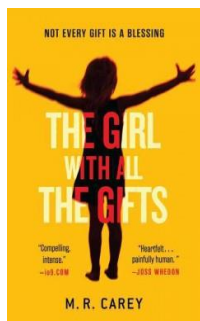


Binge-worthy Reads for Fans of *Stranger Things*

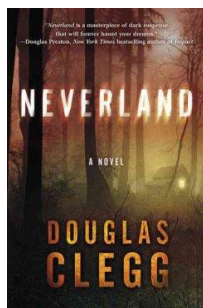
by Kimberly Burton

Netflix's hit series *Stranger Things* overlays fantasy/SF and horror elements with coming-of-age themes and warm-hearted nostalgia for 1980's pop culture. It follows the exploits of four pre-teen boys whose bestie -- and the fifth member of their regular *Dungeons & Dragons* game -- goes missing one night. At first treated as a missing child case, it soon becomes clear that far stranger things are indeed afoot. Fans of the show will find similarly well-developed characters, escalating suspense, and genre-bending plot twists (both frightening and wondrous) in this list of binge-worthy books for adult readers.



The Girl with All the Gifts by M. R. Carey

If Eleven ("El") is your favorite *Stranger Things* character, then this is the book for you! Melanie can't remember life before the base. Sheltered there from zombie-like "hungries" that have ravaged England for decades, Melanie spends her days confined in a cell. She is collected to go to the shower, and to class every day -- with Sergeant Parks training his gun on her, as two of his people strap her into a wheelchair for transport. She thinks they don't like her. She just wants to be a normal girl. Then the base is attacked, and Melanie escapes. On the outside with her favorite teacher Miss Justineau, the Sergeant, and Dr. Caldwell (a scientist who experimented on Melanie at the base), Melanie is about to show everyone just how gifted she *really* is.



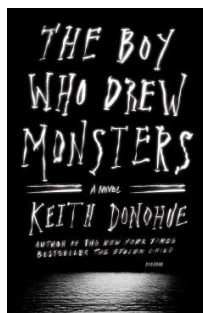
Neverland by Douglas Clegg

Beau and his family spend summers at his grandmother's rambling Victorian home on Gull Island. It isn't as idyllic as it sounds: his grandmother is a blatant racist and the other adults usually drink too much and argue. This year Beau's older cousin Sumter decides to show him the secrets of "Neverland," a tumble-down shack at the far edge of the island. In it, a crate houses someone (or something) calling itself "Lucy." Soon their secret rituals escalate into sinister games, and Neverland becomes the stuff of nightmares as well as dreams. Mesmerizing and terrifying at once, *Neverland* brilliantly captures the conflicted desires of a child on the cusp of growing up.



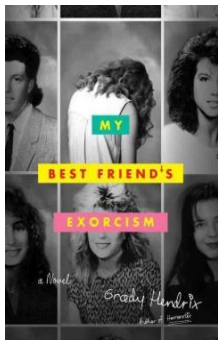
Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

Part quest, part coming-of-age novel, and part love story, this spectacular genre blend is a must-read for fans of the show *Stranger Things* and 80's pop-culture buffs. In a grim, dystopian near-future world, high schooler Wade Watts spends his days jacked into the OASIS, a sprawling virtual utopia that lets you be anything you want to be, on any of ten thousand planets. Like most of humanity, he dreams of solving the OASIS creator's ultimate, final puzzle: a mystery hidden in OASIS, concealed with clever puzzles requiring prodigious retro-pop-culture knowledge to solve. Despite the substitution of high-tech thrills for *Stranger Things*' suburban horror/fantasy elements, you'll be just as charmed by the adventures of this book's resourceful, diverse, and determined young protagonists.



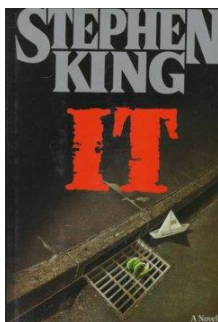
The Boy Who Drew Monsters by Keith Donohue

Emotionally scarred by a near-drowning experience, young Jack Keenan spends all his time indoors, fanatically preoccupied with drawing strange things. He shares his drawings with his best friend Nick, and sometimes they draw together. That is, until Nick notices that disturbing events take place when they do -- and Jack's parents have started hearing and seeing things that look a lot like the monsters they draw. *The Boy Who Drew Monsters* offers a compelling coming-of-age tale with a straight-up horror twist. Like *Stranger Things*, it illuminates the complexities of boyhood friendships as well as adult relationships.



