



September 2023 Good Reads Book Club

Our next meeting will be Wed October 4, and we'll be discussing *Peach Blossom Spring* by Melissa Fu.

The book we read for this month was Talking to Strangers by Malcolm Gladwell. Reviews were mixed, leaning towards the negative.

Angie read:

Hello beautiful by Ann Napolitano. Thought it was OK, but Angie didn't like the characters much and she doesn't really care for Napolitano's writing style.

Covenant of water by Abraham Verghese: this is a beautifully written, spiritual book, a generational, saga in India. It's a loong book, but worth it. The ending came together really nicely. This is by the author of *Cutting for Stone*.

The bodyguard by Katherine Center. A cute, fun book – – very enjoyable.

Dottie read:

Horse by Geraldine Brooks. This had been recommended by Angie and Irene. It's historical fiction set just before the Civil War. Dottie loved it.

Dottie also read *Her Final Breath*, which is number two in the Traci Crosswhite series by Robert Dugoni. Tracy Crosswhite is a detective in the Seattle police department. An enjoyable read.

All the sinners bleed by SA Crosby. It was an OK read, but didn't really live up to all the buzz. Plus, there were graphic scenes of torturing kids, which Dottie really didn't like reading.

Once there were wolves, Charlotte McConaghy. A biologist is re-introducing 14 gray wolves in Scotland but there's a conflict brewing with the farmers, who worry what the wolves might do to their livestock. The main character is a twin. Dottie loved the book, thought it was a good mystery and a good story with the twins and their backstory, but one of her friends couldn't bring herself to read it, because wolves do get killed.

Phyllis read:

The lost and found gift shop by Susan Wiggs
House in the pines by Ana Reyes

JoAnn read:

Simply by David Baldacci. A fun read, featuring murder, mobsters, and money. "Nothing exciting! Just your run-of-the-mill Baldacci book!"



Agent in Place by Mark Greaney. This is another of the Gray Man series. It almost felt too unbelievable – – he is a perfect fighter, manages to get out of every situation, seems inhumanly strong, and clever. With a character this perfect, you feel like less is at stake.

Pat read:

Under the Larrow by Flynn Barry check the spelling A story set in England featuring two sisters, one sister lives in London and the other lives in the suburb. One of them was physically assaulted five years ago, and the other one is then murdered. It was an OK read.

The book of unknown Americans by Christine something. People coming in as illegal migrants in the 50s and 60s, and also a love story between a boy and a girl. A new a good book

Mary read:

City of bones by Cassandra Clare, and the other two series in that YA trilogy .

Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano, and enjoyed it.



August 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For tonight's book club, we read *The Residence: Inside the Private World of the White House* by Kate Anderson Browers. The book was about the hundreds of people who work in the White House residence and the relationships they form with the first families. The complex inner workings of the White House residence are something you never really think about until you read a book like this. For instance, it was fascinating to get a look at how quickly the turnaround is on Inauguration Day, how quickly the servants must move out the departing first family and get everything ready for the next family.

Irene read:

Zero Days by Ruth Ware. A cyber thriller, Irene enjoyed it.

The Tuscan Child, by Rhys Bowen. In 1945 an RAF pilot goes down in Italy, has an affair with the Italian woman who helps him. They get pregnant, a betrayal occurs, and after his death 30 years later, his estranged daughter tries to piece together the story after his death. An enjoyable read.

Five star weekend by Elin Hilderbrand. A fine beach read.

Frank read:

The Measure by Nikki Ehrlich. This was on Angie's recommendation. Frank enjoyed it just as much as everyone else in the book club who has read it.

Islands beneath the Sea by Isabelle Allende. This historical novel is set in Santo Domingo and describes the evolution of Haiti between 1770 and 1805 through the eyes of the characters who lived there.

Becky read:

I Will Find You by Harlan Coban, a satisfying thriller.

Dark Angel by John Sandford. This is his new series featuring the daughter, Lenny Davenport, and was an enjoyable read.

Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers by Jesse Q. Sutanto. A fun, enjoyable murder mystery.

Hard Rain by Samantha Jane Allen. This is the second in a series, and Becky enjoyed it.

Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano. Becky loved it, thought it was really good, and has told everyone she knows about it. Very immersive. Warning: book hangover ahead.

The Senator's Wife, by Liv Constantine. This was a nice twisty, psychological thriller.

Marianne read three great books this month.

The Light After the War by Anita Abrial. This was absolutely fabulous historical fiction. Maryanne commented, "some people can hardly get to Bayonne, yet these people manage this long journey"

Liberation by Imogene Kealey

This was an excellent read based on the true story of Nancy Wake, a very effective Allied spy who worked in France during World War II (she was known as the White Mouse).

Invisible hour, by Alice Hoffman. Another good read.



JoAnn read:

Two sweet romances by Susan Wiggs: *The Apple Orchard* and *Beekeepers Ball*.

Mary read:

Block party by Jamie Day. A fun mystery/thriller set in a neighborhood, where at first you aren't sure what's going on or who's dead. Throughout the book you begin to piece the story together by learning from all the characters' perspectives. There's more to this neighborhood than meets the eye, and some of it is pretty ugly.

Margaret read *Under the Cover of Mercy* by Rebecca Connolly. Historical fiction based on the true story of a nurse in World War I who served in Brussels and saved soldiers when she could. A very very good book, but a sad ending.

Angie read.

The Winter of the Witch by Katherine Arden. This was number three in the trilogy (we read the first one last month.) Angie liked it.

The Wager by David Grann. An amazing non-fiction tale about shipwreck savagery, and survival that ends in a court martial, and asks who is telling the truth. And she really enjoyed it, received the recommendation from Dorothy last month, and would recommend this to others.

