# Nancy Pearl Presents: Books That Make Great Gifts A Reading list

### Fiction

#### The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Carter

The best-selling author of *The Emperor of Ocean Park* envisions a post antebellum America where Lincoln has survived his assassination attempt and is tried for impeachment for abusing his Constitutional authority. Abigail Canner, a young black Oberlin graduate, proves instrumental in his defense in this stirring courtroom drama.

#### The Double Game, Dan Fesperman

Edwin Cage is a down-at-heels public relations executive whose journalism career fell apart after he printed a story about a famous spy novelist's scandalous past. Thirty years later, he receives cryptic messages indicating that there was more to the story than originally met the eye, and he's off on a trans-continental chase that leads to some surprising discoveries about his own past.

#### Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk, Ben Fountain

Billy Lynn is nineteen years old and already a decorated war hero. Home in between tours, his unit is part of a government-sponsored Victory Tour designed to drum up support for the war. This National Book Award nominee (and debut novel) tracks his experience as he navigates professional football players, Hollywood producers, his family, and his memories during one fateful day.

#### Crashed, Timothy Hallinan

Hallinan displays his considerable comic talents in the first of his Junior Bender series, which focuses on a cat burglar turned private investigator. Blackmailed by a mob boss into finding out who's sabotaging the set of the boss' latest project (a porn film starring a former child star), Junior finds himself pulled into Hollywood's seedy underbelly. Hallinan's deft comic tone and colorful characters have earned him comparisons to Donald Westlake and Carl Hiassen.

#### The Fear Artist, Timothy Hallinan

The fifth book in Edgar-nominee Hallinan's Rafferty series finds travel writer Poke Rafferty in the midst of a government cover-up. When Rafferty collides with an overweight businessman on a Bangkok sidewalk, the businessman mutters three words to Rafferty and soon dies from gunshot wounds in his back. The Thai police deny that the man was shot, and Rafferty finds himself in the crosshairs of a dangerous villain who will go to any lengths to conceal his secrets.

#### The Cowboy and the Cossack, Clair Huffaker

The latest release from Nancy's Book Lust Rediscoveries spins the tale of fifteen Montana cowboys who sail to Vladivistok with 500 head of cattle to transport over the Siberian wilderness. Tensions mount when they realize they're to be escorted by a team of Cossacks. When they realize they're under attack by the Tartar army, the two unlikely allies must work together in this stirring saga written by screenwriter Huffaker.

#### The Color of Lightning, Paulette Jiles

Freed slave Britt Johnson dreams of moving his family down to Texas to start a freight business, but during the journey their band is victim to a Sioux and Kinowa attack, leaving Britt's eldest son dead and his wife and children kidnapped. Jiles used primary sources as the basis for her deeply felt novel about revenge and reunion.

#### The Towers of Trebizond, Rose Macauley

First published in 1956, this comic romp showcases the misadventures of a group of English missionaries as they make their way from Istanbul to Trebizond. Macauley (who



was friends with the likes of Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forester) uses their run-ins with spies and recalcitrant camels to ask deeper questions about maintaining your faith in the modern world.

## "A book is a gift you can open again and again" -Garrison Keillor

#### The Silver Linings Playbook, Matthew Quick

The film version has been released to rave reviews, so discover this enormously pleasurable novel about a high school teacher's struggle to assimilate back into society after a four-year stint in a mental health facility. Quick's compassionate take on sensitive subject material helps create a cast of characters with whom you'll instantly connect.

#### The Last Night at the Ritz, Elizabeth Savage

Another of Nancy's Book Lust Rediscoveries, this book, out-of-print for more than twenty years, depicts the birthday reunion of the unnamed narrator with her three college friends at Boston's Ritz-Carlton. Spanning the course of the day, this enigmatic novel examines how memory and the past shape our current relationships.

#### There but for the, Ali Smith

A Washington Post Notable Book of 2011, Smith's drily witty novel centers around Miles Garth, an uptight account executive who becomes the unwitting object of national fascination after he locks himself in a bathroom to escape a boring dinner party. Through the elliptical perspective of the four other guests (none of whom have more than a passing acquaintance with Miles), we get a glimpse into how the strangers in our lives affect our existence.

#### Burr, Gore Vidal

The recent passing of Gore Vidal has sparked a renewed interest in the legendary writer's work. In this novel told from the perspective of Aaron Burr, Gore displays his considerable talents as he sheds light on the Founding Father and America in its infancy.

#### Among Others, Jo Walton

Winner of both the Hugo and Nebula awards, this inventive novel pays homage to the great science fiction and fantasy books of the past while also painting a dark tale of warped familial bonds. Morwenna Phelps was left permanently injured after her half-mad mother sought to twist Morwenna's magical powers for evil. Resettled in England with her estranged father, Morwenna tentatively takes up magic again, leading to an inevitable showdown with her mother.

#### Code Name Verity, Elizabeth Wein

When young Allied spy, Verity, is shot down in Nazi Germany, her fate seems sealed. Yet this compelling novel takes unexpected turns as Verity's "confession" to her Nazi captors reveals hidden layers of her background as well as the fate of her co-pilot and best friend.

### Nonfiction

#### America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation, David Goldfield

In his provocative new book, historian Goldfield studies the root causes of the Civil War through the rise of evangelical Protestantism within the Republican party and America's transformation to an industrialized society. Goldfield's meticulous research makes historical figures come alive as well as bring the horror of war to the reader.

#### We Learn Nothing: Essays and Cartoons, Tim Kreider

Kreider's elegant essays examine uncomfortable truths about the human condition that will leave you alternately cringing and laughing in recognition. His text is accompanied by his cartoons, which will be appreciated by fans of his popular comic strip *The Pain – When Will it End?* 

#### The End of Your Life Book Club, Will Schwalbe

Schwalbe's memoir of the last two years of his mother's life, where he and she started an informal book club, celebrates the life-affirming aspect of reading. Their expansive conversations about the array of books that they read serve not only as a love letter to books, but also a tribute to the big-hearted and funny woman who was Schwalbe's mother.

