

# The Book Sense 76

Why 76?

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Independent bookstores for independent minds. More choice and diversity. Books across many areas of interest, from a wide range of publishers.

Based on years and years of knowledge and passionate reading, hundreds of independent booksellers nominate their favorite new and old books, and from that, 76 eclectic and diverse books of quality are chosen every two months. NOT the usual bestsellers!

But with our support and yours, they could be. Let's discover new voices together, the great writers of tomorrow today.



May and June 2000

These are the Top Ten Vote-Getters for this May/June Book Sense 76, as tallied from hundreds of recommendations from independent booksellers. For each book, one of the many enthusiastic nominations was chosen to represent it as follows:

1. **The top vote-getter, just published: BEE SEASON**, by Myla Goldberg (Doubleday, \$22.95, 0385498799) "The protagonist of this first novel is a heretofore unremarkable nine-year old girl who is revealed to be a spelling prodigy. With the revelation of this talent comes an unraveling of the family, with each individual trying desperately to find his or her own version of God. This novel is beautifully written and draws the reader into the world of this young girl, the compelling world of Jewish mysticism, Spelling Bee politics, family dynamics, and deep secrets. Absolutely amazing!"—**Cathy Langer, Tattered Cover, Denver, CO**
2. **A delightful new children's book came in a close second: THE WARLORD'S PUZZLE**, by Virginia Walton Pilegard; illus. by Nicholas Debon (Pelican Pub., \$14.95, 1565544951) "This is a great story about the origin of everyone's favorite Chinese brain-teaser—the tangram puzzle. The illustrations are terrific!"—**Wendi Gratz, Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Cincinnati, OH**
3. **A book from three months back has developed great word-of-mouth: STORM RIDERS**, by Craig Lesley (Picador USA, \$24, 0312245548) "Lesley's semi-autobiographical novel is a book for our time. Full of suspense and heartbreak, it is the story of an Oregon man who becomes the foster father of a young Tlingit boy. It is a profoundly disturbing and ultimately satisfying read."—**Mary Gleysteen, Eagle Harbor Books, Bainbridge Island, WA**
4. **The first trade paperback in this top 10: POACHERS**, by Tom Franklin (HarperPerennial, \$12 paper, 0688177719; due out late May) "Move over Larry Brown; Pete Dexter, shove off; make way for a brand new voice in American writing. This collection of stories is too good for words! Franklin's landscape is tough and rugged—hunters, factory workers, the swamps and backwoods. The forests are lush with toxic places, the cities home to the damned, and the hills are just loaded with schemers, bunglers, and misanthropes. This is the two-fisted real deal."—**Robert Segedy, McIntyre's, Pittsboro, NC**
5. **The first non-fiction book in this top 10: SWEEPING CHANGES: Discovering the Joy of Zen in Everyday Tasks**, by Gary Thorp (Walker, \$19, 0802713602) "Thorp uses the Zen ideal of being present in every moment as a way of examining the simple pleasures of life. Whether washing dishes, cleaning the oven, or sweeping the floor, this book reminds us how the simplest acts can take on great significance if we only pay attention."—**Cathy Keibler, Hawley-Cooke Booksellers, Lexington, KY**
6. **This book from 1996 is a big bookseller favorite...and a great reading group book: SPARROW**, by Mary Doria Russell (Fawcett, \$12 paper, 0449912558) "It takes all of our persuasive power to interest people in a book whose subject is a visit to an alien planet by Jesuit priests, but we have been rewarded time and again for doing so. The unforgettable characters make this a truly memorable and thought-provoking book."—**Paula Dutko, Bookland of Maine, Saco, ME**
7. **RENATO'S LUCK**, by Jeff Shapiro (HarperCollins, \$24, 0060194189) "Renato Tizzoni has lost his taste for life. He is the waterworks man for the small village of Sant'Angelo D'Asso in Tuscany, a village soon to be flooded. Propelled by a dream of a gold-ringed hand that he assumes to be the Pope's, he begins a quest to recover his losses, to change his fortune. The simplicity and humor of this lovely story immediately connect you to its engaging characters."—**Sarah Thoren, The Northshire Bookstore, Manchester Center, VT**
8. **WHITE TEETH**, by Zadie Smith (Random House, \$25, 0375501851) "Set a novel in postwar London. Make the characters English, Bengali, Jamaican, all desperate to assimilate (especially the English). Track them over 50 years. Stir in women's liberation, religious fundamentalism, reefer madness, genetic mice, Jehovah's Witnesses. The result is a wickedly funny comic novel by a writer who may well be the literary love child of Evelyn Waugh and Fay Weldon."—**Matt Lage, Iowa Book Company, Iowa City, IA**
9. **SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF WATER**, by Craig Childs (Sasquatch, \$23.95, 1570611599) "The author studies, chases, and flees water in a place most people think is completely dry: the Arizona desert during a drought. Using a highly metaphorical and silky smooth style, he writes about water as an entity with desires, needs, knowledge, and intentions. The book is full of personality—both the author's and the water's—and Childs is patient, tenacious, and tender."—**Katherine Sotol, Elliott Bay Book Company, Seattle, WA**
10. **FEAST OF LOVE**, by Charles Baxter (Pantheon, \$24, 0375410198) "What a book! You will immediately be drawn into this Midsummer Nights Dream-like novel set in current-day Ann Arbor. This richly developed story is about ordinary people whose seemingly ordinary lives intersect in ways that are extraordinary."—**Adrian Newell, Warwick's, La Jolla, CA**

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Independent Bookstores for Independent Minds

