

# October 2017 Wayne Readers' Recommendations

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*We want to hear from you. Please send a blurb about something you've read and want to share with CML. Postings will be published monthly except over the summer. Next posting will be in November 2017. Send your recommendations to*

[jadelbergCML@gmail.com](mailto:jadelbergCML@gmail.com)

*This month's blog has **11** entries from enthusiastic readers. Try some of these selections now that the days are getting shorter.*

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## Non-Fiction



### **Democracy in Chains by Nancy MacLean (Politics / Government / Ideologies)**

Democracy in Chains was written by Nancy MacLean (Professor of History and Public Policy at Duke). It's 240 pages present a deep history of the radical right in America from its origins with Brown vs Board of Education (1954) to the present. It elucidates how the work of the "free market" economist James Buchanan (Nobel laureate in 1986 who died in 2013) becomes linked to the deep pockets of Charles Koch and the subsequent creation of a broad political strategy aimed at undoing long standing American democratic traditions — in the name of a modified form of "libertarianism." It discusses the social safety net which emerged during the Depression and how this has become integrated into American society. It describes tactics which have been and are being used as part of a grand strategy to undermine the social safety net and other public institutions and to return the country to a social fabric favoring only the propertied classes. This book presents what I believe to be a credible portrait of America today and the political machinations testing its resolve.

Other recent books which relate to this subject and which insightfully illuminate the surrounding territory are Hillbilly Elegy by J D Vance (2016), Strangers in Their Land by Arlie Russell Hochschild (2016), and The Conscience of a Conservative by Jeff Flake (2017). Democracy in Chains was published in 2017.

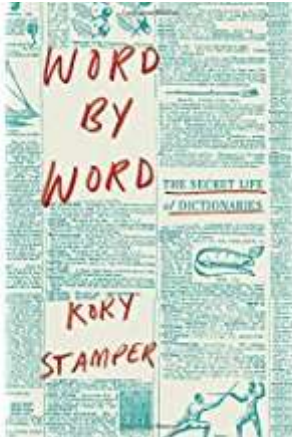
This is perhaps the most important book I have read recently.

Mark Rockkind   Morristown NJ / Wayne, ME

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## **Word by Word by Kory Stamper (Lexicography)**

This interesting book is for people who like words. The author is a lexicographer for Merriam-Webster. She writes humorously about a tedious process. It is a wonder dictionaries are ever ready for print. Her vocabulary is awesome. It is not a book for everyone, but for those who love words, it is a gift!

Reviewed by Rowena Farrar



## **Franklin and Winston by Jon Meacham (History/Biography)**

In Franklin and Winston, author Jon Meacham presents a dual biography of two of the most powerful men of the 20th century. He traces the family backgrounds of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and speculates on how their upbringing molded their decision-making skills.

On Christmas 1941 Winston visits the White House with the goal of encouraging the American President to enter the war. Roosevelt, knowing the tenor of his people, resisted but eventually signed the Lend Lease Treaty that provided the British Government with the necessary arms and machinery to resist the German advances. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor sealed the deal and America enters WWII.

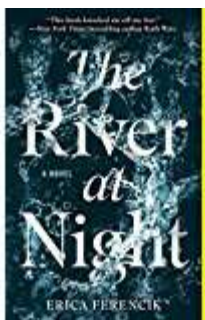
Meacham details the cooperation between FDR and Churchill and their relationship with Joseph Stalin. Roosevelt, recognizing the strength of the Russian army, was forced to balance his close relationship with Churchill with the need to keep the Russians on the side of the allies.

The author makes generous use of the personal writings of the main subjects. Their beautifully written letters are almost poetic and present a cold comparison to today's politics.

Reviewed by James DiRenzo  
Flanders, NJ / Wayne, ME

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## **Fiction**



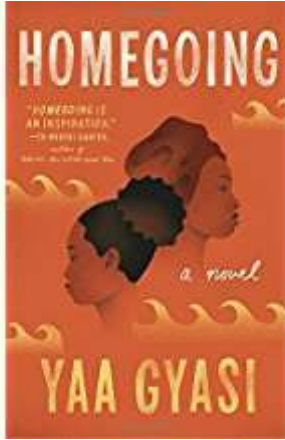
## **The River at Night by Erica Ferencik (Suspense)**

Think four women white water rafting on a "girls weekend." Think Stephen King as a guide. Read if you ride with Stephen King.

