

Clare Marie Byers. Bibliotherapy for Military Spouses: An Annotated Bibliography. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2013. 70 pages. Advisor: Ronald Bergquist.

Over two million soldiers deployed in 2011. Each had a family affected by the deployment, but with only 2% of American families including a military member, society is becoming indifferent to service persons and their loved ones at home. For spouses and significant others, military support includes online forums, social networks and organizations. These supports are limited and recommended reading lists are largely limited to nonfiction – how-to guides and memoirs of soldiers, not their spouses. Dealing with deployment, long separations, frequent relocation and the uncertainty of a spouse's safety poses a discrete set of emotional issues faced by these community members. Thus, this group is well suited to being provided informal bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy focuses on the power of books, both fiction and nonfiction, to offer catharsis and insight to readers. This bibliography will help public libraries and military spouses to identify literature for relief of emotional stress surrounding military life.

Headings:

Military dependents -- Bibliography

Families of military personnel -- Bibliography

Military spouses -- United States

Military spouses -- Bibliography

Bibliotherapy

BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR MILITARY SPOUSES:  
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

by  
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty  
of the School of Information and Library Science  
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in  
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2013

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
Introduction .....	2
Literature Review .....	5
<i>Military Families</i> .....	5
<i>Bibliotherapy</i> .....	13
<i>Content Analysis and Annotated Bibliography</i> .....	21
Methodology .....	24
<i>Variables</i> .....	24
<i>Operational Definitions</i> .....	24
<i>Methods</i> .....	25
<i>Limitations</i> .....	27
<i>Significance</i> .....	27
Results .....	29
<i>Entry Format</i> .....	29
Annotated Bibliography .....	30
<i>Women's Fiction</i> .....	30
<i>Literary Fiction</i> .....	32
<i>Historical Fiction</i> .....	34
<i>Classic Fiction</i> .....	37
<i>Fantasy</i> .....	38
<i>Science Fiction</i> .....	39
<i>Christian Fiction</i> .....	40
<i>Romance</i> .....	40
<i>Mystery</i> .....	41
<i>Young Adult</i> .....	42
<i>Short Story Collection</i> .....	42
<i>Memoir</i> .....	43
<i>Poetry</i> .....	45
Discussion .....	46
Summary .....	49
Bibliography .....	51
Appendix I <i>Content Analysis Chart</i> .....	54
Appendix II <i>Works Not Included in Bibliography</i> .....	59
Index I <i>Index By Author</i> .....	68
Index II <i>Index By Title</i> .....	69
Index III <i>Index by Subject</i> .....	70

## Introduction

With the beginning of American involvement in Iraq in 2003, interest in war and the Middle East surged in the United States. Booksellers countrywide noticed a trend in war-related book purchases (Howell & Nawotka, 2003, p. 20). By the end of 2003, *Publisher's Weekly's* "The Year in Books 2003" article highlighted the overwhelming popularity of nonfiction published and purchased related to war (p. 26). This trend blossomed into an uptick in war-related fiction published since 2003. Books like Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds* and Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* capture the changes faced by US soldiers since 2001.

Similarly, more books are being published about American military families, hand-in-hand with focused attention in popular media including television shows (*Army Wives*) and movies (*Dear John*, *Brothers* and *Taking Chance*). Books like Ellen Hopkins' *Collateral* about a couple facing multiple deployments living apart are recognized as "featuring characters grappling with the serious issues of our time" (*Publisher's Weekly*, 2012, p. 30). However, while these stories deal with what the American people as a whole seek, they may not best serve the groups of people they are about – namely, military families.

Over two million soldiers deployed in 2011 alone, and each of them had a family affected by the deployment. Websites and support groups coordinated through and outside the military seek to help these families. Spouses can make use of resources

provided by military units to prepare for and live through deployments in practical ways such as creating power of attorney, dealing with finances, employment searching and childcare. Social networks are offered within the context of military units through organizations such as the Family Readiness Group and the Spouse blogs and forums on Military.com. For those who find themselves experiencing severe emotional distress, anxiety or depression, medical help may be the best course of action, and is readily available at any military base.

Despite this support, recommended reading lists are largely limited to nonfiction – how to guides, devotionals, and memoirs and stories of soldiers, not their spouses. For example, the “Best Books for Military Wives” list on Goodreads includes nonfiction titles such as *God Strong: The Military Wife’s Spiritual Survival Guide*. However, fiction can be important in dealing with difficult situations as well.

Author Siobhan Fallon is the wife of an Army officer. Fallon published a collection of fictional stories relating to deployment. In an interview about her work, Fallon stated that she “liked the distance of telling ... stories through fiction” (Menzel, 2013). Other military spouses appreciate her work as well. One interviewee stated “what I most appreciate about Siobhan Fallon’s work is its honesty” acknowledging that war in America as most people conceive it (camouflage-clad soldiers toting high-tech weaponry) is not the whole story. Thus, the purpose of this research is to implement the principles of bibliotherapy in identifying and compiling an annotated bibliography of fiction suited to the therapeutic needs of military spouses.

Public libraries serving communities with large military populations could provide an outlet for military spouses by offering resources and reading lists tailored to

these community members as a form of informal or creative bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy can be used in a clinical sense, but is widening its applications to practical library settings. Libraries can offer patrons reading lists, book displays and reading groups in response to general community needs focusing on fiction, poetry, biography, memoir and other creative writing to help improve health and well-being.

Military families tend to live near military bases, thus they form discrete community populations whose particular needs can be met by the public library. Dealing with deployment, long separations, frequent relocation and uncertain of a spouse's safety offers a discrete set of issues faced by these community members. These factors make this group well suited to being offered informal bibliotherapy.

## **Literature Review**

### **Military Families**

Military spouses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century face not only the inherent stresses of military life, but the additional stress of a wartime military without the universality of circumstances created by a draft. According to a 2009 study on behalf of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, since September 2001, an estimated “1.9 million service members had completed three million deployments” to Iraq or Afghanistan (Wadsworth & Southwell, 2009, p. 166). While this estimate provides a long-term sense of military families suffering deployment stress, the issues are ongoing. Another study found in December 2011, that since September of that year (four months), over 2 million members deployed to Iraq alone, and for over 800,000, the deployment was not their first (Tan, 2009 as cited in Asbury & Martin 2011, p. 45). Concern for military families among researchers arises not only because of the number and length of deployments, but also because “only two percent of American families currently include a service member” (Hughes, 2011, p. 40). The world is becoming indifferent to these service persons and their families left at home (Hughes, 2011, p. 40). In previous U.S. wartime (e.g. World War II), military deployment affected every American with brothers, husbands, neighbors and children in combat zones, but since the late twentieth century, fewer and fewer families have felt the effects of deployment, such that military members,

and families today must look harder to find ways of coping with the hardships of military lifestyle.

In today's military, "over one half of enlisted ... personnel and 70% of active duty officers are married" (Lutton, 2011, as cited in Asbury & Martin, 2011, p. 45). For families experiencing deployment, a model was proposed by a landmark study during World War II which continues to be used. In this model, military families enter a state of crisis at the outset of a deployment; they then reorganize, recover and finally settle into a more permanent reorganization (Tollefson, 2008, p. 282). Upon redeployment and return home, this process occurs again. It is during these periods of crisis that military spouses must find an outlet for emotional stress or the family unit will suffer. A study by Collins & Kennedy (2008) demonstrated that "family homeostasis has been shown to be negatively affected by prolonged separation due to military deployment" (Asbury & Martin, 2011, p. 45-46). If a military member's family life is distressed, it is likely that it will also affect his or her military unit.

If stress is not managed at home, a service member may fall short in the performance of duties even when far away from home. One study noted that inability to cope positively with changing circumstances can strain a relationship. Deployment is demanding for military personnel, and "those who perceive an empathetic and supportive spouse" have lower rates of anxiety, and a strong relationship can serve as a buffer in difficult times (O'Brien et al., 2009, as cited in Asbury & Martin, 2011, p. 46). Prior to a deployment, not knowing when one will next deploy is a source of stress, resulting in underlying anxiety in daily life for a family. When the military spouse deploys, their family goes through a process of negotiating new roles, experiencing "a series of



emotional ebbs and flows” (Lowe, et al, 2012, p. 17). If the family does not cope well with these changes, additional stress is placed on the deployed spouse.

When the military spouse returns from deployment, the process of reintegration can be equally challenging. Communication and establishment of new roles can be difficult, and “it may negatively impact the long term stability of the family” if not handled with care (Lowe et al., 2012, p. 17). These events can negatively affect not only home life, but life at work. Besides degrading a military member’s work performance, family tension surrounding deployment can affect military retention. A study conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute in 2003, indicated that spouse morale directly affected a soldier’s organizational commitment (Gade, Tiggler, & Schumm). Thus, it is in the best interest of the U.S. military to ensure families of military personnel can cope positively with the stress of deployment in order to improve performance of duty both on deployment and at home as well as increasing retention of service members.

Everyday military life can be difficult, even without enduring a deployment. As part of military life, spouses face frequent relocation, periodic separation, long and unpredictable hours and strict behavioral expectations (Padden et al., 2010, p. 248). Recent military downsizing and increasing global deployments, particularly to combat zones, find military families experiencing longer separations and fear for the safety of loved ones (Padden et al., 2010, p. 248). These circumstances are stressful, and family members must find ways to cope.

For military family members surveyed during the First Gulf War, a study conducted regarding family separation found that people experienced “headache, fatigue, insomnia, eating disorders, menstrual changes, behavioral problems, loneliness, sadness,

anxiety, and worry” (Blount et al., 1992 ref. in Padden et al., 2010, p. 252). During the current conflict, a study conducted among a large group of Army spouses demonstrated significant levels of loneliness (78.2%), anxiety (51.6%) and depression (42.6%) (SteelFisher et al., 2008, ref. in Padden et al., 2010, 252 and De Burgh et al., 2011, p. 193). When compared to civilian counterparts (civilian spouses of other civilians), Asbury & Martin (2011) found that military spouses experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, isolation and marital discord. These conditions are correlated to the deployment cycle (whether during the deployment or during family reintegration is as yet unclear). A 2010 study from the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) found that 69% of the 250,000 wives of Army personnel treated for “depressive disorders, anxiety, sleep disorders, and acute stress reaction and adjustment disorders” were married to a soldier who had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan (Friedman, 2010, p. 169). These findings instigated a desire on the part of this agency to highlight the “importance of developing appropriate programs to fortify wellness and resilience among spouses” with a long term goal of helping not only these family members, but by extension, “to prevent psychiatric morbidity among the troops themselves” (p. 169).

Reaching out to military spouses is no easy task. For spouses in unique situations, it is even more difficult. Three examples of unique situations include civilians whose military spouses are posted overseas, spouses of service members who are in the National Guard or Reserves on deployment, and spouses who choose to move away from their military installation during a deployment. In dealing with spouses posted overseas, the stress of military life and deployments is complicated by “added financial strains, extreme climates, and communication difficulties” (Blakely et al., 2012, p. 121). Central

to stress faced by these spouses is a feeling of loss – both internal and external. This sense of loss stems from the following: a lack of autonomy, an unfamiliar environment, not having a job, and being far away from friends and family (Blakely et al., 2012, p. 129). The social isolation for spouses overseas would be acute, and coping with this challenge would be more difficult.

A similarly isolated situation is that of spouses of members of the National Guard or Reserve units. Often these people live in communities far from any military installations. As an example, a case study was conducted by Thora Tollefson, a nurse, which examined the specific case of a patient, Jane (2008). Jane's husband, in the National Guard, was given two months notice for an eighteen month deployment to Iraq. Jane lived over an hour from any Army base, and had no connection to the military community. For six months, she attempted to cope alone with her sudden life as the sole caregiver, but the added responsibilities and fear for her husband's safety became a source of sadness and fatigue, but without a support system or strong coping mechanisms, Jane had to seek medical care (Tollefson, 2008). Tollefson (2008) seems to imply that Jane's isolation and husband's deployment resulted in an otherwise stable individual needing psychological help that with appropriate outlets for emotions and coping techniques might have been avoided.

