

**Trinity Book Group
2011 Book Selections**

January 2011 The Help – Kathryn Stockett

The Help is about a young white woman in the early 1960s in Mississippi who becomes interested in the plight of the black ladies' maids that every family has working for them. She writes their stories about mistreatment, abuse and heartbreaks of working in white families' homes, all just before the Civil Rights revolution. That is the story in a nutshell - but it is so much more than just stories. The theme is the indomitable will of human beings to survive against all odds - because of the color of their skin.

February 2011 The Outside Boy – Jeanine Cummins

In "The Outside Boy," Jeanine Cummins has created a poignant, coming-of-age tale which captures the reader and never lets go. Christy Hurley is an outside boy; he lives outdoors, his traveller family is outside society's mainstream, and Christy feels himself to be an outsider even in his own life. The quest for one's identity, the desire for answers, and the need to belong are beautifully addressed in this fine novel. Cummins employs those themes to build the story to its climax and wraps the tale neatly into its satisfying conclusion. The characters have strong personalities; each has unique qualities that strengthens their role in the narrative and adds depth to the novel. Emotions are real and will touch the reader deeply.

March 2011 Family Tree – Barbara Delinsky

FAMILY TREE is about racism, and whether color has anything to do with what a person is really all about. In FAMILY TREE, Dana Clarke is pregnant. She and her husband Hugh are expecting their first child with much anticipation. She is looking forward to raising her own family and creating a loving home, something she didn't have when she was growing up. When she finally gives birth to her daughter, there is a big shock. While Dana and Hugh are both obviously white, their newborn daughter is not. She's definitely of African American descent, and now Dana is wondering who in her family was black. Hugh is able to trace his ancestry several centuries back, but there are a number of unknowns in Dana's background, including a father she knows nothing about. The birth of her daughter has now forced Dana to go in search of her roots, because it seems that Hugh isn't even sure he can trust Dana, accusing her of having an affair, possibly with their neighbor.

April 2011 Here if You Need Me – Kate Braestrup

As a mother of four and wife to Maine State trooper Drew Griffith, Kate Braestrup thought her life was in order as a wife, mother, and writer. Drew's plans though were to go to school to become a Unitarian minister. Suddenly though, Kate becomes a widow and then decides to pursue Drew's dream. She becomes a Unitarian minister and begins working with the Maine Game Warden department, mainly ministering to the families of those involved in search and rescue attempts - the hikers, the lost snowmobilers, the swimmers falling over a waterfall, the despondent young women, the lost children. The reader will be moved to tears, laugh out loud, begin a spiritual awakening - and keep the book nearby for re-reading of Kate's essays again and again. You will wish she was your friend, your pastor.

May 2011 Cutting For Stone – Abraham Verghese

This brilliant novel revolves around what is broken -- limbs, family ties, trust -- and the process of rebuilding them. It starts with the birth of twin boys to a nursing nun, Sister Mary Praise

Joseph, in a small hospital on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; an event which no one had expected: "The everyday miracle of conception had taken place in the one place it should not have: in Sister Mary Praise Joseph's womb." The delivery rapidly becomes a debacle when it's clear that Mary Praise Joseph can't deliver her baby normally; the last minute arrival home at "Missing" (the Mission Hospital) by Indian obstetrician Hema saves the children, but their mother dies and their presumed father, surgeon Thomas Stone, disappears into the night.

June 2011 The Color of Water – James McBride

This book is, indeed, a tribute to the author's mother. In it, the author, a man whose mother was white and his father black, tells two stories: that of his mother and his own. Tautly written in spare, clear prose, it is a wonderful story of a bi-racial family who succeeded and achieved the American dream, despite the societal obstacles placed in its way.

