

Beth's Best Books

Five (plus 1) to make you laugh



★ PEST CONTROL

by Bill Fitzhugh

FIC FITZHUGH

When Bob Dillon gets fired from his job in Queens, he seizes the chance to start his own dream business – an environmentally responsible pest control business using specially bred insects to eat roaches and termites. When his marketing flyer comes to the attention of Marcel, a Parisian broker of hit men looking for new talent, a series of hilarious misunderstandings creates a unique, laugh-out-loud thriller that you won't soon forget.

★ SUPREME COURTSHIP

by Christopher Buckley

FIC BUCKLEY

Thwarted repeatedly by Congress in his nominations for Supreme Court, President Donald Vanderdamp decides to propose someone so outrageously popular with everyday America that the Senate will not be able to reject the nomination. So he nominates a tall, beautiful Texan, Judge Pepper Cartwright, who just happens to be the superstar of the reality hit TV show, Courtroom Six. What begins as a slap at the legislative blocks to presidential powers has huge repercussions as Pepper finds herself caught up in a Presidential re-election race, a Constitutional crisis, dramatic changes in her own love life, and a surprising set of Supreme Court colleagues. Very witty, with a large dose of satire.

★ THE UNCOMMON READER

by Alan Bennett

FIC BENNETT

Feeling obligated to borrow a book after her beloved corgis won't stop barking at a small bookmobile parked near Buckingham Palace, the Queen discovers the "common" joy of reading. Assisted in her new hobby and self-education effort by Norman, a palace kitchen helper, the Queen begins to change her viewpoints on long-accepted practices and the expected activities and roles of a monarch. This passion for reading soon frightens her advisors, and eventually leads to far-reaching changes for the country. A very quick and funny read about the power of reading.

★ SWEETNESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIE

by Alan Bradley

MYS BRADLEY

Flavia de Luce, a budding chemist who is eleven going on eighty, lives in the quiet English village of Bishop's Lacey in the huge old family home in 1950, happily concocting potions and conducting important experiments in her private lab.

Flavia is sure that her dictatorial older sisters are the biggest problem in her young life, until the morning Flavia finds a dead stranger in the family cucumber patch. With her boundless curiosity irrevocably piqued but getting no answers from her ex-military father and the family factotum who are tied up with mundane things like bankruptcy and dwindling funds, Flavia decides to solve the crime by herself using scientific deduction. Even the lack of transportation other than her trusty old bicycle Gladys can't stop feisty and fearless Flavia! This is the first book in a delightful and well-plotted mystery series full of unique and fascinating characters, intriguing mysteries, and lots of local color and period detail. Flavia is unforgettable!

★ HEROICS FOR BEGINNERS

by John Moore

SF MOORE

Prince Kevin Timberline has a busy day ahead. He needs to find a secret way in to the deadly Fortress of Doom, retrieve the Ancient Artifact Model Seven from the evil Lord Voltmeter, rescue a beautiful princess, defeat an army of evil and save the kingdom of Desarae – all before dawn. Unfortunately, he has no experience at this sort of thing and has only an old copy of The Handbook of Practical Heroics to help him out. This book is a laugh-out-loud spoof on epic fantasies and fairytales where the author makes fun of traditional heroes and epic quests, but also offers his own hilarious heroic epic.

★ AGENT TO THE STARS

by John Scalzi

SF SCALZI

Thomas Stein is one of Hollywood's hottest agents and is confident he can "sell" anyone or anything. But this time, he might have met his match. This time, he has to represent the Yherajk, an intelligent alien race that has come to make first contact with humans. Not only are interspecies trust and communication an issue, but the Yherajk have a bigger problem in gaining the friendship of Earth – they are extremely ugly and smell like rotting fish. Quite funny, absurd with a dose of satire.



Five (plus 1) books to help you travel

✈ POSTCARDS FROM FRANCE

by Megan McNeill Libby

944.98 LIBBY


Written by a high school junior spending a year abroad in France, this gem of a book chronicles the everyday challenges and moments of enlightenment that marked her stay in a foreign culture. From language difficulties to restaurant dining with dogs to homesickness and high school in a new country, Megan writes about her reactions to her experiences with such charm and humor you will wish you could visit France too.

 **THE LEMON TREE: AN ARAB, A JEW,
AND THE HEART OF THE MIDDLE EAST**

by Sandy Tolan

956.9405 TOLAN

This true story of two families, one Arab and one Jewish, from the town of Ramla, currently in Israel, is a microcosm of individual life in Palestine over the last 60 years. Brought together through family history and a house with a lemon tree, this highly personal story of the regional quest for independence, self-determination and peace is written with objectivity, poignancy and hope. A book to make you think.

