



## September 2, 2020 – Good Reads Book Club Suggestions

We met in person at Whippanong Library to discuss what we've read during the last month. Mary started, by saying she had been reading a bunch of completely trashy romance novels and urban fantasy novels, as an attempt to escape the dumpster fire that has been 2020. None of them were really worth sharing the titles of.

### JoAnn read:

*Reasonable Doubt* by Philip Margolin. A magician gets murdered onstage, during his act.

*The Beginning of Everything* by Robyn Schneider. This is a teen book that was recommended by JoAnn's grandmother. "I love the conversations they have... what an eye opener about teens today!"

*The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. Boy, this was a tearjerker. This was also recommended by JoAnn's granddaughter. Kids with terminal cancer. JoAnn cried through the whole thing.

*Masked Prey* by John Sandford. The latest in the Lucas Davenport series. Before JoAnn could open her mouth, Becky told us all very firmly that she didn't like it AT ALL - in fact, she hated it. She said she still kind of holds a grudge against her dad because she wanted to give up reading it, but he said "keep going, it gets better" and then IT DID NOT GET BETTER. JoAnn thought it was okay, but the storyline, about a social media site with questionable and distasteful material - was a bit too close to home.

### Marianne read:

*The Last Tudor* by Philippa Gregory. This is an author whom Marianne normally enjoys, but this one was overly stuffed with complex intricate family relations. Did not finish it.

*Miracle Country* by Kendra Atleework. A memoir that blends family history with the history of the environment in California.

*Keeper of Lost Things* by Ruth Hogan and *Beekeeper's Ball* by Susan Wiggs - these were both sort of interesting, but not great.

*The House at Riverton* by Kate Morton. Book switches between the past (1914) and current time. Loved it.

*The Secrets We Keep* by Lara Prescott. Historical fiction focused on the woman on whom Boris Pasternak based Laura in *Dr Zhivago*. Enjoyable! Dottie, Angie and Mary read it too and also liked it.

*Black Swan of Paris* by Karen Robards. A very good WW2 story involving Nazis. The story was a little gruesome, but very good nonetheless.



Irene read:

*My Friend Anna* - nonfiction memoir by a woman who went to work at *Vanity Fair* magazine in NYC right out of college, and got scammed by another girl who was a “friend.” A short and quick read.

*Lonesome Dove* by Larry McMurtry. 858 pages long, so it’s a big commitment, a really terrific classic Western about two retired Texas Rangers.

*Boy from the Woods* by Harlan Coben. An easy read.

*Southern Guide to Slaying Vampires* by Grady Hendrix. A great book (Angie chimed in and said she liked it too) - genteel Charleston southern belles whose friendship was formed through their book club, battle an undead vampire who threatens the safety of children in the community.

*The Book of Longings* by Sue Monk Kidd. An interesting piece of historical fiction that focused on a woman named Anna, the wife of Jesus (during the time before he began preaching). It was interesting, you got a good sense about what it was like to be a woman living through that era.

Becky read:

*Normal People* by Sally Rooney. Don’t bother; Becky has no idea how it ended up on so many “best of” book lists. “There is nothing at all to recommend about it.”

*Outsider* by Linda Castillo. The latest entry in the Kate Burkholder series set in Amish country. It was a little different than her earlier books, and Becky thought it was a good read.

*The Silent Wife* by Karin Slaughter. Another entry in the series about Will Trent, the FBI medical examiner.

Charity read:

*The Room* by Johannes Carlson. A strange book, translated from Swedish. A quick read, quirky characters who work together in a generic company office, but Charity never did figure out what the point of the book is.

*The Ghost* by Robert Harris. An entertaining mystery about a man who takes a job as the ghostwriter for a politician who is writing a memoir. The previous man who’d taken the job died under mysterious circumstances. The ending was a little bit flat and was a letdown.

Angie read:

*Apeirigon* by Colum McCann. This novel is rooted in the real-world friendship between a Palestinian father and an Israeli father, both of whom lost daughters due to the violence and conflict between the two nations. The fathers meet at a grief group, bond over their losses, and this is the story of how their friendship flowers even in this kind of toxic environment.

*Motherland* by Leah Franqui. An American girl, newly married to an Indian man, uproots her life and moves to Mumbai. Her mother-in-law decides to leave her husband and move in with her



son and the American wife. The novel was interesting, funny, and sad. Angie would recommend it.

*Southern Guide to Slaying Vampires* by Grady Hendrix. Like Irene, Angie enjoyed this novel.

Dottie read:

*Someone Knows* which is an older Lisa Scottoline book about high schoolers who get involved in something bad and then 20 years later, the main character returns home for a funeral and things start to unravel.

*Force of Nature* by Jane Harper. A pretty good read, featuring investigator Aaron Falk (who first appeared in *The Dry*). An Australian corporation decides to hold a teambuilding event by hiking into the Australian outback. When they stagger back to camp several days late, one of the women is missing. Falk investigates.

