

# ridgewood public library staff picks

## **The Human Stain** by Philip Roth. – *Lestra's pick*

It is 1998, the year in which America is whipped into a frenzy of prurience by the impeachment of a president, and in a small New England town, an aging classics professor, Coleman Silk, is forced to retire when his colleagues decree that he is a racist. The charge is a lie, but the real truth about Silk would have astonished even his most virulent accuser. FICTION

## **White Teeth** by Zadie Smith – *Marion's pick*

Set in post-war London, this novel of the racial, political, and social upheaval of the last half-century follows two families--the Joneses and the Iqbals, both outsiders from within the former British empire--as they make their way in modern England. FICTION

## **A Far Cry from Kensington** by Muriel Spark

*Roberta's pick*

Set on the crazier fringes of 1950s literary London, *A Far Cry from Kensington* is a delight, hilariously portraying love, fraud, death, evil, and transformation. FICTION

## **Brooklyn** by Colm Toibin – *Pat's pick*

Leaving her home in post-World War II Ireland to work as a bookkeeper in Brooklyn, Ellis Lacey reluctantly parts with her sister and fragile mother and discovers a new romance in America with a charming blond Italian man before devastating news threatens her happiness. FICTION

## **Bad Mother** by Ayelet Waldman – *Deborah's pick*

Covering topics as diverse as the hysteria of competitive parenting (whose toddler can recite the planets in order of their distance from the sun?), the relentless pursuits of the Bad Mother police, and the bane of every mother's existence (homework, that is), *Bad Mother* illuminates the anxieties that riddle motherhood today, while providing women with the encouragement they need to give themselves a break. NONFICTION

## **The Kids are All Right**

by Diana, Liz, Amanda & Dan Welch - *Roberta's pick*

A family story told from the revolving viewpoints of its four children describes how they lost both of their parents and their privileged lifestyle early in life before being separated into different homes, where they struggled to achieve independence and find one another. NONFICTION

## **Sag Harbor** by Colin Whitehead – *Deborah's pick*

Benji, one of the only black kids at an elite prep school in Manhattan, tries desperately during the school year to find a social group that will accept him. Every summer, he and his brother, Reggie, escape to the East End of Sag Harbor, where a small community of African-American professionals has built a world of its own, in a funny coming-of-age novel that explores racial and class identity. FICTION

## **True Blue** by David Baldacci - *Carol's pick*

Mason 'Mace' Perry was a maverick cop on the DC police force until she was kidnapped and framed for a crime. She lost everything - her career, her liberty - and spent two years in prison. Now back on the outside, Mace is trying to rebuild her life and track down the people who set her up. FICTION

## **The Sea** by John Banville – *Nancy B.'s pick*

Struggling to cope with grief, anger, and loss following the death of his wife, Max, a middle-aged man, returns to his childhood seaside home, where he deals with his memories of his first encounter with the Graces, a wealthy vacationing family, his recollections of his wife, and the emotional upheaval of the present as he comes to an understanding of the profound influence of the past on his life. FICTION

## **Lidia cooks from the heart of Italy**

by Lidia Bastianich – *Nancy H.'s pick*

In this warmly written, lushly illustrated new cookbook, Lidia delves into the regional cooking of many lesser known parts of Italy—Molise, Liguria, Umbria, Abruzzo, Calabria, Valle d'Aosta, Le Marche, Trentino Alto Adige, Basilicata, and Sardinia—and explores hidden treasures in the well-known gastronomic domains of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna. NONFICTION

## **City of Thieves** by David Benioff - *Dani's pick*

Documenting his grandparents' experiences during the siege of Leningrad, a young writer learns his grandfather's story about how a military deserter and he tried to secure pardons by gathering hard-to-find ingredients for a powerful colonel's daughter's wedding cake. FICTION

## **Those Who Save Us** by Jenna Blum – *Maryjo's pick*

A professor of German history begins a long journey back into a past she has pushed aside, returning to Germany to reopen the wounds of her own life--as well as that of her mother--as a child living in Nazi Germany. FICTION

## **Possession** by A.S. Byatt – *Pat's pick*

A young academic couple's attempt to trace the relationship between two turbulent, romantic, and superstitious Victorian poets reveals uncanny parallels with their own lives and culminates in the exhumation of a poet's corpse. FICTION

