

Amy's World Famous Top 10 Book List for 2009
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For the newbies, here's the skinny:

This marks my tenth year of putting together a Top 10 Book List. Yep, you too can receive a whole decade's worth of book recommendations from yours truly if you so wish. Ask and you shall receive the entire list of more than 100 books that deserve to be read ... more than 100 because I always include a few extra reco's at the end of each Top 10, the number ten being pretty subjective and all.

The history of the endeavor is simple. I read a bunch and friends were always asking me to recommend something so I decided to put a list together. Way back in 2000 (remember all that Y2K hubbub?), my recommendations excluded Oprah Book Club selections on the grounds that Oprah had way too much influence over what we were reading and there way too many great authors being overlooked. These days, I make exceptions to that rule. However, after 10 years, several original rules still hold:

- The books I recommend do not have to be published in that given year. There are zillions of good books in the world and I don't want to be so narrow as to only read books published that year. Case in point: I read a book that was published in 1914 and it made my 2009 list. Oldies can still be goodies.
- The first few pages of this document summarize my year as well as the overarching theme(s) in the books I've selected. So, you can bypass the personal stuff and get right to the selections if you choose.
- Forward ho, book lovers! That means you can forward this list to anyone you know that I don't know who likes to read.
- I track where my list travels. In the past, it's gone as far as Australia and Thailand so if you send this to a friend of a babysitter of an aunt's twice-removed cousin overseas, let me know. Even if you send it to New Amsterdam, Indiana (smallest town in the US, population 1), shoot me an email. One of these days I'm banking on someone sending it to someone famous like Dave Grohl or Martin Sheen or the Edge. (Hint, hint, people!) A girl can dream.

And finally (insert drum roll here), this year brings a Best of The Decade List! I read a ridiculous amount of books in the 2000s and I struggled to narrow the decade list to a paltry ten, but I did it. The task was about as difficult as taking an algebra test or walking out of a shoe store without making a purchase – these two things being nearly impossible for me. There was sweating, there was regret for leaving a beloved book behind, there was grand internal debate over the rankings, there was probably gnashing of teeth. What it came down to was simply this: these are the books that I believe deserve to be read by everyone, no matter your tastes in literature. They say important things, their characters reflect who we are and what we believe, and your life will be better for having read them. 'Nuf said.

Happy reading in the new decade!

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

—A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens

Here we are at the end of the decade and the beginning of another. Charles Dickens' first paragraph in *A Tale of Two Cities* could symbolize this decade, if not the final year of the 2000s.

For me, this year was a mixed bag of best and worst times, and with 2010 looming, I declared 2009 the Year of Starting Over. The "start over" phrase is a running joke between Dave and I. When we met, my checkbook ledger looked like abstract art and was just about as difficult to interpret. Basically, when I couldn't get my checkbook balance to match the bank statement, I crossed out the incorrect total, wrote "start over" on the next line, and then scribbled in whatever total the bank statement or my ATM receipt indicated. It's safe to say my financial acumen has improved since then but we still yell "Start Over!" when plans aren't going as planned or when things gets royally messed up, or when it's time to find a different approach because the current one isn't cutting it.

This year, I gave the Start Over shout-out early and often, beginning in January with one of the year's best of times – our trip to the inauguration of President Obama in Washington, DC. (Go here for the complete story: <http://www.amypurcell.com/blog/?p=585>). Regardless of your political stance, there's no denying that this was an historic moment for our country. Bundled up in layers of winter gear, Dave and I – along with our friends Kevin and Doug – made the trek from Philly to DC to stand near the Washington Monument with two million others. Never have I been in a crowd so joyful. And I still believe Obama will make good on these words from 1/20/09:

"Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will **not be met easily or in a short span of time**. But know this, America – they will be met. On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

For those who are critical or suspicious of Obama and his administration, I say give our president more than a year in office before you cry epic fail. No one can fix this mess in day, let alone a year.

But I digress.

