

MVAH ZOOM BOOK CLUB

February 11, 2021

Next MVAH ZOOM Book Club March 11th at 3PM

Attendees: Host: Barbara Brennan Cher Terry Betsy Stephens Louise & Robert McLean	Carol Mattaino Norma Brodsky Sarah Tatum Hugh Schwartz
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NOTE: I think in the beginning we decided to limit the books discussed to one or maybe two, but no more. It was suggested to expand a bit more on the book, the author – at least a paragraph about it and why you are recommending it. Thank you!

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1. **Sarah – MAJOR PETTIGREW’S LAST STAND: A NOVEL. Author, Helen Simonson.** 534 pages. Published 2010.

In the small village of Edgcombe St. Mary in the English countryside lives Major Ernest Pettigrew (retired), the unlikely hero of Helen Simonson’s wondrous debut. Wry, courtly, opinionated, and completely endearing, the Major leads a quiet life valuing the proper things that Englishmen have lived by for generations: honor, duty, decorum, and a properly brewed cup of tea. But then his brother’s death sparks an unexpected friendship with Mrs. Jasmina Ali, the Pakistani shopkeeper from the village. Drawn together by their shared love of literature and the loss of their spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship blossoming into something more. But village society insists on embracing him as the quintessential local and regarding her as the permanent foreigner. Can their relationship survive the risks one takes when pursuing happiness in the face of culture and tradition?

2. **Cher – ANYTHING GOES: A BIOGRAPHY OF THE ROARING TWENTIES by Lucy Moore.** Published 2008. 389 pages.

Anything Goes: A Biography of the Roaring Twenties

Lucy Moore

Atlantic Books, Sep 10, 2015 - History - 400 pages

1 Review

Bracketed by the catastrophes of the Great War and the Wall Street Crash, 1920s America was a place of drama, tension and hedonism. It glittered and seduced: jazz, flappers, wild all-night parties, the birth of Hollywood, and a glamorous gangster-led crime scene flourishing under prohibition. But the period was also punctuated by momentous events - the political show trials of Sacco and Vanzetti; the huge Ku Klux Klan march down Washington DC's Pennsylvania Avenue - and it produced a splendid array of writers, musicians and film stars, from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Bessie Smith and Charlie Chaplin.

Pennsylvania Avenue - and it produced a splendid array of writers, musicians and film stars, from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Bessie Smith and Charlie Chaplin.

What people are saying - Write a review

ANYTHING GOES: A Biography of the Roaring Twenties

User Review - Kirkus

Review: Anything Goes: A Biography of The Roaring Twenties

User Review - Gwen - Chew & Digest Books - - Goodreads

Loved how this was broken down with chapters on Lindbergh, Dempsey, etc. It also brought home how the "Roaring Twenties" weren't roaring for a majority of the population, 71% of the population were living at the poverty line or lower.

3. **Carol - THE FOUR WINDS: A NOVEL by Kristin Hannah.** Published 2021. 398 pages.

From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Nightingale* and *The Great Alone* comes an epic novel of love and heroism and hope, set against the backdrop of one of America’s most defining eras—the Great Depression.

Texas, 1934. Millions are out of work and a drought has broken the Great Plains. Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as the crops are failing, the water is drying up, and dust

threatens to bury them all. One of the darkest periods of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl era, has arrived with a vengeance.

In this uncertain and dangerous time, Elsa Martinelli—like so many of her neighbors—must make an agonizing choice: fight for the land she loves or go west, to California, in search of a better life. *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American Dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.

4. **Hugh - MOBY DICK by Herman Melville.** Published 1851. (Movie 1956 Director John Huston)

i) **The True-Life Horror That Inspired Moby-Dick**

The whaler Essex was indeed sunk by a whale—and that’s only the beginning

By Gilbert King

SMITHSONIANMAG.COM

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In July of 1852, a 32-year-old novelist named Herman Melville had high hopes for his new novel, *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale*, despite the book’s mixed reviews and tepid sales. That month he took a steamer to Nantucket for his first visit to the Massachusetts island, home port of his novel’s mythic protagonist, Captain Ahab, and his ship, the *Pequod*. Like a tourist, Melville met local dignitaries, dined out and took in the sights of the village he had previously only imagined.

