

Parkdale Book Club

March 2025 – A New Season

Schedule – 2nd Saturday each month, 10 am, Zoom

2025

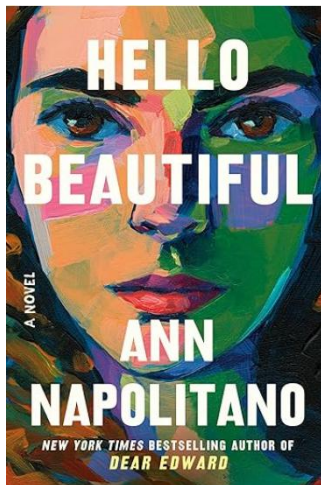
Apr. 12 *	<i>Hello Beautiful</i> by Ann Napolitano	Margaret
May 10 *	<i>Heaven & Earth Grocery Store</i> by James McBride	Lindsay
Jun. 14	<i>State of Terror</i> by Hilary Rodham Clinton & Louise Penny	Sue

*Note the change of dates. April and May books have been switched.

Next Meeting
Saturday, April 12th
10:00 am

Hello Beautiful

by Ann Napolitano



From Amazon: “William Waters grew up in a house silenced by tragedy, where his parents could hardly bear to look at him, much less love him — so when he meets the spirited and ambitious Julia Padavano in his freshman year of college, it’s as if the world has lit up around

him. With Julia comes her family, as she and her three sisters are inseparable: Sylvie, the family’s dreamer, is happiest with her nose in a book; Cecelia is a free-spirited artist; and Emeline patiently takes care of them all. With the Padavanos, William experiences a newfound contentment; every moment in their house is filled with loving chaos.

But then darkness from William’s past surfaces, jeopardizing not only Julia’s carefully orchestrated plans for their future, but the sisters’ unshakeable devotion to one another. The result is a catastrophic family rift that changes their lives for generations. Will the loyalty that once rooted them be strong enough to draw them back together when it matters most?

An exquisite homage to Louisa May Alcott’s timeless classic, *Little Women*, *Hello Beautiful* is a profoundly moving portrait of what is possible when we choose to love someone not in spite of who they are, but because of it. □

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82432011683?pwd=SEgwSFFIOTRZODVtSmVuYW1vOXNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 824 3201 1683

Passcode: 284356

If you’re not able to join the meeting, you are welcome to send your comments about *Hello Beautiful* to sloanelm@shaw.ca or bethbalshaw@shaw.ca before April 12th so they can be shared with the group and included in our next Book Club Newsletter. □

March 10th Book Club

A New Season

A small group of just four of us had a lively discussion about Terry Fallis' book, *A New Season*. A couple of members sent their comments in ahead of time so their views were part of the discussion, too. Janine told us that she hadn't read the book when she "suggested" it for our Book Club reading list so she was discovering it for the first time with the rest of us. Although there were parts of the book that people thought were good, it seemed like it didn't deliver the level of depth readers would have liked. "Everything fell into place perfectly. It wasn't as messy as real life."

Terry Fallis is similar to his character Jack in the book in a lot of ways. Fallis wrote the featured love songs himself. He wrote "Until the New Year" for his wife (who is still living) and he wrote the other song for his teammates. Fallis loves Paris and visits the city every two years with his wife. Like Jack, Fallis is fascinated by Paris in the 1920s and, like Jack, he is not a fan of Hemingway or his writing. Fallis plays sports and has meaningful relationships with his teammates. Fallis is in his 60s so is speaking first-hand about some of the losses described in his book. Because of all the similarities, the group speculated that perhaps Fallis is writing about something he fears himself – i.e., the loss of his own wife.

Here are some reflections from the group ...



I read the book a few months ago and loved it. It was an easy read for me and I found it quite sad at first as Jack was grieving the loss of his wife. His companionship with his ball hockey players was unique. One doesn't often see men have such long endearing relationships with a group of men, which really helped Jack move forward. I was excited to continue reading the book once Jack agreed to finally go to Paris and fulfill a life long dream. Once in Paris, the book became a great love story.



I found the book to be a quick and easy read, quite different than Fallis' other books that focused on Canadian politics. I didn't like it as much as the other ones, but good for him to venture into the areas of grief and romance for men. It was certainly topical with the death of his wife from Covid. I described it to someone

as a male version of a "romcom" and I could see it as a movie with the lovely setting of Paris. I enjoyed the scenes in Paris (as well as Toronto) but certainly finding Callaghan working in the coffee shop and then having the growing romance really seemed too good to be true. I found myself really wondering about her (being such a lovely, accomplished person -- what was her relationship history?). I expected there to be a bombshell revelation about her, which never happened. Fallis is certainly an idealistic romantic but I think he lacked a bit of insight about women.



This book is different from Fallis' normal humorous books, tackling more serious topics of loss and grieving – the loss of Jack's beloved wife, Annie, and the loss of his own youth. He explores grief thoroughly, looking at how different people are impacted by loss and how they find their own ways to cope. The worries that Jack has about entering into a new relationship ring true – e.g., is it being disloyal, what will others think, will my son judge me, will I be comparing to my first wife?

Fallis does a good job of describing relationships and showing how important they are day to day – husband and wife, male friendships, father and son, relationship with workmates and an emerging love relationship.

There are romantic moments and perfect coincidences that require suspending disbelief but it felt good to have a happy ending that leaves us feeling hopeful there can be meaningful life after significant loss.



I read *A New Season* last September. Disappointing. Before this, Fallis was an author I would read or vote for just because it was him. *A New Season* sounds like a debut novel, google searches roughly woven together (like how to write a song). I liked the connections, the emotions. But if I had not read anything by Fallis before, I would decide from this not to read anything else. ☐

"What on earth could be more luxurious
than a sofa, a book, and a cup of coffee?
Was ever anything so civil?"

