



# 2025 SUMMER READING LIST

BETTER  
TOGETHER

Dear Maverick Collective community,

We live in a culture that often glorifies individualism — celebrating the solo act, the lone genius, the self-made success. But look closer, and you'll see a different truth: the most enduring, impactful, and joyful work in the world doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in community and through connection with others. This means it can be messy and even sometimes painful; but all the more beautiful and powerful.

This year's [Maverick Collective](#) summer reading list is called **Better Together**. It serves as both a nod to our 2020 community programming at the start of the COVID pandemic, and as a celebration of the enduring idea that relationships — especially among women — are not only essential to our personal wellbeing, but also to how we lead, change systems, raise families, create art, build movements, and heal the world.

As Dr. Vivek Murthy wrote in [My Parting Prescription for America](#), at the end of his tenure as Surgeon General in 2025:

**“THIS IS MY PARTING PRESCRIPTION, MY FINAL WISH FOR ALL OF US:  
CHOOSE COMMUNITY.”**

His words are a reminder that connection isn't a luxury — it is a necessity for building resilience, creating meaning, and finding joy.

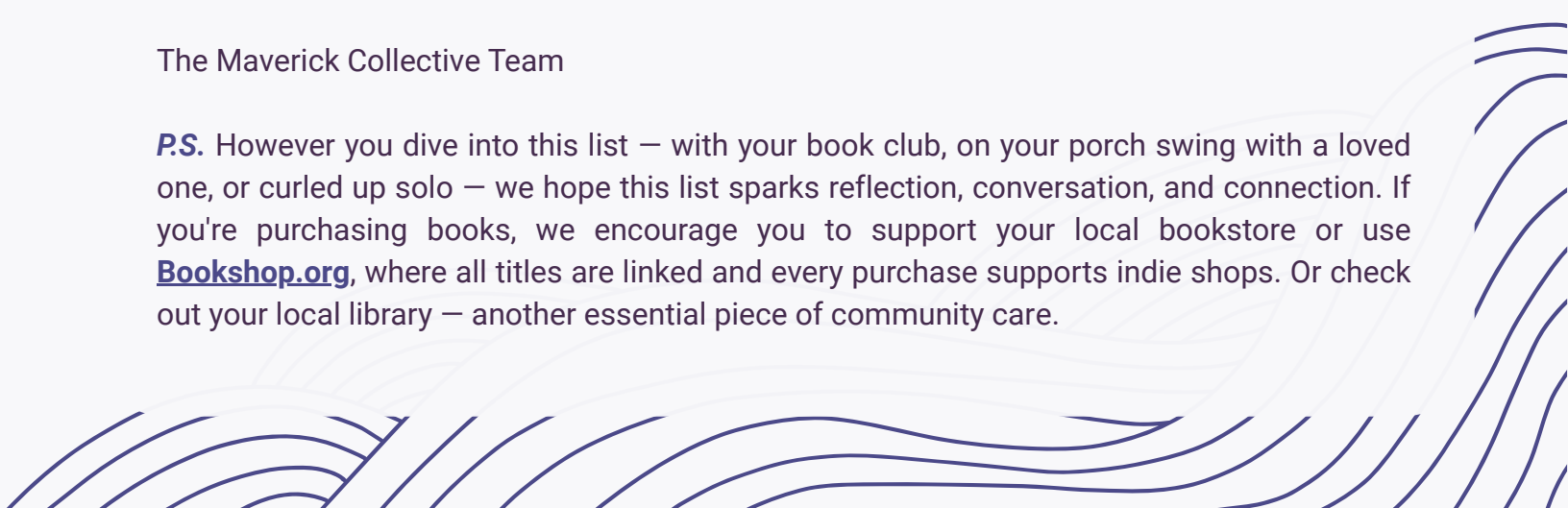
Whether it's communities facing injustices and rising into action, sisters-in-arms plotting codebreaking coups, or modern friendships navigating conflict and repair, the books on this list explore the full spectrum of what it means to *do* life with one another.

Some are deeply personal. Some are grounded in research. Some are fictional and fabulously fun. But each one reminds us: when women come together, magic happens — and so does meaningful change.

Happy reading and have a joyful summer!

