

National Reading Group Month

from the Women's National Book Association

Celebrating the Joy of Shared Reading

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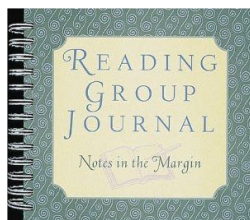
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National Reading Group Month

By Jill A. Tardiff

Now in its sixth year, National Reading Group Month (NRGM) is steadily gaining in recognition and reputation among readers who comprise the "community of the book." Book club members, authors, booksellers, librarians, and publishing industry professionals across the country now celebrate the joy of shared reading during the month of October. National Reading Group Month was the dream of author and WNBA member Martha



Burns back in 2000. I still keep a copy of her book titled *Reading Group Journal: Notes in the Margin* (Abbeville Press) co-written with her sister Alice Dillon close at hand. It reminds and affirms for me the connection between the Women's National Book Association and its marketing initiative -- "To promote the value of books and reading." Even

more than the 68,500+ results in a Google search or the 700+ downloads of the National Reading Group Month Marketing Toolkit over the past two years, the breadth and depth of National Reading Group Month can be gauged on a more personal level -- by the number of emails I receive from book clubs, bookstores, and libraries. Or when a chapter president walks into her local library to be greeted with a banner that reads "October is National Reading Group Month - Celebrating the joy of shared reading."

Very cool indeed!

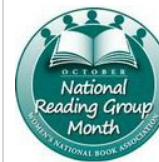
Our NRGM / Great Group Reads (GGR) outreach is not without its keen enthusiasts. **Thanks to our WNBA chapter presidents and NRGM coordinators and their bookstore/library partners and our sponsors, content, and publisher partners.**

I'd like to individually thank:

GGR Selection Committee Chair Roz Reisner and the GGR Selection Committee, and NRGM Chapter Event Coordinator Susan Walker, Nashville Chapter President Bebe Brechner, Signature Event Coordinators Lee Fairbend and Joanne Slaughter and their team, Seattle Chapter NRGM/Readings 'Round the Sound Coordinators Leslie Adams and Linda Gray.

Additionally,

Mark Nichols, Development Officer, American Booksellers Association; Bill Ott, Editor/Publisher, Booklist and Mary Mackay, Marketing Director, American Library Association; John Niernberger, Website Producer/Designer, Conscious Images®LLC; Susan Vianna, Principal, Fishergate® LLC;



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Serenity Gerbman, Humanities Tennessee, Southern Festival of Books; and Charlie Mead, Principal, Reading Group Choices.

So here is National Reading Group Month 2012. In this special issue of the national *Bookwoman*, you will find news about our various events and programs, as well as several book reviews. Do have a look. More importantly, enjoy your own WNBA chapter's National Reading Group Month event and take pleasure in reading the Great Group Reads 2012 Selections throughout the year. You may also like to check out the [NRGM website](#) and our [Great Group Reads Selections](#) page.

Jill A. Tardiff
NRGM Committee Chair/Event Manager

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Special Events

The highly awaited [National Reading Group Month Signature Event](#) to be held in Nashville at the Nashville Public Library Downtown on Saturday, October 13 (program, 9-11 a.m.; book-signing, 11-11:30 a.m.) headlines best-selling authors Ben Fountain, a 2012 National Book Award finalist, (*Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, Ecco/HarperCollins); Christopher Tilghman (*The Right-Hand Shore*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux); Gail Tsukiyama (*A Hundred Flowers*, St. Martin's Press); and Karen Thompson Walker (*The Age of Miracles*, Random House). In an encore appearance, Nashville Public Radio WPLN *All Things Considered* host Nina Cardona will lead the panel-program.

For a fourth year in a row, the "coffee with authors" is an official part of the Southern Festival of Books, and is co-sponsored by the Nashville Public Library and Parnassus Books-Nashville - An Independent Bookstore for Independent People.

