

Book Shelf: 2012 Books Webpage

[Link to PDF Version of The 2012 Book List](#)

[Link to Big Book Shelf Webpage: All Books 1999-2011](#)



[Link to PDF Version of All Books](#)

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This web page lists all books reviewed by Steve Hopkins at <http://bkrev.blogspot.com> during 2012 as well as books pending (The Shelf of Possibility), or relegated to the Shelf of Reproach or the Shelf of Ennui. You can click on the title of a book or on the picture of any jacket cover to jump to amazon.com where you can purchase a copy of any book on this shelf.

Key to Ratings:

***** Outstanding book-read it now

**** Highly recommended

*** Recommended

** Mildly recommended

* Read if your interest is strong

DNR Do Not Read: Take a Pass

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Title (Ctrl + Click on Link to purchase at amazon.com)	Author(s)	Rating	Blog Date	Comments	Ctrl + Click on Picture to Purchase at amazon.com
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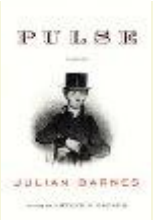
<p><u>American Rose: A Nation Laid Bare: The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee</u></p>	<p>Abbott, Karen</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>2/24/12</u></p> <p>Legend. Readers who enjoy biographies of 20th century figures are those most likely to enjoy Karen Abbott's book titled, <u>American Rose: A Nation Laid Bare: The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee</u>. Abbott structured this book like a striptease: she sways back and forth in time and reveals a little here and a little there. The versions of a life presented here are interesting and entertaining. The characters, especially Rose herself, her mother, sister Joan and son Erik are intriguing and complex. Abbott presents the people and their times with vivid anecdotes and finely written prose. I was engaged from beginning to end by this interesting life.</p>	
<p>Capitol Punishment: The Hard Truth About Washington Corruption From America's Most Notorious Lobbyist</p>	<p>Abramoff, Jack</p>	<p>Unread</p>	<p>I looked at the photos and read the first few pages. I concluded quickly that I really didn't want to know anything more about Abramoff, especially from him. Shelf of Ennui 2012.</p>	
<p><u>Last Man in Tower</u></p>	<p>Adiga, Aravind</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>1/5/12</u></p> <p>Solitary. Readers who enjoy fine writing that stimulates deep thinking should consider Aravind Adiga's latest novel, <u>Last Man in Tower</u>. Sixty-one year old retired teacher, Masterji, is a widower who has lived in Vishram Society Tower A for decades, and the place holds memories for him, and his relationship with his neighbors seems positive and mutually supportive. When a developer proposes buying the building, all residents except Masterji agree. His stolid perseverance brings</p>	

			<p>out animosity in his neighbors. How does one be true to oneself and live in community? What are our obligations to our neighbors? Adiga's fine writing lays out the plot and develops multiple characters in ways that will captivate readers and present the range of complexity in human nature.</p>	
<p><u>Would It Kill You to Stop Doing That: A Modern Guide to Manners</u></p>	<p>Alford, Henry</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>2/3/12</u></p> <p>Witty. Readers looking for a few laughs about our own foibles and those of others will find witty prose in Henry Alford's book titled, <u>Would It Kill You to Stop Doing That: A Modern Guide to Manners</u>. Alford presents aspects of contemporary life that made me laugh, and got me through the parts of the book that seemed to drag a bit. Readers looking for an Emily Post update won't find that kind of expertise here. If you like witty writing, this is a book should consider.</p>	
<p><u>Fixing the Housing Market: Financial Innovations for the Future</u></p>	<p>Allen, Franklin, James R. Barth and Glenn Yago</p>	<p>**</p>	<p><u>3/2/12</u></p> <p>Data. A recent book from Wharton's Milken Institute Series on Financial Innovations is titled, <u>Fixing the Housing Market</u>. I expected the book would provide a brief review of what caused the crash, and then spend the bulk of the presentation on alternative solutions. Instead, the authors provide a lengthy historical framework and lots of global data. Their analysis of the data seemed shallow, and almost all of the book covers history and data. By the time the solutions were presented, they seemed vague and too generalized to be useful. Readers looking to understand housing over the past hundred years will find</p>	

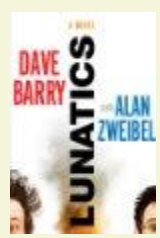
				useful information here. Those looking for cogent recommendations for solving our problems should look elsewhere.	
The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work	Amabile, Teresa and Steven Kramer	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Lionel Asbo	Amis, Martin	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Our Black Year: One Family's Quest to Buy Black in America's Racially Divided Economy	Anderson, Maggie	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Robert B. Parker's Lullaby	Atkins, Ace	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination	Atwood, Margaret	Unread		I prefer Atwood's fiction. I stopped reading this collection of essays after about 50 pages. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
<u>Zero Day</u>	Baldacci, David	***	<u>1/5/12</u>	Character. I read David Baldacci's novels because I find them amusing and entertaining. I'm often most amused by poorly written dialogue or characters that are stereotypes or poorly developed. In his latest novel, <u>Zero Day</u> , Baldacci seems to start from scratch. He introduces a new heroic protagonist, John Puller, and I found myself recognizing	

				the individual and rooting for his success. The fast pace of the plot and the thrilling action kept me turning pages quickly, and I found the dialogue was not as distracting as it had been in earlier Baldacci novels. Readers who like character-driven action thrillers are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
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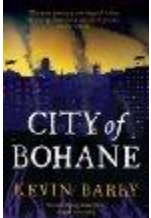
Paris, I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down	Baldwin, Rosecrans	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012		
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Pulse	Barnes, Julian	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2011		
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<u>The Sense of an Ending</u>	Barnes, Julian	*****	<u>1/5/12</u>	Memories. In a clever novella, Julian Barnes delves into the notion of memory, and the difference in form between action and our constructed and amended memories. <u>The Sense of an Ending</u> is constrained and concise, and a reader is almost compelled to start re-reading once the last page is turned. There's that "aha" sense that can propel a reader to take newly found insight and read again to see the book in new light. Readers who enjoy literary fiction and clever writing are those most likely to enjoy this short novel.	
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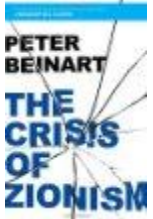
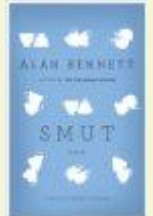
<u>Lunatics</u>	Barry, Dave and Alan Zweibel	***	<u>2/17/12</u>	Antics. Readers expect two things from Dave Barry novels: laughs and zany characters. Barry's latest book, <u>Lunatics</u> , written with Alan Zweibel, provides an abundance of zany characters	
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			in hilarious situations. The implausibility of the situations in which the protagonists find themselves adds to the mayhem, and Barry and Zweibel maintain the laughter and antic behavior throughout the book. Readers looking for something funny to read are those most likely to enjoy this book.	
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City of Bohane	Barry, Kevin	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
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<u>Machine Man</u>	Barry, Max	***	<u>3/2/12</u> Evolution. Max Barry combines dystopia, satire and comedy in his latest novel, <u>Machine Man</u> . Protagonist Charles Neumann works as a scientist in the lab of an unscrupulous company named Better Future. After Charlie loses his leg, he considers making himself an improved model. Barry satirizes our culture of constant self-improvement, and describes corporate exploitation and avarice in an extreme way. Charlie's exploits become hilarious at times, and the pace of the novel is quick. Fans of Barry's prior novels will be pleased with this one, and new readers may find his quirky writing to be an acquired taste. Read an excerpt before diving in.	
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On Canaan's Side	Barry, Sebastian	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
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Wild Thing	Bazell, Josh	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Mrs. Nixon: A Novelist Imagines a Life	Beattie, Ann	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
Great Companies Deserve Great Boards: A CEO's Guide to the Boardroom	Behan, Beverly A.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2011	
The Crisis of Zionism	Beinhart, Peter	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
Smut: Stories	Bennett, Alan	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	

[The Shadow Patrol](#)

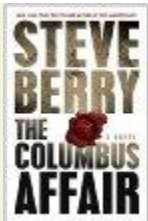
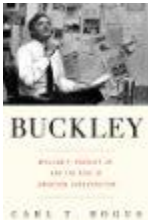
Berenson, Alex

[3/19/12](#)

Stan. The timing of Alex Berenson's latest John Wells novel could not be better. Set in Afghanistan, [The Shadow Patrol](#) explores the duplicity and self-interest of a variety of players in the military, the CIA, and among Afghans. In some ways, this novel seems to come straight from the nightly news. The lively writing made me think that Berenson had fun writing it. Making the code name of a CIA operative, "Stan," was just outright funny. While Berenson continues to present Wells as a heroic figure whose skills are superior to all other humans,


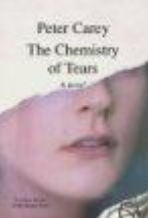
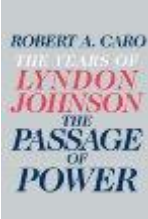

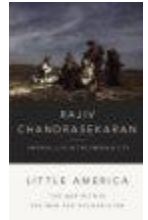



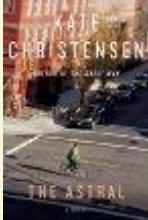
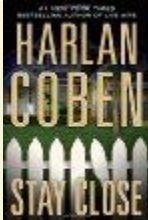
there are enough aspects of his life that come through in this installment that readers can see him as one of us. Fans of action novels are those most likely to enjoy this book.

