

## *Favorite Books V*

*Compiled from suggestions by Wisconsin legislators & legislative employees, May 2006*

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/tapthepower.htm>

The following titles and book reviews were gathered as an activity for National Library Week 2006. Book reviews were written by legislators and legislative staff and were not altered except to paraphrase for length or to correct typographical errors. Summaries from commercial book sites were added for titles submitted without reviews. Technical malfunctions during this library week activity may have prevented receipt of some titles and reviews; such omissions are unintentional.

### Fiction

***Broken for You.* Stephanie Kallos, Grove Press, 2004.** A debut novel of infinite charm and tremendous heart that explores the risks and rewards of human connection, and the hidden strength behind things that only seem fragile. When we meet septuagenarian Margaret Hughes, she is living alone in a mansion in Seattle with only a massive collection of valuable antiques for company. Enter Wanda Schultz, a young woman with a broken heart who has come west to search for her wayward boyfriend. Both women are guarding dark secrets and have spent many years building up protective armor against the outside world. Funny, heartbreaking, and alive with a potpourri of eccentric and irresistible characters.

***McTeague.* Frank Norris, Modern Library, 1996.** A semi-guilty pleasure. American novelist Frank Norris's naturalistic study of the "you gotta read it to believe it" rise and decline of McTeague, an unlicensed and woefully simple San Francisco dentist, and his miserly tormented wife Trina. The final scene in Death Valley is, alone, worth the price of the \$3.50 Signet version! And there's a lottery ticket as a major part of the plot! It's got everything a reader could ask for. A major work of American naturalism (a literary movement, made famous by Emile Zola, that analyzes reality in terms of natural forces, such as heredity, environment, and physical drives). Lots of natural forces at work! Impact on me: ruined my desire to become an unlicensed dentist or to marry a tormented miserly wife.

***The Memory of Running.* Ron McLarty, Viking, 2004.** This is the story of Smithy Ide, an overweight, friendless, chain-smoking, drunk. A loser by his own admission. When his beloved parents are killed in a car crash and Smithy learns that his emotionally troubled, long-lost sister, Bethany, has turned up in a morgue in Los Angeles, he rolls down the driveway of his parents' house on his old Raleigh bicycle into an epic journey that will take him clear across the country. Very entertaining.

***Seven Arrows.* Hyemeyohsts Storm, Harper & Row, 1972.** This book is full of Native American stories – the type that would be told around the fire on long winter nights.

***The Unbearable Lightness of Being.* Milan Kundera, Harper & Row, 1984.** "Tomas is a doctor living in Prague during the tumultuous time of the Prague Spring. While the Russians are taking over Czechoslovakia, he is dealing with his own thoughts on love and sex. He meets Tereza, and attempts to keep love and sex separate. Tereza must also learn how to cope with Tomas' unfaithfulness with his mistress, Sabina."—What Do I Read Next? (Thomson-Gale database)

### Biography

***Colored People: A Memoir.* Henry Louis Gates Jr., Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1994.** This book gives a wonderful overview of Black Appalachians of the pre-civil rights era.

***Flags of Our Fathers.* James Bradley, Delacorte Press, 2001.** This is the story of the six flag raisers on Iwo Jima during World War II. It had an impact on me to read about six young men, from all across America, brought together to defend freedom. These men were thrust into the international spotlight as a result of the Pulitzer Prize winning photograph of the flag raising by Joe Rosenthal. The book follows the lives of the men both before and after the flag raising, including the life of the author's father, John Bradley, who incidentally is from Wisconsin. (Library copy: 920/B72)

***John.* Cynthia Lennon, Crown Publishers, 2005.** A must-read for any Beatles fan, this is the biography of John Lennon as told by his first wife Cynthia. They were high school sweethearts in Liverpool, and she was with him through his Hamburg days, the madness of Beatlemania, and his early avant garde period. Cynthia details John's relationship with his caustic Aunt Mimi, her own awkward encounters with Yoko Ono before and after her divorce, and John's longing to be a better father to both his sons shortly before his murder. It is an entertaining, fast read that fills in some of the gaps in the prolific coverage of the lads from Liverpool.

***Master of the Senate [Lyndon B. Johnson].* Robert Caro, Knopf, 1982.** A wonderful book that highlights the political genius and ethical challenges of one of the great Democrats of the 20th Century. A must read to understand the father of modern legislative politics on the national and now state level.

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## *Favorite Books V* Continued

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### Nonfiction

*Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life.* **Anne Lamott, Audio Partners and Pantheon Books, 1994.** This book is intended to be for writers, but it is really about overcoming procrastination. I listened to the book as read by the author, and she is a wonderful reader. She has an irreverent way of hitting at the truth; a wonderful sense of humor.

