

Oakhurst Library Committee
2008 Summer Reading Recommendations
(Compiled by Carolyn Copenhaver)

ADULT FICTION (ALL GENRES)

ANGRY HOUSEWIVES EATING BONBONS by Lorna Landvik
ATONEMENT, by Ian McEwen
BLEEDING KANSAS, by Sarah Paretsky
BULLS ISLAND, by Dorothea Benton Frank
CHANGE OF HEART, by Jodi Picoult
CARELESS IN RED, by Elizabeth George
DOUBLE CROSS, by James Patterson
EVERYTHING IS ILLIMINATED, by Jonathan Safran Foer
GOOD OMENS, by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett
IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES, by Julia Alvarez
NINE YEARS OF WONDERS: A NOVEL OF THE PLAGUE, by Geraldine Brooks
LABYRINTH, by Kate Mosse
LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH, by Emily Giffin.
MISTRESS OF SPICES, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
PLAGUE SHIP, by Clive Cussler with Jack Du Brul.
SAVING THE WORLD, by Julia Alvarez
SEPULCHRE, by Kate Mosse
SNOW FLOWER AND THE SECRET FAN, by Lisa See
THE AIR BETWEEN US, by Deborah Johnson
THE APPEAL, by John Gresham
THE ALCHEMIST, by Paul Coello
THE CONCH BEARER by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
THE MAYTREES, by Annie Dillard
THE MERMAID CHAIR by Sue Monk Kidd
THE SAMURAI'S GARDEN by Gail Tsukiyama
THE YEAR OF PLEASURES, by Elizabeth Berg
WATER FOR ELEPHANTS, by Sara Gruen
WHITE TEETH, by Zadie Smith

ADULT NONFICTION

A REMARKABLE MOTHER, by Jimmy Carter
ANAM CARA; A BOOK OF CELTIC WISDOM, by John O'Donohue
DESIRE OF THE EVERLASTING HILLS, by Thomas Cahill
DREAMS FROM MY FATHER, by Barack Obama
EAT, PRAY, LOVE, by Elizabeth Gilbert
FINDING MEANING IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE, by James Hollis
KING LEOPOLD'S GHOST: A STORY OF GREED, TERROR, AND HEROISM IN COLONIAL AFRICA by Adam Hochschild
GHOST PLANE; THE TRUE STORY OF THE CIA TORTURE PROGRAM, by Stephen Grey
LEAVING CHURCH, by Barbara Brown Taylor
MYSTERIES OF THE MIDDLE AGES; THE RISE OF FEMINISM, SCIENCE, AND ART FROM THE CULTS OF CATHOLIC EUROPE, by Thomas Cahill
NINE PARTS OF DESIRE; THE HIDDEN WORLD OF ISLAMIC WOMEN, by Geraldine Brooks
PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, by Geraldine Brooks
SAILING THE WINE DARK SEA, by Thomas Cahill
THE AUDACITY OF HOPE, by Barack Obama.
THE BIBLE, by KAREN ARMSTRONG
THE BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF, by Norman Doidge
THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL, by Thomas Moore
THE INNOCENT MAN, by John Grisham
THE PRIZE WINNER OF DEFIANCE, OHIO: HOW MY MOTHER RAISED 10 KIDS ON 25 WORDS OR LESS, by Terry Ryan
THE SPACE BETWEEN US, by Thrity Umrigar
THREE CUPS OF TEA, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin
WEEP WILLOW FOR ME by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah

JUVENILE/YOUNG ADULT FICTION

BUDDY NOT BUDDY, by Christopher Paul Curtis
ELIJAH OF BRUXTON, By Christopher Paul Curtis
SEA OF MONSTERS by Rick Riordan
SHAKESPEARE'S SECRET, by Elise Broach
SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELLING PANTS, by Ann Brashares
TITAN'S CURSE, by Rick Riordan

