

FOAL Focus

A Quarterly Newsletter from Friends of the Auberry Library

ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT SUCCESS!



FOAL's annual (with a pause) benefit concert was quite the experience for all who attended. This was our third benefit concert, and we are so gratified with the support from the sponsors, the community, and the artists who support this event.

This year's concert brought together two perennial favorites: blues artist AC Myles and his band, plus the Mana Fire Dancers, who have performed at our prior benefit concerts. The fall evening was picture perfect as the band started to play in the early evening light, with Myles displaying his talent and agility with the guitar. He and his band played a variety of cover and original blues that kept the audience swaying and toes tapping.

As the evening deepened, the fire dancers set up, and went on to perform multiple sets with the band. The music and the fire dancers were full of energy as they literally lit up the stage! The three dancers performed individually with different styles, and came together for a grand finale that was intense and powerful.

Between sponsors, attendees, and donations, FOAL raised over \$8,000 toward its mission. It was a wonderful thing to see so many supporters out for our once-a-year paid concert, which then supports our free concerts, school outreaches, and many other activities that we do during the rest of the year.

Thank you for coming out, sponsoring, donating, and just enjoying what we aspire to offer to our community.

HOLIDAY BOOK & BAKE SALE, BLOOD DRIVE

FOAL will continue the themed book sales into the holiday season, with an extra bonus thrown in. November's themed books will be about food. Come on by and check out all kinds of cookbooks in the library vault for the first half of November.

After Thanksgiving, we transition to the holiday book sale, with gift-quality books for sale. As additional incentive, we'll be hosting a bake sale and blood drive on Saturday December 3rd. Come by, do a good deed, pick up some tasty treats AND some food for your mind and those of your loved ones in the form of books! If you would like to donate baked goods, please contact Program Director Loren Leach at foalorg@gmail.com.



CHAT FROM THE CHAIR



Jamelie Taylor, Chair

My overwhelming thought for this Focus is a *giant thank you* to everyone involved in the recent benefit concert. We were surprised with a huge crowd of new friends and eager listeners who brought chairs and blankets to share the lovely September evening on the Sohm Garden lawn. AC Myles was entertaining, the Mana Fire Dancers

were breathtaking and FOAL benefited financially. Thank you to all involved.

Our library is getting a much-needed facelift! Thanks to Fresno County, who uses the building free of rent as a public library, our old bank will be receiving new siding and LED lighting. The work begins the last day of October and will most likely be done before Thanksgiving. FOAL has plans to replace the faded signs as well so soon that library property will have a whole new look.

Now that the weather is finally cooler, we can begin plans for the winter, family time and shorter days. For me that means even

more library visits to take advantage of the many services offered. Did you know that overdue fines are a thing of the past and that downloading a book on Libby for listening is free and simple? Did you know that the children's librarian comes to Auberry every week with a fantastic story time experience for preschoolers? Did you know that the teen program offers crafts with all the supplies to make something cool? You can also order books from home using the online system and they come quickly. Our branch is open Tuesday through Saturday and I hope to see you there.

FOAL's mission is to

- Support the Auberry Branch Library as it strives to encourage literacy and lifelong learning
- Provide a vibrant cultural gathering place;
- Enhance the Library's resources and services;
- Increase community access to information and knowledge.

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFIT CONCERT SPONSORS

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Beverly Leach

Silver Sponsor \$500



Bronze Sponsor \$250



Anne & Stan Neal

Friend Sponsor \$100



Jamelie & Ron Taylor



Loren Leach

On Friday evening, October 28, local and celebrated poet Mai Der Vang visited the Auberry Library to share her poetry with our community, sponsored by the Friends of the Auberry Library’s Anne Neal Guest Speaker Series. Vang was raised in Fresno, the daughter of Hmong refugees, studied English at UC Berkeley, and then later earned her MFA in poetry at Columbia University. She has returned to Fresno, where she teaches in the creative writing MFA program at CSU Fresno.

Vang’s poetry explores her Hmong identity, using her parents’ experiences as refugees fleeing America’s secret war in Laos to generalize about the Hmong refugee experience in general, including their subjection during flight to a toxic substance, “yellow rain,” for which no one has as yet admitted responsibility. For ten years Vang researched this phenomenon, digging into public records, unearthing the material that would result in her collection *Yellow Rain*, published last year. It’s a searing expose which honors and gives voice to the refugees and their suffering.

Her first book, *Afterland*, published in 2017, appeared in the midst of this research, and includes a poem, “Yellow Rain,” which foreshadows her future focus. It’s a difficult poem, full of imagery which shows the effects of the mysterious “yellow rain”: “First, the sting/ in your nose./ Then in your eyes,/ a furnace flared/ to hollow/ your face...”

