

S A N T A M O N I C A

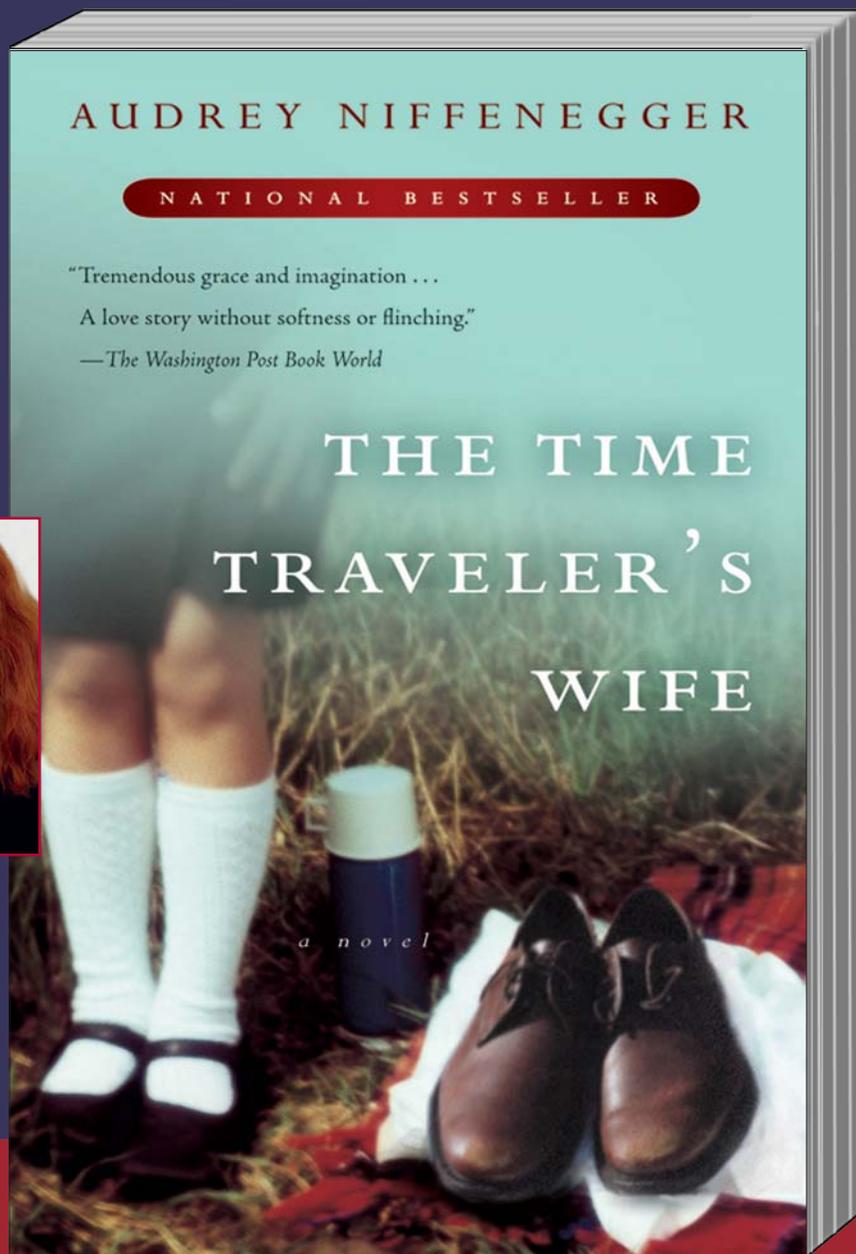
# READS CITYWIDE

JOIN A  
**CITYWIDE  
BOOK CLUB**

**APRIL 18  
THROUGH  
MAY 19  
2007**

For free public  
book discussion  
groups and  
other events,  
check the Santa  
Monica Citywide  
Reads Web site

[www.smpl.org/cwr](http://www.smpl.org/cwr)  
or call 310.458.8600



## CITYWIDE READS

## MAYORAL WELCOME

Welcome to the fifth annual Santa Monica CITYWIDE READS program. This community reading program encourages people who live, work in, or visit Santa Monica to read and discuss the same book at the same time in discussion groups and other events held around the city.

