Looking for the perfect gift for the book lover in your life? We recommend these 2020 books by Grotto writers.

POETRY  
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NON-FICTION  
pages 6-11
Poet Tess Taylor follows Dorothea Lange’s winding paths across California during the Great Depression and immediate aftermath. Taylor’s hybrid text collages lyric and oral histories against Lange’s own journals and notebook fragments.

Taylor’s much-anticipated third book traces literal and metaphoric fault lines—rifts between past and present, childhood and adulthood, what is and what was. Circling Taylor’s hometown—an ordinary California suburb lying along the Hayward fault—these poems unearth strata that include a Spanish land grant, a bloody land grab, gun violence, and the painful history of Japanese internment.

With sharp focus and startling language, the poems in Maw Shein Win’s second book look through physical objects to glimpse the ephemeral, the material, and the immaterial. Ingrid Rojas Contreras, author of Fruit of the Drunken Tree, hails these poems as “luminous and gorgeously darkly-edged, bellowing as they do with the knowledge that we never truly depart from all of our departed things.”
DECEIT AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES: STORIES
by Vanessa Hua

In this powerful collection, first published in 2016 and now featuring new stories, Vanessa Hua gives voice to immigrant families navigating a shifting America. Read what Oprah Magazine hailed as a “searing debut.”

THE COMPANIONS
by Katie M. Flynn

Katie M. Flynn’s debut novel is set in an unsettling near future where the dead can be uploaded to machines and kept in service by the living.

This eerily prescient novel has been included in the New York Times’ “Your Quarantine Reader” and Bustle’s “16 Novels About Viral Outbreaks To Make You Feel Less Alone.”

A GOOD FAMILY
by A.H. Kim

A.H. Kim’s debut novel is a domestic thriller about a glamorous Big Pharma executive who pleads guilty in a high-profile lawsuit and enters women’s prison.

Maureen Corrigan lauds A Good Family as a “lively suspense diversion that provides the eternally welcome assurance that nobody has it all, at least not forever.”
Included in this anthology - part of Akashic Books’ award-winning series - is a short story by Grotto member Shanthi Sekaran.

PARKED
by Danielle Svetcov

Jeanne Ann is smart, stubborn, and living in an orange van. Cal is awkward, sensitive, and living in a humongous house across the street.

Danielle Svetcov’s debut middle-grade novel is a scrappy, poignant, and uplifting story about family, friendship, and the importance of learning both how to offer help and how to accept it.

THE BEST WEEK THAT NEVER HAPPENED
by Dallas Woodburn

Grotto Fellow Dallas Woodburn’s debut YA novel tells the story of eighteen-year-old Tegan Rossi who finds herself alone and confused about how she got to the Big Island in Hawaii. With no wallet, no cell phone, purse, or plane ticket, Tegan’s journey is a mystery. Winner of Best Fiction in the Young Adult Book Awards.
1921. Minsha, a determined terrier, loves her human family, especially 9 year-old Leila. But Leila’s family has decided to leave their home in Beirut for a new life in America—and they can’t take Minsha with them. Minsha stows away on a second ship bound for New York. She knows she’s supposed to stay hidden away, but she can’t help but make friends with a boy named Yusef and his family. Along the way, Minsha meets a gang of cats, some helpful sparrows, and a surprisingly friendly rat.

If someone on your holiday list loves

FICTION

AT THE HEELS OF HISTORY SERIES

by Pam Berkman and Dorothy Hearst,
illustrated by Claire Powell

This chapter book series for children shares important historical events through the eyes, ears, and noses of the dogs who were there.

BO-BO’S CAVE OF GOLD

California, 1852. Sage, a big-hearted mutt, is abandoned by her pack. She's about to give up hope when she meets Sheng, a young gold prospector who renames her Bo-Bo, the Chinese word for treasure. When Bo-Bo frees a caged bear, the bear’s owner demands a huge price from Sheng. Their only chance to find that much gold is a fabled cave rumored to be filled with treasure.

MINSHA'S NIGHT ON ELLIS ISLAND

1921. Minsha, a determined terrier, loves her human family, especially 9 year-old Leila. But Leila’s family has decided to leave their home in Beirut for a new life in America—and they can’t take Minsha with them. Minsha stows away on a second ship bound for New York. She knows she’s supposed to stay hidden away, but she can’t help but make friends with a boy named Yusef and his family. Along the way, Minsha meets a gang of cats, some helpful sparrows, and a surprisingly friendly rat.
WHY WE SWIM
by Bonnie Tsui

New York Times contributor and avid swimmer Bonnie Tsui dives into the deep and investigates what it is about water that seduces us, despite its dangers, and why we come back to it again and again.

A Best Book of the Season by BuzzFeed, Bustle, and San Francisco Chronicle, Why We Swim has been praised by Rebecca Skoot (The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks) as “A fascinating and beautifully written love letter to water. I was enchanted by this book.”

