

SATURDAY READING GROUP 2016-2017

Saturdays at the English Language Library in Angers 3-4:30pm

SEPTEMBER 17:

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr (531 pages): Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel. In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge.

OCTOBER 15:

Revolutionary Road by Richard Yates (355 pages – 2 copies) + 2008 film starring Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio (2 DVD copies): In the hopeful 1950s, Frank and April Wheeler appear to be a model couple: bright, beautiful, talented, with two young children and a starter home in the suburbs. Perhaps they married too young and started a family too early. Maybe Frank's job is dull. And April never saw herself as a housewife. Yet they have always lived on the assumption that greatness is only just around the corner. But now that certainty is about to crumble. With heartbreaking compassion and remorseless clarity, Frank and April mortgage their spiritual birthright, betraying not only each other, but their best selves.

NOVEMBER 19:

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt (426 pages – 2 copies) + 1999 film "Angela's Ashes" starring Emily Watson and Robert Carlyle (1 DVD copy): The luminous memoir of Frank McCourt, born in Depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants and raised in the slums of Limerick, Ireland. Frank's mother, Angela, has no money to feed the children since Frank's father, Malachy, rarely works, and when he does he drinks his wages. Yet Malachy — exasperating, irresponsible, and beguiling — does nurture in Frank an appetite for the one thing he can provide: a story. Frank lives for his father's tales of Cuchulain, who saved Ireland, and of the Angel on the Seventh Step, who brings his mother babies. Perhaps it is story that accounts for Frank's survival. Wearing rags for diapers, begging a pig's head for Christmas dinner and gathering coal from the roadside to light a fire, Frank endures poverty, near-starvation and the casual cruelty of relatives and neighbors—yet lives to tell his tale with eloquence, exuberance, and remarkable forgiveness.

DECEMBER 10* PARTNER EVENT WITH FILM CLUB (3-6pm):

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd (315 pages – 2 copies) + 2008 film "The Secret Life of Bees" starring Dakota Fanning, Queen Latifah, Jennifer Hudson, Alicia Keys (1 DVD copy): Set in South Carolina during 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of a fourteen year old white girl, Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three racists in town, they escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters, Lily finds refuge in their mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna. Lily starts a journey as much about her understanding of the world, as about the mystery surrounding her mother. *The Secret Life of Bees* is a major literary triumph about the search for love and belonging, a novel that possesses a rare wisdom about life and the power and divinity of the female spirit.

JANUARY 14:

Breakfast at Tiffany's by Truman Capote (179 pages – 1 copy) + 1961 film "Breakfast at Tiffany's" starring Audrey Hepburn (2 DVD copies): 'What I've found does the most good is just to get into a taxi and go to Tiffany's. It calms me down right away, the quietness and the proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there, not with those kind men in their nice suits...' Meet Holly Golightly - a free spirited, lop-sided romantic girl about town. With her tousled blond hair and upturned nose, dark glasses

and chic black dresses, Holly is a style sensation wherever she goes. Her apartment rocks to Martini-soaked parties and she plays hostess to millionaires and gangsters alike. Yet Holly never loses sight of her ultimate dream - to find a real life place like Tiffany's that makes her feel at home.

FEBRUARY 11:

The Martian by Andy Weir (387 pages – 1 copy) + 2015 film “The Martian” starring Matt Damon (1 DVD copy): Six days ago, astronaut Mark Watney became one of the first people to walk on Mars. Now, he's sure he'll be the first person to die there. After a dust storm nearly kills him and forces his crew to evacuate while thinking him dead, Mark finds himself stranded and completely alone with no way to even signal Earth that he's alive—and even if he could get word out, his supplies would be gone long before a rescue could arrive. Chances are, though, he won't have time to starve to death. The damaged machinery, unforgiving environment, or plain-old "human error" are much more likely to kill him first. But Mark isn't ready to give up yet. Drawing on his ingenuity, his engineering skills—and a relentless, dogged refusal to quit—he steadfastly confronts one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after the next. Will his resourcefulness be enough to overcome the impossible odds against him?

MARCH 4:

The Silver Linings Playbook by Matthew Quick (304 pages – 1 copy) + 2012 film “Silver Linings Playbook” starring Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper (1 DVD copy): During the years he spends in a neural health facility, Pat Peoples formulates a theory about silver linings: he believes his life is a movie produced by God, his mission is to become physically fit and emotionally supportive, and his happy ending will be the return of his estranged wife Nikki. When Pat goes to live with his parents everything seems changed; no one will talk to him about Nikki; his old friends are saddled with families; the Philadelphia Eagles keep losing, making his father moody; and his new therapist seems to be recommending adultery as a form of therapy. When Pat meets the tragically widowed, physically fit, and clinically depressed Tiffany, she offers to act as a liaison between him and his wife, if only he will give up watching football, agree to perform in this year's Dance Away Depression competition, and promise not to tell anyone about their 'contract.' All the while, Pat keeps searching for his silver lining.

APRIL 8* PARTNER EVENT WITH FILM CLUB (3-6pm):

The Hours by Michael Cunningham (229 pages – 1 copy) + 2002 film “The Hours” starring Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, and Julianne Moore (1 DVD copy): *The Hours* tells the story of three women: Virginia Woolf, beginning to write Mrs. Dalloway as she recuperates in a London suburb with her husband in 1923; Clarissa Vaughan, beloved friend of an acclaimed poet dying from AIDS, who in modern-day New York is planning a party in his honor; and Laura Brown, in a 1949 Los Angeles suburb, who slowly begins to feel the constraints of a perfect family and home. By the end of the novel, these three stories intertwine in remarkable ways, and finally come together in an act of subtle and haunting grace.

MAY 13:

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green (318 pages – 3 copies) + 2014 film “The Fault in Our Stars” starring Shailene Woodley and Ansel Elgort: Despite the tumor-shrinking medical miracle that has bought her a few years, Hazel has never been anything but terminal, her final chapter inscribed upon diagnosis. But when a gorgeous plot twist named Augustus Waters suddenly appears at Cancer Kid Support Group, Hazel's story is about to be completely rewritten. Their relationship is all the more miraculous, given that Hazel's other constant companion is an oxygen tank and Gus jokes about his prosthetic leg. Hazel introduces her favorite novel to Gus and tells that she dreamed about having a conversation with the author, Van Houten, who lives in Amsterdam. Gus contacts him and Van Houten invites them to visit him in Amsterdam. They travel to the Netherlands where Hazel will learn that things are not like they seem to be.

JUNE 17:

Brooklyn by Colm Toibin (262 pages – 2 copies) + 2015 film “Brooklyn” starring Saoirse Ronan (1 DVD copy): Eilis Lacey has come of age in small-town Ireland in the hard years following World War Two. Though skilled at book-keeping, Eilis cannot find a proper job in the miserable Irish economy. When an Irish priest from Brooklyn visits the household and offers to sponsor Eilis in America -- to live and work in a Brooklyn neighborhood "just like Ireland" -- she decides she must go, leaving her fragile mother and her charismatic

sister behind. Eilis finds work in a department store on Fulton Street, studies accounting at Brooklyn College, and when she least expects it, finds love. Tony, who loves the Dodgers and his big Italian family, slowly wins her over with persistent charm. He takes Eilis to Coney Island and Ebbets Field, and home to dinner in the two-room apartment he shares with his brothers and parents. But just as Eilis begins to fall in love with Tony and consider what this means, devastating news from Ireland threatens the promise of her future.