

Staff Picks

January 2013

Stone Arabia

by Dana Spiotta LORRI'S PICK (Fiction)

Spiotta's novel is an inspired consideration of sibling devotion, Southern California, and fame. Nik, a promising songwriter and musician, stopped performing long ago and his sister, Denise, worries about her mother's dementia and her own cognitive functions. Spiotta delivers one of the most moving and original portraits of a sibling relationship in recent fiction.

This is Where I Leave You

by Jonathan Tropper DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

Simultaneously mourning the death of his father and the demise of his marriage, Judd joins the rest of the Foxmans as they reluctantly submit to their father's dying request: spend the seven days following the funeral together, in the same house, like a family. As the week quickly spins out of control, longstanding grudges resurface, secrets are revealed, and old passions reawakened.

Ali in Wonderland and Other Tall Tales

By Ali Wentworth LOIS' PICK (792.028 WENTWORTH)

Growing up in a family of political journalists, and daughter of President Reagan's White House social secretary, Wentworth rebelled against her blue-blood upbringing. Today she is an acclaimed comedic actress and writer, former Oprah regular, wife of political and media star George Stephanopoulos, and a mother who lets her two girls eat cotton candy before bed. In this addictively funny and warm memoir, Wentworth offers an entertaining look at life that is both intimate and hilarious.

The Healing

by Jonathan O'Dell DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

The Healing is a warmhearted novel set in Antebellum Mississippi, about the unbreakable bonds between three generations of female healers and their power to restore the body, the spirit, and the soul. The book transcends clichés with its captivating prose, its firm grasp of history, and vital, fully realized people, particularly the slaves with their many shades of color and modes of survival.

The Light Between Oceans

by M.L. Stedman DEBORAH'S PICK (Fiction)

This tale opens in 1918 with the return of Tom Sherbourne to Australia after serving four years in the Great War. He marries, and the childless couple live quietly, running a lighthouse. The miraculous arrival of a child by boat delivers profound love, but also the seeds of destruction. Moral dilemmas don't come more exquisite than the one around which Australian novelist Stedman constructs her debut.

Family Acts

by Louise Shaffer DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

A pleasant excursion into the heart and soul of theater life involving two women who become the mysterious inheritors of an old opera house. It seems Katie and Randa have no connection--Katie is a native New Yorker and a scriptwriter and Miranda is a business manager for spoiled Hollywood actors. But after a few days together in Georgia, the two find what has always eluded them--family history.

A Walk Across the Sun

by Corban Addison DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

After a tsunami in India tragically orphans 17-year old Ahalya Ghai and her 15-year-old sister, Sita, the girls are kidnapped and taken to a Mumbai brothel where their nightmare begins. Addison uncovers the underside of human trafficking in this dazzling story about the power of conviction, the bonds of family, and the tenacity of love.

Red Book

by Deborah Copaken Kogan DEBORAH'S PICK (Fiction)

Before Facebook, there was the Red Book: a report with astonishingly personal updates from Harvard alumni. Kogan's wry and irresistible novel takes entries of five alumni to explore a relationships-altering, score-settling, life-changing weekend that is their 20th reunion.

Moloka'i

by Alan Brennert EILEEN'S PICK (Fiction)

At seven, Rachel and her dreams are shattered by the discovery that she has leprosy. In her exile to the leper colony on Moloka'i she finds a family of friends to replace the family she's lost. True to historical accounts, *Moloka'i* is the story of an extraordinary human drama, the full scope and pathos of which has never been told before in fiction.

Unorthodox: the scandalous rejection of my Hasidic roots.

by Deborah Feldman PAT P.'s PICK (Biog FELDMAN)

Born into a Hasidic community in Brooklyn, and raised by devout grandparents who forbade her to read in English, Feldman was determined to live her own life. Her spark of rebellion started with sneaking off to the library and hiding novels under her bed. After an arranged marriage and having a child, she plots her escape. An engaging and gripping story of what it is like to be different when everyone else is the same.

Hotel at the Corner of Bitter and Sweet

by Jamie Ford MARCIA'S PICK (Fiction)

Chinese American Henry and Japanese American Keiko bond as the only Asian students in a Seattle elementary school in 1942. The two are victims of both racist attitudes and patriotic fervor following Pearl Harbor. While emphasizing their deep friendship, Ford also conveys the details of that particular time and place. A timely debut that reminds readers to examine the present and take heed we don't repeat those injustices.

The Ghost at the Table

by Suzanne Berne DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

Different since childhood and leading very dissimilar lives now, sisters Frances and Cynthia have nevertheless managed to remain "devoted"- so long as they stay on opposite coasts. But with the reappearance of their elderly, long-estranged father sleeping tensions and old sorrows awaken.

More Staff Suggestions are found on our website:

www.ridgewoodlibrary.org

Pull down the Reference tab on the homepage.

"Book and Film Corner"

Take a look!

Forever

by Pete Hamill PAT P.'S PICK (Fiction)

Cormac O'Connor, arriving in NYC from Ireland in 1741, has been given the gift of immortality--but only if he never leaves Manhattan. Through his eyes, this magical epic follows the city's history and transformation to the present day. But this is also Cormac's story as he explores the mysteries of time and immortality, death, loss, and love.

