

Book Club in a Bag:
Annotated Bibliography of Titles

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Readers' Advisory Librarian to borrow one of these kits)**

***Aloft* by Chang-Rae Lee**

Jerry Battle is a suburban middle-aged man who has lived his entire life on Long Island, New York. His favorite diversion is to fly his small plane solo; slipping away for quick flights over the Island or to the coastal towns of New England. Then a family crisis occurs, and Jerry finds he must face his disengagement in his relationships: with his deceased wife, the circumstances of whose death he has never fully accepted; with his former girlfriend, whom he still longs for; with his daughter, who refuses to address the disease that threatens her life; with his son, who is in danger of losing the family business; and with his father, whom he has placed in a nursing home

***Amagansett* by Mark Mills**

By 1947, Amagansett, like much of this part of Long Island, is undergoing a radical change as Manhattan's rich and famous invade the small fishing villages and farmlands that have made up this area. Fishermen like immigrant Basque Conrad Labarde and his helper Rollo cast nets almost daily to earn a living, one day, they catch the body of a young woman. Deputy Chief of Police Tom Hollis investigates the death to ascertain whether a murder has occurred. Though on the surface, *Amagansett* is a historical village police procedural, the story line is actually more of a character study of a time when great upheaval impacted this part of Long Island.

***American Pastoral* by Philip Roth**

American Pastoral is the story of a fortunate American's rise and fall - of a strong, confident master of social equilibrium overwhelmed by the forces of social disorder. Seymour "Swede" Levov - a legendary high school athlete, a devoted family man, a hard worker, the prosperous inheritor of his father's Newark glove factory - comes of age in thriving, triumphant postwar America. But everything he loves is lost when the country begins to run amok in the turbulent 1960's. Not even the most private, well-intentioned citizen, it seems, gets to sidestep the sweep of history. With vigorous realism, Roth takes us back to the conflicts and violent transitions of the 1960's. This is a book about loving - and hating - America. It's a book about wanting to belong - and refusing to belong - to America. It sets the desire for an American pastoral - a respectable life of space, calm, order, optimism, and achievement - against the indigenous American Berserk.

***American Wife* by Curtis Sittenfeld**

A kind, bookish only child born in the 1940s, Alice Lindgren has no idea that she will one day end up in the White House, married to the president. In her small Wisconsin hometown, she learns the virtues of politeness, but a tragic accident when she is seventeen shatters her identity and changes the trajectory of her life. More than a decade later, when the charismatic son of a powerful Republican family sweeps her off her feet, she is surprised to find herself admitted into a world of privilege. And when her husband unexpectedly becomes governor and then president, she discovers that she is married to a man she both loves and fundamentally disagrees with - and that her private beliefs increasingly run against her public persona. As her husband's presidency enters its second term, Alice must confront contradictions years in the making and face questions nearly impossible to answer.

***Amy and Isabelle* by Elizabeth Strout**

Isabelle Goodrow thought her move to the small mill town of Shirley Falls would be temporary-just until she decided in which direction she wanted her life to head. Now her daughter, Amy, has fallen in love with her high school math teacher, and he takes advantage of the teen's infatuation. When the relationship is discovered, Isabelle is furious with her daughter but also a little jealous that Amy has found sexual fulfillment while she has not. As mother and daughter try to rebuild the trust and closeness they once shared, the private secrets of many citizens of Shirley Falls are revealed.

***The Art of Mending* by Elizabeth Berg**

It begins with the sudden revelation of astonishing secrets that have shaped the personalities and fates of three siblings, and now threaten to tear them apart. In renowned author Elizabeth Berg's moving novel, unearthed truths force one seemingly ordinary family to reexamine their disparate lives and to ask themselves, is it too late to mend the hurts of the past?

***Atonement* by Ian McEwan**

On a summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives and her precocious imagination bring about a crime that will change all their lives, a crime whose repercussions *Atonement* follows through the chaos and carnage of World War II and into the close of the twentieth century.

***Away* by Amy Bloom**

Panoramic in scope, *Away* is the epic and intimate story of young Lillian Leyb, a dangerous innocent, an accidental heroine. When her family is destroyed in a Russian pogrom, Lillian comes to America alone, determined to make her way in a new land. When word comes that her daughter, Sophie, might still be alive, Lillian embarks on an odyssey that takes her from the world of the Yiddish theater on New York's Lower East Side, to Seattle's Jazz District, and up to Alaska, along the fabled Telegraph Trail toward Siberia.

***Away from Her* by Alice Munro**

Follows Grant, a retired professor whose wife, Fiona, begins gradually to lose her memory and drift away from him. Readers slowly see how a lifetime of intimate details can create a marriage, and how mysterious the bonds of love really are.

***Bee Season* by Myla Goldberg**

Eliza Naumann, a seemingly unremarkable nine-year-old, expects never to fit into her gifted family: her autodidactic father, Saul, absorbed in his study of Jewish mysticism; her brother, Aaron, the vessel of his father's spiritual ambitions; and her brilliant but distant lawyer-mom, Miriam. Then, she surprises herself and the rest of the Naumanns when she discovers a rare aptitude for spelling, winning her school and district bees with a surreal surge of mystical insight, in which letters seem to take on a life of their own.

***Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett.**

At a lavish, multi-national birthday party in a fictional South American country, terrorists invade. They are planning to kidnap the President who is not there and a siege ensues that lasts for several months. The reader watches as many alliances are slowly formed, stereotypes begin to disappear, and opera becomes the universal language. The tone of this book is almost diametrically opposed to the premise. It is a story of love, friendship, and compassion set in the midst of a terrorist act.

***The Birth of Venus* by Sarah Dunant**

Alessandra Cecchi is not quite fifteen when her father, a prosperous cloth merchant, brings home a young painter to decorate the chapel walls in the family's Florentine palazzo. A child with a precocious mind and a talent for drawing, Alessandra is intoxicated by the painter's abilities. Their burgeoning relationship is interrupted when Alessandra's parents arrange her marriage to a wealthy, much older man. Meanwhile, Florence is changing, increasingly subject to the suppression imposed by the fundamentalist monk Savonarola. Alessandra and her native city are caught between the Medici state, with its love of luxury, learning, and art, and the hellfire preaching and increasing violence of Savonarola's followers. Played out against this turbulent backdrop, Alessandra's married life is a misery, except it allows her to pursue her powerful attraction to the young painter and his art.

***Black & White* by Dani Shapiro**

A novel about art, fame, ambition, and family that explores a provocative question: is it possible for a mother to be true to herself and true to her children at the same time? Clara Brodeur has spent her entire adult life pulling herself away from her famous mother, the renowned and controversial photographer Ruth Dunne, whose towering reputation rests on the unsettling nude portraits she took of her young

daughter from the ages of three to fourteen. Now, Ruth Dunne is dying, and Clara is summoned to her bedside. Despite her anguish and ambivalence, Clara returns and confronts the past she has ignored for so long.

***Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* by Malcolm Gladwell**

In this best-seller, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* weighs the factors that determine good decision-making. Drawing on recent cognitive research, Gladwell concludes that those who quickly filter out extraneous information generally make better decisions than those who discount their first impressions.

***Blue Diary* by Alice Hoffman**

Secrets are the real key to *Blue Diary*, Hoffman's plunge into the darker mysteries of seemingly blissful love in a small New England town. Ethan Ford's secret, which is the thing that splits the novel apart, is that he has reinvented himself, from a crime-doer to a good-doer, and yet that means nothing in the wake of the crime he committed when he was "someone else." Jorie, his previously envied wife becomes the subject of derision and a personal breakdown that forever changes her life and that of her melancholy young son.

***Book Thief* by Markus Zusak**

Trying to make sense of the horrors of World War II, Death relates the story of Liesel--a young German girl whose book-stealing and story-telling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors.

***The Bookseller of Kabul* by Asne Seierstad**

Journalist Asne Seierstad has given readers a first-hand look at Afghani life as few outsiders have seen it. Invited to live with Sultan Khan, a bookseller in Kabul who has defied the authorities—whether Communist or Taliban—to supply books to the people of Kabul, and his family for months, this account of her experience allows the Khans to speak for themselves, giving us a genuinely gripping and moving portrait of a family, and of a country of great cultural riches and extreme contradictions.

***Bridge of Sighs* by Richard Russo**

Louis Charles "Lucy" Lynch has spent his whole life in Thomaston, a small town in upstate New York. He's married to Sarah, the girl he fell in love with in high school, owns and operates three convenience stores, including the corner grocery he inherited from his parents, and is perfectly content with his well-established routines and the familiar rhythms of Thomaston. At the age of sixty, as he and Sarah plan their first-ever trip away from home, he looks back on his life, weaving memories into a history of his family and his town. He writes about his outgoing father, who believed fully in the American Dream and loved him unconditionally, and about his critical but caring mother, whose realistic view of life provided the necessary balance to his father's naivete and idealism.

***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz**

Paralleling his own experiences growing up in the Dominican Republic and New Jersey, Díaz has choreographed a family saga that confronts the horrific brutality of the reign of the dictator Trujillo. Writing in a combustible mix of slang and lyricism, Díaz loops back and forth in time and place, generating sly and lascivious humor in counterpoint to tyranny and sorrow. And his characters—Oscar, the hopeless romantic; Lola, his no-nonsense sister; their heartbroken mother; and the irresistible homeboy narrator—cling to life with the magical strength of superheroes.

