Crawford, Matthew. The World Beyond Your Head. 2015. In the gambling addict, dead broke at the slot machine, Crawford finds the surprising terminus of a way of thinking traceable to Descartes, Kant, and Lodge. The book and thinkers enshrined at the very center of Western philosophy a ceaseless concern for the autonomy of the individual, untrammeled by authority or tradition. The boundless emancipatory project legitimated by this perspective, Crawford argues, has actually undermined authentic autonomy by fostering an anxious fixation on the self. This fixation, readers learn, subverts truly liberating mastery of real-world skills and sabotages genuine human individuation within a healthy community...A cultural inquiry of rare substance and insight. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Gilbert, Elizabeth. Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear. 2015. For anyone who has ever dreamed of writing a novel, painting a still life, sculpting a statue, or choreographing a dance but hasn’t done so, Gilbert has just one question: What’s stopping you? Doubt, denial, demands: you name it, the obstacles are many. The world is filled with people who have a creative passion yet never pursue it. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Ronson, Jon. So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed. 2015. Is technology moving humankind forward, or does the powerful reach of social media hearken back to the purging days of the past? The author of The Man Who Stared at Goats (2005) and The Psychopath Test (2011) takes a hard look at modern-day gambling in his provocative new book. Inspired by an episode where a sambpot impressed him on Twitter, Ronson employs his typical investigatory approach to take the reader on a years-long examination of humiliation via technology, his curious mind pursuing new avenues of inquiry as they open up. He recounts the real-time Twitter shaming of a disfigured soldier who was displayed on a feed the author could see as he was making his apology speech; the race-tinged tweet of a public-relations executive that upended her life; and the story behind the military and their supporters. Beyond that, though, he talks to those involved—both the people shamed and those who acted as instruments for their humiliation—about their motivations, what the experience did to them, and whether they recovered.

Munroe, Randall. The Thing Explainer. 2015. It’s good to know what the parts of a thing are called, but it’s much more interesting to know what they do. Richard Feynman once said that if you can’t explain something to a first-year student, you don’t really get it. In This Thing Explainer, Randall Munroe takes a quantum leap past this: he explains things using only ordinary language (‘bridges’), and our computer rooms (’datacentres’) are strange to us. So are the other worlds around our sun (the solar system), the big fat rocks we live on (lenticular plates), and even the stuff inside us (cells). Where do these things come from? How do they work? What do they look like if you open them up? And what would happen if we heated them up, cooled them down, pointed them in a different direction, or pressed this button? Funny, interesting, and always understandable, this is for anyone—I age 5 to 105—who has ever wondered how things work, and why. Amazon, 2016

Parker, Matt. Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension. 2014. If you don’t believe that mathematics can be fun you should read this book. Parker, a mathematical comic, takes the reader on an entertaining voyage through many recreational topics. These include some more or less familiar aspects of number theory but also polygonal numbers, packing problems, graph theory, and computer logic and algorithms. The fascinating excursions into geometry and topology including discussions of non-planar spheres, knot theory, and the geometry of four-dimensional objects are especially noteworthy. Throughout the text, subjects are enhanced by clever problems that immediately grab one’s attention. Copyright 2014. Library Journals LLC

Anderson, M.T. Symphony for the City of the Dead. 2015. This ambitious and gripping work is narrative nonfiction at its best. Anderson expertly sets the scene of the tumultuous world into which Dmitr Shostakovich was born in 1906 and traces his development as an artist and a public figure. He also tells the story of the composer’s beloved Leningrad, focusing on the hopscotch game and legacy of the symphony written in its honor at the height of World War II. In his author’s note, Anderson poses an intriguing question: “How do we reconstruct the story of someone who lived in a period in which everyone had an excuse to lie, evade, accuse, or keep silent?” The compelling, well-researched narrative relates what is known of Shostakovich’s story, what is speculation, what is revisionist history, and what new sources have revealed. The author’s research details how the Stalin regime and the plight of the Russian people even before the Germans arrived will be eye-opening to many teen readers. Luann Toth, School Library Journal

Brown, Daniel. The Boys in the Boat. 2015. In the summer of 1936 Olympic rowers in Europe were full of speculation about what the Americans would make of the Olympic Games. For some, the dark horse entry was the eight-man rowing team from the University of Washington remains a remarkable story. It encompasses the convergence of transcendent British boatmaker George Pocock; the quiet yet deadly effective UW men’s varsity coach, Al Ulbrickson; and an unlikely gaggle of young rowers who would shine as freshmen, then grow up together, a rough-and-tumble bunch, writes Brown, not very worldly, but earnest and used to hard work. Copyright 2012 Booklist Reviews

Hobbs, Jeff. The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace. 2014. Rob Peace’s father was a very bright drug dealer who served time for murder, leaving Rob in the care of a hardworking mother who wanted more for him than the tough streets of Orange, New Jersey, could provide. Peace set out from a poor public school in fourth grade, just as his father’s trial was beginning, and developed elaborate emotional and psychological strategies to maneuver his life. In the pole village neighborhood and “Newark-proof” himself. In high school, he undertook ponderous research to prove his father’s innocence and slowly turned his attention to temporary reprieve on a technicality. His brilliance attracted the attention of a benefactor who made it possible for Peace to go to Yale, where he met and roomed with Hobbs. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

