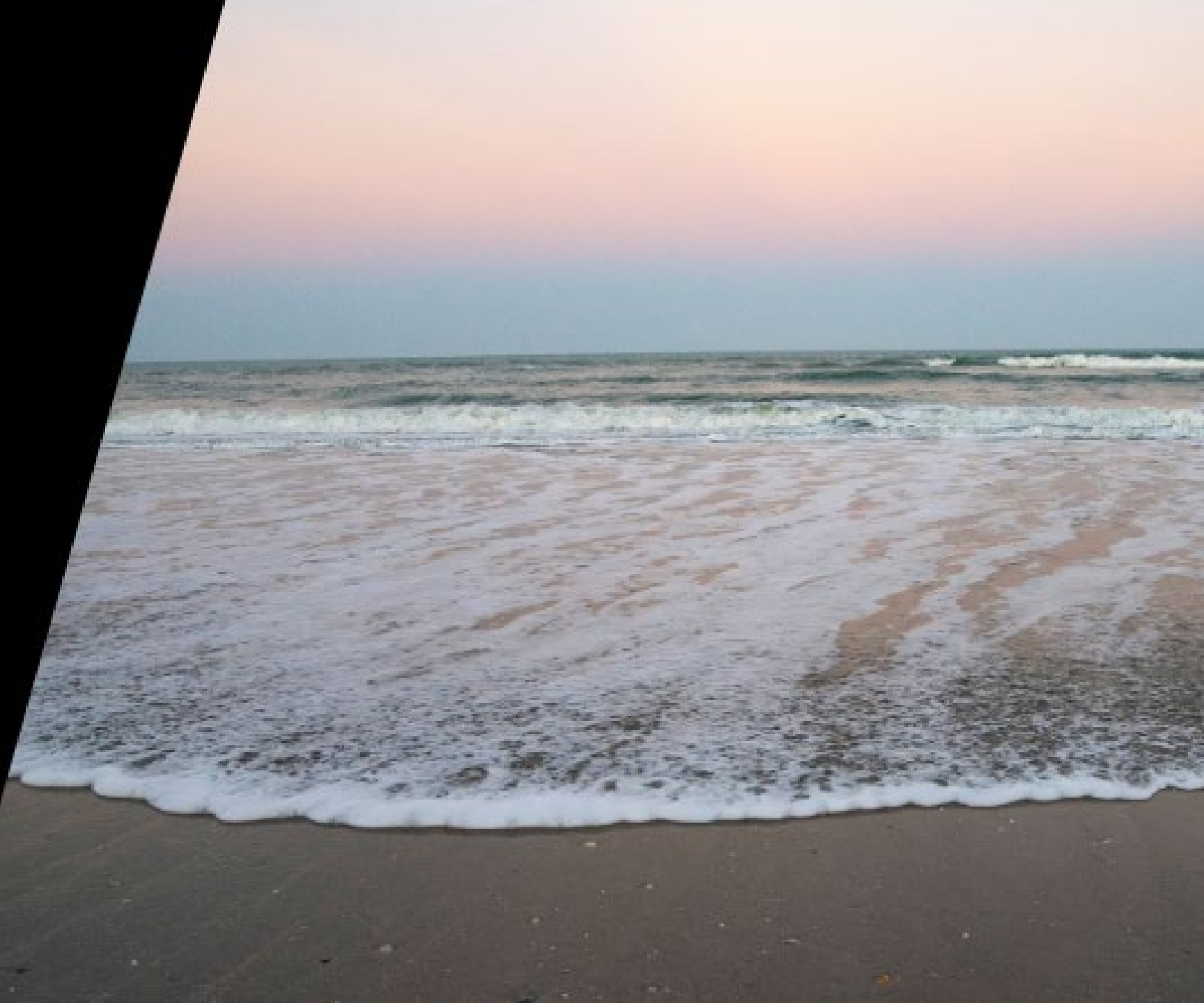


# CRASH COURSE IN GENTLE READS

NoveList



# Panelists



Lindsey Dunn

Senior Readers' Advisory Librarian, NoveList



Kaite Stover

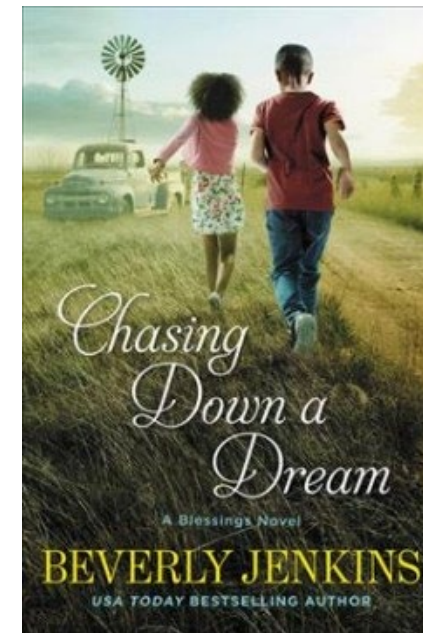
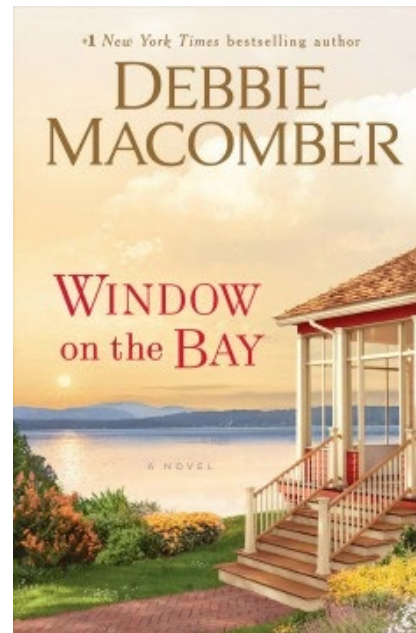
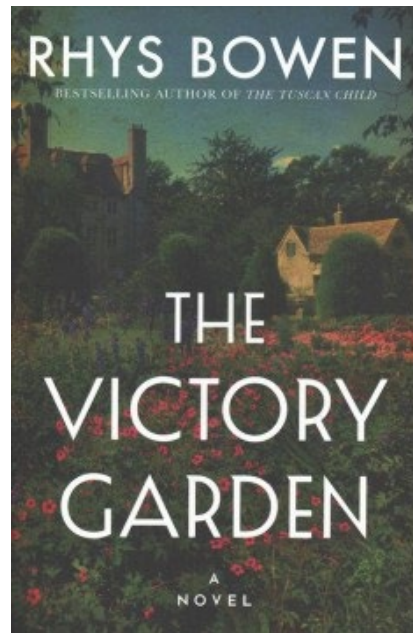
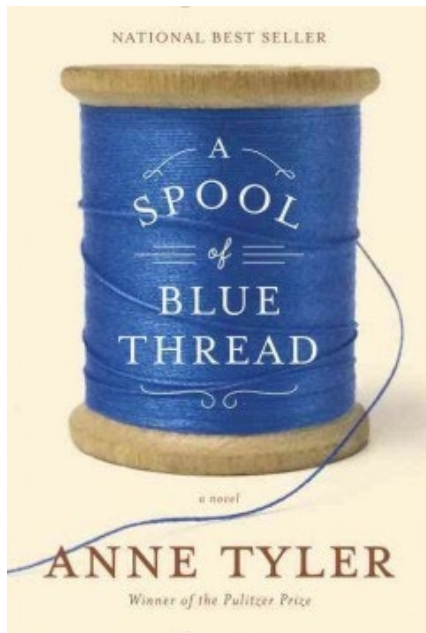
Director of Readers' Services, Kansas City Public Library



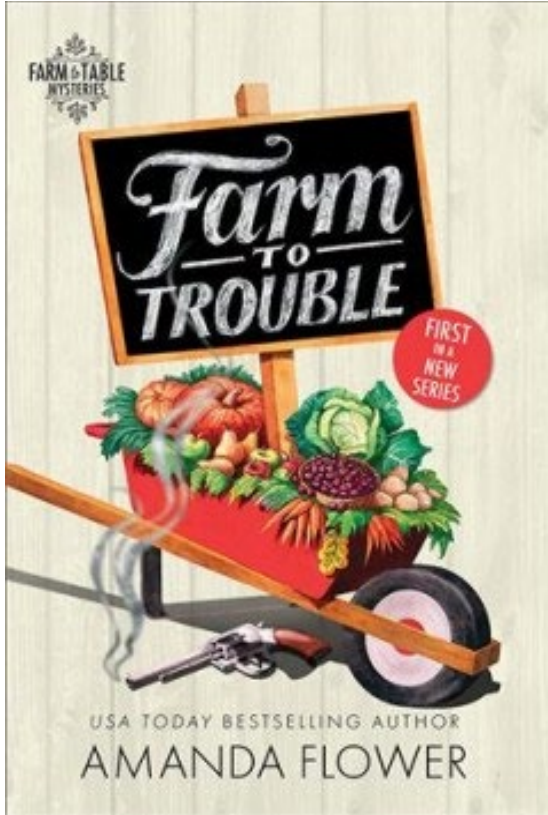
[libraryreads.org](http://libraryreads.org)

# What are gentle reads?

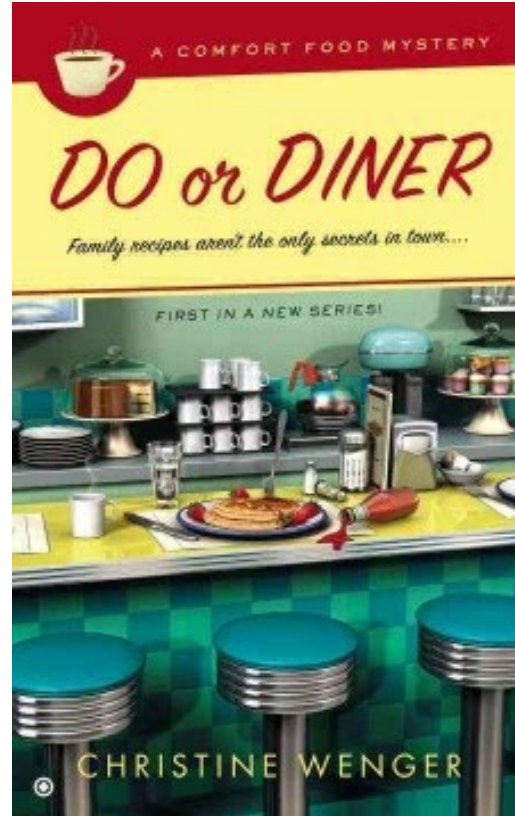
1. Feel-good books that project a comfortable sense of well-being
2. They reflect wholesome values and have a satisfactory ending
3. They are void of profanity, explicit sex, or violence



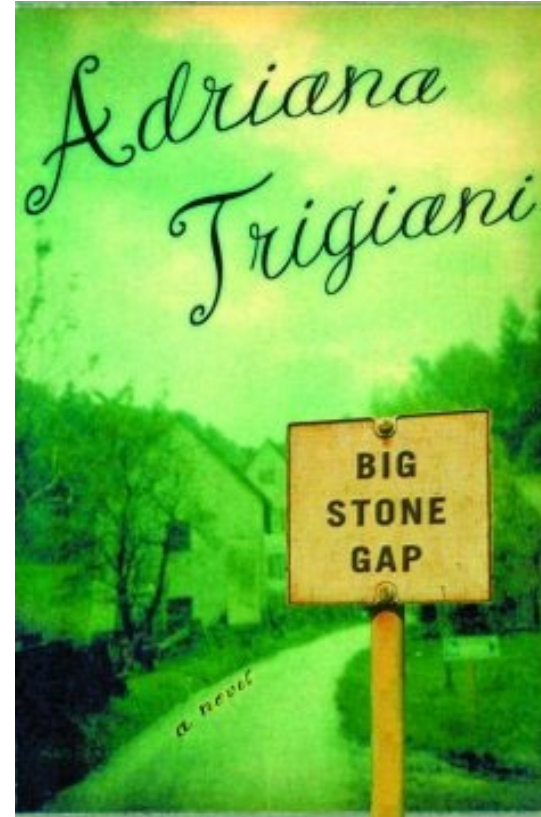
# What happens in gentle reads?



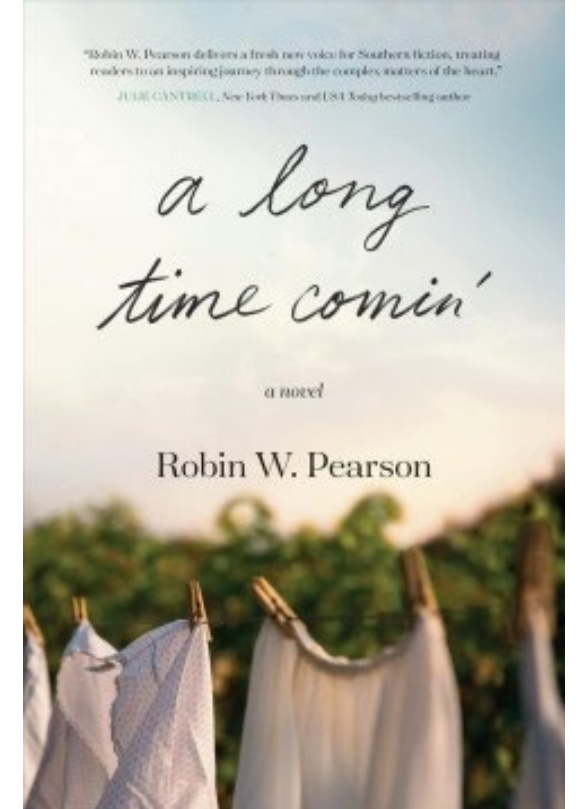
Homecoming



Timeless feel



Good natured humor



Witty colorful characters

# Why do readers like gentle reads?

- ❖ Peaceful, easy feeling
- ❖ Kinder, gentler
- ❖ Hope and escape
- ❖ Everything ends well



