Register Your Book Club
The monthly newsletter

Celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Banned Books Week
September 30th – October 6

2012 marks the 30th Anniversary of Banned Books Week: an annual event marking our freedom to read. This year’s theme is "30 years of Liberating Literature." The Readers’ Services Department will be presenting two special events to commemorate Banned Books Week. Come join us for a discussion of the frequently banned book Of Mice and Men on Tuesday, October 2nd at 3PM. No registration is required and the event is free. We will also be showing the 1992 film version of Of Mice and Men starring John Malkovich and Gary Sinise. A short discussion will follow the film. We look forward to having you join us. The discussion will be led by Jackie Ranaldo, Head of Readers’ Services.

If you are not able to join us on October 2nd, why not choose your own “Banned Book” for your group’s next book club meeting? Banned Books make for a lively and interesting discussion. The most important question being: why was this book Banned?

-Jackie Ranaldo, Head of Readers Services

Frequently “Challenged” Classics include:

- 1984 by George Orwell
- Animal Farm by George Orwell
- As I Lady Dying by William Faulkner
- Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
- The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
- The Color Purple by Alice Walker
- A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway
- Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell
- The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
- The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
- The Lord of the Flies by William Golding
- One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey
- Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut
- The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway
- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston
August’s Monthly Book Discussion

Last month, I had the pleasure of moderating Syosset Public Library’s August book discussion selection of “The Buddha in the Attic” by Julie Otsuka. “The Buddha in the Attic” is Julie Otsuka’s second novel. Her first was the highly successful “When the Emperor Was Divine”. “The Buddha in the Attic” is told in collective first person narrative, i.e. told from the point of view of a group rather than an individual. Nameless Japanese girls and women, “picture brides”, retell their immigrant experience from their journey, by boat, from Japan to California to meeting their husbands for the first time, to their struggles to master a new language and a new culture. Some of the women quickly learn that their husbands, whom they only know through photographs, have lied about their age and financial status. Within days of arriving in America, these women are forced to work in fields and live in migrant labor camps. They struggle to raise their children and to maintain aspects of their cultural heritage only to be later forced into Japanese Internment camps at the start of WW II.

We first discussed the author’s use of collective first person narrative to tell the story. The majority of the group had never read a novel structured this way. Some in the group felt this took away from the story as there were no main characters to connect or form a bond with. Some were left wanting to know even more about these women instead of just glimpses. Other group members felt the collective first person added to the story and found it “lyrical”, “haunting”, “eloquent”, “intimate” and “tragic”. Otsuka’s use of collective first person narrative “allowed me to tell a much larger story than I would have been able to tell otherwise. Using the “we” voice allowed me to weave them all in. Since Japan is a very group-oriented culture it made sense to speak of the picture brides as a collective entity”.

The main focus of the discussion was on immigration and the immigrant experience. Many of us shared stories of our families experience coming from foreign lands to America; the sacrifice, the fear, the adventure, the isolation, the poverty, the language barriers, and the prejudice felt by all immigrant groups as they struggled to assimilate to their new adopted homeland.

For additional novels regarding the WWII Japanese Internment Camps, try the following, All the Way Home by Ann Tatlock, Tallgrass by Sandra Dallas, The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford and Silent Honor by Danielle Steel.

- Lisa Jones-Readers’ Services Librarian

If you liked...Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn: one of the most requested books for 2012, has been on The New York Times Hardcover Best Seller List for the past 13 weeks. For the week ending September 16, 2012, Gone Girl is at the top of the list in the number one slot. If you have read Gone Girl and enjoyed it or if you are waiting for a copy, the following books are recommended as Read-alikes:

• Dark Places - Gillian Flynn After witnessing the murder of her mother and sisters, 7-year-old Libby Day testifies against her brother Ben, but twenty-five years later she tries to profit from her tragic history and admit that her story might not have been accurate.

• Afterwards– Rosamund Lupton After a school fire leaves Grace and her daughter, Jenny, in the hospital, Grace must find the true culprit before Jenny’s life is once again in danger—and before her mute son is convicted for an arson he didn’t commit.

• Tell No One: A Novel – Harlan Coben Eight years after his beloved wife, Elizabeth, was supposedly murdered by a serial killer, Beck receives information that suggests she may still be alive, but his search for the truth could mean setting himself up as the prime suspect in a number of crimes.

• Drowned - Therese Bohman When Marina travels from Stockholm to rural Skåne for a summer visit to her sister Stella, she feels an uncanny combination of fascination and unease toward Stella's boyfriend, the enigmatic and unpredictable author Gabriel.

Please contact Readers’ Services if you would like to read any of the above-mentioned books.
- Evelyn Herschkowitz, Readers’ Services Librarian