



# The Bookmarks

## BOOK CLUB



Free Public Library of Monroe Township  
713 Marsha Ave, Williamstown NJ  
856-629-1212

## 2021-2022 Book Club Reading List

The Bookmarks meet on the last Tuesday of every month, except for December. All adults are invited to read along with us and join our monthly discussions held in the library meeting room. For more information, call 856-629-1212 ext. 206.

**October 26: The Woman who Smashed Codes by Jason Fagone (Nonfiction) 652.8 FAG**

In 1916, at the height of World War I, brilliant Shakespeare expert Elizebeth Smith went to work for an eccentric tycoon on his estate outside Chicago. The tycoon had close ties to the U.S. government, and he soon asked Elizebeth to apply her language skills to an exciting new venture: code-breaking. There she met the man who would become her husband, groundbreaking cryptologist William Friedman.

**November 30: Driving Miss Norma by Tim Bauerschmidt (Biography) B BAU**

When Miss Norma was diagnosed with uterine cancer, she was advised to undergo surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. But instead of confining herself to a hospital bed for what could be her last stay, Miss Norma—newly widowed after nearly seven decades of marriage—rose to her full height of five feet and told her doctor, “I’m ninety years old. I’m hitting the road.” And so Miss Norma took off on an unforgettable around-the-country journey in a thirty-six-foot motor home with her retired son Tim, his wife Ramie, and their dog Ringo.

← **No meeting in December** →

**January 25: The Only Woman in the Room by Marie Benedict (Fiction) - F BEN**

Her beauty almost certainly saved her from the rising Nazi party and led to marriage with an Austrian arms dealer. Underestimated in everything else, she overheard the Third Reich's plans while at her husband's side, understanding more than anyone would guess. She devised a plan to flee in disguise from their castle, and the whirlwind escape landed her in Hollywood. She became Hedy Lamarr, screen star. But she kept a secret more shocking than her heritage or her marriage: she was a scientist. And she knew a few secrets about the enemy. She had an idea that might help the country fight the Nazis...if anyone would listen to her.

**February 22: The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead (Fiction) - F WHI**

Elwood Curtis has taken the words of Dr Martin Luther King to heart: he is as good as anyone. Abandoned by his parents, brought up by his loving, strict and clear-sighted grandmother, Elwood is about to enroll in the local black college. But given the time and the place, one innocent mistake is enough to destroy his future, and so Elwood arrives at The Nickel Academy, which claims to provide 'physical, intellectual and moral training' which will equip its inmates to become 'honorable and honest men'. In reality, the Nickel Academy is a chamber of horrors, where physical, emotional and sexual abuse is rife, where corrupt officials and tradesmen do a brisk trade in supplies intended for the school, and where any boy who resists is likely to disappear 'out back'. Stunned to find himself in this vicious environment, Elwood tries to hold on to Dr King's ringing assertion, 'Throw us in jail, and we will still love you.' But Elwood's fellow inmate and new friend Turner thinks Elwood is naive and worse; the world is crooked, and the only way to survive is to emulate the cruelty and cynicism of their oppressors. The tension between Elwood's idealism and Turner's skepticism leads to a decision which will have decades-long repercussions.

**March 29:**     **The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson (Fiction)**  
**F RIC**

In 1936, tucked deep into the woods of Troublesome Creek, KY, lives blue-skinned 19-year-old Cussy Carter, the last living female of the rare Blue People ancestry. The lonely young Appalachian woman joins the historical Pack Horse Library Project of Kentucky and becomes a librarian, riding across slippery creek beds and up treacherous mountains on her faithful mule to deliver books and other reading material to the impoverished hill people of Eastern Kentucky. Along her dangerous route, Cussy, known to the mountain folk as Bluet, confronts those suspicious of her damselfly-blue skin and the government's new book program. She befriends hardscrabble and complex fellow Kentuckians, and is fiercely determined to bring comfort and joy, instill literacy, and give to those who have nothing, a bookly respite, a fleeting retreat to faraway lands.

**April 26:**     **The Dutch House by Ann Patchett (Fiction) - F PAT**

At the end of the Second World War, Cyril Conroy combines luck and a single canny investment to begin an enormous real estate empire, propelling his family from poverty to enormous wealth. His first order of business is to buy the Dutch House, a lavish estate in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia. Meant as a surprise for his wife, the house sets in motion the undoing of everyone he loves. The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, the brilliantly acerbic and self-assured Maeve, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures.

**May 31:**     **Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy by Karen Abbott (Nonfiction) - 973.785 AB27L**

After shooting a Union soldier in her front hall with a pocket pistol, Belle Boyd became a courier and spy for the Confederate army, using her charms to seduce men on both sides. Emma Edmonds cut off her hair and assumed the identity of a man to enlist as a Union private, witnessing the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. The beautiful widow, Rose O'Neale Greenhow, engaged in affairs with powerful Northern politicians to gather intelligence for the Confederacy, and used her young daughter to send information to Southern generals. Elizabeth Van Lew, a wealthy Richmond abolitionist, hid behind her proper Southern manners as she orchestrated a far-reaching espionage ring, right under the noses of suspicious rebel detectives. Using a wealth of primary source material and interviews with the spies' descendants, Abbott seamlessly weaves the adventures of these four heroines throughout the tumultuous years of the war. With a cast of real-life characters including Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, General Stonewall Jackson, detective Allan Pinkerton, Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, and Emperor Napoleon III, *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy* draws you into the war as these daring women lived it.

**June 28:**     **War Paint by Lindy Woodhead (Nonfiction) - 338.7 WOO**

They were both born in the nineteenth century in humble circumstances—Helena Rubinstein in an orthodox Jewish household in Kraków, Poland, Elizabeth Arden on a farm outside Toronto. But by the 1930s, they were bitter rivals in New York, the rulers of dueling international beauty empires that would forever change the way women thought about cosmetics, salons, and wrinkles. This riveting biography brings these two celebrated women to life, revealing the ruthless drive and innovative business strategies that took each to the top. Along the way, it offers an intriguing look at their personal idiosyncrasies (Rubinstein collected art, Arden racehorses), their checkered marriages, and the rarefied social milieu in which they both traveled.

**July 26:**     **Infamy by Richard Reeves (Nonfiction) - 940.53 REE**

Less than three months after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and inflamed the nation, President Roosevelt signed an executive order declaring parts of four western states to be a war zone operating under military rule. The U.S. Army immediately began rounding up thousands of Japanese-Americans, sometimes giving them less than 24 hours to vacate their houses and farms. For the rest of the war, these victims of war hysteria were imprisoned in primitive camps. In *Infamy*, the story of this appalling chapter in American history is told more powerfully than ever before. Acclaimed historian Richard Reeves has interviewed survivors, read numerous private letters and memoirs, and combed through archives to deliver a sweeping narrative of this atrocity. Men we usually consider heroes—FDR, Earl Warren, Edward R. Murrow—were in this case villains, but we also learn of many Americans who took great risks to defend the rights of the internees. Most especially, we hear the poignant stories of those who spent years in "war relocation camps," many of whom suffered this terrible injustice with remarkable grace. Racism, greed, xenophobia, and a thirst for revenge: a dark strand in the American character underlies this story of one of the most shameful episodes in our history. But by recovering the past, *Infamy* has given voice to those who ultimately helped the nation better understand the true meaning of patriotism.