

2012 Quarter 4 Book Suggestions

Read Between the Wines

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

Psychology 336 pages

An intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"--the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band. Brilliant and entertaining, *Outliers* is a landmark work that will simultaneously delight and illuminate.

Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry by Rachel Joyce Fiction 336 pages

Meet Harold Fry, recently retired. He lives in a small English village with his wife, who seems irritated by almost everything he does. Little differentiates one day from the next. Then one morning the mail arrives, and within the stack is a letter addressed to Harold in a shaky scrawl from a woman he hasn't seen or heard from in 20 years. Queenie Hennessy is in hospice and is writing to say goodbye. Harold pens a quick reply and, leaving his wife to her chores, heads to the corner mailbox. But then, Harold has a chance encounter, one that convinces him that he absolutely must deliver his message to Queenie in person. And thus begins the unlikely pilgrimage. Harold is determined to walk 600 miles because, he believes, as long as he walks, Queenie Hennessey will live.

Prayers for Sale by Sandra Dallas

Fiction 320 pages

The idea of selling prayers conjures images of pre-Reformation Catholicism or, at the very least, stops you in your tracks to think a bit. When Nit Spindle, a newcomer to Middle Swan, Colorado, spots Hennie Comfort's sign, "Prayers for Sale," she stops to buy a prayer and gains a friend. At 86, Hennie has a passel of stories to tell and finds in Nit an eager listener and kindred spirit. In the telling of Hennie's life and in the gradual elicitation of Nit's lonely ponderings, the reader is treated to an oral history of a mountain town and the women who run it while the men are chasing their dreams of gold. Hennie considers passing along her stories and her knowledge of mountain life to Nit a fit pastime, in preparation for her departure from town.

The Sisters by Nancy Jensen

Fiction 336 pages

Growing up in Kentucky in the 1920s, with their mother dead and their stepfather an ever-present threat, Bertie and her older sister Mabel have no one but each other—with perhaps a sweetheart for Bertie waiting in the wings. But on the day that Bertie receives her 8th-grade diploma, good intentions go terribly wrong. A choice made in desperate haste sets off a chain of misunderstandings that will divide the sisters and reverberate through 3 generations of women. From the Depression through WWII and Vietnam, Bertie and Mabel forge unexpected identities that are shaped by unspeakable secrets. As the sisters have daughters and granddaughters of their own, they discover that both love and betrayal are even more complicated than they seem.

Crossing to Safety by Wallace Stegner

Fiction 335 pages

An exploration into the mysteries of friendship. With a quiet but strong hand, Stegner traces the bond that develops between Charity and Sid Lang and Sally and Larry Morgan from their first meeting in 1937 through their eventual separation to their final get-together in 1972 when Charity is dying of cancer and is determined "to do it right," no matter what anyone else thinks. It seems only appropriate that Charity bring them together since she has been the driving force behind the relationship. As we discover now, her bull-headedness has had its price.

2012 Quarter 4 Book Suggestions

Read Between the Wines

Let the Great World Spin by Colum McCann

Fiction 375 pages

One morning, the people of lower Manhattan stand hushed, staring up in disbelief at the Twin Towers. It is 1974, and a mysterious tightrope walker is running, dancing, leaping between the towers, suspended 1/4 mile above the ground. In the streets below, a slew of ordinary lives become extraordinary. Corrigan, a radical young Irish monk, struggles with his own demons as he lives among the prostitutes in the middle of the burning Bronx. A group of mothers gather in a Park Avenue apartment to mourn their sons who died in Vietnam, only to discover just how much divides them even in grief. A young artist finds herself at the scene of a hit-and-run that sends her own life careening sideways. Tillie, 38 year-old grandmother, turns tricks alongside her teenage daughter, determined not only to take care of her family but to prove her own worth.

The Cider House Rules by John Irving

Fiction 608 pages

Rich in characterization, epic in scope, this is the heart-wrenching story of orphan Homer Wells and his guardian, Dr. Wilbur Larch. With nods of affection to both David Copperfield and Jane Eyre, Irving's novel follows Homer on his journey from innocence to experience, brilliantly depicting the boy's struggle to find his place in the world.

