

Reading Year Off to a Good Start
Kris Wiley for The News Review

The only resolution I make every new year involves reading. This year I promised myself I would do my best to read 200 books, which would be a record.

I am off to a good start, and I enjoy mixing lighter fare with more challenging work.

“The Lily of Ludgate Hill” is the third book in the Belles of London romance series by Mimi Matthews. Set in the 1860s, the series features a quartet of women who don’t adhere perfectly to the expectations of the time. Their romances are exciting but more modest than, say, Bridgerton.

“The Lily” is Lady Anne, who rejected a match with Felix Hartford six years ago because of her father’s death and Hart’s willfulness. Their feelings didn’t change, however, and now that they seem to be thrown together at every turn, the tension builds to a satisfying conclusion.

The first two books in the series are “The Siren of Sussex” and “The Belle of Belgrave Square.” I recommend all three of them for escape reads.

“Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis” by Jonathan Blitzer is a deeply researched examination of immigration at the southern border of the United States.

Blitzer, a staff writer at The New Yorker, spent years investigating policy and interviewing a myriad of people, including several who have navigated the immigration process. Those folks elevate the narrative, putting a literal face on the ramifications of political decisions made over the past several decades.

For more studies on the topic, I recommend “Our Migrant Souls: A Meditation on Race and the Meanings and Myths of ‘Latino’” by Héctor Tobar and “Rivermouth: A Chronicle of Language, Faith, and Migration” by Alejandra Oliva, both nonfiction titles, and “Where There Was Fire,” a novel by John Manuel Arias.

Finally, I saw “Juno Loves Legs” by Irish-born author Karl Geary on a lot of best of 2023 book lists, and I’m so glad I read this heartbreakingly beautiful novel of friendship.

Dublin in the 1980s is the gritty backdrop for the story of Juno, who lives in poverty with her downtrodden mother and alcoholic father, and Sean – “Legs” – who is bullied for his sexuality. As the years pass, it becomes clear they can rely only on each other. Just when you think Juno and Legs aren’t going to find their way out of their desperate situations, Geary crafts a lovely, hopeful ending.

“Juno Loves Legs” reminded me of several Irish writers who focus on the bent but not broken, including Roddy Doyle, whose “The Woman Who Walked Into Doors” is a character-driven masterpiece, and Douglas Stuart.

I would love to know your latest favorite reads and share them with other patrons. Email me at kwiley@cityofroseburg.org or complete a Patron Pick form located on the library’s website at www.roseburgpubliclibrary.org.

Happy reading!

This Week’s Library Events

Wednesday, January 31, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Thursday, February 1, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Thursday, February 1, 12-2 p.m. – Drop-In Tech Time

Thursday, February 1, 3-4:30 p.m. – Teen Drop-In Hangout

Thursday, February 1, 6:30 p.m. – Charrería presentation and demonstration by Comunidad y Herencia Cultural

Friday, February 2, 12-2 p.m. – Drop-In Tech Time