

2026 Proposed RAY bag titles

***All the Colors of the Dark* by Chris Whitaker FICTION**

After a string of disappearances in 1975 Missouri, a one-eyed boy heroically thwarts a kidnapping, igniting a chain of events that blur the lines between triumph and tragedy as the townspeople of Monta Clare confront hidden truths.

***Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* by Dacher Keltner NONFICTION**

Awe is mysterious. How do we begin to quantify the goose bumps we feel when we see the Grand Canyon, or the utter amazement when we watch a child walk for the first time? How do you put into words the collective effervescence of standing in a crowd and singing in unison, or the wonder you feel while gazing at centuries-old works of art? Up until fifteen years ago, there was no science of awe, the feeling we experience when we encounter vast mysteries that transcend our understanding of the world. In *Awe*, Dacher Keltner presents a radical investigation and deeply personal inquiry into this elusive emotion.

***Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America* by Leila Philip NONFICTION**

Traces the beaver's profound influence on our nation's history, culture and environment, from the early days of western expansion, as well as profiling a colorful group of people who have devoted their lives to the wonderfully weird rodent.

***Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon* by Melissa L. Sevigny NONFICTION**

The riveting tale of two pioneering botanists and their historic boat trip down the Colorado River and through the Grand Canyon.

***Brooklyn* by Colm Toibin FICTION**

Young Eilis Lacey dreams of life beyond the confines of her tiny Irish village, but unlike her beautiful sister, Rose, Eilis' gifts are of a more practical nature: she has a head for numbers, and is a loving and dutiful daughter. Yet her ambition cannot be hidden and soon is noted by the Parish Priest, Father Flood. Via a church contact, he arranges for Eilis to travel to America where a job opportunity has arisen in New York with a reputable "merchant of Italian origin". Eilis finds lodgings in an eccentric boarding house and ekes out an existence in the cosmopolitan melting pot that is 1950s Brooklyn, impressing her employer, outwitting her landlady, and even falling in love. It seems her dream is truly becoming a reality. But then fate intervenes: a family crisis back home forces Eilis to make a choice between the past and the future, the old world and the new.

***Bunny* by Mona Awad FICTION**

Invited to join a popular clique at her university, a misfit artist with a dark imagination is drawn into ritualistic activities that transform her perspectives on reality.

***A Fever in the Heartland: The Ku Klux Klan's Plot to Take Over America, and the Woman Who Stopped Them* by Timothy Egan NONFICTION**

The Roaring Twenties -- the Jazz Age-- has been characterized as a time of Gatsby frivolity. But it was also the height of the uniquely American hate group, the Ku Klux Klan. Their domain was not the old Confederacy, but the Heartland and the West. And the man who set in motion their takeover of great swaths of America was a charismatic charlatan named D.C. Stephenson. But at the peak of his influence, it was a seemingly powerless woman -- Madge Oberholtzer -- who would reveal his secret cruelties, and whose deathbed testimony finally brought the Klan to their knees.

***The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon FICTION**

In 1789 Maine, midwife and healer Martha Ballard, who is good at keeping secrets, investigates a shocking murder linked to an alleged rape that has shaken her small town, especially when her diary lands at the center of the scandal, threatening to tear both her family and her community apart.

***The God of the Woods* by Liz Moore FICTION**

Early morning, August 1975: a camp counselor discovers an empty bunk. Its occupant, Barbara Van Laar, has gone missing. Barbara isn't just any thirteen-year-old: she's the daughter of the family that owns the summer camp and employs most of the region's residents. And this isn't the first time a Van Laar child has disappeared. Barbara's older brother similarly vanished fourteen years ago, never to be found.

***In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss* by Amy Bloom NONFICTION**

Amy Bloom began to notice changes in her husband, Brian: He retired early from a new job he loved; he withdrew from close friendships; he talked mostly about the past. Their world was altered forever when an MRI confirmed what they could no longer ignore: Brian had Alzheimer's disease. Forced to confront the truth of the diagnosis and its impact on the future he had envisioned, Brian was determined to die on his feet, not live on his knees. Brian and Amy made the unimaginably difficult and painful decision to go to Dignitas, an organization based in Switzerland that empowers a person to end their own life with dignity and peace.

***Intermezzo* by Sally Rooney FICTION**

In the wake of their father's death, two brothers--successful Dublin lawyer Peter and his younger brother Ivan, a competitive chess player--find different ways to deal with their grief, which affects not only their lives, but the lives of those they hold dear.