# Gentle Reads – Tricky Business

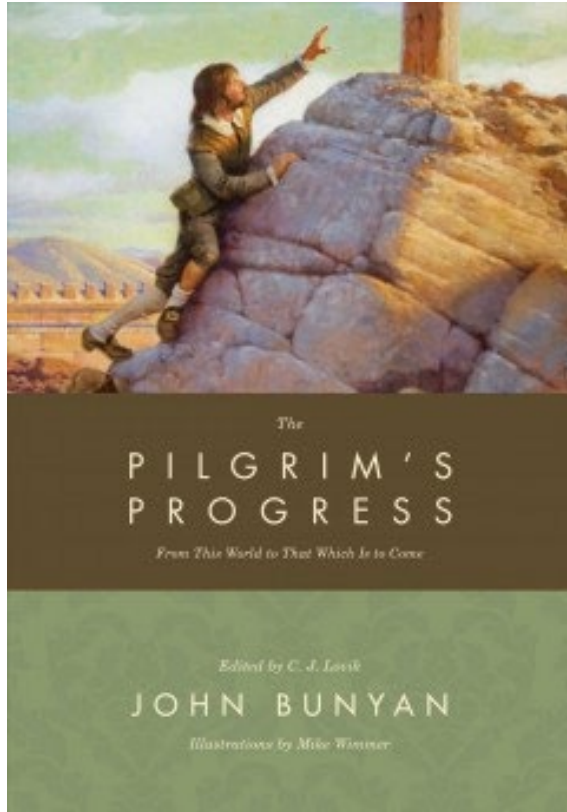


# A History of the Genre

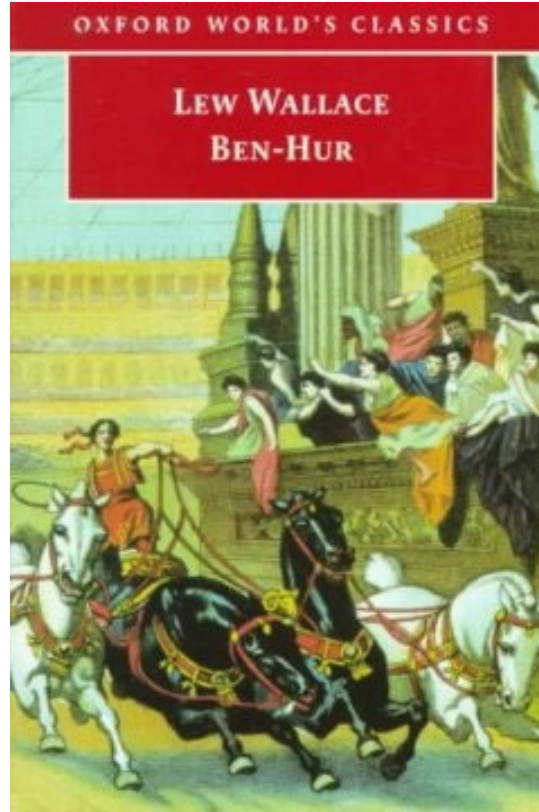




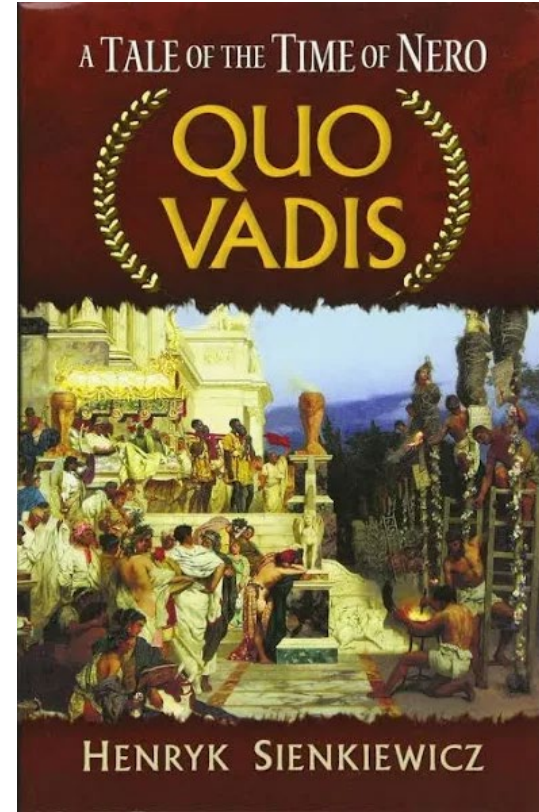
# The Stage is Set



1678

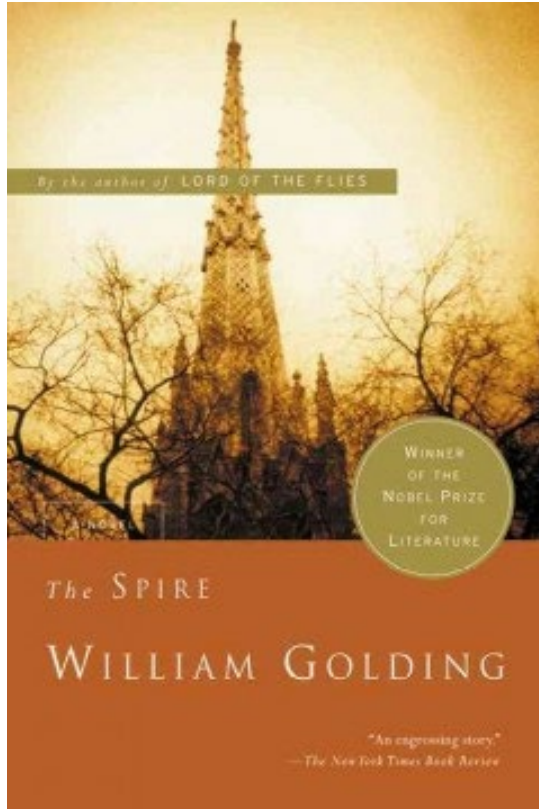


1880

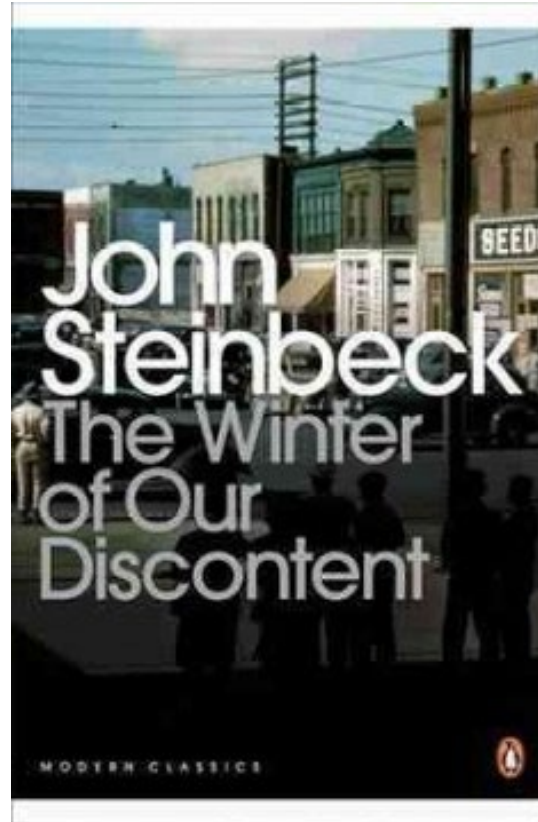


1895

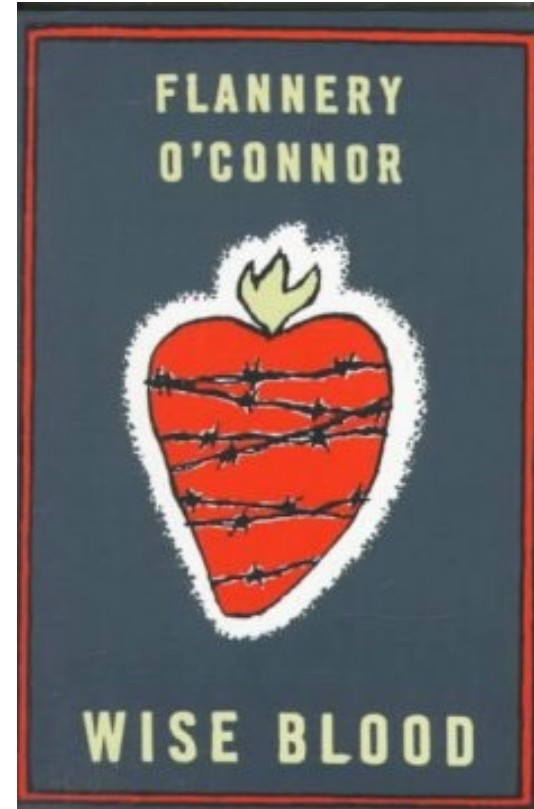
# Tumultuous 60s



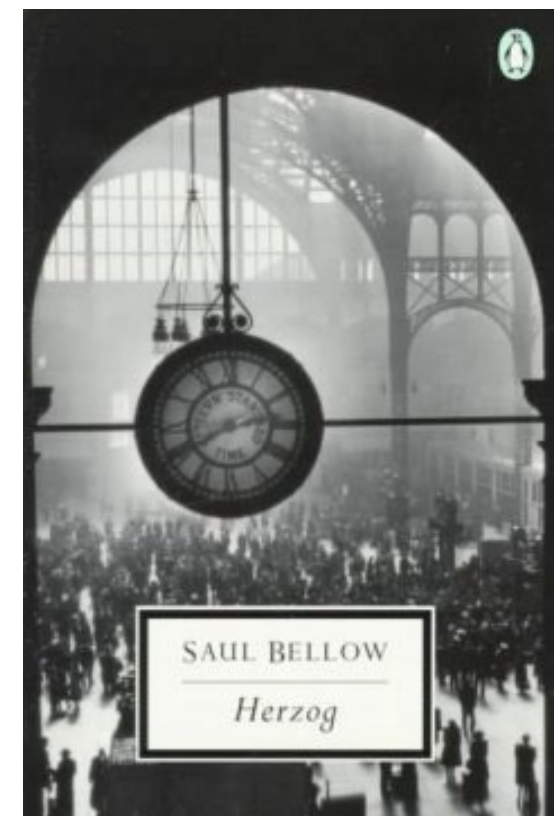
1964



1961



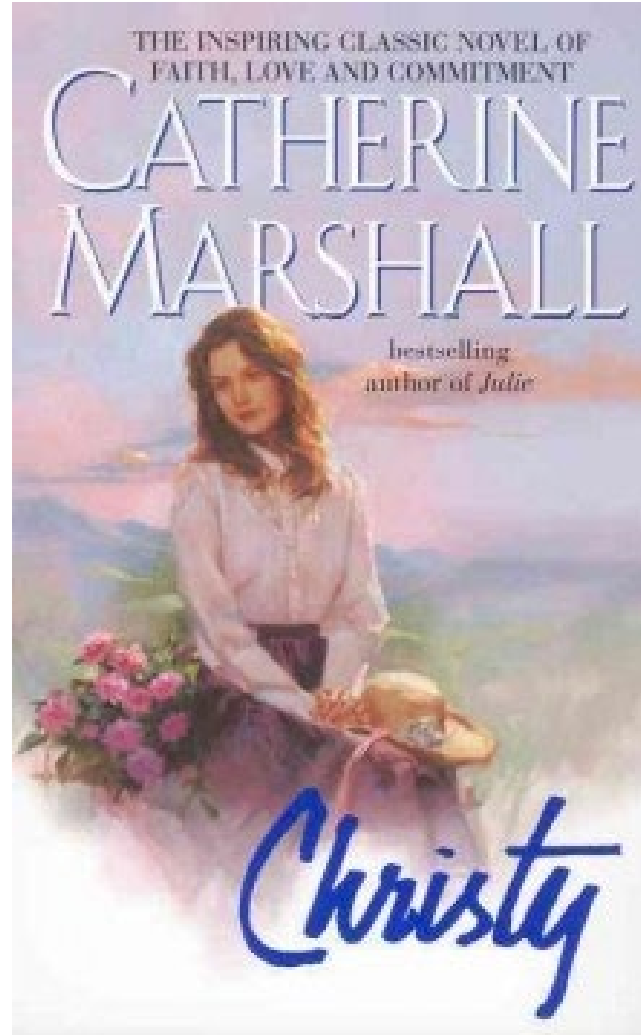
1962



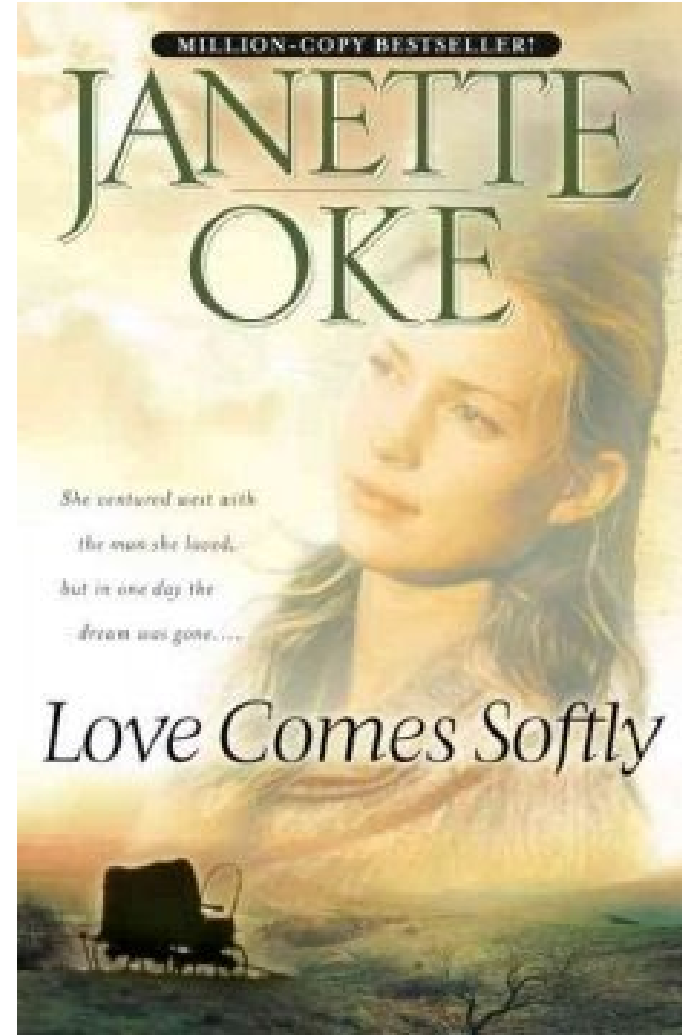
1964

# The Cornerstone Books

1968

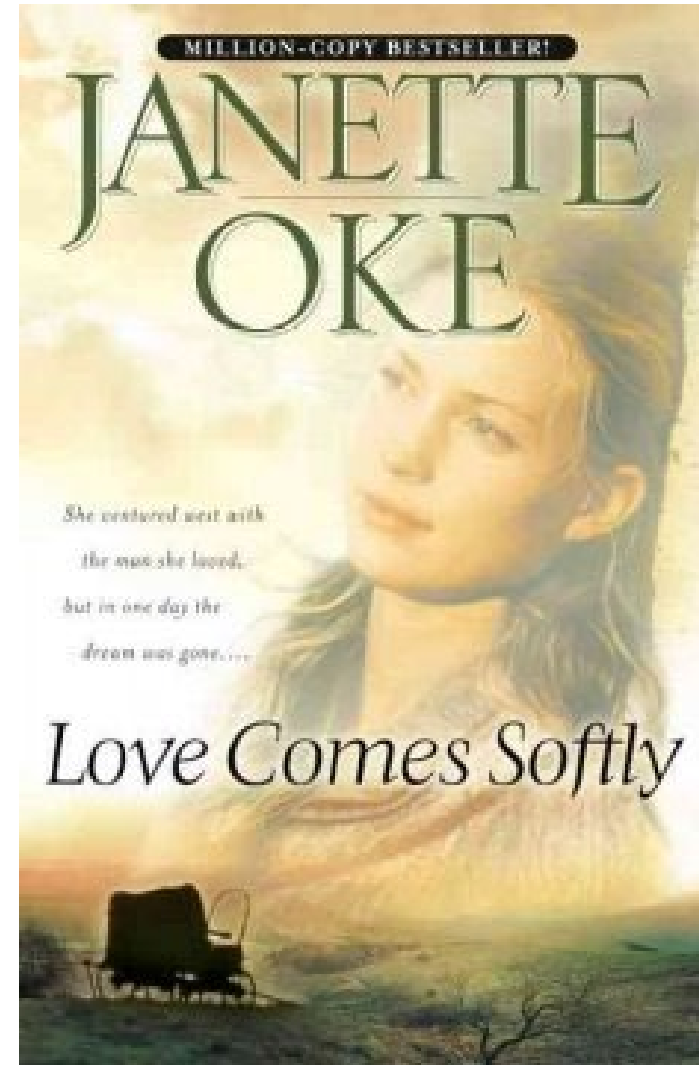


1979



# Love Comes Softly

- ❖ Nostalgia
- ❖ Love
- ❖ Redemption
- ❖ Old-fashioned values
- ❖ Not overly preachy
- ❖ Publishers had to take notice



I've been very reluctant to read inspirational romances lately because of the preachiness I often find in them, but *Love Comes Softly* was a **truly uplifting novel** that brought me back to some **simple spiritual truths** that had **somehow gotten lost** in the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

