

# RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2017



Welcome to the April 2017 issue of *RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER*

**In this issue:** Recommended Reads: *The Lowland*, *Half a Yellow Sun*, *The Old Man and the Sea*

“Read the Book-Watch the Movie”: *Me Before You*

Website of the Month: Guardian Books

The Booker Prize for Fiction

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## Recommended Reads from the RTC community

### *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri

*The Lowland*, by Pulitzer Prize winner, Jhumpa Lahiri, is the story of two brothers, Udayan and Subhash. Born 15 months apart, they are as different as night and day. One is cautious, the other reckless, yet they are inseparable. Until... Udayan, the younger brother becomes involved in the Naxalite movement sweeping across his college campus and Subhash, skeptical that the movement will solve India's problems, chooses to pursue a graduate degree in marine chemistry in Rhode Island, ignoring Udayan's plea to remain in India.

With the distance of miles and a political philosophy between them, the brothers drift apart. Udayan becomes ever more involved in the movement, which leads to deadly repercussions.

A veil of sorrow permeates the story. After Udayan's death, his parents and Gauri, his pregnant widow, remain fixated in the past, unable and unwilling to bring happiness into the lives of the living. As the reader, I want to shake them and say, "Wake up, let go of the pain, find happiness in the present."

Returning home, Subhash impulsively marries Gauri, who willingly marries him to flee Kolkata and her widowhood fate. In America, Gauri throws off her sari and pursues her education. Given a new lease on life, she nevertheless remains consumed in sorrow and lives in an idolized world, locked in the past, that as the story reveals, is perhaps not worthy of her veneration.

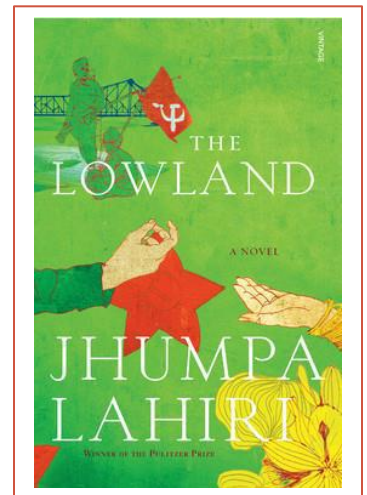
Subhash, endures his own sorrows as the ignored son and the unloved husband. Gauri shuts out both Subhash (bringing neither love nor joy into their marriage) and her daughter, Bela. While Gauri finds no joy in motherhood, Subhash embraces fatherhood. He loves Bela as his own daughter, always fearful that his real identity as uncle will be exposed.

*The Lowland* spans nearly half a century, taking us from the water hyacinth lowlands of Kolkata, where the young boys play, to the salty breezes of the North Atlantic seashore, where Subhash comes to find comfort and love.

In this, as in her other novels, Lahiri weaves a fine story. Although... I must admit, I am more a fan of her short story collections (my favorite being, *An Unaccustomed Earth*) and her recent nonfiction work *In Other Words* (as she shares her love and struggles learning and writing in Italian). **Amrita McKinney, Librarian**

Location: FIC

Call no.: FIC L183L



#### Quotes:

*“With her own hand she'd painted herself into a corner, and then out of the picture altogether.”*

*“Plato says the purpose of philosophy is to teach us how to die.”*

*“Nor was her love for Udayan recognizable or intact. Anger was always mounted to it, zigzagging through her like some helplessly mating pair of insects. Anger at him for dying when he might have lived. For bringing her happiness, and then taking it away. For trusting her, only to betray her. For believing in sacrifice, only to be so selfish in the end.”*

*“Most people trusted in the future, assuming that their preferred version of it would unfold.”*

## **Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

In her second novel, Adichie takes us to 1960's Nigeria. This newly independent West African country, formally carved out by the British with no regard for preexisting ethnic and religious alliances, is a fragile alliance at best.

Adichie, adeptly portrays the tension and distrust between the three dominant ethnic groups: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. These tensions that will lead to coups and massacres that erupt into civil war, as the Igbo secede to form a separate country: Biafra. The three year Nigerian-Biafran War (1967-1970) will leave over one million dead, many from starvation.

