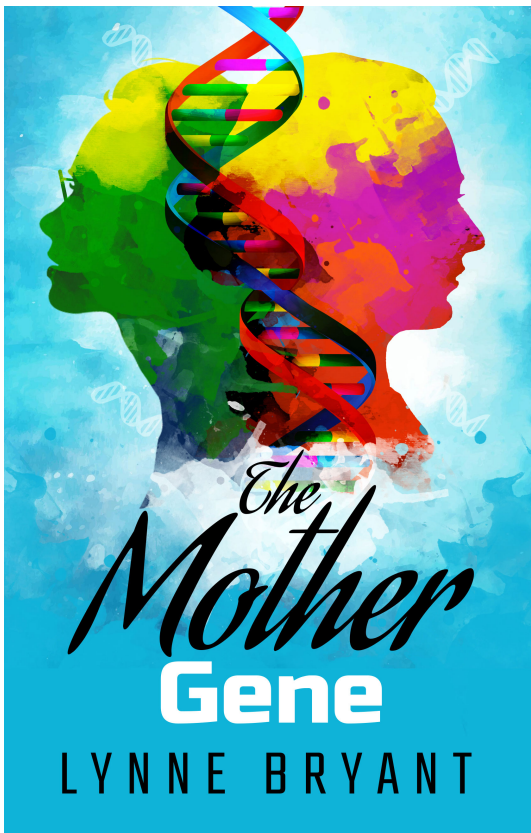




Lynne Bryant's Newsletter #5

February 2023

My writing journey, interesting snippets from my research, books I'm reading, and other stuff that makes me think.



***A Huge Thank-You to my
Newsletter Subscribers!!***

Giveaway News

Thank you to everyone who entered my newsletter sign-up giveaway. The 10 randomly selected winners from my e-mail list have been notified. Signed copies of ***The Mother Gene*** will soon be traveling through snail mail!

I'm so excited for the release—March 8, 2023! I hope you enjoy this novel's characters as much as I have. And when you're done, please share *The Mother Gene* with a friend!

And I'm always grateful for your candid reviews and feedback!

My Goodreads giveaway of 25 copies runs through February 24. You still have time to enter! Link in [my website](#).

My writing journey...

On Getting The Mother Gene into the World

As I think is the case for most writers, the publicity part of releasing a book is the most challenging part. I recently listened to a lovely interview between [Barbara Kingsolver](#) and [Ann Patchett](#)—two of my writing luminaries. Barbara Kingsolver described the relationship between the author and the reader as a conversation. As she noted, books aren't really finished until they're "absorbed in thousands of individual ways." With this idea as inspiration, the introverted writer (me) must come out of her hermit mode and give her story the best possible chance of getting into the hands and hearts of readers.



I've added a page for **Book Clubs** on my website for this very reason. Through conversations with multiple book clubs over the years, I've had the privilege and joy to engage with lots of readers about the thoughts, emotions, questions, self-reflection that were prompted by reading *Catfish Alley*, *Alligator Lake*, and I'm hoping... *The Mother Gene*. Here is a sneak peek at the book discussion questions I included in *The Mother Gene*. I'm looking forward to continuing the conversation.

[Book Club Discussion Questions.](#)

A little history...



OCTOBER 29, 1926.

**HEREDITY IS
BIG PROBLEM**

Home for Feeble-Minded Is
Filled With Those Whose
Parents Were Not as Care-
fully Selected as Dairymen
Breed Cattle

The Women's Auxiliary to the dairy-men, who met in the roof garden of the Hotel Vermohs yesterday afternoon, listened to talks by Miss Sara M. Holbrook, department of education, U. V. M., and Prof. H. P. Perkins of the University, head of the zoology department.



THE SAVANNAH PRESS

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND FAMILY TAKE FAIR TOP HONORS

Win "Fitter Families" Sweepstakes



Mr. and Mrs. James E. Kelley and their two daughters, Elizabeth and Priscilla, of Isle of Hope, won the blue ribbon in the small family class and the sweepstakes at the "Fitter Family" contest conducted during the Georgia State Fair.

Close Contest.
"The Kelley family won by only a narrow margin over the Richter family," Mrs. Watts said today in discussing the awards. "Both families are of extremely high type. There was also close competition in the single adults, women's class, not less than five made an 'A' grade."

This year was the second that the "Fitter Family" contest has been held at the fair, and the number of plates represented by the entrants is especially pleasing to Mrs. Waite. There were three entrants in the contest this year who participated last, and in instance their scores were higher than before. The examinations given are very extensive and cover the mental and physical fields.

Well Known.

The Kelley family, winners of the sweepstakes and the blue ribbon prize in the 1934-35 contest, are well known in Savannah. Both Mr. and Mrs. Kelley are teachers at the Central High School. Elizabeth, 22, Elizabeth who helped their parents to win these honors are grade pupils in the Central High School. She was principal of the summer grade schools at the last term and is now in the 10th grade. Mr. Kelley is interested in young people and is an active scout master, which probably accounts to some extent for his good physical condition. He usually takes outdoor recreation to keep up the vigor of a person employed in a sedentary occupation.

