

ANNOTATION by Book Title

1984 by George Orwell

1984 has come and gone, but George Orwell's prophetic, nightmare vision in 1949 of the world we were becoming is timelier than ever. "1984" is still the great modern classic "negative Utopia" - a startling original and haunting novel that creates an imaginary world that is completely convincing from the first sentence to the last four words. No one can deny this novel's power, its hold on the imagination of whole generations, or the power of its admonitions - a power that seems to grow, not lessen, with the passage of time.

Accidental Tourist by Anne Tyler

Scarred by grief after their 12-year-old son's senseless murder (he was shot by a holdup man in a Burger Bonanza), Macon and Sarah Leary are losing their marriage too. Macon is unable to cope when Sarah leaves him, so he settles down "safe among the people he'd started out with," moving back home with two divorced brothers and spinster sister Rose. Author of a series of guidebooks called "Accidental Tourist" for businessmen who hate to travel, Macon journeys from lonely self-absorption to an 'accidental' new life with brassy Muriel, a dog trainer from the Meow Bow Animal Hospital, who renews and claims his heart. Not a character, including Macon's dog Edward, is untouched by delightful eccentricity in this charming story, full of surprises and wisdom.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Hilariously picaresque, epic in scope, alive with the poetry and vigor of the American people, Mark Twain's story about a young boy and his journey down the Mississippi was the first great novel to speak in a truly American voice. Influencing subsequent generations of writers -- from Sherwood Anderson to Twain's fellow Missourian, T.S. Eliot, from Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner to J.D. Salinger -- "Huckleberry Finn," like the river which flows through its pages, is one of the great sources which nourished and still nourishes the literature of America.

Alchemist, The by Paulo Coelho

This story, dazzling in its powerful simplicity and inspiring wisdom, is about an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried in the Pyramids. Along the way he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself king, and an alchemist, all of whom point Santiago in the direction of his quest. No one knows what the treasure is, or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles along the way. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a discovery of the treasure found within. Lush, evocative, and deeply humane, the story of Santiago is an eternal testament to the transformation power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

Alias Grace by Margaret Atwood

A fascinating elaboration of the life of Grace Marks, one of Canada's more infamous killers. As notorious as our own Lizzy Borden, Grace Marks was barely 16 when she and James McDermott were arrested in 1843 for the brutal murder of their employer Thomas Kinnear and his pregnant mistress/housekeeper Nancy Montgomery. The trial was a titillating sensation; McDermott was hanged, and Grace was given the dubious mercy of life imprisonment. Some felt her an innocent dupe, others thought her a cold-blooded murderer; the truth remains elusive. Atwood reimagines Grace's story, and with delicate skill all but replaces history with her chronicle of events. Anchoring the narrative is the arrival of Dr. Simon Jordan, who has come to investigate the sanity of Grace after some 16 years of incarceration. A convert to the new field of psychiatry, Jordan is hoping to help Grace recover her memory of the murders, which she claims no recollection of. He begins by asking for her life story. Grace tells him of her first commission as a laundry maid in a grand house, and of her dear friend Mary, dead at 16 from a botched abortion. On she goes until she calmly relates the events that led up to the murders, and her attempted escape with McDermott afterward. Hypnotism finally "restores" her memory (or is Grace misleading Jordan?), with results that are both shocking and ambiguous.

All he ever Wanted by Anita Shreve

Anita Shreve's *All He Ever Wanted* reads like Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* told from the perspective of the husband. The wife gains a measure of freedom, but how does the repressive, abandoned husband feel about that freedom? Set in the early 1900s in the fictional New England college town of Thrupp, and narrated by the pompous Nicholas Van Tassel, *All He Ever Wanted* is at once an academic satire, a period novel, and a tale of suspense. Shreve's ability to nimbly hop through genres brings a liveliness to this story of love gone depressingly wrong. Van Tassel is an undistinguished professor of rhetoric at Thrupp College and a confirmed bachelor when he meets--in no less flamy a scenario than a hotel fire--the arresting Miss Etna Bliss. Immediately smitten, he woos and wins her. At least, he persuades her to become his wife. But Van Tassel hasn't really won her. Etna keeps her secrets and her feelings to herself. The extent of her withholding only becomes clear after a couple of kids and a decade or so of marriage. Then we find out that she's been creating a secret haven for herself all along. Van Tassel is in turn revealed--through his own priggish, puffed-up sentences--as something of a monster. The book is cleverly done; watching Etna through Van Tassel's eyes is like looking at beautiful bird from a hungry cat's point of view. But Van Tassel's voice might be too well written; he's pedantic and dull and snarky all at once, and by the end we find that we, like Etna, can't bear his company a minute longer.

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Remarque

Paul Baumer enlisted with his classmates in the German army of World War I. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. And as horrible war plods on year after year, Paul holds fast to a single vow: to fight against the principles of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other--if only he can come out of the war alive.

All that Matters by Wayson Choy

Kiam-Kim is three years old when he arrives by ship at Gold Mountain with his father and his grandmother, Poh-Poh, the Old One. It is 1926, and because of famine and civil war in China, they have left their village in Toishan province to become the new family of Third Uncle, a wealthy businessman whose own wife and son are dead. The place known as Gold Mountain is Vancouver, Canada, and Third Uncle needs help in his large Chinatown warehouse. Canada's 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act forces them, and many others, to use false documents, or ghost papers, to get past the 'immigration demons' and become Third Uncle's Gold Mountain family.

All the Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy

John Grady Cole is a 16-year old Texas rancher, and the last of his family's line. Beckoned by the promise of Mexico's rugged beauty, he crosses the Rio Grande with his companion Lacey Rawlins, and soon takes up with the sharp-shooting Jimmy Blevins. But as they struggle to build a life for themselves in a peaceful hacienda, Cole is introduced both to romance and to the world of adult responsibilities.

Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay by Michael Chabon

Chabon revels in the crass yet inventive and comforting world of comic-book superheroes, those masked men with mysterious powers who were born in the wake of the Great Depression and who carried their fans through the horrors of war with the guarantee that good always triumphs over evil. In a luxuriant narrative that is jubilant and purposeful, graceful and complex, hilarious and enrapturing, Chabon chronicles the fantastic adventures of two Jewish cousins, one American, one Czech. It's 1939 and Brooklynite Sammy Klayman dreams of making it big in the growing world of comic books. Joseph Kavalier has never seen a comic book, but he is an accomplished artist versed in the "autoliberation" techniques of his hero, Harry Houdini. He effects a great (and surreal) escape from the Nazis, arrives in New York, and joins forces with Sammy. They rapidly create the Escapist, the first of many superheroes emblematic of their temperaments and predicaments, and attain phenomenal success. But Joe, tormented by guilt and grief for his lost family, abruptly joins the navy, abandoning Sammy, their work, and his lover, the marvelous artist and free spirit Rosa, who, unbeknownst to him, is carrying his child. As Chabon--equally adept at atmosphere, action, dialogue, and cultural commentary--whips up wildly imaginative escapades punctuated by schtick that rivals the best of Jewish comedians, he plumbs the depths of the human heart and celebrates the healing properties of escapism and the "genuine magic of art" with exuberance and wisdom.

American Gods by Neil Gaiman

Shadow gets out of prison early when his wife is killed in a car crash. At a loss, he takes up with a mysterious character called Wednesday, who is much more than he appears. In fact, Wednesday is an old god, once known as Odin the All-father, who is roaming America rounding up his forgotten fellows in preparation for an epic battle against the upstart deities of the Internet, credit cards, television, and all that is wired. Shadow agrees to help Wednesday, and they whirl through a psycho-spiritual storm that becomes all too real in its manifestations. For instance, Shadow's dead wife Laura keeps showing up, and not just as a ghost--the difficulty of their continuing relationship is by turns grim and darkly funny, just like the rest of the book.

Armed only with some coin tricks and a sense of purpose, Shadow travels through, around, and underneath the visible surface of things, digging up all the powerful myths Americans brought with them in their journeys to this land as well as the ones that were already here. Shadow's road story is the heart of the novel, and it's here that Gaiman offers up the details that make this such a cinematic book--the distinctly American foods and diversions, the bizarre roadside attractions, the decrepit gods reduced to shell games and prostitution. "This is a bad land for Gods," says Shadow.

Andromeda Strain by Michael Crichton

A Nobel-Prize-winning bacteriologist, Jeremy Stone, urges the president to approve an extraterrestrial decontamination facility to sterilize returning astronauts, satellites, and spacecraft that might carry an "unknown biologic agent." The government agrees, almost too quickly, to build the top-secret Wildfire Lab in the desert of Nevada. Shortly thereafter, unbeknownst to Stone, the U.S. Army initiates the "Scoop" satellite program, an attempt to actively collect space pathogens for use in biological warfare. When Scoop VII crashes a couple years later in the isolated Arizona town of Piedmont, the Army ends up getting more than it asked for. *The Andromeda Strain* follows Stone and the rest of the scientific team mobilized to react to the Scoop crash as they scramble to understand and contain a strange and deadly outbreak.

Anil's Ghost by Michael Ondaatje

Anil Tissera, a forensic anthropologist, returns to her homeland of Sri Lanka as a member of an international human-rights group investigating abuses that occurred during the country's decade-long civil war. She teams up with Sarath Diyasena, an archaeologist who works for the Sri Lankan government. Together they unearth a skeleton and, using their skills and training, patiently piece together parts of the man's life and violent death. Along the way, they each deal with ghosts of their own. Ondaatje weaves the present time of the story, sometime in the 1990s, with plenty of flashbacks to the characters' pasts. Several of the murders are mentioned in enough detail to relate how the victim was tortured, but none of the specifics are described. Intensely written, the book skillfully conveys the tension, fear, and stress Anil and Sarath feel as they discover the past life, another ghost, of the skeleton they have found. The author shows the hopelessness and inability of the general population to find any way of stopping the unrelenting massacres, all in the name of politics and beliefs. He deftly describes the effects of war on individuals, a nation, and a people as an entity.

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Genius **George Orwell** relates the tale of a rural revolution, written in the style of a traditional animal fable, where animals uniting against tyranny create a totalitarian state just as horrific as the one they fought to overthrow. When the mistreated and overworked animals of Manor Farm revolt and take over, they do so for freedom's sake. But soon some animals want more than equality and other animals find themselves living in an oppressive, fascist "pig-headed" - indeed - state. More than five decades after its publication, *Animal Farm* is still an infinitely ironic, modern political satire, absolutely relevant today.

Anthem by Ayn Rand

Ayn Rand's classic tale of a future dark age of the great "We"—a world that deprives individuals of name, independence, and values—anticipates her later masterpieces, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*.

Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, The by Mordecai Richler

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz is a novel about costs. How much will Duddy sacrifice to get what he wants? "Born with a rusty spoon in his mouth," Duddy is a hustler and a schemer, scrambling to acquire the idyllic lakefront property he thinks will raise him out of the Jewish ghetto of post-war Montreal, where "the boys grew up dirty and sad, spiky also, like grass beside the railroad tracks." In the hilarious and tragic progress of his career, Duddy--along with everyone around him--discovers how much he will pay for material success

Armageddon's Children by Terry Brooks

Extrapolating from current world events, Brooks projects a worst-case scenario in which the steady destruction of all humankind is a reality. Plagues have killed half a billion, weapons of mass destruction have decimated entire populations, and the few survivors have retreated into a siege mentality, turning city stadiums into walled compounds and shutting out the "freaks"--those who have mutated from breathing the polluted air and drinking the badly fouled water. Logan Tom and Angel Perez, both Knights of the Word are committed to keeping the magic that binds all things together in balance; Hawk, a street kid leads a group of other young people in Seattle; Kirisin, a young elf is one of the Chosen safeguarding the Ellcrys, a magnificent tree upon whose existence the lives of the elves depend and whose safety is now threatened; and the demons and their minions, the once-men, who have been subverted by false promises and lies. Everything and everyone moves inexorably toward a deadly confrontation.

Articles of War by Nick Arvin

This fierce, compact tale of one grunt's war takes readers to the woods of northern France in 1944. George Tilson, aka Heck, is an awkward, uncertain American 18-year-old mobilized from America's heartland to the European theater. Disembarked in Normandy, he meets a struggling French family: a one-armed painter; his daughter, Claire; and son, Ives. Claire nearly takes Heck's virginity, but he fumbles her seduction in a fit of fear. He's then trucked off to battle, where he experiences real panic under bombardment: "The noise was like nothing he had ever experienced before, a noise such as might be used to herald the beginning of a terrible new world." Heck is halfway through his nightmarish advance through a forest peppered with German snipers and booby traps before he fires his gun in anger, and that's only to kill the company dog. His second shot comes when his company sergeant, Conlee, an ex-foxhole mate and one of many to mark Heck as a coward, enlists him in an unexplained but horrifying mission. Arvin's first novel is an elegant, understated testament to the stoicism, accidental cowardice and occasional heroics of men under fire.

As Hot as It Was, You Ought to Thank Me by Nancy Kincaid

Kincaid's fourth novel (after *Crossing Blood; Balls; Verbena*) is a deliciously intimate portrayal of the sunstruck small town of Pinetta, Fla., as seen through the eyes of Berry, a 13-year-old trying to make sense of adult indiscretions and her own sexual awakening. Berry's father, Ford, is the town's self-righteous school principal; her mother, Ruth, has a crush on the preacher; her good-looking older brother, Sowell, has his "mind... on tits"; her younger brother, Wade is a specialist in "elaborate animal funerals." When Ford mysteriously disappears in the middle of a tornado with Rennie, the town's tragic teenage wannabe starlet, Berry and her family become the subject of much gossip and attention. In her father's absence, her mother shifts her attentions to a rich, hot-tempered neighbor, and Berry develops a crush on Raymond, a smooth-talking convict in town to help clean up after the storm. When Raymond saves Berry's life by coming between her and two rattlesnakes, it's she who fearlessly volunteers to suck the poison out of his leg. Hungry for affection, Berry ultimately gets what she's after, though when she's had it, she's not sure what to make of it. Narrated with childlike honesty and dead-on Southern flavor ("Used to be we would all get in the tub like a can of worms spilled into shallow ditch water"), this is a sticky, sultry gem.

Atonement by Ian McEwen

The major events of the novel occur one day in the summer of 1935. Briony Tallis, a precocious 13-year-old with an overactive imagination, witnesses an incident between Cecilia, her older sister, and Robbie Turner, son of the Tallis family's charwoman. Already startled by the sexual overtones of what she has seen, she is completely shocked that evening when she surreptitiously reads a suggestive note Robbie has mistakenly sent Cecilia. It then becomes easy for her to believe that the shadowy figure who assaults her cousin Lola late that night is Robbie. Briony's testimony sends Robbie to prison and, through an early release, into the army on the eve of World War II. Gradually understanding what she has done, Briony seeks atonement first through a career in nursing and then through writing, with the novel itself framed as a literary confession it has taken her a lifetime to write. Moving deftly between styles, this is a compelling exploration of guilt and the struggle for forgiveness.

Awakening, The by Kate Chopin

In the summer of her 28th year, Edna Pontellier and her children, along with the wives and families of other prospective businessmen, spend the summer in an idyllic coastal community away from their husbands and the sweltering heat of 1890s' New Orleans. Aware of deep yearnings that are unfulfilled by marriage and motherhood, Edna plunges into an illicit liaison that reawakens her long dormant desires, inflames her heart, and eventually blinds her to all else.

Away by Jane Urquhart

A stunning, evocative novel set in Ireland and Canada, *Away* traces a family's complex and layered past. The narrative unfolds with shimmering clarity, and takes us from the harsh northern Irish coast in the 1840s to the quarantine stations at Grosse Isle and the barely hospitable land of the Canadian Shield; from the flourishing town of Port Hope to the flooded streets of Montreal; from Ottawa at the time of Confederation to a large-windowed house at the edge of a Great Lake during the present day. Graceful and moving, *Away* unites the personal and the political as it explores the most private, often darkest corners of our emotions where the things that root us to ourselves endure. Powerful, intricate, lyrical, *Away* is an unforgettable novel.

Barney's Version by Mordecai Richler

Barney Panofsky smokes too many cigars, drinks too much whiskey, and is obsessed with two things: the Montreal Canadiens hockey team and his ex-wife Miriam. An acquaintance from his youthful years in Paris, Terry McIver, is about to publish his autobiography. In its pages he accuses Barney of an assortment of sins, including murder. It's time, Barney decides, to present the world with his own version of events. *Barney's Version* is his memoir, a rambling, digressive rant, full of revisions and factual errors (corrected in footnotes written by his son) and enough insults for everyone, particularly vegetarians and Quebec separatists.

But Barney does get around to telling his life story, a desperately funny but sad series of bungled relationships. His first wife, an artist and poet, commits suicide and becomes--à la Sylvia Plath--a feminist icon, and Barney is widely reviled for goading her toward death, if not actually murdering her. He marries the second Mrs. Panofsky, whom he calls a "Jewish-Canadian Princess," as an antidote to the first; it turns out to be a horrible mistake. The third, "Miriam, my heart's desire," is quite possibly his soul mate, but Barney botches this one, too. It's painful to watch him ruin everything, and even more painful to bear witness to his deteriorating memory. The mystery at the heart of Barney's story--did he or did he not kill his friend Boogie?--provides enough forward momentum to propel the reader through endless digressions, all three wives, and every one of Barney's nearly heartbreaking episodes of forgetfulness. *Barney's Version*, winner of Canada's 1997 Giller Prize, is Richler's 10th novel, and a dense, energetic, and ultimately poignant read.

Bastard out of Carolina by Dorothy Allison

Set in the rural South, this tale centers around the Boatwright family, a proud and closeknit clan known for their drinking, fighting, and womanizing. Nicknamed Bone by her Uncle Earle, Ruth Anne is the bastard child of Anney Boatwright, who has fought tirelessly to legitimize her child. When she marries Glen, a man from a good family, it appears that her prayers have been answered. However, Anney suffers a miscarriage and Glen begins drifting. He develops a contentious relationship with Bone and then begins taking sexual liberties with her. Embarrassed and unwilling to report these unwanted advances, Bone bottles them up and acts out her confusion and shame. Unaware of her husband's abusive behavior, Anney stands by her man. Eventually, a violent encounter wrests Bone away from her stepfather. In this first novel, Allison creates a rich sense of family and portrays the psychology of a sexually abused child with sensitivity and insight.

Beach, The by Alex Garland

In our ever-shrinking world, where popular Western culture seems to have infected every nation on the planet, it is hard to find even a small niche of unspoiled land--forget searching for pristine islands or continents. This is the situation in Alex Garland's debut novel, *The Beach*. Human progress has reduced Eden to a secret little beach near Thailand. In the tradition of grand adventure novels, Richard, a rootless traveler rambling around Thailand on his way somewhere else, is given a hand-drawn map by a madman who calls himself Daffy Duck. He and two French travelers set out on a journey to find this paradise.

What makes this a truly satisfying novel is the number of levels on which it operates. On the surface it's a fast-paced adventure novel; at another level it explores why we search for these utopias, be they mysterious lost continents or small island communes. Garland weaves a gripping and thought-provoking narrative that suggests we are, in fact, such products of our Western culture that we cannot help but pollute and ultimately destroy the very sanctuary we seek

Bean Trees, The by Barbara Kingsolver

Feisty Marietta Greer changes her name to "Taylor" when her car runs out of gas in Taylorville, Ill. By the time she reaches Oklahoma, this strong-willed young Kentucky native with a quick tongue and an open mind is catapulted into a surprising new life. Taylor leaves home in a beat-up '55 Volkswagen bug, on her way to nowhere in particular, savoring her freedom. But when a forlorn Cherokee woman drops a baby in Taylor's passenger seat and asks her to take it, she does. A first novel, *The Bean Trees* is an overwhelming delight, as random and unexpected as real life. The unmistakable voice of its irresistible heroine is whimsical, yet deeply insightful. Taylor playfully names her little foundling "Turtle," because she clings with an unrelenting, reptilian grip; at the same time, Taylor aches at the thought of the silent, staring child's past suffering. With Turtle in tow, Taylor lands in Tucson, Ariz., with two flat tires and decides to stay. The desert climate, landscape and vegetation are completely foreign to Taylor, and in learning to love Arizona, she also comes face to face with its rattlesnakes and tarantulas. Similarly, Taylor finds that motherhood, responsibility and independence are thorny, if welcome, gifts. This funny, inspiring book is a marvelous affirmation of risk-taking, commitment and everyday miracles.

Beasts of No Nation BY Uzodinma Iweala

Iweala's visceral debut is unrelenting in its brutality and unremitting in its intensity. Agu, the precocious, gentle son of a village schoolteacher father and a Bible-reading mother, is dragooned into an unnamed West African nation's mad civil war—a slip of a boy forced, almost overnight, to shoulder a soldier's bloody burden. The preteen protagonist is molded into a fighting man by his demented guerrilla leader and, after witnessing his father's savage slaying, by an inchoate need to belong to some kind of family, no matter how depraved. He becomes a killer, gripped by a muddled sense of revenge as he butchers a mother and daughter when his ragtag unit raids a defenseless village; starved for both food and affection, he is sodomized by his commandant and rewarded with extra food scraps and a dry place to sleep. The subject of the 23-year-old novelist's story—Iweala is American born of Nigerian descent—is gripping enough. But even more stunning is the extraordinarily original voice with which this tale is told. The impressionistic narration by a boy constantly struggling to understand the incomprehensible is always breathless, often breathtaking and sometimes heartbreaking. Its odd singsong cadence and twisted use of tense take a few pages to get used to, but Iweala's electrifying prose soon enough propels a harrowing read.

Before You Know Kindness by Chris Bohjalian

Bohjalian's new novel begins with a literal bang: a bullet from a hunting rifle accidentally strikes Spencer McCullough, an extreme advocate for animal rights, leaving him seriously wounded. The weapon—owned by his brother-in-law, John, and shot by his 12-year-old daughter, Charlotte—becomes the center of a lawsuit and media circus led by Spencer's employer, FERAL (Federation for Animal Liberation), a dead ringer for PETA. The many-faceted satire Bohjalian (*Midwives*, etc.) crafts out of these events revolves around Spencer and Jon's families, but also involves a host of secondary figures. Bohjalian excels at getting inside each character's head with shifts of diction and perspective, though he makes it difficult for readers to connect with any one in particular. This is in part because his portraits are often unsympathetic; the characters are allowed to hoist themselves on their own petards. While some are credibly flawed—Spencer is both a loving father and an obnoxious activist—others are cartoonishly mocked with their own thoughts, like high-powered attorney Paige, who mourns the loss of her leather chairs and briefcases, hidden away for as long as FERAL is a lucrative client. If there is a grounded center to this work, it is 10-year-old Willow, Spencer's niece, who distinguishes herself from this baggy ensemble by always trying to do the right thing. She alone is spared the narrator's irony, and it is Willow, years after the accident, who has the last word. Bohjalian's skewering of the animal rights movement gets the better of his domestic drama, but his skillful storytelling will engage readers.

Behind the Scenes at the Museum by Kate Atkinson

The narrator's insistent voice and breezy delivery animates this enchanting novel. Ruby Lennox is a quirky, complex character who relates the events of her life and those of her dysfunctional family with equal parts humor, fervor and candor—starting with her moment of conception in York, England, in 1959: "I exist!" Ruby then describes the family she is to join. Her parents own a pet shop; her mother, Bunty, bitterly regrets having married her philandering husband, George, and daydreams about what her life might have been. Ruby has two older sisters, willful Gillian and melancholy Patricia. Through its ambitious structure, the novel also charts five generations and more than a century of Ruby's family history, as reported in "footnotes" that follow relevant chapters. (For example, a passage about a pink glass button reveals the story of its original owner, Ruby's great-grandmother Alice, who will abandon her young family and run off with a French magician.) Ruby's richly imagined account includes both the details of daily life and the several tragic events that punctuate the family's mundane existence. Atkinson's lively and enthusiastic narrative style captures the troubled Lennox family with wit and poignant accuracy.

Bell Jar, The by Sylvia Plath

Plath was an excellent poet but is known to many for this largely autobiographical novel. **The Bell Jar** tells the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown beginning during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s. The real Plath committed suicide in 1963 and left behind this scathingly sad, honest and perfectly-written book, which remains one of the best-told tales of a woman's descent into insanity.

Beloved by Toni Morrison

Staring unflinchingly into the abyss of slavery, this spellbinding novel transforms history into a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby. Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved. Filled with bitter poetry and suspense as taut as a rope, **Beloved** is a towering achievement.

Better Times than These by Winston Groom

An extraordinary first novel, hailed as one of the great, authentic novels of the Vietnam War, from the bestselling author of Forrest Gump. 1966: Billy Kahn finds himself Executive Officer of Bravo Company, responsible for leading over 100 young men into combat--and drawn into an impassable moral quagmire that could mean his downfall . . . or his redemption.

Between Mountains by Maggie Helwig

This novel is essentially a love story, but it is so much more than simply a tale of romance. Set mainly in The Hague and Bosnia, this novel spans the final six months of the last millennium, giving us a rare glimpse into the tense post-Balkan war political landscape that remained after the attention of the rest of the world had moved on. It is July 1999. Daniel Bryant, a Canadian war correspondent, has remained in Sarajevo to follow up on interviews with suspected war criminals. Travelling to The Hague to pursue his research, Daniel renews his friendship with Lili, a French citizen of Serbian-Albanian descent who is working as a simultaneous interpreter at the War Crimes tribunal-the same tribunal that has indicted Nikola Markovic, Daniel's prime subject. Aware that any fraternization between journalists and tribunal interpreters is strictly forbidden, Daniel and Lili must play a protracted game of hide and seek in order to spend precious moments together, all the while resisting the temptation to share confidential information that each knows the other has. The sexual and professional tension between Daniel and Lili is finely wrought with powerful and effective prose. But the most startling passages are those which focus on Markovic's interior monologue in the weeks before his trial. Initially, Markovic is in a state of denial. He wasn't there. He saw nothing. He refuses to read the diaries of his co-accused and insists the written accounts of ethnic cleansing are lies. As the novel progresses, he defends his role as necessary. Later, as he begins to realize the impact of his actions, he tries to convince himself he was acting in response to orders.

Big War, The by Anton Myrer

They were our husbands, our fathers, our lovers, our sons. They were Americans and Marines. And this is their story: *The Big War*, Anton Myrer's panoramic novel of Marines in the Pacific in World War II. This is the story of Alan Newcombe, the Boston society Harvard man; Danny Kantaylis, the natural-born leader; Jay O'Neill, the barroom scrapper. Myrer does not glorify war; he does not flinch from describing what the actual experience of warfare was like for a desperate group of Marines trapped in some of the worst fighting conditions of the war. We learn about their lives at home and their fates on the battlefield.

Birdsong by Sebastien Faulks

In 1910, England's Stephen Wraysford, a junior executive in a textile firm, is sent by his company to northern France. There he falls for Isabelle Azaire, a young and beautiful matron who abandons her abusive husband and sticks by Stephen long enough to conceive a child. Six years later, Stephen is back in France, as a British officer fighting in the trenches. Facing death, embittered by isolation, he steels himself against thoughts of love. But despite rampant disease, harrowing tunnel explosions and desperate attacks on highly fortified German positions, he manages to survive, and to meet with Isabelle again. The emotions roiled up by this meeting, however, threaten to ruin him as a soldier. Everything about this novel, which was a bestseller in England, is outsized, from its epic, if occasionally ramshackle, narrative to its gruesome and utterly convincing descriptions of battlefield horrors.

Birdy by William Wharton (8)

An inventive, hypnotic novel about friendship and family, love and war, madness and beauty, and, above all, "birdness." Wharton crafts an unforgettable tale--one that suggests another notion of sanity in a world that is manifestly insane.

Birth of Venus by Sarah Dunant

Dunant's lush and intellectually gripping novel is set in fourteenth-century Florence at the height of the Renaissance. Fifteen-year-old Alessandra Cecchi does not fit the mold of the compliant Florentine woman. She avidly consumes books written in Greek and Latin as she keeps abreast of the art movement, hoping to some day create her own masterwork. The city is teeming with artisans working for the Catholic Church and the ruling Medici family, and sightings of Botticelli in the piazza or the infamous Michelangelo are commonplace incidents in a city that thrives on beauty. The years of Florentine decadence come to a close when the French Army invades Italy and Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola begins a puritanical crusade. To protect her from the city's tumultuous atmosphere, the Cecchis arrange a marriage for Alessandra, but the man they have chosen has closely guarded secrets and Alessandra's heart also belongs to someone else.

Bitter Fruit by Achmat Dangor

Early in Dangor's embittered second novel about his native South Africa, aloof, independent 19-year-old Mikey comes to the realization that "history has a remembering process of its own, one that gives life to its imaginary monsters." This understanding of the past informs the thoughts and actions of the characters, which the author of *Kafka's Curse* explores in meticulous detail. Mikey's parents, Silas and Lydia Ali, are members of the black middle class in postapartheid South Africa. But when Silas, a lawyer for the Justice Department, encounters the white police lieutenant who raped his wife two decades before, old wounds open in his and Lydia's already strained marriage. Mikey discovers that he may be the product of his mother's violation and sets out to explore his familial roots, taking a type of "apartheid heritage route" that leads him to Silas's father's mosque. Here, he learns of his grandfather's own struggle with colonialism in India a generation earlier. Dangor's novel, a Man Booker Prize finalist, interrogates the forgiving attitude of people like Archbishop Tutu, and, as Silas puts it, "the namby-pambying of God's ferocious legions." In this environment, where even incestuous transgressions can be rationalized away, Mikey finds vengeance as a way to order the decayed social structures around him. Dangor's work is a bleak look at modern South Africa in the vein of J.M. Coetzee's novels, but from the perspective of black South Africans.

Black and Blue by Anna Quindlen

"The first time my husband hit me I was nineteen years old," begins Fran Benedetto, the broken heroine of Anna Quindlen's *Black and Blue*. With one sweeping sentence, the door to an abused and tortured world is swung wide open and the psyche of a crushed and tattered self-image exposed. "Frannie, Frannie, Fran"--as Bobby Benedetto liked to call her before smashing her into kitchen appliances--was a young, energetic nursing student when she met her husband-to-be at a local Brooklyn bar. She was instantly captivated by his dark, brooding looks and magnetic personality, but her fascination soon solidified into a marital prison sentence of incessant abuse and the destruction of her own identity. After an especially horrific beating and rape, Fran realizes that the next attack could be the last. Fearing her son would be left alone with Bobby, she escapes one morning with her child. Fran's salvation comes in the form of Patty Bancroft and Co., a relocation agency for abused women that touts better service than the witness protection program. Armed only with a phone number, a few hundred dollars, and the help of several anonymous volunteers, Fran begins a new life. The agency relocates her to Florida, where she becomes Beth Crenshaw, a recently divorced home-care assistant from Delaware. Fran and her son adapt, meeting challenges with unexpected resilience and resolve until their past returns to haunt them. Quindlen renders the intricacies of spousal abuse with eerie accuracy, taking the reader deep within the realm of dysfunctional human ties. However, her vivid descriptions of abuse, emotional disintegration, and acute loneliness at times numb the reader with their realism.

Black Flower, The by Howard Bahr

The senseless agony of armed conflict is expertly evoked in this elegiac Civil War novel. As Bushrod Carter, a seasoned Confederate rifleman, grimly anticipates his next battle, he experiences both the mind-numbing terror and the detached resignation characteristic of most common foot soldiers. Shortly after the infamous Battle of Franklin commences, Gen. John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee is quickly overwhelmed by the firepower of the superior Union forces. Before succumbing to his own wounds, Carter bears witness to the grim aftermath of combat as he roams through the carnage haunted by the visages of his departed comrades and horrified by the gruesome reality of the slaughter. The mournful tone of the narrative serves to underscore the powerful drama of this harrowing tale.

Black Robe by Brian Moore

It was a time when the French laid claim to everything, but in truth the wilderness that was Canada belonged to the natives. The Jesuits saw the Savages (as they called them) as souls to be saved. The natives saw the Black Robes (as they called them) as destroyers, threatening the gods and sorceries by which their lives were ordered. Out of that conflict between two cultures, two worlds, Moore has fashioned an extraordinary novel of suspense, with quiet and intense but hypnotic detail and surprises of emotional blackmail, treachery, deceit and murder.

Blind Assassin, The by Margaret Atwood

“Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge.” These words are spoken by Iris Chase Griffen, married at eighteen to a wealthy industrialist but now poor and eighty-two. Iris recalls her far from exemplary life, and the events leading up to her sister’s death, gradually revealing the carefully guarded Chase family secrets. Among these is “The Blind Assassin,” a novel that earned the dead Laura Chase not only notoriety but also a devoted cult following. Sexually explicit for its time, it was a pulp fantasy improvised by two unnamed lovers who meet secretly in rented rooms and seedy cafés. As this novel-within-a-novel twists and turns through love and jealousy, self-sacrifice and betrayal, so does the real narrative, as both move closer to war and catastrophe. Margaret Atwood’s Booker Prize-winning sensation combines elements of gothic drama, romantic suspense, and science fiction fantasy in a spellbinding tale.

Bloodtide by Melvin Burgess

In a far future, two warring gangs, the Conors and the Volsons, rule the ruins of London. When the leader of the Volsons gives his daughter Signy in marriage to the leader of the Conor family, the stage is set for a tale of vengeance and tragedy. This postmodern retelling of the saga of the Volsungs from Iceland does not stint on graphic portrayals of violence. Twin themes of love and death provide an inexorable tension in this dark dystopian fable.

Blue Diary by Alice Hoffman

Hoffman writes from on high, a storytelling goddess who drenches the earth with flower-opening sunshine one day, only to bring on the most abysmal gloom the next. She enchants and she riles, and her powers are extraordinary, although the overture to her fourteenth novel is awfully sweet. Ethan and Jorie, gorgeous and madly in love after 13 years of marriage, are just too horribly perfect. Ethan is a carpenter, baseball coach, and volunteer fireman. Jorie is a homemaker and a gifted gardener, and their 12-year-old son, Collie, is handsome and good. It's enough to make you puke, and that's exactly Hoffman's intention because this is a make-believe life that has run its course. The girl-next-door, the younger, funny-looking one named Kat, not her exquisite and coldhearted sister Rosarie, misses her father, who committed suicide, and has never trusted Collie's, so when she recognizes an old photograph of Ethan shown on a most-wanted TV show, she makes the fateful call and then watches in shock while her neighbors' lives collapse like a house that looks fine from the outside but has been consumed by termites until it's no more than a shell. Nothing will ever be the same for the denizens of Monroe, Massachusetts, after Ethan is arrested for the long-unsolved murder of a 15-year-old Maryland girl. Many rally to his cause; Kat and Collie grow up too fast; Jorie's best friend copes with breast cancer; and Jorie, devastated but lucid, realizes that she must learn the truth whatever the cost. This canny tale of abrupt reversals and courageous, unpopular choices is as suspenseful as it is lyrical and provocative.

Bonesetter's Daughter, The by Amy Tan

Tan's empathetic insight into the complex relationship of Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters is again displayed in her latest extraordinary, multi-layered tale. Now suffering from Alzheimer's, Lu Ling's references to the past are confusing and contradictory particularly her desperate attempts to communicate with her deceased Precious Auntie, who was her nursemaid and Ruth worries about her mother's health. But when Ruth translates Lu Ling's lengthy journal, she learns that her mother was once a strong-willed, courageous girl who overcame a background of family secrets and lies, persevered despite romantic heartbreak and survived tremendous hardships and suffering in war-torn China. Tan deftly handles narrative duties as Ruth, the exasperated but loving daughter, while Chen is perfect as the quick-speaking, accented Lu Ling. Lu Ling's first-person diary is particularly suited to audio: we hear the young girl directly reveal her secret hopes and dreams, and watch her grow from a naive innocent to a sharp-eyed survivor.

