



2024 Reading Challenge

MARCH

A book whose
protagonist has a
different culture or
lifestyle from you

A reader from Orleans read *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte: I have been on a classic novel path this year, and I have not yet read this one and it fits the category.

A reader from Marblehead read *his only wife* by Peace Adzo Medie: This story took place in Ghana and the cultural approach/attitude towards marriage played a major role in the story.

A reader from Springfield read *The Covenant* by Beverly Lewis: This book was about a family of 4 Amish girls and their adventures with relationships. Because they are Amish, they are faced with many different challenges than english girls. Lots of lies, secrets and suppressed feelings. I don't think I would enjoy being Amish. It was interesting to read about the Amsh way of life though.

A reader from Worcester read *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner: The book focuses on Michelle Zauner's grief and her relationship with her mom as she battles cancer. She talks about Korea, the Korean-American experience, and how Korean food helps her connect with her mom

A reader from BEVERLY read *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah: I love Trevor Noah & was fascinated to learn more about apartheid from the perspective of someone who also knows America very well.

A reader from Indian Orchard read *Counterfeit* by Kirstin Chan: Fun read.

A reader from Hadley read *Autumn* by Ali Smith: This bitingly humorous and bittersweet novel provides a meditation on friendship and aging. Set in post-Brexit England, the book follows the decades-long friendship between Daniel, an art enthusiast and songwriter who is now 101 years old and in a care home, and his former next-door neighbor Elisabeth, who is now in her thirties and an art lecturer at a London university. Nonlinear, poetic, and light on plot, this book is a delightful and insightful read. It came out on the heels of Brexit, and juxtaposes the relatively stable and enduring relationship between the main characters with this political framework to explore the more unstable and cruel aspects of human relations. Highly recommend.

A reader from Foxborough read *Midnight in Peking* by Paul French: This book starts with the murder of a British woman in Peking just prior to WWII. It is a fascinating look at the social forces at play during this time. A fascinating read.

A reader from Gloucester read *The Burnout* by Sophie Kinsella: I liked the book. Sasha the protagonist couldn't be more different from me. She's younger, is single, has no children, and is completely burnt out in a field I've never worked in. I knew the end was coming, but didn't care every now and then you have to read a book with a happy ending.

A reader from Hopkinton read *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* by Kai Cheng Thom: A trans girl memoir that is fact, fiction, and fantasy. Best line of the book "Hunger is a story you get stuck in. Love's the story that takes you somewhere new."

A reader from Somerville read *Horse* by Geraldine Brooks: Based on the real history of famous thoroughbred, Lexington, a story about the American history of horse racing and the black horse trainers and grooms who made great contributions to horse racing during the antebellum period. The story is told primarily from three perspectives: (1) in the late 1800s, Jarret, a black horse trainer who works with Lexington, (2) in the present day, Theo, an Nigerian art historian who studies a painting of Lexington, (3) in the present day, Jess, a smithsonian scientist who studies Lexington's bones.

A reader from WAKEFIELD read *Once Upon a River* by Bonnie Jo Campbell: Margo is a teenaged survivor - by happenstance and temperament, and inspired by Annie Oakley - in rural Michigan. Throughout the story I had to remind myself that this takes place in the 1980s, not the 1780s. I couldn't do what she did.

A reader from Mashpee read *Grey Bees* by Andrey Kurkov: The protagonist of *Grey Bees* lives in a grey zone during the war in Ukraine. He lives without electricity and alone. There is only 1 other person in this grey zone. In the spring, he has to travel to take his bees to collect pollen. He faces border patrols, loyalists, separatists and such, all awhile keeping his good natured, naive ways. With all the adverse conditions that he lives with/ deals with, it is nice to read about someone just doing the next right thing.

A reader from CHICOPEE read *Class* by Stephanie Land: This is the follow up book to the author's first book "Maid" and is just as inspiring. I highly recommend this book especially if you feel there are many obstacles in your way of accomplishing your goals or dreams. The author was so honest and I loved the vignettes she shared about her daughter.

A reader from Plymouth read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: I have mixed feelings about this book. It is truly an epic accomplishment with beautiful writing and memorable characters. But for me, the length was too much. By the time I reached the last 15%, I just wanted it to end.

A reader from Reading read *Hula: A novel* by Jasmin Iolani Hakes: Eye opening book about the culture of Hawai'i and the not good reasons for becoming a state.

A reader from Spencer read *The Swallows of Kabul* by Yasmina Khadra: Very well written, I really wanted to know more about the characters. The depiction of people, especially women, whose lives drastically changed with the taliban makes me want to learn more about Afghanistan before the Taliban.

A reader from Dartmouth read *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai: This political and religious history of those countries absolutely shocked me. I am not a historian or a person who is terribly interested in more than a biography in Nonfiction. However, the complexities and constant conflicts in this girl's life astounded me. It's amazing that she grew up to be well adjusted and willing to stand up for herself. Her father and quiet mother were wonderful role models.

A reader from Sandisfield read *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger: This book is about a family, the father, who is a Veteran, now being a minister in a town in Minnesota. On the outskirts of town there is an Indian reservation which tries to blend in with townsfolk, in the midst of tragedies and a murder.

A reader from Gardner read *Faebound* by Saara El-Arifi: *Faebound* features an African-inspired fantasy world with tons of POC representation and queernormativity. Four Elven tribes have been waging war against each other for centuries over a precious resource that would be able to solve all of their problems, mainly food insecurity. I loved the rich history and folklore that this book is based upon. Very atmospheric and lyrical. I can't say more without spoiling the book but I thoroughly enjoyed!

A reader from Woburn read *Put On Your Crown* by Queen Latifah: Queen Latifah is one of my all-time favorite celebrities, and this book was so positive and uplifting while still keeping it real.

It will definitely remain in my home library for when I need a reminder to keep pressing on in life.

A reader from Dracut read *Women of the Silk* by Gail Tsukiyama: Great read about a time and culture I knew little about.

A reader from Wilbraham read *Instead: Navigating the Adventures of a Childfree Life - A Memoir* by Maria Coffey: Interesting read. Makes me glad I opted for motherhood.

A reader from Woburn read *Mystery Of Crocodile Island* by Carolyn Keene: I love both Nancy Drew and crocodiles, but this book was poorly written and a waste of my time.

A reader from EDGARTOWN read *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens: Certainly not like any life I've lived...! Fascinating insight into Dicken's perspective on legal system, class, money, and a little mystery and death thrown in for good measure.

A reader from Hull read *The Woman in Me* by Britney Spears: I will never be a famous pop star, so she fits a different lifestyle category from me. What a tough life she has had! Conservatorships can be very abusive if they are appointed to the wrong people, like in her case. I wish her the best in the future after all she had to endure.

A reader from Shutesbury read *Irreversible Damage; The Transgender Craze Seducing our Daughters* by Abigail Shrier: This book was brought to my attention by the trans librarians of Mass who stand behind banning it from libraries. I am not a trans person but am curious about the increase in people undergoing medical treatment for gender dysphoria and recommend it to others with similar curiosity.

A reader from Sunderland read *Children and Fire* by Ursula Hegi: By the same author as *Stones From the River*, and set in the same village of Burgdorf, Germany, this book tells the story of a school teacher facing the events of 1934 and the rise of the Nazis. She does not know how to help her students understand any of it, and struggles with her own worries. You might find this novel both timely and chilling.

A reader from Billerica read *His Only Wife* by Peace Medie Adzo: "His Only Wife" follows a Ghanian woman, Afi, as she begins her life in an arranged marriage set up by her new husband's family as a plot to separate him from his current girlfriend. I really enjoyed this read. The timing and pace of it was excellent in my opinion and you could feel the main character's emotions, mainly anxiety, grow throughout the book. It was fascinating to read about how marriage was treated in Ghana as well. The book is only set in 2014 but feels like another world from what I am used to. However, I did feel like the ending was a bit rushed but overall, loved it and would recommend.

A reader from Yarmouth Port read *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange: Beautifully written generational story of Native Americans trying to survive after the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre to present day.

A reader from East Otis read *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India* by Narendra Jadhav: I had almost no knowledge of the history of India prior to reading this book and it was extremely informative, all the while being a gripping personal story.

A reader from dover foxcroft read *Educated* by Tera Westover: "Educated" is a memoir about Tera's life growing up in a dysfunctional family in Idaho. I didn't plan to use this book for March's challenge however once I read it I could see that her lifestyle growing up was very different from mine. Tough book to read but I feel it is important to read.

A reader from Melrose read *Death in Troy* by Bilge Karasu: This was an interesting read that I'm not sure I fully understood (will need to take some time and then re-read it). The main character is a gay man in 1940s/1950s Turkiye, so it certainly fits the "different culture or lifestyle" requirement. It was written beautifully but I couldn't always follow everything that was going on.

A reader from Pittsfield read *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge: What a wonderful book! This book definitely has a protagonist who lives in a different world than I do. The young man, Woody Nickel, travels across the country with two giraffes during the Depression. I learned so much about giraffes and the characters were so well developed. I highly recommend this book. It is a good story and as the main character states "It is a foolish man who thinks stories do not matter - when in the end, they may be all that matter and all the forever we'll ever know."

A reader from Beverly read *Huda F Are You?* by Huda Fahmy: Super fast read. Insightfully done. Looking forward to reading more by this author.

A reader from Hadley read *A Hope In the Unseen* by Ron Suskind: I enjoyed this longitudinal look into one person's journey through high school and college, coming from a background that is different than my own.

A reader from Spencer read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah: Wow. I had no idea what women went through in the Vietnam War. I couldn't put it down. Great story!

A reader from Amherst read *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* by Satoshi Yagisawa: This was a super cute and quick read, I found it very cozy and calming to read at night!

A reader from Wareham read *Fourth Wing: Empyream, Book 1* by Rebecca Yarros: This is a fantasy character who makes very risky, bold choices that I would never make. I'm her opposite, but I love the character and love reading her story. I just finished the sequel, *The Iron Flame*.

A reader from Sharon read *Golden State* by Ben Winters: The main character of this book is a large, red-headed man who is a Speculative Services Agent, searching out lies/untruths/fabrications, in a dystopic, future California. The society tolerates zero lies and equates truth with facts to avoid a society where people can lie with abandon, believe whatever they want about the lies they hear and read and each person could therefore have their own reality. It's written like a detective novel, well-paced, and it's easy to see where the author came up for the idea of such a society. Though who would want to live in a world such as that?

A reader from Tyngsboro read *Ben Yokoyama and the cokie of perfection* by matthew Swanson: Great Funny, graphic novel/chapter book. The illustrations in the book are great and really add to the story, and in some places help tell the story. I loved this book. It is so funny and creative. I can't wait to read entire series.

A reader from Tyngsboro read *Keeper of lost cities EverBlaze* by shannon Messenger: Enjoyed reading Keeper of the lost cities series it's a great fiction book. It has a fun plot with cool powers, full of mystery. Plots were well constructed. Overall great series.

A reader from Berkley read *The tea girl of Hummingbird Lane* by Lisa Sea: Very interesting and well written book. Easy to get into. I learned a lot about a culture I knew nothing about and I also learned a lot about tea.

A reader from Agawam read *Abroad in Japan* by Chris Broad: I enjoyed the book overall, but there were times when it felt like the author was cramming too much information in at once. The beginning had a nice pace, but the end was much more condensed and rushed.

A reader from Basking Ridge read *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang: Very cute.

A reader from North Attleboro read *The Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angeline Boulley: Enjoyed this book a great deal. First time read of this author for me. An 18 year-old Native American woman in Michigan contemplates her place in her tribe when the FBI approaches her to date one of them to help uncover the source of drugs that have taken the life of her best friend, infiltrated her beloved hockey team & threatens to involve her brother.

A reader from Beverly read *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster: "The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence." So says Mr. Fielding, a British teacher stationed in India during the British Raj. Published 100 years ago in 1924, a statement such as this might have seemed somewhat enlightened. Now, in 2024, we see things differently. We understand that we need to respect all cultures and we define intelligence in many ways. We appear to be still working on showing good will toward one another. Perhaps this is humanity's perpetual challenge. Time will tell how well we have been able to meet it.

A reader from Tyngsborough read *the deep* by rivers solomon: A little confusing at times, but overall, a beautiful story focusing on the pain of intergenerational trauma and the importance of cultural history and community. The main character fell a little flat and the story seemed to be lacking plot-wise, but the overall message and philosophical themes were impactful.

A reader from SOUTH YARMOUTH read *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich: A little hard to get into, but I learned a lot about the lifestyle of the Turtle Mountain Indians and their fight not to be "emancipated" by the US government in 1953/1954. Love the characters and the way the author brings us into their heads and their homes.

A reader from Northampton read *Dust Child* by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai: This was very compelling and provided great insight that there are so many bystanders in every conflict. Well written and great character development.

A reader from Dracut read *By The Book* by Jasmine Guillory: Cute, romantic storyline. The book had a couple different stories within it, such as the romance, as well as the main characters own stories involving their lives, careers, etc. overall, nice story and would recommend.

A reader from Northfield read *The Diamond Eye* by Kate Quinn: It is a historical fiction based on the real life of Lyudmila "Mila" Pavlichenko. Mila is a single mother who is in her final year of graduate school, when she enlists in the Russian Army's Rifle Division after Germany invades the Soviet Union. She was one of the first female snipers who logged in 309 official Nazi kills. Mila's was known as Lady Death. In 1942, after fighting for 18 months, Mila was selected to join a delegation of war heroes to the United States on a goodwill tour. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt hosted the delegation. Mila and the Eleanor became life long friends. Mila was courageous, resilient, intelligent, and loving. She was an amazing woman. A book that was hard to put down.

A reader from New Bedford read *Mott Street* by Ava Chin: I never would have come across this book on my own. But reading about the ways in which history/politics directly affected not only individuals, families and communities made we realize how lacking my own historical knowledge is. The ways the Chinese Exclusion Act affected the trajectory of the author's family is fascinating and tragic. I liked how she filled out the descriptions of her family members. Anyone interested in genealogy, history, politics or even drama should read.

A reader from Easton read *What You Are Looking For Is In The Library* by Michiko Aoyama: There are several characters and stories in the book. They are tied together by the research librarian who works at the local library within the neighborhood community center in a small Japanese town. She recommends books and more and I recommend this book.

A reader from Edgartown read *Dust Child* by Nguyen Phan Que Mai: Brought me back to the war in Viet Nam and aftermath conditions to both Vietnamese and Americans.

A reader from Burlington read *Promise Boys* by Nick Brooks: Audio production was great but I didn't enjoy the story.

A reader from Newton Highlands read *I Will Greet the Sun Again* by Khashayar J. Khabushani: What a beautifully written novel that read so realistically that I forgot it was fiction.

A reader from Bedford read *Maame* by Jessica George: Touching story of a young British Ghanian woman dealing with the complexities of her family life.

A reader from Hanson read *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erlich: This was not my usual genre of book, but it was interesting to read about the lives of Native Americans and the challenges they faced.

A reader from Amesbury read *The Lesbiana's Guide to Catholic School* by Sonora Reyes: Loved this book. It did a really good job of portraying how hard it can be for a teenager who doesn't fit the typical mold.

A reader from Middleboro read *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros: I meant to read this book years ago but when I started it I wasn't very interested. I'm usually not a fan of poetry but I loved how natural it felt in this story. A short but powerful read.

A reader from Northampton read *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson: Kind of hard to understand at times, but deeply interesting to learn about evangelicalism in that time and the community it fostered. I enjoyed it!

A reader from Boston read *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak: Wanted to read this last month as part of a different challenge but ran out of time. Did not think I would like this book so much as historical fiction is not what I usually go for. Five star read, in my opinion.

A reader from somerville read *Dust Child* by Nguyen Phan Que Mai: Page turner!!! Kept me hook from beginning to end!

A reader from Hull read *First Person Singular* by Haruki Murakami: Is it fiction? non-fiction? semi-autobiography? Typical Murakami magical realism is at work in this short story collection told from the first person in each story. I enjoy Murakami and liked this book.

A reader from Boston read *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu: This one was a quick read. Originally I was going to do "In the Dream House" by Carmen Maria Machado this month, but it seemed like too heavy of a read immediately after Stone Butch Blues. So I picked a fun lesbian vampire novel instead. I would argue that an 1800s aristocrat Christian girl who falls in love with a vampire has a very different identity/culture than myself. Next month, it's on to Gathering Moss!

A reader from Belchertown read *So Late in the Day* by Claire Keegan: I absolutely loved this collection of stories, particularly the final story. I haven't stopped thinking about it since I put the book down.

A reader from Haverhill read *As Brave As You* by Jason Reynolds: The protagonist of this book is a young Black boy who goes to his grandparents rural Virginia home for the summer with his brother. He learns about bravery from his blind grandfather, who is trying to learn to leave his house for the first time in years.

A reader read *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djèlí Clark: This book was fantastic. I had only read his short stories before, which are set in the same universe. This just blew me out of the water, and I hope there is more to come from this series with these characters. Clark has such a gift for description and world building. Everything is so vibrant.

A reader from Wakefield read *The Last One* by Fatima Daas: An introspective memoir by a French person of Algerian descent, exploring how they grapple with having a foot in two worlds at once. They explore many topics that opened my eyes to a different perspective on life,

including the complications of cultural assimilation, the exploration of gender identity and sexuality, and the struggle with religious affiliation and tradition.

A reader from Somerville read *Furia* by Yamile Saied Mendez: I really enjoyed this book! I don't know much about Argentinian culture so this book was an interesting read. It reminded me a lot of *Bend it Like Beckham*, a movie I really loved as a kid so the nostalgia was nice as well.

A reader from Brighton read *Woman of Light* by Kali Fajardo-Anstine: Although this book contains some beautiful imagery, the character development is lacking for me. The story lines also felt disjointed for me and in some ways anticlimactic.

A reader from Attleboro read *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* by Lisa See: I enjoy how well the author wove historical facts into a wonderful work of fiction. Her descriptions of the characters and the setting were vivid enough to transport me into the story and made the individuals come alive. Very well researched! Highly recommend.

A reader from Attleboro read *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin: I loved the first half of this book - very interesting ways to continue the friendship and video game creation stories between the two best friends, Sadie and Sam, and their newfound third friend turned producer, Marx. The way the author introduced and expanded on race, cultures, family background and dynamics, friendship, sexuality, and loss were natural without being preachy or judgmental. Everything just happened the way it happened for each character, it didn't have to be explained and discussed for its social merit. Spoiler Alert: The end took a dark turn and left me wishing more of the friendship and game design continued instead of focusing just on the negative, but that's just my preference. Overall a worthwhile read - I enjoyed it.

A reader from Northampton read *Banyan Moon* by Thao Thai: This has been my favorite book that I've read so far this year. Such rich, complex characters and relationships!

A reader from Beverly read *A Living Memory* by Nicole Chung: The author is an adoptee, talking about growing up in an all-white community as an Asian, and then losing both of her parents when they were in their 60s, after she had moved across the country and had a family of her own. I know from personal experience how hard it is to be so far away when your parents are in their last illnesses, but my parents were in their 90s (or nearly, in case of my father) and had adequate health care as well as other family nearby. Interesting to compare and contrast our different experiences with the final illness and loss of parents.

A reader from Worcester read *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Beautiful and devastating. I knew nothing about the conflict depicted in the book, so this was very eye-opening for me.

A reader from Fairhaven read *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* by Kashiwai, Hisashi: A cozy little book seemingly about a family-run restaurant in Japan...but so much more lingers just under the surface of this light mystery! You'll want to visit Kyoto and seek out the food in this book after reading it. Likeable characters and delicious descriptions!

A reader from Everett read *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* by Amos Tutuola: Interesting storytelling and folklore!

A reader from Salem read *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith: This book was about a family in poverty living in a dilapidated castle in England and was a really good coming of age story.

A reader from Belchertown read *Ancestor Approved* by Various: I always find it hard to rate a short story collection. Some of these stories were incredible and others were... just fine. Regardless, I loved getting so many different voices and points of view from different native characters. Highly recommend for middle grade readers.

A reader from Chelmsford read *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi: This book looks into the lives of two Afghani women living 100 years apart. It is interesting to see how the culture has evolved and how much it has stayed the same for women over that century. I was inspired to read this book after reading an article about the tradition of bacha posh, where families without sons have a daughter dress, act, and observe the privileges of a son. Well-written, parts were definitely heartbreaking to read.

A reader from Northampton read *The Summer Palace* by S.Forrest Nomakeo: Katia is a young woman living in a Russian Terem in the 17th century. Her strong desire to ride a horse is the beginning of her many adventures . The book has segments about match making and weddings as well as battlefield accounts.

A reader from Scituate read *Spirit Car* by Diane Wilson: I chose this to learn more about the Lakotas. Reading about the personal experiences of the tribal members and their descendants was difficult yet important. The US treated the native peoples abhorrently. The scars run deeply. Generations after the War of 1862, the Lakotas are still grappling with their history and the impacts on them today.

A reader from Rochester read *The Windsor Knot (Her Majesty Investigates, 1]* by S J Bennett: An intriguing well crafted plot with a view of how things work backstairs at the Castle. The Crown meets Miss Marple. No one must know that the Queen is a sleuth. It's a lifestyle I'll never experience, but I share her affinity for dogs and horses.

A reader from Attleboro read *The Woman Who Watches Over The World, A Native Memoir* by Linda Hogan: This is a fantastic book and I will definitely be reading more of her books. I learned many things about the Native American culture and I plan to learn more, especially the history. The Attleboro Library does such a great job of displaying books on their shelves, by highlighting the front covers of some, and this is how I came about picking this book. I have known of Linda Hogan, just haven't read any of her books before this one.

A reader from Colrain read *Hatching Magic* by Ann Downer: A fun fantasy about Theodora, a young girl who loves dragons but has to spend the summer alone when her biologist father goes off on a trip without her. Then Gideon, a wizard from the 13th century, chases his dragon through a hole in time and the summer won't be the same for Theodora. The lives of Theodora and Gideon are the complete opposites of my own, but it was a very good story. Would recommend.

A reader from Rockland read *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi: A really good book about women in Afghanistan living very different lives than in the US.

A reader from Brewster read *Born A Crime* by Trevor Noah: A wonderful book I am so glad I chose to read this!

A reader from Springfield read *Bad Cree* by Jessica Johns: A very engaging and poignant reflection on grief, and the importance of family through the lens of Cree culture.

A reader from Attleboro read *The Light We Carry* by Michelle Obama: It was great to read a book told from the perspective of someone who has a different culture and lifestyle from me. The book also had helpful advice for how to live a successful life.

