



DECEMBER 2015 YEAR END BOOK LIST 2015

We are delighted to present the Honeybee book list for 2015! As you will all know by now, we find great joy in following our curiosity, exploring. Sometimes this takes the form of actual exploration, out in the world, or inside our own heads and hearts. But sometimes the best way to explore is by diving deep into a book. I might not ever create an award-winning TV series or train a goshawk or command a hollow monster, but I can get the tiniest glimpse of what it might be like by reading, and then, what if...? Two of my favorite words: What. If.

Happy reading and happy holidays to all!

“Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home.”

- Anna Quindlen

“A book, too, can be a star.... A living fire to lighten the darkness, leading out into the expanding universe.”

- Madeleine L'Engle

EXPLORATIONS IN INVESTING & DECISION MAKING

SUPERFORECASTING, by Phil Tetlock

Who doesn't want to be super, or at least a better forecaster? Tetlock explains what makes some people and teams terrific at forecasting, and suggests that we can all learn to be better at it. For example, we are pretty bad at keeping score, especially over long periods of time – this leads to honoring pundits who “are very good at appearing to go out on a limb without actually doing so.” Beware, this book probably will not make you a superforecaster. But it will help you to understand why most of us aren't, and to think about how we might incentivize better, healthier, less polarized debate.

[ZERO TO ONE](#), by Peter Thiel

I have to admit, I held off reading this book for a long time – for one thing, I really like school, and hearing so many people adopt Thiel’s anti-college arguments was bugging me. (Yes, this is a petty reason to reject a person’s other thoughtful ideas – no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater.) This book illuminates the key differences between zero-sum, incremental business thinking and additionality, grow-the-pie, or better yet, invent-a-new-dessert thinking. If you’re a west coast entrepreneur, please be aware that these are not the only essential questions for business. If you’re an east coast big-company person, this is a great summary of the current Bay Area mindset. I make both of these sweeping statements with great respect & affection!

EXPLORATIONS IN SPIRIT & CREATIVITY

[BIG MAGIC: CREATIVE LIVING BEYOND FEAR](#), by Elizabeth Gilbert

No matter how enthusiastic, how curious, how independent-minded we are, some days we just need a great big pep talk. Are you sure you’re not playing it safe, no matter how good the results might be? There’s a time for temperance and caution, sure, but there’s also a time for diving in, for exploring the nooks that seem a little crazy or scary or, well, amazing. Need a little nudge? Elizabeth Gilbert reminds you of your own greatness.

[GRATITUDE](#), by Oliver Sacks

If I have seen you in recent weeks, there is a very good chance I have handed you this slim little volume, a compilation of a number of Oliver Sacks’ final essays, including his candid, beautiful reflections on the end of his own life.

“Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure.”

I highly recommend combining this small volume with Dr. Sacks’ longer memoir, [ON THE MOVE: A Life](#).

EXPLORATIONS OF HUMANITY - PERSONAL STORIES

[YEAR OF YES](#), by Shonda Rhimes

It is pretty flippin’ hard not to gush about all Shonda Rhimes has created: Grey’s Anatomy AND Scandal AND How to Get Away with Murder, for a start. Now she has created this wonderful book too, a book that is honest and nuanced and un-sugarcoated. Illustrating the power of yes is important, but Rhimes also shows how hard it is to actually say yes, even to the things we want most. And it can be complicated – a Yes in one area might require a No someplace else. It might even cause pain to loved ones. And yet.... Yes.

[THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING](#), by Colum McCann

McCann is somehow able to write about sorrow in a way that is beautiful and even hopeful (of course I credit this to his Irishness). This collection of a novella and three short stories has echoes of the beautiful prose and New York settings of [Let The Great World Spin](#) – reading this latest work is like reconnecting with an old friend, where you have the combination of shared history and new, yet-to-be-told stories.

[BETWEEN THE WORLD & ME](#), by Ta-Nehisi Coates

It’s clear that we’ve created a series of unhelpful, often painful boxes regarding race in America: boxes of closed communities, boxes of forbidden subjects, boxes of locked-up emotion and experience, boxes of actual boxes on forms and charts and reports. Perhaps most important, it can be hard for each of us to peer over the edge of our own box in order

to understand the broader landscape. One of our longstanding Honeybee themes is “bridges over boxes”, and this book is a whole series of bridges, about a whole series of boxes. Vital.

