

Vanity Fair (originally pub: 1848)

William Makepeace Thackeray (18/07/1811 – 24/12/1863)

Thackeray was a British Novelist and author. He is known for his satirical works, particularly Vanity Fair a panoramic portrait of English society. Thackeray began as a satirist and parodist, writing works that displayed a sneaking fondness for roguish upstarts such as Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair.

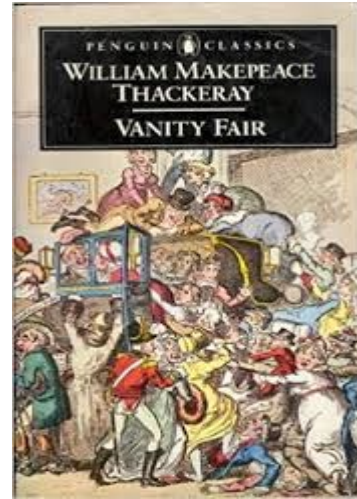
To place Vanity Fair at around the time of the Battle of Waterloo (1816) was to throw a pebble in the water and watch the ripples spread across the pool. It was sheer genius because it was the one historical fact where people from all sorts of background were brought together in Brussels. Those like Becky Sharp who was heard to cry 'Vive Napoleon' whilst others like Joseph (Jos) Sedley was right behind the Red, White and Blue Union flag, but only as a follower of the British Army not as an officer. Then there was Captain Dobbin, an old school friend of George, who only committed to a relationship when the person was out of reach!!

So how did the story begin? It is about two girls, Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp, both at the same school – Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies, on Chiswick Mall. Miss Sedley came from a relatively prosperous family whilst Miss Sharp had no family and was only at the Academy as a pupil/teacher of French. Becky was poor so her options in life, one would think, would be limited. However Becky was not only beautiful, but clever, charming, witty a brilliant mimic and a raconteur whilst Amelia was pretty wan, loyal, kind and very quiet when in company. Amelia was set to marry George Osbourne with whom she had grown up, a dissolute Lieutenant who depended upon his father to financially support him. A bit of a peacock, George was marrying Amelia because his father sought the match. Meanwhile Becky was sent as a governess to the two daughters of Sir Pitt Crawley. She made a match at Queens Crawley with Sir Pitt's second son Captain Rawdon Crawley 'a good natured rake' who was the apple of his aunt's eye. Miss Crawley was expected to will £70.000 to Rowden on her demise.

The story goes from Queens Crawley to Hampshire, to London, to the continent (Pumpnickel), to Brussels and back to London taking Amelia and Becky on many adventures, both of whom end up impoverished, one continually weeping whilst the other is constantly contriving to improve her position in society any way she can.

Which is which we ask ourselves??

Reviewer: Janet J



One of Thackeray's several illustrations for his novel, Vanity Fair. This one is of young Becky throwing a Dictionary out of a carriage window.

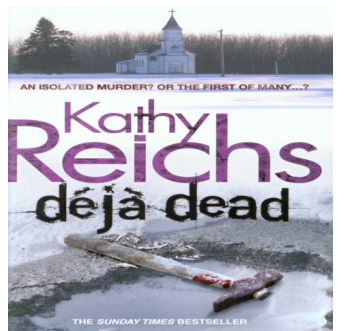
Reviews for Mobile Library Group Meeting September 2018

Note to Jackie. My son read one of my reviews on the website and said to me 'Aren't you putting spoilers in though mom?' since then I have been unsure as to whether to describe events in the book for this reason.

Can we have a chat about 'spoilers' in out next meeting? Marg x

Kathy Reichs – Deja Dead

A coroner in Quebec suspects that a body that has been found, is in fact one in a long line of victims of a serial killer and that the fact that a serial killer has been at work for a long time, is going unrecognised. She continues to investigate to establish this, much to the annoyance of the police department. The very gory murders continue and Tempe seems to become a target too. Her risk – taking pushes the investigations along but her best friend falls victim along the way. Opportunities are missed to catch the killer. There are a few red herrings along the way, but the outcomes are the right ones.



