



## Goodreads Updates

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**Updated:** 11-22

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## **Evanston Public added 'The Help'**

Evanston Public added: The Help (Hardcover) by Kathryn Stockett

In 1963 in Jackson, Mississippi, most middle-class white women had black maids who came daily to do the housework, cooking, and see to the children. In Stockett's hugely popular novel, we have a story about the real state of black-white relations, the shameful unfairness of the status quo, and the three brave women who join forces to expose the truth. Minny and Aibileen are black maids who have difficult lives and tenuous relationships with their employers. Skeeter is a 24-year old young woman with a drive to write. Her fretting mama bewails her spinsterhood, her overly tall figure, and her wildly frizzy hair at constant war with the local humidity. Skeeter is firmly entrenched in the Women's League where her lifelong girlfriends are all settled married ladies who try to fix her up, yet Skeeter senses that big changes are coming to their segregated world, and she's open to new ideas and dreams of living in a larger world. Using the technique of changing narrators, Stockett shows us both sides of the great divide as Skeeter, Minny, and Aibileen begin secret meetings to record their life experiences for a book Skeeter is compiling. At times Stockett's writing style is a bit over the top—high drama and cliff hangers abound, and many of the secondary characters come off as caricatures (the evil employers you just love to hate). But all in all this is a great yarn and a fascinating rendition of a momentous time in American life. (Barbara L., Readers Services)

## **Evanston Public added 'Year the Colored Sisters Came to Town'**

Evanston Public added: Year the Colored Sisters Came to Town (Hardcover) by Jacqueline Guidry

In 1957 Vivien Leigh DuBois is ten years old and desperate to know all the goings-on and family secrets. She pricks up her ears for gossipy tidbits during her folks' hushed conversations; she prides herself on her grasp of all things grownup as she despairs of her sister Mavis, a mere five-year old, being so dense and uncaring of real world issues; and she's really looking forward to fifth grade at Holy Rosary parochial school in her small Louisiana town. But when she finds out that the eponymous colored sisters are two black nuns who have been assigned to her school, our youthful narrator is thrown for a loop. As loveable and chatty as she is, Vivien Leigh is also just as racist as most of the white folks around her. She carefully observes the reactions to this big news of those close to her—her parents, the beloved black cleaning lady that comes to help her mother once a week, her friends, and the townspeople as she slowly awakens to the idea of the big changes are brewing. With warmth and humor, author Guidry has captured an era and given us a wonderful young character who discovers that being truly grownup means learning to think for oneself. (Barbara L., Reader's Services)

## **Kate added 'The Wild Things'**

Kate is currently reading: The Wild Things (Hardcover) by Dave Eggers  
bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Kate added 'Cloudsplitter: A Novel'**

Kate gave 3 stars to: Cloudsplitter: A Novel (Paperback) by Russell Banks

## **Christie added 'Zeitoun'**

Christie is currently reading: Zeitoun (Hardcover) by Dave Eggers  
bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Christie added 'Crossing Stones'**

Christie is currently reading: Crossing Stones (Hardcover) by Helen Frost

bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Christie added 'Front and Center'**

Christie is currently reading: Front and Center (Hardcover) by Catherine Gilbert Murdock

bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Christie added 'Stitches: A Memoir'**

Christie gave 4 stars to: Stitches: A Memoir (Hardcover) by David Small

## **Christie added 'Identical'**

Christie gave 4 stars to: Identical (Hardcover) by Ellen Hopkins

## **Lori added 'The 19th Wife: A Novel'**

Lori gave 4 stars to: The 19th Wife: A Novel (Paperback) by David Ebershoff

## **Lori added 'Do Not Deny Me: Stories'**

Lori is currently reading: Do Not Deny Me: Stories (Paperback) by Jean Thompson

bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Lori added 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'**

Lori gave 5 stars to: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Paperback)  
by James Joyce

This is an amazing book -- it reads just as a child thinks and then changes as he grows older. Completely pulls you in once you get going with the story. I'm amazed to say that I hadn't ever read this book. Would recommend it to anyone -- it is a classic. Should be a must read...

