



A Word from...YOUR Library

Thanks to all of the faculty and staff who contributed to this issue of Bookwatch!
Be sure to check in at the library for some great summer reading.

**Congratulations to our winner of the Borders gift certificate drawing...
Donalee Ong!**

Have a wonderful Summer Break and read a Good Book!

Western Reserve Academy

BOOKWATCH

Reading Recommendations from the John D. Ong Library

Summer 2006
ISSUE 16



Nonfiction Reviews:



Churchill and America by Martin Gilbert

Here in one volume is a complete record of Churchill's many visits to America from his first trip in 1895 at the age of 21 to his last visit in 1961 a few years before his death. The great British leader was tireless in his efforts to maintain a close alliance with the U.S. and sought to strengthen that friendship through his personal ties to FDR, Truman, and others. Of special interest are his visits to the White House during World War II and the account of his controversial "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri in 1946. *(Review by Tom Vince)*

Snowstruck: In the Grip of Avalanches by Jill Fredston

Jill Fredston is an avalanche expert based in Anchorage, Alaska. She and her husband teach and train people about the hazards of climbing in avalanche zones and how to safely encounter the conditions. Fredston offers interesting insight into the power and treachery of avalanches and how to survive if caught in one. She delves into the history of avalanches in Alaska as well as detailing many avalanche victims rescue and recovery missions. *(Review by Melissa Slager)*

The Tomb of Agamemnon by Cathy Gere

This is an archeological book based on Grecian history, mainly the period around the eighth-century B.C. Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90) grew up with a fervent interest in the Trojan War. This wealthy self-educated man went on a quest to find evidence to support the stories portrayed in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. At Mycenae, he uncovered what he thought was the grave of Agamemnon in the ruins, although other archeologists on similar quests have since proven his claim false. This book reads like a historical novel yet supplies an abundance of historical facts for anyone interested in what happened to some of the artifacts found in the digs in Greece and what the artifacts tell us about the people who lived during one of the earliest civilizations. *(Review by Sue Donnelly)*

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Fiction Reviews:

Entombed by Linda Fairstein

I recently discovered a new mystery writer who loves to build a story around historical individuals or events. Linda Fairstein's mysteries feature Alexandra Cooper, a Manhattan Assistant D.A., who isn't afraid to hit the streets to hunt down the bad guys. Fairstein's new book, **Entombed**, centers around a body found within the wall of a house in which Edgar Allan Poe once rented a room. As Alex tries to find the killer, she also learns some very interesting facts about Poe, the "father" of the modern detective story. *(Review by Holly Bunt)*

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Professional Reading Over the Summer!

The John D. Ong Library has an extensive **Professional Collection** with materials on education and instruction for the teaching professional. Come in and see what we have!

Faculty and Staff Recommendations

Patty Campbell recommends:

Gilead by **Marilynne Robinson**

"From the first page of her second novel, the voice of Rev. John Ames mesmerizes with his account of his life." [Publishers Weekly]

Christine Borrmann recommends:

Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog by **John Grogan**

"A great read for any dog lover/owner."

False Impression by **Jeffrey Archer**

"Another fun summer read... Murder, suspense, art history, travel—all with a 9/11 twist. A real page turner!"

Donalee Ong recommends:

The Known World by **Edward P. Jones**

"This is a profoundly beautiful and insightful look at American slavery and human nature." [Booklist]
[Recommended in Winter '04 by Peter Fry]

A Number by **Caryl Churchill**

"A play by the author of more than 20 dramatic works." [amazon.com]

Tom Moore recommends:

Now I Can Die in Peace: How ESPN's Sports Guy Found Salvation with a Little Help from Nomar, Pedro, Shawsank, and the 2004 Red Sox by **Bill Simmons**

"A columnist for ESPN.com, Simmons writes in his columns about his love for the Boston Red Sox and the team's World Series victory in 2004. Although it focuses on the Red Sox, Cleveland fans will see a lot of themselves reflected in the long-term disappointment of Boston fans, just minus the championship season."

Even though I am away this summer, I am not worried! I know I can access Bookwatch online anytime at:

<http://library.wra.net/library/publications/bookwatch.cfm>



Peter Lee recommends:

Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer by **James L. Swanson**

"An excellent book about the happenings surrounding the assassination of President Lincoln and others on that fateful night. The book continues in the footsteps of Mr. Booth and the 12-day hunt."

