



JUNE 2016 HONEYBEE SUMMER BOOK LIST

Summer afternoon, summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.

- Henry James

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

Reality provides us with facts so romantic that imagination itself could add nothing to them.

- Jules Verne

It's a sunshine day.

- The Brady Bunch

Summer days, drifting away, tooo-ah! Oh those summer nights.

- Jacobs & Casey (or, for me, Newton-John and Travolta)

*Here comes the sun
And I say, it's all right.*

- The Beatles

Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.

- John Lubbock

SUMMER REFLECTIONS:

- **BECOMING WISE, Krista Tippett**

*If you are a fan of [Krista Tippett's radio show & podcast](#) (as we all surely should be), you will love this book. This is the wisdom drawn from Tippett's many years of conversations, and just like those conversations, her writing has a lovely way of moving from the deeply personal to the universal. Especially in these tumultuous times, as I find myself wondering about our most essential questions more and more often, these ideas are beacons. (Note: I am not often a fan of e-books, but in the electronic or audio versions of *Becoming Wise*, you have the benefit of hearing clips from many of Tippett's conversations instead of seeing them as quotes. This is nicely additive.)*

- **THE BAD-ASS LIBRARIANS OF TIMBUKTU, Joshua Hammer**

I'll admit it; I grabbed this book for the title alone, thinking it was a novel about secret superhero librarians who performed extraordinary feats. Turns out, it's even better: it's real! Here we have the story of Abdel Kader Haidara, archivist from Timbuktu, who spent years tracking down ancient texts and assembling a splendid library, only to see all of that work and all of those precious texts threatened by Al Qaeda. Haidara then leads the effort to sneak 350,000 volumes out of the city to safer spots in southern Mali. I've only just begun this book, but what a glorious story, and what a wonderful reminder of the many forms that heroes can take – especially in real life.

- **THE NEW GRAND STRATEGY, Mark Mykleby, Patrick Doherty, Joel Makower**

If you are queasy listening to all sides of our election talk, this book will help. It rises above politics, stepping back to reflect on what's changed in our world and what responses and mental models are most helpful now, versus 50-plus years ago. I first heard about these ideas in a [PopTech talk](#) that Mykleby and Wayne Porter delivered in 2011, and was immediately captivated. Here was a "new narrative" for the United States, a long-overdue revision of Eisenhower's vision in the 1950's, and it noted mega-shifts like "from control to credible influence". If you just skim the table of contents for the book, with headings like "regenerative agriculture" and "walkable communities" you might think it was written by your favorite greenies. But listen. This book stems from the report Mullen and Porter were assigned to devise for the Joint Chiefs. You know, the military. (Note: a handy short version of this content is reflected the [PopTech talk](#), and the [original report](#) is in some ways an even better read than the book.

SUMMER BUSINESS:

- **THE HARD THING ABOUT HARD THINGS, Ben Horowitz**

Horowitz is cofounder of VC firm Andreessen Horowitz and he's the one who led Loudcloud's transformation to Opsware back in the day. Here you have reflections from someone who has built and run businesses through challenging times, and who's also been a successful investor. That sounds obvious & maybe even commonplace, but this combination of experience is very rare, and it's what makes this book valuable. Horowitz does not talk about aiming for the stars, or living your dreams; he talks about what happens when your team has worked six months with no sleep and little pay and it looks like things will still fail. The book is not elegantly written or structured – it's more like a series of beers with a friend who likes to cuss – and of course it's not wise to extrapolate too far from any one person's unique experience. But I'd rather hear stories from someone who's really done something than from an eternal critic. (Note: If you'd like to follow Ben on an ongoing basis (or see the original material for the book), check out Ben's Blog: <http://www.bhorowitz.com/>)

- **THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS, Adam Smith**

I know, I know – “Seriously, Katherine? Adam Smith in the garden? On the beach? What's he doing on your summer reading list?!?” Well, summer's a good time to pick one or two essential ideas where I want to dive deeper instead of skating along the surface. I am so sick & tired of Smith's ideas being generalized and misconstrued... but that is where my argument stops, as I only have the Wikipedia-level, Econ-101 version of counterpoints. So look out, friends, I will be ready for debate by Labor Day.

SUMMER FICTION:

- **VINEGAR GIRL, Anne Tyler**

I'm a big fan of Anne Tyler and a big fan of [Taming of the Shrew](#), so this was an obvious pick for me: it's part of the Hogarth Shakespeare series, where modern authors riff on Shakespearean plays. This is a dangerous premise of course, mixing favorites – I like salsa and I like chocolate, but that does not mean chocolate salsa is a great idea. It's true, the original Shakespeare and the original Tyler are each better than this mash-up. However, Tyler's light and charming writing had me breezing through this book, and it had the same fun experimental feeling as [Pride and Prejudice and Zombies](#). (Note: if you prefer a 100% Tyler book, last year's [Spool of Blue Thread](#) is absolutely terrific. If you are looking for other Shrew remakes, the movie [10 Things I Hate About You](#) is my all-time favorite.)

