

SoCo Book Club Resources

David Joy's *Those We Thought We Knew*

About *Those We Thought We Knew*

Winner of the 2023 Willie Morris Award for Southern Fiction

Winner of the 2023 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award

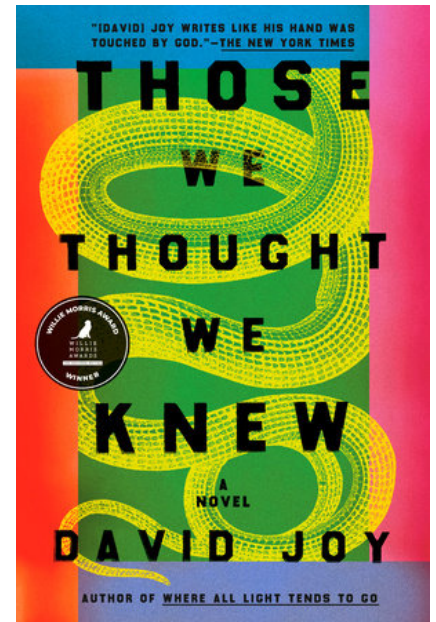
Winner of the 2024 Sir Walter Raleigh Award

From award-winning writer David Joy comes a searing new novel about the cracks that form in a small North Carolina community and the evils that unfurl from its center.

Toya Gardner, a young Black artist from Atlanta, has returned to her ancestral home in the North Carolina mountains to trace her family history and complete her graduate thesis. But when she encounters a still-standing Confederate monument in the heart of town, she sets her sights on something bigger.

Meanwhile, local deputies find a man sleeping in the back of a station wagon and believe him to be nothing more than some slack-jawed drifter. Yet a search of the man's vehicle reveals that he is a high-ranking member of the Klan, and the uncovering of a notebook filled with local names threatens to turn the mountain on end.

After two horrific crimes split the county apart, every soul must wrestle with deep and unspoken secrets that stretch back for generations. *Those We Thought We Knew* is an urgent unraveling of the dark underbelly of a community. Richly drawn and bracingly honest, it asks what happens when the people you've always known turn out to be monsters, what do you do when everything you ever believed crumbles away?



Please use this Google Doc to introduce yourself however you'd like. You can tell us how you're connected to the Institute for Social Concerns, what you like about book clubs, what you think of this book, what else you like to do for work or fun, etc. We don't have much time together so this will help us expedite introductions. If you have previously shared a bio, we have included it below.

INTRODUCTIONS

Connie Mick — Co-host (she/her)

I've been on the faculty at Notre Dame for 24 years. I am currently the Director of Academic Affairs and Director of the Poverty Studies Interdisciplinary Minor at the Institute for Social Concerns where I teach the core courses and a special course on writing for social change. At one point I taught the Appalachia seminar through the CSC. I taught an Inside-Out course with Notre Dame students and incarcerated students at Westville Correctional Institution for the first time Spring 2024--it was one of the most profound teaching and learning experiences of my life,. I am in two other book/film clubs, but this is the first one I've led. (Yikes! Exciting!) I have two daughters--one is 19 and one is 22. My husband passed away suddenly on August 8, 2021 and I've found reading by myself or in groups to be a great comfort. I am excited to share this space with all of you. You can contact me at cmick@nd.edu.

Haley Beaupre — Co-host (she/her)

Hi, all! I graduated from Notre Dame in 2010 with a major in Economics and a minor in PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics), and was involved with the CSC primarily through the Appalachia Seminar Task Force and other CSC leadership and assistant roles. I grew up in Minnesota and moved to the mountains of Western North Carolina after a decade in Charlotte. I fell in love with Appalachia initially through the seminar, and now officially live in it! I play old time music (traditional mountain music), primarily on banjo and guitar, and enjoy experiencing the mountains here on foot, bike, and motorcycle, or through fly fishing. I worked in banking in Charlotte but have since left the corporate world and am an independent consultant, primarily for DEI initiatives and through designing, administering, and analyzing belonging surveys. I've really enjoyed this book club so far and am looking forward to meeting new folks!