***Broken for You* by Stephanie Kallos**

Septuagenarian Margaret Hughes lives alone in her mansion in Seattle with only a massive collection of valuable antiques for company. When young Wanda Schultz appears on Margaret's doorstep as a boarder, she arrives with only her broken heart and a plan to find her wayward boyfriend. Both the women have spent years in self-imposed exile, but as their friendship develops, their armor falls away and Margaret and Wanda find the hidden strength behind things that only seem fragile. Funny, heartbreaking, and alive with a potpourri of eccentric and irresistible characters *Broken for You* is a testament to the saving graces of surrogate families and shows how far the tiniest repair jobs can go in righting the world's wrongs.

***The Camel Bookmobile* by Masha Hamilton**

Fiona "Fi" Sweeney is a librarian from New York. Driven by a desire for adventure and her professional devotion to literacy and reading, she relocates to Kenya to help with a traveling library program for isolated rural villages. She inadvertently renews a decades-old tribal feud involving a camel-powered bookmobile and prior efforts to promote local education.

***Change of Heart* by Jodi Picoult**

One moment June Nealon was happily looking forward to years full of laughter and adventure with her family, and the next, she was staring into a future that was as empty as her heart. Now her life is a waiting game. Waiting for time to heal her wounds, waiting for justice. In short, waiting for a miracle to happen. For Shay Bourne, life holds no more surprises. The world has given him nothing, and he has nothing to offer the world. In a heartbeat, though, something happens that changes everything for him. Now, he has one last chance for salvation, and it lies with June's eleven-year-old daughter, Claire. But between Shay and Claire stretches an ocean of bitter regrets, past crimes, and the rage of a mother who has lost her child.

***The Color of Water* by James McBride**

Around the narrative of Ruth McBride Jordan, a.k.a. Rachel Deborah Shilsky, the daughter of an angry, failed Orthodox Jewish rabbi in the South, her son James writes of the inner confusions he felt as a black child of a white mother and of the love and faith with which his mother surrounded their large family. The result is a powerful portrait of growing up, a meditation on race and identity, and a poignant, beautifully crafted hymn from a son to his mother.

***Crossing to Safety* by Wallace Stegner**

Two young couples, Sid and Charity and Larry and Sally, from different backgrounds—East and West, rich and poor--befriend each other in 1937 Madison, Wisconsin. *Crossing to Safety* is a novel about gifts: the gifts of our talents; the gifts of our shortcomings, which allow us to grow; the gifts of a marriage; the gifts of our friendships; the gifts of what endures and what falls away; the gift of a good life and the gift of a good death.

***Crow Lake* by Mary Lawson**

Canadian writer Mary Lawson's debut novel is a beautifully crafted and shimmering tale of love, death, and redemption. The story, narrated by 26-year-old Kate Morrison, is set in the eponymous Crow Lake, an isolated rural community where time has stood still. The reader dives in and out of a year's worth of Kate's childhood memories--when she was 7 and her parents were killed in an automobile accident that left Kate, her younger sister Bo, and two older brothers, Matt and Luke, orphaned. When Kate, the successful zoologist and professor who is accustomed to dissecting everything through a microscope, receives an invitation to Matt's son's 18th birthday party, she must suddenly analyze her own relationship and come to terms with her past before she forsakes a future with the man she loves. Kate is still in turmoil over the events of that fateful summer and winter 20 years ago when the tragedy of another local family, the Pyes, spilled over into their lives with earth-shattering consequences. But does the tragedy really lie in the past or the present?

***Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese**

This debut fiction by the renowned physician takes the reader on a sweeping journey that moves from India to Ethiopia to the inner city of New York. It is the harrowing tale of Sister Mary Joseph Praise, a devout nun who leaves her home in southern India to do Missionary work in Yemen. In Yemen, she saves a man's life and in the process alters the course of her own. Amidst the political turmoil of 20th century Ethiopia, the novel introduces the reader two young boys who from an early age define their destiny by their fascination with medicine. One of the boys, Marion, will go off to America, and in the over-stuffed hallways of a New York hospital begin to find refuge and great value in his work as a doctor. When his past catches up to him, Marion is forced to reach back into his past and reconnect with a family that had betrayed and deserted him.

***The Dante Club* by Matthew Pearl**

A serial killer is loose in this historical novel set in 1865 Boston. Strangely, the murderer kills his victims using the tortures described in Dante's *Inferno*. The Dante Club, whose members include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell, meet weekly to edit the first English

translation of Dante's poem, in spite of the powerful Boston Brahmins who are fighting to keep Dante in obscurity. These literary men soon realize that the murderer is using their translation as a model for his crimes and decide to search for the killer.

***The Devil In the White City* by Erik Larson**

Before the turn of the 20th century, a city emerged seemingly out of the ash of then dangerous Chicago. Designed by Daniel Burnham, this White City of the 1893 World's Fair became the antithesis of its parent city. While this great city of the future was being built, Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor and serial killer, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds—a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium. A gripping true tale about two men -- one a creative genius, the other a mass murderer -- who turned the 1893 Chicago World's Fair into their playground.

***The Double Bind* by Chris Bohjalian**

When Laurel Estabrook is attacked while riding her bicycle through Vermont's back roads, her life is forever changed. Formerly outgoing, Laurel withdraws into her photography, spending all her free time at a homeless shelter. There she meets Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of photographs that he won't let anyone see. When Bobbie dies, Laurel discovers a deeply hidden secret—a story that leads her far from her old life, and into a cat-and-mouse game with pursuers who claim they want to save her.

***Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler**

Eighty-five-year-old Pearl Tull recalls the desertion of her husband and her attempts to raise their three children, who must come to terms with their own lives and with their feelings toward their father after their mother's death.

***The Distant Hours* by Kate Morton**

A long lost letter arrives in the post and Edie Burchill finds herself on a journey to Milderhurst Castle, a great but moldering old house, where the Blythe spinsters live and where her mother was billeted 50 years before as a 13 year old child during WW II. The elder Blythe sisters are twins and have spent most of their lives looking after the third and youngest sister, Juniper, who hasn't been the same since her fiance jilted her in 1941. Inside the decaying castle, Edie begins to unravel her mother's past. But there are other secrets hidden in the stones of Milderhurst, and Edie is about to learn more than she expected. The truth of what happened in 'the distant hours' of the past has been waiting a long time for someone to find it.

***Dreams From My Father* by Barack Obama**

In this memoir, the son of a black African father and a white American mother searches for a workable meaning to his life as a black American. It begins in New York, where Barack Obama learns that his father - a figure he knows more as a myth than as a man - has been killed in a car accident. This sudden death inspires an emotional odyssey - first to a small town in Kansas, from which he retraces the migration of his mother's family to Hawaii, and then to Kenya, where he meets the African side of his family, confronts the bitter truth of his father's life, and at last reconciles his divided inheritance.

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

Traces the author's decision to quit her job and travel the world for a year after suffering a midlife crisis and divorce, an endeavor that took her to three places in her quest to explore her own nature, experience fulfillment, and learn the art of spiritual balance.

***The Elegance of the Hedgehog* by Muriel Barbery**

We are in the center of Paris, in an elegant apartment building inhabited by bourgeois families. Renée, the concierge, is witness to the lavish but vacuous lives of her numerous employers. With humor and intelligence she scrutinizes the lives of the building's tenants, who for their part are barely aware of her existence. Then there's Paloma, a twelve-year-old genius. She is the daughter of a tedious parliamentarian, a talented and startlingly lucid child who has decided to end her life on the sixteenth of June, her thirteenth birthday. Paloma and Renée hide both their true talents and their finest qualities from a world they suspect cannot or will not appreciate them. They discover their kindred souls when a wealthy Japanese man named

Ozu arrives in the building. Only he is able to gain Paloma's trust and to see through Renée's timeworn disguise to the secret that haunts her.

***Empire Falls* by Richard Russo**

Empire Falls, Maine, has seen the inexorable failure of its logging and textile industries. The once mighty holdings of the Whiting clan, presided over by the last scion's widow, now mostly amount to decrepit real estate. Miles Roby gazes over this ruined kingdom from the Empire Grill, an opportunity that has become the albatross of his ambitions. Brought home from college by family obligations-- his mother ailing, his father a loose cannon – Miles himself now has a divorce to contend with, but also a beloved daughter to guide gently through adolescence.

***Faithful Place* by Tana French**

Detective Frank Mackey finds himself straight back in the dark tangle of relationships he left behind twenty-two years ago when the suitcase belonging to his first love, Rosie Daly, shows up behind a fireplace in a derelict house on Faithful Place.

***Fifty Shades Darker* by E. L. James**

After a brief break-up, Anastasia and Christian change their arrangement and both wrestle with their inner demons, as Anastasia tries to make an important decision. Book two of the Fifty Shades Trilogy.

***Fifty Shades Freed* by E. L. James**

Even though Christian and Anastasia are now a proper couple, they still have many obstacles to overcome, including Christian's past coming back to haunt Anastasia. Book three of the Fifty Shades Trilogy.

***Fifty Shades of Grey* by E. L. James**

When Anastasia Steele, a young literature student, interviews wealthy young entrepreneur Christian Grey for her campus magazine, their initial meeting introduces Anastasia to an exciting new world that will change them both forever. Book one of the Fifty Shades Trilogy.

***A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry**

With a compassionate realism and narrative sweep that recall the work of Charles Dickens, this magnificent novel captures all the cruelty, corruption, dignity, and heroism of India. The time is 1975. The place is an unnamed city by the sea. The government has just declared a State of Emergency, in whose upheavals four strangers--a spirited widow, a young student uprooted from his idyllic hill station, and two tailors who have fled the caste violence of their native village--will be thrust together, forced to share one cramped apartment and an uncertain future. As the characters move from distrust to friendship and from friendship to love, *A Fine Balance* creates an enduring panorama of the human spirit in an inhuman state.

