

Marblehead League Book Discussion Group 11/22/19

1. “Run Fast. Cook Fast. Eat Slow: Quick-Fix Recipes for Hangry Athletes” (2018) by Shalane Flanagan and Elyse Kopecky. This book of recipes by Marblehead’s Olympic runner Shalane Flanagan combines easy preparation and healthy food. Our reviewer loved the attitude which debunked many myths about women athletes. Highly recommended!
2. “Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter” (2019) by Ben Goldfarb. The author is a nature writer who has written articles for Sierra Club and other science publications. The book explores how the beaver has affected our entire continent, until the 1850s when they were all but wiped out by trappers. Healthy watersheds, swamps, and native wildlife depend on beaver activity. Beautiful writing makes this book a pleasure to read. It has won several awards. A wonderful alternative to nonfiction burn-out.
3. “TheWomans’s Suffrage Movement” (2019) by Sally Roesch Wagner. This is a compendium of historical documents and little-known accounts of the women’s suffrage movement. Our reviewer was struck by the fact that American Indian women participated in democracy- voting, electing chiefs and deciding whether to go to war. The book includes articles by Matilda Gage, the brilliant suffragette, who was obliterated from history because she disagreed with the founding sisters about including the religious temperance movement. The ‘Matilda effect’ has been used to describe awesome women scientists who deserved recognition while their male colleagues received Nobel prizes and other awards for their work. The introduction is written by Gloria Steinem.
4. “Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End” (2017) by Atul Gawande. A perennial favorite by our reviewers. The author, a physician, explores getting older through his own experience with his father facing health issues. Wonderful!
5. “Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America” (2019) by Nancy MacLean. This book traces the Nobel –winning economist James Buchanan’s ideas, the Koch brothers, and Libertarianism. The book suggests the existence of a hidden campaign to disempower and dismember our democracy, viewing the wants of citizens as antithetical to capitalism. Not bedtime reading! Winner of several prizes. Citizen activist groups have sprung up to spread the message of this book.
6. “Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?” (2010) by Michael J. Sandel. Our readers have recommended this book again and again. Written by a favorite Harvard professor, this book explores the basic tenants of moral philosophy as applied to the real world.

7. “Hold Still” by Sally Mann (2016). This is a memoir by a famous accomplished photographer coming to grips to her beloved roots in the South. At age 69, she explores photos, letters and other memorabilia as she reconstitutes her family history from the fading clues and reintegrates her own memories into the context of the South.
8. “A Single Thread: A Novel” (2019) by Tracy Chevalier. A wonderful work of fiction about life in the 1930s in England of “surplus women”, when a generation of young men and fathers was lost in WWI. The main character finds she must break conventions of the time in this unusual environment.
9. “Farsighted: How We Make the Decisions That Matter the Most” by Steven Johnson, (2018). This nonfiction book explores how expert decision- makers make their choices and the skills we can develop to do the same.
10. “How to Be an Antiracist” by Ibram X. Kendi (2019.) A nonfictional book that reveals over and over how we cannot just not be a racist, but we need to be antiracist to counter racism. Written by a young black man who, in a series of insights, comes to understand his own innate racism. Interestingly, the revelations could be applied to other “isms” that need to be dismantled. This was a mind-blowing book for a suburban woman reader that identifies racism in its many hidden and crippling forms and gives us ways out of the morass.
11. “Blowout: Corrupted Democracy, Rogue State Russia, and the Richest, Most Destructive Industry on Earth” (2019) by Rachel Maddow. Why are inhabitants of poor countries with rich deposits of oil and gas that are developed by multinational companies, worse off after the development? Why were oil and gas companies unprepared for massive spills? Why were the effects of fracking ignored? The fossil fuel industry’s actions in the U.S. and worldwide are explored.
12. “On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century” (2017) by Timothy Snyder. A meditation on threats to democracy with examples of how a variety of attitudes and actions seen in the US today echo the darkest past of the 20th century.