

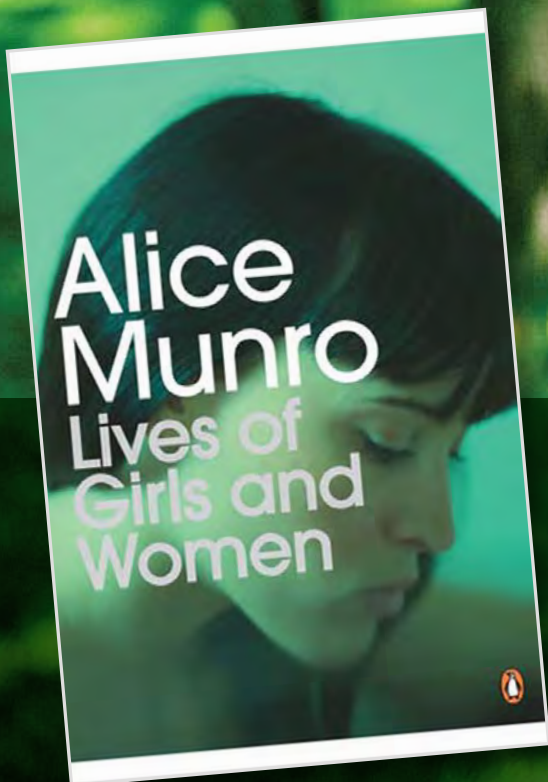
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



