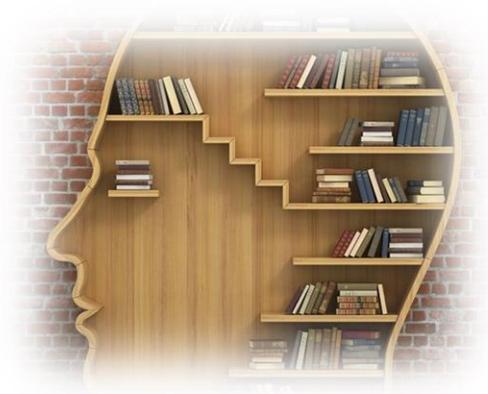


BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 24



1. LUCY BY THE SEA - ELIZABETH STROUD
2. AMY + LAN - SADIE JONES
3. WE WERE DREAMERS - SIMU LIU
4. PEOPLE PERSON - CANDICE CARTY-WILLIAMS
5. OWÓKNAGE - JIM TANNER
6. JUNIE - CHELENE KNIGHT
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8. STORIES I MIGHT REGRET TELLING YOU - MARTHA WAINWRIGHT
9. SCOUNDREL - SARAH WEINMAN
10. THE LAST ONE TO VANISH - MEGAN MIRANDA

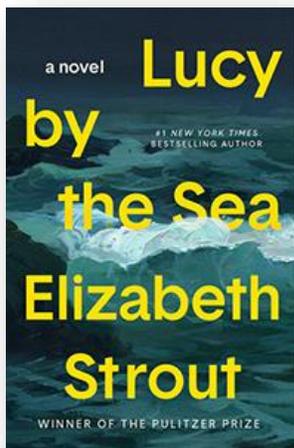
BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY



LUCY BY THE SEA

ELIZABETH STROUT

Strout's prose oozes an abundance of love. A definite favourite.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Lucy by the Sea is an absolutely gorgeous read.

I felt tears welling on every page.

I now look at life through different lenses. Strout's writing is divine. Her words helped me understand the splendour in living different lives and listening. We are not all the same; we must strive to find kindness in our hearts. Many of us are in pain. The world is a confusing place.

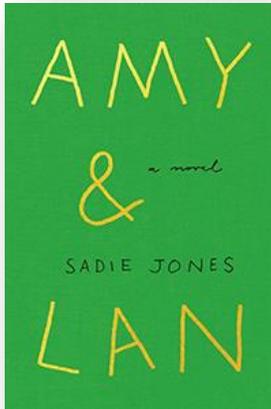
Strout's prose oozes an abundance of love. **Lucy by the Sea** is a beautifully woven tale about what it means to be alive.

I absolutely loved this book – it etched a place in my heart, warming my soul!

WRITTEN: 19 September 2022

AMY & LAN

SADIE JONES



Amy & Lan is a heart-wrenching read reminding us of all the beauty found in innocence.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I loved this book; therefore, I don't want to impose my will on people with too many thoughts.

Amy & Lan are two kids. They're soulmates. They grow up together on a farm their parents dragged them to – to be joined by a collection of outcasts. A move undertaken because life became too hectic, expensive, and unsustainable in a world spinning absurdly out of control.

The adults seek a better life – far outside their comfort zones. They are outsiders in this world. **Amy &**

Lan joyfully amble through their lives, eyes wide open, experiencing much, and growing into who they will become. Their parents coddle and protect them from things they deem – “too adult” – for **Amy & Lan** to comprehend and not be scarred from; *the circle of life for farm animals*. The adults battle classism, racism and other isms plaguing societies today.

As much as parents impose their wills on children, they have a propensity to strip away a child's innocence by muddying the waters of living with the weakness of thinking the grass is greener elsewhere – often destroying families with their selfishness.

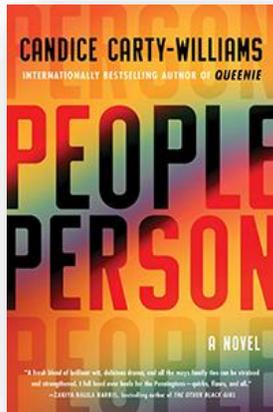
While reading the last chapter, tears sprouted from my eyes, rolled over my cheeks, and floated gingerly to the floor below. If adults were only self-aware enough to understand, it might be best to learn from the innocence only found in a child's heart – then maybe, they could hear the lessons about love and naivety our children teach daily – that only an adult would see as childish; instead of breaking people apart.