Horse by Geraldine Brooks. This was an excellent read, historical fiction that was really well written, and Angie had trouble putting this one down. Irene, who also read this book, agreed that it was a good read.

I'm Glad My Mom Died by Jennette McCurdy. This memoir by a former child star details the abuse and trauma and put it on her by her mother when she was growing up

Dottie read:

Dottie also read *The Winter of the Witch* by Katherine Arden.

The Match by Harlan Cobrn. This was an OK read, though Dottie had trouble figuring out what exactly happened.

The soulmate by Sally Hepworth. A young couple moved into a house on a cliff that is known as "suicide cliff. Then another young woman appears, but what's the story between her and her husband? A very good, quick read.

Blue Heaven by CJ Box. This was a standalone written in 2004, about a young brother and sister who witnessed a murder. Dottie liked it a lot.

Her Deadly Game by Robert Dugoni. A young woman who's a defense lawyer also happens to be a chess prodigy. Dottie prefers her thrillers with less chess talk and more thriller.

Project Hail Mary by Andy Weir. Through a series of unlikely coincidences, a sixth grade science teacher ends up as the only person alive on a spaceship far from Earth, whose sole mission is to find something that will save earth. He meets an alien from another species, and they become friends. There was a lot of science in the book, but Dottie just skimmed that. She thought the story and the relationships were good.



July 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For our July 5th meeting we read *The Bear and the Nightingale* by Katherine Arden, a fairy tale set in an imaginary middle-ages Russia, featuring medieval Russian folklore. Most people couldn't get into it, or didn't like it, but Dottie and Angie, enjoyed it. One member remarked that while the writing was good, there were too many spirits and names to keep track of.

For those who want to read more about the author (aka, Dottie and Angie)- here is a link to an interview she did in 2017: <https://www.bookpage.com/interviews/20813-katherine-arden-fiction/>

DOTTIE READ:

The girl in the tower, by Katherine Arden, 2nd book after *Bear and Nightingale*, and loved it.

FRANK READ:

All the light we cannot see by Anthony Doerr. He thought it was well written and thoroughly enjoyed the historical aspect of the book.

Sparring partners, a trio of short novellas by John Grisham from 2022. Another enjoyable read.

DOROTHY READ

The measure by Nikki Erlick. Two thumbs up! This is the same opinion all the other people in the group had about the book.

We should all be feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichue, less than 30 pages, based on a Ted talk – – an interesting read.

The wager by David Grann – an amazing nonfiction tale (by the author of *Lost City of Z* and *Killers of the Flower Moon*).

Romantic Comedy by Curtis Setterfeld. This was a selection of Reese's book club and was described as laugh-out-loud, but Dorothy didn't even chuckle, and didn't recommend..

Mother daughter, traitor spy, by Susan Elia MacNeal. Based on a true story of a mother and daughter who, during the buildup to World War 2, were recruited to spy on a Nazi group in Los Angeles. Really interesting.

PAT READ:

All Shall Be Well by Deborah Crombie. A British mystery featuring the murder of a terminally ill woman. It was interesting, but not great.

Nutshell by Ian McEwan. A very weird mystery. Definitely not recommended.



JO ANN READ:

Kristin Harmel's *The Sweetness of Forgetting*. Historical fiction based in France during World War II, Nazis are rounding up Jews, and a girl escapes and winds up in the US. A sad read with a sad ending.

I will find you by Harlan Coben. This one was a bit predictable, but Harlan Coben remains one of JoAnn's favorite authors

The rabbit factory, by Marshall Karp. A really good mystery, part of a series featuring LA detectives Michael Lomax and Terry Briggs. Lots of killings, bombings, extortion... Entertaining, but it was 634 pages long, and probably could have used a better editor.

IRENE READ:

A family affair by Demi Macomber. A very fluffy book, similar to a hallmark movie, she read it in one afternoon.

So shall you reap by Donna Leon - part of the Brunetti series set in Venice, this one features a 30 year old cold case involving the murder of a Sri Lankan immigrant. Always a good series

Lucy by the sea by Elizabeth Strout. This is just a depressing writer and not enjoyable.

The way of the bear by Anne Hillerman. A mystery set in the Southwest involving a paleontologist, a fossil skull and - you guessed it - murder

Storm Watch, a Joe Pickett novel, by CJ Box. An enjoyable read!

ANGIE READ:

How to sell a haunted house by Grady Hendrix. "Puppets, clowns, and murderous dolls. It was terrifying, and creepy, but I loved it." This was a recommendation from Irene.

Banyan moon by Thao Thai. This debut novel follows three generations of Vietnamese women. Excellent, and highly recommended.

Before we were yours, by Lisa Wingate. Historical fiction based on true stories of the forced adoption of children who were abducted from their true parents from 1920 to 1950. Sobering and sad.

House of Eve by Sadeqa Johnson. A five-star read (also a Reese's book club pic, and Dorothy also liked it). A journey of love, motherhood, secrets and sacrifices with strong women characters. Very well written, couldn't put it down, gave Angie a big book hangover.

The girl in the tower, by Katherine Arden, the second in the bear and the nightingale trilogy. Angie liked this one better than the first.



MARY READ:

Hello stranger, by Katherine Center, an enjoyable, fluffy chick lit book.

A love catastrophe by Helena Hunting, another enjoyable, fluffy chick lit book

A little ray of sunshine by Kristan Higgins. This is one of my favorite authors and I enjoyed it although I can't tell you what it was about.



