

Amy's Top 10 Books of 2023

While I was contemplating my top 10 list, I went for a run with a few of my running pals. Maria and I got to talking about books and why people read. The reasons are as diverse as our tastes in books. But it reminded me of a quote I'd seen recently. Franz Kafka quipped: "A book must be an axe for the frozen sea within us."

Let that sink in for a moment. It's a brilliant visual, isn't it? The idea that a book—a story created by another human (don't get me started on AI and writing fiction)—has the power to break open something inside us that's been frozen or hidden. A book can chip away at the layers of our psyche and personality, plumb our depths, help us explore new territory and cultures. A book can make us feel all the feels, maybe even feels that we've been ignoring or live outside of our comfort zone.

This year, I challenged myself to reach for axes that I normally wouldn't swing around my own frozen sea. If you've been a reader of my top 10 lists for even a few years, you know that I gravitate toward a certain type of story. Even though the axes in my woodpile are filled with diverse authors and cultures, the stories themselves typically center around families or relationships, the more dysfunctional the better, and they usually blend heartwarming and heartbreaking moments. I also adore an author who knows how to wield an experimental structure and a dash of the bizarre. (As the Russian formalists used to say about deformatization, "making strange"—meaning take familiar objects or settings or topics and make them strange so we can see them in a new light. I've actually had other writers tell me I have formalist tendencies in my short stories.)

So, this year I devoured a few mysteries and crime novels. I read a novel about video gamers and another that threatened to keep me up all night because it bordered on horror. I zipped through young adult and middle grade stories on Kindle, another axe on my frozen sea since I'm old school and enjoy holding a book with paper pages in my hands.

Surprisingly, I enjoyed reading the stories outside of my comfort zone more than the stories I typically read. While you'll find the likes of Alice McDermott, Ann Patchett and George Saunders on my long list—three authors I respect and admire—none of them made my Top 10 this year. Shocking, I know. It shocks me too.

The books that made my Top 10 this year feature characters whose frozen seas were cracked open by external and internal forces. Sometimes the figurative axe came in the form of a secret or grave misunderstanding, other times it was an evil-doer lurking in the shadows.

As is often the case, the theme of my reading life mirrors what's happening IRL (in real life). I didn't go to one of those trendy places and throw an axe but I did step outside of my comfort zone a few times. On the easier side, I tried my hand at silversmithing, embroidery and slow stitching. I love a good craft show but I'm not crafty by any stretch, especially when the craft requires attention to detail. Embroidery turned out to be good for my undiagnosed but most-certainly-have-the-traits-of-it ADHD. Silversmithing is hard but so fun. It turns out slow stitching is not my jam but I'm glad I gave it a try.

On the tougher side, I discovered that I still need to sharpen the axe that is my novel in progress. I received rejections from two literary agents that I'd been hoping would find enough in it to love. Essentially, the feedback boiled down to "this was hard to pass up because the writing is beautiful, but the plot doesn't hang together in the second half."

Rejections are part of the publishing game and I've grown accustomed to them for short stories. When it's on a novel that you've spent so much time on (in my case, off and on for years), it's a deeper cut. After exerting my right to pout for a few weeks, I decided that the only course of action was perhaps chopping off certain elements of the story (goodbye, magic realism; goodbye, a character that I liked) and pushing the next draft in a different direction. Onward I go, into uncharted seas with my trusty axe—in this case, my pen because, as many know, I write longhand before I commit to the computer.

On the good side of writing, I had a short story accepted for publication. It'll appear in the Spring 2024 issue of *Passages North*, a literary journal published by Northern Michigan University. A flash fiction piece that I pulled out of my idea pile took the blue ribbon (1st place) in the Southwest Writers Association's annual contest. My novel opening also received an honorable mention. Feel free to support local writers and purchase a copy of the anthology, *Woven Pathways*, [here](#). I also dusted off an old project and have had a lot of fun reworking it.

