

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 4
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BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK
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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

A MAN CALLED OVE

FREDRIK BACKMAN



I want Ove to be my best friend!

How did the book make me feel/think?

A Man Called Ove is my second favourite book – it is close, but still second.

Ove is a snarky old man, 59 years old, not old by any standard, but he is from Sweden, perhaps old by Ikea standards.

Does Ikea furniture ever make it to antique?

Don't take that as a slight against Ikea; I love Ikea.

Ove likes order, “rules are rules.”

He's an awkward man who's deeply principled. When Ove finds a lost item, he turns it in, but he will not rat out a lesser man who believes in 'finder's keepers.'

Ove's world is black and white.

He likes fixing things.

1 He enjoys working with tools.

He likes simplicity and falls in love.

He feels unworthy, but his heart fills with true – his love, Sonja, brings colour to Ove's life.

He falls deeply.

Tragedy strikes – his love never wavers through trauma – sadly, love eventually leaves as it succumbs to cancer and his world trips back to black and white.

The days begin darkly blending into the next, and his will to live evaporates without “pure love” walking lockstep.

He plans his exit.

He feels isolated despite the collection of unusual blundering characters who keep dropping into his life.

He resists their presence, and his time is up.

Suicide is on the docket.

He tries.

He is interrupted.

He tries again.

He is interrupted once more.

With each chapter read, I feared he'd eventually succeed.

The damaged blundering characters transform from flawed to flawed with a purpose: to keep Ove busy fixing things broken in each of their lives.

Then, magically, as if a zipper appeared on the pages only to be pulled down, allowing me to crawl fully into the story: I felt as if I was becoming a character in the story.

I read "Ove" while reading a memoir about a megalomaniac psychiatrist who was trying to cure the homosexuality of the main character — a light read — not, but an excellent book (more on it at another time). With each passage I finished of the not-so-light read, I felt a need to read "Ove" to cheer myself up. So, imagine a book about a crotchety old suicidal man being an elixir of hope!

It is time to wind my thoughts down; I feel the wind blowing long here.

I never wanted "Ove" to end.

I became sad as the pages slipped by.

Pardon the cliché; the book is a real page-turner — but I only read a chapter or two at a time to avoid the last page. But, as I paced along beside the beautiful cast of characters inside the book, I imagined meeting with Ove each week to catch up.

Ove became my friend.

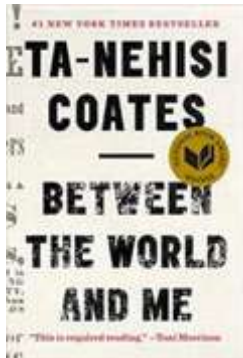
Ove made me want to be a better man.

Ove turned black and white into a vibrant tapestry of colour.

A Man Called Ove is my second favourite book, my first favourite: my memoir — simply because I did not write Ove!

BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME

TA-NESHI COATES



I will never be black.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Racism is a learned sickness. **Between the World and Me** is an eloquently written, captivating look at it from the inside. I thank Ta-Neshi Coates for sharing his story.

The book upset me. I don't want to believe the world to be this way. I don't bleeping understand what race is—I do—but I don't. I think it is a creation affecting us from the depths of greed — a way to control.

Ta-Neshi weaves his realities by using the literary tool of a letter to his son. The letter speaks of the atrocities cloaking those of black skin. It navigates the truths of race, being a creation of the rich to control the unrelenting challenges of the poor.

White poor.

Black poor.

They're all the same; however, greed needed to divide. Greed required one group to be below the other on the pecking order of living. **Between the World and Me** is a beautiful exposé, highlighting the ridiculousness and blind sightedness of literally all of us who grew up in suburbia. It scorns the illusive DREAM, which is only allowed to be chased by those deemed to be white enough to take part.

NEWSFLASH

White doesn't exist. It never has, and it never will. If White Supremacists held a convention where all members took a DNA TEST—there would never be a second convention.

What I loved most about this book; is it promotes the quest for critical thought?

It challenges us to question everything. It is painful. In today's (and always) climate, it is a vital read to help us look deeply into the mirror and query how we've arrived: HERE - TODAY.

