

# Summertime Suggestions



## Jo Nesbo. *The Leopard.*

Nesbo, a Norwegian award-winning author, features some stand-alone novels as well as his Harry Hole series. *The Leopard* is 8<sup>th</sup> in this series. Harry is the typical loose cannon of the police force, using unorthodox methods to solve crimes in a brilliant way. Tough, gritty and for those who love Nordic Noir a great series.

## Camilla Lackberg. *Gallows bird.*

Lackberg is one of the most popular crime writers in Sweden right now. We have four of her series at Rideau Lakes. She is particularly good at mixing cozy domestic scenes with icy horror. All her books are set in a coastal village and are heavily atmospheric. It would be a good idea to read the books in sequence since the plot line involves evolution of the characters.

## Henning Mankell. *The troubled man.*

Finale of the Kurt Wallender series. Mankell, for those who love mysteries, was an international sensation long before Steig Larssen. Reviews say this is a first-rate respectful finale to the story of his complex detective.

## Louise Penny. *Bury your dead.*

Latest in the Chief-Inspector Gamache series by our own Canadian international mystery writer. Penny continues to spin out award-winning novels in this intriguing series set in Quebec. Inspector Gamache and his wife in this novel vacation in Quebec City in the midst of wintertime. A murder happens in the town's English-language library. If you haven't read this series, you are in for a real treat.

## John Hart. *Last child.*

Although this is his latest fiction, Hart debuted in the *King of Lies*. He is a wonderful new talent in the literary mystery field and has won the Edgar award already even he has only published three books. His North Carolina setting, elegant writing and suspenseful plot lines make him an upcoming star.

## Alan Bradley. *Red herring without mustard.*

Bradley is a fairly new Canadian writer who specializes in English cosies. His main character Flavia de Luce is a highly intelligent eleven-year-old with a talent for poisons and a nose for mysteries. Bradley's series (this is third in the series) has already a large following. Lots of fun.

## Robert. Rotenberg. *Old City Hall.*

In 2009, Rotenberg debuted with this great legal mystery set in Toronto. He has another book out recently as well. Very dramatic and a good choice for a person who likes Canadian content.

## Tana French. *The guilty place.*

Tana French is another recent Edgar award winner and critics agree she improves with each new book (this is her third). She specializes in writing about the murder squad in Dublin, Ireland. This book looks at the long-ago disappearance of undercover cop Frank MacKay's girlfriend Rosie and the sudden appearance of her old suitcase.

# General fiction

## Geraldine Brooks. *Caleb's crossing.*

Pulitzer prize winning Brooks (People of the Book, Year of the Plague) has a new novel, which tells the story of the first Native American to graduate from Harvard University in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Starred reviews in most newspapers, magazines and literary journals. Critics say she can recreate a long-ago world effortlessly.

## Elizabeth Hay. *Alone in the classroom.*

Hay, author of the popular *Late Nights on Air*, has a new novel, which travels from the Ottawa Valley to Saskatchewan. In 1929, Connie Flood, a young teacher, assists a backward student in reading only to be watched by Parley Burns, the rather sinister school principal. Reviewers call it intricate, spellbinding and seductive. There is probably a waiting list already!

## Ian McEwan. *Solar.*

McEwan is one of the best contemporary authors writing in the English language. Books of his such as *Atonement* have been globally acclaimed. In *Solar*, McEwan writes about Michael Beard, a Nobel-prize winning physicist who has seen better days. After a freak accident occurs, he is forced to re-evaluate both his life and marriage. A stylish comedy, which deals with environmental issues such as global warming...

## Suzanne Desrochers. *Bride of New France.*

This fascinating debut novel has been on Canadian bestsellers lists for weeks. Desrochers creates a marvellous story around the life of Laure who is raised in a French orphanage and then shipped to New France for an arranged marriage. John Barber of the *Globe and Mail* calls this “a fully imagined but deep grounded novel” and an example of “social history at its best”.

## Dianne Warren. *Cool water.*

Winner of the GG award for 2010. Warren’s novel is set in the mythical town of Juliet Saskatchewan in a single day. Critics have compared her writing to that of Carol Shields or Miriam Toew. With her caste of exquisitely drawn characters, Warren explores secrets beneath the surface of this small town located in the sand dunes. For those interested in rural communities, this is a witty, warm-hearted and wonderfully written work.

## Jonathan Franzen. *Freedom.*

The *New York Times* calls this a masterpiece. Franzen specializes in books about families in the American Midwest, showing their flaws and eccentricities with style and grace. He remains one of our best chroniclers of contemporary middle-class life.

## Jane Urquhart. *Sanctuary Line.*

Urquhart, through the eyes of Liz Crane, last of a long line of orchard farmers in rural southern Ontario, tells the story of the rise and decline of her family. Urquhart, as usual, scored enthusiastic reviews for her way of weaving stories and centuries together in beautifully crafted prose.