I remember watching the news during this time as pictures of starving Biafrans, children with swollen bellies and stick-like arms and legs suffering from kwashiorkor (a severe protein deficiency), made headlines. There is a part in the book where a mother cannot tell if her teenage daughter is pregnant or suffers from kwashiorkor. She is pregnant, by a French priest, who has been trading food for sex with the young girls in the refugee camp.

We follow the lives of Olanna and Kainene, fraternal twins from a well-to-do Igbo family. Olanna has terminated her relationship with Mohammad, a Hausa, and has come to live with the well-educated Odenigbo, who teaches at Nsukka University and has an interesting circle of academic friends. Ugwu, his servant, whom he calls his good man, is a central character of the story. He is a bright young man, eager to keep his position. At first, Ugwu is threatened by Olanna's presence but soon becomes an indispensable member of the family.

Olanna and Kainene, never very close, become estranged after an infidelity but are reunited during the siege. As Kainene says, "There are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable."

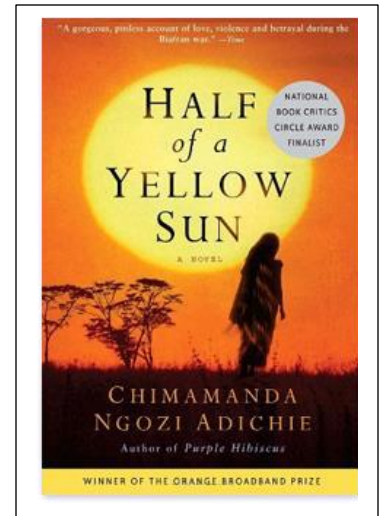
Food is a theme throughout the book. Ugwu learns to cook and continually tries to impress Odenigbo and his friends with new dishes while Harrison, Richard's manservant serves only colonial food, refusing to cook anything local. Richard has come to Nigeria to study rope pots. He falls in love with Kainene and becomes more Biafran than some Biafrans.

From plenty to famine, the quality and quantity of food diminishes. The famine, caused by a naval blockade, is starving the Biafrans while the world watches. It is estimated that 3,000 to 5,000 people die each day in Biafra during their three year fight for independence.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is filled with a colorful cast of characters. Adichie's character development is wonderfully executed as she draws us into their lives and a world filled with turmoil and hardship. Some will die and the lives of those who survive will be changed forever. Highly recommended. **Amrita McKinney, Librarian**

**Location: FIC**

**Call no.: FIC A234h**



### **Quotes:**

*"Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future."*

*"Remember, what you will answer whenever he calls you is Yes, sah!"*

*"Of course, of course, but my point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe," Master said. "I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came."*

*"Olanna had wanted to give the scent of his mother's visit some time to diffuse before telling him she wanted to have a child, and yet here he was, voicing her own desire before she could. She looked at him in wonder. This was love: a string of coincidences that gathered significance and became miracles."*

## **The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway**

After 84 days of bad luck, the old man, Santiago, sets out to sea by himself, leaving behind Manolin, the young boy, who loves and idolizes the old man. Santiago is desperate to catch a fish and turn his luck around and goes far out to sea, too far, he says to himself more than once. When he finally hooks a fish on his line, he knows he has caught something special. The giant marlin, weighs over 1500 pounds and measures 18 ft. and for three days and three nights, they match strength and determination. Can you imagine such a catch?

I like how Hemingway, portrays the struggle between the old man and his formidable opponent. Many times Santiago laments not taking the young boy along as he struggles to conserve his strength as the marlin also tires. Hemingway does a wonderful job showing the reverence and respect Santiago feels for the marlin as he comes to wish he had never, ever hooked it.

Hemingway allows us to empathize with both Santiago and the marlin. As a vegetarian, I wished the marlin might break the line and swim away. At the same time, I feel for the old man. His desperation to catch a fish. As I read this novella, I wondered if I related to Santiago more now than I did as a teenager. Now that I am older, I better understand the physical challenges and uncertainty he faces – that moment when he knows he's gone too far, that his strength may not hold out. When all he has left is raw determination.

