

Best Books of 2008

Enjoy the Best Books of 2008, as chosen by the Materials Selection Team at the King County Library System. Each section is presented in alphabetical order by author.

Adult Fiction

Beginner's Greek: a novel by James Collins. ISBN: 9780316021555

Peter meets the woman of his dreams on a flight from New York to Los Angeles but loses her telephone number. Years later, he meets her again, only now she is the fiancée of his best friend. Will true love prevail?

The Likeness by Tana French. ISBN: 9780670018864

In this tightly-written psychological thriller, Irish Detective Cassie Maddox takes on the identity of a murdered woman to try to find a killer.

Unaccustomed Earth by Jhumpa Lahiri. ISBN: 9780307265739

Eight delicate and complex short stories explore the immigrant experience. By the author of *The Namesake*.

Lavinia by Ursula K. LeGuin. ISBN: 9780151014248

LeGuin, famous for her ability to create imagined worlds, here brings to life a minor character from Virgil's *The Aeneid*.

The Given Day by Dennis Lehane. ISBN: 9780688163181

Set against the Boston Police Strike of 1919, this rich, historical novel depicts the struggles of two families at a time of political and social unrest.

Netherland by Joseph O'Neill. ISBN: 9780307377043

An equity analyst rekindles his love of cricket and meets a charismatic entrepreneur who introduces him to another side of the city in this love letter to post-9/11 New York.

Lush Life by Richard Price. ISBN: 9780374299255

A random shooting brings together an ensemble of cops and criminals in New York's Lower East Side. With grit and humanity, the author of *Clockers* explores the collision between poverty and gentrification in one neighborhood. For fans of the HBO series *The Wire*.

Home by Marilynne Robinson. ISBN: 9780374299101

A deeply emotional and clear-sighted story of family and forgiveness by the winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. ISBN: 9780385340991

Author Juliet Ashton receives a letter from a member of an unusual book club, formed as a way of eluding Guernsey's Nazi occupiers.

Anathem by Neal Stephenson. ISBN: 9780061474095

In the far future, a monastery harbors a cloister of scientists, philosophers, and mathematicians with the knowledge to save the world.

The Big Both Ways by John Straley. ISBN: 9780882407395

This tale of Seattle in the 1930's combines labor unrest, murder, and a harrowing journey in a small boat on Puget Sound.

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout. ISBN: 9781400062089

The life of an outspoken retired school teacher is revealed in these vivid, poignant linked stories.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski. ISBN: 9780061374227

A mute boy has a special relationship with the dogs his family breeds on their Wisconsin farm in this epic reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Adult Nonfiction

Predictably Irrational : the hidden forces that shape our decisions by Dan Ariely. ISBN: 9780061353239

Ariely explores why irrational impulse so often trumps logic in human decision making. For those who enjoyed *Blink*.

American Lightning : terror, mystery, movie-making, and the crime of the century by Howard Blum. ISBN: 9780307346940

On October 1, 1910 the offices of the LA Times were bombed. The trial became a battleground of management vs. labor, with Clarence Darrow defending the accused. An absorbing true crime drama.

Ballistics : poems by Billy Collins. ISBN: 9781400064915

Former U. S. Poet Laureate Collins manages to be accessible, humorous and serious -- sometimes all in the same poem.

Hot, Flat, and Crowded : why we need a green revolution-- and how it can renew America by Thomas L. Friedman. ISBN: 9780374166854

The Pulitzer Prize winning author the *The World is Flat* takes on climate change, population growth and the need for American leadership to counteract their effects.

The Hemingses of Monticello: an American family by Annette Gordon-Reed. ISBN: 9780393064773

A well-researched and clearly-written portrait of the family descended from President Thomas Jefferson and his slave Sally Hemings.

A Voyage Long and Strange : rediscovering the new world by Tony Horwitz. ISBN: 9780805076035

Part history and part road trip, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Horwitz travels to sites in North America that were visited by Europeans between 1492 and the founding of Jamestown in 1602.

