

# *Books for Brain Power*

A.k.a. Traci's Über-Cool booklist

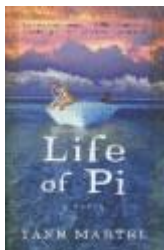
## Fiction



***Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri.** A great collection of short stories that won a Pulitzer Prize, and it actually deserves it. These stories mainly compare and contrast the modern world with the echoes of India's politics and culture. (Short Stories) (Modern India)



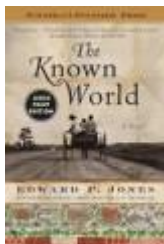
***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon.** Fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone, raised in a working-class home by parents who can barely cope with their child's quirks, is mathematically gifted and socially hopeless. Late one night, Christopher comes across his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork. Outraged, he decides to find the murderer. (Fiction) (Mystery)



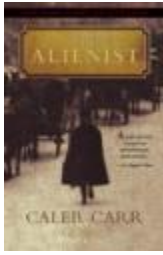
***Life of Pi* by Yann Martel.** In his 16th year, Pi sets sail with his family and some of their menagerie to start a new life in Canada. Halfway to Midway Island, the ship sinks into the Pacific, leaving Pi stranded on a life raft with a hyena, an orangutan, an injured zebra, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. After the beast dispatches the others, Pi is left to survive for 227 days with his large feline companion on the 26-foot-long raft. He must use all his knowledge, wits, and faith to keep himself alive. (Fiction)



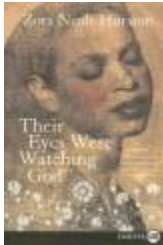
***The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.** This is the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted. (Fiction) (Modern Afghan)



***Known World* by Edward P. Jones.** This story, set in Manchester County, Virginia, 20 years before the Civil War began, depicts Caldonia Townsend, an educated black slaveowner and the widow of a well-loved young farmer named Henry, whose parents had bought their own freedom and then freed their son only to watch him buy himself a slave as soon as he had saved enough money. (Fiction) (African American) (Historical US)



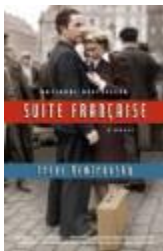
***Alienist* by Caleb Carr.** Set in New York City in 1896, this story depicts a serial killer on the loose, gruesomely preying upon cross-dressing boy prostitutes. Reform-minded police commissioner Theodore Roosevelt, the same T.R. who later became president, is determined to catch the killer. In order to do so, he assembles an unconventional group of investigators headed by "alienist" Dr. Lazlo Kreizler. (Mystery) (Historical US)



***Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston.** This is a luminous and haunting novel about Janie Crawford, a Southern Black woman in the 1930's, whose journey from a free-spirited girl to a woman of independence and substance has inspired writers and readers for close to 70 years. This poetic and graceful love story, rooted in Black folk traditions and steeped in mythic realism, celebrates boldly and brilliantly African-American culture and heritage. (Fiction) (African American) (Historical US)



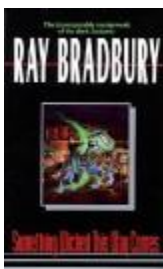
***Native Son* by Richard Wright.** Bigger Thomas, a 20 year-old black man, is uneducated, unsophisticated, and unemployed. When a wealthy family offers him a chauffeur's position, Bigger is torn between gratitude for the job and anger over his subservient status. On his first evening, the family's daughter orders Bigger to spend a drunken night on the town with her and a gentleman friend. By morning, the young woman is dead. (Fiction) (African American)



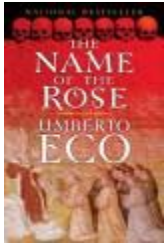
***Suite Française* by Irene Nemirovsky.** This is a collection of five novels that chronicle the connecting lives of a disparate clutch of Parisians. The first novel, *Storm in June*, depicts a snobbish author, a venal banker, a noble priest shepherding churlish orphans, a foppish aesthete, and a loving lower-class couple fleeing city comforts for the chaotic countryside, mere hours ahead of the advancing Germans. The second, *Dolce*, set in 1941 in a farming village under German occupation, tells how peasant farmers, their pretty daughters, and petit bourgeois collaborationists co-existed with their Nazi rulers. (Historical France) (Short Stories/Novella) (WWII)



***Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick.** It's America in 1962. Slavery is legal once again. The few Jews who still survive hide under assumed names. In San Francisco, the *I Ching* is as common as the Yellow Pages. All of the present circumstances have been set in place because some 20 years earlier the United States lost a war, and Nazi Germany and Japan now occupy it jointly. (Science Fiction)



***Something Wicked This Way Comes* by Ray Bradbury.** This is a memorable story of two boys, James Nightshade and William Halloway, and the evil that grips their small Midwestern town with the arrival of a "dark carnival" one autumn midnight. Through intense struggle, these two innocents, both age 13, save the souls of the town as well as their own. This book is a compelling read based on timeless themes. (Horror) (Science Fiction) (Fiction)



***Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco.** In 1327, Brother William of Baskerville arrives to investigate heresy among the monks in an Italian abbey; however, a series of bizarre murders overshadows the mission. Within the mystery is a tale of books, librarians, patrons, censorship, and the search for truth in a period of tension between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. (Mystery) (Historical Middle Ages Italy)



***The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold.** When we first meet Susie Salmon, she is already in heaven. Everything she ever wanted appears as soon as she thinks of it, except the thing she most wants, to be back with the people she loved on Earth. In the weeks following her death, Susie watches life on Earth continuing without her, school friends trading rumors about her disappearance, her family holding out hope that she'll be found, and her killer trying to cover his tracks. (Fiction)

