

## BOOKS

# On the Train Again: Great Books for Every Kind of Commute

By ASHLEY MORTON

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Photo by Ana Martin on Unsplash

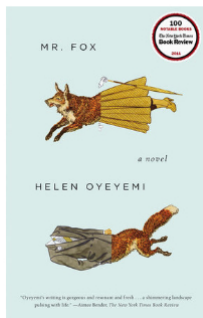
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The biggest advantage to commuting on public transportation is the opportunity to catch up on your reading. But finding the right, relevant-to-you book can be a bit of a challenge. Here are some suggestions for every kind of commuter's daily ride.

### Break It Down

For the commuter who may only have time for one chapter at a time, but wants to feel satisfied each time they close the book.



### Mr. Fox

Helen Oyeyemi

The risk of reading *Mr. Fox* on the train is you may try to lean over to a fellow passenger and read aloud. Helen Oyeyemi's writing is so captivating it's hard to not share, and her imaginative storytelling mixed with her carefully selected language makes *Mr. Fox* somehow both a simple and not simple book at once. A writer, Mr. Fox, is having trouble with his fictional heroine, a problem made more complicated when his fictitious muse, tired of seeing herself killed off again and again, appears to him in-person. Fantastical and completely original, each chapter reads as its own story, while moving the larger narrative forward in the most unique way.

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### World War Z

An Oral History of the Zombie War

Max Brooks, author of *The Zombie Survival Guide*

An apocalyptic zombie book even non-horror fans can enjoy, author Max Brooks has created a creative fake history about humanity's battle against a plague that develops into full-fledged zombies. The advantage of *World War Z* is it's told as a collection of stories from different people across the globe, and the varying perspectives and narratives allow each chapter to be its own story within the story.

Additionally, if you find yourself needing a read for a long car ride, the award-winning audiobook of *World War Z* features incredible vocal talent from the likes of Mark Hamill, Simon Baker, Martin Gamm, Alfred Molina, John Rhys-Davies, and Alan

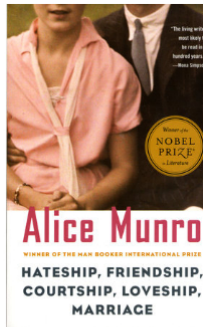
regg, Martin Scorsese, Alfred Molina, John Turturro and Alan Alda.

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## Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

Stories

Alice Munro

Alice Munro's *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* is a collection of nine short stories that will knock your socks off. Sometimes shorts can feel devoid of emotional connection — after all, you only get so many pages to find your way into the situation and sync up with the character. And oftentimes shorts don't end with the same finality a longer novel would. But Munro's talent prevails in that every story and character is charged with feeling — frequently lying just under their surface — allowing for every bit to satiate your reading appetite.

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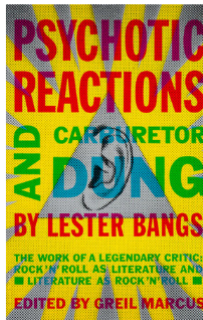
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### Let's Get Critical

Looking for nonfiction light enough for the morning ride? Look no further than these essay collections.



## Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung

The Work of a Legendary Critic: Rock'N'Roll as Literature and Literature as Rock'N'Roll

Lester Bangs Edited by Greil Marcus

Lester Bangs was a music journalist, originally known for his work for *Creem Magazine*. If the name is familiar but you can't quite place him, you may recognize it from Phillip Seymour Hoffman's portrayal of Bangs as both a rock 'n' roll lover and mentor in "Almost Famous." Bangs's writing is electric and outrageous and covers Iggy Pop, the Clash, John Lennon, and more. This is not safe criticism; this is passion on the page, so even if you don't agree with all of Bangs's ravings, it will definitely wake you up.

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## I Lost It At the Movies

Pauline Kael

Back before the Internet, and when one well-written film criticism could really make or break a picture, Pauline Kael was practically a goddess. This collection, her first, is a good place to start. While some of the writing may get a little overly film-intellectual, it's fascinating to read Kael's unabashed perspectives opposing some of today's most-loved classics and loving movies that have disappeared into relative obscurity.

