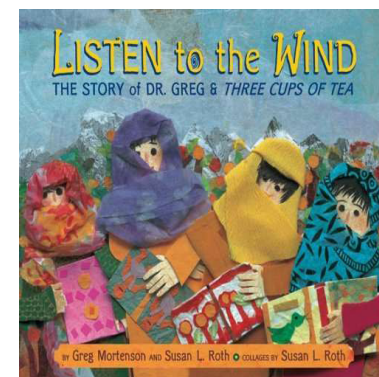
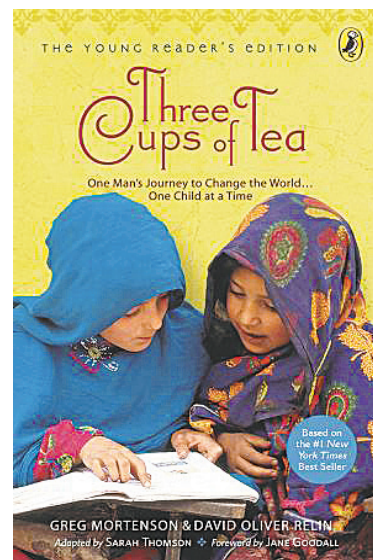
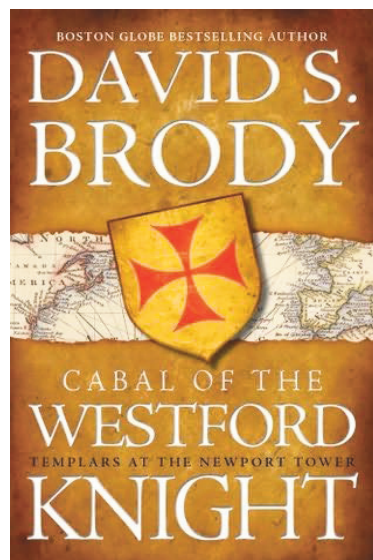
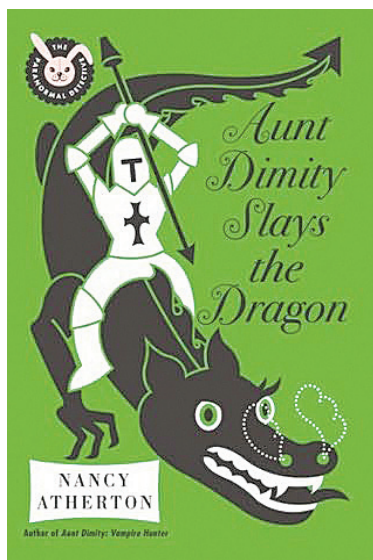


## Summer Reading



By Judy Buswick

Having just completed 20 years of interviewing authors, poets, and columnists (predominantly from Massachusetts), I should explain that an interesting mix of books comes across my desk. Some are books to be reviewed on assignment, and some are suggestions for possible TV guests on my show *The WRITERS* (now aired on LexMedia). Some books I've bought because they intrigued me, and others come recommended by my husband who reads more than anyone I know.

This list of summer-reading suggestions floats to you with lazy days in mind. Mysteries are always popular. Non-fiction with unique destinations and biographical works entertain and inspire us.

Two mystery authors have drawn my eye recently. Nancy Atherton from Colorado Springs was to make a New England book tour this winter promoting her newest of fourteen *Aunt Dimity Mysteries*. We were unable to arrange the TV interview, but I enjoyed *Aunt Dimity Slays the Dragon* (Viking, 2009). In this "cozy mystery" set in the English village of Finch, I met Lori Shepherd – an American mother of twin boys – living with her husband and sons in a charming Cotswold village about to embark on its annual summer fete. Everything changes when village member Calvin Malvern, dressed as King Wilfred the Good, enthusiastically announces his plans to hold weekend Renaissance fairs with magic, minstrels, and jousting on his uncle's farm

throughout the summer. It's not long before Lori senses something sinister and has to seek otherworldly advice from an unseen Aunt Dimity, who responds to Lori's questions by magically writing in "royal-blue ink... as fluidly as quicksilver" on the pages of her journal. Characters are lively, the ambiance of rural England is vivid, and the events at King Wilfred's Faire provide pageantry with a down-home twist.