THE BATTLE OF THE LABYRINTH, by Rick Riordan
THE LIGHTENING THIEF, by Rick Riordan
THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM--1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis

BOOKS SELECTED THIS YEAR BY THE OAKHURST BOOK CLUB

THIRTEEN MOONS by Charles Frazier
A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS by Khalea Hosseini
ON BEAUTY by Zadie Smith
THEM by Nathan McCall
THE PROMISE OF REST by Reynolds
BROKEN FOR YOU by Stephanie Kallos

NOTES FROM READERS (alphabetical by last names)

Trina Baldwin

I just finished listening to the unabridged version of **Bulls Island**, the latest book by Dorethea Benton Frank. It is rated PG-13, but an entertaining summer book! [Harper Collins: A satisfying tale of honor, chance, and star-crossed love infused with Southern wit, grace, and charm from the *New York Times* bestselling author]

I am presently listening to John Grisham's latest, **The Appeal**. I recommend it, but it is more serious.

Janie Branscomb

I am now reading **Year of Wonders** by Geraldine Brooks and am engrossed. Also brought **Eat, Love, Pray**, nonfiction, which comes highly recommended. Some years back I mentioned a book called **Reverence**, which i am moved for some reason to bring up again. It helped me appreciate this human trait that unifies us across and beyond religions.

Paula Buford:

A client just asked me to read a 10YO memoir. It's the first book on depression written by an Africa American woman, Meri Nana-Ama Danquah. It's called **Willow Weep For Me**, and I read it in one day. Couldn't put it down. It's not for the faint of heart. Anyone in a helping profession should read it. Or anybody with depression. Or single mothers living in poverty.

Lou Clymore:

I just finished **The Air Between Us** by Deborah Johnson and enjoyed it. It is set in Revere Mississippi and deals with the interconnectedness of whites and blacks. It features two MDs, one of each race, and a poor black boy who brings a mortally wounded poor black man to the whites only hospital and that's all I'm going to tell you before I tell you too much.

Carolyn Copenhaver:

The Audacity of Hope, by Barack Obama. [The Illinois senator proposes that Americans move beyond their political divisions.—NYT]

Dreams from My Father, by Barack Obama. [The senator on life as the son of a black African father and a white American mother. NYT]

The Innocent Man by John Grisham. Grisham's first nonfiction book concerns a man wrongly sentenced to death.—NYT]

The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science by Norman Doidge. This was for me an eye-opening and hopeful introduction to the new medical field of neuroplasticity or brain plasticity

Any mystery/police procedural by Elizabeth George, Ian Rankin, or Sara Paretsky

The popular series by Alexander McCall Smith (**The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency**)

The brilliant works (**The Third Chimpanzee, Collapse, Germs, Guns and Steel**) by Jared Diamond. [Diamond is an American evolutionary biologist, physiologist, biogeographer, lecturer, and nonfiction author. Diamond works as a professor of geography and physiology at UCLA. He is best known for the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1998), which also won the Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science. He received the National Medal of Science in 1999.—Wikipedia]

The works of Steven Pinker, particularly **The Blank Slate**

Lynn Donham:

Shakespeare's Secret by Elise Broach

Labyrinth. by Kate Mosse

Sepulchre, By Kate Mosse

Literary historical mysteries with great suspense and characters

Careless in Red.by Elizabeth George

The Alchemist by **Paul Coello** [...is a bestseller that was first published in Brazil and is the most famous work of author Paulo Coelho. It is a symbolic story that urges its readers to follow their dreams. Originally published in 1988, **The Alchemist** has been translated into 56 languages, and has sold more than 65 million copies in more than 150 countries, and is one of the best selling books in history.

Martha England

Books I have read this year are:

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen

Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert [A writer's yearlong journey in search of self.—NYT]

Bleeding Kansas by Sara Paretsky

A Remarkable Mother by Jimmy Carter

Atonement by Ian McEwan

I am presently reading **People of the Book** by Geraldine Brooks.

