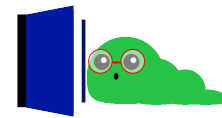


THE BOOKWORMS

BOOK CLUB



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

2025 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 15 : 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 to the ruler of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, 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.

February 19: The Women by Kristin Hannah (F HAN)

Women can be heroes. When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is over-whelmed by the chaos and destruction of war. Each day is a gamble of life and death, hope and betrayal; friendships run deep and can be shattered in an instant. In war, she meets—and becomes one of—the lucky, the brave, the broken, and the lost. But war is just the beginning for Frankie and her veteran friends. The real battle lies in coming home to a changed and divided America, to angry protesters, and to a country that wants to forget Vietnam.

March 19: My Brilliant Friend by Elena Ferrante (F FER)

A modern masterpiece from one of Italy's most acclaimed authors, *My Brilliant Friend* is a rich, intense and generous-hearted story about two friends, Elena and Lila. Ferrante's inimitable style lends itself perfectly to a meticulous portrait of these two women that is also the story of a nation and a touching meditation on the nature of friendship. Through the lives of these two women, Ferrante tells the story of a neighbourhood, a city and a country as it is transformed in ways that, in turn, also transform the relationship between her two protagonists.

April 16: The Baseball Book of Why by John McCallister (795.357 MCC)

Why do we sometimes refer to a left-handed pitcher as a “southpaw?” Why are major league pitchers normally limited to 100 pitches per game? Why was Jack Roosevelt Robinson the first African-American ever to play as part of an official lineup for a team in Major League Baseball? Why is a baseball field sometimes referred to as a diamond? This book provides over 100 questions and detailed answers concerning the traditions, rules, and history of the national pastime. Organized by the sport’s five eras—Dead Ball, Live Ball, Golden Age, Expansion, and Steroid Era—it answers questions about hitting, pitching, fielding, base running, managing, scouting and ownership that vex even the most ardent fans of the game. Moreover, this book is an appreciation of how baseball’s traditions began.

May 21: Henna House by Nomi Eve (F EVE)

Nomi Eve’s vivid saga begins in Yemen in 1920, when Adela Damari’s parents desperately seek a future husband for their young daughter. After passage of the Orphan’s Decree, any unbetrothed Jewish child left orphaned will be instantly adopted by the local Muslim community. With her parents’ health failing, and no spousal prospects in sight, Adela’s situation looks dire until her uncle arrives from a faraway city, bringing with him a cousin and aunt who introduce Adela to the powerful rituals of henna tattooing. Suddenly, Adela’s eyes are opened to the world, and she begins to understand what it means to love another and one’s heritage. She is imperiled, however, when her parents die and a prolonged drought threatens their long-established way of life. She and her extended family flee to the city of Aden where Adela encounters old loves, discovers her true calling, and is ultimately betrayed by the people and customs she once held dear.

June 18: The Talented Mrs. Mandelbaum by Margalit Fox (364.1 FOX)

A Jewish mother of four, a gracious society hostess, a beloved member of her community—and the first widely renowned crime boss in America. Discover the true story from the bestselling author of *The Confidence Men*. In 1850, Fredericka Mandelbaum traveled to New York in steerage and worked as a peddler on the streets of Lower Manhattan. By the 1870s she was a widow with four children, a fixture of high society, and an admired philanthropist. What had enabled a woman on the margins of American life to ascend from tenement poverty to immense wealth? In the intervening years, “Marm” Mandelbaum, as she was known, had become the country’s most notorious “fence”—a receiver of stolen goods—and a successful criminal mastermind. By the mid-1880s as much as \$10 million worth of purloined luxury goods (the equivalent of nearly \$300 million in today’s money) had passed through her modest haberdashery shop on the Lower East Side. Called “the nucleus and center of the whole organization of crime in New York City” by the *New York Times*, she planned, financed, and profited from robberies of cash, gold, diamonds, and silk throughout the city and across the United States. But Fredericka Mandelbaum wasn’t just a successful She was a business visionary—one of the first entrepreneurs in America to systemize the formerly scattershot enterprise of property crime. Handpicking a cadre of New York’s foremost bank robbers, housebreakers, and shoplifters, and neatly bribing anyone who stood in her way, she handled logistics and organized supply chains—turning theft into a viable, scalable business .