BOOK CLUB

**DISCUSSION
GUIDE**

**TAKE ACTION
ON GIRLS ABDUCTED
BY BOKO HARAM
IN NIGERIA,
PAGE 9**

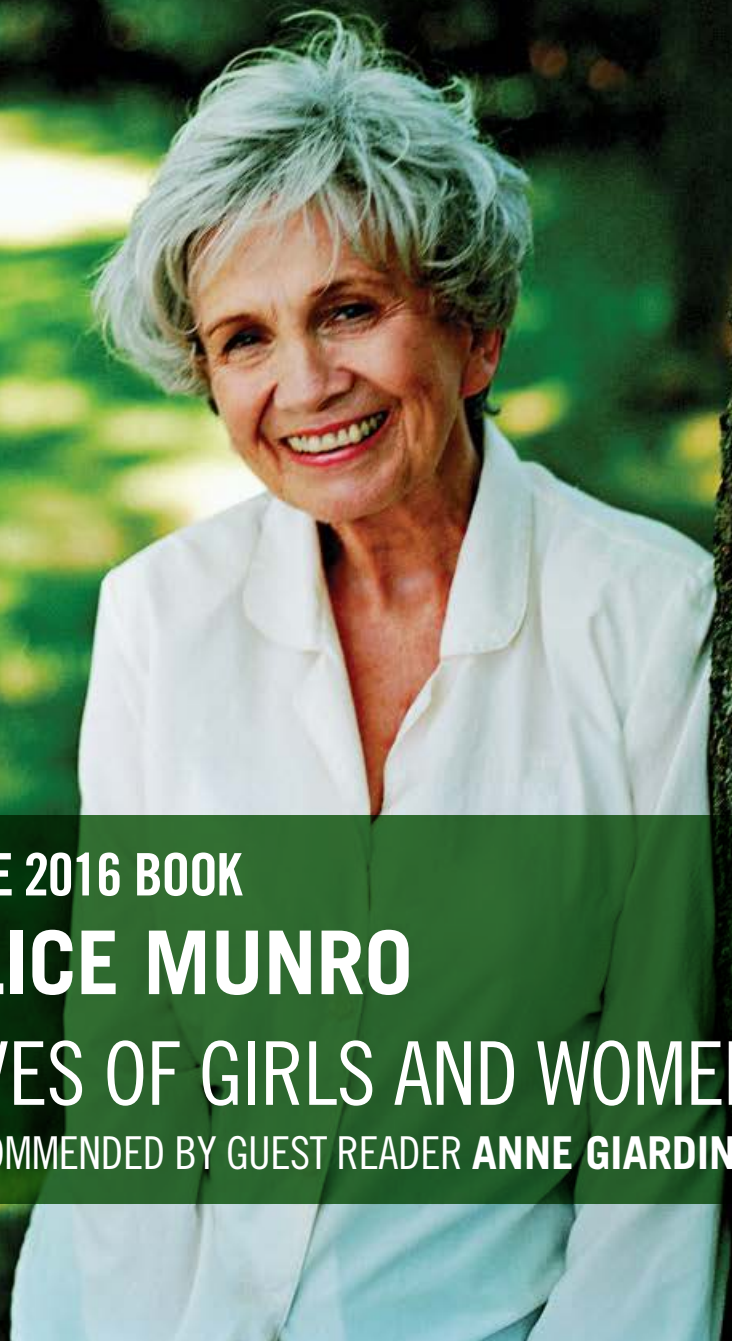


JUNE 2016 BOOK

ALICE MUNRO

LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

RECOMMENDED BY GUEST READER **ANNE GIARDINI**





Bringing life to life

This month's Amnesty International Book Club selection showcases the work of two Nobel Prize winning women: revered Canadian author, Alice Munro and real-world heroine, Malala Yousafzai.

Lives of Girls and Women gives voice to Del, a young woman who journeys from childhood through the awkwardness of adolescence as she comes to realize the woman she does not want to be: one married with children. Set in post-World War II rural Ontario, the novel is a gently written examination of the everyday. Alongside Del, the reader visits episodes of her life that, as she matures, reveal complex themes of what it means not only to be a woman, but a fully formed and unique adult who grasps opportunities and experiences. It is one woman's story, and yet also reflects the stories of many.

Del, the voice of Munro herself, is left to presumably finish writing a wholly dull family history after her Uncle Craig passes away. She is told by her uncle's sisters that she could become a great writer if she learned to just copy his style and finish writing the family history. Del's reaction? "They were talking to somebody who believed that the only duty of a writer is to produce a masterpiece."

Indeed Munro met Del's expectations, being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013. The *New York Times* describes Munro's genius as, "her understanding of the music of domestic life, her ability to simultaneously detail her characters' inner landscapes and their place in a meticulously observed community, and her talent for charting 'the progress of love' as it morphs and mutates through time."

The quality of life for women and girls varies dramatically across the world and this guide documents some of the challenges they face. It features the inspiring story of Malala Yousafzai, fierce defender of a person's right to education, especially

for girls. Join us in taking action as we call for the Nigerian Government to increase efforts to ensure the rescue and safe return of the Chibok girls who were abducted by Boko Haram in 2014.

Thank you for being part of the Amnesty International Book Club. If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, we'd love to hear from you. Just send us an email at bookclub@amnesty.ca.

—The Book Club Team

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than seven million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and off line campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.ca or write to us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9.



About this month's guest reader, **Anne Giardini, Q.C.**

As a director, writer and lawyer, Anne publishes and speaks on sustainability, ethics, legal, governance and other topics. She has been a weekly columnist for the *National Post* and a contributor to the bestseller *Dropped Threads*. Her novels, *The Sad Truth About Happiness* and *Advice for Italian Boys*, were published in 2005 and 2009, and *Startle and Illuminate*, a book of writing advice co-edited with her son Nicholas, was published in May 2016.

In her role as the 11th Chancellor of Simon Fraser University, Anne frequently wears a very large and very red velvet hat. While chancellors in early days could imprison, excommunicate, require penance, deprive a master or scholar of privileges, and determine disputes, today the chancellor is a ceremonial non-resident head of the university.

Anne has been married for 28 years to Tony Giardini and they are the parents of three young adults.



About this month's featured author, **Alice Munro**

Alice Munro grew up in Wingham, Ontario, and attended the University of Western Ontario. She has published thirteen collections of stories and a novel. During her distinguished career she has been the recipient of many awards, including two Giller Prizes, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Man Booker International Prize. In 2013 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Her stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, and many other publications, and her collections have been translated into thirteen languages.

Her website is www.alicemunro.ca



Anne Giardini on *Lives of Girls and Women*

I chose Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women because it is among the essential works of Canadian fiction and because it lays bare the contradictions that make up human nature.

