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Ask HN: 2018 Summer Reading List?

746 points by gozzoo 17 days ago | hide | past | web | favorite | 391 comments

It become somewhat a tradition for YC to publish a reading list for the vacations months. This hasn't happen for a while. I have discovered some very intersting books there apreciate suggestions from similarly minded people.

I recently stumbuled upon this list [1] and the selection seems quite good. I read The Oracle Year which I liked a lot.

My question for the community here is: Have you read somthing interesting recently?

[1] <https://geekdad.com/2018/06/5-reasons-to-read-5-great-books-june-2018-edition/>

stochastic_monk 17 days ago [-]

As for me ---

0: Jorge Luis Borges, Labyrinths

Anyone interested in information theory, intelligence (artificial or otherwise), many-worlds interpretations of quantum mechanics, metafiction, the nature of art, or even probabilistic sequence modeling should read Borges' short stories. I couldn't recommend it highly enough.

1: Hero With A Thousand Faces

A classic book collating world mythologies and psychoanalytical thought to investigate an individual's core struggle for meaning and purpose. I find that it has informed my appreciation of literature, film, music. More importantly, it helped me understand how I want to live my life and from whence I now choose to derive my personal senses of direction and meaning.

2: Samuel Beckett, Malone Dies

An obtuse, rambling, depressing novel without a sense of momentum or even plot. The narrator or narrators are unreliable, prone to aporetics, and capricious. Beyond its stark exterior, the prose is, at times, achingly beautiful, the narrator is relatable in his uncertainty and frailty, and the dual struggle for meaning and accepting the absolute absence thereof is invigorating. It's book two of a trilogy, but these postmodern novels are enjoyable on their own, and the rare, tenuous grasp on plot or direction makes reading them in sequence seem to be more a suggestion on how to experience them than a strict ordering.

I've also been reading The Double (Dostoevsky), but I haven't progressed far enough to make an informed recommendation.

plants 16 days ago [-]

Many of my lit-savvy friends have never heard of Borges - I had never caught wind of him until about a year or two ago. I was blown away when I read Labyrinths. His writing style strikes a really nice balance between analytical and artistic/philosophical. I found that I got the most out of his stories when I read them in their entirety and reflected upon for a while afterwards.

I would HIGHLY recommend him to other technical-minded people who have interest in the arts. Two stories that I loved were "The Library of Babel" (obviously) and "The South". Two more from a different collection (The Book of Sand) that I think go hand-in-hand with each other conceptually are "The Mirror and the Mask" and "Undr"

psalminen 16 days ago [-]

> read them in their entirety and reflected upon for a while afterwards.

This. My HS Physics teacher introduced me to Labyrinths. Still the best book recommendation I've ever received. Giving time for each story to absorb is essential. I'd also like to add "The Lottery in Babylon" is an excellent story.

anacleto 17 days ago [-]

> 1: Hero With A Thousand Faces

Unusual. The first time, I - happily - see someone on HN mentioning Joseph Campbell and this book.

As a following up lecture, I'd recommend: The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life & Work.

[0] https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/242530.The_Hero_s_Journe...

lloydde 16 days ago [-]

Although seldom mentioned, I hope Joseph Campbell's work is familiar to many members of this community, because of his influence on George Lucas, Star Wars, and most fantasy and speculative fiction.

goldenkey 16 days ago [-]

I highly recommend his show Power of the Myth on Netflix.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Power_of_Myth

Absolutely wonderfully insightful journey through the different myths of our ancestors

aestetix 17 days ago [-]

I'd also recommend his Mythos series. And his "Power of Myth" interview with Bill Moyers, which should be required viewing in every highschool.

tw1010 17 days ago [-]

There are so many things that so many people say should be "required learning in school". I sympathise the sentiment, but maybe it'd be better to habituate ourselves to somehow thinking about how each of us could solve the problem (for kids) instead of trying to elbow in our favourite subject in an already stuffed-to-the-brim curriculum. Just a thought.

aestetix 17 days ago [-]

Against my better judgement, I'll go ahead and bite.

There are two things in your comment I want to address. First, I'm not sure what you mean by "the problem," so I'll assume you mean the question of what constitutes a solid education. Second, there's an underlying debate here of another question, what is the purpose of education?

I'd argue the second question begets the first, for how can you determine what constitutes education until you know what the purpose of it is? For example, is the purpose to be trained for a job, or to be able to think critically and ask fundamental questions about the nature of life?

If the answer is the former, then I would agree with you that no lesson should be allowed unless it can be directly followed along to a relevant skill at a job. But I think the answer ought to be the latter, and in that case, the questions posted by Campbell's responses in "Power of Myth" and exploration of ideas and narratives that many of us simply take for granted, compel one to have serious reflection; even better that the

pivot is Star Wars, a story with which many people are already well acquainted.

So, while I was using a rather casual colloquialism, hopefully this reasoning justifies its use :)

stochastic_monk 16 days ago [-]

In case you're curious as to why I read it, a good friend of mine gave me a copy after he read House of Leaves upon my recommendation a few years ago because it provided further insight into the book.

moretai 16 days ago [-]

Probably a result of Jordan Peterson becoming famous. He mentions Campbell a lot.

wellpast 16 days ago [-]

Had the same thought. On this note, Peterson's reading list [1] is worth pursuing, however I'd dovetail it with less serious books for the sake of levity -- his reading list, like himself, can be pretty serious + severe.

[1] <https://jordanbpeterson.com/books/book-list/>

stochastic_monk 15 days ago [-]

I came to read it by way of a fellow House of Leaves enthusiast's recommendation. I don't remotely care for Jordan Peterson.

wellpast 14 days ago [-]

But what do you think of his book list?

stochastic_monk 13 days ago [-]

I like a surprising number of them. I'm surprised to see Demons mentioned; that's been my favorite of his for over 5 years.

So I don't like his platform, but he has some excellent taste in books.

[reply](#)

stochastic_monk 16 days ago [-]

Actually, I've had this book for years. I think Jordan Peterson is an exploitative personality who simply tells people what they want to hear.

Then again, George Lucas is among those who like it, so it's not necessarily an intellectually valuable cohort.

wellpast 14 days ago [-]

I'm not in any JP fan club or anything, but that's a bizarre assessment. Jordan Peterson is as far from someone who "tells ppl what they want to hear" as you can get. Which is one reason among a few why he is so unlikeable.

moretai 13 days ago [-]

People are masochistic and self hating. They love it when an older man tells them to get your sorry life together bucko. Take small steps, and incrementally work your way up you piece of shit.

[reply](#)

Kuzutsukake 17 days ago [-]

Your description of Malone Dies reminds me of Notes From Underground by Dostoevsky. I found it hard to get into at first because the prose was different from most books I've read (might be the translation, but the Narrator is also crazy). After starting and restarting the book a few times to get into the flow, it definitely turned out to be one of my favorite books.

Also, for sci-fi I'd recommend Hyperion by Dan Simmons. This is the first in a trilogy but can be read and be satisfied with not reading the other two (although the second one, The Fall of Hyperion, is very good).

I read the first (Hyperion) one on a recommendation and I think the guy who recommended it to me was also read it based on a recommendation. It makes me wonder what the longest "recommendation streaks" are and what books they could be for.

stochastic_monk 17 days ago [-]

You're spot on! Good catch.

Now, while the narrative style is different in the later of these books, if you enjoy NFU, I recommend both Crime and Punishment and Demons. I see Notes From Underground, Crime and Punishment, and Demons/The Possessed as unified by a core set of ideas. In the first, Dostoevsky states his claims. Crime and Punishment is a case study of what would happen should an individual act upon the ideas of his (Dostoevsky's) time, and Demons extrapolated this to societal scale. I may not be in the majority, but I think Demons is by far his best.

jcomis 16 days ago [-]

The Hyperion Cantos is 4 books btw. But seconding your recommendation.

playing_colours 17 days ago [-]

Hero With A Thousand Faces is truly amazing. It made me think about archtypes, meaning of live. The next stop for me after that book was famous and mystical The Golden Bough by James Frazer. I highly recommend it. I bought a great edition from Folio [0]

[0] <http://www.foliosociety.com/book/GNB/golden-bough>

xkgt 16 days ago [-]

The challenge of reading Borges for a wider audience is to find appropriate translation. The ones he sanctioned, translated collaboratively by Giovanni is out of the market due to copyright tussles with the estate. The translations available in market are by Andrew Hurley which do not quite capture the brilliance of Borges. I started with Hurley's translation of a short story and later chanced upon Giovanni's for the same. The difference was stark. I cannot force myself to read other translation any more, even if it means denying myself further works of Borges.

therealdrag0 16 days ago [-]

Anyone tried this Borges' audiobook? <https://www.audible.com/pd/Classics/Collected-Fictions-Audio...>

vagab0nd 16 days ago [-]

If you want to get a taste of Jorge Luis Borges, I strongly recommend the short story, The Garden of Forking Paths. Especially if you like twist at the end.

dandare 17 days ago [-]

Could you compare Malone Dies with Joseph Heller's Something Happened?

stochastic_monk 17 days ago [-]

I unfortunately cannot as of yet, having not had the pleasure. I will add it to

my list, however!

If you've perhaps read any of Beckett's plays, especially Krapp's Last Tape, that might be a proper frame of reference. The recollections and musings all take place in a single room where a man is preparing for death, undisturbed apart from nurses or maids who never talk to him.

toomanybeersies 17 days ago [-]

I'm going to do something a bit different from everyone else and suggest some poetry.

1) *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* from William Blake.

2) *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde

3) *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

I've started to enjoy reading poetry again. The education system managed to extinguish any love I had for poetry. It's been a bit over half a decade since I was in school, and I've started to enjoy reading poetry again.

Turns out it's possible to just read a poem and enjoy it without having to go through line by line and word by word analysing the thing to death.

I actually prefer poetry to long form text right now. I don't have the time or attention span to sit down and read a whole book, but poems are like a shot of literature. I've been enjoying reading sci-fi short stories for the same reason.

stochastic_monk 17 days ago [-]

Excellent choice with Blake, and of course, there's nothing quite like Reading Gaol. The latter is some of the best written word art ever created.