McCullough, David. The Wright Brothers. 2015. Family or not, Orville and Wilbur Wright have always be remembered by the general public for December 17, 1903, the day at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, when the brothers flew, for the first time, a heavier-than-air vehicle. Of course, the brothers had accomplishments and interesting lives that both preceded and followed that triumphant day, as this fine biography by esteemed historian McCullough shows. McCullough offers an interesting portrait of their youth in Dayton, Ohio, that also serves as an examination of daily life in post–Civil War Middle America. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Diamont, Anita. Boston Girl. 2014. Seventy years tells a gripping story of a young Jewish woman growing up in early-20th-century Boston. Addie Baum, an octogenarian grandmother in 1985, relates longago history to a beloved granddaughter, answering the question: “How did I get to be the woman I am today?” The answer: by living a fascinating life. First remembering about 1915 and the rebirth club she became a journalism. Addie, in a conversational tone, recounts the lifelong friendships that began at club meetings and days by the seaside at nearby Rockport. She tells movingly of the Fatal effects of the flu, a relative’s suicide, the
Janie, a lonely, 39-year-old woman, working as a newspaper tycoon who stands up for her beliefs at all costs. Copyright 2014 Publisher's Weekly

Doerr, Anthony. All of the Light We Cannot See. 2014. Shifting among multiple viewpoints but focusing mostly on blind French farmer Marie-Laure and Werner, a brilliant German soldier just a few years older than she, this novel has the physical and emotional heft of a masterpiece. The main protagonists are captivating, multi-dimensional, and intellectually curious, and in another time they might have been a couple. But they are on opposite sides of the horrors of World War II, and their fates ultimately collide in connection with the radio—a means of resistance for the Allies and just one more avenue of annihilation for the Nazis. Set mostly in the final year of the war but moving back to the 1930s and forward to the present, the novel presents two characters so interesting and sympathetic that readers will keep turning the pages hoping for an impossible happy ending. Marie-Laure and Werner both suffer crushing losses and struggle to survive with dignity amid Hitler’s swath of cruelty and destruction. Copyright 2014 Library Journals LLC

Hannah, Kristin. The Nightingale. 2015. Character growth and development is a strength of this World War II-set novel, although the middle plods during some sections. Sisters Vianne and Isabelle Mauriac are even-tempered and dedicated to helping people in need, including the resistance, and their love and memory, life and death, belief and fact. Copyright 2014 Library Journals LLC

McLain, Paula. Circling the Sun. 2014. McClain fictionalizes the grandly adventurous, passionate, and scandalous life of British East Africaneryl Markham, the first licensed woman horse trainer and breeder on the continent and an intrepid, record-setting pilot. Markham resolutely finds her way to doomsday and terror, love and ostracism as she undertakes the sort of risky and exhilarating things men do even as she suffers through failed marriages, homelessness, and a complicated and wrenching entanglement with coffee grower and writer Karen Blixen and Denys Flath Hambro, the enigmatic man they both love. McLain creates a seductive work of popular historical fiction. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Moyes, Jojo. The Girl You Left Behind. 2013. Moyes (Me Before You, 2012) writes with such clarity that one can almost see the eponymous 100-year-old painting at the center of her wonderful novel. Also crystal clear are the emotions that protagonist Liv Halston attaches to the portrait. Gifted to Liv by her late husband, David, in celebration of their wedding, The Girl You Left Behind becomes a personal icon, embodying all that was good about their brief life together. What is less clear is the painting’s provenance and who has the right to assert ownership. Will Liv’s notion of ownership unravel when the artist’s heirs sue to reclaim what they call ill-gotten gains, working as a newspaper tycoon who stands up for her beliefs at all costs. Copyright 2013 Booklist Reviews

Guskin, Sharon. The Forgetting Time. 2016. In The Forgetting Time, we bond right away with Janie, a lonely, 39-year-old architect, and psychiatrist Anderson, who is grieving over the death of his wife and adjusting to an appalling diagnosis of primary progressive aphasia. This form of dementia will slowly and inexorably destroy his command of language, a cruel fate amplified by Anderson’s ardent devotion to his controversial research into “the survival of consciousness after death,” specifically reincarnation. As Anderson struggles to continue his investigations of his own past lives, we rejoin Janie, who is now a single mother wrung down to raw nerves by the inexcusably disruptive behavior of her strangely precocious, anxious son, Noah, who is forever asking for his “other mother.” In vivid flashbacks, we accompany Anderson as he meets families with children who remember past lives in Thailand and India, where reincarnation is part of the culture, unlike America, where his findings are summarily dismissed by his colleagues. As Anderson, Janie, and Noah follow the clues in Noah’s enigmatic “memories,” unlikely under siege relationships develop as the searchers cross racial boundaries. Guskin poses key and unsettling questions about love and memory, life and death, belief and fact. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

