

Book Discussion Title List

Title	Author	Description
The Secret River	Kate Grenville	Grenville, author of the Orange Award winner <i>The Idea of Perfection</i> (2002), tells a story rooted in her family's Australian past. In the early 1800s, William Thornhill is sentenced to death for stealing a shipload of expensive woods. Offered an alternative, he chooses transportation to New South Wales, Australia. Six sections describe Thornhill's progress from convict laborer to landowner, conveying the broader history of Australian colonization through the experience of one convict family.
Carry Me Down	M J Hyland	John Egan is an extremely tall 11-year-old boy living in the small town of Gorey, Ireland, with the moody triumvirate of his mother, father and grandmother. As he faces the trials of home and school life, John feels he has no place in the world, and his frustration fuels odd obsessions: with the <i>Guinness Book of World Records</i> , with physical human contact and with his "gift" for detecting lies. His parents, already sorting through their own uneasy relationship, puzzle over their only son with doctors and teachers, pushing John to a moment of crisis, which may prove his undoing.
In the Country of Men	Hisham Matar	Matar's debut novel tracks the effects of Libyan strongman Khadafy's 1969 September revolution on the el-Dawani family, as seen by nine-year-old Suleiman, who narrates as an adult.
Mother's Milk	Edward St Aubyn	First we meet Robert, who provides an exceptionally droll and convincing account of being born; then Patrick, a hilariously churlish husband who has been sexually abandoned by his wife in favor of motherhood; then Mary, who's consumed by her children and an overwhelming desire not to repeat the mistakes of her own mother.
The Night Watch	Sarah Waters	This novel visits a group of characters in World War II-era London at three different points in their lives: in the aftermath of the war, during its height, and the early days of the war. The format introduces the characters while gradually revealing the intricacies of how they are all connected. Vivian is a vibrant young woman in love with a married soldier. Her brother, Duncan, is drifting through life after spending the years during the war in jail. Helen is worried her relationship with Julia is crumbling. Kay wanders aimlessly, searching for purpose in a broken city. All are affected and irrevocably changed by the war.
The Inheritance of Loss	Kiran Desai	Sai, his sixteen-year-old orphaned granddaughter; a chatty cook; and the cook's son, Biju, who is hopscotching from one miserable New York restaurant to another, trying to stay a step ahead of the INS. When a Nepalese insurgency in the mountains threatens Sai's new-sprung romance with her handsome tutor, their lives descend into chaos. The cook witnesses India's hierarchy being overturned and discarded. The judge revisits his past and his role in Sai and Biju's intertwining lives.
On Beauty	Zadie Smith	<i>On Beauty</i> is the story of an interracial family living in the university town of Wellington, Massachusetts, whose misadventures in the culture wars—on both sides of the Atlantic—serve to skewer everything from family life to political correctness to the combustive collision between the personal and the political.
The Accidental	Ali Smith	Barefoot, thirty-something Amber shows up at the door of a Norfolk cottage that the Smarts are renting for the summer, insinuating herself into their family. Dazzled by her seeming exoticism, the Smarts begin to examine the accidents of their lives under the searing lens of Amber's perceptions. When the mother Eve finally banishes her from the cottage, Amber disappears from their sight, but not—as they find when they return home to London—from their profoundly altered lives.
Never Let Me Go	Kazuo Ishiguro	As children Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were students at Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school secluded in the English countryside. It was a place of mercurial cliques and mysterious rules where

		teachers were constantly reminding their charges of how special they were. Now, years later, Kathy is a young woman. Ruth and Tommy have reentered her life. And for the first time she is beginning to look back at their shared past and understand just what it is that makes them special—and how that gift will shape the rest of their time together.	
A Long, Long Way	Sebastian Barry	In <i>A Long Long Way</i> has created an unforgettable portrait of the horrors of war through the story of Willie Dunne, a young man who leaves his native Dublin in 1914 to join the Allies on the Western Front. Caught between the catastrophic violence he encounters there and the growing political tension at home over Irish independence, Willie finds himself confronting unbearable choices regarding family, patriotism, and the devotion he feels toward his regiment.	
Arthur and George	Julian Barnes	As boys, George, the son of a Midlands vicar, and Arthur, living in shabby genteel Edinburgh, find themselves in a vast and complex world at the heart of the British Empire. Years later—one struggling with his identity in a world hostile to his ancestry, the other creating the world’s most famous detective while in love with a woman who is not his wife—their fates become inextricably connected.	
The Sea	John Banville	In this luminous new novel about love, loss, and the unpredictable power of memory, John Banville introduces us to Max Morden, a middle-aged Irishman who has gone back to the seaside town where he spent his summer holidays as a child to cope with the recent loss of his wife. It is also a return to the place where he met the Graces, the well-heeled family with whom he experienced the strange suddenness of both love and death for the first time.	
The Line of Beauty	Alan Hollinghurst	Nick is a Jamesian scholar, obsessed with aesthetic beauty, who is coming of age against the backdrop of Thatcher-era England. He's an outsider--gay, living with the wealthy family of an Oxford mate whose father, Gerald, is a Tory MP--and often doesn't engage with the world around him so much as observe it. Alex Jennings's smooth, pleasant voice easily conveys Nick's internal observations, as well as all the class distinctions of a large cast of British characters--Gerald's upper-crust brusqueness; decadent Wani's lazy drawl; the Caribbean-tinged accent of Leo, Nick's first male lover.	
Bitter Fruit	Achmat Dangor	The last time Silas Ali encountered Lieutenant Du Boise, Silas was locked in the back of a police van and the lieutenant was conducting a vicious assault on Silas's wife, Lydia, in revenge for her husband's participation in Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. When Silas sees Du Boise by chance twenty years later, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is about to deliver its report, crimes from the past erupt into the present, splintering the Alis' fragile peace. Meanwhile Silas and Lydia's son, Mikey, a thoroughly contemporary young hip-hop lothario, contends in unforeseen ways with his parents' pasts.	
The Electric Michaelangelo	Sarah Hall	Cy Parks is the <i>Electric Michelangelo</i> , an artist of extraordinary gifts whose medium happens to be the pliant, shifting canvas of the human body. Fleeing his mother's legacy -- a consumptives' hotel in a fading English seaside resort -- Cy reinvents himself in the incandescent honky-tonk of Coney Island in its heyday between the two world wars. Amid the carnival decadence of freak shows and roller coasters, enchanters and enigmas, scam artists and marks, Cy will find his muse: an enigmatic circus beauty who surrenders her body to his work, but whose soul tantalizingly eludes him.	
Cloud Atlas	David Mitchell	A reluctant voyager crossing the Pacific in 1850; a disinherited composer blagging a precarious livelihood in between-the-wars Belgium; a high-minded journalist in Governor Reagan's California; a vanity publisher fleeing his gangland creditors; a genetically modified "dinery server" on death-row; and Zachry, a young Pacific Islander witnessing the nightfall of science and civilisation -- the narrators of <i>Cloud Atlas</i> hear each other's echoes down the corridor of history,	