Published in 1971, when Munro was 40, Lives of Girls and Women is the second of her many books, primarily collections of short stories. (She had published her first collection, Dance of the Happy Shades, three years earlier.)

A lifetime of extraordinary writing followed. She was awarded the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature, the Swedish Academy calling her a "master of the contemporary short story." Her stories range across much of Canada—countryside, small towns, and cities—and span the days of the early settlers to the present. Alice Munro tells us truths, both gorgeous and heartbreaking, about the bounded lives that most of us live.

The central character, observer and narrator in Lives of Girls and Women is the marvelously-named Del Jordan, and it is through her observations that the stories of the people of Jubilee, Ontario, are delivered to us. Del is a meticulous if sometimes unreliable chronicler of these lives, showing them as tightly defined and yet wide open as any to human experience.

The people of Jubilee appear to live simple lives but they are awash in contradictions. Del discerns "malice" beneath "their courtesies". A sunburned chest is "a V of tough red skin" but "with a tender edge of white." We are told of a neighbour whose eyes are both delicate and predatory; he adores the animals he raises while also relishing "their unpleasant destinies." In an old photograph, pioneers wear "fierce but somehow helpless expressions." While Del's aunts respect "men's work

beyond anything; they also laughed at it.” The good Christians of Jubilee believe that someone who has died is in a “white nightshirt and floating around Eternity” and at the same time in the ground decaying. Being forgiven is both reassuring and shameful, and remorse is tender, but has “on its other side a brutal, unblemished satisfaction.” The book ends with Del relieved and desolate.

The book’s title comes from a short cautionary lecture that Del’s mother gives her. “There is a change coming I think in the lives of girls and women,” her mother says. “Yes. But it is up to us to make it come.”

Del decides that she wants to live as men do, to be “able to go out and take on all kinds of experiences and shuck

off what they don’t want and come back proud.” But escape into a different kind of life is elusive.

Peter Englund, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy and Secretary of the Nobel Committee for Literature said this on the occasion of Munro being presented with the Nobel: “In an uncompromising way, Alice Munro demonstrates that love rarely saves us or leads to reliable happiness, and that few things can be as devastating to us as our own dreams. Sexuality is constantly present and its power is gripping, but often blind and even devastating. Even though genuine happiness may occur, sometimes accidentally, people rarely go unpunished for believing in romantic love.”

—Anne Giardini

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON *LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN*

Discussion questions from Anne Giardini

1. Describe the ways in which the lives of women differ from those of the men in Jubilee.
2. How much scope do the people of Jubilee have to stray from the accepted template of how a life should be lived?
3. What role does religion play in defining and shaping Jubilee?
4. Why does Del neglect her Uncle Craig’s manuscript?
5. In what ways does Garnet French’s family surprise Del?
6. What does Del take from her relationship with Garnet French that is necessary for her to break away from Jubilee?

Discussion questions from Amnesty

1. Does the book transcend time and place? Are the struggles described in this book the same or different than the lives of girls and women today?
2. Does it transcend Southern Ontario? Do you think woman and girls of different countries and cultures can relate to these stories and experiences?
3. In your experience, what happens to the girls who are wondering about the stars and the wider universe?



BACKGROUND

Girls attend their first day of school in the Yemeni capital Sana'a.

Change is coming

While the book, *Lives of Girls and Women*, aptly describes the lives of girls and women living in small town Ontario in the post war period, many of their experiences, hopes, dreams and fears remain are relatable to women around the world. It is a book of hope and optimism. Del's mother tells her that "*change is coming in the lives of girls and women,*" but it is up to us (the women) to make it come, as "*all women have had up till now has been their connection with men.*"

In the years which have ensued since the book was written, it may well be true that change has come to the lives of girls and women, but maybe not in the ways that Munro imagined or hoped for.

In many parts of the world, women and girls do have more control over their bodies and lives and are in a better position to decide if, when and how to pursue education, a career, form a family, and have children. But while some gains have been made, women and girls continue to experience gender-based discrimination and violence.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, women and girls in Canada are more likely than others to be poor, and poverty rates are on the rise. Over the past 25 years, child and family poverty has increased by 25%.

