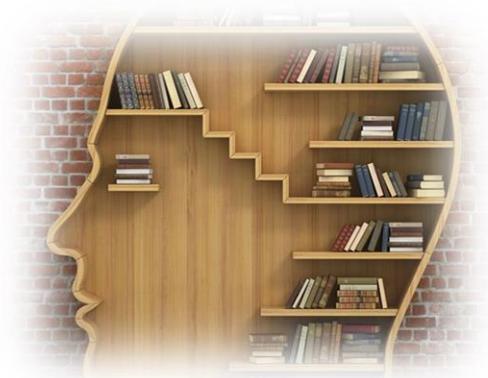


# BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 20  
BATCH 20



1. BLUEBIRD - GENEVIEVE GRAHAM
2. GIRL IN ICE - ERICA FERENCIK
3. THE BOOK OF SMALLER - ROB MCLENNAN
4. THE EMPLOYEES - OLGA RAVN
5. NEVERWHERE - NEIL GAIMAN
6. THE CANDY HOUSE - JENNIFER EGAN
7. A HERO OF OUR TIME - NABEN RUTHNUM
8. NOTICE - DUSTIN COLE
9. I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK - PAUL ZITS
10. HIGH ACHIEVER - TIFFANY JENKINS

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

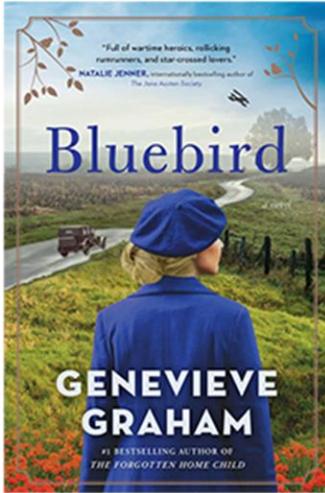
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

## BLUEBIRD

GENEVIEVE GRAHAM



*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

I dive in, tunnelling my way through the First World War in Belgium.

I'm taken aback. The timing of this release is eerie.

What's the point of war (any war)? Soldiers decide who to kill because of the fabric on their uniforms (deep in the darkness). Seriously.

*Is the point to satiate the egos evil?*

Passion is found in horror.

Time shifts.

A discovery is made in present day.

Emotions run strong with every discovery made.

I'm in. The pages speed up.

Genevieve Graham drops us onto the pages. Readers become part of the story as it sweeps us back and forth, past to present to past. Love blossoms. The horrible truths of war become glaringly apparent as soldiers return, all of them damaged, mentally, physically – many amputees. How do returning soldiers exist in a world they fought so gallantly for its very existence?

Shunned. Damaged. Lost.

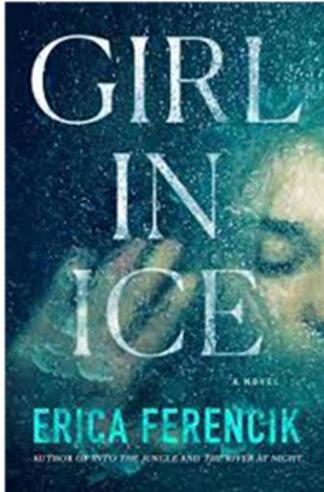
Bluebird is an exhilarating ride, twisting + turning; it left me craving more pages as I cheered for love to blossom, as I tunneled through the trenches, and as I rode shotgun with the rumrunners of Windsor Ontario during prohibition.

Whether it was in the mind-blowing passages in the past or the enlightening, heart-wrenching discoveries of the present. Bluebird delivered the rarest of combinations: An education of a world I never knew existed, and warmth only found in the comforts of love discovered in the unlikeliest of places.

WRITTEN: 14 March 2022

# GIRL IN ICE

ERICA FERENCIK



*Humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Girl in Ice reads like a world-renowned DJ dropping beats, layering their set, inserting elements. Love. Lose. Fear. Sorrow. Deception. Ego. With the bass line thumping, you guess what's coming next. And with your heart about to burst out of your chest, you're taken on an exhilarating free fall. Gasping for air as the layers are uncovered. What you may have thought was coming arcs in a different direction. You are left spent, satisfied, shaking, and wanting another beat at the end of this ride. A ride that is exhilarating + terrifying.

The most horrifying layer in this immensely readable ride is a plastic toy troll found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic.

I draw a bath; I look around my bathroom. Almost everything is plastic. Noise for decades has bombarded and conditioned us, humans, telling us what to do, how to live, what to buy. We're excellent students. Mostly, we've done what we're told.

