

***Year Of Yes* by Shonda Rhimes**

I watched a [TED Talk by Shonda](#), and in her talk she mentions this year of yes, what inspired it, and why she kept at it. Somehow, from the [TED Talk](#), I made my way to her book, which gives all the nitty-gritty details of exactly how and why she opted for an entire year of yes.

As a bonus to the audiobook, not only is it read by the author, but sometimes Shonda references specific speeches that she gave at various events. In the audiobook, you hear the recorded clips from her speeches.

I really enjoyed Shonda's writing style, but more importantly, her message behind why she said yes. She knew her no was based on fear. And all those nos meant she wasn't stretching beyond the normal placidity of life. In order to stretch herself outside that comfort zone, she started saying yes to things that filled her with fear. In doing so, she released a lot of pent up anxiety, fear, and frustration.

I'm part of a [group of amazing human beings](#) who are currently working through something that we've dubbed: *The Season of Yes*. And, like [Shonda](#), I'm afraid of saying no to things that push me beyond my comfort zone. These are the things that scare me the most. Sometimes they mean facing hard memories, difficult moments in life, or reflecting on how you've given a little too much of yourself.

I'm not in a "year of yes," but I must admit that Shonda's book has challenged me to consider it. Not just a quick decision to go out when I'd rather be home. More like taking a moment to confront difficult situations.

***The Shop On Blossom Street* by Debbie Macomber**

I found myself in a reading rut in July. I think it's because I'm up to my eyeballs in editing. I spend many hours a day reading chapters to a book I've written, making minor changes, and reading them all over again. Listening to someone read them to me, making more adjustments, repeat.

By the time I stop for the day, I'm ready to veg out. I know for some it might mean watching a movie, or tv show, but aside from sports we don't watch a lot of tv.

There's often an [Aussie Rules Footy match](#) or a [T20 Cricket match](#) on. But when I need a little more "down time", I confess to bingeing episodes of [Hoarders](#) on [YouTube](#). I know it's weird, but I find the stories fascinating.

Anyway, deciding to pull myself out of a reading slump, I scanned the library for a [Macomber](#) book. She's my "fall back" author. I'll also confess I was using the [Libby App](#) and wanted something that I didn't have to wait {read put on hold} for, and it limited my choices. I spotted *The Shop On Blossom Street* and remembered that once upon a time, when [Book of the Month Club](#) still sent you a catalog, and all that jazz, I'd purchased the book.

Strangely enough, I'd never read it and wasn't sure if we lost it in the Shed Fiasco of '21 or if it was one of the many things we gave away. Either way, it seemed like a good choice to start with.

Lydia Hoffman opened a little yarn shop on Blossom Street. The road is currently under construction, but she figures once it's over, she'll have an ideal location. In order to bring customers in, and get to know the community, she offers knitting classes. In the first class, they will learn to knit a baby blanket.

The small group of women who join are from all different backgrounds in life. Jacqueline, who is estranged from her husband, disapproves of her daughter-in-law, and isn't exactly sure how her life got so complicated. Carol is on her final round of IVF treatments and decides joining the class is a sign that this time she will bring a pregnancy to full term. Alix Townsend owes Community Service time for a crime she didn't commit, but is not willing to admit who did.

Thanks to the small knitting group, the small group of mismatched women weather life's ups and downs and become fast friends.

***A Good Yarn* by Debbie Macomber**

I read the first book in a day and looked to see if the [Libby App](#) had the second book in the series. Since they did, I snagged it and settled in, expecting this read to be just as good as the first installment.

Lydia and her sister are also in this book, but the other original characters aren't as prominent. The new cast of characters has arrived hoping to make friends or at least get out of the house. In this book, they are learning to make socks.

Bethanne is recently divorced, and dealing with a surly teen who will do anything to get back at her father. Elise, a divorced retiree, lost all her savings when a developer ran off with her deposit.

There was a sizable chunk of the story hung on a teen with severe body image issues. [Jess Connelly's Body Image Revolution](#) taught me to reject anything that promotes the idea that our bodies are inadequate. I won't consume things that promote the idea that our bodies are not good enough, so this book let me down.

The displaced high school senior, Courtney, took center stage for most of the story. She viewed herself as overweight and unlovable because of it. And the only way she found real peace in the book was by dieting and exercise.

***Mrs. Pollifax Unveiled* by Dorothy Gilman** — When we still lived back on the Island, I was chatting with a friend in the US who mentioned the [Mrs. Pollifax series](#). I absolutely loved the very first Mrs. Pollifax book, and have slowly read, or rather listened, my way through the series.