The Columbus Affair	Berry, Steve	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism	Bogus, Carl T.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity	Boo, Katherine	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
Fatal Risk: A Cautionary Tale of AIG's Corporate Suicide	Boyd, Roddy	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
Waiting for Sunrise	Boyd, William	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
We Can All Do Better	Bradley, Bill	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Greenback Planet: How the Dollar Conquered the World and Threatened Civilization as	Brands, H.W.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	

We Know It					
Screw Business As Usual	Branson, Richard	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Collaborate or Perish!: Reaching Across Boundaries in a Networked World	Bratton, William and Zachary Tumin	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
James Madison	Brookhiser, Richard	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	
Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power	Brzezinski, Zbigniew	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
They Eat Puppies, Don't They?	Buckley, Christopher	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
<u>Perilous Fight: America's Intrepid War with Britain on the High Seas, 1812-1815</u>	Budiansky, Stephen	***	<u>3/19/12</u>	Navy. Readers who gravitate toward naval history are those most likely to enjoy Stephen Budiansky's fine book, <u>Perilous Fight: America's Intrepid War with Britain on the High Seas, 1812-1815</u> . Budiansky provides a solid foundation of the politics and issues of the time, and the weaknesses of the fledgling USA in comparison to England's Royal Navy. He describes the key players in sufficient detail, and highlights with ample description the pitched battles that marked that war. Readers unfamiliar with this	


				war will learn much from this book, and those who know this period well are likely to appreciate Budiansky's contribution to our understanding of that time.	
This Is How: Proven Aid in Overcoming Shyness, Molestation, Fatness, Spinsterhood, Grief, Disease, Lushery, Decrepitude & More. For Young and Old Alike	Burroughs, Augusten	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
Ragnarok	Byatt, A.S.	Unread		After my third try to get into this retelling of a Norse myth, I gave up at about page 15. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
The Best Care Possible: A Physician's Quest to Transform Care Through the End of Life	Byock, Ira	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
<u>Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking</u>	Cain, Susan	***	<u>4/10/12</u>	Understanding. To the extent such a thing could happen, it seems that Susan Cain may have written an introvert's manifesto with her book titled, <u>Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking</u> . Cain presents the importance and value of the perspective and contributions that introverts can make in relationships and work settings, if given the chance. Her call is for understanding and the achievement of balance. This book is quick and easy to read, and extroverts are likely to feel they got the point, while introverts will ponder	

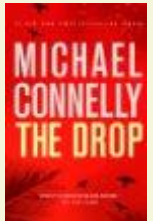
				and reflect on Cain's viewpoints and discover ways in which their contributions can be acknowledged and recognized.	
Scapegoat: A History of Blaming Other People	Campbell, Charlie	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
The Chemistry of Tears	Carey, Peter	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson	Caro, Robert A.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
The Reckoning	Casey, Jane	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Little America: The War Within, the War for Afghanistan	Chandrasekaran, Rajiv	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
<u>Stay Awake</u>	Chaon, Dan	***	<u>3/19/12</u>	Lost. There are twelve short stories in a new collection from Dan Chaon titled, <u>Stay Awake</u> . The characters in these stories are people facing disorientation, loss and situations that are weird. Readers who like psychological tension in fiction are those most likely to enjoy this collection. Life is messy, bad things happen, and the story ends. Readers are left uncertain about resolution. The unsettled	

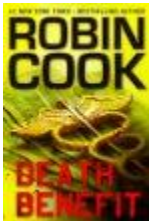
				nature of the story also leaves the reader somewhat unsettled. Try a story or two. If you like one, you're likely to enjoy the others.	
My Two Worlds	Chejfec, Sergio	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
The Astral	Christensen, Kate	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
Back to Work: Why We Need Smart Government for a Strong Economy	Clinton, Bill	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	
Stay Close	Coben, Harlan	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Money and Power: How Goldman Sachs Came to Rule the World	Cohan, William D.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
Blink of An Eye	Cohen William S.	***	2/3/12	Insecurity. Former Senator and former Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen has written another novel in the thriller genre, this one titled, Blink of An Eye . Packed with clunky writing and acronyms, this novel focuses on the detonation of a nuclear device on U.S. soil, and the rush to retaliate. The protagonist is a National Security Advisor named Sean Falcone, and this character is drawn in the heroic tradition.	

				The plot moves quickly, some of the characters are interesting, and in the back of my mind, the insider knowledge of Cohen made me shiver even more that the plot required. Readers who like thrillers and can overlook some weak writing are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
In Our Prime: The Invention of Middle Age	Cohen, Patricia	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power	Coll, Steve	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck--Why Some Thrive Despite Them All	Collins, Jim and Morten T. Hansen	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
<u>A Covert Affair: Julia Child and Paul Child in the OSS</u>	Conant, Jennet	***	<u>2/17/12</u>	Friendship. The declassification of secret records can provide authors with a treasure trove of material about individuals and situations. Jennet Conant's book, <u>A Covert Affair: Julia Child and Paul Child in the OSS</u> , tells a bundle of interesting anecdotes about the wartime adventures of the Childs and how their postwar life led to challenging times for them and their friends. The central character of the book, Jane Foster, was a friend of the Childs, and she was accused of being a Soviet spy. That led to McCarthy challenges of the loyalty of her friends. Even	


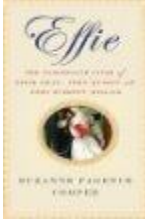
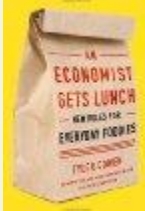
			with many American and Russian documents declassified, it remains unclear whether or not Foster was a spy. Fans of Julia Child may feel shortchanged by all the pages that are not connected to her. Readers interested in this era are those most likely to enjoy this account of some fascinating people and events of the 1940s and 1950s.	
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Red on Red	Conlon, Edward	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
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<u>The Drop</u>	Connelly, Michael	***	<u>1/18/12</u> Twists. The latest detective Harry Bosch novel from Michael Connelly is titled, <u>The Drop</u> . Fans of the series and first-time readers can find equal pleasure in the exploits of this heroic, flawed protagonist whose moral compass distinguishes right from wrong with clarity. The world gets messier than he'd like it to be, and the good guys can let him down, while the bad guys also need justice. Can Harry overcome the demons that distract him and move on? Can he be a father and a detective? Will he find love again? Connelly writes a fine crime novel, and the character of Harry Bosch continues to develop and mature. Readers who like character-driven crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
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<u>Death Benefit</u>	Cook, Robin	***	<u>2/17/12</u> Organs. It's been a long time since I finished reading a Robin Cook medical thriller without being annoyed. Perhaps I've set the bar too low, but I felt pretty good	
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when I finished [Death Benefit](#) and concluded that Cook entertained me. The protagonist, Pia Grazdani is a beautiful and smart medical student who is still damaged from a troubled childhood. Her mentor's research lab has made a breakthrough in stem cells that shows promise in providing patients with replacement organs. Not everybody is pleased, and the behavior of hedge fund villains and the Albanian mob spice up the plot. Recurring characters Laurie Montgomery and Jack Stapleton make their appearance very late in this novel, and that seemed just right. Readers who like medical thrillers and can overlook some clunky writing are those most likely to enjoy this book.

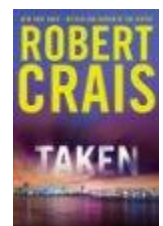
Daughters of the Revolution	Cooke, Carolyn	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
Effie: The Passionate Lives of Effie Gray, John Ruskin and John Everett Millais	Cooper, Suzanne Fagence	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
An Economist Gets Lunch: New Rules for Everyday Foodies	Cowen, Tyler	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	

[Taken](#)

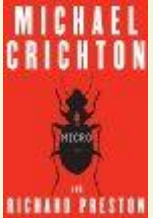
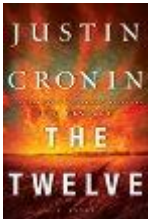
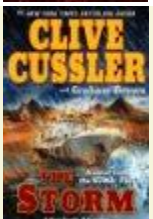
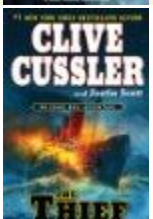
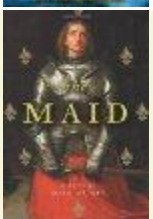
Crais, Robert





[3/19/12](#)

Trafficking. Robert Crais sets his latest Elvis Cole and Joe Pike novel on the Mexican border and uses the current headline issue of human trafficking as the backdrop for the fast-paced



action in [Taken](#). Crais moves us backward and forward in time from the perspective of multiple characters, and that device increases the tension a reader feels. A young woman and her boyfriend are kidnapped, and the woman's mother hires the man she read about as "the world's greatest detective," Elvis Cole, to find her. Elvis asks Joe Pike to protect his back, and things get more than a little complicated when plans don't turn out as expected. Fans of action thrillers or this particular series are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

Micro	Crichton, Michael and Richard Preston	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
The Twelve	Cronin, Justin	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The Storm	Cussler, Clive	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
The Thief	Cussler, Clive	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
The Maid: A Novel of Joan of Arc	Cutter, Kimberly	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	

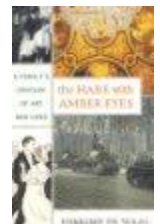
The Inverted Forest	Dalton, John	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
Almost a Family: A Memoir	Darnton, John	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
Religion for Atheists: A Non-believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion	De Botton, Alain	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The House I Loved	de Rosnay, Tatiana	Unread	The prose became annoying to by page 11, so I stopped reading. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	

[The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss](#)


de Waal, Edmund

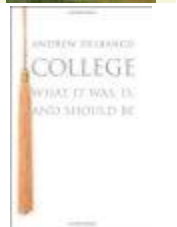
[3/19/12](#)


Inheritance. Most families have stories about the lives of our ancestors. Fortunate families have some objects that were acquired by those ancestors that connect us to the past as a part of our inheritance. Edmund de Wall is a ceramicist who inherited 264 netsuke from a favorite uncle. One of the netsuke, small intricately carved objects from Japan, provided the title of his family memoir, [The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss](#). This finely written book tells of the Ephrussi family, wealthy grain traders and bankers from Russia whose wealth grew in the 20th century as they migrated to Paris and Vienna. Their wealth and some of their lives were destroyed by the Nazis. A family servant hid the

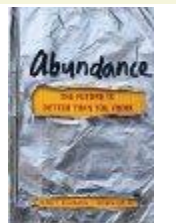


netsuke from the Nazis, and they became the only objects that were passed along to the survivors of that tragic time. I was absorbed by this book from beginning to end and recommend it highly to any reader who enjoys how good writing can bring the past to life.

