

Falmouth Academy Faculty and Staff

2009-10

GUIDE FOR THE

Casual Bookworm

Reading is to the Mind, what Exercise is to the Body.

Sir Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, No. 17, 1710

•Alison Ament (science)

Team of Rivals, Doris Kearns Goodwin

This is a fine-scale history of Abraham Lincoln's political rise, government formation, and decision making during the Civil War, with close attention to the personalities of the men and women who opposed and helped him. I came away with a huge appreciation for Lincoln's brilliance in building acceptance of his ideas through thoughtful understanding of his rivals' point of view. The length of the book (754 pages in paperback) seems daunting, but I found every single sentence fascinating.

[Outstanding! -L. Melillo] [Perfect to read on the Kindle since that avoids the weight and bulk. -J.C. Taylor] [I listened to this on tape on a long car ride. It was great. -R. Slocum] [Goodwin makes sure the reader keeps all the characters straight. -T. Clark]

Teacher Man, Frank McCourt

This is a memoir about McCourt's 30-year teaching career in the New York City schools. He is an extraordinary storyteller and can make the reader laugh out loud as he describes the attitude and behavior of his high school English students and some of his unusual techniques for capturing their attention. He can also make the reader feel the pain as he describes the problems in his first marriage and refers to his poverty-stricken childhood in Ireland (more fully told in *Angela's Ashes*) and to the dangers of working on the New York City docks (more fully told in *Tis*). It added to my pleasure to listen to this book in audio form read by the author.

[I loved this, but Angela's Ashes is better. -L. Melillo]

Out Stealing Horses, Per Petterson

This was by far and away my favorite fiction book of the year. Petterson is Norwegian, the original language

of the book, and the story takes place in Norway over three time periods. The focus is on a summer in the countryside for 15-year-old Trond and his father as seen in the memory of 67-year-old Trond, who has chosen to retire to another rural hamlet. The third time period is during World War II, when Trond is a very young boy and his father is secretly serving in the Resistance, carrying information from occupied Norway into Sweden. Most of all I enjoyed the subtle writing style with shifts among the time periods and many parallel occurrences and images. For example, a pair of horses first appears in a boyhood (mis)adventure as Trond and a friend "steal" a ride on them, and later in a well-planned trail ride by Trond and his father. "Out stealing horses" is also a code among members of the Resistance. This is a coming of age novel with many other themes to follow and wonder about, as Petterson allows for the reader's imagination and does not tell all. *[See also E. Clark-ed.]*

•Pusit Atthaoraek (buildings and grounds)

Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992, Jane Hamilton-Merritt

Shooting at the Moon: The Story of America's Clandestine War in Laos, Roger Warner

A fighter jet roars over my head—a flashback to the '70s. As a young boy in Northern Thailand, it was a thrill to hear the big boom from jets taking off. I was told there was a war somewhere. In the mid-'80s I was working at a UNHCR refugee camp on the Thai-Lao border with victims of the war that I had heard about as a boy. I have been curious to find out more about what was going on across the border at that time.

These books are well written. They give you a history of Laos and its peoples, the facts, the politics, and the stories behind the U.S. government's policies on South-

At Falmouth Academy, we have always had reading lists for our students and have encouraged them to turn off their TVs and computer games and instead read or have conversations, as they and we do at FA. Several years ago, we decided to condense some of our faculty-room conversations and compile this informal reading list for adults. We answered the question we ask prospective students: "What have you read or reread this year that you particularly liked?" Here, then, are our answers to that question, along with comments by colleagues. We welcome comments to: thegam@falmouthacademy.org ~ Elenita Muñiz, ed.

east Asian countries, the role of the CIA and USAID during the Cold War against Communists from Russia and China. There was a secret war in Laos. We only knew about Vietnam's war, but what about Laos? The U.S. military used Thailand as an air base, training camp, supply base, and military hospital. The military joint task force has been classified for over 20 years.

I read these books because I never understood why the U.S. government spent so much time, money, and, of course, lives in this region and why it was a secret! After reading and re-reading the books, I learned that it was all about business, dirty business. At the end of the war in 1975, the Communists took over Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Thailand opened its border to Indochinese refugees, who continue to enter the country even today. At this moment, there are 7,000 Hmong refugees from Laos still remaining in refugee camps in Northern Thailand waiting to be reunited with their family members, most of whom are living in the U.S.

[In 9th grade, we talked a lot about Laos and the war there. By the time I was a senior, the first of my friends was off to Vietnam and we heard no more about Laos. I always wondered what happened to that war. Now I can find out. -E. Muñiz]

• Clare Beams (English)

The Children's Hospital, Chris Adrian

This was probably my favorite of the books I read this summer, and one of the most ambitious books I've read in recent years. It's a sprawling novel that re-envisioned the Noah's Ark story: an apocalyptic flood destroys the entire world except for a single hospital and the people inside it, and they're left to deal with the aftermath of the end of the world. I found their story dark, moving, and unexpectedly funny by turns. There's no shortage of oddities here—angels, supernatural powers, cartoonish minor characters, etc.—but I was more than happy to wade through the weirdness, since it seemed like an outgrowth of Adrian's incredibly rich imagination. This book's imperfections come from the fact that it takes on so much, I think, and ultimately books with this kind of scope are the ones I love most.

Olive Kitteridge, Elizabeth Strout

This story collection won the Pulitzer Prize this year, and it's very impressive. Strout, like Chris Adrian, is an ambitious writer with big things to say, but she grounds those things in small moments: mostly the interactions between family members and the way misunderstanding can flourish there. The common threads that link these stories are their setting—the characters all live in the tiny

town of Crosby, Maine—and the appearance in each of the title character, though sometimes she's almost peripheral. Strout's characters are beautifully drawn, Olive Kitteridge herself in particular; she's a cantankerous former teacher who fiercely loves her family and yet often finds herself inadvertently hurting them or being hurt by them. I also admired the subtlety of these stories, which often seem to work by tracing two different story lines that intertwine and shed light on one another. A quietly affecting book.

[I think E. Strout is a good writer—Clare's right up there with her. -T. Clark] [See also M. Hough-ed.]

• Robert Bordeleau (business manager)

The Remorseful Day, Colin Dexter

After spending the better part of summer laboring over a tome by Anthony Trollope I was determined my next selection would be short, light and frothy. Luckily, I remembered one of my acquisitions at this year's Falmouth Library Book Sale. For the sum of 25¢, I purchased Colin Dexter's final Detective Morse mystery novel: *The Remorseful Day*. Unfortunately for his fans, Mr. Dexter, after 13 novels, decided to quit writing even though he seemed to be at the top of his game.

In this novel Detective Morse is assigned the year-old murder case of Nurse Yvonne Harrison. We learn the deceased had a history of extramarital affairs and was no stranger to unconventional sexual encounters. The list of former acquaintances along with her philandering husband provides Morse with an abundance of suspects. The author is very clever at weaving hints as to a relationship between Morse and Yvonne Harrison. So we now have two mysteries.

In the course of his investigation Detective Morse ricochets from one suspect to another, all the while convinced his rational and Socratic investigative skills have identified the culprit. Morse's ability to side-step his erroneous conclusions without guilt is admirable. Whether it is his audacity to correct syntax and punctuation errors of colleagues and superiors or the verbal sparring he engages in with women, both young and old, during the course of his investigations, our irascible curmudgeon demonstrates a unique personality and talent for ferreting out the murderer.

The pleasure in reading a Detective Morse mystery novel is not so much sifting through the clues for the culprit, as from the number of chuckles one gets from seeing how Morse influences others through his pompous confidence and rapier wit. For readers who prefer to have their mystery detective heroes with everyday garden variety foibles, a Detective Morse novel should fit the

bill nicely, And for those who are only acquainted with Detective Morse from the PBS television series, the twinkle in Morse's blue eyes is a lot brighter in paperback.

• **Deborah Bradley (French)**

Ahab's Wife, Sena Jeter Naslund

This epic novel, inspired by a brief reference in *Moby Dick* where Captain Ahab speaks longingly of his young wife left on Nantucket, accompanied me on my journeys—historical, geographical and spiritual—this past summer. The story of Una Spencer touches on many issues of the day, including women's identity and role in society, slavery, and religion. I have to confess to having found Melville's venerable hero considerably more interesting as seen through the eyes and heart of this fictitious wife.

The Birth of Venus, Sarah Dunant

Reading this historical novel set in turn-of-the-15th century Florence is to plunge into one of the central character's father's vats of rich Renaissance dyes, or to be wrapped in a luxurious length of the fine cloth in which he traded. The story envelops the reader in the religious controversies that marked the end of the 15th century, when a particularly austere stream of Christian thought threatened to unleash hellish fires on the resplendent celebration of God's glory that was Florentine art. The writing is as rich as the cloth and the frescoes it depicts, as well as the passions that it relates.

[Very atmospheric. I really enjoyed this. -L. Melillo]
[I read this book while in Florence which made it just that much more enjoyable and magical to read! -C. Pingal]

Twilight, Stephanie Myer

I'm not sure I want this in the Bookworm, but yes, I read *Twilight*. [My husband Al read all four novels in the "quartet"!] Call it Anthropology 101 for a secondary school teacher. I can think of one compelling reason to recommend this book to teenage girls: it makes it alluringly clear that a relationship can be romantic, even passionate, and very sensual without jumping into the bed or the bushes. OK. Now why not to recommend it. The central character is appallingly blah. She has no interests, no talent, no life: nothing but a vampire boyfriend who is everything to her. Oh yes, and a dilapidated truck. She is a terrible role model. I feel blessed to spend my days among adolescent girls, and boys, whose lives and minds are full and interesting, whether or not they are involved in "relationships" and whether or not they are yet able to value the integrity of their identity as individuals.

