

WTBBL Recommended Reads: Nonfiction That Reads Like Fiction



Let's explore nonfiction that doesn't feel like nonfiction! Whether it's a memoir that pulls you in faster than a thriller, a collection of essays that changes your way of thinking, or narrative nonfiction so rich it feels like you're watching a movie, these reads are sure to entertain and enlighten.

The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui 2017. ([DBC15856](#))

Adapted from a graphic novel format and produced locally at WTBBL in audio, this short book tells the story of the author's family fleeing from Vietnam and adjusting to being refugees in the United States. From childhood to becoming a parent herself, at the heart of Bui's story is a universal struggle told through haunting, poetic writing examining the strength of family, the importance of identify, and the meaning of home. – Book Description from WTBBL Staff

Apple: Skin to the Core a Memoir in Words and Pictures by Eric Gansworth, 2020. ([BR023594](#) , [DB101947](#) , [LP026247](#))

The term "Apple" is a slur in Native communities across the country. It's for someone supposedly "red on the outside, white on the inside." Eric Gansworth is telling his story in Apple (Skin to the Core). The story of his family, of Onondaga among Tuscaroras, of Native folks everywhere. From the horrible legacy of the government boarding schools, to a boy watching his siblings leave and return and leave again, to a young man fighting to be an artist who balances multiple worlds. Eric shatters that slur and reclaims it in verse and prose and imagery that truly lives up to the word heartbreaking. – Book Description from the Publisher

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone by Lori Gottlieb, 2019. ([BR022850](#) , [DB094667](#) , [DB106234](#) [Español])

Wendell, with his balding head, cardigan, and khakis, looks like he has come from Therapist Central Casting. Lori Gottlieb's personal crisis has landed her, a fellow therapist, in this quirky but seasoned therapist's office in L.A. As Gottlieb explores the inner chambers of her patients' lives -- a self-absorbed Hollywood producer, a young newlywed diagnosed with a terminal illness, a senior citizen threatening to end her life on her birthday if nothing gets better, and a twenty-something who can't stop hooking up with the wrong guys -- she finds that the questions they are struggling with are the very ones she is now bringing to Wendell. – Book Description from WTBBL Staff

The Five: The Lives of Jack the Ripper's Women by Hallie Rubenhold, 2019. ([DB096868](#))

For more than a century, newspapers have been keen to tell us that “the Ripper” preyed on prostitutes. Not only is this untrue, as historian Hallie Rubenhold has discovered, but it has prevented the real stories of these fascinating women from being told. Now, in this devastating narrative of five lives, Rubenhold finally sets the record straight, revealing a world not just of Dickens and Queen Victoria, but of poverty, homelessness, and rampant misogyny. They died because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time—but their greatest misfortune was to be born women. – Book Description from Goodreads

Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from Red States
by Samantha Allen, 2019. ([DB096338](#))

In *Real Queer America*, Allen takes us on a cross-country road-trip stretching all the way from Provo, Utah to the Rio Grande Valley, to the Bible Belt, and Deep South. Making pit stops at drag shows, political rallies, and hubs of queer life across the heartland, she introduces us to scores of extraordinary LGBT people working for change, from the first openly transgender mayor in Texas history, to the manager of the only queer night club in Bloomington, Indiana, and many more. – Book Description from the Publisher

Furiously Happy: A Funny Book About Horrible Things
by Jenny Lawson, 2015. ([BR021376](#) , [DB083517](#))

In *Furiously Happy*, a humor memoir tinged with just enough tragedy and pathos to make it worthwhile, Jenny Lawson examines her own experience with severe depression and a host of other conditions, and explains how it has led her to live life to the fullest:

"I've often thought that people with severe depression have developed such a well for experiencing extreme emotion that they might be able to experience extreme joy in a way that 'normal people' also might never understand. And that's what *Furiously Happy* is all about." – Book Description from Goodreads

I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race and Other Reason I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé by Michael Arceneaux, 2018. ([BR022467](#) , [DB092315](#))

It hasn't been easy being Michael Arceneaux. Equality for LGBT people has come a long way and all, but voices of persons of color within the community are still often silenced, and being black in America is...well, have you watched the news? In this timely collection of alternately hysterical and soul-searching essays about what it is like to grow up as a creative, sensitive black man in a world that constantly tries to deride and diminish your humanity, Arceneaux shows us an impassioned, forthright, and refreshing look at minority life in today's America. Leaving no bigoted or ignorant stone unturned, he describes his journey in learning to embrace his identity when the world told him to do the opposite. – Book Description from the Publisher

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil by John Berendt, 1994. ([BR011463](#) , [DB038077](#))

Shots rang out in Savannah's grandest mansion in the misty, early morning hours of May 2, 1981. Was it murder or self-defense? For nearly a decade, the shooting and its aftermath reverberated throughout this city of moss-hung oaks and shaded squares. Now, join John Berendt in his narrative of his experiences in the city that enchanted him, and the hodgepodge of friends, including the antique dealer, Jim Williams, who went to trial four times for the events of May 2, 1981. Berendt interweaves a first-person account of life in this isolated

remnant of the Old South with the unpredictable twists and turns of a landmark murder case. – Book Description from WTBBL Staff

Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do by Studs Terkel, 1972. ([DB107784](#))

Take a step back in time to the early 1970's with these intimate and thought-provoking oral histories compiled by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Studs Terkel. Lauded for "presenting the real American experience," men and women from every walk of life talk to him, telling him of their likes, dislikes, fears, problems, and happiness's on the job. Professionals include: a waitress, a coal miner, a receptionist, a telephone operator, an advertising agent, hotel clerks, taxi drivers, film critics, and many, many more! – Book Description from WTBBL Staff

In the Dream House by Carmen Maria Machado 2019. ([BR023161](#) , [DB097881](#))

For years Carmen Maria Machado has struggled to articulate her experiences in an abusive same-sex relationship. In this extraordinarily candid and radically inventive memoir, Machado tackles a dark and difficult subject with wit, inventiveness, and an inquiring spirit, as she uses a series of narrative tropes—including classic horror themes—to create an entirely unique piece of work which is destined to become an instant classic. – Book Description from Goodreads

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot 2010. ([DB070661](#))

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her enslaved ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb’s effects; helped lead to important advances for in vitro fertilization, cloning, gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions.

Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave. Henrietta’s family did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research - without informed consent.

Now Rebecca Skloot takes us on an extraordinary journey, from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to stark white laboratories with freezers full of HeLa cells; from Henrietta’s small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia, to East Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells. – Book Description from Goodreads

Blind Rage: Letters to Helen Keller by Georgina Kleege, 2006. ([BR016939](#) , [DB063900](#))

As a young blind girl, Georgina Kleege repeatedly heard the refrain, “Why can’t you be more like Helen Keller?” Kleege’s resentment culminates in her book *Blind Rage: Letters to Helen Keller*, an ingenious examination of the life of this renowned international figure using 21st-century sensibilities. Kleege’s absorption with Keller originated as an angry response to the ideal of a secular saint, which no real blind or deaf person could ever emulate. However, her investigation into the genuine person revealed that a much more complex set of characters and circumstances shaped Keller’s life. – Book Description from the Publisher