The Last Storyteller	Delaney, Frank	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
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College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be	Delbanco, Andrew	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
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<u>The Starboard Sea</u>	Dermont, Amber	***	4/10/12 Truth. Amber Dermont's debut novel, <u>The Starboard Sea</u> , takes the 99% into a slice of the lives of the 1%. Set at a co-ed prep school for the outcasts of other prep schools, Dermont draws a picture of the loneliness and alienation of the rich children of busy parents. Their coming of age can be hampered rather than enhanced by privilege. Their search for the right path in life can be elusive. Demont's writing is lyrical, the story engrossing, and the sailing exciting. Readers willing to give a debut novelist a try are likely to enjoy this novel, as will those who attended prep school, are wealthy, or who love sailing.	
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Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think	Diamandis, Peter H. and Steven Kotler	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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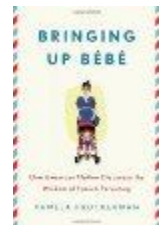
The Variations	Donatich, John	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics	Douthat, Ross	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Bullfighting	Doyle, Roddy	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2011	

Autonomy. I was entertained and amused by Pam Druckerman's book, [Bringing Up Bebe: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting](#). Druckerman presents her personal story of raising children in France. Working like an anthropologist as a participant-observer of the culture, she is able to call attention to the differences she saw in how French parents behaved with their children as compared to many American parents. Among the many differences she presents are the approaches to patience and waiting rather than leaping in, and the ways in which autonomy is encouraged. No one parent's experience or observation is ever definitive for another parent's behavior, so those readers expecting a how-to manual will be disappointed. Readers who enjoy lively writing about family life across cultures will find this book interesting.

[Bringing Up Bebe: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting](#)

Druckerman, Pamela

[3/2/12](#)



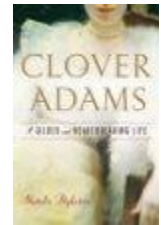
<p><u>The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business</u></p>	<p>Duhigg, Charles</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>4/11/12</u></p> <p>Cues. Readers who like science written for lay people are those most likely to enjoy Charles Duhigg's new book, <u>The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business</u>. Duhigg explains the science in enough detail to inform and in a writing style that entertains because of great examples and stories. The loop we all engage in is that some cue causes us to behave in a certain way to achieve a desired reward. Some readers are likely to become more self-reflective after reading this book, and may recognize the patterns that we follow without much thought.</p>	
<p>Talulla Rising</p>	<p>Duncan, Glen</p>	<p>Unread</p>	<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012</p>	
<p><u>Wild Abandon</u></p>	<p>Dunthorne, Joe</p>	<p>**</p>	<p><u>2/24/12</u></p> <p>Commune. There are some wickedly funny passages in Joe Dunthorne's novel, <u>Wild Abandon</u>. Set in a commune in Wales, the characters are quirky and the odd situations in which they find themselves make for some lively plot threads. By the end of the novel I realized that I had developed no empathy for any of the characters and found almost all of them to be weakly developed. Much of the novel involves their beliefs, including the imminent end of the world, and I found all that to be amusing, but Dunthorne's satire never quite satisfied me. Readers who like finely written dark humor are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	

Clover Adams: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life

Dykstra, Natalie

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011

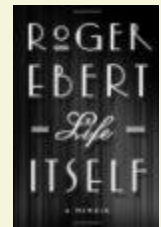


[Life Itself](#)

Ebert, Roger

[1/18/12](#)

Upbeat. Reading memoirs can be a crapshoot. Most readers of Roger Ebert's memoir titled, [Life Itself](#), will come away winners. We know Ebert from his decades of movie reviews in print and on television. Most of us also know that because of complications from treatment for thyroid cancer, he can no longer speak nor eat and his face is disfigured from the loss of bone. His voice comes through with ebullience in his animated writing. In his account, he's had (and is having) a wonderful life. He's worked hard at doing what he loves. He's married to his soulmate, and thanks to AA, he quit drinking. He's made friends all around the world, and his conversational writing style makes readers feel like we're sitting at a dining room table listening to the stories of a life well lived. All that adds up to an inspiring memoir, well worth reading.



[The Prague Cemetery](#)

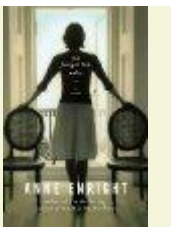

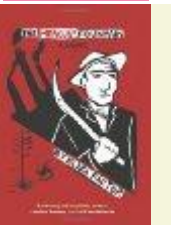

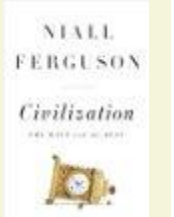
Eco, Umberto

[1/5/12](#)

Hate. Can a novel about evil and hate be entertaining? In the competent hands of Umberto Eco, the answer is yes when it comes to his latest novel, [The Prague Cemetery](#). Eco sets the novel in the tumultuous late 19th century, and all the characters except the protagonist are historical. That protagonist is the scheming, evil, hateful Simonini who gives voice and



action to a wide range of vitriol and plots. An equal opportunity figure, Simonini hates Jesuits, Masons, Russians, Germans, French, and blames the Jews for everything. What Eco accomplishes in this portrayal of hate and evil is to give readers goose bumps that such evil lives among us now. Readers who like to think when we read are those most likely to enjoy this finely written novel.

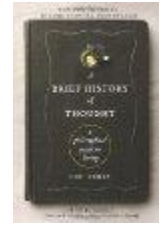
The Forgotten Waltz	Enright, Anne	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit	Epstein, Joseph	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
The Mercury Fountain	Factor, Eliza	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
While America Sleeps: A Wake-up Call for the Post-9/11 Era	Feingold, Russ	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
Civilization: The West and the Rest	Ferguson, Niall	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	

A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living

Ferry, Luc

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012

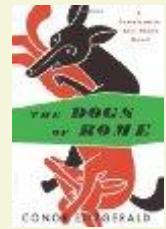


[The Dogs of Rome](#)

Fitzgerald, Conor

[3/2/12](#)

Relaxed. Conor Fitzgerald's debut crime novel, [The Dogs of Rome](#), proceeds at a relaxed pace in introducing readers to protagonist Commissario Alec Blume. I became engaged in the life, work and world of Blume and I enjoyed the easy going plot momentum. Readers learn just enough about the characters to be interested, and the choices that Blume makes in dealing with bosses, subordinates, witnesses, criminals and lovers kept me engaged throughout the novel. Readers who like crime fiction and are looking for new authors are those most likely to enjoy this novel.



The Fatal Touch

Fitzgerald, Conor

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011




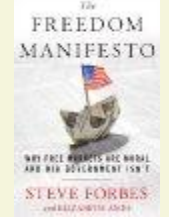
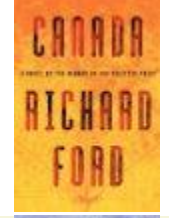

[Cinnamon Roll Murder](#)

Fluke, Joanne

[4/19/12](#)

Nice. Readers looking for an escape to the world of "Minnesota nice" can find a few hours of pleasure by reading Joanne Fluke's 15th installment in her Hannah Swensen mystery series. Titled, [Cinnamon Roll Murder](#), this novel opens with Hannah serving as a first responder to a bus accident. The action proceeds at a good clip, and the recipes included provide a sweet diversion of another type. Most characters are caring and loving people who treat each other with kindness.



				Readers who like to feel good after reading a novel are those most likely to enjoy the books in this series.	
New American Haggadah	Foer, Jonathan Safran and Nathan Englander	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
Freedom Manifesto: Why Markets Are Moral and Big Government Isn't	Forbes, Steve and Elizabeth Ames	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
Canada	Ford, Richard	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The Memory of Blood	Fowler, Christopher	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	

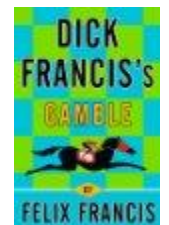
Mindless. Readers who like a slow-paced mystery that requires little brain activity are those most likely to enjoy Felix Francis' debut novel in the family business titled, [Dick Francis's Gamble](#).

Consistent with prior novels from the family, this one uses the backdrop of horse racing to present and solve a mystery. The characters are developed just enough to prompt a reader to care, the dialogue not quite realistic, and the exposition more than ample to fill in the modest plot twists and obvious clues. I've read the Francis novels regularly and quickly as an entertaining diversion. This book provided that and met

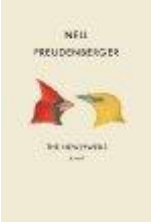

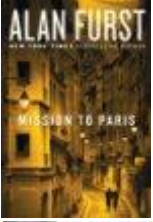
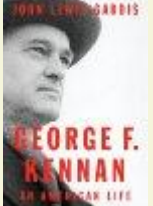
[Dick Francis's Gamble](#)

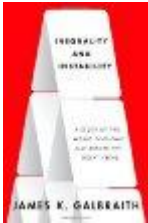

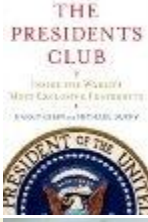
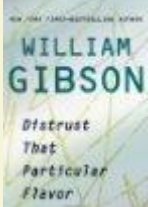
Francis, Felix

[2/3/12](#)



<p><u>Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right</u></p>	<p>Frank, Thomas</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>3/19/12</p> <p>Reality. The target audience for Thomas Frank's book, <u>Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right</u>, is the reader who finds some of the logic of the political right to represent an alternate reality. Unlike what happened after prior economic crises when progressive populism arose, the reaction to the 2008 crisis has been a conservative populism. Frank explores how and why that happened, and where what logic there is may lead (hint in the title.) Frank's writing is entertaining and lively, and the attention he calls to the lack of reality in some of the muddling positions of the right will appeal to liberal readers, especially those who recognize the absurdity in some elements of conservative populism.</p>	
<p>Farther Away</p>	<p>Franzen, Jonathan</p>	<p>Unread</p>	<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012</p>	
<p><u>Nightwoods</u></p>	<p>Frazier, Charles</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>1/23/12</p> <p>Bleak. The prose in Charles Frazier's novel, <u>Nightwoods</u>, is lyrical, the characters are richly developed, and the description he presents in a meandering plot presents a bleak life. In some ways, this novel explores the nature of love and evil, using a setting and characters that provide an ideal backdrop for the contrast between light and darkness and fire and water. Readers who are patient with a plot that can be a challenge to follow and who appreciate</p>	

			lyrical prose are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
The Newlyweds	Freudenberger, Nell	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
<u>The Fry Chronicles</u>	Fry, Stephen	***	<u>2/17/12</u> Worker. Stephen Fry continues to write about his own life in a new book titled, <u>The Fry Chronicles</u> . The 400+ pages of witty and engaging narrative focus on the busy life he led in his 20s. A reader can become exhausted from the work pace that Fry describes. This is a tale of man who could never say no, had a constant desire to please others, and is able at the current distance of time to describe that life in a way that entertains readers. The stories of his university years and his friendship with Hugh Laurie and Emma Thompson are told with excitement and verve. Readers who enjoy well told stories of interesting lives are those most likely to enjoy this autobiography.	
Mission to Paris	Furst, Alan	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
George F. Kennan: An American Life	Gaddis, John Lewis	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	

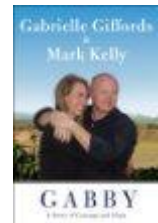
Inequality and Instability: A Study of the World Economy Just Before the Great Crisis	Galbraith, James K.	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
The Idea Factory: Bell Labs and the Great Age of American Innovation	Gertner, Jon	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity	Gibbs, Nancy and Michael Duffy	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Distrust That Particular Flavor	Gibson, William	Unread	I sampled a few of the 25 essays in this collection, but was not interested enough to read all of them. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	


[Gabby: A Story of Courage and Hope](#)


Giffords, Gabrielle and Mark Kelly


[2/24/12](#)

Inspirational. Readers who are down in the dumps about whatever curve life has thrown lately can feel motivated and inspired by the new biography titled, [Gabby: A Story of Courage and Hope](#). Few of us were familiar with the representative of Arizona's 8th congressional district, Gabrielle Giffords or her astronaut husband, Mark Kelly, until the day she was shot. Thanks to their work on this book, assisted by the late Jeffrey Zaslow, their lives are described in depth for readers to get to know them better. The subtitle tells it all: this is a finely written account of courage and hope.

