

MVAH ZOOM BOOK CLUB

March 11, 2021

Next MVAH ZOOM Book Club April 8th at 3PM

Attendees: Host: Barbara Brennan Cher Terry Betsy Stephens Louise & Robert McLean	Carol Mattaino Norma Brodsky Sarah Tatum Hugh Schwartz – in absentia
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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 – Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America by Timothy Egan.** Published 2009. 349 pages.

The story of the nation's biggest wildfire – an apocalyptic blaze that burned an area the size of Connecticut in a weekend. No living person had ever seen a fire with the ferocity, speed, and destructive power of the Big Burn of 1910. Equally dramatic is the larger story of Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, and the creation myth of the U.S. Forest Service.

2. **Cher – Once Upon a Time: A True Story by Gloria Vanderbilt.** Published 1985. 320 pages.
A riveting and astonishing memoir written by Gloria Vanderbilt herself. Gloria Vanderbilt tells her story, from the moment of her earliest memory through the custody trial to her seventeenth year. Gloria Laura Vanderbilt (February 20, 1924 – June 17, 2019) was an American artist, author, actress, fashion designer, heiress, and socialite. She was a member of the Vanderbilt family of New York and the mother of CNN television anchor Anderson Cooper.

During the 1930s, she was the subject of a high-profile child custody trial in which her mother, Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt, and her paternal aunt, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, each sought custody of her and control over her trust fund. Called the "trial of the century" by the press, the court proceedings were the subject of wide and sensational press coverage due to the wealth and prominence of the involved parties, and the scandalous evidence presented to support Whitney's claim that Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt was an unfit parent.[1]

As an adult in the 1970s, Vanderbilt launched a line of fashions, perfumes, and household goods bearing her name. She was particularly noted as an early developer of designer blue jeans.

3. **Carol – The Paris Library. By Janet Skeslien Charles.** Published 2020. 368 pages.
Based on the true World War II story of the heroic librarians at the American Library in Paris, this is an unforgettable story of romance, friendship, family, and the power of literature to bring us together, perfect for fans of *The Lilac Girls* and *The Paris Wife*.

Paris, 1939: Young and ambitious Odile Souchet has it all: her handsome police officer beau and a dream job at the American Library in Paris. When the Nazis march into Paris, Odile stands to lose everything she holds dear, including her beloved library. Together with her fellow librarians, Odile joins the Resistance with the best weapons she has: books. But when the war finally ends, instead of freedom, Odile tastes the bitter sting of unspeakable betrayal.

Montana, 1983: Lily is a lonely teenager looking for adventure in small-town Montana. Her interest is piqued by her solitary, elderly neighbor. As Lily uncovers more about her neighbor's mysterious past, she finds that they share a love of language, the same longings, and the same intense jealousy, never suspecting that a dark secret from the past connects them.

A powerful novel that explores the consequences of our choices and the relationships that make us who we are--family, friends, and favorite authors--*The Paris Library* shows that extraordinary heroism can sometimes be found in the quietest of places.

4. **Louise – Dune by Frank Herbert. Published 1965.** Dune series. pages 412
Set on the desert planet Arrakis, *Dune* is the story of the boy Paul Atreides, heir to a noble family tasked with ruling an inhospitable world where the only thing of value is the "spice" melange, a drug capable of extending life and enhancing consciousness. Coveted across the known universe, melange is a prize worth killing for...

When House Atreides is betrayed, the destruction of Paul's family will set the boy on a journey toward a destiny greater than he could ever have imagined. And as he evolves into the mysterious man known as Muad'Dib, he

will bring to fruition humankind's most ancient and unattainable dream. David Lynch created the 1984 film adaptation of the first novel. It was also adapted into the 2000 Sci-Fi Channel miniseries Frank Herbert's *Dune* and its 2003 sequel Frank Herbert's *Children of Dune* (which combines the events of *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*), a series of computer games, a board game, songs, and a series of follow-ups, including prequels and sequels, that were co-written by Kevin J. Anderson and the author's son, Brian Herbert, starting in 1999.[8] A new film adaptation directed by Denis Villeneuve is scheduled to be released on October 1, 2021.

5. **A. Norma – Spy by Danielle Steele.** Published 2019. 243 pages.

Spy by Danielle Steel is a World War II historical fiction novel that covers the thrilling life of one young British aristocrat that completely changed her future when the war hit England. The book spans across decades following its main character, Alexandra Wickham, through her adventurous lifetime.

B. No Greater Love by Danielle Steele. Published 1991. 600 pages.

It was the maiden voyage of the Titanic, the greatest ship ever built, and in one fatal, unforgettable night, the sea shattered the lives and future of an extraordinary family, the Winfields. Compelling and deeply moving, **No Greater Love** questions a woman's choices and the price she must pay for making them. And in an unforgettable climax, it offers an answer—as Edwina confronts the ghosts haunting her and take an extraordinary risk for her future and her heart.

6. **Hugh – Les Misérables by Victor Hugo.** Published 1862.

Upton Sinclair described the novel as "one of the half-dozen greatest novels of the world", and remarked that Hugo set forth the purpose of *Les Misérables* in the Preface:[6]

So long as there shall exist, by reason of law and custom, a social condemnation, which, in the face of civilization, artificially creates hells on earth, and complicates a destiny that is divine with human fatality; so long as the three problems of the age—the degradation of man by poverty, the ruin of women by starvation, and the dwarfing of childhood by physical and spiritual night—are not solved; so long as, in certain regions, social asphyxia shall be possible; in other words, and from a yet more extended point of view, so long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless.

7. **Barbara – A. Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln. by Doris Kearns Goodwin.** Published 2005. 944 pages.

In 1860, prairie lawyer and former one-term congressman Abraham Lincoln stunned the country by prevailing over three prominent rivals—William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates—to win the Republican nomination for President. Perhaps equally surprising was what Lincoln did after being elected President: He appointed all three rivals to his cabinet—Seward as secretary of state, Chase as secretary of the treasury, and Bates as attorney general.

In *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, Doris Kearns Goodwin explores the extraordinary array of personal qualities that allowed Lincoln first to appoint, then to win over, men who had previously opposed him, and reveals how Lincoln's bold and brilliant actions helped him steer the country through its darkest days.

Goodwin won the Pulitzer Prize in history for *No Ordinary Time*, which examines Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and the home front during World War II. She is also the author of *Wait Till Next Year*, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, and *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*.

B. The Giver of Stars by Jojo Moyes. Published 2019. 402 pages.

Synopsis: Alice Wright marries handsome American Bennett Van Cleve hoping to escape her stifling life in England. But small-town Kentucky quickly proves equally claustrophobic, especially living alongside her overbearing father-in-law. So, when a call goes out for a team of women to deliver books as part of Eleanor Roosevelt's new traveling library, Alice signs on enthusiastically.

Based on a true story rooted in America's past, *The Giver of Stars* is unparalleled in its scope and epic in its storytelling. Funny, heartbreaking, enthralling, it is destined to become a modern classic--a richly rewarding novel of women's friendship, of true love, and of what happens when we reach beyond our grasp for the great beyond. -