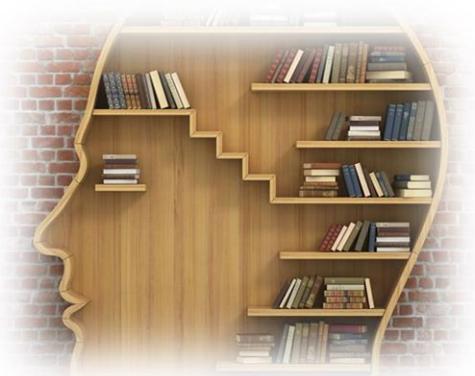


BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 22
BATCH 22



1. ANTKIND - CHARLIE KAUFMAN
2. BLUE PORTUGAL - THERESA KISHKAN
3. STORIES FROM THE TENANTS DOWNSTAIRS - SIDIK FOFANA
4. COLD COLD BONES - KATHY REICHS
5. THE IT GIRL - RUTH WARE
6. THE CHAIN - ADRIAN MCKINTY
7. DREAM ON - ANGIE HOCKMAN
8. MOTHER TONGUE - BILL BRYSON
9. A KID CALLED CHATTER - CHRIS KELLY
10. HOOPED - MICHAEL BAINS

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

ANTKIND

CHARLIE KAUFMAN

A Mouth-watering delicious mess...

How did the book make me feel/think?

A mouth-watering delicious mess that had me giggling on every page.

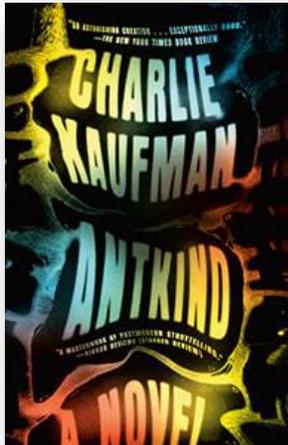
Pick a better word.

Guffawing. No. Shrieking.

It's a book, not a cookbook: Delicious mess makes no sense.

But it does. I ate it. Up. Up. Yum. My trucks on fire. Where am I? In a cave. Okay. I kept eating. First raw. Sushi? No. Then, with mustard. Then, sriracha. Full of fibre?

What are you even saying?



1

I'm strong. I'm an ant. Pound for pound stronger than →

Anything?

Sure.

The world is crumbling around us. Greed is out of control. Slammy's Burgers. Trucks.

I'm done.

This book (a favourite), what's another word for trunking? Great!

What are you even saying?

I get it. I loved it. Kaufman was writing just for me.

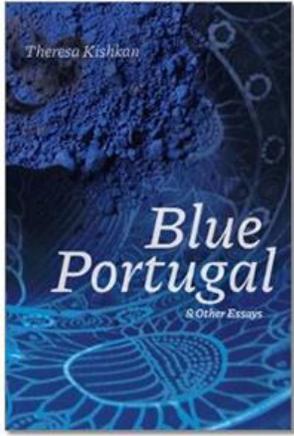
Go on.

Yes.

WRITTEN: 14 July 2022

BLUE PORTUGAL

BY THERESA KISHKAN



Blue Portugal is a poetically lyrical read that will surprise readers with its undeniable depth.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Soon, I might find out who my father is for the third time in my life.

The first time, I watched him take his last breath, the day after I turned 25 (1985).

Eighteen years later (2003), I accidentally discovered he wasn't my birth father, which spiralled me into a search for my identity. I found my birth father. Met him (2006). He welcomed me into his family with open arms. Two weeks passed, and I had to inform him he wasn't my father. My mother had lied on my birth registration.

Recently, after discovering I'm 45% Norwegian, a first cousin popped up in my DNA string – her uncle might be my birth father.

2

How does this relate to Blue Portugal?

Well, after the first two fathers, not being my birth father, I thought I'd never care, and as I age, why does it even matter, I thought?

That's where Blue Portugal comes in.

First off, it is chock full of poetic lyricism and, for me, at least, highlights the importance of retracing our roots. As Kishkan ages; she thirsts for an understanding of who she is and why (?) and a longing for the comfort only found in the threads of life which make us whole.

Second, in her search for understanding, Kishkan sheds a powerful light on how, as much as the world improves daily, humanity is on a slippery slope, slicked by the limited minds of those who desperately think they need to hold on to the advantages of entitlement.

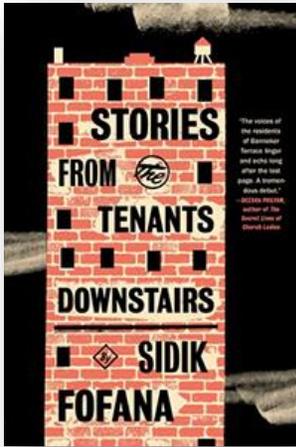
One hundred years ago, corporate greed brought over immigrants to do back-breaking work to build nations – only to deny these working slaves the rights they (the entitled) fought-tooth-and-nail to keep for themselves. When war broke out, Kishkan's ancestors were deemed to be the enemies of the country, denied home ownership, and faced racism because the entitled railed against Immigrant Workers. The same workers' corporations exploited for profit. Does this ring familiar today?

