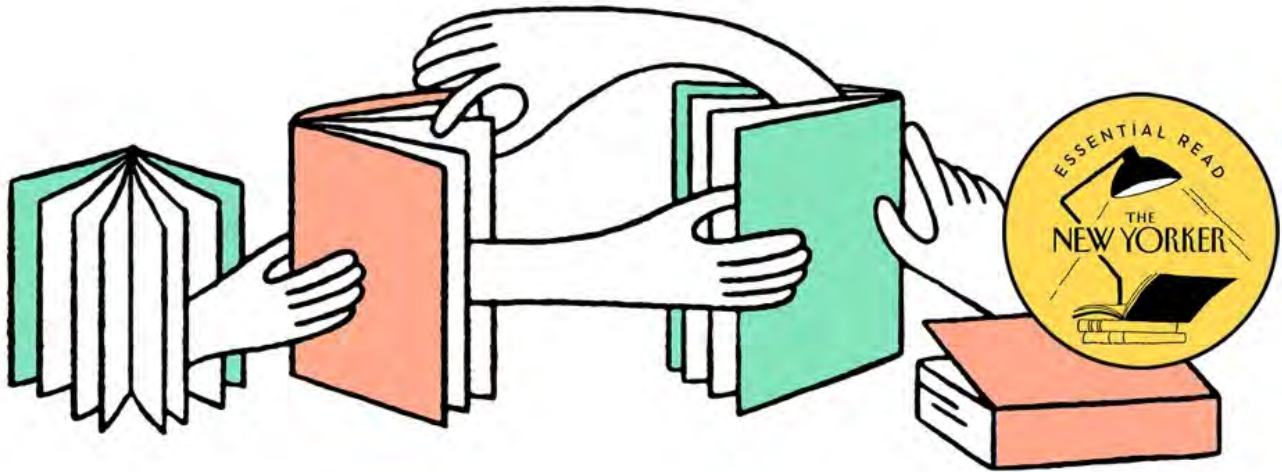


THE
NEW YORKER



THE BEST BOOKS OF 2023

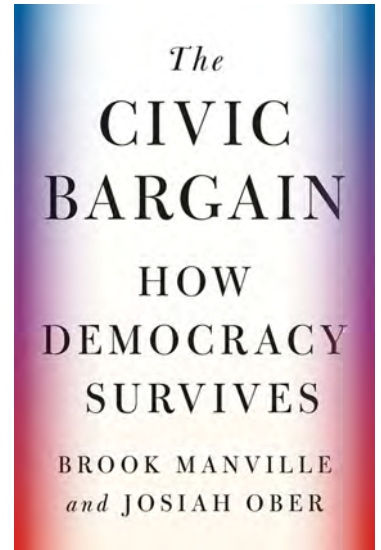
Each week, our editors and critics recommend the most captivating, notable, brilliant, thought-provoking, and talked-about books. Now, as 2023 comes to an end, we've chosen a dozen essential reads in nonfiction and a dozen, too, in fiction and poetry.

By **The New Yorker** December 20, 2023

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The Civic Bargain

by Brook Manville and Josiah Ober (Princeton)



Nonfiction Manville and Ober begin with a simple but persuasive point: that democracy depends not on the creation of constitutions and statutes but on shared understandings among groups. The primal act of healthy democracies is the social bargain, they write, and its product is an idea of citizenship that depends on the coexistence of different kinds of people. The authors trace this idea through the history of democracies, from the Athens of Pericles to the Rome of Cicero, leaping forward, as that history demands, to the slow evolution of British democracy in the seventeenth century and then to the American Revolution and its long aftermath. Throughout the book, Manville and Ober's model is of civic dialogue rooted in an Aristotelian ideal of "civic friendship." Citizenship, they suggest, is an escape from clan identity.

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