



April 2021 Good Reads Book Club suggestions

The book we read for April is *Conditional Citizens* by Laila Lalami, and while the book was interesting, many of us didn't like it at all. So we moved quickly on to the other books we'd read this month.

Dottie read:

Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate. Liked the book, but it alternated between scenes from the past and from the present. Dottie liked the story from the past better, so she skipped some of the present-day chapters.

The Lost Apothecary by Sarah Penner. Another book with alternating viewpoints (past and present). In the present, a history teacher goes on a trip to London without her cheating husband. She investigates a piece of jar she finds, which leads her back to the part of the book set in the 1700s, featuring a female apothecary. Dottie enjoyed this and would recommend it.

One By One by Ruth Ware - A corporate ski retreat on a snowy, isolated mountain goes very wrong. This is in the style of *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie.

The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue by V. E. Schwab. In the 1700s, French girl Addie LaRue makes a deal with the devil to live forever. He grants her wish, but also curses her to be forgotten by everyone she meets. 300 years later, in the present day, she meets a man in a book store who remembers her name, and everything changes.

Rachel read:

Bones Never Lie and *Bones on Ice* by Kathy Reichs (both thrillers feature forensic archaeologist Temperance Brennan)

Masked Prey by John Sandford. It was in the Lucas Davenport series, and it was okay, nothing special.

Dark Sacred Night by Michael Connelly. Harry Bosch joins forces with Renee Ballard in this book. It was an okay read, interesting but not great.

Shadow Box by Luanne Rice. A woman who makes shadow boxes suspects her corrupt politician husband is behind the murderous attack that almost kills her. How much will she risk to try and take him down along with his partners in corruption?

The Senator: A Blake Jordan Mystery by Ken Fite

The Lions of Fifth Avenue by Fiona Davis. A good book, alternating between 1913 and present day.

The Lost and Found Bookshop by Susan Wiggs - a cute read.



Sentinel by Lee Child. It was just okay. Rachel, like other members of our book group, is getting kind of tired of Jack Reacher and his habit of buying new clothes instead of doing laundry. :P

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides. A good psychological thriller.

The Magnificent Dappled Sea by David Biro. An Italian kid has cancer and needs a bone marrow transplant. A rabbi in Brooklyn turns out to be a match. How? This was a nice story. (Angie agreed, she read it also).

West With Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge. This book is based on a true story of how a group of people traveled across the country with a couple of giraffes headed for the San Diego zoo. Rachel loved the book (Angie also read it and thought it was great).

Irene read:

Danny Boy: The Legend of the Beloved Irish Ballad by Malachi McCourt. This nonfiction book is all about the history behind the song.

Irish Coffee by Ralph McInerney - the seventh in a mystery series set at the University of Notre Dame.

Death of the Wandering Wolf by Julia Buckley - a Hungarian Tea House cozy mystery

Secret Book & Scone Society by Ellery Adams. #1 in a series featuring 4 female friends living in a small town, working together to solve a crime.

Pat read:

Still Life by Val McDermid. Sadly, Pat cannot recommend this book. There were two murder victims, two female detectives, so many characters and many of them had aliases... Pat lost track of who everyone was and kind of didn't care.

The Dirty South by John Connolly. It's 1997 and a dirt-poor Arkansas town is making a bid for a big company to build a plant there. But what do you know? Here comes a serial killer. Enter former NYPD detective Charlie Parker. This book is his origin story.

Shadow in Death by J. D. Robb - not recommended.

House Rules by Jodi Picoult. Loved the book, thought it was spot-on. Will read her again, a very good read.

Jo Ann read:

Dark Sky by C. J. Box. Another in the Joe Pickett series. A great read, fast-paced and fun.

Riding the Bus with My Sister by Rachel Simon. Nonfiction. The author spends a year with her mentally disabled sister, who spends her days riding the city buses. During their time together,



the author comes to accept that there is only so much she can do to help her sister, and that she can't force her sister to make "normal" choices.

Angie read:

The Bear and the Nightingale by Katherine Arden. The main character is a girl who grows up in a small village deep in the woods. The book is loosely based on Russian folklore.

The Night will Find Us by Matthew Lyons. The author lives in Colorado but strangely, he's set his horror novel in the Pine Barrens. An intense, unsettling book. Even Angie thought it was too creepy. Not recommended.

Zo by Zander Miller - a modern retelling of *Romeo & Juliet*, the story takes place in Haiti during the aftermath of the terrible earthquake of 2010. A nice story, well written, and Angie would recommend it.