***The Forgotten Garden* by Kate Morton**

A tiny girl is abandoned on a ship headed for Australia in 1913. She arrives completely alone with nothing but a small suitcase containing a few clothes and a single book—a beautiful volume of fairy tales. She is taken in by the dockmaster and his wife and raised as their own. On her twenty-first birthday, they tell her the truth, and with her sense of self shattered and very little to go on, "Nell" sets out to trace her real identity. Her quest leads her to Blackhurst Manor on the Cornish coast and the secrets of the doomed Mountrachet family. But it is not until her granddaughter, Cassandra, takes up the search after Nell's death that all the pieces of the puzzle are assembled.

***For One More Day* by Mitch Albom**

For One More Day explores the question: what would you do if you could spend one more day with a lost loved one? As a child, Charley "Chick" Benetto was told by his father, "You can be a mama's boy or a daddy's boy, but you can't be both." So he chooses his father, only to see the man disappear when Charley is on the verge of adolescence. Decades later, Charley's life has been crumbled by alcohol and regret. He loses his job. He leaves his family. After his only daughter has shut him out of her wedding, he decides to take his own life. He makes a midnight ride to his small hometown and staggers back to his old house, only to make an astonishing discovery. His mother—who died eight years earlier—is still living there, and welcomes him home as if nothing ever happened.

***The Friday Night Knitting Club* by Kate Jacobs**

Juggling the demands of her yarn shop and single-handedly raising a teenage daughter has made Georgia Walker grateful for her Friday Night Knitting Club. Her friends are happy to escape their lives too, even for just a few hours. And when the unthinkable happens, these women will discover that what they've created isn't just a knitting club: it's a sisterhood.

***Garden Spells* by Sarah Addison Allen**

In a garden surrounded by a tall fence, tucked away behind a small, quiet house in an even smaller town, is an apple tree that is rumored to bear a very special sort of fruit. In this luminous debut novel, Sarah Addison Allen tells the story of that enchanted tree, and the extraordinary people who tend it.

***Gates of Fire* by Steven Pressfield**

Ten years after his father Darius the Great was defeated at Marathon, Xerxes returned to conquer and punish Greece with a huge and terrible army. Between them and the Greek mainland lay the narrow pass of Thermopylae, defended by a small contingent of citizen soldiers, and ultimately held by a picked force of just three hundred Spartan warriors. This is the moving story of those heroic brothers-in-arms who bought precious time for Western Civilization with their lives; a stirring tale of guts and glory, blood, brawn, and bone-jarring combat as wave after wave of Persian attackers crash on the mighty shore of Spartan shields.

***The Girls* by Lori Lansens**

Since their birth, Rose and Ruby Darlen have been known simply as "the girls." They make friends, fall in love, have jobs, love their parents, and follow their dreams. But the Darlens are special. Now nearing their 30th birthday, they are history's oldest craniopagus twins - joined at the head by a spot the size of a bread plate. When Rose, the bookish sister, sets out to write her autobiography, it inevitably becomes the story of her short but extraordinary life with Ruby, the beautiful one. From their awkward first steps--Ruby's arm curled around Rose's neck, her foreshortened legs wrapped around Rose's hips-- to the friendships they gradually build for themselves in the small town of Leaford, this is the profoundly affecting chronicle of an incomparable life journey.

***The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Steig Larsson**

Harriet Vanger, scion of one of Sweden's wealthiest families, disappeared over forty years ago. All these years later, her aged uncle continues to seek the truth. He hires Mikael Blomkvist, a crusading journalist recently trapped by a libel conviction, to investigate. He is aided by the pieced and tattooed punk prodigy Lisbeth Salander. Together they tap into a vein of unfathomable iniquity and astonishing corruption.

***The Glass Castle: A Memoir* by Jeannette Walls**

The author recalls her life growing up in a dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father and distant mother and describes how she and her siblings had to fend for themselves until they finally found the resources and will to leave home.

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

The Great Gatsby, which is generally considered to be Fitzgerald's greatest completed work, is set among the gaudy, excessive mansions of Long Island and depicts the hope and disillusionment inspired by the dream of becoming wealthy. It is a portrait of the spiritlessness of the Jazz Age and the cruelty of immense wealth.

***The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows**

In 1946, as England emerges from the shadow of World War II, writer Juliet Ashton finds inspiration for her next book in her correspondence with a native of Guernsey and his eccentric friends, who tell her about their island, the books they love, German occupation, and the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, a book club born as an alibi during German occupation.

***The Ha-Ha* by Dave King**

A shrewd, engrossing, and deeply genuine first novel told from the perspective of Howard Kapostash, a wounded Vietnam veteran whose injury has left him unable to read, write, or speak. Now middle-aged,

Howard lives a lackluster existence in the house where he grew up. Everything changes when Sylvia, the former girlfriend he's loved since high school, heads to drug rehab, saddling Howard with Ryan, her taciturn nine-year-old son. Caring for Ryan has opened him up again to joy and sorrow, frustration and small accomplishments. King writes convincingly from inside Howard, offering entertaining descriptions of the small triumphs and sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic mistakes of a man reaching out to the world from deep inside himself.

***Happiness Sold Separately* by Lolly Winston**

Elinor Mackey has always done the right things in the right order—college, law school, career, marriage—but now everything's going wrong. After two painful years of trying, Elinor has learned that she can't have children. All the doctors can tell her is that it's probably because of her age. As she turns forty, she withdraws into an interior world of heartbreak. Elinor's loving husband, Ted, a successful podiatrist, has always done the right thing, too. Then he meets the wrong woman at the wrong time, and does the wrong thing. Ted's lover, Gina—a beautiful and kindhearted nutritionist—always eats the right thing, but is unlucky in love and always falls for the wrong men. Soon Ted has to fight to make everything right again. Can Elinor and Ted's marriage be saved? The answer is alarmingly fresh and unexpected as New York Times bestselling author Lolly Winston introduces us to characters as memorable as those of Anne Tyler and Nick Hornby, but who are indelibly all her own.

***The Help* by Kathryn Stockett**

Set in Stockett's native Jackson, MS, in the early 1960s, this first novel adopts the complicated theme of blacks and whites living in a segregated South. A century after the Emancipation Proclamation, black maids raised white children and ran households but were paid poorly, often had to use separate toilets from the family, and watched the children they cared for commit bigotry. In Stockett's narrative, Miss Skeeter, a young white woman, is a naive, aspiring writer who wants to create a series of interviews with local black maids. Even if they're published anonymously, the risk is great; still, Aibileen and Minny agree to participate. Tension pervades the novel as its events are told by these three memorable women.

***Hidden* by Victoria Lustbader**

The battlefield traumas of The Great War cement an improbable friendship between Jed Gates, scion of the wealthy Gates family, and David Warshinsky, first-generation American from New York's poverty-ridden lower East Side. David sacrifices his family and his Jewish heritage in pursuit of his untamable ambition, while Jed sacrifices his private desires to assume the burdens of familial expectations.

***The History of Love* by Nicole Krauss**

Leo Gursky is trying to survive a little bit longer, tapping his radiator each evening to let his upstairs neighbor know he's still alive, drawing attention to himself at the milk counter of Starbucks. But life wasn't always like this: sixty years ago, in the Polish village where he was born, Leo fell in love and wrote a book. And although he doesn't know it, that book also survived: it crossed oceans and generations, and changed lives. Fourteen-year-old Alma was named after a character in that book. She has her hands full keeping track of her little brother Bird (who thinks he might be the Messiah) and taking copious notes in her book, "How to Survive in the Wild Volume Three". But when a mysterious letter arrives in the mail, she undertakes an adventure to find her namesake and save her family.

***Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford**

Fifth-grade scholarship students and best friends Henry and Keiko are the only Asians in their Seattle elementary school in 1942. Henry is Chinese, Keiko is Japanese, and Pearl Harbor has made all Asians, even those who are American born, targets for abuse. Because Henry's nationalistic father has a deep-seated hatred for Japan, Henry keeps his friendship with and eventual love for Keiko a secret. When Keiko's family is sent to an internment camp in Idaho, Henry vows to wait for her. Forty years later, Henry comes upon an old hotel where the belongings of dozens of displaced Japanese families have turned up in the basement, and his love for Keiko is reborn. In his first novel, award-winning short-story writer Ford expertly nails the sweet innocence of first love, the cruelty of racism, the blindness of patriotism, the astonishing unknowns between parents and their children, and the sadness and satisfaction at the end of a life well lived. The result is a vivid picture of a confusing and critical time in American history.

***The Hours* by Michael Cunningham**

This novel dissects the lives of three separate women, living at three separate moments in time; Laura, a reluctant mother and housewife of the 1940s; Clarissa, an editor in the 1990s and caretaker of her best friend, an AIDS patient; and Woolf herself, on the verge of writing *Mrs. Dalloway*. The book is an ode to Woolf and her capacity to find the extraordinary in what would otherwise appear to be just another ordinary day. Jumping from one woman's life to the next, it becomes increasingly evident that the problems that one generation faces are not so dissimilar from the next.

