

Reality Readers

2017



September 25: *Killing Patton: the Strange Death of WWII's Most Audacious General* by Bill O'Reilly (323 pgs)

General George S. Patton, Jr. died under mysterious circumstances in the months following the end of World War II. For almost seventy years, there has been suspicion that his death was not an accident--and may very well have been an act of assassination. *Killing Patton* takes readers inside the final year of the war and recounts the events surrounding Patton's tragic demise, naming names of the many powerful individuals who wanted him silenced.

October 23: *Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter* by Kate Clifford Larson (336 pgs)

Rosemary Kennedy was intellectually disabled, a secret fiercely guarded by her powerful and glamorous family. Young Rosemary comes alive as a sweet, lively girl adored by her siblings. But Larson also reveals the often desperate and duplicitous arrangements the Kennedys made to keep her away from home as she became increasingly difficult in her early twenties, culminating in Joe's decision to have Rosemary lobotomized at age 23 and the family's complicity in keeping the secret. Only years later did the Kennedy siblings begin to understand what had happened to Rosemary, which inspired them to direct government attention and resources to the plight of the developmentally and mentally disabled, transforming the lives of millions.

November 27: *Moscow Nights: The Van Cliburn Story-How One Man and His Piano Transformed the Cold War* by Nigel Cliff (464 pgs)

Gripping narrative nonfiction that tells the dramatic story of a remarkable young Texan pianist, Van Cliburn, who played his way through the wall of fear built by the Cold War, won the hearts of the American and Russian people, and eased tensions between two superpowers on the brink of nuclear war. In 1958, an unheralded 23-year-old piano prodigy from Texas named Van Cliburn traveled to Moscow to compete in the First International Tchaikovsky Competition. The Soviets had no intention of bestowing their coveted prize on an unknown American; a Russian pianist had already been chosen to win. Yet when the gangly Texan with the shy grin took the stage and began to play, he instantly captivated an entire nation.

December 18 (SPECIAL DATE): *Clementine: The Life of Mrs. Winston Churchill* By Sonia Purnell (448 pgs)

By Winston Churchill's own admission, victory in the Second World War would have been "impossible without her." Until now, however, the only existing biography of Churchill's wife, Clementine, was written by her daughter. Sonia Purnell finally gives Clementine her due with a deeply researched account that tells her life story, revealing how she was instrumental in softening FDR's initial dislike of her husband and paving the way for Britain's close relationship with America.

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January 23: *What Remains: A Memoir of Fate, Friendship, and Love* by Carole Radziwill (264 pgs)

What Remains begins with loss and returns to loss. A small plane plunges into the ocean carrying John F. Kennedy Jr., Anthony's cousin, and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, Carole's closest friend. Three weeks later Anthony dies of cancer. With unflinching honesty and a journalist's keen eye, Carole Radziwill explores the enduring ties of family, the complexities of marriage, the importance of friendship, and the challenges of self-invention. Beautifully written, *What Remains* "gets at the essence of what matters," wrote Oprah Winfrey. "Friendship, compassion, destiny."

February 27: *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* by Colin Woodard (371 pgs)

Colin Woodard leads us on a journey through the history of our fractured continent, and the rivalries and alliances between its component nations, which conform to neither state nor international boundaries. He illustrates and explains why "American" values vary sharply from one region to another. Woodard reveals how intranational differences have played a pivotal role at every point in the continent's history, from the American Revolution and the Civil War to the tumultuous sixties and the "blue county/red county" maps of recent presidential elections.

March 27: *Lincoln's Greatest Case: The River, the Bridge, and the Making of America* by Brian McGinty (272 pgs)

In the early hours of May 6, 1856, the steamboat *Effie Afton* barreled into a pillar of the Rock Island Bridge—the first railroad bridge ever to span the Mississippi River. Soon after, the newly constructed vessel, crowded with passengers and livestock, erupted into flames and sank in the river below, taking much of the bridge with it. As lawyer and Lincoln scholar Brian McGinty dramatically reveals, no one was killed, but the question of who was at fault cried out for an answer.

April 24: *The Wild Truth* by Carine McCandless (304 pgs)

The spellbinding story of Chris McCandless, who gave away his savings, hitchhiked to Alaska, walked into the wilderness alone, and starved to death in 1992, fascinated not just *New York Times* bestselling author Jon Krakauer, but also the rest of the nation. Krakauer's book, *Into the Wild*, became an international bestseller, translated into thirty-one languages, and Sean Penn's inspirational film by the same name further skyrocketed Chris McCandless to global fame. But the real story of Chris's life and his journey has not yet been told – until now.

May 22: *The Republic of Pirates: Being the true & surprising story of the Caribbean Pirates and the man who brought them down* by Colin Woodard (400 pgs)

In the early eighteenth century, the Pirate Republic was home to some of the great pirate captains, including Blackbeard, "Black Sam" Bellamy, and Charles Vane. Along with their fellow pirates—former sailors, indentured servants, and runaway slaves—this "Flying Gang" established a crude but distinctive democracy in the Bahamas, carving out their own zone of freedom in which servants were free, blacks could be equal citizens, and leaders were chosen or deposed by a vote. They cut off trade routes, sacked slave ships, and severed Europe from its New World empires, and for a brief, glorious period the Republic was a success.

June 26: *The Elephant Whisperer: My life with the herd in the African wild* by Lawrence Anthony (384 pgs)

Lawrence Anthony devoted his life to animal conservation, protecting the world's endangered species. Then he was asked to accept a herd of "rogue" wild elephants on his Thula Thula game reserve in Zululand. His common sense told him to refuse, but he was the herd's last chance of survival: they would be killed if he wouldn't take them. In order to save their lives, Anthony took them in. In the years that followed he became a part of their family. And as he battled to create a bond with the elephants, he came to realize that they had a great deal to teach him about life, loyalty, and freedom.

July 24: *Hillbilly Elegy: A memoir of a family and culture in crisis* by J.D. Vance (272 pgs)

Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck. A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

August 28: *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman (352 pgs)

In *The Genius of Birds*, acclaimed author Jennifer Ackerman explores the newly discovered brilliance of birds and how it came about. As she travels around the world to the most cutting-edge frontiers of research—the distant laboratories of Barbados and New Caledonia, the great tit communities of the United Kingdom and the bowerbird habitats of Australia, the ravaged mid-Atlantic coast after Hurricane Sandy and the warming mountains of central Virginia and the western states—Ackerman not only tells the story of the recently uncovered genius of birds but also delves deeply into the latest findings about the bird brain itself that are revolutionizing our view of what it means to be intelligent.