Blue Portugal is a poetically lyrical read that will surprise readers with its undeniable depth.

WRITTEN: 28 June 2022

STORIES FROM THE TENANTS DOWNSTAIRS

SIDIK FOFANA



A tender, voyeuristic, nuanced look at cultural inequality.

How did the book make me feel/think?

These are complex thoughts to right (write).

Here goes:

On the one hand, life dealt me an unfair advantage because of my ancestry DNA.

On the other, they shrouded my family in secrecy, as I was a baby born to an unwed mother—in a horrible place—where women were sent to be fixed. A reality that has haunted me for 62 years.

Despite my less than auspicious beginnings and the flawed cards dealt my family, leading to a lifelong

struggle, it wasn't laced with the outrageous disadvantage of being born black.

I must quickly shout out: being born black is not a disadvantage, but for those of my flawed ilk whose shortcomings have them scratching and clawing to keep the unfair advantage do, to, well, disease the world, disgustingly using it to give themselves a leg up.

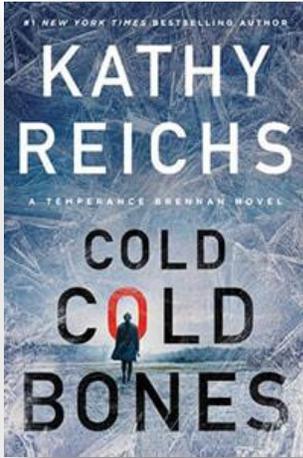
Stories from the Tenants Downstairs is a voyeuristic, nuanced look into a world filled with tenderness, struggle, growth, fear, and the unbelievable willpower of those who've been held down and shackled by the sickness of unfettered capitalism.

Fofana delivers a must-read for anyone willing to step outside their skin and open their hearts + eyes. Just because you may have been dealt a strong hand—its important to understand: most people are doing their best, regardless of what your ancestors have done.

WRITTEN: 21 July 2022

COLD COLD BONES

KATHY REICHS



Reichs is a masterful storyteller who will keep you riveted to the page.

How did the book make me feel/think?

21. This is the 21st Tempe Brennan novel; it seems like a great place to jump in.

I step into the eye of a hurricane. Tempe Brennan's life has come to a place of calmness. Her daughter has returned from army life. It's time to slow down and smell the roses – but they aren't blooming. Winter is swirling.

Tempe's daughter thirsts to make a difference – while suffering from PTSD. Tempe wants to coddle her, but she can't reach her. The first half of the book layers level after level of terror as cold cases spring to life.

I know more about the forensic sciences than I ever thought possible. I want to learn more.

4 At the halfway mark, the literal eye of the storm has passed over us, and the pace of discovery becomes frenzied. Characters drop in and out. Some dull, like real life. Others are flat, like real life. Somehow, all are chilling, sorrowful, pedantic, compelling, like real life; once more layers are revealed.

Evil lurks.

Vengeance is a fickle beast.

I used to believe vengeance could be justified. Maybe it's always misguided?

The story races toward a desperate conclusion.

Will vengeance win?

Will Tempe survive?

Will her daughter Katy...?

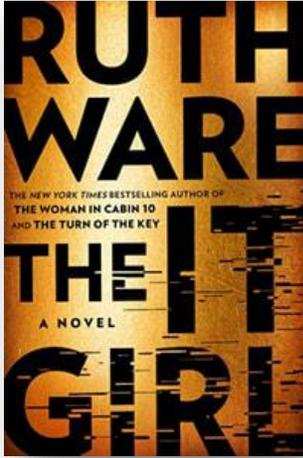
Kathy Reichs is a masterful storyteller who keeps readers riveted to the pages as she unravels the horrific, starting with a perfectly extracted eye.

When you think, Tempe may succumb to her demons, Birdie (her cat) plays a massive role in calming the storm.

I now have 20 books to catch up on!

WRITTEN: 17 June 2022

THE IT GIRL
RUTH WARE



The IT GIRL will leave you breathless when you consume the last word.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Wealth. Entitlement. Beauty. Popularity. A killer sense of humour. IT.

When is IT enough?

Divergent worlds collide. Youthful ignorance is tossed into a blender. Everything is too bleeping important.

You get on the ride. A murder. Fracturing friendships.

Did the wrong person get charged?

Has entitlement swept the truth under the carpet?

It's okay, you're the chosen ones. But you're not.

