

## **Kathleen's Recent Reads—July**

### Fiction

#### *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Hiram, an enslaved boy in Virginia fathered by the plantation owner and left on his own after his mother is sold away, succeeds so well at pleasing his father that he is eventually educated and given the job of manservant and guardian to his half-brother Maynard, the heir to the Walker fortune, and a dissipated, shiftless fool. One night, crossing the Goose River while bringing Maynard home after an evening of carousing, Hiram sees a vision of his mother; the next thing he knows, he and Maynard are in the freezing water, the carriage overturned, and Maynard is drowned. This disaster begins a chain of events that opens Hiram's eyes to the secret workings of the Underground Railroad, and to a power within himself. Suspenseful, absorbing historical fiction, with touches of magic.

#### *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford

Henry, an American of Chinese descent, and Keiko, an American of Japanese descent, meet as scholarship students at an all-white school in Seattle during World War II. Both are subjected to vicious racism by their classmates, but are able to withstand it as their friendship blossoms into something more—until Keiko and her family, along with every other Japanese American family, are sent to internment camps. Ford tells Henry's story with a wistful, delicate touch, never glossing over Henry's struggles, but not lingering unduly on the cruelty he experiences.

### Audiobooks\*

\*available on cloudLibrary

#### *The Wife Upstairs* by Rachel Hawkins

Never assume you know what will happen next in this modern retelling of *Jane Eyre*. The story is very enjoyable even without knowledge of the original plot, but for those who are familiar with it, twists and turns abound, and characters become unpredictable and slippery. A suspenseful page-turner.

#### *Sag Harbor* by Colson Whitehead

In the summer of 1985, 15-year old Benji and his friends spend their days working at the local fast food shops, calling shotgun for car rides to the beach, and scheming to attract the few girls in their age group. Sag Harbor, an enclave for middle class Blacks, is an idyllic second home for most of them, with houses inherited by their parents from the pioneering first generation of the postwar era. Meandering and memoir-ish, this coming of age novel is still firmly recognizable as the work of a Pulitzer Prize winning-author, thanks to its sharp observations and masterful use of language. Whitehead excels at calling forth the golden summers of youth, when nothing much and yet everything all happen at once.

*The Sanatorium* by Sarah Pearse

A British detective, on leave from her job as she wrestles with the aftermath of an arrest gone sideways, and her boyfriend arrive at a luxurious new hotel in the Swiss Alps to celebrate the engagement of her brother and a formerly close childhood friend. Everyone seems to have a secret and a troubled past, and things come to a head when people start disappearing and an avalanche cuts off the hotel and its inhabitants from the village below. Recommended for fans of Ruth Ware.

*Whereabouts* by Jhumpa Lahiri

A writer who teaches at a university muses about her life as she goes about her daily activities in this wistful novel, written in Italian and translated into English by the author. Loneliness and small satisfactions coexist for the protagonist, a single, middle-aged Italian woman. Like a secret garden glimpsed through a gate, each short chapter allows a peek into the woman's increasingly circumscribed life, and the narrator's distinctive voice and charming accent lend a charming piquancy.