

## The Spectator's Books of the Year 2020

The Spectator's writers and friends recommend the best books, richest reads and most pandemical page-turners of 2020

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David J. Garrow

My Best Book of 2020 is an easy choice: Catherine Belton's *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West* is a superbly impressive work of extensive reporting and expert analysis. There have been excellent similar books in the past, such as Karen Dawisha's *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*, but Belton's prize-worthy achievement will endure for decades.

I'm often months late in getting to new titles, and oh, was that the case with Evan Thomas's *First: Sandra Day O'Connor*, a biography of the US Supreme Court's first female justice. I had modest expectations but found it to be the most revealing new book about the high court in more than a decade. Of books I've reviewed, the best without question is Barton Gellman's deeply eloquent *Dark Mirror: Edward Snowden and the American Surveillance State*, which I found compulsively readable.