

## BROWN BAG BOOKTALK RECOMMENDATIONS

AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2022

**Abbs, Annabel** *Miss Eliza's English Kitchen: A Novel of Victorian Cookery and Friendship* <2021> {historical fiction} (Fiction Abbs) - This novel is about the pioneering cookery writer Eliza Acton and her assistant, Ann Kirby. Not many facts are known about them, but this story of the revolutionary recipes and their friendship is very enjoyable. We know that Acton was a poet and was persuaded by her publisher to write a cookery book. It ended up being a best seller and Eliza was hailed as the best cookery writer in the English Language. She lived and worked in Tonbridge, Kent, England between 1835 and 1845. Acton was the first writer to list recipe ingredients with specific measurements as part of the recipe, rather than using the words "dash" or a "handful" or a "glass". This was a great innovation which we take for granted today. Imagine "Orange-Flower Macaroons" or "Indian Curried Fish" - you will have to read the book to find out the source and details of these and numerous other recipes. - recommended by JAC

**Adams, Michelle** *Hidden Treasures: A Novel of First Love, Second Chances, and the Hidden Stories of the Heart* <2021> {fiction} (Fiction Adams) - We first meet Harry Langley as he sits in his mother's cottage located in the Cotswolds. His mother is recently deceased, and we learn that she was a hoarder. It is almost impossible to move about the cottage. As things develop Harry tries to sort through the mess and get rid of most of the junk. His ex-girlfriend, Tabitha, turns up on the doorstep clutching a letter sent by Harry's mother just before she died. The letter includes instructions to help Harry find a priceless jewelry box hidden among the mess. The box had been stolen from the Nazis and hidden since the war over 75 years ago. The reunited couple sort through the mess of both the cottage and their relationship. Will they find the treasure, and its secrets, and will they get back together? - recommended by JAC

**Arlen, Tessa** *In Royal Service to the Queen: A Novel of the Queen's Governess* <2021> {biographical fiction} (Fiction Arlen) - This is the fictionalized story of Marion Crawford, who was governess to the two little princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose of England. As the princesses begin to reach adulthood during World War II, we learn of their joys and sorrows and their relationships through the eyes of their beloved Crawfie. As Princess Elizabeth reaches adulthood Crawford knows that it is time to leave, but she has one more task. She is probably the only one who believes that Prince Philip of Greece will be a suitable husband for the future Queen. It was very difficult for Crawford to stand up to the Queen mother for both her own sake and Princess Elizabeth's. It was very sad to read about how Crawford waited so long to marry herself and how cruelly the royals treated her. Anyone fascinated with England's royal family will enjoy this book. - recommended by JAC

**Chiaverini, Jennifer** *The Women's March: A Novel of the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession* <2021> {historical fiction} (Fiction Chiaverini) - I've read many accounts of the Women's Suffrage movement and I found this one to be very informative. Although it is written as historical fiction Chiaverini obviously did a lot of research into the lives of Maud Malone, Alice Paul and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Many of Chiaverini's previous historical novels have ended up being best-sellers, because her writing style and mastery of research is presented in such an appealing way. Alice Paul has just returned to New Jersey after spending years on Great Britain's suffrage marches and hunger strikes. She organizes a magnificent procession down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D. C. the day before the

inauguration of Present-Elect Woodrow Wilson (March 3, 1913). New Yorker Maud Malone is a librarian and advocate for workers' rights. She has acquired a reputation for interrupting politicians' speeches with pointed questions they would rather ignore. Journalist Ida Wells is passionate that women of color must also be included in the march and the vote. She was born into slavery in Mississippi and worries that white suffragists may exclude Black women. Despite many obstacles, the march does occur even though crowds of belligerent men try to block the parade route. Ida's fears of exclusion nearly happen, but she marches alongside the delegates from Illinois anyway. This was obviously a crucial moment in American history. - recommended by JAC