The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach

Fiction 544 pages

At a small college on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star, Henry, seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of 5 people are upended. Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. A longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Henry's gay roommate becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Henry's best friend realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. The college pres' daughter, returns to Westish after an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life. As the season counts down to its final game, these 5 are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one another find their true paths.

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Science Fiction 240 pages

The 1994 Newbery Medal winner, has become one of the most influential novels of our time. The haunting story centers on 12-year-old Jonas, who lives in a seemingly ideal, if colorless, world of conformity and contentment. Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver of Memory does he begin to understand the dark, complex secrets behind his fragile community. Lowry creates a chilling, tightly controlled future society where all controversy, pain, and choice have been expunged, each childhood year has its privileges and responsibilities, and family members are selected for compatibility. Wrought with admirable skill--the emptiness and menace underlying this Utopia emerge step by inexorable step: a richly provocative novel.

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

Classic 304 pages

Dr Felix Hoenikker, one of the founding 'fathers' of the atomic bomb, has left a deadly legacy to the world. For he is the inventor of 'ice-nine', a lethal chemical capable of freezing the entire planet. The search for its whereabouts leads to Hoenikker's three eccentric children, to a crazed dictator in the Caribbean, to madness. Felix Hoenikker's Death Wish comes true when his last, fatal gift to mankind brims about the end, that for all of us, is nigh.

I Knew You'd be Lovely by Althea Black

Short Stories 238 pages

A deeply moving debut features a coterie of memorable characters who have reached emotional crossroads in their lives. Brimming with humor, irony, and insights about the unpredictable nature of life, the unbearable beauty of fate, and the power that one moment, or one decision, can have to transform us, this book delivers that rare thing—stories with both an edge and a heart.

2012 Quarter 4 Book Suggestions

Read Between the Wines

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Classic 176 pages

Guy Montag is a book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature.

The Complete Stories by Flannery O'Connor Short Stories 576 pages

The publication of this extraordinary volume of 31 stories firmly established Flannery O'Connor's monumental contribution to American fiction. O'Connor published her first story, "The Geranium," in 1946, while she was working on her master's degree at the University of Iowa. Arranged chronologically, this collection shows that her last story, "Judgement Day"—sent to her publisher shortly before her death—is a brilliantly rewritten and transfigured version of "The Geranium." Taken together, these stories reveal a lively, penetrating talent that has given us some of the most powerful and disturbing fiction of the twentieth century.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson

Biography 656 pages

Based on more than 40 interviews with Jobs conducted over 2 years—as well as interviews with more than 100 family members, friends, adversaries, competitors, and colleagues—this is a riveting story of the roller-coaster life and searingly intense personality of a creative entrepreneur whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing. At a time when America is seeking ways to sustain its innovative edge, and when societies around the world are trying to build digital-age economies, Jobs stands as the ultimate icon of inventiveness and applied imagination. He knew that the best way to create value in 21st century was to connect creativity with technology. He built a company where leaps of the imagination were combined with remarkable feats of engineering.

The Reluctant Tuscan: How I Discovered My Inner Italian by Phil Doran Memoir 320 p

After years of working on a string of sitcoms, Phil Doran found himself on the outside looking in. Just as he and his peers had replaced the older guys when he was coming up the ranks, it was now happening to him. And it was freaking him out. He came home every night angry, burned-out, and exhausted. After 25 years of losing her husband to Hollywood, Doran's wife decided it was finally time for a change—so on one of her many solo trips to Italy she surprised her husband by purchasing a broken-down 300-year-old farmhouse for them to restore. This is about the author's transition from being a successful but overworked writer-producer in Hollywood to rediscovering himself and his wife while in Italy, and finding happiness in the last place he expected.

The Dirty Life: A Memoir of Farming, Food, and Love Memoir 304 pages

by Kristin Kimball

Single, 30-something, working as a writer in NYC, Kristin Kimball was living life as an adventure. But she was beginning to feel a sense of longing for a family and for home. When she interviewed a dynamic young farmer, her world changed. Kristin knew nothing about growing vegetables, let alone raising pigs and cattle and driving horses. But on an impulse, smitten, if not yet in love, she shed her city self and moved to five hundred acres near Lake Champlain to start a new farm with him. This is the captivating chronicle of their first year on Essex Farm, from the cold North Country winter through the following harvest season—complete with their wedding in the loft of the barn.