

Happy 10th Anniversary Cambridge READS Carole Feeney Withrow, Cambridge READS Program Coordinator

Cambridge READS, the Library's citywide book club, strives to promote the love of reading and increase connections within the Cambridge community. Throughout the year, the Cambridge READS Advisory Board looks for titles with broad appeal in both fiction and nonfiction genres. We announce the final pick in June and work to create companion programming throughout the summer and fall, culminating in an event with the author.

For our 10th Anniversary the Cambridge READS Advisory Board has selected a work of fiction, [*Three Weeks in December*](#), by Cambridge author Audrey Schulman:

Jeremy is a young engineer who leaves Maine to oversee the construction of a railroad in British East Africa. Jeremy is hiding a secret. Max is a young ethnobotanist who leaves Maine to work in Rwanda for a pharmaceutical company. Max has Asperger's Syndrome. Jeremy's work begins in 1899; Max's journey begins in the year 2000.

"Told in alternating perspectives that interweave the two characters and their fates, this novel deftly confronts the struggle between progress and preservation, idiosyncrasy and acceptance and ...explores some of the crucial social and cultural challenges that over the years have come to shape our world." Europa Editions

If you're looking for even more great summer reads, here is a list of tried and true winners, all past Cambridge READS selections, available at your local library.

[*Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother*](#) by James McBride

The author's memoir of his upbringing by his mother, an abused daughter of a Polish Orthodox rabbi who ran from Virginia to Harlem, married a black man and founded a Baptist Church. Announcing that, "God is the color of water" but never admitting to being white, she faced hardship and adversity throughout her life, including being widowed twice. However, she managed to raise 12 children who all graduated from college. The narrative is told in two voices: McBride's and his mother's.

[*The Namesake*](#) by Jhumpa Lahiri

A story of assimilation in a new country, and a boy's growing up with a mother who will always miss her native country. Ashoke and Ashima have moved from Calcutta to Cambridge. Both are challenged by US customs, language and food. Ashoke is more amenable to change as he begins his new job as an engineer; his wife misses home. They name their son Gogol, to honor a Russian writer, and Gogol's life is difficult as he struggles as a first generation American marked with an old generation name. The *New York Times* has praised Lahiri as "a writer of uncommon elegance and poise."

[*The Kite Runner*](#) by Khaled Hosseini

This is the first Afghan story to be written in English. It is a coming of age story of two boys, one the son of a wealthy man and his friend the son of the man's servant. Their friendship is suddenly and cruelly changed and although one eventually moves to America, feelings of guilt move him to visit home and right a wrong in the menacing world of the Taliban.

[*Mountains Beyond Mountains*](#) by Tracy Kidder

Pulitzer Prize writer Kidder examines the inspirational work of Dr. Paul Farmer who believes that, “the only real nation is humanity”. Farmer, who is the founder of Partners in Health, lived with his free spirited parents in a bus and on a boat. While in medical school at Harvard, he discovered his calling: bringing modern medicine to the poorest of the poor. In *Mountains Beyond Mountains* Kidder tells how one man has made an incredible difference in Haiti.

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

Mortenson, after failing to climb K2, was rescued by members of a local village. While in their care, he noticed the children taking themselves to a “school” which was only a clearing where they would do lessons drawing with sticks in the dirt. Mortenson vowed to build a school as a thank you. This is his uplifting story of raising money, traveling back and forth to Pakistan, and facing the obstacles of weather, rough terrain, red tape and threats to his life as he fulfilled his promise.

How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents by Julia Alvarez

The funny and heartwarming tale of a family of four girls uprooted from the Dominican Republic to a new life in New York City in the 60s. This animated story of assimilation is beautifully told by Julia Alvarez who was born in New York, but spent the first 10 years of her life in the Dominican Republic.

Colored People: A Memoir by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

A coming of age memoir of Gates’ youth in the small paper mill town of Piedmont, West Virginia, during the pre-civil rights era of the 50s and 60s. Richard Eder of the *L.A Times* writes, "Affecting, beautifully written and morally complex...The heart of the memoir is Gates' portrait of his family, and its placement in a black society whose strength, richness and self-confidence thrived in the darkness of segregation."

Cod by Mark Kurlansky

This biography of “the fish that changed the world” explores the importance cod fishing had in settling North America and the upsetting result of overfishing a once plentiful staple. Author Mark Kurlansky knows his material; before becoming a foreign correspondent he was a commercial fisherman and a dock worker.

WAR by Sebastian Junger

Sebastian Junger was with a platoon of soldiers for fifteen months at a remote outpost in Afghanistan. His story gives gritty details of combat life and the horror of killing, and examines the soldiers’ fear of death and love of their fellow soldiers. Junger discusses military history, the psychology of combat, and problems faced by troops as they face assimilation back to civilian life. The book was the basis for the Academy Award nominated film *Restrepo* by Junger and the late Tim Hetherington.