

After working with books all day, many of our librarians like nothing more than to relax with a good book of their own. Here are some recommendations from a list compiled annually by the University of Wisconsin–Madison Librarians' Assembly. Many of these books can be found in campus libraries or your local public library.

Andrew, Miles Keaton. **Final Arrangements**. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002. To mortician Casey Kight “the first three letters in ‘funeral’ are f-u-n” in this wonderfully bizarre, irreverent and graphic look at the mortuary industry. Andrew’s debut is a very funny tale of young love and mystery set amid draining tables and suction tubes. (from *Publishers Weekly*)

Berry, Venise T. **So Good**. New York: Dutton, 1996. A story of the relationship between three successful and independent African-American women in Washington, D.C. The novel examines their friendship and their relationships with the men in their lives with humor, wit, and compassion.

Bingham, Clara and Laura Leedy Gansler. **Class Action: The Story of Lois Jenson and the Landmark Case That Changed Sexual Harassment Law**. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 2002.

Details the determination and courage of the first women miners in the Minnesota taconite mines, one woman’s desperate need for work to support her children, and the tortuous path of the first class-action sexual harassment lawsuit.

Chabon, Michael. **The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay: A Novel**. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2000.

This Pulitzer Prize-winning story about the adventures of two Jewish cousins, one American, one Czech, caught up in creating comic book heroes comes wrapped in metaphors. An epic novel spanning continents and eras.

Cherryh, C. J. **Foreigner: A Novel of First Contact**. New York: DAW Books, 1994.

An exiled colony of stranded humans relies on one man, their “paidhi” (liaison), to explain their ways to the dominant species of their new world. When he is targeted for assassination, the conflict becomes a life-and-death struggle for survival and understanding.

Corneli, Helen M. **Mice in the Freezer, Owls on the Porch: The Lives of Naturalists Frederick & Frances Hamerstrom**. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

Corneli draws on papers and letters, reminiscences of contemporaries, and her own long friendship with the Hamerstroms. She captures the breadth of their relationship and details the history of conservation in Wisconsin from 1920 to 1970.

Crace, Jim. **Quarantine**. 1st ed. London, New York: Viking, 1997.

A retelling of Jesus’ forty-day fast in the desert. Jesus travels to a cluster of arid caves, where he crosses paths with a small group of exiles and changes their lives in unexpected ways. Haunting and provocative.

Dark, Larry. **The O. Henry Prize Stories, 2002**. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.

A wonderfully eclectic collection of stories selected by Dave Eggers, Joyce Carol Oates, and Colson Whitehead, from large and small literary magazines. Marriage is a common theme that is approached from varied and often surprising angles.

Donaldson, Julia and Axel Scheffler. **The Gruffalo**. 1st ed. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1999.

A rhyming story about a smart mouse and a monster. When Mouse goes for a walk in a dangerous forest, he invents tales of a fantastic creature called a Gruffalo to scare off his enemies. Imagine his surprise when he meets a real Gruffalo. (Amazon.com)

Father Gander and Carolyn Marie Blattel. **Father Gander Nursery Rhymes: The Equal Rhymes Amendment**. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Advocacy Press, 1986.

A collection of traditional nursery rhymes rewritten from a nonsexist, nonracist, and nonviolent viewpoint.

Fforde, Jasper. **The Eyre Affair: A Novel**. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 2002.

A spoof on hardboiled detective fiction and time travel science fiction. Someone has kidnapped Jane Eyre from the pages of the Brontë novel. Special Operative Tuesday Next must solve the literary crime of the century in this highly entertaining mystery.

Friedman, Thomas L. **The Lexus and the Olive Tree**. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999.

A clear and highly readable explanation of globalization and the world we live in today.

Fuller, Alexandra. **Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood**. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2001.

Fascinating and engaging memoir of a contemporary African childhood. Fuller reflects upon loss, racism, personal, and national identities.

Gaiman, Neil. **Neverwhere**. 1st ed. New York: Avon Books, 1997.