Bonfire of the Vanities, The by Tom Wolfe

In his spellbinding first novel, Wolfe proves that he has the right stuff to write propulsively engrossing fiction. Both his cynical irony and sense of the ridiculous are perfectly suited to his subject: the roiling, corrupt, savage, ethnic melting pot that is New York City. Ranging from the rarefied atmosphere of Park Avenue to the dingy courtrooms of the Bronx, this is a totally credible tale of how the communities uneasily coexist and what happens when they collide. On a clandestine date with his mistress one night, top Wall Street investment banker and snobbish WASP Sherman McCoy misses his turn on the thruway and gets lost in the South Bronx; his Mercedes hits and seriously injures a young black man. The incident is inflated by a manipulative black leader, a district attorney seeking reelection and a sleazy tabloid reporter into a full-blown scandal, a political football and a hokey morality play. Wolfe adroitly swings his focus from one to another of the people involved: the protagonist McCoy; Kramer, the assistant D.A.; two detectives one Irish, the other Jewish; a slimy, alcoholic British journalist; an outraged judge, etc. He has an infallible, mocking ear for New York voices, rendering with equal precision the defense lawyer's "gedoutdahere," the deliberate bad grammar ("that don't help matters") of the wily "reverend" and the clenched-teeth WASP locution ('howjado"). His reporter's eye has seized every gritty detail of the criminal justice system, and he is also acute in rendering the hierarchy at a society party. He convincingly equates the jungles of Wall Street and the Bronx: in both places men casually use the same four-letter expletives and, no matter what their standing on the social ladder, find that power kindles their lust for nubile young women. Erupting from the first line with noise, color, tension and immediacy, this immensely entertaining novel accurately mirrors a system that has broken down: from the social code of basic good manners to the fair practices of the law. It is safe to predict that the book will stand as a brilliant evocation of New York's class, racial and political structure in the 1980s.

Book of Eve, The by Constance Beresford-Howe

First published in 1973, *The Book of Eve* has become a classic. When Eva Carroll walks out on her husband of 40 years, it is an unplanned, completely spontaneous gesture. Yet Eva feels neither guilt nor remorse. Instead, she feels rejuvenated and blissfully free. As she builds a new life for herself in a boarding house on the "wrong" side of Montreal, she finds happiness and independence – and, when she least expects it, love.

Book of Ruth, The by Jane Hamilton

The Book of Ruth is a virtuoso performance and that's precisely why it can be excruciating to read. Author Jane Hamilton leads us through the arid life of Ruth Grey, who extracts what small pleasures and graces she can from a tiny Illinois town and the broken people who inhabit it. Ruth's prime tormentor is her mother May, whose husband died in World War II and took her future with him. More poor familial luck has given Ruth a brother who is a math prodigy; Matt sucks up any stray attention like a black hole. Ruth is left to survive on her own resources, which are meager. She struggles along, subsisting on crumbs of affection meted out by her Aunt Sid and, later, her screwed-up husband Ruby. Hamilton has perfect pitch. So perfect that you wince with pain for confused but fundamentally good Ruth as she walks a dead-end path. The book ends with the prospect of redemption, thank goodness--but the tale is nevertheless much more bitter than sweet.

Boy of Good Breeding, A by Miriam Toews

In the tradition of Lake Wobegon, Toews (*A Complicated Kindness*) gives us Algren, Manitoba, a town noteworthy because, with 1,500 colorful residents (give or take), it ranks as Canada's smallest town. For the town's painfully shy mayor, Hosea Funk, Algren's small population spurs both pride and constant anxiety. He tallies births, deaths and all other arrivals and departures to make sure the population hews to the magic number 1,500—less than that, and the town diminishes to a mere village, but more than that and Algren might outgrow its title. Funk's obsession isn't motivated just by bragging rights, but also by a family secret: on her deathbed, Funk's mother told him that the prime minister of Canada is his long-lost father, and that same prime minister has pledged to visit the smallest Canadian town. When single mother Knute McCloud and her kinetic young daughter return to Algren and Funk's own long-distance romance threatens to catch up with him, Funk's compulsive people-counting tests his already awkward human relationships. First published in Canada in 1998, this is a sweet, funny novel full of memorable, picaresque characters and unexpected drama.

Brandenburg by Henry Porter

Set in East Germany during the bleak, waning days of 1989, this stand-alone thriller from British author Porter (*A Spy's Life*) combines impeccable research with compelling characters caught up in the broad sweep of fascinating historical events. The Stasi want art scholar Dr. Rudi Rosenharte to take part in a dangerous mission involving a former lover Rudi knows is dead, but who the Stasi thinks is not only alive but also harboring vital state secrets. Rudi has little choice, since the Stasi are holding Rudi's brother, Konrad, and his family hostage. Rudi, an ex-Stasi agent himself, clandestinely enlists the aid of the British SIS, the CIA and even the KGB as he pits all of these agencies against one another in an effort to smuggle Konrad and family across the border to the safety of the West. Readers will know that in a few weeks the Wall will be torn down, but at the time, as Porter makes clear, this was not a foregone conclusion, and death and disaster, as in Tiananmen Square, was a real possibility. It's easy to see why this riveting read won the CWA's Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through the clever mix of genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs, everyone is a happy consumer. Bernard Marx seems alone in his discontent.

Breath, Eyes, Memory by Edwidge Danticat

A distinctive new voice with a sensitive insight into Haitian culture distinguishes this graceful debut novel about a young girl's coming of age under difficult circumstances. "I come from a place where breath, eyes and memory are one, a place where you carry your past like the hair on your head," says narrator Sophie Caco, ruminating on the chains of duty and love that bind the courageous women in her family. The burden of being a woman in Haiti, where purity and chastity are a matter of family honor, and where "nightmares are passed on through generations like heirlooms," is Danticat's theme. Born after her mother Martine was raped, Sophie is raised by her Tante Atie in a small town in Haiti. At 12 she joins Martine in New York, while Atie returns to her native village to care for indomitable Grandmother Ife. Neither Sophie nor Martine can escape the weight of the past, resulting in a pattern of insomnia, bulimia, sexual trauma and mental anguish that afflicts both of them and leads inexorably to tragedy. Though her tale is permeated with a haunting sadness, Danticat also imbues it with color and magic, beautifully evoking the pace and character of Creole life, the feel of both village and farm communities, where the omnipresent Tontons Macoute mean daily terror, where voodoo rituals and superstitions still dominate even as illiterate inhabitants utilize such 20th-century conveniences as cassettes to correspond with emigres in America. In simple, lyrical prose enriched by an elegiac tone and piquant observations, she makes Sophie's confusion and guilt, her difficult assimilation into American culture and her eventual emotional liberation palpably clear.

Brick Lane by Monica Ali

Nazneen is a teenager forced into an arranged marriage with a man considerably older than her--a man whose expectations of life are so low that misery seems to stretch ahead for her. Fearfully leaving the sultry oppression of her Bangladeshi village, Nazneen finds herself cloistered in a small flat in a high-rise block in the East End of London. Because she speaks no English, she is obliged to depend totally on her husband. But it becomes apparent that, of the two, she is the real survivor: more able to deal with the ways of the world, and a better judge of the vagaries of human behaviour. She makes friends with another Asian girl, Razia, who is the conduit to her understanding of the unsettling ways of her new homeland.

Bridget Jones Edge of Reason by Helen Fielding

In this continuation of her diary, Bridget again recounts the ups and downs of the single life. During this period she has a somewhat steady boyfriend; however, the joys of having a man in her life are tempered by his seeming indifference to her at times. To her consternation she discovers that he is spending time with another woman. Besides the trials and tribulations of this relationship, Bridget must contend with confrontations with an obstinate boss, dealings with a weird contractor, working on her apartment, and the unpleasant experiences during the worst vacation of her life. Through it all Bridget is supported by her married and unmarried friends. Her comments, often overstated, are both harsh and humorous.

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding

It's an age-old story--two brothers in love with the same woman--but in Lawson's masterful hands, the emotive tale of Arthur and Jake Dunn and the young woman who comes between them takes on a luminous originality. Set in a backwoods village in northern Canada, the story flashes back to 1930 to establish the tenacity of the Dunn brothers' relationship, and leaps forward to 1950, where Lawson, following her fine debut, *Crow Lake* (2002), cannily introduces a fourth element to the standard love triangle. Young Ian Christopherson, son of the town's only doctor, takes a summer job working on Arthur's farm, not because he craves the grueling labor but simply to be closer to Dunn's wife, Laura. When Jake resurfaces after more than a decade's absence, Ian interprets Laura's changed behavior in ways that will have devastating consequences.

Broken for You by Stephanie Kallos

"*The dead*, Margaret thought. *They can be so loud.*" So muses the protagonist of this dreamy, powerful tale of familial warring, secrets and redemption. When elderly Margaret Hughes discovers that she has a malignant brain tumor, she refuses treatment and decides to take a nice young tenant into her huge, lonely Seattle mansion for company. What she gets is Wanda Schultz, a tough-as-nails stage manager who is secretly seeking the man who left her and prone to inexplicable weeping breakdowns. Wanda, ignorant of Margaret's illness, is intrigued by the museum-like house and its eccentric owner—so when Margaret unexpectedly invites her to a drink-champagne-and-break-the-priceless-antique-china party for two, she's delighted. But a dark history lurks; the houseful of gorgeous antique porcelain comes from Margaret's father's WWII pilfering of European Jewish homes. Meanwhile, Wanda's father, who deserted her years ago, is on the road trying to heal, and Margaret's mother's ghost is haunting the Seattle mansion, lounging about in expensive peignoirs and criticizing her only daughter. Wrestling to keep the dead and the ghosts of their pasts at bay, the two women slowly build an extraordinary friendship, and when Wanda discovers a talent for mosaics, the past begins to quiet. Though it takes a while to get started, this haunting and memorable debut is reminiscent of early Atwood, peopled by lovably imperfect and eccentric characters.

Broken Ground by Jack Hodgins

The story opens with young Charlie MacIntosh sitting in the attic of his family's slipshod farmhouse, rolling a clover-and-newspaper cigarette and watching a stranger ride into town. The rider proves to be one Wyatt Taylor, a discharged explosives expert, who has crossed the country in search of his former fiancée, Nora Macken. Both Charlie and Taylor soon become closely involved in the family affairs of Matthew Pearson, a former schoolteacher who has yet to come to terms with his own wartime experience--especially the execution for desertion of one of his former students. As Taylor settles in as a resident jack-of-all-trades, a forest fire continues to roil in the hills above Portuguese Creek, threatening the settlement but not enough to drive the locals away.

Burning Bright by Tracy Chevalier

Burning Bright follows Thomas Kellaway and his family as they migrate from rural Dorset to London, where Thomas has found work as a circus carpenter and builder. The novel foregrounds the experiences of Kellaway's son Jem and his pretty sister Maisie as they adjust with varying degrees of success to urban life and the vicissitudes of adulthood. As in her previous novels, Chevalier mixes historical characters and her own creations; among the real people vividly portrayed here are circus pioneer Philip Astley and radical poet/engraver William Blake.

Call of the Wild by Jack London

The Call Of The Wild is the story of Buck, a dog stolen from his home and thrust into the merciless life of the Arctic north to endure hardship, bitter cold, and the savage lawlessness of man and beast. *White Fang* is the adventure of an animal -- part dog, part wolf --turned vicious by cruel abuse, then transformed by the patience and affection of one man. Jack London's superb ability as a storyteller and his uncanny understanding of animal and human natures give these tales a striking vitality and power, and have earned him a reputation as a distinguished American writer.

Candle to Light the Sun, A by Patricia Blondel

Cane River by Lalita Tademy

Five generations and a hundred years in the life of a matriarchal black Louisiana family are encapsulated in this ambitious debut novel that is based in part upon the lives, as preserved in both historical record and oral tradition, of the author's ancestors. In 1834, nine-year-old Suzette, the "cocoa-colored" house servant of a Creole planter family, has aspirations to read, to live always in a "big house" and maybe even to marry into the relatively privileged world of the gens de couleur libre. Her plans are dashed, however, when at age 13 a French ,migr, takes her as his mistress. Her "high yellow" daughter Philomene, in turn, is maneuvered into becoming the mother of Creole planter Narcisse Fredieu's "side family." After the Civil War, Philomene pins her hopes for a better future on her light-skinned daughter, Emily Fredieu, who is given a year of convent schooling in New Orleans. But Emily must struggle constantly to protect her children by her father's French cousin from terrorist "Night Riders" and racist laws. Tademy is candid about her ancestors' temptations to "pass," as their complexions lighten from the color of "coffee, to cocoa, to cream to milk, to lily." While she fully imagines their lives, she doesn't pander to the reader by introducing melodrama or sex. Her frank observations about black racism add depth to the tale, and she demonstrates that although the practice of slavery fell most harshly upon blacks, and especially women, it also constricted the lives and choices of white men.

Canticle for Leibowitz, A by Walter Miller

In the depths of the Utah desert, long after the Flame Deluge has scoured the earth clean, a monk of the Order of Saint Leibowitz has made a miraculous discovery: holy relics from the life of the great saint himself, including the blessed blueprint, the sacred shopping list, and the hallowed shrine of the Fallout Shelter. In a terrifying age of darkness and decay, these artifacts could be the keys to mankind's salvation. But as the mystery at the core of this groundbreaking novel unfolds, it is the search itself—for meaning, for truth, for love—that offers hope for humanity's rebirth from the ashes.

Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis De Bernieres

During WWII the little Greek isle of Cephallonia is occupied by a division of Italian soldiers. A young Greek woman, Pelagia (can you hear that name?), betrothed already to a local fisherman, surprises herself by falling in love with the musical, misplaced and Italian Captain Corelli. But this central love is only one of many different kinds that shine out from the blackness of war. Carlo's accounts of his sadly repressed homosexual loves, for example, once understood in their platonic purity, break one's heart.

Carry Me Down by M.J. Hyland

Carry Me Down filters the adult world through the distressed lens of adolescence, which makes every change look like a test of survival. John Egan is an extremely tall 11-year-old boy living in the small town of Gorey, Ireland, with the moody triumvirate of his mother, father and grandmother. As he faces the trials of home and school life, John feels he has no place in the world, and his frustration fuels odd obsessions: with the *Guinness Book of World Records*, with physical human contact and with his "gift" for detecting lies. His parents, already sorting through their own uneasy relationship, puzzle over their only son with doctors and teachers, pushing John to a moment of crisis, which may prove his undoing. John's voice is singular and powerful throughout: "I wait anxiously for my turn, thinking that he'll soon discover me and know that I'm different. I've already decided that I'll tell him about my gift." By the subtle, satisfying dénouement, one is rooting for John's place in the Guinness book.

Case Histories by Kate Atkinson

In this ambitious fourth novel from Whitbread winner Atkinson (*Behind the Scenes at the Museum*), private detective Jackson Brodie—ex-cop, ex-husband and weekend dad—takes on three cases involving past crimes that occurred in and around London. The first case introduces two middle-aged sisters who, after the death of their vile, distant father, look again into the disappearance of their beloved sister Olivia, last seen at three years old, while they were camping under the stars during an oppressive heat wave. A retired lawyer who lives only on the fumes of possible justice next enlists Jackson's aid in solving the brutal killing of his grown daughter 10 years earlier. In the third dog-eared case file, the sibling of an infamous ax-bludgeoner seeks a reunion with her niece, who as a baby was a witness to murder. Jackson's reluctant persistence heats up these cold cases and by happenstance leads him to reassess his own painful history. The humility of the extraordinary, unabashed characters is skillfully revealed with humor and surprise. Atkinson contrasts the inevitable results of family dysfunction with random fate, gracefully weaving the three stories into a denouement that taps into collective wishful thinking and suggests that warmth and safety may be found in the aftermath of blood and abandonment. Atkinson's meaty, satisfying prose will attract many eager readers.

Catch 22 by Joseph Heller

Catch-22 is like no other novel. It is one of the funniest books ever written, a keystone work in American literature, and even added a new term to the dictionary. At the heart of *Catch-22* resides the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero endlessly inventive in his schemes to save his skin from the horrible chances of war. His efforts are perfectly understandable because as he furiously scrambles, thousands of people he hasn't even met are trying to kill him. His problem is Colonel Cathcart, who keeps raising the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempts to excuse himself from the perilous missions that he is committed to flying, he is trapped by the Great Loyalty Oath Crusade, the hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule from which the book takes its title: a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes the necessary formal request to be relieved of such missions, the very act of making the request proves that he is sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved. *Catch-22* is a microcosm of the twentieth-century world as it might look to some one dangerously sane -- a masterpiece of our time.

Catcher in the Rye, The by J. D. Salinger

This classic 1951 novel tells the tale of a defiant 16-year-old prep school student who runs away to New York City after getting expelled. Although Holden Caulfield is more cynical than a Gen-Xer, his pain and loneliness slowly escape from underneath his tough exterior. Holden is one of the literary world's most memorable characters, which is why *The Catcher in the Rye* lives on in high schools today. Author J.D. Salinger's cutting language and adult themes continue to challenge and fascinate.

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

One of Vonnegut's most highly praised novels. Filled with humor and unforgettable characters, this apocalyptic story tells of Earth's ultimate end, and presents a vision of the future that is both darkly fantastic and funny, as Vonnegut weaves a satirical commentary on modern man and his madness.

Cat's Eye by Margaret Atwood

Cat's Eye is the story of Elaine Risley, a controversial painter who returns to Toronto, the city of her youth, for a retrospective of her art. Engulfed by vivid images of the past, she reminisces about a trio of girls who initiated her into the fierce politics of childhood and its secret world of friendship, longing, and betrayal. Elaine must come to terms with her own identity as a daughter, a lover, an artist, and a woman—but above all she must seek release from her haunting memories. Disturbing, hilarious, and compassionate, *Cat's Eye* is a breathtaking novel of a woman grappling with the tangled knot of her life.

Cattle Cars are Waiting 1942-1944, The by Chava Rosenfarb

Originally published in Yiddish in 1972, this final volume of a trilogy depicting daily life in the Lodz ghetto recreates the frantic desperation as thousands of Jews were forced to board cattle trains bound for Auschwitz. Revisiting characters from the first two books, Rosenfarb—herself a Lodz ghetto and concentration-camp survivor—gets very close to the horror. Adam Rosenberg, who once owned the biggest factory in town, hides under an assumed name and shovels excrement for a living until he is found out and becomes an informant, identifying other Jewish industrialists and sniffing out their hidden valuables. The poet Bunim Berkovitch discovers that his wife and children, including a newborn, have been arrested while he was out fetching their potato ration. And the hated leader of the Jewish Council who composes the dreaded transport lists can't save himself or his loved ones when the ghetto is "liquidated."

Children of Men, The by P.D. James

Near the end of the 20th century, for reasons beyond the grasp of modern science, human sperm count went to zero. The last birth occurred in 1995, and in the space of a generation humanity has lost its future. In England, under the rule of an increasingly despotic Warden, the infirm are encouraged to commit group suicide, criminals are exiled and abandoned and immigrants are subjected to semi-legalized slavery. Divorced, middle-aged Oxford history professor Theo Faron, an emotionally constrained man of means and intelligence who is the Warden's cousin, plods through an ordered, bleak existence. But a chance involvement with a group of dissidents moves him onto unexpected paths, leading him, in the novel's compelling second half, toward risk, commitment and the joys and anguish of love. In this convincingly detailed world--where kittens are (illegally) christened, sex has lost its allure and the arts have been abandoned--James concretely explores an unthinkable prospect. Readers should persevere through the slow start, for the rewards of this story, including its reminder of the transforming power of hope, are many and lasting.

Chosen, The by Chaim Potok

In 1940s Brooklyn, New York, an accident throws Reuven Malther and Danny Saunders together. Despite their differences (Reuven is a secular Jew with an intellectual, Zionist father; Danny is the brilliant son and rightful heir to a Hasidic rebbe), the young men form a deep, if unlikely, friendship. Together they negotiate adolescence, family conflicts, the crisis of faith engendered when Holocaust stories begin to emerge in the U.S., loss, love, and the journey to adulthood. The intellectual and spiritual clashes between fathers, between each son and his own father, and between the two young men, provide a unique backdrop for this exploration of fathers, sons, faith, loyalty, and, ultimately, the power of love.

Chronicles of Narnia, The by C. S. Lewis

Journeys to the end of the world, fantastic creatures, and epic battles between good and evil -- what more could any reader ask for in one book? The book that has it all is *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, written in 1949 by Clive Staples Lewis. But Lewis did not stop there. Six more books followed, and together they became known as The Chronicles of Narnia. For the past fifty years, The Chronicles of Narnia have transcended the fantasy genre to become part of the canon of classic literature. Each of the seven books is a masterpiece, drawing the reader into a land where magic meets reality, and the result is a fictional world whose scope has fascinated generations.

Clan of the Cave Bear by Jean M. Auel

When her parents are killed by an earthquake, 5-year-old Ayla wanders through the forest completely alone. Cold, hungry, and badly injured by a cave lion, the little girl is as good as gone until she is discovered by a group who call themselves the Clan of the Cave Bear. This clan, left homeless by the same disaster, have little interest in the helpless girl who comes from the tribe they refer to as the "Others." Only their medicine woman sees in Ayla a fellow human, worthy of care. She painstakingly nurses her back to health--a decision that will forever alter the physical and emotional structure of the clan. Although this story takes place roughly 35,000 years ago, its cast of characters could easily slide into any modern tale. The members of the Neanderthal clan, ruled by traditions and taboos, find themselves challenged by this outsider, who represents the physically modern Cro-Magnons. And as Ayla begins to grow and mature, her natural tendencies emerge, putting her in the middle of a brutal and dangerous power struggle.

Clara Callan by Richard B. Wright

Clara Callan is a single "schoolteacher who likes to write poetry," left to fend for herself in the tiny town of Whitfield, Ontario, after her father dies and her sister, Nora, takes off for New York City. The novel is made up of a series of letters and journal entries written between 1934 and 1939. During that time, Nora becomes a radio soap opera star, while Clara loses her faith in God, is raped by a vagrant, has an abortion, engages in an affair with a married man named Frank and finally gives birth to a daughter. Nora and the lesbian writer of her soap opera, Evelyn Dowling, are Clara's main correspondents, but the news she relates in her letters (such as "grippe and calloused hands"-although she also shows concern for the world's more serious injustices) contrasts with the darker events recorded in her journal entries. Wright has accomplished an amazing feat by allowing his characters to emerge, fully formed and true, without authorial intrusion into their intimate psychological world, revitalizing the epistolary form in the process.

Clockwork Orange, A by Anthony Burgess

Told by the central character, Alex, this brilliant, hilarious, and disturbing novel creates an alarming futuristic vision of violence, high technology, and authoritarianism. Anthony Burgess' 1963 classic stands alongside Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World* as a classic of twentieth century post-industrial alienation, often shocking us into a thoughtful exploration of the meaning of free will and the conflict between good and evil. In this recording, the author's voice lends an intoxicating lyrical dimension to the language he has so masterfully crafted.

Codex, The by Douglas Preston

A notorious treasure hunter and tomb robber, Maxwell accumulated a priceless collection of rare art, gems, and artifacts before vanishing completely-along with all his riches. At first, robbery is suspected, but the truth proves far stranger: as a final challenge to his three sons, Maxwell has buried himself and his treasures somewhere in the world, hidden away like an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. If his sons wish to claim his inheritance, they must find their father's concealed tomb. Furthermore, Maxwell's priceless possessions include a codex-an ancient Mayan manuscript that contains all the lost arts of Mayan herbal medicine, secrets which will revolutionize pharmacology. The codex is worth billions, and one pharmaceutical company CEO has sent mercenaries after it with orders to kill anyone in their way, including the beautifully enigmatic woman accompanying one of them. Now the race is on, with more and more people competing for the treasure-and some of them will stop at nothing to succeed.

Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier

The hero of Charles Frazier's beautifully written and deeply-imagined first novel is Inman, a disillusioned Confederate soldier who has failed to die as expected after being seriously wounded in battle during the last days of the Civil War. Rather than waiting to be redeployed to the front, the soul-sick Inman deserts, and embarks on a dangerous and lonely odyssey through the devastated South, heading home to North Carolina, and seeking only to be reunited with his beloved, Ada, who has herself been struggling to maintain the family farm she inherited. *Cold Mountain* is an unforgettable addition to the literature of one of the most important and transformational periods in American history.

Collector, The by John Fowles

Withdrawn, uneducated and unloved, Frederick collects butterflies and takes photographs. A lottery win enables him to capture art student Miranda and keep her in the cellar of the Sussex house he has bought with the windfall.

Colony of Unrequited Dreams, The by Wayne Johnston

Born into debilitating poverty, Smallwood is sustained by a bottomless faith in his own industry. His unabashed ambition is to "rise not from rags to riches, but from obscurity to world renown." To this end, he undertakes tasks both sublime and baffling--walking 700 miles along a Newfoundland railroad line in a self-martyring union drive; narrating a homespun radio spot; and endlessly irritating and ingratiating himself with the Newfoundland political machine. His opaque and constant incitement is an unconsummated love for his childhood friend, Sheilagh Fielding. Headstrong and dissolute, she weaves in and out of Smallwood's life like a salaried goad, alternately frustrating and illuminating his ambitions. Smallwood is harried as well by Newfoundland's subtle gravity, a sense that he can never escape the tug of his native land, since his only certainty is the island itself--that "massive assertion of land, sea's end, the outer limit of all the water in the world, a great, looming, sky-obliterating chunk of rock."

Color Purple, The by Alice Walker

Celie is a poor black woman whose letters tell the story of 20 years of her life, beginning at age 14 when she is being abused and raped by her father and attempting to protect her sister from the same fate, and continuing over the course of her marriage to "Mister," a brutal man who terrorizes her. Celie eventually learns that her abusive husband has been keeping her sister's letters from her and the rage she feels, combined with an example of love and independence provided by her close friend Shug, pushes her finally toward an awakening of her creative and loving self.

Coming of the King, The by Nikolai Tolstoy

Tolstoy (a British descendant of the famous writer) has named his volume aptly: this first book of a trilogy is also the first to draw the complex, mysterious Merlin from the mists of Britain's Celtic past in terms poetic, fantastic and true. This is no garishly covered blockbuster to be quickly read and lugged around in commuter handbags: instead, it should be kept for reading alone--and telling aloud, as the Iliad, Beowulf and the Mabinogion were told. In a brief prologue, a king rides out with his warband and sees a vision of a man rising from a great mound to address him: "You awaken me, that am departed from the world of men." And Merlin Mab Morfryn proceeds to tell how, in fulfillment of legend and prophecy, he was born in a castle and consigned as a baby to the depth of the sea for 40 years. Once again on dry land, there were battles, duels with the supernatural, visions of past and future and wonderful riddles: "What is swifter than the wind?--Thought." "What is sharper than the sword?--Truth." In classic, heroic style, and with wit, tragic sensibility and poetry in the bardic tradition, Merlin's story--which includes Arthur's and tells of the coming of the priests of Iesu Crist to save the soul of Britain in the Dark Ages--is gathered up in masterly fashion from scattered references in chronicle, fable, myth and poem into an epic with the complex quality of nectar: not easily described, nor for every taste, but once tasted, never forgotten.

Company K by William March

This book was originally published in 1933. It is the first novel by William March, pen name for William Edward Campbell. Stemming directly from the author's experiences with the U.S. Marines in France during World War I, the book consists of 113 sketches, or chapters, tracing the fictional Company K's war exploits and providing an emotional history of the men of the company that extends beyond the boundaries of the war itself.

Concubine's Children, The by Denise Chong

The Concubine's Children, by Denise Chong, is a true story about a Chinese family and how both physical and emotional distance can tear generations of families apart. We are presented with the lives of the children of three generations, starting with the oldest, the story of May-ying, a concubine, and her husband, fellow wives and children. She manages to have three children, two female and one deformed male. They override her with guilt because of her inability to bear sons, and she takes out her frustration on her children who are educated in English and Chinese. Refusing to learn English for herself, she relies on her children to communicate with the outside world. However, Winnie, one of the daughters, decides to immerse herself in nothing but schoolwork all the time to distract herself from the men and alcohol with which her mother is involved. She eventually marries and has a child, Denise, the author of the book.

Confessions of a Shopaholic by Sophie Kinsella

Becky Bloomwood has a fabulous flat in London's trendiest neighborhood, a troupe of glamorous socialite friends, and a closet brimming with the season's must-haves. The only trouble is that she can't actually afford it—not any of it. Her job writing at Successful Savings not only bores her to tears, it doesn't pay much at all. And lately Becky's been chased by dismal letters from Visa and the Endwich Bank—letters with large red sums she can't bear to read—and they're getting ever harder to ignore. She tries cutting back; she even tries making more money. But none of her efforts succeeds. Becky's only consolation is to buy herself something ... just a little something....Finally a story arises that Becky actually cares about, and her front-page article catalyzes a chain of events that will transform her life—and the lives of those around her—forever.

Crackpot: a novel by Adele Wiseman

Hoda, the protagonist of *Crackpot*, is one of the most captivating characters in Canadian fiction. Graduating from a tumultuous childhood to a life of prostitution, she becomes a legend in her neighbourhood, a canny and ingenious woman, generous, intuitive, and exuding a wholesome lust for life.

Crossing, The by Cormac McCarthy

In the late 1930s, sixteen-year-old Billy Parham captures a she-wolf that has been marauding his family's ranch. But instead of killing it, he decides to take it back to the mountains of Mexico. With that crossing, he begins an arduous and often dreamlike journey into a country where men meet ghosts and violence strikes as suddenly as heat-lightning--a world where there is no order "save that which death has put there."

Crow Lake by Mary Lawson

Matt, a true scholar, is expected to fulfill the family dream by becoming the first Morrison to earn a university degree. But a dramatic event changes his course, and he ends up a farmer; so it is Kate who eventually earns the doctorate and university teaching position. She is never able to reconcile her success with what she considers the tragedy of Matt's failure, and she feels a terrible guilt over the sacrifices made for her. Now a successful biologist in her twenties, she nervously returns home with her partner, a microbiologist from an academic family, to celebrate Matt's son's birthday. Amid the clash of cultures, Kate takes us in and out of her troubled childhood memories. Accustomed to dissecting organisms under a microscope, she must now analyze her own emotional life. She is still in turmoil over the events of one fateful year when the tragedy of another local family spilled over into her own. There are things she cannot understand or forgive.

Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

"Cry, the Beloved Country" is a beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s. The book is written with such keen empathy and understanding that to read it is to share fully in the gravity of the characters' situations. It both touches your heart deeply and inspires a renewed faith in the dignity of mankind. "Cry, the Beloved Country" is a classic tale, passionately African, timeless and universal, and beyond all, selfless.

Cure for Death by Lightning, The by Gail Anderson-Dargatz

The year is 1941. For the Weeks family on their frontier farm in Western Canada, life is brutally hard, with moments of joy few and far between. Fifteen-year-old Beth Weeks narrates this coming-of-age story, which is sprinkled with recipes, home remedies and useful homesteading advice (e.g., how to kill and clean a chicken: keep it calm, since "there's nothing as frustrating as trying to kill a panicked chicken"). Though the inventory of authentic period detail is evocative, make no mistake: this is no warmhearted tale of pioneer life. Forget square dances and barn raisings; think bestiality and incest. Beth's tortured, demanding father, mentally ill following a traumatic bear attack and the lingering effects of a head injury he received in WWI, goes on one rampage after another. Beth, meanwhile, does her best to fight off various sexual predators, finding solace of sorts in a tentative love affair with Nora, a troubled half-Indian girl. But Coyote, a sinister shape-changing spirit, stalks them and others, infusing the plot with a weird mystical aura at odds with the hardscrabble realism of the descriptions of day-to-day life.

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

Christopher Boone, the autistic 15-year-old narrator of this revelatory novel, relaxes by groaning and doing math problems in his head, eats red-but not yellow or brown-foods and screams when he is touched. Strange as he may seem, other people are far more of a conundrum to him, for he lacks the intuitive "theory of mind" by which most of us sense what's going on in other people's heads. When his neighbor's poodle is killed and Christopher is falsely accused of the crime, he decides that he will take a page from Sherlock Holmes (one of his favorite characters) and track down the killer. As the mystery leads him to the secrets of his parents' broken marriage and then into an odyssey to find his place in the world, he must fall back on deductive logic to navigate the emotional complexities of a social world that remains a closed book to him. In the hands of first-time novelist Haddon, Christopher is a fascinating case study and, above all, a sympathetic boy: not closed off, as the stereotype would have it, but too open-overwhelmed by sensations, bereft of the filters through which normal people screen their surroundings. Christopher can only make sense of the chaos of stimuli by imposing arbitrary patterns ("4 yellow cars in a row made it a Black Day, which is a day when I don't speak to anyone and sit on my own reading books and don't eat my lunch and Take No Risks"). His literal-minded observations make for a kind of poetic sensibility and a poignant evocation of character. Though Christopher insists, "This will not be a funny book. I cannot tell jokes because I do not understand them," the novel brims with touching, ironic humor. The result is an eye-opening work in a unique and compelling literary voice.

Da Vinci Code, The by Dan Brown

The action kicks off in modern-day Paris with the murder of the Louvre's chief curator, whose body is found laid out in symbolic repose at the foot of the Mona Lisa. Seizing control of the case are Sophie Neveu, a lovely French police cryptologist, and Harvard symbol expert Robert Langdon, reprising his role from Brown's last book. The two find several puzzling codes at the murder scene, all of which form a treasure map to the fabled Holy Grail. As their search moves from France to England, Neveu and Langdon are confounded by two mysterious groups-the legendary Priory of Sion, a nearly 1,000-year-old secret society whose members have included Botticelli and Isaac Newton, and the conservative Catholic organization Opus Dei. Both have their own reasons for wanting to ensure that the Grail isn't found. Brown sometimes ladles out too much religious history at the expense of pacing, and Langdon is a hero in desperate need of more chutzpah. Still, Brown has assembled a whopper of a plot that will please both conspiracy buffs and thriller addicts.

Daniel isn't Talking by Marti Leimbach

Melanie Marsh has what seems to be the perfect life: an American woman living abroad in London, she and her husband, Stephen, have two beautiful children. But when a doctor tells her that her three-year-old son, Daniel, who isn't developing normally, is autistic, Melanie resists Stephen's increasingly insistent suggestions that Daniel needs to be placed in a special school for autistic children. Determined that her son speak, Melanie turns to Andy O'Connor, who believes with patience and attention he can get autistic children to speak and play. Melanie believes Daniel will speak, but what she doesn't anticipate is that her marriage is in real danger or that she'll be deeply attracted to the charismatic Andy. Focused and tightly written, Leimbach's novel is an absorbing and hopeful story about a mother's love for and faith in her child.

Daughter of Fortune by Isabel Allende

An orphan raised in Valparaíso, Chile, by a Victorian spinster and her rigid brother, young, vivacious Eliza Sommers follows her lover to California during the Gold Rush of 1849. She enters a rough-and-tumble world whose newly arrived inhabitants are driven mad by gold fever. With the help of her good friend and savior, the Chinese doctor Tao Chi'en, Eliza moves freely in a society of single men and prostitutes, creating an unconventional but independent life for herself. The young Chilean's search for her elusive lover gradually turns into another kind of journey, and by the time she finally hears news of him, Eliza must decide who her true love really is.

David Copperfield by Charles Dickens

David Copperfield is the story of a young man's adventures on his journey from an unhappy and impoverished childhood to the discovery of his vocation as a successful novelist. Among the gloriously vivid cast of characters he encounters are his tyrannical stepfather, Mr. Murdstone; his formidable aunt, Betsey Trotwood; the eternally humble yet treacherous Uriah Heep; frivolous, enchanting Dora; and the magnificently impecunious Micawber, one of literature's great comic creations. In *David Copperfield*—the novel he described as his “favorite child”—Dickens drew revealingly on his own experiences to create one of his most exuberant and enduringly popular works, filled with tragedy and comedy in equal measure.

Day of the Jackal by Frederick Forsyth

The Jackal. A tall, blond Englishman with opaque, gray eyes. A killer at the top of his profession. A man unknown to any secret service in the world. An assassin with a contract to kill the world's most heavily guarded man. One man with a rifle who can change the course of history. One man whose mission is so secretive not even his employers know his name. And as the minutes count down to the final act of execution, it seems that there is no power on earth that can stop the Jackal.

Deafening by Frances Itani

Deaf since she was five years old, Grania has learned that watching is not always enough to survive in the world of the hearing. Sent to the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville, Ontario, Grania must learn to live away from her loving family. When Grania falls in love with Jim, a young hearing man from the East Coast, her life seems complete, but the First World War soon tears them apart and sweeps him into the worst of experiences—trench warfare.

