

Heidi's Top 10

David Sedaris - **Me Talk Pretty One Day**

I tried to leave this off, because it is so well known and loved, but I can't. It is the best. Never would have thought I'd enjoy a book of essays about someone's life -opened my eyes that non-fiction can be fun.

Agatha Christie - **Ten Little Indians/And Then There Were None**

(Curtain: Poirot's Last Case

is a close second runner up, but is really only worth it if you know and love Poirot)

ATTWN - is a great classic mystery - suspenseful, twists and turns, dark.

Alexander McCall Smith - **No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency (#6 Blue Shoes and Happiness), 44 Scotland Street (#3 Love Over Scotland)**

McCall Smith writes with a lovely lyrical style which I adore. Mainly, his novels are a vehicle for philosophizing. Full of description, short on "plot". No 1. Ladies, set in Botswana, captures a place and a voice so well. Love Grace Makutsi and her shoes. Blue Shoes and Happiness is a favorite, because "Happiness" is something I think about a lot. 44 Scotland street stars the irrepressible Bertie, and #3 is a favorite because of the sections told from Cyril the dog's point of view.

Ron McLarty - Memory of Running Kind of sad book, featuring a sad lead character, but all so sort of beautiful. The main character is a man who lets life happen to him, and after a tragic event, this is the story of him finally acting. The main story is interwoven with dreams/flashbacks about his early family life, mentally ill sister, and time at war. Not a fun read, but one that has stuck with me.

Sandra Cisneros - **Loose Woman**

A poetry collection by my matron saint. These poems gave me so much insight into the possibility and reality of what being an adult feminist woman could be. They also have a really strong personal voice, and made me long for a cultural identity akin to chicana.

Sherman Alexie - **Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven**

Similar to Sandra Cisneros, Sherman Alexie captures the voice a minority culture - in this case modern native american- in a way that makes you understand what it might be like, not even in what he says but in how he says it. This book has a non-linear narrative that reminds me of the way people really tell stories when you get to know someone. "This one time...." And eventually you have a pretty complete picture of a whole life.

Alan Bradley - **The Flavia De Luce Novels (#5 - Speaking from Among the Bones)**

Told from the viewpoint of young chemistry prodigy Flavia De Luce, these stories are sweet, sad, and funny. Flavia knows a lot of things about a lot of things, but doesn't really understand everything that's going on around her. Given her lack of an appropriate role model (she's kind of a feral child), she tries to figure out the mysteries of adult behavior via the scientific method. A lo

t of the story lives between the lines. I particularly am fond of the relationship between her and Inspector Hewitt and his wife Antigone, and of course Dogger.

Lisa Lutz - Spellman Files (#4 The Spellmans Strike Again)

Another funny mystery series about a family of PIs who are constantly investigating, misleading, and being suspicious of one another. I like Isabel Spellman because her life is a mess, because she comes to things reluctantly, and for the ways in which she is a mess, but a good person any way. And, I always enjoy a crazy family dynamic, especially if it is still kind in spite of the oddness. I also really love the structure of these books, which are written as “documents” as if Izzy is reporting to a client. A lot of the information, backstory, and jokes are found in the extensive footnotes - a fabulous gimmick that is perfect for the real book nerds, though it can be challenging with an e-reader.

Tom Robbins - Skinny Legs and All

TR is an old favorite author of mine, who I almost didn't include because I'm afraid I might be embarrassed for loving upon re-read. All of his books are written in his signature style, which is brash, funny, irreverent, perhaps a bit preachy, sexy, wild, and totally unique. His novels are one of the first places I encountered magical realism in the wild, which is a big part of why I like them. They all have strong female characters who get to do things and think and talk and screw and live and have agency. BUT, they also all seem to inexplicably like or not mind sleeping with/falling in love with crusty older men. Anyway, this particular book is one of those that has three or four seemingly unrelated stories going which all eventually come together. It talks about religion, art, relationships, the conflicts in the middle east and, I don't know, the meaning of life.

Mark Dunn - Ella Minnow Pea

This is a real word nerd book. First of all, it is an epistolary novel (novel in the form of letters written by the characters), which I always love. It is about an island founded by the guy who came up with the pangram “the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog” whose inhabitants have sort of a religion based on it. When a letter falls off of their monument to the phrase, they decide it is a sign that they have to stop using that letter. As the novel progresses, the letter writer also has to stop using those letters, which makes for a really interesting use of language on the part of the author/letter writer.

Honorable Mentions

Joseph Heller - Catch 22

This is a classic favorite that I re-read every so often, but I'm keeping off my “10” list because we covered the absurdity of war so thoroughly last month.

Tana French - Dublin Murder Squad series, #3 Faithful Place is the best so far.

These are pretty dark, gritty mysteries set in Dublin. The interesting thing is that so far, each in the series takes a minor character from the previous book and makes them the main character of the next book.

Deborah Harkness - The All Souls Trilogy.

These are a recommendation for those who like witches, time travel, vampires, magic, and history. Not as ridiculous as it sounds.

Carl Hiaasen

All of his novels are sort of comic explorations of the horribleness of humanity. Set in Florida, naturally. Usually, the bad guys get what's coming to them. Creatively. Messy, but fun.