2015 Holiday Gift Guide

Books on the Nightstand

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Welcome and thank you for downloading Books on the Nightstand’s 2015 Holiday Gift Guide. We’ve each chosen a selection of books we think deserve to be wrapped up, given, and received (Ann’s recommendations are in green, and Michael’s are in blue). We worked hard to narrow our choices down to the books featured in this guide, and we think we’ve found a book - or several! - for everyone on your list.

This year, it’s easy to not only give, but to give back. Simply take to social media and champion giving books as gifts this holiday season. For every use of the hashtag #GiveaBook on Facebook and Twitter between now and December 24th, Penguin Random House will donate one book to the literacy charity First Book, up to 35,000 books. So share your love of books as the perfect gift, and you’ll be sharing books with children in need.

Please help us spread the word about this gift guide and about Books on the Nightstand by sharing the guide with friends and family. Go to www.booksonthenightstand.com for information on how spreading the word about this guide could win you free signed books!

We truly appreciate your support for Books on the Nightstand, and thank you for allowing us to share our love of books and reading with you. For those of you that read and listen on a regular basis, thank you. For our new friends, welcome – we look forward to getting to know you!

Happy Holidays!
Ann Kingman and Michael Kindness
The year following the closure of Gourmet magazine was a difficult time for Ruth Reichl. To cope with the loss of her job, she did what she’s always done when troubled: she went to her kitchen and cooked. In addition to being a cookbook filled with comfort food recipes, My Kitchen Year is a book that should be read for its entertaining and moving story of the food that gave Ruth her passion for life back.

A compendium of everything you need to know to cook amazing Italian cuisine, from award-winning Lidia Bastianich. If this reminds you of Julia Child’s Mastering the Art of French Cooking, that’s no accident. It features 400 recipes, lovely hand-drawn illustrations, and ribbon bookmark. Lidia set out to create the bible of Italian cooking, and this book is the perfect gift for new and experienced cooks alike.

The website Serious Eats and its resident culinary scientist Kenji Lopez-Alt has lately been my go-to resource when trying to figure out the best way to cook something. When I found his article on the best way to make hard-boiled eggs, the heavens opened and the angels sang. These aren’t just recipes: Lopez-Alt shows you the process of experimenting and tells you why things work the way they do. Fully illustrated with color photos. I don’t yet own this, but it’s #1 on my wish list.
Mark Bittman is hugely-bestselling cookbook author, but I’ll confess something: because I love cookbooks with color photos, I wasn’t a fan of his previous books. With Mark Bittman’s *Kitchen Matrix*, I finally have a Bittman book to devour. Filled with “recipe generators” (pick a bean from column one, protein from column two, spices from column three, etc.), and key ingredients prepared multiple ways (Pork Ribs 9 Ways, for instance), this beautiful cookbook is perfect for new and seasoned cooks.

**Stories from the Kitchen**
Diana Secker Tesdell, editor
Hardcover, $16.00, Fiction Anthology

A charming volume of short fiction centered around food and cooking, from some of the best writers, including Shirley Jackson, Anton Chekhov, Amy Tan, Nora Ephron, and TC Boyle. This hardcover is a beautiful gift, complete with gorgeous endpapers and a ribbon marker.

**100 Years of the Best American Short Stories**
Lorrie Moore and Heidi Pitlor, editors
Hardcover, $30.00, Fiction Anthology

Whether your gift recipient is a short story fan or just wants to be, this is a fabulous collection. Presented here are a few stories from each decade of the annual Best American Short Stories collections, stories that are representative of their time and give us a look into the fashion and forms of storytelling.
“You like ghost stories?” taunts the back cover of this wonderfully giftable hardcover. Well, do you? I hope so, because Gillian Flynn has given us the perfect spooky treat that can be devoured in one sitting. Trust me, you won’t want to stop reading The Grownup. So, get one for yourself, and one for any grownup stockings you have to stuff!