Women and girls continue to face barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services.



Malala Yousafzai speaking
at Amnesty International's
Ambassador of Conscience
Award Ceremony in Dublin,
September 2013.

© Amnesty International

And women and girls in some parts of the world remain subjected to early and forced marriage.

One third of women in Canada and around the world will experience some form of violence in their lifetime. The same gender inequalities that lead to high rates of violence against women also lead to barriers in reporting violence. In Canada, for example, it is estimated that only 10% of sexual assaults are reported, and of those, very few perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

Because of gender-based discrimination and systematic inequalities, girls continue to have fewer educational opportunities than boys. Education is a key tool in breaking the cycle of poverty. Educated women and girls are less likely to marry early and against their will, less likely to die in childbirth, more likely to have healthy babies, and are more likely to send their children to school.

UNICEF contends, *“When all children have access to a quality education rooted in human rights and gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come.”*

But for some girls, change, as Alice Munro speaks of, hasn't yet come, and the simple act of seeking an education puts them in harm's way.

Malala Yousafzai's story

One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.

The world watched in shock and horror to see if 15 year old Malala Yousafzai would survive being shot in the head by the Taliban on a school bus in 2012. A staunch human rights defender in her own right, Malala and her father Ziauddin are advocates for education in Pakistan, a country with the second highest number of children out of school in the world.

Malala and Ziauddin, who ran a school in Swat, Pakistan, became outwardly critical of the Taliban's efforts to restrict education, especially for girls. In 2009, Malala began blogging for the BBC Urdu under a pseudonym, articulating fears about the increased military activity in Swat. Music and television were banned, women were no longer permitted to go shopping and ultimately, Ziauddin was ordered to close his school.

Despite received death threats, Malala and Ziauddin continued to speak out for the right to education. Malala became a target of the Taliban after she was revealed

as the author of the BBC blog and was featured in a documentary made for the New York Times.

On October 9, 2012, a masked shooter entered the school bus as Malala and her friends returned from school. He asked for Malala by name and proceeded to fire a bullet that went through her head, neck and shoulder.

For most people, an experience like that would succeed in silencing them. But Malala has only gained strength of purpose and international recognition as she continues to advocate globally for education for girls. In 2013, Malala and Ziauddin co-founded the Malala Fund “to bring awareness to the social and economic impact of girls’ education and to empower girls to raise their voices, to unlock their potential and to demand change.”

Amnesty International awarded its highest honour, the Ambassador of Conscience Award to Malala in 2013. The award recognizes individuals who have promoted and enhanced the cause of human rights through their life and by example.

‘I am truly honored to receive this award and would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that there are many millions of children like me across the world who fight every single day for their right to go to school. I hope that by working together we will one day realize our

dream of education for every child, in every corner of the world.’ —Malala Yousafzai upon receiving the Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award.

In 2014, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded Malala with the Nobel Peace Prize for her “*struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education...Despite her youth, Malala Yousafzai has already fought for several years for the right of girls to education, and has shown by example that children and young people, too, can contribute to improving their own situations. This she has done under the most dangerous circumstances. Through her heroic struggle she has become a leading spokesperson for girls’ rights to education.*”

Girls’ education under threat

62 Million girls around the world are not in school

The girls in the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok were keen to pursue their education, and knew that education was the key to new opportunities and provided the means to find a way out of poverty. Unfortunately, this opportunity for advancement ended on April 14, 2014, when 276 school girls were abducted





from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok in northeastern Nigeria by the non-state armed group Boko Haram. They were abducted because they were girls seeking higher education. Under Boko Haram's interpretation of Islam, girls should not be educated.

The missing schoolgirls are only a small proportion of the women, girls, men and boys abducted by Boko Haram. More than 2,000 women and girls, as well as hundreds of men and boys, have been abducted by Boko Haram. Many were forced into sexual slavery or trained to fight. Thousands more civilians were held captive as the group took control of towns in northeast Nigeria between July 2014 and January 2015.

