



Sunriver Books & Music

January 2022

Newsletter

Sunriverbooks.com
541-593-2525



Happy New Year!
May 2022 be a kinder, gentler year!

The past two years have been difficult for many. The pandemic has claimed over 800,000 American lives. 2021 was a strange year, for over 200 years the USA has prided itself on being a shining example of democracy with a peaceful transfer of power. Not so this time, instead there are videos of a violent mobs in the halls of Congress.

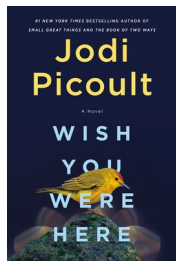
Sunriver Books & Music has some of the nicest people shopping with us. A couple we respect and enjoy having as long-time regulars made a comment that sticks with me. They said people used to avoid speaking about politics and religion, but now that seems to be a common focus that can bring on unpleasantness. I think they are right. Maybe 2022 should be a year we all respect everyone's right to different opinions and focus conversations on areas of common ground. Like good books! We can talk more about good books and less about politics and religion! I am not saying ignore the obligation to act for the common good by being involved, or agree with opinions not based on facts. However, maybe we could try to get along, not expect everyone to believe the same way, and enjoy areas (like good books, wilderness walks, being kind to animals and such) that build common ground.

Covid 19 has been hard for the world. We chose at Sunriver Books & Music to be protective of our staff, community, and family. Properly worn masks are required to shop at Sunriver Books & Music. My mother is 93 years old, I fear her getting the virus. I am tired of telling adults to wear a mask and please pull their masks up over their nose. One of our regulars was taken to St. Charles with a heart attack, she got the last ICU bed available, the rest were taken by Covid-19 patients. She is a lovely person and this was a serious illness. What if that bed had not been available? I believe in personal choice, I also believe we should try not to harm others. Maybe in 2022 we could be more careful.

Those are two of my hopes for 2022. Approach each other with the belief we are all doing our best and focus more on good books less on politics and religion. Respect each other's right to personal choice while also trying to act for the common good regarding Covid-19.

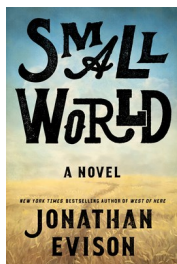
New Releases.

Wish You Were Here by Jodi Picoult is a story for our times. Diana is on a fast track to success. Hers is a life carefully planned. Success in selling fabulous art, cozying up to the rich and famous to persuade them of the benefit in using her employer, Sotheby's, to auction their exquisite pieces. Currently she is completing a deal for a piece that should surely lead to promotion. Marriage, children, a house in a great neighborhood are part of the plan. All that is coming along swimmingly too. Finn, her lover, is a young doctor, doing his surgical residency. They currently live in a trendy New York apartment, but she is pretty sure Finn plans to propose when they travel to the Galapagos Islands. She is not quite thirty, but all systems are looking good. You know what they say about "best laid plans"?



A pandemic is about to hit, just in time to derail the romantic vacation. Finn can't go, all leave has been cancelled as the hospital braces for what is coming. He suggests Diana go ahead, they have already paid for the trip, it is non-refundable, it sounds like he will be working round the clock, and besides, it will probably be safer on an island in the Galapagos.

She arrives on the last boat in, the hotel is shuttered, cell reception is non-existent and Diana is stuck. As the island works its magic, she starts to break down to more elemental needs and pleasures. Swimming with sea creatures, long walks in pristine nature make her start to question her priorities. Is the "plan" really right for her? How do you measure success? Meanwhile the virus fells victims. I wish everyone choosing to remain unvaccinated would read this book! It details struggles that do not resemble an easy flu, they show an illness that is debilitating, heart-breaking, and potentially avoidable with vaccine.



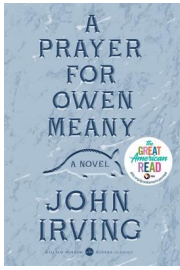
Small World by Jonathan Evison assembles a dazzling array of characters. Evison takes the reader across the USA from the time railroads were first being built hurtling on to present day. Quick snapshots keep the reader interested as the story switches between characters and their descendants. Connecting them loosely by the onward expanse and running of the railroad.

