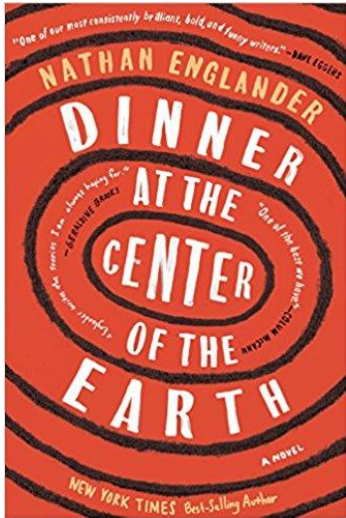


# 2018-19 TBY Book Selections

## Dinner at the Center of the Earth: A novel

by Nathan Englander

The best work yet from the Pulitzer finalist and best-selling author of *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*--a political thriller that unfolds in the highly charged territory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and pivots on the complex relationship between a secret prisoner and his guard.



A prisoner in a secret cell. The guard who has watched over him a dozen years. An American waitress in Paris. A young Palestinian man in Berlin who strikes up an odd friendship with a wealthy Canadian businessman. And The General, Israel's most controversial leader, who lies dying in a hospital, the only man who knows of the prisoner's existence.

From these vastly different lives Nathan Englander has woven a powerful, intensely suspenseful portrait of a nation riven by insoluble conflict, even as the lives of its citizens become fatefully and inextricably entwined--a political thriller of the highest order that interrogates the anguished, violent division between Israelis and Palestinians, and dramatizes the immense moral ambiguities haunting both sides. Who is right, who is wrong--who is the guard, who is truly the prisoner?

A tour de force from one of America's most acclaimed voices in contemporary fiction.

"Glorious...devastating...a beautiful masterpiece."

—NPR

"A kaleidoscopic fairy tale of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation... One of the exhilarating aspects of *Dinner at the Center of the Earth* is its expansive sense of space and time...The effect is to heighten events, to transcend history in favor of a more allegorical realm...Englander has built a complex structure, by which his narrative reveals itself in pieces, and the less we know in advance, the more vividly we feel its turns...with this novel he frames history as both an act and a failure of the imagination, which is to say, in inherently, and inescapably, human terms."

—*Los Angeles Times*

"Equal parts political thriller and tender lamentation, the latest from Englander explores, in swirling, nonlinear fashion, Israeli-Palestinian tensions and moral conflicts... Ultimately, Englander suggests that shared humanity and fleeting moments of kindness between jailer and prisoner, spy and counterspy, hold the potential for hope, even peace."

—*Booklist*

"The ability to see the world from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives is what gives *Dinner at the Center of the Earth* its optimistic moral center. Both Israelis and Palestinians are faithful to the righteousness of their own cause, but at times, characters can see a way past this most charged of conflicts to a future of peace... Yet while the novel is optimistic, it is also realistic. The violence, and the historical memory of past violence, keeps both sides addicted to carrying out further attacks in the name of retribution. Englander's ability to capture the almost pathological nature to 'get even' shines."

—*NTK Network*

# A Horse Walks Into a Bar: A novel

by David Grossman

WINNER OF THE 2017 MAN BOOKER INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

In a dive bar in a small Israeli city, Dov Greenstein, a comedian a bit past his prime, takes the stage for his final show. Over the course of a single evening, Dov's patter becomes a kind of memoir, taking us back into the terrors of his childhood. And in the dance between comic and audience, a deeper story begins to take shape as Dov confronts the decision that has shaped the course of his life—a story that will alter the lives of several of those in attendance. A poignant exploration of how people confront life's capricious battering, *A Horse Walks into a Bar* is a searing story of loss and survival.

*A New York Times* and *Washington Post* Notable Book

"Astounding. . . [A] magnificently comic and sucker-punch-tragic excursion into brilliance." —Gary Shteyngart, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Unsettling and mesmerizing. . . As beautiful as it is unusual, and it's nearly impossible to put down." —NPR

"[Grossman] has transcended genre; or rather, he has descended deep into the vaults beneath. . . This isn't just a book about Israel: it's about people and societies horribly malfunctioning." —*The Guardian*

"As cunning and compelling as the stand-up guy at its center. In this funnyman's sad, grotesque performance, Grossman reaffirms his power to entertain and unnerve." —*The Boston Globe*

"Arresting. . . Grossman seems to be channeling Philip Roth, circa *Portnoy's Complaint*, with a colloquial voice that badgers, bullies, berates and beseeches." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

