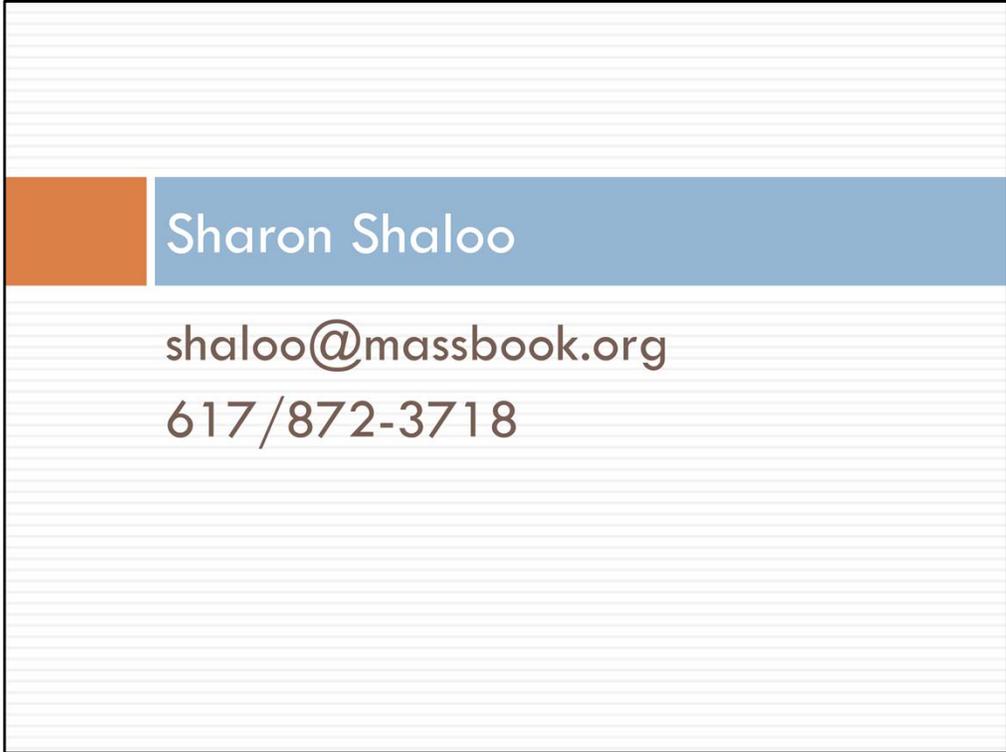


THE **FIRST** FIRST FRIDAY:  
6 JANUARY 2012



A business card for Sharon Shaloo. The card has a white background with a blue horizontal band across the middle. On the left side of the blue band, there is a small orange square. The name "Sharon Shaloo" is printed in white on the blue band. Below the blue band, the email address "shaloo@massbook.org" and the phone number "617/872-3718" are printed in a dark brown color.

Sharon Shaloo

shaloo@massbook.org

617/872-3718

# MassBook Awards Committee

Sunny Vandermark, MLA Liaison (ex officio)  
Sharon Shaloo, MCB Director (ex officio)  
Katie Baxter, Convener, Children's/Young Adult Literature (2014)  
Laurie A. Cavanaugh, Coordinator, Reading & Discussion Guides (2014)  
James R. Kelly, Convener, Nonfiction (2014)  
Jan Resnick, Convener, Fiction (2014)  
Peter Thornell, Convener, Poetry (2014)  
Forest Turner, New Books Blog (2014)

We shall be recruiting members for other functions in the coming months and forming the Advisory Committee of former judges at that time as well.

Running a series of workshops in Jan/Feb for potential judges in the MassBook Awards – check the MLS Listings and sign up!



## Heads Up on 2012 Anniversaries

January 24, 2012

Edith Wharton's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

November of 2012 marks 100 yr anniversary of THE REEF

Age of Innocence was an NEA Big Read book and I have 1,000 reading and discussion guides and 500 audio recordings to support programs for that. Email me if you want me to pop a guide and CD in delivery to you.