June 2023 Good Reads Book Club

The book we read for this meeting was *Molokai* by Alan Brennert. It told the story of Rachel, a young Hawaaiian girl who developed leprosy at an early age and was forced to live her life in a remote leper colony. There was a lot of sadness in the book, but Rachel was a strong woman and persevered. The author was good at creating vivid characters and descriptions of what it was like to live on the island, following Rachel from the late 1800s to the early 20th century. Everyone liked it and a couple of people liked it so much that it gave them a book hangover (truly, the mark of a great book).

Starting this month, we all have 5 minutes to talk about book(s) so that other book club members can decide whether they want to read it (or skip it). Here goes...

Mary read:

Hard Cold Winter by Glen Erik Hamilton, the second in the Van Shaw series. "If you liked Orphan X — " was all I managed to get out of my mouth before Becky snatched it from me. I hope she likes it.

A Fever in the Heartland by Timothy Egan - a nonfiction book about the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the midwest in the 1930s, how it fed on our hate, ignorance, and need to blame others for our problems, and how its leader eventually fell from grace. It was a hard book to read. Very disturbing.

My Father's Brain by Dr. Sandeep Jauhar. The author's father, who had a successful career in microbiology, developed dementia later in life and the author shares his struggles and his family's struggles to manage the situation and manage their own expectations...

The Keeper of Stories by Sally Page. A feel-good British book featuring a cleaning lady named Janice who develops positive relationships with her clients and enjoys hearing stories about their lives. She feels almost detached from the unhappiness of her own life, until she takes on a new client who wants to know what Janice's story is. Enjoyed this one.

The Heiress Bride by Madeline Hunter. The fourth book in a series of very well-written Regency romances.

Angie read:

Blue Skies by T. C. Boyle. Angie described this as an enjoyable and funny read about climate change, that is focused on quirky characters such as an entomologist who loses an arm, his alcoholic twin who lives in Florida and whose house is sinking, and a very hungry snake. 99 people have reviewed it on Amazon and it received 4.5 stars, but even though Angie tried very hard, she couldn't get anyone else interested in reading it.



Marianne read:

The Eight Mountains by Paolo Cognetti, which was a pick of the Seton Hall Italian book club that she belongs to. The book won multiple awards but Marianne doesn't have any idea why. She cannot recommend this one.

Bridge of Scarlet Leaves by Kristina McMorris. A really good story (she's a good writer) that starts at the beginning of WW2, when a white woman goes with her Japanese-born husband when he is sent to an internment camp. Passed along to JoAnn.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr. Marianne loved (as did most of us). It was a Pulitzer Prize winner and Marianne suggested Frank can check out lists of Pulitzer Prize winners for ideas on what to read. Easiest way to do this is to Google "Pulitzer prize winners fiction" and you'll get a list.

JoAnn read:

After Dark by Philip Margolin - a great story, a good legal thriller.

The Forgotten Cottage by Courtney Ellis. Another one of those books that takes place both in present day and in the past. In 2014 a woman visits the English cottage she inherited from her grandmother, then learns about the grandmother's past in World War I. Good historical fiction!

Saving Fish From Drowning by Amy Tan. When a Chinese-American woman dies unexpectedly right before a trip she planned for a group, the rest of the group goes anyway. But without their guide, they find themselves in increasingly awkward cultural situations. An interesting book, Jo Ann enjoyed it.

Becky read:

Three chick lit books:

Happy Place by Emily Henry (enjoyable)

Off the Map by Trish Dolan (enjoyable)

The Nanny by Lana Ferguson (porn masquerading as chick lit! Not recommended.)

Also *The Soulmate* by Sally Hepworth, a twisty psychological thriller
and

Loyalty by Lisa Scottoline - historical fiction based in Italy, showing the beginnings of the Mafia
and

The Murder Rule by Dervla McTiernan. A twisty psychological thriller featuring a young lawyer who works for an "Innocence Project" group. Things aren't what they seem...

Frank read:

The Judge's List by John Grisham

Nothing to Lose by J. A. Jance



In The Midst of Winter by Isabelle Allende. This beautifully written book takes place in New York State in a major snowstorm, during which several people from different backgrounds are stranded together in a remote cabin. Frank learned a lot about the process of immigration.

The Japanese Lover by Isabelle Allende - another good book

Irene read:

The Golden Spoon by Jessa Maxwell - a fun mystery, loosely based on a British baking show.

Stargazer by Anne Hillerman, a good read, featuring series regulars Chee and Manolito

How to Sell A Haunted House by Grady Hendrix. When their parents die suddenly, two siblings who don't really get along must work together to fix up their parents' house for sale. Only their parents' death wasn't an accident... and there are EVIL PUPPETS inside the house, staring at them and coming to life. Irene said to Angie: "You're going to love it!" Irene stayed up all night reading it, it was so good. This is from the author of *The Southern Book Club's Guide to Vampire Slaying*, which was another good (but weird) book.

Dottie read:

My Sister's Grave by Robert Dugoni - first in the Tracy Crosswhite series. Irene has also enjoyed this series.

Symphony of Secrets by Brendan Slocumb

I'm Glad My Mom Died - A memoir by former child actress Jeanette McPurdy, who talks about the mental and emotional abuse and violation she lived through as a child. Very powerful.

It Ends With Us by Colleen Hoover

The Gray Man by Mark Greaney (1st in the series)

The Family Game by Catherine Steadman



May 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For this month we read *The Lost Man* by Jane Harper, an Australian writer. The book is set in the desolate Australian outback and features a family who is shaken and stunned by the unexplained death of the middle son in the desolate outback. The reactions of group members were mixed. A couple of people felt that it dragged in the beginning but then got interesting. One person felt that it was slow and boring and did not like it at all. Another person said she liked the book, but she will never go to Australia - the book made it seem so lonely, isolated, dusty and dry. (I loved this book which is why I recommended it. I'm not sure anyone else liked it as much as I did -Mary)

Angie read:

The Light Pirate by Lily Brooks-Dalton. Very long and tedious about a girl coming of age after an environmental disaster in Florida. Not recommended.

