

**Angelina Benedetti's Book Recommendations**  
**Bellevue Book Group Extravaganza**  
Bellevue Regional Library - King County Library System  
November 15, 2008

**Fiction**

***Beginner's Greek*** by James Collins (hardcover, no paperback date)

James meets the woman of his dreams on a cross-country flight but loses her phone number. Years later, he meets her again, only now she is the fiancée of his philandering best friend. With engaging characters and witty dialogue, this modern comedy-of-manners will charm readers looking for a story a cut above the usual chicklit.

***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*** by Junot Diaz

A New Jersey Dominican American family struggles with *fukú*, the bad luck that has haunted them for generations. Oscar, a nerdy, overweight, lover of science fiction, longs to overcome the curse and find true love, but will his luck overtake him?

***Then We Came to the End*** by Joshua Ferris

Every unhappy workplace is unhappy in its own way and this failing Chicago ad agency is no exception. This satire looks at survival in the modern American workplace.

***In the Woods*** by Tana French

Irish Detective Rob Ryan is a man with a past and he is forced to face it when a 12-year old is found murdered at an archaeological dig. The sequel to this taut, psychological thriller, *The Likeness*, is receiving rave reviews this year as well.

***The Bridge of Sighs*** by Richard Russo

Three best friends grow up in a small town in upstate New York. Forty years later, two are married and one is an artist living in Venice. Russo explores the weight of family and history on people facing their pasts and finding a new future.

***The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society*** by Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows  
(available in paperback May 2009)

Author Juliet Ashton receives a letter from a member of a most unusual book club. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society was formed as a way to elude the island's Nazi occupiers. Juliet begins a correspondence with the islanders and comes to appreciate their island, their love of books, and the impact of the occupation on their way of life.

***The Art of Racing in the Rain*** by Garth Stein (available in paperback June 2009)

Enzo wants nothing more than to be reincarnated as a person half as honorable as his racecar-driving owner Denny. Through Enzo's soulful eyes, we view the custody battle between Denny and his in-laws for his daughter Zoe.

***Olive Kitteridge*** by Elizabeth Strout

The life of an unpleasant and indomitable schoolteacher is portrayed in thirteen connected stories. This book is both a character study and a meditation on small-town life.

### Nonfiction

***A Long Way Gone: memoirs of a boy soldier*** by Ishmael Beah

At the age of twelve, Beah was recruited into the Sierra Leone army and made to fight in its civil war. Later, he made his way to the United States, slowly recovered from the experience, and now tells his story.

***American Shaolin: flying kicks, Buddhist monks, and the legend of Iron Crotch: an odyssey in the New China*** by Matthew Polly

As a young man, Matthew Polly dropped out of college, traveled to China, and asked to train at the famous Shaolin Temple, hoping to become a world famous kung fu fighter. There he learns as much about the Chinese culture as he does about martial arts and goes from being a “98 pound weakling” to winning a silver medal in a national competition. Here he describes the characters he meets along the way.

***The World Without Us*** by Alan Weisman

If the world was suddenly de-populated overnight, how long would it take to erase humankind’s global footprint? Drawing on experts in many fields, Weisman explores what the world would look like without us.