

October 24, 2023 Book Club

There were six participants for a lively discussion. Our next book club meeting is Tuesday, November 28, 2023.

Carol Mattaino read *Shanghai Girls*, a 2009 novel by Lisa See. Set in China and in the United States from the 1930s-1950s, *Shanghai Girls* tells of the lives and suffering of two Chinese sisters and their families. The Japanese invasion of China and discrimination against Chinese people in the US are major factors in the sisters' suffering. Carol referred to *Shanghai Girls* as great fiction and highly recommends it.

Norma Brodsky read *Hello Beautiful*, a novel by Ann Napolitano. *Hello Beautiful's* plot centers on four sisters, their parents and children, and on William, a college basketball star who marries two of the sisters. William's parents had abandoned him emotionally in childhood following the death of his toddler sister. Norma gave *Hello Beautiful* a lukewarm endorsement, although she found the ending satisfying.

Sarah Tatum read *The Rice Birds*, a historical fiction by Lindy Carter. *The Rice Birds* tells the story of twin females, impoverished refugees from the Irish potato famine. One of the twins, Nora, ends up in pre-Civil War Charleston as an indentured servant. There she develops a close friendship with Pearl, an enslaved girl of about the same age. The two young women form a small business partnership, the proceeds from which help buy the freedom of Pearl's mother. Sarah liked the book and recommends it.

Louise McLean read *Hannah Coulter*, a work of fiction by Wendell Berry. Set in Kentucky, Hannah looks back on her farming life, her two husbands, her children, and the changes to farm life brought by technological "progress" and corporate growth. Noting the book's slow start, Louise nevertheless recommends it.

Robert McLean re-read *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto* was published in London in 1848 against the backdrop of widespread political unrest in Western Europe. The first time Robert read *The Communist Manifesto* was on the New York City subway, and back then, he had to cover it with an alternate book jacket. Although Robert noted that there has never been true communism, he still recommends *The Communist Manifesto*.

Laurie Tracy reported on *The Nature of Oaks*, a work of non-fiction by Douglas Tallamy. Tallamy, a much-honored entomologist, ecologist and professor, calls our native oaks a keystone species for the critical role they play in supporting insects, birds and many other species. They are champions at carbon sequestration and in absorbing water from heavy rain before it hits the storm sewers and ends up in our rivers. Laurie loved this well-written book and strongly recommends it.