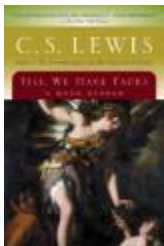


***Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card.** Ender Wiggin is one of a group of children bred to be a military genius and save Earth from an inevitable attack by aliens, known as "buggers." Ender becomes unbeatable in war games and seems poised to lead Earth to triumph over the buggers. Meanwhile, his brother and sister plot to wrest power from Ender. (Science Fiction)

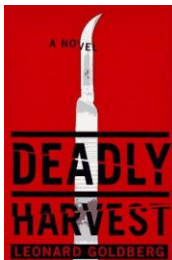


***Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood.** The United States has undergone a nuclear war, and the government is now a strict and dangerous political scene, where any type of crime can result in an execution and a public hanging on "The Wall." Not only that, but women are made secondhand citizens and are no longer able to hold jobs, make money, read or write. This story is told through the eyes of Offred, a Handmaid, or a surrogate mother of sorts, who is appointed to an infertile couple in order to get pregnant and help boost the population. (Science Fiction)

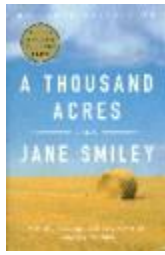
(Fiction)



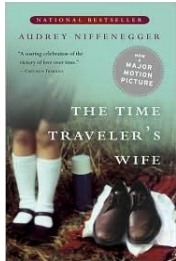
***Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis.** This is a tale of two princesses, one beautiful and one unattractive, and the struggle between sacred and profane love. This work is Lewis's re-working of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. (Fiction)



***Deadly Harvest* by Leonard Goldberg.** When the sister of forensic pathologist Joanna Blalock needs a liver transplant, Joanna seeks the professional assistance of a highly acclaimed organization that finds replacement organs. Unfortunately, her investigation of the company uncovers the diabolical schemes behind Donors International's acquisition of the ideal transplants. A conspiracy is un-covered that will send shockwaves throughout the medical world. (Mystery)



***Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley.** Aging Larry Cook announces his intention to turn over his 1,000-acre farm, one of the largest in Zebulon County, Iowa, to his three daughters, Caroline, Ginny, and Rose. A man of harsh sensibilities, he carves Caroline out of the deal because she has the nerve to be less than enthusiastic about her father's generosity. While Larry Cook deteriorates into a pathetic drunk, his daughters are left to cope with the often grim realities of life on a family farm, from battering husbands to cutthroat lenders. (Fiction)



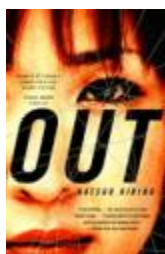
***The Time Traveler's Wife*, by Audrey Niffenegger** Young lovers often believe themselves crossed by fate or by time, but those in Niffenegger's spirited first novel have more reason than most. Henry suffers from Chrono-Impairment—a quasi-medical condition that catapults him, unwillingly, from one random point in time to another. Clare first meets him in 1977, when she is six and he materializes near her parents' garden as a thirty-six-year-old from 2000; he returns regularly throughout her childhood from different times in their shared future. At last, when Clare is twenty and Henry twenty-eight, they meet in his present, and the relationship begins in earnest. But romance proves even trickier than usual when one person keeps vanishing to distant, and occasionally dangerous, times. Niffenegger plays ingeniously in her temporal hall of mirrors, but fails to make the connection between the lovers as compelling as their odd predicament. *From The New Yorker.* (Nonfiction)



***Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole.** Meet Ignatius J. Reilly, a 30-year-old medievalist living at home with his mother in New Orleans. Reilly pens his magnum opus on Big Chief writing pads, which he keeps hidden under his bed, and he relays to anyone who will listen the traumatic experience he once had on a Greyhound Scenicruiser bound for Baton Rouge. However, Ignatius's quiet life of tyrannizing his mother and writing his endless comparative history screeches to a halt when he is almost arrested by the overeager Patrolman Mancuso who mistakes him for a vagrant. Afterwards, Reilly is then involved in a car accident with his tipsy mother behind the wheel. One thing leads to another, and before he knows it, he needs a (gasp!) job. (Fiction)



***Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison.** This is the story of the Breedloves, a poor black family living in Lorain, Ohio in the early 1940s. Each chapter tells something different: the journey of the dad, Cholly, from curious young boy to a drunk and unloving father, the history of the mother, Pauline and her dreams of movie stars and romance, and the childhood of the children, Sammy and Pecola, and how they deal with life as they've been given. ( Fiction) (African American)



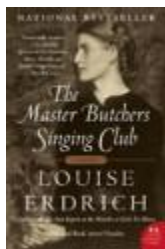
***Out* by Natsuo Kirino.** This is the story of Yayoi, the youngest and prettiest of four women who work the night shift in a Tokyo factory, who strangles her philandering gambler husband with his own belt in an explosion of rage. Afterwards, she turns instinctively for help to her co-worker Masako, an older and wiser woman whose own family life has fallen apart in less dramatic fashion. To help her cut up and get rid of the dead body, Masako recruits Yoshie and Kuniko, two fellow factory workers caught up in other kinds of domestic traps. (Mystery) (Japan)



***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe.** This is a relentlessly unsentimental rendering of Nigerian tribal life before and after the coming of colonialism. Achebe sketches a world in which violence, war, and suffering exist, but are balanced by a strong sense of tradition, ritual, and social coherence. (Fiction) (Nigeria)



***Yellow Raft in Blue Water* by Michael Dorris.** Three generations of Native American women deal with the trials of life and their interactions with each other set against the obscene and the presence of the men in their lives. (Fiction) (Native American)