I would point others to Robert Browning's Childe Roland To The Dark Tower Came. It's a late romantic poem about the time after Camelot's glory has faded and all hopes have been dashed by man's weakness and the inexorable hunger of time. A fitting poem for those of us who live in an age whose greatest promises lay unfulfilled. These were not the robots we were promised.*

*Tagline stolen from a truly stellar Op-Ed from last year available here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/09/opinion/sunday/household-...>

therealdrag0 16 days ago [-]

Many years ago I collected short stories I enjoyed in an Evernote list. Here it is if you want some inspiration. :)

Asimov, Isaac - "Nightfall"

Asimov, Isaac - "The Last Question"

Barthelme, Donald - "Some of us had been threatening our friend Colby"

Beckett, Samuel - "That Time"

Bisson, Terry - They're Made Out of Meat

Boyle, T. C. - The Hit Man

Carver, Raymond - Little Things

Chekhov, Anton - "The Bet"

Dick, Philip K - "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" Gibson, William - Dogfight ("...he had nobody to tell it to. Nobody at all.")

Hemingway, Ernest - The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber

Hemingway, Ernest - Hills Like White Elephants

Makkai, Rebecca - "The Briefcase"

Bradbury, Ray - "The Veldt"

Saroyan, William - "Seventy Thousand Assyrians"

KodiakLabs 17 days ago [-]

The podcast 'In Our Time' by the BBC did an hour long discussion on William Blake's poems:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07gh4pg>

steve_gh 16 days ago [-]

If you want a poetry anthology, can I recommend "Other Men's Flowers" by Lord Wavell - poetry that he memorized that saw him through WW1 and WW2. You won't like everything, but there is lots of good stuff in it.

baruchel 16 days ago [-]

Reading your comment suddenly made me remember about the "Voyage to India" by Gonçalo M. Tavares; maybe you would enjoy this recent book written in verses. Unfortunately I couldn't find any link to some good review online

bbertucc 17 days ago [-]

Blake is indeed great summer reading - a retreat from the rational mind. In that vein, my two summer picks are A.R. Ammons' "Still" and the fragments of Friedrich Holderlin translated by Michael Hoffman.

rayalez 17 days ago [-]

Here are the best books I've read over the last few months:

- Lost and Founder - the founder of Moz shares his advice and experience from building a 40M/year company. I found the things he says about building a startup extremely insightful and practically useful. Reading it feels like having a dinner with a friend who shares with you the things he has learned in a very honest, down to earth way. Highly recommend it.

- Rationality from AI to Zombies - probably the most influential book I've read in my life, profoundly changed the way I think. It's a collection of LessWrong essays on science and rationality. (recently they've released an audio version by the way).

- "A Short History of Nearly Everything" and "Our Mathematical Universe" - two general popular science books I'm enjoying a lot. Haven't finished reading them yet, but so far they're brilliant (and very easy to understand, authors do an amazing job explaining complicated things in a simple, accessible way).

- Hacking Growth - an AMAZING book on "growth hacking". It provides a framework for marketing a startup, gives a ton of practical advice and specific tactics. It breaks down step by step how startups and big tech companies grow their products. Most of the books I've read on the subject were bullshit, but this one is absolutely fantastic, can't recommend it enough.

Other great books I should mention: This Idea is Brilliant, Actionable Gamification, The Design of Everyday Things, The Master Algorithm (great overview of machine learning techniques), Springfield Confidential (fun behind the scenes from one of the writers on Simpsons), Homo Deus (from the author of Sapiens).

oxymoron 17 days ago [-]

I recommend "A short history of nearly everything" to everyone, regardless of background. It covers a range of scientific fields and their history. My favorite part is his description of biological taxonomy. I also remember enjoying his chapter on the history of plate tectonics.

"Our mathematical universe" is a fun and interesting book, but probably more of interest to someone with an explicit interest in physics. I enjoyed the first few chapters the most, but still feel a bit skeptical about his level 4 multiverse.

amorphous 14 days ago [-]

> I recommend "A short history of nearly everything" to everyone, regardless of background

Yes, not forgetting to mention that Bill Bryson is such a fantastic writer who

can not only make the complex simple but who is also fun to read. Love his travel memoirs as well.

psalminen 16 days ago [-]

The beginning of "Our Mathematical Universe" was a great high-level description of a lot of popular modern physics concepts for a layperson to understand.

Then it goes really downhill IMO. It (pretty much) only gets worse from level 4.

atipmt 17 days ago [-]

"Rationality from AI to Zombies" - I loved that book! It took me quite a bit to read it all, even though it is written in a colloquial style (might be due to length or me just wanting to digest what I've just read). Changed my perspective on quite a lot too, mainly how to approach information that causes cognitive dissonance. I wanted to read some of it again for some time, so I thank you for pointing out that there is an audio version now!

ohmatt 15 days ago [-]

"A Short History of Nearly Everything" is an amazing book. Bill Bryson is one of my favorite authors, and even though the book can get a little slow at times (for me, at least) in some of the later chapters, his wit and writing style still make it entertaining.

If you haven't read A Walk in the Woods, or In a Sunburned Country by him, I highly recommend those as well.

dumb2223 17 days ago [-]

I followed your advice and read chapter 9 of Rationality from AI to Zombies. This chapter title is "Expecting Short Inferential Distances", my summary is that if you are using a scientific language and your audience is not used to it then you should explain basic terminology. So from this piece I should estimate content with low density of information.

gjm11 17 days ago [-]

"I took a speed-reading course and read War and Peace in twenty minutes. It involves Russia." -- Woody Allen

I mean, yes, Yudkowsky is pretty verbose, but that's not what I'd call a super-accurate summary and there's definitely more in that chapter than your one-sentence summary.

(It's about *understanding* as well as *knowledge*, and in so far as it's about knowledge it's not only about terminology or only about science. There's some evo-psych-y speculation on why it's so easy to forget that inferential distances are there, which may or may not be correct but (1) is interesting in its own right and (2) helps to fit the notion of "inferential distance" into the reader's overall model of the world, rather than just giving specific instructions like "explain basic terminology". There's the concrete and I think useful suggestion that when you encounter a failure of communication you probably need to back off further than you are initially inclined to. There's a concrete example (appeals to "simplicity") of the sort of thing that once you've been immersed in, say, scientific thinking for a while becomes second nature to you and that you may not think to explain -- and, please note, it's *not* primarily a matter of terminology. There's an important warning of a failure mode you may encounter when trying to take inferential distances into account -- which seems like it should be obvious, but I've seen people fall into it often enough.)

[Note: Those things are on the Less Wrong page from which the chapter is derived. I haven't read the ebook, and it's possible that some stuff was trimmed out.]

There's also a bit of irony in complaining "this could have been explained

much more briefly" about a chapter *whose whole point is to warn about how communication can fail unexpectedly when you don't take the time to explain things slowly and apparently redundantly*.

dumb2223 16 days ago [-]

I think that there more interesting examples to illustrate the fact that communication require to explain the basic to those that don't work in the field. Any good teacher knows that you have to motivate students and explain things adapting your classes to the knowledge of your students. Also, those who sell services or products know very well how to communicate the value of products. Perhaps some empathy is necessary for communication, but chapter 9 sound voiceless to me.

professorgerm 17 days ago [-]

Yudkowsky is a polarizing writer. Some people love his writing; I do not. There's the occasional nugget of wisdom but I find his style so irritating and pretentious that it's not worth suffering through.

Scott Alexander (Slatestarcodex) is related and more readable if verbose, but less focused on that groundwork material of (so-called) rationality.

dumb2223 16 days ago [-]

Thanks, I just read in his blog the post "beware the man of one study". Discussing if rising minimum wage hurts the economy give rise to 270 comments. I agree with the conclusion: Even if someone give you overwhelming evidence in favor of a certain point of view just wait and see if the opposite side has equally overwhelming evidence. My example: This coin came 7000 times heads so almost always gives head. Just wait and count how many times it came tails.

satanic_pope 16 days ago [-]

Thanks for pointing towards Slatestarcodex. Loved it.

criddell 16 days ago [-]

Do you not read fiction or is it just that you haven't read any *good* fiction lately?

rayalez 16 days ago [-]

I rarely read fiction. I'd love to read something great, but I have harder time finding it and getting into it.

Harry Potter and The Methods of Rationality is the best fiction I've ever read, and am actually rereading now, so that's one.

I absolutely love everything written by Alexander Wales, The Martian by Andy Weir, and a lot of stuff from /r/rational. Also I think that Atlas Shrugged and everything written by Ayn Rand is brilliant.

I've read Ready Player One by Ernest Cline, and Mistborn by Brandon Sanderson not so long ago, they were pretty fun, but I wasn't blown away or anything.

Aside from that, I don't know many great ones, so I mostly read non-fiction.

grinnick 17 days ago [-]

Hacking growth by Sean Ellis and Morgan Browne?

Just want to check I'm buying the right book!

rayalez 17 days ago [-]

Yep.

Oh, and if you're interested in the subject, I can also recommend "Traction"

by Gabriel Weinberg and Justin Mares, it's a really neat outline of traction channels.

arosier 17 days ago [-]

I also really enjoyed Traction. It provides a good framework on testing to identify the channel that provides the results needed at the stage your business is at. It also goes drives home the concept that the channel that gets you to one stage of growth might not be the one that gets you to the next stage.

pitt1980 16 days ago [-]

book recommendations on topics with lots of noise competition are really helpful, thanks

founder_qw 16 days ago [-]

I read Traction and Hacking Growth. Traction is a great book, HG is uninspiring - too repetitive and generally is about setting up growth hacking team in your company with emphasis on "developers are important they should contribute to the growth hacking"

Traction is a really interesting overview of all sorts of channels

saryant 17 days ago [-]

1) *Devil Take the Hindmost: A History of Financial Speculation* by Edward Chancellor

Everything from the tulip craze to the dotcom boom.

2) *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look On My Face?* by Alan Alda

Alan Alda of MASH fame teaches you how to build more empathy and improve your communication skills.

3) *Bad Blood* by James Carreyou

Theranos. Enough said.

4) *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan* by Steve Coll

I think of this as the last book in Coll's unofficial trilogy on Afghanistan. First up was *Ghost Wars*, a history of American involvement in Afghanistan from the Soviet invasion up to 2001. Second is his biography on the Bin Laden family. Last year he released *Directorate S*, a chronicle of American and Pakistani involvement post-9/11 primarily told through the lens of the Pakistani intelligence directorate tasked with influencing Afghanistan.

Coll has interviews with everyone from in-country CIA agents and foot soldiers who were on the ground all the way up to defense secretaries and military leaders, from both sides. An in-depth examination of what went wrong and why we're still stuck there.

5) *Deep South: Four Seasons on Back Roads* by Paul Theroux.

