



Book Club Night 2012

Tuesday, May 1st

We hope you enjoy this list of recommendations. Reviews are alphabetical by the author's last name. Each review includes a byline from the staff member who recommended it. Please feel free to ask any of us what other books we love.

The Corpse with the Silver Tongue by Cathy Ace

Mystery, paperback, \$14.95

Cait Morgan is a Welsh Canadian criminologist visiting France. When her host drops dead at the dinner party she is attending, Cait uses her experience as a profiler to try and both clear her own name and discover the culprit. Add elements of Celtic treasures and victims of the Nazis and there is a lot to absorb and discuss. This first in a new intriguing Canadian series has a great location, interesting characters, and an exciting plot. Mystery lovers will look forward to more in the series. (Susan)

Waiting for the Monsoon by Threes Anna

Fiction, paperback, \$24.95

At age 65, Charlotte Bridgewater is living with her aged father, a retired British general, in a crumbling old house in India. Desperate to earn a bit of extra money, she rents out a room to a very talented itinerant tailor. Mandan is a mute, but has an unexpected ability to communicate with Charlotte. As the whole town waits for the monsoon, the details of Charlotte's and Mandan's lives are slowly revealed. (Michelle)

The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes

Fiction, paperback, \$19.95

Only once in my life have I finished a book only to realize that I must read it again. Right away! This Man Booker prize winning novel centers on Tony Webster, an Englishman in his 60s who is unexpectedly bequeathed the diary of Adrian, his childhood friend who committed suicide 40 years earlier. Through recollections about his relationship to Adrian and to their friend Veronica, Tony learns that what he remembers may not accurately reflect reality. This is a small book but not slight in any way. So many sections lend themselves to multiple interpretations. Essentially, Julian Barnes offers up a treatise on loss, memory, and what it might be like to realize you may have got it wrong all along. (Mike)

Jamrach's Menagerie by Carol Birch

Historical fiction, paperback, \$21.99

Late 19th-century London. Jaffy Brown, eight-years-old, is walking down the street when he is picked up in the mouth of a tiger. He survives. This chance meeting is a turning point in his bleak life. He starts to work for the owner of the tiger, Mr. Jamrach, and at fifteen sets sail on a collecting expedition to the south pacific in search of a "dragon". This is a story of adventure and survival with many twists and turns, all described in such rich detail that you will feel as if you are there, and often wish you were not. (Michelle)

The Coke Machine: The Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favourite Soft Drink by Michael Blanding

Current events, paperback, \$18.50

Coca Cola is synonymous with good times, and reaching out to the world. The slogans: "Things Go Better With Coke" or "It's The Real Thing", and the song "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing" have helped the soft drink achieved No. 1 billing world-wide and become one of the most profitable companies ever. Michael Blanding takes the reader behind the facade of Coca-Cola, and uncovers a morass of greed, dirty politics, corruption, and devastating environmental impacts. (Cynthia)

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain

Psychology, hardcover, \$28.00

Statistically, we know that two out three people reading this are extroverts. If you are part of the majority you need to read Cain's extraordinary work because she will help you to understand why and how introverts think and behave. If you are an introvert, *Quiet* is virtually mandatory reading. You will learn how to increase your confidence by embracing your strengths. (Mike)

A Land More Kind Than Home by Wiley Cash

Fiction, paperback, \$20.00

A stunning debut reminiscent of the beloved novels of Tom Franklin, *A Land More Kind Than Home* is a mesmerizing literary thriller about the bond between two brothers and the evil they face in a small western North Carolina town. The novel is told in 3 voices; sweet innocent Jess, who wanted to protect Stump, his mute brother; Adelaide, the town midwife who knew the evil that controlled the church and tried to protect the children from it; and Clem, the town sheriff who has his own sad burdens to bear. It is a tragic story of misplaced faith and love gone wrong. (Mike)

