

HAA ZTA Book Club 2017 Reading List

January 18 – “A Man Called Ove” by Fredrik Backman

February 15 – “When I’m Gone” by Emily Bleeker

March 15 – “Big Little Lies” by Liane Moriarty

April 19 – “The Nightingale” by Kristin Hannah

May 17 – “The Nix” by Nathan Hill

June 21 – “Stories I Only Tell My Friends: An Autobiography” by Rob Lowe

July 19 – “All-Girl Filling Station’s Last Reunion” by Fannie Flagg

August 16 – Share your favorite summer read!

September 20 – “The Chemist” by Stephanie Meyer

October 18 – “Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers” by Mary Roach

November 15 – “Cyberstorm” by Matthew Mather

No Regular Meeting in December

Meetings held 7:00-8:30pm on 3rd Wednesday of each month. Please respond to the Evite to help with reservation planning.

Email your book suggestions for 2018 to Candy Bourgeois at bookclub-night@ztahouston.org

Reviews/Summaries

January 18 - “A Man Called Ove” by Fredrik Backman

A grumpy yet loveable man finds his solitary world turned on its head when a boisterous young family moves in next door.

Meet Ove. He's a curmudgeon, the kind of man who points at people he dislikes as if they were burglars caught outside his bedroom window. He has staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. People call him the bitter neighbor from hell, but must Ove be bitter just because he doesn't walk around with a smile plastered to his face all the time?

Behind the cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. So when one November morning a chatty young couple with two chatty young daughters move in next door and accidentally flatten Ove's mailbox, it is the lead-in to a comical and heartwarming tale of unkempt cats, unexpected friendship, and the ancient art of backing up a U-Haul. All of which will change one cranky old man and a local residents' association to their very foundations.

(Recommended by Candy Bourgeois, Renee Svitek)

February 15 - “When I’m Gone” by Emily Bleeker

Dear Luke, First let me say—I love you... I didn’t want to leave you...

Luke Richardson has returned home after burying Natalie, his beloved wife of sixteen years, ready to face the hard job of raising their three children alone. But there’s something he’s not prepared for—a blue envelope with his name scrawled across the front in Natalie’s handwriting, waiting for him on the floor of their suburban Michigan home.

The letter inside, written on the first day of Natalie’s cancer treatment a year ago, turns out to be the first of many. Luke is convinced they’re genuine, but who is delivering them? As his obsession with the letters grows, Luke uncovers long-buried secrets that make him question everything he knew about his wife and their family. But the revelations also point the way toward a future where love goes on—in written words, in memories, and in the promises it’s never too late to keep.

(Recommended by Kelley Davis)

March 15 - “Big Little Lies” by Liane Moriarty

Sometimes it’s the little lies that turn out to be the most lethal. . . .

A murder... . . . a tragic accident... . . . or just parents behaving badly?

What’s indisputable is that someone is dead.

But who did what?

Big Little Lies follows three women, each at a crossroads:

Madeline is a force to be reckoned with. She’s funny and biting, passionate, she remembers everything and forgives no one. Her ex-husband and his yogi new wife have moved into her beloved beachside community, and their daughter is in the same kindergarten class as Madeline’s youngest (how is this possible?). And to top it all off, Madeline’s teenage daughter seems to be choosing Madeline’s ex-husband over her. (How. Is. This. Possible?).

Celeste is the kind of beautiful woman who makes the world stop and stare. While she may seem a bit flustered at times, who wouldn’t be, with those rambunctious twin boys? Now that the boys are starting school, Celeste and her husband look set to become the king and queen of the school parent body. But royalty often comes at a price, and Celeste is grappling with how much more she is willing to pay.

New to town, single mom Jane is so young that another mother mistakes her for the nanny. Jane is sad beyond her years and harbors secret doubts about her son. But why? While Madeline and Celeste soon take Jane under their wing, none of them realizes how the arrival of Jane and her inscrutable little boy will affect them all.

Big Little Lies is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandal, and the dangerous little lies we tell ourselves just to survive.

(Recommended by Anna Bramanti, Samantha Bourgeois, Stephanie Gilbert, Kelly Davis)

April 19 - “The Nightingale” by Kristin Hannah

Despite their differences, sisters Vianne and Isabelle have always been close. Younger, bolder Isabelle lives in Paris while Vianne is content with life in the French countryside with her husband Antoine and their daughter. But when the Second World War strikes, Antoine is sent off to fight and Vianne finds herself isolated so Isabelle is sent by their father to help her.

As the war progresses, the sisters’ relationship and strength are tested. With life changing in unbelievably horrific ways, Vianne and Isabelle will find themselves facing frightening situations and responding in ways they never thought possible as bravery and resistance take different forms in each of their actions.

(Recommended by Candy Bourgeois, Stephanie Gilbert, Lisa Wilson, Kim Watson, Erika Roberts)

May 17 - “The Nix” by Nathan Hill

It's 2011, and Samuel Andresen-Anderson—college professor, stalled writer—has a Nix of his own: his mother, Faye. He hasn't seen her in decades, not since she abandoned the family when he was a boy. Now she's re-appeared, having committed an absurd crime that electrifies the nightly news, beguiles the internet, and inflames a politically divided country. The media paint Faye as a radical hippie with a sordid past, but as far as Samuel knows, his mother was an ordinary girl who married her high-school sweetheart. Which version of his mother is true? Two facts are certain: she's facing some serious charges, and she needs Samuel's help.