The greatest travel writer of the last half-century finally turns his attention homeward: the American Deep South. Four road trips over four seasons. He published an article in Smithsonian Magazine hitting the highlights: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/soul-south-180951861/>

txcwpalpha 17 days ago [-]

I can't second the recommendation of Bad Blood enough. I couldn't put it down. Every chapter I thought "surely I've reached the bottom of the rabbit hole now. It CANT get any crazier than this", but then it always did.

Aside from being a really enthralling and interesting story about one of SV's darling unicorns, it was also really eye opening into the absurdity of the amount of money that gets thrown around willy-nilly in SV, and how the bandwagon/FOMO effect just makes it worse. I won't say anything more because it's better to just read the book, but this is one of those stories that is almost endlessly fascinating.

freehunter 16 days ago [-]

Does anyone have a recommendation on a good book around the DotCom era? I was too young and too far removed from the tech world at the time to know much about it, and I've had a hard time finding anything that could transport me back to that era. What were the offices like, what was everyone doing, what languages/tooling were they using, what was the feel? There are plenty of books I see recommended that talk about SV *today* but what was it like 20 years ago?

misiti3780 16 days ago [-]

you may enjoy this one: <https://www.amazon.com/New-Thing-Silicon-Valley-Story/dp/039...>

arethuza 17 days ago [-]

The Steve Coll book is pretty disturbing - e.g. the CIA hints on "How to spot a terrorist" including things like "Keeps insisting on their innocence when tortured", "Keeps asking for to see a lawyer or a doctor" etc.

cncrnd 16 days ago [-]

Bad Blood is crazy stuff. Stayed up reading it last night after seeing the recs here. Not sure what I learned other than people are carried away easily, but it was very entertaining.

killaken2000 17 days ago [-]

+1 for bad blood as well. I don't think I've read a book faster. Every chapter was more unbelievable than the next.

arethuza 17 days ago [-]

If someone had written *Bad Blood* as a work of fiction I'm sure it would have been savaged for being completely unrealistic.

refurb 17 days ago [-]

Agree. Bad blood is a fantastic book. Really well written and tells the story in an incredible amount of details. The author did an amazing job in his research.

divan 14 days ago [-]

I also couldn't stop reading it, and devoured it in one day. Amazing read.

paraschopra 17 days ago [-]

- The Origin of Wealth. Fantastic book on the new field of complexity / evolutionary economics
- The Language Instinct. How mind creates language.
- The Elephant in the Brain. I've posted notes here <https://invertedpassion.com/notes-from-the-elephant-in-the-b...>
- Existential Cafe. History of existential thought. Excellent book.
- 12 rules of life. Highly opiated but well argued book on how to live life
- Skin in the game by Nassim Taleb.
- Daemon. The sci-fi book that anticipated what rouge blockchain like programs can do. Again, highly recommended

adamnemecek 17 days ago [-]

There are two books called origin of wealth by the same author. "Origin of Wealth: Evolution, Complexity, and the Radical Remaking of Economics" and "The Origin of Wealth: The Radical Remaking of Economics and What it Means for Business and

Society". Which one did you mean?

adora 17 days ago [-]

It's the same book. For some reason they changed the title for the later printed paperback version.

Dowwie 17 days ago [-]

Daemon was a good story and so was another by him, "Kill Decision", which is about autonomous killing drone warfare.

m-i-l 16 days ago [-]

> *The sci-fi book that anticipated what rouge blockchain like programs can do.*

It would have to be a fantasy book to truly go rogue - if it was sci-fi it would get bogged down in network congestion or high transaction fees, or consume all of the planet's energy production, before it could do much damage.

Aeolun 16 days ago [-]

It's not a block chain, just a rogue distributed network. But saying too much more would ruin the plot.

It gets a little bit over the top, but the concept is very entertaining.

m-i-l 16 days ago [-]

Sorry, was just a sarcastic comment about the limitations of blockchain tech. If it is about a distributed network in general that makes much more sense. Have checked it out.

mvleming 17 days ago [-]

Check out the *Unfolding of Language* if you're interest in the *Language Instinct*. Also *Elephant in the Room* made me think of the Master and his Emissary, very interesting book, check that one out too.

paraschopra 17 days ago [-]

Thanks. I'll check them out.

sone3d 16 days ago [-]

For your like on language check:

Surfaces and Essences by Douglas Hofstadter & *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff

misiti3780 16 days ago [-]

i love taleb but i thought skin in the game was the most disappointing of all of this books.

cncrnd 16 days ago [-]

I could never get into Taleb for some reason. Am I the only one who thinks his writing is extremely long winded?

carapace 16 days ago [-]

When I was reading "Black Swan" I was prepared to believe he was a genius. Then I got to the part where he bags on the Uncertainty Principle and I realized he's just a clever fool with a good way with words.

Nevertheless, it behooves us to try to remember that we are susceptible to the "Black Swan effect", the very real tendency to immediately forget that our sacred cows shit the bed.

nimithryn 14 days ago [-]

I am not convinced he is right about how susceptible people are to the black swan effect: it seems like your average person overvalues tail probabilities, not undervalues (hence why people play the lottery and buy insurance). It's been a while since I read anything by him, but I remember not being convinced by how he dealt with the problem of induction either, which seemed to lean dangerously close to intellectual nihilism.

Edit: grammar

decebalus1 16 days ago [-]

Not the only one. I think most of his books are actually prolonged intentionally arrogant blog posts sprinkled with pseudo-science and weightlifting metaphors with the recurrent 'fuck you money' motif.

Black swan, the concept which brought him in the spotlight is somewhat valid but it's worth at most a chapter in a risk management book. But he milks the black swan cow to biblical proportions.

Antifragile is so longwinded it's an exercise in attention and patience. I think it's remarkable how he managed to fill so many pages.

In my view, Taleb resides close to Malcolm Gladwell and Seth Godin, the 'thought leaders' experts at rebranding/refactoring common concepts and milking the proverbial cow in publishing, speaking events, etc..

misiti3780 16 days ago [-]

i think you need to start with fooled by randomness, it's shorter and i think it prepares you for the black swan. i thought antifragile and the blank swan were life changing, they're on the short list of books I re-read every year because I think they are so important. He is a huge dick, but as long as you can get over his arrogance, I think he has a lot of great insights.

pbnjay 17 days ago [-]

For sci-fi recs: I recently read The Three-body Problem by Cixin Liu (a trilogy) and thought it was really good.

Also just started another sci-fi trilogy with A Fire Upon the Deep by Vernor Vinge which has some really fun and interesting (if hand-wavy) ideas about deep space physics.

djaychela 16 days ago [-]

Another vote for Vernor Vinge here - Loved a Deepness in the Sky and A Fire Upon the Deep. Lately it has taken me AGES to get through any fiction, but I read both of them in short order - really compelling SciFi with interesting ideas, and presented in a great way (where you often don't know the details of the protagonists and assume they are human initially until details progressively inform you otherwise).

mercutio2 17 days ago [-]

Wow! You managed to juxtapose my favorite and least favorite science fiction. I've never read anything bad by Vernor Vinge.

I could not find a single thing to like about The Three Body Problem. I've heard it gets better after the first book, but I loathed the first book so thoroughly I wasn't willing to try any more.

What did you like about it? It seemed like there was practically zero plot, and the science bits seemed unconvincing.

mojoe 17 days ago [-]

Not op, but I'm a big fan of both authors. I enjoy Vinge more, but I wouldn't say his science is any more plausible than Liu Cixin's (with the exception of "A Deepness in the Sky"). I actually enjoyed "The Dark Forest" and "Death's End" more than the Three Body Problem. All three books have some fun, novel ideas. While the plot arc is not very traditional, it is complex and interesting -- lots of characters with vastly different motivations interacting in interesting ways. The main plot driver over all three books (that the universe is a dark forest) is highly plausible.

spapas82 17 days ago [-]

You need to read the 2nd book of the "Three Body Problem" trilogy ("The Dark Forest"). It will explain and improve most ideas found in the 1st book and, when it explains the whole "Dark Forest" concept I guarantee that you'll be amazed (don't research the concept before reading the book).

I also didn't like the 1st part very much but I was blown apart after reading the 2nd. The third was not as good, so at least read the 2nd one

dswalter 17 days ago [-]

I agree that the first two three body problem books (I've just finished dark forest) have some weak points on character development and dialogue.

But I've really enjoyed them so far because the books have surprised me at least a dozen times.

vagab0nd 15 days ago [-]

Personally, the first book is my favorite out of the 3. I think if you know a bit of the history of the Cultural Revolution, you'd enjoy it more. The way he combined the plot with that part of the Chinese history is amazing.

mercutio2 5 days ago [-]

I took several classes in Chinese literature in college. One semester was specifically on the Cultural Revolution. I don't think my dislike stemmed from an insufficient (for an American) knowledge of the Cultural Revolution.

The characters ranged from caricatures to boringly malevolent, the plot dripped out like an icicle half a degree above freezing, and the aliens, which were at least interesting, got about 20 pages of attention.

I just don't get the hype.

[reply](#)

fao_ 17 days ago [-]

The Three Body Problem is one of my main reasons for learning Chinese :)

Vernor Vinge single handedly became one of my favourite writers (along side Clarke and Lem) with his short story True Names. I didn't find Rainbow's End as easy a read, I'll probably reapproach it after finishing The Star Diaries or Snow Crash, though.

Yizahi 17 days ago [-]

You should read this essay then: <http://pinyin.info/readings/texts/moser.html>

fao_ 16 days ago [-]

That's funny. The course I've been doing (dominochinese.com) has approached Chinese from a different angle and it's ridiculously accessible. I remembered and understood more Chinese in a week, than I ever understood of another language (I have attempted learning German, Russian, and Japanese -- in many different learning

styles).

The perspective given by the course shows to me that Chinese is one of the most sensible languages on earth. And the fact that we can trace the lineage of the language back to the Bronze age is one hell of a bonus!

Of course traditional learning methods (by rote, etc.) are not going to work for a pictographic language, but mnemonic learning is greatly aided by the story and history of the symbols therein.

sah2ed 16 days ago [-]

> Of course traditional learning methods (by rote, etc.) are not going to work for a pictographic language, but mnemonic learning is greatly aided by the story and history of the symbols therein.

Upvoted just for your last sentence.

I've found that this is true for correctly learning certain topics that appear to be impenetrable to me when using standard reading materials. So what I do now is try to read up on some historical materials to help me understand how the original ideas evolved to what they have become today, before re-attempting to read modern texts.

