
Notable Books

The 2013 Selection of Titles

Notable Books Council

Notable Books Council contributing members:

Elizabeth Olesh, Chairperson, Nassau Library System (NY); William Kelly, Vice Chairperson, Cuyahoga County Public Library (OH); Terry Beck, Sno-Isle Library System (WA); Sharon Castleberry, DeSoto Public Library (TX); Kayne Ferrier (MI); Robin Kinder, George Washington University (DC); Liz Kirchhoff, Barrington Public Library (IL); Katharine Phenix, Anythink Libraries (CO); Camina Raphael, Westbury Public Library (NY); Andrea Slonosky (Toronto ON); Sara Taffae (NM); Mary Callaghan "Cal" Zunt, Cleveland Public Library (OH).

The Notable Books Council, a group of readers' advisory experts within the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the American Library Association, has announced its selections for the 2013 Notable Books List.

Since 1944, the goal of the Notable Books Council has been to make available to the nation's readers a list of twenty-five or twenty-six very good, very readable, and at times very important fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books for the adult reader. A book may be selected for inclusion on the Notable Books List if it possesses exceptional literary merit, expands the horizons of human knowledge, makes a specialized body of knowledge accessible to the nonspecialist, has the potential to contribute significantly to the solution of a contemporary problem, or presents a unique concept.

This year's list was selected from titles published between December 1, 2011, and November 30, 2012.

FICTION

Díaz, Junot. *This is How You Lose Her*. Riverhead. (ISBN 978-1-5944-8736-1).

Yunior, a smooth-talking Dominican, explores the complexity of love, fidelity, and cultural identity in these inventive, uncompromising stories.

Edugyan, Esi. *Half-Blood Blues*. Picador. (ISBN 978-1-2500-1270-8).

Two aging African-American musicians return to Berlin to find their friend, a jazz trumpeter, arrested in Nazi-occupied France.

Eggers, Dave. *A Hologram for the King*. McSweeney's. (ISBN 978-1-9363-6574-6).

In a nod to Godot, an American salesman is in Saudi Arabia to close a deal which may salvage his way of life.

Erdrich, Louise. *The Round House*. Harper. (ISBN 978-0-0620-6524-7).

On the Ojibwe reservation, Oop hunts for his mother's attacker and learns that law does not always provide justice.

Ford, Richard. *Canada*. Ecco. (ISBN 978-0-0616-9204-8).

The twin teenage children of once upstanding citizens who rob a bank are left to fend for themselves. The murders come later, in Saskatchewan.

Fountain, Ben. *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*. Ecco. (ISBN 978-0-0608-8559-5).

The Bravo Squad was caught live on camera in a fire-fight. Now temporarily stateside, they are being exploited in a hyped-up victory tour.

Heller, Peter. *The Dog Stars*. Knopf. (ISBN 978-0-3079-5994-2).

A man, his dog, his airplane, and a will to survive in post-apocalyptic Colorado.

Johnson, Adam. *The Orphan Master's Son*. Random House. (ISBN 978-0-8129-9279-3).

In a surreal sortie to a world of fabricated reality, Pak Jun Do is forced to become many people by the North Korean government.

Joyce, Rachel. *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*. Random House. (ISBN 978-0-8129-9329-5).

Delivering a letter to a dying friend becomes a five-hundred-mile journey of reflection and redemption.

Lam, Vincent. *The Headmaster's Wager*. Hogarth. (ISBN 978-0-3079-8646-7).

What happens when you are blind to the realities of war? Percival, a Chinese expatriate in Vietnam, makes bad bets with tragic consequences.

Tropper, Jonathan. *One Last Thing Before I Go*. Dutton. (ISBN 978-0-5259-5236-7).

No one can understand how Silver has made such a mess of his life. Can he fix it before the clock runs out?

Watkins, Claire Vaye. *Battleborn*. Riverhead. (ISBN 978-1-5944-8825-2).

The aching beauty of Nevada from the mid-1800s to the present is depicted in these nuanced and elegant stories.

NONFICTION

Boo, Katherine. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. Random House. (ISBN 978-1-4000-6755-8).

Documents the lives of the slum dwellers of Annawadi, whose work as garbage pickers barely keeps them alive.

Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. Crown. (ISBN 978-0-3073-5214-9).

Compelling arguments for why we should turn down the volume.

Colby, Tanner. *Some of My Best Friends are Black: The Strange Story of Integration in America*. Viking. (ISBN 978-0-6700-2371-4).

Answering a simple question uncovers the surprisingly complex roots of contemporary segregation.

Dyson, George. *Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe*. Knopf. (ISBN 978-0-3754-2277-5).

The story of the eccentric personalities whose work in Los Alamos and Princeton initiated the modern era.

Egan, Timothy. *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis*. Houghton Mifflin. (ISBN 978-0-6189-6902-9).

Illuminates one man's quest to document and preserve the culture of indigenous American tribes.

Holt, Jim. *Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story*. W.W. Norton. (ISBN 978-0-8714-0409-1).

Why something instead of nothing?

Ingrassia, Paul. *Engines of Change: A History of the American Dream in Fifteen Cars*. Simon & Schuster. (ISBN 978-1-4516-4063-2).

From the Model T to the Prius, we are what we drive.

Iverson, Kristen. *Full Body Burden: Growing Up in the Nuclear Shadow of Rocky Flats*. Crown. (ISBN 978-0-3079-5563-0).

The personal story and public politics of life beside plutonium triggers.

King, Ross. *Leonardo and the Last Supper*. Walker. (ISBN 978-0-8027-1705-4).

Think you know everything about da Vinci and his masterpiece? An enlightening and entertaining treatment of an iconic subject.

Murphy, Paul Thomas. *Shooting Victoria: Madness, Mayhem, and the Rebirth of the British Monarchy*. Pegasus. (ISBN 978-1-6059-8354-7).

Queen—8, assassins—0.

Roberts, Callum. *The Ocean of Life: The Fate of Man and the Sea*. Viking. (ISBN 978-0-6700-2354-7).

Sail and swim through our threatened waters towards ideas for creating a sustainable future.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Grove. (ISBN 978-0-8021-2010-6).

Religion, sex, class, libraries, politics, madness, art—the memoir of a young woman discovering the sanctuary of literature.

POETRY

Alighieri, Dante. Trans. Mary Jo Bang. Illus. Henrik Drescher. *Inferno: A New Translation*. Graywolf. (ISBN 978-1-5559-7619-4).

A rollicking, contemporary trip through the Underworld.

Olds, Sharon. *Stag's Leap*. Knopf. (ISBN 978-0-3079-5990-4).

An arc of verses that touch the raw nerve of betrayal, lost love, forgiveness, healing, and finding peace.