



2020 READING RECOMMENDATIONS

By Members of Alpha Sigma Chapter, Kitsap DKG



1. ***The Book of Longings***

by Sue Monk Kidd

This is a well-researched novel taking place in Palestine during the time of Jesus. Ana is an educated young woman from a wealthy family, who has connections with the ruler of Galilee. She loves to write narratives about neglected and silenced women. She hates the prospect of having to marry a rich widower. Circumstances change and through a series of events, she meets Jesus and becomes his wife before he begins his ministry. Did I mention that Judas is Ana's brother and a zealot? When Ana commits a brazen act against the royal family, she is forced into exile in Alexandria just when Jesus begins his ministry. She is ultimately released during a most important week in the history of humanity, where she determines her fate.

2. ***A Gentleman in Moscow: A Novel***

by Amor Towles

An excellent read of times and locations very different from ours. A story of family, loss, loyalty, sacrifice, love and so much more. Utterly charming! You will love the main character, but also the supporting cast.

3. ***The Water Dancer***

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

This is a slavery-era novel that tells a powerful story of loss and courage and of a special thing found. An Oprah Book Club choice, it was written by another talented, young black author.

4. ***The Great Alone***

by Kristin Hannah

Hannah is one of my favorite authors because of her powerful storytelling and richly drawn characters. The setting is modern day Alaska and tells the story of a dysfunctional family's struggle to find happiness and peace. At times not an easy read, but well worth it. My book club loved it!

5. ***Sing Unburied Sing***

by Jesmyn Ward

This novel is set in modern Mississippi. The author has spent time there and knows the people she writes about well. Although it is a novel, it feels like an amalgamation of real people and events, with the culturally appropriate air of the supernatural thrown in. A powerful read.

6. ***The Moment of Lift***

by Melinda Gates

A memoir that is so much more! I have a full page of wonderful quotes that I took from the book, which is something I don't usually do. I didn't know much about her, but I came away so impressed by her morality, philanthropy and self-knowledge. It is about the empowerment of women, but there is so much more to it.

7. ***The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz.*** by Erik Larsen

This is an interesting view of the lives of upper class families in the UK during the beginning of WWII. A moment to moment chronology of Churchill, members of his family and close confidants, is woven between the anecdotes of Churchill as Prime Minister. There are surprising glimpses into his private life, especially late night antics when guests were present at his Camp David like retreat from 10 Downing Street. All of this takes place while London and surrounding cities and military bases are bombed nightly by the Germans, residents are routinely retreating to shelters and death and destruction are prevalent. Churchill expected invasion and knew that American help was necessary if the UK were to survive. Having studied many aspects of World War II and listened to all of Churchill's incredible speeches which bolstered the courage of the people during this period, it was amazing to see a more personal, picture of this iconic hero and the courage of the English people.

8. ***Ragged Company.*** by Richard Wagamese

Four homeless people in a large Canadian city discover a lost winning lottery ticket with a \$13.5 million jackpot. Without identification or addresses, none of them can claim it. They enlist help from an ex-newspaper man.

9. ***Indian Horse.*** by Richard Wagamese

A moving story of a young Ojibway boy forcibly taken to a merciless home (orphanage) for First Nation children. He survives, excels and ultimately escapes through ice hockey. A wonderful film as well.

10. ***Years of Wonder*** by Geraldine Brooks

An odd choice I admit, since it is about the plague, but certainly relevant. In 1666, residents of a small English village make the extraordinary decision to quarantine themselves to keep the plague from spreading outside the village. As they confront death and their own weaknesses, the villagers also discover faith and community. They all sacrifice and ultimately succeed because they were in it "together."

11. ***The Bean Trees*** by Barbara Kingsolver

This is Kingsolver's first book telling the story of a young Taylor Greer who escapes her rural Kentucky background by heading west to Tucson, where she confronts life in the raw. Drugs, alcohol, poverty abandonment, she finds them all. But she also finds friendship, belonging, love and her own inner strength. Though a novel, there are biographical components to Kingsolver's own life. I recommend any of her books.

12. ***Accidental Presidents: Eight Men Who Changed America*** by Jared Cohen

This well written and very approachable book tells the story of eight presidents, who became president by the unexpected death of their predecessors. Some, like Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson, were very successful. Some, like Andrew Jackson, were disasters, whose administrations had long term repercussions after they left office. The book examines the role of the vice-president in the Constitution and how it has changed in recent years from a position of little consequence to one of partnership with the president.

13. ***The Man With A Load of Mischief*** by Martha Grimes

I reread this author's mysteries because I love her humor, her characters and her ever handsome detective Richard Jury. The titles are all names of English pubs. This is the first in a series of 25 books. I also recommend the mystery series in items 14 and 15 below.

14. ***Maisie Dobbs*** by Jaqueline Windspear

This is the first book in the series. Easy reads about a young woman "private investigator" in the years between WWI and WWII. Maisie is not your usual young woman and neither are her adventures. Sort of a Nancy Drew for adults, liked by both female and male readers. There are 15 books in the series so far, many award winning.

15. ***A Great Deliverance (Inspector Lynley Series)*** by Elizabeth George

This is the first book in this series of 20 books which is more serious than the two above. "Police procedural" by the charming 8th Earl of Asherton, Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley and his misfit working class sergeant Barbara Havers, who team brilliantly to solve murders all over England. The author lives on Whidbey Island and Seattle.

16. ***Squeeze Me.*** by Carl Hiaasen

An hysterical spoof of current society in Palm Beach, Florida. Lord knows we need to laugh these days! It is a quick, fun read!!

17. ***Talking to Strangers*** by Malcolm Gladwell

We all know Gladwell to be an incredible writer and thinker who seems to tackle the most relevant topics at just the right time. *Talking to Strangers* is no different. Gladwell tells a series of stories about encounters between strangers, some that go well and others terribly wrong, to illustrate concepts about trust and lying in communications, why lying works and why people believe the lies over and over again.

18. ***Breath, Eyes, Memory*** by Edwidge Danticat

I am not sure why I never discovered this award winning author before (this book was published in 1994), but I have now and recommend her. Haitian born, Danticat moved to the USA when she was twelve. Her novels and short stories contain strong elements of her Haitian culture and her enduring respect for the Haitian people. In this novel, the strength and courage of three generations of women are explored, the love, the hurt, the shame, and the wonder that binds a family.

19. ***Such a Fun Age*** by Kiley Reid

This story tells about a young black woman employed as a baby sitter while trying to decide what to do with her life. A racist incident in an upscale grocery store leads to an interesting series of events. I liked this book because it covered situations from various viewpoints and demonstrated how racism operates both subtly and not so subtly.