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Book Talk
AMPA Lunch
October 24, 2018

Sandy Mack



Pachinko

Min Jin Lee

Fiction

A finalist for the National Book Award, this is a multi-generational story of Koreans living in Japan who are both rejected by the new country they call home as well as the country of their birth. As a result, they never fully assimilate. It is a story of strong family ties, economic struggles and sacrifice, and the women who sacrifice all for their families, and most of all, for love.

Love and Ruin

Paula McLain

Fiction

McClain's third historical fiction returns to the telling of another of Ernest Hemingway's wives. This time it is Martha Gellhorn, the third wife of the famous author and a writer herself. Gellhorn's marriage to the author was interrupted by trips where she served as a war correspondent; this time away from her husband ultimately led to the dissolution of their marriage.

The Lilac Girls

Martha Hall Kelly

Fiction

Based on the true story of a New York socialite who became involved in charitable work in the days preceding WW II, the story focuses on Caroline, the New Yorker, two Polish sisters sent to a German concentration camp, and a young German doctor who convinces herself that her work will glorify the Reich. Years after the war is over, their lives will intersect.

My Italian Bulldozer

Alexander McCall Smith

Fiction

Writer Paul Stewart travels to Italy with the intention of finishing his much delayed book. To that end, he books a hotel in the lovely Tuscan town of Montalcino, but when his rental car fails to materialize, he is forced to settle for an Italian bulldozer. A hilarious take on the travel-book genre, this book will have you chuckling aloud.

Leonardo da Vinci

Walter Isaacson

Non-Fiction

Isaacson follows his mega seller biography of Steve Jobs with a tour de force on the life and times of Leonardo da Vinci. He seems to write about men who crossed the boundaries of science and technology---as seen in his other works on Einstein and Ben Franklin. Meticulously researched, this is a riveting look at one of the world's all-time geniuses. The reader is quickly drawn into da Vinci's Renaissance world as we follow him from place to place and project to project. A book to be savored, not rushed through---it will not disappoint.



Carl Silva

The Ninth Hour

Alice McDermott

Fiction

Steeped in turn-of-the-century Irish Brooklyn, McDermott brings us into the world of Sister St. Savior helping those less fortunate. When a young mother and her daughter lose their father, Sister St. Savior brings them to Little Nursing Sisters of the Sick Poor. And it is there we meet the cast of characters guiding this novel. Daughter Sally will be raised by these nuns, and we will follow her life. The intricate linking of the nuns to the community reflect on a time where it often seemed they might be running the city, and as Sally grows up, her desire to be a nun conflicts with her growing realization of the world around her. This is a story of faith, love, and conflict when the church and community worked together to help their citizens and congregation.

Exit West

Mohsin Hamid

Fiction

Nadia and Saeed, two young people who will fall in love, live in an unnamed war-torn country (although it seems like a Middle Eastern city). As life became more dangerous, they have no choice but to leave. But how? There is rumor of someone who can offer them transport through a door that will take them to another country. They take a chance, walk through the door, and find themselves in ...well, you will need to find out. This novel is a remarkable story of fleeing a country, attempting to create a new life, while also growing up and realizing relationships change. In an era where migration is occurring at a scale we have not seen before, *Exit West* is a concise, emotionally riveting work about the world of two refugees looking for a home.

An American Marriage

Tayari Jones

Fiction

Celeste and Roy, a young African American couple, have the ideal life. His business is going strong, and she is an upcoming talented artist. But in one single night, all is upended. At a hotel, Roy is falsely accused of attacking a woman. His wife knows he is innocent because she was with him the whole time. Still, he is wrongfully convicted and sentenced to twelve years in prison. What reality is created because of this? What happens when you follow all the rules, make all the right choices, and then the world turns on you? This novel is told from the points of view of Celeste, Roy, and their close friend Andre as they struggle to make sense of a situation gone horribly wrong while simultaneously seeking justice and understanding.

The Song of Achilles

Madeline Miller

Fiction

The Iliad gets a fresh reboot with Miller's beautiful novel. There has always been an understanding that Achilles and his friend Patroclus were more than just "good friends" in the Greek sense. Miller retells the story exploring how this relationship came to be. We know what happens to Achilles. And Miller explores how this friendship grew into love and challenge for Patroclus as he watches Achilles be consumed by his own pride and greed, visiting this upon their relationship. Add into the mix a very angry mom who happens to be a river-goddess attempting to destroy this unbreakable relationship, and the stage is set for a stunning story that will not be soon forgotten.

Educated

Tara Westover

Non-Fiction

Tara Westover was raised by a radical Mormon survivalist family in Idaho. Just let that sentence sink in. That alone would make for a riveting story. Add that she was homeschooled while struggling with an abusive brother and father, and the obstacles for success become even more challenging. So how despite this situation did she go on to earn a PhD from Cambridge? That is the remarkable autobiography of *Educated*.