

Wayne Reader's Blog May 2022

Fiction

Violeta by Isabel Allende (Fiction)

A fascinating story told by an old woman to her grandson about her life and how she survived and dealt with many of her life events. She relays a lot of details to him about her early life, and why she made some of the decisions she did, and how she felt about so many things and how her feelings evolved. She also explains a lot of family dynamics and how he came to be, as well as how political events in Chile shaped them all....

Reviewed by Judy Danielson

Wish You Were Here by Jodi Picoult (Fiction)

I wasn't sure I was ready to read this book about the beginning of our COVID pandemic, but once I got started I had a hard time putting it down.

The story centers around Diana and Finn, a young couple living in NYC. They've planned a dream vacation to the Galapagos for her 30th birthday...then COVID hits. It's all hands on deck at the hospital where Finn is a surgical resident, but he insists that Diana should still go. Fasten your seatbelt for the ride that follows, on the island and back in the city. It is an emotional read that will touch every reader on multiple levels. A page turner that would be an excellent book group discussion.

Reviewed by Bev Petell

Falling by T.J. Newman (Fiction)

I read this book in one sitting as I was gripped by the suspense. A pilot is faced with the threat to either crash the plane or let his family be killed. A great look at airplane crew culture: my favorite character is a feisty, seasoned flight attendant who takes charge of 'her cabin.' This is the first novel by a flight attendant who scribbled it down during red eye flights. Good writing, fast paced, and I highly recommend it!

Reviewed by Chris Jones

The Extraordinary Life of Same Hell by Robert Dugoni (Fiction)

The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell, by Robert Dugoni starts in a delivery room where Sam's mother and father see that their new son was born with red eyes. Mrs Hill, a devout Catholic, prays that her child will be seen as a normal child but anticipates the agony he might experience because of strange eyes. Sam's mother waits for the day her son is admitted to Our Lady Of Mercy School. Sister Bridget, the principal insists that he cannot be admitted because he will certainly cause a disruption. Mother Hill's insistence finally gets Sam admitted and it is here that he meets his nemesis, David the Bully. This relationship follows Sam into his adult life and leads to his choice of profession.

The author's style makes this an easy read, a page turner.

Robert Dugoni's family is an apparent lead to the development of this story.

Reviewed by Jim DiRenzo

Run Rose Run by Dolly Parton and James Patterson (Fiction)

On the run, attacked by a truck driver, escapes with the truck to borrow a guitar to sing in a Nashville honky-tonk. Surviving to tell her story in song, she tries to find a future and lose a past. Enjoyed it muchly!

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

House Rules by Jodi Picoult (Fiction)

As a former elementary school instructor, Picoult precisely describes the autistic child's experiences in the complicated and ever so frustrating life of one diagnosed with autism. Jacob faces murder charges having an obsession with criminal and forensic interests. He must watch CSI at 4:30 daily and eat the same colored foods corresponding with each day of the week. He recites all 5 Miranda rights even though it's not clear he fully understands the consequences. House Rules offers a glimpse into the importance of maintaining balance to avoid horrendous tantrums and physical outbursts for our autistic loved ones. A bit of a nightmare but, fascinating read.

Reviewed by Linda Gatti Fyler

The Paris Apartment by Lucy Foley (Mystery Fiction)

The setting for this mystery is in a luxury apartment house in the heart of Paris. Jess impulsively decides to stay with her brother (one of the inhabitants of the apartment) after being fired from her job at a British dive bar. However, Ben is nowhere to be found. His last voicemail to her left directions to his apartment and informed her that he would be waiting up for her arrival. Jess, sensing the worst, doggedly chases clues as to her brother's whereabouts.

The author slowly reveals how each of the apartment house's inhabitants have dark secrets, none of which portend well for Ben. Jess eventually finds herself in danger, and the ending is a twisted surprise.

Couldn't put this book down – each chapter lures the reader in. Good read, and I hope to read more from Lucy Foley.

Reviewed by Chris Jones

The Madness of Crowds by Louise Penny (Mystery Fiction)

Readers seem to run “hot & cold” on Louise Penny and her Chief Inspector Armand Gamache mystery series; love her or not, this book really held my interest...more so than some of her others. As in all her Inspector Gamache books, this one (#17 of the series) is set in Three Pines, a small community in Canada. What I found interesting was that it was set after what seemed like the author felt was the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. The story is based around a brilliant statistics professor whose unfortunate theories indicate that the weak and elderly would use up too many resources if another pandemic arrived or this one continued. This is an intense story with much reality in these uncertain times when too many people refuse to believe in science. Of course, the usual cast of characters play roles in solving the current murder and one from long ago.

