

[Menu](#)[CBC Gem](#)[CBC Listen](#)[CBC](#)[Search](#)[Sign In](#)

Books

10 Canadian books that just might be the next classics

CBC Books compiled recommendations from book experts of which titles we'll be seeing on bookshelves for years

CBC Books · Posted: Sep 10, 2026 9:00 AM MST | Last Updated: September 10

[Listen to this article](#) ⓘ

Estimated 9 minutes



A stack of Canadian books. (Courtney Dickson/CBC)

Join the Conversation

Who gets to decide what makes a book a Canadian classic? Does it need to be set in Canada? Win awards? Be a bestseller?

It's hard to pin down what earns a book a spot in the Canadian canon, but publishers [McClelland & Stewart](#) and [HarperCollins Canada](#) are

trying. They both recently released lines of classic Canadian books.

For McClelland & Stewart, this initiative is called Kanata Classics, and consists of reissuing six books every year that “champions brilliant, timeless books,” according to their website.

Featuring novels like Marian Engel's *Bear* and Richard Wagamese's *Medicine Walk*, the publishing imprint says it's committed to bringing a “balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices into provocative and nuanced dialogue with one another.”

HarperCollins Canada reissued their Canadian classics in tandem with an American classic series. The books chosen, including *Half-Blood Blues* by Esi Edugyan and *Any Known Blood* by Lawrence Hill, are “award winners and bestsellers” that highlight “the most iconic and diverse that have shaped Canadian literature throughout the decades,” their website says.

COMMOTION

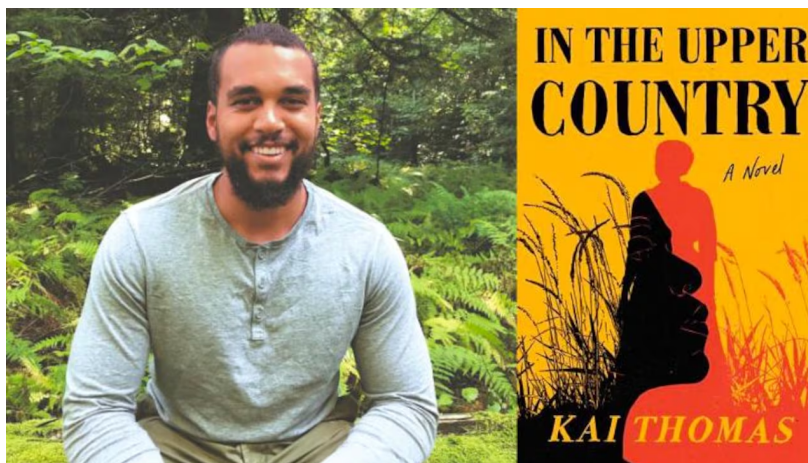
What does it mean to be part of the Canadian literary canon?

Inspired by these discussions of what makes a Canadian classic, CBC Books compiled recommendations from book experts of which titles we'll potentially see on bookshelves for years to come.

This list features titles chosen for panels on *The Next Chapter* and *Commotion*. CBC Books also reached out to indie bookstores across the country — and got some great selections from three of them.

What would you add to the list? Click the “Join the Conversation” button above or let us know on social media [@CBCBooks](#).

***In The Upper Country* by Kai Thomas**



In the Upper Country is a novel by Kai Thomas. (Viking Press)

On a recent panel on *The Next Chapter*, Nathan Maharaj, a bookseller and director of content marketing at Rakuten Kobo, noted that the Kai Thomas novel *In The Upper Country* has all the makings of a future Canadian classic.

Set in 18th-century Ontario, *In The Upper Country* is the story of young Lensinda Martin, who is summoned to interview an old woman who has shot and killed a slave hunter. The woman, who recently arrived in town via the Underground Railroad, refuses to confess but instead proposes a deal: a story for a story.

Kai Thomas, Christina Sharpe among Writers' Trust literary prize winners

The last line of the prologue, “Behind every glorious thing is a whole mess of trouble,” sets up the message of the entire novel, said Maharaj.

