

MORSELS FOR THE MIND BOOK GROUP

Date: January 19, 2015

Hostess: Nancy Schellenberg

Book Title: The Signature of All Things

Author: Elizabeth Gilbert

Book Synopsis: Alma, the daughter of the wealthy entrepreneur Henry Whittaker and his Dutch wife Beatrix, was born in 1800. She receives an excellent education at an early age, and her freedom to roam the family's White Acre estate in Philadelphia led to her early interest and talent in botany, and later evolution. Sadly, Alma's gifts did not include beauty and social niceties. Her lonely life is upending when she meets and falls for Ambrose Pike, a gifted but rather unbalanced artist. The marriage does not connect on a physical level, so Ambrose is exiled to Tahiti. Alma embarks to Tahiti to learn of his fate, learning much about the world and most importantly, herself. Her journey ends in Holland where she connects with her Dutch family and ultimately leads a fulfilling professional and family life

Our Review: We thought the book was ripe for discussion, from Alma and Ambrose's brief and unusual marriage, to the eccentric Whittakers and Alma's fascination with science and the natural world. It was filled with well developed characters such as Retta, Hanneke, Prudence, Tomorrow Morning, Rev. Welles, Sister Matu, Roger the Dog, and Uncle Dees. The author's research about major figures in evolution added to the book.

Food Served: Cinnamon pineapple, Gouda with pumpernickel, pastrami dip with endive, Droste chocolates, cranberry tart with whipped cream, assorted ciders, pop, wines, coffee, tea, and Boerenjongens, a traditional Dutch liqueur.

Highlights of Discussion: We appreciated Gilbert's characters, and there was much speculation about relationships among Alma, Ambrose, and Tomorrow Morning. We agreed that Hanneke De Groot and Dees were favorites. Ambrose's strange personality was the basis for much discussion, as were Alma's sexual urges and frustrations.

Attendance: Mary and Sandy were absent enjoying warmer climates.

Business/Suggestions: Ginny asked that we bring our dietary supplements to the next meeting on February 16 for the discussion of Radical Remissions.