

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 30



1. SHE'S A KILLER - KRISTEN MCDUGALL
2. EAST GRAND LAKE - TIM RYAN
3. LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE - LAURA ESQUIVEL
4. WALK THE DARKNESS DOWN - DANIEL MAGARIEL
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10. WHEN MY GHOST SINGS - TARA SIDHOO FRASER

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

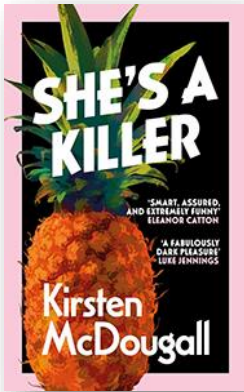
ORANGE = POETRY

Lindsay Wincherauk

SHE'S A KILLER

KRISTEN MCDUGALL

An uproarious and relentless rollercoaster ride of laughter + much more!



How did the book make me feel/think?

I couldn't contain my laughter as I delved into the pages of "She's a Killer" by Kristen McDougall. Within the first 40 pages, I laughed so uproariously I had to put on noise-cancelling headphones to spare my eardrums. My raucous laughter caused such a disturbance I was promptly asked to leave the library where I had been residing.

As I continued reading, the story took an unexpected turn. The world was in dire straits, teetering on the brink of destruction. Everything was completely askew. New Zealand

emerged as the last beacon of hope in this bleak scenario, the final paradise.

Our protagonist, a near-genius woman, trudged through life with a spectral imaginary friend by her side, simultaneously taunting her and offering guidance. The impending end of humanity rendered life utterly meaningless. To make matters worse, New Zealand was being invaded not by desperate refugees fleeing war-torn nations but by the ultra-wealthy individuals responsible for the destruction through the disease of greed and entitlement.

These "wealthugees" sought to purchase paradise, evading the inevitable downfall of humankind with their affluence. In the midst of this chaos, Alice, our near-genius protagonist, unexpectedly falls in love with a wealthugee who exhibits a conscience and a desire for a better world.

Their connection brings Erica, his daughter, into Alice's orbit. Erica, surpassing Alice on the genius scale by two points, proves to be far more than she initially appears.

"She's a Killer" takes readers on an uproarious and relentless rollercoaster ride of laughter and shines a blinding light on the true meaning of being a refugee. It challenges our preconceptions about those in need and those who have contributed to the mess in the first place.

With the final word devoured, I can guarantee readers will yearn for another page.

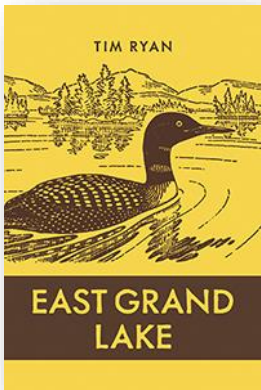
WRITTEN: 29 August 2023

1

EAST GRAND LAKE

TIM RYAN

A powerful symbol of nostalgia, simplicity, and love.



How did the book make me feel/think?

“East Grand Lake” is a deeply moving and evocative novel that delves into the profound themes of loss, grief, family dynamics, and the passage of time. Through its compelling narrative, readers are drawn into its characters’ lives and shared experiences.

The author skillfully explores the notion that not all generations grieve similarly, giving the story a rich depth of characterization and a nuanced exploration of how different family members cope with and express their emotions. This adds a layer of realism and complexity to the family

dynamics depicted in the novel.

More than just a physical location, “East Grand Lake” serves as a powerful symbol of nostalgia, simplicity, and love. The story adeptly weaves together elements of humour, denial, and healing within the family. It offers a realistic portrayal of how individuals navigate their emotions during grief and change.

