

What Adults Read – Summer 2019

Title: The Last Mrs. Parrish

Author: Liv Constantine

Review: This is a psychological thriller. It was an ok read. Good for beach or summer read. It was a bit slow to start, but second half picked up speed. Story of greed, envy, betrayal and revenge.

★★★★☆

Title: The Shoemaker's Wife

Author: Adriana Trigiani

Review: Perfect summer read. I was pulled into the storyline and felt involved in the plots and subplots. Some parts of the book were overly descriptive. Too many words if that is possible!

★★★★☆

Title: A Stranger in the House

Author: Shari Lapena

Review: After loving the author's debut novel, I was excited to start this, her second. But sadly it did not hold up. The premise did not peak my interest and the characters were dull and shallow. I'll still give her third novel a try since I like "The Couple Next Door" so much.

★★☆☆☆

Title: Bodies of Water

Author: T. Greenwood

Review: This book is the tragic love story of two women stuck in unhappy marriages during the early 1960's. The characters are authentic, the writing descriptive and lyrical. The water analogies were interesting and the storyline was engrossing and kept my interest. Well written.

★★★★☆

Title: Unaccustomed Earth

Author: Ghumpa Lahiri

Review: Highly recommend this collection of eight stories about two generations of Bengali immigrants who travel to America. It is filled with Bengali culture, food, clothing and traditions. The prose is poetic and lyrical. Lahiri is a gifted story teller considered by many to be one of the greatest authors of our time.

★★★★★

Title: To Capture What We Cannot Keep

Author: Beatrice Colin

Review: Historical romance set in the late 1800's. Fictitious story about a widow, Catriona Wallace, who accepts a position as a chaperone to two wealthy young Scots. She ultimately falls in love with Emile Nougeuir, an engineer and a designer of the Eiffel Tower. It is filled with historical detail about the building of the tower.

★★★★☆

Title: Rust and Stardust

Author: Tammy Greenwood

Review: Well written psychological suspense novel based on the true story of 11-year old Sally Homer, who was abducted in 1984 by Frank La Salle. It is a disturbing story line but a moving account of this horrible event. Good character development. Enjoy her writing.

★★★★☆

Title: Nearer than the Sky

Author: Tammy Greenwood

Review: This book is a domestic/psychological fiction handling a difficult topic, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, and how it can lead to the devastation of an entire family. It is a frightening and thought provoking story how patterns within families can be repeated. Well written.

★★★★☆

Title: Beneath the Surface - Killer Whales, SeaWorld, and the Truth Beyond Blackfish

Author: John Hargrove

Review: This is a memoir that tells the story of the author's life with killer whales at SeaWorld. It depicts a picture of what it means to have a real relationship with these amazing creatures. It is an important look at marine animal captivity. Interesting and heartbreaking this book is well written and a good follow up to the documentary "Blackfish".

★★★★☆

Title: Undressing the Moon

Author: Tammy Greenwood

Review: This book deals with a sensitive and sad storyline. The story is told in alternating chapters: currently as a 30 year old battling cancer and the past, as a 14 year old young girl. It is well written and inspiring. I like this author's writing style. It is a psychological fiction dealing with loss, resilience, life and death.

★★★★☆

Title: One Dangerous Lady

Author: Jane Stanton Hitchcock

Review: **(SPOILER ALERT)** Jo is a rich socialite whose friend disappears. Jo thinks he's been murdered and tries to solve the crime. She thinks it is a "new and upcoming socialite, Carla." Carla is very manipulative and cunning. So who really is the "dangerous lady?" Carla tries to bring down Jo, but Jo is a strong lady too who "wins" in the end.

★★★★☆

Title: It's About Us

Author: Erin Hilderbrand

Review: Such an interesting story about a very famous chef who was known worldwide. His many wives and ex-wives show up for his funeral, as he died suddenly. His children piece together the life, character of Dad. Great seafood recipes too!

★★★★☆

Title: The Sleepwalker

Author: Chris Bohjalian

Review: **(SPOILER ALERT)** This was pretty great. I liked the topic of a mother who suffers from sleep walking & then disappears and is presumed dead. Her daughter also discovers that she suffers from sleepwalking too and gains more knowledge when she befriends a friend of her mother's (male) and tries to learn more about her parents' marriage. Also involved is the detective, who involves himself with the family. In the end you find out that the daughter actually caused the mothers death accidentally.

