



FRIENDS OF THE PALM SPRINGS LIBRARY

BOOK CLUB



The Indigo Girl Led
by Don Elder

Our October selection, *The Indigo Girl* written by Natasha Boyd and presented by Don Elder, requires a careful review in order not to spoil the plot. For the reader relying on last month's squib for insight into the story, the rationale for the book was somewhat opaque. Don added some context to the book by describing the author as an accomplished romance novelist (other titles include *Accidental Tryst*, *Inconvenient Wife*, *Butler Cove*, and *Eversea*.) We already knew from the squib that the book was based on actual letters by a real American colonist. *The Indigo Girl* has elements of a romance novel in the genre of historical fiction written by a relatively new author.

Included among the obvious parallels between *The Indigo Girl* and the prior month's *Desert Queen* are that both works of historical fiction are based on the correspondence of female protagonists who faced male-defined, subordinate expectations and misogynistic societal norms. If the book club was a course in English literature, we would probably expect to compare and contrast the stories (however, one should note the titles were calendared accidentally in consecutive order after being chosen by anonymous ballots).

To repeat Don's details about the life of the protagonist, Eliza Lucas, would be tantamount to revealing the story. Suffice to say, like *Desert Queen's* Gertrude Bell, Ms. Lucas is an important female figure in history. Her efforts to grow indigo in colonial South Carolina resulted in the crop producing one third of the colony's exports before the Revolutionary War. Her family members were among the most prominent founders of the fledgling United States.

Much of the book club discussion related personal stories of growing up and being told what girls and women could expect to do in life. Choices about who to marry and when, whether girls were welcome in scientific studies (like Eliza Lucas studying the botany of agriculture), and the greater expectations of their male siblings were among topics raised. Attempts to over-analyze the characters, their motives or metaphors were often dismissed given the genre the author generally works in and some imaginative plot developments.

Photos by Ginger Semple

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