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Sommario/riassunto

"Head Off the Books in this collection of newspaper columns, where J. Peder Zane uses classic and contemporary literature to explore American culture and politics. The book review editor for the Raleigh, North Carolina News & Observer from 1996 to 2009, Zane demonstrates that good books are essential for understanding ourselves and the world around us. The one hundred and thirty columns gathered in Off the Books find that sweet spot where literature's eternal values meet the day's current events. Together they offer a literary overview of the ideas, issues, and events shaping our culture--from 9/11 and the struggle for gay rights to the decline of high culture and the rise of sensationalism and solipsism. As they plumb and draw from the work of leading writers--from William Faulkner, Knut Hamsun, and Eudora Welty to Don DeLillo, Lydia Millet, and Philip Roth--these columns make an argument not just about the pleasure of books, but about their very necessity in our lives and culture"--