

## St. Andrew's Book Club

All meetings take place in the office area of St. Andrew's at 10:30.

**November 7, 2016**

### *Brooklyn Colm Toibin*

Hauntingly beautiful and heartbreaking, Colm Tóibín's sixth novel, *Brooklyn*, is set in Brooklyn and Ireland in the early 1950s, when one young woman crosses the ocean to make a new life for herself.

Eilis Lacey has come of age in small-town Ireland in the years following World War Two. Though skilled at bookkeeping, she cannot find a job in the miserable Irish economy. When an Irish priest from Brooklyn to sponsor Eilis in America -- to live and work in a Brooklyn neighborhood "just like Ireland" -- she decides she must go, leaving her fragile mother and her charismatic sister behind.

Eilis finds work in a department store on Fulton Street, and when she least expects it, finds love. Tony, a blond Italian from a big family, slowly wins her over with patient charm. He takes Eilis to Coney Island and Ebbets Field, and home to dinner in the two-room apartment he shares with his brothers and parents. He talks of having children who are Dodgers fans. But just as Eilis begins to fall in love with Tony, devastating news from Ireland threatens the promise of her future.

**December 5, 2016**

### *Lost on Planet China: One Man's Attempt to Understand the World's Most Mystifying Nation Maarten Troost*

Maarten Troost has charmed legions of readers with his laugh-out-loud tales of wandering the remote islands of the South Pacific. When the travel bug hit again, he decided to go big-time, taking on the world's most populous and intriguing nation. In *Lost on Planet China*, Troost escorts readers on a rollicking journey through the new beating heart of the modern world, from the megalopolises of Beijing and Shanghai to the Gobi Desert and the hinterlands of Tibet.

*Lost on Planet China* finds Troost dodging deadly drivers in Shanghai; eating Yak in Tibet; deciphering restaurant menus (offering local favorites such as Cattle Penis with Garlic); visiting with Chairman Mao (still dead, very orange); and hiking (with 80,000 other people) up Tai Shan, China's most revered mountain. But in addition to his trademark gonzo adventures, the book also delivers a telling look at a vast and complex country on the brink of transformation that will soon shape the way we all work, live, and think. As Troost shows, while we may be familiar with Yao Ming or dim sum or the cheap, plastic products that line the shelves of every store, the real China remains a world—indeed, a planet--unto itself.

Maarten Troost brings China to life as you've never seen it before, and his

insightful, rip-roaringly funny narrative proves that once again he is one of the most entertaining and insightful armchair travel companions around.

**January 2, 2017**

*I Heard the Owl Call My Name* Margaret Craven

Amid the grandeur of the remote Pacific Northwest stands Kingcome, a village so ancient that, according to Kwakiutl myth, it was founded by the two brothers left on earth after the great flood. The Native Americans who still live there call it Quee, a place of such incredible natural richness that hunting and fishing remain primary food sources.

But the old culture of totems and potlatch is being replaced by a new culture of prefab housing and alcoholism. Kingcome's younger generation is disenchanted and alienated from its heritage. And now, coming upriver is a young vicar, Mark Brian, on a journey of discovery that can teach him—and us—about life, death, and the transforming power of love.

**February 6, 2017**

*The Dream is Over, The Nightmare Begins* Gudrun Z. Jones

I hope there will be sunshine, meadows and music in the world beyond for this is what my mother loved most. As I sort through her keepsake box, which holds her memories, I cannot stop the crying. Touching the small items that seemed important to her

somewhat eases the pain of losing her. Everything I pull from the box is carefully wrapped in tissue paper, which over the years has yellowed and now is fragile to the touch, but it also throws a shroud of mystery around her. There is a medal wrapped in an official document declaring my mother to be a “most honourable” citizen of the Third Reich for choosing duty over brotherly love. It is carelessly thrown in the box as if the owner was ashamed of its possession. I know very little about WWII, and this one sentence in this document is putting a fear into my heart and makes me hesitant about delving further into her life. Some of the things my mother had cherished make no sense to me. What mystery is in the jar of loose earth? Why would she have kept the feather of a rooster’s tail? What secret lies behind the remains of a straw star that looked like a broken Christmas ornament . . . what memory had it held for her? Carefully I re-wrap the star and place it back into the box. Among the many and mysterious things there is a small package carefully wrapped in silk paper. As I start to peel the paper away some of the old loose flakes of the dry leather binding cling to the wrapping and when I look at my hands I find them stained by the leather’s fading dye. New tears roll down my cheek as I realize it is my mother’s diary. Sometimes the words are a quick scribbling and are hard to read. It is not just the writing that upsets me so; it is also the contents that put a stone into my heart, for I cannot understand her devotion to a monster like Hitler. At times, I have to stop reading, for there is anger in me, and also an embarrassment that wants me to hide from the accusing eyes of Society. The dust and

musty smell that linger in the attic, which before had bothered me, now no longer matter: it all disappears as I sit there on the attic floor, reading my mother's diary. And as I keep reading it, page by page, line by line, little by little, her true life emerges. There, hidden under the surface of the dutiful citizen of the Third Reich, are the stories of her many rescue operations taking Jewish children out of Germany. My anger and embarrassment disappear and are replaced with pride and admiration. Now I wish I could follow in her footsteps. My lovely mother. My lovely mother.

**March 6, 2017**

*Everything I Never Told You* Celeste Ng  
Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet." So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos. A profoundly moving story of family, secrets, and longing, *Everything I Never Told You* is both a gripping page-turner and a sensitive family portrait, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another.

**April 3, 2017**

*The Whistling Season* Ivan Doig  
"Can't cook but doesn't bite." So begins the newspaper ad offering the services of an "A-1 housekeeper, sound morals, exceptional disposition" that draws the hungry attention of widower Oliver Milliron in the fall of 1909. And so begins the unforgettable season that deposits the noncooking, nonbiting, ever-whistling Rose Llewellyn and her font-of-knowledge brother, Morris Morgan, in Marias Coulee along with a stampede of homesteaders drawn by the promise of the Big Ditch—a gargantuan irrigation project intended to make the Montana prairie bloom. When the schoolmarm runs off with an itinerant preacher, Morris is pressed into service, setting the stage for the "several kinds of education"—none of them of the textbook variety—Morris and Rose will bring to Oliver, his three sons, and the rambunctious students in the region's one-room schoolhouse. A paean to a vanished way of life and the eccentric individuals and idiosyncratic institutions that made it fertile, *The Whistling Season* is Ivan Doig at his evocative best.