

Parkdale Book Club

8 November – Charms & Curiosity & Magic

Schedule

Date (10 am on 2nd Saturday)

Dec. 9	<i>Slaughterhouse Five</i> by Kurt Vonnegut -- Lindsay
Jan. 13 2018	<i>Being Mortal</i> , by Atul Gawande -- Doreen
Feb. 10	<i>Fifteen Dogs</i> by Andre Alexis – all of us
Mar. 10	<i>My Grandmother Sends Her Regards and Apologises</i> by Fredrik Backman -- Beth
Apr. 14	<i>The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness</i> by Karen Armstrong -- Lee
May 12	<i>The Humans</i> , by Matt Haig -- Lynn
June 9	<i>One Brother Shy</i> , by Terry Fallis -- Joan

Charms & Curiosity

We met on the first Saturday this month because of Remembrance Day on the 11th. Eight of us had a good discussion of Beth's suggestion, *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper*, with the Peace Fair happening downstairs. Here are some of our reactions to the book.

- ☞ When I suggested it, I had not read it but it came up as "if you liked *A Man Called Ove*, you'll like TCCoAP"

- ☞ Wow, AMCO never occurred to me as similar to this book!
- ☞ In both, the protagonist lost his wife, is depressed ...
- ☞ At first I thought it was just kind of goofy
- ☞ I did not like it at first but then the relationships became more real.
- ☞ A lot of suspension of disbelief required.
- ☞ I did not challenge the plausibility until now
- ☞ Arthur grew, learned a lot about forgiveness.
- ☞ I related to his hiding from Bernadette at the beginning
- ☞ Moved into a larger than life odyssey (from being quite rigidly bound by anxiety -- ??)

- ☞ The story was relevant to this stage of my life
- ☞ I enjoyed his trek through the fields to get to the manor
- ☞ Message: look outside of yourself; Arthur became more giving
- ☞ I appreciated Arthur's connection with Sebastian
- ☞ Arthur had to decide to continue how he'd lived the first year since Miriam's death, or take a new path
- ☞ Not okay that the kids did not go to Mom's funeral - no do-over for funerals
- ☞ I'm nowhere near as interesting as Miriam
- ☞ It's a book about secrets
- ☞ How did she keep these secrets? When you date, do you not talk about these sorts of things? *Why* did she keep these secrets?
- ☞ Was it Arthur's obliviousness? Not paying attention, as he'd not noticed that Miriam was wearing the bracelet in an early photo? "Arthur thought about how memories shift and disappear." Did Miriam tell him some of her adventures, but there was no place in his framework for them to attach?
- ☞ Then Arthur goes off without telling anyone
- ☞ Nathan's aspiration to be a baker - he did tell Bernadette, but when she did not support, he stopped talking about it
- ☞ Bernadette kept her illness a secret
- ☞ AND Arthur's profession was locksmith
- ☞ I could understand Miriam's wanting to bury the story of Martin's death
- ☞ Miriam did suggest some adventures, like going to London. Arthur: Why would we do that?
- ☞ Her past would have challenged his ideas of romance
- ☞ Her early adventures allowed her to live a life that was more sedate
- ☞ Raw empathy - a real understanding of how people respond to loss
- ☞ The benefit of routine - I get that
- ☞ Like *The Juggler's Children* - "If you don't want to find woodlice, don't go looking under wood."
- ☞ Arthur as nude model - would you do that?
- ☞ It was a metaphor for how he was getting naked
- ☞ What would happen if the book were to go on?
- ☞ Readers' experience parallels Arthur's - from detachment to connection & depth
- ☞ Arthur and Miriam lived their lives in opposite directions.
- ☞ We give all our love to one person, and then when she dies the love goes out to the rest of the world
- ☞ Old age pensioners likened to zombies in the post office scene
- ☞ Was Miriam happy with Arthur? If not, she would have taken action, being an action sort of woman
- ☞ Do most couples keep secrets about their past?
- ☞ What is secret and what is private?

The Magic Shop

Ten of you were there to discuss Barb's suggestion on October 14, *Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart*, by James R. Doty. Lee reported that overall, the book generated lots of discussion.

Everyone had something to say.

Here are Lee's paraphrases of people's reactions, and some of my thoughts as I read it in July:

- I found it hard to believe an 11 year old boy would commit to seeing Ruth every day.

- I found it hard to get into at first... repetition... get on with it
- A self-help book
- A terrific book...
- I recommended it to my patients
- Other thoughts as to whom it could be recommended.
- Some personal stories of people who might like to read it
- Some people loved it, some found it difficult to get into.
- A bit simplistic, but a gentle invitation to learn meditation
- Interesting how it took Jim a long time to get "the opening of the heart" right.
- Important learning: 103 - "think of the person... who has given you unconditional love. (this) is not perfect love or love without hurt and pain. It just means that someone loved you selflessly once for a time."
- Clarifying your intent: 135 - "The brain doesn't distinguish between an experience that is intensely imagined and an experience that is real." "The brain... will always choose what is familiar over what is unfamiliar. By visualizing my own future success, I was making this success familiar to my brain."
- 141 - just because something is broken doesn't mean everything is broken
- 145 - how could he have missed the importance of doing well in HS if his goal was to become a doctor??
- 149 - "having faith in the outcome is quite different from being attached to the outcome." How, though?
- The story of his application to college (no application fee) and to medical school seemed unlikely and entitled
- The trope of grown son punches father and everything changes.
- Why did he not look Ruth up earlier?
- ? the inconsistency of father's behaviour - signing over a cheque for \$1000 when he is living on skid row
- how much compassion does this compassion expert have for the child he fathered?
- 230 - the heart sends more signals to the brain than the brain sends to the heart... the neural net around the heart is an essential part of our thinking and reasoning... our individual happiness and our collective well-being depend on the integration and collaboration of both our minds and hearts.
- 242 - CDEFGHIJKL - compassion, dignity, equanimity, forgiveness, gratitude, humility, integrity, justice, kindness, love
- 246 - the heart beats 100,000 times a day, sending 2000 gallons of blood throughout the system of blood vessels. Egyptian - heart = ib; happiness = awt-ib - wideness of heart
- 259 - Jim wonders what made Ruth reach out to me?
- See intothemagicshop.com for relaxations