

# Popular Threads on Solosez

## Holiday Reading List

.....well, I guess some of them could be given as gifts. But only to the worthy. And here's my first nominee:

John Berendt's "The City of Falling Angels."

The #1 Ladies Detective Agency series, followed by Alexander McCall Smith's other series. It took me a long time to get around to even considering this series, but once I did, it was like eating bonbons. The language and style are deceptively elegant. McCall Smith, who is a law professor, gives the reader some excellent lessons in writing clearly.

The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafron. Magical.

Snow by Orhan Pamuk. The clash between radical Islam and Western ideals in Turkey.

Ariel by Jose Enrique Rodo.

All of Witold Rybczynski's books: Home, Waiting for the Weekend, The Most Beautiful House in the World, Looking Around: A Journey through Architecture, A Clearing in the Distance, City Life, The Perfect House, One Good Turn: A Natural History of the Screwdriver and the Screw.

jennifer rose, Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico

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" Gettysburg" by Newt Gingrich and Bill Fortschen.

An interesting view of how Lee \*won\*. Very, very realistic to the period, good description of battle. I'm desperately waiting for the sequels to come out in paperback.

Jay S. Goldenberg, Chicago, Illinois

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Read the sequels some time ago...the benefit of a good library system in one case and of Barnes & Noble in the other. Gettysburg was far better than the others though.

Alan P. Bernstein

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"Freddy and Fredericka" by Mark Helprin is a laugh-out-loud funny book about the Prince of Wales and his wife who are sent to America to conquer the colonies to prove he's worthy to be king. Ellen Buckley, Westminster, Colorado



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## Books

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How timely! I really need a new reading list. I want to read "Devil in the White City," and also the first book by the "Blink" (Gladwell?) guy. Right now I am slogging through "The Fortress of Solitude" by Jonathan Lethem. He wrote "Motherless Brooklyn," which was great, but this is really slow. So, throw them at me.

In addition, I listen to books on tape in the car (just finished the latest Elizabeth George "No One as a Witness" which wasn't her best). So, if there are any car-worthy books out there (not too pithy please), include those as well.

Has anyone read the newer Zaide Smith? I liked, but did not love "White Teeth." I loved "Cavalier & Klay" by Michael Chabon. That was brilliant. If you never read "The Corrections," definitely read it (Jonathan Franzen). That also goes for "Prodigal Summer" by Barbara Kingsolver. I think that's it for my posting limit for the day.

Andrea Goldman. Newton, Massachusetts

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I never seem "current" in reading (I have a backlog of several thousand books to get through), but the more recent "current" book I've read is Terry Pratchett's newest "Thud." (For those who don't know, Pratchett has been writing humorous fantasy for years, and I think he may be the funniest writer I've read -- and, I'm a big fan of Twain and Wodehouse).

From last year, I'm reading "Fraud of the Century" by Roy Morris Jr. -- This is not about the Bush-Gore election, as some may suppose, but about its very real predecessor -- the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876.

Earlier this year, I read Kurt Eichenwald's book about the Enron mess, which was fascinating (however, I don't remember the name).

And, finally, I just read Brian Burrough's book about the popular gangsters of the 1930s and the birth of the FBI (again, can't remember the name). Many don't realize that Dillinger, Bonnie & Clyde, Baby Face Nelson, Machine Gun Kelly, and the Barker-Karpis gang all operated within the same 3 year period, and that knew and worked with each other. Couldn't put this one down, and recommend it very much.

I like Evanovich too (and everything else of that ilk; try the books by Liz Evans, although they're tough to find -- you need to locate someone carrying English editions, but sometimes Barnes & Noble online or Amazon works), but I stay away from the cat fancier books. No particular reason, and I like cats; something about the idea makes me uneasy.