When Mr. Kelley was asked his object in entering the "Fitter Young Men" contest, he replied: "I believe in practicing what I preach and I am preaching the doctrine of living in the fit." He said he was an opportunity to improve the physical and mental condition of the young men of Savannah and to find the weak points and build up."

Again Next Year.
Mrs. M. H. Kohn's family will be back again next year and endeavor to bring with them a high score in Georgia. It means to keep on the job each day and to get the best of it. "It is not a score. It may be good this year, but it will be better next."

Single Adult. Had strong competition for the position of single adult. The expert is working under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Women.

Going to New York. Mrs. M. H. Kohn is going to Savannah for nearly three weeks in the interest of sister families. She has been invited to attend a conference with the executive committee of the Council of Jewish Women, United States, under whose auspices she is conducting her work. She is in charge of the voluntary secretary of the health work in Savannah.

Returned. Mrs. Kohn has just received. When asked how the family came out, she declared she had never had better returns from her examination. The high score. "Kathleen says the high score is not the best of it. It is a question how long they can hold it." (Circulation)



American Philosophical Society. Noncommercial, educational use only.



American Philosophical Society. Noncommercial, educational use only.

Each picture above can be clicked on for a closer look!

In the 1920s and 30s, what started out as **Better Babies** contests soon evolved to **Fitter Families** contests, thanks to the work of Dr. Florence Sherbon and Mary Watts (pictured). The criteria for fitness were derived from the breeding of livestock. Just as the perfect bull specimen was chosen to impregnate the best cows and assure the vitality of the herd, men and women considered of good breeding, with family backgrounds that matched the goal of white supremacy were encouraged to reproduce and to compete in a **meritocracy of whiteness**. Eugenecists believed that heredity and all things deviant went hand in hand, with women being the primary carriers of “degenerate” traits. The contests originated at the Iowa State Fair and quickly spread to other parts of the country. The whole object was to produce more white people and prevent what was called “race suicide”—white women deciding they didn’t really want to pump out babies all the time.

Questions this leaves us with: Is this ancient history? Are we past this kind of thinking?

Hmm...

In ***The Mother Gene***, young Lillian encounters two women from the *Fit Families Society* who visit the holler:

“Why, Lil,” Miz Jane said, grasping Lillian’s thin shoulders, “What’s the matter with you, child? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

Before Lillian could reply, Jo came barreling in. “Ma, there’s two ladies from town in the front yard and they said they want to see my folks.”

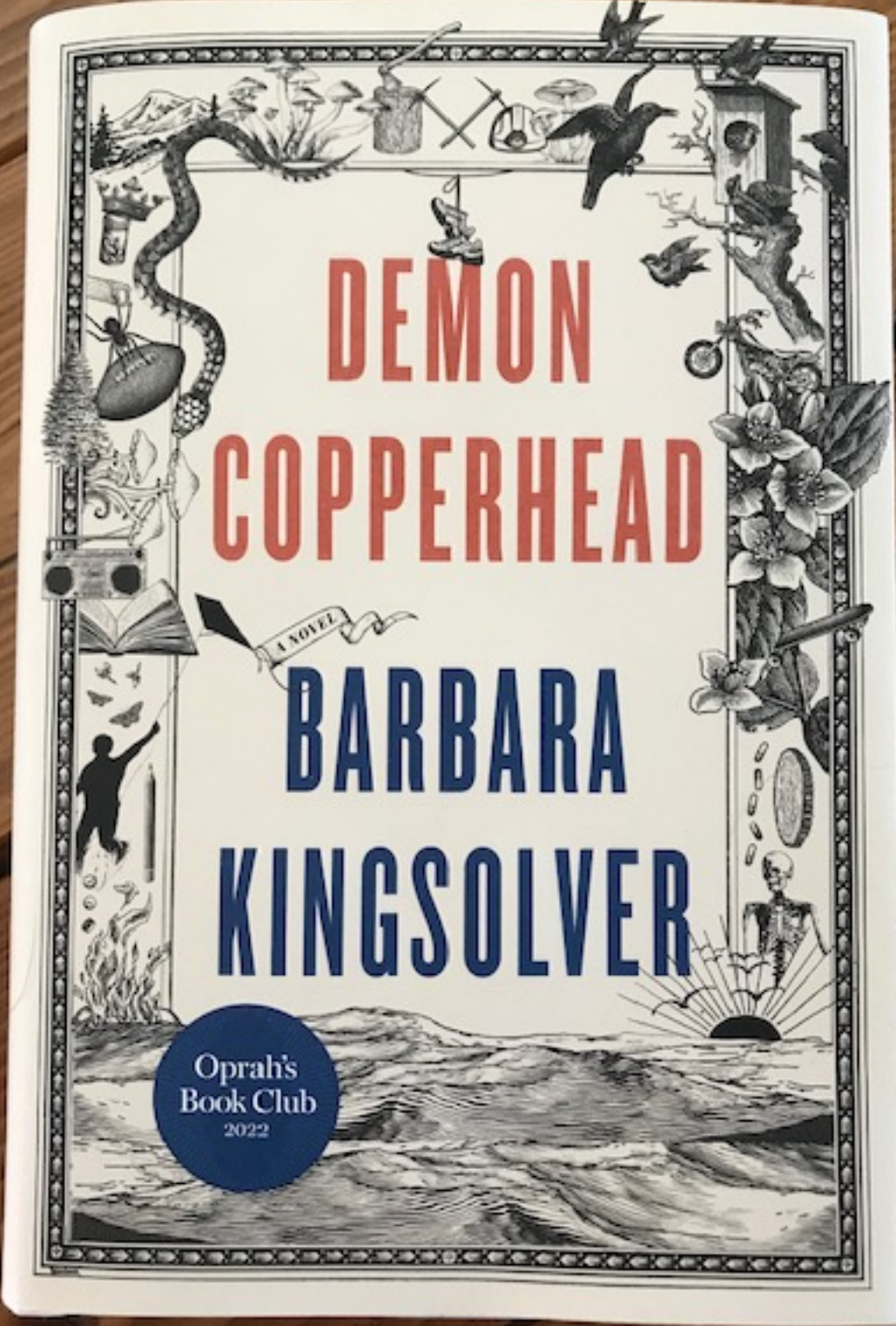
“Stay here.” Miz Jane pulled off her apron and threw it on the Hoosier.