Finn and Nora Bergan are twins who travel from Ireland to New York, finding their way to Chicago seeking the golden opportunity of America. Othello is a slave, his life not his own, but the property of a self-indulgent blowhard. That Othello is the better man is beyond question, but wealth and ownership put him at the beck and call of the lesser man. Othello is easily worth a whole book of his own! Actually, many of these characters are worth a whole book of their own! Evison populates the novel with a wide variety of backgrounds, from immigrants to Native Americans, each seeking a meaningful life. As I read the snapshots of their lives, Evison's writing is so vivid it kept me wanting to read more about them. Clearly shown is the strength diversity brings to the US. Connecting the past to the present, often focusing on the Northwest, this is an epic story and a joy to read.

Book Clubs!

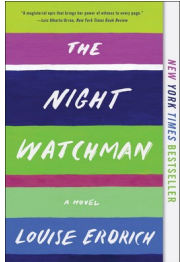
Book Clubs are a big part of Sunriver Books & Music! We have great Book Club members in both our in person Book Clubs and our Zoom Book Clubs. Each year they vote for their favorite selections discussed. Winners for 2021 are inside.

Fiction Book Club's Favorite Selections of 2021.



Fiction Book Club discussed a Banned Book selection in observance of Banned Book week, ***A Prayer for Owen Meany*** by John Irving. Considered a modern classic, ***A Prayer for Owen Meany*** is number 76 on the Banned Book list according to the American Library Association's Top 100 Banned Books 2000-2009. It was banned in Pennsylvania over language and content. In West Virginia it was banned in 2000 as pornographic and offensive. In 2009 in Massachusetts, it was banned for language and sexuality.

Owen Meany is a small child who lives a big life. Although diminutive in stature, during a baseball game he hits the ball with enough oomph that when it goes astray it hits and kills his best friend's mother. John Wheelwright, the best friend, is the narrator over the thirty years of Owen Meany's life the book follows. Owen Meany has a tendency to foresee events (including his own demise) and is convinced he is God's messenger. The Vietnam War features strongly in the story, Meany enlists, Wheelwright heads north to Canada. As in all of John Irving's novels, there are many comedic moments and abundant hijinks.

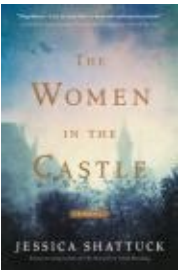


The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich, one of the foremost Native American authors, winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. ***Night Watchman*** is inspired by the life of her grandfather Aunishenauabay, Patrick Gourneau, who battled the US government with his eloquence and determination when House Concurrent Resolution 108 was being passed to terminate treaties with Native Americans through promoting assimilation. 113 tribes lost their rights and their land. Louise Erdrich's grandfather, along with others, battled Senator Arthur Watkins saving the Tuttle Mountain Indians of North Dakota from that fate.

The Night Watchman is a book about a tribe's fight to keep their rights, but it is also the story of a group of people connected by their heritage and families. This is a lively book, sprinkled with humor, and shadowed by darkness. It is populated by characters that you will be loath to leave when you turn the last page, wanting to spend more time with them.

Thomas Wazhashk, the character based on Erdrich's grandfather, works as a night watchman at a factory. He is a good man, providing for his family, involved in helping his community, and occasionally seeing ghosts. Pixie works at the factory, trying to save enough money for an education and a way to help her family. Barnes teaches at the Reservation School and coaches boxing; he thinks Pixie is the cat's pajamas and wishes she would notice him. There are a host of great characters, each with hopes and dreams that sustain or abandon them.

Louis Erdrich is a master at creating beautifully written stories that enlighten and entertain



Women in the Castle by Jessica Shattuck. What was it like in Germany, a country renowned for its Universities, rule of law, and well-educated populace as a hate monger came to power? How did the citizens react, what were their personal consequences, and how did they attempt to heal from the horror after defeat? In rich prose, Shattuck explores these questions through the lives of three women.

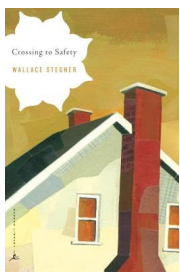
Marianne von Lingenfels was of the upper class, her husband held a responsible position in government. As the story opens on November 9, 1938, she is helping his aunt, the Countess von Lingenfels, put on a soiree at the family castle. The night is significant, known as Kristallnacht, when violence against the Jewish population erupted and a brave few pledged opposition to the evil that was consuming their nation. Marianne will return to the castle a widow, her husband executed for his part in opposing Hitler. There she will seek out the widows of others who gave their lives trying to stop the evil regime.