		and their destinies are changed in ways great and small.	
The Master	Colm Toibin	Like Michael Cunningham in <i>The Hours</i> , Colm Tóibín captures the extraordinary mind and heart of a great writer. Beautiful and profoundly moving, <i>The Master</i> tells the story of a man born into one of America's first intellectual families who leaves his country in the late nineteenth century to live in Paris, Rome, Venice, and London among privileged artists and writers.	
I'll Go to Bed at Noon	Gerard Woodward	Colette Jones has had problems of her own with alcohol, but now it seems as though her whole family is in danger of turning to booze. Her oldest son, Janus, the family's golden boy, has wasted his talents as a concert pianist. His drinking sprees with his brother-in-law, Bill, a pseudo-Marxist supermarket butcher who sees alcohol as central to the proletarian revolution, have turned violent and landed him in trouble with the police. Meanwhile Colette's recently widowed older brother is desperate to numb his grief. This is a darkly funny novel about a quirky, troubled family as it lurches from farce to tragedy to pub and back again.	
Vernon God Little	DBC Pierre	In the wake of <i>The Onion's</i> devastatingly funny riffs on 9/11 comes this satiric first novel about the fallout from a Columbine-like shooting in Martirio, Texas, the barbecue-sauce capital of America. Vernon God Little has been mistakenly identified as the shooter in a rampage that left 16 dead at the local high school. Stalked by the media, Vernon feels like his life has turned into a TV movie (he hopes Brian Dennehy will be his lawyer). His mother and her frighteningly simple-minded suburban posse of friends think that emotional support consists of a continuous supply of ribs from the Bar-B-Chew Barn, although Vernon is facing the death penalty.	
Brick Lane	Monica Ali	Nazneen leaves her Bangladeshi village and is sent to London to marry an older man who lives in Brick Lane. There she observes her neighbors; raises a family; learns to love the kind, ineffectual man she married--and finds a new love that forces her to make choices for the first time. The simplicity of Ali's wonderfully written story is deceptive, for this is a book about bravery, honesty, love, and the kindness of strangers.	
Oryx and Crake	Margaret Atwood	Snowman may be the last man alive after a killer virus has decimated the world. In flashback, Snowman reveals his pre-plague world and the events leading to its inevitable devastation. In a society whose morality and ethics have fallen to the Great God Science, biotechies tampering with the genetic code have engineered brainless chickens with three breasts; designer babies; BlyssPlus, the Fountain of Youth in a pill; and a grotesque assortment of animals created for organ and tissue transplants.	
The Good Doctor	Damon Galgut	When Laurence Waters arrives at his new post at a deserted rural hospital, staff physician Frank Eloff is instantly suspicious. Laurence is everything Frank is not—young, optimistic, and full of big ideas. Frank reestablishes a liaison with a woman, one that will have unexpected consequences. A self-made dictator from apartheid days is rumored to be active in cross-border smuggling, and a group of soldiers has moved in to track him, led by a man from Frank's own dark past. Laurence sees only possibilities—but in a world where the past is demanding restitution from the present, his ill-starred idealism cannot last.	
<i>What Was She Thinking: Notes on a Scandal</i>	Zoe Heller	Schoolteacher Barbara Covett has led a solitary life until Sheba Hart, the new art teacher at St. George's, befriends her. But even as their relationship develops, so too does another: Sheba has begun an illicit affair with an underage male student. When the scandal turns into a media circus, Barbara decides to write an account in her friend's defense--and ends up revealing not only Sheba's secrets, but also her own.	
Astonishing Splashes of Color	Clare Morrall	Kitty struggles to come to terms with her life, including the loss of her mother, a miscarriage, and an unconventional marriage to her husband, who lives in the apartment next door. And when her father and brothers reveal a family secret long hidden, it overwhelms Kitty's tenuous hold on reality	

		and propels her on an impetuous journey to the brink of madness.	
<i>Atonement</i>	Ian McEwan	On a summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives and her precocious imagination bring about a crime that will change all their lives, a crime whose repercussions <i>Atonement</i> follows through the chaos and carnage of World War II and into the close of the twentieth century.	
The Life of Pi	Yann Martel	Pi Patel, a young man from India, tells how he was shipwrecked and stranded in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger for 227 days. This outlandish story is only the core of a deceptively complex three-part novel about, ultimately, memory as a narrative and about how we choose truths. Unlike other authors who use shifting chronologies and unreliable narrators, Martel frequently achieves something deeper than technical gimmickry. Pi, regardless of what actually happened to him, earns our trust as a narrator and a character, and makes good, in his way, on the promise in the last sentence of part one--that is, just before the tiger saga--"This story has a happy ending."	
Family Matters	Rohinton Mistry	At the age of seventy-nine, Nariman Vakeel, already suffering from Parkinson's disease, breaks an ankle and finds himself wholly dependent on his family. His step-children, Coomy and Jal, have a spacious apartment (in the inaptly named Chateau Felicity), but are too squeamish and resentful to tend to his physical needs. Nariman must now turn to his younger daughter, Roxana, her husband, Yezad, and their two sons, who share a small, crowded home. Their decision will test not only their material resources but, in surprising ways, all their tolerance, compassion, integrity, and faith.	
Unless	Carol Shields	Forty-four-year-old Reta Winters, wife, mother, writer, and translator, is living a happy life until one of her three daughters drops out of university to sit on a downtown street corner silent and cross-legged with a begging bowl in her lap and a placard round her neck that says "Goodness."	
The Story of Lucy Gault	William Trevor	The Gault family leads a life of privilege in early 1920s Ireland, but the threat of violence leads the parents of nine-year-old Lucy to decide to leave for England, her mother's home. Lucy cannot bear the thought of leaving Lahardane, their country house with its beautiful land and nearby beach, and a dog she has befriended. On the day before they are to leave, Lucy runs away, hoping to convince her parents to stay. Instead, she sets off a series of tragic misunderstandings that affect all of Lahardane's inhabitants for the rest of their lives.	
Fingersmith	Sarah Waters	In Victorian London, the orphaned Sue Trinder is raised by Mrs. Sucksby, den mother to a family of thieves, or "fingersmiths." To repay Mrs. Sucksby's kindness, Sue gets involved in a scam but soon regrets it. Divided into three parts, the tale is narrated by two orphaned girls whose lives are inextricably linked. Waters's penchant for byzantine plotting can get a bit exhausting, but even at its densest moments--and remember, this is smoggy London circa 1862--it remains mesmerizing. A damning critique of Victorian moral and sexual hypocrisy, a gripping melodrama, and a love story to boot, this book ingeniously reworks some truly classic themes	
Dirt Music	Tim Winton	Georgie Jutland is a mess. At 40, with her career in ruins, she finds herself stranded in White Point with a fisherman she doesn't love and two kids whose dead mother she can never replace. Her days have fallen into domestic tedium and social isolation. Her nights are a blur of vodka and pointless loitering in cyberspace. One morning, in the boozy pre-dawn gloom, she looks up from the computer screen to see a shadow lurking on the beach below, and a dangerous new element enters her life. Luther Fox, the local poacher. So begins an unlikely alliance.	
The Map of Love	Ahdaf Soueif	Isabel travels from New York to Cairo with a trunk containing diaries and possessions of her great-grandmother, Anna Winterbourne. Omar, a conductor of international fame (and the man Isabel loves), refers her to his sister Amal for help in understanding the contents. What he fails to tell her is that they are distant cousins: Sharif, the man who becomes Anna's husband, is Amal and Omar's	