**Collier, Peter and Horowitz, David** *The Fords: An American Epic* <1987, 2021 reprint Hoopla ebook> {nonfiction} (Nonfiction 921 F699) - This is a history of the Henry Ford dynasty. Although perhaps not as illustrious as the Rockefellers or Kennedys, the Fords definitely have a special place in American history, having created industrial models that remain in place in the 21st century. Progenitor William Ford was born in County Cork, Ireland and emigrated to the United States in the 19th century, settling in Dearborn, Michigan. His son Henry was the mechanical genius who created the Ford motorcar and built the Ford Motor Company into an international conglomerate. This book concentrates on four generations of Fords. Henry Ford was not well educated, but he was a tinkerer and an inventor. As an engineer, industrialist, and philanthropist he had vision that extended beyond the Rouge River. Perhaps his greatest contribution to manufacturing was the development of mass production which grew beyond the automobile plants to all areas of American and international industry. Unfortunately, Henry Ford had his dark side which not only affected his devoted wife, Clara, but their only son, Edsel, and many of his colleagues and rank-and-file workers. Although Edsel was enamored of his father and strived to emulate and impress him, Henry soon became jealous of his own son and, later, anyone in administration who excelled. After ten years of record sales, the Ford Model T began to face competition from other burgeoning automobile manufacturers. Edsel pleaded with Henry to introduce the Model A and then the Mercury and Lincoln. Every innovation met with a veto from Henry. Edsel passed away in his late forties due to the stress and anxiety of working with his father. Edsel and Eleanor Ford had four children: William Clay Ford, Henry II, Benson, and Josephine. It was Henry II who became interested in his grandfather's company and fortune. Henry II had little of his father's business acumen but a lot of Henry's ruthlessness and daring. In addition, his personal life (he was married three times) was full of scandal and drama. He, also, was wary of anyone who outshone him in the board room or on the factory floor. His much-publicized feud with Lee Iacocca probably fueled the sales of the latter's creation: the Mustang, a sports car for women. Although he welcomed brothers William and Benson into the firm, he made sure that they got menial jobs and access to much fewer company stock. This generation of Fords struggled with alcoholism and various social problems. Henry II and Anne had three children, Charlotte, Anne, and Edsel II. Less time is spent on the most recent generation of Fords, perhaps because the family controls less of the company. Nevertheless, Ford is still a name recognized worldwide and will surely remain so for the foreseeable future. - recommended by EN

**Fowler, Karen Joy** *Booth* <2022> {historical fiction} (Fiction Fowler) - John Wilkes Booth. We all know the name of the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, but what do we know about where he came from. *Booth* is historical fiction told by John's older sister Rosalie. In 1822 a family moves to a secret farm in Maryland to raise a family. By 1838 the family has grown. The tenth child is expected. Four of those

ten have died leaving six. The father, Junis, is a Shakespearean actor who tours much of the time leaving the family to fend on its own with the help of Junis' father. The grandfather is a lawyer from England who is enthusiastic about America and its politics. A once young beauty is mother to the family as it grows. As the children grow to maturity, each chooses their own path. Some follow in their father's footsteps as others choose their own road. The story follows the family through turbulent times, both personal and political, during a shifting time in American history. - recommended by CSC

**Graeber, Charles** *The Good Nurse: A True Story of Medicine, Madness, and Murder* <2013> {nonfiction} (Nonfiction [164.1523 G734g](#)) - Charles Cullen is the perfect nurse in many ways. He is knowledgeable about intensive care patients and procedures, helpful to other staff, and calm under emergencies. At home he is a devoted spouse and father. But, journalist Charles Graeber documents another side to Cullen, as he leaves a trail of unexplained deaths on the nursing units where he works. Over a period of 16 years when Cullen worked as a registered nurse in New Jersey and Pennsylvania hospitals, over 300 patients perished via massive intravenous overdoses of insulin, digoxin, and other medications. The most astonishing fact is that Cullen was repeatedly fired but given good references, allowing him to continue his nefarious actions. - recommended by SCR

**Jenner, Natalie** *Bloomsbury Girls* <2022> {fiction} (Fiction [Jenner](#)) - It is 1950 in London's Bloomsbury Books and perhaps it is time for some changes. Evie Stone has just graduated from Cambridge where she was part of the first class permitted to earn an actual degree. As was all too common, she was passed over for an academic position in favor of her much less qualified male rival. She is grateful for her new job in the Rare Books Department, but has plans for her future in bookselling. Vivien Lowry has been single ever since her aristocratic fiancé was killed in action during World War II. She is very stylish and has a great plan for new selling techniques in the Fiction Department where she works. Grace Perkins is unhappily married to a former soldier who has suffered a nervous breakdown, but she has two wonderful sons, so she is working to support her family. She is the secretary to the General Manager. Of course, all the department heads are men, and it soon becomes apparent that the three women outperform their bosses every time. I really enjoyed the characterizations in this novel, written by the author of *The Jane Austen Society*. - recommended by JAC

