

ZTA Book Club 2016 Reading List

January 20 - "Inheritance" by Natalie Danford

February 17 - "The Selection" by Kiera Cass

March 23 - "A House in the Sky" by Amanda Lindhout

April 20 - "Luckiest Girl Alive" by Jessica Knoll

**May 18 - "Garlic Sapphires - The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise"
by Ruth Reichl**

June 15 - "Desolation Row" by Kay Kendall * (Meet the author)

July 20 - "Ship of Fools" by Katherine Anne Porter

August 17 - *Share your favorite summer read!*

September 21 - "The Promise" by Ann Weisgarber * (Meet the author)

**October 19 - "Devil in the White City: A Saga of Magic and Murder
at the Fair that Changed America" by Erik Larson**

November 16 - "The Law of Moses" by Amy Harmon

No Meeting in December

** Author lives in Houston*

Meetings held 7:00-8:30pm on 3rd Wednesday of each month (exception March)

Email your book suggestions for 2017 to bookclub-night@ztahouston.org

Reviews/Summaries

January 20 - “Inheritance” by Natalie Danford

How well do we know our parents? One half of the story begins after the death of Luigi Bonocchio, an Italian immigrant whose daughter, Olivia, discovers a mysterious deed among his possessions. The deed is to a house in Urbino, Italy---the hometown he barely spoke of. Intrigued, Olivia travels there. At first she is charmed by the historic city, the relatives she’s not met before, and the young lawyer she’s hired to help her investigate the claim. But when Olivia tries to sort out the deed, she is met with a puzzling silence. Everyone in the town remembers her father, but they are not eager to tell his story. However, Luigi tells his part of the tale directly to the reader as the chapters alternate between Olivia’s search for the truth and Luigi’s account of his history. By the end of this skillfully constructed book, the reader understands both sides of a heartbreaking yet ultimately satisfying love story. (Amazon.com)

February 17 - “The Selection” by Kiera Cass

For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape the life laid out for them since birth. To be swept up in a world of glittering gowns and priceless jewels. To live in a palace and compete for the heart of gorgeous Prince Maxon. But for America Singer, being Selected is a nightmare. It means turning her back on her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her. Leaving her home to enter a fierce competition for a crown she doesn't want. Living in a palace that is constantly threatened by violent rebel attacks. Then America meets Prince Maxon. Gradually, she starts to question all the plans she's made for herself—and realizes that the life she's always dreamed of may not compare to a future she never imagined. (Amazon.com)

March 23 - “A House in the Sky” by Amanda Lindhout (June 2014)

The dramatic and redemptive memoir of a woman whose curiosity led her to the world’s most beautiful and remote places, its most imperiled and perilous countries, and then into fifteen months of harrowing captivity—an exquisitely written story of courage, resilience, and grace.

As a child, Amanda Lindhout escaped a violent household by paging through issues of National Geographic and imagining herself in its exotic locales. At the age of nineteen, working as a cocktail waitress in Calgary, Alberta, she began saving her tips so she could travel the globe. Aspiring to understand the world and live a significant life, she backpacked through Latin America, Laos, Bangladesh, and India, and emboldened by each adventure, went on to Sudan, Syria, and Pakistan. In war-ridden Afghanistan and Iraq she carved out a fledgling career as a television reporter. And then, in August 2008, she traveled to Somalia—“the most dangerous place on earth.” On her fourth day, she was abducted by a group of masked men along a dusty road.

Held hostage for 460 days, Amanda converts to Islam as a survival tactic, receives “wife lessons” from one of her captors, and risks a daring escape. Moved between a series of abandoned houses in the desert, she survives on memory—every lush detail of the world she experienced in her life before captivity—and on strategy, fortitude, and hope. When she is most desperate, she visits a house in the sky, high above the woman kept in chains, in the dark, being tortured.

Vivid and suspenseful, as artfully written as the finest novel, A House in the Sky is the searingly intimate story of an intrepid young woman and her search for compassion in the face of unimaginable adversity. (Goodreads.com)

News: Amanda Lindhout’s lead kidnapper, Ali Omar Ader, was arrested in June 2015.

April 20 - “Luckiest Girl Alive” by Jessica Knoll

HER PERFECT LIFE IS A PERFECT LIE.

As a teenager at the prestigious Bradley School, Ani FaNelli endured a shocking, public humiliation that left her desperate to reinvent herself. Now, with a glamorous job, expensive wardrobe, and handsome blue blood fiancé, she’s this close to living the perfect life she’s worked so hard to achieve.

But Ani has a secret.

There's something else buried in her past that still haunts her, something private and painful that threatens to bubble to the surface and destroy everything.

With a singular voice and twists you won't see coming, *Luckiest Girl Alive* explores the unbearable pressure that so many women feel to "have it all" and introduces a heroine whose sharp edges and cutthroat ambition have been protecting a scandalous truth, and a heart that's bigger than it first appears. The question remains: will breaking her silence destroy all that she has worked for—or, will it at long last, set Ani free? (Goodreads.com)

May 18 - "Garlic Sapphires - The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise" by Ruth Reichl

Ruth Reichl, world-renowned food critic and former editor in chief of *Gourmet* magazine, knows a thing or two about food. She also knows that as the most important food critic in the country, you need to be anonymous when reviewing some of the most high-profile establishments in the biggest restaurant town in the world—a charge she took very seriously, taking on the guise of a series of eccentric personalities. In *Garlic and Sapphires*, Reichl reveals the comic absurdity, artifice, and excellence to be found in the sumptuously appointed stages of the epicurean world and gives us—along with some of her favorite recipes and reviews—her remarkable reflections on how one's outer appearance can influence one's inner character, expectations, and appetites, not to mention the quality of service one receives. (Amazon.com)

June 15 - "Desolation Row" by Kay Kendall

In 1968 a young bride from Texas uses her CIA-honed skills to catch the real killer when her husband lands in a Canadian jail for murdering the draft-resisting son of a United States senator.

