

BOOKS

Adult and children's books with New Jersey connections make for great holiday gifts



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There are only a few days left until Christmas and Hanukkah, and you are still procrastinating over getting that special gift for the book lover in your life.

Here are a few suggestions for fiction and nonfiction titles with a New Jersey flavor worth purchasing online or in a local bookstore.

For the kids

Queer Mythology

Guido Sanchez, who grew up in Glen Ridge, is an educator at a New York City school and a longtime LGBTQIA+ activist. He brings those worlds together in his new children's book, "**Queer Mythology: Epic Legends from Around the World**" (Oct. 2024; Running Kids Press; 120 pg.).

Need a break? Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.

Sanchez explores twenty mythical figures and legends who have been part of LGBTQIA+ history. There's Guede Nibo, the leader of the spirits of the dead in Haitian Vodou, who was considered a great healer and celebrated by Haitian farmers in November with praise songs. And Tu'er Shen is a traditional Chinese rabbit god looked upon as the patron of homosexual love.

On Monday, one copy remained for sale for \$19.99 at Watchung Bookstore in Montclair. Copies are also available for purchase at BarnesandNoble.com.

The Hat Diaries

Bergen County resident Nadine Haruni wears several hats: attorney, yoga instructor, mom, and children's book author.

So, it is only fitting that she has come out with her new book, "**The Hat Diaries: Discover the Portal**" (Nov. 2024; Speaking Volumes, LLC; 268 pg.) about teenage loner Ryan Rigbee, whose friendship with magician/haberdasher Merlo provides him with hats that open up new worlds with daily adventures. This new title is a follow-up to her 2023 book "The Hat Diaries: The Secret Life of Ryan Rigbee."

Autographed copies are available for \$16.99 at Bookends in Ridgewood or for \$16.99 online at Amazon.

Camp Twisted Pine

The Pine Barrens, the wooded area that covers much of southern New Jersey, has been where various myths and legends exist, including the New Jersey Devil. Cherry Hill native Ciera Burch takes inspiration from this fantastical element of this famous place for her new novel, "**Camp Twisted Pine**." (Sept. 2024; Margaret K. McElderry Books; 272 pg.)

Burch tells the tale of 11-year-old nature-loving Naomi whose first experience at a summer camp near the Pine Barrens is shaped by her parents on the verge of divorce, a developing friendship with a fellow camper, and the search for the creature behind the disappearance of people at camp including her new best friend.

A copy of the book is in stock at the Curious Reader in Glen Rock for \$17.99. Copies can also be found at simonandschuster.com.

There's a Robot in my Socks

Jamie is a young girl who has a special friend who ensures her daily life is in order called "**The Robot in Her Socks**." That is also the title of the recently published book (Sept. 2024; 4U2B Books & Media; 40 pg.) by Union County resident Meredith Rusu.

However, things don't go so smoothly for Jamie or the robot during a visit to her grandmother, where she finds everything not in the way she wants it. But she learns a lesson of acceptance and finds a connection with Grandma, who has a robot of her own to make things right.

The hardcover book is available at Amazon (\$16.50) or Barnes and Noble (\$19.99).

For the adults

Watergate's Unexpected Hero

Peter Rodino had a distinguished career serving his home state of New Jersey for 40 years in Congress. During his time serving in the House of Representatives, Rodino would rise through the ranks until he became the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, where he presided over the impeachment hearings of then-President Richard Nixon in 1974 before Nixon resigned in August of that year.

A half-century later, a new biography of Rodino made its debut: "**Watergate's Unexpected Hero: The Life of Peter W. Rodino Jr.**" (Amplify Publishing; August 2024; 392 pg.). This historical tome is by Lawrence Spinelli, a former assistant professor at Drew University in Madison who served as Rodino's press secretary on Capitol Hill. He explores Rodino's life and career from his youth in his native Newark (where a federal building bears his name) to serving under eight U.S. presidents.

Copies are available for \$32 at Words Bookstore in Maplewood and amplifypublishinggroup.com.

Night and Its Longings

Jake Garrett once had an affair with Vera, a married woman. Instead of seeking vengeance, her husband seeks Jake's assistance in finding his wife after she disappears from the park where she was taking photos.

Unraveling what happened to Vera is at the heart of a new mystery novel, "**Night and Its Longings**" (March 2024; Livingston Press; 260 pg.) by longtime Fort Lee resident Philip Cioffari, who taught writing at William Paterson University for many years.

The book can be purchased online at Livingston Press for \$19.95 (paperback) and \$32 (hardcover).

Baby X

Union County author Kira Peikoff examines the worlds of reproduction, DNA, and advanced technology in her recent thriller, "**Baby X: A Thriller**" (March 2024; Crooked Lane Books; 336 pg.).

Her new mystery centers on superstar singer Trace Thorne, the target of a black-market site, the Vault, whose mission is stealing the DNA of celebrities used to produce offspring they had no part in conceiving. Thorne retains the services of bio-security expert Ember Ryan to protect him from the Vault.

Available for purchase at penguinrandomhouse.com for \$30.99 (hardcover).

Ricardo Kaulessar covers race, immigration, and culture for NorthJersey.com. For unlimited access to the most important news from your local community, please subscribe or activate your digital account today.

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