

Emma Approved and Other Jane Austen Inspirations

Pride and Prejudice Last year I blogged about the Lizzie Bennet Diaries, which was a really wonderful and Emmy winning video series that told the modern day story of Lizzie Bennet and her sisters based on the original characters from Pride and Prejudice.

Fans of that series now have something new to watch! Emma Approved is a video series from the same producers and again is a modern day retelling of a classic Austen work. I was able to get caught up on the first five episodes today during lunch. They might be harder to get into because Emma Woodhouse isn't initially as likeable of a character as Elizabeth Bennet, but having read the book (both for school and leisure!) I am feeling confident that she will grow on me with time. It isn't too late to get caught up with either story, no matter if you are an Austen super fan or just a casual admirer. Read more

Posted by sbowman on October 22, 2013

Classics

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Award Nominations and Literary Fiction

Lowlands If we were to believe the media, summer reading is a time for light beachy reads. Thrillers, romance and other guilty pleasures seem to fall in this category. I fall strictly into the camp that you can read anything you want at any time, but one thing we can agree on? It isn't summer anymore! So maybe it is the perfect time for a literary read. Literary fiction is often denser, more lyrical and the characters spend less time doing things and more time reflecting or reacting to things. They can be beautiful to read, have complex issues, but also sometimes dark and sad. Warning: literary fiction books often have open or ambiguous endings! You will be in for a surprise if you normally read romance or mysteries.

Literary fiction fans often refer to awards lists ? and two of my go-to lists have recently announced their nominees. The Man Booker prize is awarded to British authors and those from the Commonwealth of Nations. Their recently announced short list is very diverse ? four of the six are women and are from the far reaches of Zimbabwe, New Zealand, India, and Canada. The entire list: Read more

Posted by sbowman on October 21, 2013

Award Winner

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Comedy Memoirs for the Boomer Generation

Still Foolin' Em October seems like the perfect time of year for dark, mysterious and brooding books. But I am still holding on to September! Something light might just be the ticket before the dark fall reads.

New release Still Foolin? 'em by Billy Crystal has cracked into the top of the New York Times best seller list. After recently turning 65, Crystal tries to relate to the other millions of baby boomers who are also at or near this milestone often by portraying physical ailments through the lens of appealing humor. He also explores his long career starting off with stand up in New York to some beloved movies and stints on Saturday Night Live and hosting the Oscars. Crystal isn't afraid to tackle serious issues, but also presents

us with a belly laugh at a life well lived. There are numerous holds on the Crystal book, so while you are waiting for this book to come in you might want to try these other humorous memoirs. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on September 24, 2013

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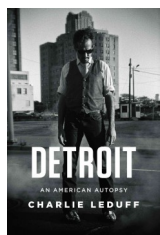
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Detroit: An American Autopsy



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Leading the news today is the announcement that Detroit filed for bankruptcy. They aren't the first municipality to file, but they are the largest. What this means for residents, city workers, retirees and the state of Michigan remains to be seen. 20 billion dollars is hard to wrap my mind around, and is a figure without names and faces.

Hoping to personalize this story is native son Charlie LeDuff. His recent nonfiction work is called *Detroit: An American Autopsy*. LeDuff is a journalist who left Detroit at an early age and traveled the world covering international conflicts and won a Pulitzer for his contributions at the New York Times. He returns to Detroit to work for The Detroit News.

This book covers a variety of stories, including the fall of ex-Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, city council corruption, the crumbling auto industry implications, and the struggles of a local fire station. You also meet LeDuff's family and follow them while they are coping (or not) with living in and near Detroit.

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Posted by sbowman on July 19, 2013

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Madame Tussaud and Read Alikes

Madame Tussaud

Madame Tussaud is a historical fiction book by Michelle Moran based on the real Marie

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Tussaud, a sculptress and museum owner in Paris. Apprenticed by her uncle, Marie learns the art of wax sculpting amid the politics, court intrigue, and massacres leading up to and during the French Revolution. Marie needs the museum to be profitable, but is often torn by personal loyalties and her desire for success. It was really refreshing to read a historical book with a strong female character who does more than sit around in fancy dresses and flirt with famous men. With a little digging, I uncovered a few more books that fit this description - historical fiction with strong women who earn income, love to learn, and

are passionate about their careers! [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on July 9, 2013

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Garbage! Water! Or Why I Love Non-fiction

Garbology

I read a lot of narrative non-fiction - historical, microhistory, natural sciences, travel, and

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environmental. I read these to be better informed, but also for pleasure so my ultimate test for a narrative non-fiction book is whether it would have made a better magazine article. I hate finishing something that I think was interesting, but could have been boiled down into a 20 page magazine article with the same impact. I've recently read two non-fiction books passed the magazine article test and then some.