It's 1968. The Cold War is hot, the Vietnam War is raging, and the women's movement is beating a far-distant drum. When Austin Starr's husband decides to protest the war by emigrating from Texas to Canada, she goes along, with the biblical dictate of "whither-thou-goest I will go" ringing in her ears. No activist herself, Austin is homesick, drowning in culture shock, and now, her husband has been accused of murdering a fellow draft resister, the black-sheep son of a U.S. Senator. Alone and ill-equipped to negotiate in a foreign country, she is befriended by Larissa Klimenko, the daughter of Austin's Russian history professor.

The Mounties aren't supposed to harass draft-age boys but the truth is very different, especially when political pressure is applied by both the victim's father and the Canadian prime minister's office. They may have a reputation for always getting their man, but Austin is convinced this time they have the wrong one. Once courted by the CIA, and a lover of mystery and espionage novels, Austin launches her own investigation into the murder. When ominous letters warning her to stop her sleuthing turn into death threats, Austin must find the real killer or risk losing everything. Her love-and her life-are on the line. (Amazon.com)

NOTE: *We have plans to meet the author to discuss her books, research, planning, and writing process. If you enjoy "Desolation Row" then read the 2nd book in the series called "Rainy Day Women".*

July 20 - "Ship of Fools" by Katherine Anne Porter

The story takes place in the summer of 1931, on board a cruise ship bound for Germany. Passengers include a Spanish noblewoman, a drunken German lawyer, an American divorcee, a pair of Mexican Catholic priests. This ship of fools is a crucible of intense experience, out of which everyone emerges forever changed. Rich in incident, passion, and treachery, the novel explores themes of nationalism, cultural and ethnic pride, and basic human frailty that are as relevant today as they were when the book was first published in 1962. (Goodreads.com)

August 17 - Share your favorite summer read!

September 21 - "The Promise" by Ann Weisgarber

Young pianist Catherine Wainwright flees the fashionable town of Dayton, Ohio in the wake of a terrible scandal. Heartbroken and facing destitution, she finds herself striking up correspondence with a childhood admirer, the recently widowed Oscar Williams. In desperation she agrees to marry him, but when Catherine travels to Oscar's farm on Galveston Island, Texas—a thousand miles from home—she finds she is little prepared for the life that awaits her. The island is remote, the weather sweltering, and Oscar's little boy Andre is grieving hard for his lost mother. And though Oscar tries to please his new wife, the secrets of the past sit uncomfortably between them. Meanwhile for Nan Ogden, Oscar's housekeeper, Catherine's sudden arrival has come as a great shock. For not only did she promise Oscar's first wife that she would be the one to take care of little Andre, but she has feelings for Oscar which she is struggling to suppress. And when the worst storm in a generation descends, the women will find themselves tested as never before. Against the backdrop of the devastating Galveston hurricane of 1900, Ann Weisgarber tells a heartbreaking story with two unforgettable voices. (Goodreads.com)

October 19 - “Devil in the White City: A Saga of Magic and Murder at the Fair that Changed America” by Erik Larson

Author Erik Larson imbues the incredible events surrounding the 1893 Chicago World's Fair with such drama that readers may find themselves checking the book's categorization to be sure that 'The Devil in the White City' is not, in fact, a highly imaginative novel. Larson tells the stories of two men: Daniel H. Burnham, the architect responsible for the fair's construction, and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer masquerading as a charming doctor.

Burnham's challenge was immense. In a short period of time, he was forced to overcome the death of his partner and numerous other obstacles to construct the famous "White City" around which the fair was built. His efforts to complete the project, and the fair's incredible success, are skillfully related along with entertaining appearances by such notables as Buffalo Bill Cody, Susan B. Anthony, Nikola Tesla and Thomas Edison. The activities of the sinister Dr. Holmes, who is believed to be responsible for scores of murders around the time of the fair, are equally remarkable. He devised and erected the World's Fair Hotel, complete with crematorium and gas chamber, near the fairgrounds and used the event as well as his own charismatic personality to lure victims. (Goodreads.com)

November 16 - “The Law of Moses” by Amy Harmon

If I tell you right up front, right in the beginning that I lost him, it will be easier for you to bear. You will know it's coming, and it will hurt. But you'll be able to prepare.

Someone found him in a laundry basket at the Quick Wash, wrapped in a towel, a few hours old and close to death. They called him Baby Moses when they shared his story on the ten o'clock news – the little baby left in a basket at a dingy Laundromat, born to a crack addict and expected to have all sorts of problems. I imagined the crack baby, Moses, having a giant crack that ran down his body, like he'd been broken at birth. I knew that wasn't what the term meant, but the image stuck in my mind. Maybe the fact that he was broken drew me to him from the start. It all happened before I was born, and by the time I met Moses and my mom told me all about him, the story was old news and nobody wanted anything to do with him. People love babies, even sick babies. Even crack babies. But babies grow up to be kids, and kids grow up to be teenagers. Nobody wants a messed up teenager. And Moses was messed up. Moses was a law unto himself. But he was also strange and exotic and beautiful. To be with him would change my life in ways I could never have imagined. Maybe I should have stayed away. Maybe I should have listened. My mother warned me. Even Moses warned me. But I didn't stay away. And so begins a story of pain and promise, of heartache and healing, of life and death. A story of before and after, of new beginnings and never-endings. But most of all . . . a love story. (Amazon.com)

No meeting in December

All reviews from Amazon.com or Goodreads.com unless otherwise noted.