

Booklovers' Café Saturday, June 27, 2015

Despite the beautiful weather, the members of the Booklovers' Café met on Saturday morning, June 27, and shared thoughts about books.

One attendee spoke about *The Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Marra, which she called a difficult book, a bit like *Cutting for Stone*. When you start it, you get a feeling that you're really going to get into these characters. It is about the war in Chechnya.

She also spoke about *The Rocks*, by Peter Nichols, a sometime Maine resident and mostly nonfiction (Sea Change, Voyage for Mad Men), some foul language and some very interesting situations. The story of a marriage in reverse. The married couple dies in the beginning, and it's their story in reverse, so when they die at first you don't really care because you just met them. However, as the book went on she found herself thinking about her own life and how lives turn on seemingly innocuous decisions. He has a great vocabulary so it's a smart read.

A nonfiction suggestion was *Being Mortal*, by Atul Gawande. It's very interesting because he recounts stories of people who are getting near their deaths and how some people are refusing to prepare for it and how others want to but find that there are societal roadblocks set up. It's really interesting and very compassionate; he talks about his own father and what happened to him.

Two children's books were mentioned: *If You Plant a Seed* by Kadir Nelson. If you plant a carrot seed, you know what you are going to get, but if you plant a seed of selfishness, you get into a heap of trouble; and *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner; beautiful--The world is not just little segmented components, and how everything is dependent on everything else. A full cycle of the seasons.

Lester Grinspoon, at Harvard Medical School, believes that doctors don't understand what's at stake in the debate of medical marijuana. His books are *Marijuana: The Forbidden Medicine and Marijuana Reconsidered*. There's very little evidence that marijuana is as dangerous as they say it is.

John Grisham wrote *Gray Mountain* about the corruption of the coal companies and the destruction and total disregard for people who live in an area by cutting the tops off mountains and throwing them into valleys. Samantha is the main character, she's a lawyer, then there's a legal problem and she's put on leave, so she goes to a little town and takes on the job of dealing with the legal issues of ordinary people. Riveting, and well worth the read. The reader was surprised because it's not in the usual Grisham vein.

Paul Doiron's most recent, *The Precipice*, almost a beach read but not quite. Sixth in his series about Michael Bowditch, Maine Guide. The reader wished he had read the book before going to the talk because then be able to ask him about the apparently gratuitous inclusion of certain aspects. However, the growth of the characters has been good. Most people agree that the books have been getting better and better!

*Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life*, by Marta McDowell, a charming book that talks about her life and shows many of her illustrations. Potter was so advanced and a woman ahead of her time.

*The Dog Who Could Fly* by Damien Lewis. I love a good pet story, and I have a great love of WWII aircraft, so the book appealed to me. A Czech man who was flying with the French during WWII was shot down and found abandoned puppy in an empty farmhouse. The dog ends up flying with him when they go flying for the RAF. A good book.