
Notable Books

The 2008 Selection of Titles

RUSA Notable Books Council

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This 2008 list has been compiled for use by the general reader and by librarians who work with adults. The Notable Books Council, ALA Reference and User Services Association, has selected the titles for their significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge or for the pleasure they can provide to adult readers. Titles were selected from books published from November 2006 through November 2007.

NONFICTION

Ackerman, Diane. *The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story*. Norton, \$24.95 (9780393061727).

Graceful writing reveals the gentle nature of Antonina Zabinski, who hoped to save the Warsaw Zoo and instead was able to hide hundreds of Jews and Resistance fighters from the Nazis.

Angier, Natalie. *The Canon: A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science*. Houghton, \$27 (9780618242953).

This exhilarating introduction presents the fundamentals of science through interviews and clear, witty explanations.

Ayres, Ian. *Super-Crunchers: Why Thinking-by-Numbers Is the New Way to Be Smart*. Bantam, \$25 (9780553805406).

This accessible, thought-provoking work vividly explains how information collection and statistical analysis play a part in every facet of our daily lives.

Godwin, Peter. *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa*. Little, Brown \$24.99 (9780316158947).

This harrowing memoir recounts a journalist's return to his elderly parents in dictator Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, where he uncovers family secrets and witnesses a country falling apart.

Groopman, Jerome. *How Doctors Think*. Houghton, \$26 (9780618610037).

Pharmaceutical companies, managed care, and medical training all contribute to how physicians automatically think. Groopman shows how patients can interact with doctors to avoid misdiagnoses.

Howell, Georgina. *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations*. Farrar, \$27.50 (9780374161620).

The unexpected story of British explorer, adventurer, and diplomat Bell reveals her influence on the shape of modern-day Iraq.

Isaacson, Walter. *Einstein: His Life and Universe*. Simon & Schuster, \$32 (9780743264730).

Newly available documents help create a vivid, three-dimensional portrait of one of the twentieth-century's iconic geniuses.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*. HarperCollins \$26.95 (9780060852559).

This entertaining account of a family's year eating only locally produced food presents both serious and humorous facts and anecdotes about nutrition, agribusiness, and food production.

Margonelli, Lisa. *Oil on the Brain: Adventures from the Pump to the Pipeline*. Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, \$26 (9780385511452).

This eye-opening, highly readable account of a commonplace yet indispensable substance is a complete study of oil's journey from well to consumer.

Weisman, Alan. *The World without Us*. Thomas Dunne/St. Martin's, \$24.95 (9780312347291).

Discover the ruins of humankind on a people-free earth and nature's response in this provocative, scrupulously researched experiment in creative thinking.

FICTION

Bloom, Amy. *Away*. Random, \$23.95 (9781400063567).

This beautifully written novel follows Lillian Leyb, a Russian immigrant who embarks on an arduous westward journey across the U.S. in the 1920s in search of her daughter.

Carlson, Ron. *Five Skies*. Viking, \$23.95 (9780670038503).

As three men build a ramp for a daredevil jump across an Idaho gorge, each exposes tender wounds and experiences significant changes.

Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. HarperCollins, \$26.95 (9780007149827).

What if Israel were relocated to a piece of land leased from Alaska? This genre-blending tour de force explores an outlandish premise with enthusiasm and flair.

Clarke, Brock. *An Arsonist's Guide to Writers' Homes in New England*. Algonquin, \$23.95 (9781565125513).

Released from prison after burning down Emily Dickinson's house, an accidental arsonist reinvents himself in this incendiary send-up of the state of American letters.

Clinch, Jon. *Finn*. Random \$23.95 (9781400065912).

The dark secrets of Huck Finn's brutal father, "Pap," are imagined in this violent tale of life on the Mississippi.

Crace, Jim. *The Pesthouse*. Doubleday/Nan A Talese, \$24.95 (9780385520751).

Pestilence is the backdrop for this surprisingly hopeful tale of Margaret and Franklin, young survivors traveling across po-

stapocalyptic America both to escape and to begin again.

Englander, Nathan. *The Ministry of Special Cases*. Knopf, \$25 (9780375404931).

By turns humorous and tragic, this sometimes surreal novel examines Jewish culture during Argentina's "dirty war" and chronicles the disappearance of one family's son.

Holthe, Tess Uriza. *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes*. Crown, \$23.95 (9780307351852).

Linked by an accidental death and by a train route, these 10 stories offer colorful characters and intense dramas entwined into an exemplary novel-in-stories.

Jones, Lloyd. *Mister Pip*. Dell, \$20 (9780385341066).

As her once familiar life crumbles in the face of civil war, a young island girl is transformed by her reading of *Great Expectations*.

Malouf, David. *The Complete Stories*. Pantheon, \$27.50 (9780375424977).

These intense, powerful stories range from lyrical to violent portrayals of how the Australian landscape changes its inhabitants.

McEwan, Ian. *On Chesil Beach*. Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, \$22 (9780385522404).

Miscommunication and apprehension imperil a new marriage in this powerful story of a young couple honeymooning on England's Chesil Beach in the early 1960s.

Petterson, Per. *Out Stealing Horses*. Graywolf, \$22 (9781555974701).

In this spare and beautiful novel, aging widower Tron Sanders, who lives alone on the Norwegian tundra, contemplates his childhood, which was shaped by World War II, as well as the central tragedy of his youth.

Trevor, William. *Cheating at Canasta*. Viking, \$24.95 (9780670018376).

This sublime collection of melancholy short stories exploring relationships between friends, family, and lovers is the work of a master craftsman at the top of his form.

POETRY

Bosselaar, Laure-Anne. *A New Hunger*. Ausable, \$16 (9781931337328).

Palpable longing and uncommon beauty engender universality in this adroit and haunting collection.

Kennedy, X. J. *In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus: New and Selected Poems, 1955–2007*. Johns Hopkins, paper, \$18.95 (9780801886539).

Presenting the best of a 50-year career, Kennedy proves that poetry with meter and rhyme is still exciting and alive.