

SUMMER READING GUIDE

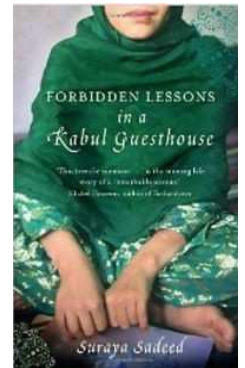


NON-FICTION

FORBIDDEN LESSONS IN A KABUL GUESTHOUSE

by Suraya Sadeed with Damien Lewis

This courageous and resourceful woman tells her life story, involving repeated and dangerous trips from the US to succour her needy fellow Afghans and commence the education of women and children under the nose of the suspicious Taliban. She was in the upper echelon of Afghan society but fled to the US in the chaotic situation after the defeat of the Russian invaders. As a US citizen in 1993 she set up a charity to aid Afghan children, which was generously supported by Americans. She describes numerous adventures while taking funds into Afghanistan in order to found clinics and schools and provide relief supplies in times of conflict and natural disaster. The Taliban were a major impediment to her work, but she concedes that their strict law and order was sometimes helpful. She pleads for a non-military solution to Afghanistan's problems, with respect for its culture.

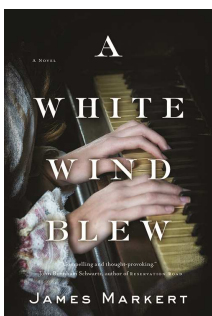


Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

FICTION

A WHITE WIND BLEW

by James Markert

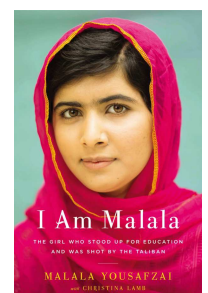


This work of vivid imagination is a complicated exercise in interpersonal relationships, set in the late 1920s in a real-life (and death) tuberculosis sanatorium in Louisville, Kentucky. The reader should find it helpful to glance first at the historical note at the end of the narrative: the author is a successful screenwriter and has a history degree from Louisville. The story is told by the main character, Wolfgang, a doctor at the sanatorium, an aspirant for Catholic priesthood and a musician. The plot involves love affairs, natural deaths, murders, the Ku Klux Klan, prohibition, gangsters, the insane, Afro-Americans and lots of flashbacks. Wolfgang manages to train up a choir and orchestra, providing a triumphal occasion when they gave a public concert.

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

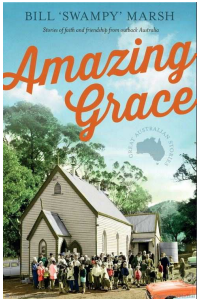
I AM MALALA by Malala Yousafzai with Christine Lamb

Malala was born in the Swat Valley in northern Pakistan. Before her birth, her father founded the KHUSAL SCHOOL where boys and girls attended six mornings a week receiving an excellent education, until the Taliban came to seek Malala out as she had become a sought after speaker on girls education. Many schools were destroyed and Malala was shot in the head on a school bus. She ended up in Birmingham U.K. after her injuries failed to heal without the latest treatment. The family, her parents and two brothers, now live permanently in Birmingham, U.K. and she continues to speak out for education for all, especially girls and the rebuilding of schools in Pakistan. A very good book, helping us to understand the situation in Pakistan.



Reviewed by Margaret Boundy

SAVING GRACE by Bill "Swampy" Marsh



Bill is one of life's natural story tellers with the gift of being able to 'connect' with folk from the Outback who trust him with some amazing tales - and here we have them.

This book - the 13th that Bill has produced - is a series of yarns that have been produced in concentrated form from many pages of transcript, both from face-to-face interviews and phone conversations. They are all about Faith and Friendship found in a collection of country-folk recollections and give a fascinating insight into what could be described as a simpler way of living and believing.

Each chapter is a different voice, but no one is ever identified which I confess to have found irritating. To have begun each story with a name attached (even if it were a bogus name) would have been a nice way to know that I was reading Joe's story rather than Fred's. However when you get to the anecdote about the mother who believed her bunions should be hit by the Bible, just think of it as Bill's account of his dear old Mum!

This is an easy read that provides a gentle narrative for bed-time reading, and will give no nightmares or sleepless nights.

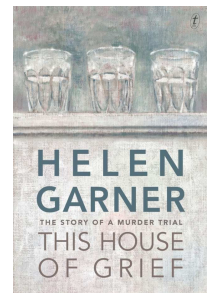
Reviewed by Jan Thornton

THIS HOUSE OF GRIEF

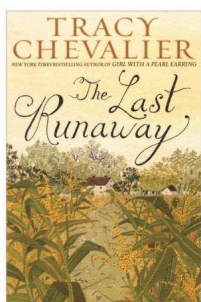
by Helen Garner

On Fathers' Day 2005 Robert Farquharson veered off the highway five minutes from home into a dam drowning his 3 sons Jai, Tyler and Bailey, but managing to save himself. After a trial and several appeals, he was convicted of deliberately drowning his boys. Was he guilty or did he have a severe coughing fit and black out or did he drown them because of depression from the breakdown of his marriage and subsequent remarriage of his wife Cindy? It will be hard for you to decide!!

Reviewed by Margaret Boundy



THE LAST RUNAWAY A Novel by Tracy Chevalier



Honor Bright is a modest English Quaker with a broken heart. Immigrating to Ohio with her sister, in the hope of making a new life, she soon discovers that 19th century America is a precarious place to live. It's people are practical and unsentimental, it's climate challenging. Moreover, it is divided by slavery, legal in the southern states, and opposed by many northerners.

One day a runaway slave appears in the yard of Honor's new family, and she must decide what to do. Thus she is drawn into the activities of the Underground Railway, a network of people helping runaways escape to freedom in the north.

I found this an interesting story - it is full of information about Quakers, quilt-making, and American history pertaining to the treatment of slaves. As Tracy Chevalier sums up her book, "The core of The Last Runaway centres on searching for freedom".

Reviewed by Jill Kerr