Entre les Murs, François Bégaudeau

The film *Entre les Murs*, English title *The Class*, won a *Palme d'Or* at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival. The book consists of classroom dialogue, much of which made its way more or less verbatim into the film. Set in a middle-school classroom in a disadvantaged immigrant neighborhood in Paris, and acted by M. Bégaudeau, his students and his colleagues, the film is to my eye less a documentary than a sort of "reality show." I don't think Bégaudeau is evil, or even ill-intended. He wants to help these kids survive, and he knows that, without a reasonable command of the language he teaches, the language of the country in which this incredibly diverse hodge-podge of kids find themselves, they won't. I'm not sure whether the intention of the book/film is to evoke the sympathy of the reader or viewer for the unlucky teachers who find themselves assigned to such schools. If this is Bégaudeau's intention, he has failed with me, for my reaction is to be horrified by the degree to which the teachers' attitudes and behavior not only mirror but surely must also form the patterns of insolence, incompetence, and low self-esteem that pervade their classrooms. I came away from both the film and the book with heightened awareness of the power of role modeling, for better or worse. I'm not sure that I recommend either reading the book, which is very repetitious, or seeing the movie, which is also somewhat tedious. But both are thought-provoking and remind me of the power a teacher with faith in his or her students—or without it—wields in their young lives.

[I, too, found the film thought-provoking. I have seen first-hand (in Aulney-sous-Bois) what these teachers and students are up against. -B. Parsons] *[I was in France when the movie came out there. It sparked a lot of discussions throughout the entire country. It's worth seeing. -P. Ehrenbrink]*

• **Maryann Bremser (physical fitness)**

Loving Frank, Nancy Horan

This book captures your attention while combining historical events, passion, and morality. It is a story of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his love, Mamah Berthwick Cheney. The author found letters and journals of Mamah's and is able to feel and relate Mamah's struggles at the turn of the century as she explores gender roles and marriage. A story of loving someone and the effect it has on the destiny of your life. This is a wonderful novel with a startling ending. It's hard to believe it's Horan's first novel. *[See also M. Hough-ed.]*

• **Barbara Campbell (development)**

Firefly Lane, Kristin Hannah

A huge tear-jerker for best friends everywhere!

The Lost Symbol, Dan Brown

This book was written as if it should race right on to its reincarnation as a screenplay. While just as interesting as its siblings, *The DaVinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*, *The Lost Symbol* was really a cacophony of action scenes. Each thought and clue was played out visually with little opportunity for the reader to become part of the story. Brown gives us an intense history of freemasonry from Ancient Egypt to Isaac Newton to George Washington to modern-day diplomats. The secrets and codes so prevalent in the degrees of being a mason weave themselves through the narrative and, in fact, are the main characters in this story. It was a little exhausting trying to assimilate the current clues before the book took off again on another path. In fact, I had to reread the ending to understand fully what our hero Robert Langdon had discovered for himself. Don't get me wrong – this is a great read, a good story if you have time to think about it.

• **Victoria Centurino (technology, math)**

Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy: An Assembly Such as This, Duty and Desire, These Three Remain, Pamela Aidan

The three books span the events of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, but relay them from Darcy's perspective. All the major players reprise their famous roles: the Bennett family, the Bingleys, the Darcys, and new characters add spice to the story. Darcy's long-suffering valet, Fletcher, is my favorite new character and plays a large role in the second book. The books do not simply retell *P&P*. Darcy has a separate life which includes spending time with his sister, Georgiana, and his cousin, attending house parties, visiting his clubs, and coming to terms with his feelings for Elizabeth Bennett. Aidan has a knack for penning overwrought Regency prose, and her version of the doings of Elizabeth and Darcy and all the rest will more than satisfy Austen fans.

[Vicki, discovering my passion for the goddess Jane Austen, lent me the first of Aidan's books. Even though I proceeded to find and buy the next two books, and read all three in one weekend, halfway through the first book I discovered that no one can write the story of Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett like Jane Austen. No one ever will. However, the books were a nice distraction from the wilds of Botswana and the bitter taste of bush tea, where Alexander McCall Smith's books had taken me!—C. Pingal, qv.]

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem! and *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith

Take all of the beloved things about *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, toss in zombies and sea monsters to create battle action sequences, and mix thoroughly. They are bizarre, but fun to read, and only highlight the power of Austen's pen.

The Gold Coast and *The Gate House*, Nelson DeMille

I howled with laughter while reading *Gold Coast*, less so while reading its sequel, *The Gate House*. Jay Gatsby's life pales in comparison. When a Mafia don moves into the mansion next door to jaded Wall Street attorney John Sutter, his life on posh, tony Long Island becomes almost surreal. The reader may find most of the characters self-centered and despicable, but probably will not be able to put the book down. *Gate House* continues the story a decade later and is not quite as good, but still deserves a read.

[The Gold Coast may be the best trashy novel of all time.—J. Taylor]

The Thirteenth Tale, Diane Satterfield

If you like creepy stories set in old creepy Yorkshire houses with governesses, unhappy marriages, sets of twins, and ghosts, this book will satisfy. I was reminded of my favorite Brontë heroines when reading it and could not put it down.

Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen, Julie Powell

I enjoyed reading this light fare for the hungry reader. Because this was a blog before it was a book, it is rather self-indulgent, but fun and feisty most of the time and a page-turner. (The movie is better, mainly because Meryl Streep is so fabulous as Julia Child.)

[I agree, the movie is much better than the book, as Ms. Julie was a bit too self-indulgent for my taste.—P. Ehbrenbrink]

• **Eleanor Clark (English)**

Out Stealing Horses, Per Petterson

While I haven't picked up the book in months, I find myself thinking about Petterson's writing with some frequency. The images of two boys climbing an isolated spruce to find a goldcrest's nest, of a woman standing in a pale blue dress, of two men struggling on top of a log pile—all are haunting pictures that startle me still with their simple intensity. The novel is set in a remote part

of Norway and takes us back and forth from present to past, from the current life of the main character, Trond, and his attempt to find a peaceful existence, to 1948 and a summer with his beloved father, who was quietly getting set to leave Trond and the rest of his family. The movement in and out of memory is powerful, marked by Trond's efforts to make sense of his experience and to make sense of his father's words, "You decide for yourself when it will hurt." I plan to read this book again.

[After Eleanor recommended this to me, I recommended it to my book club. It was unanimously deemed worth-while.—S. Moffat] [Beautiful, haunting book. Loved it!—B. Parsons] [See also A. Ament—ed.]

• **Tucker Clark (assistant to headmaster)**

An Equal Music, Vikram Seth

A few pages into this novel, I paused for an instant because I wanted to call Olivann Hobbie immediately and tell her she HAD to read it. Then, I remembered: "Of course, Olivann gave it to me!" I thank her for handing me this beautifully written story of music and passion, music and love, music and life and the emotional and professional bonds and stresses peculiar to a quartet. I was with the quartet in rehearsals and in parks, halls, palazzos and churches in London, Venice, and Vienna.

[This book gives one lots to think about. I reread the ending and am still thinking.—A. Ament] [Me, too. I wasn't crazy about the ending but haven't a suggestion.—T. Clark]

A Voyage Long and Strange, Tony Horwitz

A Pulitzer Prize winner, Horwitz has done a tremendous amount of research but his tales of the early American visitors and settlers have the same fresh insight and humor as his on-the-spot research adventures. He weaves them together with those of the Vikings, conquistadors, lost colonists, and other adventurers in early America (the book's subtitle). When he called to see if he could meet with a group of Floridians who gathered to reenact the conquistadors—"metal clad Spaniards who slaughtered thousands of Indians"—he was invited to join them.

"What should I bring?" I asked.

"A nasty attitude," Tim said.

This is a delight and will remind you of good articles, including his, in *The New Yorker*.

[Aside from learning some new, interesting details about American exploration, I laughed aloud many times reading about the author's adventures. Two of his wife Geraldine Brooks' books, March and Year of Wonders, were great favorites of our book club.—J. Taylor] [Yes, the "conquistadors" incident is especially delightful, but the whole book is a

pleasure-informative and surprising.—L. Melillo]

[I love Horwitz's idea of creating a history of this period—one often over-simplified and misrepresented—based on his many adventures and interviews. Whether "enjoying" a sweat with the Micmac in Newfoundland or getting stuck in "the ooze" of the Pamunkey River near Jamestown, he entertains and invites the reader to imagine other lives and times.—J. Swanbeck]

The Secret Scripture, Sebastian Barry

The story is interesting enough: an almost-100-year-old woman lives in an asylum in Ireland where she encounters a 65-year-old psychiatrist who takes a particular interest in her and her reasons for being there. We read about her life and his life and the tragedy of Irish politics. But the best things about the book are the words and the way that Barry uses language, especially metaphors.

Fifty Russian Winters: An American Woman's Life in the Soviet Union, Margaret Wettlin

It took me several days to open this memoir after Patrice Buxton left it on my desk. But when I did, I sat down and lost myself in it. One of many American liberals intrigued by the Soviet Union and Soviet socialism in the early 1930s, the author went to Moscow for two months and hoped she could stay a year. Her visit turned into her life after she met and married a Russian stage director, who was an idealist and a member of the intelligentsia. Wettlin describes the good, the bad, the very ugly. She was luckier than many of their friends: she suffered through Russia in World War II and Stalin's purges but lived to write compellingly about them.

• **Peter Conzett [science]**

After all the questions that Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* left unanswered, I spent some time this year looking at various angles of our food choices. There are few things more fundamental to our lives than what we eat and much depends on how we choose to allocate our purchasing power.

Local Eating: Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, Barbara Kingsolver

Kingsolver's book is the story of her family's year eating local food, with the goal of eating only food sourced within 100 miles. (Goodbye, bananas!) The book is generally uplifting as she argues that a local food investment requires more care in thinking about food, a process that yields a better and deeper food experience. Her take is that it's better for the planet, the farmers, the

plants, the genetics, and for you. [Yes!– L. Melillo]

Healthy Eating: In Defense of Food, Michael Pollan

Pollan makes a clear and compelling argument for what constitutes healthy eating. His basic conclusion is to eat only food that your great-grandparents would recognize. He is at war with the micro-managing of nutrients (think of all those box labels) that he calls “nutritionalism.” Pollan thinks it is unclear that healthy eating can be built up by studying labels listing nutrients that science presently takes to be important. It would be far better to eat whole foods. Of the three books listed here, this is the one that made the largest difference in my own eating habits.

