

RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2016



Welcome to the September 2016 issue of *RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER*

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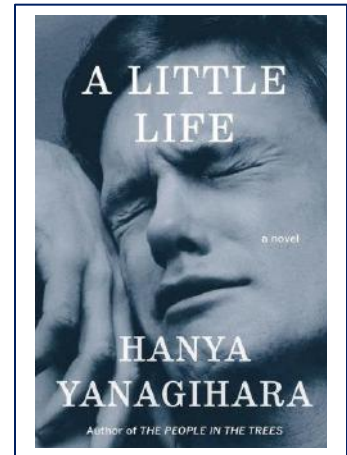
***A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara**

Can you start a review by saying: everyone should read this but I will never ever read this book again? I feel like that is the most honest way to recommend *A Little Life*. It was entirely absorbing (I managed 800+ pages in just three days!) and very emotionally satisfying but it also deals with dark and difficult subject matter (pedophilia and self-harm in particular) in such shockingly specific detail that it makes for very harrowing reading. The book starts as the charming story of four college friends and follows them through their adult lives in New York City but is slowly shifts its focus to one of these friends, mysterious and brilliant Jude, with a haunting past. By the time you notice that the book is starting to get progressively darker and more disturbing it's too late, you are already far too invested in the characters and the story to stop. It helps that the book is also about friendship, loyalty and the endless hope that the human spirit can survive unspeakable trauma.

I think the internet was invented for books like *A Little Life*. After I was done I spent hours googling and reading interviews and reviews and listening to podcasts, trying to draw the story out a little longer, trying to understand how any one person could come up with something so wonderful and terrible. Yanagihara has been delightfully provocative in her statements about the book. She proudly claims in one interview that she did absolutely no research in preparation for writing the book (in the “Electric Lit”). In another (in “The Guardian”) she talked about arguing with her editor about “how much a reader can take” and in several others (including “The Guardian”) she notes that her book is intended to have a fairy tale quality (with monster aplenty, no doubt). ***Dolma Choden Roder, Social Sciences Faculty***

Location: FIC

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Quotes

“You won’t understand what I mean now, but someday you will: the only trick of friendship, I think, is to find people who are better than you are— not smarter, not cooler, but kinder, and more generous, and more forgiving— and then to appreciate them for what they can teach you, and to try to listen to them when they tell you something about yourself, no matter how bad—or good—it might be, and to trust them, which is the hardest thing of all. But the best, as well.”

“All the most terrifying ifs involve people. All the good ones do as well.”

“At times he wondered if he was making the same mistake again. Was it better to trust or better to be wary? Could you have a real friendship if some part of you was always expecting betrayal?”

The Martian by Andy Weir

What would you do if you were stranded alone on Mars---with enough food for a year, enough water for 3 months, no way to communicate with earth and no hope of rescue for 4 years?

This story is about just that. It's a story of courage, problem solving and persistent ingenuity.

There are four main characters:

Mark Watney, botanist and engineer who has to find a way to survive on a planet that could kill him in any number of bizarre way. He is also a very funny guy.

NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, who is trying to get Mark home by bringing together the best scientific minds in the US and China.

The astronauts of the spaceship Hermes who mistakenly left Mark for dead on the planet and later mount a brave and foolhardy rescue mission.

And last but not least, there is the planet Mars---a place with no atmosphere pressure, sand storms, below freezing temperatures, two moons and a whole lot of sand, rocks and craters.

You first hear Mark's voice through his journal. He shares his doubts, his joys and also how he solves the numerous problems that arise. At first I wasn't sure I wanted to know all the science but as the book progresses you come to understand how things work (or more likely, how they don't work!) and how he ultimately figures it out. It's all done in a simple, funny way. Numerous mistakes are made, some of which nearly kill him, and others that are so silly, you laugh out loud.

If you have the chance to read the book and see the movie, I would suggest you read the book first. It will make the movie a much richer experience.

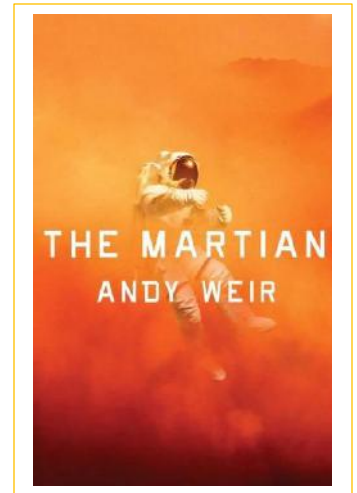
This is a book without sex and without violence. There is no romance and no handsome hero.