*The Baker's Secret* by Stephen Kiernan. Set in Normandy during WW2, a young French baker who is compelled to bake for the occupying Nazis still manages to help the villagers by organizing a barter system and arranging to set aside some of the bread for her countrymen.

*Dear Edward* by Ann Napolitano. Edward is 12 years old, traveling with his family across the country to relocate to the West Coast. When the plane crashes, everyone dies except Edward. Adopted by his aunt and uncle, he struggles to cope with the enormity of what happened to him, how he can go on living. Chapters alternate between Edward's perspective and the stories of the others on the plane who perished.



### August 2020 Good Reads Book Club Suggestions

Our first in-person, socially distanced, chairs-far-apart meeting since March. It was so good to see each other in person. As usual we laughed a lot, talked about what we've read lately, and swapped books and book recommendations.

Dottie read:

*The Tenant* by Katrine Engberg. A debut mystery thriller set in Copenhagen. Really liked this one.

*A Great Reckoning* by Louise Penny. One of the Inspector Armand Gamache mystery series set in Canada.

*The Dry* by Jane Harper. A mystery set in a small drought-ridden town in the Australian outback. Liked it a lot.

*The Mother In Law* by Sally Hepworth. A mystery/thriller that switches back and forth between the mother in law's perspective and the daughter in law's perspective. Loved this!

*The Last Romantic* by Tara Conklin. Pretty good.

*The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett. Loved it.

*Sulfur Springs* by William Kent Kruger. Didn't realize this is several books into the Cork O'Connor series, so it assumed a lot of backstory that Dottie hadn't read. It would probably be better to start with the first in this series, *Iron Lake*.

*Conjure Women* Afia Atakora. Set on a Southern plantation before, during and after the Civil War, the book tells the story of a slave woman who's a healer, her daughter, and their master's daughter.

Pat D. read:

*Trust Me* by Hank Ryan. Save yourself the trouble, don't read this.

*Beautiful Bad* by Aimee Ward. Two women are best friends... until a man comes between them.

*The Silent Patient*. Pat thought it was terrible. Mary agreed, but many of the others in the group loved it. If you haven't read it yet, you might want to try it and see what YOU think.

*Perfect Stranger* by Megan Miranda. Pat didn't like it.

*The Boy at the Keyhole* by Stephen Giles. "Yuck," said Pat. You probably want to skip this one.

*How Hard Can It Be* by Alison Pearson. This was a cute book featuring a main character who is turning fifty, has a couple of sullen teenagers, and when her hubby loses his job, she must



re-enter the workforce and act as the breadwinner. The only problem is, no one will give her a second look after they hear she's 50, so she has to pretend to be younger.

*A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer (nonfiction). A heartbreaking book about an abused child. Difficult to read.

*Stranger in the Woods* by Michael Finkel (nonfiction). The tale of a man who decided to leave society and lived alone in the woods of Maine for over twenty years until he was finally caught when stealing supplies from houses in a nearby community.

*Ice Man* by Brenda Fowler (nonfiction). "The life and times of a prehistoric man found in an alpine glacier."

*Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult. A tough read, but good, that revolves around a school shooting event.

*The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah. A wonderful book, loved it. It resulted in a book hangover - nothing else could capture Pat's interest for a couple of days.

Becky read:

*The Whisper Network* by Chandler Baker. Harassment in the workplace - #MeToo.

*Mr. Nobody* by Catherine Steadman. It was really good, about a guy with amnesia. Becky gave it to her boyfriend who doesn't usually like to read, and he liked it too.

*Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens. It was so good - Becky had a big book hangover after this one.

*All Adults Here* by Emma Staub. It was a good read.

*The Lies that Bind* by Emily Giffin. While Becky has enjoyed other books by Giffin, she really didn't like this one and wouldn't recommend it.

Angie read:

*The Tenant* by Katrine Engberg. A murder mystery with lots of suspects, a good read (Dottie also reviewed this book).

*The Book of Longing* by Sue Monk Kidd. Anna, a woman living in the same time period as Jesus, becomes a scribe of stories about women and in fact becomes involved in a relationship with Jesus.

Marianne read:

*The Book of Lost Friends* by Lisa Wingate

*Fatal Pursuit* by Martin Walker



*The Room on Rue Amelie* by Kristin Harmel

*A Woman is No Man* by Etaf Rum

*The Paris Library* by Janet Charles

*The Weight of a Piano* by Chris Cander. Marianne loved it. I'll steal Amazon's blurb about it: "A tour-de-force about two women and the piano that inexorably ties their lives together through time and across continents, for better and for worse."

*Code Name Helene* by Ariel Lawhon

*The Forgotten Letters of Esther Durrant* by Kayte Nunn. A good story.

*Mistress of the Ritz* by Melanie Benjamin.

*Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

*The Rug Merchant* by Sally Rooney

*Normal People* by Sally Rooney - big buzz, but didn't like the book as much as all the reviewers did.

