

## 2021 Texas Topaz Adult Nonfiction

### Reading List, Annotated



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.

(\*) denotes a unanimous vote by the committee.

***The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal About Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power*** by Deirdre Mask (St. Martin's Press, 2020)

What's in a name? Addresses may be something taken for granted, but merely having an address can have a profound impact on our lives. In *The Address Book*, the author journeys around the world to explore how addresses came to be and how they shape us, our lives, and how they have shaped history.

***American Sherlock: Murder, Forensics, and the Birth of American CSI*** by Kate Winkler Dawson (Putnam, 2020)

Fascinating story of early forensic science and the famous-in-his-time criminalist Oscar Heinrich who pioneered some of the forensic tools and methods that are still used today. Heinrich's passion for science and truth are admirable. An historical biography that reads like a mystery fiction.

***The Best Cook in the World: Tales from My Momma's Table*** by Rick Bragg (Alfred A Knopf, 2018)

From Rick Bragg, this is a delightful combination of cookbook, family history, memoir, and loving tribute to his mother Margaret, and the foods of her lifetime. Exceptional storytelling, wonderfully written, with recipes to try on almost every page.

***Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*** by Jennifer L. Eberhardt, PhD (Viking, 2019)

Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt digs deep into her experience as a social psychologist to help readers understand the roots of bias, and how conscious and unconscious biases shape our daily experiences, thoughts and actions from our childhoods through adulthood. She ends by noting there is hope in self-reflection, and asks three questions: What have you learned? What will you do? What gives you hope?

***\*Big Wonderful Thing: A History of Texas*** by Stephen Harrigan (University of Texas Press, 2019)

This new history of Texas, commissioned by the University of Texas Press and written by novelist and journalist Stephen Harrigan, is lively, entertaining and readable from start to finish. It's as big as our state (over 850 pages of text and notes), but its focus on Texas' outsize personalities, amazing stories, and enduring sense of place, makes this a book every Texas reader should know.

***Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*** by James Nestor (Riverhead Books, 2020)

A fascinating look at the power of, and science behind, breathing.

***Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*** by Isabel Wilkerson (Random House, 2020)

Caste explores America's 400-year-old structured racial hierarchy and reimagines it as a racial caste system, showing the ways caste continues to impact race relations to this day.

***The Collected Schizophrenias*** by Esmé Weijun Wang (Graywolf Press, 2019)

Wang documents her experience being diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder while also writing about the other varieties of "collected schizophrenias" from both personal and scientific viewpoints.

***Dear Girls: Intimate Tales, Untold Secrets, and Advice for Living Your Best Life*** by Ali Wong (Random House, 2019)

Ali Wong writes a memoir in the form of letters to her two young daughters (to be hidden from them until they are older, because there is adult and crass content). She talks about growing up as the child of immigrants from China and Vietnam, racism in the entertainment industry, and lots of deeply personal stories, with comedy woven throughout.

***\*Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*** Edited by Alice Wong (Vintage Books, 2020)

#ownvoices essays on the disabled experience.

***\*Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*** by David Kessler (Scribner, 2019)

A powerful look at moving past all the stages of grief into a new one: meaning.

***Fire in Paradise: An American Tragedy*** by Alastair Gee and Dani Anguiano (W. W. Norton & Company, 2020)

A suspenseful and compelling account of 2018's historic and terrible Camp Fire, which burned the town of Paradise, California, to ashes--and a poignant story whose ending hasn't yet been completely written.

***The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History*** by Kassia St. Clair (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019)

The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History is an engaging historical journey on a topic that many take for granted: fabric. This book details clothing's impact on societies, industries, and cultures; the simple act of weaving threads into fabric provided the currency, and protective covering, for humans to travel around the world and into outer space. Clothing: where would we be without it?

***\*Grace Will Lead Us Home: The Charleston Church Massacre and the Hard, Inspiring Journey to Forgiveness*** by Jennifer Berry Hawes (St. Martin's Press, 2019)

Grace Will Lead Us Home: The Charleston Church Massacre and the Hard, Inspiring Journey to Forgiveness is a very measured account of one of the worst acts of domestic terrorism in U.S. history, the impact of which continues to resonate through our society today.

***Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family*** by Robert Kolker (Doubleday, 2020)

A portrait of a family devastated by multiple schizophrenia diagnoses.

***How We Fight for Our Lives*** by Saeed Jones (Simon & Schuster, 2019)

A haunting coming-of-age memoir of a young, black, gay Texas man trying to navigate family relationships and explore his own identity.