Ethical Eating: The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter, Peter Singer and Jim Mason

Singer and Mason work hard to make it clear what ethical issues are at stake with any food, and the scope of foods they discuss is truly staggering. They try hard to put the information forward and leave the choosing to the reader. They discuss environmental consequences as well as issues surrounding animal cruelty. They discuss, for instance, whether fish can feel pain and the ground-water implications of various growing strategies.

• **Mike Earley (admissions)**

Etoile Errante (Wandering Star), J.M.G. LeClézio

The story begins with a young Jewish girl living in a mountain village near Nice during the occupation. When the Germans arrive to replace the Italian army, Esther (or Helene as she is called, for fairly obvious reasons) and her mother flee across the mountains to Italy and eventually on to take part in the founding of Jerusalem. On her way to Jerusalem, she crosses paths with a young Palestinian refugee, and we watch as a second young woman courageously confronts violence and exile. This is such a beautifully written book that you can read a few pages immersed in the language and realize you haven't been paying attention to the plot. It reminded me a bit of *Corelli's Mandolin*. My favorite book of the past few years.

• **Petra Ehrenbrink (German)**

It all started with a TV program. Staying at a hotel while traveling, I stumbled upon an episode of the fantasy series “Legend of the Seeker.” I knew I wouldn't be able to see any following episodes but was intrigued enough to find out what would happen to the characters. So I paid close attention to the credits that led me to **Terry Goodkind's *Sword of Truth*** series. Eleven volumes

and some 7,000 (!) pages later, I have my answer.

Speaking of series, **Anthony Horowitz** was back to good form with *Necropolis*, the fourth volume of his *Gatekeepers* cycle. It made me look forward to the upcoming final volume.

Brian DeLeeuw makes his debut with *In this Way I was Saved*. The suspenseful novel picks up the Doppelgänger motif and uses it for a somewhat terrifying exploration of the darker side of self.

Another strong debut is **Robert Goolrick's *A Reliable Wife***. At first, I was reluctant to pick up this novel. Set in Wisconsin in 1907, the story of a rural man advertising for a mail-order bride seemed too well-known and “done” to me. But Goolrick delivered a pleasant surprise by remodeling the familiar plot into an intriguing original story with complex characters.

Interesting characters also inhabit **Rose Tremain's *The Road Home***. They are surrounding protagonist Lev who is fleeing an economically deprived area of Russia for London in order to provide a better life for the daughter and mother he leaves behind. The novel captures loneliness and frustration of the immigrant experience while also showing Lev's underlying upbeat determination.

Determination is also shown in **Alice Eve Cohen's** seemingly unbelievable memoir *what i thought i knew*. Being told she is unable to conceive, neither she nor her gynecologist suspected pregnancy when Cohen felt a lump in her abdomen. Not before her third trimester did she learn about her pregnancy, upending life as she knew it in a flash. Her fears as a self-employed ambiguous mother-to-be were only compounded by the medical community's warnings regarding her unborn child's fate in light of a previously prescribed synthetic hormone therapy. A compelling read.

• **Margaret Ellsworth (fine arts)**

Saxons, Vikings, and Celts, Bryan Sykes

This book is the result of a ten-year, systematic DNA survey of more than 10,000 volunteers to discover the true genetic make-up of the British Isles. From prehistoric caves to the Arthurian legend, Irish myth to the mysterious Picts, Sykes systematically explains the Y chromosome studies of male volunteers and the mitochondrial DNA of the female volunteers in terms a lay person can easily grasp. The book reads kind of

like a mystery. Sykes explores all sources from science to myth and legend in his quest to discover the genetic roots of Ireland, Wales, Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides, and England. Some of his findings seem predictable while others are much less obvious: 10% of Irish men and women are direct descendants of a maternal clan that originated in Greece 45,000 years ago and they have inhabited Ireland for some 7,300 years. This is a great mix of archeology and microbiology. I loved it.

• **Dave Faus (headmaster)**

Outliers: The Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell

Following the success of his earlier works *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*, Gladwell, a New Yorker writer has another bestseller in *Outliers* where he considers the ingredients of success. As he studies the rise of groups like the Beatles and individuals like Bill Gates, he dismisses the idea that good genetics or class privilege is/are the keys to success. For instance, the Beatles played in Hamburg, Germany five times between 1960 and 1962 and often performed seven nights a week, usually for seven or eight hours, for as many as 100 nights in a row. Gladwell estimates that they had played together for as many as 10,000 hours prior to performing in the U.S. and because of their practices, their performances were top quality. Success followed quickly. Gladwell also argues that the Beatles' timing was perfect: rock 'n roll was exploding onto the music scene and the (teen) world was ready for the Beatles' sound.

Bill Gates' is a similar story. Growing up in Seattle in the late '60s, he joined the newly formed high school computer club and by the time he dropped out of college, he had amassed 10,000 hours of hands-on computer time. Gates also happened to be in the right field at the right time, as the demand for personal computers exploded. Gladwell cites practice—the hard work that leads to mastery—and good timing as the two most compelling reasons for success. [See also E. Lott—ed.]

Still Boy Crazy at 90, Eleanor D. Bronson-Hodge

This witty and well-written memoir authored by a Falmouth resident and good friend of Falmouth Academy is the fourth book in a series of Mrs. Bronson-Hodge's reflections. I found her accounts of volunteering with the American Red Cross during World War II in Europe to be fascinating. The relationships that she built during this period have played a significant part in the rest of her life. The memoir ends with the story of her marriage to Stuart Hodge whom she had first met in Paris while he was an Army artist. An avid reader and writer and clear thinker, Mrs. Bronson-Hodge has never

stopped learning; she continues to attend writing classes and seminars in the Falmouth area!

[Eleanor's an inspiration.—T. Clark]

[One of a kind, in the most wonderful way!—L. Melillo]

In Pharaoh's War: Memories of the Lost War, Tobias Wolff

FA physics teacher Peter Conzett recommended this book to me and it proved to be my favorite of the summer. A compelling memoir about Wolff's time in Vietnam during the late 1960s, with the familiar themes of apathy and growing up during this era. While Wolff encountered the ugliness of war, much of the book focuses on the relationships he developed with other young men who were just trying to survive, stay out of harm's way, and do their best to make it back home. Very well written. I was compelled to pull Wolff's *This Boy's Life* off the shelf to reread.

[His book *Old School* is an all-time favorite.—T. Clark]

The Perfect Mile, Neal Bascomb

This is the story of Roger Bannister's breaking the four-minute mile in 1952, a record many believed unattainable. I had known some of Bannister's story—that he, perhaps one of the greatest amateur athletes ever, broke the record while attending medical school at Oxford (St. Mary's Medical College). What I did not know was that there were two other runners vying to break this record at the same time: Wes Santee from the University of Kansas and John Landy from Australia. *The Perfect Mile* tells the story of these three athletes' pursuit to break this landmark record. I enjoyed the history, the detail of each race and the psychological trials and tribulations that each runner endured.

• **Donna Garcia (admissions)**

The Shack, William Paul Young

The Shack, "Where tragedy confronts eternity," focuses on a father who blames himself for his daughter's death. He receives a letter four years after her death inviting him to return to the shack where she had been found murdered. Responding to the invitation takes him on an extraordinary journey. He finds himself wondering if he dreamed this mission! When I was done reading this book, I found myself in awe.

Here is the opening for chapter 5: *We routinely disqualify testimony that would plead for extenuation. That is, we are so persuaded of the rightness of our judgment as to invalidate evidence that does not confirm us in it. Nothing that deserves to be called truth could ever be arrived at by such means.*—Marilynne Robinson

[This inspires me to finish the book. I'm half way through it and couldn't decide if I should keep reading.—S. Wakefield]

• Olivann Hobbie (history)

Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire, Alex von Tunzelman, chronicles the end of the British Empire in India and gives fascinating portraits of four major figures who played important roles in that finale: Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Lord “Dickie” Mountbatten, and his wife, Edwina. The book is less a “secret” history than an intimate one.

We see Gandhi's idealism but also his stubbornness. He had lost much of his influence after 1935, but in the last few months of 1947 he made a comeback. Telling almost no one before he lay down, he began a fast (on January 6, 1946, at the age of 78!) aimed at ending the violence in Delhi, especially that of Hindus against Muslims. While attacks and killings escalated in the Punjab, where the British had 15,000 troops, Delhi became calm and stayed calm thanks to the power of this one man. Gandhi's assassination on January 30, 1948 at the hands of a Brahmin extremist outraged at Gandhi's defense and befriending of Muslims, actually improved relations between the two groups.

The most admirable figures in the book are the aristocratic, wealthy, British-educated, Kashmiri-born Nehru and the woman who became his confidante and lover, Edwina Mountbatten. We admire Nehru for his selflessness, his concern for India, and his nearly always reasonable approach to solving the tremendous problems India faced as British rule drew to an end. Edwina, wealthy and well-born, lovely and spirited, showed both compassion and courage in helping the victims of the violence that ripped through India at partition.

Well worth reading for the reassessments it pushes you toward, and the best documented gossip I've ever enjoyed. Thanks to my colleague Julie Taylor for recommending it!

[I, too, appreciated Julie's recommending this fascinating book.—L. Melillo]

In Other Rooms, Other Wonders, Daniyal Mueenuddin

This collection of interwoven short stories, recommended to me by a Sikh friend, was a revelation. The Pakistani author, a Dartmouth College and Yale Law School graduate, now lives on the family farm (estate) in southern Punjab. His depressing but powerful stories, with some moments of dark humor, portray the power of the feudal land-owning class in today's Pakistan. At the 1947 partition, although India changed its land-holding laws to help build a society of greater economic and

social equality, Pakistan did not abandon the old system. Thus, even today, wealthy families have extraordinary power and their dependents have little chance of ever rising out of their poverty and attitudes of submission. In such a society corruption and exploitation are widespread and accepted as the norm.