Benita grew up in a village, not a member of the hoi polloi, a pretty girl who by chance met and married Marianne's best friend who was also executed for his part in the plot against Hitler. After the executions, Marianne first finds Benita's son, Martin, then discovers Benita in very poor condition, bringing her to the castle to heal.

Ania is found in a refugee camp with her children. The three women and their children form a matriarchal family, innovating ways to survive as Germany plunges deeper into chaos.

Their bonds strengthen as they help each other and reach out to others in need. Each woman has strengths and weaknesses of her own; each came to this situation in a different way giving the reader a broad look at the experiences of Germany's civilians during war years under the mad rule of Hitler. They will face choices and challenges that test them both during and after the war. Marianne's sense of moral certainty will cause her to take actions with far reaching consequences, teaching her that life is lived in the grey zone and attempts to interpret it in shades of black or white can be harmful.

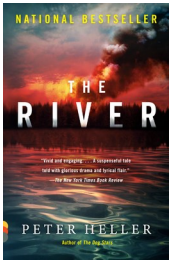
The story culminates in 1991, having shared with the reader not only the experiences of the war years, but also the aftermath.



Fiction and Classics Book Clubs combined to discuss ***Crossing to Safety*** by Wallace Stegner. He was a giant in American literature, inspiring others through the gift of his writing and in the classroom as he taught at Stanford. He accumulated an impressive number of awards including the Pulitzer Prize for ***Angle of Repose***, one of our earlier Book Club selections, and the National Book award for ***The Spectator Bird***.

Crossing to Safety spans decades in a day, from 1937 to 1972 when two couples reunite in Vermont. Larry and Sally Morgan are westerners from hardscrabble beginnings. In their youth they form an unlikely friendship with Sid and Charity Lang, easterners with a moneyed background. Charity, a formidable woman who dominates Sid, is dying. She has organized a farewell get together at the Lang family home in Vermont. The story is fueled by Larry's reminiscences as he examines the goals of his youth and the accomplishments of a full life.

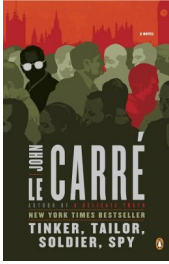
Fiction Book Club's Favorite Selections of 2021 continued.



The River by Peter Heller. Wynn and Jack met freshman year, college boys with the world wide open ahead of them. Both are avid outdoorsmen but from opposite sides of the country with different upbringing. Wynn hales from Vermont, a sweet natured guy, tall and impressively built. Jack is a ranch kid from Colorado, wiry and fit, at home in a Rocky Mountain wilderness more armed with tooth and claw than the gentle mountains of New England. A love of literature and the outdoors bonds them; they spend their summer breaks working together for a guiding company. Before settling down to adult endeavors, they plan a grand trip, canoeing Canada's remote Maskwa River spending their days on the water and hiking, their nights under the stars, away from cell phones and traffic.

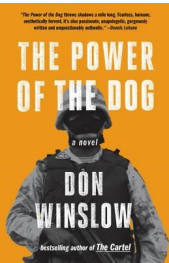
Things start to go seriously awry when a raging wildfire threatens to overtake them. Jack knows a thing or two about wildfires, and this one is apocalyptic, it scares him. Attempting to make time before the fire can catch up to them; they hear a couple arguing on a riverbank obscured by fog. Though they try, they cannot find the couple to warn of the coming conflagration. The next day the man appears, the woman is missing, and those idyllic woods take on a sinister atmosphere as the young friends try to avert disaster.

Mystery Book Clubs Favorite Selections of 2021.



Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy by John Le Carré. In memory of John Le Carré, Book Club chose to discuss one of his best, a classic of the spy genre. Twice it was made into a major film. Having worked as a spy in his youth, he abandoned the flash of Ian Fleming's James Bond for a grittier, probably more accurate, portrayal of the great game. His plots are intricate, both shocking and subtle. In his novel, there is no knight in shining armor, no side with the moral high ground. Just people involved in a dangerous game, where the tricks it takes to win will keep them up at night someday.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy has to do with a double agent, a mole, much like the real Kim Philby. Full of twists and turns, as it travels down dark alleys, and back in time to an operation that went tragically awry. Smiley fell from favor with the passing of the former chief. Now he is called back to hunt one of their own. Out of the blue, a spy who fled his last mission has returned to England peddling a tale he heard in Greece about a double agent, someone passing high level secrets to the Russians.