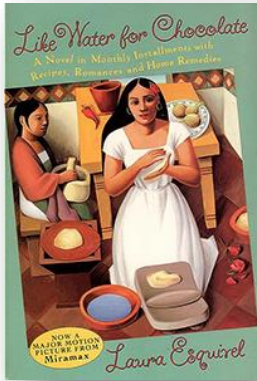
Ultimately, “East Grand Lake” conveys a message of embracing the present, finding joy in moving forward, and learning to let go. This universal theme will resonate with many readers. It combines emotional depth and growth with moments of love, laughter, and self-discovery, creating a truly captivating and meaningful reading experience.

WRITTEN: 25 August 2023

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

Laura Esquivel

A mesmerizing tale weaving together magical realism, profound emotions, and the transformative power of food . . .



How did the book make me feel/think?

“Like Water for Chocolate” is a mesmerizing tale weaving together magical realism, profound emotions, and the transformative power of food and relationships. Every page is a captivating journey, where food preparation becomes a conduit for expressing and experiencing intense emotions, ultimately shaping the characters’ lives.

The novel beautifully captures the intergenerational dynamics that often burden the youngest generation with caring for aging parents. Through this, it mirrors the cycles of life, depicting how roles and responsibilities can shift over time, resonating deeply with readers.

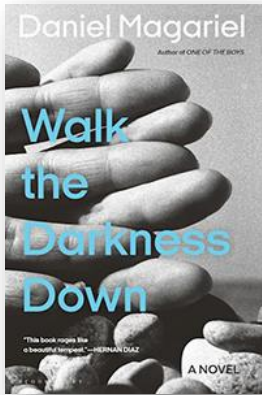
For me, “Like Water for Chocolate” struck a chord as I spent my youth watching my parents battle cancer, feeling the weight of being the youngest in my family. This personal connection evoked empathy and understanding, allowing me to immerse myself fully in the story’s emotional journey.

The gift of the book from the proprietor of the Tamaly Shop in Vancouver was a heartwarming gesture, highlighting the power of literature and shared stories to bridge gaps and connect different aspects of our lives. It served as a reminder that through literature, we can find solace, evoke emotions, and forge meaningful connections between our experiences and the fictional narratives that touch our hearts.

WRITTEN: 25 August 2023

WALK THE DARKNESS DOWN

DANIEL MAGARIEL



Is it possible to survive the loss of a child?

How did the book make me feel/think?

Two lives shattered by the loss of their child.

How does one recover from such a tragedy?

A mother, consumed by grief, desperately clings to any remnants of her daughter, searching endlessly for solace. Self-hatred consumes her as she struggles to find a way out of the darkness.

Meanwhile, a father hides in the delusional embrace of escape, subjecting himself to the arduous realm of commercial fishing alongside a band of shattered souls.

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Love seems to have vanished in the face of devastating loss.

In his haunting novel, **“Walk the Darkness Down,”** Daniel Magariel delves into the agonizing realities of an inescapable horror: the loss of a child. He explores the desperate yearning to reconnect and find a way to navigate the immense pain and suffering accompanying such a profound loss. It is a story that emphasizes the importance of holding onto the fragments of hope that remain as one strives to forge a path toward a future that can be endured.

In this gripping masterpiece of painfully authentic fiction, Magariel adeptly tackles a harsh truth that countless individuals must face: the struggle to carry on in the aftermath of an unspeakable tragedy.

This story cannot be deemed pleasurable; unsettling darkness looms dangerously close to our hearts at every twist and turn. Nevertheless, it serves as a poignant reminder that anguish may silently reside within our very souls, compelling us to embrace empathy and compassion as our steadfast companions on life’s unpredictable journey.

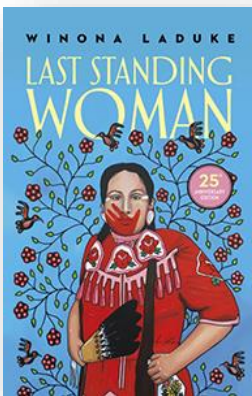
WRITTEN: 27 July 2023

LAST STANDING WOMAN

WINONA LADUKE

Sheds light on how Indigenous people have been mistreated by...

How did the book make me feel/think?