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

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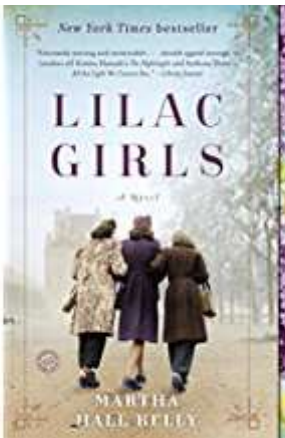
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## Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi (Historical Fiction)

The latter is full of characters and their offspring through the centuries of slavery, from the 1800 until the recent past. Nothing new, no belaboring of gory details, but she presents her characters in a way the reader can empathize with. It really sets up scenarios that help in understanding current Black/White relationships, and the very long history of hardships of African Americans.

Reviewed by Rowena Farrar



## Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly (Historical Fiction)

An amazing story - following three women during WWII. One is a Polish resistance fighter, another is a German doctor, and the third is a New York socialite who spends her time and resources during the war and long after, helping Europeans affected by the war.

The story is well written, though painful to read at times. The main character, Caroline Ferriday is a real person, and years of careful research by the author detail her exploits and life as it happened. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Judy Danielson



## The Right Side by Spencer Quinn (Mystery)

Army Sgt. LeAnne Hogan (Iraq/Afghanistan) ends up at Walter Reed Hospital for Recovery. Upon release, still traumatized, she embarks on a cross country journey and along the way is adopted by an unruly stray dog. Together they set out to finding a missing girl. A must-read.

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

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## **Seven Days in May by Kim Izzo (Historical Fiction)**

One of my favorite time periods to read about is turn-of-the-century, early 1900s. *Seven Days in May* takes place in 1914 during WWI and is an historical fiction account of the doomed, seven day voyage of the *Lusitania*.

Sydney and Brooke Sinclair are two New York heiresses making the crossing to England, along with Brooke's fiancé, Edward. Despite warnings from the German government that ships are at risk, they board the ill-fated liner for England and THE upcoming wedding.

Sydney, Brooke and Edward are the main characters on the *Lusitania* and another key player is Isabel Nelson, who is working in London for the British government in breaking codes. Her character weaves in and out, adding suspense and interest to the story.

At times the book reads like a soap opera, but I enjoyed it and found Sydney's character to be especially intriguing in her passion for the suffragette movement and women's rights.  
Good read!

Reviewed by Bev Petell



## **The Samurai's Garden by Gail Tsukiyama (Historical Fiction)**

This novel is one of Tsukiyama's earlier books (1994), but is wonderfully written and I thought a true gem. The story spans one year (fall 1937 – fall 1938) in the life of a 20 year old Chinese man who lives in Hong Kong, but is sent to a rural beach community in Japan to recoup from an illness. Here at the family beach house the quiet older family gardener becomes his caregiver and eventual friend. Nearby is an even smaller hamlet in the mountains where ostracized individuals with leprosy have been sent to live including a lifelong friend of Matsu, the gardener. How all of these lives intersect and impact the young Steven is very special. Highly recommend.

Reviewed by Connie Locashio  
Winthrop



## **Radio Girls by Sarah-Jane Stratford (Historical Fiction)**

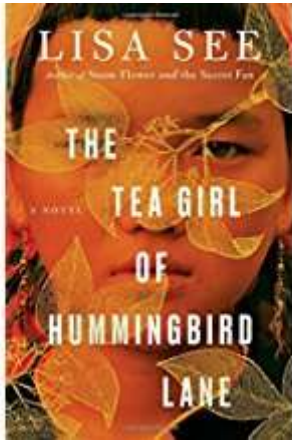
This is historical fiction exploring a real life journalist - Hilda Matheson - along with a variety of fictional characters. They all worked at BBC in London in the early 20s, as it was starting. This is a great summer read with a touch of romance thrown in, and lots of true information about the beginning of radio and broadcast news. The female characters are all determined to take advantage of a new career path opening for women, and to do their best to challenge cultural norms about how women should act and what they were capable of doing.

Reviewed by Judy Danielson



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## **The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane by Lisa See (Historical Fiction)**

Generations of ritual govern the lives of the Akha tribe, where Li-Yan's family raises tea in a remote Chinese mountaintop village. These ancient ways change as the soaring demand for rare tea brings the 20th century to the mountain. This engrossing book is also a compelling adoption story, told from all perspectives. Hard to put down. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Janet Adelberg