

Author to Author with Mindy Friddle

Summer reading

Whether your summer plans include dozing under a beach umbrella, long waits at an airport, or snoozing in the backyard hammock, here are a just few books sure to transport you.

1. If you are a loyal reader of the Palmetto State's own cache of authors, don't miss: *Chemistry and Other Stories* by Ron Rash (Picador), a collection spanning the twentieth century in the mountains of the Carolinas, where rural communities struggle with the arrival of a new era. Also: two new novels from Sullivan's Island residents: *Queen of Broken Hearts* by Cassandra King (Hyperion) and *The Land of Mango Sunsets* by Dorothea Benton Frank (William Morrow).

2. If you're intrigued by Frank Lloyd Wright-- one of the renowned architect's last designed houses is located in downtown Greenville--try *Loving Frank: A Novel*, by Nancy Horan (Ballantine). The book is based on the struggles Frank Lloyd Wright and his mistress faced in creating a life together.

3. If you're a fan of the cult-favorite documentary *Grey Gardens*, about the aunt and first cousin of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis who lived together in a mansion amid squalor, and you can't wait to see the Tony-Award winning Broadway musical, you need to read *The Secret Life of the Lonely Doll: The Search for Dare Wright* by Jean Nathan (Picador). This is a mesmerizing biography about the glamorous, haunted life of the fragile woman behind a classic children's book, and her monstrous mother.

4. If you're a fan of Don DeLillo, one of America's leading contemporary writers, try *Falling Man* (Scribner), his new novel about the events of 9/11. A good companion read: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid (Harcourt), a disturbing, engaging novel about a young Pakistani man in Manhattan in the wake of 9/11. And speaking of the Middle East, if historical fiction is your thing, try the much-heralded novel, *The Blood of Flowers*, by Anita Amirrezvani (Little, Brown). Set in 17th century Persia, the novel weaves an intriguing tale about a young woman who blossoms as a brilliant designer of carpets while her prospects for marriage grow dim.

5. If you've finally been bitten by the green bug (and especially if you haven't): Pick up a copy of Barbara Kingsolver's latest: *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (HarperCollins), the story of how the author and her family were "changed by our first year of deliberately eating food produced from the same place where we worked, went to school, loved our neighbors, drank the water, and breathed the air." And while you're at it, don't miss Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin Press), a groundbreaking book sure to change the way we think about the politics and pleasure of eating.

6. If you are fleeing a cubicle—or just seeking some ironic distance from your Blackberry—take a look at *Then We Came to the End* by Joshua Ferris (Little, Brown): A satirical, insightful, clever “office” novel, with a cast of memorable characters.

7. If you’re into lost loves and the road not taken (that is, if you’re human), read *Evening*, by Susan Minot (Vintage), a poignant tale about a dying woman's memory of a summer love affair from her youth. See the movie, with its all-star cast if you must, but definitely read this terrific novel.

8. If you want to read a short story collection from a contemporary filmmaker and writer who has burst upon the scene with outrageous, comical and moving characters, read *No One Belongs Here More Than You: Stories*, by Miranda July (Scribner).

9. If you’re ready for what critics call our “latter-day Henry David Thoreau,” pick up a copy of *The Maytrees*, by Annie Dillard (HarperCollins). Set in New England, Dillard's novel, which explores the trials and tribulations of a marriage, showcases the author’s brilliant imagery of the natural world and her knack for startlingly beautiful sentences.

10. If you think *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy (Knopf), a post-Apocalyptic Pulitzer Prize- winning novel about a father and son’s struggle to survive, sounds too dark, think again. An “Oprah” book, this novel does have its dangers—it is highly addictive. Lyrical and spare, it is, from the first pages, enormously suspenseful, and by the end, unforgettable.

Still pondering? Two excellent sources to peruse the newest books, both fiction and nonfiction, are BookSense (www.booksense.com) the monthly recommended top 20 list from the nation’s independent bookstores, and Barnes and Noble’s Discover Great New Writers, a quarterly selection of books by new authors.