

BOOK CLUB 2016-17 RECOMMENDATIONS

Dave Sargent's Recommendations:

LIEUTENANT SHERMAN AND LA DOÑA OF MONTEREY (San Francisco) by John Hoopes ... This is an historical novel set in 1847 about the relationship between Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, serving as adjutant to the military governor of newly-conquered California, and his three year intimate friendship with Angustias de la Guerra, La Doña of Monterey. Paramount, however, for Lieutenant Sherman through all these trials and amusements is that he must employ extreme strategies in order to resist his enchantment by La Doña, whose de la Guerra family owns a half million of the finest acres in all California, and whose husband is dying.

THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY by A.J. Baime ... A dramatic, intimate narrative of how Ford Motor Company went from making automobiles to producing the airplanes that would mean the difference between winning and losing World War II.

THE WORLD RUSHED IN: The California Gold Rush Experience by J.S. Holliday ... Through the diary and letters of William Swain--augmented by interpolations from more than five hundred other gold seekers and by letters sent to Swain from his wife and brother back home--the complete cycle of the gold rush is recreated: the overland migration of over thirty thousand men, the struggle to "strike it rich" in the mining camps of the Sierra Nevadas, and the return home through the jungles of the Isthmus of Panama.

NOTHING LIKE IT IN THE WORLD: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869 by Stephen Ambrose ... This book gives the account of an unprecedented feat of engineering, vision, and courage. It is the story of the men who built the transcontinental railroad—the investors who risked their businesses and money; the enlightened politicians who understood its importance; the engineers and surveyors who risked, and sometimes lost, their lives; and the Irish and Chinese immigrants, the defeated Confederate soldiers, and the other laborers who did the backbreaking and dangerous work on the tracks.

Susan Sargent's Recommendations:

OUTLANDER by Diana Gabaldon ... This is the first of a series of novels around Claire Randall. Scottish Highlands, 1743. Claire, a former British combat nurse, is just back from the war and reunited with her husband on a second honeymoon when she walks through a standing stone in one of the ancient circles that dot the British Isles. Suddenly she is a Sassenach—an "outlander"—in a Scotland torn by war and raiding clans in the year of Our Lord . . . 1743. Claire is catapulted into the intrigues of a world that threatens her life, and may shatter her heart. Marooned amid danger, passion, and violence, Claire learns her only chance of safety lies in Jamie Fraser, a gallant young Scots warrior. What begins in compulsion becomes urgent need, and Claire finds herself torn between two very different men, in two irreconcilable lives. This exciting series of books has been made into a TV series that can be seen on Starz.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE ... This is a series of books for those who get caught up in the flowery language of Shakespeare. On one page you will find the original language of the play while on the opposite page you will find a more current translation of what William was trying to say, line by line. Almost all of Shakespeare's famous plays are available. This is a perfect series of books to read just before you head up to Ashland, Oregon to enjoy one of his entertaining plays.

PASION AND PRINCIPLE: John and Jessie Fremont, the Couple Whose Power, Politics, and Love Shaped Nineteenth-Century America by Sally Denton ... Written with an investigative journalist's eye for detail and a novelist's flair, this biography, set in the 1800s, of explorer, politician, and gold-mine owner John C. Frémont and his intellectual wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, also casts light on the tumultuous period that forms the backdrop for their lives, from the abolition of slavery to the building of the railroad.

The Revenant by Michael Punke ... A thrilling tale of betrayal and revenge set against the nineteenth-century American frontier, the astonishing story of real-life trapper and frontiersman Hugh Glass.

Anything by John Steinbeck.

Ellen Droke's Recommendations:

The Underground Railroad: A Novel by Colson Whitehead ... This novel is a magnificent tour de force chronicling a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. This book is one of Oprah Winfrey's Book Club choices.

HOW THE POST OFFICE CREATED AMERICA: A History by Winifred Gallagher ... This book is a masterful history of a long underappreciated institution, *How the Post Office Created America* examines the surprising role of the postal service in our nation's political, social, economic, and physical development.