It appears that I've shaken off the last remnants of long Covid, thank goodness. Since my "wobbles" only occur in rare situations now, I was able to run regularly again as a member of USA Fit Albuquerque where I met some fantastic new running pals. I ran back-to-back half marathons in October, the first being the Queen Bee Half Marathon in Cincinnati where I'm a stalker. Don't freak out, I ran with my pants on. Being a stalker means that you run a race every year since its inception. My Queen Bee streak now stands at ten years and I'm proud of it. The next weekend, I ran the Duke City Half Marathon in ABQ.

For Dave, music and his drumsticks are his axe of choice. His band [Radio Free ABQ](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)) continued to learn his new songs and attract great crowds at their gigs. They're heading into the studio in February to record an album that should be available in Spring 2024. Dave also continued to study with world-class drummer and composer Mark Guiliana. Most evenings, you can find Dave in his office/studio practicing drumming techniques, working on new songs for the band or conjuring up new ideas for an experimental solo project. Drumming and composing are his happy places and I'm always happy to hear him banging around in his creative space. He also celebrated his one-year anniversary with the University of New Mexico's Cradle to Career Policy Institute where he's a Senior Research Scientist, researching the effects of state policy on children and families.

On the homefront, Louie continued to make progress on his separation anxiety which allowed us to venture farther away from home than we were able to the last year. We road-tripped to Las Vegas (New Mexico, not Nevada), Madrid (New Mexico, not Spain) Red River, Ruidoso, Cloudcroft and Silver City. Each lovely small town offered gorgeous mountain views (yes, New Mexico has mountains) and some much-needed time away. We also spent a weekend in Long Beach, California. It had been five years since we'd laid eyes on the ocean and walked barefoot in the sand. When you live in a state where water is scarce and precious, it's nice to see some waves.

If this list is old hat to you, then you know the drill. As always, my Top 10 aren't necessarily published in the current year. Why limit myself to a specific year when there are so many great books to read? You also know that what I treasure most about this tradition is when you pass the list along to fellow book lovers, and then you and your pals' email or message me with your fave reads so I can put them on my to-read list. If I read something you recommend and it makes the list, you get the credit you deserve.

I still dream of my list making it to other famous readers like Barack Obama, Martin Sheen, Oprah Winfrey, Jenna Bush Hager, Reese Witherspoon etc. etc. etc. or famous people **like Dave Grohl, whose memoir appears in my Top 10 this year!** Anyone with a connection who can forward Grohl this list?

Someday, Grohl will read this list and tell me he thinks it's fucking cool that I've kept up this tradition since he's been singing songs from "There Is Nothing Left To Lose." If you can get this to Grohl, I'll definitely think you're fucking cool. And if you're wondering why I'm using the F-word, you might need to learn more about Grohl so read his book because it's fucking cool too.

Here's hoping that you have no axes to grind in 2024 but that you break open whatever frozen seas that may exist within you, whether it's by challenging yourself to do something new, saying yes to an adventure you'd otherwise skip or simply reading something that you wouldn't normally stack on your reading pile. I wish you and yours a joyful, healthy, creative and enchanted new year filled with everything and everyone you love – including new reads and authors who rock your world! As always, I'm grateful for the readership and the friendships this list has brought to me.

Amy's Top 10 Books

1. *Rules of Civility* by Amor Towles

Admittedly, Towles is always in my sea of authors so it's no surprise to have him at the top spot. His novels, *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *The Lincoln Highway*, made my previous Top 10 lists. However, I'd neglected to read his debut, published in 2011, until this year. It's a highly stylized story set in 1937. Towles depiction of New York City in its post-Great Depression years, including all the period detail, is pitch perfect—the dialogue, the silk stockings, the smoking, the martinis. I felt like I was watching a black and white movie with each turn of the page. Told in the retrospective by Katey Kontent (content she wasn't), we travel back to 1937 when she and her gal pal Eve Ross meet Tinker Grey. There's some flirting, numerous cocktails and a friendly rivalry between Katey and Eve to see who can capture Grey's heart and rather fat wallet first.

