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2016 A Novel Idea  
... READ TOGETHER

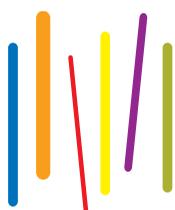


# Euphoria.

AUTHOR

**LILY KING**

SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2016 • 2:00 P.M.  
Bend High Auditorium



DESCHUTES PUBLIC  
**LIBRARY**  
FOUNDATION

Free tickets are available at [www.dplfoundation.org](http://www.dplfoundation.org)  
and all libraries beginning April 16, 2016.



# Lily King

## interview

**A NOVEL IDEA** **What drew you to Margaret Mead? Are there qualities you personally share with her?**

LILY KING I was initially drawn to the situation she was in at age 31 in Papua New Guinea, married to one man and falling in love with another while trying to remain focused on her work. Mead herself, from her biography, seemed pretty alien to me. She was always really ambitious, type A plus plus. On her first wedding night, when she married her first husband, Luther Cressman, at age 22, she told him she had some “headsplitting work” to do, and shut the bedroom door. I’m just not like that. But I do think I share with her a great desire to understand human nature, the full spectrum of it, and to document a bit of it in some way.

**It was intriguing to learn that Margaret Mead was a victim of spousal abuse. Why did you choose to include this intimate and vulnerable side of her in *Euphoria*?**

It seemed to me, once I started doing the research, that it was a crucial part of the story of her time in Papua New Guinea from 1931–33. Her husband, Reo Fortune, was always possessive and jealous, and he never should have married a woman who was so capable of having many intimate relationships with both men and women at the same time. But when they got to the Sepik and met Gregory Bateson, with whom Mead claimed she fell in love in about 36 hours, Reo’s frustrations grew and turned, on occasion, violent. When I started writing the fictional story, that impulse to violence became an inexorable part of his personality. It felt out of my control by that point, and I just had to follow the story that unfolded from there.

**Bankson’s story is front and center in the novel. How did his voice become most prominent? What did you find most compelling about him?**

I felt such tenderness for and connection to Bankson from the very start. At first I thought it would be enough to write him from Nell’s point of view, but by the second chapter he took over. I tried not to let him, and continued to keep in Nell’s perspective, or in all three of their perspectives—I kept trying it in different ways—but finally I gave in and let him tell his story. He was the emotional center of it. It just took me a while to figure that out.

**What research did it take for you to capture and understand the essence of Papua New Guinea and its people?**

I read everything that Mead and Bateson wrote about the area, then I read more modern anthropologists, and travelogues of anyone I could find. I do not claim to understand the essence of the place and the people, not at all. I just tried to give a believable impression of a fictional tribe through the eyes of Westerners in the early 1930s. I feel like I had to do as much research to see things from their perspective in 1933 as I did anything else.

**Which character are you most like and why?**

Interesting question! I feel more like Bankson, I suppose. I identify with his inclination toward nostalgia—I think the book is a long look back, a sort of fondling of his best memories. And I think I would be the sort of anthropologist that he is, not wanting to bother anyone, not being as assertive as Nell or Fen. But I also do have a tenacity like Nell, a desire to see things through, to push through when

it all seems hopeless. *Euphoria* itself felt like that pretty much the whole time I was writing it!

**What was your path to writing? How has writing served your life?**

My path to writing was pretty straight. I always loved it, always knew it was what I wanted to do. I was lucky enough to go to a high school that offered creative writing classes, which I took for two semesters. I made sure I went to a college with a good English department, and eventually I heard about graduate school in creative writing, which I also did. I put in many years waiting tables after that, because I could write during the day and work at night. I also taught high school English, but after I published my first novel and had a baby (within six months of each other) I quit all other jobs except writing. I think I’ve always needed to write as a way to connect with myself, to know what’s in there.

**Describe how living in Maine has changed/formed you.**

I think Maine has been a really peaceful and easy place to live, write, and raise children. I discovered a thriving and supportive writers’ community that I had no idea even existed before I moved here. It’s really essential to have people around you who don’t think you’re crazy to do what you do, who can commiserate with all the doubt and tumult of writing a novel. My writer friends, and my writers’ group in particular, have been crucial to my career. Also, the winters in Maine are long and conducive to tea drinking and getting cozy with a notebook and pencil.

I’m really looking forward to meeting you all and discussing all this and more in person!

# Discussion

## book

**1.** Set against the lush tropical landscape of 1930s New Guinea, this novel charts British anthropologist Andrew Bankson's fascination for colleagues Nell Stone and her husband, Fen, a fascination that turns deadly. How far does the setting play a role in shaping events?

