

F A V O R I T E S

My two favorite books of the year were originally published in 1960 and 1966 and the authors were childhood friends. I had read one of them before, many, many years ago, and the other one I just thought I had read.

To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee

I know I read this when I was in junior high or high school, and I'm sure I liked it. But many years later - from a different perspective - I was practically sobbing on the plane back from Las Vegas as I finished it. Has there ever been a more noble character than Atticus Finch? Loved the movie, too.

In Cold Blood – Truman Capote

After seeing the movie "Capote" I went straight to the bookstore to buy In Cold Blood. I knew the story and honestly thought I'd read it before. The story is gruesome, but the narrative is beautiful. In the movie, Capote is portrayed as a manipulative, self-centered monster - but if that's what it took to write this book it was worth it.

Now, my least favorite book of the year. (I believe it might also be Oprah's least favorite.)

A Million Little Pieces – James Frey

This book drove me crazy. It was tremendously compelling, but Frey (or his character) is one of the most unpleasant, self-centered, egocentric, smug, self-impressed people ever. Even if I hadn't known that he made half the stuff up, I still would have found him soooooo aggravating. Will I read My Friend Leonard? Probably. But I promise to hate it. P.S. There was a very popular book this year called On Bullshit by Harry G. Frankfurt, perhaps Mr. Frey should pick up a copy.

AMY'S 8th ANNUAL SUMMER READING LIST

It's that time again - time for me to tell you about all the **great and not-so-great** books I read in the past year.

This time I had a lot of **helpful** input from friends and relatives. So if my choices aren't quite your speed, hopefully someone else suggested something that interests you.

Enjoy! And always feel free to send me recommendations or warnings. Have a great summer!

Amy Klugus Chamley, 2006
clanley8@insightbb.com



Some books are undeservedly forgotten,
none are undeservedly remembered.
—W.H. Auden

W H A T I R E A D

FICTION

Snobs – Julian Fellowes

A funny novel about British social classes, social climbing and snobbishness.

Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith – Anne Lamott

Not as funny as Traveling Mercies, but I still like Anne Lamott.

Never Let Me Go – Kazuo Ishiguro

A woman remembers her time at Hailsham, a private boarding school for “special” students in England. There’s a mysterious secret about why the school exists and the students’ purpose.

Rapture – Susan Minot

A man and woman reflect internally on the nature of relationships, love and sex, all while engaging in a sexual act.

Emma Brown – Clare Boylan

A clever Victorian mystery based on an unfinished novel by Charlotte Brontë.

The Bear Went Over the Mountain – William

Kotzwinkle

A bear finds a briefcase containing the manuscript of a novel, it’s published and he becomes rich and famous. It’s very, very funny. He also wrote the popular Walter the Farting Dog series for kids.

Empire Falls – Richard Russo

Miles Roby is fortyish, divorced and running the diner in his hometown in Maine. The town is declining as the local factories shut down. The book revolves around Miles, his family and friends and the people of the town. Very good.

In Her Shoes – Jennifer Weiner

Good in Bed – Jennifer Weiner

Both of these are better-than-average tales of single, twentysomething women trying to make it.

Watermelon – Marion Keyes

Annoying tale of a woman whose husband leaves her the day she gives birth to their first child. She’s annoying, he’s annoying, her family’s annoying. Don’t bother.

All He Ever Wanted – Anita Shreve

The strange, but compelling story of a man obsessed with his wife.

Ragtime – E.L. Doctorow

Weaving in a variety of real-life characters, Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Emma Goldman, etc., Doctorow tells the story of a family in New York around the turn of the century. Fascinating.

Deception – Denise Mina

From *Publishers Weekly* “When psychiatrist Susie Harriott is convicted of murdering Glasgow serial killer Andrew Gow, her husband, Lachlan, embarks on a frantic search for material that may help with her appeal. But in going through her files, he finds layer upon layer of nasty secrets... or does he?” Really good, she’s written several others I’d like to read.

