

Book Club Selections 2016

January **Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948 (2012)**
By Marilyn Albright

From former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright comes a moving and thoughtful memoir of her formative years in Czechoslovakia during the tumult of Nazi occupation, World War II, fascism, and the onset of the Cold War. (www.amazon.com)

February **A Grand Murder (2015)**
By Dave Vizard (local author)

When a body lands on the porch of the legendary Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, news reporter Nick Steele is pulled into a mysterious death at one of America's great summer resorts. Nick tracks the killer from the magical island through the neighborhoods of Bay City and a Flint auto assembly plant, unlocking the truth behind a horrifying secret of the past. (amazon.com)

March **Legends of the Fall (1979)**
By Jim Harrison

A book of three novellas, the title novella is an epic tale of three brothers fighting for justice in a world gone mad. Moving from the raw landscape of early 20th-century Montana to the blood-drenched battlefields of World War I and back again to Montana, Harrison's story explores the theme of revenge and the actions to which people resort when their lives or goals are threatened.

April **Midnight in Siberia: A Train Journey into the Heart of Russia (2015)**
By David Greene

This book chronicles NPR reporter David Greene's journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway, a 6,000-mile cross-country trip from Moscow to the Pacific port of Vladivostok. In quadruple-bunked cabins and stopover towns sprinkled across the country's snowy landscape, Greene speaks with ordinary Russians about how their lives have changed in the post-Soviet years. (www.amazon.com)

May **Aviator's Wife (2013)**
By Melanie Benjamin

When Anne Morrow travels to Mexico City to spend Christmas with her family, she meets Colonel Charles Lindbergh, fresh off his celebrated 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic. Anne is certain the aviator has scarcely noticed her, but she is wrong. Charles sees in Anne a kindred spirit and the two marry in a headline-making wedding. Anne becomes the first licensed female glider pilot in the U.S., but despite this and other achievements, she is viewed merely as the aviator's wife. The fairy-tale life she once longed for will bring heartbreak and hardships, ultimately pushing her to reconcile her need for love and her desire for independence, and to embrace life's infinite possibilities for change and happiness. (www.amazon.com)

June **The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine (2010)**
By Michael Lewis

The real story of the 2008 crash began in bizarre feeder markets where the sun doesn't shine and the SEC doesn't dare, or bother, to tread: the bond and real estate derivative markets where geeks invent impenetrable securities to profit from the misery of lower and middle class Americans who can't pay their debts. The smart people who understood what

was or might be happening were paralyzed by hope and fear; in any case, they weren't talking. (www.amazon.com)

July **No Book Club**

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September **East of Eden (1952)**
 By John Steinbeck

Set in the rich farmland of California's Salinas Valley, this sprawling and often brutal novel follows the intertwined destinies of two families—the Trasks and the Hamiltons—whose generations helplessly reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel. A masterpiece of Steinbeck's later years, this is a work in which Steinbeck created his most mesmerizing characters and explored his most enduring themes: the mystery of identity, the inexplicability of love, and the murderous consequences of love's absence. (amazon.com)

October **Gilead (2004)**
 By Marilyn Robinson

Gilead is an epistolary novel that is the fictional autobiography of the Reverend John Ames, an elderly Congregationalist pastor in the small, secluded town of Gilead, Iowa, who knows that he is dying of a heart condition. At the beginning of the book, the date is established as 1956, and Ames explains that he is writing an account of his life--as he remembers his experiences of his father and grandfather--to share with his seven-year-old son, who will have few memories of him. (Wikipedia.com and amazon.com)

November **Mountains of California (1894)**
 By John Muir

John Muir, born in Scotland in 1838, is known today as one of the pre-eminent naturalists and advocates for the preservation of much of the western United States. Muir did much to turn such beautiful areas as Yosemite into protected National Parks. His writing is not only an invaluable guidebook to these unspoiled places but also a hymn to their spirituality. He helped push the understanding of nature forward by observing and writing upon the glaciers and their actions in eroding and shaping much of the land. Muir also helped to create The Sierra Club, which he led for many years on projects to preserve areas of outstanding natural beauty. He was equally adept at persuading politicians, from Presidents to local State officials and the common man to come together in the defense of nature. (amazon.com)

December **The Great Bridge: The Epic Story of the Building of
the Brooklyn Bridge (1972)**
 By David McCullough

The dramatic and enthralling story of the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge at the time, a tale of greed, corruption, and obstruction but also of optimism, heroism, and determination. This book is the enthralling story of one of the greatest events in our nation's history, during the Age of Optimism—a period when Americans were convinced in their hearts that all things were possible. In the years around 1870, when the project was first undertaken, the concept of building a bridge to span the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn required vision and determination comparable to that required to build the great cathedrals. Throughout the fourteen years of its construction, the odds against the successful completion of the bridge seemed staggering. Bodies were crushed, lives lost, political empires felled, and surges of public emotion constantly threatened the project. This is not only the saga of an engineering miracle; it is a narrative of the social climate of the time and the heroes and rascals who had a hand in either constructing or exploiting the surpassing enterprise. (amazon.com)