A giant finger is being pointed at us, telling us we are destroying the earth. We must get our egos in check and listen to the new message. But the thing is, we humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism. It's overwhelming. We need decades of new conditioning for it to sink in.

How can we fix earth when we debate plastic straws and bags when a plastic troll is found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic?

Maybe it is too late for us to say sorry?

WRITTEN: 25 March 2022

# THE EMPLOYEES

OLGA RAVN



*Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Greed is a festering disease. Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity. As we Humans race toward, what?

The Employees is supposed to be Sci-Fi. I disagree. It is the thesis of an experiment with the subjects being us.

A ship traverses space the Six-Thousand Ship. Inhabited with Humans and humanoids and, objects, bringing humans hope of a world they've left behind. The humans and humanoids are being studied—how do they work?—productivity is paramount. But they don't seem to produce anything, except for work. The story is supposed to be about what it is like to be human. I guess it is. But it is much more. It is an experiment created by greed to drain the last drops of blood and energy from the product, humans. The ship soars through the galaxies, drifting further from the earth. The humans' memories wane. Everything they are emotionally attached to floats into the ether—the thinking is, without the cumbersome of humanness, the humans will become more productive. Instead, paranoia and fear take over.

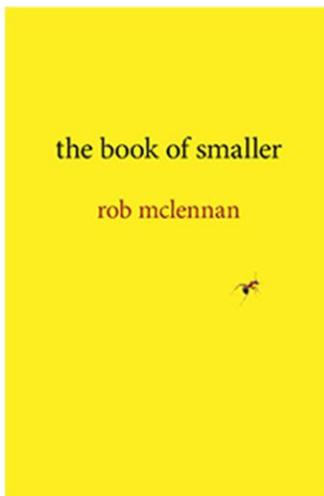
The humanoids are the perfect worker until the AI develops human-like emotions, love, empathy, and compassion. Emotions are infectious, and Humanoid productively wanes—and the experiment fails—with life needing to be destroyed, so greed can try again.

The Employees mirror real life. My career came crashing to a halt at the beginning of the pandemic. With greed dictating, it must keep me away from the younger replacements because greed doesn't want productivity to be infected with compassion and empathy.

WRITTEN: 24 March 2022

## the book of smaller

ROB MCLENNAN



*(the book of smaller) deserves a place on your coffee table.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**First Word:** Civilization.

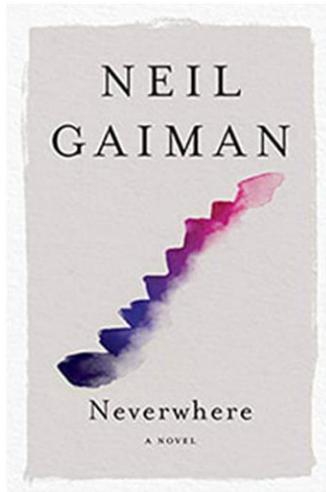
Are we really civilized? Some of the water we drink comes from some factory. Swollen Members? Paraphrased. I don't know what poetry is? Is this poetry? Two children. A scattered existence. Thoughts bombard us. Floating in from the ether. What is this? A light goes on. I get it. I love it. It flows. It speaks to me. The thaw comes. A puddle forms. We must name it. Happy birthday to me. Chicken wings. Eat them up. Yum. Look into the sun Mr. President. Eclipse. Why do I understand? I think you are telling me life is a beautiful mess. I think you are telling me every day is new and we must make the best of what it gifts us. I think? Ten poetry books read. Am I understanding? In the know? Speaking the language. 'History belongs in a museum.' Resist the hate. We don't want yours. (the book of smaller) deserves a place on coffee tables, everywhere. Your guests will thank you. Now, where did I put my reading glasses?

This might be the best book cover of the year. You pick the year!

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

# NEVERWHERE

NEIL GAIMAN



*Phantasmagorical + Magic + Mystical: Where dreams go for adventure.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I am fighting a righteous battle against insomnia, and I'm losing.

A story comes on the news about the importance of sleep. I think lack of sleep is fuelling my creativity – the story says otherwise – apparently, sleep fuels creativity.

Like many people, my life trips into the rudders of mundane routine. Everything seems in place, and then opposing forces rip it apart. So please, sweet slumber, arrest me in your purple cloak.