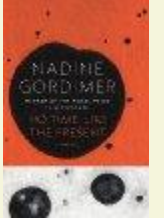


The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood	Gleick, James	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2011	
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Bloodland	Glynn, Alan	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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Say Her Name	Goldman, Francisco	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	
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<u>1861: The Civil War Awakening</u>	Goodheart, Adam	***	<u>2/3/12</u>	<p>Forces. Readers of history looking for a fresh take on a familiar topic are those most likely to enjoy reading Adam Goodheart's <u>1861: The Civil War Awakening</u>. Goodheart uses the 450 pages of this book to explore an answer to the question of what forces drove peaceful Americans into a bloody civil war in a relatively short period of time. Goodheart breaks down the answer to the question through a series of stories about the people and events that transformed the entire nation. These stories are presented with insight and context and through writing that will engage most readers.</p>	
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No Time Like the Present	Gordimer, Nadine	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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V is for Vengeance

Grafton, Sue

3/27/12

Pacing. The latest and twenty-second novel in the Kinsey Millhone series from Sue Grafton is titled, V is for Vengeance. For the past thirty years, Grafton has rewarded patient readers with entertaining episodes in the life of a California private detective. Grafton's pacing in the novel and in the series proceeds at a moderate rate, allowing fans to savor every page. In the current offering, Kinsey stumbles on a crime ring and pursues resolution with vigor. Readers who like detective fiction can start here or anywhere and find pleasure.

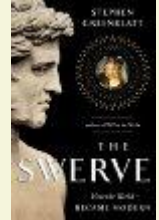


The Swerve: How the World Became Modern

Greenblatt, Stephen

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011

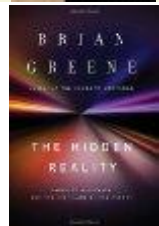


The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos

Greene, Brian

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2011

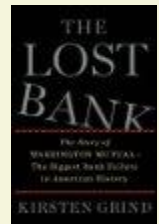


The Lost Bank: The Story of Washington Mutual-The Biggest Bank Failure in American History

Grind, Kirsten

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012



Calico Joe



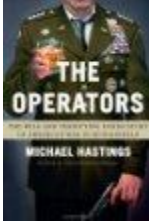
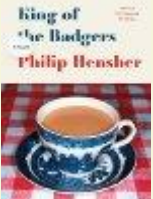
Grisham, John

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012



Monday Mornings	Gupta, Sanjay	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Blood in the Water	Haddam, Jane	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The Red House	Haddon, Mark	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion	Haidt, Jonathan	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
<u>The Art of Fielding</u>	Harbach, Chad	****	<u>3/2/12</u>	Sacrifice. Chad Harbach's sprawling and ambitious debut novel, <u>The Art of Fielding</u> , demands a lot of patience from readers. The characters are developed very slowly, almost at the pace of most baseball games. The setting is a Midwestern college where the protagonist, Henry Skrimshander, has been recruited to the school because of his talent as a baseball player. His ambition and that of other characters, along with the sacrifices made by many, provide the backdrop for relationships and a multi-year odd adventure with mighty highs and deep lows. Harback tested my willing suspension for disbelief at many times, but by the time I finished the 500+ pages, I realized that I	

				had really enjoyed a fine story. Patient readers who are willing to give a chance to first time authors are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
<u>The Fear Index</u>	Harris, Robert	****	<u>2/17/12</u>	<p>Alive. I was highly entertained by Robert Harris' latest novel, <u>The Fear Index</u>. A quirky quant, Dr. Alex Hoffmann, has developed computer programs to create a machine that learns and produces huge returns for a hedge fund because of its ability to anticipate market movements. The power of the machine to learn has consequences for the inventor and others, and the thrilling plot kept me entertained throughout. Somewhat ripped from the financial pages about high volume nanosecond trades in and out of securities leading to market disruptions, this novel carries the power of the machine to a logical outcome. Readers who like thrillers are those most likely to enjoy this novel.</p>	
Songs of Unreason	Harrison, Jim	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	
The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan	Hastings, Michael	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
King of the Badgers	Hensher, Philip	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	

The New Deal: A Modern History

Hiltzik, Michael

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in August 2011

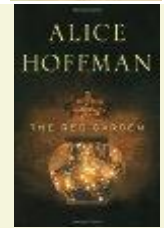


The Red Garden

Hoffman, Alice

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2011

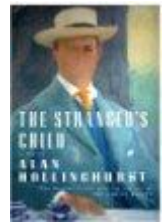


The Stranger's Child

Hollinghurst, Alan

1/5/12

Desire. The atmosphere, tension and drama that Alan Hollinghurst writes in his novel, The Stranger's Child, carries readers through 450 pages of a sweeping novel spanning a century of time. Two families provide the focus of our attention, and the many forms of desire are spun out in ways that are witty, exacting in detail, and tragic. The character development and attention to detail bring to life past and modern times with precision. Readers who appreciate fine writing and who are willing to tolerate an indirect plot and paths that seem distracting are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

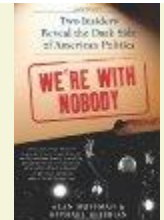


We're with Nobody: Two Insiders Reveal the Dark Side of American Politics

Huffman, Alan and Michael Rejebian

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012

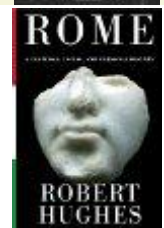



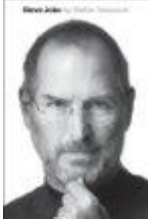
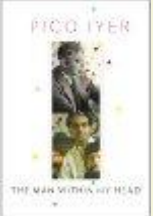
Rome: A Cultural, Visual, and Personal History

Hughes, Robert

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011



In One Person	Irving, John	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
Steve Jobs	Isaacson, Walter	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
The Man Within My Head	Iyer, Pico	Unread		By page 10, I realized I am not that interested in Graham Greene after all. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	

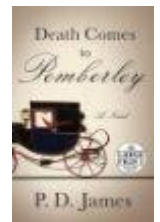
Curiosity. I was intrigued when I heard that the venerable mystery writer, P.D. James, chose to set her latest novel, [Death Comes to Pemberley](#), in the place, time, and characters of Jane Austen. Curiosity brought me to this novel, and James' skill at mystery writing kept me interested. I suspect that both Austen and James fans are likely to come away from this novel with some degree of disappointment. Darcy, Elizabeth, Wickham and others are familiar characters to most readers, but they are set in our minds from Austen's writing. James may be true to many aspects of these well-developed characters, but she sets them in a situation that is unlike anything that Austen would have done. Along the way, readers get an interesting mystery to read, but one neither great nor memorable.

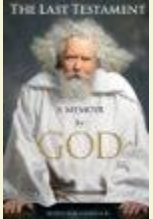
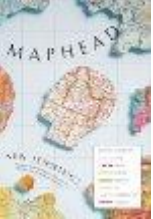

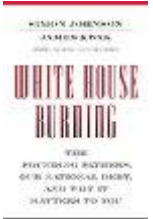
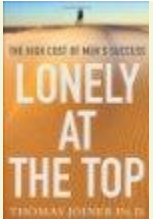
[Death Comes to Pemberley](#)

James, P.D.

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[1/18/12](#)



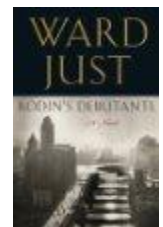
The Last Testament: A Memoir by God	Javerbaum, David	Unread		I stopped at page 26, realizing that the schtick just wasn't keeping me interested. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
Maphead: Charting the Wide, Weird World of Geography Wonks	Jennings, Ken	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
An Unquenchable Thirst: Following Mother Teresa in Search of Love, Service, and an Authentic Life	Johnson, Mary	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
White House Burning: The Founding Fathers, Our National Debt, and Why It Matters to You	Johnson, Simon and James Kwak	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Lonely at the Top: The High Cost of Men's Success	Joiner, Thomas	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in November 2011	

Artist. How is art formed? How is the artist formed? These are some of the questions that Ward Just explores in his finely written novel, [Rodin's Debutante](#). The core of the novel is a coming of age story about a man named Lee Goodell who grew up in a small town as the child of a prominent father, a judge who was the son of a judge. A side story involves Tommy Ogden a wealthy loner who prefers hunting and whoring over

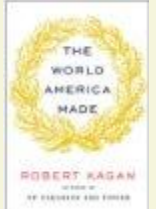
[Rodin's Debutante](#)

Just, Ward

1/23/12



other pursuits. Ogden founds a school which Goodell attends. The novel explodes with the contrasts of beauty and the grittiness of life, and the real scars that Goodell experiences turn into his marbles, the sculptures he creates. Just creates vibrant characters and masterfully expresses powerful emotions with an economy of finely chosen words. Readers who enjoy thought provoking fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

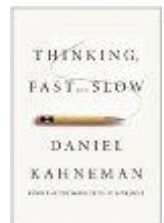
The World America Made	Kagan, Robert	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
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Principles. Readers who like to think about thinking will enjoy Daniel Kahneman's book, [Thinking Fast and Slow](#). This Nobel winner elucidates his own research about how the mind works and comments on the insights of other researchers. The title refers to the ways in which our brain leads us toward quick and lazy decisions that are almost automatic versus the harder and slower thinking work that requires greater effort. Kahneman describes his decades of research in a readable style that most readers will find interesting and enlightening. Fans of behavioral economics will find this book to be delightful reading.