★★★★☆

Title: Sharp Objects

Author: Gillian Flynn

Review: This novel is hauntingly good. You have no idea what is going on, you think you do and then you don't. I wasn't surprised to see the author also penned 'Gone Girl' another intense read unlike any other. I'd guess the author is brilliant and familiar with painful relationships. An addicting and chilling read. I loved it!

★★★★★

Title: How to Walk Away

Author: Catherine Center

Review: A wonderfully crafted story about endurance, courage, humor and resilience. Inspiring! Tender! Honest! True! (Even though it's a novel)

★★★★★

Title: Into the Water

Author: Paula Hawkins

Review: Thorough character development makes for an ever thickening plot. Many mysteries unfold in this dark tale, and how things seem and what is really behind them. Characters wrongly accused and characters eventually brought to justice abound.

★★★★★

Title: Close Your Eyes, Hold Hands

Author: Chris Bohjalian

Review: A young girl who has a dysfunctional family. Her father works at a power plant is responsible for a meltdown where her parents are killed. She feels she will be blamed for her parents doing, so she leaves her hometown and lives on the streets. She befriends a little boy and tries to take care of him but he gets very sick and needs to go to the hospital. He does, so she finally returns home to deal with her and her parents past. Nice ending.

★★★★☆

Title: The Flight Attendant

Author: Chris Bohjalian

Review: **(SPOILER ALERT)** I loved this book! A flight attendant who drinks a lot, and sleeps around a lot, finds herself waking up with a dead, bloody man. She can't remember if she killed him or not since she was so drunk. But she doesn't think so. It takes place in Dubai. The FBI get involved, she lies a lot but finds out a secret agent woman actually killed her "lover" of one night.

★★★★★

Title: The Sandcastle Girls

Author: Chris Bohjalian

Review: I don't think this is one of his better books but it was ok. Maybe it was because I wasn't that interested in the Armenian dynamic between the "nurse" and the widower with a child and their developing relationship. I also wasn't that interested in the modern day woman who explores her Armenian heritage and a picture of her grandmother. The ending however was good.

★★★☆☆

Title: Cold Service

Author: Robert B. Parker

Review: I love Robert B. Parker's novels that involve Spencer & Hawk. In this one Hawk was shot by a hitman and Spencer and Hawk try to solve the crime. I liked this because this is the first time that Hawk has a close "girlfriend." But Hawk is a mysterious man with a closed past (He raised himself) and he can only get close to another person to a certain degree. Of course the case is solved in the end. But Hawk is still standoffish with relationships.

★★★☆☆

Title: Nine Perfect Strangers

Author: Liane Moriarty

Review: I did not like this book. There is group of women who go to a health spa/resort for "enlightenment." The owner of the resort challenges and leads the nine strangers to growth and self-discovery. It sounds like this should be a good book but I didn't enjoy it very much.

★★☆☆☆

Title: The Light in the Ruins

Author: Chris Bohjalian

Review: I find Chris Bohjalian's books have either been great or not so good. This one was medium. I liked the setting in Italy and the topic was very interesting - murder and German Nazis in Italy. And the going back and forth of 10 years prior and later, where a serial killer wants revenge on the family, and one by one cuts their hearts out. But...

★★★☆☆

Title: No Safe Secret

Author: Fern Michaels

Review: I love fern Michaels. This story is about a woman who was raised in a horrible home. In high school her twin brother "sold" her to guys who gang raped her. She left and went away for 20 years thinking she ran over and killed a couple of them. Later she comes back to her hometown and discovers she was not responsible but then goes after her twin brother and gets revenge. Loved it. Present day she's married to a control freak and finally releases herself from abuse.

★★★★★

Title: I Invited Her In

Author: Adele Parks

Review: I loved this book. It's about two friends from college who haven't seen each other for about 20 years. All of a sudden, Ali contacts - Mel can she come to her house and heal from a cheating lover. Mel "invites her in" and Ali becomes more and more entwined with Mel's family. She even has an affair with Mel's son and it comes out that Mel's first child is the son of Ali's husband. What a mess. But great!