# The Book Sense 70

## Children's Books

Bookseller Picks of the Best New Ones

11. **AMERICA'S CHAMPION SWIMMER:** *Gertrude Ederle*, by David Adler; illus. by Terry Widener (Harcourt, \$16, 0152019693) Ages 4-8. "This one passed the goosebumps test! Children will cheer, and girls will feel especially proud of this athlete who won three medals at the 1924 Paris Olympics and went on to do what no woman had ever done—swim the English Channel. That she did it in two hours less than any man made reporters declare that the myth of the weaker sex was 'shattered and shattered forever.' Widener's colorful paintings capture the spirit of the stirring text. Bravo!"—**Linda Bubon, Women & Children First, Chicago, IL**
12. **BEMBO'S ZOO**, by Roberto de Vicq de Cumplich (Holt, \$17.95, 080506382X) Ages 4-8. "This is not your usual alphabet book. It is a visual explosion of letters and shapes—literally. Text is combined to make the animals for each letter. We've even looked at it upside down and enjoyed it!"—**Melanie Chrimer, Blue Willow Bookshop, Houston, TX**
13. **A CAKE FOR HERBIE**, by Petra Mathers (Atheneum, \$15, 0689830173) Ages 4-8. "Petra's books, featuring Lottie the chicken, gently discuss hard-to-handle feelings that young children may be having for the first time (jealousy, humiliation, feeling left out) in a loving way. We love Lottie!"—**Roberta Dyer, Broadway Books, Portland, OR**
14. **CLICK CLACK MOO:** *Cows That Type*, by Doreen Cronin; illus. by Betsy Lewin (Simon & Schuster, \$15, 0689832133) Ages 4-8. "Seems that the cows have learned to type and are demanding electric blankets. Next the chickens get in on the act with their own demands, and finally the ducks. It is just a hoot!"—**Susan Danner, Danner's Books, Muncie, IN**
15. **GIRLS THINK OF EVERYTHING:** *Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women*, by Catherine Thimmesh; illus. by Melissa Sweet (Houghton Mifflin, \$16, 0395937442) Ages 9-12. "This book is a necessary collection of the stories of women who invented the Snugli, Liquid Paper, and more. Their creations are some of the most enduring (the windshield wiper) and the most loved (the chocolate-chip cookie). Thimmesh thoroughly researched each inventor's story and, when possible, interviewed each. The book is complemented by Sweet's wacky collages."—**Amanda Himle, The Red Balloon Bookshop, St. Paul, MN**
16. **HENNY PENNY**, by Jane Wattenberg (Scholastic, \$15.95, 0439078172) Ages 4-8. "This is a truly wonderful, updated version of the classic tale. Full of alliteration and puns; hilarious for young and old!"—**Susy Lacer, St. Helen's Bookshop, St Helens, OR**
17. **HOW DO DINOSAURS SAY GOODNIGHT?**, by Jane Yolen; illus. by Mark Teague (Scholastic, \$15.95, 0590316818) Ages 4-8. "This is one of those perfect matches of author and illustrator. Yolen and Teague have created a wonderful goodnight book for both the toddler and beleaguered parent. A slightly retro-looking cast of moms and dads attempt to put to bed a group of reluctant dinos. Every child will recognize his or her own particular form of protest ...and smile."—**Leslie Reiner, Inkwood Books, Tampa, FL**
18. **OH MY BABY, LITTLE ONE**, by Kathi Appelt; illus. by Jane Dyer (Harcourt, \$16, 0152000410) Ages 4-8. "Chosen as a staff pick the day it arrived in our store. Written in engaging rhyme, it is a perfect read aloud! And Jane Dyer's illustrations are, as always, enchanting."—**Patsy Madden, Bennett Books, Wyckoff, NJ**
19. **THE SECRETS OF THE STONES: A Folktale**, by Robert San Souci; illus. by James Ransome (Phylis Fogelman Books, \$16.99, 0803716400) "The illustrations are stunning in this wonderful retelling of a folktale that originated in the Congo, and was retold in Arkansas, about two little stones that are actually enchanted children."—**Jane Stroh, The Bookstore, Glen Ellyn, IL**
20. **A great Mother's Day gift—WILL YOU STILL BE MY DAUGHTER?**, by Carol Lynn Pearson; illus. by Kathleen Peterson (Gibbs Smith, \$9.95, 0879059591) "I love this little book about mothers and daughters; it's a gem. Affirming that our differences can make us stronger, and that daughters can grow into friends, Pearson uses the story of an oak tree and an acorn in this charming little fable that will make you choke up a little and even shed a tear. In the end, you are left with a warm heart, a big smile, and the impulse to share this book with every mom and daughter you know."—**Rita Williams, Books of Aurora, Aurora, OH**

## WILD ABOUT HARRY???

Reserve your copy of the Harry Potter #4 at your local independent bookstores now!!!!!! It's due out July 8!!!!!! Meantime, ask your local independent store wizard for other great reading along the same vein, see our official "If you love Harry Potter, you'll love..." list of recommended reading at BookSense.com, and check out the following.

## Great New Summer Reading

21. **BAT 6**, by Virginia Euwer Wolff (Scholastic, \$4.99 paper, 0590898000) For ages 9-12. "This was the best book I read last year, adult or children's. The story of small-town America right after World War II told in the words of girls who should have had only their annual softball game on their minds. But in the aftermath of war there are undercurrents that adults won't talk about and 12-year-olds can't put into words. Stunningly simple and profound. Lots of classroom and family discussions could revolve around all that is said and unsaid in these girls' lives."—**Marjorie Bowman, Davis-Kidd Booksellers, Memphis, TN** (Also an audiobook.)