To save her, Samuel will have to embark on his own journey, uncovering long-buried secrets about the woman he thought he knew, secrets that stretch across generations and have their origin all the way back in Norway, home of the mysterious Nix. As he does so, Samuel will confront not only Faye's losses but also his own lost love and will relearn everything he thought he knew about his mother and himself.

(Recommended by Sally Evans, Renee Svitek)

June 21 - “Stories I Only Tell My Friends: An Autobiography” by Rob Lowe

A wryly funny and surprisingly moving account of an extraordinary life lived almost entirely in the public eye. A teen idol at fifteen, an international icon and founder of the Brat Pack at twenty, and one of Hollywood's top stars to this day, Rob Lowe chronicles his experiences as a painfully misunderstood child actor in Ohio uprooted to the wild counterculture of mid-seventies Malibu, where he embarked on his unrelenting pursuit of a career in Hollywood.

The Outsiders placed Lowe at the birth of the modern youth movement in the entertainment industry. During his time on *The West Wing*, he witnessed the surreal nexus of show business and politics both on the set and in the actual White House. And in between are deft and humorous stories of the wild excesses that marked the eighties, leading to his quest for family and sobriety.

Never mean-spirited or salacious, Lowe delivers unexpected glimpses into his successes, disappointments, relationships, and one-of-a-kind encounters with people who shaped our world over the last twenty-five years. These stories are as entertaining as they are unforgettable.

(Recommended by Taryn Cheesman; Audio version is wonderful!)

July 19 - “All-Girl Filling Station’s Last Reunion” by Fannie Flagg

Mrs. Sookie Poole of Point Clear, Alabama, has just married off the last of her daughters and is looking forward to relaxing and perhaps traveling with her husband, Earle. The only thing left to contend with is her mother, the formidable Lenore Simmons Krackenberry. Lenore may be a lot of fun for other people, but is, for the most part, an overbearing presence for her daughter. Then one day, quite by accident, Sookie discovers a secret about her mother's past that knocks her for a loop and suddenly calls into question everything she ever thought she knew about herself, her family, and her future.

Sookie begins a search for answers that takes her to California, the Midwest, and back in time, to the 1940s, when an irrepressible woman named Fritzi takes on the job of running her family's filling station. Soon truck drivers are changing their routes to fill up at the All-Girl Filling Station. Then, Fritzi sees an opportunity for an even more groundbreaking adventure. As Sookie learns about the adventures of the girls at the All-Girl Filling Station, she finds herself with new inspiration for her own life.

Fabulous, fun-filled, spanning decades and generations, and centered on a little-known aspect of America's twentieth-century story

(Recommended by Candy Bourgeois)

August 16 - Share your favorite summer read!

There is no specific book for the discussion this month! What would you recommend your Zeta sister read? Fiction or non-fiction, paperback, hardcover or electronic ... it does not matter. Come share your favorite summer reads or those you regret wasting your time plodding through from start to finish. It will be a great way to discover books that you might want to add to your own personal reading list.

September 20 - "The Chemist" by Stephanie Meyer

She used to work for the U.S. government, but very few people ever knew that. An expert in her field, she was one of the darkest secrets of an agency so clandestine it doesn't even have a name. And when they decided she was a liability, they came for her without warning.

Now she rarely stays in the same place or uses the same name for long. They've killed the only other person she trusted, but something she knows still poses a threat. They want her dead, and soon. When her former handler offers her a way out, she realizes it's her only chance to erase the giant target on her back. But it means taking one last job for her ex-employers. To her horror, the information she acquires only makes her situation more dangerous.

Resolving to meet the threat head-on, she prepares for the toughest fight of her life but finds herself falling for a man who can only complicate her likelihood of survival. As she sees her choices being rapidly whittled down, she must apply her unique talents in ways she never dreamed of.

(Recommended by Samantha Bourgeois)

October 18 - "Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers" by Mary Roach

"One of the funniest and most unusual books of the year....Gross, educational, and unexpectedly sidesplitting."—Entertainment Weekly

Stiff is an oddly compelling, often hilarious exploration of the strange lives of our bodies postmortem. For two thousand years, cadavers—some willingly, some unwittingly—have been involved in science's boldest strides and weirdest undertakings. In this fascinating account, Mary Roach visits the good deeds of cadavers over the centuries and tells the engrossing story of our bodies when we are no longer with them.

(Recommended by Taryn Cheesman, Candice Montgomery, Kim Watson)

November 15 - "Cyberstorm" by Matthew Mather

Sometimes the worst storms aren't caused by Mother Nature, and sometimes the worst nightmares aren't in the ones in our heads...

Mike Mitchell, an average New Yorker already struggling to keep his family together, suddenly finds himself fighting just to keep them alive when an increasingly bizarre string of disasters start appearing on the world's news networks. As the world and cyberworlds come crashing down, bending perception and reality, a monster snowstorm cuts New York off from the world, becoming a wintry tomb where no one can be trusted, and nothing is what it seems...

CyberStorm is a techno-thriller set in present-day New York City that will appeal to fans of Michael Chrichton and Tom Clancy as well as devotees of William Gibson and Neal Stephenson. It is an exploration of the human condition as the cyberworld collides with our own, a compelling portrait of a possible future that is all too terrifyingly real.

(Recommended by Kathy Wilson)

December - No regular meeting in December

- **December 1** - Book recommendations for 2018 are due. All Zetas are welcome to make recommendations! Please email them to crbourg@gmail.com.
- **December 3** – Nominations summary spreadsheet emailed to Book Club Committee.
- **December 13** – Book Club Committee reviews the recommendations, discuss our options, and plan next year's reading list with a variety of great reads!

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