



Adult Titles

Texas Topaz Nonfiction Reading List, 2020

* *Becoming* by Michelle Obama (Crown, 2018)

An extraordinary glimpse into the life of Michelle Obama, before, during, and after Barack and the White House. Readers get to know First Lady Obama a little more, viewing her as a person, versus just a political figure.

Crisis in the Red Zone: The Story of the Deadliest Ebola Outbreak in History, and of the Outbreaks to Come by Richard Preston (Random House, 2019)

A riveting look at the discovery of the Ebola virus and the deadly 2013-2014 outbreak that reached the United States, eventually making its way to Dallas, TX

Diamond Doris: The True Story of the World's Most Notorious Jewel Thief by Doris Payne, Zelda Lockhart (Amistad, 2019)

This biography details how Doris Payne used her beauty, charisma, and cunning to rise from her roots in the coal mining town of Slab Fork, West Virginia, to become one of the world's most notorious, and fascinating jewel thieves.

Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company That Addicted America by Beth Macy (Little, Brown and Company, 2018)

This is a timely look at the Opioid crisis in America. From the involvement of big drug companies to quotidian life in small-town Virginia, author Beth Macy gives the reader an eye-opening look at the people involved in the crisis. Her interaction with families who have lost loved ones to the drug brings a personal touch to this ongoing story.

Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America by Vegas Tenold (Nation Books, 2018)

Tenold explores the reemergence of white nationalism and its various forms in the United States. An intense, unsettling look into the heart of racism in America.

Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee by Casey N. Cep (Alfred A. Knopf, 2019)

This true crime story of an Alabama preacher accused of murdering several relatives and the lawyer who helped him escape justice – until the preacher was shot dead in front of hundreds of people. Harper Lee attended the trial of his killer as research for a book that was never published.

* *Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to A Tribe Called Quest* by Hanif Abdurraqib (University of Texas Press, 2019)

This book is a love letter to the rap group A Tribe Called Quest, filled with appreciation and affection while the writing is poetic and personal. It will appeal to anyone interested in the history of rap.

Hunger: A Memoir Of (My) Body. by Roxane Gay (Harper Collins, 2018)

With wisdom and bravery, this memoir deals with the psychological effects of trauma that lead her to grapple with the universal themes of empathy, weight, anxiety, and pleasure. With frankness, the author writes about what it means to be overweight in the world we live in.

Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity, and Love by Dani Shapiro (Alfred A. Knopf, 2019)

When a random DNA test upends her life, Dani Shapiro is forced to explore the secrets her family kept from her, how it affects her sense of herself, and the intricate facets of what it means to be a father.

Ladysitting: My Year with Nana at the End of Her Century by Lorene Cary (W.W. Norton & Company, 2019)

A faith-filled, loving, yet candid memoir by novelist Lorene Cary about the last year of her grandmother's long life. It is a study of a complex American family and the very real challenge of helping a vibrant 100-year-old through her final months.

Mama's Last Hug: Animal Emotions and What They Tell Us about Ourselves by Frans de Waal (W.W. Norton & Company, 2019)

Primatologist Frans de Waal is renowned for his work on the intelligence of primates, especially chimpanzees and bonobos, who are closely linked genetically to humans. He finds that animals have emotions and feelings which are far richer and more complex than we have ever realized. Thought-provoking, funny, and moving, it has much to teach non-scientists, and especially those who respect and love the animals who share our world.

* *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone: A Therapist, HER Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed* by Lori Gottlieb (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019)

Lori Gottlieb gives the reader an inside look at the life of a therapist when her romantic relationship crumbles, and she heads to therapy herself.

Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster by Adam Higginbotham (Simon & Schuster, 2019)

One of the most extensive and balanced books about the Chernobyl disaster. It is thrilling, horrifying, with tragic outcomes we contend with thirty years later.

No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know about Domestic Violence Can Kill Us by Rachel Louise Snyder (Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2019)

A powerful look at the roots and outcomes of domestic violence, why just building more shelters isn't enough, and how most mass shooting events begin at home.

Notes from a Young Black Chef: A Memoir by Kwame Onwuachi and Joshua David Stein (Alfred A. Knopf, 2019)

The memoir of a gifted, renowned, and young chef. The story of his life is filled with grit, talent, and hustle, but he also embraces the stories of the unlikely community that shaped this journey.

Rising out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist by Eli Saslow (Doubleday, 2018)

Derek Black's father created the notorious white nationalist website Stormfront and raised him to eventually take it over. Then Derek went to college, and his beliefs began to transform thanks to dialogue with those who disagreed with him. This is the story of how he started to question his family's ideology and how he eventually broke away to create a different life.

Save Me the Plums: My Gourmet Memoir by Ruth Reichl (Random House, 2019)

Food writer and critic Ruth Reichl tells the remarkable story of her years as editor-in-chief of Conde Nast's venerable Gourmet magazine, in what turned out to be its final decade. Her memoir offers a fascinating glimpse of

the gloriously gilded age of American print journalism, just as it was coming to an end.

Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland by Patrick Radden Keefe (Doubleday, 2019)

It follows the story of two different women whose lives are illustrative for the Troubles in Northern Ireland: one a charismatic revolutionary, the other a victim caught between the cycle of violence, in a place where post-traumatic wounds feel fresh decades later. The writing is gripping and in the end, works as a detective story with a final, jaw-dropping revelation that will haunt you.

