

The 25 Books Project: Comments

1. It's amazing and such a tribute to Woolf without ripping Woolf off. It's a wonderfully complex novel that also stands on its own. For it is by far one of the best books of the last 25 years.
2. Actually, a lot on your list (and mine) were bestsellers. Fall...Knees is more dramatically written than 1000 Acres, though with some of the same themes. It's historic scope is huge. As for the Auster, it just continues to haunt me. I'll never forget it.
3. Roth should be included in the list; he's Jewish and "The Anatomy Lesson" is one of the novels in the "Zuckerman" series.
4. ALL OF THESE BOOKS HAVE REMAINED A PART OF ME. THEY TOUCHED ME DEEPLY WHEN I READ THEM, THEY MOVED ME. NOT ONLY THE LANGUAGE, BUT THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR LIVES. MEMORABLE TALES.
5. I tried to think of the books that affected me strongly, and stayed that way- the feeling didn't fade.
6. Shirley Hazzard is one of the most disciplined, profound writers of our time. Her understanding of human nature is so enlightening.
7. Donald Hall (a poet laureate of the US) spared no pain when describing the death of [wife and fellow poet] Jane Kenyon in *Without*, told through free-verse poetry. Some pages are so painful you can see the blood. Remy Rougeau, himself a monk, offered a rare insight into the spiritual life and petty jealousies that monks experience with *All We Know of Heaven*. Margaret Atwood weaved Biblical quotes and feminist rage into a scarily realistic look at the religious right in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Decades after her son was kidnapped, Anne Morrow Lindbergh reflected on life and how each stage compares to a sea shell. Entire chapters are highlighted in my personal copy. Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* provides a workbook experience for people struggling to get over Writer's Block.
8. Literature, at least good literature, needs to be about more than the writing. It needs to take us beyond our limited selves and help us understand more about the nature of being human. These books each, in their own way, do just that.
9. The absence of straight white males, while corrective, is myopic.
10. I truly consider this to be the best modern novel I have read in a very, very long time. *Middlesex* showcases Eugenides' knack for effervescent narration and his amazing talent for weaving fiction that reads as a true family history.
11. More women and not just fiction, in the conventional sense. Ondaatje's novel is affective and brilliant.
12. Auster is a unique, talented, prolific and underappreciated author. Anyone who loves to read should begin with "City of Glass" and work through his entire body of work!
13. I made those choices because the authors absorbed me. Strangely, I don't finish most newly published books that I pick up. These were authors that portrayed their characters in real terms rather than sensational, romantic, or hackneyed ways. They avoided political issues and stuck to human experiences which I think is the heart of art.
14. I've chosen *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* because it is so honest and unpretentious. It starts out as a story about four Moroccans who travel to Spain on a makeshift boat. But it ends up being a book about what people want, why they want it, how they go about getting what they want, how sometimes that want changes... It's a short, page-turning, sometimes funny, read. This book needs to be added to the list because I don't think everyone and their mama knows about it, and they

should.

15. The most interesting writing to me -- the writing that deals with important questions, is around the edges of what we call "literature." Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower is an amazing reflection on social disintegration and the creation of religions.
16. Because Naipaul is the greatest English language writer alive today, and I generally read books written in English.
17. Well, I wanted to keep my votes restricted to ones from the list. That being said, I could only, in good faith, vote for ones I've read. :) Out of the four I've read, Krauss and Lahiri really stood out to me.
18. If Michael Cunningham can make the list, then Jonathan Safran Foer should be on the list! His writing is eloquent and thought-provoking, and he deals mostly with Jewish history in his novels.
19. I only picked my absolute favorite from the list provided because these four other novels need attention. They're each books that I got lost in not because they're perfect but because the stories they told pushed me hard, which is what a really great book can do, even to those who don't read so much.
20. The Things They Carried because I teach college LIT classes, and this book more than any other touches the souls of young people and makes war human and real. Birds of America because it is the smartest book I've ever read. The Handmaid's Tale because it is a gripping page-turner and devastating dystopian social commentary in one.
21. phenomenal books, interesting stories, all different. i have read all of them and they have changed my life!
22. If you haven't read Three Day Road, do. It is such a beautifully rendered story. I bought multiple copies to give away to people.
23. Because these writers are doing amazing things with language, characterization, point of view and bicultural narrative.
24. Hmm, might have chosen the first two because the list above reminded me of them. Not a great reason. And sorry not to do much to help defy the white men thing.
25. I'd like to strongly vote AGAINST some books: The Pagoda, by Padget Powell, Free Enterprise, by Michelle Cliff, and especially The Kite Runner, by Khalid Housseini. Matt Also, it's not really fair to vote if you haven't read all the books (myself included) because then it just is a vote on the books most read, not BEST.
26. Writing itself. Topic, depth and structure complexity Same for Richard Powers - writing and complexity/depth of structure.
27. I voted not only for the specific titles but for the authors whose cumulative work speaks of their talents and also of the themes that are important to them.
28. I think there's no way of getting around the fact that if not the best, Beloved is close to it and definitely I think the most important novel by an American writer in past 25 years. My other choices are novels that had a big impact on me at the time that I read them. Your list seems to include a couple of writers who I don't think of as from U.S., i.e., Zadie Smith (British) and Carol Shields (Canadian) and a couple of books that I don't think are novels, i.e. The Kite Runner and The Color of Water, but I might be wrong. Looking over my reading lists from past 15 years most of my favorite novels were written by Canadians and writers from other parts of the world.(and I did read a lot of the books on your list) On the other hand, I read a lot of good poetry and non-fiction by U.S.

writers. That's my 2 cents worth.

29. I hate that my list of favorite books tends more towards the more "accessible" rather than the better-written, but usually the books I really get into are those that I find extremely engaging. Hence the 2 additions I put. But I don't think they should necessarily be added to the list...I just really liked them, and they are MY top votes! Most of the rest of the books listed in the Pool are in my (very extensive) to-read list, and I am just disappointed that I haven't yet gotten to them, but I am glad this will give me an impetus. Thanks!
30. Gerald Vizenor is the epitome of Native American, mixed-blood / mixed-identity writers (might I refer you to my undergraduate thesis on native american identity in the ethnographic novel?); Kingsolver rocks, but Poisonwood Bible was really weak on male characters (and I'm a sucker for all things African)- Prodigal Summer is a better book; Patricia McCormick is a new writer of young adult fiction - better known for Cut, which highschool libraries can't keep on the shelves - but Sold is just so simple, and stark; for haddon - how can you not love an autistic murder mystery?