The plot was classic Kathy Reichs, very scientifically detailed, which I find very interesting, fast paced with lots of good location description, I always enjoy her books and looked forward to picking it up.

Detective Ryan is a very attractive character, weary but heroic, good-looking but not predatory, and better still, very often right! Temperance does seem to take unrealistic risks and push the boundaries of her remit for no particularly believable reasons, she makes breakthroughs but at great peril. It was as if it was unbelievable how Tempe risks her own life and why she keeps investigating when it is not her job. It did feel like interfering! Also this tale was over-long in the wrapping up. It was also inevitable that her friend Gabby would be killed.

Pace was good until about 2/3rds of the way through when the breakthroughs didn't just quite appear. It pretty much ended the way I expected. I anticipate a Ryan/Brennan duo in the next book.

Yes, I would recommend to a friend

Reviewer: Margaret H

J G Ballard - Empire of the Sun

It is 1941, eleven year old Jim is in Shanghai trying to consider everything normal even though many of his friends at the Cathedral School had left for the relative safety of Hong Kong or Singapore with their mothers whilst their fathers stayed in hotels along the Bund. Amherst Avenue was still Jim’s home which he shared with his mother, father, Vera his Amah, Yang the driver of the family Packard and nine Chinese servants. Jim would often take his bicycle and roam around the city and the environs seeing how the Chinese were treated by the expats as well as the Japanese. Things were normal in Amherst Ave but in the countryside the Japanese had total control. Jim’s playground was intensified by the ammunition boxes and the general detritus of rusting machine guns, discarded rifles and ruined trenches all from the 1937 invasion of the Japanese. Jim would go exploring carrying his balsa wood airplane and making the appropriate noises of a plane under attack.

The expats were following the war in Europe avidly, trying to live as normal as possible. After Pearl Harbour everything changed. Amherst Avenue was no longer safe so they moved to a hotel. Before long the cinemas were closed, Mr Maxted and Doctor Lockwood were gone and Jim was on his own after getting separated from his parents, ending up in a detention centre before going to Lunghua Camp. The place where place names like Regent Street, Piccadilly, Knightsbridge, and Petticoat Lane appeared at regular intervals along the stench incrustated pathways. ‘The years in Lunghi had not given Jim a high opinion of the British’. Nostalgia was not an emotion that got people moving. Although Jim escaped the camp, in the end, strangely, it was where Dr Ransome found him to take him home. Jim felt safe at Lunghi Camp.

There was no plot. It is a story of observation and narrative. It is how a child thrown into a place of turmoil form a typical home of peace and protection, survives. The war-torn country takes its toll on the young boy. Jim went form the safety of his civilised and privileged up-bringing to just trying to keep alive as best he could. Jim was always hungry, always thirsty, having to do whatever it took to see the death and depravation without there being any self-pity or questioning of the status quo.

There were lots of people in the story nut not that many characters. You didn’t really get to know them. Mrs Vincent was an independent person who did not accept her situation in Lungi, made no comment about her child or husband and hated Jim’s intrusion into her room and her life. It was as though everything went around Mrs Vincent, the War was not taking place. All very composed.

Yes all the characters seemed plausible each character played out differently. There was no cause celebre. Everyone doing what had to be done.

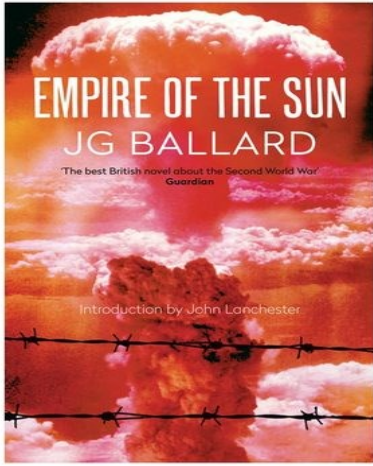
Reviewer: Janet J

J G Ballard – Empire of the Sun

The main character was Jim, a small British boy who lived with wealthy ex-pat parents in Shanghai. He witnessed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, which was the beginning of the 2nd World War. During the confusion following the attack, Jim was separated from his parents and didn’t see them again until the end of the war.

