

1. **North of Normal**, Cea Sunrise Person

320 pages

Caught up in the counterculture movement of the late 1960s, Cea Person's grandfather traded the suburban comforts of California for a pot-smoking, free-loving, clothing-optional life under a canvas tipi in the Canadian wilderness. As a child, Cea knew little about the world beyond her eccentric, hand-to-mouth existence, but her teenage mother, Michelle, found something lacking: a man. With Cea in tow, she hits the road for an insane journey full of ill-fated adventures and the company of spectacularly unsuitable men. Craving stability and safety, all Cea wants is to be normal. Left to practically raise herself, she promises to find a different life from her usual and dysfunctional upbringing. Determined and resilient, Cea reinvents herself through her successful international modelling career, but her new life brings its own challenges.

2. **Little Fires Everywhere**, Celeste Ng

348 pages

In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. Enter Mia Warren – an enigmatic artist and single mother – who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community. When old family friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town—and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs. *Little Fires Everywhere* explores the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the ferocious pull of motherhood – and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.

3. **The German Girl**, Armando Lucas Correa

400 pages

Before everything changed, Hannah Rosenthal lived a charmed life. But now the streets of Berlin are draped in swastikas and Hannah is no longer welcome in the places she once considered home. A glimmer of hope appears in the shape of the *St Louis*, a transatlantic liner that promises Jews safe passage to Cuba. The Rosenthals sell everything they have to fund visas and tickets. At first the liner feels like luxury, but as they travel the circumstances of war change, and it soon becomes their prison. Seven decades later in New York, on her twelfth birthday Anna Rosen receives a package from Hannah, the great-aunt she never met but who raised her deceased father. Anna and her mother immediately travel to Cuba to meet this elderly relative, and for the first time Hannah tells them the untold story of her voyage on the *St Louis*.

4. **Beneath A Scarlet Sky** by Mark Sullivan. Historical fiction. 509 pages.

Pino Lella is a normal teen when his home in Milan is destroyed by Allied bombers. Pino joins an underground railroad that assists Jews to escape over the Alps. His family insists he join the Army and but when he gets injured he becomes the driver for Hitler's left hand in Italy. Eventually, Pino becomes a spy for the Allies. He endures the horrors of war and the Nazi occupation by fighting in secret.

5. **Suite Francaise** by Irene Nemirovsky. Fiction, 367 pages.

The story begins in Paris 1940 on the eve of Nazi occupation. Eventually, the Parisians flee the city to a provincial village which is occupied by German soldiers. The locals must learn to coexist with the enemy.

When the author began working on this novel she was already successful. She was also a Jew and in 1942 arrested and deported to Auschwitz where she died. For 64 years this novel remained hidden.

6. **A River Of Stars** by Vanessa Hua. Fiction. 289 pages.

Gathered with other mothers to be in a secret maternity home in Los Angeles, Scarlett Chen was a factory worker in China. She fell in love with the factory owner, Boss Yeung. When Boss discovered Scarlett was pregnant with a boy, he sent her to America. He knew U.S. citizenship would open doors for the child. Scarlett's new sonogram reveals an unexpected result and causes her to flee to Chinatown in San Francisco. She is hoping for a new life in America but, Boss Yeung is in pursuit. Scarlett and her young friend Daisy survive hand-to-mouth in the Chinatown ghetto, relying on the tenuous good-will of their neighbors as the ever-ticking countdown of their visitors' visas weighs heavily on Scarlett's mind. There's no money to go back to China, no money to get a green card, and the threat of deportation looms greater with every passing day.

Hua is an amazing writer, her prose tight and packed solid with emotion. She deftly handles several characters' points-of-view, giving the book a well-rounded feel that never allows any character to become the enemy. These are people with difficult histories and tragic stories trying to seek out an existence in a tough world. Hua takes readers to China and shows us the cold, hard truth of the factories, the fields, and forced abortion clinics. One of the most moving things about the story is her ability to show the culture in a way that is both normal to Scarlett and understandable to western readers without losing the emotion and tension of the story. It is timely and raw, giving an open and honest look at the fate of many undocumented immigrants stuck and sinking in their situation with no way out.

7. **The Girl You Left Behind** by JoJo Moyes. Fiction. 369 pages.

The year is 1916 in France and Sophie Lefevre is keeping her family safe while her husband fights on the front. Eventually the town falls to the Germans and Sophie's hotel becomes a headquarters. The Kommandant admires Sophie's portrait which was painted by her artist husband. His obsession with the painting causes Sophie to make a painful decision. A century later the portrait hangs in the home of a young widow. The portrait's shadowy past is revealed causing the young woman's life to become complicated.

8. **Golden Child** by Claire Adam, Fiction - 288 pages

Rural Trinidad: a brick house on stilts surrounded by bush; a family, quietly surviving, just trying to live a decent life. Clyde, the father, works long, exhausting shifts at the petroleum plant in southern Trinidad; Joy, his wife, looks after the home. Their two sons, thirteen years old, wake early every morning to travel to the capital, Port of Spain, for school. They are twins but nothing alike: Paul has always been considered odd, while Peter is widely believed to be a genius, destined for greatness. When Paul goes walking in the bush one afternoon and doesn't come home, Clyde is forced to go looking for him, this child who has caused him endless trouble already, and who he has never really understood. And as the hours turn to days, and Clyde begins to understand Paul's fate, his world shatters—leaving him faced with a decision no parent should ever have to make.

9. **The Alice Network - A Novel**, by Kate Quinn, 560 pp

1947. In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, American college girl Charlie St. Clair is pregnant, unmarried, and on the verge of being thrown out of her very proper family. She's also nursing a desperate hope that her beloved cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France during the war, might still be alive. So when Charlie's parents banish her to Europe to have her "little problem" taken

care of, Charlie breaks free and heads to London, determined to find out what happened to the cousin she loves like a sister.

1915. A year into the Great War, Eve Gardiner burns to join the fight against the Germans and unexpectedly gets her chance when she's recruited to work as a spy. Sent into enemy-occupied France, she's trained by the mesmerizing Lili, code name Alice, the "queen of spies," who manages a vast network of secret agents right under the enemy's nose.

Thirty years later, haunted by the betrayal that ultimately tore apart the Alice Network, Eve spends her days drunk and secluded in her crumbling London house. That is until a young American barges in uttering a name Eve hasn't heard in decades, and launches them both on a mission to find the truth . . . no matter where it leads.