[With headlines almost daily advising us about the latest suicide bombing in Peshawar or Islamabad, I keep hearing echoes of FA's first Falmouth Academy Community Series speaker. Robert Kaplan outlined what is necessary in a society to give rise to such terrorism: an abundance of under-educated, under-employed young men recently moved to the cities, seemingly without prospect of improving their situation. Hmmm...E. Muñiz]

The Cellist of Sarajevo, Steven Galloway

This novel portrays the courage, the survival skills, and the determination of the people of Sarajevo during the Bosnian civil war, when the Bosnian Serb army besieged the city from April 5, 1992 to February 29, 1996, when the siege took the lives of about 10,000 people and left 56,000 wounded. The Sarajevans saw themselves defending not only their lives but also the ideal of a community where people of different ethnicities and religions could live together peacefully. On May 27, 1992, from the hills surrounding the city, the army attacked a group of people waiting to buy bread. In memory of the 22 people killed in that attack a renowned local cellist played the same Albinoni *Adagio* each day for 22 days on a main street in the city. The most fascinating character in the novel is Arrow, a female sniper, who, even as she uses her amazing skills to defend the cellist, fights off her impulse to hate the attackers. Giving in to their kind of hatred, she reasons, would mean that they had won.

[I liked this one, too.—P. Ehrenbrink]

Stormy Applause: Making Music in a Worker's State, Rostislav Dubinsky (founder of the Borodin Quartet)

Dubinsky chronicles some of the absurd dilemmas artists faced in the Soviet Union. After Stalin's death in 1953 and Krushchev's secret speech condemning Stalin in 1956, the USSR began to allow some contact with the West, but the Communist Party establishment, paranoid in its bones, kept close tabs on everyone. Jews were always suspect, though many were allowed to emigrate in the 1970s in exchange for much-needed grain. When the Quartet toured the Eastern bloc, all their programs had to be approved to ensure that they were free of “un-Soviet” music, and every step, literally, of the group's travel had to be accounted for. The members of the Quartet (one of whom was probably a spy for the

authorities) were well-compensated and spent all of their money on Western goods, which they could then use as “gifts” back home; these “gifts” were necessary to cut red tape, get a little better food, secure travel permission, etc.

It’s hard, now, to imagine the lack of freedom at that time, and yet we know that in many nations today, rulers and their lackeys still hold life-and-death power over the words and actions of their citizens. And in today’s Russia, outspoken journalists face a good chance of being murdered. Dubinsky, who insisted on programming the mostly forbidden works of Shostakovich and Schnittke, stands out as an artist of incredible integrity. He left the Soviet Union in 1976 with his pianist-wife, Luba, and settled in Bloomington, Indiana, where he became the head of the Department of Chamber Music at Indiana University. This book is not quite as chilling as *1984*, but some of its details are parallel to those in Orwell’s masterpiece.

• Monica Hough (English)

The Little Stranger, Sarah Waters

This chilling tale pays homage to Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, and Shirley Jackson, among others, while at the same time offering a fresh, compelling take on the ghost story. Waters sets the scene at Hundreds Hall, a once grand British manor house, now falling into disrepair. The collapse of the British class system after World War II has left the Ayres family with their crumbling mansion, a good family name, and little else. Although our narrator, Dr. Faraday, son of a former Hundreds Hall housemaid, has risen in class, he still feels dazzled by the remembered past glory of the hall and the family. Just as in James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, the reader never actually sees a ghost, and must decide whether specters, the past itself, or mental illness haunt the hall’s inhabitants. I delighted in recognizing the author’s nods to classic works (in a nod to Poe, the shell-shocked son of the manor is named Roderick, as in *The Fall of the House of Usher*), while never feeling that she was simply reworking other peoples’ tales.

Olive Kitteridge, Elizabeth Strout

As a 7th-grade teacher, I identified with Olive, although I would like to think I am at least slightly less abrasive. Olive’s own son tells her, “You can make people feel terrible.” Over the course of this “novel in 13 stories,” Strout introduces us to several denizens of Olive’s small New England town and gradually reveals the many facets of the title character in skillful, beautiful prose. In the hands of a lesser writer, Olive would be revealed to be hiding a heart of gold under her gruff exterior (cue the

violins), but Strout trusts her very real main character, and her reader, more than that.

[This book just felt bleak to me.— A. Ament] [I liked it very much even though I wanted to shake Olive. Strout writes beautifully about ways not to behave!— T. Clark] [Somehow I couldn’t really care about her.— P. Ehbrenbrink] [See also C. Beams—ed.]

The Women, T. Coraghessan Boyle

I read Boyle’s amusing, intriguing, fictionalized account of the life and loves of Frank Lloyd Wright immediately after reading Nancy Horan’s *Loving Frank*. Horan’s account of the life of Mamah Borthwick Cheney, who publicly, scandalously left her husband and children to live with Wright, left me cross. I never saw why anyone would love the Wright she depicts, never mind divorce a seemingly open-minded, kind husband for him. Boyle does not make Wright any more appealing, but does allow for the genius that kept so many women and workers in thrall. Despite Boyle’s far less romanticized take on events, I liked Mamah better in his novel. Through the eyes of his narrator, Tadashi Soto, we see the women: Wright’s first wife, Kitty, Mamah, morphine addict Miriam, and Montenegrin dancer Ol-givanna. The book is uneven and drags in spots, but I like the way Boyle writes.

[Yes, skip Loving Frank and read The Women. Have a coffee table book with you of Wright’s interiors and exteriors.— J. Taylor] [See also M. Bremser— ed.]

• Jayne Iafate (development)

Lonesome Dove, Larry McMurtry

Larry McMurtry’s 1000-page epic of the American West follows two former Texas Rangers, Woodrow Call and Augustus McCrae, as they attempt to recapture the excitement of their youth by undertaking what was, in the late 1800s, considered impossible: a cattle drive from southern Texas to Montana. The novel is as elegant as it is long.

Three great achievements of *Lonesome Dove* resonate with me. First, in graceful prose he paints a long-lost landscape of America as visual as any Bierstadt. For McMurtry, place is the central character, and the opportunities and limitations that the landscape imposes on the novel’s plot are as compelling as any human character’s. His West is one of both broad romantic vision and breathtaking violence. While that might describe many novels of this genre, McMurtry’s landscape is ever-changing yet consistently optimistic. And never predictable.

Second, he draws the reader into his characters

slowly and deftly. That there is very little plot movement in the first 200+ pages doesn't matter, as it would in a lesser work; the characters are too interesting to let go of. There are no stereotypes among *Lonesome Dove's* ranchers, cowboys, Native Americans, outlaws, dancehall women and animal companions (Gus' pigs are as loyal as Lassie), and just when you think you've understood the depth of one character, his or her actions send you in a new direction.

The story itself is McMurtry's ultimate triumph. Through dozens of characters and locations, the author's plot and many sub-plots intertwine effortlessly and often unexpectedly. Beneath all the adventure, death, intrigue and food (yes, you'll find a lot of humor and heartbreak in the scenes involving food), *Lonesome Dove* is a story of love—love of family, friends, lovers, duty and a way of life slowly slipping away.

[My all-time favorite! I tried to read all of the books in the series but got frustrated when the stories didn't always match up. It's as if McMurtry created too many characters and couldn't keep them all straight.—S. Wakefield]

***If the Heart Is Lean*, Margaret Luongo**

I had the good fortune to meet writer Margaret Luongo during a weeklong course at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown last summer. She read a very short portion of "Pedagogy," one of 16 short stories in *If the Heart Is Lean*, and I wanted to know the rest of the story. I'm glad I read on.

Luongo's stories range from hysterical to quietly moving, and her characters are at once recognizable and completely foreign. Each seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and searching for a way to move through—not around—a crisis. In "Pedagogy," a professor, desperate to convince his students that life and education are very serious pursuits, boils his head in order to try to get his students' attention. It's outlandish, but I'd bet any classroom teacher could see a bit of themselves in this character. "Every Year the Baby Dies" and "Buoyant" are unforgettable, and pieces like "Embankment" and "What Nina Wants" just made me scratch my head. But that's the beauty of this collection; these characters just can't figure themselves out, and their delicious ambiguity is fresh and engaging. And oddly familiar.

• **Colleen Johns (library)**

***The Widow's War: A Novel*, Sally Gunning**

When Lyddie, a strong-willed woman living on Cape Cod in the late 1700s, loses her whaling husband to the sea, she must face life without him—without his companionship and conversation, without his income,

and—perhaps most importantly—without her financial independence. As a widow in colonial New England, she is now entitled only to the "widow's third" of their house and furniture, while her daughter's greedy husband (Lyddie's closest male relative) takes ownership of the rest of her property. Frustrated with her situation, Lyddie rebels, creating scandal, gossip, anger—and some admiration—among her fellow villagers. Gunning's vivid descriptions of life in harsh colonial Cape Cod will make you thankful for your furnace!

[I found this book very interesting, especially in my past two years' work to restore the Brewster Meeting House. It is fun to imagine what that knoll and neighborhood looked like in Lyddie's day.—E. Muñoz]

***Bound*, also by Sally Gunning**

Our rebellious Cape Cod widow Lyddie turns up again when she befriends Alice, a young English girl who has lost most of her family on the dangerous sail from England to Boston. Alice is not only friendless and penniless; she is also a runaway indentured servant who is still legally "bound" to an abusive man who wants her back. Lyddie's and Alice's friendship evolves in spite of Alice's inability to be completely honest with her new friend.

[I liked both of these books and recommend them for teenage girls.—J. Taylor]

• **Jim Johnson (science)**

***The Defector*, Daniel Silva**

This is Daniel Silva's latest novel on the adventures of Gabriel Allom, a Special Ops agent from Israel working as an art restorer of Italian masterpieces. Gabriel goes up against a ruthless Russian oligarch and arms dealer who has kidnapped a former Russian intelligence officer who once saved Gabriel's life. The hunt for the man whom Gabriel had promised to protect takes place throughout Europe and finally concludes in the birch forests of Russia. This novel is a fine example of spy fiction. It is difficult to put down as are all of Silva's other novels.

