



Beyond Emancipation

Juneteenth Cincinnati Booklist of Adult Fiction

Abolitionists

The Widow's War

Mackey, Mary

2009

In 1853, Carolyn Vinton is left alone and pregnant after her fiancé, abolitionist doctor William Saylor, disappears. After his stepbrother convinces her that William is dead, Carolyn accepts his offer of marriage, not realizing that she is being drawn into an elaborate ruse by her new husband and his father, a pro-slavery senator and that William is still alive.

The Stamp of Glory: A Novel of the Abolitionist Movement

Stafford, Tim

2000

Amid continuing debate over just how "Christian" are the Christian roots of the United States, *The Stamp of Glory* is the first book in a multigenerational family saga where the main characters interact with actual historical Christians who helped change America for the better. The story of a fictional southern family intertwines across three decades with key historical figures at the heart of the abolitionist movement in the United States.

African Americans—Segregation

Early Birght

Silber, Ami

2008

From the black jazz clubs on Central Avenue in Watts, to the tidy homes of the war widows he cons, Louis Greenberg lives life on the outside. No matter how charming and passionate he is, an outsider he will always be. He is white, a Jew, and that never goes away. It is 1948. An impulsive, irrevocable decision has led to Louis' permanent exile from his family back in New York. Six years later, his father's disappointment still haunts him. Living a fractured, confusing life in Los Angeles, Louis moves between worlds. By day he is a c-man, artfully conning the relatives of men killed in action in World War II out of their cash, preying upon their memories and pain. By night he enters the only world where he is truly alive. In the all-black underground clubs of L.A. he nurtures his passion for bebop, listening to and playing cutting-edge jazz. Here he is still an outsider, but he has won acceptance -to a point. Here, he meets the woman he loves, but can never truly have, in the segregated world of the forties. As Louis navigates the treacherous waters of jazz and women, passion and cynicism, he will try for one big con to put his troubled life to rights -but the many dissonant threads of past and present will come together, ensnaring him in a web of his own making.

Civil Rights

A Walk Through Fire: A Novel

Cobb, William

1992

1961: Disorder and angst brew in Hammond, Alabama -- a town plagued with racial unrest and torn between lifelong loyalties and prejudices. As strife boils to the surface with mass demonstrations, riots, and ultimately bloodshed, Cobb's characters face an unthinkable struggle to find order and commonality among people they've known all their lives. More intimately, *A Walk Through Fire* is an intricate love story between a man and a woman separated by race and joined by an unquenchable longing to recreate the past, a time when truth was found within.

Invisible Man

Ellison, Ralph

1952

This deeply disturbing and resonant novel was critically well received, a winner of the National Book Award. It concerns a southern black man at sea in a northern setting--"I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."

Color of law : a novel

Milofsky, David

2000

Color of Law is a rich, absorbing novel about good, evil, and the inability of the legal system to mediate between the two. Two white Milwaukee motorcycle cops pursue and kill a young black man on a bitterly cold winter night in 1959 and with the help of their superiors escape detection for twenty years. When at last the truth comes out -- first in a confession and then in a groundbreaking civil rights suit brought against the state by the victim's family -- many people find their present lives increasingly altered by this event from the past. This includes Milwaukee Times reporter Bob Joseph, mayoral candidate Andy Hedig, Hedig's wife Sarah, lawyer Charlie Simon, the sister of the murdered youth, and many more.

No crystal stair

Rutland, Eva

2000

This saga of how segregation and the Civil Rights movement shaped the lives of African Americans is told through the eyes of a woman who is born into the black privileged class. She leaves her sheltered life to marry a member of the first black unit in the Army Air Corps.

Safe from the neighbors

Yarbrough, Steve

2010

Our lives are inextricable from history. In his new novel, Yarbrough intertwines James Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss with a town's not-so-admirable response. Decades later, local historian and high-school teacher Luke May struggles with his father's involvement in Meredith's enrollment. May

also initiates his family's crumbling. Being a historian, or perhaps simply by being human, May is incapable of forgetting, which he recognizes as both blessing and curse. Yarbrough wonderfully displays the social upheaval of a specific era and the often-overlooked complexities of small-town life. He also intelligently wrestles with whether or not actions require condemnation of the whole man or just his actions. The relationships are real: simultaneously complex and simple. They are built out of pain and joy. Luke May dislikes some elements of the past but realizes condemnation of his father is futile. Luke's family may have fallen apart, but he will get along. Reading the novel hurts, but in a way that you know things will be okay.