## Celebrating Edith Wharton

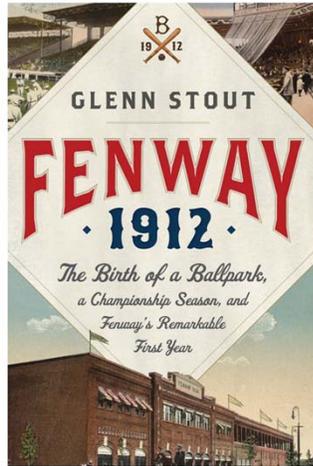
- Age of Innocence (Pulitzer Prize 1920)
- The Reef (published Nov 15, 1912)
- Summer (published in 1917 ... 95 yrs ago)
- *Ghosts* (published in 1937 ... 75 yrs ago)
- Book Club Trip to *The Mount* (Lenox), sold 100 yrs ago



Spring 2012

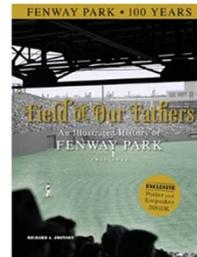
Fenway Park's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

# Fenway Park at 100

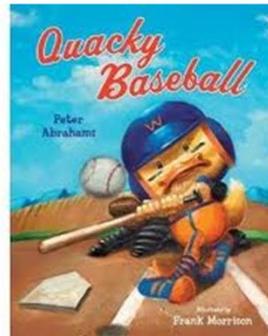
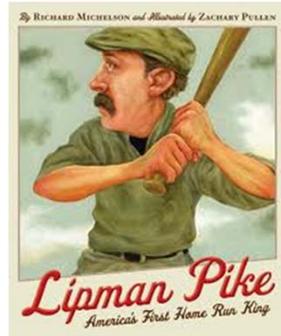


No matter what the Sox do this year, we can celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fenway – Glenn Stout's a local sports guy made good, edits the *Best American Sports Writing*, contributes to various radio programs, etc. This book is in the MassBook submissions this year. He's a good speaker. Lives in Metrowest.

Stout's sometime collaborator, Richard A. Johnson, published an illustrated history of the Park as well. Less narrative but interesting news snippets and great pics!



## 2011 Children's MassBooks about Baseball



*Richard Michelson does beautiful books – gallery in NoHo ...*

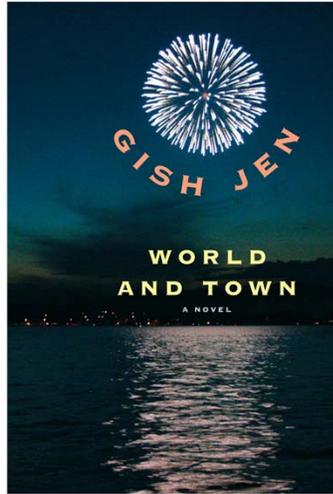
*Peter Abrahams has been to MLA once or twice – Cape Cod author*



# The MassBook Award Winners

A Quick Review of the 2011 Awards

## MassBook Award Winners 2011



Gish Jen, *World and Town*, now in trade paperback from Vintage so book-club ready!

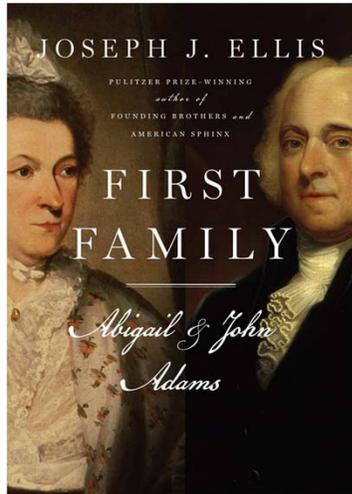
A really wonderful book set in a small New England town each of us can imagine inhabiting – with town meetings to block cell phone towers, community yoga classes, and so on – a book that interrogates the meaning and the place of home with characters we live among and – perhaps not often enough – sympathize with.