I Am Charlotte Simmons – Tom Wolfe

For about 250 pages I like Tom Wolfe books. But then they disappoint me. Here he describes life in a “Duke-like” university and its varied social groups. It’s interesting (especially in light of Duke’s recent problems,) but ultimately disappointing.

Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules –

David Sedaris, ed.

A collection of short stories that David Sedaris particularly likes. And, I’m still into David Sedaris enough to read whatever has his name on it.

NONFICTION

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything – Steven D. Levitt and

Stephen J. Dubner

Sort of a statistical analysis of a variety of topics, like the organizational structure of gangs, the affect of abortion on the crime rate and baby-naming patterns. It’s the kind of book you want to read aloud to whoever’s around. It also sort of inspired Bess’ middle name.

What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America – Thomas Frank

He makes a lot of good points about why Kansas (and many other states) are turning “red”, (perhaps to their own disadvantage.) But then he just keeps going on and on and on. Read the introduction, and then stop.

City of Falling Angels – John Berendt

The author of Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil takes on Venice. I wasn’t really impressed. And I read it shortly after going to Venice.

Garlic & Sapphires – Ruth Reichl

Ruth Reichl’s third memoir. This time she talks about the disguises she created to work as the New York Times restaurant critic. Not as good as Tender at the Bone and Comfort Me with Apples, but I still liked it.

Just the knowledge that a good book is awaiting one at the end of a long day makes that day happier.

– Kathleen Norris

BOOK CLUB CHOICES

In January, my "mom" friends and I started a book club. I find it slightly disturbing that 4 of our 5 choices feature mothers who are dead, dying or disappeared.

Crossing to Safety – Wallace Stegner

Did you guess this was my choice? This is currently (and has been for some time) my "favorite book of all time." If you still haven't read it, what are you waiting for? It's a great book for a book club discussion.

Light on Snow – Anita Shreve

A motherless girl who lives with her reclusive father makes a discovery that changes their lives.

Middlesex – Jeffrey Eugenides

From my 2005 Book List "Gender confusion, incest, Greek families, Detroit race riots, Prohibition – this book has a lot going on. And it's totally worth it."

To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee

See page 1.

Vanishing Acts – Jodi Picoult

A woman in her thirties finds out that her father kidnapped her when she was a toddler – and that her mother isn't dead.

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend.

Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.

– Groucho Marx

WHAT YOU READ

JANIS COMER'S OPINIONS – (Unedited)

Oooh, one thing I'd recommend is Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*. It's political economics, but it's not terribly academic. And it's part of my personal crusade to get everyone to realize that Libertarians Are Right. I had read his *Capitalism and Freedom* in college, but it can be a little dry. "Free to Choose" is well-written and (I found it) fascinating. And it just makes sense. So everyone should read it.

I would decidedly NOT recommend *The Crimson Petal and the White*. It sucked. So if anyone says that it's a good read, well, he's wrong. It was lousy and it pissed me off because I powered through to the end (it's LONG and sucky) since I'd committed myself to it. And then it DOESN'T WRAP ANYTHING UP. I mean, Grisham may suck and he may wait until the last 40 pages to tie all the ends together, but at least we're not just cut off and dropped from a 500-page cliff with sucky nothingness under us. (By Michael Faber) Ed. Note – I loved it!

Oooh, remembered one more thing. I'd recommend *Wicked*, though all of your Reading List subscribers have probably already read it. Have you read any of his other books? Are they good? (By Gregory Maguire)

Forever got a little redundant and predictable, but it wasn't bad. (By Pete Hamill)

Dogs of Babel was weird and a little creepy. (By Carolyn Parkhurst)

Ten Thousand Little Sorrows was painful, but a quick read. Not bad.

