

Recommended Reading: Selections from the Book Contest

I've received several emails in response to my December 26 WSJ Op-Ed, "Bush is a Book Lover," asking for a list of the books President Bush and I read during our book competition or, failing that, some recommendations of volumes I particularly enjoyed. While the President's complete reading list is not available now, I suspect it will be made public at sometime in the future at a time of the President's choosing. As for my list, I feel a little uncomfortable sharing it in its entirety and picking favorites is like choosing between children.

So, here are some recommendations.

First, books I read for the first time and enjoyed a lot, arranged in alphabetical order by author. You'll notice it's heavy on our 16th President (run up for his 200th birthday), American history and for some reason, World War II.

Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power by Richard Carwardine
The Coming of the Third Reich by Richard J. Evans
The Third Reich in Power by Richard J. Evans
The Third Reich at War by Richard J. Evans
The War of the World by Niall Ferguson
Churchill and America by Martin Gilbert
Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin
Vienna 1814 by David King
Lone Survivor by Marcus Luttrell
Prophet of Innovation by Thomas McCraw
Freedom Just Around the Corner by Walter McDougall
Throes of Democracy by Walter McDougall
President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman by William Lee Miller
Troublesome Young Men by Lynne Olson
History of the English Speaking Peoples Since 1900 by Andrew Roberts
The Forgotten Man by Amity Shlaes
Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln by Douglas Wilson
Lincoln's Sword by Douglas Wilson
The Great Upheaval by Jay Winik
The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 by Lawrence Wright

Second, here are three authors I particularly like for that escape reading—when the serious stuff makes your brain hurt.

Anything by Vince Flynn
Any "Travis McGee" mystery by John D. MacDonald
Any "Dirk Pitt" novel by Clive Cussler

Third, here are books I read long ago that I enjoyed re-reading.

The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism by Daniel Bell

Democracy in America by Alexis deTocqueville

Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War by David Donald

The Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay

Finally, here are some quirky picks, along with a short description of the topics covered if the title isn't clear. I admit these can be offbeat, but isn't that why we read?

The Buried Book by David Damrosch (How the world came to know of the Epic of Gilgamesh)

The Confident Hope of a Miracle: The True History of the Spanish Armada by Neil Hanson

God's Secret Agents by Alice Hogge (The missionaries who tried to return Elizabethan England to the Catholic Church)

Ex-Libris by Ross King (A 17th century mystery involving a bookseller and a missing manuscript)

The Race for Timbuktu: In Search of Africa's City of Gold by Frank T. Kryza

Josiah the Great by Ben Macintyre (The American adventurer who becomes King of Afghanistan and inspires Rudyard Kipling)

A Nation of Counterfeiters by Stephen Mihm (And you think we have problems with banks today! Check out the difficulties of finance in early America)

Blue Mauritius by Hellen Morgan (The story of the most valuable stamp in the world)

Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F.B. Morse by Kenneth Silverman

Beautiful Evidence by Edward Tufte (Tufte's most recent offering on how presenting information helps the understanding of it)