

## People of the Book Selections for 2009-2010

### September 8, 2009

*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon

Complete with golems and magic and miraculous escapes and evil nemeses and even hand-to-hand Antarctic battle, it pursues the most important questions of love and war, dreams and art, across pages brimming with longing and hope. Samuel Klayman--self-described little man, city boy, and Jew--first meets Josef Kavalier when his mother shoves him aside in his own bed, telling him to make room for their cousin, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague. It's the beginning, however unlikely, of a beautiful friendship.

### October 6, 2009

*Other People's Houses* by Lore Segal

Originally published in 1964 and hailed by critics including Cynthia Ozick and Elie Wiesel, *Other People's Houses* is Lore Segal's internationally acclaimed semi-autobiographical first novel. Nine months after Hitler takes Austria, a ten-year-old girl leaves Vienna aboard a children's transport that is to take her and several hundred children to safety in England. For the next seven years she lives in "other people's houses," the homes of the wealthy Orthodox Jewish Levines, the working-class Hoopers, and two elderly sisters in their formal Victorian household.

### November 3, 2009 One book One Jewish Community

*All Other Nights* by Dara Horn

A Civil War spy page-turner meets an exploration of race and religion in 19th-century America in Horn's enthralling latest. Jacob Rappaport, the 19-year-old scion of a wealthy Jewish import-export family, flees home and enlists in the Union army to avoid an arranged marriage. When his superiors discover his unique connections, he is sent on espionage missions that reveal an American Jewish population divided by the Mason-Dixon line, but united by business, religious and family ties. After being sent to assassinate his uncle in New Orleans on Passover, Jacob's next assignment proves even more daunting: marry the feisty Confederate spy Eugenia Levy. What starts out as a dangerous game for both Jacob and Eugenia ends up being a genuine romance, fraught with the potential for peril, betrayal, tragedy and redemption.

### December 1, 2009

*The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit* by Lucette Lagnado

In this stunning memoir is the author's father, Leon Lagnado, a prosperous businessman in Cairo during and after World War II, one of the city's most elegant boulevardiers, who spent his nights in the restaurants, cafes, dance halls and casinos of what was then "the most cosmopolitan city in the world." Impeccably dressed in suits made by Cairo's finest tailors, he romanced the city's most beautiful women, did business with French colonial merchants, gambled with wealthy Egyptians and socialized with British officers. Though there was severe rationing in the city during the war, "the nightlife flourished and cafe society preened and the hedonistic streak of the city went almost unchecked."

### January 5, 2010

*A Murder on the Kibbutz* by Batya Gur

In Gur's third mystery, clever, charming Israeli investigator Michael Ohayon, whom readers fell in love with in *Saturday Morning Murder* and *Literary Murder*, must once again put his skills to work to solve a murder, this time within the complex, closed society of a kibbutz.

**February 2, 2010**

*The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World* by Kati Marton

In this very insightful work the lives of only nine people, saved from the Holocaust, are delved into and their impact on the world shown. John Von Nueman, Edward Teller and Robert Capa are only a few of these. The idea is partly to give a slice of life of the Hungarian Jews who were able to flee, showing how they made new lives and impacted the world. But the more sad and disturbing question is, imagine the contribution the 400,000 or more Hungarian Jews could have had, had the German Nazis and their collaborators not murdered them, gassing them all as they were deported in just a few weeks in 1944, destroying in one breadth an entire world.

**March 2, 2010**

*The Muslim Next Door: The Qu'ran, the Media, and That Veil Thing* by Sumbul Ali-Karamali

Since 9/11, stories about Muslims and the Islamic world have flooded headlines, politics, and water-cooler conversations all across the country. And, although Americans hear about Islam on a daily basis, there remains no clear explanation of Islam or its people. *The Muslim Next Door* offers easy-to-understand yet academically sound answers to these questions while also dispelling commonly held misconceptions. Written from the point of view of an American Muslim, the book addresses what readers in the Western world are most curious about, beginning with the basics of Islam and how Muslims practice their religion before easing into more complicated issues like jihad, Islamic fundamentalism, and the status of women in Islam.

**April 13, 2010**

*He, She, It* by Marge Piercy

In this diverting tale of the 21st century, Piercy explores a world where information has become a commodity more precious than gold.

**May 4, 2010**

*The Girl from Foreign* by Sadia Shepard

Besides being a personal memoir and a portrait of a family that includes the world's three major monotheistic religions, "The Girl From Foreign" is a meditation on how our individual memories inevitably slip away, either into oblivion or into that dull collective consciousness we call history.

The main, organizing event here occurred in 1947, when India at once gained its independence from Britain and split into two countries -- Hindus remaining primarily in the main body of the subcontinent; Muslims peeling off to the west and east, to form Pakistan. (Decades later, East Pakistan became Bangladesh.) ss

**June 1, 2010**

*The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer

The letters comprising this small charming novel begin in 1946, when single, 30-something author Juliet Ashton (nom de plume Izzy Bickerstaff) writes to her publisher to say she is tired of covering the sunny side of war and its aftermath. When Guernsey farmer Dawsey Adams finds Juliet's name in a used book and invites articulate—and not-so-articulate—neighbors to write Juliet with their stories, the book's epistolary circle widens, putting Juliet back in the path of war stories.