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The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 3 n. 5,
January, 2008

What Exactly is a 'Great Book?'

A while back I was caught short for something good to read, so I looked online for one of those lists of The 100 Best Books of the 20th Century, or The 100 Best Novels in the English Language. There are many of these lists, mostly put out by different publishers, and usually heavy on books currently in print by those publishers.

I picked the list from Modern Library, because they are a publisher whose editions have always been well done. I checked through the list and found that I had not read 27 of their 100 (you will notice that almost all of these lists begin with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which I have read, so thank goodness I didn't have to put myself through that particular literary penance).

The first book I read was *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler. Next was *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry. I just finished *The Way of All Flesh* by Samuel Butler. I have intensely enjoyed almost every word of all three, and I intend to keep reading through the list. *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser is next.

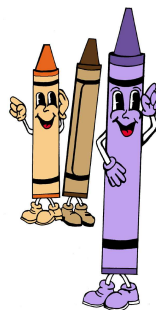
At the same time I am listening to a series of lectures in my car called *Books That Have Made History*, by Professor Rufus J. Fears. He has really put something into perspective for me. I feel kind of funny reading a list of 'great books' simply because some editorial board put the list together – especially since I know that their main motivation in assembling the list is selling books. I don't cotton to the idea that there is a list of books that 'everyone must read to be considered well read.' These days, there are simply too many books that fall into the 'must read' category. There's not enough time.

Professor Fears offers a new definition of a great book. It is a book that resonates for you as a reader even though it was written in a place or a time far removed from your own reality. Many of the books that we tend to include on our 'greatest ever' lists do just that – resonate for readers worldwide one generation after another.

I know there are so many good books coming out all the time, and we hate to miss the next work from our favorite authors; still I would advise that you take the time to check out some of these classics, some of these 'great books,' and find out what the fuss is all about.

tcooper@wgpl.org

Holiday Coloring Contest Ends, Prizes Available for Pick-up



One of our most popular annual events, the Holiday Coloring Contest, came to an end on December 26. Forty-seven children participated this year, offering entries that were inventive, creative, and of course, colorful. Winners in each age category have been notified. Everyone who participated receives a prize.

Prizes are available for pickup now through January 7th, so visit the Children's Room soon to get yours.

January in the Children's Room

- * Tuesday, January 8: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, January 9: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, January 10: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Monday, January 14: Storytime with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.
- * Wednesday, January 16: Storytime with Miss Michelle – 2 p.m.
- * Tuesday, January 22: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Wednesday, January 23: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, January 24: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 a.m.
- * Thursday, January 31: Pajama Storytime with Miss Laurene, 7:30 p.m.



Library Hours

Monday-Thursday 9 am to 9 pm
Friday and Saturday 9 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday 2 pm to 5 pm

The library will be closed Monday, January 21st in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *T is for Trespass*, Sue Grafton
2. *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert
3. *Book of the Dead*, Patricia Cornwell
4. *World Without End*, Ken Follett
5. *7th Heaven*, James Patterson
6. *Blood Brothers*, Nora Roberts
7. *Pillars of the Earth*, Ken Follett
8. *Bridge of Sighs*, Richard Russo
9. *Double Cross*, James Patterson
10. *Shadow Music*, Julie Garwood
11. *Little Face*, Sophie Hannah
12. *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman

Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

***A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, by Ismael Beah**

A true account of how government forces turned an innocent boy into a killer during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

February 5 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

Staff Favorites: January, 2008

1. *The Snake Stone*, Jason Goodwin (Adult Mystery)
2. *Oh My Stars*, Lorna Landvik (Adult Fiction)
3. *Naked in Death*, J.D. Robb (Adult Mystery)
4. *The Way of All Flesh*, Samuel Butler (Adult Fiction)
5. *Death of a Perfect Wife*, M.C. Beaton (Adult Mystery)
6. *Out Stealing Horses*, Per Petterson
7. *Moosewood Cookbook*, Mollie Katzen (Adult Non-fiction)
8. *I Am America (and so can you)*, Stephen Colbert (Adult Non-fiction)
9. *The Subterraneans*, Jack Kerouac (Adult Fiction)
10. *In the Wake*, Per Petterson (Adult Fiction)



Bojangles the Reindeer Visits the Library

It was a rainy and wet morning Thursday, December 20th when Bojangles the reindeer came to visit with children at the library. We thought the rain might discourage him from coming, but it let up and, as you can see by these photos, he was there with bells on.

Bojangles is a four-year-old male reindeer, which means he loses his antlers each winter and grows new ones starting in the spring. Here he has already lost one. The missing antler was quite a curiosity for the children, and was the second question most of them asked, right after 'Can he fly?'



This is the second time we have had a reindeer visit, and he seems to be so popular with our young audience that we hope to invite him back again next year.



Webster Groves Public Library 301 E. Lockwood Webster Groves, MO 63119

(314) 961-3784 www.wgpl.org

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