Emancipation Proclamation

Come Juneteenth

Rinaldi, Ann

2007

Sis Goose is a beloved member of Luli's family, despite the fact that she was born a slave. But the family is harboring a terrible secret. And when Union soldiers arrive on their Texas plantation to announce that slaves have been declared free for nearly two years, Sis Goose is horrified to learn that the people she called family have lied to her for so long. She runs away--but her newly found freedom has tragic consequences.

An eighth of August : a novel

Trice, Dawn Turner

2000

In Halley's Landing, a small Illinois town, the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation has been celebrated on August 8 since the late 1880s. The festival is one of the grandest in the Midwest. Yet each year, along with the good times, there are painful memories, heartfelt confessions, and dark secrets. In 1986, the community has gathered to celebrate another festival one year after the unfortunate death of a young boy. Among the great cast are Aunt Cora, the outspoken family elder who provides refuge for those in need; Thelma, the wife, mother, and sister who has compassion yet difficulty dealing with others; Herbert, Thelma's husband; May Ruth, the older woman who visits year after year; Flossie, the unpredictable sister-in-law; and Sweet Alma, Flossie's daughter. What brings them back to Halley's Landing for this celebration is special and unique for each one of the characters; their past and perspective add flavor to the celebration and to their gathering. Trice's second novel, after the successful *Only Twice I've Wished for Heaven* (1997), will assuredly have commercial success.

Harlem Renaissance

The quarry

Chesnutt, Charles W.

1928

Was Donald Glover really what he seemed--a handsome, dedicated, & clever African-American star of the Harlem Renaissance, whose looks made him the "quarry" of a variety of women? Or could the secrets of his birth change his destiny entirely? Focusing on the culture of Harlem in the 1920s,

Charles Chesnutt's final novel dramatizes the political & aesthetic life of the exciting period we now know as the Harlem Renaissance.

Prairie nocturne : a novel

Doig, Ivan

2003

From one of the greatest novelists of the American West comes a surprising and riveting story set in Montana and New York during the Harlem Renaissance, drawing together an unlikely set of thwarted performers in one last inspired grasp at life's set of gold rings: love and renown. Susan Duff -- the bossy, indomitable schoolgirl with a silver voice from the pages of Doig's most popular work, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* -- has reached middle age alone, teaching voice lessons to the progeny of Helena's high society. Wesley Williamson -- business scion of a cattle-empire family -- has fallen from the heights of gubernatorial aspirations, forced out of a public career by political foes who uncovered his love affair with Susan. Years later, Susan is taken off guard when Wes arrives at her door with an unusual request: to train his chauffeur, Monty, in the ways of voice and performance. *Prairie Nocturne* is the saga of these three people and their interlocked destinies. Monty is distantly known to Susan from their childhoods in the Two Medicine country, yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide. When she realizes he possesses a singing voice of rare splendor, Susan joins Wes's Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a performing career -- only to find the full force of the Ku Klux Klan in their way. As Monty and Susan overcome treacherous obstacles, Wes's mysterious motives unsettle everyone, including himself, and the trio's crossed fates form a deeply longitudinal novel that raises everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past, and the costs of career and passion.

The walls of Jericho

Fisher, Rudolph

1928

Lawyer Ralph Merritt buys a house in a white neighborhood bordering Harlem. In their reactions to Merritt and to one another, Fishers' characters--including the prejudiced Miss Cramp who 'takes on causes the way sticky tape picks up lint, 'Merritt's housekeeper Linda, and Shine, his piano mover-- provide an invaluable view of the social and philosophical milieu of the times. Thematically, Fisher focuses on the idea of black unity and discovery of the self.