*The Lost Diary of Venice* by Margaux deRoux.

Margaret read:

*The Good House* by Ann Leary. A woman who's a realtor in a small Massachusetts town befriends a new person when she sells them a house, and uncovers some dangerous secrets. Margaret really liked it.

*Secret Garden* by Katie Fforde

*Winter Garden* by Kristin Hannah. A marvelous book, engaging from the moment Margaret picked it up. A mother and her daughters, who emigrated from Russia after World War II, are at the crossroads of their lives. Absolutely fabulous.

JoAnn read:

*Winter Solstice* by Rosamunde Pilcher. Five people meet during a storm. A wonderful read.

*The Messenger of Athens* and *The Taint of Midas* by Anne Zouroudi - the first two books in a fascinating and engrossing mystery series set in the Greek Islands. You learn a lot about the people, their food and customs. JoAnn liked both books.

*The Goodbye Man* by Jeffrey Deaver.

*Fair Warning* by Michael Connelly - featuring Jack McEvoy, a veteran reporter who has appeared in earlier Connelly books



*The Big Lie* by James Grippando. "It was so bad, I was beside myself. A terrible story. All the characters are awful people and they all lie."

*The Blue Bedroom* by Rosamunde Pilcher. Peaceful and lovely short stories.

Charity read:

A lot of inexpensive Kindle books for escapism

*The French Girl* by Lexie Elliott. Psychological suspense. A group of friends goes to France. A girl goes missing. Ten years later, the girl's body is found. Which of the friends did the deed? You'll have to read it to find out.

Mary read:

*The Searchers* by Alan LeMay - an old Western (it was made into a popular John Wayne movie). Really tragic and sad, but well-written.

*Mother Land* by Leah Franqui

*The Relentless Moon* by Mary Robinette Kowal

*Planetside* by Michael Mammay

*Coders: the making of a new tribe* by Clive Thompson (nonfiction)

*The Box: how the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy bigger* by Marc Levinson (nonfiction)

*As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales from the Making of The Princess Bride* by Cary Elwes (nonfiction). I listened to this audiobook, which was narrated by Elwes, the guy who played Westley in the movie. A fun and enjoyable, completely escapist listen.

*The Lost and Found Book Shop* by Susan Wiggs



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## July 2020 Good Reads Book Club Reading Suggestions

Our next meeting is August 5th, location TBD. Here are my notes from our July 1st meeting, which was a small group - just JoAnn, Irene and Mary. Hope you are all hanging in there, staying safe, and reading some good stuff. See you soon! --Mary

### **Irene read:**

Irene's in the middle of reading *Lonesome Dove* by Larry McMurtry, which Mary suggested to her. She's really liking it - it's a long book (800 pages!) but so easy to read, you connect right away with the characters. Quite enjoyable.

*Escape Artist* by Brad Meltzer - A guy who serves as a mortician for the government notices some strange things as he takes care of some bodies of servicemen, and investigates. Very good - not your typical detective, and an interesting story.

*The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett - liked it.

*Lost Lake* by Sarah Addison Allen - enjoyable!

*The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis - a kid's book Irene had never read. She enjoyed it.

### **JoAnn read:**

*The Perfect Girlfriend* by Karen Hamilton. Becky gave this to JoAnn to read. It was a psychological thriller and quite a creepy read featuring a psychopathic woman who stalked a guy she wanted to date.. Unputdownable, but frustrating. JoAnn confessed that at one point, she got so frustrated that she screamed out loud.

*The Boy from the Woods* by Harlan Coben. A 6-year-old boy is found living in the woods with no idea where he came from. He's adopted but never quite fits in, and after he grows up he ends up back in the woods trying to find a missing girl. The book, set in Bergen County, has themes of guilt and responsibility.

*Texas Outlaw* by James Patterson. The second book in the Rory Yates series. A quick and entertaining read.

*Deadlock* by Iris Johansen. A woman works for the UN, trying to extricate artifacts from war-torn countries and then give the artifacts back after things calm down in that country. While in Afghanistan with her team she uncovers an artifact in the shape of a hammer. It might be important -- she soon gets attacked - but luckily, a hot CIA guy saves her in the nick of time. A good diversion.





*The Chemist* by Stephenie Meyer. A woman who was involved in a black site chemistry lab has to go on the run to escape death. A good diversion from the dumpster fire that is 2020.

**Mary read:**

*How the Penguins Saved Veronica* by Hazel Pryor (from the author of *Ellie and the Harpmaker*). Liked the beginning but lost interest towards the end.

*I Was Told It Would Get Easier* by Abbi Waxman. Last year we read *Other People's Houses*, an earlier book by this author. This one just came out in June and features alternating chapters told from the perspective of a teenager and her mom, who are on a tour of colleges for the teen. I liked it a lot.

*Dance Away With Me* by Susan Elizabeth Phillips. This is one of my favorite romance writers and I liked this story, though it wasn't my favorite of hers.

