2020 Books

Books read starting December 1st 2019

**-- Non-Fiction --**

* **Punished by Rewards** by Alfie Kohn (11 - 29- 19) - Really interesting read about how rewards have a tendency to undermine peoples interest in following through with what the rewards are supposed to increase interest in. This is in regards to parenting, work place incentives, and largely any reward based option. Very fascinating overall and highly recommend it.
* **Archaeology From Space** by Sarah Parcak (12-21-19) - Goes into the use of satellites and their usages in helping archaeologist find new sites for further study. The author talks also about the state of looting and how using crowd sourcing platforms they are able to possibly locate new areas of study while trying to get to these locations before the looters. Overall was pretty interesting as the author had plenty of stories from her own adventures, with plenty of Indian Jones references, as well as some times where the information garnered did not prove to be worth while.
* **A Crack in Creation: Gene Editing and the Unthinkable Power to Control Evolution** by Jennifer Doudna (1-15-20) - Super informative and an all around phenomenal read. I've had a fascination with gene editing since I watched Gattaca years ago. This book goes into detail on the history of gene editing and the emergence of the CRISPR system. It talks about the good things it can possibly do in the future, but, it also talks about the unexpected consequences that could come about because of it as well. Highly recommended to anyone who even has a remote interest in anything about the future of the species and medicine, among other fields of science that can be touched by this technology.
* **Astrophysics for People in a Hurry** by Neil DeGrasse Tyson (1-26-20) - A rather quick read compared many others so far, but was quite interesting overall. It gives a brief overview of various topics ranging from dark matter, dark energy, the big bang and many other topics. Its a quick gloss over of the material, but, put in a some what easy to understand knowledge morsel.
* **The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less** by Barry Schwartz (3-5-20) - Took me far longer then it should have to read. Was interesting though about the effects the amount of choices in todays world can have on a person. In addition, the last chapter has various tips on how to minimize the effects of those choices on you as well.
* **Ultralearning** by Scott H. Young (4-12-20) - Found this to be a bit interesting. Not the most entertaining to read, but it went over the benefits of learning to an extreme level. For instance, the author learned a new language by basically jumping in day 1 without using English as his primary. Just started speaking the new language, poorly, to the locals and learned from there. Then at night, went over various new words, practiced them and started again the next day. After three months was conversationally fluent anyway and moved on to the next task. If learning is an interest to you, might be worth reading just to see if there are any ways to adapt your own learning with the things read about in this book.
* **Deadliest Enemy** by Michael T. Osterholm (5-7-20) - This was very interesting look into the war against virus through the ages. It talks about the history a little bit but also goes into the various struggles with fighting diseases. Talks about Ebola, HIV, Dengue and other mosquito born illnesses, as well as going into bacteria that is resistant to antibiotics. It paints a grim picture of things to come because of the current overuse of antibiotics world wide, largely from animal use in farms for growing purposes. Ultimately it does outline some things that can be done to make sure we do not get into a post antibiotic world and work towards stemming the tide of infections in the process.
* **The Great Influenza** by John M. Barry (6-29-20) - A bit slow to get started, the book delves into the modernization of the US medical system to one that uses current science based methods towards medicine. It then delves into how various scientist tried to prevent and cure the Spanish flu as it started. The way the various cities and other public officials dealt with it, how information about the disease was hidden at a time that transparency was required. At the end, it talks about the ramifications of what transpired, how several of the key scientist lives worked out afterwards, and what to do going forward.
* **Bad Blood** by John Carreyou (8-12-20) - Was really interested in this once I first heard of it. It basically goes through the history of Theranos and the various perspectives of people who worked there and thought the job was a scam, or at least was not what it was portrayed as. Was fascinating to see how people can be swayed by someone who is good at selling their dreams and are able to get others to believe in what they are saying. Also, listened to her voice on YouTube, just beyond belief that anyone could believe that was her real voice.
* **End Times: A Brief Guide to the End of the World** by Bryan Walsh (9-12-20) - I have been reading some overall dark books over the last couple of months, this is no exception. The author delves into all the ways that humanity can kill itself, or be killed as a whole. Extinction basically. He covers everything from asteroids to aliens, volcanos and nuclear wars, disease and biotechnology and of course, AI. Was an interesting read overall and its very much of interest to hear about the unintended consequences of our choices we make as a society.
* **When The Earth Had Two Moons** by Erik Asphaug (10-15-20) – Ultimately this book covers a lot of information about the creation of the solar system, how the plants and various moons moved as well as the reason to going to various other points in the system to explore. It brings it back into focus though talking about how various methods of the moon’s formation and the Theia theory. All around, was a good book though a bit dense in information.
* **The Revenge of Gaia** by James Lovelock (11-11-20) – The basic premise of Gaia theory is that the earth is a self-regulating body in the same sense as any living entity. It tries to maintain a specific temperature via the use of natural means. Ultimately the book goes on to talk about climate change and his personal views on what is needed to help fix the damage we have caused to this system. Its in interesting read, though it does sometimes meander a bit before getting to the point.