How can you live with yourself?

5 You can't sleep.

Who dun it?

A friend? A stranger? A lover?

Stop the insanity.

Don't open a can of worms.

Let sleeping dogs lie. No good can come from the truth.

Sleep escapes you. Your blood pressure spikes. Could your husband be the killer?

No. That's not possible. How could it possibly be? Your doubts threaten to destroy your life.

A group of friends. They're kids. Acquaintances. Ephemeral. Fleeting memories. Guilt through innocence. Do the right thing.

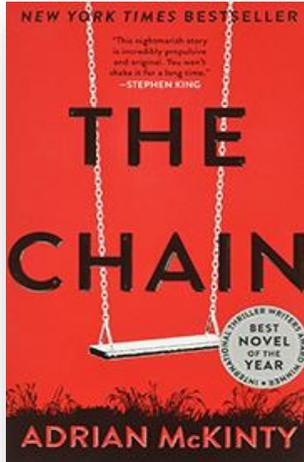
The IT GIRL is a soul-stripping roller coaster ride as doing the right thing is trapped in the illusion of being IT. An IT so powerful IT threatens to destroy everyone in ITS wake who suffers from the weight of being less.

The IT GIRL will leave you guessing on every page + examining what is most important in life as you flip through this psychological labyrinth, and IT will leave you breathless when you consume the last word.

WRITTEN: 9 June 2022

THE CHAIN

ADRIAN MCKINTY



McKinty's writing is not only terrifying, but it also shakes the core of the world...

How did the book make me feel/think?

The Chain is most undoubtedly dark. Imagine being locked in a windowless room that is painted black → without lights.

I loved it. It frightened me.

If my kid, whom I don't have, was kidnapped, what would I be capable of doing?

Could I, if ordered, kidnap and kill another child to get mine back?

Would I burn in hell if I did?

McKinty's writing is not only terrifying → but it also shakes the core of the world by highlighting the evil he portrays in his writing, existing. Does it?

I turn a page, and the hair on my arms stands at attention. What will the mother do? How will she survive? Is she selling her soul to the devil? Are we all the devil?

Another page, I guess the outcome, a twist, a turn → my guess is incorrect.

I can't stop reading.

I need to know if the children are okay.

I need to know evil fails.

We have too many examples that evil walks amongst us in the real world.

I think greed might be the greatest fueler of evil.

I gasp at the end. Relief? Horror?

You must read to find the answer.

I'm glad I don't have children. I have five godchildren, though.

Would I be capable of killing to save them?

I think the answer might be absolutely.

Are we all monsters?

WRITTEN: 26 May 2022

DREAM ON

ANGIE HOCKMAN



A delightful romp into a love that can only be found in our dreams.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Fun!

My head hits a bunch of fluffy pillows, sinking into the luxurious feathers. I slip into REM.

Am I in a coma?

I'm in love.

Is this the love of my life?

I don't want to wake up.

Oh my, another love interest.

Are the people in my comma dream from my life?

Have I seen you before?

I must find out; I'm, we're, falling.

But I want to kiss someone else; my support network supports me.

I can't stop thinking about you. Fortunately, I have a blessed life. But, more, fortunately, the blessed people in my life are just as enamoured by my fantasy as I am. We kiss.

A sign from the universe tells me this is destiny?

What's destiny?

You lead me to true love, my soulmate, a fever dream. Is that what my comma dream is about?

Beer and flowers. Makes sense.

Dream On is a delightful romp into a love that can only be found in our dreams.

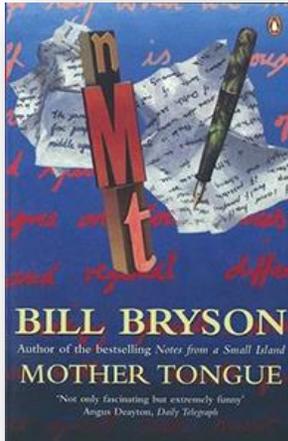
We kiss. Sparks fly, and the world is okay, if only for a moment.

I've now read a romantic comedy.

WRITTEN: 21 June 2022

MOTHER TONGUE

BILL BRYSON



A page after page Bryson had me guffawing at the sheer insanity of literacy.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I was lounging at home, languishing in exacerbating indolence. I had just finished placing my milk, cola, and water in a trine. The phone rattled, prattled, off the hook. It wasn't on a hook. It was a cellphone wrapped in cellophane. Why? Not an answerable query.

My maudlin mood rendered me sloth-like.

I sprang to my feet, throwing on my kicks and a jumper and dashed to the carport to retrieve my EV SUV vehicular auto. The garage door springs to life, exposing

a spectacularly radiant day. The sidewalk was being toasted like a tinsmith working his craft (or her).

8

I hit the autobahn, highway, open road → *En route* to the airport for a trip to paradise.

