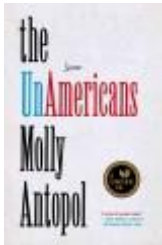


Best Fiction A-Z 2014

Description: NextReads Bibliographer Shauna Griffin traverses the wide world of fiction to bring you some of 2014's best reads in general, mainstream, and hard-to-classify fiction.



The UnAmericans (Feb 2014)

By: Antopol, Molly

This complex debut collection of short stories traces the experiences of deeply flawed and painfully human characters from a range of backgrounds, including a Czechoslovakian dissident, a McCarthy-era communist/actor, and an Israeli journalist. Exploring themes of estrangement, family, and politics, these stories span much of the 20th century and take place in locations as varied as Maine and Kiev.



Ruby (Apr 2014)

By: Bond, Cynthia

Loving the beautiful but damaged Ruby all of his life, Ephram is torn between his sister and a chance for a life with Ruby when the latter returns to their small hometown and confronts the forces that traumatized her early years.



The Plover (Apr 2014)

By: Doyle, Brian

A compelling, marvelous novel by the acclaimed author of *Mink River* Declan O'Donnell has left Oregon aboard his boat, the Plover, to escape the life that's so troubled him on land. He sets course west into the Pacific in search of solitude. Instead, he finds a crew, each in search of something themselves, and what at first seems a lonely sea voyage becomes a rapturous, heartfelt celebration of life's surprising paths, planned and unplanned.



Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay (Sep 2014)

By: Ferrante, Elena

Continues the story of Lina and Elena as they push against boundaries in 1970s Italy, where Lina has left her husband and is working in a factory while taking care of her son and Elena has graduated college and published a novel.

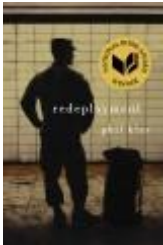
Series: My brilliant friend, 3



An Untamed State (May 2014)

By: Gay, Roxane

A debut novel about a woman kidnapped for ransom, her captivity as her father refuses to pay and her husband fights for her release over thirteen days, and her struggle to come to terms with the ordeal in its aftermath.



Redeployment (Mar 2014)

By: Klay, Phil

A collection of short stories by a former Marine captain and Iraq veteran focuses on the complexities of life for soldiers on the front lines and after, exploring themes ranging from brutality and faith to guilt and survival.



Station Eleven (Sep 2014)

By: Mandel, Emily St. John

An actor playing King Lear dies onstage just before a cataclysmic event changes the future of everyone on Earth. What will be valued and what will be discarded? Will art have a place in a world that has lost so much? What will make life worth living?

These are just some of the issues explored in this beautifully written dystopian novel.

Recommended for fans of David Mitchell, John Scalzi and Kate Atkinson.

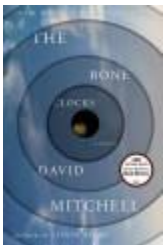


Mermaids in Paradise (Nov 2014)

By: Millet, Lydia

This delightful book starts out as almost chick-lit, turns into a fantasy adventure, then leads into an underdog heist. The tone reminds me of Libba Bray's *Beauty Queens*, with just enough absurdity in a tropical location to keep you on your toes.

Protagonist Deb's husband, Chip, is a total babe (in a nerdy way) and her BFF, Gina, is the best kind of snarky. A highly entertaining read!



The Bone Clocks (Sep 2014)

By: Mitchell, David (David Stephen)

Beginning in 1984 and moving in linear fashion through the years before ending in the 2040s, this complex, layered novel interweaves several different narratives to tell the story of a secret war between those who would steal souls and those who try to stop them. But it's also the story of Holly Sykes, who belongs to neither of these groups but whose life is nevertheless bound up in them. An expansive, globe-trotting

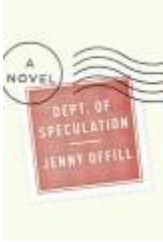
book that takes on themes of aging, youth, and death, *The Bone Clocks* also features characters who have appeared in author David Mitchell's other books and incorporates genres from absolute realism to heady fantasy.



