



### ***Robocalypse* ~ Daniel H. Wilson**

In case it's not obvious enough from the title and book cover this book is about killer robots. There's nothing original about this novel, in fact the plot about an artificial intelligence bent on annihilating human kind is extremely similar to the Terminator franchise. That said, I loved this book. The author is a robotics expert and he does a credible job of creating a believable world where even your car wants you dead.



### ***Matterhorn* ~ Karl Marlantes**

It's a beautiful thing to completely lost and engrossed in a story and *Matterhorn* pulled me right into the world of the Vietnam War as seen through the eyes of a junior Lieutenant. The author spent over 40 years writing this and based it on his own experiences. He does an amazing job of giving you a sense of the horror of jungle warfare.



### ***White Lung* ~ Grant Buday**

In *White Lung* Grant Buday explores the gritty working class side of Vancouver seldom seen in Canadian literature. This is a hilariously informative look at life in a mass production bakery. I find the term "darkly humorous" gets bandied about a little too easily but this novel is indeed dark (it starts off with our flawed hero torching a baker) and very funny (because arson is funny, right?). Not only did *White Lung* keep me entertained and laughing, it introduced me to an industrial side of our city I barely knew existed.



### ***The Man Who Killed* ~ Fraser Nixon**

This is a book filled with bad people doing even worse things. There is very little in the way of decent or at all redeeming characters (other than Houdini who makes a brief but fascinating appearance,) and yet somehow this novel set in late 1920's Montreal works. The novel is narrated by Mick who's got to be one of fiction's greatest anti-heroes. I thoroughly enjoyed reading of his exploits at booze running and armed robbery all set against the vivid landscape of a time and place that the author has obviously painstakingly researched.



### ***The Dewey Decimal System* ~ Nathan Larson**

This fantastic debut novel is set against an eerily empty and ravaged Manhattan. I never really figured out what happened to the city (or indeed the rest of the world) nor did I care because this vaguely dystopian book is really about Dewey, a mysterious hit man with a moral compass of sorts. When tasked to off a Russian construction mogul, Dewey finds himself embroiled in a web of deceit being played off numerous shady characters.



### ***Murder at the Academy Awards* ~ Joan Rivers**

Joan Rivers' humour transfers well to fiction in this surprisingly well written and very light-hearted mystery. While covering the Academy Awards, Maxine Taylor (Joan Rivers' alter ego) witnesses the death of a young troubled starlet and suspects foul play. What follows is a hilarious caper that keeps you laughing but still interested in knowing the outcome to the whodunit. This is the perfect book for a mystery lover who's looking for something a little lighter than Stieg Larsson.



### ***The Passage ~ Justin Cronin***

This is a big book not just in size but in scope. You are really getting three books in one, each with a unique feel and some that I liked better than others. Though I think it could have used more editing and I was left more than a little confused by the end, there is so much to like about this fascinating take on the vampire myth that I would still readily recommend it. Vampires and post-apocalyptic settings are both incredibly popular plot devices at the moment but Cronin does an excellent job combining the two into a riveting and unique novel.



### ***Bright Shiny Morning ~ James Frey***

James Frey may be notorious for his memoir but it's a shame that he's largely been overlooked as a novelist as this is a fantastic piece of fiction. Every now and then I come across a book that conveys a sense of place so well that I feel compelled to jump on a plane and visit the setting immediately and Frey does exactly that with Los Angeles in this book. This is a big novel in size and also scope, it does a fantastic job of tracking the trajectory of a huge cast of characters as they make their way in the city. The story of the homeless man in Venice beach is just as compelling as that of the Tom Cruise like movie star.



### ***Marching Powder ~ Rusty Young and Thomas McFadden***

Thomas McFadden's experience doing time in San Pedro prison is a horribly fascinating look at a penal system like no other. When he was imprisoned for drug trafficking he was shocked to learn that everything in the prison came at a price: poor prisoners lived cramped in dungeon-like rooms while wealthy ones could purchase two level apartments complete with transferable property titles. McFadden ended up making a living giving tours of the facility (he and the prison were profiled in the Lonely Planet Guidebook) which is where Rusty Young met him and decided to tell his story. This is a poignant and heart wrenching look a justice system gone horribly wrong.



