

Fiction

Gift Books 2008

List compiled by Everett Public Library staff – ask us for more great recommendations!

1. *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett

Uncommon indeed – the title refers to none other than the Queen herself, who rediscovers the joy of reading and its life-changing potential. Bennett offers common and uncommon readers alike a brisk and humorous ride.

2. *Cooperative Village* by Frances Madeson

Madeson's comic tale includes a stolen library card, the Patriot Act, psychotherapy and – due to extenuating circumstances – a dead neighbor being pushed around on a luggage cart. Life and death, freedom and responsibility, ritual and the unorthodox are all handled with deft humor and narrative flair.

3. *The Black Tower* by Louis Bayard

Bayard's suspenseful historical adventure is set in 1818 when real-life former convict and current detective Eugene Vidocq and medical student Hector Carpentier find themselves on the trail of Marie Antoinette's lost son – who was said to have died in the Black Tower in 1795.

4. *Anathem* by Neal Stephenson

On an alternate world where society is divided into scientific monasteries and the “saecular” world of reproduction, business, and other worldly concerns, the “maths” are surprised to be called upon to save their shared planet. Local epic author Stephenson returns to his SF roots in this scientific and philosophical smorgasbord.

5. *My Mistress's Sparrow is Dead: Great Love Stories from Chekhov to Munro* edited by Jeffrey Eugenides

This anthology looks at love from every possible angle – desire, commitment, obsession, recklessness, repetitiveness, loss, and grief. A stellar collection which presents the work of 26 master storytellers from the past 120 years.

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6. *The Book of Getting Even* by Benjamin Taylor

A young man estranged from his father goes off to college and finds a new home in the heart of another family. Taylor captures the intimacies, antagonisms, and secrets of these entangled lives with bristling intelligence and vitality in this novel vividly set in the 1970s.

7. *Night Train to Lisbon* by Pascal Mercier

A chance encounter with a woman – and another with a book – propels staid philologist Raimund Gregorius to Lisbon in search of a fascinating, little-known writer who had a profound affect on everyone who knew him. Salazar's dictatorship provides the backdrop for Mercier's exploration of literature, unattainable love, familial devotion, friendship, heretical speeches and soul-searching intelligence. For the literature lover on your list.

Great gift ideas from the backlist

1. *Towers of Trebizond* by Rose Macaulay

This treasure from the backlist features three Brits and their camel traveling through spy-ridden Turkey during the middle of the last century. Armchair travelers and readers of all types will relish Macaulay's wit and keen observations on travel, love, religion and women's rights.

2. *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* by Giorgio Bassani

An eloquent and nuanced look at the lives and loves of youth in the Jewish section of Ferrara, Italy during World War II. This neglected classic rewards the reader with rich language and characterization.

3. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Death narrates this powerful 2006 novel about a girl and her foster parents who resist the extremes of the Nazi party and end up harboring a Jewish man, who comes to seem like family. The characters and the story are equally well developed, and this very personal look at the lives of everyday Germans who quietly resist the practices of the party is striking and memorable.