Reviewed by Connie Locashio

Home Stretch by Graham Norton (Fiction)

This novel follows the life of several family members and friends over several decades who grapple with intense issues regarding sexuality and family responsibility. The characters are beautifully and realistically drawn. Cultural norms regarding gay rights are explored as well. Very worthwhile to read, think about and possibly discuss in a book group format.

Reviewed by Judy Danielson

Letters From Skye by Jessica Brockmole (Historical Fiction)

I listened to this on audiobook and really enjoyed it. A whole cast of characters narrate the story, which makes it feel like reader's theater. Told entirely in letters, this compelling novel is rich with the atmosphere of the Isle of Skye, wartime Dublin, Indiana and London. The story moves between a young Skye woman in the WWI years, and her daughter's life told in the WWII years. The unfolding of the plot is un-put-downable, and I found myself inventing errands since I was listening in my car. Charming but not schmaltzy.

Reviewed by Janet Adelberg

Mercy Street by Jennifer Haigh (Fiction)

Claudia grew up in a 'tin can' of a mobile home in rural Maine. Her mother, who had Claudia as an unwed teenager, worked long hours as a nurse's aide in a local nursing home and took in as many as four foster children at once to supplement her income. Raising 'the fosters' falls on Claudia's shoulders. And sometimes there was a boyfriend in the mix.

Determined to never end up like her mother, Claudia now works as a counselor at a Boston Women's Health Clinic. Women come to Mercy Street for general health care as well as abortions no later than 24 weeks. The staff who work there must plow through a circus of overwhelmingly male anti-abortion activists, unaware that women also receive potentially life-saving treatment there. This novel offers a snapshot of the occasionally unsavory characters who are on the right to life crusade.

Jennifer Haigh is a gifted writer. The subject of abortion is highly divisive, but she sets this very personal decision in the total context of the women's lives.

Trigger warning; there is some foul language, mostly at the start of the book. And it's difficult to read about the inner workings of truly misogynistic, twisted minds. Overall, this is a satisfying tale.

Reviewed by Chris Jones

In Her Tracks by Robert Dugoni (Fiction)

Returning from extended leave, Violent Crimes Detective Tracy Crosswhite finds herself reassigned to the Cold Case Unit. As Seattle PD's most decorated officer, she is also asked to assist in finding a vanished woman jogger. Tracy has to utilize all her talents to pursue hidden secrets from a quiet neighborhood to save multiple lives.

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

Non-Fiction

The Premonition, A Pandemic Story by Michael Lewis (Non-Fiction)

“it shouldn’t be the Centers for Disease Control, it should be the Centers for Disease Observation and Reporting.”

It is a widespread notion that the CDC has lost respect and credibility. It would be easy to blame its handling of the Covid pandemic; however, this is not the final blow that would lead to its fall from grace. Michael Lewis has assembled a rigorously researched, very readable account of the country’s handling of infectious threats. He focuses on a small band of geniuses who faced unbelievable obstacles in the way of acting on the truth. Lewis exposes ludicrousities that exist in our health systems. Early testing was deemed vital to stopping the initial spread of the virus as it is airborne and spreads while asymptomatic. The group offered FREE covid tests to hospitals and labs at a time when none were available. There were no takers because their accounting systems couldn’t handle a ‘0’ billing! The most widely used lab, Quest Diagnostics, did not accept the free tests as the company was enjoying huge profit margins from the government and major health networks.

Very absorbing and interesting book - perhaps it will help us re-examine some sacred cows as well as the virus?

Reviewed by Chris Jones

Every Day is a Gift by Tammy Duckworth (Autobiography)

If you are a proud American you should read this story of a surprising and inspiring woman!

Reviewed by Steve Dodge

And a Bonus Review of the Cary’s new streaming service:

In Praise of HOOPLA

Instead of a single book recommendation, I want to skip through my grateful experience with the library’s new free streaming service. First, it was easy to set up an account with my library card number and then off to trip light fantastic through the tulips. Over the last 2 months I’ve listened to classical music (Yo Yo Ma), listened to biographies (Professor and the Madman and No Ordinary Time), Non-fiction (Braiding Sweetgrass), danced around the kitchen to Broadway show tunes (Hamilton and Jon Batise), and watched the latest season of British comedy (Doc

Martin). This service has lots of media to dabble in and I plan on using my 5 borrows each month. And I do appreciate the suggested titles as a place to try something new.

Reviewed by Mary Jean Cowing