
Notable Books 2016

RUSQ Notable Books Council

RUSA Notable Books Council contributing members are Liz Kirchhoff, chair, Barrington Area Library; Kristen Allen-Vogel, Dayton Metro Library; Rochelle Ballard, Princeton University; Victoria Caplinger, NovelList; Craig Clark; Carol Gladstein, Multnomah County Library; Vicki Gregory, University of South Florida School of Information; Marlene Harris, Reading Reality LLC; Stacey Hayman, Rocky River Public Library; Sarah Jaffa, Kitsap Regional Library; Elizabeth Joseph, Ferguson Library; Mary Zunt, Cleveland Public Library.

The Notable Books Council, first established in 1944, has announced the 2016 selections of the Notable Books List, an annual best-of list comprising twenty six titles written for adult readers and published in the United States, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. The list was announced today during the American Library Association's Midwinter Meeting in Boston.

FICTION

In the Country: Stories by Mia Alvar. Knopf (ISBN: 978-0-385-35281-9). Exploring the Filipino experience spanning decades and continents, these fully rendered tales express wonder and sadness leavened with humor.

The Sellout: A Novel by Paul Beatty. Farrar (ISBN: 978-0-374-26050-7). Poking the underbellies of many sacred cows, this biting social satire examines race, culture, and politics in modern America.

Did You Ever Have a Family: A Novel by Bill Clegg. Simon & Schuster (ISBN: 978-1-4767-9817-2). The aftermath of a tragedy and its rippling effects in a small Connecticut town.

Delicious Foods: A Novel by James Hannaham. Little, Brown (ISBN: 978-0-316-28494-3). Themes of race, addiction, wage slavery, and corporate greed coalesce in this startling, darkly comic coming of age odyssey.

Black River: A Novel by S. M. Hulse. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (ISBN: 978-0-544-30987-6). This modern literary Western explores a man's redemptive journey and the possibility (and cost) of forgiveness.

Fortune Smiles: Stories by Adam Johnson. Random House (ISBN: 978-0-8129-9747-7). Humanity: quirky, disturbing, endearing, striving, resigned, and fascinating.

The Prophets of Eternal Fjord: A Novel by Kim Leine. Liveright Publishing (ISBN: 978-0-87140-671-2). An epic and evocative tale of colonialism in Greenland; translated from the Danish.

The Tsar of Love and Techno: Stories by Anthony Marra. Random House (ISBN: 978-0-7704-3643-8). Beauty and humanity are found in the darkest and grimmest of places in these interconnected pieces.

The Sympathizer: A Novel by Viet Thanh Nguyen. Grove Press (ISBN: 978-0-8021-2345-9). A half-French, half-Vietnamese man serves as a double agent after the war, and struggles with the contradictions of his identity and loyalties.

This Is the Life: A Novel by Alex Shearer. Washington Square Press (ISBN: 978-1-4767-6440-5). Spare prose mixes with heart-wrenching humor in this gem of a story about two brothers coping with terminal illness.

The Book of Aron: A Novel by Jim Shepard. Knopf (ISBN: 978-1-101-87431-8). The perspective of a boy whose only goal is to live another day gives a sharp edge to the mind-numbing tragedies of the Warsaw Ghetto.

A Little Life: A Novel by Hanya Yanagihara. Random House (ISBN: 978-0-385-53925-8). A visceral, provocative story of four New York City lives marred by ambition, abuse, and addiction.

NONFICTION

The Interstellar Age: Inside the Forty-Year Voyager Mission by Jim Bell. Penguin (ISBN: 978-0-525-95432-3). An enthusiastic account of our reach for intergalactic space—and the people who made it possible.

Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America by Ali Berman. Farrar (ISBN: 978-0-374-15827-9). A sobering and impassioned popular history of the fight for universal suffrage in the United States.

The End of Plenty: The Race to Feed a Crowded World by Joel K. Bourne Jr. Norton (ISBN: 978-0-393-07953-1). An agricultural revolution supported our booming population in the twentieth century, but we'll need another one to sustain us in the years to come.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Random House (ISBN: 978-0-8129-9354-7). Framed as a letter to the author's teenage son, this chronicle of race in America works as memoir, meditation, and call to action.

The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle by Lillian Faderman. Simon & Schuster (ISBN: 978-1-4516-9411-6). An authoritative, affecting account of the effort to establish and solidify legal rights and cultural acceptance in the United States.

Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter, Mary Shelley by Charlotte Gordon. Random House (ISBN: 978-1-4000-6842-5). From *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to *Frankenstein*, this dual biography provides fresh insight about these groundbreaking authors.

Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania by Erik Larson. Random House (ISBN: 978-0-307-40886-0). A race to the finish, even though we know it won't end well.

The Wright Brothers by David McCullough. Simon & Schuster (ISBN: 978-1-4767-2874-2). A strong work ethic and keen observation fueled the quest to conquer manned flight.

The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness by Sy Montgomery. Simon & Schuster (ISBN: 978-1-4516-9771-1). A charming, revelatory journey into the world of cephalopods.

M Train by Patti Smith. Knopf (ISBN: 978-1-101-87510-0). Part memoir, part travelogue, and ultimately an elegy to her beloved husband, written by an iconic American artist.

Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War by Susan Southard. Penguin Random House (ISBN: 978-0-670-02562-6). Bearing witness to hibakusha, those left behind.

Stalin's Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva by Rosemary Sullivan. HarperCollins (ISBN: 978-0-06-220610-7). A portrait of a woman unable to escape the terrible shadow of her father.

POETRY

Bastards of the Reagan Era by Reginald Dwayne Betts. Four Way Books (ISBN: 978-1-935536-65-9). Drugs, violence, and incarceration during a period of fear and chaos told in a brutal and haunting poetic voice.

Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings: Poems by Joy Harjo. Norton (ISBN: 978-0-393-24850-0). Folklore, history, personal journeys, and modern times are entwined in this absorbing work by a Native American poet.