* A Great Group Reads Selection

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Library & Other Events

[Readings 'Round the Sound](#)

WNBA-Seattle and Parkplace Books (Kirkland, Wash.) in association with eight metropolitan bookstores and libraries present "Readings 'Round the Sound" -- a month-long, multi-event National Reading Group Month celebration giving prominence to local authors with national recognition. Participating venues: Eagle Harbor Books(Thurs., Oct 4; 7:30 p.m.), Lance Weller (*Wilderness*, Bloomsbury USA); Liberty Bay Books (Sat., Oct. 6; 2 p.m.), Sheila Roberts (*Better Than Chocolate*, Harlequin MIRA); University Book Store/U-District (Mon., Oct. 8; 7 p.m.), Sherman Alexie (*Blasphemy: New and Selected Stories*, Grove Press); Elliott Bay Book Company (Mon., Oct. 8; 8 p.m.), A.M. Holmes (*May We Be Forgiven*, Viking Adult/Penguin Group USA); Parkplace Books (Wed., Oct. 10; 7 p.m.), Knute Berger (*Pugetopolis: A Mossback Takes on Growth Addicts, Weather Wimps, and the Myth of Seattle Nice*, Sasquatch Books); Seattle Public Library/Central Branch (Tues., Oct. 16; 7 p.m.), Gregory Martin (*Stories for Boys: A Memoir*, Hawthorne Books); Edmonds Bookshop (Thurs., Oct. 18; 5:30 p.m.), Ingrid Ricks (*Hippie Boy: A Girl's Story*, Ricks Communications LLC); Eagle Harbor Books (Thurs., Oct. 18; 7:30 p.m.), Dylan Tomine



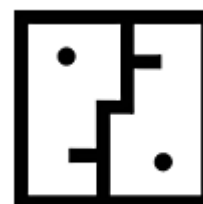
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(*Closer to the Ground: An Outdoor Family's Year on the Water, in Woods and at the Table*, Patagonia Books); Queen Anne Books (Fri., Oct. 19; 6:30 p.m.), Douglas Smith (*Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux); Parkplace Books (Wed., Oct. 24; 7 p.m.), Heather Barbieri (*The Cottage at Glass Beach*, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers), Laurie Frankel (*Goodbye for Now*, Doubleday/Random House), Maria Semple (*Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, Little, Brown and Co./Hachette Book Group), Gregory Spatz (*Inushuk*, Bellevue Literary Press), and Lance Weller (*Wilderness*, Bloomsbury USA); Third Place Books (Thurs., Oct. 25; 7 p.m.), Will Schwalbe (*The End of Your Life Book Club*, Knopf/Random House).

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National Reading Group Month Selects Great Group Reads

2012 Selections

The Absolutist by John Boyne (Other Press)
An Age of Madness by David Maine (Red Hen Press)
The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach (Back Bay Books)
The Art of Hearing Heartbeats by Jan-Philipp Sendker (Other Press)
Blue Asylum by Kathy Hepinstall (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
Boleto by Alyson Hagy (Graywolf Press)
The Dovekeepers by Alice Hoffman (Scribner)
Equal of the Sun by Anita Amirrezvani (Scribner)
Faith by Jennifer Haigh (Harper Perennial)
I Married You for Happiness by Lily Tuck (Atlantic Monthly Press)
In the Shadow of the Banyan by Vaddey Ratner (Simon & Schuster)
A Land More Kind Than Home by Wiley Cash (William Morrow)
The O'Briens by Peter Behrens (Pantheon Books)
The Orchardist by Amanda Coplin (Harper)
The Right-Hand Shore by Christopher Tilghman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Running the Rift by Naomi Benaron (Algonquin Books)
Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward (Bloomsbury USA)
The Snow Child by Eowyn Ivey (Reagan Arthur Books)
What Alice Forgot by Liane Moriarty (Berkley Books)
Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal? by Jeanette Winterson (Grove Press)

[Great Group Reads Selections 2012 Tabletop \(PDF\)](#)

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CHAPTER EVENTS

Boston

www.wnbaboston.org/

WNBA-Boston at Hotel 140 with event partner Haley Booksellers (Thurs., Oct. 18; 6:30-8:30 p.m.): Kate Whouley (*Remembering the Music, Forgetting the Words: Travels with Mom in the Land of Dementia*, Beacon Press), with David R. Gillham (*City of Women*, Amy Einhorn Books/Putnam), Martha Southgate (*The Taste of Salt*, Algonquin Books), and Rosie Sultan (*Helen Keller in Love*, Viking Adult/Penguin Group USA).