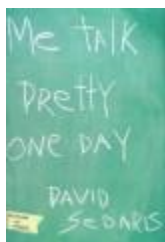
***The Master Butchers Singing Club* by Louise Erdrich.** After German soldier Fidelis Waldvogel returns home from World War I to marry his best friend's pregnant widow, he packs up his father's butcher knives and sets sail for America. He settles in Argus, North Dakota, where he sets up a meat shop with his wife Eva, who quickly befriends the struggling yet resourceful Delphine Watzka. Delphine, who runs a vaudeville show with her balancing partner Cyprian Lazarre, has returned home to Argus to care for her alcoholic father. (Fiction) (Native American)



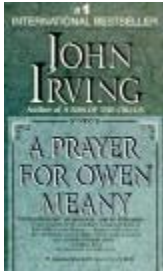
***The Corner of His Eye* by Dean Koontz.** The premise behind Koontz's novel is that there exist multitudes of alternate universes, each varying only slightly from the next. Every act of good and evil magnifies as they affect others. (Mystery) (Horror) (Science Fiction)



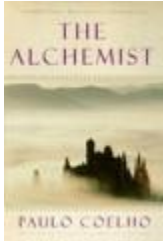
***Woman in Dunes* by Kobo Abe.** This is the story of an amateur entomologist who wanders alone into a remote seaside village in pursuit of a rare beetle he wants to add to his collection; however, but the townspeople take him prisoner. They lower him into the sand-pit home of a young widow, a pariah in the poor community, who the villagers have condemned to a life of shoveling back the ever-encroaching dunes that threaten to bury the town. (Fiction)



***Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris.** Sedaris's caustic gift has not deserted him in his fourth book, which mines poignant comedy from his peculiar childhood in North Carolina, his bizarre career path, and his move with his lover to France. Though his anarchic inclination to digress is his glory, Sedaris does have a theme in these reminiscences, the inability of humans to communicate. (Short Stories) (Fiction) (Travel)



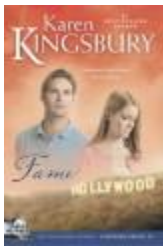
***Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving.** Owen Meany is a dwarfish boy with a strange voice who accidentally kills his best friend's mom with a baseball and believes that he is an instrument of God, to be redeemed by martyrdom. (Fiction)



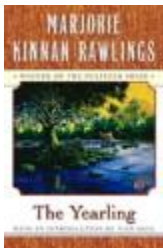
***Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.** Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd, dreams of a distant treasure in the Egyptian pyramids. He learns about the alchemists, men who believed that if a metal were heated for many years, it would free itself of all its individual properties and what was left would be the "Soul of the World." (Fiction)



***Where the Heart Is* by Billie Letts.** A funny thing happens to Novalee Nation on her way to Bakersfield, California. Her ne'er-do-well boyfriend, Willie Jack Pickens, abandons her in an Oklahoma Wal-Mart and takes off on his own, leaving her with just 10 dollars and the clothes on her back. Not that hard luck is anything new to Novalee, who is "seventeen, seven months pregnant, thirty-seven pounds overweight--and superstitious about sevens. (Fiction)



***Fame (Firstborn Series #1)* by Karen Kingsbury** Dayne, Hollywood's number one hunk, wants to work opposite someone who exudes innocence in his new romantic comedy, so he persuades his casting agent to bring an unknown woman from Bloomington, Ind., for an audition—Katy. Katy once aspired to be a famous actress—she filmed a made-for-TV movie—but now she directs a children's theater. Indeed, it was through the theater that Dayne first discovered Katy: on a trip to Bloomington, she had captured his attention during a performance. Because this is the first in a planned five-volume series, none of the plot lines tie up neatly. By the end, Kingsbury has revealed that Dayne has some deep, secret family links to Bloomington; presumably these connections will be explored in subsequent novels. (Fiction) (Christian)



***The Yearling* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings** Fighting off a pack of starving wolves, wrestling alligators in the swamp, romping with bear cubs, drawing off the venom of a giant rattlesnake bite with the heart of a fresh-killed deer--it's all in a day's work for the Baxter family of the Florida scrublands. But young Jody Baxter is not content with these electrifying escapades, or even with the cozy comfort of home with Pa and Ma. He wants a pet, a friend with whom he can share his quiet cogitations and his corn pone. Jody gets his pet, a frisky fawn he calls Flag, but that's not all. With Flag comes a year of life lessons, frolicking times, and achingly hard decisions. (Fiction) (Florida)



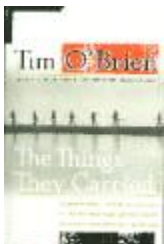
***The Dew Breaker* by Edwidge Danticat** spins a series of related stories around a shadowy central figure, a Haitian immigrant to the U.S. who reveals to his artist daughter that he is not, as she believes, a prison escapee, but a former prison guard, skilled in torture and the other violent control methods of a brutal regime. "Your father was the hunter," he confesses, "he was not the prey." Into this brilliant opening, Danticat tucks the seeds of all that follows: the tales of the prison guard's victims, of their families, of those who recognize him decades later on the streets of New York, of those who never see him again, but are so haunted that they believe he's still pursuing them. (A dew breaker, we learn, is a government functionary who comes in the early morning to arrest someone or to burn a house down, breaking the dew on the grass that he crosses.) (Fiction) (Haitian American)



***The Man Who Smiled* by Henning Mankell** Depressed and world-weary after having killed a man in the line of duty, Detective Kurt Wallander returns from two years of wallowing in guilt to investigate the murders of a father and son, both prominent lawyers. His investigation takes the brooding Swede into an intricate web of deception and horror. (Mystery)



***Mildred Pierce* by James M. Cain** Cain's classic novel of a woman scorned who survives no-good men and a hateful daughter to make it in 1930s Los Angeles. (Mystery) (Noir)



