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Best Books!

Scott West
University of Dayton, swest1@udayton.edu

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Best Books! : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Wednesday January 11, 2023

Best Books!

By Scott West

I started writing this with the intention of highlighting books featuring diverse perspectives in the leisure reading collection. As I moved along, I realized what an extraordinary number of amazing books we added this year, and the scope of my review grew.

In particular, a significant number of award-winning books were added to the collection. Several awards are considered pinnacles of literary achievement: the Booker Prize, the Carnegie Medal, the National Book Award, the Pulitzer Prize. Most people know these awards at some level. They provide us with some fantastic books.

Other respected awards honor excellence in formats, genres and themes. In almost every case, they include various categories such as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, young adult, graphic novels, and anthologies.

In keeping with my original intent, I have used an asterisk to indicate books reflecting a diverse perspective.

Triple Winner: Malinda Lo

Perhaps the most lauded book in all these collections is *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*.^{*} Malinda Lo's book won the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, but also the Stonewall Book Award and the National Book Award.

Booker Prize

The Booker Prize is considered one of the leading awards in the English-speaking world. This year's winner is *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*,^{*} by Shehan Karunatilaka. We also have the 2021 and 2020 winners in *The Promise*,^{*} by Damon Galgut, and *Girl, Woman, Other*,^{*} by Bernardine Evaristo.

Bram Stoker Awards

If you like your books to be a bit creepy, if not outright terrifying, the Bram Stoker Awards recognize the best horror writing. This year's fiction winner is *My Heart is a Chainsaw*,^{*} by Stephen Graham Jones; it also won the Locus Award in the horror category. It is a completely bonkers ride with one of the hottest authors out there right now. He also won the previous year with *The Only Good Indians*.^{*} If you enjoy Indigenous literature, get ready for something completely different. *The Inhabitant of the Lake* is a graphic adaptation of the Ramsay Campbell story. I am a big fan of Lovecraftian stories, and this is a great one. *The River Has Teeth* won the young adult category. Two collections — *When Things Get Dark* and *In That Endlessness, Our End* — were recognized as the best anthologies. Good luck sleeping!

Carnegie Medals

The winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction was *The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu*,^{*} by Tom Lin. This is a debut book and provides a new spin on the Western novel. It is every bit a traditional Western but with an Asian protagonist and serious elements of magical realism. Very interesting. If you are expecting martial arts, do not do so. Lin breaks new ground by defying traditional expectations of how we envision the gunfighter myth. Ming Tsu is definitely an antihero, and his prowess comes from his ability with a pistol. The gunfights are graphic without a hint of sentimentality.

Edgar Allan Poe Awards

One of the most popular genres in the leisure reading collection are mysteries and thrillers. This genre's coveted awards are the Edgars — more officially, the Edgar Allan Poe Awards. Alan Parks' *Bobby March Will Live Forever*, a wonderful piece of Scottish noir, focuses on Harry McCoy, a detective in the Glasgow Police Department, and took the Edgar for best

original paperback. *Deer Season*, by Dayton author and Wright State University English professor Erin Flanagan, won for best first novel. *Five Decembers*, by James Kestrel, won best novel, and *Last Call: A True Story of Love, Lust, and Murder in Queer New York*,* by Elon Green, won in the best fact crime category.

Will Eisner Awards

Graphic novels remain an extraordinary medium for storytelling. They are so much more than superheroes. Our recent additions showcase the diverse range of topics that characterize the Will Eisner Award:

- *The Good Asian*,* by Pornsak Pichetshote and Alexandre Tefenkgi (best limited series), is a really cool piece of noir fiction featuring a Chinese American cop trying to find a missing girl in early 20th-century San Francisco.
- *The Nice House on the Lake*, by James Tynion IV and Alvaro Martinez Bueno (best new series), is a trippy piece of horror writing. We just have the first volume, but I am really interested to read more in the second.
- *You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife*, by Kel McDonald and Andrea Purcell (best anthology)
- *Lore Olympus*, by Rachel Smythe (best webcomic), is one of the coolest comics I have read in recent years. Awesome artwork with an intriguing new interpretation of the Hades and Persephone myth. Deeper than at first glance. We have [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).
- *The Black Panther Party: A Graphic History*,* by David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson (best reality-based work)
- *Run*,* by John Lewis et al. (best graphic memoir)
- *Monsters*, by Barry Windsor-Smith (best graphic album)
- *Not All Robots*, by Mark Russell and Mike Deodato Jr. (best humor publication)
- *1984: The Graphic Novel*, by George Orwell, adapted and illustrated by Fido Nesti (best adaptation)
- *Lovesickness*,* by Junji Ito (best international - Asia)

Goodreads Choice Awards

If you are an avid reader, you really should be familiar with Goodreads. It is an excellent resource for everything old and new in the world of books. The Goodreads Choice Awards for 2022 include:

I haven't read any of these books. Admittedly, I am a bit disappointed in myself.

Hugo and Locus Awards

Fantasy and science fiction seem to resonate pretty powerfully on both the big and small screens right now. The Hugo and Locus Awards identify the best books in these genres. *A Desolation Called Peace*, by Arkady Martine, won the Hugo Award for best novel and the Locus Award for best science fiction novel. *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*,* by Becky Chambers (Hugo, best novella), reads like an allegory on inclusion and sustainability. *Far Sector*,* by N.K. Jemisin and Jamal Campbell, is a new Green Lantern graphic novel (Hugo). *Never Say You Can't Survive*, by Charlie Jane Anders, was recognized as the best related work (Hugo), while her young adult book, *Victories Greater Than Death*, won the Locus Award. Anders had a pretty good year because her book *Even Greater Mistakes* won another Locus Award as best collection. Naomi Novik's *The Last Graduate* won for best young adult title. *Jade Legacy*, by Fonda Lee, won the Locus Award for best fantasy novel, and P. Djeli Clark's *A Master of Djinn** was the best first novel winner. Finally, *We're Here: The Best Queer Speculative Fiction 2021** won the Locus for best anthology. I usually think of these genres as within my wheelhouse, yet I have much to read.

Lambda Literary Awards

The Lambda Literary Awards (nickname: Lammy) recognize the best in LGBTQ+ literature. This year's recipients are:

National Book Award

The National Book Award is an incredibly prestigious award. The 2022 winners were just released, and the fiction winner, *The Rabbit Hutch*, by Tess Gunty, was already in the collection. Some of the 2021 winners added this year are:

Pulitzer Prize

The Pulitzer Prize is often associated with journalism (with good reason), but there is a prize focusing on books. This year's fiction winner was *The Netanyahus*, by Joshua Cohen, and the biography winner was *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*,* by the late Winfred Rembert as told to Erin I. Kelly.

Dayton Literary Peace Prize

Finally, our leisure reading collection is an archive of the winners and finalists of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois*,* by Honoree Fanonne Jeffers, won the fiction award. Clint Smith won the nonfiction award with *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With the History of Slavery Across America*.*

So many great books to read! Stop by the first-floor leisure reading section of Roesch Library and check one out.

— Scott West is a collections specialist in the University Libraries. On National Library Workers Day 2021, he received the coveted Li-Berry Award for "Governor of Govdocs."

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