[Quote from Hope Chest Reviews](#)

# The Great Split

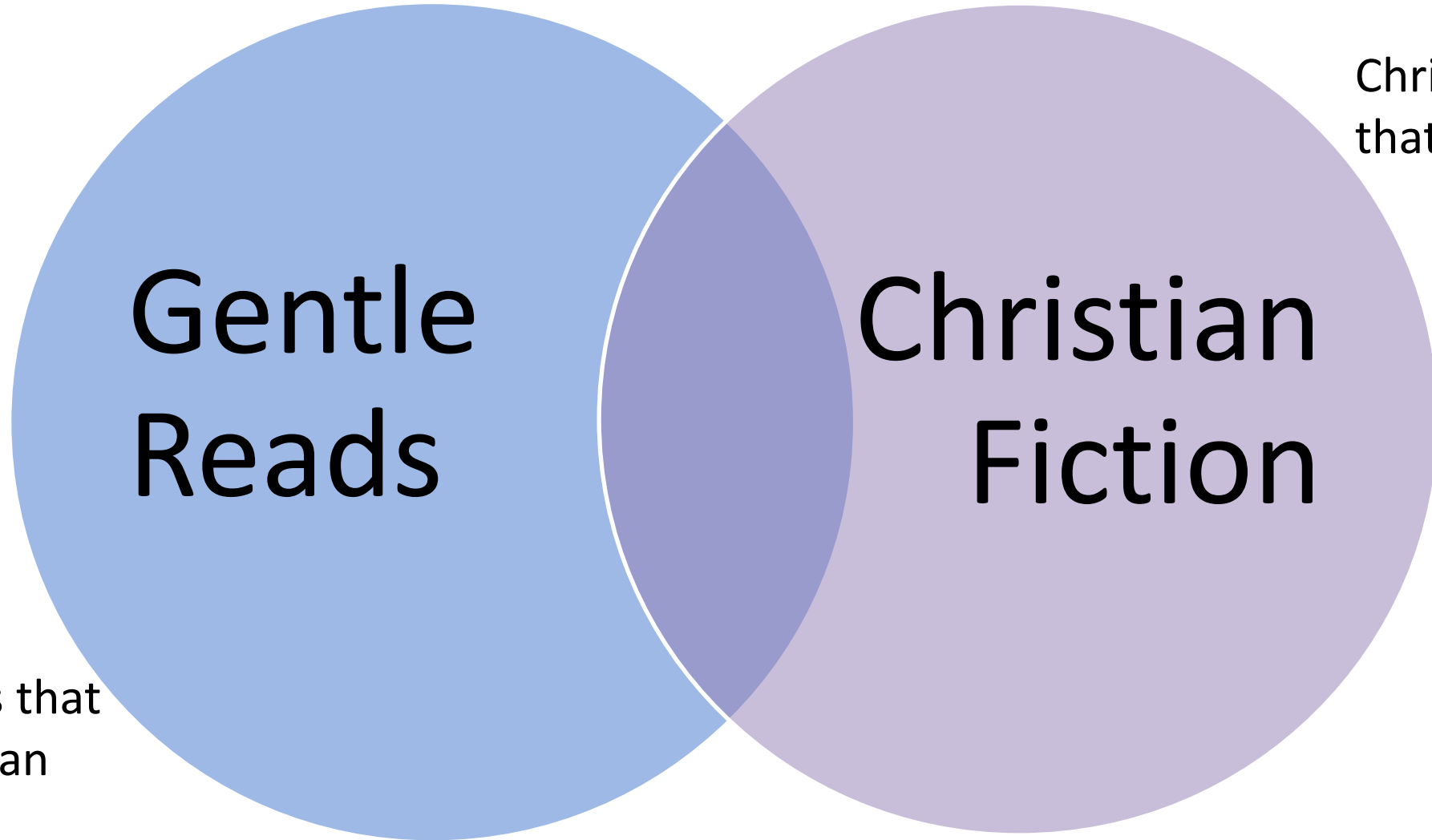
## Christian Fiction

- Started tapping into Genre fiction
  - Frank Peretti
  - The Left Behind series
  - Anything tapping into Y2K fears
  - Christian fiction boom in 1990s

## Gentle Reads

- Continues on with prairie romance
- Bonnet fiction
- Historical romances
- But this is part of appeal for some readers: predictable

# The Great Overlap



Christian fiction  
that isn't gentle

Gentle Reads that  
aren't Christian

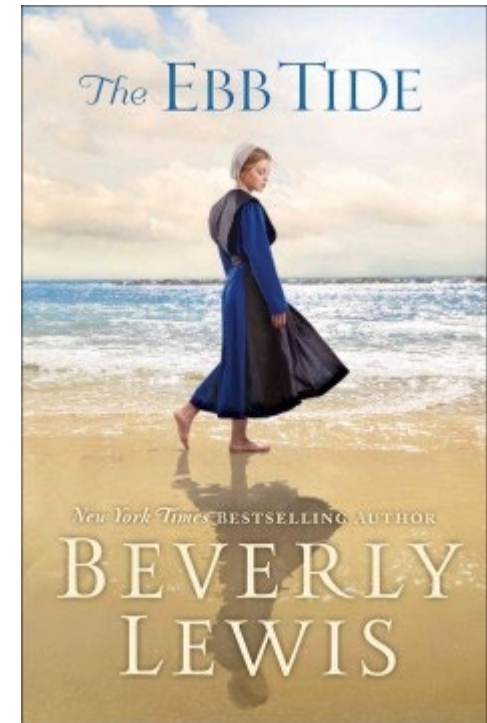
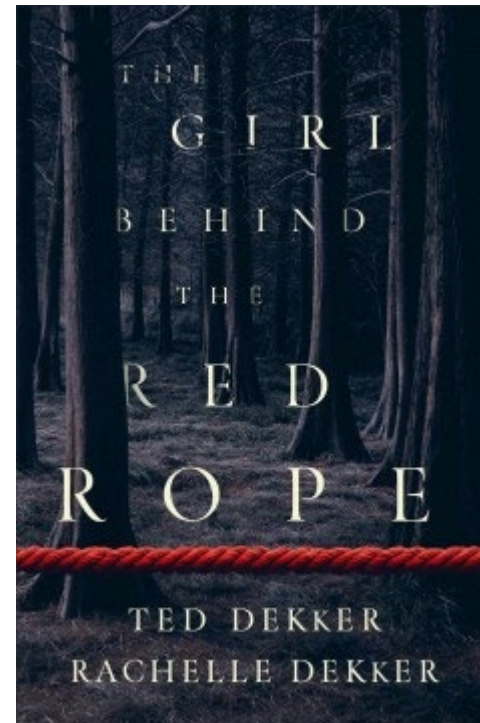
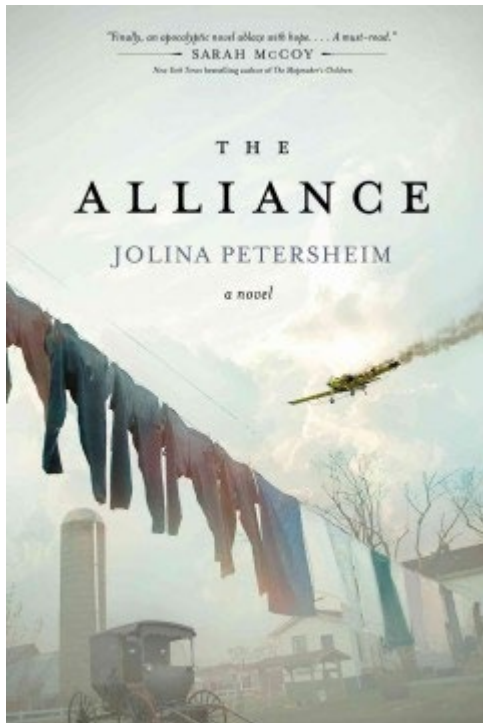
# Know Your Terms





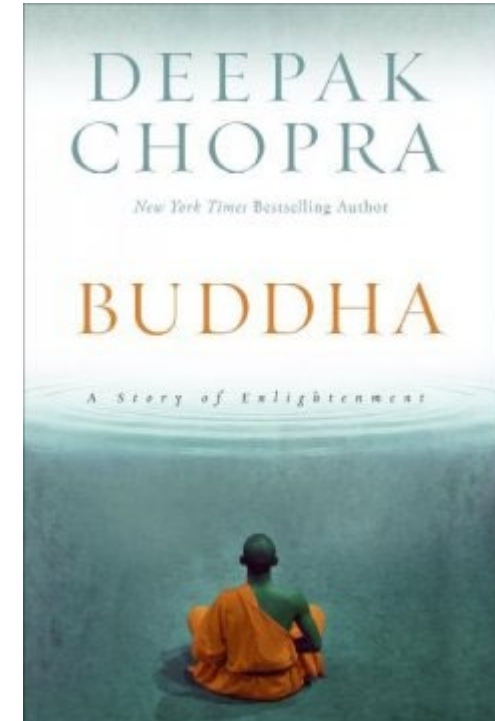
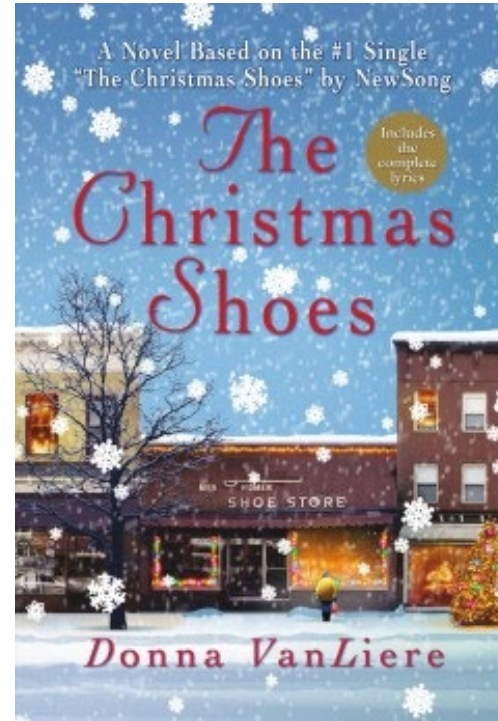
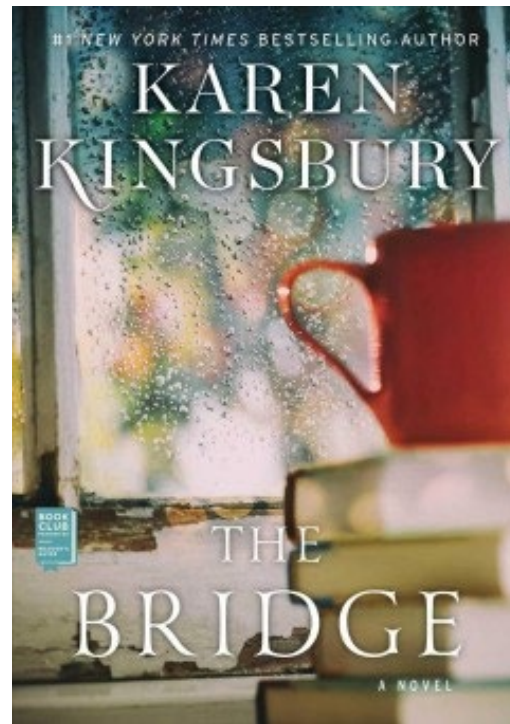
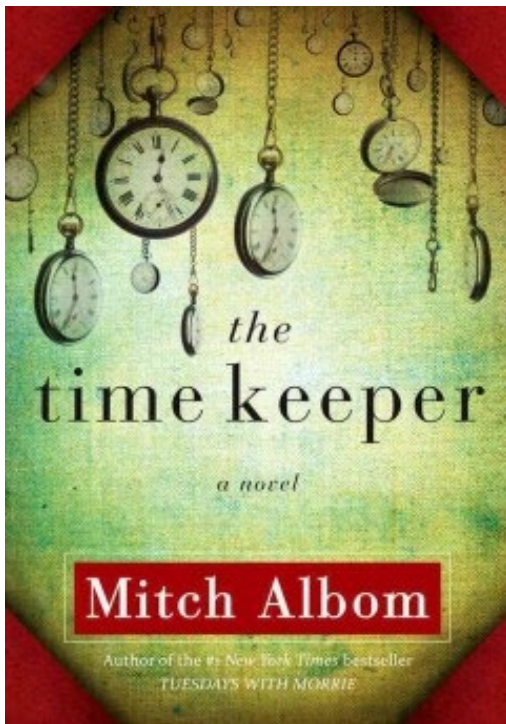
# Christian Fiction

- Characters experience conflict centering on Christian principles.
- The main characters deal with life's ups and downs by acknowledging that God is in control
- They must make tough choices and do God's will, regardless of the consequences.



# Inspirational Fiction

- Uplifting books with characters that enact positive changes.
- They are meant to inspire others that good things can happen.
- Usually have spiritual themes, but not specifically Christian.



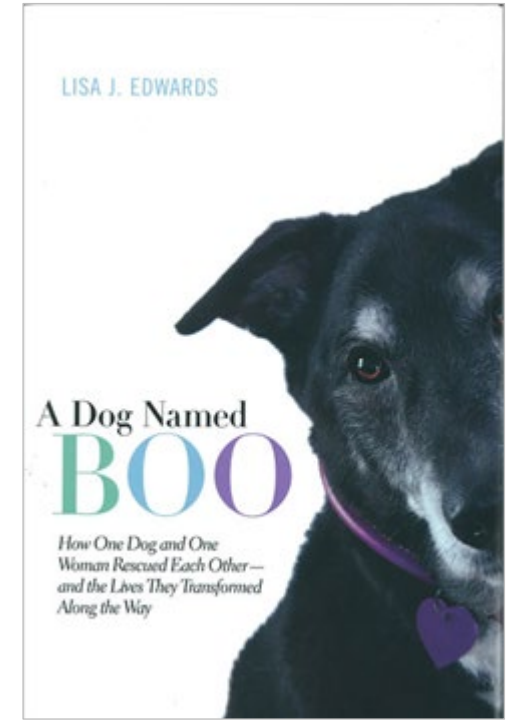
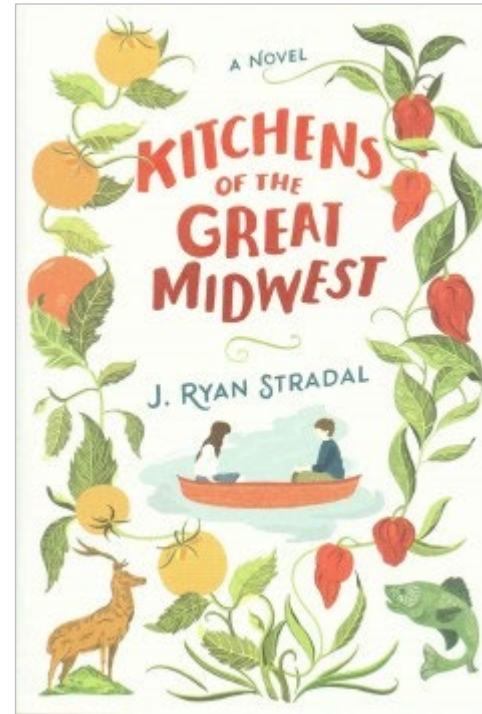
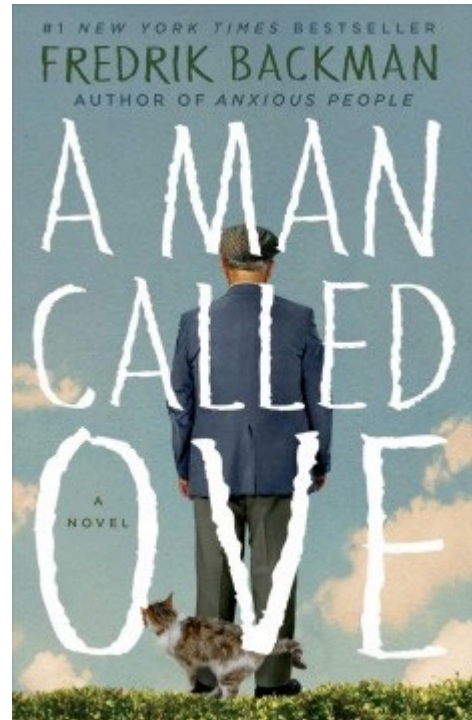
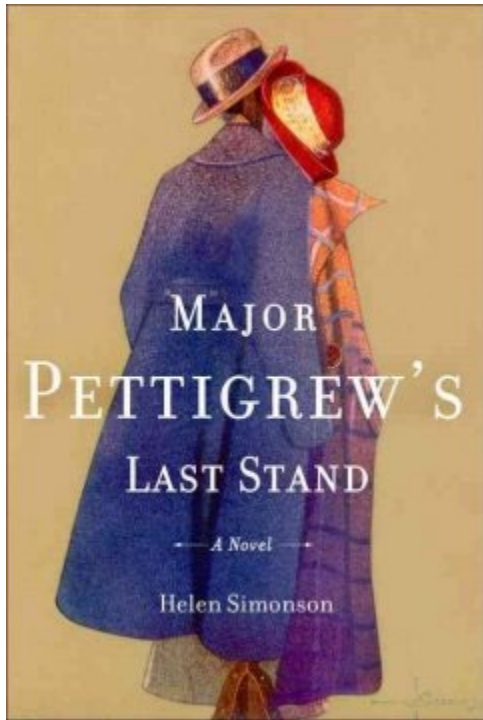
# Clean Reads

The absence of explicit, language, or violence in their books



# UpLit

- Gentle with a contemporary edge
- Feature characters with more life experience
- Some nonfiction, too!

