The human condition.

City of Women
A Novel, by David R. Gillham
(Berkley Trade, 9780425252963, $16)

“In this powerful debut, Gillham gives voice to the remarkable women left to defend the home front in war-torn Berlin. He masterfully juxtaposes their courage and determination in the face of opposition with fear, loneliness, and despair. Impeccably told, City of Women is a sensual, suspenseful read filled with extraordinary characters and exceptional moments of resilience, humanity, and grace.”
—Anderson McKeen, Page & Palette, Fairhope, AL

The Dog Stars
A Novel, by Peter Heller
(Vintage, 9780307950475, $15)

“It is 10 years after the end of civilization. Few survived the illness that wiped out most of the population of the U.S. Hig, a pilot, and his dog, Jasper, live in an isolated airport with Bangley, a gun-obsessed gruff man with no second thoughts about killing intruders. Somehow, Hig has maintained his conscience, continues to yearn for more to life, and sets out to find Hig. Heller has written a masterpiece full of language so beautiful it will break your heart and then fill it back up.”
—Hannah Johnson-Breimeier, Next Chapter Bookshop, Mequon, WI

Gold
A Novel, by Chris Cleave
(Simon & Schuster, 9781451672322, $16)

“Cleave is one of the luminaries of modern fiction to read his talent shines near the end of his long career and his marriage—he does what many of us do at a time of great change: reassess the trajectory of our lives by going back to a time when we were truly happy. For Ellis that time was in his twenties, when he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Lower River of Malawi, but the Africa of his sixties is but a shadow of the Africa he left behind, and the idealism he arrives with quickly vanishes in the desperation that covers his beloved village.”
—Amanda Hurley, Inkwood Books, Tampa, FL

Istanbul Passage
A Novel, by Joseph Kanon
(Washington Square Press, 9781439156438, $16)

“Istanbul in 1945—a cauldron of intrigue with layer upon layer of cultures, religions, security organizations, spies, police, foreign agents, and refugees—is the backdrop for this tale of moral ambiguity featuring Leon Bauer, an American taken in as a representative. He has spent the war years in Istanbul doing ‘favors’ for someone from the American Consulate from time to time. Now he is asked for one last favor—to arrange passage of a notorious Romanian woman to Moscow for a joint operation of the KGB and Russians. Elegantly written for a thoroughly absorbing read.”
—Darwin Ellis, Books on the Common, Ridgefield, CT

A Lady Cyclist’s Guide to Kashgar
A Novel, by Suzanne Joinson
(Bloomsbury, 9781608198337, $16)

“Two worlds collide with the discovery of a mysterious inheritance. On one side of the globe in the 1920s, three young women embark on an adventure along a famous Silk Road. On the other side of the world in present day London, two young strangers bond over a beautiful illustration with a history. Decades of family tradition and mystery become unravelled as the stories come crashing together.”
—Morgan Kiedrowski, Next Chapter Bookshop, Mequon, WI

The Lola Quartet
A Novel, by Emily St. John Mandel
(Amazon Kindle, 9780062130525, $14.99)

“Mandel’s characteristic infusions of moral ambiguity and complexity remind us, as good novels should, of what it means to be human.”
—Emily Pullen, WORD, Brooklyn, NY

The Lower River
A Novel, by Paul Theroux
(Mariner Books, 9780544002258, $14.95)

“Theroux’s talent shines near the end of his long career and his marriage—he does what many of us do at a time of great change: reassess the trajectory of our lives by going back to a time when we were truly happy. For Ellis that time was in his twenties, when he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Lower River of Malawi, but the Africa of his sixties is but a shadow of the Africa he left behind, and the idealism he arrives with quickly vanishes in the desperation that covers his beloved village.”
—Amanda Hurley, Inkwood Books, Tampa, FL

The Right-Hand Shore
A Novel, by Christopher Tilghman
(Back Bay Books, 9781501180100, $14.99)

“This tale opens in 1922 with Miss Mary, the stern matron who keeps up the quality of the massive Mason family property on the Chesapeake Bay—interviewing Edward Mason, one of two distant descendants of the original immigrant owner, as she decides to whom she will leave it all when she dies. Told in a series of vignettes, the homestead’s proudest as well as most brutal moments are recounted by those whose lives are intertwined—for better or for worse—with the Masons and with The Retreat. A vivid and haunting look at the power of family and place by a master storyteller.”
—Jill Minner, Saturn Bookellers, Gaylord, MI

The Roots of the Olive Tree
A Novel, by Courtney Miller Santo
(William Morrow Paperbacks, 9780062130525, $14.99)

“Set in northern California, Santo’s debut features five generations of strong women who live in an old house on an olive grove. The women know there is a secret to harvesting the last of the olive crop, but can’t quite put it in words. They’ve kept the secret for so long that it seems to enhance longevity. Rich with secrets, this lovely novel winds through the lives of each woman as a geneticist seeks the reason for their youthfulness. Santo gives readers an intimate look into a family of women come to terms with tragedy, love, childbirth, and infidelity. Not to be missed!”
—Annie Philbrick, Bank Square Books, Mystic, CT

Seating Arrangements
A Novel, by Maggie Shipstead
(Vintage, 9780307743954, $15)

“This is the kind of character-driven, thoroughly enjoyable read I love! It easily compares to the family drama in J. Courtney Sullivan’s Maine and the humor in Richard Russo’s That Old Cape Magic. Just add lots of gin and tonics, men in pants with whales on them, and characters with names like Biddy, Fee, and Oatsie, and you’ve got the irresistible Seating Arrangements!”
—Claire Benedict, Bear Pond Books of Montpelier, Montpelier, VT

The Yellow Birds
A Novel, by Kevin Powers
(Back Bay Books, 9780316219341, $14.99)

“The Yellow Birds should be required reading for the President, Congress, and the entire Military Industrial Complex. Powers’ novel describes in lyrical language the intensity and the confusion of war. Young men who have barely left boyhood face battle for the first time in Iraq, a country and a people that they know little about. For those fortunate enough to return home, the war comes with them and affects their families as well. In eloquent prose, Iraq war veteran Powers unveils the hidden costs of war for the average American. Truthful and painful, The Yellow Birds will join the classics of war fiction.”
—Joan Grenier, Odyssey Bookshop, South Hadley, MA