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Recommended books 2008

Fiction

Barry, Brunonia. The Lace Reader
Enthralling debut novel featuring a woman descended from a long line of fortune tellers who must use her gift to discover the cause of death of her aunt, an apparent drowning victim. Fascinating characters enrich Barry?s unusual plot.

Barry, Sebastian. The Secret Scripture
In Roseanne?s 100th year, she revisits her life by writing her autobiography. When the facility in which Roseanne lives is scheduled to close, she is evaluated by a doctor to determine her future living situation and he soon uncovers a totally different story than the one Roseanne recalls. Beautifully written with themes of love and tragedy.

Bear, Elizabeth. All the Windwracked Stars (Science Fiction)
It is Ragnarok?the Last Day of the Last Battle, the end of the world?and Muire, who thinks of herself as the least of the Valkyries, has survived. However she soon finds that it takes a very long time for her world to die out entirely. Lyrical, complex, and compelling this novel will draw you in with a finely honed combination of ancient themes and far-future tech.

Benioff, David. City of Thieves
A writer listens to his grandfather?s story of the siege of Leningrad where his grandfather, too young at the time for the army, along with a soldier were sent off on the improbable mission of gathering a dozen eggs for a wedding cake. Coming of age tale in which two young men are faced with an impossible task in a city devastated by war.

Davidson, Andrew. The Gargoyle
An unpleasant character is driving home late one night when a sudden hallucination causes him to lose control of his vehicle. He plunges off the road and is horribly burned over most of his body. What follows is a slow recovery during which he meets a mysterious woman who insists they know each other from a past life. Not for the faint-hearted, however well-crafted characters and beautifully sculpted imagery combine to sweep you away.

Enger, Leif. So Brave, Young, and Handsome

An elderly train robber is traveling to Mexico to find his ex-wife when he meets up with a man about to give up on his writing career. The train robber convinces the writer to accompany him on his travels and voyage of self-discovery. Fans of westerns or those who just love a good story won?t want to miss Enger?s latest.

Erickson, Carolly. The Tsarina?s Daughter
This entertaining historical novel has it all: suspense, romance, glamour, and appealing characters. The Tsarina?s daughter is the story of the last few years of the Romanov family?s reign and their subsequent exile told from the perspective of second daughter Tatiana.

Jordan, Hillary. Mudbound
In 1946, a Memphis school teacher becomes a farmer?s wife when her husband buys land on the delta. She struggles with primitive conditions and a racist father-in-law who comes to live on the farm. When two young men return from WWII to help work the land, their unlikely friendship foments issues of racism in the post-war south.

Kushner, Rachel. Telex from Cuba
Ex-pat children growing up in pre-Castro Cuba live in a paradise seeing only glimpses of society outside of their privileged existence. In a parallel story, an exotic dancer in Havana and one of her patrons become involved in the political underground leading up to the revolution. Kushner?s debut novel is rich with history in a brilliant setting.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. Unaccustomed Earth
Pulitzer Prize winner Lahiri presents another entrancing short-story collection dealing with themes of immigration and assimilation. Beautiful language and enthralling stories compel you to read on.

Larsson, Steig. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (Mystery)
Murder mystery featuring a man hired to find out what happened to a woman missing for 40 years. Family secrets and skeletons come tumbling out of the closets as the investigator takes on an assistant, a much pierced and tattooed computer hacker. Full of surprises, mystery fans will find the pair an intriguing duo.

Miles, Jonathan. Dear American Airlines
Bennie is on his way to his daughter?s wedding. Unfortunately, he?s also stranded at O?Hare and busy writing a letter of complaint to the airline. Miles hits our hearts and our funny bones in this debut novel.

Shaffer, Mary Anne and Annie Barrows. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
During the German occupation of the Channel Islands, a group of residents make up a book club as an excuse for the late night feast they?re caught enjoying. Years later, a London reporter receives a letter from one of the book club members which begins a long correspondence in which the writer learns about the islands and their eccentric inhabitants and the books they read.

Wroblewski, David. The Story of Edgar Sawtelle
Edgar, born mute, speaks only in sign language. He grows up in Northern Wisconsin with his family that breeds a type of dog known for loyal companionship. When Edgar?s uncle comes to live with them, and Edgar?s father dies suddenly, Edgar must find a way to survive on his own

while trying to prove his uncle had something to do with his father?s death. Vivid setting and characterizations make this debut novel a winner.

