

BOOK CLUB 2019-20 BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Elizabeth Young's Recommendations:

THE DRY: A Novel by Jane Harper ... After getting a note demanding his presence, Federal Agent Aaron Falk arrives in his hometown for the first time in decades to attend the funeral of his best friend, Luke. Twenty years ago when Falk was accused of murder, Luke was his alibi. Falk and his father fled under a cloud of suspicion, saved from prosecution only because of Luke's steadfast claim that the boys had been together at the time of the crime. But now more than one person knows they didn't tell the truth back then, and Luke is dead.

Amid the worst drought in a century, Falk and the local detective question what really happened to Luke. As Falk reluctantly investigates to see if there's more to Luke's death than there seems to be, long-buried mysteries resurface, as do the lies that have haunted them. And Falk will find that small towns have *a/ways* hidden big secrets.

THE PERFECT NANNY: A Novel by Leila Slimani ... When Myriam decides to return to work as a lawyer after having children, she and her husband look for the perfect nanny for their son and daughter. They never dreamed they would find Louise: a quiet, polite, devoted woman who sings to the children, cleans the family's chic Paris apartment, stays late without complaint, and hosts enviable kiddie parties. But as the couple and the nanny become more dependent on one another, jealousy, resentment, and suspicions mount, shattering the idyllic tableau.

CODE GIRLS: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II by Liza Mundy ... Recruited by the U.S. Army and Navy from small towns and elite colleges, more than ten thousand women served as codebreakers during World War II. While their brothers and boyfriends took up arms, these women moved to Washington and learned the meticulous work of code-breaking. Their efforts shortened the war, saved countless lives, and gave them access to careers previously denied to them. A strict vow of secrecy nearly erased their efforts from history.

Ellen Droke's Recommendations:

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: A Novel by Colson Whitehead ... Cora is a young slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. An outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is on the cusp of womanhood—where greater pain awaits. And so when Caesar, a slave who has recently arrived from Virginia, urges her to join him on the Underground Railroad, she seizes the opportunity and escapes with him. In Colson Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor: engineers and conductors operate a secret network of actual tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil.

BECOMING by Michelle Obama ... In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her

disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms.

MOMENT OF LIFT: How Empowering Women Changes the World by Melinda Gates

... For the last twenty years, Melinda Gates has been on a mission to find solutions for people with the most urgent needs, wherever they live. Throughout this journey, one thing has become increasingly clear to her: If you want to lift a society up, you need to stop keeping women down.

In this moving and compelling book, Melinda shares lessons she's learned from the inspiring people she's met during her work and travels around the world. Melinda's unforgettable narrative is backed by startling data as she presents the issues that most need our attention—from child marriage to lack of access to contraceptives to gender inequity in the workplace. And, for the first time, she writes about her personal life and the road to equality in her own marriage. Throughout, she shows how there has never been more opportunity to change the world—and ourselves.

ONE GIANT LEAP: The Impossible Mission That Flew Us to the Moon by Charles Fishman

... President John F. Kennedy astonished the world on May 25, 1961, when he announced to Congress that the United States should land a man on the Moon by 1970. No group was more surprised than the scientists and engineers at NASA, who suddenly had less than a decade to invent space travel.

When Kennedy announced that goal, no one knew how to navigate to the Moon. No one knew how to build a rocket big enough to reach the Moon, or how to build a computer small enough (and powerful enough) to fly a spaceship there. No one knew what the surface of the Moon was like, or what astronauts could eat as they flew there. On the day of Kennedy's historic speech, America had a total of fifteen minutes of spaceflight experience—with just five of those minutes outside the atmosphere. Russian dogs had more time in space than U.S. astronauts. Over the next decade, more than 400,000 scientists, engineers, and factory workers would send 24 astronauts to the Moon. Each hour of space flight would require one million hours of work back on Earth to get America to the Moon on July 20, 1969.

THE DUTCH HOUSE by Ann Pratchett ... This is a richly moving story that explores the indelible bond between two siblings, the house of their childhood, and a past that will not let them go. The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, the brilliantly acerbic and self-assured Maeve, where, at the end of WWII, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakeable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures.