Summerland by Michael Chabon,

Young adult fiction, paperback, \$9.99

Everyone knows *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, and other books by Pulitzer-winning author Michael Chabon. But did you know he has written a most marvelous mythical adventure for teens and adults? *Summerland* was first published in 2002, and was reissued in 2011. It is the story of Ethan Feld, a terrible baseball player, who is chosen to save the world from evil. Celtic, Native American, and Norse mythology is woven into the fabric of the story, as is the American passion for baseball. If you loved *Field of Dreams* with Kevin Costner, you will get an idea of how the beauty of the sport and the poetry of Chabon's language can be woven into a mesmerizing story with many layers to delve into. Highly recommended for all ages. (Susan)

The Sisters Brothers by Patrick deWitt

Fiction, paperback, \$22.95

A cowboy story like no other. Surprising and delightful. Yes, they are hired killers, they are filthy, they are ruthless but somehow by the end of it you have a soft spot for them. There are some comical moments, there are some touching moments and some horrific moments but it's all in a day's work for these brothers. The nuances of language, the careful observations of behavior, and the revelation of feelings are what set this book apart. It certainly deserves all the recognition it has received. (Jeanie)

Revolution by Jennifer Donnelly

Young adult fiction, paperback, \$10.99

Andi Alpers's younger brother, Truman, died a year ago. Andi has been coping – if you can call it that – by overusing her anti-depressants. It's a balance. Too little and she can't get out of bed. Too much and

she starts to see strange things. Her father determines that taking her to Paris while he completes a high-profile DNA analysis is the only way to keep her out of danger. When Andi stumbles on the crumbling diary of Alexandrine, a girl who lived in the French Revolution, she become obsessed with the fate of both Alexandrine and of the girl's young charge, Louis-Charles, son of Louis XVI. If they survived, perhaps Andi can, too. (Judith)

Half-Blood Blues by Esi Edugyan

Fiction, paperback, \$24.95

Berlin, 1939. Paris, 1940. Baltimore, 1992. Despite the Nazi condemnation of jazz, black American jazz musicians are having an easier time in Berlin under the Nazis than their very young, very brilliant, trumpeter, Hieronymous Falk, who is black—and German. Their band, the Hot Time Swingers, flees to Paris. Their respite is brief before the Germans occupy France. In Paris, the Nazis seize Hiero, and he is never heard from again. Esi Edugyan's story is compelling and her writing is stunning. It is no surprise that *Half-Blood Blues* won the Giller and was shortlisted for the Man Booker, the Governor-General's Prize, the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, and the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction. Edugyan was born and raised in Calgary, and now lives in Victoria. (Anne)

After by Amy Efaw

Young adult fiction, paperback, \$10.99

Are there some actions that are simply unforgivable, no matter the circumstances? Devon is currently in a juvenile detention centre, being told just that, when in truth she doesn't remember much of anything that happened That Morning. But these are the facts: a baby was found in the trash, and Devon was found home alone, bleeding. Did she really not know she was pregnant? Efaw's powerful and empathetic narration draws you in. (Judith)

River City by John Farrow (pen name of Trevor Ferguson)

Fiction, paperback, \$24.99

River City covers a sprawling period in Montreal history, starting from the mid-1500s but focusing on the "Rocket Richard Riot" in 1955 and the disappearance of the legendary Cartier dagger. As we follow the history of the dagger through the centuries we meet many well-known historical figures who shaped Canada's history. This rather lengthy novel is challenging, so readers need to resist the temptation to speed past the historical elements in favour of getting to the modern day criminal case where the story culminates. Farrow has gone to incredible lengths to portray the historical characters and events as accurately as a work of fiction will allow. (Mike)

Beauty of Humanity Movement by Camilla Gibb

Fiction, paperback, \$21.00

If you liked *Sweetness in the Belly*, this newest offering by our favorite social anthropologist will not disappoint. Gibb's descriptions of contemporary Vietnam are rich with smells and sounds and colors. Her passion for the Vietnamese people is undeniable and her understanding of how the past influences the present is obvious. A brutal political regime can impact lives for future generations. This is the story of how unlikely lives can become interwoven. A young American girl searches for her father's story; a wise old pho seller has lived a long, poverty stricken life; and his nephew is young and eager to move ahead in the new Vietnam. Can these three unravel the mysteries of the past? (Jeanie)