John Aberle-Grasse:

For the Time Being by Annie Dillard. Here Dillard alternates account of her own travels to China and Israel with ruminations on sand, clouds, obstetrics, and Hasidic thought. She also records the wanderings of paleontologist and spade-wielding spiritualist Teilhard de Chardin, whose itinerary (geographical and philosophical) has certain similarities to her own. But as she ties together these disparate threads with truly Emersonian eloquence, it becomes clear that God's presence--or absence--is at the heart of her book.

The Maytrees: A Novel by Annie Dillard. Lou Bigelow meets her husband-to-be, Toby Maytree, when Toby returns to Provincetown following WWII. In the house Lou inherits from her mother, they read, cook soup, play games with friends, vote and raise a child. Toby writes poetry and

does odd jobs; Lou paints. Their unaffected bohemianism fits right in with the Provincetown landscape, which Dillard, who won a Pulitzer Prize for *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, describes with an offhand but deep historical sense.

Good Omens by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. Pratchett (of Discworld fame) and Gaiman (of Sandman fame) may seem an unlikely combination, but the topic (Armageddon) of this fast-paced novel is old hat to both. Pratchett's wackiness collaborates with Gaiman's morbid humor; the result is a humanist delight to be savored and reread again and again. You see, there was a bit of a mixup when the Antichrist was born, due in part to the machinations of Crowley, who did not so much fall as saunter downwards, and in part to the mysterious ways as manifested in the form of a part-time rare book dealer, an angel named Aziraphale.

Non-fiction:

The Bible, a biography by Karen Armstrong.

Desire of the Everlasting Hills by Thomas Cahill

Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter by Thomas Cahill

Mysteries of the Middle Ages: The Rise of Feminism, Science, and Art from the Cults of Catholic Europe by Thomas Cahill

Sandy Harrison:

Jodi Picoult's (2008) **Change of Heart**. About a convicted murderer on death row who wants to donate his heart to the sister of the little girl he killed. Lots of spiritual content, including a segment on the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. Picoult is always provocative, and it's a fast read.

Also, Geraldine Brooks, **Nine Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague (2001)**. Brooks is a journalist, so her style is engaging and easy to read.

Geraldine (1994) Brooks, **Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women** [review excerpt from Salon.com: *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women* is the story of Brooks' intrepid journey toward an understanding of the women behind the veils, and of the often contradictory political, religious, and cultural forces that shape their lives. In fundamentalist Iran, Brooks finagles an invitation to tea with the ayatollah's widow—and discovers that Mrs. Khomeini dyes her hair. In Saudi Arabia, she eludes the severe segregation of the sexes and attends a bacchanal, laying bare the hypocrisy of this austere, male-dominated society. In war-torn Ethiopia, she watches as a female gynecologist repairs women who have undergone genital mutilation justified by a distorted interpretation of Islam.

JoEllen Holmes:

The following books are by Rick Riordan. (pronounced Ryerden). The main character is Percy Jackson, a Harry Potter type figure. He is a demi-god, and battles the Kronos army. Great author. Great place for kids to learn Greek Mythology. Great for boys between the age of 8-13ish. Girls would like it too. A movie is coming out December 2009.

The Lightning Thief

The Sea of Monsters

The Titan's Curse

The Battle of the Labyrinth.

