

Multicultural Book Group choice list for late 2017

August 1 | September 5 | October 3 | November 7 | December 5 | January 2

The women in the castle by Jessica Shattuck 356 p. (many copies, many holds)

Description: Three German women's lives are abruptly changed when their husbands are executed for their part in an attempt to assassinate Hitler. They band together in a crumbling estate to raise their children and keep each other standing. Rich in character development, this book is narrated by each of the women, giving us a clear understanding of their sense of loss, inner strength and the love they have for each other. This story examines the human side of war, where the lines are blurred between hero and victim.

Genre: Historical fiction

Character: Complex

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Bleak; Thought-provoking

Exit west by Mohsin Hamid 231 p. (9 copies)

Description: The internationally best-selling author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* presents the story of two young lovers whose furtive affair is shaped by local unrest on the eve of a civil war that erupts in a cataclysmic bombing attack, forcing them to abandon their previous home and lives.

Genre: Love stories; Political fiction; War stories

Character: Authentic

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Bittersweet; Bleak

The orphan's tale by Pam Jenoff 342 p. (many holds, hoopla audiobook)

Description: Sixteen-year-old Noa, forced to give up her baby fathered by a Nazi soldier, snatches a child from a boxcar containing Jewish infants bound for a concentration camp and takes refuge with a traveling circus, where Astrid, a Jewish aerialist, becomes her mentor.

Book Appeal Terms: Definition of Appeal Terms

Genre: Adult books for young adults; Historical fiction; War stories

Character: Sympathetic

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Bittersweet; Moving

Writing Style: Compelling

The Wangs vs. the world by Jade Chang 354 p. (7 copies, AudioCD, Oneclick audiobook)

Description: A wealthy but dysfunctional Chinese immigrant family has it all, only to lose every last cent. Mad at America, Wang, a brash but lovable immigrant businessman takes his family on a cross-country road trip that, despite a few harrowing twists and turns, eventually brings them back together again.

Genre: Coming-of-age stories; Mainstream fiction; Road novels

Character: Flawed

Tone: Funny; Moving

Writing Style: Engaging

The dark flood rises by Margaret Drabble 327 p. (8 copies, Hoopla audiobook)

Description: Driven to live life to its fullest while she still can, a housing expert for the elderly balances her challenging career with the cares of her loved ones, in a tale that juxtaposes her interconnected social circle in England against her contacts in an idyllic expat community in the Canary Islands.

Genre: Literary fiction; Psychological fiction

Character: Authentic; Complex

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Bittersweet; Reflective

Writing Style: Compelling; Thoughtful

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee 490 p. (12 copies)

Description: In early 1900s Korea, prized daughter Sunja finds herself pregnant and alone, bringing shame on her family until a young tubercular minister offers to marry her and move with her to Japan, in the saga of one family bound together as their faith and identity are called into question.

Genre: Family sagas; Historical fiction

Character: Authentic; Complex

Storyline: Character-driven; Sweeping

Tone: Moving

Writing Style: Compelling

Mothering Sunday: a romance by Graham Swift 177 p. (10 copies)

Description: Sharing what she believes will be a last tryst with a longtime secret lover on the eve of his marriage, a woman reflects on the years they have spent together and her journey of self-discovery against a backdrop of 20th-century history.

Genre: First person narratives; Historical fiction

Character: Complex

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Moving

Writing Style: Descriptive; Stream of consciousness; Stylistically complex

The tea planter's wife by Dinah Jefferies 418 p. (14 copies)

Description: When Gwendolyn Hooper comes to Ceylon as a young bride, she has no idea that she's entering a region on the cusp of political upheaval or that she's living with a widower and his secret-filled past. *The Tea Planter's Wife* has all of the elements that I'm looking for in historical fiction: compelling characters, an evocative setting, a leisurely pace, and a plot that unfolds like the petals of a flower, or, in this case, the tea plant.

Genre: Historical fiction

Pace: Leisurely paced

Tone: Dramatic; Strong sense of place

Writing Style: Compelling; Descriptive; Lush

The velvet hours by Alyson Richman 374 p. (5 copies, hoopla audiobook)

Description: In the face of the German Occupation, a young Parisian woman locks up her late grandmother's apartment, full of valuables and treasure, and wonders if she'll ever return.

