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Is a book the same book—or a reader the same reader—the second time around? The 17 authors in this witty and poignant collection of essays all agree on the answer: never. *Rereadings* reveals at least as much about the reader as about the book: Each essay is a miniature memoir that focuses on that most interesting of topics, the protean nature of love. And as every bibliophile knows, no love is more life-changing than the love of a book. $15, paperback.

Anne Fadiman is (by her own admission) the sort of person who learned about sex from her father's copy of *Fanny Hill*, whose husband buys her 19 pounds of dusty books for her birthday, and who once found herself poring over her roommate's 1974 Toyota Corolla manual because it was the only written material in the apartment that she had not read at least twice. This witty collection of essays recounts a lifelong love affair with books and language. For Fadiman, as for many passionate readers, the books she loves have become chapters in her own life story. $14, paperback.

From our first ABCs to the Bible's statement that Jesus is “the Alpha and Omega,” we see the world through our letters. Here the author probes the alphabet's influence in Western history, showing how it has served as a lens for conceptualizing the cosmos and how the cosmos has been perceived as a kind of alphabet itself. *The Letter & the Cosmos* is a sharp and entertaining examination of how languages, letterforms, orthography, and writing tools have reflected our hidden obsession with the alphabet. $27.95, paperback.

A cabinet of curiosities, a time machine, a treasure trove—we love bookshops because they possess a unique kind of magic. UK literary critic Henry Hitchings asks 15 writers from around the world to reveal their favorite bookshops. Each conjuring a specific time and place, these inquisitive, enchanting pieces are a collective celebration of bookshops for anyone who has ever fallen under their spell. Contributors include Michael Dirda, Daniel Kehlmann, Yiyun Li, Pankaj Mishra, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Elif Shafak, Iain Sinclair, Ali Smith, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez. $16.95, paperback.
Human beings were never born to read, writes Tufts University cognitive neuroscientist and child development expert Maryanne Wolf. Reading is a human invention that reflects how the brain rearranges itself to learn something new. In this ambitious, provocative book, Wolf chronicles the remarkable journey of the reading brain not only over the past 5,000 years since writing began but also over the course of a single child’s life, showing in the process why children with dyslexia have reading difficulties and singular gifts. $16.99, paperback.

From the earliest book in medieval England to the incomparable Book of Kells to the oldest manuscript of the Canterbury Tales, these encounters tell a narrative of intellectual culture and art over the course of a millennium. The author introduces us to kings, queens, saints, scribes, artists, librarians, thieves, and collectors. Part travel book, part detective story, part conversation with the reader, this history allows us to experience some of the greatest works of art in our culture and gives us a different perspective on history and the cultivation of wisdom. $25, paperback.

Is vocabulary destiny? Why do clocks “talk” to the Nahua people of Mexico? Will A.I. researchers ever produce true human-machine dialogue? In this mesmerizing collection of essays, bestselling author Daniel Tammet answers these and many other questions about the intricacy and profound power of language. In London, he explores the numeric language of his autistic childhood; in Iceland, he learns why the name Blær became a court case; in Canada, he meets one of the world’s most accomplished lip readers. He chats with chatbots; contrives an “e”-less essay on lipograms; and contemplates the significance of disappearing dialects. Orig. $27 harcover, sale priced at $5.98.

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Ian McEwan once said, “When women stop reading, the novel will be dead.” This book explains why women are the main buyers and readers of fiction today, and how they draw on it to tell the stories of their lives. And female readers, as parents, teachers, and librarians, are the glue for a literate society. This book, written by a scholar of women’s writing, draws on more than 500 interviews with and questionnaires from women readers and writers, describing how, where, and when women read fiction and why stories influence the way female readers understand their own life stories. $18.95, hardcover.