**2.** Over the course of the novel we learn a great deal about Bankson's childhood and young adulthood. Talk about the reasons and life events that brought him to anthropology. What has led him to the brink of suicide?

**3.** Discuss the ways in which Bankson's attitude toward his work changes as he gets to know Nell and her research methods.

**4.** Take your discussion of the previous question a step further by considering whether it is ever possible to truly know another person. Apply your observations to Bankson's views of Nell and Fen.

**6.** On several occasions during the novel, Nell refers to an Amy Lowell poem, "Decade." Why do you think the poem holds such meaning for her? How does the poem's central idea—of feelings for a lover changing from the sweet, almost painful intensity of red wine into the blissful satisfaction of bread—relate to her and her own relationships?

**7.** While Nell declares later that "He is wine and bread and deep in my stomach" (p. 247), do you believe that Bankson was able to give Nell the freedom she was looking for? How or how not? Could it have led inevitably to her death?

**8.** How far would you consider Nell to be the epitome of a young, independent accomplished woman? Talk about her character, her personality, work habits, and motivations. Then discuss her disturbing relationship with Fen, and her inability to escape his

**10.** Talk about the significance of the Grid to the three anthropologists. What does it represent to them? Why does Bankson refer to a "shift in the stars" caused by the Grid?

**11.** Discuss the glimpses the novel gives into the world of 1930s colonialism—in the conversations with Westerners in New Guinea and in Australia; and in Bankson's, Nell's, and Fen's attitudes to the tribes they study and the Western society to which they must eventually return.

**12.** Fen briefly mentions a dark family secret, then continues the conversation to discuss the primitive world versus the "civilized world": "Nothing in the primitive world shocks me, Bankson. Or I should say, what shocks me in the primitive world is any sense of order and ethics. All the rest—the cannibalism, infanticide, raids, mutilation—it's all comprehensible, nearly reasonable, to me. I've always been able to see the savageness beneath the veneer of society" (p. 137–38). What does this say about Fen? How far do you agree with his comment, especially in the light of events that follow in the novel?

**13.** For all of Nell and Bankson's heartfelt conversations, and Bankson's keen observations of her at work, there are many important things left unsaid. Nell states: "You don't realize how language actually interferes with communication...how it gets in the way like an overdominant sense" (p. 79). Should Bankson have understood further Nell's sadness within her marriage, Fen's physical abuse? As a reader, do we miss the clues too?

**14.** Discuss Fen's obsession with the flute, and the reasons why it ultimately leads to the destruction of so much: the anthropologists' relationship with the Tam tribe, Fen's relationship with Nell and Bankson.

**15.** Continue your discussion to consider whether an anthropologist must always betray in some way the tribes he/she works with. How does Nell writing books about the people she studies differ from Fen selling the flute to a museum? Was Nell's work in the field beneficial to the Tam or to the children of Kirakira? Are her reasons for working with them ultimately as selfish as Fen's need to profit from the flute?

**16.** Fen justifies taking the flute so that he can restore balance to his relationship with Nell: "There has to be a balance. A man can't be without power—it doesn't work like that" (p. 238). Contrast this with Nell's thoughts on balance: "[P]erhaps a culture that flourishes is a culture that has found a similar balance among its people" (p. 144). Do you think they are talking about the same thing? Does balance always need to rest on power?

*Find additional discussion questions at the back of Euphoria or at [www.lilykingbooks.com](http://www.lilykingbooks.com).*

## What do the three anthropologists really see in the tribes of New Guinea?

**5.** The theme of possession, of ownership, runs throughout the novel, twisting like the river Sepik itself through the relationships and conversations of the protagonists. Talk about Nell's search for "a group of people who give each other the room to be in whatever way they need to be" (p. 88). Has she found this kind of freedom in any of the tribes she has studied? In any of her relationships?

harm. How did she end up in such an untenable situation?

**9.** What do the three anthropologists really see in the tribes of New Guinea? To what extent, when unlocking the puzzles of the Kiona and the Tam, are they searching for meaning within themselves? How important is it to impending events that the Tam tribe appears to be female-dominated?

