

All Who Live on Islands by Rose Lu

The Female Persuasion by Meg Wolitzer

Edna O'Brien's Country Girls trilogy

The Road to Wigan Pier

Trick Mirror, essays by Jia Tolentino

The Plot Against America

Aspiring by Damien Wilkins

Not Her Real Name

Americana

Tooth and Nail by Mary Findlay

What a Carve-up

Abide with Me

The Relive Box, short stories by T. C. Boyle

The Red House by Mark Haddon

The Elephant Vanishes

The Empty Family - short stories by Colm Toibin

Olive Kitteridge

Waiting for Sunrise

Margaret Atwood's *The Hearts Last Want*

Olive Again

Four Souls by Louise Erdrich

Cherry Crush by Cathy Cassidy

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Getaway

The Truth About Why People Do Bad Things by Tom Gash

Frank McCourt's memoir, *Tis*

Specimen by Madison Hamill

That's my reading list for 2020 so far. I grew up in a reading household, and my parents read to me every day until I was eleven. One of my earliest memories is a rhyme from Mother Goose. I knew it by heart, even though it made very little sense – to me or anyone. It was about the words and knowing them and owning them:

Away down east, away down west,
away down Alabama,
the only girl that I loved best,
her name was Suzy-anna.
I took her to the ball one night,
and sat her down to supper.
The table fell, and she fell too,
and stuck her nose in the butter.
The butter, the butter, the holy margarine,
two black eyes and a jelly nose,
and the rest all painted green.

I miss going to the Central Library. I went there almost every week, mostly because I liked being in such a big space filled with books.

I have friends. I play netball. I do all the usual stuff. But reading makes me especially happy. I can't articulate exactly why. I know that reading's relaxing. It keeps me entertained.

I also know that it's about learning stuff, like why people behave the way they do and how we relate to one another.

This year, I've been getting into nonfiction, including *Why People Do Bad Things* and *Road to Wigan Pier*. The first book, written by a criminologist, changed my thinking about society's attitude to crime. And I knew nothing about life in English mining towns in the 1930s before I read George Orwell.

Although I'll never give up on story, I can see that the world opens up in a whole new way when you read nonfiction. But whenever I pick up any book, I know I'm going somewhere else. Reading rearranges things. It puts life in perspective.

In her recent collection of essays, the Chinese-American writer Yiyun Li said she isn't the kind of reader who looks for herself in the stories of others. She seeks the opposite experience. Yiyun reads so she can be with people who don't notice her existence.

When I really think about it, that's what I like too. Reading, so I can forget myself. To not be the main character for once.