Familiarity with the topic's history prepares the foundation on which I can mentally hang together the topic's most important ideas, in a way that is coherent for me for future recall.

fao_ 16 days ago [-]

Exactly. I find a lot of people tend to try and teach things in a vacuum. Not only does that leave you without a mental context for the thing, it is also *not how humans operate on a basic level*. If you think about the longest cultural memories we have, they are all stories. Humans operate on stories. If you can tell *the story of a thing*, it is often very difficult to forget the fact entirely.ematic

Indeed, most of the time the initial problem is caught up in the history and story of it, so not only does it give a mental context, but it helps you in applying the thing that you're learning!

For example, Mathematics became much more accessible to me when I learned the historical context for the maths first. Polynomials seemed not only completely useless, but also utterly mystical. Now I will never forget that once-upon-a-time, ability to solve Polynomials and other similar things were used not only as the measure of a person, but also became a type of challenge, and through that a form of gambling!

mojoe 17 days ago [-]

Those two are fantastic, and if you like Vernor Vinge check out "A Deepness in the Sky" -- I think it's his best work, and is much more plausible (centered around slower-than-light travel).

I have a few more recommendations in that vein here:
<http://compellingsciencefiction.com/blog/2016-12-18.html>

arethuza 17 days ago [-]

Not sure that "plausible" is the word I would use - they are both set explicitly in the same universe with the same "physics" - Deepness just being a bit more subtle about it as the characters don't know about the Zones of Thought - but the Zones are central to the book and the ending.

Edit: Having said that, the concept of "focus" in Deepness is utterly terrifying - particularly as it seems very plausible and, as is noted in the book, some people might willingly submit to it (relevant to HN!).

davedx 17 days ago [-]

I really liked the concepts of the story in Deepness, but it took so long to progress I got bored of it. :(

kenjinp 17 days ago [-]

omg I love your website!

mojoe 16 days ago [-]

Thank you!

gandhium 16 days ago [-]

Since nobody recommended them yet: Alastair Reynolds's "Revelation Space" and "Poseidon's Children" are wonderful sci-fi series.

hasseio 17 days ago [-]

Try his Marooned in Realtime next. Excellent murder mystery!

zengid 17 days ago [-]

I just started Death's End! Great books so far, though The Dark Forest felt very slow compared to The Three-body Problem.

psalminen 16 days ago [-]

Tom Holt - Doughnut is a really fun, easy sci-fi read I recently enjoyed.

jackthetab 17 days ago [-]

"Tailspin" by Steven Brill. It talks about how the recruiters for the Ivy League decided to admit people based on merit instead of connections, creating a de facto meritocracy and how this meritocracy has changed the USA in the past 50 years.

A friend gave me the book. I was skeptical of the premise. By the third chapter (the 70's, basically) I was like "I remember that!" "Yes, he was in all the newspapers!" "Yes, that was 'the greatest financial disaster since the Great Depression!'" (I've lived through three of those, btw.)

Interesting premise, good scholarship (he traces Citizen's United back to the college paper written to impress a college prof by a fellow who ended up clerking for SCOTUS judge who was the swing vote for Citizen's United (Kennedy?)).

Interesting read. I know it sounds like a grandiose conspiracy theory but he has actual facts (that I experienced growing up) to back him up.

a-saleh 17 days ago [-]

Before I started a new job I had myself read: 1. So good they can't ignore you 2. Deep work 3. Mythical man-month 4. Power of habit

Now I am reading Tools of titans by Tim Ferris. I never thought I would get into the genre of self-improvement books, but it seems I like these :-). Even though I am conscious about the fact, that I am applying maybe 10% of the books advice :P

Another thing I am reading is Math from three to seven [1], mostly because I would like to discuss math with my 4yo daughter one day, preferably sooner rather than later, because I find math discussions immensely fun :-D Maybe I will even start a math-circle :-)

[1] <http://www.msri.org/people/staff/levy/files/MCL/Zvonkin.pdf>

fredley 17 days ago [-]

I found *59 Seconds: Think a little, change a lot* by Richard Wiseman to be a good contribution to the genre, if you're looking for more.

sadema 17 days ago [-]

[1] *We Are Legion We Are Bob* (Bobiverse 1-3) - Just finished this trilogy and really enjoyed it! It's well paced, has a very likable protagonist and has a nice sprinkling of programming/CS humor.

[2] *Guns, Germs and Steel* - Can't believe I waited so long to check this off my list. Very thorough and well written argument about how geography and environment shaped the modern world.

[3] *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion* - Scientific and philosophical reasoning for why the self is an illusion. Covers a lot of ground without getting too heavy: Buddhism, meditation, neuroscience, religion, and more.

carrollgt91 17 days ago [-]

I'll second *Waking Up* - I've been interested in mindfulness meditation for years, and this book is what finally helped frame it in a way that went down nicely for me.

I sometimes enjoy the podcast by the same name as well, though the conversations are more hit or miss.

sadema 17 days ago [-]

Have you read any other mindfulness or meditation books? *Waking Up* wanted me to read more in that area, but I'm not sure what to pick up next.

projproj 16 days ago [-]

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/64369.Mindfulness_in_Pla... was good. I read it twice in a row. It actually delivers on the promise of being for beginners.

oldpond 16 days ago [-]

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind is a good place to start.

jackstraw14 16 days ago [-]

Yes, pick this one up. *The Mind Illuminated* is also a good one.

guiambros 17 days ago [-]

"*Why We Sleep*", by Matthew Walker. One of the best books I've read in a while.

I've commented before [1][2]; but pasting here: the author presents a vast amount of scientific evidence amount pretty much every corner of why we sleep, from its evolutionary roots thousands of years ago, to the importance of dreams and REM sleep for your memory, reasons and impact of insomnia, to what happens in the neurochemistry in your brain when you drink coffee, alcohol or sleep pills, and much, much more.

[1] <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=17381235>

[2] <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=17446932>

divan 16 days ago [-]

I've also started reading this book after one of your recommendations, and I agree that it would be beneficial for people who have never questioned what sleep is and how it works. But if someone is interested in sleep (has basic understanding of what is jet-lag, circadian rhythms, melatonin, REM phases etc), the amount of new information would be pretty low. I'm halfway through the book and I can't say I've read something you can't find in popular articles on sleep – i.e. how caffeine works and why jet-lag is more bearable eastwest.

guiambros 15 days ago [-]

Fair enough. After all, several of the popular articles on sleep are written over slices of study covered by (or some led by) the author, so not surprisingly there's a lot of similar content. But I still saw a lot of value, particularly on Alzheimer's, the significance of dreams, the effect of alcohol, sleep disorders, why doctors usually don't care about sleep.

Above all, I appreciate his perspective on the importance of sleep for public health, and how transformative it could be for society. And how bad we're doing, by not enforcing public education and health policies to counterbalance the side effects of modern society - blue light, addiction-forming social media, school classes starting too early and others.

Concrete example: I did a routine physical exam last week, and my (new) doctor spent 20 minutes asking me questions about my family history and current behaviors, from food to favorite pastime to overall mental state. Incredibly comprehensive -- *but not a single word about sleep*. Simply didn't cross her mind to ask me how many hours on average I sleep per day/week -- despite many of the symptoms she was interested in assessing can be eventually caused by poor sleep - weight, mood, performance, memory, etc.

markdog12 17 days ago [-]

Read it based on the thread you posted. I feel like it's a book everyone should read and wished I had read it sooner.

Joe Rogan interviews the author here, great vid: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwaWilO_Pig

jboynyc 17 days ago [-]

I recently read *The Dispossessed* and *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula K. Le Guin, and will continue reading her stuff over the summer for sure. It's really great. (HN discussion about her obituary: <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=16218439>)

The other day I started *Pictures of a Gone City*, a book about the Bay Area by critical geographer Richard Walker. It was recently discussed here (<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=17473141>). I'm only about fifty pages in, but I can tell this is going to be worthwhile.

I'm also still finishing *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials* by Malcolm Harris. It's a very compelling account of the crises and pressures confronting today's young adults (among which I can still, just barely, count myself).

Other books I've got lined up for the summer:

- *The Boy Kings: A Journey Into the Heart of the Social Network*, by Kate Losse. This memoir by an early Facebook employee came out a few years ago, and I finally want to read it.
- *Social Creature*, by Tara Isabella Burton. Recently published novel that's been getting rave reviews. It's been described as "a literary novel about social media."
- *Surveys*, by Natasha Stagg. A novel about microcelebrity/instafame that came out in 2016.

PS: LitHub runs a "Rotten Tomatoes for Book Reviews" site at <https://bookmarks.reviews/> that I'm finding to be a useful resource to discover new books coming out. That's how I found out about the Burton and Stagg books.

sdevoid 17 days ago [-]

I read *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed* at the beginning of the year, just before she passed away. This summer I the first four books of the Earthsea series and will probably read *The Other Wind* and *Tales* soon. I've really enjoyed both universes--with Earthsea I keep wishing someone would make a game with this kind of magic system. *The Lathe of Heaven* is such a wonderful title, I'm looking forward to reading that as well.

I read her translation of *Tao Te Ching* while waiting in 2 hours of traffic for a ferry and it was wonderful and really informs the rest of her works.

I'm currently reading *Cadillac Desert* by Marc Reisner, on the history of U.S. water policy in the West. Frustratingly dry.

Also re-reading *On the Road* but unlike 16 years ago I'm reading the 'Original Scroll Edition' this time: no chapters, paragraph breaks, invented character names, censors, etc. The book you read in high school is, in fact, the novelization of the original, which Kerouac wrote in twenty days. I've kept my beat-up paperback copy of the 'novel' nearby and I've preferred the scroll edition for the most part.

On the nightstand: - *Annals of the Former World* by John McPhee 300 pages into it, but I got a bit tired of the redundancy inherent in combining multiple books into one. - *The Vulgar Tongue* by Jonathon Green. 40 pages in. I've been looking for a copy of the dictionary. - *The Path to the Nest of Spiders* by Italo Calvino.

AllegedAlec 17 days ago [-]

> Ursula K. Le Guin

I tried reading her Earthsea series once, but I found her writing style rather awkward. It all felt rather emotionless and descriptive, with much detail left out. In fact, now I think about it, it rather reminded me of the writing style of the Old Testament. Are her other books also like that?

sdevoid 17 days ago [-]

Her Hainish novels (SF) may be more to your liking, but I think all of her works are informed by the kind of mysticism that informed her translation of the *Tao Te Ching*. What made *A Wizard of Earthsea* dry for you?