You can also see Coates’ writing for *The Atlantic* here:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/author/ta-nehisi-coates/>

MY KITCHEN YEAR, by Ruth Reichl

*Technically this is a cookbook, but it’s also a story, a story of loss and recovery. Reichl (foodie legend and editor in chief of *Gourmet*), chronicles the year after the magazine’s abrupt closing, focusing on her own kitchen and the dishes that marked her own evolution, from shock to grief to beyond.*

EXPLORATIONS OF OUR WORLD – SCIENCE & NATURE

H IS FOR HAWK, by Helen Macdonald

I tore through this terrific book over the summer, and kept thinking, “this is a wintery novel – it should be read under lots of blankets, or by a fire as the sun sets before supper’s even been served.” Well, surprise – it’s not a novel at all! Helen’s nonfiction account of hawk training is mesmerizing, and it swoops in and out of the narrative of her own life like the bird at its center. An interesting companion to [My Kitchen Year](#), noted above.

DARK MATTER & THE DINOSAURS: The Astounding Interconnectedness of the Universe, by Lisa Randall

Randall is a theoretical physicist and professor of Science at Harvard, and I admire that, like many terrific scientists, Randall is eager to acknowledge all that we don’t yet understand. You have got to love a person who hears the Beatles lyric “Got to be good looking, because he’s so hard to see” and relates it to dark matter and the extinction of the dinosaurs.

A more in-depth review of the book can be found from BrainPickings’ Maria Popova here: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/11/28/dark-matter-and-the-dinosaurs-lisa-randall/> And a terrific OnBeing podcast with Randall can be found here:

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/lisa-randall-dark-matter-and-the-astounding-interconnectedness-of-everything/8100>

LANDMARKS, by Robert MacFarlane

*Do you remember learning that there are thirty-two words for rain in Ireland, or sixty-three ways to say “dark” in Finland, or eighteen versions of “hot” in Thailand? I’m not sure how accurate these individual claims are, but the idea that language reflects the world around us – and values it by doing so - is a powerful one. *Landmarks* sets out to catalogue the language of landscape in Britain, “to sing the world back into being”. Fa-la-la! I find myself saying these magical descriptive words out loud as I read, as if they are incantations. Which, perhaps, they are.*

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/08/landmarks-review-robert-macfarlane>

EXPLORATION OF OTHER WORLDS – FICTION & POETRY

FELICITY, by Mary Oliver

I cannot pass up anything Mary Oliver writes, and this is no exception. The poems here are beautiful, provocative, and often tinged with impatience or even melancholy. “There are moments that cry out to be fulfilled...” This slim little volume is a great companion to Oliver Sacks’ [Gratitude](#), noted above – or combine it with [Red Bird](#) or [Why I Wake Early](#), two other Oliver favorites.

DUNE, by Frank Herbert

In our summer reading update I noted that I was revisiting some older books on their anniversary years – Dune is 50 years old! It’s a little spooky to report that the storyline here does not seem so farfetched in our drought-ridden world. And all these years after the initial reading, I remain enchanted by the idea of a rebel force that is healing our planet by working with its own assets instead of against them – riding sandworms and planting secret gardens.

FATES & FURIES, by Lauren Groff

We all have a few “book friends”, people whose reading recommendations we trust implicitly. Not one, not two, but three of my dearest book friends have urged me to read this novel, and they aren’t alone, as it’s also a National Book Award finalist. So, this one is first on my list for holiday break.

LIBRARY OF SOULS, by Ransom Riggs

This is the third and final installment in the Miss Peregrine series by Riggs, which we’ve mentioned before. It’s like Harry Potter meets the Land of Misfit Toys (coming from me, this is a compliment). If I had a pre-teen in my life, we’d read this together.

THE NEOPOLITAN SERIES, by Elena Ferrante

Ferrante’s series has kept me company through much of the last year, as I worked my way through all four of her books. Like any good fiction, it got to the point where the characters were as familiar as actual people in my own life. I’d find myself walking along the river wondering, how is Lenu doing? And then, happily, realized I could just go home and turn the page to find out. If you have ever had a long-lasting, complicated relationship – to a person, to a place, to an idea – you will appreciate these books.

“Picking five favorite books is like picking the five body parts you’d most like not to lose.”

- Neil Gaiman

“I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.”

- Jorge Luis Borges

“Beware of the person of one book.”

- Thomas Aquinas

“A room without books is like a body without a soul.”

- Cicero

And lest you think we are a little *too* bookish....

“So much of what I see reminds me of something I read in a book, when shouldn’t it be the other way around?”

– Meg Ryan as Kathleen Kelly, in You’ve Got Mail

