

Social Justice Themes in Literature

- Access to natural resources
- Agism
- Child labour
- Civil war
- Domestic violence
- Education
- Family dysfunction
- Gender inequality
- Government oppression
- Health issues
- Human trafficking
- Immigrant issues
- Indigenous issues
- LGBTQ+ issues
- Mental illness
- Organized crime
- Poverty
- Racism
- Religious issues
- Right to freedom of speech
- Right to justice
- Social services and addiction

POVERTY

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Glass Castle</i>	Jeannette Walls	When sober, Jeannette’s brilliant and charismatic father captured his children’s imagination. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn’t want the responsibility of raising a family.
<i>Angela’s Ashes</i>	Frank McCourt	So begins the luminous memoir of Frank McCourt, born in Depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants and raised in the slums of Limerick, Ireland. Frank’s mother, Angela, has no money to feed the children since Frank’s father, Malachy, rarely works, and when he does he drinks his wages. Yet Malachy — exasperating, irresponsible, and beguiling — does nurture in Frank an appetite for the one thing he can provide: a story. Frank lives for his father’s tales of Cuchulain, who saved Ireland, and of the Angel on the Seventh Step, who brings his mother babies.
<i>Buried Onions</i>	Gary Soto	For Eddie there isn’t much to do in his rundown neighborhood but eat, sleep, watch out for drive-bys, and just try to get through each day. His father, two uncles, and his best friend are all dead, and it’s a struggle not to end up the same way. Eddie searches for answers after the death of his cousin and discovers that his closest friends may be his worst enemies.
<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	Vikas Swarup	Ram Mohammad Thomas has been arrested for answering twelve questions correctly on TV’s Who Will Win a Billion? Ram takes us on an amazing tour of his life growing up in Asia’s biggest slum—from the day he is salvaged from a garbage can, to falling in love with Nita, a young prostitute.
<i>Summer of My Amazing Luck</i>	Miriam Towe	Lucy Von Alstyn sends fictitious letters to her friend Alicia, pretending to be the father of Alicia's twins, and the two welfare mothers and their five children set off on a journey to find him, facing along the way the complications of living in poverty and raising fatherless children.
<i>Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity</i>	Katherine Boo	The dramatic and sometimes heartbreaking story of families striving toward a better life in one of the twenty-first century's great, unequal cities - Mumbai. A bewildering age of global change and inequality is made human. Annawadi is a makeshift settlement in the shadow of luxury hotels near the Mumbai airport, and as India starts to prosper, Annawadians are electric with hope.
<i>An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny</i>	Laura Schroff	This inspirational <i>New York Times</i> bestseller chronicles the lifelong friendship between a busy sales executive and a disadvantaged young boy, and how both of their lives were changed by what began as one small gesture of kindness. “A straightforward tale of kindness and paying it forward in 1980s New York....an uplifting reminder that small gestures matter”

RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Help</i>	Kathryn Stockett	Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, the woman who raised her, but Constantine has disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter where she has gone.
<i>I am Nijood, Age 10 and Divorced</i>	Nijood Ali	Nujood Ali's childhood came to an abrupt end in 2008 when her father arranged for her to be married to a man three times her age. With harrowing directness, Nujood tells of abuse at her husband's hands and of her daring escape. Nujood's courageous defiance of both Yemeni customs and her own family has inspired other young girls in the Middle East to challenge their marriages.



RIGHT TO JUSTICE

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee	The unforgettable novel of a childhood in a sleepy Southern town and the crisis of conscience that rocked it. Compassionate, dramatic, and deeply moving, <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> takes readers to the roots of human behavior—to innocence and experience, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred.
<i>Dead Man Walking</i>	Helen Prejean	In 1982, Sister Helen Prejean became the spiritual advisor to Patrick Sonnier, the convicted killer of two teenagers who was sentenced to die in the electric chair of Louisiana's Angola State Prison. In the months before Sonnier's death, the Roman Catholic nun came to know a man who was as terrified as he had once been terrifying. At the same time, she came to know the families of the victims and the men whose job it was to execute him--men who often harbored doubts about the rightness of what they were doing.
<i>A House Without Windows</i>	Nadia Hashimi	For two decades, Zeba was a loving wife, a patient mother, and a peaceful villager. But her quiet life is shattered when her husband, Kamal, is found brutally murdered with a hatchet in the courtyard of their home. Nearly catatonic with shock, Zeba is unable to account for her whereabouts at the time of his death. Her children swear their mother could not have committed such a heinous act. Kamal's family is sure she did, and demands justice. Barely escaping a vengeful mob, Zeba is arrested and jailed. For the women she meets in jail, the prison is both a haven and a punishment; removed from the harsh and unforgiving world outside, they form a lively and indelible sisterhood. Into this closed world comes Yusuf, Zeba's Afghan-born, American-raised lawyer he has the fate this seemingly ordinary housewife in his hands.



AGISM

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Stone Angel</i>	Margaret Laurence	Hagar Shipley is Stubborn and, at ninety, with her life nearly behind her – She makes a bold last step towards freedom and independence. We meet Hagar as a young girl growing up in a black prairie town and as an old woman isolated by an uncompromising pride and by the stern virtues she has inherited from her pioneer ancestors
<i>Girl Runner</i>	Carrie Snyder	<i>Girl Runner</i> is the story of Aganetha Smart, a former Olympic athlete who was famous in the 1920s, but now, at age 104, lives in a nursing home, alone and forgotten by history. For Aganetha, a competitive and ambitious woman, her life remains present and unfinished in her mind. When her quiet life is disturbed by the unexpected arrival of two young strangers, Aganetha begins to reflect on her childhood in rural Ontario and her struggles to make an independent life for herself in the city.



