



PHOTO SHANNON LINDEN

Ladies on Literature: More than a Bookclub

BY: SHANNON LINDEN

Ahh, summer. It's time for the LOL to hold our monthly meetings outdoors, sipping sweet wine, indulging in fresh, fabulously prepared foods, whilst seated on someone's sun-kissed patio.

Brought together by a shared love of literature, we've become friends and supporters of local and international charities, including Kelowna's Project Literacy and Room to Read.

Here's what we read this spring. Visit the ladies@shannonlinden.ca to see what we're up to this summer.

THE PARIS WIFE

By Paula McLain

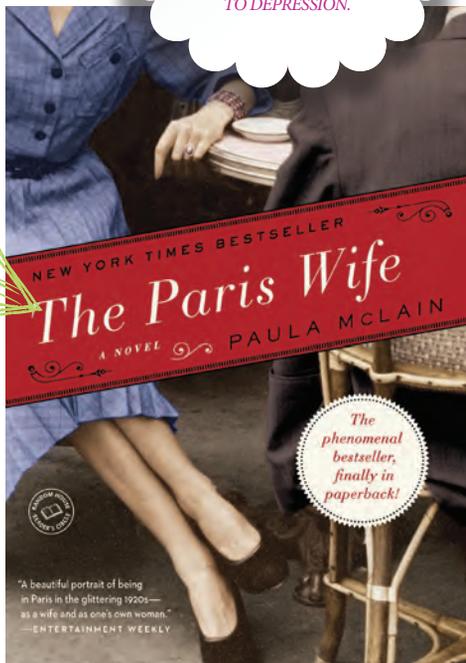
Set in post WWI, readers are vividly transported to the smoky, sexy, boisterous and boozy Paris of the 1920's; an alluring place for the poignant—though ultimately heartbreaking—love between Ernest Hemingway and his first wife, Hadley Richardson.

McLain's impeccable research draws heavily from Hemingway's own account of this time pivotal time in his life, *A Moveable Feast*. Her book is an attempt to tell the story from Hadley Richardson's perspective.

Hadley is a quiet, contemplative, bright woman. Ever



DID YOU KNOW?
SUNLIGHT HITTING THE SKIN BEGINS A PROCESS THAT LEADS TO THE CREATION AND ACTIVATION OF VITAMIN D. STUDIES SUGGEST THAT THIS VITAMIN HELPS FIGHT CERTAIN CONDITIONS, FROM OSTEOPOROSIS AND CANCER TO DEPRESSION.



faithful, she is a devoted wife, annoyingly tolerant of Hemingway's wild mood swings and self-absorbed artist's struggle. She bravely follows him to Paris (on her trust fund) so that he may immerse himself in his work. The couple fall in love with the city and the bohemian collection of affluent artists they befriend, including Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

But the sultry city simmers with sweet temptations, including beautiful and fashionable people, hard liquor and fast jazz, late night parties, and some risqué relationships.

Beautifully written, the author does an impressive job of weaving research into fictional flow and we learn a great deal about the early years of Hemingway. While he was widely known as an egotistical and philandering man, McLain digs deeper, showing a tender side of the original bad boy of literature and drawing empathy from the reader as Hemingway ultimately goes on to have three more wives and finally commits suicide in his early 60's. Hadley, on the other hand... well, I won't ruin the book!

THE BOOK THIEF

By Markus Zusak

The Book Thief was a brilliant novel long before it became a mediocre movie—please don't judge the book by the film. Australian author, Markus Zusak, is actually a young adult novelist, and an absolute wizard with words.

Set in Nazi Germany, the story features Liesel Meminger, a young girl haunted by the death of her little brother and the disappearance of her communist parents. Sent to live with foster parents in Munich, her beloved stepfather, Papa, empowers her and inspires a lifelong love of books by teaching her to read.

With her best friend, Rudy, Liesel becomes an accomplished thief of that which she cannot live without: the occasional piece of fruit, but mostly books. She reads them to her neighbors as they huddle in shelters during the bombing raids and to the Jewish man hiding in her basement.

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THE BOOK THIEF

MARKUS ZUSAK

THE EXTRAORDINARY NEW YORK TIMES #1 BESTSELLER

She re-reads the few she has and begins writing her own.

We learn of unspeakable atrocities to Jewish citizens but also of the day-to-day hunger and hardships of all Germans, especially those reluctant to hang the Nazi flag and brave enough to risk their lives for the expression of their humanity.

Unwavering in its raw and brutal honesty, the book is narrated by Death—a brilliant, sarcastically funny, disheartened sort of entity whose work is never done—especially during the war. Simultaneously in awe of the beauty humans are capable of and horrified at the absolute destruction they create, Death defies his own rules when he gets personally involved in Leisel's story. Some critics disliked the intrusive nature of Death, cutting in and out of the narrative, but this was where Zusak's artistry comes to life. The story is unbearably sad and while Death foreshadows most of the upcoming events, you can't stop turning the pages to find out when such things will occur.

The heart and soul of the author shine through in this one. Highly recommended.

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4.5/5 CHEERS!

A TALE FOR THE TIME BEING

By Ruth Ozeki

I loved the intriguing title of this book. The author is a Japanese-American novelist, married to a Canadian environmental artist, and this unique blend of cultures and careers colour Ozeki's story.

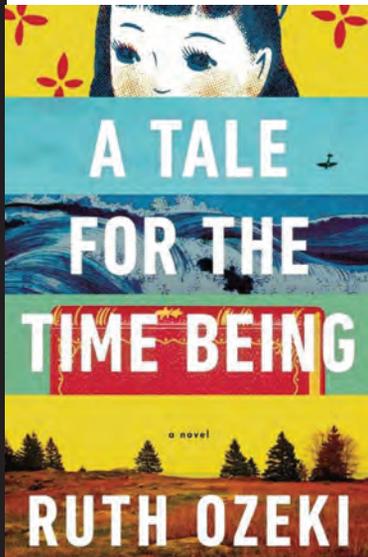
Told in the alternating voices of Nao (pronounced now), a depressed, 16-year old Japanese girl living in Tokyo, and Ruth, a middle-aged novelist with writer's block, living on BC's coast, this is a very complex story that explores a very simple idea: Be present, live without regret for the past or wishful thinking for the future.

When a Hello Kitty lunchbox washes ashore on debris from Japan's 2011 Tsunami and Ruth discovers Nao's diary within, the two are set on an intersecting course destined to change both their lives. Nao's fresh and frank, acutely adolescent voice draws the reader in with her descriptions of modern Japanese culture and her painful struggle to adapt to life in Japan after growing up in California. Ruthlessly bullied by her school mates and ashamed of her family's failure, Nao hides out in cafes and pours her heart out to the stranger she hopes will discover the story she is writing—an adage to her 104 year old Buddhist nun grandmother, Jiko.

A decade later, Ruth discovers Nao's work and becomes enraptured in her story and obsessed with finding her.

Topics range from bullying to Buddhism; the environment to magical realism and even quantum physics. I admit many of the LOL struggled with this story. It's long and it does go off in tangents, but it was short listed for the Man Booker prize and highly acclaimed. Smart, funny, sad and well written, I enjoyed the book's message. 

2.75/5 CHEERS!




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