RELATED CONTENT

How Nantucket Came to Be the Whaling Capital of the World

And on his last day on Nantucket, he met the broken-down 60-year-old man who had captained the *Essex*, the ship that had been attacked and sunk by a sperm whale in an 1820 incident that had inspired Melville’s novel. Captain George Pollard Jr. was just 29 years old when the *Essex* went down, and he survived and returned to Nantucket to captain a second whaling ship, *Two Brothers*. But when that ship wrecked on a coral reef two years later, the captain was marked as unlucky at sea—a “Jonah”—and no owner would trust a ship to him again. Pollard lived out his remaining years on land, as the village night watchman.

ii) **THADDEUS STEVENS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY EGALITARIAN by Hans L Trefousse.** Published 1997.

One of the most controversial figures in nineteenth-century American history, Thaddeus Stevens is best remembered for his role as congressional leader of the radical Republicans and as a chief architect of Reconstruction. Long painted by historians as a vindictive 'dictator of Congress,' out to punish the South at the behest of big business and his own ego, Stevens receives a more balanced treatment in Hans L. Trefousse's biography, which portrays him as an impassioned orator and a leader in the struggle against slavery.

Trefousse traces Stevens's career through its major phases: from his days in the Pennsylvania state legislature, when he antagonized Freemasons, slaveholders, and Jacksonian Democrats, to his political involvement during Reconstruction, when he helped author the Fourteenth Amendment and spurred on the passage of the Reconstruction Acts and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. Throughout, Trefousse explores the motivations for Stevens's lifelong commitment to racial equality, thus furnishing a fuller portrait of the man whose fervent opposition to slavery helped move his more moderate congressional colleagues toward the implementation of egalitarian policies.

5. **Louise - THE NICKEL BOYS by Colson Whitehead.** Published 2019. Pages 224.

In this bravura follow-up to the Pulitzer Prize, and National Book Award-winning #1 New York Times bestseller *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead brilliantly dramatizes another strand of American history through the story of two boys sentenced to a hellish reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

As the Civil Rights movement begins to reach the black enclave of Frenchtown in segregated Tallahassee, Elwood Curtis takes the words of Dr. Martin Luther King to heart: He is "as good as anyone." Abandoned by his parents, but kept on the straight and narrow by his grandmother, Elwood is about to enroll in the local black college. But for a black boy in the Jim Crow South of the early 1960s, one innocent mistake is enough to destroy the future. Elwood is sentenced to a juvenile reformatory called the Nickel Academy, whose mission statement says it provides "physical, intellectual and moral training" so the delinquent boys in their charge can become "honorable and honest men."

6. **Betsy – FLIGHT BEHAVIOR by Barbara Kingsolver.** Published 2012. Pages 600.

Barbara Kingsolver's 2012 novel *Flight Behavior* presents a compelling symbolic connection between Dellarobia Turnbow, an unhappy farm wife who secretly dreams of running away from it all, and a surprising migration of monarch butterflies that alight upon her in-law's property in Feathertown, Tennessee. As the butterflies struggle to survive and reproduce to continue their species, Dellarobia struggles in her efforts to deal with the consequences of her past decisions and the possibility of her new life. Her delayed coming-of-age opens up a multitude of options for her and her children.

7. **Norma – DAUGHTERS OF ERIETOWN by Connie Schultz.** Published 2020. Pages 481.

"The Daughters of Erietown," Connie Schultz's absorbing debut novel, begins in the mid-1940s and hopscoches through the century tracking four generations of women in a hardscrabble northeast Ohio town. Schultz captures the rhythms of daily life in this blue-collar community, weaving in standard historical punctuation marks: the 1963 Kennedy assassination, the 1970 shootings at Kent State University and the burgeoning women's movement. It's territory she knows well from her longtime career at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, where she won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary. She is also an alumna of Kent State and is married to Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), adding to her Ohio cred.

8. **Barbara - TATTOOIST OF AUSCHWITZ by Heather Morris.** Published 2018. Pages. Historical fiction based on true story.

The *Tattooist of Auschwitz* is based on a true story about a Jewish man, Lale Sokolov, who is put to work as a tattooist at Auschwitz, the infamous German concentration camp. There, he meets Gita, a woman who is waiting to be branded with her identifying serial number, and he falls in love with her.

Lale's story is unique in that he's not really a normal prisoner at Auschwitz. Instead, in a stroke of luck, he has a chance to become the tattooist at the concentration camp, which brings him into the fold of the political wing of the camp administration. This allows him some level of protection, freedom and privileges which provides a slightly different perspective about Auschwitz and the Holocaust than can typically be seen. When he falls in love with Gita, he's able to extend some of those protections to her as well.

Of course, just becoming the tattooist isn't enough to ensure his survival, as is seen by the disappearance (and presumable death) of his predecessor, Pepan. Instead, Lale manages to make it out alive due a combination of luck, his own ingenuity and a willingness to do what needs to be done to survive.