



The Bookmarks

BOOK CLUB



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

2023 Book Club Reading List

The Bookmarks meet on the last Tuesday of every month at 7pm, 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.

January 31 : The Girls in the Stilt House by Kelly Mustian (F MUS)

Ada promised herself she would never go back to the Trace, to her hard life on the swamp and her harsh father. But now, after running away to Baton Rouge and briefly knowing a different kind of life, she finds herself with nowhere to go but back home. And she knows there will be a price to pay with her father. Matilda, daughter of a sharecropper, is from the other side of the Trace. Doing what she can to protect her family from the whims and demands of some particularly callous locals is an ongoing struggle. She forms a plan to go north, to pack up the secrets she's holding about her life in the South and hang them on the line for all to see in Ohio. As the two girls are drawn deeper into a dangerous world of bootleggers and moral corruption, they must come to terms with the complexities of their tenuous bond and a hidden past that links them in ways that could cost them their lives.

February 28 : The Last Slave Ship by Ben Raines (306.36 RAI)

Fifty years after the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed, the Clotilda became the last ship in history to bring enslaved Africans to the United States. The ship was scuttled and burned on arrival to hide evidence of the crime, allowing the wealthy perpetrators to escape prosecution. Despite numerous efforts to find the sunken wreck, Clotilda remained hidden for the next 160 years. But in 2019, journalist Ben Raines made international news when he successfully concluded his obsessive quest through the swamps of Alabama to uncover one of our nation's most important historical artifacts. The incredible true story of the last ship to carry enslaved people to America, the remarkable town its survivors founded after emancipation, and the complicated legacy their descendants carry with them to this day—by the journalist who discovered the ship's remains.

March 28 : Her Hidden Genius by Marie Benedict (F BEN)

Rosalind Franklin has always been an outsider—brilliant, but different. Whether working at the laboratory she adored in Paris or toiling at a university in London, she feels closest to the science, those unchanging laws of physics and chemistry that guide her experiments. When she is assigned to work on DNA, she believes she can unearth its secrets. Rosalind knows if she just takes one more X-ray picture—one more after thousands—she can unlock the building blocks of life. Never again will she have to listen to her colleagues complain about her, especially Maurice Wilkins who'd rather conspire about genetics with James Watson and Francis Crick than work alongside her. Then it finally happens—the double helix structure of DNA reveals itself to her with perfect clarity. But what unfolds next, Rosalind could have never predicted.

April 25 : This Must be the Place by Maggie O'Farrell (F OFA)

Daniel Sullivan leads a complicated life. A New Yorker living in the wilds of Ireland, he has children he never sees in California, a father he loathes in Brooklyn, and his wife, Claudette, is a reclusive ex-film star given to pulling a gun on anyone who ventures up their driveway. Together, they have made an idyllic life in the country, but a secret from Daniel's past threatens to destroy their meticulously constructed and fiercely protected home. Shot through with humor and wisdom, *This Must Be the Place* is an irresistible love story that crisscrosses continents and time zones as it captures an extraordinary marriage, and an unforgettable family, with wit and deep affection.

May 30 : The Room on Rue Amelie by Kristin Harmel (F HAR)

When Ruby first marries the dashing Frenchman she meets in a coffee shop, she pictures a life strolling arm in arm along French boulevards, awash in the golden afternoon light. But it's 1938, and war is looming on the horizon. Unfortunately, her marriage soon grows cold and bitter, her husband Marcel, distant and secretive—all while the Germans flood into Paris, their sinister swastika flags waving in the breeze. When Marcel is killed, Ruby discovers the secret he'd been hiding—he was a member of the French resistance—and now she is determined to take his place. She becomes involved in hiding Allied soldiers—including a charming RAF pilot—who have landed in enemy territory. But her skills are ultimately put to the test when she begins concealing her twelve-year-old Jewish neighbor, Charlotte, whose family was rounded up by the Gestapo. Ruby and Charlotte become a little family, but as the German net grows tighter around Paris, and the Americans debate entering the combat, the danger increases. No one is safe.

