

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 3



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

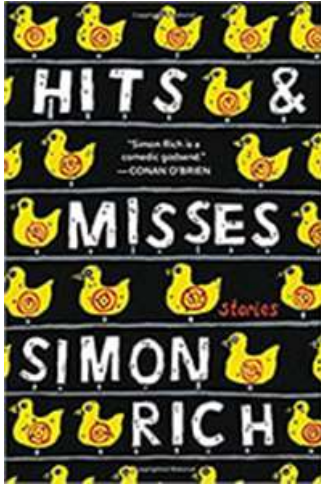
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

HITS & MISSES

SIMON RICH



I laughed so hard at times I peed a little bit...

How did the book make me feel/think?

Simon Rich was an ordinary boy, raised by a typical family in New York City. If ordinary translates into being raised in a family of academics, gifted with a love of the quill.

Little did little Simon know, his destiny included entertaining by spinning twisted yarns derived from deep inside his brain, fueled by the hamsters ferociously rotating the creativity wheels of the absurd. Rumour has it: Simon was born with pen and pad in hand.

Another rumour suggests Simon's first words were "Horsey" and "The British Are Coming" – which, oddly enough, he writes a story from the perspective of a horse ending with the horse's fate determined to be: glue?

Experts question the roots of his scattered-genius-creativity, often asking: How could an ordinary boy born into a typical family be so mentally (insert your descriptive word here)?

There have been suggestions since he fell off his imaginary horse, Louis. Often. Tapping his head on the floor each time he fell → after each tap, his whack-creativity poured from his clouded mind freely → producing a series of comedic gems found in the stories of his laugh-out-really-(a "really" bad and unimaginative adjective)-loud book, **Hits & Misses**.

Whether any of my above thoughts are true facts. Or fake. We are lucky for the traumatic events that indeed must have occurred in Simon's ordinary boy life → to allow him to mess with our minds with such hilarity → begging the question: Is there something wrong with me when I guffaw while reading, or did I hit my head as well, allowing me to get it? "

It' = being Simon.

Thanks, Simon. Because of you, I finally can accept I'm not normal.

Read: Hits & Misses – if you don't find it side-splittingly hilarious, oh well, it must suck to be...

ONE OF US IS LYING

KAREN M. McMANUS



A jock. An outsider. A beauty-queen. An overachiever. Social media. A murder.

How did the book make me feel/think?

What happens when you mix these all together into a simmering broth?

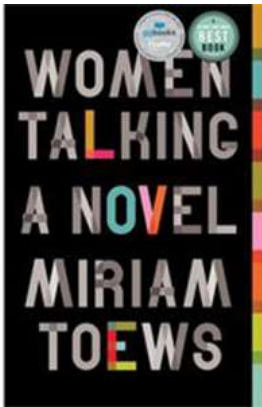
The Breakfast Club goes viral!

One of Us is Lying is an enthralling, comedy-laced, deliciously original take on what it is like to be growing up in the NOW. Author Karen McManus weaves a masterful, nuanced tale. Karen chops her personality into four to tackle the four protagonists, who've all become the prime suspects in the murder misfit, Simon. Simon's misguided sense of entitlement led to his death.

One of Us is Lying wrestles with the challenges of youth, depression, vanity – in a world that makes unrelenting changes with each blink of an eye!

WOMEN TALKING

MIRIAM TOEWS



Is the oppression of women in religion really the norm?

How did the book make me feel/think?

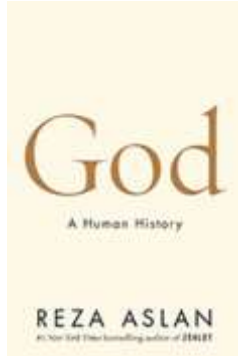
Is the oppression of women in religion really the norm?

A gripping story about the oppression (rape) of women in an archaic religious colony. Women Talking can be challenging because it blasts our eyes wide-open, making it impossible not to compare the atrocities of the community to the horrors of mainstream society, a society not immune to similar behaviour.

The book is a timely piece with the current state of the world and the desires of the “old boys” club to keep women subservient and in their place.

Despite tackling the upsetting subject, this book warrants the maximum number of stars. If there is one thing I take away from this book: I think Women Talking is a SHOUT OUT to all men, to look in the mirror, and examine their behaviour, to make sure you’re not guilty of being archaic yourself.

GOD
A HUMAN HISTORY
REZA ASLAN



A light read that may mess with your mind while shining a different light on your GOD!

How did the book make me feel/think?

I picked up GOD because I figured it would be a light-spirited, informative read.

Before I share my thoughts, I'd like to get my exaltations out of the way: Reza Aslan is a gifted writer — and an intellectual who makes my head spin — I've watched him dismantle talking heads on television. Instead, he scares me into wanting to be smart.

