

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Do it again: Lazy, hazy summer perfect time for guilt-free rereading

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The lazy, hazy dog days of summer are the perfect time to enjoy books in a leisurely fashion, and all the better if that reading is combined with the opportunity to bask in fine weather -- or while away a rainy day.

From beaches to backyard hammocks, patios to porches, 'tis the season to savor reading as an antidote to workday stress. And for such purposes, there's often nothing more enticing than rereading a favorite book.

Yet rereading has a mixed reputation. There are those who consider it a form of intellectual laziness, something to feel guilty about. But who doesn't return to at least a few books again and again over the years to refresh one's grasp of great thinkers' insights, to seek perspective attainable only with time's passage or just to relive a memorably great read?

Roger Angell, who annually revisits books kept at his summer cottage in Maine, explained in his article "[Two Emmas](#)" in the June 8 edition of The New Yorker why he can't be bothered with rereading guilt trips at this time of year: "Yes, we really should be into something new, for we need to know all about credit-default swaps and Darwin and steroids and the rest, but not just now, please."

Verlyn Klinkenborg, in his May 30 New York Times op-ed "[Some Thoughts on the Pleasures of Being a Re-Reader](#)," noted that rereading has its roots in childhood: "(W)itness the joyous and maddening love of hearing that same bedtime book read aloud all over again, word for word, inflection for inflection."

For him, rereading has become a grown-up virtue: "The work I chose in adulthood -- to study literature -- required the childish pleasure of rereading." And after listing some of his favorite rereading material, he declared: "This is not a canon. This is a refuge."

Picking up on Klinkenborg's comment, David Gates drew a striking analogy in his July 13 Newsweek article "Now, Read it Again": "Most of us ... have our own musical canon -- or why do they sell so many iPods?.... If you've got Talking Heads on your iPod, why would you want to hear this loony music only once in your life?"

The same could be said of movies and TV shows. If people didn't want to experience them again and again, there would be no market for movies and TV shows on DVDs. So why shouldn't rereading be similarly guilt-free?

As Klinkenborg pointed out, even a reader who devours as wide a range of books as possible will never get through more than a tiny portion of all the world's books.

And a lot of those books wouldn't exist if not for rereading. Consider how many great books, some of which have endured for centuries, have resulted from reconsideration of the works of ancient Greek and Roman authors.

Such reconsideration surely required more than one quick run through those ancients' seminal Western texts.

Though just about all of today's readers often feel pressed to find reading time amid hectic schedules and lifestyles, it's important for them to remind themselves that reading is not a race. So the notion of going "one lap down" with each book reread is nonsense.

Readers have all year to read what they must. This time of year is for reveling in reading what one wants to read, especially if it's something one has read before.

WORTH REPEATING

"Any book, which is at all important, should be reread immediately." -- German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

"The greatest pleasure of reading consists in rereading." -- British author Vernon Lee (1856-1935)

"Let us read good works often over. Some skip from volume to volume, touching on all points, resting on none. We hold, on the contrary, that, if a book be worth reading once, it is worth reading twice, and that if it stands a second reading, it may stand a third." -- Scottish author George Gilfillan (1813-1878)

SHELF LIFE: REREADING PART OF LIBRARY THEME FOR SUMMER

Rereading is an important part of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's summer reading theme for adults, "Reduce, Reuse, Reread" -- a timely slogan in a number of ways.

"Reduce" stands for reducing spending on books (and DVDs, CDs, video games, magazines and other materials) by using a library card -- a great way to stretch a budget during the recession.

"Reuse" carries a hint of environmental consciousness, because reusing library books means fewer trees are cut down to make paper for printing new books.

And "Reread," while self-explanatory, reminds people that the library likely has the books they'd like to reread but no longer own. And it's worth remembering that the library can be a great place for rereaders to find out-of-print books without resorting to the rare-book market.

For more information, including how to win prizes through summer reading done by Aug. 31, visit carnegielibrary.org/summer/adults. Click on the "Booklists" and "Staff Picks" tabs for suggested titles -- some new, some old and suitable for rereading -- in a wide range of genres.

To get you started, here's a list of classic non-fiction titles, selected especially for A Page of Books readers by manager Karen Rossi and her staff at Carnegie Library's Downtown & Business branch, that are "definitely worth reading and rereading," she says.

1776

by David McCullough (Simon & Schuster, 1995)

Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England

by William Cronen (Hill and Wang, 1983)

Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution

by Simon Schama (Knopf, 1989)

Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds

by Charles Mackay (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1932, 1972)

The Fifties

by David Halberstam (Villard Books, 1993)

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West

by Stephen E. Ambrose (Simon & Schuster, 1997)

SNEAK PEEK

Following is an excerpt from Ronald Kessler's "In the President's Secret Service: Behind the Scenes with Agents in the Line of Fire and the Presidents They Protect," due out Aug. 4 from Crown.

While the Secret Service considered Richard Nixon the strangest modern president, Jimmy Carter was known as the least likeable. If the true measure of a man is how he treats the little people, Carter flunked the test. Inside the White House, Carter treated with contempt the little people who helped and protected him.

"We never spoke unless spoken to," says Fred Walzel, who was chief of the White House branch of the Secret Service Uniformed Division. "Carter complained that he didn't want them (the officers) to say hello."