It’s one that resonates especially in Canada.

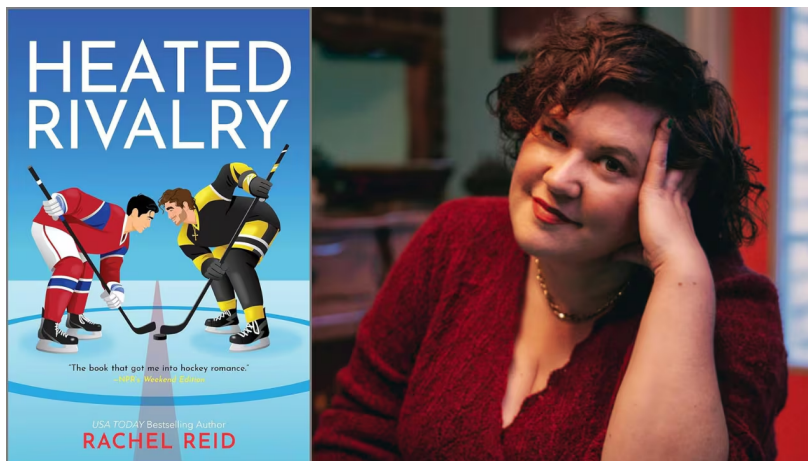
“It made me think of our glorious country, Canada, which is no less glorious for the whole mess of trouble behind it,” he said.

For Maharaj, *In The Upper Country* makes a good classic because it encourages readers to work through the “mess” rather than pretending it’s not there.

LISTEN | Kai Thomas on The Next Chapter:

**The Next Chapter 11:43**

Kai Thomas discusses his award-winning debut novel, *In The Upper Country*

***Heated Rivalry* by Rachel Reid**

Heated Rivalry is a book by Rachel Reid. (Carina Press, Caleb Latreille)

On the very same panel on *The Next Chapter*, BookToker and CBC Books producer Bridget Raymundo brought Rachel Reid's *Heated Rivalry* to the table as a future member of the Canadian literary canon.

Heated Rivalry, which spawned the hit TV show of the same name, tells the story of a relationship between rival professional hockey players at the top of their game who fall into a secret romance.

Nova Scotia author Rachel Reid shares how to cure your *Heated Rivalry* hangover

"There's something romantic about Canadian literature at large," said Raymundo.

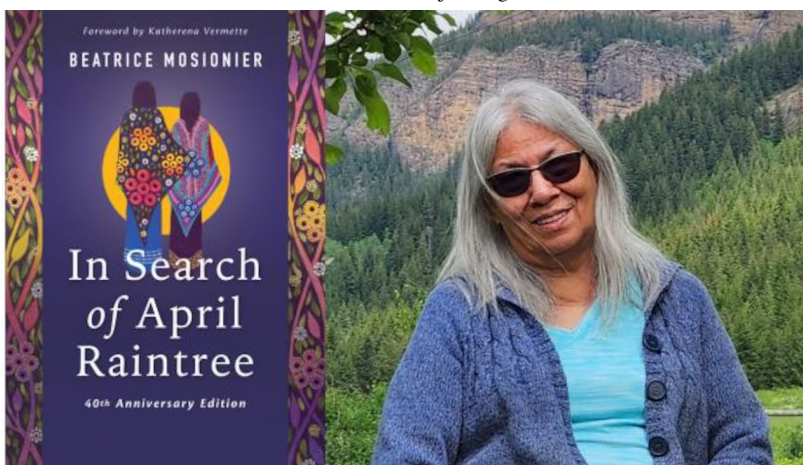
"In a very weird and poetic way, it speaks to what we've always loved to write about, which is love and human experience — and also hockey."

LISTEN | Rachel Reid on The Next Chapter:

**The Next Chapter with Antonio Michael Downing 27:32**

Watching *Heated Rivalry*? Here's what the author wants you to know

***In Search of April Raintree* by Beatrice Moisionier**



In Search of April Raintree is a book by Beatrice Mosionier. (HighWater Press, Beatrice Mosionier)

In a recent conversation on CBC Radio's *Commotion*, author David A. Robertson said that Beatrice Moisionier's 1983 novel *In Search of April Raintree* is his pick.

