

books '13
Book Talk
AMPA Lunch
October 23, 2013



Sandy Mack

And the Mountains Echoed

Khaled Hosseini

Fiction

This third novel, once again, is set in Afghanistan, but branches out to the Bay Area, Paris and Greece. The author continues to focus on relationships and this novel has a broad focus, involving several generations and branches of a family. Like his other novels, the story grips the reader and has great appeal. The reader senses the pull of Afghanistan, whether from exiles who live away, to foreign workers who have come to work in a strange land, and to those who remain and must deal with struggles.

The Aviator's Wife

Melanie Benjamin

Fiction

This absorbing historical novel reads like a memoir and chronicles the life of Anne Morrow from the time she meets the world famous aviator through her marriage until his death. The years she spends with Charles Lindbergh are remarkable in many ways, but they also are challenging, heartbreaking and at times debilitating. To read of her life is to go on her life's journey along with her and to marvel at how she handles herself and emerges strong and independent.

The Sand Castle Girls

Chris Bohjalian

Fiction

Elizabeth Endicott, a wealthy Bostonian daughter of a philanthropist, decides to travel to Syria in 1915 with her father to distribute medical supplies to Armenian refugees fleeing the Turks. She agrees to write about what she sees and to send back stories to the Friends of Armenia Society. She is not prepared for what she finds and gradually will come to realize she is witnessing events which have now come to be termed the Armenian Genocide. While in Aleppo, Syria, she will meet and fall in love with Armen, a young engineer looking for his wife and daughter, presumed killed in the massacre of his village. Elizabeth will return to America to start her new life carrying a secret she will take to her grave.

Wolf Hall

Hilary Mantel

Fiction

This historical fiction chronicles the events leading to Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine and his marriage to Anne Boleyn. Despite the fact that Henry's desire for an annulment will spur the action of the novel, the story is really a fascinating glimpse into the lives of two of Henry's closest, most powerful advisors---Thomas Cromwell and Thomas More. These advisors will clash, Henry ultimately gets his way, the course of history will change and the new era of reformation will begin.

Don't Let Go to the Dogs Tonight

Alexandra Fuller

Non-Fiction

A fascinating memoir of growing up in Rhodesia in the 1970s in the midst of a civil war in a family clearly out of its elements. Dysfunctional yet loving, the family will experience events which challenge them, at times defeat them, but which will mold every family member into strong and independent individuals. Alexandra, called Bobo by her family, is seven years old when we meet her and far too young to realize that her experiences are not routine by any means.



Carl Silva

Quiet

Susan Cain

Non-Fiction

Cain's groundbreaking book has re-written how introverts are viewed within our extroverted society. Beginning with our Founding Fathers, Cain traces the evolution of the introvert and extrovert to the present day. Some of her most fascinating research examines the graduates of Harvard Business School and their impact upon the economy. In fact, her research into charismatic leaders versus soft-spoken leaders yields good insight about our extroverted society. And her exploration whether this is encoded into our DNA will have you taking a second look at your children. The impact upon everything from the workspace to the classroom is explored, leaving us with many good questions by the book's conclusion.

Ransom

David Malouf

Fiction

Malouf revisits *The Iliad* when Priam travels across enemy grounds to bring back the body of his son Hector and breathes new life into this ancient story. Although in the original this journey is not significant, Malouf creates Somax, the simple carter, who will help Priam understand the world around him. It is this journey that adds a new perspective to the story. It is a remarkable novel with a heart-breaking scene between Achilles and Priam, speaking about the loss of life, honor, and what it means to be among the gods. It will be hard to think of *The Iliad* again without this new vision.

Someone: A Novel

Alice McDermott

Fiction

Just gorgeous language. This beautiful story is about Marie Commeford, raised in Brooklyn living an ordinary life. But what an extra ordinary life this will be. From childhood through adulthood, we watch Marie become aware of the world around her and although there really is nothing remarkable about her life, McDermott's ability to document the every day is magical. We are there for her first love, marriage, children, challenges with her brother, and her parents' death, and I have to tell you I never wanted this book to end. The novel is short (240 pages), and it is remarkable what McDermott achieves.

Dear Life: Stories

Alice Munro

Fiction

Ok, so I will jump on her recent Nobel Prize win in literature and say hurray for the short story form. These still-life portraits that capture the world require a little work. There really isn't the grand reveal or the classic climax that so much of literature depends upon. These are moments that unfold, and whether her characters are reacquainting with someone from the past or believe too much in their own identity, there is a humbling world that surrounds them captured by Munroe.

Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine & the Murder of a President

Candice Millard

Non-Fiction

What's that you say? You have spent sleepless nights wondering about our twentieth President of the United States, James Garfield? Well, buckle-up and get ready. This book is one amazing read that will be hard to put down. Yes, that's right. It is a page-turner. Garfield, raised in a log cabin, schooled in the classics, beloved by all, never really wanted to be president. In fact this rise to presidency is worth the price of the book alone. But add in a crazed man seeking to kill plus a surprising cast of characters, and you have one amazing work of non-fiction.