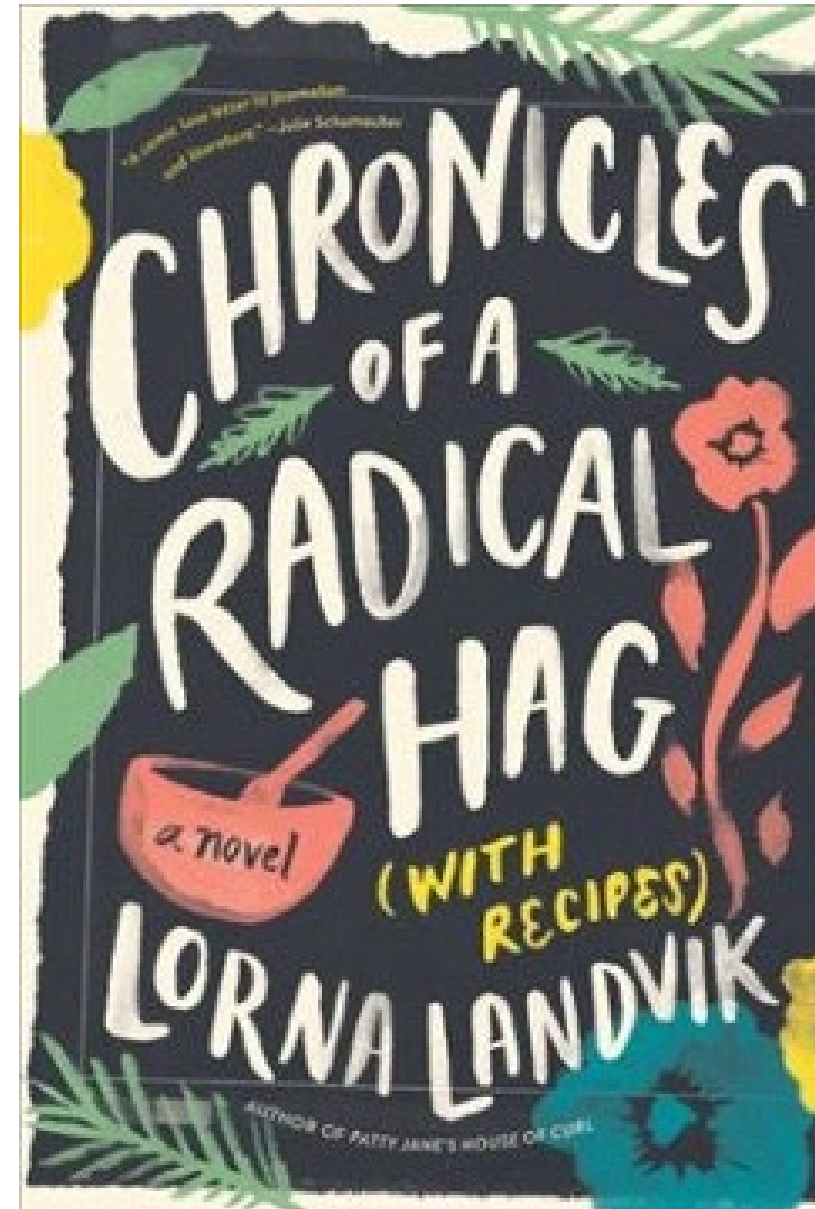


# Authors to Know



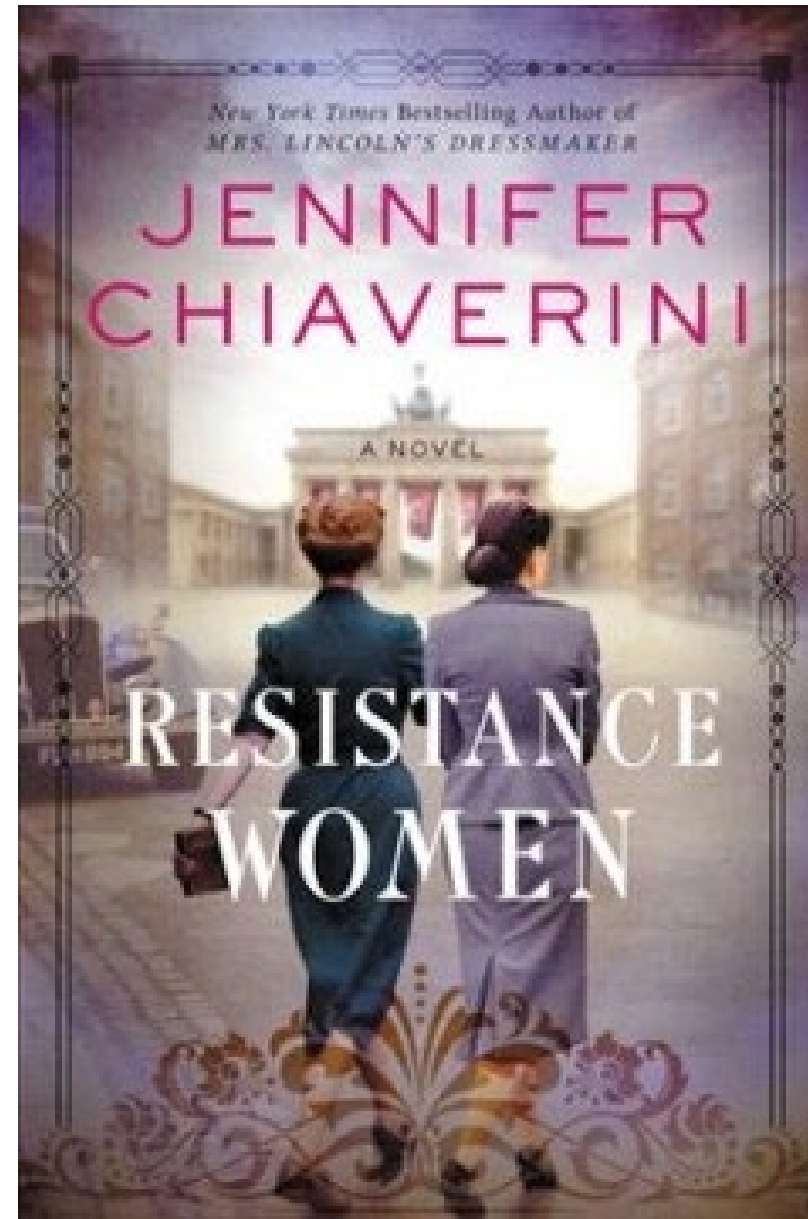
# Lorna Landvik

- ❖ Eclectic characters
- ❖ Lots of laughs
- ❖ Norwegian heritage
- ❖ Folksy feel



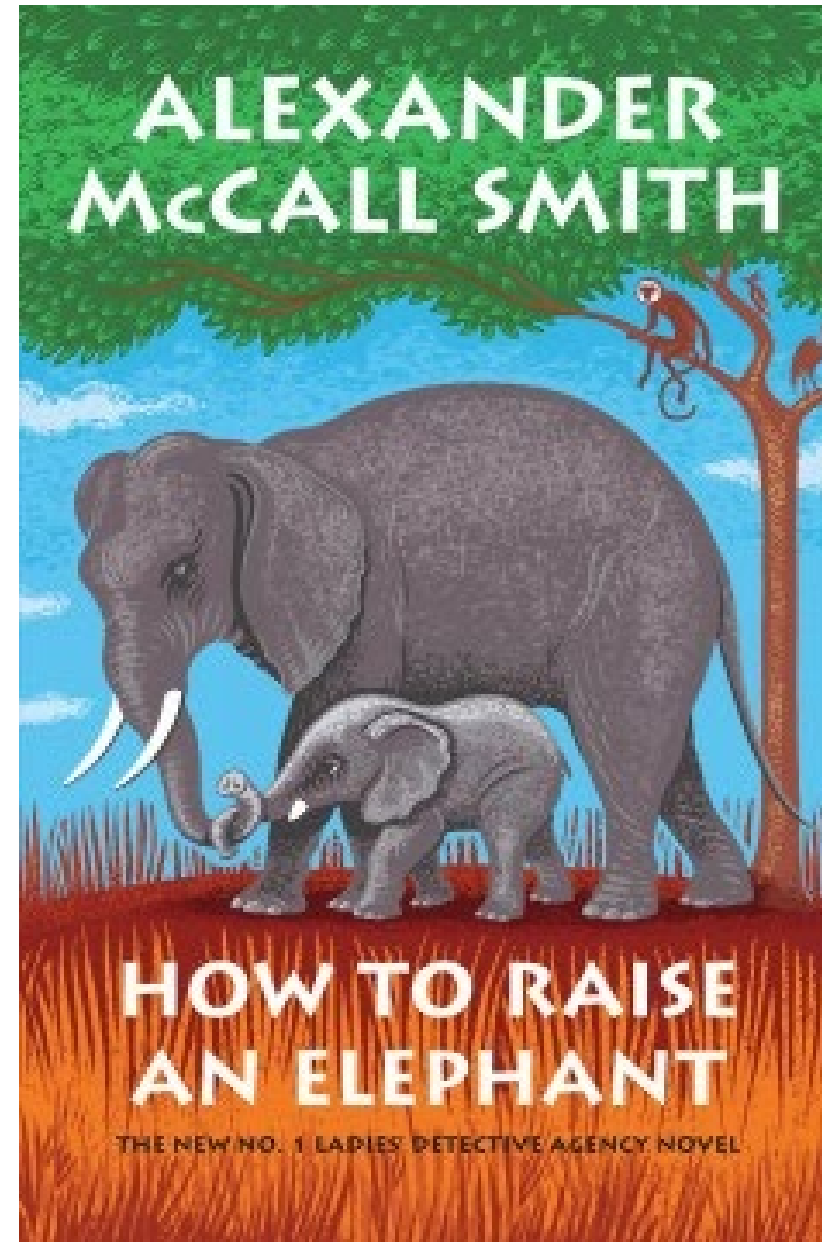
# Jennifer Chiaverini

- ❖ Intergenerational conflict
- ❖ Quilting is prominent
- ❖ Women put aside differences
- ❖ Historical detail



# Alexander McCall Smith

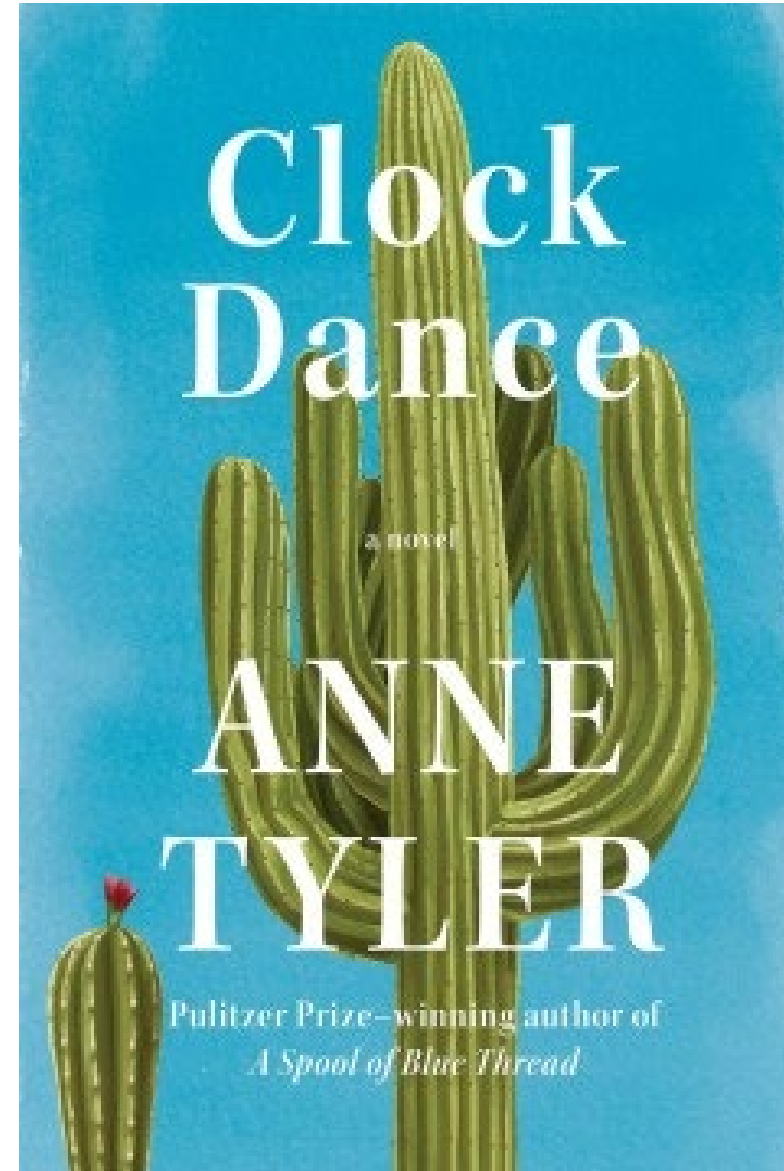
- ❖ Cozy mysteries
- ❖ Strong sense of place
- ❖ Short stories
- ❖ Likeable, flawed characters