Anthony Trollope

Book Recommendations

***The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah.** (You may recall that our Book Club read *The Nightingale* by Hannah a few years ago.) *The Four Winds* features Texas and California in the 1930s during a devastating and lengthy drought. From Amazon: “*The Four Winds* is a rich, sweeping novel that stunningly brings to life the Great Depression and the people who lived through it. ... A testament to hope, resilience, and the strength of the human spirit to survive adversity, *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.”

***The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See.** This is a superbly and thoroughly researched historical novel (17 pages of acknowledgements!) set in Korea from the Japanese occupation in the 1930s to the present time. It features an all-female diving collective on a small Korean island. It has been called “a wonderful ode to a truly singular group of women” and a “beautiful story about the endurance of friendship when it’s pushed to its limits.”

***The Needs of the Dying* by David Kessler.** This book was recommended by someone whose partner is currently in hospice care. The couple is reading the book together and finding it very helpful. Although intense, they say it is “spot on” in terms of fitting with their own experience. From Amazon: “Author David Kessler has identified key areas of concern: the need to be treated as a living human being, the need for hope, the need to express emotions, the need to participate in care, the need for honesty, the need for spirituality, and the need to be free of physical pain.”

Sue just finished reading ***It Ends With Us* by Colleen Hoover.** “I saw the movie last August and heard the book was very good. I reserved it at the library in August and just got it last Tuesday. A great read, as good as the movie if not better

because the book was more detailed.” From Amazon: Lily hasn’t always had it easy, but that’s never stopped her from working hard for the life she wants. She’s come a long way from the small town where she grew up — she graduated from college, moved to Boston, and started her own business. And when she feels a spark with a gorgeous neurosurgeon named Ryle Kincaid, everything in Lily’s life seems too good to be true.

Possible or Sure Nominations for Next Year

- a) *Bad Cree* by Jessica Johns
- b) *The Cemetery of Untold Stories* by Julia Alvarez
- c) *Clear* by Carys Davies
- d) From Lynn, *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline
- e) From Lindsay, *The Signature of All Things* by Elizabeth Gilbert
- f) *Sipsworth* by Simon Van Booy

What is on your list of possible nominations for next year? You don’t have to have read a book yourself to nominate it!

Since Last Month ...

Thanks to Lynn for this annotated reading list.

1. ***Has Anyone Seen Charlotte Salter?* by Nicci French.** I may have picked this one up because I mixed up Nicci French with Tana French. Nicci French is two people – Nicci Gerrard and Sean French. *HASCS?* is a recent publication, which I know because I looked up to see if it predates *Only Murders in The Building*, the very good series about making a podcast to solve a murder – no it doesn’t. The book was okay, maybe 3☆☆ The TV series, though, is a whole constellation. 🌌 (17225)

2. ***The Trees by Percival Everett.*** Wow. Amazing. Especially unsettling to read now that there is a Nazi in the White House. "Everybody talks about genocides around the world, but when the killing is slow and spread over a hundred years, no one notices. Where there are no mass graves, no one notices. American outrage is always for show. It has a shelf life." Horrid and funny. Maybe those are the constituents of satire. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 (20225)
3. ***In Winter I Get Up at Night by Jane Urquhart.*** This was good. A bit dreamy, fitting with Emer's being on pain medication in hospital. History of Canadian expansionism; racism; KKK; a variety of children long-term stay in hospital, allowing for exploration of different cultures The racism was heart-breaking; for example, the Irish woman (main character Emer's mother) disdaining to ride in the 'colonists' car on the train west. "Most of us come from Irish and Scottish tribes cast out by the mother country. But we are still reading her poems and singing her songs. How odd that we define foreignness as those whose speech hold the trace of another language, and then we ignore altogether our own foreignness on land that was never our own." One of the novel's characters is based on a scientist who is not named in the book, and oddly, not named in the first dozen or so reviews I looked at. So, I guess I'll continue the secret here. Hint – a book about him is included in the bibliography. Definitely 5 ✨ (25225)
4. ***The Undertaker's Daughter by Sara Blaedel.*** 2* I haven't often read a book that I liked less and less with each chapter (because I usually DNF if I'm not liking a book after 100-pages-minus-my-age). I struggle with writing negatively about a book because writing a book at all is such an accomplishment. How can I, someone who has never written a book, critique? On the plus side, some of the Goodreads reviewers identified this book as very different from Blaedel's usual, so maybe I'll try another. Not the sequel to this one, though. (13 25)
5. ***The Truth About the Devlins by Lisa Scottoline.*** Good characterization, domestic drama, legal procedural, exploration of substance addiction as well as behavioural addiction, pulled together by a reliable author, narrated by one of the top narrators, Edoardo Ballerini.
6. ***There, There by Tommy Orange.*** "Don't ever let anyone tell you what being Indian means. Too many of us died to get just a little bit of us here, right now, right in this kitchen." "And don't make the mistake of calling us resilient. To not have been destroyed, to not have given up, to have survived, is no badge of honor. Would you call an attempted murder victim resilient?" Another heart-breaking, important book. I was surprised to see that it's a debut novel. Highly recommended. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷
7. ***Unreasonable Doubt by Vicki Delaney.*** According to the Libby app, I read this in 4 hours 2 minutes! It was good company on the flight to Victoria and as I sat on the balcony of my room overlooking the Outer Harbour. Good characterization, inland BC setting, dragon boats. 4 *
8. ***Motorcycles & Sweetgrass by Drew Hayden Taylor.*** Anishnawbe, humour, magical realism & social commentary. "I read somewhere that most religions have pretty much the same message, they just use different books." "I think it's called the Bible." "Yeah, needed an editor. No offense, but it went on forever and repeated itself." 3.5 *