July & August ****Break****

September 2011 Strength in What Remains – Tracy Kidder

Tracy Kidder's book, briefly, is the non-fiction tale of Deogratias. Raised in Burundi (neighbor to Rwanda), Deo lives a nearly idyllic life until the outbreak of ethnic violence in his country replaces Wordsworth's "of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower" with a living hell that makes Dante's Inferno look like a pleasant winter destination resort. Deo, a Tutsi third year medical student, flees Burundi, arriving at age 24 in New York City with \$200 in his pocket, the clothes on his back, and his will to survive. Kidder artfully alternates between Deo's fight for survival in the United States and scenes of the genocidal massacres that Deo witnesses in Burundi. Deogratias emerges as a complex and rich personality, more a testament to human resilience than a hero (though certainly not lacking in heroic qualities).

October 2011 Remarkable Creatures – Tracy Chevalier

Remarkable Creatures is told in the first person narratives of two women in Lyme-Regis, on the Southwest coast of England. Mary Anning is the poor daughter of a cabinet maker and a laundress, while Elizabeth Philpot is a spinster two decades Mary's senior. Elizabeth and her two sisters, Louise and Margaret, have just moved to Lyme-Regis, their fortunes having decreased to the point where although they are of an elevated social status, their newly married brother can no longer support them in London. Chance brings these two women from different generations and social classes together, and through their mutual love of fossils they become unlikely friends. They tell their stories in alternating chapters as they flirt with love, hunt for fossils on the desolate cliffs and beaches of the southwest coast, and struggle to find their place in a society in which they are constrained by both their gender and their social status.

November 2011 Outliers – Malcolm Gladwell

The main tenet of Outliers is that there is a logic behind why some people become successful, and it has more to do with legacy and opportunity than high IQ. In his latest book, New Yorker contributor Gladwell casts his inquisitive eye on those who have risen meteorically to the top of their fields, analyzing developmental patterns and searching for a common thread. The author asserts that there is no such thing as a self-made man, that "the true origins of high achievement" lie instead in the circumstances and influences of one's upbringing, combined with excellent timing.

December 2011 People of the Book – Geraldine Brooks

In 1996, as rare book expert Dr. Hanna Heath examines the Sarajevo Haggadah, an illuminated Hebrew manuscript from 15th century Spain, she carefully removes a series of artifacts that, under laboratory examination, will offer insight into the remarkable journey of this unusual text. Having survived the Serb-Bosnian war, the haggadah yields precious clues that allow Hanna to reconstruct the attrition of time: the fragment of an insect wing, an apparent wine stain, a white hair, salt crystals. It requires all of Heath's considerable skills to trace the evidence through the centuries to the book's origin. One of the earliest illuminated Hebrew books to feature figurative art, this haggadah has been repressed by medieval Jews for religious concerns. Perhaps made in mid-4th century Spain, when Jews, Christian and Muslims peacefully coexisted, the manuscript begins its troubled journey in the Spanish Inquisition and expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

January 2011 Little Bee – Chris Cleave

"Little Bee" is about a young Nigerian refugee whose very existence changes the lives of a group of English citizens in dramatic ways. It's about sadness. It's not funny, except perhaps in small details where you might find yourself smiling ruefully. It's a sad book filled with sad and often thoughtless people. It's about how we cover our sadness with layers of so-called civilization, wrap our fears in popular culture, and never ever have the opportunity to face any of it and learn to rise above. Little Bee knows how to rise above. She's known how to do it her whole life because there's nowhere to hide in her country. Poverty, abuse and death are common where she is from, and if you don't want them to destroy you, they must be transcended.

February 2011 A Woman's Place – Lynn Austin

In December 1941 Japan launched a surprise attack against Pearl Harbor causing widespread panic and devastation. Lynn Austin captured the call to arms through the lives of these women who wanted to participate in the war effort. Each of their stories reflects how they faced discrimination and conflict in a time when the roles of men and women were changing.

**Trinity Book Group
2010 Book Selections**

January 2010 Abide with Me – Elizabeth Strout

The year is 1959. Tyler Caskey, a minister in West Annett, Maine has recently lost his wife to cancer. He's trying to get past his grief, dress and feed his two little girls, and tend to the needs of his congregation, but his efforts are getting as ragged as the cuffs of his dress shirts.