But it's a great adventure. How often do you read a book where the science nerd is the hero! It will warm your heart and restore your belief in the capacity of the individual and the power of the human community.

Mark says it best when he is asked why the world would spend millions to save one man stranded on Mars: "...they did it because every human being has a basic instinct to help each other out. It might not seem that way sometimes, but it's true. This is so fundamentally human that it's found in every culture without exception. Yes, there are assholes who just don't care, but they're massively outnumbered by the people who do. And because of that, I had billions of people on my side. Pretty cool, eh?"

Pretty cool, yes! **Phyllis Bergman, RTC adjunct**

***The Martian* (the book and the movie) are available on the MSS**



Quotes:

"So, I have two problems: not enough dirt and nothing edible to plant in it."

"Everything was great right up to the explosion."

"As I made my way toward the RTG's burial site, it hit me: Mars is a barren wasteland and I am completely alone here. I already knew that, of course. But there's a difference between knowing it and really experiencing it. All around me there was nothing but dust, rocks, and endless empty desert in all directions. The planet's famous red color is from iron oxide coating everything. So, it's not just a desert. It's a desert so old it's literally rusting."

"This may be my last entry."

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

Doerr has written a page turning tale as we follow the lives of Marie-Laure, blind since the age of six, and Werner, an orphaned German boy.

Werner grows up in an orphanage with his younger, idealistic sister, Jutta under the care of Frau Elena. Werner, a gifted boy with a talent for fixing radios, earns a slot at Schulpforta, a prestigious military academy. He is delighted to escape a preordained life in the mines, but soon finds himself a misfit in this breeding ground for Hitler Youth, which demands conformity and allegiance to country above all else. Werner is torn between these demands and his basic goodness and friendship with Frederick, a sensitive, enthusiastic bird watcher, who is fingered as the weakest student and is bullied and beaten as a result. Although Werner never fits in with his classmates, his radio repair skills keeps him in good stead with his superiors. At sixteen, Werner is drafted into the war and sent to the Russian front.

When the Germans occupy Paris, Marie-Lurie and her father escape to the walled port city of Saint-Malo. Her father has been entrusted with the mysterious Sea of Flames (or its likeness). As he has done for her in Paris, her father creates a detailed wooden model of Saint-Malo so Marie-Lurie can memorize each and every detail before she navigates the streets on her own. When her father is arrested, Marie-Lurie and Etienne, her agoraphobic, WWI traumatized uncle, find comfort and companionship in each other. Daily, she reads to him from her Braille copy of *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*.

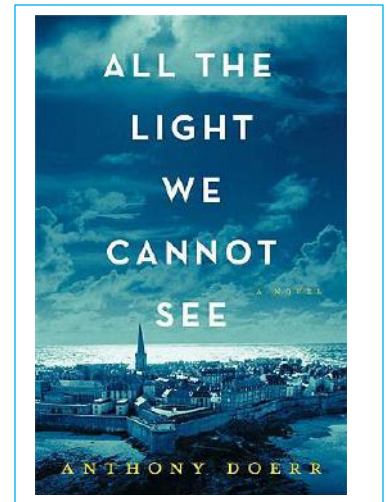
When Werner is sent to Saint-Malo to roost out the resistance, his path converges with Marie- Laurie, taking him back into memories of a bygone time.

The novel is written in short chapters that swing back and forth in time and between the lives of Marie-Lurie and Werner. Our protagonists are supported by a gritty cast of likeable characters – such as seventy-six year old Madam Manec, who organizes a group of women to fight for the French resistance against Nazi occupation. One day she says to Etienne, “Doing nothing is as good as collaborating... Don't you want to be alive before you die?”

Doerr won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in fiction for *All the Light We Cannot See*. I liked it and think you will too. **Amrita McKinney, Librarian**

Location: FIC

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Quotes:

"Is it right,' Jutta says, 'to do something only because everyone else is doing it?"

"Nearly every species that has ever lived has gone extinct, Laurette. No reason to think we humans will be any different!"

"They are each a mound of clay, and the potter that is the portly, shiny-faced commandant is throwing four hundred identical pots."

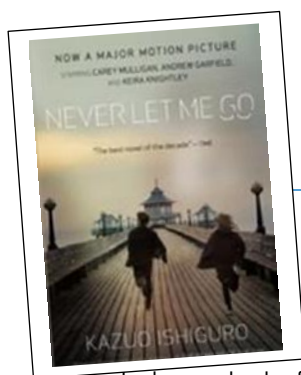
"Open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever."