### ***The Devil in the White City ~ Erik Larson***

At the heart of this book is the World's Fair of 1893 in Chicago, a fascinating time and place. Chicago was just coming into its own as America's second city and the Fair came at a time of great technological strides. This in itself would make interesting reading but what makes this book great is the story of the architect who brought the Fair to life and the brilliant and psychopathic killer who built a hotel with the specific purpose of preying on the droves of tourists visiting the city to see the Fair. This is easily one of the best pieces of non-fiction I have ever had the pleasure of reading.



### ***Hell ~ Robert Olen Butler***

Hell may be no laughing matter but Robert Olen Butler's treatment of the subject is devilishly funny (sorry, I couldn't help myself.) Life in Hell is no picnic but former television newscaster Hatcher McCord does have a couple of things going for him. For one thing he's been able to stay in the same profession as when he was alive – he's Hell's official anchorman. He also doesn't suffer from loneliness as it seems that virtually everyone who has ever died is there as well. This is a hilarious and imaginative take on a decidedly unpleasant place.



### ***Asterix* ~ R. Goscinny and A. Uderzo**

Though the popularity of the graphic novel is relatively new to North America, they have long been popular in Europe and Asterix has been entertaining kids and adults since the 1960s. The premise is simple and endearing (and even very slightly educational); in 50 BC, most of France has been subjugated by Rome but a small village remains independent thanks to a magic potion that gives the Gauls super strength. At the heart of the story are Asterix and his best friend Obelix and their comical escapades involving various aspects of Roman history. Like *Bone* these books work well for children around eight years old and up but they are equally compelling for adult readers.



### ***Sleepless* ~ Charlie Huston**

There are dozens of excellent post-apocalyptic novels but *Sleepless* is the first novel I've come across that deals with the beginning of the end. A devastating disease has appeared that causes the afflicted to suffer from severe insomnia and ultimately death. There is no cure but there is a drug called Dreamer that gives the suffering a temporary reprieve by allowing them to sleep. This powerful novel revolves around a dedicated cop who has been tasked with stopping the illegal dealing of Dreamer while struggling with a wife diagnosed with the disease and a police force that is slowly disintegrating along with the rest of the world. All of this is set in a Los Angeles on the brink of collapse and a world where there is a slow but steady increase in those infected with the virus. Charlie Huston does a fantastic job of imagining how the beginning of the world's demise might play out.



### ***The Unnamed* ~ Joshua Ferris**

It was the premise that drew me to this fantastically unique novel – a successful trial lawyer is afflicted with an unheard of disease that compels him to walk without any ability to stop himself. I chuckled when I first read the back cover blurb but as I got pulled into the book I found myself agonizing over the fate of a man who would routinely wake up in freezing cold alleys after passing out from exhaustion from a marathon walk he was powerless to stop. Joshua Ferris doesn't rely solely on the medical condition to carry the novel, there is an intriguing subplot about a murder trial and the author even inserts some raunchy humour reminiscent of Chuck Palahniuk. This novel is an unusual and beautifully written page turner.



### ***The Warmth of Other Suns* ~ Isabel Wilkerson**

Until I picked up this book I had never heard of the Great Migration. I had the vague knowledge that starting during the first World War a large number of African Americans had moved from the south to the north in search of newly available jobs in the factories, but Isabel Wilkerson does a great job of portraying a much more profound and widespread movement of African Americans escaping the Jim Crow South. From 1915 to 1970 close to six million African Americans fled a place far more repressive than I had ever conceived. The author interviewed hundreds of people to paint a picture of a world where African Americans could not vote, could not testify in court and would frequently be beaten to death for the smallest perceived slight against a white person.