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight was interesting. About a (white British) girl growing up in Africa (can't remember the country/ies now) in the 1970s. I'd probably recommend it for a quick read. (By Alexandra Fuller)

The Birth of Venus was okay. Novel-y/romance-y book set in Florence in the 1500s. (By Sarah Dunant)

Bel Canto was interesting. A birthday party in some South American country for a Japanese business man, at which a famous American opera singer performs, is crashed by terrorists, who take everyone hostage. (By Ann Patchett)

The Amateur Marriage was okay. I'm not a huge Anne Tyler fan.

Mrs. Kimble was also okay. It was Anne Tyler-esque. (By Jennifer Haigh)

WALLY'S BOOK LIST

The Shadow of the Wind - Carlos Ruiz Zafon

A Little History of the World - E.H. Gombrich

The Troubadour's Song: The Capture and Ransom of Richard the Lionhearted - David Boyle

The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey - Candice Millard

Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: A Biography - Edward Rose

The secret agent who traveled to Mecca, discovered the Kama Sutra, and brought *The Arabian Nights* to the West.

Lost City of the Incas - Hiram Bingham

Sign of the Book - John Dunning

Another in the series of Cliff Janeway mysteries about a retired cop who owns a rare bookstore in Denver.

Anything by John Sanford or Michael Connelly.

SPOOKY SUGGESTS...

The Twelve Little Cakes - Domenika Dery
Memoirs of growing up in Czechoslovakia in the 1970's.

Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia -
Carmen Bin Laden

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan - Lisa See
Friendship and foot binding in China.

Anne G. Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral -
Kris Radish
Friendship and the death of a friend.

Teacher Man - Frank McCourt
Teaching in the New York City school system.

Saints and Villains - Denise Giardina
A fictional life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The Georgetown Ladies Social Club -
C. David Heymann
The ladies behind the scenes in Washington D.C.,
Katherine Graham, Lorraine Cooper, Evangeline Bruce,
Pamela Harriman, and Sally Quinn.

The Tipping Point - Malcolm Gladwell
How little things can make a difference.

The Year of Magical Thinking - Joan Didion
Portrait of a marriage and death of a spouse.

Gilead - Marilynne Robinson
A Pastor's letters to his son give an account of his life and
his forebears.

Death Comes to the Archbishop - Willa Cather
Early missions in the Southwest.

FROM AMY DURUKAN, ANGLOPHILE

Maisie Dobbs - Jacqueline Winspear
A young woman in London who opens her own detective
agency shortly after the end of WWI. She has family issues
as well as memories from her stint as a battlefield nurse that
she must confront and put to rest. She has a remarkable
group of patrons, teachers, and friends that make the story
even richer. My favorite book of 2005.

Some Danger Involved - Will Thomas
An Oxford-educated ex-con is hired by a mysterious and
thoroughly likeable detective to investigate crimes in
Victorian London. A dynamic duo, to be sure.

A Year in the Merde - Stephen Clarke
A Brit spends nine months in Paris attempting to open a
chain of British tea rooms. Quasi-fiction, as the story is
based on the author's experience. He navigates the French
workplace (an oxymoron, according to the author) and
tawdry romances, all with a very tenuous grasp on the
language. A hilarious read.

Brick Lane - Monica Ali

I can't believe I made it through this thoroughly depressing
book. A Bangladeshi woman is married off to an
unsuccessful man twice her age and they settle in the East
End of London. Dysfunction-palooza. Don't waste your
time.

Forever Amber - Kathleen Winsor

Considered very risqué when it was published in 1947.
900+ pages of fantastic historical fiction. Amber is not a
sympathetic character, but her liaisons and adventures in
17th century England make for great reading. Fire, plague,
and heaving bosoms... what more could you ask for!

SHELLY TANGEN SAYS...

I am reading **Second Glance** by Jodi Picoult and I love
it.

FROM THE ALWAYS RELIABLE CAROL ULMER

Goodnight Nobody - Jennifer Weiner
Mother of three turns suburban sleuth when a fellow mother
is murdered.