Richard Mayhew’s life is changed forever when he stops to help a girl bleeding on a London sidewalk. Propelled into a world he never dreamed existed—he has fallen through the cracks of reality and landed somewhere that is Neverwhere.

—. **American Gods**. London: Headline Feature, 2001.

A scary, strange, and hallucinogenic road-trip story wrapped around a deep examination of the American spirit. The portrayal of the House on the Rock as the spiritual center of America is not to be missed.

Gaiman, Neil and Terry Pratchett. **Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch: A Novel**. New York: Workman Pub, 1990.

This zany young adult tale of the bungling of Armageddon features an angel, a demon, an 11-year-old Antichrist, and a doomsaying witch. British humor in abundance.

Goldberg, Myla. **Bee Season: A Novel**. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

An underachiever finds out that her niche is spelling, and replaces her brother in her father’s attentions. This entire Jewish family begins to unravel in this coming-of-age story. Fascinating and well-written with very descriptive spelling bee scenes.

Gordon, Noah. **The Last Jew**. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000.

A young adult story about a Jewish family whose son escapes the Inquisition and leads a fugitive existence while traveling around Spain. A very readable work of historical fiction that “illuminates the choices history forces on individuals.”

Hedderwick, Mairi. **Katie Morag and the Tiresome Ted**. Boston: Little, Brown, 1986. Set on a Scottish island and replete with charming, richly detailed illustrations, this children’s book reflects sibling rivalry from a child’s perspective.

Hessler, Peter. **River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze**. 1st ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.

This memoir recounts Hessler’s two years as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching English in the city of Fuling, located in the heart of China. He makes you feel as if you were there with him.

Hornby, Nick. **About a Boy**. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.

A playboy pretends he is a single dad so he can date single moms, but finds his fantasies become warped by the real needs of an unusual 12-year-old boy. Contemporary and serious issues presented in a clever and upbeat way.

King, Stephen. **Everything’s Eventual: 14 Dark Tales**. N.Y.: Scribner, 2002.

Fourteen intense, eerie, and compelling stories, that include one O. Henry Prize winner, stories from *The New Yorker*, and "Riding the Bullet" which was originally published as an eBook.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. **Interpreter of Maladies: Stories**. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. In these stories Lahiri sums up the universal experiences that apply to all who have grown up, left home, fallen in or out of love, and know what it means to be a foreigner, even within one's own family. Delicate and bittersweet.

Lee, Sharon, Steve Miller, and Michael Herring. **Partners in Necessity**. Book Club ed. Atlanta, GA: Meisha Merlin Publishing, 2000. An excellent space opera that brings together the first three books in the Liaden Universe series. Filled with adventure, romance, humor, and "terrific world building."

Martel, Yann. **Life of Pi: A Novel**. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harcourt, 2001. A beautifully written story about a boy who survives for over a year in a lifeboat with a zebra, an orangutan, a hyena, and a Bengal tiger. A real page turner.

McCall Smith, R. A. **The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1998. The first in a series, this is a gentle, whimsical mystery set in Botswana. Self-taught "lady detective" Precious Ramotswa's love of Africa, good humor, and wisdom are evident throughout.

McDonough, Jimmy. **The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan**. 1st ed. Chicago: A Cappella, 2001. A cautionary tale of a man obsessed with filmmaking and the biographer who got too close. An astounding and devastating read. You will be haunted for weeks.

McEwan, Ian. **Atonement**. London: Jonathan Cape, 2001. Brilliant exploration of truth and humility, forgiveness, and restitution. This dark coming-of-age story of 1930s English country life is wonderfully crafted and original.

Mistry, Rohinton. **Family Matters**. London: Faber, 2002. Set in Bombay, a patriarch ailing from Parkinson's needs constant care from his step-daughter. After an accident, her desire to pass him to her younger sister's house starts a chain of destruction that may never be repaired. Funny, sad, and heartwarming.

Nix, Garth. **Sabriel**. 1st U.S. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. A young adult novel about the daughter of necromancer Abhorsen and her journey into the mysterious Old Kingdom to rescue her father from the Land of the Dead.