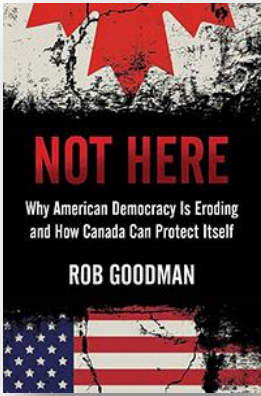


“Last Woman Standing,” is an engrossing and remarkable work of historical fiction that sheds light on how the invasion of whiteness has mistreated Indigenous people. It’s a stark reminder of the pollution and damage caused by those in power.

WRITTEN: 30 July 2023

NOT HERE

ROD GOODMAN



Pay attention, listen, and refuse.

How did the book make me feel/think?

“**Not Here**” is an enthralling narrative that urges Canada to resist the American influence it has been subjected to since Confederation.

Canadians find themselves inundated with Americanization through various channels such as media, literature, and entertainment. America tantalizes us with its offerings, and we find ourselves yearning for more, while simultaneously witnessing the unsettling developments unfolding across the border.

Is America on the verge of collapse right in front of our eyes? Are values like decency and trust being eroded to an irreversible extent? Is authoritarianism vying for dominance?

To many Americans, Canadians are perceived as a polite annoyance, waiting for an opportunity to be used when the need arises. It is imperative that we reject the American model and stand against authoritarianism.

Goodman argues that Canadians must remove their blinders and abandon their self-righteousness because the afflictions plaguing America are not exclusive to them. We are not immune, nor can we claim innocence.

According to Goodman, Canada’s strength lies in its failures. The inability to unite as “**one people**” with a shared purpose has taught us valuable lessons.

Canadians must continue to learn and define who they aspire to be, and without a doubt, America currently serves as a cautionary example of what to avoid.

Goodman passionately implores all Canadians to pay attention, listen, and resist!

WRITTEN: 24 July 2023

THE TENANT CLASS

RICARDO TRANJAN



A must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the inequalities present within society.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Tenants are being thrown into the chaos of the situation. They are caught in the middle of conflicts between landlords, government regulations, and financial struggles. Many have lost their homes or struggled to pay rent during the pandemic, further complicating their already challenging situations. Throw in unscrupulous business owners fuelled by greed, who used the pandemic to stuff their already overstuffed pockets at the expense of the people who stuffed their pockets. As eviction moratoriums expire and rent prices continue to rise, tenants are left with

few options and are often pushed into dire circumstances. The lack of affordable housing, coupled with inadequate tenant protections, leaves these vulnerable individuals navigating a treacherous landscape with few resources at their disposal.

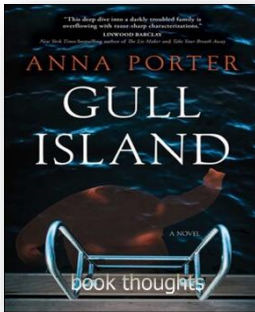
The Tenant Class, offers a profound analysis of the flaws of capitalism and the significant divide between the owning and working class. The book dispels the notion of a housing crisis and sheds light on the struggles of many individuals just trying to find and maintain decent living conditions.

This book is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the inequalities present within society.

WRITTEN: 8 July 2023

GULL ISLAND

ANNA PORTER



A personification of the ghosts who haunt us throughout life.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I don't know who my father is – but I do know I'm 48% Norwegian. I watched my father die twice, once literally and once metaphorically.

“Gull Island” resonated with me as a representation of the unresolved questions and emotional ghosts that can haunt us when we lack critical pieces of our personal history and identity. This kind of uncertainty indeed leaves many of us feeling adrift and disconnected from ourselves, like we're wandering alone in a fog.

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When everything we hold dear seems to slip away or becomes lost in the darkness, it can be an incredibly challenging experience. The feeling of being crushed by the walls of discovery can be overwhelming, and it's natural to seek coping mechanisms like alcohol to numb the pain.