Lillian and Jo peeked through a crack in the kitchen door. How calm Miz Jane was as she ushered the two women into the front room. How could she treat this as so ordinary? People from town meant only one thing. Death.



In this month's blog, I continue exploring my own mothering journey. Watch here for "Running From... Running Toward..." Coming Soon!

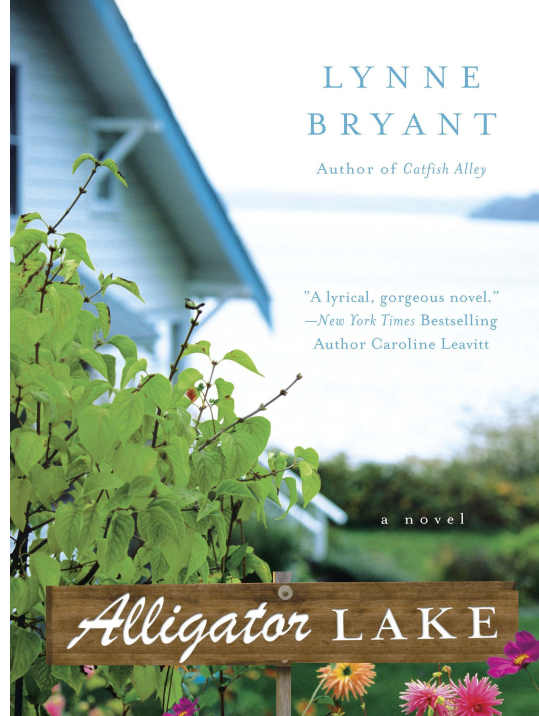
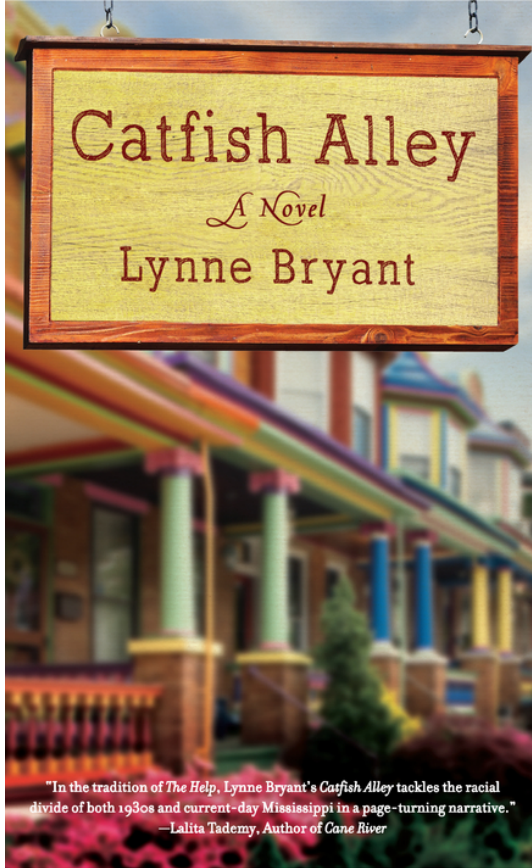
What I've been reading...



DEMON COPPERHEAD

A NOVEL
**BARBARA
KINGSOLVER**

Oprah's
Book Club
2022



Lynne Bryant

Manitou Springs, Colorado
United States of America

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