RACISM

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Bifocal</i>	Eric Walters and Deborah Ellis	One day their high school is put on lockdown, and the police arrest a Muslim student on suspicion of terrorist affiliations. The Muslim students become targets and a smoke-bomb is set off near their lockers while Jay and his teammates believe they've been set-up to look like racists.
<i>Obasan</i>	Joy Kogawa	<i>Obasan</i> tells, through the eyes of a child, the moving story of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. Naomi is a sheltered and beloved five-year-old when Pearl Harbor changes her life.
<i>The House Girl</i>	Tara Conklin	Virginia, 1852. Seventeen-year-old Josephine Bell decides to run from the failing tobacco farm where she is a slave and nurse to her ailing mistress, the aspiring artist Lu Anne Bell. New York City, 2004. Lina Sparrow, an ambitious first-year associate in an elite law firm, is given a difficult, highly sensitive assignment that could make her career: she must find the "perfect plaintiff" to lead a historic class-action lawsuit worth trillions of dollars in reparations for descendants of American slaves. Are the iconic paintings long ascribed to Lu Anne Bell really the work of her house slave, Josephine? This books moves from past to present to search for the truth.
<i>Beloved</i>	Toni Morrison	Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless.
<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i>	Alan Paton	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice.
<i>Invisible Man</i>	Ralph Ellison	The nameless narrator of the novel describes growing up in a black community in the South, attending a Negro college from which he is expelled, moving to New York and retreating amid violence and confusion to the basement lair of the Invisible Man he imagines himself to be.
<i>The Book of Negroes</i>	Lawrence Hill	The story of Aminata, who was abducted as an eleven-year-old child from her village in West Africa and put to work on an indigo plantation on the sea islands of South Carolina.
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	Maya Angelou	Sent by their mother to live with their devout grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the locals. Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime.
<i>Chains</i>	Laurie Halse Anderson	As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight for freedom. Upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons.
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i>	John Boyne	Berlin, 1942: While exploring his family's new home and land, Bruno meets another boy whose life and circumstances are very different from his own, and their meeting results in a friendship that has devastating consequences.

RACISM

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Bluest Eye</i>	Toni Morrison	Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl, prays every day for beauty. Mocked by other children for the dark skin, curly hair, and brown eyes that set her apart, she yearns for normalcy, for the blond hair and blue eyes that she believes will allow her to finally fit in.
<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i>	Sue Monk Kidd	A coming of age tale set in South Carolina in 1964, <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily’s fierce-hearted black “stand-in mother,” Rosaleen, insults three of the town’s most vicious racists, they escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother’s past.
<i>Black Like Me</i>	John Howard Griffin	A nonfiction book by white journalist John Howard Griffin recounting his journey in the Deep South of the United States, at a time when African-Americans lived under Racial Segregation. Griffin was a native of Dallas, Texas, who had his skin temporarily darkened to pass as a black man. He traveled for six weeks throughout the racially segregated states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, and Georgia to explore life from the other side of the color line.
<i>Notes of a Native Son</i>	James Baldwin	Since its original publication in 1955, this first nonfiction collection of essays by James Baldwin remains an American classic. His impassioned essays on life in Harlem, the protest novel, movies, and African Americans abroad are as powerful today as when they were first written.
<i>The Invention of Wings</i>	Sue Monk Kidd	Hetty “Handful” Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke’s daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women. As the stories build to a riveting climax, Handful will endure loss and sorrow, finding courage and a sense of self in the process. Sarah will become one of the early pioneers in the abolition and women’s rights movements.
<i>Amistad</i>	Alexs D. Pate	Based on the true story of the 1839 mutiny on board the Spanish slave ship, Amistad, here is the frightening sequence of events that led fifty-three young men and women - and one young nation - to seek freedom and justice for all people. Amistad is the story of Cinque, the illegally enslaved son of a Mende chief who led an uprising full of fury and courage. It is also the story of John Quincy Adams, the former American president, who reluctantly heeded the call to justice and defended Cinque in a Supreme Court trial that would alter the nation's history. Amistad celebrates the human spirit's profound determination to fight, hope, and to be free.

LBGTQ+ ISSUES

<i>Title</i>	Author	Summaries
<i>Prayers for Bobby</i>	Leroy Aarons	Bobby Griffith was an all-American boy ...and he was gay. Faced with an irresolvable conflict-for both his family and his religion taught him that being gay was "wrong" -Bobby chose to take his own life.
<i>The Mayor of Castro Street</i>	Randy Shilts	Known as "The Mayor of Castro Street", Harvey Milk's personal life, public career, and assassination reflect the dramatic emergence of the gay community as a political power in America.
<i>Am I Blue? (anthology)</i>	Marion Dane Bauer (ed.)	Each of these stories is original, each is by a noted author for young adults, and each honestly portrays its subject and theme--growing up gay or lesbian, or with gay or lesbian parents or friends.
<i>Tran-Sister Radio</i>	Chris Bohjalian	When Allison Banks develops a crush on Dana Stevens, she knows that he will give her what she needs most. But then a few months into their relationship, Dana tells Allison his secret: he has always been certain that he is a woman born into the wrong skin, and soon he will have a sex-change operation.
<i>Funny Boy</i>	Shyam Selvadurai	A boy's bittersweet passage to maturity and sexual awakening is set against escalating political tensions in Sri Lanka, during the seven years leading up to the 1983 riots. Arjie Chelvaratnam is a Tamil boy growing up in an extended family in Colombo. It is through his eyes that the story unfolds and we meet a delightful, sometimes eccentric cast of characters.
<i>Middlesex</i>	Jeffrey Eugenides	Middlesex tells the story of Calliope Stephanides, and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family, who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit, witnessing its glory days as the Motor City and the race riots of 1967 before moving out to the tree-lined streets of suburban Grosse Pointe, Michigan. To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret, and the astonishing genetic history that turns Callie into Cal.



