How I spent the month of April…

I’ve hit a rut. We’ve all been there … you pick up book after book and nothing holds your interest for very long. Ultimately, you pick up the TV remote and just stop reading for awhile. My problem is not that the books are “bad” or boring. I am reading too many of the same types of books. And you may be too.

Instead of sticking with my usual genres, I decided to mix it up and finally discovered how to extricate myself from that disheartening black hole of the reading rut. I spent the month of April “Genre-Hopping” which can be described as purposely reading books from different genres, rather than my typical favorites, or jumping from genre to genre.

Below are the books I read in April while Genre-Hopping. All would make fabulous book discussion choices. I encourage you and your reading group to try your own “Genre-Hopping” experiment.

Biography/Memoir: Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison by Piper Kerman
“Follows the author’s incarceration for drug trafficking, during which she gained a unique perspective on the criminal justice system and met a varied community of women living under exceptional circumstances.”

Historical Fantasy Fiction/ Fairy Tale Adaptation: While Beauty Slept by Elizabeth Blackwell
“Reflecting on her long-ago service with a princess who fell under a sleeping curse, Elise remembers witnessing how events actually transpired and were connected to a secretive labyrinth of evil…A Gothic retelling of the story behind the legend of Sleeping Beauty.”

Nonfiction-Social Issues: Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm Ravaged Hospital by Sheri Fink
“Reconstructs five days at Memorial Medical Center after Hurricane Katrina destroyed its generators to reveal how caregivers were forced to make life-and-death decisions without essential resources.”

English Translation: Block 11 by Piero Degli Antoni (Translated from Italian)
“Two elderly survivors of Auschwitz recall the harrowing night when they and eight other prisoners were ordered to pick which of their number would be executed at dawn, a choice marked by shocking revelations and wrenching debates about which of them deserved to live or die.”

Indie Pick: The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin
“When his most prized possession, a rare collection of Poe poems, is stolen, bookstore owner A.J. Fikry begins isolating himself from his friends, family, and associates before receiving a mysterious package that compels him to remake his life.”

All summaries provided by the Publishers

- Jackie Ranaldo, Head of Readers’ Services
JOCKEYING FOR A GOOD BOOK? SADDLE UP TO ONE OF THESE GREAT TITLES

May 3, 2014 marks the 140th running of the Kentucky Derby at the famed Churchill Downs Racetrack. The Kentucky Derby aka “the most exciting 2 minutes in sports” is a 1.25 mile race for 3 year old thoroughbreds and is the first of three Triple Crown races held each year. The second race is the Preakness Stakes held this year on May 17th at Pimlico Racetrack located in Baltimore, Maryland. The third and final jewel in the race for the Triple Crown is the Belmont Stakes in Elmont, New York. The Belmont, the longest race at 1.5 miles will take place on Saturday, June 7th. The last horse to successfully win all 3 Triple Crown races was Affirmed in 1978. Here are some book titles your book club may want to read that celebrate all things equine:

The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls by Anton DiClafani
Exiled to an equestrian boarding school in the South at the height of the Great Depression for her role in a family tragedy, strong-willed teen Thea Atwell grapples with painful memories while acclimating to the school's strict environment.

Dead Heat, Longshot & Silks all by author (and former jockey) Dick Francis. These books are about crime in the horse racing world.

Seabiscuit: An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand
The true story of how 3 men and a racehorse captivated the world in 1938.

All the Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy
John Grady Cole, a 16-year-old dispossessed Texas horseman, crosses the Rio Grande into Mexico in 1949, accompanied by his pal Lacey Rawlins. This is the first book in the Border trilogy.

Change at Jamaica by Marshall Messer
It’s the summer of 1973 and Eddie Sacks, having flunked out of college, is driving a cab and trying to figure out exactly who and what he wants to be. The only place he finds common ground with his Nixon-loving, cigar-puffing dad is at Belmont Park, where Secretariat makes his historic bid for the Triple Crown.

Kentucky Heat, Kentucky Rich and Kentucky Sunrise all by Fern Michaels
The Kentucky Trilogy about two horseracing families the Coleman’s and the Thornton’s.

Half Broke Horses: A True Life Novel by Jeannette Walls
True-life novel about Lily Casey Smith (the author’s grandmother) who at age six helped her father break horses in Texas.

Affirmed: The Last Triple Crown Winner by Lou Sahadi
The first biography of Affirmed, the last horse to win the Triple Crown; the descendent of Man o War and War Admiral, Affirmed won all three stages of the Triple Crown in 1978 by a combined margin of less than two lengths over rival Alydar.

-Lisa Jones, Readers’ Services Librarian

New to Book Club in a Bag

The House Girl by Tara Conklin, “is an unforgettable story of love, history, and a search for justice, set in modern-day New York and 1852 Virginia. Weaving together the story of an escaped slave in the pre–Civil War South and a determined junior lawyer, The House Girl follows Lina Sparrow as she looks for an appropriate lead plaintiff in a lawsuit seeking compensation for families of slaves. In her research, she learns about Lu Anne Bell, a renowned prewar artist whose famous works might have actually been painted by her slave, Josephine. Featuring two remarkable, unforgettable heroines, Tara Conklin's The House Girl is riveting and powerful, literary fiction at its very best.” (from the publisher)

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-Evelyn Hershkowitz, Readers’ Services Librarian