A final group of isolated spouses are those who choose to be isolated, and reaching out to them would be most difficult. A study conducted by Walter Schumm (2000) of Kansas State University found that spouses are more likely to move away from the assigned military installation if they find living on post stressful. According to the study, 42% of highly stressed spouses wanted to move away (Schumm, 2000, p. 1281).

Those who actually move are typically “younger, more recently married, and less experienced with the military” (Schumm, 2000, p. 1281). Once they move, providing access to resources and outreach is more difficult, and often they are among those who most need support.

Moreover, many spouses regardless of proximity to military installations or living in the U.S. choose not to make use of support provided by the military. In a 2009 study, 88.5% of spouses from family readiness groups stated that they would be willing to seek help, but only 68% actually sought help. This study cited as reason for the disparity the negative perception of seeking help with mental health issues in the military community (Warner et al., 2009 ref. in DeBurgh, 2011, p. 193). In the military community, a negative social stigma is attached to seeking help or support. According to a study of family relationships affected by deployment among Air Force squadrons, “dependent spouses have learned that labeling a family as ‘problematic’ or ‘in need’ can negatively affect the active duty member’s career” limiting their potential advancement (Lowe, 2012, p. 17). These stigmas are felt at every level in the military. In a study among commanders’ spouses conducted at an Air Force base in 2007, only 3 in 101 respondents reported that they would seek professional help when feeling overwhelmed, fearing a negative effect on their spouse’s career (Massello, 2007, p. 93). The resulting recommendation from the study was early intervention to educate spouses (1) to recognize when they are feeling overwhelmed and (2) to manage stress through coping techniques such as biofeedback and relaxation. Essentially, people need outlets for emotions, and different coping techniques work for different individuals.

As discussed in Padden, et al. (2011), “stress resulting from deployment separation necessitates a coping response to maintain health and well-being” (p. 249). Coping is “ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” where coping can be emotion-focused or problem-focused (p. 251). In either case, when spouses cope successfully, they develop patterns that can be employed when the next crisis arises, which in turn lowers anxiety and makes them stronger as an individual (Jacobson, 2009, p. 249). In a study conducted to measure anxiety levels of midlife women, military spouses were found to have lower overall anxiety levels due to their development of strong, effective coping techniques (Jacobson, 2009). Dealing with the stress of military life and deployments can make these spouses stronger if they find healthy ways of dealing with stressors.

One significant way (provided by the military) of dealing with the difficulty of military life is through social organizations. Padden (2010) found that “social support within both formal and informal social networks have been shown to be beneficial during deployment separation” (p. 32). While these organizations are beneficial to some, not all spouses are open to such hands-on support. Jervis (2009) when looking at these groups, such as the Family Readiness Group, found that “such circumstances can enforce false relationships ... because of their temporary and rather superficial nature” (Blakely et al., 2012, p. 130). A 2011 study found that those who chose not to participate in social network support (such as the family readiness group) experienced higher levels of stress during deployments (Padden et al., 2011, p. 32). It is the availability of resources which determines whether or not and how individuals cope with this emotional stress.

“Positive beliefs about oneself ... and problem-solving skills are resources that may be used for effective coping.” (Padden et al., 2010, p. 254). In terms of how this goal is achieved, responses among military spouses to different kinds of support are highly individual. A study by Gillian (2012) highlights the individuality of coping techniques by asserting that remarks made by “trailing” spouses (non-military) “indicate a predominance of personal variables over situational factors” (p. 130). Thus, no two responses to emotional stress are alike, and the best method of coping will be equally unique.

Coping can take many forms. Some people experience more mild stress that would not warrant medical help. Similarly, while social networks offer coping through shared experience, some spouses prefer to minimize involvement with the military, have busy schedules or are simply private people. Some people deal with stress by throwing themselves into their own career or a particular hobby which can be healthy. As noted by Carolyn Massello (2007), “spouses should pursue ... things that will help them vent their stress and make them more effective partners” (p. 93). For some people, this is enough. If it is not, other forms of support can be utilized without pressuring “themselves or other spouses into participating in military or base activities” (p. 93). Tollefson (2008) noted the effectiveness of visiting related websites or participating virtually in chat rooms. Another similarly low-key approach to coping could be through reading books, particularly fiction, in order to seek relief from emotional stress. Book therapy could offer military spouses an individualized cathartic experience free from the social pressure of gatherings at a military installation to help spouses cope with separation. Such an

approach could meet the unique needs of spouses living far away from bases as well offering long-distance support through an informal bibliotherapy.

### **Bibliotherapy**

Currently, library professionals in many types of libraries are focused on serving veterans and active duty soldiers. Professional articles are being published to advise on collection development surrounding this group of people proposing the acquisition of literature about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, living with amputations, claiming veteran benefits, and a multitude of resources with background information about the military and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Hughes, 2011, p. 41-42). Similarly, collections of internet resources for military personnel and veterans are being compiled to aid with employment, to provide families with checklists for deployments and practical guides for military life (Evans, 2012, p. 471). However, while practical and educational, these guides are focused on service members more than families, and they cannot function in a therapeutic capacity.

Bibliotherapy, or book therapy, has no agreed upon definition. In a 2012 study by Ahmadipour, Avand and Mo'menpour of Vali-E-Asr University in Iran, bibliotherapy was defined as “an expressive therapy which uses an individual relationship to the content of books and poetry and other written words as therapy” (p. 49). Bibliotherapy, discussed in the 1980 work *Bibliotherapy: The Right Book at the Right Time*, is “a process of dynamic interaction” between a reader and literature where the reader “must experience a change in thinking about the need that is presently unmet in his or her life” (Cornett & Cornett, 1980, p. 8-9). Regardless of exact definition, bibliotherapy focuses on the power of books, both fiction and nonfiction, to offer catharsis and insight to

readers, demonstrating the power of reading. As stated by Theodosia Cross in 1928, “Literature has been through ages the great medium of thought transference. It is the mighty stronghold wherein are kept the gems of intellect.... In its depths are reflected joy, sorrow, hope, despair—every emotion that recorded life has known” (Ahmadipour, Avand & Mo’menpour, 2012, p. 49). The notion that literature can provide healing is an idea stemming from philosophies of the ancient Greeks.

“Bibliotherapy” was a term coined in 1916 by Samuel Crothers to discuss books used in treatment, as books were increasing being used in the therapy of the mentally ill. However, librarians soon realized the applications book therapy could have for groups such as immigrants and handicapped patrons in the public library (Cornett, 1980, p. 12). Bibliotherapy can occur in several forms. For clinical purposes, self-help bibliotherapy is employed whereby books are prescribed by mental health professionals. This would not be appropriate in a public library setting. However, a milder form of bibliotherapy, creative or informal bibliotherapy, can be employed. Librarians identify common community characteristics and respond to these needs by offering fiction, poetry, biography and other creative work recommendations and reading groups to patrons (Brewster, 2009, p. 13). In its most effective form, bibliotherapy can offer readers’ the opportunity to identify with characters in a story, experience catharsis in a safe context wherein “the reader feels secure because he [is not] actually the person involved in the emotional circumstance”, and finally, these insights can be integrated the readers’ emotions to help identify solutions to their personal problems (Cornett, 1980, p. 18).

The process of using fiction in bibliotherapy was conceived by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) in three stages. In the first stage, users identify with the life and problems



faced by a book's character. During stage two, a user will experience catharsis through an "emotional release" whereby they "respond to the story with some sort of passion" (Detrixhe, 2010, p. 59). In the final stage, users recognize through the text that they personally face a problem in their lives that needs to be solved. Thus, fiction can be a useful tool for emotional release and problem solving.

While bibliotherapy with fiction has existed theoretically since Plato's concept of "molding minds" through encounters with literature, "the delivery of formal schemes in public libraries has developed over the past ten years" (Brewster, "Legitimising bibliotherapy," 2012, p. 187). It is seen as an "extension of readers' advisory, a specialized kind of information provision" (Pierce, 2010, p. 48). Librarian and developer of *NoveList*, Duncan Smith, another 1980s innovator in readers' advisory services, produced an article about the value of fiction in 1998. Smith (1998) asserted that "fiction readers are not really reading for escape. They are not running away from anything. Readers read to see themselves and their worlds in a new way – or sometimes to reconnect with a memory of themselves in a different world" (p. 1094). He rejected the notion that reading fiction is noncreative, and, instead, proposed a new way of thinking about the readers of fiction with the readers as active participants with the narrative. This conception of fiction bore striking resemblance to another idea of practice in public libraries which developed around the same time: bibliotherapy.

Not everyone has expressed the same enthusiasm for the use of fiction in therapy. In the history of bibliotherapy, two main issues regarding use of fiction have arisen. The first is that it could do more harm than good, and the second is that use of fiction is limited to children.

In terms of use in therapy, experts continue to struggle with recommendations. As noted in a study of bibliotherapy with depressed university students conducted by experienced counselors, even seasoned therapists use clinical trial and error method of discovering what will be effective. For those with less experience in these experimentations, “choosing the wrong book could have ethical and detrimental consequences that might impact the client” (Ahmadipour, Avand & Mo’menpour, 2012, p. 54). Of even greater concern to researchers is the thought that “librarians who tout bibliotherapy as a library service are, essentially, practicing without a license” (Pierce, 2010, p. 48). Jennifer Burek Pierce (2010), a professor of library and information science at the University of Iowa writes that recommending fiction for therapeutic purposes “is an area whose effectiveness is least known ... There’s no single rule of what’s helpful or safe. Some of these things may make it worse,” referencing the large unknown factor in what might help or hurt an individual with emotional stress (p. 48). Pierce fears that offering book therapy to individuals, particularly when the offerings come from librarians rather than therapists, may turn individuals off to seeking help altogether.

Another concern is specifically about the use of fiction for bibliotherapy among adults. Traditionally, using fiction in bibliotherapy is considered to be exclusive to children with the thought that “adult problems are ... too complex to be captured by a mere story” (Detrixhe, 2010, p. 63). However, in a 2010 study, Jonathan Detrixhe of Long Island University’s Department of Psychology vigorously defended use of fiction among adults. One anecdote related by Detrixhe (2010) described Mario Vargas Llosa’s book *The Perpetual Orgy* which details a “deep connection with a literary character leading to personal change over time” (p. 63). In Llosa’s case, the character

was Emma Bovary of Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*. Llosa identified with Emma Bovary, and reading about her "self-poisoning and agonizing death ... helped him control" his own suicidal thoughts (p. 64). While an extreme example, the message is clear: fiction can be therapeutic even for adults.

Although it would not stand alone in clinical practice, in an informal format in the context of the public library, use of fiction for relief of emotional stress could be useful. Soheli Begum (2011) wrote that instead of pitting different forms of literature against each other to determine a victor, efforts would be better expended "to redefine the ephemeral entirely and view it as a champion in its own right" (p. 739). Instead of dismissing escapist reading as "trashy" or "pulpy," Begum (2011) stated that librarians should analyze "the origins and implications of escapism" to better "determine the resources to aid the unique and transformative journeys of their readers" (p. 740). Begum redefined escapism through the various purposes for which readers used fiction including coping with stress, promoting creativity, for survival, to ascertain reality and for transformative purposes – essentially the experience of bibliotherapy. Begum (2011) cited specific examples such as women in Depression-era South Dakota who sought to preserve in harsh times by identifying with other strong women such as the characters in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (p. 742). Such characters and themes offer universal appeal in the face of difficult realities, from Hurricane Katrina to a family dealing with parental divorce.

Even without Detrixhe's passionate defense of fiction therapy among adults and Begum's historic anecdotes, bibliotherapy has been proven to be effective in a number of contexts. Generally, psychology studies have found that bibliotherapy can be effective

when combined with other forms of therapy, specifically depression and panic disorders. For example, a study reported in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* in 2004 reported that patients with panic disorder experienced clinically significant decreases in panic symptoms from pre- to post-treatment when bibliotherapy was a part of their treatment (Febbraro, p. 776). A higher proportion of participants who experienced bibliotherapy as part of their treatment showed clinically significant improvement than those who did not receive bibliotherapy. In this study, a self-help book entitled *Coping with Panic* (Clum, 1990) was provided to participants in the experimental group.