RACE WAS CREATED BY GR\$\$D

There is no Chinese race.

There is no Korean race.

There is no Muslim race.

However, somehow, there is a WHITE RACE.

Isn't that a ginormous load of BS?

What the bleep are we racing toward?

Ta-Neshi, in perfect clarity, highlights the struggle of being trampled for generations and then being punished for trying to rise. Slavery didn't end when the so-called white elitists ended it—it just shifted into laws meant to control, leading to unrelenting violence swallowing the ghettoized poor. Prisons for profit continued to incarcerate those who'd already brought a bountiful of wealth to the ruling class by enslaving them in offensive numbers; and then using the imprisoned labour to keep stuffing their pockets.

I don't want to be racist. So, I won't. I wish Ta-Neshi didn't need to write this heart-wrenching letter to his son. However, he did.

Ta-Neshi's letter, sadly, reminded me of a beautiful blog post a white musician left for his daughter when he was dying from the wrath of Cancer. In the letter, he explained to his daughter all the beautiful things in the world when he was still alive. Who the leader of his country was, what the number one song was, what his favourite food was — with nary a mention of the struggles of life?

The letter contrasted Ta-Neshi's daily struggles to stay alive, stay out of prison, and not be destroyed by a created race that has treated everyone but themselves as less than human for centuries.

I loved this book.

For several hours after I completed reading, I tripped into a blue funk, only to snap out of it because I realized how offensive it is to feel sadness for something I can never possibly understand. After all, if I were to write a letter to a loved one, my struggles would never have to touch on who I am. Instead, I blend in with all the so-called superior whites.

I don't want this book to reflect humanity.

I will keep asking questions.

Maybe one day, we can stop the bleeping race. If we don't, I'm not sure if reaching the finish line is a good thing.

READ THIS BOOK.

SUPERMARKET

BOBBY HALL



A wicked ride on a roller-coaster leaving my mouth agape at the end.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Hey, look at the red book over there?

I pick it up.

Simple cover, enticing texture, I'm sold!

I crack it open.

I don't know what to expect.

I don't know what the story is about.

An elevator door opens.

I get in.

The attendant hands me a bag of pills.

I resist taking one.

We meet Flynn.

He's quirky.

He's creative.

He weaves his words in a unique formation.

We rise to the second floor.

The characters are colourful, vibrant, consistent, challenged – trapped working in one of the few going concerns in town, a supermarket – generic → *like many-a-town*, sprinkling the world.

As Flynn writes them, the characters spring to life, peculiarities, and all.

Flynn is a writer.

He's signed a book deal.

He needs to create fiction from non.

He needs to make the boring life of a small town vibrant.

HIS CHALLENGE

He's kind of messed up.

We reach another floor.

The protagonist is antsy.
He wants to push the proverbial envelope.
He wants to live.

"He could be any of us who struggle with belonging."

We are near the top floor.
We're handed another bag of pills.
I resist popping again.
What's happening?
Am I hallucinating?
Flynn's life unravels.
He's damaged.
Lost.
He could be any of us who struggle with belonging.
We drop at an unforgiving pace.
I read another page.
Reality has become skewed.
I read more.
Maybe a pill will help clear things up.

I CAN'T STOP READING!

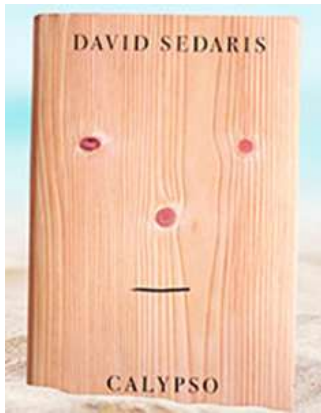
SUPERMARKET is street-smart. It is an outrageous, insanity-laced, roller-coaster ride, with mind-bending realities around every corner. It profoundly tackles issues of mental health + will have you teetering on a line between clarity and fantasy + if you trip too far – you may never make it back.

