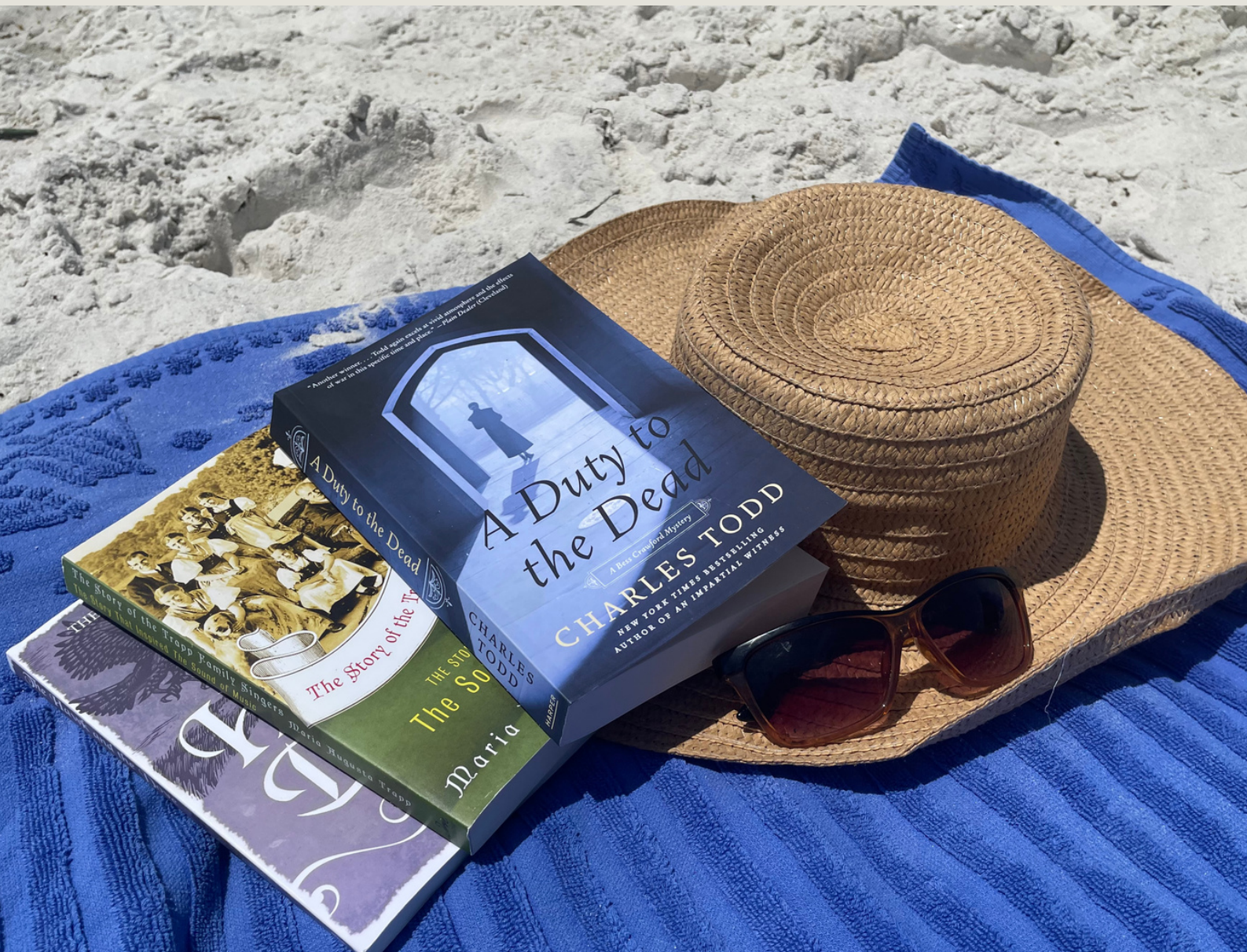




Well-Read Mom

Summer Reads 2022



READ MORE. READ WELL.



WELL-READ MOM SUMMER 2022

Welcome to the Well-Read Mom Summer Reads!

Our official reading list for the year wraps up in June to give our members a chance to catch up on the reading of their choice.

However, if you're looking for something to read over the summer, a few of our Well-Read Mom members recommended the following books. They're typically lighter than our monthly choices, although still worth your time. Use the reflections and discussion questions on your own or share them with a friend!

- 03 [Well-Read Mom Mission & Method](#)
- 05 [*The Hawk and the Dove*](#)
by Penelope Wilcock
- 07 [*The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*](#)
by Maria Augusta Trapp
- 09 [*A Duty to the Dead*](#)
by Charles Todd

If you enjoy the Well-Read Mom experience, we welcome you to join us for the 2022-23 reading year which begins in September. (Registration opens in July.)

Already a member? Invite a friend.

We'll be reading books around the theme of the "Giver."
Please join us!

Please note: The book titles in this document are links. By purchasing books through our affiliate sites not only do you get the Well-Read Mom suggested editions, but a small portion of the sale comes back to help financially support Well-Read Mom. If you decide to purchase through Amazon we ask that you thoughtfully consider using Amazon Smile and select Well-Read Mom as your non-profit of choice.

Scan this QR code
for more information



Well-Read Mom

MISSION

METHOD

VISION

Our Mission

Well-Read Mom accompanies women in the reading of great books and spiritual classics to encourage personal growth, friendship, and meaningful conversations in order to explore the human condition and reorient ourselves to what is good, beautiful, and true.

Our Method

Women stay together in the reading as we compare and share literature.

- **Accompany:** As we accompany one another, there is accountability, support, and a sense of belonging that helps to foster the habit of regular reading. Staying on pace together and reading the same books across the nation facilitates awareness of a wider and deeper cultural conversation.
- **Read:** We give ourselves permission to find time and space to read the selected literature, allowing it to penetrate our minds and hearts.
- **Compare:** We enter into the drama of the story and examine our own questions as they come forth, asking, "What does this mean for my life?"
- **Share:** We first listen to the WRM prepared monthly audio and then discuss the book, offering something of ourselves through sharing personal insights and experiences, along with conversation and questions that arise from the text.

Our Vision

In Well-Read Mom, women read more and read well. Our hope is to deepen the awareness of meaning hidden in each woman's daily life, elevate the cultural conversation, and revitalize reading literature from books.

Our Goals

- To suggest works of literature that encourage women to grow intellectually, spiritually, and personally through deepened thought and conversation.
- To foster meaningful friendship among women and thus to counteract the increasing isolation characteristic of our culture.
- To deepen awareness of the immensity of meaning hidden in each woman's daily life.
- To build community locally and nationally through meetings and Well-Read Mom events.
- To provide original resource materials that illuminate the literature through the lens of Catholic tradition.
- To encourage intentional family life, reading in the home, and all mothers' awareness of their unique presence in the heart of the family.

Well-Read Mom

INVITES YOU TO

RECLAIM TIME FOR READING AND FRIENDSHIP

It can be a challenge to make time to read in a world that never stops. Developing and maintaining the ability for deep reading isn't something we can take for granted. Millions of Americans won't read a single book this year. Don't let yourself be one of them.



WHAT WE DO:

In Well-Read Mom, women read more and read well. We hope to deepen the awareness of meaning hidden in each woman's daily life, elevate the cultural conversation, and revitalize reading literature from books.

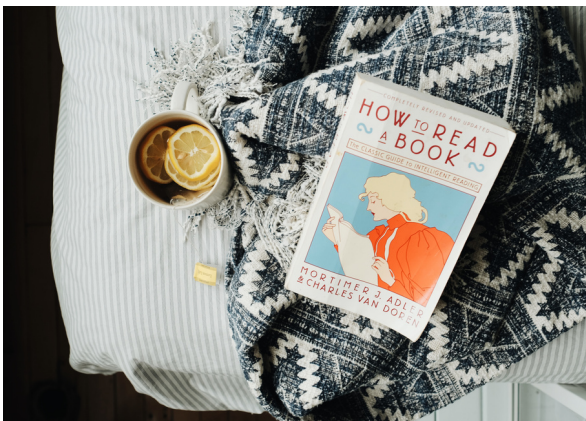
OUR BOOKLIST:

We read books that encourage, enlighten, and motivate us to dive deeper into the plots of our own lives. Great writers become dear friends and we find ourselves seeing reality through their eyes, imbued with their insights.



FIND YOUR COMMUNITY:

Join an existing group, start a group, or, if you're not ready for a small-group experience, read along with a friend. As we accompany one another, there is accountability, support, and a sense of belonging that helps to foster the habit of regular reading.



Let Well-Read Mom help you form beautiful friendships.

A PLAN THAT WORKS:

There is no "failing" when you join Well-Read Mom. With our tips, support, and accountability, you'll read more and read well—whether that means finishing a heavy-hitter like *Crime and Punishment* or a few pages of a classic work like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We meet you where you're at.

VISIT WELLREADMOM.COM TO JOIN NOW, START A GROUP, OR TO FIND OUT MORE.

THE HAWK AND THE DOVE

PENELOPE WILCOCK



ORDINARY SACRIFICE

A Reflection by Rachel Digman

More than once, on a rough day of parenting, I have considered what it would have been like to have been called to religious life instead of marriage and family. The needs of children, husband, and household can be overwhelming even for the most organized, spiritually in-tune, and healthy woman, much less the overtired, scattered, and defeated mother I feel I am at the moment.

Consequently, the characters in *The Hawk and the Dove* were a refreshing touch with reality as I glimpsed the inner workings of both religious and married life. And in each, there was a takeaway that illuminated the beauty and pain of human relationships.

First, I was struck by the literalness of the posture of forgiveness in the monastery. While I work to set an example of forgiveness in my home, I rarely take it to the formality of kneeling down and humbly waiting to be forgiven. My quick or muttered “sorry” pales in comparison both in style and sincerity. The actual kneeling that the monks do, particularly Father Peregrine in his discomfort, is an outward gesture that facilitates inward humility while discouraging pride and the taking up of an offense.

And though Father Peregrine is a priest ensconced in a monastery while I am a mother in a home, we both have a sense of responsibility to be an example to our children and those placed in our care. It is humiliating and liberating to bend and apologize to those we have authority over. But what better lesson do I want to pass on to my children and the next generation than that of how to forgive and ask for forgiveness graciously?

The second gesture that stuck with me was the ordinary act of love shown by Melissa’s mother in her routine of sitting with little Cecily until she fell asleep. This same choice of love is one I have made multiple times with my toddlers to help them bridge the gap into learning to sleep on their own. But what a sacrifice it is for a parent to lay down what they want to do at that time of night and sit for another half hour (or more!) with a child who wants them.

“It was one of those brief spells of complete happiness that come once in a rare while, an unlooked for gift of God, when the forces of darkness, of sorrow and temptation seem miraculously held back, a breathing space in the battle.” -The Hawk and the Dove

I love how the author wove that small detail into the story, yet it is that very choice that the mother makes that allows her to tell the stories of Father Peregrine to young Melissa. As women, especially mothers, we have these unique opportunities to share stories as we are given hours with our children before bed, in the car, at mealtimes, during bath time, or during chores. Storytelling is a way of bonding, leading, teaching, and passing on values, preserving the goodness and truth handed to us.

Melissa's mother and Father Peregrine are great reminders for me to put down my phone, forget pop culture news, look at the people in front of me, accept them for who they are, and love them by serving them in the way they need at that moment. Whether it is painfully peeling potatoes to set an example or sacrificing TV time to help a child fall asleep, whether in the middle of a medieval monastery or on a couch in a family home, wherever we are is the time and place for forgiveness and sacrifice.

Forgiveness and sacrifice together can bring the gift of peace into our home. Melissa observes at evening vespers, “What a gift [peace is]!... I had been brought up with the flavour and texture of it in our home. Peace, at the very core of things, constant, unobtrusive, like the humming of the fridge and the ticking of the clock. Peace, freely given.” I hope that my children will say something similar years from now when they think about their childhood home.

Rachel Digman is a homeschooling mother of five children, ages 2 to 11. She enjoys reading, watching TV, and playing board games with her kids. She and her husband live in Madison, WI, and enjoy living close to Lake Mendota, canoeing in the summer, and playing on the ice in the winter. She is part of a wonderful Well-Read Mom group with which she looks forward to meeting each month.

Discussion Questions

- What details of the monastic life interested you? How has this story compared with your own experiences with religious life or your other vicarious experiences through books (e.g., *In This House of Brede* or *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy*)?
- Consider the details shared about Melissa's family and how they operated, such as the family being just in time for church, the father taking care of the dishes, or the grandmother giving the mother a childcare break, etc. What part of their home life appealed to you, and what features struck you as odd? How did it match with your upbringing or your current family life?
- In Chapter V, we see Father Peregrine at a low point in his life and very much in pain. His uncle wisely admonishes him, saying, “Prayer and fasting are all very well, but you're not adding common sense to the recipe. You can't possibly undertake your responsibility to this community when you are half dead with fatigue and aching from head to foot!” How can we take Brother Edward's advice as working women and mothers? Where in your life might you need to add common sense to the recipe to undertake your responsibility better? In your prayer life, work life, parenting, health, or relationships?
- Which character in the story did you identify with most? What character would you like to be if you could enter the story, either in Melissa's or Father Peregrine's time?
- Were you surprised by Father Peregrine's shady past? How did his past (both his actions and those of his father) play a role in his vocation? How does your past become something you must overcome or embrace?
- How has storytelling played a role in your life?

THE STORY OF THE TRAPP FAMILY SINGERS

THE STORY THAT INSPIRED THE SOUND OF MUSIC

by Maria Augusta Trapp

FAMILY AND THE TIES THAT BIND

A Reflection by Eileen Larkin Wilkin

Early in my reading of *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, I thought of the saying, “The family that prays together stays together.” My parents instilled prayer in our family life: they also instilled play, and I long ago decided the saying should be, “The family that prays and plays together stays together.” I believe both were key to keeping us thirteen Larkin kids from drifting apart after our parents passed away.

As I read Maria’s memoir, I realized the saying could be, “The family that prays, plays, works, sings, and cultivates tradition together stays together.” Imagine my delight when I came upon Maria’s own words: “A family which sings together, plays together, and prays together, usually stays together” (pp.272-273). She didn’t include work or tradition, but I dare say she would agree they fit. They are like strands of a rope, intertwined, forming a bond that will not break. They kept the Trapp family together; they did the same for the Larkins.

There is another thread worth weaving in: family stories. For this reflection, I sought to learn more about my family’s connections with the real Trapps and the primarily fictionalized ones of *The Sound of Music*. The Trapp family crossed paths with mine before I was born. My mom’s sister Joanne worked at the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont for several years and greatly admired Maria. While in Minnesota, Maria spent time with my Grandma and Grandpa Schuler (“Omi” and “Pop”). She also visited my mom, who told me the real Maria was not the willowy, mild-mannered Julie Andrews version. Whether Joanne or the shared Austrian heritage precipitated these connections, no one to whom I talked remembers.

We also have stories connected to the musical which was part of my childhood. Dan told me *The Sound of Music* was Mom’s ideal of home and family life! This was a revelation to me, yet it rang true. Mom (especially) and Dad wove singing, praying, playing, working, and traditions into our childhood. My mom starred as Maria in a stage production when I was a toddler. The once-a-year TV broadcast was the only way to see the movie when I was growing up, so it was always an event. Like Maria, Mom loved teaching songs to us, in parts and with actions. We have a family movie of my older siblings performing “So Long, Farewell” in our back yard. Dan, wearing liederhosen and Tyrolean hat, looked none-too-happy singing in front while the rest popped out to say “cuckoo!”

I truly enjoyed hearing these anecdotes. I regret not asking my grandparents more questions when I had the chance, but I resolve to learn more stories from older relatives still among us. As grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles, we also have stories worth sharing. Let's not wait to be asked.

I found it oddly reassuring to learn less rosy aspects of the Trapp family. As Maria said, the public tended to romanticize them, but no family is without messiness—not Trapps, not Schulers, not Larkins, not Wilkins. Despite that, I still believe the threads of prayer, song, play, work, traditions, and stories are ties that bind. We may not wind them perfectly, and it doesn't mean the rope won't be stretched and frayed, but it's worth the effort. Those strands, twisted together, may very well keep it from breaking.

There are ways to seal rope ends to prevent unraveling and fraying, such as capping or heat-sealing. The seal for family bonds must be love. “As the weeks, the months, the years go by, we see more and more that only one thing is necessary to be happy and to make others happy, and that one thing is not money, nor connections, nor health—it is love.” – Maria Augusta Trapp (p.311)

Eileen Larkin Wilkin lives in Mendota Heights, MN, with her husband and the youngest two of their five children, who attend Trinity School at River Ridge. Eileen holds bachelor's degrees in music and French, and a master's degree in piano performance and pedagogy. In June 2021, she “retired” after twenty years of homeschooling, with goals of giving more time to writing, prayer, daily Mass, exercise, and cleaning and organizing the entire house. She's still working on those, with varying degrees of success.



Discussion Questions

- Share how you experienced the formation of family bonds in your childhood through one or more of the ways the Trapp family did: prayer, play, music, work, traditions, and stories. Were there others?
- Can you point to ways these strands have helped/are helping form bonds between you, your husband, and your children? Are there any you would like to begin instilling or do more of? Has the story of the Trapp family encouraged or inspired you?
- The Trapp family's faith sustained them through many trials. They put their trust in God and turned to Scripture for guidance and reassurance. They also cultivated faith and family life traditions, giving the seasons and years beautiful meaning and depth. Discuss examples from the memoir. Were there any that especially inspired you?
- On p.195, Maria writes, “We had learned that work—whatever it may be—honors you and makes you free. Further, we found out that as long as you are willing to work, America is still the land of unlimited opportunities. It is up to you to use them.” What examples of this in the Trapp family stood out to you? Today in the U.S., we see a push for equality of outcomes rather than equality of opportunity. Discuss this in light of Maria's words and the Trapp family's example.

A DUTY TO THE DEAD

CHARLES TODD

A DUTY TO THE DEAD, A BESS CRAWFORD MYSTERY

A Reflection by Ana Braga-Henebry

With the amount of time the pandemic provided (I am a part-time Latin teacher who taught online for a year) I started looking for new reading adventures. I read, or listened to, all of Wodehouse books and went on to enjoy the Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey books. As I have long been a fan of Agatha Christie, my husband suggested the Bess Crawford Mysteries, by Charles Todd. Like Miss Marple of Agatha Christie fame, Bess Crawford's behavior is appropriate. Yet the two resemble each other in little else: Bess is young and restless, and no quaint village makes her home. She bounces back and forth from England to France as a World War I nurse and reaches Wales, Scotland, and Ireland in later books. This series hooked me from the beginning. And as my daughter was spending a lot of time in the hospital with our grandson with special needs, she too started enjoying the Bess Crawford Mysteries. We both thought WRM members could certainly follow suit this summer, sitting in their fruitful gardens, chilled Chardonnay in hand.

Can a murder mystery series be in a literature book club? Most of us are aware of the high level of writing in Agatha Christie's or P D James' mysteries, among many. The stories in the Bess Crawford Mysteries revolve around the mysteries Bess solves, but her detecting adventures do not limit her growth as a character. The charming traits of this protagonist include, first, the love and admiration she has for her parents. Together, they often reminisce about their early years in India, especially as those memories become interwoven in her adventures.

The relationship between Bess and her father—a strong, powerful man whom she respects and loves—reminded me of my relationship with my dad. My father was an intense, deeply religious, moral man, a lover of art and music, faithful, intelligent, and unforgettable. His large personality could be intimidating, even to some of my siblings. Since my early years, I felt that we were like-minded, and we had a rich, honest and beautiful relationship. Throughout my married years in the United States, we wrote letters and loved each other from a distance, and we thoroughly enjoyed our meetings. Reading Bess brought all that back into my heart with much gratitude.

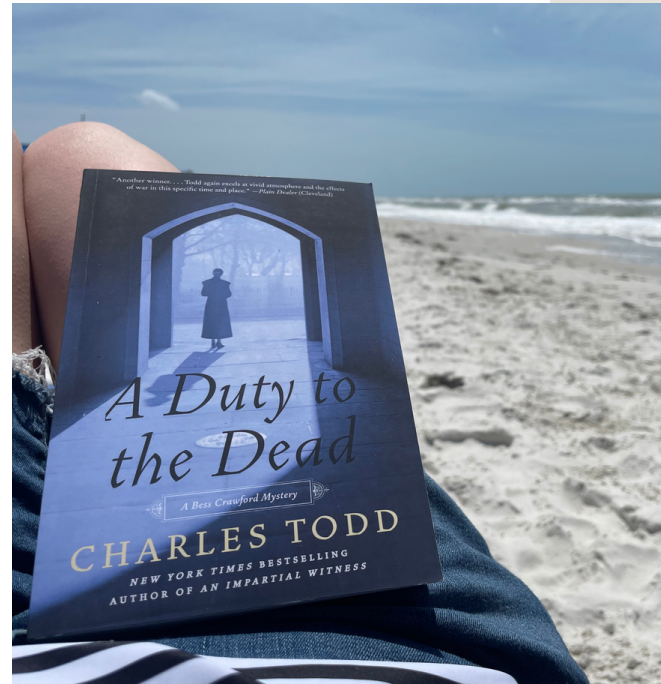
Bess deals with men during World War I, and they are, at times, clearly on the brink of despair or at death's door. Yet the language is consistently clean and non-offensive. They may "swear under their breath" from time to time. So many say, "graphic language (or scenes) are needed to show what is going on" in literature and films. I disagree. Author Charles Todd (the pen name for a mother and son team) shows this masterfully. The reader is aware of the

"Sometimes you see briefly into someone's heart, and it becomes a bond between you that goes beyond friendship."

—A Duty To The Dead

violence happening—and yes, these are murder mysteries—but the excellent writing avoids gratuitous, excessively graphic scenes of violence or sex or language. This author team is remarkable for their respectful portrayal of family, clerics, and Catholic history in the UK.

Duty to the Dead is the first of Bess Crawford's Mysteries. The back cover says, "Dedicated to helping the many wounded during the Great War, Bess Crawford receives a desperate request from a dying lieutenant while serving as a nurse aboard a hospital ship." Enjoy a character who is virtuous, smart, fun, and independent. Enjoy the serious, excellent writing, not without the occasional humor and the impeccable, instructive historical background. If your summer allows for books that may spill into the fall semester, rejoice: there are many more Bess Crawford Mysteries waiting for you. The books in this series become better and better. I am eagerly waiting for the next title to come out!



Ana Braga-Henebry is from Rio de Janeiro. She received a master's degree from UTD, writing a thesis on the poetry of a Brazilian Benedictine monk. After homeschooling seven children with her academic husband Geoff, Ana started teaching Latin in parochial schools. In summer, audiobooks are her gardening companions; writing, her rainy day challenges. Daily mass and prayer time are the highlights of her happy days, which also include cooking for others, conversations about good books, and the delightful grandchildren.

Discussion Questions

- Bess spends time weighing her family's expectations and her independence and plans. Do you think the author convincingly conveyed this common dilemma? How does it relate to times in your life when you were in Bess' shoes?
- An essential part of the *Bess Crawford Mysteries* is World War I. Discuss some of the facets of this war that may have been new to you.
- Bess's relationships with her good friends and the owner of the flat she rents with friends in London—where "no gentleman over the age of 12 is ever allowed"—are all loving, fun, and appropriate. Bess lives the values her parents expect of her because she believes in them. What a genuinely refreshing find in contemporary literature! Discuss the relationship between Bess and her flatmates in London. Does it remind you of connections you may have had with roommates in college or professional life?
- Does your family, when gathered for the holidays or a reunion, enjoy reminiscing about old places and times? Bess's memories of India come into play often in her stories. Do you have stories that feel now very far away, in time and space, that come to mind in your daily life?
- As a Catholic reader, I find solace in Bess' character. Her ethical and morally strong traits, along with the absence of offensive language, make this book a pleasant read for me. Do you enjoy this genre? What other authors of this genre you have enjoyed? Compare them with Charles Todd.



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US

We want all women who participate in Well-Read Mom to enjoy our beautiful materials. When a woman joins Well-Read Mom, she is not just purchasing a booklist or product; she is joining and supporting a movement of women who want to read more and read well. We are so proud that we are a part of deepening the awareness of meaning in women's daily lives, elevating the cultural conversation, and revitalizing the reading of literature. Well-Read Mom couldn't exist without the financial support our members provide. We are proud to say that, due to the generosity of our members, no woman is turned away due to financial need.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Ready to start a group? Contact us at info@wellreadmom.com.

We'll add you to our Leader Roster and send you our free Leader Training Materials that will get your group off to a great start. These include resources for hosting an informational meeting, a Well-Read Mom brochure, and an editable flyer to publicize your group.

REGISTER AT WELLREADMOM.COM

Once you have a group of interested women, each one will visit WellReadMom.com to register and select the membership level of her choice. She will also note you as her Leader.

ACCESS OUR MATERIALS

After she registers and pays the membership fee, she'll have immediate access to our online materials, including our current and past booklists, monthly audios, podcasts, and video resources. We'll mail her printed materials beginning in late July for the membership year starting in September and within 7–10 business days for anyone who joins during the year.



JOIN TODAY

WWW.WELLREADMOM.COM

"Well-Read Mom takes the guesswork out of what to read and shares tips to make reading possible - even when the kids are young." - Lisa (WRM member)

LET'S GET IN TOUCH

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