

Reading for the summer recess

Roy Blatchford

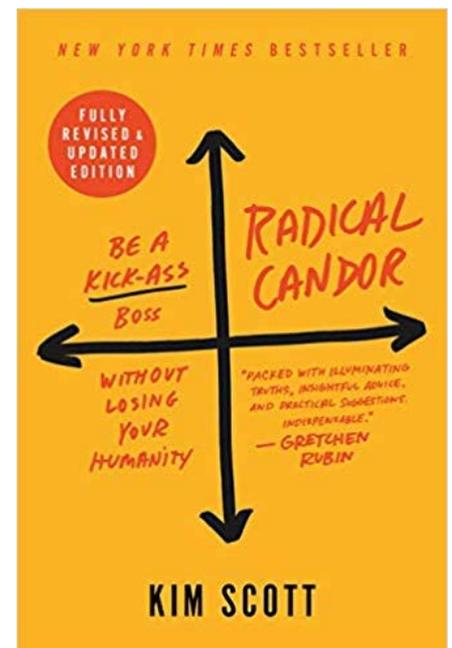
August 2019

Radical Candour

Kim Scott (2017)

‘Once you build Radically Candid relationships with the people who report to you, you will eliminate a terrible source of misery in the world: the bad boss. You will achieve results you never imagined possible. You will create an environment where you and the people who report to you can love their work and working together.’

Kim Scott has worked as a senior executive at Google and Apple. The book brings together her strong opinions, tips and anecdotes, focused on creating a ‘can-do’ culture in the workplace. Checklists, buzzwords and natty diagrams punctuate the text.

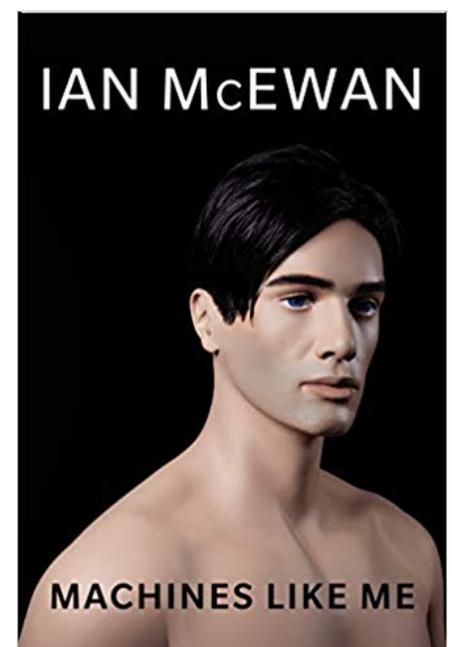


Machines Like Me

Ian McEwan (2019)

‘He was advertised as a companion, an intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum who could wash dishes, make beds and ‘think’. Every moment of his existence, everything he heard and saw, he recorded and could retrieve..... Before us sat the ultimate plaything, the dream of ages, the triumph of humanism – or its angel of death.’

In common with many of his novels, the author’s latest title explores a contemporary topic with a characteristically divergent eye, in this case AI. He creates a convincing ménage à trois involving the above ‘companion’, plays with the sequence of late 20th century historical events, and intriguingly weaves in Sir Alan Turing.



Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic

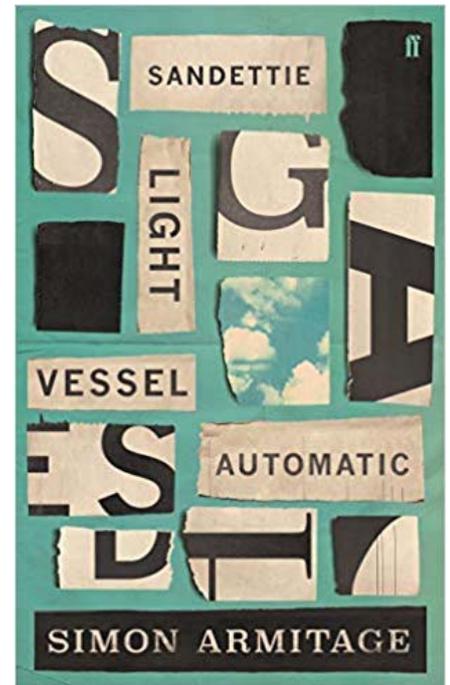
Simon Armitage (2019)

'Why is the sea?

Because it sleeps.

