

Book Talk ~ Summer 2019

Recommendations from JTL Book Group

***Hey Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka**

One Book/One Region selection for this year, and a National Book Award finalist. Graphic novel/memoir, two-hour read. Author's mother was a drug addict, and he was brought up by his grandparents.

***Marilla of Green Gables* by Sarah McCoy**

Published in 2018, this book is ideal for fans of *Anne of Green Gables*. Excellent job; highly recommend. Historical novel set on Prince Edward Island in the nineteenth century, about Marilla's life before Anne.

***Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver**

Animal Dreams and others were early favorites, and this is good, but slow. Climate change is a major theme in this novel, a parable about the protagonist's life and butterflies.

***The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century* by Kirk Wallace Johnson**

Nonfiction. A young man stole rare and extinct birds from British Museum of Natural History and sold the fishing flies he made from them. Surprised by how much I enjoyed this! Book discussion book, perhaps?

***The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding* by Jennifer Robson**

Fiction about Queen Elizabeth's wedding.
—LLW

***The Island of the Sea Women* by Lisa See**

Story based on facts about women divers on an island in Korea who collect food from the ocean to support their families. Girls start at twelve years old, as "baby divers." (Check out YouTube videos.) The story follows two women with different backgrounds through eighty years of friendship, and also includes elements of Korean history and culture (you want a son because he will care for you in the afterlife; daughters take care of you now). Studies of the divers have shown that the women's body fat helps them stay underwater for up to three to four minutes. Loved this book.

***A Hope More Powerful than the Sea* by Melissa Fleming**

Debut nonfiction about Doaa al-Zamel, a Syrian refugee. Tells the story of her family, trying to survive in Syria. Mostly happy childhood, with idealistic youth protests; later, the country breaks down, and there are street killings. The daughter gets involved in the resistance, and the family has to escape to Egypt, and then to Italy. She ends up living in Sweden. Remarkable perseverance.

***The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris**

A novel based on interviews with the real tattooist, a young man who makes use of his skill to help people in the camp. He finds his true love there, and they live a long happy life together after they leave Auschwitz.

***A Serial Killer's Daughter* by Kerri Bawson**

Nonfiction about a woman whose father was the BTK Killer. The same man who had been a loving father, devoted husband, church president, Boy Scout leader, and public servant had been using their family as a cover for his heinous crimes since before she was born. Everything she had believed about her life had been a lie.

—SY

***Finding Dorothy* by Elizabeth Letts**

Fiction about making the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. 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.
—SO

***The Life We Bury* by Allen Eskens**

This debut thriller (2014) was written by an award-winning author. A page-turner, with interesting characters; plan to read the sequel.

***Save Me the Plums* by Ruth Reichl**

Latest memoir by famous foodie Ruth Reichl, this one about her years at *Gourmet* magazine.

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***The Signature of All Things* by Elizabeth Gilbert**

Historical fiction by author of *Eat, Pray, Love*, etc. Liked this one better, about a female botanist in the nineteenth century.

***Ask Again, Yes* by Beth Keane**

Contemporary fiction about two families and the complications of their joint circumstances over a lifetime.

—JC

***Time Was Soft There: A Paris Sojourn at Shakespeare & Co.* by Jeremy Mercer**

An enjoyable memoir about books and living in Paris. Author goes to Paris and ends up living in the famous bookshop, where the owner believes in helping struggling authors and artists.

***The Garden of Small Beginnings* by Abbi Waxman**

Women's fiction with a gardening component. Story of a woman with two small children starting over after the death of her husband. Clever, witty writing and engaging characters. Laughed out loud.

***A Single Desperate Prayer* by Ludmila Ritz**

A new memoir by Lebanon resident Ludmila Ritz, who survived life in a Crimean ghetto and came to Lebanon as an adoptee at fourteen. Ritz has a calling to help other orphans from Ukraine, and will share her extraordinary story of courage and determination at an author event at JTL on July 18, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

***Machines Like Me: A Novel* by Ian McEwan**

New science fiction that takes place in alternate-history 1980s London. People can buy a robot and program it to become human-like. Excellent writing, as always; McEwan poses interesting questions about the moral ramifications of artificial intelligence that really make you think.

