

2011 Fiction All Stars

Titles Which Received Three or More Starred Reviews From Major Review Sources

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[1Q84](#)

by Murakami, Haruki

FICTION MUR

An ode to George Orwell's "1984" told in alternating male and female voices relates the stories of Aomame, an assassin for a secret organization who discovers that she has been transported to an alternate reality, and Tengo, a mathematics lecturer and novice writer.

[Broken Irish](#)

by Delaney, Edward J.

FICTION DEL

Set in the late 1990's in Boston, a time when even the local Catholic Church is party to a scandal that threatens to unravel, Edward J. Delaney's intricately structured Broken Irish moves with the pace of a thriller, but delves more deeply into its lives. This engrossing novel about corruption and redemption gives sympathetic voice to the voiceless and offers an unflinching look at the workings of a community in the throes of change

[The Buddha in the Attic](#)

by Otsuka, Julie

FICTION OTS

Presents the stories of six Japanese mail-order brides whose new lives in early twentieth-century San Francisco are marked by backbreaking migrant work, cultural struggles, children who reject their heritage, and the prospect of wartime internment.

[The Call](#)

by Murphy, Yannick

FICTION MUR

When a hunting accident leaves his son in a coma, the son's veterinarian father tries to find the man responsible while maintaining normalcy for his family until an unexpected visitor asks a favor that will test his resolve and force him to come to terms with what it truly means to be a family.

[The Cat's Table](#)

by Ondaatje, Michael

FICTION OND

In the early 1950s, an eleven-year-old boy in Colombo boards a ship bound for England. At mealtimes he is seated at the "cat's table"--as far from the Captain's Table as can be--with a ragtag group of "insignificant" adults and two other boys, Cassius and Ramadhin. As the ship makes its way across the Indian Ocean, through the Suez Canal, into the Mediterranean, the boys tumble from one adventure to another, bursting all over the place like freed mercury. But there are other diversions as well: one man talks with them about jazz and women, another opens the door to the world of literature. The narrator's elusive, beautiful cousin Emily becomes his confidante, allowing him to see himself "with a distant eye"

for the first time, and to feel the first stirring of desire. Another Cat's Table denizen, the shadowy Miss Lasqueti, is perhaps more than what she seems. And very late every night, the boys spy on a shackled prisoner, his crime and his fate a galvanizing mystery that will haunt them forever. As the narrative moves between the decks and holds of the ship and the boy's adult years, it tells a spellbinding story--by turns poignant and electrifying--about the magical, often forbidden, discoveries of childhood and a lifelong journey that begins unexpectedly with a spectacular sea voyage.

[The Empty Family: Stories](#)

by Toibin, Colm

FICTION TOI

A collection of short fiction includes "The Street," in which Pakistani workers in Barcelona pursue a taboo affair; and "Two Women," in which a taciturn Irish set designer confronts repressed emotions while working in her homeland.

[Faith](#)

by Haigh, Jennifer

FICTION HAI

Sheila McGann is estranged from her complicated family. But when her older brother Art, pastor of a large suburban parish, finds himself at the center of a scandal, Sheila returns to Boston, ready to fight for him. Her strict mother lives in a state of angry denial; her younger brother Mike has already convicted his brother in his heart. But most disturbing of all is Art himself, who persistently dodges Sheila's questions and refuses to defend himself.

[The Family Fang](#)

by Wilson, Kevin

FICTION WIL

Performance artists Caleb and Camille Fang dedicated themselves to making great art. But when an artist's work lies in subverting normality, it can be difficult to raise well-adjusted children. Just ask Buster and Annie Fang. For as long as they can remember, they starred (unwillingly) in their parents' madcap pieces. but now that they are grown up, the chaos of their childhood has made it difficult to cope with life outside the fishbowl of their parents' strange world. When the lives they've built come crashing down, brother and sister have nowhere to go but home, where they discover that Caleb and Camille are planning one last performance--their magnum opus--whether the kids agree to participate or not. Soon, ambition breeds conflict, bringing the Fangs to face the difficult decision about what's ultimately more important: their family or their art.

[Forgotten Waltz](#)

by Enright, Anne

FICTION ENR

During a snowstorm, Gina Moynihan reminisces the string of events that brought her the love of her life, Sean Vallely, and recalls their affair.

[Last Man in Tower](#)

by Adiga, Aravind

FICTION ADI

When real estate developer Dharmen Shah offers to buy out the residents of Vishram Society so he can build a luxury high-rise, retired teacher Masterji puts himself in grave danger by refusing to leave.

[Love and Shame and Love](#)

by Orner, Peter

FICTION ORN

The interactions of four generations of the Popper family reveal the ways in which love, memory, and connections can make individuals whole or completely unravel them.