**Keefe, Patrick Radden** *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* <2021> {nonfiction} (Nonfiction [920 K261e](#)) - It was in high school that Arthur Sackler, first generation American, first showed his remarkable abilities as both a student entrepreneur and marketing genius. He attended NYU as both an undergraduate and medical student, where he combined his studies with a copywriting position at Schering AG, a multinational pharmaceutical company. After graduation, Sackler accepted a staff position at the Creedmore Psychiatric Center. He also stayed with Schering part-time working in medical research and advertising. At Creedmore, he was one of the first doctors to utilize histamine and psychiatric medications instead of electroshock therapy. His two younger brothers followed his path to medical school and Creedmore. But it was not until the advertising company, McAdams, hired Sackler that the real power of marketing pharmaceuticals directly to physicians took off. Within a few years Sackler became McAdams President and owner. In 1952, the Sacklers purchased Purdue-Frederick, maker of Betadine, Senokot, and MS Contin. It was not until 8 years after Arthur died, that Oxycontin was introduced with the same direct to physician marketing techniques that Arthur invented. Though the Sacklers were also known for their philanthropic efforts,

when Oxycontin became the backbone of the drug epidemic, institutions like Harvard, the Smithsonian Museums, and Guggenheim Museum were forced to sever all ties. *Empire of Pain* was selected for *The Washington Post's* 10 best books of 2021 list. - recommended by SCR

**Korelitz, Jean Hanff** *The Plot* <2021> {fiction} (Fiction Korelitz) -Imagine writing a number one best-selling novel. What if that is the only book you have in you? Where do you get inspiration? Jacob Finch Bonner, now teaching creative writing in a third-rate college, is looking for inspiration as he ekes out a living. Each of his students is required to present a synopsis of their work for evaluation and constructive criticism. Jacob is despondent about his situation and critical of his fellow teachers and their successes. As we delve into Jacob, we see his need for future success and discover the lengths he is willing to go to achieve that success. When a student presents a plot that is bound to create a bestseller, but does not write the book, Jacob is faced with the dilemma of writing the book himself. Will this be the answer he has been searching for or will this plot twist? - recommended by CSC

**Miller, Derek B.** *Norwegian by Night* <2012> {mystery fiction} (Fiction Miller) - Widow Sheldon Horowitz now lives with his daughter and new son-in-law in Norway. Ostensibly a retired watch repairman from New York by trade, the three live a sedate life in the countryside. One morning after the daughter and son-in-law leave for work, he hears loud noises coming from the apartment below. As violence escalates, Sheldon takes the opportunity to shield the child from the apartment. When the pair are forced to flee the scene to hide, it becomes apparent that Sheldon has skills that are more formidable than a mere tradesman might ordinarily have. Winner of the Dagger award, *Kirkus Reviews* best crime novel of the year, and *Guardian* best crime and thriller of the year, this is the first of three Sheldon Horowitz novels. - recommended by SCR

**Morelli, Laura** *The Stolen Lady: A Novel of World War II and the Mona Lisa* <2021> {historical fiction} (Fiction Morelli) - Although I try to avoid books about World War II, I gave this one a try and I'm glad I did. The main premise of an art masterpiece is what attracted me to the story. There are two main storylines. In 1939 France Anne Guichard is working at the Louvre as an archivist. As the Nazis approach Paris, the directors of the Louvre decide to evacuate the museum and move staff and all the precious artworks into hiding. A truck convoy successfully moves everything, including the priceless *Mona Lisa*, to the Chambord château. As the war continues, the artworks are moved again, and again in a very elaborate game of hide-and-seek. The second storyline takes place in 1479 Florence. Bellina Sardi is a servant to her mistress Lisa Gherardini. Lisa is newly married to Francisco del Giocondo. He is a very prosperous silk merchant aligned with the powerful Medici family. This was a very contentious time in Florence, and I learned quite a bit of history in reading the novel. Bellina feels very conflicted about the Gioconda's display of wealth. Part of that display centers on the portrait of Lisa that Leonardo da Vinci is commissioned to paint. Bellina ultimately hides the painting and returns it to da Vinci, who continued to work on it until the end of his life. Leonardo da Vinci also narrates part of the Florence storyline, and we find out why the *Mona Lisa* ended up in France as the property of the French King. While Leonardo is, of course, real, both Anne and Bellina are fictional. But they are based on people of their times. Morelli has a Ph.D. in art history and is an accomplished author. This was a painless and enjoyable history lesson for both World War II and Renaissance Florence. - recommended by JAC

