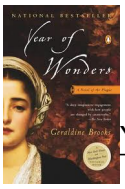
For the Love of Reading

Year of Wonders and Caleb's Crossing



Year of Wonders is a book about the plague, but it is also so much more than that. Anna lives in a small village in England in 1666. She has two small children and a hard working husband. Despite her struggles with her relationship with her father, and a new minister, things are generally going well for Anna. Unfortunately the true history of the village, as discovered by Brooks, creates a tragic backdrop for Anna's fictional life. First, Anna's husband dies in a mining accident, and to help ends meet, Anna takes in a boarder from London. Shortly after this, her boarder suddenly dies, and people in her village begin falling fatally sick. The death of Anna's husband is only the beginning of the upheaval that Anna is to survive. Near the end of the book, everything that she has known was turned up on its head.

Geraldine Brooks came upon a sign at the location of the village and did quite a bit of research to create fictional characters and events. Though all the action takes place in the small quarantined village, the language is lush and the characters vivid.
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For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews American History Britain Caleb's crossing Fiction Historical Year of wonders : a novel of the plague
Posted by Sarah B. on Dec 27, 2011 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

China in Ten Words

Although I've spent some time in Asia, I never visited China, so when I came across this personal narrative that combines essays on life in modern China with growing up during the Cultural Revolution, I couldn't resist. Through the focus of ten simple words, contemporary novelist Yu Hua presents a vivid picture of how Chinese life has changed in many ways, yet in others remained the same for over fifty years. With humor and an incisive take on his own culture, Hua shows how conformity vies with individuality in his country and how conformity often wins.

The chapter titled "Leader" focuses on the era of Mao Zedong. Although Yu was only a boy when Mao was Chairman, Yu entered the spirit of things by writing big-character posters. These were signs that were put up in all public place: movie theaters, schools, stores, and outside people's houses. In these anonymous signs, people criticized their neighbors for being landlords

or for not following the precepts of the little red book. Yu Hua himself wrote many about his teachers and parents. In fact, he traces his love of writing from this childhood activity. **Read more »**

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Posted by Dory L. on Dec 26, 2011 Dory L.'s blog Add new comment

Mindy Kaling and Bill Clinton pick favorites on Today Show

Mindy Kaling, new author of Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me, and Bill Clinton, recent author of Back To Work offer their very different, but intriguing holiday and year end book lists. I've included their top 5 lists below with links to the catalog, but click on over to the video which is interesting at least for the brief discussion on the importance of books and reading. Happy Holiday reading!

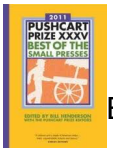
Mindy's top list:

1. 11/22/63 by Stephen King
2. Bossypants by Tina Fey
3. Lady Gaga X Terry Richardson by Lady Gaga and Terry Richardson **Read more »**

For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews

Posted by Sarah B. on Dec 23, 2011 Sarah B.'s blog Add new comment

Pushcart Prize XXXV, Best of the Small Presses



Enjoy discovering new authors? Or finding new work by favorite ones? Or just checking out what kind of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction shorts the vibrant American small press movement is publishing? This anthology, edited by Bill Henderson, manages to seek out the best new work in American literature year after year.

It opens with a short story by Anthony Doerr titled "The River Nemunas." It's about a 15-year-old with no parents and a poodle named *Mishap*. Because he has no relatives in the U.S., the boy is sent to live in his grandfather's homeland of Lithuania. For the first time, the teenager sees a place that in the past meant no more to him than a pink spot on the world map. It's a lovely story about an orphan finding a new home after a tragedy. Another interesting story is the funny "Frost Mountain Picnic Massacre" by Seth Fried; it depicts a Revolutionary War Massacre reenactment that turns out badly.

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For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews Poetry Pushcart prize XXXV, 2011 : best of the small presses Short Stories

Posted by Dory L. on Dec 12, 2011 Dory L.'s blog Add new comment

Next to Love

Babe Huggins is one of those young women (my mother was one also) both lucky and unlucky enough to come of age at the start of World War II. She lives in a small New England town and because the men have left to fight overseas, she scores a department store job, and then later, interesting work at Western Union. She loves being the pulse of news in the town, but a big negative is that she is the first to discover which family has lost a young son or a new spouse.

Next to Love gives a vivid portrait of the war at home in America during WW II as lived by three friends who have known each other since first grade. Both Babe and Millie come from poor families on the wrong side of Sixth Street, whereas Grace's family lives in one of the town's mansions.

The novel chronicles the marriages of each of the three women, and shows how it either destroys or strengthens those unions. At the start of the war, there's one giddy summer when the number or marriages skyrockets--a combination of the men responding to the knowledge of their own mortality and the sheer lust for life-- seize this moment because no one knows how long it will last.
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For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews Fiction Historical Next to love : a novel Romance World War II
Posted by Dory L. on Dec 7, 2011 Dory L.'s blog Add new comment