

Rusland Reading Group - Books for 2009-2010 Season

The group meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month (apart from August and December) at 08:00 p.m..

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
September 18th	Carol Driver, Rusland	Barnaby Rudge	Charles Dickens
<p>Set against the backdrop of the Gordon Riots of 1780, <i>Barnaby Rudge</i> is a story of mystery and suspense which begins with an unsolved double murder and goes on to involve conspiracy, blackmail, abduction and retribution. Through the course of the novel fathers and sons become opposed, apprentices plot against their masters and anti-Catholic mobs rampage through the streets. And, as London erupts into riot, Barnaby Rudge himself struggles to escape the curse of his own past. With its dramatic descriptions of public violence and private horror, its strange secrets and ghostly doublings, <i>Barnaby Rudge</i> is a powerful, disturbing blend of historical realism and Gothic melodrama.</p> <p>"It is one of Dickens's most neglected, but most rewarding, novels. In its sympathetic portrayal of the mad boy Barnaby, and in its evocation of a turbulent London, it transcends the usual boundaries of the historical novel and becomes a complete statement of human weakness and communal power." <i>Peter Ackroyd, The Guardian</i></p>			

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
October 15th	Liz Cringle, Dale Park	Home	Marilynne Robinson
<p>The book is a companion piece to <i>Gilead</i>, and whilst it is not absolutely necessary to have read the earlier book first, the two novels are inextricably linked and each benefits from reading the other. Indeed a knowledge of <i>Gilead</i> is somewhat assumed in <i>Home</i>. Both books occupy the same time frame and the central drama - the return of prodigal son Jack Boughton to the parental home - is identical. <i>Gilead</i> takes the form of a letter written by 76-year old preacher John Ames to his six-year old son. <i>Home</i> is a more conventional linear narrative, written from the perspective of the Boughton household, friends and neighbours of the Ames family. The plot, such as it is, is essentially a simple one. After a 20 year absence, the details of which are gradually revealed to us, Jack Boughton, the favourite but troubled son, comes home in search of redemption and to visit his dying father. His sister Glory has already moved back home after troubles in her own life, and it is through her eyes that the reunion and subsequent events take place.</p>			

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
November 19th	Jan Benefield, Dale Park	The Heart of the Matter	Graham Greene

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
January 21st	Jean Crabtree, Force Mills	The Black Robe	Wilkie Collins

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
February 18th	Carol McNeill	The Blind Assassin	Margaret Atwood

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
March 18th	Mandy Lane, Lilac Cott, Oxen Park	The Little Stranger	Sarah Waters

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
April 15th	Sally Pike Crosslands	Haweswater	Sarah Hall
<p>Haweswater, set in the 1930s, describes the calculated dispossession of a community of Cumbrian tenant hill-farmers, making way for a reservoir that will swallow their ancient rural valley in order to succour modern urban thirst. From the moment the man from Manchester arrives in his flash car down the barely travelled road, it is clear there is nothing to be done. Already, in some cool metropolitan boardroom, the man-made deluge has been rubber-stamped - it is cruel, inevitable, righteous, much like the Bible's archetypal flood.</p> <p>The rise of tragedy in the book echoes the incremental rise of water, more powerful than one can imagine. The seemingly indestructible valley community disintegrates in months, its fabric quickly and quietly rotting away as if already brutally submerged. This is the death of history: timelines rubbed out, the graveyard uprooted. A new mountain humps between its heather-coated sisters, its concrete face swarmed over by sickly hollow-bellied victims of economic depression. The army uses the emptying village as target practice.... (from The Guardian. More..)</p>			

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
May 20th	Helen Adams, Light Hall, Rusland	Three Cups of Tea	Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Renin
<p>"Here we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger, the second you become a friend, and the third you join our family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything.... even die" Haji Ali, Korphe Village Chief, Karakoram Mountains, Pakistan.</p> <p>"In 1993, after a terrifying and disasterous attempt to climb K2, a mountaineer called Greg Mortenson drifted, cold and dehydrated, into an impoverished Pakistan village in the Karakoram</p>			

Mountains. Moved by the inhabitants' kindness, he promised to return and build a school. 'Three Cups of Tea' is the story of that promise and its extraordinary outcome. Over the next decade, Mortenson built not just one but fifty-five schools in remote villages across the forbidding and breathtaking landscape of Pakistan and Afghanistan, just as the Taliban rose to power. His story is at once a riveting adventure and a testament to the power of the humanitarian spirit." (*from bookjacket*).

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
June 17th	John Walton, Crosslands Barn	Going Fishing	Negley Farson

Meeting Date	Where	Book	Author
July 15th	Fiona Baxter, Dane's Howe	Somewhere Towards the End	Diana Athill

Rusland Valley Reading Group: Current Suggested books:

Book	Author
A Farewell to Arms	Ernest Hemingway
Love and Summer / The Story of Lucy Gault	William Trevor
Brooklyn	Colm Toibin
England's Mistress - the Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton	Kate Williams
The Island	Victoria Hislop
44 Scotland Street	Alexander McCall-Smith
Suite Francais	Irene Nemirovsky
The Other Hand	Chris Cleave
Mountains of the Mind	Robert Macfarlane
Two Lives	Vikram Seth
The Lonely Sea and the Sky	Francis Chichester

Mood of Future Joys: Around the World by Bike - Alastair Humphries

Alastair Humphreys' round the world journey of 46,000 miles was an old-fashioned adventure: long, lonely, low-budget and spontaneous. Cycling across five continents and sailing over the oceans, his ride took four years to complete, on a tiny budget of hoarded student loans.

Moods of Future Joys is the story of the first remarkable stage of the expedition. Just two weeks into the ride the September 11th attacks changed everything. All Humphreys' plans went out the window and, instead of riding towards Australia, he suddenly found himself pedaling through the Middle East and Africa and on towards Cape Town. But his journey did not end there. In fact, this was only the beginning...

Moods of Future Joys recounts an epic journey that succeeded through Humphreys' trust in the kindness of strangers, at a time where the interactions of our global community are more confused and troubled than ever.

To the End of the Earth: The Race to Solve Polar Exploration's Greatest Mystery - Tom Avery

This is the gripping true story of how Briton Tom Avery led three men, one woman and sixteen dogs to the North Pole in just under thirty-seven days, in doing so breaking the world record and solving the greatest mystery of polar exploration. The electrifying true story of a race against time to solve the greatest mystery of polar exploration. Facing some of the most hostile terrain on the planet, how did Arctic pioneer Robert Peary travel 413km in just 37 days to reach the North Pole with only dogs and wooden sleds as his transportation? 100 years later, British explorer Tom Avery and his team set themselves against the elements to recreate Peary's journey, risking their lives to break the record and rewrite history.

Three Cups of Tea - Greg Mortenson and David Renin

'Here we drink three cups of tea to do business; the first you are a stranger, the second you become a friend, and the third, you join our family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything - even die' - Haji Ali, Korphe Village Chief, Karakoram mountains, Pakistan. In 1993, after a terrifying and disastrous attempt to climb K2, a mountaineer called Greg Mortenson drifted, cold and dehydrated, into an impoverished Pakistan village in the Karakoram Mountains. Moved by the inhabitants' kindness, he promised to return and build a school. "Three Cups of Tea" is the story of that promise and its extraordinary outcome. Over the next decade Mortenson built not just one but fifty-five schools - especially for girls - in remote villages across the forbidding and breathtaking landscape of Pakistan and Afghanistan, just as the Taliban rose to power. His story is at once a riveting adventure and a testament to the power of the humanitarian spirit.