AllegedAlec 17 days ago [-]

Much of it was written in the way of "The wizard went here and this this, and it was pretty damn cool". It wasn't necessarily dry, but it was so differently written from the fantasy I normally read I couldn't get used to it on my first time reading it. It should probably try again at some point, however. The setting was really cool.

therealdrag0 16 days ago [-]

It definitely is distinct. Personally I find it refreshing after all the 500-1200pg fantasy I read. There's something poetic about compressing so much into so little words. I find that it flows nicely. It's more poetic than dramatic.

iventwind 17 days ago [-]

Hey, thanks! I have never heard of that website. Will be truly useful.

zachruss92 17 days ago [-]

For a nonfiction book, *The Millionaire Next Door* was a game changer for how I thought about wealth accumulation. It's the findings of a statistical analysis of the life and habits of millionaires.

Deep Work had the similar effects on my work habits as the former did on my finances.

If you're looking for a fun fantasy read, *Elantris* by Brandon Sanderson is one of my all-time favorite standalone novels.

jetrink 17 days ago [-]

> It's the findings of a statistical analysis of the life and habits of millionaires.

I have not read *The Millionaire Next Door*, but that seems fraught. Does it avoid survivorship bias? E.g. Playing the lottery is a 'habit' common to all lottery winners, but it's also common to all lottery losers, of whom there are many more. If you only studied the winners though, the lottery might start to look like a wise investment. Maybe the habits common to millionaires are counterproductive for the average person and only helpful to the lucky few.

mrfredward 17 days ago [-]

I have read that book, and survivorship bias is not a worry for most of the recommendations.

They find that most millionaires are quite frugal, have stable families, and live modest lifestyles--they have accumulated wealth but don't flaunt it and don't waste it. These are essentially the lowest risk strategies in life, and survivorship bias favors the exact opposite, i.e. the "lottery ticket" decisions.

The exception to the low risk mantra is that many millionaires run their own businesses, and of course entrepreneurship is risky. The authors do note the effects of survivorship bias here.

I'd summarize the book by saying: "work hard, live well below your means, and invest the difference. Also, don't spoil your kids if you want them to build wealth."

mromanuk 17 days ago [-]

Is there any list of finance/self-help books, filtered by 'survivorship bias'(and possibly other bias)?

maerF0x0 17 days ago [-]

I think a key difference is you have a choice to either be a lottery winner, loser or non-participant.

From the "Millionaire" or not game we're all "losers" by default.

whiteandnerdy 17 days ago [-]

I think the objection still applies. Suppose the statistical analysis told us that millionaires mostly get where they are by comparatively risky strategies or investments. Does that tell us we should also pursue high-risk high-yield opportunities? It's impossible to know without knowing how many people acted similarly to the successful millionaires but went bust or ended up in jail.

On the other hand, a low risk strategy might give you a comfortable life with high probability, but almost certainly won't make you a millionaire.

You need to know the base rate to understand whether survivorship bias is a factor or not.

mrfredward 16 days ago [-]

>A low risk strategy might give you a comfortable life with high probability, but almost certainly won't make you a millionaire.

If you invest \$5k per year and earn a 7% annual return with a mix of stock and bond index funds, you'll be a millionaire in 40 years. If you don't like my 7% number, then invest \$16,500 at 2% (short term government bond type rates), and you'll still get there in about 40 years.

For a sufficiently frugal person on an engineer's salary, getting to a >\$1 million net worth is easy, but it takes a while. It's worth noting, however, that \$1 million isn't a particularly lavish retirement anymore (and will be much more modest in 40 years).

The easiest way to become a millionaire is to have boring financial habits.

hlfshell 17 days ago [-]

I'm a huge Brandon Sanderson fan, but find that Mistborn is a better entry point for people these days - though it (and the Cosmere) are among my own personal

my all-time favorite fantasy books, so perhaps I'm biased in that.

elvinyung 17 days ago [-]

I think Elantris was gateway-Sanderson for me. Read that in a day and have been hooked ever since.

That said, in hindsight a lot of Elantris feels pretty similar to Way of Kings.

JonasJSchreiber 17 days ago [-]

I agree with this but feel the need to add that the Stormlight Archives is his best work yet

ashton314 17 days ago [-]

Wholeheartedly agree that the Stormlight Archive is the best. However, if you can't stand cliffhangers, you might have a hard time since the series isn't finished yet. The first Mistborn trilogy is complete—I'd start with that if you want a nice complete series.

hasseio 17 days ago [-]

Another Mistborn fan here. Should be made into an anime at some point.

freehunter 17 days ago [-]

I have to agree: Mistborn is an amazing experience.

wwweston 17 days ago [-]

> The Millionaire Next Door was a game changer for how I thought about wealth accumulation. It's the findings of a statistical analysis of the life and habits of millionaires.

So, it's been a while since I dipped into this book, but my recollection was that I read the summary and intro and thought "this sounds like an analysis which suffers significantly from survivorship bias." Did you find with a close read that was/wasn't a problem with the picture it presented?

(Not that I think that the advice I skimmed over was *bad*, certainly, I don't like to buy depreciating assets like cars on credit, and more people could likely benefit from budgeting investing conscientiously.)

jwdunne 17 days ago [-]

It might be but the book boils down to:

1. Save at least 10% (or 25%) of your income
2. Live frugally. No flashy cars, etc.
3. Choose friends doing similar

I.e how to retire with a million.

I guess given enough income and decent rates on savings, it's not so revolutionary but perhaps hard work.

malyk 16 days ago [-]

It documents a lot of the habits that get "normal" people to millionaire status. Drive "normal" cars for 15 years instead of buying fancy cars every 3 years. Clip coupons and shop wisely (2 for 1s, sales, coupons, etc). Live below your means generally. Save.

Basically the opposite of the SV mantra which is raise a ton of money for a shot at the lottery, live in the nicest apartment you can find/afford, eat out at fancy restaurants most nights, drive a nice audi or bmw, etc.

justinzollars 17 days ago [-]

The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era

> Liu describes the 21st century relations between the United States and China as a "Marathon contest" in which the "Beijing Plan will replace the Washington Consensus" so that China would become a "Champion nation". This is a question of who will rule the world in the 21st century. The implications are institutions and ideas we fundamentally value as Westerners: Our Democratic rules-based world order, Human Rights and The United Nations could become uprooted.

The China Dream may scare you.

Liu provides an interesting alternative perspective on American History, The American psyche and American strategic misconceptions. He also unwittingly reveals deep insecurities with respect to single party rule and global perceptions of China.

This was an amazing strategic read and has opened my eyes to a new perspective.

arthurk 17 days ago [-]

Sapiens/Homo Deus - History of Humankind. Also goes into topics of how money came to be and evolved over time. Homo Deus is the follow up book by the same author which focuses on humanity's future.

Shoe Dog - Nike founder Phil Knight shares the story of the company's early days.

Chasing the Scream - History and impact of drug criminalisation (War on Drugs). The author describes the War on Drugs (mostly in US but also describes other countries like Portugal where the policies on drugs are different)

nindalf 17 days ago [-]

I loved Sapiens. It has a couple of ideas that help explain so much of our world - really powerful ideas. Once you know them they seem so obvious and you feel like you should have thought of that yourself. For example, (spoilers for human history ahead), our civilizations are based on agriculture and very few hunter gatherers remain. But that doesn't mean that people consciously chose one over the other. It's just that for various reasons, agriculture is a more "viral" idea that spread more efficiently than the alternative. Ditto with monotheistic vs polytheistic religions.

Homo Deus... less so. It rehashes a lot of Sapiens and I found it a bit of a drag. The introduction is worth reading though. He recounts all the progress we've made as a species, which would surprise people who think our world is growing worse by the day.

Chasing the Scream was amazing. Nothing more to be said.

The book I learned the most from was probably The Dictator's Handbook. Again, a very simple idea - how can we predict a politician/leader's behaviour based on a simple assumption - they will try their best to stay employed. The authors manage to explain almost all of how politics works based on this one single idea. If you're one of those people who likes to try-before-they-buy, here's a trailer of the book - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rStL7niR7gs>

sah2ed 16 days ago [-]

The Dictator's Handbook is also on my reading list and I really enjoyed the Kindle sample. In fact, I got to know about the book from a HN recommendation.

It's impressive how so much clearly one may see the world by relearning well-known concepts using one's intuition, which is how the authors happened upon the simple but powerful idea behind what really drives political behavior.

misiti3780 16 days ago [-]

all of these are great, i second chasing the scream, i loved that book

srom 17 days ago [-]

1) Adults in the room - Yanis Varoufakis (2017)

must read for anyone leaving in, or interested in the politics of the European Union; the book is a political memoir of Varoufakis' fight against the EU institutions during his 6 months as finance minister of Greece in early 2015.

The people of Greece had elected the syriza government to put an end to the incredibly harsh austerity they've been through during the past 5 years. But the Greek government had agreed to, and was bounded by the terms of the two bailout programs from the Eurozone & the IMF. Faced with a dilemma, democracies must compromise. But Democracy has no place in the Eurozone, as Wolfgang Schäuble, former finance minister of Germany, puts it very clearly during his first meeting with Varoufakis: "Elections cannot be allowed to change economic policy".

Three years after the events recounted, this book is still very much relevant, and anyone wanting to understand EU politics ought to read it.

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2) And the Weak Suffer What They Must? - Yanis Varoufakis (2016)

Companion book to the first one, it explained how the Eurozone crisis came to be by recounting its history from the end of the second world war to today. A key book to understand the institutions of the European Union, whether or not you agree with Varoufakis' economic theories. I highly recommend it, as it is very well written, in plain english, with no economic background required.

freehunter 16 days ago [-]

Wow that link to GeekDad is absolutely toxic. When you visit, it shows a banner that begs for you to turn off your ad blocker promising that they don't have malicious or distracting ads... then in the fine print below that, it says "okay I know we currently have a lot of malicious ads, but that's out of our control, we promise!"

Seriously, *that's why people use ad blockers*. If you're running content on your site that you have no control over, *stop doing that*. If you're serving malicious ads, at the very least turn off the banner that tells people you're not serving malicious ads.

ashton314 17 days ago [-]

Anathem by Neil Stevenson. Science Fiction. Takes place in a universe very much like ours. The most noticeable difference is the culture: intellectuals live inside monastery-like sanctuaries, while religious people live outside. The story is written from the point of view of one of the intellectuals. Very rich world building. The book also explores (high-level, slightly fictitious in some parts) some fascinating areas of quantum mechanics, topology, communication, diplomacy, and Zen.

ianmcgowan 17 days ago [-]

The bat, the worm and the fly is still one of the most zen moments ever for me. Really felt like a smack on the head.

ryanSrich 17 days ago [-]

Books finished in June:

"How to Change Your Mind" by Michael Pollan. A fascinating look into the world and science of psychedelic drugs.

