

52 Books in 52 Weeks (2018)

From Chris Little

Week 1 – Lisa Scottoline, *Damaged*. For those of you who enjoy legal thrillers I highly recommend ANY of this author's many books and series. This series, Rosato & DiNunzio, is one of my particular favorites. With that said, *Damaged*, book #4, was not my favorite but still a very good read. You can always count on this author for page turning suspense. A 3 star read at least.

Week 2 – Laura McHugh, *Arrowood*. Because my reading list is so large I generally don't stick with a book anymore unless it grabs me right from the beginning but I am glad that I stuck with this one. I think the fact that the story was based in Iowa kept me wanting to like it and read on. The first half of the book was a challenge so far as keeping my interest or feeling involved with the plot but just when I thought, "okay, one more chapter and if it doesn't get better I'll give up" the plot thickened and sucked me in. I loved the last half of the book and the ending. A haunting tale about a woman who goes home years later to try and come to terms with the kidnapping of her twin baby sisters while under her watch. Only because of the slow start do I give this book a less than satisfying 3 stars.

Week 3 - Ruth Ware, *The Woman in Cabin 10*. I've read or heard a lot of really good reviews on this book so I have to say I was incredibly disappointed. As a matter of fact, I struggled through 8 chapters and finally just gave up. I found nothing appealing about this story or the characters, at least not by chapter 8 and honestly, if there isn't SOME appeal by that far into a book, most readers would probably give up. Perhaps, if I could stick with it, there would be a turnaround but getting as far as I did was an almost painful process.

Week 4 – Victoria Laurie, *Vision Impossible*. I never tire of these cozy mysteries. Abigail Cooper is a quirky, fun character whose psychic abilities never fail to get herself, her hunky FBI husband and her best friend into situations that are sometimes crazy and hilarious and sometimes suspenseful and downright dangerous. Victoria Laurie is my Janet Evanovich. This is book 9 out of 15 so I know I will be sharing more titles from this author.

Week 5 – Richard Paul Evans, *The Mistletoe Secret*. Who doesn't love Richard Paul Evans and his inspirational fiction? A little bit predictable but still an enjoyable read. These little Christmas novellas are not my favorites by this author (I'm a huge fan actually) but always a quick and entertaining read.

Week 6 - Paula Treick DeBoard, *The Fragile World*. As a mother who's lost a child it always amazes me when I read a book with this subject matter and the author can so accurately express a grief that is far different than any other kind of grief a person should experience. I found myself thinking that this author surely must have lived this particular kind of horror. I became a fan of Paula Treick DeBoard from her debut novel *The Mourning Hours* and I remain a huge fan.

Week 7 – Clare Mackintosh, *I See You*. If it wasn't for the slow beginning I think I probably would've given this book 5 stars. The first quarter of the book I seriously considered not finishing it but then "it got good" ...REALLY good. I will definitely recommend this to readers of suspense/thrillers.

Week 8 – Paula Daly, *Just What Kind of Mother are You?*. This is probably more of a 3.5 star book. I liked it but I am not so sure I liked it a lot. It had moments of suspense but also moments that seemed to drag

on and on. The twist at the end I personally didn't predict but nor could I find it a believable ending either. I would however definitely like to read more by this author.

Week 9 – Debbie Macomber, *Sweet Tomorrows* (Rose Harbor Series #5). I'm not a reader of romancey type fluff but I did kind of enjoy this series. Honestly I did have to roll my eyes on occasion with the sappiness and predictability. But if you like that sort of thing I believe you would really enjoy the series.

Week 10 – Alafair Burke, *212* (Ellie Hatcher Series #3). Alafair Burke, daughter of famed fellow crime writer James Lee Burke, has become one of my favorite knuckle biting suspense novelists. Both of her series as well as her standalones are page turning, edge of your seat books that you don't want to put down. Definitely a 4.5 star writer that I highly recommend.

Week 11 – Margaret Mizushima, *Killing Trail* (Timber Creek K-9 #1). This is book #1 in what is a new series for me. I enjoyed it very much and look forward to reading the next one. Fans of Nevada Barr will find these a refreshing, easier read with loveable characters both human and canine. Give me a good mystery with a good plot and throw in a dog and I am one happy camper.

