

## A literary trip around the world

The beauty of reading fiction is that you can travel to so many different places and read rich descriptions about faraway places without ever leaving your sofa.

From Sweden we have the wildly popular Millennium trilogy by Steig Larsson. In the first book, "The girl with the dragon-tattoo" disgraced journalist Mikael Blomqvist is hired by aging business man Henrik Vanger to come to a remote Swedish island to investigate the cold case disappearance of his 16 year old grand-niece. On the day Harriet Vanger disappeared in 1966 the island was filled with Vanger relatives gathering for an important family dinner. As the story progresses Mikael is teamed up with the 24 year old Lisbeth Salander. Salander's brilliant computer skills and her photographic memory make her the perfect partner to solve the case even though her facial jewelry, colorful language and punk appearance confuse most around her. This series by Steig Larsson will be a page-turner for anyone who enjoys a taut, edgy, complex thriller.

Liz Jensen from England rates as one of the most inventive writers this year with her eco-thriller, "The rapture." After a horrific car accident which leaves her wheel-chair bound, art therapist Gabrielle Fox accepts a new job on the south coast of England at Oxsmith Adolescent Secure Psychiatric Hospital. Gabrielle is assigned patient Bethany Krall, an unstable and dangerous 16 year old who has stabbed her mother and despises her father, an evangelical preacher. After ECT therapy Bethany claims she can predict natural disasters. As Bethany's predictions become more frequent and accurate Gabrielle begins to wonder if Bethany is truly a visionary or a manipulative fraud. The prediction of a catastrophic disaster draws the attention of renowned scientists, fundamentalist Christians, and those close to Bethany into a story that spirals to a riveting conclusion. Liz Jensen writes with an intelligent and darkly comic sense of humor that makes this book unique.

Muriel Barbery from France has written an impressive second novel titled, "The elegance of the hedgehog." Renee is the 54 year old concierge of a Left Bank Paris apartment building for the wealthy. To the occupants she is predictable and crotchety but inside her apartment she is a brilliant self-taught student of literature and philosophy with a secret passion for Tolstoy. Paloma is a gifted 12 year old who lives upstairs and has decided she is going to end her life on her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday unless she finds "something in life worth living for." When the wealthy and charming Monsieur Ozu takes an apartment, the trio forms a friendship that will irrevocably alter each person's life.

Japanese author Yoko Ogawa who has won every major Japanese literary award brings us the novel, "The housekeeper and the professor." The professor is a brilliant mathematician who has only 80 minutes of short-term memory due to a head injury. The housekeeper, a single mother with a ten year old son, accepts the position after the previous nine housekeepers, did not work out. The professor and the housekeeper's son form an immediate bond due to their mutual love of baseball. Ogawa uses the language of math to pull these three characters' friendship together and it equates to a great story.

Anchee Min, author of "The Pearl of China," was born in Shanghai in 1957 under the Communist rule of Mao Zedong. While working in the fields of a labour camp she was chosen by Madame Mao to play the leading role in a Chinese propaganda film. Eventually she was able to leave China for the United States and began writing. Min's sixth novel tells the story of a young Chinese peasant named Willow who befriends Pearl S. Buck, daughter of American missionaries. Willow and Pearl's story spans eight decades as they grow, marry and communicate during Pearls' exile from China. "Pearl of China," is a wonderful blend of invention and historical detail that is a beautiful tribute to novelist Pearl Sydenstricker Buck.

On the West coast of the United States Jim Lynch has written his first novel set in Puget Sound called, "The highest tide." Thirteen year old Miles O'Malley is fascinated with sea-life in the bay where he lives, the writing of marine biologist Rachel Carson and his pretty twenty-year old neighbor Angie. When Miles stumbles upon a thirty-seven foot beached squid, local media flock to see Miles' discovery and to hear what he has to say about it. As Miles continues to make startling discoveries and locals turn to him for information; perhaps the most astonishing prediction about the bay will come true. This book is filled with many beautiful descriptions of the sea and all its' hidden wonders.

The Brockville Public Library is filled with many great books to choose from, browse the shelves or ask staff for a suggestion and take a literary journey of your own.

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