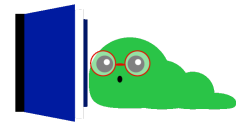


THE BOOKWORMS

BOOK CLUB



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

2024 Book Club Reading List

The Bookworms meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 1pm, 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 17 : Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus (F GAR)

Chemist Elizabeth Zott is not your average woman. In fact, Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing as an average woman. But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute takes a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel-prize nominated grudge-holder who falls in love with—of all things—her mind. True chemistry results. But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show *Supper at Six*. Elizabeth's unusual approach to cooking ("combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride") proves revolutionary. But as her following grows, not everyone is happy. Because as it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo.

February 21: The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store by James McBride (F MCB)

In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighbourhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows. As these characters' stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town's white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community-heaven and earth-that sustain us.

March 20 : The First Ladies by Marie Benedict & Victoria Murray (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—and holding each other's hands through tragedy and triumph. 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, a consequence of the devastating discovery of her husband's secret love affair. 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.

April 17 : When the Astors Owned New York by Justin Kaplan (974.71 KAP)

Endowed with the largest private fortunes of their day, two heirs of arch-capitalist John Jacob Astor battled with each other for social primacy. William Waldorf Astor and his cousin John Jacob Astor IV led incomparably privileged lives in the blaze of public attention. Novelist, sportsman, and inventor, John Jacob went down with the Titanic, after turbulent marital adventures and service in the Spanish-American War. Collector of art, antiquities, and stately homes, William Waldorf became a British subject and acquired the title of Viscount Astor. In New York during the 1890s and after, the two feuding Astors built monumental grand hotels, chief among them the original Waldorf-Astoria on lower Fifth Avenue. Home of the chafing dish and the velvet rope, the Waldorf-Astoria drew the rich, famous, and fashionable. It was the setting for the most notorious society event of the era—a costume extravaganza put on by its hosts during a time of widespread need and unemployment. The celebrity-packed lobbies, public rooms, lavish suites, and exclusive restaurants of the grand hotels became distinctive theaters of modern life.

May 15 : The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell by Robert Dugoni (F DUG)

Sam Hill always saw the world through different eyes. Born with red pupils, he was called “Devil Boy” or Sam “Hell” by his classmates; “God’s will” is what his mother called his ocular albinism. Her words were of little comfort, but Sam persevered, buoyed by his mother’s devout faith, his father’s practical wisdom, and his two other misfit friends. Sam believed it was God who sent Ernie Cantwell, the only African American kid in his class, to be the friend he so desperately needed. And that it was God’s idea for Mickie Kennedy to storm into Our Lady of Mercy like a tornado, uprooting every rule Sam had been taught about boys and girls. Forty years later, Sam, a small-town eye doctor, is no longer certain anything was by design. Running from the pain, eyes closed, served little purpose. Now, as he looks back on his life, Sam embarks on a journey that will take him halfway around the world. This time, his eyes are wide open—bringing into clear view what changed him, defined him, and made him so afraid, until he can finally see what truly matters.

June 19 : Baseball Before We Knew It by David Block (796.357 BLO)

It may be America’s game, but no one seems to know how or when baseball really started. Theories abound, myths proliferate, but reliable information has been in short supply—until now, when *Baseball before We Knew It* brings fresh new evidence of baseball’s origins into play. David Block looks into the early history of the game and of the 150-year-old debate about its beginnings. He tackles one stubborn misconception after another, debunking the enduring belief that baseball descended from the English game of rounders and revealing a surprising new explanation for the most notorious myth of all—the Abner Doubleday–Cooperstown story.

July 17 : The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich (F ERD)

Thomas Wazhashk is the night watchman at the jewel bearing plant, the first factory located near the Turtle Mountain Reservation in rural North Dakota. He is also a Chippewa Council member who is trying to understand the consequences of a new “emancipation” bill on its way to the floor of the United States Congress. It is 1953 and he and the other council members know the bill isn’t about freedom; Congress is fed up with Indians. The bill is a “termination” that threatens the rights of Native Americans to their land and their very identity. Unlike most of the girls on the reservation, Patrice, the class valedictorian, has no desire to wear herself down with a husband and kids. She makes jewel bearings at the plant, a job that barely pays her enough to support her mother and brother. Patrice’s shameful alcoholic father returns home sporadically to terrorize his wife and children and bully her for money. But Patrice needs every penny to follow her beloved older sister, Vera, who moved to the big city of Minneapolis. Vera may have disappeared; she hasn’t been in touch in months, and is rumored to have had a baby. Determined to find Vera and her child, Patrice makes a fateful trip to Minnesota that introduces her to unexpected forms of exploitation and violence, and endangers her life.

August 21 : 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. It's an honor to perform in the world's most spectacular theater, an art deco masterpiece. But with four shows a day as well as grueling rehearsals, not to mention exacting standards of perfection to live up to, 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." They have been terrorizing the citizens of New York for sixteen years by planting bombs in popular, crowded spaces. 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—performing in perfect unison with all the other identical Rockettes—if she hopes to catch the bomber, she'll need to stand out and take a terrifying risk. But she may be forced to sacrifice everything she's worked for, as well as the people she loves the most.

September 18 : The Runaway Wife by Dee McDonald (F MCD)

One evening in early August, while mashing the potatoes for dinner, Connie McColl decides she's had enough... Connie is tired of solving one family crisis after another - usually involving her unruly grandchildren - while her husband Roger spends all day at his beloved golf course. Surely it must be time for her to shake off her apron and start living again? So Connie packs a bag, gets in her little green car and drives off... As Connie journeys from England to Scotland on an unexpected adventure, she finally begins to rediscover herself. And she starts to wonder, will she ever be ready to return home? Or will this summer change her life forever?

October 16 : 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. Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

November 20 : The Personal Librarian by Marie Benedict (F BEN)

In her twenties, Belle da Costa Greene is hired by J. P. Morgan to curate a collection of rare manuscripts, books, and artwork for his newly built Pierpont Morgan Library. Belle becomes a fixture on the New York society scene and one of the most powerful people in the art and book world, known for her impeccable taste and shrewd negotiating for critical works as she helps build a world-class collection. But Belle has a secret, one she must protect at all costs. She was born not Belle da Costa Greene but Belle Marion Greener. She is the daughter of Richard Greener, the first Black graduate of Harvard and a well-known advocate for equality. Belle's complexion isn't dark because of her alleged Portuguese heritage that lets her pass as white—her complexion is dark because she is African American.

No meeting in December