Week 12 – Amy Schumer, *The Girl with the Lower Back Tattoo*. Personally for me this book was a waste of my good reading time. I would never consider myself prudish or goody-goody but this book was just trashy. The constant use of foul language was a complete turn off for me. I was hoping for a little comedy and a good laugh but instead I found myself looking forward to the whole thing just being over.

Week 13 – Kevin Kwan, *Crazy Rich Asians*. While probably not a book that I would've picked up on my own, this book did come highly recommended from one of my favorite library patrons so I gave it a try. It took me a few chapters to really get into it but once I did I found it to be humorous, charming and entertaining. I don't normally care to read fiction or non-fiction when the characters are arrogant, wealthy, unlikeable snobs but...this book was written in such a way that made it humorous and quite enjoyable. I gave it four stars and plan to read the sequel *China Rich Girlfriend*.

Week 14 – Brene Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace*. I haven't really met a "self-help" book that I've liked. Although this was probably one of the better ones. I didn't come away from this book feeling inspired or even like I'd actually learned something.

Week 15 – Fannie Flagg, *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion*. Definitely not a favorite Fannie Flagg book but it was pretty good. I always enjoy the characters that Fannie creates. With all the men off to war, Fritzi and her sisters must learn men's work -- from fixing flats to driving the tow truck. They add their own touches, too: neat little caps, short skirts and roller skates, and the All-Girl Filling Station is born. Their peace doesn't last long though: skilled women are needed to fly planes for the war effort. While the book is fiction, much of the story was created around actual facts from WW2 and the Depression era.

Week 16 – Clare O'Donohue, *The Double Wedding Ring* (Someday Quilts Mysteries #5). Charming cozy mysteries that I started reading a few years ago. Of the five books in this series this one was my least favorite, however, it was still an enjoyable read as is everything I've read by this author. If you love quilts, quilting shops and mysteries I think you will fall in love with this series.

Week 17 – Richard Paul Evans, *The Broken Road* (Broken Road Series #1). I am a HUGE fan of Richard Paul Evans. I think I have read everything he has ever written so I was very excited that he was coming out with a new series. While I can't say this is a favorite Richard Paul Evans book I can say I enjoyed it very much and frankly, I'm wishing I didn't have to wait until Spring of 2018 to read the next in the series.

Week 18 – Alex Kava, *Reckless Creed* (Ryder Creed Series #3). I love this series and am hopeful that there are more to come in the Ryder Creed series. Kava's books are not for the squeamish or cozy mystery readers as they can oftentimes get pretty graphic but otherwise an excellent read. Twists and turns, suspense, and wonderful canines make for a 4 star read.

Week 19 - Mary Higgins Clark and Alafair Burke, *The Sleeping Beauty Killer*. I have become a huge Alafair Burke fan but have become tired of the predictability of Mary Higgins Clark these last few years. I was excited to see these two authors working together but I think I will stick with just Alafair in the future. This was only a two star read for me.

Week 20 – Margaret Mizushima, *Stalking Ground* (Timber Creek K-9 Mystery #2). As I stated in my previous review of book #1... I LOVE this author AND the series. The second book was as good as the first.

Week 21 – Sarah Pinborough, *Behind Her Eyes*. Well golly, I'm not sure what to say...definitely well written, definitely twisty, and definitely a CRAZY ending. If you like psychological thrillers you should put this on your "have to read" list. Perhaps for me it was just a little bit TOO far-fetched and "out there" but...*WARNING* it will suck you in and not let go until you've read the very last sentence.

Week 22 – Nicholas Sparks, *Two by Two*. Nicholas Sparks has been a favorite of mine for many years so it's difficult to not give him a perfect review but...I loved the last half of this book but really struggled through the first half. It didn't grab me or keep my attention as his books usually do so I'll compensate and give the book 3 stars.

Week 23 – Jennifer McMahon, *The Night Sister*. If you like the Stephen King/Dean Koontzy type of psychological thriller you would love this book or anything by this author for that matter. The only thing that kept me from giving it 5 stars was the ending. The ending left a little bit to be desired for me and we all know that the ending can make or break a 5 star read.

Week 24 – Matthew Speak, *Devils Glen*. I read approximately 100 books a year and have for many, many years so I feel I can say with absolute certainty that this is one of the worst books (if not THE worst) book I have ever read. To be fair however, I believe this book series was written for the young adult age group so perhaps I simply couldn't relate to this writing style or storyline.