***The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien** *"They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing--these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice.... Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to."* A story told through the letters and equipment hauled through the jungles of Viet Nam, but the story goes way beyond that. (fiction) (Military) (Viet Nam)



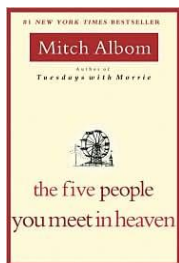
***House Made of Dawn* by Scott Momaday** A young Native-American Indian named Abel, returns to Walatow Reservation in New Mexico from World War II only to discover that he is caught between two worlds. Momaday combines the struggles of Native Americans living in industrial America paired with Kiowa legends and history. (Pulitzer Prize Winner) (Fiction) (Native American)



***Before Women Had Wings* by Connie May Fowler** Avocet Jackson, called Bird, lives with her parents, Billy and Glory Marie, and her older sister, Phoebe, in a roach-infested Florida shack. When Billy, a frustrated country music singer who has squandered his talent in booze, commits suicide, a desperate Glory Marie takes the girls to the outskirts of Tampa, where they move into a dilapidated trailer. Terrorized by her mother's alcohol-fueled rages, Bird is further confused by the fire-and-brimstone strictures of the Bible, which she takes literally. Mixing the squalid details of Bird's life with the child's magical dreams of hope and healing, this book graphically details the abuse. (Fiction) (Florida) (Child abuse)

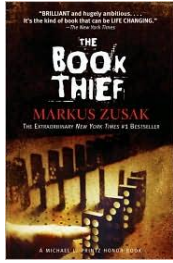


***Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier:** This riveting tale of fear, suspicion, and love opens as the unnamed narrator reminisces about her former home, the grand English estate, Manderley. She had been young and shy, a lady's companion, when she met the wealthy recent widow, Maxim de Winter, fell in love with him, and married him in a matter of weeks. They returned to his home, where she was immediately overwhelmed with the responsibilities of running the house and dealing with her forbidding housekeeper as well as the memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca. She had been beautiful, sophisticated, and supremely confident, and the narrator felt lost and helpless in comparison. Her new husband was strangely distant to her, until a horrible secret was revealed that would change their lives and the very existence of Manderley. (Fiction) (Mystery)



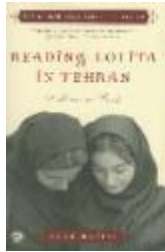
***The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, by Mitch Albom** Sports columnist, radio talk-show host, and author of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Albom has written a parable quite different from his best-selling memoir about his old professor but with the potential to follow it as a favorite of the book club circuit. At an oceanside amusement part, 83-year-old maintenance mechanic Eddie is killed while trying to save a little girl. Instead of floating through the cliched tunnel-and-light territory, Eddie meets five people whose lives intersected with his during his time on Earth. The novel comes down firmly on the side of those who feel that life matters, that what we do as individuals matters, and that in the end there will be a quiz. The touchy-feely phobic need not be afraid: this is not judgmental ax-grinding; nor does it favor any religion. Before you finish reading, you can't help thinking about your own life-Albom's whole point, of course. *Morrie* fans will want to read this first novel, and readers daring to examine their own lives may enjoy as well. For all public libraries.-Mary K. Bird-Guilliams, Wichita P.L., KS Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information. *From Library Journal*. (Inspirational)



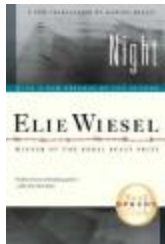


***The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak** Australian-born Markus Zusak grew up sitting at the kitchen table, glued to his chair, listening to his mother's tales of her childhood in Nazi Germany. Such tales would later serve as a springboard for his unusual novel about the power of words to both destroy and comfort. A daring work in the adventurous spirit of *The Shadow of the Wind*, this novel has a bizarre narrator: Death. Drawn into a tense and dangerous historical era, readers discover how Liesel Meminger first learns to read and is transformed into the "book thief," stealing books before they can be burned by the Nazis or confiscated from personal libraries. When her family decides to hide a Jew in the basement, Liesel holds out hope to him in the form of her two most precious commodities: words and stories. *From Barnes and Noble.*

## Non-Fiction



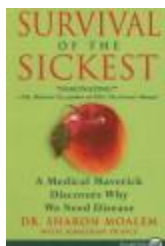
***Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Azar Nafisi.** A woman's book club meets in secret and creates an apt comparison between Iranian political and social policies and classics of literature. (History) (Modern Iran)



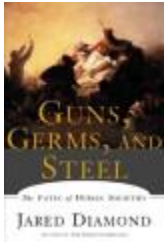
***Night* by Elie Wiesel.** A scholarly pious teenager is wracked with guilt at having survived the horror of the Holocaust and the genocidal campaign that consumed his family. His memories of the nightmare world of the death camps present him with an intolerable question, "How can the God he once so fervently believed in have allowed these monstrous events to occur?" (WWII) (Jewish Holocaust) (Germany)



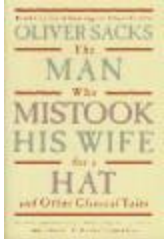
***The Hot Zone* by Richard Preston.** This is a dramatic and chilling story of an Ebola virus outbreak in a suburban Washington, D.C. laboratory with descriptions of frightening historical epidemics of rare and lethal viruses. More hair-raising than anything Hollywood could think of because it's all true. (Medical)



***Survival of the Sickest* by Sharon Moalem.** Is there a reason for such afflictions as diabetes, sickle-cell anemia, and antibiotic-resistant infection? If every living thing dances to the same two-step imperative, survive and reproduce, then even the diseases our increasingly homogeneous society struggles to conquer, once must have served a purpose. (Medical)



