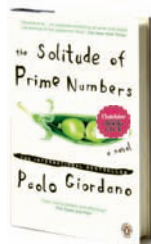


BOOK OF THE MONTH

SO NEAR and yet so far

The forces of attraction draw two troubled teens together in this poignant story from a scientist and novelist



THE PICK *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*, Paolo Giordano, \$24 (paperback), \$19 (ebook).

THE HOOK An intense, provocative read, about two young people, set in Italy from the early '80s to 2007. Each is a

loner, an outsider or, in mathematical lingo, a prime. (High-school recap: Prime numbers are those that can't be divided by anything but one and themselves: two, three, five, seven, etc.) Traumatic early-life experiences have had lasting effects on both — but in one another they find kindred spirits.

THE PLOT The messy, intoxicating, electrifying and sometimes scary days of adolescence are practically a supporting character in this compelling story. While Alice and Mattia are the centre around which the entire story revolves, the minor characters are just as evocative: the popular girl, golden and cruel; a whole cadre of giggling hangers-on; a socially awkward closeted boy. When our protagonists meet as young teens, both are intensely lonely and living outside of the strictly regimented schoolyard hierarchy. He hardly speaks, grieving and guilty over the death of his mentally challenged twin sister. She tries hard to fit in, feeling perpetually different after a childhood skiing accident left her scarred and with a limp. Both are constantly at risk of being over-

whelmed by their fears and emotions; their inner turmoil is what both draws them together and keeps them apart. Are they destined to be forever like the twin primes that Mattia, a budding mathematician, discovers at university — always together, but never touching?

THE INSPIRATION “All the emotional material is collected from my childhood and adolescence,” says Paolo. “This can only happen with a first novel; from the second one on you need to start to search for it. The overarching idea came to me when I had gotten almost halfway through writing. I realized that I was talking about the feeling of being ‘special’ and the dangers related to it; about what happens when you start to isolate yourself because you think there is something in you that other people will never understand.”

PAOLO'S CONFESSION “Mattia's personality is similar to mine, though his physiognomy is different — dark hair, black eyes,” Paolo confides. “He's the idealized version of me I had when I was 13. At that time, I found it hard to reconcile my blond hair and innocent look with the obscure mess I had inside. With Alice, the situation is different. She's female, so I had to rely more on observation. She became a mix of three or four girls I met in my life and was somehow strongly bound to.”

TALKING POINTS Love, adolescence, social isolation, '90s culture, self-harm and eating disorders. — *Stacy Lee Kong*



all about THE AUTHOR

PAOLO GIORDANO

Born & lives:

Turin, Italy

Age: 29

Behind the scenes:

Paolo is also a particle physicist (studying the bits that make up atoms). Writing was an exercise in time management: While completing his novel, he was doing his thesis at the University of Turin and preparing for the PhD program. “It was something I had in mind for a long time but never found the courage to do. I also realized recently that, unconsciously, I was looking for a way out of science. Physics makes me feel a little stupid and that feeling was starting to frustrate me.”

Read along with us

➤ Find author Q&As and editor chats at chatelaine.com/bookclub.



BOOK LOVERS'

Wish List

Give them a present they'll never forget

FOR THE FASHION FAN

This reprint of Edith Head's 1967 tome contains timeless inspiration and the award-winning costume designer's original line drawings. Head, who dressed Audrey Hepburn and Sophia Loren, provides candid advice ("Avoid too- youthful, faddy fashions that make you look like 'mutton dressed as lamb'") about how to build personal style. **How to Dress for Success**, Edith Head, \$24.

FOR THE DIEHARD ROMANTIC

Karen Doornebos puts a comic twist on romance à la Jane Austen. American Chloe Parker auditions for what she thinks is a documentary but is actually a reality dating show set in 1812 England, with contestants competing to impress the wealthy, wife-seeking Mr. Wrightman—all without any modern-day conveniences. **Definitely Not Mr. Darcy**, Karen Doornebos, \$18.

FOR THE ECCENTRIC

The first-time collaboration between Douglas Coupland's imaginative writing and Graham Roumieu's devilishly creative illustrations produces highly entertaining stories. The unique characters—including Donald the Incredibly Hostile Juice Box—are delightfully evil and will leave you laughing out loud at their impish escapades. **Highly Inappropriate Tales for Young People**, Douglas Coupland and Graham Roumieu, \$24.

FOR THE GO-GETTER

Bestselling biographer Walter Isaacson has written books on Einstein and Benjamin Franklin; now he focuses on the late, great Apple guru Steve Jobs. Isaacson conducted over 40 interviews with Jobs in his attempt to capture the man who changed the way we look at the world. **Steve Jobs**, Walter Isaacson, \$37.

FOR THE CRAFTY SOUL

In her newest book, Martha Stewart showcases lush, gorgeous projects for holidays throughout the year, from Christmas-card making to Easter-egg dying. **Handmade Holiday Crafts**, Martha Stewart, \$28.

FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHY BUFF

Errol Morris, who won an Academy Award for his documentary *The Fog of War*, explores the world of photographs in *Believing Is Seeing*. Each essay details how photographs are perceived, what they're truly meant to represent and how our beliefs can actually influence what we see. **Believing Is Seeing**, Errol Morris, \$29.

FOR THE FOODIE

In her newest book, James Beard Foundation Award-winning author Jennifer McLagan turns to the trend of making the most of meat—from nose to tail. She outlines recipes like tongue with salsa verde or oxtail ravioli to encourage food lovers to value all parts of an animal, not just the prime cuts. **Odd Bits: How to Cook the Rest of the Animal**, Jennifer McLagan, \$40.

