

city where she is literally surrounded by millions and millions of people. It's the soul's plight of the post-Industrial Age: How can people be lonely when they're stacked on top of each other in gleaming metropolises?

Laing finds company in the work of artists who themselves wrestled with loneliness, self-imposed as well as thrown down by society — the likes of Edward Hopper, Andy Warhol, Klaus Nomi, David Wojnarowicz and Henry Darger. Her descriptions of Hopper's suffocating walls of glass (à la his 1942 oil painting "Nighthawks," and more) raised the hairs on the back of my neck.

And while there are no glossy art images in the book, she describes artworks with such care, such heightened attention to detail and to each artist's set of codes, that seeing them through her eyes is almost better than seeing for yourself.

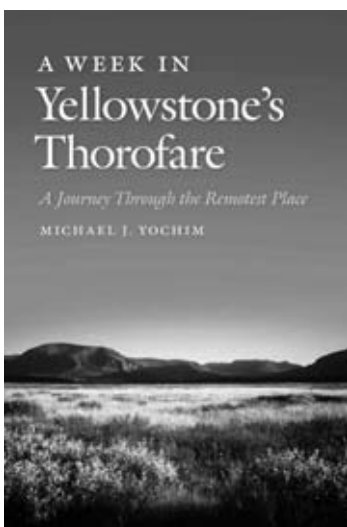
Laing finds that loneliness is "a city in itself," and it's populated by many. — Alex V. Cipolle

The Nordic Theory of Everything: In Search of a Better Life

by Anu Partanen. Harper, \$27.99.

Nothing in U.S. politics surprises me more than a seeming universal lack of imagination in exploring potential alternatives to how we do business and government. This likely has some correlation with the widespread negative resignation

and fatalistic resolve that seem to have rotted the core of our meager political culture. Are there alternatives? Why not explore? *Nordic Theory* is a perfect book to inspire consideration for how nations that are more developed and modern than the U.S. manage their resources. Written by a Finn who has immigrated here, the book is full of interesting comparisons between Nordic countries and the United States. It offers perspectives and statistics that are fascinating and telling in their revelation of how the Nordic countries became more egalitarian, progressive and stable than the United States, partly through adopting some practices borrowed from us in the first place. An expanded theme is how providing citizens with the basic requirements for life, like education and health care, actually creates more individual liberty and autonomy, rather than dependency. Partanen grapples with some of the most common generalizations Americans make when claiming we cannot utilize Nordic approaches and maintains a realistic critique of some issues the Nordic countries currently face. — Paul Quillen



A Week in Yellowstone's Thorofare: A Journey through the Remotest Place

by Michael J. Yochim. Oregon State University Press, \$19.95.

Park ranger Michael J. Yochim's account of a 2014 kayaking trip through the wilderness of Yellowstone's Thorofare takes on a sobering new meaning

when, fairly early in the book, he reveals that he's been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease. Having spent a lifetime exploring nature, hiking thousands of miles over wild terrain, Yochim documents a final journey through his beloved Yellowstone with a group of friends who help him make the journey despite his rapidly failing body.

By turns poetic, musing, historical and descriptive, *A Week in Yellowstone's Thorofare* communicates Yochim's deep love for nature and his concern for its future in the face of climate change. He recounts historical details from Yellowstone's past, explaining how one of Yellowstone's most wild areas was protected from development over the years. The book bears black-and-white photos from this breathtaking area of Wyoming, with sweeping valleys and snow-clad peaks that stun even without color.

"Writing this book was a way for me to cope with the isolation forced upon me by ALS: not only isolation from the landscape I have always found so invigorating, but also isolation from those that I love, as my speech grew increasingly slurred and unintelligible," Yochim writes. "The 12 months that I spent writing and revising this book were the longest time period in a quarter-century that I did not set foot in Yellowstone, and I have no realistic hope of ever getting there again."

Though replete with elegant prose about Yellowstone's wild forests and waters, perhaps the most touching and emotional passages of the book emerge in Yochim's reflections on his condition, the inevitability of his disease and his bittersweet gratefulness to see the wonders of Yellowstone one last time.

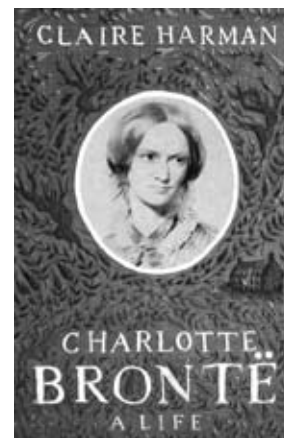
While heartbreaking, Yochim's story strikes deep in that profoundly human part of the soul that connects us with nature and our own fleeting mortality. — Amy Klarup

Teacher: Two Years in the Mississippi Delta

by Michael Copperman. University of Mississippi Press, \$25.

Before local writer Michael Copperman began to teach

writing to low-income, first-generation college students of diverse backgrounds at the University of Oregon, he spent two years in the Mississippi Delta having his illusions shattered. His memoir *Teacher: Two Years in the Mississippi Delta* chronicles the joys, but mainly the heartbreaks, of being sent to teach fourth graders by Teach for America with all the hope in the world but very few of the tools he needed for success. Copperman's writing is wryly personal and brutally honest, and his goals, failures and successes of Teach for America are worth pondering. — Camilla Mortensen



Charlotte Brontë: A Fiery Heart

by Claire Harman. Penguin Random House, \$30.