Amy & Lan is a heart-wrenching read reminding us of all the beauty found in innocence.

WRITTEN: 9 October 2022

PEOPLE PERSON

CANDICE CARTY-WILLIAMS



Who you are; doesn't 'lie' in the choices you've made, but...

How did the book make me feel/think?

I'm swimming in murky water. Five children, their absentee father, and their four mothers swim alongside me. I see a hook in the water. I swim toward it. On the hook is a bizarre premise. I bite.

I'm tugged from side to side.

I struggle to break free.

I'm glad I did not.

The children swim up to me. A page turns, a layer is added, and then another. The bait wasn't the premise.

Instead, it was the relationship between the children. They're broken. Angry. Confused. Different. In denial. Scared. Another page turns. I'm in. The line tightens. More layers are added. The children and their mothers threaten to cut the cord. But the more they learn about themselves, the more they understand they are all products of the same dysfunction.

The children are mad at their father.

The mothers' struggle with not being the only one.

The line loosens.

A moment comes where it might be too much to process – but just when everything is about to fall apart, a piece is uncovered that doesn't let the father off the hook but provides an understanding that maybe he didn't have a chance - to begin with.

In *People Person*, Candice Carty-Williams takes readers on a ride, bringing them to a place where we understand *if you are a product of dysfunction and you are lucky, you might realize who you are; doesn't 'lie' in the choices you've made → but stems from a collection of unknowns*. If you are fortunate enough to collect enough pieces, then maybe, just maybe, who, or whatever you are most angry about, you can let off the hook, take a deep breath, and realize it was just what it was.

When I collected enough pieces of me, I discovered my sister was my mum.

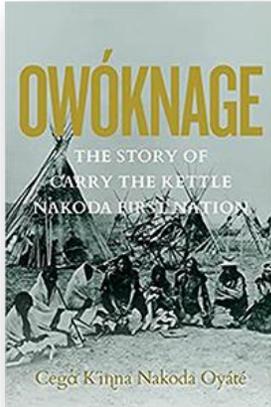
WRITTEN: 7 October 2022

OWÓKNAGE

JIM TANNER

I'm not sure Truth & Reconciliation is enough.

How did the book make me feel/think?



Some rich man came and raped the land |...| nobody caught him. (The Last Resort-The Eagles)

Eyes pried wide open.

Dept. of Indian Affairs + Indian Agencies; do we need to know more? Yes.

We came – our ancestors, bringing disease. Our ancestors, mine, yours (?), raped the land of its resources. The Indigenous peoples were unsuspecting, gracious hosts.

Our ancestors were not the best guests. Treaties were signed under the ruse of mutual progress. Our ancestors

eradicated what our hosts needed for survival, food, and land. Then, our ancestors ostracised, forcing the Indigenous peoples onto reserves (concentration camps), starved them – and our ancestors took to where if 'the water doesn't have insects in it, don't drink it,' poisoning the earth with progress. Our ancestors marginalized and criminalized their hosts.

A person I know says the Indigenous people have an advantage; I did nothing to them; they need to 'get over it.' His ancestors were responsible for a culture's 'attempted' destruction (genocide). A culture that respected what the earth was providing. His apathy, denial, and verbal cruelty make him (many of us) complicit in ignorance. We want everything. At what cost? Diseasing Mother Earth? Cancer?

A new development springs up, obliterating everything in its path. The very things wildlife needs to thrive. Our fish are covered in sores. If humans are getting cancer at alarming rates, think of the animals.

Owóknage is a riveting account of the ways of life of proud nations of Indigenous peoples. The atrocities they faced by trusting settlers who were only interested in one thing: raping the earth of its resources, stripping away the way of life of Mother Earth's Shepherds – all in the name of...

No wonder some people are anti-immigration – they know what their ancestors were capable of – and it might be embedded in their DNA.

I want to be a better person.

WRITTEN: 17 September 2022

JUNIE

CHELENE KNIGHT

The past pulses to life in this sublime coming-of-age story!

How did the book make me feel/think?



I live in Vancouver. I have walked, driven, across, under, and around the Georgia Viaduct thousands of times, ignorant of the vibrant black community that used to lay where the viaduct is now.