“Gull Island” is about surviving and finding a way to get back up regardless of how daunting the journey in front of us appears to be and what creatures lurk in the dark.

As the pages turn and the darkness begins to recede, readers become emotionally invested in the protagonist's (Jude) quest for answers and self-discovery. They share Jude's hopes, fears, and triumphs, and they will find them cheering for her as she navigates the twists and turns of her journey.

That's how “Gull Island” made me feel.

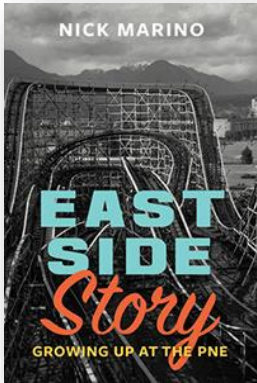
WRITTEN: 9 September 2023

EAST SIDE STORY: GROWING UP AT THE PNE

NICK MARINO

Igniting a connection to the past.

How did the book make me feel/think?



“East Side Story” by Nick Marino provides readers with a deeper understanding of the city’s history, both positive and dark moments, encouraging readers to appreciate the rich tapestry of life in the East Side of Vancouver.

Marino’s ability to transport readers through time and connect personal family stories with the significance of the PNE in Vancouver’s history is a testament to the power of storytelling. It’s important for residents and visitors alike to gain insight into the places they live or visit, fostering a greater appreciation for the community and its heritage.

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The contrast between joyful memories of events like the PNE and the sobering historical reminders of injustices, such as the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, underscores the complexity of a city’s history. It’s essential to celebrate the positive aspects and acknowledge and learn from the darker moments. Kudos to Marino for painting the whole picture without sugarcoating.

In “East Side Story” nostalgia will take hold, leaving readers anticipating their next visit to the local fair (PNE), igniting a connection to the past and the on hyper-drive present.

“East Side Story” is a valuable read for anyone interested in Vancouver's history and culture, as it offers a unique blend of personal stories and the broader context of the city’s development, with moments of laughter springing to life on many pages.

I can smell the onions and burgers frying, and I am looking forward to my next trip to the PNE, where I can ride the roller coaster into nostalgia. Sometimes, being trapped in time in today’s hectic world offers a refuge from the stresses of life.

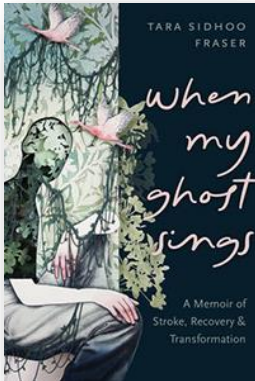
WRITTEN: 9 September 2023

WHEN MY GHOST SINGS

TARA SIDHOO FRASER

What it's like living inside of a stroke.

How did the book make me feel/think?



I survived a stroke in 2018. When I cracked open “When My Ghost Sings,” I feared what might seep out of the pages and haunt me. After my stroke, my mind desperately attempted to reset itself for the next year or two. My brain would send singles to my fingers to write; all I could produce was a squiggly line, which had to suffice for a while.

“When My Ghost Sings” will resonate with anyone who has ever suffered a stroke or have known someone who has, so, everyone.

Stroke can be a profoundly life-altering experience, and books like “When My Ghost Things” deftly and lyrically delve into the emotional and psychological aspects of recovery and can provide refuge and understanding to those who’ve gone through similar challenges.

Sidhoo, wholeheartedly, will have readers pondering questions about identity, loss, and the possibility of rediscovering oneself after such a transformative event.

Fraser’s courage in sharing her darkest moments and emphasizing the importance of love and vulnerability in the healing process is a powerful testament to the book’s impact. It’s a reminder that literature has the ability to offer empathy, insight, and hope to those facing difficult circumstances.

We must thank Sidhoo for sharing her perspective, and collectively, hope her journey toward recovery continues to be filled with hope and growth as she embraces the new version of herself emerging from her experiences.

WRITTEN: 10 September 2023