



Marblehead League Book Discussion Group 6/23/2023

League members offered analysis of the following books at our June 2023 book group.

1. **The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War**” (2023) by Jeff Sharlet The author travels across the country interviewing and meeting all sorts of people in megachurches and small churches in a quest to understand the beliefs that powered January 6, 2021.
2. **“Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II”** (2018) Liza Mundy. Sworn to secrecy for years, 11,000 American women worked to break the codes of the Nazis and the Japanese, while men were overseas fighting in WWII. They were recruited from elite colleges..
3. **“Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War”** (1999} by Tony Horwitz (1998) A fascinating look at hard core Civil War re-enactors who emulate bloated dead and emaciated soldiers for realism on the battlefield.
4. **“The Soul of America: the battle for our better angels”** by Jon Meecham (2019) This nonfiction books looks at post-civil war presidencies and how many times our country faced challenges to civil rights, with examples of bravery by presidents when all seems dark. These were imperfect people but at the right moment saw a wrong and sought to repair it. Uplifting.

(Note: the Marblehead League is encouraging members to read and report on banned books)

5. Banned Book: **“Catcher in the Rye”** (1945) J.D. Salinger 16- year old Holden Caulfield keeps getting kicked out of elite private schools, acting out his grief at his younger brother’s death and despair at the adult world of “phonies” that he is entering. This is coming- of- age novel that has been banned due to profanity, sexuality and mental health aspects. Some have objected to it as “anti-family”.

6. Banned Book “**Lord of the Flies**” (1954) William Golding Lord of the Flies is the most frequently banned book for the 8th grade, cited for language, violence and the portrayal of the dark side of humanity.

7. Banned Book “**The Great Gatsby**” F. Scott Fitzgerald The story takes place on Long Island NY in the 1920s and is about the excesses of the roaring 20s. It is a story about a mysterious millionaire, a self-made man of strange origins and his fixation on his first love, Daisy. who has married an unfaithful man. It doesn't end well. It has been banned due to sex, and language.

8. Banned Book “**Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History**” (1986) Art Spiegelman The comic artist begins a conversation with his father about what happened to his Polish Jewish family during WWII. The artist records the stories in his medium, comics, and eventually a book was published. It won a Pulitzer. The characters in the story are portrayed as animals- Jews as mice, Nazis as cats, gentile Poles as pigs. Covering the Holocaust has made it a target of book bans due to the uncomfortable topic.

9. Banned Book “**All Boys Aren't Blue**” George M. Johnson (2023) This book is a personal memoir about growing up black and queer. It has been frequently banned.

10. Banned Book “**1984**” (1949) George Orwell) Our reader rated this particularly important book to read today, with concepts of thought police, Newspeak, rewriting history, and Big Brother as relevant as ever in the time of rising authoritarianism. Orwell was postulating the endpoint of the totalitarian states he saw in 1949- constant warfare, repression of personal liberties, thought control. It has been banned by China, and a town in Florida who says it is pro-communist.