



Fall 2025, Volume 57

TBR is a quarterly newsletter of the Women's Fiction Writers Association.

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As children enter new classrooms and loved ones gather for holidays, we're reminded of the many ways that fall is a season of community, a time for finding connection and warmth. What's more perfect than cozying up with a book from a supportive writing community?

In this issue of TBR, Lisa F. Rosenberg, Kim Gottlieb-Walker, Beverly Burch, Wendy Haller, Connie Morgan, and Jourdana Webber share their recommendations and reading experiences. Find out who listened to *Winnie-the-Pooh* read aloud in a British accent, who reads non-fiction to invigorate their imagination, and who always prints off their first draft. Then, find your fall read in this season's New & Noteworthy collection.

BOOK TALK WITH...

...Lisa F. Rosenberg

On your nightstand now: *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver, which is my favorite genre of historical fiction, inspired by a literary classic, meticulously researched, and beautifully crafted. Kingsolver addresses the contemporary social crisis in Appalachia of abject poverty, the opioid epidemic, and the wretched and brutal foster care system. A heartbreaking and gripping human story set in an important historical moment in rural twenty-first century America. I am swooning.

Book that changed your life: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig. Pirsig's narration of a father-son cross-country motorcycle trip is an examination of how to live a life of quality and defining what that is. Pirsig posits a philosophical approach to the consideration of existence, addressing religion, science, and existentialism. I was very young when I read it, and I found it at just the moment I needed it.

Book you wish you'd written: *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith. Smith writes brilliantly of the human story of immigration, assimilation, cultural differences (and similarities) with empathy and humor. Smith directly inspired me to write about my family history.

Favorite line from your book: "Home was filled with broken lamps, broken locks, broken blenders and broken hearts."

What you look for in a good read: Stories with human relationships that make me feel less alone, where I see myself and my world reflected back to me. A good story helps me to make sense of the muck and mire of the human condition. I can not and think, "That is so true."

Fine, I'm a Terrible Person by Lisa F. Rosenberg

When 73-year-old, former beauty, Aurora, discovers her father's widow has died, she decides to drive to Los Angeles to see if this means money for her. Enter Aurora's high-strung daughter, Leyla, who spends her days keeping up with other Marin moms, manically pursuing perfection. Leyla suspects her husband is having an affair, so she decides to sneak into a cannabis business conference he is attending to spy on him. Aurora and Leyla's separate quests intersect in Los Angeles over the course of a weekend, provoking hijinks and chaos, and yes, even some healing.

Learn more on Lisa's [website](#).

...Kim Gottlieb-Walker

Favorite book when you were a child: *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A. A. Milne. My mother read it to me with a British accent when I was five, living in Texas, because she didn't want me to develop a Texas accent! I was in third grade when A. A. Milne died, and I wore a black band around my arm in mourning for my favorite author.

Advice for aspiring writers: Write the scenes you can see most clearly in your head first. It will get you going, and the connective tissue will emerge. Never send your first draft anywhere! Join a critique group, and rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. Then, when you think it's perfect, have it professionally edited, and do whatever rewriting is needed again. Completing a first draft is a huge accomplishment, but it is only the first step. My debut novel took 25 years!

What you're working on next: After my trip to Florence, Italy, in 2019, I fell in love with the Renaissance, the Medici, Botticelli, and the city's history. When I got home, the characters from the paintings I'd seen dictated my Renaissance novel *Caterina* by Morikayla. I think of *Lenswoman in Love* as delicious fast food and *Caterina* as a gourmet banquet—love, tragedy, and adventure against the tapestry of the beauty and violence of the late fifteenth century.

Lenswoman in Love by Kim Gottlieb-Walker

Fearless photographer, Maddy Garfield, shoots love-ins and police riots in the turbulent 1960s and deals with bikers, rock stars, arrogant diplomats, egotistical actors, and enigmatic Rastas in the '70s. But every time she encounters the charismatic-but-elusive future director who gave her a mind-blowing first kiss, her desire grows, fueling her unfulfilled fantasies. When she finally works on a Western he's directing, her imperative to always "get the shot" jeopardizes her career and the life of the man she loves.

Learn more on Kim's [Goodreads page](#).

...Beverly Burch

Your top five women's fiction authors: An ever-changing list, currently including Lauren Groff, Maggie O'Farrell, Caryl Davies, the late Paulette Jiles, and Toni Morrison, who is always on my top five. They have all written compelling historical fiction, which may or may not be a coincidence, as I'm not aware of leaning toward this category. They are all amazing authors. I re-read their work for pleasure and to grasp their craft strategies and gorgeous sentence construction.

