

A Serene
Summer
melts into
Fall,
While we
Wait on
Winter...



LOL

LADIES ON LITERATURE

After a highly successful inaugural year, the Ladies on Literature have embarked upon our second season together. Fourteen women who gather once a month to discuss literature, which inevitably turns into other kinds of talk, our lives are enriched by the sharing of fantastic food and sumptuous sips, and a kinship that comes from laughing out loud.

Though we broke for summer, I continued to blog about books, but not the kind I foresaw. While I pictured myself soaking up the sun, sipping Gewurztraminer from a stemmed glass and reading absolute rubbish, no one was more surprised than me, to find a basket of non-fiction books by my lounge.

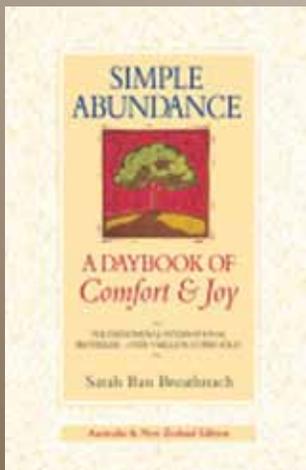
Simple Abundance by Sarah Ban Breathnach

This book has been one of the most influential tools I've ever owned. While I confess a collection of self-help and spiritual literature lines my bookshelf, Ban Breathnach's book maintains its place of honor in my bedside table. Her writing is so lovely and the daily readings short but significant. I happily embrace her concept of moving through the seasons, practicing the six threads of abundant living beginning with gratitude, which gives way to simplicity, which brings order, then

harmony and beauty, which leads to joy.

A woman after my own heart, Ban Breathnach's belief that a reverence for beauty and a quest for balance are kindred sisters, always makes me smile. This book never fails to reset my compass for compassion, happiness, and thankfulness. Encouraging readers to begin a "Gratitude Journal", Ban Breathnach has inspired millions of women to find and follow their bliss, even through the blah-blah that is the carpool, dirty dishes, bill paying portions of our day.

5/5 Cheers!



wild

FROM LOST TO FOUND ON THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL



Cheryl Strayed

Wild

by Cheryl Strayed

As the serenity of summer swept along into September, days continued to dazzle with bright sunshine and high temperatures, but the pressure was on. My turn to select a book and host the start of our second season, I took the old fashioned approach to finding something: peruse the shelves, waiting for something to strike my fancy or stir my soul simply from its cover, title, or back-of-the-book description.

Maybe it was the beat up boot on the front or the catchy, one word title, all in lower case letters, or maybe it was because it was smack in the center of the table of “Heather’s Picks” at Chapters, but I was drawn to Cheryl Strayed’s memoir, Wild.

Never mind it was Oprah Winfrey’s pick, the true story of a 26-year old woman devastated by the loss of her mother, the scattering of her family, and the break down of her marriage, who sets out seeking reconciliation by hiking the Pacific Crest Trail—alone—intrigued me.

The LOL had high praise for the author’s writing but we were also critical of her self-indulgence; her reckless forays into the world of heroine, her promiscuous sexual

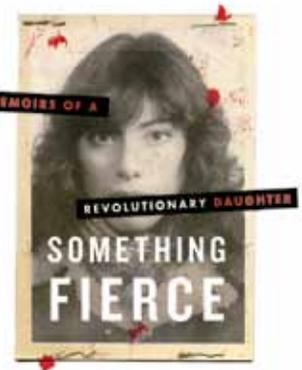
encounters, and her nearly heartless treatment of her seemingly saint-like husband. The foreshadowing of dramatic events that never really result in much (like encounters with snakes and dangerous animals of the wild and human kind) came off as a bit of a “ploy” to keep people turning pages. At times it seemed not much was happening out there on the trail...or was it?

What I learned at the meeting at my home (other than I hate pumpkin and should never have made a cake with it, even if it was in season) was that the death of a loved one touches us all differently and we simply cannot judge how someone else grieves. Cheryl Strayed was completely and utterly destroyed when she lost her mother during some very developmentally vulnerable years. That alone grants her forgiveness for the crazy stuff she does as a result. No one saw it coming, but our first meeting of the LOL evolved into the deepest of discussions. Members shared intimate details about loss of loved ones and how painful it is to let go, yet how much better off we would be if we could embrace the dying process as a natural part of living...if we could see it for the beautiful moment of release, the ultimate freedom it is.

Member, Gail—a physician—has been present at many deaths and says it’s an absolute privilege, much the same as it is utterly magical to witness a birth. Just as birthing is a painful process resulting in the ultimate reward, so death is often a long, drawn out, humbling and painful affair, but the result is some sort of untouchable bliss.

The complex but blessed business of living...it’s a wonderful thing. And we came away believing Wild is worth the read.

3.5/5 Cheers!



CARMEN AGUIRRE

Something Fierce

by Carmen Aguirre

Ah, ostentatious October! How I love this show-off month when the earth delights in decorating herself in jewel toned accessories like a mother of fashion, embracing her new fall line. The air is crisp and clean and clear, the sunlight shimmers, in this season of transformation. Fitting, then, that the LOL read Something Fierce, a funny but shocking first-hand account of one Canadian woman’s journey through change—completely transforming—as the daughter of Chilean revolutionaries during the Pinochet era.

Don’t ask me how we ended up reading a second memoir, hot on the heels of the first, but Cindy W’s choice, winner of Canada Reads 2011, is an informative and fascinating, as well as entertaining read. Told in everyday language, blunt and basic, yet captivating, the story is touching and endearing without being sentimental. It’s often funny as hell, too.

3.75/5 Cheers!

Join us over the coming months as we read a range of fiction. Pick up the books! Log into shannonlinden.ca. We’d love your comments—and your company.