I’m not sure if this is a novel or an art object — well, actually, it’s both. “Highly-designed” and “heavily-illustrated” don’t adequately describe this book. All of the design elements (hand-written notes, pages of old books, even bullet holes!) and illustrations are relevant to the story that moves back and forth from 1840s Texas to the future, encompassing elements of history, adventure, and dystopian fiction.

Originally written for his son, Ethan Hawke (yes, that Ethan Hawke) gives us a beautiful parable. A knight, fearing he may not return from battle, writes a letter to his children in an attempt to leave a record of all he knows. In a series of ruminations on solitude, humility, forgiveness, honesty, courage, grace, pride, and patience, he shows what gives life meaning and beauty.
The Scientific Secrets of Doctor Who
Simon Guerrier and Marek Kukula
Hardcover, $19.99, Science/Pop Culture

As you can tell from this and the next book, I need a lot of help understanding scientific concepts! But that’s okay, because this book is right up my alley. Using original Doctor Who stories, featuring all incarnations of the Doctor, The Scientific Secrets of Doctor Who explains complicated ideas in understandable ways. It also explores how real science is used in the TV show, when they’ve gotten it right or wrong, and when they’ve predicted future real-life advances.

Thunder & Lightning
Lauren Redniss
Hardcover, $35.00, Science/Nature

Beautifully illustrated with Lauren Redniss’s own art, Thunder & Lightning is an enlightening look at weather throughout human history: how it has affected politics, people, and the planet. Redniss’s writing is entertaining and informative, and you’ll want to linger over the artwork, absorbing the unique details, textures, and colors.

Thing Explainer
Randall Munroe
Hardcover, $24.95, Science

Using drawings and only the thousand (or “ten hundred”) most common words in the English language, Randall Munroe, author and illustrator of last year’s hugely-popular What If?, explains incredibly complex things like helicopters (“planes with turning wings”), the solar system (“the other worlds around the sun”), and the International Space Station (“the shared space house”). I’m hoping this book will end up under my Christmas tree!
**The Invention of Nature**  
Andrea Wulf  
Hardcover, $30.00, History/Nature

A gorgeously illustrated biography of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) explorer and naturalist. Humboldt was a huge influence on Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, and many others. Without Humboldt, Darwin would not have written *Origin of the Species*, and Thoreau might not have written *Walden*. Wulf retraces Humboldt’s trip through South America, which gives this an adventure story feel throughout. The perfect gift for anyone who loves plants, nature, science, history, or travel.

**Devotion**  
Adam Makos  
Hardcover, $28.00, History

Tom Hudner, a white kid from Massachusetts, and Jesse Brown, an African-American kid from Mississippi became fast friends training as Navy pilots in the months leading up to the Korean War. As the first black Navy pilot, Jesse defended his country even though it was still rife with racial segregation and discrimination. During a key battle of the Korean War, the friends are put to the test when one of them is shot down behind enemy lines, and the other makes the decision to intentionally crash to try to save his comrade. This is my favorite book of the year, and it has earned raves from Erik Larson and Hampton Sides.

**Custer’s Trials**  
T.J. Stiles  
Hardcover, $30.00, History

A new biography of Custer that looks at his life beyond Little Big Horn, examining Custer’s life in the context of the time and the place in which he lived. Author T.J. Stiles is a Pulitzer-prize-winning biographer and winner of the National Book Award. This book brings a new, more nuanced view of Custer, his victories, and his failings.
**Dynasty**  
Tom Holland  
Hardcover, $30.00, History

A well-researched, well-regarded and entertaining history of the first five emperors of Ancient Rome, complete with sex, violence, and political wheeling and dealing. Fans of *I, Claudius* will love *Dynasty*, as will the history buff on your gift list.

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**Plotted**  
Andrew DeGraff and Daniel Harmon  
Hardcover, $24.99, Books/Reference

What if you could follow the path of Phileas Fogg’s 80 Day journey around the world? Or Ebenezer Scrooge’s nocturnal adventures through his past, present, and future? Or Odysseus’s wanderings around the ancient world? Though it’s nearly impossible to take those trips in the real world, examining the intricately-illustrated literary maps in *Plotted* is surely the next best thing.

