



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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Here are some great reads to help chase any winter doldrums away.

Barry Unsworth has written a new book called 'Land of Marvels' which takes place in Mesopotamia (soon to be Iraq) in 1914. It is a fascinating look at the jockeying of the major powers for control of the Middle East and its newly discovered oil riches. The story revolves around an archeological dig and the people who are drawn to exploring the rich past of this area. The lead archeologist literally has his head in the sand about the approaching world war and the danger to his site by forces beyond his control, manifested by an encroaching railway line. Colonial powers circle each other and play dangerous games with people's lives. The details of the palace grounds they are excavating, and the war rituals of the Assyrians kings who lived there are woven into the more modern story line. Unsworth is a master storyteller and fine writer whose characters are developed imaginatively and realistically.

Pam Jenoff has written a diverting winter beach book called 'Almost Home'. The story of Jordan Weiss, a career State Department employee, takes place in London and Cambridge. The action is set both in current times and the halcyon days of Jordan's graduate year at Cambridge University. While at Cambridge she coxed the eight boat in her college and fell in love, with both England and the enigmatic Jared. Tragedy strikes and she leaves for ten years until summoned back by a good friend who needs her. A series of spy vs. spy shenanigans ensues as Jordan and her team investigates global financial fraud. Filled with realistic diplomatic lore and suspenseful betrayals, the book rockets to an unexpected conclusion.

Robert B. Parker is best known for the iconic Spenser private eye series set in Boston. He is well known for his skill at writing dialogue, and has also written other novels outside his famous series. One of the best is "Appaloosa", set in a



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town of that name in the wild West of the 1800's. Lawmen for hire Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch come to town to rid it of the evil Rancher Bragg. The challenges are formidable and the pace quickens as horses and women complicate the chase. Ed Harris directed and starred in a movie version that is excellent and available in the library on DVD.

Los Angeles is the setting for T. Jefferson Parker's new book 'The Renegades'. Charlie Hood must find the gunman who killed his new partner and solve the mystery of a man he barely knew. Tense plotting and lots of action make this a fast, terrific read.

I think 'Young Men and Fire', the story of the 1949 Mann Gulch Montana fire, is Norman MacLean's masterpiece. The author of 'A River Runs Through It' was fascinated with the deadly fire that claimed the lives of thirteen smoke jumpers. He did years of research into fire fighting, the lives of the lost crew, and the lucky or smart circumstances that benefitted the handful of survivors. The heart of the book is the raging fire itself and the unbelievable courage it took to fight it. It is especially resonant given that in 1994 fourteen wildfire fighters lost their lives in the South Canyon Colorado fire in eerily similar circumstances. It's tremendously sad to read about the loss of young lives, but the book is brilliant in its depiction of the science and deadliness of major wildfires. Come to the book talk on 2/25 at 7 PM!

You may be exhausted by the global financial crisis but we encourage you to read 'The Ascent of Money' by Niall Ferguson if you want to benefit from historical perspective on the pursuit of money. This clever narrative history of speculative bubbles, bucks and lucre is as fast paced as any adventure story due to well chosen anecdotes that bring the economics alive.



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'A Nation on Fire' by Clay Risen is a history of the urban riots that occurred in the wake of the assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. This is a sweeping narrative that covers just ten days but clearly makes the case that the post riot wreckage was a major turning point in Americans' view of the inner city. This is a sobering book as it makes clear that some American cities have still not recovered from the devastating toll.

Come in and browse and share your favorites with us.

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