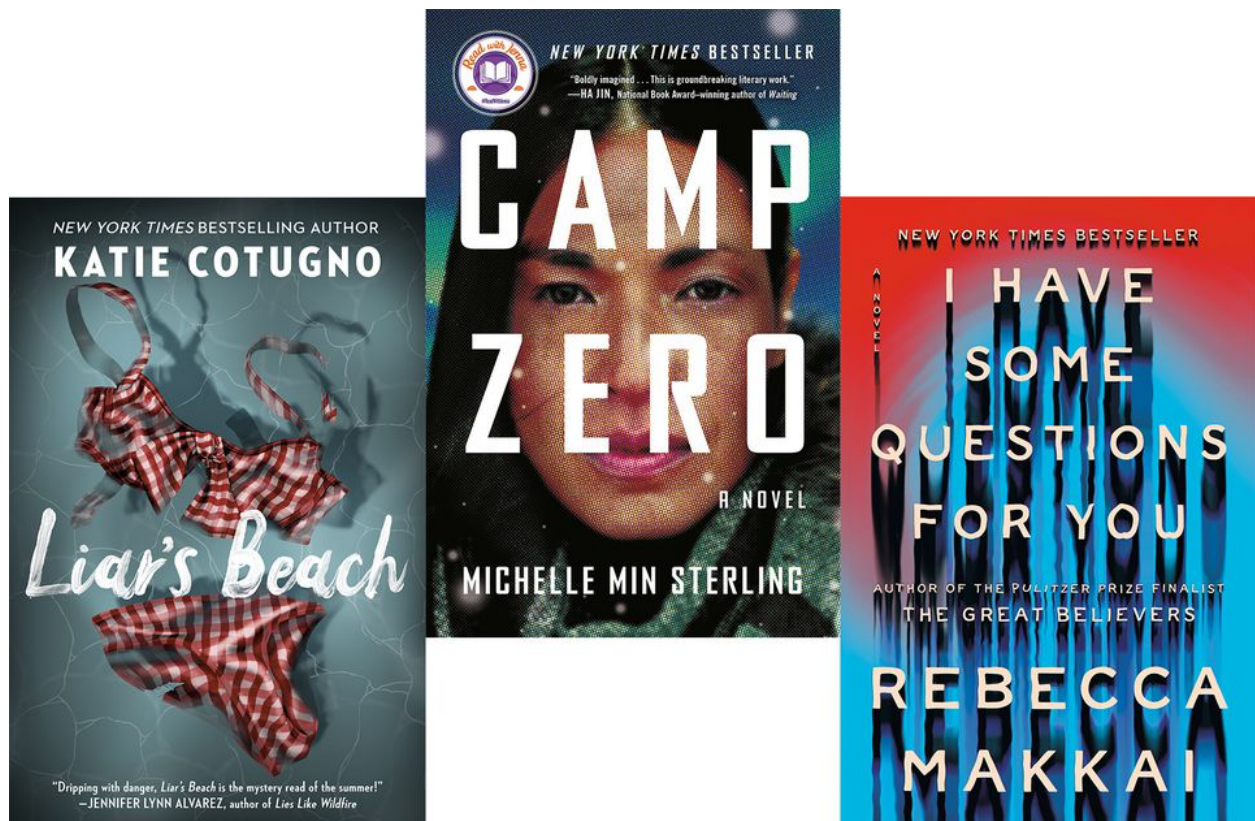


Six new page-turners set in New England

Novels of mystery and suspense set in dystopian Boston, at a New Hampshire boarding school, on Martha's Vineyard, and other nearby locales add atmosphere to juicy plots.

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HANDOUT

I don't think I've seen a stronger crop of locally set page-turners than the novels that have hit shelves so far this year. Here are six of the best I've read.