Death in the Family, A by James Agee

On a sultry summer night in 1915, Jay Follet leaves his house in Knoxville, Tennessee, to tend to his father, whom he believes is dying. The summons turns out to be a false alarm, but on his way back to his family, Jay has a car accident and is killed instantly. Dancing back and forth in time and braiding the viewpoints of Jay's wife, brother, and young son, Rufus, Agee creates an overwhelmingly powerful novel of innocence, tenderness, and loss that should be read aloud for the sheer music of its prose.

Death of an Expert Witness by P.D. James

Dr. Lorrimer appeared to be the picture of a bloodless, coldly efficient scientist. Only when his brutally slain body is discovered and his secret past dissected does the image begin to change. Once again, Chief Inspector Adam Dalgliesh learns that there is more to human beings than meets the eye -- and more to solving a murder than the obvious clues.

Deep Green Sea, The by Robert Olen Butler

In *The Deep Green Sea*, Robert Olen Butler has created a memorable and incandescent love story between Tien, a contemporary Vietnamese woman orphaned in 1975, when the city finally fell to the Communists, and Ben, a Vietnam veteran who returns from America to a war-torn land, seeking closure and a measure of peace. Bit by bit they learn more of each other's pasts. Secrets are revealed: Ben's love affair with a Vietnamese prostitute in 1966; Tien's mixed racial heritage and her abandonment by her bar-girl mother, who feared retribution from the North Vietnamese for having given birth to one of the hated "children of dust." In Butler's hands, what follows conjures the stuff of classical tragedy and also achieves a classic reconciliation of once-warring cultures. Infused equally with eroticism and with Butler's deep and abiding reverence for Vietnamese myth and history, *The Deep Green Sea* is a landmark work in the literature of love and war.

Deliver us from Evie by M. E. Kerr

A skilled mechanic and farmer on her family's Missouri spread, Evie Burrman, 17, has a streak of blond in her slicked-back dark hair, a sign quietly calculated to ward off other people's assumptions—for starters, that she'll marry Cord Whittle, and that she'll help Dad keep the farm going. Evie's story is affectingly told by her younger brother, Parr, who understands as their parents cannot that Evie is falling in love, not with Cord Whittle, but with the daughter of the man who holds the mortgage on their farm. Parr's observations are telling: "You'd say Evie was handsome. You'd say Mom was pretty." Meanwhile, Parr falls for a girl whose fundamentalist family is fearful of gayness, and tension builds slowly until the truth about Evie explodes out of Parr, not just to their parents, but to the whole town. This is first-rate storytelling, with Kerr in absolute control of the narrative. Evie never seems a victim, nor are there villains. With the exception of the rich man who holds the Burrman mortgage, all of the characters are likable. All are survivors. Among the most convincing lesbian characters in young adult fiction, Evie makes a lasting impression, and Parr himself, the loving but conflicted brother, is just as finely drawn and memorable.

Deliverance by James Dickey

The setting is the Georgia wilderness, where the states most remote white-water river awaits. In the thundering froth of that river, in its echoing stone canyons, four men on a canoe trip discover a freedom and exhilaration beyond compare. And then, in a moment of horror, the adventure turns into a struggle for survival as one man becomes a human hunter who is offered his own harrowing deliverance

Demian by Hermann Hesse

A brilliant psychological portrait of a troubled young man's quest for self-awareness, this coming-of-age novel achieved instant critical and popular acclaim upon its 1919 publication. A landmark in the history of 20th-century literature, it reflects the author's preoccupation with the duality of human nature and the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment.

Deptford Trilogy by Robertson Davies

Who killed Boy Staunton? Around this central mystery is woven a glittering, fantastical, cunningly contrived trilogy of novels. Luring the reader down labyrinthine tunnels of myth, history, and magic, "The Deptford Trilogy" provides an exhilarating antidote to a world from where "the fear and dread and splendour of wonder have been banished."

Disgrace by J. M. Coetzee

An uninspired college teacher's affair with a student is discovered, and he seeks solace on his daughter's farm in South Africa. A violent attack launched by three black men alters how he perceives many things including his daughter and the rights of South Africa's aggrieved majority.

Divine Secrets of the YaYa Sisterhood by Rebecca Wells

When Siddalee Walker, oldest daughter of Vivi Abbott Walker, Ya-Ya extraordinaire, is interviewed in the New York Times about a hit play she's directed, her mother gets described as a 'tap-dancing child abuser'. Enraged, Vivi disowns Sidda. Devastated, Sidda begs forgiveness, and postpones her upcoming wedding. All looks bleak until the Ya-Yas step in and convince Vivi to send Sidda a scrapbook of their girlhood mementos, called *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*. As Sidda struggles to analyse her mother, she comes face to face with the tangled beauty of imperfect love, and the fact that forgiveness, more than understanding, is often what the heart longs for.

Diviners, The by Margaret Laurence

Laurence, who saw *The Diviners* as her own fictional autobiography, tells the story of 48-year-old Morag Gunn as she struggles to finish another novel. As she works, she reminisces about her life. It's her story but it's also the story of the men and women who have fostered her, for good and bad: her parents, who died when she was five; her eccentric stepfather and his reclusive wife; her overbearing and repressive husband, who tried to smother her dreams to write; and the sensuous but unreliable Native lover who inspires her, with whom she bears a daughter and with whom she is never happy.

Don Quixote by Miguel Cervantes

Widely regarded as one of the funniest and most tragic books ever written, *Don Quixote* chronicles the adventures of the self-created knight-errant Don Quixote of La Mancha and his faithful squire, Sancho Panza, as they travel through sixteenth-century Spain.

Double Helix by Anthony Hyde

Deborah Graham, a young Canadian stockbroker, makes a startling discovery while running a routine stock check for a curious client. Her lover, a medical specialist for tropical diseases, has left for a conference in Brazil, and she discovers information connecting him with a biotech company specializing in genetic manipulation. The company has developed a new drug that can fix it so women will give birth only to boys. The biotech company plans to offer the drug to overpopulated countries as a method to control the female population. Another twist occurs when the client inquiring about the stock winds up dead. She's determined to find the truth no matter the consequences. *Double Helix* is a fast-paced thriller dealing with ethical and moral issues.

Down By the River Piedra, I Sat Down and Wept by Paulo Coelho

Rarely does adolescent love reach its full potential, but what happens when two young lovers reunite after eleven years? Time has transformed Pilar into a strong and independent woman, while her devoted childhood friend has grown into a handsome and charismatic spiritual leader. She has learned well how to bury her feelings...and he has turned to religion as a refuge from his raging inner conflicts.

Dracula by Bram Stoker

This is the classic, hypnotic story of the undead creatures of the night--and the human lives they touch--as they relentlessly seek to satiate an accursed craving for their only sustenance: human blood. A Gothic novel of immense proportions, "Dracula" has only strengthened its grip on the public over the course of the last century.

Drive like Hell by Dallas Hudgens

When Luke Fulmer was just 10 years old, his father--an amateur stock-car driver--taught him to drive, saying, "It's best to learn young." Luke turns 16 in 1979 and finally gets his much-anticipated driver's license, but he immediately steals his neighbor's car and smashes it, so the local magistrate suspends his license. His overwhelmed mother, Claudia, has had enough: her oldest son, Nick, is already a two-time felon. She decides to spend the summer elsewhere, and she sends Luke to live with his brother Nick, hoping he'll learn from Nick's mistakes. So begins an endless summer during which Luke works pit crew for a stock car driver, dates a kleptomaniac, meets Jack Nicklaus (the golfer), and retrieves a duffel bag of cocaine for his brother. He also does a lot of illegal driving and learns that there is nowhere in the world he feels more in control than behind the wheel of a car. It's a good thing, too, because young Luke must keep it together while his family, his girlfriend, and maybe even his future are all taking a dive.

Drowning Ruth by Christina Schwarz

By March 1919, Nurse Amanda Starkey has come undone. She convinces herself that her daily exposure to the wounded soldiers in the Milwaukee hospital where she works is the cause of her hallucinations, fainting spells and accidents. Amanda journeys home to the family farm in Nagawaukee, where her sister, Mathilda (Mattie), lives with her three-year-old daughter Ruth, awaiting the return of her war-injured husband, Carl Neumann. Mattie's ebullient welcome convinces Amanda she can mend there. But then Mattie drowns in the lake that surrounds the sisters' island house and, in a rush of confusion and anguish, Amanda assumes care of Ruth. After Carl comes home, Amanda and he manage to work together on the farm and parent Ruth, but their arrangement is strained: Amanda has a breakdown and recuperates at a sanatorium. As time passes, Ruth grows into an odd, guarded child who clings to perplexing memories of the night her mother drowned. Why does Amanda have that little circle of scars on her hand? What is Amanda's connection to Ruth's friend Imogene and why does she fear Imogene's marriage to Clement Owen's son?

Duet for Three by Joan Barfoot

Barfoot's novel explores the relationship between three generations of women in one family. Aggie, now old and obese, but once vibrant, adventurous, and irreverent, is taken care of by her prim and proper God-fearing daughter, June. June was married briefly and disastrously, and has one daughter, the independent, assertive Frances, whom Aggie loved and helped raise. A crisis is precipitated when Aggie becomes incontinent at night, and June decides it is time to put her in a nursing home. Through flashbacks and monologues, we learn of the lives and marriages of each, and move, as they do with each other, toward understanding and sympathy. A lovely, rare novel.

Dune by Frank Herbert

This Hugo and Nebula Award winner tells the sweeping tale of a desert planet called Arrakis, the focus of an intricate power struggle in a byzantine interstellar empire. Arrakis is the sole source of Melange, the "spice of spices." Melange is necessary for interstellar travel and grants psychic powers and longevity, so whoever controls it wields great influence. The troubles begin when stewardship of Arrakis is transferred by the Emperor from the Harkonnen Noble House to House Atreides. The Harkonnens don't want to give up their privilege, though, and through sabotage and treachery they cast young Duke Paul Atreides out into the planet's harsh environment to die. There he falls in with the Fremen, a tribe of desert dwellers who become the basis of the army with which he will reclaim what's rightfully his. Paul Atreides, though, is far more than just a usurped duke. He might be the end product of a very long-term genetic experiment designed to breed a super human; he might be a messiah. His struggle is at the center of a nexus of powerful people and events, and the repercussions will be felt throughout the Imperium.

East of Eden by John Steinbeck

California's Salinas Valley is the proving grounds for **John Steinbeck's** version of Cain and Abel. *East of Eden* runs the course of two generations from the end of the American Civil War to the Beginning of the First World War. Adam Trask is innocent and fair. His wild brother Charles isn't - he sleeps with Adam's prostitute bride, the manipulative Cathy Ames, on the wedding night. Twins fall from her womb just days before she shoots her husband and runs off, leaving him to care for Aron and Caleb. The epic story of these lives, filled with heartbreak, betrayal and hope, consistently barter with human emotions in its convincing attempt to render the world conflicted.

Edible Woman, The by Margaret Atwood

Her main character, Marian McAlpin, has a very contemporary problem. She feels alienated: constrained by her market-research job, ambivalent about her engagement to the "nicely packaged" but dull Peter, and alarmed by the prospect of her friends embarking on chaotic motherhoods. In a narrative jammed with images of food, body parts, advertising, and shiny surfaces, Marian feels like a commodity to be portioned out, wrapped up, and consumed. Acquiescing to a degree, she also rebels: she virtually stops eating, and she constantly flees from Peter in favour of the dubious alternative represented by Duncan, a bizarre student with a fetish for ironing. Vulnerable but empowered, tangled up in a world from which she is also acerbically detached, Marian is a classic Atwood heroine. The novel's ambiguous resolution, involving a woman-shaped cake that Marian solemnly decapitates and serves to her significant others, may seem heavy-handed. But it does drive home Atwood's pointed satire of an insidious consumer culture that convinces young people--and women in particular--that their identities and choices can be pulled from a shelf. That message is as relevant as ever.

Ellen Foster by Kaye Gibbons

"When I was little I would think of ways to kill my daddy. I would figure out this or that way and run it down through my head until it got easy." So begins the tale of Ellen Foster, the brave and engaging heroine of Kay Gibbons's first novel, which won the Sue Kaufman Prize from the American Academy of Institute of Arts and Letters. Wise, funny, affectionate, and true, **Ellen Foster** is, as Walker Percy called it, "The real thing. Which is to say, a lovely, sometimes heartwrenching novel. . . . [Ellen Foster] is as much a part of the backwoods South as a Faulkner character—and a good deal more endearing."

Emigrants, The by W.G. Sebald

In this remarkable work of fiction, W.G. Sebald explores the power of memory as he traces the lives of four people uprooted by war and prejudice. Each of the stories reflect the tragic impact of World War II on the survivors, who struggle with a loss of home, a loss of language, and a loss of self. Through memories, each person attempts to make sense of their histories and bridge the chasm the war ripped in their lives. Combined with each story are photographs that purport to show the subjects of the stories. The combination of photographs, biography, and autobiography combine to form a meditative, lyrical story that is at once powerful and introspective.

Emma by Jane Austen

Perhaps the out-and-out funniest of Jane Austen's books. Telling the story of a heroine Austen feared readers would actively dislike, Emma has turned out to be a character whose creation was necessary to the development of the spoiled rich kid genre of literature, TV and movies. Since Emma knows what's best for everybody, she sets about trying to straighten the world out. It doesn't work. Fortunately, before completely screwing up everyone else's life, she gets her head screwed on straight and for the first time sees what it's all about.

Empire Falls by Richard Russo

Russo explores the tragicomic realities of life in a small mill town in central Maine whose best days are behind. Miles Roby is a basically decent guy who runs the Empire Grill for the widow of the last Whiting male (who shot himself when he, too, couldn't recover from his failure to dispatch his wife). Miles's own wife has left him for a sleazy gym owner, and his angst-ridden teenage daughter has befriended a sullen, ominously silent classmate shunned by the rest of his peers. Meanwhile, his ne'er-do-well father is in the process of trying to con a senile old priest into financing his annual jaunt to Key West. As the world careens around him and his fellow townfolk, Miles is trying desperately to figure out what went wrong and the answers, both complicated and simple, seem to lie mostly in the house across the river in which Mrs. Whiting resides. Russo has constructed a sensitive, endearingly oddball portrait of small-town life.

Empire of the Sun by J. G. Ballard

Jim is separated from his parents in a world at war. To survive, he must find a strength greater than all the events that surround him. Shanghai, 1941 -- a city aflame from the fateful torch of Pearl Harbor. In streets full of chaos and corpses, a young British boy searches in vain for his parents. Imprisoned in a Japanese concentration camp, he is witness to the fierce white flash of Nagasaki, as the bomb bellows the end of the war...and the dawn of a blighted world. Ballard's enduring novel of war and deprivation, internment camps and death marches, and starvation and survival is an honest coming-of-age tale set in a world thrown utterly out of joint.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Intense is the word for Ender's Game. Aliens have attacked Earth twice and almost destroyed the human species. To make sure humans win the next encounter, the world government has taken to breeding military geniuses -- and then training them in the arts of war... The early training, not surprisingly, takes the form of 'games'... Ender Wiggin is a genius among geniuses; he wins all the games... He is smart enough to know that time is running out. But is he smart enough to save the planet?

Enemy Women by Paulette Jiles

Enemy Women, the outstanding first novel by poet Paulette Jiles, leads us into new terrain, both geographic and historical, in the war between the states. Set in the Missouri Ozarks during the Civil War, Jiles's story focuses on the trying times of 18-year-old heroine Adair Colley. When a group of renegade Union militiamen attacks the Colley home, stealing family possessions, burning everything down, and taking away her father--an apolitical judge--Adair gathers the remnants of her clothes and mounts a rescue effort. Unfortunately, she is falsely accused of being a Confederate spy, a charge that lands her in a squalid women's prison run by a decent commandant embarrassed by his post. After he helps her escape, the two agree to seek out one another after the war; their separate, harrowing journeys and the evolution of each character throughout make for breathtaking action and powerful writing. Each chapter of *Enemy Women* begins with excerpts from historical testimony about this terrible period in the Civil War, when marauding soldiers pillaged and murdered whole families and communities at will. These documents add depth and resonance to Jiles's remarkable narrative.

Englishman's Boy, The by Guy Vanderhaeghe

Winner of the 1996 Governor General's Award for fiction, *The Englishman's Boy* is an extraordinary achievement. It's a story within a story--a shimmering romance about the myth of movie-making in Hollywood in the 1920s and an account of a real-life massacre of First Nations people in Montana in the 1870s. Linking these two very different stories is Shorty McAdoo, an aging cowboy, who as a young man acted as a guide for the American and Canadian trappers who perpetrated the massacre and who is now going to be the subject of a no-holds-barred blockbuster set to rival D.W. Griffith's epic *Birth of a Nation*. Vanderhaeghe attempts to break the spell of Hollywood as mythmaker, expose the terrible tragic reality that lurks behind this particular myth, and make readers look again at why we have bought into this mythos, both of the idealism of the American West and Hollywood.

Enigma by Robert Harris

A gripping World War II mystery novel with a cryptographic twist, *Enigma's* hero is Tom Jericho, a brilliant British mathematician working as a member of the team struggling to crack the Nazi Enigma code. Jericho's own struggles include nerve-wracking mental labour, the mysterious disappearance of a former girlfriend, the suspicions of his coworkers within the paranoid high-security project, and the certainty that someone close to him, perhaps the missing girl, is a Nazi spy. The plot is pure fiction but the historical background, Alan Turing's famous wartime computing project that cracked the German U-boat communications code, is real and accurately portrayed. *Enigma* is convincingly plotted, forcefully written, and filled with well-drawn characters; in short, it's everything a good techno-mystery should be.

Escaping into the Night by D. DinaFriedman

Loosely based on actual events, this dramatic story of escape from the Warsaw Ghetto offers insight into the will to survive. After her mother is killed by the Nazis and the ghetto is evacuated, Halina Rudowski escapes through an underground tunnel to the forest with the help of her mother's boyfriend. Though she has resented Georg in the past, she eventually realizes that he cares for her as a father would. She hides with a group of Jews living in underground bunkers. Strengthened by the knowledge that her mother would have wanted her to survive, the 13-year-old turns from her despair and perseveres despite unbearable obstacles. Halina is embarrassed into bravery by the courage of her friend Batya as the two girls join a group trying to find food for the encampment. Later she risks her life to save Batya. She develops a crush on a boy who is working for the resistance. In Halina, Friedman has created a reluctant heroine who is also a believable adolescent.

Eva Luna by Isabel Allende

Born in the back room of the mansion where her mother toils, and herself in service from an early age, the enchanting and ever-enchanted Eva Luna escapes oppression through story telling. Rolf Carle flees Germany for South America, and ultimately works as a documentary film maker, to escape childhood memories of burying the concentration camp dead. The two are brought together by guerrilla Huberto NaranjoEva's lover and a subject for Rolf's camera in this dense, opulent novel that serves as a metaphor for redemption through creative effort.

Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer

The simplest thing would be to describe *Everything Is Illuminated*, Jonathan Safran Foer's accomplished debut, as a novel about the Holocaust. It is, but that really fails to do justice to the sheer ambition of this book. The main story is a grimly familiar one. A young Jewish American--who just happens to be called Jonathan Safran Foer--travels to the Ukraine in the hope of finding the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis. He is aided in his search by Alex Perchov, a naïve Ukrainian translator, Alex's grandfather (also called Alex), and a flatulent mongrel dog named Sammy Davis Jr. Jr. On their journey through Eastern Europe's obliterated landscape they unearth facts about the Nazi atrocities and the extent of Ukrainian complicity that have implications for Perchov as well as Safran Foer. This narrative is not, however, recounted from (the character) Jonathan Safran Foer's perspective. It is relayed through a series of letters that Alex sends to Foer. These are written in the kind of broken Russo-English normally reserved for Bond villains or Latka from *Taxi*. Interspersed between these letters are fragments of a novel by Safran Foer--a wonderfully imagined, almost magical realist, account of life in the shtetl before the Nazis destroyed it. These are in turn commented on by Alex, creating an additional metafictional angle to the tale.

Eye in the Door by Pat Barker

The Eye in the Door is the second installment of Pat Barker's acclaimed and haunting historical fiction trilogy about British soldiers traumatized by World War I trench warfare and the methods used by psychiatrist William Rivers to treat them. As with the other two, the book was recognized with awards, winning the 1993 Guardian Fiction Prize. Here, Lieutenant Billy Prior is tormented by figuring out which side of several coins does he live -- coward or hero, crazy or sane, homosexual or heterosexual, upper class or lower. He represents the upheaval in Britain during the war and the severe trauma felt by its soldiers. The writing is sparse yet multilayered; Barker uses the lives of a few to capture an entire society during a tumultuous period.

Eye of the Needle by Ken Follett

One enemy spy knows the secret of the Allies' greatest deception, a brilliant aristocrat and ruthless assassin--code name: ""The Needle""--who holds the key to the ultimate Nazi victory. Only one person stands in his way: a lonely Englishwoman on an isolated island, who is coming to love the killer who has mysteriously entered her life. Ken Follett's unsurpassed and unforgettable masterwork of suspense, intrigue, and dangerous machinations of the human heart.

Fade by Robert Cormier

Much of Cormier's fiction poses a paradox: you are most alive just as outside forces obliterate your identity. Cormier's protagonists want to be anonymous, and their wishes are fulfilled in nightmarish ways. In *Fade*, which encompasses three stories in three decades, 13-year-old Paul discovers an incredible secret gift: he can become invisible. His long-lost uncle appears, to tell Paul that each generation of the family has one fader, and to warn him of the fade's dangers. Paul, however, abuses his power and quickly learns its terrible price. Twenty-five years later, Paul, a successful writer, confronts the next fader, his abused nephew Ozzie, whose power is pure vengeance. And 25 years after that, in 1988, Paul's distant cousin Susan, also a writer, reads his amazing story, and must decide if Paul's memoir is fact or fiction. *Fade* is an allegory of the writer's life. Paul's actions stem from his compulsion to understand the behavior of the people around him; Susan's questions and her awful dilemma, which concludes the book, result from her near-pathological writer's focus on other persons, a purpose her unreachable late cousin serves well. Omniscient power Paul's invisibility and Susan's access to his unpublished work leads to identity-consuming responsibility. At its best, *Fade* is an examination of the writer's urge to lose identity and become purely an observer. As in all Cormier's novels, the protagonists are ciphers whose only affirming action seems to be to assert, however briefly, that they exist. The story is gripping, even when it approaches melodrama, and Cormier concentrates on each action's inner meaning. *Fade* works better as allegory than as fantasy; this is Cormier's most complex, artful work. He seems to challenge himself as a writer, and in doing so, offers a respectful challenge to his readers. Through him, they will discover the extremes of behavior in the quietest human soul.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury's classic, frightening vision of the future, firemen don't put out fires--they start them in order to burn books. Bradbury's vividly painted society holds up the appearance of happiness as the highest goal--a place where trivial information is good, and knowledge and ideas are bad. Fire Captain Beatty explains it this way, "Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs.... Don't give them slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy." Guy Montag is a book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature.

Fall on your Knees by Ann Marie MacDonald

Fall on Your Knees tells the story of several generations of the Piper family of Cape Breton, beginning with the marriage of James Piper, the controlling, emotionally stunted son of Gaelic-speaking Scottish Canadians, and Maria Mahmoud, the 13-year-old daughter of wealthy Lebanese immigrants. Maria's father cuts her off from her family for marrying James, and James in turn forces her to deny both her heritage and her emotions. James, out of a spite even he fails to comprehend, focuses all his attention on Kathleen, his first-born and a musical prodigy. He dotes on her and sends her away to study opera in New York. However, Kathleen's unexpected return from New York, where she has made some discoveries that will ultimately turn her father against her, becomes the centre of an intricately plotted series of tragedies involving each of the Piper sisters. In a startlingly skilful manipulation of prose, MacDonald teases out clues, secrets, and revelations that are both delightful to discover and disturbing to consider.

Falling Angels by Barbara Gowdy

The book opens in 1969, at a funeral of a woman who either jumped or fell from the roof of her track house. The time frame then shifts to a decade earlier, when the woman's daughters discover that years before she had thrown or dropped an infant son over Niagara Falls. The girls--Norma, Lou and Sandy--are fascinated by this unknown sibling and by a parent who spends her life drunk, facing a TV, while the girls' father, a used-car salesman, maintains household order, such as it is. One Christmas, he promises a trip to Disneyland but instead builds, with Norma's help, a bomb shelter, and persuades the family to hole up in it for two weeks. The girls get through the fetid underground days by sipping from their mother's mug of whiskey, which their father keeps topped off. Through it all, the siblings create their own mechanisms for coping.

Family Matters by Rohinton Mistry

Family Matters, which follows upon Mistry's much lauded novels, *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, is a modern take on *King Lear* set in the roiling multicultural bustle of Bombay. Mistry's Lear is Nariman Vakeel, an elderly widower of the Parsi minority, who lives with his two middle-aged stepchildren, the embittered Coomy and her decent but spineless sister, Jal. When Nariman breaks his leg, Coomy and Jal conspire to off-load him onto their younger half-sister, the good-hearted Roxana, whose family is barely making ends meet as it is. Mistry engages all the family members in the telling of his saga. Entering the interior world of each character, he presents a richly textured portrait of how a family copes or fails to cope with the messes and smells of an infirm member, about the friable brink of poverty that can leave one vulnerable to the seduction of the quick fix, about the corruptive power of bitterness, about how room can always be made in the human heart. A less compelling subplot involving Roxana's husband Yezad aside, the undeniable fulcrum of both the family and the narrative remains the charismatic and wise patriarch, Nariman. Tortured by regret, haunted by memories that, despite the decrepitude of his body, will not be repressed, he will surely leave an indelible mark on readers of this novel about how family truly does matter.

Famous Last Words by Timothy Findley

In the final days of the Second World War, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley scrawls his desperate account on the walls and ceilings of his ice-cold prison high in the Austrian Alps. Officers of the liberating army discover his frozen, disfigured corpse and his astonishing testament—the sordid truth that he alone possessed. Fascinated but horrified, they learn of a dazzling array of characters caught up in scandal and political corruption. The exiled Duke and Duchess of Windsor, von Ribbentrop, Hitler, Charles Lindbergh, Sir Harry Oakes—all play sinister parts in an elaborate scheme to secure world domination.

Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

By turns romantic and harshly realistic, **Ernest Hemingway's** story of a tragic romance set against the brutality and confusion of the First World War cemented his fame as a stylist and as a writer of extraordinary literary power. In *A Farewell to Arms*, a volunteer ambulance driver and a beautiful English nurse fall in love when he is wounded on the Italian front. Their relationship weaves through ups and downs and eventually explodes. **Hemingway's** use of a turgid war for setting is particularly effective as it adds magnitude to a drama that works on both expansive and microscopic levels.

Fatelessness by ImreKertesz

Kertesz, a Hungarian Jew, was imprisoned in Auschwitz during his youth. His novel *Fateless* was translated into English in 1992 and told the story of a Jewish boy's experiences in the concentration camps and his attempts to reconcile himself to those experiences after World War II.

Fatherland, The by Robert Harris

Fatherland is set in an alternative world where Hitler has won the Second World War. It is April 1964 and one week before Hitler's 75th birthday. Xavier March, a detective of the Kriminalpolizei, is called out to investigate the discovery of a dead body in a lake near Berlin's most prestigious suburb. As March discovers the identity of the body, he uncovers signs of a conspiracy that could go to the very top of the German Reich. And, with the Gestapo just one step behind, March, together with an American journalist, is caught up in a race to discover and reveal the truth -- a truth that has already killed, a truth that could topple governments, a truth that will change history.

Fields of Fire by James Webb

Fields of Fire is James Webb's classic, searing novel of the Vietnam War, a novel of poetic power, razor-sharp observation, and agonizing human truths seen through the prism of nonstop combat. Weaving together a cast of vivid characters, **Fields of Fire** captures the journey of unformed men through a man-made hell — until each man finds his fate.

Fifth Mountain, The by Paulo Coelho

In the ninth century B.C., the Phoenician princess Jezebel orders the execution of all the prophets who refuse to seek safety in the land of Zarephath, where she unexpectedly finds true love with a young widow. But this newfound rapture is to be cut short, and Elijah sees all of his hopes and dreams irrevocably erased as he is swept into a whirlwind of events that threatens his very existence. In what is truly a literary milestone, Coelho gives a quietly moving account of a man touched by the hand of God who must triumph over his frustrations in a soul-shattering trail of faith.

Fine Balance, A by Rohinton Mistry

In mid-1970s urban India—a chaos of wretchedness on the streets and slogans in the offices—a chain of circumstances tosses four varied individuals together in one small flat. Stubbornly independent Dina, widowed early, takes in Maneck, the college-aged son of a more prosperous childhood friend and, more reluctantly, Ishvar and Om, uncle and nephew tailors fleeing low-caste origins and astonishing hardships. The reader first learns the characters' separate, compelling histories of brief joys and abiding sorrows, then watches as barriers of class, suspicion, and politeness are gradually dissolved. Even more affecting than Mistry's depictions of squalor and grotesque injustice is his study of friendships emerging unexpectedly, naturally. The novel's coda is cruel and heart-wrenching but deeply honest.

Fire Dwellers, The by Margaret Laurence

The Fire-Dwellers is an extraordinary novel about a woman who has four children, a hard-working but uncommunicative husband, a spinster sister, and an abiding conviction that life has more to offer her than the tedious routine of her days.

Firelord by Parke Godwin

Artorious Pendragon, a young warrior-king destined to unite the shattered land of Britain, reaches unattainable heights, only to lose his heart and his kingdom to the greatest betrayal of all.

Firm, The by John Grisham

Grisham's gripping fiction debut describes the inner workings of a law firm set up by the Mafia to launder money and concoct tax evasions. Mitchell McDeere, third in his class at Harvard Law, is wooed relentlessly by the prestigious Memphis tax firm of Bendini, Lambert and Locke. Succumbing to the firm's high-powered salesmanship, he rejects some of the country's best-known firms to join the group, where he is awed by the opulent lifestyle pressed upon him. But the company has ruthless, underhanded methods of gathering information (they wire the homes of all associates) and ensuring loyalty (social situations are severely monitored). The firm's mania for security and secrecy, combined with the fact that the only lawyers who have ever left did so in coffins—five in 15 years—arouse Mitch and wife Abby's curiosity, and they rapidly find themselves in a labyrinth of intrigue and danger. Grisham, a criminal defense attorney, lucidly describes law office procedures at the highest levels, smoothly meshing them with the criminal events of the narrative.

Flanders by Patricia Anthony

In Flanders Fields, where so many died so horribly during WWI, an American volunteer named Travis Lee Stanhope finds terror, death, forgiveness and, ultimately, an odd sort of salvation. Anthony (God's Fires), one of speculative fiction's brightest talents, has written a novel of the Great War that is worthy of comparison to Erich Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front. Travis Lee is a wonderfully complex character, a wild boy from Texas who had the brains to win a scholarship to Harvard, a survivor of childhood abuse who hates his alcoholic father but fears he may be turning into him. Uncomfortable at home and at school, Travis, like many young Americans in 1916, enlists in the British army in search of adventure. What he finds instead is the monstrous human meatgrinder that is Flanders in northern France. Few writers have succeeded so well as Anthony in describing the horrors of trench warfare, the mud and disease, the rotting bodies and unending bombardment, the virtually universal madness that turns men into killers and rapists. Travis Lee is a talented sharpshooter, but as months of terror go by and the number of his kills grows, he begins to see things, at first in his dreams and later on the battlefield itself. Ghosts begin to haunt him, unwilling or unable to leave the shell craters and barbed wire where their lives ended. Told by a battlefield chaplain that he's gifted with the Second Sight, Travis Lee repeatedly finds himself wandering in an unearthly cemetery, a melancholy place that nonetheless hints at the possibility of eternal life.

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes

Flowers for Algernon is the beloved, classic story of a mentally disabled man whose experimental quest for intelligence mirrors that of Algernon, an extraordinary lab mouse. In poignant diary entries, Charlie tells how a brain operation increases his IQ and changes his life. As the experimental procedure takes effect, Charlie's intelligence expands until it surpasses that of the doctors who engineered his metamorphosis. The experiment seems to be a scientific breakthrough of paramount importance--until Algernon begins his sudden, unexpected deterioration. Will the same happen to Charlie?

For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down by David Adams Richards

A suspenseful and moving novel which has at its centre one of Richards' most memorable and haunting characters. It is the fall of 1989 in a small Miramichi mill town. Jerry Bines is acquitted of murder and returns home to his estranged wife and young son, with hopes for a new beginning. But when he learns that Gary Percy Rils has escaped from prison, he has good reason to fear for his own safety and that of others. In his attempts to protect his family from Rils by taking him under his wing, Bines sets in motion a series of events that ultimately leads to tragedy. The story of what happens unfolds piece by piece, as related by police reports, interviews, and by a man to a boy. Vivid in its sense of place, this penetrating chronicle of lives is both dark and redemptive, devastating and comic.

Forty Words for Sorrow by Giles Blunt

This brooding tale of a search for a serial killer in rural Ontario takes its title from the often-quoted fact that Eskimos have 40 words for snow. "What people really need is forty words for sorrow," thinks Det. John Cardinal, whose glum outlook aptly mirrors the mood of Blunt's atmospheric thriller. The story begins when the frozen body of 13-year-old Chippewa Katie Pine is discovered on one of the Manitou Islands near Algonquin Bay, Ontario. Cardinal, whose obsessive search for the missing girl when she first disappeared six months earlier got him kicked off the case, ends up back in the good graces of his superiors. Or so he thinks.

Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang by Joyce Carol Oates

Oates, one of America's most distinguished and prolific writers, has triumphed again with this deftly crafted, highly imaginative novel about a girl gang called Foxfire and its leader, Legs Sadovsky. Legs is many things: a female Robin Hood, a Marxist revolutionary, a highly intelligent naif, an incredibly bold, indestructible heroine. Legs, who is wise beyond her years, dominates Foxfire with her superiority. But Legs is not a writer; that responsibility she delegates to Maddy Wirtz, who becomes the official chronicler of Foxfire's history. Later in life, in search of elusive truth, Maddy returns to her notebooks and relives her Foxfire days of the 1950s, a decade she and her female contemporaries (of all ages) experienced through violence, fear, and oppression. The forces that gave rise to Foxfire and the bonds that kept it together raise many interesting questions about gender, social status, and sexuality. As in any Oates novel, these multiple themes intertwine to create a richly textured piece.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

As this chilling, gothic tale unfolds, Dr. Frankenstein experiments in his private laboratory and assembles a living being from parts of unearthed corpses. But beyond his imagination are the dire and terrifying consequences of a creature who inflicts murder on the human race.

Franny and Zooey by J. D. Salinger

In the toils of the Glass family and their utilitarian lifestyle lay two children. Franny is the youngest, away at school and slowly giving into doubts about the meaning of life. She becomes obsessed with a book that prompts her to pray away the ills of her life, only to fall victim to a nervous breakdown. Back at home, Zooey, the eldest brother in the family of seven, is worried sick over the state of his little sister. He is all too familiar with the way she feels, so much so that he feels impelled to explain to her the alienation as he tries to bring her around with a virtuous lecture on life. **J. D. Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*** is a keen take on life from two mutated perspectives. At once dark and witty, it's as provocative as it is entertaining.

Freaky, Deaky by Elmore Leonard

Meet a vivid group of characters who are mainly veterans of the youth rebellion of the 1960s. Chief among them are Chris Mankowski, 38-year-old Detroit police sergeant, newly transferred from the bomb squad to sex crimes; Woody Ricks, alcoholic auto scion; Donnell Lewis, ex-Black Panther who is acting as Woody's driver, nursemaid and would-be swindler; Robin Abbott, ex-con, ex-fugitive (she bombed a federal office building) who has plans for a million dollar movie based on Woody's life, with help from her old boyfriend and erstwhile bombing partner Skip Gibbs, now a movie dynamite expert. The only character who does not have ties to the '60s is Greta Wyatt, stage-named Ginger Jones, who meets Chris when she reports that Woody has assaulted her. When Chris pursues the investigation, he is suspended from the force, ostensibly for non-residence in Detroit but really because of Woody's clout. Now determined to get to the bottom of things, Chris is caught up in a web of scams plotted by Robin, Skip and Donnell. Leonard excels here with his trademark menace and his deadpan, throwaway humor.

