



L I F E T I M E R E A D I N G

OPEN SPACES Booklist

It is a *cliché* that few of us today have much time to slow the pace of life and immerse ourselves in other worlds and when we do, it is often to the “great outdoors” or the small screen that we go. Still, for most of us avid readers, there is always time to open our minds and hearts to what lies between the covers of good books, and so we set aside the daily demands and enter with an eager anticipation the world created and/or interpreted for us by writers. With admiration for the richness and rhythm of language and with pleasure sparked by a clever turn of phrase or apt reference, we seek mostly (as seems to be borne out by our and others’ surveys) an insight into the lives and times of others and a deeper understanding of our own lives and times.



PHOTOGRAPHY: P. 44 EVA SERRABASSA; P. 45 ANDREW DERNIE

WE HAVE BEEN PRIMED TO READ. Many of us spent a good part of our early lives in public libraries scouring the stacks for anything that caught our curiosity. This serendipitous pursuit led us to reach out early beyond the bounds of our lives – something online marketers with their carefully researched “If you like this, you will also like this and this,” do not offer.

Books are powerful. You hold them in your hands, let the words flow into your mind and heart and are forever changed. We all know the historic impact of books that humanize a cause like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, so affecting that when Lincoln met

Stowe he reportedly greeted her with: “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!”

A little more subtly perhaps, many have suggested that long before Betty Friedan’s celebrated *Feminine Mystique* documented them, the feelings of the women’s movement were instilled by the hours of girlhood spent in the company of Carolyn Keene’s popular Nancy Drew mysteries, Ayn Rand’s elevation of the talented individual, Tillie Olson’s thoughts about her own life and that of her daughter in “I Stand Here Ironing,” and of course, Jo of *Little Women*. (Is there any grown woman who aspired to be Meg, Beth or Amy?) Books are an inspiration.

Books are also a comfort. Readers chose Wallace Stegner’s *Crossing to Safety*, a story of complex, but enduring love and friendship, most often in our survey. It is a book that evokes some of the most poignant moments of our personal lives. *Crossing to Safety* and many of the other works on our list are books that we love because they are both timeless and universal. Perhaps the stories of our collective experiences, many of which are listed below, can help us to see our commonalities, understand our differences, and – in the words of Professor Barry Schwartz in his interview earlier in this issue – make wiser choices.



OPEN SPACES has completed a survey of books asking readers to tell us what they consider to be the “Best Works of Fiction of the Last 35 Years” and their “Favorite Books” of any time and genre. Several hundred readers, from age 3 to 88, responded to our request for nominations. Many belong to book groups. Virtually all – with the exception of those under 17 years – are college educated, most with advanced degrees. Our motivation for conducting this survey was threefold:

1) A member of our editorial staff breezed in straight from a meeting with her book group carrying a complaint. “We can’t believe it,” she said. “We were discussing this book that none of us liked and then it was announced that it had just won a major literary prize.” What everyone wanted to know was “Who makes these selections and what are the criteria?”

Many answers to these questions are offered by University of Pennsylvania Professor James E. English in his book *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Harvard University Press 2005). Though it is obvious that such awards boost sales of the books so favored, the question of correlation between award presentation and reader satisfaction remains up in the air.

In the OPEN SPACES reading lists of the past few years, a favorite category has been “Books you’re glad you own, but have never read and probably won’t.” There has been no shortage of nominees. (Others have presented extended research on this phenomenon of books bought but unread for

every reason from good intentions to decorating schemes.) Additional relevant categories have included, “Best first paragraph in a book I could never force myself to finish,” and in the nonfiction category, “It’s not a book,” meant to counter the tomes built out of one or two intriguing ideas ideally suited to a 750-word essay. In this survey, we wanted to get beyond book sales to books that are read, returned to and remembered.

2) Recently *The New York Times Book Review* published their “Best Works of American Fiction of the last 25 years.” The list seemed to some of us west of the Hudson to be a little, well – provincial. That suspicion, and the realization that those who contributed to the list were selected “editors, critics

and fellow authors,” reminded us of a previous observation about another publication described as “The New York Review of Each Others’ Books” (e.g. Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World*.) We wanted to go directly to the readers.

3) A compilation of suggestions by intelligent and appreciative readers should, at the least, make a great reading list. On this note, it is interesting that our responding readers did not seem – except in a very few cases – to settle on one author or another as “the best” or “favorite,” but rather on the works themselves. For that reason the following list is quite broad and diverse – rather like the reading public.