***House of Sand and Fog* by Andre Dubus III**

When the reader first meets Behrani, he has exhausted himself and almost all of his savings in a relentless job search, but has been unable to find a suitable job. Behrani, a former member of the Iranian Air Force under the Shah, is reduced to a job on a road crew picking up trash and yearns to restore his family's dignity. When an attractive bungalow turns up for auction, he buys it, hoping to resell it at a profit. But the house's troubled owner, Kathy Nicolo, aided by her lover, the local sheriff, is determined to get the house back. Both Behrani and Kathy are driven by the same need, as the house represents much more than just a place to live for both of them

***How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez**

Forced to flee their native Caribbean island after an attempted coup, the Garcias--Carlos, Laura, and their four daughters--must learn a new way of life in the Bronx, while trying to cling to the old ways that they loved.

***I Feel Bad About My Neck* by Nora Ephron**

With her disarming, intimate, completely accessible voice, and dry sense of humor, Nora Ephron shares with us her ups and downs in *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, a candid, hilarious look at women who are getting older and dealing with the tribulations of maintenance, menopause, empty nests, and life itself.

***If Today Be Sweet* by Thrity Umrigar**

Umrigar's protagonist is Tehmina, a recent widow, whose only son lives in a fictional suburb of Cleveland with his American wife and young son. Tehmina, who is visiting her son over Christmas, has to make a choice about where she will live the rest of her life. If she were to stay in Bombay, she would be independent and surrounded by the familiar including her memories of a beautiful life with her husband. But, she would be away from her son and his family. If she were to move to the United States, it would have an impact on her son and his family and she would have to acculturate herself to life in the United States

***Imperfectionists* by Tom Rachman**

At the Caffe Greco in Rome, circa 1953, Atlanta financier Cyrus Ott makes an offer that can't be refused. He will establish an international English-language newspaper to be run in Italy by Betty, the woman he once loved, and her husband, Leo, a hack writer for a Chicago daily. Within the building's walls an entire history of the print news business plays out over a 50-year span as writers, editors, and accountants grow in professional stature, squander their reputations, and fade into obsolescence. A former editor for the Paris branch of the International Herald Tribune, Rachman makes outstanding use of his credentials to place readers in the center of a newsroom so palpable one can hear the typewriters clacking and feel the uncomfortable undercurrent of professional jealousy among the writers jockeying for position. Navigating the minefields of relationships, parenthood, loneliness, and failure, each realistically imperfect character, developed through intimate, candid detail, becomes a story unto himself (or herself).

***Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer**

The story of Chris McCandless, a young man who embarked on a solo journey into the wilds of Alaska and whose body was discovered four months later, explores the fascinating allure that the wilderness has for the American imagination.

***The Invisible Wall* by Harry Bernstein**

The narrow street where Harry Bernstein grew up, in a small English mill town, was seemingly unremarkable. It was identical to countless other streets in countless other working-class neighborhoods of

the early 1900s, except for the "invisible wall" that ran down its center, dividing Jewish families on one side from Christian families on the other. Only a few feet of cobblestones separated Jews from Gentiles, but socially, it they were miles apart.—

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

Jane Eyre is an extraordinary coming-of-age story featuring one of the most independent and strong-willed female protagonists in all of literature. Poor and plain, Jane Eyre begins life as a lonely orphan in the household of her hateful aunt. Despite the oppression she endures at home, and the later torture of boarding school, Jane manages to emerge with her spirit and integrity unbroken. She becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she finds herself falling in love with her employer - the dark, impassioned Mr. Rochester. But an explosive secret tears apart their relationship, forcing Jane to face poverty and isolation once again. One of the world's most beloved novels, *Jane Eyre* is a startlingly modern blend of passion, romance, mystery, and suspense.

***The Keats Brothers* by Denise Gigante**

John and George Keats—Man of Genius and Man of Power—embodied sibling forms of Romanticism. George's emigration to the U.S. frontier created an abyss of loneliness and alienation in John that would inspire his most loud and sublime poetry. Gigante's account places John's life in a transatlantic context that has eluded his previous biographers.

***The Kitchen Boy* by Robert Alexander**

The Kitchen Boy is a brilliant mixture of historical information and skillful storytelling. Robert Alexander takes the bare bones of the Romanov tragedy and fleshes them out into a poignant, seemingly accurate tale. The descriptions of each member of the Tsar's family and how each behaved in captivity are based on testimony from those who saw them and are only slightly embellished. The diaries of the Tsar and Tsaritsa are also utilized to full extent to illustrate the misconceptions about her and the fact that he, while well-intentioned, was at best ineffectual as a leader. The imagery and descriptions are so vivid that the reader can almost picture the Tsar pacing up and down and the family rushing to be near the finally opened window for a breath of fresh air.

***The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini**

Taking us from Afghanistan in the final days of the monarchy to the present, *The Kite Runner* is the unforgettable, beautifully told story of the friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul. Raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan nonetheless grow up in different worlds: Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara, member of a shunned ethnic minority. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. When the Soviets invade and Amir and his father flee the country for a new life in California, Amir thinks that he has escaped his past. And yet he cannot leave the memory of Hassan behind him. *The Kite Runner* is a novel about friendship, betrayal, and the price of loyalty.

***The Language of Flowers* by Vanessa Diffenbaugh**

Discovering the symbolic meanings of flowers while languishing in the foster-care system, 18-year-old Victoria is hired by a florist when her talent for helping others is discovered, a situation that leads to a romantic prospect and the confrontation of a painful secret from her past.

***Last Van Gogh* by Alyson Richman**

A love story that explores the bonds between patient and doctor, painter and muse. Summer, 1890. Van Gogh arrives at Auvers-sur-Oise, a bucolic French village that lures city artists to the country. It is here that twenty-year-old Marguerite Gachet has grown up, attending to her father and brother ever since her mother's death. And it is here that Vincent Van Gogh will spend his last summer, under the care of Doctor Gachet—homeopathic doctor, dilettante painter, and collector. In these last days of his life, Van Gogh will create over 70 paintings, two of them portraits of Marguerite Gachet. But little does he know that, while capturing Marguerite and her garden on canvas, he will also capture her heart. Both a love story and historical novel, *The Last Van Gogh* recreates the final months of Vincent's life—and the tragic relationship between a young girl brimming with hope and an artist teetering on despair.

***Let the Great World Spin* by Colum McCann**

A rich vision of the pain, loveliness, mystery, and promise of New York City in the 1970s. A radical young Irish monk struggles with his own demons as he lives among the prostitutes in the middle of the burning Bronx. A group of mothers gather in a Park Avenue apartment to mourn their sons who died in Vietnam, only to discover just how much divides them even in grief. A young artist finds herself at the scene of a hit-and-run that sends her own life careening sideways. A 38-year-old grandmother, turns tricks alongside her teenage daughter, determined not only to take care of her family but to prove her own worth. Weaving together these and other seemingly disparate lives, McCann's allegory comes alive in the voices of the city's people, unexpectedly drawn together by hope, beauty, and the "artistic crime of the century", a mysterious tightrope walker dancing between the Twin Towers.

***Little Bee* by Chris Cleave**

A violent incident on a Nigerian beach has tragic echoes in posh London in Cleave's beautifully staged if haphazardly plotted debut novel. British couple Andrew O'Rourke and his wife, Sarah, are on vacation when they come across two sisters, Little Bee and Nkiruka, on the run from the killers who have massacred everyone else in their village—in the pay, it turns out, of an oil company seeking the land. Soon the killers arrive and propose a not-quite-credible deal: they will trade the girls if Andrew and Sarah each cut off a finger. Andrew can't do it, but Sarah does, and the killers drag the girls away. So two years later, when Little Bee shows up at Sarah's house on the day of the funeral for Andrew, who has killed himself, it seems almost miraculous. Later, however, it's revealed that Little Bee has been hiding around the O'Rourke place, and that Andrew seeing her set off his suicide. Sarah nevertheless determines to help Little Bee get refugee status.

***The Lost Legends of New Jersey* by Frederick Reiken**

Romeo and Juliet in northern New Jersey? Yiddish constellations in Asbury Park? A garbage dump in the Meadowlands that's filled with old musical instruments from a high school marching band? Love and sex, hockey and snorkeling, a family that is falling apart despite the best intentions—this is what Frederick Reiken has delivered in his brilliant second novel.

***Lottery* by Patricia Wood**

Having learned essential life skills from his dedicated grandmother that helped him overcome his low IQ, Perry finds himself without a caregiver at the age of thirty-one and wins a fortune by playing the lottery, a lucrative windfall that brings him more family than he ever wanted.

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

While delivering a message to her father, Florentino Ariza spots the barely pubescent Fermina Daza and immediately falls in love. What follows is the story of a passion that extends over 50 years, as Fermina is courted solely by letter, decisively rejects her suitor when he first speaks, and then joins the urbane Dr. Juvenal Urbino, much above her station, in a marriage initially loveless but ultimately remarkable in its strength. Florentino remains faithful in his fashion; paralleling the tale of the marriage is that of his numerous liaisons, all ultimately without the depth of love he again declares at Urbino's death.

***Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan**

Fact and fiction blend in a historical novel that chronicles the relationship between seminal architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney; from their meeting, when they were each married to another, to the clandestine affair that shocked Chicago society.

***Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* by Helen Simonson**

Wry, courtly, opinionated, and completely endearing, Major Pettigrew is one of the most indelible characters in contemporary fiction. The Major leads a quiet life valuing the proper things that Englishmen have lived by for generations: honor, duty, decorum, and a properly brewed cup of tea. But then his brother's death sparks an unexpected friendship with Mrs. Jasmina Ali, the Pakistani shopkeeper from the village. Drawn together by their shared love of literature and the loss of their respective spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship blossoming into something more. Can their relationship survive the risks one takes when pursuing happiness in the face of culture and tradition?

