
Notable Books

The 2009 Selection of Titles

RUSA Notable Books Council

Notable Books, 2009, committee

members: Patricia L. Gregory, chair, Saint Louis University; Alicia Ahlvers, vice chair, Kansas City Public Library; Susie Brown, Shaker Heights Public Library; A. Issac Pulver, Saratoga Springs Public Library; Andrea Slonosky, Sandra Ballasch, University of Iowa Libraries; Malynda Dalton, Texas A&M International University; Julie Elliott, Indiana University South Bend; Nancy Pearl; Nonny Schlotzhauer, The Pennsylvania State University; Lise Snyder, UCLA College Library; Valerie Morgan Taylor, Lewisville Community Library; and Booklist consultant Brad Hooper.

This list has been compiled for use by the general reader and by librarians who work with adults. RUSA's Notable Books Council has selected the titles for their significant contributions to the expansion of knowledge or for the pleasure they can provide to adult readers. Titles were selected from books published from November 2007 through November 2008.

NONFICTION

Steve Coll. *The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century*. Penguin, \$35 (978-1-59420-164-6).

An intimate look at this large, influential Saudi family of which Osama is but one member reveals the complexity of the modern Arab world.

Drew Gilpin Faust. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. Knopf, \$27.95 (978-0-375-40404-7).

A unique explication from many perspectives illuminates the profound social and political consequences of the unprecedented number of soldiers who died during the American Civil War.

Dexter Filkins. *The Forever War*. Knopf, \$25 (978-0-307-26639-2).

Eyewitness reporting of military engagements and civilian life in war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq is visceral yet measured, avoiding simplistic conclusions.

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950*. Norton, \$39.95 (978-0-393-06244-1).

This groundbreaking history follows an early-twentieth-century movement for social justice in the South that evolved into the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Annette Gordon-Reed. *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*. Norton, \$35 (978-0-393-06477-3).

A comprehensive history of a family and their owners, including Thomas Jefferson, reveals the complex nature of slave relations in America.

Mark Harris. *Pictures at a Revolution: Five Movies and the Birth of the New Hollywood*. Penguin, \$27.95 (978-1-59420-152-3).

The 1967 best-picture nominees provide a framework for examining pivotal changes in the film industry reflecting radical shifts in American society.

FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

Tony Horwitz. *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*. Holt, \$27.50 (978-0-8050-7603-5).

What starts as a fact-finding travelogue transforms into a diverting romp through the history and mythology surrounding the early explorers of the Americas.

Jane Mayer. *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals*. Doubleday, \$27.50 (978-0-385-52639-5).

This harrowing account of post–September 11 counterterrorism is an indictment of the Bush administration's endorsement of torture as a legitimate interrogation tool.

Michael Pollan. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. Penguin, \$21.95 (978-1-59420-145-5).

This extended essay considers generations of human experience and research to explicate a simple mantra: Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.

Nick Taylor. *American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work*. Bantam, \$27 (978-0-553-80235-1).

A monumental appraisal of the Works Progress Administration recounts how the program permanently changed U.S. social policies and its physical and cultural landscape.

Tom Vanderbilt. *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says about Us)*. Knopf, \$24.95 (978-0-307-26478-7).

Balancing meticulous research with an approachable style, this captivating and enlightening read lends new insight into a nearly universal activity.

Joan Wickersham. *The Suicide Index: Putting My Father's Death in Order*. Houghton, \$25 (978-0-15-101490-3).

Brave and unflinching in its honesty, this memoir examines the effects of suicide on those left behind.

FICTION

Rabin Alameddine. *The Hakawati*. Knopf, \$25.95 (978-0-307-26679-8).

Interweaving memory and fable, this dazzling epic tale of a modern Lebanese family's vigil for a dying patriarch unveils the magical power of storytelling.

Richard Bausch. *Peace*. Knopf, \$19.95 (978-0-307-26833-4).

This taut, stark novel in which three GIs confront the moral dilemmas of combat renders a powerful meditation on the themes of trust, war, and redemption.

David Benioff. *City of Thieves*. Viking, \$24.95 (978-0-670-01870-3).

In this darkly comedic novel, set during the siege of Leningrad, two young prisoners are sent on an absurd errand by a Russian colonel.

Louise Erdrich. *The Plague of Doves*. HarperCollins, \$25.95 (978-0-06-051512-6).

Ojibwe and white characters narrate a tense, complex story of murder, love, and shared history in a dying North Dakota town.

Rivka Galchen. *Atmospheric Disturbances*. Farrar, \$24 (978-0-374-20011-4).

Love and meteorology converge as Dr. Leo Lieberstein searches for his wife, unaccountably replaced by a simulacrum, or so he believes.

Jhumpa Lahiri. *Unaccustomed Earth*. Knopf, \$25. (978-0-307-26573-9).

These luminous stories give the reader a glimpse of the lives, loves, and malaise of Bengali Americans.

Stephen Millhauser. *Dangerous Laughter: Thirteen Stories*. Knopf, \$24 (978-0-307-26756-6).

These inventive and fantastic stories range in subject from counting fir-tree needles to teenage laughter parties to building a tower to heaven.

Aslam Nadeem. *The Wasted Vigil*. Knopf, \$25 (978-0-307-26842-6).

This haunting, poetic novel weaves a paradoxically beautiful tale of love, loss, hope, and despair in Afghanistan.

Owen Sheers. *Resistance*. Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, \$39 (978-0-385-52210-6).

In this haunting, alternative history, after the men disappear from a remote Welsh village, the women variously respond to invading German soldiers.

Elizabeth Strout. *Olive Kitteridge*. Random, \$25 (978-1-4000-6208-9).

Interlinked stories of life in a small coastal town focus on retired schoolteacher Olive Kitteridge's difficult nature, ultimately revealing her humanity despite her imperfections.

Jeff Talarigo. *The Ginseng Hunter*. Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, \$21.95 (978-0-385-51739-3).

Refugees fleeing political oppression and famine disrupt a Chinese man's solitude in this spare, tender portrait of life on the North Korean border.

POETRY

Edward Hirsch. *Special Orders*. Knopf, \$25 (978-0-307-26681-1).

An unflinchingly honest and unsentimental examination of a man's lifetime of disappointment strikes an unexpectedly hopeful note in this slim volume of finely wrought poems.

James Tate. *The Ghost Soldiers*. Ecco, \$22 (978-0-06-143694-9).

The varied narrators in these one hundred poems relate tales of, among others, alien kidnapers, navels, and houseflies, all delightfully off-kilter and frequently chuckleworthy.

Outstanding Reference Sources

The 2009 Selection of Titles

RUSA CODES Reference Sources Committee

RUSA CODES Reference Sources Committee 2008-09 members:

Theresa Mudrock, chair, University of Washington; Kathleen Collins, University of Washington; Danise Hoover, Hunter College; Deborah Katz, Washington University; Peggy Keeran, University of Denver; Jacalyn Kremer, Fairfield University; Stella Terrazas, Teton County Library; and Patrick Wall, University City Public Library.

The 2009 list of Outstanding Reference Sources for small and medium-sized libraries has been announced by RUSA. The titles, selected by the RUSA Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES) Reference Sources Committee, represent high-quality reference works that are suitable for small and medium-sized libraries.

THE SELECTIONS FOR 2009

New Encyclopedia of Orchids: 1500 Species in Cultivation. Isobyl la Croix. Timber Pr., 2008 (978-0-88192-876-1). \$59.95

African American National Biography. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham. 8 vols. Oxford Univ. Pr., 2008 (978-0-19-516019-2). \$995

Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales. Ed. Donald Haase. 3 vols. Greenwood, 2008 (978-0-313-33441-2). \$299.95

Climate Change: In Context. Ed. Brenda Wilmoth Lerner and K. Lee Lerner. 2 vols. Gale Cengage, 2008 (978-1-4144-3614-2). \$257

Gale Encyclopedia of Diets: A Guide to Health and Nutrition. Ed. Jacqueline L. Longe. Gale Cengage, 2008 (978-1-414-42991-5). \$436

Encyclopedia of Taoism. Ed. Fabrizio Pregadio. 2 vols. Routledge, 2008 (978-0-7007-1200-7). \$305

Encyclopedia of Education Law. Ed. Charles J. Russo. 2 vols. Sage, 2008 (978-1-4129-4079-5). \$325

Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social and Military History. Ed. Spencer C. Tucker. 4 vols. ABC-CLIO, 2008 (978-1-85109-841-5). \$395

Encyclopedia of the First Amendment. Ed. John R. Vile, David L. Hudson Jr. and David Schultz. 2 vols. CQ Pr., 2009 (978-0-87289-311-5). \$275

Books and Beyond: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of New American Reading. Ed. Kenneth Womack. 4 vols. Greenwood, 2008 (978-0-313-33738-3). \$399.95

The Reading List 2009

The RUSA CODES Reading List Council

RUSA CODES Reading List Council
2008-09 members: Neal Wyatt, chair, Richmond, Virginia; Joyce Saricks, vice chair, Downers Grove, Illinois; Jennifer Baker, The Seattle Public Library; Arlene Griffin, LSSI Library North Jackson Madison County Library; Mirja Johanson, Perrot Memorial Library; Lucy Lockley, St. Charles City–County Library District; Robert Renwick, Brooklyn Public Library; Jacqueline Sasaki, Ann Arbor District Library; Sharron Smith, Kitchener Public Library; Tapley Trudell, San Antonio Public Library; and Alan Ziebarth, Chicago Public Library.