Roxanne Kohlin Recommendations:

WHERE THE DESERT MEETS THE SEA: A Novel by Werner ... An illuminating and heart-stirring historical novel set in post-WWII Palestine, where the boundaries of love and friendship are challenged by the intractable conflicts of war.

Jerusalem, 1947: Judith, a young Jewish survivor of the Dachau concentration camp, arrives in Mandatory Palestine, seeking refuge with her only remaining relative, her uncle. When she

learns that he has died, she tries to take her own life in despair. After awakening in the hospital, Judith learns that Hana, a Muslim Arab nurse, has saved her life by donating her own blood. While the two women develop a fragile bond, each can't help but be drawn deeper into the political machinations tearing the country apart. After witnessing the repeated attacks inflicted on the Jews, Judith makes the life-changing decision to join the Zionist fight for Jerusalem.

THERE THERE: A Novel by Tommy Orange ... *There There* is a wondrous and shattering portrait of an America few of us have ever seen. It's masterful . . . white-hot . . . devastating at the same time as it is fierce, funny, suspenseful, thoroughly modern, and impossible to put down. Here is a voice we have never heard—a voice full of poetry and rage, exploding onto the page with urgency and force. Tommy Orange has written a stunning novel that grapples with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and profound spirituality, and with a plague of addiction, abuse, and suicide. This is a story of twelve unforgettable characters, Urban Indians living in Oakland, California, who converge and collide on one fateful day. As we learn the reasons that each person is attending the Big Oakland Powwow—some generous, some fearful, some joyful, some violent—momentum builds toward a shocking yet inevitable conclusion that changes everything.

THE DESERT AND THE SEA: 977 Days Captive on the Somali Pirate Coast by Michael Scott Moore ... Michael Scott Moore, a journalist and the author, incorporates personal narrative and rigorous investigative journalism in this profound and revelatory memoir of his three-year captivity by Somali pirates—a riveting, thoughtful, and emotionally resonant exploration of foreign policy, religious extremism, and the costs of survival.

In January 2012, having covered a Somali pirate trial in Hamburg, Michael Scott Moore traveled to the Horn of Africa to write about piracy and ways to end it. In a terrible twist of fate, Moore himself was kidnapped and subsequently held captive by Somali pirates. Subjected to conditions that break even the strongest spirits—physical injury, starvation, isolation, terror—Moore's survival is a testament to his indomitable strength of mind. In September 2014, after 977 days, he walked free when his ransom was put together by the help of several US and German institutions, friends, colleagues, and his strong-willed mother.

WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING by Delia Owens ... For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life--until the unthinkable happens.

Joyce Hocker's Recommendations:

BEFORE WE WERE YOURS: A Novel by Lisa Wingate ... Based on one of America's most notorious real-life scandals in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country. Memphis, 1939. Twelve-year-old Rill Foss and her four younger siblings live a magical life aboard their family's Mississippi River shantyboat. But when their father must rush their mother to the hospital one stormy night, Rill is left in charge—until strangers arrive in force. Wrenched

from all that is familiar and thrown into a Tennessee Children's Home Society orphanage, the Foss children are assured that they will soon be returned to their parents—but they quickly realize the dark truth. At the mercy of the facility's cruel director, Rill fights to keep her sisters and brother together in a world of danger and uncertainty.

WHERE THE CROWDADS SING by Delia Owens ... See Roxanne Kohlin's Recommendations

FURIOUS HOUSE: Murder, Fraud and the Last Trial of Harper Lee by Casey Cep ...

Reverend Willie Maxwell was a rural preacher accused of murdering five of his family members for insurance money in the 1970s. With the help of a savvy lawyer, he escaped justice for years until a relative shot him dead at the funeral of his last victim. Despite hundreds of witnesses, Maxwell's murderer was acquitted—thanks to the same attorney who had previously defended the Reverend.

Sitting in the audience during the vigilante's trial was Harper Lee, who had traveled from New York City to her native Alabama with the idea of writing her own *In Cold Blood*, the true-crime classic she had helped her friend Truman Capote research seventeen years earlier. Lee spent a year in town reporting, and many more years working on her own version of the case.