Charity read:

Beartown by Fredrik Backman. A very serious story, and a very good story. There is a lot of hockey in it but the main plot focuses on a rape. The translator deserves a shout out because they made the translation sound lyrical and flow well, which is not always the case when a book gets translated.

Marianne read:

The Lincoln Lawyer by Michael Connelly - the first in the Mickey Haller series. A great book.

The Queen's Fortune by Allison Pataki. Set during the time of Bonaparte. Very well done.

A Most English Princess by Clare McHugh - historical fiction about Queen Victoria's daughter. A very good read.

A Week in Winter by Marcia Willett. A likeable book, and enjoyable. Marianne passed this one along to Jo Ann.

The Japanese Lover by Isabel Allende. An interesting story about love and class differences.

The Paris Seamstress by Natasha Lester. It was an okay read. It held one's interest, but was not great.

A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman. Enjoyed this one! Gave it to Charity since she'd just finished *Beartown*.

Things You Save in a Fire by Kathleen Center. This was one Mary recommended, and Marianne enjoyed it.

The Last Original Wife by Dorothea Benton Frank. A good read, set in the low country of South Carolina.



On Mystic Lake by Kristin Hannah, a good read.

Mary read:

The Lamplighters by Emma Stonex. A creepy tale with a locked-room mystery at its core. In the 1970s, three lighthouse keepers vanished without a trace from the lighthouse tower they were in. Twenty years later, a journalist begins interviewing the wives they left behind. As perspective switches between past and present, you realize that no one is quite who they seem, and that everyone is hiding something. I liked it.

The House in the Cerulean Sea by T. J. Klune. This book got a 5 star review on GoodReads and everyone I know has raved and raved about how good it was. Imagine my surprise when I got a third of the way through and decided that I really disliked it. I thought it was overpoweringly saccharine and was trying way too hard to be "quaint." I felt like a terrible person, but I wholeheartedly rejected it.

Ask Again, Yes by Mary Beth Keane. At first I didn't want to read this novel because it looked like it might be a little more "deep" than I wanted, but then I decided that the title was pretty optimistic and maybe I'd give it a try. My first instinct was right, the book is basically like watching a family train wreck in slow motion. But it was a well-written train wreck, so there's that.

Love and Theft by Stan Parish. A heist novel. Enjoyable!



March 2021 - Good Reads Book Club suggestions

For this month's virtual book club meeting we read *Lucia Lucia* by Adriana Trigiani. Reviews ranged from "I liked it" to "I loved it." Jo Ann said that the part she loved the most was the descriptions of Lucia's life as a seamstress - "the fabric, the embellishments, the tailoring, because I've sewn my whole life, and I loved that part of it and her commitment to her career." Dottie said that she enjoyed reading about Lucia's relationship with her coworkers, and Margaret liked Lucia's relationship with her family. Everyone agreed that the guy who jilted her at the altar was a jerk, and mourned the fact that because of when she was born, she really did have to choose between a career and love.

Margaret read:

The Trust by Ronald Balson. A really enjoyable read - you really wanted to know what was going to happen next. After his uncle is shot to death, Liam Taggart, a former IRA spy (and current private investigator) leaves his wife and child in Chicago and returns to northern Ireland for the funeral. There, he discovers that he has been named executor, and also that the uncle set up a trust ensuring that no money will be dispersed until the person who killed him is found.

Big Cherry Holler by Adriana Trigiani - a light read, entertaining and enjoyable, focusing on love, and forgiveness. Funny and poignant.

Angie read:

The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah. She's a good writer, and Angie likes her writing style, but honestly, this new book is a little tedious and also stressful. It's set during the Dust Bowl in the Texas Panhandle. A spinster gets pregnant, gets married, then her husband leaves her and she decides to go to California for a better life. Every page was stressful, all these awful things happened to the woman, and all of a sudden it's all wrapped up in 2 or three pages. It was not her best work.

JoAnn read:

A Time for Mercy by John Grisham.

In Clayton, Missouri in 1990, a 16 year old kid shot and killed a deputy sheriff. Even though he's a juvenile, the crime still calls for capital punishment. The kid's lawyer has an uphill battle trying to get him off. Jo Ann loved the book, thought it was exciting, and would completely recommend it (if you can get through the legal stuff - there's quite a lot of legal and political wrangling).

No Stone Unturned: A Forensic Instinct Thriller by Andrea Kane

Becky gave Jo Ann this book over the summer, and Jo Ann finally got around to it and loved it, especially since it featured a young jewelry artist who designed Celtic jewelry (since Jo Ann is part Irish). The book took place in NYC, and had a lot to do with tapestries. Jo Ann enjoyed how they talked about the symbolism in the tapestry.