The Widow of the South - Robert Hicks
During the Civil War, a woman transforms her plantation
into a war hospital.

The Same Sweet Girls - Cassandra King
For 30 years six southern college girls have been gathering
biannually for a reunion.

The Borgia Bride - Jeanne Kalogridis
Set in 15th century Italy, it is a novel of the Borgia family
and the Pope.

In the Rose Garden of Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran -
Christopher de Bellaigue

**Standing Alone in Mecca: A Woman's Struggle for
the Soul of Islam** - Asra Normani

Wickett's Remedy - Myla Goldberg
A novel that follows the shifting fortunes of a young Irish
woman of South Boston. She serves as a nurse in the
Spanish flu epidemic of 1918.

The News from Paraguay - Lily Tuck
A novel of a 19th century courtesan and the dictator of
Paraguay.

Broken for You - Stephanie Kallos
An elderly woman learns she has a brain tumor and takes a
tenant in her home. They wrestle with ghosts of the past.

JUNE SAYS...

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time
Mark Haddon
Rasputin's Daughter - Robert Alexander
The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane -
Kate DiCamillo

WHAT I'D LIKE TO READ

FICTION

Saturday – Ian McEwan

From *Bookmarks Magazine* "As McEwan writer, 'When anything can happen, everything matters.' Saturday magnifies a pivotal moment in history and a day in a man's life as secure foundations crack and uncertainty rushes in."

Specimen Days – Michael Cunningham

From *Amazon* "In each section of Michael Cunningham's bold new novel... we encounter the same group of characters: a young boy, an older man, and a young woman....at the height of the industrial revolution, in present day New York City and 150 years into the future... I liked *The Hours*, his last one."

Veronica – Mary Gaitskill

A former model reflects on her glamorous, celebrity life – from her current life as a 50ish cleaning lady.

The Closers – Michael Connelly

Another in the Harry Bosch mystery series

A Long Way Down – Nick Hornby

From *Publishers Weekly* "If Camus had written a grown-up version of *The Breakfast Club*, the result might have had more than a little in common with Hornby's grimly comic, oddly moving fourth novel."

The Man of My Dreams – Curtis Sittenfeld

I liked her first one, *Prep*.

Digging to America – Anne Tyler

Two different couples – one American and one Iranian-American are brought together when they adopt daughters from Korea.

JPod: A Novel – Douglas Coupland

The man who coined "Generation X" is back.

In the Company of the Courtesan – Sarah Dunant

By the author of *Birth of Venus*, set in Venice.

NONFICTION

The Nasty Bits – Anthony Bourdain

As you know, Anthony Bourdain is my boyfriend and I hang on his every word. This is a new collection of his essays about food and travel. By the way, Wally and Adam saw him in their hotel in Peru (I'm so jealous.)

Julie & Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny

Apartment Kitchen – Julie Powell

The author's chronicle of working her way through Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. I didn't realize it started out as a blog (yuk.)

My Life in France – Julia Child, Alex Prud'homme

From *Publishers Weekly* "With Julia Child's death in 2004 at age 91, her grandnephew Prud'homme (*The Cell Game*) completed this playful memoir of the famous chef's first, formative sojourn in France with her new husband, Paul Child, in 1949."

Insatiable: Tales from a Life of Delicious Excess

Gael Greene

From *Publishers Weekly* "As the title of her longtime *New York* magazine column suggests, Greene was indeed an 'Insatiable Critic' and not just where food was concerned. Her fun memoir spices up the standard chronicle of food supped and wine sipped with breathless descriptions of sexual trysts, travel tales and signature fashions. Greene's sensual appetite was voracious and her affairs as abundant and indulgent as her meals; her more famous lovers included Elvis Presley, Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds..." Sounds like my kind of book.

Heat – Bill Buford

From *Publishers Weekly* "Buford's book starts smartly—he first met dynamic celebrity chef Mario Batali at a dinner party at his own home, where Batali sparkled until 3 a.m.—and continues at a fast clip as he conceives the notion of becoming Batali's 'kitchen slave.'"