Sleeps like a drunk, its feet on the pillow
Of reefs and shallows, its head where light
Never breaks, face down in the sand.
I know this. I know this, I am the land.'

Armitage is a favourite of anthologies for school students. This collection brings together an outstanding selection of poems all rooted in projects, commissions, collaborations, residencies and events which the poet has been involved in. The astonishing variety of settings highlights Armitage's core belief that poetry is about public engagement. The poetry itself is always 'the best words in the best order'.

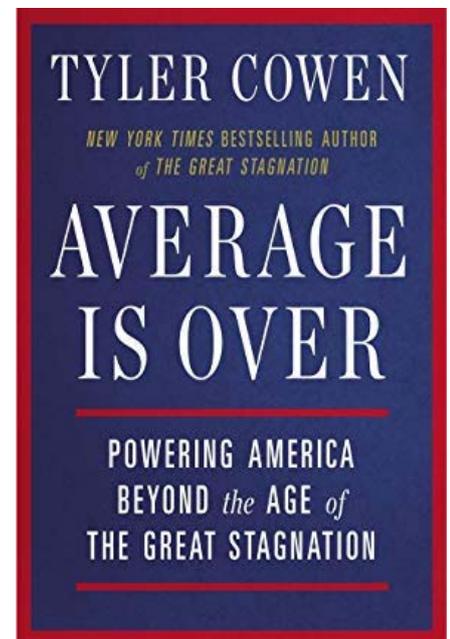


Average Is Over

Tyler Cowen (2013)

'So let's take a look at how education will change, keeping in mind these two blades of the scissors, namely that machine intelligence can replace human labor and augment the value of human labor for many individuals..... Online education is expanding beyond its niche status, but sometimes we don't recognize the most important developments as explicit education.'

Cowen is one of the US's leading economists. Writing this book in 2013, he predicted much of the social and political fracturing of the current Trump years, rooted in his analysis of America's ageing population, widening wealth gaps, enormous national debt and relations with China. He has some especially trenchant things to say about schools and universities and their conservative resistance to the potential of online learning.

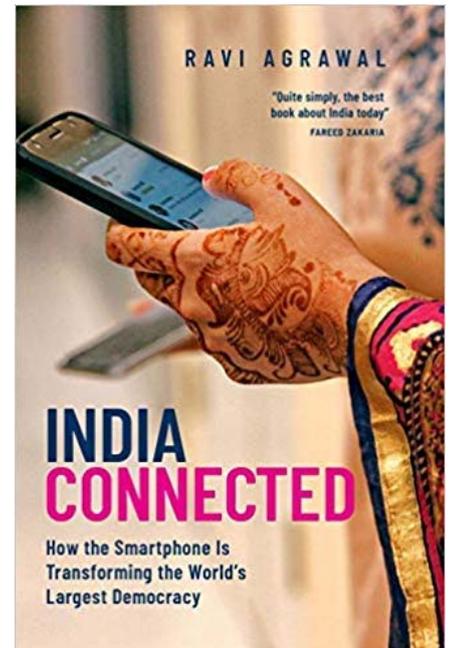


India Connected

Ravi Agrawal (2018)

‘In 2000, only 20 million Indians had access to the internet. Ten years later, that number grew to 100 million. But 1.1 billion Indians were still offline. Then smartphones and cellular data became mainstream. By 2017, 462 million were online. By 2020, India’s online community is projected to swell past 700 million.’

The author argues compellingly – and with delightful tales from urban and rural places – that, in the land of great inequalities, the smartphone is India’s great equalizer. He compares what is unfolding with what happened a century ago in the US: the arrival of the automobile. In the way the car came to define American lifestyle and social standing, so today the smartphone is the embodiment of the new Indian Dream.



Why We Dream

Alice Robb (2018)

‘We dream in order to work through our anxieties and prepare for our days; we rehearse for trials and tests, making their real-world counterparts feel more familiar. We confront worst-case scenarios in a no-stakes environment so the actual event feels like a comparative breeze. Dreaming about traumatic events can help us heal from them.’

The author claims that most people experience a lucid dream at some point in their lives but only about 10 to 20 percent have them regularly. Dotted with personal experiences, interviews and reflections on research, the narrative is fun, engaging, and sometimes arresting. At its conclusion the reader stands persuaded that those who don’t dream/cannot remember their dreams are missing out. And that given we spend a third of our lives asleep, we should treat our dreams like the real and profound experiences they are.