This first-ever history of the legendary bohemian bookstore in Paris, published by the bookshop itself, interweaves essays and poetry from dozens of writers associated with the shop—Allen Ginsberg, Anaïs Nin, Ethan Hawke, Robert Stone and Jeanette Winterson, among others—with hundreds of never-before-seen archival pieces. It includes photographs of James Baldwin, William Burroughs and Langston Hughes; a foreword by British novelist Jeanette Winterson; and an epilogue by Sylvia Whitman, the daughter of the store’s founder, George Whitman. $34.95, hardcover.

Three years before David Bowie died, he shared a list of 100 books that changed his life. His choices span fiction and nonfiction and include timeless classics alongside eyebrow-raising obscurities. The author studies each book on Bowie’s list and contextualizes it in the artist’s life and work. How did the power imbued in a single suit of armor in the Iliad impact a man who loved costumes and shifting identity? How did the Gnostic Gospels inform Bowie’s own hazy personal cosmology? How did T.S. Eliot find his way into Bowie’s lyrics and artistic outlook? How did the 100 books on this list influence one of the most influential artists of a generation? $18, hardcover.

The so-called “book towns” of the world are dedicated havens of literature and the ultimate dream of book lovers everywhere. Book Towns takes readers on a richly illustrated tour of the 40 semi-officially recognized literary towns around the world, and outlines the history and development of each community, and offers practical travel advice. Many “book towns” have emerged in areas of marked attraction such as Ureña in Spain or Fjaerland in Norway, where bookshops have been set up in buildings, including former ferry waiting rooms and banks. While the UK has the best-known examples at Hay, Wigtown, and Sedbergh, the book has a broad international appeal, featuring locations such as Jimbochu in Japan, College Street in Calcutta, and major unofficial “book cities” such as Buenos Aires. $22.99, hardcover.
The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: And Their Race to Save the World’s Most Precious Manuscripts

In the 1980s, a young adventurer and collector for a government library, Abdel Kader Haidara, journeyed across the Sahara Desert and along the Niger River finding and salvaging tens of thousands of ancient Islamic and secular manuscripts that had fallen into obscurity. Here is the incredible story of how Haidara, a mild-mannered archivist and historian from the legendary city of Timbuktu, later became one of the world’s greatest and most brazen smugglers. In his quest to outwit Al Qaeda and preserve Mali’s—and the world’s—literary patrimony, a victory of art and literature over extremism. $17, paperback.

The Written World: The Power of Stories to Shape People, History, and Civilization

In this groundbreaking book, Martin Puchner leads us on a remarkable journey through time and around the globe to reveal how stories and literature have created the world we have today. Through 16 foundational texts selected from more than 4,000 years of world literature, he shows us how writing has inspired the rise and fall of empires and nations, the spark of philosophical and political ideas, and the birth of religious beliefs. $20, paperback.

The Library: A Catalogue of Wonders

Libraries are much more than mere collections of volumes. The best are magical, fabled places whose fame has become part of the cultural wealth they are designed to preserve. To research this book, Stuart Kells traveled around the world with his young family like modern-day “library tourists.” Kells discovered that stories about libraries are stories about people, containing every possible human drama. The Library is a celebration of books as objects, a celebration of the anthropology and physicality of books and bookish space, and an account of the human side of these hallowed spaces by a leading and passionate bibliophile. $16.95, paperback.

Libraries: Candida Höfer

Traveling around the world, photographer Höfer shows the exquisite beauty to be found in order, repetition, and form—rows of books, lines of desks, soaring shelves create patterns that are both hypnotic and soothing. Photographed with a large-format camera and a small aperture, these razor-sharp images of such amazing spaces as the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the Escorial in Spain, Villa Medici in Rome, the Bibliotheque Nationale de France in Paris, and the Museo Archeologico in Madrid glow with subtle color and natural light and remind us again and again that libraries are more than just repositories for books. $65, hardcover.
Imported from England!
When Lucy Mangan was little, stories were everything. They opened up different worlds and cast new light on this one. She was whisked away to Narnia, Kirrin Island, and Wonderland. She ventured down rabbit holes and womble burrows into midnight gardens and chocolate factories. In Bookworm, Lucy brings the favorite characters of a British childhood back to life and disinters a few forgotten treasures, poignantly, wittily using them to tell her own story, that of a born and unrepentant bookworm. $17.95, paperback.

