

One Book saddles up with a western

'News of the World' chosen for 2019 community read

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A morally complex historical fiction set in the Old West is this year's One Book, One Community (OBOC) selection.

"News of the World," a 2016 National Book Award Nominee by Paulette Jiles, was chosen by a committee and revealed Thursday evening at the Bedford Branch Library.

The annual community read, which will take place from March 11 to April 6, is full of events, workshops, and presentations.

Set in the aftermath of the Civil War, the book features Capt. Jefferson Kidd, an aging itinerant who earns a living reading aloud from newspapers across northern Texas.

Through his readings, Kidd takes his audiences "to far places and strange peoples. Into mythic forms of thought and the structures of fairy tales."

Kidd, who is content in his nomadic story-telling existence, soon finds himself compelled to take on a strange mission.

"'News of the World' kind of speaks for itself," committee member and Ida librarian Suzanne Krueger said. "In that, the main character is bringing news to different parts of Texas."

How we digest our news – what we read and where we get it from – are questions asked by "News of the World."

According to OBOC chairwoman Cheryl Johnston, the book hits on many subjects which are relevant in our modern days, such as Native American rights, and the separation of children from their families.

"This little girl gets taken by and then rescued from the Kiowa Indians," Johnston said. "At this point, when Capt. Kidd finds her, she's homesick for home, and home is with the Kiowa."



Photos by Vanessa Ray

OBOC Chairwoman Cheryl Johnston discusses the book and the committee's decision to choose it at the Bedford Branch Library.

"What happens? What is the trauma to children who are separated from their families," she added. "These are all fairly contemporary issues."

Voter suppression and racism, both of which are issues today, play a role in the story as well.

In one point, when Capt. Kidd is delivering news of the 15th amendment, which extends voting rights to all men, regardless of skin color, he says, "That means colored gentlemen. Let us have no vaporings or girl-

ish shrieks."

Deciding on what the new OBOC story will be is a lengthy process

Every year, a committee made up of members of the community, reads multiple books in search of "the one."

The MCCC faculty members who are part of the committee include Rachel Eagle, Janel Boss, Mary Bullard, Edmund La Clair, Dan Shaw, and Carrie Nartker.

"The committee members read many

books," Krueger said. "Then we all make suggestions.

"It's multi-faceted," she added. "We have to look at what kind of programming, and the possibility of whether or not we can get the author."

Provoking insightful conversations is another area the committee members try to hit on.

"We're looking for a book that's going to promote some good discussions," Johnston said. "We also want a book that will appeal to multiple age groups."

Though many Monroe County high school students will be participating in OBOC, the committee was not looking for something only teenagers or young adults would like.

Other criteria include availability and the types of programs the committee can build around the ideas in the book.

Last year's book, "Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet," by Jamie Ford, featured a presentation by Ford himself, as well as events focused around learning origami and calligraphy, showings of movies dealing with xenophobia, and a panel discussion by immigrants – one of whom was a survivor of a Japanese internment camp during WWII.

Every year, the committee must decide which book ticks all the right boxes, and this year, "News of the World" did just that.



Copies of this year's book, "News of the World," were placed on a table for audience members to purchase.