[Your description of the climax makes me think of the wonderful BBC series "Reilly, Ace of Spies," about the original James Bond-type of spy. Reilly, too, ends in the birch forests of Russia.—E. Muñoz] [Engaging.—T. Clark]

• **Doug Jones (math)**

Recently Henry, my 13-year-old son, and I have been reading books in the **Clive Cussler** series and we have thoroughly enjoyed the complex plot twists surrounded by interesting scientific explorations. While

Cussler's most well known novels are *Raise the Titanic* and *Sabara*, our favorites are *Atlantis Found* and *The Trojan Odyssey*. Cussler does extensive research for his novels and he often weaves interesting and intriguing real discoveries and futuristic ideas into his stories. In *The Trojan Odyssey*, Cussler presents the fascinating notion that the Trojan War actually took place on the eastern plains of England. While Cussler did not originate this theory, he presents it in a plausible and believable manner (credible enough that I purchased the original text *Where Troy Once Stood* by Iman Wilkens—another fascinating read but hard to obtain.) This series of books is enjoyable light reading and completely appropriate to be shared across generations.

• **Janet Kearsley (English)**

Home, Marilynne Robinson

Having read and loved Robinson's earlier novel, *Gilead*, I looked forward to this one and wasn't disappointed. Several characters reappear, including *Gilead*'s narrator, a retired Congregational preacher, and his friend, the domineering but now ailing Reverend Boughton. The narrator of this novel is Glory Boughton, lonesome and resigned, who has come home to care for her father. Shortly after she arrives, the Boughtons hear from Jack, Glory's older brother and the prodigal son of the Boughton family. The two solitary adult children and their father forge new family ties but are never far removed from the patterns and habits of their earlier life. Robinson captures daily life and the slow revelations of inner life with measured insight and realism. As with *Gilead*, I found this a beautiful read.

[I loved this, too. Each individual sentence is so rich and lovely.—C. Beams]

Brooklyn, Colm Tóibín

Again, having read Tóibín's *The Master* (a gift from Julie Taylor), I looked forward to another of his novels. While I found *The Master* more layered and intricate, I also loved this, in part because of my familiarity with Brooklyn of the 1950s. The novel follows rather quiet and shy Eilis Lacey as she becomes the unlikely member of her large family to leave Ireland for greater opportunity in Brooklyn. She navigates Brooklyn well, finding work, and finding love with Tony, whose large Italian family quickly adopts her. A crisis at home in Ireland immerses Eilis in a muted inner conflict between the attachments of home and her new independence. I loved just how attached Tóibín made me feel to Eilis's sincerity and to her struggles with the lures of her old and new lives.

• **Didier Karolinski (French)**

Velvet Totalitarianism: Post-Stalinist Romania, Claudia Moscovici

Velvet Totalitarianism is the most convincing novel I have read in a very long time. It is a work of the greatest importance to anyone interested in understanding the nature of totalitarianism. Its author, Claudia Moscovici is a graduate of Princeton University where her father is a world-renowned professor of Mathematics. She is also a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Brown University and a professor at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). Her whole family fled Romania and found refuge in the United States when she still was in her teens. Her novel translates into fiction the experiences they went through when living in the Ceausescu era, under the constant supervision of the terrible Romanian secret police, the Securitate. It also depicts the difficult relocation process to the United States. For Westerners who have heard about such difficult times under such despicable political regimes, the book represents a chance to experience in a realistic way what those times might have been.

• **Elisabeth Ledwell (English, drama)**

World Without End, Ken Follett

Set in a fictional English city during the early fourteenth century, *World Without End* is rich in historical detail and engaging characters. The novel begins with four children who witness the killing of two men in the forest outside of the city. One of the children, Merthin, helps the killer, Sir Thomas Langley, bury a letter, the contents of which become clear only at the end of the novel. The four children (the loyal builder Merthin, the ambitious healer Caris, the hardworking laborer Gwenda, and the ruthless warrior Ralph) find their lives intertwined by love and by circumstance as they face the challenges of bringing their once innovative monastery and town into the new age. I found the characters and the struggles they faced much more appealing than their ancestors in Follett's *The Pillars of the Earth*. Despite the distance of hundreds of years, these characters made me empathize with their plights. I particularly enjoyed the story of Caris, an intelligent girl whose desire to learn more about medicine causes so much conflict with the monks and with those she loves. This sequel was definitely worth the wait.

[Both are great, but read them in order.—J. Taylor]

[I agree.—M. Hough]

Black Watch, Gregory Burke

I first read about this play a year or so ago, and while the subject matter seemed to me, at first, as if it might be

too maudlin or too preachy, I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was neither of these things. The oldest Highland regiment in Scotland, the Black Watch was once charged with keeping peace between clans. They have since become a respected fighting force on the world stage. It is fitting, then, that the play is largely set in the present day in Iraq. Rather than glorifying the soldiers and their unit, Burke seeks to understand the tribe of the Black Watch, warts and all. A highly theatrical piece, the play makes the war personal.

• **Ed Lott (math)**

Outliers: The Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell

I truly enjoyed this book and found the theories it presented about the steps to success, a mix of practice and the right place at the right time, to be intriguing. As I read it, I had to take a step back and think about our society today, which seems hyper-focused on finding that perfect formula to be successful. Suggesting to people that there is a hard and fast path to success might actually be limiting and may stifle the creativity and joy that makes life worth living. With that said, I enjoyed the book just the same. [See also D. Faus—ed.]

• **Stephanie Mastroianni (humanities)**

The Art of Racing in the Rain, Garth Stein

I am very much a dog person, and have always believed that dogs are practically humans who have simply been stuffed into dog suits. This is why I truly enjoyed *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, a very touching and somewhat tragic family drama told through the eyes of Enzo, an elderly lab mix who, on the eve of his death, takes a look back on his life with his best friend and master, Denny Swift, an up-and-coming race car driver, and his much-loved family.

I truly enjoyed getting a human perspective through Enzo's eyes. I loved the descriptive passages about the various scents that stimulate Enzo's curiosity and wisdom, and that he, like humans has the same type of demons living within all of us that must be suppressed. Enzo's demon is in the form of a stuffed zebra: "Beware, I thought, the zebra hides everywhere." Those sections seemed very genuine to me, as if that is exactly what a dog would know innately, given a particular situation.

Enzo is a philosopher with a human soul who believes that he is different from other dogs. He has educated himself by listening very closely to Denny and the people in Denny's world, and by watching television. As a result, Enzo gains a fantastic insight into the human condition, and he sees that life, like racing, isn't simply about going fast. Using the techniques needed

on the race track, one can successfully plot a course to live by. Enzo's Zen-like approach to life is masterful and uplifting: "I know this much is true about racing in the rain. I know it is about balance. It is about anticipation and patience...But racing is about the mind! It is about owning one's own body. About believing that the track is an extension of the car, and the rain is an extension of the track and the sky is an extension of the rain. It is about believing that you are not you; you are everything. And everything is you".

Though somewhat predictable, and even at times unrealistic, through Enzo's eyes, we observe the sacrifices that Denny has made to succeed professionally; the tragic loss of Denny's wife, Eve, who Enzo confesses he could never truly love because, "I was afraid. She was my rain. She was my unpredictable element. She was my fear"; the three-year battle Denny has over his daughter, Zoë, whose maternal grandparents, "the evil twins," pull out every stop they can think of to win custody. In the end, Enzo comes through valiantly to protect the Swift family, holding in his heart the dream that Denny will become a race car champion with Zoë by his side. Enzo does eventually die (this is mentioned in the synopsis) but when he does, his death is handled so well by Garth Stein that I actually had to stop reading to catch my breath. I was reminded of the depths of a bond between two souls that are so connected, they can never truly be separated.

The Art of Racing in the Rain is very sweet, and is filled with love, devotion, and optimism, all of which are the great characteristics ever-present in dogs. I dove into this book because I love dogs and their philosophical ways and the gentlest of souls. We can all stand to learn from them. Enzo delivers this message loud and clear.

[I don't love dogs, but I loved this book! You'd think the dog narrator would be hokey, but that dog can say things a human character might not be able to.—A. Ament]

• **Lalise Melillo (rhetoric)**

Alphabet Juice, Roy Blount, Jr.

When I was a sophomore in college, Roy Blount, Jr. was the editor of the school's newspaper. We were all in awe of his skills as a journalist, as well as his wit. Since that time, Blount has used his considerable gifts in a long career as one of the most inventive of our national humorists, writing 20 books and appearing regularly on National Public Radio. He loves words, and this book, his twenty-first, is the product of that deep affection for the English language.

Each chapter begins with a playful, but also remarkably erudite, survey of the history of a letter of the al-

phabet. Then Blount presents words and phrases chosen largely because he has something delightful to say about them. This is a book that includes entries like “heebee-jeebies,” “syntax collie,” “sesquipedalian,” and “electricity/chewing tobacco” (and you will find out what these two things have to do with each other). In addition, you will encounter Gertrude Stein, Wilt Chamberlain, Madame de Pompadour, and the Crawley family of cockroaches. Blount makes up words—“sonicky” is both useful and original—and he tells stories with zest. His tour through the letter “Q” had me laughing aloud; come to think of it, many parts of the book had this effect.

I recall something else about Blount from my college days. Though he could successfully skewer pomposity and pretense, his humor was never mean, and that remains true. His sense of fun arises from a kind of buoyant generosity, a warm sense of the ridiculous, and a remarkable intelligence, making this book, as well as all of his work, joyfully satisfying.

Losing the News, Alex S. Jones

The Press Effect, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Paul Waldman

Among today’s writers who examine the media and the press, Alex Jones and Kathleen Hall Jamieson stand out as the most thoughtful, eloquent, and deeply informed. These two books, as well as other works by these authors, ask us to consider more closely the role of the press as “truth teller” and the urgent need for that role to be supported and sustained.

