

The following reading list was compiled in February 2009 by Duana Welch of the amazon.com Fiction Forum group from suggestions received after she asked the group to recommend "GREAT LITERATURE THAT WON'T DEPRESS YOU."

(in no particular order)

100 Years of Solitude--Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Love In The Time Of Cholera--Gabriel Garcia Marquez
A Confederacy of Dunces--John Kennedy Toole
Candide--Voltaire
Catch 22--Joseph Heller
The Unbearable Lightness of Being--Milan Kundera
A Midsummer Night's Dream--Shakespeare
Much Ado About Nothing--Shakespeare
As You Like It--Shakespeare
The Comedy Of Errors--Shakespeare
The Tempest--Shakespeare
The Merchant Of Venice--Shakespeare
Jane Eyre--Charlotte Bronte
Pride & Prejudice--Jane Austen
Sense & Sensibility--Jane Austen
Anything by Jane Austen (although if you start with Pride & Prejudice and Sense & Sensibility, you'll probably be ruined for her other novels)
Great Expectations--Charles Dickens
Don Quixote--Cervantes
Anything by Jerome K. Jerome
A Room With A View--E.M. Forster (all Forster's works are recommended)
The Count of Monte Cristo--Alexandre Dumas
Atlas Shrugged--Ayn Rand
The Fountainhead--Ayn Rand
O Pioneers--Willa Cather
Song of the Lark--Willa Cather
My Antonia--Willa Cather
Sister Carrie--Theodore Dreiser
Jennie Gerhardt--Theodore Dreiser
All the short stories of W. Somerset Maugham
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer--Mark Twain
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn--Mark Twain
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court--Mark Twain
The Importance Of Being Ernest--Oscar Wilde
Murder Considered As One Of The Fine Arts--Thomas of Quincey
All the works of P.G. Wodehouse
All the works of Barbara Pym
Slaughterhouse-Five--Kurt Vonnegut
Cat's Cradle--Kurt Vonnegut
Cyrano de Bergerac--Edmund Rostrad
To Kill a Mockingbird--Harper Lee
Decline and Fall--Evelyn Waugh
Treasure Island--Robert Louis Stevenson
The Dubliners--James Joyce
Adam Bede--
Silas Marner--
The Mill On The Floss--
Tom Jones--Henry Fielding
Joseph Andrews--Henry Fielding
Amelia--Henry Fielding
Tartuffe--Moliere
The Misanthrope--Moliere
Puck of Pook's Hill--Kipling
The Jungle Books (Short Stories)--Kipling
Rewards and Fairies--Kipling
Tarzan--Edgar Rice Burroughs

A Moveable Feast –Hemmingway (probably his only happy book)
Dandelion Wine--Ray Bradbury

GREAT LITERATURE THAT IS WORTH THE PAIN AND ENDS WELL:

Angela's Ashes--Frank McCourt (ignore his subsequent work—you'll only be disappointed after this masterpiece)
A Tree Grows In Brooklyn--Betty Smith
I Know This Much Is True--Wally Lamb
The Poisonwood Bible--Barbara Kingsolver
The Road--Cormac McCarthy

GREAT READS (THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE GREAT LITERATURE) THAT WON'T DEPRESS YOU:

Gone with the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell (did you know this won the Pulitzer?)
The Invisible Wall: A Love Story That Broke Barriers--Harry Bernstein (warning: contains pain, somewhat like the great novels where the pain is Worth It)
Mrs. Mike--Benedict & Nancy Freedman
Joy In The Morning--Betty Smith
McGowan's Call--Sherry Clements
The Holdouts--Sherry Clements
Andrew Greely's "Angel" series of books (Angel Fire; Contract With An Angel)
The Secret Life Of Bees--Sue Monk Kidd
Being Dead Is No Excuse: The Official Southern Ladies Guide to Hosting The Perfect Funeral--Gayden Metcalfe
Somebody is Going to Die If Lilly Beth Doesn't Catch that Bouquet!-- Gayden Metcalfe and Charlotte Hays
The Sweet Potato Queens' Big-Ass Cookbook & Financial Planner--Jill Conner Browne
All of the Sweet Potato Queens books--Jill Conner Browne
Neither Here Nor There--Bill Bryson
A Green Journey--Jon Hassler
Grand Opening--Jon Hassler
Simon's Night--Jon Hassler
Me Talk Pretty One Day--David Sedaris (outrageous humor)
Lion Country (and the other three in the Book of Bebb series)--Frederick Buechner
Tales Of The City--a series of books by Armstead Maupin
Paris to the Moon--Adam Gopnik
High Fidelity--Nick Hornby
Lonesome Dove--Larry McMurtry
Timeline--Michael Crichton
A Prayer For Owen Meaney--John Irving
The Cider House Rules--John Irving
The Good Soldier—Ford Maddox Ford
The Hummingbird's Daughter--Luis Alberto Urrea (fantastic! Do not miss this one!)
The Archivist--Martha Cooley
Giovanni's Room--James Baldwin
Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society--Mary Ann Shaffer
The French Lieutenant's Woman--John Fowles (It has two endings, so you can choose the one you prefer)
Summer at Tiffany's--Marjorie Hart
John Adams--David McCullough
1776--David McCullough
Phillippa Gregory's series of English Tudor dynasty historical fiction: The Constant Princess, The Other Boleyn Girl, The Virgin's Lover, The Queen's Fool
A Southern Belle Primer: Why Princess Margaret Will Never Be a Kappa Kappa Gamma--Marilyn Schwartz
The Deptford Trilogy--Robertson Davies
She--H. Rider Haggard (if you love it, there are two sequels. Freud analyzed this book--kind of interesting to know.)
Cold Sassy Tree--Olive Burns
Snow In August--Pete Hamill
Gods In Alabama--Joshilyn Jackson
Between, Georgia--Joshilyn Jackson
Anesthesia: A Brief Reflection on Contemporary Aesthetics--Tripp York
The Joy Luck Club—Amy Tan (has sadness, but worth it)
House Of The Spirits—Isabele Allende (sadness, but worth it)