		great-uncle. And so, in turn, we learn of Anna's life and love for Sharif and her adopted country and of Isabel and Omar. Amal, the link between the two worlds, untangles the old story and entangles a new one.	
Quarantine	Jim Crace	<i>Quarantine</i> is an imaginative and powerful retelling of Christ's fabled forty-day fast in the desert. In Jim Crace's account, Jesus travels to a cluster of arid caves, where he crosses paths with a small group of exiles and changes their lives in unexpected ways. Evoking the strangeness and beauty of the desert landscape, Crace provocatively interprets one of our most important stories.	
The God of Small Things	Arundhati Roy	The story of the tragic decline of an Indian family whose members suffer the terrible consequences of forbidden love, <i>The God of Small Things</i> is set in the state of Kerala, on the southernmost tip of India. Armed only with the invincible innocence of children, the twins Rahel and Esthappen fashion a childhood for themselves in the shade of the wreck that is their family -- their lonely, lovely mother, Ammu (who loves by night the man her children love by day), their blind grandmother, Mammachi (who plays Handel on her violin), their beloved uncle Chacko (Rhodes scholar, pickle baron, radical Marxist, bottom-pincher), their enemy, Baby Kochamma (ex-nun and incumbent grandaunt), and the ghost of an imperial entomologist's moth (with unusually dense dorsal tufts).	
<i>The English Patient</i>	Michael Ondaatje	The nurse Hana, exhausted by death, obsessively tends to her last surviving patient. Caravaggio, the thief, tries to reimagine who he is, now that his hands are hopelessly maimed. The Indian sapper Kip searches for hidden bombs in a landscape where nothing is safe but himself. And at the center of his labyrinth lies the English patient, nameless and hideously burned, a man who is both a riddle and a provocation to his companions—and whose memories of suffering, rescue, and betrayal illuminate this book like flashes of heat lightning.	
Persepolis (GN)	Marjane_Satrap	Persepolis paints an unforgettable portrait of daily life in Iran: of the bewildering contradictions between home life and public life and of the enormous toll repressive regimes exact on the individual spirit. Marjane's child's-eye-view of dethroned emperors, state-sanctioned whippings, and heroes of the revolution allows us to learn as she does the history of this fascinating country and of her own extraordinary family..	
Fieldwork	Mischa Berlinski	This novel is an amalgam of murder mystery, historical novel, psychological thriller, and even travelogue, but its multiple dimensions are not a drawback. The premise is solid and creative: a young American freelance writer accompanies his girlfriend to Thailand, where, from a person he'd known before, he is offered a tantalizing story to pursue, "as a gift." It seems a woman anthropologist had been imprisoned in Thailand for murder and subsequently killed herself during her incarceration. The narrator takes up the story, assumes the challenge, and goes in search of answers.	
Tree of Smoke	Denis Johnson	<i>Tree of Smoke</i> is the story of William "Skip" Sands, CIA--engaged in Psychological Operations against the Vietcong--and the disasters that befall him. It is also the story of the Houston brothers, Bill and James, young men who drift out of the Arizona desert and into a war where the line between disinformation and delusion has blurred away.	
Varieties of Disturbance	Lydia Davies	In <i>Varieties of Disturbance</i> , her fourth collection, Davis extends her reach as never before in stories that take every form from sociological studies to concise poems. Her subjects include the five senses, fourth-graders, good taste, and tropical storms. She offers a reinterpretation of insomnia and re-creates the ordeals of Kafka in the kitchen. She questions the lengths to which one should go to save the life of a caterpillar, proposes a clear account of the sexual act, rides the bus, probes the limits of marital fidelity, and unlocks the secret to a long and happy life.	
Then We Came to the End	Joshua Ferris	No one knows us quite the same way as the men and women who sit beside us in department	

		meetings and crowd the office refrigerator with their labeled yogurts. Every office is a family of sorts, and the ad agency Joshua Ferris brilliantly depicts in his debut novel is family at its strangest and best, coping with a business downturn in the time-honored way: through gossip, pranks, and increasingly frequent coffee breaks.	
Like You'd Understand	Jim Shepard	<i>Like You'd Understand, Anyway</i> reaches from Chernobyl to Bridgeport, with a host of narrators only Shepard could bring to pitch-perfect life. Among them: a middle-aged Aeschylus taking his place at Marathon, still vying for parental approval. A maddeningly indefatigable Victorian explorer hauling his expedition, whaleboat and all, through the Great Australian Desert in midsummer. The first woman in space and her cosmonaut lover, caught in the star-crossed orbits of their joint mission. Two Texas high school football players at the top of their food chain, soliciting their fathers' attention by leveling everything before them on the field. And the rational and compassionate chief executioner of Paris, whose occupation, during the height of the Terror, eats away at all he holds dear.	
Legacy of Ashes: A History of the CIA (NF)	Tim Weiner	With shocking revelations that made headlines in papers across the country, Pulitzer-Prize-winner Tim Weiner gets at the truth behind the CIA and uncovers here why nearly every CIA Director has left the agency in worse shape than when he found it; and how these profound failures jeopardize our national security.	
Brother I'm Dying (NF)	Edwidge Danticat	From the age of four, award-winning writer Edwidge Danticat came to think of her uncle Joseph as her "second father," when she was placed in his care after her parents left Haiti for America. And so she was both elated and saddened when, at twelve, she joined her parents and youngest brothers in New York City. As Edwidge made a life in a new country, adjusting to being far away from so many who she loved, she and her family continued to fear for the safety of those still in Haiti as the political situation deteriorated.	
God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything (NF)	Christopher Hitchens	In the tradition of Bertrand Russell's <i>Why I Am Not a Christian</i> and Sam Harris's recent bestseller, <i>The End of Faith</i> , Christopher Hitchens makes the ultimate case against religion. With a close and erudite reading of the major religious texts, he documents the ways in which religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual repression, and a distortion of our origins in the cosmos. With eloquent clarity, Hitchens frames the argument for a more secular life based on science and reason, in which hell is replaced by the Hubble Telescope's awesome view of the universe, and Moses and the burning bush give way to the beauty and symmetry of the double helix.	
Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution (NF)	Woody Holton	Woody Holton upends what we think we know of the Constitution's origins by telling the history of the average Americans who challenged the framers of the Constitution and forced on them the revisions that produced the document we now venerate. The framers who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 were determined to reverse America's post-Revolutionary War slide into democracy. They believed too many middling Americans exercised too much influence over state and national policies. That the framers were only partially successful in curtailing citizen rights is due to the reaction, sometimes violent, of unruly average Americans.	
The Echo Maker	Richard Powers	On a winter night on a remote Nebraska road, twenty-seven-year-old Mark Schluter has a near-fatal car accident. His older sister, Karin, returns reluctantly to their hometown to nurse Mark back from a traumatic head injury. But when Mark emerges from a coma, he believes that this woman--who looks, acts, and sounds just like his sister--is really an imposter. When Karin contacts the famous cognitive neurologist Gerald Weber for help, he diagnoses Mark as having Capgras syndrome.	
Only Revolutions	Mark Danielewski	The second novel from cult author Danielewski (<i>House of Leaves</i> , 2000) consists of the dual free-verse narratives of 16-year-old Hailey and Sam, which are meant to be read in tandem; eight pages of Hailey's story are to be read first, then the volume needs to be flipped upside down and read in	

