

# *The Bookmarks*

## Free Public Library of Monroe Township

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## 2020 BOOK CLUB READING LIST

The Bookmarks meet on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. 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, please call 856-629-1212.

### **JANUARY 28: Maisie Dobbs by Jacqueline Winspear (Mystery) M WIN**

Maisie Dobbs got her start as a maid in an aristocratic London household when she was thirteen. Her employer, suffragette Lady Rowan Compton, soon became her patron, taking the remarkably bright youngster under her wing. Lady Rowan's friend, Maurice Blanche, often retained as an investigator by the European elite, recognized Maisie's intuitive gifts and helped her earn admission to the prestigious Girton College. The outbreak of war changed everything. Maisie trained as a nurse, then left for France to serve at the Front, where she found—and lost—an important part of herself. Ten years after the Armistice, in the spring of 1929, Maisie sets out on her own as a private investigator, one who has learned that coincidences are meaningful, and truth elusive. Her very first case involves suspected infidelity but reveals something very different. (Book 1 of the Maisie Dobbs series)

### **FEBRUARY 25: Accidental Presidents by Jared Cohen (Nonfiction) 973.09 COH**

Eight men have succeeded to the presidency when the incumbent died in office. In one way or another they vastly changed our history. Only Theodore Roosevelt would have been elected in his own right. Only TR, Truman, Coolidge, and LBJ were re-elected. **John Tyler** succeeded William Henry Harrison who died 30 days into his term. He was kicked out of his party and became the first president threatened with impeachment. **Millard Fillmore** succeeded esteemed General Zachary Taylor. He immediately sacked the entire cabinet and delayed an inevitable Civil War by standing with Henry Clay's compromise of 1850. **Andrew Johnson**, who succeeded our greatest president, sided with remnants of the Confederacy in Reconstruction. **Chester Arthur**, the embodiment of the spoils system, was so reviled as James Garfield's successor that he had to defend himself against plotting Garfield's assassination; but he reformed the civil service. **Theodore Roosevelt** broke up the trusts. **Calvin Coolidge** silently cooled down the Harding scandals and preserved the White House for the Republican Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression. **Truman** surprised everybody when he succeeded the great FDR and proved an able and accomplished president. **Lyndon B. Johnson** was named to deliver Texas electorally. He led the nation forward on Civil Rights but failed on Vietnam.

### **MARCH 31: The Woman Who Smashed Codes by Jason Fagone (Nonfiction) 652.8 FAG**

In 1916, at the height of World War I, brilliant Shakespeare expert Elizebeth Smith went to work for an eccentric tycoon on his estate outside Chicago. The tycoon had close ties to the U.S. government, and he soon asked Elizebeth to apply her language skills to an exciting new venture: code-breaking. There she met the man who would become her husband, groundbreaking cryptologist William Friedman. Though she and Friedman are in many ways the "Adam and Eve" of the NSA, Elizebeth's story, incredibly, has never been told. In *The Woman Who Smashed Codes*, Jason Fagone chronicles the life of this extraordinary woman, who played an integral role in our nation's history for forty years. After World War I, Smith used her talents to catch gangsters and smugglers during Prohibition, then accepted a covert mission to discover and expose Nazi spy rings that were spreading like wildfire across South America, advancing ever closer to the United States. As World War II raged, Elizebeth fought a highly classified battle of wits against Hitler's Reich, cracking multiple versions of the Enigma machine used by German spies. Meanwhile, inside an Army vault in Washington, William worked furiously to break Purple, the Japanese version of Enigma—and eventually succeeded, at a terrible cost to his personal life.

### **APRIL 28: Driving Miss Norma by Tim Bauerschmidt (Biography) B BAU**

When Miss Norma was diagnosed with uterine cancer, she was advised to undergo surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. But instead of confining herself to a hospital bed for what could be her last stay, Miss Norma—newly widowed after nearly seven decades of marriage—rose to her full height of five feet and told her doctor, "I'm ninety years old. I'm hitting the road." And so Miss Norma took off on an unforgettable around-the-country journey in a thirty-six-foot motor home with her retired son Tim, his wife Ramie, and their dog Ringo.

### **MAY 26: The Only Woman in the Room by Marie Benedict (Fiction) F BEN**

Her beauty almost certainly saved her from the rising Nazi party and led to marriage with an Austrian arms dealer. Underestimated in everything else, she overheard the Third Reich's plans while at her husband's side, understanding more than anyone would guess. She devised a plan to flee in disguise from their castle, and the whirlwind escape landed her in Hollywood. She became Hedy Lamarr, screen star. But she kept a secret more shocking than her heritage or her marriage: she was a scientist. And she knew a few secrets about the enemy. She had an idea that might help the country fight the Nazis...if anyone would listen to her.

