



2025 Potential RAY Title Descriptions

NONFICTION

***The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* by Jonathan Haidt**

Description: In *The Anxious Generation*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt lays out the facts about the epidemic of teen mental illness that hit many countries at the same time. He shows how the “play-based childhood” began to decline in the 1980s, and how it was finally wiped out by the arrival of the “phone-based childhood” in the early 2010s. He explains why social media damages girls more than boys and why boys have been withdrawing from the real world into the virtual world, with disastrous consequences for themselves, their families, and their societies.

Genre: Family and Relationships; Family and Relationships; Science Writing; Society and culture; Society and culture

Storyline: Issue-oriented

Style: Persuasive

***The Backyard Bird Chronicles* by Amy Tan**

Description: Mapping the passage of time through daily entries, thoughtful questions and beautiful original sketches, the best-selling author of *The Joy Luck Club* shares her search for solace which turned into an opportunity to connect with nature in a meaningful way and imagine the intricate lives of the birds she admired.

Genre: Illustrated books; Nature Writing; Nature Writing

Mood: Funny; Reflective

Style: Candid

***Call Us What We Carry: Poems* by Amanda Gorman**

Description: The presidential inaugural poet—and unforgettable new voice in American poetry—presents a collection of poems that includes the stirring poem read at the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States.

Genre: Poetry

Storyline: Issue-oriented; Own voices

Mood: Moving

Style: Stylistically complex; Wordplay-filled; Thought-provoking

***The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War* by Erik Larson**

Description: Drawing on diaries, secret communiques, slave ledgers and plantation ledgers, the #1 New York Times best-selling author of *The Splendid and the Vile* offers a gripping account of the months between Lincoln's election and the start of the Civil War, which tore a deeply divided nation in two.

Genre: History writing; Life stories

Mood: Cinematic

Style: Fast-paced

***Framed : Astonishing True Stories of Wrongful Convictions* by John Grisham**

Description: Exposes ten harrowing tales of innocent Americans unjustly found guilty and convicted of crimes they didn't commit, shedding light on the flaws within the legal system that led to their imprisonment and the relentless battles for exoneration that ensued.

Genre: Collective biographies; Life stories; True Crime

Storyline: Issue-oriented

Mood: Serious

Style: Thought-provoking; Well-researched

***Grief is for People* by Sloan Crosley**

Description: *Grief Is for People* is a deeply moving and surprisingly suspenseful portrait of friendship, and a book about loss packed with verve for life. After the pain and confusion of losing her closest friend to suicide, Crosley looks for answers in friends, philosophy, and art, hoping for a framework more useful than the unavoidable stages of grief. Crosley's search for truth is frank, darkly funny, and gilded with a resounding empathy. Upending the "grief memoir," *Grief Is for People* is the category-defying story of the struggle to hold on to the past without being consumed by it.

Genre: Autobiographies and memoirs; Life stories; Life stories; Family and Relationships; Family and Relationships

Mood: Darkly humorous; Melancholy; Moving; Reflective

Style: Candid; Witty

***Knife : Meditations After an Attempted Murder* by Salman Rushdie**

Description: The internationally renowned writer and Booker Prize winner speaks out for the first time about the traumatic events of August 12, 2022, when an attempt was made on his life, in this deeply personal meditation on violence, art, loss, love and finding the strength to stand up again.

Genre: Autobiographies and memoirs; Life stories; Life stories

Mood: Reflective

Style: Thought-provoking

***Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl**

Description: Internationally renowned psychiatrist, Viktor E. Frankl, endured years of unspeakable horror in Nazi death camps. During, and partly because of his suffering, Dr.

Frankl developed a revolutionary approach to psychotherapy known as logotherapy. At the core of his theory is the belief that man's primary motivational force is his search for meaning.

Genre: Translations; Spirituality and Religion; History writing

Mood: Moving

Style: Thought-provoking

The Message by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Description: Ta-Nehisi Coates originally set out to write a book about writing, but found himself grappling with deeper questions about how our stories—our reporting and imaginative narratives and mythmaking—expose and distort our realities. Written at a dramatic moment in American and global life, this work from one of the country's most important writers is about the urgent need to untangle ourselves from the destructive myths that shape our world—and our own souls—and embrace the liberating power of even the most difficult truths.

Genre: Essays; Book club best bets; Society and culture; Society and culture; Politics and global affairs; Antiracist literature

Storyline: Issue-oriented; Own voices; Sweeping

Mood: Disturbing; Haunting; Moving; Reflective

Style: Incisive; Thought-provoking; Unputdownable

Sociopath: A Memoir by Patric Gagne

Patric Gagne realized she made others uncomfortable before she started kindergarten. Something about her caused people to react in a way she didn't understand. She suspected it was because she didn't feel things the way other kids did. Emotions like fear, guilt, and empathy eluded her. For the most part, she felt nothing. And she didn't like the way that "nothing" felt. She did her best to pretend she was like everyone else, but the constant pressure to conform to a society she knew rejected anyone like her was unbearable. So Patric stole. She lied. She was occasionally violent. She became an expert lock-picker and home-invader. All with the goal of replacing the nothingness with...something. In college, Patric finally confirmed what she'd long suspected. She was a sociopath. But even though it was the very first personality disorder identified--well over 200 years ago--sociopathy had been neglected by mental health professionals for decades. She was told there was no treatment, no hope for a normal life. She found herself haunted by sociopaths in pop culture, madmen and evil villains who are considered monsters. Her future looked grim. But when Patric reconnects with an old flame, she gets a glimpse of a future beyond her diagnosis. If she's capable of love, it must mean that she isn't a monster. With the help of her sweetheart (and some curious characters she meets along the way) she embarks on a mission to prove that the millions of Americans who share her diagnosis aren't all monsters either. This is the inspiring story of her journey to change her fate and how she managed to build a life full of love and hope.

***Why We Remember: Unlocking Memory's Power to Hold on to What Matters* by Charan Ranganath**

Description: Combining accessible language with cutting-edge research, eye-opening studies and examples from pop culture, a pioneering neuroscientist and psychologist unveils the hidden role memory plays throughout our lives and how once we understand its power, we can cut through the clutter to remember the things we want to remember.

Genre: Science Writing; Society and culture

Style: Accessible; Comprehensive; Thought-provoking

FICTION

***The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters**

Description: July 1962. A Mi'kmaq family from Nova Scotia arrives in Maine to pick blueberries; weeks later, four-year-old Ruthie vanishes mysteriously, last seen by her six-year-old brother, Joe. Joe will remain deeply affected by his sister's disappearance for years to come. In Boston, a young girl named Norma grows up as the only child of an affluent family. Her father is emotionally distant, her mother frustratingly overprotective. Norma is often troubled by recurring dreams and visions; as she grows older, Norma slowly comes to realize there is something her parents aren't telling her. Unwilling to abandon her intuition, she will spend decades trying to uncover this family secret.

Genre: Relationship fiction; Canadian fiction; Debut title

Themes: Childhood trauma

Storyline: First person narratives

Mood: Haunting; Moving

Style: Character-driven

***The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn**

Description: In 1950 Washington, DC, at an all-female boardinghouse called Briarwood, mysterious widow Grace March moves into the attic room, drawing her oddball collection of neighbors into unlikely friendship, but when a shocking act of violence tears the house apart, the women must expose the true enemy in their midst.

Genre: Historical thrillers

Themes: Large cast of characters

Storyline: Intricately plotted; Multiple perspectives

Characterization: Well-developed

Mood: Haunting; Moving; Suspenseful

Style: Richly detailed; Character-driven; Atmospheric

***Circe* by Madeline Miller**

Description: Follows the banished witch daughter of Titans as she hones her powers and interacts with famous mythological beings before a conflict with one of the most vengeful Olympians forces her to choose between the worlds of the gods and mortals.

Genre: Mythological fiction; Historical fantasy; Literary fiction; Adult books for young adults; Book club best bets

Themes: Go your own way; Women of steel; Too powerful to contain; Novels of place

Characterization: Complex

Mood: Cinematic

Style: Lyrical; Character-driven; Atmospheric

***The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Daré**

Description: Adunni, a 14-year-old Nigerian girl who longs for an education, must find a way for her voice to be heard loud and clear in a world where she and other girls like her are taught to believe, through words and deeds, that they are nothing.