*Always the Last to Know* by Kristan Higgins. When Sophie's dad suffers a heart attack she rushes home to help care for him. But unbeknownst to her, the father had been having an affair, and the mother had been just about to divorce him when the stroke occurred. An interesting story of a family in crisis and how they resolve it.

*The Girl He Used to Know* by Tracey Graves. Annika and Jonathan first met and fell in love in college, but broke up and went their separate ways. When they meet again 10 years later, the attraction and strong feelings they once shared are instantly rekindled, but until they confront the fears and anxieties that drove them apart, their second chance will end before it truly begins. [I stole this description from Amazon! --Mary]



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## June 2020 Good Reads Book Club Reading Suggestions

Our next book club meeting will be on Wednesday July 1st, at 7 pm, location TBD.

### **Irene read:**

*Cutthroat* by Stuart Woods. Not one of his best - don't waste your time.

*Radium Girls* by Kate Moore. Nonfiction about the factory girls who painted radium onto watch faces at an Orange, NJ Westclox factory before it was known to be toxic, and the aftermath. Very interesting.

*Unorthodox* by Deborah Feldman. This woman writes about how she ended up leaving an ultra-orthodox Jewish sect. It was very interesting. (There's also a show on Netflix based on the book.)

### **Dottie read:**

*The Language of Flowers* by Vanessa Diffenbaugh. A very good story, enjoyed it quite a bit. Most everyone else has read it except Becky, so Becky will get it next.

*When We Were Vikings* by Andrew McDonald. It got good reviews, but Dottie didn't love it and thought the story of a 20-year old special needs kid named Zelda was just not that realistic.

### **Angie read:**

*Conjure Women* by Afia Atakora. This debut novel features a healer woman who is a slave on a plantation. She is training her daughter to follow in her footsteps. The perspective shifts between time periods - before the Civil War, during the War, and then after they have been freed. Very good! Will give to Dottie next.

*The Institute* by Steven King, Angie loved it. Good characters, not too wacko. A black ops government operation kidnaps kids and trains them to use their psychic abilities as weapons. Well written, very long, a perfect pandemic read.

### **Margaret read:**

*Finding Dorothy* by Elizabeth Letts. Loved this - it was historical fiction featuring Maude, the wife of L. Frank Baum (writer of *Wizard of Oz*). Maud is a strong and powerful woman. She visits the set of the movie and befriends Judy Garland, tries to help her blossom.

*The Bookshop at the Water's Edge* by Patti Callahan Henry. Two childhood friends revisit the small Southern town where they grew up, and end up uncovering some secrets and resolving some unfinished business. A very good book.

*Ranch of Dreams* by Cleveland Amory. An incredible book, and so interesting, written by mystery writer Cleveland Amory. The story of how he loved and rescued animals in their old age to live out the rest of their lives in comfort on his "Ranch of Dreams."



**Becky read:**

*What You Don't Know* by JoAnn Chaney - this is the other book by the author of the terrific thriller we read earlier this year, *As Long As We Both Shall Live*. A very enjoyable read (if you like fiction about serial killers).

*No Stone Unturned* by Andrea Kane. It features a woman with psychic abilities so Becky really didn't care for it.

**JoAnn read:**

*The Break Down* by B. A. Paris. A great, twisty, psychological thriller.

*The Shell Seekers* by Rosamunde Pilcher. Loved it, it was such a good book, want to re-read it already.

*I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith. A young girl's coming-of-age diary. Written in the 1930s, the book's protagonist lives in a falling-down old castle with her down-at-heels family in the British countryside.

*The Ghost* by Robert Harris. Because she thought it was going to be about ACTUAL ghosts, JoAnn was reluctant to pick this up at first. But then she gave it a try and discovered it's not about ghosts at all, the main character is a ghost writer for a famous person. It's a good thriller.

**Mary read:**

*When We Do Harm* by Danielle Ofri - nonfiction about the errors that doctors and hospitals make and how things need to change

*The Best Man* by Kristan Higgins - funny, light romantic comedy

*Beach Read* by Emily Henry - a cute, light read

*Ascent* and *The Edge* by Roland Smith - the second and third in a trilogy featuring a 13-year old extreme mountain climber. Really good.



## May 2020 Good Reads Book Club Reading Suggestions

We didn't have a specific book to discuss, just chatted about what we've been reading during the last few weeks.

**Dottie** finished *This Tender Land* by William Kent Kruger and loved it.

Read *The Passengers* by John Marrs. Angie and JoAnn had read this one too, and enjoyed it. Driverless cars were hacked and suddenly became killing machines to the people trapped inside.

**Irene** has been really enjoying Cloud Library eBooks! (Dottie and Angie wanted to get in on it, so we did a brief "how to.")