I can't sleep. I drift into a phantasmagorical dream. My mundane existence falls through the cracks into the depths of despair of another world. Mystical beings are all around. Rat-speakers speak with rats. I want mundane to return. Got to pee. No. I'm in the middle of the dream. I return. The dream is different now. The characters in it are magical, mystical, evil, and even more phantasmagorical. Where am I? Resist. I need to pee. Damn. I return. Luckily, to a new part of the dream: connecting, fear, magic, horror, love. I want to go home. I fight and fight and fight for my existence. I exist. I'm returned to the dullness of living. Everything I wanted, when I was gone, I could have.

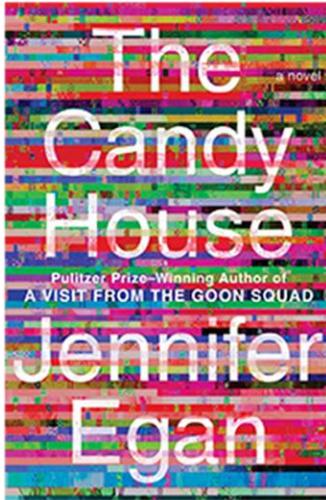
I want to return to slumber; I want to return to the dream; I want to return to phantasmagorical.

*That's how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

# THE CANDY HOUSE

JENNIFER EGAN



*I needed that (this).*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

When I sat down to write my thoughts on this book, I wanted to write something pithy, intellectual, worthy of being in the Advance Praise.

Stop.

Why?

I often avoid the Advanced Praise because they make me feel less – like if I don't understand the depth of what I'm reading. I don't like feeling that way.

Stop.

For me, AP often comes across as the praise-er is writing to get paid – to flex their intellectual superiority. Probably not. But that is how I feel.

Trying to intellectualize *The Candy House* would come across as stilted, pretentious.

Instead, to do *The Candy House* justice, I suggest picking three or four of your favourite adjectives, thesaurus-ize them (similar to steroids), and that won't even do this book justice.

The world is a mess. We have a war battling with a killer virus for air time. Our left hand is trying to sever our right (and vice versa). I'm choosing to be willfully ignorant about what's happening in the world because I don't want to sound like the taking pundits, cheering for body counts while people suffer. Listen to your friends' conversations. Heck, I'm watching Dick Wolf crime dramas to cheer myself up.

Most people, now sound like the talking heads spinning in shallowness as we sink in the deep end, trying to grasp onto anything to survive.

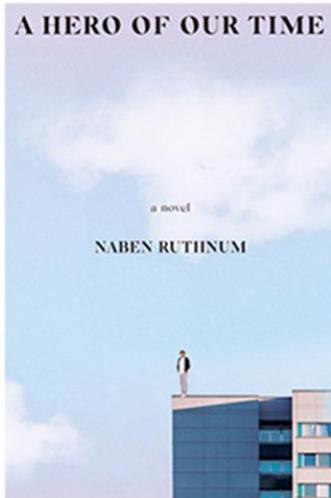
Jennifer Egan has an uncanny talent to talk about a highway or the sky, describing them in such a way they become living parts of the story. Her characters are us, laced with the beauty of our fracturing flawed lives, relatable, struggling, hilarious in our struggle (I want to scream like Alfred) to find out whatever's coming next. So, I reach for something to hold on to – and lucky for me – I read *The Candy House*; just when I needed it most.

I'm not sure I need to read ever again. Maybe I'll read *The Candy House* over and over and over – *I needed that (this)!*

WRITTEN: 10 March 2022

# A HERO OF OUR TIME

NABEN RUTHNUM



*The violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*“You’re a mediocre, pleasant Indo-Canadian, the perfect hyphenate-union of cultures to elicit zero interest, and you moved to Los Angeles two years ago. That’s the start of you. You’re background – the degree, your father’s transferred academic prestige – those are stats, not story. You made a move that allows you to exist in the world, to make a salary while you think small thoughts to yourself, and that’s your beginning and end...”*

Why am I so fragile to allow you to think or speak of me how you do?

Coming from another world, culture, and existence is too much for me to comprehend. I just want to blend in. You have no right to judge me, use me as a prop, or feign your awakening. You are what you are, a manipulator. A person who climbs over people and destroys them because you are part of a disease, festering in the online world (hiding in a screen), a bastion of illness where you can disparage me. You flex your ignorance, claiming you are not the racist garbage you are. My mother spews unconditional by pushing me out of her life – because she can’t stand me, I mean bear to have me see who she really is.

How could I possibly have a chance to be well-rounded?

I need a drink to cloud the days.

I love you, but I’m so disgusted with myself, I am incapable of intimacy.

I’m broken.

I want to think small thoughts; the violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.