Genre: Literary fiction; Adult books for young adults; Book club best bets

Themes: Surviving sexual violence; Coming of age

Identities: Black

Storyline: Own voices; Issue-oriented

Mood: Bleak; Emotionally intense; Inspiring; Moving

Style: Dialect-filled; Richly detailed

***The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride**

Description: When a skeleton is unearthed in the small, close-knit community of Chicken Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1972, an unforgettable cast of characters, living on the margins of white, Christian America closely guard a secret, especially when the truth is revealed about what happened and the part the town's white establishment played in it.

Genre: Historical fiction; African American fiction; Book club best bets

Themes: Large cast of characters

Identities: Black; Jewish

Storyline: Intricately plotted

Mood: Moving; Feel-good; Amusing; Gritty

Style: Witty; Lyrical; Leisurely paced; Character-driven; Strong sense of place

***The House of Doors* by Tan Twan Eng**

Description: From the best-selling, Booker Prize-shortlisted author of *The Garden of Evening Mists* comes a spellbinding novel about love and betrayal, colonialism and revolution, storytelling and redemption.

Genre: Historical fiction; Literary fiction; Biographical fiction

Identities: Gay; LGBTQIA+

Storyline: Multiple perspectives

Characterization: Flawed; Complex

Mood: Cinematic

Style: Well-researched; Stylistically complex; Evocative; Character-driven; Atmospheric

***I Hope This Finds You Well* by Natalie Sue**

Description: An admin worker accidentally gains access to her colleagues' private emails and DMs and decides to use this intel to save her job.

Genre: Humorous stories; Canadian fiction; Mainstream fiction; Book club best bets; Debut title

Themes: Office life

Characterization: Likeable
Mood: Offbeat; Funny; Feel-good; Moving; Upbeat
Style: Fun read; Plot-driven

***James* by Percival Everett**

Description: When the enslaved Jim overhears that he is about to be sold to a man in New Orleans, separated from his wife and daughter forever, he decides to hide on nearby Jackson Island until he can formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Huck Finn has faked his own death to escape his violent father, who recently returned to town. As all readers of American literature know, thus begins the dangerous and transcendent journey by raft down the Mississippi River toward the elusive and too-often-unreliable promise of the Free States and beyond. While many narrative set pieces of Twain's original novel remain in place, Jim's agency, intelligence and compassion are shown in a radically new light.

Genre: Historical fiction; African American fiction; Adaptations, retellings, and spin-offs; Book club best bets

Identities: Black

Storyline: Intricately plotted; Own voices

Mood: Irreverent; Moving; Suspenseful

Style: Character-driven; Lyrical; Stylistically complex; Witty

***Malas* by Marcela Fuentes**

Description: When her beloved grandmother passed away, 14-year-old Lulu is drawn to the glamorous stranger who crashed the funeral and their unexpected kinship picks at the secrets of Lulu's family and a curse that reverberates across generation as one woman must make peace with the past and one girl must embrace her future.

Genre: Literary fiction; Historical fiction; Book club best bets; Debut title

Themes: Coming of age

Identities: Latino/Latina/Latine

Characterization: Complex

Mood: Moving; Reflective

Style: Lyrical; Evocative; Strong sense of place

***Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir**

Description: Ryland Grace is the sole survivor on a desperate, last-chance mission--and if he fails, humanity and the earth itself will perish. Except that right now, he doesn't know that. He can't even remember his own name, let alone the nature of his assignment or how to complete it. His crewmates dead, his memories fuzzily returning, he realizes that an impossible task now confronts him. Alone on this tiny ship that's been cobbled together by every government and space agency on the planet and hurled into the depths of space, it's up to him to conquer an extinction-level threat to our species. And thanks to an unexpected ally, he just might have a chance.