***The Map of True Places* by Brunonia Barry**

Zee Finch, a psychotherapist, has come home to Salem to take care of her ailing father and to try to figure out her own life after the suicide of one of her patients, which was made even more difficult by Zee's past--her mother committed suicide herself, in front of her.

***The Master Butchers Singing Club* by Louise Erdrich**

Having survived World War I, Fidelis Waldvogel returns to his quiet German village and marries the pregnant widow of his best friend, killed in action. With a suitcase full of sausages and a master butcher's precious knife set, Fidelis sets out for America. In Argus, North Dakota, he builds a business, a home for his family--which includes Eva and four sons and a singing club consisting of the best voices in town. When the Old World meets the New in the person of Delphine Watzka the great adventure of Fidelis's life begins. Delphine meets Eva and is enchanted. She meets Fidelis, and the ground trembles. These momentous encounters will determine the course of Delphine's life, and the trajectory of this brilliant novel.

***Matrimony* by Joshua Henkin**

From the moment he was born, Julian Wainwright has lived a life of privilege. To get out from under his parents' influence, he goes off to a bohemian, Massachusetts college, where he hopes to become a writer. There Julian becomes friends with Carter, a scholarship student from California and he also meets Mia, whom he falls in love with and marries. After graduation, the couple move from one college town to another, coping with family dramas and failed literary projects. Then Carter reappears and he throws everyone's life into turmoil.

***The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards**

In a tale spanning twenty-five years, a doctor delivers his newborn daughter during a snowstorm and, rashly deciding to protect his wife from the baby's affliction with Down Syndrome, turns her over to a nurse, who secretly raises the child. This is an epic story of a doctor who, in an emotional moment makes a decision that affects him and everyone around him forever. Author Kim Edwards traces the story of this particular family over 25 years as a long kept secret is revealed.

***Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides**

"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974." And so begins *Middlesex*, the mesmerizing saga of a near-mythic Greek American family and the "roller-coaster ride of a single gene through time." The odd but utterly believable story of Cal Stephanides, and how this 41-year-old hermaphrodite was raised as Calliope, is at the tender heart of this long-awaited second novel from Jeffrey Eugenides, whose elegant and haunting 1993 debut, *The Virgin Suicides*, remains one of the finest first novels of recent memory.

***Moloka'i* by Alan Brennert**

This richly imagined novel, set in Hawaii more than a century ago, is an extraordinary epic of a little-known time and place---and a deeply moving testament to the resiliency of the human spirit. Rachel Kalama, a spirited seven-year-old Hawaiian girl, dreams of visiting far off lands like her father, a merchant seaman. Then one day a rose-colored mark appears on her skin, and those dreams are stolen from her. Taken from her home and family, Rachel is sent to Kalaupapa, the quarantined leprosy settlement on the island of Moloka'i. Here her life is supposed to end---but instead she discovers it is only just beginning.

***Mona in the Promised Land* by Gish Jen**

Mona Chang is a Chinese-American teenager growing up in the late 1960s and early 70s when matters of race and eth-nicity are beginning to be contested. She is one of two daughters of Chinese immigrants who have just moved their pan-cake house to upscale Scarshell, New York. The neighborhood is "moneyed" and has many delis. Mona soon has numerous friends. many of whom are Jewish. The plot centers around Mona, a nice Chinese girl, turning Jewish over the objections of her parents.

***Mudbound* by Hillary Jordan**

In Jordan's prize-winning debut, prejudice takes many forms, both subtle and brutal. It is 1946, and city-bred Laura McAllan is trying to raise her children on her husband's Mississippi Delta farm, a place she

finds foreign and frightening. In the midst of the family's struggles, two young men return from the war to work the land. Jamie McAllan, Laura's brother-in-law, is everything her husband is not—charming, handsome, and haunted by his memories of combat. Ronsel Jackson, eldest son of the black sharecroppers who live on the McAllan farm, has come home with the shine of a war hero. But no matter his bravery in defense of his country, he is still considered less than a man in the Jim Crow South. It is the unlikely friendship of these brothers-in-arms that drives this powerful novel to its inexorable conclusion. The men and women of each family relate their versions of events and we are drawn into their lives as they become players in a tragedy on the grandest scale. As Kingsolver says of Hillary Jordan, "Her characters walked straight out of 1940s Mississippi and into the part of my brain where sympathy and anger and love reside, leaving my heart racing. They are with me still."

***The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

An Indian-American saga, following the immigrant Ganguli family across three decades. Newlyweds Ashoke and Ashima leave India for the Boston area shortly after their traditional arranged marriage. The young husband is ready to be part of U.S. culture, but Ashima, disoriented and homesick, is less taken with late-Sixties America. When their baby arrives, he is named Gogol, after the Russian writer. As Gogol matures, his unusual name proves to be a burden, though no more than the tensions and confusions of growing up as a first-generation American.

***Night* by Elie Wiesel**

Wiesel is one of the most eloquent writers of the Holocaust, and this book is his best known work. This compelling narrative describes his own experience in Auschwitz. His account of his entrance into Auschwitz and his first night in the camp is extraordinary.

***Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult**

"In nineteen minutes, you can mow the front lawn, color your hair, watch a third of a hockey game. In nineteen minutes, you can bake scones or get a tooth filled by a dentist; you can fold laundry for a family of five....In nineteen minutes, you can stop the world, or you can just jump off it. In nineteen minutes, you can get revenge." Sterling is a small, ordinary New Hampshire town where nothing ever happens — until the day its complacency is shattered by a shocking act of violence. In the aftermath, the town's residents must not only seek justice in order to begin healing but also come to terms with the role they played in the tragedy.

***No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith**

When Precious Ramotswe decides to use the money her beloved father left her to open the first ever Ladies' Detective Agency in Botswana, everyone is skeptical. "Can women be detectives?" asks the bank's lawyer. Mma Ramotswe herself feels unsure of her success. After all, her only assets are a tiny white van, two desks, two chairs, a telephone, an old type-writer, a teapot, and three teacups. But she does possess the intangible assets of intuition and intelligence. These she has in great supply, along with perseverance, a keen knowledge of the human mind and heart, a steadfast sense of right and wrong, and a personality that inspires trust and loquaciousness in nearly all who meet her. What she also has is a deep love for Africa generally and for Botswana and its people especially.

***Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout**

At times stern, at other times patient, at times perceptive, at other times in sad denial, Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher, deplores the changes in her little town of Crosby, Maine, and in the world at large, but she doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her: a lounge musician haunted by a past romance; a former student who has lost the will to live; Olive's own adult child, who feels tyrannized by her irrational sensitivities; and her husband, Henry, who finds his loyalty to his marriage both a blessing and a curse.

***On Beauty* by Zadie Smith**

Just outside of Boston, in the small college town of Wellington, lives a family that is anything but typical. Liberated by education, complicated by race, and hobbled by self delusion, they are about to stray onto the battleground that divides personal belief from political conviction *On Beauty* is Zadie Smith's brilliant, hilarious send up of the culture wars that define our age.

***One Day* by David Nicolls**

Over twenty years, snapshots of an unlikely relationship are revealed on the same day, July 15th, of each year. Dex Mayhew and Emma Morley face squabbles and fights, hopes and missed opportunities, laughter and tears. And as the true meaning of this one crucial day is revealed, they must come to grips with the nature of love and life itself.

***One Good Turn* by Kate Atkinson**

On a beautiful summer day, crowds lined up outside a theater witness a sudden act of extreme road rage: a tap on a fender triggers a nearly homicidal attack. Jackson Brodie, ex-cop, ex-private detective, new millionaire, is among the bystanders. The event thrusts Jackson into the orbit of the wife of an unscrupulous real estate tycoon, a washed-up comedian, a successful crime novelist, a mysterious Russian woman, and a female police detective. Each of them hiding a secret, each looking for love or money or redemption or escape, they all play a role in driving Jackson out of retirement and into the middle of several mysteries that intersect in one sinister scheme.

***One Thousand White Women* by Jim Fergus**

The story begins with May Dodd's journey west into the unknown. A government program, in which women are brought west as brides for the Cheyenne, is her vehicle. What follows is the story of May's adventures: her marriage to Little Wolf, chief of the Cheyenne nation, and her conflict of being caught between two worlds, loving two men, living two lives.

***The Other Family* by Joanna Trollope**

When Richie Rossiter, once a famous pianist, dies unexpectedly, Chrissie knows that she must now tell the truth to their three daughters: their parents were never married. Yet there is one more shock to come when Richie's will is read. It seems he never forgot the wife and son he left behind years ago, Margaret, who lives a quiet life of routine and work, and Scott, who never knew his famous father. Now two families are left to confront their losses and each other, and none of them will ever be the same.

***Out Stealing Horses* by Per Petterson**

We were going out stealing horses. That was what he said, standing at the door to the cabin where I was spending the summer with my father. I was fifteen. It was 1948 and one of the first days of July. Trond's friend Jon often appeared at his doorstep with an adventure in mind for the two of them. But this morning was different. What began as a joy ride on "borrowed" horses ends with Jon falling into a strange trance of grief. Trond soon learns what befell Jon earlier that day - an incident that marks the beginning of a series of vital losses for both boys. At age sixty-seven, Trond has settled into a rustic cabin in an isolated part of eastern Norway to live the rest of his life with a quiet deliberation. A meeting with his only neighbor, however, forces him to reflect on that fateful summer.