Rebecca Makkai's buzzy "["I Have Some Questions for You,"](#)" set largely at an elite New Hampshire boarding school called Granby, fuses true-crime podcasting, racism, and #MeToo brilliantly. A part-time Vermonter and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award for 2018's "The Great Believers," Makkai brings Granby to life. The plot: Podcaster/film professor Bodie Kane was a Granby student in the mid-'90s when classmate Thalia Keith was murdered, and Granby athletic trainer, Omar Evans, was jailed for it. In the present, the story pops up again on YouTube and Reddit threads with the question: *Did they arrest the right guy?* Now 40, Bodie returns to Granby to teach — and falls down the rabbit-hole trying to answer that question with her precocious student podcasters.

"["Camp Zero,"](#)" by Berklee professor Michelle Min Sterling is a New York Times bestseller partially set in dystopian Boston. The time is the near future, climate change has ravaged the planet, and our

protagonist, code-named “Rose,” becomes a high-end escort in the lavish “Floating City” off Boston Harbor. Soon, Rose is sent with other escorts to remote northern Canada where a crew of men is constructing a settlement for climate refugees fleeing the burning south. Other characters include a professor from a long line of Boston wealth and a team of women researchers. Their stories intertwine in unexpected ways — and there’s even an abandoned mall, a la “The Last of Us.”

“[Liar’s Beach](#),” by best-selling Boston author Katie Cotugno riffs on Agatha Christie’s “The Mysterious Affair at Styles.” The YA mystery features protagonist Mike Linden, a blue-collar kid from East Boston, who scores an invite from his rich Northampton boarding school friends to vacation at their Vineyard summer home. I got a kick out of Linden lines like: “[F]rom the way she said *Southie*, I could tell she was picturing the set of ‘Good Will Hunting’ rather than the fratty, gentrified neighborhood full of condos and swanky bars that I knew South Boston to be these days.” In Cotugno’s story, Linden’s childhood friend, Holiday Proctor, stands in for Christie’s famous detective, Hercule Poirot.

“[The House in the Pines](#),” by UMass-Amherst alum Ana Reyes, shines a spotlight on Pittsfield and the Berkshires. Protagonist Maya is a BU alum living in Boston with her boyfriend — and trying to detox from Klonopin — when she clicks on a disturbing video: a woman dropping dead in a restaurant. It reminds Maya of a high school trauma, and sends her packing to mom’s Pittsfield home to figure out a hazy mystery from her past. You have to be OK with stretching your imagination a bit toward the end — but Reyes preps you for that, dropping hints about magical realism. (Catch Reyes [at The Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield](#) May 13.)

“[For You and Only You](#),” by Caroline Kepnes. I first heard of “You” from the Netflix series — the books are so much better. The Cape Cod-raised Brown alum Kepnes — who also had a New England-set stand-alone with “Providence” — has created a distinctive voice with snarky stalker/killer Joe Goldberg. Her debut “You” (2014) saw Joe in New York, with each successive book in the series moving to a different locale. The fourth book, “For You and Only You,” sees Joe in Cambridge for a Harvard writing fellowship. Joe’s insights (and insults) are comical, as he falls for the only other blue-collar non-college-degree writer in the group, Wonder, a Dunkin’ manager who still lives at home with her dad and sister. Compulsively readable, and laugh-out-loud funny.

“[The Kind Worth Saving](#),” by Peter Swanson. Swanson’s niche is Boston-set cozies. And when I say “cozy” I don’t mean kittens and cupcakes. Yes, people get murdered, but it’s still a book you want to curl up with fireside. (Agatha Christie is a clear Swanson inspiration.) The Gloucester resident does here what he does best. Characters often pop into cafes or pubs. Meals are described. Murder is afoot. It’s technically a follow-up to his 2015 release, “[The Kind Worth Killing](#),” but you don’t need to read that first to read this. (Just know that the plot of “Killing” is recounted here.) Meet English teacher-turned-Boston-cop-turned-Boston PI Henry Kimball. His former student Joan asks Kimball to tail her husband to see if he’s cheating. Then time jumps to Joan’s backstory: a mysterious death in Maine, a Massachusetts school shooting. The plot thickens like clam chowder.