In very short order after the inauguration, I injured my right knee, had my wisdom teeth extracted, traveled to Honduras on a OneSight mission where I contracted a respiratory infection or what, upon further review, might've been the swine flu, and experienced an inexplicable bout of hair loss. Worst times? Nah. I felt incredibly fortunate to have a job, to be surrounded by strong friends and family, to give the gift of sight to others who have no access to eyecare, and to continue jogging along with the aid of my

new best friend, The Cortisone Shot. As for the hair, at least I had mass quantities to start with so the loss was easily covered up by strategically-placed barrettes and hats.

By October, the meniscus tear in my right knee – formerly known as The Good One – was too cranky to ignore. Besides that, being so far out of my regular running routine had taken its toll on my writing and general productivity. Running keeps me focused. Without it, I'm like an unanchored boat drifting from project to idea to cleaning out the junk drawer to looking online for a new sweater...um...what was it that I was supposed to be doing? No doubt, getting the knee fixed was going to put me back in the best of spirits and get me back to having the best of times. After surgery, I went to physical therapy and claimed that I was a beginning runner again. I had to rebuild the muscles I lost and I'm just now getting back my lowest gear of speed. Building up endurance will take even more time but the experience made me appreciate how far I have come as a runner these past ten years.

In many ways, Dave and I started over in Akron as well. In our first two years here we focused on getting settled into a new life with Dave as a professor at Kent State University and me as a work-from-home employee. These were not little changes; they were changes of big-doozy proportions. We spent time making our new house and this new city feel familiar, and we sought out new friends after leaving a brilliant band of brothers and sisters in Cincinnati. Dave attempted to enter the music scene and, after playing a few gigs, he realized it wasn't just the lackluster music scene that troubled him; he wanted to take his music in a different direction. Start over! I faced similar situations in the running community and the writing scene. There were groups I could join but none of them felt all that right. So I started the Akron Writers Group and now there's a solid core of writers and friends in Akron supporting each other as they dig away at their craft. But, overall, we were frustrated by how slowly our community was taking shape.

For a brief period this summer, we experienced our own Dickensian "season of darkness" as we seriously questioned whether Akron was the right place for us and whether Kent State was the right place for Dave. On the one hand, Akron is a great, easy place to live and we had cobbled together a small, strong community of pals. On the other hand, we were missing our larger network in Cincinnati and Dave was realizing that teaching was more important and valuable to him than conducting research (p.s. Dave rocks as a professor, students love him and it's awesome to see him doing what he loves). We wondered if Akron was suffering from "brain drain" and had lost the bulwark of its creative natives and the kind of people who value community. After many long discussions during dog walks and over beers at our favorite restaurant, Lockview Lounge, we decided Akron is the right place for us, for now. We're staying and we're going to start over in some ways by making an effort to expand our community, possibly in Kent because ...

... I have applied for the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. Wahoo! If accepted, I will be going back to school part-time in Fall 2010 and starting my education over. The idea of taking a fiction workshop or a class on Irish literature makes me weepy –a very, very happy weepy. As does the thought of buying new school supplies! I'm thinking Foo Fighters lunchbox.

In my writing life, I started over on the novel. As the saying goes, all first drafts are crap and thanks to those writing friends of mine who slogged through the first draft with me, questioning what needed to be questioned and pointing out what needed fixing, editing, or total annihilation. My first draft definitely fit the crap category but I learned a lot from the process and I'm working on draft number two. In between working on the novel, I sent out one short story, and it was accepted by *Third Coast* for their Fall 2010 issue. Strangely enough, the story was also accepted by *Southern California Review* several weeks later. It was nice to know that more than one editor enjoyed the story. I also finished up the final months of the year with an online Novel Writing class through Gotham Writers. Here, I met some incredible writers and

super-fantastic women. We enjoyed each other's writing and company so much that we started our own splinter group to keep us motivated.

