Summer Readings?

Our Spring Discussions were successful and enjoyed by many. Our Fall Discussions offer the same opportunity on Long Island in October. This is a good time to get your books for a leisurely read!

• Reading *Grant* by Ron Chernow was a surprise to many. Not only was U.S. Grant a great leader (a military commander on a par with Napoleon Bonaparte and Julius Caesar, the best in world history, and a 2-term President of the U.S. who championed civil rights for all, including minorities), he also was an admirable person who loved children, horses, his wife (a lifelong attachment) and others. A shy man among strangers, he became a great storyteller among familiar companions. Non-political through most of his life, he became “political” after having left the presidency and having toured Europe and parts of the United States. Grant experienced many discouragements and reversals of fortune, yet remained true to his ideals. Once the most admired man in western civilization, receiving many valuable gifts from wealthy persons, Grant became bankrupt because of his trust in those whom he liked. Relative poverty at the end of his life produced the greatest of all military histories, written by a person thought to be uneducated and probably illiterate by some of the “intelligencia” of his time – and written by a painfully dying man to provide an ongoing income for his wife. Chernow’s book is about an ordinary person, with typical family loves and conflicts, whose life was made more difficult by the moral divide of pro-slavery and anti-slavery relatives. Grant was financially unsuccessful at every moneymaking action he attempted (except his last). Yet Grant was an extremely high achiever when training and riding horses, and training and commanding armies. The Chernow book is about a real human being who was a hero to many because of his great wartime achievements, but also because of his honesty, determination, courage, integrity, and loyalty. When this ordinary person was doing that which he loved, he and his best achievements became extraordinary.

• Our spring discussions of Kinzer’s *The True Flag* and Twain’s *To the Person Sitting in Darkness* were interesting and enjoyed. Some participants were impressed by the clarity of Kinzer’s presentation of the pros and cons about U.S. imperialism, clarity greater than that seen by contemporary observers of the 18th and 19th Century discussions of that topic. More on these two readings will be available in our late-summer bulletin.
MERICA TRANSFORMED

The Civil War and the Spanish American War of 1898 were among the major influences that transformed the hearts and souls of the people of the United States of America from their earlier attitudes to those of contemporary Americans. These fascinating readings will provide insight into our past and present beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Join us for a day of intelligent discussion. Experience a stimulating day of camaraderie and, possibly, civilized controversy at the Long Island Great Books Council’s Annual Spring Discussion in New York City or Annual Fall Discussion in Commack, Long Island. We invite you to attend one of two concurrent discussions at one or both events.

**GROUP A**
1. **Morning:** *The True Flag: Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and the Birth of American Empire* by Stephen Kinzer (about 320 pages), 2017
2. **Afternoon:** *To a Person Sitting in Darkness* by Mark Twain (about 19 pages), 1902

**GROUP B**
3 & 4. **Morning and Afternoon:** *Grant* by Ron Chernow (about 1,100 quick-read pages), 2017

**Who is this for?** Anyone who wants to read and discuss thought-provoking literature.

**What do you get:** Books, participation in two discussions; food (continental breakfast, beverages, lunch); an opportunity to present your ideas, listen to, and explore the ideas of others.

**When & Where:** Saturday, **June 9, 2018**, 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., on Roosevelt Island, New York City, readily accessible via public transportation; AND Saturday, **October 27, 2018**, 9:30 a.m. — 4 p.m., in Commack, Long Island, New York

**Cost:** $65 per person per event

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**The True Flag: Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and the Birth of American Empire** In the late 19th Century, a public debate emerged over whether or not the U.S. should invade, occupy, administrate, and possibly annex countries beyond the borders of the U.S. Stephen Kinzer’s book “brings to life the forgotten political debate…” and history. Critics have said: “One could not ask for a timelier argument…. Kinzer is right. The first debate over American empire…speaks to our own time,” and “lively and very readable reconstruction of one of America’s most consequential debates,…this century-old debate mirrors contemporary issues and positions…. Kinzer is an award-winning foreign correspondent, formerly of *The New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*.

**To a Person Sitting in Darkness** is a 1902 Mark Twain essay, published during a period of his life when he was very active in the Anti-Imperialist movement. The essay will surprise many who know Twain only through his novels and humor. Understanding the Kinzer book is a pre-requisite to understanding this essay and life in eastern USA at the start of the 20th Century.

**Grant** Chernow’s best-selling biography was loved by almost every reviewer. Some typical comments were: “highly entertaining, highly readable…,” “presents the whole, colorful mid-19th Century America in vivid hues…,” “meticulously researched, well-written, with an easy style…,” and “despite its length, it was a quick read.” Most people today know little about Grant, but in his time, after his successes in the Civil War and as President, he was the most popular man in the U.S. and Europe, perhaps the most admired man in the world. Long after his death, some revisionist historians conducted a smear campaign against him. The public opinions created by that campaign have only begun to be reversed in recent decades. This book presents Grant as a real hero, with flaws and errors, whose behavior in personal and public life and fundamental values we can all applaud.
REGISTRATION FORM

Name ____________________________________________

Mailing Address ____________________________________

City ___________________________ State _______ ZIP ________

Home or Work Phone _______________ Mobile Phone ______________

Email _______________________________________________

Annual Spring Discussion in New York City
Saturday, June 9, 2018, 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
at 531 Main Street, Apartment 1603
Roosevelt Island
New York, NY 10044
Registration Deadline: May 16, 2018
Fee: $65

_____Group A (Kinzer/Twain)  _____Group B (Chernow)

Annual Fall Discussion in Commack, Long Island
Saturday, October 27, 2018, 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
at Commack Public Library
18 Hauppauge Road
 Commack, NY 11725
Registration Deadline: September 5, 2018
Fee: $65

_____Group A (Kinzer/Twain)  _____Group B (Chernow)

Please make check payable to Long Island Great Books Council or LIGBC and mail to:

Arlene Stock
531 Main Street, #1603
New York, NY 10044

Books will be mailed upon receipt of registration and payment. Detailed travel directions and the agenda will be sent under separate cover.

Questions and comments are welcome: arlenestock@verizon.net, 212.688.0034; Grahme Fischer, ligb@optimum.net, 631.361.3401.