That's enough sunshine. The real reason I picked up the book is that I'm God uninformed. My beliefs are simplistic: I believe we are supposed to trip toward kindness and that most other things we endure in life are just divisive noise. Do we need a God to tell us light is better than darkness? Maybe I'm naïve.



GOD is a beautifully written book that, for me, highlighted the precarious nature of humanity as some of us desperately try to control others because of egos left unchecked. The book resonated loudly, helping me to understand we are all the same flawed creatures — losing ourselves in an unquenchable thirst for power.

If GOD exists, could someone please explain politics (pmurt)?

Pick up this book. If you have a background in theology, it may provide a different view — maybe not. If religious studies passed you by as you struggled through life, like me, GOD is a nice light way to mess with your mind — may be on a Sunday.

I don't fear GOD, but any book with GOD in the title, just for divinity's sake, warrants 5 STARS.

I enjoyed GOD. How could I not?

"He watches the sun forever chase the moon across the vault of heaven."

Thanks, Reza.

THE BEST DAY EVER

KAIRA ROUDA



A unique voice narrating a story in a riveting, gripping way, questioning self with every page turned.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Best Day Ever reads like a world-class DJ dropping beats – slowly elevating the reader to a crescendo – then sending them into a whirlwind ride racing toward a gripping → at a relentless pace - flashing twists and horror → until the ending leaves you gasping.

Love the ending?

Hate the ending?

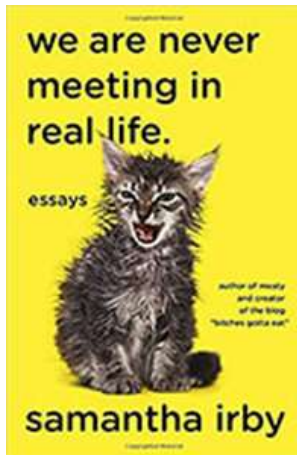
There is no doubt Kaira's prose is deft at drawing readers in – and guessing what may come next – with the last words opening up to debate.

The characters: We know them. As much as this is a work of fiction, I could not help but examine my life – wondering: have I ever behaved abhorrently like the main character? Have I ever placed, or do I know anyone who has?

Put a “loved” one in a place where love does not exist, where control disgusts?

WE ARE NEVER MEETING IN REAL LIFE

SAMANTHA IRBY



A disruptive collection of dysfunction + insecurity that will have you guffawing about life

How did the book make me feel/think?

Samantha Irby is a full-figured, somewhat-introverted black woman who shares stories. She shares biting candour and highlights the heartfelt realities of her life's struggles, mostly learning to accept who she has become. She seems to want to hide from the world while screaming out: LOOK AT ME! At least—README!

As much as her collection of stories is wit-filled diatribes on the perils of living in one's own skin. The book stands out because of her courage to allow vulnerability to sneak onto the pages. And when it does, Irby turns the awkward pain into a slightly up-turned smirk. Only slightly. Laughter comes from despair. An abusive, manipulative, alcoholic father may provide a plethora of comedy necessary to survive. I'm not a full-figured black woman. Also, this life is hers, not mine—but, as much as humour allows us to cope—I would be surprised if before the laughter grew roots, it drowned in tears.

In the end: I'm glad I heard her screaming: README.

It might have been the dishevelled cat on the cover doing the screaming!

I guffawed, cringed, and a tear almost made it into my left eye. I considered puking twice, but I mostly enjoyed escaping into her life.

If you enjoy a witty take on such shallow topics as racism, alcoholism, mental health issues, isolation, sex, lesbianism—you will love this book! But, mainly, suppose you are an alcoholic who is suffering from mental health problems while being isolated from the world, as you struggle with sexuality + the health issues that arise—from not the best eating plan, well. In that case, this book might be about you (us) or someone we know. READ IT!

Sorry for yelling: read it!

BUFFERING

HANNAH HART



Family despair + Coming to Terms with Identity – Delivered with heaping helpings of empathy!

How did the book make me feel/think?

What if your mother was mentally disorganized – unable to take care of herself – how could she possibly take care of her children?

Of course, your older sister lives the same reality as you – your norms – all you know. A second father arrives, riding in on a broken horse – not your father – he is attracted to dysfunction, attempting to save a floundering soul; confusing life more – a baby sister arrives.

How the bleep can you survive and become a light when your world is draped in darkness?

When I read *Buffering*, I did not know who Hannah Hart is – one of the few – I think. Hannah's story may be disruptively unique – smeared with neglect – usually leading to misery and despair; however, with insurmountable hurdles stacked in front of her and her sisters, she shares without burdening the readers with sadness and pain. She has endured a reality few could comprehend – but one a good deal of may use avoidance to hide from – we all have layers of dysfunction in our lives.

What makes *Buffering* outstanding?

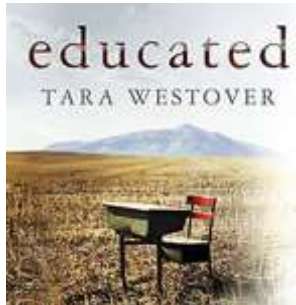
And must-read.