### A Novel Idea ... Read Together Selection Committee

Wylie Ackerman, Ruth Burleigh, Jo Caisse, Tina Walker Davis, Stacey Donohue, Liz Goodrich, Kim Jackson, Chantal Strobel

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# Based on a True Story

Lily King's *Euphoria* is inspired by a brief period in the life of Margaret Mead. King calls her work fiction, based on a true story, separating her work from biography and historical fiction by changing the names and the fates of the characters. The start of the novel closely follows the period in 1932 when Mead (Nell Stone in the novel) was working in New Guinea with her

names of the real people, she is also at liberty to change key facts about Mead's life story, to change history.

And yet, there are enough similarities to Mead's story to raise the question: are there any ethical concerns about taking a real person's life and fictionalizing it?

The benefits are obvious to the fiction writer. Mead wrote little about

tribes face. The anthropologist must remain clinically detached but is that possible? Nell and Fen tell Bankson that they would prefer to work with a tribe that has a nice beach, and good art, and they effectively recreate a home in suburbia, with curtains, books, and tea when they "live with" the tribe. Such cautious questioning of an admired anthropologist is easier for King to do through fiction.

Though Nell and Fen say they are both open to non-Western sexuality and gender roles, their relationship mimics traditional relationships. Nell's desire as an anthropologist is to escape all of that and find a society where they "give each other the room to be in whatever way they need to be." And although she posits she might never find the ideal society, she might "find parts of it in several cultures" (88) and create a new society that honors women like herself. It is an impossible goal. In real life, Mead is considered a major figure in cultural anthropology whose work about Samoan sexual relations and identities influenced the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Recent criticisms describe her work as being subjective, influenced by her own desire to find an ideal society.

King initially follows historical reality but reimagines the outcome. While this

works in terms of the novel, it is risky, especially given the number of anthropologists who will be drawn to a story about Mead. King's revision of Mead's fate might make anthropologists and Mead fans wonder what King's point is. Were early cultural anthropologists too arrogant, as greedy as Western colonialists in their willingness to destroy other cultures? This seems to be the one of the questions King wishes to explore, perhaps one she did not want to directly implicate with the very real Margaret Mead.

**Stacey Donohue** is Professor of English and Interim Instructional Dean at Central Oregon Community College. She teaches composition, autobiography and contemporary fiction classes, and is on the Executive Committee of the Modern Language Association's English Department Chairs working group. Donohue received her Ph.D. in English at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. She has lived in Bend since 1995.

## Why would a writer choose to explore real people's lives through fiction?

second husband, Reo Fortune (Fen), and the man who became her third husband, Gregory Bateson (Andrew Bankson). It is only in the second half of the novel that King reimagines history.

King's work becomes a hybrid of fiction and historical fiction, faux biography and fictionalized biography. Why would a writer choose to explore real people's lives through fiction?

Fictional biographies are popular. *Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan, *The Paris Wife* by Paula McClain, and *Wolf Hall* by Hillary Mantel have all spent time on the bestseller lists. Unlike *Euphoria*, however, the subjects of these novels maintain their names.

As with nonfiction biography, fictionalized biography requires a strict adherence to key historical facts, making in-depth research into the historical period critical for both genres. However, with fictional biography, the writer has room to make up events that happened behind the scenes of history, most of the dialogue, and, most importantly, the real person's interior monologue. And, in King's case, since she changed the

her time in New Guinea, her affair with Gregory Bateson, who became her third husband, her affair with anthropologist Ruth Benedict, known as Helen in the novel. Since Mead revealed little about these professional and sexual liaisons in her writing, a novelist, unlike a biographer, can imagine, rather than report based on nominal evidence.

Through fiction, King can use the essential elements of these real characters and events to serve a nonbiographical purpose, to explore big questions about anthropology. "When only one person is the expert on a particular people," Bankson asks, "do we learn more about the people or the anthropologist when we read the analysis?" A biographer may ask the same question, but ultimately must show how Mead's life and work address it. A novelist can explore it without the constraint of facts.

A novelist can also structure the plot of the narrative, rewriting the real history, to reflect the moral contradictions that cultural anthropologists working with remote



Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, and Reo Fortune, July 1933, arriving in Sydney, Australia for field work in New Guinea.

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mead/field-sepik.html>. "Group of Anthropologists Who Arrived on Macdhui," July 1933. Gelatin silver print. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (139a).

# A Brief History of Anthropology

*cultural*

Anthropology, specifically cultural anthropology, explores how people live in, make sense of, and interact with the world around us. As cultural anthropologists, we take as our starting point that various groups with diverse practices and beliefs are not discrete units of “culture” but that these groups have histories and interactions that shape experiences and motivations. We have concerns about representation and try to avoid exoticizing groups. As anthropologists, we attempt to balance our analysis of the human experience broadly without compromising the integrity and agency of the groups we study.