The Maverick Collective Team

**P.S.** However you dive into this list — with your book club, on your porch swing with a loved one, or curled up solo — we hope this list sparks reflection, conversation, and connection. If you're purchasing books, we encourage you to support your local bookstore or use [Bookshop.org](#), where all titles are linked and every purchase supports indie shops. Or check out your local library — another essential piece of community care.



# Our 2025 Book Spotlight

## The Big We by Hali Lee

Honorary Maverick — and all-around extraordinary human — Hali Lee brings heart, grounded-wisdom, and clear-eyed purpose to her debut book, *The Big We*. Part memoir, part manifesto, this powerful read invites us to rethink what it means to give — not as an exclusive act of wealth or charity, but as a joyful, collective force, rooted in community.

Drawing from her own story and the experiences of people across the country, Hali shows how giving circles, mutual aid, and civic engagement are reshaping philanthropy from the ground up. Through small, everyday acts of generosity, people are building something bigger: a culture of shared care, belonging, and possibility.

If you met Hali at our [10th anniversary in New York](#) or through [Freedom School for Philanthropy](#), you already know how expansive her vision is. If you're just meeting her now, you're in for something extraordinary. *The Big We* speaks to this moment — when so many of us feel overwhelmed, disconnected, or disillusioned — and offers a deeply hopeful path forward. It's about reclaiming philanthropy as something joyful, rooted in culture and community, and open to all of us.

This is a book about generosity — not just of money, but of time, attention, imagination, and love. It's an invitation to learn together, act together, and give together — and to build a future that truly belongs to all of us.



We'll be hosting a special session with Hali on **September 30** to dive into her book and explore the power of community giving. You won't want to miss it!

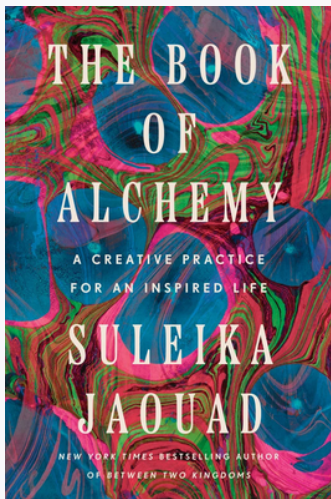
# Foundations for Connection

## **Fired Up: How to Turn Your Spark into a Flame and Come Alive at Any Age** by Shannon Watts

If you've ever felt stuck or talked yourself out of going after what you really want because you felt too old, too busy, or not "ready" enough, this book is for you.

Shannon, who founded Moms Demand Action, knows what it means to step into your power, and *Fired Up* is her call to action — and encouragement — to light that spark inside you.

Filled with the kind of real talk and motivation that makes you believe you can do the thing, you'll want this one on your shelf - and maybe a copy to lend around!



## **The Book of Alchemy** by Suleika Jaouad

A powerful guide to journaling as a creative and healing practice. Through thoughtful prompts and reflections from over 100 artists and thinkers, *The Book of Alchemy* invites us to explore life's big questions, navigate uncertainty, and transform everyday experiences into meaning. A great choice if you are looking for inspiration, clarity, and connection in even the most challenging times.

*"A kind and human book that welcomes creativity, community, and curiosity through journaling. A great way to explore documenting the daily through prompts from amazing people sharing how they engage in the world. Fun to read as a stand alone or engage with as a daily practice" ~ Emma*

## **Partnering: Forge the Deep Connections That Make Great Things Happen** by Jean Oelwang

*Partnering* is a powerful call to reimagine success as something built through deep, purposeful relationships. Drawing wisdom from iconic partnerships like Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Ben and Jerry, Desmond and Leah Tutu, and the team who helped close the ozone hole, Jean Oelwang shows us how meaningful connection is at the heart of impactful lives and collaborations.

Through hundreds of interviews with changemakers, Jean identifies six core principles that help partners stay aligned, resolve conflict with grace, and support each other through anything.



# Cultivating Strong Relationships



## **Fighting for Our Friendships: The Science and Art of Conflict and Connection in Women's Relationships**

by Danielle Bayard Jackson

Sometimes friendships can feel so deep, and also so fragile. In this book, a friendship coach unpacks the psychology and science behind how we connect, communicate, and sometimes hurt each other, and offers smart, actionable ways to do better.

