



# The Bookmarks

## BOOK CLUB



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

### 2024 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 30 : The First Ladies by Marie Benedict (F BEN)**

The daughter of formerly enslaved parents, Mary McLeod Bethune refuses to back down as white supremacists attempt to thwart her work. She marches on as an activist and an educator, and as her reputation grows she becomes a celebrity, revered by titans of business and recognized by U.S. Presidents. Eleanor Roosevelt herself is awestruck and eager to make her acquaintance. Initially drawn together because of their shared belief in women's rights and the power of education, Mary and Eleanor become fast friends confiding their secrets, hopes and dreams. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt is elected president, the two women begin to collaborate more closely, particularly as Eleanor moves toward her own agenda separate from FDR. Eleanor becomes a controversial First Lady for her outspokenness, particularly on civil rights. And when she receives threats because of her strong ties to Mary, it only fuels the women's desire to fight together for justice and equality.

#### **February 27 : The Spectacular by Fiona Davis (F DAV)**

New York City, 1956: Nineteen-year-old Marion is over the moon to have been selected to be one of the Rockettes, Radio City Music Hall's glamorous precision-dancing troupe. But with four shows a day as well as grueling rehearsals, Marion quickly realizes that the life of a Rockette has both extraordinary highs and devastating lows. Then one night a bomb explodes in the theater. It's only the latest in a string of explosions around the city orchestrated by a person the press has nicknamed the "Big Apple Bomber." With the public in an uproar over the lack of any real leads after a years long manhunt, the police, at Marion's urging, turn in desperation to a radical new technique: psychological profiling. As Marion finds herself pulled deeper into the investigation, she realizes that as much as she's been training herself to blend in, if she hopes to catch the bomber, she'll need to stand out and take a terrifying risk.

#### **March 26 : Canary Girls by Jennifer Chiaverini (F CHI)**

Early in the Great War, men left Britain's factories in droves to enlist. Struggling to keep up production, arsenals hired women to build the weapons the military urgently needed. These "munitionettes" worked grueling shifts often seven days a week, handling TNT and other explosives with little protective gear. Among them is nineteen-year-old former housemaid April Tipton. Impressed by her friend Marjorie's descriptions of higher wages, plentiful meals, and comfortable lodgings, she takes a job at Thornshire Arsenal near London. Joining them is Lucy Dempsey, wife of Daniel Dempsey, Olympic gold medalist and star forward of Tottenham Hotspur. With Daniel away serving in the Footballers' Battalion, Lucy resolves to do her bit to hasten the end of the war. When her coworkers learn she is a footballer's wife, they invite her to join the arsenal ladies' football club, the Thornshire Canaries. As the war grinds on, the Canary Girls persist despite the dangers, determined to outlive the war and rejoice in victory and peace.

**April 30 : Lady Tan's Circle of Women by Lisa See (F SEE)**

According to Confucius, "an educated woman is a worthless woman," but Tan Yunxian—born into an elite family, yet haunted by death, separations, and loneliness—is being raised by her grandparents to be of use. Her grandmother is one of only a handful of female doctors in China, and she teaches Yunxian the pillars of Chinese medicine, the Four Examinations—looking, listening, touching, and asking—something a man can never do with a female patient. From a young age, Yunxian learns about women's illnesses, many of which relate to childbearing, alongside a young midwife-in-training, Meiling. The two girls find fast friendship and a mutual purpose, and they vow to be forever friends, sharing in each other's joys and struggles. But when Yunxian is sent into an arranged marriage, her mother-in-law forbids her from seeing Meiling and from helping the women and girls in the household. Yunxian is to act like a proper wife—embroider bound-foot slippers, pluck instruments, recite poetry, give birth to sons, and stay forever within the walls of the family compound, the Garden of Fragrant Delights.

**May 28 : Solito by Javier Zamora (B ZAM)**

Trip. My parents started using that word about a year ago—"one day, you'll take a trip to be with us. Like an adventure." Javier's adventure is a three-thousand-mile journey from his small town in El Salvador, through Guatemala and Mexico, and across the U.S. border. He will leave behind his beloved aunt and grandparents to reunite with a mother who left four years ago and a father he barely remembers. Traveling alone except for a group of strangers and a coyote hired to lead them to safety, Javier's trip is supposed to last two short weeks. At nine years old, all Javier can imagine is rushing into his parents' arms, snuggling in bed between them, living under the same roof again. He does not see the perilous boat trips, relentless desert treks, pointed guns, arrests and deceptions that await him; nor can he know that those two weeks will expand into two life-altering months alongside a group of strangers who will come to encircle him like an unexpected family.

