

# Fiction News



The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter

September 2017

## BACK TO SCHOOL - FICTION SET IN ACADEMIA

**Dear Committee Members** by Julie Schumacher.  
Enduring budget cuts at his small liberal arts college, literature professor Jason Fitger despairs of his writing ambitions and imposed role in a star pupil's would-be opus while writing wryly comic, passive-aggressive letters to students and colleagues.



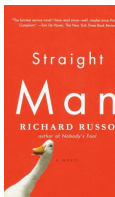
**Moo** by Jane Smiley.  
In urgent need of funds, Moo University, a huge midwestern agricultural college, and its male-dominated hierarchy search for a solution to their economic woes.



**The Dean's December** by Saul Bellow.  
Dean Corde is a man of position and authority at a Chicago university. He accompanies his wife to Bucharest where her mother lies dying in a state hospital. As he tries to help her grapple with an unfeeling bureaucracy, Corde is troubled: at home the centre is not holding firm, in Eastern Europe authority is cruel and dehumanising.



**Straight Man** by Richard Russo.  
During one tortuous week, Hank Devereaux, head of the English department at the state university in Railton, Pennsylvania, has his nose slashed by a feminist poet, finds his secretary is a better writer than he is, suspects his wife is having an affair, threatens wild fowl, and confronts his father.



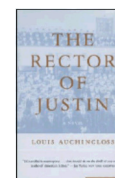
**Lucky Jim** by Kingsley Amis.  
This is the story of Jim Dixon, a hapless lecturer in medieval history at a provincial university. Amis leads the reader through a gallery of emphatically English bores, cranks, and neurotics with whom Dixon must contend in one way or another in order to hold on to his cushy academic perch.



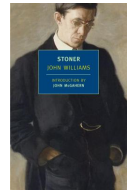
**Obedience** by Will Lavender.  
The students of Winchester University's class on Logic and Reasoning are given a strange assignment by the creepy Professor Williams, to follow a series of clues to find a missing girl who will be murdered if she has not been found by the end of the term.



**The Rector of Justin** by Louis Auchincloss.  
Traces the fictional life of Dr. Francis Prescott, the founder and head of a New England prep school.



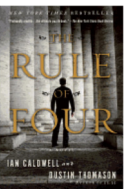
**Stoner** by John Williams.  
William Stoner is born at the end of the nineteenth century into a Missouri farming family. Sent to the state university to study agronomy, he instead falls in love with English literature and embraces a scholar's life in this deeply moving novel.



**I Am Charlotte Simmons** by Tom Wolfe.  
As Charlotte encounters the paragons of Dupont University's privileged elite, she is seduced by the heady glamour of acceptance, betraying her values and upbringing before she grasps the power of being different and the exotic allure of her innocence.



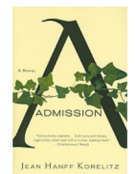
**The Rule of Four** by Ian Caldwell.  
Trying to decipher an ancient text that weaves a mathematical labyrinth within a love story, two Princeton researchers obtain a diary that may contain the key to the code, but when a fellow researcher is killed, they realize that the book contains a dangerous secret.



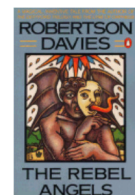
**The Gates of Angels** by Penelope Fitzgerald.  
Fred Fairly is a Fellow of St. Angelicus College in Cambridge in 1912, studying physics. In the midst of a religious crisis, he meets and falls in love with Daisy Saunders, a nursing student, but is discouraged from marrying her since only bachelors are permitted to reside at the College and teach.



**Admission** by Jean Hanff Korelitz.  
Thirty-eight-year old Portia Nathan, a Princeton University admissions officer, must decide whether or not to confront the truth when a life-altering decision from her past resurfaces.



**The Rebel Angels** by Robertson Davies.  
Two professors--one a goodhearted priest, the other a dabbler in the darker arts--becomes involved with graduate student Maria Theotoki, who knows the gospel of the angels who betrayed heaven's secrets.

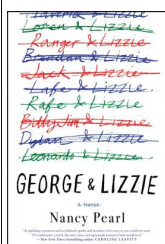


**Goodbye Mr. Chips** by James Hilton.  
Depicts the life of Mr. Chipping, a gentle English schoolmaster known familiarly to the schoolboys at Brookfield as Mr. Chips.



# NEW FICTION

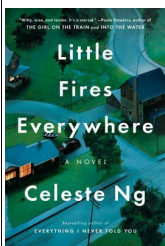
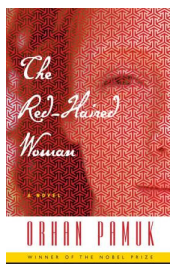
(Annotations from BookLetters)



## **George and Lizzie** by Nancy Pearl.

George and Lizzie have radically different understandings of what love and marriage should be. George grew up in a warm and loving family while Lizzie grew up as the only child of two famous psychologists, who viewed her more as an in-house experiment than a child to love. With pitch-perfect prose and compassion and humor to spare, *George and Lizzie* is an intimate story of new and past loves, the scars of childhood, and an imperfect marriage at its defining moments.

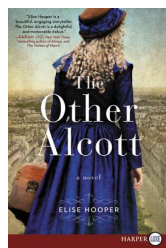
**The Red-Haired Woman** by Orhan Pamuk. On the outskirts of a town thirty miles from Istanbul, a master well-digger and his young apprentice are hired to find water on a barren plain. As they struggle in the summer heat, excavating without luck meter by meter, the two will develop a filial bond neither has known before. A beguiling mystery tale of family and romance, of east and west, tradition and modernity, by one of the great storytellers of our time.



