

Marblehead League Book Discussion Group 11/13/20

Seven League members contributed to our November 13, 2020 (six in person, one by email).
Books discussed/ recommended to group:

1. Breath: The New Science of A Lost Art (2020) by James Nestor It turns out that when breathing at a normal rate, our lungs will absorb only about a quarter of the available oxygen in the air, with the majority of that oxygen is exhaled. By taking longer breaths through the nose, we allow our lungs to soak up more in fewer breaths. Breath also acts like a power switch to vast network called the autonomic nervous system. This book explores many aspects of breathing- evolution, medical history, biochemistry, physiology, physics, athletic endurance. Our reader loved this practical and surprising book! We all breathe, yet there is much to learn. Nonfiction
2. The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane (2018) by Lisa See The novel was a fascinating look about a girl and her mother centered around a Chinese minority the Akha whose beliefs infuse every part of their lives. Fiction
3. Caste (2020) by Isabel Wilkerson The author compares the caste systems of Nazi Germany, India and American blacks and the structures of domination that underpin it. The realities of American structural racism are made crystal clear, in this beautifully written and researched blockbuster. Nonfiction
4. News of the World (2016) Paulette Giles This is a cowboy story taking place in the 1870s. A widower and war- veteran, who has lost his business, wanders from town to town in the American frontier, making a meagre living sharing the news of the day. He is hired to return a young girl, held captive by the Kiowa tribe, to her relatives; held for 4 years, she doesn't want to go back. Fiction
5. Disloyal: A Memoir: The True Story of the Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump (2020) by Michael Cohen Donald Trump's personal lawyer tell-all confessional book about Trump business from the inside. Memoir
6. Lose your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route by Saidiya Hartman A woman travels to Africa (Ghana) to explore the routes taken to bring slaves captured in the interior of the continent to African shores to ship them to the Middle Passage to the Americas. Nonfiction
7. The Tattooist of Auschwitz (2018) by Heather Morris In old age, Ludwig (Lale) Sokolov, relates his story of life in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp to writer Heather Morris. Lale tattooed the numbers onto arms of the prisoners. One of the earliest prisoners, he tells

how the camp was run and organized. Lale finds love and a vision for a future, perhaps a key to his survival. Biography

8. Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind (2014) Yuval Noah Harari A historian tackles the big questions of how humans may have developed into a highly successful species. Nonfiction
9. The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II by Iris Chang The Japanese invaded Nanking China in 1937 and more than 300,000 were brutally killed; another story of humanity's inhumanity that has been largely ignored, but needs acknowledgement, if you can bear just reading about the brutality. Nonfiction
10. The Ungrateful Refugee (2019) by Dina Nayeri The author recounts her experience as a child when her mother with two children were forced to flee Iran because of religious persecution. Once settled in the U.S., Nayeri devotes herself to a single-minded goal of getting into an elite US college, attends Princeton and Harvard. But it isn't a story of success- it is the story of a woman struggling to come to terms with the refugee experience as a second-class citizen and her own understanding of identity. As a writer, she revisits the camps and way-stations, interviewing those caught in the limbo of waiting, looking for answers to her own past. Psychologically and objectively, it is a powerful challenge to the assumptions Americans hold about refugees. Nonfiction
11. American Contagions: Epidemics and the law from smallpox to COVID-19 (2020) by John Fabian Witt. Written by a law professor this short book reviews the tension between law and rights as America has dealt with epidemics since its founding. It turns out, the least powerful in American society have always borne the largest curtailment of rights in times of crisis. Moreover, public resistance to sanitary practices (such as wearing masks) is not new either. This book lends a needed American historical perspective on rights and the law as we grapple with the pandemic within our own culture . Nonfiction.
12. Film on Netflix: "My Octopus Teacher" Captures the wonder of the ocean and its creatures seen through the eye of a broken man transformed. Beautiful!
13. Film on Netflix or Amazon Prime: "Fantastic Fungi" Perhaps fungi rule the world...