A reader from Andover read *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave: I was not sure about this book but when I began to hear and listen to the story of little bee and Sarah I began to like it. Little bee made her way to England from Nigeria to first be in a detention center then to Sarah's home I learned what Little bee life was in Nigeria. Only for her to end up deported knowing what the outcome would be. I learned new things

A reader from Salem read *Preparing for War: The Extremist History of White Christian Nationalism and what comes next* by Bradley Onishi: I picked this book because the many people profiled have very different views of Christianity and its function in their life than I do. I honestly finished the book feeling that we had even less in common than I originally thought.

A reader from MASHPEE read *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks: Brooks takes the reader through the 13th through the 21st century of European history following the travels of the Sarajevo Haggadah and the people of many faiths who saved it through wars, the Inquisition, the Holocaust.. The story of the book is told by a fictional book conservator, Hannah Heath, who discovers her own story while telling her history of the book.

A reader from Sutton read *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See: This book was amazing. I had never heard of the haenyeo before. What these all women divers were capable of is incredible. And what they went through, both labor-wise and historically, to provide for their families is pretty remarkable.

A reader from Berkley read *Huda F Are You?* by Huda Fahmy: This book was about the life of Huda, who is a young Muslim-American girl, living in Dearborn, Michigan, who is trying to find herself. I'm not Muslim and/or Arab so it was cool to read this graphic novel from the POV of a woman from a different cultural background.

A reader from Braintree read *Say You'll Be Mine* by Naina Kumar: I learned about Indian matchmaking.

A reader from Hudson read *The Things We Didn't Know* by Elba Iris Pérez: Growing up in a community in central Massachusetts where there were a number of Puerto-Rican families in our neighborhood provided me with a backdrop of the family depicted in the book. The culture that

existed in this immigrant population especially around the tight rules put forth by the father in terms of his teenage children was eye-opening and helped me to have a greater understanding of their families. Surprising to me was the level of racism based on the darkness of one's skin that existed among the native Puerto Ricans. They shared the same homeland and customs, yet the tone of their skin set them apart.

A reader from Hopkinton read *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett: I had it on my reading list for a while, and I gave it a go for a different lifestyle part of the monthly challenge. It is a book with a contrived plot, and too descriptive and slow in its first half or so, but then it picks up pace and writing style adjusts in the last third or so to make up for the slow beginning. I see why so many people rate it so highly. It has issues and ethnic stereotypes for sure, but overall it's still a decent read.

A reader from Amherst read *Beauty in Breaking* by Michelle Harper: A young, black, female inner-city emergency room physician tells of her experiences with the health care system as she struggles to find the role that best fulfills her work-life balance. Many examples of how by listening to ourselves we are able to make the changes and choices to create a better life.

A reader from Groton read *The Bandit Queens* by Parini Shroff: I really enjoyed this book! Despite the serious subject of the lack of women's rights, the story is entertaining and often humorous. The characters and their lives in this small village come together for a great read.

A reader from Lexington read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: The protagonist Joe is from the Mi'kmaq indigenous tribe from Nova Scotia. That Culture and the lifestyle he leads for much of his life - apart from his family by choice - are far from my white, American, family man and homebody. This was a fabulous book, whose issues of love, loss, family, and the choices we make and that are made for us was powerfully told. The Mi'kmaq family at the heart was richly portrayed and I cared for all of them. There is a horrific event that propels the story - of a missing youngest member of the family. The author played this out very well. I listened to the audio of this book - and the readers were terrific. One of my top reads of the year.

A reader from Wrentham read *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai: Malala is a brave young woman and it was riveting to read about Pakistan and the challenges girls and women face in that country. It made me feel very thankful for the opportunities we have here.

A reader from Wakefield read *Hula* by Jasmin 'Iolani Hakes: I really enjoyed *Hula*. I wasn't expecting it to incorporate so much history on the Kingdom of Hawaii but that ended up being the most interesting part for me. I had a basic understanding of how the US overthrew Hawaiian monarchs but there was a lot in here I didn't know. I also found it compelling the way this book followed multiple generations of the Naupaka family and explored the impacts of settler colonialism on a family and community. I know the actual characters were fictional but the book made me think about so many actual issues that I want to know more about.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: Author so clearly describes how addiction took over the lives of many in the teenage age group and I received a

new appreciation of what this age group was up against. For so many, going away to college was just not an option as even finishing high school. Sad story but so well written.

A reader from Northampton read *Pageboy* by Elliot Page: This book riveted me. Elliot Page has been so generous in sharing his life experiences, traumas, and reactions to open our eyes and educate us. This book has stayed with me and I feel more openhearted for having read it.

A reader from Medford read *Mexikid* by Pedro Martin: I don't read many graphic novels, but this Newbery-honor-award-winning autobiographical memoir caught my eye. *Mexikid* is about a Mexican-American boy who goes on a long road trip down to Mexico with his parents and eight siblings and has some wild adventures along the way. It was entertaining and very different from anything in my own experience.

A reader from Attleboro read *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park: This book shares the life of an orphan in Korea during the twelfth century. It explains the village, the society of the time and the culture. Pottery and the life of a potter was handed down from father to son was something the main character could never have since he was an orphan. But friendship and kindness prevail in this Newberry Award winning book.

A reader from Hudson read *Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: Despite the fairly dark subject matter, the book was funny, and, I believe, ultimately meant to inspire hope.

A reader from Northampton read *Finding Me* by Viola Davis: Moving, heartbreaking, and inspiring memoir by Viola Davis. She has been THROUGH it, but never gave up. An important reminder that you have no idea what others might be going through.

A reader from North Dighton read *The Girl, the Ring, and the Baseball Bat* by Camille Gomera-Tavarez: Love the way the magical elements percolate throughout. Rosie and Caro's relationship as sisters is complex but ultimately defined by their love for one another.

A reader from North Billerica read *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* by Lisa See: I thought the book was ok. I did not love it as much as many of those reviewing the book on various sites. I had trouble reading of the bonding of girls feet (a horrible, painful practice), how women were property of men, how concubines were used to try to produce more heirs and entertain the husbands, etc. I learned a lot about how women lived in the time of the Ming Dynasty but never grew fond of any of the characters.

A reader from BREWSTER read *Moloka'i* by Alan Brennert: Beautiful story of resilience and hope that is also a sweeping history lesson about Hawaii and Hansen's disease.

A reader from Springfield read *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: The *Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride tells the story of the Chicken Hill community in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. It starts with a human skeleton being dug up at a site for a new housing development. It then flashes back to tell the story of Chona and Moshe Ludlow, a Jewish couple who own the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store, which serves the Jewish, Black, and immigrant members of this community. When Dodo, the deaf Black young nephew of Nate and

Addie Timlin, gets in trouble and is threatened to be institutionalized by the state, Chona takes him in and the community works together to save him. I had been looking at this novel at Barnes and Noble for several months before I bought it upon the suggestion of one of the clerks. While it took me a little bit to get used to McBride's style, in which he unravels the story through the multiple perspectives of the people of Chicken Hill, I ended up becoming immersed in the stories and insights of this small, close-knit community with their secrets and in the bigger mystery of the book. It gave me a chance to see and appreciate a community and perspectives different from my own. I loved this book and will be looking for others by McBride.

A reader from Westborough read *Honor* by Thrity Umrigar: It was recommended to me by someone I know and it was fantastic. She is such an amazing writer, and her depiction of life in India was vivid and compelling. As an adult American woman who has never been out of the U.S., the description of life in India, especially rural villages, and the treatment of women there was eye-opening. I will be thinking about this book for a long time to come.

A reader from Arlington read *Solito* by Javier Zamora: A memoir about a boy from El Salvador trying to get to the United States, where his parents are waiting for him. Even though it was written from the boy's perspective, throughout the book, I found myself thinking about how hard it must have been for his parents not knowing where he was and what he was going through. It would have been useful to have footnotes or more explanation of some of the Spanish text.

A reader from Boston read *The Last List of Mabel Beaumont* by Laura Pearson: Loved this book! Protagonist is 86 years old and British.

A reader from Brighton read *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* by Jeff Lindsay: Overall it was a good book, I would like to watch the TV show now.

A reader from Medway read *The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb: Excellent Book. Can't wait to hear him speak at the Foxboro Boyden Library.

A reader from Lowell read *educated* by tara westover: Very engaging. Interesting to reach which aspects of the story the author was able to recount with certainty and which made her question her memories.

A reader from Scituate read *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* by Jean Sasson: Quite eye opening book describing the life of a female member of a royal family in Saudi Arabia. At times difficult to read due to the harsh treatment and restricted life women may endure in Saudi Arabia.

A reader from Springfield read *Get a Life, Chloe Brown* by Talia Hibbert: I chose this book because the protagonist has a disability and also lives overseas. I got a better understanding of someone who lives in constant pain. The author did a great job of describing the issues the protagonist had to deal with both in her personal and working life. I look forward to reading more books by this author.

A reader from Scituate read *Michael Vick* by Jeff Savage: I felt better about Michael Vick after reading the book.

A reader from Northampton read *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder: Instead of a book with one protagonist/lifestyle different than mine I chose *Rough Sleepers* a book with two distinct yet connected protagonists and communities: 1) Dr. Jim O'Connell and his Boston Street Team and 2) a group of rough sleepers - those unhoused individuals who sleep outside year-round. Both worlds so different, yet each with caring people, each with visible and invisible pain and triumphs. A book to make you think, to see and to better understand.

A reader from Haverhill read *Greasepaint* by Hannah Levene: A slice of life novel about a group of butch lesbians who gather at a New York City bar in the 1950's. There isn't much in terms of a traditional plot. Instead, the book focuses on the characters' relationships, inner lives, and reflections on the challenges they face in a time with much stricter gender norms. I typically prefer more of an overarching narrative, but nonetheless, it was engaging to "visit" Louis' Place and soak in the atmosphere our queer predecessors would have experienced.

A reader from New Salem read *Blue Desert* by Celia Jeffries: This was a very different book than what I normally read but I like it a lot.

A reader from Sharon read *Pineapple Street* by Jenny Jackson: Novel about very wealthy upper class family in NYC. Definitely couldn't relate to their 'struggles.'

A reader from Williamstown read *Kantika* by Elizabeth Graver: A loosely biographical novel about Graver's grandmother, who was from a Sephardic Jewish community in Turkey. Although I am Jewish (Ashkenazi) the life, language, and customs of Sephardic Jews is very different from what I am familiar with. Beautiful book!

A reader from Melrose read *Little Liar* by Mitch Albom: Love his work and the characters in this book.

A reader from Derry read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: My cousin recommended "Demon Copperhead" to me last summer. So, it's been on my radar. When I considered what to read for the March challenge, this book immediately came to mind. The protagonist, Demon Copperhead, definitely has a different culture/lifestyle from me...way different! I grew up in an upscale suburb of a major city, with a loving family and many privileges. Demon, is an orphan in Appalachia who suffers in horrible foster homes, experiencing way too much a boy aged 12-17 should ever experience. He's forced to trust people of authority who don't always have his best interests in mind. It's a coming of age saga like no other. (Influenced by Dickens' "David Copperfield" but not a prerequisite to read the Dickens tale.) It wasn't an easy read but, a really, really good one. It's written in first person with Demon narrating his unbelievably tragic and horrific experiences. The narrative is brilliant! I won't spoil it for others as to how things turn out. So I'll stop here, A must read (for those not faint of heart).

A reader from Quincy read *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* by Judith Rossner: I found the protagonist (Teresa) to be generally unlikeable. She's selfish, lazy, mean-spirited and reckless. The story

pulled me in enough that I wanted to keep reading, but the ending while I think it is meant to be jarring felt underdeveloped and, in my opinion, just fell flat.

A reader from Tewksbury read *Much Ado About Nada* by Uzma Jalaluddin: I really enjoyed learning about Muslim culture and their approach to relationships, marriage, and familial roles. The romance was a sweet second chance and the twists kept me on my toes.

A reader from Beverly read *Clare of Assisi: Gentle Warrior* by Murray, Wendy: She loved God, St. Francis, and poverty. I didn't fully grasp or appreciate her commitment to poverty (and seemingly also to starving herself to death), but her willingness to stand up to powerful men in the middle ages was impressive.

A reader from read *Flight* by Sherman Alexie: A young teen has been bounced around foster homes and rebelling against every step of the way. After living on the streets he has a series of out of body experiences that lead him to find a path forward that isn't so hopeless.

A reader from Whately read *The Last Getaway* by Clay Savage: This book is about two different crews who rob the same bank at the same time. The bank heist does not go as planned. The story is about the two getaway drivers. Richie is a gambling addict and Calvin is a car thief. They work together to try and figure out what happened while trying to take advantage of the stolen money and coins.

A reader from Canton read *Daughter of the Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan: I liked the book and got the second one immediately after finishing it. I was happy with how it ended.

A reader from North Andover read *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan: It portrayed a Palestinian family upended repeatedly by war with Israel. The sad part is that the wars continue.

A reader from Springfield read *St. Patrick's Day MURDER* by Leslie Meier: I enjoyed this mystery very much. It was set in a small Maine town. I learned a lot about Irish traditions from the book and read it around St. Patrick's day. The plot of the story reminded me of the Whitey Bulger story from Boston.

A reader from Wilmington read *Rez Dogs* by Joseph Bruchac: I liked that it was about the Covid pandemic because I went through that in my life as well.

A reader from Wilmington read *Contenders: Two Native Baseball Players, One World Series* by Traci Sorell: I liked how it was about baseball from a longtime ago.

A reader from Wilmington read *The Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah: Definitely a different culture and lifestyle than mine, which made it hard for me to connect with the main character.

A reader from Springfield read *Making a Scene* by Constance Wu: I really enjoyed listening to Constance Wu in *Making a Scene*. She spoke about her upbringing, the struggles of acting and the hardships being a woman of color in the industry. She showed true vulnerability and I believe she was very genuine! Definitely different than my life!

A reader from Pepperell read *Redwood Court* by Delana R.A. Dameron: This book provided insight and perspective into a culture very different from my own. Having grown up in New England in the 1950s and 60s, I had very little first hand knowledge of the struggles of black families in the South. This book captures three generations of a Black family in the South and gave a glimpse into their every day lives.

A reader from West Boylston read *Where You'll Find Me* by Ty Gagne: This is about an experienced mountain climber from around the world who attempted to climb the Presidential Traverse in the White Mountains during the worst storm possible. It follows her path and what decisions she made(whether right or wrong) to stay alive. The title refers to her final decision of how her rescuers would find her if she didn't survive.

A reader from Woburn read *Facing The Music: My Story* by Jennifer Knapp: I thought I would like this book much more, but Jennifer Knapp did not come off as endearing as I expected.

A reader from Norwood read *A Morbid Taste for Bones* by Ellis Peters: As a choice for a different lifestyle, I couldn't choose better than a Benedictine monk in the middle ages. This was a nice, cozy, kind of predictable mystery, though some of the wording and sentence structure was a bit annoying. But the main character is a really interesting one, and one whose personality I'd be interested to see develop in further books.

A reader from Foxborough read *Jean Kwok* by The Leftover Woman: This book kept me guessing! Absolutely loved all of the twists and turns, and dynamics between characters. There were a lot of aspects that aren't something I identify with or as. Jasmine is Chinese, an immigrant, a mother. Even the jobs Jasmine holds are profoundly different than anything I've ever done. It was a great read and very eye opening. Fiction or not, there was a lot to learn.

A reader from West Springfield read *The Shepherd's Life* by Rebanks, James: Life on a farm is very different from the life I have in the busy suburbs. :-)

A reader from Plainville read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: I have visited Kerala and know many people from there so was interested to learn more about the area and to read a story highlighting the culture there. Though the story was excellent and the characters were so well developed, I also learned a lot about the British occupation of the area, the religion that was brought over, the caste system there and the medical world in Kerala during the 1900s. I haven't read anything else by this author but after reading this I think I will!

A reader from Wilmington read *Mother Daughter Murder Night* by Nina Simon: I chose this book because the protagonist has a very different lifestyle than me. Lana, the grandmother is the main protagonist, and she a real estate agent or let's say 'shark.' She cared more about her image than her daughter. This is the complete opposite of me! I really enjoyed the book though!!

A reader from Mattapoisett read *Daughter of a Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan: This book! It is a five star read for me! I am a huge fan of the middle grade book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin. This book incorporated many of the same Chinese elements and I found the tale to be beautifully written with interesting characters and a captivating story.

A reader from Brewster read *To Everything a Season* by Lauraine Snelling: Set in Blessing, ND we follow a family of immigrants from Norway.

A reader from Providence read *The Undertaker's Assistant* by Amanda Skenandore: A fantastic tale about the life of a black woman during the reconstruction Era in the south.

A reader from Whitinsville read *No Reservations* by Sheryl Lister: *No Reservations* by Sheryl Lister was a great relaxing novel of friendship and between friends and their families. It reminded me of my girlfriends and our families while we raised and loved all of our kids. How we helped out each family or individual when there was a need. This novel was set in present day, I was disappointed in myself for not recognizing all the music and social references. I try to read about other cultures and lifestyles from myself but most are set in the past. I will need to rethink my future book choices to include more modern protagonists from this amazing group. I also read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, *An American Beauty* by Shana Aba, *Shark Heart* by Emily Habeck, *The Apology* by Jimin Han, *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride.

A reader from South Hadley read *Daughter of the Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan: The language in this book is absolutely beautiful! I haven't decided if I'm going to read the sequel or not, but this book is lovely.

A reader from New Bedford read *Olga Dies Dreaming* by Xochitl Gonzalez: An interesting story that portrays the inequalities of Puerto Rican people and Puerto Rico, especially after hurricane Maria. I enjoyed learning a little about Latino, Puerto Rican specifically, culture. It also had a side story of a woman finding herself and her own identity after having a tumultuous childhood. Was a little slow to start, but the ending picked up.

A reader from Melrose read *The Space Between Here & Now* by Sarah Suk: Despite the strange condition that the main character has, the strongest thread in this book is family and their ties. A fabulous YA book that I also appreciated being set in Canada and showed a diverse set of characters that were not that two-dimensional.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Riot Baby* by Tochi Onyebuchi: For the category "A book whose protagonist has a different culture/ lifestyle from me." Superb book.

A reader from Bellingham read *Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World* by Christian Cooper: I picked up this book because of my interest in birds, but was immediately drawn into Christian Coopers experiences in life as a self-described, "Blerd" (Black nerd). Also being, Marvels first openly gay writer and editor! He really opens up about many aspects about his life and ties it in beautifully with meaningful stories regarding birds and nature. It was also a fun audio book with his narration and real bird sounds!

A reader from Sunderland read *The Best Minds* by Jonathan Rosen: Written from the perspective of a Jewish man looking back on his friendship with a man struggling from schizophrenia, this piece takes the reader into a world of confusion, hope, and ultimately despair, while simultaneously intertwining elements of the author's religion and culture into the piece. I really

liked this book for its unique writing style, as well as for both the storyline and historical context that allowed the reader to be a part of the rise of understanding mental health struggles.

A reader from Wenham read *Where You See Yourself* by Claire Forrest: Really interesting story about a teen wheelchair user navigating relationships, the end high school, and finding the right college for her.

A reader from Salem read *total fucking godhead: the biography of chris cornell* by corbin reiff: Insightful.

A reader from Sandwich read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: I am so happy that I read this book for the March challenge. The strength and character of the main character, Big Ammachi, was intertwined with the storytelling from the perspective of three generations and the solution to a family medical mystery called the Condition. The connections among the characters proved that love, trust and loyalty make a family. The setting in India on the Malabar Coast and its historical significance was a learning experience for me.

A reader from Northampton read *Endpapers* by Jennifer Savran Kelly: Novel about a gender queer book artist in post-9/11 NYC with an archival mystery subplot.

A reader from Lexington read *A Town Like Alice* by Nevil Shute: Published in 1950, the novel tells the story of an English woman caught up in the war after Japan takes over Malaya. Her ordeal is based on the forced marching of many Dutch women in Sumatra after the Japanese captured them and didn't have a plan for what to do with them. The story holds up relatively well, although descriptions and assumptions about non-westerners might disturb contemporary readers.

A reader from Forestdale read *as long as the lemon tree grows* by zoulfa katouh: So deep, sad and yet so inspiring.

A reader from Lowell read *Lunar Love* by Lauren Jessen: Easy and fun read.

A reader from Brookline read *The Rainbow* by Yasunari Kawabata: The book seemed like a meditation on being in the upper middle class in the wake of WWII in Japan. The characters (I am still unsure which one of the 3 main characters is truly the protagonist) exist in a different world than I do both because they are in Japan, but also because they are from the petit bourgeoisie. The novel demonstrates both their awareness of the struggles of people from lower economic classes and also their banal and casual disregard for the lives of those people. It was an interesting book and an interesting exploration of what it was to be economically secure in post-war Japan, even if it does not seem that the author intended to make the focus so obviously on a privileged class.

A reader from Sandwich read *Concrete Rose* by Angie Thomas: This is the prequelish book to *The Hate You Give*. I became invested in the characters and their struggles growing up. Great read!!

A reader from Boston read *Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers* by Jessie Q. Sutanto: The eponymous Vera Wong is an elderly Chinese woman who runs a tea shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Since I am from the SF Bay Area and spend a lot of time in the city, it was fun to read about a woman whose life experiences mean that she interacts with the city in a very different way that I would. It made the book both familiar and strange.

A reader from Beverly read *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones: This was well written and the author is great at building a creeping dread. I expected it to be scary, but the brutal gore just wasn't for me. It was tough to finish but I'm glad I did.

A reader from Needham Heights read *When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller: Lovely middle grade fiction about a Korean-American family.

A reader from Woburn read *Stalking Jack the Ripper* by Kerri Maniscalco: This book gives a lot of insight on what it was like to be a woman during the 1800s. It's interesting to compare it to the time from then until now and see how long it took for social standards to change.

A reader from South Hadley read *There There* by Tommy Orange: An incredibly heart-wrenching and eye-opening book about indigenous folks and the intertwining of experiences.

A reader from Dudley read *Take my hand* by Dolen Perkins-Valdez: Everyone needs to read this book. I had no idea that this took place in history. There is no greater right for a woman than having a choice.

A reader from Quincy read *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sanchez: There was a line toward the end that read, "...this place is not the promised land for everyone." I think that encapsulated so much about America.

A reader from Rockland read *In the Lives of Puppets* by TJ Klune: Adorable book - boy grows up on an Earth full of robots, growing his own food that only he eats as the only human, repairing and befriending robots.

