

**Washington Center for the Book:
Recommended Books for Discussion (Adult)**

Note: To find newly added books, search this document by date (e.g. "1/2007")

Abel, Jessica

La Perdida

In this richly emotional, high-velocity tale, a young woman journeys to Mexico City in search of her true identity, only to discover a self she can hardly recognize. [1/2009]

Abraham, Pearl

The Romance Reader

Rachel Benjamin, daughter of a Hasidic rabbi in upstate New York, escapes from her rigid upbringing through the romance novels she borrows from the library.

Achebe, Chinua

Things Fall Apart

A sparsely written fictional account of the entrance of Europeans into Nigeria, and their cultural decimation of the native Ibos.

Aciman, Andre

Out of Egypt

With fond humor, Aciman relates the varied fortunes of his colorful family, a cosmopolitan clan of Sephardic Jews who have alighted in Alexandria, where they live in uneasy contrariety with the world around them, each other, and themselves.

Agee, James

A Death in the Family

In this timeless Pulitzer Prize-winning classic, six-year-old Rufus Follet and his Tennessee family mourn the accidental death of his father. [6/2006]

Alexie, Sherman

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian

Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white farm town school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Despite being condemned as a traitor to his people and enduring great tragedies, Junior attacks life with wit and humor and discovers a strength inside of himself that he never knew existed. [3/2009]

Alexie, Sherman

Flight

Just as he's about to commit a horrific act of violence, an orphaned 15-year-old Indian boy travels back through time to various points in American history, viewing war and prejudice from multiple perspectives. [6/2007]

Alexie, Sherman

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven

22 interwoven stories paint a picture of life in and around the Spokane Indian Reservation.

Alexie, Sherman

Ten Little Indians

In this collection of hilarious and heartfelt stories, the reader finds reflections of alienation and assimilation in pawnshop windows, basketball courts, forgotten poetry and miraculous salvation. [7/2005]

Ali, Monica

Brick Lane

Brought from Bangladesh to London for an arranged marriage with an insufferable older man with the face of a frog, devout Muslim Nazneen grows within and beyond the strictures of her faith towards wisdom and self-understanding.

Allende, Isabel

Ines of My Soul

In a sweeping historical novel set in 16th century Spain, Peru and Chile, Allende tells the real-life saga of seamstress Ines Suarez, known as the founding mother of Chile. [9/2007]

al-Shaykh, Hanan

Women of Sand and Myrrh

In an unnamed Middle Eastern City, four friends struggle for fulfillment in a country that severely restricts what women can do and be.

Ambrose, Stephen

Undaunted Courage

Relying heavily on the journals, this is an extremely readable account of Lewis and Clark's great journey.

Amirrezvani, Anita

The Blood of Flowers

In this historical novel interwoven with evocative folktales, an intrepid young woman in 17th century Persia rises above poverty—and the brutal results of an arranged marriage—by learning to make intricate rugs. [9/2008]

Anaya, Rudolfo

Bless Me, Ultima

Ultima, a curandera (one who cures with herbs and magic), comes to six-year-old Antonio Marez's New Mexico family, and helps him discover himself in the magical secrets of the pagan past.

Armstrong, Karen

The Spiral Staircase

The moving memoir of a young woman's spiritual journey: leaving a Catholic convent in 1969, her stressful readjustment to secular life, and her success as a religious writer. [2/2006]

Atkinson, Kate

Behind the Scenes at the Museum

A portrait of heartbreak and happiness that recounts the story of Ruby Lennox and her family above a pet shop in England.

Atkinson, Kate

Case Histories

Three separate family tragedies linked by a private investigator with a compulsion to understand loss. [2/2006]

Atwood, Margaret

Alias Grace

In this fictional retelling of an actual murder case in the 19th century, Grace Marks is accused and found guilty of collaborating in the murder of her employer and his mistress.

Atwood, Margaret

The Handmaid's Tale

A dystopian tale about a world in which women are strictly controlled, unable to have jobs or money, and are promised salvation through childbearing—under the threat of death.

Atwood, Margaret***Oryx and Crake***

Adrift in a nebulously bleak dystopian future, narrator Jimmy, aka The Snowman, reminisces about his involvement with brilliant geneticist Crake and elegant courtesan Oryx.

Austen, Jane***Emma***

Emma, matchmaker extraordinaire to all her friends, is determined not to fall in love or marry, but her determination is wrecked on the shoals of events.

Austen, Jane***Persuasion***

Twenty-seven year-old Anne was secretly engaged to a naval officer long ago, but a scheming socialite persuaded her to break it off. When the officer returns, will they rekindle their love, or is it too late? [11/2005]

Auster, Paul***The Brooklyn Follies***

Nathan Glass, a 59-year-old retired insurance salesman, moves to Brooklyn to live a life of quiet solitude, but instead goes on a spirited journey with his long-lost nephew Tom. [1/2007]

Avery, Ellis***The Teahouse Fire***

In rapidly westernizing 19th century Japan, the elegant daughter of a tea ceremony grandmaster takes in an orphaned American girl and together they navigate the changes in their lives in the venerable old city of Kyoto. [9/2008]

Bakopoulos, Dean***Please Don't Come Back From the Moon***

One by one, the jobs and fathers in a blue-collar neighborhood in Michigan disappear and "go to the moon" while the sons remain behind in this moving debut novel. [3/2006]

Baldwin, James***Giovanni's Room***

David, an American expatriate in Paris, attempts to repress his homosexuality by proposing to Hella Lincoln, but finds that he is unable to continue to live a lie when he meets Giovanni, an Italian bartender.

Ball, Edward***Slaves in the Family***

Winner of the Southern Book Award for Best Nonfiction and a National Book Award finalist, this is the story of Ball's attempts to search out his black relatives.

Banks, Russell***The Darling***

Hannah Musgrave, born to privilege, is a 59-year-old woman living in upstate New York who remembers her life in Liberia as a political radical and the three sons and chimpanzee sanctuary she abandoned there. [12/2005]

Barnes, Julian***Arthur and George***

A literary thriller based on the lives of two men: George Edalji, a country lawyer and victim of racism, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who takes on Edalji's case with the rigor of his fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes. [1/2007]

Barrett, Andrea***The Voyage of the Narwhal***

Erasmus Darwin Wells, the scholar-naturalist aboard the Narwhal, tells of its fateful trip to the Arctic in the mid-19th century. A New York Times Notable Book and American Library Association Notable Book.

Beals, Melba Pattillo***Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High***

A true account of the author's experiences in 1957 when she was one of nine black teenagers who attempted to integrate Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Bechdel, Alison***Fun Home***

A tragicomic graphic novel memoir describing Bechdel's growing up as a lesbian in a perfectly restored gothic revival home with a closeted gay father. [11/2007]

Bennett, Alan***The Uncommon Reader***

From the author of *The History Boys* and *The Clothes They Stood Up In* comes a deliciously funny novella that celebrates the pleasure of reading. [01/2009]

Berg, Elizabeth***Talk Before Sleep***

When Ruth Thomas is diagnosed with rapidly metastasizing breast cancer, her best friend Ann Stanley shares doctor's visits, funeral plans, and long talks about men, children, sex, the past, and the future.

Blunt, Judy***Breaking Clean***

Judy Blunt tells the story of her childhood and early married life on an isolated cattle ranch in northeastern Montana.

Bohjalian, Christopher***Before You Know Kindness***

A timely and topical issue is raised when ardent animal rights activist Spencer McCullough is accidentally shot by his 12-year-old daughter, testing the values of all involved. [8/2005]

Boyle, T.C.***Tortilla Curtain***

When the lives of young Southern California professionals Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher intersect with illegal Mexican immigrants Candido and America Rincon, the result is tragic for both couples.

Bronte, Charlotte***Shirley***

Caroline Helstone has lived peacefully in the English countryside with her wealthy father for all of her 18 years, but she finds her world changes dramatically when headstrong heiress Shirley Keeldar becomes her neighbor.

Brooks, Geraldine***A Year of Wonders***

A year in the life of a 17th century remote British village decimated by bubonic plague and voluntarily quarantined is keenly observed in this detailed historical novel. [12/2006]

Brooks, Geraldine***Nine Parts of Desire***

A Middle Eastern correspondent for the Wall Street Journal describes the conflicted, often custom-bound lives of Islamic women.

Burroughs, Augusten***Running With Scissors***

The true story of a boy whose mother (a poet with delusions of being Anne Sexton) gave him away to be raised by her psychiatrist, a dead ringer for Santa and a lunatic in the bargain. [10/2008]

Butler, Robert Olen***A Good Scent From a Strange Mountain***

A Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of stories about the lives of Vietnamese immigrants living in New Orleans.

