



Staff Picks

Summer Reading 2010

Fiction

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The Red Thread, Ann Hood, May 2009: This novel simultaneously tells the story of the Chinese girls who are put up for adoption and the families from the US who adopt them. The interspersed tales of how the Chinese children came to be abandoned and how the American families came to adopt them is beautifully written and poignant. Hood's sensitive depiction of her characters makes for a moving story of dedication, forgiveness, and love. *I loved it!* Linda's pick.

Red Hook Road, Avelet Waldman, July 2010: The book begins describing all the details of a perfect Maine wedding with a young, beautiful couple. That day ends in tragedy and the story continues with how those left behind deal with the tragedy. Set in a small town in Maine where summer residents and visitors all know each other, the story reminds me of Charlevoix. "Every day, families are shoved into new realities. *Red Hook Road* is a masterful imagining of the way a single tragic event impacts the psyches and behaviors and dynamics of two families. Waldman's writing is elegant and riveting." —Kelly Corrigan, author of *The Middle Place* Linda's pick.

Noah's Compass, Anne Tyler, 2009: The book is typical Tyler, in that the characters are quirky and humane. The protagonist in this lighthearted piece is a 60 year old man named Liam Pennywell, forced into retirement from his job as a schoolteacher at a private boys' school. He is troubled by his inability to remember anything about the first night that he moved into his new apartment on the outskirts of Baltimore. All he knows when he wakes up the next day in the hospital is that his head is sore and bandaged. His effort to recover the moments of his life that have been stolen from him leads him on an unexpected detour. Anne Tyler's prose continues to be rich and fluid, with just the right blend of dialogue and narration. Judith's pick.

Wench Dolen Perkins-Valdez, 2010: Follows the friendship of 5 slave women in the decade before the civil war. Each is taken with her master to a private resort in Ohio during the summer. The story offers a look into their lives and emotions as they live in servitude, but with an awareness of the abolitionist movement. Linda's pick.

The Sheen on the Silk, Anne Perry, 2010: Fans of Anne Perry's William Monk, and Charlotte & Thomas Pitt novels should enjoy her new venture into the world of the 13th century Byzantine Empire. Perry weaves plot and subplots seamlessly, and has created her usual colorful cast of characters. Her research into medical practices of the era, and complexities of the history of the Catholic Church is thorough. Anna, the daughter of a physician in Nicea, who is also skilled in the practice of medicine, passes herself off as a eunuch in order to set up practice in Constantinople so that she can find out the truth about her twin brother being exiled for the murder of Bessarion, a nobleman. Several years, and subplots later, she finds out the truth. Fascinating reading. Judith's pick.

In the Shadow of the Cypress by Thomas Steinbeck: Wonderfully intriguing novel by the son of John Steinbeck that deals with the idea that Chinese may have "discovered" the west coast of the America's long before the Spaniards, around the time of Columbus. "This striking debut novel weaves together two fascinating eras into one remarkable tale that depicts California in all its multicultural variety, with a suspense that draws the reader on to the very last page." (jacket notes) Judith's pick.

The Handbook for Lightning Strike Survivors by Michele Young-Stone: This is a unique work, and an excellent first novel. The author, herself a lightning strike survivor, creates two main characters, both lightning strike victims, whose lives parallel each other for years. Sprinkled throughout the novel are quotes from the text of a book that one of them writes as an adult called *The Handbook for Lightning Strike Survivors*. The other character reads this book, and eventually their lives cross. Very entertaining. Judith's pick.