Alex Jones grew up in a newspaper family and has practiced and studied journalism nearly all of his life. He is currently director of Harvard University’s Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, as well as a lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government. In *Losing the News*, he builds on his strong sense of the history of newspaper journalism and his commitment to it. This book, recently published, serves as a warning about the eroding of both the role of fact-based, reported news and the structures of accountability that help to ensure that citizens are truly informed. Jones is so experienced and well-read that his examples and his extended stories are highly readable.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson is a professor at the Annenberg School for Communication and director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Paul Waldman is a senior researcher at the Annenberg Center. In *The Press Effect*, Jamieson and Waldman focus primarily on the press’s coverage of the 2000 presidential election, exploring the ways in which the persistent and misleading “framing” of issues and candidates often overrode facts. With documentary and

statistical support, they expose fabrications in a fair and strikingly nonpartisan way. The chapter on “The Press as Custodian of Fact” is especially interesting, presenting specific suggestions for ways to support the press in fulfilling this role, “the bedrock underlying all the functions journalists perform.”

Though the book was published in 2003, it does not seem dated. Nevertheless, Jamieson’s new book, discussing the 2008 election, will be in bookstores soon (probably before this issue of “The Bookworm” is published). Like all of Jamieson’s work, it will, I am sure, be engaging, informative, and strikingly thought-provoking.

• Audrey Meyer (science)

The Wandering Heart, Mary Malloy

Malloy is a maritime historian and a colleague of mine from the Sea Education Association. She has written several excellent non-fiction books (*Devil on the Deep Blue Sea: The Notorious Career of Samuel Hill of Boston* is my favorite), and *The Wandering Heart* is her first fiction novel. As with everything Mary tries her hand at, it is excellent. The central character is Elizabeth Lizzie Manning, a well respected Boston professor and historian. British aristocrat George Hatton invites Lizzie to his family home to review journals and classify artifacts collected by one of his ancestors, Lt. Francis Hatton, who accompanied Captain James Cook on his third Pacific sea voyage. Things get complicated—and fascinating—from there. Without spoiling the plot’s twists and turns, there is family history that extends all the way back to the Crusades and involves a family curse that spans multiple generations: Elizabeth Manning finds herself personally involved in ways she did not expect. The plot’s threads are well woven into an engagingly complex tale, an excellent mix of history and fiction, and I found myself enthralled. The book is intended as the first of a trilogy, and I can’t wait for the next installment.

Copenhagen, Michael Frayn

FA parent Lee Gove loaned me this book, telling me that his son Matt had read it for a college course and that it was excellent. It’s a play, involving three historical characters—German physicist Werner Heisenberg who led the Nazis’ nuclear research efforts during World War II, his friend and mentor Danish physicist Niels Bohr, and Bohr’s wife Margrethe. The play centers on a meeting between Bohr and Heisenberg at Bohr’s house in occupied Copenhagen in 1941. This meeting actually took place, but what was discussed and what effects that discussion may have had on events of World War II have been the subject of continued debate among historians.

After the war, the scientists themselves gave differing accounts of the meeting. The play highlights the humanity of the scientists involved in the nuclear weapons race, and their dilemma between pursuit of scientific knowledge and moral responsibility to mankind. Frayn develops intriguing parallels between the Heisenberg uncertainty principle and the unpredictability of outcomes involving human interactions. Although the play is a quick read, it leaves one pondering at length the many alternative scenarios that could have dramatically altered the history of nuclear weapon development. There is sufficient physics embedded in this play to intrigue a theoretical physicist, yet it is written in such a way as to be understandable and engaging to us mere mortals as well.

[I agree: an excellent play!—P. Ehbrenbrink] [Yes.—L. Melillo] [And it might encourage people to read Richard Rhodes' The Making of the Atomic Bomb, a great book.—J. Taylor] [Frayn is an amazing playwright, veering from serious drama to adaptations of Chekov to clever comedies like Noises Off. Read and see them all.—E. Ledwell]

• Susan Moffat (photography)

The Glass Castle, Jeannette Walls

This is a memoir that begins with author Jeanette Walls, a high-profile journalist, watching a woman dumpster-dive in Manhattan. As she looks on from a taxi, she realizes that this is her mother.

Walls holds nothing back as she tells the tale of her shocking, heartbreaking, chaotic and dysfunctional childhood. She and her siblings survived fires, hunger, poverty, sexual abuse and general neglect. It's remarkable that Walls rarely falters in her belief that her eccentric and alcoholic father is a hero and that her artist mother, who refuses to get a job and hoards chocolate while the rest of the family is hungry, is anything less than selfish.

Walls rises above the past to tell the brave story. She reveals a memoir that's told with a light sense of humor and poignant voice and I both laughed and cried throughout. Although not a completely easy read, it's one that I would highly recommend.

[A favorite book.—A. Ament] [Carol Chittenden at Eight Cousins Bookstore recommended this to me. I hesitated, as I felt I'd had my fill of "horrid childhood" memoirs, but I loved this one.—M. Hough] [Great book—S. Wakefield]

• Elenita Muñoz (publications)

Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: a Journey into the Heart of Fan Mania, Warren St. John

... Well, my wife—" Mrs. Ogle says eventually, pointing to Mrs. Ogle, "she had a gall bladder attack

before the Alabama–Ohio State bowl game. The doctors thought they'd have to do surgery, but they got her eased up on Demerol, so the next morning I dragged her out of there and we made the kick-off."

Mrs. Ogle nods assent... "I don't remember a lot about that game," she says.

The point is, Mrs. Ogle wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere other than at the game. The Ogles are just two of the dedicated Alabama Crimson Tide football fans Warren St. John meets when he decides to spend a season attending every Alabama game with the RV-ers, folks who travel by RV to root for their Alabama team. "Roll Tide!" is their battle cry. They share a passion for 'Bama and a joy in gathering—not just for the few hours of the game, nor even for the day. No, these fans arrive on Friday, Thursday, even Wednesday, set up their camps, break out the grills and coolers, and settle in for the duration.

St. John's book is engaging, quirky, touching, and laugh-out-loud funny. His encounters with Hot Food Man, Show Chicken Man, (not to be confused with Chicken Man), and Heart Man illuminate both the passion of fandom and the splendid joys of being part of this intense but purely seasonal community.

The measure of a fan [Marty] says, isn't how obnoxious he is, but what he's willing to sacrifice for his team.

"... Jerry Fisher from Tampa—that's 150 miles away—flies his plane in. Makes 50% of the meetings."

"Wow," I say.

"That's nothing," Marty says. "He flew it to Mississippi State, crash-landed in a tree—still made the game."

So it's not only Alabama fans, but all the dedicated fanatics St. John meets, who cope with recalcitrant cooling systems, U-Haul-size barbecue grills, college administrations who want to interrupt/direct/confine their RV villages, the abysmal depths of loss, mammoth hangovers, and the Elysian feel of victory. It's quite a ride and I recommend you join. Roll Tide!

Jane Addams, Champion of Democracy, Judith Bloom Fradin and Dennis Brindell Fradin

I noticed this on display in our Buxton Library and picked it up, as J.A., as she was known, was the first president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an organization dear to my heart. J.A. was the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her pacifist work during and after the Great War, but she was much more than that. As a kid, I read

Jane Addams of Hull House and remembered her pioneering efforts among the immigrant and poor population of Chicago. Reading this new biography written for young adults, however, brought home just how powerful and dedicated a woman Jane Addams was. Hull House grew from the single home in which it started to include 13 buildings with forty resident staff, including physicians, attorneys, journalists, businessmen, teachers, scientists, musicians, and artists. Roughly 9,000 people who lived in the neighborhood participated in the settlement's programs in any given week.

J.A. took on the elected officials of Chicago, becoming herself the first female Nineteenth Ward Garbage Inspector and waging a campaign to defeat a corrupt councilman. She approached every cause in her life with complete dedication and a certainty that, even if the goal could not be accomplished completely, it would not be accomplished at all without the struggle.

Her peace work was lauded until the U.S. joined the war. It was after that that she earned the epithet "Most dangerous woman in America," a phrase we WILPFers of today proudly enjoy. Granted, J.A. was the product of wealth and leisure, so she could put her efforts into Hull House, suffragist rights, and peace and justice work. She was also, however, an indefatigable fundraiser, even when her cause was not popular, and she empowered many of her friends to support and join her work. She continues to be an inspiration to me and to many others. Her legacy is in WILPF, in Reaching Critical Will, in PeaceWomen, in the United Nations, and in social service programs all over the world. It is important to be reminded of her unceasing work to bring justice and opportunity to a world that would, she hoped, one day be free of weapons.

A Man, A Can, A Plan: A Second Helping: 50 Fast Meals to Satisfy your Healthy Appetite, David Joachim and the editors of Men's Health

So there I was, in the cookbook aisle at Borders, sitting on the floor laughing out loud at this cookbook, the perfect answer to my search for a simple cooking guide for my future son-in-law to enjoy with his son. First off, it's a board book, so the pages stay open and can be wiped clean. Second, it's illustrated with photos of each of the major items in each recipe, so shopping is both simple and fun, especially with a four-year-old in tow. Finally, the meals are designed to appeal to any non-cook, particularly male, with names like BBQ Beast Sandwich, Cheez-It Chicken, and Very Cherry Ham Steaks, which features a can of Cherry Coke as a key ingredient.

The recipes, as well as the concept, were the source of my laughter. Despite my initial impression, however, these are really not the diet busters their titles may imply. In fact, the book includes Pesto Salmon Pitas, Noodlicious Ramen Salad (I think we've seen that at faculty potlucks), Hoppin' John, Veggie Calzones, and Peach-Bluenana Smoothie (right above Red Bull Granita). I searched out the first edition (*A Man, A Can, and A Plan*) but I liked the recipes in this volume, with its emphasis on healthy eating (really!) better. Now we'll see how Ryan and his son like it... [*They do.*—ed.]