<p><i>New from Washington</i></p> <p>River of Memory</p> <p><i>The Everlasting Columbia</i></p> <p>William D. Layman</p>	
<p>Historical photographs following the Columbia River from the Pacific Ocean to British Columbia are accompanied by the words of early explorers and naturalists as well as contemporary poets and writers, including Gloria Bird, Peter Christensen, Tim McNulty, Kathleen Dean Moore, Theodore Roethke, Kim Stafford, William Stafford, Elizabeth Woody, and many more. The “River of Memory” exhibition runs through December 31, 2006, at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center.</p> <p><i>Published with the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center</i></p> <p>\$40.00 cloth, \$24.95 paperback</p>	
<p>UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS</p> <p>1-800-441-4115 www.washington.edu/uwpress</p>	

READERS' SURVEY

★ Several Votes ★★ More than 5 Votes ★★★ More than 10 Votes ★★★★ Most Votes

BEST FICTION OF THE LAST 35 YEARS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Isabel Allende
<i>House of Spirits</i> | Michael Cunningham
<i>The Hours</i> | Penelope Fitzgerald
<i>The Bookshop</i> |
| Dorothy Allison
<i>Bastard Out of Carolina</i> | Robertson Davies
<i>The Deptford Trilogy</i> ★★ | Jonathan Franzen
<i>The Corrections</i> |
| Richard Adams
<i>Watership Down</i> | Don DeLillo
<i>Underworld</i> ★ | Charles Frazier
<i>Cold Mountain</i> ★ |
| Margaret Eleanor Atwood
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> ★★
<i>The Blind Assassin</i> | Anita Diamont
<i>The Red Tent</i> | Judith Freeman
<i>Red Water</i> |
| Saul Bellow
<i>Humboldt's Gift</i> ★★ | Monica Dickens
<i>One Pair of Hands</i> | Ernest J. Gaines
<i>A Lesson Before Dying</i> |
| Dan Brown
<i>The DaVinci Code</i> | Annie Dillard
<i>The Living</i> | Mark Hadden
<i>The Curious Incident of
the Dog and the Night Time</i> |
| A.S. Byatt
<i>Possession</i> | David James Duncan
<i>The Brothers K
The River Why</i> ★ | Elizabeth Forsyth Hailey
<i>A Woman of Independent Means</i> |
| Italo Calvino
<i>If on a Winter's Night</i> | Umberto Eco
<i>The Name of The Rose</i> | Mark Helprin
<i>A Winters Tale</i> |
| Ethan Canin
<i>The Palace Thief</i> | Leif Enger
<i>Peace Like a River</i> | Kent Haruf
<i>Plainsong</i> ★★ |
| Ana Castillo
<i>Peel My Love Like an Onion</i> | Jeffrey Eugenides
<i>Middlesex</i> | Tony Hillerman
<i>A Thief of Time</i> |
| | Kate Fenton
<i>Vanity and Vexation</i> | Khalid Hosseini
<i>The Kite Runner</i> |

This is a rather difficult task, as I'm sure you're aware. Hmm.

In fact, damn near impossible, or at least extremely slippery – every few books I write down get immediately bumped off the list, or at least equaled, by three others, that I may have enjoyed just as well, but are 'best' in a different way. I think the issue lies with the term 'best'. What does that mean? Most relevant? Most enjoyable? Most fun to read? Most politically astute? Most resonant with the ethos of one particular year of those 35?

Somewhat in protest, I'm going to stop prevaricating and punt. Here are the first three books I've read (or referred to) in the past year or two that come immediately to mind. Sorry – your task was too difficult.

MICHAEL KIPARSKY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

- Keri Hulme
The Bone People
- Kazuo Ishiguro
The Remains of the Day ★★★
A Pale View of Hills
- John Irving
The World According to Garp
A Prayer for Owen Meany
- Edward P. Jones
The Known World
- Barbara Kingsolver
Poisonwood Bible ★★



Milan Kundera
Immortality

Jhumpa Lahiri
Interpreter of Maladies

Craig Lesley
Winterkill

Andrea Levy
Small Island

Elinor Lipman
Then She Found Me

Mario Vargas Llosa
Conversation in the Cathedral

Jim Lynch
The Highest Tide

Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Chronicle of a Death Foretold

