
Notable Books

The 2012 Selection of Titles

RUSA Notable Books Council

Notable Books Council contributing members: Nonny Schlotzhauer, Penn State University, chair; Terry Beck, Sno-Isle Libraries; Paul Cammarata, University of South Carolina; Sharon Castleberry, DeSoto Public Library; Julie Elliott, Indiana University South Bend; Bill Kelly, Cuyahoga County Public Library; Elizabeth Olesh, Nassau Library System; Katharine Phenix, Rangeview Library District; Camina Raphael, Westbury Memorial Public Library; Sara Taffae; Valerie Morgan Taylor, Great Falls Library; and Brooke Watkins, New York Public Library.

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 2012 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 about twenty-five 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.

FICTION

Banks, Russell. *Lost Memory of Skin*. Ecco. (ISBN: 978-0-06-185763-8).

A surprisingly sympathetic exploration of the lives and treatment of sex offenders and how this reflects on our society.

Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. Knopf. (ISBN: 978-0-307-95712-2).

A sixty-something retiree living near London searches through his memories to discern what role, if any, he may have played in a decades-old tragedy.

deWitt, Patrick. *The Sisters Brothers*. Ecco. (ISBN: 978-0-06-204126-5).

A darkly comic and quixotic quest about two brothers whose divergent world views are presented in sparkling prose and originality.

Goldman, Francisco. *Say Her Name*. Grove. (ISBN: 978-0-8021-1981-0).

Poetic novelization of the author's struggle to cope with his young wife's accidental death.

Harbach, Chad. *The Art of Fielding*. Little, Brown. (ISBN: 978-0-316-12669-4).

One man's failure to attain perfection on the baseball field reveals the pain and beauty that life offers in this psychologically astute novel.

FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

MacLeod, Alexander. *Light Lifting*. Biblioasis. (ISBN: 978-1-897231-94-4).

Seven fearless short stories explore the limits of physical and emotional endurance in muscular prose.

Obreht, Téa. *The Tiger's Wife*. Random House. (ISBN: 978-0-385-34383-1).

After the death of her beloved grandfather, a young doctor navigates family history, folklore, and love across ethnic barriers in a war-torn country.

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Cat's Table*. Knopf. (ISBN: 978-0-307-70011-7).

An adventurous twenty-one-day ocean voyage filled with a rich assortment of characters and escapades resonates through a boy's life on his way to a new life.

Phillips, Arthur. *The Tragedy of Arthur*. Random House. (ISBN: 978-1-4000-6647-6).

In an adulthood marred by family dysfunction, an author who dislikes Shakespeare reluctantly finds himself in possession of the Bard's lost gem. Or does he?

Russell, Karen. *Swamplandia!* Knopf. (ISBN: 978-0-307-26399-5).

An inventive story set in an alligator theme-park navigates boundaries between childhood and adulthood, imagination and reality, in an American landscape both familiar and surreal.

Torres, Justin. *We the Animals*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (ISBN: 978-0-547-57672-5).

Searing portrait of a troubled, mixed-race, working class family centers on the youngest son as he struggles to find his identity amid affection and abuse.

Trevor, William. *Selected Stories*. Viking. (ISBN: 978-0-670-02206-9).

These finely sculpted and timeless stories provide a greater appreciation for finding beauty in the minutiae of daily life.

NONFICTION

Adams, Mark. *Right Turn at Machu Picchu: Rediscovering the Lost City One Step at a Time*. Dutton. (ISBN: 978-0-525-95224-4).

In this humorous travelogue, the author sprinkles historical anecdote with investigative reporting as he retraces the steps of early explorers into ancient Peru.

Bartók, Mira. *The Memory Palace*. Free Press. (ISBN: 978-1-4391-8331-1).

Beautifully wrought memoir chronicles the seventeen-year estrangement of the author and her homeless, schizophrenic

mother, and the painful reunion that brings them together.

Gleick, James. *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. Knopf. (ISBN: 978-0-3754-2372-7).

This comprehensive study, a melodious interplay between science and literature, documents the transmission of human knowledge from the talking drums to the Internet.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. Norton. (ISBN: 978-0-3930-6447-6)

In this meditation on the power of literature, a medieval book hunter's serendipitous discovery of an ancient prose poem provides a theoretical bridge to the Renaissance.

Hillenbrand, Laura. *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*. Random House. (ISBN: 978-1-4000-6416-8).

An Olympic runner's physical and inner-strength is tested by the experience and aftermath of a plane crash, forty-two days at sea, and Japanese imprisonment.

Hitchens, Christopher. *Arguably: Essays*. Twelve. (ISBN: 978-1-4555-0277-6).

Polymath and public intellectual displays his considerable range and biting wit in these thoughtful, incisive pieces that provoke and challenge.

Homans, Jennifer. *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. Random House. (ISBN: 978-1-4000-6060-3).

This elegant, authoritative work traces the evolution of classical dance from the sixteenth century to today, highlighting social and cultural dimensions of this traditional art form.

Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Strauss, Giroux. (ISBN: 978-0-374-27563-1).

This work provides an entertaining look at the complexities and oddities that characterize our mental processes from the only psychologist ever to have won the Nobel Prize for Economics.

Marable, Manning. *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. Viking. (ISBN: 978-0-670-02220-5).

This is a definitive work on his life and transformation from petty thief to charismatic leader during the turbulent civil rights era.

Millard, Candace. *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine, and the Murder of a President*. Doubleday. (ISBN: 978-0-385-52626-5)

An era of great corruption and change in U.S. history is illuminated through the tragic story of two men—one destined for greatness, the other a madman.

Mukherjee, Siddhartha. *Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*. Scribner. (ISBN: 978-1-4391-0795-9).

The history of these diseases and their treatment is examined through the stories of those seeking to discover a cure and the individuals affected.

Reitman, Janet. *Inside Scientology: The Story of America's Most Secretive Religion*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (ISBN: 978-0-618-88302-8).

An investigation of the origins, personalities, and controversies of this uniquely American religious movement.

POETRY

Rimbaud, Arthur. *Illuminations*. Translated by John Ashbery. Norton. (ISBN: 978-0-393-07635-6).

A vigorous new translation of the French prodigy's last poems as rendered by one of America's finest contemporary poets.

Bartlett, Jennifer, Sheila Black, and Michael Northen. *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*. Cinco Puntos. (ISBN: 978-1-935955-05-4).

A collection of poems and essays provides insight into the lives of the estimated fifty million Americans with disabilities.