"Rendezvous with Rama" by Arthur C. Clarke. One of, if not Clarke's best. It's short for a sci-fi book and almost impossible not to like.

"The Hydrogen Sonata" By Iain M. Banks. It certainly wasn't my favorite culture entry, but it's worth a read none the less. If you haven't read the others in the series I wouldn't suggest starting with it.

"Children of Time" by Adrian Tchaikovsky. It took me a bit to get into this book, but once I did, I really enjoyed it. If you're into long timelines and human existential crisis this is your book.

As far as July goes, I'm digging into "Matterhorn" by Karl Marlantes and "The Origins of

Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind" by Julian Jaynes.

sizzzzlerz 16 days ago [-]

Rama is a great read and shows off Clarke's skill in merging science and fiction into a believable narrative. Its been years since I last read it but I still can remember the anticipation I felt, waiting for the story to explain things.

peacetreefrog 16 days ago [-]

For anyone reading this: Matterhorn is really good. It's a novel that takes place during the Vietnam war written by a former vet. I feel like it was good insight into what war is like. Also some good lessons to take away on nature of centralized command structures and their drawbacks.

velcrovan 13 days ago [-]

If you're reading the Jaynes book, you should absolutely follow it up with "The Muse in the Machine" by David Gelernter. (Gelernter also happens to be one of the surviving unabomber victims)

[reply](#)

talonx 17 days ago [-]

Rendezvous with Rama stands high up among my Clarke favourites. I cannot say the same about the sequels that he wrote with Gentry Lee - too much religious overtone - and for what exactly, is unclear.

Cyphase 17 days ago [-]

Here's Jeff Atwood's 'Recommended Reading for Developers':

<https://blog.codinghorror.com/recommended-reading-for-develo...>

From the header:

- > This list was last updated in March 2015.
- > Why are updates to my reading list so rare? Because computers change a lot in 10 years, but people don't.
- > To make better software, you need to understand how people work, and that is what the books I recommend tend to focus on.

sridca 16 days ago [-]

Took quite a bit of scroll to see someone recommending programming related books. HN culture has changed a lot indeed. :-P

galeforcewinds 17 days ago [-]

William Gibson's Neuromancer continues to hold up well both for adults and teens. Worth a read or re-read.

Travel books can be a good fit for the summer, and Keri Smith's Wander Society is a fun pick.

I also like to make a random pick or two that I'd never normally choose for myself. My next random pick may be off this thread...

Z

ddsaso 16 days ago [-]

Not quite a book but definitely a long essay.

"A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" by David Foster Wallace.

Great read on consumerism, escapism, and the funny things that people seem to do on cruise ships.

Also just started keeping a public kanban board of my book backlog and wondering if others do something similar? I'd be curious to know how others organize their book lists and peaking through to find new things to read. <https://github.com/davidsantoso/books>

[/projects/1](#)

anant90 16 days ago [-]

The public kanban board is an excellent idea! I'll probably set up one for myself this weekend.

geephroh 16 days ago [-]

+1 - thanks, ddsaso! Worth digging into the thread just for this.

ddsaso 16 days ago [-]

Glad to hear it! Feel free to open a new issue if there happens to be a book you think I might find interesting based on the books I already have listed. Or if you start your own book list kanban board I'd be interested to see it.

squigs25 16 days ago [-]

I use goodreads to keep track of the books I want to read, books I am reading, and books I have read.

ashtonbaker 16 days ago [-]

Thank you for the Kanban idea; I love it.

DanielBMarkham 17 days ago [-]

I cycle from business to pulp fiction to classics to non-fiction to biographies.

Right now I'm doing classics. I find that taking a month or two each year and reading classics I may have overlooked makes all the other books I read that much better. (It also gives them a higher bar to reach!)

This month it's The Count of Monte Cristo and The Brothers Karamazov. I'm having a blast. I can't believe it's taken me this long to get to these.

charlchi 17 days ago [-]

If you enjoy The Brothers Karamazov I couldn't recommend one of Dostoevsky's other books enough: Notes from the underground. IMO a must read for any intellectual that has ever struggled with anything from self-deprecating thoughts to superiority complexes.

KevanM 17 days ago [-]

The Count of Monte Cristo is fabulous, it sags a bit in Paris, but otherwise a rip roaring read.

I was recently in Brittany and there was a sea gael off one of the beaches that reminded me how great that book is.

davedx 17 days ago [-]

Going with the "stuck on an island" theme, "The Magus" is another great classic. Definitely one of my favourite books in a while.

ar-nelson 17 days ago [-]

I'm really enjoying Brandon Sanderson's Mistborn trilogy. I started listening to the audiobook version on my commute to work.

It's a fantasy series with an incredibly detailed, logical, well-thought-out magic system and world history.

spapas82 16 days ago [-]

I didn't like at all the first of the series (Mistborn); never got into the other ones. It had some fresh ideas however the story was way too childish (in my humble opinion). Here's my review on that book <https://www.goodreads.com/review>

/show/2031838874?book_show_a...

jor-el 17 days ago [-]

I completed the series a month back. I found 1st book to be a bit slow and need to force myself to read sometimes. But 2nd book thoroughly caught my imagination and I would say the best of the 3 books in the series.

hornd 17 days ago [-]

Excellent series. I thought Sanderson's writing noticeably improved with each book, as well. Humbly suggest jumping into The Stormlight Archive next!

tntn 17 days ago [-]

Good magic system, but I found the ending to be disappointing. Literal deus ex machina.

timwaagh 17 days ago [-]

its on my to read list definitely. looking forward to it.

ericdykstra 17 days ago [-]

First, I'll recommend *Discrimination and Disparaties* by Thomas Sowell, another fantastic work from Sowell put out this year that builds on some ideas from previous essays. It's short, but the arguments are concise, empirical, and convincing.

And 3 books that have most recently made it into my "must-reread" category.

The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt

Antifragile by Nassim Taleb

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman

adora 17 days ago [-]

I grew up on Thomas Sowell. Extremely articulate economist. I've now come to disagree with probably one-third of what he writes but all of his works are really good frameworks of how to think.

ericdykstra 17 days ago [-]

I wouldn't want to read someone I agreed with 100% ;)

I really like Sowell's writing style and willingness to tackle issues in a straightforward way that others skirt around. I still have many of his past writings to get to, as I only recently started reading him, to my own detriment.

We're blessed to have nearly 50 years of his writing and that he's still at it at 88.

swah 16 days ago [-]

> he's still at it at 88.

Actually IIRC he retired ;)

Something I didn't even knew writers did...

Stronico 17 days ago [-]

Hey - same here - still a premier thinker though - he introduced me to Eric Hoffer too.

kovrik 17 days ago [-]

'Malazan: Book of the Fallen' by Steven Erikson (that is actually 10 huge books).

I've only read 2 books and a half so far and it is brilliant!

I'm not a big fan of fantasy books (prefer hard sci-fi), but Malazan just blew my mind. One of the best things I've ever read.

Not an easy read though, be prepared!

spapas82 17 days ago [-]

I tried reading the 1st one of the series (Gardens of the Moon) not once but twice. Both times I was quickly bored and did not make it past page 50. The book (at least in its first pages) is filled with boring descriptions and uninteresting events.

I've heard good things about it (along with that it won't be an easy read as you say) however I don't want to torture myself reading boring stuff for like 1000 pages until something interesting happens.

There are much better books to read and too little time.

Actually, that's more or less a rule I try to follow: If the book can't hook me after some pages and I keep feeling bored and not interesting I just put it away. Other books that I have started but found way too boring to keep reading them:

(* please don't downvote me for this. I know that some of these books are considered classics and many of you won't like this but remember that this is just my personal opinion; I tend to get bored easily *)

- The orphan master's son - The man in the high castle - Metro 2033 - Neuromancer - Catch 22 - Digital Fortress (this wasn't so boring but I hated the smart-ass characters)

jatsign 16 days ago [-]

You may want to try the audiobook version of Gardens of the Moon. I've been listening to it and have quite enjoyed it, but can definitely see how reading the book might be a bit of a slog. There's a lot of posturing going on, talking about how powerful so many characters are, that it remind me a bit of dragonball z.

openfuture 17 days ago [-]

This series is amazing if for no other reason than the ambition! They actually use GURPS (a dungeon and dragon like dice system) to decide important events and write the story based on the results, also the two dudes who created the world are PhDs in Archeology and all the different cultures are based on actual human civilizations.

hornd 17 days ago [-]

I almost gave up on this series halfway through book one, but I'm so glad I stuck with it. The characters were fantastic, the world was wonderfully built, and there was just.. so much of it. Took me quite a while to get through all 10 just due to their size.

I haven't read any of the off-shoot books yet, but they're on my list.

cirque 17 days ago [-]

'Simulacrum and simulation', 'understanding media', and 'society of the spectacle' right now. My focus this summer is on everything ever written about media and society. I am currently looking for works on social trends in response to radio and television.

minikomi 17 days ago [-]

You might want to check: Trust Me, I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator -- written by the PR guy who kept American Apparel in infamy.

paulgb 17 days ago [-]

+1 on that book, as well as the author Ryan Holiday's more recent book Conspiracy on the Hulk Hogan / Gawker trial.

treme 17 days ago [-]

McLuhan's work would be right up your alley then.

Medium is the Message; Gutenberg Galaxy would be my top 2 recommendation given what you wrote.

r4ltman 16 days ago [-]

McLuhan in the 70s is the most relevant today: specifically:

Take Today: the executive as drop out with Barry Nevitt

From Cliché to Archetype with Wilfred Watson

and finally,

Culture is Our Business, the last book he did solo [the one with WWII being a 'guerrilla information war']

Also, if you're feeling philanthropic: I'm screening McLuhan's origin story at the Park in the place where he began University in Winnipeg.