The rap on the book was that this was not the Gish Jen we know and love ... and it's true that the humor is more understated in this book ... but it's a gem of ideas and situations that are ripe for discussion and well worth a read, if you haven't already.

Gish will be reading at the Groton PL in April – and you can check in with Owen Smith Shuman after the event. I'm sure it will be terrific – she always is.

Gish lives in Cambridge.

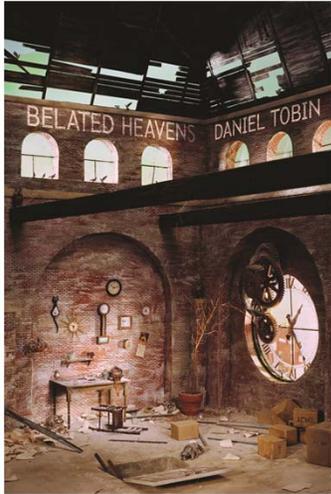
## MassBook Award Winners 2011



Joseph J. Ellis's *First Family* is an extraordinarily readable account of the marriage of John and Abigail Adams.

My husband just finished the book – and really enjoyed it as well – and I am wondering about a series of reads for a book group about power couples ...

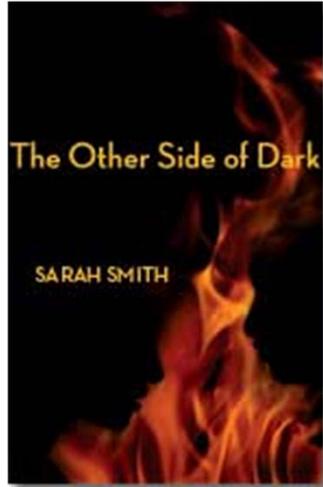
## MassBook Award Winners 2011



Daniel Tobin, *Belated Heavens*, a collection of poetry published by Four Way Books.

Daniel is a wonderful guy, and besides his lovely poetry he has also edited an anthology of Irish poetry – which would have great potential for a St Patrick’s Day program. He is on the faculty of the Writing, Literature and Publishing Dept at Emerson College and lives in Dorchester.

## MassBook Award Winners 2011



Sarah Smith's *The Other Side of Dark* is a debut young adult novel from an author of historical fictions.

Set at an Olmsted property that is part of the Emerald Necklace, raising questions about preservation and the way that impetus is complicated by sins of our fathers – in this case – the house to be saved was built by a major participant in the slave trade. Past and present intermingle as teens encounter past inhabitant. The judges were quite taken with this book and it received very strong recommendations from SLJ and Booklist.

Sarah: Not surprisingly, her first three novels are set in the Victorian and Edwardian period: *THE VANISHED CHILD*, *THE KNOWLEDGE OF WATER*, and *A CITIZEN OF THE COUNTRY*. Two were named *NEW YORK TIMES* Notable Books and one a *LONDON TIMES* Book of the Year; they also have made numerous other Best of the Year lists and regional and national bestseller lists, and have been published in 12 languages.

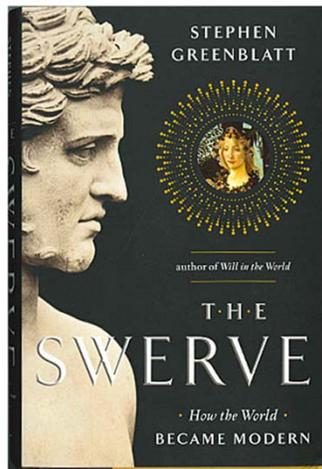
Her first novel for young adults, *THE OTHER SIDE OF DARK*, is about ghosts, interracial romance, and a secret kept since slavery times. It has won both the Agatha for best YA mystery and the Massachusetts Book Award for best YA book.