 **THE TIME TRAVELER'S
GUIDE TO MEDIEVAL ENGLAND:
A HANDBOOK FOR VISITORS
TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY**

By Ian Mortimer

942.03 MORTIMER

This book is a wonderful trip to the medieval past. Chock full of fascinating peeks into such aspects of everyday life as night wear, where to get the best wine, to what the bathroom facilities were like, Mortimer has crafted an easy-to-read, but deceptively thorough compendium of medieval life. A delight to skim or read cover-to-cover.

 **LAZY B**

by Sandra Day O'Connor and H. Alan Day

B OCONNOR

Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and her brother tell their story of growing up on the Lazy B, a cattle ranch in Arizona. Raised to be tough, independent, hard-working and self-reliant, the authors obviously love the harsh, demanding but beautiful land that they come from. An excellent glimpse into the life of a fascinating woman who became such a force on the American legal scene.

 **PAINTING CHINESE:
A LIFELONG TEACHER GAINS THE
WISDOM OF YOUTH**

by Herbert Kohl

B KOHL

Herbert Kohl, a highly respected educator and award-winning author, ran across an unknown painting studio while walking around San Francisco. Grappling with aging, Kohl signed up for a class on a whim. Imagine how surprised he was on the first day when he discovered the class was in Chinese landscape painting and his fellow classmates were all young Chinese children. Deciding to stay in the class and use it as a chance to try something new and challenging, as well as an opportunity to observe young children, Kohl wrote this book to reflect his thoughts as he progresses in a new skill and learns to adapt to aging with grace. This is a gem of a book for anyone of any age who is looking to try something different.

THE JANISSARY TREE

by Jason Goodwin

MYS GOODWIN

From a historian specializing in the Ottoman Empire comes this exotic, complex mystery set in the declining years of the Empire in the 1830's. Eunuch Yashim Tögalu, a quiet, influential force in the Sultan's court with unrivaled access to the harem and other restricted areas of the palace, investigates a series of murders and jewel thefts amid the troubling signs of a resurgence of the secretive and corrupt Janissary corp. Full of rich and sensual details of life in a mysterious and exotic society, full of history, greed and intrigue, this first book in a wonderful series is full of twists, turns, and mystery. Fascinating and addicting!



Five (plus 1) books to make you look over your shoulder

TSAR

by Ted Bell

FIC BELL

Alex Hawke, a modern James Bond who also happens to be a British Lord, has withdrawn from people and the world into a quiet, secluded, slow-paced hideaway in Bermuda. A former counter-terrorist first-class, he is recovering from the physical and psychological wounds and has withdrawn from the world which he saved from destruction. But he is soon pulled back into his reluctant role of global protector by the ruthless plans of a resurgent and threatening Russia, determined to "reintegrate" former territories and to blackmail the world with its huge oil supplies. Insidious technical inventions, global greed and diabolical genius make this book a nail-biting read which races breathlessly to its conclusion. Shockingly current with an unsettling picture of our near future, this thriller series covers the globe. This book is actually the fifth book in the series that begins with Hawke, but each book can stand alone.

FROST THE FIDDLER

by Janice Weber

FIC WEBER

Leslie Frost is a beautiful, world renowned concert violinist. Her concert appearances and recording sessions all over the world provide an excellent cover for her second profession as deep-cover spy and assassin. Performing in Leipzig during the time of glasnost, Leslie stumbles upon an East German spy ring, obviously up to no good. With breathtaking action, and a good-girl heroine that could take on James Bond with no trouble, this book is a thrilling and intricate ride into the murky world of espionage.

 **POISON STUDY**
by Maria Snyder

SF SNYDER

Forced to make an impossible choice between immediate execution and probably death by slow poisoning, Yelena becomes the food taster for the hated Commander of Ixia. To make sure of her loyalty, she is fed Butterfly Dust by the powerful Chief of Security. Only a daily dose of the antidote can keep her alive. Intrigues, emerging magical powers, shifting loyalties, and changing perspectives force Yelena to make hard choices as she tries to gain control over her fate.

This exciting book blends mystery, fantasy and romance into a real page-turner which will grab the reader's attention right from the first page. This is the first book in a trilogy which also contains Magic Study and Fire Study.

