

2024 Is an Embarrassment of Reading Riches Kris Wiley for The News-Review

This year is shaping up to be my best yet when it comes to reading. Not only do I remain on track to finish 200 books, I am amazed by the quality of the literature I have read. Here are a few of my favorites.

My top read of the year so far is “The Great Divide” by Cristina Henríquez, a novel set during the construction of the Panama Canal. It is told from the perspectives of a number of characters, and I appreciated the diversity of viewpoints.

There is Ada, a 16-year-old from Barbados who arrives in Panama hoping to earn just enough money so her sister can get the medical treatment she needs. She ends up caring for Marian Oswald, who came to Panama with her husband, John, when he was selected to help eliminate malaria in the region. Never mind that Marian is a scientist in her own right; her marriage is not the partnership she envisioned.

Then there is Omar, a Panama native who defies his father, Francisco, and joins a crew digging the canal. The two have had a strained relationship ever since Francisco, a fisherman, realized his son was afraid of the ocean. Now Francisco can’t believe his son is helping other countries grab a piece of their homeland.

There are so many more fully realized characters, and Henríquez weaves together their stories around a spectacle of modern engineering that comes at great cost.

Oregon author alert! Rene Denfeld’s latest book, “Sleeping Giants,” is a page-turning family story/mystery that reveals the best and worst of people.

Amanda Dufresne arrives at a small Oregon coastal town to learn why her brother ran away from his group home and into the ocean 20 years ago. She teams up with Larry Palmer, a retired police officer who moved to the area after his wife died.

They discover the group home has a sinister history, and there are people willing to take drastic measures to ensure their secrets remain concealed. There also are people ready to speak up about what happened all those years ago.

One more reason to pick up “Sleeping Giants”: Denfeld’s descriptions of the Oregon coast are so amazing it felt like another character in the book.

Anna Quindlen is one of my must reads for heartfelt family stories. Her latest, “After Annie,” features the husband, daughter and best friend of a woman who died unexpectedly in her 30s. Follow them as they process her death over a year of sadness and joy, and I challenge you to do it without crying.

Finally, I love Nordic noir for its willingness to delve into the psychological motives of murder and the deeply flawed (read: human) detectives.

In Christoffer Carlsson's "Under the Storm," translated from the Swedish, former cop Vidar Jörgensson revisits a long-solved case when the evidence suggests the wrong person was sentenced for the crime. The original investigation changed a 10-year-old boy's life forever, and the ramifications continue to affect the entire community.

If you enjoy "Under the Storm," check out "Blaze Me a Sun," which features Vidar's father, Sven, who comes upon a young woman in her last minutes of life on the same date in 1986 when Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme is assassinated. Sven becomes obsessed with finding the killer – who claims two more victims – while being a suspect himself.

Let me know what books you have enjoyed recently. Stop in to the library, email me at kwiley@cityofroseburg.org or submit a Patron Pick form available on the library's website at www.roseburgpubliclibrary.org.

This Week's Library Events

Monday, June 10-Saturday, June 15, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. - StoryWalk® at Eastwood Park

Tuesday, June 11, 10 a.m. – Grab-and-go craft kits while supplies last

Tuesday, June 11, 1-2 p.m. – Summer Reading kickoff party for children

Tuesday, June 11, 6:30 p.m. – Online Book Group

Wednesday, June 12, 10:30 a.m. – Storytime at Stewart Park Pavilion

Thursday, June 13, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime at library

Thursday, June 13, 1-2:30 p.m. – Teen program: make a T-shirt tote bag

Friday, June 14, 10:30-11:30 a.m. – Children's program at Stewart Park Pavilion: make a library bag