St. Mary's Episcopal School

UPPER SCHOOL

Summer Reading

SELECTIONS - 2026

Chart your course with a great read

Where will you go this summer? Our 2026 Summer Reading selections have been picked to help you explore new worlds and old truths. Whether you prefer a 'True Expedition' into science and memoir or an 'Imagined Voyage' through literary mystery, there is a route waiting for you. Select your book, enjoy the reading journey, and look forward to our community-wide discussion groups at the beginning of the Fall 2026 semester.

Please select your summer read by June 8th, 2026, using this form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Imagined Voyages ~ Fiction Titles

- High-Stakes Horizons.....3
- Points of Origin.....4
- Epic Expeditions.....5
- Journeys Through Fiction.....6

True Expeditions ~ Non-Fiction Titles

- Blueprints of Belonging.....7
- Systems of Connection.....8
- A Universe of Creativity.....9

QUESTIONS?

RaShauna Wright
rwright@stmarysschool.org
Upper School Librarian

Catherine Denman
cdenman@stmarysschool.org
Director of Libraries

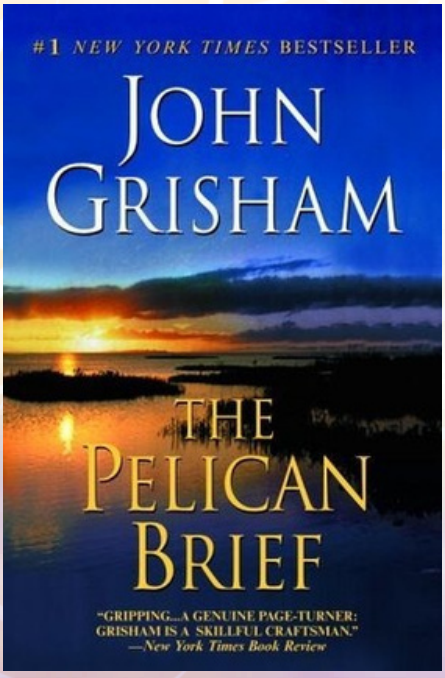
All book descriptions are direct quotes or adaptations of the publisher's description.

HIGH-STAKES HORIZONS

Suspense & Thriller

The Pelican Brief
John Grisham

"The Discovery
When two Supreme Court justices are taken out of the picture, law student Darby Shaw writes a legal brief linking the crimes to a massive corporate conspiracy. It was supposed to be a theory; instead, it becomes a target on her back.

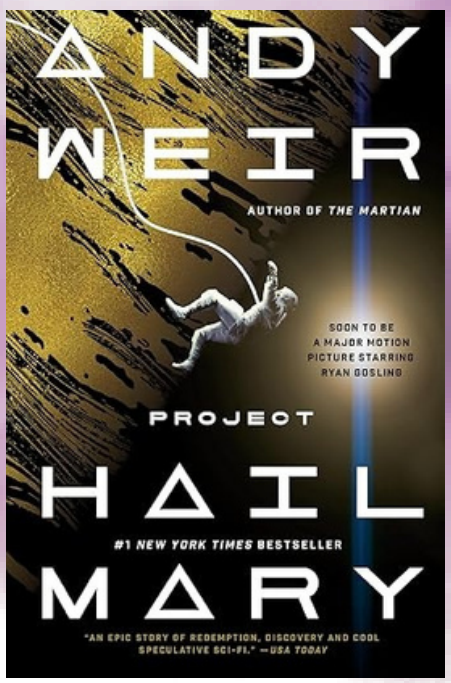


The Pursuit
The brief leaks to the highest levels of power, and suddenly, Darby is a witness to a cover-up she wasn't meant to see. On the run and unable to trust the authorities, she teams up with Gray Grantham, an ambitious reporter ready to break a story bigger than Watergate.

The Stakes
From the Louisiana bayous to the White House, Darby and Gray race to expose the truth before they are silenced for good. In a world of political chess, they are the only players who know the real board.

Mystery | Thriller | Suspense

Project Hail Mary
Andy Weir



"Ryland Grace is the sole survivor on a desperate, last-chance mission—and if he fails, humanity and the earth itself will perish. Except that right now, he doesn't know that. He can't even remember his own name, let alone the nature of his assignment or how to complete it.

All he knows is that he's been asleep for a very, very long time. And he's just been awakened to find himself millions of miles from home, with nothing but two corpses for company.

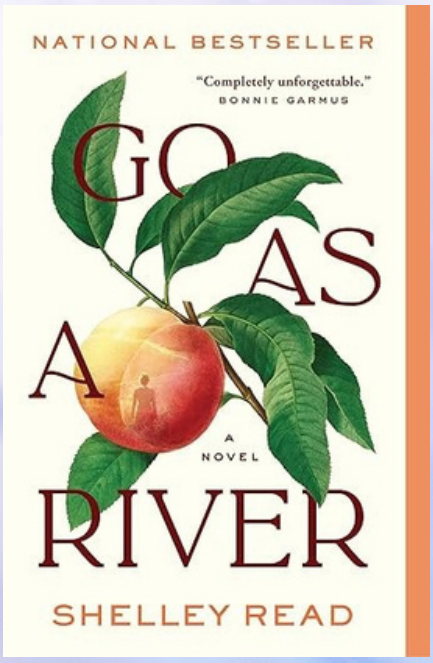
His crewmates dead, his memories fuzzily returning, Ryland realizes that an impossible task now confronts him. Hurtling through space on this tiny ship, it's up to him to puzzle out an impossible scientific mystery—and conquer an extinction-level threat to our species.

And with the clock ticking down and the nearest human being light-years away, he's got to do it all alone. Or does he?

Science Fiction | Thriller | Fantasy

POINTS OF ORIGIN

Historical Fiction & Coming-of-Age



Go As A River
Shelley Read

Seventeen-year-old Victoria Nash runs the household on her family's peach farm in the small ranch town of Iola, Colorado—the sole surviving female in a family of troubled men. Wilson Moon is a young drifter with a mysterious past, displaced from his tribal land and determined to live as he chooses.

Victoria encounters Wil by chance on a street corner, a meeting that profoundly alters both of their young lives, igniting as much passion as danger. When tragedy strikes, Victoria leaves the only life she has ever known, fleeing into the surrounding mountains, where she struggles to survive in the wilderness with no clear notion of what her future will bring. As the seasons change, she also charts the changes in herself, finding in the beautiful but harsh landscape the meaning and strength to move forward and rebuild all that she has lost, even as the Gunnison River threatens to submerge her homeland—its ranches, farms, and the beloved peach orchard that has been in her family for generations.

Inspired by true events surrounding the destruction of the town of Iola in the 1960s, *Go as a River* is a story of deeply held love in the face of hardship and loss, but also of finding courage, resilience, friendship, and, finally, home—where least expected. This stunning debut explores what it means to lead your life as if it were a river—gathering and flowing, finding a way forward even when a river is dammed.

Historical Fiction | Literary Fiction | Coming of Age

The Lion Women of Tehran
Marjan Kamali

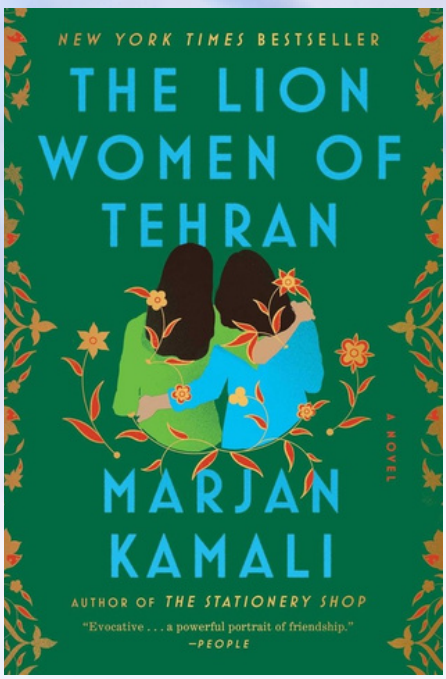
In 1950s Tehran, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father, forcing Ellie and her mother to move to a tiny home downtown. Lonely and bearing the brunt of her mother's endless grievances, Ellie dreams for a friend to alleviate her isolation.

Luckily, on the first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind girl with a brave and irrepressible spirit. Together, the two girls play games, learn to cook in the stone kitchen of Homa's warm home, wander through the colorful stalls of the Grand Bazaar, and share their ambitions of becoming "lion women."

But their happiness is disrupted when Ellie and her mother are afforded the opportunity to return to their previous bourgeois life. Now a popular student at the best girls' high school in Iran, Ellie's memories of Homa begin to fade. Years later, however, her sudden reappearance in Ellie's privileged world alters the course of both of their lives.

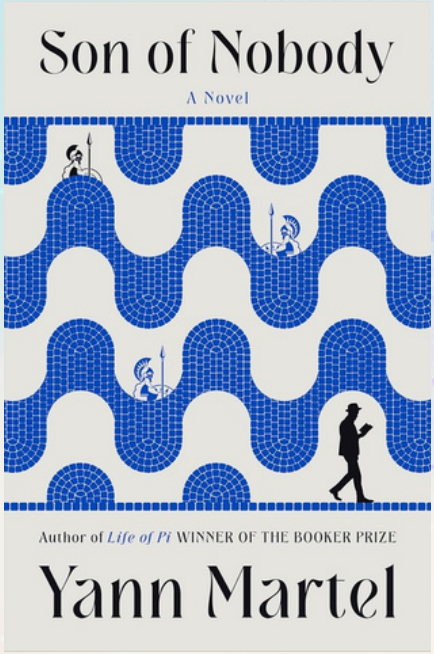
Together, the two young women come of age and pursue their own goals for meaningful futures. But as the political turmoil in Iran builds to a breaking point, one earth-shattering betrayal will have enormous consequences.

Historical Fiction | Literary Fiction



EPIC EXPEDITIONS

The Hero's Journey

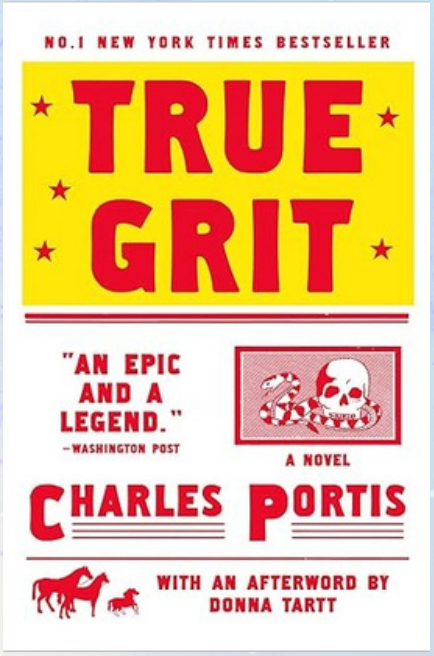


Son of Nobody
Yann Martel

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were not the only ancient tales of the Trojan War. In *Son of Nobody*, Yann Martel composes a new the Psoad, an epic in free verse that follows a goatherd's son, Psoas of Midea, who leaves his wife and family to fight at Troy. Psoas meets his doom and the poem of his life is lost—until a Canadian academic studying at Oxford, Harlow Donne, discovers its relics thirty centuries later.

As Harlow assembles and comments on the fragments in footnotes, he retrieves memories of his wife and daughter and grapples with questions of ambition, family, and responsibility in both the ancient and modern worlds. *Son of Nobody* upends the regal perspective of traditional epics and shows that "the past is never done with, that always there are parallels and returns and repetitions, always the song continues."

Mythology | Literary Fiction | Retellings

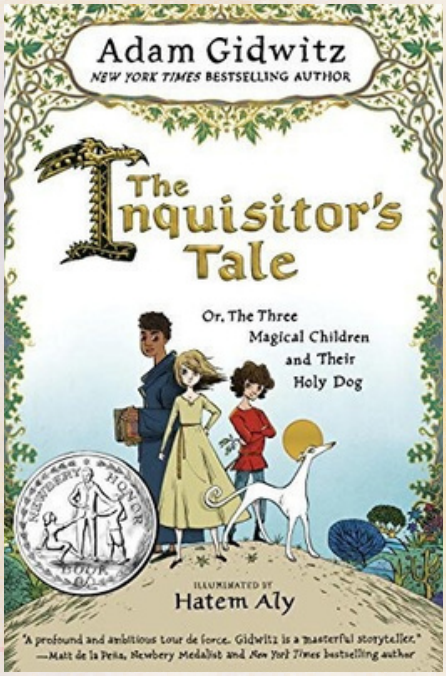


True Grit
Charles Portis

True Grit tells the story of Mattie Ross, who is just fourteen when the coward Tom Chaney shoots her father in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and robs him of his life, his horse, and $150 cash. Filled with an unwavering urge to avenge her father's blood, Mattie finds and, after some tenacious finagling, enlists one-eyed Rooster Cogburn, the meanest available US Marshal, as her partner in pursuit, and they head off into Indian Territory after the killer.

Historical Fiction | Westerns | Classics

Literary & Fantasy



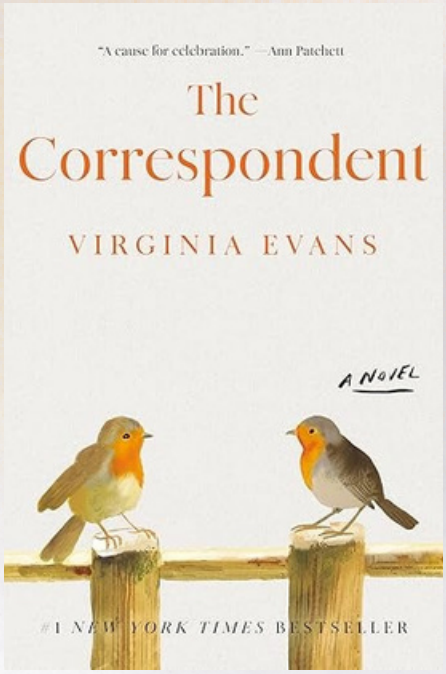
The Inquisitor's Tale

Adam Gidwitz

1242. On a dark night, travelers from across France cross paths at an inn and begin to tell stories of three children. Their adventures take them on a chase through France: they are taken captive by knights, sit alongside a king, and save the land from a farting dragon. On the run to escape prejudice and persecution and save precious and holy texts from being burned, their quest drives them forward to a final showdown at Mont Saint-Michel, where all will come to question if these children can perform the miracles of saints.

Join William, an oblate on a mission from his monastery; Jacob, a Jewish boy who has fled his burning village; and Jeanne, a peasant girl who hides her prophetic visions. They are accompanied by Jeanne's loyal greyhound, Gwenforte . . . recently brought back from the dead. Told in multiple voices, in a style reminiscent of *The Canterbury Tales*, our narrator collects their stories and the saga of these three unlikely allies begins to come together.

Historical Fiction | Fantasy | Adventure | Friendship



The Correspondent

Virginia Evans

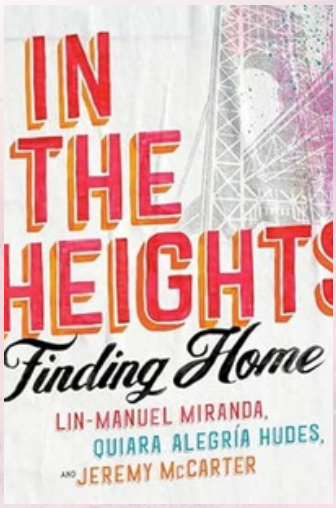
Sybil Van Antwerp has throughout her life used letters to make sense of the world and her place in it. Most mornings, around half past ten, Sybil sits down to write letters—to her brother, to her best friend, to the president of the university who will not allow her to audit a class she desperately wants to take, to Joan Didion and Larry McMurtry to tell them what she thinks of their latest books, and to one person to whom she writes often yet never sends the letter.

Sybil expects her world to go on as it always has—a mother, grandmother, wife, divorcee, distinguished lawyer, she has lived a very full life. But when letters from someone in her past force her to examine one of the most painful periods of her life, she realizes that the letter she has been writing over the years needs to be read and that she cannot move forward until she finds it in her heart to offer forgiveness.

Sybil Van Antwerp's life of letters might be "a very small thing," but she also might be one of the most memorable characters you will ever read.

Literary Fiction | Contemporary | Epistolary | Family

Community & Memoir



In the Heights: Finding Home

Lin-Manuel Miranda, Quiara Alegría Hudes, Jeremy McCarter

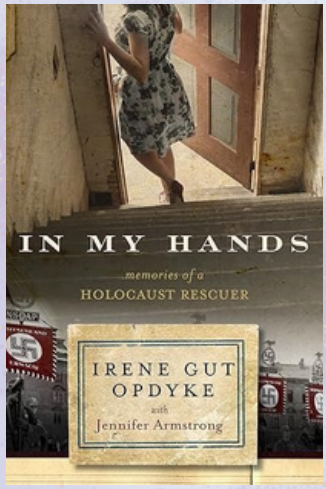
In 2008, *In the Heights*, a new musical from up-and-coming young artists, electrified Broadway. The show's vibrant mix of Latin music and hip-hop captured life in Washington Heights, the Latino neighborhood in upper Manhattan. That's where Usnavi, Nina, and their neighbors chase their dreams and ask a universal question: Where do I belong?

I*n the Heights: Finding Home* reunites Miranda with Jeremy McCarter, co-author of *Hamilton: The Revolution*, and Quiara Alegría Hudes, the Pulitzer Prize–winning librettist of the Broadway musical and screenwriter of the film. They do more than trace the making of an unlikely Broadway smash and a major motion picture: They give readers an intimate look at the decades-long creative life of In the Heights.

Non-Fiction| Music | Theater | Memoir

In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer

Irene Gut Opdyke, Jennifer Armstrong



"I did not ask myself, "Should I do this?" but "How will I do this?"
Through this intimate and compelling memoir, we are witness to the growth of a hero. Much like *The Diary of Anne Frank, In My Hands* has become a profound testament to individual courage.

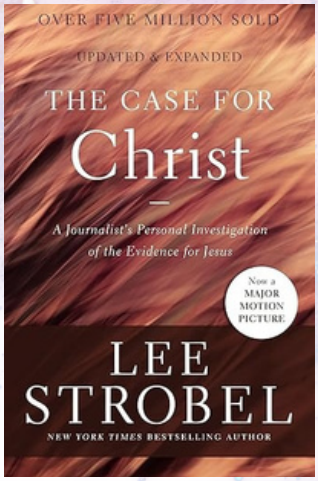
"You must understand that I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, a defierof the SS and the Nazis, all at once."
When the war began, Irene Gut was just seventeen: a student nurse, a Polish patriot. Forced to work in a German officiers' dining hall, she learns how to fight back.

"One's first steps are always small: I had begun by hiding food under a fence."
Irene eavesdropped on the German's plans. She smuggled people out of the work camp. And she hid twelve Jews in the basement of a Nazi major's home. To deliver her friends from evil, this young woman did whatever it took--even the impossible.

Non-Fiction| Memoir | Holocaust | History

The Case for Christ

Lee Strobel



Lee Strobel cross-examines a dozen experts with doctorates from schools such as Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis, asking hard-hitting questions--and building a captivating case for Christ's divinity. Strobel asks challenging questions like:

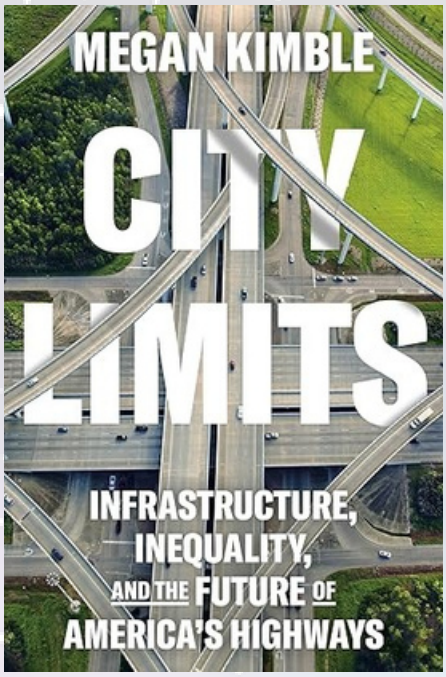
- How reliable is the New Testament?
- Does evidence for Jesus exist outside the Bible?
- Is Jesus who he said he was?
- Is there any reason to believe the resurrection was an actual event?

Strobel's tough, point-blank questions read like a captivating, fast-paced novel. But it's not fiction. It's a riveting quest for the truth about history's most compelling figure.

Non-Fiction| Faith | Theology | Christianity

Infrastructure & Ecology

City Limits
Megan Kimble

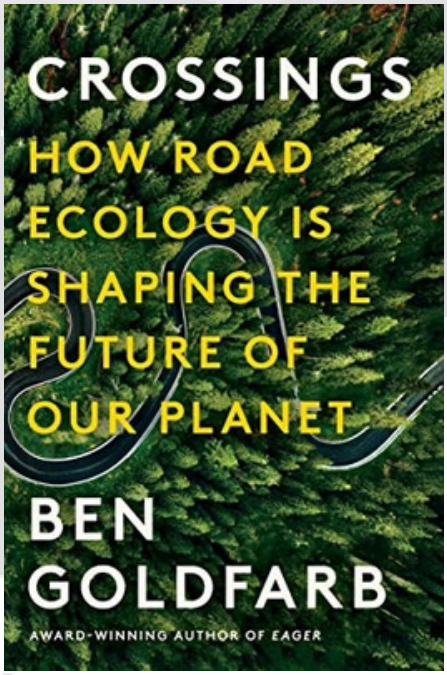


In *City Limits*, journalist Megan Kimble weaves together the origins of urban highways with the stories of ordinary people impacted by our failed transportation system. In Austin, hundreds of families will lose child care if a preschool is demolished to expand Interstate 35. In Houston, a young Black woman will lose her brand-new home to a new lane on Interstate 10—just blocks away from where a seventy-four-year-old nurse lost her home in the 1960s when that same highway was built. And in Dallas, an urban planner has improbably found himself at the center of a national conversation about highway removal. What if, instead of building our aging roads wider and higher, we removed those highways altogether? It's been done before, first in San Francisco and, more recently, in Rochester, where Kimble traces how highway removal has brought new life to a divided city.

With propulsive storytelling and ground-level reporting, *City Limits* exposes the enormous social and environmental costs wrought by our allegiance to a life of increasing speed and dispersion, and brings to light the people who are fighting for a more sustainable, connected future.