Because people fleeing and dying were not given the ritualistic send-off into the spirit world which their Shamanist beliefs require, Vang wrote a poem to summon them, “Transmigration”: “Spirit, when I flee this jungle, you must too./ Among the foliage, we must be ready to see/ the half decayed. You must not run off no matter how much/ flesh you smell.../I am refugee. You are too. Cry, but do not weep./ We walk out the door.”

An investigation into the mysterious symptoms the refugees were experiencing lead to the mass collection and shipment of blood and other bodily samples. Vang’s poem “Authorization to Depart Ravaged Homeland as Biomedical Sample,” and several others, reveal the futility of the collection—samples lost, misdirected, never tested. “Authorization...” is the one Vang read, providing us with the context we needed.



Photo by Ze Moua

When she discovered the theory that “yellow rain” was just the mass defecation of local bees, Vang wrote her defense of them in “Allied with the Bees.” It opens with an epigraph—a letter to the editor: “These people have been living in these areas for all their life but they have never heard or experienced something like this before. Bees and honey are part of their life...” The poem continues: “Tell them, child, we have hiked/ These hills without shoes, long/ Enough to hunt alongside the bees,” then closes: “...we are not misled in/ Our anguish, what happened/ To the bees also happened to us.”

And when, in the course of her writing, she sought solace in nature, she wrote “Prayer to the Redwood,” addressing this forest so far from her ancestral home, invoking its beleaguered and far-flung cousin.

These are just a few of the poems Vang read on Friday evening. We in the audience listened intently, taking the journey with her.

Submitted by Beth Linder Carr

“Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful.” —Rita Dove

LIBRARY LINK: AUBERRY BRANCH UPDATE

For those that have visited the Auberry Library within the past month, you may have seen some new faces. Within the Sierra Gateway Cluster (which includes Auberry), we have three new librarians to join the team. They are a fantastic group of librarians and we are excited to see what they contribute to our mountain branches in the future!

Isariya Locke is our new Children's Librarian. Previously, Isariya was the Children's Librarian for the Water Tower Cluster that includes Central, West Fresno, and Mosqueda libraries and prior to that, an Outreach Librarian in the WoW (Without Walls) Department as a Community Librarian with a focus on Citizenship and Immigration. Isariya has extensive outreach and community engagement experience, which we know she'll put to good use at Auberry. Her storytime's have been quite popular on Thursday mornings as she and the kids sing along as she plays the ukulele.

Isariya is a mother of two high school sons. She enjoys working with children and providing her services to families. She loves singing and playing ukulele at her storytime in Auberry. A fun fact about Isariya is her first language is Thai and she wrote fiction in Thai, translated books, and was published in Thailand before working full-time as a librarian.

Jessica Duong is our new Teen and Young Adult Services Librarian. Previously, Jessica worked at our downtown location as the Teen and Young Adult Services Librarian for Community Engagement and prior to that, an Outreach Librarian in the WoW Department. Jessica has fostered several Fresno County partnerships and we are excited to see what she is able to build for our teens at Auberry.

In her downtime, Jessica is quite busy as both being recently married and taking care of her 1-year-old puppy. She enjoys reading YA Fantasy and Romance literature. She also reads manga and watches anime, as well as playing video games. She is excited to be here in the cluster and serve our Teen and Young Adult communities.

MaCall Hunter-LaVoy is our new Adult Services Librarian. Previously, MaCall worked at the Ellis Library at the University of Missouri as a Paraprofessional Reference Librarian. As a newly graduated librarian, we are looking forward to MaCall's enthusiasm and energy. She has already been trying new things and is eager to add more to the next programming session. Currently at the Auberry Library, you can find that MaCall is offering Computer Classes and monthly Take & Make crafts.



Children's Librarian Isariya Locke

As a fun fact about MaCall, she is highly knowledgeable about rabbits and has two pet rabbits. One is named Halloweenie and the other is Phantasmagoria.

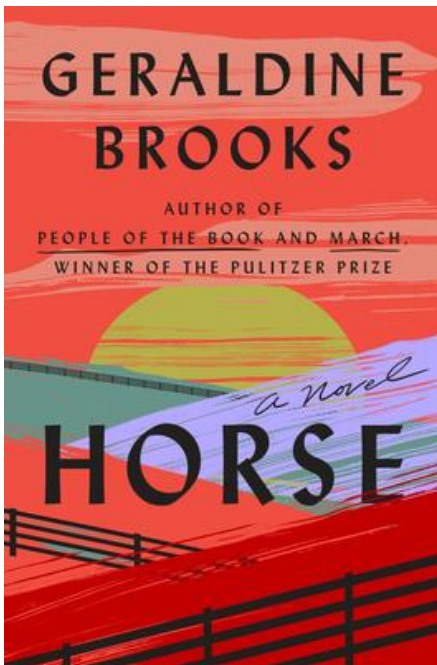
Submitted by Jamie Kurumaji, FCPL

FOAL PLANS FOR 2023

Each November, the FOAL board drafts a budget and plans for the new year. As we forecast into 2023, we hope to return to a fully "normal" and exciting year of programs! We hope to have 10 music programs (we made it to 7 this year), plus 3-4 theatre programs. We have planned for 5-6 music and 4-5 art outreach visits to our local schools. We also plan to have at least 4-5 guests for our Anne Neal Speaker series.

