

BOOK CLUB REPORT FOR MAY 16, 2017

Eleven members met to discuss The High Mountains of Portugal by Yann Martel. He is the author well known for writing Life of Pi. Martell did extensive research on this book and it showed in the writing. He gave intricate detailed explanations of the subjects he discussed, such as antique cars, visiting a chimpanzee Rescue Facility, the slave trade, Portugal and its customs and language. He read every one of Agatha Christie's Mysteries so that he could present a comparison of the mystery story to the story of Jesus. This book should be read more than once to truly understand all the layers and nuances that it presented. Martell divided this book into three distinct stories (novellas), in three distinct time periods and yet brought them all together in the end. The group liked this structure. It provided opportunity to discuss many subjects. All three men who were the subjects of each section suffered great loss of a loved one and the stories revolved around how they dealt with their profound grief. In dealing with grief the stories also wound themselves around the subjects of atheism, agnosticism and theism. Martell also used magical realism in this work which enhanced its mystery. In story one, Thomas, loses his son and walks backward. He then goes on a quest to find a certain crucifix. In story two, a pathologist loses his wife and is visited by her ghost and deals with grief through work and weird autopsies and Agatha Christie mysteries. In the third section a man loses his wife and takes up with Odo, a rescue ape that changes his life. The book explores grief and great love in detail. Martel also played with names. Every character name had a meaning. Even Agatha Christie's name contained Christ, Thomas was doubting Thomas, all clever in their second meaning. Three people didn't finish the book but in the end the others gave it a high rating of 8.75 and encouraged the ones who didn't read the book to do so.