For another mystery (set closer to home), I suggest David S. Brody's fourth novel *Cabal of the Westford Knight: Templars at the Newport Tower* (Martin and Lawrence Press, 2009). This fast-paced thriller does a masterful job of connecting mysterious stone carvings and rock structures across New England and beyond. Taking a page from *The Da Vinci Code*, Brody has created a conspiracy theory set in America and in need of investigation. It all starts with an actual engraved stone in Westford known as the "Westford Knight." Attorney Cameron Thorne stumbles into threatening secret societies, confronts treasure hunters, and unearths defenders of the Jesus bloodline. He and Amanda Spencer, a feisty British researcher, are soon the targets of violence and escalating danger.

As Director of the New England Antiquities Research Association (NEARA), Brody includes photographs of actual artifacts, including the Westford Knight, Spirit Pond Rock carvings in Maine, the Machias Bay petroglyph, and the Kensington Rune Stone found in

Minnesota in 1898. Though the plot is filled with coincidence and lucky timing, I enjoyed the story that linked together New England's ancient artifacts, notably the mysterious Newport Tower in Rhode Island and America's Stonehenge in Salem, New Hampshire.

Last February I interviewed Greg Mortenson of *Three Cups of Tea* fame and asked him to autograph my copy of his inspiring book about building schools in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He quickly scribed "Peace" on the bar of a doodle which might be a bridge or else a G and M intertwined. This Montana resident has co-written two new books for children: *Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg and Three Cups of Tea* (a colorful collage book for youngsters) with artist Susan L. Roth (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2009) and a middle school edition of his worldwide bestseller *Three Cups of Tea* adapted by Sarah Thompson, with a foreword by Jane Goodall (Puffin Books, 2009). The man and his books inspire both children and adults.

I've long been intrigued by the ancient civilizations in Central America and so I couldn't resist *Palenque: Eternal City of the Maya* (Thames & Hudson, 2008) by archaeologists David Stuart and George Stuart. This father-son team recounts both the history of archaeological research and the long-ago life of this Mayan city that has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The authors decipher inscriptions and map out the site as each explorer

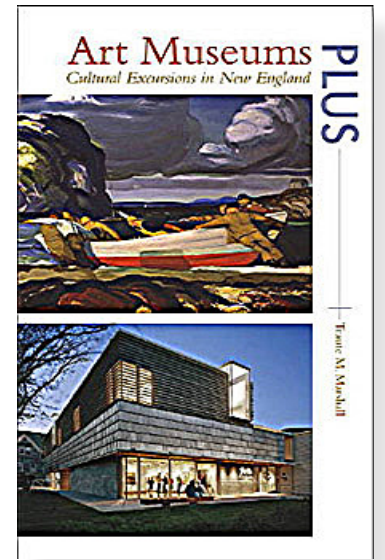
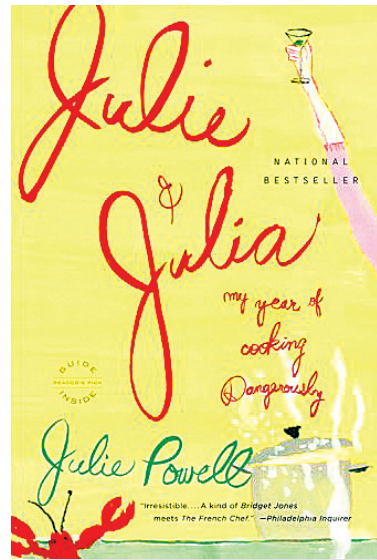
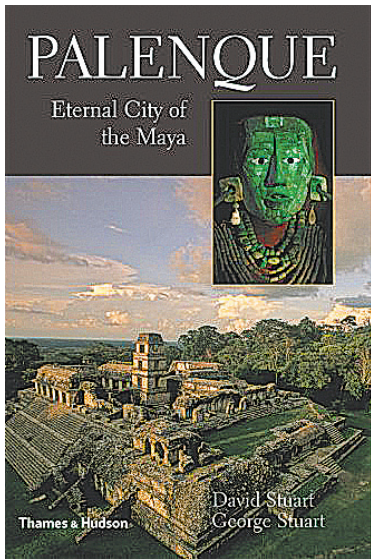
"discovered" the jungle-bound city that was "lost" between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries AD in the mountains of southeastern Mexico. Intricate drawings, detailed photographs of bas-relief carvings, glyphs from its dynasty of rulers, and images in both color and black & white help the armchair traveler experience this remarkable site. From the graceful palaces of Palenque to the jade mosaic funerary mask of K'inich Janab Pakal, its greatest king, readers are brought to the steamy jungle. Today the city and its art are accessible to tourists. Whether in person or via the printed page, Palenque seems well worth a visit.