**-- Fiction --**

* **Star Wars: Rebel Rising** by Beth Revis (12-1-19) - Interesting enough read as it stands. This is sort of the prequel to Star Wars Rogue One the movie. Starts essentially when Jyn’s parents are found, she is taken in by Saw, and eventually leads to the opening scenes of the movie.
* **Cibola Burn (The Expanse Book 4)** by James S. A. Corey (1-16-20) - While note as interesting as the previous three books. It was still good to get back into the series and read it along side the release of the 4th season of the show which covered the same subject matter. All around looking forward to the 5th book.
* **Star Wars: Reven** By Drew Karpyshyn (2-7-20) - Was a nice read even if the story line is no longer valid to the continuity. Enjoyed the character since playing Knights of the Old Republic back in the day. I still wish his character would have more stories about him, as this one felt a bit rushed to get through the story arc though all around it was still a good read.
* **The Last Astronaut** by David Wellington (3-17-20) - Story is essentially first contact with an alien species with a slight twist. Overall was an interesting read, its sort of written as if its already happened even though it takes place about 30 years in the future. It even has some monologues about the characters perspective looking back on the events that happened. Enjoyed the read, though will likely not read it again anyway.
* **Boundless** by R. A. Salvatore (4-10-20) - Book 2 of the new series (book 1 was Timeless), picks up where book 1 left off. If you are a fan of Drizzt and his previous adventures, I was not disappointed with this story either.
* **Nemesis Games (The Expanse Book 5)** by James S. A. Corey (5-3-20) - I cant say much on this as to not ruin the plot. So far though I would say this is probably one of the best stories out of the books, and all the books have been quite good so far. The character driven stories here just sealed the deal. I honestly cant wait to watch Season 5 of the show once it becomes available.
* **Star Wars: Heir to the Jedi** by Kevin Hearne (5-20-20) - I bought this over 2 years ago now. I had a bit of time getting into the first person perspective its written from. This tracks Luke Skywalker seemingly between episodes 4 and 5. After a bit, the story wasn't that bad. Didn't really add much to the overall story outside of filling in some thoughts from Luke during this time as he is learning the force. Overall, was interesting but probably wont ever read it again.
* **Lord of the Flies** by William Golding (5-27-20) - I dont remember how this even got added to my list honestly. I think it was recommended from someone else most influential must read lists. (Elon Musk perhaps?). I seen the movie years ago so I had an idea of what I was getting into. Savagery and loss of all sense and falling back to violence. About sums it up. An interesting read, though, the same issue I run into many classic books is its hard to understand whats going on sometimes because of the prose.
* **Do Robots Dream of Electric Sheep** by Philip K. Dick (6-9-20) - I have never actually watched Blade Runner which is based off this book. All around though this was a very interesting book. Takes place around the year now after some sort of apocalypse that has sent the large majority of the human race to Mars now. Those left on Earth appear to largely be those who are not intelligent enough to be allowed to leave, or those who choose to stay. In this world the androids sometimes escape and are tracked by bounty hunters. The world has few animals and everyone strives to have some sort of animal. The most amazing things for most people is to find a living animal in the wild. The world building is just amazing and made the book quite fun to read.
* **Star Wars: The Legends of Luke Skywalker** by Ken Liu (6-26-20) - Another of whats become norm of a book of stories. This is basically a bunch of events that take place sometime in the new trilogy about how Luke went on a search into the history of the Jedi and its various facets. Overall, was an average story but was interesting enough in its own right.
* **Babylons Ashes (The Expanse Book 6)** by James S. A. Corey (8-3-20) - Another stellar installment in the Expanse series of books. Book 4 while great was a bit slow I thought, but books 5 and 6 have just been non stop action. Plus with the show released earlier this year, the casting is so good I have had a hard time remembering if I have watched it or read it at this point. Just a phenomenal book all around and looking forward to reading book 7 at some point in the future.
* **Star Wars: The Force Collector** by Kevin Schinick (8-19-20) - Was an average story really. Was a coming of age tale where the hero finds himself and some friends by the end. Like many of the Star Wars books recently, it seems to be average at best. Enjoyable, but not memorable to me.
* **Hull Zero Three** by Greg Bear (9-10-20) - Seen this recommended by another author I follow, I believe it was Scott Sigler, but I cant remember for sure. The book was a slow start, as it starts from the perspective of a guy who is just woken up from a type of cryosleep (think the movie Passengers). He gets woken up into a ship that is clearly broken in some way and largely needs to figure out whats going on to stay alive while also dealing with not having memories from before. Wasnt a bad read overall, sort of slow but it was interesting enough. It ended not the way I expected and was sort of a let down, but overall was interesting book.
* **Star Wars: Thrawn Treason** by Timothy Zahn (9-21-20) - To be short, a great read. These books by Zahn have been among the best of the newly written Star Wars books released (Lost Stars is another great read here). All around, if you like the Thrawn books, read this, though read the previous two first. Even though they are not necessarily related, I'm a stickler for reading things in order!
* **The Haunting of Hill House** by Shirley Jackson (10-9-2020) – Actually an exceptionally good story. I went in knowing this was different from the show and did not have high hopes for it. I find the older the stories I often find the prose hard to get into. Had this issue with “Turning of the Screw” and “Orestes”. While the stories seemed interesting, the writing could not hold me. This was great though, kept a good bit of tension for a book also. All around a good read.
* **Persepolis Rising** by James S. A. Corey (11-26-20) – Another great book in the series. All around cant comment on much that happens, but a great story. Love the characters and learning about each one new in each story.

**-- Just cant get into it right now --**

* **How to Create a Mind** by Ray Kurzweil - I bought this because I was curious to hear his thoughts on the singularity and various other future predictions. The book might get into it, but its early chapters focus on the workings of the brain which is quite dense. Informative, but very dense and hard to read. I just cant get interested into it enough to keep going right now. I moved on to another story and will likely come back to this in the future again.

**-- Currently Reading --**

1. The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins
2. Leia: Princess of Alderaan by Claudia Gray

**-- Current Book Completed Count as of 11-27-20 --**

Non-fiction - 12

Fiction - 16