



BOOKWORMS BOOK CLUB

The Bookworms Book Club is a reading group for adults that meets at 1:00 on the third Wednesday of each month. All are welcome to read along with us and attend our discussions in the library meeting room. No registration is required.

2020 BOOK CLUB READING LIST

Wednesday, January 15th

Hotel On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford F FOR

Henry Lee comes upon a crowd gathered outside the Panama Hotel, once the gateway to Seattle's Japantown. It has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has made an incredible discovery: the belongings of Japanese families, left when they were rounded up and sent to internment camps during World War II. As Henry looks on, the owner opens a Japanese parasol. This simple act takes old Henry Lee back to the 1940s, at the height of the war. At school Henry, a Chinese American student, meets Keiko Okabe, a young Japanese American student. Amid the chaos of blackouts, curfews, and FBI raids, Henry and Keiko forge a bond of friendship-and innocent love-that transcends the long-standing prejudices of their Old World ancestors. And after Keiko and her family are swept up in the evacuations to the internment camps, she and Henry are left only with the hope that the war will end, and that their promise to each other will be kept. Forty years later, Henry Lee is certain that the parasol belonged to Keiko.

Wednesday, February 19th

The Day the World Came to Town by Jim Defede

When 38 jetliners bound for the United States were forced to land at Gander International Airport in Canada by the closing of U.S. airspace on September 11, the population of this small town on Newfoundland Island swelled from 10,300 to nearly 17,000. The citizens of Gander met the stranded passengers with an overwhelming display of friendship and goodwill. As the passengers stepped from the airplanes, exhausted, hungry and distraught after being held on board for nearly 24 hours while security checked all of the baggage, they were greeted with a feast prepared by the townspeople. Local bus drivers who had been on strike came off the picket lines to transport the passengers to the various shelters set up in local schools and churches. Linens and toiletries were bought and donated. A middle school provided showers, as well as access to computers, email, and televisions, allowing the passengers to stay in touch with family and follow the news.

Wednesday, March 18th

The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead 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.

Wednesday, April 15th

A Square Meal by Jane Ziegelman 641.597309 ZIE

Before 1929, America's relationship with food was defined by abundance. But the collapse of the economy left a quarter of all Americans out of work and undernourished. In 1933, for the first time in American history, the federal government assumed some of the responsibility for feeding its citizens. 'Home economists' brought science into the kitchen and imposed their vision of a sturdy, utilitarian cuisine on the American dinner table. Ziegelman and Coe provide an in-depth exploration of the greatest food crisis the nation has ever faced and how it transformed America's culinary culture.

Wednesday, May 20th

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens F OWE

For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life--until the unthinkable happens. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.

Free Public Library of Monroe Township

713 Marsha Avenue, Williamstown

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Wednesday, June 17th

The Girls in the Picture by Melanie Benjamin F BEN

It is 1914, and twenty-five-year-old Frances Marion has left her (second) husband and her Northern California home for the lure of Los Angeles, where she is determined to live independently as an artist. But the word on everyone's lips these days is "flickers"-the silent moving pictures enthralling theatergoers. In this fledgling industry, Frances finds her true calling- writing stories for this wondrous new medium. She also makes the acquaintance of actress Mary Pickford, whose signature golden curls and lively spirit have given her the title of America's Sweetheart. The two ambitious young women hit it off instantly. But their ambitions are challenged both by the men around them and the limitations imposed on their gender-and their astronomical success could come at a price.

Wednesday, July 15th

Waiting for Snow in Havana by Carlos Eire

Waiting for Snow in Havana is both an exorcism and an ode to a paradise lost. For the Cuba of Carlos Eire's youth—with its lizards and turquoise seas and sun-drenched siestas—becomes an island of condemnation once a cigar-smoking guerrilla named Fidel Castro ousts President Batista on January 1, 1959. Suddenly the music in the streets sounds like gunfire. Christmas is made illegal, political dissent leads to imprisonment, and too many of Carlos's friends are leaving Cuba for a place as far away and unthinkable as the United States. Carlos will end up there, too, and fulfill his mother's dreams by becoming a modern American man—even if his soul remains in the country he left behind.

August - No meeting

Wednesday, September 16th

Infamy by Richard Reeves 940.53 REE

Less than three months after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and inflamed the nation, President Roosevelt signed an executive order declaring parts of four western states to be a war zone operating under military rule. The U.S. Army immediately began rounding up thousands of Japanese-Americans, sometimes giving them less than 24 hours to vacate their houses and farms. For the rest of the war, these victims of war hysteria were imprisoned in primitive camps. Reeves has interviewed survivors, read numerous private letters and memoirs, and combed through archives to deliver a sweeping narrative of this atrocity.

Wednesday, October 21st

Under the Wide and Starry Sky by Nancy Horan F HOR

Under the Wide and Starry Sky chronicles the unconventional love affair of Scottish literary giant Robert Louis Stevenson, author of classics including *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and American divorcee Fanny Van de Griff Osbourne. They meet in rural France in 1875, when Fanny, having run away from her philandering husband back in California, takes refuge there with her children. Stevenson too is escaping from his life, running from family pressure to become a lawyer. And so begins a turbulent love affair that will last two decades and span the world.

Wednesday, November 18th

Dark Tide by Stephen Puleo

Around noon on January 15, 1919, a group of firefighters were playing cards in Boston's North End when they heard a tremendous crash. It was like roaring surf, one of them said later. Like a runaway two-horse team smashing through a fence, said another. A third firefighter jumped up from his chair to look out a window—"Oh my God!" he shouted to the other men, "Run!" A 50-foot-tall steel tank filled with 2.3 million gallons of molasses had just collapsed on Boston's waterfront, disgorging its contents as a 15-foot-high wave of molasses that at its outset traveled at 35 miles an hour. It demolished wooden homes, even the brick fire station. The number of dead wasn't known for days. It would be years before a landmark court battle determined who was responsible for the disaster.

December - No meeting

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