Similar improvement has been seen using fiction with young adults. In a case study analysis of the effectiveness of fiction bibliotherapy among depressed university students, bibliotherapy was found to be as effective as drug therapy. Among clinically depressed university students, this study discovered that using fairy tales, short stories and novels in a bibliotherapy context demonstrated an average 20% recovery rate over a period of a month, equivalent to the expected recovery rate for students receiving drug therapy (Ahmadipour, 2012, p. 56). In offering fiction for therapeutic purposes, mental health professionals have found success among adults as well. For example, a study reported in 1990 (Coleman and Ganong) working with stepfamilies asserted that the same books which were effective with children could be effective with adult clients since a “well-written, honestly portrayed stepfamily story can be informative and instruction for adult readers” as well (Coleman & Ganong, 1990, p. 328 ref. in Detrixhe, 2010, p. 63). Coleman and Ganong made use of fiction not only among their adult clients, but also encouraged their graduate students to read specific fictional works in order to “sensitize” them “to the problems their clients were facing” (Detrixhe, 2010, p. 63). While these

researchers used fiction in practice and reported the use, no empirical evidence was provided as to the effectiveness of this therapy.

Thus, the most current research in bibliotherapy is exploring the use of fiction with adults both in practice and theory. In the United Kingdom, a bibliotherapeutic program in public libraries, known as the Get Into Reading program, was instituted in 2001 in partnership with local businesses and practitioners. The program partnered therapists, counselors and other mental health professionals with libraries to coordinate sessions for reading excerpts of poems and fiction aloud as a means of providing therapy but in a community setting. During a survey in 2008, *The Guardian* noted that “over half of English library authorities are operating some form of bibliotherapy intervention” (McLaine, 2010, p. 141). Not only did the library program gain national media attention, but the UK Department of Health was so impressed that it noted the Get Into Reading program in its *Service user research and evaluation* report as “exactly the kind of work we at the Department of Health want to develop over the next ten years” (McLaine, 2010, p. 146). The benefits of such a program included increased confidence, “concentration, memory, patience, reflection, ability to relax and self awareness” (p. 146). As of December 2010, the highly successful Get into Reading program delivered over 170 weekly sessions in local institutions throughout the United Kingdom including not only public libraries, but prisons, adult care homes, hospitals and mental health facilities (p. 142). According to McLaine (2010), using this program as a model, the State Library of Victoria (with McLaine as supervisor) partnered with the government’s Health Promotion Foundation to found The Book Well program as the first program of its kind outside of the United Kingdom. Although evidence for the success of fiction

bibliotherapy among adults is currently anecdotal, the success of programs such as these indicate, if nothing else, there is a desire being met in communities and the public library is fulfilling it.

In terms of selecting fiction suited to bibliotherapy, it is commonly agreed that what works for a person is highly individual and can only be arrived at through trial and error, but practitioners and researchers suggest certain criteria in making the initial decisions. In selecting books for depressed university students, researchers used the following criteria: theme of the story where “the protagonist overcomes her problem” and stories which have “a moral lesson and also a positive mood” (Ahmadipour, Avand, & Mo’menpour, 2012, p. 54). The readers need to perceive something of themselves in the characters, but the characters do not need to be contemporary to the readers in order to be relatable. As stated by Jane Davis of the Get Into Reading program in the UK, “great literature is from all times and places” and if we open our minds we can overcome the nervousness “of stuff that doesn’t look obviously like us” (McLaine, 2010, p. 142). Thus, anything from Charlotte Bronte and Homer to J.D. Salinger and Ray Bradbury can offer valuable experience. In terms of books that can be most helpful, Morrison makes the observation: “The self can get help from a book... But the best kind of help doesn’t necessarily come by way of self help books. Nor are the books which make us feel good usually feel good books” (McLaine, 2010, p. 142). Seeking lighthearted literature is not always the most helpful. While it can provide escape, it is less likely to offer insight. However, there is no need to perform literary analysis to experience a benefit. When people participate in bibliotherapy, “no academic analysis is expected – simply enjoyment, emotional response or reminiscence” (Bolitho, 2011, p. 90). Even with a

simple response, the reading experience can have value. As McLaine (2010) observes “the therapy happens when groups focus on the text rather than themselves and their problems” (p. 142). In experiencing a sense of heightened imagination through the text, people can use this as a tool “to construct a more informed understanding of [his or her] own life” thereby experiencing some form of emotional relief (Walwyn, 2011, p. 303). No one correct answer exists for providing these books, and no single book will have the same effect on different people. As stated by Jennifer Pierce in her 2010 article “A Feeling for Books,” there is “no single rule of what’s helpful” (p. 48). However, in thoughtfully choosing books of appropriate subject matter with a positive outlook, the odds that someone will find these books useful increase.

### **Content Analysis and Annotated Bibliography**

For the purposes of this research, bibliotherapy will take the form of an annotated bibliography of potential fiction acquisition, display or book clubs for public libraries in communities of high military population. To create this bibliography, books must be selected and evaluated for appropriate subject matter and positivity. The first step of this process is to identify themes or subjects or importance to military spouses and families. By analyzing the content of blog postings and comments from military organization websites as well as a collection of brochures and pamphlets published by the military to educate military spouses, a collection of important subjects and terms regarding the experience of deployment can be gathered.

In conducting content analysis within the context of a blog to ascertain themes or subjects of importance, the advantage lies in the unobtrusiveness. As no participants speak to a researcher or feel that they are being interviewed, a blog writer “naturally

presents or projects itself to its normal audience” (Aharony, 2009, p. 591). Thus, true emotions are more likely to emerge. In fact, research indicates that people tend to start blogging because they want to interact or chronicle their personal experiences and emotions in order to exorcise frustrations or bond with an online community (p. 588). By forming online communities, people “make contact with others facing similar problems, tell their stories, and be heard” (Savolainen, 2010). To extract key experiences or emotions from blog postings and comments, latent analysis proves more useful. Reading a complete post, the main idea (or ideas) of the post becomes apparent which can then be categorized according to other main ideas present (p. 591). Once these categories are formed, ideas can be clustered into larger, more general categories to arrive at a manageable list of thematic terms from which to search for materials. This clustering technique was employed in an exploratory analysis of librarians’ blogs by Noa Aharony (2009) as well as a study of bibliotherapy narratives conducted by Olivia Walwyn and Jennifer Rowley (2011). Once these terms are identified, they will be used to search for subject appropriate books at which point the content will be assessed for inclusion in the annotated bibliography.

The creation of the annotated bibliography will be based in the principles of collection development. The foremost criteria will be that books fall within an appropriate thematic groups. However, more traditional aspects of collection development will need to be assessed as well to determine appropriateness of content. Specifically, reviews will be employed such as the *New York Times Book Review*, *Booklist*, and *Publishers Weekly* will help indicate popular reader interest in books which is particularly important in selecting fiction (Saricks, 2009, p. 10). Online sources such



as Bookwire also offer recognized book reviews (Johnson, 2009, p. 110). Looking at awards these books have received can also indicate appeal. In evaluating books for inclusion, the foremost criteria will be content or subject, specifically, falling within the thematic scope of the bibliography. However, other considerations will include currency, writing style, reader level and uniqueness (Johnson, 2009, p. 112). Through thorough research and careful evaluation of sources, it may be possible that the product of this research, an annotated bibliography, may be used in future as a selection tool in itself.

## Methodology

### Variables

*Causal variable:* The need for a resource comprising works of fiction and memoir a significant proportion of military spouses who experience subclinical, emotional stress in reaction to spouse deployment who do not want to become significantly involved in the military community, but who might benefit from the catharsis bibliotherapy can provide.

*Outcome variable:* Creation of an annotated bibliography of fiction paralleling the emotional issues faced by U.S. military spouses and family members for the purpose of offering military community-centered public libraries a working collection development and reading list to improve overall readers' advisory services.

*Purpose of Research:* To create an annotated bibliography of fiction paralleling the emotional issues faced by U.S. military spouses and family members for the purpose of offering military community-centered public libraries a working collection development and reading list to improve overall readers' advisory services.

### Operational Definitions

*Bibliotherapy:* The use of books to promote individuals' understanding of personal problems and to offer insight for improvement when the books' characters parallel the emotional problems faced by the reader. This definition is specific to fiction, memoir and other character-centric literature forms.

*Military spouse:* An individual in a committed relationship with a member of the armed services. In the context of this research, this will apply most directly to American military spouses or significant others.

## **Methods**

1. Identified discrete community needs to be met - specifically the themes and subjects most useful or prevalent for the community of military spouses using a content analysis. As discussed in the literature review, a cluster content analysis was best suited to this approach. Twenty blog entries were identified from sources on the following websites:

- Armyfrg.org (1)
- Afterdeployment.org (2)
- Blog-brigade.militaryonesource.mil (6)
- Spousebuzz.com (11)

Military One Source and the Army FRG at Fort Bragg supplied the official URLs. SpouseBUZZ and After Deployment were linked through these organization websites. Only original posts, no comments, were included in the analysis. Specific phrases embodying the salient point of the post were extracted and clustered until a whittled-down list of eleven searchable subject or thematic terms was derived.

2. Identified possible sources to be included in annotated bibliography using a subject heading search for pervasive theme in the library catalogs of UNC-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill Public Library, Orange County Public Library, Sandhills Regional Library System, and Southern Pines Public Library. After making initial identifications, *Book*

*Page*, *NoveList*, *Goodreads Listopia*, and *Amazon.com's Listmania* were used to further identify potential book inclusions. Finally, some were serendipitously identified while locating titles from the initial list in the stacks.

3. Working from the complete list of potential books, book review sources and award nominations were consulted to determine the value of including the book in the bibliography and its potential popularity to help libraries make sound acquisition decisions. In simple terms, if the source has not been reviews by *Publisher's Weekly*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews* or a genre-specific reviewer of note, the book will be excluded. If the book has not been reviewed by known reviewers, it will likely not be readily available for purchase by libraries.
4. Once the search was completed, each source was evaluated for personal merits. The plot was examined first and foremost. For effective bibliotherapy, researchers suggest that the character experiences must not only parallel reader experiences, but the context should be one of high moral content with a positive outcome to affect positive change (as explored in the literature review).
5. Attempts to diversify the bibliography were made by looking at the sources overall. By including a variety of reading levels, genres and formats, the widest audience of military spouses can be reached. Many military spouses, particularly of young enlisted servicemen and women, are the age of most university undergraduates. The presence of young adult-focused literature is considered important, particularly since these are the spouses facing deployment and the military lifestyle for the first time. By attempting to identify a variety of protagonists in terms of age, gender, race,

nationality, social background, et cetera, a wider breadth of military spouses may better be able to identify with the emotional stresses characters experience in a book.

6. The selections for inclusion are annotated to include a brief plot summary composed based on a reading of the work, any notable reviews or awards, format availability and subjects or themes of the book, and current publication information.
7. Finally, the bibliography is categorized according to most pervasive genre of the book in order to allow libraries and individuals to identify books more tailored to their personal needs and tastes, but indexed according to author name, title, subject and genre.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited scope. This resource is tailored to the spouses or significant others of military members. It does not respond to the emotional needs of the extended military family including children, parents, siblings, et cetera. It is also limited to fiction, short-fiction, memoir, and poetry. Thus, self-help literature considered useful for bibliotherapy is excluded. However, there are other resources available for these purposes primarily provided through the military. Also, if there is a need for more intensive therapy, the issue should be addressed with a therapist or physician.

### **Significance**

Research has indicated that bibliotherapy can be useful in helping individuals cope with specific situations. Military spouses are a discrete and small enough group that an effective bibliography of potentially therapeutic literature can be compiled. Having this available may aid military spouses in catharsis in the face of emotional stress related

to the military and deployments. Additionally, public libraries in military-centric communities may benefit from having access to such a resource to better meet the needs of their community. They can provide more effective readers' advisory, offer pertinent book displays and book club books and use the bibliography as a selection aid for acquisition to make prudent collection decisions.

## Results

The results of this research take the form of an annotated bibliography which follows. Forty-three of the one hundred books examined were included. Those fifty-seven not chosen are discussed in Appendix II.

