

Book Talk ~ Summer 2023

Recommendations from JTL Book Group

***The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese**

Very good; mesmerized by the story (although middle section dragged a little). I appreciated being able to immerse myself in history of southern India. (from Amazon.com): From *New York Times*–bestselling author of *Cutting for Stone*, a stunning and magisterial epic of love, faith, and medicine, set in Kerala, South India, following three generations of a family seeking the answers to a strange secret.
—JS

Agree with JS; this book starts out strong, although parts of it dragged. Wonderful writing.
—SK

***You'll Forget This Ever Happened: Secrets, Shame, and Adoption in the 1960s* by Laura Engel**

Powerful book about young girls who got pregnant in the 1960s and what happened to them; this is the author's story. (from Amazon.com): Mississippi, 1967. It's the Summer of Love, yet unwed mothers' maternity homes are flourishing, secret closed adoptions are routine, and many young women still have no voice.
—SK

***Running with Sherman: How a Rescue Donkey Inspired a Rag-tag Gang of Runners to Enter the Craziest Race in America* by Christopher McDougall**

Very enjoyable book about running with a rescue donkey in Colorado. (from Amazon.com): A heartwarming story about training a rescue donkey to run one of the most challenging races in America, and, in the process, discovering the life-changing power of the human-animal connection.
—JJ

All eighteen books by Louise Penny

Read them all in order; thoroughly enjoy this series.
—SY

James Patterson by James Patterson: The Stories of My Life

This book was a riot—so funny. Patterson is adamant about the importance of reading. (from Amazon.com): How did a kid whose dad lived in the poorhouse become the most successful storyteller in the world? This "fizzing, funny, often deeply moving" (Daily Mail) #1 *New York Times* bestselling memoir is "damn near addictive."
—SY

***Mad Honey* by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan**

(from Amazon.com): *Mad Honey* is a riveting novel of suspense, an unforgettable love story, and a moving and powerful exploration of the secrets we keep and the risks we take in order to become ourselves.

Excellent; couldn't put this book down; truly unforgettable.
—SY

Also read this and agree that it's very powerful.
—LW

I agree; one of the best books I've read recently.
—AH

Helene Hanff Omnibus *Letter from New York* by Helene Hanff *Delightful.*

(from Amazon.com): For six years, the author of *84 Charing Cross Road* captivated audiences with her monthly BBC broadcasts about her unique adventures living in New York City. Now collected in a charming volume, these vignettes capture an intimate and quirky New York—a witty and humorous depiction that will be treasured.
—LW

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***Rough Sleepers: Dr. Jim O'Connell's Urgent Mission to Bring Healing to Homeless People* by Tracy Kidder**

(from Amazon.com): The powerful story of an inspiring doctor who made a difference, by helping to create a program to care for Boston's homeless community—by the Pulitzer Prize-winning, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

—LW

***The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien**
Rediscovering the beautiful language and rich stories; a wonderful break from reality.

(from Amazon.com): J. R. R. Tolkien's classic fantasy has accumulated worldwide acclaim as the greatest adventure tale ever written. No other writer has created a world as distinct as Middle-earth, complete with its own geography, history, languages, and legends. And no one has created characters as endearing as Tolkien's large-hearted, hairy-footed hobbits.

—MH

***Wooden Boats: In Pursuit of the Perfect Craft at an American Boatyard* by Michael Ruhlman**
Really interesting, and not too technical; focuses on a well-known builder at a famous boatyard on Martha's Vineyard, talks of some of the process of building large wooden boats.

(from Amazon.com): Filled with exquisite details and stories of the sea, this exciting exploration of a nearly forgotten craft and the colorful personalities involved will enthrall wooden boat owners as well as craftspeople of every stripe, nature enthusiasts, and fans of compelling nonfiction.

—MH

***Two Coots in a Canoe: An Unusual Story of Friendship* by David E. Morine**
Humorous; a fun read.

(from Amazon.com): A journey of whim, humor, and self-discovery along the Connecticut River.

—EP

***White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* by Tim Wise**

About racial prejudice and white privilege, by a Jewish author who was subject to discrimination himself.

(from Amazon.com): From "one of the most brilliant, articulate and courageous critics of white privilege in the nation" (Michael Eric Dyson), this now-classic is "a brilliant and personal deconstruction of institutionalized white supremacy in the United States . . . a beautifully written, heartfelt memoir."

—EP

***Nine Lives* by Peter Swanson**

Very suspenseful. Nine strangers receive a list, and one by one they're murdered; fascinating connection between victims.

(from Amazon.com): "[A] smartly entertaining reimagining of Agatha Christie's classic *And Then There Were None* . . . Swanson cunningly plays with readers' heads as we hope so-and-so gets it next."

—LLW

***Untold Power: The Fascinating Rise and Complex Legacy of First Lady Edith Wilson* by Rebecca Boggs Roberts**

Biography of Woodrow Wilson's second wife. When she first met Wilson, she wasn't interested in politics; she grows more interested, and ends up making a lot of the decisions after he had a stroke.

(from Amazon.com): A nuanced portrait of the first acting woman president, written with fresh and cinematic verve by a leading historian on women's suffrage and power.

—LLW

***The Vera Stanhope mystery series* by Ann Cleeves**
Enjoyable series by author of Vera and Shetland series, both of which are hit TV shows.

—LLW

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***The Watchmaker's Daughter: The True Story of World War II Heroine Corrie ten Boom* by Larry Loftis**

Incredible story of Corrie ten Boom. There is also a documentary about her on Amazon Prime, called Corrie ten Boom: A Faith Undefeated.

(from Amazon.com): *New York Times* bestselling author and master of nonfiction spy thrillers Larry Loftis writes the first major biography of Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch watchmaker who saved the lives of hundreds of Jews during World War II—at the cost of losing her family and being sent to a concentration camp, only to survive, forgive her captors, and live the rest of her life as a Christian missionary.

—RK

***My Father's House* by Joseph O'Connor**

The Vatican believed they had to stay neutral to avoid invasion by the Nazis; very interesting account of true story.

(from Amazon.com): *My Father's House* is inspired by the extraordinary true story of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, who, together with his accomplices, risked his life to smuggle Jews and escaped Allied prisoners out of Italy right under the nose of his Nazi nemesis. Suspenseful and beautifully written, *My Father's House* tells an unforgettable story of love, faith, sacrifice, and courage.

—AH

***Once Upon a Wardrobe* by Patti Callahan Henry**

(from Amazon.com): College student Megs Devonshire sets out to fulfill her younger brother George's last wish by uncovering the truth behind his favorite story. What transpires is a fascinating look into the bond between siblings and the life-changing magic of stories.

***The Bookshop at Water's End* by Patti Callahan Henry**

(from Amazon.com): The women who spent their childhood summers in a small southern town discover it harbors secrets as lush as the marshes that surround it . . .

—AH

***Beyond That, the Sea* by Laura Spence-Ash**

Favorite book besides Mad Honey; loved the story and the writing.

(from Amazon.com): A sweeping, tenderhearted love story, *Beyond That, the Sea* by Laura Spence-Ash tells the story of two families living through World War II on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, and the shy, irresistible young woman who will call them both her own.

—AH

***The Whalebone Theatre* by Joanna Quinn**

Absolutely loved this book, recommended by AH; I agree completely with one blurb on the cover:

"Sheer, undiluted delight from start to finish."

Without doubt, the best book I've read in years!

(from Amazon.com): A transporting, irresistible debut novel that takes its heroine, Cristabel Seagrave, from a theatre made of whalebones to covert operations during World War II—a story of love, family, bravery, lost innocence, and self-transformation.

—MJH