Jeanne Kidera recommends:

Running With Scissors: A Memoir by **Augusten Burroughs**

"Recommended for the adventurous seeking an unsettling experience among the grotesque." [Library Journal]

[Recommended in Fall '05 by Susan McKenzie]

Will McIntire recommends:

The Life & Times of Michael K by **J.M. Coetzee**

"So purifying to the senses that one comes away feeling that one's eye has been sharpened, one's hearing vivified." [The New York Times Book Review]

Waiting for the Barbarians by **J.M. Coetzee**

"A story of profound beauty, clarity and eloquence, which even at its most melodramatic holds to a biblical nobility." [Chicago Tribune Book World]

Elizabeth Wirtz recommends:

Double Shot by **Diane Mott Davidson**

"I read all of those Diane Davidson Mott books... and I really like them."

Fran McHugh recommends:

Gone to New York: Adventures in the City by **Ian Frazier**

"A great collection of 22 essays that he wrote from 1975 to 2005 for *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and other publications. Included in the book is a humorous piece about his obsession with removing plastic grocery bags stuck in trees, an informative piece about the chief engineer of the Holland tunnel, and a profoundly tragic piece about the loss of the Twin Towers. It's a fairly quick read but another winner from our 'hometown author.'"

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Fiction Reviews

(continued from page 1):

The Moon Tunnel by **Jim Kelly**

Local newspaper man Philip Dryden is immediately on the scene when diggers from a local archaeological excavation find a body in what appears to be an escape tunnel of an abandoned POW camp. Determined to find out who the deceased is, Dryden begins to uncover secrets buried as long as the murdered corpse itself. Offering a superbly drawn protagonist in Dryden, Kelly also provides an engaging story about POW camps in England during World War II. *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

The Pillars of the Earth by **Ken Follett**

Politics, romance, religion, and intrigue: this novel is packed with excitement! In 1123, an ambitious priest, an ungallant knight, and a scheming monk collude to unjustly sentence a jongleur to death, and his execution and a subsequent curse initiates a chain of events that spans several generations. Much of the story takes place in a small village called Kingsbridge, and the community is guided by the pious, even hand of Prior Philip, the head of the local monastery. The prior's ultimate goal is to create a cathedral in Kingsbridge that will glorify God and bring the village into prominence. In pursuing this goal, he interacts with powerful, sometimes ruthless individuals who change loyalties to suit the current royalty on the throne as civil war rages in medieval England. It is not at all surprising that the novel was a national bestseller, since the intricate story and engaging characters capture the reader's interest for all of its 983 pages. *(Review by Christina Sent)*

Are We There Yet? by **David Levithan**

Danny is a 23-year-old, uptight, workaholic advertising executive. Elijah is a 16-year-old, mellow, carefree high school student. The two brothers are tricked by their parents into taking a summer trip to Italy together with the hope that they will become closer and more loving to each other. The trip quickly becomes the brothers' nightmare as they realize how many countless hours they will be *together*. This read was a journey worth taking. *(Review by Jane Spencer)*

The Last Templar by **Raymond Khoury**

A la **The DaVinci Code**, author Khoury takes us on a fast-paced thrill ride that alternates between present day and the end of the 13th century and centers on an explosive secret long guarded by the Templar Knights. Armed horsemen dressed as Templars brazenly rob priceless papal artifacts on display at the opening gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Archeologist Tess Chaykin witnesses the theft of a coding device that begins her involvement in the hunt for the secret that can change the world forever! A great beach read with some great plot twists. *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

Queen of the Underworld by **Gail Godwin**

A young reporter fresh out of college starts a new life in Miami, Florida, in the summer of 1959. Through ties to her married lover, Emma is hired by the *Miami Star* as a beat reporter. At this time in history, Miami is teaming with Cuban exiles following Castro's rise to power. Emma makes fast friends with the Cuban families staying at her hotel while the exiles figure out their next moves. Unwittingly, Emma offers assistance to a few exiles as they smuggle arms back into Cuba. This novel has many layers and is set in a really interesting time period. Godwin makes the reader care about the characters and their outcome. *(Review by Melissa Slager)*

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For more great reading suggestions, check out the 2006 Summer Reading Booklet, updated with new titles!

Visit the 2006 Summer Reading Booklet display in the Ong Library!