Us (Oct 2014)

By: Nicholls, David

Every once in a while you stumble upon a book that makes you wish you could meet the characters in real life. This is the case with *Us*, the poignant story of a middle-of-the-road British family spiraling out of control, and one man's attempt to win back their love. Quirky, delightful and unpredictable, the novel delves into what makes a marriage, and what tears it apart.



Dept. of Speculation (Jan 2014)

By: Offill, Jenny

The unnamed narrator of this novel writes in short vignettes, starting with odd facts, memories of boys she loved, and recollections from her travels. But as a whole the book itself is a moving portrait of a marriage and a relationship, from early days filled with possibilities to recent difficulties and fears. Wide-ranging and speculative, this novel focuses on the role of a wife and mother.



Fives and Twenty-fives (Aug 2014)

By: Pitre, Michael

When you're in a Marine platoon dispatched to repair roads in Iraq, fives and twenty-fives are important -- they mark the distance, in meters, at which roadside bombs can kill. In this debut novel, written by an Iraq War veteran, we hear the stories of the platoon leader, who feels isolated by his rank; the medic, unraveled by the deaths of friends; and their Iraqi interpreter, who both loves and hates what America represents. *Fives and Twenty-Fives* jumps back and forth between their time in Iraq and their present in the U.S. (or Tunisia, in the case of the asylum-seeking interpreter), and movingly captures the horrors of war and the difficulties of returning to civilian life.



The Spinning Heart (Jun 2013)

By: Ryan, Donal

Narrated by unforgettably distinct characters -- one chapter per character -- who relay some of the same events, this dialect-rich novel follows a small Irish town in the aftermath of the country's financial collapse. Their own major employer, a construction company, has folded, bringing about rising tensions and violence as resources become increasingly hard to come by. The narrators, who share their own experiences, also build a picture of one Bobby Mahon, who enjoys a reputation as an upstanding citizen but may not entirely deserve it. Though necessarily bleak and grey, this is an engaging and occasionally humorous debut.



Five Days Left (Sep 2014)

By: Timmer, Julie Lawson

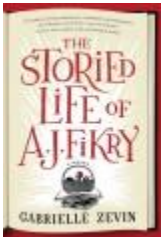
Mara Nichols is terminally ill, and the disease is progressing rapidly; rather than let it rob her of every function, she's determined to end her life (unbeknownst to her husband and daughter). She's given herself five days to say goodbye. Scott Coffman also has five days -- he's about to lose his much-loved foster son to the boy's biological mother, who's been in jail. Though they've never met in person, Mara and Scott are close, thanks to an online forum; though their situations are different, debut author Julie Timmer adroitly captures their shared difficulty -- of how and when to say goodbye. You'll want to have a box of tissues available before embarking on this heart-wrenching journey.



The Free (Feb 2014)

By: Vlautin, Willy

Severely wounded in the Iraq war, Leroy Kervin has lived in a group home for eight years. Frustrated by the simplest daily routines, he finds his existence has become unbearable. An act of desperation helps him disappear deep into his mind, into a world of romance and science fiction, danger and adventure where he is whole once again. Freddie McCall, the night man at Leroy's group home, works two jobs yet still can't make ends meet. He's lost his wife and kids, and the house is next. Medical bills have buried him in debt, a situation that propels him to consider a lucrative--and dangerous--proposition. Pauline Hawkins, a nurse, cares for the sick and wounded, including Leroy. She also looks after her mentally ill elderly father. Yet she remains emotionally removed, until she meets a young runaway who touches something deep and unexpected inside her.



The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry (Apr 2014)

By: Zevin, Gabrielle

A middle-aged bookseller mourning his lost wife, a feisty publisher's rep, and a charmingly precocious abandoned child come together on a small island off the New England coast in this utterly delightful novel of love and second chances.