The Shakespeare authorship controversy forms the center of her modern standalone novel, *CHASING SHAKESPEARES*, which Samuel R. Delany has called "the best novel about the Bard since *NOTHING LIKE THE SUN*."



MassBooks on “Best of” 2011 Lists

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Nonfiction



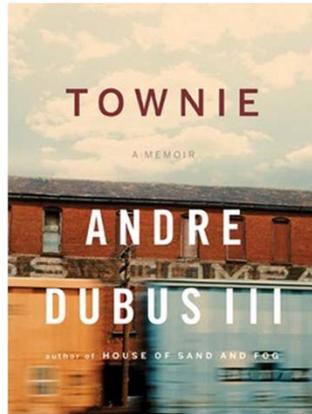
Stephen Greenblatt won the National Book Award in Nonfiction for *The Swerve*.

Harvard prof, Stephen Greenblatt tells the story of Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, of his serendipitous discovery of the poem while a grad student at Yale and also of the serendipitous rescue of this poem from obscurity.

Nearly six hundred years ago, a short, genial, cannily alert man in his late thirties took a very old manuscript off a library shelf, saw with excitement what he had discovered, and ordered that it be copied. That book was the last surviving manuscript of an ancient Roman philosophical epic, *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius—a beautiful poem of the most dangerous ideas: that the universe functioned without the aid of gods, that religious fear was damaging to human life, and that matter was made up of very small particles in eternal motion, colliding and swerving in new directions.

Greenblatt was a featured speaker at the Plymouth PL last summer when they were doing a community read of Shakespeare – and while he is not a jump up and down lively sort of speaker, he has been accessible and interesting every time I have heard him.

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Nonfiction



Andre Dubus III published a memoir of growing up on the outskirts of poor in Haverhill and its surroundings during the 70s.

An interesting 2011 read to pair with this book might be Alexandra Styron's *Reading My Father*.

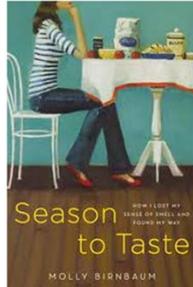


This is a very readable book – a “writing saved me” memoir that suggests to me a panel discussion with Andre and Jack Gantos (*Hole in My Life*) and perhaps one other male writer – aimed at boys and books and reading.

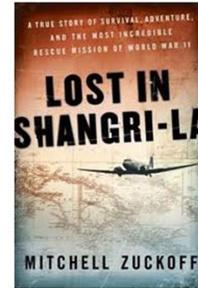
Interesting, too, because it discusses the parenting he received (or didn't) from his famous writing father and harried single mother – divorce and its many complications. Andre is a wonderful and unassuming speaker – a real light.

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Nonfiction

Reminder about authors we heard at MLA who made it to the Best of 2011 lists:

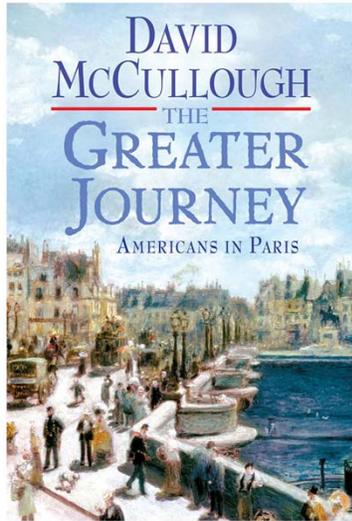


Molly Birnbaum, *Season to Taste*



Mitchell Zuckoff, *Lost in Shangri-La*

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Nonfiction



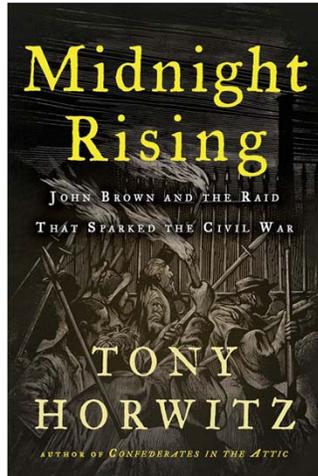
David McCullough's look at the important influence of Paris on the formation of social and political thought in our country.