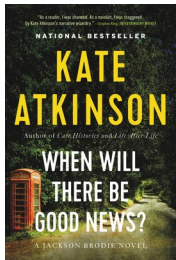


The Power of the Dog by Don Winslow is the first of a trilogy about the drug cartels and the border. Movies are being made.

Art Keller was CIA. When President Nixon started his war on drugs, Art, who grew up in the barrio and witnessed **The Power of the Dog** first hand, was all in. Good notions don't always work the way you plan, switching to the newly created DEA he was thwarted by bosses who were rigidly entrenched in their own culture and coworkers who didn't trust the new guy from the CIA with a background in Southeast Asia. He was about to make one of the bigger mistakes of his life. Frustrated by bosses who wouldn't listen, and fluent in Spanish, he went to town where he met Adan Barrera. It was a meeting of future consequence. Adan and his brother would rise to be a power in the cartels. Father Parada knew both men, while the war they fought tore apart his country.

Callan was just a poor Irish kid from New York's Hells Kitchen. He palled around with, O-Bop, who got sideways of the local gang boss' enforcer. The standard result would have been a long dirt nap. Instead, Callan's talent for quickly dispatching his enemies makes him a formidable hit man.

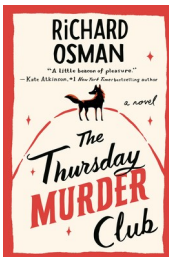
Nora was the sort that inspire songs about California girls. Strictly into having a good time, sun streaked and pretty. Her parents were divorced, she stayed with her dad, an aging hippie more interested in his next toké than his daughter. Her Mom lived on the other side of the country. A chance meeting with a more experienced woman showed Nora another way. Their stories come together in a cataclysmic tale of the first three decades of the war on drugs.



When Will There Be Good News by Kate Atkinson. Dr. Joanna Hunter is living the good life, a beautiful house in an upscale neighborhood, a career she is good at, a handsome husband, baby son, and devoted German Shepherd dog, Sadie. It looks like a rosy life from the outside, but there is sadness in Joanna, she was marked by her past. When Joanna was six years old, walking along a country road, she witnessed her family being slaughtered. Her mother, baby brother, sister, and the family dog, all dead. Joanna's father was not present thus survived. Joanna doesn't like to talk about the past, but its mark is clear in the occasional sadness of her gaze.

Reggie has her own secret tragedies. She lives alone, is sixteen but looks about twelve. Her brother Billy took to a life of crime early and enthusiastically. Reggie knows nothing about babies, but interviews for a position caring for Dr. Hunter's child. Amazed she got the job, Reggie loves the baby and Dr. Hunter, they are the family she wishes she had. She does not disclose her tragedies because she would do anything not to increase the looks of sadness that come over Dr. Hunter unbidden and unexplained.

Jackson Brodie has been a lot of things; soldier, cop, private investigator. He likes women, he truly does, he just has trouble understanding them, although heaven knows he tries. When events intersect in the lives of these characters, Jackson will be there, a bit beaten up, but willing to give his all to see that good people are protected from evil. Jackson is in several of Atkinson's books. I hope she continues writing about him because he is one of my favorite characters! Strong female characters are generally found in Kate Atkinson's writing. She is best known for her literary fiction; **Life after Life**, **Transcription**, **Behind the Scenes at the Museum** and others.

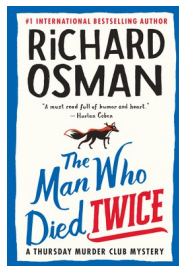


The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman is a lark, great fun to read! Coopers Chase Retirement Village is just the sort that all retirement facilities should be, with extensive park like grounds, walking paths, a pleasant vista, apartments with all the features expected in the better condominiums, parking for the resident's cars, and, of course, a game room. On Thursdays four residents, **The Thursday Murder Club**, meet to discuss cold cases. Murder is their game and boy are they chess level players!

Normally they concentrate on past murders, but when a murder takes place right at hand, they are in the game! Running rings around the Fairhaven Police. A clever plot, generous sprinkles of humor, and a cast of characters you will be wanting to revisit. Good news, the second in the series, **The Man Who Died Twice**, just released and is January's Book Club selection.