February 2010 The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet – Jamie Ford

Henry Lee is still mourning the death of his wife when he learns that the belongings of Japanese Americans hidden in the basement of Seattle's Panama Hotel for decades have been discovered. Henry is drawn to the basement, and what he's searching for there opens a door he thought he had closed forever. The story switches back and forth between 1986 and the 1940s, when a 12-year-old Henry attending an American school (he's "scholarshipping" as his father likes to say) meets another international student working in the school kitchen. Keiko is Japanese American, the enemy according to Henry's father, but the two become best friends before her family is imprisoned in one of the relocation camps.

March 2010 The Story of Forgetting – Stefan Merrill Block

The Story of Forgetting by Stefan Merrill Block tells the tale of devastation of a familial form of

Alzheimer's from two perspectives: one, seventy year old Abel and the other, the teenaged Seth. In the end, the common thread of their stories is revealed in a quiet, reflective, and touching way.

April 2010 The Help – Kathryn Stockett

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May 2010 Mudbound – Hillary Jordan

Set at the end of World War II, it follows the vastly different homecomings of two returning war heroes--one black, one white--to the Jim Crow south. Jordan uses deftly lyrical writing (judiciously salted with both humor and pathos) and a breathlessly brave approach to tell her story: a diverse chorus of different characters (black and white, male and female) weave their voices together in observations of race and rural farmlife in the 40's. The result is a delicately-choreographed, operatic tragedy that unrolls with graceful inevitability, culminating in a climactic scene that will reverberate for this reader (and writer) for years to come.

June 2010 Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society – Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie B. Shaffer

The book consists of a series of letters written during the post-World War II years from and to Juliet, a London-based writer, Juliet's publisher, Sidney, Juliet's friends, Juliet's suitor, and a group of residents of Guernsey (in the Channel Islands) who formed a book club...

July & August Break

September 2010 Sing them Home – Stefanie Kallos

The basic story involves the lives of three siblings and the impact their mother's death has on their personalities and relationships with the opposite sex. The story then takes us to see how the children deal with returning to face each other and the realities of life in the small Nebraska town.

October 2010 Falling Leaves – Adeline Yen Mah

In 1937, Adeline Yen Mah's mother died giving birth to her. Because of this, she was considered "bad luck", tormented by her siblings and shunned by her father. Her father soon remarried a beautiful, young Eurasian woman who was cruel and manipulative. She treated all five of her stepchildren badly, but saved her real hatred for Adeline. Falling Leaves is the powerful, riveting memoir of emotional abuse and isolation that Ms Yen Mah suffered at the hands of her stepmother. At this point, most would say, "Why would I want to torture myself by reading a book about child abuse?" The answer is simple...Adeline Yen Mah didn't just survive her childhood, she triumphed. With great wisdom and insight, she tells a story not just about her life, but the life of China, before and after the cultural revolution and how both were changed forever. Despite her miserable childhood, she excelled, became a doctor, married and found freedom and a new life in America. This is an amazing, compelling story, told by an amazing woman who was not only able to put the past behind her, but was able to celebrate life and move forward.

November 2010

Sarah's Key – Tatiana deRosnay

In July 1942 thousands of Jewish families in France were rounded up and forcibly kept in the Velodrome d'Hiver by the French authorities before being sent to Auschwitz.

Based upon this seldom this novel alternates between the past in 1942 of a 10 year old Jewish girl Sarah Strazynski who is forced to go to the Velodrome d'Hiver with her mother and father, innocently leaving behind a 4 year old brother Michel locked in a secret cupboard with the assurance that she would return to let him out when it was safe.

The present revolves around writer Julia Jarmond. As the truth emerges, the author deftly handles the question of guilt caused by suppressed secrets and how the truth can sometimes not only bring about pain and disrupt the regularity of life, yet also have the ability to heal and move forwards into the future.

December 2010 Sweetsmoke – David Fuller

The much awaited Civil War novel, Sweetsmoke, by screenwriter, David Fuller, explores slave/carpenter Cassius Hoke's day-to-day existence on Plantation Sweetsmoke in Virginia. Cassius learns about the death of Emoline, the freedwoman who nursed him back to health and taught him to read and write. When it is apparent it is murder, he sets out to avenge her death.