

Reed Rainier Chapter Reading Group Calendar
October 2011 – January 2012

Reading group meetings start at 7:30 p.m. and generally end around 9:30 p.m. New participants are welcome. If you plan to attend, please e-mail or call the hosts at least two days before the meeting to let them know you expect to attend and to confirm the location. Locations sometimes change after the calendar has been sent out. Contact Peter Greenfield '67 with questions or suggestions (petergreenfield@msn.com; 206/322-2640).

Wednesday, October 19th

“Tokyo Fiancée,” by Amélie Nothomb
Home of Judy Blinder '80 and Billy Kreuter
716 N 84th Street, Seattle 98103
judyblinder@yahoo.com
(206) 784-0849

A (typically) short and well-received recent work by Belgian novelist Amélie Nothomb, drawing on her experience as a young woman in Japan. Nothomb won the Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie Française in 1999 for a related work, “Fear and Trembling.” “Fear and Trembling” told a tale (with insight and humor) based on Nothomb’s experience working in a large Japanese firm. (The excellent film adaptation of “Fear and Trembling” is available on DVD from the Seattle Public Library and from Netflix.) “Tokyo Fiancée” turns to our heroine’s life outside the office. Here is a link to the NYT review of “Tokyo Fiancée”:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/books/review/Fay-t.html>

Wednesday, November 16th

“Cleopatra: A Life,” by Stacy Schiff
Home of Debbie Prince '71
4211 3rd Avenue NW, Seattle 98107
(206) 782-5827
seareddie@comcast.net

From the NYT review by Michiko Kakutani:

“In ‘Cleopatra: A Life,’ Ms. Schiff strips away the accretions of myth that have built up around the Egyptian queen and plucks off the imaginative embroiderings of Shakespeare, Shaw and Elizabeth Taylor. In doing so, she gives us a cinematic portrait of a historical figure far more complex and compelling than any fictional creation, and a wide, panning, panoramic picture of her world.”

Wednesday, January 18, 2012

“Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet,” by Jamie Ford

Location to be announced

From Nancy Pearl’s 2009 review for KUOW:

“In 1986, at age 56, Chinese–American Henry Lee watches as modernization comes to the derelict and long abandoned Panama Hotel, long the gateway to Japantown in Seattle. As a new owner prepares to remodel the building, she discovers in the basement the belongings of 37 Japanese–American families, left behind when they were sent to spend the World War II years in the now–infamous internment camps. This discovery evokes in Henry memories of his own experiences of the war years, and especially of his first love, Japanese American Keiko Okabe, a fellow student at the private school he attended, whom he never saw again after she and her family were sent to the camps. What Ford does so nicely in ‘Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet,’ his first novel, is give us a picture of the war years from the point of view of a Chinese–American boy, a young man whose non–English speaking father tries to deal with the strong and frightening anti–Japanese sentiment by making his son wear a button that says ‘I am Chinese,’ in the mostly futile hope that Henry can thereby escape the prevalent racism. Although I’ve read many novels that touched upon the discrimination against Japanese–Americans during WWII, Ford’s book presents a point of view that I’d never encountered before. Ford does a fine job transitioning the reader between present and past; those sections set in the present day explore Henry’s relationship with his own son, as well as his attempts to finally locate Keiko and put the past to rest. Ultimately, this is a book about memory and regret. It reminds us that the great events of history take place not only on the world stage, but also reverberate throughout the lives of individuals, even the young and innocent.”