

2024

July 8

The Golem of Brooklyn by Adam Mansbach c2023

Len, a high school art teacher at a private school, who has been amassing stolen clay from the school, gets thoroughly stoned one day and creates a 400-pound, 9-foot Golem in his garden apartment in Brooklyn, NY. After doing some research he brings the Golem to life. The Golem demands to know, in Yiddish, why he is here, but Len speaks no Yiddish. He enlists the help of Miri, an ex-Hasidic lesbian, who is working in a nearby bodega, to help translate. After a great deal of chaos, it is revealed that there is to be an anti-Semitic rally held in western Kentucky in a matter of days.

Peppered with some profanity and a great deal of humor, this is a philosophical journey for our time.

August 12

A Backpack, A Bear, and 8 Crates of Vodka by Lev Golinkin

In the twilight of the Cold War, nine-year old Lev Golinkin and his family cross the Soviet border with only ten suitcases, \$600, and the vague promise of help awaiting in Vienna. Years later, Golinkin, now an American adult, sets out to retrace his family's long trek, locate the strangers who fought for his freedom, and in the process, gain a future by understanding his past.

September 9

The Wind Knows My Name by Isabel Allende c2023

Vienna, 1938. Samuel Adler is five years old when his father disappears during Kristallnacht—the night his family loses everything. As her child's safety becomes ever harder to guarantee, Samuel's mother secures a spot for him on a Kindertransport train out of Nazi-occupied Austria to England.

Arizona, 2019. Eight decades later, Anita Díaz and her mother board another train, fleeing looming danger in El Salvador and seeking refuge in the United States. But their arrival coincides with the new family separation policy, and seven-year-old Anita finds herself alone at a camp in Nogales. She escapes her tenuous reality through her trips to Azabahr, a magical world of the imagination.

Intertwining past and present, *The Wind Knows My Name* tells the tale of these two unforgettable characters, both in search of family and home. It is both a testament to the sacrifices that parents make and a love letter to the children who survive the most unfathomable dangers—and never stop dreaming.

October 14

Nine Folds Make a Paper Swan by Ruth Gilligan c2016

Three intertwining voices span the twentieth century to tell the unknown story of the Jews in Ireland, in this heartbreaking portrait of what it means to belong, and how storytelling can redeem us all.

At the start of the twentieth century, a young girl and her family emigrate from Lithuania in search of a better life in America, only to land on the Emerald Isle instead. In 1958, a mute Jewish boy locked away in a mental institution outside of Dublin forms an unlikely friendship with a man consumed by the story of the love he lost nearly two decades earlier. And in present-day London, an Irish journalist is forced to confront her conflicting notions of identity and family when her Jewish boyfriend asks her to make a true leap of faith.

These three arcs, which span generations and intertwine in revelatory ways, come together to tell the haunting story of Ireland's all-but-forgotten Jewish community.

November 11

The Art of Leaving by Ayelet Tsarbari c2019

This memoir in sixteen personal essays by a young woman, born in Israel to a large family of Yemeni descent, shares her vivid memories as she travels the world, from New York to India, searching for love, belonging, and an escape from grief following the early death of her father.

December 9

A Day in the Life of Abed Salama by Nathan Thrall c2023

Winner of the **2024 Pulitzer Prize** for best general non-fiction.

Five-year-old Milad Salama is excited for a school trip to a theme park on the outskirts of Jerusalem. On the way, his bus collides with a semi-trailer. His father, Abed, gets word of the crash and rushes to the site. The scene is chaos—the children have been taken to different hospitals in Jerusalem and the West Bank; some are missing, others cannot be identified. Abed sets off on an odyssey to learn Milad's fate. It is every parent's worst nightmare, but for Abed it is compounded by the maze of physical, emotional, and bureaucratic obstacles he must navigate because he is Palestinian. He is on the wrong side of the separation wall, holds the wrong ID to pass the military checkpoints, and has the wrong papers to enter the city of Jerusalem. Abed's quest to find Milad is interwoven with the stories of a cast of Jewish and Palestinian characters whose lives and histories unexpectedly converge.