**Lori added 'Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation'**

Lori gave 3 stars to: Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation (Paperback) by Joseph J. Ellis  
bookshelves: book-group-books

## **Evanston Public added 'Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans'**

Evanston Public marked as to-read: Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans (Mass Market Paperback) by Wallace Terry

bookshelves: to-read

This title was a fantastic choice to read in honor of Veteran's Day pick by the African American Literature Book Discussion group. The stories revealed by the twenty Black Vietnam veterans resonate with passion, courage

## **Christie added 'The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope'**

Christie is currently reading: The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope (Hardcover) by William Kamkwamba

bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Christie added 'Liar'**

Christie is currently reading: Liar (Hardcover) by Justine Larbalestier  
bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Christie added 'Bang!'**

Christie gave 4 stars to: Bang! (Hardcover) by Sharon G. Flake

Random shootings in Mann's neighborhood claim his younger brother and some friends. Mann's father decides artistic Mann is too soft, and leaves him to the streets to learn how to become a man. This is a powerful, disturbing, coming-of-age tale that explores father-son relationships in ways that will prompt a lot of discussion.

## **Christie added 'Sarah's Key'**

Christie gave 4 stars to: Sarah's Key (Hardcover) by Tatiana de Rosnay

## **Evanston Public added 'Reasons for and Advantages of Breathing: Stories'**

Evanston Public added: Reasons for and Advantages of Breathing: Stories (P.S.) by Lydia Peele

Reasons for and Advantages of Breathing, the debut short story collection from Lydia Peele is so clear, concise, direct, and beautiful that it will at times stop you dead in mid-sentence, your breath sucked in, your insides resonating like a bell that has been struck. Ostensibly another entry into the canon of Southern literature (Peele lives in Nashville and most of the stories are set around the region), the book encapsulates much more than that somewhat weighted label implies. Walking a thin path between the rural America of yesterday, today, and days to come, Peele explores the fluid and transitory nature of our land, our history, our memories, and ourselves. Along the way we meet a grandchild recounting borrowed memories of the days when tractors replaced mule power on a grandfather's farm, a grown woman recalling the ponies she loved during the final fading days of her last summer of childhood innocence, a young man finding salvation he doesn't know he needs amidst a broken-down goat farm, and three half-crazy, half-hearted has-beens wandering the footsteps of the James Boys in search of buried treasure.

The stories paint a sadly recognizable portrait of the vanishing American countryside where hunters with GPS units tool around on ATVs, Wal-Mart is king, and the omnipresent sub-division creeps ever further outward, flattening whatever shared nature, culture, and history lies in its path. This deadening sense of an irreversible loss of place seeps from between Peele's words, but that is not to say that the stories are suffused with dread and heaviness. The characters in these stories evince nothing so much as a sense of resignation to the inevitable march of time. It is not so much that the past has a hold on them, but more that they struggle with finding meaning in the present when the past is meaningless and obliterated. Peele's protagonists get through their days the same way most of us do, heads down, one foot in front of the other, attending to the tasks at hand. But what makes these characters and these stories so human, so personal, so relatable, is in the moments when they slip, and just simply getting by isn't enough. A common thread among the stories is a search for a connection of some kind to something bigger than the everyday—something timeless and lasting, something that makes sense.

All in all, the book can be a bit of a downer, but it is through its questioning and its searching for something still of meaning in our land and our lives that the barest shards of hope and belief (albeit shaken and staggered) break through its most overcast of days. (Andy R., Reader's Services)

## **Leslie added 'The Invention of Hugo Cabret'**

Leslie gave 5 stars to: The Invention of Hugo Cabret (Hardcover) by Brian Selznick

Excellent. The drawings lend an arch of calmness, quiet to the book. I would recommend it to the bounce-around type kiddos!

## **Leslie added 'A Girl of the Limberlost'**

Leslie marked as to-read: A Girl of the Limberlost (Paperback) by Gene Stratton-Porter

bookshelves: to-read

I bought an early edition of this at the book sale. Since I was only half-way through it when I lost the book, I'll try again!