This year brought some changes to our expenses: we moved to a smaller office, which lowered our cost, but also had to take on new landscaping expenses. This service had been managed by the Fresno County Library, but the burden has shifted. We will continue to look for ways to manage this extra cost.

Speaking of funds, the Board is hoping to form a fundraising committee to help organize our outreach and messaging. Interested? Let us know at foalorg@gmail.com.



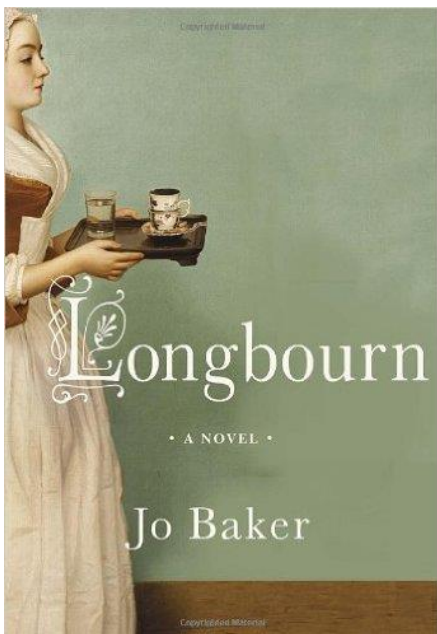
Reviewer: Bev Schubert
Horse by Geraldine Brooks (2022)

Genre: Historical Fiction

This work elegantly straddles a multitude of subjects. *Horse* weaves together the era of antebellum American history, contemporary science, issues of race, art history, and the development of equestrian racing and breeding in the United States. Brook’s brilliantly written novel crosses the boundaries of time and space- creating a tension that compels the reader forward.

It opens in Washington D.C. in the present time with the discovery of a small painting found in a neighbor’s trash pile. This discovery brings together a promising young black art historian and an awkward, yet equally bright, white, female osteologist working at the Smithsonian Institution. Together, they unravel the origin and history of the painting, setting the stage for the journey back in time and into the greater body of the book. Depicted in the painting is a young black trainer lightly holding the bridle of a powerful thoroughbred racehorse. What unfolds is the story of devotion and deep affection between Jarret, the trainer, and Lexington, the horse, that will go down in history as one of the most powerful contenders and dominant sires of the late 19th century.

While depicting a beautiful and tender story, the author carefully uncovers some of the deeper and more emotional aspects of racial inequality through the lens of people whose stories have been marginalized. Through painstaking research and sensitivity, she has taken a multitude of historic facts and written a complex and entertaining novel that illuminates the timeless power of love, the nobility of endurance, and the persistent reality of racial inequality.



Reviewer: Anne Neal
Longbourn by Jo Baker (2013)

Genre: Historical Fiction

The world of *Pride and Prejudice* is enhanced with the addition of the lives and characters of the servants in the Bennet household.

Jo Baker has not only imagined what goes on “below the stairs” but has created entire new characters and circumstances for readers to care about and appreciate.

This is a satisfying novel in the Regency style in which to immerse oneself.

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, said Jojen. The man who never reads lives only one.”
– George R.R. Martin in *A Dance With Dragons*

FALL/WINTER CALENDAR

November 1-12, **Cookbook Sale** in The Vault, Auberry Library

Thursday November 10, **Anne Neal Speaker: Peace Corps Ecuador by Tom Catchpole.** 7:30-9 pm, Auberry Library

December 1-22, **Holiday Book Sale** in The Vault, Auberry Library

Saturday December 3, **Bake Sale.** 10am – 5 pm, Auberry Library

Saturday December 3, **Blood Drive.** 10:30 am - 2 pm, Auberry Library

Friday, December 16, **Concert: Shap Hill Jazz Project** featuring seven of the Central Valley's finest jazz musicians. 7:30-9:00 p.m. Auberry Library (yes, indoors)

ABOUT US

Friends of the Auberry Library (FOAL)

A registered non-profit since 2005

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FOAL Focus Newsletter

Connie Schlaefer, Editor

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