Favorite line from your book: I couldn't resist this question because an answer came to mind immediately. Rosie, one of the two main characters in *What You Don't Know*, has just given birth after a difficult labor. The baby's father, Doug, is absent. Rosie overhears the doctor speaking to her sister and misunderstands his words, though her own understanding is the more accurate one: "The doctor said, 'low-lying placenta,' but she heard 'low-life sinner,' meaning Doug, of course."

Advice for aspiring writers: Revision is sometimes the most joyful part of writing, easier than the first effort of finding the story and putting it into words. First words are not always the right words. I love this saying: "First, make it exist; then make it good." Bringing a piece of writing into existence is effortful. Revision is the part where you play, move things around, find the real dialogue, and make the writing come alive. It's such a pleasure when suddenly you know you've got it right, know it in your bones, because you became a talented one on your own.

What you're working on next: I have two projects underway. My next novel picks up minor characters from *What You Don't Know*. I've also been working on a book of personal essays that deal with growing up in a Southern family—about race, sexuality, secrets, and general cultural craziness.

What You Don't Know by Beverly Burch

What You Don't Know is a love story, a grief story, and a ghost story about two women whose antagonism turns into something tender and electric, then catastrophic. It is also a psychological dive into relationship triangles in families, friendships, and love.

Learn more on Beverly's [website](#).

...Wendy Haller

On your nightstand now: When I am writing fiction, I have a hard time reading fiction as my mind wanders off the page in front of me and begins to daydream about my own characters and story. So, currently, I am reading two autobiographies: *How to Lose Your Mother* by Molly Jong-Fast as research for my current project and *Yet, Here I Am* by Jonathan Capehart.

Favorite line from a book: A line that resonated with me from Jong-Fast's book is, "I've never known her, and she's never known me. I loved her, but it was never enough." I write emotionally charged, dialogue-driven stories. This one line is an emotional punch to the gut and contains all the feelings I aspire to put into my own books. That one line alone says so much about a strained mother-daughter relationship that it has become my new favorite line from a book.

What you're working on next: I am currently writing the second novel in *The Flamingo Girls* trilogy. Each book in the trilogy is written from a different sister's perspective. This new book *Regret No More* is Becca's story. Like my other books, it is a dual point of view between Becca and her mother, Justine. The story delves into the mother-daughter relationship and how it changes from adolescence to adulthood. We will learn about Justine's childhood and discover what made Justine into the mother she became. It explores generational trauma and, hopefully, healing. I know this will be a challenging story for me to write as I will be digging deep within myself, reflecting on my relationship with my own mother. This story will be fiction but interwoven with autobiographical elements.

From This Day Forward by Wendy Haller

Newlyweds Jay and Emmaline Ellis had their whole future planned—until a tragic accident shattered everything. As Jay struggles to accept his new reality, Emmaline must learn that love isn't about holding on to who someone was but embracing who they've become. *From This Day Forward* is a heart-wrenching, hopeful story of resilience, love, and the promises that define us. It's perfect for fans of Jojo Moyes and Taylor Jenkins Reid.

Learn more on Wendy's [website](#).

...Connie Morgan

Your top 5 women's fiction writers: Choices made in chronological order of authors who crafted the perfect book for me at a specific time in my life.

First: Grace Metalious' 1956, *Peyton Place*. This is a groundbreaking novel about an adolescent navigating life while dealing with the issues of gossip and social expectations in a small town. I was a 14-year-old reader who realized the protagonist was living with the same small-town dynamics that my eyes were just opening up to.

Second: Barbara Taylor Bradford, whose 1979 novel *A Woman of Substance* inspired me and thousands of women. This 836-page novel was reissued many times and adapted into a movie. In my early years of adulthood, already divorced and remarried, Bradford ignited a drive for me to make a mark in the world.

Third: Jean M. Auel's *The Clan of the Cave Bear* came out in 1980, and I read every book in that series. What fascinated me was the vivid depiction of how learning and skill development evolved the human race. Fascinating books!

Fourth: Diana Gabaldon, who wrote the *Outlander* series. I collected and devoured them all. Besides loving the historical settings of Scotland and the US, Claire's resourcefulness in using her medical knowledge during more primitive times captivated me.

Fifth: Jodi Picoult. I have enjoyed everything I have read from her. I am a big fan of learning something new while I read. Her novels fit the bill.

What you're working on next: My next manuscript will show a woman with an attachment disorder—her symptoms, the cause, and what could spark the change process.

Book you love to cheerlead: Currently, my friend Cindy Goyette's book *Chey All Laws: A Probation Case File Mystery*. It's fast-paced with quirky characters like Janet Evanovich's.