Irene also read *The Last Bathing Beauty* by Amy Sue Nathan. It was trashy, but fun.

and *Inheritance* by Dani Shapiro. The memoir of a woman who learns as an adult that her DNA does not match that of the man she knew as her father.

and *Lost Girls of Paris* by Pam Jenoff. I'll let Amazon describe it: "From the author of the runaway bestseller *The Orphan's Tale* comes a remarkable story of friendship and courage centered around three women and a ring of female secret agents during World War II."

and *The Banker's Wife* by Christina Alger. The plot involved offshore accounts in Swiss banks, corruption, and Presidential libraries. A very good read.

and *The Last Interview* - a very interesting collection of interviews with the late Anthony Bourdain. Very interesting.

and *Clementine* by Marie Benedict - a portrait of Winston Churchill's wife and how dependent they were upon each other.

**JoAnn** read a lot this month. *The Murder House* by James Patterson was very good, as was *Lost* (yet another by Patterson).

*Nine, Ten* is a middle-grade story about four kids whose families were affected by 9/11, where they were when the event happened and how they reacted. (Spoiler: none of the family members died in the story.)

*Last Resort* by Linwood Barclay - the thriller writer's autobiography of spending his summers at a remote fishing camp when he was a kid. JoAnn liked it very much, which made Mary happy because Mary was the one who recommended it.

*Search and Destroy* by James Hilton, *Coyote* by Linda Barnes, *Flat Lake in Winter* by Joseph Klemperer, and *Indemnity Only* by Sara Paretsky. These thrillers & mysteries were a good read, they kept JoAnn's mind off the pandemic.



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**Angie** confessed (because we are among friends) that she's been reading a lot of fluff on her kindle. But she also read *Peyton Place* by Grace Metalious, for another book club she's in. The book was a pleasant surprise, because Angie remembers the TV show was just kind of sleazy. The book was well-written and actually reminded Angie of *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf. Quirky characters, good writing -- Angie really enjoyed it and encourages the rest of us to give it a shot. (The book was such a scandal when it first was published, but the most scandalous thing is an unwed mother. Oh, how the world has changed.)

**Margaret** read *The Language of Flowers* by Vanessa Diffenbach. An excellent read about an orphan girl who bounces between multiple foster homes until finally she finds a home with a florist.

*The Keeper of Lost Things* by Ruth Hogan. A man spent half his life collecting lost objects to atone for something he did years ago. After he dies, he leaves his collection to his assistant with instructions to try and re-unite the objects with their owners. A really nice read.

*Finding Dorothy* by Elizabeth Letts. Full report next time, as Margaret is only 2 chapters in. Amazon says: "This richly imagined novel tells the story behind *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the book that inspired the iconic film, through the eyes of author L. Frank Baum's intrepid wife, Maud."

**Charity** has been reading some inexpensive Kindle mysteries, which are entertaining and escapist. Exactly what is needed.

**Mary** has been rereading favorite series, including the Amelia Peabody series by Elizabeth Peters (the first one was *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, which JoAnn read and enjoyed) and the *Cainsville* series by Kelley Armstrong (the first one is *Omens*. Angie and Mary love this series. The rest of you don't know what you're missing. So there.)

*Peak* by Roland Smith - a teen novel featuring a kid whose dad is a famous mountaineer. He goes with his dad on an expedition to Everest and tries to make it to the top. I really enjoyed the book, as did my dad. It was written well, had a decent plot, and wasn't too long of a read.

*88 Names* by Matt Ruff - a thriller about people who play video games for a living. No one else would enjoy it.



### April 2020 Good Reads Book Club Reading Suggestions

For the April meeting I had assigned *The Whistling Season* by Ivan Doig. I warned you that it was a slow read, and it turned out to be too slow for several people. But I know that at least two of us were able to get into the book and really enjoyed it after they got going.

#### Irene read:

*The Guardian* by John Grisham. Wasn't impressed with it, really seemed to drag. Irene's been disappointed in his last two (the one before this was *Camino Island*. Disappointing.

*Beyond the Ice Limit* by Preston & Child. It was pretty good, and really picked up speed and got more interesting in the last 100 pages.

*Wolf Pack* by C. J. Box - this is one of the Joe Pickett mysteries, the first one Irene has enjoyed and she really liked it. Looking forward to reading more of them.

Irene also reported that she has physical copies of *The Guardian*, *Beyond the Ice Limit* and *Wolf Pack*. Irene also has a supply of jigsaw puzzles she's happy to share. Just contact her. Contact her if you want to arrange to borrow any of these things.

Rachel had a hard time concentrating on reading an actual book, but this month she did listen to *Leadership in Turbulent Times* by Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. It was an excellent listen, the story of four extraordinary presidents. The book was broken into five sections, each having its own reader. The first four sections were about the individuals, and then Doris Kearns Goodwin read the last part. Rachel would highly recommend this.