Imperial Scandal by Teresa Grant

Historical fiction, paperback, \$16.95

Brussels, Belgium. June, 1815. The aristocracy and soldiers alike dance and drink the nights away, waiting for the final confrontation between Napoleon and Wellington. When the indiscretions of a Belgian prince result in a woman's death and threaten insubordination in Wellington's ranks, civilian diplomat Malcolm Rannoch is assigned to the mystery – but the most unexpected people are working against him. The themes of loyalty and betrayal are ripe in this novel: loyalty to one's ideals, to one's country, to one's friends, to one's spouse. What happens when these various loyalties do not fit neatly into their separate boxes? (Judith)

Blood, Bones & Butter by Gabrielle Hamilton

Memoir, paperback, \$19.00

This is Hamilton's own story of being a female chef in a male-dominated field. It is also a story of family, relationships, and what we do to keep our connections to the world. Hamilton was a troubled teen who found a new life as a chef, and she never glosses over the bad times. Her marriage is ruthlessly examined. She acknowledges that she stayed married as long as she did because of her love of Italy and her husband's Italian family. Hamilton is a gifted writer, whose passion for both of her crafts is explored as she uses her cooking to pay for college writing classes. (Susan)

The Almond Picker by Simonetta Agnello Hornby

Fiction, paperback, \$18.00

Sicily, 1963. Mennulara, the almond picker of the title, has died. For most of her life she has worked for a local wealthy family rising from illiterate maid to estate administrator. On the day of her death, the remaining adult children of her employer balk at the stipulations of her will and slowly the details of her life and influence are revealed. Sicily of the 1960s was a very strict, violent, class-conscious society, and Mennulara managed to survive and triumph in spite of her circumstances. (Michelle)

The House of Velvet and Glass by Katherine Howe

Fiction, paperback, \$19.99

Three years after the release of her hugely successful *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane*, Howe has delivered another book I am thrilled to recommend. We begin on April 14th, 1912 on Titanic's ill-fated journey. The timing of the publication, so near Titanic's 100th anniversary, was no accident. *The House Of Velvet And Glass* is an entrancing historical novel set primarily in Boston in 1915 where a young Sibyl Allston is living a life of quiet desperation with her taciturn father and scandal-plagued brother in an elegant town house in Boston's Back Bay. From the opium dens of Boston's Chinatown to the opulent salons of high society, from the back alleys of colonial Shanghai to the decks of the Titanic, *The House of Velvet and Glass* weaves together meticulous period detail, intoxicating romance, and a final shocking twist that will leave readers breathless. (Mike)

When She Woke by Hillary Jordan

Fiction, paperback, \$19.99

Hillary Jordan, bestselling and award-winning author of *Mudbound*, has created a dystopian world that will feel somewhat familiar to readers of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. It's the mid-21st century in Texas and a young woman, Hannah Payne, wakes up in a prison to find that her skin has changed colour. She must live the next 15 years as an outcast with skin the colour of a murderer, a "Red." Hannah tries to escape persecution in Texas by fleeing to Canada through a network that recalls the Underground Railroad. *When She Woke* is speculative fiction that describes a country where a

repressive government is omniscient, punishment is extreme, and a cult of religious extremism is the norm. (Mike)

Russian Winter by Daphne Kalotay

Historical fiction, paperback, \$17.99

Communist Russia. Stalin is everywhere. You will absolutely feel the starvation and the cold; feel the oppression of the people, of their dreams, their ideas, and their joys. You will dance onstage with the Bolshoi ballet; join the conversations of the Russian poets and artists; feel romance in all its forms, young love, everlasting love, jealous love, doomed love. It's all here. Of course, at the heart of it all, there is someone searching for their roots, a mystery to unravel. These are characters you will grow to love and who you will miss when you've turned the final page. This is historical fiction at its very best. (Jeanie)

Defending Jacob by William Landay

Mystery, hardcover, \$31.00

Andy Barber, a highly-respected prosecutor in a placid suburban community, is as shocked as his neighbours when an eighth-grade student is murdered. He is even more stunned when his own son, Jacob, a classmate of the victim, is arrested. As a 14-year-old, he will be tried as an adult. On leave, Andy shepherds his son through the trial process, but he also undertakes his own investigation to find the real killer. The dynamics of this small family—Andy, his wife Laurie, and Jake—change as they go through this crisis. From arrest to verdict, they are shunned by parents and kids they've known since Jake was a baby. This novel blends the tradition of the semi-amateur sleuth trying to save a family member from wrongful conviction with the suspense of a courtroom drama. What sets this novel apart is the close examination of the impact on the family, and their relationship with their community. (Anne)