Callahan, David***The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead***

A spirited discussion of ethics that examines the moral crisis of cheating in America - and why it may be increasing. [4/2005]

Callanan, Liam***Cloud Atlas***

The moving story of a naive young WW II soldier sent to find and disarm secret Japanese balloon bombs in the Alaskan wilderness, where he encounters people who change and haunt his life. [6/2005]

Calvino, Italo***If on a Winter's Night a Traveler***

This brilliantly crafted novel written in a form, style, and structure all its own has as its backdrop a love story between two readers, both victims of a botched novel.

Camus, Albert***The Stranger***

Camus, one of the leading French existentialists of mid-20th century, tells a compelling and troubling tale of a disaffected, apparently amoral young man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder.

Cardoso, Fernando Henrique***The Accidental President of Brazil: A memoir***

The former two-time president of Brazil (1995-2002) reminisces about his role in bringing Brazil into the 21st century. [11/2007]

Carey, Peter***True History of the Kelly Gang***

Composed as a letter to the daughter he will never meet, legendary Australian outlaw Ned Kelly describes his notorious life of crime in this 2001 winner of the Booker Prize. [2/2006]

Cather, Willa***My Antonia***

Jim Burden tells of the great American West when much of it was still unclaimed prairie and of the farmers who worked it, including Antonia Shimerda, a beautiful Bohemian girl for whom he carries a secret love.

Cather, Willa***The Song of the Lark***

Cather's third novel follows the life of Thea Kronberg from her childhood in 19th century Nebraska to her career as a renowned opera singer.

Chabon, Michael***The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay***

Set in the years before, during, and after World War II, two cousins try to succeed as creators of comic books.

Chang, Jung***Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China***

A nonfiction account of three generations of Chinese women living in the turmoil of the rapidly changing 20th century: grandmother, a warlord's concubine; mother, an ardent supporter of Mao; Chang herself, a western-educated professor in London.

Chang, Lan Samantha***Inheritance***

As China becomes fragmented by war in the 20th century, so does the matriarchal Wang family. Formerly inseparable twin sisters Junan and Yinan are torn apart, first by an arranged marriage, and then betrayal. [11/2005]

Chevalier, Tracy***Girl With a Pearl Earring***

Set in 17th-century Delft, this historical novel intertwines the art of Johannes Vermeer with his life and that of a maiden servant in his household who eventually becomes his assistant and model.

Choi, Susan***American Woman***

Choi gives us the first fictionalized look at the Patty Hearst kidnapping, as seen through the eyes of a young Japanese American activist on the run with the radicalized daughter of a wealthy newspaper magnate.

Chopin, Kate***The Awakening***

An early feminist novel in which a young woman rebels against her staid husband and constricted life and falls in love with a younger man, caused a scandal when it was first published in 1899.

Choy, Wayson***The Jade Peony***

Jook-Liang, Jung-Sum, and Sek-Lung, the children of an immigrant Chinese family living in Vancouver, Canada, in the 1940s, are torn between the ways of Old China and their desire to be real Canadians.

Cisneros, Sandra***Caramelo***

A multigenerational story of a Mexican-American family whose voices create a dazzling weave of humor, passion, and poignancy.

Coetzee, J.M.***Disgrace***

Set in post-apartheid Cape Town, Prof. David Laurie attempts to relate to his daughter Lucy and to a society with new racial complexities, but that is disrupted by an afternoon of violence that changes both in ways he could not have foreseen.

Cohen, Leah Hager***Heart, You Bully, You Punk***

An intense and poignant look at a threesome whose love fluctuates for one another: high school teacher Esker, her star pupil Ann whom she tutors after a mysterious fall, and Ann's father Wally, an ambiguously married restaurant owner.

Cohen, Leah Hager***Train Go Sorry: Inside a Deaf World***

Cohen portrays life in New York City's Lexington School for the Deaf, where her father is superintendent and her grandfather was a former student, sympathetically presenting both sides of debates such as signing vs. teaching deaf people to vocalize and lip read.

Collins, Wilke

The Moonstone

In the first modern English detective story, several narrators recount the theft of an enormous diamond originally stolen from an Indian shrine.

Connolly, John

The Book of Lost Things

Following his dead mother's voice, 12-year-old David enters a dark fantasy world of fairy tales where the enduring power of stories prevails. [12/2007]

Conrad, Joseph

Heart of Darkness

Marlow, working for an ivory company, is assigned to travel into the African interior to retrieve a stranded cargo boat; along the way he witnesses the brutal treatment of the African by the whites, as well as white men "going native."

Conway, Jill Ker

The Road from Coorain

A memoir, beginning with the author's experiences as a child on a sheep ranch in the Australian outback, through her coming of age and adult life.

Coomer, Joe

The Loop

Thirty-year-old Lyman's life takes a detour from normalcy (his job as a courtesy patrolman on the loop highway surrounding Fort Worth and his endless series of college courses) when a parrot enters his life, along with Fiona, a librarian.

Craven, Margaret

I Heard the Owl Call My Name

Vicar Mark Brian travels to a remote Indian village in British Columbia to convert the natives but soon becomes enamored with and protective of the dying culture.

Cusk, Rachel

Arlington Park

Enter the world of desperate young mothers who live in the well-to-do London suburb of Arlington Park. [1/2008]

Danticat, Edwidge

Breath, Eyes, Memory

At 12, Sophie discovers she must leave the beloved aunt who raised her in Haiti and move to New York City to live with the mother she doesn't know.

Danticat, Edwidge

Brother, I'm Dying

A powerfully moving family story that centers around the men closest to the author's heart: her father, Mira, and his older brother, Joseph. [1/2009]

Davies, Robertson

The Deptford Trilogy

The three books that make up this trilogy – *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore*, and *World of Wonders* – trace the lives of three men from the small town of Deptford, Ontario, Canada, their lives connected and transformed by a single childhood event: the throwing of a snowball containing a stone.

Dean, Debra

The Madonnas of Leningrad

Memorizing the Madonna portraits in the Hermitage Museum helped Marina through her wartime ordeal. Now that she's elderly, her mind copes with Alzheimer's in a touchingly similar fashion. [1/2007]

Deane, Seamus

Reading in the Dark

The political upheavals in Northern Ireland are the backdrop to the life of the young narrator, who tries to puzzle out the nature of love, the effects of violence, and the secrets his family carries.

Desai, Kiran

The Inheritance of Loss

First and third worlds are examined in this Booker Prize-winning novel of a retired Cambridge-educated judge, his granddaughter, and cook, who live in a politically tense Himalayan town in the mid-1980s, in contrast to the life the cook's son leads as an illegal alien in New York City. [10/2006]

Diamant, Anita

The Red Tent

Diamant vividly conjures up the Biblical world of caravans, farmers, midwives, slaves, and artisans.

Diaz, Oscar

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Oscar, an overweight ghetto nerd in New Jersey dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and of finding love. But he may never get what he wants because of an ancient curse that has haunted Oscar's family for generations. Winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize. [1/2009]

Dickinson, Charles

The Widows' Adventures

Two widowed sisters drive from Chicago to California: Helene, the driver, is a blind diabetic and Ina, the navigator, is overly fond of beer.

Didion, Joan

The Year of Magical Thinking

This riveting memoir chronicles Didion's grief and lucid introspection in the difficult year following her husband's death, which tragically occurred while their daughter was on life-support in a nearby hospital. [2/2007]

Dillard, Annie

The Living

This panoramic historical novel about the settling of the Pacific Northwest in the latter part of the 19th century is unflinching in its portrayal of the hardships the pioneers endured.

Dinesen, Isak

Out of Africa

Isak Dinesen (nom de plume of Karen Blixen) recounts her marriage to her cousin Baron Bror Blixen, her move to eastern Africa, and her experiences on the coffee plantation that she and her husband establish.

Doctorow, E.L.

The March

Near the end of the Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman marched 60,000 Union soldiers through Georgia and the Carolinas, leaving a path of destruction that comes to life through the eyes of real and fictional characters. [9/2006]

Doerr, Harriet

Stones for Ibarra

Sara and Richard Everton move to Ibarra, Mexico, to reopen the mine once owned by Richard's grandfather, and in the process learn about life, love, and the relentlessness of fate.

Doig, Ivan

Bucking the Sun

When they learn their Montana farm is in the path of the proposed Fort Peck Dam, the Duffs—father, mother, and their three sons—all get work on the project, which leads to love, marriage, and murder.

Doig, Ivan

Dancing at the Rascal Fair

Part of a trilogy, although able to stand alone, this novel is the story of two 19-year-olds—Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay—who emigrate to Montana at the turn of the century.