Set in Manitoba, the novel follows Métis sisters April and Cheryl Raintree as they are taken from their families and raised in separate foster homes. As they grow up, they stay close despite developing different feelings towards their Métis heritage and separate goals for their futures.

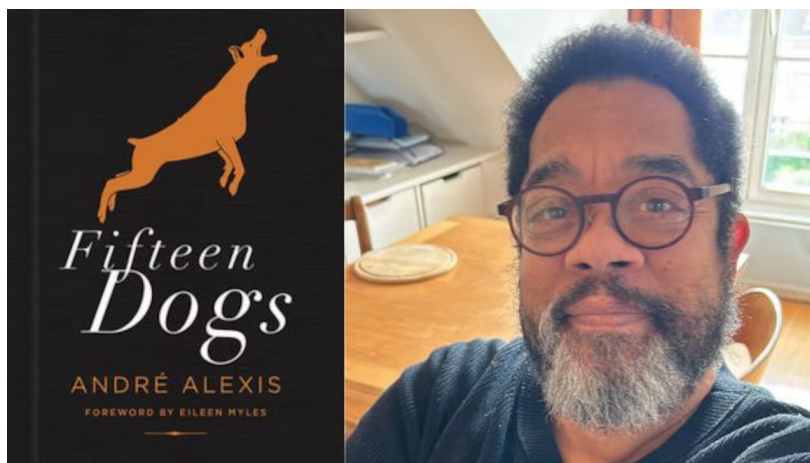
Influential Indigenous novel *In Search of April Raintree* commemorates 40 years with anniversary edition

"It deals with the impacts of foster care, and the displacement of culture, language, identity," said Roberston. "It's a vitally important book. Not enough people have read it."

COMMOTION

What does it mean to be part of the Canadian literary canon?

***Fifteen Dogs* by André Alexis**



Fifteen Dogs is a novel by André Alexis. (Coach House Books, Thecla K. Alexis)

Martha Sharpe, owner and publisher of Flying Books picked *Fifteen Dogs* by André Alexis as a future Canadian classic. She called it a “great Toronto book” on the *Commotion* panel.

Fifteen Dogs is a retelling of the story of Greek gods Hermes and Apollo who bet on the outcome of giving animals human consciousness — and test it out on 15 dogs spending the night in the back of a Toronto veterinary clinic.

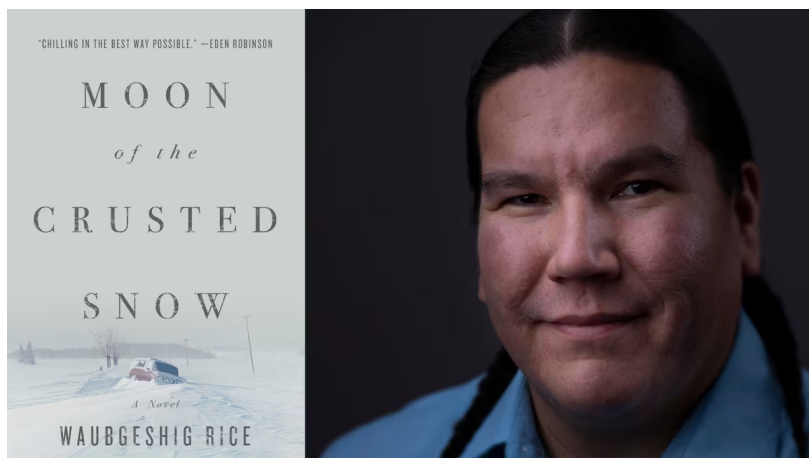
HOW I WROTE IT

How André Alexis wrote *Fifteen Dogs*

“It’s just brilliant and funny. André is a superb writer who’s internationally recognized. Canon-worthy for sure,” said Sharpe.

