

# Real Good Books

July 4, 2007

[Original link](#)

---

So I was sitting there, reading Natalie Angier's *The Canon* and complaining to my roommate. "God, this book is so overwritten," I whined. "This is the worst science book since Lauren Slater published *Opening Skinner's Box*." I read her a random sentence: "Am I sounding a self-pitying, sour-grapes-turned-defensive whine? Of course: a good offense begins with a nasal defensiveness." I was about to read more when she stopped me. "If that book is so bad," she asked, "why do you keep reading it?"

And so, we decided on a plan: for the month of June, I would only read good books. Unfortunately, this plan didn't go as well as I had hoped — good books are harder to find than it might seem at first. I realized what I really wanted was books that were compulsively readable, the kind that once you slurped down like wet noodles, where once you started in on them you just couldn't stop.

I've read a couple books like that, but not many. For example, [David Boies' autobiography](#) isn't the kind of thing I would normally pick up. Self-aggrandizing autobiographies aren't exactly my thing and Boies, while interesting, isn't exactly a topic of fascination for me. But when I found myself holding it with a couple minutes to kill, I started reading it and before I noticed it I was most of the way through the 500 page book.

Or take James Wolcott's *Attack Poodles*. Now I love a good media-bashing as much as the next guy, but this one I just couldn't put down. I had to sneak away from dinner to finish reading it. And when it was done, I found myself wanting more.

What both books have in common, aside from being fun reads, is a small red rectangle on in the upper left of their covers. The rectangle is part of the "Miramax Books" logo which stretches from the back cover around the spine to the front of every book they publish. As far as I know, Miramax is the only publisher audacious enough to put their logo on the cover of their books, and while I initially took it as a sign of Hollywood arrogance, I now see it as something else: a mark of quality. Perhaps, I figured, Miramax works so hard to make their books readable that they want to capitalize on that brand by making it really clear which ones were theirs. I even dreamed of having my books published by Miramax.

So when my plan for June fizzled out, I tried to think of how I could fix things for July. And I hit upon the idea of spending it only reading Miramax books. Unfortunately for me, when the Weinstein Brothers (who ran Miramax) left Disney, Miramax Books got the axe. The Weinstein Brothers have restarted

their book division at their new company (cleverly named The Weinstein Company, apparently because Fellowship Adventure Group was “too gay”) but their first real book doesn’t come out until September.

So here’s a plea to you readers: where does one find compulsively readable books? Who do *you* trust?