22. **BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE**, by Kate DiCamillo (Candlewick, \$15.99, 0763607762) Ages 9-12. "The narrator of this stunning novel speaks in a voice that is clear, strong, and enchanting. Just as the scruffy but lovable dog, Winn-Dixie, changes Opal's life, she changes the reader's. By the end of the book, you're glad you've met her."—**Beth Puffer, Bank Street Books, New York, NY**
23. **THE DRAGON OF LONELY ISLAND**, by Rebecca Rupp (Candlewick, \$15.95, 0763604089) Ages 9-12. "Three kids vacation on their great-aunt's island; she's left them a key and some hints about something special on the island. They discover a three-headed dragon that has been alive for thousands of years. Each head takes turns telling them about an adventure from its past — one adventure takes place in ancient China, another on a pirate ship, and the third flying around the world. The writing is funny and lively; kids from 6 to 10 are crazy about it. It has the charm and timeless appeal of a minor classic."—**Elizabeth Bluemle, Flying Pig Children's Books, Charlotte, VT**
24. **KIT'S WILDERNESS**, by David Almond (Delacorte, \$16.99, 0385326653) Young Adult. "In this story, Kit follows his troubled friend, David, down a dark road into their ancestral past. With the strength of his family's love, and the guidance of his grandfather's stories, Kit is able to help David find the goodness and compassion that resides within; an exceptional book for young adults that is not to be missed."—**Judy Hobbs, Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park, WA** (Also an audiobook.)

## Community and Change

25. **ORDINARY RESURRECTIONS**, by Jonathan Kozol (Crown, \$25, 051770000X) "Kozol, the great academic theorist and social commentator, once again has learned a lot from a group of very real, funny and resilient kids. And what he learns tells us even more about the ability of the human spirit to thrive in the most desperate surroundings, how faith plays a role in keeping that human spirit alive, how people are basically forgiving and helpful. When you listen to these children, you get stuck not so much on the horrors that surround them, but the joy with which they greet every day. It is a powerful book, and one that will reverberate in all areas of the culture: schools, churches, politics—everywhere! READ IT."—**Kim Ricketts, University Bookstore, Seattle, WA** (Also an audiobook.)
26. **PAY IT FORWARD: A Novel**, by Catherine Hyde (Simon, \$23, 0684862719) "From the mouth of a child comes a realistic plan to change the world for the better. This book will touch you deeply, and it may even convince you to start 'paying it forward.'"—**Kathryn Keicher, Quail Ridge Books, Raleigh, NC** (Also an audiobook.)

## Cookbooks

27. **A great Father's Day gift—THE HERBFARM COOKBOOK: A Guide to the Vivid Flavors of Fresh Herbs**, by Jerry Traunfeld (Scribner, \$40, 0684839768) "Traunfeld has put his treasured Herbfarm recipes into a cookbook at long last. This cookbook goes beyond recipes into the world of elegant and informative writing. Peruse for extraordinary and simple recipes or use as a handy guide for growing and preparing your own fresh herbs."—**Tiffany Schindler, Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park, WA**
28. **HOW IT ALL VEGANI: Irresistible Recipes for an Animal-Free Diet**, by Tanya Barnard & Sarah Kramer (Arsenal Pulp Press, \$15.95 paper, 1551520672) "Easily one of the coolest cookbooks ever. Quick, easy recipes packed with vegan goodness as well as the hippest layout to hit the page. Also has a comprehensive listing of what is hidden inside the foods we eat (or choose not to)."—**Michael Kelley, Bookshop Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA**

## Fiction in Paperback (great for reading groups)

29. **BATTLE CREEK**, by Scott Lasser (HarperPerennial, \$14 paper, 0688177638; due in June) "A wonderful first novel about a semi-pro baseball team in the Midwest on the verge of its first championship. However, Manager Gil Davison has to contend with a dying father, some young players, and an estranged son. Intelligent and compelling fiction, and a great baseball book as well."—**Mark LaFramboise, Politics & Prose, Washington, DC**
30. **BODEGA DREAMS**, by Ernesto Quinonez (Vintage, \$12 paper, 0375705899) "What's in a name? For Willie Bodega, everything depends on a name. In a world filled with drug dealers, families, thugs, and students, Bodega emerges as a modern-day Gatsby who reinvents himself in hopes of remaking his community. An inspiring look into pushing people towards the impossible and watching what unravels. Quinonez will go down in history as having turned F. Scott Fitzgerald upright on his feet!"—**Francisco Cardona, Modern Times Bookstore, San Francisco, CA**
31. **THE CHISELLERS**, by Brendan O'Carroll (Plume, \$11.95 paper, 0452281229) "The second in the Mrs. Browne trilogy is as delightful as THE MAMMY, the first. Agnes Browne fans will love hearing more of her determined and indomitable Dublin life, alone with the adventures of her seven children. Lovely and laugh-out-loud funny."—**Cindy Heidemann, U. of Oregon Bookstore, Eugene, OR**

32. **CEREUS BLOOMS AT NIGHT**, by Shani Mootoo (Bard, \$14 paper, 0380731991) "This book took the international literary world by storm when it was first published in 1996. Set on a fictional Caribbean island, Mootoo's stunning novel unravels the epic life story of Mala Ramchandin and her infinitely complex family. *Out* remarked that Mootoo 'employs myth and magic reminiscent of Isabel Allende,' and I would only add that she embellishes Allende's style with some very queer twists. Part mystery, part love story, this book explores gender, sexuality, identity, and post-colonialism without a trace of didacticism, but with a great deal of tender and exquisite beauty."—**Catherine Sameh, In Other Words Women's Books and Resources, Portland, OR**