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**Last Night’s Reading**  
Kate Gavino  
Paperback, $16.00, Books/Reading

Kate Gavino doesn’t just attend author events, she captures them by sketching the author alongside a handwritten quote from the evening. Previously available only on her blog, the best of these drawings and quotes are now collected in this charming paperback. *Last Night’s Reading* is just perfect for readers and writers alike.
**Felicity**  
Mary Oliver  
Hardcover, $24.95, Poetry

A short, meditative book of poems from an award-winning contemporary poet who is also one of America’s most popular poets. Very accessible even to those of us who think we don’t understand poetry, and a wonderful gift.

**Gratitude**  
Oliver Sacks  
Hardcover, $17.00, Memoir

In the months before his death, Dr. Oliver Sacks wrote four amazing essays about coming to terms with his life and his death. These columns appeared in *The New York Times* and were among the most widely shared pieces from that paper. They are presented here in a small, lovely volume that makes a wonderful gift for a loved one or for yourself.

**Brave Enough**  
Cheryl Strayed  
Hardcover, $16.95, Quotations

Cheryl Strayed’s books and writing have inspired many, and her readers often underline passages, share quotes on social media, or tear out pages and hang them over their desks (it’s true, I’ve seen it). *Brave Enough* is a pretty little gift volume of some of the best quotations from all of Cheryl’s work, and they can be enjoyed by anyone who needs a little inspiration – whether they’ve read *Wild* or not.
**Little Victories**  
Jason Gay  
Hardcover, $24.95, Essays

Popular *Wall Street Journal* columnist Jason Gay shares well-written observations about life, and useful yet humorous advice. Think of him as a more contemporary Dave Barry or Erma Bombeck.

**The LEGO Architect**  
Tom Alphin  
Hardcover, $24.95, Architecture/Pop Culture

More than just a book of cool LEGO creations, *The LEGO Architect* is an education in architectural styles from Neoclassical to High Tech. Each style is fully explained in text and is shown in photographs of key buildings, both real and LEGO. Many of the LEGO structures are versions of real-world counterparts, and it’s fascinating to see how complicated buildings are recreated in brick form. Building instructions are included for one LEGO structure in each architectural style section.

**Lost Ocean**  
Johanna Basford  
Paperback, $16.95, Coloring Book

Johanna Basford is widely credited for starting the current craze of adult coloring books, and this is her newest work, featuring fantastical ocean scenes and marine life, along with a hunt for hidden treasure that you can look for as you color the pages. Wrap this up with a set of colored pencils or fine-line markers.
**Press Start to Play**
Daniel H. Wilson and John Joseph Adams, editors
Paperback, $15.95, Fiction Anthology

The perfect gift for the adult on your wishlist who loves video games. This is an anthology of short fiction with video games in the spotlight, and includes 21 stories from authors such as Andy Weir, Hugh Howey, Daniel H. Wilson, Holly Black and TC Boyle, plus an intro by Ernie Cline, author of *Ready Player One*.

**The Must List**
Entertainment Weekly
Hardcover, $19.95, Pop Culture

I was a charter subscriber to *Entertainment Weekly*, so it’s no surprise that this compendium is on my wishlist. Beginning with an introduction featuring the “25 Things We’ve Forgotten About 1990”, this full-color, look at the past twenty-five years of obsessive pop-culture coverage features topics like: One-Hit Wonders, Best Superheroes, Zombies, Heist Films, Dystopias, Movie Catchphrases, Celebrity Profiles, and tons more lists and info you’ll be dying to share with friends.