Doig, Ivan

The Whistling Season

In this coming-of-age story written in elegiac language and set against the spare Montana landscape, school superintendent Paul Milliron faces a dilemma and remembers his own educational experience 40 years earlier. [2/2008]

Dorris, Michael

A Yellow Raft on Blue Water

Three generations of Native American women – the mixed blood teenager Rayona, the dying party girl Christine, and the embittered, TV-obsessed Ida – are isolated from one another by secrets and misunderstandings.

Dubus, Andre

House of Sand and Fog

Now living in the U.S. after leaving his job as a colonel in the Shah's Air Force, Behrani works at low-paying jobs; when he purchases a house auctioned by the country, he sets in motion a series of events involving the previous owner of the house and her married lover.

Dunant, Sarah

The Birth of Venus

Alessandra recalls in magnificent detail her passionate young life in 16th century Florence, when art and literature flourished, and the fiery monk Savonarola preached hellfire and damnation. [8/2006]

Dunant, Sarah

In the Company of the Courtesan

Set against the lush backdrop of Renaissance Italy, Bucino, a servant, helps his mistress, a famed courtesan named Fiammetta Bianchini, escape the 1527 pillage of Rome and reinvent her career in Venice. [2/2007]

Eco, Umberto

The Name of the Rose

In the year 1327, Franciscans in an Italian abbey are suspected of heresy, but Brother William of Baskerville's investigation is suddenly overshadowed by seven bizarre deaths.

Edgerton, Clyde

Walking Across Egypt

Mattie Rigsbee, a 78-year-old widow, finds her own life rejuvenated when she is faced with the challenge of helping Wesley, a juvenile delinquent in need of a grandmother's love, home-cooking, and stability.

Edwards, Kim

The Memory Keeper's Daughter

On a winter night in 1964, Dr. David Henry delivers his own twins. His son is perfectly healthy. When his daughter is born with Down's Syndrome, David asks his nurse to take the baby away to an institution and never to reveal the secret. But the nurse cannot leave the infant; instead, she disappears and raises the child herself. [1/2009]

Egan, Timothy

The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl

Environmental reporter Egan writes absorbingly of the 1935 Dust Bowl – the biggest dust storm on record – in the Great Plains states brought on by man's reckless pride in progress. [1/2007]

Eggers, Dave

What Is the What

In a fictionalized memoir, Valentino Achak Deng, a refugee from the Sudanese Civil War, journeys to America where he struggles to survive. [11/2007]

Ehrenreich, Barbara

Nickel and Dimed

In this very readable book, Ehrenreich explores the plight of Americans toiling at the lowest paid jobs in America.

Elliot, Jason

An Unexpected Light

Two long trips to Afghanistan in the early 1980s and the late 1990s are the subject of this wonderful work of nonfiction: part armchair travel, part history, part political analysis - always readable and very relevant.

Ellis, Joseph J.

Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation

A Pulitzer Prize-winning, very readable account of the men who set the course for the new nation - including Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Washington, Hamilton, and Burr.

Ellis, Joseph J.

His Excellency: George Washington

Insightful biography of the man behind the legend: military commander of the American Revolution, "Founding Father" and first President of the United States. [4/2006]

Ellis, Rhian

After Life

Naomi Ash is a spiritualist, a medium, a faker (call it what you will), who lives with her mother (also a spiritualist, a medium, a faker) in a small town in upstate New York filled with spiritualists, mediums, and fakers.

Ellison, Ralph

Invisible Man

First published in 1952, *Invisible Man* revealed the pain of a black man's existence in a white world. It tells of a young man's journey, through the Deep South to the streets of Harlem.

Enger, Leif

Peace Like a River

Eleven-year-old Reuben "Rube" Land, a boy who has reason to believe in miracles, recalls the events of his childhood in small-town Minnesota. Winner of the 2002 BookSense of the Year Award.

Erdrich, Louise

Love Medicine

On a North Dakota Indian reservation, the lives of three women and their families intertwine through marriage and friendship.

Erdrich, Louise

The Master Butchers Singing Club

A rich, multigenerational tale exploring the German ancestry and the extraordinary secrets, love, and deceit in this small North Dakota town. [4/2005]

Eugenides, Jeffrey***Middlesex***

Calliope, a hermaphrodite, narrates her story of growing up as a female child, discovering she's not actually a girl, and being reborn as a teenage boy. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

Fadiman, Anne***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down***

A meticulously researched, moving account of a Hmong family's encounter with the western medical profession. Winner of the National Book Critics' Circle Award for Nonfiction.

Farmaian, Sattarch***Daughter of Persia***

After growing up in her father's harem as the 15th of his 36 children, the author realizes her dream of becoming highly educated and opening a school of social work, but when the Shah's government collapses, she is exiled from Iran.

Faulkner, William***As I Lay Dying***

The novel is told in turn by different members of the Bundren family as they travel across Mississippi to bury their wife and mother, Addie.

Feiler, Bruce***Walking the Bible***

Bruce Feiler's inspiring journey through the greatest stories ever told will forever change the reader's view of some of history's most storied events.

Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock***Guests of the Sheik***

Unique insight into the life of Middle Eastern women provided by the author's two-year stay in a tiny rural village in southern Iraq.

Fisher, Karen***A Sudden Country***

The lives of a harried young mother and a grieving widowed father intertwine as they experience the vast beauty and harshness of an overland journey along the Oregon Trail in 1847. [6/2006]

Fitzgerald, F. Scott***The Great Gatsby***

In a time of questionable morality and societal corruption, Jay Gatsby, the ultimate rich American romantic, risks everything in a tragic effort to capture the love of a married woman. [3/2005]

Fitzgerald, Penelope***The Bookshop***

Innocent widow Florence Green attempts to open a bookshop in an English seaside village but finds her enterprise thwarted by an upper-class snob and her toadying acolytes.

Flaubert, Gustave***Madame Bovary***

Set in the French countryside, Emma Bovary has upper class aspirations, but finds herself trapped in an utterly bourgeois marriage.

Foer, Jonathan Safran***Everything is Illuminated***

A young Jewish American travels to the Ukraine in the hope of finding the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis.

Forster, E.M.***Howards End***

In Edwardian England, impoverished, intelligent Margaret Schlegel becomes the close friend of wealthy, aristocratic Ruth Wilcox. When Ruth dies, it turns out she has left her home to Margaret, much to the dismay of the Wilcox family.

Fowler, Karen Joy***Sarah Canary***

Set in Washington Territory in the 1880s, a young, mute woman wanders into a railroad camp filled with Chinese laborers.

Franzen, Jonathan***The Corrections***

Enid Lambert, the matriarch of a spectacularly dysfunctional family, wants her three children to come home to the Midwest for one last Christmas, even as her husband of 50 years is falling victim to Parkinson's-induced dementia.

Fraser, Antonia***The Wives of Henry VIII***

The history of the legendary six wives of Henry VIII by an acclaimed biographer.

Frazier, Charles***Thirteen Moons***

Ninety-year-old Will Cooper recalls his past, his Cherokee allies, and the woman he loved and lost in a fictional frontier history of the 19th century, loosely based on the story of an actual state senator. [9/2007]

Fredriksson, Marianne***Hanna's Daughters***

Three generations – a grandmother, mother, and daughter – of a Scandinavian family live through numerous changes as the world around them becomes increasingly modern.

Friedman, Thomas L.***From Beirut to Jerusalem***

New York Times columnist Friedman has written one of the best books about the Middle East ever, based on the years he spent reporting from first Beirut, then Jerusalem. Vivid, personal, well written - not to be missed.

Gaines, Ernest***A Gathering of Old Men***

When a Cajun farmer is murdered outside the home of an elderly black plantation worker, several other aging black men of the plantation and the white woman who owns it rally around, each claiming to be guilty of the murder.

Gaines, Ernest***A Lesson Before Dying***

University-educated, agnostic Grant Wiggins, a young black man in the 1940s south, is sent to teach Jefferson, who is sentenced to death for a murder he didn't commit, how to die with dignity.

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel***Love in the Time of Cholera***

Florentino has loved Jermina since they were teenagers, and now that she is a widow, he thinks (even after 50 years) he can reclaim her elderly heart and hand.

Gibbons, Kaye***Charms for the Easy Life***

From the turn of the century through World War II, three generations of women survive the deaths of spouses, divorce, and hard times with indomitable spirit and resiliency.

Gibbons, Stella***Cold Comfort Farm***

In this parody of the writing styles of D.H. Lawrence and Mary Webb, Flora Poste, a wealthy orphan, takes her inherited family farm in hand and straightens up her rural cousins.

Gilbert, Elizabeth***Eat, Pray, Love***

After a nasty divorce, Gilbert, a journalist, spends a year traveling, rediscovering love (and food) in Rome, quieting her mind outside Mumbai, and mastering a balancing act of pleasure and grace in Bali. [5/2007]

Glass, Julia***The Whole World Over***

In a tale of intersecting lives where the past affects the present, young wife and mother Greenie Duquette moves to New Mexico with her small son to become the governor's pastry chef. [7/2007]

Gloss, Molly***The Jump-Off Creek***

Through the use of three narrative voices (a woman, a Native American, and a cowboy), Gloss describes hardscrabble lives in the Blue Mountains in the last decade of the 19th century.