The most brilliant best-of-times highlight of the year was our trip to Ireland, truly a trip of a lifetime. We're not sure we'll ever find another city or country where we felt so instantly at home and fell so instantly in love with the people, the vibe, the scenery. (Go here to read about the entire trip: <http://www.amypurcell.com/blog/?cat=8>). Galway and Dingle and Kilkenny are still close to our hearts and in our minds. If we can find cheap airfare like we did this time, we'll go back sooner rather than later. And in keeping with the Irish theme, we saw U2 and Snow Patrol in Chicago in October. U2 is no stranger to starting over. The boys have defined and redefined their sound several times, and we love every iteration. Me? I fell in love with Snow Patrol's enthusiasm. They were ga-ga about playing with their heroes and their happiness was contagious. They're in regular rotation on my iPod these days.

So with all this chatter about starting over, I wasn't surprised to find that same thread weaving its way through my 2009 book selections. The subconscious works in mysterious ways, yes? I fell in love with characters that struggled to begin again or were forced to start over after some type of tragedy. I lost myself in sprawling stories that focused on community and how we're all connected, no matter how loosely. And I found comfort in tales of people struggling to make sense of their world, just like all of us do every day. As always, I didn't happen across these books on my own. I have friends like Sandy Becker, Erik Brueggemann, Veronica Jurgena and many others to thank for passing along a must-read title.

The publishing industry has taken its own economic beating and many editors question whether literature will survive, whether in hardback or in Kindle-esque digital. I prefer to believe Alice Sebold who says: "Narrative is perhaps the most powerful antidote we have in the face of what at first may appear to be insurmountable odds." And I believe Edward O'Brien who, in 1933, said, "In a time of doubt and uncertainty a nation is wise if it turns to its artists for enlightenment. The artists of a land are its most nearly conscious voice...new life always springs from old."

New life springs from old. Start over. And do it with a great book! Thanks, fellow book lovers, for continuing to support writers and for seeking out new narratives. We are the stories we tell, yes?

1. The Sweet Hereafter, Russell Banks

This slim novel packs an emotional punch as four main characters try to piece together what happened when a school bus careened off a snowy road and killed several children, forever changing the communal fabric of a small, working class town in Upstate New York. What I love about stories told from multiple viewpoints, is that we, as readers, have the freedom to choose the character we identify with the most and the character we believe in the most. Each of the four characters here – the bus driver, the widowed father who loses two children in the accident, the lawyer who attempts to pit the parents who lost their children against the town, and the beauty queen cheerleader crippled in the accident – will do more than tug at your heartstrings. They'll make you think the next time you try to place blame on someone when the unthinkable happens, or when there's an accident and it's unclear what happened.

Each character has details the others don't and each character grapples with much more than the accident in their daily lives. In the case of this story, it seems that no one is to blame for the accident directly, yet everyone is to blame for something behind the closed doors of their homes. The final scene at the town's annual demolition derby is so well-drawn, you'll feel like you're sitting on the bleachers beside Dolores Discroll (the bus driver) and her husband Abbott. Ultimately, this book is about how a community comes together or is torn apart when tragedy strikes. It reminds us that we are all linked, no matter how loosely we think those links may be.

I tend to go to Richard Russo for a sense of place but Banks may be one of my new heroes in this regard. I have more than a few of his books on my reading list for 2010.

2. More of This World or Maybe Another, Barb Johnson

A special thanks to fellow bibliophile Erik Brueggemann who never steers me in the wrong direction on a book recommendation. Erik liked this book so much he mailed me a copy of it. This might be one of the best short story collections I read not just this year, but this decade. So thanks for that, Erik! Johnson was a carpenter for more than 20 years before deciding to trade in her hammer for a pen. I love that she published her debut collection in her 40s (it gives me hope!) but I also love her for writing down to the bone. These stories are raw and will turn you inside out.

Set in New Orleans, the stories follow the same characters and narrow in on significant, life-altering moments – moments that are either murky endings or clear beginnings for the characters. Delia and her laundromat, The Bubble, act as the hub of this struggling community. The rest of the stories are the spokes in a lives-on-the-margin wheel of misfortune, hope, family, love, and redemption. You'll root for Pudge and Dooley and Luis who battle terrible odds and try to straighten out their lives, and you'll hope that Delia will accept the love of her partner. You'll feel each character's pain when things go way down south and you'll stand up and cheer when things work out. You can sense Johnson's love for her characters, so much so that it made me wonder how much she was drawing from her own experience or the experiences of those she has loved deeply. The language is simple yet powerful in its authenticity. And the smallest actions are heavy with meaning. If you're not a fan of short stories, give this a try. You'll come to love these underdog characters as much as Johnson seems to. Think of each story as the shortest novel you've ever read.