Adventures in Solitude: What Not to Wear to a Nude Potluck and Other Stories from

Desolation Sound by Grant Lawrence

Memoir, paperback, \$26.95)

Grant Lawrence has spent his summers since the 1970s travelling up B.C.'s Sunshine Coast to Desolation Sound. This collection of memories is laugh out loud hilarious, bringing to life the unique individuals, the experiences, and the rugged beauty of this area of Canada. He is a great storyteller, and readers can relate to his experiences of the childhood family road trips, even those readers who have never been to Desolation Sound. (Cynthia)

The Vanishing Track by Stephen Legault

Mystery, paperback, \$18.95

The third in a series of mysteries featuring Cole Blackwater, *The Vanishing Track* takes place in the deteriorating East Side of Vancouver. When a medical social worker notices an increasing number of homeless people disappearing, you can't help but remember the infamous Pickton case. However, *The Vanishing Track* is so much more. Legault, who lives in Canmore, is an environmentalist, conservationist, and someone who cares deeply about preserving the best our world has to offer. Not only will you read a spell-binding mystery, Legault will challenge you to think about homelessness, political corruption, organized crime and the medical profession. (Mike)

The Girl Who Fell From the Sky by Simon Mawer

Fiction, paperback, \$24.99 – to be published in July 2012

Mawer has written a suspenseful, spell-binding novel highlighting the activities of the French section of the Special Operations Executive, who sent female operatives into occupied France during the Second World War. Marian Sutro, a young, very clever woman in her twenties is recruited by the SOE and sent to France where she must go “underground” in an effort to find a nuclear physicist who holds the key to unleashing a deadly new weapon. (Mike)

The Kitchen Daughter by Jael, McHenry

Fiction, paperback, \$17.00

So on the food theme – The Kitchen Daughter is the story of two sisters who are trying to cope with burying their parents. One daughter, Amanda, has a husband and children and is in favour of selling their parents’ house as quickly as possible. Ginny, the other daughter, who lives alone in the family home, has no social skills, and can only cope with life by retreating, physically and mentally, into the kitchen and pondering food. Ginny’s journey of discovery as to why she is like this, and whether or not she can make changes is compelling. The interplay between the sisters, one “normal” and one not, is realistic and exasperating. This is reminiscent of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, but is a more hopeful story. The decision of Ginny’s parents to avoid labelling Ginny is a great discussion point in the book, as the results are open to question. (Susan)

The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern

Fiction, hardcover, \$32.00 (Paperback to be released July 2012, \$21.00)

In its simplest form, this debut novel is about a competition between two magicians. But it is so much more than that. It is a story of enchantment, intrigue and love. The imagery is astounding, a feast for all your senses bringing to life the beguiling world of the Night Circus. The reader is drawn in, almost like existing within the Cirque du Soleil, as the different tents spring to life. This is a magical book. (Cynthia)

Stone Child’s Mother by Virginia Nemetz

Psychology, paperback, \$21.95

Stone Child’s Mother is a memoir that focuses on the author’s relation with the Mother Archetype. It is a book about personal transformation that describes a sincere quest for wholeness. Because mothers are universal, timeless, and taken for granted, to ignore them is to do so at one’s peril, for mothers embody energy and that which nourishes and heals us. Nemetz’s insights also reflect on what happens to those who are deprived of a mother’s love. (Mike)

The Invisible Bridge by Julie Orringer

Fiction, paperback, \$17.95

So often an author’s first novel is brilliant because she takes the time to get it right. Orringer possesses a rare talent that makes a 750 page story--which must descend into war and genocide--feel rivetingly readable, even at its grimmest. Building vivid worlds in effortless phrases, she immerses us in 1930s Budapest just as a young Hungarian Jew, Andras Lévi, departs for the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris. There, we become immersed in Lévi’s world as we move inexorably towards World War II. It is in effect, an old fashioned love story that some have compared to Tolstoy’s *Dr. Zhivago*. I found myself comparing her work to Pat Conroy’s *Beach Music*. High praise indeed. (Mike)