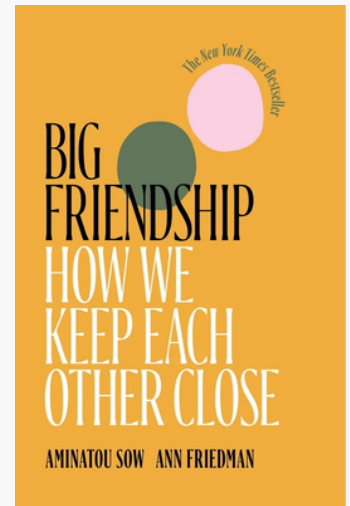
We especially loved her breakdown of “friend types” and the idea that we don’t have to opt out when things get hard; we can opt in and learn how to show up better. Whether you’re nurturing long-time bonds or trying to build new ones, this book is full of tools to help you deepen your connections with others.

## **Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close**

by Aminatou Sow & Ann Friedman

The longtime co-hosts of *Call Your Girlfriend* 🎧 pull back the curtain on their own decade-long friendship: the good, the messy, the heartbreaking, and the hilarious. They explore what they call a *Big Friendship*—one that spans life phases, distance, and even periods of deep tension—and how it requires just as much care and commitment as any other meaningful relationship.

As we embark on new adventures and get ready to put in the work to sustain friendships, Aminatou and Ann remind us that choosing and making space for our friends—again and again—is one of the most important choices we can make.



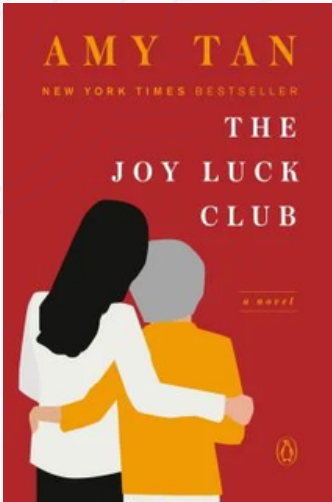
## **We All Want Impossible Things** by Catherine Newman

This book is a raucous, tender, and laugh-out-loud celebration of friendship, love, and life in all its messy beauty. It follows Edith and Ashley, best friends for over 40 years, as they face the unthinkable: Edi is dying, and Ash is trying to be there for her. Between hospice visits, exes, kids, and all that life throws at her, Ash stumbles through grief, love, and the chaos of being human.

The writing is sharp, funny, and full of heart. It reminded us of how rare and precious deep friendship is, and how hard it is to let go. If you’ve ever lost a friend or just deeply loved one, this book will land in that soft, aching spot. Be ready to laugh, cry, and probably send long voice notes to your friends.



# Cultivating Strong Relationships



## The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

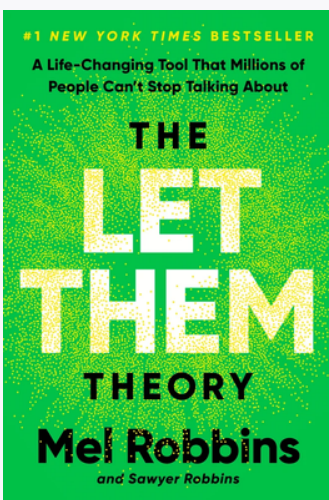
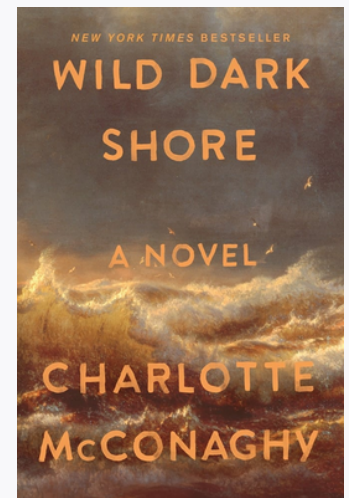
*The Joy Luck Club* is a beautifully written, deeply moving novel about the complicated, tender bond between mothers and daughters. It follows four Chinese immigrant women in 1940s San Francisco who meet regularly to play mah jong, share stories, and support one another through love, loss, and change. Their daughters, raised in America, often find themselves caught between two cultures and generations. As the women's histories slowly unfold, so do the deep emotional threads connecting past and present.

It's a nuanced story about identity, memory, and healing—and about how, even when it feels like we're worlds apart, our roots still run deep. A true modern classic you'll want to talk about afterward.