### Entry Format

Entries are organized alphabetically by author last name within genre subheadings. Each entry is formatted according to the following categories as applicable:

**Author:** Last name, First name

**Title:**

**Subjects:** War, Military family, Isolation, Separation, Loneliness, Longing, Loss, Self fulfillment, Resentment, Reconciliation

**Publisher:** Publisher name, Publication date (edition)

**Review:** Direct quote from noted source

**Other Reviews/Awards:** Names for other known reviewing sources, any notable awards

**Summary:** Brief description as applicable to themes and therapeutic aims of the paper. All summaries are composed by this paper's author.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Women's Fiction

**Author:** Bohjalian, Chris

**Title:** *The Sandcastle Girls*

**Subjects:** War, Separation, Longing, Long-distance relationship

**Publication:** Doubleday, 2012

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Bohjalian powerfully narrates an intricately nuanced romance with a complicated historical event at the forefront. With the centennial of the Armenian genocide fast approaching, this is not to be missed. Simply astounding. —Julie Kane, *Library Journal*

**Summary:** On a chance meeting in Aleppo in 1915, Elizabeth, a young American nurse, and Armen, an Armenian engineer, begin a friendship which blossoms into something more. When Armen travels to Egypt to join the British Army, he and Elizabeth begin a correspondence that soon reveals their love for one another. In the present, a journalist begins to investigate her Armenian heritage and reveals the secret Elizabeth kept for so many years. In a story of love in wartime, Armen and Elizabeth's love letters share a deepening respect and love in spite of distance and a strong sense of hope for the future.

**Author:** Donoghue, Emma

**Title:** *Landing*

**Subjects:** Long-distance relationship, Separation

**Publication:** Mariner Books, 2008 (Reprint edition)

**Formats:** Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Despite its ... twenty-first century trappings of email, global travel, and cell phones, this remains an old-fashioned love story about compromise and growth.--*Booklist*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** Two women living in Ontario, Canada – Jude – and Dublin, Ireland – Sile – begin a long-distance romantic relationship. They have the opportunity to meet for a weekend every few months, but each woman lives a separate life with friends, work and home issues that do not intersect. Long-distance phone calls at strange times of day and many emails make up the bulk of their relationship. Jude and Sile are forced to be creative with topics and consider more carefully tone of voice or comments in emails in ways that couples who see each other in person do not. This focused exploration of the complications of maintaining and building a strong long-distance relationship is a story of hard-won love and commitment.

**Author:** Hannah, Kristin



**Title:** *Home Front*

**Subjects:** Military family, Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation

**Publication:** St. Martin's Press, 2012

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Hannah has written a remarkable tale of duty, love, strength, and hope that is at times poignant, and always thoroughly captivating and relevant.—*Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Kirkus Reviews*

**Summary:** Jolene Zarkades is deployed to Iraq, leaving behind her husband, Michael, and their two daughters. Michael resents Jolene at first as he struggles to balance his full-time job and taking care of his daughters. He slowly comes to appreciate the efforts of his wife in their home life as he attempts to fill her shoes. His daughters must learn to rely on him, and as a family they learn a new routine together. When Jolene returns, she struggles not only to deal with the physical and emotional scars of war, but also to find her new role in her family. Together, Michael and Jolene discover the value of each other, and together, they learn to be a stronger, communicative and loving family. Separation and reintegration are examined in this emotionally-charged novel.

**Author:** Harrington, Laura

**Title:** *Alice Bliss*

**Subjects:** Separation, Isolation, Self-fulfillment, Loss

**Publication:** Pamela Dorman Books, 2011

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Playwright and lyricist Harrington transforms her one-act musical *Alice Unwrapped* into a moving debut about loss and survival.—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal, Kirkus Reviews*

**Summary:** A coming-of-age story about Alice, a sixteen-year-old whose father is deployed to Afghanistan as part of the National Guard. Together, Alice, her mother and her sister must learn to function as a family without their father. They look forward to his every call or letter, and they are jealous of one another for his attentions. Angie, Alice's mom, resents her husband for leaving her as a single parent. Alice must learn to rely on her mother as she had on her father, growing the bond between them. It is the story of a family living apart which must grow closer emotionally to deal with physical distance and loss.

**Author:** Powning, Beth

**Title:** *The Sea Captain's Wife*

**Subjects:** Isolation, Self-fulfillment, Resentment, Reconciliation

**Publication:** Plume, 2011 (Reprint edition)

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook

**Review:** Compelling historical novel with a strong female protagonist and an exciting plot. Sure to appeal to fans of women's historical fiction.—*Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Booklist, Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** Azuba Bradstock is a lonely woman. Her husband leaves for years at a time as a merchant ship captain. She thinks that by joining her husband at sea, she will no longer feel lonely. After joining him onboard, she quickly learns that his role is always that of the sea captain rather than husband or father to their child. He does not wish to

share the rougher parts of life with her. Azuba discovers that loneliness is an emotion she must conquer on her own since she cannot control her husband. Separate from her husband, Azuba finds newfound strength and the courage to engage her husband in more equal communication, helping him to better see the needs of his wife and daughter. A tale of overcoming loneliness, the strength of Azuba is inspiring.

**Author:** Trollope, Joanna

**Title:** *The Soldier's Wife*

**Subjects:** Deployment, Military family, Self-fulfillment, Communication, Resentment

**Publication:** Simon & Schuster, 2012

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD

**Review:** The noticeable absence of swearing, sex scenes, and controversial topics places this story about a rough patch in a marriage squarely in the women's fiction genre, but its nuanced writing, multigenerational points of view, and balanced presentation of changing gender roles elevate it above the pack; recommended for Trollope's many fans.—Laurie A. Cavanaugh, *Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Kirkus Reviews*

**Summary:** A modern-day British Army family deals with coming back together after Major Dan Riley returns from a six month deployment. His wife, Alexa, is excited for his return, believing that it will herald a time of happiness for their family and a renewed sense of self for her. However, none of this is realized. Dan, while home in body, is not home in his mind. He is used to dealing with commanding soldiers and executing orders, and has difficulty adjusting to his home life where he is a father and husband. Problems and relationships are not as simple and direct as in the Army. Alexa is not happy even though Dan is home. She misses having a job and a sense of continuity. She is tired of Army life. She must determine what will allow her to feel fulfilled personally, outside of her marriage. Dan must truly return home, and relearn how to talk to his wife and children. Told from the perspective of Dan, Alexa and their daughter this novel highlights the painful process of reintegration.

## Literary Fiction

**Author:** Atwood, Margaret

**Title:** *The Penelopiad*

**Subjects:** Separation

**Publication:** Canongate U.S., 2006

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Despite the jokiness ... Margaret Atwood's Penelope is coherently and persuasively imagined—*New York Times Literary Supplement*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal*

**Summary:** Atwood retells Homer's *Odyssey* from the perspective of Penelope, Ulysses' wife, capturing a sense of longing and waiting experienced by Penelope. The difficulties faced by families left behind are explored in an often lighthearted way, such as Penelope's resentment and difficulties in dealing with Ulysses' judgmental mother.

Narrated by Penelope after death, the *Penelopiad* takes a unique perspective on the Odyssey and conveys a sense of separation in a lyrical tale.

**Author:** Brooks, Geraldine

**Title:** *March: A Novel*

**Subjects:** War, Separation, Reunion

**Publication:** Penguin Books, 2006

**Formats:** Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** The best moments in the narrative are the peeks inside the mind of the long-suffering Marmee, and thus we learn where Jo gets her famous spunk—Marta Segal Block, *Booklist*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** A retelling of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, *March* offers a look inside the minds of Mr. March, fighting for the Union and disillusioned with slavery, and Marmee, worried for her husband, determined to see him when she learns of his injury and determined to keep her family together. Mr. March enjoys the letters from his family, but feels a sense of duty to the Union. Marmee understands his sense of duty, but she fights fiercely for their family, navigating a difficult reunion.

**Author:** Corona, Laurel

**Title:** *Penelope's Daughter*

**Subjects:** Separation, Isolation, Longing

**Publication:** Berkeley Trade, 2010

**Formats:** Paperback, eBook

**Review:** Provides new insight into the lives of Homer's women while giving voice to the inventiveness, creativity and ingenuity of all those left behind--*Booklist*

**Summary:** Xanthe, daughter of Odysseus and Penelope, endures trials and tribulations in the midst and aftermath of the Trojan War. With her father away, Xanthe must deal with her mother and brother worrying and waiting for Odysseus, while Xanthe herself barely remembers her father. Xanthe is sent to live with Penelope's cousin, Helen of Troy, to keep her safe from her mother's suitors in Ithaca. Away from home, she misses her mother and comes to recognize the strength of her kinswomen, Penelope and Helen. As a strong character, Xanthe exudes a sense of longing amidst a tale of adventure and political intrigue.

**Author:** LeGuin, Ursula K.

**Title:** *Lavinia*

**Subjects:** Separation, Self-fulfillment

**Publication:** Mariner Books, 2009

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** The compulsively readable Le Guin earns kudos for fashioning a winning combination of history and mythology featuring an unlikely heroine imaginatively plucked from literary obscurity – Margaret Flanagan, *Booklist*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal*

**Summary:** Virgil's *Aeneid* explores the character of Lavinia as part of Aeneas's future, but without depth. It is this character who is given voice by LeGuin. Lavinia, in a

dreamlike state, encounters the poet, Virgil who is also dreaming, on his deathbed. He tells Lavinia of the love Aeneas will bring to her life, though it brings with it war and a brief marriage. Lavinia chooses bravely to accept this path. She stands by Aeneas through many battles, essentially taking control of Latium and bonding with fellow women left behind through battles. Although she knows that Aeneas will die, she makes the most of the days she has with him and not only faces her separation with a sense of action and self-fulfillment, but brings this spirit to other women, empowering them.

**Author:** Murakami, Haruki

**Title:** *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*

**Subjects:** Communication, Resentment, Reunion, Self-fulfillment

**Publication:** Vintage, 1998 (1<sup>st</sup> American edition)

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** A significant advance in Murakami's art ... a bold and generous book—*New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** Toru Okada is somewhat lost – he quit his job at a law firm and is not really looking for one as he eats his spaghetti at ten thirty in the morning. His wife is frustrated by his behavior, and their marriage is falling apart. He sets out in search of his wife's missing cat, discovering eventually that she, too, is missing. Toru is drawn into a dangerous underworld of Tokyo. He soon has purpose and a group of allies in his search for his wife and a healing of their marriage. Funny and gripping, Toru is a character seeking himself to help mend his relationship.

## Historical Fiction

**Author:** Farrington, Tim

**Title:** *Lizzie's War*

**Subjects:** Military family, Separation, Reunion

**Publication:** HarperOne, 2006

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook

**Review:** A memorable family story told with wry humor and fluent prose.--*Booklist*

**Summary:** In the midst of the Vietnam War, Lizzy O'Reilly, the wife of US Marine Corps Captain Mike O'Reilly, is fighting her own war at home in Washington DC while Mike is deployed. Lizzy is the pregnant mother of four (soon to be five). She deals with her father's illness and a country of people rioting in protest against the war her husband is risking his life fighting. When her kids start to get into fights in school, Mike is wounded and Lizzy's pregnancy has complications, she finds solace in the friendship of an eccentric, war veteran priest, Father Germaine. Told from the perspectives of Lizzy, Mike and Father Germaine, Farrington's novel captures the struggles of a family strong enough to endure any hardship.

**Author:** Faulks, Sebastian

**Title:** *Charlotte Gray*

**Subjects:** Separation, Longing, War

**Publication:** Vintage, 2000

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD

**Review:** Mesmerizing narrative with a piercing love story and the kinds of details that vitalized his descriptions of life in the trenches during WWII—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** A young Scottish woman falls in love with a British fighter pilot in World War II. When he is reported missing in action, Charlotte decides to seek him while working as a spy in France. She finds herself involved with the French resistance and the protection of two young Jewish brothers. An exciting odyssey where Charlotte finds herself in the midst of death, intrigue and temptation, Faulks' novel is a wartime adventure and an epic love story.