***The Painted Veil* by W. Somerset Maugham**

Set in England and Hong Kong in the 1920's *The Painted Veil* is the story of the beautiful but love-starved Kitte Fane. When her husband discovers her adulterous affair, he forces her to accompany him to the heart of a cholera epidemic. Stripped of the British society of her youth and the small but effective society she fought so hard to attain in Hong Kong, she is compelled by her awakening conscience to reassess her life and learn how to love.

***People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks**

Inspired by a true story, *People of the Book* is a novel of sweeping historical grandeur and intimate emotional intensity by an acclaimed and beloved author. Called "a tour de force" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, this ambitious, electrifying work traces the harrowing journey of the famed Sarajevo Haggadah, a beautifully illuminated Hebrew manuscript created in fifteenth-century Spain. When it falls to Hanna Heath, an Australian rare-book expert, to conserve this priceless work, the series of tiny artifacts she discovers in its ancient binding—an insect wing fragment, wine stains, salt crystals, a white hair—only begin to unlock its deep mysteries and unexpectedly plunges Hanna into the intrigues of fine art forgers and ultra-nationalist fanatics.

***The Photograph* by Penelope Lively**

When Glyn, a landscape historian, stumbles upon a photograph of his deceased wife, Kath, holding hands with another man, his understanding of the past is "savagely undermined." Reading the past, uncovering and deciphering its strata, is his stock in trade, but now it is his own personal landscape, and the history of his marriage, that he must reinterpret. He veers from emotional vertigo to an obsessive need to know what kind of woman his wife really was.

***Pope Joan* by Donna Woolfolk Cross**

Brilliant and talented, young Joan rebels against the medieval social strictures forbidding women to learn to read and write. When her older brother is killed during a Viking attack, Joan takes up his cloak and identity, goes to the monastery of Fulda, and is initiated into the brotherhood in his place. As Brother John Anglicus, Joan distinguishes herself as a great Christian scholar. Eventually she is drawn to Rome, where she becomes enmeshed in a dangerous web of love, passion, and politics. Triumphant over appalling odds, she finally attains the highest throne in Christendom. Pope Joan is a sweeping historical drama set against the turbulent events of the ninth century.

***Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen**

Pride and Prejudice is a perceptive examination of the relationship between the classes in Britain with the middle class with its upwardly mobile aspirations rubbing against upper class efforts to keep them "in their place." Austen's adroit depiction of the plight of women in pre-Victorian Europe shows her superlative insight into her own world and this insight is skillfully mirrored through one of the most intriguing and admired heroines of English novels, Elizabeth Bennet.

***Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi**

Azar Nafisi's luminous tale offers a fascinating portrait of the Iran-Iraq war viewed from Tehran and gives us a rare glimpse, from the inside, of women's lives in revolutionary Iran. Anyone who has ever belonged to a book group must read this book. Nafisi takes us into the vivid lives of eight women who must meet in secret to explore the forbidden fiction of the West. It is at once a celebration of the power of the novel and a cry of outrage at the reality in which these women are trapped.

***A Reliable Wife* by Robert Goolrick**

Rural Wisconsin, 1909, in the bitter cold, Ralph Truitt, a successful businessman, stands alone on a train platform waiting for the woman who answered his newspaper advertisement for "a reliable wife." But when Catherine Land steps off the train from Chicago, she's not the "simple, honest woman" that Ralph is expecting. She is both complex and devious, haunted by a terrible past and motivated by greed. Her plan is simple: she will win this man's devotion, and then, ever so slowly, she will poison him and leave Wisconsin a wealthy widow. What she has not counted on, though, is that Truitt, a passionate man with his own dark secrets, has plans of his own for his new wife. Isolated on a remote estate and imprisoned by relentless snow, the story of Ralph and Catherine unfolds in unimaginable ways.

***Revolutionary Road* by Yates, Richard**

In the hopeful 1950's, Frank and April Wheeler appear to be a model couple: bright, beautiful, talented, with two young children and a starter home in the suburbs. Perhaps they married too young and started a family too early. Maybe Frank's job is dull. And April never saw herself as a housewife. Yet they have always lived on the assumption that greatness is only just around the corner. But now that certainty is about to crumble. With heartbreaking compassion and remorseless clarity, Richard Yates shows how Frank and April mortgage their spiritual birthright, betraying not only each other, but their best selves.

***The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

In this Homeric novel, a father and son journey through what is left of a future apocalyptic world. Along the journey, the tandem comes across a humanity that is nearly undecipherable in its terror and cruelty. McCarthy pulls us along using terse dialogue to reveal an ambivalent world where cannibals roam yet where fleeting moments of compassion still exist between the father and son.

***The Robber Bride* by Margaret Atwood**

Petite Tony teaches the aggressively male subject of military history and has a talent for speaking backwards; actually, she's Ynot. Charis eats only vegetarian fare and consults crystals. Boisterous, stylish Roz runs her own company and drives a BMW. These three women would seem to have little in common, but they're held together by a single thread: Zenia, a lying, charismatic femme fatale who at one time or other stole the men in their lives. But Zenia is dead, blown to bits in Beirut, and can hurt them no more. Or so they think until the day a still-seductive Zenia walks into the restaurant where they are having lunch.

***Runaway* by Alice Munro**

A collection of short fiction captures the lives of women of all ages and circumstances, as they deal with the limits and lies of passion, unfulfilled dreams, motherhood, betrayal, and the bonds of love.

***The Sabbathday River* by Jean Hanff Korelitz**

Jogging outside the town of Goddard, New Hampshire, Naomi Roth finds the body of a newborn baby girl floating facedown in the Sabbathday River. News of the dead child spreads quickly through Goddard, and Naomi - an aging idealist, a former VISTA volunteer, and the founder of a women's quilting cooperative - is shocked when the community swiftly, implausibly fingers Heather Pratt, a young single mother notorious for her affair with a married man, as the prime suspect. It comes as an even greater shock when, after a long interrogation behind closed doors, Heather confesses to the crime. Moved and angered by Heather's plight - and increasingly isolated in conservative Goddard - Naomi engages the help of Judith Friedman, a lawyer and fellow "flatlander," to defend the young woman. But when the truth at the heart of this astonishing case - and the body of a second baby - comes to light, it is Naomi who must confront how little she has understood her town, her friend, and herself.

***Sarah's Key* by Tatiana De Rosnay**

Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel' d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. Paris, May 2002: On Vel' d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl's ordeal, from that terrible term in the Vel' d'Hiv', to the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life. Tatiana de Rosnay offers us a brilliantly subtle, compelling portrait of France under occupation and reveals the taboos and silence that surround this painful episode.

***Saturday* by Ian McEwan**

Saturday is a masterful novel set within a single day in February 2003. Henry Perowne is a contented man — a successful neurosurgeon, happily married to a newspaper lawyer, and enjoying good relations with his children. Outside the hospital, the world is not so easy or predictable. There is an impending war against Iraq, and a general darkening and gathering pessimism since the New York and Washington attacks two years before. On this particular Saturday morning, Perowne's day moves through the ordinary to the extraordinary. As he makes his way to his regular squash game, trying to avoid the hundreds of thousands of war protesters filling the streets of London, he has a minor car accident. This brings him into a confrontation with a small-time thug, who believes the surgeon has humiliated him and Henry Perowne must deploy all his skills to keep his family alive.

***The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd**

Lily Owens, 14, is an emotionally abused white girl living with her cold, uncaring father on a peach farm in rural South Carolina. The memory of her mother, who was accidentally killed in Lily's presence when she was four, haunts her constantly. She has one of her mother's few possessions, a picture of a black Madonna with the words, Tiburon, South Carolina, written on the back. Lily's companion during her sad childhood has been Rosaleen, the black woman hired to care for her. Rosaleen, in a euphoric mood after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, goes to town to register to vote and insults one of the town's most racist residents. After she is beaten up and hospitalized, Lily decides to rescue her and they go to Tiburon to search for memories of her mother. There they are taken in by three black sisters who are beekeepers producing a line of honey with the Black Madonna label. While racial tensions simmer around them, the women help Lily accept her loss and learn the power of forgiveness.

***Secret of Lost Things* by Sheriday Hay**

Coming to New York from Tasmania at the age of eighteen, Rosemary takes a job at a used and rare bookstore run by the gruff Mr. Pike and his idiosyncratic staff, including Walter Geist, a solitary albino. When Walter's eyesight begins to fail, Rosemary takes on the job of his assistant and becomes caught up in the search for a long-lost Melville manuscript.

***The Senator's Wife* by Sue Miller**

Meri is newly married, pregnant, and standing on the cusp of her life as a wife and mother, recognizing with some terror the gap between reality and expectation. Delia, wife of the two-term liberal senator Tom Naughton, is Meri's new neighbor in the adjacent New England town house. Tom's chronic infidelity has been an open secret in Washington circles, but despite the complexity of their relationship, the bond between them remains strong. Soon Delia and Meri find themselves leading strangely parallel lives, as they both reckon with the contours and mysteries of marriage: one refined and abraded by years of complicated intimacy, the other barely begun. It is a highly charged, superlative novel about marriage and forgiveness.

***The Septembers of Shiraz* by Dalia Sofer**

Isaac Amin, an Iranian Jew, is arrested and imprisoned shortly after the 1979 revolution in Iran, accused of being a Zionist Spy. This novel follows his descent from a venerated, wealthy jeweler to a helpless prisoner, and chronicles the disquieting effect of his arrest on his family. As Isaac navigates the tedium and terrors of prison, his wife feverishly searches for him, suspecting that their once-trusted housekeeper has turned on them and is now acting as an informer. His daughter, in a childlike attempt to stop the wave of baseless arrests, engages in illicit activities, while his son, sent to New York before the rise of the Ayatollah, struggles to find happiness even as he realizes that his family may soon be forced to embark on a journey of incalculable danger. *The Septembers of Shiraz* vividly depicts not only the undoing of a family, but also that of an entire country.

