

# Fiction News

The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter



March 2011

## AUTHORS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



### Elizabeth Berg

Elizabeth Berg creates women characters that readers can easily recognize and identify with. Her interest is in putting typical Everywoman characters into situations that require them to discover their inner strength and self worth. In her finely balanced novels, Berg treats such subjects as death, terminal illness, spousal

betrayal, familial estrangement, mid-life crises and unrequited love with dignity and gentleness, adding a dollop of humor when appropriate. She is the author of over 20 works of fiction.



#### Partial List of Elizabeth Berg Novels:

##### *The Last Time I Saw You* (2010)

Attending a fortieth high school reunion at the side of former classmates, Dorothy reconnects with old friends with whom she reevaluates her life, choices, and relationships.

##### *Home Safe* (2009)

After the death of her husband, Helen Ames is shocked to discover that he spent their retirement savings before he died.

##### *Dream When You're Feeling Blue* (2007)

After sending their men off to fight in the war, sisters Kitty and Louise Heaney join their flirtatious younger sister, Tish, in writing letters to servicemen overseas.

##### *We Are All Welcome Here* (2006)

Challenged by the effects of the polio she contracted during her pregnancy, Paige is determined to live as normal a life as possible and to raise her daughter, Diana, in the way she sees fit—with the support of her tough-talking black caregiver, Peacie.

##### *The Year of Pleasures* (2005)

Betta Nolan moves to a small town after the death of her husband to try to begin anew. Here new acquaintances help her in both expected and unexpected ways.

##### *The Art of Mending* (2004)

Returning home for a family reunion, Laura Bartone and her brother, Steve, are stunned by their sister's allegations of shocking behavior on the part of their mother, and must come to terms with the truth and lies within their family.

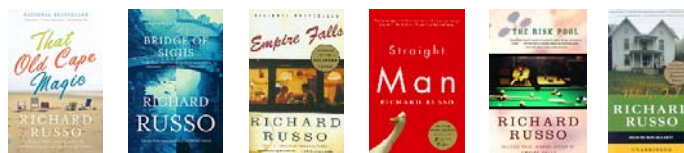
##### *Never Change* (2001)

Myra Lipinsky, a 51-year old visiting nurse, has been content to be a self-appointed spinster—until a man she adored in high school is struck by an incurable illness.

### Richard Russo



Awarded the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for the novel *Empire Falls*, Russo is noted for his evocative depictions of blue-collar life in depressed Northeastern towns. Lyrical prose, complex plots, intriguing characters, and humor complement these eloquent stories of friendship, family, love, and luck. While the books focus on the male characters, the supporting characters receive Russo's careful touch.



##### *That Old Cape Magic* (2009)

The lives of Jack and Joy Griffin always seem to come back to Cape Cod, where they honeymooned, as they experience the ups and downs of life.

##### *Bridge of Sighs* (2007)

After sixty years of living in the upstate New York town of Thomaston, Louis Charles and his wife of forty years, Sarah, prepare for a trip to Italy to visit Louis' childhood friend, an artist who had fled his hometown many years earlier.

##### *The Whore's Child and Other Stories* (2002)

A collection of short fiction explores the lives of a variety of characters, including a Hollywood filmmaker, a precocious fifth-grader, and a child forced into a harrowing cross-country escape.

##### *Empire Falls* (2001)

Milo Roby tries to hold his family together while working at the Empire Grill in the once-successful logging town of Empire Falls, Maine, with his partner, Mrs. Whiting, who is the heir to a faded logging and textile legacy.

##### *Straight Man* (1997)

During one tortuous week, Hank Devereaux, head of the English department at the state university in Railton, Pennsylvania, has his nose slashed by a feminist poet, suspects his wife is having an affair, threatens wild fowl, and confronts his father.

##### *Mohawk* (1994)

This novel tells the stories of the regulars at the Mohawk Grill and a secret from the past that leads to murder.

##### *The Risk Pool* (1994)

An adolescent growing up in a declining, working-class town is torn between his gloomy, romantic mother and his delinquent father,

##### *Nobody's Fool* (1993)

This humorous epic stars an unlucky man in an unlucky town.

(Annotations from *NoveList*)

# NEW FICTION

(Annotations from BookLetters)

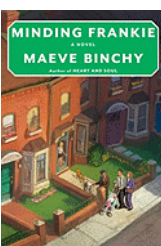
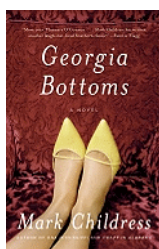


**Sing You Home** by Jodi Picoult.  
Zoe Baxter has spent 10 years trying to get pregnant, and after multiple miscarriages and infertility issues, it looks like her dream is about to come true. But a terrible turn of events leads to a nightmare—one that takes away her unborn baby and breaks apart her marriage to Max.

