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Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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Jack Mallers's detailed Turchin recommendation leads a list that pairs an actionable YC sales manual with science, literary, and current-affairs resources.

Most compelling: *The End Times* — Peter Turchin

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author:** Peter Turchin
- **Recommended by:** Jack Mallers, in *Jack Mallers: Why I Left 21*

Mallers explicitly says he would recommend that everyone read *The End Times*. He describes Turchin's method as applying science and mathematics to recurring patterns in the rise and collapse of empires. The framework's two leading indicators are declining real wage growth—prices rising faster than compensation—and “elite overproduction,” in which too many aspirant elites compete for too few positions; Mallers says the combination produces revolutionary tendencies. [1]

Why it matters: This is the strongest recommendation because it comes with a usable analytical lens rather than general praise: two concrete conditions readers can examine when evaluating claims about institutional or imperial decline.

The practical founder pick: *Sales Like That* — Pete Kazanjy

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author:** Pete Kazanjy
- **Recommended by:** Garry Tan, in his YC interview

Tan says YC gives every founder a copy of Kazanjy’s book. Its central mindset shift is to normalize rejection: 95 no’s out of 100 calls can still be a 5% conversion rate, and five enterprise contracts worth \$10,000–\$100,000 per year make that outcome a major win. [2]

Why it matters: The recommendation turns an emotionally punishing sales process into conversion math. It is especially useful for founders who mistake a high count of rejected outreaches for evidence that the business is failing.

Science and craft recommendations from Tim Ferriss’s interviews

Longitude — Dava Sobel

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author:** Dava Sobel
- **Recommended by:** Andrew Huberman, on *The Tim Ferriss Show*

Huberman calls *Longitude* the book he gifts most often: a short, accessible account of solving the practical problem of timekeeping at sea. He praises the way it combines a technological and scientific challenge with adventure and real-world risk. [3]

Why it matters: It is a compact case study in how an abstract scientific problem becomes an engineering problem with consequential constraints—an accessible entry point even for readers without a science background.

Projections — Karl Deisseroth

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author:** Karl Deisseroth
- **Recommended by:** Andrew Huberman, on *The Tim Ferriss Show*

Huberman describes Deisseroth’s book as a “beautiful read” about the landscape of psychiatry and the attempt to build tools for manipulating the nervous system that are better than drugs; he adds that readers will learn a great deal of neuroscience. [3]

Why it matters: The appeal is both narrative and technical: it offers a route into neuroscience through a researcher’s account of what better intervention tools might look like.

Of Wolves and Men — Barry Lopez

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author:** Barry Lopez
- **Recommended by:** Tim Ferriss, during his conversation with Joyce Carol Oates

Ferriss says the book impressed him enough that he tried to reach Lopez, only to learn the author was in hospice and died shortly afterward. He was about to begin Lopez’s memoir and said that reading the collected works could change not only how he viewed the craft of writing but also how he looked at life. [4]

Why it matters: This is a personal, experience-backed literary recommendation rather than a title drop: Ferriss connects one book to a broader plan to read an author’s work as a way to change his creative perspective.

Free NSDR/yoga-nidra recordings

- **Content type:** Free video/audio resources
- **Creators named:** Kamini Daidesai and Liam Gillan
- **Recommended by:** Andrew Huberman, on *The Tim Ferriss Show*

Huberman points listeners to free yoga-nidra recordings on YouTube and names Daidesai and Gillan as examples, emphasizing that listeners should choose a voice they like. He frames yoga nidra and related non-sleep deep-rest practices as zero-cost tools for rest and learning, and says two *Cell Reports* papers found that a 20-minute protocol after intense focus accelerated plasticity by about 50%. [3]

Why it matters: It is the list’s most immediately actionable resource: a specific, no-cost practice with a research rationale that readers can investigate further rather than a paid product recommendation.

A carefully qualified current-affairs resource

“The Covid Origins Saga Is More Complicated Than Either Side Wants to Admit” — Katherine Eban

- **Content type:** Article
- **Author:** Katherine Eban
- **Recommended by:** Bill Gurley, who called it a “Great summary” with “Useful detail for all” [5]
- **Link:** Rolling Stone feature on the Covid-origins saga and Fauci hearing

The feature says there is no “smoking gun” proving either a laboratory accident or a natural jump, while newly released documents show that some officials and scientists privately considered a lab leak credible or equally likely even as they publicly argued against it. It concludes that the hearing did not resolve the question and that the uncertainty surrounding the evidence made a definitive conclusion harder. [6]

Why it matters: Gurley’s recommendation is useful as a map of the evidence and its uncertainty, not as a claim that the origin question has been settled. [7]

Sources

1. Jack Mallers: Why I Left 21
2. Y Combinator CEO Shares How They Pick Winners, Advice For Founders + Lessons From Paul Graham | G...
3. #521: Dr. Andrew Huberman — A Neurobiologist on Optimizing Sleep, Enhancing Performance, Reducing...
4. #497: Joyce Carol Oates — A Writing Icon on Creative Process and Creative Living
5. X post by @bgurley
6. The Covid Origins Saga Is More Complicated Than Either Side Wants to Admit
7. X post by @Ayjchan