

mate? On top of it all, with *Pride and Prejudice* and its 1811 predecessor, *Sense and Sensibility* (almost as good), Jane Austen invented the novel as we now know it. Before Austen, novels were either rambling guy-sagas or sentimental weepers. Austen gave fiction structure, sophistication, and emotional maturity—not bad for a parson's spinster daughter. *Pride and Prejudice* also contains one of the most famous opening lines in the history of the literature: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." How can you not read on?

2. *Carmina*, by Quintus Horatius Flaccus (23 B.C.). You know him as Horace, the greatest of the Latin lyric poets, and the *Carmina* are also known in English as his "Odes." Horace wrote two thousand years ago, but these short poems, models of literary economy, resonate now more than ever, with their themes of life's brevity and of the perennial human need for beauty, meaning, and love. The *Carmina* are best read in Latin—a language that every college student should master, not just because it is the baseline language of our Western civilization, but because it is beautiful. No translation can quite capture the melodiousness and haunting sadness of lines like these: *Tu ne quaesieris—scire nefas—quem mihi, quem tibi / finem di dederint, Leuconoë* (Do not ask—it is wrong to know—what end the gods have ordained for me and for you, my Leuconoe). Words to ponder hard after September 11, 2001. If you must read Horace in English, I recommend David Ferry's *The Odes of Horace* (1998), which includes the Latin on facing pages.

3. *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare (1611). Just before he retired from the theater, the Bard wrote his last

great play, *The Tempest*, set in, of all places, America—or rather, the America that most Englishmen of his time imagined, an offshore Caribbean island. Neither a tragedy nor a comedy, *The Tempest* is a play, therefore, that every American and especially every American college student should read, for its most famous line is "O brave new world!" and its theme is about making fresh starts in a brave new world of new experiences. (Another famous phrase that Shakespeare coined in the play is "sea change.") The hero, Prospero, was duke of Milan in the Old World, but now, marooned in the New after a failed assassination by his own brother, he's forced literally to survive by his wits, as a sorcerer, with the spirit Ariel as his incorporeal retainer. Prospero's lovely daughter, Miranda, who has never seen a young man before, has to learn how to distinguish courtship from seduction when a handsome prince is shipwrecked on the island in the title's "tempest." A hefty dose of realism tempers the magic and the optimism; the savages aren't noble (think Caliban), and Prospero's murderous brother washes up on the island. Shakespeare understood astutely that the human heart can be so malign as nearly to defy human forgiveness—a useful lesson for a country with a war on.

4. *The Essential Handbook of Victorian Etiquette*, by Thomas E. Hill, edited by William P. Yenne (1994). Treating other people courteously is as essential to civilized life as Horace, Shakespeare, and Jane Austen. I'd recommend anything by Judith Martin (the syndicated "Miss Manners"), but her books are long, and this one, a distillation of the late-nineteenth-century etiquette manuals of Thomas Hill (1832-1915) is only 127 pages. Hill was the Lord Chesterfield of upwardly mobile Americans in his time, and his

topics ranged from conversation ("do not make a parade of being acquainted with distinguished or wealthy people") to the table ("all unusual noises when eating should be avoided") to wooing ("a lady is not obliged to invite her escort to enter the house when he accompanies her home"). Naturally, you will have to correct some of Hill's advice to account for changed times (unescorted females don't have to enter hotel dining rooms by the "ladies' entrance" anymore), but overall, his counsel will save you from boorishness and snobbishness and show you how to be firm about unwanted advances beforehand so you won't have to sue for harassment later. Hill also firmly believed that no woman should have to settle for a jerk: "Unmarried ladies of mature years are proverbially among the most intelligent, accomplished, and independent to be found in society." ♦

Charlotte Allen is author of *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus* (Free Press).



NAT HENTOFF

LEWIS CARROLL, *Alice in Wonderland*. How to see through the looking glass at people for whom words mean only what they choose them to mean—and the ever contemporary Red Queen's in-

sistence: "Verdict first, trial afterwards."

Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*. A reality novel on the essence of Stalinism but also sempiternally contemporary in its focus on how dishonest means corrupt all ends, even the intentionally noble ones (e.g., getting campaign finance reform by punishing anonymous speech).

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. The most American of all novels, in its true, unsentimental diversity of characters and its transcendence of race through elemental humanity.

Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*. Down Alice's rabbit hole of justice through serpentine court systems.

W.H. Auden, *Collected Poems*. Unblinking wisdom, wit, and vulnerability. And a prescient perception of John Ashcroft: "Others say, Law is our Fate;/ Others say, Law is our State/ Others say, others say/ Law is no more/ Law has gone away."

Ralph Ellison, *Living with Music*. The life force of jazz reverberating through his experiential, confident definition of Americanism. ♦

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CLAUDIA WINKLER

COLLEGE READING should unsettle childish assumptions. In their place, it should leave a deepening awareness of the vast cross-generational conversation of culture in which those who read are privileged to take part. It should open the student to unknown or underappreciated aspects of reality, and to disciplines useful for exploring reality. The purpose of the exercise is not mere accumulation or intellectual display but wisdom for life.

On that theory, four short books

come to mind, accessible to a young woman of 2002, whether literary or science-minded, and apt to invite reflection along useful avenues:

For light on the choices that confront her as a woman—whether to marry; whether to have children; how to rear them—Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher's *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. As an empirical, demographic study, this has the advantage of cutting through



the ideological chaos left behind by decades of liberation and its aftermath and clearing a space where readers of various starting assumptions can meet. It is a fine introduction to social science—and to the universality of marriage as a social institution—but also a well-turned argument for "rooted relationships" as those in which adults as well as children flourish.

To help rescue her pride in America from those who teach that all its saints are plaster, Richard Brookhiser's *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington*. This "moral biography" brings alive the role of character in leadership, and the role of leadership in great historical accomplishments, to wit, the forging of the world's first constitutional democracy. It will call our stu-

dent's attention to some unfashionable virtues—reticence, civility, martial valor, constancy—along with the limitations of a Virginia planter who only in death finally reconciled his actions with his often-expressed repugnance at slavery. And it will cause her to consider the paradox of a nonintellectual who staked his life on ideas—for the blessing, he said, of "millions yet unborn," including us here and now.

To expand her acquaintance with the high achievements of a non-Western civilization and help equip her to think about the post-September 11 challenges facing her generation, Bernard Lewis' *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. Here is connoisseurship at its most attractive: a handsome example of erudition brought to bear on a contemporary problem, and the tactful handling of inflammatory subject matter. That these intellectual graces are compatible with the author's energetic political engagement—he argues publicly for a U.S.-led regime change in Iraq—should not be lost on our student.

To address her spiritual thirst, and demonstrate indelibly that there's more in heaven and earth than they told her in high school, a work by a usually slighted American genius, *Charity and Its Fruits: Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life*, by Jonathan Edwards. What better solvent for preconceived notions than this collection of crystalline sermons by the chief of Puritans? Whatever our student's religious background, Edwards will enlarge her understanding of eighteenth-century New England, and enlarge her understanding of love—which, as he notes, is "the great and essential thing." ♦

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