

Good Reads for the Holidays at the Nichols Library

Have some leisure around the holidays to fill with a good read? The Nichols Library something for your the most discerning reader (we won't say finicky) reader. Here are some capsule reviews: some true stories and some fiction, some cozy some challenging, some set in the past, some looking to the future, some compelling, some refelective.

A Train in Winter by Moorehead relates the story of 230 women accused of being members of the French Resistance who were sent on one train to Auschwitz in January 1943. Separated from home and loved ones, they overcame divisions of age, profession, and class, as they found solace and strength in their deep affection and camaraderie. *A Train in Winter* "stands as a luminous testament to the indomitable will to survive and the unbreakable bonds of friendship." (Booklist). *Jerusalem, the Biography* by Simon Sebag Montefiore offers a comprehensive history of this city, the shrine of three faiths; a prize of empires, and today's front page news.

Beyond Religion by the Dalai Lama elaborates his vision for an ethical "third way", a system of secular ethics that recognizes our common humanity and so contributes to a global human community based on understanding and mutual respect. Says Kirkus reviews, "This wise, humane book is an incisive statement of His Holiness's thinking on ways to bring peace to a suffering world." *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman takes us on a groundbreaking tour of the mind and explains the two systems that drive the way we think. System 1 is fast, intuitive, and emotional; System 2 is slower and deliberative. Kahneman discusses where we can and cannot trust our intuitions and how we can tap into the benefits of slow thinking, and offers insight into ways to guard against the mental glitches that often get us into trouble

Christopher Hitchens, a bold man of letters and a legendary bon vivant, passed away from cancer this week. His memoir, *Hitch-22* gives you is the story of a life, lived large. Recommended for those with a love of literature and take-no prisoners commentary. *No Higher Honor* by Condoleezza Rice, was one figure to emerge from the Bush administration with reputation intact. *No Higher Honor* has been called "the first serious memoir of the Bush presidency (*Washington Post*)." She tells her story without the score-setting typical of such tomes. While she defends many key decisions, she also acknowledges the mistakes made along the way."

Rin Tin Tin by Susan Orlean's tells how an orphaned puppy became an international icon. "Orlean surfs the tide of time, pushing off in the 1900s and landing in the now, delivering a witty synopsis of nearly a century of Rin Tin Tins and American popular culture. The result is a truly exceptional book (Boston Globe). In *Following Atticus*, Tim Ryan, a middle-aged, overweight, and acrophobic newspaperman vows to pay tribute to a friend who died of cancer by climbing all of New Hampshire's four-thousand-foot peaks. With him is his miniature schnausser Atticus.

For fiction readers, we have *Death in Pemberley*, in which PD James "masterfully re-creates the world of *Pride and Prejudice* with the suspense of a brilliantly crafted crime story." *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Elizabeth and Darcy's married idyll is broken by the arrival of Lydia, Elizabeth's disgraced sister with thestartling news that her cad of a husband Wickham has been murdered. In *House of Silk* by Anthony Horowitz is an authentic recreation of the beloved Baker

Street characters by the creator of the acclaimed Foyle's War. Watson takes up his pen to recount a case he and Holmes shared in 1890 that was "too monstrous, too shocking" to appear in print. . London art dealer Edmund Carstairs asks for the detective's help after receiving threats from a shadowy figure. The trail leads him and the good doctor to a powerful secret society known as the House of Silk.

In *The Art of Fielding* by Caleb Harbach, a young ballplayer experiences a crisis of confidence, impacting the interlocking fates for five people. "Harbach's novel is no more about the game than *Moby Dick* is about whaling. Both books examine determination and striving." (Boston Globe). The Marriage Plot, by Jeffrey Eugenides . Madeleine Hanna, recent Brown University English grad, Madeleine is equally caught up with the cynical postmodern vogue (Derrida, Barthes) and her romantic affection for love James, Austen, and Salinger. She meets brilliant but erratic Leonard Bankhead, whose fits of manic depression jeopardize his suitability as a marriage prospect. Meanwhile, her admirer Mitchell Grammaticus, has opted out of Divinity School to walk the earth as an ersatz pilgrim. "In capturing the heady spirit of youthful intellect on the verge, Eugenides revives the coming-of-age novel for a new generation (*Publishers Weekly*)."

Finally, for futuists, we have Haruki Murakami's *1Q84*. A young woman named Aomame follows a taxi driver's enigmatic suggestion and begins to notice puzzling discrepancies in the world around her. She has entered, she realizes, a parallel existence, which she calls 1Q84 —"Q is for 'question mark.'" Described as "a mystery, a fantasy, a novel of self-discovery, [it is] a dystopia to rival George Orwell's *1984*."