***Kitchen Confidential Updated Edition: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* by Anthony Bourdain NONFICTION**

An updated and revised edition of Anthony Bourdain's mega-bestselling *Kitchen Confidential*, with new material from the original edition Almost two decades ago, the New Yorker published a now infamous article, "Don't Eat before You Read This," by then little-known chef Anthony Bourdain. Bourdain spared no one's appetite as he revealed what happens behind the kitchen door. The article was a sensation, and the book it spawned, the now classic *Kitchen Confidential*, became an even bigger sensation, a mega bestseller with over one million copies in print. Frankly confessional, addictively acerbic, and utterly unsparing, Bourdain pulls no punches in this memoir of his years in the restaurant business. Fans will love to return to this deliciously funny, delectably shocking banquet of wild-but-true tales of life in the culinary trade from Chef Anthony Bourdain, laying out his more than a quarter-century of drugs, sex, and haute cuisine—this time with never-before-published material.

***The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth* by Zoe Schlanger NONFICTION**

It takes tremendous biological creativity to be a plant. To survive and thrive while rooted in a single spot, plants have adapted ingenious methods of survival. What is intelligent life if not a vine that grows leaves to blend into the shrub on which it climbs, a flower that shapes its bloom to fit exactly the beak of its pollinator, a pea seedling that can hear water flowing and make its way toward it? Zoë Schlanger takes us across the globe, digging into her own memories and into the soil with the scientists who have spent their waking days studying these amazing entities up close.

***The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamali FICTION**

In 1950s Tehran, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father, forcing Ellie and her mother to move to a tiny home downtown. Lonely and bearing the brunt of her mother's endless grievances, Ellie dreams for a friend to alleviate her isolation. Luckily, on the first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind girl with a brave and irrepressible spirit. Together, the two girls play games, learn to cook in the stone kitchen of Homa's warm home, wander through the colorful stalls of the Grand Bazaar, and share their ambitions of becoming "lion women." But their happiness is disrupted when Ellie and her mother are afforded the opportunity to return to their previous bourgeois life. Now a popular student at the best girls' high school in Iran, Ellie's memories of Homa begin to fade. Years later, however, her sudden reappearance in Ellie's privileged world alters the course of both of their lives. Together, the two young women come of age and pursue their own goals for meaningful futures. But as the political turmoil in Iran builds to a breaking point, one earth-shattering betrayal will have enormous consequences.

***The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales* by Oliver Sacks NONFICTION**

In his most extraordinary book, Oliver Sacks recounts the stories of patients lost in the bizarre, apparently inescapable world of neurological disorders. These are case studies of people who have lost their memories and with them the greater part of their pasts; who are no longer able to recognize people or common objects; whose limbs have become alien; who are afflicted and yet are gifted with uncanny artistic or mathematical talents. In Dr Sacks' splendid and sympathetic telling, each tale is a unique and deeply human study of life struggling against incredible adversity.

***Margo's Got Money Troubles* by Rufi Thorpe FICTION**

A young woman attempts to navigate adulthood, new motherhood and her meager bank account in our increasingly online world. Blisteringly funny and filled with sharp insight, *Margo's Got Money Troubles* is a tender tale starring an endearing young heroine who's struggling to wrest money and power from a world that has little interest in giving it to her. It's a playful and honest examination of the art of storytelling and controlling your own narrative, and an empowering portrait of coming into your own, both online and off.

***Martyr!* By Kaveh Akbar FICTION**

An alcoholic, addict and poet, Cyrus Shams, the orphaned son of Iranian immigrants, finds his obsession with martyrs leading him to examine the mysteries of his past and to a terminally ill painter living out her final days in the Brooklyn Museum.

***The Measure* by Nikki Erlick FICTION**

When every person, all over the globe, receives a small wooden box bearing the same inscription and a single piece of string inside, world is thrown into a collective frenzy, in this novel told through multiple perspectives that introduces an unforgettable cast of characters.

***The Ministry of Time* by Kaliane Bradley FICTION**

A time travel romance, a spy thriller, and an ingenious exploration of the nature of power and the potential for love to change it all. In the near future, a civil servant is offered the salary of her dreams and is, shortly afterward, told what project she'll be working on. A recently established government ministry is gathering "expats" from across history to establish whether time travel is feasible—for the body, but also for the fabric of space-time. An exquisitely original and feverishly fun fusion of genres and ideas, *The Ministry of Time* asks: What does it mean to defy history, when history is living in your house? Kaliane Bradley's answer is a blazing, unforgettable testament to what we owe each other in a changing world.