Now Casey Cep brings this story to life, from the shocking murders to the courtroom drama to the racial politics of the Deep South. At the same time, she offers a deeply moving portrait of one of the country's most beloved writers and her struggle with fame, success, and the mystery of artistic creativity.

Lou Woodburycatcott's Recommendations:

DESTINY OF THE REPUBLIC: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President

by Candice Millard ... James A. Garfield was one of the most extraordinary men ever elected president. Born into abject poverty, he rose to become a wunderkind scholar, a Civil War hero, and a renowned and admired reformist congressman. Nominated for president against his will, he engaged in a fierce battle with the corrupt political establishment. But four months after his inauguration, a deranged office seeker tracked Garfield down and shot him in the back.

But the shot didn't kill Garfield. The drama of what happened subsequently is a powerful story of a nation in turmoil. The unhinged assassin's half-delivered strike shattered the fragile national mood of a country so recently fractured by civil war, and left the wounded president as the object of a bitter behind-the-scenes struggle for power—over his administration, over the nation's future, and, hauntingly, over his medical care. A team of physicians administered shockingly archaic treatments, to disastrous effect. As his condition worsened, Garfield received help: Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, worked around the clock to invent a new device capable of finding the bullet.

BEFORE WE WERE YOURS: A Novel by Lisa Wingate ... See Joyce Hocker's Recommendations

Susan Sargent's Recommendations:

THE PERFECT HORSE: The Daring US Mission to Rescue the Priceless Stallions

Kidnapped by the Nazis by Elizabeth Letts ... In the chaotic last days of the war, a small troop of battle-weary American soldiers captures a German spy and makes an astonishing find—his briefcase is empty but for photos of beautiful white horses that have been stolen and kept on a secret farm behind enemy lines. Hitler has stockpiled the world's finest purebreds in order to breed the perfect military machine—an equine master race. But with the starving Russian army closing in, the animals are in imminent danger of being slaughtered for food.

With only hours to spare, one of the U.S. Army's last great cavalrymen, Colonel Hank Reed, makes a bold decision—with General George Patton's blessing—to mount a covert rescue operation. Racing against time, Reed's small but determined force of soldiers, aided by several turncoat Germans, steals across enemy lines in a last-ditch effort to save the horses.

BIG LITTLE LIES by Liane Moriarty ... A murder...A tragic accident...Or just parents behaving badly? What's indisputable is that someone is dead.

Madeline is a force to be reckoned with. She's funny, biting, and passionate; she remembers everything and forgives no one. Celeste is the kind of beautiful woman who makes the world stop and stare but she is paying a price for the illusion of perfection. New to town, single mom Jane is so young that another mother mistakes her for a nanny. She comes with a mysterious past and a sadness beyond her years. These three women are at different crossroads, but they will all wind up in the same shocking place.

Big Little Lies is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandal, and the little lies that can turn lethal.

HEART OF DARKNESS by Joseph Conrad ... Heart of Darkness (1899) is a novella by Anglo-Polish novelist Joseph Conrad, about a voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State, in the heart of Africa, by the story's narrator Marlow. Marlow tells his story to friends aboard a boat anchored on the River Thames, London, England. This setting provides the frame for Marlow's story of his obsession with the ivory trader Kurtz, which enables Conrad to create a parallel between London and Africa as places of darkness. Central to Conrad's work is the idea that there is little difference between so-called civilized people and those described as savages; Heart of Darkness raises important questions about imperialism and racism.

Dick Sheehan's Recommendations:

MAKE, THINK, IMAGINE: Engineering the Future of Civilization by John Browne ...

John Browne argues that we need not and must not put the brakes on technological advance. Civilization is founded on engineering innovation; all progress stems from the human urge to make things and to shape the world around us, resulting in greater freedom, health and wealth for all. Drawing on history, his own experiences and conversations with many of today's great innovators, he uncovers the basis for all progress and its consequences, both good and bad. He argues compellingly that the same spark that triggers each innovation can be used to counter its negative consequences. *Make, Think, Imagine* provides an eloquent blueprint for how we can keep moving towards a brighter future.