For three and a half years, agent John Piasecky was on Carter's detail -- including seven months of driving him in the presidential limousine -- and Carter never spoke to him, he says. At the same time, Carter tried to project an image of himself as a man of the people by carrying his own luggage when traveling. But that was often for show. When he was a candidate in 1976, Carter would carry his own bags when the press was around but asked the Secret Service to carry them the rest of the time.

"Carter would have us carry his luggage from the trunk to the airport," says former Secret Service agent John F. Collins. "But that is not our job, and we finally stopped doing it." On one occasion, says Collins, "We opened the trunk and shut it, leaving his luggage in the trunk. He was without clothes for two days."

As president, Carter engaged in more ruses involving his luggage.

"When he was traveling, he would get on the helicopter and fly to Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base," says former Secret Service agent Clifford R. Baranowski. "He would roll up his sleeves and carry his bag over his shoulder, but it was empty. He wanted people to think he was carrying his own bag."

Carter -- code-named Deacon -- was moody and mistrustful.

"When he was in a bad mood, you didn't want to bring him anything," a former Secret Service agent says. "It was this hunkered-down attitude: 'I'm running the show.' It was as if he didn't trust anyone around him. He had that big smile, but when he was in the White House, it was a different story."

"The only time I saw a smile on Carter's face was when the cameras were going," says former agent George Schmalhofer, who was periodically on his detail.

When he was in the White House, Carter would regularly make a show of going to the Oval Office at 5 or 6 a.m. to call attention to how hard he was working for the American people.

"He would walk into the Oval Office at 6 a.m., do a little work for half an hour, then close the curtains and take a nap," says Robert B. Sulliman Jr., who was on Carter's detail. "His staff would tell the press he was working."

Another agent says that at other times, he could see Carter through the Oval Office windows dozing off at his desk while pretending he was working.

For all his bizarre behavior and shams, Carter was genuinely religious, did not swear and had a loving relationship with his wife, Rosalynn, who acted as an adviser.

Says Richard Repasky, who was on Carter's detail, "Rosalynn really was the brains of the outfit."

-- from *Newsmax magazine*

NEW PAGES TO TURN

Econoclasts: The Rebels Who Sparked the Supply-Side Revolution and Restored American Prosperity

by Brian Dimitrovic (ISI Books)

Due out Aug. 1, "Econoclasts" -- billed by its publisher as the first and only history of its kind -- posits that though today's recessionary woes are compared most often to the Great Depression of the 1930s, the "stagflation" of the 1970s produced the most consequential economic counterrevolution of the 20th century: supply-side economics. Author Brian Dimitrovic, a Texas resident who holds a doctorate in history from Harvard University, where he did graduate work in economics, and teaches at Sam Houston State University, argues that supply-side economics succeeded because it restrained the income tax and the Federal Reserve, the government's two greatest means of economic intervention. He tells the story of the economists, intellectuals, journalists and policy wonks -- Robert Mundell, Arthur Laffer, Jack Kemp, Paul Craig Roberts, Robert Bartley, Ronald Reagan -- who ushered in a quarter-century of supply-side prosperity. Sharply criticized during its ascent from contrarian idea to favored policy, supply-side economics remains a target for critics today, primarily on the political left, despite its record of success. Dimitrovic suggests that knowing the history of supply-side economics is critical for understanding American prosperity and reinvigorating America's economy in the face of the current crisis.

Economics Does Not Lie: A Defense of the Free Market in a Time of Crisis

by Guy Sorman (Encounter Books)

In this July 20 release, author Guy Sorman counters recession-inspired criticism of capitalism by reminding readers that free markets have lifted hundreds of millions of people around the world out of poverty in recent decades. Citing success in nations such as India and Brazil, he argues that this is a time for rebuilding trust in free markets, not turning our backs on them -- and that economics is only now becoming a true science based on real knowledge. The writer of more than 20 books, including "The Conservative Revolution in America" and "The New Wealth of Nations," Sorman taught economics at the Paris Institute of Political Sciences from 1970 to 2000. A Wall Street Journal contributing editor, he served as an adviser to the prime minister of France from 1995-97 and as global adviser to the president of South Korea. Translated from the French, this first American edition of "Economics Does Not Lie" carries a valuable message: "The essential task of democratic governments and opinion makers, when a society is confronting economic cycles and political pressure, is to secure and protect the system that has served humanity so well, not to change it for the worse on the pretext of its imperfection."

Realizing Freedom: Libertarian Theory, History and Practice

by Tom G. Palmer (Cato Institute)

A welcome option for readers looking for "bite-size" chunks of intellectually stimulating material rather than a book-length discourse, "Realizing Freedom" collects essays originally published during the past quarter-century in scholarly journals and such newspapers as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. Author Tom G. Palmer's background -- doctorate in politics from Oxford University, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, vice president for international programs at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation and general director of the Atlas Global Initiative for Free Trade, Peace and Prosperity -- might lead one to label him an ivory-tower academic. But he hasn't just "talked the talk"; he has "walked the walk" by smuggling photocopiers and fax machines into the Soviet Union, promoting freedom in communist Europe, China and Iraq, and organizing movements against the draft, taxes, censorship and "victimless" crime laws. In these essays, he explores how freedom relates to justice, law, property, peace and prosperity, tackling topics that range from multiculturalism and globalization to patent and copyright law and economics. Championing the notion that liberty is for everyone, Palmer writes accessibly, shedding light on the libertarian perspective and its commonalities and differences with conservatism, providing much for readers of all political persuasions to ponder.

A Page of Books, written and compiled by Alan Wallace, appears on the last Sunday of each month.

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