- **HEAT & LIGHT, Jennifer Haigh**

I had the treat of meeting author Jennifer Haigh recently (thank you, [CueBall!](#)) and though we talked for half an hour about her writing and this new publication, she

somehow didn't assume that I should know she was already a bestselling author (though of course I should have). In our modern sea of mega-self-promotion, this alone is reason for admiration. This novel, like her previous [Baker Towers](#), is set in a Pennsylvania landscape that's familiar to me – prior coal country, now fracking central. More than any fracking investment report (pro or con), Haigh's story conveys the nuance and complexity and humanity that underpins this issue, and all others that are worthy of our attention. I can't wait to dive into her other books after this one.

- **[GOODNIGHT, BEAUTIFUL WOMEN](#), Anna Noyes**

Short stories are one of the great joys of summer – you can dive right in, and if the urge for a walk on the beach or a nap in the hammock kicks in, there's a handy stopping place just a few pages away. Anna Noyes' collection pulled me right in, especially as it's set in DownEast Maine, a place for which I have great affection. These are not sweet breezy tales, though. Each has a bit – or more than a bit - of life's tougher side, a heartbreaking undercurrent. Beautiful indeed.

SUMMERY NATURE READINGS:

- **[SUMMER WORLD](#), Bernd Heinrich**

I've taken to keeping a volume of Bernd Heinrich's always at hand – his books are like great short stories of nature, readable a few pages at a time or in big long gulps, all connected yet able to stand on their own as well. Perhaps this is because Heinrich is writing so beautifully about our natural world and its wonders – poetry plus science, fused together in the most wonderful way. He doesn't skip the less-pretty stuff – insects and frog reproduction feature prominently – but these parts are gorgeous, and fascinating.

- **[BRAIDING SWEETGRASS](#), Robin Kimmerer**

“Despite our fears of falling, the gifts of the world stand by to catch us.” I started each morning this spring with a few pages from this poetic book by Robin Kimmerer. Robin is a professor of environmental biology and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, and the combination of science, indigenous wisdom, and sheer love of our natural world shines through on every page. Whether you swim in a sea of digital data or in a pond hidden deep in the woods, you will find beauty and wisdom here. (Note: for video, see Robin's [Bioneers](#) talk. For Audio, listen to the terrific conversation with Krista Tippett at [OnBeing](#).)

- **[FOLLOWING THE WILD BEES](#), Tom Seeley**

By now you all know how much I admire honeybee researcher Tom Seeley – his [Honeybee Democracy](#) is the first book I recommend to anyone interested in bees. Here Seeley explores bee hunting, the wild sister of bee keeping. For anyone looking for a summer pastime to enjoy with your family, look no further. As Seeley explains, bee hunting is the perfect game: “it requires no costly equipment, can be

played alone or in a group, exercises both muscles and the brain, demands skill and persistence, builds suspense, and ends in either harmless disappointment or exhilarating triumph.” As always, there are many levels of meaning in this natural exploration – indeed, Seeley concludes with the words of Henry David Thoreau, “in Wildness is the preservation of the world.” Whether you hunt bees in the woods or in your mind, this book is an invaluable guide.

ANNIVERSARY SERIES:

- **THE MOVIEGOER, Walker Percy**

This is the 100th anniversary of Walker Percy’s birth – what better time to re-read The Moviegoer? Turns out this is the favorite book of not one but two of my dearest friends, and like all good stories, it reveals more each time ‘round. On this turn I noticed, “he is no more aware of the mystery which surrounds him than a fish is aware of the water it swims in” – which of course brought to mind [This is Water](#) by the great David Foster Wallace. A seemingly quick read, but with layer after layer to explore.

- **THE METAMORPHOSIS, Franz Kafka**

Can you believe this book is 100 years old? 101, to be exact. It’s hard to say anything of value regarding such a classic, so I’ll just note that this time through I focused on the relationship of Gregor and his sister Grete, which revealed some different observations and questions than I’d ever had before. If you are going to watch a TV show tonight, consider reading this instead – it’s less than 50 pages, and much more gripping than a CSI re-run. (Note: to continue the mash-up theme, listen to the Kafka-inspired [Samsa & Seuss](#) by the extraordinary David Rakoff.)

- **THE VEGETARIAN, Han Kang**

I’m pairing my revisit of The Metamorphosis with a newer novel, The Vegetarian (big thanks to [Bilal Hafeez](#) for this idea). Mesmerizing and creepy, author Han Kang reminds me a little of Kafka, a little of Haruki Murakami. The first third of the novel (it’s told in 3 parts) is by far the most compelling, but it’s the end of the story that highlights how fragile we all are. I’m not sure this is the most well-crafted book I’ll read this year, but it might be the most haunting.

DEATH OF A NATURALIST – Seamus Heaney

Every spring during peeper-frog season I re-read this poem, and I can hardly believe that it is already 50 years old. “The great slime kings”!

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied
Specks to range on window sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst, into nimble
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:

The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

A NOTE ON BOOKSELLERS:

Alert readers may have noticed that many of our links connect you with a Very Large Online Retailer, and indeed, we appreciate that this retailer provides terrific customer service and helpful product detail. We are also loyal patrons of local booksellers, of course (most especially Brookline Booksmith)! In fact, one of my favorite ways to get to know a new area is to seek out its bookstore and its coffeeshop (sometimes one and the same). The IndieBound organization can help you find these local booksellers wherever you may be – and if you are an e-loving person, they have handy online functions too.

<http://Brooklinebooksmith.com>

<http://www.indiebound.org>

***If you have a garden and a library,
you have everything you need.***

- Cicero