* *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow* by Henry Louis Gates (Penguin Press, 2019)

Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. documents key social, economic, and political gains made by freed slaves during period of Reconstruction, after the Civil War. The book also describes the harrowing pushback against and eventual reversal of those gains, which lead to the Jim Crow laws and 20th-century segregation.

* *Texas Flood: The Inside Story of Stevie Ray Vaughan* by Alan Paul and Andy Aledort (St. Martin's Press, 2019)

Music lovers and fans of Stevie Ray Vaughan will love this book, the first biography authorized by his family and Double Trouble bandmates, who offered first-hand insight into Stevie's life and what shaped his music.

The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters by Priya Parker (Riverhead Books, 2018)

People gather for so many reasons, and it doesn't have to be boring or tedious. By being human-centered and intentional, a work meeting or family gatherings, a convention or a courtroom can be productive, fun, and transformative.

The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century by Kirk W. Johnson (Viking, 2018)

Three men obsess about the same group of birds. One as a scientist 150 years ago studying evolution; another man desiring the birds for fanatics in fly-tying underground, and the last man is the author investigating the story of ornithological theft striving to find justice.

* *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* by David Treuer (Riverhead Books, 2019)

The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee is a sweeping account of the Indigenous People of America/Native American's fight for not being called a relic of the past. The author, Treuer, provides stories of resilient humans over time, their culture, truths, and their determination to still exist and reclaim their identity in an ever-changing American society.

The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Milicent Patrick by Mallory O'Meara (Hanover Square Press, 2019)

Author Mallory O'Meara takes the reader on a journey through Hollywood history as she searches for Milicent Patrick. Milicent was the creator of the Creature of the Black Lagoon costume. With her own travel through the movie industry, O'Meara shows that the challenges Milicent and other women faced in Hollywood are still being faced today.

* *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean (Simon and Schuster, 2018)

Susan Orlean's investigation of the most devastating library fire in American history, the burning of the Los Angeles Public Library's Central Library in April 1986, becomes the starting point for her lively and engaging look at our nation's public libraries. For her, a library is a great civic institution that serves its community, not only as its collective memory, but also as its heart and spirit.

The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World by Melinda Gates (Flatiron Books, 2019)

Philanthropist Melinda Gates shows how helping women succeed benefits the whole family and society as a whole

* *The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11*
by Garrett M. Graff (Avid Reader Press, 2019)

This is a riveting and haunting look at what happened on September 11, 2001 - from the voices of those who found themselves part of an attack that killed thousands of people and changed the United States forever.

The Queen: The Forgotten Life behind an American Myth by Josh Levin (Little Brown and Company, 2019)

Written in the style of a true crime narrative, this book explores the mystery of a woman whose identity embodied the false national reports of rampant welfare abuse. The distortion of the so-called "Welfare Queen" set the pace for policy change but those same tales masked the horrifying, real crimes of Linda Taylor and the people whose lives were ruined or even ended all together.

* *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations* by Toni Morrison (Alfred A. Knopf, 2019)

Toni Morrison's last epic book before her death is a wide-ranging assortment of essays and speeches tracing not only the life of the author but the lives of America. Morrison's literary work recounts her own history from Martin Luther King Jr. to James Baldwin to 911 and Mark Twain to Black Lives Matter to Human Rights and Female Empowerment, Morrison uses her words to write an epitaph for the Americas.

We Fed an Island: The True Story of Rebuilding Puerto Rico, One Meal at a Time by José Andrés and Richard Wolffe (Ecco, 2018)

This is the story of how much we are willing to give in the face of a disaster. After Hurricane Maria devastated

Puerto Rico in 2017, José Andrés, a renown, world-class chef went to the island where he took on the responsibility of feeding people one hot meal at a time, restoring humanity and witnessing a tragedy while battling red tape and beaurocracy in the middle of an American natural disaster.

* *Where the Lost Dogs Go: A Story of Love, Search, and the Power of Reunion* by Susannah Charleson (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019)

Susannah Charleson's tender memoir examines the epidemic of lost pets in the U.S. and features Ace, Charleson's shelter dog talented at finding other dogs lost like him. Charleson also chronicles her own complicated upbringing and how her parents fostered a love of animals.

Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer, and the Corruption of Science by Carey Gillam (Island Press, 2017)

Investigative journalist Carey Gillam writes takes on agrochemical company Monsanto in this wide-sweeping book that charts the rise and impact of Monsanto, and the agrochemical industry as a whole, on the environment and human health worldwide.

Why to Kill a Mockingbird Matters: What Harper Lee's Book and Iconic American Film Mean to Us Today by Tom Santopietro (St. Martin's Press, 2018)

This is a well-researched and thoughtfully written look at Harper Lee's great novel, its classic film version, and the surprise publication in 2015 of *Go Set a Watchman*. It will prompt today's readers to re-visit Harper Lee's life and work, and to think about it in an entirely new way.

The purpose of the Texas Topaz Reading List is to provide children and adults with recommended nonfiction titles that stimulate reading for pleasure and personal learning. It is intended for recreational reading and is not designed to support any particular curriculum. Due to the diversity in age range and topics, Texas librarians should consider titles on this list in accordance with their own local collection development policies.

The 2020 Topaz Committee consisted of:

Cathe Spencer (Plano Library); Lesley Roane (Frisco ISD), Esther Garcia, (University of St Augustine); Kimberly Gay (Prairie View A&M University), Amy Watterman (Abilene Public Library); Jennifer Franz (Cozby Library and Community Commons in Coppell); Lynette Roberson (Little Elm Public Library)