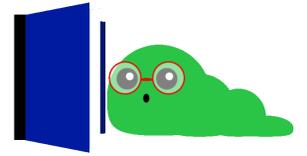


THE BOOKWORMS

BOOK CLUB



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

2021-2022 Book Club Reading List

The Bookworms meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 1pm, except for August and 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 20: 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.

November 17: A Square Meal by Jane Ziegelman (Nonfiction) - 641.597309 ZIE

The decade-long Great Depression, a period of shifts in the country's political and social landscape, forever changed the way America eats. Before 1929, America's relationship with food was defined by abundance. But the collapse the economy, in both urban and rural America, left a quarter of all Americans out of work and undernourished—shattering long-held assumptions about the limitlessness of the national larder. In 1933, as women struggled to feed their families, President Roosevelt reversed longstanding biases toward government sponsored "food charity." For the first time in American history, the federal government assumed, for a while, responsibility for feeding its citizens. The effects were widespread. Championed by Eleanor Roosevelt, "home economists" who had long fought to bring science into the kitchen rose to national stature. Tapping into America's longstanding ambivalence toward culinary enjoyment, they imposed their vision of a sturdy, utilitarian cuisine on the American dinner table. Through the Bureau of Home Economics, these women led a sweeping campaign to instill dietary recommendations, the forerunners of today's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. At the same time, rising food conglomerates introduced packaged and processed foods that gave rise to a new American cuisine based on speed and convenience. This movement toward a homogenized national cuisine sparked a revival of American regional cooking. In the ensuing decades, this tension between local traditions and culinary science have defined our national cuisine—a battle that continues today.

← **No meeting in December** →

January 19: Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens (Fiction) - F OWE

For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life—until the unthinkable happens. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.

February 16: The Girls in the Picture by Melanie Benjamin (Fiction) - F BEN

It is 1914, and twenty-five-year-old Frances Marion has left her (second) husband and her Northern California home for the lure of Los Angeles, where she is determined to live independently as an artist. But the word on everyone's lips these days is "flickers"-the silent moving pictures enthralling theatergoers. In this fledgling industry, Frances finds her true calling- writing stories for this wondrous new medium. She also makes the acquaintance of actress Mary Pickford, whose signature golden curls and lively spirit have given her the title of America's Sweetheart. The two ambitious young women hit it off instantly. But their ambitions are challenged both by the men around them and the limitations imposed on their gender-and their astronomical success could come at a price.

March 16: Waiting for Snow in Havana by Carlos Eire (Biography) - B EIR

Waiting for Snow in Havana is both an exorcism and an ode to a paradise lost. For the Cuba of Carlos Eire's youth—with its lizards and turquoise seas and sun-drenched siestas—becomes an island of condemnation once a cigar-smoking guerrilla named Fidel Castro ousts President Batista on January 1, 1959. Suddenly the music in the streets sounds like gunfire. Christmas is made illegal, political dissent leads to imprisonment, and too many of Carlos's friends are leaving Cuba for a place as far away and unthinkable as the United States. Carlos will end up there, too, and fulfill his mother's dreams by becoming a modern American man—even if his soul remains in the country he left behind.

April 20: 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.

May 18: Under the Wide and Starry Sky by Nancy Horan (Fiction) - F HOR

Under the Wide and Starry Sky chronicles the unconventional love affair of Scottish literary giant Robert Louis Stevenson, author of classics including *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and American divorcee Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne. They meet in rural France in 1875, when Fanny, having run away from her philandering husband back in California, takes refuge there with her children. Stevenson too is escaping from his life, running from family pressure to become a lawyer. And so begins a turbulent love affair that will last two decades and span the world.

June 15: Dark Tide by Stephen Puleo (Nonfiction) - 363.11 PUL

Around noon on January 15, 1919, a group of firefighters was playing cards in Boston's North End when they heard a tremendous crash. It was like roaring surf, one of them said later. Like a runaway two-horse team smashing through a fence, said another. A third firefighter jumped up from his chair to look out a window-"Oh my God!" he shouted to the other men, "Run!" A 50-foot-tall steel tank filled with 2.3 million gallons of molasses had just collapsed on Boston's waterfront, disgorging its contents as a 15-foot-high wave of molasses that at its outset traveled at 35 miles an hour. It demolished wooden homes, even the brick fire station. The number of dead wasn't known for days. It would be years before a landmark court battle determined who was responsible for the disaster.