"What is blindness? Where there should be a wall, her hands find nothing. Where there should be nothing, a table leg gouges her shin. Cars growl in the streets; leaves whisper in the sky; blood rustles through her inner ears. In the stairwell, in the kitchen, even beside her bed, grown-up voices speak of despair."

This month:

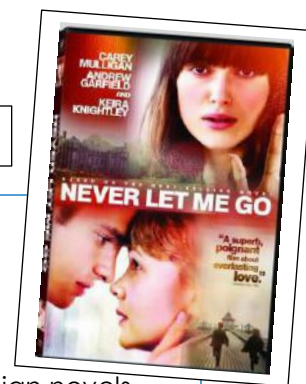
The Library was the recipient of five new computers. A grant from the Indian government is furnishing new computers to all colleges/universities and 49 school libraries across Bhutan. School libraries will receive three computers and colleges five. RTC was the first institution to have the computers installed. We now have six public computers in the Library. They were definitely needed!

The computers are step one in providing educational institutions with a suite of e-library resources. What that yet means, has not been disclosed. Each library will also be equipped with a server that will allow educational institutions to upload documents, which can then be made accessible within their school/campus as well as across all academic institutions in Bhutan.



Call No.: FIC I795m

Available on the MSS



Read the book, watch the movie!

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro

Let me start off by saying, I really liked the book. But then, I'm a big fan of dystopian novels. This one is set in an alternative 1970-90's England. The story centers around three friends, Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth. I immediately liked how the author (a man) so aptly adopts a convincingly young female voice as Kathy tells the story of their idyllic years at Hailsham House and later the Cottages. We learn, as they do, that they are special, and what their "specialness" holds in store for them. We listen to the theories they create to make sense of what they don't understand, what remains unsaid. For as Miss Lucy, one of the guardians says, "You have been told, but not told".

I was glad I read the book first. The movie was okay, but... sometimes it felt like a slightly different story, even though the premise and the ending is the same. As is often the case, a movie has less time to develop relationships between characters (which is done so nicely in this book). This is certainly the case here. Events too, are omitted and changed around so that what was meaningful in the book is often omitted from the movie.

I preferred the book's way of showing how they learn about Hailsham House and their purpose in life as opposed to the movie spilling the beans shortly into the story. Did they not think the audience could figure it out? In the movie, nothing is allowed to seep in. And perhaps I would have liked the movie more if it had allowed me to soak in the story bit by bit. It was sort of like the different experience of sipping a glass of good wine vs. guzzling down a Druk beer.

If you are looking for a good story to read, I wholeheartedly recommend the book. If you've read the book, you may be disappointed, as I was, in the movie. And... if you haven't read the book, by all means watch the movie. Ishiguro has told a thought provoking tale.

In the Library: Books by Mountain Echoes' Authors

Come check out our collection of newly purchased titles by Mountain Echo authors. We have titles that range from stillness to travel, from advertising to faith, from romance to crime fiction, autobiography to noir, from well-known author Amitav Ghosh, to lesser known (for us) Turkish author Ciler Ilhan. We also have the newest titles by Bhutanese authors Rinzin Rinzin (*Depa Bondeypa's Relatives*) and Chador Wango (*Kyetse*).

Come check them out. We hope there is something for everyone.



Have you ever wondered what her HM the Royal Queen Mother likes to read?

During the session: *On Her Majesty's Bookshelf*, she recommended the following three titles:
 Ancient Secret of the Fountain of Youth by Peter Kelder – (available to download on the MSS)
 Creative Visualization by Shakti Gawain – (available to download on the MSS)
 Ashoka the Great by Wytze Keuning – (not yet available in local bookstores or to download)

Mountain Echoes 2016 in Quotes

The 2016 Mountain Echoes Literary Festival was a true feast for book lovers. Here are some of the interesting, inspiring, thought provoking and sometimes surprising quotes that I jotted down.

Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

I love historical fiction.

The oral tradition is/was very important. That was how we "read"; we heard.

When asked about her favorite fictional character: I can't zero in on one. My favorite real life figure is the 4th king and he is quite a character. This favorite character of mine is a super hero.

When asked what she would be if not the Queen: A primary school teacher. That is what I would have loved to do.

Maybe, I can still do it.

Her message to children: Take pride in being Bhutanese and appreciate your nation. Be good Bhutanese and everything good will come from it.

Her thoughts on poetry: Poetry is something that comes from the heart. Just put your thoughts on paper – what makes you sad – what makes you happy. That is poetry to me.

Gyalwa Dokhampa

It is amazing how our concepts control us. By nature, everything is perfect.

Devotion is genuine when you can recognize that Guru is the non-dualistic wisdom.

