

NO.56 FALL 2000
BENE LEGERE
 NEWSLETTER OF THE
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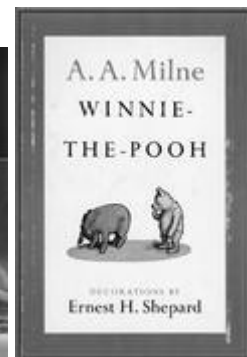
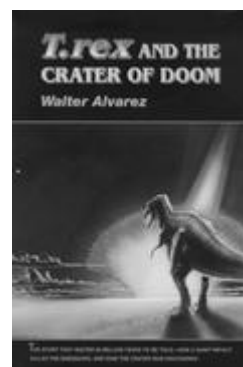
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FRESHMAN HIT THE BEACH WITH BOOKS: SUMMER READING

Ellen Meltzer, Director of the Teaching Library

What do *Winnie the Pooh* and *T. rex and the Crater of Doom* have in common?

Both were titles that have appeared on Berkeley's unofficial *Summer Reading List* put out by the Library and the College Writing Program. All of this year's selections were written by campus faculty members, including a Nobel Laureate, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and several recipients of the National Book Critics Circle Award.



Each year the list is created by polling different segments of the Cal campus. We ask deans and directors, Distinguished Teaching Award winners, a broad-based group of faculty, students, or librarians what books they would recommend to incoming students to Cal. We try to steer them away from recommending standards in their fields and towards books they think new students would enjoy, books that have made an impact on them or had a special meaning to them as young people.

Steve Tollefsen, academic coordinator of the campus Writing Program, and I get together each spring to come up with a new list. Perhaps our most controversial list was that prepared for the entering class in fall 1999. We chose to poll the dedicated faculty who teach their courses not in the familiar academic buildings like Wheeler and Dwinelle, but in the residence halls. That year brain researcher and professor of integrative biology, Marian Diamond, suggested including *Winnie the Pooh*. In her annotation of the book she wrote:

... in general my goal has always been to try to attain elegant simplicity. Today my recommendation might be *Winnie the Pooh*, simple and elegant. The story was written in 1926 and look at its impact 73 years later. In the midst of information overload from every direction, what is most popular in the toy stores today for children is none other than *Winnie the Pooh*, everywhere that you look. A simple little bear, not brainy at all, who is loved by all the animals in the forest who are most considerate of each other. A simple little story that provides a certain peace of mind which has somehow been overrun by technology. No, I do not think that I am losing my selective inhibitory nerve fibers with aging, just using them with more discretion.

Professor Diamond's recommendation elicited a storm of attention in the media. *The Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *The New York Times* picked up the press release on the story put out by the campus Public

Information Office. But who would have thought that the story would have gone as far as Sydney and London? Then the list was mentioned on the Jay Leno show, and I thought, "Uh-oh." Apparently Leno showed a copy of the list with a mocked up copy of those readers' aids so popular with students, *Cliff's Notes*.

We did receive one complaint from an alum, but the positive attention generated by the list far outweighed the criticisms. One faculty colleague mentioned that at a barbecue for new faculty members the list was the subject of a great deal of animated discussion.

Best of all, publicity about the list provokes discussions amongst students. They become very lively when talking about their favorite books. It is thrilling to hear these members of the MTV generation speak so passionately about what they love to read and the impact books have had on their lives.

So, if you receive a call or note from us, asking about books that have had an impact on your lives, don't forget to tell us what they were. You may be next!

The unofficial 2000 UC Berkeley *Summer Reading List*:

Fiction

The Ninth Wave by Eugene Burdick

The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts by Maxine Hong Kingston

Going Places by Leonard Michaels

Earth Abides by George R. Stewart

Jasmine by Bharati Mukherjee

Poetry

The Man with Night Sweats by Thom Gunn

Sun Under Wood: New Poems by Robert Hass

Collected Poems, 1930-83 by Josephine Miles

Collected Poems: 1931-1987 by Czeslaw Milosz

Non-Fiction

T. rex and the Crater of Doom by Walter Alvarez

Men, Women, and Chain Saws. Gender in the Modern Horror Film by Carol J. Clover

The Pooh Perplex, A Freshman Casebook by Frederick C. Crews

The Vampire: A Casebook by Alan Dundes

Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976 by Barbara Christian

Coming of Age in the Milky Way by Timothy Ferris

The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work by Arlie Russell Hochschild

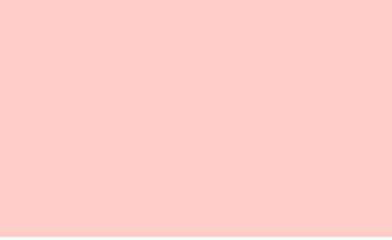
A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals by Spiro Kostof

Soldier: A Poet's Childhood by June Jordan

Metaphors We Live By by George Lakoff

Talking Power: The Politics of Language by Robin Tolmach Lakoff

Been in the Storm So Long. The Aftermath of Slavery by Leon F. Litwack



Death Without Weeping. The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil by Nancy Scheper-Hughes

A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald T. Takaki

Burnout: The Cost of Caring by Christina Maslach

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