### ***Tragedy at Second Narrows ~ Eric Jamieson***

In my lifetime I've probably driven across the Second Narrows Bridge hundreds of times. I was aware that it had collapsed during construction in the 50's but this is the type of information and history that most of us don't truly process (it would make crossing bridges a lot more stressful if we thought about them falling apart beneath us.) Eric Jamieson does an excellent job of bringing this enormous tragedy to life, describing the events leading up to the bridge's design and construction and, most importantly, bringing to life the stunning story of the collapse itself, the loss of life and the dramatic rescues of the fortunate ones who survived to tell their story.



### ***Billy Boyle: A World War II Mystery ~ James R. Benn***

This is the first in a series of World War II mysteries that I've become addicted to...and for good reason! Billy Boyle is a Boston Irish cop with no love for the British and no desire to die fighting their war. It turns out General Eisenhower is an obscure relation and Billy figures he's getting a safe desk job working for Eisenhower, but that would make a pretty boring read. Billy finds himself acting as a special investigator for "Uncle Ike" and this book has him chasing a spy in the Norwegian government which is in exile in England.



### ***The Hunger Games ~ Suzanne Collins***

This is ostensibly a teen novel but this thrilling and gritty dystopian book kept me turning the pages eagerly (my wife also loved it and we seldom agree on books so that's saying something). Set in an unrecognizable North America of the distant future, the book follows 16 year old Katniss as she is forced to participate in the annual "Hunger Games," a televised fight to the death that pits several teens against each other in an elaborate controlled environment. If that sounds odd and disturbing, it is; sort of a sick coming of age ritual meets a Roman gladiator scene but the author pulls it off well and manages to create a disturbingly rich possible future that had me craving the next two books in the trilogy.



### ***I Thought You Were Dead ~ Pete Nelson***

Paul Gustavson is the sort pathetic but entertaining protagonist that I never get tired of reading about. His career as a writer of "For Morons" books pays the bills but isn't very fulfilling, he still hasn't gotten over his wife leaving him and he has to compete for his girlfriend's affections with another man. All of this has been covered in novels thousands of times but what really makes the book different is the shining light in Paul's life, his dog Stella. Stella can talk but that point isn't over-hyped and it feels quite natural in the context of the book. The dog is truly Paul's best friend and their relationship and conversations are truly beautiful and make the book unique and worth reading.



### ***Horns ~ Joe Hill***

A year after losing his girlfriend to a brutal murder, Ig is no closer to getting over her death. Of course it doesn't help that the murderer has not been caught and everyone thinks that Ig did it. And if all of that wasn't bad enough, Ig wakes up one morning to find he's grown horns and acquired demonic powers. This is the first book I've read by Joe Hill and I was impressed, the book is a creepy thriller, a page-turning mystery and a darkly humorous novel all thrown into one.



### ***The Fall Of The Berlin Wall ~ William F. Buckley Jr.***

I was in my early teens when the wall came down and in truth I didn't pay a lot of attention to the news – I don't think I really grasped just how significant an event it was. Lucky for me then that William F. Buckley Jr. has written this fantastic book. Buckley does an excellent job laying out the history of Berlin under communist rule. This book doesn't just cover the fall of the wall it does a great job of explaining the creation of it and life in the shadow of it. It also explains the politics of the time while still covering the more personal stories of those who made it across and the unfortunate ones who died trying.



### ***Dear American Airlines ~ Jonathan Miles***

This entire novel unfolds as a complaint letter to American Airlines. Bennie Ford is a slightly bitter middle-aged man who finds himself stranded at O'Hare airport in Chicago on the way to the wedding of a daughter he barely knows. To pass the time he begins a complaint letter that turns into a memoir, confession and darkly humorous tirade against his airline tormentors.



### ***Waiter Rant ~ Steve Dublanica***

Personalities such as Gordon Ramsay and Anthony Bourdain have done much to raise the profile of chefs and create an intense interest in the world of restaurants but until now all the interest has been focused on the kitchen. Steve Dublanica turns the attention to the front of the house in this entertaining, hilarious and, yes, educational book on the world of restaurant servers. The author covers the obvious things like how much to tip, the worst times to dine out and how to really piss off your server but he also does a good job of conveying his love/hate relationship with the profession.



### ***Free ~ Chris Anderson***

Chris Anderson does a great job of exploring the concept, history and relevance of *free*. The book works well as a conventional business title: strong arguments are made for the power of free things to deliver profits. (Google being the largest example and a company the author talks about extensively). Even if you have no interest in business books, there's plenty in this to entertain, Anderson even explains the history and significance of the phrase "there's no such thing as a free lunch."



### ***The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo ~ Stieg Larsson***

We've long depended on the Swedes for ultra safe automobiles and stylish yet inexpensive furniture but in the last few years they have earned a much deserved reputation for literary mysteries. You might not have heard of Stieg Larsson yet but he was the second best selling author internationally last year and it's all because of this, the first book in a gripping new trilogy. Sadly the author passed away before he could enjoy the accolades his books have received.



### ***Why Your World Is About To Get A Whole Lot Smaller ~ Jeff Rubin***

Oil scarcity is a topic that's been written about almost as much as global warming but it's seldom made for interesting reading until Jeff Rubin came along. The author lays out compelling arguments for the fact that the era of cheap oil is gone for good and that rising energy prices are the real reason behind our current recession. Jeff Rubin is a distinguished economist but he's also a very gifted writer, this subject matter could easily be dull in other hands but the book was breezy and engaging throughout.



### ***City of Thieves* ~ David Benioff**

Would it be too cheesy to say this is the best novel I've read in ages? Too bad because I've already said it! David Benioff has taken the true story of his grandparents' experience of the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War and turned it into an unforgettable novel. In a city, literally starving to death, our teenage hero faces execution for looting unless he can procure a dozen eggs for a powerful KGB colonel.



### ***World Made by Hand* ~ James Howard Kunstler**

The dangers of peak oil were justified and the world has slowly retreated into itself as it runs out of the oil it depends on to function. That is the premise of James Howard Kunstler's excellent new novel. This isn't a grim post apocalyptic view of the future, instead Kunstler has created a realistic world that has had to re-invent itself to cope with its new circumstances.



### ***The Beats: A Graphic History* ~ Harvey Pekar & others**

How many times have I cursed the absence of a well drawn and written comprehensive comic book history of the Beats? Well frankly, never, but this beautifully drawn and well written book by Harvey Pekar and Ed Piskor is still really cool. For a relatively slim a graphic novel, there is a ton of interesting content well worth reading even for those well read on the subject. There are biographies of all the big names from Kerouac to Corso but there are plenty of lesser known figures covered as well.



### ***Madness, Betrayal and the Lash* ~ Stephen R. Bown**

Captain George Vancouver doesn't seem to have been a very likeable guy (see the title) but Stephen R. Bown's account of Vancouver's life and his critical voyage proves his importance to Canadian and British history. Bown portrays a fascinating period on North America's Pacific Coast; he does a wonderful job of explaining the conflicts that ensued between Native, English and Spanish interests and how Vancouver was in the centre of it all. I remember Canadian history being as dull as dishwater but it's brought to life in this book.



### ***Bayou of Pigs* ~ Stewart Bell**

This is the story of a small country that I had never heard of (Dominica, not to be mistaken with the island of Dominica). The early 1980s was a time of political upheaval throughout the Caribbean and allowed a shady American mercenary and a prominent Canadian white supremacist to plot the overthrow of Dominica and to install a puppet regime that would allow them to begin exploit the island as they saw fit. What's even more incredible is that they allied themselves with extreme Rastafarians influenced by the Black Power movement! Stewart Bell has discovered a fascinating little known piece of history and spun it into an intriguing book that is well worth reading.



### ***The World Without Us* ~ Alan Weisman**

What would happen to the earth if humans suddenly ceased to exist? It's an intriguing premise and Alan Weisman does an excellent job exploring it. Talking to engineers, biologists and other experts, Weisman fascinates us with speculation as to the fate of plant life, animals and buildings. He even finds unique places such as the de-militarized zones of Cypress and Korea with no human habitation to get a real example of what happens when humans disappear.



