

Fiction News

The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter



April 2011

AUTHORS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Masha Hamilton

Masha Hamilton is the author of four acclaimed novels, most recently *31 Hours*, which the *Washington Post* called one of the best novels of 2009. She also founded two world literacy projects, the Camel Book Drive and the Afghan Women's Writing Project. She began her career as a full-time journalist and was

sent by the Associated Press to the Middle East, where she was news editor for five years, including the period of the first *intefadeh*. She then moved to Moscow, where she worked for five years during the collapse of Communism, reporting for the *Los Angeles Times* and NBC-Mutual Radio and writing a monthly column, "Postcards from Moscow." She also reported from Kenya in 2006, and from Afghanistan in 2004 and 2008.

Masha Hamilton will be speaking at the Ridgefield Library on Wednesday, April 13th at 7 PM as part of our *Focus on Literacy* lecture series. Please register at www.ridgefieldlibrary.org or by calling 203-438-2282 x1015 or 1016.

31 Hours (2009)

A woman in New York awakens sensing that her grown son is in danger. She has not heard from Jonas in weeks. We soon learn that Jonas is isolated in a safe-house apartment in New York City. As he ponders his conversion to Islam and his experiences training in Pakistan, he prepares for the violent action he has been instructed to take in 31 hours.

The Camel Book Mobile (2007)

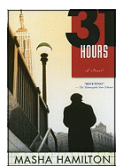
Fiona Sweeney travels to Africa to help start a traveling library. But, encumbered by her Western values, Fi does not understand the people she seeks to help. This powerful saga captures the calamities that can occur when two cultures collide.

The Distance Between Us (2004)

Caddie Blair, a war correspondent, loses her photojournalist lover and her detachment in one tragic moment during an unexpected ambush in the war-torn Middle East.

Staircase of a Thousand Steps (2001)

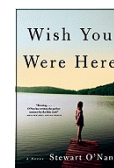
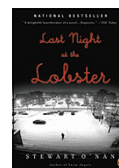
As a young girl in a Middle Eastern desert village struggles to understand the adults' secrets, she unwittingly sows the seeds of her family's destruction.



Stewart O'Nan



Stewart O'Nan writes character-centered novels, short stories, and popular nonfiction. His sympathetic portrayal of characters lends them dignity, as he makes readers privy to their thoughts, motivations, and dreams. A wealth of details enrich his books and add to our appreciation. His careful documentation of events and their aftermath makes his books compulsively readable. A polished style, lyrical language, and an evocative, sometimes melancholy tone enhance his writing.



Partial List of Stewart O'Nan Novels:

Emily, Alone (2011)

Newly independent widow Emily Maxwell mourns changes in her quiet Pittsburgh neighborhood before realizing an inner strength to pursue developing opportunities. (*see Staff Picks*)

Songs for the Missing (2008)

When a popular high-school student goes missing from her small Midwestern community, her loving parents, introverted sister, friends, and boyfriend devote themselves to finding her.

Last Night at the Lobster (2007)

Managing a failed seafood restaurant in a run-down New England mall just before Christmas, Manny DeLeon coordinates a final shift of mutinous staff members, an effort that is complicated by his love for a waitress, a pregnant girlfriend, and an elusive holiday gift.

The Good Wife (2005)

When her husband is incarcerated for his involvement in a tragic home invasion, Patty Dickerson must raise their newborn child in a community that is sometimes hostile to her, all the while struggling to maintain her dignity.

The Night Country (2003)

One year following their deaths in a late-night car accident, teenagers Danielle, Marco, and Christopher return, in spirit, to the sleepy New England suburb of Avon. Over the course of the evening, the three will drift in and out of the lives of those who knew them.

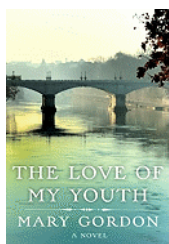
Wish You Were Here (2002)

A year after the death of her husband, Emily Maxwell summons her family to their vacation house on Lake Chautauqua in western New York state, bringing together three generations for one last reunion before selling the home.

(Annotations from *NoveList* and *BookLetters*)

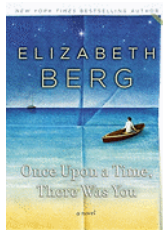
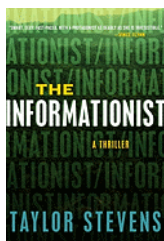
NEW FICTION

(Annotations from BookLetters)



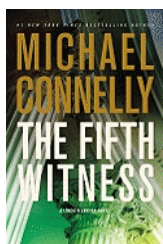
The Love of My Youth by Mary Gordon.
Beloved author Gordon pens a beautifully choreographed novel about first lovers meeting again after more than 30 years, walking the streets of Rome and re-immersing themselves in their lost past.