Initially I was not keen to read a book about the 2nd W.W. and did not have to force myself to read it. However having read the introduction(by John Lancaster) and realised that Ballard was born and lived in Shanghai for the first 16 years of his life, I became more interested, and found it difficult to put down. My favourite character was Jim – he was privileged, cheeky, inquisitive, kind and caring and the main character. The actions of the characters very plausible – not just Jim but Mr. Maxted and the doctor were also real. I disliked reading the horrors and cruelty of war but liked the courage and optimism of some of the characters. The book ended the way I’d hoped – being re-untied with his parents but they had become estranged by their experiences – parents aged and worn and Jim now a teenager who had experienced things that no child should have to deal with. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret S



Elizabeth Chadwick – The Summer Queen

This was an historical novel about Queen Eleanor (Alienor) of Aquitaine (1124 – 1204).

Alienor was thirteen and already the head of state of Aquitaine when she married King

Louis VII, after the death of her father in 1137. The Duchy of Aquitaine was politically

and financially a very wealthy are of France was an acquisition sought after by Brittany,

Anjou & Maine, Blois, King Louis of France, Henry II OF England and many more. The

movement of these tracts of land was settled by war or by marriage and often the

coupling of these powers was agreed by betrayal of babies and young children so that

the line could be secured and an alliance between the parties would result in peace. At

the start of Alienor’s marriage to Louis it seemed exciting for the two young people,

almost impish, but as the years passed, Alienor found it difficult to have live babies and

impossible to have a boy child then the marriage started to flounder. As the second son,

Louis was intended for the Church of Rome. However when his brother died he had to

step-up as king. As the years passed Louis became more and more fixated on his religion

olus the continuing thought that Alienor was plotting against him and his government.

Louis and Alienor did have two live births, both girls. They were brought up by their

father as part of the marriage settlement, never to see their mother again. There are

various twists and turns including a boisterous sister (Petronella) who went off and

married the much older Raoul de Vermandois, a mother-in-law from hell, the Church of

Rome in all its political finery plotting against Alienor courtesans who could not be

trusted (including Gisela who spied on her mistress for Thierry de Galeran), the

accusation of adultery by Alienor with her uncle, Raymond, the ruler of Antioch. Just

because you are paranoid doesn’t mean that they are not out to get you????

I would describe the plot as a 12th century Eastenders. I was very committed to the book

and it certainly pulled me into the whole of the political machinations of the middle

ages. It was good having the maps at the beginning of the book because the continuing

relationship between England and France was more understandable. The youth of Louis

and Alienor had a dramatic effect on how everything about the couple impacted the

progresses, the weddings, the births, the deaths, ‘the flux’ plus the celebrity of their

position. You could experience first-hand the changes in their personalities from open

trusting to secretive and manipulative. Just think of Shakespeare’s Othello.

My favourite character: Henry II because he was a child of his time.

Reviewer: Janet J

Elizabeth Chadwick – The Summer Queen

This is the fictionalized story Eleanor of Aquitaine up until she married Henry II of England. Like most people I am very well acquainted with the story of this indomitable woman. I loved reading this book and enjoyed the authors take on events and representation of them. The account of the Crusade was very realistic and gave me a fine appreciation of just how awful it must have been for the common man. Eleanor's life of being watched every second she has lived must have been very wearing. I think Geoffrey de Rancon and Petronella deserve a mention here. He for his quiet heroism and care for Eleanor and she for having her life with a passion that drove her crazy.



Did the actions of the characters seem plausible? Absolutely, the cold calculations of politics and the chess like game of playing with people's lives is quite chillingly plausible. Everyone had their own agenda and life could change radically for anyone in a heartbeat. I liked the flow, and her descriptions of the land and the weather are beautiful, particularly about Fountevraud. I also loved the words she gave to Rancon 'if I could buy back a spring morning from my young manhood and take you there forever, I would do so'. The pace of the book, I always looked forward to picking up again. I would recommend for a summer read.

