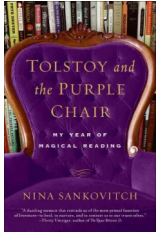


Tolstoy and the Purple Chair: My Year of Magical Reading

A Cornucopia of Books



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If you look back to those long summer afternoons of reading during your childhood with longing, this book is for you. Three years after losing her beautiful and talented older sister, Anne-Marie, to cancer, Nina Sankovitch decided to do something she had long dreamed of doing, making books central to her life again. Of course as the mother of three teens and one preteen - all boys - she didn't have much free time. But from Oct. 28, 2008 to the same date in 2009 Nina read and read and read some more.

In the intervening years after her sister's death, Nina had kept fiendishly busy, driving, cooking, cleaning, heading committees, and organizing literary projects--all the myriad duties of raising a family and being involved in her Connecticut community. But each day she felt guilty to be alive because her sister had died. This lovely book is both a tribute to a sister, and a memoir of their relationship. It's also a narrative about how concentrating on reading finally healed Nina, so that she was eager to go forward again.

Nina resurrected (reupholstered) the big purple chair that one of their cats had made its own by spraying on it. Here in this regal chair for two, three, even four hours a day, Nina both lost and found herself through books.

Besides telling Anne-Marie's story, *Tolstoy and the Purple Chair* also relates the story of her father, Anatole, who lost three aunts and uncles in a shooting during WW II. All were shot in his family's kitchen in Poland while their terrified mother lay upstairs in her sick bed. Anatole also suffered from TB after WW II and spent over two years in a sanatorium in the mountains recovering after the war. Nina compares her year of reading to those years of rest and recuperation that her father experienced there.

Sundays, she set aside for mysteries, but otherwise Nina tackled some hard books, many in translation: from Balzac to Nu Nu Yi to Chimanda Ngozi Adichie, as well as books by Chris Cleave, Anne Tyler, and Junot Diaz. She also found herself discussing books with friends, acquaintances and ever strangers (on her website) because talking about books allowed her to speak about everything: death, family, fidelity, war, travels, etc.

For anyone at a loss for what to read next, Nina included a list of the 365 special books that grounded her in the world again.

Another book that describes the pleasures of a year's reading is *So Many Books, So Little Time* by Sara Nelson.

For a completely different take on a year's reading challenge, try A. J. Jacobs' *The Year of Reading Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

Posted by Dory L. on February 14, 2013

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