Barry Lippitt, Southfield, Michigan

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Personally, I'm partial to Lillian Jackson Braun's Cat Who ... series

definitely light weight. I also like Evanovich's Number series about Stephanie Plum as an incompetent bounty hunter in Trenton though this is a good deal racier then the Cat Who .. series.

John A. Davidson

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My favorite, well one of my favorite, authors is Thorne Smith, best known for Topper, but some of his others are better.

Jonathan Bressman. Florham Park, New Jersey

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May I add: Saturday, by Ian McEwan; Never Let Me Go, by K. Ishiguro; Edward J. Costello, Santa Monica, California

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For history I have finished "1776" and recommend it as perhaps the best exposition of the character of George Washington I have encountered. The research reveals much of a very close and intimate portrait of the First President and some fascinating details of many Revolutionary War battles and retreats. Although American History is my present teaching focus, I marvel at the degree to which new insights surface from the pursuit of so many perspectives.

Dick Howland, Amherst, Massachusetts

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John Lawton, I've read his "Blackout", "Flesh Wounds" and "Bluffing Mr. Churchill" and am trying to get a couple of the other books in the series.

Also:

"Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell" for a Terry Pratchett type take on english history;

I also just started "The Water Room" by Christopher Fowler, so far, so good.

I got those three from our library system.

There's also:

Riptide

Old Flames

A Little White Death

in the series; none of which are available locally

I'm going to have to bite the bullet and order them from Amazon or such.

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

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This is a great topic.

"Devil in the White City" is an excellent choice as are any of the historical fiction books by Jeff Shaara, (his father wrote "Killer Angels"), "The Bridge" by McCullough (recently reissued) "1776" as Dick recommended and anything by Halberstam; Ambrose's, "Citizen Soldiers" or "D-Day" and finally a disturbing book about the fall of the Twin Towers, "102 Minutes." For murder any of the Prey books by John Sanford, (although I'd start at the beginning to really really enjoy the characters - "Rules of Prey") and for just good mystery anything by Nelson DeMille. And for the guys, who like a little fiction with their military exploits, the "Corps" or the "Brotherhood" series by WEB Griffen.

Andrea, and books close to you might be "Emperor of Ocean Park" by Steven Carter, it takes place in DC and Martha's Vineyard and Boston. Ted Williams, by Leigh Montville, best biography I've ever read. A great book on tape is Dracula. Wonderful for a long car trip. Promise.....

Can't wait to pick up the other recommendations. After being a voracious reader, law school destroyed that simple pleasure and fortunately for the past few years I'm finally back to enjoying the escape a good book can bring. Thanks for the recommendations. Steve Satter

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Do not read "Devil in the White City" before bed time. It'll keep you up.

Shane L. Jimison

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Excellent mystery/conspiracy theory/pulp entertainment read is the Straw Men trilogy by Michael Marshall...1) "The Straw Men"; 2) "The Upright Man"; and 3) "Blood of Angels"...kind of obscure, but worth seeking out

William L. Bands

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Delightful stocking stuffer is The Little Book of Snowflakes by Kenneth Libbrecht. \$7.95. It has over a hundred beautiful photos of different snowflakes, along with snow-related quotations and snowflake facts. I picked up copies at my local bookseller's around the corner, Sam Weller's.

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/>

Joyce Maughan, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Off Center Hackman & Pierson Our Endangered Values Carter Any of

the newer Spenser novels by Parker  
The World is Flat - Friedman  
One Bullet Away - Fick

So many books, so little time....

Jim Moriarty, Cresco, Iowa

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Philip Roth--particularly Letting Go.

Richard O'Connor

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I think that I have already suggested "1776", but if not it is great for history buffs. As for social issues (our line of work) my younger daughter is a Children's Protective Services officer in Phoenix. Buying her a Christmas gift I asked a moonlighting local similarly employed in his other job at Barnes & Noble. He said that the best author he had encountered, and a good readable writer, is Dave Pelzer. He wrote A Child Called "It", The Lost Boy, A Man Named Dave, and Help Yourself. In my practice and thinking about the foundations of legal practice, I find these books easy to read, insightful and very helpful in understanding people in a side of life I can imagine and partially observe, but not experience now. Whatever I have experienced is not the same as Mr. Pelzer's focus. There are about fifty other books I have read this year, many old favorites which are part of the English curriculum.