On New Year's Eve, Grey wrecks his car with Katey and Eve as his passengers. Eve, severely injured, sees an opportunity to use the accident to her advantage. Thing is, Tinker is really in love with Katey, but Eve knows how to use Grey's guilt against him. It's Grey, after all, who strives to live by George Washington's "Rules of Civility," so he dedicates his life to Eve, even when she becomes a bit unbearable to live with. But does he really live up Washington's social and moral code? That's for you to discover.

While Eve and Grey flounder in their relationship, Katey forges ahead with a career in publishing. She's a strong woman and she doesn't mind speaking her mind. As the distance grows between this threesome, Katey finds a way to stay connected to Eve and Grey. Like many relationships, what appears to be perfect on the surface is anything but and Katey soon learns some of Grey's shocking secrets. One could say that while the corks are popping on the bubbly throughout the novel, lots of other bubbles are getting burst. Other reviewers have compared this tale to *The Great Gatsby*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and even "Sex and The City," and I wouldn't disagree. If you're looking to escape today's world, this might be your ticket back to a time that feels a little lighter, a little easier, and a lot more boozy.

2. *The Storyteller: Tales of Life and Music* by Dave Grohl

When you see Grohl screaming on stage in front of throngs of adoring fans, the word "vulnerable" doesn't necessarily come to mind. Yet, that's one of the main emotions I felt coming from his memoir as he shares stories of his childhood and life as a struggling, then blockbuster musician that are equal parts hilarious and heartwarming. This is a dude who loves his mom and respects all that she did to raise him as a single parent. This is a dude who literally crossed continents without sleeping over the course of a few days to be with his daughter and wife in moments that mattered. This is also a dude who believes in

the power of rock and roll, and considers himself lucky to be living the life he lives. On top of it, he is, like the title says, a storyteller—and damn good at it.

His collection of memories here plays like a mixed tape (if you remember those) of greatest hits. The stories move at a fast pace and then slow down when he has a poignant point to make. You feel like you're traveling right along with Grohl and everyone else in the band van as he walks back through big and small moments of his career. You can smell the gas station corn dogs (they were 3 for 99 cents) that he survived on when he was living in Olympia, Washington with Kurt Cobain and his pet turtle. You feel his sense of awe when he explains how he became friends with Paul McCartney and other famous musicians.

Whether you like the Foos or not, you'll find something to connect with in Grohl's tales. Also, if you like your reads in audio, I've been told that listening to this book, read by Grohl, is even more enjoyable than reading it.

3. *Hello, Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano

This novel was in the running for the No. 1 spot on my list for a few months. I'm a sucker for any version of *Little Women* and this modern-day riff on the old story didn't disappoint. Here you'll find the four Padavano sisters and lots of sibling drama. There's also William, the boy the book begins with who becomes the man who is central to the plot and the dissolution of the bond between the sisters. William's family life is slim to none at best. His parents lost a child six days after William was born and never got over their grief. William, neglected and lonely, finally takes refuge in basketball and lands on the varsity team at Northwestern in Chicago but ends up on the bench due to an career-ending injury. William meets the Padavano sisters and Julia, the eldest, offers William the kind of love he's never had. But Julia has a 10-year plan which includes marrying William and controlling their lives.

Meanwhile, Sylvie, the bookish sister, takes a secret shine to William. She's a bona fide romantic who immerses herself in fictional, romantic ideas about love and the perfect mate. Tensions build between Julia and William when their daughter Alice is born. Love takes a few twists and turns, and the sisters fall out, but I don't want to say much more than that about the plot because I'd rather you sink into the Padavano family dynamic yourself.

