

personal library

I owe it all to Mrs. Turnipseed. I learned of her Dickensian surname after she encouraged students to join her fledgling Library Club, which I did with great joy.

For a bookish third-grader like myself, the idea of spending time before and after school shelving books at the Adams Elementary School Library in Davenport, Iowa, was a free pass to fantasy land. As a bonus, we got a piece of candy, mostly Brach's hard sour balls, for each shift. Since I was a hard worker, I'd occasionally snag two or three from the decorative tin in her bottom drawer.

Every day after school (except Wednesday), I would dart to the library shelves to see what had come in. My time spent filing books allowed me to learn and read perhaps more than would be considered healthy for most children.

The aforementioned obsession continued into adulthood. In the fall, I'll be teaching high school students the pleasures, escapes and joys of novels in an English class.

Almost everyone says they don't have time to read anymore, to which I politely reply, "Hogwash." I suggest there are at least 30 minutes a day that you could make some page time, and the rewards are manifold — for your well-being, your brain and even your family. With this in mind, I offer the following "Thinking Person's Library," a quick list of some good, often contemporary, places to start your reading

TOO BUSY TO READ? HOGWASH.
HERE ARE SOME CHOICES
THAT CAN START YOUR READING
RENAISSANCE

BY MARK LUCE

renaissance. Please note, this is strictly fiction — look for the nonfiction version in a later column.

My Antonia, by Willa Cather. A gem about the land, space, sunsets and character of the Midwest.

Light in August, by William Faulkner. A tale of alienation far more accessible than Faulkner's thicker works.

The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway. Bullfights and bitterness.

Jesus' Son, by Denis Johnson. An unbelievable, raw collection of stories centered around a drifter.

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee. Plenty of lessons still to be learned today.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, by Milan Kundera. A political, philosophical and erotic delight.

Lolita, by Vladimir Nabokov. Best opening paragraph of all time — and it gets even better.

Blood Meridian, by Cormac McCarthy. A bloodbath of a novel, but the best novel by our contemporary



answer to Faulkner.

The Intuitionist, by Colson Whitehead. You'll never feel the same way about being on an elevator.

Tomato Red, by Daniel Woodrell. Lean and mean in the Ozarks. Woodrell's novels are tougher than a three-legged coon dog.

Here are some others worth checking out: *Where I Am Calling From*, by Raymond Carver; *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, by Michael Chabon; *The Hours*, by Michael Cunningham; *Libra*, by Don DeLillo; *The Trial*, by Franz Kafka; *Mr. Phillips*, by John Lanchester; and *White Teeth*, by Zadie Smith.

Remember, 20 pages a day keeps the blues away.

Mark Luce wiles away hours reading in his den in Kansas City, Mo.

GOLFDOM, Volume 58, No. 8, (ISSN 1526-4270) is published monthly by Advanstar Communications Inc., 131 W First St., Duluth, MN 55802-2065. Subscription rates: One year \$30 (U.S. and possessions), \$49 (Canada and Mexico) and \$78 (all other countries). Air expedited service is available in countries outside the U.S. and Canada for an additional \$45 per year. Current issue single copies (prepaid only) \$5 (U.S. and possessions), \$7 (Canada and Mexico) and \$8 (all other countries). Back issues (if available, prepaid only) \$10 (U.S. and possessions), \$14 (Canada and Mexico) and \$16 (all other countries); add \$6 per order shipping and handling for both current and back issue purchases. Periodicals postage paid at Duluth MN 55806 and additional mailing offices.



POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to GOLFDOM, 131 W 1st St, Duluth, MN 55802-2065. Canadian G.S.T. Number: R-124213133, Publications

Mail Agreement number 1436694. Printed in the U.S.A.

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