While reading Claire Harman's excellent biography of Charlotte Brontë — famed author of *Jane Eyre* — I found myself wondering how the Brontës would have fared in the 21st century. Harman intimately describes the siblings' faults and talents, creating a tangible portrait of the Brontë family in all

its oddball charm. Would Branwell Brontë have sought help for his opium addiction and alcoholism, I wonder? Would Charlotte Brontë have found true love on eHarmony, crafting her image through writing to supplement her abysmally absent social graces? Would all four siblings have lived to a ripe old age, producing mountains of literary genius, instead of dying tragically young from tuberculosis?

I have always been intrigued by the Brontës and their churning creativity, so this glimpse into their world proved fascinating. Harman depicts Charlotte Brontë with warmth and fondness, while keeping honest about the darker sides of her nature. Brontë's blatant obsession with her professor is cringe-worthy, an unrequited infatuation that clung to her for years. But Harman's descriptions of Brontë's sensitivity, her bluntness, her ability to craft fantasy worlds to which she mentally escaped, truly shed light on the complexity and deep intelligence that characterized the life of this great novelist. With every success Brontë encounters, I felt cheered, and with every obstacle, I despaired for her. As a woman and author in the 19th century, she faced difficulties at every turn, and Harman's biography portrays the full contextual magnitude of Brontë's accomplishments.

If you're looking for a book that makes you want to reach back through time and hug its subject, *Charlotte Brontë: A Fiery Heart* fulfills every wish. — Amy Klarup

Tesla for Beginners

by Robert I. Sutherland-Cohen, illustrations by Owen Brozman. For Beginners, \$15.95.

I knew the name Nikola Tesla, but it was my love of grammar comics that led me to discover the story of the genius inventor. I avidly read "The Oatmeal" online (and

Read Electronically

with the Eugene Public Library

The Eugene Public Library says when it comes to reading, it's going to stay out of the fray over print ebook versus audio. "In practice, most people enjoy books in each of these ways at different times," the library's director, Connie Bennett, says, adding: "At Eugene Public Library, we believe in freedom of format!"

She says that while every week "thousands of Eugeneans browse and borrow hundreds of thousands of printed books from the library's shelves. Simultaneously, thousands more enjoy eBooks and online audiobooks free with their library cards."

Bennett suggests trying out "eBooks and Streaming" on the library website to start using Library2Go (OverDrive) and Hoopla. She says, "These large, constantly updated collections offer something for everyone: current bestsellers, classics, fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels and comics, and more." And for kids there is Tumblebooks, "which includes read-along animated picture books."

Bennett says the services are easy, save money and are convenient for travel, and, she says, "an absolutely delightful option when you're snuggled in at home on a cold winter's night."

For more info, contact the Eugene Public Library at 541-682-5450 or eugene-or.gov/library.

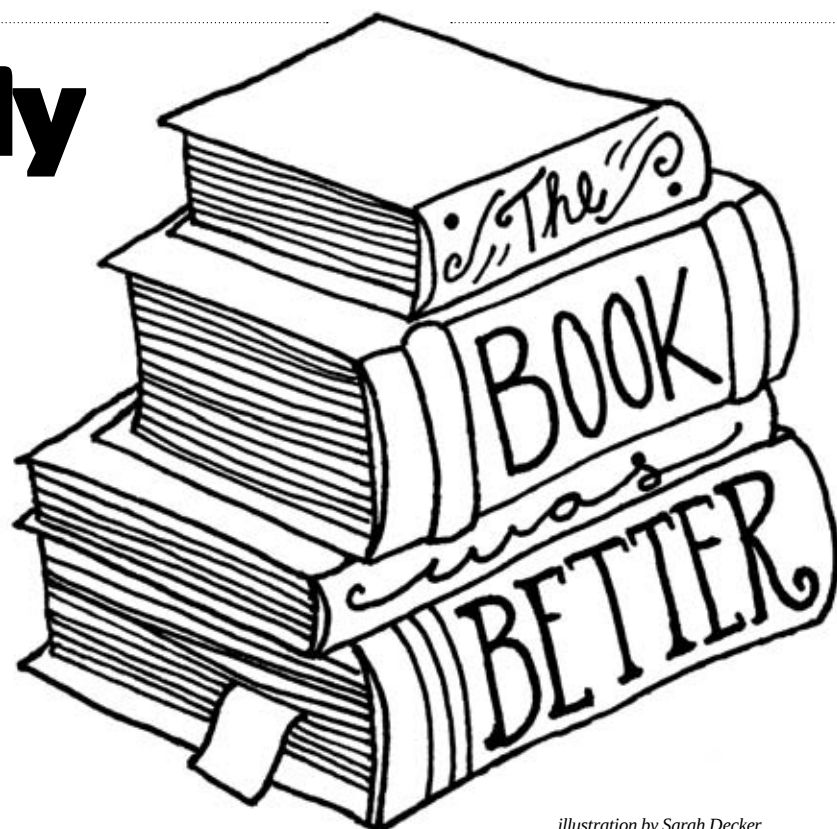


illustration by Sarah Decker