***In the Dream House*** by Carmen Maria Machado (Graywolf Press, 2019)

Machado tells the story of an abusive relationship, from its romantic beginnings to the struggle to overcome her fears and leave.

***Know My Name: A Memoir*** by Chanel Miller (Viking, 2019)

Emily Doe became a voice for sexual assault survivors. This memoir tells her powerful story.

***The Last Stargazers: The Enduring Story of Astronomy's Vanishing Explorers*** by Emily Levesque (Sourcebooks; Illustrated Edition, 2020)

How do astronomers solve the mysteries of the stars and the galaxy? Dr. Emily Levesque, an astronomy professor helps to unravel how complex and orderly the cosmos in distance galaxies are organized in her book, *The Last Stargazers*. The author showcases the stories of these astronomers who spend their careers studying the experiences with eclipses, telescopes, gravitational waves, Super Novas and gamma ray burst as they faced celestial gazing. The book explains the science behind astronomy through technological expansions in digital data. Levesque discusses how the role of astronomers are changing in the manner they organize and disseminate the study of outer space.

***The Less People Know About Us: A Mystery of Betrayal, Family Secrets, and Stolen Identity*** by Axton Betz-Hamilton (Grand Central Publishing, 2019)

In this autobiographical "who-dunnit", author Axton Betz-Hamilton shares an identity theft mystery which changed the course of her family's lives before reaching its final, shocking conclusion.

***The Lincoln Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill America's 16th president--And Why It Failed*** by Brad Meltzer (Flatiron Books, 2020)

This book about an assassination plot against Abraham Lincoln reads like a suspense novel.

***The Lost Family: How DNA Testing is Upending Who We Are*** by Libby Copeland (Abrams Press, 2020)

Journalist Libby Copeland explores the booming popularity of consumer genetic test kits and the implications for families, identity, science, health, ethics, and individual privacy.

***Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*** by Natasha Trethewey (Ecco, 2020)

This heartbreaking and beautiful memoir by former United States Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey recalls her mother's violent death when Natasha was only nineteen. As she comes to terms with the

central trauma of her own life, an indelible event which made her the writer she is today, the poet creates a deeply moving tribute to the mother she has never forgotten.

***Mobituaries: Great Lives Worth Reliving*** by Mo Rocca (Simon & Schuster, 2019)

A companion to his popular podcast of the same name, Mo Rocca reflects on the lives of the famous, infamous, and anonymous people who affected the world.

***Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey*** by Jo Ivester (She Writes Press, 2020)

An inspiring, positive story about a family learning and growing together as their transgender son discovers and accepts his true self.

***Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America*** by Candacy Taylor (Abrams Press, 2020)

Author and cultural documentarian Candacy Taylor readers in the passenger's seat as she charts the rise of African-American leisure travel and uses Victor H. Green's "Negro Motorist Green Book" to journey throughout America documenting the true experiences, and sometimes dangers, that Black Americans travelers faced when trying to grab onto this aspect of the "American dream." The book is supplemented by historical and modern-day photos of the "safe" lodging, dining, and entertainment sites highlighted in the book.

***\*The Pandemic Century: One Hundred Years of Panic, Hysteria, and Hubris*** by Mark Honigsbaum (W.W. Norton, 2019)

A look at the past 100 years of contagious disease outbreaks and the extraordinary efforts to contain them.

***Rough Magic: Riding the World's Loneliest Horse Race*** by Lara Prior-Palmer (Catapult, 2019)

On a whim, 19-year old Lara Prior-Palmer enters "the world's longest, toughest horse race"--an endurance race on wild ponies across 1,000 kilometers of Mongolian grassland. Driven by her restlessness and overcoming illness and exhaustion, Lara finishes the race becoming the first woman to win and the youngest person ever to finish.

***The Splendid and The Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz*** by Erik Larson (Crown, 2020)

A look at the realities of life during the Blitz in WWII, which occurred in Churchill's first year as Prime Minister of England.  
2019)

***The Ungrateful Refugee*** by Dina Nayeri (Catapult, 2019)

Dina Nayeri shares about her life as a refugee from Iran and the life of other refugees. She details the sacrifice and hardships that refugees go through in the asylum process and the life in their new country.

***\*The Women with Silver Wings: The Inspiring True Story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II*** by Katherine Sharp Landdeck (Crown, 2020)

The inspiring story of early female aviators and the first women pilots in the U.S. military that shines light on the significant contribution this group of women made to the war effort and their struggle to be recognized as veterans.