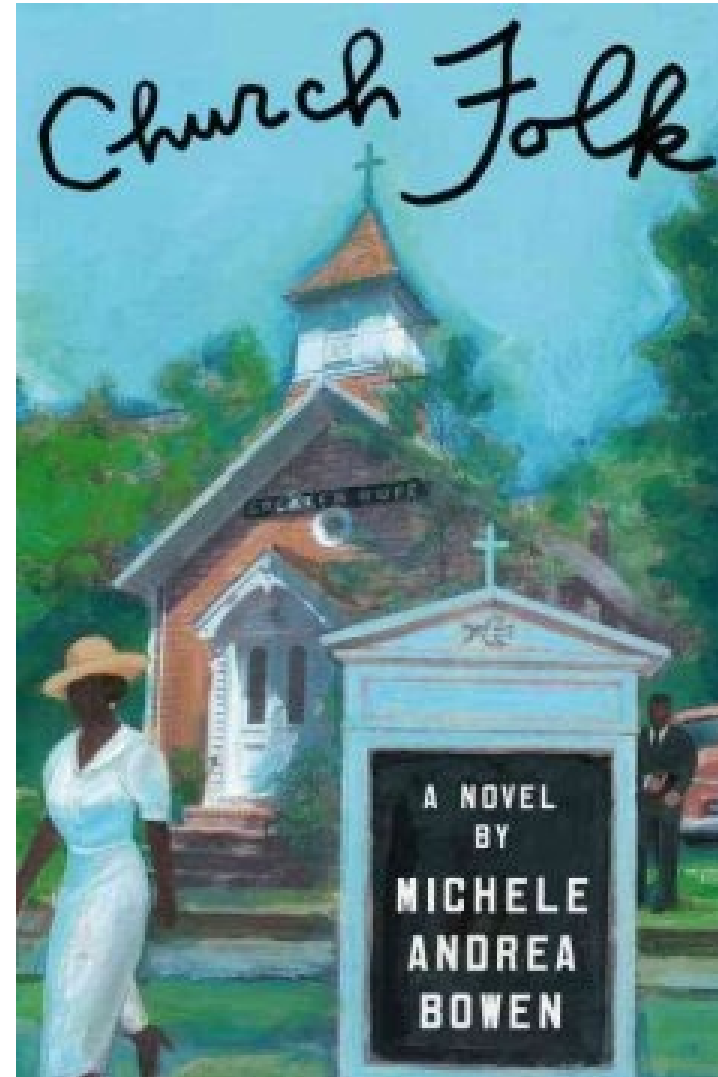
# Anne Tyler

- ❖ Second act
- ❖ Hidden secrets
- ❖ Strong sense of place
- ❖ Family relationships



# Michele Andrea Bowen

- ❖ Own Voices
- ❖ Church lady fiction
- ❖ Congregational drama
- ❖ Tests of faith



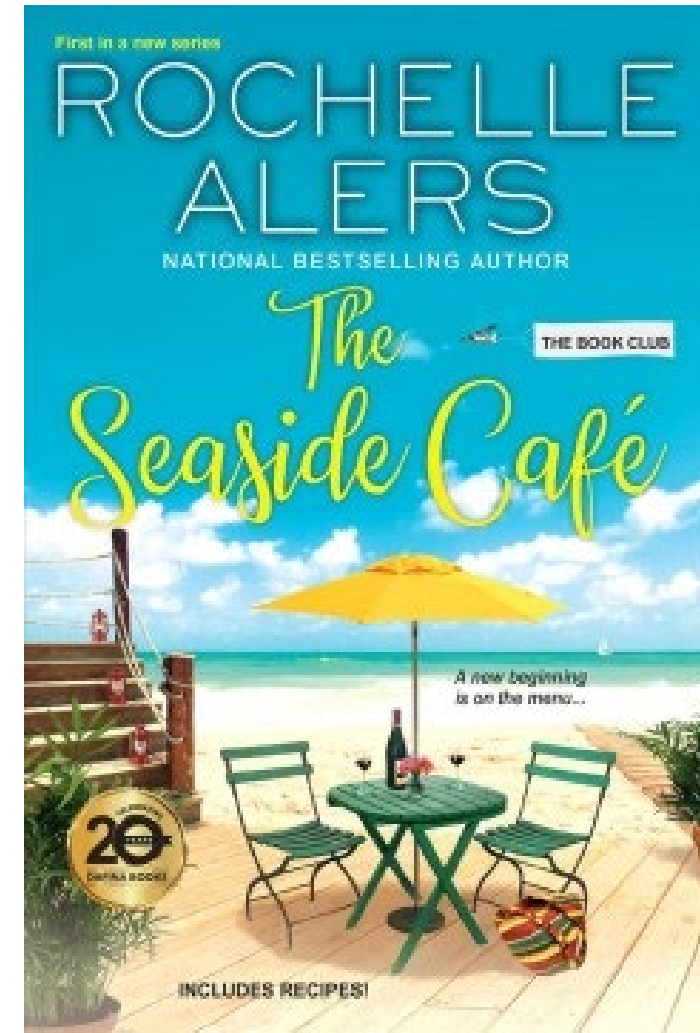
# Gentle Reads Starter Pack

- ❖ Representative of genre
- ❖ Well-reviewed
- ❖ Wide appeal
- ❖ Stand-alone or series starter
- ❖ Available on audio



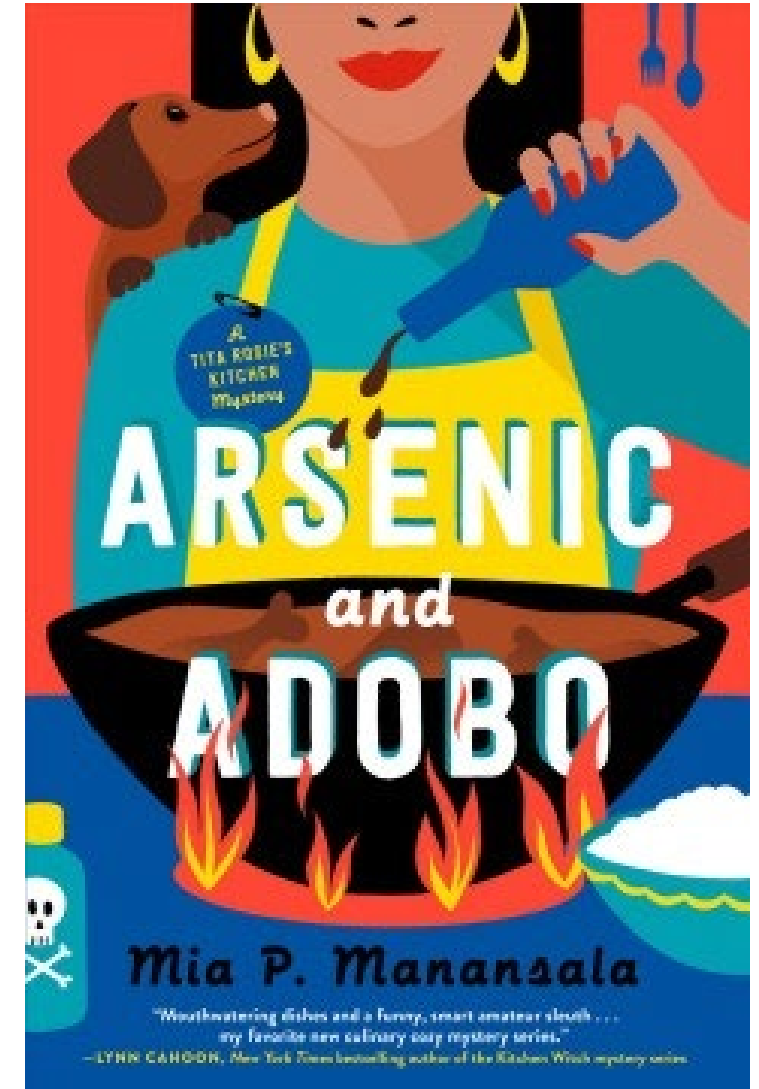
# *The Seaside Café* by Rochelle Alers

- ❖ Culturally diverse
- ❖ Home again theme
- ❖ First in projected series
- ❖ Relationship fiction
- ❖ Drama



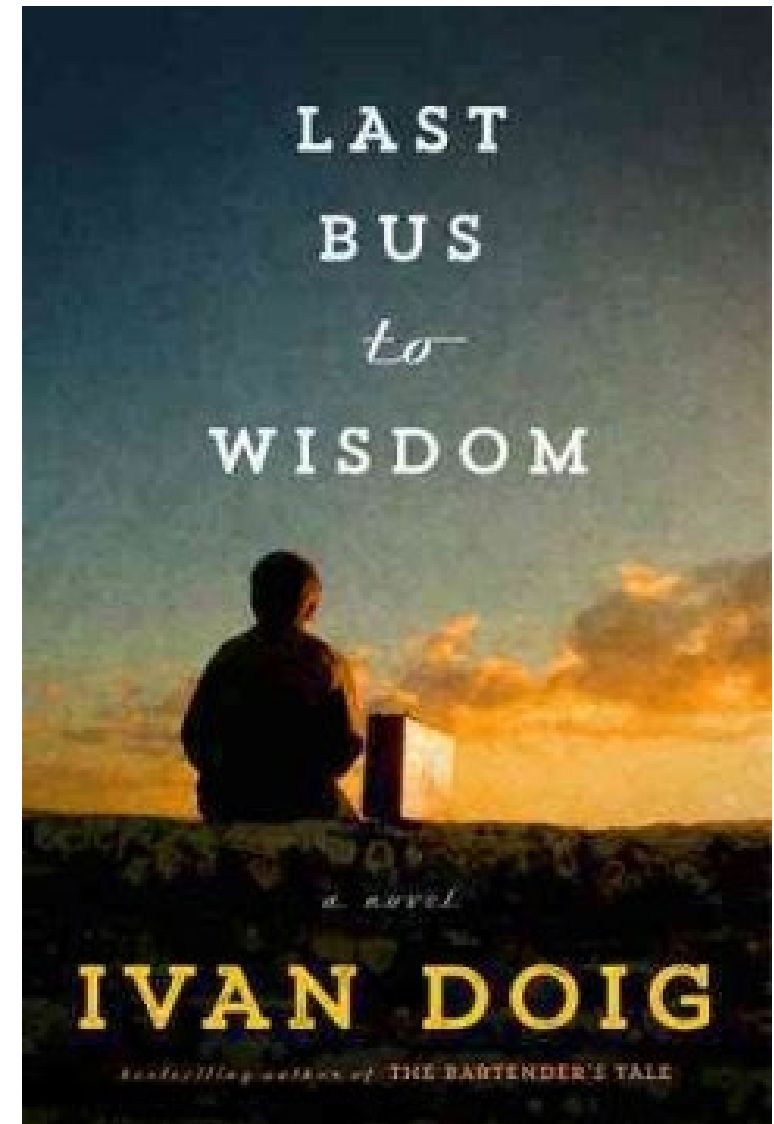
# *Arsenic and Adobo* by Mia P. Manansala

- ❖ Culturally diverse characters
- ❖ Cozy culinary mystery
- ❖ Strong sense of place
- ❖ Tightly knit community
- ❖ Upbeat



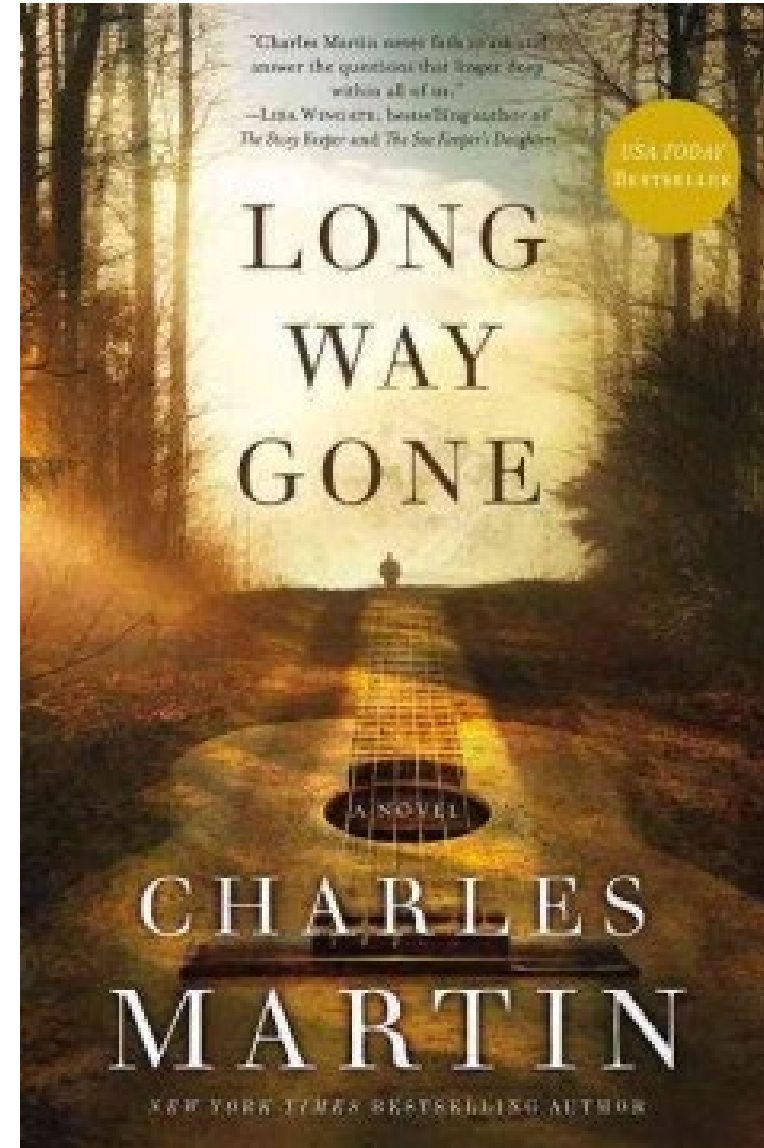
# *Last Bus to Wisdom* by Ivan Doig

- ❖ Historical fiction
- ❖ Heartwarming, nostalgic
- ❖ Unlikely friendship
- ❖ Strong sense of place
- ❖ Coming of age



# Long Way Gone by Charles Martin

- ❖ Christian fiction
- ❖ Moving, Strong sense of place
- ❖ Home again, Prodigal returns
- ❖ Strong writing style



# *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune

- ❖ Fantasy
- ❖ Chosen family
- ❖ LGBTQIA diverse, Own voices
- ❖ Regency setting
- ❖ Heartwarming, Hopeful, Offbeat





