

Fiction News

The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter



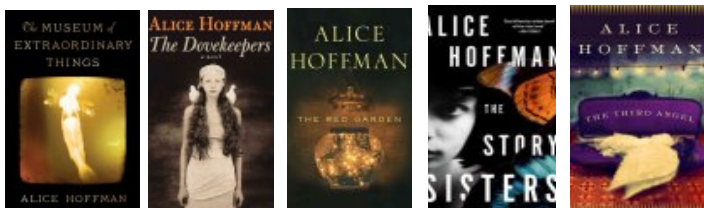
August 2015

AUTHOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Alice Hoffman

Alice Hoffman entralls fans with a blend of earthy and ethereal characters, and thoughtful plots with hints of magic and the supernatural. Readers are drawn to Hoffman's seemingly ordinary women and their lives but quickly learn there is something mysterious about them and their situations. Hoffman often creates characters who are experiencing grief, but in the end discover an inner strength to learn how to deal with life's troubles.



Partial List

The Marriage of Opposites (2015) See Staff Picks.

The Museum of Extraordinary Things (2014)

The daughter of a Coney Island boardwalk curiosities museum's front man pursues a love affair with a Russian immigrant photographer who after fleeing his Lower East Side Orthodox community has captured images of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

The Dovekeepers (2011)

A tale inspired by the tragic first-century massacre of hundreds of Jewish people at Masada presents the stories of a hated daughter, a baker's wife, a girl disguised as a warrior, and a medicine woman who keep doves and secrets while Roman soldiers draw near.

The Red Garden (2011)

Traces the multi-generational story of wintry Blackwell town through the experiences of such characters as a wounded Civil War soldier who is saved by a passionate neighbor and a woman who meets a fiercely human historical figure.

The Story Sisters (2009)

Elv, Claire, and Meg are the Story Sisters, and each has a fate she must meet alone. One on a country road, one in the streets of Paris, and one in the corridors of her own imagination. At once a coming-of-age tale, a family saga, and a love story.

The Third Angel (2008)

Follows the lives of three women in love with the wrong men.

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- ✓ Witty
- ✓ Atmospheric

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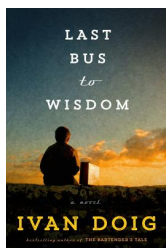


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NEW FICTION

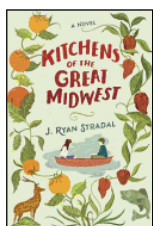
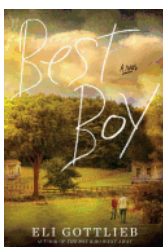
(Annotations from BookLetters and NovelList)



Last Bus to Wisdom by Ivan Doig. Donal Cameron is being raised by his grandmother, the cook at the legendary Double W ranch of the Montana Rockies, a landscape that gives full rein to an eleven-year-old's imagination. But when Gram has to have surgery for female trouble in the summer of 1951, all she can think to do is to ship Donal off to her sister in faraway Manitowoc, Wisconsin. There Donal is in for a rude surprise: Aunt Kate bossy, opinionated, argumentative, and tyrannical is nothing like her sister. The final novel from a great American storyteller.

Best Boy by Eli Gottlieb.

Sent to a therapeutic community for autism at the age of eleven, Todd Aaron, now in his fifties, is in the Payton Living Center. Written in the first-person voice of an autistic, adult man, *Best Boy* with its unforgettable portraits of Todd's beloved mother, whose voice still sings from the grave, and a staffer named Raykene, who says that Todd reflects the beauty of His creation, is a piercing, achingly funny, finally shattering novel no reader can ever forget.

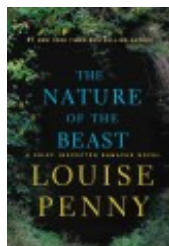
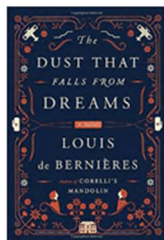


Kitchens of the Great Midwest by J. Ryan Stradal. Each chapter in J. Ryan Stradal's startlingly original debut tells the story of a single dish and character, at once capturing the zeitgeist of the Midwest, the rise of foodie culture, and delving into the ways food creates community and a sense of identity. By turns quirky, hilarious, and vividly sensory, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest* is an unexpected mother-daughter story about the bittersweet nature of life, its missed opportunities and its joyful surprises.