A reader from Wakefield read *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank: This really hit hard every time I realized that the closer I got to the end of the book was the closer Anne and the others in hiding were to being discovered and, ultimately, their deaths. So haunting. I don't usually read nonfiction so it stuck with me that this was her real life, it's not just an author making things up.

A reader from Franklin read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: I absolutely adore Abraham Verghese and was so excited when I learned he had another book coming out. It's a long book (obviously, since it does cover three generations) but never felt like it was dragging. I loved it!

A reader from Ipswich read *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant: Incredible story, intense, beautifully written.

A reader from Ipswich read *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros: The story is written through the eyes of a grade school and then teenage Hispanic girl. I am an old lady of English background, so we are quite different. The author does a good job of seeing things thru the eyes of this girl. She lives in downtown Chicago and does well at describing it.

A reader from Plainville read *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks: This is a very well-written book telling the story of one object over centuries. Fascinating read.

A reader from Boston read *A Grandmother Begins the Story* by Michelle Porter: Intricate, unique, and mystical story-telling weaves the paths of 5 generations of Metis women. A blending of the indigenous culture of story-telling and magical realism. I could imagine the scenes with such clarity. A book about the gifts and traditions along with the pain and trauma passed through generations.

A reader from Dracut read *the Jigsaw Man* by Nadine Matheson: A black British female detective inspector has her work cut out for her on this case.

A reader from WEST BOYLSTON read *Neruda on the Park* by Cleyvis Natera: This book had many themes, including how to define home, the relationships and expectations between parents and children who have immigrated to the US, and the impact of gentrification.

A reader from Wrentham read *Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson: I enjoyed this book. It had mystery and family drama. I also found it very interesting to learn more about the Caribbean culture.

A reader from Stoneham read *Into the Amazon: The Life of Candido Rondon, Trailblazing Explorer, Scientist, Statesman, & Conservationist* by Larry Rohter: Candido Rondon (1865-1958) was a Brazilian military officer of indigenous descent who was also all of the things listed in the subtitle. Co-lead exploration of River of Death with Teddy Roosevelt.

A reader from Malden read *The Three Body Problem* by Cixin Liu: This was an incredible sci-fi book. Expansive in its reach and ideas. I had a hard time putting it down!

A reader from Florence read *The Star Side of Bird Hill* by Naomi Jackson: The Star Side of Bird Hill is the story of two sisters, 10-year-old Phaedra and 16-year-old Dionne, who move from Brooklyn to Barbados to live with their grandmother, Hyacinth, after their mentally ill mother disappears. Hyacinth is a midwife and practitioner of obeah - a kind of sorcery practiced in the Caribbean. I was encouraged to read this book by the rave reviews it received; unfortunately, I didn't find it lived up to the hype. The premise is promising, but the plot is thin and character development weak. With the exception of one scene where Hyacinth makes a special tea, the practice of obeah isn't even explored. The denouement feels rushed and unsatisfactory. The one place where Jackson's writing came alive for me and I felt I was getting a true sense of Bajan culture was during the Crop Over and Kadooment Day scenes.

A reader from Boston read *Godly Heathens* by H. E. Edgmon: The protagonist of the book is a nonbinary Seminole teen living in Georgia who finds out that they're a reincarnated god. The

book deals with a lot of different layers of identities and finding community in unexpected places.

A reader from Attleboro read *Nine Lives* by William Dalrymple: In the country with the highest atheism and agnosticism rate, India has a wide array of deeply devotional persons and their diverse religious beliefs. This book introduces nine such persons, their centuries-old religious traditions, and their search for enlightenment. It is eye-opening.

A reader from Melrose read *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro: Having read many of the books on the suggested list for March, I chose Klara and the Sun for something different, although thinking of the AI robot protagonist as from another culture was a bit of a stretch for me. I really enjoyed how the author put you right in the scene, the visuals were so clear. I did have trouble keeping momentum with this one, but I loved the idea that a full and decent life can look many different ways. It's also interesting (and frightening) to think about technology getting to the point that robots become our social support and that those who can afford genetic modifications would be the new haves vs. have nots. The ethical considerations really get you thinking - I hope the real life scientists in these fields are thinking carefully about such implications as well.

A reader from Erving read *Surviving the White Gaze: A Memoir* by Rebecca Carroll: Recommend to help gain more understanding of one person's experience and journey growing up biracial in a heterogeneous white area. Overall well written but some areas felt a bit disjointed but still recommend reading.

A reader from Canton read *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange: Beautifully written and raw prose from multiple POVs dealing with important historical realities as well as contemporary issues faced by the Native American community. Themes include cultural identity, drug/alcohol use, abuse (physical/sexual/psychological)-mostly off page, mental health, SI, addiction, mixed race identity. It is important to acknowledge the historical events in this book and the experience of people who lived through them. It was difficult reading because it was real and life is often difficult and messy but offers some hope in the end.

A reader from Belchertown read *When The Angels Left the Old Country* by Sacha Lamb: Heartwarming book about young Jews traveling from the Pale of Settlement to New York City in the early 1900s.

A reader from Quincy read *The Mayor of Maxwell Street* by Avery Cunningham: Interesting concept. I liked that the main character was different from me in several ways. She was a POC, I am not. She was affluent, I am not. The way that she manages the privilege of her wealth while navigating the challenges of a person of color in the 1920s was fascinating.

A reader from Hanson read *The Girl With The Louding Voice* by Abi Dare: Amazing story of a young teenage girl in a small Nigerian village whose mother worked hard to get her an education. When her mother dies, Adunni is pulled from school to take care of her father and 2 brothers, then sold to an older man with 2 other wives. Stubborn and strong, she ends up sold as

a house slave to a rich woman in Lagos, while doing all she can to work toward educating herself by any means possible. Loved this book!

A reader from Northfield read *The Art Thief: A True Story of Love, Crime, and a Dangerous Obsession* by Michael Finkel: Stephane Breitwieser started robbing museums in his early 20's. His girlfriend, Anne-Catherine Kleinklaus was his lookout. They started out small but then it escalated. Stephane was obsessed with certain pieces he saw in person and in catalogs. They travelled to several countries for their thefts. Nothing was sold or traded. They stored everything in their attic bedroom in his mother's house. Is he an art thief or just a thief?!

A reader from Greenfield read *Sacred Games* by Chandra, Vikram: Bombay/Muibai as seldom depicted. Police procedural, cultural delineation, Pop, character studies; that, and more, comprise this dense, multi-layered modernist fable.

A reader from Sharon read *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: This book is about how the kindness and inclusion shown by a woman in their community brings the people of Chicken Hill together, and as a result they accomplish great things. I enjoyed the author's writing style and the quirky aspects of the characters he develops throughout the story.

A reader from Somerville read *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone: I am not a young african american boy going to prep school (And on to an ivy league college) so I figured this would be a good read. I listened to this as an audiobook and the voice talent did a PHENOMENAL job! The book put me in the shoes of how unfair it can really be to be a young black man and it educated me about BMC (black man's curse). I want everyone who claims to be "colorblind" to really read this and feel what the character feels. Racism hecking really sucks.

A reader from Gill read *The Postscript Murders* by Lily Griffiths: The detective is Indian. The coffee shop owner is a former Monk. The caregiver is Ukranian. The former radio announcer is gay. They all have or have had different lifestyles than my own. It was a good book. Took me forever to read it. Don't know if it's me or the book?!

A reader from Sandwich read *Cutting For Stone* by Abraham Verghese: Stick with it until the end. Well worth it!!

A reader from Reading read *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance: I knew very little about the contemporary Rust Belt and Appalachia before reading this book.

A reader from Boston read *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott: Great read

A reader from Berkley read *The River Between* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: This book showed the struggles of conflicting faiths, honoring cultural traditions, the effects of colonization, and the struggle to stay true to oneself. I really enjoyed this book, as it was very eye-opening about this time in Kenya, as Waiyaki was trying to unify a dividing land while enemies and hardships began to face him at every turn.

A reader from East Sandwich read *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata: Did not enjoy.

A reader from Chelmsford read *The Wind Knows My Name* by Isabel Allende: This is my first book by author Isabel Allende. The book focuses on the immigration experiences of two children during different times in history. One of the characters, Anita, fled El Salvador with her mother, to find safety in the US. This is my first read about a Central American immigrant experience. The hardships and dangers endured are eye-opening and touch the heart more than one realizes. I have since shared this book with my daughter and friend and highly recommend it.

A reader from Georgetown read *tobacco wives* by Adele Myers: I really enjoyed this book! Easy read and a fascinating look at (fiction but realistic) how cigarettes played a role in society back in the day, in the south, with the working class and women! It reminded me of *The Help* a bit!

A reader from Amherst read *Life and Other Love Songs* by Anissa Gray: Wonderful book!

A reader from Topsfield read *Bailando en Silencio (Silent Dancing)* by Judith Ortiz Cofer: I have enjoyed reading the author's stories and poems about her childhood both in Puerto Rico and America. Although we come from different cultures, as a first generation American I could relate to many of her stories about growing up between two different cultures.

A reader from Harwich read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: Engaging, well-written, and spanning fifty years, this novel is an endearing family story about the lives, loves, and losses of a Mi'kmaq family. They come from Nova Scotia each summer to pick in the blueberry barrens of northern Maine until a tragedy changes everything.

A reader from Dracut read *Never Whistle at Night* by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.: Such an amazing collection of short stories by indigenous authors!

A reader from Clinton read *Why Didn't You Tell Me?: A Memoir* by Carmen Rita Wong: I read this book as my third for the 2024 Reading Challenge - read a book whose protagonist has a different culture or lifestyle than you.

A reader from Wrentham read *The Bookish Life of Nina Hill* by Abbi Waxman: The author is single, works in a bookstore, and is on a trivia team, none of which is my current situation.

A reader from Fitchburg read *The Girl of Ink Stars* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave: A story of friendship and adventure where myth and storytelling becomes reality, testing courage and strength.

A reader from Randolph read *wicked woman of new mexico* by Donna Blake Birchell: This gave brief stories of women engaged in varied unlawful enterprises in the old west. They were interesting to read about but none of those enterprises were interesting enough for me to consider. Especially at my age.

A reader from Hyannis read *The Ball at Versailles* by Daniella Steel: Loved the characters and their quest for a better life.

A reader from Dedham read *theives gambit* by Kayvion Lewis: This was a great book about a crime family from the Caribbean. It was fictional but a lot of what the protagonist was struggling with could be real and gave me a different perspective. I thoroughly enjoyed this thriller.

A reader from Reading read *How Beautiful We Were* by imbolo Mbue: This is a story about an unnamed African village devastated by an oil company. Thula, raised in the village, attends college in NY and then returns as an activist to fight the corporation. Beautiful writing and depiction of community, and not such a beautiful outcome, as evidenced by the title.

A reader from Beverly read *The Mayor of Maxweel Street* by Avery Cunningham: Protagonists are both Black. One works within the law, the other is a career criminal. Both work for the good of the community

A reader from Lowell read *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein: Truly enjoyable to interpret life in the way a dog would - such an important perspective! Though it took an interesting turn, it was a good read.

A reader from Pepperell read *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water* by Angie Cruz: This was a perfect book for March's prompt, placing me firmly in the life and culture of a Dominican immigrant during the Great Recession. The narrative was written in an interesting way through 12 sessions with a job counselor and Cara came alive through the telling of her story. I felt a lot of empathy for her and was moved by her resilience, growth, and friendship. While I read this in print, I bet it would've made a fantastic audiobook as well.

A reader from Pepperell read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: Such a sad story.

A reader from Chelmsford read *The Kind Worth Killing* by Peter Swanson: Gripping...very hard to put down.

A reader from Chelmsford read *The Kind Worth Saving* by Peter Swanson: The first one was so gripping, I had to read the second one.

A reader from Chelmsford read *After the Night* by Linda Howard: The way people of privilege think others are obligated to submit to their wishes is truly appalling.

A reader from Franklin read *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli: A fast read about the drama of high school and in particular, outing someone and the aftermath. I did not want to stop reading so that I could find out what would happen next! Albertalli creates some great characters and I felt their emotions as they grappled with the up's and down's of high school life. I enjoyed the book and recommend it.

A reader from Worcester read *Bee Keeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri: I enjoyed this book. Nuria is a beekeeper. He leads a simple life, lots of family and friend's in the town of Aleppo, Syria. Then war strikes and his home is destroyed and some of his family members are killed. He is forced to try to escape to Europe. Very moving about the plight of immigrants and their struggles to find a safe haven for their family.

A reader from Ludlow read *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri: Compelling, disturbing, and affirming of the human spirit. Makes one realize the safety and privilege we enjoy in US.

A reader from Hopedale read *Educated* by Tara Westover: Accidentally submitted this as January. The book was great. It took a little while to get into it but all of a sudden I realized I couldn't put it down.

A reader from Worcester read *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt: Since I am neither an elderly woman nor a Pacific Octopus I thought this would be a good choice! This book was absolutely lovely, and I hope to read more by this author.

A reader from Somerville read *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* by Virginia Hamilton: I loved this book! The protagonist has a VERY different lifestyle and culture from my own, as she is a Black god child who belongs to a pantheon of Black gods. This book is a hero's journey with a classic Virginia Hamilton twist.

A reader from Melrose read *It's Hard for Me to Live with Me* by Rex Chapman: Enjoyed this memoir. A few obvious editing mistakes were a bit distracting, but Chapman provides honest and insightful insights into his athletic career and his struggle with addiction. He also points out the hypocrisy of the NCAA.

A reader from Harvard read *Martyr!* by Kaveh Akbar: With a cover so luminous, it stands out even in a power outage, it's easy to be drawn to *Martyr!* The book's protagonist, Cyrus Shams, is a young poet with addiction struggles who was brought to America from Iran as a baby after his mother perished in a plane crash. His father raises Cyrus, but passes away shortly after he goes to college. All of Cyrus' experiences have left him pondering death, particularly those who die important deaths. His brush with an artist, whose final exhibition is herself on display in the final stages of breast cancer, leads Cyrus to explore writing a book about martyrs, and discovers pieces of himself along the way. Some passages in the book are beautifully written, but the narratives meander at times and my attention span waned. I appreciated the many references to Iranian history and culture, as I was able to do more research on them afterward. The action picks up around page 200 and results in an interesting twist. And the cover, as mentioned, is striking. Overall, I'm glad I read it, but I'm also glad it's over.

A reader from Amesbury read *Diary of a Void* by Emi Yagi: Really good, but super confusing at the end.

A reader from Avon read *Amazing Grace Adams* by Fran Littlewood: This story was about the day in the life of a woman who was trying to gain back the trust of her teenage daughter. It resonated with me because I also have a teenage daughter whom I will protect as fiercely as a mama bear. We learn the main character is undergoing a divorce and has a falling out with her daughter. She is trying to resolve the break with a birthday cake. As we go through the trials of delivering said cake we learn more about the family dynamics. The story wandered a bit but wrapped up well. While my life is different than Grace's I don't think I would have reacted much differently than she did. Family is most important.

A reader from Braintree read *Happiness Falls* by Angie Kim: Interesting book about a family's struggle after their father goes missing. He was last with his non-verbal autistic son and it unfolds like a mystery trying to find out what happened.

A reader from Rockland read *Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller.

A reader from Belchertown read *Diamond Eye* by Kate Quinn: Female Russian Sniper - have never read anything about Russian women troops in World War 2.

A reader from Newton read *black sheep* by Rachel Harrison: The protagonist of this horror novel grew up in a religious satanic cult and the story is about her returning to the cult compound for a cousin's wedding after being estranged from them for several years. The book was a slow burn, got creepier and creepier and more horrifying as it went on. It gave Midsommar vibes!

A reader from Plainville read *Dear Haiti, Love Alaine* by Maika Moulite: This book has been on my TBR for years. Having visited Haiti five times in the past, I was really looking forward to having this book bring me back to the Haiti that I knew. Unfortunately, it did not and only represented the upper class of Haiti. It did not describe the Haitian culture well also.

A reader from Wrentham read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: I enjoyed reading this debut novel. A beautifully written story about love and loss within a Mi'kmaq family. I look forward to reading more books written by this author.

A reader from Watertown read *Romantic Comedy* by Curtis Sittenfeld: I had hoped to read a book with a character from a different culture but this month got away from me, so a different lifestyle had to do. The main character in this book lives a wildly different lifestyle from my own, as she is a comedy writer for a show in NYC and ends up dating a pop star.

A reader from Granby read *Twisted: The Tangled History of Black Hair Culture* by Emma Dabiri: This book is about so much more than hair. Dabiri uses the symbol of hair to discuss race relations worldwide, and how black women have been discouraged from wearing the styles that are tribal identifiers in Africa. How only straight, flowing locks are permissible in white dominated culture. I chose this book because one of my best friends is a woman of color, who is a hairdresser (was my hairdresser for more than 20 years, before I moved to Massachusetts). Dabiri is a professor and mixed race citizen of Ireland, this is a scholarly work.

A reader from Quincy read *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner: The author and I have lived very different lifestyles. I have lived in the same house my entire life in New England, surrounded by big Italian families on both sides. It was fascinating to read of Michelle Zauner's life- so many times I wish I could hug her.

A reader from Weymouth read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: in the summer of 1962 indigenous workers from Nova Scotia came to Maine to pick blueberries. The novel follows a Mi'kmaq family through loss, and heartache. The author details their way of life and how they each handle the loss of Ruthie and Charlie. The introduction of Norma and her decades long search brings closure to this family.

A reader from Andover read *Wandering Ththrough Life* by Donna Leon: Leon has had a very intriguing and circuitous life weaving through academia and strange odd academic-ish jobs before becoming a mystery author residing in Venice and then Switzerland.

A reader from BECKET read *Exit West* by Mohsin hamid: Loved this book. Heartbreaking as well as hopeful. Beautiful characterization.

A reader from Dracut read *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz: Refreshing way to start spring! I love this reading challenge.

A reader from Wakefield read *Tress of the Emerald Sea* by Brandon Sanderson: I unintentionally read two books about female pirates this month, *Tress* and 'Deep as the Sky, Red as the Sea'. I really enjoyed how both women made delicate, thoughtful decisions. It's so frustrating when authors have characters act unreasonable or carelessly just to move a plot along.

A reader from Florence read *The Miraculous True History Of Nomi Ali* by Uzma Aslam Khan: Historical Fiction About a penal colony in the Andaman Islands established by the British in 1936, then ruled by the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. Nomi is a " local born" daughter of a former prisoner, sister to an older brother and friend to Aye who works for the Commissioner of the prison. The atrocities in the prison under British rule and the treatment of the multicultural local population, escalates when the Japanese invade in 1942. Nomi is witness to the cruelty and the ways people survive or not. All records are destroyed when the Japanese leave,. including those of prisoner # D218, who escaped and is only called "the prisoner who is no longer a prisoner" . She will impart this wisdom to Nomi, "Fireflies are the stars of the forest; they are the pathways thru shadow to light."

A reader from Reading read *All the Sinners Bleed* by S.A.Cosby: Cosby's books are all enjoyable, and the life of the main character in this novel, a Black sheriff in the rural south, is definitely different than mine.

A reader from Lincoln read *Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin* by Tracey Baptiste, Shauna Grant: A neat graphic novel about two important historical figures.

A reader from Lincoln read *A Bold Return To Giving a Damn: One farm, six generations and the future of food* by Will Harris: I wasn't sure I'd find common ground with a fourth generation cattle farmer in Georgia, but I really appreciated what he had to say about the farming industry and why he felt he had to do things differently than his forbearers.

A reader from West Boylston read *mademoiselle revolution* by zoe sivak: I am glad this book took me outside my comfort zone and taught history from a personal point of view. I can't imagine the terrors she experienced of being judged on skin color, gender, nationality and family history - yet we all face these biases each day. Our generations don't seem to learn and this French Revolution setting showed how many deaths can occur based on fear and biases. I am lucky as a female that I can be independent and not rely on my husband, brother or dad to dictate my life. Sometimes I need a reminder of how far we've come, but also how far we can still go.

A reader from Turners Falls read *The Invocations* by Krystal Sutherland: Dark and twisted but so intense. A very difficult book to put down! Each of the three main characters come from wildly different backgrounds but ultimately all want the same thing.

A reader from Wakefield read *This is How You Lose the Time War* by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone: A love story of two time-traveling agents on opposite sides of a war... a very different lifestyle.

A reader from Eden Prairie read *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: The marginalized black and Jewish community of Chicken Hill may be poor financially, but it is abundantly rich in its sense of community and love. Each character is so well written with a clear, unique voice. It was a pleasure to read!

A reader from Amherst read *The Satapur Moonstone*: This book was built around an intriguing mystery that had you guessing who was guilty. Perveen is a wonderful character and while the author reminds you that she hits many roadblocks in her career, she also doesn't harp on it too much. As the 2nd book in the series I wasn't sure if I'd like it as much as the first but it was definitely different but still had all the aspects of Perveen that I loved. I enjoyed this book and look forward to the next in the series!

A reader from Vineyard Haven read *The Last Exchange* by Charles Martin: Maybe Joe Sue is an academy award winning actress - a much different lifestyle than mine. She's also a drug addict and struggling with infertility. A lot of heavy material to get to an ending that will be happy in the future.

A reader from Southampton read *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama* by Nathan Thrall: This involves the Palestinian/Israeli situation prior to October 7, 2023. A school bus of Palestinian kids is travelling to a school outing and collides with a concrete truck in a blinding rain storm. The Palestinian existence under Israeli occupation is fully displayed with all of its dehumanizing, torturous misery and abuses fully exposed. The persecuted has become the persecutor as history repeats itself. No deed, good or bad goes unpunished. It is a bit like reading about the Warsaw Ghetto before the deportations to the gas chambers. Page 209- Abed states, "We have extremists in our society, and you do, too." Hate looks like all of us.

A reader from Brookline read *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith: This book was so wonderfully episodic. I loved watching Francie grow with her family in the streets of Brooklyn. I loved the simplicity of the story telling in a pre Great War era where we experienced simple ritualistic days for the neighborhood and family. The story that sticks out most to me is seeing Francie have a job in Manhattan and realizing she doesn't quite love Manhattan as much as Brooklyn. I think each chapter deserves its own book club because regardless of how mundane some of the days are, there's always something unique to take away from each chapter which is my favorite thing about her writing style.

A reader from Seekonk read *Vintage 1954* by Antoine Laurain: The characters' lives in this novel were very different from my own. They were Frenchmen who had shared a bottle of wine that

had been bottled in 1954. They awoke the next day in 1954. It was an amusing look at 1950s France while they figured out how to get back to their own time period.

A reader from San Jose read *The Fine Print* by Lauren Asher: I love that the book has normalized people having special abilities. Zahra is so cute. Rowan and Ani's bond is heart-touching.

