

MAINE CALLING 2025 BEST & OVERLOOKED BOOKS

Below are the books mentioned either during our program on December 4, 2025, or books that were suggested by listeners via email or social media. Also included below are the books our three panelists submitted to the program's producers as we were preparing for this program. Enjoy—and happy reading!

Mentioned on the show by our panelists and by those calling into the program

Fiction:

The Fourth Wing Series by Rebecca Yarros

A Court of Thorns and Roses Series by Sarah J. Maas

A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman

The Poppy Fields by Nikki Erlick

The Measure by Nikki Erlick

The Correspondent by Virginia Evans

My Friends by Fredrik Backman

The Old Man by the Sea by Domenico Starnone

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemmingway

Death in Venice by Thomas Mann

Perfection by Vincenzo Latronico

The Smiler with the Knife by Cecil Day Lewis

The Collegium Conspiracy by Edward Marino

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

Pink Chimneys: A Novel of 19th Century Maine by Ardeana Hamlin

All Honorable Men by James Stewart Martin

Bring Rain: Helping Humanity in Crisis by Sarah Dawn Petrin

The Sea Captain's Wife: A True Story of Mutiny, Love, and Adventure at the Bottom of the World by Tilar J. Mazzeo

The World in Books: A Year of Reading Wisely by Kenneth C. Davis

Choosing Sides by Brian Lee Houseal

The Greatest Sentence Ever Written by Walter Issacson

The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder That Inspired the Abolition of Slavery by Siddharth Kara

Another World Is Possible: Lessons for America from Around the Globe by Natasha Hakimi Zapata

Pegasus: The Story of the World's Most Dangerous Spyware by Sandrine Rigaud, Laurent Richard

Children's Book:

The Academy by T.Z. Layton

Non-Fiction:

Don't Know Much About History: Everything You Need to Know About American History but Never Learned by Kenneth C. Davis

Monopoly X: How Top-Secret World War II Operations Used the Game of Monopoly to Help Allied POWs Escape, Conceal Spies, and Send Secret Codes by Philip E. Orbanes

The Innocents of Florence: The Renaissance Discovery of Childhood by Joseph Luzzi

Poetry:

Shahnameh by Ferdowsi

No Obvious Distress: A John Murray Original by Amanda Quaid

Biography:

A Different Kind of Power by Jacinda Ardern

Books recommended by listeners via email and/or social media

Fiction:

Other Wise, This Other Way of Knowing, and Love & Other Matters (series) by Mary Lou Bagley

The Buddha in the Attic, and When the Emperor was Divine by Julie Otsuka

The Vegetarian by Han Kang

Tough Boy and Sister; Winter Camp; Dancing at the Odinochka by Kirkpatrick Hill

Angry Bull's Cadence by Jim Dunn

Behind the State Capital by John Wieners

Murder in the Maple Woods and Body in the Blueberry Barrens by Claire Ackryod

Schooled in Silence by D.J. Howard

Vantage Point by Sara Sligar

Broken Country by Clare Leslie Hall

Wild Dark Shore by Charlotte McConaghy

The Cheese Shop Mysteries by Korina Moss

The *Wild Love* series by Elsie Silver

Shaw Connolly Lives to Tell by Gillian French

How to Read a Book by Monica Wood

Galactic Hellcats and its sequel *Andrei and the Hellcats* by Marie Vibbert

Guardians of the Fae Gate trilogy; last book is *Blood of my Blood* by Isla Elrick

Conflicting Roots by Robert W. Spencer

Chronicles of Osmaria (series) by Morigan Gaines

Playground by Richard Powers

Non-Fiction:

Working Waterfront by Bill Gerencer

The Last Neanderthal by Ludovic Slimak

John Moore by Carl Little

A Soldier of the Great War by Mark Helprin

Replaceable You by Mary Roach

Addio Sicilia - Farewell Sicily: A Romance of Place, and Safe Return - Inside the Amnesty Movement for Vietnam Deserters by Michael Uhl

Children's books:

The Chronicles of a Guinea Pig by Kayla James

Not Oatmeal Hikes the Appalachian Trail by Opye Bettis

Graphic novel:

Drafted by Rick Parker

Poetry:

Thrown Voice by Isabel Neal

Blanket of the Night by Carl Little

Recommendations by our panelists (not all mentioned during the program)

From Kenneth C. Davis:

First, two novels:

The Old Man by the Sea by Domenico Starnone
(Europa Editions)

Perfection by Vincenzo Latronico (New York Review
Books)

A memoir, in verse:

No Obvious Distress by Amanda Quaid (John Murray
Press)

And two nonfiction works:

*The Innocents of Florence: The Renaissance
Discovery of Childhood* by Joseph Luzzi (Norton)

*The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder That Inspired
the Abolition of Slavery* by Siddharth Kara (St.
Martin's)

I also compiled a “long list” of nonfiction that are all
on my “To Be Read” pile:

*Unabridged: The Thrill and Threat to the Modern
Dictionary* by Stefan Fatsis (Atlantic Monthly Press)

*Dark Renaissance: The Dangerous Times and Fatal
Genius of Shakespeare's Greatest Rival* by Stephen
Greenblatt (Norton)

The Greatest Sentence Ever Written by Walter
Isaacson (Simon & Schuster)

How Things Are Made by Tim Marshall (Ecco)

*The Martians: The True Story of an Alien Craze that
Captured Turn-of-the-Century America* by David
Baron (Liveright)

Separation of Church and Hate by John Fugelsang
(Scribners)

We the People: A History of the US Constitution by Jill
Lepore (Liveright)

Life on a Little-Known Planet by Elizabeth Kolbert
(Crown)

On Antisemitism by Mark Mazower (Penguin)

Also—four older titles appropriate to the time that
are included in my recently published guide to great,
short nonfiction, *The World in Books: A Year of
Reading—Briefly*:

Homage to Catalonia by George Orwell

A Chill in the Air by Iris Origo

Night by Elie Weisel

On Freedom by Timothy Snyder

As the saying goes, “So many books, so little time.”

