

Favorite Books of 2019

By Paulina Poplawska, Library Director

As we start to settle into the remaining days of the year and a festive month, snowy days are a great opportunity to cozy up with a book (or two) and a cup of tea. Maybe a pastry as well. Some of us are realizing we're behind on our reading goals for the year. Have you heard of the Icelandic tradition of Jolabokaflokkur? This is gifting books and spending the rest of the day reading. It sounds marvelous. I asked the library staff what book was their favorite this year. Many didn't pick just one.

My two picks of the year are "Searching for Sylvie Lee" by Jean Kwok and "Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World" by Cal Newport. Kwok's novel is about the daughter of the Lee family. She flies to the Netherlands to visit her dying grandmother and disappears. It's told from her point of view as well as those of her mother and younger sister, it weaves topics of family, secrets, cultural identity, love, loss, and forgiveness. Newport's digital minimalism applies minimalism to our personal technology and how to live a focused life in a world that is increasingly noisy. It was a nice reminder that tech isn't good or bad but the key is to use it to support your goals and values.

Assistant Library Director April Ide enjoyed "Red, White & Royal Blue" by Casey McQuiston and "The Huntress" by Kate Quinn this year. McQuiston's novel is a lighthearted combination of British royals and politics and just the right amount of scandal. Quinn's book is a historical novel about a battle-haunted English journalist and a Russian female bomber pilot who join forces to track the Huntress, a Nazi war criminal gone to ground in America.

Reference Librarian Leasa Sieve's pick of the year is Kelly Rimmer's "The Things We Cannot Say". She says "I became wrapped up in this story of secrets and sacrifice in World War II. I warn you...there were tears!"

Youth Services Librarian Kathryn Tatnall says that her favorite book of the year is "The Invisible Boy" by Trudy Ludwig. "It is a wonderful picture book that made me cry." The book is a gentle story that shows how small acts of kindness can help children feel included and allow them to flourish.

Library Aide Ann Anderson's picks were "Becoming" by Michelle Obama and "Tell Me More" by Kelly Corrigan. The first is a memoir by the former First Lady of the United States and the second is a take on the power of the right words at the right moment to change everything - the essential phrases that turn the wheel of life.

Two of Library Aide LuAnn Moldan favorites were "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens and "When We Were Lost" by Kevin Wignall. Owen's story follows two timelines that slowly intertwine. The first describes the life and adventures of a young girl named Kya as she grows up isolated in the marsh of North Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s and the second follows a murder investigation of Chase Andrews, a local

celebrity of Barkley Cove, a fictional coastal town of North Carolina. Wignall's novel is of survival, of teenagers thrust into a hostile environment. It's a novel of life and death and about finding a place for yourself in a world that's infinitely complex.

Reference Library Aide Sue Ullery's favorites this year "Red at the Bone" by Jacqueline Woodson and "Olive, Again" by Elizabeth Strout. Woodson's novel is beautifully-written and poetic in nature; this is a complex yet spare novel that examines the lives of a non-traditional family from different perspectives along a changing continuum of time. Strout's Olive is such a great, complex character! This is well-written with empathy and great insight into human nature, disappointment and joy.

Those are the library staff's picks of the year. What's your favorite book of 2019? Tell us the next time you're in. We look forward, as always, to seeing you in the library!