A reader from Wakefield read *The Light We Carry* by Michelle Obama: This excerpt from the book applies to this month's theme: "Read books by people whose perspective is different from yours, listen to voices you haven't heard before, look for narratives that are new to you. In them and with them, you might end up finding more room for yourself."

A reader from Brookline read *The Hunting Gun* by Yasushi Inoue: A novella in 4 voices. The framework is that of a poet who receives a letter from a man who believes he's the inspiration of a poem titled "The Hunting Gun". This unknown correspondent asks the poet to read 3 letters and then dispose of them. The three letters are from the daughter of the man's mistress, the man's wife and the man's mistress. All three focus on the long love affair between the man and Saiko, and the effect this had on his wife, Midori, who knew all along, and on Saiko's daughter, who only found out about the deception practiced on her by her mother and her "aunt" and "uncle" on the day before Saiko died. This is one of those books where you can see that it's all very well done, and the descriptions of nature are probably a very typical Japanese touch. But I couldn't enter into the psychology of these folks, their sensitivities and thought processes.

A reader from Woburn read *Mad Honey* by Jodi Picoult & Jennifer Finney Boylan: I hated this book. Jodi always does this thing where she kills off the most complex character so that she doesn't have to deal with the consequences of them being alive by the end of the book. It's so unsatisfying.

A reader from Somerville read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: So much about the book was different from my life and culture as it was set in India when it was under British rule. The story meandered to a point that I almost put it down because I felt like I no longer knew where I was going or why. But I persevered and it all came together in the end. Ultimately, I liked it but not as much as I liked his previous book *Cutting For Stone*.

A reader from Wakefield read *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro: There were a lot of parts of the book that were so poignant and beautifully written and some others where it felt the story was just meandering and didn't have too much going for it. I enjoyed Klara's voice as a narrator and a lot of the ideas hinted at in the book.

A reader from Seekonk read *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah: I was not well educated in the racism that South Africa had. This was eye opening and I would definitely recommend this to others.

A reader from Yarmouth Port read *Hard by a Great Forest* by Leo Vardiashvili: Wonderful book that takes place in Georgia, the former member of the USSR. Highly recommend.

A reader from Byfield read *Two Tribes* by Emily Bowen Cohen: This book brought a beautiful perspective about living life and feeling torn by your identities. I loved learning about different cultures and different family set ups. I am looking forward to reading this book with my 6th-grade students.

A reader from Sharon read *The Wildest Sun* by Asha Lemmie: Second novel for this young author. Excellent writing, characterization, and story line.

A reader from Fall River read *The Hidden World of Gnomes*. by Lauren Soloy: A cozy early Spring read! With a message reminding us that although we may have different lives, the simple joys of life are uniiversal.

A reader from Mattapoisett read *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah: Great descriptions of the Alaskan wilderness, and the value of community, friends, and non-biological family.

A reader from Turners Falls read *Hidden Amish Secrets* by Debby Giusti: While it can be tough to read an amish book with their unique language I always enjoy reading about living in simpler times. Thinking about riding in horse drawn carriages is amazing to me, add in a murder mystery and I could read the book a dozen times.

A reader from Northfield read *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt: As a landlocked Massachusetts resident living 1000+ft above sea level, my day to day is without a doubt different from that of Tova and Marcellus. I finished the read by candle lantern light during a 19.5 hour power outage which did lend a wavery otherworldly quality to the experience of getting to know the octopus and his role in setting some hearts and minds to rest. I found it a compelling tale and a reminder to believe in goodness and kindness, as well as the wisdom of offering the world your vulnerabilities that they may be met by someone else's strengths.

A reader from Wrentham read *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd: I enjoyed reading a book about a different culture. While this book still took place within the USA, I will never live the life of the characters who dealt with racism in the South during the 60's. There were many cultural customs and injustices faced during this time that I was not aware of. I have a new perspective on the 1960s and how people were treated in America.

A reader from Sharon read *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett: This was an amazing and powerful book!

A reader from Mashpee read *The Secret Keeper of Jaipur* by Alka Joshi: The protagonist in this book is named Lakshmi; she is a henna artist in a small village in India. She finds herself in a mystery involving a theater that collapses, bringing up past secrets and saving the people closest to her. Lakshmi is from a different time and culture than I am. It is interesting to read about her culture, practices, and village. Some parts of this story are relatable, but others take you by surprise due to her cultural norms. One example was having tea at the home of someone who despised Lakshmi. First, I was shocked that she called the meeting with people who she knew did not like her; I thought she would end up killed. Instead, both characters spilled tea and

gracefully tried to warn each other to stay away. I found her enjoyable because her background, culture, and personality were similar to mine.

A reader from Chelsea read *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Very powerful book that resonates with the immigrant experience in America regardless of ethnicity. I found so many parallels between my experience in a Bosnian refugee family and the protagonists Nigerian background in Washington.

A reader from Edgartown read *rental person who does nothing* by Morimoto, Shoji: This was very enjoyable. And existential.

A reader from Hamilton read *Among the Almond Trees, A Palestinian Memoir* by Hussein Barghouthi: "Among the Almond Trees" is a Palestinian memoir that combines fable and fairy tale with personal experiences, Arabic poems, and Palestinian songs. The author, Hussein Barghouthi, uses Sufi mysticism to color his journey of being diagnosed and treated for lymphoma. The memoir is not a linear tale but a cyclical and transformative journey. After living in exile for thirty years, Barghouthi constructs his tale of return and 'ends' within his familial almond orchard. As he reflects on his visceral experience with cancer, he reaches an internal alembic distillation that leads him towards a rebirth. Reading this memoir feels like experiencing a gift made for his son, Athar, and wife, Petra- an intimate locket revealed and a secret shared with the reader, a new "Song of the Reed" for us to hear.

A reader from Beverly read *The Viscount Who Loved Me* by Julia Quinn: Books set in this time period assure me I am rightfully and gratefully born in this time period (to a degree). My modern sensibilities don't mesh with "society ways" of the 1800s. Surely, if I was born in that time period, I possibly wouldn't know better and would fit in. But I'm glad the world isn't like that now. It would not be my cup of tea. The book was fine. Not something I'd reach for again. I knew what to expect because I saw that season of its Netflix series.

A reader from Agawam read *Safiyyah's War* by Hiba Noor Khan: This is an incredible story inspired by the work of members of the Grand Mosque of Paris during World War II. Following Safiyyah, her family, and her companions through the horrors of Nazi occupied Paris was simultaneously a harrowing and heart warming read. I know handfulls of information about the Muslim faith, and this novel taught me even more in the most seamless way a story could. This novel is an incredible ode to the real people its characters are inspired by.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Ann Frank: Diary of a young girl* by Anne frank: Interesting Definitely a young adult book.

A reader from Amherst read *Blackouts* by Justin Torres: Very interesting to read after listening to him speak at the Amherst College LitFest.

A reader from Pembroke read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: I enjoyed this book for the complex characters and relationships and also for the setting of Appalachia. It made me connect to *The Bookwoman of Troublesome Creek*-a book that I also enjoyed.

A reader from Brookline read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: A beautiful debut about love, family, loss, and trauma.

A reader from Sandwich read *Come Sundown* by Nora Roberts: The story takes place in Western Montana on a large ranch/resort. There are many facets to running a large ranch, especially one haunted by the 25 year disappearance of an 18 year old rebellious daughter who loved adventure. Cleverly woven mystery among the mundane.

A reader from Sharon read *The Rent Collector* by Camron Wright: "A novel about a mother's struggle to save her son from poverty and illness in a Cambodian dump." This novel highlighted little known true, historic and cultural events of the Cambodian people.

A reader from Beverly read *The House of Hidden Meanings* by RuPaul: An interesting memoir of the RuPaul's life prior to Drag Race.

A reader from Arlington read *River East, River West: A Novel* by Aube Rey Lescure: The publisher of the book writes: "In a stunning reversal of the east-to-west immigrant narrative and set against China's political history and economic rise, "River East, River West" is an intimate family drama and a sharp social novel. Alternating between Alva and Lu Fang's points of view, this is a profoundly "moving exploration of race and class, cultural identity and belonging, and the often-false promise of the American Dream." In modern parlance, my reaction to the story was meh. Perhaps one should not measure a story like this against Tolstoy's "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," but I cannot resist the urge. I found the story and characters shallow versus the potential for a story and characters living across the Cultural Revolution through the historic economic rise of China. For a story that includes the fourteen year old protagonist having sex with the wealthy father of her international school classmate, the moment had no more emotional impact than had the teenagers been describes as having lunch at the first American fast food restaurant just opened in Shanghai. This and many other plot elements relevant to the historical backdrop existed in the story, but the telling lacked the emotional impact I would have expected. I found no happy families in this story. The unhappy families struck me as all unhappy in the same way. Tolstoy's approach makes for better fiction.

A reader from Franklin read *The Woman in Me* by Britney Spears: I enjoyed reading this memoir and learned a great deal more than I expected about the author's family culture and local culture through descriptions of her childhood.

A reader from Waltham read *Killers of the flower moon* by david grann: Following the Oscar buzz I decided to read this book. Having never learned about the origins of the FBI or Osage Indians in history class I was hooked and couldnt believe this was true. The book masterfully intertwines elements of true crime, history, and social injustice, shedding light on the corruption and prejudice that plagued the investigation. Although nonfiction, it was an easy and fast read following the exploration of greed, betrayal, and the resilience of the Osage people in the face of adversity.

A reader from Woburn read *Interstellar Pig* by William Sleator: This book is so different from anything else I've ever read.

A reader from Hartland read *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride.

A reader from Worcester read *D'Vaughn and Kris plan a wedding* by chencia c higgins: Everyone deserves a good romance.

A reader from Dedham read *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi: This book has a Frankenstein like monster, but instead of being brought to life by a spark of lightening it is brought to life by the spirits of Iraqi innocents looking for justice. It is a monster that runs on never ending vengeance and will not stop until it avenges the wrongs done to the people it's body is made up of. Once it avenges a wrong the body part that is connected to that wrong falls off and rots. To be able to accomplish it's end goal, it needs to continue to add to it's ever rotting body, thus adding more wrongs that need to be corrected. It is a never ending cycle and in war torn Iraqi there is always body parts available to add to the monster. You also follow the lives of ordinary Iraqis that are all connected by circumstance and the monster. It is a commentary on the horrors of the Iraqi war through the eyes of those who lived it.

A reader from Wilmington read *Defiant* by Brandon Sanderson: The book focuses on a girl who was raised in a society fighting for survival in a total war in space and the impacts of growing up an outcast in a far flung future. Very different culture from what I have grown up in.

A reader from Sharon read *The Queens of New York* by E. L. Shen: Badaaassssssss.

A reader from Northampton read *Scatterlings* by Resoketswe Manenzhe: South Africa has been through some crazy times.

A reader from Northampton read *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy: It took some time for me to get into this one, but it was worth it.

A reader from Lancaster read *a burning* by megha majumdar: This book wasn't for me. I enjoyed the plot and the multiple POV, but the actress character got on my nerves.

A reader from Dallas read *Blood and steel* by Helen Scheuerer: A great book about a strong willed young woman who wants to be a warrior and is does whatever is in her power to make that come true.

A reader from Derry read *Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo: I loved this book. I thought it was a good choice for the theme.

A reader from Webster read *Girls on the Line* by Jennie Liu: An interesting fictional narrative that centers around the One Child Policy in China.

A reader from Webster read *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi: This was a re-read for me, and I didn't realize how much of it I didn't remember or did not catch on the first read. If you are a fan of interwoven vignettes and connections, I highly recommend this.

A reader from Andover read *La Americana* by Melanie Bowden Simon: True Story of career, loss, and romance. A 25 year old woman after she loses her mom to cancer, quits her job at a magazine to travel to Cuba with a friend. She has always been intrigued by Cuba: the culture, people, music and communism. She meets a Cuban man, who is their driver, and fall in love, him as well. After she leaves, she stays in touch with him, and returns to visit multiple times. This romance faces many obstacles to overcome: language barriers, cultural differences, and geographic distances. However they overcome them, and eventually after 3 years, get married, and live in the southern US, slowly building a family, and also bringing over some Cuban relatives to become US citizens. A very happy ending!!

A reader from BERKLEY read *The Battle of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins: Very good prequel to the Hunger Games series. I was a bit disappointed with the ending.

A reader from Ware read *Daughter of No Worlds* by Carissa Broadbent: This month was a tough choice for me. Many books that fall under this category do not grip my attention. So, I went in a bit of a different direction by choosing a fantasy book. In this book, the main character is taken from her homeland at a young age and sold as property to a very wealthy man. She lives 8 years under his rule and eventually escapes after making a great sacrifice. She is a strong woman who endured many awful things in life, and even through it all, she remains strong and hopeful.

A reader from Danvers read *Legendborn* by Tracy Deonn: This book was great. I do not read YA often, but I saw it at our school library and the summary on the back of the book seemed interesting. It was fantastically written. It was a good balance between the supernatural components and real life experiences for a person.

A reader from Braintree read *The House of Hidden Meanings* by Rupaul: Great read; I have always been a fan of Rupaul's Drag Race and getting to read about Rupaul's life in his own words was great.

A reader from Boston read *Queenie* by Candice Carty-Williams: Queenie is a Jamaican-British Woman living in London and struggling with intergenerational trauma and reckless behavior. I loved witnessing Queenie's transformation with the support of her friends and therapist. It was inspiring to see her break cycles of trauma and to see her family come around to the value of therapy.

A reader from NEWTON CENTER read *36 Ways of Writing a Vietnamese Poem* by Nam Le: Unbelievable collection of poetry from the author of *The Boat*.

A reader from Hull read *Page Boy* by Elliot Page: This book gave me a better understanding of the Trans community, and how we can better support them!

A reader from Cambridge read *Keigo Higashino* by Devotion of suspect X: Such a fun book!! It's a murder mystery set in Japan, with one of the best twists I have read in a while!

A reader from ALLSTON read *Waiting to Be Arrested at Night: A Uyghur Poet's Memoir of China's Genocide* by Tahir Hamut Izgil: I cannot recommend this book enough. Especially now as all of the world is watching the genocide in Gaza, it is remarkable that so little of this Uyghur genocide has been covered in Western media despite how long it has been going on. I used to teach about it in my history courses, but this personal perspective was so moving. The author's poetry interspersed with his story created a heartbreaking look at the growing fear and loss of hope that things would change, soon enough, even while showing that there is still cause to hope for the future.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy: Very thought-provoking.

A reader from Northboro read *He Who Drowned the World* by Shelley Parker-Chan: *He Who Drowned the World* is a historical fiction with fantasy elements of the founding of China's Ming dynasty. It is the second in a duology and was really well written and enjoyable!

A reader from Dracut read *The Stand* by Steven King: It's very weird reading hundreds of pages and being nowhere near the end of a book. I really like this book and hope to read it again in the future. If I turned out to be the .1% that survived, I think I'd have to find a new purpose for life (and hope I dream of Abigail).

A reader from East Bridgewater read *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver: You can't just sashay into the jungle aiming to change it all over to the Christian style, without expecting the jungle to change you right back. This is, quite frankly, one of the best books I've ever read. And that's really saying something since I hated it when I first read it 20+ years ago. (I've grown a lot as a reader.) This book hits all the sweet spots: a compelling story, richly drawn characters, a realistic setting, and gorgeous language. There is plenty of sarcasm and dry humor to balance out the heaps of heartbreak and tragedy. The history of the Belgian Congo and colonialism is, sadly, as relevant today as it was when it was published and my hatred of Nathan Price knows no bounds. If you're looking for a book that will touch you to your core and break your heart in all of the best possible ways, look no further than *The Poisonwood Bible*.

A reader from Waltham read *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak: Wonderful book.

A reader from Cambridge read *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan: Wonderful. A piece of art. An act of courage in a small Irish village.

A reader from Norfolk read *The Company I Keep: My Lie in Beauty* by Leonard Lauder: Memoir of Leonard Lauder the son of Estee Lauder and the driving force behind many of the bold business moves of the company. He goes through the start of the company, his time in the Navy and working for the Estee Lauder company. her brought to market many of the different brands that fall under the Lauder umbrella including Clinique, Origins, Perspectives, Bobbi Brown, etc. He has some great leadership mantras and it was refreshing to hear about someone focused on the well being of employees and not just profits. His philanthropy is also legendary and given his

wealth he was able to create a lot of good - but his mantras shaped the donations into self sustaining models that have been used over and over again for greater and lasting impact. It was refreshing and inspirational.

A reader from Reading read *Girlz 'n the hood : a memoir of mama in South Central Los Angeles* by Mary Hill-Wagner: An autobiographical account of the author's life growing up in a large, poor family South Central Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s.

A reader from NAHANT read *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson: This book wasn't exactly what I was expecting. But, I loved it. I love that this challenge has me trying books I might not have read otherwise or maybe reading books I might not have gotten to for a long time. I'm not a big nonfiction reader, and this was nonfiction. It's a collection of personal essays about someone who struggled, but definitely who also saw the humor in things, and I found myself laughing a lot, especially in the earlier chapters. I'm glad I found this book.

A reader from Rindge read *Educated* by Tara Westover: The book was a different world for me. It was fascinating to learn about her life growing up in a doomsday prepping religious family with no education to going to school and bettering herself.

A reader from Toronto, Ontario read *Sweetland* by Michael Crummey: I adore all of Michael Crummey's work but was particularly moved by his novel Sweetland. Crummey writes about Canada's eastern coast in a way that humanizes not only the inhabitants of the land but the land itself. Where most of Crummey's work takes place in past centuries, Sweetland takes place in present day where a Newfoundland community is finding itself torn between the inhabitant's traditional way of life and the future way of life that sees the community becoming obsolete. A beautiful and heartbreaking read.

A reader from Longmeadow read *Between Two Worlds :Jewish War Brides After the Holocaust* by Robin Judd: I learned so much.

A reader from STOUGHTON read *A Woman is No Man* by Etaf Rum: Loved the writing style and characters.

A reader from Springfield read *Glitterland* by Alexis Hall: This book set in England and about two gay men falling in love despite they're difference and struggles. The language used by the author brought me so much joy. Another book that reminded me why I love this author.

A reader from Lynn read *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy: All of the characters in the book share a culture and lifestyle different from my own, but I was amazed at the similarities we shared despite those fundamental differences.

A reader from Weymouth read *First Lie Wins* by Ashley Elston: Page turner. Loved this book!

A reader from Billerica read *The Awakening of Spring* by Frank Wedekind: The play that the musical Spring Awakening is based on - German teenagers under very conservative expectations regarding gender roles and sex.

A reader from Quincy read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho: I understand why it's a classic, the language is brilliant and beautiful.

A reader from Uxbridge read *Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* by Adeline Yen Mah: A great reminder of how hard life can be for women around the world and the lasting damage it can cause to be unwanted. I found it hard to put down!

A reader from Lawrence read *The Fox Maidens* by Robin Ha: A book whose protagonist has a different culture or lifestyle from you.

A reader from East Weymouth read *Death of a Bookseller* by Alice Slater: Great book, very creative angles.

A reader from Foxboro read *River Spirit* by Leila Aboulela: Beautiful written book about Sudan's fight for independence when the British empire and other forces wanted to rule the country. It is the story of one young woman and her navigation through life during this time.

A reader from Revere read *Empire of Storms* by Sarah J Maas: I love the throne of glass series and this month I did the tandem read with *Empire of Storms* and *Tower of Dawn*. The protagonist in *Empire of Storms*, Aeiln, is the heir to her throne with a background as an assassin. Not only is her lifestyle completely different than mine in this fantasy world but her personality differs from mine as well. She has a swagger and sarcasm that I think is unmatched by a real person and she truly has to figure out how to lead when others don't want her to. She is underestimated and bold and I hope to take a few pieces from Aeiln as I continue to grow.

A reader from West Boylston read *Too Much and Never Enough* by Mary Trump: I chose to read about a lifestyle and way of thinking that is not something I understand.

A reader from Reading read *Circe* by Madeline Miller: Great book from the perspective of Circe, the witch, and her troubling encounters with gods and mortals. Good writing and a fresh take on the mythology we grew up with.

A reader from Dartmouth read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah: *The Women* by Kristin Hannah was a fantastic book. She was able to portray the lives of those affected by the Vietnam War; by those who served, remained at home and were in Vietnam. The protagonist, Frankie, lived a very different life than I have. Frankie was a nurse, went to war and lost many loved ones. I can't imagine living the life that Frankie did, but Kristin Hannah wrote a book, where for a short time I was transported into the past.

A reader from Weymouth read *Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice* by Elle Cosimano: I absolutely love this series and this book did not disappoint. Finlay and I certainly live VERY different lifestyles. This was a fun read and while I am definitely not a writer or an amateur detective, it was nice to jump into Finlay's world for a bit! I am already looking forward to the next installment.

A reader from North Andover read *OLD GODS TIME* by Sebastian Berry: Tom Kettle, a retired Irish detective, visited by 2 detectives from his former unit, is questioned about a murdered priest investigation he conducted years earlier with his late partner. The visit sets off memories long buried and better forgotten as he tries to adjust to his retirement in a comfortable apartment attached to a castle. For the first 75 pages Tom ruminates through streams of unconsciousness confusing the reader about Tom's grip on reality and his story. Then the writer's style shifts to a straight forward narrative that makes the reader get it and to speculate and to read this tale of betrayal by the Church, the effects on the people abused, and both coming to terms with the abuse and forgiveness. It's the story about Tom's family, his terrible loss, and his own resolution. Berry, a multiple Booker prize nominee finalist, the Irish literary laureate twice, a play write, brings viserile reality to his characters and the setting. Only 272 pages, a quick read, OLD GOD's TIME, an Irish term reference, is a tribute to the Irish spirit and resilience.

A reader from Beverly read *Butterfly Yellow* by Thahhna Lai: Read this along my sophomores (ELA teacher here!) during out Vietnam/Things They Carried unit. A lovely, eye-opening read!

A reader from Worcester read *On All Other Nights* by Edited by Chris Baron: A great collection of short stories touching on the Passover tradition and celebration was an delightful read. As a gentile this read was a lovely introduction to the different was Passover is celebrated.

A reader from Dracut read *Ana Maria and the Fox* by Liana De la Rosa: This book was a really interesting slice of history, focused around a family of three aristocratic daughters from Mexico, during the American Civil War when France invaded Mexico and ousted the Mexican government. I had never really heard about that and it was very interesting to follow these daughters as they escaped to England.

A reader from Newton read *The Return of the King* by J.R.R. Tolkien: Long overdue read!