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- 33. THE COLONY OF UNREQUITED DREAMS**, by Wayne Johnston (Anchor, \$14 paper, 0385495439) "This is a deft and thoroughly engaging fictionalized account of one of the world's least known countries—Newfoundland—and the men who walked its harsh terrain to unite its people."—**Tabatha Henning, McKinze White Booksellers, Colorado Springs, CO** And "I loved this book. A love story and historical novel, but more importantly a very well-crafted and enthralling tale."—**Jean Westcott, Olsson's Books and Records, Arlington, VA**
- 34. CRAZY LADIES**, by Michael Lee West (HarperPerennial, \$14 paper, 0060977744) "This is one of the store's favorites. We sold a copy to Rebecca Wells, and sold Wells' *Little Altars* to this author, so we believe fans of the *Ya Ya* books will love *Crazy Ladies*. Our store book club is reading it for the May meeting—so we can reread it and laugh once more."—**Mary Gay Shipley, That Bookstore in Blytheville, AK**
- 35. HUMMINGBIRD HOUSE**, by Patricia Henley (MacMurray & Beck, \$13 paper, 1878448986) "OK!! My favorite book of 1999 is now out in paperback! Henley creates a landscape of haunted/ing inhabitants between the boundaries of sorrow and consolation. This heartbreaking story of an American midwife caught up in the madness of war in Central America is told with immediacy and passion, but there is also sweetness, hope, and every form of love here. You will not emerge untouched."—**Bobby Tichenor, Annie Blooms Books, Portland, OR** (This book was a finalist for the National Book Award last year.)
- 36. MY DOG TULIP**, by J. R. Ackerley (NYRB Classics, \$12.95 paper, 0940322110) Actually, this is nonfiction, but still great for reading groups. "This is one of literature's greatest love stories, truly! From the humorously harrowing search for an understanding vet to frantic matchmaking episodes, Ackerley's memoir is full of wit and charm, poignancy and wisdom, as it recalls his 16-plus years with his rambunctious and beloved Alsatian. Thank goodness this book is back in print!"—**Herman Fong, The Odyssey Bookshop, South Hadley, MA**
- 37. THE NIGHT INSPECTOR**, by Frederick Busch (Ballantine, \$14 paper, 0449006158) "A man so wounded by war that he wears a mask to cover the part of his face that isn't there prowls post-Civil-War New York City. His companion is none other than Herman Melville, fallen into obscurity and now a night inspector on the Hudson. (For Hudson read Styx.) What happens on the river is the stuff of darkest nightmares."—**Betsy Burton, The King's English Bookshop, Salt Lake City, UT**
- 38. NOBODY'S FOOL**, by Richard Russo (Vintage, \$14 paper, 0679753338) "Wry, witty, and poignant. The characters and plot will captivate you from the start, and although it is a serious story, Russo creates some of the best 'laugh until you cry' moments ever written."—**Paulette Zander, The Happy Carrot Bookshop, Old Lyme, CT**
- 39. THE RINGS OF SATURN AND THE EMIGRANTS**, by W. G. Sebald (New Directions, \$14 paper, 0811214133) "Two highly unusual fictional travelogues which are both entertaining and enlightening. After I read this, I had to go back and read his first book for more."—**Deal Safrit, Literary Bookpost, Salisbury, NC**
- 40. SOMETIMES THE SOUL: Two Novellas of Sicily**, by Gioia Timpanelli (Vintage, \$12 paper, 0375707220) "Timpanelli is a professional storyteller who has brought all her lyricism to these two novellas infused with traditional tales. The book informs and enchants the reader, and the writing is so beautiful that I read this book aloud to myself to just so I could hear the language."—**Janice King, The Golden Notebook, Woodstock, NY**
- 41. STRONG FOR POTATOES**, by Cynthia Thayer (St. Martin's/Griffin, \$12.95 paper, 0312200277) "If you like Barbara Kingsolver, you will enjoy this engrossing tale of a very strong young woman and her wonderful grandfather, who passes along the way of his ancestors."—**Sue Carita, Toadstool Bookshop, Milford, NH**
- 42. TAPPING THE SOURCE**, by Kem Nunn (Four Walls Eight Windows, \$12.95 paper, 1568581629) "This fits into the *One of the Best First Novels I've Ever Read* category. I read it in 1984 when it was originally published, and it's just been reissued. It chronicles the search by a young man from a tiny California desert town for his older sister who has disappeared among the surfing crowd in Huntington Beach. It's about the tension between bikers and surfers, good and evil, outlaws and groupies—all the important stuff. It's gritty, nasty, and right on the mark."—**Henry Berliner, Foundry Bookstore, New Haven, CT**
- 43. THE BANYAN TREE**, by Christopher Nolan (Arcade, \$25.95, 1559705116) "This powerful three-generation novel follows Minnie O'Brien and her family in rural Ireland with language that is dark and rich, humorous and colorful. Minnie is a character who will enrich and remain with you."—**Mary Joyce Dicola, The Book Stall at Chestnut Court, Winnetka, IL** (Also an audiobook.)
- 44. BEING DEAD**, by Jim Crace (Farrar, \$21, 0374110131) "Crace, the author of *Quarantine* and *Signals of Distress*, has one of the finer senses of place amongst contemporary novelists. Set on the English seacoast where a grisly murder of a middle-aged couple takes place, the novel asks about the meaning of death when there is no belief in God or an afterlife. Superb writing."—**A. David Schwartz, Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops, Milwaukee, WI**