### ***Tunnels* ~ Roderick Gordon & Brian Williams**

Will Burrows is a loner with a fascination for digging tunnels that he shares with his historian father. It's an innocent enough hobby until he stumbles upon a hidden underworld society (picture *The Secret World of Og* with none of the levity and a lot more terror). The authors have written a compelling thriller for kids that works just as well as a subterranean thriller for adults.



### ***The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming* ~ Lemony Snicket**

Lemony Snicket has created a true modern Holiday classic. I use the term "Holiday" not for the sake of being PC but for the fact that it's a Hanukkah book masquerading as a Christmas one (look at the subtitle). Illustrator Lisa Brown brings our beloved latke to life as he runs through a wintry village confronting those who can not comprehend his faith or Hanukkah. This book begs to be read aloud, it's filled with wit and humour for adults and children and works for both Christmas and Hanukkah.



### ***Holidays on Ice* ~ David Sedaris**

This has always been one of my favourite Sedaris titles and certainly one of the funniest Christmas books ever written. It has now been updated and turned into an even better book with the addition of six new stories, one of which (*Six to Eight Black Men*) is even better than any of the original stories and worth the price of the book alone.



### ***Stuff White People Like* ~ Christian Lander**

This book is hilarious until you realize how painfully accurate it is. A random flip through it had me chuckling at all those other silly "whiteys" and how brilliantly Christian Lander mocks them, but then came the fateful page that hit too close to home followed by many more. Whether you're a white person not afraid to laugh at yourself or just white-curious, this book is worth a read.



### ***Crooked Little Vein* ~ Warren Ellis**

If Hunter S. Thompson and Chuck Palahniuk had teamed up to write a mystery novel they might have created something similar to this brilliant piece of fiction. Our narrator is your typical down and out private investigator with the world's worst luck, and that's before a heroin addicted US Secretary of State shows up at his office. Next thing he knows, our hero is off on a cross country odyssey in search of a secret backup constitution. Warren Ellis has created a witty, depraved and highly entertaining little novel.



### ***Shantaram* ~ Gregory David Roberts**

This is one of the most compelling and entertaining novels I've read in some time, the size is daunting but Shantaram had me entranced within the first few pages. The author has created an epic fictionalized page turner out of his own life; after escaping prison in Australia he flees to Bombay and quickly falls in love with the chaos of the city and its inhabitants. This is a novel of the slums and the criminal underworld with a little bit of Bollywood and the Afghan Soviet war thrown in.



### ***The Hot Kid* ~ Elmore Leonard**

This book was meant for summer reading and Elmore Leonard has really outdone himself. The 1930s of this novel aren't full of impoverished farmers or ruined stockbrokers, instead we get evil bank robbers and an Oklahoma Marshall who shoots to kill and never misses. Literature it ain't, but *The Hot Kid* may just be the best escapist novel I've ever read.



### ***Riding Toward Everywhere* ~ William T. Vollman**

Have you ever dreamed of living a hobo lifestyle and hopping trains? Well me neither, but I really enjoyed reading about William T. Vollmann doing it. Writing with a peculiar, eccentric charm, Vollmann gives a glimpse of a dying lifestyle.



### ***Spin* ~ Robert Charles Wilson**

I like the idea of science fiction but rarely read it as I usually find it to be overly technical or wildly over the top. *Spin* is an intriguing story with good cross-over appeal to readers who would normally never touch the genre (even my wife loved it and her idea of sci-fi is *The Time Traveller's Wife*). The book revolves around three closely connected people and their pivotal role in a world that is suddenly encircled by a global shield by an unknown entity. The story always feels plausible, and the relationship between the main characters is as interesting as the science fiction element of the book.