The Cloisters by Katy Hays. A mystery/thriller that was sinister and creepy, with a lot of good characters and a handsome gardener (though there was way too much emphasis on Tarot cards.)

The Last Orphan by Greg Hurwitz. "I didn't hate it, but it was just the same old same old. He's becoming a little like Patterson, keeps churning out slightly different revisions of the same plot."

Margaret read:

Going Rogue by Janet Evanovich. The latest Stephanie Plum mystery. Stephanie is still working as a bail bondsman and juggling Ranger and Morelli.

Tears of the Moon and *Heart of the Sea* by Nora Roberts. These are the second and third books in a trilogy featuring a family in Ireland and their paths to love (the trilogy started with *Jewels of the Sun*, which was Margaret's Christmas gift book. They're good stories.

The Last to Vanish by Megan Miranda. The main character manages an inn in the mountains of North Carolina in a town where people have vanished before, and gets embroiled in the mystery. It kept Margaret's interest! Irene said she has also read it, and enjoyed it.

Rachel read:

Where Waters Meet by Zhang Ling. The first part of the book focuses on the main character, Phoenix, who's being raised in Canada after her mother emigrated from China. After her mother's death, Phoenix travels back to China to try to find out more about her mother's history. The second part of the book tells the mother's story.

The House is On Fire by Rachel Beamland. Historical fiction set in Richmond, Virginia in the early 1800s, this is based on a deadly fire that swept through a theater and killed a lot of people. The characters were interesting, it was a quick read, and Rachel really enjoyed the book.



Marianne read:

The Last Collection by Jeanne Mackin. Historical fiction (set in the late 1930s) featuring two female designers who disagreed about everything - Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli. Recommended for anyone who is interested in fashion design.

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone by Lori Gottlieb. Nonfiction written by a therapist who went into therapy herself after a difficult life event. She also mentions the problems her own clients face. Marianne disliked it - too much moaning and groaning.

Becky read:

Exiles by Jane Harper. This is latest book by Jane Harper, whose book we read this month. Becky really liked it.

Someone Else's Shoes by JoJo Moyes. A good story, but Becky felt there was a major problem with the main plot point. Two women accidentally exchange shoes when they pick up each other's bags. They don't have the same size foot! You can't just wear pumps that are a half size too big for you or a half size too small. How would you walk? And oh my God, the blisters! Other than that glaring problem, the book was OK.

Pat read:

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris. Pat really liked the book, but wondered - "how could anyone live through that?"

Dorothy read:

House of Eve by Sadequa Johnson This was a selection of Reese's Book Club (the same author who wrote *Yellow Wife*) and was a very good read.

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah. A fascinating book set during World War II, based on the story of a real person.

Pineapple Street by Jenny Jackson (a selection of the Good Morning America book club). An interesting story focused on a very dysfunctional family. Dorothy thought it was a good read.

Frank read:

The Dry by Jane Harper (same author whose book we read for this evening). This was the first of the Aaron Falk mysteries. The second was *Force of Nature* and the third was *Exiles*, which Becky read last month.

Portrait in Shadow by Nicole Jarvis. Historical fiction based on the story of female Renaissance painter Artemisia Gentileschi, who was raped by her tutor as a teenager and faced incredible challenges as a female painter in such a male-dominated place and time.

Irene read:

Next Year in Havana by Chanel Cleeton. A disappointing read. It started out good but then had identity issues - couldn't decide if it was historical fiction or a romance, and as a result, failed at both.



The Secret Keeper by Alka Joshi - the second book in the *Henna Artist* trilogy. The first book was better, this one had way too many plot points to juggle.

Foster by Claire Keegan. A short, interesting story that Irene's other book club is reading. Set in rural Ireland where a young girl is sent to a foster home and what happens to her over the course of the summer.

Mary read:

Go Like Hell: Ford, Ferrari and Their Battle for Speed at Le Mans by A. J. Baime. The movie *Ford Vs. Ferrari* was based on this 2009 nonfiction account of the European racing world in the 1960s. An interesting story, but I would have preferred a magazine-length version of it. Too much detail.

The Dirty Tricks Department: Stanley Lovell, the OSS, and the Masterminds of World War II Secret Warfare by John Lisle. Nonfiction. An account of the creation of the United States OSS and their quest for unusual weapons and ways to gain an edge and help the Allies win World War II. Also an interesting story, but I'd have preferred an abridged version.

Empress of the Nile: The Daring Archaeologist who Saved Egypt's Ancient Temples from Destruction by Lynne Olson. Also nonfiction. I was interested at first but then I got bogged down and abandoned it.

Girl Waits With Gun by Amy Stewart - the first in a historical mystery series set in the 1920s and featuring the Kopp sisters, who live in Wyckoff. A large part of the book takes place in Paterson when it was a thriving silk and industry town. Enjoyable.

Chasing Space by Leland Melvin. This is the young reader's edition of astronaut Leland Melvin's memoir about what it was like to grow up Black, how he was passionate about sports and hoped for a professional football career, what happened when injury made that dream impossible, and how he started and maintained a long career at NASA. I enjoyed it.



April 2023 Good Reads Book Club

This month we discussed *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech, a kid's book aimed at 9 to 11 year olds. Most of the book clubbers liked it, some loved it. It seemed that the teachers in the group loved it the most, because it reminded them of the kids they taught. Angie said it was a perfect poetry month read.