GENDER INEQUALITY

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>	Khaled Hosseini	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> is a breathtaking story set against the volatile events of Afghanistan's last thirty years—from the Soviet invasion to the reign of the Taliban to post-Taliban rebuilding—that puts the violence, fear, hope, and faith of this country in intimate, human terms. It is a tale of two generations of characters brought jarringly together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives—the struggle to survive, raise a family, find happiness—are inextricable from the history playing out around them.
<i>Possessing the Secret of Joy</i>	Alice Walker	This is the searing story of Tashi, a tribal African woman first glimpsed in "The Color Purple" whose fateful decision to submit to the tsunga's knife and be genitally mutilated leads to a trauma that informs her life and fatefully alters her existence.
<i>The Birth House</i>	Amy McKay	The Birth House is the story of Dora Rare, the first daughter to be born in five generations of Rares. As a child in an isolated village in Nova Scotia, she is drawn to Miss Babineau, an outspoken Acadian midwife with a gift for healing. Dora becomes Miss B.'s apprentice, and together they help the women of Scots Bay through infertility, difficult labours, breech births, unwanted pregnancies and even unfulfilling sex lives. Filled with details as compelling as they are surprising, <i>The Birth House</i> is an unforgettable tale of the struggles women have faced to have control of their own bodies and to keep the best parts of tradition alive in the world of modern medicine.
<i>Secret Daughter</i>	Shilpi S. Gowda	<i>Secret Daughter</i> , a first novel by Shilpi Somaya Gowda, explores powerfully and poignantly the emotional terrain of motherhood, loss, identity, and love through the experiences of two families—one Indian, one American—and the child that binds them together. An Indian mother gives up her new daughter in order to save her and an American mother adopts the child she can never have. A masterful work set partially in the Mumbai slums so vividly portrayed in the hit film <i>Slumdog Millionaire</i> .
<i>Princess: a true story of life behind the veil in Saudi Arabia</i>	Jean Sasson	Sultana is a Saudi Arabian princess, a woman born to fabulous, uncountable wealth. She has four mansions on three continents, her own private jet, glittering jewels, designer dresses galore. But in reality she lives in a gilded cage. She has no freedom, no control over her own life, no value but as a bearer of sons. Hidden behind her black floor-length veil, she is a prisoner, jailed by her father, her husband, her sons, and her country.
<i>Lucky</i>	Alice Sebold	In a memoir Alice Sebold reveals how her life was utterly transformed when, as an eighteen-year-old college freshman, she was brutally raped and beaten in a park near campus. What propels this chronicle of her recovery is Sebold's indomitable spirit - as she struggles for understanding ("After telling the hard facts to anyone, from lover to friend, I have changed in their eyes"); as her dazed family and friends sometimes bungle their efforts to provide comfort and support; and as, ultimately, she triumphs, managing through grit and coincidence to help secure her attacker's arrest and conviction. Sebold illuminates the experience of trauma victims even as she imparts wisdom profoundly hard-won: "You save yourself or you remain unsaved."

GENDER INEQUALITY

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Virgin Cure</i>	Amy McKay	This novel is set in the tenements of lower Manhattan in 1871. The summer she turned twelve, Moth is sold as a servant to a wealthy woman. From there, she meets Miss Everett, the owner of a brothel simply known as "The Infant School." Miss Everett caters to gentlemen who pay dearly for companions who are "willing and clean. Her new friends are falling prey to the myth of the "virgin cure" - that deflowering a "fresh maid" can heal the incurable and tainted. She knows the law will not protect her that polite society ignores her, and still she dreams of answering to no one but herself. There's a high price for such independence.
<i>The Pearl that Broke Its Shell</i>	Nadia Hashimi	In Kabul, 2007, with a drug-addicted father and no brothers, Rahima and her sisters can only sporadically attend school, and can rarely leave the house. Their only hope lies in the ancient custom of bacha posh, which allows young Rahima to dress and be treated as a boy until she is of marriageable age. As a son, she can attend school, go to the market, and chaperone her older sisters.



CHILD LABOUR

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Boys Without Names</i>	Kashmira Sheth	For eleven-year-old Gopal and his family, life in their rural Indian village is over: <i>We stay, we starve</i> , his baba has warned. They flee to the big city of Mumbai in hopes of finding work and a brighter future. Gopal is eager to help support his struggling family, so when a stranger approaches him with the promise of a factory job, he jumps at the offer. But there is no factory, just a stuffy sweatshop where he and five other boys are forced to work for no money and little food. The boys are forbidden to talk or even to call one another by their real names. Locked away in a rundown building, Gopal despairs of ever seeing his family again.
<i>A Long Way Gone</i>	Ishmael Beah	At the age of twelve, Ishmael Beah fled attacking rebels in Sierra Leone and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. At sixteen, he was removed from fighting by UNICEF, and through the help of the staff at his rehabilitation center, he learned how to forgive himself, to regain his humanity, and, finally, to heal.



EDUCATION

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Push</i>	Sapphire	Precious Jones, an illiterate sixteen-year-old, has up until now been invisible: invisible to the father who rapes her and the mother who batters her and to the authorities who dismiss her as just one more of Harlem's casualties. But when Precious, pregnant with a second child by her father, meets a determined and highly radical teacher, we follow her on a journey of education and enlightenment as Precious learns not only how to write about her life, but how to make it her own for the first time.
<i>Freedom Writers</i>	Ellen Gruwell and Freedom Writers	As an idealistic twenty-three-year-old English teacher at Wilson High School in Long beach, California, Erin Gruwell confronted a room of “unteachable, at-risk” students. She and her students, using the treasured books <i>Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl</i> and <i>Zlata’s Diary: A Child’s Life in Sarajevo</i> as their guides, undertake a life-changing, eye-opening, spirit-raising odyssey against intolerance and misunderstanding. They learn to see the parallels in these books to their own lives, recording their thoughts and feelings in diaries and dubbing themselves the “Freedom Writers” in homage to the civil rights activists “The Freedom Riders.”
<i>I am Malala</i>	Malala Yousafzai	When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school, and few expected her to survive. Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she has become a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate.
<i>Speak</i>	Laurie Halse Anderson	Melinda is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her. Her healing process has just begun when she has another violent encounter with him. But this time Melinda fights back, refuses to be silent, and thereby achieves a measure of vindication.

RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	Anne Frank	Discovered in the attic in which she spent the last years of her life, Anne Frank's remarkable diary has since become a world classic. In 1942, with Nazis occupying Holland, a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl and her family fled their home in Amsterdam and went into hiding. For the next two years, until their whereabouts were betrayed to the Gestapo, they and another family lived cloistered in the "Secret Annex" of an old office building. Cut off from the outside world, they faced hunger, boredom, the constant cruelties of living in confined quarters, and the ever-present threat of discovery and death. In her diary Anne Frank recorded vivid impressions of her experiences during this period.
<i>Annexed: A Novel</i>	Sharon Dogar	Everyone knows about Anne Frank and her life hidden in the secret annex – but what about the boy who was also trapped there with her? Sharon Dogar explores what this might have been like from Peter's point of view. What was it like to be forced into hiding with Anne Frank, first to hate her and then to find yourself falling in love with her? Anne's diary ends on August 4, 1944, but Peter's story takes us on, beyond their betrayal and into the Nazi death camps. He details with accuracy, clarity and compassion the reality of day to day survival in Auschwitz – and ultimately the horrific fates of the Annex's occupants
<i>Sarah's Key</i>	Tatiana De Rosnay	Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel' d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. Paris, May 2002: On Vel' d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life.
<i>Berlin Boxing Club</i>	Robert Sharenow	Berlin Boxing Club is loosely inspired by the true story of boxer Max Schmeling's experiences following Kristallnacht. Karl Stern has never thought of himself as a Jew. But the bullies at his school in Nazi-era Berlin, don't care that Karl has never been in a synagogue or that his family doesn't practice religion. Demoralized by attacks on a heritage he doesn't accept as his own, Karl longs to prove his worth through boxing. Max's fame forces him to associate with Hitler and other Nazi elites. Can Karl balance his dream of boxing greatness with his obligation to keep his family out of harm's way?