WHITE TRASH: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America by Nancy Isenberg ... In this groundbreaking bestselling history of the class system in America, Nancy Isenberg takes on our comforting myths about equality, uncovering the crucial legacy of the ever-present, always embarrassing—if occasionally entertaining—poor white trash.

HILLBILLY ELEGY: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by J.D. Vance ... From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class. *Hillbilly Elegy* is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck.

Joyce Hocker's Recommendations:

ALEXANDER HAMILTON by Ron Chernow ... In the first full-length biography of Alexander Hamilton in decades, Ron Chernow tells the riveting story of a man who overcame all odds to shape, inspire, and scandalize the newborn America. According to historian Joseph Ellis, *Alexander Hamilton* is "a robust full-length portrait, in my view the best ever written, of the most brilliant, charismatic and dangerous founder of them all." This is the book that the Broadway play "Hamilton" is based on.

ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES by Ernest Hemingway ... This is Hemingway's poignant tale of a love found too late. Set in Venice at the close of World War II, this is the bittersweet story of a middle-aged American colonel, scarred by war and in failing health, who finds love with a young Italian countess at the very moment when his life is becoming a physical hardship to him. Spanning a matter of hours, this book is tender and moving, yet tragic in the inexorable shadow of what must come.

THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America by Erik Larson ... Erik Larson intertwines the true tale of the 1893 World's Fair and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Erik Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction.

DANCE HALL OF THE DEAD by Tony Hillerman ... Two Native-American boys have vanished into thin air, leaving a pool of blood behind them. Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police has no choice but to suspect the very worst, since the blood that stains the parched New Mexican ground once flowed through the veins of one of the missing, a young Zuñi. But his investigation into a terrible crime is being complicated by an important archaeological dig . . . and a steel hypodermic needle. And the unique laws and sacred religious rites of the Zuñi people are throwing impassable roadblocks in Leaphorn's already twisted path, enabling a craven murderer to elude justice or, worse still, to kill again.

Lou Woodburycatcott's Recommendations:

UNSEEN CITY: The Majesty of Pigeons, the Discreet Charm of Snails & Other Wonders of the Urban Wilderness by Nathanael Johnson ... No matter where we live—city, country, oceanside, or mountains—there are wonders that we walk past every day. *Unseen City* widens the pinhole of our perspective by allowing us to view the world from the high-altitude eyes of a turkey vulture and the distinctly low-altitude eyes of a snail. The narrative allows us to eavesdrop on the comically frenetic life of a squirrel and peer deep into the past with a ginkgo biloba tree. Each of these organisms has something unique to tell us about our neighborhoods. A fun and interesting read.

THE FINEST HOURS: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue by Michael J. Tougias ... In the early hours of Monday, February 18, 1952, while New England was battered by the most brutal nor'easter in years, two oil tankers, the *Pendleton* and the *Fort Mercer*, found themselves in the same horrifying predicament. Built with "dirty steel," and not prepared to withstand such ferocious seas, both tankers split in two, leaving the dozens of men on board utterly at the Atlantic's mercy. *The Finest Hours* is the gripping, true story of the valiant attempt to rescue the souls huddling inside the broken halves of the two ships.

Dick Sheehan's Recommendations:

"H" IS FOR HAWK by Helen Macdonald ... Helen Macdonald's story of adopting and raising one of nature's most vicious predators has soared into the hearts of millions of readers worldwide. Fierce and feral, her goshawk Mabel's temperament mirrors Helen's own state of grief after her father's death, and together raptor and human "discover the pain and beauty of being alive".

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN by Paula Hawkins ... Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning and night. Every day she rattles down the track, flashes past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stops at the signal that allows her to daily watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. She's even started to feel like she knows them. Jess and Jason, she calls them. Their life—as she sees it—is perfect. Not unlike the life she recently lost. UNTIL TODAY And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Unable to keep it to herself, Rachel goes to the police. But is she really as unreliable as they say? Soon she is deeply entangled not only in the investigation but in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

THE NIGHTINGALE by Kristin Hannah ... Author Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of WWII and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women's war. The Nightingale tells the stories of two sisters, separated by years and experience, by ideals, passion and circumstance, each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France--a heartbreakingly beautiful novel that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the durability of women. It is a novel for everyone, a novel for a lifetime.