Peter Matthiessen
Far Tortuga
Bone by Bone

James McBride
Miracle at St. Anna

Cormac McCarthy
The Crossing ★★
All the Pretty Horses

Ian McEwan
Saturday ★★
Enduring Love
Atonement

Larry McMurtry
Lonesome Dove

Toni Morrison
Beloved ★★★

Haruki Murakami
The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

Iris Murdoch
A Word Child

Sena Jeter Naslund
Ahab's Wife: Or, The Star-Gazer

Cynthia Ozick
The Shawl: Stories

Ellis Peters
The Virgin in the Ice

Thomas Pynchon
Gravity's Rainbow

Annie Proulx
The Shipping News ★★★

Gregory David Roberts
Shantaram

Marilynne Robinson
Housekeeping ★★★
Gilead

Jeanne Rose
Little Miss Strange

Philip Roth
The Plot Against America
American Pastoral ★

Arundhati Roy
The God of Small Things

Salman Rushdie
Midnight's Children ★

Jose Saramago
Blindness

Proclaim Your Passion ...



A profile on Poet Laureate Lawson Inada will air on OPB-TV's "Art Beat" in October 2006.
Photo: Jim Leisy.

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Vikram Seth
A Suitable Boy

Carol Shields
Unless
The Stone Diaries

Leslie Marmon Silko
Ceremony

Alexander McCall Smith
In the Company of Cheerful Ladies
(No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency)

Zadie Smith
White Teeth

Francine Prose
Blue Angel

Tom Spanbauer
The Man Who Fell
in Love With the Moon

Wallace Stegner
Crossing to Safety ★★ ★★

Indu Sundaresan
The Twentieth Wife ★

Su Tong
Rice

John Kennedy Toole
A Confederacy of Dunces

Anne Tyler
Searching for Caleb ★

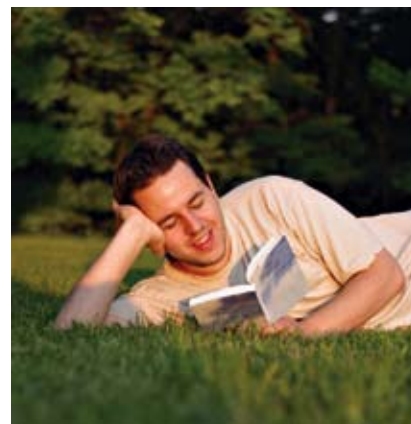
Gail Tsukiyama
Women of the Silk

Alice Walker
The Color Purple ★

David Foster Wallace
Infinite Jest: A Novel

James Welch
Fools Crow

James Wilcox
Modern Baptists



PHOTOGRAPHY: ARPAD BENEDEK

FAVORITE BOOK OF ANY GENRE OR TIME

Edward Abbey
Desert Solitaire

James Agee
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

Sherman Alexie
Smoke Signals

Hervey Allen
Anthony Adverse

Isabell Allende
Zorro

Pat Barker
Regeneration ★

Saul Bellow
Herzog

Daniel Boorstin
The Discoverers

Charlotte Bronte
Jane Eyre

Mikhail Bulgakov
The Master and Margarita

Edwin G. Burrows & Mike Wallace
Gotham: A History of New York City
to 1898

Willa Cather
My Antonia

The first thing I thought of when I read this mail is that most of the fiction I've found most compelling in recent years hasn't been American – I'm not sure America is where the action is when it comes to the novel. Which reminded me of a *Granta* article a few years ago about how the enormous growth in MFA programs in Creative Writing in the USA has led to a great homogenization of style and structure, a single "American voice" in fiction. There has not been a similar boom in credentialization in most other countries. I wonder if this relates to the recent observations I have heard that it is "impossible" to find a publisher for a new work of literary fiction in the U.S. unless you are already a giant figure, or one of the handful each year that are picked to get marketed into famousness. Perhaps our writers have all become so good that they are uniformly, excellently boring.

Anyway, my list of best novels would include work by Salman Rushdie, Mario Vargas Llosa, Milan Kundera, Naguib Mafouz...and on the American front, outsiders – perhaps in particular the Northwest Wacko school that encompasses Tom Robbins, Ken Kesey, Neil Stephenson, Ivan Doig, Sherman Alexie, W.P. Kinsella, Douglas Coupland...and American women like Joyce Carol Oates, Louise Erdrich, Toni Morrison, and Jane Smiley. Offshore again, I'd be tempted to toss in Patrick O'Brien's complete Aubrey-Maturin series – it's really one big, 5,000-page novel. And the complete works of William Trevor...the novellas and short novels, plus the collected short stories all hang together. Cheating, I know. And, at the end of the day, Roth is really writing great books these days....