At certain points in the story, the sisters Julia, Sylvie, Cecelia and Emeline, compare themselves to the March sisters, musing and arguing about who is most like Jo, Beth, Meg and Amy. There are definitely parallels to the March sisters, but I'd argue that each of the Padavanos is a blend of the March girls. Julia is not a replication of Jo and some may find Julia more unlikeable than Jo has ever been in all the iterations and adaptations of *Little Women*.

Told from the viewpoints of William, Julia, Sylvie and Alice, Napolitano gets deep inside each character's head with the exception of William. As a character, he's closed off so it makes sense his point of view would also be less crisp and feel more distant. Napolitano doesn't shy away from tough topics like betrayal, mental illness disease and more. As writers, we sometimes fall in love with our characters which makes it harder to share their foibles. Napolitano allows her characters to fail and fall victim to their own insecurities, vulnerabilities and shortcomings, leaving it up to the reader to decide who we empathize and sympathize with.

4. *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver

Despite the glowing reviews and my love for Kingsolver's work, I set this axe down twice before I could allow it to open my frozen seas. Did I want to read a doorstopper-sized book (550 pages) about the

opioid epidemic in Appalachia when I already knew how grim of a crisis it is? I have my friends Erin and Judy to thank for encouraging me to pick it back up. Don't give up like I did. There's a lot of hope in this modern-day retelling of Charles' Dickens *David Copperfield* and sometimes we need to read the very things we resist because they have important things to say. It's an important read for our times, just like *David Copperfield* was back in Dickens' era. The good news is, Kingsolver brings her dry sense of humor to her characters as well as her hopeful outlook.

Demon (his real name is Damon) Copperhead's (his hair is red) life is bleak from the start. Born into poverty with no proverbial bootstraps to hang onto, we journey with Demon through the southern Appalachian hills of Virginia as he encounters just about every hardscrabble obstacle imaginable. An opioid-addicted mother, an abusive foster situation, child labor, days filled with hunger and bullying. Just when you think it can't get any worse, Kingsolver dials up the grim. However, Demon's sense of humor and resilience brings some levity and hope to the story, and you find yourself reading with the hope that Demon will either be rescued or rescue himself. He's a brief superstar on the football field and is taken in by Coach Winfield only to suffer an injury that leads to his first use of opioids and his subsequent addiction.

Demon continues to battle his inner demons and the outer demonic, socio-economic forces that continue to pull him down. Through it all, he finds some love, some hope, some redemption whether it's through those he befriends or through his own strength. Interestingly, the elements of hope often come from the women in Demon's life, especially Angus, Coach Winfield's daughter.

If you've read Dickens' *Copperfield*, you'll see the parallels in the characters and in the commentary on the social ills of institutional poverty and the opioid crisis in Kingsolver's Appalachia to Dickens' impoverished London. What I continued to ponder while reading this is that the characters, while fictional, represent real people in the all too real and awful world of addiction, fueled by big Pharma and deep inequality in our society and systems. Kingsolver is sharing an important story here, one that we should all read.

5. *Now Is Not the Time to Panic* by Kevin Wilson

I've been accused in the past of only reading novels that are emotionally dark or bleak. Perhaps it's the Irish melancholy in me. For my accusers, I present you with a story outside of that dark bubble. It's funny. It's a little zany. Yes, there are a few bleak moments here and there but all great stories have those. I've read everything Kevin Wilson has written. If he wrote copy for the back of a cereal box or jumbo rolls of toilet paper, I'd read it. In fact, it'd be great to see what Wilson would put on the back of a cereal box because he's hilarious. He's also a writer with a big heart.

Wilson has a knack for making characters feel like friends—albeit quirky friends. In this case, it's Frankie Budge and Zeke, two teens living in Coaltown, Tennessee in 1996. Frankie is bored. It seems nothing happens in Coaltown even though she has big dreams to be a writer. Frankie's dad has also run off and her mom is too busy to check up on her. Frankie meets Zeke, an aspiring artist, who's staying with his grandmother for the summer. They soon discover an old Xerox machine and, in a burst of creativity (or sheer boredom), Frankie writes: "The edge is a shantytown filled with gold seekers. We are fugitives, and the law is skinny with hunger for us." Zeke illustrates the sentence. Then, they splatter a drop of blood on the page.