## Wild Dark Shore by Charlotte McConagh

On a remote island near Antarctica, a storm brings a mysterious woman into the lives of the Salt family, caretakers of a crucial seed bank. As secrets surface and trust frays, they must confront past tragedies and rising dangers. *Wild Dark Shore* is a haunting, atmospheric story of survival, love, and renewal.

*"This woman is one of my favorite writers. Her prose is beautiful, she weaves in incredible detail about the natural environment (truly a character in its own right in each of her three books), and this poignant book is about the power of (unconditional) love between parents and children." ~ Becky*



## The Let Them Theory by Mel Robbins

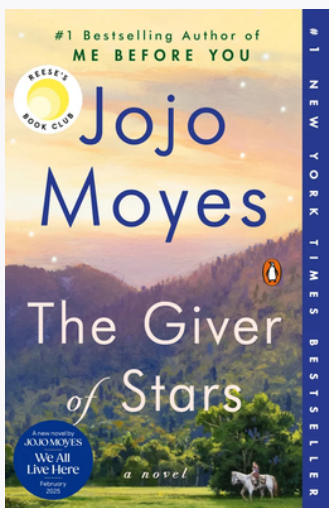
In *The Let Them Theory*, Mel Robbins shares a simple but powerful mindset shift: stop trying to control others, **let them**. This practical, no-nonsense guide helps you reclaim your energy, focus on what truly matters, and build a life grounded in your own happiness, goals, and peace of mind.

*"I have always loved the principle that we can only control ourselves, not others around us. From a young age, my mom taught this over and over to my sisters and I. As strong, get it done women, this is a great reminder of what we have control over and what we don't." ~ Amanda*

# Community in Action

## The Once and Future Witches by Alix E. Harrow

A fierce, magical reimagining of the women's suffrage movement, mixing sisterhood, rebellion, and reclaiming power with a touch of magic! Set in an alternate 1890s New Salem, the novel follows the Eastwood sisters as they reunite and reignite their outlawed witchcraft to fight for both women's rights and their own survival. This novel is for someone who enjoys a slower paced world-building full of female rage, resilience, and solidarity. After all, if to be a witch is to stand alongside your sisters to resist a system that seeks to silence you and strip your autonomy, sign us up!



## The Giver of Stars by Jojo Moyes

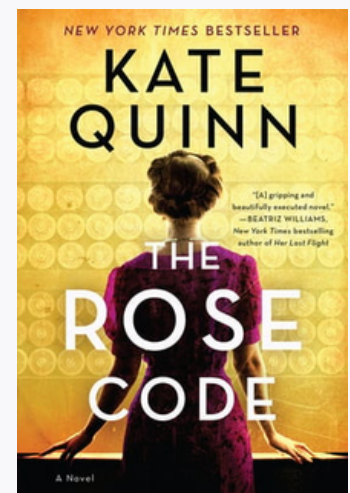
Inspired by the real-life Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky, *The Giver of Stars* follows an unlikely group of women as they face off against prejudice, personal dangers, and unforgivable climate and terrain. Together they ride into remote mountain communities, delivering books and knowledge to those long overlooked. Against all odds, these women forge deep friendships and challenge the rigid norms of their time. Through love, heartbreak, and resilience, they fight for justice, literacy, and the freedom to live on their own terms.

Richly told and deeply moving, this novel is a tribute to the power of female solidarity and the transformative gift of finding and cultivating community.

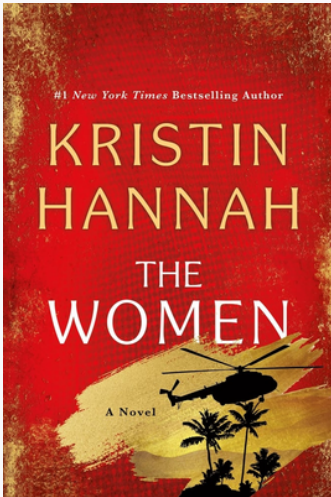
## The Rose Code by Kate Quinn

*The Rose Code* by Kate Quinn is a gripping tale of friendship, secrets, and resilience. In 1940, three women—Osla, Mab, and Beth—are brought together at Bletchley Park to help crack Nazi codes. Despite their differences, they form a deep bond under the strain of war. But betrayal tears them apart, and years later, a cryptic letter reunites them to uncover a hidden traitor before it's too late.