King, Stephen. Bazaar of Bad Dreams. 2015. Renowned author King’s impressive latest collection wraps 20 stories and poems in fascinating commentary. Each work’s preface explains what inspired it and gives readers insight into King’s writing methods, with occasional tidbits of his daily life. The stories and poems touch on topics of mortality, destiny, and regret, all of which showcase King’s talent for exploring the human condition. Realistic and supernatural elements sit side by side. This introspective and wide-ranging collection of King’s most powerful works, draws on the deepest emotions: love, grief, fear, and hope. Copyright 2015 Publisher’s Weekly

Swerly, Erika. The Book of Speculation: A Novel. 2015. When a mysterious book detailing the history of a traveling circus arrives on the doorstep of newly unemployed librarian Simon Watson, he discovers his family’s lineage includes tarot readers, and his mission and building his church, to the detriment of his health and his connection with Bea. Meanwhile, his new foster parents, employees at the local museum, have enlisted Izzy’s help in cataloguing his most informative and informative. Izzy, now seventeen, refuses to follow the clues in Noah’s enigmatic “memories,” unlikely under siege relationships develop as the searchers cross racial boundaries. Guskin poses key and unsettling questions about love and memory, life and death, belief and fact. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Weir, Andy. The Martian. 2014. Weir combines the heart-stopping with the humorous in this brilliant debut novel about an astronaut stranded on Mars. When its mission is scrubbed as a result of a powerful stormwind, the team of Ares 3 move from their habitat to the ascent vehicle. In transit, Mark Watney’s spacecraft is punctured by debris, knocking him unconscious and disabling the suit's bio-suit. After reestablish. Communications find a source of food, and last until the next mission to Mars. Like TV’s MacGyver, Mark does have a few potatoes, lots of duct tape, and plenty of resourcefulness. If only Mars would stop trying to kill him and the crew had left behind something other than disco music and 1970s sitcoms for entertainment. Copyright 2013 Library Journals LLC

Johansen, Erika. The Queen of the Tearling (end of trilogy). 2015. Princess Kelsea has been hiding in the forests of the Tearling since her mother’s death, training for the role she will have to play when she turns 19 and becomes the queen. But once Kelsea arrives in the capital and proves her right to the throne, her troubles begin. Her uncle had been acting as regent, and the alliance he made with the sorcerous Red Queen of neighboring Mortmesne is the first thing Kelsea decides to change. She will have to find allies fast as her actions threaten to plunge her kingdom into war. Copyright 2014 Library Journals LLC

Mitchell, David. Slade House. 2015. It would have been better if Nathan Bishop and his mother, Rita, had never found the house off Slade Alley, where Rita had been invited to perform piano for a group of distinguished guests, including Yehudi Menuhin. They might have missed it altogether had it not been for a helpful passerby directing them to the small iron door through which they found the impressive home of Lady Grayer. After that October in 1979, mother and son were never seen again. Following a lead to their disappearance nine years later, Det. Gordon Edmonds entered through the same improbable door in the wall, met and interviewed the attractive owner, and was also never seen again. Ten years later, every nine years on the last Saturday in October, another disappearance occurs. Behind these mysteries are Jonah and Norah Grayer, telepathic twins who seek to achieve immortality through the souls of the recently disappeared. Copyright 2015 Library Journals LLC

Faber, Michel. The Book of Strange New Things. 2015. Peter Leigh has been hired by the mysterious Oasis corporation to travel to a newly colonized planet, Oasis, light years away. His job will be to minister to the indigenous population and establish a rapport. He leaves his beloved wife, Bea, behind, their only link a kind of interstellar e-mail. He finds the Oasisis eagerly awaiting his arrival and singing “Amazing Grace.” [A previous missionary had disappeared!] The Oasisis beg for readings from the Bible, or, as they call it, “the book of strange new things.” Peter becomes more and more immersed in his mission and building his church, to the detriment of his health and his connection with Bea. Meanwhile, word from home becomes more and more worrisome. Tidal waves, earthquakes, helpless women, and violence wreak havoc with lives and faith. And finally, the true reason for the Oasis colony comes into question, and Peter must make a difficult decision—to stay or go. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews

Weir, Andy. The Martian. 2014. Weir combines the heart-stopping with the humorous in this brilliant debut novel about an astronaut stranded on Mars. When its mission is scrubbed as a result of a powerful stormwind, the team of Ares 3 move from their habitat to the ascent vehicle. In transit, Mark Watney’s spacecraft is punctured by debris, knocking him unconscious and disabling the suit's bio-suit monitor so that he appears to be dead. When he regains consciousness, Mark realizes that his crew have left behind something other than disco music and 1970s sitcoms for entertainment. Copyright 2013 Library Journals LLC

Weir, Andy. The Martian. 2014. Weir combines the heart-stopping with the humorous in this brilliant debut novel about an astronaut stranded on Mars. When its mission is scrubbed as a result of a powerful stormwind, the team of Ares 3 move from their habitat to the ascent vehicle. In transit, Mark Watney’s spacecraft is punctured by debris, knocking him unconscious and disabling the suit's bio-suit monitor so that he appears to be dead. When he regains consciousness, Mark realizes that his crew have left behind something other than disco music and 1970s sitcoms for entertainment. Copyright 2013 Library Journals LLC

Library Journals LLC