***Guns Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond.** Jared Diamond argues that the Earth's geography has been the sole determining factor in the evolution and development of all the world's civilizations. (Medical) (Biology) (Geography) (Socio-Economics)



***Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks.** Sacks explores neurological disorders with a novelist's skill and an appreciation of his patients as human beings. These cases illustrate the tragedy of losing neurological faculties such as: memory, powers of visualization, word-recognition, or the also devastating fate of those suffering an excess of neurological functions causing such hyper states as chorea, tics, Tourette's Syndrome, and Parkinsonism. (Medical)

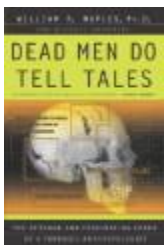


***Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* by David Cordingly.** Though literature, films, and folklore have romanticized pirates as gallant seaman who hunted for treasure in exotic locales, David Cordingly reveals the facts behind the legends of such outlaws as Captain Kidd, Blackbeard, and Calico Jack. Even stories about buried treasure are fictitious! Pirate captains were often sadistic villains, and crews endured barbarous tortures. Crews were constantly threatened with the possibility of death by hanging, drowning in a storm, or surviving a shipwreck on a hostile coast. (History)

(Caribbean)



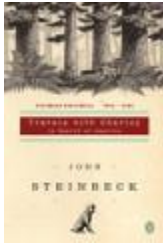
***We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* by Philip Gourevitch.** "The best reason I have come up with for looking more closely into Rwanda's stories is that ignoring them makes me even more uncomfortable about existence and my place in it." The stories are unrelentingly horrifying and filled with "the idiocy, the waste, the sheer wrongness" of one group of Rwandans (Hutus) methodically exterminating another (Tutsis)-800,000 people killed in 100 days. (History) (Modern Rwanda)



***Dead Men Do Tell Tales: The Strange and Fascinating Cases of a Forensic Anthropologist* by William R. Maples.** Noted forensic anthropologist Maples, whose specialty is the study of bones, and freelance journalist Browning recount Maples's criminal and anthropological investigations over the past 20 years. The book's strength is that it is a snapshot of the world of forensic scientists, which vividly portrays the siege mentality of many of them when their objective data is used for purposes other than ascertaining the truth about how a victim died. (Medical) (True Crime)



***In Patagonia* by Bruce Chatwin.** Prompted by a piece of reddish animal skin that family legend says is brontosaurus skin which he found in his grandmother's curio cabinet when he was a child, the author ignites himself on a flight of fancy about its origin. This quest leads him to an expansive area of wild beauty and adventure, Patagonia on South America's southernmost tip. (Travel) (History) (Argentina)



***Travels with Charlie in Search of America* by John Steinbeck.** At age 58, John Steinbeck and his venerable standard poodle, Charley, set out on a journey across America in a camper. For three months, these companions traveled the nation meeting friends, strangers, and relatives. Throughout their adventure, they immerse themselves in the fabric of the country as it was at that time. (Travel) (US)



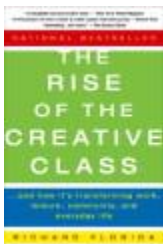
***In a Sunburned Country* by Bill Bryson.** Bill Bryson tells the story of his exploits in Australia, where A-bombs go off unnoticed, prime ministers disappear into the surf, and cheery citizens co-exist with the world's deadliest creatures: toxic caterpillars, aggressive seashells, crocodiles, sharks, snakes, and the deadliest of them all, the dreaded box jellyfish. And that's just the beginning, as Bryson treks through sun-baked deserts and up endless coastlines, crisscrossing the "under-discovered" Down Under in search of all things interesting. (Travel) (Australia)



***House of Rain: Tracking a Vanished Civilization Across the American Southwest* by Craig Childs.** Although less well known than the Mayans, the Anasazi, who flourished in the region now known as New Mexico, also vanished without a trace. Now, eight centuries after their thriving, this 2,000-year-old civilization disappeared as though it had never existed, naturalist and adventurer Childs undertakes to find out where the Anasazi went and why. (Ancient History) (US)



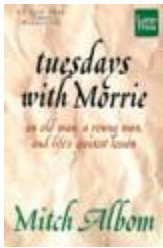
***Love and Hatred* by William Shrier.** Occasionally quoting from Tolstoy's novels, Shrier draws on the diaries, letters, and testimony of Leo, Sonya, their children, and associates for this darkly magnificent dual portrait. (Biography) (Russia)



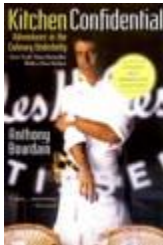
***The Rise of the Creative Class* by Richard Florida.** Florida defines a new class of individuals, whose members include scientists, engineers, architects, educators, writers, artists, and entertainers, as those whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and new creative content. In general, this group shares common characteristics such as creativity, individuality, diversity, and merit. The author estimates that this group has 38 million members, constitutes more than 30 percent of the U.S. workforce, and profoundly influences work and lifestyle issues. (Business)(Economics)(Social Theory)



***The Warrior Woman: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* by Maxine Hong Kingston.** Split between two worlds, Kingston writes of growing up in America coupled with her Chinese heritage. She weaves the stories of the women in her family with Chinese mythology. (Autobiography) (Chinese American)



***Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson* by Mitch Albom.** This true story about the love between a spiritual mentor and his pupil reminds us of the affection and gratitude that many of us still feel for the significant mentors of our past. It also plays out a fantasy many of us have entertained: what would it be like to look those people up again, tell them how much they meant to us, and maybe even resume the mentorship? (Biography) (Education)