**Towles, Amor** *The Lincoln Highway* <2021> {fiction} (Fiction Towles) - Set in 1954, *The Lincoln Highway* opens on the day young Emmett Watson is released from a juvenile detention center in Salina, Kansas. After the warden drops him home, Emmett aims to pick up his younger brother Billy and head down to Texas to work as a carpenter. Billy has other ideas and wants to follow his mother's path along the Lincoln Highway to San Francisco in order to reunite with his mother. But, unbeknownst to the warden and Watson brothers, two former inmates, Duchess Hewett and Woolly Martin, have stowed themselves in the warden's car trunk. It is their intention to have Emmett drive the group to upstate New York to claim money belonging to Woolley. Emmett only agrees to take the stowaways to Omaha so they can catch a train to New York State. Unfortunately, the pair steal Emmett's car, stranding the Watson brothers. Over the course of the next 10 days, Towles documents the Watsons as they attempt to find the stowaways and retrieve the car. This novel was chosen by *NPR*, *Time Magazine*, and *The Washington Post* as best book of 2021. - recommended by SCR

**Ware, Ruth** *The Woman in Cabin 10* <2016> {mystery fiction} (Fiction Ware) - Ruth Ware's second murder mystery will keep readers on the edge of their seats as journalist Laura Breaklock faces not one but several attempts on her life. The first is by a burglar she faces in her London apartment a week before she sets sail on a cushy assignment covering the maiden voyage of the Norwegian luxury yacht, the *Aurora Borealis*. The second is by a woman impersonating the wife of the yacht's owner, Richard Bullmer. In typical Agatha Christie style, the main story places a group of 12 aboard the *Aurora* soon isolated in the middle of the Northern Sea. Most of the guests are travel writers, food writers, and adventurers. Laura, who prefers to be called Lo, tells the story which revolves around the fact that on the very first night she sees someone fall into the sea from the room next door. Unfortunately, no one believes her. Facing anxiety, depression, claustrophobia, guilt, and paranoia, it takes half of the book for Lo to discover the identity of the woman in cabin 10, believed to have gone overboard. By then she is in real danger. The ever-increasing suspense more than makes up for the lack of detail in some tense scenes. From below deck, below water level aboard ship to climbing tors above the fjords, Lo finally arrives at a swift, positive denouement. Mystery buffs worldwide will enjoy this fast-paced thriller. - recommended by EN

**Webb, Heather** *The Next Ship Home: A Novel of Ellis Island* <2022> {historical fiction} (Fiction Webb) - Francesca is a young Italian immigrant recently arriving on Ellis Island. She hopes to make a better life for herself in America while escaping from an abusive family in Naples. Alma is a young American of German descent who has just been hired as a matron at Ellis Island. Their paths intersect on their first day at the Island, and despite having nothing in common, they end up being friends. Francesca ultimately falls to the abuse of an Island Inspector. Alma, who has a wonderful gift for languages, yearns to become an official translator. She is held back by the mechanizations of that same inspector. This is a feel-good novel where the right people end up triumphing. Webb is the co-author, with Hazel Gaynor, of *Meet Me in Monaco*. - recommended by JAC

**Williams, Beatriz** *A Hundred Summers* <2013> {fiction} (Fiction Ware) - Beatriz Williams uses the East Coast hurricane of 1938 as the crisis in this riveting romance mystery that keeps readers guessing until the last line: The Western Union telegram dated 1944. *A Hundred Summers* is a good summer read. It has strong memorable characters: childhood girlfriends Budgie Byrne and Lily Dane who attend Smith College together, and Graham Pendleton and Nick Greenwald, two football players whom they

entice after a Dartmouth game in the fall of 1931. Unfortunately, it would seem that the wrong two individuals end up as spouses several years later. Apart from the leading quarter, there is Aunt Julie, the eccentric busybody, Mrs. Hubert, who heads up the country club crowd, and Kiki, the younger sister of Lily. Fathers are bankers or lawyers in New York City; mothers are devoted wives very conscious of social class and the epitome of New England snobbery and antisemitism. A good part of the action takes place in Seaview, Rhode Island during the summer months when the families reunite on their annual pilgrimages (reminiscent of Scott Fitzgerald). While one generation wines and dines, the other wines, dines and courts, and the youngsters swim and build sandcastles. The story shifts back and forth between 1931 and 1938. A major concern is Nick Greenwald's Jewishness. - recommended by EN