This year's book, *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger, offers an interesting thematic change from the books featured thus far. *The Time Traveler's Wife* is the fantastic, romantic adventure story of beautiful artist Clare Abshire and dashing librarian Henry DeTamble, who suffers from chrono-displacement disorder, a condition that causes him to unexpectedly jump backwards and forwards in time.

This innovative book has a richly drawn cast of characters and universal themes of identity, love, and loss. Whatever experiences you bring as a reader, this novel is certain to provide a framework for dialogue in our community.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* is available from the Santa Monica Public Library or your local bookstore. Please plan on attending one of the many free, public events being held around the city from April 18 to May 19.

I hope that your participation in CITYWIDE READS is a rewarding experience that brings us together as a community through literature.



Richard Bloom, Mayor  
City of Santa Monica

## AUDREY NIFFENEGGER

*"First novels are often said to be thinly disguised autobiography. This one uses my places and things I know something about (libraries, paper making) but, alas, this is not my life, and these characters are not me."*

Mark Flanagan interview for About.com Contemporary Literature, December 7, 2003

Born in 1963 in South Haven, Michigan, Audrey Niffenegger grew up in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, and developed a love of writing and art at a young age. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1985 and her MFA from Northwestern University in 1991. She has been awarded numerous artistic grants and fellowships, including the Illinois Arts Council Fellowship in Prose and nine Ragdale Fellowships.

In addition to her own literary and artistic work, Niffenegger is a full-time professor in the Interdisciplinary Book Arts MFA Program at the Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts, where she teaches writing, letterpress printing, and fine edition book production. Represented by the Printworks Gallery in Chicago, she is also a visual artist whose prints, artists' books, paintings, and photographs have been exhibited nationally and internationally. Her work appears in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, The Newberry Library, Harvard University's Houghton Library, the Rijksmuseum Merrmano in the Hague, Northwestern University, and Temple University.

Audrey Niffenegger considers herself both a visual artist and a writer. *The Time Traveler's Wife* is her first novel. Her other published works include two artists' books, *The Three Incestuous Sisters* and *The Adventuress*, which she calls "novels in pictures." She is currently working on another novel in pictures called *Her Fearful Symmetry* and a gallery showing of her artwork in late 2007.

Ms. Niffenegger lives in Chicago with her cats, Muybridge and Claudine. Among many other things, she collects books about the English illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, who she cites as one of her strongest influences.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the author title the book *The Time Traveler's Wife* and not the *The Time Traveler*? Whose story is it?
2. On the novel's first page, Clare declares, "I wait for Henry." In what way does this define her character?
3. What is the importance of Clare's job as an artist and Henry's job as a librarian?
4. How do the supporting characters (Henry's mother and father, Clare's family, Gomez, and Charisse) and their relationships with the main characters add to the story?
5. What is stronger in the novel – plot or characters?
6. What are the book's implications about the relationship between time and identity?
7. How does the author create a sense of place and a sense of time for the 40 years it covers?
8. How does the author use time travel as a metaphor for love, loss, absence, fate, aging, and death?
9. How would you characterize the ending of the novel?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the book?
11. This novel has been optioned for a film. What aspects of the book lend themselves to cinematic treatment?

*"Reading is where all the action is. You are moving your mind across someone else's, like a snail, like a long kiss."*

Audrey Niffenegger ["Original Essays" at [www.Powells.com](http://www.Powells.com)]

## THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE

*"The delightful part about making anything is that no story or picture is ever complete."*

Audrey Niffenegger ["Original Essays" at [www.Powells.com](http://www.Powells.com)]