Gloss, Molly***Wild Life***

Independent and feisty, in 1901, Charlotte Budger Drummond finds herself challenged when she is lost for more than a month on Mt. St. Helens.

Godwin, Gail***The Good Husband***

Now in her 60s and dying of ovarian cancer, English professor Magda Danvers and her husband befriend another couple, whose marriage is also beset by adversity. Although the subject sounds depressing, this is an uplifting story

Goldberg, Myla***Bee Season***

When nine-year-old Eliza Naumann - who has always been out of step with her brilliant parents and older brother - begins winning one spelling bee after another (her school, district, and state), her success sets off a series of events that shake the family to its roots.

Goodman, Allegra***Intuition***

Scientists near Harvard may have found a way to shrink cancerous tumors in hairless mice, but one researcher wonders if the results are too good to be true. Is there room for intuition in scientific research? [2/2007]

Goodman, Allegra***Kaaterskill Falls***

A small Orthodox Jewish sect has traditionally spent summers in the Dutch community around Kaaterskill Falls, but in 1976 tensions arise both with the townspeople and some of the group's women who resent its many restrictions.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns***No Ordinary Time***

An intimate, fascinating look at the White House during Franklin D. Roosevelt's time in office, concentrating on the years of World War II.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns***Wait Till Next Year***

In this fond memoir, Goodwin recalls the joys and preoccupations of a Catholic girl growing up in Brooklyn in the 1950s, for whom books were salvation and the Dodgers were God, until they picked up and moved to California.

Gordimer, Nadine***None to Accompany Me***

Vera Stark, a lawyer in her sixties, becomes caught up in the reconstruction of present-day South Africa and her legal representation of blacks in the struggle to reclaim their land. Gordimer won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.

Grealy, Lucy***Autobiography of a Face***

A childhood cancer survivor tells of her facial disfigurement and her quest for beauty, love, and acceptance. [1/2006]

Greene, Graham***The End of the Affair***

After Sarah suddenly refuses to continue with their love affair, Maurice Bendrix hires a detective to discover why she broke off the relationship. This novel is set in England during the 1940s.

Greene, Graham***The Quiet American***

While the French are battling the insurgent Viet Minh in Indochina (now Vietnam), in Saigon, a young American becomes involved in a war he cannot win.

Gruen, Sara***Water for Elephants***

Ninety-year-old Jacob Jankowski reflects on his past especially the Depression years he spent with Benzini Brothers Circus and the elephant and the woman he loved. [7/2007]

Haddon, Mark***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time***

Narrated by a 15-year-old autistic savant obsessed with Sherlock Holmes, this dazzling novel weaves together an old-fashioned mystery, a contemporary coming-of-age story, and a fascinating excursion into a mind incapable of processing emotions.

Hakakian, Roya***Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran***

A documentary filmmaker and poet recalls with humor and pain her adolescence living in a small Jewish population in Tehran when revolution swept through Iran in 1979, and how her writing literally saved her life. [8/2006]

Hamann, Jack***On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II***

A war story kept under wraps until Hamann's journalism recently uncovered it: In August 1944, the army segregated African American troops and, at Fort Lawton in Seattle, housed them near Italian prisoners of war. After a race riot, the violent death of an Italian POW launched the biggest army court-martial of World War II. [9/2008]

Hamid, Mohsin***The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. But in the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, which unearths allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and maybe even love. [1/2009]

Hamilton, Jane

When Madeline Was Young

An unusual domestic drama in which Aaron and Julia Maciver and their two children share a home in a Chicago suburb in the 1950's with Aaron's brain-damaged first wife. [9/2007]

Harr, Jonathan

The Lost Painting

In a suspenseful and true account, scholarly sleuths accidentally rediscover Caravaggio's painting of Christ's betrayal, which had been lost for almost two centuries. [1/2007]

Harris, Joanne

Chocolat

Newly arrived in a small French town, Vianne Rocher opens a confectionary serving up a sympathetic ear and, always, the perfect piece of *chocolat*.

Harrison, Jim

Dalva

The saga of a Nebraska pioneer family unfolds as 45-year-old Dalva, now a successful woman living in California, searches for the son she gave up for adoption 30 years earlier. [6/2006]

Harrison, Jim

Returning to Earth

Diagnosed with a fatal disease, 45-year-old Donald Burkett of Chippewa-Finnish descent and living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, attempts to relate his family history to his children. [11/2007]

Haruf, Kent

Plainsong

In the prairie town of Holt, Colorado, various residents try to make sense of their lives and what is happening around them.

Hegi, Ursula

Salt Dancers

Forty-one years old, unmarried, and pregnant, Julia Ives fears that she will be unable to nurture her child unless she comes to terms with her own past; she returns to her childhood home of Spokane, Washington, to confront her family.

Heller, Joseph

Catch-22

The classic novel of World War II, marked by black humor and pathos, and filled with unforgettable characters.

Hessler, Peter

River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze

A Peace Corps English teacher powerfully portrays a microcosm of a changing China during the late 1990s in this brilliant travelogue that interweaves his students' writings with his own adventures and descriptions of quirky people he meets.

Him, Chanrithy

When Broken Glass Floats

A moving, child's-eye memoir about life under the Khmer Rouge.

Hollinghurst, Alan

The Line of Beauty

In this Booker-prize winning novel, the excesses of the Thatcher era are captured in vivid detail as Nick Guest, a gay Oxford grad, moves through the drawing rooms and boudoirs of the rich and well-connected. [11/2005]

Horan, Nancy

Loving Frank

Based on true events, this novel recounts the passionate, turbulent affair between two married lovers: Mamah Borthwick Cheney, a Chicago socialite, and the noted American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. [6/2008]

Horn, Dara

The World To Come

Art, mysticism, Chagall, Jewish history, and love combine to form a compelling literary fiction. [12/2007]

Hosseini, Khaled

The Kite Runner

Amir betrays his childhood friend, Hassan, during a kite festival. Many years later, he travels back to Afghanistan to try to make amends for his youthful failures, and runs afoul of the Taliban. [3/2005]

Hosseini, Khaled

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Born in Afghanistan a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are brought together by war, loss and fate. As they endure the ever-escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they form a bond that will ultimately alter the course of their lives and the lives of the next generation. [1/2009]

Houston, Pam

Sight Hound

Rae, a fiercely independent playwright, learns about the power of love as she struggles with the impending death of her dog, Dante, her best friend, in this witty, warmhearted novel. [3/2006]

Hunt, Linda Lawrence

Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America

The true story of a mother's walk from Spokane, Washington, to New York City in 1896 to win a \$10,000 prize to save the family farm from foreclosure. [6/2005]

Hurston, Zora Neale

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Beautiful African American Janie Crawford grows up in the 1930s expecting better treatment than she receives.

Irving, John

A Prayer for Owen Meany

Owen Meany, an unusually small boy, believes that God has designated him to be a hero.

Ishiguro, Kazuo

Never Let Me Go

Kathy slowly uncovers the dark secret behind her idyllic childhood at a British boarding school and discovers her "special" purpose in a world where science ignores ethics. [3/2006]

Ishiguro, Kazuo

When We Were Orphans

Twenty years after his parents disappeared in Shanghai, British detective Christopher Banks searches for the truth about the mysterious events surrounding the event. By the Booker Prize-winning author of *The Remains of the Day*.

Jaffrey, Madhur

Climbing the Mango Trees

The actress and food writer reminisces about growing up in a large well-to-do Delhi family. Recipes are included. [12/2007]

Jen, Gish

Typical American

When three young Chinese immigrants (Ralph, his older sister Theresa, and her delicate friend Helen) all arrive in the U.S. in the late 1940s, they try their best to understand the intricacies of American life and become typical Americans.

Johnson, Charles

Middle Passage

In 1830, freed slave Rutherford Calhoun, desperate to leave a mess of a life in New Orleans, jumps aboard the first ship he encounters, only to discover it is a slave ship on its way to Africa for a new load of human cargo.

Jones, Edward P.

The Known World

When black slave owner, and former slave, Henry Townsend dies, his widow Caldonia mismanages their antebellum Virginia plantation, with disastrous results.