—Kari Pritchard





MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

This clever poster is made from the entire text of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; other classic novels, like *Jane Eyre* and *Moby Dick*, are also available.

CLASSIC LITERATURE POSTER, \$24-\$35, POSTERTEXT.COM.

TYPE SET

A literary take on the classic initial charm, these necklaces are made from repurposed vintage-typewriter keys.

TYPEWRITER-KEY NECKLACE, \$24, THEWEEKENDSTORE.COM.



A TASTE OF AUSTEN

Quotes from Jane Austen's books and letters adorn these generously sized mugs.

JANE AUSTEN MUG, \$16, BROOKISH.ETSY.COM.



MAGIC TOUCH

These pretty gloves keep hands toasty, and the unique fabric on the thumb and index finger allows you to use touch-screen devices.

TOUCH GLOVES, \$35, ECHODESIGN.COM.



READERS' rapture

Let them indulge their passion with these literary picks!



PERSONAL LIBRARY

This adorable kit includes 20 self-adhesive pockets, 20 checkout cards, a date stamp, an ink pad and a pencil. DIY LIBRARY KIT, \$16, THINKGEEK.COM.



BEST BOOKMARK

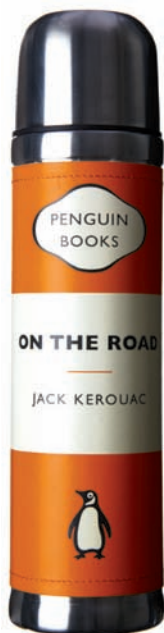
These tiny bronze darts mark exactly where a reader left off in a book or passages of note.

BOOK DARTS, \$9, LEEVALLEY.COM.

THE ART OF BOOKS

Splurge on an original painting for a friend of their favourite titles: Artist Jane Mount paints the spines to show an ideal bookshelf. Or buy a ready-made print for \$26.

IDEAL BOOKSHELF PAINTING, \$230-\$465, IDEALBOOKSHELF.COM.



TRAVEL IN STYLE

A Thermos gets the classic Penguin cover treatment.

ON THE ROAD FLASK, \$36, DRAKEGENERALSTORE.CA.





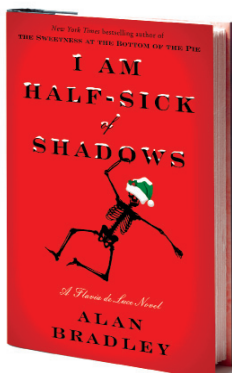
A Second Chance

Cheated on by her husband of 10 years, Cassie leaves her sheltered life in rural Scotland to embark on an eye-opening and emotional year-long odyssey, living with each of her best friends in New York, Paris and London. A heartwarming story of friendship, love and the journey to find a suitable life – all generously frosted with glamour and wit. **CHRISTMAS AT TIFFANY'S**, Karen Swan, \$20. – M.M.

MURDER ON SET

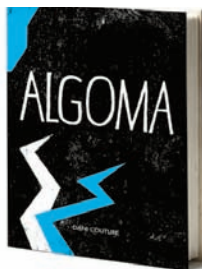
When a film crew settles in at the Buckshaw estate before the Christmas holidays, it's all lights, camera and murderous action. So the precocious Flavia de Luce focuses her attention on the corpse at hand, taking time out from chemistry experiments and an attempt to capture Father Christmas to track down the killer. The fourth in Alan Bradley's popular de Luce series.

I AM HALF-SICK OF SHADOWS, Alan Bradley, \$30. – L.G.



DECEMBER

editor's picks

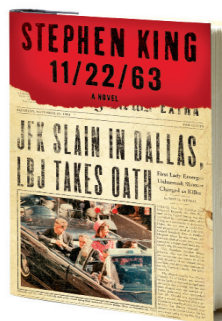


THE GREAT DIVIDE

As a young mother struggles to cope with the drowning of one of her twin sons and the increasing distance between herself and her husband, her remaining son insists his twin will return and leaves notes for him wherever there is water. In her debut novel, Dani Couture captures the starkness of northern Quebec life, grief's many forms and the idea that even in the midst of sorrow and upheaval there can be hope. **ALGOMA**, Dani Couture, \$20. – M.D.L.

life saver

Stephen King's hotly anticipated new novel has a seemingly simple premise: If 35-year-old English teacher Jake Epping can travel back in time, he'll be able to save John F. Kennedy's life on that fateful November day in Dallas. The trip itself should be easy, since Jake's friend conveniently has a time portal in his diner that leads straight back to 1958. But is five years enough to change the course of history? Only time – and 864 pages! – will tell. **11/22/63**, Stephen King, \$20. – L.G.



CELEB CULTURE

What Book Would You Give as a Gift?



Tessa Bonhomme
hockey player,
Battle of the Blades

Spin by Montreal's Catherine McKenzie. I picked it up because it sounded funny, and I wanted a light, entertaining read to occupy my time as I travelled. I like it because I relate to the main character, who's funny and honest. *Spin* is about a young girl who's an aspiring writer and party animal. She faces a situation where she has to choose between her dream job and loyalty to her new friend. The author's writing style is engaging and comical. I can hardly put it down!



Dominic Monaghan
actor, *The Lord of the Rings*

I think I'd probably give *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, because it's such an amazing adventure and experience. It made me feel like I was in that world, experiencing Middle Earth. It's such escapism.



Ashly Bell
actor, *The Last Exorcism*

I'd give *The Beautiful and Damned* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, because every sentence is just so beautiful.



Take the pressure off: Frozen appetizers are good enough.