Our next meeting is Wednesday May 3rd, and we will discuss Jane Harper's *The Lost Man*.

Dorothy read:

The stranger in the boat by Mitch Albom, a spiritual book.

All he has left by Chad Zunker, not recommended.

The candy house by Jennifer Egan. This was highly recommended by a book blogger, but Dorothy didn't like it at all.

The tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris. Dorothy enjoyed this one.

Frank read:

A book about da Vinci and Mona Lisa by Laura Morelli. A combination of art, history and World War II historical fiction. Enjoyed it very much.

The best strangers in the world by Ari Shapiro. This was an advanced readers copy that Frank picked up at our last meeting. It wasn't one he would've thought to read, but he enjoyed it. An NPR journalist's memoir about interviewing families. Shapiro is a wonderful writer.

Nothing to lose by J A Jance. This was one of the Beaumont mystery series, and was very good. In this book he's in his mid-70s and retired, and the son of his late partner comes to him for help because his brother is missing. Very well written. This author doesn't disappoint.

Mary L Trumps book about her uncle. It was OK.

Irene read:

Iron lake by William Kent Krueger. Enjoyed it. This is the first one in the Cork O'Connor mystery series, by the author who also wrote *Ordinary Grace* and *This Tender Land*.

The lost and found bookstore by Susan Wiggs. Only so-so.

Alice Feeney's *I know who you are* – a really good thriller.

A death in Tokyo by Kogo Higashiro. This mystery is set in Japan. A man has been killed near a secret temple and two Japanese detectives are called in to investigate. Irene liked it. Very interesting, and has a similar feel to the Li Du series by Brian Klugeborg (that's the one with the investigator in rural China).



The guest list by Lucy Foley. A good read.

What the fireflies knew by Kai Harris. This was a so-so read. Irene read it for her book club in Florida

The henna artist, which Irene chose based on Angie's recommendation, and found it very enjoyable.

Put out to pasture by Amanda Flower. A very fluffy cozy murder mystery set in Amish country.

While Irene was in Florida, she visited Eudora Welty's garden, which prompted her to pick up The Optimist's Daughter. This was a short story that won the Pulitzer Prize a long time ago.

Irene also read Horse, by Geraldine Brooks. This was a slow read at the beginning, but enjoyable.

Dottie read:

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin. This book has been getting a lot of buzz and good press, but Dottie really didn't enjoy it all that much.

All that is mine I carry with me by William Landay. This was a good read, with lots of twists and turns. Not as good as defending Jacob, his earlier novel

Storm watch by CJ Box - Dottie enjoyed this

The Bandit Queens by Parini Shroff. This was an interesting story set in India, with a plot based on a real woman in India. The "bandit queen" acts as an inspiration to other abused women. It's a book about the caste system in India. It's funny, not violent.

The record keeper by Charles Martin. This is the third in a series. Dottie likes this author a lot and recommends the whole series.

Remarkably bright creatures, by Shelby Van Pelt. The friendship between a lonely woman and an octopus living in an aquarium. Dottie loved it, so did Angie. A wonderful story.

Mary read:

Number one is walking by Steve Martin. A graphic novel, memoir of Steve Martin's career.

The Wager by David Grann, the latest nonfiction book by the guy who wrote Lost City of Z and Killers of the Flower Moon. An interesting read.

The Return of Captain John Emmett, by Elizabeth Speller. A mystery set in England just after World War I. Very enjoyable.



Angie read:

Demon copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver. She's a wonderful writer but it's a difficult story to read, because the main character's life is so hard. It was pretty long too, over 600 pages. In hindsight, Angie did like the book and thought it was well done.

Mr. Rosenblum dreams in English by Natasha Solomons. Angie said she wouldn't have chosen it from the shelf, but she tried it because it was her Blind Date book from the February meeting. It's a wonderful book, she describes it as warm, uplifting, and charming. The author based it on her grandparents' story. If you liked Major Pettigrew's Last Stand, then you'd love this one

Rachel read:

Killing Jesus by Bill O'Reilly. He's a good writer, it was an interesting read, and Rachel enjoyed it.

The wild robot by Peter Brown. This was a book that Angie raved about last month. The book teaches patience. A charming book, and there are two more in the series.

The Pain Hunter, by Jeffery Deaver. This was a short story, a psychological thriller, and an interesting read.

Marianne read:

I am staying here, by Marco Belzano. This is historical fiction based around a bell tower standing in water. A really good read, recommended by the Seton Hall department of Italian book club.

The hummingbird by Sandro Veronisi. Another Seton Hall book club pic. It was ridiculous and awful. Marianne managed to skim through it but it was difficult. She hasn't gone back to the book club since!

The girl who drew butterflies. This was a teen book from the Montville Library. It was historical fiction about a girl named Maria Merion who lived in the 1700s and grew up to become a scientist. Marianne loved this book, it included a lot of interesting illustrations.

The farewell tour, by Stephanie Clifford. This was reviewed in last month's book page magazine. Historical fiction. A good story, with a nice cover. About a country singer.

The Paris apartment by Lucy Foley. Marianne didn't like it, but psychological thrillers are not usually a genre she enjoys.

The dinner list by Rebecca Searle. Marianne likes the part where you got to choose five people you'd like to have dinner with, but not the belabored romance part.

Pat read:

The great believers by Rebecca Makkai. This book follows a group of friends from 1985 to the present. A good story, but very depressing, about the ravages of the AIDS epidemic.



March 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For this month we all read *Wish You Were Gone*, a thriller by Kieran Scott. Some of us really liked it, a few of us thought it was okay, and no one actively hated it, so I'm calling it a win.