SUPERMARKET has entered a three-way tie for my favourite book. "A MAN CALLED OVE," "My Life on the Slush Pile," "**SUPERMARKET**"

REVIEW WRITTEN: May 12, 2019

CALYPSO

DAVID SEDARIS



A darkly entertaining and intimate look at coming to terms with the inescapability of living.

How did the book make me feel/think?

In **Calypso**, David Sedaris blasts open the doors and windows into his life, inviting readers in for a darkly entertaining and intimate look into his coming to terms with the in-escapability of living.

Once inside, I found Sedaris standing in front of the mirror with the image staring back at him, attempting to come to terms with life slipping by — part reminiscing — part fear; laced with reality.

7 My emotions flipped between laughter, cringing introspection, and profound sadness on any page.

As David peered into the mirror, the book transformed. The image looking back at his life morphed into me, you, our neighbours — and — every human being who has their eyes open to the trials and tribulations every one of us deals with in time in our life journeys.

David Sedaris is a gifted storyteller — did I just become Mr. Obvious?

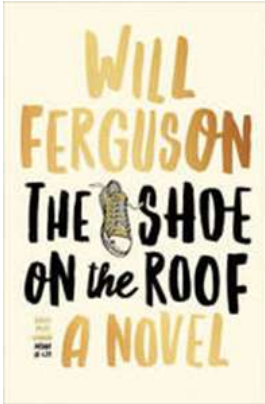
This collection of stories is a beautiful gift to each of us!

I found the chapters “Why Aren’t You Laughing” and “The Spirit World” tugged at my heartstrings in a painfully visceral way — providing warmth masked as pain — bringing tears to my eyes as the image in the mirror morphed back to me.

Sure, all our paths are uniquely our own, but if you open your heart and mind while reading **Calypso**, you may realize the threads that bind us altogether likely come from the same source.

THE SHOE ON THE ROOF

WILL FERGUSON



Will the real Jesus please stand up?

How did the book make me feel/think?

What happens when three Jesus(s) are forced to meet during an experiment to determine he doesn't exist?

Thomas is troubled, demented, highly intelligent. He's messed up by the need to rise from the dysfunction of having been a scientific experiment in his youth, an experiment conducted by his brilliant maniacal psychiatrist father.

"Memory is the hotel curtain that never completely closes...."

8

The Shoe on the Roof dives deeply into Thomas's psyche as Thomas is forced to face his mental health issues while desperately trying to find a place of belonging. Thomas is not a less-than-likeable entitlement-damaged protagonist. He stumbles across the three Jesus(s) who are wandering around Boston, taking guardianship over them. He's facing his insecurities and a need to manipulate, stemming from his upbringing. The book is hilarious, cut from large swaths of darkness.

We are all damaged.

We all need to find a place of belonging.

We all...

Read this book!

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

HARPER LEE



A sad classic that highlights evolution has a long way to go.

How did the book make me feel/think?

There is nothing to be said about this book that hasn't been already said. However, I'll still give it a go.

To Kill a Mockingbird exposes the ugly truths of America decades ago. America can be a dark place. Over time, of course, things have gotten better, much better for us Caucasians, who are at the very worst have been called a 'cracker' or 'honky', which in all honesty, have no bite. So when I was called those things, I had to GOOGLE them to know what they meant.

I'm still not sure about the origins of 'honky?'

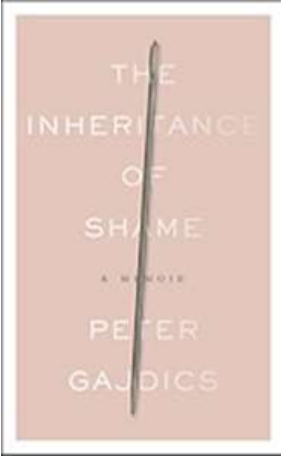
I have a metallic white vehicle.

I've named it Honky!

To Kill a Mockingbird saddened me because if we open our eyes, we'll realize that the 'things have gotten better' is relative to other cultures. But, as much as the book saddened me, it also made me open my eyes and not accept things the way they are. It makes me want to be a better person!