Non-Fiction | Urban Planning | Cities | Politics | History

Crossings: How Road Ecology is Shaping the Future of Our Planet
Ben Goldfarb

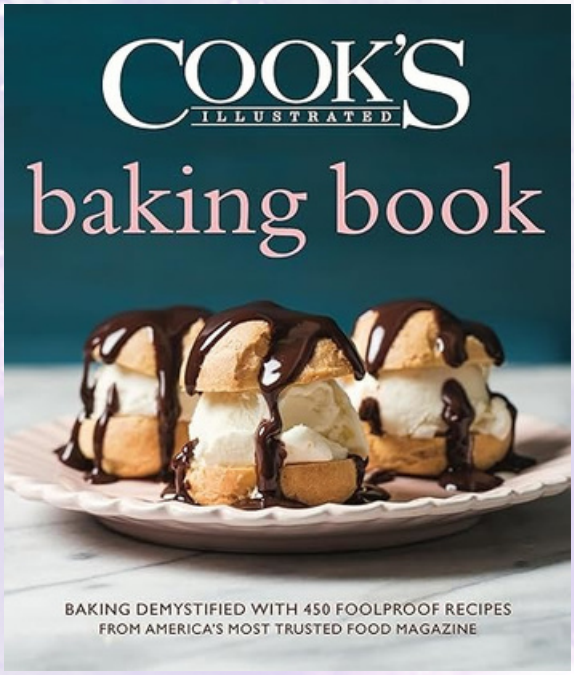


Some 40 million miles of roadways encircle the earth, yet we tend to regard them only as infrastructure for human convenience. While roads are so ubiquitous they're practically invisible to us, wild animals experience them as entirely alien forces of death and disruption. In Crossings, environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb travels throughout the United States and around the world to investigate how roads have transformed our planet. A million animals are killed by cars each day in the U.S. alone, but as the new science of road ecology shows, the harms of highways extend far beyond roadkill. Creatures from antelope to salmon are losing their ability to migrate in search of food and mates; invasive plants hitch rides in tire treads; road salt contaminates lakes and rivers; and the very noise of traffic chases songbirds from vast swaths of habitat.

Today, as our planet's road network continues to grow exponentially, the science of road ecology has become increasingly vital. Written with passion and curiosity, *Crossings* is a sweeping, spirited, and timely investigation into how humans have altered the natural world—and how we can create a better future for all living beings.

Non-Fiction | Science | Nature| Ecology

Musings On Art and Baking

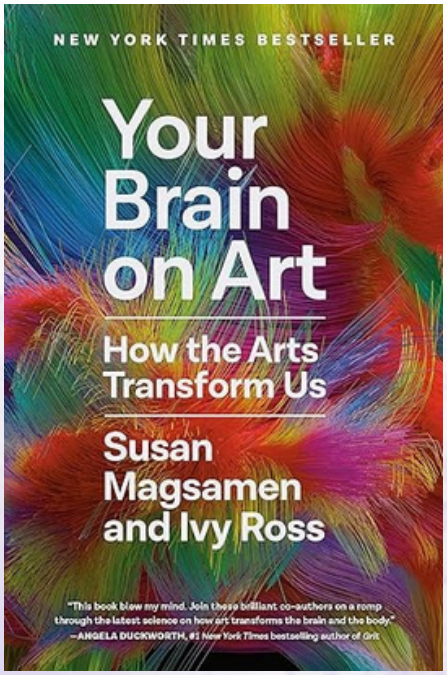


Cook's Illustrated Baking Book
America's Test Kitchen

The Cook's Illustrated Baking Book has it all—definitive recipes for all your favorite cookies, cakes, pies, tarts, breads, pizza, and more, along with kitchen-tested techniques that will transform your baking. Recipes range from easy (drop cookies and no-knead bread) to more ambitious (authentic croissants and dacquoise) and the trademark test kitchen expertise shines through each one.

Discover why spreading the dough and then sprinkling the berries leads to better Blueberry Scones, why cubed versus shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese makes all the difference in our irresistible Cheese Bread, how we found three ways to squeeze more lemon flavor into our Lemon Bundt Cake, and how to keep the best Buttermilk Waffles warm and crispy.

Non-Fiction| Cookbook | Recipes | Food



Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transforms Us
Susan Magsamen, Ivy Ross

Your Brain on Art details how activities from painting and dancing to expressive writing, architecture, and more are essential to our lives.

Magsamen and Ross offer compelling research that shows how engaging in an art project for as little as forty-five minutes reduces the stress hormone cortisol, no matter your skill level, and just one art experience per month can extend your life by ten years. They expand our understanding of how playing music builds cognitive skills and enhances learning; the vibrations of a tuning fork create sound waves to counteract stress; virtual reality can provide cutting-edge therapeutic benefit; and interactive exhibits dissolve the boundaries between art and viewers, engaging all of our senses and strengthening memory. *Your Brain on Art* is a portal into this new understanding about how the arts and aesthetics can help us transform traditional medicine, build healthier communities, and mend an aching planet.

Non-Fiction | Art | Pyschology | Science | Health