I'll Be Watching by Pamela Porter

Fiction/poetry, paperback, \$12.95

The four Loney children lost their mother, and then their father. It was a bitterly cold Saskatchewan winter during the Depression. The children are not only struggling against the cold, but also the disapproval of the community. They do not fit the proper mold. The Loney children must rely on their own resourcefulness in order to survive. The novel is written in verse, from multiple points of view, giving a unique and compelling voice to each character. (Cynthia)

Divergent by Veronica Roth

Teen fiction, paperback, \$10.99

The Hunger Games set a high bar for dystopian novels, but this one really grabs the reader. In this future, society is divided into five factions, each exhibiting different values. Tris has grown up in Abnegation (selflessness), but has always questioned whether she truly belonged. Her simulation test results prove inconclusive, which could be life threatening. On Choosing Day, Tris has to make a hard choice which could destroy the world she knows. (Cynthia)

The Still Point by Amy Sackville

Historical fiction, paperback, 18.50

In 1899 Edward Mackley set sail for the North Pole leaving his young wife Emily to wait his return. One hundred years later, his great-grandniece, Julia, is living in the family home, surrounded by the story of the enduring love of Emily and Edward. Meanwhile, her own love story is slowly unravelling. Written from five different perspectives, this is a beautifully lyrical tale of love and loss; of family myth and omission. (Michelle)

The Art of Hearing Heartbeats by Jan-Philipp Sendker

Fiction, paperback, \$16.95

Half Burmese, half American, Julia Win has just graduated from law school. The next day, her father disappears. Four years later a box of old papers, including an unsent letter to an unknown woman, sends Julia on a trip to Burma in search of her missing father. A superbly told story of an enduring love that transcends the boundaries of ability, distance and time. (Michelle)

Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys

Teen fiction, paperback, \$9.99

On June 14, 1941, the Soviet Union began deporting any Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian they considered to be anti-Soviet. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, writers, musicians, librarians, artists...all were considered anti-Soviet. Lina, a typical 15 year old Latvian girl, and her family are among the first to go. Lina tells her story in a simple, but heartbreaking voice, of their long and torturous journey and separation. Beautifully written, this novel opens the readers' eyes to what was an unknown horror story. (Cynthia)

Cleopatra: A Life by Stacy Schiff

Biography, paperback, \$18.50

Little was written about Cleopatra in her own lifetime. Her biographies—such as they are—were mostly written long after her death. They were also written by Roman men who saw her primarily as the sexy consort first of Caesar and later of Mark Anthony. Stacy Schiff, a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, had little contemporary information about Cleopatra herself, but Schiff's objective was to illuminate the person by providing the context of her life. Cleopatra became the queen when she was eighteen and ruled for

twenty-two years. She not only had to govern Egypt, but also had to deal with the threat from the powerful Roman Empire. Cleopatra, an intelligent woman, was masterful at strategy and negotiation, and her talents were fully tested as she sought to be an ally of Rome, not its colony. There's more to Cleopatra than Mark Antony, Elizabeth Taylor, and asps—and that's what Schiff gives to us as readers. (Anne)

Annabel by Kathleen Winter

Fiction, paperback, 19.95

Life in a remote Labrador fishing village is harsh. Add a sexuality identification issue to a struggling family and you will see true strength and character where you least suspect. This book is full of sorrow and sensitivity. The flawed characters are very well portrayed. Your heart will ache for each one as they try to figure out how to handle this unfamiliar and frightening situation. How do you know you are really a male or a female? What if your feelings don't match your anatomy? This is a great book on a currently popular topic. Kathleen Winter writes with honesty, beauty and compassion. (Jeanie)

When God was a Rabbit by Sarah Winman

Fiction, paperback, \$24.99

Not all childhoods are created equal. This quiet, quirky novel is about the innocence of childhood, about the love of a brother and a sister, about the need to protect and care for the ones you love. Bad things do happen to good people, and you cannot escape your past, but the people that really love you will help you become whole again. Sarah Winman is a master of sparse, heart-wrenching story-telling. (Jeanie)

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