[Thinking, Fast and Slow](#)

Kahneman, Daniel

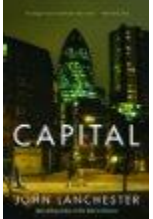
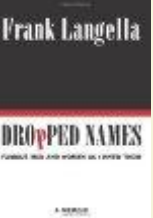
[3/19/12](#)





The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present	Kandel, Eric R.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
What to Ask the Person in the Mirror: Critical Questions for Becoming a More Effective Leader and Reaching Your Potential	Kaplan, Robert Steven	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation	Kazin, Michael	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
Flea Circus: A Brief Bestiary of Grief	Keifetz, Mandy	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in December 2011	
The End of Leadership	Kellerman, Barbara	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy	Kennedy, Caroline and Michael Beschloss	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
11/22/63: A Novel	King, Stephen	*****	4/27/12	Obdurate. Readers who like to settle in and spend a lot of time with a well-told story should consider Stephen King's latest novel, 11/22/63 . King's imagination soars as he considers the question of what would have happened if	

				<p>Kennedy wasn't shot and killed in 1963. The device he uses to riff on this topic is time travel, and by using protagonist Jake Epping as an everyman who gets to decide the future of reality itself. A lot of the book is a love story that is endearing and important to the plot. Changing the past has consequences, and as King restates often, "the past is obdurate," it does not want to change. Jake finds events become harmonized and his best plans can lead to unexpected outcomes. This is fine story telling with just enough speculation and imagination to keep a reader interested and willing to suspend disbelief.</p>	
On China	Kissinger, Henry	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
City of Scoundrels: The 12 Days of Disaster That Gave Birth to Modern Chicago	Krist, Gary	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Babylon: Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization	Kriwaczek, Paul	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
<u>Gods Without Men</u>	Kunzru, Hari	***	4/10/12	<p>Searching. A rock formation called The Pinnacles provides the backdrop to the action in Hari Kunzru's novel, <u>Gods Without Men</u>. Kunzru presents a story of a search for meaning capitalizing on the desert journey experience used for millennia of stories,</p>	

				and adds a quirky UFO dimension for modern interest: the role of the Ashtar Galactic Command. While Kunzru uses various time periods to present the story of our ongoing search for meaning, the part that gripped me most was the modern story of the search for a missing child. Readers looking for a well told but somewhat odd story are those most likely to enjoy this novel.	
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Capital	Lanchester, John	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Dropped Names: Famous Men and Women As I Knew Them	Langella, Frank	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	

<u>Imagine: How Creativity Works</u>	Lehrer, Jonah	*****	4/27/12	<p>Magic. Most readers of Jonah Lehrer's new book, <u>Imagine: How Creativity Works</u>, will learn a dozen or so new things about creativity as a result of reading this book. His lively writing will keep all but the most distracted readers engaged. The stories and anecdotes bring to life some underlying science that would be a bit boring to read in a different manner. I found his chapter on outsiders to be particularly informative. Promoting creativity, especially in the workplace, involves some magic, and Lehrer provides some useful thoughts on how to tap into the possibilities.</p>	
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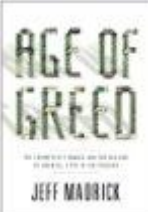
<p><u>Beastly Things</u></p>	<p>Leon, Donna</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>4/11/12</u></p> <p>Companions. Fans of the Donna Leon novels featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti will enjoy this 21st installment in a reliable and consistent series set in Venice. Titled <u>Beastly Things</u>, the novel opens with the homicide of a veterinarian. While Guido investigates the case, his wife, Paola, struggles with an issue of her own at the university. As expected, both Guido and Paola find ways to reach the right resolution. The scenes of Brunetti and his sidekick Vianello visiting a slaughterhouse were more vivid than some readers might appreciate, and the good character and decency of some characters provides a striking contrast to the criminals. By the time Leon shifts to pets as companions at the end of the novel, most readers will have become vegetarians.</p>	
<p><u>Raylan</u></p>	<p>Leonard, Elmore</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>2/17/12</u></p> <p>Identity. Elmore Leonard never seems to add a second word when one will do, whether in dialog or description. <u>Raylan</u> is his latest novel featuring U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens as the central character. Readers who are unfamiliar with this character from previous novels or from the TV series, <i>Justified</i>, may find the character developed in this novel to be a bit spare. For fans, this is a worthy installment featuring an intriguing character, and the writing soars. The subject matter of drug and body part sales in former coal mining country provides a lively backdrop of characters and situations for Givens to play</p>	

out his role. Readers who like well written crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.


<p>Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress--and a Plan to Stop It</p>	<p>Lessig, Lawrence</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011</p>	
<p>The Ecstasy of Influence: Nonfictions, Etc.</p>	<p>Lethem, Jonathan</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011</p>	
<p>The Sugar Frosted Nutsack</p>	<p>Leyner, Mark</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012</p>	
<p>Mr g: A Novel About the Creation</p>	<p>Lightman, Alan</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012</p>	
<p><u>The Compass of Pleasure: How Our Brains Make Fatty Foods, Orgasm, Exercise, Marijuana, Generosity, Vodka, Learning, and Gambling Feel So Good</u></p>	<p>Linden, David J.</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>4/27/12</u></p>	<p>Lively. David Linden does for neuroscience what the <i>Freakonomics</i> authors have done for social science: he finds a way to make the subject accessible for general readers. His latest book, <u>The Compass of Pleasure: How Our Brains Make Fatty Foods, Orgasm, Exercise, Marijuana, Generosity, Vodka, Learning, and Gambling Feel So Good</u>, provides a lively presentation about how the brain works and how our pleasure circuits become activated. One aspect of the book that I found particularly interesting is his exploration of the relationship between pleasure and addiction. Most</p>	

				readers will feel entertained by Linden as we learn key concepts from evolution and modern neuroscience.	
<u>How It All Began</u>	Lively, Penelope	***	<u>3/27/12</u>	Accidental. What I enjoyed most about Penelope Lively's novel, <u>How It All Began</u> , was the cast of charming and endearing characters. Lively frames her plot around the notion of how a single accident can lead to considerable consequences for characters that at first seem unconnected from one another. For those readers who like to read about a wide range of behavior, enjoy witty dialogue, and have any interest at all in chaos theory, this novel will deliver the goods.	
The Future of History	Lukacs, John	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business	Lutz, Bob	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
The Charlestown Connection	MacDonald, Tom	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Light Lifting	MacLeod, Alexander	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	


<p><u>Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power</u></p>	<p>Maddow, Rachel</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>4/19/12</u></p>	<p>Compelling. Open-minded readers will find a compelling argument about American military bloat in Rachel Maddow's book, <u>Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power</u>. Those readers who have pigeonholed Maddow as a liberal automaton may be deaf to her articulate, witty and thoughtful approach in this book. I found this book to be a reasoned and reasonable exploration of the ways in which we have drifted from our foundational values about a standing military, and for a variety of reasons have funded a military that is too easy to engage in foreign entanglements. True conservatives and libertarians will find her case to be compelling. Any reader interested in public affairs and public policy issues should seriously consider reading this book whether you generally agree or disagree with Maddow.</p>	
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<p>Age of Greed: The Triumph of Finance and the Decline of America, 1970 to the Present</p>	<p>Madrick, Jeff</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in August 2011</p>	
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<p>Bring Up the Bodies</p>	<p>Mantel, Hilary</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012</p>	
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<p><u>The Flame Alphabet</u></p>	<p>Marcus, Ben</p>	<p>****</p>	<p><u>4/19/12</u></p>	<p>Toxic. For some “meat and potatoes” readers, reading a literary novel can be like being told to eat one’s vegetables because they’re good for you. The taste is often less appealing, especially when plot can be</p>	
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confusing or absent, or the subject matter is depressing. The latest novel from Ben Marcus, [The Flame Alphabet](#), may be an acquired taste for most readers. This is a dystopic novel in which the speech of children causes disease, while the reaction of parents is to continue to love and be drawn to the suffering from this toxicity. Our desire for community comes through in the odd way in which religious practice is conducted. You may not read a stranger novel this year if you approach this one. Sometimes, it's worth the stretch to explore something imaginative and unusual. For some readers, this novel is worth the stretch.

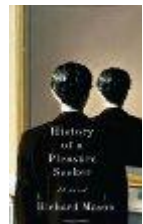
The Ten, Make That Nine, Habits of Very Organized People. Make That Ten.: The Tweets	Martin, Steve	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
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Yield. When Piet Barol, the protagonist of Richard Mason's novel, [History of a Pleasure Seeker](#), finds himself offered the chance to indulge in any form of pleasure, he yields to the opportunity with delight and enthusiasm. Set mostly in Amsterdam in 1907, Barol is hired as a tutor to the son of a wealthy hotelier. The house is packed with beautiful objects and people, the food and service outstanding. Barol is handsome, talented and charming, and uses skills and wits to achieve what he desires. Readers who like period novels and atmospheric sensuality are

[History of a Pleasure Seeker](#)

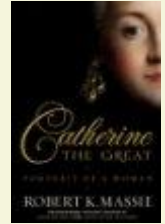
Mason, Richard

[3/27/12](#)



those most likely to enjoy this novel.

Stupendous. Octogenarian Robert K. Massie has condensed the scale of his broad and deep knowledge of this subject into 650 pages of lively reading titled, Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman. Massie tells the story of her life, her struggles and her great successes with a level of detail and insight that will appeal to those readers of biography who crave for good stories and wise, critical examination. My knowledge of Catherine's life was sketchy, so I was enthralled by Massie's depiction of this enlightened leader's prudence and risk taking. All readers will come away from this book with many reasons why she was a great leader.



