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COMPLETELY UNSOLICITED BOOK RECOMMENDATION QUIZ

As the weather grows less hospitable and there are more reasons than ever to lounge around indoors, there's probably no better time than the present to find something new to read (and hopefully finish before final exams and projects elbow-drop us all). Also, I've realized I haven't written a Bullsheel article in a hot minute. What better way to scare off two vultures with one firework than to write a quiz where I recommend a book I read earlier this year that I loved based on your literary preferences?

What are you most in the mood to read?

- a) Something a bit fcking crazy, but also somewhat wholesome.
- b) Something that exposes the dawning terror of our times in all its unholy glory. (ok man, calm down)
- c) Something that's both escapism yet kind of entrenched in our socio-political landscape and engages with it in ways that are trite while somehow occasionally being insightful.
- d) Something horrendously depressing. Idk man it can't be any worse than this year.

What genre would you say is your favorite of the following:

- a) magical realism
- b) sci-fi
- c) action—shaken, not stirred, with a dash of humor
- d) is semi-modern cowboy a genre?

What do you look for in a main character?

- a) Somebody with a strong personality, perhaps with a unique character flaw. I prefer morally grey characters that I can still usually root for.
- b) Everyman types are appealing.
- c) I'm cool with a little cliché, because who doesn't like a capable lead?
- d) Someone who's prone to making a lot of bad choices, or just. suffering. (my guy, are you ok)

How do you feel about overdone tropes?

- a) Some are bearable, but not many. More of a motifs/themes kind of reader.
- b) No overt ones, thanks.
- c) Dude I literally don't care. There's a reason tropes exist, and it's 'cause they're fun.
- d) Hell no; I only tolerate them if they're subverted.

If you've read any of these books before, which was your favorite?

- a) 100 Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- b) Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood
- c) The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson
- d) Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk

Results on back...

RESULTS FROM QUIZ ON FRONT

Mostly A's: Literally anything by Haruki Murakami. 85% of the reason I made this stupid thing is to ramble about how amazing his books are. Though Murakami's genre is magical realism, I feel as if his works defy that clean categorization a multitude of times, being something all their own. It's difficult to recommend a starting point in his body of works, as his books are paradoxically very different from one another while all written in such a way they're unmistakably his style, but I cut my teeth on *After Dark*, which I think was one of the better introductions to his style, as it doesn't get quite as crazy as some of his other works like *Kafka on the Shore*. *After Dark* takes place all in the span of one night, following two sisters who've grown apart and have--quite literally--become a part of very different worlds, one of them exploring the seedy yet welcoming nightlife of metropolitan Tokyo as the other reflects on her life in complete isolation. The cast of characters is unusual, but most are endearing, and the dialogue and Murakami's atmospherically-charged narration are a treat. I'd also recommend *Norwegian Wood* as a good place to start. *Kafka and the Shore* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* are some of his best known works and for good reason, but the content can get a bit gory (look up tw's if needed, folks). Also *Killing Commendatore* is another favorite of mine; if an artist being forcefully commissioned by a man with no face to paint his portrait sounds up your alley, do check it out!

Mostly B's: *Brave New World* by Isaac Asimov & *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. There's a high likelihood that some of you may have already been forced to read these books in grade school, but I hope that didn't ruin the experience for you; I honestly believe they're both good, important books that have a lot to offer beyond their premises, which most everyone knows at this point. Though dark, the worlds Bradbury and Asimov build are worth exploring, and though not appealing, are nonetheless made morbidly fascinating to explore through the vehicle of their well-wrought prose. Also the first line of *Fahrenheit 451* is absolutely raw; I don't care if it makes me sound all "imfourteenandthisisdeep", I'll die on that hill. If you haven't read either of these yet, please, do it.

Mostly C's: James Elroy's *The L.A. Quartet*, *The Thin Man* by Dashiell Hammett, & *A Rage in Harlem* by Charles Himes. HA YOU THOUGHT I WAS GONNA RECOMMEND IAN FLEMING DIDN'T YOU. Well joke's on you, because I haven't read any of his stuff yet. Though these stories are undeniably products of their times (though the noir genre does some things right, there is plenty of room for improvement in regard to some of the common character archetypes), a good detective story can be a lot of fun, and, generally, they're as involving as you want them to be, whether you want to try to actively guess the culprit as you go along or just enjoy the ride to the conclusion. Also, please, for your own good, do **not** make a drinking game out of taking a shot every time a character drinks in *The Thin Man*. I haven't done an official count, but I think there might be more instances of binge day-drinking in Hammett's book than in any of Hemingway's, which is something of an achievement. (My next Bullsheet article might be a tally to settle the question.)

Mostly D's: Literally anything by Cormac McCarthy. His writing style can be difficult to adjust to for reasons that are immediately evident when one picks up any of his works, but believe me, it's worth it. I started with *No Country for Old Men* and highly recommend doing so, as the movie made off its premise does a fantastic job with the source material and pairs splendidly with the novel (or is the perfect thing to watch after you've finished it, for first-time reading purists). McCarthy's style of writing is both cinematic and grand, and he has a great knack for knowing when to slow down and set the mood through sparse but poignant description and when to keep things snappy. Hands down, he writes the best action sequences I've ever read, and his characters feel different and solid, even down to their speech patterns (he's one of the rare few writers who are able to play around with accents in their dialogue without coming off as a tryhard or offensive). I also really enjoyed his book *The Road* (which is less of a thriller than *No Country for Old Men*, but arguably contains even more of that feel of lingering nihilistic resignation), and have heard good things about *The Border Trilogy*. McCarthy's books are the furthest thing I can think of from a feel-good novel (except maybe works by Dostoevsky or Nabokov), but are fantastic, thought-provoking works that don't shy away from showcasing the brutality of man and the unfairness of life.

-Elizabeth Arterberry, Senior Writer and Senioritis Sufferer



Baby Drew

@SocioDrew

The amount of anxiety around this election should be reason enough for colleges to cancel class this week. But alas, we are expected to keep trucking through a global pandemic, police oppression, financial scarcity, state violence, and now the inevitable chaos from the election.

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