

Fiction News



The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter

September 2016

AUTHORS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Ann Patchett

Ann Patchett writes contemporary literary fiction and non-fiction. Her work features complex characters, whom she never judges, even when they don't make the "right" decisions. Her writing style has been described as graceful and compassionate, as she probes social, political, and psychological issues and the complexity of

human relationships.



Colson Whitehead

Colson Whitehead is not known for writing the same novel twice -- he's ranged from a high-concept, philosophical tale dealing with race and history in a near-future U.S. to a warm, realistic, somewhat autobiographical novel to a satirical, literate take on the post-apocalyptic zombie genre -- but there are a few things you're guaranteed to get in each of his

inventive, original books: shrewd humor, evocative writing, well-crafted characters, sharp social commentary, and plenty of references to popular culture.



Fiction (partial list)

Commonwealth (Sept. 2016)

This enthralling story shows how an unexpected romantic encounter irrevocably changes two families lives. Spanning five decades, *Commonwealth* explores how this chance encounter reverberates through the lives of the four parents and six children involved.

State of Wonder (2011)

A researcher at a pharmaceutical company, Marina Singh journeys into the heart of the Amazonian delta to check on a field team that has been silent for two years - a dangerous assignment that forces Marina to confront the ghosts of her past.

Run (2007)

Struggling with single parenthood and a scandal that cost him his political career, Bernard Doyle fights his disappointment with his adopted sons' career choices before a violent event forces the members of his family to reconsider their priorities.

Bel Canto (2001)

When terrorists seize hostages at an embassy party, an unlikely assortment of people is thrown together, including American opera star Roxanne Coss and Mr. Hosokawa, a Japanese CEO and her biggest fan.

The Magician's Assistant (1997)

After the death of a homosexual magician, his female assistant journeys from Los Angeles to Nebraska in search of the man's hidden past and discovers his estranged family, as well as the love she has always been denied.

The Underground Railroad (2016)

Chronicles the daring survival story of a cotton plantation slave in Georgia, who, after suffering at the hands of both her owners and fellow slaves, races through the Underground Railroad with a relentless slave-catcher close behind.

Zone One (2011)

In a post-apocalyptic world decimated by zombies, the U.S. government has retreated to Buffalo, New York, and survivor efforts to rebuild are focused on lower Manhattan. With several others, Mark Spitz works as a "sweeper" -- eliminating zombie stragglers as he struggles with PASD (Post-Apocalyptic Stress Disorder) and recalls humanity before the apocalypse. -- Description by Dawn Towery.

Sag Harbor (2009)

Benji, one of the only black kids at an elite prep school in Manhattan, tries desperately to fit in, but every summer, he and his brother, Reggie, escape to the East End of Sag Harbor, where a small community of African-American professionals has built a world of its own.

John Henry Days (2001)

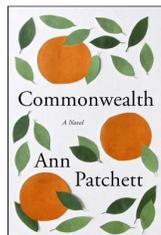
An assignment for a travel website takes J. Sutter, a young black journalist, to West Virginia for the first annual "John Henry Days" festival, where history and popular culture are juxtaposed as the real story of John Henry unfolds.

Intuitionist (1999)

A black female elevator inspector must prove that her method of inspection by intuition, as opposed to visual observation, is not at fault when an elevator in a new city building crashes.

NEW FICTION

(Annotations from BookLetters)



Commonwealth by Ann Patchett.

The acclaimed, bestselling author winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize tells the enthralling story of how an unexpected romantic encounter irrevocably changes two families lives. One Sunday afternoon in Southern California, Bert Cousins shows up at Franny Keating's christening party uninvited. Before evening falls, he has kissed Franny's mother, Beverly thus setting in motion the dissolution of their marriages and the joining of two families.

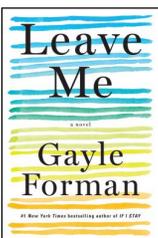
A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles.

A Gentleman in Moscow immerses us in another elegantly drawn era with the story of Count Alexander Rostov. When, in 1922, he is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, the count is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him a doorway into a much larger world of emotional discovery.



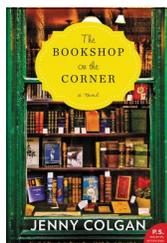
Leave Me by Gayle Forman.