In an age when some want to eat freedom fries and defy the French, McCullough reminds us that some of the better parts of our past were sculpted in France. Bostonians of note in the book: Charles Sumner and Samuel Morse among others. If any of your patrons is particularly taken with Ellis's *First Family*, which covers a bit of Adams's French experiences, then you might suggest they follow up with this one – showing the continuing importance of France in our political/cultural life.

The book is a wonderful sideways glance at American History through art and culture ... it didn't make any of the "Best of " lists that I saw at the end of the year – odd since it was very strongly reviewed when it came out:

"A lively and entertaining panorama. . . . By the time he shows us the triumphant Exposition Universelle in 1889, witnessed through the eyes of such characters as painters John Singer Sargent and Robert Henri, we share McCullough's enthusiasm for the city and his affection for the many Americans who improved their lives, their talent and their nation by drinking at the fountain that was Paris."

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Nonfiction

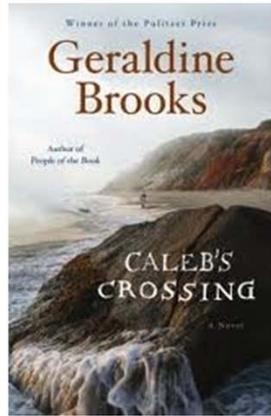


Tony Horwitz is a great Civil War buff, and here he publishes a book to much acclaim about a key figure in that period and an event with which Concord's Transcendentalists were intimately involved

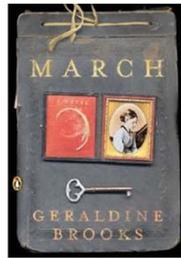
A book that did make it to the best of lists – though – is Tony Horwitz's *Midnight Rising*:

"Horwitz's skills are a good match for this enormously compelling character, and his well-paced narrative incorporates masterful sketches of Brown's family, foot soldiers, financial backers, admirers and prosecutors... The result is both page-turning and heartbreaking—a book to engage mind and soul."—*The Boston Globe*

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Fiction



MassBook Award Winner in Fiction 2008  
for *People of the Book*, Geraldine Brooks  
published *Caleb's Crossing* this year.



While this may not be her strongest outing – she is clearly committed to the history of her adopted home – and an event with her discussing historical fiction, etc., might be a great crowd pleaser.

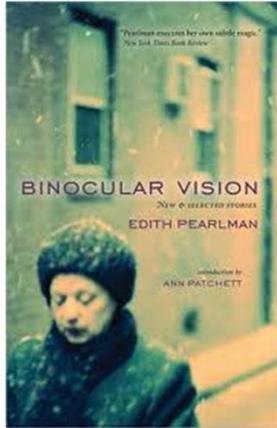
The NBA-winning Australian-born, now New England author (*People of the Book*, 2008, etc.) moves ever deeper into the American past.

Her fourth novel's announced subject is the eponymous Caleb Cheeshahteumauk, a member of the Wampanoag Indian tribe that inhabits Massachusetts's Great Harbor (a part of Martha's Vineyard), and the first Native American who will graduate from Harvard College (in 1665). Even as a boy, Caleb is a paragon of sharp intelligence, proud bearing and manly charm, as we learn from the somewhat breathless testimony of Bethia Mayfield, who grows up in Great Harbor where her father, a compassionate and unprejudiced preacher, oversees friendly relations between white settlers and the placid Wampanoag. The story Bethia unfolds is a compelling one, focused primarily on her own experiences as an indentured servant to a schoolmaster who prepares promising students for Harvard; a tense relationship with her priggish, inflexible elder brother Makepeace; and her emotional bond of friendship with the occasionally distant and suspicious Caleb, who, in this novel's most serious misstep, isn't really the subject of his own story. Fascinating period details and a steadily expanding plot, which eventually encompasses King Philip's War, inevitable tensions between Puritan whites and upwardly mobile "salvages," as well as the compromises unavoidably ahead for Bethia, help to modulate a narrative voice that sometimes teeters too uncomfortably close to romantic cliché. Both Bethia, whose womanhood precludes her right to seek formal education, and the stoical Caleb are very

