

Book choice reviews for 2017



<u>Month</u>		<u>Author</u>	<u>Review</u>
January	The Silk Merchant's Daughter	Dinah Jefferies	First of the New Year! Marks varied greatly again with 3 x 5; 3 x 6; 1 x 7 and 3 x 8. Those who gave it 8 found the story very interesting and the history of Vietnam fascinating with the issues regarding the mixed marriages between the French and the Vietnamese and Vietminh element together with the story of the silk shop running throughout. However it was thought among the lower markers that the plot was not very well fleshed out with a very abrupt ending. It was felt that the story was not well written overall with the characters very superficial and the ongoing plot clumpy between the characters with too many unanswered questions making it disappointing and inconsistent in parts
February	Her Giant Octopus Moment	Kay Langdale	Very interesting and unusual fiction book dealing with the issues of IVF and surrogacy. 11 year old Scout has not much in common with her mother Joanie who leads an erratic and unconventional lifestyle with no routine although she loves her daughter. Scout is very intelligent and likes order and neatness. The story deals with Scout's birth and her life before finding eventual peace and order after Janie's warm chaos. Marks were generally 7's and 8's.

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March	Catcher in the Rye	J D Salinger	Classic book often read by school/college students about a teenage, very sad and depressed boy just expelled from his 4th school and narrated by him discussing his various challenges of life and his struggles with his insecurities. Some sympathy with the disturbed and dysfunctional character as he had a lack of help and guidance whilst his life and mind slowly falls apart. Marks varied a great deal ranging from 2-7! "
April	Magpie Murders	Anthony Horowitz	Very unusual and original "who done it" mystery novel within a novel of the Agatha Christie type. Bit confusing for two of us following both storylines as a lot of red herrings and not an easy book to just pick up and carry on! Overall though we were in the minority and the majority of the members loved it and marks were mostly 8 with one 8.5 and one 9.
May	The Girl with All the Gifts	M R Carey	Quite easy to read but some didn't like the content and not for the squeamish! Written by the brother-in-law of one of our members this book was in the Sunday Times best seller list! Disturbing futuristic story – think The Walking Dead, crossed with a bit of Silence of the Lambs and The Triffids!! Disturbing especially as children involved and readers need a strongish stomach (not recommended when eating!) Very original and imaginative story however. Marks varied from 8 down to 4 with the lower marks from those who felt it was too disturbing.

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June	Hunger Games Catching Fire	Suzanne Collins	Second book in the series and sequel to The Hunger Games which was read and enjoyed previously. Needless to say most members loved this too. The imagination was good, characterisation good and all felt it was very well written and kept your interest throughout and as a member stated you care about the protagonists. Some members are already reading the next book The Mockingjay whilst the storyline was fresh in their minds! Marks mostly at the top end of the range of 8s and 9s with a couple of 5's from people who couldn't get into it!
July	This Must Be the Place	Maggie O'Farrell	Use of language good, well written with quality writing although some got frustrated as the chapters kept jumping between years and those reading it on a Kindle found it very hard to deal with! A lot of sympathy lay with Daniel the main character and how his life deteriorated from a mistake in his past. Lot of discussion about this book dealing with the rather sketchy characterisations felt by some and the various dates which made the reader think. Not a book to pick up easily where you left off without getting your head together! Marks varied from 5 at the bottom end up to one 9.

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August	The Wide Sargasso Sea	Jean Rhys	This is the tale of the renowned 'mad woman in the attic' written as a "prequel" to Jane Eyre, and tells of a young Creole misfit heiress where she does not fit in among white or black people, nor with her parent's idea of a husband (Mr Rochester) and how her mental instabilities (the supposed "madness") destroy her life. On the whole the book group found the writing style somewhat difficult to read with various members not finishing it! The overall vote was 6 and below with one 8
September	The Girl with a Pearl Earring	Tracy Chevalier	This story is set in 17th Century Holland and is written through the eyes of Griet who becomes a maid in the household of Johannes Vermeer an artist in the town of Delft. As she becomes part of his world and his work and is trusted by him to mix his paints and generally assist him as well as deal with her usual household chores it leads to deception keeping the fact from the rest of the household. It made fascinating and interesting reading portraying the artist's work methods as well as insights into his use of colour after he comes to use Griet as his model for his famous painting and shows Griet's gradual revelation of her true feelings for the artist although nothing ever materialised. Most enjoyed this immensely, the writing was easy to read with excellent characterisation. Some were disappointed and wanted the story to be more and thought it was a bit boring in places but on the whole the marks were on the upper end of the scale at 8's and 2 9's, with a few only rating it a 6.

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October	Dead Simple	Peter James	The tale of what can go horribly wrong when a stag do “prank” goes unexpectedly awry. Very good storyline with a twist at the end. Members’ views varied greatly but the overall majority found it a superior thriller which was very descriptive, easy to read and well written with interesting characters and very clever details. Marks varied from 5 from those who found the plot difficult and those who loved it with 5 x 9’s and even one 10! - a first in the history of the book club! Several of the members are reading other stories by the author as he has whet their appetite!
November	The Saffron Trail	Rosanna Ley	After the death of her mother the tale of a daughter’s search for answers to various questions about her origins and the background events in her mother’s life which lead her from Cornwall to Marrakech. Enrolling on a cookery course to enable her to open a Moroccan restaurant on her return she goes on the “saffron trail” learning about the spice and ultimately fulfilling all her dreams. Most of the members thoroughly enjoyed this book and the descriptions and found it a good read although some members felt there were too many loose ends and too many coincidences which made it too predictable. Marks mainly 6, 7 or 8.

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December	And the Mountains Echoed	Khaled Hosseini	This is the second book we have read by this author and most of the group thought that he is a very good writer and enjoyed it although some felt it was quite disjointed and you had to think about where you were in the story when you came back to it. It showed the bleakness and hardship suffered in Afghanistan and the terrible decisions having to be made to survive and eke out an existence. The marks were mainly 7's with one 8.
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