

No Pressure Book Group 2.19.26

Phyllis Arsenault Berry, Sally Madeira, Mary Kasamatsu, Monique, Mary Roberts, Judi Byron, facilitator.

Phyllis shared three books she was reading” ***American Reich* Eric Lichtblau**
A study in the workings of white supremacist hatred as it surges across the land. Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Lichtblau focuses on Orange County, California, “a petri dish for young white supremacists anxious to take back their culture from minorities they see as an existential threat.” The author’s thorough reporting makes it plain that things are likely to become still worse, for, with Trump’s second term, supremacists’ numbers and actions are rising, while violent hatred has become “the sad state of normalcy in modern day America.”

***Hamnet* Maggie O'Farrell**

England, 1580: The Black Death creeps across the land, an ever-present threat, infecting the healthy, the sick, the old and the young alike. The end of days is near, but life always goes on.

A young Latin tutor—penniless and bullied by a violent father—falls in love with an extraordinary, eccentric young woman. Agnes is a wild creature who walks her family’s land with a falcon on her glove and is known throughout the countryside for her unusual gifts as a healer, understanding plants and potions better than she does people. Once she settles with her husband on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon, she becomes a fiercely protective mother and a steadfast, centrifugal force in the life of her young husband, whose career on the London stage is just taking off when his beloved young son succumbs to sudden fever.

***Every Last Fear* Alex Finlay**

After a late night of partying, NYU student Matt Pine returns to his dorm room to devastating news: nearly his entire family—his mom, his dad, his little brother and sister—have been found dead from an apparent gas leak while vacationing in Mexico. The local police claim it was an accident, but the FBI and State Department seem far less certain—and they won’t tell Matt why. Told through multiple points-of-view and alternating between past and present, Alex Finlay’s *Every Last Fear* is not only a page-turning thriller, it’s also a poignant story about a family managing heartbreak and tragedy, and living through a fame they never wanted.

Mention of Wallace Stegner (Was there a book?)

Mary R is reading ***Plainsong* by Kent Haruf**. Set in the fictional town of Holt, Colorado, it tells the interlocking stories of some of the inhabitants. The title comes from a type of unadorned music sung in Christian churches and is a reference to both the Great Plains setting and the simple style of the writing.

Also, ***Hamnet***, Maggie O'Farrell

Mary K. discussed the novel ***Run for the Hills*** by **Kevin Wilson**, which follows Madeline Hill, a woman in her 30s living on a farm in Coalfield, Tennessee, as she embarks on a road trip with her newly discovered stepbrother, Rube, to find other siblings. The book's premise, where Rube introduces himself as Madeline's brother and proposes the trip, is humorous and emotional. Mary recommended the book as a fun and thought-provoking read, highlighting its unique plot and charming characters.

Sally shared her recent reading experiences, highlighting two books from the Waterbury Library: ***Every Day I Read*** by **Hwang Bo Riam**, a collection of essays about the love for books, and ***Murder on the Yukon Quest*** by Alaskan Sue Henry, a murder mystery set in Alaska that features authentic descriptions of dog sledding.

Monique shared reviews of three books: ***The Book of Lost Hours*** by **Hayley Gelfuso**, a spy-themed time travel adventure with themes of historical censorship; ***Becoming Dr. Seuss*** by **Brian Jay Jones**, a biography revealing Seuss's financial struggles and his role in transforming reading education; and ***All the Living and the Dead*** by **Hayley Campbell**, an exploration of death workers and the dying process.

Judi is reading ***Mediumship***. Renowned medium **Suzanne Giesemann** wants you to know that your loved ones in spirit are *still right here* and want to communicate with you. In her book ***Mediumship: Sacred Communications with Loved Ones from Across the Veil***, she gives her background (a former US Navy Commander and aide to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff- so no woo there) and how she was led to mediumship, followed by firsthand accounts written by those that experienced communication with their loved ones, and finishes up with a "How-to" or "What to do" section. This book is part of the Common Sentence book series. And for those who are wondering, it is back on the shelves!

Discussion at the end that James Norbury, ***The Cat who taught Zen***, and many books with ***Big Panda, Little Dragon*** are great bedtime relaxing books. James does all the watercolor art. A great podcast is "Currently Reading" with ***A Journey to Three Pines-*** A Deep Dive into Lousie Penny.

No NPBG for March as I will be in Peru- whoo hoo!
See you the 3rd Thursday in April at 7 PM.