French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles

Universally regarded as a contemporary classic, ***The French Lieutenant's Woman*** is a feat of seductive storytelling that effectively reinvents the Victorian novel. Fowles' classic tells the story of a mysterious, lonely woman, notorious for her obscure relationship with an absent French lieutenant.

Fried Green Tomatoes by Fanny Flagg

When Cleo Threadgood and Evelyn Couch meet in the visitors lounge of an Alabama nursing home, they find themselves exchanging the sort of confidences that are sometimes only safe to reveal to strangers. At 48, Evelyn is falling apart: none of the middle-class values she grew up with seem to signify in today's world. On the other hand, 86-year-old Cleo is still being nurtured by memories of a lifetime spent in Whistle Stop, a pocket-sized town outside of Birmingham, which flourished in the days of the Great Depression. Most of the town's life centered around its one cafe, whose owners, gentle Ruth and tomboyish Idgie, served up grits (both true and hominy) to anyone who passed by. How their love for each other and just about everyone else survived visits from the sheriff, the Ku Klux Klan, a host of hungry hoboos, a murder and the rigors of the Depression makes lively reading the kind that eventually nourishes Evelyn and the reader as well. Though Flagg's characters tend to be sweet as candied yams or mean clear through, she manages to infuse their story with enough tartness to avoid sentimentality.

Friend of my Youth by Alice Munro

Friend of My Youth is a collection of 10 short stories by renowned Canadian author **Alice Munro**. In each meaningful tale, she captures the magical wonder of the human condition across time and continents. From *Five Points* to *Wigtime*, **Munro** encapsulates what it means to be Canadian, whether you're young, old, rich or poor. Discover the brilliant prose and tender handling of emotions in the engaging compilation.

From the Depths I Call You 1940-1942 by Chava Rosenfarb

Originally published in Yiddish in 1972, this final volume of a trilogy depicting daily life in the Lodz ghetto recreates the frantic desperation as thousands of Jews were forced to board cattle trains bound for Auschwitz. Revisiting characters from the first two books, Rosenfarb—herself a Lodz ghetto and concentration-camp survivor—gets very close to the horror. Adam Rosenberg, who once owned the biggest factory in town, hides under an assumed name and shovels excrement for a living until he is found out and becomes an informant, identifying other Jewish industrialists and sniffing out their hidden valuables. The poet Bunim Berkovitch discovers that his wife and children, including a newborn, have been arrested while he was out fetching their potato ration. And the hated leader of the Jewish Council who composes the dreaded transport lists can't save himself or his loved ones when the ghetto is "liquidated."

Frozen Fire by Tim Bowler

When Dusty gets the strange phone call on a snowy winter's night, she knows she can't ignore it. The boy on the other end of the line says he's dying. That's bad enough - but the fact that he seems to know something about the disappearance of her brother, Josh, means that Dusty must find the boy no matter what. But when she does finally meet him, there's something strange and haunting about him. He seems to be made of snow and fire, he can see people's thoughts, and feels everything - from chilling ice to white-hot pain...and he seems to have a hold over everyone he meets. There's talk in the town - talk of the boy's past and his ability to hurt people. Lynch mobs are baying for blood. Dusty must help the boy and find out what happened to Josh. But when the mob turns on her, it is she, and not the boy, who is in the gravest danger.

Fugitive Pieces by Anne Michaels

Fugitive Pieces is about many things: the redemptive power of poetry, the complexity of a single life, the irrevocable fist-print of brutality on human consciousness. It's about love, both its failure and its success. It's about gut-wrenching events depicted without the slightest trace of sensationalism. But perhaps, most of all, it is about every person's own inevitable connection with humanity.

Galveston by Paul Quarrington

One of Canada's great comic writers, Quarrington has throughout his career proven himself expert at mixing the absurdities and ironies of life with flawed but likeable characters, and his ninth novel is no exception. *Galveston* takes place on the tiny Caribbean outpost of Dampier Cay, where a trio of self-professed "weather weenies" convene in search of the eye of an approaching hurricane. Caldwell, Beverley, and Jimmy Newton, a.k.a. "Mr. Weather," all have different reasons for searching out weather at its most extreme. Meanwhile, Gail and Sorvig, two employees of the cable channel Planet Man simply looking for a party, have also happened upon the island--and boy, have they ever chosen the wrong island at the wrong time. As Hurricane Claire--categorized, to Newton's delight, as a "force five" storm on a scale that goes no higher--approaches, the visitors gather at the Water's Edge resort to await, and hopefully survive, the storm.

Generation X by Douglas Coupland

Coupland sheds light on an often overlooked segment of the population: "Generation X," the post-baby boomers who must endure "legislated nostalgia (to force a body of people to have memories they do not actually own)" and who indulge in "knee-jerk irony (the tendency to make flippant ironic comments as a reflexive matter of course . . .)." These are just two of the many terse, bitterly on-target observations and cartoons that season the margins of the text. The plot frames a loose Decameron -style collection of "bedtime stories" told by three friends, Dag, Andy and Claire, who have fled society for the relative tranquility of Palm Springs. They fantasize about nuclear Armageddon and the mythical but drab Texlahoma, located on an asteroid, where it is forever 1974. The true stories they relate are no less strange: Dag tells a particularly haunting tale about a Japanese businessman whose most prized possession, tragically, is a photo of Marilyn Monroe flashing. These stories, alternatively touching and hilarious, reveal the pain beneath the kitschy veneer of 1940s mementos and taxidermied chickens.

Ghost Road by Pat Barker

The Ghost Road is the shattering conclusion of Pat Barker's brilliant World War I trilogy. Set in the final months of the war, The Ghost Road focuses on Dr. William Rovers, the compassionate psychiatrist of Regeneration and Lt. Billy Prior, last seen as a domestic intelligence agent in The Eye in the Door.

Girl With the Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier

Girl with a Pearl Earring centers on Vermeer's prosperous Delft household during the 1660s. When Griet, the novel's quietly perceptive heroine, is hired as a servant, turmoil follows. First, the 16-year-old narrator becomes increasingly intimate with her master. Then Vermeer employs her as his assistant--and ultimately has Griet sit for him as a model. Chevalier vividly evokes the complex domestic tensions of the household, ruled over by the painter's jealous, eternally pregnant wife and his taciturn mother-in-law.

Girlfriend in a Coma by Douglas Coupland

A high school senior makes love on a ski slope, then mixes drinks and drugs at a wild party and falls into a 17-year coma. She wakes up to find she has a daughter, delivered nine months into her coma. Her friends all seem diminished by the passage of time. Her boyfriend laments, "What evidence have we ever given of inner lives?" Not long after, a plague kills off everyone on Earth but her friends. Even more bizarre happenings follow, leading to an unconvincing denouement. For the most part, however, Coupland has crafted a moving chronicle of the impoverished inner lives of a circle of materially rich young adults of the Nineties. Using punchy sentences filled with hip names and brand labels, he succeeds in capturing the weak sense of identity exhibited by a generation that has defined itself in terms of what it consumes and not what it could achieve.

Glass Lake, The by Maeve Binchy

Lough Glass is at the heart and soul of the namesake town clinging to its shore. They say that if you go out on St. Agnes' Eve and look into the lake at sunset you can see your future. But beneath its serene surface, the lake harbors secrets as dark and unfathomable as the beautiful woman who walks beside its waters.

God of Small Things, The by Arundhati Roy

With sensuous prose, a dreamlike style infused with breathtakingly beautiful images and keen insight into human nature, Roy's debut novel charts fresh territory in the genre of magical, prismatic literature. Set in Kerala, India, during the late 1960s when Communism rattled the age-old caste system, the story begins with the funeral of young Sophie Mol, the cousin of the novel's protagonists, Rahel and her fraternal twin brother, Estha. In a circuitous and suspenseful narrative, Roy reveals the family tensions that led to the twins' behavior on the fateful night that Sophie drowned. Beneath the drama of a family tragedy lies a background of local politics, social taboos and the tide of history--all of which come together in a slip of fate, after which a family is irreparably shattered. Roy captures the children's candid observations but clouded understanding of adults' complex emotional lives. Rahel notices that "at times like these, only the Small Things are ever said. The Big Things lurk unsaid inside." Plangent with a sad wisdom, the children's view is never oversimplified, and the adult characters reveal their frailties--and in one case, a repulsively evil power--in subtle and complex ways. While Roy's powers of description are formidable, she sometimes succumbs to overwriting, forcing every minute detail to symbolize something bigger, and the pace of the story slows. But these lapses are few, and her powers coalesce magnificently in the book's second half. Roy's clarity of vision is remarkable, her voice original, her story beautifully constructed and masterfully told.

Godfather, The by Mario Puzo

The story of Don Vito Corleone, the head of a New York Mafia family, inspired some of the most successful movies ever. It is in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* that Corleone first appears. As Corleone's desperate struggle to control the Mafia underworld unfolds, so does the story of his family. The novel is full of exquisitely detailed characters who, despite leading unconventional lifestyles within a notorious crime family, experience the triumphs and failures of the human condition. Filled with the requisite valor, love, and rancor of a great epic, *The Godfather* is the definitive gangster novel.

Gone to Soldiers by Marge Piercy

In a stunning tour-de-force, Marge Piercy has woven a tapestry of World War II, of six women and four men, who fought and died, worked and worried, and moved through the dizzying days of the war. A compelling chronicle of humans in conflict with inhuman events, GONE TO SOLDIERS is an unforgettable reading experience and a stirring tribute to the remarkable survival of the human spirit.

Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell

A monumental classic considered by many to be not only the greatest love story ever written, but also the greatest Civil War saga.

Good Earth, The by Pearl S. Buck

A classic novel by a Nobel Prize-winning author offers a graphic view of China during the reign of the last Emperor, and tells the story of an honest farmer and his wife as they struggle with the sweeping changes of the twentieth century.

Good House, A by Bonnie Burnard

Told from a variety of points of view, the book traces the upheavals and affirmations of the very ordinary Chambers family of Stonebrook, Ontario, from 1949 to 1997. The year after his wife's death, Bill, an injured WWII vet, remarries. His new wife, the unflappable Margaret, who used to work with him at the town hardware store, helps him raise his three children. Paul, the baby, becomes a hockey star and eventually a farmer, marrying young; oldest brother Patrick, a lawyer, is destined to be the keeper of family secrets; and middle child Daphne makes an eccentric choice for that time and place: she'll become the single mother of two daughters. As the years pass, the family, in nuclear and then extended form, gathers around the kitchen table to celebrate and to mourn. There are no saints, no Jobs, no Hamlets in Burnard's tale, just flawed people making the best possible choices given the passions and options of the moment, choices that sometimes require disingenuousness, stonewalling and outright lies.

Gorky Park by Martin Cruz Smith

A triple murder in a Moscow amusement center: three corpses found frozen in the snow, faces and fingers missing. Chief homicide investigator Arkady Renko is brilliant, sensitive, honest, and cynical about everything except his profession. To identify the victims and uncover the truth, he must battle the KGB, FBI, and New York police as he performs the impossible--and tries to stay alive doing it.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

"Great Expectations" is at once a superbly constructed novel of spellbinding mastery and a profound examination of moral values. Here, some of Dickens's most memorable characters come to play their part in a story whose title itself reflects the deep irony that shaped Dickens's searching reappraisal of the Victorian middle class

Great Gatsby, The by F. Scott Fitzgerald

In the decade following the end of the Great War, America sunk into a profound sense of disillusionment. While Americans became obsessed with the pursuit of glamour and riches, the roaring 20s were also driven by a sense of despair and moral failure - by a widespread sentiment that the world and the country were unable to deliver what they had promised. The period comes alive in **F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby***, a book now recognized as one of the great classics of American literature.

Great Santini, The by Pat Conroy

Step into the powerhouse life of Bull Meecham. He's all Marine --- fighter pilot, king of the clouds, and absolute ruler of his family. Lillian is his wife -- beautiful, southern-bred, with a core of velvet steel. Without her cool head, her kids would be in real trouble. Ben is the oldest, a born athlete whose best never satisfies the big man. Ben's got to stand up, even fight back, against a father who doesn't give in -- not to his men, not to his wife, and certainly not to his son. Bull Meecham is undoubtedly Pat Conroy's most explosive character -- a man you should hate, but a man you will love.

Green Grass, Running Water by Thomas King

Through a combination of magical humour, revisionist history and muted nostalgia, this book transports readers to the fictional town of Blossom. As the story unfolds, **Thomas King** familiarizes readers with the lives of five Blackfoot Indians. The plot centres around Alberta, a university professor involved with two men who pull her into opposing orbits. There is also Charlie, a flashy ambitious lawyer; Lionel, the local TV salesman; Latisha, the manager of the Dead Dog Cafe; and Eli, a lost soul searching for the white man's grail in Toronto. Although the characters live seemingly separate lives, they discover their existences are connected in ways at once coincidental, comical and cosmic in **Green Grass, Running Water**.

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift

Gulliver's Travels describes the four fantastic voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a kindly ship's surgeon. Swift portrays him as an observer, a reporter, and a victim of circumstance. His travels take him to Lilliput where he is a giant observing tiny people. In Brobdingnag, the tables are reversed and he is the tiny person in a land of giants where he is exhibited as a curiosity at markets and fairs. The flying island of Laputa is the scene of his next voyage. The people plan and plot as their country lies in ruins. It is a world of illusion and distorted values. The fourth and final voyage takes him to the home of the Houyhnhnms, gentle horses who rule the land. He also encounters Yahoos, filthy bestial creatures who resemble humans.

Guns of August, The by Barbara Tuchman

Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Barbara Tuchman has brought to life again the people and events that led up to World War I. With attention to fascinating detail, and an intense knowledge of her subject and its characters, Ms. Tuchman reveals, for the first time, just how the war started, why, and why it could have been stopped but wasn't. A classic historical survey of a time and a people we all need to know more about.

Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Written in 1985, Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* imagines a near future quite different than the one George Orwell had predicted for the previous year, but her novel has joined *1984* as one of the classics of dystopian literature. Her vision is of a United States transformed into the Republic of Gilead, a fundamentalist state in which women, and their increasingly rare reproductive capacities, are strictly controlled. It's an imagined world memorable both for Atwood's vivid anger and her surprising tenderness.

Harvesting the Heart by Jodi Picoult

An Irish Catholic whose mother left home when she was only five, Paige has a special talent. She often finds, buried in her drawings, images that others recognize as details of their pasts or their innermost longings. Overwhelmed by guilt after an abortion, Paige finishes high school and runs away from home instead of checking into the Rhode Island School of Design. She practices her art at her job (at a diner aptly called Mercy), sketching the customers in a promotion called the Chicken Doodle Soup Special. It's through her insightful portraits that she meets her husband-to-be, Nicholas Prescott, an egocentric medical student and future heart surgeon. His wealthy parents disown their son and estrange themselves from the young couple, and Paige works to help Nicholas through medical school. When their first child is born, Paige completely loses her self-confidence and embarks on a search to reestablish her identity and to find her own mother. Stranding the self-centered Nicholas with a new baby turns out *not* to be the worst possible decision, and the repercussions from this impulsive move help mend family rifts.

Heart is a Lonely Hunter, The by Carson McCullers

With its profound sense of moral isolation and its compassionate glimpses into its characters' inner lives, the novel is considered McCullers' finest work, an enduring masterpiece first published by Houghton Mifflin in 1940. At its center is the deaf-mute John Singer, who becomes the confidant for various types of misfits in a Georgia mill town during the 1930s. Each one yearns for escape from small town life. When Singer's mute companion goes insane, Singer moves into the Kelly house, where Mick Kelly, the book's heroine (and loosely based on McCullers), finds solace in her music. Wonderfully attuned to the spiritual isolation that underlies the human condition, and with a deft sense for racial tensions in the South, McCullers spins a haunting, unforgettable story that gives voice to the rejected, the forgotten, and the mistreated -- and, through Mick Kelly, gives voice to the quiet, intensely personal search for beauty.

Hero's Walk, The by Anita Rau Badami

As *The Hero's Walk* opens, Sripathi's life is already in a state of thorough disrepair. His mother, a domineering, half-senile octogenarian, sits like a tyrant at the top of his household, frightening off his sister's suitors, chastising him for not having become a doctor, and brandishing her hypochondria and paranoia with sinister abandon. It is Sripathi's children, however, who pose the biggest problems: Arun, his son, is becoming dangerously involved in political activism, and Maya, his daughter, broke off her arranged engagement to a local man in order to wed a white Canadian. Sripathi's troubles come to a head when Maya and her husband are killed in an automobile accident, leaving their 7-year-old daughter, Nandana, without Canadian kin. Sripathi travels to Canada and brings his granddaughter home, while his family is shaken by a series of calamities that may, eventually, bring peace to their lives.

Hey Nostradamus! By Douglas Coupland

The book begins with a Columbine-like shooting at a Vancouver high school, viewed from the dual perspectives of seniors Jason Klaasen and Cheryl Anway. Jason and Cheryl have been secretly married for six weeks, and on the morning of the shooting, Cheryl tells Jason she is pregnant. Their situation is complicated by their startlingly deep religious faith (as Cheryl puts it, "I can't help but wonder if the other girls thought I used God as an excuse to hook up with Jason"), and their increasingly acrimonious relationship with a hard-core Christian group called Youth Alive! After Cheryl is gunned down, Jason manages to stop the shooters, killing one of them. He is first hailed as a hero, but media spin soon casts him in a different light.

High and Hidden Place, A by Michele Lucas

On June 10, 1944, the Nazis massacred 642 men, women, and children in the remote rural community of Oradour in southwest France. To this day, no one knows why. This first novel tells the story mainly from the viewpoint of a fictionalized character, one of the few survivors. Christine Lenoir was six years old when the soldiers shot her father and burned her mother and little brothers in the church. Raised in the convent, she believed her parents had died of influenza. Then, in 1963, she begins to remember and returns to confront the horror she has suppressed. The history is the drama here.

High Fidelity by Nick Hornby

Rob Fleming is the kind of person whose mindset is clearly shown by his top two career choices: journalist for the *New Musical Express*, 1976-79, and producer for Atlantic Records, circa 1964-71. Owner of a small London record shop and musical snob of a high degree, Rob finds his life thrown into turmoil when live-in girlfriend Laura suddenly leaves. He embarks on a journey through the past, tracking down old lovers while finding solace with Marie, an American folk/country singer living in London, even as he yearns for Laura's return. Told in an engaging first-person voice that blends sarcasm with self-deprecating humor, *High Fidelity* presents a painfully funny take on love, music, and growing up.

Hiroshima Joe by Martin Booth

Captured by Hirohito's soldiers at the fall of Hong Kong and transferred to a Japanese slave camp outside Hiroshima, Captain Joe Sandingham was present when the bomb was dropped. Now a shell of a man, he lives in a cheap Hong Kong hotel, scrounging for food and the occasional bar girl. The locals call him "Hiroshima Joe" with a mixture of pity and contempt. But Joe-haunted by the sounds and voices of his past, debilitated by illness, and shattered by his wartime ordeal-is a man whose compassion and will to survive define a clear-eyed and unexpected heroism.

His Truth is Marching On by Robert Vaughan

As a student at Litchfield College, Dewey Bradley wants nothing more than to graduate, marry his girlfriend Unity, and become pastor of a church. But when war breaks out, Dewey-impassioned by the atrocities of the Nazis-drops out of school to enlist as an infantryman. Meanwhile, Gunter Reinhardt is forced to leave engineering school and join the German army. The two unknowingly cross paths as enemies on several occasions. While Dewey's heart is hardened by the brutality of war, Gunter becomes disillusioned with Hitler and his country, vowing his allegiance only to the men in his company. In a critical moment, Dewey and Gunter come face-to-face. One will choose to spare the life of the other, and in doing so, will ultimately spare his own soul.

Hobbit, The by J. R. R. Tolkien

The Hobbit is a tale of high adventure, undertaken by a company of dwarves in search of dragon-guarded gold. A reluctant partner in this perilous quest is Bilbo Baggins, a comfort-loving unambitious hobbit, who surprises even himself by his resourcefulness and skill as a burglar. Encounters with trolls, goblins, wizards, elves and giant spiders, conversations with the dragon, Smaug, and a rather unwilling presence at the Battle of Five Armies are just some of the adventures that befall Bilbo.

Homesick by Guy Vanderhaeghe

It is the summer of 1959, and in a prairie town in Saskatchewan, Alec Monkman waits for his estranged daughter to come home, with the grandson he has never seen. But this is an uneasy reunion. Fiercely independent, Vera has been on her own since running away at nineteen – first to the army, and then to Toronto. Now, for the sake of her young son, she must swallow her pride and return home after seventeen years. As the story gradually unfolds, the past confronts the present in unexpected ways as the silence surrounding Vera's brother is finally shattered and the truth behind Vera's long absence revealed. With its tenderness, humour, and vivid evocation of character and place, *Homesick* confirms Guy Vanderhaeghe's reputation as one of Canada's most engaging and accomplished storytellers.

Honorary Consul, The by Graham Greene

The gripping tragicomedy of a bungled kidnapping in a provincial Argentinian town is considered one of Greene's finest. It tells of Charley Fortnum, the "Honorary Consul," a whisky-sodden figure of dubious authority taken by a group of revolutionaries. As Eduardo Plarr, a local doctor, negotiates with authorities and the revolutionaries for Fortnum's release, the corruption of both becomes evident. This spare, tense novel explores the morality of a political system that turns priests into killers.

House of Sand and Fog by Andre Dubus

Dubus has created a novel that is nearly perfectly suited to the audio format. Kathy Nicolo is a recovering addict whose husband has left her and who is making her way in the straight world with her own cleaning business. When her house in the California hills is mistakenly seized by the county for back taxes and sold at public auction, she finds herself living out of her car and on the brink of desperation. Once a wealthy and powerful man in Iran and a colonel in the army under the Shah's rule, Behrani is now a struggling immigrant who hopes that he can sell the house for a large profit, so that he can once again provide his family with a lifestyle like the one they enjoyed in Iran. Emotions take precedence over ethics, logic, love and the law as their paths collide in a surprising and tragic conclusion.

House of the Spirits, The by Isabel Allende

It's impossible to discuss *The House of the Spirits* without referring to the characters that people its pages. More than plot or message, we learn about human nature through the relationships between the characters. **Isabel Allende** tells the captivating saga of the Truebas, a group of people who live life to the fullest and remain fixed in your imagination forever. While the family's trials, tribulations and deeply felt loves are at the heart of this novel, readers also get a very clear picture of the political landscape in South America at the time.

Hundred Secret Senses, The by Amy Tan

Nearing divorce from her husband, Simon, Olivia Yee is guided by her elder half-sister, the irrepressible Kwan, into the heart of China. Olivia was five when 18-year-old Kwan first joined her family in the United States, and though always irritated by Kwan's oddities, Olivia was entranced by her eerie dreams of the ghost World of Yin. Only when visiting Kwan's home in Changmian does Olivia realize the dreams are, in Kwan's mind, memories from past lives. Kwan believes she must help Olivia and Simon reunite and thereby fix a broken promise from a previous incarnation. Tan tells a mysterious, believable story and delivers Kwan's clipped, immigrant voice and engaging personality with charming clarity.

I am the Messenger by Marcus Zusak

Nineteen-year-old cabbie Ed Kennedy has little in life to be proud of: his dad died of alcoholism, and he and his mom have few prospects for success. He has little to do except share a run-down apartment with his faithful yet smelly dog, drive his taxi, and play cards and drink with his amiable yet similarly washed-up friends. Then, after he stops a bank robbery, Ed begins receiving anonymous messages marked in code on playing cards in the mail, and almost immediately his life begins to swerve off its beaten-down path.

I Capture the Castle by Dodie Smith

Seventeen-year-old Cassandra Mortmain wants to become a writer. Trouble is, she's the daughter of a once-famous author with a severe case of writer's block. Her family--beautiful sister Rose, brooding father James, ethereal stepmother Topaz--is barely scraping by in a crumbling English castle they leased when times were good. Now there's very little furniture, hardly any food, and just a few pages of notebook paper left to write on. Bravely making the best of things, Cassandra gets hold of a journal and begins her literary apprenticeship by refusing to face the facts.

I Had Seen Castles by Cynthia Rylant

John Dante is seventeen when the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, and he wants to fight for his country. But then he falls head over heels for Ginny Burton, who is against all war, and his beliefs are suddenly questioned. Rather than be judged a traitor or a coward, though, John enlists--a decision that changes his life forever.

I Know This Much Is True by Wally Lamb

40-year-old housepainter Dominick is facing many obstacles to happiness. He doesn't know who his real father is, his own marriage is defunct, and his current relationship with the woman in his life is tricky. However, these problems pale in comparison to the much bigger situation he has to deal with: his schizophrenic twin brother, Thomas. Having already presented Dominick with a lifetime of problems, Thomas has now mutilated himself; he severed his own hand out of some misplaced notion of religious sacrifice and political protest. Interspersed with the narrative history of the many awful situations Thomas' mental instability has forced the two to face over the years is the story of the twins' grandfather, whom Dominick learns about from the old man's memoir. Through the help of a counselor, Dominick comes to realize that the manuscript can be read as a "parable of failure" that can teach him how to get free of an abiding self-pity.

***I Love You Like A Tomato* by Marie Giordano**

ChiChi Maggiordino will do anything to get God's attention. She will hold her breath, stand on tiptoe for an hour, walk a mile backward, climb all stairs on her knees... anything. When her grandmother teaches her how to use the Evil Eye, telling her it's how Jesus Christ made his miracles and how the Italians got rid of Mussolini, ChiChi realizes it's what her prayers have been missing. Now she can get started on the business of making her mother happier by helping her find love, and healing her brother's weak lungs. But ChiChi's family lives in Minneapolis, and it's the 1950s. For an Italian immigrant family, sometimes it seems like nothing can make life easier. ChiChi's mother still pines for her husband, a long-dead American soldier; ChiChi's brother is disdainful of her sacrifices and penance-he doesn't understand what his older sister already knows, that sometimes God needs to be bribed.

***I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* by HannahGreen**

Chronicles the three-year battle of a mentally ill, but perceptive, teenage girl against a world of her own creation, emphasizing her relationship with the doctor who gave her the ammunition of self-understanding with which to help herself.

***I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov**

In this collection, one of the great classics of science fiction, Asimov set out the principles of robot behavior that we know as the Three Laws of Robotics. Here are stories of robots gone mad, mind-reading robots, robots with a sense of humor, robot politicians, and robots who secretly run the world, all told with Asimov's trademark dramatic blend of science fact and science fiction.

***In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote**

If all Truman Capote did was invent a new genre--journalism written with the language and structure of literature--this "nonfiction novel" about the brutal slaying of the Clutter family by two would-be robbers would be remembered as a trail-blazing experiment that has influenced countless writers. But Capote achieved more than that. He wrote a true masterpiece of creative nonfiction. The images of this tale continue to resonate in our minds: 16-year-old Nancy Clutter teaching a friend how to bake a cherry pie, Dick Hickock's black '49 Chevrolet sedan, Perry Smith's Gibson guitar and his dreams of gold in a tropical paradise--the blood on the walls and the final "thud-snap" of the rope-broken necks.

***In the Heart of the Country* by J. M. Coetzee**

Stifled by the torpor of colonial South Africa, and trapped in a web of reciprocal oppression, a lonely sheep farmer seeks comfort in the arms of a black concubine. But when his embittered spinster daughter Magda feels shamed, this lurch across the racial divide marks the end of a tenuous feudal peace. As she dreams madly of bloody revenge, Magda's consciousness starts to drift and the line between fact and the workings of her excited imagination becomes blurred. What follows is the fable of a woman's passionate, obsessed and violent response to an Africa that will not heed her.

***In the Skin of a Lion* by Michael Ondaatje**

In the Skin of a Lion is a love story and an irresistible mystery set in the turbulent, muscular new world of Toronto in the 20s and 30s. Michael Ondaatje entwines adventure, romance and history, real and invented, enmeshing us in the lives of the immigrants who built the city and those who dreamed it into being: the politically powerful, the anarchists, bridge builders and tunnellers, a vanished millionaire and his mistress, a rescued nun and a thief who leads a charmed life. This is a haunting tale of passion, privilege and biting physical labour, of men and women moved by compassion and driven by the power of dreams -- sometimes even to murder.

Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice

Here are the confessions of a vampire. Hypnotic, shocking, and chillingly erotic, this is a novel of mesmerizing beauty and astonishing force—a story of danger and flight, of love and loss, of suspense and resolution, and of the extraordinary power of the senses. It is a novel only Anne Rice could write.

Invisible Man by Ralph W. Emerson

Incredibly powerful and humorous, *Invisible Man* follows an anonymous black man who comes across a variety of adventures in the South and New York City. A definitive book about African-American experience in 1940s America, it's a compelling account of a fervent quest for social visibility, identity and a philosophy of hope. **Ralph Ellison** won the National Book Award for this burning document of a black man's journey through contemporary America.

Island of Dr. Moreau by H. G. Wells

A shipwreck in the South Seas, a palm-tree paradise where a mad doctor conducts vile experiments, animals that become human and then "bestial" in ways they never were before--it's the stuff of high adventure. It's also a parable about Darwinian theory, a social satire in the vein of Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*), and a bloody tale of horror.

Island Walkers, The by John Bemrose

John Bemrose's highly acclaimed national bestseller tells the story of a family who slips from fortune's favour in a southwestern Ontario mill town during the mid-1960s. Like his father before him, Alf Walker is a fixer in the local textile mill. When a labour dispute forces him to choose between loyalty to his friends and his own advancement, Alf's actions inadvertently set in motion a series of events that will reverberate far into the future. Meanwhile, Alf's wife, Margaret, must reconcile her middle-class upbringing with her blue-collar reality, as her marriage is undermined by forces she cannot name. And after their eldest son, Joe, falls headlong for a girl he first glimpses on a bridge, the boy finds his world overturned by the passion and uncertainty of young love. At once intimate and epic in scope, *The Island Walkers* follows the Walker family to the very bottom of their night, only to confirm, in the end, life's regenerative power.

Jade Peony, The by Wayson Choy

Told through the eyes of three Chinese Canadian siblings, Choy's first novel gives readers a historical glimpse at life in Vancouver's Chinatown during the 1930s and 1940s. Jook-Liang, the only sister in a family of three boys; Jung-Sum, the second adopted son; and Sek-Lung (Sekky), the sickly youngest son are searching for their identities, each presenting a moving account of love and loss that combine to tell the story of their family.

Jakob the Liar Jurek Becker

One of the most remarkable novels of the Holocaust ever written, *Jakob the Liar* is a tale of everyday heroism and the extraordinary power of illusion. Set in an unnamed German-occupied ghetto, the story centers on an unlikely hero, Jakob Heym, who accidentally overhears news of vital importance: the Russians are advancing on a city three hundred miles away. As Jakob's tidings rekindle hope and the promise of liberation, he feels compelled to elaborate. Forming a protective bond with a young orphan girl, Jakob becomes caught in his own web of optimistic lies.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Having grown up an orphan in the home of her cruel aunt and at a harsh charity school, Jane Eyre becomes an independent and spirited survivor—qualities that serve her well as governess at Thornfield Hall. But when she finds love with her sardonic employer, Rochester, the discovery of his terrible secret forces her to make a choice. Should she stay with him whatever the consequences or follow her convictions, even if it means leaving her beloved?

Jest of God, A by Margaret Laurence

Rachel Cameron is a woman struggling to come to terms with love, with death, with herself and her world. Trapped in a milieu of deceit and pettiness – her own and that of others – Rachel longs for love, and contact with another human being who shares her rebellious spirit. Through her summer affair with Nick Kazlik, a schoolmate from earlier years, she learns at last to reach out to another person and to make herself vulnerable.

Jewel by Bret Lott

The year is 1943 and life is good for Jewel Hilburn, her husband, Leston, and their five children. Although there's a war on, the Mississippi economy is booming, providing plenty of business for the hardworking family. And even the news that eldest son James has enlisted is mitigated by the fact that Jewel, now pushing 40, is pregnant with one last child. Her joy is slightly clouded, however, when her childhood friend Cathedral arrives at the door with a troubling prophecy: "I say unto you that the baby you be carrying be yo' hardship, be yo' test in this world. This be my prophesying unto you, Miss Jewel."

When the child is finally born, it seems that Cathedral's prediction was empty: the baby appears normal in every way. As the months go by, however, Jewel becomes increasingly afraid that something is wrong with little Brenda Kay--she doesn't cry, she doesn't roll over, she's hardly ever awake. Eventually husband and wife take the baby to the doctor and are informed that she is a "Mongolian Idiot," not expected to live past the age of 2. Jewel angrily rebuffs the doctor's suggestion that they institutionalize Brenda Kay. Instead the Hilburns shoulder the burdens--and discover the unexpected joys--of living with a Down's syndrome child.

Johnny Got His Gun by Dalton Trumbo

This was no ordinary war. This was a war to make the world safe for democracy. And if democracy was made safe, then nothing else mattered--not the millions of dead bodies, nor the thousands of ruined lives...This is no ordinary novel. This is a novel that never takes the easy way out: it is shocking, violent, terrifying, horrible, uncompromising, brutal, remorseless and gruesome...but so is war.

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke

It is the early 1800s. The reclusive Mr. Norrell goes to London to offer his magical gifts to the government for use against Napoleon. He quickly becomes a man of influence and distinction, only to be threatened by the appearance of Jonathan Strange, a sardonic, charming, rich young man with a talent for magic. It is a talent that will take Jonathan to the edges of darkness where the shadowy figure of the Raven King lurks. Here is the most legendary magician of all, a human child taken by the fairies in ancient times.

Joshua Then and Now by Mordecai Richler

Joshua Then and Now is about Joshua Shapiro today, and the Joshua he was. His father a boxer turned honest crook, his mother an erotic dancer whose greatest performance was at Joshua's bar mitzvah, Joshua has overcome his inauspicious beginnings in the Jewish ghetto of Montreal to become a celebrated television writer and a successful journalist. But Joshua, now middle-aged, is not a happy man. Incapacitated by a freak accident, anguished by the disappearance of his WASP wife, and caught up in a sex scandal, Joshua is besieged by the press and tormented by the ghosts of his youth. Set in Montreal, the novel chronicles the rocky journey we all make between the countries of the past and the present.

Joy Luck Club, The by Amy Tan

In 1949, four Chinese women--drawn together by the shadow of their past--begin meeting in San Francisco to play mah jong, invest in stocks and "say" stories. They call their gathering the Joy Luck Club--and forge a relationship that binds them for more than three decades. A celebrated novel in the tradition of Alice Adams and Margaret Atwood from the bestselling author of *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Reissue

July's People by Nadine Gordimer

Not all whites in South Africa are outright racists. Some, like Bam and Maureen Smales in Nadine Gordimer's thrilling and powerful novel *July's People*, are sensitive to the plights of blacks during the apartheid state. So imagine their quandary when the blacks stage a full-scale revolution that sends the Smaleses scampering into isolation. The premise of the book is expertly crafted; it speaks much about the confusing state of affairs of South Africa and serves as the backbone for a terrific adventure.

Key to Liberty by Piers Anthony

Shortly after the planet Charm was colonized 1,000 years ago, Earth finally suffered World War III. Almost everyone was destroyed and those remaining fell into a barbarian society when technology was lost. To prevent future wars, Earth's women took control and governed with a more sensible approach.

Killer Angels, The by Michael Shaara

This novel reveals more about the Battle of Gettysburg than any piece of learned nonfiction on the same subject. Michael Shaara's account of the three most important days of the Civil War features deft characterizations of all of the main actors, including Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Buford, and Hancock. The most inspiring figure in the book, however, is Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, whose 20th Maine regiment of volunteers held the Union's left flank on the second day of the battle. This unit's bravery at Little Round Top helped turned the tide of the war against the rebels. There are also plenty of maps, which convey a complete sense of what happened July 1-3, 1863. Reading about the past is rarely so much fun as on these pages.

