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Recommended Books 2006

Fiction

Abrahams, Peter. End of Story: a novel of suspense. William Morrow (F)
Ivy Seidel has an MFA and a body of work. Unfortunately none of it is published. She begins to lose heart until she?s offered a teaching job at a prison and meets an extremely talented inmate she believes is innocent. Ivy embarks on a quest to clear his name in this psychological thriller.

Barnes, Julian. Arthur and George. Knopf (F)
Arthur is a famous British writer, George is a half-Indian lawyer. When George is accused of and imprisoned for a variety of unusual crimes, Arthur is convinced of his innocence and sets out to prove it. Short-listed for the Booker prize.

Carey, Peter. Theft: a love story. Knopf (F)
Famous Australian artist Butcher Boone has had a streak of bad luck and is forced to take on the role of caretaker for his brother Hugh as well as for an art collector?s large estate. After a stranger comes to the door one night, Butcher falls in love and becomes embroiled in an international art heist.

Cox, Michael. The Meaning of Night: a confession. W.W. Norton (F)
Cox creates a dark and chilling world in which an obsessed killer sets out to get revenge against a man he believes is the cause of every unfortunate event he?s suffered in his lifetime. Psychological fiction with many surprises, The Washington Post dubs it ?Victorian Noir?.

Desai, Kiran. The Inheritance of Loss: a novel. Atlantic Monthly Press (F)
Man Booker Prize winner explores questions of class and postcolonial hardships as experienced by retired judge Jemubhai Patel and his family. Set near the India/Nepal border in the 1980s, the family grapples with political uprising, culture clashes, and the quest for a better life.

Gruen, Sara. Water for Elephants. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (F)
Jacob Jankowski, a veterinarian nearing retirement recalls his time with the circus during the depression. There?s a love story, lots of history, and the allure of the big top to keep this novel moving.

Hart, John. The King of Lies. St. Martin's Minotaur (MYS)
Hart?s debut novel is a legal thriller set in North Carolina. Jackson Workman Pickens (Work) is an attorney in practice with his father. When his father is murdered, Work becomes fearful his sister is involved and tries to protect her.

King, Stephen. Lisey?s Story. Scribner (F)
Mournful story in which a writer?s widow is compelled to explore her husband?s childhood. Supernatural elements are present in the form of a catatonic sister who speaks with the deceased?s voice, but mostly it?s a haunting love story.

Messud, Claire. The Emperor?s Children. Knopf. (F)
For three privileged college friends struggling with careers and relationships in New York, life gets interesting when the young college-dropout cousin of one of them moves to the city to learn how to be an intellectual.

Nemirovsky, Irene. Suite Francaise. Knopf (F)
Last manuscript by Nemirovsky who with her husband was sent to Auschwitz (where she died in the infirmary at age 39). The suite of two novellas describe the lives of French farmers under Nazi rule as well as those of sophisticated Parisians who flee the city in fear of the approaching German army.

Setterfield, Diane. The Thirteenth Tale. Atria (F)
Very gothic story including ghosts, ruins, and family secrets. Margaret is hired to write the biography of a famous author who has spent 60 years living a lie. This debut novel inspired a bidding war between publishers in the U.S. and in the U.K.

Yehoshua, Abraham B. A Woman In Jerusalem. Harcourt (F)
A woman is killed in a terrorist attack. A man supposed to be her employer at a bakery is charged with the task of discovering her background and delivering her body to her family. Along the way, the manager has plenty of time to consider his own life, relationships and moral issues.

Non-Fiction

Brinkbaumer, Klaus. The Voyage of the Vizcaína: the mystery of Christopher Columbus's last ship . Harcourt (970.015 C726b)
Don?t let the title fool you. This is not just another book about Columbus. It?s also the story of the discovery of a wreck that may be one of the ships Columbus brought on his last voyage to the new world. We learn what happened to the sunken ship when politicians and treasure hunters got involved as well as the details of Columbus? last voyage. Together they make for a great adventure read.