I live one county over from where *Those We Thought We Knew* takes place (and my boyfriend grew up here) and know many of the places mentioned in it or have experienced some version of many of the events in it. Can't wait to hear others' thoughts on the book!

Adrienne Carmack

I was in the class of 85- came to ND from Long Island, NY -initially majored in aeronautical engineering- for one semester. I lived in Lyons Hall. I was not really sure what I wanted to do, and my younger sister passed away from Cystic Fibrosis the summer between my junior and senior year. . I did an Urban Plunge in the Bronx during one of my Christmas breaks. I majored in Math, but not really sure what I would do with that. In the spring of senior year, I saw a pamphlet on a rack in the hall of what is now the CSC and read about a small Catholic school on the edge of the Jicarilla Apache reservation in northern NM looking for volunteer teachers,, so I decided to head there for a year. From there I made the decision to go back to school to get the pre-med requirements - and graduated from Columbia medical school in 1992. I met my husband in my class and he had an Air Force commitment, so we moved to San Antonio for our residencies- with our new baby, We lived in San Antonio for 7 years, and then moved a few times in the military with his training. After our 4th child was born, due to all the moves, and my mother's health back in NY, I decided to stay home with our kids. We moved to Detroit where our 5th child was born, and then to Houston and Baltimore. While in Baltimore we decided to adopt our 6th child- and after much research and prayers we adopted Allie from Guatemala. Our daughter came home in 2005, right before we moved to Maine, for my husband's first job out of the military. Once we got settled here in Maine, I wanted to get back to practicing pediatrics - and specifically helping families who had adopted, as we experienced many challenges navigating the health system with her needs, and especially her behavioral and mental health needs. I started working at a Federally qualified Health center here in Maine, and learned more and more about the needs of children in foster care. I helped to create a clinic that does comprehensive health evaluations for youth entering foster care. As more and more families were affected by substance use we also created a clinic for infants born exposed to opioids and helped their families to get connected to resources. I have become very involved with the national AAP council that helps pediatricians who care for adopted and foster children. In 2020 I began a new job working for our state child welfare system- I am the Medical Director of the Office of Child and Family Services for the Maine DHHS. I still work one day per week at the FQHC here in Bangor seeing patients, and then the other 4 days at my job at the state.

Two of our children graduated from Notre Dame, one in 2014, one in 2017.

One of our daughters is gay and recently married her partner- they both graduated from Colby College. My husband and I are involved in a statewide ministry here in Maine, hoping to help our Catholic church to be more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community, and when I heard about ARC ND, i decided to become involved in that, as an Ally, and from that I have become more involved in the Maine Club as well.

I have always felt that the pamphlet that I picked up at the CSC changed my life and gave me a purpose to find my path.

I have not been in a book club in while, and I am excited to join.

Anna Mittag

Hi everyone! I just graduated from Notre Dame a month ago with a major in Chemical Engineering and a minor in Poverty Studies. Starting in July, I will be working as a Sustainability Analyst at Schneider Electric, but for now I'm taking a couple months to spend time with family and rest. During my four years at ND, I was able to interact with the CSC a number of times - through my minor in Poverty Studies, the SSLP, the Appalachia Seminar, and more. The CSC is my favorite part of Notre Dame as I believe it is the core of our mission to be a force for good, so I am very excited to be joining this book club.

Anne Huntington

Feel free to add your bio here

Daphne Vaughn

Feel free to add your bio here

Eleanor Huntington

I graduated from ND in 2010 and then went on to teach and live in Bangkok, Thailand, Sydney, Australia, and Boston, Massachusetts before moving out to Los Angeles. I now work in health care administration.

Emily Flores

Feel free to add your bio here

Emma Bosch

Feel free to add your bio here

Jack Sullivan

Hello! I'm originally from St. Louis, MO. I graduated from ND in 2019 and went on to work in the community health worker program with Partners In Health-Mexico before starting medical school. I'm currently in my final year of medical school in Providence, RI before planning to start residency in Family Medicine. This is my first book club, and though I've missed quite a few of the sessions, I have loved the book selections and following along!