King Leary by Paul Quarrington

Quarrington is the Canadian author of the well-received *Life of Hope* and *Home Game*. His success in this entertaining fourth novel is not only creating a memorable character in Canadiens' hockey champion Patrick Leary, "King of the Ice" for most of the first half of the 20th century, but also surrounding him with equally memorable companions. There's Clay Clinton, a likable though Machiavellian con artist-cum-hockey manager, and Leary's best friend; gormless Clifford, King's obese, amiable son, who seems to have inherited some of his father's inability to see reality; Manny Oz, King's challenger for the crown who died ignominiously and alone in a hotel room; Blue Hermann, King's roommate in the nursing home, ace reporter and alcoholic; and the hockey-playing monks of Bowmanville Reformatory, where Leary's career begins. In an odyssey that takes the King from past to present, and from Bywater to Toronto to make a ginger ale "advert," the ghosts and half-truths of Leary's life are satisfyingly resolved.

King of the Jews: a Novel of the Holocaust by Leslie Epstein

Kingdom of the Golden Dragon by Isabel Allende

Sixteen-year-old Alexander accompanies his tough grandmother on another International Geographic expedition. This time they are in the Himalayas, and, somehow, Alexander's friend Nadia Santos from the Amazon is with them. High in the mountains are the Yetis, who behave like "crazed orangutans." They help Alexander and the good guys in their fight against American corporate villains, who employ bloodthirsty bandits to kidnap the king and steal a golden dragon from the Forbidden Kingdom. Alexander and Nadia join the young heir to the kingdom and his wise Buddhist mentor, and the evil is finally conquered using a mix of telepathy, technology, guns, and Tao-shu. There's an overload of travelogue detail, but the Himalayan setting is thrilling, and the second half of the novel speeds up with breathless action and some truly surprising revelations.

Kiss of the Fur Queen by Tomson Highway

The novel opens in 1951 with Abraham Okimasis's victory in "The World Championship Dog Derby," a major dog-sled race. Part of his prize is a kiss from the winner of a local beauty pageant, a young white woman with the title of Fur Queen. This touch of white culture indelibly marks the lives of Abraham's sons, Jeremiah and Gabriel, who grow into acclaimed artists attempting to work within white, European traditions while retaining the influence of Native culture. The novel follows the boys from the idyllic innocence of their Cree childhood through a forced relocation to an abusive residential school to their lives as young artists attempting to discover how far their natural talents can take them.

Kitchen God's Wife, The by Amy Tan

Pearl, the American-born daughter of immigrants, begins the tale with an uneasy visit to her mother for Grand Auntie Du's funeral. Misunderstanding runs deep between mother and daughter: Pearl is married with two young girls of her own, but her mother's life is largely incomprehensible to her. This leads to the large second part of the novel, told in mother Winnie's voice of her young womanhood in World War II-era China. Tan is a gifted natural storyteller. The rhythms of Winnie's story are spellbinding and true, without the contrivance common in many modern novels.

Kite Runner, The by Khaled Hosseini

This beautifully written first novel presents a glimpse of life in Afghanistan before the Russian invasion and introduces richly drawn, memorable characters. Quiet, intellectual Amir craves the attention of his father, a wealthy Kabul businessman. Kind and self-confident Hassan is the son of Amir's father's servant. The motherless boys play together daily, and when Amir wins the annual kite contest, Hassan offers to track down the opponent's runaway kite as a prize. When he finds it, the neighborhood bullies trap and rape him, as Amir stands by too terrified to help. Their lives and their friendship are forever changed, and the memory of his cowardice haunts Amir as he grows into manhood. Hassan and his father return to the village of their ancestors, and later Amir and his father flee to Los Angeles to avoid political persecution. Amir attends college, marries, and fulfills his dream of becoming a writer. When Amir receives word of his former friend's death under the Taliban, he returns to Kabul to learn the fate of Hassan's son.

Kit's Law by Donna Morrissey

It's Newfoundland in the 1950s, but it feels like 1850 in Haire's Hollow, a tiny, remote outpost community. There, 12-year-old Kit Pitman lives in a gully shack with feisty grandmother Lizzy and mentally retarded mother Josie, an often drunk near-vagrant scorned by townsfolk as "the gully tramp." Lizzy tigerishly protects her girls, but when she suddenly dies, local women join forces with the vitriolic Reverend Ropson in a campaign to ship Kit and Josie away. Defended by kindly Doctor Hodgins, Kit and Josie are allowed to remain in the gully shack with frequent visits from babysitters and spies, most notably the minister's teenage son, Sidney. But they are never safe, as a psychopathic murderer named Shine roams Haire's Hollow, and Josie persists in meeting him.

Kit is a fresh, delicately nuanced first-person narrator, who almost imperceptibly blossoms from a wary, joyless preadolescent into a "full-blooded" woman, falling disastrously in love with Sidney. Like her beloved grandmother, Kit is valiant and impulsive, but most fetching is her voice whether describing Josie's "smell of rotting dogberries" or the big Newfoundland skies.

Knot, The by Tim Wynne-Jones

Lamb: the Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal by Christopher Moore

If Jesus was fully human, then of course he must have farted, but never has messianic flatulence been used to greater comic effect. Jesus' best pal, Biff, has been reincarnated by the Angel Raziel to write a true gospel--the *real* story, in which Jesus and Biff set out to find the three magi after the betrothal of Mary Magdalene (Maggie) to Jakan the jerk. Jesus (or Josh, as Biff calls him) and Biff head east, meeting immortality-obsessed Balthasar and then brothers Gaspar and Melchior, from whom they learn of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Yoga, which Josh teaches to his pet elephant. Absurd? Of course, and as in Moore's other books, the jokes, ranging from the sublime to the sophisticated to the utterly sophomoric, make the book. What *Lamb* lacks in theological sophistication it more than compensates with mirth. Although many will find something offensive in this novel, which pokes fun at every major religious tradition that existed in the first century, they will find it simply impossible not to laugh.

Larry's Party by Carol Shields

Larry goes from work as an ordinary man, a floral designer, to become a noted architect of garden mazes. Like the mazes he designs, his life becomes increasingly complex - a symbol of what it is like to be a Caucasian male in the late 20th century. His interactions with his parents, his sister, the two women who (consecutively) marry and divorce him, and his son are paralleled by the additional textures and colors he builds into the hedges he designs. The chapters gradually reveal the threads of the protagonist's identity. This well-written, satisfying novel is replete with telling metaphors, memorable phrases, and gentle satire.

Last Crossing, The by Guy Vanderhaeghe

Set on the Canadian and American frontier borderlands at the end of the 19th century, Guy Vanderhaeghe's *Last Crossing* is both an old-fashioned Western tale of adventure and character and a thoroughly modern, multi-voiced story of cultural conflict. Vanderhaeghe's powerful storytelling and his complete mastery of voice and place made *The Last Crossing* an instant classic from the moment of its publication.

Last Enchantment, The by Mary Stewart

Last Time They Met, The by Anita Shreve

From the moment they speak, *The Last Time They Met* unfolds the story of Linda and Thomas in an extraordinary way: it travels back into their past, bypassing layers of memory and interpretation to present their earlier encounters with unshakable immediacy. In Africa, when Linda and Thomas were twenty-seven, and in Massachusetts, when they were in high school, the novel re-creates love at its exhilarating pinnacle--the kind of intense connection that becomes the true north against which all relationships are measured. Moving backward through time, *The Last Time They Met* traces the extraordinary resonance a single choice, even a single word, can have over the course of a lifetime. At the same time, the novel creates an almost unbearable mystery, a mystery that can only be understood fully in the novel's final pages, in the eyes of young Linda Fallon and the young man who loves her. With a master's control of phrase, observation, emotion, and character, Anita Shreve has written a beautiful and unforgettable exploration of intimacy, loss, and lifelong desire.

Law of Dream, The by Peter Behrens

The Law of Dreams tells the story of a young man's epic passage from innocence to experience during The Great Famine in Ireland of 1847. On his odyssey through Ireland and Britain, and across the Atlantic to "the Boston states," Fergus is initiated to violence, sexual heat, and the glories and dangers of the industrial revolution. Along the way, he meets an unforgettable generation of boy soldiers, brigands, street toughs and charming, willful girls -- all struggling for survival in the aftermath of natural catastrophe magnified by political callousness and brutal neglect.

Law of Similars, The by Chris Bohjalian

Widower Leland Fowler, the chief deputy state's attorney in Burlington, Vt., has been lonely since his wife was killed in an accident two years previously, leaving him to raise his daughter Abby, now four. When traditional methods fail to cure a persistent sore throat caused by stress, he consults homeopath Carissa Lake, receives a remedy that works on the principle of "like cures like" (i.e., using the cause of the illness as the cure) and falls desperately in love with Carissa. When another of Carissa's patients misinterprets the law of similars and falls into an allergy-induced coma, Leland realizes that Carissa may be accused of malpractice. Abandoning his judgment and his rectitude, Leland instructs Carissa in fabricating and destroying evidence; this while his own office may seek to prosecute her. The consequences are, of course, ineffably sad.

Left Hand of Darkness, The by Ursula LeGuin

Genly Ai is an emissary from the human galaxy to Winter, a lost, stray world. His mission is to bring the planet back into the fold of an evolving galactic civilization, but to do so he must bridge the gulf between his own culture and prejudices and those that he encounters. On a planet where people are of no gender--or both--this is a broad gulf indeed. The inventiveness and delicacy with which Le Guin portrays her alien world are not only unusual and inspiring, they are fundamental to almost all decent science fiction that has been written since. In fact, reading Le Guin again may cause the eye to narrow somewhat disapprovingly at the younger generation: what new ground are they breaking that is not already explored here with greater skill and acumen? It cannot be said, however, that this is a rollicking good story. Le Guin takes a lot of time to explore her characters, the world of her creation, and the philosophical themes that arise.

Lesson Before Dying, A by Ernest J. Gaines

What do you tell an innocent youth who was at the wrong place at the wrong time and now faces death in the electric chair? What do you say to restore his self-esteem when his lawyer has publicly described him as a dumb animal? What do you tell a youth humiliated by a lifetime of racism so that he can face death with dignity? The task belongs to Grant Wiggins, the teacher of the Negro plantation school who narrates the story. Grant grew up on the Louisiana plantation but broke away to go to the university. He returns to help his people but struggles over "whether I should act like the teacher that I was, or like the nigger that I was supposed to be." The powerful message Grant tells the youth transforms him from a "hog" to a hero, and the reader is not likely to forget it, either.

Life of Pi, The by Yann Martel

Martel's Pi is Piscine Molitor Patel, a boy from Pondicherry, one of the few Indian towns to be colonized by France. Pi is an intelligent, unusual child: he has a scientific turn of mind but is also a practising Hindu, Moslem, and Christian. Pi's family runs a large zoo, but they decide to sell their animals to zoos in the United States and emigrate to Canada. Crossing the Pacific (with their animals), they're shipwrecked halfway between China and Midway. Pi survives, only to find himself sharing a lifeboat with an injured zebra, a spotted hyena, an orangutan, and Richard Parker--an immense Bengal tiger. Most of these animals are doomed, but Pi and Richard Parker cling to life, establishing a tacit order on the lifeboat. Martel handles this part of the story perfectly: one would expect *Life of Pi* to become cute, or perhaps preachy, but it is neither. Life on the boat proceeds in strict accordance with the rules of ecology and territorialism, and the interdependence of the passengers is both believable and absorbing. *Life of Pi* is a superb novel, both for its story and for its rich examinations of religion, isolation, and love.

Little Big Man by Thomas Berger

In *Little Big Man*, a white man becomes an Indian but eventually fits into neither white nor Indian societies. The novel is 111-year-old Jack Crabb's episodic account of his life from 1852, when he is ten and most of his family is killed by Indians, to 1876, when he becomes the only white survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Little Friend, The by Donna Tartt

Set in small-town Mississippi, the story centers on the family of Harriet Cleve, shattered forever after the murder by hanging of Harriet's nine-year-old brother, Robin, when Harriet was still a baby. Harriet's mother has withdrawn, her father has left town (though he still supports the family), and Harriet and sister Allison are essentially raised by their redoubtable grandmother, Edie, and a gaggle of aunts who, though mostly married, are ultimately "spinsters at heart." Harriet grows up an ornery and precocious child who at age 12 determines that she will finally uncover her brother's murderer. Whether or not she solves the crime is hardly the point; what matters here is the writing—dense, luscious, and exact—and Tartt's ability to reconstruct the life of this family in vivid detail. Harriet in particular is an extraordinary creation; she's a believable child who is also persuasively wise beyond her years.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Little Women describes the family life of the four March sisters living in a small New England community. Meg, the eldest, is pretty and wishes to be a lady; Jo, at fifteen is ungainly and unconventional with an ambition to be an author; Beth is a delicate child of thirteen with a taste for music and Amy is a blonde beauty of twelve. The story of their domestic adventures, their attempts to increase the family income, their friendship with the neighbouring Lawrence family, and their later love affairs remains as fresh and beguiling as ever.

Lives of the Saints by Nino Ricci

Nothing can be hidden in a small village, and little is forgiven. In Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints*, the constricted mores of the villagers of Valle del Sole in the Italian Apennines come into severe conflict with Cristina, a local woman whose husband left for the United States years before and who has been impregnated by a secret lover. Ricci's engaging novel explores, through the eyes of Christina's seven-year-old son Vittorio, the superstition and narrow-mindedness of rural Italy.

Long Walk, The by Stephen King

On the first day of May, one hundred teenage boys meet for an event known throughout the country as "The Long Walk," a deadly contest of endurance and determination, where each step could literally be their last.

Long Way Down, A by Nick Hornby

Four different people find themselves on the same roof on New Year's Eve, but they have one thing in common—they're all there to jump to their deaths. A scandal-plagued talk-show host, a single mom of a disabled young man, a troubled teen, and an aging American musician soon unite in a common cause, to find out why Jess (the teen) can't get her ex-boyfriend to return her calls. Down the stairs they go, and thoughts of suicide gradually subside. It all sounds so high concept, but each strand of the plot draws readers into Hornby's web. Each character takes a turn telling the story in a distinctive voice. Tough questions are asked. Characters are alternately sympathetic and utterly despicable, talk-show-host Martin, particularly. The narrators are occasionally unreliable, with the truth coming from the observers instead. Obviously, a book about suicide is a dark read, but this one is darkly humorous—as Hornby usually is.

Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad

When Jim, an idealistic merchant seaman and ship's officer, abandons the supposedly sinking Patna and its passengers, he dashes his youthful dreams of glory in a single stroke. Condemned in court for his impetuous act of cowardice, Jim relegates himself to a life roaming the Far East. Unforgettably told by Marlow, who also narrates Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the story of Lord Jim plumbs the mysteries of a man abjured by human society but driven by a desire for redemption.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

William Golding's classic tale about a group of English schoolboys who are plane-wrecked on a deserted island, is just as chilling and relevant today as when it was first published in 1954. At first, the stranded boys cooperate, attempting to gather food, make shelters, and maintain signal fires. Overseeing their efforts are Ralph, "the boy with fair hair," and Piggy, Ralph's chubby, wisdom-dispensing sidekick whose thick spectacles come in handy for lighting fires. Although Ralph tries to impose order and delegate responsibility, there are many in their number who would rather swim, play, or hunt the island's wild pig population. Soon Ralph's rules are being ignored or challenged outright. His fiercest antagonist is Jack, the redheaded leader of the pig hunters, who manages to lure away many of the boys to join his band of painted savages. The situation deteriorates as the trappings of civilization continue to fall away, until Ralph discovers that instead of being hunters, he and Piggy have become the hunted.

Lord of the Rings, The by J. R. R. Tolkien

Sauron, the Dark Lord, has gathered to him the Rings of Power - the means by which he will be able to rule the world. All he lacks in his plan for dominion is the Ruling Ring, which has fallen into the hands of the hobbit Bilbo Baggins. In a sleepy village in the Shire, young Frodo Baggins finds himself faced with an immense task, as the Ring is entrusted to his care. He must leave his home and make a perilous journey across the realms of Middle-earth to the Cracks of Doom, deep inside the territories of the dark Lord. There he must destroy the Ring forever and foil the Dark Lord in his evil purpose

Lords of Discipline, The by Pat Conroy

This powerful and breathtaking novel is the story of four cadets who have become bloodbrothers. Together they will encounter the hell of hazing and the rabid, raunchy and dangerously secretive atmosphere of an arrogant and proud military institute. They will experience the violence. The passion. The rage. The friendship. The loyalty. The betrayal. Together, they will brace themselves for the brutal transition to manhood... and one will not survive.

Lost Garden, The by Helen Humphreys

Set against the drama of wartime England, this is the story of Gwen, a young horticulturist who escapes London for a job teaching young girls in the country. When she discovers a "lost" garden, overgrown and containing mysterious markers that speak of long-buried emotions, she finds a flowering of a different sort—her own profound capacity to reach for love, even in the face of pain.

Lost Horizon by James Hilton

The classic 1933 novel that introduced Shangri-La to the world focuses on one woman and three men who, in a paradisiacal community deep in the mountains of Tibet, experience physical, cultural, and spiritual transformation.

Lovely Bones, The by Alice Sebold

When we first meet 14-year-old Susie Salmon, she is already in heaven. This was before milk carton photos and public service announcements, she tells us; back in 1973, when Susie mysteriously disappeared, people still believed these things didn't happen. In the sweet, untroubled voice of a precocious teenage girl, Susie relates the awful events of her death, and her own adjustment to the strange new place she finds herself. (It looks a lot like her school playground, with the good kind of swing set.) With love, longing, and a growing understanding, Susie watches her family as they cope with their grief her father embarks on a search for the killer, her sister undertakes a feat of amazing daring, her little brother builds a fort in her honor and begin the difficult process of healing. In the hands of a brilliant new novelist, and through the eyes of her winning young heroine, this story of seemingly unbearable tragedy is transformed into a suspenseful, touching, even funny novel about family, memory, love, heaven, and living.

Lucy by Jamaica Kincaid

Lucy, a teenage girl from the West Indies, comes to America to work as an au pair for a wealthy couple. She begins to notice cracks in their beautiful façade at the same time that the mysteries of own sexuality begin to unravel. Jamaica Kincaid has created a startling new heroine who is destined to win a place of honor in contemporary fiction.

Man and Boy by Tony Parsons

Harry had it all: a beautiful wife, an adorable four-year-old son, and a high-paying media job. But on the eve of his thirtieth birthday, with one irresponsible act, he threw it all away. Suddenly he finds himself an unemployed single father trying to figure out how to wash his son's hair the way Mommy did and whether green spaghetti is proper breakfast food. This brilliantly engaging novel will tug at your heart as Harry learns to become a father to his son and a son to his aging father, takes stabs at finding new love, and makes the hardest decision of his life.

Map of Glass, A by Jane Urquhart

Urquhart's passion for the past and the land are at full poetic play in this intricate story of love, loss and memory. Set in present-day Toronto and in the 19th-century world of rural Ontario timber barons, it opens with the wintry death of Alzheimer's sufferer Andrew, whose body, borne by an ice floe, runs aground on the small Lake Ontario island where artist Jerome McNaughton is seeking inspiration. The story steps back a century, to when Andrew's ancestors, owners of the same island, razed forests to build ships, then it jumps forward a year from the opening scene of Andrew's death, to when Sylvia, Andrew's married lover of 20 years, sets out to meet with Jerome, who discovered Andrew's body, and, through Jerome, to reconnect one last time with Andrew. Meanwhile, Jerome, the relationship-shy adult child of an abusive, alcoholic father, is slowly coming to trust that girlfriend Mira's love for him is real. Urquhart reveals all of their haunted personal histories in the lyrical first and third parts of the novel. But it's in the compact family-saga middle, where a slew of Andrew's memorable forebears take the stage, that this novel's luminous heart truly lies.

Map of the World, A by Jane Hamilton

Alice Goodwin is caring for her best friend's children when two-year-old Lizzy Collins wanders to the pond on the Goodwin farm and drowns. The consequences of this tragedy reverberate through a small Wisconsin community, which never accepted Howard and Alice Goodwin. Theresa Collins, bereft at losing a child and a dear friend, draws on her Catholic religion and finds forgiveness. Alice, immobilized by guilt and grief and unable to function as a wife or mother to her own two daughters, is charged with abusing children in her part-time job as a school nurse. Lizzy's death is ever present-especially in the bond growing between Theresa and Howard while Alice is in jail-and the pain of it is echoed in Alice's primary young accuser and in Alice as a child, drawing her own map of the world after her mother died.

Massive by Julia Bell

Weight has always been a big issue in Carmen's life. How could it not? Her mom is obsessed with the idea that thin equals beautiful, thin equals successful, thin equals the way to get what you want. Carmen knows that as far as her mom is concerned, there is only one option: be thin. When her mother sweeps her off to live in the city, Carmen finds that her old world is disappearing. As her life spirals out of control Carmen begins to take charge of the only thing she can -- what she eats. If she were thin, very thin, could it all be different?

Mayor of Casterbridge, The by Thomas Hardy

One of Hardy's most powerful novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* opens with a shocking and haunting scene: In a drunken rage, Michael Henchard sells his wife and daughter to a visiting sailor at a local fair. When they return to Casterbridge some nineteen years later, Henchard—having gained power and success as the mayor—finds he cannot erase the past or the guilt that consumes him. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a rich, psychological novel about a man whose own flaws combine with fate to cause his ruin.

Member of the Wedding, A by Carson McCullers

Tall, awkward, and lonely, Frankie Addams has a vivid imagination but no friends. Even her father calls her a great big long-legged 12-year-old blunderbuss, and the friendless girl spends most of her time in the kitchen, pouring out her heart to Berenice, the gentle and wise family cook and housekeeper. Frankie's jealousy of her brother's impending marriage, and her curious belief that she must accompany him and his bride on their honeymoon in order to belong, drives her to strange measures. She devises a desperate plan, reinventing herself as the seemingly sophisticated F. Jasmine, a gawky beauty in a pink dress who looks closer to 16 than 12. But she's ill prepared for what follows from this troubling game of make-believe. Carson McCullers captures the universal in the particular in this sensitive, nuanced portrayal of one girl's struggle into adulthood.

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden

In this literary tour de force, novelist Arthur Golden enters a remote and shimmeringly exotic world. For the protagonist of this peerlessly observant first novel is Sayuri, one of Japan's most celebrated geisha, a woman who is both performer and courtesan, slave and goddess. We follow Sayuri from her childhood in an impoverished fishing village, where in 1929, she is sold to a representative of a geisha house, who is drawn by the child's unusual blue-grey eyes. From there she is taken to Gion, the pleasure district of Kyoto. She is nine years old. In the years that follow, as she works to pay back the price of her purchase, Sayuri will be schooled in music and dance, learn to apply the geisha's elaborate makeup, wear elaborate kimono, and care for a coiffure so fragile that it requires a special pillow. She will also acquire a magnanimous tutor and a venomous rival. Surviving the intrigues of her trade and the upheavals of war, the resourceful Sayuri is a romantic heroine on the order of Jane Eyre and Scarlett O'Hara. And *Memoirs of a Geisha* is a triumphant work - suspenseful, and utterly persuasive.

Memoirs of a Survivor by Doris Lessing

In a beleaguered city where rats and roving gangs terrorize the streets, where government has broken down and meaningless violence holds sway, a woman, middle-aged and middle-class, is brought a twelve-year-old girl and told that it is her responsibility to raise the child. This book, which the author has called "an attempt at autobiography," is that woman's journal—a glimpse of a future only slightly more horrendous than our present, and of the forces that alone can save us from total destruction.

Memory Keeper's Daughter, The by Kim Edwards

In 1964, when a blizzard forces Dr. David Henry to deliver his own twins, he immediately recognizes that one of them has Down Syndrome and makes a split-second decision that will haunt all their lives forever. He asks his nurse to take the baby away to an institution and to keep her birth a secret. Instead, she disappears into another city to raise the child as her own. Compulsively readable and deeply moving, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* is an astonishing tale of redemptive love.

Memory Man, The by Lisa Appignanesi

When Bruno Lind, a neuroscientist and memory expert, returns to Vienna, the city of his birth, more awaits him than he had expected. Propelled by dreams, a chance name overhead in a hotel lobby, and the urgings of his daughter, Lind becomes the detective of his own unexplored life, retracing the experiences of World War II, refugee camps, and migration that he has long been unable to communicate.

Mercy Among the Children by David Adams Richards

At the age of 12, Sydney, believing he has accidentally killed a friend, vows to God that he will never harm another human being. Even as an adult, Sydney takes his vow so seriously that he will not defend himself or his family when they are falsely accused of various misdeeds. Forced to live in squalor, he and his family struggle against ridicule and persecution from the residents of the small Canadian town where they live. After a construction accident set up to frame Sydney results in the death of a young boy, Sydney's son Lyle turns to violence. In the end, though, Lyle comes to see that his father was right about his enemies: "They who lift a hand against you do so against themselves."

Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides

From the opening paragraph, in which the narrator explains that he was "born twice," first as a baby girl in 1960, then as a teenage boy in 1974, readers are aware that Calliope Stephanides is a hermaphrodite. To explain his situation, Cal starts in 1922, when his grandparents came to America. In his role as the "prefetal narrator," he tells the love story of this couple, who are brother and sister; his parents are blood relatives as well. Then he tells his own story, which is that of a female child growing up in suburban Detroit with typical adolescent concerns. Callie, as he is known then, worries because she hasn't developed breasts or started menstruating; her facial hair is blamed on her ethnicity, and she and her mother go to get waxed together. She develops a passionate crush on her best girlfriend, "the Object," and consummates it in a manner both detached and steamy. Then an accident causes Callie to find out what she's been suspecting--she's not actually a girl. The story questions what it is that makes us who we are and concludes that one's inner essence stays the same, even in light of drastic outer changes. Mostly, the novel remains a universal narrative of a girl who's happy to grow up but hates having to leave her old self behind.

Midnight at the Dragon Café by Judy Fong Bates

Set in the 1960s, Judy Fong Bates's much-talked-about debut novel is the story of a young girl, the daughter of a small Ontario town's solitary Chinese family, whose life is changed over the course of one summer when she learns the burden of secrets. Through Su-Jen's eyes, the hard life behind the scenes at the Dragon Café unfolds. As Su-Jen's father works continually for a better future, her mother, a beautiful but embittered woman, settles uneasily into their new life. Su-Jen feels the weight of her mother's unhappiness as Su-Jen's life takes her outside the restaurant and far from the customs of the traditional past. When Su-Jen's half-brother arrives, smoldering under the responsibilities he must bear as the dutiful Chinese son, he forms an alliance with Su-Jen's mother, one that will have devastating consequences. Written in spare, intimate prose, *Midnight at the Dragon Café* is a vivid portrait of a childhood divided by two cultures and touched by unfulfilled longings and unspoken secrets.

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

Saleem Sinai was born at midnight, the midnight of India's independence, and finds himself mysteriously 'handcuffed to history' by the coincidence. He is one of 1,001 children born at the midnight hour, each of them endowed with an extraordinary talent -- and whose privilege and curse it is to be both master and victims of their times. Through Saleem's gifts -- inner voices and a wildly sensitive sense of smell -- we are drawn into a fascinating family saga set against the vast, colourful background of the India of this century.

Midwives by Chris Bohjalian

The time is 1981, and Sibyl Danforth has been a dedicated midwife in the rural community of Reddington, Vermont, for fifteen years. But one treacherous winter night, in a house isolated by icy roads and failed telephone lines, Sibyl takes desperate measures to save a baby's life. She performs an emergency Caesarean section on its mother, who appears to have died in labor. But what if--as Sibyl's assistant later charges--the patient wasn't already dead, and it was Sibyl who inadvertently killed her? As recounted by Sibyl's precocious fourteen-year-old daughter, Connie, the ensuing trial bears the earmarks of a witch hunt except for the fact that all its participants are acting from the highest motives--and the defendant increasingly appears to be guilty. As Sibyl Danforth faces the antagonism of the law, the hostility of traditional doctors, and the accusations of her own conscience, **Midwives** engages, moves, and transfixes us as only the very best novels ever do.

Mila 18 by Leon Uris

It was a time of crisis, a time of tragedy--and a time of transcendent courage and determination. Leon Uris's blazing novel is set in the midst of the ghetto uprising that defied Nazi tyranny, as the Jews of Warsaw boldly met Wehrmacht tanks with homemade weapons and bare fists. Here, painted on a canvas as broad as its subject matter, is the compelling of one of the most heroic struggles of modern times.

Misery by Stephen King

Paul Sheldon. He's a bestselling novelist who has finally met his biggest fan. Her name is Annie Wilkes and she is more than a rabid reader - she is Paul's nurse, tending his shattered body after an automobile accident. But she is also his captor, keeping him prisoner in her isolated house.

Mister Sandman by Barbara Gowdy

In her startling, original take on the state of the nuclear family, the talented Gowdy offers a surreal narrative permeated with sex, spirituality, and humor. The Canarys are no ordinary family. Doris and Gordon, both closeted homosexuals, have passed off their daughter's illegitimate child, Joan, as their own. And that is just one of the many secrets the Canary family keeps. Dropped on her head at birth, the brain-damaged Joan seems somehow unearthly, with her porcelain skin and wispy hair, her refusal to speak, and her talent for mimicry and music. Observing the family closely, Joan seems to know all--Gordon's unrequited love for the orange-haired giant who fathered her, Doris' heart-stopping affair with the vibrant Harmony La Londe. This is a bizarre and frequently moving meditation on the nature of family bonds. Most astonishing of all, who would suspect that the eccentric Canarys--standing in the front yard at midnight, dressed in their nightclothes, tossing a striped beach ball back and forth--could so perfectly encapsulate the strange dance of family life?

Mists of Avalon, The by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Even readers who don't normally enjoy Arthurian legends will love this version, a retelling from the point of view of the women behind the throne. Morgaine (more commonly known as Morgan Le Fay) and Gwenhwyfar (a Welsh spelling of Guinevere) struggle for power, using Arthur as a way to score points and promote their respective worldviews. *The Mists of Avalon's* Camelot politics and intrigue take place at a time when Christianity is taking over the island-nation of Britain; Christianity vs. Faery, and God vs. Goddess are dominant themes.

Monsignor Quixote by Graham Greene

With his Sancho Panza a deposed Communist mayor and his faithful Rocinante an antiquated automobile, Monsignor Quixote roams through modern-day Spain in a brilliant picaresque fable that, like Cervantes' classic, offers enduring insights into our life and times.

More Joy in Heaven by Morley Callaghan

Based on a real-life character, *More Joy in Heaven* is a gripping account of the tragic plight of young Kip Caley, a notorious bank-robber released early from prison and feted by society as a returning prodigal son. Earnest, optimistic, and fired by reformist zeal, Kip eventually comes to realize that the welcome of his supporters is superficial and that their charity is driven by self-interest

Mosquito Coast, The by Paul Theroux

In one of Theroux's most magnificent novels, the paranoid, brilliant, and self-destructive Allie Fox takes his family to live in the Honduran jungle, determined to build a civilization better than the one they've left.

Mother of Pearl by Melinda Haines

Set in Petal, Mississippi, amid the social and economic challenges of the Deep South in 1956, this phenomenal and completely captivating novel highlights basic human longings and aspirations common to us all--love, community, identity, and security. Even Grade is a 28-year-old black man, an orphan who never knew his family. He can't seem to get enough of the untamed, natural woman Joody Two Sun, a seer who can "read" peoples' lives. Valuable Korner is the white, 15-year-old, tenderly vulnerable daughter of a known prostitute and an unknown father; her relationship with her childhood best friend Jackson has recently undergone a profound transformation. The story centers on the unusual circumstances that lead these characters and others to an unlikely connection. The events of a single year forever alter the way they see the world and their places in it. Both richly humorous and deeply tragic, this story leaves one wiser, made to understand something meaningful and important about life and human nature. Haynes speaks the truth in a story that is astonishingly powerful.

Mothers by Jax Peters Lowell

At a time when family values are being debated and defined, Lowell's novel puts human faces on a loving, nurturing, and unconventional--that is, homosexual--family. Claire is a successful fine arts photographer from a background of wealth and privilege in the East. Theo is a successful caterer, transplanted from the southwestern trailer park in which she was raised. Together, the two lovers are Willy's mothers during the 1960s and 1970s, when even their beloved, cosmopolitan New York City--let alone Claire's conservative, disapproving family--did not exactly welcome lesbian parenting. Lowell tells the story of this warmly loving family from the adult Willy's vantage as he eyes his own twin daughters with adoration and recounts his mothers' initial meeting and subsequent lives, which are eventually threatened by a society dancing to tunes proclaiming, ironically enough, that "love is all you need."

Mountain and the Valley by Ernest Buckler

The Mountain and the Valley is an affectionate portrait of David Canaan, a sensitive boy who becomes increasingly aware of the difference that sets him apart from his family and his neighbours. David's desire to write is the secret that gives this haunting story its detailed focus and its poignant theme. Set in the years leading up to World War II and against the backdrop of the Annapolis Valley's natural beauty, *The Mountain and the Valley* captures a young man's spiritual awakening and the gradual growth of artistic vision.

My Antonia by Willa Cather

In Jim Burden's accounting of his life with, and without, Antonia Shimerda, listeners are transported to the hardscrabble Nebraska prairie and the rural immigrant experience. When Jim first sees the Shimerda family, immigrants from Bohemia, disembarking from the same train that is taking him West to live with his grandparents, he has no idea the impact they will have on his life. Nostalgically, he remembers the good and bad times they had on their respective farms and creates his portrait of Antonia, an independent and tough survivor.

My Sister's Bones by Cathi Hanauer

This is a beautifully written first novel about an ordinary, non-practicing Jewish dysfunctional family in the suburbs. Father is an authoritarian physician. Mother is a teacher, caring but sensitive to social conventions. Daughter Cassie, a freshman at Cornell, is beautiful and brainy. Only her sister, Billie, 16 and not very sure of herself, realizes Cassie is losing weight, a lot of it, and has changed in other ways as well. When Cassie's weight drops dangerously, the family puts her into a resident facility for treatment of anorexia. Billie gets a boyfriend, a star wrestler, but gives herself physically to her friend's older brother. Gradually, as Cassie seems to disappear until only her bones remain, Billie begins to accept herself and strives to break free of her family. Hanauer paints a disturbing picture of the horrific effects of anorexia on patient and family.

My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult

Thirteen-year-old Anna Fitzgerald walks into the office of lawyer Campbell Alexander and announces she wants to sue her parents for the rights to her own body. Anna was conceived after her older sister, Kate, developed a rare form of leukemia at the age of two, and has donated bone marrow and blood to her sister. Now she has been asked to donate a kidney, and she intends to refuse. Campbell is a jaded young man who nevertheless decides to take her case pro bono. Anna's parents are shocked when they learn of her lawsuit, and her mother, a former civil defense attorney, decides to represent them. Anna refuses to budge on her position despite the fact that she clearly loves her sister and longs for her family's happiness. As the gripping court case builds, the story takes a shocking turn.

Naked and the Dead, The by Normal Mailer

Written in gritty, journalistic detail, the story follows an army platoon of foot soldiers who are fighting for the possession of the Japanese-held island of Anopopei. Composed in 1948, *The Naked and the Dead* is representative of the best in twentieth-century American writing.

Name of the Rose, The by Umberto Eco

In 1327, finding his sensitive mission at an Italian abbey further complicated by seven bizarre deaths, Brother William of Baskerville turns detective, penetrating the cunning labyrinth of the abbey and deciphering coded manuscripts for clues.

Native Son by Richard Wright

Right from the start, Bigger Thomas had been headed for jail. It could have been for assault or petty larceny; by chance, it was for murder and rape. **Native Son** tells the story of this young black man caught in a downward spiral after he kills a young white woman in a brief moment of panic. Set in Chicago in the 1930s, Wright's powerful novel is an unsparing reflection on the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country and of what it means to be black in America.

Natural, The by Bernard Malamud

Biting, witty, provocative, and sardonic, Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* is widely considered to be the premier baseball novel of all time. It tells the story of Roy Hobbs--an athlete born with rare and wondrous gifts--who is robbed of his prime playing years by a youthful indiscretion that nearly costs him his life. But at an age when most players are considering retirement, Roy reenters the game, lifting the lowly New York Knights from last place into pennant contention and becoming an instant hero in the process. Now all he has to worry about is the fixers, the boss, the slump, the jinx, the fans...and the dangerously seductive Memo Paris, the one woman Roy can't seem to get out of his mind.

