



Devon and Exeter Institution Reading Group

Reading List and meeting dates for 2020

13th January **A book of your choice from the DEI collection.** Bring the book and your comments to the group.

10th February **A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles** *He can't leave his hotel. You won't want to.* From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Rules of Civility*--a transporting novel about a man who is ordered to spend the rest of his life inside a luxury hotel. In 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, and is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him entry into a much larger world of emotional discovery. Brimming with humour, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the count's endeavour to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose

9th March **Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton** The story is set in the 1870s, in upper-class, "Gilded-Age" New York City. Wharton wrote the book in her 50s, after she had established herself as a strong author, with publishers clamouring for her work.

6th April **The Salt Path by Raynor Winn** Just days after Raynor learns that Moth, her husband of 32 years, is terminally ill, their home and livelihood is taken away. With nothing left and little time, they make the brave and impulsive decision to walk the 630 miles of the sea-swept South West Coast Path, from Somerset to Dorset, via Devon and Cornwall.

11th May **A Second Sleep by Robert Harris** a chilling and dark new thriller unlike anything Robert Harris has done before. 1468. A young priest, Christopher Fairfax, arrives in a remote Exmoor village to conduct the funeral of his predecessor. The land around is strewn with ancient artefacts--coins, fragments of glass, human bones--which the old parson used to collect. Did his obsession with the past lead to his death? Fairfax becomes determined to discover the truth. Over the course of the next six days, everything he believes--about himself, his faith, and the history of his world--will be tested to destruction.

8th June **Jazz by Toni Morrison** The novel begins in the midst of the love triangle between Violet, Joe and Dorcas. Violet and Joe are unhappily married and living together in an apartment in Harlem when Joe falls in love with a seventeen-year old girl named Dorcas. Joe and Dorcas meet when Joe comes to Dorcas's aunt's house to sell ladies cosmetics, and their affair lasts from October of 1925 to the first of January 1926. Joe talks with Malvonne, an upstairs neighbour, and negotiates the use of her empty apartment so that he and Dorcas can meet there. This arrangement continues for several months and neither Violet nor Alice Manfred, Dorcas's aunt, have any knowledge of the affair. ...

13th July Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen Jane Austen's first novel—published posthumously in 1818—tells the story of Catherine Morland and her dangerously sweet nature, innocence, and sometime self-delusion. Though Austen's fallible heroine is repeatedly drawn into scrapes while vacationing at Bath and during her subsequent visit to Northanger Abbey, Catherine eventually triumphs, blossoming into a discerning woman who learns truths about love, life, and the heady power of literature. The satirical novel pokes fun at the gothic novel while earnestly emphasizing caution to the female sex.

10th August The remains of the day by Kazuo Ishiguro *The Remains of the Day* is a 1989 novel by the Nobel Prize-winning British author Kazuo Ishiguro. The protagonist, Stevens, is a butler with a long record of service at Darlington Hall, a stately home near Oxford. In 1956, he takes a road trip to visit a former colleague and reminisces about events at Darlington Hall in the 1920s and 1930s.

14th September Brooklyn by 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 offers to sponsor Eilis in America--to live and work in a Brooklyn neighbourhood "just like Ireland"--she decides she must go, leaving her fragile mother and her charismatic sister behind.

12th October Saville by David Storey *Saville* centres around Colin, a young boy growing up in the fictional Yorkshire mining village of Saxton during the Second World War and the postwar years. This is the story of a miner's son, and his growth from the 1930s on, his rise in the world by way of grammar school and college. At first there is triumph in this, not least for the father who had spurred him on, but later "alienated from his class, and with nowhere yet to go" Colin finds himself struggling to remain in the place that made him. Saville won the Booker prize in 1976

9th November The Dressmaker by Beryl Bainbridge If Liverpool in 1944 was grim for Rita and her aunts Nellie and Margo, Rita knew that life in America was gay and rich - she'd seen it in the movies. So, when a GI came to call, she was sure that love and escape would follow. But Nellie knew different - the boy would have to go.

14th December The Sea by John Banville In this luminous new novel about love, loss, and the unpredictable power of memory, John Banville introduces us to Max Morden, a middle-aged Irishman who has gone back to the seaside town where he spent his summer holidays as a child to cope with the recent loss of his wife. It is also a return to the place where he met the Graces, the well-heeled family with whom he experienced the strange suddenness of both love and death for the first time. What Max comes to understand about the past, and about its indelible effects on him, is at the centre of this elegiac, gorgeously written novel among the finest we have had from this masterful writer.