Week 25 – Rita Mae Brown, *Nine Lives to Die* (Mrs. Murphy #23). Charming characters as always but I think the storylines have gotten a little slow and boring for me. This is the 23rd book in the series and I have read them all so perhaps the appeal has simply run its course.

Week 26 – Fannie Flagg, *The Whole Town's Talking*. I LOVED the first half of this book but struggled with the last half which is not typical for me of Fannie Flagg books. Once the focus of the story turned to the cemetery I pretty much lost interest and struggled to finish the book. For sure not a favorite by this author. I only gave it two stars.

Week 27 – Linda Castillo, *The Dead Will Tell* (Kate Burkholder #6). I always enjoy Amish fiction so throw in some mystery and suspense and I'm a happy reader. I have yet to grow tired of this series.

Week 28 – Fredrik Backman, *A Man Called Ove*. This book went crazy in the ratings and reviews so of course I had to see what all the fuss was about. A little slow starting for me, however, I am so glad that I stuck with it. What a lovely, lovely story.

Week 29 – David Baldacci, *The Fix* (Amos Decker #3). I love this new character, Amos Decker, AND the series; however, this (book #3) one barely got away with 3 stars. The first half of the book I found myself struggling to stay awake but fortunately the author redeems himself and the story in the last half. Honestly, if this hadn't been a Baldacci book there's a good possibility I wouldn't have taken the time to finish it.

Week 30 – Max Lucado, *Let the Journey Begin: Finding God's Best For Your Life*. I found this book to be very enlightening and encouraging. I never get tired of Max's simple ways of sharing truth and grace into our lives. However, I believe this book was written with a much younger intended reader.

Week 31 - James Patterson and Howard Roughan, *Murder Games*. This one is definitely not a favorite. I felt like this story was all over the place and I was having a difficult time keeping track of the plot.

Week 32 – Theresa Caputo, *Good Grief*. I found my mind wandering away from the book more than I found what I was reading interesting or attention keeping. I lost a son and love the things that Theresa has to say so I think perhaps it's just her writing style that I had a hard time with. I still love her and her show!

Week 33 – Liane Moriarty, *Truly Madly Guilty*. Absolutely NOT my favorite Liane Moriarty book. While I have always been a huge fan of the author this book left A LOT to be desired. It was simply an "okay" read.

Week 34 - Kristin von Kreisler, *An Unexpected Grace*. Usually dog stories give me the warm fuzzies but page after page, chapter after chapter the author used SO many metaphors it was distracting and became annoying. Honestly, the only reason I finished this book was because I wanted to see what happened to the dog Grace.

Week 35 – Paul Doiron, *The Poacher's Son*. I wasn't sure how I wanted to rate this book so I compromised with middle ground. I had a little trouble getting into the story through the first half, however, I must admit, from this point on it really sucked me in. Enough so at that I think I will at the very least give book number two a go. This series is definitely one that I will suggest to our male mystery/crime patrons and fans of Nevada Barr.

Week 36 – Jo Baker, *Longbourn*. Reviews on this book are either absolutely loved or absolutely did not like but...I think this is probably a much better book than I'm giving it credit for, however, it is written in the style of *Pride and Prejudice*/*Jane Eyre* which is not a favorite of mine despite the historical fiction genre.

Week 37 – James Patterson, *Woman of God*. I have read pretty much every James Patterson book from crime/thriller to romanceyish to non-fiction and am a huge fan but I have to say this is the WORST James Patterson ever. It's not the spiritual or biblical content that was a turn off, I'm a Christian and love the Lord with all my heart, but this main character was quite frankly annoying and beyond belief.

Week 38 – Lisa Scottoline, *One Perfect Lie*. Definitely not my favorite Scottoline read but an enjoyable book none the less. Some of the chapters kind of dragged for me but all-in-all she remains a favorite author.

Week 39 – Ace Collins, *The Color of Justice*. This was a *To Kill A Mockingbird* meets John Grisham type of story. For the most part I loved it and am anxious to read more by this author. I really liked the splitting up of years as it begins in 1964 and comes to completion in 2014, however, I didn't give it 5 stars because the use of DNA towards the conclusion was just too unrealistic. This is a process that takes weeks or months not a matter of a few days. While it wrapped things up nicely and added suspense to the ending it left me with a feeling of skepticism and disappointment.

Week 40 – Stephen King, *Mr. Mercedes*. Apparently I've just outgrown Stephen King. I love creepy books on occasion but the last few of his I've tried have practically put me to sleep.

Week 41 – Paula Daly, *Keep Your Friends Close*. I LOVE edge of your seat, can't put down thrillers and Paula Daly doesn't disappoint in this department. My only complaint with Daly's books seems to be her endings. Both this and her first novel kept me turning the pages quickly through to the end only to be utterly let down by the finale. In both cases the endings dropped the book from a 5 star to a 4 star rating.

Week 42 – Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*. This book was a disappointment to me. I love historical fiction and stories of the Underground Railroad whether it be fiction or non-fiction. But this book could not keep my attention. I just wanted it to be over.

Week 43 – Sarah Miller, *Caroline: Little House, Revisited*. Growing up on Laura Ingall's and Little House on the Prairie I was so excited to see a grown up version of the story as told from the perspective of Caroline (Ma Ingall's). I enjoyed it very much however, I did find sections of it a bit tedious and too wordy and frankly I found the ending a bit of a disappointment.

Week 44 – Kevin Kwan, *China Rich Girlfriend*. Unbelievably, I find this series of books quite enjoyable. I enjoyed the first in the series, *Crazy Rich Asians*, quite a bit more, however, now I'm hooked on the futures of my favorite characters and am on to book number three.

Week 45 – Caitie Dolan-Leach, *Dead Letters*. I liked this book well enough to keep me reading and wanting to see how it ended, however, I didn't love it or even sort of love it, but... I love trying out new authors and I think we will likely see more from this author. If you like twisty plots with surprise endings you might find this a good read. I give it 3.5 stars.

Week 46 – Richard Paul Evans, *The Noel Diary*. While I might not call this my FAVORITE Richard Paul Evans book I would definitely put it in the top 3. It's no wonder so many of his books are turned into Hallmark movies. A year ago I hooked up my 88 year old mother (who has NEVER been a reader) with Richard Paul Evan's books and she read three weekly until she exhausted his collection. A phenomenal author who just needs to write faster because my mama simply can't wait for the next one!

Week 47 – Jodi Picoult, *Small Great Things*. This is a powerful book, bold in some ways, as we have a white author bringing to us a story depicting what racism looks like and trying to tell those of us who are not black, what it feels like. But anyone who has read any of Jodi Picoult's books knows that she doesn't

shy away from difficult to discuss topics. This was a great book up until the ending which killed it for me and dropped my opinion from 4.5 stars to 3.5.

Week 48 – Jenny Colgan, *The Bookshop on the Corner*. I loved this little cozy read. I have an obsessive, passionate love for books of all genres. I work in a library surrounded by books and I spend a good part of my day talking about books. In other words... I LOVE BOOKS and MY JOB. So a book about books? And a cute little librarian? Adorable! There's even a little romance thrown in. I highly recommend this book. One of my rare 5 stars for this one and probably my favorite read of the year.

Week 49 – Harlan Coben, *Don't Let Go*. Definitely not a favorite Coben book for me. I liked it well enough and it did keep my interest; it even had the infamous twist at the end so common with Mr. Coben's books. I can't really put my finger on why it held little "pizzazz" for me. Perhaps because his AWESOME books are SO awesome the bar is set a little high. Not even the best authors can write a WOWZA book every single time.

Week 50 – James Patterson, *The Store*. In my review #37 I stated that *Woman of God* was the worst James Patterson I'd ever read, however, this one beat it by leaps and bounds. There is no doubt in my mind that this was the worst James Patterson book I've ever read...and I've read them all. Perhaps it's time to get back to quality over quantity?

Week 51 – John Grisham, *The Rooster Bar*. I've been pretty hard on this author the last few years as I've felt his writing has been subpar but now...FINALLY! More like the John Grisham of old! I had almost given up on one of my fave's. 4 Stars!

Week 52 – Lisa Ko, *The Leavers*. I really wanted to love this book but with my expectations comparing it to *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* and *Songs of Willow Frost* (in other words, Jamie Ford books) before I'd even started it, it should probably be no surprise that it fell a little flat for me. I did like the book, I did enjoy it and it definitely was not a waste of my precious reading time. I would even venture to say that I will watch for more by this author but a four-star read? Not quite?