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Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings

*The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*

Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, Random House, 2008

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

If you have never read an epistolary novel (or even if you have), this charming tale is a wonderful place to begin (or begin anew). Set just after the Second World War, the story unfolds entirely and gracefully through a series of letters written to or received by the protagonist, Juliet Ashton.

Juliet, a young London author who has established a reputation by writing morale-boosting newspaper columns during the war, is searching somewhat frantically for a topic for her next book. Unexpectedly she receives an intriguing letter from one Dawsey Adams, a farmer living on the English Channel island of Guernsey, English territory occupied and fortified by the Germans during World War II. It seems that Dawsey has come into possession of a used book of Charles Lamb’s essays with Juliet’s name and address inside as the previous owner.

Even though the German occupation is over, there are no bookstores left on the island, and since he is quite taken with Lamb's essays, he writes to ask how he might obtain another book of them. In his letter, Dawsey refers to the Guernsey literary and potato peel pie society. This brief reference, of course, peaks Juliet's interest and in the letters that follow between her and other residents of Guernsey a remarkable tale unfolds, a tale of the redeeming power of literature and of human courage and connection in the face of extreme duress.

- Judi Morrel is associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and associate professor of mathematics at Butler University.