**June 25 : American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins (F CUM)**

Lydia lives in Acapulco. She has a son, Luca, the love of her life, and a wonderful husband who is a journalist. And while cracks are beginning to show in Acapulco because of the cartels, Lydia's life is, by and large, fairly comfortable. But after her husband's tell-all profile of the newest drug lord is published, none of their lives will ever be the same. Forced to flee, Lydia and Luca find themselves joining the countless people trying to reach the United States. Lydia soon sees that everyone is running from something. But what exactly are they running to?

**July 30 : Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt (F VAN)**

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago. Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors—until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova. Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

**August 27 : The Marriage Portrait by Maggie O'Farrell (F OFA)**

Florence, the 1550s. Lucrezia, third daughter of the grand duke, is comfortable with her obscure place in the palazzo: free to wonder at its treasures, observe its clandestine workings, and devote herself to her own artistic pursuits. But when her older sister dies on the eve of her wedding, Lucrezia is thrust unwittingly into the limelight: the duke is quick to request her hand in marriage, and her father just as quick to accept on her behalf. Having barely left girlhood behind, Lucrezia must now enter an unfamiliar court whose customs are opaque and where her arrival is not universally welcomed. Perhaps most mystifying of all is her new husband himself, Alfonso. Is he the playful sophisticate he appeared to be before their wedding, the aesthete happiest in the company of artists and musicians, or the ruthless politician before whom even his formidable sisters seem to tremble? As Lucrezia sits in constricting finery for a painting intended to preserve her image for centuries to come, one thing becomes worryingly clear. In the court's eyes, she has one duty: to provide the heir who will shore up the future of the Ferranese dynasty. Until then, for all of her rank and nobility, the new duchess's future hangs entirely in the balance.

**September 24 : The Sisterhood by Liza Mundy (327.12 MUN)**

Upon its creation in 1947, the Central Intelligence Agency instantly became one of the most important spy services in the world. Like every male-dominated workplace in Eisenhower America, the growing intelligence agency needed women to type memos, send messages, manipulate expense accounts, and keep secrets. Despite discrimination, these clerks and secretaries rose to become some of the shrewdest, toughest operatives the agency employed. During the Cold War, women made critical contributions to U.S. intelligence, sometimes as officers, sometimes as unpaid spouses, working together as their numbers grew. They noticed things that the men at the top didn't see. It was a close-knit network of female CIA analysts who warned about the rising threat of Al Qaeda. They showed that painstaking data analysis would be crucial to the post-9/11 national security landscape—an effort that culminated spectacularly in the CIA's successful efforts to track down and kill Osama Bin Laden and, later, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

**October 29 : Crow Mary by Kathleen Grissom (F GRI)**

In 1872, sixteen-year-old Goes First, a Crow Native woman, marries Abe Farwell, a white fur trader. He gives her the name Mary, and they set off on the long trip to his trading post in the Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan, Canada. Along the way, she finds a fast friend in a Métis named Jeannie; makes a lifelong enemy in a wolfer named Stiller; and despite learning a dark secret of Farwell's past, falls in love with her husband. The winter trading season passes peacefully. Then, on the eve of their return to Montana, a group of drunken whiskey traders slaughters forty Nakota. Mary, hiding from the hail of bullets, sees the murderers, including Stiller, take five Nakota women back to their fort. She begs Farwell to save them, and when he refuses, Mary takes two guns, creeps into the fort, and saves the women from certain death. Thus, she sets off a whirlwind of colliding cultures that brings out the worst and best in the cast of unforgettable characters and pushes the love between Farwell and Crow Mary to the breaking point.

**November 26 : The Women by Kristin Hannah (F HAN)**

"Women can be heroes, too." When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these unexpected words, it is a revelation. Raised on idyllic Coronado Island and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing, being a good girl. But in 1965 the world is changing, and she suddenly imagines a different choice for her life. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she impulsively joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is overwhelmed by the chaos and destruction of war, as well as the unexpected trauma of coming home to a changed and politically divided America.

**No meeting in December**