Non-Fiction

Carr, David. The Night of the Gun B C311
A reporter, Carr was inspired to write this memoir when he discovered that he and his friends and family had extremely different recollections of traumatic events triggered by Carr?s drug addiction. Carr takes a reporter?s skeptical look at his own memories of events and fact checks them against medical and legal records, and interviews with those close to him. Fascinating look at what we choose to recall.

Donovan, Jim. A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Big Horn?the last great battle of the American west 973.82 D687
Donovan reveals new details about Custer and what led him to the Little Big Horn. Along the way, we also meet Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and learn their backgrounds and motivations. Donovan gives us a clear view of what went wrong for Custer and why.

Friedman, Thomas. Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why we need a green revolution and how it can renew America 363.7 F911
Friedman has another hit dealing with the issues of climate destabilization and energy consumption. Friedman?s straightforward language and numerous case studies clearly outline and support his arguments that we need breakthroughs in clean and energy technologies to keep America competitive and prosperous.

Horwitz, Tony. A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the new world 970.01 H824
With his hallmark humor and curiosity, Horwitz takes us on a journey of discovery as he travels in search of the history of early exploration of North America. On the way, he sorts out fact from fiction and reminds us of things we have learned but long forgotten.

Pollan, Michael. In Defense of Food: an eater?s manifesto 613 P771
Pollan argues, convincingly and with well-documented research to back him up, that eating in America has not only become a far too complex affair in which nutritional claims and nutrients have taken the place of simple healthy food, but that Americans?and anyone who eats a Westernized diet?are suffering for it. Fascinating look at what we eat vs. what we should eat.

Preston, Douglas. Monster of Florence 364.1523 Sp75p
Thriller novelist Preston moved his family to Florence Italy to pursue a simpler way of life in an old farmhouse. When he discovers that his own olive grove was the scene of a notorious and unsolved double homicide, Preston teamed up with an Italian reporter to try and solve the case. Monster of Florence chronicles their investigation.

Shubin, Neil. Your Inner Fish: a journey into the 3.5 billion-year history of the human body 611 Sh56
Provost of The Field Museum and professor of anatomy at the University of Chicago, Shubin traces the evolution of the human body back to early sea creatures. Explained with humor and straightforward language, Shubin takes a fascinating look at our origins.

Taylor, Jill Bolte. My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist?s Personal Journey 362.19681 T243
Neuroanatomist Taylor suffered a major stroke at age 37. Because of her scientific training, she was able to understand what was happening and was eventually able to help herself recover through her understanding of anatomy. In her memoir, she shares the journey with vivid detail.

Torres, Alissa. American Widow Graphic Novel B T693
On September 11, Alissa became a widow when Eddie, trapped on the 85th floor, leaped to his death before the tower fell. In this poignant and affecting graphic novel memoir, Alissa chronicles her first year as one of the 9/11 widows, including the birth of their child two months after his death.

Vanderbilt, Tom. Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and what it says about us) 629.283 V228
Vanderbilt explains the hows and whys of traffic including how roads are designed, how we fool ourselves into thinking we?re better drivers than we are, how we misperceive speed and misjudge distance and why traffic jams happen. This is the book that teaches us what we should have learned in drivers? education.

Walters, Barbara. Audition: a memoir B W235
Celebrity-filled memoir in which Walters chronicles her life and struggles to be successful in a competitive profession. Bound to be full of surprise even for those who think they know much about Walters and her career.

Winchester, Simon. The Man Who Loved China 509.2 N374w
Winchester is a master of historical detail who never fails to make connections between cause and effect. This is the story of Joseph Needham, a British scientist who traveled to China to study history and science and who wrote the multi-volume Science and Civilisation in China. This is an extraordinary look at both Needham and China.

Wright, Robin. Dreams and Shadows: the future of the Middle East 320.956 W953
Wright, a writer for the Washington Post tackles the subject of the people in the Middle East who are seeking change, whether by small shows of civil disobedience, or by public protest. Wright wants to believe change is coming, but finds that despite the efforts of many, significant change is not right around the corner. Fascinating tour of the Middle East.

Zakaria, Fareed. The Post-American World 303.4973 Z21
Newsweek editor Zakaria shows us where we?re headed in the 21st century. This hugely discussable book talks not about America?s decline, but about the rise of other nations and the adjustments the U.S. will have to make to successfully coexist with newly powerful nations

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