From Holly Williams, Bangor Public Library:

What our patrons enjoyed (the highest circulation counts for 2025 titles)—

Fiction:

- 1) *25 Alive* by James Patterson
- 2) *Nobody's Fool* by Harlan Coben
- 3) *My Friends* by Fredrik Backman

Non-Fiction:

- 1) *The House of My Mother: A Daughter's Quest for Freedom* by Shari Franke
- 2) *Forest Euphoria : The Abounding Queerness of Nature* by Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian
- 2) *We Who Wrestle with God: Perceptions of the Divine* by Jordan Peterson

Teen Fiction (all graphic novels):

- 1) *The History of Everything* by Victoria Evans
- 1) *Hunger's Bite* by Taylor Robin
- 3) *Strange Bedfellows* by Ariel Slamet Ries
- 4) *Leap* by Simina Popescu

Children's Books:

- 1) *Hazel Has Her Hands Full* by Nathan Fairbairn (graphic novel)
- 2) *Karen's Prize* (Babysitter's Little Sister #10) by Shauna Grant (graphic novel)
- 3) *When Tree Became a Tree* by Ron Hodgson

Favorite 2025 reads from Bangor Public Library staff—

Fiction (*Maine authors):

- A) *Atmosphere* by Taylor Jenkins Reid
- B) **Body in the Blueberry Barrens* by Claire Ackroyd
- C) *Boy From the North Country* by Sam Sussman—
This book was what I was looking for. I was there from page one. The story is deep, involving, intellectual, and literary-full of emotions and thoughts to ponder.

This is the author's first book. I can't wait to read more. VR

- D) *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans
- E) *Court of the Dead* by Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro
- F) *Gliff* by Ali Smith
- G) **Heart the Lover* by Lily King
- H) *The Listeners* by Maggie Stiefvater
- I) *My Friends* by Fredrik Backman (mentioned twice!)
This delicious novel was like a vacation for my brain. MJ

- J) **Never Flinch* by Stephen King

K) *The Poppy Fields* by Nikki Erlich (best for discussion) - Although this wasn't my favorite book of the year, it was an incredible one to discuss. Although we don't typically read fiction in our "Grieving Through Reading" book group, it's one I'll bring up for folks to read. HW

- L) **The Savage, Noble Death of Babs Dionne* by Ron Currie

- M) *Say You'll Remember Me* by Abby Jimenez

- N) *When the Moon Hits Your Eye* by John Scalzi

Non-Fiction:

A) *The AI Con: How to Fight Big Tech's Hype and Create the Future We Want* by Emily Bender and Alex Hanna—An affirming and hopeful read, even though it's about a subject that makes me very mad. The authors lay out such plentiful and compelling evidence about just how baseless the hype around AI is and just how harmful these technologies are. HC

- B) *Everything is Tuberculosis* by John Green

- C) *Coming up Short* by Robert Reich

- D) *A Marriage at Sea* by Sophie Elmhirst

E) *Memorial Days* by Geraldine Brooks—I've read a bunch of books about grief, death and dying, and many are memoirs. This one was brief, beautiful, and painful. There's one thing that really rang true for me, and I hope we remember to do this: When you lose someone, talk about them. Bring them into your conversation. Others might be afraid to, but if you talk about your person, they will, too. HW

- F) *Searches: Selfhood in the Digital Age* by Vauhini Vara

- G) *Vagabond* by Tim Curry

From Laura Hale, owner of Neighborhood Books:

Some of my personal favorites I read published this year—

Atmosphere by Taylor Jenkins Reid - set in the 1980s; a story of a woman joining the NASA team and her dream of space exploration

The Stolen Life of Colette Marceau by Kristin Harmel - set in WW2 in Paris; a woman comes from a long line of jewel thieves and teaches her daughter to steal jewelry. They begin stealing jewelry from the Nazis to fund the resistance.

Beautiful Ugly by Alice Feeney - a man's wife has disappeared and has not been found in over a year. His life is spiraling downward and he needs to focus to write his next novel. He travels to a tiny, remote Scottish island to write his book but feels that he's seeing his wife everywhere he looks.

The Poppy Fields by Nikki Erlick - The Poppy Fields is an experimental and controversial new treatment facility in California, where those who are grieving can find peace by sleeping through their grieving period.

Selling well in our store this year—

Sunrise on the Reaping by Suzanne Collins- newest book in *The Hunger Games* series! This book follows Haymitch's game and Haymitch's life.

Presqu'île by Barry Wright - written by a local writer about the city we live in: Presque Isle

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt – non-fiction book about raising/teaching children in a time of over-protection in the real world and under-protection in the virtual world, and the dangers of both.

Anything written by Frieda McFadden sells well here!