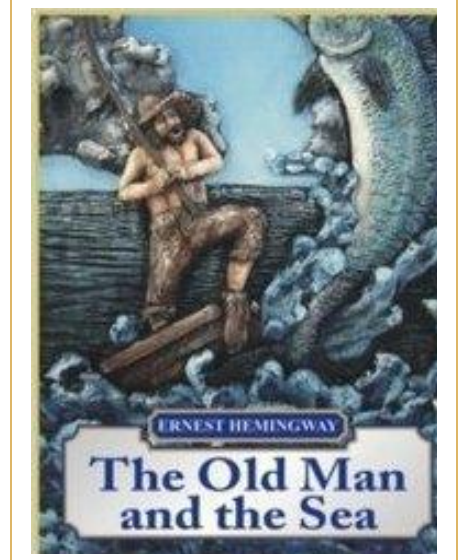
Before I became a vegetarian, I loved to go fishing. I learned to kill, gut and clean the fish I caught. Doing so, connected me to the food I was eating in a completely new and different way. As with Santiago, it taught me to respect and be thankful for the life I was taking and the gift of its offering. Although I read this book when I was younger, I don't remember it affecting me as much as this reading. I couldn't help but wonder if this book, often read in high school and college, might be 'wasted' on the young.

Hemingway won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 for *The Old Man and the Sea* although some critics consider it inferior to his other novels. For that, I'll have to read (and reread) his other works to offer an opinion.

I liked this book very much. His descriptions of the marlin, Santiago's determination despite his weary body, and the ice cream clouds are wonderfully described. **Amrita McKinney, Librarian**

**Location: MAIN**

**Call No. 813.5 H488o 2009**



### **Quotes:**

*"I'm clear enough in the head, he thought. Too clear. I am as clear as the stars are my brothers."*

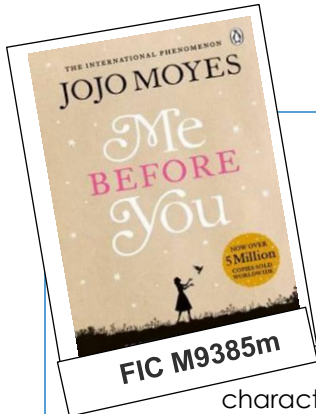
*"He saw him first as a dark shadow that took so long to pass under the boat that he could not believe its length."*

*"You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me."*

*"It was too good to last, he thought."*

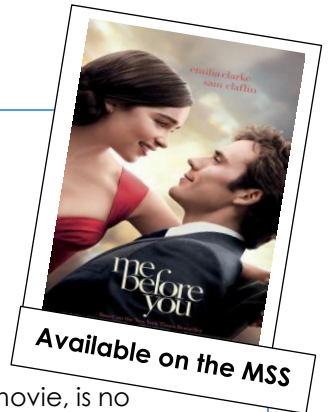
*"Fish,' the old man said. 'Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too?"*

*"If the others heard me talking out loud they would think I am crazy. But since I am not crazy, I do not care."*



## Read the book, watch the movie!

### *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes



Normally, I like to read a book before I watch its film adaptation. Time constraints ensures a movie will omit events, characters, and relationships that add to the story. *Me Before You*, the movie, is no exception to the rule. However, in this instance, I had the opportunity to watch the movie first. And I'm glad I did. Had I read the book first, I might have had higher expectations of the movie. Having no expectations, and not knowing the story, I was free to simply let the movie unfold and enjoy the chemistry and the bantering between Louisa (Emilia Clarke) and Will (Sam Claflin). I loved Louisa's outlandish outfits and looked forward to seeing what she would be wearing each day. Wouldn't it be great fun I thought to have a pair of those bumble bee tights myself!

I had to ask myself - if I wasn't writing with column, would I have wanted to read the book after watching the movie? And the answer is: I don't think so. And that would have been a shame because while the movie follows the storyline and was pleasant to watch, Moyes' writing pulled me further into the story as we get to know more about the characters and why Louisa is hesitant to brave the world outside her small town.

