

# Are you looking for a good book? Try reading one of these gems

To the Editor:

Is it just a coincidence that "National Reading Week" follows hard on the heels of "Give Up TV For a Week?" Thank you, Jim Gillis, for the delightful feature on reading and favorite books of local readers. (By the way, you didn't mention yours. Put it in your column.)

The recommendations of those you interviewed have inspired me to share a few of my favorite books with other TV-liberated souls. Everybody knows about the Stephen Kings and John Grishams who dominate the best-seller lists. Nothing they've

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written, in my opinion, comes close to the following gems.

For example, you saw the movie "Remains of the Day" with

Anthony Hopkins — good movie, right? The book is better. And that book by Kazuo Ishiguro made you wonder about the guilt or innocence of Nazi sympathizers in England. Another really beautifully written novel by the same author, "An Artist of the Floating World," deals with the complexities of motivation, guilt, forgiveness and atonement in connection with Japanese aggression in World War II. Two great novels.

Chaim Potok has written a number of novels dealing with the conflict of strict religious upbringing and the modern world. The first two, "The Chosen" and "The Promise," are classics and should be read in sequence, but I recommend starting with "My Name is Asher Lev." It is the story of a young Jewish artist who first troubles his parents and their close-knit Hasidic community by painting nudes. Then, struggling to portray pure torment, he paints two masterpieces with such an explosive central image (and I won't tell you what it is) that it blows him right out of the community and almost out of his family. I still tremble when I visualize

the raw emotions involved in the climax of this book, when his parents, an earnest, devout couple, attend their son's heralded New York exhibition and come face to face with these paintings.

"All the King's Men," by Robert Penn Warren is a half-century old, but this novel of political corruption in the south is as up-to-date as today's headlines, and the writing is incredible. Listen to Warren's description of a character named Tiny Duffy:

"If the wind was right, you knew he was a city-hall slob long before you could see the whites of his eyes. He had the belly and he sweated through his shirt just above the belt buckle, and he had the face, which was creamed and curded like a cow patty in a spring pasture, only it was the color of biscuit dough, and in the middle was his grin with the gold teeth."

Walker Percy is another great southern writer. Of all his novels, I think "The Second Coming" is the best. It tells the story of a wealthy, early-retired Wall Street lawyer and widower, an avid golfer, who starts having seizures. He meets a young girl who has escaped from a mental institution, and that sets up the plot: The lawyer has a sharp mind and deteriorating body; she is physically healthy but mentally ill. Can they help each other deal with life? Read this engrossing story to find out.

If you disliked that trash movie, "Priest", and want to read a really great book about a priest, you'll love — and I don't mean a dear old bumbly father figure — get a copy of Jon Hassler's "North of Hope." My wife and I just loved this book; it's one of those books you remember and think about, and long afterwards you find yourself wondering what the characters are doing now.

Finally, a question. I've never read any of Iris Murdoch's novels. Which one is her best? (C'mon, book lovers, let's get something going here. Recommendations, please!)

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