Jennifer Ehren

Feel free to add your bio here

Jennifer Webber (she/her)

I graduated from Notre Dame in '93 and pursued graduate degrees in applied educational psychology from Northeastern University. My husband ('92) and I currently live in West Lebanon, New Hampshire. We have two daughters, whom we unintentionally gifted with Cystic Fibrosis (CF). After several hospitalizations, we moved South from the Boston area (I grew up on Cape Cod) to cut costs so I could stay home with the girls. With our K-gardener's school principal's encouragement (after more hospitalizations), we embarked on homeschooling. While not an intended path, it was the most amazing, challenging, stimulating, and humbling time of my life. Both girls have now graduated from college, and they are both on their own paths. I have been working as a school psychologist again since February 2020, remotely, with rural school districts. My husband and I have a non-profit, CF Education Parent Group. We moved back to New England in April 2024. I am grateful for this book club - having been in others over the years - and its inception was timely.

John Dacey

Hi Everyone. There There will be my first book discussion with this group. I graduated from ND in 1973 (History) and from Arizona State (Law) in 1977. My wife (Julie) and I live in Phoenix and we have three 30-ish children. I practiced poverty, disability and civil rights law much of my career. At present, I manage a small nonprofit, public interest law firm. Coincidental with the discussion of There There tomorrow (6/18), I used to be a member of the Navajo Nation and San Carlos Apache Bar Associations. I have enjoyed an informal connection to the Center since 2016.

Josie Wesseler

I graduated from Notre Dame in 2021 with a major in ACMS (math/stats) and minors in Data Science and CST. I was in McGlinn Hall all four years, was a part of Magnificat Choir (formerly Women's Liturgical Choir), and studied abroad in Perth, Australia in the Fall of 2019. Now I live in Indianapolis with my fiancé, who is in medical school, and I work as a data analyst, currently in risk analysis. I am on the Board of Directors for the Notre Dame Club of Indianapolis and am co-coordinator for our local YoungND. I am also continuing my volunteer work locally through the Junior League of Indianapolis in the Grants Committee and through our other volunteer projects focused on foster and kinship care, and I volunteer with Kids Voice of Indiana to improve their data reporting systems, particularly for their CASA program. I appreciated this book, and I look forward to our discussion!

Joy Agwu

Feel free to add your bio here

Judy Benchaar

Greetings to everyone, I received my MA in Romance Languages from ND in 2016 and have been working at the Center for Social Concerns since 2014 here on campus. I work with Connie Mick and

enjoy working here very much. Projects like this book club are one of the reasons why. I began my undergraduate degree in Madison, WI years ago at the University of Wisconsin. That project was cut short when I married a man from Algeria and we moved there for two years after he graduated from UW. I had three sons with him and we ended up in South Bend when he was hired as an engineer at Bendix. Later, after divorcing, I worked as a travel agent for many years and eventually finished my bachelor's degree at IUSB. My move to Notre Dame happened in 2010 when I was hired by the Department of Romance Languages while still finishing at IUSB. This move prompted me to change my major to French and to eventually spend a semester living abroad in Toulon. It was there that I decided to apply to do my Masters at Notre Dame in the very department where I had previously worked. My job at the Center for Social Concerns started as a part time gig while I was pursuing this degree and it turned into a fulfilling career path for me quite by accident.

Julie O'Brochta

Hi everyone! I graduated '12 with an Architecture degree and minor in Catholic Social Teaching. I loved my year in Rome but finding the CSC, and learning about the Catholic Worker, was a top highlight of ND. For the past ten years I've been an architect and urban designer in my hometown of Chicago- focusing on community engagement, affordable housing and neighborhood plans as much as possible. I currently am the architect for Chicago Public Library. I love love reading and am so excited to join the group!