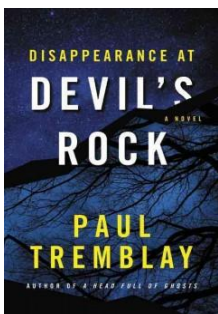
***My Best Friend's Exorcism* by Grady Hendrix**

As girls, Abby and Gretchen bond over their shared love of *E.T.*, roller-skating parties, and scratch-and-sniff stickers. Still best friends in high-school, they enjoy small-town pleasures like sneaking out at night to drink, listen to music, and skinny-dip. One night's lame experimentation with LSD changes Gretchen: she becomes weird and withdrawn at first; she finally snaps out of it, but begins ruthlessly and cruelly manipulating their circle of friends. Only Abby grasps the truth: Gretchen is possessed by a demon. With help from unlikely allies, Abby battles the devil for her friend's soul. Darker than the film *Heathers* -- but no less a testament to the power of friendship than *Stranger Things* -- *My Best Friend's Exorcism* dishes up 80's nostalgia with supernatural creepiness to spare.



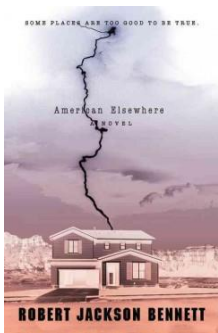
***It* by Stephen King**

Stranger Things pays homage to Stephen King's 1980's horror heyday in various ways, notably the distinctive lettering that announces each episode's title in the opening credits -- a nod to the original 1986 *It* cover. Stephen King's *It* introduced readers to the world's creepiest clown: Pennywise, in reality just one form of a horrific eldritch entity ("It") that returns every 27 years to feed on the children of Derry, Maine. During the 1950s, nerdy teens (whose main hobby is running away from bullies) stumble upon the town's secret evil. They banish It, but must reunite in the mid-1980s to kill It once and for all. Much darker than *Stranger Things*, this modern horror gem is well worth a read (or re-read) for any fan of the show.



***Disappearance at Devil's Rock* by Paul Tremblay**

13-year-old Tommy sneaks out with friends one night, to visit a site that local legends claim is cursed. Tommy disappears. His grief-stricken mother Elizabeth can barely hold it together: the other boys aren't quite telling all they know, and police lose interest as the trail goes cold. Elizabeth becomes convinced that Tommy is dead -- and his spirit appears as a dark shape in her bedroom at night. Everyone calls her crazy -- until others around town start seeing dark shapes at night, too. Like *Stranger Things*' character Joyce Byers, Elizabeth is a believably flawed but sympathetic single mom willing to face unholy powers to learn her missing son's fate.



***American Elsewhere* by Robert Jackson Bennett**

Wink, New Mexico, lies under a perfect pink moon, a perfect little town not found on any map. Its perfect, pretty houses conceal the strangest things -- as ex-cop Mona Bright discovers, when she inherits a home in Wink from her long-dead mother. Settling uncomfortably among its quixotic, secretive residents, Mona pieces together bits of her childhood memories: how Wink was a "government town" built to service a mysterious research station on the nearby mesa. Mona knows her mother worked there -- and that experiments in quantum physics were performed at the facility until abruptly closed in the 1970s. Could a lab like this produce a prodigy like *Stranger Things*' Eleven? Or perhaps a terrifying realm like "the Upside Down" itself? This cool, claustrophobic horror story will make fans wonder.

Kimberly Burton is a Reader's Advisory and genre fiction specialist for adult readers at NoveList, where she creates innovative content throughout the NoveList product suite. A librariatrix, folk horror fan, artist/maker, and medieval maven, Kim also provides RA resources via the NoveList Book Squad e-groups *Club Scene* and *Beyond Genre*. Find out more: <https://www.ebscohost.com/novelist/about-novelist/book-squad>