		reverse for Sam's story, until the two narratives meet in the middle. With a Jack Kerouac-like reverence for the open road and a Dr. Seuss-like feel for wordplay, Danielewski tells an epic love story as the two teens travel across time, from the Civil War to the year 2063, in vehicles ranging from a Model T to a Mustang.	
A Disorder Peculiar to the Country	Ken Kalfus	Joyce and Marshall each think the other is killed on September 11—and must swallow their disappointment when the other arrives home. As their bitter divorce is further complicated by anthrax scares, suicide bombs, and foreign wars, they suffer, in ways unexpectedly personal and increasingly ludicrous, the many strange ravages of our time. In this astonishing black comedy, Kalfus suggests how our nation's public calamities have encroached upon our most private illusions.	
Water for Elephants	Sara Gruen	As a young man, Jacob Jankowski was tossed by fate onto a rickety train that was home to the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. It was the early part of the great Depression, and for Jacob, now ninety, the circus world he remembers was both his salvation and a living hell. A veterinary student just shy of a degree, he was put in charge of caring for the circus menagerie. It was there that he met Marlena, the beautiful equestrian star married to August, the charismatic but twisted animal trainer. And he met Rosie, an untrainable elephant who was the great gray hope for this third-rate traveling show. The bond that grew among this unlikely trio was one of love and trust, and, ultimately, it was their only hope for survival.	
Eat the Document	Dana Spiotta	Spiotta, whose debut novel <i>Lightning Field</i> (2001) garnered critical acclaim, has pleased some critics and disappointed others. With a title based on a documentary about Bob Dylan, the novel raises questions about identity, intent, and outcomes. Some reviewers praised Spiotta's gift for delving deep into idealism and exploring the collective consequences of individual actions. Detractors cited an uneven storyline (the novel cuts back and forth between Mary's past and present, and the stories of Jason, Bobby, and Henry), while admitting that Jason's quest to learn the truth about his mother remained compelling.	
The Zero	Jess Walter	As the smoke from 9/11 slowly clears, Remy finds that his memory is skipping, lurching between moments of lucidity and days when he doesn't seem to be living his own life at all. Remy has a new girlfriend he doesn't know, a son who pretends he's dead, and an unsettling new job chasing a trail of paper scraps for a shadowy intelligence agency known as the Department of Documentation. Whether that trail will lead Remy to an elusive terror cell—or send him circling back to himself—is only one of the questions posed by this provocative yet deeply human novel.	
The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dustbowl (NF)	Timothy Egan	The dust storms that terrorized America's High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since, and the stories of the people that held on have never been fully told. Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times journalist and author Timothy Egan follows a half-dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, going from sod huts to new framed houses to huddling in basements with the windows sealed by damp sheets in a futile effort to keep the dust out.	
At Canaan's Edge : America in the King Years 1965-68 (NF)	Taylor Branch	<i>At Canaan's Edge</i> concludes <i>America in the King Years</i> , a three-volume history that will endure as a masterpiece of storytelling on American race, violence, and democracy. Pulitzer Prize-winner and bestselling author Taylor Branch makes clear in this magisterial account of the civil rights movement that Martin Luther King, Jr., earned a place next to James Madison and Abraham Lincoln in the pantheon of American history.	
Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone (NF)	Rajiv Chandrasekaran	In this acclaimed firsthand account, the former Baghdad bureau chief of <i>The Washington Post</i> gives us an intimate portrait of life inside this Oz-like bubble, which continued unaffected by the growing mayhem outside. This is a quietly devastating tale of imperial folly, and the definitive history of	

		those early days when things went irrevocably wrong in Iraq.	
Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present (NF)	Peter Hessler	A century ago, outsiders saw China as a place where nothing ever changes. Today the country has become one of the most dynamic regions on earth. In <i>Oracle Bones</i> , Peter Hessler explores the human side of China's transformation, viewing modern-day China and its growing links to the Western world through the lives of a handful of ordinary people. In a narrative that gracefully moves between the ancient and the present, the East and the West, Hessler captures the soul of a country that is undergoing a momentous change before our eyes.	
The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 (NF)	Lawrence Wright	A sweeping narrative history of the events leading to 9/11, a groundbreaking look at the people and ideas, the terrorist plans and the Western intelligence failures that culminated in the assault on America. Lawrence Wright's remarkable book is based on five years of research and hundreds of interviews that he conducted in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, England, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States. Brilliantly conceived and written, <i>The Looming Tower</i> draws all elements of the story into a galvanizing narrative that adds immeasurably to our understanding of how we arrived at September 11, 2001.	
The Moor's Last Sigh	Salman Rushdie	Booker Prize-winning author Salman Rushdie combines a ferociously witty family saga with a surreally imagined and sometimes blasphemous chronicle of modern India and flavors the mixture with peppery soliloquies on art, ethnicity, religious fanaticism, and the terrifying power of love. Moraes "Moor" Zogoiby, the last surviving scion of a dynasty of Cochinese spice merchants and crime lords, is also a compulsive storyteller and an exile. As he travels a route that takes him from India to Spain, he leaves behind a tale of mad passions and volcanic family hatreds, of titanic matriarchs and their mesmerized offspring, of premature deaths and curses that strike beyond the grave.	
<i>The Remains of the Day</i>	Kazuo Ishiguro	Stevens, an elderly butler who has spent 30 years in the service of Lord Darlington, ruminates on the past and inadvertently slackens his rigid grip on his emotions to confront the central issues of his life. Glacially reserved, snobbish and humorless, Stevens has devoted his life to his concept of duty and responsibility, hoping to reach the pinnacle of his profession through totally selfless dedication and a ruthless suppression of sentiment. Having made a virtue of stoic dignity, he is proud of his impassive response to his father's death and his "correct" behavior with the spunky former housekeeper, Miss Kenton.	
The Unbearable Lightness of Being	Milan Kundera	A young woman in love with a man torn between his love for her and his incorrigible womanizing; one of his mistresses and her humbly faithful lover -- these are the two couples whose story is told in this masterful novel. In a world in which lives are shaped by irrevocable choices and by fortuitous events, a world in which everything occurs but once, existence seems to lose its substance, its weight. Hence, we feel "the unbearable lightness of being" not only as the consequence of our pristine actions but also in the public sphere, and the two inevitably intertwine.	
<i>And the Band Played On: Politics, People and Aids Epidemic (NF)</i>	Randy Shilts	Why was AIDS allowed to spread unchecked during the early 1980s while our most trusted institutions ignored or denied the threat? <i>And the Band Played On</i> reveals how the federal government put its budgetary concerns ahead of the nation's welfare, how health authorities placed political expediency before public health, and how some scientists valued international prestige more than saving lives. This masterpiece of investigative reporting has become the very foundation for all ongoing debate about the greatest medical crisis of the twentieth century.	
The Plot Against America	Philip Roth	A. Lindbergh defeated Franklin Roosevelt by a landslide in the 1940 presidential election, fear invaded every Jewish household in America. Not only had Lindbergh, in a nationwide radio address, publicly blamed the Jews for selfishly pushing America toward a pointless war with Nazi Germany, but upon taking office as the thirty-third president of the United States, he negotiated a	