Lonely. Mike Mayo has spent his career as a financial analyst specializing in banks. In his book, Exile on Wall Street, Mayo describes his early experience working at the Federal Reserve providing analysis on bank mergers, and then as a sell side stock analyst for a variety of Wall Street firms. Readers will come away from this book with the sense that Mayo is not a person inclined to get along and go along. He is willing to go against the views of those around him and come up with his independent judgment. His record shows him as being right more often than he was wrong. Instead of being acclaimed for his wise analysis, he was often treated as a pariah. Accepting that



Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman

Massie, Robert K.

1/5/12

Exile on Wall Street: One Analyst's Fight to Save the Big Banks from Themselves

Mayo, Mike

1/18/12

his account is one side of a story, this is an interesting description of the challenges involved in financial reform. Those readers interested in this subject will find the book quick to read and liable to induce further thinking on this subject.

Men in Space	McCarthy, Tom	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
The Man Who Changed the Way We Eat: Craig Claiborne and the American Food Renaissance	McNamee, Thomas	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
The Song of Achilles	Miller, Madeline	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
We Others	Millhauser, Steven	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan	Miscamble, Wilson	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in August 2011	
Jerusalem: The Biography	Montefiore, Simon Sebag	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	

Sacre Bleu	Moore, Christopher	***	4/27/12	<p>Colorful. The last time I read a novel about a color must have been when I was three or four years old. I have a distant memory of dreaming of the colors coming to life. Maybe that experience prepared me to enjoy reading Christopher Moore's novel, Sacre Bleu. The Impressionist painters come to life in this novel, and the illustrations and the beauty of the book itself were a joy to experience. This is a funny and imaginative novel that can be best enjoyed while sipping French wine. Readers who are looking to read something a little different should consider this novel.</p>	
Home	Morrison, Toni	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The First Detective: The Life and Revolutionary Times of Vidocq: Criminal, Spy and Private Eye	Morton, James	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
All I Did Was Shoot My Man	Mosley, Walter	***	2/3/12	<p>Paternal. The more Walter Mosley develops the character of protagonist Leonid McGill, the greater the desire of fans to want the series to grow. The fourth novel of the series is titled All I Did Was Shoot My Man, and the contrasting love and loss, joy and sorrow of McGill, the tragic hero and private detective, caught me from the beginning and held me to the end. The complex relationship between fathers and sons is a motif in this</p>	

novel, and the plot will require close attention. First time readers of the McGill series can begin here, but those who have read the earlier novels will be best prepared for the richness of this latest installment.

<p>The Gift of Fire / On the Head of a Pin: Two Short Novels from Crosstown to Oblivion</p>	<p>Mosley, Walter</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012</p>	
<p>God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World</p>	<p>Murphy, Cullen</p>	<p>Unread</p>		<p>Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012</p>	
<p><u>Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010</u></p>	<p>Murray, Charles</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>3/19/12</u></p>	<p>Class. Any reader interested in the current state of American society will benefit from reading Charles Murray's controversial book, <u>Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010</u>. Murray's premise is that our society is divisible by class. There is a new upper class and a new lower class, and he explains why that matters. To eliminate the "noise" he focuses on white America, since some readers may see our class divide as racial. This book carves up a lot of numbers, and he draws conclusions with a libertarian point of view. His passion on this topic comes from the question about whether or not American exceptionalism can survive. Whether one agrees with Murray or not, his concerns about how we may be coming apart the seams are worth considering.</p>	

Grand Pursuit:
The Story of
Economic
Genius

Nasar, Sylvia

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility
in July 2011



The Devil's Star

Nesbo, Jo

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility
in February 2010

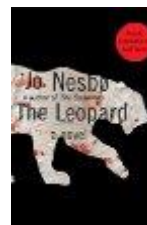


Inhumanity. Readers who can tolerate massive amounts of violence and inhumane acts described in detail can open Jo Nesbo's novel, [The Leopard](#), and settle right in. It's helpful to have read the earlier novels in the Harry Hole series to understand why this protagonist has hit his nadir and is living a life of darkness in Hong Kong. Coerced home to Norway to solve yet another serial murder case, Hole who has subjected himself to great pain, faces even greater physical pain during this case. The plot is complicated, and it can be painful to an empathetic reader to watch the damaged Hole suffer. Harry Hole is a great character, and Nesbo's writes well (probably better in the original Norwegian), and readers willing to spend time exploring the nature of evil will find this book engaging.

[The Leopard](#)

Nesbo, Jo

[1/18/12](#)

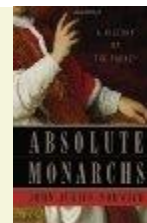




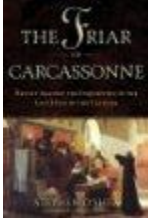
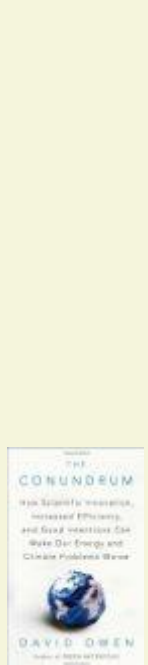
Absolute
Monarchs: A
History of the
Papacy

Norwich, John
Julian

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility
in August 2011



Emily, Alone	O’Nan, Stewart	Unread		I stalled out after 40 pages. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
The Odds: A Love Story	O’Nan, Stewart	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
The Friar of Carcassonne: Revolt Against the Inquisition in the Last Days of the Cathars	O’Shea, Stephen	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
<u>The Conundrum</u>	Owen, David	***	<u>4/19/12</u>	<p>Cross-purposes. If you’re pretty smug about the ways in which you’re green: recycling, locavore, hybrid, etc., be sure to avoid reading David Owen’s book, <u>The Conundrum: How Scientific Innovation, Increased Efficiency, and Good Intentions Can Make Our Energy and Climate Problems Worse</u>. Owen’s basic premise is that we turn efficiencies into increased consumption and thereby make our problems worse. These usage changes don’t lead to sustainability. The conundrum entails our inability, thus far, to commit to taking steps that would actually make a lasting difference on a global scale. According to Owen, we need to find ways globally to live smaller, closer to each other, and to drive less. Readers who enjoy gathering a broader perspective on issues are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	

[Mrs. Fox](#)

Oyeyemi, Helen

[1/23/12](#)

Muse. Music lovers who appreciate amusing variations on a theme and those readers who are patient with an absence of plot sequence or logic are those most likely to enjoy Helen Oyeyemi's novel, [Mrs. Fox](#). I found many parts of the novel to be witty and I enjoyed the multiple ways in which Oyeyemi explores the story. After a while, I lost patience, and found myself concluding that this odd novel is for acquired tastes, and mine savors something a little less gamey.



Annoying: The Science of What Bugs Us

Palca, Joe and Flora Lightman

Unread

Added to Shelf of Possibility in May 2011



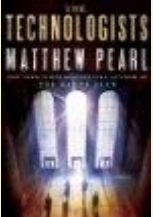
[Breakdown](#)


Paretsky, Sara

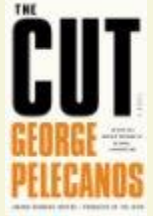
[4/27/12](#)

Connections. Sara Paretsky's fifteenth and latest V.I. Warshawski novel is titled [Breakdown](#). As fans have come to expect, Paretsky's plot is complicated, her politics are raw, and issues from the headlines provide ample opportunities for Paretsky to exploit. The connections she makes from contemporary headlines to novel plots are always well done. Partisans of Paretsky's leftward leanings will cheer her character portrayals, while righter leaning readers may find her characters incomplete. Readers who like character-driven crime fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel and this series.




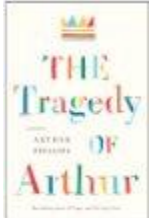
The Technologists	Pearl, Matthew	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
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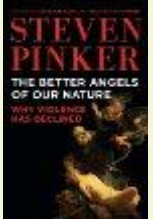
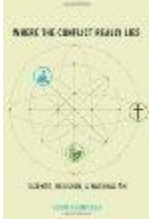
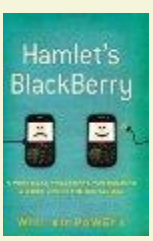
Binocular Vision: New & Selected Stories	Pearlman, Edith	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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The Cut	Pelecanos, George	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
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<u>What It Was</u>	Pelecanos, George	***	<u>3/2/12</u>	<p>Setting. George Pelecanos paints such a vivid picture of the setting for his novel, <u>What It Was</u>, that readers will see and feel the early 1970s on these pages. Pelecanos likes the cars, the music and the clothes, so they are described in detail to set the background and mood for a quickly paced crime novel featuring private detective Derek Strange at the time just after he left the Metropolitan Police Department. Fans of crime fiction and Pelecanos are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	
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Lifeblood: How to Change the World One Dead Mosquito at a Time	Perry, Alex	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
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The Tragedy of Arthur	Phillips, Arthur	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
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The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined	Pinker, Steven	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism	Plantinga, Alvin	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
Hamlet's BlackBerry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age	Powers, William	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2010	

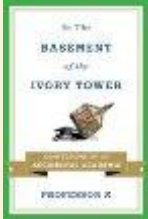
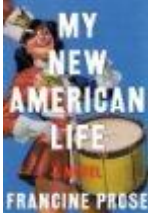
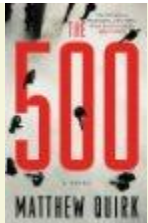

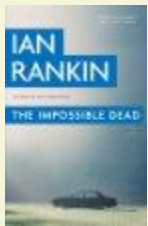
Nonconformists. Eyal Press' short book, [Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times](#), presents a reflection on a dimension of human behavior: standing alone for one's convictions. He tells the stories of nonconformists who exhibit moral courage in taking stances that conflict with the will of their superiors or peers. This book provides a thought-provoking launching point for conversation with friends or colleagues about the decisions we make to conform or to stand our ground. Readers looking for inspiring stories of courageous behavior will find those here. Readers looking for an interesting book club selection will find this book will stimulate lively discussion.

[Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times](#)

Press, Eyal

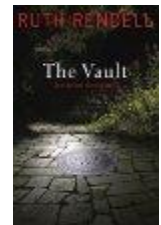
[4/19/12](#)



In the Basement of the Ivory Tower: Confessions of an Accidental Academic	Professor X	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	
<u>My New American Life</u>	Prose, Francine	***	<u>1/23/12</u>	Plucky. Twenty-six year old Albanian immigrant Lula is the protagonist of Francine Prose's novel, <u>My New American Life</u> . Prose captures many aspects of contemporary life circa 2005, and assembles a cast of characters to flesh out that time and show the contrast between suburban malaise and an immigrant's struggle post-9/11. The plucky Lula is a survivor who stumbles through ways to make it in America. All the Albanian characters have a liveliness that contrasts with the sadness of the American characters. Readers who enjoy novels of social commentary are those most likely to enjoy this book.	
The 500	Quirk, Matthew	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
Waterline	Raisin, Ross	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
<u>The Impossible Dead</u>	Rankin, Ian	****	<u>2/3/12</u>	Outsider. Ian Rankin is a master of character-based crime fiction, and his skills are prodigious in his latest Malcolm Fox novel titled, <u>The Impossible Dead</u> . Fox is a police detective outsider, assigned to the professional standards unit or internal	

affairs, called by most, the Complaints. Sent to the Fife Constabulary on a case, he ends up investigating murder, while being drawn back home to visit his ill father and repair his relationship with his sister. Fox is a complex individual that Rankin creates in ways that make him familiar, fully human, and prompts readers to care for what happens to him. Rankin provides realistic dialogue, a captivating plot, and deep character development that will appeal to all readers who like those elements in well-written fiction.

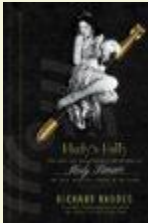
Advisor. The retired life of former chief inspector Reginald Wexford takes on spikes of adrenalin in the latest novel titled [The Vault](#), in this popular series by Ruth Rendell. Wexford has been asked to assist Tom Ede of the Metropolitan Police as an unpaid advisor helping solve a complicated multiple murder case. Wexford relishes the work, and finds himself forgetting that he's no longer on the force since the work he is doing is so familiar. Rendell adds complexity to Wexford's family life and those events close to home make Wexford even sharper as he unravels a complicated puzzle one piece at a time. Readers who like finely written mystery or crime novels are those most likely to enjoy this book.

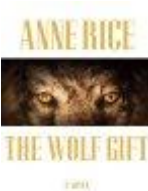


[The Vault](#)

Rendell, Ruth

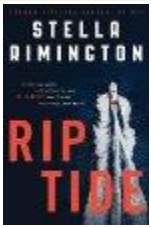
[1/18/12](#)

Hedy's Folly: The Life and Breakthrough Inventions of Hedy Lamarr, the Most Beautiful Woman in the World	Rhodes, Richard	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in December 2011	
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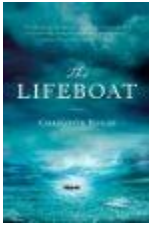


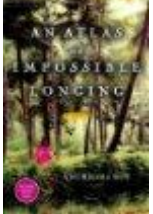
<u>The Wolf Gift</u>	Rice, Anne	***	<u>3/2/12</u>	<p>Mutation. Prolific author Anne Rice has returned to her fan base with the first 400 page novel in what readers will hope is a new series. <u>The Wolf Gift</u> features protagonist Reuben Golding, who has become a werewolf. Similar to the characters in her vampire novels, these werewolves are heroic monsters who battle evildoers. While long philosophical passages may bore some readers, the action moves quickly, there's a love story, and the contemporary setting brings the story to life. This is a satisfying story to those readers who have come to enjoy Rice.</p>	
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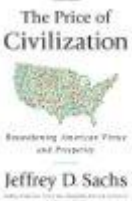
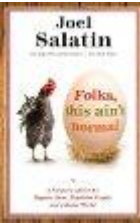
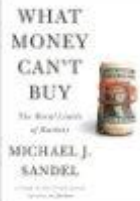
<u>No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington</u>	Rice, Condoleezza	***	<u>2/3/12</u>	<p>Personal. It took a lot of perseverance for me to slog through the 750+ pages of Condoleezza Rice's memoir of her time in Washington, titled <u>No Higher Honor</u>. Rice tells her side of the story of that time, following memoirs by Rumsfeld, Bush and Cheney, each of whom has told a version of the same events. Rice settles some scores with Rumsfeld and Cheney in a gentle way, and remains fully loyal to Bush, as readers would expect. While I disagree with most of the policies she pursued, I was charmed often while reading this book when she'd inject personal asides and</p>	
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			<p>anecdotes. Those lively paragraphs made up for dense chapters and reminded me of the humanity of political figures who can become depersonalized through the lens of policy differences. Partisans and fans of Rice will find this as required reading, and readers with a strong interest in contemporary politics are those most likely to enjoy this memoir.</p>	
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Rip Tide	Rimington, Stella	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in August 2011	
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<p><u>When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays</u></p>	Robinson, Marilynne	***	<p>4/27/12</p> <p>Cogent. I read each of the ten essays in Marilynne Robinson's collection, <u>When I Was a Child I Read Books</u>, in a single sitting on separate days. I needed to engage my wits to follow her thorough and thoughtful arguments, and then needed a rest afterwards to absorb what I read. She must be the kind of teacher for whom alert students should schedule free time after her class for recovery. In many respects, she comes across as a writer's writer, with her careful choice of words and deliberative style. There may not be a better contemporary description of liberal Christianity and its sources and demands. Readers of her novels will gain insight from these essays and may consider re-reading the novels in light of the revelations from these essays. Any reader who appreciates fine writing and cogent reflection should consider</p>	
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				reading the book.	
The Lifeboat	Rogan, Charlotte	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
<u>Kayak Morning: Reflections on Love, Grief, and Small Boats</u>	Rosenblatt, Roger	***	<u>2/24/12</u>	Breathing. Roger Rosenblatt's fine writing rescues a scattered collection of thoughts and turns them into lucid reflections that many readers will find comforting. Titled <u>Kayak Morning: Reflections on Love, Grief, and Small Boats</u> , Rosenblatt uses this book to continue to share with readers the ways in which he has been dealing with the death of his daughter. Sometimes it comes down to breathing. Readers who have experienced the loss of a loved one will find in this book an expression of feelings and behavior that will be familiar.	
Unassisted Living	Rosenfeld, Jeffrey P. and Wid Chapman	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in December 2011	
The Train of Small Mercies	Rowell, David	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
An Atlas of Impossible Longing	Roy, Anuradha	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2011	

The Price of Civilization: Reawakening American Virtue and Prosperity	Sachs, Jeffrey D.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World	Salatin, Joel	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets	Sandel, Michael J.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	


Restoration. Within the span of a few pages of Anthony Shadid's memoir, [House of Stone: A Memoir of Home, Family, and a Lost Middle East](#), I smiled and then teared up. The centerpiece of the book is the story of his restoration of a family home in southern Lebanon. He owns a fraction of this house with a load of cousins, and decided to just go ahead and live in it, since he was the only owner residing in the region even part of the year. Anyone who has tried to restore an old house will smile at these travails. The havoc of war in the region is never far from the scene, and Shadid provides crisp and clear insight into the issues and the effects of decades of strife. What Shadid does so well is describe the people of the town and members of his family in ways that all readers will enjoy. The fact that Shadid died earlier this year led me to tear up on occasion

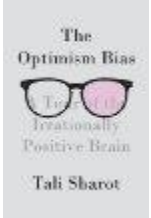



[House of Stone: A Memoir of Home, Family, and a Lost Middle East](#)


Shadid, Anthony ***** 4/11/12

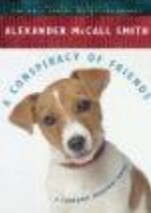
as I read this book. A major part of his legacy involves his extensive journalism career with *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Another part of his legacy is the restoration of a stone house, as told in this finely written memoir.

Sweet Heaven When I Die: Faith, Faithlessness, and the Country In Between	Sharlet, Jeff	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
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<u>The Optimism Bias: A Tour of the Irrationally Positive Brain</u>	Sharot, Tali	***	<u>3/19/12</u>	<p>Expectations. I had something of a “wow” reaction as I read Tali Sharot’s book, <u>The Optimism Bias: A Tour of the Irrationally Positive Brain</u>. Her research has led to conclusions that optimism is a survival mechanism, and at the neural level, our brain tends to frame the past as better than it was and position us to expect a better future. The regions of the brain that do these things are described in a way that’s accessible to all readers, and those who like to think about thinking and are interested in how the brain works, are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>	
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In-Flight Entertainment: Stories	Simpson, Helen	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	
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Demand: Creating What People Love Before They Know They Want It	Slywotzky, Adrian J.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
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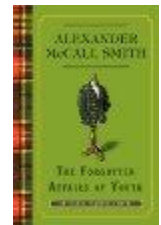
A Conspiracy of Friends	Smith, Alexander McCall	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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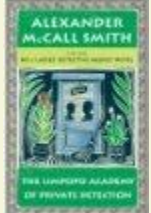
Introspective. One reason I never tire of reading the short novels in the multiple series written by the prolific Alexander McCall Smith is that the characters and their situations always make me feel good. In the latest Isabel Dalhousie novel, [The Forgotten Affairs of Youth](#), the moral philosopher continues to closely question herself about her preconceptions and biases. This philosopher lives a closely examined life! Most of the plot in this novel involves Isabel helping a fellow philosopher discover the identity of her birth parents. The usual cast of Edinburgh characters is present, and Charlie gets a little bit older, while still eating olives. Readers who like feel-good novels are those most likely to enjoy this one.