nearly too good to be true. However, Brooks' knowledgeable command of the energies and conflicts of the period, and particularly her descriptions of the reverence for learning that animates the little world of Harvard and attracts her characters' keenest longings, carries a persuasive and quite moving emotional charge.

While no masterpiece, this work nevertheless contributes in good measure to the current and very welcome revitalization of the historical novel.

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Fiction



Edith Pearlman's *Binocular Vision*, from Lookout Books, was a nominee for the National Book Award in Fiction.

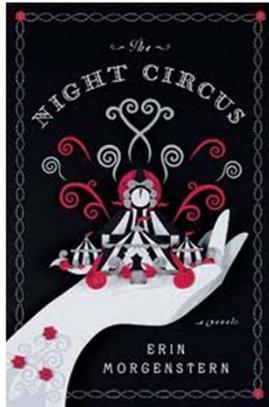
A very feel good story – P is a 70-something writer of short stories who finally had her breakout publication – coming from a new small literary press associated with UNC – and catapulted to the NBA. She lives in Brookline, has long been active in PEN New England – is a wonderful person – and was a huge hit at the MV Book Festival in August. If you haven't read her stories yet – get them at once and enjoy!

Two other collections of short stories that we can recommend:

Jim Shepard's *You Think That's Bad* (Knopf)

Steve Almond's, *God Bless America* (Lookout as well!) -- *quirky and hip – dj to all literati , etc.*

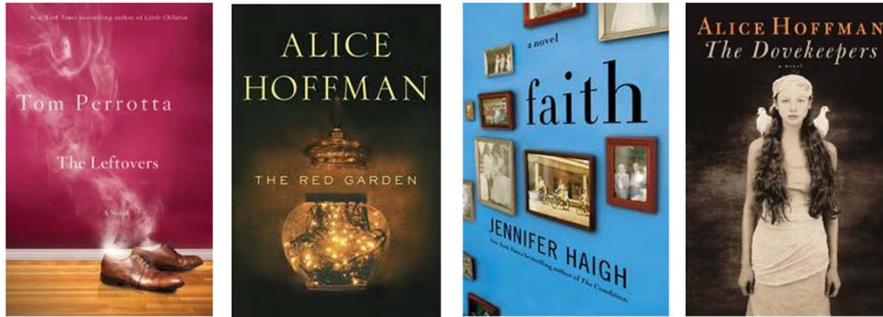
## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Fiction



Erin Morgenstern's debut novel, *The Night Circus*, is amazing. On so many best of lists at end of year – a wonderful romance/fantasy set in Victorian England/Europe.

We ALL loved it – my daughter my husband me ... when this hids trade Paperback I think it will be a runaway hit. She is young – and sweet – I went to her very first reading – at a BN in Framingham – Rooting for her. From Salem. Lives in Lynn? Late 20s ...

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Fiction



More Massbooks that made it to a best-of list in fiction this year ...

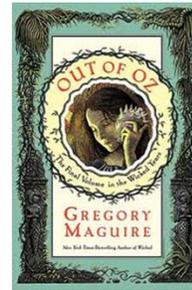
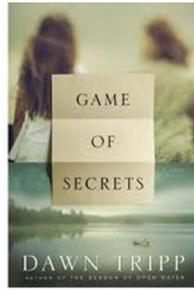
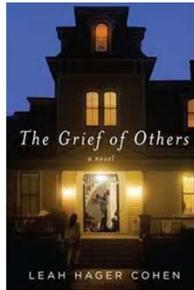
Perotta – post Rapture America

Red Garden – 1750 to present in 14 chapters, “The Red Garden” consists of 14 chapters, each an independent short story, connected by the common

Faith – RC sex abuse scandal – told in perhaps only way it could be – accused but innocent priest – who had been a victim of priestly abuse as a youth.

