

## 2024 novels selection

### *The Purchase* by Linda Spalding, December 7th

“In 1798, Daniel Dickinson, a young Quaker father and widower, leaves his home in Pennsylvania to establish a new life. He sets out with two horses, a wagonful of belongings, his five children, a 15-year-old orphan wife, and a few land warrants for his future homestead. When Daniel suddenly trades a horse for a young slave, Onesimus; it sets in motion a struggle in his conscience that will haunt his life forever.”

### *Beatrice & Virgil* by Yann Martel, January 4th

“Beatrice & Virgil is a novel-within—a novel that deals with the ways the Holocaust is represented. In the story, Henry, a writer, receives the manuscript of a play in a letter from a reader. Intrigued, Henry traces the letter to a taxidermist, who introduces him to the play’s protagonists, two taxidermy animals—Beatrice, a donkey and Virgil, a monkey.

Prepare to be charmed and moved by these very real stuffed animals.”

### *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden, February 1st

“Three Day Road is the story of a Cree soldier returning from World War I. It is 1919, and Niska, a Cree healer living off the land, has received word that one of the two boys she saw off to the Great War has returned. Xavier Bird, her sole living relation, is gravely wounded and addicted to morphine. As Niska slowly paddles her canoe on the three-day journey to bring Xavier home, travelling through the stark but stunning landscape of Northern Ontario, their respective stories emerge—stories of Niska’s life among her kin and of Xavier’s horrifying experiences in the killing fields of Ypres and the Somme.”

### *Secret Daughter* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda, March 7th

Read this touching story of three women, worlds apart but entwined through circumstance, loss and love.

Somer is a successful physician in San Francisco, newly married and ready to start a family until she discovers she's not able to have children.

Meanwhile in India, Kavita is forced to smuggle her newly born daughter to an orphanage and give the girl away, knowing that to keep her would mean her daughter's death.

Asha, adopted from a Mumbai orphanage, is the child who binds these two women's destinies, and ultimately connects their stories as she takes a journey of self-discovery.

### *The inconvenient Indian by Thomas King, April 4th*

"Indigenous peoples often share a key value – the close association between their identity, their way of life and their land. They act as guardians or custodians of the land for the next generation. Losing it means a loss of identity.

Thomas King's book, *The Inconvenient Indian*, is a sharp account of Indigenous peoples in North America and the impact of colonization, colonial policies and attitudes on their cultures, identities and lands.

Through storytelling, humour and reality-checks, King dares us to realize that our heroes are misrepresented, our legends are wrong, and injustices against Indigenous peoples continue today.

### *Dogs at the Perimeter by Madeleine Thien, May 2nd*

Madeleine Thien's novel *Dogs at the Perimeter* "examines the long-burning fallout of the Cambodian genocide through three of its victims. Beautifully realized, deeply affecting, *Dogs at the Perimeter* evokes totalitarianism through the eyes of a little girl, and draws a remarkable map of the mind's battle with memory, loss and the horrors of war.

While she survives, her family does not.

Many years later, after being adopted by a Canadian family, Janie spends her life trying to disassociate from the loss of her mother, father and brother. But when a

colleague suddenly disappears without explanation, she embarks upon a journey that will piece together both who she was, who she has become and the consequences of reconciling these different lives.”

*Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, June 6th

“Set in the eerie days of civilization’s collapse—the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity.

*The Nine Lives of Charlotte Taylor* by Sally Armstrong, July 4th

Charlotte Taylor is our featured author’s ancestor, and while the novel itself is fiction, her story is based upon handed-down pieces of family folklore and government documents.

Using a seamless blend of fact and fiction, Charlotte Taylor’s great-great-great granddaughter, Sally Armstrong, reclaims the life of a dauntless and unusual woman and delivers living history with all the drama and sweep of a novel.

*The Illegal* by Lawrence Hill, August 1st

“The Syrian refugee crisis: gripping accounts of human tragedy, shocking reports of human cruelty, and hopeful tales of human compassion.

The *Illegal* reflects this tragedy, cruelty, and hope as well as the complexities of what it means to be a refugee or undocumented migrant in the world today.

The reader immediately tumbles into the crisis as it is being lived by Keita Ali, one of the millions fleeing persecution by their country. Swept up in the fear and instability of his life on the run, we learn gradually of the grave human rights

violations that spurred his flight. At the same time, we are touched by the dignity and ingenuity with which this man approaches his ordeal.

*The Afterlife of Stars by Joseph Kertes, September 5th*

In the waning months of 1956, while Russian tanks roll into the public squares of Budapest to crush the Hungarian Revolution, brothers Robert and Attila Beck flee with their family to Paris. As they travel through minefields both real and imagined, Robert and Attila grapple with sibling rivalry, family secrets and incalculable loss to arrive at a place they thought they'd lost forever: home.

Reading this novel, you cannot help but gain a deep sense of both struggle and wonder through Kertes' storytelling. As a young boy, Joseph Kertes himself was amongst those who escaped Hungary in 1956, and this can be felt in the writing.

*Lives of Girls and Women by Alice Monroe, October 3rd*

"Lives of Girls and Women gives voice to Del, a young woman who journeys from childhood through the awkwardness of adolescence as she comes to realize the woman she does not want to be: one married with children. Set in post-World War II rural Ontario, the novel is a gently written examination of the everyday.

Alongside Del, the reader visits episodes of her life that, as she matures, reveal complex themes of what it means not only to be a woman, but a fully formed and unique adult who grasps opportunities and experiences. It is one woman's story, and yet also reflects the stories of many."

*For Today I Am a Boy by Kim Fu, November 7th*

"For Today I Am a Boy provides insights into experiences that may be unfamiliar to many of us. We are introduced to Peter Huang and his three sisters. Peter is the much desired son of a Chinese immigrant family, living in a small town in Ontario. Peter, however, knows from a very early age, that while his anatomy dictates that he is male, he is certain he is a girl.

Throughout this story, Peter struggles with his gender identity, fighting his 'other' self and failing at every turn. We experience Peter's loneliness, depression, grief, and glimmers of joy when his true self emerges, often when he is alone and behind closed doors."

### *Room* by Emma Donoghue, December 5th

"To five-year-old Jack, Room is the world. It's where he was born. It's where he and Ma eat and sleep and play and learn. There are endless wonders that let loose Jack's imagination: the snake under Bed that he constructs out of eggshells; the imaginary world projected through the TV; the coziness of Wardrobe, where Ma tucks him in safely at night, in case Old Nick comes.

Room is home to Jack, but to Ma, it's the prison where she's been held since she was nineteen—for seven long years. Through her fierce love for her son, she has created a life for him in that eleven-by-eleven-foot space. But Jack's curiosity is building alongside Ma's own desperation, and she knows that Room cannot contain either indefinitely.

Told in the inventive, funny and poignant voice of Jack, *Room* is a celebration of resilience—and a powerful story of a mother and son whose love lets them survive the impossible."