

The Pleasure of Rereading

Coordinator: Gloria Plesent:

We have all read novels that were so moving or exhilarating or mysterious that as we read the last line and closed the book we immediately felt a sense of loss. There can be many rewards and surprises while rereading familiar works. In this study group, participants appreciate reading or rereading the texts described in the syllabus. Together we enjoy the pleasure of re-reading and discover the freshness and newness of these books.

Gloria Plesent has a masters degree in comparative literature from Columbia University and believes that literature helps us keep the long view and reminds us of what's really at stake in life.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Democracy by Henry Adams

The American by Henry James

A Hazard of New Fortunes by W.D. Howells

The New Men by C.P. Snow

Transit of Venus by Shirley Hazzard

Participants may purchase any edition of these books.

Working Syllabus

Weeks 1 and 2 Democracy

An ironic, informed, witty sermon on American politics by an insider.

Weeks 3 and 4 The American

A rich young American comes to Paris. He has little appreciation of French customs, values, culture or art. His attempt to marry the daughter of an aristocratic family has humor and pathos.

Weeks 5, 6 and 7 A Hazard of New Fortunes

A portrait of the rise of a wealthy materialistic class in New York that champions the development of capitalism.

Weeks 8 and 9 The New Me

C.P. Snow trained as a physicist and writes about the growing conflicts between young academics and professionals regarding the rise in importance of scientific inquiry versus the more traditional aspirations of humanists.

Weeks 10, 11 and 12 The Transit of Venus

A lyrical novel of broad reference and scope. The author illuminates past and current views of the importance of art, music and literature in a dynamic secure society.

NOTE: Specific pages for each week will be assigned before the first meeting of the study group.

Takeaway: The rewards and surprises of rereading familiar works, and discovering the freshness and newness of these books.

Peer Learning: Study Groups members will be encouraged to participate in guided reading. Volunteers can make brief presentations.