THE INHERITANCE OF SHAME

PETER GAJDICS



An eloquently written + scorching tale of survival and understanding.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Peter Gajdics is (was?) a damaged man. His parents were deeply flawed, causing Peter to cloak who he would inevitably become from the judgemental eyes of religion.

His mother escaped a post-WWII communist concentration camp — his father, an orphan, never knew his parents. They were both exiled to Vancouver, where they found each other and started new lives.

Peter is gay, raised when gay was deep in the closet only to come out in the dark underbelly of many cities (Vancouver included). Peter faced a sexual assault at six, throwing his life into confusion. He felt isolated and alone. Being raised by deeply religious parents who endured dark pasts didn't bring comfort and stunted Peter's growth in coming to terms with whom he would be.

The Inheritance of Shame is a scorching, candid story about finding oneself while navigating a quandary of near-impossible circumstances. Peter trips into the cult-like care of a megalomaniacal psychiatrist (Alfonso) who rips apart the identity of many lost, damaged, and flawed souls, warehousing them in a charade of caring — which is nothing more than psychotic control. In Peter's case: Alfonso, while masking his torture as caring, tries to cure Peter's homosexuality, a ploy used to manipulate for profit.

Peter eventually finds the strength to break free + the unwavering courage to fight for what's right. In freedom, he finds purpose. He understands that as much as he grapples with his realities. His parents also need to find solace in who they once were. Patiently, with great empathy, Peter helps his mother and father let go of some of the crippling secrets hidden in their pasts.

Gajdics tackles a complex dark subject with grace and brilliant prose. The subject is intense. As much as the book is a memoir with gay undertones, it will resonate with anyone who has ever struggled with finding their identity (everyone).

The Inheritance of Shame is a passionate story about love, understanding and acceptance. The subject is scathingly intense; it will linger with you long after consuming the last word. Even with the intensity cranked to eleven — if you scour the pages closely — there is the occasional moment of deliciously dark comedy; a slice of one sentence jumped off the pages for me, leaving me chortling and falling out of my chair. I will go for it for you to find!

Thank you, Peter, for having the courage to share your engagingly troubling story.

I'LL GIVE YOU THE SUN

JANDY NELSON



A deeply gripping story about finding out who you really are!

How did the book make me feel/think?

Twins, Jude, and Noah, one boy, one girl, inseparable in youth; both artistically gifted and like boys, take us on an exciting trip through their lives searching for meaning. Their mother dies in a tragic accident, leaving them alone with a single father. He is a father who struggles to provide the much-needed heartwarming moments his children desperately need because of his infinite struggles with his realities.

I struggled through my realities as the pages unfolded into a brilliant tapestry of what life is like when life-altering traumatic

events drop into life. Jude and Noah both need the love of their father. They both need to be understood.

They both need to matter.

They both need love.

Unfortunately, they've left to their own accord to cobble together the pieces they are becoming, hopefully, to find solace and a place allowing them to move forward in life.

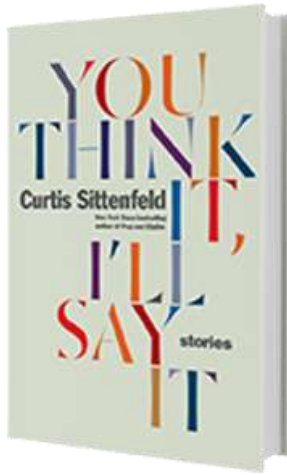
Jandy weaves an incredible journey, inviting us into the twin's lives. Jude and Noah's challenges tug at readers' heartstrings, alternating emotions between cheering and jeering for the foolish decisions they make.

The book twists and turns in a soul-searching, violently, and is full of denial, leading down an exhilarating path ending when a bomb is dropped in the last few pages, leaving readers, at least me, with my mouth agape.

I loved this book, and I'm sure you will as well!

YOU THINK IT, I'LL SAY IT

CURTIS SITTENFELD



Politics → Unrequited Misguided-Love → Lust – Envy ++

How did the book make me feel/think?

Hello, Curtis.

My name is Lindsay.

It's a pleasure to meet you.

I like your outfit.

