

Reading 10 Before the End of the Year Kris Wiley for The News-Review

The past couple of years I have enjoyed participating in the book world's informal 10 before the end challenge in which I identify the titles I commit to reading before Dec. 31.

I would love for you to participate. Let me know your 10 before the end by emailing me at kwiley@roseburgor.gov. Perhaps the titles below will inspire you.

I gravitate toward new releases so I can recommend readalikes to patrons and recommend authors folks may not know. Yes, I will get to the new John Grisham, "The Widow," but I don't need to make much of an effort to promote one of the bestselling writers of all time.

Instead, I read the first two books in the Mavis Miller mystery series by Elise Bryant, "It's Elementary" and "The Game Is Afoot." The books are cozy adjacent (there is some stronger language, but there is no graphic violence or adult situations), and I recommend them for fans of strong female characters who enjoy laugh-out-loud situations with a dose of mayhem.

Mavis is the single mom of a 7-year-old who lives with her father and works at a nonprofit where she is undervalued. She gets roped into the school's diversity committee because she is Black, which means she's at the school to see the intimidating PTA president doing some shady business. The next day the new principal goes missing, and Mavis realizes she has a knack for investigating. It doesn't hurt that her sidekick is the hunky school psychologist.

"The Game Is Afoot" picks up a few months later with Mavis trying to focus on self-care when her daughter's soccer coach is murdered. She can't not investigate. After all, she's pretty good at solving crimes in between juggling her dad's dreams of becoming a podcast legend, her daughter's school musical and the two men vying for her affections.

For readers who like emotional, character-driven novels that work well as book group picks, I recommend "When the Cranes Fly South" by Swedish novelist Lisa Ridzén.

This debut is a tear-jerker about a man named Bo who is living the last days of his life reminiscing and doing his best to go out on his own terms with his beloved dog by his side, a situation complicated by the actions of his son.

"When the Cranes Fly South" is a quiet, powerful book for fans of "A Man Called Ove" by Fredrik Backman and "The Unexpected Pilgrimage of Harold Fry" by Rachel Joyce.

So what are my 10 before the end? I've selected these books, and I'll follow up with my thoughts about them as I read my way to the end of the year.

- “The Body in the Bookstore” by Ellie Alexander because she is from the Pacific Northwest, and this is the first book in her new mystery series.
- “The Build-a-Boyfriend Project” by Mason Dever because I’m a sucker for romances.
- “The Correspondent” by Virginia Evans because it has been recommended by members of the library’s Online Book Group.
- “Flashlight” by Susan Choi because it is on this year’s Booker Prize shortlist and National Book Award longlist.
- “Little Bosses Everywhere: How the Pyramid Scheme Shaped America” by Bridget Read because I’m fascinated by multilevel marketing.
- “Mailman: My Wild Ride Delivering Mail in Appalachia and Finally Finding Home” by Stephen Starring Grant because numerous patrons have recommended it.
- “Sacrament” by Susan Straight because she exquisitely captures contemporary America, and California specifically.
- “The Sisters” by Jonas Hassen Khemiri because his previous novel “The Family Clause” knocked my socks off.
- “We Don’t Talk About Carol” by Kristen L. Berry because I love a debut mystery that is getting rave reviews.
- “Wild Dark Shore” by Charlotte McConaghy because it is on a lot of best-of-the-year lists.

Next week’s events

Tuesday, Nov. 4, 10 a.m. – Grab-and-go kids craft kits

Wednesday, Nov. 5, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Thursday, Nov. 6, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 12 p.m. – Umpqua Haiku

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 3-4:30 p.m. – Teen program: felt garlands and PlayStation gaming

Thursday, Nov. 6, 4-5 p.m. – Legos & building toys

Thursday, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m. – Author Lyla Sage in person or on Facebook Live @roseburglibrary