3. Olive Kitteridge, Elizabeth Strout

This was my number one pick of the year until I read the two books above. Considered a “novel in stories”, it may appeal to those who don't enjoy the short story form. More than likely, it will appeal to those who like messy, imperfect main characters with oversized Achilles' heels. Olive isn't the most likeable of women. In fact, when she was a teacher, students didn't like her very much and her son finds her so overbearing and suffocating that he moves across the country to escape her. Olive unapologetically thinks, says, and does many of the things that some of us wish we could think, say, or do in certain situations. She doesn't win friends this way but at least she doesn't hold back. And that's what makes her empathetic.

The thirteen linked stories cover about 30 years in a small coastal town in Maine, where Olive loses more times than she wins. She's a crank, she's a bungler, and some of her actions are appalling if you're reading this in a gendered way. If Olive were a man, you wouldn't think twice about it but because she's a woman who's supposed to act a certain way, you find her challenging. And that is Strout's most brilliant stroke.

Like my Number One and Number Two selections, Olive Kitteridge magnifies ordinary life and points out the extraordinary things that people face behind closed doors or, sometimes in the case of those who Olive meets along the way, in front of the whole town. While the stories have their downer moments, there's enough humor and hope threaded through the narrative to keep this from being overly melancholy or melodramatic.

4. The Senator's Wife, Sue Miller

Have I mentioned how much I love Sue Miller? If you check some of my previous Top 10 Lists, Miller appears about as frequently as Richard Russo. Love. Her. In this story, Miller's two characters are living parallel lives. Meri is at the beginning of her life, newly married and entering pregnancy and motherhood. Delia is at the dead-end of her marriage with her philandering husband, a former senator whose health

deteriorates as the story unfolds. Meri and her husband rent out a wing of Delia's house and the two women become friends. Eventually, their relationships collide and while the climax seems inevitable, Miller makes it surprising in the way it plays out. It will be up to you to decide whether or not you like these couples in the end. If nothing else, you will question their choices. The writing is soft and beautiful, very Miller-esque in its psychological dissection of each character. I'm glad she's a writer but, in another life, Miller probably would've made a great therapist.

5. A Gate At The Stairs, Lorrie Moore

I know you're shocked. Lorrie Moore at Number Five? How can this be when I love her even more than Sue Miller, Richard Russo, Joyce Carole Oates, Amy Bloom, Alice McDermott, and Stewart O'Nan combined? Sheesh, you think you know someone's tastes and then there's Lorrie Moore relegated to the middle of the list! Here's the thing: I adore her writing so much that I was almost afraid to read this book, the first book she's put out in 11 years. After waiting all this time, I wondered if I was setting myself up for disappointment by expecting too much out of her. I thought maybe she wouldn't live up to the hype, which, if you pay attention to reviews, is at an all-time high. Jonathan Lethem's review in the *New York Times* noted that he only knows of one person who doesn't enjoy Moore's writing, on the grounds that it is "too punny." Moore can do no wrong in the eyes of other writers, including me. She is a super genius when it comes to original metaphor and description. Here's a small sample: "The woman of the house opened the door. She was pale and compact, no sags or pouches, linen skin tight across the bone. The hollows of her cheeks were powdered darkly, as if with the pollen of a tiger lily. Her hair was cropped short and dyed the fashionable bright auburn of a ladybug. . . her leggings mahogany, her sweater rust-colored, and her lips maroonish brown. She looked like a highly controlled oxidation experiment."

Linen skin? Pollen of a tiger lily? Not your average description by any stretch. And because of this talent Moore is simultaneously envied and adored by other writers. When I heard her book was coming out, I placed my order in advance (oh yes, I fork out the extra duckets for Moore in hardback), and then it laid on my nightstand, waiting. When I finally had enough courage to crack the spine, I read the first chapter. Twice. Once as a reader. And then once as a writer in awe of her originality. I turned to Dave and said, "god, I hate her for being so good but I love her for being so good."