Bryson, Bill. The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: a memoir. Broadway (910.4 B916)
Bryson?s memoir of growing up in Des Moines, Iowa. Nostalgic and humorous look at what it was to be a child in the 1950?s.

Buford, Bill. Heat: an amateur's adventures as kitchen slave, line cook, pasta-maker, and apprentice to a Dante-quoting butcher in Tuscany. Knopf (641.59455 B929)

Buford goes inside the kitchen of Mario Batali?s Babbo to learn firsthand about cooking and the restaurant business. Without the benefit of cooking school, Bill learns things the hard way. He then goes to Tuscany to apprentice with ?the best butcher in the world.? More than culinary writing, this book gets to the culture of cooking and of one Tuscan Village.

Child, Julia. My Life in France. Knopf (B C536m)
Child tells the story of her culinary training in France, her adventures in learning French and adapting to a new culture. This manuscript was begun before her death in 2004 and was finished by her grandnephew.

Egan, Timothy. The Worst Hard Time: the untold story of those who survived the great American dust bowl. Houghton Mifflin Company (978.032 Eg28)
Winner of the 2006 National Book Award for Nonfiction, The Worst Hard Time follows a number of families through tragedy during the dust bowl disaster. Profiled are those who toughed it out for the duration of this man-made crisis. Riveting cautionary tale.

Gardner, Chris. The Pursuit of Happyness. HarperCollins (B G2264)
Although Chris Gardner had a tough childhood, he had enough determination to set goals and was well on his way to achieving them--until a series of circumstances left him a homeless single father. Resolute about not leaving his children without a father, Gardner found a way to turn his life around.

Groom, Winston. Patriotic Fire: Andrew Jackson and Jean Lafitte at the Battle of New Orleans. Knopf (973.52 G876)
Novelist Groom (Forest Gump) tells the story of how a small haphazard army defeated a British force twice its size in a battle that actually happened after the War of 1812 was officially over. Andrew Jackson, Jean Lafitte, pirates, Acadians, and troops from Tennessee were among those involved in the astonishing victory.

Junger, Sebastian. A Death in Belmont. W.W. Norton (364.1523 J95)
Author of The Perfect Storm explores the death of a family neighbor in 1963. Although the murder was similar to those committed by the Boston Strangler, a handyman doing work at the neighbor?s home was arrested and convicted of the killing. Junger studies both men in an effort to determine which may actually have been guilty.

Kaplan, Justin. When the Astors Owned New York: blue bloods and grand hotels in a gilded age. Penguin Group (929.2 As85k)
Cousins William Waldorf Astor and John Jacob Astor IV epitomized the excesses of the gilded age. John was a blunderer; William was a connoisseur of art. Together they set the tone for luxury accommodation in the form of the Waldorf-Astoria.

Philbrick, Nathaniel. Mayflower: a story of courage, community, and war. Viking Penguin (973.22 P545)
It didn?t happen exactly as we learned in history class and Philbrick is keen on filling in the blanks in our past. Inter-tribal relationships as well as those between tribes and the pilgrims were complex and often harrowing as alliances were formed, shifted, and dissolved into violence. Winner of the National Book Award for Sea of Glory, Philbrick digs up some surprising details and presents the Pilgrim story in an entirely new light.

Rusesabagina, Paul . An Ordinary Man: an autobiography. Penguin Group (B R951z)
During Rwanda?s genocide, Ruesabagina offered a haven to 1200 refugees in the hotel he managed. He stayed their execution in a variety of ways including negotiation and diplomacy. This autobiography takes us from his childhood through the 100 days during which the fate of so many remained in his hands.

Tolan, Sandy. The Lemon Tree: an Arab, a Jew, and the heart of the Middle East. Bloomsbury (956.9405 T647)
Journalist Sandy Tolan tells the story of two families?one Jewish and one Palestinian who have both called the same house their home. They meet when a trio of Arab cousins journey to Ramla to see the houses their families had lived in 20 years earlier. One of the current residents opens the door to them, which begins an often-difficult friendship.

RA staff
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