July 16: The Last Secret of Lily Adams by Sara Blaydes (F BLA)

One of the brightest stars of Hollywood’s golden age was Lily Adams, the beloved picture of all-American innocence. Why she suddenly vanished from the spotlight was a mystery even to those closest to her. Upon Lily’s death seventy years later, her granddaughter, Carolyn Prior, struggles to understand a woman she loved but never really knew. Then, sifting through the memorabilia of a once-glamorous career, Carolyn comes across a letter from her grandmother. It’s the trembling admission of a secret life and a story that begins and ends with superstar Stella Lane, Lily’s archrival of the silver screen—a bombshell who was brutally murdered. As Carolyn unearths her grandmother’s connection to the notorious unsolved slaying, her life collides with Lily’s in the most shocking ways. And with each stunning new revelation, Carolyn must decide how much she is willing to risk to unlock the truth.

August 20: Devil's Gate by David Roberts (978.02 ROB)

Dramatic re-telling of a terrible but little-known tragedy: In 1856, 220 Mormons traveling west to Utah, pushing and pulling their belongings in handcarts, died of malnutrition and hypothermia. Roberts draws on contemporary letters and diaries to re-create the drama and suffering. A powerful indictment of Brigham Young: Young had been warned that the pilgrims were at risk from winter storms; he could have waited until the next year or sent aid eastward sooner but failed to do so until it was too late. Not only have Young's biographers ignored or minimized this tragic and preventable event, they've tacitly accepted the official version of the story, which casts it as an unavoidable act of God that tested—and proved—the faith and steadfastness of the Mormon spirit.

September 17: 1984 by George Orwell (F ORW)

The story takes place in an imagined future in the year 1984, when much of the world is in perpetual war. Great Britain, now known as Airstrip One, has become a province of the totalitarian superstate Oceania, which is led by Big Brother, a dictatorial leader supported by an intense cult of personality manufactured by the Party's Thought Police. Through the Ministry of Truth, the Party engages in omnipresent government surveillance, historical negationism, and constant propaganda to persecute individuality and independent thinking.

October 15: God of the Woods by Liz Moore (F MOO)

Early morning, August 1975: a camp counselor discovers an empty bunk. Its occupant, Barbara Van Laar, has gone missing. Barbara isn't just any thirteen-year-old: she's the daughter of the family that owns the summer camp and employs most of the region's residents. And this isn't the first time a Van Laar child has disappeared. Barbara's older brother similarly vanished fourteen years ago, never to be found. As a panicked search begins, a thrilling drama unfolds. Chasing down the layered secrets of the Van Laar family and the blue-collar community working in its shadow, Moore's multi-threaded story invites readers into a rich and gripping dynasty of secrets and second chances. It is Liz Moore's most ambitious and wide-reaching novel yet.

November 19: The Briar Club by Kate Quinn (F QUI)

Washington, D.C., 1950. Everyone keeps to themselves at Briarwood House, a down-at-the-heels all-female boardinghouse in the heart of the nation's capital, where secrets hide behind white picket fences. But when the lovely, mysterious widow Grace March moves into the attic, she draws her oddball collection of neighbors into unlikely friendship: poised English beauty Fliss whose facade of perfect wife and mother covers gaping inner wounds; police officer's daughter Nora, who is entangled with a shadowy gangster; frustrated baseball star Bea, whose career has ended along with the women's baseball league of WWII; and poisonous, gung-ho Arlene, who has thrown herself into McCarthy's Red Scare. Grace's weekly attic-room dinner parties and window-brewed sun tea become a healing balm on all their lives, but she hides a terrible secret of her own. When a shocking act of violence tears apart the house, the Briar Club women must decide once and for all: Who is the true enemy in their midst?

No meeting in December