

## **Kathleen's Recent Reads—January 2022**

### Non-Fiction

#### *Wintering* by Katherine May

Everyone, argues May, cycles through troubled periods in their lives, when we cannot engage fully with society, but must withdraw to rest and heal. This may be due to illness, a bereavement or a birth, or it may result from a failure or humiliation; whatever the reason, these periods (“winters”) come to us all, and often more than once. Why, then, don’t we talk about them, acknowledge their inevitability—even celebrate these fallow periods? Instead, they are treated as something abnormal, something to be ashamed of. May explores different notions of wintering, literal, figurative, and historical, as she chronicles a winter of her own.

### Fiction

#### *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo

A series of linked stories follows the lives of several English women, mostly Black, through decades in this Booker Prize winner. Feminism, the patriarchy, sexuality, relationships are all explored as the characters, most of them considered “other” in some way from mainstream society, live their lives and find their way. Memorable, wide-ranging, and sensitive; suggested for fans of *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi, or Elizabeth Strout’s *Anything is Possible* or *Olive Kitteridge*. A Book Club Selection.

#### *A Deadly Education* by Naomi Novik

Harry Potter meets *The Hunger Games* in this thrilling first book of the new *Scholomance* series. In Novik’s construction, the wizarding world is not dominated by the wizards; rather, they are ably matched by the maleficaria, creatures who mean harm to magical people. In this environment, school becomes a contest of survival, which makes for quite a page turner. Highly recommended for readers who enjoy intricate world building along with fast-paced adventure.

#### *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman

Residents of a senior living facility meet each week to discuss the cold cases of one club member, a retired police officer, using copies of her old files. They are energized when an actual murder is committed in their town, involving a businessman associated with the facility, and work on their own to solve the case. The characters are the draw, with their histories, quirks, and intelligence. Cozy and gentle, despite the ultimately high body count.

#### *Beautiful World, Where Are You* by Sally Rooney

Sally Rooney excels at writing compelling, realistic dialogue that instantly grounds the reader in a book’s setting, and this novel is no different. Eileen and Alice, young Irish women who have been best friends since university, have been physically separated while Alice recovers from a nervous breakdown, and they communicate primarily through email, which allows for a nice amount of musing on topics like the collapse of society in the late Bronze Age. Alice, a famous writer, is struggling to come to terms with her success; Eileen, who works for a literary

magazine, has all but given up on her own, once-promising, writing career, and has come to a kind of emotional crossroads. Both characters seem to realize their lives will never be the same, which lends an undertone of poignant melancholy as they attempt to define what comes next.

Audiobook (available on cloudLibrary)

*Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell

Historical fiction that imagines the marriage of Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare, and named for their son, whose death at age 11 is the centering event of the book. O'Farrell paints Anne as a woman of great intuition, a clairvoyant and healer, in touch with the natural world and reluctant to leave the country, and Shakespeare as a man tormented by his abusive father, unable to live fully until he can escape his father's house. Wistful, evocative, and achingly beautiful with its echoes of some of the themes and imagery from Shakespeare's works (forests, twins), this is a must-read for fans of the Bard.

*Where the Grass is Green and the Girls Are Pretty* by Lauren Weisberger

Sisters Peyton and Skye appear, at first glance, to be completely different. Peyton, an anchor on a morning news show, is fabulously successful and has the lifestyle to go with it; Skye, a stay-at-home mom in an upscale suburb, is more low-key and bohemian. But both harbor secrets and must deal with the fallout of bad decisions in this entertaining women's fiction.