

FOXWOOD VILLAGE BOOK CLUB



Dear Neighbors!

Our Reading Group enters the New Year hoping to read many enjoyable books. In November we read "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan" and we really enjoyed the discussion as the story deals with the harsh life of Chinese women in the 19th century and their custom of foot-binding to enhance their value as women to be sold to their future husbands. The book in January was the "Bookseller of Kabul". By coincidence the subject again is the harsh life of women this time in Afghanistan. A female journalist lives with a family of a bookseller and describes the daily drudgery of the females in the family. In February we will acquaint ourselves with Chinese immigrant women in California trying to fit into the so called American dream. The book is named "The Joy Luck Club". We travelled the world with our books but celebrated Christmas at home. We had a very enjoyable party with much home made entries and deserts. No restaurant could have served a better and more plentiful display of food.

Betty:

The Bookseller of Kabul: A well written and insightful novel which proved the old adage, you never know a person until you have lived with them. Happy New Year.

Diane:

I thoroughly enjoyed Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, a novel that takes place when young Japanese girls were subject to foot-binding to enhance their allure. The book describes in detail this rather horrifying process that has long since been abolished. Beyond that what I found most interesting was the friendship between two women that spans their lifetimes. One of the women too late learns that true friendship should involve support, tolerance and respect. This was yet another great history lesson from a very good read in our book club.

Lyn:

I loved the book "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan" The story of two young girls in China follows their lives and friendship through many twists and turns in life. They share the horror of foot binding and being married off to strangers. The book is a great, but short read, and very informative as well as entertaining. We watched the movie made of the story which kept 15 women totally quiet for an hour and half! Now isn't that something! Not a word was spoken during it. You must read the book, and then get the movie from the library to warm up the cold winter.

Victoria:

I have always found history and learning about other countries very interesting. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan not only encompassed that interest but also focused on women's rights. Learning about all that was done and expected of women in the 19th century in China was not only enlightening but equally frightening. Foot binding, isolation was sorrow filled with only "old sames" (latongs, friends) to relieve the pain. The book certainly made me appreciate even more my life and friends. It is a book worth reading.

Kate:

Mohammed Rais (Sultan Khan in the book). When it was published, in 2002, it became the bestselling non-fiction book in Norwegian history! In 2003 Rais left Afghanistan, went to Norway, hired an attorney, and sued Seierstad and her publisher over the portrayal of him and his family in her book. He pursued her through Norwegian courts for almost a decade, and won the case against her! Sierestad met Rais in Kabul in 2001, and he invited her to live with his family, which she did for three months. I bet the book she wrote after leaving the booksellers' family was nothing like what she thought it would be before she lived with them. Her portrayal of both men (domestic tyrants) and women (slaves) is pretty grim, and short shrift is given to how very hospitable it was of them to embrace her like they did. The author is a glamorous, educated, privileged woman of the Western world. How is she qualified to judge these people? How could she have remained neutral, as a good journalist should, when evaluating Afghanistan family life? In some respects I thought her views merely confirm Western prejudices about Afghanistan and Islamic culture. She sure hung the dirty laundry of the Rais family out for all the world to see! Having said all this, it was a very interesting read, and I couldn't put it down. I'll probably try to find more to read by this author.