[Riordan is the multi-award-winning author of the #1 New York Times best-selling Percy Jackson and the Olympians series for children. His Percy Jackson series features a twelve-year-old dyslexic boy who discovers he is the modern-day son of a Greek god. The novels draw on Riordan's experience teaching Greek mythology and his interaction with students who have learning differences. **The Lightning Thief** was a New York Times Notable Book for 2005. Film rights have been purchased by Twentieth Century Fox and a feature film is in development. The

second book, **The Sea of Monsters** was a Child Magazine Best Book for Children for 2006 and a Publishers Weekly and BookSense national best-seller. The third book in the series is **The Titan's Curse**. The most recent title is **The Battle of the Labyrinth**.—Wikipedia]

Robbie King:

These are some other books I've read in the last few months that I've really enjoyed. Several of these are particularly relevant to women who find themselves at the end of some stage or facet of their lives and how they handle the transition to something larger. (You may or not remember that my husband died this year)

Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life by James Hollis

Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom by John O'Donohue

Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

Leaving Church by Barbara Brown Taylor

The Dark Night of the Soul by Thomas Moore

Other books I read:

The Mermaid Chair by Sue Monk Kidd

The Year of Pleasures by Elizabeth Berg

The Samurai's Garden by Gail Tsukiyama

Double Cross by James Patterson

Katelyn Murphy-McCarthy:

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants—This is a series of four bestselling young adult novels by Ann Brashares. [The novels tell the continuing story of four girls who acquire a pair of magical jeans that fit all four of them perfectly, even though they're all different shapes and sizes. The four main characters are Bridget (the mighty bee), Lena (the shy and beautiful), Carmen (the drama queen), and Tibby (the rebel). The series follows the girls through the four summers following their sophomore year (age 15) in high school. The series ends with their first summer following college.—Wikipedia]

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen [The pages...burst with rich descriptions and action. You will be drawn into the world of ringmasters, elephants and sideshows. You will also experience the world of nursing homes and old age. You will not want to put Water for Elephants down, and when it is over, you will want more.—About.com]

Angry Housewives Eating BonBons by Lorna Landvik. (I really liked this one) [This depicts a special slice of American life, of stay-at-home days and new careers, children and grandchildren, bold beginnings and second chances, in which the power of forgiveness, understanding, and the perfectly timed giggle fit is the CPR that mends broken hearts and shattered dreams. Once again Lorna Landvik leaves you laughing and crying, as she reveals perhaps the greatest truth: that there is nothing like the saving grace of best friends.—Reading Group Guide]

Running with Scissors by Augustine Burroughs [The book tells the story of Burroughs' bizarre childhood life after his mother, who had an obsession with Anne Sexton, sent him to live with her psychiatrist.—Wikipedia]

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, by Lisa See [See's translucent prose style gleams with the beauty of 19th century Chinese culture but also makes us burn with indignation at its sexist ugliness and injustice. By bringing the secret world of these Chinese women into vivid relief, See has conjured up an alien world that is the better for being lost."— *Los Angeles Times*]

Other books I enjoyed:

Dry, by Augustine Burroughs

The Glass Castle: A Memoir, by Jeannette Walls

Bud Not Buddy, by Christopher Paul Curtis

Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis [**The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963** is a 1995 book written by Christopher Paul Curtis about an African American family living in Flint, Michigan who go to their relative's home in Birmingham, Alabama in the year 1963, hence the title. The book was Curtis' first novel, and received a Newbery Honor. The book is based on the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing.—Wikipedia]

Elijah of Bruxton by Christopher Paul Curtis

Miranda Rensberger:

I recommend anything by Julia Alvarez, but especially her first novel, **In the Time of the Butterflies**, and her most recent one, **Saving the World**. *In the Time of the Butterflies* is based on the true story of four sisters in the Dominican Republic who became instrumental in the resistance movement against the dictator Trujillo. *Saving the World*, which I just finished, has two plots intertwined. The first is again based on historical fact, about an expedition that left Spain in 1803, yes 1803, to carry a vaccine for smallpox around the world. They were often hampered by untrusting officials, and more often by the leader's ego. Then there's the ethical consideration of using young orphans as the carriers for the vaccine, although given the limitations they had to work with it was really the only option they had. The other plot is the story of a frustrated Dominican-American writer (who, it eventually becomes clear, is not Alvarez) writing the story of the expedition while her husband goes to the Dominican Republic to do humanitarian work, which turns out to be quite dangerous.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of my newest favorite authors. I've only read three of her books so far, but I've got two more in my pile. **The Conch Bearer** is basically your standard quest-fantasy plot, but told much better than usual, and given variety by the fact the the quest originates in Calcutta and ends in the Himalayas. **Mistress of Spices** sort of defies description, but it's about a woman who is able to use Indian spices for magical healing but ends up having to choose between her magical power and her own inner strength. It's one of those books you want to go on forever. I liked these two books so much that I actually bought *The Palace of Illusions* in hardcover. It is based on a legend-cycle that is apparently known all over India; Divakaruni picks out a woman who is a relatively minor character in the legend and makes her the central character of the book.

