

literary **mama**

reading for the maternally inclined

Now Reading: December 2011

By [Rhena Tantisunthorn](#)



I'm reading [11/22/63](#), Stephen King's latest 850 page tome. I love it. It's a great book. It's on all the lists. Time travel. Characters. Dialogue. Blah, blah, blah. King needs no endorsement from me. Even if I could introduce one or two new readers to the "King of Horror," they would be but tiny grains of sand in his vast, literate empire.

So why even bring it up in the Now Reading section of Literary Mama?

It's not that the book I'm reading is any sort of a revelation. It's *how* I'm reading it.

Back when my husband and I were first married, it seemed as if all we had was time (although, of course, I'm sure we complained, even then, about how little time we had). We could do whatever the hell we wanted to do. It was awesome. We could read at our leisure and to our heart's content. We could go to bars and get drunk and spend the entire

Sunday "recovering" from a hangover with greasy take out and America's Next Top Model marathons on the couch. (But, of course, we mostly read.) One kid, a dog, a house, a hive full of bees, and two advanced degrees later? Not so much. My scientist husband spends all his "free" reading time on nerd stuff that's way over my head. I like novels. Two ships passing in the night. Or two readers in different stacks at the library. Or something.

A few months ago, my husband discovered the joy of audio books. And, by proxy, so did I. He spends an hour and a half on the train and bus to and from work. He also has periods of time when he's at the lab, doing rote, mechanical work (like growing and feeding cells and other things that could possibly be done by nerd robots if only someone would invent a nerd robot; please, someone, invent a nerd robot). During these times he can actually listen to an audiobook! While I can cram a few pages in while our daughter sleeps or before I doze off at night, he can get in a few minutes here and there too. And so, at the end of the day, when we meet up again, we are no longer in different stacks in the library. We can discuss plot and character and try to predict what's going to happen next. It's almost as good as greasy take out on the couch. Almost.

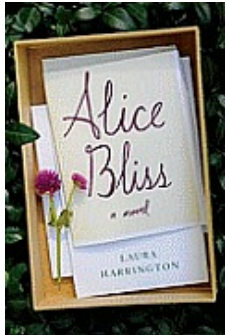
Read on for more recommendations from our Editors and Columnists. Some of them might even be available on audiobook.

Caroline M. Grant, Editor-In-Chief, writes, "My sons and I just finished Brian Selznick's extraordinary new novel, [Wonderstruck](#). Many people are learning about Selznick's work through Martin Scorsese's gorgeous film adaptation ('Hugo') of Selznick's first novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. *Wonderstruck* is even more ambitious. The novel unfolds along two tracks. One story is told with words, about Ben, a newly-orphaned boy living in Michigan in the 1970s. Another story is told entirely in pictures, about Rose, a deaf girl living in Hoboken, NJ, in the 1920s. Ben heads to New York to pursue a clue about the father he never knew, and the stories begin to converge at the American Museum of Natural History. *Wonderstruck* is an elegant, delicate exploration of deaf culture, family relationships, and how we share and keep our stories."



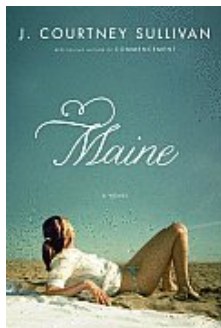
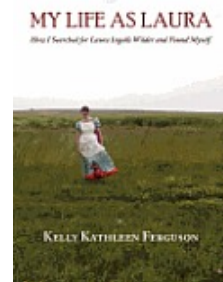
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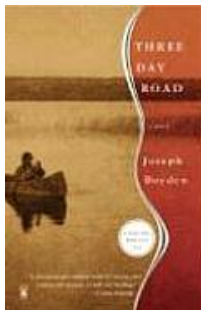
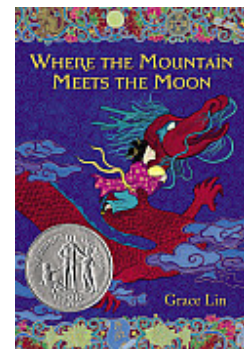
"Birthing the Mother Writer" Columnist Cassie Premo Steele shares, "[Alice Bliss](#) by Laura Harrington is a new novel about an adolescent girl whose father leaves to be deployed just as she, in her budding phase, feels she most needs him. There are wonderfully honest scenes between Alice and her mother, a charming first romance, and insights for literary mamas about the joys and tragedies of many families who struggle to stay together during the separation of deployment."

Fiction Co-Editor, Suzanne Kamata tells us, "I found myself tearing up in a coffee shop toward the end of [My Life as Laura: How I Searched for Laura Ingalls Wilder and Found Myself](#), which shows how deeply involved I became with the narrator, author Kelly Kathleen Ferguson. For the most part, however, I was laughing out loud as I read about Kelly's quest to visit the sites made famous by the Little House series, all while wearing a vintage prairie dress."



Kristina Riggle, Fiction Co-Editor, is reading [Maine](#) by J. Courtney Sullivan, "which is already hitting the "best of" lists for 2011. I've only just begun, but I can't wait to dig further into the lives and personalities in the Kelleher family. I cannot resist a sprawling, complicated family story packed into a crucible-like situation -- such as a summer cottage in Maine."

"Four Worlds" Columnist Avery Fischer Udagawa explains, "My mother recently sent me Grace Lin's Newbery Honor-winning novel [Where the Mountain Meets the Moon](#), an original folktale-fantasy spun from threads in Chinese mythology. I relished reading the book while nursing our baby and had a hard time stopping between feedings. I loved its bracing yet subtle messages about courage, contentment, and the power of story. I can't wait to 're-gift' this to my daughters in a few years by reading it aloud."



Reviews and Profiles Co-Editor and "Mother City Mama" Columnist Katherine J Barrett is reading [Three Day Road](#) by Joseph Boyden, "The story takes place during WWI and tells of two Cree friends who enlist in the Canadian army. They spend much of the war in the trenches and use their hunting skills to become renowned snipers. I'm not a fan of war novels but this book is fascinating for its portrayal of First Nations culture and deep friendship through a horrific period in history."