In 1997, the phrase "the time traveler's wife" popped into Audrey Niffenegger's head. She began to think about the couple the phrase brought to mind and developed a sympathetic interest in the wife, who had to wait while the husband led an exciting, adventurous life. Once she had the characters in mind, the story unfolded. The idea of a happy marriage being tested by something beyond the control of the husband and wife was an idea the author wanted to explore. She was inspired in part by her grandparents, Elizabeth and Norbert Tamandi, to whom the novel is dedicated. Norbert Tamandi died young of a brain tumor and though she never met him, Audrey Niffenegger wanted to create a story about the kind of relationship she imagined her grandparents had.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* is the unconventional and original story of librarian Henry DeTamble and artist Clare Abshire. Henry suffers from "Chrono-Displacement Disorder," a condition that causes him to involuntarily travel through time. Clare first meets Henry when she is six years old and he is 36. Henry first meets Clare when she is 20 and he is 28. Henry and Clare attempt to cobble together a normal

life while coping with Henry's random and sometimes dangerous disappearances. Their story is told from both Clare and Henry's perspectives and the reader follows them both in the present time, as well as the past when Henry travels back to Clare's childhood.

Symmetry interests Audrey Niffenegger and the book's themes reflect this: love and loss, fate and free will, life and death, time and waiting. The author creates a novel that combines humor and tragedy, as well as happiness and grief. She balances the fantastical time travel element with a strong sense of place in Chicago and a strong sense of time in music, fashion, and world events.

It took Audrey Niffenegger four years and nearly 600 pages to tell the story. MacAdam/Cage published it in 2003 to tremendous critical praise. The book became a New York Times bestseller, and won several awards including a British Book Award for Popular Fiction and the Young Adult Library Services Association's Alex Award for books with appeal to teens. A film adaptation of the novel is currently in progress, with a screenplay by Jeremy Leven.

## READ-ALIKES

### Andrew Sean Greer, *The Confessions of Max Tivoli*, 2004

Max Tivoli has a problem. He was born with the physical appearance of a 70-year-old man and the mind of an infant and ages physically towards youth while maturing mentally as any other man would. Along the way, he finds opportunities to woo the one true love of his life, Alice, who fails to recognize him as the same man at three distinct times in each others' lives.

### Jasper Fforde, *The Eyre Affair*, 2002

Literary references, puns, and clever jokes abound in this alternative universe novel where people can enter into the world of a book, and the book's characters can escape into reality. A literary detective, Thursday Next, must go to great lengths to rescue a kidnapped Jane Eyre, with the help of Jane's beloved Rochester.

### Jack Finney, *Time and Again*, 1970

A cult classic, this novel tells the story of Simon Morley, an imaginative artist, who is drafted into a government experiment that transports him back and forth between present-day and 1880s New York City. He finds himself falling in love with a woman from the past and must decide in which time period he most wants to remain.

### Diana Gabaldon, *Outlander*, 1991

Like Audrey Niffenegger, Diana Gabaldon fuses time travel with a love story in her compelling first novel. Claire, on a trip with her husband to the Scottish Highlands in 1945, walks through an ancient standing stone circle. She finds herself in 1743 Scotland, which is on the verge of a Jacobite uprising, and in the company of Jamie, a passionate and courageous Highlander.

### Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 1969

In this genre-bending, anti-war classic, Billy Pilgrim bounces back and forth through time, to the Allied fire bombings of Dresden in World War II, to his marriage in later years, and on to the future where he encounters mysterious aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. Challenging standard notions of time and space, this black comedy reminds readers to live in the moment.

## RESOURCES

■ Krystyna Wasserman, Johanna Drucker, & Audrey Niffenegger, *The Book as Art: Artists' Books from the National Museum of Women in the Arts*, 2006

What is a book? This title explores the contemporary art form of bookmaking and media, with descriptions, illustrations, and essays on books by female authors. Audrey Niffenegger wrote the introduction.

■ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, translated by Edward Snow, 2000  
These intense poems, beloved by Niffenegger's Clare, resonate with some of the themes from *The Time Traveler's Wife*, including reconciling beauty and suffering, life and death.

■ Al Spicer, *The Rough Guide to Punk*, 2006

Throughout *The Time Traveler's Wife*, Henry and Clare make references to their favorite punk rock bands. This guide is a credible introduction to punk rock music and the cultural movement behind it.

