



January 2021 – Good Reads Book Club suggestions

For tonight's meeting we read a teen mystery, *Truly Devious* by Maureen Johnson. Many of us liked it (but didn't love it) and thought it was an entertaining COVID read. JoAnn was frustrated that it ended on a cliffhanger (which is because it's part of a trilogy) but no one seemed interested enough in the story to read the second or third books.

Our next meeting (February 3rd) will also be via Zoom. We'll discuss *The Road from Coorain*, Jill Ker Conway's memoir of growing up in the remote Australian outback. She was the first person in her family to attend university (in Sydney, Australia) and later became the first woman president of Smith College in Massachusetts

JoAnn read:

Silent Bite by David Rosenfelt, an Andy Carpenter mystery. A fun read, especially if you like dogs. This series is set in and around Paterson.

Total Power - a Mitch Rapp thriller by Kyle Mills (who took over writing the series when Vince Flynn passed away). An interesting read - the villains had the ability to take out all the power grids in the US. A little scary because it's possible

The Secrets We Kept by Lara Prescott.

A really interesting book, Cold War era Dr Zhivago writer's lover. Dottie and Angie had also read it (probably Marianne too).

Daylight by David Baldacci. Atlee Pine is an FBI officer and her twin sister disappeared when she was 6 years old, each book is a thriller on its own but also provides more info on how she can find her sister.

Winter People by Jennifer McMahon. Not really JoAnn's kind of book, Supernatural stuff, probably going to be perfect for Angie, so JoAnn is going to save it for Angie.

Irene read:

Bell in the Lake - very good. Took a while to get into it because it was hard to get the hang of all the names, but well worth reading. If you want to read it, Irene has it at her house. (Dottie and Marianne both also loved it)

Girl who Wrote in Silk by Kelly Estes --not a lot of substance, and very predictable - was a little disappointed in the book, it was only ok

The Mystery of Mrs. Christie by Marie Benedict. Irene had read and enjoyed a few of Marie Benedict's earlier historical fiction novels, but felt that this one is REALLY good. It focuses on her relationship with her husband and also on the period of time during which Christie mysteriously went missing for several weeks.

Charity read:



A couple of mysteries from author Elly Griffiths's series featuring forensic anthropologist Dr Ruth Galloway mystery. It's a good series, not serial-killer-y. The main character and the people she works with show up in each book and it's nice to see them again, they're familiar people, they solve a crime together, it's a nice escapist read.

Margaret read:

Heft by Liz Moore. A depressing, but good read. A very overweight recluse had previously been a professor in a college but now he never leaves the house. She wrote compassionately about the characters, it wasn't a happy ending by any means. Margaret's sister brought it to her. It was sad on so many levels.

When The Morning Glory Blooms by Cynthia Ruchti. A woman opens her home to unwed mothers. Three different decades, talks about her involvement with these women and it was a fabulous good story - fascinating, a story of hope, resilience and tenderness. Out of nothing, she was able to help these people. A very good read.

Look Again by Lisa Scottoline. A thriller featuring a woman whose adopted son may have been kidnapped from his real parents - An fascinating story about a woman who can't let go of her investigation even when it might lead to harm for her and her child. Ends on a good note.

Where the Crawdads Sing - fabulous read. You didn't want to put it down. A very good read.

Dottie read:

The Family Upstairs by Lisa Jewell
Enjoyable read. A good story. But complicated.

A long petal in the sea - Isabel Allende - historical fiction. A good, if complicated, family story. It begins in Spain during the time when Franco is coming to power.

A Noise Downstairs by Linwood Barclay. A good twisty mystery story.

The Guest List by Lucy Foley. Similar plot as *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie.

The Flight Attendant Chris Bohjalian - it was an okay read. The flight attendant is constantly drinking and having sex with everyone and then wakes up in bed next to a guy whose throat was slashed. Do we even care if she did it? And at the end, it gets kind of weird.

The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett - Dottie really liked it (but Angie read it too and just didn't like it)

Angie read:

The Vanishing Half - a great book for a book club that likes to discuss stuff. Very well written.

The Red Lotus by Chris Bohjalian. His books are really in depth. It's a very good thriller that takes place partly in NYC and partly Vietnam, featuring an ER doctor whose boyfriend, unbeknownst to her, has very bad intentions. It was very good. (JoAnn had read it too, and thought it was excellent.)



Into the Fire by Gregg Hurwitz- a fast paced, bloody, murder-y thriller. Angie loved it

The Boy from the Woods - Harlan Coben - Angie thought it was a bit ridiculous, everything was tied up too neatly at the end. However, it was a good escapist pandemic read.

Within Arms Reach by Ann Napolitano - The author published *Dear Edward*, which was a fairly popular book in 2020 that several of us read. *Within Arms Reach* was her first novel, published around 2004 - about a truly dysfunctional large Irish family. Selfish, spoiled, whiny, mean-spirited, angry siblings and grandchildren all vying for the attention of the grandmother, who was the matriarch of the family. It wasn't actually a bad book and the writing was good, but the characters were terrible people..

Mary read:

Squeeze Me by Carl Hiaasen - even though I know JoAnn hated the book, I thought it was pretty funny. It was very snarky.

After the Fire by Will Hill. Based loosely on what happened at the Branch Davidians cult in Waco Texas, this teen novel features a young girl who has been rescued from the flaming wreckage of the only home she's ever known. A well-meaning psychiatrist and an FBI investigator try to help her piece together what has happened, but she's so indoctrinated that she isn't sure whether she can trust them. The book is written in the first person so you really get to know what it might be like to be this person. I liked it.

The Law of Innocence by Michael Connelly - Mickey Haller is framed for murder when a body is found in his Lincoln's trunk during a "routine" traffic stop. Incarcerated while awaiting trial, he works with his team to figure out who framed him so they can prove his innocence. In the process, they run afoul of the FBI, which has its own interest in the case.

The Gifted School by Bruce Holsinger. Conflict arises between parents in a small Colorado town, when their kids compete for a chance to attend the new "gifted" magnet school. Predictably, the parents' behavior becomes more and more bizarre and things fall apart.

Group: How One Therapist and a Circle of Strangers Saved My Life by Christie Tate. This is the memoir of a lonely, neurotic woman who finds salvation in a therapy group she attends.

The Murder of My Aunt by Richard Hull. Originally published in the 1930s, this was a pretty funny mystery with a surprise twist at the end.

Travel Light, Move Fast by Alexandra Fuller. This woman grew up on a hardscrabble farm in war-torn Rhodesia. This is her third memoir, and focuses mostly on the death of her father and how she and her family try to move past it. She's an interesting writer and gives you a real sense of the places she's writing about.