- 45. BLUE ANGEL**, by Francine Prose (Harper, \$25, 006019541X) "A funny, complex, pitch-perfect novel about art, honesty, and gender politics in the age of Political Correctness. A professor of creative writing at a liberal arts college in rural Vermont navigates his way through undergraduate stories wrought with 'meaning' and sentimentality, while feeling removed from the writing life, and a life in which interesting conversations take place. Along comes Angela, a heavily-pierced student with a gift for the written word. As their relationship escalates, it becomes harder to separate art from lust, friendship from manipulation, and lies from truth. This is the novel I've been wanting to read—a smart page-turner."—**Samantha Schoech, A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books, San Francisco, CA**
- 46. DEUS LO VOLT!: A Chronicle of the Crusades**, by Evan S. Connell (Counterpoint, \$28, 1582430659) "This book combines both history and fiction, bringing to life a fascinating subject in the inimitable style Connell brought to his equally memorable SON OF THE MORNING STAR."—**Jan Owens, Millrace Books, Farmington, CT**
- 47. ENGLISH PASSENGERS**, by Matthew Kneale (Doubleday/Nan Talese, \$25, 0385497431) "A wonderful novel about the British conquest of Tasmania told from the point of view of over 20 characters, veering from farce to bitter tragedy."—**Graham Knight, Kepler's, Menlo Park, CA**
- 48. FAY**, by Larry Brown (Algonquin, \$25, 1565121686) "The story of a 17-year-old girl who literally walks away from poverty and abuse, and into wide-eyed womanhood along the casino-trashed shores of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Brown's noir powers come into full strength in this rich and riveting tour de force. The author's longest and best book so far."—**Richard Howorth, Square Books, Oxford, MS**
- 49. FOOL'S GOLD**, by Jane S. Smith (Zoland, \$24, 1581950195) "Eco-feminist art critic Vivian Hart, her stock photographer spouse, and their innocent children set off on summer sabbatical to the south of France. Instead of sunny vineyards and picturesque retreats, they inhabit a commercialized, traffic-choked countryside, and a dark, damp, depressing house. Smith writes about pretension, greed, and overarching artistic ambitions, under-supported by taste or talent."—**Barbara Peters, The Poisoned Pen, Scottsdale, AZ**
- 50. HOUSE OF LEAVES** by Mark Z. Danielewski (Pantheon, \$20 paper, 0375703764) "Beware of being lost in the world created by this breathtaking debut, an accomplishment of amazing depth and texture. The story of the Navidson family is told through an examination of a documentary film they made, plus poetry, footnotes, the random musings of both the author-within-the-book and a now-deceased blind man. The most texturally dense book in years, and creepy as Hell. The line between fact and fiction is completely obliterated within the covers of this astonishing first novel."—**Scott Coffman, Hawley-Cooke Booksellers, Louisville, KY**
- 51. IN BABYLON**, by Marcel Moring (Morrow, \$24, 0688176453) "A cause for real celebration for fans of the classic European novel. This Dutch novel has it all—the sweep of history; questions of philosophy, science, and faith, characters with richness and depth. The 'modern' touches Moring adds—a suspenseful plot and a hint of magic realism—contribute to the book's readability without detracting from its impact. A gourmet feast for all lovers of literature."—**Tom Campbell, Regulator Bookshop, Durham, NC**
- 52. JIM THE BOY**, by Tony Earley (Little Brown, \$23.95, 0316199648; due in June) "I loved this book. Life to a 10-year-old Southern boy growing up during the Depression can be overwhelming, but his three bachelor uncles help Jim become a young man we would want to know. The ending is a perfect closing to a story of friendship and discovery."—**Andrea Swift, Water Street Bookstore, Exeter NH** (Also an audiobook.)
- 53. JULIE AND ROMEO**, by Jeanne Ray (Harmony, \$22, 0609606727; due in June) "An absolutely delightful read; a wry, poignant, funny, and captivating story of unexpected love between two sixty-somethings from virulently long-feuding families. This is a perfect little gem that is, if I may use the word, heartwarming in the best possible, least clichéd way. Check it out."—**Lily Bartels, The Open Door, Schenectady NY**
- 54. KITTY AND VIRGIL**, by Paul Bailey (Overlook Press, \$26, 1585670103) "A charming and improbable love story between an American and a Romanian in London that is witty, dark, and politically and psychologically astute."—**Lilla Weinberger, Reader's Books, Sonoma, CA**
- 55. MOTHER KIND**, by Jayne Anne Phillips (Knopf, \$24, 0375401946) "This is an exquisite account of one woman's experiences of life's greatest paradoxes: joy and sorrow, thriving growth and illness, birth and death. At the same time that Phillips explores these themes, she also offers an engaging meditation on the power of language to shape our thoughts and relationships."—**Beth Dean, The Open Book, Cincinnati, OH**
- 56. PASTORALIA**, by George Saunders (Riverhead, \$22.95, 1573221619) "Saunders is a most brilliant, authentic, and wickedly funny writer of short fiction. Since reading CIVIL WAR LAND IN BAD DECLINE at the request of a fellow bookseller, I have waited desperately for another Saunderson's collection, temporarily satisfied only when I discovered a story published in *The New Yorker*. After reading this second collection, I wanted to call him and thank him."—**Tim Huggins, Newtonville Books, Newton, MA**
- 57. PILGRIM**, by Timothy Findley (HarperCollins, \$25, 006019197X) "A truly intriguing central character—a man who cannot die, who has lived many lives—and an equally fascinating portrait of Carl Jung, who takes Pilgrim on as a patient. Toward the end I began to read more slowly because I didn't want the book to end."—**Peggy Decaria, Bear River Books, Evanston, WY**