***The Shack* by William P. Young**

Mackenzie Allen Phillips' youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation and evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later in the midst of his Great Sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him back to that shack for a weekend. Against his better judgment he arrives at the shack on a wintry afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare. What he finds there will change Mack's world forever.

***The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon**

A boy named Daniel selects a novel from a library of rare books, enjoying it so much that he searches for the rest of the author's works, only to discover that someone is destroying every book the author has ever written.

***Shanghai Girls* by Lisa See**

May and Pearl, two sisters living in Shanghai in the mid-1930s, are beautiful, sophisticated, and well-educated, but their family is on the verge of bankruptcy. Hoping to improve their social standing, May and Pearl's parents arrange for their daughters to marry Gold Mountain men who have come from Los Angeles to find brides. But when the sisters leave China and arrive at Angel's Island (the Ellis Island of the West) where they are detained, interrogated, and humiliated for months they feel the harsh reality of leaving home. And when May discovers she's pregnant the situation becomes even more desperate. The sisters make a pact that no one can ever know.

***Sleeping Arrangements* by Laura Shaine Cunningham**

Adopted by her two eccentric bachelor uncles after her mother's death, the author describes growing up in an unorthodox but happy Bronx household during the 1950's. Here is Lily Moore at 10, as judged by her fifth grade teacher: "Unsatisfactory...Hair matted, uncombed, disheveled appearance. Soil under nails." She has, in addition, been AWOL from school for 37 full and 38 half days. She lives in a bizarre apartment whose living room furnishings consist of a gold lame castro convertible and two pink bath mats--her choice. She shares the habitation with a senile old woman and two bachelors, one of whom habitually

cooks popcorn for breakfast wearing a pith helmet. All indications to the contrary notwithstanding, Lily is living a blessed life, as depicted in this enchanting memoir.

***Small Island* by Andrea Levy**

It is 1948 in an England that is still shaken by war. At 21 Nevern Street, London, Queenie Bligh takes into her house lodgers who have recently arrived from Jamaica. She feels she has no choice. Her husband, Bernard, whom she married to escape her dreary upbringing on a farm in the Midlands, was posted to India with the RAF during the war, but when the conflict was over he did not return. What else could she do? Among her tenants are Gilbert and his new wife Hortense. Gilbert Joseph was one of the several thousand Jamaican men who joined the RAF to fight against Hitler. Returning to England after the war he finds himself treated very differently now that his is no longer in a blue uniform. It is desperation that makes him remember a wartime friendship with Queenie and knock at her door. Hortense shared Gilbert's dream of leaving Jamaica and coming to England to start a better life - that's why she married him. But when she at last joins her husband, she is shocked by London's shabbiness and horrified at the way the English live. Even Gilbert is not the man she thought he was. Queenie's neighbors do not approve of her choice of tenants, and neither would her husband, were he there. England may be recovering from a war but at 21 Nevern Street it has only just begun.

***Snow Flower and the Secret Fan: A Novel* by Lisa See**

Born into a farmer's family in 19th century China, Lily suffers her fate like many other daughters of that age - she is seen more as a liability than an asset. But the local matchmaker announces that Lily's feet will be flawless if they are bound. Suddenly, a good marriage for Lily and an improvement in fortune for the family are within reach. Lily also meets Snow Flower, a girl with whom she would share the joys and heartaches of the rest of her life. Footbinding, matchmaking, nushu, sworn sisterhood, all traditional practices of old China, figure strongly in this memorable novel about Chinese women, loyalty, and love.

***Snow in August* by Pete Hamill**

An unlikely friendship between an eleven-year old Irish-Catholic boy and a lonely rabbi from Prague in 1947 Brooklyn has the two opening new windows of understanding with each other but still fighting the prejudices of the day.

***Someone Knows My Name* by Lawrence Hill**

Enslaved on a South Carolina plantation, Aminata Diallo works in the indigo fields and as a midwife. When she is bought by an entrepreneur from Charleston, she is torn from friends and family. The chaos of the Revolutionary War allows her to escape. In British-held Manhattan, she helps pen the Book of Negroes, a list of blacks rewarded for wartime service to the King with safe passage to Nova Scotia. During her travels in Canada, Sierra Leone, and England, Aminata strives for her freedom and that of her people, even when it comes at a price.

***Sotah* by Naomi Ragen**

Fragile, exquisite Dina Reich was raised to be an obedient daughter, a dutiful wife. In modern Jerusalem, within the vigilant confines of the ultra-orthodox world of the Haredim, she is bound by the strictest letter of ancient law. At seventeen, Dina enters an arranged marriage to a loving, generous man. But restless yearnings - for knowledge, for romance, for excitement - drive her into a dangerous flirtation. When the insular community learns of her transgression, Dina is subjected to an ordeal. Like the Biblically ordained ritual for the wife suspected of adultery, the Sotah, this will either destroy her or vindicate her completely. Forced into exile in New York, Dina is appalled by the shallowness of American life. Yet it is here that she must fashion her own traditions and find the courage to return to Jerusalem to reclaim her husband, her family and her life.

***The Space Between Us* by Thrity Umrigar**

Bhima is a domestic servant in contemporary Bombay who leaves her own small shanty in the slums to scrub the floors of a house in which she remains an outsider. Sera, her employer, is an upper-middle-class Parsi housewife whose opulent surroundings hide the shame and disappointment of her abusive marriage. Despite being separated from each other by blood and class, Bhima and Sera find themselves bound by gender and shared life experiences. Everything changes, however, when Bhima's granddaughter, Maya, a

university student, becomes pregnant by a man whose identity she refuses to reveal. Bhima's dreams of a better life for Maya, as well as for herself, may be shattered forever and loyalties are put to the test. Poignant and compelling, evocative and unforgettable, *The Space Between Us* is an intimate portrait of a distant yet familiar world.

***Suite Francaise* by Irene Nemirovsky**

A story of life in France under the Nazi occupation includes two parts--"Storm in June," set amid the chaotic 1940 exodus from Paris, and "Dolce," set in a German-occupied village rife with resentment, resistance, and collaboration.

***Sword and Blossom* by Peter Pagnamenta**

Draws on more than eight hundred letters to recount the tragic romantic relationship between an ambitious British army officer and a Japanese woman, who fell in love on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War and defied conventions to remain in touch.

***The Ten Year Nap* by Meg Wolitzer**

For a group of four New York friends, the past decade has been defined largely by marriage and motherhood, but it wasn't always that way. Growing up, they had been told that their generation would be different. And for a while this was true. They went to good colleges and began high-powered careers. But after marriage and babies, for a variety of reasons, they decided to stay home, temporarily, to raise their children. Now, ten years later, they are still at home, unsure how they came to inhabit lives so different from the ones they expected—until a new series of events begins to change the landscape of their lives yet again, in ways they couldn't have predicted.

***The Tender Bar* by J.R. Moehringer**

In a memoir of growing up with a single mother, the author describes how he received valuable life lessons and friendship from an assortment of characters at the neighborhood bar, who provided him with a kind of fatherhood by committee.

***Tevye the Dairyman* by Sholem Aleichem**

Of all the characters in modern Jewish fiction, the most beloved is Tevye, the compassionate, irrepressible, Bible-quoting dairyman from Anatevka, who has been immortalized in the writings of Sholem Aleichem and in acclaimed and award-winning theatrical and film adaptations.

***The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield**

Margaret Lea, a bookish loner, is summoned to the home of Vida Winter, England's most popular novelist, and commanded to write her biography. Miss Winter has been falsifying her life story and her identity for more than 60 years. Facing imminent death and feeling an unexplainable connection to Margaret, Miss Winter begins to spin a haunting, suspenseful tale of an old English estate, a devastating fire, twin girls, a governess, and a ghost. As Margaret carefully records Vida's tale, she ponders her own family secrets. Her research takes her to the English moors to view a mansion's ruins and discover an unexpected ending to Vida's story.

***This Boy's Life* by Tobias Wolff**

This unforgettable memoir, by one of our most gifted writers, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. His various schemes - running away to Alaska, forging checks, and stealing cars - lead eventually to an act of outrageous self-invention that releases him into a new world of possibility.

***Those Who Save Us* by Jenna Blum**

For fifty years, Anna Schlemmer has refused to talk about her life in Germany during World War II. Her daughter, Trudy, was only three when she and her mother were liberated by an American soldier and went

to live with him in Minnesota. Trudy's sole evidence of the past is an old photograph: a family portrait showing Anna, Trudy, and a Nazi officer, the Obersturmführer of Buchenwald. Driven by the guilt of her heritage, Trudy, now a professor of German history, begins investigating the past and finally unearths the heartbreaking truth of her mother's life.

***A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini**

An in-depth exploration of Afghan society in the three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban cruelty. The story follows the heroic plight of two women of different generations married to the same savagely abusive male. Born out of wedlock, Mariam was forced to marry 40-year-old Rasheed when she was only 15. Then, 18 years later, her still childless husband angrily takes an even younger wife, Laila, who is mourning the loss of her childhood sweetheart and parents. The wives, after initial conflict, form a bond that sustains them through the violence and tragedy they face.

***Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin**

Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan.