More Than Luck Required: A Journey of Healing, Hope and Love by Connie Morgan

More Than Luck Required is a heartfelt story of Lora Hamilton's journey of triumph over the grief, guilt, and shame from the accidental death of her young daughter and the subsequent collapse of her marriage. Since healing requires more than luck, Lora goes about earning renewed respect for herself, the love of a man she helped heal, and joy from her engagement with two teenage girls.

Learn more on Connie's [website](#).

...Jourdana Webber

Favorite line from your book: "To the dreamers who dream, and the ones who never give up."

Advice for aspiring writers: Print off your first draft! Hold her in your hands and feel the tangible, real magic that you created.

What you're working on next: My second novel *Could've, Should've, Would've*, which goes to my editor in December! The story follows a new relationship in the *Elle* Universe: Addie Taylor (an aspiring Broadway actress) and Grey Butord (brother of Addie's best friend, Miles). When they were younger, Addie and Miles made a pact to get married if they were still single at 30. The catch? They both prefer men. Addie is a month away from her 30th birthday and single (thanks to a cheating beau). The societal pressures of being on time with marriage, family, and career are overwhelming, and she feels behind the curve. The pact can't be enacted, so she goes on a week-long trip with Grey to Europe (a trip she supposed to take with her ex). Addie comes to realize that maybe she made the pact with the wrong brother. Oh, and did I mention, Grey's a poet trapped in the body of a finance guy? With plenty of banter and chemistry, two people who've known each other all their lives finally give in to the feelings that have been there all along—even if it takes a while because, ultimately, friendships, careers, and the status quo are at stake.

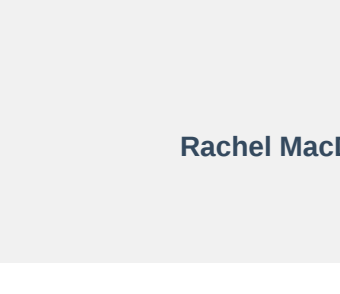
Unconventionally, Elle by Jourdana Webber

Elle Watson climbed the corporate ladder, now she's ready to burn it all down and find her own success (and love) in the process. This debut novel combines the found family and city life of *Sex and the City* with the female rage of *Legally Blonde*. Perfect for fans of Carley Fortune and Emily Henry.

Learn more on Jourdana's [website](#).

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

As autumn temps cool, it's the perfect time to cozy up with a good book. Here's what we're reading this season.



Chasing Stardust by Erica Lucke Dean

Honoring a deathbed promise, Zoey Higgins is scattering her mother's ashes along David Bowie's Ziggy 1975 Stardust tour path, where her grandmother, G-Lo, claims her mother was conceived—and the glam rock icon was the father. When G-Lo's ancient Cullas, "the Betty," claims her Zoey was born in Nashville, she meets Dash Hammond. Together, they embark on a cross-country journey of self-discovery, first love, and glittering revelations, while Zoey discovers the heart of a rebel that's been beating inside her the whole time.

Visit Erica's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



Who We Used to Be by Caitlin Weaver

What if the person you trust the most did something you can't forgive? When Dana Blair's teenage daughter ends up in a coma, Dana blames the ER doctor who treated her—who happens to be Dana's best friend. As Dana's grief turns to blame, she's forced to make a decision that could either save her family or destroy the most important friendship of her life. *Who We Used to Be* is a powerful story about the ties that hold us together, the pain that can pull us apart, and the courage it takes to find your way back—to yourself and the people who matter most.

Visit Caitlin's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



Little Bird: A Novel by Barbara Vinjar

In 1910, fearing violence against the Jews in Russia, Felge's father arranges her marriage to a wealthy cousin in New York. She goes from being an obedient daughter to a dutiful wife. When her husband's cruelty pushes her to leave him, she plays her embroidery skills into a job she loves. Can she give up her hard-won independence for another man? *Little Bird* is the story of a girl who finds the courage to forge her own path to womanhood.

Visit Barbara's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



Beneath the Sicilian Stars by Lindsay Marie Morris

Set against the backdrop of World War II, *Beneath the Sicilian Stars* explores family, prejudice, and resilience. In California, teenage Annalisa Aiello comes of age amid wartime hysteria as her father is interned as an "enemy alien" and her brother dies at Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, in Sicily, cousin Alberto seeks identity in Palermo as bombs fall around him. This cross-ocean, triple narrative follows their fight for survival and belonging, showing how love and strength endure even under the darkest skies.