## **Little Fires Everywhere** by Celeste Ng.

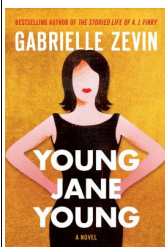
*Little Fires Everywhere* delves into family relationships and what parenthood, either biological or by adoption, means. We follow the members of two families living in the idyllic, perfectly-planned suburb of Shaker Heights, Ohio: Mia and Pearl, a mother and daughter living a less traditional lifestyle, moving from town to town every few months, and the Richardsons, the perfect nuclear family in the perfect suburb...until Izzy Richardson burns her family home down.... -- Emma DeLooze-Klein for *Library Reads*.

**The Other Alcott** by Elise Hooper. A tale inspired by the life of Louisa May Alcott's youngest sister finds young May longing to study art outside of the confines of her Concord home before turning down a marriage proposal and pursuing an identity in contrast to the spoiled and worldly character of Amy in her sister's famed novel.



## **Young Jane Young** by Gabrielle Zevin.

Aviva Grossman, an ambitious congressional intern in Florida, makes the mistake of having an affair with her boss and blogging about it. When the affair comes to light, the beloved congressman doesn't take the fall. But Aviva does, and her life seems over before it begins. She sees no way out but to change her name and move to a remote town in Maine. But when, at the urging of others, Aviva decides to run for public office herself, that long-ago mistake trails her via the Internet and catches up. In the digital age, the past is never, ever, truly past. *Young Jane Young* is a smart, funny, and moving novel about the double standards alive and well in every aspect of life for women.



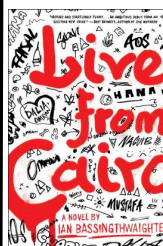
For a more extensive list of new fiction, mystery, and science fiction and fantasy titles, visit our website at [www.ridgfieldlibrary.org](http://www.ridgfieldlibrary.org)

## STAFF PICKS

### Elise's Picks

#### **The Alice Network** by Kate Quinn.

In the aftermath of WWII, a young American student, Charlie St. Clair, enlists the help of an embittered former English spy to search for her missing cousin, Rose, who may have been involved with the French Resistance. Eve Gardiner, hard-drinking and armed with an ever-present Luger, once was a member of the Alice Network, a real-life cabal of courageous women who infiltrated the German lines in WWI, rescuing more than a thousand British soldiers. Now thirty years later and exiled to a desk job, Eve is the only lead to Charlie's cousin's whereabouts, but the quest also affords Eve the chance to track down the French collaborator who ruined her reputation and managed to survive two world wars running elegant restaurants catering to German officers. An engrossing work of historical fiction filled with colorful characters and a truly venomous villain, Kate Quinn's latest novel pays overdue tribute to the true heroines of Alice Dubois' covert network.



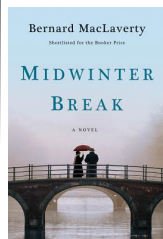
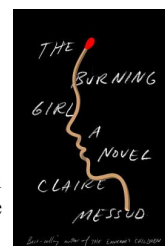
#### **Live from Cairo** by Ian Bassingthwaite.

Set shortly after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, when Cairo was a city in turmoil, this powerful novel focuses on the plight of an Iraqi woman, who fled to Egypt after she and her husband were attacked for working with the Americans. He has been granted asylum in Boston, but for lack of an official marriage certificate, Dalia has been stranded in Cairo, where she is ineligible to work and scorned as a foreigner. Desperate to help her, Dalia's immigration lawyer convinces a disillusioned intake officer at the U.N. to participate in a risky plan to forge her exit papers. Written by an author who worked in Egypt at the time as a legal aid interviewer and witnessed first hand the injustice of the resettlement process, *Live from Cairo* is a searing, heartbreaking novel that humanizes the growing refugee crisis by putting a very personal face on one its many trapped victims.

### Dorothy's Picks

#### **The Burning Girl** by Claire Messud.

Julia and Cassie are friends who have been inseparable since pre-school. As they approach adolescence, their paths gradually diverge and the always daring Cassie begins to drift away from Julia and behave in ways that are difficult for Julia to reconcile with the friend she thought she knew. Told in the first-person narrative from Julia's perspective, this coming-of-age novel explores the complex nature of friendship and the minefields of adolescence and family life. In the *New York Times Magazine*, Ruth Franklin praised Messud for her gift "in creating unusual female characters with ferocious, imaginative inner lives...."



#### **Midwinter Break** by Bernard MacLaverly.

Retirees Gerry and Stella Gilmore embark on a vacation from their home in Glasgow to Amsterdam. Over the course of their four-day trip, a nuanced portrait of a marriage unfolds as both the couples abiding love for each other and the fractures in their relationship are revealed. Unknown to Gerry, Stella, a devout Catholic who lived through and was scarred by the "troubles" in Northern Ireland, has planned the trip to explore how her faith will inform her remaining days and to resolve her internal conflicts over the state of her marriage. Considered one of Ireland's best living writers, MacLaverly offers a finely wrought novel that explores the complexities of the human heart and that will appeal to fans of Ian McEwan and Colm Toibin.