I was introduced to Hogan's alley in the fantastic book, *Becoming Vancouver* (Daniel Francis). Even with the introduction, I remained blind to the thriving community erased by gentrification and the displacement of those who added matchless character to the city.

Systemic racism saw to that. The city's leaders decided moving cars in and out of the city's core was more

5 important than protecting a beating, thriving heart. I'm appalled.

Thanks to Junie, when I walk under the viaduct now, in the now nondescript area once known as Hogan's Alley, the area springs to life. I can hear cheerful souls rejoicing, jazz floating through the air. The fragrance of different tickles the senses.

Chelene Knight is masterful at bringing what once was to life and reminding us of what could have been if we had only evolved. Are we evolving, even today?

In this enchanting coming-of-age story, Knight explores what it is like to be a young black girl growing up in a harsh world where her mother does not relish the role because alcohol and unreachable dreams have muddied her mind. Her mother's unquenchable thirst for the spotlight, coupled with neglecting her daughter's needs – turns Junie into the matriarch by default as she tries to find her way in a racist world.

Knight arouses the enormity facing Junie (including sexuality), as she has to be strong, not only for her mother but also for her best friend, whose mother, the polar opposite of Junie's, also doesn't relish the role of motherhood.

I walk by where Hogan's Alley used to be once more; it pulses to life. I see Junie walk on by, smiling.

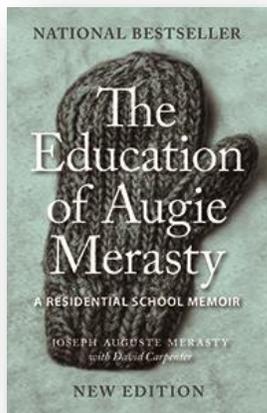
WRITTEN: 15 September 2022

THE EDUCATION OF AUGIE MERASTY

JOSEPH AUGUSTE MERASTY, DAVID CARPENTER

Truth + Reconciliation is only the starting point.

How did the book make me feel/think?



The Education of Augie Merasty may be a small tome, but it packs a powerful punch that goes a long way in eradicating ignorance. Some people want to keep their eyes shut, living in denial. However, we'd do the entire world (in this case, Canada) a massive favour by diving into the pages of this important story.

Augie is the definition of heroic. I never knew the evil Indigenous people faced. Like many people, I hid behind the walls of the disgusting attitudes instilled in us all, by a racist society. Some people scream, "get over it" – I didn't do this to you. But we were all complicit (even if it was

through our ancestors), and our willing ignorance only exacerbates the pain and slows the path to an inclusive world.

Augie's courage has made us all better. Educate yourself. You might not like what you discover, but you'll likely be a better, kinder, and more empathetic person – after you've read the last word of this essential read that will linger with you, long after the cover has been closed.

Thanks to heroes like Augie, he has kindly offered us all a salve for our souls.

Powerful. Evocative. Essential. Courageous.

WRITTEN: 28 September 2022

STORIES I MIGHT REGRET TELLING YOU

MARTHA WAINWRIGHT



Creative brilliance is rooted in pain...

How did the book make me feel/think?

Martha Wainwright and I got together in a pub to talk. We sat down and started sharing horror stories from our lives in search of finding stories of belonging and where love and comfort rest.

We got messed up along the way.

Stories I Might Regret Telling You reads like the scene I started painting above; Martha has lived a celebrity life.

As we shared another pint, the layers of her life started falling away: Insecurity, drugs, love found and lost, and a

child's longing for their parents to assume the role of caregiver instead of being swallowed by their own need to be seen. I learned this is an ongoing struggle for those in the spotlight.

How can you care for yourself when you need the world's validation?

In unflinching honesty, Wainwright shares her vulnerability, letting us all know that just because you're reaching for the stars doesn't mean you are not immune to the perils many, if not all of us, face daily.

Stories I Might Regret Telling you deftly remind us that regardless of life's paths, we are all on the same road together.

Creative brilliance is rooted in pain; thanks, Martha, for taking the time to share yours.

WRITTEN: 6 November 2022

SCOUNDREL

SARAH WEINMAN



Psychopathy and extreme wealth are one in the same.

How did the book make me feel/think?

What did I learn from Scoundrel?

It is a fascinating read. I never thought I would be into a historical murder story.

I dove in.

What a voyeuristic ride. The writing is captivating. Weinman is a fabulous storyteller. I hope she's okay (after being immersed in this horrendous story).

