



Notable Books

1980

Compiled by the
NOTABLE BOOKS COUNCIL
REFERENCE AND ADULT
SERVICES DIVISION
AMERICAN LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

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 1980 included: Jane Cumming Selvar, Chair, Bronxville Public Library (Bronxville, N.Y.); John Alfred Avant, Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, N.Y.); Janet Fletcher, *Library Journal* (New York, N.Y.); James Gault, University of California (Berkeley, Calif.); Jeanne Gelinis, Hennepin County Library (Edina, Minn.); Douglas Hindmarsh, Utah State Library Commission (Salt Lake City, Utah); Jean Jacocks, Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, Md.); Jewell Smith, Springfield-Greene County Library (Springfield, Mo.); Suzanne Sutton, Bloomfield Township Public Library (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.); Frances de Usabel, Wisconsin Reference and Loan Library (Madison, Wis.); Wendell Wray, University of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, Pa.); Bill Ott, consultant, *Booklist*.

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American Folk Painters of Three Centuries. Edited by Jean Lipman and Tom Armstrong. Hudson Hills Pr. Vivid color reproductions of the masterpieces of thirty-seven primitive artists and essays on their lives and work illustrate the achievements and creativity of the American folk tradition.

Arnold, Eve. *In China*. Knopf. The rich complexity of this enormous land is illuminated in magnificent color photographs of landscape and people. Picture journalism at its best.

Atwood, Margaret. *Life before Man*. Simon & Schuster. Fantasies of prehistoric times offer the only solace from the turmoil and dissatisfaction of a modern marriage. A novel.

Bogan, Louise. *Journey around My Room: The Autobiography of Louise Bogan*. A mosaic by Ruth Limmer. Viking. Passages from her private papers and public writings disclose the life and craft of the late Louise Bogan, a leading poet of our age.

Calvino, Italo, comp. *Italian Folktales*. Translated by George Martin. Helen and Kurt Wolff/Harcourt. A treasury that captures the earthy, pragmatic, indomitable spirit of a rich body of folk literature.

Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. Harper. The changing relationships and perceptions among the four children of a Hindi family evoke the growing tension and violence in repartition India. A novel.

Drabble, Margaret. *The Middle Ground*. Knopf. A successful woman journalist caught up in the complexities of her personal life struggles to define her future.

Flaubert, Gustave. *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830-1857*. Selected, edited, and translated by Francis Steegmuller. Belknap Pr./Harvard Univ. Pr. The spontaneity of personal letters reveals the development and range of Flaubert's art and passions from early boyhood through the writing of and public reaction to *Madame Bovary*.

Gibson, Margaret. *The Butterfly Ward*. Vanguard. In these short stories tortured souls flutter between transient phases of insanity and normality.

Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History*. Norton. The excitement and challenge of "doing" science captured in disarming, literate essays that entertain and instruct by focusing on the curiosities and vagaries of evolutionary theory.

Kaplan, Justin. *Walt Whitman: A Life*. Simon & Schuster. The Good Gray Poet comes alive in all his majesty and frailty, triumphs and failures, in this gripping biography by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

Keneally, Thomas. *Confederates*. Harper. A novel about the Civil War in Virginia in 1862, when the South seemed to be winning, that follows the lives of fictional and historical characters in gripping, scarring scenes of battle.

Kiely, Benedict. *The State of Ireland: A Novella and Seventeen Stories*. Godine. A gifted storyteller captures the piety and irreverence, wit and wickedness of his compatriots in this uniquely unparochial collection.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China Men*. Knopf. Voices of Chinese emigrants echo in a dreamlike blend of oral tradition, memoir, and history of their exile in the New World.

Kramer, Jane. *Unsettling Europe*. Random. Telling profiles of four groups of migrant workers typical of millions who fled their impoverished homelands. This flight, a contemporary phenomenon, has altered the complexion of industrialized Europe and resulted in mutually painful cultural shock.

Lanes, Selma G. *The Art of Maurice Sendak*. Abrams. A delightfully illustrated study of how a leading artist has responded to the challenge of creating books for today's children.

Lash, Joseph P. *Helen and Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy*. Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence. This biography plunges you into Keller's sensibility—radically intelligent, cut off from sight and sound. It gives a new view of a powerful interlocking relationship.

Manchester, William. *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War*. Little. A noted author revisits the scenes of battle he and fellow WWII Marines endured almost four decades earlier, recalling the savagery and waste of war with conflicting emotions of pride and revulsion.

Massie, Robert K. *Peter the Great: His Life and World*. Knopf. A man of curiosity and ingenuity, Peter the Great forced a nation out of medievalism, built a navy when he had no ships and a powerful army from illiterate peasants, created a city from a swamp, and, in spite of his cruelties and absurdities, changed the course of Russian history.

Meredith, William. *The Cheer*. Knopf. The cheer that can give heart against an evil world is "hidden in right words" in these cleanly crafted poems.

Morris, Wright. *Plains Song: For Female Voices*. Harper. Tough independence and ability to survive isolation, loneliness, and change are demonstrated in the fictional lives of three generations of women who attempt to fulfill their personal dreams on the plains of Nebraska.

Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective. Edited by William Rubin. Museum of Modern Art. This magnificent book provides a permanent record of the life work of a master artist.

Percy, Walker. *The Second Coming*. Farrar. Assaulted by memories, prosperous Will Barrett flees the banality of his materialistic existence with a mentally unbalanced but essentially wise young girl. A novel.

Pym, Barbara. *A Glass of Blessings*. Dutton. Everything is understated in this resonant comic novel of a young wife whose social existence centers on the Church of England.

Silk, Leonard, and Mark Silk. *The American Establishment*. Basic. As lively as it is thoughtful, this study traces the evolution of a "third force" in the American polity, and attempts to discover how well such institutions as Harvard, *The New York Times*, and the Ford Foundation have observed the disinterested pursuit of the public good.

Steel, Ronald. *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*. Atlantic Monthly Pr./Little. A brilliant portrayal of a distinguished American journalist who analyzed rather than sought power yet wielded tremendous influence in this century.

Strand, Mark. *Selected Poems*. Atheneum. Absence, emptiness, and nothingness take on a vibrant fullness of meaning as the poet encounters the sharp reality of everyday things and being.

Strouse, Jean. *Alice James: A Biography*. Houghton. The younger sister of William and Henry James, Alice James lived the life of an invalid, constrained by nineteenth-century and family conventions, but remarkable for her intelligence and tenacity.

Toole, John Kennedy. *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Louisiana State Univ. Pr. This farcical, satiric novel follows an antic misfit's quest for transcendence in New Orleans.

Troyat, Henri. *Catherine the Great*. Translated by John Pinkham. Dutton. Enthralling biography of the passionately ambitious German-born ruler of Russia during the turbulent 1700s.

Vendler, Helen. *Part of Nature, Part of Us: Modern American Poets*. Harvard Univ. Pr. These critical essays explore every dimension a poem could be thought to take and open the techniques of poetry to all readers.

Watt, Ian. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. Univ. of California Pr. A distinguished biography closely analyzing the sources, historical context, and philosophical foundations of Conrad's fiction through *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*.

Welty, Eudora. *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*. Harcourt. In forty-one stories—comic, sensual, lyrical—Welty shows how ordinary lives can blaze into myth.

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