[The Forgotten Affairs of Youth](#)

Smith, Alexander McCall

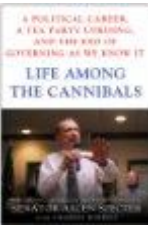
[2/17/12](#)




The Limpopo Academy of Private Detection	Smith, Alexander McCall	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
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There But For The	Smith, Ali	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
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The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda	Soufan, Ali H.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in September 2011	
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Life Among the Cannibals: A Political Career, a Tea Party Uprising, and the End of Governing As We Know It	Specter, Arlen	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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<u>Stone Arabia</u>	Spiotta, Dana	*****	<u>4/27/12</u>	<p>Siblings. Literary novels can concentrate on the lives of characters in ways that lead readers to deep insights into our human condition. Dana Spiotta's novel, <u>Stone Arabia</u>, performs that feat with skill and efficiency over the course of about 250 pages. The protagonists are siblings, Denise and Nik, and while this sibling relationship provides context, what Spiotta explores are the ways in which awareness can lead to isolation, especially when it comes to our knowledge of world events. Anyone who has experienced difficult and challenging relationships, particularly with close family members, will find Spiotta's sensitive treatment of these relationships to be sensitive and profound. Readers who enjoy fine writing should pick up this novel.</p>	
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<u>At Last</u>	St. Aubyn, Edward	*****	<u>3/2/12</u>	<p>Safety. The action in Edward St. Aubyn's finely written novel, <u>At Last</u>, takes place on the day of the protagonist's mother's funeral. Patrick Melrose feels relief and a sense of safety now that both his parents are deceased. His father abused him and his mother knew. St.</p>	
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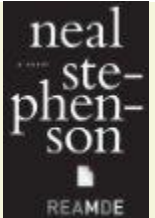
Aubyn's prose is constructed with great care and precision, full of wit and psychological insight. This novel is part of a series he's written about the wealthy Melrose family and his insight into the life of the privileged will be appealing to many readers. Fans of finely written literary fiction are those most likely to enjoy this novel.

Man Made: A Stupid Quest for Masculinity	Stein, Joel	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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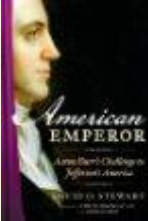
Complexity. Readers who like complex spy novels and characters that are multi-dimensional are those most likely to enjoy the fine writing in Olen Steinhauer's latest novel, [An American Spy](#). This is his third novel to feature Milo Weaver, and readers who have not read the earlier books may find Milo to be developed somewhat incompletely in this novel. The Chinese characters in this novel are developed very well, and the complex plot requires readers to pay close attention as a large cast of characters move around the world carrying out their actions. Don't read this novel while distracted at the beach, since you're likely to become lost on who's who and what's what. Find a time and place when you can pay attention and enjoy the complexity.

[An American Spy](#) Steinhauer, Olen **** 4/19/12



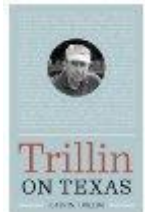
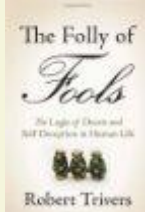

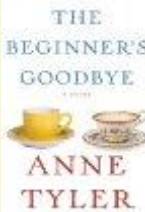
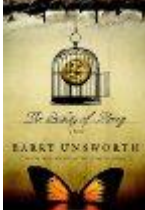
Reamde	Stephenson, Neal	****	1/18/12	
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Expansive. Readers who like big, sweeping novels with empathetic characters are those most likely to enjoy Neal Stephenson's latest novel, [Reamde](#). Over the

			<p>course of a thousand thrilling pages, Stephenson introduces hackers, gamers, mobsters, a big extended family, MI6, and terrorists. The heroes and villains are drawn with sharp contrasts, and the virtual world provides a second dimension in which the action can proceed, although the global stage in the real world covers a lot of territory which Stephenson handles with aplomb. I found myself rooting for the heroes and turned pages quickly wanting to see how everything turned out.</p>	
Never Knowing	Stevens, Chevy	Unread	<p>I sat down one evening and opened this book to begin reading for an hour or so. For the first time in memory, I stopped reading on page 1. I concluded that I had no interest at all in reading a novel about the search for one's birth mother. Shelf of Ennui 2012.</p>	
<u>American Emperor: Aaron Burr's Challenge to Jefferson's America</u>	Stewart, David O.	***	<p>Schemer. Had two or three events turned out differently in the early 19th century, the United States would be a different place today. Attorney David O. Stewart brings a lawyer's discipline and a litigator's story telling together in a fascinating new book titled, <u>American Emperor: Aaron Burr's Challenge to Jefferson's America</u>. Burr is one of the most engaging characters in American history, and Stewart presents Burr's vision of new society made up of the disgruntled communities around the Gulf of Mexico and the wide open Western part of the United States. Burr's schemes are presented as treasonous and</p>	

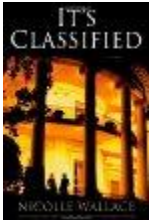
			appealing to the secessionist leanings in many parts of the fragile new republic. Burr tried to capitalize on those sentiments and he came very close to achieving his vision. Fans of American history are those readers most likely to enjoy this finely written account.	
Tangled Webs: How False Statements are Undermining America: From Martha Stewart to Bernie Madoff	Stewart, James B.	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in May 2011	
Mrs. God	Straub, Peter	Unread	When I added this to the reading queue, I thought it was a new novel. When I opened it, I realized it was a republished part of a 1990 work. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail	Strayed, Cheryl	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Wish You Were Here	Swift, Graham	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
Noon	Taseer, Aatish	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
Derby Day	Taylor, D.J.	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	

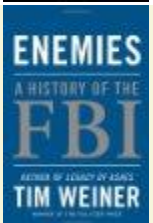
Practically Radical: Not-So-Crazy Ways to Transform Your Company, Shake Up Your Industry, and Challenge Yourself	Taylor, William C.	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in August 2011	
The Lower River	Theroux, Paul	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in December 2011	
The Toaster Project: Or a Heroic Attempt to Build a Simple Electric Appliance from Scratch	Thwaites, Thomas	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
New Ways to Kill Your Mother: Writers and Their Families	Toibin, Colm	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
The King of Diamonds	Tolkien, Simon	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2011	
<u>Quite Enough of Calvin Trillin: Forty Years of Funny Stuff</u>	Trillin, Calvin	*****	<u>1/23/12</u>	Seconds. I find that even on a second or third reading of a Calvin Trillin piece, I experience it as fresh and interesting. One of his latest collections, <u>Quite Enough of Calvin Trillin</u> , contained many essays I've read before, and I found re-reading them to be entertaining and enjoyable. His wit and writing style keeps a reader engaged, and he has a prodigious skill at observation and in selecting the perfect word and phrase.	

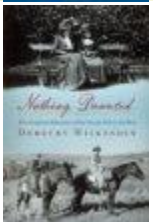
				<p>Readers who love fine and witty writing are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p> <p>Tasty. While I enjoy reading whatever topic Calvin Trillin chooses, I think I enjoy his food writing best because of the obvious pleasure that eating brings to his prose. A small collection of Trillin essays was assembled by the University of Texas Press and targeted his connections to the Lone Star State. Titled <u>Trillin on Texas</u>, this book includes pieces on politics and crime, but soars when it comes to food. Some of the connections to Texas are tenuous, but the writing is fine throughout, and will attract readers who appreciate fine writing and the wit of a master like Bud Trillin.</p>	
<u>Trillin on Texas</u>	Trillin, Calvin	***	<u>2/3/12</u>		
The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life	Trivers, Robert	Unread		I could have fooled myself and kept reading after page 36, but I couldn't lie: this book wasn't capturing my interest. Shelf of Ennui 2012.	
I Married You for Happiness	Tuck, Lily	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
The Beginner's Goodbye	Tyler, Anne	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
The Quality of Mercy	Unsworth, Barry	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2012	

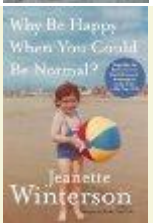
The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival	Vaillant, John	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2011	
My Lucky Life In and Out of Show Business: A Memoir	Van Dyke, Dick	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in June 2011	
Dirt	Vann, David	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in February 2012	
Once Upon a Car: The Fall and Resurrection of America's Big Three Auto Makers--GM, Ford, and Chrysler	Vlasic, Bill	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
The Gods of Greenwich	Vonnegut, Norb	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in May 2011	
Unfamiliar Fishes	Vowell Sarah	Unread		Added to Shelf of Possibility in January 2011	
Black Diamond	Walker, Martin	***	1/23/12	Truffles. Chief of Police Bruno Courrèges returns in Black Diamond , the third novel of this series by Martin Walker. Something is amiss with the truffles coming to market, and Bruno is at the center of a complicated investigation with the stakes heightened by local elections that could put Bruno out of a	

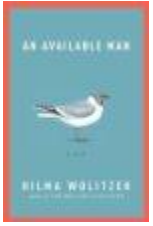
			<p>job. Walker does a great job with the police procedural plot, in presenting interesting characters that readers care about, and in describing a place with lively and descriptive prose. I could almost taste the truffles and feel that I was in France. Readers who like light novels with clear plots are those most likely to enjoy this book.</p>
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It's Classified	Wallace, Nicolle	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in October 2011	
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Enemies: A History of the FBI	Weiner, Tim	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in April 2012	
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Nothing Daunted: The Unexpected Education of Two Society Girls in the West	Wickenden, Dorothy	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in July 2011	
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Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?	Winterson, Jeanette	Unread	Added to Shelf of Possibility in March 2012	
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<u>An Available Man</u>	Wolitzer, Hilma	*****	<u>2/17/12</u>	<p>Charming. There are at least a half dozen ways in which Hilma Wolitzer could have messed up her latest novel, <u>An Available Man</u>, and one way or another she avoided every potential pitfall and wrote a fine book. The protagonist, Edward Schuyler, is a sixty-two year old science teacher at a private school whose wife has died of cancer. The novel picks up as Schuyler's grief</p>	
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has progressed to the point where can date again. Readers are likely to recommend this book to others by relating one or another anecdote from these dates. This tender and charming novel will appeal most to those readers who like a good love story packed with the confusion setbacks and humor of every life.

Reason. It's rare to find a historical novel that links two time periods effectively, while retaining the complexity and depth of each. Such a rare find is Irvin Yalom's latest novel, The Spinoza Problem. There are two protagonists: philosopher Bento Spinoza in 17th century Holland, and Alfred Rosenberg in Nazi Germany. The Spinoza problem is raised out of Rosenberg's anti-Semitic perspective: how could this Jew from Amsterdam have written works revered by Goethe, the greatest of German thinkers? Yalom uses the fictional Rosenberg to illuminate the philosophy of Spinoza and provide an entertaining way of learning to those readers who enjoy historical fiction.



<p><u>The Spinoza Problem</u></p>	<p>Yalom, Irvin D.</p>	<p>***</p>	<p><u>4/19/12</u></p>	
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Key to Ratings:

***** Outstanding book-read it now

**** Highly recommended

*** Recommended

- ** Mildly recommended
- * Read if your interest is strong
- DNR Do Not Read: Take a Pass

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