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A year of Oregon books

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Brian Booth, Portland lawyer and founder of Literary Arts and the Oregon Book Awards, compiled this list of his favorite "Oregon books" by Oregon writers. He is the editor of *Wildmen, Wobblies & Whistlepunks: Stewart Holbrook's Loubrow Northwest* (1992), chosen as one of 20 books on the "Essential Northwest Reading List" by *Pacific Northwest Magazine*.

JANUARY

Honey in the Horn (1935) by H. L. Davis

Set in rural Oregon in 1906 to 1908, this Northwest version of Huckleberry Finn was called the "best first novel written by an American," by H. L. Mencken. It helped change the course of Northwest literature and won Davis the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

FEBRUARY

Skookum: An Oregon Pioneer Family's History and Lore (1986) by Shannon Applegate

A distinctive and powerful

narrative of the Applegate family, from 1843 to the present, written by a fifth-generation descendant.

MARCH

Trask (1960) by Don Berry

The clash of two cultures when a former mountain man and two Clatsop Indians journey to the land of the Killamooks in 1848; written when he was 27, this is the first of Berry's three acclaimed Oregon novels.

APRIL

Stepping Westward: The Long Search for Home in the Pacific Northwest (1991) by Sallie Tisdale

A personal, opinionated and very readable view of the region's history, people, geography and natural resources.

MAY

A month for Oregon rivers: *River Notes* (1975) by Barry Lopez; *The River Why* (1983) by David James Duncan; *Riverwalking: Reflections on Moving Water* by Kathleen Dean Moore; and *Voyage of a Summer Sun* (1995) by Robin Cody

The Lopez stories describe the physical and spiritual relationship of a river with humans, herons, fish, animals and wilderness. Duncan's epic of Oregon fly fishing was the first novel published by the Sierra Club. Moore's essays originated on the rivers she hiked and floated. Cody's book describes his solo canoe trip down the length of the Columbia River.

JUNE

Stories that Could Be True: New and Collected Poems (1977) by William Stafford

A collection by Oregon's poet laureate and National Book Award winner whose work "in the American grain" used everyday language to probe relationships among the individual, the family and nature.

JULY

A month for books on different aspects of the Native American experience in Oregon. *Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country* (1977) by Jarold Ramsey is a collection of Oregon Indian myths and tales from every region, presented with imagination, humor, history and wisdom. Terence O'Donnell's *An Arrow in the Earth: General Joel Palmer and the Indians of Oregon* (1991), is the sad story of the Oregon Indian wars of the 1850s. *The Sky Fisherman* (1995) by Craig Lesley is a powerful and compassionate contemporary novel of the landscape and people east of the Cascades where white and Native American cultures co-exist. Don't overlook *Cathlamet on the Columbia* (1906) by Thomas Nelson Strong, a moving and melancholy book of recollections of Indian life and villages along the lower Columbia River.

AUGUST

Sometimes a Great Notion (1964) by Ken Kesey

This massive tale of the Stamper family and conflict in an Oregon coastal town is considered by many the greatest Northwest novel.

SEPTEMBER

Hole in the Sky (1992) by William Kittredge

A memorable "New West" memoir of a ranching family and their land in Southeast Oregon.

OCTOBER

A Heaven in the Eye (1984) by Clyde Rice

Written when he was 81, this exuberant and colorful autobiography of a working man on the fringes of society between 1918 and 1934 won the Western States Book Award for creative nonfiction. For the ultimate contrast with Clyde Rice, read *A New Life* (1961) by Bernard Malamud, who drew upon his 12 years at Oregon State College for this delightful and humorous tale of transplanted New Yorker Seymour Levin's "new life" in academia in a fictional Corvallis.

NOVEMBER

Searoad, Chronicles of Klatsand (1991) or *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971) by Ursula Le Guin

Two very different books written by perhaps the most versatile living Oregon author: *Searoad* examines the lives of residents in a beach community from the 1890s to the present; *Lathe* is the story of a Portlander whose dreams come true.

DECEMBER

Winds of Morning (1952) by H. L. Davis

Not as well known as *Honey in the Horn*, this novel of the journey of an old horse herder and a young deputy sheriff in the mid-Columbia River country in 1926-1927 may be Davis's best work.

BONUS

Heckletooth 3 (1969) by David Shetzline

This impressive 1960s novel involves loggers, a great forest fire and what happens when a bull elk is killed out of season; praised as "extraordinary and always deeply moving" by Thomas Pynchon.

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