Unfortunately, my little Island Library system didn't have the books on the shelves, but [Audible](#) did. Last year I finished what was available in the series through Audible. And then secretly hoped that while I hunted down physical copies that perhaps [Audible](#) would get the remaining book in. It took them a few years, but at long last they did!

One of the funniest parts about this book was how they tricked me into finishing it! Have you seen that meme? The one where the lady is crying because she feels *tricked* into finishing her book. The last few pages were the author's notes and extras. Well, as this story kept winding down, I thought, "What am I missing? There's an entire 30 minutes left?"

Turns out, there was an author interview, and while those are normally only a couple of minutes, this one was an entire half hour. And even funnier yet, I still stayed up way past my bedtime listening to that interview!

In this episode of Mrs. Pollifax, she and Carstairs are on assignment in Damascus to look for one, Amanda Pym. She's gone missing after facing down hijackers on a middle eastern flight. The CIA believes she may have been kidnapped, or worse. Mrs. Pollifax goes undercover as the lovable aunt who is searching for a beloved niece.

It had all the beauty and fun of every Mrs. Pollifax book that I've read, and I confess I'm always a little sad when I wrap these books up. I spent much of this one attempting to dissect various things the author had done, but being slightly distracted with the story.

The interview at the end of the audio book is quite interesting. Ms. Gilman talks about many things from Mrs. Pollifax to her time living in a very remote part of Canada. She also discusses some health struggles she was dealing with. I confess, I found it highly amusing when the host made a suggestion for a book idea and Ms. Gilman said, "Oh no, I don't think I could sit with them for a year. It would be too much, far too much to deal with."

The host wasn't sure what she meant. Gilman tried to explain that, when writing, the characters are in your head for the duration of the time you spend hashing out their story.

***The Giver Of Stars* by Jojo Moyes**

I decided to challenge myself. You know that whole saying yes thing? Here it was in action. I purposefully chose a book by a popular author that I haven't read before.

This was one of the first ones that came up in the [Libby app](#) that did not require a hold, meaning I could download it and jump right in whenever I wanted. That factor alone is one reason I grabbed it. The other reason is that this story is about the [packhorse librarians](#) in the mountains of Kentucky. This was probably a bigger selling factor to me, because I find the job and time in history intriguing.

This story revolves around the lives of five women: Alice, Margery, Beth, Izzy, & Sophia. This small group of women makes up the [Packhorse Librarians Of Kentucky](#). Each has their own story and troubles.

Alice, new to town, is stuck in a loveless marriage that is controlled by her father-in-law. She accepts the job to escape the drudgery of home. Margery is a no-nonsense independent woman, and delighted to take on the job. She's also hated in town, thanks to a longstanding family feud between her kin and the family Alice married into.

Izzy wears a leg brace, the lasting memories of Polio. Yet, through joining this motley group of women, she finds genuine friendship and a way to be useful despite her disability. Beth is the only girl in a family of boys. She's rough, tough, and determined that she can make her own way in the world without having to become cook and cleaner for her brothers and father.

Sophia organizes the library, having spent many years working at the [Louisville Free Public Library \(Colored Branch\)](#). Only returning to the backwater town when her brother got injured in the mines.

This small group of women unite to support each other in depression era Kentucky. They face life's challenges together and develop a lifelong friendship.

I absolutely loved this book. Despite finishing it weeks ago, I still think about not only the story, but the writing. I've been hunting down a copy of it (preferably second hand) because I want to annotate some things Moyes did with her writing. Sadly, I cannot find a copy, but I realize that even though I despise e-books, I can mark it to pieces and still have a clean copy to read whenever I want.

Author's Note:



If you're looking for cozy, but enjoyable mystery series to delve into, I really can't recommend Mrs. Pollifax enough. I'm considering starting them all over again, as it's been a while since reading the previous thirteen books.

If you're a knitter and intrigued by the knitting series, you might like to know that the patterns for the items made in the Blossom Street books are also available in the physical books. Or, if you'd like to watch a mini documentary on The Packhorse Librarians you can do that via [a video from PBS](#).

I know there are many ebook lovers out there, but I confess to having this love-hate relationship with them. They can certainly be convenient when traveling, but I spend a lot of time already staring at a screen and prefer not to do that while reading. Plus, backlit screens are painful thanks to my Irlen. And then there's the whole flipping back-and-forth thing. But, I confess I love the ease of marking them up.

All that might sound a little suspect considering just how many audio books I listen to. I bookmark them, too. Saving all my favorite quotes. Although, I really miss the feature in [Audible](#) where one could share snippets.

The Reluctant Author:

