Their lives depend upon one another.

They continue circumnavigating the rugged, undeniably beautiful coastline. The crew's leader grows ill |no spoiler| shining their steadfast love for one another regardless of differences.

Take up the Slack is the story of these ragged souls told with buttery prose, guaranteed to capture readers in the simplicity of what matters, and the beauty found in coming together.

Narrated from the tugboat's point of view!

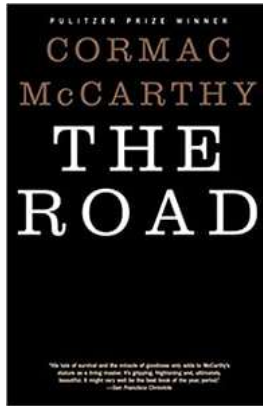
If you can find this book, it's must-read. I hope the author revisits republishing this tasty sea morsel — I'm sure many publishers would be willing to give it a go!

That is how this book made me feel/think.

WRITTEN: July 13, 2021

THE ROAD

CORMAC MCCARTHY



There is nothing more powerful than a parent's unconditional love for their children.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Where shall I place you on my all-time list?

1? 2? 3? 4? 5?

Top 5 for sure.

I'm exhausted. Not a single word in *The Road* is wasted.

I'm breathless. Father. Son. The world is over; all that is left is traversing a post-apocalyptic Deathscape to find finality.

Simplicity blows up into a complex social commentary.

A young boy is frightened, pure, innocent, kind, caring; his father shades him the definition of unconditional. The father, taking the boy's lead, constantly battles with his survival instincts. Instincts, which would lead him into the sickness of survival at all costs instead of the innocence of accepting love is all they have. And being swallowed by the darkness of believing, somehow, you deserve more than the others playing out life's end – a somehow that would leave you unrecognizably damaged and soulless as destiny delivers you to the inevitable.

The father and son intuitively understand the providence awaiting them when they finally stop moving. The boy repeatedly asks, "Are we dying?" – with the father consoling his son with reassurance and love.

I couldn't help but think I was reading about society gone astray as the father and son moved from place to place, dragging their found belongings with them like homeless people hoping tomorrow will bring light. I felt none of us are immune from the plight of those less fortunate. And in a sense, humanity needs to peer deeply into a collective mirror and hopefully understand what matters most is love and kindness – and there is nothing more powerful than a parent's unconditional love for their children.

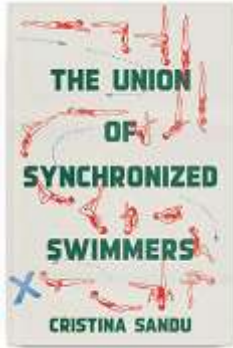
Near the end of this engrossing ride, my eyes filled with tears, and then – twist –

That is how this book made me feel/think.

WRITTEN: July 13, 2021

THE UNION OF SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMERS

CRISTANA SANDU



What happens in life when you don't have a place of belonging?

How did the book make me feel/think?

What happens in life when you don't have a place of belonging?

A river. Two sides. One part of Russia. The other is laying in limbo. A cigarette factory. Exploited workers. Six women form a friendship, playfully escaping their realities in the murky waters of the river.

Those on the other side of the river see promise in the women's playfulness | synchronized swimming |.

Those on the other side of the river exploit these women for the pride of their country.

The women escape by swimming their way into the Olympics.

Life changes. Escape leads them to different locales around the globe.

When a person comes from purgatory and is thrust into the world, survival is questionable at best as their lack of grounding leaves them abundantly vulnerable to the darker sides of life. Transforming oneself into someone new, with predators lurking, waiting to feast on your insecurities and solitude – how?

Being female would only exacerbate life challenges (I would think), leaving loneliness and despair trapped inside. Coping, and trying to climb while fitting into a world full of rejection, a constant illusory reality.

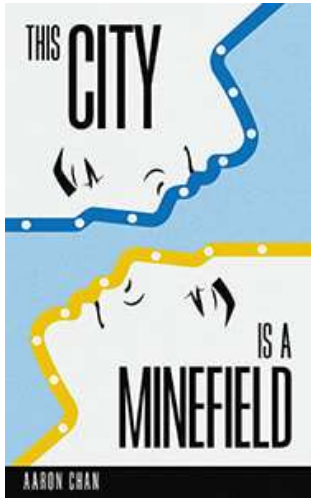
As much as I could never understand the female experience, what I can appreciate because I was an unwanted baby – purgatory sucks – and luminous beauty comes from being an individual. Often sad, lost, but definitely, unique.

That is how this book made me feel/think.

WRITTEN: July 13, 2021

THIS CITY IS A MINEFIELD

AARON CHAN



A lengthy rant of woe is me.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I've lived in Vancouver for more than 31 years. Every day I fall deeper in love with the city. Sure, like every city and person, Vancouver has flaws, but despite the imperfections, like every city, it is filled with a diverse mix of personalities, and like every city, it is what you make of it.

