

ARTS & CULTURE

MULTICULTURAL CUISINE

Tong Soon Garden serves food which combines the best of Chinese and Korean food.



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A GLASS CLOSET

After months of online harassment, *Heartstopper* star Kit Connor was "forced" to come out on Twitter, contradicting the message of the show.

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REGALITY AND IDENTITY

Season two of *Young Royals* explores queer identities and brings a compelling slow-burn romance.

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A MASK OF WOKENESS

The second season of *The White Lotus* is a prime example of how a new cast doesn't cover the past wrongdoings of a show.

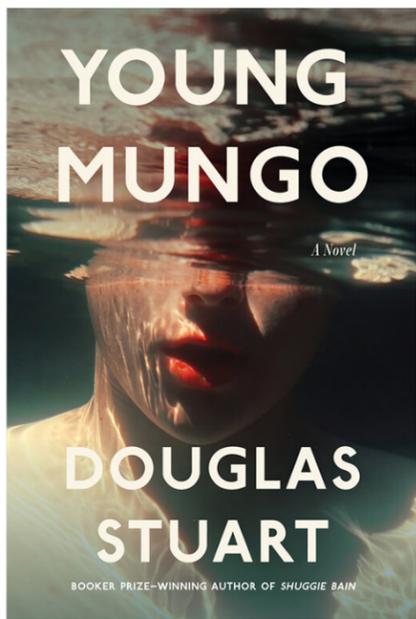
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Must-read books from 2022

STORY Isabella Xu

PHOTOS Douglas Stuart, R.F. Kuang, Jennette McCurdy, Keiler Roberts

With the year coming to a close and winter break right around the corner, bundle up with our four favorite books released in 2022. Don't want to pay the premium for hardcovers? Check out *The Current's* pop-up display in the WRC!



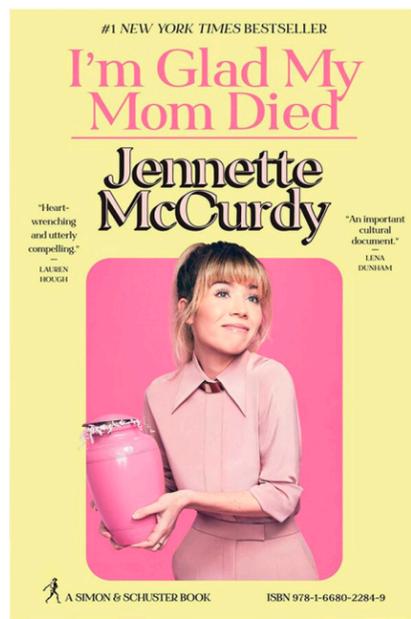
Young Mungo by Douglas Stuart

FICTION

In *Young Mungo*, Booker-Prize-winning author Douglas Stuart returns readers to the literary territory he's most familiar with—working class, post-Thatcher-era Glasgow. Despite the novel's setting being nearly identical to his debut *Shuggie Bain*, it's evident that Stuart still has plenty of stories left to tell.

Young Mungo follows a young boy, Mungo, as he explores his sexuality amidst a domestic life tainted by his mother's alcoholism and economic insecurity. His starry-eyed outlook is continuously ruptured as he's tormented by his gangster brother, poverty-stricken community, and ultimately sent off with two strange men as his mother seeks to "man him up."

This depth of social commentary is a heavy burden for any novelist, yet Stuart achieves it all without sacrificing emotional or literary prowess. *Young Mungo* is gritty—and startlingly mundane. Stuart masterfully uses portraits of Mungo's life (right down to the burning scent of sausage grease and the yellowing wallpaper of his cramped apartment) to intimately acquaint readers with the gentle protagonist. It's this acquaintance that makes the trauma he endures all the more painful. *Young Mungo* capitalizes on empathy and transforms it into commentary; it's a tale of homophobia and classism which—despite its historic setting—remains hugely relevant.



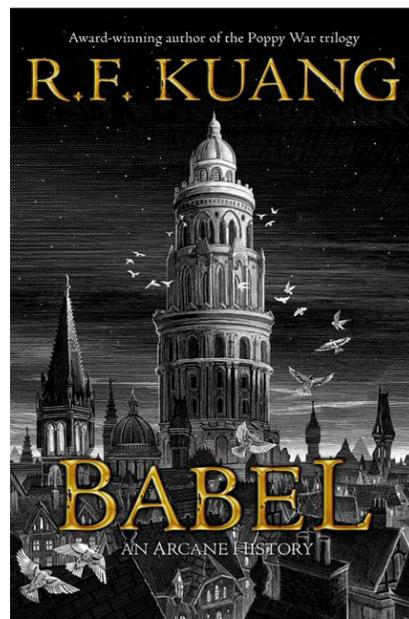
I'm Glad My Mom Died by Jennette McCurdy

MEMOIR

Let's face it: celebrity memoirs aren't great. Typically, they're cash-grabs meant to capitalize on a famous name, starring an abundance of overinflated egos and a distinct lack of any storytelling value. (Source: your local bookstore's memoir section.) However, Nickelodeon sitcom *iCarly* star Jennette McCurdy's *I'm Glad My Mom Died* is a refreshing, punchy, heartbreaking exception to this rule, recounting McCurdy's struggle with eating disorders, addiction, and an abusive mother as a former child star.