June 27 : The Doctors Blackwell by Janice Nimura (610.92 NIM)

Elizabeth Blackwell believed from an early age that she was destined for a mission beyond the scope of "ordinary" womanhood. Though the world at first recoiled at the notion of a woman studying medicine, her intelligence and intensity ultimately won her the acceptance of the male medical establishment. In 1849, she became the first woman in America to receive an M.D. She was soon joined in her iconic achievement by her younger sister, Emily, who was actually the more brilliant physician. Exploring the sisters' allies, enemies, and enduring partnership, Janice P. Nimura presents a story of trial and triumph. Together, the Blackwells founded the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children, the first hospital staffed entirely by women. Both sisters were tenacious and visionary, but their convictions did not always align with the emergence of women's rights—or with each other. From Bristol, Paris, and Edinburgh to the rising cities of antebellum America, this richly researched new biography celebrates two complicated pioneers who exploded the limits of possibility for women in medicine. As Elizabeth herself predicted, "a hundred years hence, women will not be what they are now."

July 25 : The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah (F HAN)

Texas, 1921. A time of abundance. The Great War is over, the bounty of the land is plentiful, and America is on the brink of a new and optimistic era. But for Elsa Wolcott, deemed too old to marry in a time when marriage is a woman's only option, the future seems bleak. Until the night she meets Rafe Martinelli and decides to change the direction of her life. With her reputation in ruin, there is only one respectable choice: marriage to a man she barely knows. By 1934, the world has changed; millions are out of work and drought has devastated the Great Plains. Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as crops fail and water dries up and the earth cracks open. Dust storms roll relentlessly across the plains. Everything on the Martinelli farm is dying, including Elsa's tenuous marriage; each day is a desperate battle against nature and a fight to keep her children alive.

August 29 : Black Cake by Charmaine Wilkerson (F WIL)

In present-day California, Eleanor Bennett's death leaves behind a puzzling inheritance for her two children, Byron and Benny: a traditional Caribbean black cake, made from a family recipe with a long history, and a voice recording. In her message, Eleanor shares a tumultuous story about a headstrong young swimmer who escapes her island home under suspicion of murder. The heartbreaking tale Eleanor unfolds, the secrets she still holds back, and the mystery of a long-lost child, challenge everything the siblings thought they knew about their lineage, and themselves.

September 26 : A Woman of No Importance by Sonia Purnell (B GOI)

In 1942, the Gestapo sent out an urgent transmission: "She is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her." The target in their sights was Virginia Hall, a Baltimore socialite who talked her way into Special Operations Executive, the spy organization dubbed Winston Churchill's "Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare." She became the first Allied woman deployed behind enemy lines and--despite her prosthetic leg--helped to light the flame of the French Resistance, revolutionizing secret warfare as we know it. Virginia established vast spy networks throughout France, called weapons and explosives down from the skies, and became a linchpin for the Resistance. Even as her face covered wanted posters and a bounty was placed on her head, Virginia refused order after order to evacuate. She finally escaped through a death-defying hike over the Pyrenees into Spain, her cover blown. But she plunged back in, adamant that she had more lives to save, and led a victorious guerilla campaign, liberating swathes of France from the Nazis after D-Day.

October 31 : The Huntress by Kate Quinn (F QUI)

Bold and fearless, Nina Markova always dreamed of flying. When the Nazis attack the Soviet Union, she risks everything to join the legendary Night Witches, an all-female night bomber regiment wreaking havoc on the invading Germans. When she is stranded behind enemy lines, Nina becomes the prey of a lethal Nazi murderess known as the Huntress, and only Nina's bravery and cunning will keep her alive. Transformed by the horrors he witnessed from Omaha Beach to the Nuremberg Trials, British war correspondent Ian Graham has become a Nazi hunter. Yet one target eludes him: a vicious predator known as the Huntress. To find her, the fierce, disciplined investigator joins forces with the only witness to escape the Huntress alive: the brazen, cocksure Nina. But a shared secret could derail their mission unless Ian and Nina force themselves to confront it.

November 28 : The Lincoln Highway by Amor Towles (F TOW)

In June 1954, 18-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served 15 months for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother Billy and head to California, where they can start their lives anew. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have hidden themselves in the trunk of the warden's car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take them all on a fateful journey in the opposite direction - to the city of New York.

No meeting in December