Jones, Judith

The Tenth Muse: My Life in Food

From a legendary editor who helped to shape modern cookbook publishing—the force behind the publication of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*—comes an evocative and inspiring memoir that includes more than 50 recipes. [1/2009]

Jones, Lloyd

Mister Pip

On a tropical island shattered by war, one man sweeps out a ruined schoolhouse and begins to read to the children each day from "Great Expectations. Soon the rest of the villagers are inspired to share tales of their own pasts—but in a ravaged place where even children are forced to live by their wits and daily survival is the only objective, imagination can be a dangerous thing. [1/2009]

Kallos, Stephanie

Broken for You

Two women with secrets meet and connect in this compelling tale. Elderly ailing Margaret Hughes invites Wanda Schultz, a young lovesick woman, into her Seattle mansion and, ultimately, into her heart. [8/2005]

Khadra, Yasmina

The Attack

A personalized view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is depicted in this novel about a successful surgeon trying to understand his wife's actions as a terrorist. [6/2007]

Kidd, Sue Monk

The Mermaid Chair

Married Jessie Sullivan returns to tiny Egret Island off the coast of South Carolina to care for her mother and while there confronts the tragedies of the past and finds herself attracted to Brother Thomas, a junior monk. [3/2006]

Kidd, Sue Monk

The Secret Life of Bees

Set in South Carolina in 1964, a coming-of-age story about Lily Owens, whose mother died mysteriously when Lily was four.

Kidder, Tracy

Mountains Beyond Mountains

The stirring biography of infectious disease specialist Dr. Paul Farmer who transformed healthcare in impoverished Haiti and brought change where it seemed impossible. [7/2005]

Kingsolver, Barbara

Animal Dreams

Returning to her hometown of Grace, Arizona, to teach high school, Codi Noline finds the once sleepy town facing an environmental catastrophe.

Kingsolver, Barbara

The Poisonwood Bible

The wife and four daughters of evangelical Baptist minister Nathan Price take turns telling the story of the family's experiences when they moved to Congo in 1959.

Kingsolver, Barbara

Prodigal Summer

Three people come together during one hot summer on the farms and mountains of Appalachia.

Kirchner, Bharti

Darjeeling

Set in the tea plantations of Darjeeling, India, and Manhattan, the story of a family torn apart when two sisters fall in love with the same man.

Kneale, Matthew

English Passengers

Based on real events in Tasmanian history, Matthew Kneale's novel delivers a home truth about Australia's brutal colonial past, even as it conveys the wonder and allure of the age of exploration. (Amazon.com)

Krakauer, Jon

Under the Banner of Heaven

The violent past of Mormonism, and the current outlawry of fundamentalist Mormon sects, is at the center of this true story of murder, polygamy, and internecine conflict.

Krauss, Nicole

The History of Love

Set in contemporary New York City, old and young, past and present, loss and survival merge in this story of the connection between the elderly Polish retired locksmith Leo Gursky and the 14-year old half-orphan Alma Singer. [10/2007]

Lahiri, Jhumpa

Interpreter of Maladies

Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of short stories shows how love and longing play out in different countries and cultures.

Lahiri, Jhumpa

The Namesake

Saddled by his immigrant Indian parents with an odd name and the hopes and expectations of his family, Gogol Ganguli struggles to find meaningful work and sustaining love in present day America.

Lalami, Leila

Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits

The story of two men and two women brought together and separated under extraordinary circumstances. As the book opens, they're on the sea in a flimsy inflatable boat, which they hope will carry them across the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco to Spain. What has driven them to leave their country and risk their lives? And will the rewards prove to be worth the danger? [3/2007]

Larson, Erik

The Devil in the White City

The story of two men's obsessions with the Chicago World's Fair, one its architect, the other a murderer. (Ingram)

Laskin, David

The Children's Blizzard

An engrossing story of nature vs. man, this is the tale of a surprise terrible blizzard that swept over the Dakota Nebraska prairie in January 1888, killing 500 people, many of them children. [12/2005]

LeGuin, Ursula

The Left Hand of Darkness

Genly Ai is sent to the planet Winter to make contact with its people and finds himself drawn into their world.

Lipman, Elinor

The Inn at Lake Devine

Lipman offers up sparkling scenes of serious social mischief, explorations of identity, delicious food, and a wedding party or two that charts Natalie Marx's fixation with a small bastion of genteel anti-Semitism.

Lipman, Elinor

My Latest Grievance

A witty, satirical pc novel about the daughter of two professors who discovers that her father's first wife, the glamorous Laura Lee French, is now working as a dorm mother. [7/2007]

Lively, Penelope

Oleander, Jacaranda

A memoir, written from a child's perspective, describes the English author's experiences growing up in Egypt during the 1930s and 1940s.

Long, David

The Inhabited World

A combined ghost story, psychological drama and mystery about the relationship between Evan, stuck in a state of purgatory, and the alive but lost Maureen. [9/2007]

Lovell, Mary S.

The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Sisters

The Mitford sisters, who grew up between the wars, were notorious British debutantes who fueled the rumor mill for years with their scandals and politics. A riveting look at five uncompromising and extraordinary women. [3/2005]

Lynch, Jim

The Highest Tide

Miles O'Malley is a typical 13-year-old boy in many ways, but he's also a Rachel Carson-obsessed insomniac who makes a life-changing discovery while exploring the wonders of Puget Sound at 2:15 in the morning. [2/2007]

Mahfouz, Naguib

Palace Walk

A cloistered wife, her adolescent children, and tyrannical husband hold fast to their Islamic faith amidst domestic scandals and violent uprisings against British occupation. Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Makine, Andrei

Dreams of My Russian Summers

Each summer Andrei and his sister travel from their home in a city in the Soviet Union to visit their grandmother, who has lived in Siberia for all her adult life.

Malouf, David

Remembering Babylon

In the 1840s, Gemmy, a white British cabin boy, is cast ashore in Australia and adopted by the Aboriginals; when he emerges 16 years later into the newly developing white colonies, the inhabitants distrust him and Gemmy finds himself caught between two worlds.

Mann, Thomas

Magic Mountain

A sanatorium in the Swiss Alps, a community devoted exclusively to sickness, serves as a microcosm for Europe, which in the years before 1914 was already exhibiting the first symptoms of its own terminal irrationality.

Markham, Beryl

West With the Night

An autobiography by a woman who grew up in East Africa, where she preferred hunting with the Muranis to studying, and horse racing to farming. Markham was the first woman to gain a commercial pilot's license in East Africa and the first woman to fly alone over the Atlantic from west to east.

Martel, Yann

Life of Pi

The story of 16-year-old Pi Patel from his childhood in Pondicherry, India through his 227 days adrift on a 26-foot lifeboat with a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

Martin, Gregory

Mountain City

Winner of the Washington State Book Award in 2001, this moving memoir of the author's relatives who live in Mountain City, Nevada is a story of the American West and an American family.

Mason, Daniel

The Piano Tuner

A shy, middle-aged piano tuner travels to Burma to repair the rare piano of an eccentric army surgeon.

Maxwell, William

They Came Like Swallows

This account of Elizabeth Morison's death by influenza in 1918, told from the perspectives of her sons and husband, is a spare and eloquent achievement. [3/2005]

McBride, James

The Color of Water

James McBride's nonfiction tribute to his white mother, a strong, courageous, eccentric woman.

McCarthy, Cormac

The Road

A post apocalyptic classic tale of survival after nuclear war features the tender love between father and son in a world of blackness. [7/2007]

McCracken, Elizabeth

Here's Your Hat, What's Your Hurry

An American Library Association Notable Book, this collection of marvelously inventive short stories introduces many quirky characters and weird situations, all described in a down-to-earth voice and endearing language.

McCullough, David

Mornings on Horseback

A marvelously readable biography of the young Theodore Roosevelt, from his birth through his marriage to Edith Carow and his unsuccessful run for mayor of New York. Winner of the National Book Award.

McEwan, Ian

Atonement

In a number of stories within a story, the repercussions of a crime in the summer of 1935 are followed through the turn of the 21st century.

McEwan, Ian***On Chesil Beach***

On the day they are married, Florence and Edward, a young virginal couple, anticipate their wedding night - and their future together - with mixed emotions. [9/2008]

McEwan, Ian***Saturday***

A single day in the thoughts of neurosurgeon and family man Henry Perowne when his safe, happy world is shattered by a minor accident and his post 9/11 anxiety becomes a personal terror. [4/2006]

Meloy, Maile***Lies and Saints***

In a family driven by jealousy and propriety as much as by love, an unspoken tradition of deceit is passed down through generations; fiercely protected secrets gradually drive the Santerres family apart. When tragedy shatters their precarious domestic lives, it takes astonishing courage and compassion to bring them back together. [1/2009]

Mengestu, Dinaw***The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears***

Ethiopian émigré Sepha Stephanos, who owns a small store in a gentrifying area of Washington DC, narrates a story of the immigrant experience. This award-winning novel explores themes of race and class relations, what it means to lose family and a country, what it takes to create a new home, what it means to be an immigrant in America. [2/2008]

Messud, Claire***The Emperor's Children***

Three friends from prestigious Brown University and their myriad relationships are featured in a contemporary comedy of manners set in New York City. [6/2007]

Michaels, Anne***Fugitive Pieces***

The stories of Jakob Beers, a Polish boy rescued from certain death at the hands of the Nazis by a kindly Greek geologist, and of Ben, who knows Jakob from afar and traces his life.