Navigator of New York, The by Wayne Johnston

Wayne Johnston's finely wrought sixth novel, *The Navigator of New York*, is loosely based on the historical polar expeditions of Dr. Frederick A. Cook and Commander Robert Peary, and the controversy in the early twentieth century that arose over their competing claims to have been the first to reach the North Pole. Yet, at a crucial moment in the novel, Dr. Cook, one of the primary characters, muses that "There is no fixed North Pole per se, for the ice is always moving. The north polar explorer seeks after what is merely an illusion." Given the fact that both Dr. Cook and his arch-rival, Peary, go to great lengths to be the first to arrive at an apparently shifting destination, this realization is not a little ironic. The acknowledgment is of striking importance, however, not only for Dr. Cook but also to the thematic interests which govern the novel. If ostensibly about Arctic exploration and the contest to be the first to discover the North Pole, the book is also about the illusive—and elusive—nature of mapping one's origins and personal identity.

Neuromancer by William Gibson

A hard-boiled futuristic novel, NEUROMANCER uses as its stage the boundless range of modern cyberspace. The author's hero, Case, is a cyberspy, the best in the business. But he plays his games close to the edge and double-crosses the wrong people. Banished from cyberspace and restricted to life in the physical world, Case hits the skids. But his luck turns when he gets another chance. To take it may cost him his life. William Gibson is a guru of science fiction in the computer age, and NEUROMANCER is his "cyberpunk" masterpiece.

Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman

Neverwhere's protagonist, Richard Mayhew, learns the hard way that no good deed goes unpunished. He ceases to exist in the ordinary world of London Above, and joins a quest through the dark and dangerous London Below, a shadow city of lost and forgotten people, places, and times. His companions are Door, who is trying to find out who hired the assassins who murdered her family and why; the Marquis of Carabas, a trickster who trades services for very big favors; and Hunter, a mysterious lady who guards bodies and hunts only the biggest game. London Below is a wonderfully realized shadow world, and the story plunges through it like an express passing local stations, with plenty of action and a satisfying conclusion.

Nights at the Circus by Angela Carter

A powerful and disturbing writer, Angela Carter created haunting fiction about travelers surviving their passage through a disintegrating universe. Often based on myth or fairy tale-borrowed or invented for the occasion-her work evokes the most powerful aspects of sexuality and selfhood, of life and death, of apocalypse.

No Great Mischief by Alistair MacLeod

Generations after their forebears went into exile, the MacDonalds still face seemingly unmitigated hardships and cruelties of life. Alexander, orphaned as a child by a horrific tragedy, has nevertheless gained some success in the world. Even his older brother, Calum, a nearly destitute alcoholic living on Toronto's skid row, has been scarred by another tragedy. But, like all his clansman, Alexander is sustained by a family history that seems to run through his veins. And through these lovingly recounted stories-wildly comic or heartbreakingly tragic-we discover the hope against hope upon which every family must sometimes rely.

No Time to Say Goodbye by Sylvia Olsen

A fictional account of five children sent to aboriginal boarding school, based on the recollections of a number of Tsartlip First Nations people. Taken by government agents to live at Kuper Island Residential School, the children are isolated on the small island and life becomes regimented by the strict school routine. They experience the pain of homesickness and confusion while trying to adjust to a world completely different from their own. In spite of the harsh realities of the residential school, the children find adventure in escape, challenge in competition, and camaraderie with their fellow students.

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen

A deliciously witty satire of popular Gothic romances, it is perhaps Austen's lightest, most delightful excursion into a young woman's world. Catherine Morland, an unlikely heroine—unlikely because she is so ordinary—forsakes her English village for the pleasures and perils of Bath. There, among a circle of Austen's wonderfully vain, dissembling, and fashionable characters, she meets a potential suitor, Henry Tilney. But with her imagination fueled by melodramatic novels, Catherine turns a visit to his home, Northanger Abbey, into a hunt for dark family secrets. The result is a series of hilarious social gaffes and harsh awakenings that for all of Austen's youthful exuberance nevertheless conveys her mature vision of literature and life—and the consequences of mistaking one for the other.

Not Wanted on the Voyage by Timothy Findley

Not Wanted on the Voyage is the story of the great flood and the first time the world ended, filled with an extraordinary cast of remarkable characters. With pathos and pageantry, desperation and hope, magic and mythology, this acclaimed novel weaves its unforgettable spell.

Novel without a Name by Duong Huong

A compelling novel about the horror and waste of the Vietnam War--from the North Vietnamese point of view. The central character is Quan. At the age of 28, he's already a 10-year combat veteran. Like his fellow soldiers, Quan is so exhausted in body and mind that he yearns for death, even as he dreads it. Quan returns to his home village to investigate reports that an old friend has gone insane, and here he becomes aware of the war's other costs. The villagers are dispirited, because nearly everyone has lost a loved one. Poverty has blossomed. And the Communist hierarchy, once revered, is now viewed as corrupt and hypocritical.

Obasan by Joy Kogawa

This powerful, passionate and highly acclaimed novel tells, through the eyes of a child, the moving story of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. Naomi is a sheltered and beloved five-year-old when the attack on Pearl Harbor changes her life. Separated from her mother, she watches bewildered as she and her family become enemy aliens, persecuted and despised in their own land. Surrounded by hardship and pain, Naomi is protected by the resolute endurance of her aunt, *Obasan*, and the silence of those around her. Only after Naomi grows up does she return to question that haunting silence.

Odd's End by Tim Wynne-Jones

Of Love and Shadows by Isabel Allende

Isabel Allende transports us to a Latin American country in the grip of a military dictatorship, where Irene Beltran, an upperclass journalist, and Francisco Leal, a photographer son of a Marxist professor together discover a hideous crime. They also discover how far they dare go in search of the truth in a nation of terror . . . and how very much they risk.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

When feeble-minded Lenny Small and his protector George Milton arrive to work on a ranch in the Salinas Valley of California, they dream of the day when they can own their own farm. But when Lenny accidentally kills the ranch owner's daughter-in-law, their lives are changed forever. One of **John Steinbeck's** most beloved novels, *Of Mice and Men* tells the tragic story of two migrant ranch hands during the Depression. Intricately plotted and rich in character, this modern morality tale is a classic of American literature.

Officer Factory by Hans Kirst

The Officer Factory is where the cream of Germany's youth are molded into soldiers ready to fight for the Fatherland. But the training is not only military but ideological and when a murder occurs inside the school all the underlying tensions begin to surface.

Old Man and the Sea, The by Ernest Hemingway

The Old Man and the Sea is one of Hemingway's most enduring works. Told in language of great simplicity and power, it is the story of an old Cuban fisherman, down on his luck, and his supreme ordeal -- a relentless, agonizing battle with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream. Here Hemingway recasts, in strikingly contemporary style, the classic theme of courage in the face of defeat, of personal triumph won from loss. Written in 1952, this hugely successful novella confirmed his power and presence in the literary world and played a large part in his winning the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature.

On the Beach by Nevil Shute

A novel about the survivors of an atomic war, who face an inevitable end as radiation poisoning moves toward Australia from the North. They are the last generation, the innocent victims of an accidental war, living out their last days, making do with what they have, hoping for a miracle. As the deadly rain moves ever closer, the world as we know it winds toward an inevitable end....

On the Brink of the Precipice 1939 by Chava Rosenfarb

On the Brink of the Precipice, the first volume of the trilogy *The Tree of Life*, describes the lives of the novel's ten protagonists in the Lodz Ghetto before the outbreak of World War II. Chava Rosenfarb, herself a survivor of the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen, draws on her own history to create realistic characters who struggle daily to retain a sense of humanity and dignity despite the physical and psychological effects of ghetto life. Although the novel depicts horrendous experiences, the light of faith in the human spirit shines through this novel's every page.

On the Road by Jack Kerouac

On The Road, the most famous of Jack Kerouac's works, is not only the soul of the Beat movement and literature, but one of the most important novels of the century. Like nearly all of Kerouac's writing, *On The Road* is thinly fictionalized autobiography, filled with a cast made of Kerouac's real life friends, lovers, and fellow travelers. Narrated by Sal Paradise, one of Kerouac's alter-egos, *On the Road* is a cross-country bohemian odyssey that not only influenced writing in the years since its 1957 publication but penetrated into the deepest levels of American thought and culture.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

A mordant, wickedly subversive parable set in a mental ward, the novel chronicles the head-on collision between its hell-raising, life-affirming hero Randle Patrick McMurphy and the totalitarian rule of Big Nurse. McMurphy swaggers into the mental ward like a blast of fresh air and turns the place upside down, starting a gambling operation, smuggling in wine and women, and egging on the other patients to join him in open rebellion. But McMurphy's revolution against Big Nurse and everything she stands for quickly turns from sport to a fierce power struggle with shattering results.

One Hundred Million Hearts by Kerri Sakamoto

Sakamoto sketches the rippling effects of World War II on the Japanese, but she also tells the bittersweet personal tale of Miyo, a physically challenged and emotionally repressed woman of Japanese descent living with her father in present-day Toronto. With fluid shifts in time and simple yet poetic language, the story blossoms with Miyo's awakened sexuality, growing confidence, and determined exploration of the world. As the tale unfolds revelations occur regarding an unknown sister and her father's hidden past as a kamikaze pilot. Sakamoto is a gentle storyteller who never forces the point, but rather lets the details slowly surface. She gracefully, but skillfully, paints the story with words as deftly as a Japanese artist would bend a wrist and sweep a brush laden with water-thinned ink across paper to create the strong and elegant strokes of classic Japanese calligraphy.

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family. Inventive, amusing, magnetic, sad, and alive with unforgettable men and women -- brimming with truth, compassion, and a lyrical magic that strikes the soul -- this novel is a masterpiece in the art of fiction.

One True Thing by Anna Quindlen

The question posed in this tilt-a-world tale of self-sacrifice, grief, suspense, and revelation is whether or not a person has the right to die. And, further, how on earth can a person convince themselves to end the life of a loved one, no matter how awful their suffering? The novel begins with a deceptively hubristic prologue in which our narrator, 24-year-old Ellen Gulden, describes what it's like to be in jail charged with killing her dying mother. Then we get the real story, every painful, ironic bit of it. Fresh out of Harvard and eager to prove herself as a journalist, Ellen is completely unprepared for her rather elusive and dismissive father's request that she move back home and nurse her mother, who, at age 46, has suddenly become terribly ill. Ellen has always been a daddy's girl, dismissing her homey mother as an anachronism. Now, as she enters her mother's world just as her mother is about to exit it, everything she's ever assumed about her family and, indeed, life itself is challenged. It isn't easy reading about how cancer ravages Ellen's once radiant and ever-nurturing mother, but it is eminently satisfying to witness Ellen's transformation from an often glib, emotionally suppressed overachiever into a woman who begins to fathom the meaning of love.

Open Secrets by Alice Munro

There is a remarkable magic in these eight matchless stories -- stories set in Ontario, Australia, Europe, in dangerous mountains, forbidding wilderness, familiar towns. Things that cannot be explained happen here -- and yet all seems inevitable, deeply credible, and always profoundly true to the human heart.

Ordinary Life by Elizabeth Berg

In this superb collection of short stories, Elizabeth Berg takes us into remarkable moments in the lives of women, when memories and events come together to create a sense of coherence, understanding, and change. In "Ordinary Life," Mavis McPherson locks herself in the bathroom for a week, shutting out her husband and the realities of their life together—and, no, she isn't contemplating a divorce. She just needs some time to think, to take stock of her life, and to arrive, finally, at a surprising conclusion. In "White Dwarf" and "Martin's Letter to Nan," the secrets of a marriage are revealed with the sensitivity and "brilliant insights about the human condition" (*Detroit Free Press*) that have become a trademark of Berg's writing. *The Charlotte Observer* has said, "Berg captures the way women think as well as any writer." Those qualities of wisdom and insight are everywhere present in *Ordinary Life*.

Ordinary People by Judith Guest

Describes a youth's breakdown and recovery and how it affects his family.

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood

Jimmy is struggling to stay alive on a wreckage-littered Earth besieged by a brutal sun and overrun with smart and vicious test-tube-bred predators. Now calling himself Snowman (as in Abominable), he's preparing for an arduous scavenger expedition back to the formerly high-tech compound in which he lived and worked until the bioengineering industry ran amok and a catastrophic event put an end to civilization. Snowman is desperately lonely, but he isn't actually alone since he serves as guru for a strangely passive tribe unaware of the lost world of computers, bullet trains, Web porn, gene-splicing, and the plagues that Snowman so vividly and regretfully recalls. As Snowman remembers his friend, Crake, an emotionally remote genius, as well as the love of Snowman's life, an enigmatic survivor of childhood sexual abuse called Oryx, Atwood conjures a grim, all-too-plausible future in order to consider the possibly devastating consequences of our present ill-advised biotech pursuits. Rigorous in its chilling insights and riveting in its fast-paced "what if" dramatization, Atwood's superb novel is as brilliantly provocative as it is profoundly engaging.

Other Side: a Novel of the Civil War, The by Kevin McColey

On the eve of the Civil War, 17-year-old Jacob Wilson is happy to stay on his family's Ohio farm and ignore the looming belligerence. But he is forced by events to choose sides and is plunged into a world of violence in the border states of Missouri and Kansas, where the Civil War is anything but civil. Jacob joins a band of raiders led by William Quantrill and preys on "jayhawkers" and Union men. His descent into murder and madness is described in straightforward yet elegant prose.

Outsider, The by Albert Camus

Meursault leads the life of a bachelor in Algiers until he becomes involved in an act of violence that threatens to forever alienate him from the rest of society. He begins to question the moral values that he has so far taken for granted, and comes face-to-face with a new world that is both bleak and absurd. *The Outsider* is a classic of existentialism, and many critics consider it to be **Albert Camus'** greatest literary achievement. It holds a secure place as one of the most influential books of the 20th century, and is a standard in both philosophy and literature classes.

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha by Roddy Doyle

A look at the daily exploits and thoughts of a 10-year-old Irish boy. As the story progresses, readers become more and more aware of the anguish that Paddy Clarke is feeling as he becomes conscious of the impending breakup of his parents' marriage. They may find it disconcerting to see the pain he inflicts on others (preferably younger or weaker boys) for the sheer "fun" of it and the dangerous antics of Paddy and his friends. The novel is powerfully written and slowly draws readers into the protagonist's complex personality.

Painted Bird, The by Jerzy Kosinski

Many writers have portrayed the cruelty people inflict upon each other in the name of war or ideology or garden-variety hate, but few books will surpass Kosinski's first novel, **The Painted Bird**, for the sheer creepiness in its savagery. The story follows an abandoned young boy who wanders alone through the frozen bogs and broken towns of Eastern Europe during and after World War II, trying to survive. His experiences and actions occur at and beyond the limits of what might be called humanity, but Kosinski never averts his eyes, nor allows us to.

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

Born with no air in his lungs, it was only when Reuben Land's father, Jeremiah, picked him up and commanded him to breathe that Reuben's lungs filled. Reuben struggles with debilitating asthma from then on, making him a boy who knows firsthand that life is a gift, and also one who suspects that his father is touched by God and can overturn the laws of nature. The quiet 1960's midwestern life of the Lands is upended when Reuben's brother Davy kills two marauders who have come to harm the family. The morning of his sentencing, Davy -- a hero to some, a cold-blooded murderer to others -- escapes from his cell, and the Lands set out in search of him. Their journey is touched by serendipity and the kindness of strangers, and they cover territory far more extraordinary than even the Badlands where they search for Davy from their Airstream trailer. Sprinkled with playful nods to Biblical tales, beloved classics such as *Huckleberry Finn*, the adventure stories of Robert Louis Stevenson, and the westerns of Zane Grey, *Peace Like A River* is at once a heroic quest, a tragedy, a love story, and a haunting meditation on the possibility of magic in the everyday world.

Peace Shall Destroy Many by Rudy Wiebe

In 1944, as war rages across Europe and Asia, famine, violence and fear are commonplace. But life appears tranquil in the isolated farming settlement of Wapiti in northern Saskatchewan, where the Mennonite community continues the agricultural lifestyle their ancestors have practised for centuries. Their Christian values of peace and love lead them to oppose war and military service, so they are hardly affected by the war – except for the fact that they are reaping the rewards of selling their increasingly valuable crops and livestock. Thom Wiens, a young farmer and earnest Christian, begins to ask questions. How can they claim to oppose the war when their livestock become meat to sustain soldiers? How can they enjoy this free country but rely on others to fight to preserve that freedom? Within the community, conflicts and broken relationships threaten the peace, as the Mennonite tradition of close community life manifests itself as racism toward their “half-breed” neighbours, and aspirations of holiness turn into condemnation of others. Perhaps the greatest hope for the future lies with children such as Hal Wiens, whose friendship with the Métis children and appreciation of the natural environment offer a positive vision of people living at peace with themselves and others.

Piano Man's Daughter, The by Timothy Findley

As the story opens, Lily, the heroine of Timothy Findley's Victorian-Gothic-style novel as seen through the narrative of her son Charlie, is ending her days in an asylum; her life unfolds as a Dickensian tale of deprivation and struggle between the feminine and the coldly masculine, leading to that "madwoman in the attic" denouement. Yet Charlie is reclaiming his mother's life through his loving telling of her story. "She could break your heart with that riveting gaze," he says. Music, vaudeville, and silent movies resonate through the lives in the novel, set in turn-of-the-century Toronto.

Picture of Dorian Gray, The by Oscar Wilde

Celebrated novel traces the moral degeneration of a handsome young Londoner from an innocent fop into a cruel and reckless pursuer of pleasure and, ultimately, a murderer. As Dorian Gray sinks into depravity, his body retains perfect youth and vigor while his recently painted portrait reflects the ravages of crime and sensuality.

Pilgrim by Timothy Findley

Pilgrim shows up at a famous psychiatric clinic in Zurich in April 1912 after failing to hang himself in the garden of his London home. His entourage includes lovely personal friend Lady Quartermaine and some servants, but the details of his circumstances are mysterious and slow to trickle out. This inventive novel mixes many historical figures, from the not-yet-famous Carl Jung--who treats Pilgrim--to Gertrude Stein, as well as some more ancient personalities. Pilgrim, it turns out, is immortal, and he (or sometimes she) has witnessed and perhaps been had a hand in many important events in history, which his diary captures. This colorful novel by a noted Canadian novelist probably won't appeal to everyone, but it is still very entertaining and decidedly offbeat.

Pilgrimage, The by Paulo Coelho

Paulo is a thirty-eight year old, intelligent man who feels he has successfully completed his training to become a Master in an ancient and mysterious religious tradition. Paulo has survived many trials and learned many lessons in order to reach the point of being awarded a new sword: an emblem of his achievement. However, Paulo has failed to learn one final and very important lesson: what he is to do with his sword. As a result of not understanding this lesson, Paulo must undertake one final journey. If he does not succeed, he will not receive his sword and the title of Master.

Pilot's Wife, The by Anita Shreve

Kathryn Lyon has an ideal life. A pilot's wife, she's happy teaching in her New England town's - and her hometown's - high school. Her marriage is a loving one and her precocious 15-year-old daughter is a constant delight. But when a late-night knock at the door awakens Kathryn to the terrible news that her husband died in a plane crash, her world erupts. This is a moving, engrossing novel about Kathryn's grief, the revelation that her husband had some disturbing secrets and the constant scrutiny of the media in the midst of her tragedy.

Plain Truth by Jodi Picoult

Philadelphia defense lawyer Ellie Hathaway retreats to her great Aunt Leda's home in Paradise, PA, to get a break from her high-pressure job. Almost at the same time that she arrives, a dead baby is discovered in the barn of an Amish farmer. A police investigation reveals that the mother is an 18-year-old unmarried Amish girl, Katie Fisher, and that the infant apparently did not die of natural causes. Even in the face of medical proof that she recently gave birth, Katie denies the murder charge. Ellie reluctantly agrees to defend her, even though she does not want to be defended. To better understand her client, Ellie moves into the farmhouse with the Fisher family where she begins to see firsthand the pressures and sacrifices of those who live "plain." As she searches for evidence in this case, she calls upon a friend from her past, Dr. John Cooper, a psychiatrist. As Coop and Ellie work together to unravel fact and fiction, they also work to resolve issues in their relationship. Readers will experience a psychological drama as well as a suspenseful courtroom trial. The contrast between the Amish culture and the "English" provides an interesting tension. This study of opposites details much information about a way of life based on faith, humility, duty, and honesty.

Poisonwood Bible, The by Barbara Kingsolver

This intense family drama is set in an Africa on the verge of independence and upheaval. In 1959, evangelical preacher Nathan Price moves his wife and four daughters from Georgia to a village in the Belgian Congo, later Zaire. Their dysfunction and cultural arrogance proves disastrous as the family is nearly destroyed by war, Nathan's tyranny, and Africa itself. Told in the voices of the mother and daughters, the novel spans 30 years as the women seek to understand each other and the continent that tore them apart. Kingsolver has a keen understanding of the inevitable, often violent clashes between white and indigenous cultures, yet she lets the women tell their own stories without being judgmental.

Postcards by Annie Proulx

E. Annie Proulx's first novel, *Postcards*, winner of the 1993 Pen/Faulkner Award for Fiction, tells the mesmerizing tale of Loyal Blood, who misspends a lifetime running from a crime so terrible that it renders him forever incapable of touching a woman. Blood's odyssey begins in 1944 and takes him across the country from his hardscrabble Vermont hill farm to New York, across Ohio, Minnesota, and Montana to British Columbia, on to North Dakota, Wyoming, and New Mexico and ends, today, in California, with Blood homeless and near mad. Along the way, he must live a hundred lives to survive, mining gold, growing beans, hunting fossils and trapping, prospecting for uranium, and ranching. In his absence, disaster befalls his family; greatest among their terrible losses are the hard-won values of endurance and pride that were the legacy of farm people rooted in generations of intimacy with soil, weather, plants, and seasons.

Power and the Glory, The by Graham Greene

During a vicious persecution of the clergy in Mexico, a worldly priest, the "whisky priest," is on the run. With the police closing in, his routes of escape are being shut off, his chances getting fewer. But compassion and humanity force him along the road to his destiny, reluctant to abandon those who need him.

Power of One, The by Bryce Courtenay

In 1939, hatred took root in South Africa, where the seeds of apartheid were newly sown. There a boy called Peekay was born. He spoke the wrong language—English. He was nursed by a woman of the wrong color—black. His childhood was marked by humiliation and abandonment. Yet he vowed to survive—he would become welterweight champion of the world, he would dream heroic dreams. But his dreams were nothing compared to what awaited him. For he embarked on an epic journey, where he would learn the power of words, the power to transform lives, and the mystical power that would sustain him even when it appeared that villainy would rule the world.

Prayer for Owen Meany, A by John Irving

The novel, set in the 1950s in the prep school town of Gravesend, is an extraordinary account of friendship, coming of age, families, "normalcy," politics, faith, and doubt. The title character is an unusually small child—as an adult barely five feet tall—with a strange and striking voice that makes many people uneasy. The only son of a New Hampshire granite quarrier and his odd and reclusive wife, Owen is best friends with Johnny Wheelwright, the narrator of the book and grandson of one of the town's most distinguished families. The friendship is sealed by a freak accident when Owen hits a baseball that kills Johnny's mother, Tabitha, who is just arriving at their game. The remainder of the novel is a back-and-forth between past and present as Johnny searches for his identity—his mother is unmarried and never reveals the father's name—and Owen searches for his destiny—he believes that he is an instrument of God. Both searches have amazing resolutions.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

In a remote Hertfordshire village, far off the good coach roads of George III's England, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet -- a country squire of no great means and his scatterbrained wife -- must marry off their five vivacious daughters. At the heart of this all-consuming enterprise are the headstrong second daughter Elizabeth and her aristocratic suitor Fitzwilliam Darcy, two lovers in whom pride and prejudice must be overcome before love can bring the novel to its magnificent conclusion.

Princess Bride, The by William Goldman

What happens when the most beautiful girl in the world marries the handsomest prince of all time and he turns out to be...well...a lot less than the man of her dreams? As a boy, William Goldman claims, he loved to hear his father read the "S. Morgenstern classic, **The Princess Bride**. But as a grown-up he discovered that the boring parts were left out of good old Dad's recitation, and only the "good parts" reached his ears. Now Goldman does Dad one better. He's reconstructed the "Good Parts Version" to delight wise kids and wide-eyed grownups everywhere. What's it about? Fencing. Fighting. True Love. Strong Hate. Harsh Revenge. A Few Giants. Lots of Bad Men. Lots of Good Men. Five or Six Beautiful Women. Beasties Monstrous and Gentle. Some Swell Escapes and Captures. Death, Lies, Truth, Miracles, and a Little Sex. In short, it's about everything.

Rage of Angels, The by Alan Fisher

A young aviator battles with fading innocence in a powerful story of love and war that evokes the nature of comradeship in unsentimental images of a generation of young men caught up in the First World War.

Rainbow, The by D. H. Lawrence

Set in the rural midlands of England, this novel revolves around three generations of the Brangwen family. Beginning with the passionate marriage of Tom Brangwen and a Polish widow, it traces their tumultuous relationship, as well as the development of their daughter, Ursula, a spirited young woman who rejects the conventional expectations of society in search of self-fulfillment.

Range of Motion by Elizabeth Berg

The first-person narrative describes an ordinary woman caught up in unusual circumstances. Lainey is a wife/mother/office worker whose life is suddenly changed when her husband is sent into a coma by a freak accident. The only one who believes that he will one day wake up, she visits him daily, bringing him stimulus from everyday life in an attempt to reach him. "I line up the little spice bags all across his chest. All across his University of California T-shirt are requests from the kitchen. Come back, says the curry, the oregano. And me." Lainey is sustained through her ordeal by the support of two special women: Alice, who lives next door, and Evie, the ghost of the woman who lived in Lainey's house in the Forties. A touching and enjoyable read, this novel is romantic without being a romance.

Rape: A love story by Joyce Carol Oates

Men as predators preying on girls and women have always piqued Oates' depthless imagination, and her home ground, beautiful but backward rural New York State, is often the setting for her tales of demented bloodlust. Both elements are present in their starkest and most unnerving forms in this masterfully crafted and diabolically insightful fable about the nearly fatal beating and gang rape of Teena MacGuire on the Fourth of July in the small town of Niagara Falls. Teena and her 12-year-old daughter, Bethel, are walking home from a party when the vicious attack takes place, and Bethel only narrowly escapes her mother's terrible fate. Terrorized but valiant, Bethel identifies their assailants and is determined to testify, but the townspeople close ranks behind the indicted brutes, their sons and brothers, and Teena is assaulted all over again in court. But there is one man on the case who possesses a clear and unshakable sense of justice, and his empathic connection with Bethel is at the heart of this lean and potent tale. Oates' unflinching dramatization of the insidious aftereffects of a horrific crime neatly exposes the underside of family loyalty, dissects the hatred victims attract, and reminds readers that the real power resides in the survivor, not the attacker.

Rapture of Canaan, The by Sheri Reynolds

For 14-year-old Ninah Huff, growing up in the extended family community of the Church of Fire and Brimstone and God's Almighty Baptizing Wind has meant working on the communal tobacco farm, receiving harsh punishments for unintended acts, being different from schoolmates, and enjoying a few simple pleasures. Foremost among the pleasures have been the company and stories of Nanna, whose husband, Grandpa Herman, founded the church after surviving wartime combat and unilaterally controlled its finances, doctrines, and daily life. Then comes a pleasures surpassing all others in the person of 15-year-old James. Designated prayer partners, Ninah and James share rebellious ideas, tentative touches, and more (after beseeching Jesus to speak to each of them through the other), leaving Ninah pregnant and touching off events that shake the community and its faith.

Rebecca by Daphne DuMaurier

At the great Cornwall estate of Manderley, Maxim de Winter and his frightened new wife try to live with the haunting legacy of Maxim's first wife, the beautiful and cold Rebecca, who died in a sailing accident.

Rebellion: A Novel of Upper Canada by Marianne Brandis

Fourteen-year-old Adam Wheeler arrives in Toronto in the autumn of 1837 with his uncle's family. Still smarting from his mother's recent death and his father's and stepmother's apparent eagerness to be rid of him, Adam must now contend with Uncle Ted's wild dreams of easy wealth in Upper Canada. Adam soon quarrels with his uncle and finds a job in a paper mill in Todmorden, just across the Don River from Toronto. Here he begins to make a life for himself, but soon hears about William Lyon Mackenzie's brewing rebellion. Against his will, Adam is drawn into the conflict both by his employer, who supplies paper to Mackenzie, and by the involvement of Uncle Ted in the rebel force. The death of his cousin Ella forces a tense and dangerous trip to the rebel camp in search of Uncle Ted, and Adam manages to persuade Uncle Ted to leave the rebellion behind for his family's sake. By the end of the story, Adam has become an apprentice at the mill and has forged a new life for himself.

Recipe for Bees, A by Gail Anderson-Dargatz

The story centres on Augusta Olsen, a woman in old age who, having recently caught sight of her own death on the rattling floor of a railway car as she travels from Victoria to Courtenay, uses the vision to conjure up her past. Related partly through recollection, partly through conversation, Augusta tells of the hardships of her early farm-life in the Shuswap area of British Columbia; of the many Indians who come to work for them; of her desperate marriage to Karl Olsen, son of the anti-social Swede who lives in isolation on a sheep farm; of her flight to Kamloops where she hopes to acquire work and a modicum of independence, but where she ends up meeting the love of her life instead. Finally, it tells of the eventual blossoming of her marriage to Karl, brought to life as if by magic.

Red Tent, The Anita Diamant

Skillfully interweaving biblical tales with events and characters of her own invention, Diamant's sweeping first novel re-creates the life of Dinah, daughter of Leah and Jacob, from her birth and happy childhood in Mesopotamia through her years in Canaan and death in Egypt. When Dinah reaches puberty and enters the Red Tent (the place women visit to give birth or have their monthly periods), her mother and Jacob's three other wives initiate her into the religious and sexual practices of the tribe. Diamant sympathetically describes Dinah's doomed relationship with Shalem, son of a ruler of Shechem, and his brutal death at the hands of her brothers. Following the events in Canaan, a pregnant Dinah travels to Egypt, where she becomes a noted midwife. Diamant has written a thoroughly enjoyable and illuminating portrait of a fascinating woman and the life she might have lived.

Regeneration by Pat Barker

In 1917, decorated British officer and poet Siegfried Sassoon wrote a declaration condemning the war. Instead of a court-martial, he was sent to a hospital for other "shell-shocked" officers where he was treated by Dr. William Rivers, noted an thropologist and psychiatrist. Author Barker turns these true occurrences into a compelling and brilliant antiwar novel. Sassoon's complete sanity disturbs Dr. Rivers to such a point that he questions his own role in "curing" his patients only to send them back to the slaughter of the war in France. World War I decimated an entire generation of European men, and the horrifying loss of life and the callousness of the government led to the obliteration of the Victorian ideal.

Rising Tide, The by Jeff Shaara

As the book begins, Hitler's forces control western Europe, and U.S. troops face off against the Germans in North Africa. From fall 1942 through spring 1943, the Allies battle Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. Shaara evokes the agony of desert warfare and the utter chaos of an airborne assault through the experiences of Pvt. Jack Logan, a tank gunner, and Sgt. Jesse Adams, a paratrooper. The challenges—and frequent frustrations—of command are seen through the eyes of such luminaries as generals Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton and Rommel. The Allied victory in Africa is followed by the conquest of Sicily and the invasion of mainland Italy in 1943. With the Italian campaign sputtering, the Allies turn to planning for the decisive event of the European theater, the cross-channel invasion of France, which is where Shaara concludes this sprawling, masterful opening act.

Robber Bride, The by Margaret Atwood

Exploring the paradox of female villainy, this tale of three fascinating women is another peerless display of literary virtuosity by the supremely gifted author of *Cat's Eye* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Roz, Charis and Tony all share a wound, and her name is Zenia. Beautiful, smart and hungry, by turns manipulative and vulnerable, needy and ruthless, Zenia is the turbulent center of her own perpetual saga. She entered their lives in the sixties, when they were in college. Over the three decades since, she has damaged each of them badly, ensnaring their sympathy, betraying their trust, and treating their men as loot. Then Zenia dies, or at any rate the three women -- with much relief -- attend her funeral. But as *The Robber Bride* begins, Roz, Charis and Tony have come together at a trendy restaraunt for their monthly lunch when in walks the seemingly resurrected Zenia...

Romantic, The by Barbara Gowdy

Louise Kirk has loved Abel Richter since they were children, but it was his mother who drew her affection first. At 10, a year after Louise's own mother left her and her father, the Richters, an older couple with an adopted son, move in next door. Louise watches Mrs. Richter longingly from a distance, wishing she would adopt her as well. Louise befriends Abel in order to get to Mrs. Richter, but her love soon transfers to the solitary, sensitive boy. The connection between the two flourishes, and Louise never stops thinking about Abel, even when he moves away. It is his return, when they meet at a high-school party, that marks the beginning of their adult relationship--an attachment Louise thinks will be permanent, especially when she discovers she is pregnant. But her love for Abel blinds her to his failings. Moving seamlessly between Louise's childhood, her teen years, and her present, this novel is a sad, beautiful examination of a lonely woman and her attempts to find unconditional, unwavering love.

Rope Walk, The by Carrie Brown

The Rope Walk brings us the dazzling story of a pivotal summer in the life of Alice, a redheaded tomboy and motherless girl who is beloved and protected by her five older brothers and her widower father, a professor of Shakespeare. On Memorial Day, at her tenth birthday party in the garden of her Vermont village home, Alice meets two people unlike any she's known before. Theo is a mixed-race New York City kid visiting his white grandparents for the summer. Kenneth is a cosmopolitan artist with AIDS who has come home to convalesce with his middle-aged sister. Alice and Theo form an instant bond and, almost as quickly, find themselves drawn into the orbit of the magisterial Kenneth. When the children begin a daily routine of reading aloud to the artist, who is losing his eyesight, they discover the journals of Lewis and Clark and decide to embark on their own wilderness adventure: they plan and secretly build a "rope walk" through the woods for Kenneth and in the process learn the first of many hard truths about the way adults see the world, no matter that they are often wrong.

Rule of the Bone by Russell Banks

In a voice totally authentic to its speaker, Banks narrates in first-person the sad story of a teenage boy whose aimlessness leads him to steal from his mother in order to buy pot; as a result, he is kicked out of the house. As a drifter, he's too young and inexperienced to take advantage of other people--he's taken advantage *of*. His need for dope and shelter drives him to consort with types even more disreputable than himself. (The thing is, he's not really so bad, he's just been kicked around too much.) He decides that tracking down his real father in Jamaica is a priority. From that experience, he gains some wisdom that just might help him over the hurdle into responsible adulthood.

Run Silent, Run Deep by Edward L. Beach

Set in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the tension-filled story focuses on an American submarine captain given orders to destroy Japanese shipping in the Pacific. At first his missions go well, but when he takes on an infamous Japanese destroyer, nicknamed Bungo Pete, a terrifying game of cat and mouse begins. From the training of the crew right through to the breathtaking climax, this tale is absolutely riveting, and will have fans of military writers such as Tom Clancy cheering.

Running Man, The by Stephen King

Set in the year 2025, *The Running Man* is a frightening tale of a sick society, fascinated by bloodthirsty game shows where desperate individuals wager their lives for a shot at fabulous riches.

Running With Scissors by Augusten Burroughs

The true story of a boy whose mother (a poet with delusions of Anne Sexton) gave him away to be raised by her unorthodox psychiatrist who bore a striking resemblance to Santa Claus.

So at the age of twelve, Burroughs found himself amidst Victorian squalor living with the doctor's bizarre family, and befriending a paedophile who resided in the backyard shed. The story of an outlaw childhood where rules were unheard of, and the Christmas tree stayed up all year round, where Valium was consumed like candy, and if things got dull an electroshock-therapy machine could provide entertainment. The funny, harrowing and bestselling account of an ordinary boy's survival under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Rush Home Road by Lori Lansens

Five-year-old Sharla Cody, a child of mixed racial heritage, is abandoned by her mother, who takes off with her latest boyfriend. Addy Shadd, their 70-year-old neighbor in the trailer park, takes Sharla in and finds new meaning in her long and tragic life. Addy has never fully recovered from a series of traumatic events in her life, beginning when she was hurt and deserted by her family and friends in the small town of Rusholme, a town settled by fugitive slaves who arrived in Canada via the Underground Railroad in the 1800s. Emotional demands triggered by Sharla's presence in her life reignite many painful memories. As the story moves back and forth over much of the 70 years of Addy's life, the reader learns of her personal struggles and the changes in race relations along the border of Canada and the U.S. But as Addy's flashbacks become more pronounced, they hint at her deterioration and heighten the need to find a home for Sharla. A poignant novel about the power of love and forgiveness.