(The 2006 Summer Reading Booklet is available online at <http://library.wra.net/library/publications/reading.cfm>)



Non-fiction Reviews (continued from page 1):

***The Bookseller of Kabul* by Asne Seierstad**

Seierstad gives a fascinating account of her three-month stay in the home of a bookseller and his extended family in 2002, just after the fall of the Taliban regime. Seierstad is an international journalist living in Norway, and she was 31 at the time this book was published. The powerful vignettes report on women, the burka, marriage customs, barriers to education and work, poverty, politics and the struggle to survive in a country devastated by decades of war. (Review by Paula Campanelli)

***Dodo: A Brief History* by Errol Fuller**

After reading this book, it soon becomes clear that very little is actually known about the ill-fated dodo. Through skeletal remains, primary source accounts, paintings, and drawings, Fuller pieces together the facts of the bird's existence on the island of Mauritius, and he conjectures about its extinction at the hands of Dutch and other European visitors to the island. Fuller feels that biological evidence ties the dodo most closely to the pigeon, and to formulate theories on its behavior and characteristics, he identifies other living and extinct birds that may be related. He also discusses what it is about the dodo that has held human interest through time and has distinguished dodos from other extinct animals. People have honored and fictionalized the dodo in stories, cartoons, children's books, poems, and knickknacks since their demise, and the book features photographs that illustrate the legend of the dodo. This account of the dodo is fascinating not only for the factual study of its physiology and habitat, but it also brings to light the capacity of humans to destroy and then honor a vulnerable creature. (Review by Christina Sent)

***Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* by Stephen Greenblatt**

In Stephen Greenblatt's biography, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, it is clear that Greenblatt is presenting "theories" about the life of Shakespeare. During his quest to write this text, Greenblatt carefully studied historical documentation on Shakespeare, his family, and associates. From these papers, Greenblatt tries to piece together exactly how Shakespeare was shaped by his 16th century world and how it affected his writing. Whether you agree or not with Greenblatt's theories, I believe the reader will find this an interesting glimpse into Shakespeare's world. (Review by Holly Bunt)

***The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* by Benjamin Franklin (1944 ed. with illustrations by Thomas Hart Benton)**

This was among the first great books ever written by an American, begun in 1771 as a series of letters to his son. It is not only Franklin's life story (up to age 50) but a book about how to live one's life. It is good to read this with the new Walter Isaacson book in order to compare how Franklin himself describes certain episodes in his life, or how he may have edited some of the details. (Review by Tom Vince)

***Jesus Land: A Memoir* by Julia Scheeres**

This author brings us poignantly into her world of dysfunction, oppression and never-wavering faith in family as we journey with her throughout her life. Julia grows up in a multiracial upper-middle class family consisting of her mother, father and two adopted brothers. Racism against all three children is rampant in school and in society. Julia's father uses his rage against non-perfection to dole out harsh punishment to her brothers, and when David, Julia's youngest brother, lashes out, Julia shortly follows down a path that their parents deem unacceptable. The journey takes the two bonded siblings to a Christian reform school in the Dominican Republic, where children are reduced to little more than animals. The strong bond that Julia and David share carries them through life's atrocities and reaffirms a life-long quest for acceptance. (Review by Tracy Schooner)

(continued on page 5)



"I should say winter had given the bone and sinew to Literature, summer the tissues and the blood."

- John Burroughs - "The Snow-Walkers" from *In the Catskills*



Faculty/Staff Recommendations

(continued from page 2)

Dana Cunningham recommends:

The Historian by **Elizabeth Kostova**

“Exotic locales, tantalizing history, a family legacy and a love of the bloodthirsty: it's hard to imagine that readers won't be bitten, too.” [Publishers Weekly]
[Recommended in Fall '05 by Julie Pratt]

Carm Smith recommends:

A Confederacy of Dunces by **John Kennedy Toole**

“Written in the Sixties, the author committed suicide and never saw it published. His mother was instrumental in getting it published some 20 years later, and it went on to win the Pulitzer for fiction in 1980.”

Britt Flanagan and **Midge Karam** recommend:

The Piano Tuner by **Daniel Mason**

“He has written a profound adventure story with an unexpected climax, as the mild piano tuner finally becomes the hero of his own life.” [The New Yorker]
[Recommended in Summer '05 by Patty Campbell]

Pat Smith recommends:

The Rule of Four by **Ian Caldwell** and **Dustin Thomason**

“Great intrigue in an academic setting.”

Cathie Buffett recommends:

Teens Under the Influence: The Truth About Kids, Alcohol, and Other Drugs – How to Recognize the Problem and What to Do About It
by **Katherine Ketcham** and **Nicholas A. Pace, M.D.**

“An honest, informative evaluation of a serious problem.” [Booklist]

Gerard Manoli recommends:

Open Season by **C.J. Box**

“The Joe Pickett Novels—start with the first (**Open Season**), and I know you'll read all five.”