Soon after, panic ensues in Coaltown. Everyone wants to know who's behind the flyers. Everyone in the town also believes they know who's creating the flyers but no one except Frankie and Zeke know. Conspiracy theories bloom. Some accidents occur. Will Franke and Zeke 'fess up? That's for you to find

out. Told in the retrospective by Frankie, this is as much about the panic as it is about friendship, secrets, art, culture and the cultural paranoia that surfaces when something occurs outside the “norm.”

6. *Signal Fires* by Dani Shapiro

This novel was recommended to me by my great writing pal, Judy. Judy and I met at a writing workshop several years ago and we’ve kept in touch ever since. We read each others’ work, share tips on navigating the increasingly difficult and competitive publishing industry and generally keep each other motivated. Writing is a solitary venture so I’m grateful for my writing tribe, including Judy, Leigh, Shana, Kori and a few others. Speaking of workshops, I saw Shapiro speak at a writing workshop about her memoir *Inheritance* (also worth reading) a few years ago and loved her energy. She sort of crackles like a fire—you’re drawn to her. Anyhow, *Signal Fires* begins with its own kind of fiery energy. There’s a car accident and, with it, a secret that must be kept by those who were involved. It’s 1985 and Theo Wilf is driving the family car because his older sister, Sarah, has had one too many drinks. A friend comes along for the ride and is killed. I’m giving nothing away here—it happens in the opening pages. To protect Theo, Sarah claims she was driving.

From there, Shapiro takes us through moments in various years that show what’s happened to Sarah and Theo. There’s this feeling throughout that, even though the characters are years and decades older, their lives still circle around this secret, this moment when everything changed. There’s also the Shenkman, neighbors of young Theo and Sarah. They have a boy named Waldo whom their father, Dr. Wilf, delivers on New Year’s Eve. Baby Waldo grows up and becomes obsessed with constellations and geography. While Waldo’s father can’t understand his unique boy, Dr. Wilf does. The two share a love of the stars and Dr. Wilf shares an app with Waldo so he can view the galaxy. Here’s a beautiful passage from the story: “The stars, rather than appearing distant and implacable, seemed to be signal fires in the dark, mysterious fellow travelers lighting a path; one hundred thousand million luminous presences beckoning from worlds away. *See us. We are here. We have always been here. We will always be here.*”

And thus, that’s one of the themes of this beautiful story that reminds us that everything is connected just as much as everything changes. We are here. We will always be here. Wise words for writers too when we’re feeling alone with our projects and wondering if anyone out there is listening. Writers, we are here. We will always be here.

7. *All the Broken Places* by John Boyne

Boyne has appeared in my Top 10 before with *The Absolutist* (2021) and *A History of Loneliness* (2016). He boldly goes where some authors wouldn’t venture, taking on tough and dark topics and taking on characters that are equally tough to like because of their behavior or beliefs. Which makes Boyne a good pick for a book group because there’s always plenty to talk about. My book group didn’t read this, but my Mom did, along with his other two novels mentioned above, and we had good discussions about all of them. Greta Fernsby is 91 years old and has lived a relatively reclusive life in London. There’s a reason she lives in the shadows. Her father was the commandant of one of the most notorious extermination camps in Nazi Germany when she was a young child. Greta flees Germany with her mother and lands in France where she befriends a boy named Henry. I have to leave her past at that; otherwise, I’ll give too much away.

The story moves between Greta in the present and the past. She’s contemplating her life and the secrets she’s kept just as a young boy moves into the apartment building where she lives. The boy’s father is abusive and Greta contemplates whether she can help save the young boy from the trauma she witnesses. We see her grapple with her guilt and shame from the past as she questions her complicity in the atrocities of her own father when she was a child. That past trauma melds with the present and

you'll find yourself waffling over your feelings for Greta—at least I did. You'll also find yourself asking what you would do if you stepped into her shoes when she was a child and as an adult. Like all Boyne endings, I let out a little gasp since I wasn't expecting the ending Boyne provides. This would be a great book for book clubs who actually like deep discussions of a book and aren't afraid to engage with sensitive territory.

