

CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK!

At the
Portland Library
2015



Curl Up with a Good Book

Crucet, Jennine Capó

FIC CRU

Make your Home among Strangers

Lizet Ramirez, the first in her Cuban immigrant family to attend college, must learn to navigate academia's culture of privilege alone as her family breaks apart. It's Thanksgiving Day 1999. Overwhelmed with being one of the few nonwhite students at an elite East Coast university, Lizet saves her work-study wages for a surprise trip home to Little Havana, Florida, to see her family. But this is also the same day that Ariel Hernandez, a 5-year-old Cuban boy who saw his mother die on a raft as they escaped to America, arrives in the state. Advocating for Ariel's well-being quickly becomes Lizet's mother's reason for living. The twin narratives play off each other in a masterful way: the battle for Ariel to remain in America echoes Lizet's own story of the breakup of her family and her formation of identity on an epic scale. Here, perfectly articulated through Lizet, is the experience of being a first-generation child of immigrants in America, the lack of cultural capital, the casually racist comments of fellow students, and the facade of campus diversity that does not exist.

Diament, Anita

FIC DIA

Boston Girl

When 85-year-old Addie Baum is asked by her granddaughter how she came to be the woman she is today, Addie launches into the story of her life. In a voice that is as comforting as it is fluid, and without a shred of self-pity, Addie tells of her poverty-stricken childhood as the daughter of immigrants living in Boston's North End neighborhood. Against her mother's wishes, she spends the summer of her sixteenth year at an inn for "young ladies" in a seaside town north of Boston. It's there she meets like-minded girls who will become lifelong friends and sees that there might be a way out for an intelligent young woman with ambition. She also talks about her sister's tragic circumstances; her first disastrous love affair; and her happy marriage. In addition to providing a graphic, page-turning portrait of immigrant life in the early twentieth century, Diamant's novel is an inspirational read that is likely to be a popular book-club choice.

Franzen, Jonathan

FIC FRA

Purity

Does anyone have truly pure intentions, or are most people motivated by their own needs and desires? This is one of the questions posed by Franzen in his provocative new novel, a book rich with characters searching for roots and meaning in a world of secrets and lies. Pip (Purity) Tyler is burdened with college debt, a minimum-wage job, and a needy yet withholding mother who lives as a recluse under an assumed name. The identity of Pip's father is a taboo subject. Enter the shadowy, Julian Assange-like CEO of the Sunlight Project, Andreas Wolf, purveyor of all the Internet's hidden truths. With less than pure

objectives, Wolf offers Pip a researcher position at his South American headquarters. Franzen is burrowing deep into each person's questionable sense of his or her own goodness and suggests that the moral rot can metastasize to the levels of corporations and government. The novel's prose never bogs down into lectures and its various stories are as forceful as the main tale of Purity's fate.

Hallberg, Garth
City on Fire

FIC HAL

Find a comfortable chair, a lamp, and fix yourself a hot cup of tea, because this book is going to steal your time and throw you into the swirling mayhem of 1970s New York City – where the lives of the wealthy, punks, artists, cops, anarchists, and fleeing teens collide – and you are not going to want it to end. Told through multiple perspectives, Hallberg's novel reveals a vast and varied web of characters whose lives intertwine around a shooting and the New York City blackout of 1977. This is a novel of America, of hopes and dreams, of old money, of families and rebellion, and how “no matter what you deserve, how far you run, your fate stays stuck to your heels.” Rendered with cinematic detail and crisp-cracking prose, Garth Risk Hallberg's *City on Fire* is electric.

Hoffman, Alice
The Marriage of Opposites

FIC HOF

This lovely and imaginative fictionalized biography re-envisioned Rachel, the mother of Camille Pissarro, the "father of impressionism." Rachel's Danish Jewish family fled Europe for the safety of St. Thomas shortly before her birth in 1795. At 17, she is forced into an arranged marriage, to a widower with small children, in order to save her father's fortune. Several years and a few more children later, she is widowed, and despite her keen business sense, the law dictates that only a blood relative of her husband can take control of the estate. When her late husband's nephew, Frédéric, arrives from France and sees Rachel, his heart is immediately hers. Their lifelong passion defies Jewish law, which forbids their marriage for many years. Camille, one of Rachel's four children, struggles well into adulthood against his mother's cold dismissal of his artistic brilliance, which was evident from an early age.

Hooper, Judith
Alice in Bed

FIC HOO

There is a literary feast of recreated letters between Alice James and her famous brothers William and Henry as Hooper's book portrays the exciting, frustrating, and perplexing private life of bed-ridden Alice. Alice's illnesses develop alongside her longing for the entertaining, ambitious lives led by her two brothers. Her sardonic wit repels suitors, and her clear disinterest in marital servitude confuses her peers and parents, but she identifies with her older, academically gifted brothers, who adore her. As Alice languishes in domestic invisibility, a provocative James-family saga unfolds.

MacDonald, Helen
H is for Hawk

598.944 MAC

When naturalist and falconer Helen Macdonald lost her beloved father, she “thought [her] world was ending.” Seems apropos, then, that her journey from crippling grief to something resembling grace is on the wings of another deadly bird of prey--the notoriously prickly, and murderous, goshawk. In *H Is for Hawk*, you will meet Mabel, not your typical bloodthirsty specimen, as she is trained to hunt like the goshawks of yore. It is this brash, slightly mad undertaking that wrenches Macdonald free from despair, and brings her to a place where she can begin again. Macdonald's gorgeously wrought prose holds you in thrall from the first page, and provides something akin to the escape, and salvation, that nature provides her.

Maguire, Gregory
After Alice

FIC MAG

What happened above after Alice fell down the rabbit hole into Wonderland? That is the question Maguire answers in his latest novel. In alternating chapters we follow Alice's sister Lydia, who was watching Alice, but lost her, and Ada Boyce, Alice's neighbor and friend, who also falls into Wonderland. Lydia is beset—by Miss Armstrong, Ada's governess; by her father's entertaining Charles Darwin that day; with being a newly motherless 15-year-old girl. Ada, free of adult scrutiny and her scoliosis brace for the first time, experiences the oddness of Wonderland as she follows in Alice's wake. In one vexing day, Ada, Lydia, and Miss Armstrong must adapt to deal with their circumstances and find new facets of themselves. December 2015 marks the 150th year anniversary of the Lewis Carroll classic.

Mandel, Emily St. John
Station Eleven

FIC MAN

Onstage at a Toronto theater, an aging movie star drops dead while performing the title role in *King Lear*. As the other cast members share a drink at the lobby bar before heading into the snowy night, none can know what horrors await them: "Of all of them at the bar that night, the bartender was the one who survived the longest. He died three weeks later on the road out of the city." The Shakespearean tragedy unfolds into a real-life calamity just before the entire world is overtaken by a catastrophic flu pandemic that will kill off the vast majority of the population. The narrative is organized around several figures present at the theater that night, and the tale travels back and forth in time, from the years before the pandemic through the following 20 years in a world without government, electricity, telecommunications, modern medicine, or transportation.

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