At the very least watch the trailer and bask in the prescience of McLuhan yelling Fake News in 1969

<http://gofundme.com/mcluhan-movie>

cirgue 16 days ago [-]

> Medium is the Message

I initially thought that was a typo. For others reading this: it's not, it was a collage-style collaboration between McLuhan and graphic designer Quentin Fiore. That's really cool, I will have to check it out.

landakram 17 days ago [-]

If you haven't already, check out "Amusing Ourselves to Death" by Neil Postman.

wazoox 17 days ago [-]

Here is a quick list of the last great books I've read which are available in English (some I've read in other languages):

- *History of Western Philosophy*, by Bertrand Russell : This is a wonderful book. Read it.
- *Why the West rules -- for now*, Ian Morris : How geography drives history. really deep and thought-provoking.
- *the Strange Defeat*, Marc Bloch : A gripping, living narration of the French armies collapse in 1940, from the inside (Marc Bloch was an officer). With a very deep analysis of the long maturing reasons for this defeat.
- *Histories of Alexander the Great*, Quintus Curtius Rufus : The title says it all. Very elegant Latin prose.
- *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius : A funny story and an immortal classic.
- *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West*, Karl-Heinz Frieser : For true military history geeks :)

I notice that these are either classics, or history. Well, so be it :)

msadowski 17 days ago [-]

Can anyone recommend some book about Africa? I would like to gain some insights about life there, ideally fact based, maybe some history? Doesn't need to be the whole continent as well, would love to start with any particular country.

This year I decided to read at least one book a month the ones I found most inspiring were: * Factfulness - how we can misinterpret the data and how most of us have a wrong idea about the state of the world * Let my people go surfing - growing a business organically, doing the least harm and taking care of your people. This book inspired me to start my own business and follow some of the ideas presented in this book. * When breath becomes air - memories of a neurosurgeon battling cancer. Very insightful and

important read about dying. In a way it's a heavy book, I cried multiple times when reading it.

csomar 17 days ago [-]

The north, the central and the south are very different. Like different climate, ethnics, religions, languages, and economies.

Africa is also the center of the Arab world (Cairo + 2/3 of the arab world population is there) although the popular belief is that the middle east is.

What are you looking exactly for? I'm from the north so I can answer some questions about that part.

msadowski 17 days ago [-]

I know my question was very broad. It's hard to pin point to what I'm exactly looking for. The best way I can describe it is "fighting my own ignorance". I realized I know very little about the world and decided it's time to change it.

Sorry for being so vague, I don't have any starting point, except the books others recommended. I'll start digging and see where it gets me!

csomar 17 days ago [-]

If you have the budget, book a flight to Cairo, Morocco and Tunis. They are dirt cheap, relatively safe and you can get by with little English. You'll see that despite they are 3 North Africa Arabic countries, they are wildly different.

If you like the beaches, they offer lots of options (for Egypt go to Sharm ElSheikh. I have yet to do a better scuba diving).

Also I don't read books about countries. I visit them. People and especially authors are biased and also perceptions are very relative. A shitty country for someone is a home for another one.

collinglass 17 days ago [-]

Books on the north would be good for me. Anything economies or about business there. Very happy to read anything you recommend about life in general there.

csomar 17 days ago [-]

I'd avoid the books if you have the budget to travel there (bonus: it's very cheap right now!). I'd avoid North Africa for investment. Maybe Egypt but only if you are big and well connected.

For life, the 3 countries can offer good value quality/price. I live in Tunis. It has good food, good weather, nice beaches, new constructions that are cheap and easy to rent, etc... You can even get optic fibre for \$25/month.

They have various issues especially with governmental services and transportation (particularly Cairo and Tunis). Tunis and Casa are definitively more open to tourists and foreigners than Cairo. Woman might find it unbearable to live in Cairo and Tunis would be the friendliest for woman in the whole of the Arab world.

One problem is that you can't travel around by car. If you are in Tunis, you can't jump to Algeria (very hostile to foreigners). You also don't want to jump to Libya. So you are limited to a 10 million population.

If you are in Egypt, beside Cairo and some touristic resorts, there is not much to go. It's downhill from the capital. The living standards are way too low.

JonoBB 17 days ago [-]

If you like James Michener, then *The Covenant* is a great read about South Africa

If you're looking for a somewhat bleak overview of corruption and despots since independence, then try Martin Meredith *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*

One of my favourites is *Blood River: A Journey to Africa's Broken Heart*

Disgrace, by JM Coetzee. Outstanding book, emotionally difficult to read. Made into a not-too-bad movie with John Malkovich, but the book is infinitely better.

Munksgaard 17 days ago [-]

I read Karen Blixen's "Out of Africa" last year, and I found it absolutely breathtaking. Beautiful descriptions of a lost land and people, vivid imagery, and an almost fairy-tale like quality to it. One of the best books I've read in many years.

Granted, it's old and describes a version of Africa that there's not much left of, but I'd highly recommend it anyway.

mattcaldwell 16 days ago [-]

West With the Night, Beryl Markham's autobiography. Beryl grew up in Africa, became a horse trainer and pilot, and flew solo from Europe to Newfoundland around the time that was highlighted in *Out of Africa*. Her life was incredibly interesting, she had at least one encounter with Hemingway, and she was a terrific writer.

lukeschlather 17 days ago [-]

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is very good. It's fiction, but semi-autobiographical. It's as much about living as a Nigerian immigrant in America as it is about Nigeria, but it's really well-written and gives a ton of insight into Nigerian culture (from a very specific perspective some might find grating.)

coccinelle 17 days ago [-]

Congo by David Van Reybrouck was recommended to me as a great book, but I haven't read it yet!

Pieterkje 17 days ago [-]

This is indeed a great book. Definitely worth a read.

Van Reybrouck describes the history of Congo starting pre-colonial, the colonization by Belgium and the entire aftermath. The book gives you a good understanding on the impact and the how of colonization and the history of Congo.

jimduk 17 days ago [-]

African books I liked, though more anecdotal and transition-based, all short

i) Ryszard Kapuściński, both *The Emperor* and *The Soccer War* (half of this is about Africa, other half is South/Central America)

ii) Chinua Achebe - *Things Fall Apart* - fiction but feels 'truthy'

oxymoron 17 days ago [-]

The Fate of Africa is a comprehensive post-colonial history of the whole continent which does a great job with identifying overarching developments and spinning them into a narrative. It's also very readable. I thoroughly recommend it.

jeffreyrogers 16 days ago [-]

I'll second this. This is probably the best thing to read if you're interested in Africa in general rather than a specific region or country. It shows you how entrenched many of the problems in Africa are.

openfuture 17 days ago [-]

Dancing in the Glory of Monsters is a must read and It's our Turn to Eat is also quite good.

timwaagh 17 days ago [-]

War and Peace by Tolstoy. it is far from 'recent' but i read it only this year. it is particularly interesting because it is not overly intellectual in nature yet still written around the time it portrays.

Robin Hobbs latest Fitz and the Fool trilogy are also great books i read this year. as are all her works really.

JonasJSchreiber 17 days ago [-]

Both are great. I was hoping for another sprawling historical fiction by Tolstoy with Anna Karenina but was treated to a sort of Russian psychological drama in the same vein as Dostoyevsky.

freddie_mercury 17 days ago [-]

My Year of Rest and Relaxation by Otessa Moshfegh -- "a novel about a young woman's efforts to duck the ills of the world by embarking on an extended hibernation with the help of one of the worst psychiatrists"

Treating People Well: The Extraordinary Power of Civility at Work and in Life by Lea Berman and Jeremy Bernard -- "A guide to personal and professional empowerment through civility and social skills"

A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing by Eimear McBride -- "a shocking and intimate insight into the thoughts, feelings and chaotic sexuality of a vulnerable and isolated protagonist"

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee -- "Pachinko follows one Korean family through the generations, beginning in early 1900s Korea with Sunja, the prized daughter of a poor yet proud family, whose unplanned pregnancy threatens to shame them all"

omosubi 17 days ago [-]

+1 for pachinko. Incredible book with excellent writing. As someone who reads a lot of books by wealthy white American men this was a refreshing change of pace.

kazinator 17 days ago [-]

A book about a Korean family saga is named after Japanese gambling machines? Bizarre.

freddie_mercury 17 days ago [-]

Bizarre as in "couldn't be bothered to google a summary to see that is about a Korean family in Japan"?

mercutio2 17 days ago [-]

And, further, it's frequently considered low class to be associated with Pachinko in Japanese culture, so it's very common for Pachinko parlor owners to be Korean-Japanese.

kazinator 17 days ago [-]

Why, when you can get one here from a live fellow hacker-newster; thanks.

adamch 16 days ago [-]

1: Diaspora (Greg Egan). Brilliant sci-fi where computer science concepts like cellular automata, computation complexity etc are major plot points. Starts with a highly detailed explanation of AI personality creation. Super geeky and a brilliant plot.

2: High Performance Browser Networking. Really explained a lot of modern networking. I was already familiar with the basics of the OSI stack, but this explained a lot of newer

ideas, optimizations, and HTTP2. Really comprehensive guide to how the internet works.

3: The Shock Doctrine (Naomi Klein): A history of how the CIA has shot down democratic regimes to enforce small-government-free-market policy in developing countries when these policies are rejected in polls. Explains a lot of the crises in Latin America and Russia.

steamer25 16 days ago [-]

> the CIA has shot down democratic regimes to enforce small-government-free-market policy in developing countries when these policies are rejected in polls

I haven't read the book but from another perspective it sounds like the CIA shot down democratic regimes in developing countries to enforce policies favorable towards U.S.-based internationally big, militarily market-intervening government that were rejected in the local polls. I wouldn't be surprised if there were extra-governmental industrial interests that benefited as well.

wetback 16 days ago [-]

Diaspora is fascinating, it captured me from the first page. Permutation City is pretty good as well.

siddboots 17 days ago [-]

I've been reading a lot of JM Coetzee. Most recently *The Life and Times of Michael K*, and *The Childhood of Jesus*.

He seems to have an incredible knack for both the unsettling, and the compassionate. It's close to the most thought provoking fiction I've ever read.

finolex1 17 days ago [-]

Ficciones by Borges.

A real classic, each story is intriguing and some center on incredibly creative ideas.

mbid 17 days ago [-]

Lost in Math by Sabine Hossenfelder, which was published just a few months ago. It deals with how foundational theoretical physics has been led astray by aesthetic ideals, i.e. "lost in Math", because of the lack of new empirical data during the last decades.

I read it because I see some parallels to programming/verification language design, where research is usually justified aesthetically because empirical data is hard to come by. It appears doubtful that the book will help you career-wise if you're an academic stuck in a field with similar problems, but it is consolidating to know you're not alone.

salimmadjd 16 days ago [-]

The Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad.

Joseph Conrad was 50 to 100 years ahead of his time. His story of European exploitation of Africa and the underlying racism that empowered that still, sadly has many parallels to our world.

It's a novella so it's quick read, with beautiful pros. Interestingly enough, English was not Conrad's native language. But you couldn't tell that from his prose.

The movie, *Apocalypse Now* was loosely based and inspired by this this book with some dialogues completely copied over.