Whether you grew up with McCurdy's shows, or stumbled upon her name for the first time today, *I'm Glad My Mom Died* is a must-read. Its writing is simple but poignant, placing readers in the shoes of a naive child who only wanted to make her mom happy. McCurdy utilizes this style to address her own flaws, reflecting on her descent into bitter resentment. As a reader, however, I finished the book feeling that I understood where her resentment stemmed from: the abuse she faced at the hands of Nickelodeon, the media, and her titular mother.

While McCurdy is not the first to address child exploitation within the media industry, *I'm Glad My Mom Died* is one of the most candid recollections of an overlooked, underprotected, and terrifyingly vulnerable demographic.

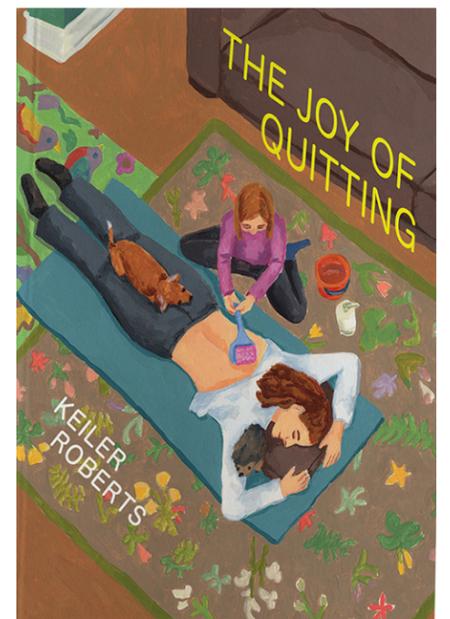


Babel: An Arcane History by R.F. Kuang

FANTASY

Dear student: Welcome to Babel, otherwise known as Oxford University's Royal Institute of Translation. The year is 1828. Here, translators use enchanted silver bars to summon color, shape, emotion, and even death. Yet as our protagonist—a Chinese boy named Robin—is soon to discover, this silver-making holds the reins to Britain's imperial expansion, as well as the internal collapse of China in the Opium Wars.

It's an ambitious premise, but with a soaring plot and treasure-trove of footnotes about translation (Kuang herself is a translation scholar, and much of the novel was inspired by her time pursuing an MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies at Oxford), Kuang delivers a masterclass in intertwining literary fantasy and modern socio-political commentary. *Babel* is a nuanced critique of academia's role in European imperialism packaged within the atmospheric swooping arches and gray skies of Oxford University. It's an astonishing addition—or more fittingly, subversion—of the ever-popular dark academia literary genre.



The Joy of Quitting by Keiler Roberts

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC

Sometimes, words just don't cut it. Quippy dialogue alone doesn't embody the frustration of sitting in sluggish hospital waiting rooms—the sickeningly sterile fluorescent lights and infuriatingly calm expressions of hospital staff play just as important of a role. In a standout collection of autobiographical comics, cartoonist Keiler Roberts proves that that combined, these two forms of media can create some of the most compelling depictions of everyday life.

The Joy of Quitting encompasses eight years of Roberts's life raising her daughter Xia. As Xia grows from a toddler to a pre-teen, the family and their dynamics subtly shift. These changes, which occur without anyone noticing in real life, are masterfully captured with Roberts's pen.

The work endows smaller, throwaway moments with just as much importance as larger ones, and it was these moments that I found myself nodding along to. Not all of the experiences Roberts's chronicals are universal (no, I've never had to sift through a daughter's hair for lice), but every reader is sure to find an intensely relatable interaction within *The Joy of Quitting's* sparse yet potent pages.

(Pro tip: this relatability makes it the perfect holiday present for someone you don't know all that well.)

ENJOYED THIS BOOK? CHECK OUT THESE READS NEXT:

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong

A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara

Hillbilly Elegy by J.D. Vance

Educated by Tara Westover

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

Confessions of a Prairie Bitch by Alison Arngrim

Portrait of a Thief by Grace D. Li

The Secret History by Donna Tart

Harlem Shuffle by Colson Whitehead

The Complete Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel

French Milk by Lucy Knisley