

Beach Reads for the Thinking Gal and Guy

By Sophie Braccini



Steve Tollefson's list of recommended books:

There's nothing more exhilarating than a passionate person talking about what moves them most. That's what happened on Thursday the 28th, when Stephen Tollefson, Director and Lecturer at UC Berkeley – Undergraduate Education, talked about “forgotten treasures” at the Lafayette Library. Steve is a writer himself and has published two volumes of witty books about grammar called GrammarGrams and several short stories.

It was a very special “Sweet Thursday,” sponsored by the Friends of Lafayette library (FLL) and supported by the Lafayette Book Store. About 110 people showed up to hear about lost treasures and talk about favorite books. Stephen Tollefson has a special gift for presenting books, many of which are forgotten treasures from well known and less well known authors. He can arouse each and everyone's curiosity.

The presentation was interactive with many in the audience giving their own impressions and opinions on books that have a special meaning for them. Books presented by Steve were on sale at the meeting and it was a challenge keeping fresh books on the table since they were eagerly snapped up. Linda Peterson, President of the Board of the FLL, and a published Mystery writer in her own right, was the moderator of the evening. She concluded by highlighting the importance of books and places where people can share common interests: “Books bring us together to talk about the things we love.”

Earth Abides, George R. Stewart

Post-apocalyptic life in the Bay Area. Ecology. Pandemics. But written in the '40s.

Storm, George R. Stewart

The “natural history” of a major Pacific Storm that hits Northern California.

The Ninth Wave, Eugene Burdick

Surfers, California politics, the new science of public opinion polls.

The Sibyl, Par Lagerkvist

The wandering Jew meets one of the women who was the Oracle of Delphi: goat gods, weird children, and philosophy. Sally Field is not involved.

Alexander's Bridge, Willa Cather

Her first novel, set in Boston and London of all places.

The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles, Herman Melville

Novella: one story for each of the Galapagos Islands.

Saint Manuel the Good, Martyr, Miguel de Unamuno

Novella: a priest who no longer believes continues for the sake of his parishioners.

And if it's been a while, how about:

The Octopus, Frank Norris

Farmers in the Central Valley fight the railroads. Great local color of the Central Valley and San Francisco. Makes you hate The Establishment.

Big Rock Candy Mountain, Wallace Stegner

An epic about the late 19th Century-early 20th Century West. Alberta, Montana, Salt Lake City, Reno, and Lake Tahoe.

The Sea Wolf, Jack London

A ferry accident in The Bay sends a man on a harrowing journey across the Pacific.

And a few more women writers:

Carson McCullers,

Ballad of the Sad Café, Member of the Wedding, and short stories

Katherine Mansfield, short stories.

We've all read “The Garden Party” but there are lots of other good ones.

Willa Cather, especially O! Pioneers!

My Antonia and Death Comes for the Archbishop.

Zora Neale Hurston

Their Eyes were Watching God

Dorothy Parker

Poems

Sigurd Undset,

but instead of Kristen Lavransdottir, find the modern novels, Madame Dortha and Ida Elizabeth 1928

Sarah Orne Jewett,

Country of the Pointed Firs

Mildred Walker,

Winter Wheat

Dorothy Johnson,

The Hanging Tree (she also wrote A Man Called Horse and The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance). All three books made into successful, well-received movies.

Jean Rhys

The Wide Sargasso Sea, Voyage in the Dark, After Leaving Mr. MacKenzie—

Laurie Colwin,

Shine On, Bright and Dangerous Object (as well as her more famous Family Happiness and Happy All the Time)

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