Min, Anchee***Red Azalea***

This powerful memoir, set in China, tells of growing up during the Cultural Revolution, "where the soul was secondary to the state, beauty was mistrusted, and love could be punishable by death." A New York Times Notable Book.

Minatoya, Lydia***Talking to High Monks in the Snow***

A memoir by an American-born daughter of Japanese immigrants. Minatoya traveled to Asia and learned about a history and culture she had never encountered before. An American Library Association Notable Book.

Mistry, Rohinton***A Fine Balance***

In 1975 in an unnamed Indian city, Mrs. Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow, takes in a boarder and two Hindu tailors. Despite differences in caste, class, and religion, the four form an unlikely, fragile alliance.

Moaveni, Azadeh***Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran***

Moaveni, an American-born Iranian trapped between two cultures, travels as a reporter to post-revolutionary Iran seeking her own cultural identity and discovers another Iran, young, hedonistic and rebellious. [4/2006]

Morrison, Toni***Beloved***

In an unforgettable narrative set after the Civil War, Sethe recalls the horrific events of her escape from slavery and her baby daughter's murder eighteen years earlier. Pulitzer Prize winner in 1988. [6/2006]

Mortenson, Greg***Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time***

After Pakistani villagers nursed Mortenson back to health after a failed attempt to summit K2, the mountain climber vowed to return and build a school, a promise that turned into a mission to build schools throughout remote Pakistan and Afghanistan. [4/2007]

Munro, Alice***Open Secrets***

Munro evokes the devastating power of old love suddenly recollected, in tales that resonate with sorrow, humor, and wisdom.

Murakami, Haruki***Kafka on the Shore***

The parallel narratives of two troubled souls – teenage Kafka and elderly, dimwitted Nakata – are told in alternate chapters in this modern Greek tragedy. [12/2007]

Murdoch, Iris***The Sea, the Sea***

Charles Arrowby, a retired actor and director, moves to an isolated house on the English coast in order to write his memoirs, but when his long-lost love unexpectedly reappears in his life, he decides to rescue her from her boorish husband. Winner of the Booker Prize.

Nabokov, Vladimir***Lolita***

Nabokov's most famous and controversial novel, about the aging Humbert's obsession with a young girl.

Nafisi, Azar***Reading Lolita in Tehran***

The astonishing true story of young women who met in secret each week to read and talk about forbidden Western classics—and their lives and loves—in the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Ingram)

Némirovsky, Irène***Suite Française***

Two linked novellas, written just before the author was in Auschwitz and published posthumously, focus on life and death in occupied France. [10/2007]

Niffenegger, Audrey***The Time Traveler's Wife***

The timelessness of love takes on new meaning in this fantastical romance about Henry, a reluctant time traveler, and Clare, whose lives intersect in various non-chronological ways.

Norman, Howard***The Bird Artist***

Fabian Vas is known for three things in Witless Bay, Newfoundland: his moderate success as an artist, his longtime affair with the wild and irreverent Margaret, and the murder of a local lighthouse keeper.

North, Will***The Long Walk Home***

This lyrical and tender love story of grief and hope is set in the mountains of North Wales. Alec and Fiona find love at middle age and question issues of morality and fidelity. [9/2008]

Obama, Barack***Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance***

Now an Illinois Senator and rising Democratic star, Barack Obama's 1995 memoir of his conflicted search for identity as a biracial American of Kenyan and Kansan descent is candid and engrossing. [3/2005]

O'Connor, Flannery***Wise Blood***

Hazel Motes, recently discharged from the Army, becomes entranced by the power of street preaching and creates his own church, "The Church Without Christ," upsetting the other itinerant preachers.

O'Faolain, Nuala***My Dream of You***

Kathleen, a travel writer, has long been estranged from her family and native Ireland; now nearing 50, mourning the death of a close friend, she returns to Ireland to make peace with her family and research a 150-year-old mystery.

Okada, John***No-No Boy***

Kenji, a Nisei (second-generation Japanese American), refuses to answer "yes" on the loyalty questionnaire during the World War II and thus becomes one of the "No-No" boys, ostracized by both white and Asian societies.

O'Nan, Stewart***Last Night at the Lobster***

Managing a failed seafood restaurant in a run-down New England mall just before Christmas, Manny DeLeon coordinates a challenging final shift of mutinous staff members, an effort that is complicated by his love for a waitress, a pregnant girlfriend, and an elusive holiday gift. [1/2009]

Ondaatje, Michael***Anil's Ghost***

Anil Tissera, a forensic anthropologist, returns to her homeland, Sri Lanka, on behalf of a human rights organization to investigate the many murders being committed in the ongoing ethnic, religious, and political violence.

Ondaatje, Michael***Divisadero***

Sundered from their makeshift family by a brutal act of violence, Claire, Amy, and Coop lead separate lives that unexpectedly intersect in an intricate, three-pronged narrative. [8/2008]

Otsuka, Julie***When the Emperor Was Divine***

A nameless Japanese-American family is sent to a Utah internment camp during World War II. Their emotional devastation is revealed in spare, haunting prose that draws the reader into the story.

Ozeki, Ruth***All Over Creation***

A prodigal daughter returning to the family farm, activists driving an RV fueled on French fry oil and a bio-engineering company promising bigger, better potatoes all roll into the tiny town of Liberty Falls, Idaho. [2/2007]

Packer, Ann***The Dive From Clausen's Pier***

On the verge of breaking her engagement to her high school sweetheart, Carrie Bell is forced to reconsider her decision following her fiancé's ill-thought-out dive from Clausen's Pier.

Paley, Grace***The Collected Stories of Grace Paley***

Paley's stories interweave personal and political truths. These are pointed, funny depictions of the small and large events that make up city life.

Patchett, Ann***Bel Canto***

Joined by no common language except music, 58 international hostages and their captors forge unexpected bonds.

Patchett, Ann***The Magician's Assistant***

When her magician husband dies unexpectedly of an aneurysm, 40-year-old Sabine discovers that he had a family and a tumultuous past that he never shared with her.

Patchett, Ann***Run***

An absorbing story of the deep-running secrets and bonds of a politically connected Boston family. [1/2009]

Patchett, Ann***Truth and Beauty: A Friendship***

Ann Patchett's brutally candid memoir explores her extraordinarily demanding 20-year friendship with Lucy Grealy, author of *Autobiography of a Face*. [1/2006]

Paton, Alan***Cry, the Beloved Country***

A deeply moving, important novel in South Africa's history about Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set against the backdrop of a land and people driven by racial inequality and injustice.

Pearl, Matthew***The Dante Club***

Someone is killing prominent Bostonians in 1865 according to punishments meted out in Dante's *Inferno*. Members of the Dante Club speed up their translation of *The Divine Comedy* to try and stop the murders. [3/2005]

Penn Warren, Robert***All the King's Men***

Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about Willie Stark, loosely based on Louisiana Governor Huey Long, that tells a dramatic story of power, politics, corruption, and idealism. [12/2007]

Percy, Walker***The Moviegoer***

Winner of the 1961 National Book Award. New Orleans stockbroker Binx Bolling goes to movies and tries to find meaning in life.

Perrotta, Tom***Little Children***

The themes of suburban angst and infidelity as experienced by the 30-something parents of young children are depicted with craft, humor and even suspense. [4/2005]

Pessl, Marisha***Special Topics in Calamity Physics***

Blue van Meer, daughter of an itinerant academic, is on the edge of a murder mystery in this darkly comic coming-of-age novel structured like a literature course syllabus, with each chapter connected to a literary work. [6/2007]

Petterson, Per***Out Stealing Horses***

Solitary Norwegian Trond Sander, a widower turning 70, reflects on his past and in particular, a transformative summer day in his youth where adventure and cruelty merged. Winner of the 2007 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. [8/2008]

Pham, Andrew***Catfish and Mandala***

Pham, a young Vietnamese American, quits his job and sets off on bicycle trips through Mexico, the U.S. west coast, Japan, and finally, Vietnam, where his journey becomes one of self-discovery, delight, and disillusionment.

Picoult, Jodi***Nineteen Minutes***

Master storyteller Picoult takes on school violence and bullying in an absorbing and controversial tale of high school shootings in small town New Hampshire. [9/2008]

Pollan, Michael***The Omnivore's Dilemma***

Pollan writes about the ecology of the food humans eat and why—what it is that we're eating. Discussing industrial farming, organic food, and what it is like to hunt and gather food, this is an honest account of the evolution of the modern diet. [1/2009]

Power, Susan***The Grass Dancer***

Like an archaeological dig, the lives of the Sioux Indians on a North Dakota reservation are uncovered layer by layer, moving backward to show how the past has influenced the present.