Terri Seratt

I read a very good novel, **The Space Between Us**, by an Indian author, Thrity Umrigar [Poignant and compelling, evocative and unforgettable, *The Space Between Us* is an intimate portrait of a distant yet familiar world. Set in modern-day India and witnessed through two compelling and achingly real women, the novel shows how the lives of the rich and the poor are intrinsically connected yet vastly removed from each other, and vividly captures how the bonds of womanhood are pitted against the divisions of class and culture.—Harper Collins]

Lois Shirley:

I just today finished reading **Three Cups of Tea** by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. I heartily recommend it. It is the true story of an American man who, after a failed attempt to climb a peak in Afghanistan, promises to return and build a school. He continues seeking to bring peace, not with guns, but with schools.

A great read is Jodi Picoult's new book, **Change of Heart**. She writes this one with the same page-turning qualities found in her other books. This summer I'm trying to read the remaining four Jodi Picoult books I have not yet read, and I'm just finishing a little fun book titled **Prize Winner from Defiance, Ohio: How my Mother Raised Ten Children on Twenty-Five Words or Less** by Terry Ryan. It's a real bit of nostalgia for the fifties and the advertising of that time.

Karen Thomas Smith:

I recommend **Ghost Plane: The True Story of the CIA Torture Program** by Stephen Grey (2006). Stephen Grey, a journalist lauded by Amnesty International, has put together a deeply disturbing account of the dark side of the war on terror which has left the US morally bankrupt in the community of nations. His findings were made public first in 2005, then more widely in 2007 after the European Union had launched inquiries and the story hit the mainstream press in places like Morocco. The full account is chilling, but, in my opinion, very important for American citizens to know.

King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa by Adam Hochschild (1999) Again, this is non-fiction that reads as fluidly as fine fiction and tells an important and nearly forgotten story of 20th century slavery and human rights abuse on a massive scale in Congo. It is also a story of bravery, especially that of E.D. Morel who let the fight to expose the lie of Leopold's Congo and end the injustice. Hochschild goes on to explore the legacy of brutality and injustice in Congo in which the US became embroiled in the Cold War. (I was unaware that Eisenhower himself had signed an assassination order for Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first democratically elected President, and was shocked to learn that a CIA officer drove around Kinshasa with Lumumba's body in the trunk of his car...) Again, a must-read in my book.

By the way, many thanks to whomever recommended **The Hummingbird's Daughter** at Christmas. I just read it during my fast USA trip. Powerful.

I just bought this online! Thanks, Janie. You have never led me astray.

Years ago, I read Geraldine Brooks' **Nine Parts of Desire**, looking at women in Islam; Brooks is a journalist, a fine writer, and someone who cares about matters of the spirit. She has written a new novel called **People of the Book** about an ancient copy of the Passover Haggadah protected over centuries by Jews, Christians and Muslims which became known in the Bosnian war (that's the historical part). It has been touted as one of the best books of 2008. I'm trying to wait until it comes out in paperback. I really miss public libraries!

Elizabeth Wilson

I'd recommend Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* or Johnathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*

They are both young fiction authors; they aren't for everybody, but I loved them. I also ALWAYS love David Sedaris.

When You Are Engulfed in Flames, by David Sedaris
Enjoy reading!