The Big Thirst: The Marvels, Mysteries & Madness Shaping the New Era of Water by Charles Fishman isn't about how to make changes in your lifestyle with regards to water conservation. It isn't a how-to book for urban or rural planners. It is a book that will challenge what you think you know about water from the big picture including where it comes from and what do we really mean by "clean". This book will also identify our emotional connection with water and will put those assumptions to the test. Near the end of the book, an economist presents a model for future water use that makes sense for both dry places like Las Vegas and Australia should also be considered for wetter places like Atlanta and even Bloomington. There are pages and pages of research, calculations and notes at the end, but the book was captivating, accessible and provides much food for thought. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on May 16, 2013

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Shine by Lauren Myracle



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Warning: this book contains Serious Issues. You've also been warned that there aren't any angels, zombies, vampires, demons, or changelings. No one has supernatural superhero powers. It isn't set in the future and there has not been an apocalypse. Still interested? Yes! I loved this. *Shine* by Lauren Myracle is a realistic, gritty and powerful coming of age story that is raw and emotional but also completely worthwhile.

After Cat's friend Patrick is brutally assaulted, marked with a gay slur, and left for dead at a gas station in their hometown of Black Creek, NC she decides to figure out who could have done something so horrible. The sheriff is investigating, but seems sure that it was outsiders - just someone passing through. At face value, this book is a mystery. Cat sets out to interview people who were with Patrick the night of the attack to establish a timeline and she tries to determine motive. Patrick was friends with many people

in town who were also uncomfortable to some degree with his homosexuality.

But really the heart of this book isn't so much figuring out who did it, but how the characters come to terms with the resolution. Cat also has to face her own demons in this process. I liked that she wasn't a superhero, but a girl who got kind of messed up and is really trying to do the right thing. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on May 6, 2013

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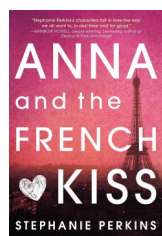
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Anna and the French Kiss



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Despite being short, Etienne St. Clair not only has amazing hair and slightly crooked-cute bottom teeth, but also is a perfect combination of French maturity and American goofiness - with a British accent! Does it get any better? Anna doesn't think so. But it could get worse. St. Clair (as everyone calls him) is taken.

Anna and the French Kiss, a recent [Rosie Award](#) nominee, begins with Anna's move for her senior year in high school from Atlanta to Paris. Anna's dad thinks it would be a good experience for her to attend the School for Americans in Paris and pulls some strings to get her into this exclusive school. It is tricky at first, because the school is small and Anna is the only new student (aaaand doesn't speak any French). Despite feeling homesick for her best friend, a new romance from her old job at the movie theater, and her little brother all back in Atlanta, Anna makes friends with her neighbor in the dormitory and starts hanging out with her and St. Clair's circle of friends. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on May 2, 2013

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Shakespeare's Birthday and the Lizzie Bennet Diaries

Will in the World

Today is Shakespeare's birthday and to celebrate a Goodreads contributor created a great

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to help you select your next read. A comedy? A tragedy? MCPL has [works by Shakespeare](#), [books to help you get through the plays](#) and of course [biographies](#). One of the best biographies is Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*. Shakespeare expert and Harvard historian, Greenblatt does an excellent job of integrating a basic biography with the sights, sounds and feel of Elizabethan England. This book is dense with detail, but also entirely readable is a great choice for both self professed Shakespeare know-it-alls and newcomers alike.

Seeing as it is a classics sort of day, I thought I would also link to the [Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#). This fictional video blog chronicles the modern day Lizzie Bennet, her sisters Lydia and Jane, and her best friend Charlotte Wu as they navigate between the pressure of their parents and potential boyfriends including the new-to-the-neighborhood Bing Lee. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on April 23, 2013

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Roger Ebert: Film Critic and Writer

Life Itself

Roger Ebert, film critic extraordinaire and Pulitzer Prize winner, died last week after a battle

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with cancer. Immediately following his death, there were lots of quotes circulating online from Ebert which reminded me what a great writer he was. In writing about movies, Ebert was able often able to put his finger on the pulse of real life human behavior and articulate the human condition - both the happy and the sad. I forgot how funny he was, and his reviews are a joy to read even if you disagree on the rating.

Those interested in starting with the basics, check out his [Movie Yearbooks](#) - complete with movie reviews, essays, tributes, journal entries, and new additions to his popular Movie Glossary. If you are looking for critiques that might lead you to viewing of really good movies, try [The Great Movie](#) series. However, some of Ebert's best writing was in critiquing bad movies. If you aren't looking for movie suggestions, but just some hilarious examples of his writing check out [Your Movie Sucks](#). [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on April 15, 2013

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