Prince-Hughes, Dawn***Songs of the Gorilla Nation***

In her memoir the author describes how her work observing and interacting with gorillas has helped her to cope with her form of autism, Asperger's Syndrome. [7/2005]

Prose, Francine***Reading Like a Writer***

Learn how a close reading of quality works affects great writing. The author claims that the trick to good writing is a careful reading of the master works. [12/2007]

Pym, Barbara***Excellent Women***

Mildred Lathbury, an unmarried woman in 1950s England, lives a quiet life, until Helena and Rockingham Napier move into the flat below her. And opportunity beckons.

Raban, Jonathan***Surveillance***

In post-9/11 America, the government's increasing scrutiny of ordinary citizens has profound effects on the relationships between friends and neighbors living in Seattle. [9/2008]

Rawles, Nancy***My Jim***

How did Huck Finn's Jim come to be his traveling partner and who were Jim's people? Rawles' novel lyrically reveals the horrific and personal realities of slavery through Sadie, Jim's childhood companion and later, wife. [10/2008]

Reichl, Ruth***Garlic and Sapphires***

In her third book, memoirist and food critic Reichl presents the hilarious story of her experiences as an underground restaurant reviewer. [6/2006]

Reichl, Ruth***Tender at the Bone***

A memoir by the former food critic of The New York Times and now the editor-in-chief of Gourmet magazine.

Roberts, Cokie***Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation***

Fascinating stories about the remarkable wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers who were crucial to the success of the American Revolution. [4/2005]

Robinson, Marilynne***Gilead***

The relationships between fathers and sons and the passions inspired by the Civil War told in a letter from a father to a young son to explain his life. [1/2006]

Robinson, Marilynne***Housekeeping***

After their mother's suicide, sisters Ruth and Lucille go to live with an eccentric aunt in eastern Washington.

Rodriguez, Deborah & Kristin Ohlson***Kabul Beauty School***

In this colorful memoir, a hairdresser from Michigan reveals the lives of women in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. [2/2008]

Roth, Philip***American Pastoral***

Seymour (Swede) Levov, finds his golden youth no protection against suffering when, during the height of the Vietnam War, his beloved daughter Merry detonates a bomb in a suburban post office.

Roth, Philip***Everyman***

The decline and death of Everyman, a Jewish advertising executive, is examined in a morality tale of the individual and the universal. [7/2007]

Roth, Philip***Exit Ghost***

Nathan Zuckerman, the literary adventurer of Roth's nine Zuckerman books, finds himself involved—as he never wanted or intended to be—with love, mourning, desire, and animosity. [1/2009]

Roth, Philip***The Plot Against America***

A chilling alternative history where aviation-hero Charles Lindbergh defeats Franklin Roosevelt for president in 1940 and America avoids war by going along with Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. [3/2006]

Rushdie, Salman***Midnight's Children***

Saleem Sinai, who was born at the stroke of midnight on Aug. 15, 1947 (the moment of India's independence from Britain), finds his life, like the lives of the 1,001 other children born at the same time, bound up with India's fate as an independent nation. In 1993, *Midnight's Children* was awarded the Booker of Bookers prize as the best novel to be awarded the Booker Prize in its first 25 years.

Rushdie, Salman***The Moor's Last Sigh***

Moraes "Moor" Zogoiby describes his colorful family and their spicy life in Cochin, filled with failed relationships, early deaths, betrayals, and passion.

Russell, Mary Doria

The Sparrow

In 2019, a group of men and women sent by the Jesuits to try to understand the inhabitants of the planet Rakhat discover that a desire to do good is no proof against doing incalculable harm.

Russell, Mary Doria

Thread of Grace

As World War II comes to an end, the members of three different cultures in Northern Italy—Catholics, Jews, and the occupying Germans—must make difficult choices in order to survive. [12/2005]

Russo, Richard

Empire Falls

Enter into small town, blue collar America, where big-hearted Miles Roby has given up a college education and worked at the Empire Grill for 20 years.

Russo, Richard

Straight Man

Hank Devereaux's inability to take anything too seriously wreaks havoc in his job as acting head of an English department in a second or third-rate college.

Saramago, Jose

Blindness

In a magnificent parable of loss and disorientation, Nobel Prize-winner Saramago tells what happens when an unnamed city is hit by an epidemic of white blindness that spares no one.

Satrapi, Marjane

Persepolis

This autobiography, using a black-and-white graphical format, recalls the life of a young girl in Iran during the Islamic Revolution.

Satrapi, Marjane

Persepolis 2

In this sequel to *Persepolis*, the author flees Iran and spends her rebellious teen years in Vienna. When she returns to Iran at 18, she finds her homeland's repressive culture difficult to bear. Can she stay? [10/2005]

Sayers, Dorothy L.

Gaudy Night

Harriet Vane returns to Oxford University just as a rash of unpleasant incidents occur, including poison pen letters, obscene graffiti, and burning effigies. Harriet, along with her paramour and partner Lord Peter Wimsey, try to find the culprit before the odd events turn deadly.

See, Lisa

Peony in Love

Set in 17th century China, this novel follows the journey of lovesick young Peony, in both life and the afterlife. [2/2008]

See, Lisa

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan

The bonds of friendship between two women are tested throughout their lives in 19th century rural China. [3/2006]

Seierstad, Asne

The Bookseller of Kabul

Norwegian journalist Seierstad dons the burkha to live with a bookseller's family in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Intimate details of women's lives are both fascinating and shocking to Western sensibilities. [3/2005]

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft

Frankenstein

Everyone knows the rough outline of the story of Dr. Frankenstein, but reading the short book as Shelley wrote it is especially illuminating in light of all the recent scientific discoveries having to do with the human genome project, cloning, and gene therapy.

Shipler, David

The Working Poor: Invisible in America

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author presents clear facts and personal profiles of America's hard-working poor. [4/2005]

Sinclair, April

Coffee Will Make You Black

Smart and feisty Jean "Stevie" Stevenson tackles growing up black, losing her virginity, and making it through high school on Chicago's south side in the late 1960s.

Smith, Diane

Letters from Yellowstone

Young naturalist A.E. Bartram joins an expedition to explore Yellowstone in 1898 - and discovers that the hardest part of the expedition is convincing the others on the team that even though she's a woman she knows what she's doing.

Smith, Zadie

On Beauty

Based on E.M. Forster's "Howards End," this witty comedy of manners about a pair of feuding families depicts the relationship between beauty and goodness in 21st century London and Massachusetts. [10/2006]

Smith, Zadie

White Teeth

An entertaining epic set in post-World War II London, about two families, whose hilarious and tortured lives capture the optimism and absurdity of the past half-century.

Sobel, Dava

Galileo's Daughter

A biography melding history, science, religion, and technology, written in highly readable prose.

Sobel, Dava

Longitude

An award-winning science journalist traces the development of the marine chronometer by an obscure, uneducated clock maker—an invention that revolutionized sailing by allowing navigators to determine their ship's longitude. (Amazon.com)

Sofer, Dalia

The Septembers of Shiraz

Author Sofer describes the exodus of Jews in Iran after the Iranian Revolution in the early 1980s and focuses on the fate of the wealthy Isaac Amin family in a semi-autobiographical and inspiring debut novel. [6/2008]

Soueif, Ahdaf

The Map of Love

Cousins Amal and Isabel use the contents of an inherited tin trunk to piece together a hundred-year-old story about Anna, an Englishwoman who scandalized the British colonials by marrying a prominent Egyptian.

Spark, Muriel

Memento Mori

In the late 1950s, several Londoners are all startled when they receive a phone call that informs each of them: "Remember you must die."

Stefaniak, Mary Helen

The Turk and My Mother

Storytelling at its best about four generations of an immigrant Croatian family living in Milwaukee after World War I. [2/2008]

Stegner, Wallace

Angle of Repose

Wheelchair-bound Lyman Ward researches and recounts his grandmother's experiences as the wife of a mining engineer in the West in the 1880s and 1890s.

Stegner, Wallace

Crossing to Safety

Two young couples – one with no prospects, the other with wealth and connections – form a painfully close and lifelong friendship that sustains them through successes, defeats, and illness.

Steinbeck, John

Sweet Thursday

Set in the years following World War II, this sequel to *Cannery Row* also includes characters from *Tortilla Flat*, and continues the story of a wide group of characters, including Fauna, the new head of the local brothel and Hazel, a bum whose mother must have wanted a daughter.

Steinbeck, John

Travels with Charley in Search of America

At the age of 58, Steinbeck set off to rediscover America, accompanied by Charley the French poodle.