Saving CeeCee Honeycutt

by Beth Hoffman MARCIA'S PICK (Fiction)

Steel Magnolias meets *The Help* in this Southern debut novel sparkling with humor, heart, and feminine wisdom. It is a novel that explores the indomitable strengths of female friendship and gives us the story of a young girl who loses one mother and finds many others.

Into the Darkest Corner

by Elizabeth Haynes DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

British author Haynes' first novel, a harrowing psychological thriller, charts one woman's life on two different time paths as they gradually converge. The Catherine we meet in 2003 was fun loving and liked going out with her friends in Lancaster. The frightened Cathy we see in 2007 has difficulty leaving her London flat for work or talking to neighbors.

Until It Hurts

by Mark Hyman BRITTIN'S PICK (Parent/Gen 796.083 HYM)

Sports journalist Hyman gives an analysis of the detrimental effects of adult over-involvement in youth sports, arguing for a more kid-centric approach. Despite warnings from educators and physicians, parents continue to be over-involved in children's sports, ratcheting up competition and taking youth athletics away from being a safe, character-building recreation.

The Snow Child

by Eowyn Ivey MARION'S PICK (Fiction)

In 1920's Alaska, childless Jack and Mabel, in a moment of levity, build a child out of snow. The next morning the snow child is gone, but they glimpse a little girl running through the trees. This girl, who calls herself Faina, seems to be a child of the woods. But things are rarely as they appear, and what they eventually learn about Faina will transform all of them.

The Poisonwood Bible

by Barbara Kingsolver ROBERTA'S PICK (Fiction)

The story is told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need, but soon find that all of it--from garden seeds to Scripture--is calamitously transformed on African soil.

In the Garden of the Beasts

by Erik Larson PEGGY'S PICK (943.086 DODD LAR)

Larson turns his considerable literary nonfiction skills to the experiences of U.S. ambassador to Germany William E. Dodd and his family in Berlin in the early years of Hitler's rule. Using Dodd's diary, Larson chillingly portrays the terror and oppression that slowly settled over Germany in 1933.

Henry and Clara

by Thomas Mallon JIN'S PICK (Fiction)

Blending fact with fiction, Mallon vividly re-creates the tragic story of Henry and Clara Rathbone--the young couple who sat in the President's box on the night of Lincoln's assassination. Witnessing the event that shook the entire nation changed their lives forever, leading to guilt, madness, and eventually murder. A moving and astonishing story based on a little known tale.

The Surrendered

by Chang-rae Lee JIN'S PICK (Fiction)

In this haunting, heartbreaking story about how love and war change the lives of those they touch, June was a girl when the Korean War left her orphaned and Hector was a young GI. When the war ended, their lives collided at a Korean orphanage. Thirty years later, on the other side of the world, June and Hector are reunited in a plot that forces them to come to terms with the mysterious secrets of their past, and the shocking acts of love and violence that bind them together.

The Chaperone

by Laura Moriarty DANI'S PICK (Fiction)

Drawing on the rich history of the 1920s, '30s, and beyond, this is a captivating novel about the woman who chaperoned fifteen-year-old Louise Brooks to New York City in 1922, only a few years before Brooks became a silent film star and an icon of her generation.

The Last Dickens

By Matthew Pearl PAT'S PICK (Fiction)

Charles Dickens has just died, leaving behind his unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, when a clerk who was sent to the docks by Dickens' American publisher to receive the final installment of the manuscript is suspiciously murdered. A juicy trans-Atlantic mystery unfurls, filled with dazzling twists and turns and unerring period details.

Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake

by Anna Quindlen PEGGY'S PICK (Biog QUINDLEN)

In this irresistible memoir, the New York Times bestselling author and winner of the Pulitzer Prize writes about looking back and ahead--and celebrating it all--as she considers marriage, girlfriends, our mothers, faith, loss, all the stuff in our closets, and more.

Shantaram

by Gregory Roberts LOIS' PICK (Fiction)

This huge novel has the world of human experience in its reach, a passionate love for India at its heart, and sails along at an amazingly fast clip. Based on the life of the author, our narrator, having ditched his revolutionary ideals for heroin, ends up imprisoned in Australia, then escapes to a vividly depicted Bombay to smuggle drugs and arms.

Dreams of Joy

by Lisa See PEGGY'S PICK (Fiction)

This is the eagerly anticipated sequel to See's *Shanghai Girls*, and what a sequel it is! Continuing the story of Pearl and May Chin, who escaped the Japanese invasion of China during the 1930s, the novel centers on Joy, the daughter that both women have raised, one as aunt, one as mother.

Was She Pretty

by Leanne Shapton LORRI'S PICK (Fiction)

In this gem of a book, artist/writer Shapton weaves together a voyeuristic tale of love and life, each spread including one or more b&w line drawings plus short, poetesque texts. As an unflinching observer of human behavior, Shapton encapsulates entire relationships in a few, stinging perfect lines.

Remembrance of Things I Forgot

by Bob Smith LORRI'S PICK (Fiction)

Through time travel and edgy humor, Smith examines family dysfunction, New York City, and the Bush-Cheney years, while effortlessly blending wild domestic comedy with science fiction, political satire, and social scrutiny.