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GENESEE DISTRICT LIBRARY PARTNERS WITH MICHIGAN HUMANITIES FOR GREAT MICHIGAN READ

September 28, 2021 – Flint, MI Residents in Genesee County are invited to join in reading and discussing *The Women of the Copper Country*, Mary Doria Russell's riveting account of 25-year-old Annie Clements as she stood up for the miners and their families during the 1913 copper strikes. The Genesee District Library will host a virtual interview with Russell on October 9 at 11 a.m. The virtual program can be viewed at thegdlib.org/virtual, Facebook, or YouTube.

"I loved this book about strong women, about the power of the union, about community taking care of its own," said Nancy Abbey, Montrose-Jennings librarian. "Nothing is more interesting than hearing history from your own state, and the people who made it. I thoroughly enjoyed this book." Abbey will interview Russell during the virtual event.

The book is Michigan Humanities' choice for the 2021-2022 Great Michigan Read, and aims to connect Michiganders by deepening readers' understanding of our state, our society, and our humanity. A statewide panel of teachers, librarians, community leaders and book lovers selects the Great Michigan Read every two years.

"I'm so honored Michigan Humanities chose *The Women of the Copper Country* for the 2021-2022 Great Michigan Read," said Russell, who spent time in Michigan's Keeweenaw Peninsula walking through the streets of Calumet, touring the mines and visiting local museums as she prepared to write her fictionalized account of the real-life Big Annie. "The copper strike itself has been studied and written about by historians and legal experts, but those accounts are not meant to engage the reader's emotions. That was my job – to combine imagination and empathy with research.

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“Here was a 25-year-old woman who is central to a strike against the most powerful company in the most dangerous industry of her time. A child of despised immigrants. A housewife with a simple education in a time when women couldn’t vote and weren’t supposed to take part in public life. Somehow, she mobilized 10,000 miners and kept everyone going, day after day, month after month. So, my task was to tell readers: What makes a woman like Annie Clements?” Russell added.

Widely praised for meticulous research, fine prose, and the compelling narrative drive of her stories, Russell is the award-winning author of seven bestselling novels, including the science fiction classics *The Sparrow* and *Children of God*. She holds a Ph.D. in biological anthropology from the University of Michigan and taught anatomy at the Case Western Reserve University School of Dentistry. She lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

The 2021-22 Great Michigan Read is presented by Michigan Humanities and supported by national, statewide and local partners, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Meijer Foundation, and Martin Waymire.

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