

Kathleen's Recent Reads—July

Non-Fiction

Sigh, Gone by Phuc Tran

Tattoo artist, classics teacher, and Vietnamese refugee Phuc Tran's journey has not been a straight line between point A and point B. When Saigon fell, Tran was an infant, and his wailing prevented his family from boarding a bus that wound up exploding after being hit by a missile. Tran's memoir traces his life from childhood to high school graduation, with each chapter titled after a classic work of literature, and framed accordingly; his longing for acceptance and search for identity are both unique to his situation and utterly commonplace. The magic lies in Tran's exceptional gift at creating an immediacy with his words, simultaneously drawing in the reader and evoking one's own childhood. A Book Club Selection.

Fiction

The Paris Apartment by Lucy Foley

A young British woman, avoiding a potential investigation into her recent interactions with an abusive boss, arrives late one night at an exclusive French apartment building to visit her brother, who is nowhere to be found. She manages to gain entry to the building and his apartment, and begins to question the other tenants in hope of locating her brother; as she gets to know her neighbors, her unease about him grows. Suspenseful and atmospheric.

Beneficence by Meredith Hall

The Senter family has farmed their land for generations, and Tup and Doris fall easily into the age-old rhythms of the land as they run their dairy business and raise their family, counting themselves fortunate and blessed. When tragedy strikes, it becomes more than Doris can bear, and the family—once so close—begins to splinter, compounding the sorrow. Spare, precise, lyrical language adds to the moody charm of this family drama, reminiscent of the great Maine classics. A Book Club Selection.

Audiobooks

The Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley (Young Adult)

This thriller by the Ojibwe author Boulley is an incredible debut. Daunis Fontaine, half white and half Native American, has put her college plans on hold after a succession of seemingly unrelated tragedies. A new boy in town, recruited for the local hockey team, shows an interest in Daunis, and despite her suspicions of his motives, she becomes drawn in to a relationship, only to have her world cracked open by further tragedy. From a pure suspense perspective, this book would be worth your time, but the author transcends the genre by weaving in details of life as a Native American in the upper Midwest. An absorbing page turner, recommended for fans of *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart

We first meet Shuggie living on his own in a crummy bedsit in the city, trying to keep clean, warm and fed, and pondering his future. Author Douglas Stuart then takes us back to when Shuggie was a small child, living with his older siblings, both parents and maternal grandparents, and gently leads us through the gradual disintegration of the family, thanks to his mother Agnes's alcoholism. Watching Agnes's inexorable march toward doom is not for the faint of heart, but the reader will marvel at the author's skill. Heart-wrenching, with memorable, vividly drawn characters (and a glimmer of redemption for Shuggie).