

# 2018 Reading Recommendations

## by Members of Alpha Sigma Chapter, Kitsap DKG

1. ***Leonardo Da Vinci*** by Walter Isaacson  
This book describes the development of a primarily self-educated genius. A thoughtful look at the society which he had to deal with gave me a whole new perspective on this man. The only persons that he can possibly be compared with today are Steve Jobs and Einstein, but his talents were so much broader than both of them! Long, sometimes not easy to read, but worth it!
2. ***Educated: a Memoir*** by Tara Westover  
Another story about self-education without the benefit of a formal school environment. It makes you think!
3. ***My Antonia*** by Willa Cather  
I have just seen the play and am rereading this novel with a new perspective: Immigrants in America in the 1890's and immigrants today. Willa Cather, whose family homesteaded in the 1880's, has such a 21<sup>st</sup> century view of the role of women, as expressed in her writing. Amazing!
4. ***Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy*** by Ann Boyd Rioux  
This is a great history of Louisa May Alcott and the inspiration behind Little Women and its influence. It's a treasured story with my mom, my sister and me (who are often called the Little Women) and this does great justice to the story. I highly recommend it.
5. ***March*** by Geraldine Brooks  
To complement the Rioux recommendation. This novel looks at the absent father of Little Women as he goes off to the Civil War.
6. ***The Golem and the Jinni*** by Helene Wecker  
A very unusual book, part science fiction and part realistic fiction. Two mythical beings meet in New York City after being transported from Europe (the Golem) and from the Middle East (the Jinni). Supposedly a sequel is in the works. A page turner!
7. ***The Lilac Girls*** by Martha Hall Kelly  
Another WWII book but from a very unique perspective. Heartwarming, and redeeming. A must read!
8. ***The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*** by Kelli Estes  
A moving novel about the Chinese expulsion from Seattle and Orcas Island. Set in the modern day and also 100 years ago.
9. ***Little Fires Everywhere*** by Celeste Ng  
A best seller for over a year, it is a study of motherhood from all angles. Lots of discussion possibilities here.

10. ***My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry***

by Fredrik Backman. Told from the perspective of a “different” seven year old who has been challenged by her dying grandmother and only friend to deliver a series of letters apologizing to people she has wronged and thus begins an adventure that combines fairy tales and mythical kingdoms with misfits, danger, and the discovery of family.

11. ***In the Midst of Winter*** by Isabel Allende

While the plot device stretches credulity – even borders on the absurd, the three characters inhabiting this novel relate their immigrant life histories from three different circumstances (decades) in very real and compelling detail. The intertwining of their lives and the discoveries they make illustrate Allende’s belief in the quote by Camus that is the book’ title, “In the midst of winter, I finally found there was within me an invincible summer.”

12. ***Unsheltered*** by Barbara Kingsolver

*Unsheltered* begins on the eve of the 2016 presidential election, when Willa, a freelance journalist whose family has fallen on hard times, discovers that the house they’ve moved into has a “nonexistent foundation.” Hoping to enlist restoration help from a historical society, Willa traces the origins of the house to Thatcher Greenwood, a science teacher who lived there in the 1870s, and his neighbor, a real-life woman biologist named Mary Treat, whose research supported Charles Darwin’s theory of the origin of species. Just as Darwin’s theory challenged the Victorian belief in the Judeo-Christian creation myth, so too, in Willa’s era, does global warming challenge prevailing myths about the future of civilization.

13. ***Hidden Tapestry*** by Delora Dean

Story of a hero of the WWII resistance who lived with gypsies part-time as a child. He went on to become an artist in NYC, living a bohemian life style with two wives, and was a contemporary of Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock, and others.

14. ***Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts*** by Brené Brown

Based on research with leaders, change makers and culture shifters, Brown puts ideas into practice. She opens the door to better leadership, shared leadership, questioning and listening, and the power of vulnerability. “A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for recognizing the potential in people and ideas and has the courage to develop that potential.”

15. ***Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*** by Donna Hicks and Desmond Tutu

When dignity is violated, the response often involve aggression, violence, and hatred. But when people treat one another with dignity, they build connections and more meaningful relationships. The book explores strategies for putting dignity into practice.

16. ***The Sisters Brothers*** by Patrick deWitt

Eli Sisters narrates the story of his journey with his brother to complete their last job as contract killers in 1850's California. Their target is a miner working his claim near Sacramento who supposedly stole something and has something else their boss wants.

The brothers are not overly concerned about the details. Eli and brother Charley are bad guys, no debate. They kill other bad and good guys alike, with small provocation, and the bodies stack up as they journey on. However, Eli has grown weary. He muses on the meaning of life- the morality of choosing one horse over another, of the comfort a woman would bring, of how hard it is to find a friend. He observes, "The creak of bed springs suffering under the weight of a restless man is as lonely a sound as I know."

The deadpan humor and unexpected observations make this book mighty entertaining. Eli ponders over the odd pointy hats some trappers wear- do they make those themselves? His brother Charley tells the tale of "How Eli Got His Freckles" that is a gross parody of any Greek creation myth. This book is not for the squeamish, but for folks looking for a good yarn.

