

For the Love of Reading

Grasshopper Jungle



Grasshopper Jungle by Andrew Smith is the weirdest book I've ever read, and that's

awesome. It's the story of Austin Szerba - a teenage boy trapped in the smallest, most boring town in Iowa. He's struggling with his identity and how he fits into the world, while also being trapped between his feelings for his girlfriend, Shannon, and his best friend, Robby.

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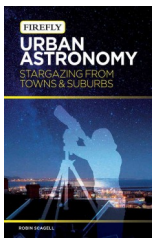
Posted by Becky F. on January 16, 2015

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Stars, Planets, Moon



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I know the title sounds like an oxymoron, but if astronomy excites you, don't let living in the heart of town make you give up exploring the night skies.

I myself have seen countless meteors and conjunctions, a changing panoply of shining planets, and many constellations right from town. There was also the night of the bright red aurora borealis that I first mistook for a major fire when I was biking home from work. To say nothing of lunar eclipses and "super" full moons.

Written by the vice-president of Britain's Society of Popular Astronomy, this handy guide is very applicable in the states. What I like best about it is, Scagell's can-do philosophy, not only can you feel awe when looking at planetary bodies, but he invites the reader to do actual astronomical research and to participate as a citizen-scientist.

And don't think you need to spend massive amounts of money for the highest tech equipment. He recommends a good pair of binoculars for sky-viewing and reports that they even have many advantages over telescopes. He does recommend telescopes too--aperture and field of view should be the deciding factors.

He also advises the city astronomer on things and props he can use to cut or eliminate light pollution, such simple things as simple as a black cape to wear over you and your telescope to cut out glare.

In eight well-researched chapters, Scagell pours his passion for the least earthbound of

sciences. Chapter 4 covers the targets of star search. All the usual ones: sun, moon, the near and far planets, the constellations but also other astronomical phenomena such as zodiacal light, noctilucent clouds, artificial satellites, double stars, clusters, nebulae, and deep sky objects. Although not necessarily geared for the beginner, all terms are so well explained that the guide can work for both the 25-year amateur astronomer and the neophyte. A four page table at the end lists many deep sky objects that can be seen even from cities.

So, on these dark, clear nights, grab your black cape, your binoculars or telescope, and delve into this fascinating science that connects us to other mysterious worlds.

Posted by Dory L. on January 13, 2015

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[Science & Nature](#)

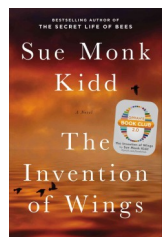
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The Invention of Wings



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Two young women characters guide the reader back to 19th century South Carolina where the institution of slavery affected everyone's life and relationships. Hetty (nicknamed Handful) is a skinny wisp of a girl with amber eyes and wild braids in her hair.

At the age of ten, the Missus gives her to her middle child, Sarah, who has just moved up from the nursery. In this society it's normal to have your own slave, and one who can mend and sew is highly valued.

At an elegant birthday party attended by the privileged young of Charleston society, Sarah refuses this lady's maid/slave. Sarah does not believe in the institution although her family's life centers around its abuse and brutality. The Missus walks everywhere with a cane, but the slaves know its real use?to hit them on the head should they bring this lady displeasure. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 7, 2015

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While you're waiting for All the Light We

Cannot See...

Anthony Doerr's *All the Light You Cannot See* has been on the New York Times Bestseller List for the past 15 weeks. Set during World War II, this novel alternates between the point of view of a blind French girl, Marie-Laure, and a young, orphaned German man, Werner. I won't go into more detail as Dory has already written a fascinating review of it on the [For the Love of Reading blog](#). The wait for this book may be long, but here are some titles that are available now.



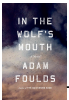
Suite Française by Irene Nemirovsky

Written during the Nazi occupation of France by a Jewish woman who ultimately perished in Auschwitz, *Suite Française*'s fictional account of the Nazi occupation depicts how the inhabitants of Paris and rural France experienced the war and had to learn to coexist with the enemy.



Stones from the River by Ursula Hegi

Set in rural Germany spanning the period immediately before, during and after World War II, dwarf Trudi becomes the town librarian. She learns many of the townspeople's secrets in her position, and uses them to get back at the people who have treated her unkindly. When Hitler comes to power, Trudi uses all the means available to her to protect those who have been kind to her-including Jewish families.



In the Wolf's Mouth by Adam Foulds

Set in North Africa and Sicily at the end of World War II, this novel tracks the Allie's attempt to chase the Germans from North Africa toward the Italian mainland. Told through the eyes of an English officer, and American soldier and an Italian shepherd, this vivid and haunting novel will leave you breathless.



Jacob's Oath by Martin Fletcher

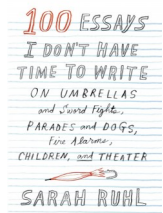
Holocaust survivors Jacob and Sarah meet in Heidelberg after the war. Jacob is consumed with anger and won't rest until he has killed his younger brother's murderer- a SS guard nicknamed 'the Rat.' Jacob must choose between revenge and love in this heart wrenching and captivating novel.

Posted by Jacoba W. on January 2, 2015

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100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write



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This collection of mostly mini-essays is a great find for anyone interested in either writing or theatre. Ruhl, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for her play *In the Next Room*, displays her skills at language, views of playwriting, and her both playful and utterly serious response to the stage. Several titles display her marvelous sense of humor: *Bad Plays and Original Sin*, *On Nakedness and Sight Lines*, and *Watching My Mother Die on Stage*. (Her mother is an actress.) Others are more philosophical: *God as Audience: A Non-syllogism*, *Is There an Ethics of Comedy*, and *Is It Bad When Comedies Make People Laugh?* *On Knowing*, and *On Lice*. Whoops, the last one isn't philosophical, but very practical.

The smallest essay is three words not including the title. I quote in full from *An Essay in Praise of Smallness*: *I admire minimalism.* [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 31, 2014

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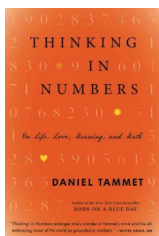
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Thinking in Numbers: on Life, Love, Meaning and Math



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It's a cliché, but people often say that if you excel at math, you'll have little talent for language and *vice versa*. Transplanted Londoner and Parisian resident, Daniel Tammet proves the falsehood of this statement.

In 25 essays that examine life from a mathematical perspective, Tammet entralls and enlightens the reader on many things especially the beauty of mathematics. Einstein's son Hans Albert said that his father's character was more like an artist than that of a scientist because his

highest praise for a theory "was not that it was correct nor that it was exact but that it was beautiful."

Tammet begins this collection with an essay describing his family and numbers theory. In fact, he attributes his first interest in math due to the fact that his neighbors' great interest in his family occurred because there were nine children. And as he explains it, there were 512 possible ways to spot him or his siblings around town in various combinations. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 29, 2014

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