

People of the Book 2017-2018 Reading List

7:15 PM in GJC's Quitman Library

SEPTEMBER 13: *Lilac Girls* by Martha Hall Kelly

New York socialite Caroline Ferriday has her hands full with her post at the French consulate and a new love on the horizon. But Caroline's world is forever changed when Hitler's army invades Poland in September 1939--and then sets its sights on France. An ocean away from Caroline, Kasia Kuzmerick, a Polish teenager, senses her carefree youth disappearing as she is drawn deeper into her role as courier for the underground resistance movement. In a tense atmosphere of watchful eyes and suspecting neighbors, one false move can have dire consequences. For the ambitious young German doctor, Herta Oberheuser, an ad for a government medical position seems her ticket out of a desolate life. Once hired, though, she finds herself trapped in a male-dominated realm of Nazi secrets and power. The lives of these three women are set on a collision course when the unthinkable happens and Kasia is sent to Ravensbruck, the notorious Nazi concentration camp for women. Their stories cross continents--from New York to Paris, Germany, and Poland--as Caroline and Kasia strive to bring justice to those whom history has forgotten.

Fiction, 487 pages, FLP: 20 MCLINC: 59 Amazon

OCTOBER 10: *Heat and Light* by Jennifer Haigh

Forty years ago, Bakerton coal fueled the country. Then the mines closed, *and* the Pennsylvania town wore away like a bar of soap. Now Bakerton has been granted a surprise third act: it sits squarely atop the Marcellus Shale, a massive deposit of natural gas. To drill or not to drill? Prison guard Rich Devlin leases his mineral rights to finance his dream of farming. He doesn't count on the truck traffic *and* nonstop noise, his brother's skepticism or the paranoia of his wife, Shelby, who insists the water smells strange *and* is poisoning their frail daughter. Meanwhile his neighbors, organic dairy farmers Mack *and* Rena, hold out against the drilling-- until a passionate environmental activist disrupts their lives. Told through a cast of characters whose lives are increasingly bound by the opposing interests that underpin the national debate, *Heat and Light* depicts a community blessed *and* cursed by its natural resources.

Fiction, 430 pages, FLP: 13 MCLINC: 36 Amazon

NOVEMBER 14: *Karolina's Twins* by Ronald Balson

Lena Woodward, an elderly woman, enlists the help of both lawyer Catherine Lockhart and private investigator Liam Taggart to appraise the story of her harrowing past in Nazi occupied Poland. At the same time, Lena's son Arthur presents her with a hefty lawsuit under the pretense of garnering her estate--and independence--for his own purposes. Where these stories intersect is through Lena's dubious account of her life in war-torn Poland, and her sisterhood with a childhood friend named *Karolina*. Lena and *Karolina* struggled to live through the atrocity of the Holocaust, and at the same time harbored a courageous, yet mysterious secret of maternity that has troubled Lena throughout her adult life. In telling her story to Catherine and Liam, Lena not only exposes the realities of overcoming the horrors of the Holocaust, she also comes to terms with her own connection to her dark past.

Fiction, 306 pages, FLP: 8 MCLINC: 17 Amazon

DECEMBER 12: *The Seven Good Years* by Etgar Keret

The seven years between the birth of Etgar Keret's son and the death of his father were good years, though still full of reasons to worry. Lev is born in the midst of a terrorist attack. Etgar's father gets cancer. The threat of constant war looms over their home and permeates daily life. What emerges from this dark reality is a series of sublimely absurd ruminations on everything from Etgar's three-year-old son's impending military service to the terrorist mind-set behind Angry Birds. There's Lev's insistence that he is a cat, releasing him from any human responsibilities or rules. Etgar's siblings, all very different people who have chosen radically divergent paths in life, come together after his father's shivah to experience the grief and love that tie a family together forever. This wise, witty memoir is full of wonder and life and love, poignant insights, and irrepressible humor.

Memoir, 171 pages, FLP: 5 MCLINC: 7 Amazon

JANUARY 9: *The Family Orchard* by Nomi Eve

Nomi Eve's lavishly imagined account begins in Palestine in 1837, with the tale of the irrepressible family matriach, Esther, who was lured by the smell of baking bread into an affair with the local baker. Esther passes on her passionate nature to her son, Eliezer, whose love for the forbidden Golda threatened to tear the family apart. And to her granddaughter, Avra the thief, a tiny wisp of a girl who thumbed her nose at her elders by swiping precious stones from the local bazaar--and grew to marry a man she met at the scene of a crime. At once epic and intimate, **The Family Orchard** is a rich historical tapestry of passion and tradition from a storyteller of beguiling power.

