

## League of Women Voters of Marblehead Book Group December 11, 2023

1. **The Wager by David Grann.** This book has been on the best seller list for about a year which is a good indication of how good it is. Here is a brief summary: During a war with Spain in the 18th century, Britain sends a squadron of war ships led by George Anson to intercept Spanish galleons, sailing ships carrying treasure from South America. As part of the mission, the ships were to set sail for Cape Horn at the southernmost tip of South America in order to attack Spanish ships trying to sail around the continent. This required the ships to sail on Drake's Passage, the waters between South America and Antarctica, which were notorious for its "pulverizing" currents and storms. Hit by the Passage's severe storms and underwater rocks near the shore, the *Wager* was wrecked. The survivors were left stranded on an uninhabited island without much food or fresh water resources. This is their story.
2. **The Power of Trees: How ancient forests can save us if we let them,** (2023) Peter Wohlleben, author of the Hidden Life of Trees. The author now runs a forestry school in Germany that teaches sustainable practices—in contrast to forestry for the wood industry. The approach is not to cut; the forest is allowed to naturally fill in gaps, without planting of alien species. Diseased trees are not removed but left in place. Old practice was to view trees as a crop, even ancient forests were managed this way. However, it has now been shown that old tree roots nourish and shelter young trees, recognize their own offspring, change microclimate, pump water 24/7 to top of the canopy, hydrate upper level of soil at night for all plants, and avoid soil compaction. Microorganisms are key to the health of the forest and the interaction with tiny rootlets our reader found amazing. Studies also show that adjacent plants rearrange their leaves so all get sunlight. A beautiful reminder that we don't know much about trees!
3. **Win Every Argument: the art of debating, persuading and public speaking** (2023) Mehdi Hasan Whether you're presenting info at a

public meeting, trying to convince or formally debating, you can learn something from this book. You will be reminded to use the power of three, do your homework, practice, and much more. The book is chocked with Medhi's own experiences debating and interviewing to illustrate the points he's making. The three essential parts of any argument are 1, Logos- the facts and logic, 2. Pathos- appeal to human emotion, tell a story, 3. Ethos- credibility of speaker. This book should be on everyone's shelf. It's entertaining, with plenty of historical stories, anecdotes and quotes from communicating experts.

4. **Be a Changemaker: How to start something that matters** (2014) Laurie Ann Thompson- required for 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Marblehead. This book gives teens ways to organize, speak out, use media, run committee meetings, etc. and is a good reference for students becoming engaged in civics.
5. **Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America** (2023) Heather Cox Richardson. The first half of the book reviews the Trump years. The second half tells the story of America starting from colonial days, and how we have had to fight to keep our democracy many times. Our two reviewers thought it was a good read, but as readers of her Letters from an American, they found it lacked the detail they loved in her "Letters".
6. **A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II** (2020) by Sonia Purnell This is a scholarly book about Virginia Hall, a woman who single- handedly managed to spy for Britain during WWII, placed in France to give support to French Resistance. An unlikely agent- she had her foot amputated and replaced with a wooden prosthesis- she overcame obstacles to become a huge force in coordinating those involved in the Resistance. It reads like fiction. Highly recommended.
7. **Massacre on the Merrimack: Hannah Duston's Captivity and Revenge in Colonial America** (2017) by Jay Atkinson. A story from colonial America based on the actual historical records in towns such

as Lincoln and Methun. Our reader found it fascinating to learn how colonists lived in daily life including native American captivity.

8. **A Little History of Economics (2018) by Niall Kishtainy** Our reader loved this book, and read it three times! Highly recommended! Readers may also love “**A Little History of Philosophy**”
9. **Afterlives, A Novel (2020)** by Abdulrazak Gurnah, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature A book that describes life in East Africa before during and after WW I including how they put their lives back together. Village life is described beautifully, in this book of life and heart.
10. **The One: How an Ancient Idea Holds the Future of Physics (2023)** by Heinrich Päs. Our reader found the challenge of the physics concepts in the early part of the book challenging, yet worthwhile. The question was raised as to why physicists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century refused to cross a certain line in interpretation. The book traces the conflict between Monism and Monotheism through history and religion. Persecution by religious authorities for perceived violations by scientists and intellectuals was pervasive. Another person mentioned this sounded similar to a book she was reading, **The Way: Meaningful Spirituality for a Modern World (2023)** by Larry Jordan