**Leslie added 'Honey, Mud, Maggots, and Other Medical Marvels: The Science Behind Folk Remedies and Old Wives' Tales'**

Leslie gave 3 stars to: Honey, Mud, Maggots, and Other Medical Marvels: The Science Behind Folk Remedies and Old Wives' Tales (Hardcover) by Robert Scott Root-Bernstein

I sent this book on to my friends Sofia. She thought the same thing I did. Good information, mediocre craft and what is with the militant advocacy chapter on circumcision?

## **Evanston Public added 'This Is Where I Leave You'**

Evanston Public added: [This Is Where I Leave You \(Hardcover\)](#) by [Jonathan Tropper](#)

“Sitting shiva” is the Jewish mourning ritual that in its most traditional form lasts seven days. When Judd Foxman’s father dies after a lingering illness, he and his three siblings are summoned home for the funeral and informed that one of his dad's last requests was that they do the full seven days. The four Foxman siblings, Wendy, Paul, Judd, and Phillip, consider the possibility that their father, neither observant nor particularly prone to humor in his lifetime, was playing a huge joke on his family by forcing them and their various spouses, partners, and small children to live under the same roof for a week. So begins a seven-day roller coaster ride of family drama that the reader is invited to watch and in my case, really enjoy.

The Foxmans have grown apart, and are caught up in their own small (and large) dramas. They are expert at putting each other down with a steady flow of snarky zingers, yet they are in complete agreement that almost everybody else is either idiotic or merely ridiculous, and entertain each other with ongoing, acerbic commentary about the foibles of the continuous stream of guests paying condolence calls. There is no crisis or occasion calling for sympathy at which they can’t crack wise. Mrs. Foxman, the widow, is a sweet woman and slightly unconventional mother who is blithely unbothered by the concept of privacy: her daughter-in-law’s fertility test kit is announced at dinner; Judd’s recent, sordid marital break-up (wife caught sleeping with his boss) becomes the point of interest she mentions when introducing him to the guests. And much to her children’s chagrin she finds unabashed pleasure in showing off her expensive breast implants by wearing cleavage-revealing blouses. The dark humor is rich and comes in rapid-fire dialogue I wish I could file away to use myself (alas, I get along pretty well with my immediate family, though I have some distant relatives that could have stopped by the Foxman house and fit right in).

Despite all the cynicism, the edgy banter, and the prickly quips, the family connection still runs deep, though it is never admitted openly. Author Tropper skillfully uses old literary techniques like the "sealed

room" (i.e., the family home) along with a day-to-day shiva countdown to develop a funny, sad, warm, and knowing family saga that continues the tradition of Tolstoy, "The Big Chill," the TV series "Brothers and Sisters," along with countless other explorations of the family dynamic. (Barbara L., Reader's Services)

## Jeannie added 'The Deep'

Jeannie marked as to-read: The Deep (Ingo, #3) by Helen Dunmore  
bookshelves: to-read

## **Jeannie added 'Animal Farm'**

Jeannie gave 2 stars to: Animal Farm (Paperback) by George Orwell

**Jeannie added 'There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in The Other America'**

Jeannie is currently reading: There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in The Other America (Paperback) by Alex Kotlowitz

bookshelves: currently-reading

## Jeannie added 'The Whispering Land'

Jeannie gave 4 stars to: The Whispering Land (Paperback) by Gerald Durrell

## **Jeannie added 'Golden Bats and Pink Pigeons'**

Jeannie gave 4 stars to: Golden Bats and Pink Pigeons (Paperback) by Gerald Durrell

## Jeannie added 'Tide Knot'

Jeannie marked as to-read: Tide Knot (Ingo, #2) by Helen Dunmore  
bookshelves: to-read

**Jeannie added 'Ingo'**

Jeannie gave 5 stars to: Ingo (Ingo, #1) by Helen Dunmore

## **Jeannie added 'Tales from a Dog Catcher'**

Jeannie gave 5 stars to: Tales from a Dog Catcher (Paperback) by Lisa Duffy-Korpics