—MJH

Detective series always a favorite. Especially British.

***The Nordic Theory of Everything: In Search of a Better Life* by Anu Partanen**

A Finnish journalist who married an American and is now a naturalized citizen compares and contrasts life in the US with the Nordic region. She debunks criticism that Nordic countries are socialist "nanny states," revealing instead that it is we Americans who are far more enmeshed in unhealthy economic dependencies than we realize. As Partanen explains step by step, the Nordic approach allows citizens to enjoy more individual freedom and independence than we do.

***Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II* by Lisa Mundy**

NYT bestseller about the American women who secretly served as codebreakers during World War II—a "prodigiously researched and engrossing" (*New York Times*) book that "shines a light on a hidden chapter of American history."

—JK

Enjoy mystery novels, especially **John Burdett's Sonchai Jitpleecheep series** about a Thai/American detective who lives in Bangkok. Magical realism. Recommend beginning with ***Bangkok 8***.

Read all five ***Game of Thrones*** books and regretted it.

Best in Science Fiction is a favorite.

***The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells**

Series about a female security guard robot that falls into a family group, which includes a spaceship.

***Boomer 1: A Novel* by Daniel Torday**

About a millennial who lives in his parents' basement. Plan for beach read.

***Anatomy of Exercise: 50+* by Hollis Lance Liebman**

Nonfiction borrowed after physical therapist mentioned flexibility.

—ME

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***The Heart's Invisible Furies: A Novel* by John Boyne**
Amazing book about a gay man in Ireland in the twentieth century. Boyne also wrote *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. A beautiful book.

***Late in the Day: A Novel* by Tessa Hadley**
Two intermingled families in late-day London. Fabulous.

***The Humans* by Matt Haig**
Science fiction about an entity sent from another galaxy to help humans who are not ready to deal with what they're about to discover. Lands on Earth naked in the middle of Oxford and starts to understand our culture through *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Excellent and very interesting.

***The Falconer: A Novel* by Dana Czapnik**
About a high school girl who could keep up with the boys, or beat them. Loved the book.

***Innocence* by Penelope Fitzgerald**
Rediscovered this author with this title, found in a used book store.

Anything by Eleanor Lipman. Funny stories about women's lives.

***Once Upon a River* by Diane Setterfield**
Good, good, good story.

***The Dutch House: A Novel* by Ann Patchett**
Looking forward to this new title coming out in September (by author of *Commonwealth*, *State of Wonder*, etc.).
—MBY

***The Shadow Divers* by Robert Kurson**
Nonfiction. In 1991 a sunken German submarine was discovered off the coast of New Jersey. Story about deep-sea divers who wanted to identify the submarine, which still had human remains inside. Turned out to be recorded as a sub sunk off South Africa. A good adventure.
—JN

Not been reading. Working on other stuff and listening to podcasts, e.g., *Crimetown*, about the former mayor of Providence. Also *Revisionist History*.

—BG

***God, War, and Providence: The Epic Struggle of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians against the Puritans of New England* by James A. Warren**

Story of Roger Williams. Tragic and fascinating history.

—JJ

Discussed possibilities for September read, to be distributed at August planning meeting (our next meeting). Settled on ***Alive Alive Oh!: And Other Things That Matter* by Diana Athill**, to be co-led by Missy Hayes and Janice Knudsen:

From amazon.com:

"On the eve of her ninety-eighth birthday, Athill reflects on the things that matter after a lifetime of remarkable experiences, and the memories that have risen to the surface and sustain her in her very old age. . . . A pure joy to read, *Alive, Alive Oh!* sparkles with wise and often very funny reflections. Athill reminds us of the joy and richness of every stage of life—and what it means to live life fully, without regrets."

Book Discussion planning meeting: August 20, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. The group will select books to read for the rest of the 2019–2020 year.

The Friends of the Library meet next on August 8, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

Many interesting library programs are coming up for all age groups. Examples: Tuesday, July 9, 6:30 p.m., "Invasive Plants and Insects"; Thursday, July 11, 6:30 p.m., *Hamilton* Karaoke. Check library website (www.lebanonctlibrary.org) to see full calendar of upcoming events, and sign up for e-mail newsletters.