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running : a memoir by Haruki Murakami. ISBN: 9780307269195

Novelist Murakami talks about the intersection of running and writing in his life.

The Angel of Grozny : orphans of a forgotten war by Åsne Seierstad. ISBN: 9780465011223

The author of *The Bookseller of Kabul* turns her attention to the war orphans of the Chechnyan conflict.

Beautiful Boy : a father's journey through his son's addiction by David Sheff. ISBN: 9780618683352

Journalist Sheff's beloved 17-year-old son sinks into meth addiction in this honest story of one family's painful recovery.

Your Inner Fish : a journey into the 3.5-billion-year history of the human body by Neil Shubin. ISBN: 9780375424472

Paleontologist Shubin examines fossils and DNA to show how our internal organs and body structure are related to other species. Accessible, lively and informative.

A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes by David Tanis. ISBN: 9781579653460

Tanis, head chef at Berkeley's Chez Panisse, celebrates the simplicity of home cooked meals served for friends and loved ones.

The Great Emergence : how Christianity is changing and why by Phyllis Tickle. ISBN: 9780801013133

Tickle believes that current changes in religious and social behavior mark a "great emergence," a major upheaval which once in every 500 years results in a new and more vital Christian church.

How Fiction Works by James Wood. ISBN: 9780374173401

A pre-eminent literary critic describes the ways and means of reading and writing good fiction.

Picture Books for Children Ages 4-8

Traction Man Meets Turbodog by Mini Grey. ISBN: 9780375855832

Traction Man, an action figure, teams up with the high-tech but not-so-bright Turbodog to rescue Scrubbing Brush, his missing sidekick, from the terrible underworld of the bin.

The Day Leo Said I Hate You by Robie H. Harris, illustrated by Molly Bang. ISBN: 9780316065801

Leo, upset that he has been hearing the word "no" all day, lets three words slip out that he wishes he could take back.

Mail Harry to the Moon by Robbie H. Harris, illustrated by Michael Emberley. ISBN: 9780316153768

Harry's older brother, unhappy that the new baby seems to have taken over, dreams up imaginative ways to get rid of him.

Old Bear by Kevin Henkes. ISBN: 9780061552052

When Old Bear falls asleep for the winter, he has a dream that he is a cub again, enjoying each of the four seasons.

Dog and Bear: two's company by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. ISBN: 9781596432734

In three stories, the two dearest of friends celebrate Bear's birthday, have their first falling out, and take care of each other when Dog is under the weather.

The House in the Night by Susan Marie Swanson, pictures by Beth Krommes. ISBN: 9780618862443

A spare, patterned text and glowing pictures explore the origins of light that make a house a home, in this bedtime book for young children.

Nonfiction for Children Ages 8-12

How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate: scientists and kids explore global warming by Lynn Cherry. Illus. by Gary Braasch. ISBN: 9781584691037

Describes how and where scientists find evidence of climate change, including bird migration patterns, checking tree rings, and collecting mud cores; and offers advice to students on how to make a positive impact on the environment.

African Critters by Robert Haas. ISBN: 9781426303180

A dramatic first-person narrative and close-up photography by a National Geographic photographer offers a rare glimpse into the struggles for survival in the African wilderness.

The Wolves Are Back by Jean Craighead George. Illus. by Wendell Minor. ISBN: 9780525479475

For over a century, wolves were persecuted in the United States and nearly became extinct. Gradually reintroduced, they are thriving again in the West, much to the benefit of the ecosystem.

The Way We Work: getting to know the amazing human body by David Macaulay. ISBN: 9780618233786

A visual exploration of the inner workings of the human body that uses close-ups, cross-sections, and perspectives to look at the different body systems and how they function.

We Are The Ship: the story of Negro League Baseball by Kadir Nelson. ISBN: 9780786808328

Using an "Everyman" player as his narrator, Nelson tells the story of Negro League baseball from its beginnings in the 1920s through its decline after Jackie Robinson crossed over to the majors in 1947.

Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman by Marc Nobleman. Illus. by Ross Macdonald. ISBN: 9780375838026

Provides the true story of how the character of Superman came to be through the creative minds of writer Jerry Siegel and illustrator Joe Shuster and their determination to see their Man of Steel become a comic book hit.

My Dog May Be A Genius: poems by Jack Prelutsky. Illus. by James Stevenson. ISBN: 9780066238630

A collection of poems by children's poet laureate Jack Prelutsky that celebrates the joys of childhood and the wackier side of life.

Fiction for Children Ages 8-12

The Penderwicks on Gardam Street by Jeanne Birdsall. ISBN: 9780375840906

The four Penderwick sisters are faced with the unimaginable prospect of their widowed father dating, and they hatch a plot to stop him.

Uh-oh, Cleo by Jessica Harper ; illustrated by Jon Berkeley. ISBN: 9780399246715

What starts out as a perfectly ordinary day in the Small house turns into Stitches Saturday when Cleo gets a cut on the head after her twin brother, Jack, accidentally pulls down their Toy House.

My One Hundred Adventures by Polly Horvath. ISBN: 9780375845826

Hot air balloon rides, a new friendship with a preacher, and an encounter with an aspiring psychic make 12-year-old Jane's boring summer vacation an adventure to remember while teaching her a lot about herself in the process.

Masterpiece by Elise Broach ; illustrated by Kelly Murphy. ISBN: 9780805082708

After Marvin, a beetle, makes a miniature drawing as an eleventh birthday gift for James, a human with whom he shares a house, the two new friends work together to help recover a Durer drawing stolen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Magic Thief. Book One by Sarah Prineas ; illustrations by Antonio Javier Caparo. ISBN: 9780061375873

A young thief is drawn into a life of magic and adventure after picking the pocket of the powerful wizard Nevery Flinglas, who has returned from exile to attempt to reverse the troubling decline of magic in Wellmet City.

The Dragon's Child : a story of Angel Island by Laurence Yep; with Kathleen S. Yep. ISBN: 9780060276928

Ten-year-old Gim Lew Yep immigrates from China to America with his father, whom Gim

barely knows, and fears he will be a disappointment to his family when he arrives at Angel Island.

Fiction for Teens

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume 2: The Kingdom on the Waves by M. T. Anderson. ISBN: 9780763629502

Set in the American Revolution, 16-year-old slave Octavian has escaped the College of Lucidity where he was raised and found freedom under Loyalist British rule. That freedom comes at a cost. He must join the Loyalist Navy and help beat the American rebels.

Graceling by Kristin Cashore. ISBN: 9780152063962

Lady Katsa, has a special "grace" is for killing. She balances the evils she commits with good acts, one of which brings her to the attention of Prince Po, another graceling who wants her to help him restore peace to their seven kingdoms.

Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins. ISBN: 9780439023481

When her little sister is chosen for the deadly Hunger Games, a government-sponsored event where contestants battle each other to the death, 16-year-old Katniss volunteers to go in her place.

Eon: Dragoneye Reborn by Alison Goodman. ISBN: 9780670062270

Crippled from an old injury, 12-year-old Eon is unlikely to win the Dragoneye competition and become one of the lords who bond with a powerful dragon. And, Eon has a secret: she is really Eona, a 16-year-old girl and so forbidden from becoming a Dragoneye.

Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Myers. ISBN: 9780439916240

High-school senior Robin joined the Army after 9/11, and became a soldier deployed at the start of the Iraq War. When it quickly escalates, Robin writes home to his uncle, a Vietnam veteran, about the dangers he faces and how his experiences have changed him.

Nation by Terry Pratchett. ISBN: 9780061433016

Mau escapes the tsunami that ravages his island, but is alone until he discovers Daphne, a shipwrecked foreigner. Together, despite the language and cultural barriers between them, they work to unite the survivors from other islands and rebuild his "Nation".