 **THE KILL ARTIST**
by Daniel Silva

FIC SILVA


Gabriel Allon, a reclusive expert in Old Master's restoration and a retired Israeli Mossad assassin, has struggled to build a quiet, mundane life after the tragic death of his wife and young son. But global terrorism knows no national boundaries, and Gabriel is forced to reconcile his past with the present as he is pulled back to work with a beautiful agent-model to prevent ruthless terrorists from wreaking massive destruction and death. This is the first book in a nail-biting series where the scenarios are remarkably similar to current news headlines.

 **BLACK**
by Christopher Whitcomb

FIC WHITCOMB

FBI Special Agent Jeremy Waller has been selected for the elite Hostage Rescue Team. He thinks he has learned all the secrets, but it quickly becomes clear that the dangerous shadows and secrets have multiplied and truth is elusive in the War on Terror. Other players enter the situation – a ruthless billionaire who trades in cutting-edge technology, a young and beautiful businesswoman who has a fabricated past, a powerful woman who heads the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and hopes to be President – all have secrets.

In this electrifying political thriller, author Christopher Whitcomb, himself a decorated FBI agent, provides a thought-provoking look at the world of black ops and its place in the complex fight against terrorism.

 **THE FAITHFUL SPY**
by Alex Berenson

FIC BERENSON

John Wells, America's sole asset inside the terrorist group Al Qaeda, has spent years proving his loyalty to his fellow jihadists. He has given up everything of his life in the United States and has even become a Muslim. His handlers have heard nothing from him in years, and he provided no advance warning the devastating September 11th attack. Intelligence gathered from many sources seems to indicate an imminent catastrophic attack on American soil. In Afghanistan, Wells risks his life to make contact with his old handlers. He is coming home to America, but can he be still be trusted?

This gripping, realistic thriller is written by a New York Times reporter who covered the American occupation in Iraq. It offers a frightening, stark look at the War on Terror and the intelligence agencies trying desperately to prevent more tragedy.



Five (plus one) books to help you look into the past

ELLIS ISLAND

by Fred Mustard Stewart

FIC STEWART

The story of five young immigrants fleeing to America from Russia, Italy, Bohemia and Ireland in the late 1800's, this novel follows the Americanization of the families that came through Ellis Island. Full of the drama, dreams, tragedies and hopes of everyday life, you may find the story of your own family in this character-centered story of a growing America. Well-researched history brought down to the level of individual families is a hallmark of this author. And this book may be his best.

TALLGRASS

by Sandra Dallas

FIC DALLAS

Set in a small town in eastern Colorado during World War II, this quiet but memorable story told by 13-year-old Rennie Stroud chronicles the changes in the lives and characters of the townspeople when a Japanese internment camp is built nearby. Raised to believe her life would always remain predictable and fair, Rennie sees the values and lives of her family and neighbors threatened, when deep-seated fears and ethnic prejudices spread after a young girl is found murdered in the community. Touching and unforgettable.

EMPRESS ORCHID

by Anchee Min

FIC MIN

The Forbidden City in 1852 is a dangerous place to enter for seventeen-year-old Tzu Hsi, in the waning years of the Ch'ing Dynasty. But enter she does, as she is selected to be one of the hundreds of concubines for the Emperor. Forced to gain power in order to survive amid the political and social jealousies that abound in the royal court, Orchid eventually achieves the position of Empress, a position that makes her a target of hatred for many. Painstakingly researched and vividly written, this book will introduce you to a dangerous, but fascinating woman, who overcame her background and taught herself to survive in very difficult circumstances.

THE CONSTANT PRINCESS

by Philippa Gregory

FIC GREGORY

Betrothed at the age of three, Catalina has been groomed since birth to be Queen of England. Raised by her parents Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain, to always place duty and country first, Catalina comes to

England at the age of 15 to marry Arthur, Prince of Wales. Catalina is confident, ambitious and highly intelligent, and is herself a master of intrigue and political expediency. But soon she finds herself mocked and penniless in the Tudor court of Henry VII, a sixteen-year-old widow and pawn caught between two countries. Now she must rely on her own intelligence, skills, and ambition, to survive the intrigues of her parents, her court and even her husband to become Queen Katherine of Aragon.

The author combines extensive research with a clear and captivating writing style to create an intriguing picture of this extraordinary woman.