**Author:** Ford, Jamie

**Title:** *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*

**Subjects:** Separation, Longing

**Publication:** Ballantine Books, 2009

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD

**Review:** Ford In his first novel, award-winning short-story writer Ford expertly nails the sweet innocence of first love, the cruelty of racism, the blindness of patriotism, the astonishing unknowns between parents and their children, and the sadness and satisfaction at the end of a life well lived. – Joanna Burkhardt, *Library Journal*

**Summary:** In World War II Seattle, Henry, a Chinese immigrant, meets Keiko, a Japanese American student. They become best friends and experience their first love which is cut short when Keiko and her family are relocated to a camp for Japanese Americans in California. The two write letters and try to maintain contact, but when Henry is sent to Canton for school, they lose touch. In 1986, back in Seattle again, Henry remembers Keiko and reveals to his son that he never forgot her. A bittersweet tale of love separated, Keiko and Henry's story is one of heartfelt remembrance and longing.

**Author:** Frazier, Charles

**Title:** *Cold Mountain*

**Subjects:** Separation, Longing

**Publication:** Grove Press, 2001 (Reprint edition)

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** An unrelenting and sometimes painful realism—Nancy Pearl, *Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** National Book Award 1997, New York Times Bestseller

**Summary:** An American Civil War odyssey, the story of Inman and Ada is one of unfaltering love and longing. Inman, a Confederate soldier wounded at Petersburg, does not rejoin his unit, but instead decides to walk home to the girl he loves at home, Ada. On his journey, Inman encounters trials and temptations (much as Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*). Ada, at home, struggles as a woman alone to run her father's farm, waiting for Inman to return to her. Frazier's novel is a story of the hardship and disillusionment of war, and the lengths two people will go to for love.

**Author:** Hodgkinson, Amanda

**Title:** *22 Britannia Road*

**Subjects:** Resentment, Communication, Reunion

**Publication:** Penguin Books, 2012

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook

**Review:** Hodgkinson enters boldly into well-trodden, sensitive territory and distinguishes herself with freshness and empathy—*Kirkus Reviews*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Booklist*

**Summary:** World War II, Poland, a family is separated by war. Silvana and Janusz married and had their son just before the outset of the war. Janusz left to fly for England's Royal Air Force, while Silvana and their son remained. After six years of separation, Silvana joins Janusz in England. He is eager to reunite his family, but Silvana is nervous about the time they spent apart. She knows they each had separate experiences of the war and that there is a distance in their relationship. Reuniting a family and accompanying emotions – fear of change, resentment of role renegotiation and the pain of needing to get to know one another again – fill this poignant novel.

**Author:** Jones, Sadie

**Title:** *Small Wars*

**Subjects:** War, Isolation, Resentment, Communication, Loneliness

**Publication:** Harper Perennial, 2011

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** This richly imagined and warmly atmospheric story convincingly demonstrates that small wars, like all wars, are hell. This is historical fiction at its best. Highly recommended. – Barbara Love, *Library Journal*

**Summary:** During the British occupation of Cyprus, Clara is left at home with her small children while her husband is sent out with his Army unit to quell local dissent. Clara is frightened for him, and although they live together, she still feels lonely. Her husband has difficulties with his unit and his commander, but he is unwilling to talk to Clara about his feelings. Eventually, Clara begins to get through to her husband, helping him to communicate better and deal with his feelings about activities of the Army in Cyprus. Clara's feelings of loneliness and her struggle to overcome them are central to the story.

**Author:** Pfarrer, Donald

**Title:** *The Fearless Man*

**Subjects:** War, Military Family, Fear for safety, Deployment

**Publication:** Random House, 2004

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback

**Review:** Pfarrer's dramatic, suspenseful narrative offers a vivid and accurate depiction of combat leadership, comradeship, small unit tactics and the brutal perspective of Marine infantrymen in Vietnam. This is a story with visceral resonance.—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** In the midst of the Vietnam War, Mac and Sarah Clare are looking forward to the end of Mac's commitment. He is eager to start a family. Sarah is afraid of becoming a single mother if he is killed on deployment. Sarah has difficulty dealing with her isolation. She wants to continue living while Mac is away, but finds herself missing him and would feel disloyal to have fun while Mac is away. Told from the perspective of both Mac and Sarah, this novel captures the fear for safety of deployed combatants and the need from strong bonds of communication to help heal those left behind.

**Author:** Richman, Alyson

**Title:** *The Lost Wife*

**Subjects:** Separation, Longing, Reunion

**Publication:** Berkeley Trade, 2011

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Tragedy and hope, love and loss, and the strength to endure are expressed through Richman's graceful writing and powerful characters, many based on actual Holocaust victims and survivors.--Danise Hoover, *Booklist*

**Summary:** A tale of loss and rediscovery, Richman's novel explores longtime separation but exudes a sense of faith in love and hope for the future. Set against the backdrop of the Holocaust and World War II, Lenka and Joseph fall in love, marry and are immediately separated. Lenka finds herself in a concentration camp while Joseph is in America, left alone to begin a new life. They find each other again only after many years, but their sense of longing and grief at separation is a thread throughout the novel.

### Classic Fiction

**Author:** Austen, Jane

**Title:** *Persuasion*

**Subjects:** Loneliness, Reconciliation

**Publication:** Dover Publications, 1997

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Summary:** Anne Elliot let the love of her life sail away from her years ago. Captain Wentworth returns from sea many years later, and Anne never stopped loving him. Anne is lonely and feels even more isolated as she finds Captain Wentworth enamored of another young lady. However, as the two get to know one another again, Captain Wentworth finds himself ready to forgive Anne and rekindle their love that never really left. The story of a woman who, regretting her actions of the past, remains true to her love through many years of separation in hope of a chance for reconciliation.

**Author:** Maugham, W. Somerset

**Title:** *The Painted Veil*

**Subjects:** Isolation, Loneliness, Self-fulfillment, Communication

**Publication:** Vintage, 2006 (Reprint edition)

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Summary:** Kitty Fane married Dr. Walter Fane because he asked and she was feeling old. She does not love him, and when he discovers her affair, he takes his wife with him to the heart of China's cholera epidemic in Mei-tan-fu. There, Kitty is bored and angry until she discovers an interest in working at the orphanage. She throws herself into this work with the same fervor Walter throws himself into his medical efforts. They develop a sense of mutual respect and love from this equality of purpose. In this tale of slowly blossoming love in the midst of hardship, Kitty struggles to overcome her loneliness and resentment of her husband with impressive character growth.

**Author:** Wilde, Oscar

**Title:** *A Good Woman or Lady Windermere's Fan*

**Subjects:** Loneliness, Communication

**Publication:** Oxford University Press, 2008 (Reprint edition)

**Format:** Paperback

**Summary:** Mrs. Windermere, newly married, is settling in with her husband and his friends. She is young and unassuming, but becomes anxious about the state of her marriage when she discovers that her husband is doing business with the mysterious and beautiful Mrs. Erlynne. Her husband does not confide in her, but as he tries to protect her, Mrs. Windermere begins to feel lonely. Her loneliness causes her to turn to her friends, and much confusion ensues. Eventually, the Windermers begin to communicate better, and Mrs. Windermere's loneliness subsides through their more equal partnership.

## Fantasy

**Author:** Fowler, Connie May

**Title:** *Remembering Blue*

**Subjects:** Loneliness, Longing, Self-fulfillment

**Publication:** Ballantine Books, 2001

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook

**Review:** The love story carries strong appeal, and Fowler's tender portrayal of Nick and Mattie's idyllic relationship will please romantics everywhere.—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** Mattie met Nick Blue when he wandered into her shop one afternoon, and it was love at first sight. Nick, the descendant of a sea god was tied to the ocean from birth, but willing to give it all up for Mattie. However, he is too quickly drawn back to the ocean, taking his new wife (Mattie) with him. As he spends his days and nights on a fishing boat, Mattie fills her loneliness and longing by following the example of Nick's mother. She becomes a businesswoman, attends college and takes up gardening. As Mattie finds self-fulfillment, she becomes a more equal partner with her husband.

**Author:** Goldman, William

**Title:** *The Princess Bride*

**Subjects:** Separation, Reunion

**Publication:** Mariner Books, 2007

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook

**Summary:** In an epic tale of romance, Buttercup promises to wait for Wesley while he sails away to seek his fortune. By the time Wesley makes his way back to Buttercup, she had been forcibly engaged to the evil Prince. With the help of friends and fellow travelers, Wesley battles his way back to Buttercup to be reunited in love. Through years of separation, Wesley and Buttercup remain faithful to one another and fight for their relationship.



**Author:** Vinge, Joan D.

**Title:** *Ladyhawke*

**Subjects:** Separation, Isolation, Reunion

**Publication:** Signet, 1985

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback

**Summary:** Narrated by Mouse, a young fugitive, this is the story of Captain Navarre and Lady Isabeau. As a young couple, they were cursed for their love. When Mouse meets them, Isabeau must spend her days as a hawk while Navarre spends his nights as a wolf, such that they can never be together as humans. Mouse becomes their way to communicate with each other. After years of separation, they make a plan to break their curse and be together. Their story of love separated and loneliness is filled with struggle and frustration, but also adventure and hope.

## Science Fiction

**Author:** Brashares, Ann

**Title:** *My Name is Memory*

**Subjects:** Separation, Loneliness, Reunion

**Publication:** Riverhead Trade, 2011

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Daniel and Sophia's near misses and chance encounters captivate and entrance us.—*Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Kirkus Reviews, Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** Daniel lives in a world where everyone is reincarnated when they die, but he is the only one who keeps his memories of his previous lifetimes. In each lifetime Daniel meets the same girl who he knows as Sophia. She is his soulmate. Unfortunately, she cannot remember him from lifetime to lifetime. In present day, Sophia is now called Lucy, and Daniel must patiently reacquaint her with himself, all the while feeling the loneliness of his long memory and the sadness of separation from Sophia.

**Author:** Haldeman, Joe

**Title:** *The Forever War*

**Subjects:** Separation, War

**Publication:** Saint Martin's Griffin, 2009 (Reprint edition)

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** A gripping tale with disturbing echoes of the Vietnam War.—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *School Library Journal, Nebula Award*

**Summary:** A futuristic novel in which William Mandella is drafted into the army for an interstellar war millions of light years away from Earth. Due to time shifts, Mandella and his unit seem to be away from home for only months at a time while many years pass on Earth. In the midst of conflict, Mandella meets Margay, another soldier, and their close friendship eventually blossoms into romance. Margay is injured and sent back to Earth, but Mandella has to stay. The hardship of separation from family and loved ones comes through in this action-packed science fiction.

**Author:** Niffenegger, Audrey

**Title:** *The Time Traveler's Wife*

**Subjects:** Separation, Isolation, Communication

**Publication:** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** It's no wonder the film rights to this hip and urban love story have been acquired.--*Booklist*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Library Journal*

**Summary:** Henry is a time traveler. Clare is the girl he returns to again and again. When they first meet, he is about forty, and she is about ten, but while her life is linear, his is not. When they meet and are roughly the same age, they begin a whirlwind romance, eventually marrying and having a daughter. However, Henry cannot control when he comes and goes from Clare's life, so she must learn to live life without him. She becomes accustomed to not hearing from him for long periods and copes with the separation through friends and developing interests of her own.

## Christian Fiction

**Author:** Kingsbury, Karen

**Title:** *Ever After*

**Subjects:** Deployment, Military family, Separation, Long-distance relationship, Loss

**Publication:** Walker Books, 2008

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Summary:** The story of two couples, one an old romance reunited nearly twenty years and the other a new romance, separated by deployment. Lauren and Shane struggle because, although they love each other, during their long separation they became completely independent individuals. Lauren is an anti-war reporter. Shane works for the Air Force as a flight instructor. Their lives do not mesh easily. Meanwhile, Emily (their daughter), heads to college in Washington where she meets Justin, a young Army officer. When Justin deploys, he and Emily work hard to maintain their long-distance relationship. This is a story of families, long-distance relationships and hard-won reunion.

## Romance

**Author:** Schoenecker, Mary Fremont

**Title:** *Four Summers Waiting*

**Subjects:** Separation, War, Reunion

**Publication:** Five Star, 2006

**Format:** Hardcover, eBook

**Review:** Henry and Maria are both tender and loving characters who do their best to follow the rules of the times as well as following their personal convictions—Carol Carter, *Romance Reviews Today*

**Summary:** In the months before the outbreak of the American Civil War, Dr. Henry Simms meets Maria Onderdonk. The two fall quickly in love, but on the eve of their engagement, Henry finds himself called to duty in the Union army. Maria agrees to wait for him. Their story is told through letters, diary entries and the experiences of Henry and Maria in a story of mutual faith and love with hope for the future.