Reviewer: Margaret H

This is about young girls lives as a pawn of powerful men.

The plot was very good, left you feeling that surly not much else can go wrong. Very much what we do today is history tomorrow. A very good page turner. The story moves on to the next time in history.

Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Eric S

Elizabeth Chadwick – The Summer Queen

The main character is Eleanor of Aquitaine, known as Alienor. The story starts in the palace of Poitiers, France in 1137 and concludes in Barfleur in December 1154. Other characters are: Louis of France, her first husband (arranged marriage), her younger sister Petronella and Henry, who was to become King of England. The marriage to Henry was also a n arrange marriage but also became a happy and loving relationship (she was a child when she was first obliged to marry). Alienor's main functions in life were to look beautiful and produce sons. She of course was blamed for this 'failure'. She and Henry did produce sons.

I didn't raise, initially, that this book was based on fact and that the characters were real. The author is continuing her research to uncover more details of Alienor's life. It is not a book I would have chosen bit I did become fascinated by it. My favourite character? Alienor because she was very brave, often having to flee to avoid being murdered, she carried out her duty completely. I wouldn't chose a book on royalty (I think it should be abolished) I disliked the treatment of women whose main role in life was to produce heirs. The book in places was slow, very ceremonial. At other times quite fast – the occasion when Alienor was forced to flee. Yes it did end the way I expected. I was glad she found happiness. I wasn't really sure how the book would end.

Would you recommend to a friend? Not unless it was someone who was very interested in history.

Reviewer: Margaret S

J G Ballard – Empire of the Sun

This was an easy read but could help thinking some of the story was in the wrong time line.

This story makes you think about this time in history without being to morbid.

Is the end satisfying? Having left the camp why did he go back? Unless he felt safer behind bars.

Reviewer: Eric S

J G Ballard – Empire of the Sun

An account of life in an interment camp in Japanese—occupied Shanghai in the 2nd World War . Based on the authors won childhood experiences, this novel explores what took place in reality and his adolescent thoughts and imaging's of the adult world of powerless witnesses and their oppressors.

I was pulled in ruthlessly, by the relentlessly unemotional way of describing the experiences the author encountered over a period of 3 years, as a young adolescent, outside of any parental control. My favourite character was probably Ransome, the doctor, who carried out his duties and strove to hold on to his beliefs and morals. Their actions were plausible because in this situation survival would be paramount, and the rules would change . This was a hard read, but an insight into a terrible time and place In history by someone who lived through it. It was steady, relentless, slow never ending...

The book ended the way I expected, although it could have easily ended in other ways if the author hadn't survived!

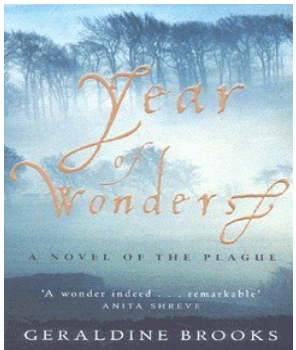
Yes I would recommend to a friend — Reviewer Su R

Geraldine Brooks – Year of Wonders

Lady meets nice young man who is a tailor by trade, he came to the village from London and with him he has brought the plague. This is a good read with lots of horror. I did dislike the ending, after a good read the ending was silly.

The book draws you like a fishing line. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Eric S



Geraldine Brooks – Year of Wonders

1666 the Great Plague reaches Byam, Derbyshire. The charismatic priest MR. Mompellion has persuaded the villagers to quarantine the village till the plague runs its course. His servant, Anna, tells the story. Of her closures with his wife Elinor, hoe the plague was brought to the village by a travelling tailor from London by George Viccors, who on his deathbed rasped 'Burn it all! For the love of God burn it!' eventually, with half the population dead, his advice is heeded and clothing, goods and chattels are burned and the plague is defeated. I was pulled in from the first page as the writing was seamless.

Anna steals the show, intelligent, humble, caring, thirsty for knowledge and fearless. It feels like a well-researched book as the beliefs at the time are reflected in the actions of the characters and are believable. I loved the book as it took me back in time to a different era and I felt transported to 1666! I disliked the epilogue, it felt forced and I found it hard to accept as a credible ending. Time passed without me noticing.