Visit Lindsay's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



The Medici Curse by Daco S. Aufferorde

When aspiring artist Anna dei Medici Rossi inherits her family's opulent Tuscan villa, she returns to a place steeped in tragedy. As a child, Anna suffered from night terrors and sleepwalking, during which her mother fatally fell down the stairs. Officials ruled it an accident, but the missing heirloom necklace from her mother's accused bedding many to suspect Anna of murder. If true, what became of the necklace, long linked to legends of a family curse? Blending Gothic and supernatural elements with a gripping exploration of identity and legacy, *The Medici Curse* is a beautifully crafted tale of family scandal, murder, art, and intrigue.

Visit Daco's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



Not Part of the Plan by Georgina Kelly

Justin Muller returns home when his mother's health declines, reigniting old tensions with his estranged father. Meanwhile, Paige Wheeler is pulled back home after her brother's accident, placing all her ambitions on hold. As both struggle with the weight of returning to lives they used to leave behind, a chance meeting leads to a no-strings-attached relationship built on mutual understanding and avoidance of grief. But as the attraction between them grows, so do their feelings, leading them to an impossible choice: walk away from love or their lifelong dreams.

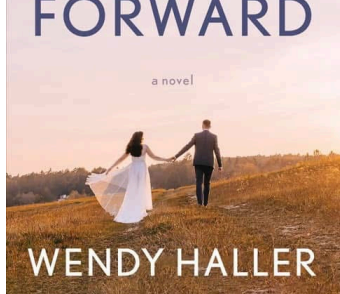
Visit Georgina's [website](#) to find out more!



Carousel Gift by David Lane Williams

Callie Wind's life is a chaotic carnival ride, caught between her ghostly father's meddling and her estranged daughter's schemes to seize control of her quirky, Texas amusement park. With the help of her best friend—who has harbored a secret love for Callie going on thirty years—and an angelic gardener who specializes in happily-ever-afters, she might just find the love and peace she craves amidst the creaky thrill rides, pony droppings, and magical mayhem.

Visit David's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



I Love You, Charlie Tanner by Lynne Goldner

Likened to *Where the Crawdads Sing*, evoking the hot-rabbi romance of Nettie's *Nobody Wants This*, and reminiscent of the steamy love of *Lucy Score's Forever Never*, Lynne Goldner's *I Love You, Charlie Tanner* is a story of a woman standing over at middle and finding new love and a new life after fleeing a cult-like commune. Reconciling her past and finally seeing possibility in her future, Charlie Tanner teaches us that it's never too late to build your best life.

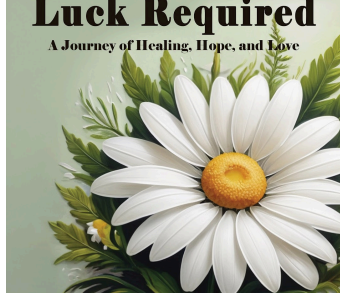
Visit Lynne's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



The Best Advice by Amy Dressler

The Best Advice is a contemporary retelling of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. This is the second book in Amy Dressler's Shakespeare Project series. Meddling in other people's business is kind of her thing. Rosalind writes a popular advice column, a mixtape, passed down by her recently deceased mother. When she loses her job and inherits byline, she establishes a fake identity at the dubious suggestion of her friends, retreating to a small town on the water.

Visit Amy's [website](#) to find out more!



Not Yet Lost by Janis M. Falk

In this cinematic story, Florence and her best friend, Basia, are enraged by working conditions in the factory where they hand-roll cigars. Florence is as reserved as Basia is fiery, but in the face of injustice, even she reaches her breaking point. In this underdog story, during a time when choices were bad or worse, a woman searches for her voice to lead a labor movement amidst her husband's violent efforts to silence her. Will Florence and her husband resolve their conflicts inside and outside the home? At what cost?

Visit Janis's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!



You, Always: The Years of Us by Lauryn Jay

Audrey and Jim's wedding day takes a sudden turn when Jim falls sick and is rushed to the emergency room. As readers delve into their past, spanning 40 years, they uncover the depth and complexity of Audrey and Jim's relationship and the hurdles they faced along the way. *You, Always* is a complex, dynamic, and heartfelt story of love, loss, and starting again. Readers will come to understand why the love of a lifetime took a lifetime to be possible.

Visit Lauryn's [website](#) to find out more!



Counterpunch by Taylor Zane

Maryl Morgan Marks jumps headfirst into the power, greed, and startup speed of the male-dominated software industry, moving cross-country to the booming city of Philadelphia. Seduced by the money and incredible technology of the 1980s (not to mention the brilliant Director), she finds herself in a swirling sinkhole of corporate misogyny and betrayal. Trust is a luxury Maryl can't afford. As the stakes grow riskier, there's one way out: strike first. And so she does.

Visit Maryl's [Goodreads page](#) to find out more!

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