

books ' 19 Book Talk  
AMPA Lunch  
October 30, 2019

Sandy Mack



***Where the Crawdads Sing***

**Delia Owens**

Fiction

Optioned by Reese Witherspoon's production company for a future film, this story will not disappoint. Seven-year-old Kya Clark lives with her parents and siblings in a shack in Barkley Cove, North Carolina. Her mother flees their life of poverty to escape her abusive husband, and soon the other children leave as well. This leaves Kya with her father. He leaves when she is ten, and she must learn to fend for herself. She is bullied at school and made to feel an outcast, but she learns despite her travails. What happens to her as she grows to adulthood makes a fascinating read, to say the least!

***The Hamilton Affair***

**Elizabeth Cobbs**

Fiction

The author has anchored this historical fiction in fact and tells a sweeping story of Alexander Hamilton from his youth in St. Croix to his late teens in New York City where he will study law, become a Revolutionary War soldier, and come to the attention of General Washington. Focusing on his personal life as well as his life in politics, the novel is an intriguing read.

***The Great Alone***

**Kristin Hannah**

Fiction

Hannah gives us a tale of modern pioneers who have moved to the wilds of the Alaskan frontier in the hope of starting a new life for themselves. Set in a place of exquisite beauty and terrible dangers, the novel is a story of love and loss, of resilience and redemption. It is suspenseful and will not disappoint.

***The Gifted School***

**Bruce Holsinger**

Fiction

This page-turner examines the culture of striving parents of talented children who will do just about anything to ensure their children gain admittance to a new magnet school for the exceptionally gifted. The story explores privilege, feelings of entitlement, competitiveness, and the effects of these on children, their parents, siblings, long-standing friendships and the overall community. Good read!

***Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why it Matters Now***

**Alan Rusbridger**

Nonfiction

The author believes that we are in the midst of a communication revolution in which falsehood is increasingly overwhelming truth. It not only has changed HOW news is reported and consumed but also HOW and BY WHOM it is generated. From a look at traditional journalistic reporting to what we are facing today, the author has arrived at several unsettling truths.



## Carl Silva

### *Being Mortal*

**Atul Gawande**

Nonfiction

Despite all our technological advances, our understanding of aging seems to be poorly understood. In fact, what is best for someone aging seems to go against how hospitals and assisted living centers are set up. Atul Gawande, drawing upon the experiences of his family and patients, explores what is happening in America today. Although the subject is tough, it was one of the best books I read last year. reinforcing the simple idea that no matter how old or how medically challenged we might become, we all need to be the author of our own lives no matter what the limitations.

### *Fleishman is in Trouble*

**Taffy Brodesser-Akner**

Fiction

Toby Fleishman is in trouble. While trying to navigate a divorce from his very successful wife and rediscovering his sexual being courtesy of online dating, he runs into a small dilemma when the kids are dropped off one weekend and well...don't get picked up. The narrator of this story is Libby, an old friend of Toby's and a stay-at-home mom. What I first thought was going to be an all too familiar white-man woe story slowly transforms into something so much more interesting. Though Libby's presence is rather subtle in the beginning, she starts to show us much more about Toby and even shows Toby more than he may want to know about himself. In fact, the book slowly starts to be less about him and more about the women around him in a very smart turnaround. And as for the wife...don't worry...Libby has that covered.

### *The Nickel Boys: A Novel*

**Colson Whitehead**

Fiction

Just off the success of *The Underground Railroad*, Whitehead returns, mixing non-fiction with fiction with *The Nickel Boys*. Based on a terrifying reform school in Florida during the Jim Crow Era, we meet Elwood Curtis, a morally strong African-American boy inspired by Martin Luther King. Raised by his grandmother, he is bright man who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sent to the Nickel Academy of Eleanor, Florida for "correction", he is brought into a world of cruelty that has him truly testing his belief in the advice of King. There he meets Turner, a fellow student who believes you need to do what you need to do to survive. This friendship will test both of them as they struggle against this torturous school.

***Red at the Bone***

**Jacqueline Woodson**

Fiction

I reviewed her book *Another Brooklyn* in 2017 and am very happy she has written yet another beautiful novel. The year is 2001, and Melody is celebrating her coming-of-age party (turning 16). The entire family gathers to celebrate this momentous occasion. Sure, she wants a Prince song to make her entrance, but the lyrics are a little too suggestive, so it's an instrumental version. The grandparents banter about their fraternities and college life. The guests enjoy the music. One particular note is the stunning white dress Melody will wear. It was a dress her mom was to wear on the day of her coming-of-age party but life would get in the way. This compact novel then explores the lives of all these people gathered, unfolding the past as stories of love and sacrifice and friendship intertwine like the joyous music that fills that house where Melody will walk down the stairs into the world of adulthood.

***Watch Us Rise***

**Renée Watson and Ellen Hagan**

Fiction

Jasmine, Chelsea, Nadine, and Isaac are entering their junior year of high school at a very socially aware, be-active-in-the-community school. When Jasmine and Chelsea realize they can't find a club to belong to, they create *Write Like a Girl*, a blog with the goal of making others aware about the achievements of women. The blog is an immediate success, which then gets into a little bit of trouble for what is being published. Their team needs to figure out what to do as they learn how to balance being active with being responsible. This novel is a great primer about so many of the issues women are facing today while weaving in poetry, history, activism, some very good playlists, and just the tough nature of being a junior in high school.