

MORSELS FOR THE MIND BOOK GROUP

Date: February 19, 2018 **Hostess:** Laura

Book Title: News of the World

Author: Paulette Jiles

Book Synopsis: It is 1870 and Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd travels through northern Texas, giving live readings to paying audiences hungry for news of the world. An elderly widower who has lived through three wars and fought in two of them, the captain enjoys his rootless, solitary existence. In Wichita Falls, he is offered a \$50 gold piece to deliver a young orphan to her relatives in San Antonio. Four years earlier, a band of Kiowa raiders killed Johanna's parents and sister; sparing the little girl, they raised her as one of their own. Recently rescued by the U.S. army, the ten-year-old has once again been torn away from the only home she knows. Their 400-mile journey south through unsettled territory and unforgiving terrain proves difficult and at times dangerous. Johanna has forgotten the English language, tries to escape at every opportunity, throws away her shoes, and refuses to act "civilized." Yet as the miles pass, the two lonely survivors tentatively begin to trust each other, forging a bond that marks the difference between life and death in this treacherous land. Arriving in San Antonio, the reunion is neither happy nor welcome. The captain must hand Johanna over to an aunt and uncle she does not remember - strangers who regard her as an unwanted burden. A respectable man, Captain Kidd is faced with a terrible choice: abandon the girl to her fate or become - in the eyes of the law - a kidnapper himself. Exquisitely rendered and morally complex, News of the World is a brilliant work of historical fiction that explores the boundaries of family, responsibility, honor, and trust.

Our Review: Pretty much everyone loved this book, especially the two main characters.

Food Served: BBQ chicken sliders, baked beans with bacon, cowboy "caviar" and chips, roasted cauliflower, trail mix, corny corn muffins, divinity and salt water taffy. Texas Sheet cake for dessert.

Highlights of Discussion: Use of (or lack of) quotation marks for dialogue was frustrating for a few of us, whereas others didn't even notice. Anne brought bullet cases – one filled with birdshot and the other with dimes! Couldn't find anything online to indicate if news readers were common, although Laura's great grandma worked in a cigar factory in GR around 1900, and readers were used. We were also curious as to why Indians "stole" white children. Why did the Kiowa in this story keep Johanna, yet kill her family?

Attendance: everyone except Sandy

Business/Suggestions: Switching months – March will be at Anne's to discuss Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk instead of Ginny's (because Meg's baby is due!)