17. **Warlight** by Michael Ondaatje

Author of *the English Patient*. This is a dark fairy tale, a mesmerizing story set in the decade after WWII, about two teens raised in London by mysterious, eccentric men and women (since their parents have disappeared somewhere in Singapore). As the boy matures into adulthood, he exhumes his parents' secrets from a mire of espionage war and comes to realize that no one really understands another's life or death.

18. **The Underground Railroad** by Colson Whitehead

The book follows the life of Cora, a young slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia and Charleston, as she escapes on the Underground Railroad. In Colson Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor: engineers and conductors operate a secret network of actual tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora embarks on a harrowing flight from one state to the next, encountering, like Gulliver, strange yet familiar iterations of her own world at each stop. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the terrors of the antebellum era, he weaves in the saga of our nation, from the brutal abduction of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. *The Underground Railroad* is both the gripping tale of one woman's will to escape the horrors of bondage—and a powerful meditation on the history we all share.

19. **Not for Profit: Why democracy needs the humanities** by Martha Nussbaum

*Not for Profit* reminds us all that the deeper purposes of liberal education go well beyond personal advancement or national competitiveness. The real project is to educate responsible global citizens who will champion democracy and human development, and who have the skills to collaborate across differences and borders to solve pressing global problems. "This is why I teach," says the recommending member.

20. **Ransom** by David Malouf

This is the story of the relationship between two grieving men at war: fierce Achilles, who has lost his beloved Patroclus in the siege of Troy, and woeful Priam, whose son Hector killed Patroclus and was in turn savaged by Achilles. A moving tale of suffering, sorrow, and redemption, *Ransom* is incandescent in its delicate and powerful lyricism and its unstated imperative that we imagine our lives in the glow of fellow feeling.

21. **The Way Under the Way** by Mark Nepo

When we shift from trying to be special to seeking what is special in everything, we

discover “the way under the way”—the timeless terrain of that mysterious force which animates and unites us. *The Way Under the Way* is part of a collection original poems and essays to open the heart, awaken insight, and support you on each step of your unique journey through life. Fabulous use of language, speaking to your feelings and becomes a friend of your Soul. Other two in collection: *Suite for the Living* and *Inhabiting Wonder*.

22. ***Half Broke Horses*** by Jeannette Walls

*Half Broke Horses* tells the story of Lily Casey Smith, Jeannette Walls’s no-nonsense, resourceful, and spectacularly compelling grandmother. By age six, Lily was helping her father break horses. At fifteen, she left home to teach in a frontier town—riding five hundred miles on her pony, alone, to get to her job. She learned to drive a car and fly a plane. And, with her husband, Jim, she ran a vast ranch in Arizona. She raised two children, one of whom is Jeannette’s memorable mother, Rosemary Smith Walls, unforgettably portrayed in *The Glass Castle*. Lily survived tornadoes, droughts, floods, the Great Depression, and the most heartbreaking personal tragedy. She bristled at prejudice of all kinds—against women, Native Americans, and anyone else who didn’t fit the mold.

23. ***The Sound of Gravel*** by Ruth Wariner

The thirty-ninth of her father’s forty-two children, Ruth Wariner grew up in polygamist family on a farm in rural Mexico. In *The Sound of Gravel*, she offers an unforgettable portrait of the violence that threatened her community, her family’s fierce sense of loyalty, and her own unshakeable belief in the possibility of a better life. An intimate, gripping tale of triumph and courage, *The Sound of Gravel* is a heart-stopping true story.

24. ***Born a Crime: Stories of a South African Childhood*** by Trevor Noah

An eye-opening memoir that shows the strength of a mother, who literally had to hide Trevor until apartheid was outlawed. The social implications, the way the family was able to work around restrictions and poverty, and still have a life is amazing. Intelligence, an abiding sense of humor and survival skills enabled Noah to become a world figure in *The Daily Show* as a young man.

25. ***Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: the Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis*** by Timothy Eagan

Starting in Seattle in the 1890’s, Curtis became a photographer who would travel the U.S. in documenting the beauty of the natural world and Native American cultures. Part history and part cultural tales, it is a work of deep insight into the times and peoples. Though Curtis has been criticized for “staging” his pictures, this book defends his work in saving the culture and language of many tribes in the NW, the SW and the Plains. I just wish there had been more samples of his photography.

26. ***Leadership in Turbulent Times*** by Doris Kearns Goodwin

Are leaders born or made? Where does ambition come from? How does adversity affect the growth of leadership? Does the leader make the times or do the times make the leader? In *Leadership*, Goodwin draws upon the four presidents she has studied most closely—Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson (in civil rights)—to

show how they recognized leadership qualities within themselves and were recognized as leaders by others. By looking back to their first entries into public life, we encounter them at a time when their paths were filled with confusion, fear, and hope.

27. Also recommended: ***The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*** by Gabrielle Zevin, ***The Book Thief*** by Markus Zusak, ***The Giver*** by Lois Lowry and ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** by Harper Lee because they seem to have new meaning when rereading them at this stage of life.