

# WTBBL Recommended Reads: Dystopia & the Apocalypse



Earth Day has us reflecting on what might happen if we don't take care of our planet. Could the air become unbreathable for humans? Might we be destroyed by ancient bacteria from melting ice? Then spiraling into the fantastical, could there be an alien invasion? Zombies? Octopus overlords? For your apocalyptic reading pleasure, pick your dystopia from this list of recommended reads where the end is indeed, nigh.

**Station Eleven** by Emily St. John Mandel, 2014. ([BR021720](#), [DB079693](#))

Actor Arthur Leander dies while performing King Lear, just before the start of a pandemic that collapses civilization. In this post-civilization, multi-person point-of-view, characters discover dystopian links that they can trace back to that fateful night. – Book description from library staff

**Notes from an Apocalypse: A Personal Journey to the End of the World and Back** by Mark O'Connell, 2020. ([DB099815](#))

We're alive in a time of worst-case scenarios: The weather has gone uncanny. A pandemic draws our global community to a halt. How is a person supposed to live in the shadow of such a grim future? What might it be like to live through the worst? Writer Mark O'Connell crosses the globe in pursuit of answers. Touring survival bunkers in South Dakota, talking with Mars colonists and preppers, and visiting Chernobyl, O'Connell tackles our anxious present to come to grips with what's ahead. – Book description adapted from publisher's website

**How High We Go in the Dark** by Sequoia Nagamatsu, 2022. ([BR024553](#), [DB106990](#))

Beginning in 2030, a grieving archeologist arrives in the Arctic Circle to continue the work of his recently deceased daughter at the Batagaika crater, where researchers are studying long-buried secrets now revealed in melting permafrost, including the perfectly preserved remains of a girl who appears to have died of an ancient virus. Once unleashed, the Arctic Plague will reshape life on earth for generations to come, quickly traversing the globe, forcing humanity to devise a myriad of moving and inventive ways to embrace possibility in the face of tragedy. – Book description from author's website

**A Boy and His Dog at the End of the World** by Charlie Fletcher, 2019. ([DB094882](#))

My name's Griz. My childhood wasn't like yours. I've never had friends, and in my whole life I've not met enough people to play a game of football. My parents told me how crowded the world used to be, but we were never lonely on our remote island. We had each other, and our dogs. Then the thief came. There may be no law left except what you make of it. But if you steal my dog,

you can at least expect me to come after you. Because if we aren't loyal to the things we love, what's the point? – Book description from Goodreads

**California** by Edan Lepucki, 2014. ([DB079262](#))

The world Cal and Frida have always known is gone, and they've left the crumbling city of Los Angeles far behind them. They now live in a shack in the wilderness, working side-by-side to make their days tolerable in the face of hardship and isolation. But the tentative existence they've built for themselves is thrown into doubt when Frida finds out she's pregnant. Terrified of the unknown and unsure of their ability to raise a child alone, Cal and Frida set out for the nearest settlement, a guarded and paranoid community with dark secrets. These people can offer them security, but Cal and Frida soon realize this community poses dangers of its own. In this unfamiliar world, where everything and everyone can be perceived as a threat, the couple must quickly decide whom to trust. – Book description from Goodreads

**The World Without Us** by Alan Weisman, 2007. ([DB065268](#))

In this revelatory account, Alan Weisman explains how our massive infrastructure would collapse and finally vanish without human presence; which everyday items may become immortalized as fossils; how copper pipes and wiring would be crushed into mere seams of reddish rock; why some of our earliest buildings might be the last architecture left; and how plastic, bronze sculpture, and radio waves may be our most lasting gifts to the universe. As he shows which human devastations are indelible, and which examples of our highest art and culture would endure longest, Weisman draws on every field of science to present an environmental assessment like no other. This is narrative nonfiction at its finest—one of the most affecting portraits yet of humankind's place on this planet. – Book description from publisher's website

**The Passage** [#1, Passage Trilogy] by Justin Cronin, 2010. ([DB071422](#))

It happened fast. Thirty-two minutes for one world to die, another to be born. First, the unthinkable: a security breach at a secret U.S. government facility unleashes the monstrous product of a chilling military experiment. Then, the unspeakable: a night of chaos and carnage gives way to sunrise on a nation, and ultimately a world, forever altered. All that remains for the stunned survivors is the long fight ahead and a future ruled by fear—of darkness, of death, of a fate far worse. – Book description from Goodreads

**Moon of the Crusted Snow** by Waubgeshig Rice, 2018. ([DB095719](#))

With winter looming, a small northern Anishinaabe community goes dark. Cut off, people become passive and confused. Panic builds as the food supply dwindles. While the band council and a pocket of community members struggle to maintain order, an unexpected visitor arrives, escaping the crumbling society to the south. Soon after, others follow. The community leadership loses its grip on power as the visitors manipulate the tired and hungry to take control of the reserve. Tensions rise and, as the months pass, so does the death toll due to sickness and despair. Frustrated by the building chaos, a group of young friends and their families turn to the land and Anishinaabe tradition in hopes of helping their community thrive again. Guided through the chaos by an unlikely leader named Evan Whitesky, they endeavor to restore order while grappling with a grave decision. – Book description from publisher's website

**The Octopus Museum: Poems** by Brenda Shaughnessy, 2019. ([DB097204](#))

This collection of bold and scathingly beautiful feminist poems imagines what comes after our current age of environmental destruction, racism, sexism, and divisive politics. As Shaughnessy conjures our potential future, she movingly (and often with humor) envisions an age where cephalopods might rule over humankind, a fate she suggests we may just deserve after destroying their oceans. These heartbreaking, terrified poems are the battle cry of a woman who is fighting for the survival of the world she loves, and a stirring exhibition of who we are as a civilization. – Book description adapted from publisher's website

**Future Home of the Living God** by Louise Erdrich, 2017. ([BR022380](#), [DB087990](#), en español [DB102396](#))

Twenty-six-year-old Cedar Hawk Songmaker, adopted daughter of a pair of Minneapolis liberals, is as disturbed and uncertain as the rest of America around her. But for Cedar, this change is profound and deeply personal. She is four months pregnant. Though she wants to tell the adoptive parents who raised her from infancy, Cedar first feels compelled to find her birth mother, Mary Potts, an Ojibwe to understand both her and her baby's origins. As Cedar goes back to her own biological beginnings, society around her begins to disintegrate, fueled by a swelling panic about the end of humanity. – Book description from Goodreads

**The Resisters** by Gish Jen, 2020. ([DB098882](#))

The time: not so long from now. The place: AutoAmerica, a country surveilled by one “Aunt Nettie,” a Big Brother that is part artificial intelligence, part internet, and oddly human—even funny. The people: divided. The “angelfair” Netted have jobs and, what with the country half under water, literally occupy the high ground. The Surplus live on swampland if they’re lucky, on water if they’re not. The story: To a Surplus couple—he once a professor, she still a lawyer—is born a girl, Gwen, with a golden arm. Her teens find her happily playing in an underground baseball league, but when AutoAmerica faces ChinRussia in the Olympics, Gwen finds herself in dangerous territory, playing ball with the Netted even as her mother battles this apartheid-like society in court. – Book description from Amazon

**Never Let Me Go** by Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005. ([BR021107](#), [DB059667](#))

As children, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were students at Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school secluded in the English countryside. It was a place of mercurial cliques and mysterious rules where teachers were constantly reminding their charges of how special they were. Now, years later, Kathy is a young woman. Ruth and Tommy have reentered her life. And for the first time she is beginning to look back at their shared past and understand just what it is that makes them special—and how that gift will shape the rest of their time together. – Book description from publisher’s website