Gentleman jigger : a novel

Nugent, Bruce

2008

An important addition to the literature of the period, *Gentleman Jigger* is the story of two brothers. Aeon, who passes for white and becomes a famous poet, faces the conundrums of love across the color line. Stuartt, who is openly homosexual--as was the author--joins the younger intellectuals of Harlem in defying authority figures, both black and white, at the notorious "Niggeratti Manor." After the group disperses, Stuartt moves to Greenwich Village and becomes sexually involved with a young hoodlum. Charming and audacious, Stuartt eventually seduces one of the gangster's top bosses, Orini, before his friendships with Wayne, a young heiress, and Bebe, Orini's "moll," set them all spinning in a whirlwind of jazz-age glamour and celebrity...that ends in an ironic dénouement.

Black orchid blues

Walker, Persia

2011

Lanie Price, a 1920s Harlem society columnist, witnesses the brutal nightclub kidnapping of the “Black Orchid,” a sultry, seductive singer with a mysterious past. When hours pass without a word from the kidnapper, puzzlement grows as to his motive. After a gruesome package arrives at Price’s doorstep, the questions change. Just what does the kidnapper want—and how many people is he willing to kill to get it?

Jim Crowism

Uncle Tom’s children : five short stories

Wright, Richard

1938

Set in the American Deep South, each of the powerful novellas collected here concerns an aspect of the lives of black people in the post-slavery era, exploring their resistance to white racism and oppression. Originally published in 1938, Uncle Tom's Children was the first book from Richard Wright, who would continue on to worldwide fame as the author of numerous works, most notably the acclaimed novel Native Son and his autobiography, Black Boy.

Reconstruction

Let freedom sing : of 19th century Americans : an historical novel or could it be a musical?

Kline, Vivian B.

2009

Or Could It Be A Musical? When a class in Cincinnati, Ohio, hopes to make a musical about nineteenth century Americans, they begin by reading autobiographies from the period. They choose a group of young black ex-slave singers, and follow their progress as they move from Tennessee to New York, singing in churches to raise money for their school, destined to become Fisk University. Their white chaperone Susannah becomes the heroine of the journey, as she meets a cast of characters which include Nicholas Longworth, Horace Greeley, P. T. Barnum, Mary Todd Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Robert Duncanson, Susan B. Anthony, Vicky Woodhull and many others. Letters between Susannah and her good friend, Maria Longworth, in Cincinnati, along with entries from the diary of Ella, the black pianist accompanying the singers, provide a great picture of the 1860s and 70s. The Cincinnati students have done a lot of homework. But will it make a musical?

Slave Traders

Crossing the river

Phillips, Caryl

1993

In a vastly ambitious and intensely moving novel, the author of Cambridge creates a many-tongued chorus of the African diaspora in the complex and riveting story of a desperate father who sells his three children into slavery.

Slavery

Uncle Tom's cabin, or, Life among the lowly

Stowe, Harriet Beecher

1852

This 1852 novel provides a powerful, historical look at the treatment of slaves in the pre-Civil War South.

The amalgamation polka

Wright, Stephen

2006

Wright's tale of the growth and travels of Liberty Fish (a moniker to choke a tyrant on), son of passionate upstate New York abolitionists but drawn to his slaveholding extended family, is an unusually captivating modernist novel set during the Civil War. As a child, Liberty sees ghosts; as an adolescent, he escapes his military unit, eventually to end up aboard a pirate ship. Throughout, Wright portrays a strangely level young man, always idealistic and occasionally sharp-tongued amidst brutal, absurd circumstances. Highly recommended.

Underground Railroad

The River Jordan : a true story of the underground railroad

Burke, Henry Robert

2001

The River Jordan is a fictionalized account of an actual escape in of a slave and her seven children from a western Virginia tobacco plantation on the Ohio River, and their harrowing flight across Ohio to Canada on the Underground Railroad. This vivid, inspiring chronicle of a family's ordeal is also a compelling history of the Underground Railroad, in which all the major characters and events are real.

The glass dove

Carrighar, Sally

1962

A courageous young worker for freedom, a handsome wounded soldier, an elderly slave, a baby in distress and a community torn by dissension, the people and setting of one of the most dramatic historical narratives of our time. It's a story of passion, a story of suspense, but most of all a story of love.