## On the Calendar

- \* May is "Get Caught Reading" Month.
- \* June is Audiobook Month and Gay & Lesbian Pride Month

## New Fiction in Hardcover

- 43. THE BANYAN TREE**, by Christopher Nolan (Arcade, \$25.95, 1559705116) "This powerful three-generation novel follows Minnie O'Brien and her family in rural Ireland with language that is dark and rich, humorous and colorful. Minnie is a character who will enrich and remain with you."—**Mary Joyce Dicola, The Book Stall at Chestnut Court, Winnetka, IL** (Also an audiobook.)
- 44. BEING DEAD**, by Jim Crace (Farrar, \$21, 0374110131) "Crace, the author of *Quarantine* and *Signals of Distress*, has one of the finer senses of place amongst contemporary novelists. Set on the English seacoast where a grisly murder of a middle-aged couple takes place, the novel asks about the meaning of death when there is no belief in God or an afterlife. Superb writing."—**A. David Schwartz, Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops, Milwaukee, WI**
- 45. BLUE ANGEL**, by Francine Prose (Harper, \$25, 006019541X) "A funny, complex, pitch-perfect novel about art, honesty, and gender politics in the age of Political Correctness. A professor of creative writing at a liberal arts college in rural Vermont navigates his way through undergraduate stories wrought with 'meaning' and sentimentality, while feeling removed from the writing life, and a life in which interesting conversations take place. Along comes Angela, a heavily-pierced student with a gift for the written word. As their relationship escalates, it becomes harder to separate art from lust, friendship from manipulation, and lies from truth. This is the novel I've been wanting to read—a smart page-turner."—**Samantha Schoech, A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books, San Francisco, CA**
- 46. DEUS LO VOLT!: A Chronicle of the Crusades**, by Evan S. Connell (Counterpoint, \$28, 1582430659) "This book combines both history and fiction, bringing to life a fascinating subject in the inimitable style Connell brought to his equally memorable SON OF THE MORNING STAR."—**Jan Owens, Millrace Books, Farmington, CT**
- 47. ENGLISH PASSENGERS**, by Matthew Kneale (Doubleday/Nan Talese, \$25, 0385497431) "A wonderful novel about the British conquest of Tasmania told from the point of view of over 20 characters, veering from farce to bitter tragedy."—**Graham Knight, Kepler's, Menlo Park, CA**
- 48. FAY**, by Larry Brown (Algonquin, \$25, 1565121686) "The story of a 17-year-old girl who literally walks away from poverty and abuse, and into wide-eyed womanhood along the casino-trashed shores of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Brown's noir powers come into full strength in this rich and riveting tour de force. The author's longest and best book so far."—**Richard Howorth, Square Books, Oxford, MS**
- 49. FOOL'S GOLD**, by Jane S. Smith (Zoland, \$24, 1581950195) "Eco-feminist art critic Vivian Hart, her stock photographer spouse, and their innocent children set off on summer sabbatical to the south of France. Instead of sunny vineyards and picturesque retreats, they inhabit a commercialized, traffic-choked countryside, and a dark, damp, depressing house. Smith writes about pretension, greed, and overarching artistic ambitions, under-supported by taste or talent."—**Barbara Peters, The Poisoned Pen, Scottsdale, AZ**
- 50. HOUSE OF LEAVES** by Mark Z. Danielewski (Pantheon, \$20 paper, 0375703764) "Beware of being lost in the world created by this breathtaking debut, an accomplishment of amazing depth and texture. The story of the Navidson family is told through an examination of a documentary film they made, plus poetry, footnotes, the random musings of both the author-within-the-book and a now-deceased blind man. The most texturally dense book in years, and creepy as Hell. The line between fact and fiction is completely obliterated within the covers of this astonishing first novel."—**Scott Coffman, Hawley-Cooke Booksellers, Louisville, KY**
- 51. IN BABYLON**, by Marcel Moring (Morrow, \$24, 0688176453) "A cause for real celebration for fans of the classic European novel. This Dutch novel has it all—the sweep of history; questions of philosophy, science, and faith, characters with richness and depth. The 'modern' touches Moring adds—a suspenseful plot and a hint of magic realism—contribute to the book's readability without detracting from its impact. A gourmet feast for all lovers of literature."—**Tom Campbell, Regulator Bookshop, Durham, NC**
- 52. JIM THE BOY**, by Tony Earley (Little Brown, \$23.95, 0316199648; due in June) "I loved this book. Life to a 10-year-old Southern boy growing up during the Depression can be overwhelming, but his three bachelor uncles help Jim become a young man we would want to know. The ending is a perfect closing to a story of friendship and discovery."—**Andrea Swift, Water Street Bookstore, Exeter NH** (Also an audiobook.)
- 53. JULIE AND ROMEO**, by Jeanne Ray (Harmony, \$22, 0609606727; due in June) "An absolutely delightful read; a wry, poignant, funny, and captivating story of unexpected love between two sixty-somethings from virulently long-feuding families. This is a perfect little gem that is, if I may use the word, heartwarming in the best possible, least clichéd way. Check it out."—**Lily Bartels, The Open Door, Schenectady NY**
- 54. KITTY AND VIRGIL**, by Paul Bailey (Overlook Press, \$26, 1585670103) "A charming and improbable love story between an American and a Romanian in London that is witty, dark, and politically and psychologically astute."—**Lilla Weinberger, Reader's Books, Sonoma, CA**
- 55. MOTHER KIND**, by Jayne Anne Phillips (Knopf, \$24, 0375401946) "This is an exquisite account of one woman's experiences of life's greatest paradoxes: joy and sorrow, thriving growth and illness, birth and death. At the same time that Phillips explores these themes, she also offers an engaging meditation on the power of language to shape our thoughts and relationships."—**Beth Dean, The Open Book, Cincinnati, OH**
- 56. PASTORALIA**, by George Saunders (Riverhead, \$22.95, 1573221619) "Saunders is a most brilliant, authentic, and wickedly funny writer of short fiction. Since reading CIVIL WAR LAND IN BAD DECLINE at the request of a fellow bookseller, I have waited desperately for another Saunderson's collection, temporarily satisfied only when I discovered a story published in *The New Yorker*. After reading this second collection, I wanted to call him and thank him."—**Tim Huggins, Newtonville Books, Newton, MA**
- 57. PILGRIM**, by Timothy Findley (HarperCollins, \$25, 006019197X) "A truly intriguing central character—a man who cannot die, who has lived many lives—and an equally fascinating portrait of Carl Jung, who takes Pilgrim on as a patient. Toward the end I began to read more slowly because I didn't want the book to end."—**Peggy Decaria, Bear River Books, Evanston, WY**