★★★★★

Title: Up in Honey's Room

Author: Elmore Leonard

Review: I hated this book. It was very boring to me but I did struggle through it to finish it. It was about Honey, a woman married to a man who looks like Heinrich Himmler (Nazi Era). She leaves him because she thinks he is boring and ends up with another man who is part of the marshal's service. I like the title and thought it would be interesting but NO!

★☆☆☆☆

Title: A Summer in Sonoma

Author: Robyn Carr

Review: This is a great beach book. It's about four very different women who are best friends and all the life experiences they go through. One tries a new relationship with a very opposite man, tattoos, long hair and a biker. Another is sick of her lazy husband and considers an affair with an old lover. Another is a stay at home mom who has had a miscarriage and the family files for bankruptcy and going through breast cancer for the second time. Love it. But not out of this world.

★★★★☆

Title: The Couple Next Door

Author: Shari Lapena

Review: I'm not sure what caught my eye perusing the library shelves but I am so glad I picked up this book. There were characters to love, some to hate and one you aren't sure. Well written and so easy to read, all your questions answered in time. This book was perfect and I'm excited it's the author's first, with three more to check out!

★★★★★

Title: The Perfect Nanny

Author: Leila Slimani

Review: I typically enjoy a book about the intricacies of the relationships between nanny, their charges and employers. But in the end I had very mixed and confused feelings about all the characters (in a bad way) and confused and mad about the ending. Which I believe was purposeful by the author, this being based partly on a true crime story. Even worse it was a slow read going nowhere.

★★★☆☆

Title: My Lovely Wife

Author: Samantha Downing

Review: The author kept me guessing throughout the entire book, trying to figure out how we got to the happenings in the first chapter, revealing just enough along the way that I had difficulty putting this book down. In the end I'm still trying to figure things out (in a good way) unsure whether the main character was as bad as he seemed or worse. Best read of the summer.

★★★★★

Title: Going Into Town – A Love Letter to New York

Author: Roz Chast

Review: The illustration on the cover drew me in and I'm glad it did. Inside I found more witty illustrations and quick easy read that was informative and very funny and personal. I appreciated that each chapter transitioned some way to the next. A perfect read for anyone who knows a lot, or very little, about NYC, particularly Manhattan.

★★★★★

Title: The Alice Network

Author: Kate Quinn

Review: A well written historical novel based on real women Louise de Bettignies and Alice Duboise. It tells two parallel tales, one of several female spies in Lille, France during Nazi occupation WW1, and the other of a pregnant college student looking for her missing cousin after WW2. Well written, gripping and wrapped up in happy ending.

★★★★☆

Title: The Defector

Author: Daniel Silva

Review: This book continues the story of Israeli Special Operative Gabriel Allon. The author mixes in action and suspense in an amazing way to keep the story and plot moving. I read/listened to the audio version, and Phil Gigante does a great job with accents and voices.

★★★★☆

Title: Hannah Coulter

Author: Wendell Berry

Review: Life in rural Kentucky, narrated by Hannah over her 80+ years. Moves back and forth through time, as she shares her impressions and reflections.

★★★★☆

Title: Ella Minnow Pea

Author: Mark Dunn

Review: Intriguing premise, delicious vocabulary, but predictable and at time tedious. Quick read if looking for a few hours light reading.

★★★★☆

Title: The Rumor

Author: Lesley Kara

Review: The Rumor was easy beach read. The author did a nice job of weaving in bits of information to keep you guessing, until near the end of the book, who the real “Sally McGowan” was and if she was truly a monster or a troubled woman who accidentally committed a crime years ago.

★★★★☆

Title: A Tale for the Time Being

Author: Ruth Ozeki

Review: I was hooked on this book. There was so much knowledge in it, culture, science, and history. The characters were interesting and I was invested in them all, even the cat! I took away a practice and will look into other works by Ruth Ozeki.

★★★★★

Title: All American Boys

Author: Jason Reynolds

Review: Great Story, very revealing. Appreciated the perspectives of two boys in the same town of different races. Emotional and engaging.