*Conspiracy of Fools: A True Story.* **Kurt Eichenwald, Broadway Books, 2005.** Eichenwald spins a true story in the exciting manner of great fiction writing. Like his earlier book, *The Informant*, this current event has been played out on the TV news. However, you never heard the Enron tale told like this.

*Diplomacy.* **Henry Kissinger, Simon & Schuster, 1994.** “Moving from a sweeping overview of history to blow-by-blow accounts of his negotiations with world leaders, Henry Kissinger describes how the art of diplomacy has created the world in which we live, and how America’s approach to foreign affairs has always differed vastly from that of other nations. Brilliant, controversial, and profoundly incisive, *Diplomacy* stands as the culmination of a lifetime of diplomatic service and scholarship. It is vital reading for anyone concerned with the forces that have shaped our world today and will impact upon it tomorrow.”—Amazon.com

*Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation.* **Joseph Ellis, Random House, 2000.** Very insightful to how our founding fathers functioned with each other and how they made important decisions.

*The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.* **Tim Gallagher, Houghton Mifflin, 2005.** You don’t need to be an avid birder to enjoy this book which documents the secret search and eventual success in finding living ivory-bills in February 2004. It is a real-time chronicle of how species suffer when their habitat is virtually wiped out. In this case, however, a few plucky birds managed to find, hide, and live in suitable old growth forest habitat. Let’s hope that we do a better job of caring for this species – we rarely get a second chance. [www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory)

*Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies.* **Jared Diamond, W.W. Norton, 1997.** One of the most groundbreaking and essential books of the century. This book examines the roots of human development and expansion across the globe, the geography and natural resources that helped nurture the growth of or spur the decline of budding societies, and the relentless capacity for specializing societies to exploit those around it. Very readable and highly recommended.

*Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World’s Worst Dog.* **John Grogan, Morrow, 2005.** *Marley & Me* is John Grogan’s funny, unforgettable tribute to this wonderful, wildly neurotic Lab and the meaning he brought to their lives. A very entertaining read about life’s many challenges with a great, but often frustrating dog.

*Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II.* **Robert Kurson, Random House, 2004.** It is a great book! An additional benefit is that the writer is from Chicago (the Midwest) and is excellent! He made me want to find additional writings of his to read. *Shadow Divers* keeps the reader engrossed and educates about deep sea diving and the war; I found it to be one of the best books I have read ever!

*Surrounded by Reality: the Best of Doug Moe on Madison,* **Doug Moe, Jones Books, 2005.** A compilation of columns December 6, 1997 – July 29, 2005 by *Capital Times* columnist Doug Moe. A delightful taste of the people and events which make Madison so unique. The book begins and ends with columns “. . . which deal with Madison’s square mileage and its enduring reputation of being ‘surrounded by reality.’” Thus, the title.

*Team of Rivals.* **Doris Kearns Goodwin, Simon & Schuster, 2005.** An interesting inside look at the politics and political skill of the Republican presidential candidates in 1860. It also follows the Lincoln Administration and gives a different perspective on the inner workings of the Lincoln White House. A definite must read for political junkies.

*Thin Ice: Unlocking the Secrets of Climate in the World’s Highest Mountains.* **Mark Bowen, Henry Holt, 2005.** This book is about a team of scientists who drill into the glaciers around the world to determine climate changes. The issue of global warming is discussed extensively.

### Related Web Sites

[www.ala.org/ala/librariesandyou/recomreading/recomreading.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/librariesandyou/recomreading/recomreading.htm) American Library Association “Recommended Reading”

[www.book-clubs-resource.com/](http://www.book-clubs-resource.com/) Book Clubs Resource

[www.bookspot.com/](http://www.bookspot.com/) BookSpot

[www.thecapitol.net/Recommended/bookspolit.htm](http://www.thecapitol.net/Recommended/bookspolit.htm) Capitol.net – Political and Government classics.

[www.gpl.lib.me.us/wrw.htm](http://www.gpl.lib.me.us/wrw.htm) Gardiner (ME) Public Library, “Who Reads What Celebrity List”

[www.oclc.org/research/top1000/default.htm](http://www.oclc.org/research/top1000/default.htm) OCLC Research (Online Computer Library Center), “Top 1000 titles owned by member libraries”

[www.readinggroupchoices.com](http://www.readinggroupchoices.com) Reading Group Choices – Selections for lively book discussions.

[www.readinggroupguides.com](http://www.readinggroupguides.com) ReadingGroupGuides.com – The Online community for reading groups.

[www.wla.lib.wi.us/lac/](http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/lac/) Wisconsin Library Association – Wisconsin Literary Award winners.

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