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LOL | LADIES ON LITERATURE



The book club comes in from the cold - Three great spring reads

BY: SHANNON LINDEN

Searching the shelves for the LOL's latest novel, I got sidetracked by Chapters' home décor.

A particularly plump, soft, grey cushion called to me, the shimmery gold scroll etched across it declaring, *Baby It's Cold Outside*. I loved the touch of festive whimsy it added to my family room. Now, having survived the nastiest cold snap winter has woven, it seems more prophecy than playful sentiment. But magazine writing means looking months ahead so while we are knee-deep in winter, when this issue hits your hands, we'll be preparing to skip through the tulips.

No matter the season, books take us somewhere inviting and the ladies on literature book club, meeting monthly.

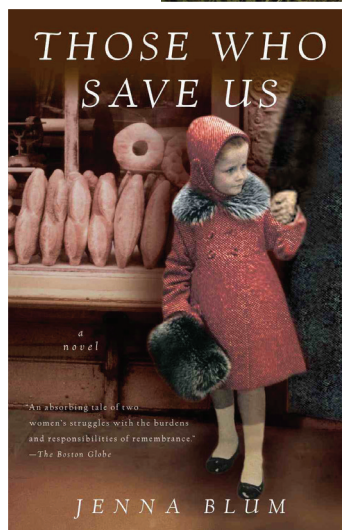
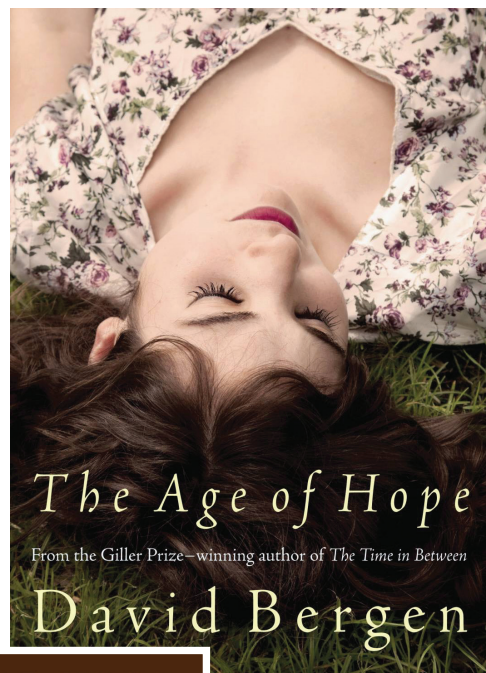
Join us at shannonlinden.ca, where you can chime in on what we're reading, sipping and savoring—and maybe even decorating.

THOSE WHO SAVE US Jenna Blum

Of Jewish-German descent, Blum worked as an interviewer with Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation—clearly what guided her creation of characters and gut-wrenching scenarios in this memorable book.

Told from the unique perspective of Anna, a stunning young woman who sacrifices self and soul to keep her daughter alive during WW II, readers learn of life from the German perspective. Denied love, stripped of their homes and livelihoods and rationed so severely they too were skeletal, many risked their lives to protect Jews and other Germans alike. While Anna and her daughter are eventually liberated by an American soldier, Anna is ostracized in America and stubbornly silent about her dark past.

Told in alternating voices with her now adult daughter, Trudy, the women are guided by guilt and oddly devoid of intimacy. A professor of German studies, it is only when Trudy takes on the project



of interviewing German Holocaust survivors that she faces her reoccurring nightmares of a troubled childhood in Nazi Germany, better understands her distant mother, and learns a great deal about herself.

Disturbing, graphic, but engrossing, Cindy G's choice was an enlightening read.

**3.75/5
CHEERS!**

LEAN IN
Sheryl Sandberg

When Gail chose *Lean In*, the bestseller by Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg, I had my doubts. I have seen her TED talk. I understand her message. But I wasn't sure I entirely agreed.

Don't women struggle as it is? Do we need a super successful, wealthy woman with full-time help telling us we don't do enough at work?

Sandberg urges women to lean into the boardroom table and pursue more leadership roles in their careers, suggesting we examine our own behavior and question why we hold ourselves back. Her message is repeated and reinforced with ample statistics, data, and stories, none unexpected. What did surprise me was her honesty about her own faulty progress; her humble admission she struggles with insecurity and has questioned her own potential as a woman (and wife and mother) in a very powerful position.

Suggesting external barriers erected by society (blatant and subtle sexism, discrimination, sexual-harassment, little flexibility for childcare, too few mentors) hold women back, what Sandberg drives home are the self-imposed barriers women erect around work. We continue to do the majority of the housework and the childcare once married and we



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LEAN IN

WOMEN, WORK, AND
THE WILL TO LEAD

compromise our career goals, even before we have met our partners, if we're still single.

I was surprisingly inspired by her message: We can reignite the revolution by internalizing the revolution. I certainly agree with her opinion: A truly equal world would be one where women run half of our countries and companies and men run half of our homes.

The people at Sony pictures are intrigued. They've recently acquired film rights to a future adaptation of the book as a fictional story.

3.75/5 CHEERS!

AGE OF HOPE

David Bergen

Named a top ten contender for Canada Reads 2013, this book about a housewife born in 1930, living in small town Manitoba, is simple but stunning. The author's writing style is easy yet deeply insightful, seemingly effortless but utterly engaging. His ability to capture the voice of a suppressed woman living at the end of an era—too old to really join the women's movement, yet too young to be relegated to the role of domestic goddess—is mesmerizing.

The book opens when Hope is nineteen and beautiful. While Hope enjoys the attention it brings her, she never really owns her beauty and as the novel progresses, the reader comes to understand that in fact, Hope never really owns any of her attributes.

Feisty, quirky, cheeky even, Hope is wrought with insecurity. She drops out of college to marry the very stable Roy Koop, a Sunday school teacher and car salesman. Roy fulfills all of Hope's needs and adores her but at most she musters gratitude and a deep friendship for him. While she eventually comes to love him dearly, the reader is always left with the sense that like dropping out of nursing school, Hope perhaps did not risk enough in the realm of love.

She goes on to have three children and lead a relatively peaceful domestic life, other than regular visits from her feminist friend, Emily, who both inspires and annoys her. It is when she becomes pregnant with her fourth child, however, that life begins to unravel for Hope. Rocked with depression, some pivotal points evolve in her life.

Nonetheless, the LOL agreed, nothing extraordinary really happens here. It is a wonder Bergen keeps the narrative flowing and the reader happily engaged in his creative world—but he does!

4 CHEERS! 🍷