THE FIRST WAVE

by James R. Benn

MYS BENN

Lt. Billy Boyle, a young Boston beat cop working as a special investigator for his uncle Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, comes ashore in the first wave of the Allied invasion of Algeria during World War II. Hoping to help liberate Algeria from Vichy France and force the retreat of Rommel from North Africa, Billy quickly finds himself caught up in the middle of a nightmarish situation, where loyalties and power shift and change continuously. Caught between French Fascist militia, black market operators, Vichy French troops, Resistance fighters and Allied invasion forces, Billy tries to investigate the murders of several American soldiers, safeguard the shipment of the miracle drug penicillin, and save the life of a beautiful British spy captured by Vichy collaborators. Lots of action and thrills, with memorable characters you will really care about. The first book in this series is [Billy Boyle](#).

THE WHITE

by Deborah Larsen

FIC LARSEN

It started out like any other day for ten-year-old pioneer Mary Jemison who was sent to weed the family's corn field on a hot summer day. But this day became the turning point in her life, as Mary and her family were captured by raiding Shawnee warriors trying to drive the white settlers out of Pennsylvania in the late 1700's. Followed by angry settlers trying to retrieve the captives, only Mary and her brother survived the forced march. Mary was soon sold to two Seneca sisters, who adopted her into their family as a replacement for a brother killed earlier in the war against the settlers. Over time, Mary was assimilated into Seneca life, married twice and raised a family, but always straddled both worlds, never truly white or Indian. This book is a fictionalized biography of Mary's life, based on actual historical interviews that were conducted with her later in life. It is accurate, touching and thought-provoking, and provides a heart-rending look at the lives of individuals caught between two opposing worlds.

Five (plus 1) series with a little extra

ALL MORTAL FLESH

by Julia Spencer-Fleming

MYS SPENCER

Clare Ferguson, a military pilot turned Episcopal priest, knows she is in trouble with her clerical superiors, because of her unorthodox, no-nonsense style of running her parish, her penchant for getting involved in messy problems, and most



especially for her friendship with married Police Chief Russ van Alstyne. After much soul-searching, Clare decides to stay away from Russ and avoid temptation and heartbreak. But Russ's wife, Linda, is found dead in the Van Alstyne home in Miller's Kill, New York, savagely mutilated. An ambitious investigator sent by Internal Affairs to investigate the Miller's Kill Police Department is determined that Russ as the husband is the obvious suspect, followed closely by Clare who may be a jealous lover. Regardless of the risk to her career or the personal pain it causes her, Clare risks her parish, her reputation and her heart to prove Russ innocent.

Perhaps the strongest book so far in this intelligent, thoughtful and fast-paced series, the author uses her characters to pose many thought-provoking questions about religion, justice, love and ethics, while crafting a truly shocking and unexpected ending to this excellent mystery. The series starts with [In the Bleak Midwinter](#).



THE COLD DISH

by Craig Johnson

MYS JOHNSON

Widower Walt Longmire has been Sheriff of Absaroka County, Wyoming for over 24 years after military service in Vietnam. The county is quiet by law enforcement standards, and Walt expects the rest of his tenure to slide by peacefully with and little to look forward to now that his only daughter Cady has taken up law practice in Boston. But then Cody Pritchard, one of four boys given very light sentences for a horrible rape/brutalization of a local handicapped Cheyenne girl, is found dead. It seems like someone is seeking vengeance against the four, and Longmire must fight his own sense of failure to protect the remaining boys from an expert killer bent on executing them. With his best friend Henry Standing Bear, hard-nosed, smart-mouthed female deputy Vic from the East, long-time dispatcher Ruby who runs the office with an iron hand, and the former sheriff Lucien, now one-legged and a feisty senior who has no time or talent for tact, Longmire fights time, the weather and his own disappointment in the law to catch the formidable vigilante out for revenge.



HIS MAJESTY'S DRAGON

by Naomi Novik

SF NOVIK

British Captain Will Laurence, commander of the HMS Reliant, has captured a French frigate with an unexpected, but extremely valuable cargo – an unhatched dragon's egg. Forced out of his promising naval career when chosen by the young hatchling, Laurence joins the Aerial Corps as an officer and the rider of the highly intelligent dragon Temeraire. This alternative history of the Napoleonic Wars blends fantasy and history extraordinarily well, and you quickly come to care about the intriguing characters, including the dragons. A fun, engaging read, this is the first book in the wonderful Temeraire series.



THE ALTO WORE TWEED: A LITURGICAL MYSTERY

by Mark Schweizer

MYS SCHWEIZE

This is the first in a hilarious series of small-town mysteries. Hayden Konig wears many hats. He is the choir director and organist at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church and the police chief of tiny, rural Germaine, North Carolina. He is also a wealthy inventor, a would-be author of hard-boiled mysteries, and an excellent wordsmith with a wicked and punny wit. When a dead body turns up in the Church choir loft shortly before Christmas, it takes all of Konig's many skills to solve the mystery, finish his masterpiece, get the girl and keep his town normal and happy. A warning to readers – be prepared either to laugh uproariously at the author's wordplay.

