

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 207

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

Next meeting: Thursday 9 August 2018 at 8pm

Venue: Earlsdon Library

Book for discussion: *Brighton Rock* — Graham Greene

Gatsby may be great, but is his story?

Our June Book: *The Great Gatsby* — F Scott Fitzgerald

Dave locked us out last time so we repaired to the City Arms while he went home to rearrange his morning. In such a loud environment, with many distractions, the discussion was somewhat brief. We also didn't allocate a note-taker so these are a few thoughts on the basis of memory only. If any of you who were present – or, indeed, any of you who were not – would like to provide an alternative perspective, please feel free to send it to me and I'll put it in the next edition.

So, bearing in mind that the following may include a degree of confirmation bias, here goes.

Most people struggled to like any of the characters, even the narrator. It's easy to dislike the selfishness of the Buchannans, the way Myrtle demonstrates so little concern for her own husband and the self-serving purpose of Gatsby's eponymous parties, but there were some questions about Nick. Was he wilfully blind to what was going on, or just naïf? And how

far did his attempts to get people to come to Jay's funeral redeem his complicity in the cuckolding (no matter that it was deserved) of Tom?

While we accepted that Fitzgerald was part of the world he described, we couldn't see how Tom might have met and fallen for and continued with Myrtle given the difference in their worlds (made particularly stark in the Baz Luhrmann film version) – but maybe the class gulf seems much greater to English readers.

As I remember, there was one person willing to champion the book as a perfect story, but it left the rest of us with a bad taste in our mouths. However, even those relieved it was short conceded that the evocative and direct writing deemed it worthy of consideration for 'must-read' lists ... although not necessarily inclusion on them.

Catherine

Our next book is

***The Way Back Home* — Freya North**

and we will discuss it on 6 August 2018

What to read next: desert island books

We had a round of desert island books. The Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare go automatically and we were lax, letting those present have one, two or three. Some were enthusiastically seconded, others written down by people persuaded to seek them out and others were new to all of us except the person who'd stow them in the life raft. So, here they are, alphabetical order so the juxtaposition gives you no clue as to which book belongs to which person. But, if you want to guess, feel free.

- *Angels at Christmas* – Debbie Macomber
- *At Swim-Two-Birds* – Flann O'Brien
- *The Black Prince* – Iris Murdoch
- *Comme un Roman* – Daniel Pennac
- *Friend or Foe* – Michael Morpurgo
- *Letter to my Daughter* – Maya Angelou
- *The Life of Pi* – Yann Martel
- *Middlemarch* – George Eliot
- *The Red Tent* – Anita Diamant
- *The Secret Garden* – Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *The Story of Beautiful Girl* – Rachel Simon
- *Stumbling on Happiness* – Daniel Gilbert
- *This Thing of Darkness* – Harry Thompson
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* – Harper Lee
- *Wuthering Heights* – Emily Brontë



Catherine

If you have any news; reviews or recommendations; tales of literary events; or anything you think AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:

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