But Enough About Me: A Jersey Girl's Unlikely Adventures Among the Absurdly Famous

Jancee Dunn

I've always loved her celebrity profiles in *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair*.

Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee

Charles J. Shields

How did she get to write such a great book? Maybe this will tell.

Capote: A Biography – Gerald Clarke

Might as well make a little research project on great, late twentieth-century Southern writers who were friends.

Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life – Amy Krouse Rosenthal

"I have not survived against all odds. I have not lived to tell. I have not witnessed the extraordinary. This is my story."

To Hell With All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife – Caitlin Flanagan

She wrote an interesting article for *The Atlantic* a couple years ago about nannies and recently had an essay in *Time* about why the Democratic party is losing the housewife vote.

The Mommy Wars – Leslie Morgan Steiner

Apparently there's a "catfight" between stay-at-home moms and working moms. Or it might just be made up to sell books. Can't we all just get along?

Because I Said So – Kate Moses, Camille Peri
The subtitle is “33 Mothers Write About Children, Sex, Men, Aging, Faith, Race, and Themselves”. That should about cover it.

You're Wearing That?: Understanding Mothers and Daughters in Conversation – Deborah Tannen
I guess I need to start studying now.

Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis – Jimmy Carter
Spooky recommended this one. She made me stay home from 1st grade to watch the Carter Inauguration.

A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children – Caroline Kennedy
From *The Washington Post* “...The editor shows great respect for children by choosing real poems and including Edward Lear, A.A. Milne, Robert Louis Stevenson, Walter de la Mare – the first-class poets for children.”

The things I want to know are in books; my best friend is the man who'll get me a book I ain't read.

– Abraham Lincoln

WHAT THE NEW YORK TIMES SAYS

The New York Times Best Books of 2005

FICTION

Kafka on the Shore – Haruki Murakami

On Beauty – Zadie Smith

Prep – Curtis Sittenfeld

Saturday – Ian McEwan

Veronica – Mary Gaitskill

NONFICTION

The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq – George Packer

De Koonig: An American Master – Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan

The Lost Painting – Jonathan Harr

Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 – Tony Judt

The Year of Magical Thinking – Joan Didion

F O R K I D S

NEW (or NEWISH)

Fancy Nancy – Jane O'Connor
Some little girls are all about fancy. Nancy is, but her parents seem terribly plain. She's surprised when their true fanciness comes out.

Lily's Big Day – Kevin Henkes
We love Lily's Purple Plastic Purse. In this new one, groovy Mr. Slinger is getting married – and Lily wants to be the flowergirl.

Olivia Forms a Band – Ian Falconer
How could you pass this one up?

OLD FAVORITES

Having tired of most of our picture books, we've moved on to reading aloud these old favorites to Emma. The best thing about these is they're fun for kids and adults.

Trumpet of the Swan,
Stuart Little,
& Charlotte's Web – E.B. White

We had so much fun reading these to Emma. Since they were published between 1945 and 1970 they have some dated language and ideas, but that's part of their charm. White creates the most amusing, realistic animal characters ever. Even if you don't read them out loud to little kids, these books are sure to provide an afternoon of fun.

Where the Sidewalk Ends – Shel Silverstein
Almost as fun to read out loud as Dr. Seuss, with the added bonus that you can say, “Just three poems tonight.”

Little House in the Big Woods
& Little House on the Prairie – Laura Ingalls Wilder
Better than the TV show.

Beezus and Ramona – Beverly Cleary
Another one from the 50's. Ramona and Beezus' mother, Mrs. Quimby, always seems to be wearing an apron and cooking something. But that Ramona, she's a pistol. Remember when she invited her whole class over for a party but forgot to tell her mother? We were a little worried this one might give Emma ideas.

'Tis the good reader that makes the good book.
–Ralph Waldo Emerson