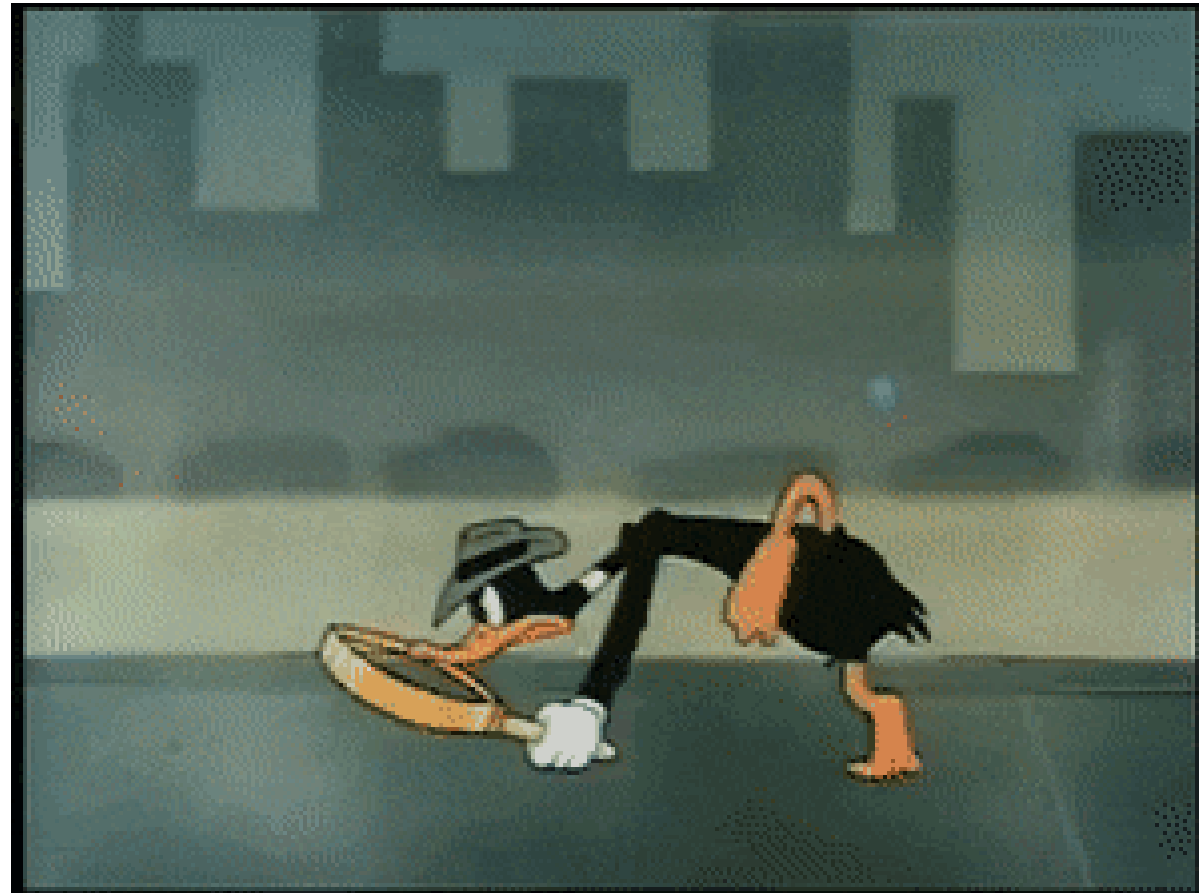
# Helping Readers



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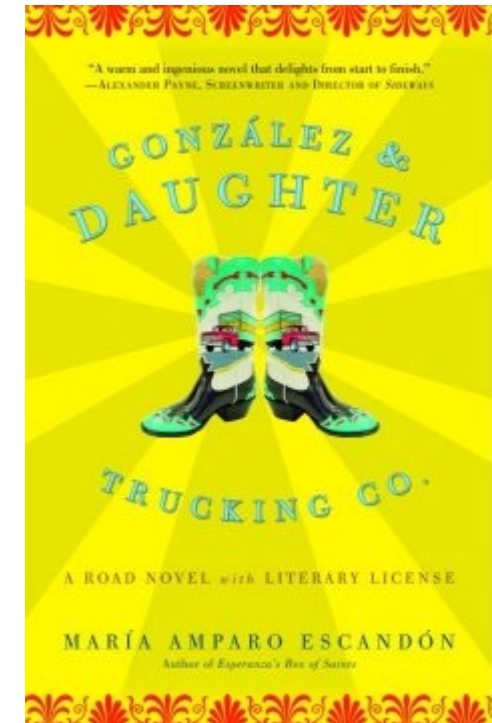
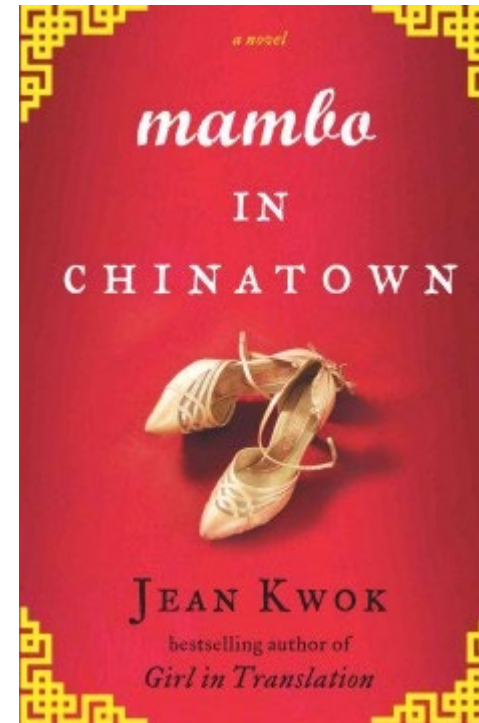
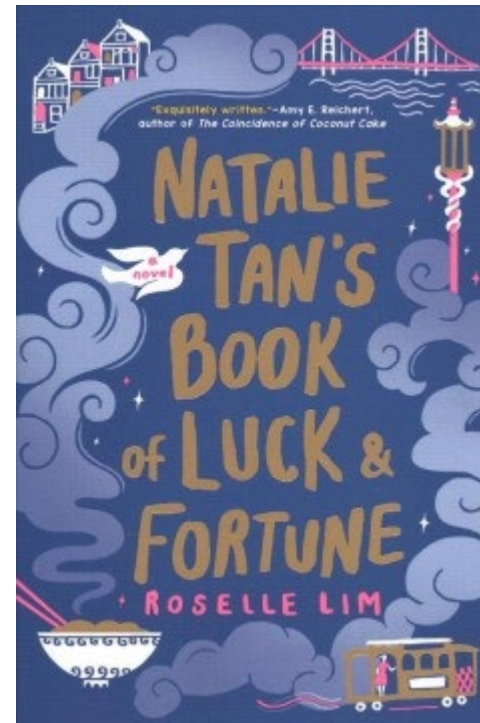
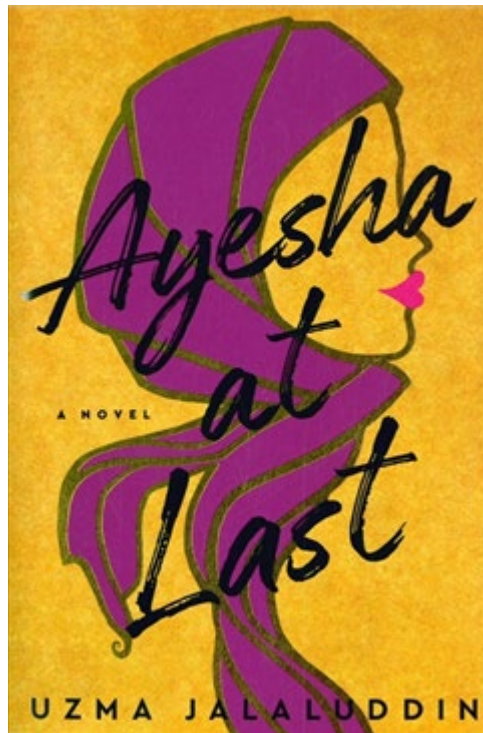


# Diversity in the Genre – Is it There?



# Titles with Diverse Characters

If you can't find any labeled "gentle reads", just use appeals!





# Gentle Reads RA Conversations

“I need something that’s guaranteed to be free of . . . ”





“My teen thinks she’s too old for the teen section. I am willing to let her try books in adult section as long as you tell me it’s safe.”

# Questions to ask

- Do you want something that celebrates a particular faith?
- What level of action do you want?
- How would you describe the level of romance you want in your books?
- What things do you want to avoid in your books if possible?
- What sort of relationships do you want to read about? Family, friends, lovers, all of the above?

“I want something that is . . . ”

- Warm and fuzzy, comfy, cozy
- An escape
- No stress
- Let's me tune out





“I want something that is . . . .”

- About the good old days
- A nice story
- Old-fashioned
- Not depressing



# Publication Dates

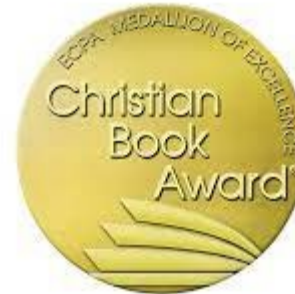
## Everything Old is New Again!



# Publishers



# Awards



# NoveList Story Elements



Honey, that's great coffee!



# Tone

Chaste

Feel-good, Upbeat

Heartwarming

Homespun

Hopeful

Inspiring

Nostalgic

Strong sense of place

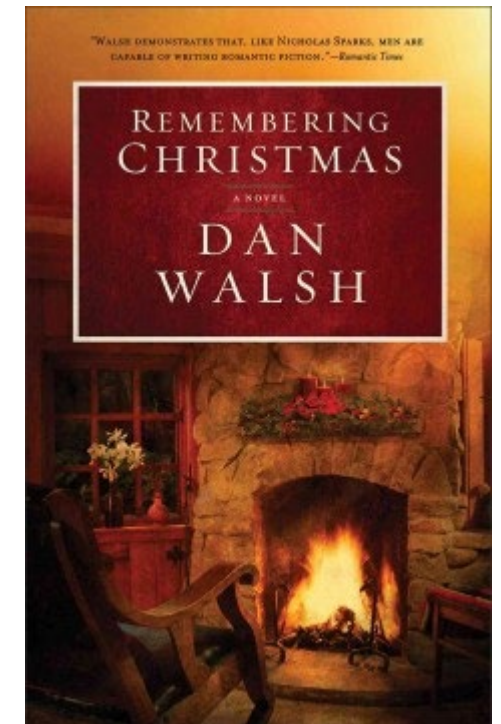
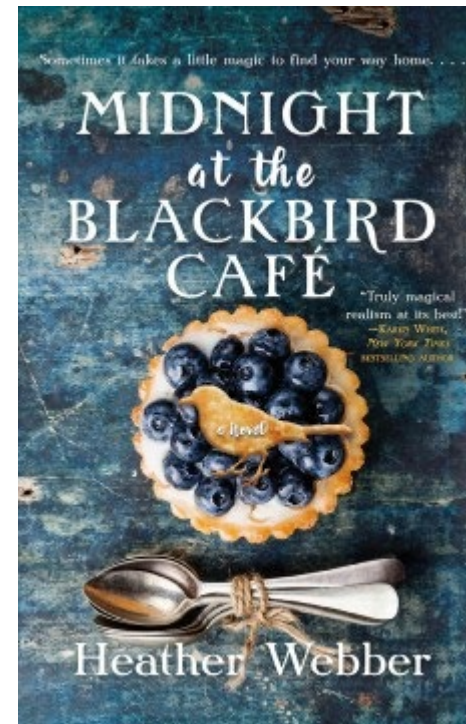
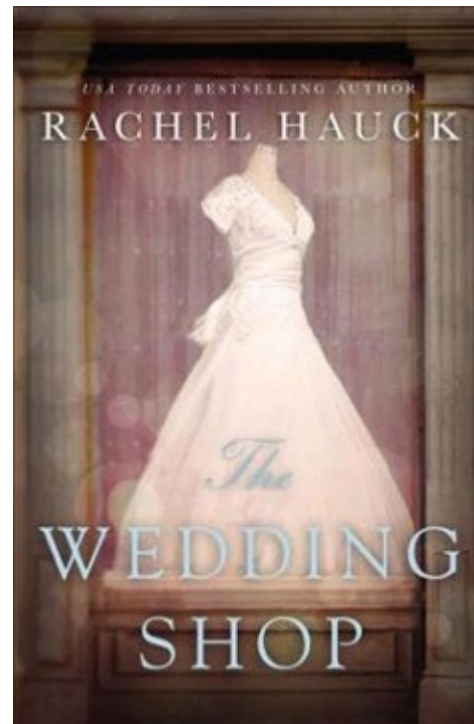
Leisurely paced

Themes	Bouncing back
	Life outside the flock
	Communities set apart
	Prodigal returns
	Home again
	Test of faith
	Forgive and forget
	Life in small towns



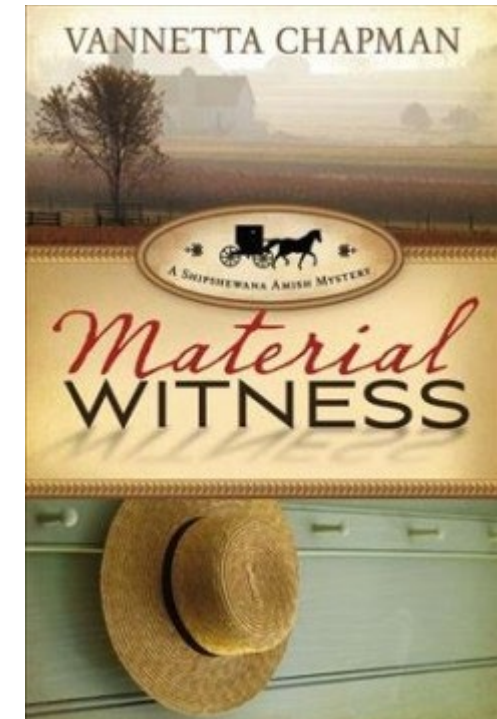
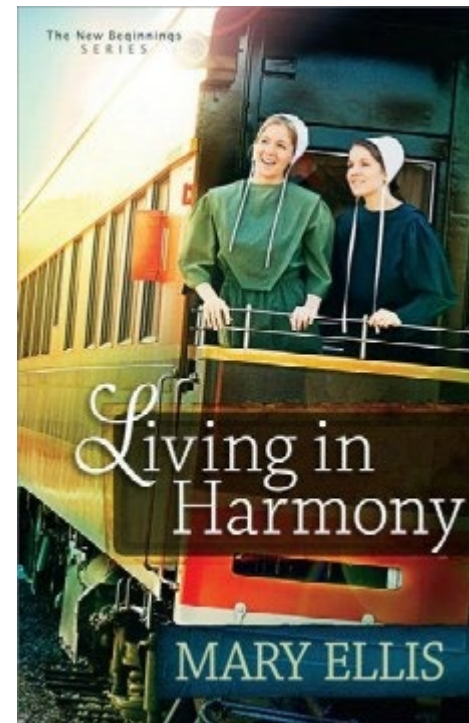
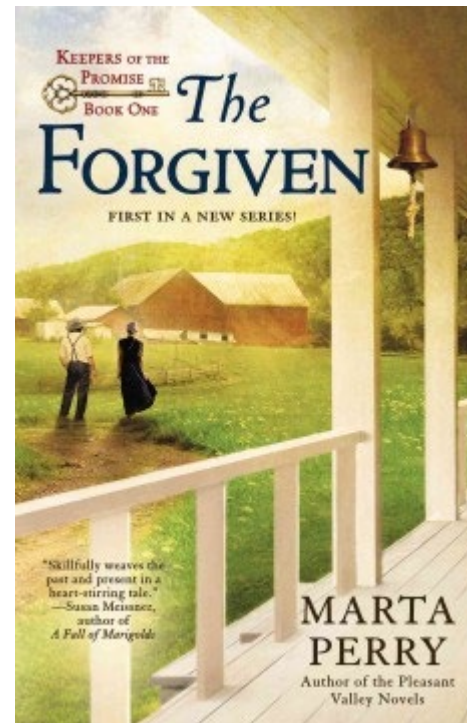
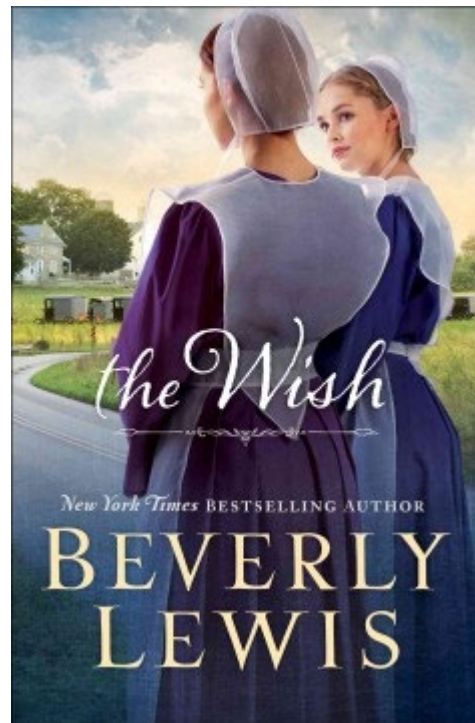
# Home again