SHABANU: DAUGHTER OF THE WIND

by Suzanne Fisher Staples

YP FIC STAPLES

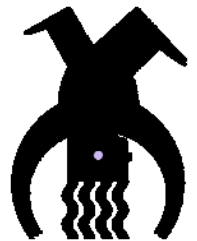
Home is the beautiful but dangerous Cholistan Desert in current-day Pakistan for Shabanu, the second and youngest daughter of a Muslim family with no sons. Life is hard, but living the nomadic life of her tribe, young Shabanu has been allowed unusual freedoms for a young Muslim girl. Secure in the love of her parents, Shabanu grows up happily surrounded by family and clan. But her life changes drastically wealthy and powerful landowner threatens her family's honor and their very lives. A heart-rending look into another way of life, this is a book you will not soon forget.

ARCHANGEL

by Sharon Shinn

SF SHINN

Samarian society was founded by the Harmonics as a perfect society based on science and faith. Multiple cultures lived together in respect for each other and society. Angels guard humans, mystics preserve forbidden knowledge and laws are strictly enforced since it has been decreed Samaria will be destroyed if the peace ever be broken. But cracks have begun to occur in the perfect society. As the danger increases, all hopes are pinned on the crowning of a new Archangel, Gabriel, who must wed a human woman named Rachel to fulfill the prophecy. Independent Rachel has her own ideas about society and rules. A truly original love story by an excellent fantasy writer, this is the first book in Shinn's Samaria series.



Five books to turn your mind upside down

SPIN

by Robert Charles Wilson

SF WILSON

One night when he is 12 years old, Tyler Dupree and his two best friends Jason and Diane Lawton, see the stars disappear, dramatically changing life on earth. While millions of people watch, a flat empty black barrier appears, enveloping the earth. In the following days, it becomes clear there is no longer any moon and the barrier has been put in place by an ancient alien race. Time is also passing faster outside the barrier than inside. More than just mind-boggling science fiction, this book examines catastrophic and global changes through the eyes of three intelligent humans, struggling to understand and cope with phenomena outside the human experience. A Hugo Award winner.

A DISCOVERY OF WITCHES

by Deborah Harkness

SF HARKNESS

Dr. Diana Bishop, a well-respected historian and scholar, is doing research in Oxford's Bodleian Library one day, when an ancient and enchanted manuscript attracts the attention of handsome and mysterious vampire Matthew Clairmont. Diana refuses to allow magic into her own life, even though she is the daughter of very powerful and famous family of witches. But the opening of the manuscript starts a breathtaking series of events that turns the world of humans, demons, vampires and witches upside down. Part history, part love story, part paranormal fantasy, this book is very complex and compelling. The author is a recognized historian, and shows her historical scholarship with her extensive use of history and the lives of famous people. Very, very hard to put down.

THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA

by Phillip Roth

FIC ROTH

What would have happened to America if highly popular aviator Charles A. Lindbergh had defeated Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election? Pulitzer Prize winning author and satirist Philip Roth uses his own New Jersey family to answer this question in a believable look at what might have happened if isolationism and pacifism had been the American policy during the 1940's. Simultaneously fascinating and chilling.

STORM FRONT

by Jim Butcher

SF BUTCHER

Meet Harry Dresden, the best (and only) wizard in Chicago. Highly intelligent and surprisingly soft-hearted in spite of a difficult life, Harry just barely ekes out a living consulting on paranormal investigations and lost items. But wait a minute; magic doesn't really exist does it? Harry gets no respect from police, his neighbors, and most of the world. But when a nasty double murder with chilling overtones of black magic is committed, the Chicago police are forced to ask for Harry's assistance. This should be good for business for Harry... except black magic can kill.

This is the first book in the excellent and fantastical series called the Dresden files. Harry is a wizard with a past, and you will desperately hope, a future. Be sure to read this series in order, as events are cumulative.

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK

by Neil Gaiman

J FIC GAIMAN

Nobody Owens, called Bod for short, could be considered a normal boy, except that he is the sole survivor of a mysterious assassin named Jack. With all his family dead, Bod is hidden in a huge graveyard, raised and guarded by ghosts from many time periods and by Silas, the mysterious guardian who seems to exist between the human and ghostly worlds. As Jack gets ever closer in his constant searching for the boy, Bod grows up in this fantastic, funny world where answers are few and mysteries are many.