

## **The Go Between by LP Hartley**

For our 100<sup>th</sup> book, we went back to the classics to read 'The Go-Between' by L P Hartley. Published in 1953, it is a story of forbidden desire and betrayal, as seen through the impressionable eyes of a 12/13-year-old boy, Leo, at the start of the 20th century. (Leo has a birthday during the period of the novel).

Now in his sixties, Leo finds his diary from fifty years earlier, when as a twelve-year-old he spent a summer at the Brandham Hall estate in Norfolk. Young and naïve, Leo is unwittingly drawn into a web of deceit as he becomes the means for secret communications as 'the go-between' in an illicit and passionate affair. The consequences of this have haunted him his whole life, and he has found himself unable to engage in a romantic relationship of his own. Having found the diary, Leo attempts to come to terms with the past.

We found this book to be quite a challenge, which can perhaps be best summed up by the opening line of the novel. "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." The language and the writing style is dated and difficult, and the narration is slow in parts. The book paints a picture of the social hierarchy in British life at the beginning of the 20th century. It seems odd that Leo is so unaware of the reasons for his message taking, but as the author tells us it was a more innocent time.

We found the interacting themes difficult to follow, perhaps because they are presented through the eyes of a 12/13-year-old. One of our members bought the DVD of the 1971 film starring Julie Christie and Alan Bates, to better understand what was going on, but it raised as many questions as it answered. The DVD is now doing the rounds amongst our members.