Katie Comeau

Feel free to add your bio here

Laura LeBrun

Hello! My name is Laura LeBrun. I graduated from ND in 2016 with a major in Economics and a minor in Poverty Studies. After participating in many CSC seminars (Appalachia 2x - St. Joseph Housing Repair and WVMW); Urban Plunge (Milwaukee, WI) Gospel of Life in Portland; Hands of St. Andre at Andre House in Phoenix, AZ), an SSLP (Hesed House in Aurora, IL), working at the CSC's Seminars Team, volunteering at Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Joseph County, and working at South Bend Center for the Homeless, I pretty much came to the realization that I was much more interested in social services than econ, so I decided to pursue social work as a career. (However, I will always laugh at remembering when guests at Hesed House would ask me, "So...you're studying rich people to work with poor people?") I wanted to make sure that I could "last" in a high burnout job, so I pursued a gap year...which turned into three. The first year I spent living with 11 other people in an old convent on the southside of Chicago with Amate House, and I worked at Perspectives High School (a charter school) with students who had failed one or more classes in their efforts to regain these credits and graduate on time. I then had a brief moment where I thought maybe I'd want to get a Master of Public Policy (spoiler: I didn't), so I took the GRE, decided to work with babies in another gap year, and moved to Houston to work as a foster parent with Casa de Esperanza de los Niños in Houston, TX. This

experience was not ideal for the kids, but it did change my life and make me fully committed to child welfare. Majority of the time, I parented 2-3 kids with one another adult, and over 14 months, I parented 14 children, all of whom were 4 years old and younger. I then fell in love with a baby, couldn't leave him until he was put into his adopted placement, and thus fell into another gap year. I applied for graduate school during that year and nannied for two children, one of whom was adopted from Casa. I got my Master's of Social Work (MSW) at the University of Minnesota in 2021 and have been living in the Twin Cities since 2019. During my MSW program I interned at a Minneapolis Elementary School and with Red Lake Nation in their tribal child welfare program. I also had a graduate assistantship with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota. I have worked with EVOLVE Family Services in their Permanency and Pregnancy Services program since September 2021 and Hennepin Healthcare as a weekend NICU, PICU, and OB social worker since March 2022. I'm deeply, deeply committed to meeting families where they are at, recognizing the systemic injustices of our systems, and trying to make people's days just a little bit better. I love reading books about social issues and I love the CSC (by far THE blessing of my ND experience - I had a hard time at ND, but I am so grateful for the CSC), so I was stoked to learn that this book club was a thing.

Linda Scheiber

Hello! I graduated from Notre Dame in 2013 with majors in American Studies and Environmental Science. I loved my experiences with the CSC, especially ones like my SSLP helping with day camps on Lopez Island, WA. I stuck around ND (at least for summers) for two more years by joining ACE, which sent me to teach middle school science, social studies, and religion in Tucson, AZ. I have been a teacher ever since, and I've spent the last six years at a Chicago Public School teaching middle school science. I'm passionate about teaching science through the lens of social justice, and I love reading, so I'm excited to join this book club!

Maura Hogaboom

Hi all! I graduated from ND in 2023 after studying Economics and Pre-health studies with the PSIM. I enjoyed taking a few CSC seminars, focusing on climate change & social change, educational equity, and global poverty. My absolute favorite experience from undergrad was taking part in the South Bend version of the ISSLP (during COVID)--it's where I met some of my very favorite people and where I truly met my new fave city (SB)! I now work in the Econ department at ND in the Lab for Economic Opportunities where I help conduct impact evaluations through academic-nonprofit partnerships. I love reading, and I am so excited to be able to read and keep learning alongside such cool people!

Mayesha Sahir Mim

Feel free to add your bio here

Meghan Jones

Hi! I graduated from ND in 2012 with a degree in English and a supplementary major in Spanish. I loved the CSC and took part in every program that I could squeeze into my schedule. I now work from home in Champaign, Illinois, as a marketing coordinator for WSP. Outside of work, my passion project is volunteering with Urbana-Champaign Books to Prisoners to provide free books to incarcerated people around Illinois. I'm excited to see some familiar names on this list and look forward to our conversation!

Monica Caro

Greetings to all! I recently joined the staff of the CSC and graduated in '97 from ND. I am a lawyer by training, but have served at ND as an administrator for more than a decade before joining the Center. I have been impressed with the Center's passion for books, which has reaffirmed a love of reading and made it more of a priority. I am grateful to join the discussion.

Nylce Prada Myers

Hello, Friends.