TOM CORDDRY, SEATTLE, WA

Eileen Chang
Rice-Sprout Song

Anton Chekhov
Short Stories ★★★

Craig Childs
*The Secret Knowledge of Water:
Discovering the Essence
of the American Desert*

Susanna Clarke
Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell

Wilkie Collins
The Moonstone

Joseph Conrad
The Heart of Darkness

Mitch Cullin
A Slight Trick of the Mind

John Daniel
Looking After

Bernard Augustine De Voto
The Course of Empire

Charles Dickens
A Tale of Two Cities

E.L. Doctorow
City of God

Ivan Doig
*This House of Sky:
Landscapes of a Western Mind*

Arthur Conan Doyle
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Fyodor Dostoevsky
Crime and Punishment ★★★

David James Duncan
God Laughs and Plays

Ralph Ellison
Invisible Man

Anne Fadiman
*Ex Libris: Confessions of
a Common Reader*

William Faulkner
*The Sound and the Fury
Intruder in the Dust*

Jasper Fforde
The Eyre Affair

Jack Finney
Time and Again

Isabel Fonseca
*Bury Me Standing:
The Gypsies and Their Journey*

E.M. Forster
Howard's End

John Fowles
The Magus

Kuki Gillman
I Dreamed of Africa

William Golding
Lord of the Flies

Jean Giono
Joy of Man's Desiring

Molly Gloss
The Jump-Off Creek

Doris Kearns Goodwin
*No Ordinary Time:
Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt:
The Home Front in World War II
Team of Rivals: The Political Genius
of Abraham Lincoln*

Ha Jin
Waiting



Helene Hanff
84, Charing Cross Road

Joseph Heller
Catch 22

Mark Helprin
A Soldier of the Great War

Ernest Hemingway
Short Stories

Peter Hessler
River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze

Bill Holm
Spirit and Ancestor

Richard Holmes
*Footsteps: Adventures of
a Romantic Biographer*

Ted Hughes
Birthday Letters

Henry James
*Portrait of a Lady
The American*

James Jones
From Here to Eternity

Carl Jung
Memories, Dreams, Reflections

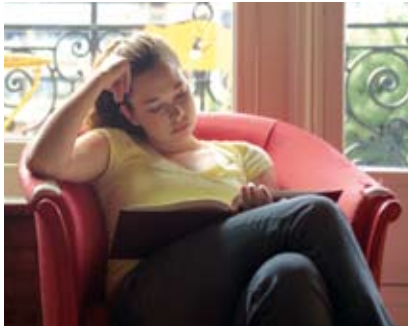
Eric Kandel
*In Search of Memory: The Emergence
of a New Science of Mind*

Ryszard Kapuscinski
The Shadow of the Sun

Ken Kesey
*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Sometimes a Great Notion*

Haven Kimmel
A Girl Named Zippy

Barbara Kingsolver
Prodigal Summer



Sophie Kinsella
*The Secret Dreamworld
of a Shopaholic*

William Kittredge
Owning It All

D.H. Lawrence
Sons and Lovers

Aldo Leopold
The River of the Mother of God

Barry Lopez
Arctic Dreams

Naguib Mahfouz
*The Cairo Trilogy: Palace Walk,
Palace of Desire, Sugar Street*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez
100 Years of Solitude ★★★

Herman Melville
Moby Dick ★★

Norman Maclean
A River Runs Through It

Kathleen Dean Moore
*River Walking:
Reflections on Moving Water*

Patrick O'Brien
*The Complete
Aubrey/Maturin Novels* ★★★

Tillie Olsen
Tell Me a Riddle

Grace Paley
The Little Disturbances of Man

Robert Pirsig
*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle
Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*

Steven Pressfield
*Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel
of the Battle of Thermopylae*