**Epicure's Lament** Kate Christensen –*Chris' pick*

Disenchanted with life and losing his cherished solitude in the wake of returning estranged family members, wealthy bachelor, Hugo Whittier, deliberately overindulges in tobacco use against the recommendations of his doctor and involves himself in the affairs of others. FICTION

**Little Bee** by Chris Cleave – *Chris' pick*

A haunting novel about the tenuous friendship that blooms between two disparate strangers—one an illegal Nigerian refugee, the other a recent widow from suburban London. FICTION

**Spooner** by Pete Dexter – *Barbara's pick*

Losing his father shortly after birth, Warren Spooner endures a troubled childhood and even more troubled young adulthood that is marked by his dishonorably discharged stepfather, whose inexhaustible patience is tested by the difficult Warren. FICTION

**Sacred Hearts** by Sarah Dunant – *Page's pick*

Condemned by sixteenth-century demands for lucrative dowries in order to marry, young Serafina is ripped from an illicit love affair and confined in a Renaissance Italy convent, a situation against which she passionately rebels and reminds the convent's doctor of her own unhappy early years. FICTION

**We two : Victoria and Albert : rulers, partners, rivals** by Gillian Gill - *Nancy H.'s pick*

Gillian Gill offers a revolutionary portrait of a queen and her prince, revealing at once both an intimate but far-from-idyllic relationship that succeeded against all odds as the strong, feisty queen and the brilliant, fragile prince worked together to build a family based on support, trust, and fidelity. NONFICTION

**In Pale Battalions** by Robert Goddard - *Dani's pick*

A young girl grows up unaware of the incredible events of her birth and of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Captain John Hallows, perhaps her father and most certainly her benefactor, until a trip to Paris reveals her family's dark secrets. FICTION

**Inside of a dog : what dogs see, smell, and know**

by Alexandra Horowitz – *Eileen's pick*

A psychologist and aficionado offers insight into the canine mind, drawing on current cognitive research to illuminate a dog's perceptual abilities and the experiences that shape dog behavior, in a report that also shares stories about the author's relationship with her canine friend, Pumpnickel. NONFICTION

**Mudbound** by Hillary Jordan – *Lestra's pick*

When Henry McAllan moves his city-bred wife, Laura, to a cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta in 1946, she finds herself in a place both foreign and frightening. Henry's love of rural life is not shared by Laura, who struggles to raise their two young children in an isolated shotgun shack under the eye of her hateful, racist father-in-law. FICTION

**Soul of a dog: reflections on the spirits and the animals of Bedlam Farm**

by Jon Katz *Eileen's pick*

Explores the question of whether animals have souls, sharing stories about the author's border collie and other pet and farm animals he lives with to consider their spiritual characters and seemingly moral or amoral choices. NONFICTION

**The Namesake** by Jhumpa Lahiri – *Marion's pick*

An incisive portrait of the immigrant experience follows the Ganguli family from their traditional life in India through their arrival in Massachusetts in the late 1960s and their difficult melding into an American way of life, in a debut novel that spans three decades, two continents, and two generations. FICTION

**Unaccustomed Earth** by Jhumpa Lahiri

*Maryjo' pick*

Exploring the secrets and complexities lying at the heart of family life and relationships, a collection of eight stories includes the title work, about a young mother in a new city whose father tends her garden while hiding a secret love affair. FICTION

**The Johnstown Flood** by David McCullough

*Nancy B.'s pick*

A graphic account of the collapse of a poorly constructed dam and the resulting flood which killed 2,000 people and caused a nationwide scandal. NONFICTION

**The City and The City** by China Mieville

*Page's pick*

When the body of a murdered woman is found in the extraordinary, decaying city of Beszel, somewhere at the edge of Europe, it looks like a routine case for Inspector Tyador Borlú of the Extreme Crime Squad. But as he probes, the evidence begins to point to conspiracies far stranger, and more deadly, than anything he could have imagined. Soon his work puts him and those he cares for in danger. FICTION

**Shantaram**, by Gregory David Roberts – *Lois' pick*

Having escaped an Australian maximum security prison, a disillusioned man loses himself in the slums of Bombay, where he works for a drug mafia kingpin, smuggles arms for a crime lord, forges bonds with fellow exiles, and finds love with an elusive woman. FICTION