Wishing you a Happy New Year! May 2022 be filled with joy, peace, and understanding. As we begin a New Year, I hope we can all get along, try to understand each other, and reduce the hateful rhetoric that has become so common. We all want to live happy lives.

Book Clubs help us understand each other, we come together to discuss books that often have viewpoints of characters living very different lives from our own. Through reading, we can fictionally walk for a few pages in another's shoes. Then discuss the book with a group of passionate readers. If you would like to join us for one of the Book Club discussions, email sunriverbooks@sunriverbooks.com and I will send you the Zoom link the weekend before the discussion. Everyone is welcome.



January 17 at 6 PM the Mystery Book Club discusses ***The Man Who Died Twice*** by Richard Osman, the second in a new series. It continues the exploits of ***The Thursday Murder Club*** with Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim, and Ron once again in the thick of multiple investigations.

Elizabeth's old life comes calling in the guise of a letter from a dead man. At least the last time she saw him, he was very dead. Now she has a letter requesting a meeting. Strange occurrences are not unknown to Elizabeth, so of course she goes. Someone once close to her needs help, he may have lifted a considerable number of diamonds from a powerful, deadly man. Soon her old shop, MI5, is once again keeping tabs on her as she tries to find a way out of a desperate situation. Of course, if there are diamonds to be found, that could be a pleasant reward.

Meanwhile a member of ***The Thursday Murder Club*** will face danger, and the gang will come together to take care of one of their own. Good piece of advice, do not mess with a member of ***The Thursday Murder Club***!

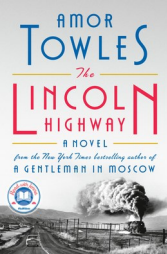
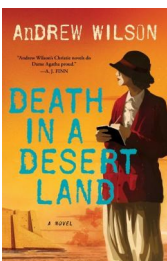
The characters are fun, the story spiced abundantly with humor. This is a book you will not want to put down until the last page is finished!



January 24 at 6 PM the Fiction Book Club discusses ***Dear Mrs. Bird*** by A.J. Pearce. Plucky characters, a can-do attitude in challenging times and a liberal sprinkling of wit make this charming novel a delight to read.

It is 1940; Emmy works in an office by day, volunteers with the Auxiliary Fire Service by night, and dreams of being a war correspondent, a woman journalist traveling to the front sending back stories full of grit. On her way home from work, she spots an ad in the paper for employment; enquire at the London Evening Chronicle. She is over the moon with excitement; this is just the opening she hoped for! All that rampant excitement and excess enthusiasm cloud her judgement a wee bit at the interview; keep her from asking some key questions about the job. When she shows up for work, she discovers belatedly that the job she accepted was not at the newspaper, but at a lady's magazine housed in the same building.

Nor is she to be groomed for a position as a journalist, instead her task is to sort through the mail and do the typing for the advice columnist, an elderly harridan, Mrs. Henrietta Bird. As advice columnists go, Mrs. Bird is supremely lacking in empathy. She refuses to read any letters with what she terms "unpleasantness", this encompasses most of the letters written by women with husbands or boyfriends off fighting. Emmy has oodles of empathy, she is distressed by all the letters being ignored from woman whose children are being sent to the countryside, or who have put passion over propriety with a man shipping out to fight, or any number of issues that might face a woman in times of war, all falling under the heading of "unpleasantness" in Mrs. Henrietta Bird's opinion. So Emmy, who in addition to oodles of empathy has a tendency to act impulsively, takes matters into her own hands, starts answering a few of the more desperate letters. Things get wildly out of control. Funny, sad, and ultimately uplifting, this heartwarming story is a treat to read.



Upcoming Book Club Dates for Monday Evenings at 6:00 PM

Everyone is welcome, Meetings are held via Zoom Mondays at 6 PM.
Times and dates are tentative due to current situation.

Happy New Year!

February

February 7 ***Death In A Desert Land*** by Andrew Wilson **Mystery Book Club**

February 21 ***Lincoln Highway*** by Amor Towles **Fiction Book Club**

March

March 7 ***The Delightful Life of a Suicide Pilot*** by Colin Cotterell **Mystery Book Club.**

March 28 ***Cloud Cuckoo Land*** by Anthony Doerr **Fiction Book Club.**

Comment on book clubs, look up future book clubs, or find more information at Sunriverbooks.com



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