

Great Fiction Reads from the Library
Kris Wiley for The News-Review

I read some amazing novels this year and encourage fans of character-driven fiction to consider picking up or gifting one of these books.

Thanks to my co-worker Gabrielle, I discovered my favorite book of the year, “The Berry Pickers” by Amanda Peters.

In 1962 Maine, a young girl named Ruthie goes missing from her Mi'kmaq family while they are harvesting blueberries, an annual migration ritual they make from Nova Scotia.

The girl is renamed Norma and raised by white people who keep her kidnapping secret, yet Ruthie/Norma is haunted by the faintest idea she had another life.

The other narrative thread belongs to Joe, Ruthie's brother and the last of her family to see her before she disappeared. Joe is affected so much by his sister's loss that he abandons his home and spends much of his life on the road, perhaps searching for forgiveness only he believes he needs.

The arcs converge beautifully, and I cried my way through the final few chapters. Any book that elicits tears gets my highest rating.

“Wandering Stars” by Tommy Orange is both a prequel and sequel to his luminous “There There,” a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

“Wandering Stars” introduces the Native ancestors who survived massacres and boarding school horrors, and it revisits the survivors of gun violence in modern-day Oakland that were introduced in “There There.” It explores generational trauma and the ties that bind families together.

I rooted for the characters through every twist and turn their lives took.

My favorite backlist read of the year was “Island Beneath the Sea” by Isabel Allende, which was published in 2010. Thanks to a nudge from the library's Online Book Group, I finally read my first Allende, and it was a masterpiece of history, storytelling and character development.

Tété anchors the epic narrative, and we follow her from Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in the 1770s to her enslavement by sugar plantation owner Valmorain to the Haitian Revolution of 1791, when she leads Valmorain and their children to safety away from their home.

They end up in New Orleans, and in the ensuing years, Tété's indomitable spirit carries her through years of upheaval to a measure of peace and stability.

Holiday Hours

The library will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28 through Saturday, Nov. 30 for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Regular hours will resume at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3.

The book drop located in the parking lot will be locked Nov. 28 through Dec. 1. Please hang onto items until the library reopens. The library does not assess late fees.

The library's digital platforms, cloudLibrary and Libby, are available 24/7.

Next week's library events

Tuesday, November 26, 10 a.m. – Grab-and-go craft kits while supplies last

Tuesday, November 26, 3-5 p.m. – Maker space time

Wednesday, November 27, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora