

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 198

The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library

Next meeting: Thursday 3 August 2017 at 8pm

Venue: Earlsdon Library

Book for discussion: *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises* — Ernest Hemingway

A missed opportunity

Our July Book: *The Prison Book Club* — Ann Walmsley

“OK in parts”, was one of the few positive comments about *The Prison Book Club* [TPBC]. A solitary AVID reader rated it as 50-50.

Over the years, we've met many Unreliable Narrators, most notably Rachel, in Daphne du Maurier's brilliant *My Cousin Rachel*. However, in TPBC we met our first Unpalatable Narrator who was variously described as:

- Self-indulgent
- Shallow
- Pompous
- Pretentious
- Hypocritical
- Off-putting

and other comments about her were:

- “I wanted to shake Ann”
- “Carol would have made a better narrator!”

As you might imagine, our reading group were looking forward to reading a novel about a Reading Group set within the

walls of a real Prison. But disappointment set in early, and some people bailed out. Others continued to the bitter end, although they acknowledged it's many shortcomings:

- I. No depth, or character development
- II. Simple linear narrative ...
- III. ... Although sub-plots were indulgent & disproportionate w.r.t. main plot (Anorexic daughter, Dad with Alzheimers)
- IV. Style of writing was Tell not Show
- V. Could be better edited to reduce page count by ~50% [Ouch! it was a small volume to start with]
- VI. Bizarre focus on Carol's sartorial choices.

The book we would like to have read, in a novel entitled *The Prison Book Club* would have got under the skin of the prisoners who joined it. It could have explored role of a Prison Book Club, why it garnered a certain level of cachet. Were there any

Our next book is

Bones are Forever — Kathy Reichs

and we will discuss it on 14 September 2017

rehabilitative qualities for those in TPBC?
Not enough detail about the prisoners themselves nor any impact the Book Choices may have had on them. Best thing about TPBC was making a note of some of the books selected!

Instead of the expected focus, we were given excessive information about when the narrator was the victim of a Mugging. Ironically, the reader is told how Ann

herself used The Prison Book Club as therapy.

In conclusion, *The Prison Book Club* missed many opportunities to create a much better novel that would do justice to its title. So, which member of AVID is going to visit Winson Green Prison, set up a Book Club and write it?

Christine Miller

TPBC Reading List

I did photograph the reading list, but the images were pretty poor quality (given how cramped we were last time) so computer struggled to OCR them to transfer to here. If you're interested – and have good reading glasses – then let me know and I can send them on ...

Catherine

What's On

Central Library, Sunday 6 August, 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Come along and have a poem written for you by poet Jo Bell As some of you will know, Jo is the Canal Poet Laureate, former director of National Poetry Day and has recently appeared in the Nationwide Building society advert!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFq389j8r4s>



If you have any thoughts about these ideas; reviews or recommendations; tales of literary events; or anything else you think other AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:
Catherine Fitzsimons
cathfitz5317@yahoo.com

Possibilities

Local author Margaret Holbrook has offered to visit a readers group in the city. She has just visited Stoke's group and has a new poetry book out. Are we interested in a visit to our group?