Frank, our newest member, said it was a fun read. A couple of other people really liked it. One person damned it with faint praise, saying "not bad -- a run of the mill psychological thriller." Several club members disliked the high-school-clique atmosphere between the three women main characters, who were not really very supportive of each other and all had secret motives. (Then again, if they were amazingly supportive of each other they'd probably have advised the character whose husband was so awful to ditch his butt and divorce him. Then we wouldn't have a murder mystery to figure out.)

Mary didn't like the book, because she found the short chapters and the character perspectives switching each chapter to be jarring. She found it difficult to care about or engage with any one of the characters long enough to care about them.

Since April is National Poetry Month, we will read a short book by Sharon Creech called *Love That Dog*, about a kid who doesn't see the point of writing or reading poetry. I hope you'll think it's cute.

Margaret read:

The language of sycamores, by Lisa Wingate. When a woman's life falls apart, she finds refuge by visiting her sister, in their grandmother's old house, and learns some important things about herself and about family.

Storm of the century by Al Roker. This was non-fiction about how the Galveston hurricane of 1866 I'm sorry 1906 hit Texas and it was a really interesting read. Mary commented that non-fiction writer Eric Larson also wrote a book about the Galveston hurricane, called Isaac's storm.

Jewels of the Sun by Nora Roberts. This was Margaret's Christmas gift from our back grab bag. It's a romance set in the Irish countryside. The book was right up Margaret's alley, she enjoyed it and was excited to hear there are 2 more in the trilogy.

Angie read

Two really interesting young adult novels.

The first was *The Wild Robot* by Peter Brown. Angie's son, who is an engineer, recommended it to her. A sweet, wonderful story, with themes of acceptance and kindness. Loved it.

Now is not the time to panic by Kevin Wilson. In Tennessee, two misfit kids meet during the summer - one is an artist, the other a writer. They decide to create a piece of art together. Things



happen as a result. An excellent read, great characters, a great story, an interesting concept. Angie recommends it and thinks it would be good for a book club discussion.

Ms. Demeanor by Elinor Lipman. Enjoyed this fluffy piece of chick-lit.

Boys from Biloxi by John Grisham.

The Secret Keeper of Jaipur by Alka Joshua. Second in trilogy (the first was The Henna Artist) and Angie will definitely read the third.

The Last Dance by Claire Macintosh. This excellent thriller takes place in Wales and the UK. Highly recommended.

Rachel read:

The Maid's Diary by Laura White. A woman who cleans for several rich people has learned a lot of their dirty little secrets. Then a murder occurs, and the maid is missing, but who was actually murdered? Definitely kept Rachel's interest.

JoAnn read:

Private Games by James Patterson. Set in London during the Olympic Games. "If you like Olympics and if you like psychopaths, this is the book for you!"

The End of Summer by Rosamund Pilcher. Love this author - a quiet, enjoyable, feel good read.

The Third Victim and The Darkest Place, both by Philip Margolin (the Robin Lockwood series). He's an incredible writer. Writes very good stories with a twist at the end.

Desert Star by Michael Connelly. "I love that guy" says JoAnn! This was a Renee Ballard/Harry Bosch collaboration.

The Secrets She Kept by Brenda Novak. This was a grab bag book from a previous meeting. Romantic thriller set in Ireland - a guy's mom dies and he goes back to investigate.

Marianne read:

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus - because Becky made her read it... and she really enjoyed it!

I am Malala. The autobiography of Malala Yousafzai. This was a pick of the Montville Book Club. The first 3/4 of the book were loaded down with a lot of information, politics, the awful violent history of Afghanistan. But the last quarter of the book was much more interesting. It talks about what happened to Malala and how after the shooting she required extensive surgery.



Women Talking by Miriam Towe - another pick of the Montville Book Club, got great literary reviews. 8 Mennonite women are violated by what they think is a demon. Marianne couldn't bring herself to finish the book or even get very far. Mary confessed that she had also tried it, with the same result.

I, Eliza Hamilton by Susan Holloway Scott. Fabulous historical fiction, a really good story. It starts out in Morristown and features Eliza Hamilton, the wife of our Founding Father Alexander Hamilton.

Pat read:

The Missing Hours by Julia Dahl. A girl gets drunk at a party, blacks out, is assaulted. Pat didn't care for the book at all. A really depressing story.

Becky read:

The Silent Sisters, by Robert Dugoni. Becky describes this book, which is part of Dugoni's Charles Jenkins series, as extremely violent and a little gross, so those of us with weak stomachs should definitely stay away.

The Villa by Rachel Hawkins. Becky was disappointed by this, because she usually likes Rachel Hawkins, but this psychological thriller was not her best one.

Just the Nicest Couple by Mary Kubica. An engaging, twisty, psychological thriller.

Dorothy read

Someone Else's Life by Lyn Liao Butler. An enjoyable thriller, with a really good ending.

The House in the Pines by Anna Reyes. A recent Reese's Book Club pick. Very good - Dorothy did NOT see the ending coming.

Blood Money by David Ignatius. This was Dorothy's February grab bag book. She didn't like the cover and doesn't usually like espionage books, but she gave it a try and found she loved the book! She thought it was written well and had a great ending. She even did some research on the author, and discovered he had been a reporter for a newspaper and is a TV pundit.

Dorothy also read Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. I asked why she read it, and she said "because I want to get cultured, Mary!" Dottie then replied "What, being in this book club isn't culture enough for you?" We all had a good laugh. Dorothy admitted that the book was a bit of a depressing slog and she skimmed a bunch of it.... But she got through it!

The yellow wife, by Sadeqa Johnson. This was Reese's February book club pic. This is a fascinating story loosely based on Civil War-era slave Mary Lumpkin's life, She was sold to a



man named Robert Lumpkin, a jailer in Richmond with a reputation for cruelty, but he loved her and tried to save her.

