

Finding Joy in a Book Club by Cheryl Rambour

I love to read. Life got in the way until I joined a book club. I am embarrassed to say before joining this book club, I was barely reading at all! The club is made up of about 20 women from all career backgrounds. I knew about 2/3 of the group before joining, but have met more wonderful ladies whose paths and mine have never crossed until now.

In November, we all bring books that we are endorsing to be chosen for the reading list for the upcoming year. The prerequisite is that you have personally already read the book and would recommend it to the group.

The group discusses each recommended book and chooses 1 book to read in the upcoming year in the following categories: biography, Nebraska authors, young adult, mystery, and a classic. The other months are filled in with whatever we choose.

This was my first time recommending a book and the group chose my read, “Molokai” by Alan Brennert. I then reviewed this book with the group this past month.

What does a book review look like? Well, we begin with a brief biography on the author. What other books has he/she also written and what inspired them to write this story.

We also are asked to find at least one favorable review and one negative review from a reputable source such as Goodreads, the NY Times or another major newspaper.

We then get into discussion questions. Book club discussion questions are often found in the back of the book. Several reputable websites such as Oprah’s Book Club, Target Book Club or publisher’s websites also provide discussion questions.

I suggested the book, “Molokai” because I have relatives that reside in Hawaii and I am intrigued about Catholic saints. It is the story of the lepers who were exiled on the Hawaiian island of Molokai beginning in 1891 until 1969. There are still lepers living there today. This story begins after the death of St. Damien of Molokai, a Catholic priest who chose to travel to the island to care for lepers and was responsible for building a school, housing and a hospital.

Rachel, age 7, was taken from her family and exiled to the island. Rachel becomes close to one of the Catholic sisters, gets married and has a child. This story could be called “When everything bad happens to the same person” but it is more than that. Rachel chooses to keep hope, and also chooses to find the good in people. Bitterness is not in her soul. She suffers a lot of loss, but chooses to live a good life.

The book club ladies all really enjoyed my first recommendation—we are currently reading “Before We Were Yours”. I HIGHLY recommend this read—it is about the Tennessee Children’s Home. We also are reading “Lilac Girls”- a WWII story.

Needless to say, I am reading again-and loving it. I have also made some new friends along the way!

Our library hosts a book club, which is open to anyone. Call 564-7116 for more information.