		cordial "understanding" with Adolf Hitler, whose conquest of Europe and virulent anti-Semitic policies he appeared to accept without difficulty.	
The Poisonwood Bible	Barbara Kingsolver	The Poisonwood Bible is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it -- from garden seeds to Scripture -- is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.	
Guns, Germs and Steel	Jared Diamond	Explaining what William McNeill called <i>The Rise of the West</i> has become the central problem in the study of global history. In <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> Jared Diamond presents the biologist's answer: geography, demography, and ecological happenstance. Diamond evenhandedly reviews human history on every continent since the Ice Age at a rate that emphasizes only the broadest movements of peoples and ideas. Yet his survey is binocular: one eye has the rather distant vision of the evolutionary biologist, while the other eye--and his heart--belongs to the people of New Guinea, where he has done field work for more than 30 years.	
The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast	Douglas Brinkley	Bestselling historian Douglas Brinkley, a professor at Tulane University, lived through the destruction of Hurricane Katrina with his fellow New Orleans residents, and now in <i>The Great Deluge</i> he has written one of the first complete accounts of that harrowing week, which sorts out the bewildering events of the storm and its aftermath, telling the stories of unsung heroes and incompetent officials alike. Get a sample of his story--and clarify your own memories--by looking through the detailed timeline he has put together of the preparation, the hurricane, and the response to one of the worst disasters in American history.	
<i>Running with Scissors</i>	Augusten Burroughs	The true story of a boy whose mother (a poet with delusions of Anne Sexton) gave him away to be raised by her unorthodox psychiatrist who bore a striking resemblance to Santa Claus. So at the age of twelve, Burroughs found himself amidst Victorian squalor living with the doctor's bizarre family, and befriending a pedophile who resided in the backyard shed. The story of an outlaw childhood where rules were unheard of, and the Christmas tree stayed up all year-round, where Valium was consumed like candy, and if things got dull, an electroshock therapy machine could provide entertainment. The funny, harrowing, and bestselling account of an ordinary boy's survival under the most extraordinary circumstance.	
Einstein: His Life and Universe (B)	Walter Isaacson	A century after Albert Einstein began postulating his "Big Idea" about time, space, and gravity, a new biography examines the scientist whose public idolization was surpassed only by his legitimacy as one of humanity's greatest thinkers. Walter Isaacson, the author of excellent profiles of Benjamin Franklin and Henry Kissinger, utilizes a trove of material from recently opened Einstein archives to offer a probing look at a provocatively freethinking individual.	
American Prometheus : The Triumph and Tragedy of J Robert Oppenheimer (B)	Kai Bird and Martin J Sherwin	<i>American Prometheus</i> is the first full-scale biography of J. Robert Oppenheimer, "father of the atomic bomb," the brilliant, charismatic physicist who led the effort to capture the awesome fire of the sun for his country in time of war. Immediately after Hiroshima, he became the most famous scientist of his generation--one of the iconic figures of the twentieth century, the embodiment of modern man confronting the consequences of scientific progress.	
The Most Famous Man in America : The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher (B)	Debby Applegate	No one predicted success for Henry Ward Beecher at his birth in 1813. The blithe, boisterous son of the last great Puritan minister, he seemed destined to be overshadowed by his brilliant siblings--especially his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, who penned the century's bestselling book <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> . But when pushed into the ministry, the charismatic Beecher found international fame by shedding his father Lyman's Old Testament-style fire-and-brimstone theology and instead	

		preaching a New Testament–based gospel of unconditional love and healing, becoming one of the founding fathers of modern American Christianity.	
<i>John Adams (B)</i>	David McCullough	Told by one of our country's greatest historians, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of <i>Truman</i> , here is the extraordinary history of the birth of our country, seen through the lives of two extraordinary men: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Deftly, and with a key eye for detail, McCullough describes the childhood, youth, and coming of age of these two very different Americans who, though bitterly opposed to each other, profoundly influenced the destiny of America.	
<i>Angela's Ashes (B)</i>	Frank McCourt	So begins the luminous memoir of Frank McCourt, born in Depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants and raised in the slums of Limerick, Ireland. Frank's mother, Angela, has no money to feed the children since Frank's father Malachy, rarely works, and when he does he drinks his wages. Yet Malachy does nurture in Frank an appetite for the one thing he can provide: a story. Perhaps it is a story that accounts for Frank's survival. Wearing shoes repaired with tires, begging a pig's head for Christmas dinner, and searching the pubs for his father, Frank endures poverty, near-starvation and the casual cruelty of relatives and neighbors -- yet lives to tell his tale with eloquence, exuberance and remarkable forgiveness.	
Heart in the Right Place (B)	Carolyn Jourdan	Carolyn Jourdan, an attorney on Capitol Hill, thought she had it made. But when her mother has a heart attack, she returns home—to the Tennessee mountains, where her father is a country doctor and her mother works as his receptionist. Jourdan offers to fill in for her mother until she gets better. But days turn into weeks as she trades her suits for scrubs and finds herself following hazmat regulations for cleaning up bodily fluids; maintaining composure when confronted with a splinter the size of a steak knife; and tending to the loquacious Miss Hiawatha, whose daily doctor visits are never billed. Most important, though, she comes to understand what her caring and patient father means to her close-knit community.	
Dog Years (B)	Mark Doty	When Mark Doty decides to adopt a dog as a companion for his dying partner, he brings home Beau, a large, malnourished golden retriever in need of loving care. Joining Arden, the black retriever, to complete their family, Beau bounds back into life. Before long, the two dogs become Doty's intimate companions, and eventually the very life force that keeps him from abandoning all hope during the darkest days.	
Marley and Me (B)	John Grogan	Labrador retrievers are generally considered even-tempered, calm and reliable;and then there's Marley, the subject of this delightful tribute to one Lab who doesn't fit the mold. Grogan, a columnist for the <i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> , and his wife, Jenny, were newly married and living in West Palm Beach when they decided that owning a dog would give them a foretaste of the parenthood they anticipated. Marley was a sweet, affectionate puppy who grew into a lovably naughty, hyperactive dog. Grogan's chronicle of the adventures parents and children (eventually three) enjoyed with the overly energetic but endearing dog is delivered with great humor.	
Kabul Beauty School : An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil (B)	Deborah Rodriguez and Kristen Ohlson	Soon after the fall of the Taliban, in 2001, Deborah Rodriguez went to Afghanistan as part of a group offering humanitarian aid to this war-torn nation. Surrounded by men and women whose skills—as doctors, nurses, and therapists—seemed eminently more practical than her own, Rodriguez, a hairdresser and mother of two from Michigan, despaired of being of any real use. Yet she soon found she had a gift for befriending Afghans, and once her profession became known she was eagerly sought out by Westerners desperate for a good haircut and by Afghan women, who have a long and proud tradition of running their own beauty salons. Thus an idea was born.	
<i>Into the Wild (B)</i>	John Krakauer	In April 1992, a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. He had given \$25,000 in savings to a charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet and invented a life for himself.	

		Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. Jon Krakauer brings Chris McCandless's uncompromising pilgrimage out of the shadows and illuminates it with meaning in this mesmerizing and heartbreaking tour de force	
Tuesdays with Morrie (B) <i>Left Off</i>	Mitch Albom	Here Albom recounts how, recently, as the old man was dying, he renewed his warm relationship with his revered mentor. This is the vivid record of the teacher's battle with muscle-wasting amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. The dying man, largely because of his life-affirming attitude toward his death-dealing illness, became a sort of thanatopic guru, and was the subject of three Ted Koppel interviews on Nightline.	
Nineteen Minutes	Jodi Picoult	Popular and prolific Picoult (<i>My Sister's Keeper</i> , and <i>The Tenth Circle</i> , 2006) now tackles the troubling topic of a school shooting. Picoult considers the tragedy--in 19 quick minutes, 10 are dead and 19 are wounded--from several different perspectives, including that of the shooter, a troubled boy named Peter, who was mercilessly picked on at school. The small town of Sterling is rocked by the carnage.	
The Glass Castle (B)	Jeanette Walls	Walls, who spent years trying to hide her childhood experiences, allows the story to spill out in this remarkable recollection of growing up. From her current perspective as a contributor to MSNBC online, she remembers the poverty, hunger, jokes, and bullying she and her siblings endured, and she looks back at her parents: her flighty, self-indulgent mother, a Pollyanna unwilling to assume the responsibilities of parenting, and her father, troubled, brilliant Rex, whose ability to turn his family's downward-spiraling circumstances into adventures allowed his children to excuse his imperfections until they grew old enough to understand what he had done to them--and to himself.	
A Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (NF)	Doris Kearns Goodwin	A Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer spins a historical tale around Lincoln's unexpected rise to the presidency and his surprising, but brilliantly calculated, choice of three ex-rivals as members of his Cabinet.	
The Brief Wonderous Life of Oscar Wao	Junot Diaz	Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight ghetto nerd who—from the New Jersey home he shares with his old world mother and rebellious sister—dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, finding love. But Oscar may never get what he wants. Blame the fukú—a curse that has haunted Oscar's family for generations, following them on their epic journey from Santo Domingo to the USA.	
What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848	Daniel Walker Howe	In the latest installment in the Oxford History of the United States series, historian Howe, professor emeritus at Oxford University and UCLA (<i>The Political Culture of the American Whigs</i>), stylishly narrates a crucial period in U.S. history—a time of territorial growth, religious revival, booming industrialization, a recalibrating of American democracy and the rise of nationalist sentiment. Smaller but no less important stories run through the account: New York's gradual emancipation of slaves; the growth of higher education; the rise of the temperance movement (all classes, even ministers, imbibed heavily, Howe says).	
The Road	Cormac McCarthy	A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other.	
March	Geraldine Brooks	From Louisa May Alcott's beloved classic <i>Little Women</i> , Geraldine Brooks has animated the character of the absent father, March, and crafted a story "filled with the ache of love and marriage and with the power of war upon the mind and heart of one unforgettable man" (Sue Monk Kidd). With "pitch-perfect writing" (<i>USA Today</i>), Brooks follows March as he leaves behind his family to aid the Union cause in the Civil War.	

Gilead	Marilynne Robinson	Twenty-four years after her first novel, <i>Housekeeping</i> , Marilynne Robinson returns with an intimate tale of three generations from the Civil War to the twentieth century: a story about fathers and sons and the spiritual battles that still rage at America's heart. Writing in the tradition of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, Marilynne Robinson's beautiful, spare, and spiritual prose allows.
The March	E.L. Doctorow	In 1864, Union general William Tecumseh Sherman marched his sixty thousand troops through Georgia to the sea, and then up into the Carolinas. The army fought off Confederate forces, demolished cities, and accumulated a borne-along population of freed blacks and white refugees until all that remained was the dangerous transient life of the dispossessed and the triumphant. I
The Known World	Edward P Jones	One of the most acclaimed novels in recent memory, <i>The Known World</i> is a daring and ambitious work by Pulitzer Prize winner Edward P. Jones. <i>The Known World</i> tells the story of Henry Townsend, a black farmer and former slave who falls under the tutelage of William Robbins, the most powerful man in Manchester County, Virginia. Making certain he never circumvents the law, Townsend runs his affairs with unusual discipline. But when death takes him unexpectedly, his widow, Caldonia, can't uphold the estate's order, and chaos ensues. Jones has woven a footnote of history into an epic that takes an unflinching look at slavery in all its moral complexities.
Middlesex	Jeffrey Eugenides	Middlesex, by the much praised Jeffrey Eugenides, presents a huge problem for any reader. Its narrator, a Greek-American born with ambiguous genitalia, spent her/his childhood as an (allegedly) gorgeous little girl, but on discovering at adolescence that he was genetically a boy, transformed Callie into Cal.
<i>The Hours</i>	Michael Cunningham	In <i>The Hours</i> , Michael Cunningham, widely praised as one of the most gifted writers of his generation, draws inventively on the life and work of Virginia Woolf to tell the story of a group of contemporary characters struggling with the conflicting claims of love and inheritance, hope and despair. The narrative of Woolf's last days before her suicide early in World War II counterpoints the fictional stories of Richard, a famous poet whose life has been shadowed by his talented and troubled mother, and his lifelong friend Clarissa, who strives to forge a balanced and rewarding life in spite of the demands of friends, lovers, and family.
The Bright Forever	Lee Martin	This simple act is at the heart of <i>The Bright Forever</i> , a suspenseful, deeply affecting novel about the choices people make that change their lives forever. Keeping fact, speculation, and contradiction playing off one another as the details unfold, author Lee Martin creates a fast-paced story that is as gripping as it is richly human. His beautiful, clear-eyed prose builds to an extremely nuanced portrayal of the complicated give and take among people struggling to maintain their humanity in the shadow of a loss.
An Unfinished Season	Ward Just	Set in Eisenhower-era Chicago, An Unfinished Season brilliantly evokes a city, an epoch, and a shift in ideals through the closely observed story of nineteen-year-old Wilson Ravan. In his summer before college, Wils finds himself straddling three worlds: the working-class newsroom where he's landed a coveted job as a rookie reporter, the whirl of glittering North Shore debutante parties where he spends his nights, and the growing cold war between his parents at home.
<i>The Shipping News</i>	Annie Proulx	E. Annie Proulx focuses on a Newfoundland fishing town in a tale about a third-rate newspaperman and the women in his life -- his elderly aunt and two young daughters -- who decide to resettle in their ancestral seaside home. The transformation each of the character undergoes following move is profound. A vigorous, darkly comic, and at times magical portrait of the contemporary American family, <i>The Shipping News</i> enlightens readers to the powers of E. Annie Proulx's storytelling genius and her expert evocation of time and place. She is truly one of the most gifted and original writers in America today.
A Year of Magical Thinking (B)	Joan Didion	Didion's journalistic skills are displayed as never before in this story of a year in her life that began