*That’s how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 27 February 2022

# NOTICE

DUSTIN COLE



*Sometimes greed is nothing more than sleaziness...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I've spent the last 32 years living in Vancouver. Notice is about a slice of life in Vancouver.

I'm officially worried about millennials. I think the main character, Levett, is a millennial? Are they all so damaged? Worrisome? Dull? Unlikeable?

The story is one of greed. Sometimes, greed is nothing more than sleaziness → Levitt isn't likeable. Nobody in this story is likeable. I wouldn't call them entitled. I would just call them flat, like a broken-down cardboard box.

Dustin Cole has a massive vocabulary. His phraseology is sui generis, placing him on par with the superb storytellers of our time. Through Levett, Cole expresses anger and frustration with a world where many millennials are tripping into lethargy. His stunningly painful descriptions of the downtrodden walking amongst us are heart-wrenching. Dustin is a fabulous writer.

## **BUT**

The story bogs down a third of the way in because readers must keep cracking open the dictionary paragraph after paragraph. It becomes tedious. Sometimes a tree just needs to be a tree, and the sky is okay just being the sky.

Blade Girl rolls by – if you've spent time in Vancouver, you likely know who she is. Blade Girl is a recurring character, a marker of sorts – but she really marks nothing. Not growth or desperation – she's just there.

"Notice" is like a graffiti artist painting Vancouver with a dystopian brush. Levett is whiney. He's a woe is me, individual. Who has focused on darkness instead of light? The story is about being evicted from home because of greed. At the story's end, I didn't care whether Levett was evicted or not.

I do, however, know what *trine* and *lambent* mean – I'm not sure when I'll find a chance to use them.

WRITTEN: 30 March 2022

# I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK

PAUL ZITS



*We desperately try to hold onto who we are – who to be.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Dan Brown, Shia LaBeouf, Neil Armstrong, Nicolas Cage, Peter Falk.

Who do you want to be?

How quickly we become irrelevant.

What to wear, eat, read, dream?

Conditioning?

We're all conditioned.

We desperately try to hold on to who we are – who to be.

Forces tear us apart.

Am I cool, intellectual, hot, desirable?

I want it all.

But how?

Illusiveness.

Don't judge me.

You are doing the same.

Turn on the tube → it will show us the way → it doesn't.

How did we get here?

By listening to the noise...

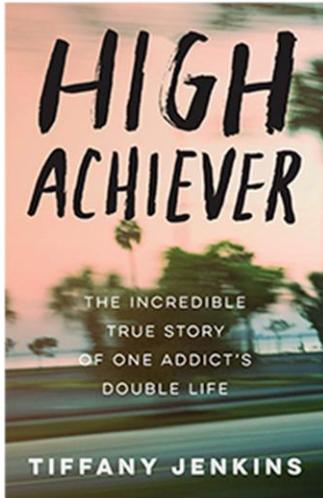
I want to be me.

*Where am I hiding?*

WRITTEN: 26 February 2022

# HIGH ACHIEVER

TIFFANY JENKINS



*Not a Starred Review*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

There is not a single five-year-old on this planet who, if asked what they want to be when they grow up? →

Who'd say I want to become a drug-addicted thief, lying and stealing from everyone, including those who still love them.

When I first put this book down, my initial thought was, wow, what a ride—it had kept me engaged—even cheering for the main character. And then a week passed.

At the end of the week, my thoughts changed from enjoyable read to, I doubt this book would have been published if the author wasn't white.

I do not downplay the seriousness and destruction caused to those who fall through the massive societal cracks → those who often become casualties in a world addicted to greed.

What are the roots of addiction? Don't we need to stop pulling people out of the water and instead; go upstream and find the honesty within ourselves to discuss why they are falling in, in the first place? Until we do that, aren't we living in denial like those in the throes of addiction?

I am glad Tiffany survived her ordeal with basically a slap on the wrist. I don't believe her broken-hearted boyfriend was ignorant of her disease (repeated often). Tiffany is boastful about her masterful ability to bend the truth. Maybe she is a master?

If you've ever known anyone struggling with the stigma of addiction, you'd know their lies are transparent. But, like an addicted person desperately trying to hold on to a shred of who they are, the societal stigma of addiction rips apart the souls of those who love them and just don't know what to do, as well.

Tiffany is right. Nobody cares if she was a cheerleader or funny or blah, blah, blah. We all care she survived.

I think the book would have been more honest if she wrote it while high.

Writing it after the fact, comes across as "LOOK AT ME."

**USA:** 26% of Women in Prison are there on Drug Offences. 47% of Women in prison are Black. Tiffany wrote a book.

WRITTEN: 3 April 2022