



fiction (in no particular order)

The Right Address – Carrie Karasyov, Jill Kargman

A former flight attendant snags a billionaire and claws her way to the top of New York society. How many times are we going to read this book?

Trading Up – Candace Bushnell

See above.

The Ivy Chronicles – Karen Quinn

This time it's a former executive in New York City who loses her job and starts a business as an advisor for families trying to get their children into private grade schools. Funny and not as annoying as the previous two.

Amanda Bright @ Home – Danielle Crittenden

A former working woman learns to deal with being a stay-at-home mom. Not worth your time.

Little Children – Tom Perrotta

A lot of folks really liked this take on 30's-ish parents of young children and their suburban angst. I didn't like it as much as I thought I would.

Good Faith – Jane Smiley

Real estate development in the 80's. Better than it sounds.

Elegance: A Novel – Kathleen Tessaro

A woman finds a 40-year old style manual called *Elegance* by Madame Dariaux, in a second-hand bookstore and transforms her life. Not that good.

The Stepford Wives – Ira Levin

Better than the recent movie. If you haven't seen the old version of the movie, you should. Paula Prentiss is so cool.

The Rule of Four – Ian Caldwell, Dustin Thomason

If you liked *The Da Vinci Code*, you'll like this one set at Princeton University. It felt a little like it was written solely for a future movie, though.

She is Me – Cathleen Schine

A tale of three women – grandmother, mother, daughter. It's ok, but I'm kind of tired of the "middle-aged mother questioning her heterosexuality" genre.

Mrs. Kimble – Jennifer Haigh

From *Publishers Weekly*

"The three women who successively marry Ken Kimble all believe they've found the perfect partner, and all are proven wrong in Haigh's uneven debut." It's worth it, just for the concept.

Sammy's Hill – Kristin Gore

HILARIOUS! It's Bridget Jones goes to Washington.

Anywhere I Hang My Hat – Susan Isaacs

From *Publishers Weekly*

"A political reporter in her late 20s goes in search of the mother who abandoned her when she was a baby..." Occasionally very funny.

Our Kind – Kate Walbert

A John Updike-ish collection of intertwined stories. These are the women that Updike's male characters were cheating on 40 years ago.

The Jane Austen Book Club – Karen Joy Fowler

A disparate group of people gathers to read and discuss Jane Austen books. We learn about their lives.

The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini

From *Amazon.com*

"Khaled Hosseini accomplishes what very few contemporary novelists are able to do. He manages to provide an educational and eye-opening account of a country's political turmoil—in this case, Afghanistan—while also developing characters whose heartbreaking struggles and emotional triumphs resonate with readers long after the last page has been turned over..." It seemed a little soap-opera-ish to me. But I couldn't put it down.

Prep – Curtis Sittenfeld

This book annoyed me, but then I realized it's because it's written from the perspective of a middle-class, Midwestern teen-age girl who's out of place at her Eastern boarding school. She's incredibly self-involved, self-doubting and also funny. Which makes it very authentic.

Chasing Vermoor – Blue Balliett

This is actually a young adult novel set at the University of Chicago Lab School. It's clever, and it reminds me of one of my all-time favorites, *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, by E. L. Konigsburg.

amy's 7th annual summer reading list

you can always count on...

The Narrows – Michael Connelly

Another Harry Bosch mystery – I can't remember much about it, but I know it was good enough to keep my attention. His new one, *The Closers*, just came out.

The Bookman's Promise – John Dunning

Cliff Janeway owns an antique bookstore in Denver and sometimes finds himself solving mysteries. This is the third in a really good series – the fourth has just come out.

Jodi Picoult writes these "suspensey" novels that deal with big issues. They're generally good and fun to read, but if you read too many in a row, they get a bit formulaic. Also, she tends to spring things at the end. But, they're all a little different from your average mystery, romance or "stay-at-home-mom who's trying to figure it all out" books.

- **Second Glance** – Jodi Picoult

This one's about ghosts, ghost hunters. Native Americans and eugenics.

- **Saving Faith** – Jodi Picoult

This one's about a little girl who believes God is talking to her, while her parents fight for custody.

- **Salem Falls** – Jodi Picoult

This one's about a teacher accused of statutory rape and some teenage "witches."

