Looking ahead to December…Recap Your Year

Many book clubs skip having a December meeting as it is a very busy and hectic time of year. Instead of cancelling your meeting, your group might skip reading a new book in December and recap all the book discussions you have had during the year. Make a holiday party of it while you discover new perspectives on the books you’ve enjoyed (or not!). With this in mind, the following is a recap of the book discussions I had the pleasure of facilitating at Syosset Public Library during 2018. You might consider one of the following for one of your own book discussions.

January 2018: The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen.
“This literary thriller-mystery is an entertaining and thought provoking read - extremely discussible” - Follows a Viet Cong agent as he spies on a South Vietnamese army general and his compatriots as they start a new life in 1975 Los Angeles.”

April 2018: My Life, My Love, My Legacy by Coretta Scott King
“This title was chosen to tie-in with the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. Not knowing much about his widow before, I was glad to have the opportunity to read this book. It is an interesting life story told well and other discussion participants thought so too.” - The wife of Martin Luther King Jr., founder of the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and singular 20th-century American civil rights activist presents her full life story, as told before her death to one of her closest confidants.

June 2018: A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles
“My most well attended discussion of the year. A wonderful book, one of the best I’ve read this year.” - Deemed unrepentant by a Bolshevik tribunal in 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is sentenced to house arrest in a hotel across the street from the Kremlin, where he lives in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history unfold.

September 2018: Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
“This year’s Banned Book discussion choice was a surprise for me, not what I expected at all. 200 years old this year, the book is as timely now as it was then.” - Obsessed with creating life in a laboratory, a medical student haunts graveyards and dissecting rooms in search of the materials for his experiments. But when he achieves success, he rejects his ghastly creation. The creature — longing for love but shunned by all — turns evil and exacts revenge.

Let us know if you have recommendations for book discussion choices by e-mailing us at readersservices@syossetpubliclibrary.org.

All summaries from the publishers.

Sonia Gregas, Reference Librarian

When I read a book I seem to read it with my eyes only, but now and then I come across a passage, perhaps only a phrase, which has a meaning for me, and it becomes part of me.

-W. Somerset Maugham
New Book Club Choices

Many of our best loved authors will be publishing books this November. Here is a sampling of some of the books we are looking forward to reading this fall:

*Nine Perfect Strangers* by Liane Moriarty - Published November 6, 2018
Nine people gather at a remote health resort. Some are here to lose weight, some are here to get a reboot on life, some are here for reasons they can’t even admit to themselves. Amidst all of the luxury and pampering, the mindfulness and meditation, they know these 10 days might involve some real work. But none of them could imagine just how challenging the next ten days are going to be.

*Tony's Wife* by Adriana Trigiani - Published November 20, 2018
Shortly before World War II, Chi Chi Donatelli and Saverio Armandonada meet one summer on the Jersey shore and fall in love. Both share the dream of becoming singers for the legendary orchestras of the time: Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman. They’re soon married, and it isn’t long before Chiara and Tony find that their careers are on the way up. All goes well until it becomes clear that they must make a choice: Which of them will put their ambitions aside to raise a family and which will pursue a career? And how will they cope with the impact that decision has on their lives and their marriage.

*Hazards of Time Travel* by Joyce Carol Oates - Published November 27, 2018
“Time travel” --- and its hazards --- are made literal in this astonishing new novel in which a recklessly idealistic girl dares to test the perimeters of her tightly controlled (future) world and is punished by being sent back in time to a region of North America ---- “Wainscottia, Wisconsin” --- that existed 80 years before. Cast adrift in time in this idyllic Midwestern town she is set upon a course of “rehabilitation” --- but cannot resist falling in love with a fellow exile and questioning the constrains of the Wainscottia world with results that are both devastating and liberating.

Summaries from the publishers.

The 2018 National Book Award Finalists for Fiction

If you are looking for a well-written, thought-provoking title for your next book group, the National Book Foundation has announced the finalists in all genres. For your review, I have included only the five fiction selections. If you are interested in reading the complete list of finalists in all genres, please refer to this website: [http://www.nationalbook.org/2018-national-book-awards-finalists-announced/](http://www.nationalbook.org/2018-national-book-awards-finalists-announced/).

This is a wonderful resource for book groups as the mission of the foundation is to celebrate the best literature in America, expand its audience, and ensure that books have a prominent place in American culture. The winners will be announced on Wednesday, November 14th at the 69th National Book Awards Ceremony. Here are the fiction finalists for your consideration:

**Florida** by Lauren Groff
A collection of stories spanning centuries of time in mercurial Florida examines the decisions and connections behind life-changing events in characters ranging from two abandoned sisters to a conflicted family woman.

**The Friend** by Sigrid Nunez
Becoming the guardian of her late best friend's enormous Great Dane, a grieving woman is evicted from her no-pets apartment and forges a deep bond with the equally distraught animal in ways that initially disturb her friends.

**The Great Believers** by Rebecca Makkai
A novel set in 1980s Chicago and contemporary Paris follows the director of a Chicago art gallery and a woman looking for her estranged daughter in Paris who both struggle to come to terms with the ways AIDS has affected their lives.

**A Lucky Man** by Jamel Brinkley
In a debut collection of nine expansive, searching stories, the author reflects on the tenderness and vulnerability of black men and boys whose hopes sometimes betray them in a world shaped by race, gender and class — and where lucky may be the greatest lie of all.

**Where the Dead Sit Talking** by Brandon Hobson
Literally and figuratively scarred by his unstable upbringing, Cherokee teen Sequoyah is placed in foster care with the Troutt family, and bonds with fellow foster child Rosemary, who shares his Native American background and tumultuous past.

All summaries are from the publishers.

Jean Simpson, Readers' Services Librarian