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The Newsletter of  
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 4 n. 5,  
January, 2009

## Children's Literature?

When I was still pretty young I started reading 'adult' literature. It's probably what marked me early on as destined to become a librarian. But it also deprived me of the pleasure of reading many classics of children's literature. Colleagues of mine are always shocked to find that I never read *Black Beauty*, *Charlotte's Web*, or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and I'm always torn about whether I should go back and read some of these. Aside from reading Lewis Carroll's works a few years ago, I never have.

Recently I was compiling a list of novels that were written in other languages which people have read and enjoyed in English. I was especially interested to know what books people felt had made a real impression on them. I solicited suggestions from an online group of librarians. What book do you suppose was suggested more times than any other? Right up there with Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Cervantes and Mann was *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. I haven't read it either.

Recently I was given a copy of *The Paul Street Boys* by Ferenc Molnár, the most famous Hungarian children's novel. You may recall that Molnár wrote the play *Liliom*, on which the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical *Carousel* was based. The young Hungarian lady who gave it to me said that it was to Hungarian children what *Tom Sawyer* is to American children. I thought, yes, with the exception that Hungarian children actually read *The Paul Street Boys*. I don't know any children who have read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. I read the 200 page book almost in one sitting. It was thrilling, well-plotted and eloquently written.

There is a reason that children's classics are classics, beyond the fact that they (supposedly) appeal to kids. One wonders if despite their fame and notoriety, the *Harry Potter* books will be read a hundred years from now. I suppose I'll cause a firestorm of indignation by doubting it. They are simply not written well enough. J. K. Rowling may be clever and write a ripping yarn, but her prose and her depth of insight into human nature do not begin to compare to E. B. White, Roald Dahl, or Mark Twain.

More than ever, I am seeing the fact that I didn't read more of the children's classics as an important gap in my literary education. How about you? Have you read any good children's book lately?

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## JANUARY IN THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

Tuesday, January 13: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, January 14: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

Thursday, January 15: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, January 21: Story Time with Miss Michelle, 2 p.m.

Thursday, January 22: Pajama Story Time with Miss Laurene, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, January 27: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, January 28: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

Thursday, January 29: Story Time with Miss Phyllis, 10 a.m.

## Saturday, January 31 ~ Chinese

### New Year Party!

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Crafts and Treats!

All Ages Welcome



## Winners of Holiday Coloring Contest Announced

88 children entered our annual Holiday Coloring Contest. This year's entries were more colorful, imaginative and creative than ever. By the time the crayons were set aside, the judges settled on these first place winners:

Age 2-4: Sammy Wright

Age 5-6: Serena Lewis

Age 7-9: Leor Shomroni

Age 10-14: Phoebe Mussman

## Website of the Month: MedlinePlus

[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)

Maintained by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. National Library of Medicine, this site has long been the premier source for dependable, easy to find medical information. It contains a medical dictionary, information on diseases, drugs and first aid, recent health news and much more.

### 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 on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday.

## This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *The Hour I First Believed*, Wally Lamb
2. *The Private Patient*, P. D. James
3. *Scarpetta*, Patricia Cornwell
4. *Divine Justice*, David Baldacci
5. *The Shack*, William P. Young
6. *American Wife*, Curtis Sittenfeld
7. *Outliers: the story of success*, Malcolm Gladwell
8. *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, David Wroblewski
9. *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison
10. *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Stieg Larsson
11. *The Brass Verdict*, Michael Connelly
12. *The Gate House*, Nelson DeMille

## Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

*Detective Story*, by Imre Kertész

February 3 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

## Staff Favorites, January, 2009

*More than it hurts you*, Darin Strauss

*20<sup>th</sup> Century Ghosts*, Joe Hill

*A People's History of Poverty in America*, Stephen Ambrose

*Testimony*, Anita Shreve

*Pete Seeger: the Power of Song*

*The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Society*, Mary Ann Shaffer

*Inner Circle*, Mari Jungstedt

*Free for All: Oddballs, Geeks & Gangsters in the Public Library*, Don Borchert

*How Late it Was, How Late*, James Kelman

*I See You Everywhere*, Julia Glass

Adult Fiction

Adult Fiction

Adult Non-fiction

Adult Fiction

Adult DVD

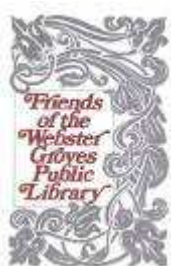
Adult Fiction

Adult Mystery

Adult Non-fiction

Adult Fiction

Adult Fiction



## Friends News

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in membership dues for 2009! If you would like to join the Friends and did not receive a membership application, they are available at the circulation desk.

One of the Friends' activities at the library is stocking our sale areas with donated books, tapes, DVDs and CDs. We recently moved our main table closer to the front door where we have some wonderful donations we were thrilled to receive – never-used books published in 2008 that we have priced at a fraction of their original cost. The proceeds from all purchases go directly to the library so every time you buy a book or tape, you are helping the library – and you get a great bargain.

During the month of January, the Friends will be staffing an information table located near the front door. We will have lots of information concerning the February 3<sup>rd</sup> election including the preliminary plans for the addition. If you have any questions, please stop by, have a cookie and talk to the Friends member there.

## Reindeer Visits Library



On December 20<sup>th</sup> one of Santa's reindeer took a moment from his hectic pre-holiday schedule to visit with young patrons at the library. Bojangles delighted children and their parents in what has become a very popular annual event. After a few hours he flew back to the North Pole and, as far as we can tell, did a wonderful job of helping old St. Nick fulfill his Christmas duties. Thank you, Bojangles, and tell Dasher and Dancer and all the others we said hello!

Bojangles the reindeer asked these children to pose for a photograph with him.



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