The Informationist by Taylor Stevens.
BookPage Notable Title
Stevens debuts with a tightly written thriller woven around an uncommon heroine with a knack for putting facts together and coming up with the right answers.



Once Upon a Time, There Was You by Elizabeth Berg.
A beautiful story about the power of love and family, this new novel by the beloved, bestselling author of *The Last Time I Saw You* follows the journey of a couple who meet again after their divorce.

Elizabeth I by Margaret George.
One of today's premier historical novelists, *New York Times* bestseller George dazzles here as she tackles her most difficult subject yet: the legendary Elizabeth Tudor, queen of enigma.



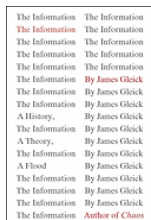
Fifth Witness by Michael Connelly.
Falling on tough times, Mickey Haller expands his business into foreclosure defense, only to see one of his clients accused of killing the banker she blames for trying to take away her home. Connelly proves again why he "may very well be the best novelist working in the United States today." (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

For a more extensive list of new fiction, mystery, and science fiction and fantasy titles, visit our website at www.ridgefieldlibrary.org

STAFF PICKS

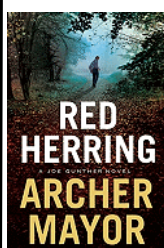
Geri's Pick

The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood by James Gleick.
Author and journalist Gleick tackles a huge subject: information. All of it. Starting with pre-history, cave paintings, African talking drums, and moving through time to alphabets, abacuses, writing, printing, and eventually, bits and bytes on computers, Gleick seemingly omits nothing, yet never overwhelms the reader with...well... information. His writing is smart and stylish, but never impenetrable or technical. He uses the skills of a storyteller to be an amazing science writer.



Elise's Picks

I Think I Love You by Allison Pearson.
In 1974 two 13-year-old Welsh girls enter a fan magazine contest to win the chance to meet David Cassidy, The Partridge Family pop star. Twenty-five years later when we catch up with Petra, she has become a talented music therapist with a 13-year-old daughter of her own. While going through her late mother's closet, she discovers that her disapproving mother hid the letter notifying the girls that they had won. When Petra tries to belatedly claim their prize, the editor decides that it would make a great human interest story to accompany Petra and Sharon, the reunited friends, on an all-expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas to meet their teen idol. Pearson captures the fierce but fragile feelings of teenage girls. But she does an equally good job of depicting the subtler longings of middle age, making *I Think I Love You* a poignant and romantic comedy that is charming, witty, and wise.



Red Herring by Archer Mayor.
This clever and complex mystery is the 21st entry in the popular Joe Gunther series. The always appealing "sage of Brattleboro" and his team at the Vermont Bureau of Investigation are initially stumped by three deaths, seemingly unrelated. VBI enlists the expertise of a cutting edge forensics lab, but it's old fashioned leg work and Gunther's interview skills that ultimately solve this puzzling and – for Joe personally – dangerous case. A gripping and emotionally satisfying novel from "one of the most respected American writers of police procedurals." (*Library Journal*)

Dorothy's Picks

Emily, Alone by Stewart O'Nan.
In this sequel to *Wish You Were Here*, O'Nan revisits Emily Maxwell as she navigates her senior years in the Pittsburgh neighborhood that has been home for all her adult life. Balancing hopes for the future with the travails of aging, Emily confronts a dwindling coterie of friends, distant children and grandchildren, and ever-present reflections on the past. O'Nan is a master at capturing the rhythms of everyday life, and in *Emily Alone* he illuminates the challenges of growing old with humor, compassion, and razor sharp insights.



The Tiger's Wife by Tea Obreht.
Set in an unnamed country in the Balkans, this multi-faceted debut novel draws on the history and conflicts of the region. Natalia Stefanovic is a young doctor on a medical mission when her beloved grandfather, a distinguished physician, dies in a nearby village. As she tries to make sense of what happened, she reflects on the significance of two pivotal influences on his life, the story of the tiger's wife and the story of the deathless man. Obreht is the youngest of the *New Yorker's* "20 under 40" writers and has been dubbed a literary descendant of Isaac Bashevis Singer and Gabriel García Márquez.