

BOOKS

Reads for the Season

These new books with local ties should be on your list.

BY LINDA LENHOFF

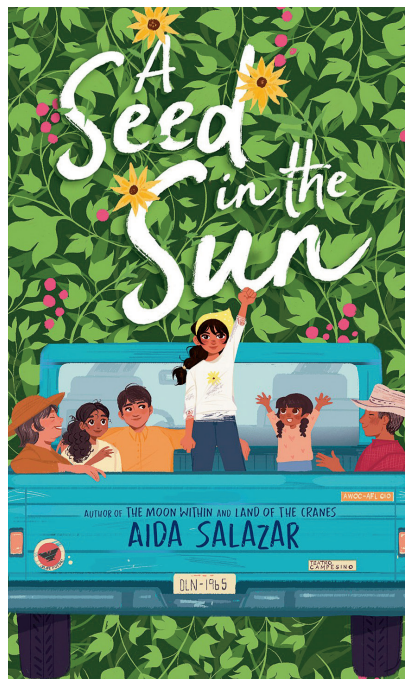
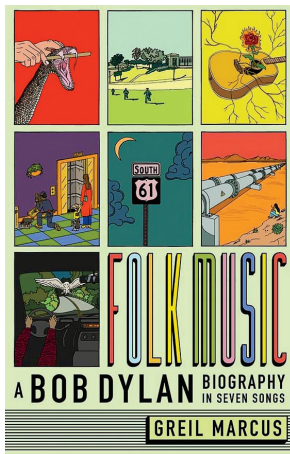
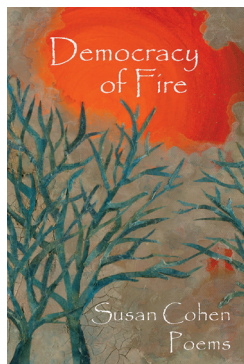


> **Susan Cohen, *Democracy of Fire* (Broadstone Books, September)**

Journalist and science writer Susan Cohen brings her fascination with all things small, detailed, and crucial to life to her new collection of poetry. Each phrase zings with understanding of the environmental and political losses we currently face. The Berkeley resident's details ("marbled salamander, Cranwell's horned frog, newt with neon stripes") illuminate loss, relationships, the animal world, and our need to come together in a calming, original volume.

> **Greil Marcus, *Folk Music: A Bob Dylan Biography in Seven Songs* (Yale University Press, October)**

Esteemed cultural writer Greil Marcus follows his decades of writing critically acclaimed books (as well as pieces for *Rolling Stone*, among others) with this opus on Bob Dylan. Marcus explores what he considers Dylan's greatest gift—empathy—through seven of the artist's most important songs, which demonstrate Dylan's continued relevance to American music and history. Slip some vinyl on the turntable as the East Bay author carefully considers "Blowin' in the Wind," "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," "Ain't Talkin'," "The Times They Are A-Changin'," "Desolation Row," "Jim Jones," and "Murder Most Foul"—the last a Shakespearean take on JFK's assassination. Dylan reigns supreme,



and Marcus's sharp, elegant prose tells us why. Dylan's own book, *The Philosophy of Modern Song*, due

November 1 from Simon and Schuster, should make a perfect encore.

> **Aida Salazar, *A Seed in the Sun* (Dial Books, October)**

Oakland author Aida Salazar sets her new historical fiction for middle schoolers in 1965, during California's Farmworker Movement. Twelve-year-old Lula Viramontes, who has come to a farm to pick grapes with her family, dreams of being a ring-leader in a Mexican traveling circus. Facing challenges with her siblings and parents in a dangerous environment, she meets Dolores Huerta and other labor rights activists and decides to fight for the better treatment of farmworkers. The author's story "By the Light of the Moon" was adapted into a ballet production by the Sonoma Conservatory of Dance and is the first Xicana-themed ballet in history.

> **Margaret Wilkerson Sexton, *On the Rooftop* (Ecco, September)**

Margaret Wilkerson Sexton's third novel—already named a Reese's Book Club pick—takes us to the 1950s, when Black mom Vivian readies her three daughters' musical group, known as the Salvations, for the big time at San Francisco's Champagne Supper Club. But her daughters want to make their own voices heard. Oakland's Wilkerson Sexton surrounds the family tension with a neighborhood battling against gentrification. Join the daughters in this engaging must-read told from alternating perspectives.

> **Erik Tarloff, *Tell Me the Truth About Love* (Rare Bird Books, October)**

Berkeley author and playwright Erik Tarloff unleashes his mastery of dialogue in this novel about a fundraising executive with the San Francisco Opera whose life is upended when he falls in love with the wrong woman, leading to heartbreak and disastrous professional consequences. But protagonist Toby learns how to survive in this fast-paced look at human connection. Tarloff's latest is packed with unexpected twists and a haunting, funny love story for grown-ups.