**How to Watch a Movie**
David Thomson
Hardcover, $24.95, Film

One of the most respected film critics working today, David Thomson presents a guide for film-lovers who haven’t attended film school. This book shows us how to watch films critically; what to focus on, and what to consider. Using a range of films from the classic to the contemporary, this is a must for any film buff.
100 Skills You’ll Need for the End of the World (as We Know It)
Ana Maria Spagna
Paperback, $14.95, Sustainable Living

I’m not saying the end of the world is coming, but I don’t think it could hurt to learn some of these diverse skills. Organized alphabetically, this guide covers Animal Husbandry to Whittling, with skills like Foraging Medicinals, Storytelling, Falconry, Hoarding, Seed Saving, Listening, and Knitting, in between. Some simple skills are explained, but more complicated ones will require additional research. Regardless, this book is the place to start!

The Infinite Board Game
W. Eric Martin
Boxed Set, $29.95, Games

The Piece Pack gaming system allows you to play a seemingly endless number of board games. This set includes the 56-part Piece Pack system (including dice, pawns, tiles, and coins), along with a handbook detailing 50 of the most popular games, some classic, and some newly created. I’m excited to see what The Infinite Board Game will bring to my family’s recently started game nights!

Reading Picture Books with Children
Megan Dowd Lambert
Hardcover, $21.95, Books/Education

This is the perfect book for anyone who reads picture books with children, including parents, teachers, or favorite relatives. Using popular picture books, Megan Dowd Lambert shows how to use all of the pieces of a picture book, including design elements such as the margins, the endpapers, and the typography, to actively engage children in the book while reading it together. This will make endless re-reads of The Very Hungry Caterpillar much more fun and entertaining for child and grownup alike.
Thanks to the wonderful holiday specials, The Peanuts gang has never had a problem gaining new fans, and the recent movie hasn’t hurt either! Now fans, old and new, can experience the earliest Peanuts comic strips in new books that are perfect facsimiles of the original collections released in the 1950s. See the checklist for the first three books in the series, which will consist of ten titles by December.

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**
Robert Frost, art by Susan Jeffers
Hardcover, $16.99, Picture Book

This well-known poem is one that can be appreciated by adults and children alike, and the lovely illustrations in this beautiful book make it perfect for a read-aloud or read-together.

**The 50 States**
Gabrielle Balkan, art by Sol Linero
Hardcover, $30.00, Children’s Reference

I’m a sucker for children’s books about the States. I love to pore over the facts, both serious and quirky, that often fill the pages of these kinds of books. The 50 States is an excellent example of this genre: the information included is wonderful, and the illustrations are bright and fun. I think my kids love books like this as much as I do. If not, that just means I get more time with it!
Warren is a twelve-year-old orphan who works as the bellhop at his family’s Victorian hotel, now under the control of his evil Aunt Anaconda. She’s obsessed with finding the mysterious treasure that she’s convinced is hidden somewhere on the grounds. Warren needs to find it first, but the hotel’s mysterious guests keep getting in the way. My ten-year-old son was immediately sucked into this beautiful, creepily-illustrated book, and is now eagerly awaiting book two!

Rick Riordan introduced my daughter to the delights of Greek Mythology with his Percy Jackson series, and now he’s ready to introduce a new generation of kids to the Viking Myths and Norse mythology. Set in contemporary Boston, troubled child Magnus has lost his mother and lives on the streets – until he’s tracked down by an uncle he believed was dangerous, who tells Magnus that he is the son of Norse gods. Even the most reluctant reader (ages 10 and up) will be drawn to this new series.

“This is a book. Black words. On white paper. No buttons. No bonus levels. Not a single sound, in fact. It’s the most quiet, ordinary thing that could be, until you learn to look closer...”

With those opening sentences we’re off on an adventure exploring what a book can be - what every book is: a portal to another world where anything is possible. Filled with gorgeous artwork which incorporates text from books, Book is a wonderful reminder that the simplest things in our house are often the most entertaining.
Checklist

Print out and use this handy checklist to mark the books you plan to give as gifts. Print out a second copy to check off the books you want to unwrap this holiday season!