Spanning two timelines, this novel is a moving tribute to the unsung heroines of WWII—and a powerful reminder that true friendship can endure even the deepest wounds and the passage of time.



# Community in Action



## The Women by Kristin Hanna

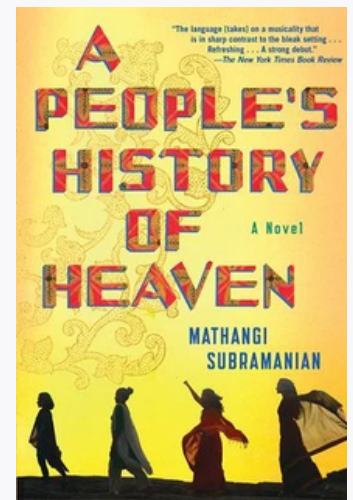
*The Women* follows Frankie McGrath, a young nurse who joins the Army during the Vietnam War. As she faces the horrors of war and the struggles of coming home, Frankie's journey honors the courage, sacrifice, and resilience of the often-forgotten women who served, and the deep bonds forged in the fire.

*"I loved this historical fiction about a woman who served as a nurse during the Vietnam War. While I loved this book for similar reasons that others have, I was impressed by the main character's pursuit of showing up as a woman in a complicated political and chaotic time in history." ~ Amanda*

## A People's History of Heaven by Mathangi Subramanian

Set in a hidden slum in Bangalore, five girls—each from a different faith and walk of life—form an unshakable sisterhood as they grow up in a world that constantly tries to overlook them. They are queer and straight, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian, but most of all, they are brave, full of love, and determined to thrive. When their homes are threatened by developers, these girls and their mothers stand their ground, refusing to be erased. What follows is a fierce, moving portrait of resistance, joy, and community.

If you're drawn to stories about friendship, resilience, and finding beauty and power in overlooked places, this one will stick with you.





# Great Reads at Every Age



## **The Rabbit Listened** by Cori Doerrfeld

When something sad happens to Taylor, a parade of animals tries to help — talking, yelling, offering distractions — but none of it feels right. Then the rabbit comes and quietly listens. No fixing. No advice. Just presence.

With tender words and soft, expressive illustrations, this book beautifully shows that sometimes the best way to support someone is to hold space for their feelings. A meaningful read for children and adults alike, it's a timeless reminder of the healing power of empathy and quiet connection. **(Reading age: 2+ years)**

## **The Kindest Red** by Ibtihaj Muhammad, S.K. Ali, & Hatem Aly

In this heartwarming follow-up to *The Proudest Blue*, Olympic medalist Ibtihaj Muhammad and bestselling author S. K. Ali share the story of Faizah, whose bright red dress sets the tone for a day filled with hope, imagination, and unexpected acts of kindness. As picture day unfolds, Faizah is reminded that creating a better world often starts with the small, thoughtful choices we make — and the friends who stand beside us. **(Reading age: 4 - 8 years)**



## **Ivy+Bean** by Any Barrows

Meet Ivy and Bean — two girls who couldn't be more different... and couldn't be better friends. Ivy is quiet, thoughtful, and a little mysterious. Bean is loud, curious, and full of wild ideas. They never expected to like each other — but when mischief calls, this unlikely duo proves they're the perfect match. Full of laugh-out-loud moments and just the right amount of trouble, this first book kicks off a beloved series that celebrates the surprise of new friendships and the joy of being unapologetically yourself. **(Reading age: 6 - 8 years)**

# Great Reads at Every Age



## Finally Seen by Kelly Yang

A moving story about immigration, finding your voice, and the power of community. When 10-year-old Lina moves to the U.S. to reunite with her family after five years apart, nothing feels familiar — not her new home, not school, and not even the people she missed most. As she works to find her place, Lina discovers that stories, friendship, and her own voice may be the key to building a life she feels she truly belongs in. **(Reading age: 9 - 12 years)**

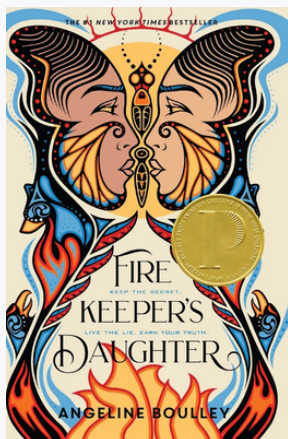
## Maya and the Rising Dark by Rena Barron

