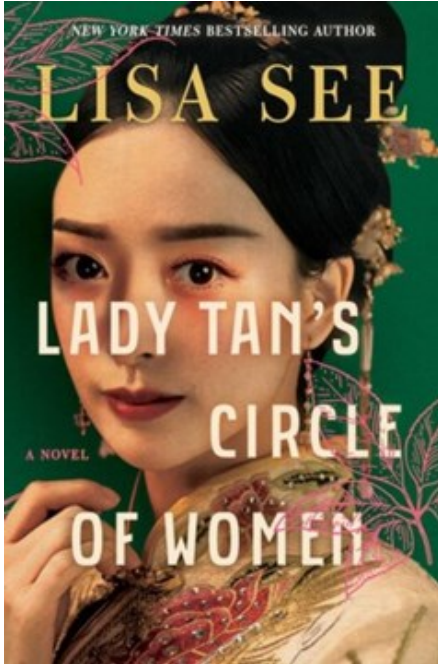


Sunshine Hall Free Library Fall Book Review



Lady Tan's Circle of Friends
Lisa See

According to Confucius "an educated woman is a worthless woman." But Tan Yunxian, a real historical figure who published a book about her career as a physician, was born into an elite family, in 1469, and raised by her grandparents to be of use. Her grandmother, one of the first female doctors in China during the Ming dynasty, teaches Yunxian about women's illnesses, as well as childbearing alongside a young midwife-in-training who becomes her best friend and confidant. How Yunxian breaks free of the confining traditions of the society she belongs to and goes on to treat women and girls from every level of society is a gripping story. This fast-paced novel is also the reimagining of the life of a real woman doctor who was remarkable in her time.

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY is a debut novel about a scientist in the 1960s who is opinionated, funny and intelligent. Unfortunately, Elizabeth Zott has been unceremoniously and brutally sidelined by male colleagues who undermine her at every turn. Cheated out of a doctorate and losing the love of her life, Calvin, to a freak accident, are central to the story. But feminism is what makes this story zip along. Continually demoted at her workplace in a prestigious laboratory, unable to continue her research as it is taken away from her bit by bit, Elizabeth finally quits her job. Needing something to do she turns her culinary skills into a new job, converting her kitchen into a lab, and then gets hoodwinked into hosting a television cooking show. She ad-libs her way into the hearts of her all women viewers, treating the creation of a stew or casserole as a grand experiment to be undertaken with utmost seriousness. Into each episode is a healthy serving of empowerment to her female watchers.

In addition to her look at the frustrations of a generation of women, Garmus adds plenty of lighthearted fun. There's a mystery involving Calvin's family and a look at the politics and dysfunction of a local television station, plus her views on rowing, her unconventional approach to parenthood and her deep connection to her dog, Six-Thirty.

"Lessons in Chemistry" will make you wonder about all the real-life women born ahead of their time — women who were sidelined, ignored and worse because they weren't as resourceful, determined and lucky as Elizabeth Zott. She's a reminder of how far we've come, but also how far we still have to go.