		with her daughter in a medically induced coma and her husband unexpectedly dead due to a heart attack. This powerful and moving work is Didion's "attempt to make sense of the weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness . . . about marriage and children and memory . . . about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself."	
Black Swan Green	David Mitchell	From award-winning writer David Mitchell comes a sinewy, meditative novel of boyhood on the cusp of adulthood and the old on the cusp of the new. Black Swan tracks a single year in what is, for thirteen-year-old Jason Taylor, the sleepest village in muddiest Worcestershire in a dying Cold War England, 1982. But the thirteen chapters, each a short story in its own right, create an exquisitely observed world that is anything but sleepy.	
The Brief History of the Dead	Kevin Brockmeier	The City is inhabited by those who have departed Earth but are still remembered by the living. They will reside in this afterlife until they are completely forgotten. But the City is shrinking, and the residents clearing out.	
The Time in Between	David Bergen	In search of love, absolution, or forgiveness, Charles Boatman leaves the Fraser Valley of British Columbia and returns mysteriously to Vietnam, the country where he fought twenty-nine years earlier as a young, reluctant soldier. But his new encounters seem irreconcilable with his memories.	
Be Near Me	Andrew O'Hagan	Half a life later, David is Father Anderton, a Catholic priest with a small parish in Scotland. He befriends two local teenagers who live in a world he barely understands. Their company stirs memories of earlier happiness—his days at a Catholic school in Yorkshire, the student revolt in 1960s Oxford, and a choice he once made in the orange groves of Rome. But their friendship also ignites the suspicions and smoldering hatred of a town that resents strangers, and brings Father David to a reckoning with the gathered tensions of past and present.	
ZigZag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love and Betrayal	Ben Macintyre	Eddie Chapman was a charming criminal, a con man, and a philanderer. He was also one of the most remarkable double agents Britain has ever produced. Inside the traitor was a man of loyalty; inside the villain was a hero. The problem for Chapman, his spymasters, and his lovers was to know where one persona ended and the other began. Based on recently declassified files, <i>Agent Zigzag</i> tells Chapman's full story for the first time. It's a gripping tale of loyalty, love, treachery, espionage, and the thin and shifting line between fidelity and betrayal.	
Heyday: A Novel	Kurt Anderson	In the middle of the nineteenth century, modern life is being born: the mind-boggling marvels of photography, the telegraph, and railroads; a flood of show business spectacles and newspapers; rampant sex and drugs and drink (and moral crusades against all three); Wall Street awash with money; and giddy utopian visions everywhere. Then, during a single amazing month at the beginning of 1848, history lurches: America wins its war of manifest destiny against Mexico, gold is discovered in northern California, and revolutions sweep across Europe—sending one eager English gentleman off on an epic transatlantic adventure. . . .	
Hotel De Dream	Edmund White	In a damp, old Sussex castle, American literary phenomenon Stephen Crane lies on his deathbed, wasting away from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-eight. The world-famous author has retreated to England with his wife, Cora, in part to avoid gossip about her ignominious past as the proprietress of an infamous Florida bordello, the Hotel de Dream. In the midst of gathering tragedy, Crane begins dictating what will surely be his final work: a strange and poignant novel of a boy prostitute in 1890s New York and the married man who ruins his own life to win his love.	
The Pesthouse	Jim Crace	Once the safest, most prosperous place on earth, the United States has become sparsely populated and chaotically unstable. Across the country, families have traveled toward the one hope left: passage on a ship to Europe. As Franklin Lopez makes his way towards the ocean, he finds Margaret, a sick woman shunned to die in isolation. Tentatively, the two join forces, heading towards their future. With striking prose and a deep understanding of the American ethos, Jim	

		Crace, one of our most consistently ambitious writers, creates in <i>The Pesthouse</i> a masterful tale of the human drive to endure.	
<i>Evening</i>	Susan Minot	July 1954. An island off the coast of Maine. Ann Grant—a 25-year-old New York career girl—is a bridesmaid at her best friend's lavish wedding. Also present is a man named Harris Arden, whom Ann has never met. After three marriages and five children, Ann Lord lies in an upstairs bedroom of a house in Cambridge, Massachusetts. What comes to her, eclipsing a stream of doctor's visits and friends stopping by and grown children overheard whispering from the next room, is a rush of memories from a weekend 40 years ago in Maine, when she fell in love with a passion that even now throws a shadow onto the rest of her life. In <i>Evening</i> , Susan Minot gives us a novel of spellbinding power on the nature of memory and love.	
<i>Gone Baby Gone</i>	Dennis Lehane	The tough neighborhood of Dorchester is no place for the innocent or the weak. A territory defined by hard heads and even harder luck, its streets are littered with the detritus of broken families, hearts, dreams. Now, one of its youngest is missing. Private investigators Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro don't want the case. But after pleas from the child's aunt, they open an investigation that will ultimately risk everything—their relationship, their sanity, and even their lives—to find a little girl lost.	
<i>The Kite Runner</i>	Khalid Hosseini	<i>The Kite Runner</i> follows the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. As children in the relatively stable Afghanistan of the early 1970s, the boys are inseparable. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever, and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted. Even after Amir and his father flee to America, Amir remains haunted by his cowardly actions and disloyalty.	
A Thousand Splendid Suns	Khalid Hosseini	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> is a breathtaking story set against the volatile events of Afghanistan's last thirty years -- from the Soviet invasion to the reign of the Taliban to post-Taliban rebuilding -- that puts the violence, fear, hope and faith of this country in intimate, human terms. It is a tale of two generations of characters brought jarringly together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives -- the struggle to survive, raise a family, find happiness -- are inextricable from the history playing out around them.	
<i>All the Kings Men</i>	Robert Penn Warren	This landmark book is a loosely fictionalized account of Governor Huey Long of Louisiana, one of the nation's most astounding politicians. All the King's Men tells the story of Willie Stark, a southern-fried politician who builds support by appealing to the common man and playing dirty politics with the best of the back-room deal-makers. Though Stark quickly sheds his idealism, his right-hand man, Jack Burden -- who narrates the story -- retains it and proves to be a thorn in the new governor's side. Stark becomes a successful leader, but at a very high price, one that eventually costs him his life.	
<i>The Good German</i>	Joseph Kanon	The bestselling author of <i>Los Alamos</i> and <i>Alibi</i> returns to 1945. Hitler has been defeated and Berlin is divided into zones of occupation. Jake Geismar, an American correspondent who spent time in the city before the war, has returned to write about the Allied triumph while pursuing a more personal quest: his search for Lena, the married woman he left behind. <i>The Good German</i> is a story of espionage, love, and murder, an extraordinary re-creation of a city devastated by war, and a thriller that asks the most profound ethical questions in its exploration of the nature of justice and what we mean by good and evil in times of peace and of war.	
<i>Last King of Scotland</i>	Giles Foden	Shortly after his arrival in Uganda, Scottish doctor Nicholas Garrigan is called to the scene of a bizarre accident: Idi Amin, careening down a dirt road in his red Maserati, has run over a cow.	