#### Dottie read three books.

*The Deserter* by Nelson DeMille

Read and liked by several in the book club already. It's about two army investigators on the hunt in Venezuela for an army deserter. I was a bit overwhelmed by the amount and type of violent killings in it but otherwise it keeps your interest and is a good suspenseful story. 4 out of 5 stars

*No Stone Unturned* by Andrea Kane

Another one of her Forensic Instincts series. Each are stand alone, as I had not read any prior and it wasn't necessary. The Forensic Instincts is a NY investigative company. This story centers around a jewelry designer (Fiona, sister to one on that team) who finds her friend, antique dealer (Rose) murdered. Rose had been researching the Celtic design in a tapestry belonging to Fiona's family. It's a good story. 3 stars out of 5. Nothing spectacular, nor boring.

*The Secrets We Kept* by Lara Prescott

Historical fiction. The true story of a CIA plot to infiltrate the Soviets with the book, Dr. Zhivago. The book is in chapters (East/West) One story is the story of two secretaries in Washington DC, pulled from a typing pool to smuggle the book out of the Soviet Union. The other story is that of the love affair between the author, Pasternak and his mistress, Olga. Loved this book. A great story. Easy to read. Very interesting story. 5 out of 5 stars



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Margaret read most of *The Whistling Season* and sort of enjoyed it, but with all the stuff going on in the world she was up for a light read, so the next book she read was *The Wanderer* by Robyn Carr. A very good read, nice and light. Margaret also read *No One Is Too Small To Make A Difference* by young climate activist Greta Thunberg. A really inspirational and interesting read.

Margaret is also reading a book of meditations, reflections and prayers by Maria Shriver, which is helping keep her grounded during these crazy times.

Mary read two Regency romances (set in England in the late 1800s) by Mimi Matthews. It's a series about four orphaned Devonshire boys and the women they end up falling in love with. Just the ticket for a small distraction from our current reality.

Jo Ann read:

*The Whistling Season* - yes, it was slow, but Jo Ann really liked it.

*A Spark of Life* by Jodi Picoult. Recommended by another book clubber, but Jo Ann didn't like it. The format was weird: the first chapter was the end of the story, and then each chapter moved back one hour earlier in time.

*The Long Range* by C. J. Box - the latest book in the Joe Pickett series, #20. Fabulous!

*Blind Side* by James Patterson.

*The Department of Sensitive Crimes* by Alexander McCall Smith. A Swedish detective bureau takes on strange and difficult cases. Funny and warm-hearted book. Recommended.

*Red Lotus* by Chris Bohjalian. An ER doctor meets and starts dating a guy she met in the ER, who is a bicyclist. It's only after they've been dating for several months when they are on a trip together, that she realizes this guy is not what he seems, and is actually a peddler of death. Lots of intrigue.



### March 2020 Good Reads Book Club

We've changed our June date (thank you for accommodating me!) and our June meeting will now take place on **Thursday, June 11**.

For our March book club, we read *As Long As We Both Shall Live* by JoAnn Chaney. It was one that I recommended based on the strength of the reviews, but I hadn't "pre-read" it so I wasn't sure if it would be good. But we all agreed that it was great! Several of us have recommended the book to other people, even to the library staff. JoAnn summed it up when she said "I thought I knew what it was going to be... but I was wrong." Just a fun read.

For April we will read *The Whistling Season* by Ivan Doig. It's a much slower-paced book than *As Long As We Both Shall Live*, and has, a similar feel to *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf or maybe *Virgil Wander* by Leif Enger (in my opinion). I hope you enjoy it but if you can't get into it, not to worry, just set it aside and pick up something else. Life's too short to read books you don't like!

JoAnn read:

*Professor Chandra Follows His Bliss*. A 68-year old professor takes stock of his life and realizes his kids don't talk to him and he's not happy. He tries to find things that make him happy. Not a great ending - basically, "work isn't everything" which we kind of already know. Not recommended.

*The Museum of Desire* by Jonathan Kellerman. A continuation of the Alex Delaware / Det. Sturgis series. A psychological thriller. It starts with four dead people in a car. They have no reason to know each other and no reason why they should all end up murdered in the same car. So what's the story? How are they connected? (JoAnn will never tell. You'll have to read it yourself.)

*House on Fire* by Joseph Finder. Nick's old army buddy ODs on heroin, and at the funeral, Nick is approached by someone who suggests this may not have been an accident.... Investigation and some mayhem ensue.

*The Passenger* by John Marrs. Eight individuals are sentenced to death when a hacker takes over the controls of their self-driving cars and announces to them that within 2 hours they'll be dead. "It was super, super, super bad. Angie will love it!"

*Into the Fire* by Gregg Hurwitz. The latest in the Orphan X series, and it's a good read.

Irene read:

*Three Hours in Paris* by Cara Black. A standalone novel by the author of the Aimee LeDuc





mystery series, this takes place in Paris during World War II. An American sharpshooter is smuggled into Paris and her job is to assassinate Hitler. A good read, and very entertaining.

