This list has been compiled for use by the general reader and by librarians who work with adult readers. The titles were selected for their significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge or for the pleasure they can provide to adult readers. Criteria include wide general appeal and literary merit.

Council members are chosen for their experience in the critical evaluation of adult books and in service to adult readers. The Notable Books Council of 1976 included: Jerome K. Corrigan, Prince George's County Memorial Library (Oxon Hill, Md.); Ray Ann Cassell, Bethlehem Public Library (Delmar, N.Y.); Robert Cayton, Marietta College Library (Marietta, Ohio); Robert Donahugh, The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County (Youngstown, Ohio); Elizabeth Egan, Helen M. Plum Memorial Library (Lombard, Ill.); Lyn Hart, Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, Md.); Jane K. Hirsch, Montgomery County Public Library (Rockville, Md.); Jean Hoagland, Cleveland Public Library (Cleveland, Ohio); Martha Reynolds, Frederick County Public Libraries (Frederick, Md.); Ross Stephen, William Rainey Harper College Library (Palatine, Ill.); Dorothy Snowden, consultant, Booklist.

The Notable Books Council gratefully acknowledges the help of the Council's participating libraries.

Symbols adapted from
The Book of Signs by Rudolf Koch
(Dover Pictorial Archive Series) published by
Dover Publications, Inc.


Borges, Elisabeth Mann. The Drama of the Oceans. Abrams. Beautifully illustrated study of nature’s most majestic and mysterious realm, now on the brink of cataclysm.


Caudill, Harry M. The Watches of the Night. Atlantic-Little. Thirty years after Night Comes to the Cumberlands, Caudill returns to find that federal programs have turned the mountain people into welfare clients and failed to stop the destruction of the land.


Davies, Robertson. World of Wonders. Viking. A master illusionist recounts his rise to fame and in so doing gives the final answer to “who killed Boy Staunton?” The third novel in the illustrious trilogy that began with The Fifth Business.


Fallaci, Oriana. Interview With History. Liveright. Through 14 interviews a talented journalist reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the powerful.

Fineberg, Jack. Human Intelligence. Putnam. Compendium of recent research, with special attention to the shortcomings of traditional measurement.

Fuentes, Carlos. Terra Nostra. Farrar. A fictional fusion of history and fantasy in graceful translation. This exotic, erotic epic is as complex and breathtaking as the Spanish culture at its core.

García Márquez, Gabriel. The Autumn of the Patriarch. Harper. An extravgant account of the last days of a mythical dictator who ruled 200 years, sired 5,000 children, and died in squalor.


Glasser, Ronald J. The Body Is the Hero. Random. A readable explanation of the ways in which the body’s defense mechanisms can organize either to protect or to work against our well-being.


Green, Martin Burgess. Children of the Sun: A Narrative of Decadence in England after 1918. Basic Books. An examination of the generation which refused to follow its forebears’ patterns of living and so created a brilliant new era in British life and art.


Haley, Alex. Roots. Doubleday. Epic story of Haley’s heritage, traced back over seven generations to a small village in West Africa.

Hall, Edward T. Beyond Culture. Anchor/Doubleday. Demonstrates the dangers of applying one’s own process of thought to civilizations with other customs and languages.

Harris, Richard. Freedom Spent. Little. Three case studies which show that even in America the legal and judicial systems will protect individual rights only if citizens remain determined and vigilant.


One family's decision to keep a dying grandfather at home results in this unflinchingly honest photographic essay.

Three British victories, over a period of 500 years, are thoroughly examined in this original and brilliant work.

A young American woman recounts memories and myths from her Chinese heritage in an effort to reconcile past and present cultures.

Keegan, John. The Face of Battle. Viking. Three British victories, over a period of 500 years, are thoroughly examined in this original and brilliant work.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior: Memories of a Girlhood among Ghosts. Knopf. A young American woman recounts memories and myths from her Chinese heritage in an effort to reconcile past and present cultures.


Price, Richard. Bloodbrothers. Houghton. The summer of choice for an eighteen-year-old Italian-American is the focus of a vivid novel that embellishes the familiar family theme with dramatic intensity.


Toland, John. Adolf Hitler. Doubleday. Drawn from more than 250 interviews and available facts, including some previously unpublished. A basic work.

Trevor, William. Angels at the Ritz and Other Stories. Viking. Incidents and individuals spotlighted and explored with grace, accuracy, and humanity.

Tyler, Anne. Searching for Caleb. Knopf. A beautifully crafted novel in which Grandfather Peck and his grandson's wife break the traditions of four stultifying generations.


Warner, William W. Beautiful Swimmers: Watermen, Crabs and the Chesapeake Bay. Atlantic-Little. A vivid and affectionately wrought description of the Chesapeake Bay area.


Yates, Richard. The Easter Parade: A Novel. Delacorte/Lawrence. Tragic tale of two sisters who spend a lifetime seeking the love and security they were denied in childhood.

Yglesias, Helen. Family Feeling. Dial. A strong-willed woman struggles through the tangles of Jewish family relationships in a superbly written novel.