However, these were not always defining characteristics of the field. The emergence of anthropology as a scholarly discipline was profoundly shaped by the colonial experience of the 19th century. Anthropologists used the stories collected from sailors, colonial administrators, and

of the work of anthropology within the realm of the natural sciences. Anthropological findings and collections were presented in natural history museums, alongside the flora and fauna of distant colonial territories.

Important shifts began to occur in the early 20th century. Franz Boas urged his students to spend time living and interacting with the people they were studying. He argued that the role of the anthropologist was to understand cultures on their own terms rather than basing their evaluations on the degree of difference from western society. While Boas advocated the collection of cultural particulars, his students, including Margaret Mead, worked to uncover patterns of culture that could be generalized to explain the human condition broadly. Anthropologists still operated under the assumption that their observations of specific groups were descriptions of discrete units of

colonial experience, contemporary anthropology took shape in the context of the post-colonial era. As the colonial holdings began exerting their political independence, the people of these newly created nations began critiquing the ways in which anthropologists had claimed authority over their public representations. These challenges to anthropological authority and critiques of anthropological representations spurred a crisis in anthropology.

Anthropologists today are much more reflective about our role in the field; how and with whom we interact and how these may shape the information we gather. We are much more aware of the ways in which even seemingly isolated groups are already part of a larger global web, in which specific historical events and global economic systems contribute to local experiences. We recognize that these same processes are at play in our own lives as well. Although the anthropology of today is understood and practiced differently, anthropology owes much to Mead and her cohort. Mead brought anthropology to the public and encouraged us to question many of our long-standing assumptions about the nature of gender and sex and the role of women in society and in science.

## Anthropologists today are much more reflective about our role in the field.

missionaries to construct grand narratives of human cultural evolution. These narratives were often unilineal in structure, with groups divided into categories of “savagery,” “barbarism,” and “civilization.” Early anthropologists used the term “primitive” to describe peoples who were not part of the European “civilized” tradition. Primitive in this sense referred to an idea that some peoples represented cultures that were not fully developed. This assumption that “primitive” peoples were closer to nature placed much

culture that could be independently measured, defined, and catalogued. Small-scale societies in the colonial territories of Africa, Oceania, and on reservations in the United States and Canada continued to be presented and represented as “natural.” Differences within groups were minimized and few anthropologists asked questions about how the colonial experience shaped the practices and beliefs of the people in the groups they observed.

Just as early anthropology emerged in the context of the

**Amy Harper** is Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the World Languages and Cultures Department at Central Oregon Community College. She received her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.



# The Short List

choice

What a year of reading! With a process dubbed "The First 50," the selection committee sampled, considered, and discussed 38 titles. The First 50 task: read the first 50 pages of a book, then recommend to either move the book through the round and on to other readers, or remove the book from the list. The First 50 was an efficient way of getting a lot of titles in front of the committee for review.

We begin to get feedback almost immediately after the title is revealed at the annual "Unveiled" event. We hear from people who love the book and people who dislike the book. It is those polarized opinions that keep a community-wide reading project dynamic and vibrant year after year.

Over the years Deschutes County "A Novel Idea" readers have read a wide variety of titles, ranging from the post-apocalyptic *The Dog Stars* to the blockbuster *The Help*. Each year readers can expect something different, but what remains constant is that the title must be well-written, pose timely themes, engage a community and, most importantly, the author must be willing and able to visit Deschutes County for the project's grand finale.

This year the committee celebrates two members who have been part of the group since the first year of "A Novel Idea." Deschutes Public Library honors the time and dedication of Stacey Donohue and Ruth Burleigh. Thank you for your tireless commitment to "A Novel Idea."

Here are the other titles that made it to the final round. All are definitely worth a read!

***H is For Hawk*** by Helen Macdonald (debut)

In this elegant synthesis of memoir and literary sleuthing, an English academic finds that training a young goshawk helps her through her grief over the death of her father.

*Publishers Weekly*

***Circling the Sun*** by Paula McLain

Famed aviator and renowned racehorse trainer Beryl Markham is only one of the subjects of McLain's captivating new novel. The other is Kenya, the country that formed the complicated, independent woman whom Markham would become.

*Library Journal*

***Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*** by David Shafer (debut)

David Shafer hits all the right buttons in his debut as he mixes crime fiction, espionage, and Science Fiction in a darkly comic novel about paranoia and big business and the battle for control over all the information in the world.