I'm an '87 grad and was an undergrad at ND during the early years of the CSC. But even then, long before anyone thought of it as an official Institute, those of us drawn to its programs thought of the CSC as the beating heart of Notre Dame. I was a Government/International Studies major (now we'd simply call it PoliSci) with a second major in English. And though there were many classes in my majors I loved, the longest-lasting lessons from my undergrad years came through the Center for Social Concerns, through programs such as Urban Plunge and Summer Service and a fall break advocacy immersion in D.C., but also through hanging out in the cafe with other students and staff.

As an alumna who has moved a lot because of my husband's work, I have connected with our new communities through ND Clubs, often serving as a liaison between the local club and programs offered through the ISC for our students.

I am now unofficially retired from teaching middle and high school English and have spent a lot of time over the past several years as a caregiver for my elderly parents.

Losing myself in a good book has been my refuge ever since I learned to read, and I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to share books with other thoughtful readers.

I grew up in a small town in GA that has a Confederate statue downtown near the old courthouse.

I now live in Minneapolis, which you might remember, became a flashpoint in May 2020 after the murder of George Floyd. That summer I had to spend a lot of time back down in GA helping my

parents. After one too many “discussions” with childhood friends who did NOT understand what was happening in my new hometown, I’d had enough.

So I had a banner made and snuck downtown in the middle of the night to hang it on the fence by the statue. It didn’t last long past sunup. But people are still talking about it.

And yeah, I wish I’d had the guts (and the aim) to use red paint balls.



Taylor Thomas

Feel free to add your bio here

KEY PASSAGES

Feel free to add passages you want to highlight here.

Key passages from *Those We Thought We Knew*

- "[Forcing] the people who needed to encounter the idea to engage with the work. I left them no choice. They had to face it no matter how uncomfortable it made them." (Toya, p. 53)
- "Having [Toya] there that summer, it had felt like putting up food, like storing something away that could sustain them." (p. 55)
- "There are a whole lot of people, even well-intentioned people, who are more bothered by the word racist than they are racism." (Ch. 13, p. 79)
- "In the end, my happiness was my defiance. My joy was my act of dissent." (Vess, ch. 21, p. 130)
- "People are always what they've been." (Silas, ch. 38, p. 239)
- "So like I said, there are questions you need to ask yourself. And until you do, I don't have any use for bridges." (Rev. Tillman, ch. 40, p. 250)
- "For all Leah knew, the wicked were right there among them." (ch. 41, p. 260)
- "[The world] was gray, and gray was scarier because so often you couldn't pin it down ... People like Cawthorn were the easy ones. But it was the **ones we thought we knew**, those were the ones who broke our hearts." (ch. 47, p. 297)
- "I was the adult and she was the child, but *I believed her* ... We're sitting here in the footprint she left." (Dayna, ch. 48, p. 301)
- "Some healing had to be done alone." (ch. 54, p. 339)
- "She just wouldn't listen ... Nothing like this ever happened until that girl showed up." (Coggins, ch. 59, p. 368)
- There was a visible resentment building in him, his body coiling into stone. "I come from nothing. I come from the same place you come from. And you want to talk about privilege and power. Everything I got I made. There wasn't nothing ever given to me. And that's why I'll be damned if I sit back and let somebody lie about where I come from just so they can rip it out from under me." (Coggins, ch. 59, p. 368)

Potential themes to discuss

- **The lineage of emotion** (Toya's project and plan to include her mother and grandmother in the molds)
- **The lineage of reputation** and only needing a family's name to place someone
- The importance of the **pendant** Vess gives Toya

- **Privilege**, often represented in the book as the ability to be able to ignore the “two worlds” or different experiences of people, even while being friends with them — or as something else?
- The role and power of **art**

RELATED LINKS

Feel free to add links to sources related to our discussion.

