

Daniel Goldin's Summer Book Suggestions 2021

The Bombay Prince by Sujata Massey (Soho)

Here's my mystery pick. It's third in a series and each of her other two have been award winners and finalists. It's about the first woman lawyer in Mumbai, based on two real people. This one brings in the burgeoning Gandhi fight for independence. It works for historical fiction readers too. And yes, there's a murder.

The Bomber Mafia by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown)

If you like Gladwell's podcast, Revisionist History, you'll enjoy this book, my history pick. It's about the crucial fight in World War II about how exactly to execute bombing raids. Gladwell is a World War II obsessive, especially the air war.

The Chosen and the Beautiful by Nghi Vo (Tordotcom)

There's always a listener who is interested in fantasy or science fiction, so I made sure I read something to please them. This book is also interesting because it's one of the first books to be a play on the Great Gatsby since that book went into public domain. It's through the eyes of Jordan Baker, who is Vietnamese by birth, and adopted into a wealthy Louisville family, bisexual, with a nascent interest in paper cutting magic.

Early Morning Riser by Katherine Heiny (Knopf)

Boyne City, Michigan is the setup for this story about a young schoolteacher who starts dating a man with a long list of ex-girlfriends. Heiny's idols are Laurie Colwin and Anne Tyler and you can see that in the story, from her writings about love to her quirky families, and her delightful sense of humor.

Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley (Henry Holt BFYR)

This is my young adult pick, the story of a young woman in Sault Ste Marie who defers going to college to care for grandmother, caught between the families of her French-Canadian mother and her Ojibwe father, only Daunis is not officially a tribe member. And then she witnesses a murder, connected to a Meth epidemic confronting the community.

The Five Wounds by Kirstin Valdez Quade (Norton)

In small-town New Mexico, it is traditional for men to reenact the crucifixion, only Amadeo takes things to far and has to go to the hospital for a nail injury. His estranged teenage daughter is pregnant and his mom is secretly dying, only Amadeo can't seem to grow up enough to help either. So many problems, but such an amazing story, often funny though you wouldn't exactly call this a comedy, with each character drawn to vibrant life.

Gold Diggers by Sanjena Sathian (Penguin Press)

Growing up in suburban Atlanta Neil feels like the only South Asian teenager not striving for a top notch college. Even his friend Anita is driven. But Anita and her mom have a secret – they are stealing the gold from their friends and neighbors and melting it down into a drinkable lemonade that allows them to

steal the ambition from their set. When Neil finds out, he wants in. And then the story moves to Silicon Valley where things get even crazier. A comic novel with a strong point of view and a lot to say about cultural stereotypes.

Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead (*Knopf*)

Marion Graves dreams of becoming the next Amelia Earhart, with her life leading up to a quest to circumnavigate the world, so different from her brother, who wants nothing more than to paint it. Many years later, actress Hadley Baxter, having sabotaged her career as a sitcom star, finds possible redemption in a movie based on Marion's life. Period fiction with lots of research, but sad to tell readers that Marion is a fictional creation. Everybody's trying to Google her!

Leonard and Hungry Paul, by Rónán Hession (*Melville House*)

Two 30-something men in contemporary Dublin are friends. One would like a girlfriend, the other could use a more permanent job than occasional substitute mail carrier. This is a story about kindness and the power of quiet people. It starts with a funeral and ends with a wedding, so you know it's a comedy. But the big story here is the response I get when I convince someone to read it – letters, emails, folks coming back to the store to thank me, flagging me down in grocery stores. A lot of people LOVE this book, but so far, it's still sort of a secret.

Lost in Summerland by Barrett Swanson (*Counterpoint*)

This collection of essays by a Madison writer are sort of travel pieces – 2 of them were included in the Best American Travel Writing anthology. The set ups are crazy – Swanson goes to Disaster City, or a West Wing convention, or Lily Dale, ground zero for mystics, and learns something about himself and society in the process.

Punch Me Up to the Gods by Brian Broome (*HMH*)

This memoir of going up Black and gay in small-town Ohio and Pittsburgh has blurbs from Kiese Laymon and Augusten Burroughs (known for *Running with Scissors*) and I think together they give a good picture of the book – Broome tells of overcoming race and gender prejudice and confronting addiction through a series of ever-more-outrageous stories, sometimes horrifying, often hilarious, always powerful.

Shape by Jordan Ellenberg (*Penguin Press*)

Ellenberg, a professor mathematics at UW-Madison, sees the world through math, and in this book, he specifically focuses on geometry, looking at everything from game theory to COVID transmission to gerrymandering. You don't have to be a math person to read this, but be prepared to occasionally get lost. Don't worry, Ellenberg will lead you back to surer footing.

Shoulder Season by Christina Clancy (*St Martin's*) (on sale 7/6)

Last year, Madison writer Clancy wrote a story about a Milwaukee family fighting over the family vacation home. This time her story features a young woman from East Troy who gets a job working as a bunny at the Playboy Resort in Lake Geneva. It's a journey to darkness and back, and along the way, Sherri learns to make better choices. Very much a time capsule trip to the 1970s.