

# The Bookmarks

## Free Public Library of Monroe Township

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## 2017 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

31:

#### **The Indifferent Stars Above: The Harrowing Saga of a Donner Party Bride by Daniel James Brown (Nonfiction) On Order**

In April of 1846, twenty-one-year-old Sarah Graves, intent on a better future, set out west from Illinois with her new husband, her parents, and eight siblings. Seven months later, after joining a party of emigrants led by George Donner, they reached the Sierra Nevada Mountains as the first heavy snows of the season closed the pass ahead of them. In early December, starving and desperate, Sarah and fourteen others set out for California on snowshoes and, over the next thirty-two days, endured almost unfathomable hardships and horrors.

### FEBRUARY 28:

#### **The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead (Fiction) F WHI**

2016 National Book Award winner for fiction, longlisted for the 2017 Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence and an Oprah Book Club 2016 selection. Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. *The Underground Railroad* is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share.

### MARCH 28:

#### **Louisa: the Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams by Louisa Thomas (Biography) B ADA**

Born in London to an American father and a British mother on the eve of the Revolutionary War, Louisa Catherine Johnson was raised in circumstances very different from the New England upbringing of the future president John Quincy Adams, whose life had been dedicated to public service from the earliest age. And yet John Quincy fell in love with her, almost despite himself. Their often tempestuous but deeply close marriage lasted half a century. They lived in Prussia, Massachusetts, Washington, Russia, and England; they lived at royal courts, on farms, in cities, and in the White House. Louisa saw more of Europe and America than nearly any other woman of her time. But wherever she lived, she was always pressing her nose against the glass, not quite sure whether she was looking in or out. The other members of the Adams family could take their identity for granted—they were Adamses; they were Americans—but she had to invent her own. The story of Louisa Catherine Adams is one of a woman who forged a sense of self. As the country her husband led found its place in the world, she found a voice.

### APRIL 25:

#### **The Burgess Boys by Elizabeth Strout (Fiction) On Order**

Named one of the best books of the year by *The Washington Post* • NPR • *Good Housekeeping*. Haunted by the freak accident that killed their father when they were children, Jim and Bob Burgess escaped from their Maine hometown of Shirley Falls for New York City as soon as they possibly could. Jim, a sleek, successful corporate lawyer, has belittled his bighearted brother their whole lives, and Bob, a Legal Aid attorney who idolizes Jim, has always taken it in stride. But their long-standing dynamic is upended when their sister, Susan—the Burgess sibling who stayed behind—urgently calls them home. Her lonely teenage son, Zach, has gotten himself into a world of trouble, and Susan desperately needs their help. And so the Burgess brothers return to the landscape of their childhood, where the long-buried tensions that have shaped and shadowed their relationship begin to surface in unexpected ways that will change them forever.

### MAY 30:

#### **Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly (Fiction) F KEL**

On the eve of a fateful war, New York socialite Caroline Ferriday has her hands full with her post at the French consulate and a new love on the horizon. But Caroline's world is forever changed when Hitler's army invades Poland in September 1939—and then sets its sights on France. An ocean away from Caroline, Kasia Kuzmerick, a Polish teenager, senses her carefree youth disappearing as she sinks deeper into her role as courier for the underground resistance movement. In a tense atmosphere of watchful eyes and suspect neighbors, one false move can have dire consequences. For ambitious young German doctor, Herta Oberheuser, an ad for a government medical position seems her ticket out of a desolate life. But, once hired, she finds herself trapped in a male-dominated realm of Nazi secrets and power. The lives of these three women are set on a collision course when Kasia is sent to Ravensbrück, the female-only Nazi concentration camp.

**JUNE 27: Brooklyn by Colm Toibin (Fiction) On Order**

Set in Brooklyn and Ireland in the early 1950s. Eilis Lacey has come of age in small-town Ireland in the years following World War Two. Though skilled at bookkeeping, she cannot find a job in the miserable Irish economy. When an Irish priest from Brooklyn offers to sponsor Eilis in America she decides she must go, leaving her fragile mother and her charismatic sister behind. Eilis finds work in a department store, and when she least expects it, finds love. Tony, a blond Italian from a big family, slowly wins her over with patient charm. But just as Eilis begins to fall in love with Tony, devastating news from Ireland threatens the promise of her future.