BREATHE: THE NEW SCIENCE OF A LOST ART
by James Nestor


This deeply researched tome explores the million-year-long history of how the human species has lost the ability to breathe properly and why we’re suffering from a laundry list of maladies—snoring, sleep apnea, asthma, autoimmune disease, allergies—because of it.
SHE VOTES: HOW U.S. WOMEN WON SUFFRAGE, AND WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

by Bridget Quinn

Just in time for the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, She Votes is an intersectional story of the women who won suffrage, and those who have continued to raise their voices for equality ever since.

Included in the 19 chapters are 100 gorgeous illustrations by some of today’s most renowned and up-and-coming artists. See why Publishers Weekly calls She Votes “a vibrant and witty chronicle of women’s rights in America.”

THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE IS FEMALE: THE BRILLIANT MINDS SHAPING THE 21ST CENTURY

by Zara Stone

Award-winning journalist Zara Stone shares the fascinating, complicated stories of how a diverse group of powerful women got started—from the perspective of those still working it out as they go along.

The Future of Science is Female provides real encouragement and inspiration for today’s amazing girls. Learn about the drama, tears, and adventure everyday women heroes face as they race to fix everything the world has messed up.
A no-holds-barred tale of gang life, guerrilla warfare, intergenerational trauma, and interconnected violence between the United States and El Salvador, Roberto Lovato’s memoir excavates family history and reveals the intimate stories beneath headlines. Named one of Newsweek’s 25 Best Fall Books.

Why is it so difficult to make a good peace when it is so easy to imagine? That is the question behind this stunning collection of essays and photography about the stakes during war and peace, masterfully edited by Constance Hale.

A no-holds-barred tale of gang life, guerrilla warfare, intergenerational trauma, and interconnected violence between the United States and El Salvador, Roberto Lovato’s memoir excavates family history and reveals the intimate stories beneath headlines. Named one of Newsweek’s 25 Best Fall Books.

From nationally recognized Wise Sons, Eat Something features over 60 homey recipes and relatable humor. This long-awaited cookbook - the first for Wise Sons - is equal parts delicious and nostalgic cookbook and a lively celebration of Jewish culture.
The latest in the best-selling, award-winning series is edited by Lavinia Spalding and includes writing by Jill Robinson, Faith Adiele, Mathangi Subramanian, and Audrey Ferber. Ride shotgun alongside intrepid female nomads as they wander the globe discovering new places, faces, and facets of themselves.

The essays are as diverse as the destinations, taking the reader from Canada to Colombia, Ireland to India, and explore such themes as kindness, transformation, nature, friendship, family, strength, and resilience.

THE WAX PACK: ON THE OPEN ROAD IN SEARCH OF BASEBALL’S AFTERLIFE

by Brad Balukjian

A Los Angeles Times Bestseller, Brad Balukjian’s debut tells the true story of a single pack of baseball cards from 1986 and the author’s quest to find all the players in the pack. Balukjian’s trip spanned 11,341 miles through 30 states in 48 days.

Alternately elegiac and uplifting, The Wax Pack is part baseball nostalgia, part road trip travelogue, and all heart, a reminder that greatness is not found in the stats on the backs of baseball cards but in the personal stories of the men on the front of them.
WRITE IT DOWN: PANDEMIC WRITING PROMPTS

by Mary Ladd (Author), Lydia Sviatoslavsky (Editor), M Rocket (Designer)

Write it Down uses creative writing prompts to cope with pandemic life. Mary Ladd, who collaborated with Anthony Bourdain on his TV projects, is a contributor to the best-selling 642 Things and Lit Starts writing books. Here, Ladd helps writers of all levels with processing pandemic emotions and experiences. This accessible paperback is brimming with empowering ideas for fresh writing.
Aspiring and seasoned writers alike: learn to focus on a single aspect of the craft of writing with these two new fill-in books from the Writers Grotto - the fifth and sixth in a series that includes Writing Humor, Writing Dialogue, Writing Character, and Writing Action.

Writing Memoir starts with a foreword by New York Times bestselling author Julie Lythcott-Haims, who offers pointers for crafting a compelling narrative from your own experiences. The rest of the book consists of prompts and space to write, providing opportunities to reframe aspects of your life in thoughtful and interesting ways.

Writing Sci-Fi & Fantasy starts with a foreword by author Dorothy Hearst, who offers pointers for writing speculative fiction and inventing fantastic new worlds. The rest of the book consists of prompts and space to write. Among other ideas, you’ll explore the various aspects of world-building.

Perfectly sized to travel with you (or sit on your lap), all of the Lit Starts books are designed for practicing your creative writing a little bit at a time.

The Writers Grotto urges you to support local independent booksellers. To find an indie bookstore near you, check out: www.bookshop.org