



The Bibliophile's Devotional: 365 Days of Literary Classics

Hallie Ephron

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The Bibliophile's Devotional: 365 Days of Literary Classics Hallie Ephron YOUR YEAR OF LITERARY INSPIRATION

"Hallie Ephron is like the best, friendliest, hippest librarian you ever met. Her taste is exquisite, her writing's a hoot, she's done her homework, and it's very clear that she loves, loves, loves books."

--Susan Stamberg, Special Correspondent for NPR

Every day's a book holiday with Hallie Ephron! Come along with this noted author and critic as she embarks on a book lover's adventure--and together you'll celebrate the erudite pleasures of precise prose, wanton wordplay, and sensational storytelling.

From a cold winter day on the heath with *Jane Eyre* (January 5) to a freewheeling *On the Road* trip with Jack Kerouac (August 18), you'll journey through a year's worth of the best and brightest classics both old and new. On the way, Hallie regales you with tales of your favorite books--and introduces you to new favorites you've yet to enjoy. Packed with intriguing opening lines, concise plot summaries, and expert insight, *The Bibliophile's Devotional* is your field guide to the wide, wild world of literature--one great book at a time!

The Bibliophile's Devotional: 365 Days of Literary Classics Details

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Phillip Edwards says

Obviously I can't resist books about books - which of us here can? And the idea behind this one is beautifully simple: for each day of the year a summary of a classic book, including the first line and a quote about it. But it only gets three stars from me because, as I worked my way through it (no, I was never going to ration myself to a page a day for a whole year) there were times when I felt I was being hit over the head by the Stars and Stripes, as one very American book followed another. Of those authors featured more than once, two-thirds are American (including Annie Dillard who has three books featured - the same number as Dickens and Tolstoy) while the only author featured four times is Henry James. The non-fiction titles are almost exclusively about America as well. Still, the summaries are excellent, and those first lines could come in handy round here...

Nancy says

A great book, a gift from my cousin, Kathy, and one that I am sure I will refer to often. I started off, a year ago, reading each day's entry, one a day, usually at bedtime. As time went on, though, I read ahead or skipped days. I've checked the books I've read and turned the pages for books that I want to read (and there are many).

Christine says

This book is like looking at either my TBR list or my Books Read list. It has a classic read for every day of the year. Each selection comes with a summary that will remind you why you liked the book or why you want to read the book. This is a must have for any book lover.

Angeli says

Last night, I wasn't up for buying another book because I told myself that I would stop. Because I'm broke. But since I'm such a hardheaded creature, I bought a book, again. 3

#mymomhatesmebecauseiboughtabookagain <-- this is the official hashtag I've been putting on my latest Instagram updates, because it's true.

So yeah, about the book. I'm a little bit disappointed about it. It's kind of misleading. Or I just expected something but turns out it wasn't what I was expecting. Okay go, on with my review...

This book is a collection of different classic books, it's like name it, you got it, only what I was hoping for were gists of the stories explaining, Pride and Prejudice for example, the summary. But it was a paragraph of

facts about the books and it seemed boring. I gotta hand it to the author though, the quotes from the book were cool. So thumbs up to that. BUT STILL... I'm just kinda disappointed that it wasn't what I was expecting.

I know classic books can't be shortened into a single paragraph because most of the time they're really, really long. But I think I'll like this in the long run, it's also a great source/reference of/on TO READS/WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?

And I also feel like collecting every book in this anthology, although I already own some of them. HAHAHAHA. Yeah. Whatever, I'm not making any sense. I'll try to write better next time because I honestly am out of my mind right now.

Lisa Vegan says

This was just okay. Maybe I'd have enjoyed it more if I'd read one entry a day, rather than reading the book straight through, but I'm not a "passage a day" type reader. Frankly, while the content is very interesting, each entry is only slightly longer than what could be included in a day at a glance calendar, and I enjoyed reading a bit about some of my favorite books, but for books I haven't read, I'd rather get information about those books from Goodreads' members, book description fields, etc. This is kind of a nonessential work, in my opinion.

Kate says

Fun book to pick up for a few moments here and there. Just enough information to let me know if I am interested or not. Definitely helped me realize some more good reads for the future.

Nicole says

Not bad, overall. A lot of the books mentioned I knew about. The most beneficial aspect of this book, at least for me, was that it mentioned books that I had and when reading its descriptions or characterization I realized it wasn't for me. So it was great because while it made me want to pick up a few books, solidify some I had, it made me want to get rid of some too, which was great. I was surprised by what I learned, some books I thought one thing but it was really something else. I think at one point or two I remember feeling like this was too much information like maybe a bit of a spoiler. But overall it wasn't bad. I liked that it was classics because then I learned about so many books that I don't actually intend to read but I at least understand them more now. But I think the classics category was also a hinderance. I kind of wish, there were more beyond the Western Canon or some more that were classics but not the most popular. There were a few but not enough.

Michelle says

The premise of this ambitious book is doomed to failure, because what bibliophile would agree with any one

universalizing idea of 365 greatest books?

My particular nitpicks are that this listing is heavy on the sci-fi, including some of my most despised books/authors (Ender's Game by the loathesomely homophobic Orson Scott Card, and Stranger in a Strange Land by the demented and incestuous-redhead-obsessed Robert Heinlein) while omitting the brilliant Octavia Butler. Overall it's heavy on mostly dead white guys (Ray Bradbury, James Mitchener, Kafka, Tolstoy, Vonnegut, Hemingway) -- though it does toss in some Virginia Woolf and Carson McCullers, and some James Baldwin.

Ian Laird says

I have a lovely edition of this book, uneven cut (deckle, I think), on beautiful paper, from Adams Media in Massachusetts, USA.