*House on Endless Waters* by Emuna Elon. In present-day Amsterdam, a well-known author researches his mother's history and what happened to her during World War II. The format of the book was confusing, as it kept changing viewpoints. Even within each chapter, there'd be a present-day paragraph and then a paragraph written in his mother's past. Irene liked it, but you really had to pay attention to what you were reading.

Margaret read:

*Tomorrow There Will Be Apricots* by Jessica Soffer. A great story about family, love, and how food is central to both. The protagonist is a young girl whose mother is a well-known chef.

*Better* by Amy Robach. Nonfiction memoir by the TV personality who was diagnosed with breast cancer after she had a mammogram on-air, six years ago. It's an honest look at her struggles and her story. Now, years later, she is alive and healthy. Margaret said it is an amazing book.

Charity read:

*Chilling Effect* by Valerie Valdez. Science fiction. "Kidnappers. Alien emperors. Psychic cats. AND she's out of coffee." Charity enjoyed it, but it's not something she thinks anyone else (except Mary and Angie, maybe) would enjoy.

Becky read:

*The Guardians* by John Grisham. Enjoyed it.

*Bitterroots* by C. J. Box. This was a standalone, and Becky didn't care for it.

*Night Fire* by Michael Connelly. Becky was so annoyed at the stuff Harry Bosch pulled in this

book that she says she'll never read another Connelly. *House on Fire* by Joseph Finder - *enjoyed it*

*The Hating Game* by Sally Thorne. A fun read (chick-lit) *When You See Me* by Lisa Gardner. Good.

*The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. Becky loved it. Dottie said she had also enjoyed it quite a lot, while Irene said she'd tried to read it several times but couldn't get into it.

*Into the Fire* by Gregg Hurwitz. Enjoyed it.

Pat read:

*The Deserter* by Nelson DeMille. A special forces captain in Afghanistan goes AWOL and is



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captured by the enemy. Then how does he end up in Argentina several years later? The writing is so suspenseful and DeMille is a great writer. Loved this one.

*The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett. Pat enjoyed this book. (Angie and Mary, who'd also read it, said they didn't really care for it.)

Angie read:

*Tideland* by Philippa Gregory. Historical fiction set in England in the 1600s. A poor healer woman whose husband has deserted her tries to survive in the close-minded town where she lives. Her neighbors need her help but also fear her. A lot of drama, but an enjoyable read, and Angie would recommend it.

Rachel read:

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. The book was very strange, and Rachel couldn't quite figure out what was going on. And the ending was pretty ambiguous, left you hanging. Rachel doesn't recommend it (but Mary and Charity previously read it and both enjoyed it). To each their own!

Dottie read:

*A Nearly Normal Family* by M. T. Edvarsson. A seemingly close-knit family is rocked when the eighteen-year-old daughter is accused of the murder of an older man she's been seeing on the sly. Her father is a pastor and her mother is a lawyer. The book has three narratives, first from the perspective of the father, then the girl, and finally the mother. "What would you do to protect your kids?"

*A Spark of Joy* by Jodi Picoult. This had been recommended by Marianne a few months ago. It was a thought-provoking book that is set at a reproductive health clinic. The book starts at the end of the story and every chapter is one hour in the past. Becky agreed with Dottie that Picoult's books always make you think. Mary and Rachel, meanwhile, are still holding grudges against Picoult for the way her first bestseller - *My Sister's Keeper* - ended (it was published in 2004). "As God is my witness, I will NEVER

read another book by Picoult," Mary vowed at the time. And she's held that grudge for twenty-six years.

*Kingdomtide* by Rye Curtis. This was another one that Marianne recommended. A seventy-two year old woman survives a plane crash in a remote area. The story is told in alternating perspectives between her and the park ranger who's trying to find her. Dottie enjoyed it.

Mary read:

*Akin* by Emma Donoghue. This was the selection of the Mount Tabor book club and after the librarian assured Mary that it is not as creepy as her earlier book *Room*, Mary decided to give it a shot. It was pretty good. It's going to be one of our book club books later this year.



*The Good Killer* by Harry Dolan. Iraqi war veteran Sean Tennant and his girlfriend Molly have managed to stay off the grid for years, but when Sean saves people at the mall from a mass shooter, his face pops up in the news, and suddenly, he and Molly are on the run from some very, very bad people. The book got great reviews but it was too violent for Mary, so she gave it to the more bloodthirsty Becky to read.



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### February 2020 Good Reads Book Club

The book we read for this meeting was *Other People's Houses* by Abby Waxman. Although no one absolutely hated it, several of us thought it was just “ehhh” or no big deal. She’s a good writer and it was fast-paced, and some of it was funny, but there were a lot of characters and some of us found it hard to follow. For next month we’ll read *As Long As We Both Shall Live* by Jo Anne Chaney.

JoAnn read:

*The River Murders* by James Born (a frequent co-writer with James Patterson). Very non-believable, and very badly written.

*The Hard Ticket Home* by David Housewright. A fun thriller featuring a private investigator who is hired to find the missing sister of a girl who needs a bone marrow transplant (because the sister is a donor match).