Did the book end the way I expected – yes apart from the strange epilogue. Yes, I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Su R

Geraldine Brooks – Year of Wonders

In the autumn 1664 Anna Frith lost her husband down a lead mine in the Derbyshire Peak District. She now lived with her two sons, Jamie and Tom, on a small-holding which supported about twenty sheep. It was the following Spring 1665 when George Viccars, a journeyman tailor, knocked on Anna’s door asking to rent a room after being recommended to Anna by the Reverend Mompellion and his wife Elinor.

Mr Viccars worked for the tailor Mr Hadfield and it was he who ordered a box of cloth from London, bringing in the dreaded PLAGUE. Mr Viccars worked the material making Anna a beautiful green dress. Shortly after that Mr Viccars became ill, showing the dreaded black and red roses on his skin. Before he died he told Anna to burn all the material, including the dress. However customers of Mr Viccars came and took the material which they considered was due to them, all except Anna who did burn the dress and any remnants. Her action did not protect her family because both babies were soon dead and buried.

The disease spread and it was Monpellion who convinced the village to blockade itself into its boundaries, with the Duke of Devonshire promising to supply the village with food, until the terrible disease had played out. Terrible things happened in the village, as people who were considered different were ousted and injured, often leading to death e.g. the Puritans, the Gowdies (Anys and Mem) even Anna’s father. Throughout all of this Monpellion, his wife Elinor and Anna grew closer.

The novel was based on the Eyam plague village in Derbyshire.

The historical novel showed how close the people were to witchcraft, the acceptance of idolatry, the problems with the civil war and the sheer desperation in keeping body and soul together in an environment where the gathering of lead, the tending of sheep and even the lighting of fires for cooking and keeping warm, was a daily if not hourly fight. Food production was not described but one can imagine how much time had to be spent in the garden to grow and also harvest the food over the summer months in readiness for the harsh winter.

My favourite character was: the Cannon of Medicine, although not a character, played a big part in the novel for preparing remedies and enhancing the knowledge about herbs which the Gowdies used to help the villagers. Anna took on their role – needs must.

Reviewer: Janet J

David Ebershoff - The 19th Wife

The novel has parallel storylines. The first is about a Mormon family in Mesadale Utah, where a wife allegedly kills her husband. Her son, Jordan and his dog Electra, attempt to get the mother released. Total fiction. The second story is factually correct and tells of the beginning of the Mormon Church culminating in high the profile divorce of Elizabeth Young and Brigham Young in 1874. The more important factual story is about Elizabeth Churchill who, in 1834 had a son called Gilbert and they both travelled to St. Louis. Travelling on the Mississippi Elizabeth stepped off the boat and went to a meeting and heard Joseph Smith of the Latter Day Saints preach. At that place she also meet Brigham Young and Weber Kimball all of whom were on their way to Kirtland, six hundred miles from St. Louis. With help and assistant Elizabeth and Gilbert settled in Kirtland, Elizabeth met nad married Chauncey Webb a recent convert and a blacksmith. Eventually the family ended up at Nauvoo in 1840/1 fleeing from Haun’s Hill where several members of the church had been massacred. Three years later the Latter Day Saints were on the move again to Utah escaping yet another killing, this time led by Brigham Young. Elizabeth and Chauncey had a daughter Ann Eliza who wrote The 19th Wife and became the nineteenth wife of Brigham Young.

The murdered husband of Becky Lyn Scott, the 19th wife, was based on modern day Mesadale (Utah) where many of the Firsts live. It is this fictional which presented fertile ground for the review of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) and the effect that modern day plural marriage has on the children as well as the wives. The intricacy of marriage is never easy to unravel but when you have fifty wives it becomes even more complicated especially for children. There is no plot in the 19th Wife as it was based on fact.