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58. **SHADOW BABY**, by Alison McGhee (Harmony, \$23, 0609606328) "This novel is about searching for truth, about possibilities, about metalworking, about families, and about the magic that could happen if a precocious 11-year-old girl befriended an 80-year-old man from 'a country that doesn't exist.' Clara and Georg are two of the most endearing people whom you'll ever meet in fiction, and my fervent wish is that millions of people get the opportunity to do just that."—**Dan Bergeson, Carleton College Bookstore, Northfield, MN**
59. **THE SKY UNWASHED**, by Irene Zabytko (Algonquin, \$22.95, 1565122461) "An incredible novel about the ordinary people who lived in the towns around Chernobyl before and after the 'incident.' Real people are affected by these events, and their stories continue after the TV crews move on to the next disaster."—**Marggie Skinner, Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany, NY**
60. **THE TOUGHEST INDIAN IN THE WORLD**, by Sherman Alexie (Atlantic Monthly, \$25, 0871138123) "I love Alexie's writing. These stories will make the reader cry, smile, or be terrified. (The Sin Eaters' would give Stephen King nightmares.) A beautiful collection of love stories; the prose is biting, ironic, tender, but never dull or plain. Sometimes disturbing, it is a joy to read."—**Jan Warner-Poole, Wayside Books, Battle Ground, WA**
61. **WILD DECEMBERS**, by Edna O'Brien (Houghton Mifflin, \$24, 0618045678) "One of the best books I have ever read. This is an extremely readable novel with wonderfully poetic writing, written by a true Irishwoman"—**Marlene Zeller, Tall Tales Bookstore, Atlanta, GA**
62. **WORLD OF PIES**, by Karen Stolz (Hyperion, \$18.95, 0786865504) "I loved it, and I found Roxanne irresistible! The book was reminiscent of Jan Karon, but BETTER!"—**Liz Murphy, Learned Owl Book Shop, Hudson, OH**

## THE NEW NATIONAL BESTSELLER LIST

We recently launched the Book Sense Bestseller List, gathered weekly from HUNDREDS of independent bookstores, making it the most representative AND diverse list of its kind.

You'll find books on this list way BEFORE other national lists, and you'll find books that will NEVER show up on any other lists! Ask your local independent about the new Book Sense Bestseller List, or visit [BookSense.com](http://BookSense.com) each Thursday for the latest list.

## History and Memoir

63. **BONES OF THE MASTER: A Buddhist Monk's Search for the Lost Heart of China**, by George Crane (Bantam, \$25.95, 0553106503) "Crane appears to be an average guy who is lucky enough to have developed an incredibly strong bond with an old, wise Mongolian Monk. Through poetry and tea, the deep friendship formed between these two takes them from upstate New York to Inner Mongolia. This is a wonderful story of faith and determination intertwined with humor and sadness."—**Chris Brawn, Mountain Lore Bookstore, Hendersonville, NC**
64. **MATTANZA: Love and Death in the Sea of Sicily**, by Theresa Maggio (Perseus, \$25, 073820269X) "Maggio's documentation of life and death on a tiny island off the coast of Sicily is best described in words usually reserved for novels. The lyricism and beauty she employs to reveal the story of the centuries-old tuna harvest (*mattanza*), the quirky villagers, and the tuna fishermen are fascinating. She has captured for us in complete elegance a vanishing, sometimes violent, culture."—**Nancy Perkins, Book Passage, Corte Madera, CA**
65. **MOCKINGBIRD YEARS: A Life In and Out of Therapy**, by Emily Fox Gordon (Basic Books, \$24, 046502727X) "A captivating story from page one. I started reading it in the airport and immediately realized I was falling into the book and if I wasn't careful I'd miss my plane...but I couldn't put it down. A well-written personal history of a woman's psychological therapy, written with an atmosphere of helpful curiosity as opposed to dark foreboding."—**Anita Zager, Northern Lights Books & Gifts, Duluth, MN**
66. **STRANGE FRUIT: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights**, by David Margolick (Running Press, \$16.95, 0762406771) "Short but powerful, this book is about the eponymous song introduced by Billie Holiday and the story that surrounds it, one that illuminates race relations in 1930s America. For a generation who probably don't know much about this relatively small but significant bit of cultural history, this book should be a valuable experience."—**Susan Avery, Ariel Booksellers, New Paltz, NY**
67. **WAKE UP, I'M FAT!**, by Camryn Manheim (Broadway, \$14 paper, 0767903633) "Tired of the notion that only lithe beauties can be the ingenue? Check out this memoir by the very sassy, very bold, fat activist you know as Ellenor Frutt on *The Practice*. In her own words, the night she won her first Emmy: 'This is for all the fat girls!'"—**Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, My Sisters' Words, Syracuse, NY** (Also an audiobook.)