• Ben Parsons (French)

Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation, John Carlin

Carlin offers the final dramatic chapters of how Nelson Mandela and his wily strategy of using a sporting event, the Springboks' victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, helped mend racial strife in South Africa. I am a sucker for stories whose theses suggest that sport has the power to change the world. Carlin makes the case that Mandela apparently harbors the same utopian belief, namely that sport is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. After giving an informed capsule history of apartheid's bitter legacy and Mandela's noble stature as a leader, the scene is set for the influential rugby match between the solid New Zealand team and the scrappy South African squad in the finals of the World Cup, with 43 million blacks and whites awaiting the outcome. All of the villains in Afrikaner lore are here—Botha, DeKlerk, Bernard, Viljeon—as they match wits with Mandela. Carlin's story of redemption and forgiveness ends triumphantly. While my new South African sister-in-law is a little more skeptical about the ultimate fate of her nation, she does admit that Mandela's strategy was brilliant. What's interesting to note is that this summer will witness South Africa play host to the football (soccer) World Cup (a traditionally Black, South African sport). If the Afrikaners can get behind their team and nation the way the blacks did for them fifteen years ago, then this might be an even greater symbol of reconciliation.

[*The new film about this story, Invictus, includes computer animations by Randy Goux, FA '89.*—ed]

Between the Assassinations, Aravind Adiga

After reading his frenetically infectious prize winner, *White Tiger*, I couldn't wait to get my hands on Adiga's sophomore effort, a collection of short stories loosely connected by their placement in the small Indian city of Kittur. The book does not disappoint, allowing

me a glimpse into a world of corruption, caste, destitution, struggle and, albeit sparingly, redemption and joy through the lives of a motley array of hoykas and Brahmins, Muslims and Christians. Its disjointedness, although at times frustrating, seems the only narrative means possible when depicting the life and times between the assassinations of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.

India has always fascinated me, ever since reading Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in high school. Adiga's amphetamine-fused prose seems the next best thing out of this wild, indefinable confluence of people and history.

[India and all of south Asia have spawned such a marvelous range of writings in English. Makes one wish that U.S. generals read more historical novels, as they might understand on a visceral level just how challenging it is to try to take an army beyond the Khyber Pass and be successful.—E. Muñiz.] [See also J. Taylor—ed.]

• Crissy T. Pingal (development)

Dune, Frank Herbert

I reread *Dune* this summer (after not reading it for about 10 years) and I have to say it was like a new book all over again. Even though I have a lot more “life experience” than the last time I read it, I still found the book spellbinding and enjoyable. I think *Dune* is one of the best classic science fiction novels ever. Everyone should read this book; it is strangely familiar yet foreign in an extra-terrestrial way. It weaves space travel, royal intrigue and the adoration of a messiah into an other-worldly high-tech web of mysticism, false prophecies, and war. What more could you want from classic sci-fi?

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (Books 1-9), Alexander McCall Smith

I spent the summer happily reading these feel good books. I want to go to Botswana. I want to be a respectful “traditionally built lady” who unconditionally loves her country, parks her little white van under the shade of an acacia tree, catches really bad people without ever getting hurt, and drinks bush tea every afternoon. What more could you want out of life?

[I would also highly recommend McCall Smith's Isabel Dalhousie and 44 Scotland Street series. Escapist reading for the Edinburgh-o-ophile.—Ruth Slocum] [Yes, let's have some bush tea!—P. Ehrenbrink]

• Ruth Slocum (English)

Self-Help, Lorrie Moore

My summer reading, I am ashamed to admit, has mostly consisted of the NYT Book Review. I read the concise and entertaining judgments of professional crit-

ics and think “that sounds great—I must buy that” and then I never do. A standout review of the summer was of *A Gate at the Stairs*, the new novel by Lorrie Moore. After reading the review's praise, I decided that I must go out and buy it. In the meantime, I was at the library and saw *Self-Help*, Moore's first book of short stories, published in 1985.

I fell into the stories on a Saturday morning and finished them that evening. Her characters are so immediate (and seemingly autobiographical) and her language is so inventive—dense but nimble—that I felt almost roped to the pages and to the lives she creates there. The conceit of the collection is, of course, self-help, and the stories have titles such as “The Kid's Guide to Divorce,” “How to Be an Other Woman,” and simply “How.” The best stories, however, sail above her framework and show the pain and purpose of the most important relationships. The unhappily married mother in “What is Seized” tells her daughter, “That is what is wrong with cold people. Not that they have ice in their souls—we all have a bit of that—but that they insist their every word and deed mirror that ice. They never learn the beauty or value of gesture. The emotional necessity. For them, it is all honesty before kindness, truth before art. Love is art, not truth.”

I am going out to buy Moore's new novel. Truly.

• Don Swanbeck (history)

Descent into Chaos, Ahmed Rashid

Rashid's book chronicles the failure of United States foreign policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan in the post-September 11 period. Anecdote by anecdote, source by source, Rashid bludgeons the decision-making by the administration of George W. Bush and the general American inattentiveness to a strategically vital region. Rashid provides an in-depth supplement to the many books written by American journalists and military personnel decrying the lack of focus and persistence in American policy toward these areas. Although his writing is rather dense and best read a little at a time, Rashid nevertheless delivers many first-hand and fascinating accounts of his meetings with top officials in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as some of his interactions with Taliban officials. The book will leave you shaking your head as it enables you to begin to fully comprehend the daunting task the U.S. and its allies face in trying to restore order to this region.

• Julie Swanbeck (history, math)

Is it possible to empathize with a slave catcher? Michael White comes close in his historical fiction, *Soul*

Catcher. When the protagonist, Augustus Cain, drinks away his past and gambles away his future, he is forced to use his uncanny ability to track people to regain the prize horse he lost in a bet and to re-establish a reason for living. The latter, surprisingly and not so compellingly, results from his relationship with Rosetta, the very runaway he tracks and captures, and eventually falls in love with. Though the relationship described does not seem completely credible, White's story is an interesting tale of hardship and adventure.

John Meacham's *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* is a wonderfully insightful, well researched volume. I particularly enjoyed his richly detailed discussions of the infighting over the place of Secretary of War John Eaton's scandalous wife Peggy in Washington society and its implications for Jackson's ability to govern with his first cabinet. Meacham also deftly describes Jackson's relationships with political adversaries John Calhoun and Henry Clay, and his calculations and maneuverings to avoid war during the nullification crisis.

Jackson, often stereotyped as a "loose cannon" and an uncompromising tyrant, is considerably more nuanced in Meacham's rendition—a sensitive warrior, unyieldingly protective of the common man, who fiercely wielded the power of the presidency.

• Julia C. Taylor (college advisor)

I have started reading many books on my Kindle. I highly recommend it for anyone who has to have a book with them at all times or who travels frequently. So from my Kindle's archived books:

For people interested in the recent financial crisis, I recommend *House of Cards: A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess* by William Cohen about the collapse of Bear Stearns and *A Colossal Failure of Common Sense: The Inside Story of the Collapse of Lehman Brothers* by Lawrence McDonald and Patrick Robinson. The titles tell the story, but I loved the details of the horrible people who earned millions and helped the rest of us lose thousands. (I particularly enjoyed reading about Larry McDonald growing up in Falmouth.) Or people can skip the juicy scandals and read *The Ascent of Money* by Niall Ferguson. As an historian, he traces the development of more and more sophisticated forms of money and credit, and the reader ends up feeling able to understand the current problems and the proposed solutions.

John LeCarre's *A Most Wanted Man* paints an extremely sad picture of one aspect of America's "war on terror." Admirers of V. S. Naipaul will appreciate, if

not exactly enjoy, *The World Is What It Is*, his biography by Patrick French. I reread the funny *Handling Sin* by Michael Malone and almost enjoyed *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga which takes up where Naipaul left off in India.

[Yes, *The White Tiger* certainly is a very interesting take on modern Indian life.—P. Ehrenbrink] [I did enjoy *The White Tiger*.—T. Clark] [See also B. Parsons—ed.]

• Nancy Twichell (admissions)

Bound, Donna Jo Napoli

I wanted to read this book because the incoming 7th graders read it for summer reading. Its setting is China in the Ming Dynasty. Xing Xing is treated as a servant by her stepmother and stepsister, Wei Ping. Xing Xing finds escape in her enjoyment of nature and in writing poetry. Whenever she gets a chance, she steals away to a nearby fish pond, where one exceptionally beautiful koi soothes her soul. Both Xing Xing and the favored Wei Ping are "bound" to the cruel stepmother, Xing Xing as a servant and Wei Ping through the painful beauty practice of having her feet bound. This is, however, a Cinderella story, so although the plot intensifies, the book ultimately has a happy ending.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows

This book was my favorite read of the summer. The story takes place immediately following World War II, on the Island of Guernsey, which had been occupied by the Nazis. The story is told through a series of letters and telegrams between Juliet, an author living in London, and the inhabitants of the island who are members of the literary society of the title (you'll have to read the book to understand how the name evolved!) There is a wonderful tone to the letters. They are delightful, short, peppy, and at times, quite sad. Although a book of fiction, it gives the reader a new perspective on this post-war time. A great read.

Complications, Atul Gawande

This book was written by an eighth-year surgical resident. Our daughter, Sarah '99, a fourth-year medical student, insisted my husband and I read it. It provides an interesting perspective on the field of medicine and the role of residents. The subtitle, *A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*, provides notice that the reader is about to encounter a frank analysis of the medical profession.

• **Matt Vivyan (history)**

There are few books to which I return more frequently and with greater delight than **Kenneth Clark's** *Civilisation*. The companion to a BBC television series, the book consequently "has a certain ease and speed, which may be counted in its favour." *Civilisation* provides a thoughtful, accessible and thoroughly enjoyable analysis of Western civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire. One could not hope for a more capable and charming guide than Clark; he seamlessly integrates Western art, architecture, music, poetry and philosophy. The television series surpasses the book in many ways—the book, for example, cannot benefit from the sound of the *Marseillaise* and the prisoners' chorus from *Fidelio*; nor can it move about the exterior and interior of the cathedral at Chartres. However, unlike the television series the book invites reflection. *Civilisation* is an intelligent investigation of the nature and meaning of civilization. "I had no idea what it meant," writes Clark, "but I thought it was preferable to barbarism, and fancied that this was the moment to say so." We would do well to reaffirm Clark's sentiments presently. He and others of his generation learned firsthand that barbarism needn't be primitive and illiterate, and by the late-1960s the prospects for a utopian society, Communist or otherwise, looked increasingly dim.