Russlander, The by Sandra Birdsell

Katherine (Katya) Vogt is now an old woman living in Winnipeg, but the story of how she and her family came to Canada begins in Russia in 1910, on a wealthy Mennonite estate. Here they lived in a world bounded by the prosperity of their landlords and by the poverty and disgruntlement of the Russian workers who toil on the estate. But in the wake of the First World War, the tensions engulfing the country begin to intrude on the community, leading to an unspeakable act of violence. In the aftermath of that violence, and in the difficult years that follow, Katya tries to come to terms with the terrible events that befell her and her family. In lucid, spellbinding prose, Birdsell vividly evokes time and place, and the unease that existed in a country on the brink of revolutionary change. The *Russländer* is a powerful and moving story of ordinary people who lived through extraordinary times.

Sacrifice, The by Adele Wiseman

The Sacrifice is a haunting depiction of one family and its often tragic attempts to come to terms with a new life in a new country. It is a moving, almost biblical story of a father possessed by his hope for his only son; of a son who rebels against his father's ideals, yet sacrifices himself to preserve what his father most prizes; and of a grandson who must reconcile the flaws in his inheritance.

Saint Maybe by Anne Tyler

All is well with the Bedloe's Baltimore family until Danny, the eldest son, announces his engagement to Lucy, a woman he has known for only two weeks and who is the mother of two small children, Agatha and Thomas. Their own daughter, Daphne, is born sooner than expected that same year. The suicides of first Danny and then Lucy are unexplained, and all but destroy the Bedloe family. While only a college freshman, Ian, Danny's younger brother, returns home to raise the orphaned children and to search for his own salvation through the Church of the Second Chance. Tyler's remarkable novel pulls at the heart strings and jogs the memories of forgotten youth. Ian's story is neither action packed nor fast moving, but each page will be eagerly anticipated.

Sands of Pride, The by William R. Trotter

In this grandly ambitious masterpiece of Civil War fiction, noted novelist and historian William R. Trotter has created nothing less than an epic re-creation of the whole experience of the war—from secession to Gettysburg—within the microcosm of North Carolina, a theater of war never before brought to life in a major novel of the Civil War. Trotter's powerful story follows the intertwined fates of over two dozen major characters—real and fictional, Union and Confederate, combatants and civilians—swept up in the hurricane of war. In *The Sands of Pride*, he chronicles the exploits of bold blockade-runners like Southerner Matthew Sloane, intrepid naval warriors like Federal officer William Barker Cushings, sadistic bushwhackers like Cyrus Bone, and spies like the Confederacy's seductive Belle O'Neal. The novel's center of gravity is the beautiful coastal city of Wilmington, North Carolina, in the midst of a vibrant, bawdy "Golden Age". It was the South's most vital port and guarded by the largest, most formidable earthen fortress ever built in America, Fort Fisher, a stupendous feat of engineering and a symbol of Southern defiance. After every other significant Rebel port had been vanquished, Fort Fisher's guns kept open Wilmington's boisterous docks, which poured supplies from Europe that kept the Confederacy alive.

Saving Lenny by Margaret Wiley

From the very beginning, readers may sense that there is something too fragile and intense about Jesse Davis's relationship with her new boyfriend, Lenny. Since they began dating, Jesse has distanced herself from her parents and classmates and, although she declares she has found perfect love, is unhappy most of the time. Best friend Kay starts to worry when Jesse changes her plans to go to college and decides to spend a year with Lenny at his grandfather's isolated cabin. Although Jesse's new life is idyllic at first, it soon becomes a nightmare. Lenny begins acting lethargic, depressed and extremely possessive; Jesse finds herself playing the role of scapegoat as well as caretaker. Even when she admits that Lenny is truly disturbed, Jesse has trouble breaking ties. Because the story is told from alternate points of view, readers are allowed to experience Jesse's emotional turmoil while retaining an outsider's perspective. Jesse's despair is as hauntingly real as Lenny's gradual breakdown. With exemplary skill, Wiley delineates love turned into obsession in this enlightening, disturbing novel.

Scarlet Letter, The by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Hailed by Henry James as "the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country," Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* reaches to our nation's historical and moral roots for the material of great tragedy. Set in an early New England colony, the novel shows the terrible impact a single, passionate act has on the lives of three members of the community: the defiant Hester Prynne; the fiery, tortured Reverend Dimmesdale; and the obsessed, vengeful Chillingworth.

Schindler's List by Thomas Keneally

Schindler's List is a remarkable work of fiction based on the true story of German industrialist and war profiteer, Oskar Schindler, who, confronted with the horror of the extermination camps, gambled his life and fortune to rescue 1,300 Jews from the gas chambers. Working with the actual testimony of Schindler's Jews, Thomas Keneally artfully depicts the courage and shrewdness of an unlikely savior, a man who is a flawed mixture of hedonism and decency and who, in the presence of unutterable evil, transcends the limits of his own humanity.

Secret History, The by Donna Tartt

Under the influence of their charismatic classics professor, a group of clever, eccentric misfits at an elite New England college discover a way of thinking and living that is a world away from the humdrum existence of their contemporaries. But when they go beyond the boundaries of normal morality their lives are changed profoundly and forever, and they discover how hard it can be to truly live and how easy it is to kill.

Secret Life of Bees, The 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. There is a wonderful sense of the strength of female friendship and love throughout the story.

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen

The Dashwood sisters are very different from each other in appearance and temperament; Elinor's good sense and readiness to observe social forms contrast with Marianne's impulsive candor and warm but excessive sensibility. Both struggle to maintain their integrity and find happiness in the face of a competitive marriage market.

Separate Peace, A by John Knowles

The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for John Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust.

Shadows of a Childhood: a Novel of War and Friendship by Elisabeth Gille

Gille was just five when her mother, Russian writer Irene Nemirovsky, was deported to Auschwitz, and the two never heard from each other again. This work is a fictionalized account of their wrenching separation and a piercing look at what it means to survive mass genocide. Told in the voice of Lea Levy, the book spans 13 years from the Jewish child's arrival in a French convent school following her parents' arrest by the Germans to her college years at the Sorbonne. Throughout, it asks essential and timeless questions: What does it mean to witness widespread atrocity? Is evil endemic to the human condition? What is Jewish identity? Why does anti-Semitism persist?

Shampoo Planet by Douglas Coupland

Raised in a hippie commune, Tyler Johnson is an ambitious twenty-year-old Reagan youth, living in a decaying northwest city and aspiring to a career with the corporation whose offices his mother once firebombed. This six-month chronicle of Tyler's life takes us to Paris and the ongoing party beside Jim Morrison's grave, to a wild island in British Columbia, the freak-filled redwood forests of northern California, a cheesy Hollywood, ultra-modern Seattle, and finally back home. On the way we meet a constellation of characters, among them: Jasmine, Tyler's Woodstock mom; Dan, his land-developer stepfather; "Princess Stephanie," Tyler's European summer fling; and Anna Louise, his post-feminist girlfriend with an eating disorder. Tyler's dizzying journey into the contemporary psyche -- a voyage full of rock videos, toxic waste, french-fry computers, and clear-cut forests -- is a spellbinding signature novel for a generation coming of age as the millennium comes to a close.

Shantaram by Gregory Roberts

So begins this epic, mesmerizing first novel set in the underworld of contemporary Bombay. Shantaram is narrated by Lin, an escaped convict with a false passport who flees maximum security prison in Australia for the teeming streets of a city where he can disappear. Accompanied by his guide and faithful friend, Prabaker, the two enter Bombay's hidden society of beggars and gangsters, prostitutes and holy men, soldiers and actors, and Indians and exiles from other countries, who seek in this remarkable place what they cannot find elsewhere.

She's Come Undone by Wally Lamb

Meet Dolores Price. She's 13, wise-mouthed but wounded, having bid her childhood goodbye. Beached like a whale in front of her bedroom TV, she spends the next few years nourishing herself with the Mallomars, potato chips, and Pepsi her anxious mother supplies. When she finally rolls into young womanhood at 257 pounds, Dolores is no stronger and life is no kinder. But this time she's determined to rise to the occasion and give herself one more chance before *really* goes under. Loveable loser Dolores Price bounces from one tragedy to the next, retaining only her cynical sense of humor. Abandoned as a child by her father (who later tries to make amends, only to be met with Dolores's stubborn rejection), raped by a trusted adult, and later married to a philandering husband, Dolores nonetheless evolves into a cautious, wry adult.

Sign of the Scales, The Marianne Brandis

In *The Sign of the Scales*, Emma is nearly sixteen and is sent by her aunt to work at a local general store in which she has financial interests during 1830s in Southern Ontario. Emma moves into this new experience and is then thrust into the business world, both legal and illegal. She proves her ability to cope with her shopkeeping duties and eventually acts upon her suspicions of smuggling. The implications of revealing the smugglers affect Emma's relationship with her brother and with a possible marriage interest.

Shipping News by Annie Proulx

Quoyle, a third-rate newspaper hack, with a "head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair...features as bunched as kissed fingertips," is wrenched violently out of his workaday life when his two-timing wife meets her just deserts. An aunt convinces Quoyle and his two emotionally disturbed daughters to return with her to the starkly beautiful coastal landscape of their ancestral home in Newfoundland. Here, on desolate Quoyle's Point, in a house empty except for a few mementos of the family's unsavory past, the battered members of three generations try to cobble up new lives. Newfoundland is a country of coast and cove where the mercury rarely rises above 70 degrees, the local culinary delicacy is cod cheeks, and it's easier to travel by boat and snowmobile than on anything with wheels. In this harsh place of cruel storms, a collapsing fishery, and chronic unemployment, the aunt sets up as a yacht upholsterer in nearby Killick-Claw, and Quoyle finds a job reporting the shipping news for the local weekly, the *Gammy Bird* (a paper that specializes in sexual-abuse stories and grisly photos of car accidents). As the long winter closes its jaws of ice, each of the Quoyles confronts private demons, reels from catastrophe to minor triumph, Quoyle has learned how to gut cod, to escape from a pickle jar, and to tie a true lover's knot.

Shoeless Joe by W. P. Kinsella

The voice of a baseball announcer tells the Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella: "If you build it, he will come." "He" is Shoeless Joe Jackson, Ray's hero. "It" is a baseball stadium which Ray carves out of his cornfield. Like the movie FIELD OF DREAMS that was made from this novel, SHOELESS JOE is about baseball. But it's also about love and the power of dreams to make people come alive

Shoot the Moon by Billie Letts

No one in sleepy DeClare, Oklahoma, has forgotten the 1972 murder of pretty Cherokee Gaylene Harjo and the abduction of her infant son, Nicky Jack. Hard-nosed deputy sheriff Oliver "O Boy" Daniels pinned the blame on local preacher Joe Dawson, but few in town believed the kindly Joe was capable of such an act. Powerful emotions resurface 30 years later, when Nicky Jack, adopted and raised by a rich couple in Beverly Hills, mysteriously reappears, determined to learn about his mother and the circumstances surrounding her death. Veteran short-story writer Letts peppers her prose with a cast of quirky characters, including a quartet of nosy, domino-playing senior citizens and a perky pool-hall owner who bakes peanut-butter pies.

Short History of a Small Place, A by T. R. Pearson

Marvelously funny, bittersweet, and beautifully evocative, the original publication of A Short History of a Small Place announced the arrival of one of our great Southern voices. Although T. R. Pearson's Neely, North Carolina, doesn't appear on any map of the state, it has already earned a secure place on the literary landscape of the South. In this introduction to Neely, the young narrator, Louis Benfield, recounts the tragic last days of Miss Myra Angelique Pettigrew, a local spinster and former town belle who, after years of total seclusion, returns flamboyantly to public view--with her pet monkey, Mr. Britches. Here is a teeming human comedy inhabited by some of the most eccentric and endearing characters ever encountered in literature.

Siege: a Novel of the Eastern Front by Russ Schneider

On January 21, 1942, more than five thousand exhausted German soldiers—fragments of retreating units—found themselves surrounded in the arctic northern Russian town of Cholm. Trapped in an area barely two kilometers wide, the freezing, starving men held out for 105 days, repelling endless infantry attacks and dozens of tank assaults. Fifteen hundred Germans died before relief finally arrived on May 5, but for those still able to fight, an even worse ordeal lay ahead—the siege of Fortress Velikiye Luki. Following the fates of three ordinary Germans through these epic struggles, Russ Schneider captures the ferocity and titanic cruelty of a war that pushed men to the very edge of madness. Millions perished on the Russian Front during World War II. *Siege* is a searing testament to the forgotten men who strove valiantly, if in vain, against impossible odds.

Sight, The by David Clement-Davies

In an epic tale of good and evil, legend and history, and the blessing and curse of an extraordinary gift of the Sight (an ability to see through others' minds and into the future), The Sight features a Transylvanian wolf clan faced with the terrifying changes brought about by Morgra, a bitter she-wolf determined to fulfill an ancient legend in order to have supreme power over all Vargs (wolves). Young Larka, a white wolf pup born with the Sight, embarks with her brother Fell and the rest of her family on an extraordinary quest for truth and salvation, with shocking consequences that even the most astute reader may not foresee. Clement-Davies's multi-layered and elaborate plot will keep young readers riveted for hours on end, drawing on Christianity, fairy tales, and mythology in a colossal allegory and cautionary tale for its human audience.

Sights Unseen by Kaye Gibbons

To the people of Bend of the River Road, Maggie Barnes is "the Barnes woman with all the problems." To her family, she is the unpredictable wife, elusive mother, and adored daughter-in-law, and to her maid, Pearl, she is the mistress who must be cared for like a child. Between the suicidal lows and delirious highs, young Hattie Barnes struggles to find a place in her mother's heart. She observes her mother's vain attempts at normalcy, and then watches as she is driven off to the hospital psychiatric ward. Only later will Hattie discover the deep-seated hopes and fears of the woman she loves unconditionally, and her inevitable connection to her family's past. In heartfelt and potent prose, through Hattie's hushed voice, "Sights Unseen" tells the story of a troubled relationship and the courage it takes to see it through.

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Slaughterhouse-Five is one of the world's great anti-war books. Centering on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the mythic journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know.

Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson

Japanese American Kabuo Miyomoto is arrested in 1954 for the murder of a fellow fisherman, Carl Heine. Miyomoto's trial, which provides a focal point to the novel, stirs memories of past relationships and events in the minds and hearts of the San Piedro Islanders. Through these memories, Guterson illuminates the grief of loss, the sting of prejudice triggered by World War II, and the imperatives of conscience. With mesmerizing clarity he conveys the voices of Kabuo's wife, Hatsue, and Ishmael Chambers, Hatsue's first love who, having suffered the loss of her love and the ravages of war, ages into a cynical journalist now covering Kabuo's trial. The novel poetically evokes the beauty of the land while revealing the harshness of war, the nuances of our legal system, and the injustice done to those interned in U.S. relocation camps.

Sojourn, The by Alan Cumyn

Highly praised as one of the best novels of the First World War, Alan Cumyn's *The Sojourn* tells the story of a young Canadian soldier's emotional journey through duty, fear, and love. From the front lines at Ypres to the seductive streets of London to memories of a West Coast childhood, we follow Ramsay Crome, a private with the 7th Canadian Pioneers who has volunteered against his father's wishes. After a particularly horrible assault, Ramsay is granted a ten-day leave to London. It is here that he meets his cousin Margaret, a fervent objector to the war and the woman who will determine his fate in unexpected ways. As Ramsay tumbles into the suffocating embrace of family and the whirl of city life, he is forced to defend his honour and confront his own doubts and terror about the war, knowing that he must ultimately return to the Front. *The Sojourn* is a powerful yet intimate story about the passions of ordinary people caught in the tide of war.

Soldier in Paradise by John Mort

In this fictional memoir, James Patrick Donnelly, a.k.a. "Irish," recalls his tour of duty in Vietnam and his subsequent difficulties back home. In 1969, battle-seasoned Irish is assigned to watch over Norman Sims, the proverbial new guy, who promptly shoots himself in the foot. Sims later redeems himself with reckless acts of bravery, falls in love with a Vietnamese boom boom girl, and eventually ends up in military prison like a modern-day Billy Budd. Donnelly's narrative moves from Vietnam to the United States in alternating chapters, contrasting his honorable military career with a succession of postwar humiliations.

Soldier of the Great War, A by Mark Helprin

For Alessandro Giuliani, the young son of a prosperous Roman Lawyer, golden trees shimmer in the sun beneath a sky of perfect blue. At night the moon is amber and the city of Rome seethes with light. He races horses across the country to the sea, and in the Alps he practices the precise and sublime art of mountain climbing. At the ancient university in Bologna he is a student of painting and the science of beauty. And he falls in love. His is a world of adventure and dreams, of music, storm, and the spirit. Then the Great War intervenes. Half a century later, in August of 1964, Alessandro, a white-haired professor, still tall and proud, finds himself unexpectedly on the road with an illiterate young factory worker. As they walk toward Monte Prato, a village seventy kilometers distant, the old man tells the story of his life. How he became a soldier. A hero. A prisoner. A deserter. A wanderer in the hell that claimed Europe. And how he tragically lost one family and gained another. The boy is dazzled by the action and envious of the richness and color of the story, and realizes that the old man's magnificent tale of love and war is more than a tale: it is the recapitulation of his life, his reckoning with mortality, and above all, a love song for his family.

Sometimes a Great Notion bt Ken Kesey

A bitter strike is raging in a small lumber town along the Oregon coast. Bucking that strike out of sheer cussedness are the Stammers: Henry, the fiercely vital and overpowering patriarch; Hank, the son who has spent his life trying to live up to his father; and Viv, who fell in love with Hank's exuberant machismo but now finds it wearing thin. And then there is Leland, Henry's bookish younger son, who returns to his family on a mission of vengeance - and finds himself fulfilling it in ways he never imagined. Out of the Stamper family's rivalries and betrayals Ken Kesey has crafted a novel with the mythic impact of Greek tragedy.

Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence

Sons and Lovers is one of the landmark novels of the twentieth century. When it appeared in 1913, it was immediately recognized as the first great modern restatement of the oedipal drama, and it is now widely considered the major work of D. H. Lawrence's early period. This intensely autobiographical novel recounts the story of Paul Morel, a young artist growing to manhood in a British working-class family rife with conflict. The author's vivid evocation of the all-consuming nature of possessive love and sexual attraction makes this one of his most powerful novels.

Sophie's Choice by William Styron

Three stories are told: a young Southerner wants to become a writer; a turbulent love-hate affair between a brilliant Jew and a beautiful Polish woman; and of an awful wound in that woman's past--one that impels both Sophie and Nathan toward destruction.

Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy by Jostein Gaardner

Wanting to understand the most fundamental questions of the universe isn't the province of ivory-tower intellectuals alone, as this book's enormous popularity has demonstrated. A young girl, Sophie, becomes embroiled in a discussion of philosophy with a faceless correspondent. At the same time, she must unravel a mystery involving another young girl, Hilde, by using everything she's learning. The truth is far more complicated than she could ever have imagined.

Sorrow of War, The by Bao Ninh

A novel addition to fiction from the Indochina conflict, this quasi-autobiographical story depicts a North Vietnamese infantryman trying to purge his grisly memories through writing. Sitting in his dingy Hanoi room, drinking day after day away, the central character, Kien, records in no set order his enlistment into the army, the bombing of his troop train, hellish firefights and napalming in the Central Highlands (an area superstitiously dubbed by Kien's comrades the "Jungle of the Screaming Souls"), his escape from an American patrol after the Tet offensive of '68, combat in Saigon's fall in '75, and his memory-piquing work on a postwar MIA detail. Each chunk of experience jostles the other, an intentional echo of the writer's struggle to describe the chaotic, while simultaneously attempting to find his own authorial voice. Thus Bao Ninh's work is half about war. If there is a message, it is that a survivor's reconciliation with savage memory is impossible--perhaps not the most original idea in war novels, but one worth hearing from the ex-enemy.

Spell of Winter, A by Helen Dunmore

In the years before World War I, Cathy, the narrator, and her brother grow up on their grandfather's impoverished English estate. Their mother abandoned them when they were small, and their father dies after being institutionalized. Except for the ministrations of the maid, Kate, and the interference of the repulsive governess, they are left on their own. It seems inevitable when their closeness takes an unnatural and destructive turn. A wealthy neighbor is refurbishing a nearby estate and offers Cathy glimpses of a larger world, but she cannot bring herself to respond. In the meantime, there are threats to her hermetic existence--the governess' intrusions become intolerable; first Kate and her brother, Rob, decide to leave. And finally the war comes, taking most of the neighboring men with it, so that Cathy is left with her ailing grandfather to scratch out an existence on the farm. It's only when the war ends and she is alone that she is ready to break away.

Spy Who Came in from the Cold, The by John LeCarre

With unsurpassed knowledge culled from his years in British Intelligence, le Carré brings to light the shadowy dealings of international espionage in the tale of a British agent who longs to end his career but undertakes one final, bone-chilling assignment. When the last agent under his command is killed and Alec Leamas is called back to London, he hopes to come in from the cold for good. His spymaster, Control, however, has other plans. Determined to bring down the head of East German Intelligence and topple his organization, Control once more sends Leamas into the fray -- this time to play the part of the dishonored spy and lure the enemy to his ultimate defeat.

Stand, The by Stephen King

This is the way the world ends: with a nanosecond of computer error in a Defense Department laboratory and a million casual contacts that form the links in a chain letter of death. And here is the bleak new world of the day after: a world stripped of its institutions and emptied of 99 percent of its people. A world in which a handful of panicky survivors choose sides -- or are chosen. A world in which good rides on the frail shoulders of the 108-year-old Mother Abigail -- and the worst nightmares of evil are embodied in a man with a lethal smile and unspeakable powers: Randall Flagg, the dark man.

Star Called Henry, A by Roddy Doyle

Born at the beginning of the twentieth century, Henry Smart lives through the evolution of modern Ireland, and in this extraordinary novel he brilliantly tells his story. From his own birth and childhood on the streets of Dublin to his role as soldier (and lover) in the Irish Rebellion, Henry recounts his early years of reckless heroism and adventure. At once an epic, a love story, and a portrait of Irish history, *A Star Called Henry* is a grand picaresque novel brimming with both poignant moments and comic ones, and told in a voice that is both quintessentially Irish and inimitably Roddy Doyle's.

Stone Angel, The by Margaret Laurence

Hagar Shipley is stubborn, querulous, self-reliant, and, at ninety, with her life nearly behind her, she makes a bold last step towards freedom and independence. As her story unfolds, we are drawn into her past. We meet Hagar as a young girl growing up in a black prairie town; as the wife of a virile but unsuccessful farmer with whom her marriage was stormy; as a mother who dominates her younger son; and, finally, as an old woman isolated by an uncompromising pride and by the stern virtues she has inherited from her pioneer ancestors. Vivid, evocative, moving, *The Stone Angel* celebrates the triumph of the spirit, and reveals Margaret Laurence at the height of her powers as a writer of extraordinary craft and profound insight into the workings of the human heart.

Stone Carvers, The by Jane Urquhart

Klara Becker is the granddaughter of a woodcarver in German-settled southern Ontario. She has a love affair with a brooding, silent Irish lad who then goes off to fight, and die, in World War I. Meanwhile her older brother Tilman has literally snapped the ties that would have chained him to the family home, and vanished. Of course, as in all great romantic epics, the two are destined to meet again. Tilman loses his leg in the war and experiences joyful belonging with an exuberant Italian immigrant family in industrial Hamilton, Ontario, before finally venturing home. Klara remains a spinster in her small town, sewing and working on and off for years on the figure of an abbess carved from wood. The novel culminates in the building of a huge stone monument to Canada's war dead in Vimy, France. Klara and Tilman are both compelled to visit the site of this insanely ambitious artistic obsession of real-life Canadian sculptor Walter Allward; both find that they have a personal struggle to overcome the past and learn to express love. Urquhart grasps her characters from outside and inside as precious few authors manage to do. She is, in her own way, a sculptor who carves a radiant and enduring tale from the elegant material of raw language.

Stone Diaries, The by Carol Shields

From her calamitous 1905 birth in Manitoba to her journey with her father to Indiana, throughout her years as a wife, mother, and widow, Daisy Stone Goodwill struggles to understand her place in her own life. Now, in old age, Daisy attempts to tell her life story within a novel that is itself about the limitations of autobiography.

Stones from the River by Ursula Hegi

Trudi Montag, the Zwerg (dwarf) becomes the town's librarian. A perennial outsider because of her deformity, Trudi exploits her gift for eliciting peoples' secrets--and often maliciously reveals them in suspenseful gossip. But when Hitler ascends to power, she protects those who have been kind to her, including two Jewish families who, despite the efforts of Trudi, her father and a few others, are fated to perish in the Holocaust. Trudi is a complex character, as damaged by her mother's madness and early death as she is by the later circumstances of her life, and she is sometimes cruel, vindictive and vengeful. It is fascinating to watch her mature, as she experiences love and loss and finds wisdom, eventually learning to live with the vast amnesia that grips formerly ardent Nazis after the war.

Story of Lucy Gault, The by William Trevor

The Gault family leads a life of privilege in early 1920s Ireland, but the threat of arson leads nine-year-old Lucy's parents to leave Ireland for England, her mother's home. Lucy cannot bear the thought of leaving Lahardane, their country house with its beautiful land and nearby beach, and a dog she has befriended. On the day before they are due to leave, Lucy runs away, hoping to convince her parents to stay, but instead she sets off a series of tragic misunderstandings that affect all of the inhabitants of Lahardane and the perpetrators of the failed arson attack for the rest of their lives. In this brilliant, profound and moving story of love, guilt and forgiveness, Trevor has written a novel that stands alongside the best literature in the English language.

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson

This intriguing combination of fantasy thriller and moral allegory depicts the gripping struggle of two opposing personalities — one essentially good, the other evil — for the soul of one man. Its tingling suspense and intelligent and sensitive portrayal of man's dual nature reveal Stevenson as a novelist of great skill and originality.

Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein

Stranger in a Strange Land, winner of the 1962 Hugo Award, is the story of Valentine Michael Smith, born during, and the only survivor of, the first manned mission to Mars. Michael is raised by Martians, and he arrives on Earth as a true innocent: he has never seen a woman and has no knowledge of Earth's cultures or religions. But he brings turmoil with him, as he is the legal heir to an enormous financial empire, not to mention *de facto* owner of the planet Mars. With the irascible popular author Jubal Harshaw to protect him, Michael explores human morality and the meanings of love. He founds his own church, preaching free love and disseminating the psychic talents taught him by the Martians. Ultimately, he confronts the fate reserved for all messiahs.

Student of Weather, A by Elizabeth Hay

From some accidents of love and weather we never quite recover. At the worst of the Prairie dust bowl of the 1930s, a young man appears out of a blizzard and forever alters the lives of two sisters. There is the beautiful, fastidious Lucinda, and the tricky and tenacious Norma Joyce, at first a strange, self-possessed child, later a woman who learns something of self-forgiveness and of the redemptive nature of art. Their rivalry sets the stage for all that follows in a narrative spanning over thirty years, beginning in Saskatchewan and moving, in the decades following the war, to Ottawa and New York City. Disarming, vividly told, unforgettable, this is a story about the mistakes we make that never go away, about how the things we want to keep vanish and the things we want to lose return to haunt us.

Such a Long Journey by Rohinton Mistry

It is Bombay in 1971, the year India went to war over what was to become Bangladesh. A hard-working bank clerk, Gustad Noble is a devoted family man who gradually sees his modest life unravelling. His young daughter falls ill; his promising son defies his father's ambitions for him. He is the one reasonable voice amidst the ongoing dramas of his neighbours. One day, he receives a letter from an old friend, asking him to help in what at first seems like an heroic mission. But he soon finds himself unwittingly drawn into a dangerous network of deception. Compassionate, and rich in details of character and place, this unforgettable novel charts the journey of a moral heart in a turbulent world of change.

Sun Also Rises, The by Ernest Hemingway

The quintessential novel of the Lost Generation, *The Sun Also Rises* is one of Ernest Hemingway's masterpieces and a classic example of his spare but powerful writing style. A poignant look at the disillusionment and angst of the post-World War I generation, the novel introduces two of Hemingway's most unforgettable characters: Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley. The story follows the flamboyant Brett and the hapless Jake as they journey from the wild nightlife of 1920s Paris to the brutal bullfighting rings of Spain with a motley group of expatriates. It is an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love, and vanishing illusions.

Sunday at the Pool in Kigali, A by Gil Courtemanche

In recounting the 1994 massacre of Rwanda's Tutsis by the majority Hutus, Courtemanche fictionalizes the thoughts and actions of real participants, but the horrors he describes were all too real. At the story's center lies the improbable love that blossoms between Canadian journalist Bernard Valcourt and Gentille, a shy Hutu waitress at Kigali's Mille-Collines Hotel. Valcourt and Gentille speak out against the brutal attacks that presage the genocide but make no headway with corrupt police, impotent UN forces, oblivious Western media outlets, and postcolonial Belgians and French who helped sow the seeds of racial superiority in Rwanda and then retreated when they bore deadly fruit. It's a powerful political novel about important world issues

Surfacing by Margaret Atwood

Part detective novel, part psychological thriller, *Surfacing* is the story of a young woman who returns to northern Quebec, to the remote island of her childhood, with her lover and two friends, to investigate the mysterious disappearance of her father. Flooded with memories, she begins to realize that going home means entering not only another place, but another time. As the wild island exerts its elemental hold and she is submerged in the language of the wilderness, she discovers that what she is really searching for is her own past. Permeated with an aura of suspense, complex with layered meanings, and written in brilliant, diamond-sharp prose, *Surfacing* has grown in reputation as a novel unique in modern literature for its mythic exploration of one woman's spiritual pilgrimage.

Swallows of Kabul, The by Yasmina Khadra

Set in Kabul under the rule of the Taliban, this extraordinary novel takes readers into the lives of two couples: Mohsen, who comes from a family of wealthy shopkeepers whom the Taliban has destroyed; Zunaira, his wife, exceedingly beautiful, who was once a brilliant teacher and is now no longer allowed to leave her home without an escort or covering her face. Intersecting their world is Atiq, a prison keeper, a man who has sincerely adopted the Taliban ideology and struggles to keep his faith, and his wife, Musarrat, who once rescued Atiq and is now dying of sickness and despair. Desperate, exhausted Mohsen wanders through Kabul when he is surrounded by a crowd about to stone an adulterous woman. Numbed by the hysterical atmosphere and drawn into their rage, he too throws stones at the face of the condemned woman buried up to her waist. With this gesture the lives of all four protagonists move toward their destinies.

Sweet Hereafter, The by Russell Banks

When fourteen children from the small town of Sam Dent are lost in a tragic accident, its citizens are confronted with one of life's most difficult and disturbing questions: When the worst happens, whom do you blame, and how do you cope? Masterfully written, it is a large-hearted novel that brings to life a cast of unforgettable small-town characters and illuminates the mysteries and realities of love as well as grief.

Sword of Shannara, The by Terry Brooks

Long ago, the wars of the ancient Evil ruined the world. In peaceful Shady Vale, half-elfin Shea Ohmsford knows little of such troubles. But the supposedly dead Warlock Lord is plotting to destroy everything in his wake. The sole weapon against this Power of Darkness is the Sword of Shannara, which can be used only by a true heir of Shannara. On Shea, last of the bloodline, rests the hope of all the races.

Sylvanus Now by Donna Morrissey

The time is the 1950s, and the place is Canada's Atlantic coast at the edge of the great Newfoundland fishing banks. Sylvanus Now is a young fisherman of great charm and strength. His youthful desires are simple: he wants a suit to lure a girl—the fine-boned beauty Adelaide—and he knows exactly how much fish he has to catch to pay for it. Adelaide, however, has other dreams. She longs to escape the sea, the fish, and the stultifying community, but her need of refuge from her own troubled family leads her to Sylvanus and life in the neighbouring outport. Set against the love story of Addie and Sylvanus is the sea, the Great Mother that is on the cusp of cataclysmic change. Caught between his desire to please his wife and his strongly independent nature, Sylvanus must decide what path his future will take.

Tale of Two Cities, A by Charles Dickens

A Tale of Two Cities begins on a muddy English road in an atmosphere charged with mystery and drama, and it ends in the Paris of the French Revolution with one of the most famous acts of self-sacrifice in literature. In between lies one of Charles Dickens's most exciting books— a historical novel that, generation after generation, has given readers access to the profound human dramas that lie behind cataclysmic social and political events.

Talented Mr. Ripley, The by Patricia Highsmith

In a chilling literary hall of mirrors, Patricia Highsmith introduces Tom Ripley. Like a hero in a latter-day Henry James novel, is sent to Italy with a commission to coax a prodigal young American back to his wealthy father. But Ripley finds himself very fond of Dickie Greenleaf. He wants to be like him--exactly like him. Suave, agreeable, and utterly amoral, Ripley stops at nothing--certainly not only one murder--to accomplish his goal. Turning the mystery form inside out, Highsmith shows the terrifying abilities afforded to a man unhindered by the concept of evil.

Talk Before Sleep by Elizabeth Berg

This is a particularly sensitive coming-to-terms-with-death tale, as well as a novel about friendship among women. In a brief prologue, Berg tells us that she lost a dear friend to breast cancer, and, clearly, her novel is a form of healing as well as a call for more research into the causes and prevention of breast cancer. Having said that, we must also say that this is a supple and subtle novel free of any didacticism or mawkishness. Berg's gentle narrator, Ann, sets the tone as she carefully, even ritualistically, describes the final days of her best friend. Ruth is a beautiful and vital woman who has attained an amazing level of serenity in the midst of the pain and ravagement of cancer. Ann puts her own life on hold to be with Ruth, feeding her rich, indulgent meals (when she can eat), bathing her, keeping her apartment bright and cheerful, sharing memories and confidences. She is joined in the watch by a trio of friends who relieve the tension with humor and abrupt little squabbles sparked by jealousy and fear. Life surely goes on, Berg seems to say, but we do miss our dead.

Tamarind Mem by Anita Rau Badami

A beautiful and brilliant portrait of two generations of women. Set in India's railway colonies, this is the story of Kamini and her mother Saroja, nicknamed Tamarind Mem due to her sour tongue. While in Canada beginning her graduate studies, Kamini receives a postcard from her mother saying she has sold their home and is travelling through India. Both are forced into the past to confront their dreams and losses and to explore the love that binds mothers and daughters everywhere.

Tattooed Girl, The by Joyce Carol Oates

Joshua Seigl, a celebrated but reclusive author, is forced for reasons of failing health to surrender his much-prized bachelor's independence. Advertising for an assistant, he unwittingly embarks upon the most dangerous adventure of his privileged life. Alma Busch, a sensuous, physically attractive young woman with bizarre tattoos covering much of her body, stirs in Seigl a complex of emotions: pity? desire? responsibility? guilt? Unaware of her painful past and her troubled personality, Seigl hires her as his assistant. As the novel alternates between Seigl's and Alma's points of view, the naïve altruism of the one and the virulent anti-Semitism of the other clash in a tragedy of thwarted erotic desire. With her masterful balance of dark suspense and surprising tenderness, Joyce Carol Oates probes the contemporary tragedy of ethnic hatred and challenges our accepted limits of desire. *The Tattooed Girl* may be her most controversial novel.

Tailor of Panama, The by John LeCarre

Harry Pendel is pressured into becoming a spy by an amoral British agent. Desperate to avoid exposure as an ex-con, Harry fabricates a network of sources and plies the giddy Brits with tales of a coming Panamanian revolution. Harry's dreams of protecting his image as an upper-crust tailor seem on the verge of coming true, but the more energy he invests in propping up his Potemkin's village of spies and revolutionaries, the more real it becomes and the more tenuous his hold on the plot of his own fiction. The tragedy is inevitable, of course, and the very loved ones whom Harry invented himself as a gentleman to please--and then as a spy to protect--are the ones who rebel against their roles in his internal universe, thus bringing it down.