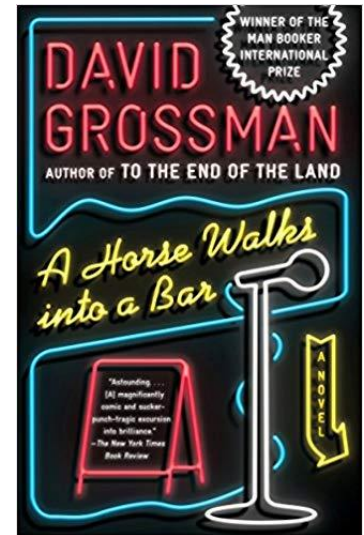
"A short, shocking masterpiece . . . in which absurdity and humor are used to probe the darkest corners of the human condition." —*The Sunday Times* (London)

"[A] pitch-black comedy. . . It takes an author of Mr. Grossman's stature to channel not a failed stand-up but a shockingly effective one, and to give him salty, scabrous gags that—in Jessica Cohen's savory translation—raise a guilty laugh." —*The Economist*

"Grossman has once more proved himself as one of Israel's finest literary alchemists. . . An unsettling, cathartic, confessional stream-of-consciousness soliloquy." —*Haaretz*

"Few writers hold a more unflinching mirror up to Israeli society than Grossman . . . But [his work] is also suffused with compassion, acutely attuned to the complexity of individual lives and the solutions people find to the challenge of that complexity." —*Financial Times*

"A devastating work. . . A lamentation and a plea for compassion and empathy. . . *A Horse Walks into a Bar* is unlike anything Grossman has yet done." —*The Irish Times*

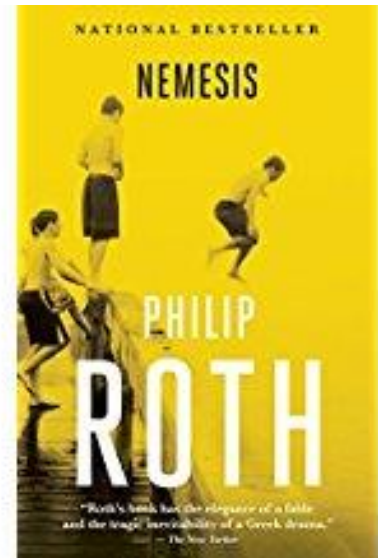


# Nemesis

by Philip Roth

Set in a Newark neighborhood during a terrifying polio outbreak, *Nemesis* is a wrenching examination of the forces of circumstance on our lives.

Bucky Cantor is a vigorous, dutiful twenty-three-year-old playground director during the summer of 1944. A javelin thrower and weightlifter, he is disappointed with himself because his weak eyes have excluded him from serving in the war alongside his contemporaries. As the devastating disease begins to ravage Bucky's playground, Roth leads us through every inch of emotion such a pestilence can breed: fear, panic, anger, bewilderment, suffering, and pain. Moving between the streets of Newark and a pristine summer camp high in the Poconos, *Nemesis* tenderly and startlingly depicts Cantor's passage into personal disaster, the condition of childhood, and the painful effect that the wartime polio epidemic has on a closely-knit, family-oriented Newark community and its children.



Roth's book has the elegance of a fable and the tragic inevitability of a Greek drama." —*The New Yorker*

"Like a very well-executed O. Henry story. . . . A parable about the embrace of conscience. . . .and what its suffocating, life-denying consequences can be." —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"Roth writes a lean, vigorous prose that burns with the intensity of his purpose. It flows smoothly even when he wrestles with the knottiest of philosophical problems." —*Plain Dealer*

"Roth is all about character and how we are shaped by improbable circumstances, and here he offers up insight to match his many years on the job." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Roth's prose, that magnificent voice of his, has always fed off the twin passions of lust and rage." —*The New Republic*

"Roth has always been terrific at rendering the times and places close to his own youth. And in *Nemesis*, he masterly contrasts the sweaty, close world of all-day ball games and nights spent on front stoops with affluence and young love developing in the cool countryside. . . . A quick, propulsive read full of chiseled storytelling." —*Chicago Sun-Times*

"Some of the most scathing and beautiful prose of our time." —*The Toronto Star*

"Part of the appeal—and the strangeness—of Roth's novel is the way that it renders this situation, with its seemingly undramatic topic and unlikely protagonist, without hyperbole, yet maintains a grasp on the tension and ethical drama." —*The Times Literary Supplement* (London)

**...AND ONE MORE – TBD!**