A reader from Braintree read *Ebony Gate* by Julia Vee: John Wick in San Francisco with dragon magic and a secret library! Loved this & ready for the sequel!

A reader from Springfield read *Next of Kin* by Hannah Bonam-Young: About two people who become foster parents to their younger siblings and eventually fall in love.

A reader from Fall River read *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro: Poignant and fascinating tale told by an AF (artificial friend). Although the story clearly takes place sometime in the future, it's a future that seems less far off every day, thanks to the advent of AI and genetic engineering. I found myself rooting for the title character and Josie, the girl who chooses her, and against most of the adults in the story, who struck me as selfish at best and cruel at worst.

A reader from Berkley read *The Thread Collectors* by Shaunna Edwards: Very interesting and a good read!

A reader from Wellfleet read *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Marra: My favorite book. Marra's storytelling style is so refreshing, he inserts these little prophetic glimpses about a

character's life after the book. He weaves characters' lives together in such an eloquent way and makes a tragic (and so current) tale extremely tender and beautiful.

A reader from Easthampton read *The Storm We Made* by Vanessa Chan: As a minority, the majority of books I read deal with characters outside of my culture and lifestyle so the reading challenge this month was particularly easy. *The Storm We Made* is set before and during the Japanese occupation of Malaysia. The plot was okay. I appreciated the characters and the history.

A reader from Salem read *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing* by Matthew Perry: I picked this book because it has been on my list for a really long time, and I'm a lover of *Friends*. It felt like it fit in well with the theme, and I enjoyed it a lot.

A reader from SCITUATE read *Riverman* by Ben McGrath: This protagonist definitely has a different lifestyle. This is the story of a veteran who withdrew from society and lived on his canoe, traversing rivers throughout the U.S. His story is compelling and presents life from a perspective we rarely see. The book not only elucidates the subject's story, but that of people who live along waterways in places that are removed from the mainstream.

A reader from Hanson read *Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea* by Sungju Lee and Susan Elizabeth McClelland: Such a sad book to think of the lives they lead in North Korea. Eye opening how protected from the world they are.

A reader from Scituate read *Naked in Death* by J D Robb: I will not survive to Eve Dallas' time. Reading about it recharges my 1950s enthusiasm for the future I will never see.

A reader from South Pasadena read *If Cats Disappeared From The World* by Genki Kawamura: An absolute work of heartbreaking, stunning genius, Kawamura pulls at every heartstring to tell a curious story of a man fighting against his own mortality. There were so many stunning quotations in this novel that I will never forget, and I am so grateful for that.

A reader from Boston read *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini: *A thousand splendid suns* is the story of 2 afghan women, Mariam and Laila, as they grow up through the changing periods of Afghan history from the last days of the monarchy, to soviet rule to the taliban. I chose this for March because I am not a muslim woman nor have I lived in a war environment or in a country with changing government. It was so eye opening in the way that people's attitudes towards women changed throughout the course of who was in charge of the government. I can't imagine being able to have a career and get an education one day and then the next no longer be allowed to walk down the street unaccompanied. I have read *The Kite Runner* also by Hosseini and he is such a gifted writer. He conveys the emotional plight of his characters with such grace and in a way that you feel you are experiencing the same emotions and events as them. Fantastic book and a great way to satisfy the march theme of a book where the main character has a different lifestyle.

A reader from Wakefield read *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas: A humorous and heartwarming story of an Iranian-American woman living in California in the 1970s. Dumas'

essays are a blend of whacky cultural misunderstandings, 70s-style bigotry, and reflections on what it means to belong in a country or a family.

A reader from Mansfield read *Peach Blossom Spring* by Melissa Fu: This book follows three generations of a Chinese family beginning in 1938 China as the Japanese approach and the family has to flee their home. They have a long journey through mainland China, to Taiwan and the United States. Well developed characters. Very interesting and moving.

A reader from North Chelmsford read *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata: The protagonist is a Japanese part-time worker, and as someone who is neither of those, I feel she is from both a different culture AND lifestyle.

A reader from Greenfield read *the little friend* by Donna Tartt: We were visiting Mississippi for the first time this month and I like to read a book set in the place I'm exploring. This was a very winding tale, but gave a glimpse into a variety of lifestyles in this southern community.

A reader from Sharon read *Early Morning riser* by Katherine Heiny: Wry and witty!

A reader from Hull read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho: I have wanted to read this book for a long time and just never did. I'm glad I finally read it, I feel like a lot of the spiritual things resonated with my life now. I like the story of the boy who was on a quest and the signs from the universe who helped him on his journey. He was a shepherd who travelled the entire desert looking for his treasure and the things he found on his way.

A reader from Boston read *The Woman in Me* by Britney Spears: Such an inspiring story and no doubt Spears has had a completely different lifestyle than most of us.

A reader from Haverhill read *Color Me In* by Natasha Diaz: The main character Nevaeh is both Black and Jewish; she's reconciling being white-passing with her Black family but not being white enough in her private school. It handles delicate topics well.

A reader from Brighton read *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro: I loved this book! I chose it randomly off of the recommendations list and was really pleasantly surprised.

A reader from Salem read *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* by Rafia Zakaria: *Against White Feminism* is a wonderfully written, informative, and poignant book that made me challenge many of my ideas and views about feminism. I chose this for the March challenge, because I am white and a feminist, so I wanted to learn what others had to say about the feminist movement particularly in the Western world. Zakaria does a wonderful job at conveying her message without attacking those who may identify as white feminists, as she routinely makes the distinction between White Feminism as a movement, and feminists who are white. I recommend this book to anyone learning to learn more about the history of the Western feminism movement, colonialism and its impact on women of color, and how to move aside to let women of color, and those who are facing intersectional biases, lead the way and speak for themselves, as opposed to being suppressed by the voices of their white counterparts. My key takeaway from this book is

that women need to be coming together to ensure equality for all, while also making sure they understand, first, that they do not all face the same levels of oppression. Incredible read!

A reader from Brockton read *To Look Upon the Sun* by Shannon St Hilaire: Ilse is pregnant in wartime Germany and is sent to a home where she bears a son who is taken from her. She is then encouraged to bear another child by the SS men to add to the so-called good race.

A reader from South Hadley read *The Thread Collectors* by Shaunna J. Edwards and Alyson Richman: This is the story of two women whose lives intersect at the height of the Civil War. Stella is an enslaved black woman in New Orleans, who secretly sews maps showing the route to freedom into scraps of fabric. Lily is a white Jewish woman living in New York City, who divides her time between writing for an Abolitionist newspaper and sewing quilts to be sent to the Union's soldiers. The women meet when Lily's husband disappears and she travels to the South to find him. Since I am neither Black, not Jewish, nor enslaved, nor living in the South or in the 19th century, I thought this book would fill the bill for the March challenge!

A reader from Canton read *A Midnight Puzzle* by Gigi Pandian: This third installment of The Secret Staircase Mystery series gets us closer to learning the truth about what happened to Tempest's mother and aunt years ago. Tempest must also try to clear the reputation of the family construction business while solving the murder of the man accusing The Secret Staircase Construction Company of his wife's near death accident. Highly recommend you read at least the previous book first to understand the backstory and the characters a little better. I really enjoy this locked door mystery series. Interesting murder scenarios, terrific architecture and stage magic references and absolutely fantastic food descriptions are hallmarks of this series. Tempest's grandparents Ash and Morag are always my favorites.

A reader from Sandwich read *Deep In Providence* by Riss M. Neilson: These characters jumped off the page from the first chapter. Though they live in a fictional Rhode Island where magic is real, it's a subtle difference, and I could recognize the city I grew up near, though my teen years were much different than the 3 protagonists', who are dealing not only with the loss of their best friend, but with inherited trauma, and the pressures of being the children of immigrants or the children of a mother with addiction. Written beautifully, with fantastic prose and great emotional backbone, I've been recommending it to anyone will listen!

A reader from Wrentham read *The Lioness of Boston* by Emily Franklin.

A reader from Danvers read *The Winners* by Backman: This was a tough read, but it was the final book in his three part Beartown Series. Tough because of the content, not because it was hard to read. Lots of difficult topics and complex characters who experience many hardships and heartwarming moments.

A reader from Beverly read *Washington Black* by Esi Edugyan: This was wavering on a 5-star read for me until the end. Still, a good story about enslavement, freedom, and the complexities of relationships.

A reader from Santa Cruz read *My Maasai Life* by Robin Wiszowaty: Robin beautifully describes her transition from American suburbia to a life in rural Kenya. I was drawn to the book because I spent some time in Kenya and fell in love with the Maasai people and their enchanting lands.

A reader from Belchertown read *Heartberries* by Therese Marie Mailhot: This is a memoir of the author growing up as a Native American woman, dealing with childhood abuse and later mental illness. Parts of the book were almost incoherent as the author kept a journal during periods of mental crisis. A difficult read but eye opening.

A reader from Gloucester read *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan: This was a fun read. I didn't feel that it truly exposed me to a different culture but rather highlighted some idiosyncrasies. Because of this , I also read *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa which was a hard but meaningful read that provided a deep dive into the Palestinian culture and crisis.

A reader from Chester read *Road to Murder* by Camilla Trincheri: Wonderfully written. Light murder but characters are fun and the descriptions of the food will make you hungry reading this book.

A reader from Cambridge read *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga: This is such a fantastic read. I greatly enjoyed learning more about the culture in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and experiencing the internal debates she went through when navigating her new life and education. I appreciated the conversation and theme of gender roles in Zimbabwe as well as the intersection of education, gender roles, and culture.

A reader from North Reading read *and they lived* by Steven Salvatore: good, cliché.

A reader from Beverly read *In the Shadow of the Valley: A Memoir* by Bobi Conn: This is an excellent, heart-wrenching memoir by a woman who was raised in abject poverty in the Appalachians in Eastern Kentucky. She grew up with abuse and neglect, in a house where drugs and violence were commonplace, but she found comfort in the wilderness around her. She fought her own battles with substances and men who had traits similar to her father's, even becoming a child bride, but managed to finish college and become a successful writer.

A reader from Lynnfield read *Less* by Andrew Sean Greer: I really enjoyed reading this novel. It follows a man after a breakup as he tours different countries to avoid attending the wedding of his ex-boyfriend. Well-paced and charming.

A reader from North Reading read *the year i turned 16* by Diane Schwemm: Good book, like the different perspectives.

A reader from North Reading read *conventally yours* by Annabeth Albert: cute couple, love it.

A reader from North Reading read *out of character* by Annabeth Albert: like the series, wish the first books characters were in it more.

A reader from North Reading read *may the best man win* by zr ellor: like the representation, good book.

A reader from North Reading read *red, white and royal blue* by casey mcquinton: Cute couple, reminds me of young royals kind of.

A reader from North Reading read *all the bight places* by jennifer niven: Bittersweet, good book.

A reader from North Reading read *girl in pieces* by katherine glasgow: sad book, beautifully written, my favorite author.

A reader from North Reading read *how to make friends with the dark* by katherine glasgow: sad but beautiful.

A reader from Boston read *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak: Never has a book shaken me to the core before, the horrors of war and politics explored via a child's innocence, the book morbidly outlines the cruelty of war stricken Germany. I originally started the book because Liesel, the protagonist being a sympathetic German during a time of hate really makes one think about the meaning of individuality and culture and how one identifies their place in it, but as I read on I was immersed in the metaphors, and the last line by Death, "I am haunted by humans." still haunts me.

A reader from South Yarmouth read *There There* by Tommy Orange: Excellent. I wish everyone would read this book!

A reader from Georgetown read *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins: I chose this book whose protagonist has a different culture or lifestyle from you because it is about a family in Mexico. There was a lot of action and attacks with just a mother and her son surviving. It mainly detailed how they took a dangerous journey to escape from the killers.

A reader from Boston read *The Fury* by Alex Michaelides: The author in the book has a sort of rags to riches story and leads a rather lavish life and has friends belonging to upper-class society, which is quite different from the life I lead as a graduate student.

A reader from Scituate read *Punch me up to the gods: a memoir* by brian broome: This was a beautifully written, but incredibly sad book about a Black queer man born in Ohio. I was also born in Ohio, as a straight white woman. Our lives and experiences couldn't be more different. His gift is in his forgiveness of the places, the people, and the times that brought him harm. I, however, feel a lot of anger at my home state for pushing Brian out. I hope that we can do better. I know I try to.

A reader from Seekonk read *Hijab Butch Blues* by Lamya H: What a gift this memoir is. Lamya's love and strength of faith intertwined with her queerness was so incredibly beautiful. So much vulnerability, earnestness and love throughout these pages.

A reader from Beverly read *The Evening And The Morning* by Ken Follett: Looking forward to more!

A reader from Quincy read *Half a Soul* by Olivia Atwater: I love how the author wrote about Regency England with a faerie twist! Coming from a family of direct and blunt individuals, it's interesting to see the stark contrast between the way I was raised versus all the rules/etiquette that women need to learn in Regency England. Love the warmth that this story exudes, definitely another great cozy read.

A reader from Springfield read *Pageboy* by Elliot Page: A very emotionally heavy but important book that highlights trans and queer experience.

A reader from Beverly read *Never Whistle at Night* by Shane Hawk: Stunning collection of dark fiction by indigenous writers featuring indigenous protagonists.

A reader from Braintree read *Dead on Target* by m.c. Beaton with R.w. Green: I have read all of the Agatha Raisin books and it is wonderful watching Agatha become a better person.

A reader from Worcester County read *The Mountains Sing* by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai: Three generations of women endure the "Vietnam War"--which was known there as The War of American Aggression. It was interesting to hear that perspective and learn about how "ordinary" citizens suffered, and how their loyalties were divided. As history is was engaging, as a novel it fell short.

A reader from Beverly read *What Happened to Ruthy Ramirez* by Claire Jimenez: This book was phenomenal! The way it transported me to a place and life that I have never had. The richness of the characters. The story-telling!

A reader from Northampton read *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen: Amazing work.

A reader from North Weymouth read *O Pioneers!* by Willa Cather: The book I chose, not only for the Challenge, but also for my reading group to read and discuss at this month's meeting. It was tremendously popular, as I knew it would be. I like everything I have ever read by Cather, and this was on the top of the list. She painted a picture of Nebraska with her words, and introduced us to Alexandra and her family.

A reader from Beverly read *The Fury* by Alex Michaelides: Interesting read!

A reader from Amherst read *The Words That Remain* by Stênio Gardel: A stream of consciousness story about an illiterate gay man from the Brazilian countryside, this book meditates on the power of words, the burden of shame, and the value of literacy to foster understanding, compassion, and love.

A reader from Haverhill read *The Girls: From Golden to Gilmore* by Stan Zimmerman: This book was kinda weird. No plot, just name drops.

A reader from Florence read *A House for Mr Biswas* by V. S. Naipaul: Funny and tragic and deserving of its reputation as a masterpiece.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *The Widows of Malabar Hill* by Sujata Massey: Very informative about the role of women in India.

A reader from Spencer read *The Girl and the Goddess: Stories and Poems of Divine Wisdom* by Nikita Gill: "A deeply moving novel in verse, this coming of age tale teaches profound life lessons by heavily incorporating Hindu mythology. Beginning with partition and displacement to Delhi, this collection of poems is written from the perspective of the young protagonist. The persistent effects of sexual assault and bullying are trials the girl endures as she grows up in a country rife with misogyny, class divides, and intense homophobia. The poet eventually leaves her home for London, where she begins to understand, accept, and overcome her past."

A reader from Brookline read *Lab Girl* by Hope Jahren: Nothing about spending my life in a lab ever appealed to me, and the thought of meticulously digging holes and collecting plant samples leaves me cold, but this book made that world magical, and the quirky friendship at the center of the narrative was beautiful.

A reader from Berkley read *The Henna Wars* by Adiba Jaigirdar: This book was sweet and sour at all the right moments. The author captured Middle School in a nutshell.

A reader from Waltham read *Requiem* by Frances Itani: No comments yet - I actually am still reading it! I just wanted to make sure to get the record in on time.

A reader from Fitchburg read *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare: This might be the first time I've read a book written in "broken English". It was an interesting way to show the character's perspective.

A reader from Brookline read *The Road from Coorain* by Jill Ker Conway: Growing up on an isolated Australian sheep station is a far cry from my youth in the suburbs of NYC. This was a fascinating book. While the descriptions of the landscape were wonderful, I was riveted by the author's recounting of the challenges she and her family faced from drought and other natural occurrences. Things got especially rough when her father died and she had to grow up fast. She recounts moving to the city for her education, and then having to care for a failing mother. The author gave a lot of herself and rose above it all to ultimately earn a PhD in history and become the president of Smith College. Very inspiring!

A reader from Atkinson read *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* by Art Spiegelman: Eye opening graphic novel memoir depicting one man's experience during the Holocaust.

A reader from Andover read *Banyan Moon* by Thao Thai: This novel is about three generations of Vietnamese women. Both mothers have secrets that negatively impact their relationships with their daughters. The story starts strong, but loses its way during the middle of the book. By the end, I was not that interested in the characters as I had been in the beginning.

A reader from Naples read *The Custom of the Country* by Edith Wharton: A scathing examination of the exploits and follies of the modern upper class. Through Undine Spragg, Wharton gives the reader detailed glimpses of the interior decor of America and its nouveau riche. Undine is a heroine who is vain, spoiled, and selfish, yet she is irresistibly fascinating. Through Undine's travels, marriages and affairs, Wharton conveys a vision of social behavior that is both supremely informed and supremely disenchanted.

A reader from Belchertown read *Airplane Mode: An Irreverent History of Travel* by Shahnaz Habib: A new (to me) perspective on travel, very different from the white, middle-class travel memoir that is so commonly found. Interesting and well-written - recommended!

A reader from Wakefield read *The Secret Keeper of Jaipur* by Alka Joshi: I had read the other two in the series (the Henna Artist and The Perfumist of Paris, so it was fun to see what the characters were up to. I gave each book in the series 4/5 stars. I thought they could have been a little shorter. I especially like reading about how different flowers and herbs were used to address discomforts and illnesses. Good story and mostly interesting characters.

A reader from Hopkinton read *A Time to Kill* by John Grisham: While it may be a bit dated, it is no less compelling for me, and describes a world very different from the one I inhabit. The tensions and challenges of the rural Deep South were interesting and author's style kept me engaged. It was my second book by Grisham and it won't be my last.

A reader from Charlton read *The Perfumist of Parks* by Alka Joshi: Third in the series, the first book would have been an even more perfect fit, I think. I enjoyed this final book of the trilogy.

A reader from Hanover read *Dust Child* by Nguyen Phan: This book is set in Vietnam. The story goes back and forth between 1969 and 2018. 2 main characters are sisters who in order to support their parents become "bar girls" interacting with American soldiers during the Vietnamese War. Another character is a black Vietnamese man who was left at an orphanage in 1969 and is seeking to locate his American father so that he can bring his family to the U.S. A white American soldier who served in Vietnam in 1969, at the suggestion of his wife, is revisiting Vietnam in 2018 to hopefully stop his nightmares but he secretly wants to find the child and girlfriend he left behind. I grew up in the sixties and experienced the war only through the news. My classmates turned 18 in 1974, the last year of the draft and the last year of the war. It was humbling to understand how the Vietnamese looked upon Americans. They were not the saviors to stop communism as I remember being initially taught. Far from it. The casualties of war are long lasting and far-reaching. No one ever "wins."

A reader from Peabody read *Finding Margaret Fuller* by Pataki: Transcendentalist meets Thoreau and discovers a special beauty that she will miss when she moves beyond Concord to New York and adventure in Italy.

A reader from Greenfield read *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* by Jeff Lindsay: Chose from list and was curious how it would be a different culture. But the world of the police, Cubans and serial murders are definitely different from mine. Great, easy read.

A reader from East Sandwich read *The House Girl* by Tara Conklin: Conklin's writing seamlessly alternates from past (Josephine's story as a slave on a southern plantation) to present (Lina's story as a young lawyer working on a reparations case), and kept me captivated the whole time. This novel got me thinking about issues of freedom, justice, race, humanity and motherhood. There was also an air of a good mystery. The best book I've read in a while.

A reader from Plainville read *Moon of the Turning Leaves* by Waubgeshig Rice: Superb.

A reader from Plymouth read *7 days in june* by Tia Williams: Good book, quick read, interesting plot. In depth characters.

A reader from North Bethesda read *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan: I picked this up off the free shelf at work not knowing what it was about, it just had a note saying "multigenerational story" and that is supremely my jam. So I grabbed it and I am so glad I did. What a beautiful work. This is the multigenerational story of a Palestinian family, over decades, across countries, across wars. Very little is in Palestine, and not much of Palestine is spoken of through the generations, but that being out of place, that being without a home, that living in houses made of salt, that is carried throughout as they move to Kuwait, Lebanon, Paris, Boston. The story is of strong women, clashing as strong women of different generations do, of chafing by the rules of the generation before. So much is about the intricacies of family and I just adored it. But that rootlessness simmering at the edges throughout. I loved this and I'm mad at myself for waiting so long to read it.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *From Blood and Ash* by Jennifer L. Armentrout: The first book of the series 'A Blood and Ash Novel', it's a really enjoyable and entertaining story. Through the eyes of Poppy, the Maiden chosen by the Gods, we get to explore the lore and history on the Kingdom of Solis, lead by the Queens and the Ascendents (nobels), being attacked by the last loyal to the fallen Kingdon of Atlantia. The fascinating thing is seeing how Poppy goes from questioning her rol buy accepting the status quo, to questioning yhe status quo itself, the history that he's being taught to her and the rol she has to play in this. A story that belongs to the steam category, the world building and characters are great. Already starting on the next one, and having entertaining conversations with my wife about this series.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen: Amazing! One of the best books I've read in a very long time. While the history is captivating and the style is fast, funny and cynical, the best of this book is the multiple critics to Capitalism, Communism, Wara, Catholicism, the American way of life, the notion of Revolutions, and more. The main character is a Vietnamese of mixed races that is despise for his condition, and has resorted to become a double agent, working for the government and the USA, while in reality being a communist spy. After the Fail fo Saigon, he goes to America and he'll continue informing og the life, dreams, plans and frustration of his countryman, will try to influence the perception of Vietnam of a Hollywood movie, and ultimately, will have to come to terms with his duality.

A reader from Holyoke read *Reef* by Romesh Gunsekera: This story is about a young houseboy, Triton, growing up in Sri Lanka during a time of political unrest. As he endeavors to please his master, Triton becomes a self-taught chef who can prepare the most delicious meals for his

master and his master's friends. This book is beautifully written, and is described on the jacket as a poetic novel. For me, this poetry renders vivid pictures in my mind such as the description of a pond on page 43: "The water would be unbroken like a mirror, and the moon would gleam in it." Although Triton has a different culture and lifestyle than I do, it was very easy for me to relate to his desire to excel in order to please.