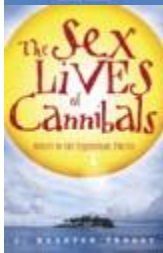
***Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* by Anthony Bourdain.** Most diners believe that their sublime sliver of seared foie gras, topped with an ethereal buckwheat blini and a drizzle of piquant huckleberry sauce, was created by a culinary artist of the highest order, a sensitive highly refined executive chef. The truth is more brutal. It is more likely, writes Anthony Bourdain in *Kitchen Confidential*, that elegant three-star concoction is the collaborative effort of a team of "wacked-out moral degenerates, dope fiends, refugees, a thuggish assortment of drunks, sneak thieves, sluts, and psychopaths." Such is the muscular view of the culinary trenches from one who has been groveling in them, with obvious sado-masochistic pleasure for more than 20 years. (Food) (Biography)



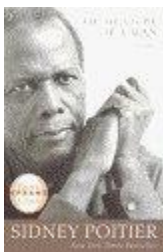
***On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker* by A'Leia Bundles.** The daughter of slaves, C.J. Walker (1867-1919) was married at 14 and became a widow with a baby daughter at 20. But by the time she was 40, Walker was the first female African American millionaire, thanks to her popular hair-care products for black women and her brilliance at marketing them. (US History) (African American) (Business) (Biography)



***Kon Tiki* by Thor Heyerdahl.** *Kon-Tiki* is the record of an astonishing adventure, a journey of 4,300 nautical miles across the Pacific Ocean by raft. Intrigued by Polynesian folklore, biologist Thor Heyerdahl suspected that the South Sea Islands had been settled by an ancient race from thousands of miles to the east, led by a mythical hero, Kon-Tiki. He decided to prove his theory by duplicating the legendary voyage. (History) (Travel) (Anthropology) (South Pacific)



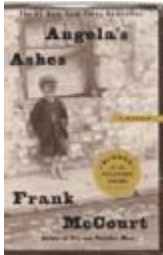
***The Sex Lives of Cannibals: Adrift in the Equatorial Pacific* by J. Maarten Troost.** At 26, Troost followed his wife to Kiribati, a tiny island nation in the South Pacific. Kiribati is the kind of place where one would think dolphins frolic in lagoons and days end with glorious sunsets; however, Kiribati was not quite paradise. It was polluted, overpopulated, and scorchingly sunny. One night, he's doing his best funky chicken with Kiribati; the next morning, he's on the high seas contemplating a toilet. (Travel) (South Pacific)



***The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography* by Sidney Poitier.** In this luminous memoir, a true American icon looks back on his celebrated life and career. Poitier's body of work is arguably the most morally significant in cinematic history, and the power and influence of that work are indicative of the character of the man behind the many storied roles. (Caribbean) (Autobiography)



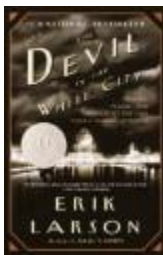
***Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynne Truss.** Her approach falls between the descriptive and prescriptive schools of grammar study, but is closer, perhaps, to the latter. A self-professed "stickler," Truss recommends that anyone putting an apostrophe in a possessive "its"-as in "the dog chewed it's bone"-should be struck by lightning and chopped to bits. Employing a chatty tone that ranges from pleasant rant to gentle lecture to bemused dismay, Truss dissects common errors that grammar mavens have long deplored and makes elegant arguments for increased attention to punctuation correctness. (Grammar)



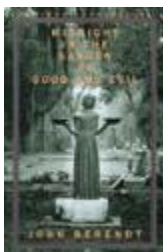
***Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt.** "Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood," writes Frank McCourt in *Angela's Ashes*. Born in Brooklyn in 1930 to recent Irish immigrants Malachy and Angela McCourt, Frank grew up in Limerick after his parents returned to Ireland because of poor prospects in America. It turns out that prospects were not so great back in the old country either, not with Malachy for a father, a chronically unemployed and nearly unemployable alcoholic. (Ireland) (Autobiography)



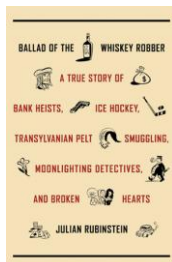
***Finding George Orwell in Burma* by Emma Larkin.** The author, an American journalist fluent in Burmese writing under a pseudonym, notes that there's a joke in Burma (now Myanmar) that Orwell wrote not one novel about the country, but three: *Burmese Days*, *Animal Farm*, and *1984*. Providing an accurate representation of Burmese life proves daunting, as Larkin encounters a nation bristling with informants and paranoia. Her language skills, however, allow her to glean information and mingle with the country's reserved and cautious intelligentsia. In addition to Larkin's depiction of the political landscape, the book also features wonderfully vibrant descriptions of the land and people. (History) (Modern Asia/ Burma) (Politics) (Travel)



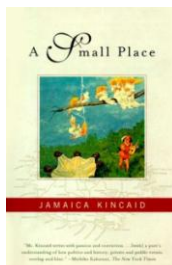
***The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson.** Not long after Jack the Ripper haunted the ill-lit streets of 1888 London, H.H. Holmes (born Herman Webster Mudgett) dispatched somewhere between 27 and 200 people, mostly single young women in the churning new metropolis of Chicago. Many of the murders occurred during (and exploited) the city's finest moment, the World's Fair of 1893. (US History) (True Crime)



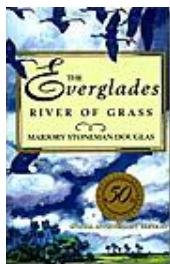
***Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt.** "Eccentrics thrive in Savannah," Berendt writes, and he proves the point by introducing Luther Diggers, a thwarted inventor who just might be plotting to poison the town's water supply, Joe Odom, a jovial jackleg lawyer and squatter non-pareil, and, most memorably, the Lady Chablis, whom you really should meet for yourself. Then, on May 2, 1981, Jim Williams, a wealthy antique dealer and Savannah's host with the most, kills his "friend" Danny Hansford. If those quotes make you suspect something, you should. (True Crime) ( Modern US)