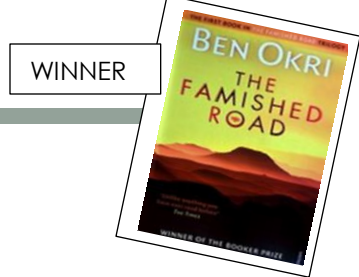
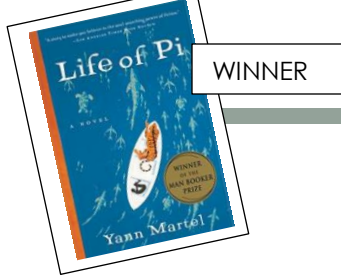
*Me Before You* is an unlikely love story between Will and Louisa. Will, a wealthy, once robust, active man is now completely dependent on others for everything. He is confined to bed and a wheel chair after a freak accident two years ago renders him a quadriplegic, without use of his arms and legs. He has made an agreement with his parents – to give life a renewed chance for six months – after which, they will support his choice to an assisted suicide at Dignitas in Switzerland. Louisa is hired for six months to be Will's carer and companion. At first, she is unaware of the pact between son and parents. When she finds out, she races against time to bring Will out of his shell and entice him to live.

As Louisa brings new life to Will's existence, Will draws Louisa out of her complacent life. He encourages her to try all sorts of things she previously shied away from. She finds she does like classical music and films with subtitles, as she cries watching *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

It is obvious to everyone that Louisa, or Clark as Will calls her, is just what Will needs, But, is her love enough to make him want to continue to live? For this answer, you will need to read the book and/or watch the movie.

PS. If you like *Me Before You*, enjoy the sequel *After You* (FIC M9385a)





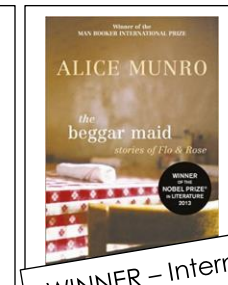
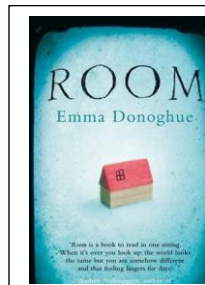
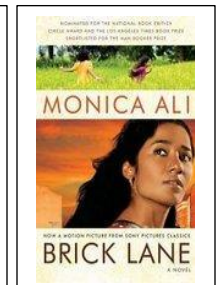
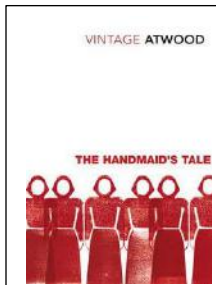
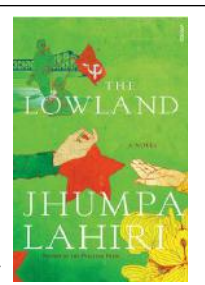
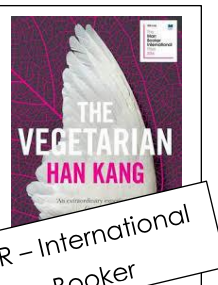
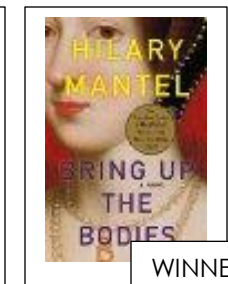
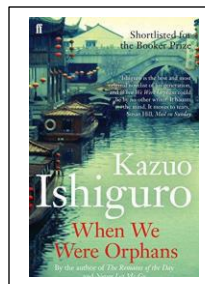
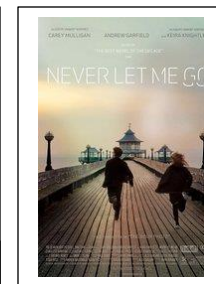
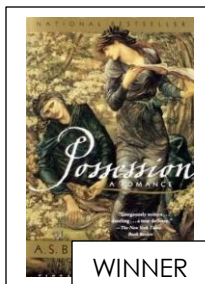
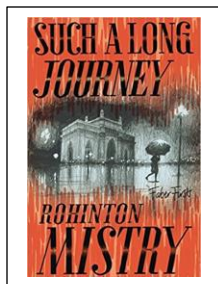
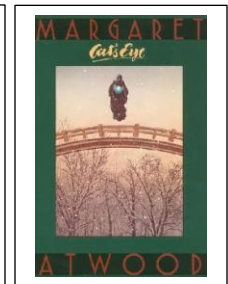
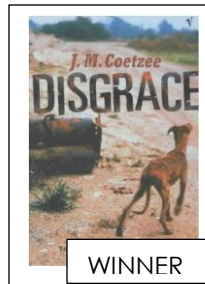
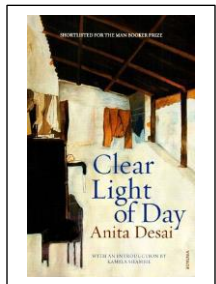
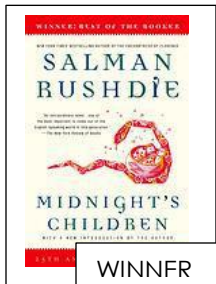
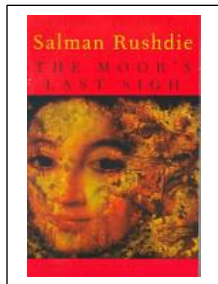
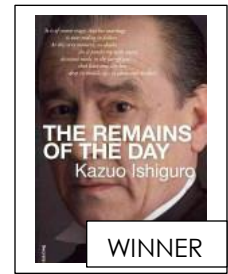
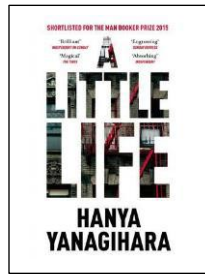
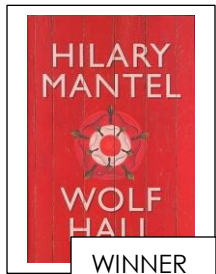
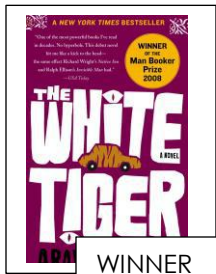
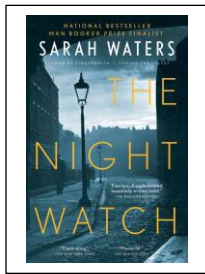
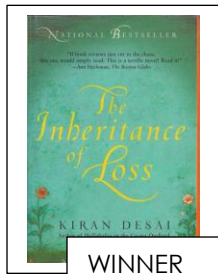
# The Booker Prize for Fiction

