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# Newsletter

Selecting Discussible Books Since 1994

## Join the Author on Opening Night!

Read & Discuss Now;  
Watch Later  
July 2009

Dear Charlie,

Classics come back; history comes to life. New discussible books and films abound this summer, along with some really exciting chances for you and your book group to celebrate.

It's all here in this month's **Reading Group Choices** newsletter!

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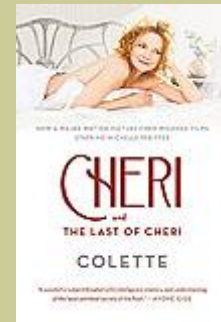
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### Early 20th Century Classic Returns as Current Film



Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette (1873-1954) was an important figure of the early twentieth century French Literature society. Colette achieved critical approval and prominence in women's literature for her defined and insightful writing and her perceptive and keen understanding of human relationships. Colette's talent of making the reader experience what the characters are feeling is the essential element in the novel, *Chéri* - an excellent portrayal of

## Walk the Pope Joan Red Carpet!

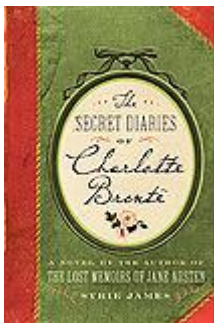
Join Donna Woolfolk Cross, author of **Pope Joan**, as she walks the red carpet on the night of the **Pope Joan** United States movie premiere! The random drawing includes two tickets to the movie premiere, plus round-trip airfare for two from any location in the continental United States or Canada, and one-night hotel accommodations for you to share with your guest.



As you may recall, Pope Joan was the woman who some say rose to rule Christianity in the ninth century as the one and only woman ever to sit on the Throne of St. Peter. It's a fascinating look at history with a woman whose courage makes her a heroine for every age.

**Enter for a Chance to Join Donna!**

## History in a New Light



If you like exploring history in new ways, perhaps your group would like to discuss **The Secret Diaries of Charlotte Bronte**. It's a look at Charlotte's story, just as she might have written it herself. From Syrie James, the acclaimed, bestselling author of **The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen**, comes a powerfully-compelling, intensely-researched literary feat that blends historical fact and fiction to explore the passionate heart and unquiet soul of Charlotte Bronte.

The past and present wrap around finely wrought characters who reveal the road home in *The New York Times* bestselling author Jacqueline Sheehan's **Now & Then**. It is a miraculous evocation of a breathtaking place in a volatile age filled with rich characters and one unforgettable dog named Madigan.

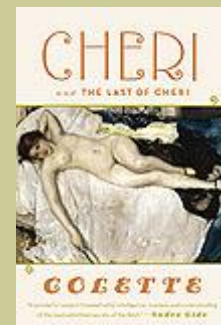


## War - and Its Effects

the relationship between an older woman and a younger man.

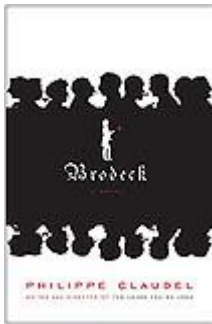
Set against the backdrop of the Roaring Twenties, with dazzling glimpses of French culture before and after World War I, **Chéri** is a mesmerizing portrait of desire--and its aftermath. The love affair captured in this sparkling work raises timeless questions about the nature of power and longing in relationships.

The film **Chéri**, based on Colette's novel, is now a major motion picture starring Michelle Pfeiffer, Kathy Bates and Rupert Friend.



\*\*\*\*\*

Two new titles set in times of war provide intrigue, excitement, and the basis for great discussions.



From the author and director of the film, *I've Loved You So Long*, comes a new title, ***Brodeck***. Set in unnamed town and place, Philippe Claudel's main character, Brodeck, returns home from a great war. A stranger in his village is murdered, and Brodeck is instructed by the authorities to write a report of the incident that is essentially a whitewash. Brodeck writes the official version while he sets down his version of the truth in a separate, parallel narrative revealing his history and the secrets of the villagers. Readers of J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*, and *Kafka* will be captivated by Brodeck.

***Gifts of War*** captures the era and the fates of men and women caught in the sweep of history, against the broader landscape of England in wartime. During the Christmas Truce of 1914, Hal Montgomery, a British soldier, is given a photo by a German soldier, Wilhelm Wetzlar, and they make a pact. Hal promises to find his enemy's English girlfriend, Sam, and let her know her fiancé is alive and thinking of her. But on returning to England, Hal meets and falls in love with Wilhelm's girlfriend. Hal keeps the pact with Wilhelm a secret, thus keeping the reader on edge as the betrayal grows. The author, McKenzie Ford (a pseudonym for a British historian), tells a tale of romance, adventure, and intrigue in a remarkable narrative that explores what made War World I so tragic, so revolutionary, and so exciting.

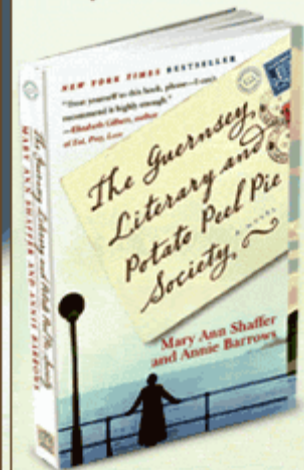


Circumstance Leads to Discovery

The beloved bestseller,  
perfect for book clubs

**“A JEWEL . . .  
poignant and  
keenly observed.”**

—*People* ★★★★★ (out of four)



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**Choices**

**[Featured Books](#)**

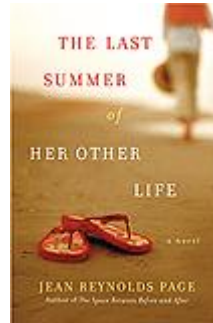
**[What's New?](#)**

Have you or any of your book group friends faced unusual circumstances that caused you to discover new things about yourselves? If so, you may want to discuss three new titles.