A reader from Foxborough read *Skraelings* by Rachel and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley: Fascinating story of how the indigenous people of Canada met the Vikings.

A reader from South Portland read *A Woman Is No Man* by Etaf Rum: Really enjoyed this book, one of the best books I've read this year.

A reader from Beverly read *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* by Lisa See: This was a great story about life in 15th century China focusing on Lady Tan, a physician and member of the elite class. The novel details how restricted a woman's life was and successfully shows the difference in what an entitled woman could expect vs. a commoner. Lady Tan was able to succeed in her pursuit of medicine through the efforts of many women including her mother, mother in law and a midwife. A very good read.

A reader from North Reading read *Three Keys + Room to Dream* by Kelly Yang: Kelly Yang does not disappoint! What I find most appealing about the stories in the Front Desk series is that they are based on events from her life. Some of her books have appeared on banned books lists because she truthfully records her experiences as a newcomer to the United States from China and the discrimination and racism she experienced as a child makes people uncomfortable. Even in 2024 as a society we have the tendency to think that newcomers either don't belong here, or are not discriminated against.

A reader from Boston read *The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb: This book has been on my radar for a while - I'm glad I finally read it. It made me think about the movie *Tar*, and inspired me to buy tickets to a violin concert featuring Stradivarius instruments! And of course, it pushed me to look at the world from a different perspective, which is the point of this prompt (and, I would argue, fiction in general).

A reader from Easthampton read *Happily: A Personal History-with Fairy Tales* by Sabrina Orah Mark: Beautifully compelling prose!

A reader from Shrewsbury read *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: This was a long book with a lot of characters! I'm glad I read it. It helped me to think about things from the perspective of a variety of people. I went into the book thinking that I would learn about different races and about the Jewish experience in the US, but never expected the whole story line about the asylum. That part of the book will stay with me for a long time and prompted me to look up that particular institution and read about its history. Some very disturbing stuff.

A reader from South Hadley read *Up Home* by Ruth J. Simmons: In this gorgeously written memoir, Dr. Ruth J. Simmons tells the story of growing up as a Black girl in the Jim Crow south

to a family of sharecroppers. The memoir details Simmons' family and educational trajectory from Grapeland Texas, to the presidency at Smith College and Brown University. A must read!

A reader from LOWELL read *1984* by George Orwell: I thought I was rereading this book but I didn't remember most of it so I don't think I'd ever completed it before. Unnerving and beautiful, if a bit dogmatic at times.

A reader from Arlington read *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Ms. Adichie gives us a fascinating insight into an immigrant's view of what life is like in the United States through the eyes of a young Nigerian woman who struggles to be herself, while at the same time trying to integrate into a foreign culture. We also hear the parallel story of her first love, a young Nigerian man who is dealing with similar issues in Great Britain. This book allows us a glimpse into the challenges faced by young immigrants thrust into alien worlds, and what they have to do to survive.

A reader from Dartmouth read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: Rich, touching, intricate sprawling story of a complex family in southern India.

A reader from Oxford read *The Tie That Binds* by Kent Haruf: I enjoyed this book. Haruf is able to build suspense and hold interest when writing about even mundane activities.

A reader from Melrose read *Dust Child* by Nguyen Phan Que Mai: This book was so interesting because it told of the Viet Nam war through the perspective of 2 women and their son who lived there during that time. It reflects the price of war for those who fought it and the survivors on both sides. I kept thinking of the futility of war and words from my father. "Nothing is worth fighting a war for."

A reader from Rockland read *Perfect Boy* by Hannah Gray: This book follows Ryann and Watson. Ryann escaped to the US on forged documents to attend college to get a better life for her and her sister. After an audit at the strip club she worked in, her fake documents were discovered and Watson married her to stay in the country, but also because he was in love with her. Through trials and tough times they make it through and found a love in each other they might have otherwise missed.

A reader from Reading read *Of Women and Salt* by Garcia, Gabriela: Three generations of women from Cuba and Miami.

A reader from Chelsea read *Edie: American Girl* by Stein, Jean: An impressive account of both Edie Sedgwick's life and the culture of the late 1960's.

A reader from Berlin read *Courting Samira* by Amal Awad: The book takes place in Australia and focuses on a Palestinian-Australia Muslim woman in her late 20s. She comes from a large practicing Muslim family and wears a hijab and follows other cultural traditions, like courting (dating) practices where the couple initially meets with their parents alongside as chaperones. I come from a small, atheist household so it was interesting to read about a large family that gets together and supports one another (who they can be nose at times). And the dating practices - I

can't imagine meeting a date with my parents. I don't get to be myself around my parents so I wouldn't be able to around my date if I practiced courting and I don't think finding a partner would go well. But it certainly has benefits in that maybe the parents see something you don't or might be blind to.

A reader from Berlin read *The Djinn Waits a Hundred Years* by Shubnum Khan: Beautiful and gothically atmospheric book that takes place in South Africa and centers on Indian immigrants. Focusing on a teen girl whose mother has died and father moved them to an apartment with other Indian immigrants, it is very different from my life. Growing up and living in rural central MA where I have a house with 2 acres and can barely see my neighbors, it is a very different life. The neighbors come together in this book often and get to know one another. I could name like one of my neighbors and I have no idea what they look like. Though I was also raised by a single father who wife, my mother had died after illness and struggled with depression, I never had siblings like the main character, Sana, who was a twin but her twin died.

A reader from Malden read *Rough Sleepers* by Tracy Kidder: Really interesting look at Boston's homeless population and the people who work with them.

A reader from South Grafton read *Eyes of the Void* by Adrian Tchaikovsky: The focus on the unspace made this so much more enjoyable for me, since that is what I was most compelled by in the first book. The worldbuilding that happens around and because of the unspace explorations--plot-wise and thematically--made this book absolutely necessary as its own book in this trilogy. I cannot wait to see what happens in the last book of this trilogy! The wide cast of varied characters--alien and human--was even more compelling.

A reader from Hull read *James* by Percival Everett: In anticipation of the publication of "James," I listened to Elijah Wood's outstanding performance on the audible version of Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" which enabled me to fully appreciate Everett's tremendous accomplishment in the retelling of the tale through the perspective of the enslaved Jim. While I can never fully understand the experience of enslaved people, I certainly have deeper compassion for their plight and an increased knowledge of how racism has shaped our society. Such is the gift of literature!

A reader from Seekonk read *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang: This is not a book I would have chosen to read if I had known the extent of the story. I thought it was well written, just not my cup of tea.

A reader from Watertown read *Becoming* by Michelle Obama: 5/5 stars! I loved this book! I chose the audio version which was extra special because Michelle Obama read the book. It was filled with history mixed with light-hearted as well as deep/heavy stories. LOVE LOVE LOVE!

A reader from Rockland read *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee: Generations of strong, loyal families struggle with death, poverty, and cultural expectations.

A reader from Ipswich read *Disability Visibility* by edited by Alice Wong: After reading, *Sitting Pretty: the view from my ordinary resilient disabled body*, I knew I had much more to learn from those who are disabled. *Disability Visibility* shares essays from a diverse cross-section of disabled folk. Their stories paint a robust mural of the powers of the disabled that are often thwarted by our ableist society. Highly recommend.

A reader from Ipswich read *Swimming In The Dark* by Tomasz Jedrowski: A beautiful gay love story set in 1980's Poland.

A reader from Boston read *The Candid Life of Meena Dave* by Namrata Patel: An independent, single Indian woman inherits an apartment, and with it a family she never knew existed, including her Indian "Aunties".

A reader from WAKEFIELD read *Anna Karenina* by leo tolstoy: Poor Anna- talk about a different culture in which she lived- no possibility of divorce, leave your child behind, and ostracized from your society. This was a re-read, and through my older/wiser eyes, her predicament felt sadder to me. I also, however, thought that the opportunity for her to break up with Vronsky in the early days of their courtship seemed more apparent and easier. Terrific book!

A reader from Woburn read *sisters of the lost nation* by nick medina: Loved it. I always am drawn to stories about indigenous people, and this was no different.

A reader from Newton read *Every Soul a Star* by Wendy Mass: In 'Every Soul a Star', the character Ally lives far from civilization on a campground in the middle of nowhere. This lifestyle is different from mine because I live on the outskirts of Boston, in the midst of civilization and I see lots of people every day. Ally is isolated and basically only sees her family and a few guests at the campground.

A reader from Brighton read *Where I Was From* by Joan Didion: Even though I went into this thinking Joan Didion was a protagonist with a very different background than me, I ended up seeing more similarities - both West Coasters with difficult, ultra-conservative, overbearing mothers with a penchant for Faulknerian prose.

A reader from Fairhaven read *The Bandit Queens* by Parini Shroff: Great insight into Indian culture... and funny to boot!

A reader from Brewster read *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon: *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon is based on the real diary kept by a midwife, Martha Ballard, in 1789 in Maine. This engrossing novel has it all - a murder, a trial, the struggle against nature to survive at that time, some really bad people and a wonderful love story.

A reader from Maynard read *Zodiac* by Ai Weiwei: A meandering memoir structured around the Chinese zodiac. I'm not sure what I should have expected from such a genre-pushing artist, though, so this was entirely on brand for Ai.

A reader from Blackstone read *A Very English Murder* by Verity Bright: Lady Eleanor Swift is an English woman in the 1920's. She was orphaned as a child and her uncle became her guardian. As a young adult, she traveled across India, Asia and Africa alone recommending areas of interest to a touring company. Her uncle dies and she inherits his estate, along with his butler, cook, housekeeper, maids and aging bulldog. Eleanor, now "Lady" Swift has been a free spirit until she becomes the lady of the manor. With time and patience on all sides, she and her household staff become close knit. Becoming a "lady" is not easy for a free spirit like Eleanor. The butler, Clifford, is like a second uncle, and gently guides Eleanor in her attempts to become a "lady". The night she arrives, Eleanor witnesses a man being shot and killed in the distance during a driving rainstorm. The body disappears and now Eleanor, with the help of Clifford and staff, need to solve the mystery and convince the local constabulary there was, in fact, a murder. This is the first book in the Lady Eleanor Swift series. I have the entire series of 17 books and have fallen in love with all the characters, especially Clifford. The writing is a delight and the plots well thought out. If you enjoy cozy mysteries across "the pond" that take place at another time...automobiles and phones had just been invented and only the wealthy could afford them...then this series is for you! Enjoy!

A reader from Attleboro read *Five Loaves and Two Fish* by Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan: A beautiful book written by a very holy man who lived during communism in Vietnam. Five stars.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Don't Fear the Reaper* by Stephen Graham Jones: Features an indigenous protagonist.

A reader from Woburn read *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor: I was surprised to be a little disappointed in this. It was fine, but I expected to love it.

A reader from Melrose read *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey: Mesmerizing novel that reads like non fiction about a crew on the International Space Station.

A reader from Stoneham read *Enola Holmes and the Mark of the Mongoose* by Nancy Springer: Excellent addition to the series. Enola certainly has a different culture and lifestyle.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Deep as the Sky, Red as the Sea* by Rita Chang-Eppig: You've probably heard of Blackbeard and his ship the Queen Anne's Revenge crewed by 300 men... but have you heard of Shek Yeung? She commanded a fleet of 400 ships (called junks) crewed by 40,000-60,000 people (men and women) in the South China Sea in early 1800s. Known by her epithet as the Scourge of the South China Sea, she was one of history's most successful pirates. This book starts after Shek Yeung's first husband is killed in battle. It tells the story of how she navigates marriage to her second husband and maintaining command over the fleet while dealing with a clever Imperial commander who is tasked with eradicating the pirates from the region. The present story is told alongside flashbacks to her past and legends of the goddess Ma-Zou. At it's core, this book is about power, and especially power that woman holds in what is traditionally seen as a male sphere. Shek Yeung overcomes her past of no agency on the flower boats (brothels), to eventually become the fearsome commander of the fleet. She internalizes self-doubt, but projects outward confidence. She unabashedly pursues power, but at the expense

of raising her own children. Yet, Shek Yeung believes that a woman holding a position of power faces harsher criticism than a man in the same position, and she hides her pregnancy until very late to not be perceived as weak. This concept felt very relevant to contemporary times, and sometimes that felt hard to read. However, at the end of the story, Shek Yeung successfully barter for immunity for not just her and her husband/co-commander, but also everyone in her fleet. She is the only pirate commander of the alliance to do so, and the Imperial commander claims it's because she's a mother. As a reader, this act / statement really stuck with me, because yes she's a mother to her full fleet. However, more than that, it shows that when women have a position of power the stakes are different for everyone and the results of women's power and empathy are more wide reaching. That message also felt very relevant to contemporary times.

A reader from Burlington read *Halo: Cryptum* by Greg Bear: This has been on my list for about a decade, as I've always wanted to have done the correct thing and read this book (and it's two sequels) before getting through Halo 4. It starts out super boring, which is probably why I never got through it initially. The Didact is finally awakened from the Cryptum at around page 50, ugh. And it does take its time getting past there to any sort of conflict. But by the end, you have a good idea of the history of all 12 Halo installations, the race that built them, why they are so beautiful and destructive at the same time, what might have happened to these Forerunners, and who the hell the Librarian is. Now that I'm playing through Halo 4 again with my son, I'm hoping that Librarian scene will make some sort of sense. Plot twist: the Didact from the game is not the same person awoken at the beginning of the book. Another interesting twist: having read *A Clockwork Orange* in the preceding month was interesting, as this was another coming of age novel about youthful stupidity. The protagonist (a Forerunner alien species) is escaping his family to find treasure, yet unwittingly causes a civil war. Or was he simply being controlled by the Librarian? I'll have to finish the trilogy, I guess. Greg Bear does a good job with language throughout (his sci-fi cred is palpable), but I think a Halo novel could have used a tad more action.

A reader from Reading read *The Fox Wife* by Yangsze Choo: Chinese (as well as Japanese) folklore revolving around fox spirits is blended with a mystery/detective story in a really delightful novel about a mother seeking revenge for the death of her child.

A reader from Beverly read *The Fox Wife* by Yangsze Choo: This was an enjoyable take on Chinese folklore combined with a mystery. It was slow at times but I learned a lot about East Asian fox mythology.

A reader from Chelsea read *the namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri: I really enjoyed this book. As a first generation American, I could relate deeply with Gogol's journey. The internal and external conflict I had between being American and holding onto my Dominican ancestry. Being one of the few Dominican kids in my class. I desperately just wanted to be like everyone else and be a regular American girl. Some of the scenes were triggering as it forced me to recall times in my childhood, where I wanted to be like everyone else, and I struggled with finding the beauty of my culture in a world, in a society that made being white the default. The scenes with his parents were also particularly touching. The push and pull as an adolescent, and how as an adult how he finally was able to see them as people who made a major sacrifice coming to the US and did the best they could in a foreign land.

A reader from Westfield read *Carrie Soto is Back* by Taylor Jenkins Reid: This book had a protagonist who had a different lifestyle than me as she was a professional tennis player. She dedicated her life to training & winning, a lifestyle I could only attempt to imagine! She was so dedicated to the sport and to winning that it was truly inspiring.

A reader from Attleboro read *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch: Absolutely cannot deal with this book any longer. Have been trying for two months. Glad she found herself what seems like a good placement now, but finding it frustrating that the pace is terrible, and the storyline is mediocre at best. How is this raved as such a great story?! Giving up at chapter 18 and putting on my DNF list for life.

A reader from Attleboro read *the night watchman* by Louise Erdrich: I really didn't know much about Indians and the things they went through. After reading this book, it made me realize that they were treated very badly.

A reader from Amherst read *This Other Eden* by Paul Harding: Beautifully written. Such a powerful evocation of how we attack Difference in our culture.

A reader from Saugus read *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong: I don't usually like "stream of consciousness" type writing because sometimes I find it hard to follow. However, I really did like this book and the writing was beautiful. Even though it jumped around a lot, I was still able to follow it fairly well. The chaotic relationship between Little Dog and his mom was sometimes beautiful, sometimes heartbreaking. But you could see how his mother's life in Vietnam after the war affected both her and her own mother and in turn informed his upbringing as a young immigrant. I would definitely recommend this book, especially if you are looking for something a little different.

A reader from Pepperell read *Another Appalachia* by Neema Avashia: being a first generation Indian desi woman raised in rural West Virginia was as far different from my upbringing.

A reader from North Reading read *Family Lore* by Elizabeth Acevedo: I really enjoyed this story about generations of women from the Dominican Republic and NYC. The ending was especially poignant!

A reader from Wilmington read *The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times* by Michelle Obama: I've loved both books that Michelle Obama wrote, but this was definitely my favorite. Her writing is very easy to read but her topics in this book related to my life right now. It gave me things to think about.

A reader from Franklin read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho: I thought it was a powerful book in that it really shows what life is really like through a young shepherd boy. Following your dreams and going after what you want is not always easy. There will be obstacles in your way but there is always something to be learned. The journey he went on and the experiences along the way changed his life forever.

A reader from Framingham read *The Reading List* by Sara Nisha Adams: Many of the characters in this book are Hindu, which was an interesting culture to read about!

A reader from Brooklyn read *Memorial* by Bryan Washington: Very good book, interesting characters that do not act the way you'd necessarily expect them to. I enjoyed learning more about the queer experiences of men from Texas and Japan and how their relationship might face challenges due to their lived experiences.

A reader from Montague read *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride: Published in the 1990s, this memoir alternates between James McBride's recollections of his life as a young Black man in Brooklyn and the stories he was able to extract from his mother about her life as a young Jewish woman in Virginia. His mother did her best to leave the past behind. McBride was driven to learn more about her. Many of her stories surprised him, and he shares these discoveries with us in this highly readable book. Their life experiences are not my life experiences, but there is a human commonality about struggle and tenacity.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by Stephanie Land: Good book. Thought-provoking. I also enjoyed the Netflix series inspired by this book.

A reader from Westminster read *The Flight Attendant* by Chris Bohjalian: Cassandra Bowden, the main character of this book, has a much different lifestyle than me. She has a job that keeps her on the go flying all around the world and her personal life is a hot mess. Her self-destructive behavior lands her in the middle of an international, high-stakes murder mystery. And she can't help but lie to try to get out of trouble. I crave stability and try to make healthy choices. I like to travel, but in short bursts.

A reader from Foxborough read *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Marukami: I had forgotten about this month's challenge. Luckily, I read this book featuring a Japanese man in the late 1960s dealing with loss, trauma, sex, love, and more. There were a lot of sudden gut punches, some wonderful writing, and unexpected graphic descriptions.

A reader from Reading read *The Toss of a Lemon* by Padma Viswanathan: This was a fascinating read for me, as it portrayed a culture and time completely foreign to my experience. The protagonist, Sivakami, is widowed at 18 with 2 young children. Per Brahmin custom, she must shave her head and adhere to a life of isolation - rarely leaving her home. Nevertheless, she exerts a powerful influence over several generations of her descendants, who come of age in a changing India and marvel at their forbearer's adherence to custom.

A reader from College Park read *Thirty Talks Weird Love* by Alessandra Narváez Varela: Anamaria, a teenager in 1990s Mexico, is visited by her 30-year-old self, who claims that she's there to save her. I enjoyed reading about Mexico from the point of view of a teenager. This novel in verse is compelling and thought-provoking--it made me reflect on what I would tell my younger self if I was given the chance.

A reader from Shelburne Falls read *Gillgamesh: A New English Version* by Stephen Mitchell: I forgot how weird myths can be.

A reader from Chelmsford read *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by Stephanie Land: Good book. Thought-provoking. I also enjoyed the Netflix series inspired by this book.

A reader from South Weymouth read *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: Set in Pottstown, PA in the 1920-1930's, the book tells the stories of Black and immigrant Jewish communities in the impoverished Chicken Hill neighborhood and how they relate to and with each other. Central is the story of Dodo, a young boy who was struck dumb and has been institutionalized by the state, and how the communities rally behind him. Beautifully written, unforgettable characters, and hard to put down.!

A reader from Boston read *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang: For this month's theme, a book whose protagonist has a culture or lifestyle different from my own, I picked up this short work by Han Kang. This book's format is unique in that each chapter feels like a short novella told by a different perspective around the main character, whose head we are never truly inside of (the first chapter shares some fragments of her dreams, but they work as part of the narrative of her husband experiencing her psychological and physical changes). Perhaps the most compelling truth in this book is that no matter how different, we can find ourselves reflected in the actions and responses of any character. How would I respond to a partner, in-law, or sibling's terrifying changes? How would I want to be treated in my own?

A reader from Middleboro read *Black Paradox* by Junji Ito: Junji Ito is always recommended to me in my horror lit group. This graphic novel follows a group of 4 people from Japan who have met up to commit suicide together.

A reader from Belchertown read *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: and their race to save the world's most precious manuscripts* by Joshua Hammer: Interesting book about the history of Timbuktu's library and the need to preserve history.

A reader from Barre read *A Woman is No Man* by Etan Ross: A good read to gain an interesting perspective of a woman's role specifically in a Palestinian culture. Some of the book was rather repetitive but definitely opened my eyes to a different culture.

A reader from Barre read *Seven Days of June* by Tia Williams: A great and fun romance book! The perspective of the black couple brought in a perspective of the challenges that black authors face which was interesting to learn more about. Was not a huge fan of the concluding chapters.

A reader from Hampden read *Left-handed Booksellers of London* by Garth Nix: Recommended. With the exception of working with books, I have nothing in common with the protagonists in this book. Garth Nix has re-invented 1983 London into a city protected by magical booksellers. Left-handed booksellers are the fighters and right-handed booksellers are the thinkers all who keep old England from intruding on a modern day London. And yes, they do operate bookstores. The protagonists are: Susan Arkshow, a nascent bookseller, who is looking for her father who she

never knew and who disappeared under mysterious circumstances; Merlin, a left-handed bookseller, and his right handed twin sister Vivian who are both seeking justice because of the murder of their mother and the botched police investigation that ensued. You will be taken to places only imagined in a real world. Nix gets high marks for his literary allusions. Book one in a series. Book two is titled "The Sinister Booksellers of Bath." Susan, Merlin and Vivian make return appearances.

A reader from Braintree read *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott: The novel was a bit long for me, but I enjoyed reading about the journeys of the different characters, especially their growth from youth to adults. Well, minus Beth.

A reader from Baldwinville read *The Fraud* by Zadie Smith: It took me a little while to get into this book, but I ended up enjoying it.