Edgar Smith was a monster, and William F. Buckley was a monster as well, who walked lockstep with Smith.

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I guess what I learned from Scoundrel is that there is a razor-thin line between psychopathy, genius and the utter manipulation of everything and everyone around you for personal gain.

Narcissism, sociopathy, and psychopathy are deadly bedfellows. Extreme wealth is a disease.

I learned those inflicted by extreme wealth care about only one thing: themselves.

I feel a sense of calm. Now, I understand the news better. We all scream about political figures saying insane things and still being loved. I get it now. The shackles attached to those needing validation, the wealthy + deranged mentally ill (1), do not care. We shriek: These people need to listen. They won't.

Because after they've jumped on a cause, their hearing has been muted. The rest of us suffer the noise of not comprehending why those diseased are not as outraged as the rest.

That's how Scoundrel made me feel/think.

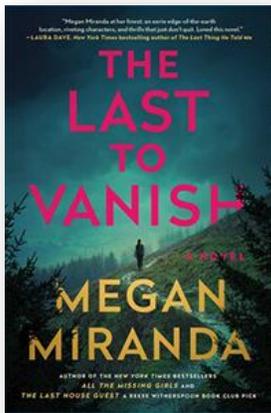
You can't change a debilitating illness.

Psychopathy and extreme wealth are the same.

WRITTEN: 12 October 2022

THE LAST ONE TO VANISH

MEGAN MIRANDA



A psychological thriller about the darkness lying in each of us.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Where did they go?

A picturesque town. Nestled at the start of Appalachia.

One hiker + another + another + another + one more + another + another + another, vanish. The town is labelled as the most dangerous. Tourism flourishes in the absence of the missing hikers as adventure seekers flock to the town. The townsfolk seem to be genuine, kind, and welcoming. As long as you don't dig too deep.

A page turns. New citizens struggle to be one with the old—to fit in. There is darkness in the souls of the town's inhabitants and in the treacherous hills. You are allowed to fit in if you accept; we are all in this together.

The Last One to Vanish is a psychological thriller about the darkness we are all capable of holding inside of us and what the unquenchable thirst for truth and belonging does to one's psyche.

Does every town have a secret?

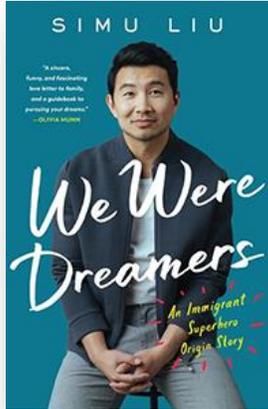
Are these secrets better left untold?

Keep flipping the pages, and when you come to the exhilarating end, decide for yourself.

WRITTEN: 4 October 2022

WE WERE DREAMERS

SIMU LIU



Never deviate from your passions...

How did the book make me feel/think?

Much like Ronny Chieng, I thought, great, another celebrity memoir. Oh, Joy.

You don't have to read it.

My friend put it in my hands and said, read this next.

I loved Kim's Convenience. After seeing the opening credits, I'm confident I could beat Simu at one-on-one basketball.

You're 62; what are you talking about?

I challenge you, Simu.

You'll lose.

Probably.

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What struck me right from the get-go of this memoir is Simu is incredibly likeable. All celebrity memoirists need to read this to learn how to win over an audience. Simu will win you over.

This book came at a great time for me. I'm facing daunting uncertainties since my career ended at the start of Covid. I write. Write. Write. And pursue my passions. Friends in my demographic have been barking at me to 'get a job.' Did I say I'm 62? Depression is lurking; not lurking, it is standing by the sofa.

Where are you going with these thoughts?

In **We Were Dreamers**, Simu not only lessens the cultural divide people face in an ever-evolving (maybe devolving) world. But with the utmost generosity, Simu blasts a powerful light on the necessity of never deviating from your passions if you are lucky enough to discover what they are.

Liu does this with gentleness and understanding, as he reminds us regardless of whether we are a celebrity, we all start close to the same place. Unless of course: you were unlucky to have been born into crippling entitlement. Liu wasn't.

When you dream, there is no Plan B.

Thank you, Simu; at this stage of my life, you gave me the encouragement I desperately need – you are a true superhero.

Next time you're in Vancouver, one-on-one basketball?

WRITTEN: 6 November 2022