**Jeannie added 'The Order of Odd-Fish'**

Jeannie gave 2 stars to: The Order of Odd-Fish by James Kennedy

## **Evanston Public added 'Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books'**

Evanston Public added: [Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books \(Paperback\) by Jenny Bond](#)

Here are the stories behind the stories. Bond and Sheedy, journalists and free-lance writers in Australia, conceived this project during a dinner table discussion when they wondered what it was that made a particular work an amazing piece of literature and an enduring favorite. For any of the 50 works included in this book you can easily find reams and reams written about the work itself—character studies, plot development, historical context, critical reviews, you name it. What these two wanted to explore was the special factors in each author's life that influenced the penning of that great work. As they delved into this, they realized that not only did the authors' childhoods, families, livelihoods, politics, and love lives contribute richly to the stories, but it worked in the other direction, too. The books had great effect on the authors in many cases, sometimes for the good, sometimes not. Written in a brisk, lively style, these mini-biographies bring to light interesting and sometimes surprising details. Yes, Scarlett was originally dubbed Pansy, and we can only imagine how our image of that heroine would have changed if Margaret Mitchell hadn't come to her senses during a final revision. Dr. Seuss came up with *The Cat in the Hat* after reading an article in "Life" magazine blaming the poor reading habits of American children on the books they were given at school which were filled with goody-goody kids who never misbehaved (or, presumably never had any real fun). Bond and Sheedy haven't restricted themselves to the high-toned classics or beloved children's books. The list is very inclusive—Tolstoy and Austen share the limelight with Stephen King, Ian Fleming, J.K. Rowling and *The Da Vinci Code* author Dan Brown, representing those great reads that some claim are not truly "good" literature. Even nonfiction works are included. The Guinness Book of World Records, for instance, has a great story behind it that has to do with beer, pubs, and gentlemanly arguments. For many of you who finish a wonderful book, then ponder what compelled the author to write it, this book offers a fine way to satisfy your curiosity. (Barbara L., Reader's Services)

## **Evanston Public added 'Outliers'**

Evanston Public added: Outliers (Hardcover) by Malcolm Gladwell

In this thought-provoking analysis, Gladwell argues that the key factors leading to success are not simply talent or luck, but that generation, family, class, and culture are as important or possibly even more so. Gladwell himself is successful partly because of the wide range of topics he explores--Bill Gates in one chapter, hockey players in another! You may argue that some of his conclusions are debatable. Nevertheless, Gladwell is a natural storyteller and *Outliers* will challenge your assumptions while offering an enjoyable read whether you take his side or not. (Shira S., Reader' Services)

## **Lori added 'Homer and Langley: A Novel'**

Lori marked as to-read: Homer and Langley: A Novel (Hardcover) by E.L. Doctorow  
bookshelves: to-read

## **Evanston Public added 'Homer and Langley: A Novel'**

Evanston Public added: Homer and Langley: A Novel (Hardcover) by E.L. Doctorow

In his latest novel *Homer and Langley*, E.L. Doctorow combines history, fiction, and urban legend as he explores the story of New York City's infamous Collyer brothers. After their parents' sudden deaths in 1918, the titular brothers are left to inhabit the family's upper Manhattan mansion. When Homer goes blind and Langley returns from World War I injured and possibly mentally unbalanced, the brothers slowly begin to retreat from the world and into their home and themselves. Although well known among New Yorkers of the day for their eccentricities and their excessive hoarding (when both brothers died in 1947 over 130 tons of trash/treasure was removed from their home), Doctorow wisely dials down the brothers' idiosyncrasies and as a result he is able to paint them as sympathetic, relatable characters, rather than mere trite bundles of NYC quiriness, or worse, a pair of mentally ill oddball cranks. That said, the brothers are quite unusual, and only become more so over the course of the book.

