

Learning Insights
Susan K. Boyar
Summer Reading List 2008

The following list is divided into two parts: the first group consists of books I have read and enjoyed, the second of books that, if given enough time, I would read this summer.

Revolutionary Road by Richard Yates--Published in 1961, this extraordinary novel which takes place in suburban Connecticut of the 1950s captures the sense of frustration and ennui experienced by Frank and April Wheeler, an unhappily married couple as they live out their lives in the shadows of their thwarted dreams.*

Consequences by Penelope Lively--A multi-generational love story covering almost 70 years

Out Stealing Horses by Per Petterson--An exceptional, prize-winning novel from the Norwegian Petterson who examines the relationship between a father and son from the distance of almost 50 years.*

Loving Frank by Nancy Horan--A fictionalized account of the relationship between Mamah Borthwick Cheney and Frank Lloyd Wright who each left her/his spouse and children to pursue their passion for each other.

Exit Ghost by Philip Roth--According to Roth, this is his farewell to Nathan Zuckerman, the protagonist and/or narrator of many of his greatest works. It is especially interesting to read it with his first Zuckerman book, The Ghost Writer.

Matrimony by Joshua Henkin--A coming-of-middle-age novel exploring the voyage from college into adulthood, a much longer journey than it used to be.*

The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears by Dinaw Mengestu--This debut novel introduces us to Ethiopian immigrant, Sepha Stephanos living in Washington D.C in the 1970s.

The Great Man by Kate Christensen--A great artist has died and this novel tells the story of the various women in his life, wife, mistress, sister and daughters. A good summer read.*

A Day at the Beach by Helen Shulman--An examination of the Falktopfs, a family struggling with being artists, providers, parents, etc set in the 24 hour period of 9/11/01

The Last Town on Earth by Thomas Mullen--A fictional town in the Pacific Northwest, Commonwealth, is just putting down its egalitarian roots when the Spanish Influenza hits

the land. For protection from the deadly disease the town quarantines itself, and the novel begins. This is a terrific read, a book that men who generally don't read fiction will enjoy. It is also a great book for both boys and girls high school age and above.*

The People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks--Historical fiction from the Pulitzer Prize winner of march. This time we travel back to examine the imagined origins of the Sarajevo Haggadah. There's something for everyone; history, art, suspense and love, a good summer read.*

The Uncommon Reader by Alan Bennet--The books we read inform whom we become maintains this charming little novel. Imagine who the Queen of England might become if bitten by the literary bug.

Love in a Cold Climate and The Pursuit of Love by Nancy Mitford--Two of my favorite books growing up and brought to mind by Alan Bennet in the book mentioned above. The Mitfords were a fascinating family, and the peek into their world that Nancy Mitford allows us continues to entertain.

These are the books I hope to read this summer:

The Plague of Doves by Louise Erdrich

Wild Nights! by Joyce Carol Oates

The Enchanted April by Elizabeth von Armin

Unaccustomed Earth by Jhumpa Lahiri*

Beginner's Greek by James Collins The Magic

Mountain by Thomas Mann* The Brief

Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

The Sorrows of an American by Siri Hustvedt

Beginner's Greek by James Collins A Person of

Interest by Susan Choi Beautiful Children by

Charles Bock Away by Amy Bloom

Bright Shiny Morning by James Frey

Nonfiction

The Zookeepers's Wife by Diane Ackerman Uncommon

Arrangements by Katie Roiphe--nonfiction Animal,

Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver

*These books have been done in recent groups or are on some of the fall schedules.