- **Picture Perfect** – Jodi Picoult

Skip this one.

- **My Sister's Keeper** – Jodi Picoult

See Kristin Hipwell's review in the "your recommendations" section.

essays short stories memoirs

Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim – David Sedaris

Can I still love David Sedaris and be slightly tired of him?

The Early Stories: 1953 to 1975 – John Updike

Lots of short stories where men feel kind of useless in the family and go have affairs.

The Hypocrite in the Puffy White Dress – Susan Jane Gilman

Oooh, I had such an alternative, bohemian upbringing in New York City! The reviews say this is hilarious, I thought it was not nearly as funny as it thought it was.

Expecting to Fly: A Sixties Reckoning – Martha Todd Dudman

Oooh, I was such a crazy, out there, radical 60's teen, volunteering for Eugene McCarthy, having sex and dropping acid! Boring.

Beyond One – Jennifer Bingham Hull

Did anyone think that adding another child to your family would be easy? I guess we'll find out in September!



all of these books are not like the others...

Don't you love it when a book is kind of out there? Different from the rest of the stuff you read? A little bit challenging? If so, check these out:

Middlesex – Jeffrey Eugenides

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

American Woman – Susan Choi

A fictionalized account of the Patty Hearst kidnapping – specifically the time when Patty and her captors were on the run. If you like this kind of thing, also read: *Family Circle* by Susan Braudy and *The Company You Keep* by Neil Gordon.

The Egyptologist – Arthur Phillips

An already crazy and egotistical Egyptologist searches for the tomb of a little known pharaoh, and descends deeper and deeper into madness. Very clever, very funny and very intricately plotted.

The Time Traveler's Wife – Audrey Niffenegger

If you have to have a linear narrative, stay far away from this book. The concept is that this guy can travel through time, but he can't control it, and he's in love with a woman who's not a time-traveller. Not science-fictiony at all. And, I especially liked it because part of it takes place at a *Violent Femmes* show that I am sure I attended.

nonfiction

Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities – Alexandra Robbins
Eating disorders, inappropriate sexual relationships, binge drinking, fierce competition between women, etc., etc. Is anyone surprised by this?

Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left – Susan Braudy
What happens when you try to "oulliberal" your parents? You join the radical Weather Underground, become involved in the murder of a police officer and spend a bunch of time in prison. Another fascinating look at 60's activism turned tragic.

Devil in the White City – Erik Larsen
One of my favorites of the year, Larsen combines two stories – the organization and development of the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and the story of a serial killer. Absolutely fascinating!

The Lives of Muses: Nine Women and the Artists They Inspired – Francine Prose
In some places this reads like a graduate thesis – but it does give you some insight into the women in the lives of artists like: Lewis Carroll, Salvador Dali, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Sigmund Freud, George Balanchine, and John Lennon.

The United States of Europe – T. R. Reid
My lefty mom recommended this one about the rising power of the European Union. Sounds heady, but it's really a fun read.

mom books

For when you just want to check and see how other moms are doing it, and having time to write about it. (I bet their houses are filthy!)

Dispatches From a Not-So-Perfect-Life: Or How I Learned to Love The House, The Man, The Child – Faulkner Fox

Toddler: Real Life Stories of Those Fickle, Irrational, Urgent, Tiny People We Love – Jennifer Margulis

Mother Shock: Loving Every (Other) Minute of It – Andrea J. Buchanan
Kind of annoying – it has its good and bad parts (kind of like motherhood!)

Of Woman Born – Adrienne Rich
The Mother Knot – Jane Lazarre
Both are feminist looks at motherhood written in the 70's. It's always fun to hear what the "sisters" were saying then.

your recommendations

From the always reliable Carol Ulmer:
- **Oh, The Places You'll Go** – Dr. Seuss
- **Dark Horse** – Tami Hoag
- **Eats, Shoots, and Leaves** **The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation** – Lynne Truss
- **Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't** – Jim Collins
- **FISH! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results** – Stephen C. Lundin
- **The Giving Tree** – Shel Silverstein
- **Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth** – Ben Shapiro
- **The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture** – Frank R. Wilson
- **On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (and Always Have) in the Future** – David Brooks
- **I Love You Like a Tomato** – Maria Giordano

From Jennifer Liagdonis:
- **The Birth of Venus** – Sarah Dunant

From the ever busy Janis Comer:
- **Life of Pi** – Yann Martel

From Kristin Hipwell:
- **My Sister's Keeper** – Jodi Picoult
It is about a family with a two-year-old daughter diagnosed with leukemia. They have another genetically engineered daughter for the purpose of saving the older sister. I was in absolute sobbing tears at points but it was well worth it.
- **Blink** – Malcolm Gladwell
This is a nonfiction title all about the art of "Thinking without Thinking". A good read but a slow read.

From Wally:
- **Let Me Tell You a Story: A Lifetime in the Game** – Red Auerbach, John Feinstein
- **Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea** – Thomas Cahill
- **Washington's Crossing** – David Hackett Fischer
- **His Excellency George Washington** – Joseph J. Ellis
John Sandford's Lucas Davenport Detective series

From Joann:
- **The Hunchback of Notre Dame** – Victor Hugo
- **The Good Earth** – Pearl Buck
- **The Bell Jar** – Sylvia Plath
- **Green Dolphin Street** – Elizabeth Goudge
- **They Cage Animals at Night** – Jennings Michael Burch
- **Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood** – Alexandra Fuller
- **A Girl Called Zippy** – Haven Kimmel
- **The Lorelei** – Fred Strickert
- **Play with Fire** and other mysteries by Dana Slabenow



what i hope to read this year

(If I actually finish three books, I'll be amazed!)

fiction

Metropolis – Elizabeth Gaffney

For some reason I'm a sucker for turn-of-the-century novels set in New York City.

Snobs: A Novel – Julian Fellowes

A satirical look at life among the modern-day British upper class.

The History of Love – Nicole Krauss

It's been reviewed a lot – it's about literature and family mysteries.

Never Let Me Go – Kazuo Ishiguro

There's something odd and special about the students at an elite British boarding school.

The Memory of Running: A Novel – Ron McClarty

Because I saw the writer (also an actor) on the steps of the New York City Public Library. And it got pretty good reviews.

The Pleasure of My Company: A Novel – Steve Martin

Steve Martin is always funny.

nonfiction

Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith – Anne Lamott

I'd read Anne Lamott's grocery list. I LOVE her.

Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise – Ruth Reichl

I feel the same way about Ruth Reichl – one of the best food/life writers there is. And if you like this, read *Tender at the Bone*, and *Comfort Me With Apples*. And if that's not enough, check out Anthony Bourdain's *A Cook's Tour* and *Kitchen Confidential*.

Assassination Vacation – Sarah Vowell

A humorous tour of the sites of the first three Presidential assassinations.

Oh The Glory of it All – Sean Wilentz

A memoir about growing up among San Francisco's elite. Dave Eggers gave it a good review, so I should probably be suspicious.

Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules: An Anthology of Outstanding Stories – David Sedaris

Collection of short stories chosen by Sedaris

The Glass Castle – Jeannette Walls

The excerpt from this memoir in *Vanity Fair* made me want to read the whole book.

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare –

Stephen Greenblatt

How Shakespeare became Shakespeare.

The Rare and The Beautiful – Cressida Connelly

The Peabody Sisters – Megan Marshall

Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III – Flora Fraser

Three unique groups of sisters and their impacts on the famous men and the world around them.

for kids

This is series by Miroslav Sasek

from *Amazon.com*

"The charm and uniqueness of New York City was never more beautifully and whimsically created for children than in Miroslav Sasek's *This Is New York*. First published in 1960...Sasek captured the essences of New York that delight children and parents, many of whom will remember the book from their childhood."

Also:

This Is Ireland **This Is Venice** **This Is London**

This Is Paris **This Is San Francisco** **This Is Rome**

The Fourteen Bears in Summer and Winter – Virginia Parsons

It's been reissued!!!! This is one of my all-time favorites, and Emma loves it, too!

Thanks for your recommendations this year. This list is always more fun if it has a little extra variety! As always, send me your favorites, and books I should warn others about.

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P.S. No one offered to be a guest editor this time, I'm still looking for your top ten lists!

have a great summer!



amy kilgus chamley, may 2005