Fiction, 316 pages, FLP: 2 MCLINC: 15 Amazon

FEBRUARY 13: *In the Darkroom* by Susan Faludi

Susan Faludi learned that her 76-year-old father-- long estranged and living *in* Hungary-- had undergone sex reassignment surgery. How was this new parent who claimed to be "a complete woman now" connected to *the* silent, explosive, and ultimately violent father she had known? Faludi chases that mystery into *the* recesses of her suburban childhood and her father's many previous incarnations: American dad, Alpine mountaineer, swashbuckling adventurer *in the* Amazon outback, Jewish fugitive *in* Holocaust Budapest. When *the* author travels to Hungary to reunite with her father, she drops into a labyrinth of dark histories and dangerous politics *in* a country hell-bent on repressing its past and constructing a fanciful-- and virulent-- nationhood.

Memoir, 417 pages, 7 FLP: 7 MCLINC: 16 Amazon

MARCH 13: *A Backpack, a Bear, and 8 Crates of Vodka* by Lev Golinkin

A compelling story of two intertwined journeys: a Jewish refugee family fleeing persecution and a young man seeking to reclaim a shattered past. In the twilight of the Cold War (the late 1980s), nine-year old Lev Golinkin and his family cross the Soviet border with only ten suitcases, \$600, and the vague promise of help awaiting in Vienna. Years later, Lev, now an American adult, sets out to retrace his family's long trek, locate the strangers who fought for his freedom, and in the process, gain a future by understanding his past.

Memoir, 307 pages, FLP: 4, MCLINC: 8 Amazon

APRIL 10: *Two She-Bears* by Meir Shalev

One of Israel's most celebrated novelists gives us a story of village love and vengeance in the early days of British Palestine that is still being played out two generations later.

"In the year 1930 three farmers committed suicide here . . . but contrary to the chronicles of our committee and the conclusions of the British policeman, the people of the moshava knew that only two of the suicides had actually taken their own lives, whereas the third suicide had been murdered." This is the contention of Ruta Tavori, a high school teacher and independent thinker in this small farming community who is writing 70 years later about that murder, about two charismatic men she loves and is trying to forgive—her grandfather and her husband—and about her son, whom she mourns and misses. In a story rich with the grit, humor, and near-magical evocation of Israeli rural life for which Meir Shalev is beloved by readers, Ruta weaves a tale of friendship between men, and of love and betrayal, which carries us from British Palestine to present-day Israel, where forgiveness, atonement, and understanding can finally happen.

Fiction, 301 pages, FLP: 2 MCLINC: 11 Amazon

MAY 8: *Pastrami on Rye* by Ted Merwin

For much of the twentieth century, the New York Jewish deli was an iconic institution in both Jewish and American life. As a social space it rivaled - and in some ways surpassed - the synagogue as the primary gathering place for the Jewish community. In popular culture it has been the setting for classics like *When Harry Met Sally*. And today, after a long period languishing in the trenches of the hopelessly old-fashioned, it is experiencing a nostalgic resurgence.

History, 245 pages, FLP: 4 MCLINC: 7 Amazon

JUNE 12: *All Who Go Do Not Return* by Shulem Deen

Shulem Deen was raised to believe that questions are dangerous. As a member of the Skverers, one of the most insular Hasidic sects in the US, he knows little about the outside world-- only that it is to be shunned. His marriage at eighteen is arranged and several children soon follow. Deen's first transgression-- turning on the radio-- is small, but his curiosity leads him to the library, and later the Internet. Soon he begins a feverish inquiry into the tenets of his religious beliefs, until, several years later, his faith unravels entirely. Now a heretic, he fears being discovered and ostracized from the only world he knows. His relationship with his family at stake, he is forced into a life of deception, and begins a long struggle to hold on to those he loves most: his five children. In *All Who Go Do Not Return*, Deen bravely traces his harrowing loss of faith, while offering an illuminating look at a highly secretive world.

Memoir, 310 pages, FLP: 1 MCLINC: 5 Amazon