Fifteen Dogs, published in 2015, won that year’s Giller Prize and Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize, as well as *Canada Reads* in 2017.

***Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice**



Moon of the Crusted Snow is a book by Waubgeshig Rice. (ECW Press)

At Yellowknife Books, bookseller Jenn Baerg Steyn sees *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, the 2018 dystopian drama by Waubgeshig Rice, as worthy of the Canadian canon.

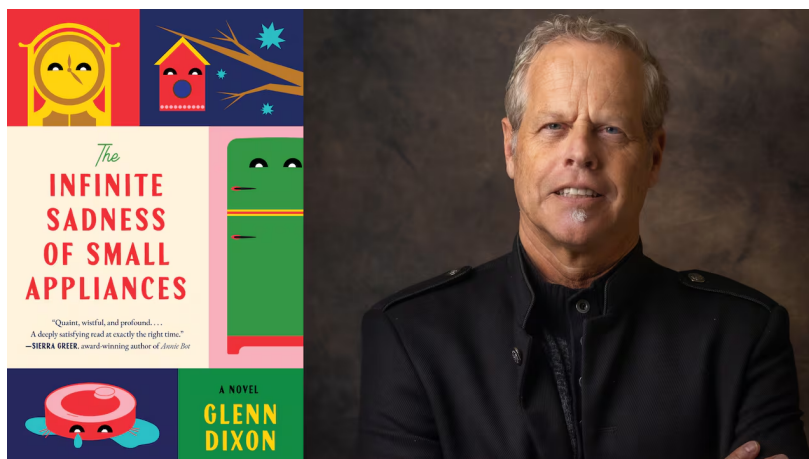
Moon of the Crusted Snow tells the story of a northern Anishinaabe community facing dwindling resources and rising panic after their electrical power grid shuts down. While the community tries to maintain order, forces from outside and within threaten to destroy the reserve.

HOW I WROTE IT

Why Waubgeshig Rice wrote a dystopian novel about the collapse of society from an Indigenous perspective

"The themes of Rice's work speak to our worst nature as humanity, but also the hope and resilience that is possible," said Baerg Steyn in an email to CBC Books.

***The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances* by Glenn Dixon**



The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances is a book by Glenn Dixon. (HarperAvenue, David Kotsibie)

Baerg Steyn's other pick is Glenn Dixon's *The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances*, a "store favourite," she said. The novel was published in March 2026 and has already become an indie No. 1 bestseller.

The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances is about a sentient robot vacuum who is captivated listening to her owner, Harold, reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* to his dying wife. Dreaming of feeling the same human connection she's learned about in literature, she renames herself Scout.

When Edie dies, Scout learns that the Grid, the powers that oversee every house in the City, want to remove Harold from his home of 50 years. Together with a ragtag group of appliances and humans, she is determined to stop the sinister forces at play and keep everyone together.

"Sweet and sad, it's a 'cozy' read and we need more of those these days," said Baerg Steyn.

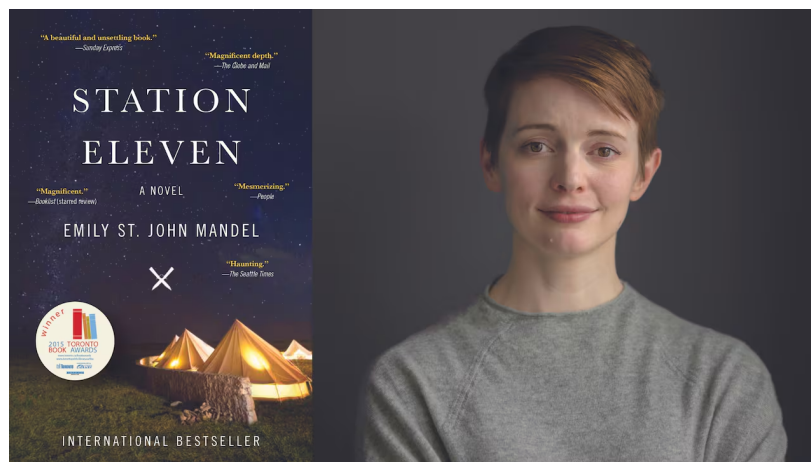
LISTEN | Glenn Dixon discusses *The Infinite Sadness of Small Appliances*:



Calgary Eyeopener 7:14

A Calgary author's new book imagines the not-so-distant future of sentient appliances

***Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel**



Station Eleven is a novel by Emily St. John Mandel. (Sarah Shatz, Harper Perennial)

Montreal bookstore Bibliophile recommended *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel as a Canadian classic. The 2014 dystopian novel was on Canada Reads in 2023 and was adapted into a popular television series of the same name.