★★★★★

Title: Beijing (Fodor’s Travel)

Author: Kit Gillet, Tom O’Malley, Yuan Ren, Adrian Sandiford

Review: The most useful part in this book are the top attractions. Suggested itineraries, recommended places from each regions in Beijing. As a visual person, the colorful pictures in this book help with picturing the places when you are planning your trip. Not as heavy as the eye witness book which is a plus if you want to bring the book to travel with you.

★★★★★

Title: Hong Kong (Lonely Planet)

Author: Puna Chen, Emily Maicher

Review: The strength of Lonely Planet books, like exemplified in this one, it provides you with information on planning the trip all by yourself, with your own budget. I found the food recommendations are geared toward not-so-adventurous westerners who haven’t got a taste of much Cantonese food though.

★★★★★

Title: Ivy Aberdeen’s Letter to the World

Author: Ashley Herring Blake

Review: A page turner and quick read. A sad story, as a mom, it made my heartache. As a woman who remembers middle school it brought back the struggle. It gave me pause how I might create an environment that allows my daughters comfort to reach out.

★★★★☆

Title: Dreams of My Father

Author: Barack Obama

Review: I enjoyed reading about his experiences as a child in Hawaii and his Indonesian stepfather. His work in Chicago helped me realize how well suited for public office he was. His time in Africa was touching and it showed how stereotypes can't be relied on and how complex our lives are.

★★★★☆

Title: The Historian

Author: Kostova

Review: Great plot twists, history & geography all in one book. Many layers that could be imagined.

★★★★★

Title: The Girl on the Train

Author: Paula Hawkins

Review: This story is cleverly crafted page-turner. The character development reads like a trip through the human condition revealing coping methods in the grip of trauma plus the eventual triumph of insight heading for courage.

★★★★★

Title: The Button Moon

Author: Pryor

Review: Light hearted like a trip to London with some intrigue with murder and suspicion until the very end!

★★★★★

Title: The Golden Hour

Author: Tammy Greenwood

Review: Fictitious story of Wyn Davies a struggling artist, who at 13 years old, took a shortcut through the woods and was attacked and raped. It is once again a tale of family secrets and how the main character is haunted by her experience into her adult years. Her paintings have become unfulfilling and she seeks to find the truth. Like the writing very much.

★★★★☆

Title: The Seven Sisters

Author: Lucinda Riley

Review: Lucinda Riley is a good story teller. This book is historical fiction, romance, and a saga of six sisters adopted at birth. When their adoptive father dies they are each left a letter (clue) as to their true origin. This is the story of eldest daughter Maia, and the first in the series. Enjoyed it very much.

★★★★★

Title: Where the Crawdads Sing

Author: Delia Owens

Review: This book has won the Edgar Award for Best First Novel by an American Author. Set in a quiet town on the Carolina coast, it tells the story of Kya Clark who is suspected of murder by the locals of Barkley Cove. Descriptions of nature are beautiful and compelling. Loved It!

★★★★★

Title: Not My Father's Son

Author: Alan Cumming

Review: Very memorable, dark and painful autobiography/memoir of Alan Cumming. It is read by the author which makes it so real. I had no idea he had such a horrendous childhood, growing up with an abusive father. His story is interspersed with some sweet stories about his granny. It is a story of survival.

★★★★★

Title: Kiss Carlo

Author: Adriana Trigiani

Review: I thought this might be a decent read because I enjoyed her other book "The Shoemaker's Wife." Unfortunately I was quite disappointed despite some scenes set in Philly, it just rambled on and on. The writing was not up to par. Too many characters who ended up being boring.

☆☆☆☆☆

Title: The Stars are Here

Author: Anita Shreve

Review: This is a fictitious story that takes place in Maine near the area of the devastating fire that ravaged Maine's Coal line in 1946 – 1947. Author writes well and gave a good idea of daily life in 1947. The heroine, Grace is a fierce survivor who discovers her own strength and bravery.

★★★★☆

Title: 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do

Author: Amy Morin

Review: It's an inspiring story to read - someone can go through such pain and come out the other side stronger and even more amazing than before. The book clearly states person's thoughts, problems with the behaviors and sound strategies to control emotions, behaviors, and thoughts.

★★★★★

Title: Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Author: JK Rowling

Review: For younger readers, the themes and plots in the fourth book of the Harry Potter series is more violent with conflict continuing to increase between the forces of good and evil (Voldemort). Be aware a very likeable character dies at the end of the book so this book is a good time to start a different series before moving onto the fifth book.

