

November 2

Prodigal Summer, by Barbara Kingsolver (2001)

Set in the small farms of southern Appalachia, this novel is built around a triple plot, each a strand of which parallels the other and all of which eventually merge. The triple plot covers three generations, and the characters include a U.S. Forest Service worker, a sheep rancher, an entomologist, an elderly organic gardener, and a retired vo-ag teacher. This novel celebrates the full environmental agenda as it offers a range of human love stories.

November 16

The Solace of Open Spaces, by Gretel Ehrlich (1985)

Gretel Ehrlich found “solace” in the wind-swept landscape near the Big Horn Mountains and reflects on the toughness it takes to live in the harsh solitude, some of which she experiences by going on drives with sheep herders. Ehrlich balances her attention between the landscape and the people she meets.



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Wednesdays at 7:00 pm

Reading Selections

September 21

Botany of Desire, by Michael Pollan (2002)

October 5

Desert Solitaire, by Edward Abbey (1968)

October 19

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, by Annie Dillard (1974)

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September 21

The Botany of Desire, by Michael Pollan (2002)

Subtitled “A Plant’s-Eye View of the World,” Michael Pollan’s bestselling book has been described by one reviewer as a “don’t-wanna-put-it-down unspooling of the socio-political, economic and historical forces that led to the cultivation of four crops.” It may surprise us to discover that any kind of discourse focusing on the subjects of apples, tulips, marijuana, and potatoes would be likely to rivet our attention, but that proves to be the case here.

October 5

Desert Solitaire, by Edward Abbey (1968)

In some ways it is regrettable that most readers will begin this book with Edward Abbey’s brief introduction instead of with the simple and somehow poignant opening sentence of the text proper: “This is the most beautiful place on earth.” By this he means the canyon-lands near Moab, Utah, where he worked as a seasonal park ranger for a couple of years in the late 1950s.

October 19

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, by Annie Dillard (1974)

Surely the most spiritual and meditative of the books in this series, it won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction. Dillard’s solitary “pilgrimage” along the creek that borders her property in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Roanoke, Virginia, is a serious reflection on nature and the understanding of the self. Very much of this book reflects what Dillard sees and what she teaches herself to discern in the world around her. She regards herself not as a scientist, but as an “explorer.”