The Booker Prize for Fiction, AKA The Man Booker Prize, was launched in 1969 to promote the best novel written in English by a citizen of the Commonwealth of Nations or the Republic of Ireland. In 2014, the Booker was extended to include any work written in English that was published in the UK. Not everyone, however, was happy with this decision. In 2016, the prize was awarded to Paul Beatty, an American, for this novel, *The Sellout*.

Judges of the prize are chosen from a wide range of disciplines and have included critics, writers, academics, poets, politicians, journalists, and actors. As one juror remarked, "This "common man" approach to the selection of Man Booker juries is, I believe, one of the key reasons why "the intelligent general audience" trusts the prize."

Current offshoots of the Booker prize include the Man Booker International Prize (MBIP) and the Russian Booker Prize. The MBIP was introduced in June 2004 to complement the Man Booker Prize. It is now awarded annually to a single book in English. The prize money is split equally between the author and the translator.

Have you read a Booker Prize winner? Or perhaps one of the titles short-listed for the prize? Come to the Library and checkout our display of Booker prize winning and short-listed titles.



WINNER - International Man Booker

WINNER - International Man Booker

# Website of the Month: Guardian Books

<https://www.theguardian.com/books>

The Guardian is one of my go-to places for the news. I like the reporting and its coverage. It also offers a great site for all things about books – what's new and the best of the best. The site includes fiction and poetry reviews, nonfiction reviews, children's books and a wide array of articles about authors and writing.

Below is a sample from a day in the life of a Guardian Books page. Visit the site and find inspiration for your next good read.



**Book of the day** / *The Great Leveller* by Walter Scheidel - an end to inequality?  
**Paul Mason**

Is economic disparity only ever reduced by war, revolution and catastrophe? Paul Mason is more optimistic: the world can change



**Dystopian dreams / How feminist science fiction predicted the future**

**Biography** / *Ludo and the Power of the Book* - portrait of a great campaigning journalist  
**Chris Mullin**

**Top 10s**  
Top 10 books about fathers



**Fiction** / *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman - nice dramatic narratives, but where's the nihilism?  
**Ursula K Le Guin**

With its chatty gods and gentle giants, Gaiman's good-natured version of the mythos lacks brutal tragedy at its heart

**Literary calendar / Books to watch in 2017**  
Jane Austen's bicentenary, Arundhati Roy's first novel in 20 years, and unpublished F Scott Fitzgerald ... the literary year ahead  
Kapow! / 20 comics to watch out for in 2017  
This year's biggest book adaptations / Which ones are worth reading first?