## Mystery

**Author:** Japrisot, Sebastien

**Title:** *A Very Long Engagement*

**Subjects:** Separation, War

**Publication:** Picador, 2004

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Japrisot's eloquently easy, almost offhand style makes even throwaway lines remarkable, and his re-creation of the nobility, futility and horror of trench warfare is harshly beautiful.—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** Mathilde, a young fiancée to a World War I soldier, searches for her fiancé when she learns of his possible execution in prison. Bound to her wheelchair, Mathilde must search for him through others. She speaks with soldiers from his unit, wives of his fellow prisoners, eventually hiring a private detective to aid in her search. As Mathilde pieces together letters and information she gathers by talking to others, she learns the truth about her fiancé. Mathilde is persistent in her search despite her physical handicap. Her faith and love shine through in the intriguing puzzle of her fiancé's disappearance. Published originally in French, the English prose is still beautiful if a bit more difficult to read.

**Author:** Spencer-Fleming, Julia

**Title:** *One Was a Soldier*

**Subjects:** Deployment, Reunion

**Publication:** Minotaur Books, 2011

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Spencer-Fleming's fans who have been waiting anxiously for her latest won't be disappointed; this series, as intelligent as it is enthralling, just keeps getting better.—

Michele Leber, *Booklist*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** Clare Fergusson, Army pilot, recently returned from a tour of duty in Iraq, joins a therapy group of other veterans each struggling with their own issues (amputation, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, marriage problems). When one of the group members dies and the death is ruled a suicide, Clare rallies the group to look into their friend's death. They uncover conspiracy and murder while they find solace and help through their therapy.

## Young Adult

**Author:** Bird, Sarah

**Title:** *The Yokota Officer's Club*

**Subjects:** Separation, Military family

**Publication:** Ballantine Books, 2002

**Formats:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** The dialogue is first-rate, and all the '60s brand-name dropping is amusing; the decade becomes fresh again when seen from the unusual perspective of a military family (especially this one) removed from mainland society—*Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** Bernie returns to her family after a year away at college, and readers are introduced to a family constantly relocating to different military bases and mired in Air Force tradition. Bernie recalls the hardships of base life growing up as she reacquaints herself with her family and life at home. A chance opportunity to travel finds Bernie at the base where she grew up, and she is able to uncover some of the family mysteries of her past. The story is one of a strong military family and a daughter redefining her life and her past after a year-long separation in a coming of age tale.

**Author:** Schreck, Karen

**Title:** *While He Was Away*

**Subjects:** War, Loneliness, Self-fulfillment, Long distance relationship

**Publication:** Sourcebooks Fire, 2012

**Formats:** Paperback, eBook

**Review:** The perils of war line the memories of the women left behind and cast into relief both their devotion and their need to continue to live separate and independence lives. A strong entry in the growing genre of fiction about the Iraq war.—*Kirkus Reviews*

**Summary:** Penelope, a high school student, meets David at her new school. They find a friendship through their love of art which eventually becomes more. However, David is deployed to Iraq as their relationship is beginning. Penelope feels lost without David until she begins to explore her family history and gets to know her estranged grandmother. Her self-fulfillment and ability to move on with her personal life while maintaining her relationship with David make Penelope a strong character. While there is no definitive ending to the novel, there is a sense of hope for the future.

## Short Story Collection

**Author:** Fallon, Siobhan

**Title:** *You Know When the Men Are Gone*

**Subjects:** Deployment, Military family, Long-distance relationships, Reunion, Loss

**Publication:** Putnam, 2011

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** the explosive sort of literary triumph that appears only every few years—*New York Journal of Books*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** Best Book of 2011 by The San Francisco Chronicle, Self Magazine, Los Angeles Public Library, Janet Maslin of The New York Times

**Summary:** Centered on a community living at Fort Hood in the present day, each chapter captures the story of different families in varying stages of the deployment cycle. Meg waits for her husband Jeremy to return, seeing the differences in her and her neighbor's marriages. Ellen struggles with her cancer, kids and fear for her husband far away. Kailani feels insecure about her marriage – does he still love her? Whether embarking on a deployment, six months in or beginning to reconnect as a family unit, O'Fallon's novel captures the doubt, fear and frustration of separation and war.

## Memoir

**Author:** Castner, Brian

**Title:** *The Long Walk*

**Subjects:** War, Reunion

**Publication:** Doubleday, 2012

**Format:** Hardcover, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** Scarifying stuff, without any mawkishness or dumb machismo--not quite on the level of *Jarhead*, but absolutely worth reading.—*Kirkus Reviews*

**Summary:** Brian Castner's memoir captures the toll of war on the human mind.

Deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as the leader of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, Castner finds himself feeling crazy upon return to civilian life. He struggles to feel well-adjusted in his family life, with his wife and children, as well as in his work life.

Overwhelmed by his emotions and experiences, he eventually seeks professional help.

Castner's story is one of a man trying to reconcile his past with his present.

**Author:** Anonymous

**Title:** *A Woman in Berlin*

**Subjects:** Empowerment, War, Loss

**Publication:** Picador, 2006

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback

**Review:** intimate account of that catastrophe. . . . Scribbled in a notebook and on odd pieces of paper, it seems not to have been written with readers in mind but as a kind of therapy—Joseph Kanon, *New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** A diary kept by a young German woman living in Berlin during the Russian occupation of the city in World War II, this work chronicles her experiences of starvation, rape and violence. However, it is ultimately a story of resilience. She begins to regain her dignity by demonstrating her ability to speak Russian, using her skills to help keep she and her neighbors safe and fed and finally looking to the future with plans for a women's magazine. Although it is a tale of great loss, it exudes a sense of hope and an unflinching courage in the face of harsh reality. Truly inspirational.

**Author:** Maitland, Leslie

**Title:** *Crossing the Borders of Time*

**Subjects:** Separation, Longing, Reunion

**Publication:** Other Press, 2013

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** A poignantly rendered, impeccably researched tale of a rupture healed by time—*Kirkus Reviews*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Booklist, Library Journal*

**Summary:** Janine, an eighteen-year-old Jewish girl fleeing Germany with her family, met Roland, a twenty-one year-old Catholic living in Lyons while her family waited to sail to America in 1942. Though he tried to find her and she never forgot him, it was not until fifty years later that they were reunited in New Jersey. Janine and Roland's story is one of enduring love and hope.

**Author:** McHardy, Aimee

**Title:** *An Airman's Wife*

**Subjects:** War, Separation, Longing

**Publication:** Grub Street Publishing, 2007

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback

**Summary:** In 1917, young Aimee McHardy and her new husband, Bill, said goodbye. While Bill was fighting World War I in France, the couple exchanged loving letters. At the end of the War, Aimee pieced together the letters sent by her husband to create a narrative of their experiences as a couple. Bill's tenderly composed notes to Aimee are a testament to enduring love and hope. The narration of her emotional experiences surrounding these letters indicate the loneliness and fear she felt for her husband, but through their good communication and mutual love and respect Aimee is able to maintain hope and find peace.

**Author:** Satrapi, Marjane

**Title:** *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*

**Subjects:** Loneliness, Self-fulfillment, Reunion

**Publication:** Pantheon, 2005

**Format:** Hardcover, Paperback

**Review:** The black-and-white illustrations are simple, yet capable of portraying great emotion. This title will likely be asked for by name.—Bonnie Brzozowski, *Library Journal*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *New York Times Book Review*

**Summary:** In the second volume of this autobiographical graphic novel, Marjane flees her home, Iran, to school in Vienna. She struggles for a sense of belonging and eventually gains a group of close friends. However, missing her home, she returns to Iran after graduation. At home, she struggles again to find her place as she adjusts to the changes in herself as well as her country. This poignant story brings to light the hardship of adjustment when one feels alone as well as when reunited.

**Author:** Scottoline, Lisa and Francesa Serritella

**Title:** *Meet Me At Emotional Baggage Claim*

**Subjects:** Long-distance relationship, Communication, Reunion

**Publication:** St. Martin's Press, 2012

**Format:** Hardcover, eBook, Audio CD, Downloadable Audiobook

**Review:** A warm, lively collection of narrative vignettes chronicling the day-to-day relationship of two women who also happen to be part of a successful mother-daughter writing team—*Kirkus Reviews*

**Other Reviews/Awards:** *Booklist*, *Publisher's Weekly*

**Summary:** The hilarious adventures and misadventures of a mother and her grown-up daughter living away from home, this collection is lighthearted and heartwarming. Lisa misses her daughter at home. Francesca is annoyed that her mother does not seem to change even though she is an adult now. Two people, in a long-distance relationship, this is a story of the ways things must change and how difficult that can be. Told in short vignettes from the perspectives of Lisa and Francesca, this is a great book to pick up and come back to at any time for a laugh.

## Poetry

**Author:** Dubrow, Jehanne

**Title:** *Stateside: Poems*

**Subjects:** Deployment, Military family, Separation, Reunion, War

**Publication:** Triquarterly, 2010

**Format:** Paperback

**Review:** Hers is a fully experiences suite, fully composed in every sense of that word, both intimate and public ... She is a contemporary Penelope whose tale is epic—Sam Hamill

**Summary:** A collection of poetry about the range of emotions experienced by one military wife. She brings herself to life as Penelope reincarnated through her poetry. A brief collection, this volume is highly readable.

**Author:** Schultz, Philip

**Title:** *The God of Loneliness*

**Subjects:** Loneliness

**Publication:** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010

**Format:** Hardcover, eBook

**Review:** A volume from “one of the least affected of American poets, and one of the fiercest”—Tony Hoagland

**Other Reviews/Awards:** 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

**Summary:** A collection of poems, both new and old, from Schultz evoking a deep sense of loneliness. He portrays a deep appreciation for family and his heritage through his haunting verse.

## Discussion

Over half of the considered books for the annotated bibliography were eliminated for various reasons in the composition of this resource. In total, the resulting annotated bibliography included forty-three of the one hundred books consulted. The reasons sources were or were not selected varied widely.

Justifications for not selecting sources included some format, publication or recognition issues – specifically including:

- No positive or no reviews at all from selection aids typically utilized by public libraries
- Publication by self-publication
- Only eBook format
- Difficult-to-obtain foreign or independent publishing

On the basis of these criteria, twelve books were eliminated from consideration without further consultation. There are inherent issues with selecting resources with any of the above-listed problems. For example, one review from a *Goodreads* user, “Tina,” stated, “I had a tough time enjoying the story due to all of the typos ... throughout the entire book” (“*Memoirs of a Soldier’s Wife* Book Review,” 2011). Quality can neither be assured nor confirmed if no book reviews exist and the book is a self-published title. Thus, public libraries cannot easily justify acquiring such resources.

Once titles successfully made it through the first set of eliminations, the characters and plot of the novels were examined to determine their appropriateness for



inclusion. If inclusion was based solely on plot summaries available through reviewing resources and selection aids, the end product would be deeply flawed. For example, *Love Virtually* by Daniel Glauert (2011) was classified in the UNC-Chapel Hill Library online catalog with the subject heading “Long-distance relationships -- Fiction.”

However, in reading Glauert’s work, it becomes apparent that the only aspect of the characters’ relationship that is long distance is that they communicate via email. They do so because they are having an affair, and Emmi (the female character) is cheating on her husband. Since the focus of the book is on an affair, an unhealthy and negative way of dealing with a difficult, failing marriage, it could not be included. Other exclusion decisions were more difficult, particularly in cases where the ending of the novel provided the sole justification. For instance, *Collateral* by Ellen Hopkins was unique. The sentiments expressed through the poetry in which Hopkins relates the story bring to light difficulties with living apart, reservations about military life and anxieties surrounding deployment. Unfortunately, the end of the novel does not embody positive emotions or a healthy way of dealing with difficulty as the young Marine becomes violent with his fiancée, dealing with his anger in a deeply negative manner. Although some of the stories reflected accurately the pain of separation, the struggle of war and the heartache of long-distance relationships, at least twenty of the novels embodied negative response to these hardships.