Other royal personages step into focus from a 4-year old novel, *Julie and Julia* written by Julie Powell (Little, Brown and Company, 2005). I speak of Julia Child, the queen of the Garland stove, and the undisputed royal personage of Meryl Streep, who plays Julia in the book's cinematic version to be released on August 7<sup>th</sup>. My copy is an uncorrected proof that has sat patiently on my shelf. Since it's best to experience the book before seeing the movie, I recommend you, too, read it before you go to the theater.

Julie Powell recounts her "Project" to go through Julia Child's legendary *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Julie will cook 524 recipes in 365 days in her tiny kitchen in Queens and reveal, as the lengthy subtitle says, "How One Girl Risked Her Marriage,

# LexMedia Host Recommends

Summer  Reading



# Books for Summer Reading

Her Job, and Her Sanity to Master the Art of Living.” She masterfully describes skinning a duck, making aspic from pig’s feet, and whipping up varieties of mayonnaise. During the year-long challenge, Julie writes a blog and develops a faithful following of “bleaders” (blog readers). Her longshoreman outbursts when things go wrong – and they do often – are accepted by most but reproached by other bleaders. The movie will intertwine the lives of the two women and would be too heavily tilted toward Julie (played by Amy Adams), if it were not jointly based on the memoir *My Life in France* (Knopf, 2006) written by Julia and her grand-nephew Alex Prud’homme. I’m looking forward to seeing how Julie and Julia concurrently unfold their lives through their culinary skills. Independent radio producer, NPR commentator, and award-winning short fiction writer Rebecca Flowers has published her debut novel *Nice To Come Home To* (Riverhead Books, 2009). We walk into the life of thirty-six year old Pru Whistler who finds herself jilted and wondering where her life is going. The setting is a Washington, D.C., neighborhood, but it might be any urban scene with a sense of community. Pru’s family and friends surround her and encourage her in building a new life and a trendy boutique. Along the way she meets a man who appreciates her. The story may sound like summer fluff, but it is nicely written and offers characters we understand and care about.

*Colonial Times* readers have

the benefit of seasonal art-travel articles in the “Leaving Lexington” column, often written by Barbara Rizzo Mellin. (See last month’s visit to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.) Now a new book provides in-depth guides, like Barbara’s, to museums in the six New England states. Traute M. Marshall compiled *Art Museums Plus: Cultural Excursions in New England* (University Press of New England, 2009) after she and her husband decided to visit one art exhibit or museum each week upon retirement. Williams College professor S. Lane Faison, Jr. (1908-2006) had published a 1982 guide to finding New England’s art treasures; but that volume was long out of print. Mrs. Marshall decided to write a guide of her own, and she contacted Professor Faison, who was well over 90, about her proposed update. She benefited from his book’s organization and insights. Her book provides all the necessary information for over eighty art museums -- with driving directions from the nearest major highway, hours, fees, and Web addresses. Noteworthy stories recount how each museum got its start or who the benefactor was that initially provided an endowment. Marshall describes the art collections with specific notes on the most famous pieces or those that were her favorites.

To selectively focus her attention on art in New England, Marshall has defined “art” to include “craft, prints, illustration, and photography.” She offers an equally “liberal” definition of “museum” to include artist’s homes or

studios, such as the country estate of Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Cornish, New Hampshire. But each “museum” should have a permanent collection, and that stipulation discounted many university galleries or regional art centers.

The “Plus” part of the book’s title comes from addressing travelers who would enjoy an art excursion that might also include “hiking, antiquing,

[or] visiting historical homes;” and so she tells readers what is nearby that might round out their museum visits. To me, this book provides relaxing summer reading or the basis for summer outings, both close to Lexington or while away in the mountains or by the sea.

The range of summer reading is limited only by your imagination.

