



The Bookmarks

BOOK CLUB



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

2025 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 28 : Betty by Tiffany McDaniel (F MCD)

Born in a bathtub in 1954 to a Cherokee father and white mother, Betty is the sixth of eight siblings. The world they inhabit is one of poverty and violence--both from outside the family, and also, devastatingly, from within. The lush landscape, rich with birdsong, wild fruit, and blazing stars, becomes a kind of refuge for Betty, but when her family's darkest secrets are brought to light, she has no choice but to reckon with the brutal history hiding in the hills, as well as the heart-wrenching cruelties and incredible characters she encounters in her rural town of Breathed, Ohio. But despite the hardship she faces, Betty is resilient. Her curiosity about the natural world, her fierce love for her sisters, and her father's brilliant stories are kindling for the fire of her own imagination, and in the face of all she bears witness to, Betty discovers an escape: she begins to write. She recounts the horrors of her family's past and present with pen and paper and buries them deep in the dirt--moments that has stung her so deeply, she could not tell them, until now.

February 25 : The Black Angels by Maria Smilios (610.73 SMI)

During those dark pre-antibiotic days, when tuberculosis killed one in seven people, white nurses at Sea View, New York's largest municipal hospital, began quitting. Desperate to avert a public health crisis, city officials summoned Black southern nurses, luring them with promises of good pay, a career, and an escape from the strictures of Jim Crow. But after arriving, they found themselves on an isolated hilltop in the remote borough of Staten Island, yet again confronting racism and consigned to a woefully understaffed facility, dubbed "the pest house". Spanning the Great Depression and moving through World War II and beyond, this story follows the intrepid young women, the "Black Angels," who, for twenty years, risked their lives working under dreadful conditions while caring for the city's poorest. Yet despite their major role in desegregating the NYC hospital system these nurses were completely erased from history.

March 25 : The Turtle House by Amanda Churchill (F CHU)

It's spring 1999, and 25-year-old Lia Cope and her prickly 73-year-old grandmother, Mineko, are sharing a bedroom in Curtain, Texas, the ranching town where Lia grew up and Mineko began her life as a Japanese war bride. Both women are at a turning point: Mineko, long widowed, moved in with her son and daughter-in-law after a suspicious fire destroyed the Cope family ranch house, while Lia, an architect with a promising career in Austin, has unexpectedly returned under circumstances she refuses to explain. Though Lia never felt especially close to her grandmother, the two grow close sharing late-night conversations. Mineko tells stories of her early life in Japan, of the war that changed everything, and of her two great a man named Akio Sato and an abandoned Japanese country estate they called the Turtle House, where their relationship took root.

April 29 : The Art Thief by Michael Finkel (B BRE)

For centuries, works of art have been stolen in countless ways from all over the world, but no one has been quite as successful at it as the master thief Stéphane Breitwieser. Carrying out more than two hundred heists over nearly eight years—in museums and cathedrals all over Europe—Breitwieser, along with his girlfriend who worked as his lookout, stole more than three hundred objects, until it all fell apart in spectacular fashion. In *The Art Thief*, Michael Finkel brings us into Breitwieser's strange and fascinating world. Unlike most thieves, Breitwieser never stole for money. Instead, he displayed all his treasures in a pair of secret rooms where he could admire them to his heart's content. Possessed of a remarkable athleticism and an innate ability to circumvent practically any security system, Breitwieser managed to pull off a breathtaking number of audacious thefts. Yet these strange talents bred a growing disregard for risk and an addict's need to score, leading Breitwieser to ignore his girlfriend's pleas to stop—until one final act of hubris brought everything crashing down.

May 27 : Yellowface by R. F. Kuang (F KUA)

Authors June Hayward and Athena Liu were supposed to be twin rising stars. But Athena's a literary darling. June Hayward is literally nobody. Who wants stories about basic white girls, June thinks. So when June witnesses Athena's death in a freak accident, she acts on impulse: she steals Athena's just-finished masterpiece, an experimental novel about the unsung contributions of Chinese laborers during World War I. So what if June edits Athena's novel and sends it to her agent as her own work? So what if she lets her new publisher rebrand her as Juniper Song—complete with an ambiguously ethnic author photo? Doesn't this piece of history deserve to be told, whoever the teller? That's what June claims, and the New York Times bestseller list seems to agree. But June can't get away from Athena's shadow, and emerging evidence threatens to bring June's (stolen) success down around her. As June races to protect her secret, she discovers exactly how far she will go to keep what she thinks she deserves.