A reader from Princeton read *The Kamogawa Food Detectives* by Hisashi Kashiwai: I enjoyed this easy, cozy read. Made me hungry, made me want to try new food and learn more about the history and culture of Kyoto.

A reader from Wrentham read *Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan: So enjoyed the family dynamics and the influence of history.

A reader from Sutton read *Women Talking* by Miriam Toews: It was heartbreaking to learn of the systematic abuse perpetrated upon the women in this fundamentalist Mennonite community. Still, the democratic and inclusive manner in which they decided to stay, leave, or confront their abusers was inspiring.

A reader from Brewster read *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck: I love this book. It is so simply written that there are no differences between anyone in the world. There are only struggles and beautiful things. It is all about connecting with the most basic humanity around us and following that.

A reader from Brewster read *The Hundred Foot Journey* by Richard C. Morales: I really liked reading about all the different aspects of the characters culture. The story was very beautiful as well.

A reader from Amherst read *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding: I really enjoyed reading this book, my mom put it on hold for me!

A reader from Stoughton read *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* by Lola Shoneyin: Set in Nigeria, the secrets Baba Segi's three senior wives withhold from the newcomer wife, who has secrets of her own, threaten to tear their family apart.

A reader from Monson read *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See: This was an interesting story of two friends living on the island of Jeju. These women were sea divers. They lived in a matriarchal culture where they were the bread winners in their families and the men were the

children's caretakers. Circumstances and events eventually pushed Mija and Young-Sook's relationship to a breaking point.

A reader from Tyngsboro read *Cover of Night* by Linda Howard: This book is about a widowed mother of 4 year old twins that opens a Bed and Breakfast in the middle of nowhere. One of her guests skips out and others come looking for him. Turns out he stole from the mob and they want something they think she has. They pretty much take the town hostage and the town fights back. It was okay. I probably would not read it again although I do like other books by this author.

A reader from Blandford read *Chenoo* by Joseph Bruchac: There was so much packed into this short novel. History, tradition, conflict, murder, and so much more. The protagonist was a Penacook detective called to investigate mysterious murders taking place during a takeover of a closed down state camp ground. Phenomenal read!

A reader from Wakefield read *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros: I definitely live a very different lifestyle than the characters in this book. As someone who enjoys reading fantasy, it was great to get to learn more about this culture and explore the different world that Yarros created. I have already read the second book and am looking forward to the release of the rest of the series.

A reader from Beverly read *I Must Betray You* by Ruta Sepetys: This was a very engaging yet harrowing book. It really captured something special about the mindset of being in a society that was so full of mistrust and restrictions.

A reader from Ludlow read *Educated* by Tara Westover: For the month of March, I read Tara Westover's memoir titled *Educated*. *Educated* was a fantastic read. Tara's childhood and young adult years were vastly different from my own, yet I had to remind myself throughout the book that this all happened during the same years I too was growing up. I'm really glad I had selected this book for March from the recommendation list.

A reader from Falmouth read *What you are looking for is in the library* by Michiko Aoyama: A gentle and charming book that celebrates the power of connection and the joy of reading.

A reader from Reading read *Ill-fated Fortune* by Jennifer J. Chow: Felicity is Chinese-American and for generations, the women in her family have all had "baking gifts." Felicity recently learned she's able to predict strangers' futures, which she pairs with the fortune cookies she's just learned to bake. Everything goes awry when she predicts a customer's sudden death right outside her pasty shop. She and her best friend decide to solve the murder before Felicity becomes a prime suspect. This cozy mystery was entertaining and I was eager to see how it all came together. 3/5 stars!

A reader from Belchertown read *Us Against You* by Fredrick Backman: Amazing read! While this second book in the Beartown series takes place in a small hockey town in Sweden, the author does an incredible job of writing about what makes people HUMAN. It was the perfect book for this month, as the protagonists (there were so many!) in the book definitely grew up with a different culture and lifestyle than I did, but Backman focuses on core human emotions and experiences that tie every human together and make us all imperfect and normal. I don't

think I've ever felt better after finishing a book than I do after finishing one of Fredrick Backman's. We are Beartown!

A reader from Hull read *The Secret Keeper of Jaipur* by Alka Joshi: Oh this wonderful story! Often I do not like the second book a series as much, but this was not the case. I was captivated by the sights and sounds of India all over again. Revisiting some of the characters felt like having tea with a friend. I highly recommend reading the Henna Artist the first in the series. Happy page turning!

A reader from Sharon read *Anybody out there?* by Marian Keyes: A lady from an Irish family describes her perfect life. One day an accident takes place and she loses her husband. This book describes her coping with grief in a comical yet possible style.

A reader from Chicopee read *This Side of Paradise* by F. Scott Fitzgerald: The book follows the upper class lifestyle of Amory Blaine. From prep school to Princeton to the real world, Amory has experiences with love, work, and society that shape him into the person he is at the end of the story.

A reader from East Falmouth read *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange: This is a (kinda) sequel to Oranges "There, There." I found both books to be beautifully written, engaging and insightful. I am not Native American, but this book provides insight into what I may feel like to be Native.

A reader from Dennisport read *Greek to Me* by Mary Norris: Enjoyed reading this book about all the great wonders about Greek life & culture; from the alphabet to Zeus.

A reader from Winchester read *The Death of Vivek Oji* by Akwaeke Emezi: This book is beautiful. I was transported to Nigeria and followed a very raw story about love and grief layered with LGBTQ+ identity storyline. It was moving and hard to read at points; the end was unexpected and the denouement was complicated. I would highly recommend this novel whose title is not as simple as it seems.

A reader from Hadley read *Warrior Girl Unearthed* by Angeline Boulley: Loved the used of Ojibwemowin throughout the book. Part way through, I also borrowed the audiobook version, to be able to hear the pronunciation.

A reader from Amherst read *Mexikid: a graphic memoir* by Pedro Martin: Outstanding! Martin manages to be heartfelt and hilarious, harrowing and gut-busting funny all in one incredible story. The variety of drawing styles perfectly complement the variety of emotions on this literal wild ride.

A reader from Merrimac read *The Ride of Her Life: The True Story of a Woman, Her Horse, and Their Last-Chance Journey Across America* by Letts, Elizabeth: A true story about a woman who grew up in a time and a place I can not begin to identify with. She started in rural Maine and made her way to California on horseback in the mid-1950's. Along the way, Annie meets a myriad of people who help her complete this journey of a lifetime. Truly amazing!

A reader from Braintree read *Forged by Blood* by Ehigbor Okosun: This fantasy book written by Nigerian UK author Ehigbor Okosun was an enjoyable read, from the world building based on Nigerian mythology to characters that quickly draw the reader in.

A reader from Worcester read *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas: I had been meaning to read this book for a while and am so glad that I did.

A reader from Belchertown read *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei: I read this graphic novel (a collaboration by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker) in one sitting. I grew up hearing stories of my grandfather's experience in World War II, along with the experiences of a few great uncles. I also heard stories of resilience and overcoming of my little town that sent so many of their young men off to war. All of these stories were about people who were white Americans of European descent from a small town nestled in the PA Wilds. Prior to reading this graphic novel, I only had a superficial awareness of what happened to American citizens who looked like those who bombed Pearl Harbor: the Japanese. Reliving the experiences of George Takei, his brother and parents through his childhood lens allowed for a powerful, nuanced and engaging read. I wish every young person and adult would read this book.

A reader from Boston read *Marmee: A Novel* by Sarah Mille: As a big fan of "Little Women" and other Louisa May Alcott books, I was excited to try this. It was a solid read but I'd say more intended for fans of the canon, and maybe not that universal. I really enjoyed seeing some of the events from "Little Women" from a different perspective but it would've been nice to see more of Marmee's back story outside of just the events already encapsulated in the original novel. The way they depicted Beth's death, however, woo, that really hit me! All in all, a clever book and a pretty easy read.

A reader from Derry read *Creep Accusations and Confessions* by Myriam Gurba: Fascinating blend of multigeneration family history coupled with the history of Mexican immigration to the United States. Sprinkling the individual experience tied to historic events even figures of history from Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna to Danny Trejo's experience with Charles Manson. At times like a fever dream John Waters writing. Completely honest and breath taking writing, paints a picture of a life I never have lived, yet now have new found compassion for the vibrant tapestry descendents of Mexico have woven into the American experience.

A reader from Derry read *Nobody Will Tell You About This* by Bess Kalb: An extremely interesting unique narrative of three generations of women, daughter, mother & grandmother. The narrative is a blend of first person between the author the youngest generation and the grandmother, the mother has no narrative voice, we only learn about her the eyes of the others. Not wanting to spoil anything but the grandmother's narration is from a perspective seldom touched upon, which is confusing to the reader until they understand what has transpired. This book is a slice of life across three generations of Jewish women in America, the sacrifices the earlier generations did to create the opportunities for the next in line. Poignant, compassionate a true gift of understanding life I cannot experience.

A reader from webster read *Swimming back to trout river* by Linda Rui Feng: A beautiful and elegantly written book. Feng transported me to a different life and culture. She weaves history,

(family) relationships, love and music together into a compelling story that left me with many things to think about and ponder. Also the end was quite unexpected and shows how life can be very unpredictable.

A reader from Wellfleet read *Horse* by Geraldine Brooks: I'm tempted to write that, having never been a horse myself, the protagonist of this book certainly had a lifestyle and culture quite different indeed from my own. Yet Lexington is only one of the vivid and memorable protagonists in this book. I share little in common with most of them but Geraldine Brooks' considerable skills as a storyteller make clear the humanity we all share and, consequently, the pain and heartache we bring on ourselves when we overlook or choose to ignore all we do have in common.

A reader from Bolton read *Days in the Life of Abed Salama* by Nathan Thrall: Terrifying and heartbreaking- esp in light of the current war.

A reader from Parkland read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: Beautiful story, beautifully written! One of the best novels I've read in years, spanning 3 generations in Southern India and touching your heart with how the love of family transcends time and tragedy. This book and its main characters, "Big Ammachi", Philipose, Mariamma and so many more will stay on my mind and in my heart for a long, long time. Don't let the length of the book intimidate you; it's worth EVERY page!

A reader from Longmeadow read *A Court of Wings and Ruin* by Sarah J. Maas: As I am unfortunately not High Fae, the lifestyle in this book is certainly nothing like my own. I love these characters so much though! I love how much of a badass fighter Feyre is now that she's come into her own!

A reader from Fitchburg read *Meet Josefina* by Valerie Tripp: I used to read the American Girl books as a child and loved them. For the March challenge it was easy for me to think of this series and read a character that wasn't around when I was into these books. In true American Girl style, the books on Josefina transported me to a different time and a different place and held my interest all these years later!

A reader from Rochestrr read *The Golden Gate* by Amy Chua: Thei book was a murder mystery set in San Francisco. The murder of a Vice Presidential candidate launches an investigation that includes family secrets, classism and racial prejudices. The connection of characters and suspects weaves an intriguing tail. A good story well told.

A reader from Rochestrr read *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese: This is an epic chronicle covering 3 generations of a family in India from 1900 to mid 1970s. The family has a peculiar trait in that in each generation there is a relative that drowns. Big Armachi is the main character that is introduced to the reader when she is only 12 years old. She becomes the Matriach and witnesss numerous changes in Indian culture. Medical advances are also woven into the story.

A reader from Bourne read *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman: Interesting read-make a lot more sense when I finished it.I liked how it all connected.

A reader from Southampton read *Daughter of the Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan: I don't know very much about Chinese mythology, but I found this novel to be very engaging. I quite liked the narrator of the audiobook and can't wait to read/listen to the sequel.

A reader from Wrentham read *When Will There Be Good News?* by Kate Atkinson: This book had 4 major characters and all their lives were quite different from my own.

A reader from Melrose read *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche: *Americanah* tells the story of a young Nigerian women who emigrates to the United States and then returns to Nigeria after several years. It also includes, to a lesser extent, the story of her friend who briefly travels to the United Kingdom and then returns to Nigeria. Fascinating view of Nigerian culture and of the experience of being an immigrant. It was also really interesting to see American culture from an outside perspective.

A reader from Ipswich read *The World I Live In* by Helen Keller: Incredible book; a peek into the world of our senses and the enormous gift of Helen Keller's insight into her inner world.

A reader from South Hadley read *Educated* by Tara Westover: This is a searing memoir about a woman who grows up as a child of survivalists with extreme religious views. The author never attends public school but goes to Cambridge and Harvard once she makes it to college. Her family had so many problems that made it very difficult to get out and then stay out. Lots to think about from this one!

A reader from Shrewsbury read *Babel, Or The Necessity of Violence* by R.F. Kuang: I chose this book because the protagonist is Cantonese, and I am Peruvian which definitely felt like a cultural difference. Once I read this work, I realized that we are not so different after all. Our cultures do differ but I felt so connected to the bipoc characters and the difficulties of being in a foreign land. As an immigrant myself, I felt this historical fiction was reflecting of the current times and it mirrored emotions I felt when I first arrived to America. I learned so much from Kuang and I can't wait to keep reading more of her work.

A reader from Arlington read *The Deep Sky* by Yume Kitasei: Really enjoyed this book! Great writing and engaging story. I appreciated the perspective of a Japanese-American immigrant-now-emigrant. Kitasei masterfully mirrors Asuka's internal and external struggles, and her strengths shine through. Five stars!! A really fun read.

A reader from Lowell read *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J Maas: Feyre comes from a poverty stricken background where she has to hunt daily to feed herself and her family. This is the basis for her stubbornness and strength as a character.

A reader from AUBURN read *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier: Beautiful writing about a servant in Vermeer's household. It depicted the endless drudgery of domestic help and the beauty of the village. While reading, i looked up each painting as discussed. What a gem this

book is! It presented how Vermeer was almost poverty stricken supporting his extended family and 11 children. I loved seeing his artistic process aided by his servant and muse.

A reader from Chelsea read *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* by Axie Oh: I think the thing that was the biggest difference for me was the family life. The way the family all cared about each other across so many different generations was really different from what I experienced. I'm not even sure if I would know what my grandfather's name was if it wasn't the same name as my dad and brother. In this book, the different family members reach out to each other, even through death, even when they never met each other in real life. It was very touching. I didn't care for the age difference of the love interest though. And had really hoped to be done with that trope forever. But it seems to be fantasy's favorite trope, paring a teenage girl with an immortal old man. It wasn't inappropriate in anyway in this particular book. But it's a trope I still would rather stop. The imagery was so beautiful. Flying fish and whales and sea dragons!!

A reader from North Dighton read *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles: As far as a book with a protagonist who has a different culture/lifestyle from me, this book for the bull. Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov was part of the Russian aristocracy and had his whole life change with the Russian Revolution. He was used to a life of opulence and excess, living in an estate and indulging in all life had to offer. When it was taken away and he was forced to live in this hotel, he continued to cling to his things until he found it was the people who would change him irrevocably. His lifestyle is incredibly different from mine and has challenges that i can't dream of encountering, but he was character with whom you could easily empathize and understand.

A reader from Ipswich read *Coventry of Water* by Abraham Verghese: This gripping, decades-sweeping novel follows one character from childhood trauma through adulthood, finding true vocation and love after many tribulations.

A reader from Hanover read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah: I chose *The Women for March* because I think it's interesting to view the Vietnam war from the eyes of an American nurse, as I'm a woman from Southeast Asia. Also, U.S. Military culture is something I'm not familiar. So it's cool to learn about that too.

A reader from Seekonk read *summer of the mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall: This book was an incredibly moving retelling of *The Odyssey* with five sisters who overcome fear and failure to bring peace to their family. I'm not Mexican and I enjoyed the mystical, magical culture described in the book. This made an excellent modern retelling of the classic tale.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *Against the Loveless World* by Susan Abulhawa: This was an incredible read about a Palestinian woman who lives in Kuwait, Jordan, and then Palestine and the struggles and triumphs she faces along the way. I read and learned more about certain historical events that were mentioned in the book, which deepened my understanding. Although heartbreaking, this was the best book I've read so far this year.

A reader from Newton read *Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine* by Uché Blackstock: This book has been a very good read for me - I do not identify as black or african american, but I am interested in the medical field (starting med school this fall). Being

able to read about first hand experiences of racism in medicine has been an eye-opening opportunity to understand something that I personally have not experienced. Learning about these topics in school and hearing about inequities is different from reading direct stories and experiences told by Dr. Blackstock. I also particularly liked this prompt as I think it's always important to see from other perspectives - this allows me to personally gain empathy and emotionally connect to understand where other people have come from and persevered through. It leads to less judgement and I think it's an important thing that everyone should do. I will definitely try to read another book next month and in the future that continue to fit this prompt. Typing it here I hope to manifest it, but on my reading list I have now added "Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors" by Sonali Dev :)

A reader from Spencer read *The Horse Tamer* by Walter Farley: As someone who has never owned or ridden a horse, *The Horse Tamer* was a great book for getting a look at the work of taming horses with behavioral issues told through a narrative lens. The characters were compelling, and the conflict between an honest professional and a conman was interesting.

A reader from Watertown read *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt: I thoroughly enjoyed the emotional ride as well as the character development. I texted my sister about the book (thinking about how much I enjoyed Marcellus) and she replied "I loved Marcellus"...

A reader from Danvers read *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters: Thought provoking...is cultural identity a product of nature or nurture?

A reader from Somerville read *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* by Carole Boyce Davies: Claudia Jones' life (as read by Davies) was focused on transnational anti-imperialist, Black feminist solidarity & reclamation of the migrating, subaltern subject outside of the imperial core, so I find the assumption from Mass Book that we're all coming from one "normative" perspective and should read the literature of what is cast as the "other" a little antithetical to her politics (like, doesn't every single protagonist have a different lifestyle or culture than you....because they are in a book....) BUT I digress! I really appreciated the connection between anti-Communist campaign waged by FBI in the 50s/60s and ICE today. It's absolutely horrifying how many people's lives they've collectively destroyed and they should both be abolished!

A reader from Plymouth read *True Biz* by Sara NoviÄž: I knew I wanted to pick a book that focused on Deaf culture. This one did not disappoint, would definitely recommend to others!

A reader from Danville read *brown girl dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson: Written in verse, *Brown Girl Dreaming* tells the story of Jacqueline Woodson as she grows up, experiencing life in the 1960s and beyond. Born in Ohio, raised in both South Carolina and New York, Jacqueline shares her truth as a child of divorce and her experiences with civil rights.

A reader from Rockland read *The Ghosts of Rose Hill* by R.M. Romero: Half-Jewish half-Cuban girl travels to visit her aunt in Prague.

A reader from Foxboro read *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride: Though it took me a few chapters before I got into the story, I really enjoyed how in the end everything came full circle. Also loved Dodo and Monkey Pants's friendship.

A reader from Tewksbury read *Almost Surely Dead* by Amina Akhtar: Started out as a decent mystery with some new characters and solid back-story development for the main character, but became convoluted and unbelievable by the end.

A reader from Uxbridge read *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi: Loved this book. Felt connected to the characters even though they were in much different circumstances.

A reader from Webster read *Age of Iron* by J.M. Coetzee: Set in Apartheid South Africa, the protagonist is a white woman dying of cancer who finds herself immersed in the lives of a homeless man and her housekeeper and her housekeeper's family and acquaintances. Truths about apartheid become clearer, as is told to her daughter throughout the book.

A reader from Grafton read *The Bride Test* by Helen Hoang: This book follows the love story of an autistic Vietnamese-American man and immigrant Vietnamese single mom - two main characters with many cultural and lifestyle differences from my own.

A reader from Berkley read *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison: Some tough subject matter but a good read.

A reader from Boston read *We Hunt the Flame* by Hafsah Faizal: Even though this book is a fantasy book it is heavily inspired by Arabian culture and history. I really enjoyed this book. The writing was absolutely beautiful and had some lines that just had me floored. I loved the complex characters and their intricate relationships with each other. I also really enjoyed the world building, though I feel like I would have understood or appreciated it more if I knew more about Arabian culture. I would recommend this book for people who like a slow burn enemies to lovers but are sick of reading the same kind of world building in many popular fantasy books.

A reader from Shrewsbury read *Infinite Country* by Patricia Engel: Infinite Country follows the members of a family from Colombia as they navigate life in the United States, separating and reuniting as circumstances allow.

A reader from Salem read *My Dress-Up Darling Vol. 10* by Shinichi Fukuda: This manga series follows the story of a young Japanese man in high school, Gojou, who is a loner and finds himself unable to really make friends or socialize due to his timid nature and old fashioned interests. He works with his grandfather in their family shop making traditional Japanese hina dolls, which is an involved and delicate process, but Gojou loves it and wants to become a master painter of hina faces. He is able to break out of his shell and expand his interests thanks to the help of classmate Kitagawa, who asks Gojou's help in making cosplay costumes for her, and the two's friendship begins to grow into something more along the way. It's a cute and interesting series about accepting yourself and doing what you love while also helping others achieve their goals, which in turn could help you grow too, which is a wonderful universal

message regardless of the very different cultural experiences and lifestyles between these characters and myself.

A reader from Danvers read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: Definitely not in my usual wheel house, but enjoyable nonetheless.

A reader from Charlton read *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe: This book provides insight into African culture and conflict with western missionaries. The protagonist Okonkwo fights back, demonstrating that he and his people do not need to be saved, that his traditions and culture are the equal of any other.

A reader from Danvers read *Ilium* by Lea Carpenter: The life of unexpected espionage and subsequent love are both a universe away from my lifestyle and culture. Undeniably hard to put down. Entertaining and thought provoking.

A reader from West Boylston read *Give Me a Sign* by Anna Sortino: I learned so much about Deaf culture from this book! I first noticed it displayed during Valentine's Day in the young adult section and was not disappointed! The author organically integrated ASL lessons and the insight of a Deaf teenager into a fun summer read.

A reader from Hanson read *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin: Really enjoyed this! First piece of fiction by Baldwin I've read.

A reader from Somerville read *Bridgerton Series* by Julia Quinn: While on one hand, I would love the idea of a dating season because it would cut down on the pain of dating apps, every time I read about a 28 year old being labeled as a spinster I died a little inside.

A reader from hudson read *Wahala* by Nikki May: This book/audiobook is about the close friendship of 3 women in England who are British/African. When a 4th woman "joins" the group, trouble ensues and the book is quite suspenseful.

A reader from Amesbury read *Educated* by Tara Westover: This book gives the point of view of someone who was raised in a home with much different views and values than I was. It provided insight into a world I haven't experienced before. Even still the main character's struggle to become the person she wants to be and break away from the ideals that she doesn't agree with. That is what makes this book relatable whether they grew up in a similar environment as the author or not.

