Around the Lake & Beyond

Good Stories Travel

A Chautauqua deadline worth circling, art to see in Jamestown, and a week of bookish discoveries from New York to Britain.

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Hall of Philosophy, June 2011. Andrewshist; CC BY-SA 4.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons

A visit to a local gallery can give you something to think about on the walk home. An awards list can introduce you to a writer you might have missed. We've brought a little of both into this week's edition.

For this edition of The Point & Pen, we are starting around Chautauqua Lake and following a few of those connections outward. There is a literary deadline approaching here, art on view in Jamestown, a place for families to make something together, and a major evening for readers coming up in New York. Across the Atlantic, a writer who has spent decades crossing the borders between genres has a new reason to be discovered.

Here are five things worth a little of your time this week.

Chautauqua has a date for your calendar

November 30 is the deadline to keep in mind for the 2027 Chautauqua Prize. The $7,500 award considers original fiction, literary or narrative nonfiction, and poetry first published in the United States during 2026. The prize will be awarded during Chautauqua's 2027 summer season. [1]

This is a published-book prize, so an unfinished manuscript needs a different destination. The submission requirements include eight copies of the book or bound galleys and an $85 entry fee. The entry form must be postmarked by November 30, and the books must also arrive by that date. With two weeks remaining, it is a good time to read the complete rules and allow for shipping. [1]

Readers have a way into this story, too. Susan Choi's Flashlight won the 2026 Chautauqua Prize. An award attached to a familiar place can be the nudge that gets an unfamiliar book onto your reading list. You do not have to be entering anything to enjoy that discovery. [1]

An afternoon with the artists who teach here

At Jamestown Community College, the Fine Arts Faculty Exhibition is on view through December 11 in the Weeks Gallery. The college's October 23 announcement describes a show spanning printmaking, digital media, ceramics, painting, drawing, graphic design, photography, and sculpture. [2]

Among the work listed are ceramics by Brenna Turner, photography by Mark Kirsch, and paintings and drawings by Nathan Jeffery. It is an opportunity to encounter the creative work of people whose other work is helping students develop their own. [2]

For writers, a gallery can be a particularly useful place to slow down. Choose one image or object and stay with it for a few minutes. What detail did you miss at first? What does its maker leave unexplained? Those are good questions to carry back to a paragraph.

The gallery is on the second floor of the Sheldon Center at 525 Falconer Street. Admission is free. Published hours are Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; the gallery closes on college holidays. Check the college's visitor information before making a trip. [2][3]



Jamestown Community College in September 2025. G. Edward Johnson; CC BY 4.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons

A story can start with something you make

Families looking for a hands-on stop in Jamestown can also look to the James Prendergast Library's Makerspace. The library describes a space for visitors of all ages to explore independently, with staff-led activities listed in its programming calendar. Examples include origami, robotics, 3-D printing, and Snap Circuits. [4]

The regular Monday schedule lists open play from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., followed by staff-led activities and open play from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The library also lists afternoon sessions during the week and Saturday open play. Check the current calendar for the day's activity and any schedule changes. [4]

There is a lovely writing exercise hiding in an ordinary building session. Make a creature, a house, or a machine, then give it a problem. Perhaps the house refuses to stay in one place. Perhaps the machine does something its inventor cannot explain. Let a child tell the story aloud before anyone worries about spelling it.

A first story does not have to begin with a blank document.



James Prendergast Library, Jamestown, September 2025. G. Edward Johnson; CC BY 4.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons

Wednesday's big evening for readers

The National Book Awards ceremony takes place on Wednesday, November 18, with a free livestream beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern. The National Book Foundation's official awards page has the viewing information and a downloadable ballot for readers who want to follow along. [5]

Winners will be announced in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, translated literature, and young people's literature. Twenty-five books reached the finalist stage across those five categories. Looking through the list before the ceremony gives you room to discover a book on its own terms, before a winner becomes the name everyone is discussing. [6]

The evening will also recognize Salman Rushdie with the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters and pediatrician and literacy advocate Perri Klass with the Literarian Award. Their honors bring two kinds of work into view: the writing that reaches readers and the work that helps more people become readers in the first place. [7][8]

You could turn the livestream into a small gathering, or simply pick a category you rarely browse and look up its five finalists. Poetry and translated literature can be especially interesting places to begin when your usual shelves are starting to feel familiar. There is no

need to read twenty-five books before Wednesday. Finding one you want to open is a perfectly good result.



55 Wall Street in 2024. Cipriani Wall Street is the announced venue for the November 18 ceremony. Kidfly182; CC BY 4.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons



Salman Rushdie at the Livre sur la place book fair in Nancy, France, in 2018. ActuaLitté; CC BY-SA 2.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons

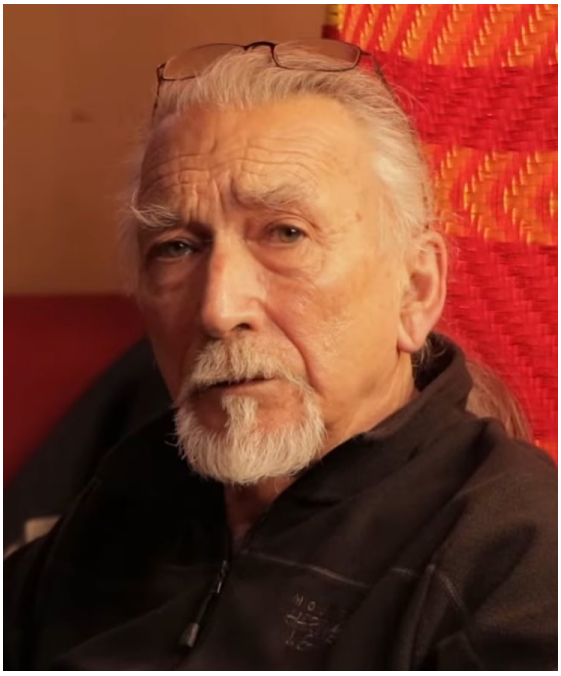
A Booker winner for readers who like the unexpected

In Britain, M. John Harrison's The End of Everything has won the 2026 Booker Prize. The Booker Prize Foundation describes the 198-page novel as a dystopian satire set on a near-future Kent coast. At 81, Harrison becomes the oldest winner in the prize's history. [9]

The foundation's account places the novel among the different kinds of writing Harrison has explored over a long career. Science fiction, literary fiction, the unsettling, and the ordinary do not need to stay in separate rooms. For readers who enjoy a story that makes them work a little, that is an inviting possibility. [9]

For a first look, the foundation's reading feature brings together the premise, the judges' response, and background on Harrison's writing. It offers an introduction for anyone curious about where to begin. [10]

For anyone working on a story that will not sit neatly in one category, this is also a welcome name to look up. Sometimes the interesting part of a book is the place where its categories stop being useful.



M. John Harrison at a Virtual Futures conversation in 2017. Video still. Virtual Futures; CC BY 3.0; resized · Wikimedia Commons

Something to bring back to the page

A gallery visit, a child's unlikely invention, a sentence by a writer you've never read: sometimes that's enough to get an idea going. Write it down while it's still fresh.

Pick one. Visit a local space, investigate one finalist, or spend ten minutes describing something you noticed without reaching for your phone. Tell somebody about what caught your attention. Ask what they have been reading or making lately.

Good stories travel. Sometimes the first part of the journey is simply giving one a little room at home.

Sources & further reading

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