★★★★★

Title: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Author: JK Rowling

Review: We loved the second book of the Harry Potter Series as much as the first! With each book the author presents more serious and mature themes and plots. The character development is the best I've seen for this age group. It's exciting for all ages. Highly recommend for parents to read with their kids eight years old and over.

★★★★★

Title: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Author: JK Rowling

Review: Each Harry Potter book builds so well from the last and sets the stage for the next. A great book to read with your child eight years old and over, but this third book is when more violent conflict among groups and characters arise so read slowly for younger readers.

★★★★★

Title: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Author: JK Rowling

Review: What a fun and engaging book and series to share with your (grade-school-aged) child. JK Rowling has wonderful character development and unites in such an engaging way for kids and adults of all ages! Each book introduces a plot with more serious, emotional and eventually violent themes so read them slowly for younger children.

★★★★★

Title: Widow's Walk

Author: Robert B. Parker

Review: Here is another of Robert B. Parker's Spencer novels. I love them because of the dynamic between Spencer and his lover of 24 years, Susan and their dog Pearl. This one involves the murder of a rich man, Nathan. The obvious suspect is his younger wife Mary. Spencer is on the hunt. Then another woman ends up dead and the evidence truly points towards Mary. Susan a psychologist has her own worries about a young client who is gay but doesn't want to be and then commits suicide and she blames herself because she couldn't help him. Another good one by Robert B. Parker.

★★★★☆

Title: Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story

Author: Caren Stelson

Review: Compelling personal story of the bombing of Nagasaki and its aftermath, interspersed with historical information.

★★★★★

Title: The Rembrandt Affair

Author: Daniel Silva

Review: Well written, Daniel Silva comes through with another great and compelling story centered on Israeli Spy Gabriel Allon.

★★★★☆

Title: My Year of Meats

Author: Ruth L. Ozeski

Review: This is the second novel I've read by this author. Her work is intelligent, engaging, and thought provoking. My Year of Meats had me grabbing my dictionary frequently! It was an enjoyable tale about a serious subject.

★★★★★

Title: Backlash

Author: Brad Thor

Review: Good thriller – A series with Scott Horvath, a super spy. This was packed with action and more brutality than usual. A lot of bodies.

★★★★☆

Title: Turtles All the Way Down

Author: John Green

Review: Amazing and scary view of teens with major life challenges, mental health and family tragedies. Well done, but tough read.

★★★★☆

Title: Morality for Beautiful Good (Audio)

Author: McCall Smith, Alexander

Review: Another charming detective story from the #1 Ladies Detective Agency. The two detectives solve several mysterious situations, sensitively and with some humor. The reader did wonderful justice to the voices and accents.

★★★★★

Title: Girl Stop Apologizing

Author: Rachel Hollis

Review: Great book! Motivating!

★★★★☆

Title: When We Were Sisters

Author: Emilie Richards

Review: Fast reading!

★★★★☆

Title: Natalie Tan's Book of Luck and Fortune

Author: Roselle Lim

Review: About a young girl figuring out what she wants to do with her life and the joy of cooking. Learns more about her family and reopens old family restaurant.

★★★★★

Title: Summer of '69

Author: Elin Hilderbrand

Review: I enjoyed this book it's a complete "beach read." The characters are enjoyable. It plays out like a regular family drama – we might even know this family. There is a lot of character development, which I love. I didn't learn anything new, but kept me entertained the whole way.

★★★★☆

Title: The Art of Discarding

Author: Nagisa Talsumi

Review: Ms. Talsumi spent a lot of time explaining her view on why it's difficult for most people to discard things and how today the way we live is different than before (hence the overview of possessions accumulating in our homes). She then delves on changing our attitudes towards discarding (spent about 10 chapters on this). Before giving us strategies to discard our unneeded things.

★★★★☆

Title: The Gate Keeper

Author: Charles Todd

Review: Great series of WW1 English mysteries. Inspector Rutledge is a veteran of the war and shell-shocked. He is a great character and the audio version is wonderful!

★★★★☆

Title: Tight Robe

Author: Amanda Quick

Review: This genre is getting old for me. Pretty hard to distinguish one Burning Cove book from another. But I keep reading them.

