Newport, Rhode Island: America's Society Capital

A glorious Labor Day weekend spent in historic Newport, Rhode Island piqued my interest in the Vanderbilt family and the Gilded Age. Upon my return, I was curious to see what books Syosset Public Library had on its shelves regarding these topics. Here are a few titles I discovered that your book club may enjoy:

- *The Rainbow Comes and Goes: A Mother and Son Talk about Life, Love and Loss* by Anderson Cooper
  A charming, intimate and fascinating collection of correspondence between broadcaster and #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Anderson Cooper and his mother, the celebrated Gloria Vanderbilt.

- *The World of Gloria Vanderbilt* by Wendy Goodman
  Gloria Vanderbilt brought the Vanderbilt name out of the Gilded Age and into the Digital Age, reinventing herself over and over along the way. Hers is a story of charisma, glamour, and heartbreaking loss.

- *The American Heiress* by Daisy Goodwin
  Traveling abroad with her mother at the turn of the twentieth century to seek a titled husband, beautiful, vivacious Cora Cash, whose family mansion in Newport dwarfs the Vanderbilt's, suddenly finds herself, the Duchess of Wareham, married. Money, Cora soon learns, cannot buy everything, as she must decide what is truly worth the price in her life and her marriage.

- *The Gods of Newport* by John Jakes
  Determined to secure entry into the elite social circles of late nineteenth-century Rhode Island, Sam Driver enlists the help of a pair of social gadflies but finds his efforts complicated by his daughter's romance with an impoverished young Irishman.

- *Murder at the Breakers* (book one of *A Gilded Newport Mystery* series) by Alyssa Maxwell
  During Newport, Rhode Island’s heyday, a lavish affair at the Vanderbilt’s mansion, the Breakers, turns into a murder scene when a dead body falls from a balcony, and Emma Cross, half-Vanderbilt and half-commoner, must get to the bottom of things when her brother is accused of a crime.

If your Book Club would like to recommend a book to our readers, please send us an email at Readersservices@syracuselibrary.org and we will share it in a future newsletter.

-Lisa Jones, Readers’ Services Librarian
Celebrate Reading Group Month With an Oprah Selection

October is National Reading Group Month, and it is an exciting time to celebrate book clubs. This year it is even more special as Oprah has selected two great books for her popular book group. While you are waiting for The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead and Love Warrior: A Memoir by Glennon Doyle Melton, your book club may want to check out one of Oprah’s past selections.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski (Oprah’s 2008 Pick)
A tale reminiscent of Hamlet that also celebrates the alliance between humans and dogs follows speech-disabled Wisconsin youth Edgar, who bonds with three yearling canines and struggles to prove that his sinister uncle is responsible for his father’s death.

Say You’re One of Them by Uwen Akpan (Oprah’s 2009 Pick)
A collection of tales about modern African children in crisis includes “An Ex-Mas Feast,” in which an eight-year-old child shares in his family’s sacrifices to obtain enough food and enable his education.

Freedom by Jonathan Franzen (Oprah’s 2010 Pick)
The idyllic lives of civic-minded environmentalists Patty and Walter Berglund come into question when their son moves in with aggressive Republican neighbors, green lawyer Walter takes a job with Big Coal, and go-getter Patty becomes increasingly unstable and enraged.

The Twelve Tribes of Hattie by Ayana Mathis (Oprah’s 2012 Pick)
Traces the story of Great Migration-era mother Hattie Shepherd, who in spite of poverty and a dysfunctional husband uses love and Southern remedies to raise nine children and prepare them for the realities of a harsh world.

Ruby by Cynthia Bond (Oprah’s 2015 Pick)
Loving the beautiful but damaged Ruby all of his life, Ephraim is torn between his dutiful sister and a chance for a life with Ruby when the latter returns to their small East Texas home and confronts the dark forces that traumatized her early years.

New to Book Club in a Bag

The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen
2016 Pulitzer Prize winner for Fiction
A profound, startling, and beautifully crafted debut novel, The Sympathizer is the story of a man of two minds, someone whose political beliefs clash with his individual loyalties.
It is April 1975, and Saigon is in chaos. At his villa, a general of the South Vietnamese army is drinking whiskey and, with the help of his trusted captain, drawing up a list of those who will be given passage aboard the last flights out of the country. The general and his compatriots start a new life in Los Angeles, unaware that one among their number, the captain, is secretly observing and reporting on the group to a higher-up in the Viet Cong. The Sympathizer is the story of this captain: a man brought up by an absent French father and a poor Vietnamese mother, a man who went to university in America, but returned to Vietnam to fight for the Communist cause. A gripping spy novel, an astute exploration of extreme politics, and a moving love story, The Sympathizer explores a life between two worlds and examines the legacy of the Vietnam War in literature, film, and the wars we fight today.

Let us provide everything you need for a successful book discussion. We can supply you with 10 copies of the book and a discussion binder. The binder contains discussion questions, biographical information and critical material.

Please contact Readers’ Services, 921-7161, ext 239 to reserve a book for your Book Club. -Evelyn Hershkowitz, Readers’ Services Librarian