Novels included in the bibliography embodied positive responses to difficult situations, but the situations in which characters manifested varied widely in order to provide variety in terms of genre reading interests, character traits and reading level. For example, one included novel was *My Name is Memory* by Ann Brashares which includes

themes of reincarnation and timeless love; it is science fiction epic romance with settings ranging from ransacking in ancient Asia Minor to British hospitals in World War I. By contrast, Lisa Scottoline and Francesca Serritella's memoir *Meet Me at Emotional Baggage Claim* is full of short, humorous vignettes about which there is nothing epic. By including such a wide range of topics and genres, the variety of kinds of books can be as wide as the variety of people who find themselves as military spouses.

## Summary

The aim of this research was to create an annotated bibliography of fiction and narrative non-fiction paralleling the emotional journey and situations faced by U.S. military spouses. The bibliography could be a tool for military-community-centered public libraries to identify titles for acquisition to improve collection development for this target audience. Further, it offers a potential reading list for personal recommendation or use in a book club setting in order to improve overall readers' advisory services in libraries.

A content analysis of military spouse blogs revealed underlying emotional stresses for this specific audience. Then, the principles and goals of bibliotherapy were employed to identify critical themes for this discrete population on which to base a working book list of one hundred titles. This list of sources embodied a variety of reading levels, formats, genres and central characters, seeking appeal to a breadth of potential readers and reflecting the diversity of military spouses themselves. This working list was evaluated in terms of theme and potential therapeutic benefit, as well as taking into consideration recommendations, awards, availability and uniqueness of the source. The final bibliography includes forty-three books, categorized by genre.

This source does not meet the needs of all military family members, and it excludes any practical guides or self-help books used in more traditional, formal bibliotherapy. However, the final bibliography may be of use to military spouses seeking

personal catharsis in the face of military stressors such as deployments. It also has potential benefit for public libraries in military-centric communities who are looking to meet the readers' advisory needs of their patrons.

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## Appendix I Content Analysis Chart

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Salient Point</u>	<u>Condensed Points</u>	<u>Subjects/Themes</u>
<i>What war has taken from these families</i>	War effect on family	War is hard on relationships	War
<i>Combat can hurt your marriage in a way deployment never will</i>	Combat effects	Military families are uniquely challenged	Military family/spouse
<i>So many others are married to people who will never face danger</i>	Military family challenges	Deployments/goodbyes are hard	Deployment
<i>It isn't easy to pick up and leave their lives for months at a time</i>	Deployments difficult		
<i>Goodbyes are extremely hard</i>	Preparing to leave is hard		
<i>I don't even want to think about the goodbye that is coming</i>	Denial and deployment	Denial is a common coping mechanism	
<i>I wish deployment was no more significant than a trip around the block</i>	Length and distance make deployment harder		
<i>I tricked myself into believing that he wasn't coming home.</i>	Fear for safety		Separation
<i>Will they still want me if I am ... sad/worried/panicked?</i>	Fear and anxiety		
<i>I said goodbye as if it was the last time I'd ever speak to him.</i>	Fear for safety	Fear and anxiety for loss, safety of deployed spouse	



<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Salient Point</u>	<u>Condensed Points</u>	<u>Subjects/Themes</u>
<i>And then this stupid thought comes into my mind... "But what if?"</i>	Sadness and fear	Sadness at being alone	Isolation
<i>Who watches for signs that we are in trouble?</i>	Loneliness, isolation		
<i>The sadness of missing him, the daily fear for his safety and the loneliness I felt ...</i>	Sadness, fear, loneliness	Loneliness	Loneliness
<i>Sifting through the feelings of loss, grief and loneliness that come with deployment</i>	Loss, fear, grief, loneliness		
<i>This creeping red fear can happen to anyone who loves someone in uniform</i>	Fear, anxiety, grief		
<i>I was invisible to the people right in front of me</i>			Isolation
<i>I think the Mean Reds are just a feeling that comes with military life</i>	Isolation	Feeling isolated even when others are around	
<i>Feelings of isolation</i>	Isolation, loneliness		
<i>Home is not you curled up in a ball hating life</i>	Isolation		
<i>I go off by unleashing a torrent of anxiety few have ever seen</i>	Sadness, loneliness, isolation		Separation
<i>I busy myself with volunteer work and plan activities ... I try to ignore it</i>	Anxiety, isolation		
	Sense of anxiety, isolation	Separation gives way to feelings of grief and anxiety	
	Separation		

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Salient Point</u>	<u>Condensed Points</u>	<u>Subjects/Themes</u>
<i>Never assume a three-week separation is a piece of cake</i>	Loneliness, separation		
<i>Why didn't you tell me I would start taking my phone to the bathroom with me?</i>	Separation, loneliness, distance	Long distance makes people lonely	Separation
<i>Letters are written during ... long separation and wartime</i>	Strength in hard times	Strength in difficult situations	
<i>Share ... strength, independence and resilience we have gained</i>	Accepting difficult situation		Long distance relationships
<i>We all have seasons in our lives; accept the phase you are currently in</i>	Accepting long-distance challenges	Relationship/love overcoming odds	
<i>I keep finding ways around those obstacles</i>			Epic Love
<i>How you choose to proceed in between will define who you are</i>	Resilience	Resilience	
<i>Focus on qualities that make a person resilient</i>			
<i>Problem solving [involving] things we have control over ... and things we can't change</i>	Coping		
<i>Set goals and make yourself stronger, wiser, or busier</i>	Overcoming loneliness through self-fulfillment	Coping	
<i>Go see everything where you live</i>	See and do things, self-fulfillment	Self-fulfillment	Self-fulfillment

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Salient Point</u>	<u>Condensed Points</u>	<u>Subjects/Themes</u>
<i>Get involved in a worthy project</i>	Self-fulfilling activities	Self-fulfillment	Self-fulfillment
<i>Near the end of ... deployment ... I was tired</i>	Tired of doing it alone	Resentment	
<i>Blame is the one thing a marriage cannot withstand</i>	Resentment		Resentment
<i>Pity ... undermininig your confidence in you and your spouse's life choices</i>	Resentment undermines	Reestablishing relationships	
<i>Make you think he's responsible for your misery</i>	Resentment, unhappy from loneliness		
<i>Deciding every day is going to be miserable will probably make you crazy</i>	Loneliness		
<i>Communicate even when things are hard to hear.</i>	Communication is necessary	Communication	Communication
<i>I tell my soldier what is on my heart</i>	Communicating important		
<i>Difficult for them to reunite</i>	Communicate for relationship	Reunion	Reunion
<i>Returning from deployment can be a confusing time</i>	Reunion is hard		
	Reunion is confusing		

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Salient Point</u>	<u>Condensed Points</u>	<u>Subjects/Themes</u>
<i>Life makes it harder to appreciate how truly wonderful it is to have him home</i>	Life goes on after reunion		
<i>We have to recate an entirely new relationship based on changes and mourn the loss of the old one</i>	Reunion is like a new relationship, needs reconciliation	Reunion  Reconciliation	Reunion  Reconciliation
<i>How did I have more to do now that he was home?</i>			
<i>Life doesn't go completely back to normal when he returns</i>	Reconciliation/Reunion		

## **Appendix II** *Works Not Included in Bibliography*

### **The Sweet Gum Tree by Katherine Allred**

The characters in this novel are torn apart when Nick leaves Alix alone and pregnant. He finds her fifteen years later, but the reconciliation is more about understanding their mutually difficult past and coming to terms with it.

### **The Future of Our Past by Kathleen Aymes**

This novel is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is self-published, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

### **A Long Long Way by Sebastian Barry**

Although there is a long distance love story during World War I, this is a minor part of the story. Instead, it is the story of a man torn between loyalties. He is seen as a traitor by his Irish countrymen for serving with the British in the war in Europe as his family and eventually he become involved with Irish rebellion against British home rule.

### **Empty Complex by Sherrie Ballou**

This novel has not been reviewed by any known sources. It would be difficult to justify in acquisition as it is a self-published title.

### **Rosie and Skate by Beth Ann Baumann**

The character, Skate, maintains a long distance relationship with her boyfriend at college. However, he cheats on her and eventually dumps her, and she deals poorly with their breakup by running away from home, drinking and having sex with virtual strangers.

### **Long Division by Jane Berentson**

Originally self published, this novel has no reviews and is not readily available. The author's second book was investigated for possible inclusion due to its similar content and publication under Penguin Books.

### **Miss Harper Can Do It by Jane Berentson**

Essentially a fleshed-out version of the original publication, this book has an identifiable character. However, her personal struggles leave her deeply in doubt of her relationship with a deployed soldier without positivity, thus it is not included.

### **Wifey by Judy Blume**

The main character has feelings of loneliness and desires self-fulfillment, but she deals with these in unhealthy ways by having an affair. She and her husband do reconcile, and she is able to tell him what she wants and needs to be happy, but he does not respond well, mostly ignoring her.

### **The Absolutist by John Boyne**

This story is one of self-forgiveness. Will, a soldier returned from World War I contacts the sister of a friend (Tristan) shot after court martial. Will wants to unburden himself of

guilt regarding Tristan's death. However, he reminisces with her about Tristan and becomes friends with her. Will eventually reveals to her the truth, coming to grips with his own actions. This story is about the horrors and inhumanity of war rather than reconciliation.

**The Correspondence Artist by Barbara Browning**

While this novel deals with a long-distance relationship, it is mired in confusion and ruses. The main character's new love interest cannot be revealed by name or description. Thus, the tale of their romance is related using a variety of fake names and identities including an older woman, a younger man, and several others. It is highly focused on the trials faced by dating while being a single mother. In essence, the romantic relationship takes a backseat to the mother-son relationship and is confusing to read. The novel is published by an independent bookseller, and might therefore be more difficult to obtain.

**Return to Me by Justina Chen**

Focused better for a younger audience, this could be a good book for children of deployed soldiers, but is outside the scope of this paper.

**Exley by Brock Clarke**

A young man comes to grips with his father's return from Iraq. However, the focus of the story is more on his inability to accept the failure of his parents' marriage and the imminent death of his father rather than reconciliation or separation.

**The Persimmon Tree by Bryce Courtenay**

This novel is an epic love story where the male main character is faithful but tempted at every turn as every young lady he meets falls in love with him. The young woman runs a brothel while he is away. Their initial romance is brief. Essentially, the love story is implausible as reported by many readers. However, it is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is published in book format only in Australia, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

**War Written Words by K.G. Cummings**

This is the second novel in a series, but the only one within the scope of this bibliography. Further, this novel is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is self-published, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

**How to be an American Housewife by Margaret Dilloway**

This story of a Japanese family in America is more of a long-distance relationship with their culture and homesickness rather than interpersonal struggles.

**Tender is the Night by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The love story distance in this novel is due to an affair that is interrupted. The reconciliation is between the wife and husband having marital difficulties. However, their marriage falls apart again before the end of the novel. In brief, this novel is one of wanting things that one cannot have and disillusionment rather than love separated or reconciliation.

**Goodbye for Now by Laurie Frankel**

In a somewhat futuristic, science fiction tone, Frankel introduces a business where digital memories of a dead person's life can be integrated to simulate the person so that those left behind can have a final conversation and gain closure. While this story is one of reconciliation and coming to terms with separation, many characters do not deal with their feelings in a positive way, choosing instead to abuse the service for anger or revenge.

**Lipstick in Afghanistan by Roberta Gately**

Focusing on a friendship between a US Aid worker in Afghanistan and an Afghan woman, this novel is more about a meeting of cultures than about a separation or long-distance relationship.

**Love Virtually by Daniel Glattauer**

Although this novel is focused on a long distance relationship, the distance is a product of their relationship being an illicit affair as the female character is married, not due to outside circumstances.

**Sushi in Liberia by Maria Olson Goins**

This novel is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is self-published, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

**Nobody's Perfect by Dana Hayes**

This book has not been reviewed by any known sources. It is only available in eBook format, and is a self-published title.

**A Long Way from You by Gwendolyn Heasley**

This story is more one of a young girl finding out about herself in a new environment than her long-distance relationship with her family. Further, this book has not been reviewed by any known source.

**Long Distance Lover by Donna Hill**

This novel has not been reviewed by any notable sources. Further, the focus of the novel seems to be on the main character's crumbling sports career and secret past rather than the relationship that develops.