Genre: Historical fiction; Parallel narratives

Tone: Atmospheric

Writing Style: Descriptive; Engaging; Lush; Richly detailed

The girl in the castle by Santa Montefiore 538 p. (7 copies, audiobook cd)

Description: A first installment in a planned trilogy follows the experiences of Kitty, who enjoys a life of privilege on Ireland's wild countryside at the side of an increasingly resentful best friend and the vet's son she loves, until the Irish revolt threatens her beloved home.

Genre: Family sagas; Historical fiction

Character: Complex; Flawed

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Strong sense of place

Writing Style: Descriptive; Lyrical

The bookshop on the corner by Jenny Colgan 332 p. (18 copies)

Description: Despite losing her job as a librarian who liked to put the right book into a patron's hands, Nina continues her mission by moving to rural Scotland, purchasing a van, converting it into a bookmobile, and taking to the road. The plot revolves around the romance of the road, the romance of books and reading, and just plain old romance. Another marvelous book by Colgan! A gem of a book!

Genre: Mainstream fiction; Women's romantic fiction

Character: Quirky

Tone: Atmospheric; Heartwarming; Romantic

Writing Style: Engaging; Well-crafted dialogue

Mischling by Affinity Konar 344 p. (18 copies, audiobook cd)

Description: Twin sisters fight to survive the evils of World War II and the Holocaust.

Genre: Adult books for young adults; Historical fiction; Literary fiction

Character: Complex; Courageous

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Haunting; Heart wrenching

Writing Style: Engaging; Spare; Stylistically complex

The house at the edge of night by Catherine Banner 419 p. (12 copies, audiobook cd)

Description: Four generations of women on a Mediterranean island fight to safeguard their family against the forces of history and bitterness that divide them from World War I through the 2008 recession.

Genre: Family sagas; Historical fiction

Character: Large cast of characters

Storyline: Sweeping

Tone: Atmospheric; Dramatic; Romantic

Writing Style: Descriptive; Engaging; Lyrical

This is your life, Harriet Chance! By Jonathan Evison 296 p. (14 copies, audio cd, Hoopla ebook + audio)

Description: Harriet Chance receives word that her recently deceased husband, Bernard, has won an Alaskan cruise. Deciding to go on the trip, she is given a letter from her close friend Mildred, with instructions not to open it until she is on the cruise. The contents of this letter shatter Harriet and she begins to reevaluate her life and her relationships.

Genre: Psychological fiction

Character: Authentic; Sympathetic

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Amusing; Bittersweet

Writing Style: Engaging; Thoughtful

The past by Tessa Hadley 311 p. (10 copies)

Description: Over five novels and two collections of stories Tessa Hadley has earned a reputation as a fiction writer of remarkable gifts, and been compared with Elizabeth Bowen and Alice Munro. In her new novel three sisters and a brother meet up in their grandparents' old house for three long, hot summer weeks. The house is full of memories of their childhood and their past - their mother took them there when she left their father - but now they may have to sell it. And under the idyllic surface, there are tensions. Roland has come with his new wife and his sisters don't like her. Kasim, the twenty-year-old son of Alice's ex-boyfriend, makes plans to seduce Molly, Roland's teenage daughter. Fran's children uncover an ugly secret in a ruined cottage in the woods. Passion erupts where it's least expected, blasting the quiet self-possession of Harriet, the oldest sister. A way of life - bourgeois, literate, ritualised - winds down to its inevitable end. With uncanny precision and extraordinary sympathy, Tessa Hadley charts the squalls of lust and envy disrupting this ill-assorted house party, as well as the consolations of memory and affection, the beauty of the natural world, the shifting of history under the social surface. From the first page the reader is absorbed and enthralled, watching a superb craftsman at work --.

Genre: Domestic fiction

Character: Authentic; Flawed

Storyline: Character-driven

Tone: Moving

Writing Style: Compelling

The zookeeper's wife by Diane Ackerman 368 p. (many copies, many holds, Hoopla audiobook)

Non-fiction

The true story of how the keepers of the Warsaw Zoo saved hundreds of people from Nazi hands. When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw--and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Żabiński began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants--otters, a badger, hyena pups, lynxes--and keeping alive an atmosphere of play and innocence even as Europe crumbled around her.