Boko Haram recognizes the power of education. Boko Haram, which translates as "western education is forbidden," wants to create an Islamic state and has pledged allegiance to the armed group calling itself the Islamic State based in the Middle East. Since 2009, it has launched a violent campaign against civilians in northeast Nigeria.

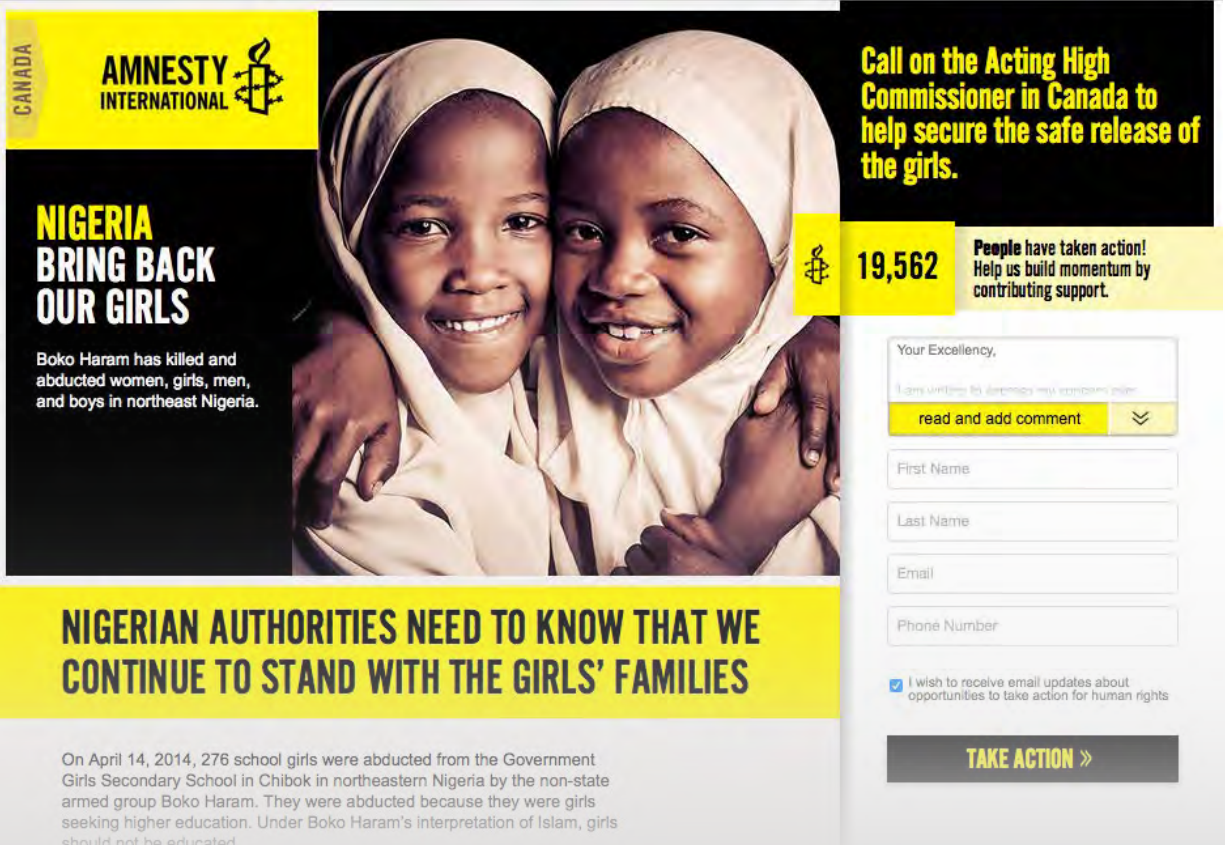
According to UNICEF, in northeast Nigeria, students and teachers have been deliberately targeted. More than 300 schools have been damaged or destroyed and at least 196 teachers and 314 school children killed. Two-thirds of schools in Borno remain closed following Boko Haram attacks. No one knows when the schools will open again, or if teaching will ever resume. While some children have been sent to schools in other districts, not all families can afford the fees, and girls are often the ones left behind.