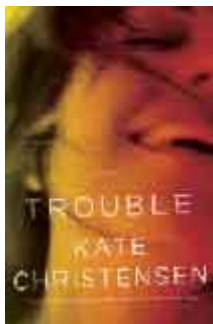


**The Best of Times** is a masterfully crafted page-turner. With intense characters and centered on one devastating moment that involves them all, plot-twist queen Penny Vincenzi vividly captures how the actions of one person can dramatically affect many in the blink of an eye.

And from Jean Reynolds Page, the critically acclaimed author of **The Space Between Before and After**, comes **The Last Summer of Her Other Life**. Jules' life is changing. Pregnant, single and almost 40, she moves across country to prepare to be a mother. But Jules



new-found life is upended when a local teen accuses her of "inappropriate sexual contact." Her search for the truth about the troubled teenager becomes, for Jules, a first step toward discovering the woman she wishes to be.



**Trouble** is a vibrant story of female friendship and midlife sexual awakening from the acclaimed Kate Christensen, author of **The Great Man**. Donna Seamen, reviewer from *Booklist*, comments, "Bewitching readers with a narcotic blend of eroticism and suspense, Christensen raises unsettling questions about our inability to understand ourselves or others."

## Afghan Women's Writing Project



You can read original works by Afghan women at a new blog for the **Afghan Women's Writing Project**, founded by Masha Hamilton, author of the soon-to-be-released **31 Hours** along with reading group favorites, **The Distance Between Us** and **The Camel Bookmobile**. According to Hamilton, the effort "was begun as a way to allow the voices of Afghan women-too often silenced-to enter the world."

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*During my two visits to Afghanistan, I've been inspired by the grace, courage and determination of many women I've met: child brides, women imprisoned for fleeing abusive husbands, war widows surviving against numerous odds. As the Taliban regains power, particularly in the south of the country, these women's freedoms are again threatened. I hope you will take a moment to read these compelling blog entries."*

## Your Own Discussible Choices



Congratulations to Linda and **The Mountain Mamas Book Club** for winning the random drawing for this month's Discussible Book Choice!

*"**The Mountain Mamas Book Club** in Sheridan, WY, recently discussed **Infidel** by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. It is an exceptional book whose author is born in Somalia and spends her childhood and adolescence in Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya with her Muslim family. This is a memoir, and the author is very forthcoming about the lives of children and women in Muslim families. She is a bright youngster and begins to question her faith. How she escapes a harsh life and becomes a member of parliament in Holland makes worthy reading."*

**Linda, The Mountain Mamas Book Club, Sheridan, WY**

We enjoy hearing from book club members and sharing their choices with everyone. Please **let us know** about your group's discussible choices - you may win a book-related prize for every member of your reading group!

### [More Discussible Choices](#)

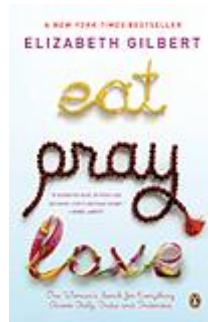
## SMART Summer Books

**The Houston Chronicle** showcased "**Hot titles available for summer reading**," observing that *"it is apparently one of the cardinal rules of the publishing industry: Books released in the summer must be the perfect accompaniment to days spent lazing on the beach. Publishers promise 'a breezy beach read' or 'a book in search of a beach.'* We all know what that really means: a book that doesn't require too much concentration or a book you can read with one eye while watching your kids with the other." As an alternative, the **Chronicle** suggested "some smart summer books to help

fire the synapses."

## Eat, Pray, Love on the Big Screen

According to *Variety*, Richard Jenkins, who earned an Oscar nomination for his performance in *The Visitor*, has signed to star opposite Julia Roberts in the film version of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. *Variety* noted that "Jenkins will play a Texan whom Roberts' character befriends at an Indian ashram. Brad Pitt and Dede Gardner are producing through their Plan B shingle." Filming begins in July on location in New York, Rome, India and Bali.



## The Most Inspirational Books

*The Telegraph* reported that Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* finished ahead of the *Bible* in a recent survey conducted by *OnePoll.com* that asked respondents to name their most inspirational book. The top five was rounded out by Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called It*, John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* and the *Diary of Anne Frank*.

## Science Fiction Novel of the Year



Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* and Ian MacLeod's *Song of Time* shared the John W. Campbell Award for the best science fiction novel of the year. James Gunn, director of the *Center for the Study of Science Fiction* at the University of Kansas, announced the co-winners.

The authors, who will accept their awards at the University of Kansas July 10, will be featured at the Campbell Conference July 11-12, where they will open a discussion about what's new in publishing and its effect on writing and reading.

## Newsweek's Book "Meta-List"

Newsweek crunched the numbers from 10 top books lists -- Modern Library, the New York Public Library, St. John's College reading list, Oprah's, [Reading Group Choices?], and more -- to come up with The Top 100 Books of All Time. It's a list of lists - a **Meta-List**. Do you agree with this list? Let the discussion begin!

**Happy Fourth of July, and thanks for keeping the joy of shared reading alive,**



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