An action-packed contemporary fantasy featuring fierce 12-year-old Maya and her loyal group of friends as they battle supernatural forces and come to terms with their newly discovered half-godling heritage—all to protect their neighborhood... and the world. If you're a fan of *Percy Jackson* or *Harry Potter*, Maya's adventures will be right at home on your list! **(Reading age: 9 - 12 years)**



## Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley

Blending Ojibwe tradition and science, Daunis, a Native teen is drawn into an undercover FBI investigation after witnessing a murder. She must navigate cultural identity, justice, and betrayal to protect her community and uncover dangerous truths in a rarely centered YA setting. **(Reading age: 15 - 18 years)**

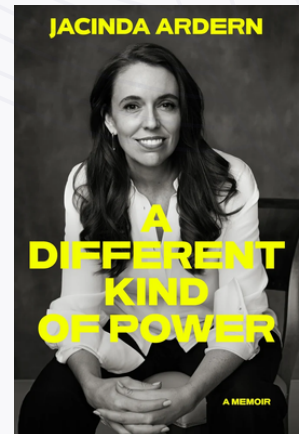


*"This YA novel is a gripping story but an easy read, and I definitely stayed up way too late to finish it. It immerses you in the Native Ojibwe community where the story is set and seamlessly orients you to the culture and traditions. **A warning that it does reference sexual assault.** I can't wait to read the sequel *Warrior Girl Unearthed* this summer!" ~ Audrey*

# Community Favorites

## A Different Kind of Power by Jacinda Ardern

*"I'm excited to dive into this one, from a leader I've long admired. Ardern models a different kind of leadership: empathetic and kind."*  
~ Cristina



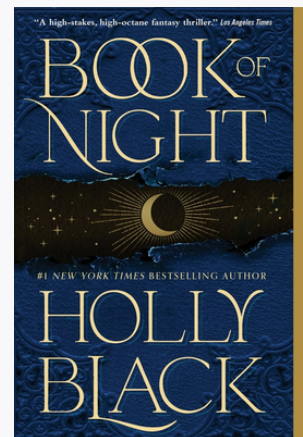
## Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here by Jonathan Blitzer

*"Meticulously researched and highly informative book for anyone who wants to understand the historical, political and very human underpinnings of the current migrant crisis at the American southern border."* ~ Becky



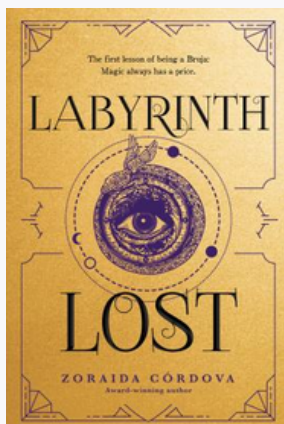
## Book of Night by Holly Black

*"Holly makes the mundane feel magical and brings the magic close enough to touch. This noir mystery will have you checking your shadow—twice!"* ~ Legna



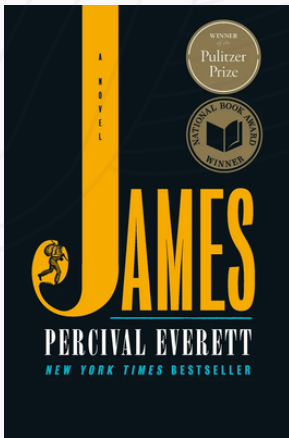
## Labyrinth Lost by Zoraida Córdova

*The first in a great YA trilogy where heritage is magic. Each book is centered around a sister's struggles balancing their family's traditions with their identities while coming of age in the heart of Brooklyn. This series helped remind me of the power of intergenerational families and the privilege of carving a new path, guided by ancestral wisdom. Did I mention there are zombies (book 2)??* ~Legna