It is not Hannah's struggles with sexuality, family dysfunction, etcetera.

What makes it outstanding: she intuitively writes about her experiences while having them be about something much more substantial than self. Hannah is a talented narrator – entertainer. Thankfully, she found the courage to share her challenges – she has survived. She seems to understand her voice may help others, those less fortunate, find strength as well!

EDUCATED

TARA WESTOVER



Upsetting + Courageous + Disturbing + Harrowing + Gross + Enlightening.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I hated this book—I loved this book—that was only three chapters in.

Tara Westover is a ridiculously courageous individual who endured what must be as close to an unendurable upbringing as possible. It's hard to fathom what she went through as a child and still be okay. I don't believe she's okay. Could she possibly be okay?

This book upset me. Mainly because I didn't laugh once, how could I?

I thank her for sharing. As much as her story is about brainwashing by family and religion, I found it to mirror everyday realities for all of us: facts are taught to us by those who are spewing the facts, when gone unchecked and delivered with delusion or manipulation, reality becomes skewed, and what we believe to be true may be so far from the truth it becomes crippling. That was Tara's upbringing, Mormonism, and family (father mostly) shaded her from the world, and until she escaped its clutches (which she likely never truly did, or has done), did the realities of the world outside of upbringing become clear.

I wanted to scream at her to open her eyes.

You must escape from your family.

They are disgusting and toxic.

They are flawed, ill, destructive → demented.

Her descriptions of violence and trauma, accidents, explosions, etcetera—had me cringing, borderline projectile vomiting—and wondering how anyone could survive?

Family is a powerful sickness.

We all want to belong.

We all want a home.

A place of beginning.

A place of safety.

The education I received and what I think many readers will struggle with: No matter how messed up your family history may be, no matter how damaged the core is; I don't think there is a single person on this spinning rock that doesn't want it to be their safe place.

IN TARA'S CASE

It is not.

And as much as her shrouded education came from her father, his likely came from his father before. His—breeding generations of sickness. I understand her need to find forgiveness and her burning desire for it not to be what it is!

I hope one day she laughs.

1984

GEORGE ORWELL

Signet Classics

If you don't understand Trump or Social Media – you will after you read this!

How did the book make me feel/think?



I came to a crossroads after reading 1984.

- Turn on every light in my home, including opening the fridge and leaving it open to eradicate the darkness consuming my soul.
- Turn off all the lights in my house, cover the window, crawl into a closet draped in a blanket, close my eyes, and shake.

1984 is a riveting story written several decades ago, highlighting where we might (?) be heading as a species. It's troublesome; two nights' worth of insomnia; unsettling.

It has helped me understand the perplexities of living and how we let others guide us to where we don't want to go. Oh yeah, the two chief difficulties:

1. Electing politicians who only have their own best interests at heart because we've all become floundering addicts in a world swallowed by the noise of living. Too beaten down to realize our next fix might kill us—but we still take it, anyway, expecting a different outcome.
2. How social (?) media has made us all needy, broken souls in constant need of validation. Seriously. Why are you on social media?

That's what I took from reading **1984**—humanities need to be controlled because the more noise we're bombarded with; eventually, we develop less capacity to think for ourselves.

George Orwell wasn't foreshadowing what he saw coming, but he was diving deep into the evil capacities of man.

MOSTLY DEAD THINGS

KRISTEN ARNETT



I highly recommend reading this book while eating!

How did the book make me feel/think?

INGREDIENTS

- A father who's a taxidermist.
- A loving lesbian daughter, Jess, working at his side.
- A semi-lost son, trying to find out who he is.
- The daughter and son love the same girl.
- A mother trying to make the best of the cards dealt.
- Dad commits suicide.
- Jessa discovers the body in the room where she and her father used to bring dead animals back to life, almost ready to return to the wild.

- Mom creates art pieces with the animals, posing them in compromising positions.

And away we go!

Strange doesn't do **MOSTLY DEAD THINGS** justice. The book cuts delicately, screw that; it rips open every emotion in a viscerally beautiful way. A family broke by conditioning tear into their beings, slicing deep, exposing every fibre of being. So, they can move forward and find comfort in whom each of them becomes.

MOSTLY DEAD THINGS is jarringly funny, emotionally laced, dripping in a breathtaking need to find similarity in the lives of a family too immersed in beautifying the living past to realize they are stuck in denial.

Parts of the last 100 pages were so incredibly gripping the words lifted off the page, coming to life, and delivering, at least to this reader, to the beautiful pains found in trying to figure out who you are supposed to be! Parts of the last 100 pages just might have been the most powerfully beautiful writing I have ever read.

I read most of this book during lunch breaks.

In hindsight, maybe not the best way to learn about taxidermy!