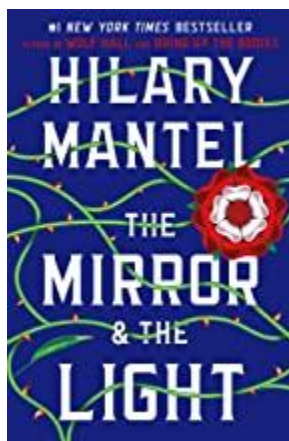


# STAFF Picks! April 22, 2020

Read what your local librarians are ready during these strange times.



## The Mirror and the Light by Hilary Mantel

The final book in Mantel's historical fiction trilogy on the life and career of Thomas Cromwell, one of the more infamous members of the court of England's King Henry VIII. Henry's government was a cult of personality--his--and thus subject to his increasing paranoia, insecurities and failing health as he worked his way through 6 wives and forced his own brand of Reformation onto his country. To survive in his court required cunning, calculation, and ruthlessness--traits Thomas Cromwell employed to great effect, helping his rise as the son of a blacksmith to become Henry's most trusted minister before ultimately succumbing to the ruthless cunning and calculation of others.

Mantel's fans who enjoyed *Wolf Hall* and *Bringing Up the Bodies*, the early books in the trilogy, will not be disappointed. The pace of *The Mirror and the Light* is more mature, as befitting the maturity of this final portion of his life, but the obviously careful research, the interweaving of plot lines, and the utterly delicious sentences Mantel brings to the story make this a book to savor. It is no easy trick to bring drama and suspense to a novel based on historical events for which most readers will know the outcome already, but Mantel brings it in spades. Fans who enjoyed *A Man For All Seasons* or the more recent TV series *The Tudors* will enjoy this. -- Christopher P



## Indelicacy by Amina Cain

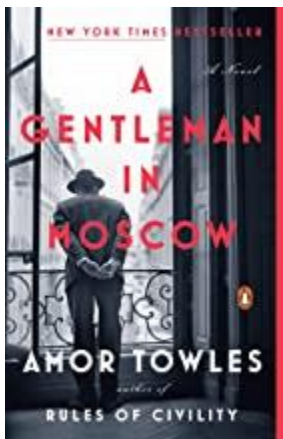
A cleaner in an unnamed museum in an unnamed city stares at the art all day while she cleans and goes home to write about the art from the viewer's point of view. This is all she wants to do - write about art. But she is poor and has to work long tedious hours for low pay. To blast through the rest of the short read without giving anything away - she marries a rich man, finds some good friends, and figures her life out in the end. -- Lori M.



## **Lady In Waiting by Anne Glenconner**

Being a fan of the Netflix series *The Crown*--which is based on the current Queen of England and her Windsor family's hijinks--I tuned into the Graham Norton chat show on TV one evening a few months ago to see the cast being interviewed. For color, Norton had also invited on an actual person who was depicted as a minor character in the show, the now 89-year old Anne Glenconner who was for 3 decades a lady-in-waiting to the notorious Princess Margaret. Turns out Glenconner had an eccentric life of her own and is a witty raconteur who soon had taken over the chat show leaving the other guests in stitches. Also turns out given the interest generated by the TV show, she decided to write a memoir--possibly the juiciest memoir you'll ever read by an octanagerian this decade.

Glenconner was born in the 1930s into one of England's fading noble families, the kind with a massive historic country house but little money to keep it running. One of her first experiences finishing school was traveling steerage alone on the *Queen Mary* to the US in the '50s with a suitcase of samples from the family pottery business to try to break into the US market. Yet she was connected and had known Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret since they were little kids. The book takes off when she marries Colin Tennant, a dashing aristocratic playboy from a family that breeds infamous eccentrics and suddenly this rather proper young English woman is propelled into a world shaped by her husband's wealth, whims, tantrums, and swinging 60s taste. During this period the Tennants buy a run down plantation island in the Caribbean called Mustique and develop it over two decades into a way station for rock stars, millionaires, movie stars and ultimately a bolt-hole for Princess Margaret herself and her significantly younger lover. Fans of *The Crown* and the racier episodes of *Downton Abbey* will love this witty, stylish and dishy memoir. --Christopher P.



## **A Gentleman In Moscow by Amor Towles**

*Alexander Ilyich Rostov, taking into full account your own testimony...it is the opinion of this committee that you should be returned to that hotel of which you are so fond. But make no mistake: should you ever set foot outside of the Metropol again, you will be shot. Next matter."* So begins *A Gentleman in Moscow*, Amor Towles' exploration of a young Russian count in the years following the Russian Revolution.

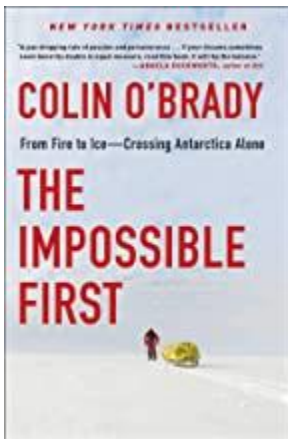
Sentenced to indefinite house arrest in Moscow's Hotel Metropol in the early 1920s, the story is not a reflection on the events that led to that day, but rather the unfolding life of a 30 year old man of privilege who finds himself, and the expensive hotel within whose attic he now lives, holding on to his charm, intelligence and humanity as year by year the new Soviet era chips away at the world around him. With writing that is patient, lyrical and often humorous, Towles guides us through the life of a

man who manages to create meaning in the gradual decay of his once-decadent prison. -- Christopher P



## **Brave Enough by Jessie Diggins**

Jessie Diggins made history when she crossed the line at the 2018 Winter Olympics to take the first ever cross country ski medal for the USA. In this memoir she takes us through her journey to that medal. She faced many challenges on her way to becoming an elite athlete. Her struggles with bulimia and her grit and determination to heal is inspiring. She has become the darling of cross country skiing due to her true sportsmanship and endless upbeat attitude. Anyone who has struggled and overcome obstacles will love the book of triumph. --Carole L.



## **The Impossible First by Colin O'Brady**

This is a book about Colin's astounding feat of crossing Antarctica without any support. He takes you from a life changing accident that requires him to relearn to walk to his 930 mile ski across the most unforgiving continent. He and Captain Rudd are in a slow motion race across the landmass for over 2 months. This is a good book to read while sheltering in place. It will make you grateful for your four walls, bed, and other comforts. Great chance to armchair travel with Colin into the darkest places of his journey and to share in his triumph. -- Carole L.