***Three Junes* by Julia Glass**

This novel draws the reader deeply into the lives of several central characters during three separate Junes spanning ten years. At the story's onset, Scotsman Paul McLeod, the father of three grown sons, is newly widowed and on a group tour of the Greek islands as he reminisces about how he met and married his deceased wife and created their family. Next, we see the world through the eyes of Paul's eldest son, Fenno, a gay man transplanted to New York City who learns lessons about love and loss that allow him to grow in unexpected ways. And finally there is Fern, an artist and book designer whom Paul met on his trip to Greece several years earlier. She is now a young widow, pregnant and also living in New York City, who must make sense of her own past and present to be able to move forward in her life.

***Time and Again* by Jack Finney**

This book is considered a science fiction classic. Written in 1970, it centers on Simon Morley, an artist-illustrator who is recruited into a secret government project that is developing a method of time travel. The plot is absorbing, but the real charm of the book is in Finney's description of people and places of late 19th century New York.

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

A dazzling novel in the most untraditional fashion, this is the remarkable story of Henry DeTamble, a dashing, adventuresome librarian who travels involuntarily through time, and Clare Abshire, an artist whose life takes a natural sequential course. Henry and Clare's passionate love affair endures across a sea of time and captures the two lovers in an impossibly romantic trap, and it is Audrey Niffenegger's cinematic storytelling that makes the novel's unconventional chronology so vibrantly triumphant. An enchanting debut and a spellbinding tale of fate and belief in the bonds of love, *The Time Traveler's Wife* is destined to captivate readers for years to come.

***The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell**

This best seller focuses on non-linear social changes -- the times when an "epidemic" breaks out. Such epidemics can be a fashion fad (the revival of Hush Puppies) or an important cultural change (the sudden reduction in crime in New York in the early 1990's). Gladwell shows how a factor 'tips' - when a critical mass 'catches' the infection and passes it on. This is when a shoe becomes a 'fashion craze', social smoking becomes 'addiction' and crime becomes a 'wave'. *The Tipping Point* is a manual for understanding and directing change: a revolutionary's handbook.

***To My Dearest Friends* by Patricia Volk**

Two unlikely women--Nanny, a charming, highly disorganized Manhattan real-estate agent, and Alice, the prim owner of a high-end used clothing boutique--are thrown together by the death of their mutual best

friend, Roberta, as they attempt to unravel the truth about Roberta's previously unknown lover, in a story of the bonds of female friendship.

***The Tortilla Curtain* by T. C. Boyle**

Topanga Canyon is home to two couples on a collision course. Los Angeles liberals Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher lead an ordered sushi-and-recycling existence in a newly gated hilltop community, while Mexican illegals Candido and America Rincon are desperately clinging to their vision of the American Dream as they fight off starvation in a makeshift camp deep in the ravine. When a freak accident brings the Candidos and Delaneys into intimate contact, these four and their opposing worlds gradually intersect in what becomes a tragic comedy of errors and misunderstandings.

***Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

These eight stories by beloved and bestselling author Jhumpa Lahiri take us from Cambridge and Seattle to India and Thailand, as they explore the secrets at the heart of family life. Here they enter the worlds of sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers, daughters and sons, friends and lovers. Rich with the signature gifts that have established Jhumpa Lahiri as one of our most essential writers, *Unaccustomed Earth* exquisitely renders the most intricate workings of the heart and mind.

***The Uncoupling* by Meg Wolitzer**

When the elliptical new drama teacher at Stellar Plains High School chooses for the school play Lysistrata—the comedy by Aristophanes in which women stop having sex with men in order to end a war—a strange spell seems to be cast over the school. Or, at least, over the women. One by one throughout the high school community, perfectly healthy, normal women and teenage girls turn away from their husbands and boyfriends in the bedroom, for reasons they don't really understand. As the women worry over their loss of passion, and the men become by turns unhappy, offended, and above all, confused, both sides are forced to look at their shared history, and at their sexual selves in a new light.

***Under the Banner of Heaven* by Jon Krakauer**

The chilling story of Mormon fundamentalist brothers Dan and Ron Lafferty, who in 1984 brutally butchered their sister-in-law and 15-month-old niece, claiming to have killed at the direct command of God. The bizarre details of this brutal crime play out against the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints (LDS) and its subsequent splintering into fundamentalist sects. Krakauer explores the nature of these sects, taking readers inside isolated American communities where some 40,000 Mormon Fundamentalists still practice polygamy.

***Voyage Long and Strange* by Tony Horwitz**

On a chance visit to Plymouth Rock, Tony Horwitz realizes he's mislaid more than a century of American history, from Columbus's sail in 1492 to Jamestown's founding in 16-oh-something. Horwitz retraces this long neglected 16th century, following the tracks of the Europeans who explored America, long before the Pilgrims arrived.

***Wait till Next Year* by Doris Kearns Goodwin**

This is the story of a young girl growing up in the suburbs of New York in the 1950s, when owning a single-family home on a tree-lined street meant the realization of dreams, when everyone knew everyone else on the block, and the children gathered in the streets to play from sunup to sundown. The neighborhood was equally divided among Dodgers, Giants, and Yankees fans, and the corner stores were the scenes of fierce and affectionate rivalries. This is also the story of a girlhood in which the religious festivals of the Catholic church and the seasonal imperatives of baseball combined to produce a passionate love of history, ceremony, and ritual. It's the story of growing up in what seemed a more innocent era until one recalls the terror of polio, the paranoia of McCarthyism reflected even in the children's games, the obsession with A-bomb drill in school, and the ugly face of racial prejudice.

***Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen**

Jacob Jankowski, ninety-three years old and living in a nursing home, reminisces about his youth. Set during the Great Depression, Jacob is orphaned two weeks before completing his veterinary degree. He impulsively jumps aboard a train which turns out to be a struggling third rate circus. Although he has no

experience, he is given a job as a vet. He has to learn everything about the circus world, the performers, the working men, the animals, and the peculiar social hierarchy. Uncle Al is the ruthless director, August the temperamental second in command, and Marlena is August's wife to whom Jacob is very attracted. Into this volatile mix comes Rosie the elephant with the expectation that her act will save the circus. Jacob's memories are interspersed with descriptions of his current life in this heartwarming novel.

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

On a sunny day in Berkeley, California, in 1942, a woman sees a sign in a post office window, returns to her house, and matter-of-factly begins to pack her family's possessions. Like thousands of other Japanese Americans they have been reclassified, virtually overnight, as enemy aliens and are about to be uprooted from their home and sent to a dusty internment camp in the Utah desert. Julie Otsuka tells their story from five flawlessly realized points of view and conveys the exact emotional texture of their experience: the thin-walled barracks and barbed-wire fences, the omnipresent fear and loneliness, the unheralded feats of heroism, *When the Emperor was Divine* is a work of enormous power that makes a shameful episode of our history as immediate as today's headlines.

***White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga**

Balam Halwai is a complicated man. Servant. Philosopher. Entrepreneur. Murderer. Over the course of seven nights, by the scattered light of a preposterous chandelier, Balam tells us the terrible and transfixing story of how he came to be a success in life, having nothing but his own wits to help him along. Set in a raw and unromanticized India, this first-person confession of a murderer is as compelling for its subject matter as it is for the voice of its narrator: amoral, cynical, unrepentant, yet deeply endearing.

***The Wife* by Meg Wolitzer**

The moment Joan Castleman decides to leave her husband, they are thirty-five thousand feet above the ocean on a flight to Helsinki. Joan's husband, Joseph, is one of America's preeminent novelists, about to receive a prestigious international award, and Joan, who has spent forty years subjugating her own literary talents to fan the flames of his career, has finally decided to stop. From this gripping opening, Meg Wolitzer flashes back to 1950s Smith College and Greenwich Village and follows the course of the marriage that has brought the couple to this breaking point -- one that results in a shocking revelation.

***Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks**

This gripping historical novel is based on the true story of Eyam, the "Plague Village," in the rugged mountain spine of England. In 1666, a tainted bolt of cloth from London carries bubonic infection to this isolated settlement of shepherds and lead miners. A visionary young preacher convinces the villagers to seal themselves off in a deadly quarantine to prevent the spread of disease. The story is told through the eyes of eighteen-year-old Anna Frith, the vicar's maid, as she confronts the loss of her family, the disintegration of her community, and the lure of a dangerous and illicit love. As the death toll rises and people turn from prayers and herbal cures to sorcery and murderous witch-hunting, Anna emerges as an unlikely and courageous heroine in the village's desperate fight to save itself.

***Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers**

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a prosperous Syrian-American and father of four, chose to stay through the storm to protect his house and contracting business. In the days after the storm, he traveled the flooded streets in a secondhand canoe, passing on supplies and helping those he could. A week later, on September 6, 2005, Zeitoun abruptly disappeared. Eggers's riveting nonfiction book, three years in the making, explores Zeitoun's roots in Syria, his marriage to Kathy, an American who converted to Islam, and their children, and the surreal atmosphere (in New Orleans and the United States generally) in which what happened to Abdulrahman Zeitoun was possible.

***The Zookeepers Wife* by Diane Ackerman**

When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw, and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Zabinski began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Another dozen "guests" hid inside the Zabinskis' villa, emerging after dark for dinner, socializing, and, during rare moments of calm, piano concerts. Jan, active in the Polish resistance, kept ammunition buried in the elephant enclosure and stashed explosives in the animal hospital. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her

unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants. With her exuberant prose and exquisite sensitivity to the natural world, Diane Ackerman engages us viscerally in the lives of the zoo animals, their keepers, and their hidden visitors. She shows us how Antonina refused to give in to the penetrating fear of discovery, keeping alive an atmosphere of play and innocence even as Europe crumbled around her.