

A list of national bestsellers  
compiled by Publishers Weekly

## HARDCOVER

## FICTION

1. **DEAD RECKONING**, by Charlaine Harris (Ace)
2. **BURIED PREY**, by John Sandford (Putnam)
3. **10TH ANNIVERSARY**, by James Patterson and Maxine Paetro (Little, Brown)
4. **THE SIXTH MAN**, by David Baldacci (Grand Central)
5. **THE LAND OF PAINTED CAVES**, by Jean M. Auel (Crown)
6. **SIXKILL**, by Robert B. Parker (Putnam)
7. **THE FIFTH WITNESS**, by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown)
8. **THE GIRL WHO KICKED THE HORNET'S NEST**, by Stieg Larsson (Knopf)
9. **CALEB'S CROSSING**, by Geraldine Brooks (Viking)
10. **THOSE IN PERIL**, by Wilbur Smith (Thomas Dunne)

## NONFICTION

1. **LIES THAT CHELSEA HANDLER TOLD ME**, by Chelsea's Family, Friends, & Other Victims (Grand Central)
2. **THE DUKAN DIET**, by Dr. Pierre Dukan (Crown)
3. **DOES THE NOISE IN MY HEAD BOTHER YOU?**, by Steven Tyler with David Dalton (Ecco)
4. **BOSSYPANTS**, by Tina Fey (Little, Brown / Reagan Arthur)
5. **THE 17 DAY DIET**, by Dr. Mike Moreno (Free Press)
6. **IN THE GARDEN OF BEASTS**, by Erik Larson (Crown)
7. **UNBROKEN**, by Laura Hillenbrand (Random House)
8. **20 YEARS YOUNGER**, by Bob Greene (Little, Brown)
9. **PLACE OF YES**, by Bethenny Frankel with Eve Adamson (Touchstone)
10. **SEAL TEAM SIX**, by Howard E. Wasdin and Stephen Templin (St. Martin's)

## PAPERBACK

1. **HEAVEN IS FOR REAL**, by Todd Burpo with Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson)
2. **THE HELP**, by Kathryn Stockett (Berkley)
3. **WATER FOR ELEPHANTS**, by Sara Gruen (Algonquin)
4. **SOMETHING BORROWED**, by Emily Giffin (St. Martin's Griffin)
5. **THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS**, by Rebecca Skloot (Broadway)
6. **LIFE**, by Keith Richards (Little, Brown / Back Bay)
7. **A VISIT FROM THE GOON SQUAD**, by Jennifer Egan (Anchor)
8. **LONE SURVIVOR**, by Marcus Luttrell (Little, Brown / Back Bay)
9. **CUTTING FOR STONE**, by Abraham Verghese (Vintage)
10. **THE 9TH JUDGMENT**, by James Patterson & Maxine Paetro (Grand Central)

## PAPERBACKS

BY MARION WINIK  
Special to Newsday

**T**wo new novels about marriage focus on the challenges to wedded bliss faced by brainy central characters — one a long-married poet with a PhD in Comp Lit, the other a single woman of 35 with a doctorate in folklore. Each is thrown a curve ball by a problematic Prince Charming — a cheating 60-something neuroscientist on the one hand, a fetching Irish fiddler who has been married eight times on the other.

"Sometime after he said the word *pause* I went mad and landed in the hospital." So begins Mia Frederickson, the narrator of Siri Hustvedt's **"The Summer Without Men"** (Picador, \$14). "The Pause," she goes on to explain, "was French with limp but shiny brown hair. She had significant breasts that were real, not manufactured, narrow rectangular glasses and an excellent mind." She is also 20 years younger than Mia, of course.

After she is released from the psychiatric ward, Mia goes home to mother in Minnesota — only mother now lives in an old-age home, so Mia rents a place and tries to pull herself together. A large supporting cast of women is involved in the effort, including her mom's octogenarian BFFs, the Five Swans, and seven bratty pubescent girls who sign up for Mia's summer poetry workshop. Then, there's Mia's next-door neighbor, a young mom with a stormy marriage. Lola is no member of MENSA, but "even though her utterances were neither original nor witty, I felt an acumen in her body that was missing in her speech," Mia explains. The fact that she befriends this stroller-pusher in short-shorts is clearly supposed to relieve Mia from our judgment of intellectual snobbery. It does not.

Mia is certainly a snob, but she's better company than most. How many snobs interweave references to Merleau-Ponty, Fröding and Khlebnikov with a juicy Mean Girls plot involving pacts signed in blood?

Perhaps because Mia is trying so

hard to tamp down her passions, she doesn't quite manage to set fire to the reader's. The book is far more intellectual than emotional, but the subjects on its mind — gender, love, the female orgasm — are quite compelling.

Bess Gray, the heroine of Amy Stolls' **"The Ninth Wife"** (Harper, \$14.99), is less of a pundit than Mia, but shares with her an engaging, self-aware sense of humor. As the story begins, she is sending out invitations to the-singles-party-to-end-all-singles-parties at her D.C. pad. "So you're temporarily unattached," she writes to prospective guests, "between relationships, living the *carpe diem* life. You're painting towns red and peeing on mountains. You're shedding the exes, asking the big whys. . . . When you come home after a long day at the office and yell, 'Hi honey, I'm home' into the echoing silence, your Chihuahua gets excited and poops on your shoe." Bess does meet someone very intriguing at her party, but before she can fully make the connection, her ex-boyfriend's pregnant girlfriend goes into labor in her bedroom. Whoops.

Rory McMillan is the new guy, and the reader gets to know his

secrets long before Bess does, as the novel alternates chapters focusing on Bess with ones in which Rory tells his story, wife by wife by wife, starting with Maggie, whom he married when they were both teenagers back in Dublin. The most surprising thing about the book is how engaging and believable a character Rory is, and how sympathetic Stolls is able to make his marital history. It really wasn't his fault at all.

In Bess' chapters, we get to know her grandparents, Millie and Irv Steinbloom, who raised Bess after her mother's early death. Though this couple's constant bickering could be played like a Catskills comedy act, it turns out to be more serious. Their problems and their history are revealed in the course of a cross-country road trip that occupies the latter third of the book. Millie and Irv are moving to Arizona, Bess is hunting down Rory's ex-wives, and her gay neighbor Cricket is along for the ride with his Shar-Pei, Stella. It's quite a vanload, complete with an African-American mannequin named Peace.

After a while, the plot comes to seem overly complicated, with soap-opera revelations that this person really is that person, or that person's father, or that person after a name-change. I could have done without most of this — Rory had me at hello — but I, too, found myself along for the ride.

