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Recommended Books 2004

Fiction

Bohjalian, Christopher A. Before You Know Kindness. Shaye Areheart Books, 2004
The tale of a family in crisis after animal rights activist father is accidentally shot by a relative wielding a hunting rifle. A media free-for-all follows as each character tries to sort through the aftermath in this social commentary.

Chaon, Dan. You Remind Me of Me. Ballantine Books, 2004.
Follows the lives of several people showing how they ended up with lives very different from those they expected. Chaon doesnt shy away from the realities of poverty and struggle in this first novel.

Crichton, Michael. State of Fear. HarperCollins, 2004.
Crichton could have written another of the science-gone-mad thrillers for which he is known. Instead, he explores how information is used to keep us in fear. In this case, Crichton takes on global warmingnot as a threat, but rather as a way to show how we are made to fear by the media.

Dunant, Sarah. The Birth of Venus. Random House, 2004.
In 15th Century Florence, a young woman chooses marriage with an older man in order to have freedom to pursue her art. Dunant captures the politics, art, and flavor of Florence in this coming-of-age story.

Fowler, Karen Joy. The Jane Austen Book Club. Putnam 2004.
Explores the personal lives of six book club members as they discuss a different Jane Austen book each month. Witty characters and faux discussion questions make for a fun read.

Greer, Andrew Sean. The Confessions of Max Tivoli. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.
Story of a man who is born at age 70 and ages in reverse. Original plot with interesting snafus as he crosses paths with his first love (who doesnt know his secret) at different points in his life.

Haruf, Kent. Eventide. Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2004.
In a small town where people encounter each other frequently, destinies entwine easily--and

surprisingly. Follows major characters from Harufs earlier *Plainsong* and introduces other residents of Holt, Colorado.

Hiaasen, Carl. Skinny Dip. Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2004.
Skinny Dip is the story of what happens after a man throws his wife off a cruise ship but unknowingly fails to kill her. The characters in this humorous novel are wonderfully quirky.

Kunzru, Hari. Transmission. Dutton, 2004.
Satire in which an Indian computer programmer finds disappointment after moving to the U.S. and then losing his new job. His response? Create and unleash a computer virus so that he can find the cure, impress his boss, and get his job back.

Langer, Adam. Crossing California. Riverhead Books, 2004.Chicagos West Rogers Park neighborhood is the setting for this debut novel in which friendship and family are explored. This book comes complete with glossary in case you werent in the area (or born yet) in 1979.

Mirvis, Tova. The Outside World. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.
This is the story of two Orthodox Jewish families joined by the marriage of their children. Each character wrestles with faith, doubt, and the unknowns of the world in this warm and often humorous story.

Munro, Alice, Runaway. Knopf, 2004.
Eight short stories about women in various stages of life. Recent winner of Canadas Giller prize.

Murkoff, Bruce. Waterborne. Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2004.
Exploration of the lives of three people who come together during the construction of the Hoover Dam. This is a noteworthy historical noveland a first novel for Murkoff.

Perlman, Elliot. Seven Types of Ambiguity. Riverhead Books, 2004.
Part thriller, part love story, Simon Heywoods obsession with the woman who dumped him ten years earlier leads him to kidnap her son. Story is told by six different narrators who are affected in different ways by Heywoods act.

Picoult, Jodi. My Sister's Keeper. Atria Books, 2004.
Picoult often tackles controversial subjects and her late plot twists are intriguing. This novel explores a familys decision to have and use a child as a donor for another child who has cancer. Interestingly told from multiple viewpoints within the family.

Roth, Phillip. The Plot Against America. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
Alternate history in which Charles Lindbergh defeats FDR in the 1940 presidential race. A Nazi sympathizer and isolationist, Lindberghs election instills fear in manyincluding the Roth familys Jewish neighborhood in New Jersey.

Thompson, Jean. City Boy: a novel. Simon & Schuster, 2004.
A Chicago apartment building is the setting for this story of love and betrayal and its tenants are the foils for Jack and ChloeChicago newcomers whose marriage begins to unravel in the face of lifestyle changes.

Nonfiction

Chernow, Ron. Alexander Hamilton. Penguin Press, 2004.
Chernows latest reveals the complexities of Hamilton and the politics of his time.

Conlon, Edward. Blue Blood. Riverhead Books, 2004.
Harvard educated Conlon chose to become the fourth generation in his family to serve on the NYPD. Blue Blood explains the inner workings of the department and relates Conlons experiences on the force beginning with his time working in the South Bronx.

Greenblatt, Stephen. Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare. Norton, c2004.
National Book Award nominee, Greenblatt brings the Elizabethan era to life and shows us the influences that created Shakespeares art.

Gross, Terry. All I Did Was Ask. Hyperion, 2004.
Compilation of interview transcripts chosen by host of NPRs Fresh Air, Terry Gross. Includes interviews with actors, writers, and artists.

Kart, Larry. Jazz in Search of Itself. Yale University Press, 2004.
Highland Park author Kart explores major jazz artists and styles in a wonderfully readable collection of critical essays.

King, Dean. Skeletons on the Zahara: A True Story of Survival. Little, Brown, c2004.
The story of an American ship that wrecked off the coast of Africa in the early 1800s. The perils that befell the crew were many, including being taken as slaves. This is the amazing story of the crew's endurance in unimaginable circumstances.

Kurson, Robert. Shadow Divers. Random House, c2004.
Discovery of a German U-boat leads two deep-sea divers on a quest to determine its origin. Full of detail on deep-sea exploration expressed in layman's terms, those not familiar with diving terms or techniques will still be able to appreciate the adventure undertaken by these divers.

Patchett, Ann. Truth and Beauty: a friendship. HarperCollins, 2004.
The story of Patchett's friendship with Lucy Grealy (Autobiography of a Face), which begins in college and continues until Lucys death in 2002. Although not a light-hearted story, Patchett's account contains some wonderful anecdotes and uplifting moments.

Ralston, Aron. Between a Rock and a Hard Place. Atria Books, c2004.
Minute by minute description of Arons solo trip to Blue John Canyon in which he became trapped by a boulder and his shocking escape. The account is interspersed with recollections of other adventures and close calls.

Rhodes, Richard. John James Audubon: The Making Of An American. Random House, c2004.
The story of Audubons life as an immigrant in New York, his courtship with his wife, and relocation to the Kentucky frontierculminating in his career as a wildlife painter. Color illustrations of some of his wildlife watercolors are a bonus.

Roberts, Cokie. Founding Mothers. William Morrow, c2004.
Biographies and writings of several women including Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, and Peggy Shippen (Benedict Arnolds wife). Their stories together tell us about the American Revolution from an altogether different perspective.

Sedaris, David. Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim. Little, Brown, 2004.
More essays from Sedaris as he picks on his family, discusses his childhood, and sorts through the absurdities of living in a small town in France. Sedaris usual biting wit is present in full force.

Tucker, Neely. Love in the Driest Season. Crown Publishers, 2004.
In Zimbabwe, foreigners are not allowed to adopt. Tucker, a foreign correspondent, recounts the struggles he and his wife face in trying to adopt the baby they have fallen in love with.

Whitaker, Robert. The Mapmaker's Wife. Basic Books, c2004.
The story of Isabel Grameson who undertook a trip down the Amazon to reunite with the husband she had not seen in 20 years. Surviving such a trip with the gear available in 1769 was unlikely, but surviving alone in the rainforest after her guides and companions perished makes this an amazing story.

RA staff
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