Here are some links or things mentioned during the book club meeting:

- The Tigerbelles: <https://lyonspress.com/books/9781493073887>
<https://tigerbellesdocumentary.com/tigerbelles-story/>
- New mural at ND celebrating workers:
<https://wsbt.com/news/local/mural-recognizes-the-contributions-of-notre-dame-workers-cus-todial-geddes-hall-building-services-employee-art-photography-exhibit-walk-the-walk-week>
- The term “own voices”
<https://diversebooks.org/why-we-need-diverse-books-is-no-longer-using-the-term-ownvoices/>
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SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE READING

Books we’ve read:

1. ***Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver (April 19, 2023)**
2. ***Our Missing Hearts* (fiction) by Celeste Ng (June 28, 2023)**
3. ***Everything Sad is Untrue*, Daniel Nayeri (September 13, 2023) (MVP speaker Fall 2023)**
4. ***Solito* by Javier Zamora (November 8, 2023) (Speaking at the Institute for Social Concerns MVP September 20, 2024--Connie interviewing him, yay!!)**
5. ***Birnam Wood* by Eleanor Catton (January 25, 2024)**
6. ***Let Us Descend* by Jesmyn Ward (April 2, 2024)**
7. ***There There* by Tommy Orange (June 18, 2024)**
8. ***James* by Percival Everett (August 13, 2024)**
9. ***Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson and *The Sun Does Shine* by Anthony Ray Hinton (October 8, 2024)**
10. ***Those We Thought We Knew* by David Joy (January 27, 2025)**

Books recommended by participants. Feel free to add to the list:

1. [*Nickel Boys*](#) by Colson Whitehead
2. [*On the Clock*](#) by Emily Guendelsberger
3. [*Not A Crime to Be Poor*](#) by Peter Edelman
4. *The Office of Historical Corrections*

5. *Homegoing*
6. *What The Eyes Don't See*
7. *Together* by Vivek Murthy
8. *Invisible Women* (nonfiction) by Caroline Criado Perez
9. *American Dirt* (fiction) by Jeanine Cummins
10. [*The Girl with the Louding Voice*](#) by Abi Daré
11. *Poverty, by America* by Matthew Desmond (2023) ([Poverty Studies speaker February 8, 2024](#)--no recording or livestream, alas!)
12. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Workers in the United States* by Seth Holmes (2013)
13. *Dopesick* (and the Hulu mini-series)
- 14. *Cutting for Stone***
- 15. *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah**
16. *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell
17. ***The School for Good Mothers*** by Jessamine Chan was sooooo good and honestly as someone who works in child welfare it 100% was accurate to me.
18. *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson
19. *Mathematics for Human Flourishing* by Francis Su
20. *The Devil's Highway*
21. *Teaching to Transgress*
22. *Doing the Truth in Love* (as a throw back to SSLP experience!)
23. ***Cloud Cuckoo Land***, Anthony Doerr
24. *We Were Once a Family* by Roxana Asgarian
25. *Warrior Girl Unearthed*, Angeline Boulley
26. *The Sentence*, Louise Erdrich
27. *Swing Time*, Zadie Smith
28. *What My Bones Know* by Stephanie Foo
29. Classics--MLK
30. *You Sound Like a White Girl*, Julissa Arce
31. *Anything* by Kaitlin Curtice
32. *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Dina Nayeri (Daniel's sister who did make it to Harvard!) (I second this one!)
33. [*Rough Sleepers*](#) by Tracy Kidder
34. *waiting for an echo*
35. *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
36. *Coffeeland* by Augustine Sedgwick
37. *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*, James McBride
- 38. *To Free the Captives: A Plea for the American Soul***, Tracy K. Smith
39. *Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver
40. *The Prague Sonata*
41. *The Memory Police* by Yoko Ogawa

42. *Anthropocene* Reviewed by John Greene
43. *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange
44. *True Biz* by Sara Nović
45. *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri
46. *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown
47. *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong
48. *Young Mungo* by Douglas Stuart
49. *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich
50. *The Meth Lunches: Food and Longing in an American City* by Kim Foster
51. *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko
52. *All You need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* by Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman
53. *You Dreamed of Empires* by Alvaro Enrique
54. *Anything* by Jesmyn Ward
55. *Anything* by Octavia Butler
56. *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan
57. *The Occasional Human Sacrifice: Medical Experimentation and the Price of Saying No* by Carl Elliott
58. *Safe Haven* by Shankari Chandran
59. *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama* by Nathan Thrall
60. *The Reformatory* by Tananarive Due
61. *Everything is Tuberculosis* by John Green