Station Eleven takes place on an Earth undone by disease, following the interconnected lives of several characters before and after the plague. One travels the wasteland performing Shakespearean plays with a troupe, while another attempts to build community at an abandoned airport and another amasses followers for a dangerous cause.

Station Eleven author Emily St. John Mandel comes to Toronto to discuss her latest book with Mattea Roach

“Mandel writes each and every one of her characters with a care and intimacy that is striking and endearing, especially so given the setting of the book in a post-apocalyptic landscape,” said Sandra Climan of Bibliophile in an email.

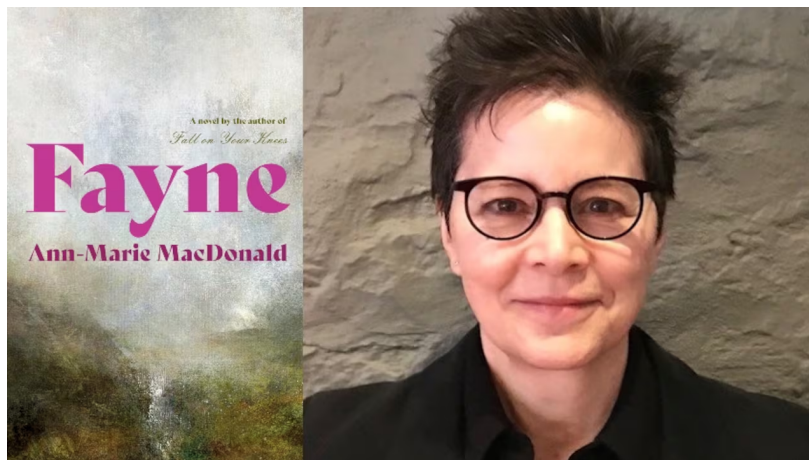
“It demonstrates not only the diversity and resilience of Canada and Canadians, but also our heart.”

LISTEN | Emily St. John Mandel on The Next Chapter:



The Next Chapter 21:03
Emily St. John Mandel on Station Eleven

***Fayne* by Ann-Marie MacDonald**



Fayne is a novel by Ann-Marie MacDonald. (Knopf Canada)

While Ann-Marie MacDonald is perhaps best known for her novel 1996 *Fall on Your Knees*, Climan went with a more recent title by the beloved author: *Fayne*, which came out in 2022.

Fayne is a novel about Charlotte Bell, a young woman growing up in the 19th century. She lives at Fayne House, a vast and lonely estate straddling the border between England and Scotland. When a mysterious artifact is found, Charlotte's passion for knowledge and

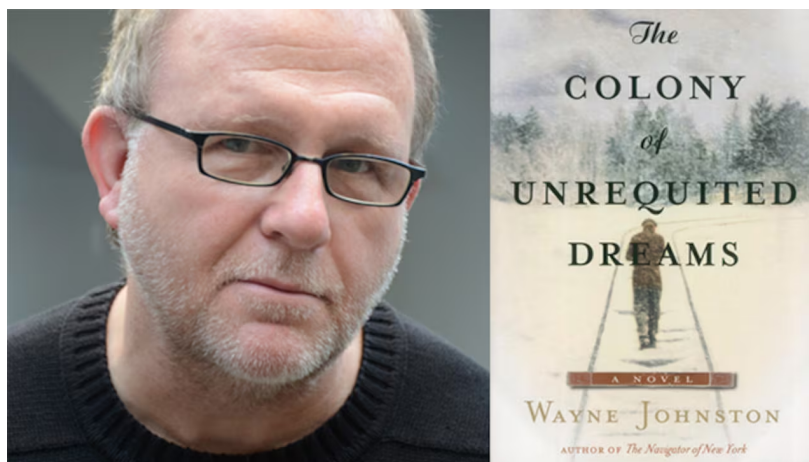
adventure will take her to the bottom of family secrets — and to the heart of her own identity.

