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Recommended Books 2003

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Fiction

Ali, Monica. Brick Lane. Scribner, 2003.
Islamic Nazneen, in an arranged marriage and living in London far from her home in Bangladesh, wonders if she can control her destiny. Over the years she gains confidence, makes friends and finds fulfillment, even taking to ice-skating.

Berger, Thomas. Best Friends. Simon and Schuster, 2003.
Time alters all things. As childhood buddies Sam and Ray grow older, their character differences become divisive. Ah, but time also soothes old wounds and their friendship helps calm the troubled waters of advancing age. What are friends for?

Boyd, William. Any Human Heart. Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
Logan Mounstuart walked this earth for 85 years and somehow managed to be on hand for every major event of the 20th century. Through his journals we share his wry observations of history. A delightful retrospective.

Brown, Dan. The Da Vinci Code. Doubleday, 2003.
The murder of a curator at the Louvre fosters an eye-opening exploration of ancient secret societies, the search for the Holy Grail, and an intense study of the works of Da Vinci. A breath-taking page-turner.

Epstein, Joseph. Fabulous Small Jews. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
Another array of Epstein short stories: feisty perspectives on everyday life as lived by the common man.

Galloway, Janice. Clara. Simon and Schuster, 2003.
Clara Schumann kept journals. From these detailed accounts, Galloway has given us the story of a marriage between two accomplished musicians striving to strike the perfect chord for their love song.

Harris, Robert. Pompeii. Random House, 2003.
Roman engineer Attilus is dispatched to tend to a faulty aqueduct on the coast of Italy in A.D. 79 arriving on the scene just as Vesuvius erupts. Harris provides a fascinating study of the genius of Roman engineering as well as an appealing love story.

Hazzard, Shirley. The Great Fire. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
The much-akeywordaimed author of The Transit of Venus brings us the story of an unlikely pair of lovers trying to love and live through the chaos that is post-war Britain.

James. P.D. The Murder Room. Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
Mayhem visits the family owned Dupayne Museum when a murder mirroring an exhibit at the museum takes place.

Inspector Dalgliesh rises to the challenge and manages to warm up his friendship with Emma while about it. Vintage James.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. The Namesake. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
A young boy moved from India to America has a difficult time fitting in. The fact that he has an unusual name, Gogol Ganguli, doesnt make it easier. Eventually, he finds his own identity and sets forth on the path of life. A rose by any other name.

Lively, Penelope. The Photograph. Viking, 2003.
After her death, Glyn finds a photograph of his wife holding hands with her brother-in-law. Gazing at the picture, Glyn views their married life through a very different lens.

Martin, William. Harvard Yard. Warner Books, 2003.
The story of Harvard University, founded by John Harvard in 1636, a fictional family associated with the college from the beginning and a mysterious Shakespearean manuscript missing from the schools archives. From Harvard yard, the reader sees the Salem witch trials, the Civil War, expansion and depression, a yardside seat at the American parade.

Petrakis, Harry. Twilight of the Ice. Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.
Chicago author Petrakis tells the story of Mike Zervakis, one of the last of the railroad car icemen. Set in the stockyards area of Chicago in the early 1950s, the crew shovels ice into rail cars as their jobs are threatened by automatic refrigeration. Nonetheless, they work with pride and loyalty at the menial task.

Rankin, Ian. Resurrection Men. Little, Brown, 2003.
A group of experienced Edinburgh police, including John Rebus, are sent for remedial training aimed at attitude overhaul. Whats happening?

Shaara, Jeff. The Glorious Cause: A Novel of the American Revolution. Ballantine, 2003.
Washington, Franklin, Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold. Cornwallis, Lafayette- all the characters in the drama of the American Revolution come to life in this vivid account. Historical fiction at its shining best.

Wolff, Tobias. Old School. Knopf, 2003.
A scholarship student in a New England prep school tries to fit in by taking on the habits of his classmates. The group is obsessed with literature; all are competing for face-to-face meetings with noted authors. Some resort to plagiarism. Disillusionment and disaster ensue.

Nonfiction

Alexander, Caroline. The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty. Viking, 2003.
Alexander recounts a tale of the most famous (infamous?) of all mutinies and the 3600 mile boat ride that took the surviving crew to safety.

Albright, Madeleine. Madam Secretary: A Memoir. Hyperion, 2003.
Albright shares her personal life, as well as her experiences in the field of diplomacy. Her writing style is warm and down-to-earth.

Armstrong, Lance. Every Second Counts. Broadway Books, 2003.
Tour-de-France winner Lance Armstrong faces life after cancer with a determined buoyancy.

Bryson, Bill. A Short History of Nearly Everything. Broadway Books, 2003.
Articulate, perceptive, Bryson discusses the scientific aspects of our world and the scientists who analyze its forces.

Colt, George Howe. The Big House: A Century in the Life of an American Summer Home. Scribner, 2003.

A 100 year-old house on a deserted Cape Cod peninsula, romantic, ramshackle, about to be sold, taking with it summer memories of five generations. Colt shares its history.

Duffy, Peter. The Bielski Brothers: The True Story of 3 Men Who Defied the Nazis, Saved 1200 Jews And Built a Village in the Forest. Harper Collins, 2003.
A truly heroic story all but unknown until this telling.

Isaacson, Walter. Benjamin Franklin, An American Life. Simon and Schuster, 2003.
A reliable, colorful, intimate and highly readable account of a remarkable man: worldly-wise, and all too human.

Kidder, Tracy. Mountains Beyond Mountains. Random House, 2003.
Paul Farmer, idealistic, dedicated doctor, devotes his life to aiding the impoverished, the ill, the handicapped people of Haiti. Kidder accompanies him on his arduous treks into the back woods and fields. An inspiring story.

Krakauer, Jon. Under the Banner of Heaven. Random House, 2003
Krakauer describes the beliefs of the Mormon community, then reports on the drift of ardent fundamentalists toward violence---all in the name of God.

Krugman, Paul. The Great Unraveling. W. W. Norton, 2003
New York Times columnist Krugman gives us a day by day report on the Bush administrations foibles and follies. Concise and cogent.

Larson, Erik. The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair That Changed American History. Crown, 2003.
A serial killer is loose in Englewood, the village to the south of the site of the Columbian Exposition. The reader is witness to meetings of the planners and architects of the White City as well as the pursuit of the madman.

Nafisi, Azar: Reading Lolita in Tehran. Random House, 2003.
Resigned professor Nafisi gathers a group of young women to study modern literature- perforce in secret. This book is a testament of Islamic womens lib as well as a look at western literature from the eastern point of view.

Price, David. Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation. Knopf, 2003.
They came from England expecting to find gold on the ground. The founding fathers of Virginia had some hard lessons to learn: how to get along with the natives and how to get along with one another. New light on a familiar story.

Wiencek, Henry: An Imperfect God: George Washington: His Slaves and the Creation of America. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
Washington set his slaves free in his final will and testament saying that holding slaves was his only unavoidable subject of regret. Wiencek writes of Washingtons lifelong struggle with his conscience on this question. A new look at Washingtons philosophy.

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