"However complex and solid civilisation seems, it is actually quite fragile. It can be destroyed," said Clark. Indeed it can; thus Clark's sense of urgency and *Civilisation's* relevance to us—the inheritors of the Western tradition. What are civilization's enemies? What does civilization require? *Civilisation* entertains and informs; it also asks important questions and compels the reader to take up where Clark leaves off, to reflect upon one's own age and culture. Civilization today is not without its own threats and challenges, some from within, some from without.

• **Sirkka Wakefield (German)**

Besides making time to read our assigned summer reading, *Mindset*, I haven't exactly had time to read for pleasure. All of the reading (besides the newspaper and occasional magazine) at our house is done aloud and to kids.

Willow's (age 2) top picks

Good Dog, Carl, Alexandra Day

It has very few words so the kids can tell the story when the parents need a break.

Nursery Rhymes: The current favorite is the **Brimax** board-book gift set from the Kittredge family.

Sandra Boynton books are a huge hit in our house thanks to Kathy and Jim Johnson, but *Barnyard Dance* may be the family favorite. (I stand corrected. Tim says it's *Snuggle Puppy*.)

I kissed the Baby, Mary Murphy

This is a simple book with mostly black and white silhouettes of the animals, but Willow has loved it since she was a baby and she still pulls it off the shelf at least once a week.

Susan Moffat gave us *Time for Bed* by **Mem Fox** before Wylie (age 3 1/2) was even born. She was surprised I had never read it. Now I make sure to give a copy of this book to every new baby, just to make sure more people don't miss out on this gem!

[A favorite of my son Fletcher as well, thanks to Eileen Miskell.—B. Parsons]

Bear Snores On, Karma Wilson

There are a bunch now—*Bear's New Friend*, *Bear Wants More*, *Bear Stays Up for Christmas*—and they all have the same story line, but the illustrations are delightful, and we love rhyming books, so it's worth having more than one. However, *Bear Snores On* may still be my personal favorite.

Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? Nancy White Carlstrom

Any book that the entire family likes is a rare find. This is one of them. Bruce Degen's illustrations (he's also the illustrator and author of *Jamberry*, another family favorite) make you wish you were a bear.

Gute Nacht, Sabine Cuno

Ravensburger books are usually fantastic. This is a great touch-and-feel book and a nice way to end the day.

Wylie's (age 3 1/2) picks:

I asked Wylie if we went on vacation and he could only take along one book, which one would it be. Before he could answer the question, he wanted to know where we were going. Ten minutes later, and ten minutes of explaining that we weren't going anywhere, he said, "*Robin Hood*." He has been handed down his uncle's books-on-tape collection from the mid-1980s and loves the Disney version of *Robin Hood*. The books are just the right length for three-year-old.

Katie and Ben Parsons presented Wylie with **Mo Willems' There is a Bird on Your Head** and he wants to read it to everyone who comes to the house. It's hilarious.

There are so many books that my kids have been given that I never would have thought to buy. Moral of the story: other people's book choices have really enhanced our library and when in doubt, buy a child a book.

***Canoe Days*, Gary Paulsen**

The illustrations make this book! It's great (maybe because the story reminds all of us of New Hampshire) for anyone who loves freshwater or fishing.

***Little Beaver and the Echo*, Amy MacDonald**

If the illustrations don't move you, the story about beaver looking for friends surely will.

***Forest Bright, Forest Night*, Jennifer Ward**

Any book that keeps the parents entertained after reading it 500 times is especially enjoyable to read. This is one of them. It's a simple story that teaches young children about nocturnal and diurnal animals with fun things to spot on every page.

***No, David!* David Shannon**

Everyone with a three-year-old will appreciate this book and every three-year-old will be able to relate to mischievous little David.

***Down to the Sea with Mr. Magee*, Chris van Dusen**

Another gift and further proof that staff at local bookstores know their stuff! The pictures are so vibrant you feel as if you are on the water with Mr. Magee and his little dog, Dee. The rhyme scheme makes this as much fun to read as it is to look at the illustrations.

Anyone who speaks German to their kids (or grand-kids) must know *Bobo Siebenschlüfer* by Markus Osterwalder. It's perfect for the little ones and there are now three books in the series.

***Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, Doreen Cronin**

Books where the kids can "read" along with us are also very popular in our family. Listening to lots of mooing and quacking simply enhances their reading experience. Reading this book may be funnier for parents, but children love the illustrations of the cows and hens snuggled up in the barn with their electric blankets.

A favorite counting rhyme my mother used to sing to me is "*Over in the Meadow*." I found a version of it illustrated by Anna Wojtech and can't help but wipe away a tear every time I sing it to the kids.

• **Rob Wells (history)**

***Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, William Taubman**

This is an aptly titled biography in that the insights offered into 20th century Russian history take this work well beyond the boundaries of Khrushchev's life story. I came away with a much greater grasp of the "mysterious" workings of the Soviet leadership and the realities of life for those around Stalin. Taubman's recounting of a shaken and paralyzed Stalin, reeling from the magnitude and initial success of the Nazi invasion, cowering in his dacha and expecting to be arrested, is etched into my memory. As for Khrushchev, Taubman skillfully takes the reader along on his own journey of assessment of this Cold War icon. One comes to share the author's struggle between feeling for the insecure, self-made man who apparently did wish to improve the lives of his countrymen, and loathing the brutal and self-promoting Party hack whose hands were steeped in blood from his climb to the top. This is an extremely well-written, well-researched, and readable work that gives the American reader a fascinating inside look at the "other side" in the Cold War struggle.

[Taubman is currently working on a biography of Gorbachev. He says it will, of course, be very different from the Khrushchev book, though I'm sure it will be equally outstanding.—L. Melillo] [Bill Taubman is also a wonderful human being and a good friend of Jerry and Lalise Melillo's.—T. Clark]

***Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, Modris Eksteins**

In many respects, this terrific work makes an ideal companion piece to Paul Fussell's celebrated, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Both works do a marvelous job of conveying the horror and insanity of trench warfare, but whereas Fussell concerns himself primarily with the war's impact on language and collective perception, Eksteins takes a broader tack and argues that the war essentially opened the door to the "Modern". In doing so, he touches upon a great deal of the history of the first three decades of the 20th century. Yes, his treatment of the war years is wonderful, but I was also fascinated with his innovative and wide-ranging attempts to illustrate his thesis. One of the more interesting is his discussion of Charles Lindbergh and his efforts to explain Lindbergh's fame by linking it to the legacy of the war. The quick version of this argument is that Lindbergh offered the world a perfect blend of both the traditional (Midwest, old-fashioned values) and the new, cool, and exciting (airplanes, technology, personal daring). It is not everyday that one experiences a readable work that deals

equally well with both ballet and war, and that leaves the reader much more informed about both.

Jacek Zuzanski (drama)

Magical Journey With Carlos Castaneda, Margaret Runyan

Carlos Castaneda authored a series of tales about spiritual apprenticeship and study, and initiations into the knowledge of a *brujo*—the Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan Matus from Yuma, Mexico. Castaneda's books have sold more than 8 million copies in 17 languages. He and his publisher claimed that they are factual accounts of his anthropological field research, a claim partly responsible for the enormous popularity of his works, but one that has never been verified. For millions of people his writing provided spiritual guidance and for some became the bible of the New Age of the sixties.

All his life Castaneda remained mysterious by guarding his own privacy and that of his inner circle of followers and apprentices. His cult grew. *Magical Journey With Carlos Castaneda* was written by his wife several years after his death in 1998. It tells how a charming and witty immigrant from Brazil began to build his career as a writer and spiritual teacher. It is about adapting to a new culture, about dreams, ambitions and love. It explains how Castaneda's outstanding creativity was intermingled with his petty lies and manipulations. This is an

honest and nonjudgmental account, given by his closest friend and the mother of his child, on the complexity of his personality and his emerging talent.

Momo by Michael Ende is a fantasy novel by the author known better for his other novel, *The Neverending Story*, which was made into a film in 1984. *Momo*, published in 1973, deals with the concept of time and how it is used by humans in modern societies. The full title in German translates to "Momo, or the strange story of the time-thieves and the child who brought the stolen time back to the people." It is a charming story about a little girl, Momo, who mysteriously appears in one little Italian town, to be treasured as a friend and counselor to everyone. She has a special talent: an ability to listen in a way that helps people find answers to all their problems. One day, strange and sinister Men in Grey arrive in the city. And everything changes. They are agents of the Timesavings Bank and promote the idea of saving time. As the idea spreads and becomes an everyday practice for more and more people, things get gloomier and darker. People forget about the friendship and joy of being together. They all become busy saving time. Reading *Momo*, I enjoyed following the poetic reflections on what really matters as much as the fantastic adventures of the main character and her friends.

Ω

Founded in 1977, Falmouth Academy focuses on a core curriculum of English, history, math, science, and foreign language to prepare students in grades 7 through 12 for college and for life as contributing citizens of the community. Our students read all year long, right through the summer. Their discussions and analysis of their reading are careful, insightful, and often passionate. They take that same energy onto the sports field, into fine arts, music, and drama, into their efforts to recycle and raise money for charity. What sets FA apart from many schools is the small classes of 10-14 students, sitting around a table, engaged in close reading, analysis, and discussion with their teachers and each other.

We welcome inquiries about our school and visits to our campus. For admissions information or for a calendar of arts and sports events, please call us at 508-457-9696 or go to www.falmouthacademy.org. Director of Admissions Michael Earley is at extension 224.

Casual Bookworm

Falmouth Academy
7 Highfield Drive
Falmouth, MA 02540

NON-PROFIT PRSRT STD U.S. POSTAGE PAID OSTERVILLE, MA 02655 PERMIT #3
--

FALMOUTH ACADEMY COMMUNITY SERIES:
 George Colt, author of *The Big House*
 (past Bookworm favorite)
 March 1, 2010, 7 p.m.
 All are welcome!