Told from Homer, the blind brother's point of view, the action of the book never leaves the setting of the Collyer's Fifth Avenue home, except for a few brief excursions across the street to Central Park. But rather than this limited setting serving as a hindrance, Doctorow uses it as an opportunity to create a strange insular world of orderly chaos entirely within the home. And lest things get too claustrophobic in there, Doctorow bestows upon the brothers Collyer a series of servants, boarders, and visitors whose presence lends some much needed emotion and contact to Homer and Langley's somewhat starved lives. It is also largely through the use of these characters that Doctorow is able to intertwine bits and pieces of twentieth century U.S. history, lending a sense of the outside world that the brothers travel through from inside their home, skipping down into reality only occasionally like stones on a lake. But this is really Homer and Langley's story, and becomes ever more sad and oblique as they disappear further and further away from the world, each other, and themselves, becoming at last like ghosts in their own wrecked, trash-heaped mansion. It is tempting to read this story of blindness, excessive hoarding, overconsumption, and willful disregard for the world as an extended metaphor for our current American culture. But whether or not you choose to read political

metaphor into the story, *Homer and Langley* remains both poignant and intriguing, as Doctorow does an admirable job of making the extraordinary seem almost normal. (Andy R., Readers' Services)

**Cheryl added 'She Got Up Off the Couch: And Other Heroic Acts from Mooreland, Indiana'**

Cheryl gave 4 stars to: She Got Up Off the Couch: And Other Heroic Acts from Mooreland, Indiana (Paperback) by Haven Kimmel

## **Rob added 'Invisible Cities'**

Rob gave 5 stars to: Invisible Cities (Paperback) by Italo Calvino

## **Lori added 'Abide with Me: A Novel'**

Lori gave 5 stars to: Abide with Me: A Novel (Paperback) by Elizabeth Strout

I really loved this book. So much to think about. All the different relationships and the ways they come apart, the struggle for redemption that takes place in the end, how the community comes together, how one's faith gets tested and how some times God finds a way to reach us through the people around us...

At the end, when Tyler is writing the sermon he then never gives, he writes that in everything we do we must ask "How can love best be served?" If only we could keep that always in the front of our minds.

**Lori added 'The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey'**

Lori gave 4 stars to: The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey (Paperback) by Candice Millard  
bookshelves: book-group-books

## **Lori added 'The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novel'**

Lori gave 2 stars to: The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novel (Paperback) by Anita Diamant

bookshelves: book-group-books

## **Lawrence M. added 'The Yiddish Policemen's Union'**

Lawrence M. is currently reading: The Yiddish Policemen's Union (Hardcover) by Michael Chabon  
bookshelves: currently-reading

## **Cheryl added 'The Elegance of the Hedgehog'**

Cheryl gave 5 stars to: The Elegance of the Hedgehog (Paperback) by Muriel Barbery

## Lawrence M. added 'Eastern Standard Tribe'

Lawrence M. gave 4 stars to: Eastern Standard Tribe (Paperback) by Cory Doctorow

Doctorow's voice is so crisp, so clean, it leaps off the page and runs around the house like a puppy on amphetamines. The plot is straightforward, nothing subtle or complex about it. What's subtle is the ease with which Doctorow gets into your head with his ideas. In no time at all you find yourself nodding in agreement, as he explains how tribes work, how they've always worked, and how the global expansion and ease of communication continue to drive such sensibilities. I'm still not sure how much is fiction, and how much is just a reflection of how brutally smart the man is.

## **Lawrence M. added 'Neuromancer'**

Lawrence M. gave 3 stars to: Neuromancer (Mass Market Paperback) by William Ford Gibson

## **Lawrence M. added 'Foundation'**

Lawrence M. gave 3 stars to: Foundation (Foundation 1) by Isaac Asimov

## **Lawrence M. added 'Stranger in a Strange Land'**

Lawrence M. gave 5 stars to: Stranger in a Strange Land (Paperback) by Robert A. Heinlein

**Lawrence M. added 'Dune'**

Lawrence M. gave 5 stars to: Dune (Dune 1) by Frank Herbert

## **Lawrence M. added 'Ender's Game'**

Lawrence M. gave 4 stars to: Ender's Game (Ender's Saga, #1) by Orson Scott Card

## Lori added 'A Christmas Carol'

Lori gave 5 stars to: A Christmas Carol (Great Stories) by Charles Dickens



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