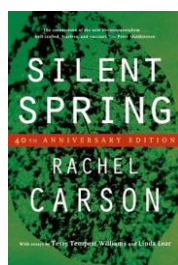
***Ballad of the Whiskey Robber: A True Story of Bank Heists, Ice Hockey, Transylvanian Pelt Smuggling, Moonlighting Detectives, and Broken Hearts* by Julian Rubinstein.** This story of a bank robber who captured a nation's sympathy in post-Communist Hungary is a rollicking tale told with glee and flair. Attila Ambrus sneaked over the border from Romania into Hungary in the waning days of Communist rule. After talking his way onto a Hungarian hockey team, he turned to robbery to make some cash in the Wild West atmosphere of the early 1990's in Eastern Europe. (True Crime) (Modern European) (History)



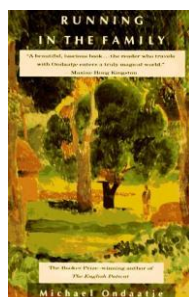
***A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid** In this thought-provoking essay, she appeals to the reader/tourist to look beyond the beautiful blues of the ocean and into the local people's lives, to question why Antigua does not have a decent library or hospital or sewer or school system. She believes the corruption of the government is a direct result of the power of money and examples set by the British occupation. She asks: "Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seemed to have learned from you is how to corrupt our society and how to be tyrants?... You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearance's sake, ask first." When you take the time to look into this small, beautiful place you eventually have to look inside yourself, to think about western colonialization and standards and their impact on non-western people. (Political Science) (Caribbean) (Sociology)



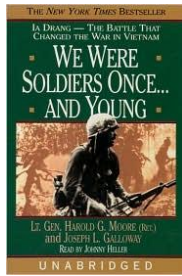
***The Everglades: River of Grass* by Marjory Stoneman Douglas** Remote and seldom visited, the Everglades nonetheless had a rich human history: several Native American peoples, Spanish explorers, French and English pirates, runaway slaves, and Anglo trappers and fishermen all came to this limestone basin and made their lives among its slowly moving water and fast-growing sawgrass. It is this human history, more than the life histories of the Everglades' deer, panthers, scorpions, serpents, and alligators, that occupies most of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas's pages; even so, her lyrical if sometimes sentimental account of the area's flora and fauna makes for fine reading. (Florida History) (Ecology)



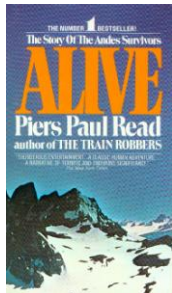
***Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson** Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is now 35 years old. Written over the years 1958 to 1962, it took a hard look at the effects of insecticides and pesticides on songbird populations throughout the United States, whose declining numbers yielded the silence to which her title attests. "What happens in nature is not allowed to happen in the modern, chemical-drenched world," she writes, "where spraying destroys not only the insects but also their principal enemy, the birds. When later there is a resurgence of the insect population, as almost always happens, the birds are not there to keep their numbers in check." The publication of her impeccably reported text helped change that trend by setting off a wave of environmental legislation and galvanizing the nascent ecological movement. It is justly considered a classic, and it is well worth rereading today. (Ecology)



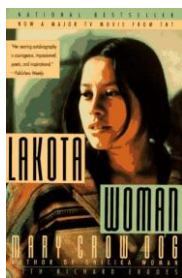
***Running in the Family* by Michael Ondaatje** "Running in the Family" is an impressionistically written and reflective memoir of Michael Ondaatje's eccentric Ceylonese family. (Biography) (Ceylon)



***We Were Soldiers Once...and Young: Ia Drang - the Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam* by Harold G. Moore** In November 1965, some 450 men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, under the command of Lt. Col. Hal Moore, were dropped by helicopter into a small clearing in the Ia Drang Valley. They were immediately surrounded by 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers. Three days later, only two and a half miles away, a sister battalion was chopped to pieces. Together, these actions at the landing zones X-Ray and Albany constituted one of the most savage and significant battles of the Vietnam War. How these men persevered--sacrificed themselves for their comrades and never gave up--makes a vivid portrait of war at its most inspiring and devastating. (Viet Nam War) (Military History)



***Alive* by Piers Paul Read** The plane crashed in the Andes mountains on Argentinean territory. By their tenth day in the Andes, the limited food supplies, which they had rationed with all the care of a miser, had virtually run out. Starving, they voiced what they all knew to be true, but had not dared to voice before. They must eat, or they would die. The only thing left for them to eat, however, was abhorrent and deeply repugnant to them. Their fallen comrades would now provide the means of their sustenance. (Modern Argentinean History) (Adventure) (Survivalism)



***Lakota Woman* by Mary Crow Dog** Mary Brave Bird gave birth to a son during the 71-day siege of Wounded Knee in 1973, which ended with a bloody assault by U.S. Marshalls and police. Seventeen years old at the time, she married fellow activist Leonard Crow Dog, medicine man and spiritual leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Her girlhood, a vicious circle of drinking and fighting, was marked by poverty, racism and a rape at 14. She ran away from a boarding school where students were beaten to induce them to give up native customs and speech. The authors write of AIM's infiltration by FBI agents, of Mary Crow Dog helping her husband endure prison, of Indian males' macho attitudes. The book also describes AIM's renewal of spirituality as manifested in sweat lodges, peyote ceremonies, sacred songs and the Ghost Dance ritual. (Modern US History) (Native American) (Politics)



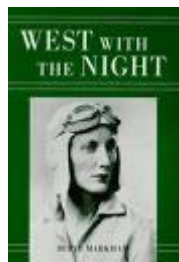
***Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* by Jon Krakauer** *Into Thin Air* is a riveting first-hand account of a catastrophic expedition up Mount Everest. In March 1996, *Outside* magazine sent veteran journalist and seasoned climber Jon Krakauer on an expedition led by celebrated Everest guide Rob Hall. Despite the expertise of Hall and the other leaders, by the end of summit day eight people were dead. (Adventure) (Survivalism) (Asian History)



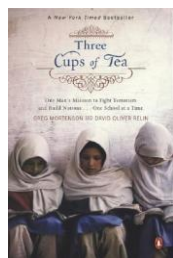
***Last King of Scotland* by Giles Foden** The title character of Giles Foden's debut novel, *The Last King of Scotland*, is none other than Idi Amin, the former dictator of Uganda. Told from the viewpoint of Nicholas Garrigan, Amin's personal physician, the novel chronicles the hell that was Uganda in the 1970s. Garrigan, the only son of a Scots Presbyterian minister, finds himself far away from Fossiemuir when he accepts a post with the Ministry of Health in Uganda. A freak traffic accident involving Amin's sports car and a cow eventually brings the good doctor into the dictator's orbit; a few months later, Garrigan is recalled from his rural hospital and named personal physician to the president. Soon enough, Garrigan finds himself caught between his duty to his patient and growing pressure from his own government to help them control Admin. (Modern Uganda History)



***Geisha: a life* by Mineko Iwasaki** Japan's most famous geisha writes of her training and life. From age five, Iwasaki trained to be a geisha (or, as it was called in her Kyoto district, a geiko), learning the intricacies of a world that is nearly gone. Iwasaki writes of leaving home very young, undergoing rigorous training in dance and other arts and rising to stardom in her profession. She also carefully describes the origins of Kyoto's Gion Kobu district and the geiko system's political and social nuances in the 1960s and '70s. Arthur Golden (*Memoirs of a Geisha*) interviewed Iwasaki for his book, and later was sued buy her for misrepresenting the world of the geisha. (Modern Japan History)

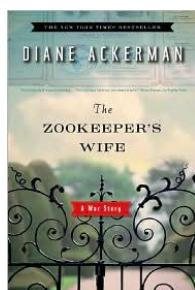


***West Until Night* by Beryl Markham** The story opens with the author being called in the middle of the night to deliver a tank of oxygen to a dying man. The reason she has been called is because her business is flying a small bi-plane through the wilds of Africa on delivery errands such as these. The flight and subsequent visit with the dying man and his doctor are used to introduce us to Africa - the rich black nights, the stories of her native peoples, the harsh reminder with the appearance of a jackal that "...in Africa there is never any waste." (Aviation) (Modern Africa History)



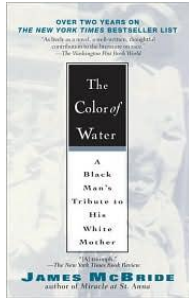
***Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time* by Greg Mortenson**

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. (Modern Asian History) (Education)

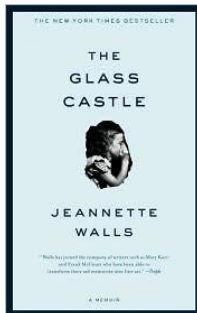


***The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story* by Diane Ackerman** A narrative about a Warsaw animal keeper who saves hundreds of Jews from Nazi gas chambers draws inevitable comparisons with Schindler's List, but Ackerman's artful, almost lyrical book occupies a genre of her own invention. Her narrative interlaces stories of Jan and Antonina Zabinski's improvised sanctuary with telling glimpses into the animal societies their hunted benefactors shared. Ultimately, this is a book about what it means to be human. *From Barnes and Noble* (Nonfiction)

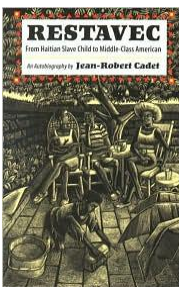




***The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride** As a young black boy in Brooklyn, James McBride wondered why his mother looked different. When he asked her if she was white or black, she would answer, "I'm light-skinned." Finally, when he had become an adult, she told him her story. She was a rabbi's daughter, born in Poland, raised in the American South. McBride's tribute, now published in a 10th anniversary edition, has become a classic in healthy race relations, a topic we are all apparently still learning. *From Barnes and Noble.* (Nonfiction)



***The Glass Castle: A Memoir*, by Jeannette Walls** Gossip columnist Jeanette Walls dishes the dirt on her own troubled youth in this remarkable story of survival against overwhelming odds. The child of charismatic vagabonds who left their offspring to raise themselves, Walls spent decades hiding an excruciating childhood filled with poverty and shocking neglect. But this is no pity party. What shines through on every page of this beautifully written family memoir is Walls's love for her deeply flawed parents and her recollection of occasionally wonderful times.



***Restavec: from Haitian slave child to middle-class American*, by Jean-Robert Cadet** African slaves in Haiti emancipated themselves from French rule in 1804 and created the first independent black republic in the Western Hemisphere. But they reinstated slavery for the most vulnerable members of Haitian society—the children of the poor—by using them as unpaid servants to the wealthy. These children were—and still are—restavecs, a French term whose literal meaning of "staying with" disguises the unremitting labor, abuse, and denial of education that characterizes the children's lives. In this memoir, Jean-Robert Cadet recounts the harrowing story of his youth as a restavec, as well as his inspiring climb to middle-class American life. He vividly describes what it was like to be an unwanted illegitimate child "staying with" a well-to-do family whose physical and emotional abuse was sanctioned by Haitian society. He also details his subsequent life in the United States, where, despite American racism, he put himself through college and found success in the Army, in business, and finally in teaching. (Fiction)