

Word of mouth

Here's what people are reading this week.

Loren Billings, executive director of the Museum of Holography, 1134 W. Washington: "I'm reading *Darkness at Night* by Edward Harrison [Harvard, \$12.95, 1987]. It's about the riddle of universe and why the sky is dark. It's a Cook's tour through the history of astronomy. It's easy to read if you understand [astronomy and science]."

Phil Krone, political and urban consultant: "I'm reading two books—*The Gospel According to the Son*, by Norman Mailer [Random House, \$22, 1997] and *A Child's Night Dream*, by Oliver Stone [St. Martin's Press, \$21.95, 1997]. In Mailer's book, Jesus explains in his own words. The book is very sensitive and compelling. Some people found it controversial—I find it convincing."

"Stone's novel is about his relationships in Vietnam and at home. It deals with his demons. I like the book because when you think of Stone, you think of him from his movies and what he's done. This

book is not like that. Parts of it are very strong and tender. It's not an easy read, but still a good read."

Here's what bookstores are recommending this week:

Ann Canada of Marshall Field's State Street Book Department recommends *Nutcracker* (Crown, \$20) by E.T.A. Hoffmann, illustrated by Maurice Sendak. This 1984 book is timeless and especially perfect for the season, said Canada. It also just happens to complement the theme of the store's Christmas decorations. The book is faithful to the old German fairy tale that tells the story of Marie Stahlbaum and the magical gift of a nutcracker she receives from an old friend of the family, Herr Drosselmeier. The nutcracker turns into a prince—Drosselmeier's nephew—who takes Marie on a magical and dangerous trip. The two end up marrying and reigning over the marzipan castle together. "It's a beautiful book with spectacular pictures," said Canada.

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