

Book Club Update: 8/2020

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 1st 7:00 pm

Books: "When We Believed in Mermaids"

When We Believed in Mermaids (Kit arrives in New Zealand, journey of memories to deal with hard events) and "The Murmur of Bees"(Murmur of Bees (Set against the backdrop of the Mexican Revolution and the devastating influenza of 1918)

Zoom link will follow with a reminder as we get closer to the date.

Everyone is welcome to join whether you read the book or not, but we do discuss the book as well as topics the book inspires. Have you read other titles? Please share with us!! We love hearing what everyone is reading and where you find the books! Bring your own drinks and snacks to the Zoom meeting and join us!! Email me with questions!

Summary:

On Thursday, August 7, 2020, Book Club members met virtually to discuss Kate Quinn's "The Huntress" and Rhys Bowen's "The Tuscan Child." These WWII books provided very different stories that kept our interest and inspired interesting conversation.

We previously read Kate Quinn's "The Alice Network," another WWII novel that we enjoyed. In "The Huntress," Quinn again creates a layered story with vivid characters whose stories unfold with shifting time periods in the narrative. Set in the 1950s in Boston, the novel flashes back to the 1930s to illustrate the events that bring the characters to culminating events. Fearless Nina Markova after a painful childhood in Siberia risks everything to join the legendary Night Witches, an all-female night bomber regiment wreaking havoc on invading Germans. Nina's bravery and cunning will keep her alive in her confrontation with "the huntress."

Transformed by the horrors he witnessed from Omaha Beach to the Nuremberg Trials, British war correspondent turned Nazi hunter Ian Graham joins forces with the only witness to escape the Huntress alive: Nina. But a shared secret could derail their mission unless Ian and Nina force themselves to confront it.

Growing up in post-war Boston, seventeen-year-old Jordan McBride is determined to become a photographer. When her long-widowed father remarries, Jordan is thrilled but curious about the soft-spoken German widow who steals her father's heart. Always an investigative photographer, Jordan uncovers her new stepmother's past to discover secrets.

We enjoyed discussing the narrative style, vivid characters whose struggles were painted with great detail, and information about the Russian female pilots. We also found it fascinating how the novel took place in Boston but took readers to other places through flashbacks. We all found it to be a page turner.

The book earned mostly 1's and 1.5's on the rating scale of 1-5: 1 being "drop everything, turn off the phone, and read; " 2 being "good but leave the phone on"; 3 being "glad I bought it and read it but...."; 4 being "wish I had not bought it and would not recommend it to others"; and 5 being "wish I had not read it."

We also enjoyed "The Tuscan Child," another WWII novel with flashback narration to tell the story of rich characters.

In 1944, British bomber pilot Hugo Langley parachuted from his stricken plane into the fields of German-occupied Tuscany where he hid in a damaged monastery and in the arms of Sofia Bartoli. They have a relationship amidst the danger of German occupation.

Nearly thirty years later, Hugo's estranged daughter Joanna discovers an unopened letter addressed to Sofia that reveals this story Joanna had not known. Still dealing with the emotional wounds of her own personal trauma, Joanna travels to Tuscany to investigate.

Through documents and letters Joanna finds an exciting story telling, Rhys Bowen entices readers to explore a love story, struggle amidst war and danger, the influence and power of art (the Tuscan Child), and mystery. We reflected on the many WWII novels we have read, individually and as a book club, and agreed that we have many engaging books. The two we read for tonight were two of the most compelling and engaging narrative styles.

Therefore, this novel earned mostly 1's and 1.5's on the rating scale of 1-5: 1 being "drop everything, turn off the phone, and read; " 2 being "good but leave the phone on"; 3 being "glad I bought it and read it but...."; 4 being "wish I had not bought it and would not recommend it to others"; and 5 being "wish I had not read it."

What other titles are our book club members exploring ?

The German Girl (WWII set in Cuba)

The Rosie Project (funny, delightful first person narration)

Finding Chicka (Gladwell's compelling story of a Haitian orphan)

Carnegie's Maid (Irish immigrant lands a job with the Carnegie family)

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn (classic throwback)

Beneath a Scarlet Sky (WWII set in Italy)

The Dutch House (Ann Patchet story set in Philadelphia; purchase of an estate sets a chain of events in motion)

Glass Hotel (ponzi scheme is center of action for main characters)

Force of Nature (Jane Harper, mystery in Australia)

Into the Wilderness (Late 1700s story follows Englishwoman and an American frontiersman)

Wine Maker's Wife (Set in 1940 Champagne, characters involved with the resistance)

The Couple Next Door (psychological thriller)

Thirteen Reasons Why (reflective, eulogy, inspired a Netflix series)

This is How it Always Is (family with transgender child)

Dressmaker's Gift (Fiona Valpy, WWII)

Behind Closed Doors (B.A. Paris, psychological thriller)

Bookshop on a Corner (Scottish bookshop series)

Midnight at the Black Bird Cafe (Anna Kate Callow returns to Wicklow, Alabama and revisits past)