**JUNE 30:**

**The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead (Fiction) F WHI**

As the Civil Rights movement begins to reach the black enclave of Frenchtown in segregated Tallahassee, Elwood Curtis takes the words of Dr. Martin Luther King to heart: He is "as good as anyone." Abandoned by his parents, but kept on the straight and narrow by his grandmother, Elwood is about to enroll in the local black college. But for a black boy in the Jim Crow South of the early 1960s, one innocent mistake is enough to destroy the future. Elwood is sentenced to a juvenile reformatory called the Nickel Academy, whose mission statement says it provides "physical, intellectual and moral training" so the delinquent boys in their charge can become "honorable and honest men." In reality, the Nickel Academy is a grotesque chamber of horrors where the sadistic staff beats and sexually abuses the students, corrupt officials and locals steal food and supplies, and any boy who resists is likely to disappear "out back." Stunned to find himself in such a vicious environment, Elwood tries to hold onto Dr. King's ringing assertion "Throw us in jail and we will still love you." His friend Turner thinks Elwood is worse than naive, that the world is crooked, and that the only way to survive is to scheme and avoid trouble.

**JULY 28:**

**The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson (Fiction) on order**

The hardscrabble folks of Troublesome Creek have to scarp for everything—everything except books, that is. Thanks to Roosevelt's Kentucky Pack Horse Library Project, Troublesome's got its very own traveling librarian, Cussy Mary Carter. Cussy's not only a book woman, however, she's also the last of her kind, her skin a shade of blue unlike most anyone else. Not everyone is keen on Cussy's family or the Library Project, and a Blue is often blamed for any whiff of trouble. If Cussy wants to bring the joy of books to the hill folks, she's going to have to confront prejudice as old as the Appalachians and suspicion as deep as the holler. Inspired by the true blue-skinned people of Kentucky and the brave and dedicated Kentucky Pack Horse library service of the 1930s.

**AUGUST 25:**

**The Dutch House by Ann Patchett (Fiction) F PAT**

At the end of the Second World War, Cyril Conroy combines luck and a single canny investment to begin an enormous real estate empire, propelling his family from poverty to enormous wealth. His first order of business is to buy the Dutch House, a lavish estate in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia. Meant as a surprise for his wife, the house sets in motion the undoing of everyone he loves. The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, the brilliantly acerbic and self-assured Maeve, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakeable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures.

**SEPTEMBER 29:**

**Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy by Karen Abbott (Nonfiction) 973.785 AB27L**

Karen Abbott illuminates one of the most fascinating yet little known aspects of the Civil War: the stories of four courageous women—a socialite, a farmgirl, an abolitionist, and a widow—who were spies. After shooting a Union soldier in her front hall with a pocket pistol, Belle Boyd became a courier and spy for the Confederate army, using her charms to seduce men on both sides. Emma Edmonds cut off her hair and assumed the identity of a man to enlist as a Union private, witnessing the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. The beautiful widow, Rose O'Neale Greenhow, engaged in affairs with powerful Northern politicians to gather intelligence for the Confederacy, and used her young daughter to send information to Southern generals. Elizabeth Van Lew, a wealthy Richmond abolitionist, hid behind her proper Southern manners as she orchestrated a far-reaching espionage ring, right under the noses of suspicious rebel detectives.

**OCTOBER 27:**

**War Paint by Lindy Woodhead (Nonfiction) on order**

They were both born in the nineteenth century in humble circumstances—Helena Rubinstein in an orthodox Jewish household in Kraków, Poland, Elizabeth Arden on a farm outside Toronto. But by the 1930s, they were bitter rivals in New York, the rulers of dueling international beauty empires that would forever change the way women thought about cosmetics, salons, and wrinkles. This riveting biography brings these two celebrated women to life, revealing the ruthless drive and innovative business strategies that took each to the top. Along the way, it offers an intriguing look at their personal idiosyncrasies (Rubinstein collected art, Arden racehorses), their checkered marriages, and the rarefied social milieu in which they both traveled.

**NOVEMBER 24:**

**Infamy by Richard Reeves (Nonfiction) 940.53 REE**

After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed an executive order that forced more than 120,000 Japanese Americans into primitive camps for the rest of war. Their only crime: looking like the enemy. In *Infamy*, acclaimed historian Richard Reeves delivers a sweeping narrative of this atrocity. Men we usually consider heroes—FDR, Earl Warren, Edward R. Murrow—were in this case villains. We also learn of internees who joined the military to fight for the country that had imprisoned their families, even as others fought for their rights all the way to the Supreme Court. The heart of the book, however, tells the poignant stories of those who endured years in "war relocation camps," many of whom suffered this injustice with remarkable grace.

**DECEMBER:**

**The Bookmarks Book Club does not meet in December**