



BOOK CLUB BOOKS

Below are this winter's Book Club selections. Chosen to represent a range of interests, it is hoped these books will stimulate thought and discussion among our diverse group of readers. As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome.

WINTER 2007

A Disorder Peculiar to the Country by Ken Kalfus

A contemporary New York story in which Joyce and Marshall Harriman's divorce battle echoes the country's problems post 9/11. Kalfus is adept at portraying the black comedy in the couple's narcissism while skewering the pieties surrounding the national trauma. He also reveals the powerful effect world events have on individual lives. This novel was nominated for a National Book Award.

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai

Winner of the 2006 Booker Prize, this luminous novel is set in a corner of India where the borders of several Himalayan states meet. Patel is a retired judge who lives in isolated tranquility with his cook, his orphaned seventeen-year-old granddaughter, and a beloved dog. But his life is irrevocably altered when his granddaughter has an affair with a politically active teacher. Questions of cultural identity, modernity and class are explored.

Lincoln's Melancholy by Joshua Wolf Shenk

History from a psychological perspective. Shenk's stylish exploration of how Lincoln's depressive nature influenced his politics is a revelation. By a careful scrutiny of primary sources and the larger context of nineteenth century attitudes, he is able to give us a rare understanding of the sources of Lincoln's greatness. His analysis also reveals how differently our own society views depression compared to the nineteenth century.

The March by E. L. Doctorow

This eminent writer's latest novel captures the madness of war through a retelling of General Sherman's march through Georgia during the Civil War. Real events and people are interwoven with fictional elements in a powerful evocation of that cruel time. Several of the characters we come to know deeply are Pearl, a plantation owner's despised daughter who is passing as a drummer boy, Arly, a cunning Reb soldier who believes that God dictates events in his life, and the great but flawed William Tecumseh Sherman. This is a cautionary tale for our times as well.

Ordinary Heroes by Scott Turow

Retired crime reporter Stewart Dubinsky discovers a secret manuscript written by his recently deceased father. It discloses his court-martial during World War II for assisting in the escape of a suspected spy. Stewart has to find out if he is “the son of a convict who’d betrayed his country” or if this was a miscarriage of justice. Along the way, he uncovers an amazing story of intrigue, romantic love, and bravery.

The River of Doubt by Candice Millard

A year after he lost a bid for the Presidency in 1912, Teddy Roosevelt embarked on a dangerous journey down an unexplored part of the Amazon. From raging rapids and boiling white water to Indians armed with poison-tipped arrows, the adventure proved to be fraught with danger. But it was just the type of therapy that Roosevelt craved, making his despair over politics seem trivial. He emerged triumphant, and this action-packed account of his ordeal is a truly inspirational tale.

Shalimar the Clown by Salman Rushdie

Part political thriller, part comic folk tale, Rushdie delves into the roots of terrorism and the turmoil of different faiths and cultures trying to coexist. The American ambassador to India, a counterterrorist expert, is murdered by Shalimar, a Kashmiri actor and acrobat turned terrorist. Tension and suspense build as love, jealousy, and revenge are intertwined with larger affairs of state. Yet the author offers cautious optimism that there is a way to work out our differences, if ideologues and fanatics can be contained.

The Tender Bar by J. R. Moehringer

J. R. grew up fatherless, in a house crammed with cousins and ruled by a mean grandfather. Needing something outside this world, at the age of nine he turned to the corner bar, a sanctuary for all types of men. These colorful characters taught and tended to J. R., providing the “father” figures he longed for. He grew up to be a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper writer, and this is a first-rate memoir of a dysfunctional but tightly knit community that gave him a sense of belonging.



Wilmette Public Library
1242 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091
(847)256-5025
<http://www.wilmette.lib.il.us>