June 24 : The Brownstone of West 53rd Street by Lora Mitchell (B MIT)

Follow Lora as she discovers the wonders of her adopted home, New York City. The moment she sets foot on the stimulating, rich land of culture, concrete and skyscrapers, it's an immediate love affair. Walk down the streets of the early 60's as she paints a captivating portrait of the spirit of the city, its landscape and people, neighborhoods and ethnic foods that puzzle her. A desire to begin a theatrical career, young, naïve, unsophisticated, Lora moves into the Rehearsal Club, a safe-haven sanctuary for young aspiring actresses where she lives for two years. She experiences the heartbreaking JFK tragedy and travels with four other Club members to Washington DC for the funeral. Based on a personal journal, she writes of her studies with famous drama and dance teachers and includes anecdotes of her Club housemates, celebrities and male friends. She also reveals poignant secrets of her closest roommates and how they affected her in unexpected ways.

July 29 : The Light of Days by Judy Batalion (940 BAT)

Witnesses to the brutal murder of their families and neighbors and the violent destruction of their communities, a cadre of Jewish women in Poland—some still in their teens—helped transform the Jewish youth groups into resistance cells to fight the Nazis. With courage, guile, and nerves of steel, these “ghetto girls” paid off Gestapo guards, hid revolvers in loaves of bread and jars of marmalade, and helped build systems of underground bunkers. They flirted with German soldiers, bribed them with wine, whiskey, and home cooking, used their Aryan looks to seduce them, and shot and killed them. They bombed German train lines and blew up a town's water supply. They also nursed the sick and taught children. Yet the exploits of these courageous resistance fighters have remained virtually unknown.

August 26 : The Midnight Library by Matt Haig (F HAI)

Between life and death there is a library. When Nora Seed finds herself in the Midnight Library, she has a chance to make things right. Up until now, her life has been full of misery and regret. She feels she has let everyone down, including herself. But things are about to change. The books in the Midnight Library enable Nora to live as if she had done things differently. With the help of an old friend, she can now undo every one of her regrets as she tries to work out her perfect life. But things aren't always what she imagined they'd be, and soon her choices place the library and herself in extreme danger. Before time runs out, she must answer the ultimate question: what is the best way to live?

September 30 : The Vaster Wilds by Lauren Groff (F GRO)

A servant girl escapes from a colonial settlement in the wilderness. She carries nothing with her but her wits, a few possessions, and the spark of god that burns hot within her. What she finds in this terra incognita is beyond the limits of her imagination and will bend her belief in everything that her own civilization has taught her. Lauren Groff's new novel is at once a thrilling adventure story and a penetrating fable about trying to find a new way of living in a world succumbing to the churn of colonialism. *The Vaster Wilds* is a work of raw and prophetic power that tells the story of America in miniature, through one girl at a hinge point in history, to ask how—and if—we can adapt quickly enough to save ourselves.

October 28 : The Housemaid by Frieda McFadden (F MCF)

Every day I clean the Winchesters' beautiful house top to bottom. I collect their daughter from school. And I cook a delicious meal for the whole family before heading up to eat alone in my tiny room on the top floor. I try to ignore how Nina makes a mess just to watch me clean it up. How she tells strange lies about her own daughter. And how her husband Andrew seems more broken every day. But as I look into Andrew's handsome brown eyes, so full of pain, it's hard not to imagine what it would be like to live Nina's life. The walk-in closet, the fancy car, the perfect husband. I only try on one of Nina's pristine white dresses once. Just to see what it's like. But she soon finds out... and by the time I realize my attic bedroom door only locks from the outside, it's far too late.

November 25 : The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters (F PET)

July 1962. A Mi'kmaq family from Nova Scotia arrives in Maine to pick blueberries for the summer. Weeks later, four-year-old Ruthie, the family's youngest child, vanishes. She is last seen by her six-year-old brother, Joe, sitting on a favorite rock at the edge of a berry field. Joe will remain distraught by his sister's disappearance for years to come. In Maine, a young girl named Norma grows up as the only child of an affluent family. Her father is emotionally distant, her mother frustratingly overprotective. Norma is often troubled by recurring dreams and visions that seem more like memories than imagination. As she grows older, Norma slowly comes to realize there is something her parents aren't telling her. Unwilling to abandon her intuition, she will spend decades trying to uncover this family secret.

No meeting in December