■ Audrey Niffenegger's website: [www.audreyniffenegger.com](http://www.audreyniffenegger.com)

■ Art Institute of Chicago: [www.artic.edu/aic/index.php](http://www.artic.edu/aic/index.php)

Henry teaches his younger self how to pickpocket in this acclaimed museum and Clare attends the affiliated School of the Art Institute. Founded in 1879, the museum is famous for its Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Surrealist collections.

■ Field Museum of Natural History: [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org)

Five year-old Henry has his first time-travel experience in this museum, which provides information on the past, present, and future of this planet and its inhabitants.

■ Newberry Library: [www.newberry.org/](http://www.newberry.org/)

Henry works for this independent research library that is free and open to the public. It houses an extensive humanities collection and offers renowned exhibits and lectures related to the collections.

■ Printworks Gallery: [www.printworkschicago.com](http://www.printworkschicago.com)

This Chicago gallery represents Audrey Niffenegger and specializes in works on paper including drawings, photography and artists' books.

■ NoveList: [www.smpl.org/research/novelist.htm](http://www.smpl.org/research/novelist.htm)

A readers' database with reviews, author read-alikes, and series lists.

## BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Trained volunteer facilitators lead these free public book discussions. No registration is required.

### Wednesday, April 18 at 7 pm

Montana Avenue Branch Library,\* 1704 Montana Avenue

### Saturday, April 21 at 2 pm

Fairview Branch Library,\* 2101 Ocean Park Boulevard

### Thursday, April 26 at 7 pm

It's A Grind, 602 Santa Monica Boulevard

### Tuesday, May 1 at 7:30 pm

Barnes & Noble, 1201 3rd Street Promenade

### Friday, May 4 at 4 pm

Café Bolivar, 1741 Ocean Park Boulevard

### Saturday, May 5 at 11 am

Ocean Park Branch Library,\* 2601 Main Street

### Thursday, May 10 at 2 pm

Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street

### Sunday, May 13 at 4 pm

It's A Grind, 602 Santa Monica Boulevard

### Tuesday, May 15 at 6 pm

Teen Book Discussion

Community Room at Main Library\*  
601 Santa Monica Boulevard

### Saturday, May 19 at 1 pm

Multipurpose Room at Main Library\*  
601 Santa Monica Boulevard

\*City of Santa Monica facilities are wheelchair accessible. To request a disability-related accommodation, call Library Administration 458-8606 (TDD 395-8499) at least 3 working days (Monday-Friday) in advance.

THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING FOR SUPPORTING BOOK DISCUSSIONS AND PROGRAMS:

**BARNES & NOBLE**  
BOOKSELLERS



THANKS TO THE FRIENDS OF THE SANTA MONICA PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PRINTING OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE.



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DATED MATERIAL

## SPECIAL CITYWIDE READS EVENTS

Free admission. Seating is on a first-arrival basis.

### An Afternoon with Audrey Niffenegger

**Saturday, May 5 at 3:00 pm**

Santa Monica College, Pavilion (Gym), 1900 Pico Boulevard

The award-winning author of *The Time Traveler's Wife* presents a reading and discussion, followed by a book signing. Co-sponsored by the Santa Monica College Associates.

### Exploring Artists' Books and Their Authors

**Wednesday, April 25 at 7:00 pm**

Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard

In her daily life, Audrey Niffenegger teaches the art and design of artists' books and is a prolific creator of them herself. But few people know precisely what an artists' book is. Is it a book? Is it art? Join the Getty Research Institute's Curator of Artists' Books, Joyce Pellerano Ludmer, for an illuminating look at this truly unique art form and the artists who create them.

### City TV Live Call-in Discussion

**Wednesday, May 9 at 7:00 pm**

Tune in to Channel 16 for a live, moderated discussion of *The Time Traveler's Wife*.

### Chronologically Displaced Movies

Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard

Two movies in the Santa Monica Public Library's regular movie screening series will feature time travel themed films, including the 1949 musical comedy adaptation of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, starring Bing Crosby and Rhonda Fleming, and the popular 1980 romance *Somewhere in Time*, starring Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour.

**Saturday, May 12 at 2:30 pm**

*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

**Tuesday, May 15 at 2:30 pm**

*Somewhere in Time*