It's a pity the contents don't quiet measure up to the presentation. The capsule reviews (around 250 words) are informative, disciplined and provide useful information, including prizes won, a quote by way of a comment on the qualities or impact of the book, and the date of publication, although that is usually in the text somewhere and it would have been handy to have it next to the title.

The problems come with the selection. Other reviewers have commented on this. The 365 books, of themselves are excellent; classics, sound works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and some modern works. But the choice is a conservative and limited one in a number of regards, and this is disappointing.

The collection is very American and British. There are few Indians or people of Indian origin (no RK Narayan or VS Naipaul, but she does include Jhumpa Lahiri, which is good), one New Zealander (Keri Hulme **The Bone Collector**) and two Australians (Shirley Hazzard **The Great Fire**, who lived most of her life in the USA, and Geraldine Brooks, **March** an Australian journalist now novelist whose selected work is about the American civil war and who lives in Nantucket. What about Tim Winton, Peter Carey and Patrick White?). The other feature which I found interesting is the large number of works relating to the black experience in the United States. I counted 24 of them, close to 7% of the total.

So, having established what I missed and what is there instead, I now intend to read Maya Angelou's **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**, Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** and Toni Morrison's **Beloved**. I already have **To Kill a Mockingbird** on my 'read pretty soon, mate' list. Hallie Ephron has also introduced me to an author I think I should look at: Robert Heinlein.

One last point: in her treatment of **Middlemarch**, Ephron describes Mr Casaubon as 'an aging academic'. This is misleading; he is in fact *the Reverend* Edward Casaubon, a scholar certainly but with a very pronounced spiritual bent. This is essential to much of the plotting of that part of **Middlemarch** concerned with the central character Dorothea Brooke.

I am aware that my comments are somewhat negative. To balance the ledger, I read all the entries with some enthusiasm, learned a lot and discovered some new authors to pursue. Hence the *** rating.

Cheryle says

"Hallie Ephron is like the best, friendliest, hippest librarian you ever met. Her taste is exquisite, her writing's a hoot, she's done her homework, and it's very clear that she loves, loves, loves books."

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Nancy says

This is an exhaustive list of 365 books recommended by the author, an English professor herself. There is no Stephen King, no Jodi Picoult, no "Twilight" in this list. What there is is a list of classical favorites from "Beowulf" and Homer to Eugenides' "Middlesex". The books mentioned vary from the antiquities through the mid-2000's. Likewise, nearly every genre and every type of story has an entry here, from Latino literature, to seasonal Christmas favorites, Asian literature, Native American, Indian and even African. Some of the authors are quite well-known: Twain, Melville, Austen, and Bronte, but there are plenty of other authors and books I've not heard of before.

Each entry fills a page with the book title & author, the opening lines of the book, a brief synopsis of the plot, characters and themes, and then closes with a snippet of a review of the book from another reviewer or sometimes a quote from an interview with the author.

If there is a fault with this book, it is that at least one book description is glaringly incorrect: "Huckleberry Finn"'s synopsis has obvious faults that anyone who has read the book would know to be incorrect. I don't know if there are other book errors listed; I've not read many of the books listed here. Nonetheless I added a significant number of books to my to-be-read pile after reading this.

Susan Rose says

This book is essentially 365 book recommendations, the recommendations are short and spoiler free but they are definitely intriguing. There are also definitely some books in it that are missed out of some other reading lists, in particular 1001 books to read before you die, (which I'm trying to read through).

A particular element of this book I enjoyed is how there is a flow between the recommendations, (for example it recommends reading Wide Sargasso Sea after Jane Eyre). This has more generally inspired to read related books next to each other which I'm finding really rewarding.

Also, (I appreciate this shouldn't matter), it is a very pretty book and as such would be a great gift for any bibliophile.

Jeff Zell says

I did not major in English in college, so I found this to be a delightful introduction to contemporary literature. This is mostly mainstream fiction from the last 70 years or so.

Ephron's format is the same for each page. Each page has a book title, author, a sentence of two from the book, a three or four page introduction and comment, and finally another commentator's one or two page statement on the book or its impact.

This is a great way to be introduced to literature. Genres such as science fiction, westerns, romances, and most thrillers and mysteries or not included.

Vicki Seldon says

This book is a "devotional", modeled on the books of hours that were a staple of the religious books of the literate upper-middle and aristocratic classes of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Each calendar day features a snapshot description of a book beloved of Ms. Ephron, some well-known classics such as Eliot's Middlemarch or Melville's Moby Dick and

some more recent books such as Helprin's Winter's Tale and Morrison's Beloved that the author feels should be both savored and added to the literary canon. At the bottom is a quote about the book of the day by another iconic author. These kinds of books I find hard to resist, especially when the author writes as insightfully about as she does. Not only has she sparked my curiosity about authors I've been neutral about reading (I've never been interested in the books of Tom

Wolfe for example) but her commentary has made me excited about rereading classics like Middlemarch and Anna Karenina, books that I have always loved. So glad I stumbled on this volume, it is such a treat!

Elizabeth says

I did read the entire book as intended, beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31. It introduced me to many books I'd never heard of and told me enough about all the books that I have a pretty good idea of what they're about. In this case, I'm not likely to pursue most of the books mentioned, simply because Ephron's taste in books is different enough from mine that I'm just not interested in most of her choices. I enjoyed how she arranged her summaries: if something about a book tied it to a particular date, the book was listed on that date. But her book gets only three stars from me mainly because in the end, it's a collection of 365 plot summaries (no, not set up for a leap year!) and that's as deep as it gets. Also, I wish she had listed the original publication date for all the books, which would've helped me get a feel for them. But overall, it was an interesting way to get through a year and I'm glad I read it.

