**Must-read books from 2022**

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!

**FICTION**

- **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 *Carly* 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 to the literary territory he's most familiar with—working class, poverty-stricken community, and classism which—despite its historic setting—remains hugely relevant.

- **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 1889. 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-troves of footnotes about translation (Xuang 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.

- **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 captivating. It's this acquaintance that capitalizes on empathy and transforms it into something relevant. Historic setting—remains hugely relevant. Young 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.”

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC**

- **The Joy of Quitting by Keller 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 fluoresceant lights and infuriatingly calm expressions of hospital staff play just as important of a role. In a standout collection of autobiographical comics, cartoonist Keller Roberts proves 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. (Plus: this relatability makes it the perfect holiday present for someone you don’t know all that well.)

**MUST-READ COMICS**

- **A Glass Closet**
  - Season two of Young Royals explores queer identities and brings a compelling slow-burn romance.
  - *A Glass Closet* is a refreshing, punchy, and complex depiction of modern-day queer life. It’s a compelling exploration of the anxieties and complexities of being queers, the struggles of coming out, and the joy of finding your perfect match.

- **Regality and Identity**
  - 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.

**MULTICULTURAL CUISINE**

- **Tong Soon Garden** serves food which combines the best of Chinese and Korean food.
  - READ MORE ON PAGE 6

---

**ENJOYED THIS BOOK? CHECK OUT THESE READS NEXT:**

- On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong
- A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara
- Hilbilly 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 Tartt
- Harlem Shuffle by Colson Whitehead
- The Complete Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi
- Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel
- French Milk by Lucy Knisley