Meet Maribeth Klein. A harried working mother who's so busy taking care of her husband and twins, she doesn't even realize she's had a heart attack. Surprised to discover that her recuperation seems to be an imposition on those who rely on her, Maribeth does the unthinkable: she packs a bag and leaves. With bighearted characters—husbands, wives, friends, and lovers - who stumble and trip, grow and forgive, *Leave Me* is about facing the fears we're all running from.



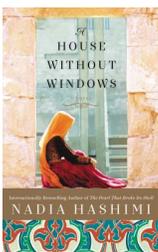
The Bookshop on the Corner by Jenny Colgan.

Nina Redmond is a literary matchmaker. Pairing a reader with that perfect book is her passion and also her job. Or at least it was. Until recently, she was a librarian in the hectic city. But now the job she loved is no more. Determined to make a new life for herself, Nina moves to a sleepy village many miles away. There she buys a van and transforms it into a mobile bookshop that she drives from neighborhood to neighborhood, changing one life after another with the power of storytelling.



The House Without Windows by Nadia Hashimi.

A vivid, unforgettable story of an unlikely sisterhood, an emotionally powerful and haunting tale of friendship that illuminates the plight of women in a traditional culture from the author of the bestselling *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*.



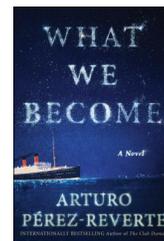
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STAFF PICKS

Elise's Picks

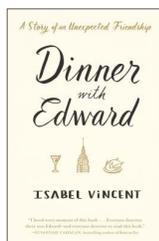
What We Become by Arturo Pérez-Reverte.

Born in the slums of Argentina and a veteran of the Spanish Foreign Legion, Max Costa is a handsome, suave cat burglar. While working on a luxury liner masquerading as a professional tango dancer, he first encounters Mecha, the beautiful, enigmatic wife of a world famous composer. The two embark on a dangerous and seemingly short-lived love affair, but their paths cross fatefully twice more in the following forty years: first in Nice, when Mecha hides Max from fascist agents, and thirty years later in Italy, where her son is competing in a chess championship against a Soviet grand master. Rich in atmosphere and intrigue, and reminiscent of a classic Hitchcock movie, Pérez-Reverte's latest literary thriller features two fascinating duplicitous characters who manage to be both "refined and roguish at the same time."



Dinner with Edward: The Story of an Unexpected Friendship. by Isabel Vincent.

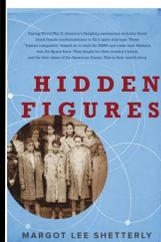
On learning that journalist Isabel Vincent had recently moved to New York City, a close Toronto friend asked her to look in on her elderly, recently widowed father. When Isabel reached out to him, Edward graciously invited her to dinner. Tall and courtly and clearly devoted to the memory of his late wife, Edward turns out to be a marvelous cook, a delightful raconteur, and a wise listener. Soon the two unlikely friends are sharing weekly dinners at his apartment, a saving balm for the grieving Edward and for Isabel, who's joyless marriage is dissolving. This charming and touching memoir about a beautiful, sustaining friendship is filled with memorable meals, sage advice, and an abiding zest for life.



Dorothy's Picks

The Golden Age by Joan London.

The central protagonists of this novel by Australian author Joan London are 13-year-old Frank Meyer, a Hungarian Jew whose family has escaped the horrors of World War II, and 12-year-old Elsa Briggs. Both are polio victims sent to the inpatient Golden Age rehab center in Perth to regain function before returning to their families. Set in the early 1950s, this novel explores the profound physical and emotional effects that polio has not only on its victims but on their extended families and their caregivers. As the adults around them struggle to best meet Frank's and Elsa's needs, the two form a unique bond as they face the reality of what has been taken from them. A haunting, heartfelt novel about resilience and the human spirit in the face of adversity.



Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race by Margot Lee Shetterly.

In June 1941 President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 forbidding racial discrimination in the national defense industry and opening doors that had been previously closed.

Shetterly tells the stories of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden, four highly talented African-American female mathematicians, who found an outlet for their skills in the burgeoning aeronautics programs at Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory in Hampton, Virginia, during World War II. Though subject to the segregation of Jim Crow laws, over the next few decades these women of the "West Computing" group made significant contributions to Cold War victories and to the success of the U.S. in the space race. An inspiring look at some little known history.