### ***The First Man-Made Man* ~ Pagan Kennedy**

I picked this up based on the fact that Laura Dillon was the first woman to become a man (her name changed to Michael), a fact pretty interesting in its own right. Though the sex change and the obvious difficulties facing a transgendered person in the 1950s are the crux of the story, it's really just the tip of the iceberg. Michael also met and fell in love with one of the first men to become a woman and then fled to the Tibetan border region of India to become a Buddhist monk. This is one of the best and most unique biographies I've ever had the pleasure to read.



### ***Uncommon Carriers* ~ John McPhee**

For all those of us that have stared in rapt fascination as a big rig drives by or dream of being an engineer on a freight train (I can't be the only one) comes this riveting account of trains, planes and really big trucks and the people who drive them. This is a riveting look at professions most of us know nothing about, the chapter on UPS and their distribution centre is surprisingly informative and explains just what happens to your laptop when you send it back for servicing.



### ***Jesus Land* ~ Julia Scheeres**

There's no point lying about it, parts of this memoir are agonizing to get through, it's the kind of the book that needs to be put down now and then to take a deep breath but at the same time you can't wait to pick up again. Being a teenager is never easy but Julia and her adopted black brother David have to suffer through 1980's rural Indiana a time and place plagued with racism. If that's not bad enough they also have to endure abusive and distant parents and I haven't even gotten to the worse part of the book yet... All that said, this is a brilliant memoir, the author has a compelling style that makes you want to race through the book in spite of the unpleasant subject matter.



### ***Gates of Fire* ~ Steven Pressfield**

True, it does have a cheesy cover, but this is one of the best historical novels I have ever read. The book is set around the battle of Thermopylae in Northern Greece, fought between a massive Persian army and a tiny force of Spartans. Told through the eyes of a Spartan society as fascinating as the battle itself.



### ***Lullaby* ~ Chuck Palahniuk**

Take a very disturbed reporter, introduce him to a haunted house real estate agent, then throw in her witch receptionist and her con artist boyfriend. Then put them all on a quest to eradicate a deadly lullaby. Part thriller with a little bit of love story and all weird, this book is amazing!



### ***The Queen and I* ~ Sue Townsend**

When a Republican party is elected in the UK, the Queen and the rest of the monarchy find themselves on the dole and living in a low cost housing estate. What follows is a hilarious read as fun as any of the *Adrian Mole* novels.



### ***Santa's Twin* ~ Dean Koontz**

I was more than a little surprised when this was first published, it's not every day that a well known horror writer does a children's Christmas book! I consider myself somewhat of an expert on Christmas literature and I think that this book is up there with Dylan Thomas. Written entirely in rhyming couplets, Koontz spins a darkly funny story of Santa's evil twin. This book begs to be read aloud.



### ***afterlands* ~ Steven Heighton**

Steven Heighton describes this book as an Arctic adventure set mostly in Mexico. It's a hard one to review or classify, but it's an awesome read! Heighton begins with a set of real individuals as characters – 19 people stranded on an ice floe in the Arctic for several months in the winter of 1872 – then deftly fictionalizes their stories into a moving, dramatic adventure. We are narrated to by Tyson, the supposed hero of the ordeal, and Kruger, the supposed villain. What is revealed through Heighton's sensitive retelling of their story is that such definitive dividing lines are not easily drawn. After leaving the ice, we follow Kruger through war-ravaged Cormac McCarthy-esque Mexico to an emotional ending.



### ***The Littlest Hitler* ~ Ryan Boudinot**

Don't let the fact that it's a short story collection deter you, this is one of the funniest and most original books I've read in a long time. Fans of Dave Eggers, Chuck Palahniuk or Kurt Vonnegut will love the quirky and pleasantly deranged writing style Boudinot brings to his stories.



### ***Cast of Shadows* ~ Kevin Guilfoile**

Kevin Guilfoile takes a fascinating premise and turns it into one of the most clever page-turners I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Davis Moore is a fertility doctor with the ability to clone a child for parents who can't conceive naturally. When his own daughter is brutally raped and murdered, he clones the murderer and places the child with clients who think they are getting their own cloned child. This is the best thriller you've never heard of.