The Reading List annually recognizes the best books in eight genres: adrenaline (which includes suspense, thriller, and adventure), fantasy, historical fiction, horror, mystery, romance, science fiction, and women's fiction. This year's list includes novels that will please die-hard fans as well as introduce new readers to the pleasures of genre fiction.

ADRENALINE

C. J. Box. *Blue Heaven*. St. Martin's Minotaur, 2008 (978-0-312-36570-7). \$24.95

In this relentlessly paced story, two children witness a murder, elude crooked ex-cops, and find refuge with a taciturn rancher. The evocative landscape and emotional depth, along with the engaging characters and provocative story line, combine to create an unforgettable novel.

Readers may also enjoy Ridley Pearson's *Killer Weekend*, Lee Child's *Nothing to Lose*, and Elmore Leonard's *Hombre*.

FANTASY

Kim Wilkins. *The Veil of Gold*. Tor, 2008 (978-0-7653-2006-3). \$25.95

The discovery of a golden bear in the walls of a derelict St. Petersburg bath house lifts the veil between the real world and that of fairy tales. Treachery is rampant and death is ever-present: Stories aren't safe, and love can't rescue anyone—or can it?

Readers may also enjoy John Connolly's *The Book of Lost Things*, Orson Scott Card's *Enchantment*, and Charles de Lint's *Forests of the Heart*.

HISTORICAL FICTION

Jeff Shaara. *The Steel Wave: A Novel of World War II*. Ballantine, 2008 (978-0-345-46142-1). \$22.40

In this riveting tale of D-day and its aftermath, Shaara closely follows events through the lives of common soldiers and generals, Allies and Axis alike. A journalistic style underscores the drama of events, and the engaging warts-and-all portrayals add to the immediacy of the novel.

Readers may also enjoy Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe series, Rick Atkinson's *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942–1943*, and Steven Pressfield's *Killing Rommel*.

HORROR

Toby Barlow. *Sharp Teeth*. Harper, 2008 (978-0-06-143022-0). \$22.95

The insiders' perspective and lyrical language of this haunting free-verse novel offer a sympathetic glimpse into the lives of urban werewolves, a nightmarish noir world where violence and heartbreak go hand in hand.

Readers may also enjoy Kelley Armstrong's *Bitten*, Nicholas Pekear's *The Wolfman*, and Charlie Huston's Joe Pitt series.

MYSTERY

David Hewson. *The Garden of Evil*. Delacorte, 2008 (978-0-385-33957-5). \$24

In contemporary Rome, an unknown lascivious painting by Caravaggio, grisly murders, and a heart-stopping chase mark series detective Nic Costa's return. The perfidious villains can only be outwitted by inventive police work and an unexpected ally in this masterfully crafted puzzler.

Readers may also enjoy Arturo Perez-Reverte's *The Flanders Panel*, Donna Leon's *Dressed for Death*, and Jonathan Santlofer's *The Death Artist*.

ROMANCE

Joanna Bourne. *The Spymaster's Lady*. Berkley, 2008 (978-0-425-21960-7). \$7.99

Take a British spymaster and a resourceful French agent, spice with clever banter, toss in a refreshing and unexpected plot, add a heaping measure of sexual chemistry, and the

result is an irresistible read with Napoleon's ambitions for England hanging in the balance.

Readers may also enjoy Amanda Quick's *Scandal*, Julia Quinn's *Its in His Kiss*, and Andrea Pickens' *Seduced by a Spy*.

SCIENCE FICTION

George R. R. Martin, Gardner Dozois, and Daniel Abraham. *Hunter's Run*. Eos, 2008 (978-0-06-137329-9). \$25.95

On a dangerous backwater planet, a criminal outcast stumbles across an alien race in hiding in this relentless and gritty adventure. Forced into a life-threatening hunt, he is irrevocably changed and learns what it means to be truly human.

Readers may also enjoy Robert Silverberg's *Downward to the Earth*, Barry B. Longyear's *Enemy Mine*, and Richard K. Morgan's *Thirteen*.

WOMEN'S FICTION

Kate Maloy. *Every Last Cuckoo*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008 (978-1-56512-541-4). \$22.95

Set against the richly textured landscape of rural Vermont, Maloy's optimistic and heartwarming novel chronicles one woman's experience of widowhood as she remembers the pains and pleasures of her long marriage and moves into a new phase of her life.

Readers may also enjoy Stephanie Kallos's *Broken for You*, Helen Humphreys' *The Lost Garden*, and Elizabeth Berg's *The Year of Pleasures*.

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References

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2. James Kanter and Andrew C. Revkin, "Scientists Detail Climate Changes, Poles to Tropics," *New York Times*, Apr. 7, 2007, A1, ProQuest (accessed Mar. 17, 2008).
3. Gregg Easterbrook, "Finally Feeling the Heat," *New York Times*, May 24, 2006, A27, ProQuest (accessed Mar. 17, 2008).