## Mystery, Crime Fiction, and Fantasy

68. **CHINESE GOLD MURDERS**, by Robert Van Gulik (U. of Chicago, \$8.50 paper, 0226848647) "Over twelve hundred years before Poirot or Sam Spade there was Judge Dee Jen-djeh (and where as the other two are fictional, Judge Dee actually existed). Three complex murders overlap in a novel that should be on the shelf next to P.D. James and Agatha Christie. Fair warning: Gulik's books can be addictive."—**Daniel Furr, Printers Inc. Bookstore, Mountain View, CA**
69. **RUMBLE TUMBLE**, by Joe R. Lansdale (Warner, \$6.50 paper, 0446607576) "Lansdale is the best writer you've never heard of. He's written god-knows-how-many books—must be going on 30 or so—but he's still an underground cult figure. Lansdale fashions some of the most side-splitting, turbo-charged, shotgun mysteries around...and some of the best curses ever scrawled into print.

Hap Collins and Leonard Pine—friends to the end—are two of the most unlikely, yet likable, protagonists in the mystery genre today."—**Christopher Miya-Jervis, Pendragon, Oakland, CA**

70. **STARDUST**, by Neil Gaiman (Spike, \$6.99 paper, 0380804557) "Unlike much of current fantasy writing, Gaiman's prose is that of a true fabulist, rather than a mere borrower of motifs. His version of the land of Fairie contains terrors and delights both strange and hauntingly familiar, and the story has the ring of authenticity that modern fairy tales often lack."—**Craig Jones, The Reader's Loft, DePere, WI**

## Poetry

71. **CENOTAPH**, by Eric Pankey (Knopf, \$22, 0375407642) "In the dictionary, a cenotaph is defined as a monument to someone who is buried elsewhere. This thread runs through Pankey's latest book, weighs in with a resonance of Donne and a little Milton, and offers up a grace as redolent as a room rich in incense. It's a mighty fine book."—**Mark Hiebert, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX**
72. **THE ESSENTIAL RUMI**, translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne (Harper San Francisco, \$12 paper, 0062509594) "Need inspiration? Open this book at any given page and you will find a hidden gift in every one of these wonderful poems."—**Natasha Carrillo, The Avid Reader, Davis, CA**

## Travel

73. **I SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME**, edited by Roger Rapoport and Marguerita Castanera (RDR Books, \$15.95 paper, 1571430148) "Hands down among the most hilarious travel books I have ever read, this wonderful little gem includes anecdotes by Isabel Allende, Rick Steves, Paul Theroux, and many other talented writers. I have told and retold these stories to anyone who would listen, and still have a good laugh whenever I think about the 'Night of the Army Ants!'"—**Beth Henkes, University Bookstore, Bellevue, WA**
74. **WOMEN TRAVEL: A Rough Guide Special** (Lonely Planet, \$19.99 paper, 1858284597) "These contributors not only write well, they have traveled in extraordinary circumstances. Whether building wheelchairs in war-torn Eastern Europe, living in a yurt, or motorcycling across the Asian desert, these essays provide both beautiful prose and useful information for women traveling anywhere."—**Jenny Hannifin, Tome on the Range, Las Vegas, NM**

*And in a category of their own...* Great Grad Gifts??

75. **THE WORLD'S SHORTEST STORIES OF LOVE AND DEATH**, edited by Steve Moss and John Daniel (Running Press, \$7.95 paper, 0762406984) "Who would have thought you could say so much in 55 words (the guidelines for all stories). Especially like the entries entitled 'Elvis in the Wings' (page 207), and 'Late Charge' (page 33), where the author makes a library book seem incredibly sexy!"—**Fred Powell, Main Street Books, Frostburg, MD** (Also an audiobook.)

76. **3 MINUTES OR LESS: Life Lessons from America's Greatest Writers**, edited by PEN Faulkner Foundation (Bloomsbury USA, \$13.95 paper, 1582340692) "I read most of this in one sitting, an experience akin to racing through an art museum in an afternoon. Ambitiously wrestling with life's great joys and sadnesses, these poignant and illuminating lessons should be, like fine art, appreciated deliberately and pensively."—**John Sherer, Olsson's Books & Records, Washington, DC**

### a chorus

The books in this group of 76 books were nominated by many independent booksellers. By email, fax and letter, bookseller enthusiasm poured in. The Book Sense staff chose the note that best captured the essence of all the nominations for each book to be printed here.

### full disclosure

These 76 books have been chosen by the independent booksellers of America and the staff at Book Sense, after which publishers were approached for promotional funds to help underwrite the ongoing Book Sense marketing campaign. Books appear here whether or not the publishers have agreed to participate, but many have...and we appreciate it.

### subject to change

We are not responsible for publisher price increases at the last moment. And despite all best efforts to ensure that all of these 76 are in stores by May 1, some will be not be available until later in the month.

### special orders

If you can't find one of the 76 books of interest to you on our shelves, we will gladly special order it for you...and you'll have it in no time.

Here are the 10 finalists for the Book Sense Book of the Year Award—the 5 adult and 5 children's books that the independent booksellers of America most enjoyed recommending to their customers last year. The winner will be announced on June 2, 2000.

- Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride
- Pam Munoz Ryan, Brian Selnick (illustrator)
- Bud, Not Buddy, Christopher Paul Curtis
- Sector 7, David Wiesner (illustrator)
- The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Children's Poetry Treasury, Jack Prelutsky (editor), Meilo So (illustrator)
- The Quiltmaker's Gift, Jeff Brumbeau, Gail de Marcken (illustrator)
- Ahab's Wife, Sena Jeter Naslund
- Girl in Hyacinth Blue, Susan Vreeland, Isaac's Storm, Erik Larson
- Plainsong, Kent Haruf
- The Poisonwood Bible, Barbara Kingsolver