She's not only good, she's downright funny. And in this book, she captures the coming-of-age-in-the-Midwest angst perfectly. Tassie Keltjin is 20 years old and wondering if there's anything more to life than she's already experienced. Life seems so . . . well . . . ho-hum. Until she meets a couple that needs a nanny. They're planning to adopt a child and they need help. The couple is odd and mysterious from the get-go, clearly hiding something but Tassie doesn't discover what until she's embroiled in their lives. At Tassie's own home, her mother dives in and out of depression, her father is a boutique farmer of potatoes stuck among the real farmers of the small town of Troy, and her brother is going off to the military. Being in college allows her to escape from her family life but only slightly so and after a series of bad-luck events, she finds herself recovering under the shelter of her family, only to encounter bad luck again. Besides the first chapter, there are two standout scenes – one where a heartbroken Tassie dons a hawk suit to help her father scare mice and other vermin out of their hiding places, and the other near the end of the story when Tassie realizes how much she loves her brother.

So why isn't this number one or even two? Because Moore might be one of those acquired-taste kind of writers. My beer to your wine. My veggie burger to your steak. I know there are plenty of people reading this list that won't enjoy Moore's absurd sense of humor or jokey, wink-wink storytelling. And for you, my loyal list readers, I pushed her down to number five. Take the risk if you so choose but don't come a-crying to me if you don't like it. If you want a taste of Moore before diving into this, read one of her short story collections: *Like Life*, *Birds of America*, or *Self Help*. In my humble opinion, she's better at the short form than the long novel but you'll know after a few pages of any of her works if she's your kind of writer.

6. Run, Ann Patchett

Race, class, politics, family at its dysfunctionally functional best. Patchett strikes every chord in less than 300 pages. The beginning chapter's eerie quality draws you into the Sullivan family's current drama. Then, as Teddy and Tip – the two black adopted sons of former mayor Bernard Doyle – leave a lecture with their father, Tip is nearly struck by a car. A woman pushes Tip out of the way and is struck in the process, leaving her young daughter Kenya to pick up her hat and gloves strewn across the snow-covered street. From there, the Sullivan's past family skeletons begin to rattle and secrets unthaw as we learn that Kenya and her mother might be more than strangers to the Sullivans. Kenya is a gifted runner, as one of the Doyle boys used to be but running is both literal and figurative here. Each character is running toward or away from something and it all comes together for each family member quite nicely – or at the very least, realistically, in the end. Patchett touches on race and class differences but the themes never feel overwrought or overplayed. At its heart, the story is about the meaning of family and the responsibilities that come along with it. This is more of a 10k sort of book, not something you want to read at the fast-pace of a 5k. Spend some time with the Doyle family and you'll end up not wanting to leave them at the finish line.

7. Songs for the Missing, Stewart O'Nan and The Double Bind, Chris Bohjalian

Really, I'm not cheating. These two are neck and neck for number seven. While their plots are dissimilar, their themes run along the same tracks. In *Songs for the Missing*, a teenage girl disappears from a small town near Cleveland, and her family sets out on a heartbreaking journey to find her without losing themselves or their family in the process. In *The Double Bind*, a teenage girl is severely injured in a beating and essentially disappears from society and the person she once was.

That's the major build-down. There's far, far more to both of these books. Part thriller, part mystery, part literary fiction, pick your poison and settle down in your favorite reading chair for some good old-fashioned storytelling. You'll find yourself wanting to skip to the last chapter to see what happens – is Kim still alive and living somewhere outside of Cleveland? Is Laurel Estabrook really discovering the secrets and connections she thinks she's uncovered? But the stories are so good, you won't want to ruin the end, especially in the case of *The Double Bind*.

