

Stay in, read up: 6 paperbacks that go nicely with a cuppa and a cozy armchair

By Moira Macdonald
The Seattle Times

It's cold out! Stay home and read! Here are six fresh paperbacks, all of which might go nicely with a mug of tea and an armchair.

"The Water Dancer" by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Random House, \$15.99) — Author of the National Book Award-winning essay collection "Between the World and Me," Coates makes his fiction debut with this bestselling and acclaimed novel, centered on a gifted 12-year-old slave on a Virginia plantation. "As with Colson Whitehead's 'The Underground Railroad,' Coates balances the horrors of slavery against the fantastical," wrote Esi Edugyan in The New York Times. "But 'The Water Dancer' is very much its own book, and its gestures toward otherworldliness remain grounded. In the end, it is a novel interested in the psychological effects of slavery, a grief that Coates is especially adept at parsing."

"One Giant Leap: The Impossible Mission That Flew Us to the Moon" by Charles Fishman (Simon & Schuster, \$18) — Timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing last year, Fishman's book "provides both a celebration of the Apollo 11 mission and a corrective to some of the myths that have crystallized around it," wrote Mark Whitaker in a Washington Post review. Calling the book "meticulously researched and absorbingly written," Whitaker notes that Fishman skips the oft-told stories of the Apollo astronauts, instead focusing on "the scientists and engineers who made it all possible."

"The Grammarians" by Cathleen Schine (Picador, \$17) — If you have twins in your life, or even if you don't, you'll likely

enjoy this novel about a pair of identical twin sisters who share a love of language and grammar; I was charmed by it last fall. Schine's sly, sweet novels always feel to me like Nora Ephron movies, and this one has the added delight of a playfulness with language. Definitions from Samuel Johnson's "A Dictionary of the English Language" open every chapter, and the twins' conversations sparkle as they move through their not-quite-conjoined lives.

"Tomorrow Will Be Better" by Betty Smith (HarperCollins, \$16.99) — Those who loved "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" (a

book I devoured repeatedly while growing up) will be happy to hear of the reissue of this 1948 novel by Smith, long out of print. Set in 1920s Williamsburg, Brooklyn, it's the story of a young woman seeking a better life. A Kirkus Reviews writer noted that while it doesn't quite reach the heights of the earlier book, "the warmth of understanding, the note of authenticity are there. And the writing has the same quality of reaching the heart of the story, making the people live and move."

"Carrie Fisher: A Life on the Edge" by Sheila Weller (Picador, \$18) — The actress and writer, who died in 2016 at age 60, would often observe, "If my life wasn't funny it would just be true, and that is unacceptable." In a Washington Post review, Celia Wren wrote, "This engrossing, gracefully written, occasionally hagiographic book doesn't just repeat the motto, it illustrates it, recounting numerous tales about how Fisher, who struggled with mental illness and addiction, managed to find the funny in it all — and share that with audiences."

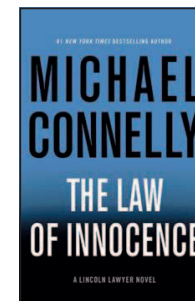
"Interior Chinatown" by Charles Yu (Knopf, \$16) — A finalist for the National Book Award, this novel — soon to be a Hulu series — is the story of Willis Wu, who plays Generic Asian Man in the background of a procedural cop show and dreams of stardom. "Although the lacerating humor in 'Interior Chinatown' never skips a beat, what makes the novel so compelling is its strong commitment to characterization, without which the pointed commentary would be less potent," wrote reviewer Jeff VanderMeer in The New York Times, calling the book "yet another stellar destination in the journey of a sui generis author of seemingly limitless skill and ambition."

What to read next?

Try one of these bestsellers (for the week that ended Nov. 14, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by NPD BookScan).

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. "The Law of Innocence" by Michael Connelly
2. "A Time for Mercy" by John Grisham
3. "The Return" by Nicholas Sparks
4. "The Sentinel" by Child/Child
5. "Fortune and Glory" by Janet Evanovich
6. "Marauder" by Cussler/Morrison
7. "Three Women Disappear" by Patterson/Serafin
8. "Moonflower Murders" by Anthony Horowitz
9. "The Book of Two Ways" by Jodi Picoult
10. "Anxious People" by Fredrik Backman



HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. "Humans" by Brandon Stanton
2. "Greenlights" by Matthew McConaughey
3. "I Would Leave Me If I Could" by Halsey
4. "Modern Comfort Food" by Ina Garten
5. "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man" by Emmanuel Acho
6. "First Principles" by Thomas E. Ricks
7. "Caste" by Isabel Wilkerson
8. "Untamed" by Glennon Doyle
9. "Pappyland" by Wright Thompson
10. "Guinness World Records 2021"

MASS MARKET

1. "Long Tall Texans: Brannon/John" by Diana Palmer
2. "Leopard's Rage" by Christine Feehan
3. "Wyoming True" by Diana Palmer
4. "Spy" by Danielle Steel
5. "The Night Fire" by Michael Connelly
6. "When You See Me" by Lisa Gardner
7. "A Christmas Message" by Debbie Macomber
8. "The Museum of Desire" by Jonathan Kellerman
9. "Delayed Justice" by Shirlee McCoy
10. "Spirit of the Season" by Fern Michaels

TRADE PAPERBACK

1. "The Truths We Hold" by Kamala Harris
2. "What Kind of Woman" by Kate Baer
3. "Sam the Cooking Guy" by Sam Zien
4. "The 19th Christmas" by Patterson/Paetro
5. "Texas Outlaw" by Patterson/Bourelle
6. "The Step-by-Step Instant Pot Cookbook" by Jeffrey Eisner
7. "Walk the Wire" by David Baldacci
8. "The Boy from the Woods" by Harlan Coben
9. "Burnout" by Nagoski/Nagoski
10. "Comfort & Joy" by Kristin Hannah