### ***The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* ~ Bill Bryson**

This book is funny, and I'm not talking about a few mild chuckles every few pages, this book is laugh so hard on the bus that everybody thinks you're crazy funny. Bill Bryson has taken an overdone genre (what's with all the memoirs these days anyway?) and created a fabulous look at childhood in 1950's Middle America. I'm probably one of the few people in the world who has visited the tourism website of the city of Des Moines, Iowa but that's how good a writer Bryson is. I found myself desperately wanting to visit a time and place that sadly now only exists in the confines of this excellent volume.



### ***The Traveler* ~ John Twelve Hawkes**

Though the plot of *The Traveler* has much in common with *The Matrix* (& *Star Wars*, for that matter), it's also incredibly entertaining & the author's reasons for writing are unique. He's concerned about people's loss of personal privacy and its impact on our lives. That said, this is not a serious book, it's a tightly paced thriller about 'Travelers', people who have a unique gift that allows them to travel to other dimensions and the sword packing heroic fighters that defend them. I loved every word.



### ***The Tiger Claw* ~ Shauna Singh Baldwin**

Noor Inayat Khan is a complex woman; of American and Muslim Indian origins she was raised in France and finds herself in England when the Germans seize France. Wanting to find her now interred Jewish lover, she volunteers to go to France as a spy for the British. The story plays out against the seldom told struggle for Indian independence and the role Churchill and Britain had in it.



### ***Neither Here Nor There* ~ Bill Bryson**

Just read the quotes on the back of this book to get sold on this one! Bill Bryson writes with a slightly skeptical yet outrageously funny point of view. Each chapter of the book covers a different part of Europe and Bryson covers all the bases!



### ***The Kite Runner* ~ Khaled Hosseini**

Hosseini has written a riveting novel about the childhood of two boys in 1970s Afghanistan and one man's return there during the Taliban rule. This book has all the tender moments of a coming of age novel with all the horror and heartache of a sweeping epic.



### ***The Cripple and His Talismans* ~ Anosh Irani**

The plot is simple enough: a wealthy decadent slacker loses his arm and sets out across Bombay to find it. The writing is excellent and filled with lots of dark and biting humour. Excellent stuff! It succeeds at being bizarre and inspirational at the same time.



### ***Miss Wyoming* ~ Douglas Coupland**

I really enjoyed this book, which surprised me because I'm not always the greatest fan of Coupland's books. There is something really appealing in this love story of a B-movie producer and a has-been small time sitcom actress. The plot line is hilariously and originally unbelievable and I mean that as a good thing.



***Salt* ~ Mark Kurlansky**

Finally the great salt epic we've all been waiting for! Kidding aside, I loved this book and flew through it in fascination. From the ancient Chinese making of soy sauce to Gandhi's salt march, Kurlansky never ceases to entertain where others could have certainly bored. Even the technical descriptions of salt making were a joy to read.



***The Hot Kid* ~ Elmore Leonard**

This book was meant for summer reading and Elmore Leonard has really outdone himself. The 1930s of this novel aren't full of impoverished farmers or ruined stockbrokers, instead we get evil bank robbers and an Oklahoma Marshall who shoots to kill and never misses. Literature it ain't, but *The Hot Kid* may just be the best escapist novel I've ever read.



***Jennifer Government* ~ Max Barry**

The quote on the front is a little misleading, if anything this book is a much lighter and humourous (not to mention fictionalized) version of Naomi Klein's No Logo. In the future, corporations rule all and your last name is the name of the company you work for. A bit of a message with a lot of laughs thrown in.



***I, Fatty* ~ Jerry Stahl**

Fatty Arbuckle was one of the world's first film stars and the first to have his career very publicly destroyed. Jerry Stahl has done an excellent job of creating a fictionalized biography of a fascinating and complicated man. The novel's background is a vividly created world of Hollywood in its infancy seldom explored in fiction and as compelling and interesting a character as Arbuckle himself.