Frank read:

The Promised Land by Barack Obama. This was the book he wrote after his presidency and was published in 2021. Frank was impressed by how well Obama writes. Rachel said she's reading it right now.

A biography of William McKinley. He was actually a pretty important president. He was involved in a lot of financial decisions for our country, and had a large part in figuring out the gold standard. He was elected President in 1897 and assassinated in 1901.

The Night Portrait by Lisa Morelli. A wonderful book featuring two characters from different time periods. Leonardo Da Vinci's *Woman with Ermine* is the connector piece. One of the characters was on the Monuments Men team, trying to track down artwork stolen by Nazis during World War II. The other character was Leonardo da Vinci himself, who was a struggling painter and trying to become better known in the 1500s. Angie read this book also and she and Frank agreed, they both loved it.

A J A Jance book. Can't remember the title right now, but Jance is always a fun read. (Other members of the club agreed - we like her books too.)

Dottie read:

Two books this month, but both are part of series and might not be good to read as standalone.

The first book was The Letter Keeper by Charles Martin. This is the second in a trilogy that began with The Water Keeper, featuring Murphy Shepherd, who is a priest trying to save people from bad situations. The first half of The Letter Keeper was a little slow but it picks up the pace and ends well. Dottie's currently reading the third in the series, The Record Keeper, and will report back next month.

The Winners by Frederik Backman. This is the third in a trilogy that started with Beartown and then Us Against You. The whole trilogy was about the hockey rivalry between two towns in Sweden. Dorothy thought it was a wonderful trilogy and she loved The Winners. She liked how the author did a lot of foreshadowing in earlier chapters, so you knew what to pay attention to.

Mary read:

A lot of trashy stuff probably not worth reporting on, but one really great thriller and that is: Exiles by Jane Harper. Harper is an Australian writer who writes great thrillers. This one features Aaron Falk, who first appeared in her book The Dry which several group members read a few years ago. This was an edge of your seat read and Mary highly recommends.



February 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For this month we discussed the book *Most Dangerous: Daniel Ellsberg and the Secret History of the Vietnam War* by Steve Sheinkin. We all thought it was a great read and really well done. Riveting, and very enlightening, learning how much went on that we didn't know.

Many book clubbers were in their 20s when this whole thing was going on. They learned a lot from this book that they didn't know then. Marianne shared that she and her husband were science teachers and he was exempt from service. Angie remembers being in college and going to DC for one of the protests, but only because she wanted to find her boyfriend, and she was terrified someone from her college would see her and report her and she'd lose her scholarship.

Dorothy said she was fascinated but it also felt disappointing in so many people doing wrong things. It was upsetting on a number of levels: the lies and deceit, the greed for power even at the expense of thousands of lives lost. Five presidents and their staffers were involved in this muck, ending with Nixon. Angie mentioned she might want to re-watch *All the President's Men* (about Woodward and Bernstein and the Watergate scandal) since some of those people were mentioned in this book.

JoAnn mentioned a quote that she really liked from the book: "Sometimes the most dangerous weapon is the truth."

Dottie read

The world of curiosities by Louise Penny. This is number 18 in the series, a good book, but not the best entry point if you haven't read the series before.

Our missing hearts by Celeste Ng. A futuristic dystopian story about a 12 year old boy who travels to find his mother. An ambiguous ending, not Dottie's favorite.

Angie read

The henna artist by Alka Joshi. This is the first in a trilogy, the final book in the trilogy is coming out sometime this spring. It's set in Jaipur India, the main character starts out as a 15-year-old in an arranged marriage. Her mother in law teaches her the art of henna and healing. She finally leaves her husband and becomes an elite henna artist in the city of Jaipur. A very good, descriptive and interesting book. Looking forward to the next book in the series.

We are not like them by Christine Pride and Jo Piazza. This is about two best friends, one white, and one black, who are torn apart by, a racial event. Lots of good characters, a very good book, a difficult read, but recommended.

Picture in the Sand by Peter Blauner. Historical fiction based on Cecil B DeMille filming the movie 10 Commandments in Egyptian in Egypt. An interesting book, would recommended.

Lucy by the sea by Elizabeth Strout. Good writing, but not recommended. Tedious and depressing.



JoAnn read.

The number one ladies' detective agency by Alexander McCall Smith. Heartwarming, hilarious, loved it.

The Thursday murder club by Richard Osman. This was an OK read. Didn't like it as much as many of us did.

Bryant and May off the rails by Christopher Fowler. This is part of a series that Mary recommended about two elderly detectives, who try to solve difficult cases in London. It was really good.

Long shadows by David Baldacci. The latest in the Amos Decker series. Loved it - love Baldacci's writing.

No Plan B by Lee Child. A Jack Reacher thriller, a very good story.

A matter of life and death by Philip Margolin. Robin Lockwood is a lawyer and in this book in the series, she's trying to fight for the life of her client. The author of this series was a criminal defense lawyer himself, and you can tell he has experience with this kind of thing. Nice short chapters, really good, will read another of his.

Marianne was happy to report that all of the book she read this month were great!

The last restaurant in Paris by Lily Graham. It was a little bit complicated because there were six generations of people who had similar names, and a flow chart would have been helpful at some point, but it was really good.

Mother, daughter, traitor spy, by Susan Elia MacNeal. Historical fiction set in Los Angeles during World War II, about a Nazi enclave in Los Angeles, and the mother and daughter who tried to infiltrate and expose them. A very enjoyable read.

The maid by Nita Prose. Many of us have also read this book. A good story.