***Red Paint: The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk* by Sasha LaPointe NONFICTION**

Sasha taqwéseblu LaPointe, a Coast Salish indigenous woman, has always longed for a sense of home. As a child her family moved around frequently, often staying in barely habitable church attics and trailers, dangerous places for young Sasha. As an adolescent determined to escape the poverty and abuse of her childhood in order to build a better future for herself and her people, Sasha throws herself headlong into the world, with little more to guide her than a passion for the thriving punk scene of the Pacific Northwest and a desire to live up to the responsibility of being the namesake of her beloved great-grandmother, a linguist who helped preserve her indigenous language of Lushootseed and one in a long line of powerful ancestors. Exploring what it means to be vulnerable in love and in art while offering an unblinking reckoning with personal traumas as well as the collective historical traumas of colonialism and genocide that continue to haunt native peoples, *Red Paint* is an intersectional autobiography of lineage, resilience and above all the ability to heal.

***The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of US History* by Ned Blackhawk NONFICTION**

Blackhawk's retelling of U.S. history acknowledges the enduring power, agency, and survival of Indigenous peoples, yielding a truer account of the United States and revealing anew the varied meanings of America.

***Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt FICTION**

For fans of *A Man Called Ove*, a luminous debut novel about a widow's unlikely friendship with a giant Pacific octopus reluctantly residing at the local aquarium--and the truths she finally uncovers about her son's disappearance 30 years ago.

***The Sisterhood: The Secret History of Women at the CIA* by Liza Mundy NONFICTION**

In this thrilling new perspective on history, the New York Times bestselling author of *Code Girls* turns her attention the women of the CIA who fought to become operatives, transformed spy craft and provided the data analysis that helped track down Bin Laden in his Pakistani compound.

***Survival is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs NONFICTION**

We remember Audre Lorde as an iconic writer, a quotable teacher whose words and face grace T-shirts and nonprofit annual reports. But even those who are inspired by Lorde's teachings on "the creative power of difference" may be missing something fundamental about her life and work, and what they can mean for us today. Lorde's understanding of survival was not simply about getting through to the other side of oppression or being resilient in the face of cancer. It was about the total stakes of what it means to be in relationship with a planet in transformation. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, the first researcher to explore the full depths of Lorde's archives, illuminates the eternal life of Lorde.

***A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life* by George Saunders NONFICTION**

In *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, George Saunders guides the reader through seven classic Russian short stories he's been teaching for twenty years as a professor in the prestigious Syracuse University graduate MFA creative writing program. Paired with stories by Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol, these essays are intended for anyone interested in how fiction works and why it's more relevant than ever in these turbulent times. Funny, frank, and rigorous, *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain* ultimately shows how great fiction can change a person's life and become a benchmark of one's moral and ethical beliefs.

***Tell Me Everything* by Elizabeth Strout FICTION**

While defending a lonely, isolated man accused of killing his mother, town lawyer Bob Burgess falls into a deep and abiding friendship with acclaimed writer, Lucy Barton, and together they meet the iconic Olive Kitteridge and spend afternoons in Olive's apartment, telling each other stories, which imbues their lives with meaning.

***There are Rivers in the Sky* by Elif Shafak FICTION**

Sweeping across centuries, and stretching from Mesopotamia to London, this stunning novel follows a trio of characters living in the shadows of one of the greatest epic poems of all time -- *The Epic of Gilgamesh* -- as they become entwined by a single drop of water.

***Travels with Charley: In Search of America* by John Steinbeck NONFICTION**

Author John Steinbeck was 58 when he set out to rediscover the country he had been writing about for so many years. With his elderly French poodle, Charley, he embarked on a quest across America, from the northernmost tip of Maine to California's Monterey Peninsula. Traveling the interstates and the country roads, they stopped to smell America: trucker and strangers, old friends and new acquaintances. Steinbeck's poignant, perceptive reflections reveal the American character: a blend of unexpected kindnesses and racial hostilities, loneliness and humor.

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

A group of surprising people help an unexpected wedding guest start anew. In turns absurdly funny and devastatingly tender, Alison Espach's *The Wedding People* is ultimately an incredibly nuanced and resonant look at the winding paths we can take to places we never imagined—and the chance encounters it sometimes takes to reroute us.

***When the Cranes Fly South* by Lisa Ridzen FICTION**

A profoundly moving debut novel that follows an elderly man's attempts to mend his relationship with his son

before it's too late: an emotional story of love, friendship, fatherhood, dogs, and atonement that is already an international sensation.