Paradise News—David Lodge
The works of Frances Burney
The Godfather—Mario Puzo
Rendezvous with Rama—Arthur C. Clarke

GREAT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE THAT ADULTS LOVE AND THAT WON'T DEPRESS YOU (you can read this alone, or have read-alouds with the entire family)

Matilda--Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake
Because of Winn Dixie--Kate DiCamillo (don't be fooled--this one is for adults)
The Tale of Despereaux--Kate DiCamillo
All of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books (Little House On The Prairie series)
The Invention Of Hugo Cabret--Brian Selznick
Harry Potter series--J. K. Rowling (enjoyed by all ages > 9; may be too scary for younger kids)
Paper Towns--John Green (young adult lit that adults enjoy)
Anything by John Green
Watership Down--
Dark Is Rising—Susan Cooper
Anne of Green Gables series--L. M. Montgomery (children's)
Holes—Louis Sachar
Dracula—Bram Stoker

WHERE TO FIND MORE GREAT, NON-DEPRESSING READS:

www.librarything.com/topic/52414

POSITIVELYGOODREADS.COM

BOOKS THAT ARE NOT MY FIRST CHOICE, BUT THAT YOU MIGHT LOVE (books on this list are either just not my thing--sci-fi, fantasy, mysteries--or the jury is still out on whether it's depressing):

Blue Sky July--Nia Wyn (depressing?)
Perfume: The Story Of A Murder--Patrick Suskind (depressing?)
The Story of Edgar Sawtelle--David Wroblewski (depressing?)
A Wrinkle in Time--Madeleine L'Engle (sci-fi/fantasy children's series)
The Lord of the Rings trilogy--J. R. R. Tolkien (everybody else loves it)
The Silmarillion—J.R.R. Tolkien
Dune--by Frank Herbert (sci-fi/fantasy)
The Once and Future King--T.H. White
Life of Pi--Yann Martel (too depressing for some)
The Picture of Dorian Grey--Oscar Wilde
The Lovely Bones--Alice Sebold (opinions vary as to how depressing this is)
Water for Elephants--Sara Gruen (varying opinions on depression factor)
Lord Peter Wimsey mystery series--Dorothy Sayers
Ellen Foster--Kaye Gibbons (description alone is depressing)
The Dog Who Wouldn't Be--Farley Mowatt (children's--the dog dies but I'm told the book is worth it)
Where The Red Fern Grows--(children's--both dogs die, but the book is worth it)
Lloyd Alexander's young adult fantasy novels
CS Lewis' novels (children's; includes the Narnia series and Voyage of the Dawn Treader)
The Time Traveler's Wife--Audrey Neffenegger (depressing to some)
The Historian--Elizabeth Kostova (Dracula-themed)
Lost World--Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Jules Verne's works

NOTE: This list pertains to fiction or (on rare occasion) fiction-like memoirs...non-fiction items that were suggested are respectfully remanded to another list.

STILL RESEARCHING/UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Borges: Labyrinths
Calvino: Invisible Cities, Italian Fables

Carroll: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass
Chekhov: 40 Stories
Conan Doyle: A Study in Scarlet, The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes
Proust: Remembrance of Things Past (tr. Moncrieff/Kilmartin)
Joyce: Ulysses
Salinger: Raise High the Roof Beam,
Carpenters and Seymour, an Introduction (the first novella)
eliot Fintushel's book Breakfast with the Ones You Love
How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents and its sequel, Yo! by the Dominican writer Julia Alvarez
Rudolpho Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima
Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John
Elena Castedo's Paradise
The Cairo Trilogy—Marfouz
The Moor's Last Sigh and The Ground Beneath Her Feet --Salman Rushdie
A Thousand Splendid Suns--Khaled Hosseini
Possession--AS Byatt
Absurdistan
Herman Hesse's work
The works of Jhumpa Lahiri (The Namesake; collection of short stories too, called "Interpreters of Maladies". It won the Pulitzer a couple years back)

Most novels by:

Haruki Murakami

Anne Tyler (the one exception being Dinner at the homesick restaurant)

Lewis Carroll

The Razor's Edge—W. Somerset Maugham

Orlando (Virginia Woolf)

Pinn (Nabokov)

David Copperfield / Martin Chuzzlewit / Pickwick papers (Dickens)

Type, Omboo (Melville)

Name of the rose

Master of the Margarita (Bulgakov)

The shipping news

Confessions of zeno (Svevo)

Invisible cities / If on a winter's night a traveler (Calvino)

Edible women (Atwood)

The bell (iris Murdock)

The world according to garp / hotel New Hampshire (Irving)

The Iowa baseball confederacy

The magic mountain (Mann)

Narcissus and goldmund / Siddhartha (Hesse)

Innocents abroad / roughing it / tramps abroad / Connecticut Yankee... (Mark twain)

Henderson the rain king (bellow)

Moonstone / Women in white (Collins)

The deerslayer (Cooper)

Tristan Shandy / sentimental journey through france and Italy (Sterne)