Amitav Ghosh

Reading is the process of entering into someone else's world. Writing is the process of creating a world others can enter.

To write a novel is a real test of endurance and discipline. It can take over a decade.

Writing a character is like getting to know a friend; it takes a long time.

When I was in college, all the writers we studied were dead.

Iyer Pico

Bhutan is with me wherever I go.

The big adventure of my life, is the inner life.

Japan is like a very old man wearing a very new T-shirt.

In this age of information we may actually know less about the world.

The more internationalism there is in the world, the more nationalism there will be.

Let's define ourselves by our passions. If I say I am an Indian, than I am an enemy of Pakistan.

Asking me a question about meditation (which I haven't practiced) is like asking a butcher about vegetarianism.

Siok Sian Dorji

Children who go to libraries, read better.

It is stories that challenge our mind and open our heart.

Graeme Simsion

I picked up a book and its words changed my life.

Ciler Ilhan

I lose myself doing research and then I have to drag myself back to doing fiction.

Renuka Narayanan

It was the British that moved us kicking and screaming into the 20th century. I'm glad they're gone, but I'm glad they came.

Dhamey Tenzing Norgay

Be great, make others great.

Natsuo Miyashita (Quoting Aung San Suu Kyi)

If you think more of others, you are more happy.

Our people did not read because they did not like books, but because they did not have access to books. When Natsuo asked Aung San Suu Kyi what she would like, she responded: I would love to have a mobile library.

(Today, there are 11 mobile libraries in Myanmar)

Mridula Koshy

Literature is the great human project. How can it be for just some people and not for all?

My writing is always about writing something I don't know. Writing is research.

My curiosity drives me. I am always learning. I write from my curiosity.

Our library is alive with the ideas in the books.

Zac O'Yeah

It was liberating to write about something I didn't know.

Piyush Pandey

Bhutan to me is Purity, Pride, and Passion.

Ira Trivedi

There are more skin lighteners sold in India than Coca Cola.

If we can't talk about it we are never going to be able to educate people about it. The 'it' she was specifically talking about was sex, (but it applies to everything, I think).

Parvan Karma

Books have their own destiny.

Who can live in Bhutan and not be influenced by it?

Why did I write fiction? I had a story in my head and I had to find the courage to write it.

Discover and follow your passion. If what you do gives you genuine pleasure, you are doing the right thing.

Nandana Sen

Illustrations are essential to a children's book, absolutely critical.

A library should be a face for the community, a space for thinking.

There is a lack of female protagonists in juvenile literature. In adult fiction as well.

I don't believe in being didactic with children, because then you lose your audience.

Namita Gokhale

I can never bear to read anything that I have written.

Anjum Hasam

When I am writing, I like to hoard myself.

I allow the character to grow within me. Everything becomes double processed – me and my character.

Karma Lotay

The average age of foreigners who come to Bhutan for treks is 60 years old.

Jean-Noel Orengo

First I am a reader, before I am a writer.

Read, write, travel, live the provocations of the book.

Take time to listen, to explore, and then take these into your writing.

News from the Reading Club:

On Tuesday, Sept. 6, the Reading Club met to discuss the book, *The Gurkha's Daughter*, a collection of short stories written by Parajuly Prajwal. Prajwal has assembled an interesting assortment of characters and situations depicting the lives of Nepalese, some living in Nepal, most living abroad - in India, Bhutan, and as far away as New York City.

In addition to discussing the stories, our talk expanded to comparing character development in short stories vs. novels, why some like television series over movies, as well as why authors, like Amitav Ghosh, get attached to their characters and keep them alive by writing trilogies. We also shared stories about immigrant lives and the challenges of adapting to new cultures. We had a good turnout and good discussions.

For this month, students selected to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

Come join us on Tuesday, October 4, from 4-5 at the Executive Center to discuss this American classic, for which Lee won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. Through memorable characters, Lee explores racism in the American south. It is an unforgettable, deeply moving story of a childhood in the sleepy town of Maycomb, Alabama in the 1930s and the "crisis which rocks its conscience."

It has been said that "In the twentieth century, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is probably the most widely read book dealing with race in America, and its protagonist, Atticus Finch, the most enduring fictional image of racial heroism."

The Library has 2 copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*: FIC L4771 (although they always seem to be checked out). The book is also available on the MSS.

The movie, starring Gregory Peck is also available on the MSS. Peck won an Oscar in 1963 for his wonderful performance as Atticus Finch.

When: Tuesday, October 4, from 4-5 at the Executive Center

Book recommendations:

Have you read a good book recently? Want to share your recommendation with others? Send it to amckinney@rtc.bt or come by the library and see me. Thanks!