The seamstress of Sardinia by Bianca Pizorno. The author is very popular in Italy, this is the first of her books that's been translated into English. Historical fiction set in 1900, about a lowly seamstress woman who got all the gossip and knew what was going on in town because she sewed gowns for all the women in town. Really good.

Pat read:

The man who died twice by Richard Osman, this is number two in the Thursday murder club. Senior citizens trying to solve a mystery. She thought it was funny, but also kind of stupid.

Killing with confetti by Peter Lovesey. This is one of the Peter Diamond series that JoAnn read last year. Pat liked it too, thought it was a good book.



Becky read:

Mad honey by Jodi Picoult. An easy read, liked it. Very topical, as with most of Picoult's books - this one centered around transgender issues.

Carrie Soto is back by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Enjoyed.

Ms. Demenor by Elinor Lipman. A very good chick lit book.

The librarian spy. Unsurprisingly, this book is about a librarian who is also a spy. A good read.

Dorothy read

Two books by Amor Towles, one of our group's favorite authors: *A gentleman in Moscow* and *The Lincoln Highway*. She enjoyed them both.

She also wants to steer us away from *Vladimir* by Julia May Jonas. It was a Pulitzer Prize winner but was a big giant mess. Felt like a kitchen sink kind of book - the author just threw in all of the current tropes and issues. Dorothy's rating: "Avoid at all costs."

The book of lost and found – – enjoyed it.

My policeman. Like this one

It ends with us by Colleen Hoover, an enjoyable read.

Margaret read:

Memoirs of a geisha by Arthur Golden. Riveting, couldn't put it down. Really good descriptions of what it was like to be a geisha girl at that time., And fascinating.

Mary read: several trashy novels, which don't deserve to be mentioned here, and is also in the middle of reading *Fairy Tale* by Stephen King, which Angie recommended to her last month.



January 2023 Good Reads Book Club

For this month's book club, we read *The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell* by Robert Dugoni. It was a heartwarming read, and everybody liked it. Several of us had already read it. A good story, engaging, and checked all the boxes that define what "a good read" is like. Focused on friendships between childhood friends. Reading it has caused several of our members to start reading other books by this author.

Dottie read:

Ink Black Heart by Robert Galbraith, a.k.a. JK Rowling. This book was a huge time commitment, 1000ish pgs. Dottie was surprised and disappointed that she didn't love it as much as she enjoyed earlier books in the series. She felt that the incorporation of social media and all the social media abbreviations detracted from the story, and was also frustrated that by the end, the main characters still were no closer to getting together.

Fox Creek by William Kent Krueger. This is the 18th in the Cork O'Connor series set in the Northwoods of Minnesota. An enjoyable read. Note: the first book in the series is *Iron Lake* (but there is a prequel to the series called *Lightning Strike*, featuring Cork O'Connor as a teenager, that is also a good place to start.) If this author's name sounds familiar, it's because he wrote *Ordinary Grace* and *This Tender Land*, two books that a lot of people in this group liked.

We are the light by Matthew Quick. This was an interesting book, written in the form of letters from a man who survived a tragedy to his analyst. Dottie didn't know where the story was going at the beginning, but it slowly comes out in the letters. She liked it a lot, and thought it was a moving story about grief.

JoAnn read:

The Rosamund Pilcher collection – – three good short stories about families and happiness.

Showstopper by Peter Lovesey. This is the latest book in the Detective Peter Diamond series, set in Bath, England. A good read, funny.

We need new names by No Violet Bulawayo. Set in Zimbabwe during civil wars. Really good description of the tragedies that occurred to villagers in this time period, and what they went through in the refugee camps. The main character eventually comes to the US to live with her aunt, which is not ideal because her aunt has a lot of problems too. It was a very good read, but a heavy one.

Marianne read:

The Quilter's Homecoming by Jennifer Chiaverini. This was two intertwining stories - one from the 1800s and one in 1925. Chiaverini is a good writer, and the book was very well done. Marianne enjoyed it.

Jacqueline in Paris by Ann Mah. Historical fiction about the year Jackie Onassis spent in Paris in 1949, and how her love for Paris influenced her later life. It was a very good novel.



This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger. This was a Montville Book club choice. Marianne really loved it, couldn't put it down, and read it in one day.

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden. This was a mostly enjoyable read, but Marianne felt it could have been shorter - there were a lot of wordy descriptions of things that could've been edited out.

Becky read:

The bullet that missed by Richard Osman. Number three in the Thursday murder club series. Becky loved it.

All that's left unsaid by Tracey Lien. A very good book- sad, and also almost haunting - about a Vietnamese immigrant family in Australia. Amazon's review says: "Alternating between Ky's voice and the perspectives of the witnesses, Tracey Lien's extraordinary debut is at once heart-pounding and heart-rending as it probes the intricate bonds of friendship, family, and community through an unforgettable cast of characters, all connected by a devastating crime. Combining evocative family drama and gripping suspense, All That's Left Unsaid is a profound and moving page turner"

Margaret just read *Sam Hell* this month - it was a busy holiday!

Irene read:

World of Curiosities by Louise Penny. This was an enjoyable read.

Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell. The dead son of William Shakespeare. Not recommended.

Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney. An enjoyable psychological thriller.

Mary read:

Showstopper by Peter Lovesey, same as JoAnn - Mary also enjoyed it.

The Ransomware Hunting team by Renee Dudley - an interesting (if geeky) nonfiction book,

This is what it sounds like: what the music you love says about you, by Susan Rogers. Another nonfiction book that was pretty interesting.

Ms. Demeanor by Elinor Lipman

The last bookshop in London by Madeline Martin. Enjoyable historical fiction set during World War 2.