Michelle read:

The Last Days of John Lennon (nonfiction) by James Patterson. This is a great book if you're interested in the Beatles (it doesn't only focus on John Lennon). It was a fast read, and Michelle liked it.



Furia by Yamile Saied Méndez. This young adult book is about an Argentinian girl who wants to play professional soccer, but society really frowns on it. Michelle thought it was a really good book, and it has gotten a lot of buzz (chosen for Reese Witherspoon's young adult book club, and a 2020 pick from New York Public Library).

Pat read

The Geometry of Holding Hands by Alexander McCall Smith. A wealthy man who's near death finds a young girl to help him choose who gets his estate. Pat really didn't care for this and would not recommend it.

Fair Warning by Michael Connelly - a good read, Connelly is a good writer. This one features a reporter who has a one-night stand with a woman and then she's murdered.

The K Team by David Rosenfelt - an Andy Carpenter mystery featuring dogs, a snarky lawyer and Paterson NJ., very good

Squeeze Me by Carl Hiaasen - "The craziest book I have ever ever read in my life, and I loved it. I thought it was the most bizarre, funniest thing I've ever read."

Dottie read:

The Glass Hotel by Emily St John Mandel. The book moves between different time periods. It opens with a woman disappearing from a container ship, but then the time period shifts backwards and we find out the book is about her relationship with her brother, a collapsed Ponzi scheme, and greed. It was a good read.

All the Devils are Here by Louise Penny. This is part of the Inspector Gamache series, but this one is set in Paris, where his son in law has gotten a job. Pat When Gamache goes to Paris to visit, of course he gets involved in solving a crime. In the end, they all end up moving back to Canada Pat enjoyed.

Irene read:

Mystery of Mrs Christie by Marie Benedict, which was a quick interesting read focused on the life of Agatha Christie.

The Paris Seamstress by Natasha Lester

The Long Range by C J Box - The judge's wife is shot to death and it's Joe Pickett's job to figure out who killed her.

The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett. Both Dottie and Angie liked it also, but all three of them said they felt that the transgender aspect really didn't fit that well into the novel.

The Splendid and the Vile by Erik Larsen. This nonfiction book is all about Churchill during World War 2. It was 700 pages, very long, but detailed and pretty interesting if you like history.



February 2021 – Good Reads Book Club suggestions

This month's book was *The Road from Coorain* by Jill Ker Conway. It was her autobiography of growing up in the Australian outback, and the ways in which tragedy impacted her family. Specifically, we talked about the way her relationship with her mother changed over time. A movie was made based on this movie that came out in 2002. JoAnn and Mary watched it, and felt that the movie really gave a great sense of the desolation of the Australian outback. Towards the end of the book, as Conway grew more interested in what she was learning in academia, it became a bit dry so many of us skimmed that part. For March 3, we are reading *Lucia, Lucia* by Adriana Trigiani.

Here's what else we read during the month of January.

JoAnn read:

Beyda, Emily - *The Body Double*. This book was a Christmas gift from JoAnn daughter. A teenaged foster kid falls for a dude who makes a lot of promises and takes her to LA. Later she finds out he wants to use her as a stand-in for a has-been actress who is in rehab. Then eventually she finds out that the actress has died, and that the guy molded her as a replica of the actress. Creepy.

Riechti, Cynthia - *When the Morning Glory Blooms*

A light read, wonderful (Margaret talked about it last time). About women who are desperate for hope and love when they face unplanned pregnancies. An uplifting read, an incredible book.

Kellerman, Faye - *The Lost Boys*

It was an ok read, but "too much touchy feely stuff." A developmentally disabled boy walks away from his group home. In the search for the kid, they stumble on a few other unmarked graves. The focus of the book then changed to "who are these people in the graves."

Hurwitz, Gregg - *Prodigal Son* (an Orphan X Novel) - this is the 4th or 5th (?) in series but can be read as a standalone. It's different from other Orphan X books. Jo Ann felt that the main character started to become more human, and was growing more emotionally aware. She also loved the ending. Angie also read it and liked it very much.

Dottie read:

Leave the World Behind by Rumaan Alam - a very weird book, with the premise that a white family rents an AirB&B on the East Coast. It's a very isolated house, can't even locate it on the GPS. When an electrical blackout occurs and knocks out the power, a black couple arrives at the door. Turns out they are the owners of the house, now they want to stay in it along with the white family. It's like a postapocalyptic novel, with a lot of other weird stuff - is it weird? Or is it supposed to be symbolic? Dottie was interested in it because she saw the author on the Hoda and Jenna show and it sounded interesting, but it was really a bit too strange.