Just published, the follow-up to the bestselling Diary of a Bookseller and a memoir every bit as warm and welcoming as a visit to your very favorite bookstore. Inside a stone-faced Georgian townhouse on the Wig-town highroad, jammed with more than 100,000 books and one portly shop cat, Shaun Bythell manages the ups and downs of Scotland’s largest used bookshop with a sharp eye and even sharper wit. $25.95, hardcover.

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Steven Roger Fischer’s fascinating history offers a sweeping view across time and geography of our evolving relationship with text, taking us to Asia and the Americas and discussing the forms and developments of completely divergent writing systems and scripts. With the Middle Ages in Europe and the Middle East, innovative reinventions of reading emerged—silent and liturgical reading; the custom of lectors; and a focus on reading in general education, whereupon printing transformed society’s entire attitude toward reading. He also assesses a future in which read communication will likely exceed oral communication in the digital age. $13.99, paperback.
This multidisciplinary exploration of the major epidemics since the Black Death reveals the impact of diseases, ranging from bubonic plague to Ebola on both medical and social history, and examines the contemporary question of our preparedness against the next generation of diseases. The author, professor emeritus of the history of medicine at Yale University, also explores the response of world governments to the great societal challenges posed by epidemics. Of all the conditions that promote virulent disease, hubris emerges across the centuries as a prime mover. Know your enemy or enemies! $22, paperback.

Paper is one of the simplest and most essential pieces of human technology. For the past two millennia, the ability to produce it in ever more efficient ways has supported the proliferation of literacy, media, religion, education, commerce, and art; it has formed the foundation of civilizations, promoting revolutions and restoring stability. By tracing paper’s evolution from antiquity to the present, with an emphasis on the contributions made in Asia and the Middle East, author Mark Kurlansky challenges common assumptions about technology’s influence, affirming that paper is here to stay. $16.95, paperback

This spirited and witty guide to the world of disheveled used bookstores by author (and Atlanta resident) Murray Browne describes his personal obsession with bookstores that has “grown into a real (albeit quirky) passion for thinking about the many ways books affect our lives—how and where we shop for them, the people we know who read them, and the small passages that stick in our heads for years only to reappear at the oddest moments.” His ruminations and explorations offer a lifeline to readers who love to browse, in the eternal quest for the perfect read. $12.95, paperback.

This collection of evocative paintings and colorful anecdotes invites you into the heart and soul of every community: the local bookshop, each with its own quirks, charms, and legendary stories. Featuring an incredible roster of great bookstores from across the globe and stories from writers, thinkers, and artists of our time such as David Bowie, Tom Wolfe, Jonathan Lethem, Roz Chast, Philip Glass, Jonathan Ames, Terry Gross, Mark Maron, Ann Patchett, Chris Ware, Amitav Ghosh, Alice Munro, and many more. Page by page, New Yorker cartoonist Eckstein perfectly captures our lifelong love affair with books, bookstores, and book sellers. $22, hardcover.
At last, a specialized journal to record the books you’ve read. Months and years from now, this journal will help you instantly recall long-forgotten details of your reading experience. This is also the place to record books you’d like to read next—just take it with you to the bookstore or library. You’ll find pages to list books borrowed, lent, or given (even a place to list books you’d like to give), your book sources, and book group contact information, plus lists of acclaimed authors and titles to inspire future reading choices and a section devoted to your reading life. $14.99, spiralbound journal.

Based on his earlier bestseller *Footnotes from the World’s Greatest Bookstores* (also available for purchase for $22.00, hardcover), Bob Eckstein brings his heart-tugging illustrations to a postcard set. Here are 100 postcards that celebrate the pillar of every community—the independent bookstore—with 50 total illustrations to both send and save. $20, boxed set.