At the moment I am reading Steven Jay Gould, Ever Since Darwin, a really wonderful author, scientist with more to say than any one I have ever met or read. I recently finished Dead Reckoning by Michae Baden, M.D. and Marion Roach great for those enamored of "CSI" and its progeny. Another gem for those who love the language and prefer to be versatile as well as erudite in speaking and writing, Anu Garg's second book, another word a day is a "romp through some of the most unusual and intriguing Words in English" and plain fun as well mind stretching. He writes a word a day blog and is resourceful. His choices are often familiar, but he always finds a number of new, fascinating and timely words which I should have known when I had something useful to say. Learn and enjoy at the same time and it is a "pick it up, lay it aside" type book.

Enjoy the fire and the easy chair while the sub-freezing gale outside blows itself out in the wintry wasteland. Dick

Dick Howland, Amherst, Massachusetts

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By the way, to everyone: if you liked "1776," you'll \*love\* "Patriots" by A.J. Langguth. (I liked "1776" myself, but did not find it quite as inspiring.) One of my favorite non-fiction books of all time; along with "Son of the Morning Star" by Evan Connell.

Gould's books of essays are really entertaining.

My favorite book of the last year: "Old Man's War" by John Scalzi. I couldn't quite decide if it was better than Haldeman's "The Forever War" or not, but it was definitely better than "Starship Troopers" by Heinlein, and those are the two books with which it is frequently compared.

Mike Koenecke, Richardson, Texas

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Dick, I'd agree on both 1776 and Ever Since Darwin, or anything Stephen Jay Gould wrote on biology. I'd also suggest, for those who haven't read it, Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat." He understands the impact of that changes in telecommunications technology and cost are having on any U.S. industry that can be outsourced. Unfortunately, that includes a good chunk of legal practice, no matter how much lawyers try to deny it. It's not a pretty picture for our children's generation.

Mark Del Bianco

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For a change of pace -- a more unusual set, perhaps, concerning some of the few options women had in the past: (1) Virgins of Venice: Broken Vows and Cloistered Lives In the Renaissance Convent, by Mary Laven; and (2) Sex With Kings: Five Hundred Years of Adultery, Power, Rivalry, and Revenge [about royal mistresses], by Eleanor Herman.

Gini Nelson, New Mexico

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Currently reading The World is Flat by Thomas Friedman. Very interesting and enlightening. Not over the head of this non-techie, either.

Recently read and recommend

David McCullough, 1776 Esther Forbes, Paul Revere and the World He Lived In (won Pulitzer Prize)

Mark Levin, Men in Black\

Philippa Gregory, The Other Boleyn Girl. Fascinating look at the politics at the Court of Henry VIII. The other Boleyn girl is Mary, Anne's sister, who had an affair with Henry first and bore him two children.

The latest Laurie King, can't remember the name. About the later years of Sherlock Holmes with new sidekick, Mary Russell.

Found a great new author (at least I have not heard of her) and read her first three books: Jacqueline Winspear, Maisie Dobbs; Birds of a Feather; Pardonable Lies. About a private investigator/psychologist, set in post WWI England. Lots of flashbacks to WWI, where she served as a nurse. Definitely a cut above the usual detective novel.

I have also read the Dave Pelzer books mentioned by Dick Howland. Interesting but tough reading. His story is supposedly the worst case of child abuse ever in the state of California.

Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women

Sharon Campbell, Texas

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Someone recommended sci-fi authors such as Heinlein--but I don't think anyone mentioned Ray Bradbury ("Martian Chronicles" in particular) who is, in my opinion the master from whom the others learned their craft. Now, Asimov is the resident genius--but he's in a class all by himself since he writes in far more areas than sci-fi.

As for Bradbury, one of his most charming books was written in 1953 when he was still unknown--"Green Shadows, White Whale." It's about his time in Ireland writing the screen play for "Moby Dick" which John Huston was going to film. Bradbury focuses on the people of Ireland and, secondarily, about his relationship with and the foibles of John Huston. One of the stories he tells, related by Finn, the pub owner, is about how during "The Troubles," and the "Easter Rebellion" of 1916, the local IRA lads took it upon themselves to burn down Lord Kilgottens great house. "Did ya bring the matches?," Casey asks. "No," Tumulty responds--"we'll borrow some from the house."

Richard O'Connor

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Finally got a copy of "Street Without Joy" by Bernard Fall. Written in the early 1960's about the French defeat in Southeast Asia (or French IndoChina).

About half the way through reading it and I am at a total loss of how the heck we ( USA) got so far into Vietnam with a book like that telling us how we would lose it, no matter how well we fought or how many battles we would win.

I do not intend this as Pol but rather as history. It is from someone who got drafted out of law school (1969) and who almost ended up there (I was diverted along with a lot of others, sitting at Oakland Army Base ready to board the plane to go), who lost several high school and college classmates and other friends there and who knows quite a few combat veterans from Vietnam.

Art Mouton, Louisiana

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The French were far from being "amateurs." But they could not conceive that the Viet Minh, a rag-tag little army wearing Ho Chi Minh sandals and fighting with old Chinese and Russian rifles, could possibly defeat them. They were wrong. (As were the Americans--for 25 years.) They made a

horrible strategic mistake--Dien Ben Phu is in a valley surrounded by mountains. General Giap had his artillery hauled up by hand to the high ground and rained artillery fire down on the French. I wasn't there at the time, but Air America was one of the suppliers by air-drop of ammunition, food, etc., to the French-- flying C-119s (several of which were shot down).

Commencing in 1953, Dr. Fall (a French born historian who taught at Howard University) wrote a number of books about Vietnam before his death (killed by a land mine in 1967 north of Hue while on a patrol with the Marines). His books were all the product of his personal experiences on the ground in VN.

Other books by Bernard Fall: "Viet-Nam Witness," "The Two Viet-Nams," "Street Without Joy" and "Hell in a Very Small Place" (also about Dien Ben Phu).

Richard O'Connor

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If you substitute "American" for French in your message below, you have a good description of our '60's. I've never read Fall's book, but will look for it. You should read Graham Greene's "The Quiet American," which covers much of the same ground and presciently foreshadows our involvement and naiveté in Vietnam. It was written in the mid '50's, I believe. It's a great book. Can you tell I like Graham Greene?

Mark Del Bianco

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...along the same geo-political lines, Making of a Quagmire by Halberstam and while not as political We Were Soldiers by Hal Moore, (Mel Gibson made a pretty good movie out of this) A Bright Shining Lie by Neil Sheehan. For WWII I recommend anything by Ambrose with D-Day and Citizen Soldiers topping the list and finally a brutally honest book, Flyboys by James Bradley.

Steve Satter

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Delightful stocking stuffer is The Little Book of Snowflakes by Kenneth Libbrecht. \$7.95. It has over a hundred beautiful photos of different snowflakes, along with snow-related quotations and snowflake facts. I picked up copies at my local bookseller's around the corner, Sam Weller's.

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/>

Joyce Maughan, Salt Lake City, Utah

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The Extravagant Universe by ??? (I forget) - this is the story of the



Harvard team of Astrophysicists who discovered that the expansion of the Universe is actually accelerating and reviving Einstein's suggestion of a cosmological constant and thus revolutionizing cosmology. This was done by the observations of Supernova in distant galaxies. These guys should get the Nobel Prize, IMHO.

Sterling DeRamus, Alabama

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