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Charlotte

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WNBA-Charlotte at Maggiana's Little Italy Restaurant with "Biblio Feast" co-sponsor Park Road Books (Mon., Oct. 22; 6:30-9 p.m.): Mark de Castrique (*The 13th Target*, Poisoned Pen Press), Emily Colin (*The Memory Thief*, Ballantine Books/Random House), Debra Dean (*The Mirrored World*, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers), Mary Glickman (*One More River*, Open Road Media), Judy Goldman (*Losing My Sister: A Memoir*, John F. Blair, Publisher), Shira Nayman (*A Mind of Winter*, Akashic Books), Elena Passarello (*Let Me Clear My Throat: Essays*, Sarabande Books), and Wendy Welch (*The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap: A Memoir of Friendship, Community, and the Uncommon Pleasure of a Good Book*, St. Martin's Press/Macmillan).

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Detroit

www.wnba-books.org/detroit/

WNBA-Detroit with event partners Baldwin Public Library-Birmingham and The Book Beat (Wed., Oct. 10; 6:30-8:30 p.m.): Natalie Bakopoulos (*The Green Shore*, Simon & Schuster) and D.E. Johnson (*Detroit Breakdown*, Minotaur Books/Macmillan).

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Los Angeles

www.wnba-books.org/la/

WNBA-LA with event partner Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena (Mon., Oct. 22; 7-9 p.m.): Naomi Benaron (**Running the Rift*, Algonquin Books), Richard Kramer (*These Things Happen*, Unbridled Books), Attica Locke (*The Cutting Season*, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers), and Héctor Tobar (*The Barbarian Nurseries*, Picador/Macmillan).

* Great Group Reads 2012 Selections

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Nashville

www.wnbanashville.org/

WNBA-Nashville with "coffee with authors" partners Nashville Public Library and Parnassus Books, Nashville in collaboration with the Southern Festival of Books (Sat., Oct. 13; program, 9-11 a.m.; book-signing, 11-11:30 a.m.): Nina Cardona (Nashville NPR host/reporter), with Ben Fountain, a 2012 National Book Award finalist, (*Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, Ecco/HarperCollins Publishers), Christopher Tilghman (**The Right-Hand Shore*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux), Gail Tsukiyama (*A Hundred Flowers*, St. Martin's Press/Macmillan), and Karen Thompson Walker (*The Age of Miracles*, Random House).



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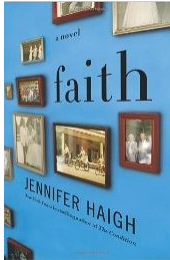
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| <p style="text-align: center;">* Great Group Reads 2012 Selections</p> <p>Back to top</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Mary Grey James</p> <p>For further information on the National Board, Chapter Presidents, Committee Chairs, please go to the WNBA website. You may also download a pdf of the information here.</p> <p>Back to top</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">New Orleans</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOLA on Facebook</p> <p>WNBA-New Orleans at the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women/Tulane University with event partner Octavia Books (Thurs., Oct. 11; 7-9 p.m.): Attica Locke (<i>The Cutting Season</i>, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers).</p> <p>Back to top</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Seattle</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.wnba-books.org/seattle/</p> <p>WNBA-Seattle with event partner Parkplace Books, Kirkland (Wed., Oct. 24; 7-9 p.m.): Mary Ann Gwinn (book editor, <i>The Seattle Times</i>), with Heather Barbieri (<i>The Cottage at Glass Beach</i>, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers), Laurie Frankel (<i>Goodbye for Now</i>, Doubleday/Random House), Maria Semple (<i>Where'd You Go, Bernadette</i>, Little, Brown and Co./Hachette Book Group), Gregory Spatz (<i>Inushuk</i>, Bellevue Literary Press), and Lance Weller (<i>Wilderness</i>, Bloomsbury USA).</p> <p>Back to top</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">New York City</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.wnba-nyc.org/ wnbanyc.wordpress.com/</p> <p>WNBA-NYC with event partner Strand Book Store (Wed., Oct. 17; 7-9 p.m.): Rosalind Reisner (<i>Read On - Life Stories: Reading Lists for Every Taste and Jewish American Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests</i>, Libraries Unlimited), with Ben Ryder Howe (<i>My Korean Deli: Risking It All for a Convenience Store</i>, Picador/Macmillan), David Maine (<i>An Age of Madness</i>, Red Hen Press), Elizabeth Nunez (<i>Boundaries</i>, Akashic Books), Marisa de los Santos (<i>Falling Together</i>, William Morrow Paperbacks/HarperCollins Publishers), and Alix Kates Shulman (<i>Ménage</i>, Other Press).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* Great Group Reads 2012 Selections.</p> <p>Back to top</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">San Francisco</p> <p style="text-align: center;">wnba-sfchapter.org/ wnba-sfchapter.org/blog/</p> <p>WNBA-SF with event partner Books, Inc., Opera Plaza in collaboration with LitQuake (Sat., Oct. 6; 2-4 p.m.): Amanda McTigue (<i>Going to Solace</i>, Harper Davis Publishing), with Anita Amirrezvani (<i>Equal of the Sun</i>, Scribner/Simon & Schuster), Amanda Coplin (<i>The Orchardist</i>, Harper/HarperCollins Publishers), and C.W. Gortner (<i>The Queen's Vow</i>, Ballantine Books/Random House).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* Great Group Reads 2012</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Washington, DC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.wnba-books.org/wash/</p> <p>WNBA-Washington, D.C. at the Arts Club of Washington with event partner Politics and Prose Bookstore (Tues., Oct. 16; 6:30-8:30 p.m.): Leslie Maitland (<i>Crossing the Borders of Time: A True Story of War, Exile, and Love Reclaimed</i>, Other Press) and Vaddey Ratner (<i>In the Shadow of the Banyan</i>, Simon & Schuster).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*Great Group Reads 2012 Selections</p> <p>Back to top</p> | |

