



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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'The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks' by Rebecca Skloot weaves the story of breakthrough medical research, beginning with the cells of an African American cancer patient named Henrietta Lacks who died in 1951 at the age of 30, and the personal history of the Lacks family. The descendants of the original cells, unknowingly contributed by Henrietta after her death, were the first to reproduce successfully in petri dishes. They played a key role in the development of life saving vaccines, and hundreds of millions of "Hela" cells later are still the basis for a huge amount of scientific research. Skloot gets to know the Lacks family and contrasts their straightened circumstances with the literal riches that sprang from Henrietta.

'A Week in December' is the new novel by Sebastian Faulkes. Set in contemporary London, it interweaves the lives of multiple characters over the course of one week. Uber wealthy hedge fund owners, a tube driver, a young misguided Muslim, a solicitor, a troubled teen and various parents, friends and colleagues fill out the cast. It's a gripping book, very contemporary, and gives you a lot to think about.

'Helmet for My Pillow' by Robert Leckie was originally published in 1957. It's a memoir of the WWII Marine engagements in the Pacific Islands and the basis for the current HBO production 'The Pacific'. We accompany Leckie and his fellow Marines on the battlefield, as well as through the "trial of tedium – with its time for speculative dread". It's a spell binding first person account of both the killing fields and the ties between the fighting men.

The SoNo Baking & Café Cookbook was published to wide acclaim last month. Our home grown bakery has spawned a beautiful and useful cookbook that all bakers will love. The owner, John Baricelli, has written a well organized and accessible book full of temptations. Both sweet and savory recipes are included, as well as a lot of helpful tips.

'Making Toast' is an affecting memoir of love and loss by Roger Rosenblatt. Catapulted into the role of caretaking parents to three young children after the death of their daughter at a tragically young age, Roger and his wife Ginny move to their daughter's Bethesda MD home and begin the process of healing. The domestic routines established with the children and their son in law Harris are the building blocks of their recovery from grief.

'Pride and Avarice' by Nicolas Coleridge is very witty. It's a send up of striving and snobbery in the English countryside. Miles Straker, the dreadful owner of Chawbury Manor, must watch as



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his arriviste neighbors the Clegg's sully the valley with their monstrous new house. A fully loaded cast of characters of all ages, thanks to multiple children in each family, create plenty of plot making opportunities. The laugh out loud moments and some very clever commentary about social striving make this tale of vengeance a quick, well written diversion.

'The Devil's Star' by Jo Nesbo is the latest installment of the series starring Harry Hole, the Oslo detective. Harry is once again struggling to stay sober long enough to crack a case involving mysterious murders that seem to have a pattern. Plenty of clues, intellectual brain teasers, office politics, and old enemies keep the action moving. It's fun to engage in the twists and turns of his cases.

'The Brick Layer' is a first novel by ex FBI agent Noah Boyd (a pseudonym). It keeps your attention as a diabolical extortion plot against the FBI unfolds, with clear indications that there is an insider involved. Plenty of surprising twists and wry, sharp dialogue between Steve Vail, the former agent turned bricklayer brought back to solve the case, and Kate Bannon, his temporary boss back at the FBI, make the pages sparkle in a way many thrillers don't.

I found 'Union Atlantic' by Adam Haslett hard to put down. Charlotte Graves, the elderly neighbor of Doug Fanning, tangles with him over the legitimacy of the land sale that allowed him to build his "McMansion" on her doorstep. Her ancestors originally gave the town the land and she is determined to see him evicted. Doug is the second in command at Union Atlantic, a large bank in Boston. He is fascinating and multi layered; his character development arc is like watching a train about to crash. Charlotte's brother, the head of the New York Federal Reserve and their neighbor, young Nate Fuller, play major roles in this well written morality play.

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