SAVING ITALY: The Race to Rescue a Nation's Treasures from the Nazis by Robert Edsel ... This book, written by the author of *The Monuments Men*, is brilliantly researched and vividly written, the *New York Times* bestselling *Saving Italy* brings readers from Milan and the near destruction of The Last Supper to the inner sanctum of the Vatican and behind closed doors with the preeminent Allied and Axis leaders: Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Churchill; Hitler, Göring, and Himmler. An unforgettable story of epic thievery and political intrigue, *Saving Italy* is a testament to heroism on behalf of art, culture, and history.

Ron Schwartz's Recommendations:

THE LONG WAY HOME by Ed Dover ... The story of how a Pan American Airways B-314 flying boat, caught in the South Pacific, made an unplanned flight around the world following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Flying in total secrecy and radio blackout, Captain Ford and his 10 man crew flew over 31,500 miles in six weeks, avoiding enemy action in their effort to return safely to the United States. An astounding feat in 1941!

THE BASES WERE LOADED (AND SO WAS I) by Tom Callahan ... Sportswriter Tom Callahan brings to life the most fascinating--and often least understood--figures in the world of sports. From Muhammad Ali to Pete Rose, Larry Bird to Oscar Robertson, and Arthur Ashe to Arnold Palmer, Callahan takes us up close to athletes we thought we knew and reveals how wrong we often are.

L.A. NOIR: The Struggle for the Soul of America's Most Seductive City by John Buntin ... Midcentury Los Angeles. A city sold to the world as "the white spot of America," a land of sunshine and orange groves, wholesome Midwestern values and Hollywood stars, protected by the world's most famous police force, the Dragnet-era LAPD. Behind this public image lies a hidden world of "pleasure girls" and crooked cops, ruthless newspaper tycoons, corrupt politicians, and East Coast gangsters on the make. Into this underworld came two men—one L.A.'s most notorious gangster, the other its most famous police chief—each prepared to battle the other for the soul of the city.

Roxanne Kohlin's Recommendations:

THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE by Neil Gaiman ... Sussex, England. A middle-aged man returns to his childhood home to attend a funeral. Although the house he lived in is long gone, he is drawn to the farm at the end of the road, where, when he was seven, he encountered a most remarkable girl, Lettie Hempstock, and her mother and grandmother. He hasn't thought of Lettie in decades, and yet as he sits by the pond (a pond that she'd claimed was an ocean) behind the ramshackle old farmhouse, the unremembered past comes flooding back. And it is a past too strange, too frightening, too dangerous to have happened to anyone, let alone a small boy.

THE NAZI'S OFFICER'S WIFE: How One Jewish Woman Survived the Holocaust by Edith H. Beer ... Edith Hahn was an outspoken young woman in Vienna when the Gestapo forced her into a ghetto and then into a slave labor camp. When she returned home months later, she knew she would become a hunted woman and went underground. With the help of a Christian friend, she emerged in Munich as Grete Denner. There she met Werner Vetter, a Nazi Party member who fell in love with her. Despite Edith's protests and even her eventual confession that she was Jewish, he married her and kept her identity a secret. In wrenching detail, Edith recalls a life of constant, almost paralyzing fear while trying to keep her secret.

A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME by Wiley Cash ... This novel is a mesmerizing literary thriller about the bond between two brothers and the evil they face in a small North Carolina town. A brilliant evocation of a place, a heart-rending family story, a gripping and suspenseful mystery.

ON HITLER'S MOUNTAIN: Overcoming the Legacy of a Nazi Childhood by Irmgard A. Hunt ... *On Hitler's Mountain* is more than a memoir -- it is a portrait of a nation that lost its moral compass. It is a provocative story of a family and a community in a period and location in history that, though it is fast becoming remote to us, has important resonance for our own time.