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Inside Hudson Williams' personal library: The gritty, romantic books he thinks you should read

From classic literary fiction to viral romance, here is exactly what's been on Hudson's nightstand.

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Photograph: Courtesy Crave/HBO Max | Hudson Williams in *Heated Rivalry*

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Since his appearance as Shane Hollander in *Heated Rivalry*, Hudson Williams has shot like a rocket into stardom. So, of course, when he tells us what he's reading, we're all over it.

Williams has kept us abreast of his favorite titles over on his [Instagram](#) and in various interviews, and according to *Variety*, one fan has compiled them all on social media.





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His influence is widely felt—Variety reports that some titles are selling out, while bookstores across the country are putting together table displays of his recommendations.

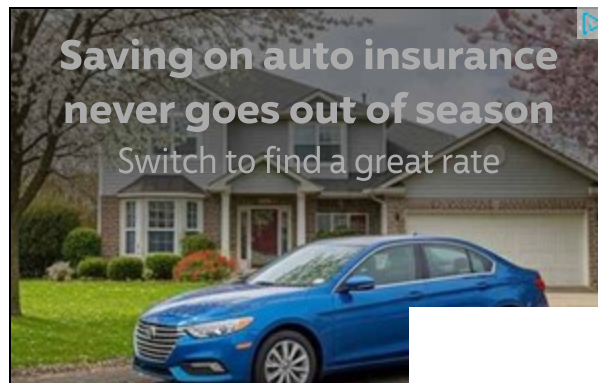
Below are the books Williams put his stamp of approval on and what they're about, including *Stoner* by John Williams and *Play It As It Lays* by Joan Didion. Based on this list alone, he seems to enjoy reading psychological deep dives, novels and non-fiction books that examine identity and Hollywood memoirs, especially by Joan Didion and Eve Babitz.

The Must-Read List: Hudson Williams' Top Book Picks

***Martyr!* by Kaveh Akbar**

This is a dark, lyrical novel following a poet named Gull who becomes mixed up in a cult-like movement that preys on grief and spiritual longing. Its themes include faith, exploitation, addiction and the cost of artistic obsession.

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Williams says it is “for anyone who’s felt like a dilettante artist or for biracial people who feel disconnected from their culture(s). Also for agnostic atheists.”

Stoner by John Williams

William Stoner is a Midwestern academic whose devotion to literature and marriage is met with professional frustration and personal disappointment. The book traces a life of modest ambitions and inner resilience.

Williams says it is “beautiful in its simplicity.”

Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays by Joan Didion

This essay collection captures 1960s California culture with sharp reporting and personal reflection. Didion mixes journalism and memoir with pieces about Hollywood, counterculture, social unraveling and family.

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This philosophical novel is about Vitangelo Moscarda, who has both an identity and reality crisis. The book looks at our sense of self, our social masks and the impossibility of a single, stable self.

My Struggle: Book 1 by Karl Ove Knausgaard

The author writes about his everyday life, memories and thoughts, with a focus on his turbulent relationship with his father, adolescence and early adulthood. It's written in a confessional way that turns mundane details into deep psychological and philosophical reflections on identity, grief, masculinity and the struggle to write honestly about oneself.

King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering Masculinity Through the Lens of Archetypal Psychology – A Journey into the Male Psyche and Its Four Essential Aspects

This is a Jungian psychological framework that proposes four mature masculine energies—King (order/creativity), Warrior (discipline/protection), Magician (insight/knowledge) and Lover (passion/connection). What does Williams classify himself as?

Sex and Rage by Eve Babitz

This semi-autobiographical novel contextualizes L.A. social scenes with sharp observations on sexuality, ambition and female desire. Babitz captures the glamour and disillusionment of 1960s–70s bohemian life.

Slow Days, Fast Company: The World, The Flesh and L.A. by Eve Babitz

Play It As It Lays by Joan Didion

A fan of Didion and Hollywood, clearly, this novel follows Maria Wyeth, a Hollywood actress having an emotional breakdown. Didion's writing showcases the disintegration of identity and the moral vacuum of the California dream.

Williams says it "goes down like absinthe (but it's amazing)."

It Lasts Forever and Then It's Over by Anne de Marcken

Did he read this for research? This novel looks at the fragility and endurance of love and memory across intimate relationships. It follows characters dealing with loss, longing and the small moments that define a life.

Didion and Babitz by Lili Anolik

As a fan of both authors, it makes sense that Williams would read this nonfiction book. It examines the complex friendship and rivalry between Joan Didion and Eve Babitz by tracing their divergent careers and styles within mid-20th-century L.A. culture.

Les Misérables by Victor Hugo

A great, relevant read—the iconic 19th-century novel follows ex-convict Jean Valjean's moral redemption after serving 19 years for stealing bread. He's pursued relentlessly by Inspector Javert, but he adopts Cosette (the daughter of the abused Fantine) and tries to build a new life while France struggles with poverty, social injustice and political unrest. The novel examines justice vs. mercy, law vs. compassion, the effects of poverty, and the possibility of personal and social transformation.

Maybe he's telling us something. This psychology book argues that many adult neuroses stem from emotional neglect in childhood, where sensitive children adapt by suppressing authentic feelings to meet parental expectations. It delves into how "gifted" compliance leads to a lost true self, chronic depression and difficulty forming honest relationships.

Been there, done that? Think again, my **friend**.

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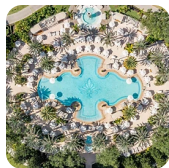


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