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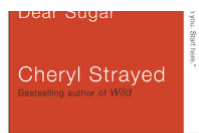


## Tiny Beautiful Things

Advice on Love and Life from Dear Sugar

Cheryl Strayed

This is not a collection of critical essays; it's in this category because it's nonfiction, column-based writing. Cheryl Strayed, as Rumpus columnist Sugar, answers profoundly personal questions with even more intimate examples from

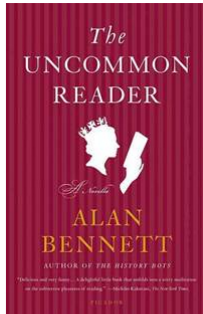


personal questions that offer more intimate glimpses into her own life, and each correspondence (one letter to “Sugar,” one back) is a bite-sized piece of advice great for starting your day. No reason to read it in order; pick the topic that pulls you in most, and marvel at this fine example of trust, honesty, and the power of the written word.

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## Size Does Matter

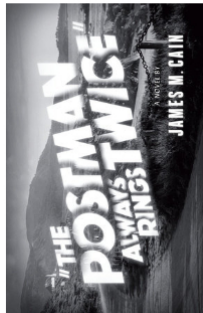
Small bag? These even smaller books will be the perfect fit.



## The Uncommon Reader

Alan Bennett

Alan Bennett’s tiny novellas, *The Uncommon Reader* and *Smut*, are a perfect combination of fine writing with light storytelling. Bennett, perhaps best known for his award-winning play *The History Boys*, touches on the idea of personal experiences versus the persona put out into the world. *Uncommon Reader* imagines the Queen suddenly discovering a mobile library, while *Smut* features two different stories about middle-aged women who discover it’s never too late to surprise yourself.

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## The Postman Always Rings Twice

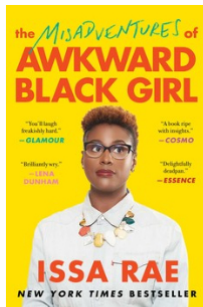
James M. Cain

Crime fiction is great for a commute because it pulls you in and keeps you there. What’s wonderful about James M. Cain’s novels, particularly the thin *Postman*, is the stories are short enough that their intense pull still won’t make you miss your stop. A classic originally published in 1934, *Postman* features what has come to be known as the femme fatale, and is a hard-boiled, gripping tale of lust and murder.

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## Laugh Out Loud

These memoirs are easy, humorous, and will make any tedious trip a little less of a burden.



## The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl

Issa Rae

It’s right on the cover: Issa Rae is awkward, *but* in the most relatable way possible. Her internal struggle with being both an introvert and a comedian is put on the page in a way that’s enjoyable and charming as hell. None of the topics she touches are particularly original — it’s the usual workplace, love-life, friendship touchstones — but her voice is one hundred percent unique to her and that’s what will have you in stitches.

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## Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)

Mindy Kaling

Mindy Kaling’s brand of humor is always teetering on the edge of “oh no” and she doesn’t hold back in her book *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me?* Starting with her

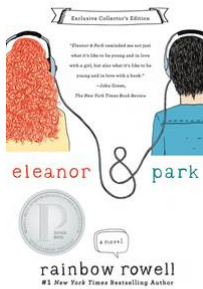


*Everyone hanging out without me?* Starting with her upbringing, and making her way through to her success as a television writer, Kaling's book offers a reading experience not dissimilar to sitting with your friend on the train and chatting about all of the "most important" things. It's quirky, fun, and best of all, hilarious.

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## A Soundtrack Without the Sound

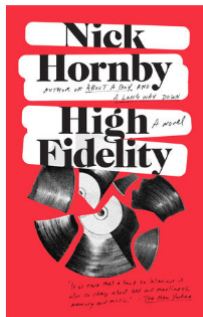
Looking for inspiration for a new playlist? Read these first.



## Eleanor and Park

Rainbow Rowell

A love story born on public transportation, *Eleanor and Park* are two sixteen-year-olds who find a connection through music and comics on the school bus. It's a touching story, and more grown up than you might perceive from its frequent young adult positioning. It will make you nostalgic for a time when sharing headphones was one of the most romantic things you could do with a person, and you'll be craving The Smiths with every page turn.

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## High Fidelity

Nick Hornby

Any Nick Hornby novel is great for a train ride, really, because his writing is frequently sharp, funny, and usually about passionate people, whose compulsions are intense but entertaining. *High Fidelity's* Rob is a record store owner with a penchant for list-making and a serious love for mixtapes, and you may find yourself seeking out his favorite music when you're finished, if only to hold onto the story a little longer.

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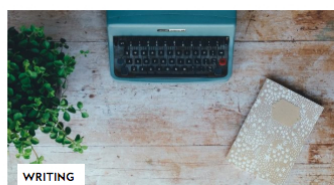
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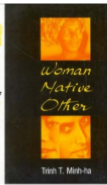
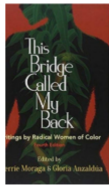
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