Seat 42D. Seated. The captain tells us to prepare for takeoff. A fly buzzes my head thrice times. I stand. My row mate whispers my fly is hanging low. Zip.

I sit. The plane taxis, Ubers, Lyfts down the runway and then blasts into the welcoming blue sky. Fly. Fly. Fly. Plane. Or do you prefer an aeroplane?

I'm not worried. I know you are malleable; I mean pliable.

I don't remember the day in Grade school when they taught us the diverse possibilities of the simple word fly.

How did we get here? Why do I know what trine means? I do.

Another quip by Bryson and page after page, Bryson has me guffawing at the sheer insanity of literacy. If only the dullards who created our language understood how hilarious they are? If only. I don't know what that implies?

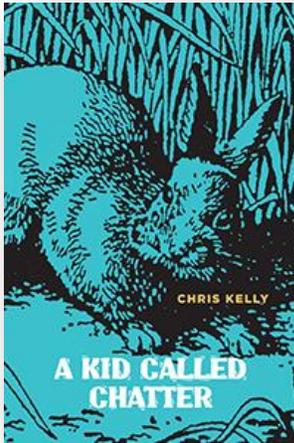
That's how this book made me feel.

Another page. I chortle. I think I earn more words, learn more, as I evolve.

WRITTEN: 21 May 2022

A KID CALLED CHATTER

CHRIS KELLY



A KID CALLED CHATTER enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) stories from a fresh perspective

How did the book make me feel/think?

A dying Jackrabbit walks up to an orphan →

There is no punch line.

What happened to unwanted kids 80. 90. 100 years ago → today?

All they'll ever know is a dystopia, regardless of the period.

What happens to kids today from solid homes?

Screen time → they live in dystopia; the only thing is, they don't know it.

9 What's the difference between the two?

The unwanted must learn to survive, at all costs, regardless of belonging, whereas the wanted flounders in a desperate quest for likes.

The unwanted must grow up, fend for themselves, and try to assign meaning to life while living a savage existence.

As for the wanted, if they're not given precisely what they desire, that's okay; they discard what they don't like and start over fresh and unscathed.

A KID CALLED CHATTER enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) story from a fresh perspective. Think: Hunger Games meets Maze Runner wrestles with Divergent → with a twist → the backstory of the kids in **CHATTER** is desperation cloaked in the cruelty of being orphaned. Sure, the kids in the stories mentioned are orphans as well, but **CHATTER** starts out desperate as the kids are forced to search frantically for anything to hold on to → as a dying animal walks up to **CHATTER** looking for the comfort of death.

Like other dystopian stories, there may be a hierarchy, but in **CHATTER** it can only be found in the individual souls of those who've started life in a dystopian world.

That's how **CHATTER** made me feel.

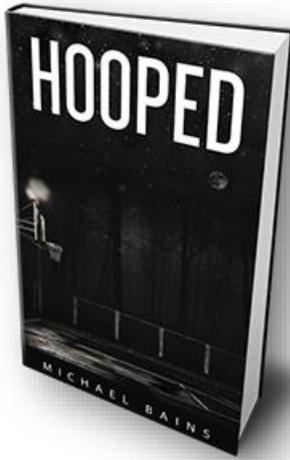
WRITTEN: 17 May 2022

HOOPED

MICHAEL BAINS

Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable.

How did the book make me feel/think?



Hooped is an important book tackling a subject plaguing today's youth in this ever-evolving, desperate, fast-paced world.

Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable as he tells the story of Jimmy, a high school basketball star who, like most teenagers, is trying to find his place in the world → as he battles with the directions life is pulling him. Bains's messaging is strong. The parts where Jimmy battles with thoughts meandering through his mind are compelling. And Bains's portrayal of a world where support networks are all around us is vitally important for today's kids to help them navigate life and

understand support is there for them, if only they open their eyes. Bains's message is positive, helping us cheer for Jimmy to find the right voices and overcome the temptation of easy money (drug dealing), hoping he finds a higher purpose to pursue.

But.

Bains's efforts to paint a cultural element into Hoops fails. Readers would never know Jimmy was of Indian descent until Bains tells us. Telling readers Jimmy's mother loved watching his child eat being a cultural thing Caucasians wouldn't understand has a propensity to add to the stereotype Caucasians are happy to glom on → us, Caucasians may have come a long way in stamping down patriarchy, but we are not immune. Just look at the US Supreme Court. A mother loving feeding her children has nothing to do with culture.

Hooped is a good book. It could have been great if only it had avoided the stereotypes and the (fortunately only occasionally) juvenile descriptions of the looks and anatomy of certain characters. If you want to avoid stereotypes, it might be prudent to shy away from perpetuating them.

That's how this book made me feel.

WRITTEN: 13 May 2022