

### **Future reads (September-October)**

The next read is *The Slap* by Christos Tsiolkas, the reviewers are saying:

“Brilliant, beautiful, shockingly lucid and real, this is a novel as big as life built from small, secret, closely observed beats of the human heart. A cool, calm, irresistible masterpiece.” Chris Cleave  
“Nothing short of a tour de force. Tsiolkas puts a microscope to family life and presents us with a vision both of unflinching honesty and great tenderness. Here is a novel of immense power and scope, reminiscent of Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* and Don De Lillo's *Underworld*.” Colm Toibin

“Once in a while a novel comes along that reminds me why I love to read: *The Slap* is such a book... Honestly, one of the three or four truly great novels of the new millennium.” John Boyne

### **Currently reading (August-September)**

*Crimson Rooms* by Katherine McMahon is our current read, the book's description is:

“Evelyn is a young woman who has defied convention to become one of the country's pioneer female lawyers. Living at home with her mother, aunt, and grandmother, Evelyn is still haunted by the death of her younger brother James in the First World War. Therefore when the doorbell rings late one night and a woman appears, claiming to have mothered James's child, her world is turned upside down. Evelyn distrusts Meredith at first, but also finds that this new arrival challenges her work-obsessed lifestyle. So far her legal career has not set the world alight. But then two cases arise that make Evelyn realise perhaps she can make a difference. The first concerns a woman called Leah Marchant whose children have been taken away from her simply because she is poor. The second, Stephen Wheeler - a former acquaintance of Daniel Breen, her boss - has been charged with murdering his own wife. It is clear to Breen and Evelyn that Wheeler is innocent but he won't talk. After being humiliated in court, Evelyn is approached by a dashing lawyer called Nicholas Thorne. She is needed by his privileged background and old-fashioned attitudes, but despite being engaged, he cannot seem to resist sparring with this feisty young female. In the meantime, Meredith makes an earth-shattering accusation about James. With the Wheeler case coming to a head, and her heart in limbo, Evelyn takes matters into her own hands.”

### **Books we have just completed (July-August)**

Over the summer we read two books, *Her Fearful Symmetry* by Audrey Niffenegger and *Plain Simple* by Jodi Picoult.

There were varied and interesting reactions to both books, I think that the groups' favourite was probably *Her Fearful Symmetry*, but it was a hard one to call. The problem with the Jodi Picoult novel is that there exists, within the book group, some preconceived judgement about Picoult's writing that acted to taint the read before the first page. Picoult is such a regular publisher of books that worry can be held that the enjoyment is lost from her work and that she *churns them out*. I think this can act to distance the reader from the book. However the book was still extremely fascinating in terms of its insight into the Amish community, its ways and beliefs. The level of research that must have gone into this work is astounding and Picoult commits that high level of dedication to all her work in my experience. I found myself getting incredibly involved not only with the characters but also with

the Amish community, I felt so convinced and included. The main protagonist, a young Amish girl accused of murdering her new born infant, I found to be intoxicating and the changes and challenges mixing with the *Englisher* presents to her are astounding. This book caused me to consider the nature of religion, justice and forgiveness, which to me means it was a very good read!

We found *Her Fearful Symmetry* very hard to put down; once we got started with these unusual characters we were all pretty much addicted. The eccentricities of the story line were made more palatable by the creation to truly unique and complex characters. We did find slight frustration in the extremities of the plot and naivety of the characters, but we were absorbed none the less. The young twins whose lives were so highly staked around each other and were so insular and somewhat perplexing, Niffenegger truly does create their own world for them and I felt we were helpless onlookers. We all agreed that we wouldn't choose a ghost story but it gives us an interesting mix. The book has also inspired us to take a trip to Highgate Cemetery and see the historical graves that are so integral to the story and lives of the characters.

For more information on the book group please visit [www.c-creation.co.uk/book-club](http://www.c-creation.co.uk/book-club)

By Clarrie Beech