Selections

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Book Reviews



***Faith* by Jennifer Haigh**

(Harper, hc 978-0060755805; Harper Perennial, tp 978-0060755812)

Reviewed by Kristen Knox (Great Group Reads Selection Committee member)

When Father Art Breen is accused of molesting a nine-year old boy, his family reacts in different ways. His mother is unable to believe it while his younger brother convicts him immediately. His sister Sheila wants to believe he's innocent and sets out to learn the truth. She is the primary narrator, telling Art's story well after the fact. As Sheila uncovers more and more about the accusation itself and Art's choice not to defend himself from the allegation, she shares the story of their family, in which Art was simultaneously his mother's revered eldest and the object of his stepfather's disdain and derision. Sheila also uncovers the checkered history of the troubled young mother, Kath, who has made the accusation against Father Art on behalf of her son. As her insights into the full picture fall into place, Sheila is assailed by doubt, wondering if the Art she knows and loves could possibly have done this monstrous thing.

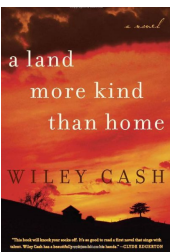
Tightly written and evenly paced, *Faith* examines the many different angles every story contains. The adage that there are two sides to every story is true exponentially here. There is Art's story, as unknowable as it might be; there is Kath's story; and there is the story Sheila is stitching together. And finally, there is the whole truth, unblemished and unattainable. Haigh has used the Catholic priest abuse scandal to raise questions about what we believe and why. This is not a religious book. Faith and religion are two different issues. But the struggles and wrestlings of faith are beautifully, sharply portrayed.

Despite the factual inspiration of the novel and the way the accusation drives the plot, this is in actuality an intense family drama; an examination of the way in which the people who know Art best react to his possible guilt. As the story unfolds, secrets threaten to spill into the open, changing the landscape of faith, just as the scandal in Boston did for so many of the Catholic faithful. Haigh has done a wonderful job portraying her characters as real and flawed. The reader, learning ever more, wavers, just as Sheila does, between faith and doubt in Art's innocence. Tightly woven and engrossing, this is hard to put down; the reader keeps turning the pages until the very end, needing to know not only whether Art is guilty but also whether his family's faith in the church and in each other, has survived this annus horribilus.

In reflecting back on it nine months after reading it, I do think that it would be a good choice for a book club. There are so many issues that it raises about truth and family and faith. And it really doesn't/shouldn't cause tetchy religious conversations at all. There's a great depth here that should inspire a lot of good conversation.

More about Kristen Knox: BookNAround: booknaround.blogspot.com.