A reader from Sharon read *The Fortunes of Jaded women* by carolyn Huynh: I loved the development of the characters throughout the novel and enjoyed learning about the culture and issues facing Asian American women. The author accomplishes this with humor but still tugs on the heart strings. I lived in CA for many years so it was nice to be able picture the landmarks mentioned in the book.

A reader from Weymouth read *The Viscount Who Loved Me* by Julia Quinn: I also read Romancing Mr. Bridgerton and am halfway through To Sir Phillip, With Love. Regency era

London is certainly a different culture than now, 200 years later, and after watching the TV show, I'm very invested in Julia Quinn's characters and find the differences between the book and show very interesting, and often better in the book!

A reader from Danvers read *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz: Sweet and beautiful love story about two Mexican American teens. While the love story was great, the exploration of Mexican identity was interesting to listen to. One character comes from a poorer background and has darker skin while the other is lighter skinned and from a wealthier background. Ari and Dante have many discussions and fights about these differences. It's also obvious how these intersections impact their coming out journey and eventual love story. Coming from somebody with a white background it was great to get this different perspective.

A reader from Charlton read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: I really liked this book, the story was so well told, and I felt close to the characters, particularly Damon. This gave me a completely new outlook on growing up. I was about the same age as Damon was throughout the story, I experienced that time frame and the beginning of the opiate crisis in a much more detached way. I have much more compassion around addiction.

A reader from Quincy read *Washington's Gay General* by Josh Trujillo: If you are looking for an in depth history book, I would recommend looking elsewhere. However, if you are looking for a sincere, well-spoken book on LGBT history told through the framing narrative of a larger than life Revolutionary general, I would definitely recommend it.

A reader from Westport read *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri: These short stories were very enjoyable. I liked that they took place in Boston. A lot of them dealt with characters who were Indian immigrants which was interesting to read about their experiences.

A reader from Pepperell read *Night* by Elie Wiesel: I read this memoir in my AP Language and Composition class. *Night* was incredibly heartbreaking, showcasing the reality of the Holocaust through the perspective of a young religious Jewish boy. The memoir was eye-opening, and I recommend it to those seeking a deeper understanding of the tragic Holocaust experiences.

A reader from Middleboro read *Educated* by Tara Westover: I'm enjoying it so far!

A reader from Worcester read *Lightseekers* by Femi Kayode: Loved the fast pace of this debut thriller!

A reader from Holden read *I Take My Coffee Black* by Tyler Merritt: Merritt's account of growing up black in Las Vegas as first a "theatre kid" and eventually also a "church kid" in the 80s and 90s was funny and emotional and eye-opening. I enjoyed his conversational writing style and his lack of pretense. It definitely was both familiar to me (since we are of a similar age) and enlightening (since our experiences of targeted racism have been very different- I'm a white woman). In the end, Merritt's message is that "proximity breeds understanding and acceptance" - if we are never in the presence of different people we will never know how ALIKE we actually are.

A reader from TEWKSBURY read *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith: Enjoyable story, relatable main character. A bit disjointed between chapters.

A reader from Stanford read *The Open Door* by Laurinda C. Andrade: The author was a lone teen- age Portuguese immigrant who emigrated to the United States in 1917. It is a true story of her struggles, experiences in achieving her goal. She became a high school teacher and the head of a foreign language department.

A reader from PEPPERELL read *The Selection* by Kiera Cass: Living in a world post-WW4, families live and work based on their level in the caste. A competition of 35 girls to become the next to be married to the royal family also gives them an opportunity to rise from their current level to a Level One. The battle for this spot is on! This was a great guilty pleasure read for me! It had the feel of the Bachelor but royal family edition with a mix of civil unrest. There are five books in the series and I HAD to read them all to see where the saga went ... totally binge-worthy. While the first three were the best of the five, all were good and I would recommend this series.

A reader from Salem read *Huda F Are You* by Huda Fahmy: I really enjoyed this book. I really liked the authenticity of the author's voice and story. This story is one that any teenager can relate to, even if they are not Muslim.

A reader from Cambridge read *Akata Witch* by Nnedi" Okorafor: I loved learning about Nigerian culture. Very accessible book.

A reader from Falmouth read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: What an amazing book. I loved Demon from the moment he was born. A story of being poor in America and a reminder that our own big pharma and doctors created the opioid crisis. Such a tragedy. The big heart and perseverance of this character kept me turning the pages.

A reader from Medford read *A Murder of Crows* by Sarah Yarwood-Lovett: ecology consultant, peer of the realm, closed off - she's me in the mirror verse.

A reader from Tewksbury read *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson: This memoir was incredible!

A reader from South Hadley read *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands* by Kate Beaton: Phenomenal, nuanced and kind but not pulling-any-punches insight into working in the Alberta oil sands.

A reader from Lynn read *Dork Diaries 15 - Tales from a not so posh Paris Adventure* by Renee Russell: This is a girl in a band, who gets to go to Paris to perform. I've never been to Paris, nor have I been in a band and I wish I got to do both.

A reader from Brookline read *the Likeness* by Tana French: Cassie Maddox has a lifestyle I enjoy reading about but would NOT want to actually live. This was a suspenseful and really well written book!

A reader from West Yarmouth read *The Waters* by Bonnie Jo Campbell: So interesting on so many levels!

A reader read *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald: I actually never read the Great Gatsby and was encouraged to do so by my daughters. I liked the book and see why it's a classic. I thought it worked for the March theme as the character of Daisy is quite different from me. I am not a 1%er nor am I a sociopath.

A reader from Amherst read *The Other Eden* by Paul Harding: I enjoyed this book, based on a true story. It was heartbreaking to see what happened to the small group of biracial and multi-racial people who lived on a small island off the Maine coast. Harding expertly portrays the racism of the white mainlanders.

A reader from Spencer read *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris: This one was in my to read pile for some time. The story was interesting and easy to read.

A reader from Danvers read *The Club Dumas* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte: Great read! I loved the intrigue and I learned a ton about Alexandre Dumas.

A reader from Milton read *Dixon, Descending* by Karen Outen: Was planning to read Heaven and Earth Grocery Store for my March book but then decide to read this instead. Enjoyed this book - interesting to see how the protagonist changed.

A reader from Boston read *The Journey of Crazy Horse* by Joseph M Marshall III: I picked up Marshall's book a few summers ago at the NPS bookshop at Grand Teton National Park. A nonfiction history, that was a great history that I combined with books by Tommy Orange and Louise Erdrich novels. I've spent the last few years looking for books written by indigenous authors after reading an history of the Plymouth colony that felt wrong.

A reader from Dartmouth read *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah: I got insight into a culture and country quite different than my own.

A reader from Harwich read *Hell Followed With Us* by Andrew Joseph White: Great read! I didn't know what was going to happen next.

A reader from Newton read *The Tusks of Extinction* by Ray Nayler: This book featured such an exciting and unique plot. I was very interested in reading about Dr. Damira's character and how humans would adapt to climate change in a dystopian setting. The book was fast-paced and the climactic ending read like a thriller.

A reader from North Easton read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah: I wasn't sure at first if this book would qualify as being about another culture, but so much of it takes place in Vietnam, and I really got a sense of place from reading this story and what it must have been like to be there.

A reader from Tewksbury read *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker: I chose this book to read last month as my third entry, since it was black history month, had a color in the title and I was going

to see the new movie. The movie did not follow the time line of the book and was very disappointing in many other respects. I am a white woman from the North so this also qualifies as a book for March. It is the story of two sisters and the abusive men in their lives and the love between them. The story was well written and better than either of the movies, I especially liked the format as first letters to Goad and then letters between the female characters. It was a good read and also knocked a book off the banned books list of books I wanted to read.

A reader from Tewksbury read *The Soul of a Woman* by Isabel Allende: Since it was Woman's History Month I decided to choose a book of the display at the local library. It was a memoir of Isabel and her feminist Journey. It was a good book and I learned some about the Latin America and their culture. Although she moved to California later in life, she spent her early years growing up in her grandfathers' home and his paternalistic attitudes. I related to it more than I thought I would.

A reader from Allston read *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan: This book was picked by another book club member for this month's book and it tied in beautifully with "a protagonist with a different culture than you". Honestly do not think I would have picked it up even if it is a modern classic that everyone says you should read! Definitely pushed me out of my comfy reading zone!

A reader from MILLERS FALLS read *Pashmina* by Nidhi Chanani: I'm still getting used to graphic novels so this was such an interesting read for me.

A reader from Dartmouth read *The Women* by Kristin Hannah: Kristin Hannah did it again! *The Women* was a fantastic historical fiction novel about women serving as nurses in the Vietnam war and their transition to home after their service. The book brought about good and sad moments through friendship, love, loss and heartache. The book gave me perspective of the time period I've heard a lot about but through the eyes of the women who are barely ever mentioned in our history books. I definitely recommend this book, especially to other women.

A reader from Brockton read *Wrong Place Wrong Time* by Gillian McAllister: Quick suspenseful read! would recommend.

A reader from Greenfield read *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri: I purchased this book years ago after reading and loving Lahiri's short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*. Since then, it sadly just sort of collected dust on my shelves for a very long time. I'm very glad to have dusted it off and finally read it for this challenge!

A reader from Salem read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald: Preparing for the upcoming musical at the ART!

A reader from Groton read *Dairy of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank: This book was just as haunting as when I read it 25 years ago. It is unimaginable what happened to that young girl.

A reader from Somerville read *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange: Tommy Orange is an incredible author and I loved his novel *There There* so I was excited to go out and get a copy of his new novel. *Wandering Stars* reminds me in a way of *Blackouts* by Justin Torres, which I read

earlier this year, in the sense that it contends with history's presence in people's daily lives. It is a beautiful book.

A reader from Beverly Hills read *Scorched Grace* by Margot Douaihy: A black, heavily tattooed, cigarette smoking, drug using, lesbian nun is hugely different from me. An interesting whodunit that takes place in Louisiana and Sister Holiday needs to solve it. The book brings up many of life's problems that I, being a white heterosexual woman would rarely if ever face. (Thank goodness.)

A reader from West Hartford read *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett: A young girl, with no aspirations to be an actress transitions from Laura to Lara. From New Hampshire to LA, from Tom Lake to the Cherry Farms of Michigan, an actress plays out the most important roles of her life. A mother like me, but so different in her parenting and her marriage from who I am. A wonderful read. Daring in its honesty.

A reader from Boston read *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros: Fun read that got me back into reading since high school! I really enjoyed the plot, suspense, and romance!

A reader from Whitinsville read *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure* by Eli Clare: Eli's experiences with the medical industrial complex as a disabled trans person were so enlightening and important.

A reader from Amherst read *The Traitor* by Ava Glass: *The Traitor* by Ava Glass is a good fit for readers who enjoy fast-paced, thrilling stories about a capable female spy navigating the dangerous world of espionage and uncovering intriguing secrets.

A reader from Boston read *The First Ladies* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray: Very lovely story about Eleanor Roosevelt and the friendship she developed with Mary McLeod Bethune. As First Lady Eleanor and Mary, who was a leading civil rights advocate in her day become passionate about woman having a strong voice in government and the civil rights causes of the day.

A reader from Woods Hole read *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride: The book fulfilled the challenge. Its unlikely I will read another book by the author.

A reader from Dracut read *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas: This was a really good read. It has been on my TBR list for awhile, so this month's challenge was a perfect time to get it read.

A reader from West Roxbury read *Fake Dates and Mooncakes* by Sher Lee: I had a great time reading this book about a Chinese-American teen growing up in Brooklyn, NY.

A reader from Greenfield read *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte: I read this book once as a teen and rereading it was a much different experience. Not a likeable character in the bunch, and I think the housekeeper that relays most of the narrative significantly underestimates how much her interference affected the events that transpired.

A reader from Plainville read *Class* by Stephanie Land: I really loved *Maid* and was excited to see Stephanie Land had put out this sequel. Her writing style paints such a vivid picture of her life and even the every day activities she writes about (compounded the poverty she experienced and being a single mother) had me filling every spare minute I had reading. I look forward to reading whatever she publishes next.

A reader from Norton read *Dust Child* by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai: Another fascinating book group read--can't wait to discuss.

A reader from Northbridge read *When Heaven Weeps* by Ted Dekker: Jan Jovic a Bosnian soldier and x war criminal becomes a famous author and prominent religious icon in the US. His personal journey of spiritual warfare transcends heaven and earth and meets the reader with a deeper love that man is challenged to define.

A reader from Natick read *Cleopatra's Daughter: From Roman Prisoner to Egyptian Queen* by Jane Draycott: A biography of Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Cleopatra and Mark Antony. She was an ancient African queen, which couldn't be further from my culture. I really enjoyed learning about this relatively unknown woman.

A reader from danvers read *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank: Anne Frank's lifestyle during the Holocaust was vastly different from life as a Jew today. She lived in constant fear of persecution and had to hide to avoid being captured by the Nazis. Anne's daily life was confined to a small hiding place, unable to go outside or live freely like most people. In contrast, as a Jew today, I have the freedom to openly practice my religion, go to school or work, and live without the constant threat of persecution. I can openly express my identity without fear of discrimination or violence, a privilege denied to Anne and many others during her time.

A reader from Rockland read *Airplane Mode* by Shahnaz Habib: There are so many lovely stories about her travels. There were also many eye-opening moments.

A reader from Weymouth read *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt: McCourt treats such series subjects with humor and grace making what could have been a very heavy memoir, a little easier on the reader.

A reader from Hampden read *Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles: This is one of my alltime favorite books!

A reader from Springfield read *Apple: Skin to the Core* by Eric Gainsworth: Heartbreaking story told as a long running poem about a young Onondaga man dealing with oppression and the residential school system designed to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man."

A reader from Worcester read *There, There & Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange: I had the privilege of reading both "There, There" and "Wandering Stars" by Tommy Orange, back to back in March. Both novels have very bleak moments depicting the oppression in the lives of Native people across multiple generations, but at their core my personal takeaway was that these were survivor stories. The people persevered and carried on, keeping their culture alive. Orange's well-

crafted and layered characters, along with his rich stories and storytelling really made both of these books three-dimensional experiences without ever losing messages and themes.

A reader from East Bridgewater read *The Maid* by Nita Prose: This is a light-hearted book, about a young woman who works as a maid in an 'exclusive' hotel. She loves to clean, and keep things shiny and immaculate. She innocently gets used by criminals and gets accused of murder. She falls for handsome men who have no interest in her. However, by the end of the book, she is less innocent, less gullible, and certainly more experienced. But she still LOVES to clean and values it more highly than so many other activities. At least there is a possibility she may try to go to school by the end, but that may change the series. I'd like to see her character 'advance' but her peculiar voice is quite funny. (Needless to say, she is VERY different than me.)

A reader from Roslindale read *Notes from a young black chef* by Kwame Onwuachi: Wonderful, interesting read on the author's intersecting identities.

A reader from Middleboro read *Mashpee Nine* by Paula Peters: Even being from Massachusetts, I've never heard of this confrontation between Indigenous people and the police. I think this should be required reading.

A reader from Hopkinton read *where coyotes howl* by Sandra Dallas: I loved this story about a woman living in early times on the plains.

A reader from Moorestown read *Deep in Providence* by Riss M. Neilson: Deep in Providence features the setting and culture of Providence, Rhode Island where the characters are from as well as Filipino, Latino, African American, Mixed Race heritages. The characters include Catholic as well as practicing magic and mysticism. Not just on this level but as teen girls they each have varying experiences than my own. Despite it all, love still connecting and finding similarities too.

A reader from Bolton read *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* by Lisa See: Great book!

A reader from TEWKSBURY read *Listen, slowly* by Thanhha Lai: I enjoyed learning about vietnam from an vietnam american who was experiencing Vietnam for the 1st time.

A reader from Beverly read *Things You Can Do, How to Fight Climate Change* by Eduardo Garcia: Easy to read. Has all the basics.

A reader from Beverly read *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey: Interesting read about the forest service.

A reader from Hampden read *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi: I have a few Islamic friends, so seeing sides of their history and culture that I hadn't before has been wonderful.

A reader from Rockland read *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor: This book was a quick read about someone who had a completely different lifestyle than mine - she was from another planet! I enjoyed this story and look forward to reading more of Okorafor's book.

A reader from Lynnfield read *A Long Walk to Water* by Park, Linda Sue: Good read about the struggles living in Sudan.

A reader from Northampton read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver: A compelling novel of Appalachia even if you haven't read David Copperfield - but extra-fun if you have, to pick up on all the references.

A reader from Beverly read *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon: Riveting! Even though I'm a New Englander born and raised, I didn't live under the restrictions of the 1700s nor would I have considered being a midwife. This fictionalized account based on the diary of Martha Ballard was hard to put down and led me to a PBS documentary titled "A Midwife's Tale" as well as a Pulitzer Prize winning NF book "The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812" ... a triple treat!

A reader from Quincy read *Black Leopard Red Wolf* by Marlon James: Science fiction, Fantasy, Myth is so far out of my realm that I couldn't get past chapter 4...and didn't want to.

A reader from Boston read *How We Live is How We Die* by Pema Chodron: This author has a very different culture from my own. She is Buddhist and I am a Christian. This book was recommended to me by my Grandmother and was the last book she finished before her unexpected and quick death. I knew it was necessary for me to read and it showed me how important it is to listen to one another. We don't need to agree on everything but we need to continue to listen and honor everyone who walks in our door, even a book. There is far more that we have in common than what separates us.

A reader from OXFORD read *The Smoke of One Thousand Lodge Fires* by Steven G.Hightower: This is modern day tale of the old West and the journey of a tribe of Comanche .It was interesting right from the beginning. Time travel, history and romance all in one novel. Well written and makes you feel and think. Highly recommend.

A reader from Pawtucket read *Beloved* by Toni Morrison: What a story! Of time, history, memory, and survival in community and with the help of each other. The beginning is gripping, starting with a place, a house, and the people who lived there. Their present and past is parceled out in bits that need to be read and reread. I made a family tree with lines of connection that I had to rewrite twice. Words and phrases sometimes have double and triple meanings. Common objects like a butter churn and a headstone are more than what they seem. When the main character Sethe tells a visitor, "I just hope you'll pardon my house," she's not talking about her housekeeping. The story has its own vocabulary, too, with talk of "disremembering" and "rememory." A person walking down the road is described as a "whitewoman." A cruel man from the past is called only "schoolteacher," not dignified by a name. Beautiful descriptions of the natural world; the characters notice the beauty even as one tries not to feel and another not to think. One loses her hearing for a long time; another, her sense of color. But "the sky was personal, weak with the weight of its own stars," and the sound of the "soughing trees" accompanies Sethe's memory of the place she ran away from to freedom. And Paul D arrives and shakes up the place (literally), with his "blessed manner" with women and "Wouldn't you know

he'd be a singing man." You know there will be some ease and happiness in their lives, once they let go of one presence from the past, but it was a wrench to close the book. I will be rereading it for sure.

A reader from Belchertown read *Strange Practice* by Vivian Shaw: Fun read!

A reader from Berkley read *The Thread Collectors* by Shaunna J. Edwards: Not my usual read but I liked it!

A reader from Wakefield read *Dearborn* by Ghassan Zeineddine: This book was absolutely wonderful, and not at all what I was expecting. A collection of stories about Lebanese Americans in the close-knit community of Dearborn, Michigan, each tale showed me new facets of the immigrant experience in America. It was written with such care, courage, and nuance that I was enthralled the entire read.

A reader from North Easton read *song of a captive bird* by jasmin darznik: Beautiful historical fiction on Iranian poet Forugh Farrokhzad. The things women have to endure just because she was a poet and labeled mad. The shame she endured and being put away plus the electroshock therapy. Reading this has made me want to get the poetry books but Forugh and also hopefully watch something on her. Beautiful story.

A reader from Whitman read *Chef's Kiss* by TJ Alexander: Fun romance with a nonbinary main character set in a world of cooking and baking. Great characters, slow burn and social consciousness, I enjoyed it all!

A reader from Leominster read *Butcher & Blackbird* by Brynne Weaver: Is it wrong to say you love a book with serial killers, questionable ice cream (I'll still eat cookies and cream BTW), and lots of steamy scenes? Cause if that's wrong, I don't want to be right. If you loved the show Dexter and steamy dark romances, this one's for you. It's absolutely not for everyone, read the content warnings at the beginning please!

A reader from Charlton read *The Storm We Made* by Vanessa Chan: This is a historical fiction about the invasion of Malaya by Japan. The main character is a woman who is deceived by a Japanese man. She gives him information that leads to the invasion. The story is about her, the impacts on her family. Well written story.

A reader from Attleboro read *Typical American* by Gish Jen: This immigrant story is beautifully written, telling of a young man coming to America to study engineering. He settles, marries, welcomes his sister and proceeds to fulfill the American Dream. The writing is witty and colorful as the family figures their way in a new country facing challenges and tragedy.

A reader from Somerville read *A Heart That Works* by Rob Delaney: A memoir told by a father about the progression of his young son's illness, hospital experiences, and passing.

A reader from Springfield read *Pageboy* by Elliot Page: eye opener on transgender issues and the struggles.

A reader from Spencer read *The Women* by Kristen Hannah: I truly enjoyed this book and felt totally invested in the story from the first chapter. There was some eye opening information in there! I would highly recommend this book, especially to people who had family serving in Vietnam.

A reader from Milton read *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan: Since I am not crazy, rich or Asian I thought this book fit perfectly for a protagonist whose culture and lifestyle were very different from mine. A fun read but I also learned a great deal about Singapore and Chinese culture, Do not watch the movie and think you know the book, they are very different! Book is better by far.

A reader from Methuen read *China Dolls* by Lisa See: *China Dolls* begins in 1938 in San Francisco. Locally: The World's Fair. Globally: Japanese-Chinese conflict rages. The novel's real *China Dolls* meet and become friends while entertaining at the Forbidden Nightclub, part of an all Chinese cast. Grace Lee (American-born Chinese, talented dancer, running from her abusive father); Helen Wong (living a sheltered life in her family's compound, survived brutal loss when living in China); and Ruby Tom (scarily ambitious, unconventional, and actually Japanese). Is this the beginning of a wonderful friendship? Now, add the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, sudden and mostly uncalled for distrust of Japanese Americans, internment camps, lies, and betrayal of friendship secrets. Will the friendships survive? You will need to read the novel to find out! I have read several Lisa See novels. She is excellent at creating characters who seem real enough to join for lunch and conversation. It must not have been easy living in San Francisco in the early 1940's. We know what the history books tell us, but that tends to leave out how "just your regular citizens" fared. This is the center of this novel and the center of what happens to friendships.