

OFF THE SHELF
North Olympic Library System
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RE: Expand Your Reading—Expand Your World

Books have amazing powers to both affirm our lives and expand our horizons. Everyone has personal preferences for certain types of authors or characters, and reading in a well-loved genre, style, or subject can be relaxing, comforting, and reassuring. But reading can also expand our world view, taking us beyond our own lives, local culture, or current society, and letting us experience different times, lifestyles, life experiences, places, and cultures.

Take a minute to think of the last handful of books you've read. Beyond subject or genre, how much do they have in common? Do the authors have similar ages, ethnicities, genders, or socio-economic backgrounds? Do the main characters fit a general mold of country of origin, skin color, or life experiences? Do they tend to be set in one time period or location? Do you read only fiction or only nonfiction? If you are ready to range more broadly, there are plenty of ways to challenge yourself with wider reading experiences. Here are some tips for getting started.

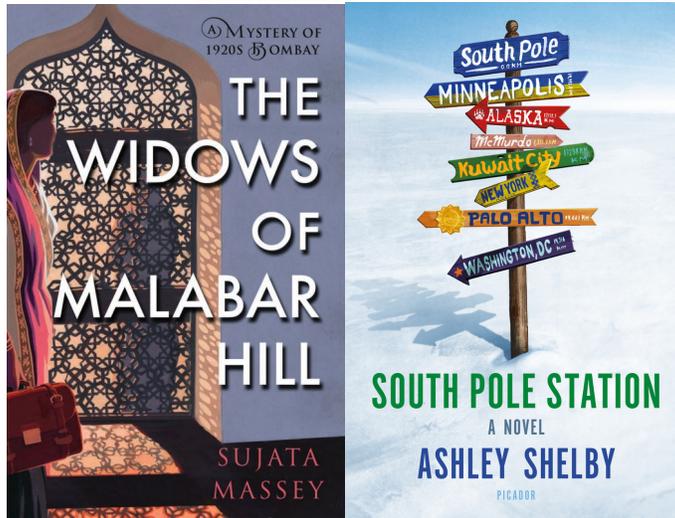
Read a book...

- By an author under 30
- By an author over 65
- By a female (or male) author
- By an immigrant author
- With a biracial main character
- With a Native main character
- Set on each continent

- Set in another U.S. state
- Published this year
- Published the decade you were born
- Translated from another language

Try Michelle Adelman's *Piece of Mind*, about an adult character living with a traumatic brain injury suddenly having to adjust to life without her protective parent. In Sarah Waters' *The Paying Guests*, a woman and her mother living in genteel poverty after WWI take in boarders to get by; an accidental murder complicates the attraction the woman has for a married female guest. Anouk Markovits' *I Am Forbidden* begins by following two sisters living in the insular, ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jewish community of Brooklyn after WWII, following the family through the years to 2005 Manhattan. A mystery set in 1920s Bombay, Sujata Massey's *The Widows of Malabar Hill* focuses on Parveen Mistry, a female lawyer relegated to little more than paperwork until a group of Muslim widows, living in seclusion and unable to talk to men, give her the opportunity to meet with clients. A thoughtful fiction set in Antarctica is Ashley Shelby's *South Pole Station*.

To find books featuring authors of other genders, ethnicities, or backgrounds, search “ability diverse,” “LGBTQIA diverse,” “religiously diverse,” or “culturally diverse” in  NoveList, one of NOLS' online resources, for lists to get started. NoveList and other reading suggestion databases can be accessed for free with your library card at www.nols.org/readers-advisory. You can even receive a personalized reading list—whatever your interests or preference—through NOLS' BookMatch program. Fill out the simple form and a real, live, library staff member will create a custom reading list for you within a few days. And, of course, stop by 630 North Sequim Avenue to get in-person suggestions from your friendly library staff, or call 360.683.1161.



Columnist Sarah Morrison
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