A city doesn't owe its inhabitants anything.

I used to have a friend who complained about Vancouver not being as fast-paced as Toronto—repeatedly saying how much better Toronto was. Every time she complained, she discounted all of the fabulous people here. I pleaded with her to stay, to give the people of the city a chance. The hundredth time she complained, I told her to leave—and if there was any problem with the city not being what she wants it to be—she was the problem. She left. I'm glad.

In *This City is a Minefield*, Aaron Chan uses the last chapter to lambaste the city he was born in—claiming Vancouver doesn't offer him what he so deserves.

Chan's complaining about this beautiful place is only part of why I am breaking my rule and giving this book a 1 Star review (I would have given it less if there was an option too).

The other reasons and there are many, might be too many to list.

The book sucked me in by suggesting it might give readers a peek into the trials and tribulations of being gay and Chinese. But it doesn't. Unless gay and Chinese is not a universal thing where parents don't want their children to be gay, or get an education, or ever leave the parents' comfort zone. It's not original or is it a cultural thing; it is just life.

Chapter after chapter after chapter, Aaron whines about how someone as self-proclaimed perfect as he is — "...I would find other gay guys out there like me—romantic, intellectual, witty. Different." —deserves to be loved? And if you do not meet his standards, you are a creepy old white guy, a basic gay, an intellectually vapid gay who works out. If you like Top 40 music... you're flawed?

The person he describes in the book (him) comes across as pretentious, banal, unlikeable.

I feel bad typing that.

Chan signs up for Gay Apps (Hookup apps) and gets mad when he finds gay racists "No Asians" and seems to think if he calls them out, he can fix racism—the naivety is shocking.

Perhaps, he should be grateful for the red flags.

When dating doesn't work out the fairy-tale way, he feels it should, he thinks he can force relationships to work. Everything isn't so bleeping important.

Chapter after chapter after chapter of insulting everything and everyone. This isn't so much a memoir as it is a lengthy rant of woe is me.

When Chan doesn't find what he wants, he sleeps around and feels less when he does, but instead of saying he experimented with meaningless sex, he used a whole chapter in insufferable prose, masked as artistic, to...?

Nobody is immune to Chan's barbs, even the fantastic city in which he is lucky to live.

I wished I had used my track + field experience to run to another part of the bookstore to select a different read – an insightful read instead of one about how the world owes the author better life experiences.

"I believe I value love more than the average person."

Who says that?

Chan goes to a gay bathhouse searching for the elusive love he so desires and proceeds to insult everyone there, seeming to forget he is in a gay bathhouse.

And finally, saying you are a sapiophile, and intellectual, doesn't make you interesting: it makes you painfully dull. Just an opinion.

I wouldn't have written these thoughts if Chan hadn't insulted everyone who lives in Vancouver.

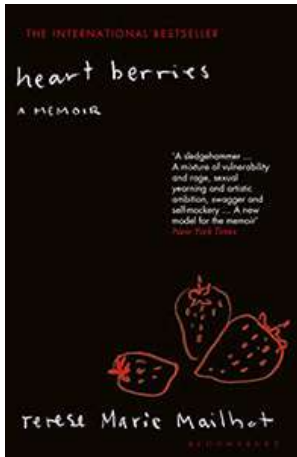
That is how this book made me feel/think.

WRITTEN: July 16, 2021

(1) STAR

HEART BERRIES

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT



Cracking a window into your life takes extraordinary courage.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Another Top 5.

A powerful illuminating must-read into a world on each of our doorsteps.

Centuries of oppression. Often administered by us. We manipulate and make people feel like less. We steal opportunities and then shun. We can be floor-licking bile-puking drunk, yet we stereotype others to the point where the others we've stereotyped fear the stereotype. We isolate then judge. We appall.

Caucasians find joy in the trivial. Indians (Indigenous) people carry misery with them throughout life as we strip them from humanity.

"Indians try to run away, and many starved. Nuns and priests ran out of places to put bones, so they built us into the walls of the boarding schools."

Pause. Shudder.

6 Two older Caucasians discuss a sporting team's name change at a local watering hole as having gone too far.

What's wrong with us?

During the same conversation, one of the men says an Indigenous street name doesn't belong in Vancouver; it should only be in Iqaluit.

My blood curdles.

Another friend says, "It goes both ways."

What are you trying to say?

"In white culture, forgiveness is synonymous with letting go. In my culture, I believe we carry pain until we can reconcile it with ceremony. Pain is not framed like a problem with a solution. I don't even know if white people see transcendence the way we do. I'm not sure that their dichotomies apply to me."

