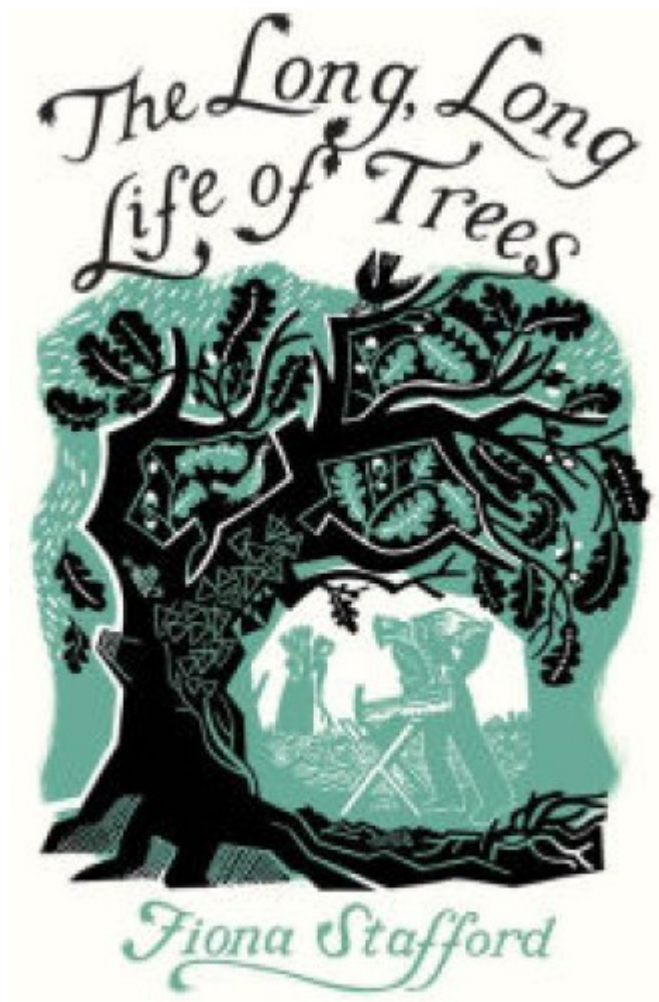


Elizabeth Palmer's Christmas picks

selected by [Elizabeth Palmer](#) in the [December 7, 2016](#) issue

In Review



The Long, Long Life of Trees

by Fiona Stafford
Yale University Press

foreword by TIM FLANNERY
PETER WOHLLEBEN

The Hidden Life of TREES

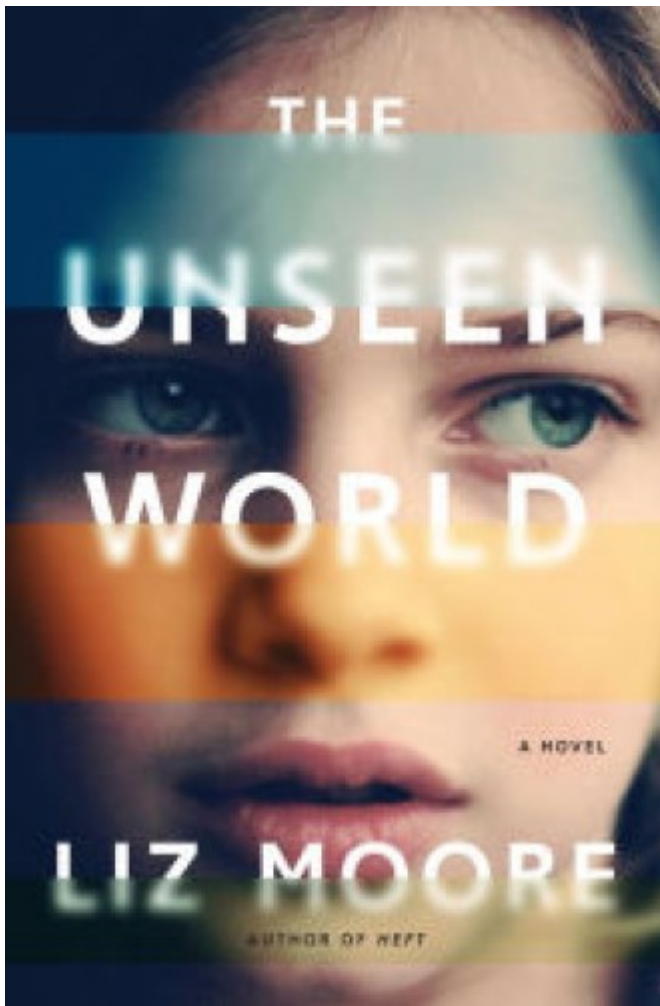
NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLER



What They Feel.
How They Communicate
Discoveries from a Secret World

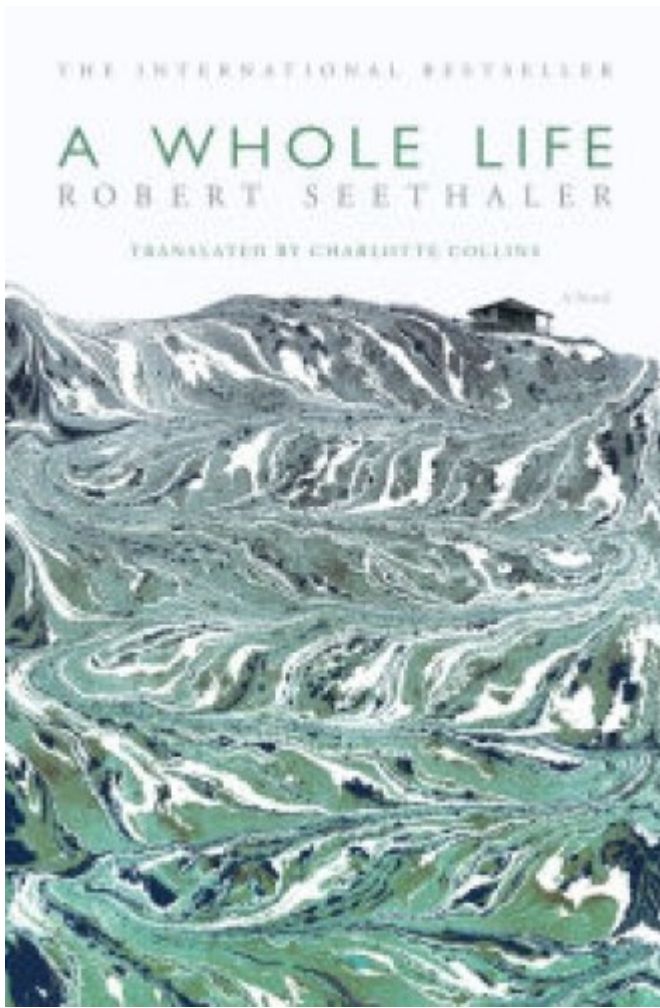
The Hidden Life of Trees

by Peter Wohlleben
Greystone



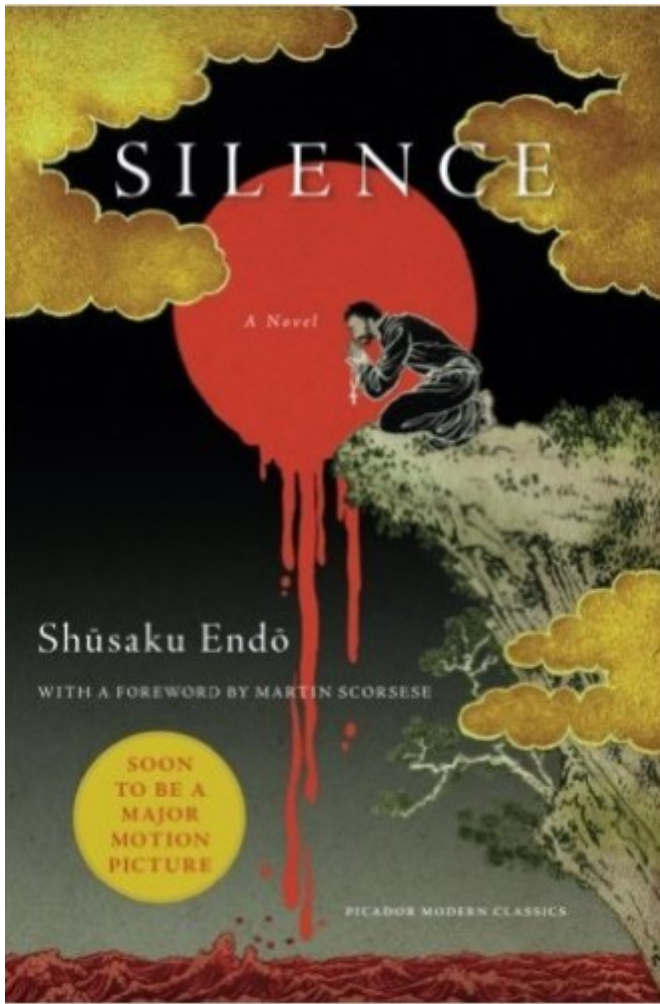
The Unseen World

by Liz Moore
Norton



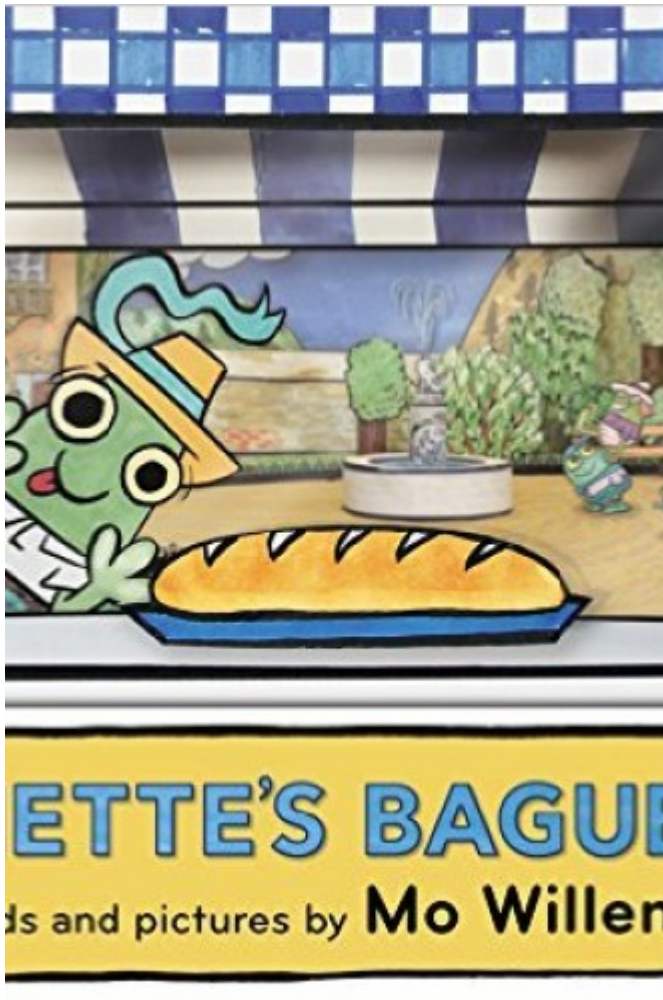
A Whole Life

by Robert Seethaler, translated from the German by Charlotte Collins
Farrar, Straus and Giroux



Silence

by Shusaku Endo translated by William Johnston
Picador Modern Classics



Nanette's Baguette

by Mo Willems
Disney-Hyperion



The Golden Key

by George MacDonald, illustrations by Ruth Sanderson
Eerdmans

The Long, Long Life of Trees (Yale University Press) by Fiona Stafford, who teaches literature at Oxford, is a beautifully written history of interpretation of trees through art, literature, religion, and politics. The sycamore was at the heart of England's first trade union movement, the elm "hints at unspoken vulnerabilities and darkening horizons," and the holly symbolizes "free spirit." While Stafford focuses on how trees carry cultural tropes, German forester Peter Wohlleben portrays trees as community members in *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* (Greystone). Combining careful science with anthropomorphic vision, Wohlleben reveals how trees relate to one another and other members of the ecosystem, sharing information and support through roots, pollen, fungi, and even audible signals.

Liz Moore's newest novel, *The Unseen World* (Norton), is a tender coming-of-age story that raises ethical questions about technology and human consciousness, compassion in the face of suffering, and what it means to be human. Robert Seethaler's novel *A Whole Life* (translated from the German by Charlotte Collins; Farrar, Straus and Giroux) is as quiet and simple as it is profound. It tells the story of one man's life in a precarious mountain village, punctuated by occasional drama but mostly just gorgeously mundane. Picador Modern Classics' new edition of William Johnston's translation of Shūsaku Endō's magisterial novel *Silence* presents elegant cover art and a foreword by Martin Scorsese, who has just adapted the book for film.

Nanette's Baguette (Disney-Hyperion), Mo Willems's newest picture book for young children, isn't religious. But it portrays a journey in which Christians may find symbols of baptism ("get wet"), Eucharist ("baguette"), sin ("Nanette forgets"), repentance ("beset with regret"), and forgiveness ("reset"). Older children will enjoy the new Eerdmans Books for Young Readers edition of George MacDonald's allegorical fable *The Golden Key*, with stunning black-and-white scratchboard illustrations by Ruth Sanderson.

Read the other 2016 Christmas picks [here](#).