

# Mary Baldwin College Alumnae/i Book Club

May 2007

What we are reading in  
2007/2008:

Apr 5: *Handmaiden's Tale* by  
Margaret Atwood

May 3: *The Glass Castle* by  
Jeanette Walls

June 7: *The Bean Trees* by  
Barbara Kingsolver

July 5: *The Last  
Witchfinder* by James  
Morrow

Aug 2: *Snow Flower and the  
Secret Fan* by Lisa See

Sept 6: *Tortilla Curtain* by  
Alice Sebold

Oct 4: *The Girls Who Went  
Away* by Ann Fessler

Nov 1: *The Same Sweet  
Girls* by Cassandra King

Dec 6: *The Secret Agent* by  
Joseph Conrad

Jan 3: *I Got Somebody in  
Staunton* by William Henry  
Lewis

Feb. 7: *Love* by Toni  
Morrison

Mar 6: *The Kite Runner* by  
Khaled Hosseini

Apr 3: *The Lovely Bones* by  
Alice Sebold

## Suggestions for Articles!!

Each month I am always scouring the internet for articles to put in this newsletter. I will always talk about the Big Read Program every year. I have listed each year's award winning books/authors.

I would love to know what ideas/articles you would like to see in the newsletter.

Would you like to see book excerpts and reviews of 2-3 different books each month?

I want this newsletter to be something that you will enjoy reading each month.

We are on the MBC website!!  
[www.mbc.edu/alumnae](http://www.mbc.edu/alumnae)

Join us online!!  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MBCAlumBookClub>

If you are in the Richmond, VA area we would love for you to join us! All meeting times are 7pm and last approximately 1 hour.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Theresa Cash Lewis '99 at [tlewis41203@yahoo.com](mailto:tlewis41203@yahoo.com) or the Alumnae/i office at 1-800-763-7359.



## Your Guide to the Classics: *The Adventures of Augie March*

Augie, a poor but spirited boy growing up in Chicago during the Depression, leaves his mother and disabled younger brother to find his way in the world. He enters a wild succession of occupations— dog groomer, saddle soap salesman, smuggler, shoplifter, boxing coach—guided by an equally fantastic array of mentors. Each of these "recruiters" attempts to determine Augie's lot in life, but whenever he is at risk of being taken by a person or profession, he slips away to a new misadventure, equal parts joiner and escapist. Not until his affair with Thea Fenchel does Augie begin to realize that love and independence are irreconcilable.

In one sense Augie is a characteristic Saul Bellow hero, a young man with an ironic sense of the world, wary of taking direct action but certain that he belongs to a greater destiny. Like Bellow's other central characters, he is intent on finding a "good enough fate" eager to write his own part on life's stage yet stubbornly resistant to the limits imposed by any scripted role. But he is also dramatically different from the brooding thinkers of Bellow's early works. Augie is playful, subversive, adventurous, and ever optimistic. He is a new American Adam, innocently poised for a future full of promise in a land full of possibilities. No profession, no lover, no commitment can capture him. He risks his job as a book thief because he can't resist the desire to keep and read the books he has stolen. Although this very adaptability, this lack of firm obligations makes him hard to characterize or define, his first-person narrative conveys a compelling vision of American freedom, a fresh spirit of irresistible charm.

### **About the author**

**Saul Bellow** was born of Russian Jewish parents in Lachine, Quebec in 1915, and was raised in Chicago. He received his Bachelor's degree from Northwestern University in 1937, with honors in sociology and anthropology, and did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin. During the Second World War he served in the Merchant Marines.

His first two novels, **Dangling Man** (1944) and **The Victim** (1947) are penetrating, Kafka-like psychological studies. In 1948 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and spent two years in Paris and traveling in Europe, where he began his picaresque novel **The Adventures of Augie March**. Augie March went on to win the National Book Award for fiction in 1954. His later books of fiction include **Seize the Day** (1956); **Henderson the Rain King** (1959); **Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories** (1968); **Mr. Sammler's Planet** (1970); **Humboldt's Gift** (1975), which won the Pulitzer Prize; **The Dean's December** (1982); **More Die of Heartbreak** (1987); **Theft** (1988); **The Bellarosa Connection** (1989); **The Actual** (1996); and, most recently, **Ravelstein** (2000). Bellow has also produced a prolific amount of non-fiction, collected in *To Jerusalem and Back*, a personal and literary record of his sojourn in Israel during several months in 1975, and **It All Adds Up**, a collection of memoirs and essays.

[http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/adventures\\_of\\_augie\\_march.html](http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/adventures_of_augie_march.html)