# Community Favorites

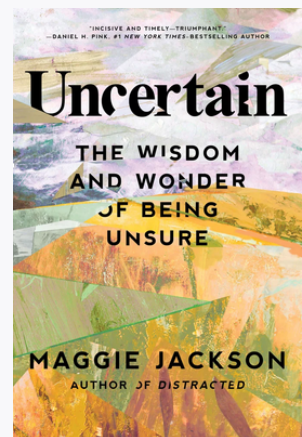


## James by Percival Everett

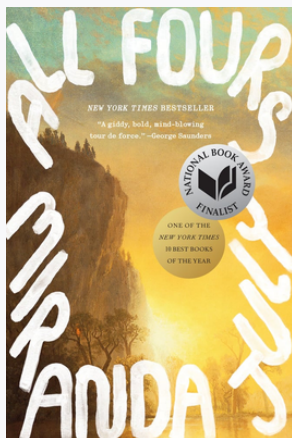
*"James is the story of Huckleberry Finn, told from the perspective of the enslaved Jim. It was poignant, funny, and resonant with so many of the battles still being fought today for justice, autonomy, and simply being seen." ~ Rena*

## Uncertain by Maggie Jackson

*"In a world that rewards quick answers, Uncertain is a powerful reminder of the value of not knowing. It challenged me to embrace ambiguity as a space for growth, creativity, and deeper connection." ~ Darley*



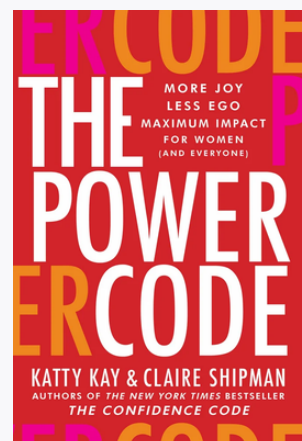
## All Fours by Miranda July



*"Everyone is talking about All Fours and for good reason! Miranda July is unabashed in this somewhat ridiculous but oh-so-real story of a woman exploring the edges of marriage, monogamy, childbirth, gender, sex, menopause, art, and self-discovery. Some people hate it. I loved it. It makes great conversation regardless of how you feel!" ~Rena*

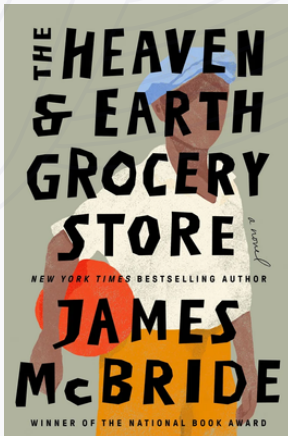
## The Power Code by Katty Kay & Claire Shipman

*"Power is a constant topic these days — but women's relationship to it is often more complex. The Power Code helped me rethink how we hold, share, and use power not just for personal success, but for collective impact." ~ Darley*





# Community Favorites

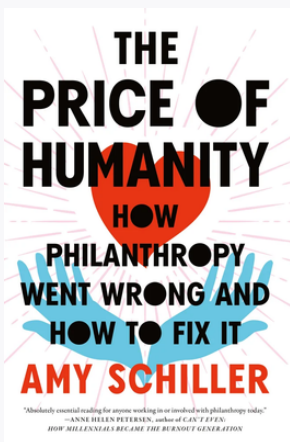
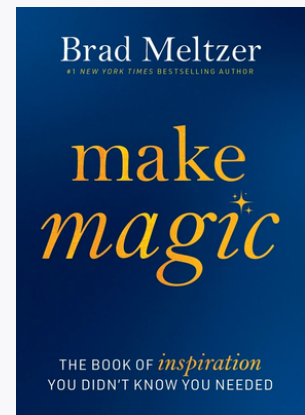


**The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store** by James McBride

*"This is a fun book recommendation. The writing is phenomenal and the ending is a big surprise." ~ Indrani*

**Make Magic** by Brad Meltzer

*"Based on a commencement address, Make Magic is a short but lovely read that distills some of life's truest lessons to help anyone become the best version of themselves. As someone who sees my own work as magic-making, this one hit especially close to home." ~ Darley*



**The Price of Humanity: How Philanthropy Went Wrong—And How to Fix It** by Amy Schiller

*"This is a head spinning, must-read for anyone interested in rethinking giving, power, and equity. It will challenge how you think about philanthropy and push your limits. While you may not agree with the ideas, it will help ground you in yours." ~ Cristina*

**Margo's Got Money Troubles** by Rufi Thorpe

*"This was a thoroughly enjoyable and provocative story that tackles feminism, motherhood, social media, sex work, and the assumptions we make about what it means to be human and good. Also made for the best book club conversation we had all year" ~ Rena*



# Revisit Past Summer Reads

