

2025 Hummingbird and JCC Books and Bites Reading List

January

The Foxtail Legacy by David Abromowitz explores the external and internal pressures on three generations who straddle the chasm between the Old World and the New, and the legacy of a patriarch in relentless pursuit of the American Dream. Follow the Itzkowitz family's immigrant journey across three continents and into the 20th century.

February

My Friends by Hisham Matar explores themes of childhood, friendship, and the emotional impact of political turmoil. The story is told through the eyes of a young narrator who reflects on his friendships with a group of boys, first in London, where he has recently moved with his family, and later in Libya. As the boys grow closer through shared experiences, the narrator begins to understand the complexities of their relationships, shaped by their backgrounds and the political climate of the time. The novel deftly weaves together themes of belonging, loss, and identity, all against the backdrop of a changing world where personal connections are influenced by the turbulence of both local and global events.

March

We Would Never by Tova Mirvis is a gripping mystery about the extremes to which a family will go in order to protect their own. After Jonah Gelman is abruptly murdered, we follow his soon to be ex-wife, Hailey and her family as they navigate her status as a suspect and the mysterious death of her husband. Part thriller and part family drama, this book explores how in the absence of forgiveness, love and hate can intertwine and turn deadly.

April

Mothers and Sons by Adam Haslett is about family, forgiveness, and how a fleeting act of violence can change a life forever. A mother and son, estranged for years, must grapple with the shared secret that drove their lives apart. This book is beautifully written and teaches us that in order to move on from the past, we must face it.

May

The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters

After the four year old daughter of Indigenous migrant workers goes missing from the blueberry fields of Maine, a tragic mystery will go unsolved for nearly fifty years. *The Berry Pickers* is a riveting novel about the search for a missing girl, the shadow of trauma, and the persistence of love across time.

June

The Weight of Ink by Rachel Kadish is set in London of the 1660s and of the early twenty-first century, *The Weight of Ink* is the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Ester Velasquez, an emigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a blind rabbi, just before the plague hits the city; and Helen Watt, an ailing historian with a love of Jewish history. *The Weight of Ink* is a sweeping yet intimate work of historical fiction about women separated by centuries, and the choices and sacrifices they must make.

July

Goyhood by Reuven Fenton is the perfect summer read if you're looking for a balance of funny characters, touching materials, and a road trip. When Mayer Belkin finds out well into middle age that he's NOT actually Jewish, he must come to grips with the reality of his history and fate. Join him on a road trip through America's Deep South as he grapples with a God he no longer trusts and a life he can't understand. *Goyhood* is zany and surreal, but it tackles issues of identity, family, and religion in such a brilliant way.

August

Birnam Wood by Elizabeth Catton follows Mira Bunting, leader of a guerrilla gardening collective that plants on unused land. When Mira discovers an abandoned farm near Korowai National Park, she's caught by billionaire Robert Lemoine, who offers to fund the group as part of his plan to gain New Zealand citizenship. Mira's pragmatic partner Shelley is ready to leave the group, while ex-member Tony begins investigating Lemoine's true intentions. As loyalties shift and secrets unravel, Eleanor Catton spins a morally complex, propulsive eco-thriller that probes ambition, idealism, and deception—building tension to a breathtaking, uncertain finale.

September

The Safekeep by Yael van der Wouden is an exhilarating, twisted tale of desire, suspicion, and obsession between two women staying in the same house in the Dutch countryside during the summer of 1961—a powerful exploration of the legacy of WWII and the darker parts of our collective past.

October

One Hundred Saturdays: Stella Levi and the Search for a Lost World
by Michael Frank

The remarkable story of ninety-nine-year-old Stella Levi whose conversations with the author over the course of six years bring to life the vibrant world of Jewish Rhodes, the deportation to Auschwitz that extinguished ninety percent of her community, and the resilience and wisdom of the woman who lived to tell the tale.

November

Fagin the Thief by Allison Epstein is a thrilling reimagining of the world of Dickens, as seen through the eyes of the infamous Jacob Fagin, London's most gifted pickpocket, liar, and rogue. Colorfully written and wickedly funny, Allison Epstein breathes fresh life into the teeming streets of Dickensian London—reclaiming one of Victorian literature's most notorious villains in an unforgettable new adventure.

December

The Wandering Jew of St. Salacious by Ron Turker is a satirical novel about a Jewish surgeon, Dr. Marty Fischer, working in a large, fictional Catholic hospital named St. Salacious. The hospital moniker is used as a humorous jab at high-end healthcare institutions, blending satire, humor, and critiques of the American healthcare system.