8. *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin

If you told me I'd enjoy a novel that has references to video games I've never heard of and revolved around video game design and gamer culture, I'd have laughed you right out of the bookstore. But this story is about so much more. It's about friendship, star-crossed love, ambition, creativity, success, failure, regret, hope, misunderstandings—I could go on. Yes, there's plenty of video game talk in here (I especially love that *The Oregon Trail* factors into the story because I used to love that game) that's central to the plot and to the relationships between the characters but what you end up following is the Shakespearean-esque friendship, courtship, dateship and marriages of Sampson Masure, Sadie Green and Marx. Apt since "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" is a phrase in *Macbeth's* soliloquy.

Flash backwards in time, Sam and Sadie meet in a hospital when they're kids. Sam is recovering from an accident that's left him with a mangled foot and a limp. Sadie's sister is recovering from an illness. Sadie meets Sam by chance and seems to be the only one who can get him to speak. Her mom suggests that she continue talking with Sam and to use the hours as community service for her upcoming mitzvah. Sadie agrees and she and Sam develop a friendship, but Sam discovers he's a charity case and he feels betrayed. Flash forward, and Sam and Sadie reconnect in college (Harvard and MIT, respectively) when they're both pursuing their interests in developing video games. They team up and create a game called *Ichigo* which becomes a blockbuster.

Along with Sam's roommate Marx, they launch a company called *Unfair Games*. All the while Sam is in love with Sadie but it's unrequited. Yet, there are times Sadie also seems in love with Sam, or at least in love with creating together. The stresses of success and who's ultimately responsible for the ideas and design behind their games begin to put pressure on their friendship and working relationship. One of the games Sam creates to draw Sadie back to him is so beautifully rendered and heart-wrenching that I had to hold back tears.

There are plenty of other layers in this story, similar to exploring layers and levels in the video games they create. I found Zevin's ability to build video worlds and ideas for games as intriguing as her ability to draw realistic relationships outside of the digital world.

9. *Foster* by Claire Keegan

Keegan's spare but brilliant novellas have popped up on numerous "best of" lists. For good reason. Reading her work is a lesson in using minimal words for maximum impact. She trusts her reader to fill in the space between sparse dialogue and description because she understands that sometimes, what's left unsaid is where the power lies. I discovered Keegan in 2022 when I read *Small Things Like These*, a novella that was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. I didn't know that *Foster* had been published as a long short story in *The New Yorker* in 2010. It took over ten years for the novella to reach book shelves in the U.S.

As you may guess, *Foster* is about a child who's being fostered. In this case, it's a young girl who remains nameless. My sense is that Keegan keeps the child nameless to emphasize that foster kids can feel forgotten or lacking familial identity. The girl is taken by her father to live with relatives, the Kinsellas, in the Irish countryside. The girl's mother is pregnant and there are other kids at home so we're to assume

that the parents had too many mouths to feed and sending the girl off was the easiest solution. The Kinsellas are kind and gentle with the girl, recognizing that she hasn't had the best life. Weeks pass with no word from her parents and we begin wondering if the Kinsellas will care for her permanently. Then there's a funeral in town and, instead of subjecting the girl to seeing a dead body in a casket in the center of the room (this is Ireland in the 80s), a woman named Mildred whisks the girl away. Let's just say that Mildred lacks tact and grills the girl about her stay with the Kinsellas who have had their own kind of heartache with children in the past. I'll leave you hanging there. Grab a cup of tea or coffee, sit in your favorite reading chair, and dig into this lovely story that will take you less than one evening to read. I guarantee you'll seek out Keegan's other novella and short story collection afterwards.