HEALTH ISSUES

<i>My Sister's Keeper</i>	Jodi Picoult	Jodi Picoult tells the story of a girl who decides to sue her parents for the rights to her own body. Anna is not sick, but she might as well be. By age thirteen, she has undergone countless surgeries, transfusions, and shots so that her older sister, Kate, can somehow fight the leukemia that has plagued her since childhood. The product of preimplantation genetic diagnosis, Anna was conceived as a bone marrow match for Kate—a life and a role that she has never challenged...until now.
<i>Panic in Level 4</i>	Richard Preston	Real mysteries that refuse to leave one's mind. These dramatic true stories include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the phenomenon of “self-cannibals,” who suffer from a rare genetic condition caused by one wrong letter in their DNA that forces them to compulsively chew their own flesh—and why everyone may have a touch of this disease • the search for the unknown host of Ebola virus, an organism hidden somewhere in African rain forests, where the disease finds its way into the human species, causing outbreaks of unparalleled horror
<i>Spillover</i>	David Quammen	Ebola, SARS, Hendra, AIDS, and countless other deadly viruses all have one thing in common: the bugs that transmit these diseases all originate in wild animals and pass to humans by a process called spillover. In this gripping account, David Quammen takes the reader along on this astonishing quest to learn how, where from, and why these diseases emerge and asks the terrifying question: What might the next big one be?
<i>Never Let Me Go</i>	Kazuo Ishiguro	As a child, Kathy – now thirty-one years old – lived at Hailsham, a private school in the scenic English countryside where the children were sheltered from the outside world, brought up to believe that they were special and that their well-being was crucial not only for themselves but for the society they would eventually enter. Kathy had long ago put this idyllic past behind her, but when two of her Hailsham friends come back into her life, she stops resisting the pull of memory and face the dark secret behind Hailsham's nurturing facade. With the dawning clarity of hindsight, the three friends are compelled to face the truth about their childhood—and about their lives now.
<i>Still Alice</i>	Lisa Genova	A 50-year-old woman's suddenly descends into early onset Alzheimer's disease. Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children and a house on the Cape, is a celebrated Harvard professor at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, she receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away. In turns heartbreaking, inspiring and terrifying, Still Alice captures in remarkable detail what's it's like to literally lose your mind...

HEALTH ISSUES

<i>Left Neglected</i>	Lisa Genova	Sarah Nickerson is like any other career-driven supermom in Welmont, the affluent Boston suburb where she leads a hectic but charmed life with her husband Bob, faithful nanny, and three children - Lucy, Charlie, and nine-month-old Linus. A self-confessed balloon about to burst, Sarah miraculously manages every minute of her life like an air traffic controller. Until one fateful day, while driving to work and trying to make a phone call, she looks away from the road for one second too long. In the blink of an eye, all the rapidly moving parts of her jam-packed life come to a screeching halt.
<i>Love Anthony</i>	Lisa Genova	Two women, each cast adrift by unforeseen events in their lives, meet by accident on a Nantucket beach and are drawn into a friendship. Olivia is a young mother whose eight-year-old severely autistic son has recently died. Beth, a stay-at-home mother of three, is also recently separated after discovering her husband's long-term infidelity. In an attempt to recapture a sense of her pre-married life, she rekindles her passion for writing, determined to find her own voice again. But surprisingly, as she does so, Beth also find herself channeling the voice of an unknown boy, exuberant in his perceptions of the world around him that brings comfort and meaning to them both.



INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>	Sherman Alexie	This is the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.
<i>April Raintree</i>	Beatrice Culleton	Two young sisters are taken from their home and family. Powerless to change their fortunes, they are separated, and each put into different foster homes. Yet over the years, the bond between them grows. As they each make their way in a society that is, at times, indifferent, hostile, and violent, one embraces her Métis identity, while the other tries to leave it behind. In the end, out of tragedy, comes an unexpected legacy of triumph and reclamation.
<i>One Dead Indian</i> (non-fiction)	Peter Edwards	On September 4, 1995, several Stoney Point Natives entered Ipperwash Provincial Park, near Sarnia, Ontario, and began a peaceful protest aimed at reclaiming a traditional burial ground. Within seventy-two hours, one of those protestors, Anthony (Dudley) George, was dead, shot by an OPP officer. In <i>One Dead Indian</i> , after covering the tragedy from the beginning, journalist Peter Edwards examines the circumstances surrounding George's death and asks a number of tough questions, including: How much pressure did the Ontario government put on the OPP to get tough? As the official public inquiry attempt to shed light on what really happened.
<i>I am an Indian</i> (anthology)	Kent Gooderham	This book is the first anthology of Indian literature to be published in Canada. It has been written and illustrated by men and women who are called Indians, but who think of themselves as Sioux or Salish, Ojibway or Delaware, Abnakis or Assinisboine. Here is a glimpse into an Indian world -- a world of wars and treaties, honour and treachery, wealth and degradation. Indian stories, songs, and poems from all areas of Canada have been included so that others may enjoy some of the fun that is Blackfoot fun, meet some of the heroes that are Cree heroes, and learn some of the wisdom that is Kwakiutl wisdom.
<i>Three Day Road</i>	Joseph Boyden	It is 1919, and Niska, the last Oji-Cree woman to live off the land, has received word that one of the two boys she saw off to the Great War has returned. Xavier Bird, her sole living relation, is gravely wounded and addicted to morphine. As Niska slowly paddles her canoe on the three-day journey to bring Xavier home, travelling through the stark but stunning landscape of Northern Ontario, their respective stories emerge—stories of Niska's life among her kin and of Xavier's horrifying experiences in the killing fields of Ypres and the Somme.
<i>Medicine River</i>	Thomas King	When Will returns to Medicine River, he thinks he is simply attending his mother's funeral. He doesn't count on Harlen Bigbear and his unique brand of community planning. Harlen tries to sell Will on the idea of returning to Medicine River to open shop as the town's only Native photographer. Somehow, that's exactly what happens. Through Will's gentle and humorous narrative, we come to know Medicine River, a small Albertan town bordering a Blackfoot reserve.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