Dovekeepers -- In 70 C.E., nine hundred Jews held out for months against armies of Romans on Masada, a mountain in the Judean desert. According to the ancient historian Josephus, two women and five children survived. Based on this tragic and iconic event, Hoffman’s novel is a spellbinding tale of four extraordinarily bold, resourceful, and sensuous women, each of whom has come to Masada by a different path. Near and dear to Hoffman’s heart ...

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Fiction



Books that we have on our to-read shelf at present ...

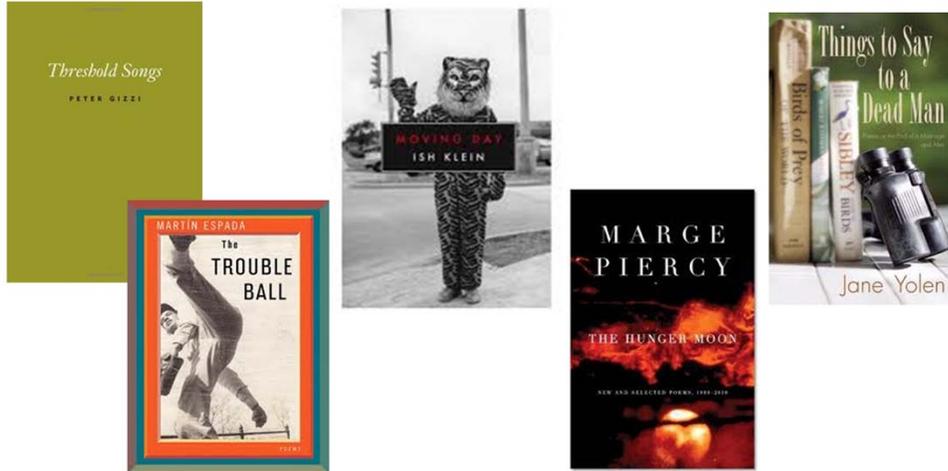
her fourth novel, “The Grief of Others,” is her best work yet. Six complex but fundamentally decent characters hurt one another and are hurt by forces greater than themselves, whether those forces be the impersonal cruelty of nature’s accidents or the very personal torments of marriage and middle school. The overarching question is whether the members of the Ryrie family will piece themselves together and re-find who they all were during a halcyon vacation eight years past, or whether they will let sorrow, secrets and shame drive them irreparably apart.

Jane Weld was eleven years old when her father, Luce, disappeared in 1957. His skiff was found drifting near a marsh, empty except for his hunting coat and a box of shotgun shells. No one in their small New England town knew for sure what happened until, three years later, Luce’s skull rolled out of a gravel pit, a bullet hole in the temple. Rumors sprang up that he had been murdered by the jealous husband of his mistress, Ada Varick.

Now, half a century later, Jane is still searching for the truth of her father’s death, a mystery made more urgent by the unexpected romance that her willful daughter, Marne, has struck up with one of Ada’s sons. As the love affair intensifies, Jane and Ada meet for their weekly Friday game of Scrabble, a pastime that soon transforms into a cat-and-mouse game of words long left unspoken, and dark secrets best left untold.

With "[Out of Oz](#)," the fourth and final novel in the sequence that began with his mega-selling "[Wicked](#)," Gregory Maguire concludes the "Wicked Years," one of the most audacious and successful fantasy series of the past few decades. A revisionist and very adult take on L. Frank Baum's Oz books (with numerous cheeky references to [the 1939 movie](#)), Maguire's masterwork belongs to the burgeoning subgenre that might be called radical American fantasy — books such as Peter S. Beagle's "[The Last Unicorn](#)," John Crowley's "[Little, Big](#)," George R.R. Martin's "[A Game of Thrones](#)," Lev Grossman's "[The Magicians](#)." The works riff on classic novels even as they offer a sharp corrective to the prescriptive uses J.R.R. Tolkien assigned to fantasy: recovery, escape and consolation.