The runaway quilt : an Elm Creek quilts novel

Chiaverini, Jennifer

2002

The fourth book in the popular Elm Creek Quilts series explores a question that has long captured the imagination of quilters and historians alike: Did stationmasters of the Underground Railroad use quilts to signal to fugitive slaves?

Hunter of dreams : a story of the underground railroad

Duff, Steven

2002

Hunter of Dreams is the story of the so-called Underground Railroad, the escape route to Canada of American slaves in the 1850s and early '60s. The driving force behind Canadian involvement was Dr. Alexander Milton Ross of Belleville, Ontario, an extraordinary character, but one relatively unknown except to historians specializing in his area.

Fairer than morning

Elliot, Rosslyn

2011

Ann dreams of a marriage proposal from her poetic suitor--until she meets a runaway apprentice who knows what a truly noble man is. In 1826, Ann Miller travels to Pittsburgh with her widowed father and two young sisters, only to find that a mysterious man has pursued them all the way from Ohio. Is Ann's father just a circuit minister, or is he hiding something that may endanger them all? Will Hanby indentures with a Pittsburgh saddler maker, only to discover that his master is a cold-hearted tyrant. After years of abuse, Will becomes a prisoner of his own mind. But then lovely Ann Miller comes to stay next door and her compassion lights a long-dark part of Will's soul. His renewed courage puts his life in jeopardy as he begins to assist fugitive slaves. Will's murderous master and Ann's questions about her family may keep both of them bound in the shadows forever. Or will they find freedom--together?

William Henry is a fine name

Gohlke, Cathy

2006

They told him his best friend wasn't human. Robert's father assisted the Underground Railroad. His mother adamantly opposed abolition. His best friend was a black boy named William Henry. As a nation neared its boiling point, Robert found himself in his own painful conflict. The one thing he couldn't do was nothing at all. William Henry is a coming-of-age story about a 12-year-old boy--and an entire country--that comes face to face with the evils of society, even within the walls of the church. In the safety of an uplifting friendship, he discovers the hope of a brighter day.

North star conspiracy

Monfredo, Miriam Grace

1993

Glynis Tryon, the delightful Seneca Falls, New York, librarian introduced in *Seneca Falls Inheritance* returns, still balancing her own life against the momentous events of the times. With sure authenticity, the author evokes the atmosphere of 1854, seven years before the Civil War, and brings to life the vivid cast of characters involved. A local election is pending, from which Glynis and Elizabeth Cady Stanton hope will come gains for women's rights. A wealthy resident has started Seneca Falls's first theater, and its production of *Macbeth* looms large in the story. Glynis herself faces a wrenching decision: Constable Cullen Stuart wants her as his wife when he moves west to become a Pinkerton man. Warm as her regard for Cullen may be, Glynis is reluctant, knowing how her life must change after marriage. Meanwhile, Seneca Falls has become an important stop on the Underground Railroad. Fugitive slaves following the *North Star* to Canada find support from many of the town's inhabitants, including Glynis. It is a difficult commitment at best, and when complicated by murder, a perilous one as well. Once again, Miriam Grace Monfredo has combined historical events, a moving personal story, and an engrossing mystery in a work of extraordinary interest.

Promise bridge

Schwab, Eileen Clymer

2010

"This is a promise bridge, and it bridges a promise flowing from your heart to mine. It can't never be broken...the promise is part of you now, understand." Thus begins an unlikely friendship between Hannelore Blessing, a plantation mistress, and a slave girl named Livie. As the young women are launched on a harrowing journey of awakening filled with shared risks and nurtured promises amid whispers of the Underground Railroad and the rising tension preceding the Civil War, they discover their ability to trust, love, and ultimately take action.

The safe room

Shapiro, Barbara A.

2002

Narrator Lee Harden toils as a research assistant for an inner-city drug center in Boston. Unofficially, she counsels recovering black addict Trina and helps her own grandmother (with whom she lives) ready her historic house for acceptance into a national park comprising Underground Railroad stations. Lee complains of unnerving nightmares about the house's root cellar and even sleepwalks while the house undergoes renovations. Her narrative shares space with journal entries an ancestor made in 1858, detailing her unacceptable relationship with an escaped slave. Increasingly eerie connections with the past, a missing bracelet, and murder make this a recommended choice for readers of psychological suspense. Shapiro is the author of such titles as *Blind Spot* and *See No Evil*.