*Publishers Weekly*

***Girl at War*** by Sara Nović (debut)

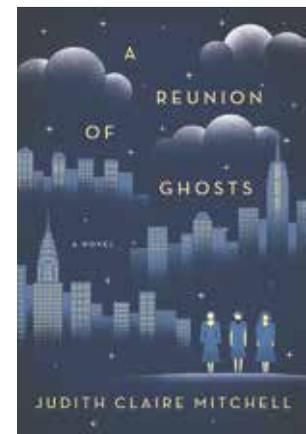
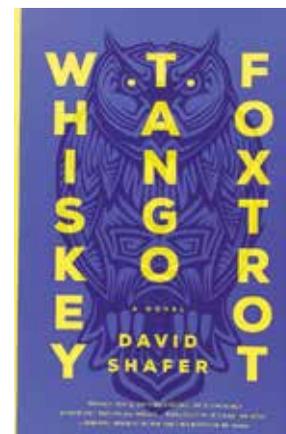
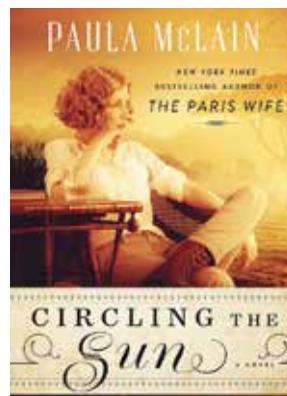
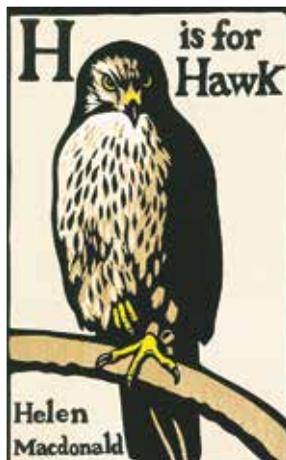
We know the broad outlines of the terrible shattering of the Balkans in the early 1990s, but the essence of war is in the details, and Croatian-born Nović's debut novel delivers a finely honed sense of what the bloodshed really meant for those who withstood it.

*Library Journal*

***Reunion of Ghosts*** by Judith Claire Mitchell

Mitchell's triumphant second novel explores love, identity, and the burdens of history in coruscating, darkly comic prose. Moving nimbly through time and balancing her weightier themes with the sharply funny, fiercely un sentimental perspectives of her three protagonists, Mitchell's fictional suicide note is poignant and pulsing with life force.

*Publishers Weekly*



# Events

## Discover

### Art Shows

March 8–May 2  
Downtown Bend Library

March 26–April 30  
Sunriver Library

April 1–April 30  
Sisters Library

### Book Discussions

Read and discuss *Euphoria* with friends and neighbors.

Monday, March 28 • 6:00 p.m.  
Herringbone Books, Redmond

Tuesday, March 29 • 6:00 p.m.  
Paulina Springs Book, Sisters

Mondays, April 4–May 2 • 3:00 p.m.  
COCC Community Garden  
Barber Library

Monday, April 11 • 6:30 p.m.  
Sunriver Books & Music

Thursday, April 14 • 12:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

Tuesday, April 19 • 12:00 p.m.  
East Bend Library

Saturday, April 23 • 1:00 p.m.  
Redmond Library

Tuesday, April 26 • 6:00 p.m.  
McMenamins Old Saint Francis  
School, Smoker Room

Wednesday, April 27 • 5:30 p.m.  
Sisters Library

Thursday, April 28 • 12:00 p.m.  
La Pine Library

Can't get to a discussion group in person? Join the conversation online at our "A Novel Idea" webpage and add comments and share thoughts when it's convenient for you. The discussion will be open from Monday, April 11–Saturday, April 30.

### Faculty Salon

Inspired by the Deschutes Public Library "A Novel Idea" selection, OSU-Cascades and COCC faculty will hold a panel discussion around the controversial question: Can research be truly objective? Join us for an eye-opening, mind-tickling, multi-layered conversation.

Thursday, April 7 • 6:00–7:30 p.m.  
Cascades Hall 248, COCC Campus

Contact Sara at sara.thompson@osucascades.edu.

### Documentary Screening

Get to know the real Margaret Mead by screening the 2010 documentary, *Taking Note*.