**Graphic novel of the month** / *Collecting Sticks* by Joe Decie - a singular, funny take on glamping  
**Rachel Cooke**

**How to finish a novel / Tracking a book's progress from idea to completion**

**Poem of the week** / *Low Tide at St Andrews* by Emily Pauline Johnson

**100 Best Nonfiction Books of All Time**  
The 100 best nonfiction books: No 60 - *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin

**Books podcast** / Man Booker International prize and Dorthe Nors



Outrage as Belarus arrests authors, publishers and journalists in crackdown

**Paperback writer**  
Robots v experts: are any human professions safe from automation?  
6



**In pictures** / *The Lovings*, the couple who ended the ban on interracial marriage



**Science** / *To Be a Machine* by Mark O'Connell - solving the problem of death  
**Paul Laity**



## What's new @ the Library?

RTC is trialing the following Ebsco databases through May 8, 2017

Academic Search Complete and GreenFILE

eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) and eBook Academic Collection

Follow this [link](#) to access. Access is available on campus only. If using a mobile phone, you need to connect to campus Wi-Fi.

Check out these new resources on the [Library Webpage](#)

### Online Resources by Subject

#### Dissertations and Theses

[RIM Digital Repository](#) – Downloadable dissertations (currently numbering 71) by RIM students. Searchable by broad subject. A sample of titles include:

*Materialistic Values and Thimphu Adolescents*

*Youth knowledge and awareness of clinical depression*

*The study of causes and consequences of rape in Bhutan*

*Sources of Academic Stress: A study on selected Tertiary Institutions in Bhutan*

#### Environmental Science

[Bhutan Biodiversity Portal](#) – is an official repository of information on Bhutan's biodiversity, built through the collective effort of data generators and users. Includes 2,700+ species pages, 45,000+ observations, maps, and documents.



[Digital Flora of Bhutan](#) - a collective effort of individuals (researchers, plant enthusiasts and naturalists) to provide basic information on the flowering plants of Bhutan.

**Need help with your research? Ask a Librarian!**

## News from the Reading Club:

### Join us in reading

#### THE GREAT GATSBY

A magnificent novel on every level. "Fitzgerald writes about the Jazz Age in language that beautifully evokes music. His characters are well drawn, and the plot is engaging and fast-paced. The book is thin but action packed, evocative and very well written. The use of language is incredible; the commentary on the "American" dream and consumerism is interesting. The characters are so purposefully frustrating when really they accurately reflect the darker sides of human nature and our own aspirations."

**Venue: Executive Centre**

**Date and Time: TBA!**

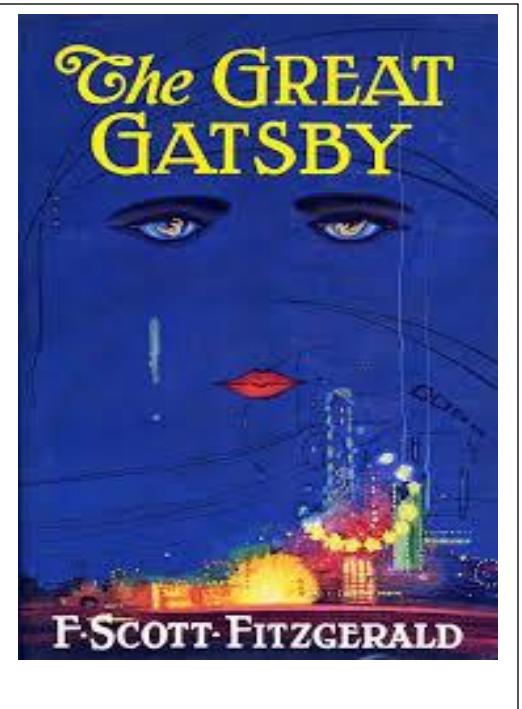
**Join us to review, revive and share your reflections and feelings regarding this undeniable classic (even if you don't complete it or have only watched the movie).**

**The e-book is available on the library media sharing files!**

**Send us your phone numbers if you want a reminder on that day.**

**For more information contact:**

**77841589/ 17953984**



#### Book recommendations:

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