[The Marriage Plot](#)

by Eugenides, Jeffrey

FICTION EUG

Madeleine Hanna breaks out of her straight-and-narrow mold when she falls in love with charismatic loner Leonard Bankhead, while at the same time an old friend of hers resurfaces, obsessed with the idea that Madeleine is his destiny.

[Nanjing Requiem](#)

by Jin, Ha

FICTION JIN

During the 1937 attack on Nanjing, American missionary and women's college dean Minnie Vautrin decides to remain at her school during a violent Japanese attack that renders the school a refugee center for ten thousand women and children.

[The Night Circus](#)

by Morgenstern, Erin

FICTION MOR

Waging a fierce competition for which they have trained since childhood, circus magicians Celia and Marco unexpectedly fall in love with each other and share a fantastical romance that manifests in fateful ways.

[Say Her Name](#)

by Goldman, Francisco

FICTION GOL

In a novel based on the author's real-life tragedy, Goldman, consumed with grief and guilt over the accidental death of his wife just before their second anniversary, obsessively collects every memory of her, especially her writings, with the hope of keeping her alive in his mind.

[State of Wonder](#)

by Patchett, Ann

FICTION PAT

A researcher at a pharmaceutical company, Marina Singh journeys into the heart of the Amazonian delta to check on a field team that has been silent for two years--a dangerous assignment that forces Marina to confront the ghosts of her past.

[The Submission](#)

by Waldman, Amy

FICTION WAL

"When a Muslim architect wins a blind contest to design a Ground Zero Memorial, a city of eleven million people takes notice. Waldman, a former bureau chief for the New York Times, explores a diversity of viewpoints around this fictional event, bringing in politicians, businessmen, journalists, activists, and normal people whose lives--whether by happenstance, choice, or even due to their country of origin--get caught up in the controversy. Incredibly, she manages to keep all the balls in the

air without ever fumbling. The story is moving and keeps the pages turning, but there are also bigger themes at work: of individuals versus groups; about the purpose of art, commerce, government, and journalism in society; of how people respond to grief and terror. The result is honest, compelling, and breathtaking."--Chris Schlupe, Amazon Best Book of the Month

[Swamplandia](#)

by Russell, Karen

FICTION RUS

Thirteen-year-old Ava Bigtree has lived her entire life at Swamplandia!, her family's island home and gator-wrestling theme park in the Florida Everglades. But when illness fells Ava's mother, the park's indomitable headliner, the family is plunged into chaos; her father withdraws, her sister falls in love with a spooky character known as the Dredgeman, and her brilliant big brother, Kiwi, defects to a rival park called The World of Darkness. As Ava sets out on a mission through the magical swamps to save them all, we are drawn into a lush and bravely imagined debut that takes us to the shimmering edge of reality.

[The Tiger's Wife](#)

by Obreht, Tea

FICTION OBR

Remembering childhood stories her grandfather once told her, young physician Natalia becomes convinced that he spent his last days searching for "the deathless man," a vagabond who claimed to be immortal. As Natalia struggles to understand why her grandfather, a deeply rational man would go on such a farfetched journey, she stumbles across a clue that leads her to the extraordinary story of the tiger's wife.

[Turn of Mind](#)

by LaPlante, Alice

FICTION LAP

Implicated in the murder of her best friend, Jennifer White, a brilliant retired surgeon with dementia, struggles with fractured memories of their complex relationship and wonders if she actually committed the crime.

[West of Here](#)

by Evison, Jonathan

FICTION EVI

Since the dawn of recorded history, the Klallam Indians have thrived upon the bounty of the Elwha River. In 1889, on the eve of Washington's statehood, the Olympic Peninsula remains America's last frontier. But not for long. As northwestern expansion reaches its feverish crescendo, the clock is ticking...

[When the Killing's Done](#)

by Boyle, T. Coraghessan

FICTION BOY

Traces an incrementally violent confrontation between a National Park Service biologist who would eradicate invasive wildlife on the Channel Islands and two locals who are fiercely opposed to the killing of any creatures.

[Zone One](#)

by Whitehead, Colson

FICTION WHI

Mark Spitz and his squad of three "sweepers" move through Zone One of lower Manhattan, a walled-off enclave scheduled for resettlement in the aftermath of a zombie plague. The great masses of the undead have been violently dispatched by a Marine detachment. It falls to Spitz and his fellows to take care of the handful that remain, as well as a second-tier of the infected known as "stragglers": zombies who have bypassed the cannibalistic urges of their more lethal fellows in favor of a hollow-eyed, eerily nostalgic repetition of some mundane act.