There is an audiobook version of it on iTunes [0] by Ralph Cosham. His narrative voice is so soothing that I listen to it sometime to fall asleep when I'm unable to turn off my brain.

[0] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/audiobook/heart-of-darkness-unab...>

The Blind Owl, Sadegh Hedayat and translated by D.P. Costello is a great read if you're into Kafka.

I read the book both in original language, Farsi and its translation in English. The translation is excellent.

Hedayat translated the work of Kafka in Farsi. Which might explain some resemblance between Blind Owl and some of Kafka's writings. Ultimately and tragically he committed suicide in his Paris apartment.

Sohrab Sepehri, Iranian poet is still largely under-discovered in US. There is a recent translation that seems to have done justice to his poetry [1]. A decade ago, I foolishly partnered with a colleague and a poet to translate some of his poems. I translated one poem, it was the most stressful thing I ever did and something, I will never try again [2].

[1] <https://www.amazon.com/Oasis-Now-Selected-Translations-Selec...>

[2] http://www.caveat-lector.org/1601/html/1601_poetry_sepehri1....

ProfDreamer 17 days ago [-]

"The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage" by Clifford Stoll is my all time favorite for vacation reading.

larntz 16 days ago [-]

I read this book about 20 years ago when I was in high school. It was one of my favorite books at the time. I think I read it 3 times during my high school years. It was a great read at the time.

I haven't read it recently but anyone that lived experienced technology of the 80s/90s or wants a realistic feel for what it was like should read this.

It's a great story about how a guy from Berkley (I think) tracked down a hacker. I don't remember the specifics but it was very War Games-esque but based in reality.

ProfDreamer 16 days ago [-]

Same for me. I first read this during high school in the early 90s and read it several times again in the following years.

There's also a movie about the story which is worth watching:
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0308449/> You can easily find it (and quite a few talks and interviews by/with Clifford Stoll about the subject of the book) on Youtube if you search for "Cuckoo's Egg".

liamcardenas 17 days ago [-]

I don't plan too far ahead, but I am going to finish the absolutely fascinating book A Natural History of Human Morality by Michael Tomasello. This is an exceptionally well researched book, full of citations, presenting a theory of how humans developed their sense of morality, from an evolutionary perspective.

It does so by contrasting our behavior with that of the great apes so that we can determine the characteristics of our common ancestor and then build a scenario for how we could have gone from there to here.

I'm about half-way through right now and I highly recommend it

carrollgt91 17 days ago [-]

The Power of Vulnerability, by Brené Brown.

Given the amount of imposter syndrome, internalized shame, and unhealthy posturing that I've seen in the startup space, it seems especially relevant for folks here. This really changed my relationship towards vulnerability as a leader.

Also, it's quite entertaining. She's very charming in her delivery, and she does a good job exemplifying her findings in the presentation of the book.

It's actually an audio seminar, as opposed to a written book, but I think it's delivered far more effectively that way.

fanclocker 16 days ago [-]

She wrote a book on the subject too: Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead

I assume you would be interested.

larntz 16 days ago [-]

I really enjoyed Daring Greatly. I would recommend this also.

I feel I was able to apply a lot of it to my day to day family life.

brickmort 16 days ago [-]

This sounds great, I'm gonna give this one a shot. Thanks for recommending!

ohmatt 15 days ago [-]

"The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" by Tom Wolfe (RIP). One of my all time favorite book, one of my all time favorite authors.

"The World According to Garp" by John Irving. Again, one of my favorite authors, one of his best books, but I really recommend almost all of his books.

"Starship Troopers" by Robert A. Heinlein. Just read this a couple weeks ago, highly recommended.

"A Walk in the Woods" by Bill Bryson. Just another of my favorite authors, I recommend any of his books if you like travel books. Very witty and well written stuff. A Walk in the Woods is probably his best known book about his attempt to thru-hike the AT.

"Story of Your Life and Others" - Ted Chiang. Really really good sci-fi short stories. Some great stuff. The movie Arrival is based on the title short story, Story of Your Life.

Honorable Mentions (from things I've read in the past year): "Meddling Kids" by Edgar Cantero "The Island of Dr. Moreau" by H.G. Wells "Furiously Happy" by Jenny Lawson

I could keep listing books, but this is probably already excessive.

ohmatt 15 days ago [-]

How could I forget "Into Thin Air" by Jon Krakauer. Another amazing author, great book.

I also realize none of these are really HN-related content. I just assumed you were looking for any type of books, and this are some of my recent favorite leisure books.

nobrain 17 days ago [-]

Ready Player One.

Read it before seeing the movie.

If you were born in late 70s or 80s, you will enjoy the references.

ohmatt 15 days ago [-]

I also really enjoyed this book, despite being born in 89. But, at the same time, it felt like the book was just him writing out lists of references, and just saying what was happening. The author is not the best "writer". That being said, the book is good, and ridiculously addicting to read. I read the whole thing over two days and couldn't put it down.

Dowwie 17 days ago [-]

This book was such a pleasure to read. It's an excellent summer read recommendation.

henrik_w 17 days ago [-]

+1 for Ready Player One - really enjoyed it.

krtkush 17 days ago [-]

Read a lot of books from Indian Authors or books about India -

1. Delhi: A novel

2. The modern architecture of New Delhi
3. Train to Pakistan
4. Maximum City: Bombay Lost & Found
5. City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi

Currently reading -

1. Bauhaus
2. Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb (Though, I think I should read Making of the Atomic Bomb first)

amarant 17 days ago [-]

The Culture series by Iain M. Banks. Cannot be recommended enough! it's brilliance is unoverstatable.

I'm still a bit hyped about these books ;)

Jedd 17 days ago [-]

I discovered these books (and the author) entirely by accident - at an airport, back in 2009 - I think it was Matter. Was hooked, and then read the entire series (inasmuch as they're a series) over the next twelve months.

Banks was an author with a truly singular style. He is sorely missed.

gandhium 16 days ago [-]

If you liked Banks, I can recommend Alastair Reynolds's "Revelation Space" and "Poseidon's Children" series.

jamesbui 17 days ago [-]

Recently finished the Red Rising trilogy and would recommend to anybody who likes fantasy. Not as well developed as Brandon Sanderson's works but definitely a trilogy to follow if you've caught up with Sanderson's works and want something to scratch that fantasy itch while you're waiting for the next book of his many series.

balladeer 16 days ago [-]

- The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor
- The Mirror of Beauty by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (I am reading it in Hindi/Urdu[0]. Anyone who loves historical fiction should check this out)
- Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992-1995 (received it as a birthday gift; my first graphic novel and I am loving it)
- Shoes of the Dead by Kota Neelima
- Everybody Loves a Good Drought by P. Sainath (one of the best non-fiction works I have read)
- and some Manto, Pratchett, and John Le Carré.

I have been reading three of the books among these forever and I intend finish them. I am again starting to spend time reading that I had basically allocated to Internet and just doing nothing.

[0] <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/26021373-kai-chaand-the-...>

ram_rar 17 days ago [-]

1. The Daily Stoic by Ryan Holiday Its all about stoic philosophy and teachings by Epictetus
2. Examined Lives from Socrates to Nietzsche by James Miller Biographies of, some of the most famous philosophers.
3. The Soul of a new machine by Tracy Kidder its about 2 competing computer design teams juggling between engineering quality and time to market.

dima586 17 days ago [-]

Sci-fi: Seveneves by Neal Stephenson. I found it fantastic though the end goes a little bit too fast and with too little detail as compared to the beginning.

spapas82 16 days ago [-]

It was an excellent book until the point you mention (the 2nd part which was about 3/4 into the book). My recommendation? Read the 1st part and skip the 2nd one.

aestetix 17 days ago [-]

I suppose I could give *my* summer reading list:

The History of the Peloponnesian War - Thucydides.

On book 3 right now, it's some of the most profound political strategy and philosophy I've ever read. It really helps if you read Herodotus' Histories before hand, to give context on the Persian War, and how what we now call Greece ended up in this mess. It's extremely illustrative, and if you've read it, the rise of populism after 70 years of American hegemony should be absolutely no surprise (it looks a *lot* like Athens).

The Gulag Archipelago - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Another book that is very important today, as socialism/communism is on the rise in parts of the western world. It's an exploration of what happens when social trust breaks down in a society, as it did after the Bolshevik Revolution. Is the US at that point? No. Does it have the potential to get there, with a few elections of more radical types and further breakdown of the social fabric? Absolutely.

ArtWomb 17 days ago [-]

Taleb's Technical Incerto. Imminently readable and accessible probability theory. His postulates concerning fat tail vs normal distributions can readily be translated into quick and dirty computer simulations. Thereby demonstrating such hidden insights as "black swans are not more frequent in fat tails, but merely more consequential"!

Other than recent technical papers, I am pretty much trying to eschew anything published in the last century until it passes the test of time. I get more out of a casual perusal of Aeschylus' Persians via Wikisource on my phone while sitting under a tree. Than I do from all the Ray Dalio Principles and Yuval Harari Homo Deus style tomes that are currently in vogue right now ;)

rb808 17 days ago [-]

People probably recognize the individual books rather than the Incerto collection. <http://www.fooledbyrandomness.com/>

Skin in the game is the latest, it is on my reading list. Taleb is an arrogant *hole, but I love following him on Twitter and reading his books. A genuinely great opinions.

zengid 17 days ago [-]

Reading Antifragile is life changing. It is very well written. I can't comment on how profound the maths are (although his arguments appear very solid), but the stuff he says about stoicism and morality is fantastic. As others have said, Taleb is a total A-hole, but his ideas deserve attention.

ry4n413 17 days ago [-]

The audio version of Principles is much better, imo.

mjfl 17 days ago [-]

By technical incerto you mean Silent Risk right?

ahansen 17 days ago [-]

Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker, is an incredible look into the benefits of getting good

amounts of sleep. Everything he talks about is also backed up by his own research.

It has convinced me to improve my sleeping habits, and I've been feeling much better because of it.

Highly recommended!

Moncefmd 17 days ago [-]

Is there any good insight on how to improve the quality of said sleep? Or is the amount of sleep the determinant factor of it?

markdog12 17 days ago [-]

There is, but this is a good summary: <https://medlineplus.gov/magazine/issues/summer15/articles/su...>

sah2ed 16 days ago [-]

Your link does a good job of highlighting most of the important things needed to fall asleep everyday like clockwork, but is light on the rituals of resolving the anxiety of not falling asleep after lying in bed for 30 mins.

Anyway, thanks for the link.

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