O'Brian, Patrick. **Master and Commander**. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969. A rave recommendation. Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey Maturin series are "the best historical novels ever written." (Richard Snow, *The New York Times*) Read them *before* you see the movie.

Ozeki, Ruth L. **My Year of Meats**. New York: Viking, 1998. Integrating the worlds of two women, Ozeki tackles issues such as hormones in beef, cultural differences, gender roles, and sexual exploitation. Hilarious with important messages.

Patchett, Ann. **Bel Canto: A Novel**. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. Soprano Roxane Coss just finished a recital when terrorists take the party hostage. Unexpected bonds lead them all to forget the real danger that has been set in motion but cannot be stopped. Contains the richness and passion of a grand opera.

Pullman, Philip. **His Dark Materials Trilogy**. New York: Knopf, 2002. The three books in Pullman's heroic fantasy series, published in one boxed set that includes *The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*. Join Lyra, Pantalaimon, and Will as they embark on breathtaking adventures.

Pérez-Reverte, Arturo and Sonia Soto. **The Seville Communion**. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1998. The Pope's personal computer is hacked into with an urgent plea as a crumbling basilica in Seville is slated for demolition. Two of its defenders have suddenly died. Could the church be involved? A rich and intricate thriller.

Rowling, J. K. **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1998.

—. **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**. New York: Scholastic, 1999. A series of stories about a young boy with a great destiny who attends the Hogwarts School for Wizards and Witches. Check out the other Harry Potter books too!

Russo, Richard. **Empire Falls**. New York: Vintage Books, 2002. Focuses on a band of working-class characters in Empire Falls, a mill town without a mill. A sensitive, endearingly oddball portrait of small-town life.
—. **The Whore's Child: And Other Stories**. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. Short stories that deal with childhood, old age, and stages in between. Russo has a "gift for conveying the absurdity and severity of everyday life with brutal honesty, humor, and compassion." (Amazon.com)

Saramago, José and Giovanni Pontiero. **Blindness**. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998. A horrific novel follows the breakdown of society as a city is hit by an epidemic of blindness and the blind are sent to a mental hospital taken over by criminals. A woman who can still see guides escapees through the city. A profound story about humanity.

Scieszka, Jon and Lane Smith. **The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs**. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1989. The wolf gives his own outlandish version of what really happened when he tangled with the three little pigs in this "new-fangled version of the classic tale."
(from *Publishers Weekly*)

Thaler, Mike and Jared D Lee. **The Librarian from the Black Lagoon**. New York: Scholastic, 1997. As the school librarian, Mrs. Beamster is known by all the kids as "The Laminator" because she laminates anyone caught whispering. Fun for children and library lovers.

Waddell, Martin and Jennifer Eachus. **The Big Big Sea**. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1994. Primarily for pre-schoolers this peaceful story features a mother and daughter on a night walk by the moonlit sea. Simple, rhythmic text, and glowing illustrations.

Waters, Sarah. **Fingersmith**. New York: Riverhead Books, 2003. Reworks some truly classic themes of Victorian England; pickpockets, orphans, grim prisons, lunatic asylums, laughing villains, and stolen fortunes. Intricate plot and startling revelations. An engrossing thriller guaranteed to haunt you.

Weber, David and John Ringo. **March Upcountry**. Riverdale, N.Y.: Baen Books, 2001. The first in a military sci-fi series featuring Prince Roger, the spoiled brat son of the Empress of Man and third in line to the throne, and his bodyguards who are marooned on the planet Marduk when their transport ship is sabotaged. Very entertaining.

Weinberg, Samantha. **A Fish Caught in Time: The Search for the Coelacanth**. London: Fourth Estate, 1999. The discovery of the coelacanth, a bizarre creature presumed to be extinct, was dubbed the "greatest scientific find of the century." An entrancing story. (*Library Journal*)

Yepsen, Roger B. **Apples**. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. For the midwinter apple-less doldrums. Beautiful hand-painted illustrations and mouth-watering information on ninety varieties available in North America. After the Hubbardston Nonesuch, you will never settle for a Red Delicious again.