2025

January 13

Unearthed: A Lost Actress, a Forbidden Book, and a Search for Life in the Shadow of the Holocaust by Meryl Frank c2023

A thrilling mystery woven into a beautifully constructed family memoir: Meryl Frank's journey to seek the truth about a beloved and revolutionary cousin, a celebrated actress in Vilna before World War II, and to answer the question of how the next generation should honor the memory of the Holocaust. Meryl looks for answers to the questions that have defined her life: what is our duty to the past? How do we honor such memories while keeping them from consuming us? And what do we teach our children about tragedy? *Unearthed* links the past to the present with Ms. Frank's comparison of the racism of Nazi Europe to modern-day racism of all forms.

Kirkus

Review <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/meryl-frank/unearthed-frank/>

February 10

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride

People may have read “The Color of Water” by McBride. “This time, we’re in Chicken Hill, a small town in Pennsylvania, where Black, Jewish, and European immigrants, rich and poor, old and young, collide—defending, fighting, entertaining, feeding, and sheltering one another. This cacophonous melody of characters with all of their schemes and dreams reveal how home is where you make it—and how all of these “outsiders” are anything but. With spunky detail, McBride masterfully makes you feel like you’re part of the neighborhood, that these are your neighbors, your friends, and enemies, drawing you in, so that you, too, know the secrets they keep, the grudges they hold, and kindness they offer. Chock full of the social, racial, and ethnic politics of a small town, The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store is another irresistible stand-out from McBride.”

March 10

The Puttermessa Papers by Cynthia Ozick c1997

From Cynthia Ozick, a masterful modern-day picaresque - the adventures of a female Don Quixote transplanted in Manhattan. Ruth Puttermessa, yearning for a life of the mind (her idol is George Eliot), finds herself mired in the lowest circles of city bureaucracy. Her love life is hopeless. Her fantasies are more influential than reality - she takes Hebrew lessons from an uncle who died before she was born; she makes a golem out of the earth of her houseplants. Still, she turns out to be the best mayor New York City has ever elected (with the most unusual campaign manager). Soon enough, though, paradise gained becomes paradise lost, and the impact of getting exactly what you want and then losing it plays itself out in dramatic and surprising fashion.

April 14

The Oracle of Stamboul by Michael David Lukas c2011

Set in the heart of the Ottoman Empire during the first years of its chaotic decline, this debut novel follows a gifted young girl who dares to charm a sultan—and change the course of history. As the sultan’s interest in her grows, so, too, does her reputation and importance, though Eleonora is unsure if her new role is what she wants from life.

May 12

Letters from Cuba by Ruth Behar

Ruth Behar is an anthropologist of international renown. She writes poetry, memoir, historical fiction, children's books. This book is based on her grandmother's life and written for children. It is absorbing and delightful, well-reviewed.

REVIEW: Pura Belpré Award winner Behar's newest story is based on her own grandmother's immigration journey. Eleven-year-old Esther bravely travels to Cuba from Poland to help her father earn enough money for the rest of their family to join them, including her mother, grandmother, three brothers, and cherished sister Malka. The

narrative is told in a series of letters from Esther to Malka, chronicling her journey across the sea and her experiences in this new homeland. As a means to earn money for her family's travel arrangements, Esther puts her sewing skills to good use by making custom dresses for many islanders. Throughout the story, readers learn that many Jewish people are arriving in Cuba, trying to escape the Jewish persecution in Europe, despite Nazi sympathy infiltrating the island. Readers dive into the story headfirst as they get to know Esther, her family, and her newfound friends. Esther's first-person descriptions of people and the island craft a vivid experience of Cuba's sights, sounds, and culinary delights. VERDICT Readers will not want to part with this story of resilience. A World War II refugee tale that spotlights dedicated hard work.