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# NOTABLE BOOKS

## *The 2011 Selection of Titles*

### RUSA Notable Books Council

**Notable Books, 2011, committee**

**members:** A. Issac Pulver, *Saratoga Springs Public Library, chair*; Terry Beck, *Sno-Isle Libraries*; Susie Brown, *Shaker Heights Public Library*; Julie Elliott, *Indiana University—South Bend*; Bill Kelly, *Cuyahoga County Public Library*; Elizabeth Olesh, *Nassau Library System*; Jessica Pigza, *New York Public Library*; Nancy Pearl; Heather Robideaux, *Fayetteville Public Library*; Nonny Schlotzhauer, *The Pennsylvania State University*; Andrea Slonosky; and Valerie Morgan Taylor, *Great Falls Library*.

Since 1944, the Notable Books Council has annually selected a list of twenty-five very good, very readable, and at times very important fiction, nonfiction, and poetry books for the adult reader. Books may be selected because they possess exceptional literary merit, expand the horizons of human knowledge, make a specialized body of knowledge accessible to the nonspecialist, have the potential to contribute significantly to the solution of a contemporary problem, or present a unique concept.

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### FICTION

Rick Bass. *Nashville Chrome*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. \$24 (ISBN 978-0-547-31726-7).

This lovely account of pop trio The Browns reels you in as though the concept of rags to riches were brand new.

Emma Donoghue. *Room: A Novel*. Little, Brown. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-0-316-09833-5).

Five-year-old Jack vividly narrates the story of his life confined in a room with his mother in this unsettling exploration of resilience and hope.

Jennifer Egan. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Knopf. \$25.95 (ISBN 978-0-307-59283-5).

A 70s punk band becomes the touchstone for a motley crew who spin their interconnected stories over time and distance.

Tom Franklin. *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*. William Morrow. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-0-06-059466-4).

Two men—one black, one white—must confront the secrets surrounding their childhood friendship following the disappearance of two girls in rural Mississippi.

Jonathan Franzen. *Freedom*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$28 (ISBN 978-0-374-15846-0).

This incisive portrait of the fractured Berglund brood captures the zeitgeist of contemporary America.

James Hynes. *Next*. Reagan Arthur. \$23.99 (ISBN 978-0-316-05192-7).

Welcome to the worst day of Kevin Quinn's life as he battles the anxieties of the modern world in steamy Austin, Texas.

Chang-Rae Lee. *The Surrendered*. Riverhead. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-1-59448-976-1).

The complex entangled lives of three people forever scarred by the Korean War are sympathetically portrayed in gorgeous prose.

Karl Marlantes. *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War*. Atlantic Monthly Press. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-8021-1928-5).

An ambitious and idealistic American marine faces the horror, heroism, futility, and pragmatism of war in this visceral portrayal of life in country.

David Mitchell. *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet: A Novel*. Random House. \$26 (ISBN 978-1-4000-6545-5).

A young clerk attempts to establish himself in the artificial and intense world of Dejima, the Dutch trading colony in 1800s Japan.

Paul Murray. *Skippy Dies*. Faber and Faber. \$28 (ISBN 978-0-86547-943-2).

Filled with warmth and humor, this coming-of-age novel set in a Dublin boys schools is a sprawling homage to adolescence, string theory, donuts, and unrequited love.

Tatjana Soli. *The Lotus Eaters*. St. Martin's. \$24.99 (ISBN 978-0-312-61157-6).

The adrenaline high that danger offers infects photojournalist Helen Adams as she documents the war in Vietnam.

Brady Udall. *The Lonely Polygamist: A Novel*. Norton. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-0-393-06262-5).

In this big-hearted novel, Golden Richards and his clan navigate their chaotic lives as each clamors to be noticed.

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## NONFICTION

Ron Chernow. *Washington: A Life*. Penguin. \$40 (ISBN 978-1594202667).

A landmark biography provides insights into the complexities of this founding father's character, and brings him fully to life within the context of his times.

Edmund de Waal. *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$26 (ISBN 978-0374105976).

Blending history, biography, and art, this personal account elegantly traces the fate of a European Jewish family and their collection of 246 netsuke.

Barbara Demick. *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*. Spiegel & Grau. \$26 (ISBN 978-0-385-52390-5).

Chronicling the experiences of six people, this powerful account draws back the curtain on the brutality of life under a totalitarian regime.

Ian Frazier. *Travels in Siberia*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$30 (ISBN 978-0374278724).

Stricken by *Russia love*, a writer sets out to experience all things Siberian and takes us along for the rollicking journey.

Oren Harman. *The Price of Altruism: George Price and the Search for the Origins of Kindness*. Norton. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-0-393-06778-1).

This moving work provides insight into the mind of a tormented genius attempting to understand an elusive aspect of human nature.

Daniel Okrent. *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. Scribner. \$30 (ISBN 978-0-7432-7702-0).

This intoxicating history of the Eighteenth Amendment reveals the surprising relationship between Prohibition and other social movements and explores its lasting impact on American life.

Lynne Olson. *Citizens of London: The Americans Who Stood with Britain in Its Darkest, Finest Hour*. Random House. \$28 (ISBN 978-1-4000-6758-9).

In this compelling portrait three influential individuals persuade a reluctant president to come to the aid of a beleaguered nation in the early days of World War II.

Nathaniel Philbrick. *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn*. Viking. \$30 (ISBN 978-0670021727).

An epic encounter between two iconic individuals is vividly portrayed in fluid, evocative, and decidedly objective prose.

Rebecca Skloot. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Crown. \$26 (ISBN 978-1-4000-5217-2).

A science writer uncovers the fascinating story of an African-American woman's cancer cells harvested for medical research, thereby raising important questions of bioethics.

Patti Smith. *Just Kids*. Ecco. \$27 (ISBN 978-0-06-621131-2).

The poet and musician's endearing memoir about her relationship with Robert Mapplethorpe captures life and art in New York City during the 1960s and '70s.

John Vaillant. *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*. Knopf. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-0-307-26893-8).

Russia's ecological and cultural history serves as the backdrop for this riveting adventure tale of man versus beast.

Isabel Wilkerson. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Random House. \$30 (ISBN 978-0-679-44432-9).

The twentieth century exodus of over 6 million black Americans from the South is sensitively retold through the lives of three who left.

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## POETRY

Tony Hoagland. *Unincorporated Persons in the Late Honda Dynasty: Poems*. Graywolf Press. \$15 (ISBN 978-1-155597-549-4).

These poems capture the absurdities and loneliness of American life using matter of fact language and humor.

C.K. Williams. *Wait: Poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$25 (ISBN 978-0374285913).

A lifetime of experience is distilled into a slim but significant volume of verse by this Pulitzer and National Book Award winning poet.