Invisible Girl by Lisa Jewell - This is one of Dottie's go-to authors. A young girl with early trauma (a sexual attack when she was 10 years old) is seeing a therapist to work through her numerous



issues. Eventually the girl starts stalking her therapist, and ends up finding out he's having an affair with a coworker. On the same street where the therapist's family lives, there's a young guy who has been accused of sexual misconduct. Then all these sex crimes start happening in the neighborhood. But who is to blame? A good story. (It's called *Invisible Girl* because the girl who's in therapy feels invisible.)

Pat read:

When You See Me by Lisa Gardner - The FBI thinks they've killed a serial killer but they're still finding bodies that were killed the same way, so maybe not. So the FBI persuades a survivor to help them try and find the copycat. "Every time I turned the page someone else was dying. Too depressing."

Crooked River by Preston & Child - Two teens walking the beach in FL find a shoe with a foot in it. Naturally, the FBI gets involved and they end up finding 95 MORE shoes on the shore, all with human feet inside. Dottie wouldn't recommend it to anyone, but she did like Pendergast, the main FBI agent.

Harlan Cobel *Boy in the Woods* - didn't like it at all

Then She Vanished by T Jefferson Parker. A private eye gets a call from a politician whose wife has been missing 9 days, and the police haven't been able to find the wife. Turns out the politician is mishandling campaign funds. There's also a terrorist going around blowing people up (because OF COURSE there is). Well written, a good book.

The Goodbye Man by Jeffrey Deaver - Pat usually likes him, but this one was pretty depressing.

Margaret read:

Chestnut Street by Maeve Binchy - A group of interlinked stories about different families living on the same famous street in Ireland. An enjoyable book, filled with a nice mix of happy and sad stories.

The Jetsetters by - Amanda Ward. A widow whose kids have all flown the nest tries to reconnect with her kids. She enters a contest to win a cruise for her family. They reluctantly join her on the cruise. Family secrets unravel, they all have their issues, they come together again as a (broken) family again at the end.

Angie read:

West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge. This novel of historical fiction is based on a true story. It features a present-day 95-year-old narrator recounting the story of how he accompanied two giraffes who were imported from Europe to the United States to the San Diego Zoo. The narrator recounts that when the boat crashed somewhere on the East Coast but the giraffes survived, he traveled over land, across the country to San Diego, with a group of people and the giraffes. It was a great, feel-good, wonderful read and includes clips of newspaper articles that were published during the "actual" event.



Greenlights by Matthew McConaghey (sp) He's a great person, a wonderful father, good son and brother. He uses a traffic light as a metaphor for life- green light means go forward, yellow means go cautiously, red means you might need to do some work. It was a great story, well-done, a fun read.

Elsewhere by Dean Koontz - a fantasy thriller about a father, daughter and scientist traveling through multiverses Angie liked it.

Goodbye Man by Jeffrey Deaver - This is book 2 in a series, and Angie liked it so she plans to pick up book 1.

The Other Mrs. By Mary Kubica - Soon to be made into a Netflix movie (or series). Lots of murder, mayhem, psychological manipulation. A psychological thriller. "Dottie, right up your alley!"

Mary read

The Outlaw Sea: A World of Freedom, Chaos & Crime by William Langewiesche (*nonfiction*). A really interesting narrative about what really goes on in the thousands and thousands of miles of open sea. Politicians who live on land may THINK they have some control over what occurs at sea, but those who live on the open ocean know better.

The Cousins by Karen McManus. Another YA thriller by an author that we've read before in the book club (I think it was *One Of Us Is Next*). Pretty good.

Outlawed by Anna North. It got pretty good reviews and it wasn't exactly a bad read, but dang, the cover did NOT match the inside of the book. I think the cover makes it look like some kind of a frothy read (with the bright colors) and it definitely wasn't that. In fact, the cover turned me OFF and I wasn't planning to read it until I read a review that intrigued me. Yes, I judged a book by its cover. :P

Summer of '69 by Elin Hilderbrand. A bit of a change from her usual contemporary romance/women's fiction books, this could (I suppose) be considered "historical fiction" since - ough - it happened over 50 years ago. It's the story of teens navigating the confusing world of late adolescence while at the same time trying to make sense of all the unrest (civil rights, anti-Vietnam, etc) that was happening at the time. A quick read.



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. 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.