I really like Queenie, Jordan’s step-sister who was truly loved by her husband Hiram Alton and because he would not take another wife he had to lose his faith as well as his home. I also thought that Gilbert Webb, Ann Eliza’s step-brother was really interesting. He took three wives and had eighteen children. In the end they left him because he didn’t have enough love to go round. Gilbert felt that love was infinite and to chop this love into eighteen pieces meant that each person got so little that it wasn’t worth having.

Jordan’s mother, BeckyLyn, reacted to the charge of murder in a way it is hard to reconcile in our modern day society where each person has certain rights and responsibilities. BeckyLyn was subsumed by the organisation. Was that because of her beliefs? Was it because she was terrified?

Reviewer: Janet J

David Ebershoff - The 19th Wife

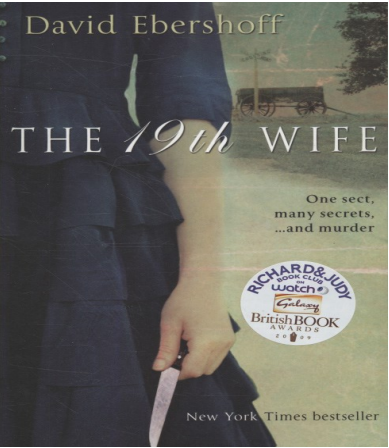
The story of the 19th wife of Brigham Young, 2nd prophet of the Mormon Church. Told by herself, Ann Eliza Young. Also a story alongside, of Jordan, son of a polygamous Mormon sect the ‘First’, and his mother who is accused, falsely of murdering her husband. I was pulled in by curiosity about polygamy and religion.

Jordan was interesting and likable and his story made the drier reading of Ann Eliza’s story easier. The action of the character seemed plausible: yes I am sure they are pretty true to what happened and happening now. I liked the historical aspect and the insights into the Moron church and it’s ideas. Also liked the parts about the modern day sects. The book is slow but compelling. The book ended how I expected- no real conclusions about Ann Eliza’s end. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Su R

David Ebershoff - The 19th Wife

This is the story of Mormonism, its leaders, followers and victims. The 19th wife Ann Eliza is the wife of Bingham Young who eventually breaks free of the sect, exposes them nationally and contributes massively to the abandonment and out lawing of ‘pluralism’ i.e. as many wives as you like! A modern day story is told in parallel of a ‘wife’ accused of murdering her much married husband and the story of her son Jordan who sets about proving her innocence and freeing her from jail. But it is really about the persuasion and coercion of the men and woman of the sect into not only having multiple bed partners but buying into the belief that in practising this edict from the elders, there are guaranteeing themselves a place in heaven. The depths of hypocrisy are unbelievable, what a con artist Joseph Smith was and then his successor Bingham Young.



Both of these side by side stories are very good. You feel deeply the exquisite torture of Elizabeth Webb, who after many years of a loving, faithful marriage is forced to accept another women into her household as a second wife, forced to give her approval and forced to witness her husband taking this women to bed and listening to it. Her husband Chauncey soon gets over the initial résistance to taking extra wives and is soon making a career of it. Ann Eliza, Elizabeth’s daughter is finally forced into ‘marrying’ Bingham Young he sets a trap for her by ruining her brother and this is the only way out of the mess.

Ann Eliza is of course a heroine, her travails are terrible but she maintains her integrity which eventually wins out. Jordan though was my favourite character, resourceful and brave, his inside knowledge of the Mormons is pivotal in freeing his mother. It is the actions and beliefs of the Morons that are totally implausible even though they are a matter of record. Why they believed that these venal practices were the way to heaven is beyond me, even though perhaps heaven was a real concept in the 1800’s, it certainly wasn’t in the 1900’s! I did not find a single plausible reason to back it up in the book. I found the book absolutely fascinating but I hated the hypocrisy, blackmail, bullying and threatening of the Mormon people, just to continue to be able to have sex with whomever you pleased. This is the central issue of the Mormon faith and despite his many achievements this is what the world really remembers about Bingham Young.

