

Summer Reading



The Sisters Mortland

by Sally Beauman

This captivating novel of emotional suspense centers around the tragic and mysterious events which take place at crumbling Ely Abbey, the childhood home of the three Mortland sisters and the favorite holiday spot of the men who inhabit the small orbit of their lives.

Before You Know Kindness by Chris Bohjalian

For ten summers, the extended Seton family met at their country home in New Hampshire, but during the eleventh summer everything changed. A bullet from a hunting rifle accidentally strikes Spencer McCullough, an extreme advocate for animal rights, leaving him seriously wounded. The weapon—owned by his brother-in-law, John, and shot by his 12-year-old daughter, Charlotte—becomes the center of a lawsuit and media circus led by Spencer's employer, FERAL (Federation for Animal Liberation), a dead ringer for PETA.

Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury

In the strange world of Green Town, Illinois, there was a junkman who saved lives; a pair of shoes that could make you run as fast as a deer; a human time machine; a wax witch that could tell real fortunes; a man who almost wrecked happiness by building a happiness machine. And there was a twelve-year-old boy named Douglas Spaulding, who found himself very much at home in this extraordinary world...

(look also for the sequel in New Books, ***Farewell Summer***)

Summer of Light by W. Dale Cramer

Mick Brannigan is a working-class stiff, but he has always been a good family man. Then he loses his job, while simultaneously his wife's long-postponed career takes off, and his small son, Dylan, exhibits developmental problems. Dylan needs the close supervision of a stay-at-home parent. Mick resists at first, then submits to his wife's logic and finds a new side of himself--if not through housework, then through guiding his children in ways their mother would never have thought of.

The Whistling Season by Ivan Doig

Oliver Milliron, a recently widowed father of three boys, answers a newspaper ad from a widow in Minneapolis seeking employment. "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite," is the woman's headline tag. Oliver, a wry man with a love of language, can't resist: he takes the bait. When Rose Llewellyn's train arrives, however, he discovers he will have to chew more than he thought he had bitten off, for she has brought a companion -- her brother, Morris.

Volk's Game by Brnet Ghelfi

A brutal killer maimed in Russia's war against Chechnya, Volk leads two lives—one as a powerful gangster with a hand in virtually all underworld rackets, the other as a covert military operative. When Volk gets the chance to steal a previously unknown Da Vinci painting, *Leda and the Swan*, which has been concealed beneath another painting in a St. Petersburg museum, Volk enlists the aid of Valya, a beautiful assassin, in plotting the theft. After an ostensible ally sabotages the operation, Volk seeks vengeance.

Body of Lies by David Ignatius

Subtly framing a highly elaborate plot, Ignatius tells the story of idealistic CIA agent Roger Ferris, newly stationed in Jordan after being wounded in Iraq. After a failed initiative to flush out a terrorist mastermind known as Suleiman, Ferris, who's dedicated to forestalling further al-Qaeda attacks, develops an intricate scheme modeled after a British plan used successfully against the Nazis. Ferris's plot to turn the terrorists against each other by sowing seeds of suspicion that their leaders are collaborating with the Americans puts his personal life in turmoil and threatens his professional relationship with the head of Jordanian intelligence.

Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver

The stories of three women living alone in southern Appalachia are wound together in this celebration of the erotic earth. In their separate settings, they struggle against a culture that denigrates them for not being "natural ladies," but through nature, they each find happiness.

The Savage Garden by Mark Mills

In Post WWII Tuscany, Adam Banting, a Cambridge architecture student, is doing research on a famous Renaissance garden. But as he digs into the history and iconography of the garden, he comes to believe that the seemingly tranquil bower offers a road map to how its original owner murdered his wife.

The Accidental by Ali Smith

A London family spends the summer in a rented house outside a Norfolk village. Eve, the mother, is an author who cannot write. Her second husband, Michael, is a university lecturer who cannot resist the urge to seduce his female students. Magnus, Eve's brooding teenage son, is nursing dark and guilty thoughts. Astrid, Eve's daughter, keeps boredom at bay by filming everything around her. Into this superficially humdrum picture comes Amber, an enigmatic stranger in her early thirties who insinuates herself into the heart of the family's tranquil holiday life.

Man Gone Down by Michael Thomas

The brooding narrator in first novel recites a mantra, "It is a strange thing to go through life as a social experiment." African American (or, more accurately, "Black Irish Indian"), he was a precocious child. Bused to white schools in Boston, gifted as a poet and a musician, and assured he would transcend his alcoholic parents' troubles, he developed his own drinking habit instead and deep-sixed an academic career. Now about to turn 35, married to a white woman, and a father, he has been dragged off course by a tidal wave of pain and despair and must reconstruct their dismantled Brooklyn life before the summer ends. This is an amazing and life affirming novel.