8. The Help, Kathryn Stockett

My good friend and fellow book lover Sandy Becker recommended this to me early in the year but it took me until November to get around to reading it. I'm glad I did. As much as the idea of reading about black maids in Civil Rights era Mississippi sounded depressing, *The Help* is anything but. Sure, the undertone of sadness and disgust that the south was still segregated and racist as little as forty years ago runs like the muddy Mississippi through every chapter, but the strong women Stockett introduces us to keeps the story afloat. Skeeter Phalen is just home from college and reuniting with her high-brow, racist friends who treat their "help" poorly. Skeeter befriends two of the maids, compassionate Aibileen who is wise beyond her years and scrappy Minny who knows she should keep her mouth shut but can't. Skeeter proposes a risky project and the two maids join her, reluctantly at first and then willing to risk their own livelihoods – and possibly their lives – to see the project through to the end. Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny take turns telling a story that is sure to be a big hit in book groups everywhere.

9. The Dubliners, James Joyce

This year's classic read comes from Ireland, naturally. I visited the Writers Museum in Dublin where they pay homage to Joyce, Yeats, and plenty of others. Walking around the crammed streets of Dublin made me wonder what the grand city was like back in Joyce's day at the turn of the 20th century. It's safe to say that Joyce was not a fan of the Catholic Church or of Ireland's politics. He found both constrictive and

rigid, and his characters experience religion, family, and relationships in the same way. This was a book group selection for me. Some enjoyed it, some found Joyce's melancholy tone dreadfully hopeless. I was in Camp Enjoyment. The writing stands strong today and Joyce encapsulates the Irish mentality of the times in sparse, sharp stories. Besides, you shouldn't be allowed to get through a college English or creative writing course without reading 'The Dead'. If I ever get to teach, it will be on the required reading list.

10. That Old Cape Magic, Richard Russo

I won't apologize for my predictability. I like what I like. And I happen to like Richard Russo a hell of a lot. In fact, I plan on re-reading *Empire Falls* this year. If *Bridge of Sighs* wasn't your bag, this Russo novel just might be the ticket, especially if you're heading off for a weekend getaway. *Cape* is much shorter and the story moves as fast as a surprise summer breeze. Griffin has had his father's ashes in the trunk of his car for nearly a year and he has the opportunity to take the ashes to the place where his family vacationed when he was a child. His marriage is teetering on the cusp of disaster, and after a wreck of a weekend, Griffin still has his father's ashes but has lost a great deal more. Flash forward a year, and Griffin now has two sets of ashes in the trunk – his mother's along with his father's – as he returns to the Cape for his daughter's wedding where his wife has brought a date as has Griffin. The family collides in true Russo-Shakespearean fashion. There's a laugh-out-loud scene at the "leftover people" wedding table followed by several other slapstick moments that make you want to grab Griffin by the lapels and shake some sense into him. But there are plenty of heart-warming and heartbreaking scenes where the past and present collide and where memories play tricks on the characters' sense of identity. If you've endured family strife, an identity crisis, or have been relegated to the table of misfits at any wedding, you'll find a good laugh in these pages.

Non-Fiction Pick

Annie's Ghosts: A Journey Into A Family Secret, Steve Luxenberg

Other Good Reads

This Is When I Leave You, Jonathan Tropper

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society, Mary Ann Shaffer

The Cellist of Sarajevo, Steven Galloway

Deep End of the Ocean, Jacquelyn Mitchard

Ghost at the Table, Suzanne Berne

The Diary, Eileen Goudge

Shelter Me, Juliette Day

Prince of Frogtown, Rick Bragg

Rules for Saying Goodbye, Katherine Taylor

Best of the Decade (year I read it in parentheses)

1. *Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver (2000 and re-read in 2009)

2. *Empire Falls*, Richard Russo (2002)

3. *Family Pictures*, Sue Miller (2005)

4. *The Corrections*, Jonathan Franzen (2001)

5. *Child of My Heart*, Alice McDermott (2002)

(Really my favorite of McDermott's is *Charming Billy* but I read that before I was keeping a list so I can't officially count it. Read that one, too.)

6. *Plainsong*, Kent Haruf (2004)

7. *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Alice Munroe (2001)

8. *Unaccustomed Earth*, Jhumpa Lahiri (2008)

9. *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy (last read in 2003; re-read about every 3-5 years since high school)

10. *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer (2002)