- **My Kitchen Year**
  Ruth Reichl, Hardcover, $35.00, Cookbook

- **Lidia’s Mastering the Art of Italian Cuisine**
  Lidia Matticchio Bastianich, Hardcover, $37.50, Cookbook

- **The Food Lab**
  J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, Hardcover, $49.95, Cookbook

- **Mark Bittman’s Kitchen Matrix**
  Mark Bittman, Hardcover, $35.00, Cookbook

- **Stories from the Kitchen**
  Diana Secker Tesdell, editor, Hardcover, $16.00, Anthology

- **100 Years of the Best American Short Stories**
  Lorrie Moore and Heidi Pitlor, editors, Hardcover, $30.00, Anthology

- **The Grownup**
  Gillian Flynn, Hardcover, $9.99, Fiction

- **Bats of the Republic**
  Zachary Thomas Dodson, Hardcover, $27.95, Fiction

- **Rules for a Knight**
  Ethan Hawke, Hardcover, $18.00, Fiction

- **Thunder & Lightning**
  Lauren Redniss, Hardcover, $35.00, Science/Nature

- **The Scientific Secrets of Doctor Who**
  Simon Guerrier and Marek Kukula, Hardcover, $19.99, Pop Culture

- **Thing Explainer**
  Randall Munroe, Hardcover, $24.95, Science

- **The Invention of Nature**
  Andrea Wulf, Hardcover, $30.00, History/Nature

- **Devotion**
  Adam Makos, Hardcover, $28.00, History

- **Custer’s Trials**
  T.J. Stiles, Hardcover, $30.00, History

- **Dynasty**
  Tom Holland, Hardcover, $30.00, History

- **Last Night’s Reading**
  Kate Gavino, Paperback, $16.00, Books/Reading

- **Plotted**
  Andrew DeGraff and Daniel Harmon, Hardcover, $24.99, Books/Reference

- **Felicity**
  Mary Oliver, Hardcover, $24.95, Poetry

- **Gratitude**
  Oliver Sacks, Hardcover, $17.00, Memoir

- **Brave Enough**
  Cheryl Strayed, Hardcover, $16.95, Inspiration

- **Little Victories**
  Jason Gay, Hardcover, $24.95, Essays

- **The LEGO Architect**
  Tom Alphin, Hardcover, $24.95, Architecture/Pop Culture

- **Lost Ocean**
  Johannas Basford, Paperback, $16.95, Coloring Book

- **Press Start to Play**
  Daniel H. Wilson and John Joseph Adams, editors, Paperback, $15.95, Anthology

- **The Must List**
  Entertainment Weekly, Hardcover, $19.95, Pop Culture

- **How to Watch a Movie**
  David Thomson, Hardcover, $24.95, Film

- **100 Skills You’ll Need for the End of the World (as We Know It)**
  Ana Maria Spagna, Paperback, $14.95, Sustainable Living

- **The Infinite Board Game**
  W. Eric Martin, Boxed Set, $29.95, Games

- **Reading Picture Books with Children**
  Megan Dowd Lambert, Hardcover, $21.95, Books/Education

- **Peanuts**
  Charles M. Schulz, Paperbacks, $6.99, Humor

- **More Peanuts**
  Charles M. Schulz, Paperbacks, $6.99, Humor

- **Good Ol’ Charlie Brown**
  Charles M. Schulz, Paperbacks, $6.99, Humor

- **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**
  Robert Frost, art by Susan Jeffers, Hardcover, $16.99, Picture Book

- **The 50 States**
  Gabrielle Balkan, art by Sol Linero, Hardcover, $30.00, Children’s Reference

- **Warren the 13th**
  Tania del Rio, art by Will Staehle, Hardcover, $16.95, Children’s Fiction

- **Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard, Book 1: The Sword of Summer**
  Rick Riordan, Hardcover, $19.99, Children’s Fiction

- **Book**
  David Miles, art by Natalie Hoopes, Hardcover, $16.99, Picture Book