A Golf Themed Book Discussion

The first of the PGA’s (Professional Golf Association) 4 major tournaments, The Master’s, will be held April 11, 2013 through April 14, 2013 at majestic Augusta National in Augusta, Georgia. Nothing says spring has arrived than the lush red and purple azaleas in bloom along the rich green grass of the Augusta National Fairway. Another picturesque golf course is Pebble Beach in California where the waves of the Pacific Ocean crash into the rocks along the shoreline. To quote the golfer Tom Watson, “No other game combines the wonder of nature with the discipline of sport in such carefully planned ways. A great golf course both frees and challenges a golfer’s mind.” If you are looking for new subject matter for your book club to explore or to learn a few tidbits about the game of golf, here are a few suggestions that will evoke great discussions for your group.

The Back Nine by Billy Mott

Though he is older and slightly disheveled, Charlie McLeod can still drive the ball as straight and as far as the best players in the world. When his extraordinary skills are discovered, he quickly becomes embroiled in a high stakes game between his wealthy employers and a ferocious pro. What ensues is the hilarious and touching story of an underdog and the joys and life lessons found in the great game of golf.

The Kingdom of Shivas Irons by Michael Murphy

This is the enchanting story of Murphy's return to Scotland in search of Shivas Irons and his wisdom about golf and human potential. Murphy’s quest takes him from the mystical golf courses of Scotland, across the world to the first Russian Open Golf Championship, and finally to Pebble Beach on the California Coast. The result is a delightful exploration of the inner game of golf and a provocative inquiry into our remarkable possibilities for growth and transformation.

The Bird Sisters by Rebecca Rasmussen

As elderly women, sisters Twiss and Milly live alone in the house where they grew up in Spring Green, Wis. They spend their days tending to injured birds and roaming their land, lost in memories. For Milly, there is the constant reminder of what could have been. Twiss spent her childhood happily trailing behind their golf-pro father, but Milly dreamed about a family and children that never happened. There was hope for a young Milly, until an accident strips their father of his golfing abilities and sets in motion a series of events that rips apart the already unstable family.

Mr. Rosenblum Dreams in English by Natasha Solomons

After escaping Germany during WWII, Jack and Sadie Rosenblum, together with their baby daughter, settle into a life of acting "English." In post-war England, however, no golf club will admit a Rosenblum. So Jack hatches a wild idea: he'll build his own. It's an obsession Sadie does not share, particularly when Jack relocates them to a thatched roof cottage in Dorset to embark on his project.

— Lisa Jones, Readers’ Services Librarian
Why Not a Mystery?

Since mystery is my own favorite genre to read, it had long been on my mind to choose a mystery for one of my book discussions at the library. But which one? Mysteries do not seem to fit the accepted criteria usually applied by common wisdom to titles chosen by book groups for their discussions. Books that are chosen for discussion are those considered well written, containing character driven stories that are primarily about people and their relationships to each other. There is some stress or trauma that happens to one, some or all of the characters. Some of the stories end happily, most end ambiguously giving book club members plenty to talk about.

While “typical” book club choices are primarily character driven, mysteries are considered plot driven. No ambiguity there! We get to know “whodunit” and that’s that. But mystery fans know that there are many mysteries that exhibit the “typical book club book traits”. Although there are many titles in the mystery genre that fulfill these criteria, mysteries are just not picked very much by book groups for their discussions.

But I was determined to pick a mystery to discuss and settled on one by my favorite author, Agatha Christie. So it was that on March 12, 2013 the Evening Book Club met to discuss Dame Christie’s best selling (over 100 million copies to date), And Then There Were None. The conversation that resulted was both spirited and interesting. Most members enjoyed the book and were glad to have the opportunity to read one of Agatha Christie’s books (only I and one other person had ever read her before!). In the interest of not giving anything away, I will say only that there is much to discuss in this book and hope that you will give it or another mystery a try. - Sonia Grgas, Readers’ Services Librarian

“Discussible mysteries:
And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie
Finding Nouf by Zoe Ferraris
Still Life by Louise Penney
A Test of Wills by Charles Todd

New To Book Club in a Bag
The Dovekeepers by Alice Hoffman and Forgotten Country by Catherine Chung have been added to our Book Club in a Bag collection. These books are now available for our Book Club Insiders:

The Dovekeepers by Alice Hoffman  
Over five years in the writing, The Dovekeepers is Alice Hoffman’s most ambitious and mesmerizing novel, a tour de force of imagination and research, set in ancient Israel: “A tale inspired by the tragic first-century massacre of hundreds of Jewish people at Masada presents the stories of a hated daughter, a baker's wife, a girl disguised as a warrior, and a medicine woman who keep doves and secrets while Roman soldiers draw near. The lives of these four complex and fiercely independent women intersect in the desperate days of the siege. All are dovekeepers, and all are also keeping secrets.”

Forgotten Country by Catherine Chung
A Booklist Top 10 First Novels of 2012 pick - A Bookpage Best Books of 2012 pick
“Learning on the night of her sister’s birth that a daughter has been lost in every generation of her Korean family, Janie assumes a protective role over her sister while learning more cautionary stories from her optimistic father and mythology-minded mother until her sister's abrupt deflection years later reveals painful family secrets.”

- Evelyn Hershkowitz, Reader’s Services Librarian