## Miriam Toews. *Irma Voth*

Toews, the author of *A Complicated Kindness*, delivers another great novel. A reclusive Mennonite girl’s life is transformed when a film crew moves into her Mexican community. She confronts her domineering father as she explores new worlds. Critics have called the book poignant, elegant and continue to praise Toew’s authentic voice and maturity.

## Michael Winter. *Death of Donna Whalen.*

Winter uses an interesting form: documentary fiction. In this highly regarded novel, he employs court transcripts and witness testimonies to outline the murder of Donna Whalen who was stabbed 31 times. The book is based on a real murder that happened in St. John Newfoundland in 1993. On the short list for several awards..

## Joanne Trollope. *Daughters-in-law.*

This is the most recent book by Trollope, a wonderful observer of domestic drama. Rachel, the mother of three sons, finds it difficult to let go of her control over her family. The daughters-in-law find new ways to define their own families. No one does this kind

of book better than Trollope – she captures emotions perfectly and pins them down on the page.

## Non-Fiction

### James Fitzgerald. *What disturbs the blood: a son's quest to redeem the past.*

Nominated for several prestigious awards and winner of the Writers Trust of Canada non-fiction award for 2010.

The National Post calls this biography of a family “a fascinating, multi-layered history of 20<sup>th</sup> century medicine and a passionate inquiry into a family’s tragedies. A banshee of a book.” Fitzgerald delves into the stories of his father and grandfather uncovering themes such as mental illness, racism, public health, and many other secrets that haunted this family of talented physicians.

### Stacey Schiff. *Cleopatra: a life.*

This mesmerizing biography shows a Cleopatra very different from the temptress of lore. She is shown as a brilliant, multilingual ruler who loved power and knew how to exercise it. She is a better politician than a mistress. Stellar.

### Bill Bryson. *At home: a short history of private life.*

Bryson, in this charming book, turns his attention from travel writing to an exploration of how items transform the way we live at home. What a range – from ice to rodents to cookbooks and salt and pepper ... Bryson turns the rooms of his old English parsonage into a riff on the history of domesticity.

### Erik Larsen. *In the garden of beasts: love, terror and an American family in Hitler's Berlin.*

Larsen's new literary non-fiction won't disappoint. His portrait of life in Hitler's Berlin in the 1930s is troubling, richly detailed and full of nuance. He traces the experience of William Dodds, the American ambassador to Germany and his carefree daughter Martha. We already know the ending – Ambassador Dodd observed and disliked Hitler from the beginning. Martha initially was charmed. This book reads like a political thriller.

### Edmund de Waal. *Hare with amber eyes: a family's century of art and loss.*

De Waal's family were wealthy Jewish grain merchants who collected netsuke, ornamental Japanese carvings. In this graceful family memoir, De Waal traces the collection of netsuke through the hands of various people until he becomes the owner of

the art treasures. It has a lot of appeal for people who enjoy art history or just like a good yarn about the turbulence of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Very readable.

## Rebecca Skloot. *Immoral life of Henrietta Lacks.*

Great science writing combined with compelling narrative. Henrietta was a poor African American mother of five who died in Baltimore in 1951 of an aggressive cancer. After her death, her cells were used without family permission to solve some of the more complex biological problems of the next fifty years. Skloot looks at racism, family and faith in this excellent medical mystery.

## Roy McGregor. *Northern light: the enduring mystery of Tom Thomson and the woman who loved him.*

A Canadian murder whodunit, art history book and love story rolled into one. McGregor, a relative by marriage of Thomson's fiancé Winnie, knew her when he was a child. He presents some answers to Thomson's death that may convince the reader. Lots of good reviews and lots of appeal for those who enjoy Canadian stories.

## Margaret Trudeau. *Changing my mind.*

For those of a certain generation, Margaret Trudeau was always very memorable. Married at 22 to the prime minister of Canada she was instantly thrown into a world of protocol, political intrigue and constant surveillance. For a fragile victim of bipolar disorder and a young mother, it was too much. Her mental illness continued to shape the changing narrative of her life after her divorce from Trudeau. A brave and insightful biography.

## Hampton Sides. *Hellhound on his trail.*

Sides, a celebrated non-fiction author, traces the path of James Earl Ray, the assassin of Martin Luther King. A magnificence evocation of the 1960s in all its turbulence...there is also some Canadian content since Ray closeted himself in a rooming house in Toronto before he was captured.

## Deborah Mitford, Duchess of Devonshire. *Wait for me: a memoir.*

A sparkling account of her life by the youngest of the notorious Mitford sisters. If you love British eccentrics, Devo had a front seat from her birth in 1922. In her long life, she has mingled with just about anyone who is famous in England or the United States. The duchess emerges as the most stable and thoughtful of the sisters. Very entertaining...