★★☆☆☆

Title: The Silent Patient

Author: Alex Michaelides

Review: First book I have read from this author. Very tricky set up and in the first person. I thought it was well done and suspenseful.

★★★★☆

Title: Guns of August

Author: Barbara Tushman

Review: Narrated history of true events that led to World War 1 and first few months of the war until trenches begin. Very engaging book that presents all main characters at play under different lights, from Joffre's excessive confidence to Von Moltke's doubts, and how Belgium was a key turning point at the beginning of the war. Highly recommend.

★★★★★

Title: Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

Author: Dusti Bowling

Review: Great exposure for young readers to the life of those with perceived disabilities. The main character was kind of positive. Highly recommend to young readers nine and up.

★★★★☆

Title: The Clockmaker's Daughter

Author: Kate Morton

Review: I enjoyed this book. It was a slow start and there were a lot of characters, but once I figured everyone out I was immersed in the storyline and wanted to know what happened. Kate Morton's a very descriptive writer. I felt like I was there in the English countryside. I would go back anytime.

★★★★☆

Title: The Stolen Marriage

Author: Diane Chamberlain

Review: This was my first time reading anything by this author. I was pleasantly surprised. At first it comes across as a “beach read” with many unlikable characters, but once everything came together at the end I was taken in. I haven’t read much about the south in the 40’s with segregation and the polio epidemic. Both were thought provoking.

★★★★☆

Title: Small Great Things

Author: Jodi Picout

Review: Overall, I enjoyed this book. It was well written and you can tell the author was invested in bring racism to the fore front. There are three main characters with three different perspectives on racism. Some of the minor characters’ behavior was hard to believe (Ruth’s Friends).

★★★★☆

Title: True Colors

Author: Kristin Hannah

Review: I loved this book! Her writing flows nicely and is very easy to follow. Life is full of distractions, so it’s fun to read a well written story. It plays out like a lifetime miniseries but a good one. The character development was good and I learned about the Innocence Project – exonerating convicted people.

★★★★☆

Title: The Trapped Girl

Author: Robert Dugoni

Review: A woman’s body is found in a submerged crab pot. The effort to identify her provides detective Tracy Crosswhite with a difficult case to untangle and solve. Lots of twists and turns.

★★★★☆

Title: Smokescreen

Author: Iris Johansen

Review: A Thriller involving a savage attack in an African jungle. Eve Duncan goes to try to identify children killed by machetes and/or fire.

★★★★☆

Title: Open and Shut

Author: David Rosenfelt

Review: This is the first book I’ve read by the author – a mystery plus the main character (a lawyer) adores his dog. This lawyer takes a death row inmate as his client. His sleuthing ends up ruffling a lot of powerful and successful people.

★★★★☆

CHESTER SPRINGS LIBRARY

Title: The Blue Bistro

Author: Elin Hilderbrand

Review: This book reminded me of my summer on Nantucket 23 years ago. A lot of the story happens at a famous restaurant; probably more detail than necessary. I was hooked on the characters, so I was disappointed at the abrupt ending. A nice character wrapping up would have been nice.

★★★☆☆

Title: A Hundred Summers

Author: Beatriz Williams

Review: I really enjoyed this book. A fun romance and interesting time in our history. It also reminded me of the summers I visited my grandmother on the shores of Rhode Island. The ending could have been expanded on. What happened to everyone after the hurricane and to the town? Specify a little more I guess.

★★★★☆

Title: Sunset Beach

Author: Mary Kay Andrews

Review: A lighter read, initially I didn't care for the main character, who seemed to be drifting aimlessly. When she discovers an interest in the investigating she becomes a more compelling character.

★★★☆☆

Title: Backlash

Author: Brad Thor

Review: Since his book prior to this (Spy Master) left the reader hanging, I've been anxiously awaiting this. What Scot Harvath has to endure and survive in this book is incredible – and you're on the edge of your seat the whole book.

★★★★☆

Title: The Queen Bee

Author: Dorothea Benton Frank

Review: A light and engaging novel of a beekeeper, her hypochondriac mother and the widower next door. The book moves into some bizarre territory, but it is entertaining. Good beach read.

★★★☆☆