Stewart, Rory

The Places in Between

A true account of the author's winter walk across the mountains of Afghanistan, from Herat to Kabul, shortly after the fall of the Taliban. He and his mastiff, Babur, follow in the footsteps of the first Mughal emperor, meeting rogues and counting on the kindness of strangers. [2/2007]

Suskind, Ron

A Hope in the Unseen

The story of Cedric Jennings, a talented black teenager, provides a compelling look at the struggles of inner-city life in contemporary America as well as the virtue of perseverance.

Swift, Graham

Waterland

History teacher Tom Crick, on the verge of a forced retirement, regales his students with a tale of love and murder in England's Fen country, from Victorian times to the present.

Tan, Amy

The Bonesetter's Daughter

Ruth Young receives two packets of papers written in Chinese calligraphy - one entitled 'Things I Know are True' and the other 'Things I Must Not Forget,' both written by her mother, now suffering from Alzheimer's. As Ruth learns what is in these papers, she gains an understanding of her mother's difficult and sad life.

Tan, Amy

Saving Fish from Drowning

A humorous story of American tourists lost in the Burmese jungle due to cultural misunderstandings is narrated by Bibi Chen, the deceased wry and witty tour leader and art expert. [10/2006]

Toobin, Jeffrey

The Nine

Based on exclusive interviews with the justices themselves and other insiders, this is a timely "state of the union" about America's most elite legal institution. Toobin reveals the complex dynamic among the nine people who decide the law of the land. [1/2009]

Toole, John Kennedy

A Confederacy of Dunces

Obese, gaseous, unemployed social critic Ignatius J. Reilly transforms successive employment opportunities into full-blown comical disasters, as a result of an ongoing revolt against his devoted, mildly alcoholic mother, his girlfriend, and the entire modern world.

Tremain, Rose

The Way I Found Her

Thirteen-year-old Lewis Little accompanies his mother Alice to Paris, where she will translate the latest medieval romance by best-selling Russian novelist Valentina Gavrilovich; when Valentina disappears, Lewis, besotted, sets out to find her, with both touching and tragic results.

Truong, Monique

The Book of Salt

Dubbed "Thin Bin" by his employer, Vietnamese 'chef-to-the-stars' Binh tells all in this rich, piquant novel of shared food and lives in the household of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.

Tsukiyama, Gail

Women of the Silk

In rural China in 1906, a group of women become friends as they labor together in the silk factory day after day.

Twain, Mark

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

The classic tale of Huck, Jim, and the Mississippi River.

Tyler, Anne

The Amateur Marriage

Stolid Michael and impulsive Pauline marry during the patriotic fervor of the United States' entry into WWII, making for a stormy 30-year marriage where neither understands the other. Wonderfully evocative detail of all the decades between 1940 and 2000.

Tyler, Anne

Back When We Were Grownups

A tender novel about aging, marriage, friendship, motherhood, and one extraordinary woman living an ordinary life.

Tyler, Anne

Digging to America

The lives of two families and their adopted Korean daughters interweave in an absorbing novel about assimilation and separation. [11/2007]

Tyler, Anne

Ladder of Years

Delia Grinstead has always lived a quiet, relatively easy life, but upon turning 40 she finds that her children no longer need her and her husband is becoming a stranger. In response, Delia walks away from it all and establishes a new life for herself.

Unsworth, Barry

Sacred Hunger

Winner of the Booker Prize, this is a novel about the British slave trade and its devastating effects on the Kemp family.

Updike, John***Terrorist***

What makes someone become a terrorist is explored in this provocative novel. Teenager Ahmad, alienated from his American life, is the puppet of a local mosque's imam. [7/2007]

Urrea, Luis Alberto***The Hummingbird's Daughter***

An epic novel of masterful storytelling combined with magical realism about a young woman's sudden sainthood in Mexico in the late 19th century. [1/2007]

Ursu, Anne***Spilling Clarence***

In the sleepy Midwestern town of Clarence, a chemical spill from a psycho-pharmaceutical plant causes the recovery of memory for some of the town's residents.

Valiant, John***The Golden Spruce***

Ex-logger turned activist Grant Hadwin destroys a one-of-a-kind 300-year-old sacred spruce tree in British Columbia's Charlotte Islands in order to protest the destruction of the old-growth forests in this true story of obsessive logic. [5/2006]

Von Herzen, Lane***The Unfastened Heart***

Unforeseen complications arise when a group of well-meaning, lovelorn women concoct a scheme to make their beloved friend Anna fall in love with the widower next door.

Wallach, Janet***Desert Queen***

In this biography of Gertrude Bell, Janet Wallach reveals a woman whose accomplishments were crucial to turn-of-the-century Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.

Walls, Jeannette***The Glass Castle***

Journalist Walls describes her nomadic, poverty-stricken, neglectful childhood with warmth, affection, and surprising tenderness. [12/2007]

Walter, Jess***Citizen Vince***

When a familiar face shows up in town, Vince (who dusts crullers at Donut Make You Hungry as his witness-protection job) realizes his sordid past is still too close behind him. During the next unforgettable week, he'll negotiate a coast-to-coast maze of obsessive cops, eager politicians, and assorted mobsters—only to find that redemption might exist, of all places, in the voting booth. [1/2009]

Wasserstein, Wendy***Sisters Rosensweig***

Three middle-aged Jewish sisters reunite after a long separation, to reminisce and to come to terms with their present lives. The play won the Best Broadway Play award from the Outer Critics Circle for the 1992-93 season.

Waugh, Evelyn***Brideshead Revisited***

In post-World War I Britain, Captain Charles Ryder remembers his relationships with members of the aristocratic, eccentric Roman Catholic Marchmain family.

Wells, Ken***Meely La Bauve***

A high-spirited, Huck Finn like coming of age story set in the Louisiana bayous, and featuring one of the most original and likeable narrators: Emile (Meely) LaBauve, with a large cast of characters, both human and not.

Welty, Eudora***One Writer's Beginnings***

Welty's memoir of growing up in Jackson, Mississippi. In a remarkably happy family is a true pleasure in several ways: it's beautifully written, and, as well, it adds an interesting twist on her novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*.

Welty, Eudora***The Optimist's Daughter***

In this partly autobiographical novel, a young Southern woman returns to New Orleans to attend to her dying father.

Welty, Eudora***The Ponder Heart***

A wonderful comic novel about the trial of Uncle Daniel Ponder, who is accused of killing his much younger second wife, Bonnie Dee Peacock.

Wharton, Edith***The House of Mirth***

New York at the turn of the century was a time of opulence and frivolity for those who could afford it, but for others, like orphan Lily Bart, trying to wed a wealthy husband, it was a gilded cage.

Wheeler, Sarah***Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica***

Following in the footsteps of Shackleton and Scott, Wheeler recounts her seven month sojourn with penguins and scientists, frozen beards and toilets, in the fierce and haunting beauty of 'the Great White.' [3/2005]

Wiesel, Elie***Night***

A deeply haunting, horrific, and evocative remembrance of the years young Eliezer and his father spent in the Nazi death camps during WWII. [8/2006]

Wilentz, Amy***Martyrs' Crossing***

The lives of a young Palestinian mother and an Israeli soldier intersect at a closed Israeli checkpoint, when the woman tries desperately to get her sick son into Jerusalem and its doctors.

Wilkins, Roger***Jefferson's Pillow***

Jefferson's Pillow explores the attitudes of the Founding Fathers to slavery and the African American experience.

Wilson, Jonathan***A Palestine Affair***

A fast-paced novel of politics and passion is set in British occupied Palestine in 1924 and features a disillusioned London painter, his American wife and a murdered prominent Orthodox Jew. [4/2005]

Winton, Tim***Dirt Music***

Set down under in the Australian outback, a stepmother with a drinking problem and an unhappy fish poacher begin a passionate affair. [2/2006]

Woolf, Virginia

To the Lighthouse

A landmark of modern fiction, this book uses stream of consciousness to reveal everyday life in the Hebrides for the Ramsay family.

Wynd, Oswald

The Ginger Tree

Soon after Scottish Mary Mackenzie marries a British military attaché in China in 1903 she scandalizes British society with her adulterous affair with a young Japanese count. This bittersweet story of love and betrayal depicts her life and Asia's tumultuous history over the next 40 years.

Yates, Richard

Revolutionary Road

Unhappiness in the Connecticut suburbs in the 1950's is incisively portrayed in a novel still resonant after 45 years in print. [11/2007]

Zafon, Carlos Ruiz

The Shadow of the Wind

In Barcelona in the mid 20th century, 10-year-old Daniel Sempere, the son of an antique bookseller, discovers a rare novel at the Cemetery of Lost Books and its even more mysterious author. [5/2005]