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(READING LIST)

More than 1,000 books will be published this fall. Do not try to read them all. That would suck. Here is GQ's guide to the twenty best.

*** NOW READ THIS**

> The Discomfort Zone
 by Jonathan Franzen

IT'S HARD FOR a novelist to be overexposed. But five years ago, there was Jonathan Franzen hitting the literary trifecta with *The Corrections*—critical acclaim, best-seller, and Oprah. Then he did something even more remarkable: He told Oprah to snuff it. Okay, he told *Power.com* that “he’s picked enough scholarly, one-dimensional [books] that I cringe,” which is sort of the same thing. And while Franzen backpedaled—something about a corporate logo—for a minute there, the guy had stoups. Well, it wasn’t always that way. Franzen is back, applying that celebrated wit and insight to his own thin-skinned adolescence in a memoir, *The Discomfort Zone*. The highlight? Franzen describes losing his virginity as a second-semester senior-in-college! That Franzen slips into the third person, so if the whole thing happened to someone else, suggests lingering disbelief that he could have ever scored. He writes: “The boy was still getting over his surprise that the girl wanted out as much as he did... He was just thankful for instruction... Even after cigarettes, the boy could taste the magic in his mouth. In his chest was a feeling of gratitude and embarrassment so large that he whimpered a little, involuntarily, every time his mind slid on what the girl had done for him and let him do.” No word on whether Oprah will be reading this one. But here are a few other books we might suggest. —BARA MADDAF

*** From The Big Book of Breakfast**, due out in November from Taschen, the reigning publisher of snuff for your coffee table.

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> The Looking Glass Wars > by Frank Beddor

Frank Beddor is a boyish 47, which comes in handy when addressing 11-year-olds at Manhattan’s Dalton School. “How many of you have been to the Valley of Mushrooms?” he asks, eyes widening. He’s here to kick-start the buzz on his retelling of *Alice in Wonderland*, which casts the girl as a Lara Croft out to avenge the murder of the Queen of Hearts. It’s a good time to launch a fantastic trilogy—Harry Potter nears graduation, and the final *Lemony Snicket* is out soon—though Beddor is an odd choice to deliver it. A champion freestyle skier in the '90s, he went on to produce *There’s Something About Mary* (he sold the pitch to a Fox exec on a Sundance chairlift). Selling a book, he says, is like selling a movie. *Looking Glass* (September) even has a Hollywood trailer, animated (in part) by a *Star Wars* guy. The book is already a best-seller in the UK, and a big-screen adaptation is next. “I’m looking for someone to star in the movie,” Beddor tells the kids. “Me! Me!” says a little blond boy. “You can call my agent.” —MICKEY RAPKIN