		When Garrigan tends to Amin, the dictator, in his obsession for all things Scottish, appoints him as his personal physician. And so begins a fateful dalliance with the central African leader whose Emperor Jones-style autocracy would transform into a reign of terror.	
<i>The Namesake</i>	Jhumpa Lahiri	Any talk of <i>The Namesake</i> --Jhumpa Lahiri's follow-up to her Pulitzer Prize-winning debut, <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> --must begin with a name: Gogol Ganguli. Born to an Indian academic and his wife, Gogol is afflicted from birth with a name that is neither Indian nor American nor even really a first name at all. He is given the name by his father who, before he came to America to study at MIT, was almost killed in a train wreck in India. Rescuers caught sight of the volume of Nikolai Gogol's short stories that he held, and hauled him from the train. Ashoke gives his American-born son the name as a kind of placeholder, and the awkward thing sticks.	
<i>The Night Listener</i>	Armistead Maupin	"I'm a fabulist by trade," warns Gabriel Noone, a late-night radio storyteller, as he begins to untangle the skeins of his tumultuous life: his crumbling ten-year love affair, his disaffection from his Southern father, his longtime weakness for ignoring reality. Gabriel's most sympathetic listener is Pete Lomax, a thirteen-year-old fan in Wisconsin whose own horrific past has left him wise and generous beyond his years. But when this virtual father-son relationship is rocked by doubt, a desperate search for the truth ensues. Welcome to the complex, vertiginous world of <i>The Night Listener</i> .	
<i>The Painted Veil</i>	W Somerset Maugham	Set in England and Hong Kong in the 1920s, The Painted Veil is the story of the beautiful but love-starved Kitty Fane. When her husband discovers her adulterous affair, he forces her to accompany him to the heart of a cholera epidemic. Stripped of the British society of her youth and the small but effective society she fought so hard to attain in Hong Kong, she is compelled by her awakening conscience to reassess her life and learn how to love.	
<i>The Constant Gardener</i>	John Le Carre	<i>The Constant Gardener</i> is a magnificent exploration of the new world order by one of the most compelling and elegant storytellers of our time. The novel opens in northern Kenya with the gruesome murder of Tessa Quayle--young, beautiful, and dearly beloved to husband Justin. When Justin sets out on a personal odyssey to uncover the mystery of her death, what he finds could make him not only a suspect among his own colleagues, but a target for Tessa's killers as well.	
<i>Everything is Illuminated</i>	Jonathan Safran Foer	With only a yellowing photograph in hand, a young man -- also named Jonathan Safran Foer -- sets out to find the woman who may or may not have saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Accompanied by an old man haunted by memories of the war; an amorous dog named Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior; and the unforgettable Alex, a young Ukrainian translator who speaks in a sublimely butchered English, Jonathan is led on a quixotic journey over a devastated landscape and into an unexpected past.	
<i>The Ice Harvest</i>	Scott Phillips	For all that it involves organized crime, naked women, grumpy bouncers, a serious snowstorm, and a hero with a profound drinking pattern, <i>The Ice Harvest</i> is a quiet little book--noir-ish, certainly, but never to excess. As the novel traces Charlie Arglist's trail around his small Kansas hometown on Christmas Eve, 1979, the lawyer's literal footprints are clear enough, given the whopper of a blizzard that's descended, but his metaphorical path is far less obvious. He's killing time before leaving town, but where is he going? And why?	
<i>The River King</i>	Alice Hoffman	People tend to stay in their place in the town of Haddan. The students at the prestigious prep school don't mix with locals; even within the school, hierarchy rules, as freshman and faculty members find out where they fit in and what is expected of them. But when a body is found in the river behind the school, a local policeman will walk into this enclosed world and upset it entirely. A story of surface appearances and the truths submerged below, <i>The River King</i> confirms Alice Hoffman as "one of our quirkiest and most interesting novelists"	

<i>A Home at the End of the World</i>	Michael Cunningham	From Michael Cunningham, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of <i>The Hours</i> , comes this widely praised novel of two boyhood friends: Jonathan, lonely, introspective, and unsure of himself; and Bobby, hip, dark, and inarticulate. In New York after college, Bobby moves in with Jonathan and his roommate, Clare, a veteran of the city's erotic wars. Bobby and Clare fall in love, scuttling the plans of Jonathan, who is gay, to father Clare's child. Then, when Clare and Bobby have a baby, the three move to a small house upstate to raise "their" child together and, with an odd friend, Alice, create a new kind of family. <i>A Home at the End of the World</i> masterfully depicts the charged, fragile relationships of urban life today.	
<i>Cold Mountain</i>	Charles Frazier	Based on local history and family stories passed down by the author's great-grandfather, Cold Mountain is the tale of Inman, a wounded Confederate soldier who walks away from the ravages of the Civil War and back home to Ada, his prewar sweetheart. Inman's odyssey through the devastated landscape of the soon-to-be-defeated South interweaves with Ada's struggle to revive her father's farm. As their long-separated lives begin to converge at the close of the war, Inman and Ada must confront the vastly transformed world they've been delivered.	
<i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i>	Tracy Chevalier	History and fiction merge seamlessly in Tracy Chevalier's luminous novel about artistic vision and sensual awakening. Through the eyes of sixteen-year-old Griet, the world of 1660s Holland comes dazzlingly alive in this richly imagined portrait of the young woman who inspired one of Vermeer's most celebrated paintings.	
<i>House of Sand and Fog</i>	Andre Dubus	In this riveting novel of almost unbearable suspense, three fragile yet determined people become dangerously entangled in a relentlessly escalating crisis. Colonel Behrani, once a wealthy man in Iran, is now a struggling immigrant willing to bet everything he has to restore his family's dignity. Kathy Nicolo is a troubled young woman whose house is all she has left, and who refuses to let her hard-won stability slip away from her. Sheriff Lester Burdon, a married man who finds himself falling in love with Kathy, becomes obsessed with helping her fight for justice.	
<i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i>	Phillipa Gregory	The other Boleyn is Mary, the little-known sister of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne. Susan Lyons first introduces us to the intricate power struggles of King Henry VIII's Court through the Boleyn parents, whose cold, rigid tones let listeners, and Mary, know that family loyalty is paramount. Contrast between siblings is crucial to the story; Anne's haughty, authoritative pride rings in Lyons's words while Mary's tenderness for Henry, her children, and later William Stafford, is just as strong--as is her shock at the scheming of her family.	
<i>The Human Stain</i>	Phillip Roth	Set during the sanctimonious culture wars of the 1990s, <i>The Human Stain</i> concludes Philip Roth's eloquent trilogy (<i>American Pastoral</i> , <i>I Married a Communist</i>) of postwar America with the story of an eminent, respected college professor whose life, career, and very identity unravel in the wake of a politically correct academic bushwhacking.	
<i>Mystic River</i>	Dennis Lehane	When they were children, Sean Devine, Jimmy Marcus, and Dave Boyle were friends. But then a strange car pulled up to their street. One boy got into the car, two did not, and something terrible happened -- something that ended their friendship and changed all three boys forever. Twenty-five years later, Sean is a homicide detective. Jimmy is an ex-con who owns a corner store. And Dave is trying to hold his marriage together and keep his demons at bay -- demons that urge him to do terrible things. When Jimmy's daughter is found murdered, Sean is assigned to the case. His investigation brings him into conflict with Jimmy, who finds his old criminal impulses tempt him to solve the crime with brutal justice. And then there is Dave, who came home the night Jimmy's daughter died covered in someone else's blood.	
<i>Blood Work</i>	Michael Connelly	Having made the best sellers lists with <i>The Poet</i> , Connelly waves goodbye to protagonist Harry	

		Bosch and welcomes former FBI agent Terrill McCaleb, in retirement after a heart transplant. But he's back in action when he learns that the woman from whom he received the heart was murdered.	
<i>White Oleander</i>	Janet Fitch	When her passionate poet mother, Ingrid, is jailed for killing her ex-lover (with poison brewed partly from white oleander flowers), Astrid Magnussen navigates her way to adulthood through a series of Los Angeles foster families and juvenile homes. Astrid's strength and resilience makes this compelling novel an inspiration.	
<i>The Orchid Thief</i>	Susan Orlean	Movie: Adaptation. From Florida's swamps to its courtrooms, the New Yorker writer follows one deeply eccentric and oddly attractive man's possibly criminal pursuit of an endangered flower. Determined to clone the rare ghost orchid, <i>Polyrhiza lindenii</i> , John Laroche leads Orlean on an unforgettable tour of America's strange flower-selling subculture, along with the Seminole Indians who help him and the forces of justice who fight him. In the end, Orlean—and the reader—will have more respect for underdog determination and a powerful new definition of passion.	
<i>No Country for Old Men</i>	Cormac McCarthy	Texas welder Llewelyn Moss makes a dubious discovery while out hunting antelope near the banks of the Rio Grande: a dead man, a stash of heroin, and more than \$2 million in cash. Moss packs out the money, knowing his actions will imperil him for the rest of his life. He's soon on the run, left to his own devices against vengeful drug dealers, a former Special Forces agent, and a psychopathic freelance killer with ice blue eyes.	