

ARRT Literary Book Discussion
Leadership Discussion Notes
Thursday July 20, 2016
3:15 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Batavia Public Library
14 participants

Leader and Notetaker: Elizabeth Hopkins

TOPIC: What are your favorite under the radar book discussion gems?

- Elizabeth began by sharing titles from 4 of her library's book clubs-
 - *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman (Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Club). Although Gaiman isn't exactly under the radar, *Neverwhere* was originally published in 1996 and in 2015 the Author's Preferred Text came out which renewed interest. Readers in the SFF group who enjoy fantasy and Gaiman loved it- readers who prefer sci-fi were not as impressed. The group had a lot to say about the use of myth, the choices made by the main character in particular, and the pros and cons of the world Gaiman created.
 - *The Work: My Search for a Life that Matters* by Wes Moore (Daytime Book Club). Most of the group thought that this book's main target was younger adults. They thought that this book would be wonderful for someone in their 20's who was seeking a way to make a difference. The main take away from this memoir is that family support or support in any means is key to reaching your potential.
 - *The Black Hour* by Lori Rader-Day (Mystery Book Club). Not only is it set in Chicago, on a thinly-disguised Northwestern campus, it skillfully blends amateur detective in an academic setting with fast-pace, highly-engaging suspense. The group loved its in-depth exploration of what violent, senseless trauma does to a normal person, and a believable, realistic depiction of current campus life for both students and professors. Lori is definitely an author to keep an eye on!
 - *The Expats* by Chris Pavone (Evening Book Club). This group reads a lot of Literary Fiction, so I (Elizabeth) was proud of them for branching out and selecting a spy thriller. This one only received one thumbs down vote, everyone else gave it a thumbs up and mentioned that they loved the fast pace, the descriptions of Luxembourg and expat life, and the conversation about lies in marriage. One reader described this as: If *Gone Girl* and *Hausfrau* had a baby, it would be *The Expats*.
- Next, Elizabeth shared Becky's under the radar title, which she sent in via email-

- *The Ghost Map* by Steven Johnson. Check out Becky's full discussion notes [here](#). Other attendees commented on how much they enjoyed this title.
- Titles and thoughts from the rest of the group-
 - *The Dinner* by Herman Koch. Not a happy book, but everyone was compelled to finish it. Very dark (Elizabeth mentioned her group also read this and intentionally discussed it in October...something dark for a Halloween discussion).
 - *Good Omens* by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman. Everyone loved this one and I had to do very little...they kept the conversation going!
 - *Presumed Innocent* by Scott Turow. We discussed this in my crime group and no one liked it. "I know Turow is a lawyer, but when an attorney is writing gore it's too real." No one really liked it, but the discussion was awesome. This was more thriller than detective story- so perhaps this group just wants detective stories. Karen mentioned that she paired this title with the film and her group loved it.
 - *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* by Katherine Howe. Magical realism that doesn't cross into fantasy. Great if you're interested in the Salem Witch Trials.
 - *Cop Town* by Karin Slaughter. Sexism, racism...everything is going on and you're just surprised the whole town hasn't burned down. Great introduction to Slaughter as it's a stand-alone.
 - *Trust No One* by Paul Cleave. Goes over better if you have a younger group who are not so fearful of Alzheimer's. For *Gone Girl* fans.
 - *Liar, temptress, soldier, spy: four women undercover in the Civil War* by Karen Abbott. Narrative Non-Fiction. You will fly through this even though it's a longer book. You won't like all of the women, but it's written so compellingly you'll be hooked.
 - *Displacement: A Travelogue* by Lucy Knisley. This graphic memoir is a nice introduction to graphic novels. A nice choice if your group has interest or wants to branch out.
 - *Please Look After Mom* by Kyung-sook Shin. Lots of cultural and historical background of South Korea. Also lots to discuss regarding family issues. Be advised that the author's authority record is incorrect!
 - *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* by A.S. King. A YA book that makes for a great discussion. Lots of problem issues here- alcohol/death. A bit of magical realism.

- o *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* led another attendee to mention *Gloria O'Brien's History of the Future*. My group was split down the middle on this one. A lot of folks couldn't handle the magical realism.
- o *The Enchanted* by Rene Denfeld. An interesting concept as it's narrated by a prisoner. I was worried it might be too dark for my book group (Another person jumped in here and said: "My group would love that!")
- o *Mary Coin* by Marisa Silver. The author created a fictional story about a famous picture ("Migrant Mother" by Dorothea Lange). I discussed this with an outside group when we were out to dinner...and we talked about the book the whole time! That is a testament to a discussable book.
- o *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. This was the hardest book I led a discussion on. I co-led this discussion with a colleague which worked out well. We had a very diverse group at the discussion and everyone had an opinion. We began with: "This is a safe place. Be honest. Be polite." I ended up moderating the discussion rather than leading it. At the end, the patrons wanted to do it again. The title makes for great discussion but it is challenging.
- o Other titles mentioned:
 - *Another Day in the Death of America* by Gary Younge.
 - *Blood at the Root* by Patrick Phillips
 - *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* By Roz Chast
 - *Where Things Come Back* by John Whaley
 - *Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow
 - *Stolen* by Lucy Christopher
 - *I Hunt Killers* by Barry Lyga