



FRIENDS

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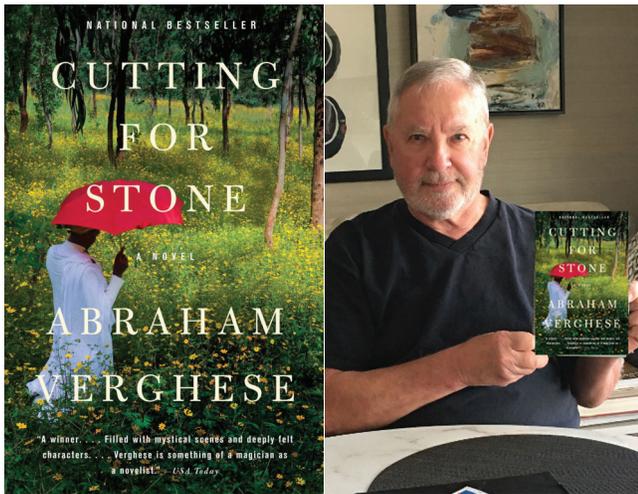
BOOK CLUB

FOPSL Book Club: January 21, 2022

Book: *Cutting for Stone*

Author: Abraham Verghese

Discussion leader: Don Elder, Lisa Walters



Don Elder

The discussion started with Don Elder giving biographical information about the author, who is also a physician and a professor at Stanford University. *Cutting for Stone* remained on the New York Times bestseller list for more than two years. Verghese's other two books are memoirs.

Much of the group discussion dealt with the author's lengthy accounts of medical procedures, described by some as "graphic" and "vivid" and by others as "tedious." Some claimed these were not necessary, that the book could have been half as long, and that readers get bogged down by these descriptions. Some, however, loved that kind of careful detail and felt that it was effective, even if it might have seemed to slow the story down. Many believed that Verghese was better at writing the "medical stuff"

than the "emotional stuff," while others especially enjoyed the love story between Hema and Ghosh.

Most agreed that Ghosh and Marion were good physicians who used all of their senses and listened to their patients, unlike many contemporary doctors. We discussed the title and its connection to the Hippocratic Oath and to the last name of the three main characters, all surgeons. Another point of interest to many was how symptoms were often expressed through poetry.

The setting, plot, and characters were vivid. Many of us knew little about the history of Ethiopia but found it interesting. We talked about connections with one's birth country and one's adopted country: Hema and Ghosh felt Indian, but the twins felt Ethiopian. We discussed the bonds between characters: Marion and Shiva, Shiva and Hema, Marion and Ghosh. Marion especially was entrusted with many secrets told him by Ghosh, Genet, and others, and he honored these secrets and bonds.

Several members had read this book years ago. Some thought that the book would have benefited from a list of characters at the beginning, and in fact a few had created their own. Most agreed that it was not a book they would have chosen, but they enjoyed it nonetheless. They felt it was unique, a book that stays with you and doesn't blend in with all the others you've read.

Interim Coordinator: Scott Biegen, Librarian, scott.biegen@palmsspringsca.gov

Friends of the Palm Springs Library Book Club meets online

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