The pace of the twin tales is good and steady and it doesn’t flip form one to the other in a way that makes the reading of them choppy and distracting. I didn’t expect the ending at all, but it seems as though Hiram Alton was the only man who loved his wife enough to eschew extra wives and escape the sect, even though Becky Lyn was set up to take the rap in her husband’s murder.

Would I recommend d to a friend? I would, it is a fascinating slash horrible read, but very interesting and unfortunate the story of the way all those people were recruited in the 1860’s to come to Salt Lake and walked all the way there from New York across deserts and mountains with their possessions in hand carts, beggars belief.

Reviewer: Margaret H

David Ebershoff - The 19th Wife

The leader of the church who thought it was in order to wreck so many lives in the name of religion.

I didn’t understand how so many girls fell into the trap of marriage surly someone must have been there to help.

I think the 19th Wife was strong to say no more, but she should have left it to the courts or government, not drag her child around the country, what good did that do him.

Reviewer: Eric S

Geraldine Brooks – Year of Wonders

It is 1666 and the plague comes to Eyan in Derbyshire. The central character and narrator is Anna, mother to two small boys and already a widow at 18. Through her we witness the devastation caused by the plague, the loss of her boys and her friends Elinor and Amy and neighbours. Through the year of the plague Anna is tested at many things and her courage and fortitude is both matter of fact and implicit in everything she does to help fellow villagers. When her beloved friend Elinor dies, she does everything she can to care for her rector husband, but he is too lost in grief and has lost his faith. She is a competent mid wife by now through necessity and finally delivers the child of the squires’ wife, who has had an affair and is forced to run from the threat of the squire, and so runs to Liverpool. She herself has taken the rector for a lover but her life and the baby are now in great danger. Ultimately she is forced to flee the country, she and the child survive a terrible voyage and she finally chooses to stay in Oran in Algiers. Here she gives birth to the rectors’ child, another girl and remains as a student and assistant of a famous doctor.

At first I wasn’t sure if I was going to keep reading as it is a difficult subject matter, but very quickly I absolutely loved it and didn’t want to put down. The characters are so vivid and the events are both fantastic and plausible at the same time. The writing is just beautiful and evocative. Anna is obviously highly intelligent and her desire to learn is satisfied thorough studying medicine, which is her vocation.

Anna is my favourite character. She is brave and courageous in coping with the events that befall her. She still tries to help everyone around her, including Merry Wickford, for whom she mines a lode of lead and nearly dies. All human nature was here, the good and the bad and all the actions and reactions. They were plausible because the plague was driving the characters to act as they did. However, the personal natures of the characters are the fascinating ingredient. I love the way the author has imagined this uplifting tale when it is based upon such tragic events. People suffer dreadfully, but there is always optimism in the background. I think it is that relatively rare beast, a really good story. The pace of the book is a big part of its charm as it describes events in detail but manages to maintain momentum so you always want to know what happens. The ending was a triumph. She had lived through all the terrible difficulties and her new life fulfilled all her hopes and satisfied all her wants. She lives in Algiers, studies under a great teacher of medicine and although she has lost her boys, she has two little girls now to live with and bring up.

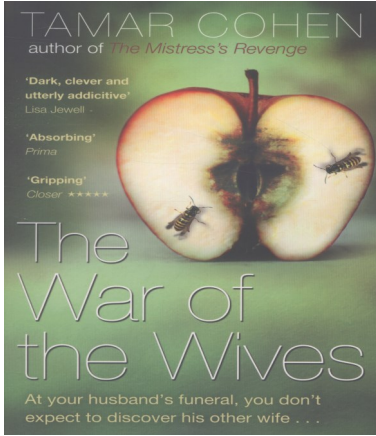
Yes I would recommend to a friend — Reviewer: Margaret H

Tamar Cohen - The War of the Wives

The main characters were: Salina Bushfield and Lottie Bushfield. The two women met at the funeral of their husband, neither of them being aware that they were married to the same man. Salina was the elder and first wife. The book didn't appeal to me at all, I thought it sounded daft. However I did start reading it and couldn't stop – even though it didn't sound plausible.