THE FLIGHT PORTFOLIO: A Novel by Julie Orringer ... In 1940, Varian Fry traveled to Marseille carrying three thousand dollars and a list of imperiled artists and writers he hoped to help escape within a few weeks. Instead, he stayed more than a year, working to procure false documents, amass emergency funds, and arrange journeys across Spain and Portugal, where the refugees would embark for safer ports. His many clients included Hannah Arendt, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, and Marc Chagall, and the race against time to save them is a tale of forbidden love, high-stakes adventure, and unimaginable courage.

Ron Schwartz's Recommendations:

WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING by Delia Owens ... See Roxanne Kohlin's Recommendations

FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre ... Seventy years ago, at midnight on August 14, 1947, the Union Jack began its final journey down the flagstaff of Viceroy's House, New Delhi. A fifth of humanity claimed their independence from the greatest empire history has ever seen—but the price of freedom was high, as a nation erupted into riots and bloodshed, partition and war.

Freedom at Midnight is the true story of the events surrounding Indian independence, beginning with the appointment of Lord Mountbatten of Burma as the last Viceroy of British India, and ending with the assassination and funeral of Mahatma Gandhi. The book was an international bestseller and achieved enormous acclaim in the United States, Italy, Spain, and France.

ZORRO by Isabel Allende ... A child of two worlds--the son of an aristocratic Spanish military man turned landowner and a Shoshone warrior woman--young Diego de la Vega cannot silently bear the brutal injustices visited upon the helpless in late-eighteenth-century California. And so a great hero is born--skilled in athleticism and dazzling swordplay, his persona formed between the Old World and the New--the legend known as Zorro.

Dave Sargent's Recommendations:

THE LIFE OF WASHINGTON by Washington Irving ... Washington Irving's Life of George Washington (published in five volumes in 1856-59) was the product of his last years and remains his most personal work. Christened with the name of the great general, Irving was blessed by Washington while still a boy of seven, and later came to know many of the prominent figures of the Revolution. In these pages he describes them using firsthand source material and observation. The result is a book which is fascinating not only for its subject (the American Revolution), but also for how it reveals in illuminating detail the personality and humanity of a now remote, towering icon. Here is an intimate portrait of Washington the man, from Virginia youth to colonial commander to commander-in-chief of the patriot army to first president and great guiding force of the American federation. But one cannot read Irving's Life without marveling at the supreme art behind it, for his biography is foremost a work of literature.

TOMBOY BRIDE: One Woman's Personal Account of Life in Mining Camps of the West by Harriet Fish Backus ... In 1906 at the age of twenty, Harriet Fish hopped on a train from Oakland, California, to the San Juan Mountains of Colorado in search of a new life as the bride of assayer George Backus. Together, the couple ventured forth to discover mining town life at

the turn of the twentieth century, adjusting to dizzying elevation heights of 11,500 feet and all the hardships that come with it: limited water, rationed food supplies, lack of medical care, difficulty in travel, avalanches, and many more. As she and George move from Telluride's Tomboy Mine to the rugged coast of British Columbia, to the town of Elk City, Idaho, and then back to Colorado's Leadville, Harriet paints a poignant picture of a world centered around mining, sharing amusing and often challenging experiences as a woman of the era.

THE BRITISH ARE COMING: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton 1775-1777 by Rick Atkinson ... It is a gripping saga alive with astonishing characters: Henry Knox, the former bookseller with an uncanny understanding of artillery; Nathanael Greene, the blue-eyed bumpkin who becomes a brilliant battle captain; Benjamin Franklin, the self-made man who proves to be the wiliest of diplomats; George Washington, the commander in chief who learns the difficult art of leadership when the war seems all but lost. The story is also told from the British perspective, making the mortal conflict between the redcoats and the rebels all the more compelling.

Full of riveting details and untold stories, *The British Are Coming* is a tale of heroes and knaves, of sacrifice and blunder, of redemption and profound suffering. Rick Atkinson has given stirring new life to the first act of our country's creation drama.

D-DAY: JUNE 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of WWII by Stephen E. Ambrose ... The author draws from hundreds of interviews with US Army veterans and the brave Allied soldiers who fought alongside them to create this exceptional account of the day that shaped the twentieth century. *D-Day* is above all the epic story of men at the most demanding moment of their existence, when the horrors, complexities and triumphs of life are laid bare and courage and heroism come to the fore.