The Dust That Falls from Dreams

by Louis de Bernières.

From the acclaimed author of *Corelli's Mandolin*, here is a sumptuous, sweeping, powerfully moving new novel about a British family whose lives and loves are indelibly shaped by the horrors of World War I and the hopes for its aftermath.

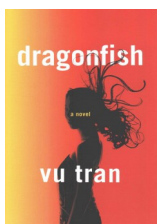


The Nature of the Beast by Louise Penny. This is the eleventh book in Penny's popular Chief Inspector Gamache series. "All our old friends are back in Three Pines where a young boy with a compulsion to tell tall tales tells one true story with disastrous results. But which story is the truth and why is it so threatening? Exquisitely suspenseful, emotionally wrenching and thoroughly satisfying."

Library Reads.

Dragonfish by Vu Tran.

Unable to forget the mysterious Vietnamese wife who left him and blackmailed by her second husband into searching for her, a rugged Oakland cop infiltrates the sleazy gambling dens of Las Vegas to uncover his ex's painful past in a Malaysian refugee camp.



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STAFF PICKS

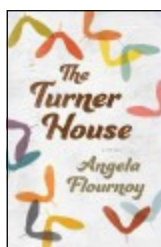
Elise's Picks

The Swimmer by Joakim Zander.

Raised by her grandparents on a remote Swedish archipelago, EU political assistant Klara Walldén never knew her father. She never knew that he was a deep-cover CIA agent who had to abandon her 33 years earlier in Damascus, when a car bomb meant for him killed her mother. Now Klara is the one on the run, in possession of a laptop full of classified information that a powerful military contractor wants destroyed, and her father has come out of retirement desperate to save the daughter he gave up. Sophisticated, with strongly drawn characters, and exotic settings, *The Swimmer* is a morally complex espionage novel that will appeal to fans of John Le Carré.



Turner House by Angela Flournoy.



Having moved from the South during the "Great Migration," the Turners, a proud African American family, have lived on Yarrow Street on the East Side of Detroit for over fifty years. In 2008, like the Motor City, the neighborhood has fallen on hard times and their neighborhood and the house have plummeted in value, it being worth 10% of its mortgage. As they come together for one of their memorable reunions to honor their ailing matriarch, the Turner family has to decide what to do about their crumbling childhood home. A wise, sympathetic look at the complicated bonds that siblings share, this impressive debut novel is filled with confrontations and celebrations, grievances and reconciliations - all the heartbreaks, intimacies, and strengths of family life.

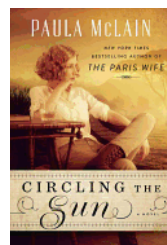
Dorothy's Picks

The Marriage of Opposites by Alice Hoffman.

Hoffman hits a literary home run with this fascinating imagining of the life of the artist Camille Pissaro's mother, a brilliant and strong-willed woman challenging the religious and cultural mores of the early 19th century. Rachel is born on the island of St. Thomas, where the Danish have provided a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution in France. As she navigates two marriages, helps run the family business, and raises ten children, she never gives up her passionate desire to pursue her own dreams and to return to her ancestral French origins. Infused with elements of the magical, Hoffman's evocative writing makes *The Marriage of Opposites* a fascinating look at another culture and another time.



Circling the Sun by Paula McClain.



In her new novel, Paula McClain explores the formative years of the legendary Beryl Markham, the first woman to fly solo from east to west over the Atlantic in 1936. Born in 1902, and raised on a farm in East Africa, Markham defied the stereotypes. After a brief disastrous marriage at age 16, she pursued her desire to become a horse breeder and trainer and engaged in a series of relationships with men attracted by her bold spirit. When Beryl falls for Denys Fitch Hatton, an expat big game hunter whose adventurous nature matches her own, she finds herself in a complicated love triangle. Karen Blixen, better known by her pen name Isak Dinesen, also has claims on Denys. This is a captivating story about a remarkable woman who followed her own rules in pursuit of her dreams.