We are complicit in stealing the ceremony.

There will never be a situation where an Indigenous person is upset because they are changing the monikers of the Kings, Golden Knights, or Patriots.

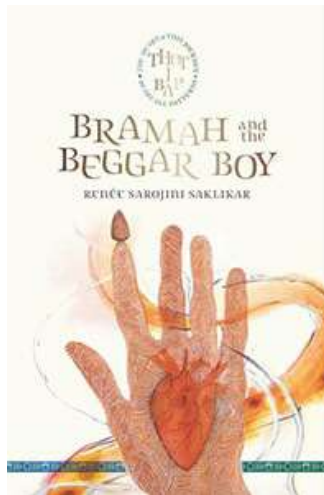
White people, we genuinely need to crawl inside the mirror and not come out until we've evolved. While inside, read: Heart Berries and open your heart and eyes – you are not everything.

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

WRITTEN: July 21, 2021

BRAMAH AND THE BEGGAR BOY

RENEE SAROJINI SAKLIKAR



An extraordinary fantasy pushing the limits of convention.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I'm not sure what I'm reading. Genres and style stretched to a breaking point, creating fresh tracks. I feel as I've entered a world where a talented disc jockey invites me into a new world. A battle for the soul of humanity ensues. Good versus evil. Everyday people, oppressed versus greed and corruption.

I step onto the disc. Spin. Spin. Spin. The verses and rhymes poetically layer on top of each other, elevating me, taking me places I've never been. I chase different dimensions. Just as I'm about to understand where I am, the mix master deftly sends me crashing through a portal to only have to rebuild once more. Another beat. Another layer. Another crash. The bad outweighs the good. Hope is being erased. But hope can never be eviscerated; it's hope; it has its own pulse and thundering beat.

Bramah and the Beggar Boy beautifully challenge our conceptions of who we are and who we are destined to become. I think. I'm not sure what I've read.

What I do know is that long after I lock this book away on the shelf, the realm and dimension I visited likely will enter my dreams, and Bramah will help me unlock the mysteries of the unlimited creativity of THOT J BAP.

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

WRITTEN: July 26, 2021

EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM WILL SOMEDAY BE DEAD

EMILY AUSTIN



An unsupervised goat | _____ ed _____ of _____ | in a bakery.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I read the first 100 pages. I laughed. I laughed. I laughed. I had to pee. I kept reading and laughing. I couldn't put the book down. I'm still carrying it.

I walked to a micro-brewery. A 10,000-pound anchor was leaning against the wall of a building—far away from any body of water. A cheap silver chain + lock fastened the anchor to the wall of the building.

Weird.

I read another 100 pages. The book turned. Dark. Darker. Darkest. I laughed more. Emily Austin has an uncanny ability to bounce from sexuality to mental health, to addiction to...well, it's like a race car of thoughts is ripping around a track in her mind. I grabbed a slice of bread. A goat walked by. Austin must have experienced almost crippling doses of pain in her life. Must have. That's the only way to explain her comedic brilliance. I had to pee again.

I walked to a local watering hole. There was a sign on a post: LOST CAT with a picture of a CAT. Redundant?

Maybe the cat's name was Mittens.

I read another 100 pages. I became captivated by Austin's innate ability to write dialogue interspersed with the deep thoughts racing through her mind, often coming perilously close to going off the rails of the track.

Everyone In This Room Will Someday Be Dead is the most uproariously hilarious smattering of writing and thoughts this reader has ever read.

Here comes the unsupervised goat again—a goat who provided me with the quirkiest line I've read.

In the last few pages, the book turns dark.

Black.

And then Emily smashes a gaping hole in the darkness, leaving me with a cheek-to-cheek smile on my face.

I finally peed.

That is how this book made me feel/think.

P.S. This is my | new | favourite book!

WRITTEN: July 28, 2021

SPOILED BRATS

SIMON RICH



Grab left shoe, right shoe, go!

How did the book make me feel/think?

Privileged. Entitled. Nary a worry in the world. Raised in comfort. A spoiled brat. Simon Rich?

I wanted to hate this book because of the above. Without struggle, how can one be funny?

But much like the cyclist who doesn't ride on the sidewalk or stops for pedestrians, Simon Rich has royally messed up my perception of the d-bags living in the privileged, entitled, carefree world.

How?

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He takes direct aim at himself and in a delightfully (1) deprecating way, mocking himself and those of his ilk while at the same time deftly tackling issues inflicting the world today with a new bent on many universal themes.

Simon comes across as a d-bag with a conscious and we are lucky he doesn't have hardship and struggle to cloud his mind as he delivers humour from a unique perspective. From the safety net looking up.

Two rubles to drink milk right from the goat.