Genre: Science fiction thrillers; Hard science fiction

Themes: Lost in space

Storyline : Intricately plotted

Mood: Suspenseful

Style: Well-crafted dialogue; Unputdownable

***Say Hello to My Little Friend* by Jennine Capó Cruet**

Description: Failed Pitbull impersonator Ismael—you can call him Izzy—might not be the Scarface type, but why should that keep him from trying? Growing up in Miami has shaped him into someone who dreams of being the King of the 305, with the money, power, and respect he assumes comes with it. After finding himself at the mercy of a cease-and-desist letter from Pitbull's legal team, Izzy embarks on an absurd quest to turn himself into a modern-day Tony Montana. What begins as Izzy's story turns into a super-saturated fever dream as sprawling and surreal as the Magic City, one as sharp as an iguana's claws, and as menacing as a killer whale's teeth.

Genre: Mainstream fiction

Themes: Coming of age

Identities: Latino/Latina/Latine

Characterization: Flawed; Complex

Mood: Bittersweet; Moving; Offbeat; Reflective; Sardonic

Style: Lyrical; Stylistically complex; Witty; Character-driven; Thought-provoking

***The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

Description: When an aging and reclusive Hollywood icon selects an unknown magazine reporter to write her life story, the baffled journalist forges deep ties with the actress during a complicated interview process that exposes their tragic common history.

Genre: Relationship fiction

Characterization: Sympathetic; Flawed

Mood: High-drama

Style: Character-driven; Atmospheric

***Slow Dance* by Rainbow Rowell**

Description: Fourteen years after they went their separate ways, 33-year-old Shiloh, a divorced, single mom living back in the same house she grew up in, attends a high school friend's wedding in hopes of seeing Cary, the boy she never realized she loved until he was lost.

Genre: Contemporary romances; Book club best bets

Themes: Friends to lovers; Second chance at romance

Characterization: Sympathetic

Mood: Feel-good; Moving; Reflective

Style: Lyrical; Character-driven

***Small Things Like These* By Claire Keegan**

Description: In a small Irish town in 1985, coal merchant and family man, Bill Furlong, while delivering an order to the local convent, makes a discovery that forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church.

Genre: Page to screen; Literary fiction; Novellas; Book club best bets

Mood: Moving; Reflective; Bittersweet

Style: Lyrical; Character-driven

***Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin**

Description: Spanning thirty years, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Venice Beach, California, and lands in between and far beyond, this is a dazzling and intricately imagined novel that examines the multifarious nature of identity, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, our need to connect: to be loved and to love. Yes, it is a love story, but it is not one you have read before.

Genre: Relationship fiction; Book club best bets

Themes: Bouncing back; Coming of age

Identities: Physically disabled

Storyline: Intricately plotted

Characterization: Flawed

Mood: Suspenseful

Style: Fast-paced; World-building; Thought-provoking; Plot-driven

***The Waters* by Bonnie Jo Campbell**

Description: A master of rural noir returns with a novel about exceptional women and the soul of a small town.

Genre: Mainstream fiction; Book club best bets

Themes: Novels of place; Green reads

Storyline: Intricately plotted

Characterization: Well-developed

Mood: Feel-good; Moving

Style: Evocative; Lyrical; Richly detailed; Leisurely paced; Character-driven; Atmospheric

***The Wedding People* by Alison Espach**

Description: A group of surprising people help an unexpected wedding guest start anew.

Genre: Mainstream fiction; Book club best bets

Characterization: Complex

Style: Witty; Character-driven

***The Women* by Kristin Hannah**

Description: In 1965, nursing student Frankie McGrath, after hearing the words "Women can be heroes, too," impulsively joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows her brother to Vietnam where she is overwhelmed by the destruction of war, as well as the unexpected trauma of coming home to a changed and politically divided America.

Genre: Historical fiction

Themes: Return from war

Mood: Cinematic; Feel-good; Moving

***Yellowface* by R.F. Kuang**

Description: After the death of her literary rival in a freak accident, author June Hayward steals her just-finished masterpiece, sending it to her agent as her own work,

but as emerging evidence threatens her success, she discovers just how far she'll go to keep what she thinks she deserves.

Genre: Satire and parodies; Book club best bets

Themes: Books about books

Storyline: First person narratives

Mood: Darkly humorous; Cinematic; Moving

Style: Evocative; Richly detailed; Fast-paced; Character-driven; Thought-provoking; Atmospheric