

Amy Bloom

Amy Bloom, author of numerous books, short stories and articles for publications including *The New Yorker* and *Atlantic Monthly* spoke to a large and enthusiastic group of readers. Her most recent novel, *Away*, was a *New York Times* bestseller, and previous titles include *Come to Me*, a National Book Award finalist, and *A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You*, nominated for a National Books Critics Circle Award.

Amy spoke about her childhood, remembering that her journalist father would often entrust her to the care of her local library for hours where she went through the collection “from a to z,” reading whatever appealed to her – with the blessing of both her parents and the library staff. Perhaps because of this buffet-style approach to literature, she grew to love Victorian novels in particular. *Away* grew out of that love and its broad span of historical context and rich collection of characters are clues to the connection.

In the body of her talk and in answer to audience questions, Amy discussed her unusual and definitely un-Victorian device of following the life stories of her characters in a non-linear way, spinning them out into the future and then returning the reader to the “present” of the story line. She felt, and the audience seemed to agree, that this approach added depth to the characterizations and fuller perspective to the novel.

Amy talked as well about her background as a practicing psychotherapist and how that had informed and been affected by her writing. Finally, and with consideration for those who had not yet completed their reading, she talked about the ending and her choices for conclusion of this saga of immigrant life in the early 20th century.