

Somerville Council on Aging Book Club

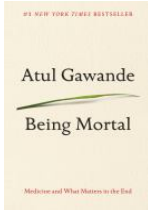
Everyone is welcome to join our monthly Book Club

Third Friday of each month

Holland Street Center 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Being Mortal - Atul Gawande

on Friday November 16

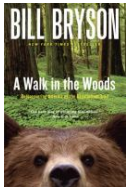


Gawande tackles the hardest challenge of his profession: how medicine can not only improve life but also the process of its ending. Medicine has triumphed in modern times, transforming birth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the inevitable condition of aging and death, the goals of medicine seem too frequently to run counter to the interest of the human spirit. Nursing homes, preoccupied with safety, pin patients into railed beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals isolate the dying, checking for vital signs long after the goals of cure have become moot. Doctors, committed to extending life, continue to carry out devastating procedures that in the end extend suffering.

Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be rich and dignified. He asserts that medicine can comfort and enhance our experience even to the end, providing not only a good life but also a good end.

A Walk in The Woods – Bill Bryson

on Friday December 21



Leisurely walks in the Cotswolds during a 20-year sojourn in England hardly prepared Bryson for the rigors of the Appalachian Trail. Nevertheless, he and his friend Katz, both 40-something couch potatoes, set out on a cold March morning to walk the 2000-mile trail from Georgia to Maine. Overweight and out of shape, Katz jettisoned many of his provisions on the first day out. After eight days of stumbling up and down mountains in the rain and mud, they came to Gatlinburg, TN. Acknowledging they would never make it the whole way, they decided to skip the rest of the Smokies and head for the Blue Ridge Mountains of

Virginia by car. Late that summer, for their last hike, the pair attempted to hike the Hundred Mile Wilderness in Maine, near the trail's end. They got separated and Bryson spent a day and night searching for his friend. When they finally were reunited, "...we decided to leave the endless trail and stop pretending we were mountain men because we weren't." This often hilarious account of the foibles of two inept adventurers is sprinkled with fascinating details of the history of the AT. In his more serious moments, Bryson argues for the protection of this fragile strip of wilderness.

A Spool of Blue Thread – Anne Tyler

on Friday January 18



"It was a beautiful, breezy, yellow-and-green afternoon. . ." This is how Abby Whitshank always begins the story of how she fell in love with Red that day in July 1959. The Whitshanks are one of those families that radiate togetherness: an indefinable, enviable kind of specialness. But they are also like all families, in that the stories they tell themselves reveal only part of the picture." Abby and Red and their four grown children have accumulated not only tender moments, laughter, and celebrations, but also jealousies, disappointments, and carefully guarded secrets. From Red's father and mother, newly arrived in Baltimore in the 1920s, to Abby and Red's grandchildren carrying the family legacy boisterously into the twenty-first century, here are four generations of Whitshanks, their lives unfolding in and around the sprawling, lovingly worn Baltimore house that has always been their anchor. Brimming with all the insight, humor, and generosity of spirit that are the hallmarks of Anne Tyler's work,

NOTE: All three of these selections seem to be readily available. We have not chosen alternates.

Books are available at the Somerville Public Library – Main Branch.

Ask for the Somerville COA book at the circulation desk, they will check the book out on your library card.