Coming back to the place you left behind



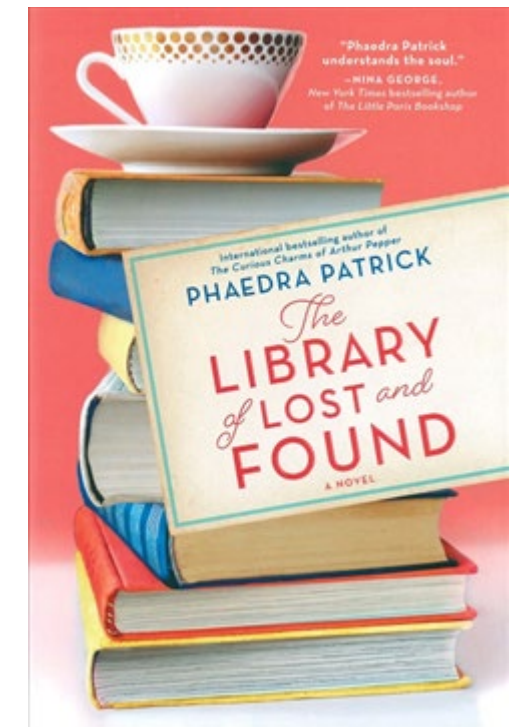
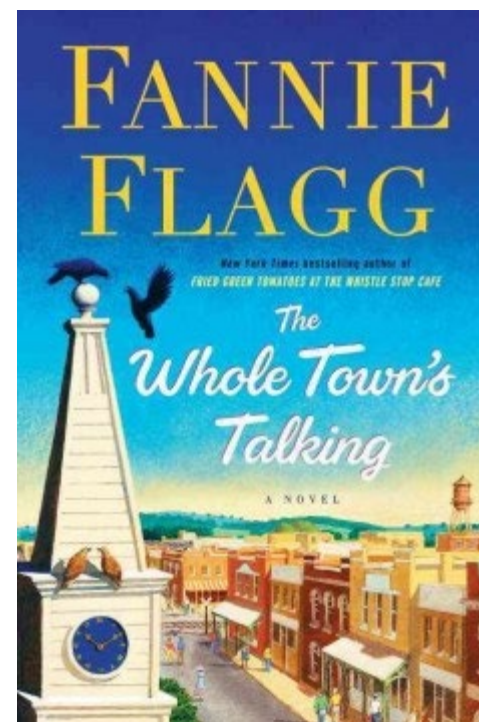
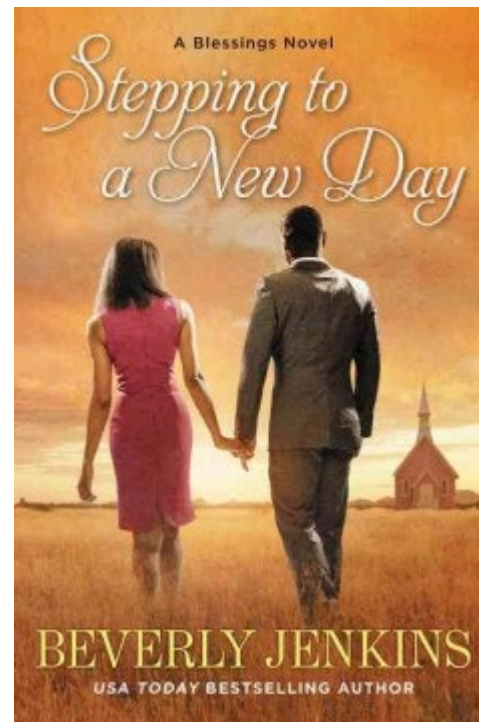
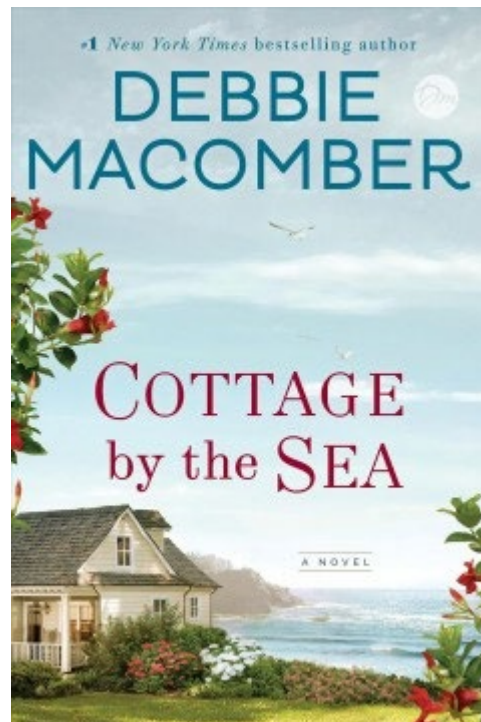
# Communities Set Apart

These stories are set inside enclosed communities of faith.



# Life in small towns

Books set in a place where everybody knows your name.

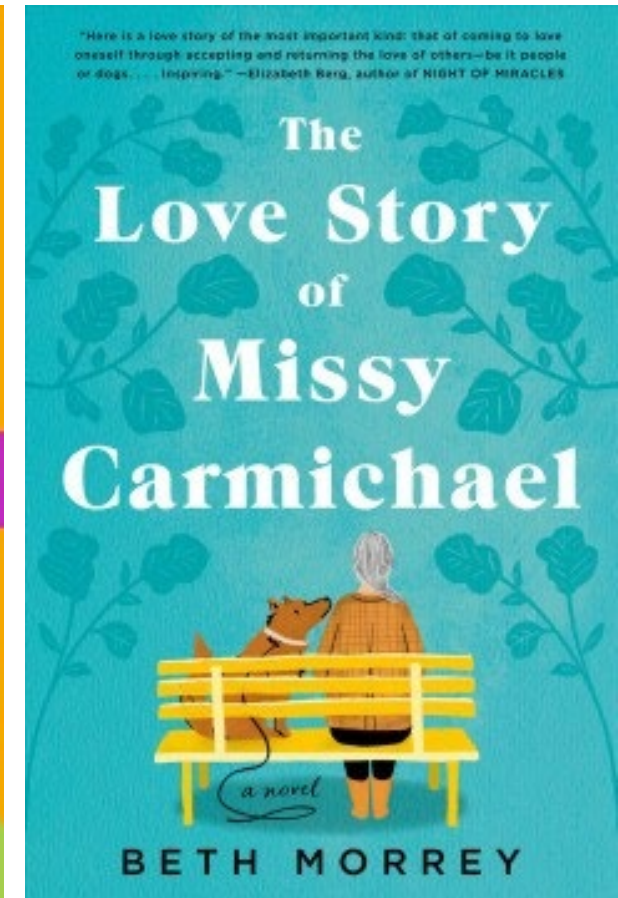
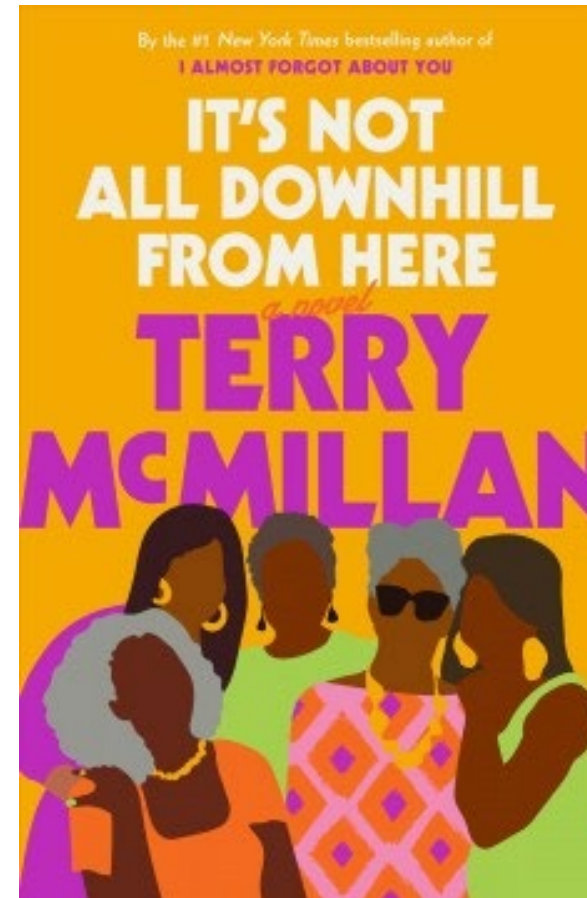
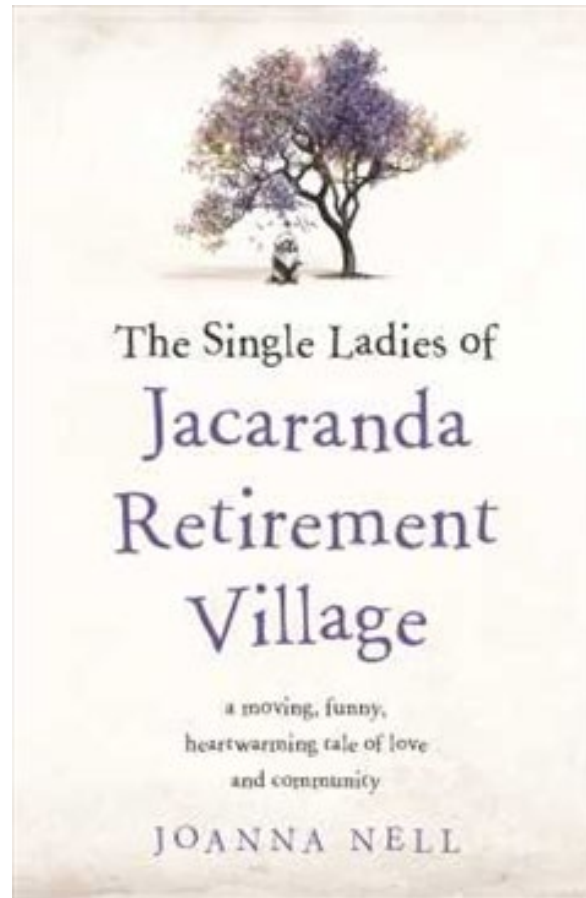
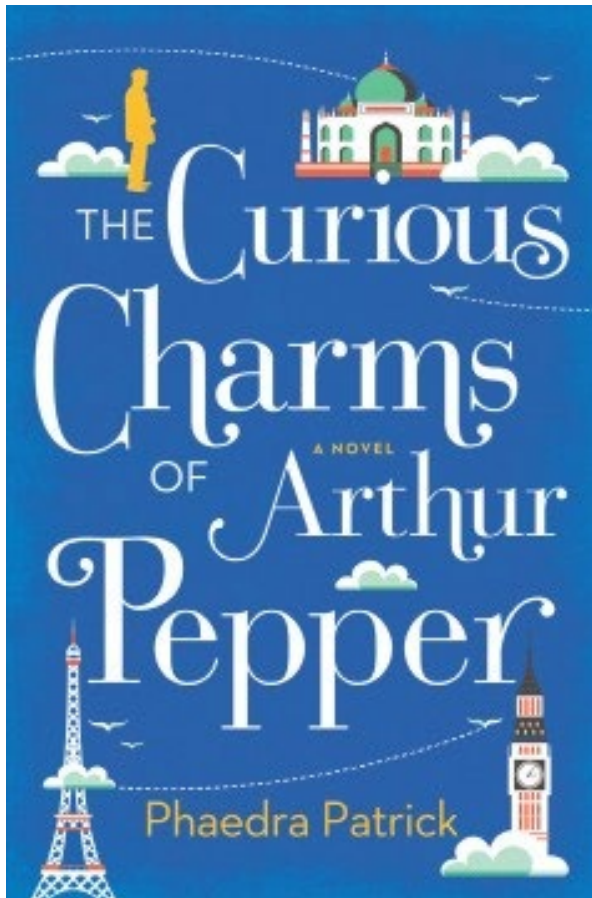


# trends

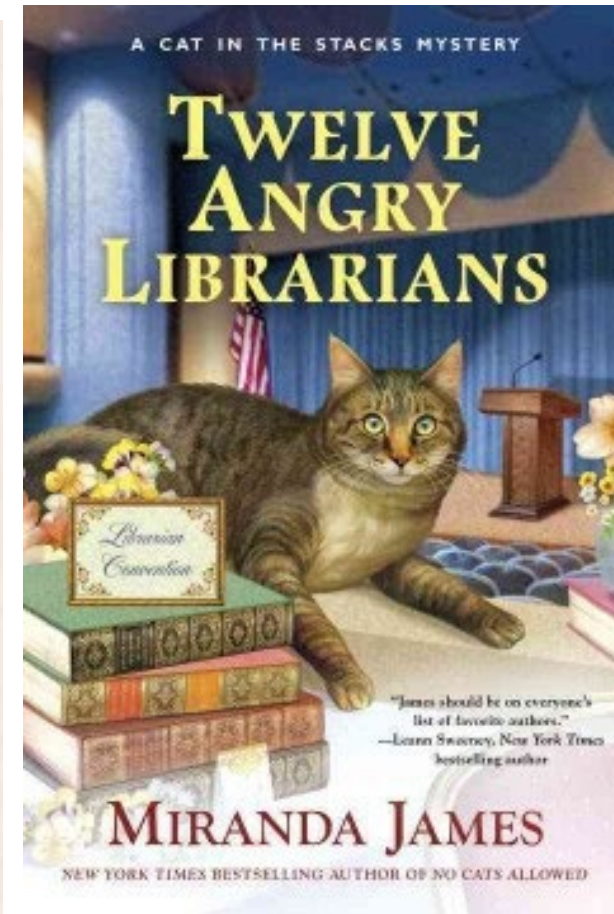
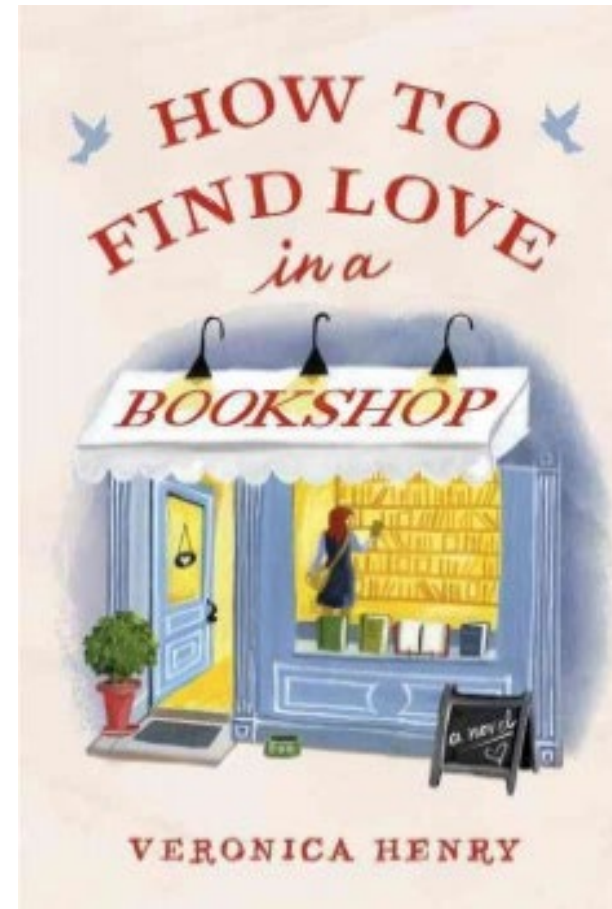
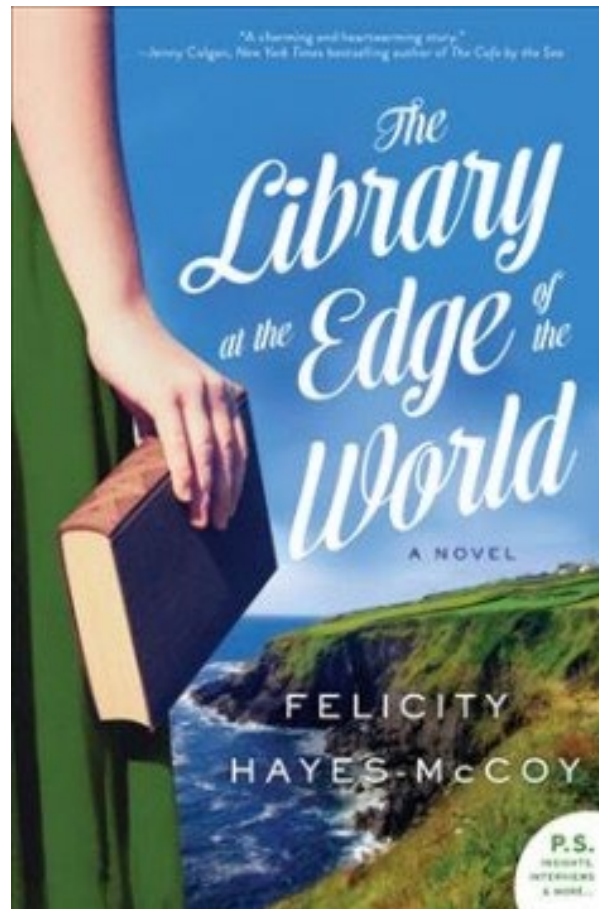
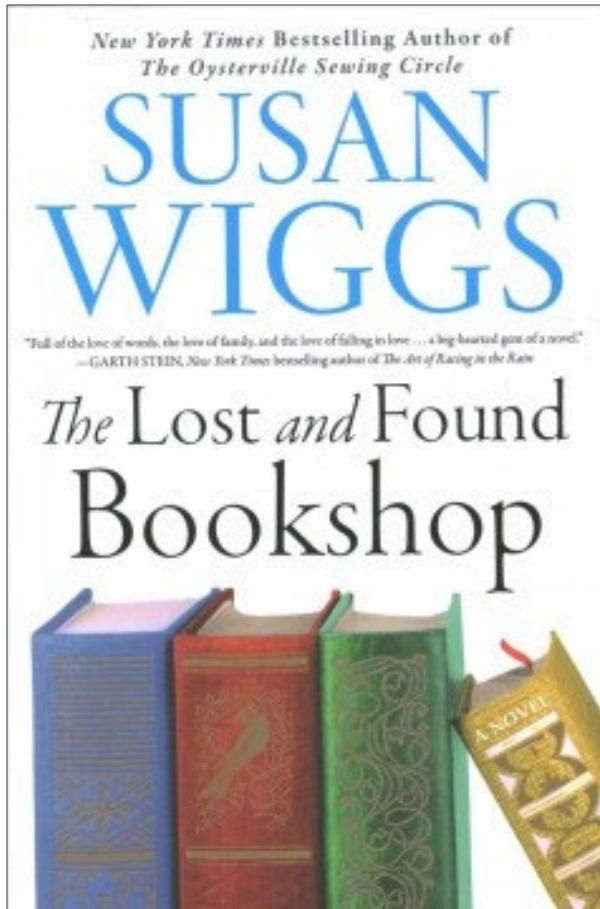