FIRST LOOK

Ann-Marie MacDonald's new novel *Fayne* tells a mysterious story of family secrets & lies — read an excerpt now

Climan calls *Fayne* “a lusciously mysterious novel of medicine, love, identity and gender” and “at once extremely current and also perfectly gothic.”

***The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* by Wayne Johnston**



The Colony of Unrequited Dreams is a book by Wayne Johnston. (Mark Raynes Roberts/Vintage Canada)

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams, a 1998 novel by Wayne Johnston, is a future Canadian classic according to the team of Bookmark Charlottetown.

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams centres a fictional version of Joey Smallwood, the first premier of Newfoundland, and the character Sheilagh Fielding, a columnist who writes about Smallwood in a satirical way.

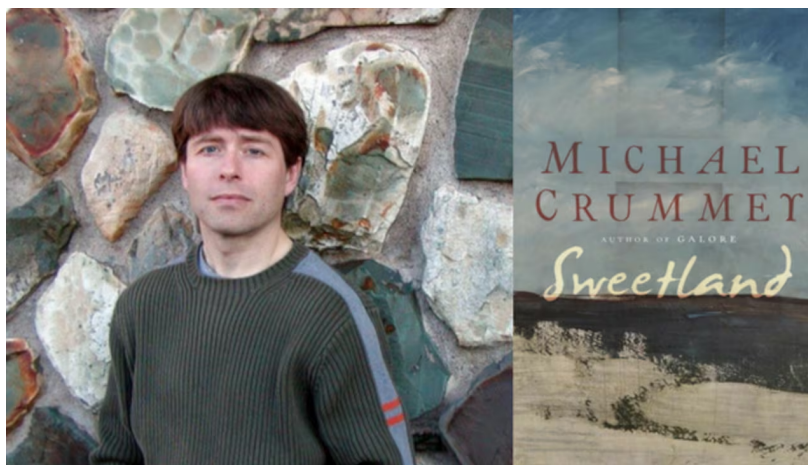
“What could be more of a Canadian classic than the story of the ‘last Father of Confederation,’” wrote the team of Bookmark Charlottetown in an email.

“Master storyteller Wayne Johnson weaves an epic tale about the fictional life of Joey Smallwood spanning five decades and includes both a mystery and a love story.”

Wayne Johnston is one of Canada's best writers — here are 5 books that shaped his life and work

When it was first published, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* was nominated for major literary awards like the Giller Prize and the Governor General's award for fiction. It was also shortlisted for Canada Reads.

***Sweetland* by Michael Crummey**



Sweetland is a book by Michael Crummey. (Holly Hogan, Doubleday Canada)

Bookmark Charlottetown's other pick was *Sweetland*, Michael Crummey's 2014 historical fiction novel.

In *Sweetland*, the Newfoundland government wants to resettle the small titular town. But when former fisherman Moses refuses to go, he realizes that he'll have to fake his own death to be able to stay.

HOW I WROTE IT

Michael Crummey: How I wrote *Sweetland*

The Bookmark team sees *Sweetland* as a future Canadian classic because "it tells the story of the outport resettlements in Newfoundland through the eyes of one unforgettable character who concocts a scheme to stay behind."



Erin Community Manager

What book do you think deserves a spot in the Canadian classics canon?

4 participants

WB Wendy Barker

Are we only talking fiction? Because I think some of the finest writing done by Canadians is nonfiction. *Fire Weather* by John Vaillant is a book that I keep referring people to whenever we get into a discussion about forest fires and climate change. *Permanent Astonishment* by Tomso...



Join the Conversation