I was surprised at the ending, never thinking that Felix was responsible for the house smashing or that he'd known about his father's other family for many years. It was an unusual read, I think I'm glad that I stuck with it, but wouldn't say to anyone 'you must read this' so no I wouldn't recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret S



Two wives, one husband, two families unknown to each other until the funeral of the husband, where the younger wife realises and meets the original wife, and they both see that he was a bigamist! The story there – 'the war' – until it resolves and they find they have a lot to share with each other. The book pulled me in as it was the war that needed and ending – so the plot was the getting there.

The younger son and daughter were the most likeable. The actions of the characters not often plausible, but then the main characters had to be outrageously different for the plot to work. I liked the theme – I'm sure there are lots of bigamists out there with 2 families kept in the dark – good to see it explored. Bit too slow for me as I was constantly wanting to slap the wives and the eldest son who was awful!!

Did the book end the way I expected – it was that or murder! Would I recommend to a friend, yes, possibly, if the right friend!!

Reviewer: Su R

What a rollercoaster of a book! Things just kept happening and all written in the realms of possibility!

A man dies then it all kicks off! He has been living a double life, but by the end of the book we understand why. But the collateral damage on his wife and his bigamous second wife and their respective families is catastrophic. When the two families have to 'get along' together it only deepens the chaos. Wife Selina sees her life with her husband, and the person she has turned into as a result, with different eyes and questions everything she believed in. Lottie '2nd wife' can only grieve and weep. The two relationships are very different. The children of the marriages react in different ways of course. The youngest son Josh has the most humane reaction and tries to keep the peace, but the darkest result is between Lottie's daughter and Selina's son '**spoiler coming!**' This was the final gasp out loud twist in the whole convoluted tale that had me greatly admiring that after a fast paced , inventive and eventful story, the author could still pull off a fantastic and unexpected ending!

I thought Josh was the only one really who acted unselfishly through this. Oddly enough the actions and reactions of the characters did seem plausible and realistic even though it is a fantastic cascade of events. I liked that along with the dynamic story that unfolds, the author writes with keen insight about how wives feel about everything. Brilliant pace, even though the tragic events. I was still surprised at the ending even when I was expecting a shocking discovery. Yes I would recommend to a friend.

Reviewer: Margaret H

Tamar Cohen - The War of the Wives – CD format

Selina Bushfield is a prim and superficial woman in her early fifties with three children and has been married to Simon. She seems perfect and has an affluent lifestyle.

Lottie Bushfield is an aspiring Artist in her late thirties who is also married to Simon for seventeen years and lives in an unconventional and happy life with her husband and daughter. Simon split his time with both wives in London and Dubai. Simon concealed his deceit by having long stretches away from home and family built into his busy work schedule.

While Selina and Simon lived in suburban London, Lottie and Simon for much of their marriage lived in Dubai. This double life collapsed suddenly when, Simon disappeared and his body was found floating in the Thames. Selina initially responds with disbelief, since as far as she knows he was supposed to be in Dubai

Lottie's discovery of Simon's death comes second hand when Simon's colleagues call to offer their condolences. It's a difficult time for both women as they both struggle with Simon's death and his distrust. The main question was did Simon commit suicide or was he murdered? Was he involved in any criminal activities? Unfortunately as both women grieved they also realised that in addition to everything else they are linked financially. Simon has managed to mortgage Selina's house to pay for Lottie's house. In the meantime Lottie has discovered that she is pregnant and the children of both families are grieving in their separate ways.

I most certainly did not have to force myself to listen in contrast it was most compelling, although in my opinion too much time was spent examining the plot and not enough time building the characters. But I certainly enjoyed the views of both women. My favourite character was Lottie.

Did the actions of the characters seem plausible? Most plausible, because both women did love Simon in their different ways he was portrayed as loving father and good husband who loved both family under the circumstances. The pace was racy it was compulsive listening and it kept you guessing with the various twists and turns. The end was totally unexpected the situation with the eldest son who was responsible for his dad's demise was horrific. However, I particularly liked how both wives came to some understanding. Although my listening was audible I have recommended the book to several friends.

Reviewer: Melanie O