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***A Land More Kind Than Home* by Wiley Cash**

(William Morrow, hc 978-0062088147; tp 978-0062088239)

Reviewed by Marsha Toy Engstrom (Great Group Reads Selection Committee member)

Young brothers Christopher and Jess Hall seem to always be eavesdropping when they shouldn't. When they peek inside their parent's bedroom window one day and discover it's not their dad who's enjoying an afternoon delight with their mother, all hell-fire and damnation breaks loose. Although *A Land More Kind Than Home* reads a bit like a thriller, the plot never overtakes the development of the characters.

And there are characters to spare! I was immediately drawn into the relationship between the two brothers:

Christopher (dubbed "Stump" because he cannot speak) and Jess, the younger, who cares deeply for his older brother. I felt pity and frustration for the young naïve mother, Julie Hall, who wants to do the best by her family and her God -- but is too easily swayed by sizzle over substance -- and the snake-charms of a twisted preacher. And one can never forget the tired old grandfather, Jimmy Hall -- racked with guilt and pickled in alcohol -- who, nevertheless, has returned home to seek redemption.

The story is told by three unique individuals: Adelaide Lyle, county conscience and former midwife-a salt-of-the-earth character you'd like to claim as your great aunt; the grizzled old sheriff, Clem Barfield, trying his darnedest to keep the peace while carrying a palpable grief from a long-ago loss (a perfect role for a younger Gene Hackman); and the aforementioned younger brother Jess, who, in the tradition of Scout Finch and Huckleberry Finn struggles to understand what's going on around him while his life changes in the blink of an eye. Each brings his own perspective to the story, each reflects his own Southern dialect and upbringing in a fresh way, and we, the readers, are wiser for those contrasts.

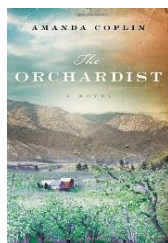
In addition to compelling characters, Cash does a great job of creating a sense of place -- mid-1980's rural North Carolina -- through both the dialogue and the descriptions of the woods and countryside and the way of life of the townspeople. And of course, from the Sunday go-to-meetings, to the bizarre snake-handling services, one never forgets that we are firmly nestled in the everlasting arms of the Bible Belt.

This is a great book for book clubs, with lots to discuss: good vs. evil; faith vs. religion -- or what vile actions can be done 'under the banner of heaven'; innocence vs. cruelty; parental responsibility; infidelity; alcoholism; loss and redemption -- what more could one ask for?

In the tradition of Flannery O'Connor, Harper Lee, and Pat Conroy, Wiley Cash's Southern roots inform his writing-in both character and language. As this is his first novel, I think he's a fresh, new writer to watch!

More about Marsha Toy Engstrom: Book Club Cheerleader: www.bookclubcheerleader.com.

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***The Orchardist* by Amanda Coplin**

(Harper, 978-0062188502)

Reviewed by Roz Reisner (Great Group Reads Committee chair)

At the turn of the twentieth century, William Talmadge lives in the Pacific Northwest tending the orchard he has lived in since childhood. He cherishes his quiet, almost reclusive life in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, where the apples and apricots he grows absorb his time and emotions. William still nurses the hurt from a childhood tragedy when his sister vanished without explanation. One day, two starving, frightened teenage girls appear at the edge of his orchard and steal his fruit. When William doesn't retaliate, they return and thereby hangs a remarkable tale.

The two girls, Jane and Della, are on the run from a sadistic brothel owner and Jane is pregnant. William takes them in and takes on the consequences of the violence that follows them. Jane dies, but her baby lives on in William's care. William's efforts to create a family in the face of unspeakable tragedy form the heartbreaking core of this beautifully written novel with a strong sense of time and place. Coplin's characters are multi-dimensional and, like life, there are no easy endings to their journeys.

Readers and reviewers have called Coplin's writing "mesmerizing" and "hypnotic" -- for historical fiction fans *The Orchardist* is a powerful combination of good writing; unusual, memorable characters; and compelling plot.

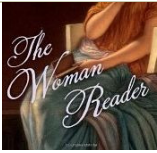
More about Roz Reisner: A Reader's Place: areadersplace.net.

Nota bene -- We highly recommend:



***The Woman Reader* by Belinda Jack**

(Yale University Press, hc 978-0300120455)



About This Book on the [publisher's website](#).

[Shelf Awareness for Readers for Tuesday, July 24, 2012.](#)

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