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 Poetry



Poetry always surprises but among those we most anticipate ...

Interestingly four of these poets live in the Valley!

Other books we are looking forward to from Henri Cole and Franz Wright ... but more of that anon ... maybe will have a guest reader on one of these sessions!

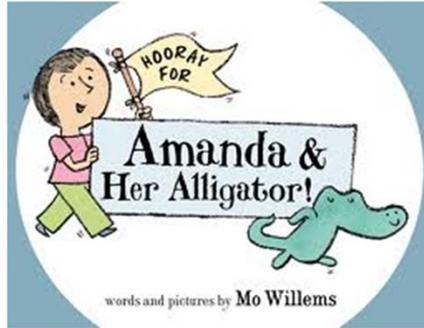
## MassBooks of Note in 2011 C/YA



A Kirkus Review and Washington Post Best Children's book of 2011, this is Jack Gantos's fictionalized memoir, one we can give to his young fans: *Dead End in Norvelt*.

An exhilarating summer marked by death, gore and fire sparks deep thoughts in a small-town lad not uncoincidentally named "Jack Gantos."

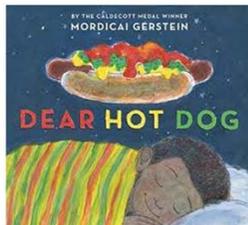
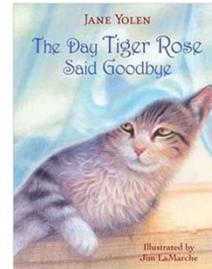
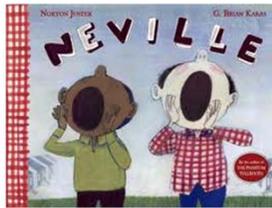
## MassBooks of Note in 2011 C/YA



A PW Best Children's book of 2011, Mo Willems always entertains!

Willems excels at putting his audience first, and the six and a half stories that make up this pitch-perfect collection are no exception. Friendship is friendship, whether with another child or with a blue toy alligator, and Willems treats the highs and lows of Amanda and her alligator's relationship with honesty and humor, evoking such classic pairings as Charlie Brown and Snoopy or Calvin and Hobbes.

## MassBooks of Note in 2011 C/YA



Oh boy ... how to choose from among the many we can't wait to read!

Phantom Tollbooth turns 50 and Norton Juster also publishes a new work, *Neville*, that sounds charming: this is a simply told story about a boy who moves to a new neighborhood and finds a unique way to make friends. With whimsical illustrations by award-winning illustrator G. Brian Karas, here is a read-aloud that's great for storytime, and is sure to be a hit among fans of Juster, Karas, and anyone who is "the new kid on the block."

*Exquisite Corpse* was conceived and managed by a Mass writer/ Mary Brigid Barrett and includes contributions from M.T. Anderson, Jarrett KK, Jack Gantos, among others. Hard to say if the print version will be as popular as the online and audio versions were/are ....

Duble – past honoree in MassBooks: In 1944, fifteen-year-old Noah Garrett, recently orphaned, is sent to live at Camp Hale, Colorado, with an uncle he has never met, and there he finds his pacifist views put to the test.

Gerstein: Twenty-two poems in all; an attractive and highly approachable introduction to poetry for young readers. (*Picture book. 4-7*)

*Yolen*: While this is another picture book on the already crowded death of a pet shelf, it takes a different approach to the subject and really honors what is happening in a beautiful

and touching way. Appropriate for ages 4-8.

## First Friday February

- 
- Report on Mass Books at ALA Midwinter
  - New Books by Mass writers on publishers' Spring 2012 lists
  - What are you reading?