

## BOOK CLUB HAS TAKEN FLIGHT—JOIN US FOR THE RIDE

Spring is here and it's time to cultivate our garden with new intellectual pursuits. AATF chapters in many regions across the U.S. have organized successful Book Club meetings. What a pleasure it has been for teachers to read a book and discuss it with colleagues who are knowledgeable about literature! Why not plan a Book Club meeting for your chapter before coming to Quebec for the convention? Teachers are finding joy in the discovery of the great literature emanating from Quebec. There will be Book Club discussions led by experts in Quebec literature at the July convention. Analyses of these works, as well as pedagogical approaches to teaching them, will be presented. Everyone is welcome to come and share their ideas. Why not come aboard the AATF Book Club and order one of the books today!

In the January issue of the *National Bulletin*, we featured discussion questions on *Cet été qui chantait* by Gabrielle Roy. Here are some food-for-thought questions on the other two novels on the list:

*Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* by Marie-Claire Blais was hailed as a masterpiece both in North America and in Western Europe when it first appeared. It received international acclaim by winning the Prix Médicis. Discovered by the critic Edmund Wilson, Blais has become an icon of Quebec literature and is considered to be one of the most important writers of our era. Here are some suggestions for discussion:

- Probably one of the most innovative and unique literary techniques used in this novel is the use of the point of view of a newborn infant in the opening chapter. Comment on how this and other techniques used by Blais enhance the artistic value of this work. i.e. her use of language, play of words, poetry, etc.
- Critics have tended to see in this work a microcosm of Quebec society. How do the basic institutions of family and religion become a source of alienation for the characters.
- How is the concept of love presented? Describe the ways the characters express this emotion. You may start with Grand-mère Antoinette, Héloïse, Jean-Le Maigre. Could Jean-Le Maigre be a portrayal of Blais herself?
- What role does the use of black humor play in this work? Would it have as much artistic value if this were not used?

For analyses of this work, see the following sources:

Robertson Davies, "A Season in the Life of Emmanuel." *New York Times Book*

*Review*, August 21, 1966, p. 28.

Edmund Wilson, Preface to *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, (1966) 1980, pp. v-ix.

*Salut Galarneau* by Jacques Godbout, is the third book on Myrna's List. The year following its publication, it won the Governor General's Award. The multi-talented Godbout is a novelist, playwright, poet, and filmmaker. He occupies a quintessential place in Quebec culture. Some suggestions for your guided reading might be:

- Jacques Godbout has seen his writing as part of French literature, but more particularly as American literature in French. What evidence of American culture is found in this work?
- How does Godbout's use of language reflect Quebec society of the time? How does it add to the humor and artistry of the novel? What role does writing play in this work?
- Godbout describes the mother in *Salut Galarneau* as being "like the big actresses who danced with Fred Astaire." Compare the mother in this work to that of the mothers in other Quebec novels. e.g. *Bonheur d'occasion* or *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, etc. How does the portrayal of the feminine condition, sexuality, reflect the evolution of Quebec society?
- What makes this work distinctively Québécois yet universal in its emotions?

For analyses of this work, see the following sources:

"Reviews of *Hail Galarneau!*" *Tamarack Review*, no. 57, Summer, 1971, pp. 86-87.

Jacques Godbout, "Literature Forms Part of the Quebec Scheme," *Ellipse*, No.6, Winter, 1971, pp. 10-11.

Each of these inexpensive books can be purchased from Exportlivre: e-mail: [order@exportlivre.com]; Fax: (450) 671-2121; Tel: (450) 671-3888. Contact persons: Colette Dupuis and Thomas Deri. Just mention when ordering that you are a member of the AATF and you will be eligible to receive a discount. Prices do not include shipping, which will vary according to the number of books ordered and their shipping destinations.

We wish you all *bonne lecture!* Please write and let us know news of your Book Club Meetings. You may also write to me for further discussion questions or for an exchange of ideas at: [delsonkaran@yahoo.com].

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