

In Order to Live: a North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom



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Born weighing less than three pounds, Yeonmi Park, had to fight to survive infancy. Her can-do spirit and inner resiliency also kept her alive through the Great Famine that struck North Korea in the 1990s. Park describes the horror that descended upon North Korea after Russia and China stopped supporting their economy. In the far north, Park's mother and father had to scramble for work. Most of the manufacturing jobs in their city disappeared so Yeonmi's father began selling on the black market. Even doing this dangerous work, the family tottered on the edge of famine often, and at other times did quite well. But well in this context was relative. In the flush periods, the Parks had rice three times daily, and meat only two or three times a month.

Park also describes the rigid class groupings the North Korean government enforced. There were three classes (*songbun*) and movement between them went in only direction, down. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 27, 2016

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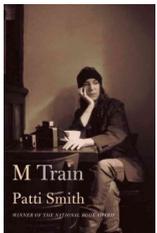
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M Train



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This absorbing new memoir by artist, poet, performer, and rock star Patti Smith provides a personal take on her daily life: her dreams, philosophical musings, friendships and myriad exotic journeys. Favorite black jacket, check. Watch cap, check. Black coffee at Café ?Ino, check.

Unlike *Just Kids*, which focused on her past, her life with artist Mapplethorpe in the famous Chelsea Hotel, in this book the past and present intertwine. Coffee, the connecting themes.

Appropriately enough, it begins with a dream. One of many that thread through the book. Next Patti describes her trip to French Guiana in the 70s. After her husband promised her a trip anyway in the world. Patti--idiosyncratic as always--chose the place where French writer Genet was imprisoned. They were almost jailed themselves on the way back when their driver was caught ferrying a man in the trunk to the airport. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 14, 2016

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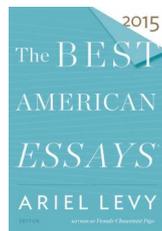
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The Best American Essays 2015



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The year 2015 has rushed out the exit door, but no worries, this wonderful mix of essays is not time-centric.

My favorite in the collection I randomly chose first. Sorry, editor, Ariel Levy, I just dive into these collections and start reading wherever my finger lands. Tim Kreider's 'A Man and his Cat' describes a single fellow's devotion for his cat. How one small nonhuman creature fills his home with love and his life with a sense of purpose.

On the other hand, in the humorous sounding essay 'My Grandma the Poisoner' John Reed makes a strong case that the early deaths of several relatives and the upset stomachs and inertia of certain houseguests were not accidental. Reed found himself comatose for fourteen hours several times after eating a Grandma meal.

The sweet and spot-on '65' describes how aging has affected one boomer's life. Mark Jacobson milks the slowing down and aches and pains of age for all they are worth. The tone is light but the sentiments serious, especially when he ponders the overarching question, how did this happen to me. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 8, 2016

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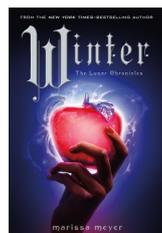
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The Lunar Chronicles



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The Lunar Chronicles by Marissa Meyer is one of my favorite series of all time. These science fiction retellings of fairy tales are exciting, romantic, smart, funny, and all around awesome. The first book in the series, Cinder, introduces readers to the world and its conflicts. Scarlet brings in some great new characters and sets the plot moving along. Cress also introduces new characters, new conflicts, and new allies. I loved all three of these books, as well as Fairest, the prequel to the series. The most recent book,

Winter, is exactly what fans have been hoping for. At just over 800 pages, it's long enough to completely lose yourself in the world and feel like you get enough time to spend with all your favorite characters. Although, I was still disappointed when it was all over.

In Cinder the reader learns that humans have colonized the Moon, now known as Luna. The Earth is broken into fewer, large countries. Cinder lives in the Eastern Commonwealth, one of the largest and most powerful countries. The Commonwealth is ruled by an Emperor and his son, Kaito, is a very handsome prince. Cinder is a cyborg, a human with robotic components, who is also the best mechanic in the Commonwealth. She lives with her adopted mother and two sisters, working hard to earn her keep and never feeling like a part of the family. When Prince Kaito shows up at her booth to inquire about her ability to fix his favorite android it's the start of something much larger for both of them. Cinder finds herself drawn into the political power plays of Queen Levana of Luna, a cruel leader with her sights set on the Commonwealth. A plague is ravaging the people of Earth and Levana has an antidote, but the young prince must first give her what she wants if he's ever to save his people.

This series is great for fans of action, romance, fairy tales, science fiction, Sailor Moon (trust me on this), and characters you wish you could be friends with in real life. The library has these books on audiobook, ebook, and traditional format. Choose one and get started enjoying your new favorite series! Then come to The Ground Floor and talk to me about them!

Posted by Becky F. on December 31, 2015

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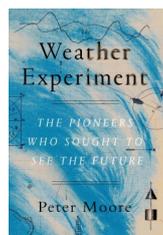
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The Weather Experiment: the pioneers who sought to see the future



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People around the world are fascinated by weather generally and in particular these days with so many unusual events. This intriguing book describes the explorations and discoveries of people who changed weather from a local phenomenon into a science that explains the why, where, and how of weather.

More importantly these new scientists could warn people before harsh storms struck to allow them to postpone travel, particularly by sea, or to mitigate the damage.

On Nov. 23, 1703 an intense storm rammmed England with no warning. The Great Storm, as it came to be called, sent ships from the North Sea into Sweden. Many were shipwrecked; thousands of others drowned. Leaders discussed the need for weather forecasting to warn the population of danger before it struck and produced casualties and massive property damage. But alas little happened until the nineteenth century.

Did you ever wonder how meteorology got its name? Historically, ?meteors? referred to any object in the sublunar zone. This included meteors of course, but also lightning, rainbows, clouds, and gusts of wind. The famous Dr. Johnson of dictionary fame defined meteors as ?any bodies in the air or sky that are of flux and transitory nature.? [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 28, 2015

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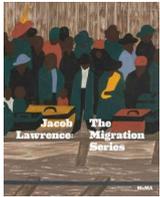
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[Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series](#)



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Although migration is obviously a hot topic in the news these days, this beautiful MoMA art book is about an earlier internal movement that began during World War 1 when many blacks left the south for the industrial north of our country to find work and better living conditions. In the end, over six decades, more than six million African Americans left the South for northern cities and towns.

When he was only twenty-one years old, Jacob Lawrence completed a series of striking tempera paintings. Lawrence himself knew many of these migrants, having moved to Harlem with his parents when he was a young teenager from Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Before beginning this project of sixty paintings, Lawrence did months of research exploring diaries, photographs, news articles, and photographs of the people that made this brave trek into the unknown.

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Posted by Dory L. on December 16, 2015

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