I find the base calming, the subtle splashes of colour intriguing.

You feel nice in my hands, firm.

If you don't mind, I think I'll crack you open and dive in headfirst.

Would you like to hang out for a few days, maybe a week?

You would - great!

Crap - can't escape politics. So, you had to start our date with a Trump-themed story?

I guess that's okay in one of the first chapters of my memoir, even I mention Trump.

Curtis, you seem to like to write about female-based themes. A tad odd, but it works swimmingly. Story one, two, three - all-female leads. What's going on, Curtis?

Do you wish you were a woman?

Better check the book jacket: Curtis, a woman, who knew? It makes sense now. I guess you knew, probably your mother. I'm thinking the fictitious cab driver, the fictional ""you"" had sex in the first chapter with – knew.

Lindsay, a man: who knew?

Keep sharing. Your stories flow effortlessly together. You got me. I'm in hook, line, and sinker. I want another page. I want another yarn. Your fictitious life keeps streaming forward. Middle age drops in a quagmire of ""what if?"" – it laments missed opportunities, denial, deceit, loneliness, revenge; all falling onto the delightfully weaved together stories you've dropped onto the pages as ""all of us.""

YOU THINK IT, I'LL SAY IT is charmingly nuanced storytelling. By the end of its juicy pages., you just might realize. As much as you've shared a book of fiction – the stories within are all about us. Regardless of gender. Regardless of age. Relatable to each of us. Whether or not we realize it.

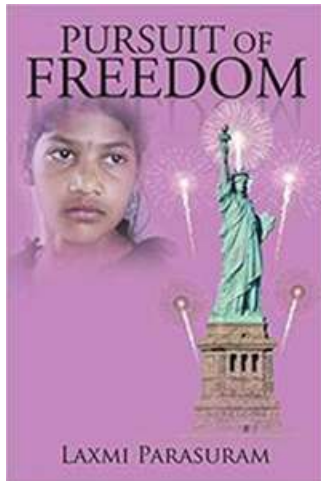
Politics → Unrequited Misguided-Love → Lust → Envy → Deception

Loneliness → Humour → Sadness → Acceptance

Thanks for the date, and I wish you the best, and I must let you go, and I think your dance card may have an exceptionally long waiting list!

PURSUIT OF FREEDOM

LAXMI PARASURAM



What's the difference between caste and the 1% elites?

How did the book make me feel/think?

Maya is 12 years old living in India. Maya is ripe for an arranged marriage and resists her planned destiny, finding the courage to want more, her own life to quench her thirst for knowledge, + fulfill a burning desire to be more.

The Pursuit of Freedom is an eye-opening journey into another world. A world most people have never been subjected to – the caste system of South East Asia; or the arranged marriages of many parts of the world. The story is set in the 1940s and winds through Maya's rising from the depths of a flawed norm –

resisting – fighting for change. The book's ending is in the 1960s.

Maya shows tremendous courage in fighting for her life. For a better way. She escaped the crippling captivity of 'caste' and 'arranged' and risks her being to strive for understanding. The Pursuit of Freedom simmers in the beginning chapters, to the point it caused me to cringe at a reality far from mine. As Maya escapes and travels to the United States, the story boils at a rollicking pace where she examines the essence of her soul.

I'd like to thank Laxmi Parasuraman for sharing this beautifully eloquent, multi-layered story about the toxic realities of this existence that likely is still brewing today. My mind sprung to the realities of her journey. How do you rewire something that has been the norm for centuries? How do you break a cycle of control and ownership when it is ingrained deep into the souls of men? Are cultures really that different? Is America's elite (the world elite) any different from those cultures we label misogynistic? Do the rich really mingle with the poor, or do they only need the poor to fatten their wallets?

The content of this gripping book without hesitation provides food for thought + highlights, at least to me, if we tear off our rose-coloured glasses, the first world has come a long way towards equality, but in reality, the large part of the road, has yet to have been travelled.

Maybe it is time for the next phase of evolution to begin, and more women need to be in charge of wiping the mess created by a patriarchal world.

WRITTEN: NOVEMBER 4, 2019