

BOOK CLUB REVIEWS JUY/AUGUST 2023

Thanks to everyone who took the time to send us your comments on our latest round of Book Club recommendations. We always enjoy hearing your thoughts and opinions!

Our first choice was **The Power of Knitting by Loretta Napoleon**. Sheila explained: "I came across this book while we were on one of our pet/homesits on Hampstead. The title caught my eye, as I am a keen knitter and have been as long as I can remember.

"The book majors on the therapeutic benefits of knitting, through the ages and different situations. I can relate to that, as when I feel stressed or pressured, it always helps me to relax, providing the pattern is not too complex. It pleases me to complete a project - even if I have had to correct mistakes.

"Knitted items have such a practical purpose, as well as often being decorative. I spent last weekend trying to teach my granddaughters to crochet with moderate success.

"The book was a little repetitive at times, but I could see the thread of the author's troubled situation. It was lovely to see how her approach to knitting and helping people played out. The historical aspects of knitting especially during wartime were really interesting. All in all a worthy read."

Barbara said: "I really looked forward to this book as I thought it might be along the lines of the very first book we read in our 'club' which was *Threads of Life*. I was expecting a bit of history and some facts but I did wonder a bit once I read the intro! Overall I found the book a little disappointing, everything had to be in a political context rather than a more social one. I got a bit irritated with it actually being all about her and her journey. There were some interesting facts and some good bits but overall it was too much of a personal journey and didn't really go into the many proven benefits of repetitive and reflexive work which knitting can be."

Barbara also enjoyed our second recommendation - **A Gentleman of Moscow by Amor Towles**. She told us: "This is a wonderful book and how relevant now. It is such a moving story, there is such a feel of menace in the background and yet through it all the gentleman just keeps carrying on in his own way. I thought it got the feel of the Soviet Union just right, never knowing who would tell on you. I loved the relationships in it. I read it a long time ago so can't quite remember the details, but the feel if it will be there for ever.

Sheila said: "A really gripping saga telling the life of Count Rostov, under almost life long house arrest at the famous Metropol Hotel in Moscow. The stories and encounters he experienced were described so beautifully with added humour and pathos. The characters he met and befriended were often larger than life as was he. I wanted to know more about them and 'root' for them. I loved the description of the count's room through a curtain into the sleeping area.

“The story took a turn when he was employed as a waiter in the best restaurant - such a lot of detail, and a sad indictment of life in Russia, especially in the current situation with the war between Russia and Ukraine. Quite a story to get through but we'll worth the effort.”

Our last recommendation was also a recent television recommendation and was the much lauded **Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus**. Barbara said: “This has to be my favourite book of the year so far (and many other years too). I have been giving it to everyone to read and they all loved it. My husband thought it was one of the best books ever too, he just loved Elizabeth. I loved Six thirty and Mad, well all the characters really (the 'good' ones). I thought it made some very serious points in such a readable way; it made me question how in the past we just let things go on because they have always been like that. What a relevant book, once again now in view of the Spanish footballers, some things are still the same but people are not just going along with it anymore.

“I loved the way it could be very stark and dramatic, intensely sad and also very funny. It was gripping and involving but you didn't feel bludgeoned and indoctrinated. I remember sometimes feeling quite breathless with shock at some of the events. Equally I recognised some of the things that happened especially in the sixties and seventies when we just took certain things for granted and went along with them. A very thought provoking and mind blowing read. I loved it.”

Chris added: “Had also (just) read Lessons in Chemistry and was so happy with it. It was also the choice of my actual book group. Who would have thought that feminism could also be such fun. Loved the dog!”