



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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Spring has been a little damp so far but hammock season cannot be far away! Here are some recommendations to kick off the summer reading season.

'The Tourist' by Olen Steinhauer is a real page turner. It is a classically bleak spy vs. spy novel. The hero, Milo Weaver, has supposedly left the cloak and dagger world of "tourism" (CIA speak for the traveling spy and/or assassin domain) behind. He is trying to be a good father and husband and settle down to brownstone living in Park Slope, Brooklyn with his wife and daughter. His nemesis, an assassin called "The Tiger", appears and starts a trail of deceit and murder that sucks Milo back into the trenches. The pace is fast, driven by the suspense of never knowing who you can trust in the global game of sabotage. The action moves from the US to Europe and involves colorful characters and believable plots that track recent headline events. Recommended for all John Le Carre fans.

'It Happens Every Day' by Isabelle Gillies is a well written and highly readable memoir despite it being the story of a disintegrating marriage and subsequent divorce. It is not as depressing as the description might lead you to believe. The family is happy at the outset as she and her two toddlers and poetry professor husband leave New York (where she had a recurring role in "Law and Order SVU") to start a new life at Oberlin College in Ohio. She starts teaching acting part time and they embrace small town life and the charm of an old brick house that seems tailor made for family happiness. As the marriage teeters, Isabelle is forced to confront her husband's lack of commitment and subsequent unfaithfulness. The passages, where she talks about her desperate attempts to save her marriage, ring especially true.

'Animals Make Us Human' by Temple Grandin is a revelation for anyone interested in animals. Whether you own a dog or cat or other pet, live on a farm, work with animals or care how your dinner was treated before it hit your table, her insights are truly amazing. You will gain a real understanding of animal temperaments and motivations. She is a noted autistic who has overcome her challenges and gone on to become a well known expert in this field.

'The Help' by Kathryn Stockett is set in 1962 in Jackson, Mississippi as the South comes to grip with the racially charged changes that are beginning to sweep the nation. Three women are the voices at the center of the story, each related by employment and history to the other. They are a white recent college graduate, a black maid who has raised 17 white children, and



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another black maid whose sharp words have cost her numerous jobs. The lines that define race, social status, culture and politics are seemingly set in stone. This is a terrific book about courageous people who cross those invisible lines. Moments of humor lighten this serious look at the waning days of the Jim Crow laws in the South.

'The Way Home' is George Pelecanos's latest novel set in and around Washington, D.C. His books are fast paced and suspenseful and the dialogue crackles, as you would expect from someone who wrote a great deal of the HBO series 'The Wire'. This is the story of Chris Flynn, and his family and friends as they travel the rocky path to maturity. Pelecanos has always been particularly talented at invoking atmosphere, in this case the gritty reality of making a decent life when the easy way is the wrong way. The characters are believable and make you think about the bigger issues of how we manage juvenile delinquency.

'Red April' by Santiago Roncagliolo is set in Ayacucho, Peru during the Fujimori regime. The hero is a rather meek and socially awkward prosecutor who is a stickler for the rules that are routinely ignored by the police and military. It is a tense time in Peruvian history. The Shining Path terrorist organization is ostensibly in decline, but events make it clear this is wishful thinking. A gruesome series of murders is a test of the system's ability to bring justice to the dead. This is a very atmospheric thriller; if you enjoy it we can also recommend 'The Dancer Upstairs' by Nicholas Shakespeare. This is a great novel about a policeman in Lima and the search for Carlos Guzman, the head of the Shining Path.

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