Saturday, April 9 • 1:30 p.m.  
Sisters Library

Saturday, April 16 • 2:00 p.m.  
East Bend Library

Saturday, April 23 • 2:30 p.m.  
Redmond Library

Saturday, April 30 • 1:00 p.m.  
Sunriver Library

### Kick Off

Get an overview of the novel and upcoming programs.

Saturday, April 9 • 1:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

### Euphoria Inspired Art Workshop

Join Arts Central VanGO teaching artist Sue Wilhelm for a fun and highly creative adventure in paper mask making, based on the life and work of Margaret Mead. Space is limited and registration is required.

Saturday, April 9 • 3:00–5:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

Saturday, April 23 • 2:00–4:00 p.m.  
La Pine Library

### Poets and Lovers in Euphoria

Poet Amy Lowell is mentioned just a handful of times in Lily King's *Euphoria*. This one-hour program will combine live readings, lecture, and discussion of some of Lowell's best known work in order to speculate on the role the poet and her works play in the novel.

Friday, April 15 • 12:00 p.m.  
Sisters Library

Sunday, April 17 • 2:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

### Mead in the Sepik

*Euphoria* takes as its inspiration Margaret Mead's fieldwork for her book *Sex and Temperament* and her relationships with Reo Fortune and Gregory Bateson. In this talk, anthropologist Amy Harper focuses on the real-life events of Mead in the Sepik River area of Papua New Guinea and the conclusions and continued relevance of her work for the anthropology of gender.



Friday, April 15 • 12:00 p.m.  
Sunriver Library

Sunday, April 24 • 2:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

### Anthropology and the Sacred

Anthropologist Amy Harper focuses on the questionable acquisition of a sacred object in the novel *Euphoria* to explore the ways in which anthropology contributed to a trend of acquisition and display of cultural artifacts. These collections often contributed to the exoticization of colonized peoples and raised question regarding issues of representation and cultural authority.

Monday, April 18 • 6:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

Saturday, April 30 • 2:00 p.m.  
Redmond Library

### Malaria

#### A Menace in New Guinea and Throughout the Tropics

Dr. Michael Riscoe, Ph.D. of Oregon Health & Sciences University describes malaria and discusses its devastating impact on global health. He also introduces us to his work on developing new drugs for treating and preventing malaria and to their potential use in eradicating the disease.

Tuesday, April 26 • 6:00 p.m.  
Redmond Library

Wednesday, April 27 • 1:00 p.m.  
Downtown Bend Library

### Balancing on the Cutting Edge

#### Women's Struggle to Have It All

Jamie Bufalino of University of Oregon examines the challenges faced by three of Margaret Mead's contemporaries as they fought for both a place at the top of their respective fields and a fulfilling personal life.



Thursday, April 28 • 6:00 p.m.  
East Bend Library

Friday, April 29 • 12:00 p.m.  
Sisters Library

### Author Lily King

Deschutes Public Library welcomes Lily King, author of *Euphoria*, to Central Oregon for the final event of "A Novel Idea...Read Together."



King's only appearance is at Bend High. Sunday, May 1 • 2:00 p.m.

Bend High School Auditorium

## Lily King

Free tickets are available at [www.dplfoundation.org](http://www.dplfoundation.org) and all libraries beginning April 16, 2016.

# Lucky 13

We are feeling lucky in this 13th year of "A Novel Idea" to share with you the fantastic novel *Euphoria* from award-winning author Lily King. *Euphoria* transports us to 1930s New Guinea and is loosely based on the anthropologist Margaret Mead's field trip down the Sepik River. The book captivates the reader with an exotic world of undiscovered tribes and the primal drama that unfolds between three anthropologists.

The library has created 30 free cultural programs that explore the themes of the book and deepen your

*gratitude*

understanding while engaging you in discussions with other members of the community. Author Lily King will present at Bend High on Sunday, May 1, at 2:00 p.m. Programs, including the author presentation, are free and open to all ages. Our generous sponsors allow "A Novel Idea" to remain free and accessible. We are grateful to our sponsors and donors who make a difference for the library and our community.

Thanks to our loyal participants, the "A Novel Idea" program remains the largest community read in Oregon. It has been recognized by the Human

Dignity Coalition for increasing awareness of diversity in our region; received the City of Bend Arts, Beautification & Culture Award; and was honored by the United Nations Refugee Agency for the program's contribution for deepening understanding of the Afghan people, culture, and traditions.

As we look to the future, we seek to further expand our audiences and deepen the dialogue. We love to hear from you, our faithful readers, and hope you continue to share your thoughts and ideas with us.

Happy reading!

*Chantal Strobel, Project Director*

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