

Ellis South End Neighborhood Association  
Book Group 2010 – 2011

The Ellis Book Group meets from September through June, on the third Wednesday of the month, at 7 at a location to be announced. The meetings last about an hour. The co-leaders are Betsy Boveroux (617-426-0989) and Trudy Kontoff (617-482-4141). All are welcome to attend, either regularly or intermittently.

September

God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, David Levering Lewis 384p  
Islam rises from the ruins from the conflict between Imperial (Christianized) Rome and Imperial Persia in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Century “the greatest revolution in power, religion, culture and wealth in history.” In the second half is Europe's response to the Islamic invasion from the Iberian peninsula. Infidel, Ayaan Hirsi Ali (384p.) is suggested as a complimentary book if you have the time. Autobiography of a Somali woman who talked herself into being accepted as a political refugee in Holland while in transit to an arranged marriage in Canada, educated herself, became a member of the Dutch Parliament, collaborated with Theo van Gogh on a film on domestic violence against Muslim women (that led to his assassination) and believes that the harsh treatment of Muslim women is not a side issue but must be directly addressed before political rapprochement can come about.

October

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, by Rebecca Skloot 384 p  
Henrietta died at 30 from cervical cancer. Some of her cancerous tissue turned out to have unusual potency: they could survive in the lab. They became the building blocks of countless discoveries, from the polio vaccine to AIDS drugs to gene mapping and much more. The human side is a mystery told through the eyes of her youngest daughter Deborah. A very entertaining account of Henrietta, her ancestors, her cells and the scientists who grew them.

November

The Big Short, Michael Lewis 266p.  
Solid, insightful and witty account of the 2007-08 financial meltdown. The book highlights a handful of people who were betting against the market.

January

A Brave Vessel: The True Tale of the Castaways Who Rescued Jamestown and Inspired Shakespeare's The Tempest, Hobson Woodward 288p  
The story of William Starchley, who was on the ship Sea Venture, bound for Jamestown, that was caught in a hurricane and nearly lost off Bermuda. The conflicts that divided the crew, the hardships of replenishing a starving Jamestown and finally the narrative and linguistic parallels between the Sea Venture's travels and the play. If you have time, read William Shakespeare's The Tempest.

February

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee 336p.

A gripping, heart-wrenching, and wholly remarkable tale of coming-of-age in a South poisoned by virulent prejudice. It views the world through the eyes of a young girl, as her father -- a crusading local lawyer -- risks everything to defend a black man unjustly accused of a terrible crime.

March

Meet you in Hell: Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick, Les Standiford 336 pages

Both men rise from poverty to become the wealthiest men in the US. It begins with sections on their personal and business backgrounds and shows how their careers intertwined as Frick's coke company became the largest supplier to Carnegie Steel. The breaking point was the riot at Homestead Mill, after which they became bitter rivals.

April is Poetry Month. Members bring a poem(s) to share with the group.

May

The Inheritance of Loss, by Kiran Desai 384p.

In a crumbling, isolated house in the Himalayas lives a Judge who only wants to retire in peace, when his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, arrives at his doorstep. The judge's cook watches over her distractedly, for his thoughts are often on his son, Biju, who jumps from one gritty New York restaurant to another. A novel of joy and despair, where the characters face numerous choices that illuminate the consequences of colonialism as it collides with the western world.

June

Cellist of Sarajevo, by Steven Galloway 256p

Based on an incident in the 1992 siege of Sarajevo when 22 people were killed while standing in line for bread, and a cellist vows to perform at the point of contact for 22 days. A tale of peril and protest is told through the cellist and three others, a sniper protecting the cellist, a baker and a man seeking water for his family. What happens to our humanity in the midst of violence and hatred?