

The Best Books I Read in 2015

Of the books I read in 2015, these are the ones that stick in my mind as particularly good, worthwhile reads. I cut it down to a dozen, which leaves off several worthy books; for example, some good books by Charles Stross, Terry Pratchett, Andy Weir, and Peter Watts didn't *quite* make the cut, but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy them. I simply had to draw an arbitrary line somewhere to cut the list of 54 down to a dozen.

1. *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. LeGuin. An undisputed classic, this work proves, as if proof was necessary, that genre fiction can be deeply literate and humane.
2. *Aurora* by Kim Stanley Robinson. A science fiction novel about interstellar travel to end all science fiction novels about interstellar travel — literally.
3. *2312* by Kim Stanley Robinson. A wonderful journey across the solar system, visiting some of Robinson's favorite planets, with a couple of memorable companions.
4. *The Three-Body Problem* by Cixin Liu. This is a very strange and fascinating work of science fiction by a Chinese author, newly translated. The sequel is on my to-read pile.
5. *Hav* by Jan Morris. An odd fictional travelogue, it is memorable for its vividly described, imaginative setting, and for the way Morris then allows time, money, and progress to make that marvelous place almost unrecognizable.
6. *Naked* by David Sedaris. I read a number of books by David Sedaris this year, but I want to mention this one in particular. It's a book of humorous essays, but the best of them are not so much funny as deeply moving. The standout is the absolute gut-punch of an essay, "Ashes."
7. *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell. This is a terrific novel and makes me want to read more of Mitchell's work.
8. *The Hare with Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal. This is an amazing non-fiction book about tiny wooden carvings. The story of their journey encompasses the whole arc of twentieth-century anti-semitism in Europe. It's beautiful, startling, and relevant.
9. *My Struggle: Book 1* by Karl Ove Knausgaard. Part of a very unsentimental autobiographical novel by a dour Norwegian, its sheer convincing realism makes the sometimes unbearable sadness of everyday reality a thing worth celebrating — because it is real.
10. *Nature's End* by Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka. I believe this odd, dark, somewhat prophetic potboiler deserves to be back in print.
11. *The Long Ships* by Frans G. Bengtsson. A terrific work of historical fiction that tells an endearingly human story about Vikings. It's impossible not to like Bengtsson's characters.
12. *The Rim of Morning: Two Tales of Cosmic Horror* by William Sloane. A reprint of two neglected horror novels, these works really deserve to be remembered along with the work of such writers as H. P. Lovecraft and

William Hope Hodgson.

What are you planning to read in 2016?

Saginaw and/or Ann Arbor, Michigan

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