Women Abolitionists

Pale truth : a novel

Alef, Daniel

2000

This large but carefully plotted and certainly historically accurate novel celebrates the rich cultural heritage that has been the hallmark of California life. The story begins in 1829 in the state of Georgia, with the birth into slavery of an unusual baby--she has eyes of two different colors. The baby's name is Mary Ellen and her mother is credited with--or, more accurately, feared for--being a voodoo queen. Mary Ellen grows up the favorite of the wife of the owner of the plantation where she was born--to say nothing of also growing up beautiful. The plantation owner's wife places Mary Ellen in the hands of a male friend, for him to see to her education and to hold a sizable amount of money in trust for her future. So off to New Orleans Mary Ellen goes, but Missouri and Cincinnati follow as sites of her continuing education in life. But San Francisco is where her fortune awaits her, the sights and sounds of that young and raw city fairly wafting off these pages.

Candle in the darkness

Austin, Lynn N.

2002

Book 1 in the Refiner's Fire series. The daughter of a wealthy slave-holding family from Richmond, Virginia, Caroline Fletcher is raised in a culture that believes slavery is God-ordained and biblically acceptable. But upon awakening to the cruelty and injustice it encompasses, Caroline's eyes are opened for the first time to the men and women who have cared tirelessly for her. Her journey of maturity and faith will draw her into the abolitionist movement, where she is confronted with the risks and sacrifices her beliefs entail.

Free enterprise

Cliff, Michelle

1993

The telling of stories--to recapture memory or redefine the past, to cope with present chaos and confusion, and to inform and enable the future--dominates these affecting novels. Jamaica-born feminist Cliff rewrites American history's "official version" of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859, with Brown as a significant but minor character. In his place, Mary Ellen Pleasant, an African American hotelier from San Francisco who funded the raid, takes center stage, along with fellow conspirator Annie Christmas, a Jamaican gens inconnu who fled from her island home in the 1850s to affirm her racial identity and join in the mainland struggle. In tall tales and legends, cherished memories, and regrettable misunderstandings, *Free Enterprise* explores the multiple meanings of freedom and enterprise and of a society that enshrines selected meanings of both. King's first novel takes place in the 1960s in southern Indiana, where the author's family has farmed for three centuries. "The night before John F. Kennedy got shot," we learn from 10-year-old Isobel, "my momma ran off again." The True Life Story of Isobel Roundtree describes "that whole year that passed." Hog farmer Prince tells his lonely daughter family stories and puzzles out the shattering changes in his own life. Emma Swallow, "the tallest woman criminal ever maybe," accepts Isobel's invitation to join the Roundtree household as housekeeper and healer. The mysterious Cat Man haunts the Roundtree woods, searching for his

lost love. King's engaging narrator and the quirky but believable characters who populate her world dramatize one young girl's encounters with chaos and hope and her discoveries about the meaning of family and of love.

Harriet and Isabella

O'Brien, Patricia

2008

It is 1887, and Henry Ward Beecher lies dying. Reporters from around the world, eager for one last story about the most lurid scandal of their time, descend on Brooklyn Heights, their presence signaling the beginning of the voracious appetite for fallen celebrities we know so well today. When Henry Ward Beecher was put on trial for adultery in 1875, the question of his guilt or innocence was ferociously debated. His trial not only split the country, it split apart his family, causing a particularly bitter rift between his sisters, Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Isabella Beecher Hooker, an ardent suffragist. Harriet remained loyal to Henry, while Isabella called publicly for him to admit his guilt. What had been a loving, close relationship between two sisters plummeted into bitter blame and hurt. Harriet and Isabella each had a major role in the social revolutions unfolding around them, but what happened in their hearts when they were forced to face a question of justice much closer to home? Now they struggle: who best served Henry -- the one who was steadfast or the one who demanded honesty?