Temptations of Big Bear, The by Rudy Wiebe

“What can that mean, I and my family will have a ‘reserve of one square mile’?” So asks Big Bear of Governor Morris, come to impose a square treaty on the round, buffalo-covered world of the Plains Cree. As the buffalo vanish and the tension builds to the second Riel Rebellion, Big Bear alone of the prairie chiefs keeps up pressure for a better treaty by refusing to choose a reserve. He argues, “If any man has the right to put a rope around another man’s neck, some day someone will get choked.” It is Big Bear’s story – and the story of Wandering Spirit, of Kitty McLean and John McDougall—that is told in this novel with rare and penetrating power. Permeated with a sense of place and time, this eagerly awaited work by Rudy Wiebe reflects the author’s sensitivity to the Canadian prairies, their history, the minds and hearts of their diverse people. Exploring Big Bear’s isolated struggle, Wiebe has encompassed in one creative sweep not only his hero’s struggle for integrity, but the whole range and richness of the Plains culture. Here is the giant circle of the prairie horizon, and the joy, the sorrow, the pain and the triumph and the violence of unconquerable human beings faced with destruction.

Ten Thousand Lovers by Edeet Ravel

The personal and the political are forever struggling to coexist, especially in Israel. Such is the case in this moving first novel about two lovers in Tel Aviv in the 1970s. Lilly is a young Canadian studying in Israel; Ami is a handsome former actor, the perfect boyfriend except for one flaw: he is an army interrogator. Ravel tells the tale in flashbacks, jumping between the past, as Ami becomes more and more disenchanted with the treatment of the Arab prisoners he must interrogate, and the present, as Lily, now a professor, remembers her first love. By setting the action at a time when the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands was in its first stage, Ravel adds an extra level of poignancy. Lily and her college friends anticipate peace, while Ami, seeing the hatred from both sides, is less sanguine. The tragedy here is both anticipated and inevitable, but the textured personal story rises above its political context like a melody soaring beyond the steady rhythm pulsing below it.

Tender is the Night by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Set on the French Riviera in the late 1920s, *Tender Is the Night* is the tragic romance of the young actress Rosemary Hoyt and the stylish American couple Dick and Nicole Diver. A brilliant young psychiatrist at the time of his marriage, Dick is both husband and doctor to Nicole, whose wealth goads him into a lifestyle not his own, and whose growing strength highlights Dick's harrowing demise.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy

The story of a young woman's doomed attempt to redeem herself after seduction and scandal, this classic novel, written in 1891, captures the essence of Hardy's sexually charged fatalism.

Thin Red Line, The by James Jones

They are the men of C-for-Charlie Company--"Mad" 1st/Sgt. Eddie Welsh, S/Sgt. Don Doll, Pvt. John Bell, Capt. James Stein, Cpl. Fife, and dozens more just like them--infantrymen in "this man's army" who are about to land grim and white-faced on an atoll in the Pacific called Guadalcanal. This is their story, a shatteringly realistic walk into hell and back. In the days ahead some will earn medals; others will do anything they can dream up to get evacuated before they land in a muddy grave. But they will all discover the thin red line that divides the sane from the mad--and the living from the dead--in this unforgettable portrait that captures for all time the total experience of men at war.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart is a gripping study of the problem of European colonialism in Africa. The story relates the cultural collision that occurs when Christian English missionaries arrive among the Ibos of Nigeria, bringing along their European ways of life and religion. In the novel, the Nigerian Okonkwo recognizes the cultural imperialism of the white men and tries to show his own people how their own society will fall apart if they exchange their own cultural core for that of the English.

Things They Carried, The by Time O'Brien

One of the first questions people ask about **The Things They Carried** is this: Is it a novel, or a collection of short stories? The title page refers to the book simply as "a work of fiction," defying the conscientious reader's need to categorize this masterpiece. It is both: a collection of interrelated short pieces which ultimately reads with the dramatic force and tension of a novel. Yet each one of the twenty-two short pieces is written with such care, emotional content, and prosaic precision that it could stand on its own. **The Things They Carried** depicts the men of Alpha Company: Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and of course, the character Tim O'Brien who has survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three. They battle the enemy (or maybe more the idea of the enemy), and occasionally each other. In their relationships we see their isolation and loneliness, their rage and fear. They miss their families, their girlfriends and buddies; they miss the lives they left back home. Yet they find sympathy and kindness for strangers (the old man who leads them unscathed through the mine field, the girl who grieves while she dances), and love for each other, because in Vietnam they are the only family they have. We hear the voices of the men and build images upon their dialogue. The way they tell stories about others, we hear them telling stories about themselves.

Thousand Acres, A 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. In this winner of the 1991 [National Book Critics Circle Award](#) for Fiction, Smiley captures the essence of such a life with stark, painful detail.

Thr3e by Ted Dekker

A sermon on the struggle between good and evil is expressed in a metaphorical thriller. Young, innocent Kevin is a seminarian with a dark past. "Slater," a mysterious psycho, calls him on his cell phone and threatens bomb-delivered mayhem unless Kevin confesses to a past sin. But what sin? Slater gives him clues in the form of riddles. Can his angelic childhood sweetheart and the brilliant lady FBI agent who also loves him help him out of this nightmare? There are plenty of thrills and chills and a moral lesson to boot.

Thread of Grace, A by Mary Russell Doria

Italian citizens saved more than 43,000 Jews during the last 20 months of World War II. Russell has transmuted this little-known history into an expansive, well-researched, and compelling novel. As the story opens, the mountainous region of northwest Italy has been relatively untouched by WWII, and even Jews have been safe. When Italy breaks with Germany in 1943 and pulls out of southern France, thousands of Jewish refugees cross the mountains in search of safety. But the German occupation of Italy poses a new threat. Even with the list that's provided, it can be hard to keep track of all the characters--Catholics and Jews, priests and rabbis, Germans and Italians, old and young, Nazis and Resistance fighters.

Three Day Road by Joseph Boyden

Joseph Boyden's first novel is the story of two Cree friends, Xavier and Elijah, who leave their pristine northern country to end up in the horrific trenches of World War I. Loosely based on the real life of a famous Canadian sniper, the story is told from two first-person views: those of Xavier and his old aunt and only living relative, Niska. After the war, Niska is taking her wounded nephew back home north to the bush in a canoe. Their trip is the three-day road of the title, which also refers to the journey taken after death. The story of the war is told in flashbacks on this journey as Xavier recovers from morphine addiction. Niska also relates various stories to Xavier, believing there is "medicine in the tale."

Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas

A perennial favorite, this work continues to hold appeal for adventure lovers. Full of intrigue, swordplay, and revenge, it is the story of d'Artagnan, a young nobleman who travels to Paris in hopes of joining the Musketeers, a group of swashbuckling adventurers who serve King Louis XIII. His wit and fighting ability make d'Artagnan a welcome addition to their ranks, and together the four young men work to foil the King's evil rival, Cardinal Richelieu. Despite the period setting and constant violence, the story captures and sustains the reader's interest as the Musketeers vanquish the villains.

Three Soldiers by John Dos Passos

A deft chronicler of the American experience, John Dos Passos has taken his place alongside his contemporaries, Ernest Hemmingway and William Faulkner. In *Three Soldiers*, he introduces readers to a Harvard aesthete who joins the army out of idealism, and his two buddies. One by one, their illusions crumble under the tyranny, red tape, and boredom of the military. The soldiers' reactions range from bitterness to rage, and--for one--murder, in this vivid portrayal of human spirit caught in the grip of war.

Three Women by Marge Piercy

Suzanne Blume is not suffering from the empty-nest syndrome. Her life has never been more rewarding. The divorced mother of two grown daughters, she teaches law, has a thriving private practice, and, best of all, has been flirting online with a man she has never met. But her neat, buttoned-up life starts to unravel when her daughter Elena returns home, angry and unemployed, and her safe online boyfriend materializes on her doorstep. Then, the biggest challenge of all: Her independent mother, Beverly--still vital, still working, still involved with men and politics with equal passion--suffers a stroke and can no longer care for herself.

Through the Wheat by Thomas Boyd

Fresh out of a Defiance, Ohio, high school, Thomas Boyd (1898-1935) joined the Marines to serve his country in the patriotic heat of the spring of 1917. In 1919 he came home from the war with a Croix de Guerre and a desire to write. He joined the St. Paul News as a journalist and opened a bookstore, whose patrons included F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. *Through the Wheat* appeared to immediate acclaim, with F. Scott Fitzgerald calling it "a work of art" and "arresting". Boyd wrote five other works before he died in Vermont of a cerebral hemorrhage at age thirty-seven.

Tiger Claw by Shauna Singh Baldwin

The *Tiger Claw* is a first-rate spy thriller and also first-rate literature. Set in the 1940s in Occupied Paris with haunting similarities to the world today, this is a novel that reminds us that sometimes only fiction can really tell us the truth.... The story of one woman's courage in the face of racism, betrayal and hypocrisy on one hand and the veils of war on the other. It is also a love story between a Muslim and a Jew told in a language that resonates with mysticism and romance – yet it is brutally honest in its assessment of motives and ambiguities.

Tiger in the Tiger Pit, The by Janette Turner Hospital

Elizabeth Carpenter is preparing for her fiftieth wedding anniversary and hoping that her children will come home for the event. She nurses her irritable, invalid husband, a retired teacher, who has been a rigid father and is now bedridden with a chronic illness. He is too proud to ask for the things he needs or wants, and spends his vacant hours comparing what he perceives as the dull, dutiful Elizabeth to the "other woman" he loved long ago. Their oldest child, Victoria, once a fragile beauty full of promise, is institutionalized for a chronic mental illness characterized by irrational fears and self-doubt. The middle child, Jason, is a psychiatrist who has been unable to establish trusting relationships and seeks affirmation through multiple sexual adventures. The youngest child is Emily, a concert violinist whose way of achieving peace is to live abroad, avoiding commitments and her family from whom she is hiding the fact of her own son, Adam. But the reunion leads them to revisit relationships and events in the past and results in some surprises for their present and future.

Time for Judas, A by Morley Callaghan

This audacious and intriguing new version of the story of Christ's trial, crucifixion, and resurrection is based on the writings of Philo of Crete, a secretary to Pontius Pilate. Throughout his time as Pilate's scribe, he attended Christ's trial, mingled with city prostitutes and desert bandits, and became acquainted with Judas Iscariot. It was through Judas that he learned the real story of the betrayal and what actually happened to Christ's body. His convincing account is a radical and dramatic version of the commonly accepted story.

Time Machine, The by H. G. Wells

The story begins with a revolutionary Victorian scientist who claims to have invented a machine that allows him to travel through time. Using flashbacks, he recounts his adventures in the futurist world he visits in his time machine to a group of skeptical friends.

Time Traveler's Wife, The by Audrey Niffenegger

Audrey Niffenegger's innovative debut, **The Time Traveler's Wife**, is the story of Clare, a beautiful art student, and Henry, an adventuresome librarian, who have known each other since Clare was six and Henry was thirty-six, and were married when Clare was twenty-three and Henry thirty-one. Impossible but true, because Henry finds himself periodically displaced in time, pulled to moments of emotional gravity from his life, past and future. His disappearances are spontaneous, his experiences unpredictable, alternately harrowing and amusing. **The Time Traveler's Wife** depicts the effects of time travel on Henry and Clare's marriage and their passionate love for each other, as the story unfolds from both points of view. Clare and Henry attempt to live normal lives, pursuing familiar goals -- steady jobs, good friends, children of their own. All of this is threatened by something they can neither prevent nor control, making their story intensely moving and entirely unforgettable.

Tin Drum, The by Gunter Grass

Acclaimed as the greatest German novel written since the end of World War II, **The Tin Drum** is the autobiography of thirty-year-old Oskar Matzerath, who has lived through the long Nazi nightmare and who, as the novel begins, is being held in a mental institution. Willfully stunting his growth at three feet for many years, wielding his tin drum and piercing scream as anarchistic weapons, he provides a profound yet hilarious perspective on both German history and the human condition in the modern world.

Tiny One, The by Eliza Minot

Via Mahoney Revere is eight years old when her mother is killed in a car accident. Confused by anguish, bewildered by her mother's absence, and mystified by the notion of death itself, Via retells the day of her mother's death in minute detail, trying to discern the crack in the world through which her mother must have slipped. She takes us through the seemingly ordinary moments of her day, from a cold-cereal breakfast to math class, when she is called to the principal's office to hear the news. Every small event of the tragic day calls up earlier memories from Via's young life, resulting in a beautifully patterned portrait of a comfortable childhood guarded by a warm and loving mother. Via attempts to grasp "how something so big could fit into such a little thing as a day."

To the Last Man by Jeff Shaara

Spring 1916: the horror of a stalemate on Europe's western front. France and Great Britain are on one side of the barbed wire, a fierce German army is on the other. Shaara opens the window onto the otherworldly tableau of trench warfare as seen through the eyes of a typical British soldier who experiences the bizarre and the horrible—a "Tommy" whose innocent youth is cast into the hell of a terrifying war.

Torn Away by James Henegan

After his mother and sister were killed in a bombing incident, 13-year-old Declan Doyle took to the streets of Belfast with a gang called the Holy Terrors. His pre-IRA training is now cut short when he is "torn away from his native soil" and sent to live with his deceased father's brother in western Canada. Driven by dreams of revenge, the boy runs away, planning to return home to Ireland. Unable to escape, he makes a deal to stay with his relatives in their idyllic Vancouver fishing village for three months. Adjusting to a new country and a new family, yet still nursing his hatred of everything British, Declan is befriended by his cousins and a classmate. Finally, he comes to understand the futility of the violence in his homeland and realizes how attached to his new life he has become.

Trailer Park by Russell Banks

Get to know the colorful cast of characters at the Granite State Trailer park, where Flora in number 11 keeps more than a hundred guinea pigs and screams at people to stay away from her babies, Claudel in number 5 thinks he is lucky until his wife burns down their trailer and runs off with Howie Leeke, and Noni in number 7 has telephone conversations with Jesus and tells the police about them. In this series of related short stories, Russell Banks offers gripping, realistic portrayals of individual Americans and paints a portrait of New England life that is at once dark, witty, and revealing.

Trial, The by Franz Kafka

A terrifying psychological trip into the life of one Joseph K., an ordinary man who wakes up one day to find himself accused of a crime he did not commit, a crime whose nature is never revealed to him. Once arrested, he is released, but must report to court on a regular basis--an event that proves maddening, as nothing is ever resolved. As he grows more uncertain of his fate, his personal life--including work at a bank and his relations with his landlady and a young woman who lives next door--becomes increasingly unpredictable. As K. tries to gain control, he succeeds only in accelerating his own excruciating downward spiral.

True Believer by Nicholas Sparks

As a science journalist with a regular column in Scientific American, Jeremy Marsh specializes in debunking the supernatural. A born skeptic, he travels to the small town of Boone Creek, North Carolina, determined to find the real cause behind the ghostly apparitions that appear in the town's cemetery. What he doesn't plan on, however, is falling hopelessly in love with Lexie Darnell, granddaughter of the town psychic. Now, if the young lovers are to have any kind of future at all, Jeremy must make a difficult choice: return to the life he knows, or do something he's never done before--take a giant leap of faith.

Truth and Bright Water by Thomas King

Thomas King is a writer of plainspoken poetry and comic poignancy. His new novel is a warm and magical story of family secrets and growing up, of a summer in the life of Truth and Bright Water, towns separated by a river that runs between Montana and an Alberta Indian reservation. It opens with a mysterious woman throwing things into the river out of a suitcase -- then jumping in after. Tecumseh and his cousin Lum see, and go to help, but she and her truck have disappeared. Other mysteries also puzzle Tecumseh -- if his mom will take his dad back; if Auntie Cassie is home to stay this time; why no one protects Lum from his father's rages. Then Tecumseh gets a job helping an artist -- Bright Water's most famous son -- with the project of a lifetime. As Truth and Bright Water prepare for the Indian Days festival, their secrets come together in a climax of tragedy, reconciliation, and love.

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

Maybe it was a grandparent, or a teacher, or a colleague. Someone older, patient and wise, who understood you when you were young and searching, helped you see the world as a more profound place, gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it. For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor from nearly twenty years ago. Maybe, like Mitch, you lost track of this mentor as you made your way, and the insights faded, and the world seemed colder. Wouldn't you like to see that person again, ask the bigger questions that still haunt you, receive wisdom for your busy life today the way you once did when you were younger? Mitch Albom had that second chance. He rediscovered Morrie in the last months of the older man's life. Knowing he was dying, Morrie visited with Mitch in his study every Tuesday, just as they used to back in college. Their rekindled relationship turned into one final "class": lessons in how to live.

Underpainter, The by Jane Urquhart

The Underpainter is a novel of interwoven lives in which the world of art collides with the realm of human emotion. It is the story of Austin Fraser, an American painter now in his later years, who is haunted by memories of those whose lives most deeply touched his own, including a young Canadian soldier and china painter and the beautiful model who becomes Austin's mistress. Spanning decades, the setting moves from upstate New York to the northern shores of two Great Lakes; from France in World War One to New York City in the '20s and '30s. Brilliantly depicting landscape and the geography of the imagination, *The Underpainter* is Jane Urquhart's most accomplished novel to date.

Unless by Carol Shields

Reta Winters, an accomplished author who suddenly finds her literary success meaningless when the oldest of her three daughters, Norah, drops out of college to live on the streets of Toronto with a placard labeled Goodness hung around her neck. Shields takes an elliptical approach to Winters's dilemma, slowly exploring the possible reasons why a bright, attractive young woman would simply give up and drop out. As Shields makes her way through Winters's literary career, her marriage and the difficulties she and her daughter face in being taken seriously as women in the modern era, she employs an ingenious conceit by tracking Winters's emotions as she tries to write a sequel to her light romantic novel while helping a fellow writer, a Holocaust survivor, work on her memoirs. As Norah's plight deepens and the nature of her decision begins to surface, the romantic novel turns dark and serious, and Winters faces a rewrite.

Unsuitable Job for a Woman, An by P.D. James

Handsome Cambridge dropout Mark Callender died hanging by the neck with a faint trace of lipstick on his upper lip. When the official verdict is suicide, his wealthy father hires fledgling private investigator Cordelia Gray to find out what led him to self-destruction. What she discovers instead is a twisting trail of secrets and sins — and the strong scent of murder.

Valkyries, The by Paulo Coelho

A classic masterwork of spiritual tension and realization from Paulo Coelho, this powerful story of one man's battle with self-doubt and fear is now available in a beautiful new package from HarperOne. An essential volume alongside Coelho's other bestselling and influential books, such as *The Alchemist*, *The Pilgrimage*, *Brida*, and *The Winner Stands Alone*, the searing and unforgettable narrative in *The Valkyries* asks the questions most central to all literature—and all of humanity's quest for understanding. Why is it that we destroy the things we love most? And how can we learn to let go of the past and believe in the future?

Velocity by Dean Koontz

Billy Wiles tends bar in a tavern in his small California hometown, from which he has never moved despite the horrific night when he became an orphan at 14 and its equally horrific aftermath. Some 15 years later, he published a well-received book of stories and met Barbara. They were about to be married when botulism in canned vichyssoise put her in a coma, and Billy more or less on hold, living on the hope that she will revive some day. Some five years further on, Billy finds, under the windshield wiper of his car, a note offering him a hideous decision. If he doesn't go to the police, "a lovely blond schoolteacher" will be killed; if he does, "an elderly woman" will be murdered.

Vernon God Little by DBC Pierre

Vernon God Little has been mistakenly identified as the shooter in a rampage that left 16 dead at the local high school. Stalked by the media, Vernon feels like his life has turned into a TV movie (he hopes Brian Dennehy will be his lawyer). His mother and her frighteningly simple-minded suburban posse of friends think that emotional support consists of a continuous supply of ribs from the Bar-B-Chew Barn, although Vernon is facing the death penalty. Every page is saturated with a humor that barely masks Pierre's contempt for the media, the criminal justice system, and the rampant materialism of contemporary culture. Scatological, irreverent, crass, and very, very funny, the novel is told at an absolutely manic pace and will have readers wincing even as they laugh out loud.

Veronica Decides to Die by Paulo Coelho

Twenty-four-year-old Veronika seems to have everything she could wish for: youth and beauty, plenty of attractive boyfriends, a fulfilling job, and a loving family. Yet something is lacking in her life. Inside her is a void so deep that nothing could possibly ever fill it. So, on the morning of November 11, 1997, Veronika decides to die. She takes a handful of sleeping pills expecting never to wake up. Naturally Veronika is stunned when she does wake up at Villette, a local mental hospital, where the staff informs her that she has, in fact, partially succeeded in achieving her goal. While the overdose didn't kill Veronika immediately, the medication has damaged her heart so severely that she has only days to live.

Virgin Suicides, The by Jeffrey Eugenides

In an unnamed town in the slightly distant past, detailed in such precise and limpid prose that readers will surely feel that they grew up there, Cecilia--the youngest and most obviously wacky of the luscious Lisbon girls--finally succeeds in taking her own life. As the confused neighbors watch rather helplessly, the remaining sisters become isolated and unhinged, ending it all in a spectacular multiple suicide anticipated from the first page. Eugenides's engrossing writing style keeps one reading despite a creepy feeling that one shouldn't be enjoying it so much.

Waiting for the Barbarians by J. M. Coetzee

For decades the Magistrate has run the affairs of a tiny frontier settlement, ignoring the impending war between the barbarians and the Empire, whose servant he is. But when the interrogation experts arrive, he is jolted into sympathy for the victims, and into a quixotic act of rebellion which lands him in prison.

Walk to Remember, A by Nicholas Sparks

There was a time when the world was sweeter...when the women in Beaufort, North Carolina, wore dresses, and the men donned hats....Every April, when the wind smells of both the sea and lilacs, Landon Carter remembers 1958, his last year at Beaufort High. Landon had dated a girl or two, and even once sworn that he'd been in love. Certainly the last person he thought he'd fall for was Jamie Sullivan, the shy daughter of the town's Baptist minister... Jamie, who was destined to show him the joys, sorrows, and depths of the human heart....

War of the Rats by David Robbins

For six months in 1942, Stalingrad is the center of a titanic struggle between the Russian and German armies--the bloodiest campaign in mankind's long history of warfare. The outcome is pivotal. If Hitler's forces are not stopped, Russia will fall. And with it, the world.... German soldiers call the battle *Rattenkrieg*, **War of the Rats**. The combat is horrific, as soldiers die in the smoking cellars and trenches of a ruined city. Through this twisted carnage stalk two men--one Russian, one German--each the top sniper in his respective army. These two marksmen are equally matched in both skill and tenacity. Each man has his own mission: to find his counterpart--and kill him. But an American woman trapped in Russia complicates this extraordinary duel. Joining the Russian sniper's cadre, she soon becomes one of his most talented assassins--and perhaps his greatest weakness. Based on a true story, this is the harrowing tale of two adversaries enmeshed in their own private war--and whose fortunes will help decide the fate of the world.

Wars. The by Timothy Findley

Sixty years after the armistice, the horrors of the First World War were still spurring antiwar literature, one of the most compelling of which is Timothy Findley's *The Wars*. Slim and elliptical, but told with a level-headed, lyrical clarity, *The Wars* traces the atrocities and absurdities of war through the journey of a young Canadian officer through trenches in which barbarism and civilization exist side by side.

Watership Down by Richard Adams

The story follows a warren of Berkshire rabbits fleeing the destruction of their home by a land developer. As they search for a safe haven, skirting danger at every turn, we become acquainted with the band and its compelling culture and mythos. Adams has crafted a touching, involving world in the dirt and scrub of the English countryside, complete with its own folk history and language (the book comes with a "lapine" glossary, a guide to rabbitese). As much about freedom, ethics, and human nature as it is about a bunch of bunnies looking for a warm hidey-hole and some mates, *Watership Down* will continue to make the transition from classroom desk to bedside table for many generations to come.

Way the Crow Flies, The by Ann Marie Macdonald

The McCarthy family moves from Germany to their new home on a Canadian air force base near London, Ontario. Madeleine, eight and already a blossoming comic, is particularly close with her father, Jack, an air force officer. Her loving Acadian mother, Mimi, and older brother Mike round out this family, whose simple goodness reflects the glow of an era that seemed like paradise. But all that is about to change. The Cuban Missile Crisis is looming, and Jack, loyal and gullible, suddenly has an important task to carry out that involves a scientist--a former Nazi--in Canada. While Jack scrambles to keep his activities hidden from his wife, Madeleine too is learning to keep secrets (about a teacher at school). *The Way the Crow Flies* is all about the fertility of lies, how one breeds another and another.

We by Evgenii Zamyatin

An inspiration for George Orwell's *1984* and a precursor to the work of Philip K. Dick and Stanislaw Lem, *We* is a classic of dystopian science fiction ripe for rediscovery. Written in 1921 by the Russian revolutionary Yevgeny Zamyatin, this story of the thirtieth century is set in the One State, a society where all live for the collective good and individual freedom does not exist. The novel takes the form of the diary of state mathematician D-503, who, to his shock, experiences the most disruptive emotion imaginable: love for another human being. At once satirical and sobering--and now available in a powerful new modern translation--*We* speaks to all who have suffered under repression of their personal and artistic freedom.

What the Body Remembers by Shauna Singh Baldwin

The year is 1937, and Roop, a sixteen-year-old Sikh girl from a small village in Northwestern India, has just been married to Sardarji, a wealthy man in his forties. She is a second wife, married without a dowry in the hope that she will bear children, because Sardarji's first wife, Satya, a proud, beautiful, combative woman whom he deeply loves, is childless. The wedding has been conducted in haste, and kept secret from Satya until after the fact. Angered and insulted, she does little to disguise her hatred of Roop, and secretly plans to be rid of her after she has served her purpose and given Sardarji a son. Besides being a landowner, Sardarji is an Oxford-educated engineer, who hopes that he can help India modernize. As a rising man in the Indian Irrigation Department, he works with British engineers, designing canals to help Indian farmers grow food for the country, and hydro dams to bring even greater prosperity by producing electric power. The British have promised India independence some day, but the timing and conditions of their departure have not yet been settled. Sardarji is instinctively conservative and believes that it is better to work with the British rulers than to agitate against them. But many others are working to drive the British out. Unfortunately, the leaders of the independence movement, in arousing nationalistic emotions, are also deepening the religious divisions between the Hindu and Muslim populations — if India is free, which religion will be the dominant force? The Sikh community, to which Roop, Sardarji and Satya belong, is linked with the Hindus by their common history and some shared traditions, but the Sikhs also have historical grievances against the other religious communities. Intolerance and hatred are growing and the stage is set for bloody conflict.

Where the Heart Is by Bille Letts

Novalee Nation, 17 and pregnant, finds herself stranded outside a Wal-Mart in Sequoyah, Oklahoma, with \$7.77 in her pocket and no one to turn to for help. This is an unlikely beginning for a humorous and hopeful novel, but that is just what this is. As she sits outside the store taking stock of her situation, plucky Novalee meets several of the town's more unusual inhabitants: Sister Husband, who presents her with a shop-worn welcome-wagon basket; black photographer Moses Whitecotton, who conveys to her the importance of a name for her unborn child; and Indian Benny Goodluck, who gives her a buckeye tree for good luck. These and other Sequoyah citizens rally around Novalee when she has her baby on the floor of Wal-Mart, and form the basis for this most enjoyable novel.

White Bone by Barbara Gowdy

Mud is a young elephant cow, orphaned at birth and blessed with visionary powers. For many years, she and her adoptive family roam the plains of Africa until prolonged drought forces them to stay close to one of the few remaining watering holes. It is there that ivory poachers find them and kill, or drive off, almost all the elephant cows and their young. Mud, now an adolescent and pregnant with her first calf, sets out with the wounded and traumatized survivors in search of the injured. Guided by visions, memories and hallucinations as much as their incredible sense of smell, the ruined herd hears rumors of A Safe Place and the White Bone that can lead them there. The quest becomes one of endurance, sacrifice, and, ultimately, transcendence, as the elephants struggle for their own lives and the continuation of their kind.

White Tiger, The by Aravind, Adiga

The white tiger of this novel is Balram Halwai, a poor Indian villager whose great ambition leads him to the zenith of Indian business culture, the world of the Bangalore entrepreneur. On the occasion of the president of China's impending trip to Bangalore, Balram writes a letter to him describing his transformation and his experience as driver and servant to a wealthy Indian family, which he thinks exemplifies the contradictions and complications of Indian society.

White Teeth by Zadie Smith

White Teeth, a multigenerational, multiethnic, somewhat zany novel, is the ambitious undertaking of first-time novelist Smith. Set in London and spanning more than 25 years, with recollections and accounts back to earlier days, it presents the combined story of the Jones and Iqbal families. The friendship of Archibald and Samad, respectively, the fathers, dates back to their shared, if somewhat bizarre, experiences during World War II. Their much younger wives (Clara Jones, a Jamaican who escaped from her Jehovah's Witness upbringing, and Alsana Iqbal, married because of family arrangements) and the children (a girl for the Jones', twin sons for the Iqbals) become like one family out of habit and self-defense. They grow and change (or not) as the years progress, and there is a sort of predestined circularity of the events and outcomes.

Who Has Seen the Wind by W. O. Mitchell

Mitchell used memories of his own childhood to create the world of Brian O'Connell, balancing a finely drawn sense of humour with a delicate nostalgia for a world that had already been lost even as Mitchell wrote about it in the aftermath of the Second World War. Like children everywhere, Brian is curious about everything, and the author allows him to freely explore his prairie world, taking in everything from gophers to God, from his feisty Irish grandmother to his friends Ben and Saint Sammy, the town of Arcola's local madman. Mitchell gives readers a most memorable glimpse into the ins and outs of small-town life during the Depression years, always through Brian's eyes, and in doing so creates a poignant and powerful portrait of childhood innocence and its loss.

Wild Dogs by Helen Humphreys

There are six people who gather every evening at the edge of the woods, calling their dogs to come back to them, dogs that have turned wild. Amongst the group of owners is Lily, a young woman scarred both physically and emotionally; Jamie, a teen with an attraction to bad company; and Rachel, a wildlife biologist whose tamed wolf leads the pack. Alice, the narrator, has just left an unhappy relationship for the unknown territory of a single life and feels that she is now somehow responsible for the others. But as she moves towards love once more, Alice must come to terms with her own wildness and the price of belonging to someone else.

Wild Ride Up The Cupboards, A by Ann Bauer

Jack and Rachel, pregnant again, have two boys--Edward, nearly four, and Matt, two--when Edward suddenly experiences loss of speech, hyperactivity, and insomnia. They run through a gauntlet of doctors: one thinks the behaviors may be caused by brain tumors; another suggests they try marijuana. Asked to provide family medical histories, Jack and Rachel are faced with unearthing painful memories involving Jack's birth parents, whom he never knew, and Rachel's mysterious uncle Mickey, who exhibited symptoms similar to Edward's and eventually committed suicide. By the time Edward is in seventh grade, he has improved markedly yet still has days when he has "the screens pulled down inside his head." By then the marriage has failed, the stress proving too great for this family in peril, portrayed by Bauer with unflinching honesty.

Wolf Pit, The by Marly Youmans

A powerful, intimate look at the Civil War on the home and battle fronts, *The Wolf Pit* is Marly Youmans's third and most accomplished novel. In it Robin, a young Confederate soldier and witness to the horrors of war, clings to what gives him strength: family pictures, psalms, and an old legend about a pair of mysterious green children found in a wolf pit. Robin carries these inside the Elmira prison camp, the very embodiment of hell. Meanwhile, Agate, the mulatto daughter of a hired-out slave, embraces the forbidden teachings of her mistress, Miss Fanny, who teaches her to love books and to write. But the hope Agate has fashioned for her future disappears when her owner, Young Master, learns of her education. Agate comes to understand the meaning of her mother's cautionary tales as she struggles to survive loss and degradation and to pit knowledge and truth against evil.

Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy

Connie Ramos, a woman in her mid-thirties, has been declared insane. But Connie is overwhelmingly sane, merely tuned to the future, and able to communicate with the year 2137. As her doctors persuade her to agree to an operation, Connie struggles to force herself to listen to the future and its lessons for today....

Woman Who Walked into Doors, The by Roddy Doyle

This is the heart-rending story of a woman struggling to reclaim her dignity after a violent, abusive marriage and a worsening drink problem. Paula Spencer recalls her contented childhood, the audacity she learned as a teenager, the exhilaration of her romance with Charlo and the marriage to him that left her powerless. Capturing both her vulnerability and her strength, Doyle gives Paula a voice that is real and unforgettable.

Wonderful Wizard of Oz, The by Frank Baum

Originally published in 1900, it was the first truly American fairy tale, as Baum crafted a wonderful fantasy out of such familiar items as a cornfield scarecrow, a mechanical woodman, and a humbug wizard who used old-fashioned hokum to express that universal theme, "There's no place like home." Follow the adventures of young Dorothy Gale and her dog, Toto, as their Kansas house is swept away by a cyclone and they find themselves in a strange land called Oz. Here she meets the Munchkins and joins the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion on an unforgettable journey to the Emerald City, where lives the all-powerful Wizard of Oz.

World According to Garp, The by John Irving

This is the life and times of T. S. Garp, the bastard son of Jenny Fields--a feminist leader ahead of her times. This is the life and death of a famous mother and her almost-famous son; theirs is a world of sexual extremes--even of sexual assassinations. It is a novel rich with "lunacy and sorrow"; yet the dark, violent events of the story do not undermine a comedy both ribald and robust.

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

Published a year before her death at the age of thirty, Emily Brontë's only novel is set in the wild, bleak Yorkshire Moors. Depicting the relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff, *Wuthering Heights* creates a world of its own, conceived with an instinct for poetry and for the dark depths of human psychology.

Year of Jubilo: a Novel of the Civil War, The by Howard Bahr

On a spring day in 1865 Gawain Harper trudges toward his home in Cumberland, Mississippi, where three years earlier he had boarded a train carrying the latest enlistees in the Mississippi Infantry. Unmoved by the cause that motivated so many others, he had joined up only when Morgan Rhea's father told Gawain that he would never wed his beloved Morgan unless he did his part in the war effort. Upon his return, he discovers post-war life is far from what he expected. Morgan has indeed waited for him, but before they can marry there are scores to be settled.

Yellow River in Blue Water by Michael Doris

A fierce saga of three generations of Indian women, beset by hardships and torn by angry secrets, yet inextricably joined by the bonds of kinship. Starting in the present day and moving backward, the novel is told in the voices of the three women: fifteen-year-old part-black Rayona; her American Indian mother, Christine, consumed by tenderness and resentment toward those she loves; and the fierce and mysterious Ida, mother and grandmother whose haunting secrets, betrayals, and dreams echo through the years, braiding together the strands of the shared past.

Youth in Revolt by C. D. Payne

Youth in Revolt is the journals of Nick Twisp, California's most precocious diarist, whose ongoing struggles to make sense out of high school, deal with his divorced parents, and lose his virginity result in his transformation from an unassuming fourteen-year-old to a modern youth in open revolt. As his family splinters, worlds collide, and the police block all routes out of town, Nick must cope with economic deprivation, homelessness, the gulag of the public schools, a competitive Type-A father, murderous canines (in triplicate), and an inconvenient hair trigger on his erectile response—all while vying ardently for the affections of the beautiful Sheeni Saunders, teenage goddess and ultimate intellectual goad.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert M. Pirsig

One of the most important and influential books written in the past half-century, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a powerful, moving, and penetrating examination of how we live . . . and a breathtaking meditation on how to live better. Here is the book that transformed a generation: an unforgettable narration of a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest, undertaken by a father and his young son. A story of love and fear -- of growth, discovery, and acceptance -- that becomes a profound personal and philosophical odyssey into life's fundamental questions, this uniquely exhilarating modern classic is both touching and transcendent, resonant with the myriad confusions of existence . . . and the small, essential triumphs that propel us forward.

Zombie by Joyce Carol Oates

Upon entering the psyche of Quentin P--, once arrested for the sexual assault of a young boy, Oates proceeds to reveal the demented scheming behind his abduction and torture of numerous victims--murders that remain essentially unknown to Quentin's parents, doctors, therapists, and parole counselors alike. With striking parallels to published reports of Jeffrey Dahmer's crimes, it is difficult not to conjure up that killer's image or to imagine his very thoughts and the rituals portrayed in the press as being perpetrated by him. Still, Oates compels the reader onward to the very last page of a horrifying, revelatory work of fiction.