

AAUW 2019-2020 Book Club Selections

DATE: September 23, 2019, 3pm at The Attic

Leader: Wendy Schroeder

Inheritance, A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity and Love by Dani Shapiro

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

What makes us who we are? What combination of memory, history, biology, experience, and that ineffable thing called the soul defines us?

In the spring of 2016, through a genealogy website to which she had whimsically submitted her DNA for analysis, Dani Shapiro received the stunning news that her father was not her biological father. She woke up one morning and her entire history--the life she had lived--crumbled beneath her.

Inheritance is a book about secrets--secrets within families, kept out of shame or self-protectiveness; secrets we keep from one another in the name of love. It is the story of a woman's urgent quest to unlock the story of her own identity, a story that has been scrupulously hidden from her for more than fifty years, years she had spent writing brilliantly, and compulsively, on themes of identity and family history. It is a book about the extraordinary moment we live in--a moment in which science and technology have outpaced not only medical ethics but also the capacities of the human heart to contend with the consequences of what we discover.

DATE: October 28, 2019, 3pm at The Attic

Leader: Dotty Juengst

Becoming by Michelle Obama

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America—the first African American to serve in that role—she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world, dramatically changing the ways that families pursue healthier and more active lives, and standing with her husband as he led America through

some of its most harrowing moments. Along the way, she showed us a few dance moves, crushed Carpool Karaoke, and raised two down-to-earth daughters under an unforgiving media glare.

In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms. Warm, wise, and revelatory, *Becoming* is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations—and whose story inspires us to do the same.

DATE: November 25, 2019, 3pm at The Attic

Leader: Carolyn Reedy

The Gown by Jennifer Robson

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

London, 1947: Besieged by the harshest winter in living memory, burdened by onerous shortages and rationing, the people of postwar Britain are enduring lives of quiet desperation despite their nation’s recent victory. Among them are Ann Hughes and Miriam Dassin, embroiderers at the famed Mayfair fashion house of Norman Hartnell. Together they forge an unlikely friendship, but their nascent hopes for a brighter future are tested when they are chosen for a once-in-a-lifetime honor: taking part in the creation of Princess Elizabeth’s wedding gown.

Toronto, 2016: More than half a century later, Heather Mackenzie seeks to unravel the mystery of a set of embroidered flowers, a legacy from her late grandmother. How did her beloved Nan, a woman who never spoke of her old life in Britain, come to possess the priceless embroideries that so closely resemble the motifs on the stunning gown worn by Queen Elizabeth II at her wedding almost seventy years before? And what was her Nan’s connection to the celebrated textile artist and holocaust survivor Miriam Dassin?

DATE: January 27, 2020, 3pm at TBD

Leader: TBD

The Moment of Lift by Melinda Gates

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

For the last twenty years, Melinda Gates has been on a mission to find solutions for people with the most urgent needs, wherever they live.

Throughout this journey, one thing has become increasingly clear to her: If you want to lift a society up, you need to stop keeping women down.

In this moving and compelling book, Melinda shares lessons she's learned from the inspiring people she's met during her work and travels around the world. As she writes in the introduction, "That is why I had to write this book —to share the stories of people who have given focus and urgency to my life. I want all of us to see ways we can lift women up where we live."

Melinda's unforgettable narrative is backed by startling data as she presents the issues that most need our attention—from child marriage to lack of access to contraceptives to gender inequity in the workplace. And, for the first time, she writes about her personal life and the road to equality in her own marriage. Throughout, she shows how there has never been more opportunity to change the world—and ourselves.

Writing with emotion, candor, and grace, she introduces us to remarkable women and shows the power of connecting with one another.

When we lift others up, they lift us up, too.

DATE: February 24, 2020, 3pm at TBD

Leader: TBD

Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than twenty years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene? With incredible empathy, intelligence, and candor, Jodi

Picoult tackles race, privilege, prejudice, justice, and compassion—and doesn't offer easy answers.

DATE: March 18, 2020, 5:30 pm at Green Bay Distillery

Leader: Joint meeting with evening Adelante! book group. Local author will be present.

Sara's Sacrifice by Flo Parfitt

Available: Soon to be published

It is the beginning of the 20th century and Sara Dewberry, a wealthy wife of Henry and mother of four (Thaddeus, Ella, Elizabeth and Adam) and a possible fifth on the way has become interested in the suffragette movement. Her husband is vehemently opposed to the movement and so the deceit began as Sara entered the underground movement of the suffragettes.

