

strong desire of some to know and understand animals, and the price that knowledge and caring may extract, make up this compelling tale.

That Old Cape Magic

by Richard Russo

Perhaps not as epic as some of his other works, Russo still spins a good tale in his latest novel. A wedding brings an older couple to Cape Cod, the scene of many summer vacations the husband, Griffin, experienced as a child. A year later, the couple is back on the Cape for the wedding of their own daughter, but their lives have changed significantly. As Griffin recalls his youth, he begins to see more clearly how his parents influenced his life view and realizes how those attitudes have not served him well.

To Siberia

by Per Petterson

The realization of life's unfulfilled dreams is the theme of this beautifully written novel, which recounts the unnamed narrator's childhood and adolescence in a small Danish town. She dearly loves her brother, Jesper, the only person in her family she cares about. Her rigid, intolerant parents are unresponsive to her need for affection, and then, World War II comes into their lives.

Olive Kitteridge

by Elizabeth Strout

This Pulitzer prize-winning novel, presented as thirteen linked short stories, is not to be missed. The Maine sea breeze blows through this story of ordinary coastal Mainers dealing with life's struggles. Throughout them all, Olive Kitteridge, aging school teacher, plays large and small roles. We find her difficult to bear in some, and quite caring and lovely in others. But always, she is true to herself, her beliefs, and certainly living an authentic life.

Brooklyn

by Colm Toibin

A rich tale of immigration from small town Ireland to big city America in the 1950's points up the vast differences between the two in customs and opportunity. Eilis Lacey, a smart young woman unafraid of hard work, must leave employment-poor Ireland to find a more lucrative existence in NYC. Under the auspices of an Irish priest, Eilis secures employment at a department store and residence in a rooming house for young women. When she is called home, she must make decisions about how her life will continue.



Director's Faves

*Books worth
reading,
Fall 2009*

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The White Tiger

by Aravind Adiga

A parable of the "new India," in which a rapidly growing global powerhouse of middle-class call centers is juxtaposed against crushing class conflict and corruption. The lower class "hero" of our story, Balram, attempts to climb the ladder of success in a unique and frightening manner.

Ms. Hempel Chronicles

by Sarah Shun-Lien Bynum

Eight interwoven stories make up this composite drawing of Ms. Hempel, a middle school teacher working on her own maturity, along with her students. I'm not sure I knew that much about who she was by the end of this slim volume, but I enjoyed accompanying her on her journey as she interacted with her students, tried some odd approaches to education, and visited her mother and younger sister. She brought to mind what Olive Kitteridge might have been like at the beginning of her career and before life took its toll.

Hello Goodbye

by Emily Chenoweth

The book jacket describes this as a literary "*Dirty Dancing*"... well not quite, but it does share some of the coming of age themes and is also set in the singularly isolated world of a resort. A family vacation in an old and regal

hotel in the White Mountains becomes the setting for a reunion of couples; friends who must face up to the impending death of one of the wives. As these 40-*something's* work on dealing with this premature loss, the young daughter of the dying woman also has to acknowledge reality and learn how to confront her grief.

The Slippery Year; a meditation on happily ever after

by Melanie Gideon

This personal account of a woman in a mid-life marriage is honest and unpretentious, while maintaining just the right level of comedy and lightness. The ever-present question—*Is that all there is?*—frames her memoir as she travels through a typical year, dealing with common-place issues—getting dinner on the table every night; facing up to aging; loving/hating her husband; and saying goodbye to a son who departs for sleep-away camp. Gideon's ability to describe everyday anomie makes this compelling reading, no matter one's life experience.

Labor Day

by Joyce Maynard

At the start of Labor Day weekend, thirteen year-old Henry, shopping in a "big box" store, is approached for help by an older man who is obviously injured. Henry's mother, Adele, allows the injured Fred to become part



of their lives. At times Henry enjoys this new experience of having a man about the house, but as he begins to fear for the future of his position in the family, his attitudes change.

A Gate at the Stairs

by Lorrie Moore

A seemingly innocent story of a young childcare worker, a nanny placed in what appears to be a mildly dysfunctional family, becomes much more complicated than at first indicated.

College freshman Tassie Keltjin, a sweet mid-western girl, becomes attached to her young charge, as she begins her own coming of age journey. Faced with the newness of being on her own and absorbed with her new life, she fails to see what is happening to her family back home. Moore's writing, at times *punny* to the extreme is so fluid and flawless that moving through this novel is complete and utter joy. Highly recommended.

The Elephant Keeper

by Christopher Nicholson

In the England of the 1750's two elephants arrive in Bristol, barely able to stand after a long ocean crossing. Their story is interwoven with that of their devoted keeper, Tom. The closeness of man and beast; that