<i>Indian Horse</i>	Richard Wagamese	Saul Indian Horse has hit bottom. His last binge almost killed him, and now he's a reluctant resident in a treatment centre for alcoholics, surrounded by people he's sure will never understand him. But Saul wants peace, and he grudgingly comes to see that he'll find it only through telling his story. With him, readers embark on a journey back through the life he's led as a northern Ojibway, with all its joys and sorrows.
<i>Keeper'n Me</i>	Richard Wagamese	When Garnet Raven was three years old, he was taken from his home on an Ojibway Indian reserve and placed in a series of foster homes. Having reached his mid-teens, he escapes at the first available opportunity, only to find himself cast adrift on the streets of the big city.



ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Empty</i>	Suzanne Weyn	A dystopic look at what happens to one American town when all the fossil fuels run out...It's the near future - the very near future - and the fossil fuels are running out. No gas. No oil. Which means no driving. No heat. Supermarkets are empty. Malls have shut down. Life has just become more local than we ever knew it could be. Nobody expected the end to come this fast. And in the small town of Spring Valley, decisions that once seemed easy are quickly becoming matters of life and death. There is hope - there has to be hope - just there are also sacrifices that need to be made, and a whole society that needs to be rethought.
<i>Rule of Three</i>	Eric Walters	Computers around the globe shut down in a viral catastrophe. At sixteen-year-old Adam Daley's high school, the problem first seems to be a typical electrical outage, until students discover that cell phones are down, municipal utilities are failing, and a few computer-free cars like Adam's are the only vehicles that function. Driving home, Adam encounters a storm tide of anger and fear as the region becomes paralyzed. Soon—as resources dwindle, crises mount, and chaos descends—he will see his suburban neighborhood band together for protection. And Adam will understand that having a police captain for a mother and a retired government spy living next door are not just the facts of his life but the keys to his survival, in <i>The Rule of Three</i> by Eric Walters.
<i>The History of Bees</i>	Maja Lunde	In the spirit of <i>Station Eleven</i> and <i>Never Let Me Go</i> , this dazzling and ambitious literary debut follows three generations of beekeepers from the past, present, and future, weaving a spellbinding story of their relationship to the bees and to their children and one another against the backdrop of an urgent, global crisis. Haunting, illuminating, and deftly written, <i>The History of Bees</i> joins these three very different narratives into one gripping and thought-provoking story that is just as much about the powerful bond between children and parents as it is about our very relationship to nature and humanity.
<i>The Lord of Opium</i>	Nancy Farmer	Raised as a clone of El Patrón, the ruler of the land of Opium, fourteen-year-old Matt is not entirely ready to fill the shoes of his predecessor. The daily struggles of ruling are made even more difficult by the desperation of the people living in the lands surrounding his, as an ecological disaster has ravaged them almost to the point of no return. His enemies are many, but Matt finds himself equally afraid of his own potential to become every bit as bloodthirsty and ruthless as the tyrant he was cloned from.
<i>The Stranger in the Woods</i>	Michael Finkel: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit	In 1986, a shy and intelligent twenty-year-old named Christopher Knight left his home in Massachusetts, drove to Maine, and disappeared into the forest. He would not have a conversation with another human being until nearly three decades later, when he was arrested for stealing food. He broke into nearby cottages for food, clothing, reading material, and other provisions, taking only what he needed but terrifying a community never able to solve the mysterious burglaries. Based on extensive interviews with Knight himself, this is a vividly detailed account of his secluded life--why did he leave? What did he learn?. It is a gripping story of survival that asks fundamental questions about solitude, community, and what makes a good life, and a deeply moving portrait of a man who was determined to live his own way, and succeeded.

GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	Ray Bradbury	Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden. Montag never questions the destruction and ruin his actions produce, returning each day to his bland life. But then he meets an eccentric young neighbor, Clarisse, who introduces him to a past where people didn't live in fear and to a present where one sees the world through the ideas in books instead of the mindless chatter of television. When Mildred attempts suicide and Clarisse suddenly disappears, Montag begins to question everything he has ever known. He starts hiding books in his home, and when his pilfering is discovered, the fireman has to run for his life.
<i>Brave New World</i>	Adolus Huxley	Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through clever use of genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs, all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone in feeling discontent. Harboring an unnatural desire for solitude, and a distaste for the pleasure of compulsory promiscuity, Bernard has a longing to break free. A visit to one of the few remaining Savage Reservations, where the old, imperfect life still continues, may be the cure for his distress.... Huxley's ingenious fantasy of the future sheds a blazing light on the present and is considered to be his most enduring masterpiece.
<i>The Chrysalids</i>	John Wyndham	The Chrysalids is set in the future after a devastating global nuclear war. David, the young hero of the novel, lives in a tight-knit community of religious and genetic fundamentalists. Abnormal plants are publicly burned, with much singing of hymns. Abnormal humans (who are not really human) are also condemned to destruction—unless they succeed in fleeing to the Fringes, that Wild Country where, as the authorities say, nothing is reliable and the devil does his work.
<i>Red Poppies</i>	Alai	Red Poppies focuses on the extravagant and brutal reign of a clan of Tibetan warlords during the rise of Chinese Communism. The story is narrated by the chieftain's son, a self-professed "idiot" who reveals the bloody feuds, seductions, secrets, and scheming behind his family's struggles for power. When the chieftain agrees to grow opium poppies with seeds supplied by the Chinese Nationalists in exchange for modern weapons, he draws Tibet into the opium trade -- and unwittingly plants the seeds for a downfall. A "swashbuckling novel" (New York Times Book Review).
<i>My Name is Number 4</i>	Ting-Xing Ye	Here is the true story of fourteen-year-old Ting-xing's tumultuous life turned upside down by China's Cultural Revolution. After the death of both her parents, Ting-xing and her four siblings endure the brutality of Red Guard attacks on their schools and even their house as they struggle against poverty and hunger. At sixteen, Ting-xing herself is exiled to a prison farm far from home. My Name is Number 4 has at its centre the feisty and courageous Ting-xing, fighting to survive as a young woman caught up in events beyond her control.

GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION

<i>Rash</i>	Pete Hautman	It's late in the twenty-first century, and the United Safer States of America (USSA) has become a nation obsessed with safety. For Bo Marsten, a teenager who grew up in the USSA, it's all good. He knows the harsh laws were created to protect the people. But when Bo's temper flares out of control and he's sentenced to three years of manual labor, he's not so down with the law anymore. Bo's forced to live and work in a factory in the Canadian tundra. The warden running the place is totally out of his mind, and cares little for his inmates' safety. Bo will have to decide what's worse: a society that locks people up for road rage, or a prison where the wrong move could make you polar bear food.
<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	George Orwell	It is 1984, and the worlds' three major powers-Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia-are constantly at war. In Oceania, where the Party is in power, the thought police unearh every act of dissent, and Big Brother is always watching. Winston Smith, a dutiful citizen of Oceania, works for the Ministry of Truth as a propaganda writer who rewrites history to suit the needs of the authoritarian government. But when Winston falls in love with fellow worker Julia, they begin to question the very system they work for, placing them in immense danger. Pursuing their forbidden love affair, Winston plans a rebellion against the Party in order to regain the freedom to shape his own future.
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Margaret Atwood	This is the story of Offred, one of the unfortunate "Handmaids" under the new social order who have only one purpose: to breed. In Gilead, where women are prohibited from holding jobs, reading, and forming friendships, Offred's persistent memories of life in the "time before" and her will to survive are acts of rebellion.
<i>Anthem</i>	Ayn Rand	A frightening future in which individuals have no name, no independence, and no values. Equality 7-2521 lives in the dark ages of the future where all decisions are made by committee, all people live in collectives, and all traces of individualism have been wiped out. Despite such a restrictive environment, the spark of individual thought and freedom still burns in him--a passion which he has been taught to call sinful. In a purely egalitarian world, Equality 7-2521 dares to stand apart from the herd--to think and choose for himself, to discover electricity, and to love the woman of his choice. Now he has been marked for death for committing the ultimate sin. In a world where the great "we" reign supreme, he has rediscovered the lost and holy word--"I."
<i>Beneath a Scarlet Sky</i>	Mark T. Sullivan	Pino Lella wants nothing to do with the war or the Nazis. He's a normal Italian teenager—obsessed with music, food, and girls. When his family home in Milan is destroyed by Allied bombs, Pino joins an underground railroad helping Jews escape over the Alps, and falls for Anna, a beautiful widow six years his senior. In an attempt to protect him, Pino's parents force him to enlist as a German soldier and after Pino is injured, he is recruited at the tender age of eighteen to become the personal driver for Adolf Hitler's left hand in Italy, General Hans Leyers, one of the Third Reich's most mysterious and powerful commanders.

GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION

<i>A House in the Sky</i>	Amanda Lindhout & Sara Corbett	In August 2008, Amanda Lindhout traveled to Somalia—“the most dangerous place on earth.” On her fourth day, she was abducted by a group of masked men along a dusty road. Held hostage for 460 days, Amanda converts to Islam as a survival tactic, receives “wife lessons” from one of her captors, and risks a daring escape. Moved between a series of abandoned houses in the desert, she survives on memory—every lush detail of the world she experienced in her life before captivity—and on strategy, fortitude, and hope. When she is most desperate, she visits a house in the sky, high above the woman kept in chains, in the dark, being tortured.
<i>City of Thorns</i>	Ben Rawlence	Situated hundreds of miles from any other settlement, deep within the inhospitable desert of northern Kenya where only thorn bushes grow, Dadaab is a city like no other. Its buildings are made from mud, sticks or plastic, its entire economy is grey, and its citizens survive on rations and luck. Get to know the residents. Among them are Guled, a former child soldier who lives for football; Nisho, who scrapes an existence by pushing a wheelbarrow and dreaming of riches; Tawane, the indomitable youth leader; and schoolgirl Kheyro, whose future hangs upon her education.



SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADDICTION

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>White Oleander</i>	Janet Fitch	Everywhere hailed as a novel of rare beauty and power, <i>White Oleander</i> tells the unforgettable story of Ingrid, a brilliant poet imprisoned for murder, and her daughter, Astrid, whose odyssey through a series of Los Angeles foster homes-each its own universe, with its own laws, its own dangers, its own hard lessons to be learned-becomes a surprising journey of self-discovery.
<i>A Million Little Pieces</i>	James Frey	At the age of 23, James Frey woke up on a plane to find his front teeth knocked out and his nose broken. He had no idea where the plane was headed nor any recollection of the past two weeks. An alcoholic for ten years and a crack addict for three, he checked into a treatment facility shortly after landing. There he was told he could either stop using or die before he reached age 24. This is Frey's acclaimed account of his six weeks in rehab.
<i>She's Come Undone</i>	Wally Lamb	Meet Dolores Price. She's 13, wise-mouthed but wounded, having bid her childhood goodbye. Stranded in front of her bedroom TV, she spends the next few years nourishing herself with the Mallomars, potato chips, and Pepsi her anxious mother supplies. When she finally orbits into young womanhood at 257 pounds, Dolores is no stronger and life is no kinder. But this time she's determined to rise to the occasion and give herself one more chance before she <i>really</i> goes under.
<i>I know This Much is True</i>	Wally Lamb	On the afternoon of October 12, 1990, my twin brother, Thomas, entered the Three Rivers, Connecticut, public library, retreated to one of the rear study carrels, and prayed to God the sacrifice he was about to commit would be deemed acceptable. . . .
<i>Smashed</i>	Koren Zailckas	With one stiff sip of Southern Comfort at the age of fourteen, Zailckas is initiated into the world of drinking. From then on, she will drink faithfully, fanatically. In high school, her experimentation will lead to a stomach pumping. In college, her excess will give way to a pattern of self-poisoning that will grow more destructive each year. At age twenty-two, Zailckas will wake up in an unfamiliar apartment in New York City, elbow her friend who is passed out next to her, and ask, "Where are we?" <i>Smashed</i> is a sober look at how she got there and, after years of blackouts and smashups, what it took for her to realize she had to stop drinking.
<i>Girl on a Train</i>	Paula Hawkins	Rachel catches the same commuter train every morning. She knows it will wait at the same signal each time, overlooking a row of back gardens. She's even started to feel like she knows the people who live in one of the houses. 'Jess and Jason', she calls them. Their life - as she sees it - is perfect. If only Rachel could be that happy. And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Now Rachel has a chance to become a part of the lives she's only watched from afar. Now they'll see; she's much more than just the girl on the train
<i>Smoking Poppy</i>	Graham Joyce	Dan Innes has received shattering news from the British Embassy in Bangkok: his daughter, Charlie, whom he hasn't seen or spoken to in two years, has been imprisoned in a Thai jail for drug smuggling. Angry, terrified, seething with reprimands and questions, Dan leaves for Thailand. But the jail at Chiang Mai marks the beginning of his search rather than the end. Following the faintest of trails up into the lawless, dangerous mountain region near Myanmar, where opium grows abundantly

SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADDICTION

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Orphan Train</i>	Christina Baker Kline	Nearly eighteen, Molly Ayer knows she has one last chance. Just months from "aging out" of the child welfare system, and close to being kicked out of her foster home, a community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping her out of juvie and worse. The closer Molly grows to Vivian, the more she discovers parallels to her own life. A Penobscot Indian, she, too, is an outsider being raised by strangers, and she, too, has unanswered questions about the past. As her emotional barriers begin to crumble, Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life - answers that will ultimately free them both.



MENTAL ILLNESS

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Icy Sparks</i>	Gwyn Hyman Rubio	Icy Sparks is the sad, funny and transcendent tale of a young girl growing up in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky during the 1950's. Gwyn Hyman Rubio's beautifully written first novel revolves around Icy Sparks, an unforgettable heroine. At the age of ten, Icy, a bright, curious child orphaned as a baby but raised by adoring grandparents, begins to have strange experiences. Try as she might, her "secrets"—verbal croaks, groans, and physical spasms—keep afflicting her. As an adult, she will find out she has Tourette's Syndrome, a rare neurological disorder, but for years her behavior is the source of mystery, confusion, and deep humiliation.
<i>Girl, Interrupted</i>	Susanna Kaysen	In 1967, after a session with a psychiatrist she'd never seen before, eighteen-year-old Susanna Kaysen was put in a taxi and sent to McLean Hospital. She spent most of the next two years on the ward for teenage girls in a psychiatric hospital as renowned for its famous clientele as for its progressive methods of treating those who could afford its sanctuary. Kaysen's memoir encompasses horror and razor-edged perception while providing vivid portraits of her fellow patients and their keepers. <i>Girl, Interrupted</i> makes us re-think our definitions of sane and insane, mental illness and recovery.
<i>Brain on Fire</i>	Susannah Cahalan	<i>Brain on Fire</i> is the powerful account of one woman's struggle to recapture her identity. When twenty-four-year-old Susannah Cahalan woke up alone in a hospital room, strapped to her bed and unable to move or speak, she had no memory of how she'd gotten there. Days earlier, she had been on the threshold of a new, adult life: at the beginning of her first serious relationship and a promising career at a major New York newspaper. Now she was labeled violent, psychotic, a flight risk. What happened?
<i>Asta in the Wings</i>	Elizabeth Watson	Asta Hewitt is a resourceful seven-year-old growing up in rural Maine. Isolated from the outside world by their delusional mother, Asta and her bookish older brother, Orion, are content constructing their own fanciful, make-believe world. When circumstances push them into the strange outside world—with all of its discontents—Asta must find a way to assimilate while remaining true to herself and her fractured family.
<i>If I Fall If I Die</i>	Michael Christie	Will has never been to the outside, at least not since he can remember. And he has certainly never gotten to know anyone other than his mother, a fiercely loving yet wildly eccentric agoraphobe who drowns in panic at the thought of opening the front door. Their little world comprises only the rooms in their home, each named for various exotic locales and filled with Will's art projects. Soon the confines of his world close in on Will. Despite his mother's protestations, Will ventures outside clad in a protective helmet and braces himself for danger. He eventually meets and befriends Jonah, a quiet boy who introduces Will to skateboarding. Will welcomes his new world with enthusiasm, his fears fading and his body hardening with each new bump, scrape, and fall. But life quickly gets complicated. When a local boy goes missing, Will and Jonah want to uncover what happened. They embark on an extraordinary adventure that pulls Will far from the confines of his closed-off world and into the throes of early adulthood and the dangers that everyday life offers.

CIVIL WAR

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Bite of the Mango</i>	Mariatu Kamara	As a child in a small rural village in Sierra Leone, Mariatu Kamara lived peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Rumors of rebel attacks were no more than a distant worry. But when 12-year-old Mariatu set out for a neighboring village, she never arrived. Heavily armed rebel soldiers, many no older than children themselves, attacked and tortured Mariatu. During this brutal act of senseless violence they cut off both her hands. Mariatu miraculously survived. The sweet taste of a mango, her first food after the attack, reaffirmed her desire to live. As told to her by Mariatu, journalist Susan McClelland has written the heartbreaking true story of the brutal attack, its aftermath.
<i>A Long Walk to Water</i>	Linda Sue Park	<i>A Long Walk to Water</i> begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about two eleven-year-olds in Sudan, a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way.
<i>Radio Congo</i>	Ben Rawlens	While poring over dust-caked pamphlets in the library, Ben Rawlence stumbles upon the photo of a lost city of colonial Congo--a glistening, modern metropolis built by huge tin mines and European capitalists. Today, that city, Manono, sits beyond the infamous "Triangle of Death," in an area rarely reached by outsiders since war turned the country's rivers to blood. Rawlence sets out to gather the news from this ghost town in one of the most dangerous places in the world.



IMMIGRANT ISSUES

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>The Hundred Secret Senses</i>	Amy Tan	The Hundred Secret Senses is an exultant novel about China and America, love and loyalty, the identities we invent and the true selves we discover along the way. Olivia Laguni is half-Chinese, but typically American in her uneasiness with her patchwork family. And no one in Olivia's family is more embarrassing to her than her half-sister, Kwan Li. For Kwan speaks mangled English, is cheerfully deaf to Olivia's sarcasm, and sees the dead with her "yin eyes."
<i>The Jade Peony</i>	Wayson Choy	Chinatown, Vancouver, in the late 1930s and '40s provides the backdrop for this poignant first novel, told through the vivid reminiscences of the three younger children of an immigrant Chinese family. The siblings grapple with their individual identities in a changing world, wresting autonomy from the strictures of history, family, and poverty.
<i>The Namesake</i>	Jhumpa Lahiri	<i>The Namesake</i> takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name.