After a series of tragic events, Sara attends a rally in Chicago where she is jailed. Her secret is out and her irate husband banishes her from her home and her children. He legally has a right to do so since only the husband owns property and in fact owns his wife and children.

Sara realizes the only way to stop the insanity is to change the world and that is precisely what she sets out to do with her friend Tillie Morgenson, wife of the late Senator Morgenson. They travel together from Milwaukee to the streets of NYC. From the halls of justice in Washington DC to the deep south where they experience first-hand the plight of black women in the South. They endure adversity and disease, they lobby politicians, influence preachers, they join militants, encounter hostility and campaigned diligently to recruit more women and somehow change the world.

DATE: April 27, 2020 3pm at TBD

Leader: TBD

How Not to Die Alone by Richard Roper

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

Andrew's been feeling stuck.

For years he's worked a thankless public health job, searching for the next of kin of those who die alone. Luckily, he goes home to a loving family every night. At least, that's what his coworkers believe.

Then he meets Peggy.

A misunderstanding has left Andrew trapped in his own white lie and his lonely apartment. When new employee Peggy breezes into the office like a breath of fresh air, she makes Andrew feel truly alive for the first time in decades.

Could there be more to life than this?

But telling Peggy the truth could mean losing everything. For twenty years, Andrew has worked to keep his heart safe, forgetting one important thing: how to live. Maybe it's time for him to start.

DATE: May 26, 2020, 3pm at TBD (This is a Tuesday due to Memorial Day Holiday)

Leader: Diane Warpinski

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

Available: Hardcover, paperback, e-Book, audio book

From the moment she entered the world, Francie needed to be made of stern stuff, for the often harsh life of Williamsburg demanded fortitude, precocity, and strength of spirit. Often scorned by neighbors for her family's erratic and eccentric behavior—such as her father Johnny's taste for alcohol and Aunt Sissy's habit of marrying serially without the formality of divorce—no one, least of all Francie, could say that the Nolans' life lacked drama. By turns overwhelming, sublime, heartbreaking, and uplifting, the Nolans' daily experiences are tenderly threaded with family connectedness and raw with honesty. Betty Smith has, in the pages of *A Tree Grows in*

Brooklyn, captured the joys of humble Williamsburg life—from “junk day” on Saturdays, when the children of Francie’s neighborhood traded their weekly take for pennies, to the special excitement of holidays, bringing cause for celebration and revelry. Betty Smith has artfully caught this sense of exciting life in a novel of childhood, replete with incredibly rich moments of universal experiences—a truly remarkable achievement for any writer.

DATE: June 22, 2020, 3pm at TBD

Leader: Joanne Rathburn

My Sister, The Serial Killer by Oyinkan Braithwaite

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

Korede is bitter. How could she not be? Her sister, Ayoola, is many things: the favorite child, the beautiful one, possibly sociopathic. And now Ayoola's third boyfriend in a row is dead.

Korede's practicality is the sisters' saving grace. She knows the best solutions for cleaning blood, the trunk of her car is big enough for a body, and she keeps Ayoola from posting pictures of her dinner to Instagram when she should be mourning her "missing" boyfriend. Not that she gets any credit.

Korede has long been in love with a kind, handsome doctor at the hospital where she works. She dreams of the day when he will realize that she's exactly what he needs. But when he asks Korede for Ayoola's phone number, she must reckon with what her sister has become and how far she's willing to go to protect her.

DATE: July 27, 2020, 3pm at TBD

Leader: TBD

An American Marriage by Tayari Jones

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, audio book

Newlyweds Celestial and Roy are the embodiment of both the American Dream and the New South. He is a young executive, and she is an artist on the brink of an exciting career. But as they settle into the routine of their life together, they are ripped apart by circumstances neither could have

imagined. Roy is arrested and sentenced to twelve years for a crime Celestial knows he didn't commit. Though fiercely independent, Celestial finds herself bereft and unmoored, taking comfort in Andre, her childhood friend, and best man at their wedding. As Roy's time in prison passes, she is unable to hold on to the love that has been her center. After five years, Roy's conviction is suddenly overturned, and he returns to Atlanta ready to resume their life together.

This stirring love story is a profoundly insightful look into the hearts and minds of three people who are at once bound and separated by forces beyond their control. *An American Marriage* is a masterpiece of storytelling, an intimate look deep into the souls of people who must reckon with the past while moving forward—with hope and pain—into the future.