*The Confession Club* by Elizabeth Berg. A group of women confess their sins to each other. It’s a good story, Jo Ann liked it.

*You’ve Been Volunteered* by Lori Gelman. Not one of Jo Ann’s favorite reads, but the snarky emails written by the protagonist were fun to read.

*A Minute to Midnight* by David Baldacci. The 2nd in his series featuring female FBI agent Atlee Pine. Very good.

*Night Fire* by Michael Connelly. It was okay, not his best work.

*What Red Was* by Rosie Price. An excellent, really good story, and well-written.

*Hindsight* by Iris Johansen. A woman who was once blind but is now able to see, uses her powers of observation to help in an investigation.

*The Deserter* by Nelson DeMille. A really superior read; highly recommended. A good story and a great ending. Unputdownable!

Marianne read

*A Spark of Light* by Jodi Picoult, set in a women’s reproductive clinic. A good story.

*Goodnight from London* by Jennifer Robson. Another great piece of historical fiction from the author of *The Gown*. Marianne liked *The Gown* better, but this was good too. It’s set in England during World War II and the main character is a young American reporter who is stationed there.

*Dear George, Dear Mary* by Mary Calvi (who is a news anchor on Channel 2). This is an enjoyable, wonderful piece of historical fiction about the love life of a young George Washington.



*The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. An interesting story, it was an ok read

*The Summer Before the War* by Helen Simonson. This was recently read by the Montville book club, and the consensus of their group (which Marianne agreed with) was "Don't bother--" it's not worth the time.

*The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah. An excellent story.

*The Girl They Left Behind* by Roxanne Veletzos. A fabulous story, an excellent book about what

it was like in Romania after World War 2. Sad and eye-opening.

*Cilka's Journey* by Heather Morris. This nonfiction book is by the author of *The Tattooist of*

*Auschwitz*. It's quite a story, and it is hard to read about what people went through. *Sold on a Monday* by Kristina McMorris - a very good story

*The Women in the Castle* by Jessica Shattuck. This was an interesting read about the lives of three women whose husbands were executed for trying to assassinate Hitler. It focuses on what their lives were like after the war. Strong female characters.

Dottie read:

*The Stationery Shop* by Marjan Kamali. Everyone in the book club who's read it has liked it very much. A good book, but sad.

*The Reckless Oath We Made* by Bryn Greenwood. The book is about two misfit kids: Zee, a girl, and Gentry, a boy who is on the spectrum (high-functioning) and believes his job is to protect Zee like a knight in shining armor. Dottie is still not quite sure if she liked the book.

*Last Hope Island* by Lynne Olsen. Nonfiction about what England was like during World War 2 and how expatriates from occupied countries helped so much with the war effort.

Rachel read:

*Red War* by Kyle Mills - the latest in the Mitch Rapp series. Unfortunately Rachel did not like this one very much

*The Wife Between Us* by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen. Very good.

*An Anonymous Girl* (also by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen) - a very good

psychological thriller.

*House of Gold* by Natasha Solomons - Enjoyable.

Angie read:

*After the Flood* by Cassandra Montag. A post-apocalyptic book of survival, set in the near-distant future. Angie thought it was an interesting story and recommended it to Mary.

*Queen Bee* by Dorothea Benton Frank. "Let's not even go there." Angie was not a fan.



*Guess Who* by Chris McGeorge. An excellent thriller set in London that caught Angie's attention because of the blurb on the front: "One room. Five suspects. Three hours to find a killer." It kept her on the edge of her seat. Highly recommended.

Pat read:

*Blue Moon* by Lee Child. Didn't like it - it seems like the books are getting to be all the same and too predictable.

*Night Fire* by Michael Connelly - the latest Bosch book

*Redemption* by David Baldacci, featuring Detective Amos Decker. A very good thriller.

*Bloody Genius* by John Sandford - another great book featuring Virgil Flowers, loved it.

*How the Dead Speak* by Val McDermid. Usually Pat likes her books, but not this one - she didn't like any of the characters.

Irene read

*A Better Man*, the new Louise Penny. It was one of the better ones in the series, very good.

*The Christmas Boutique* by Jennifer Chiaverini - one of the Elm Creek Quilt series

*Blood on Snow* by Jo Nesbo. The main character is a hit man. A very weird read, involving a

love affair with a deaf mute.

*Criss Cross* by Patterson. The latest Alex Cross. Terrible.

*Pandora's Room* by Christopher Golden. An archaeological dig in Turkey. A typical adventure thriller.

*Who Let the Dogs Out* by David Rosenfelt- one of the Andy Carpenter mysteries

Mary read

*You Can Only Yell At Me For One Thing At A Time: Rules for Couples* by Patricia Marx and Roz Chast

*Goodnight from London* by Jennifer Robson *The Royal We* by Heather Cocks

*Dear Edward* by Ann Napolitano