**Collateral by Ellen Hopkins**

A contemporary couple, Cole is a US Marine and Ashley is a doctoral student in California. Ashley is strongly anti-war, but accepts and respects Cole's commitment. They deal with multiple deployments and living apart. The sentiments expressed through the poetry in which Hopkins relates the story bring to light difficulties with living apart, reservations about military life and anxieties surrounding deployment. Unfortunately, the end of the novel does not embody positive emotions or a healthy way of dealing with difficulty.

**Learning by Karen Kingsbury**

This novel is a sequel in a series. It is the one dealing with the applicable emotions, but is part of a larger family saga that is not appropriate to the bibliography, thus it is not included.

**Longing by Karen Kingsbury**

This book did not receive positive reviews. The main character is denounced as childish and her relationship difficulties are attributed to her inability to cope in an adult manner.

**Play Out the Match by Michael Knox**

This poem collection purportedly focuses on the emotion of reconciliation, but this emotion does not spring forth in reading. The poems are more about anger and sadness more than reconciliation.

**The Last Day by James Landis**

Warren meets Jesus on the last day of his life. He is able to revisit his past. This story is one of self acceptance and self reconciliation. While inspiring, this story is not focused on interpersonal relationships.

**Love Me When I'm Gone by Robert Patrick Lewis**

This novel is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is self-published, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

**The Flight of Gemma Hardy by Margot Livesey**

In this retelling of the classic Jane Eyre, the main character is separated from the man she loves. However, she leaves him by choice because he lied to her. She returns to him eventually in the spirit of true love, but the separation was not circumstantial and his betrayal plays a key part.

**The Way the Crow Flies by Ann-Marie MacDonald**

A girl slowly unravels her father's past and must come to grips with his actions. Her father is modeled on Joseph McCarthy. Thus, the focus is more on disillusionment and family lies and betrayals rather than reconciliation or reunion.

**The Graveminder by Melissa Marr**

While this is a novel introducing a longtime separation and reunion, it is based on a childhood romance. Further, the focus is on the return of the character to her hometown and a realization of the troubles and mysteries of her childhood and her grandmother. The interpersonal relationship is not so much about reconciliation as about adulthood, and the main plot is mostly about the protagonist coming to terms with her past.

**The Lost Books of the Odyssey by Zachary Mason**

Another retelling of the Odyssey, the focus of this one is on Odysseus. It emphasizes Odysseus's desire to leave Ithaca once he returns, and Penelope is dead by the time he makes his way back home in this tale. Thus, although separated, it is no hardship for the character.



**Atonement by Ian McEwan**

Although the young couple in this story is separated by war, the story is fictionalized by the sister. Thus, the story has a tone of regret and leaves the reader with a sense of disillusionment rather than positivity.

**Love at the Speed of Email by Lisa McKay**

This memoir is one of a lifelong wanderer finally meeting someone worth settling down for. For the purposes of this research the ending would be the beginning. Further, this book is self-published and has not been reviewed by any sources of note.

**Paradise by Judith McNaught**

This romance focuses on a relationship reunited after many years. However, their initial romance was one of childhood and was one of passion, not substance. Thus, the romance of the book is not focused on reunion so much as finding feelings that are deeper and more substantial and two people getting over failed marriages together.

**Long Distance Romance by K'Anne Meinel**

This novel is not reviewed by any noteworthy source. It is self-published, and it would therefore be difficult to justify collecting.

**Margaret from Maine by Joseph Monninger**

Margaret's husband returns from war injured for life, and he will never be the same man again. When Margaret travels to Washington DC, she meets a Foreign Service officer and the two fall in love. This is a story of forbidden love and temptation rather than focusing on the healing of a difficult and wounded marriage. Its emotional focus does not fall within the scope of this paper.

**Home by Toni Morrison**

The main character of the story's return from war in Vietnam is more focused on the emotional journey of coming to terms with family problems and the reasons why he joined the Army rather than dealing with emotional issues surrounding his deployment.

**The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien**

A collection of stories about war, this is an emotionally wrought work. However, most of the stories have dour endings, thus no catharsis could come from its reading.

**In the Name of Honor by Richard North Patterson**

I considered this one as it was of a different genre – a courtroom thriller. However, the focus is on a murder trial and a love affair between a junior officer and the wife of his commanding officer. Scandal rather than emotion and reconciliation reign.

**Memoirs of a Soldier's Wife by Wendy Peterson**

While this book's subject matter is appropriate, it has not been reviewed by any sources of note, and would be difficult to obtain due to self-publication.

**The Leftovers by Tom Perrotta**

This novel is not included in the bibliography because although the characters experience a sense of separation, none of them deal with this crisis in an emotionally positive way, instead joining cults where they kill each other or act out with sexual promiscuity.

**The Shell Seekers by Rosamunde Pilcher**

While the main character's husband is in the Navy, that is a relatively small aspect of a much larger family saga. Thus, the main focus of the story is not the character's marriage.

**The People's War by Noel Rae**

Strictly a non-fiction work, this work relates the American Revolution from a social standpoint. It is not a narrative work nor does it relate primarily to emotions and/or relationships.

**Time Enough for Drums by Ann Rinaldi**

While this is a story of a young couple separated by war, its audience is meant to be juvenile, thus the emotions expressed are simplistic and not appropriate for the intended audience.

**That Old Cape Magic by Richard Russo**

The relationships discussed in this novel are mostly dysfunctional. The husband and wife have affairs. The main character attempts to come to grips with the death of his parents and his feelings of resentful love. There is no true reconciliation.

**General Winston's Daughter by Sharon Shinn**

The girl in this novel is very young. She is engaged to be married to a man she does not love. Throughout the book, she falls in love with another young man, and torn between the two, her struggle is the focus of the novel instead of one relationship.

**Dear John by Nicholas Sparks**

While this novel was popular in its own right and as a movie about a contemporary American soldier, the story's theme is more one of forgiveness for inconstancy than a struggle through hardship.

**The Light between Oceans by M.L. Stedman**

Tom, the main character, served in World War I and was deeply affected by his experiences. He takes his young wife to live in a lighthouse and start a family. The majority of the story is focused on this couple after many years when they come upon a baby that Tom's wife wants to adopt as her own. While emotionally-wrought, this work's focus is on a family seeking happiness through a child rather than a reconciliation, better communication, or realization of self-fulfillment.

**Wish You Were Here by Graham Swift**

Jack's, the protagonist, brother dies in Iraq. Through receipt of his brother's remains, Jack must come to terms with his painful childhood. A story of self-discovery, this story is not applicable to the current interpersonal relationships of the character.

**Don't Let Me Go by J.H. Trumble**

Nate's boyfriend moves to New York. He reacts in hurtful and self-destructive ways. His responses to their separation are not healthy and therefore cannot be included in this bibliography.

**Island of the Swans by Ciji Ware**

The Duchess of Gorden fell deeply in love with her childhood friend, Thomas Fraser. When she heard of his death in America, she married the Duke. When Thomas returns to claim her love he will stop at nothing to win her. Thus, this story is not so much about a healing or maintenance of personal relationships, but one of intrigue, passion and an unfaithful marriage much in line with *Wuthering Heights*.

**So Far From the Bamboo Grove by Yoko Kawashima Watkins**

A Japanese family must flee their home in Korea when the Koreans seek reoccupation of their territory. While an interesting journey, this separation is not of an interpersonal nature. Further, this novel is juvenile fiction, and therefore not quite at a reading level appropriate to the target audience.

**The Loneliness of Stars by Z.M. Wilmot**

This story embodies more of a general loneliness rather than any emotional journey of a character. Further, it is a self-published title and not reviewed by any known sources.

**The Passion by Jeanette Winterson**

This story is about passion surrounding war. It deals more with the intensifying of emotions due to extreme circumstances rather than a love story of loyalty or mutual respect.

**Sweethearts by Sarah Zarr**

A story of longtime separation and reuniting, but the purpose of reuniting is to come to terms with a traumatic childhood event, resolving the main character's younger self with the older.

## **Index I** *Index By Author*

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Atwood, Margaret ... 34   | Japrisot, Sebastien ... 43       |
| Anonymous ... 45          | Jones, Sadie ... 38              |
| Austen, Jane ... 39       | Kingsbury, Karen ... 42          |
| Bird, Sarah ... 44        | LeGuin, Ursula K ... 35          |
| Bohjalian, Chris ... 32   | Maitland, Leslie ... 46          |
| Brashares, Ann ... 41     | Maugham, W. Somerset ... 39      |
| Brooks, Geraldine ... 35  | McHardy, Aimee ... 46            |
| Castner, Brian ... 45     | Murakami, Haruki ... 36          |
| Corona, Laura ... 35      | Niffenegger, Audrey ... 42       |
| Donoghue, Emma ... 32     | Pfarrer, Donald ... 38           |
| Dubrow, Jehanne ... 47    | Powning, Beth ... 33             |
| Fallon, Siobhan ... 44    | Richman, Alyson ... 39           |
| Farrington, Tim ... 36    | Satrapi, Marjane ... 46          |
| Faulks, Sebastian ... 37  | Schoenecker, Mary Fremont ... 42 |
| Ford, Jamie ... 37        | Schreck, Karen ... 44            |
| Fowler, Connie May ... 40 | Schultz, Philip ... 47           |
| Frazier, Charles ... 37   | Scottoline, Lisa ... 47          |
| Goldman, William ... 40   | Serritella, Francesca ... 47     |
| Haldeman, Joe ... 41      | Spencer-Fleming, Julia ... 43    |
| Hannah, Kristin ... 33    | Trollope, Joanna ... 34          |
| Harrington, Laura ... 33  | Vinge, Joan D ... 41             |
| Hodgkinson, Amanda ... 38 | Wilde, Oscar ... 40              |

## Index II    *Index By Title*

- 22 Britannia Road ... 38*  
*Airman's Wife, An ... 46*  
*Alice Bliss ... 33*  
*Charlotte Gray ... 37*  
*Cold Mountain ... 37*  
*Crossing the Borders of Time ... 46*  
*Ever After ... 42*  
*Fearless Man, The ... 38*  
*Forever War, The ... 41*  
*Four Summers Waiting ... 69*  
*God of Loneliness, The ... 47*  
*Good Woman, A ... 40*  
*Home Front ... 33*  
*Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet ... 37*  
*Lady Windermere's Fan ... 40*  
*Ladyhawke ... 41*  
*Landing ... 32*  
*Lavinia ... 35*  
*Lizzie's War ... 36*  
*Long Walk, The ... 45*  
*Lost Wife, The ... 39*  
*March ... 35*  
*Meet Me at Emotional Baggage Claim ... 47*  
*My Name is Memory ... 41*  
*One Was a Soldier ... 43*  
*Painted Veil, The ... 39*  
*Penelope's Daughter ... 35*  
*Penelopiad, The ... 34*  
*Persepolis 2 ... 46*  
*Persuasion ... 39*  
*Princess Bride, The ... 40*  
*Remembering Blue ... 40*  
*Sandcastle Girls, The ... 32*  
*Sea Captain's Wife, The ... 33*  
*Small Wars ... 38*  
*Soldier's Wife, The ... 34*  
*Stateside ... 47*  
*Time Traveler's Wife, The ... 42*  
*Very Long Engagement, A ... 43*  
*While He Was Away ... 44*  
*Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, The ... 36*  
*Woman in Berlin, A ... 45*  
*Yokota Officer's Club, The ... 44*  
*You Know When the Men Are Gone ... 44*

### **Index III** *Index by Subject*

Communication ... 34, 36, 38, 39, 40,  
42, 47

Deployment ... 34, 38, 42, 43, 44, 47

Empowerment ... 45

Fear for safety ... 38

Isolation ... 33, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42

Loneliness ... 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 46

Long-distance relationship ... 32, 42,  
44, 47

Longing ... 35, 37, 39, 40, 46

Loss ... 33, 42, 44, 45

Military family ... 33, 34, 36, 38, 42,  
44, 47

Reconciliation ... 33, 39

Resentment ... 33, 34, 36, 38

Reunion ... 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41,  
42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47

Self-fulfillment ... 33, 34, 35, 36, 39,  
40, 44, 46

Separation ... 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37,  
39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47

War ... 35, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45,  
46, 47