Nigerian authorities need to know that the world continues to stand with the girls' families. Their rights—and the rights of all of Nigeria's children—to education and to be protected from gender-based discrimination and violence, must be safeguarded.

Amnesty International supporters attend a protest in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2014 as part of the Bring Back Our Girls campaign.

TAKE ACTION

Call on the Nigerian Acting High Commissioner in Canada to help secure the safe release of the girls: Sign the online petition at: <http://bit.ly/25Py5Y0>



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA

NIGERIA BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

Boko Haram has killed and abducted women, girls, men, and boys in northeast Nigeria.

Call on the Acting High Commissioner in Canada to help secure the safe release of the girls.

19,562

People have taken action! Help us build momentum by contributing support.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern over:

read and add comment

First Name

Last Name

Email

Phone Number

☒ I wish to receive email updates about opportunities to take action for human rights

TAKE ACTION »

NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES NEED TO KNOW THAT WE CONTINUE TO STAND WITH THE GIRLS' FAMILIES

On April 14, 2014, 276 school girls were abducted from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok in northeastern Nigeria by the non-state armed group Boko Haram. They were abducted because they were girls seeking higher education. Under Boko Haram's interpretation of Islam, girls should not be educated.

Or write to the Nigerian Acting High Commissioner in Canada

Nigeria High Commission
295 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1R9

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern over Boko Haram's abduction of more than 2,000 women and girls in northeastern Nigeria including the schoolgirls from Chibok, as well as hundreds of men and boys. We acknowledge the steps taken by the Nigerian government to halt the rising trend of attacks by Boko Haram in the region.

We urge the Nigerian government to:

- Increase efforts to ensure the rescue and safe return of the Chibok girls and others deprived of their liberty in accordance with international legal standards;
- Take all necessary legal measures to guarantee the safety, security and protection of civilians and their properties;
- Ensure safe schools for girls and boys; and
- Initiate prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Boko Haram with the aim of bringing suspects to justice in fair trials that are not subject to the death penalty.

Yours Sincerely, _____

Sources and further reading

- *New York Times* <http://nyti.ms/1TXKJv6>
- Canadian Women's Fund www.canadianwomen.org
- UNICEF <http://uni.cf/LY6sFf>
- Malala Fund <http://bit.ly/1QJahsK>
- Amnesty International USA <http://bit.ly/1TXJOuS>
- Nobel Prize <http://bit.ly/1sq7gYH>
- More Malala! Video of her Ambassador of Conscience 2013 acceptance speech.
<https://youtu.be/tfQ5thSuM7U>

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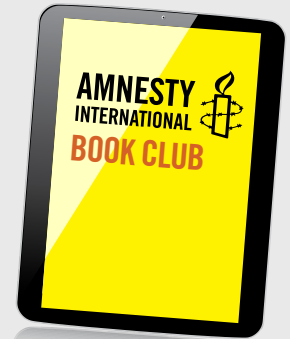
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- And join our discussion group on **Goodreads.com**



COMING UP IN JULY 2016

For Today I Am a Boy by Kim Fu

Recommended by guest reader Bif Naked

At birth, Peter Huang is given the Chinese name Juan Chaun, “powerful king.” To his parents, newly settled in small-town Ontario, he is the exalted only son in a sea of daughters, the one who will finally fulfill his immigrant father’s dreams of Western masculinity.

Peter and his sisters grow up in an airless house of order and obligation, though secrets and half-truths simmer beneath the surface. At the first opportunity, each of the girls lights out on her own. But for Peter, escape is not as simple as fleeing his parents’ home.

Though his father crowned him “powerful king,” Peter knows otherwise. He knows he is really a girl. With the help of his far-flung sisters and the sympathetic souls he finds along the way, Peter inches ever closer to his own life, his own skin, in this darkly funny, emotionally acute, stunningly powerful debut.

The discussion guide will be sent out mid July.

In the meanwhile, if you have any questions or comments, please contact us at bookclub@amnesty.ca.