ORGANIZED CRIME

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Midnight in Mexico</i>	Alfred Corchado	In the last six years, more than eighty thousand people have been killed in the Mexican drug war, and drug trafficking there is a multibillion-dollar business. In a country where the powerful are rarely scrutinized, noted Mexican American journalist Alfredo Corchado refuses to shrink from reporting on government corruption, murders in Juarez, or the ruthless drug cartels of Mexico. A paramilitary group spun off from the Gulf cartel, the Zetas, controls key drug routes in the north of the country. In 2007, Corchado received a tip that he could be their next target—and he had twenty four hours to find out if the threat was true
419	Will Ferguson	A car tumbles down a snowy ravine. Accident or suicide? On the other side of the world, a young woman walks out of a sandstorm in sub-Saharan Africa. In the labyrinth of the Niger Delta, a young boy learns to survive by navigating through the gas flares and oil spills of a ruined landscape. In the seething heat of Lagos City, a criminal cartel scours the internet looking for victims. 419 takes readers behind the scene of the world's most insidious internet scam. When Laura's father gets caught up in one such swindle and pays with his life, she is forced to leave the comfort of North America to make a journey deep into the dangerous back streets and alleyways of the Lagos to confront her father's killer.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Sold</i>	Patricia McCormick	Although Lakshmi's family is desperately poor her life still contains simple pleasures; but, when the harsh Himalayan monsoons wash away all the family's crops, Lakshmi's stepfather sends her away to take a job to support her family. When she arrives at "Happiness House", full of hope, she learns the unthinkable truth: she has been sold into prostitution. An exceptional novel suitable for teens and adults.
<i>Slave</i>	Mende Nazer	Mende Nazer lost her childhood at age twelve, when she was sold into slavery. It all began one horrific night in 1993, when Arab raiders swept through her village, murdering the adults and rounding up thirty-one children, including Mende. Seven years after she was seized and sold into slavery, she was sent to work for a diplomat working in London where she made a dramatic break for freedom.
<i>Little Princes</i>	Conor Grennan	<i>Little Princes</i> is the epic story of Conor Grennan's battle to save the lost children of Nepal and how he found himself in the process. It is the powerful story of a soul's awakening and a reflection of the noblest and darkest of human intent. It is a true, and often hilarious, tale of the power of optimism, love, and faith. And it is an unforgettable account of children, families and one man whose decision to take a stand makes the world a better place for all of us.
<i>The Color of the Sky</i>	Amita Trasi	A sweeping, emotional journey of two childhood friends—one struggling to survive the human slave trade and the other on a mission to save her—two girls whose lives converge only to change one fateful night in 1993.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>Chinese Cinderella</i>	Adeline Yen Mah	A Chinese proverb says, "Falling leaves return to their roots." In Chinese Cinderella, Adeline Yen Mah returns to her roots to tell the story of her painful childhood and her ultimate triumph and courage in the face of despair. Adeline's affluent, powerful family considers her bad luck after her mother dies giving birth to her. Life does not get any easier when her father remarries. She and her siblings are subjected to the disdain of her stepmother, while her stepbrother and stepsister are spoiled. Although Adeline wins prizes at school, they are not enough to compensate for what she really yearns for -- the love and understanding of her family.
<i>Room</i>	Emma Donoghue	To five-year-old Jack, Room is the entire world. It is where he was born and grew up; it's where he lives with his Ma as they learn and read and eat and sleep and play. At night, his Ma shuts him safely in the wardrobe, where he is meant to be asleep when Old Nick visits. Room is home to Jack, but to Ma, it is the prison where Old Nick has held her captive for seven years.
<i>Diva</i>	Alex Flinn	For most people, the word "diva" means brilliant, talented, over-the-top, and glamorous. I, however, seemed to be trapped in the not-very-glamorous life of a cheerleader wannabe with serious ex-boyfriend issues and a permanent yo-yo diet. At least until the day I auditioned for Miami High School of the Arts—and got in! All I had to do was convince my mother, the cosmetics salesperson with epically bad taste in clothes and men, that going downtown to hang with the music geeks was a good idea. I had to blackmail her to be able to do it, but I'm here—a diva-in-training—and I'm not so sure I can cut it. Now what?
<i>The Colour Purple</i>	Alice Walker	Set in the deep American South between the wars, it is the tale of Celie, a young black girl born into poverty and segregation. Raped repeatedly by the man she calls 'father', she has two children taken away from her, is separated from her beloved sister Nettie and is trapped into an ugly marriage. But then she meets the glamorous Shug Avery, singer and magic-maker - a woman who has taken charge of her own destiny. Gradually, Celie discovers the power and joy of her own spirit, freeing her from her past and reuniting her with those she loves.



FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

Title	Author	Summaries
<i>A Secret Kept</i>	Tatiana De Rosnay	Antoine Rey thought he had the perfect surprise for his sister Mélanie's birthday: a weekend by the sea at Noirmoutier Island, where the pair spent many happy childhood summers playing on the beach. It had been over thirty years, Antoine thought, since they'd returned to the island.,The family holidays ceased at their mother's death. But the island's haunting beauty triggers more than happy memories; it reminds Mélanie of something unexpected and deeply disturbing about their last island summer. She finally summons the courage to reveal what she knows to Antoine, her emotions overcome her and she loses control of the car.
<i>The Memory Keeper's Daughter</i>	Kim Edwards	On a winter night in 1964, Dr. David Henry is forced by a blizzard to deliver his own twins. His son, born first, is perfectly healthy. Yet when his daughter is born, he sees immediately that she has Down's Syndrome. Rationalizing it as a need to protect Norah, his wife, he makes a split-second decision that will alter all of their lives forever. He asks his nurse to take the baby away to an institution and never to reveal the secret.
<i>The Other Side of the Bridge</i>	Mary Lawson	A novel of jealousy, rivalry and the dangerous power of obsession. Two brothers, Arthur and Jake Dunn, are the sons of a farmer in the mid-1930s, when life is tough and another world war is looming. Arthur is reticent, solid, dutiful and set to inherit the farm and his father's character; Jake is younger, attractive, mercurial and dangerous to know – the family misfit. When a beautiful young woman comes into the community, the fragile balance of sibling rivalry tips over the edge.