**JULY 25: The Invisible Girls by Sarah Thebarge (Biography) On Order**

Twenty-seven-year-old Sarah Thebarge had it all - a loving boyfriend, an Ivy League degree, and a successful career - when her life was derailed by an unthinkable diagnosis: aggressive breast cancer. After surviving the grueling treatments - though just barely - Sarah moved to Portland, Oregon to start over. There, a chance encounter with an exhausted African mother and her daughters transformed her life again. A Somali refugee whose husband had left her, Hadhi was struggling to raise five young daughters, half a world away from her war-torn homeland. Alone in a strange country, Hadhi and the girls were on the brink of starvation in their own home, "invisible" to their neighbors and to the world. As Sarah helped Hadhi and the girls navigate American life, her outreach to the family became a source of courage and a lifeline for herself.

**AUGUST 29: The Japanese Lover by Isabelle Allende (Fiction) F ALL**

In 1939, as Poland falls under the shadow of the Nazis, young Alma Belasco's parents send her away to live in safety with an aunt and uncle in their opulent mansion in San Francisco. There she encounters Ichimei Fukuda, the quiet and gentle son of the family's Japanese gardener. Unnoticed by those around them, a tender love affair begins to blossom. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the two are cruelly pulled apart as Ichimei and his family are forcibly relocated to an internment camp run by the U. S. government. Throughout their lifetimes, Alma and Ichimei reunite again and again, but theirs is a love that they are forever forced to hide from the world. Decades later, Alma is nearing the end of her long and eventful life. Irina Bazili, a care worker, meets the elderly woman and her grandson, Seth, at San Francisco's eccentric Lark House nursing home. As Irina and Seth forge a friendship, they become intrigued by mysterious gifts sent to Alma, eventually learning about Ichimei and this extraordinary secret passion that has endured for nearly seventy years.

**SEPTEMBER 26: The Marriage of Opposites by Alice Hoffman (Fiction) F HOF**

Growing up on idyllic St. Thomas in the early 1800s, Rachel dreams of life in faraway Paris. Rachel's mother, a pillar of their small refugee community of Jews who escaped the Inquisition, has never forgiven her daughter for being a difficult girl who refuses to live by the rules. Growing up, Rachel's salvation is their maid Adelle's belief in her strengths, and her deep, life-long friendship with Jestine, Adelle's daughter. But Rachel's life is not her own. She is married off to a widower with three children to save her father's business. When her husband dies suddenly and his handsome, much younger nephew, Frédérick, arrives from France to settle the estate, Rachel seizes her own life story, beginning a defiant, passionate love affair that sparks a scandal that affects all of her family, including her favorite son, who will become one of the greatest artists of France.

**OCTOBER 31: The Book That Matters Most by Ann Hood (Fiction) F HOO**

Ava's twenty-five-year marriage has fallen apart, and her two grown children are pursuing their own lives outside of the country. Ava joins a book group, not only for her love of reading but also out of sheer desperation for companionship. The group's goal throughout the year is for each member to present the book that matters most to them. Ava rediscovers a mysterious book from her childhood—one that helped her through the traumas of the untimely deaths of her sister and mother. Alternating with Ava's story is that of her troubled daughter Maggie, who, living in Paris, descends into a destructive relationship with an older man. Ava's mission to find that book and its enigmatic author takes her on a quest that unravels the secrets of her past and offers her and Maggie the chance to remake their lives.

**NOVEMBER 28: Call the Midwife: Farewell to the East End by Jennifer Worth (Nonfiction) On Order**

Third in a trilogy of books that chronicles Jennifer Worth's career as a midwife in post-World War II London. It provides a fascinating snapshot of social history, documenting the East End in the days when there was a real sense of community, when times were tough but there was plenty of good humour and neighbourly support to help the inhabitants through the harsh economic climate. The book also enables readers to follow Jennifer's personal story, as she discovers the amazing resilience of a population still bearing the scars of war, and the vibrant community of nuns with whom she lives and who teach her the skills of midwifery.

**DECEMBER: The Book Club does not meet in December**

**“Books are a uniquely portable magic.” Stephen King**