10. *Black Cake* by Charmain Wilkerson

This book was on Barack Obama's list of faves a couple of years ago. I think it was also turned into a TV series. The story weaves back and forth in time from the present to 1965 as brother and sister, Byron and Benny are called to listen to a tape recording of their mother, Eleanor, after her death. Byron and Benny grew apart as adults, but their mother's death throws them back together. Eleanor's recording reveals a life filled with secrets and, of course, Black Cake, a Caribbean dessert typically served at weddings or other special occasions. (You might also know it as rum cake or Christmas cake.) As Eleanor's children listen to the recordings, they begin to learn that their mother wasn't who they thought she was and as Benny says, their family was "built on a colossal lie."

In the present, Byron and Benny share their viewpoints on their childhood, their mother and the reasons they stopped speaking to each other. In the past, Eleanor shares why and how she escaped the island and what happened after her escape. There are plenty of plot drivers including murder, racism, dangerous swims in the ocean and more. Most of these drivers come from Eleanor's life, whose story is the most compelling, with Byron and Benny serving as props to propel the narrative forward. I'm curious to know why Wilkerson chose the structure she did and will look around for the answer to that question.

Like many cakes, this story is layered with family drama, the ripple effect of one's choices, and much more. The icing on this cake is how Eleanor's past has a fable-like quality to it—one that you wish someone was reading to you out loud. You'll also find yourself wondering what kinds of secrets and skeletons may be lurking in your own family's history.

All books read in 2023 (in the order that I read them)

1. *Flight* by Lynn Steger Strong
2. *The Storyteller* by Dave Grohl
3. *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki
4. *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi
5. *Migration* by Charlotte McConaghy
6. *Want* by Lynn Steger Strong
7. *Now Is Not the Time to Panic* by Kevin Wilson
8. *Dear Edward* by Ann Napolitano
9. *On Animals* by Susan Orlean
10. *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver
11. *I Have Some Questions for You* by Rebecca Makkai
12. *All the Broken Places* by John Boyne
13. *Signal Fires* by Dani Shapiro
14. *Liberation Day* by George Saunders

15. *The Change* by Kirsten Miller
16. *The Kitchen House* by Kathleen Grissom
17. *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus
18. *Foster* by Claire Keegan
19. *Hello, Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano
20. *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan
21. *The Keeper of Lost Things* by Ruth Hogan
22. *Take What You Need* by Idra Novey
23. *The Unseen World* by Liz Moore
24. *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo
25. *They're Going to Love You* by Meg Howrey
26. *The Fallen Man* by Tony Hillerman
27. *A Thief of Time* by Tony Hillerman
28. *Finding Moon* by Tony Hillerman
29. *I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home* by Lorrie Moore
30. *Wish* by Barbara O'Connor
31. *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett
32. *The True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
33. *Bunny* by Mona Awad
34. *Rules of Civility* by Amor Towles
35. *The Lock-Up* by John Banville
36. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White (classic)
37. *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver (re-read)
38. *Antarctica* by Claire Keegan
39. *I Can Make This Promise* by Christine Day
40. *Johanna Porter Is Not Sorry* by Sara Read
41. *The Seven Moons of Maail Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka
42. *Black Cake* by Charmain Wilkerson
43. *The Canyon's Edge* by Dusti Bowling
44. *The Catch* by Alison Fairbrother
45. *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin
46. *Trust* by Hernan Diaz
47. *Absolution* by Alice McDermott
48. *Please See Us* by Caitlin Mullen
49. *Bitterroot: A Salish Memoir of Transracial Adoption* by Susan Daven Harness
50. *The Lola Quartet* by Emily St. John Mandel (a re-read)
51. *While You Were Gone* by Sue Miller

First on the nightstand for 2024

The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store by James McBride
The Covenant of Water by Abraham Verghese
The Bee Sting by Paul Murray
North Woods by Daniel Mason
The River We Remember by William Kent Krueger