

Earlsdon Literary Magazine 210

The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library

Next meeting: Thursday 10 January 2019 at 8pm

Venue: Earlsdon Library

Book for discussion: *The One-in-a-Million Boy* — Monica Wood

A banned prizewinner

Our November/December Book: *Fingersmith* — Sarah Waters

Our November (and December!) AVID choice was *Fingersmith* (2002) by Sarah Waters. We follow the life of orphan Sue Trinder who is raised by her adoptive mother, Mrs Sucksby, in a house of petty thieves in Victorian London.

The general response to the book was positive – one AVID member hadn't come across the novel before and now ranks it one of the top ten books they have ever read! This member was extremely impressed by Sarah Waters' historical research and felt that the incredible detail she provided about Victorian life added credibility to the story. They were surprised by all of the twists in the plot and didn't anticipate any of them.

The novel is split into three equal parts with Part Two repeating the events from the first but from a different perspective. This technique was a little jarring for one member who felt that there were too many serendipitous moments. Another described this change as long winded whilst some AVID readers looked forward to the alternative perspective – particularly as Sue was somewhat an ignorant narrator lacking all the facts.

One member thought it was the best book they had read this year and enjoyed the depth of the characters and the plot. They suggested that the pace could have improved if the two sections of the book were combined; they felt that the change in perspective slowed the book down but other than that they thoroughly enjoyed it.

Whilst the twists in the novel were surprising for some readers, one member was almost waiting for them to happen and was not shocked by them at all. This reader found the range of Waters' characters really interesting, particularly Gentleman, and was hooked after reading Part One. Another member gave up a short way into the book, whilst yet another who did continue admitted they found it quite hard work due to the pace and word count. However, on reflection, they were glad they did finish it and thought the descriptions 'amazing'.

We mused over a sequel, hoping Sue had moved to London, adopted a couple of children and found her happily ever after ...

Karen

Our next book is

Milkman — Anna Burns

and we will (probably) discuss it on Thursday 14 February.

Note that the library does not hold Readers' Groups' copies of this.
If you're having difficulty getting hold of it, please contact others through the Facebook group.

February meeting date

It may have come to your attention that February's meeting is scheduled for Valentine's Day. In December, only some people thought this would preclude their attendance, but not everyone was there ... and things may have changed for you meantime! We'll make a decision on Thursday so, if you cannot get there and have a strong opinion either way, please post in our [Facebook group](#) or let Catherine know before the meeting.

What to read next

Karen has saved me the bother of writing a column listing Sarah Waters' many books, or taking you through my Christmas reading and things that come to mind as a result of it, by passing on the list of Costa Award category winners (see below). Like her, I've noticed the subtle placing of Sally Rooney's *Normal People* in several branches of Waterstones during my holiday travels (OK, that should be 'I've tripped over piles of them and been asked if I want to buy it at every till') and it tops this list – although whether or not it wins the overall prize is yet to be seen (it's announced on 29 January).

I think the competition is tough because the poet is pretty good and the (though I've read this particular collection, I've used bits of *At Maldon* when doing work on Anglo-Saxons in schools) and the Stuart Turton novel (which I did let a Waterstone's sales person persuade me to buy) is Agatha Christie rewritten by the team that made *The Prisoner* on acid ... or that's what it reads like, anyway. Perhaps one of these would make a good choice for our next non-library selection.

Discuss :o) !

Catherine

- 🏆 **Novel:** Sally Rooney - *Normal People*
- 🏆 **First Novel:** Stuart Turton - *The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle*
- 🏆 **Children's Book:** Hilary McKay - *The Skylarks' War*
- 🏆 **Biography:** Bart van Es - *The Cut Out Girl*
- 🏆 **Poetry:** J. O. Morgan - *Assurances*

Please send news, reviews, recommendations, tales of literary events or anything you think AVID readers would find interesting, to:

Catherine Fitzsimons
cathfitz5317@yahoo.com



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