

Ott, Bill. **The Back Page**. Chicago: American Library Association, 2009. 205 p. \$27.00. (ISBN: 9780838909973)

When *Booklist* editor, Bill Ott, was advised in the late 1980's that advertisers weren't interested in buying space on the inside back cover of the magazine because there was nothing to draw readers' attention to the last page, he suggested a column. Maybe with an occasional literary quiz like the ones he used to enjoy doing in the long-defunct *Saturday Review of Literature*. And so, "The Back Page" was born. Some twenty years later, the best of those columns (and quizzes) have been gathered together in a delightful collection of the same name. With his trademark sardonic wit and admittedly "crackpot opinions on all things political," Ott muses on a variety of topics including baseball, book awards, golf, foreign travel, the noir novel, jury duty, and even diagramming sentences (using an utterance from a former vice-presidential candidate as the example). In a softer moment, he apologizes to E.B. White for *Booklist's* 1952 dismissal of **Charlotte's Web** as a book in which younger readers "are likely to lose interest as the story moves on."

Joyce Saricks, legendary readers' advisor and author of the foreword to this book, calls the final section, *Quizzes*, the "crown jewels" of this collection. Not for wimps, these quizzes test the reader's knowledge of such topics as libraries and librarians in movies; first lines and last novels; last lines and first novels; subversive messages from children's books; and, the love lives of famous authors. Fortunately, most of the quizzes are simple matching exercises, emphasis on the matching, not on the simple.

Not only is **The Back Page** a must-have volume for every library's collection, it would make a great gift for your library- and literature-loving friends, as well.

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