Philip Pullman
His Dark Materials

Thomas Pynchon
The Crying of Lot 49

Marc Reisner
*Cadillac Desert: The American West
and Its Disappearing Water*

Tom Robbins
Still Life with Woodpecker

Roger Rosenblatt
*Rules for Aging:
A Wry and Witty Guide to Life*

Jonathan Safran
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

J. D. Salinger
Catcher in the Rye

Nevil Shute
A Town Like Alice

Floyd Skloot
In the Shadow of Memory

Rebecca Solnit
Wanderlust: A History of Walking

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn
The Gulag Archipelago

Susan Sontag
On Photography

Kim Stafford
Early Morning

William Stafford
The Way It Is

Wallace Stegner
Beyond the Hundredth Meridian

John Steinbeck
The Grapes of Wrath

Robert Sullivan
A Whale Hunt

William Styron
*Darkness Visible:
A Memoir of Madness*

William Sullivan
*Listening for Coyote:
A Walk Across Oregon's Wilderness*

Henry David Thoreau
Walden

J.R. R. Tolkien
The Lord of the Rings

Much fine fiction has been written in the last 35 years, but the best for me are those works that call me back for repeated readings, and there are only two of those: Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*. Robinson's wisdom and McMurtry's expansiveness of spirit and wonderful sense of adventure are the draws that unflinchingly reward my effort.

And on the all time, all genre list, *Huckleberry Finn*. I'll not extol its many qualities, but one of its attractions for me is its portrayal of life on the margins of civilization at a time when the Oregon Trail was in full swing. The portrayal feels contemporary, while the Trail seems ancient. That the two share the same period of time strikes an emotional paradox in me that rational thought never quite displaces.

MICHAEL ANDREWS, GRESHAM, OREGON

Leo Tolstoy
Anna Karenina ★★★★★
War and Peace

William Trevor
William Trevor: The Collected Stories

Calvin Trillin
Travels with Alice

Barbara Tuchman
A Distant Mirror

Mark Twain
Huckleberry Finn ★

Derek Walcott
Omeros

Jeannette Walls
The Glass Castle: A Memoir

T.H. White
The Once and Future King ★

Charles F. Wilkinson
The Eagle Bird

Terry Tempest Williams
*Refuge: An Unnatural History
of Family and Place*

Charles Wright
A Short History of the Shadow

CHILDREN'S

Louisa May Alcott
Little Women

Judy Blume
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret
(ages 9-12)

Susan Cooper
The Dark is Rising (ages 9+)

Doreen Cronin
Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type
(ages 3+)

Nancy & Benedict Freedman
Mrs. Mike (love story for ages 11+)

Kenneth Grahame
The Wind in the Willows (ages 4+)

J.K. Rowling
Harry Potter Series ★

Anne & Todd McCaffrey
The Dragonriders of Pern

A.A. Milne
When We Were Very Young

L.M. Montgomery
Anne of Green Gables

Robert Jordan
Wheel of Time Series

Richard Peck
A Long Way From Chicago (ages 9+)

Louis Sachar
Holes (ages 10+) ★

Richard Scarry
What Do People Do All Day? (ages 2+)

Dr. Seuss
Green Eggs and Ham (ages 4+)
The Sneetches (ages 4+)

Margaret Sidney
*The Five Little Peppers
and How They Grew*

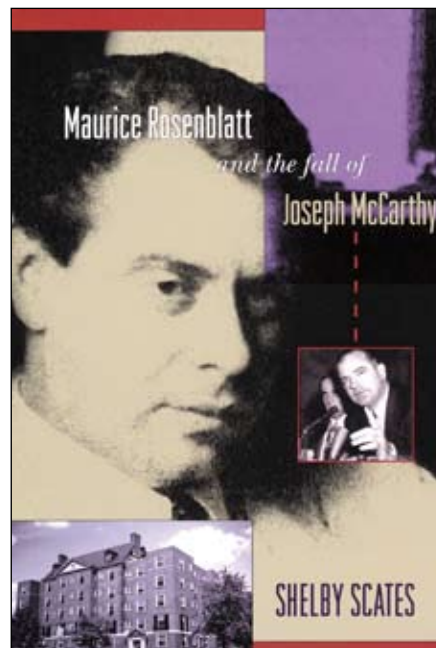
Shel Silverstein
Where the Sidewalk Ends

Eileen Spinelli
When Mama Comes Home Tonight
(ages 4+)

E.B. White
Charlotte's Web ★★

Kazumi Yumoto
The Friends
(friendship and death for ages 10+)

PLEASE JOIN US



The University of Washington Press, *Open Spaces*, and History Link invite you to an evening with Shelby Scates, former political columnist for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

Scates will discuss his new book, *Maurice Rosenblatt and the Fall of Joseph McCarthy*, as well as his recent *Open Spaces* article "Dallas Revisited: Candy Barr, Jack Ruby and JFK."

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