Julie Pratt recommends:

Leeway Cottage by **Beth Gutcheon**

“Another good book.”

Jeffrey Cronheim recommends:

The Rubäiyät of Omar Khayyäm
translated by **Edward Fitzgerald**

“Everything is destined to go wrong, so why bother getting worked up about it?”

Non-fiction Reviews (continued from page 4):

The Glass Castle by **Jeannette Walls**

Walls has written a gripping memoir of her childhood spent drifting across the country living mostly in abject poverty. Her father was debilitated by alcoholism, and her mother was a self-absorbed artist with manic/depressive behaviors. Her mother would often buy art supplies instead of food for the family, and her father would disappear to the bars for days on end. When she was a preteen, Jeannette and her family move back to her father's hometown of Welch, WV. Welch was a depressed Appalachian mining town, and the Walls lived for years without indoor plumbing, electricity, a phone or a refrigerator. Jeannette and her three siblings banded together, and each found a way to escape Welch and work for a better life. Despite the neglect, her parents were bright individuals and gifted teachers instilling a love of literature, art, and science. Walls writes of her parents with love and respect in a way that is at once heartbreaking and humorous. (Review by Paula Campanelli)

Benjamin Franklin: An American Life by **Walter Isaacson**

Here is an authoritative yet readable biography of the great American patriot and innovator whose long and resourceful life had a direct impact on the outcome of the American Revolution. This may be the best book about Franklin in the last several decades, and it arrived in time for the 300th anniversary of his birth (in 2006). (Review by Tom Vince)



Fiction Reviews

(continued from page 3)



The Grace That Keeps This World by Tom Bailey

This is a haunting and absorbing novel about a father and his two sons and a hunting accident in the wilds of the Adirondacks that changes their world forever. *(Review by Tom Vince)*

The Pale Horseman by Bernard Cornwell

A sequel to **The Last Kingdom**, Cornwell's historical novel continues the story of Uhtred of Bebbanburg, in ninth century England. In **The Last Kingdom**, Uhtred was cheated out of his English kingdom by his uncle, captured and raised by the barbarian Danes, and returned to England to fight for his homeland against the Danish would-be conquerors. Now, as the Danes occupy virtually all of the English kingdoms except Wessex, Uhtred finds himself in hiding with King Alfred (before he was "The Great") in a Wessex swamp making plans to drive the Danes out of the country once and for all. Divided loyalty still plagues Uhtred as he loathes the self-proclaimed King Arthur and encounters the Dane who saved his life—but as the ultimate battle for England commences, Uhtred leads the charge for king and country. *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

One Good Knight by Mercedes Lackey

Unfortunately, Princess Andromeda has been chosen as the next virgin sacrifice to the dragon, and Sir George joins her on a quest to search for the dragon's hideout after she uses her wits to evade death. *(New Fiction!)*

The Zahir: A Novel of Obsession by Paulo Coelho

What is love? What is commitment? What is reality? These are some of the questions posed in this novel about a famous writer whose wife has disappeared. Has she been kidnapped or murdered? Or has she left him without a word of explanation? As the years pass, he becomes convinced that his wife is alive and did purposefully leave him, but why? The search for her becomes his Zahir—"that which is unable to go unnoticed." *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

Gone by Lisa Gardner

A running car, left desolate on the side of the road during a thunderstorm... Your estranged wife's purse left haphazardly on the seat... This begins Lisa Gardner's latest thriller, which has it all! Murder, espionage, passion, and mystery rolled up into one great page-turner. Pierce Quincy must utilize his highly-regarded tools as an ex-FBI profiler to figure out his wife's disappearance one stormy night. Follow the paths of Pierce and his wife, Rainie Conner, as they battle against a madman who will stop at nothing to get his latest kill thrill. *(Review by Tracy Schooner)*

The Myth of You and Me by Leah Stewart

Once upon a time, Sonia Gray was the best friend of Cameron Wilson until a falling out in college ended the relationship—or so Cameron thought until she receives a letter from Sonia announcing her marriage and wondering what happened to their friendship. Forced to make a decision dictated in part by the death and the final request of her best friend and employer, Cameron embarks on a physical and emotional trip to bygone times, places, and relationships as she makes her way back to Sonia. *(Review by Jacque Miller)*