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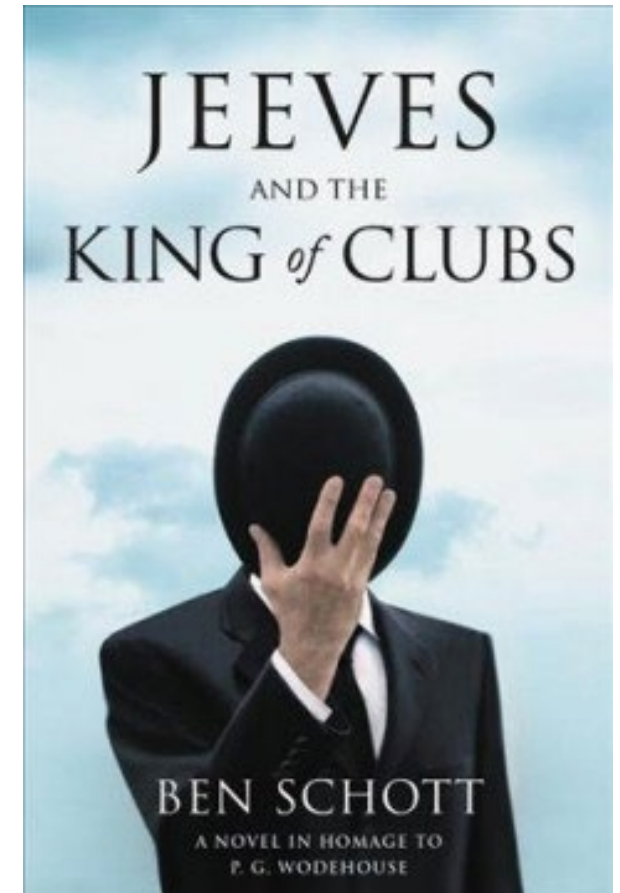
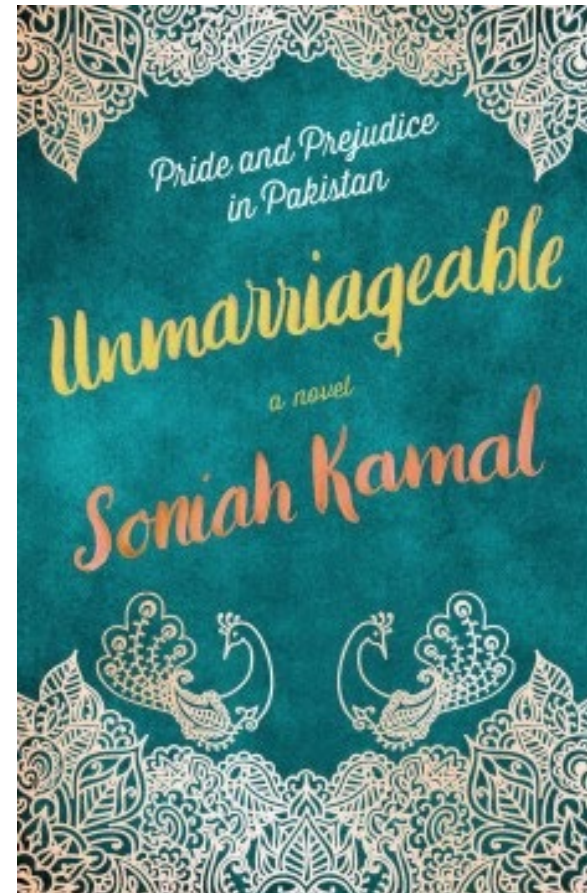
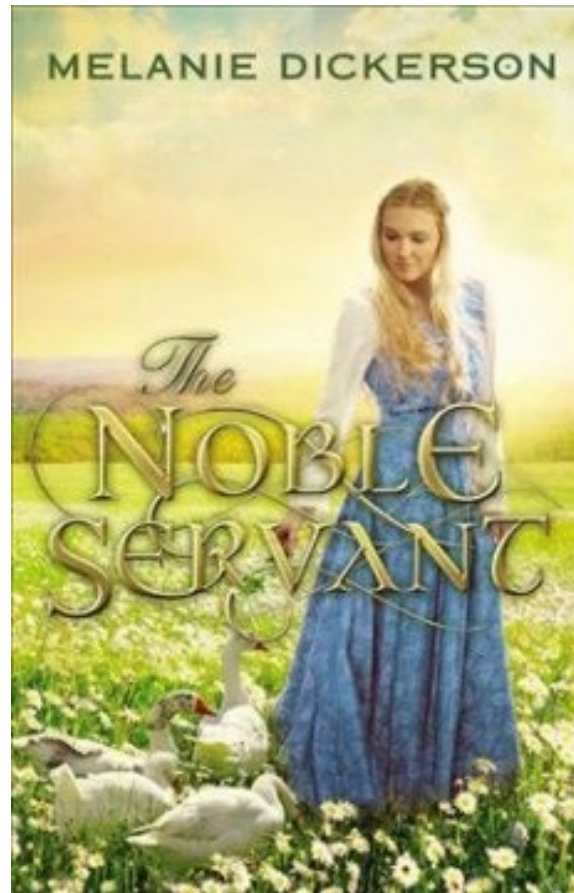
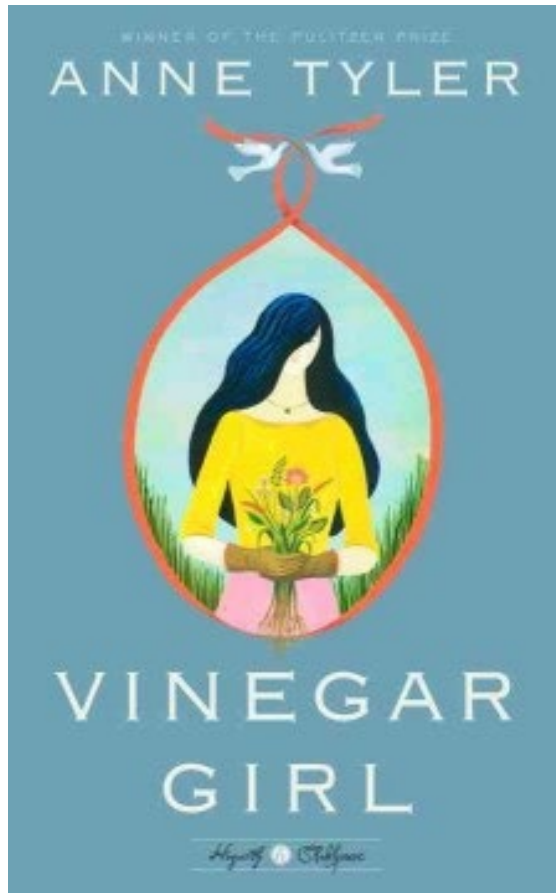
# Second Act



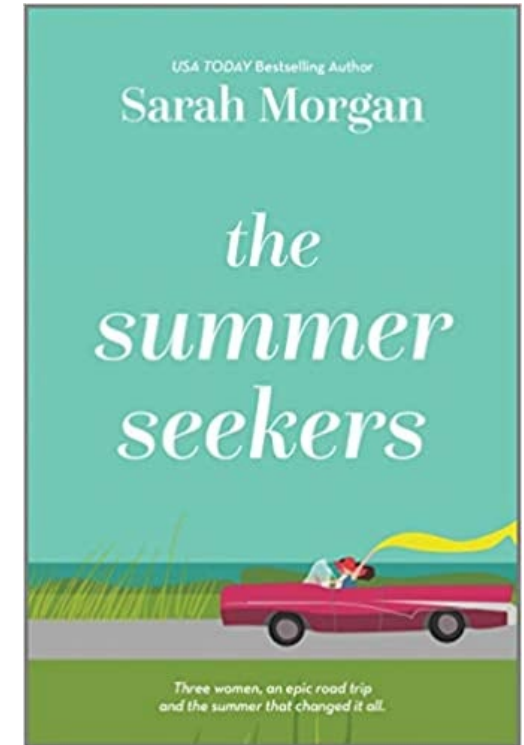
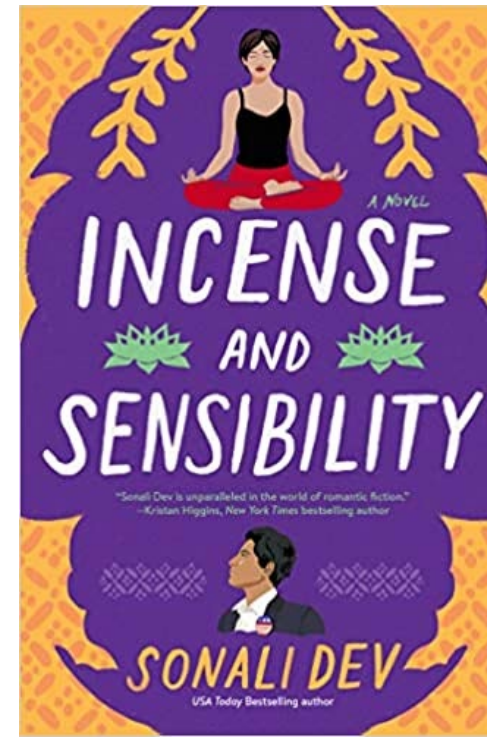
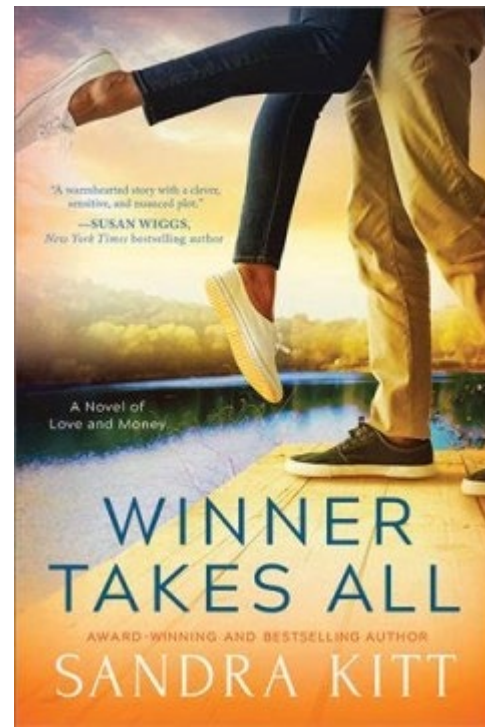
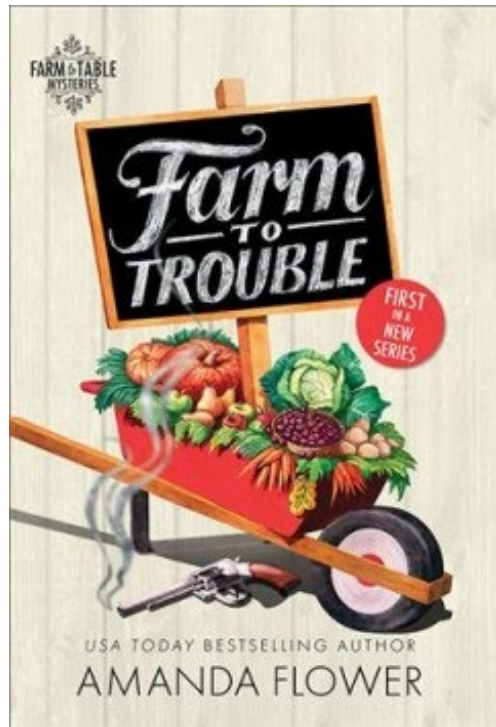
# Bookstores and Libraries



# Adaptations



# Books we can't wait to read





# More Authors to Know

- Sarah Addison Allen
- Fredrik Backman
- Abby Collette
- Nina George
- Pat G'Orge-Walker
- Emily Grayson
- Stacy Hawkins Adams
- C. Ingelman-Sundberg
- Neta Jackson
- Kate Jacobs
- Joan Medlicott
- Robin W. Pearson
- James Michael Pratt
- Ann B. Ross
- Angela Thirkell
- P.G. Wodehouse

# References

*Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*  
by Joyce Saricks, First Edition

*Christian Fiction, a Guide to the Genre*  
by John Mort

# Questions?



**Which would you rather be? Divinely beautiful, or dazzlingly clever, or angelically good?**

# THANK YOU

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