**Georgia Bottoms** by Mark Childress.

**BookPage Notable Title**

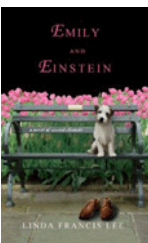
Georgia Bottoms is known in her small community as a beautiful, well-to-do, and devoutly Baptist Southern belle. Nobody knows that the family fortune has disappeared, and a single woman like Georgia needs an alternative, and discreet, means of income. In Georgia's case it is six well-heeled lovers.



**Minding Frankie** by Maeve Binchy.  
Binchy is back with a tale of joy, heartbreak, and hope in a close-knit Dublin community. When Noel learns that his former flame is terminally ill and pregnant with a child she claims is his, he agrees to take care of the baby girl once she's born. But as a recovering alcoholic whose demons are barely under control, Noel can't do it alone.

**When the Killings Done** by T. C. Boyle.

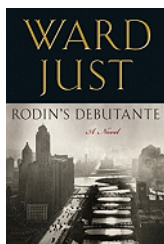
Principally set on the wild and sparsely inhabited Channel Islands off the coast of Santa Barbara, Boyle's powerful new novel combines pulse-pounding adventure with a socially conscious, richly humane tale about endangered animals and those who protect them.



**Emily and Einstein** by Linda Francis Lee.  
After learning that her marriage was based on lies, widow Emily Portman is forced on a journey to find out who her husband really was. Emily finds comfort in a scruffy dog named Einstein. But is Einstein's seemingly odd determination that she save herself enough to make Emily confront her own past?

**Rodin's Debutante** by Ward Just.

Lee Goodell's life decisions--to become a sculptor, to sojourn in the mean streets of the South Side, to marry into the haute-intellectual culture of Hyde Park--play out against the crude glamour of mid-century Chicago.



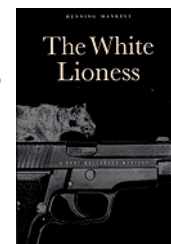
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## STAFF PICKS

### Elise's Picks

**The White Lioness: A Kurt Wallander Mystery** by Henning Mankell.

When Inspector Wallander and his crew are called in to investigate the brutal and seemingly senseless murder of an ordinary Swedish housewife, they discover some baffling clues that seem to point to a South African connection. Soon Wallander is locked in a deadly duel with a ruthless former KGB agent, who has been hired to train an assassin of a public figure who is revered worldwide. Kurt Wallander is an unlikely hero. The melancholy, middle aged detective is easy to underestimate, but he is astute and his decency and doggedness make him a relentless foe. Sadly, this month will see the publication of the final Wallander mystery, so it is fitting to feature the novel that's credited with turning this widely admired series into an international hit.



**Swamplandia!** by Karen Russell.

How to describe this wild and wonderful novel? The exotic setting is a down on its luck Florida alligator-wrestling park. The characters are unique, but the themes are universal. The saga of the Bigtree family begins with the death of Hilola, the mother and star of the show.

Each of the children deals with her loss in a totally different way. *Swamplandia!* is a coming-of-age story with a magical odyssey at its heart. Highly inventive and beautifully written, it reminded me of the joy of discovering another alternative universe—John Irving's *The World According to Garp*.

### Dorothy's Picks

**The Paris Wife** by Paula McClain.

In 1920 Ernest Hemingway met Hadley Richardson. He was a struggling 21-year old writer, and she was a 28-year old aspiring musician still living in her familial home. This fictionalized portrait of their whirlwind courtship and marriage explores how the pair's individual needs often conflicted with their love for each other. With a cast of characters including Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce, this book is a treat for anyone fascinated by the American expatriate literary scene in 1920s Paris. Coupled with *A Moveable Feast*, which recounts Ernest and Hadley's life through Hemingway's eyes, *The Paris Wife* would be a good choice for a book group discussion.



**Mr. Chartwell** by Rebecca Hunt.

Winston Churchill is said to have been plagued by depression that he called a "black dog." In *Mr. Chartwell*, the author uses this as a conceit for her novel. Mr. Chartwell is a large anthropomorphized black dog, who imposes his unwanted presence on both Churchill and on Esther Hammerhans, a young widow who is a librarian at the House of Commons. Set in the days leading up to Churchill's official retirement from Parliament in 1964, this clever and original novel explores the burden of depression and the possible antidotes to its menace.