1. By delightful, I mean in a cringe-worthy manner where an Elf-on-the-Shelf, is abused by a ten-year-old psychopath.

Laugh. Laugh. Laugh. Cringe. Cry.

A cyclist stops and waves me across the street. Darn it. You are not all a-holes.

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

WRITTEN: August 1, 2021

NIGHTBITCH

RACHEL YODER



Not 5 Stars | Subjective |

The advance praise says we're supposed to love this book.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I don't want to write my thoughts on this book. You can't make me.

Why don't you?

I don't want to be labelled. Motherhood is the most important thing on earth; I'm a man, I can't possibly understand.

But we want to hear your thoughts.

I'm afraid I might be crucified.

I read the advance praise. I wanted to love this book.

START READING

Okay, this is different. I cringe, laugh, cringe more. This is sort of working.

What's the message? Mothers are abused? They have to give up everything to go through the violence of childbirth. Mothers are saints, gods, angels. Their connection to their offspring is vital, strong, unbreakable.

Mothers' dreams drift away as they are forced into the importance of motherhood. At least the one in this story, this Mum is angry, broken, flailing, did I say angry?

On one page, she complains about her sacrifices. On the next page, she pours her tears into the love of her child. I keep reading. I cringe. I get it; this story could only take place in suburbia, where a shrinking number of families can afford the luxury of a stay-at-home parent.

What, she's turning into a dog? Her husband is less than her, and he hasn't had to give up anything? He gets to escape weekly, leaving the child-rearing to the unappreciated mother?

No wonder she's angry. She wants more. But she loves her kid. Does she?

About 100-pages to go, and the book takes a turn: A scene so grotesque for the first time ever, I didn't want to read another page. I did. It didn't get better, enjoyable, anything... it seemed like the author had exhausted her frustrations of motherhood and dropped on the readers' metaphors lost in blood. I hated the last 100 pages + and feel stupid for not understanding the advance praise.

For me, NB is 238 pages of the author telling us she prefers dogs to cats masked in the

laziness of trying to be Kafkaesque. And all mothers aren't heroes (most are) – but not those who don't really want the gig.

I believe comparing writing to Kafka is overused. The author of NB is not a man who experimented with hallucinogenic substances, so; therefore, Kafka references wring hollow for me.

I do have a suggestion for a follow-up book: A story where the mother explains to the authorities how her now nineteen-year-old son couldn't possibly be a psychopath because his formative years (up to age 3) were uneventful, except, of course, for her mother killing animals with her mouth in front of him.

At least she didn't give her kid a chia pet – that would have guaranteed his future psychopathy.

I am now terrified of dogs, + suburban women.

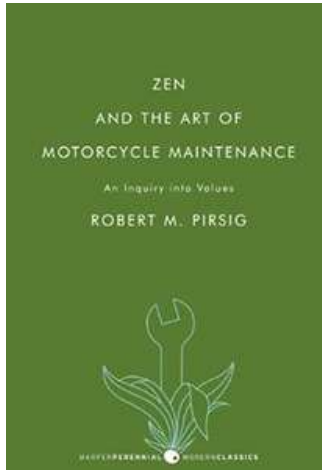
That's how this book made me feel/think!

WRITTEN: August 18, 2021

0 STARS

ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

ROBERT M. PIRSIG



Genius + Insanity Share Threads.

How did the book make me feel/think?

A young man named Lindsay tried to teach me, when I was a young man named Lindsay, how to water ski. The thing is, he couldn't get up on skis himself.

Zen + The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance reminded me of my failed skiing attempt. Pirsig takes his young son Chris on an across America cycle tour to instill life values and provide him with comfort and direction to navigate this confounding world. Christopher suffers from mental health issues, + his father suffers from the insanity of introversion-filled genius.

I loved the book. And then I didn't. It grew tedious in the madness of brilliance. Without question: it is a valuable classic – attempting to suffice what matters most in life. Us. Connections. Family. Love.

In Orwellian fashion, if you read between the lines, a far more terrifying than 1984 version of the direction of the world is suggested. Zen... was published in 1974, and Pirsig paints a clear picture of humanity's inability to process the lightning pace of technology. We may love the progress; however, we are far too emotionally stunted to traverse what is being thrust upon us daily.

For this reader, the message was Quality is subjective, and it depends significantly on a plethora of variables, such as cultural and socioeconomic factors. What matters to me might not matter to you. I believe this leads us to the one Universal truth – we must care for each other – we're all we've got, and we're all that matters.

Zen... is a painful reality about a man whose mind has been marinating in genius who wants to provide his son (and all of us) the tools to soften our lives, pushing us toward caring. Still, the only trouble is that genius often finds itself spinning on a hamster wheel without a visible offramp.

It's probably a lucky thing I couldn't get up on the water-skis because I've never learnt how to swim.

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

WRITTEN: August 26, 2021