

2024 Book Discussion List

March 15th

The Reading List: A Novel by Sara Nisha Adams (384 pages, 2021)

Led by Chris Keenan

Sara Misha Adams's *The Reading List* is a heartwarming novel about a list of recommended novels, left mysteriously in a library book, that comes to circulate among the patrons of a small branch library in the West London suburb of Wembley. Aleisha, a bright but anxious teen working at the local library shares the list with Mukesh, a lonely widower who is trying to forge a connection with his bookworm granddaughter. Slowly, the shared books create a connection between two lonely souls, as fiction helps them escape their grief and everyday troubles and find joy again.

April 19th

10 Minutes, 38 Seconds in this Strange World by Elif Shafek (320 pages, 2019)

Led by Corinne Kevorkian

In the pulsating moments after she has been murdered and left in a dumpster outside Istanbul, Tequila Leila enters a state of heightened awareness. Her heart has stopped beating but her brain is still active-for 10 minutes 38 seconds. While the Turkish sun rises and her friends sleep soundly nearby, she remembers her life-and the lives of others, outcasts like her. In her death, the secrets and wonders of modern Istanbul come to life, painted vividly by the captivating tales of how Leila came to know and be loved by her friends. As her epic journey to the afterlife comes to an end, it is her chosen family who brings her story to a buoyant and breathtaking conclusion. *Short listed for the 2019 Man Booker Prize.*

May 17th

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin (418 pages, 2022)

Led by Pat Corrigan

The novel's protagonists are 2 young people drawn together by their shared love of internet gaming. Through their developing relationship, the reader enters that world gradually understanding the compulsion to game, but also exploring the human condition in a modern setting. A compelling story about creativity, friendship and enduring love.

June 21st

These Precious Days by Ann Patchett (320 pages, 2021)

Led by Suzanne Ashley

With her characteristic storytelling skill, the author presents a series of autobiographical essays evoking nostalgia without sentimentality or hubris. Readers will find plenty to identify with in her passion for friendship, art, and books as she reveals herself and her close relationships with others in a life driven by the importance of honoring the pursuit of happiness and selflessly following one's calling.

July 19th

The Zone of Interest by Martin Amis (320 pages, 2015)

Led by Stephanie Spinner

The Zone of Interest is one of Martin Amis' most chilling, darkly funny, and haunting works. Set at Auschwitz during WW II, and narrated by three characters—Commandant Paul Doll, Polish prisoner Szmul Zachariasz, and Nazi bureaucrat Golo Thomsen—it depicts the camp's day to day operations through the eyes of its most powerful, as well as its most wretched, residents. And there's a love story. Along with many starred reviews—"an indelible and unsentimental exploration of the depths of the human soul,"(*Kirkus*); "An audaciously satiric and brilliantly realized tale,"(*Booklist*)—*The Zone of Interest* was named a Best Book of the Year by *Time*, *NPR*, *Financial Times* and *The Village Voice*, among others. A film adaptation recently won the Palme D'Or at Cannes and the Oscar for Best International Feature.

August 16th

The Man That Mistook His Wife for A Hat: and Other Clinical Tales by Oliver Sacks (285 pages, 1985)

Led by Marge Josephson

Oliver Sacks was a neurologist who investigated, treated, and wrote about patients with unusual physical and psychiatric symptoms. His case study descriptions are mesmerizing and informative. This is only one of many books he wrote with great sympathy for each case.

September 20th

Island of Missing Trees by Eli Shafek (368 pages, 2023)

Led by Sheila Kaplan

Set against the 1974 Greek and Turkish conflict in Cyprus, *Island of Missing Trees* spans multiple timelines. It follows the love story of Greek Cypriot Kostas and Turkish Cypriot Defne, their eventual migration to London, and the impact of their past and their history on their daughter Ada, whose only connection to Cyprus is the fig tree in her garden. Through Kostas and Defne's story, Shafak explores themes of cultural and communal conflict, forbidden love, and the interconnectedness of nature. A moving, beautifully written, and delicately constructed story of love, division, transcendence, history, and eco-consciousness.

October 18th

The Weight of Ink by Rachel Kaddish (576 pages, 2017)

Led by Denise Schlesinger

Set in London of the 1660s and of the early twenty-first century, *The Weight of Ink* is the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Ester Velasquez, an emigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a blind rabbi, just before the plague hits the city; and Helen Watt, an ailing historian with a love of Jewish history. As the novel opens, Helen has been summoned to view a cache of seventeenth-century Jewish documents newly discovered in a friend's home during a renovation. Helen embarks on one last project with the assistance of a graduate student: to determine the identity of the documents' scribe, the elusive "Aleph." *The Weight of Ink* is a sophisticated work of historical fiction about women separated by centuries, and the choices and sacrifices they must make in order to reconcile the life of the heart and mind.

November 15th

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride (400 pages, 2023)

Led by Bernie Kaplan

In 1972, a skeleton found in an old well unravels the hidden secrets of Chicken Hill, a Pennsylvania neighborhood where Jewish and Black communities coexist amidst racial tensions. As the characters' stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins of white, Christian America struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town's white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community—heaven and earth—that sustain us. An instant *New York Times* bestseller, the novel was also named a best book of the year by NPR, *Washington Post*, *The New Yorker* and *Time Magazine*.

December 20th (possible adjustment to December 13th)

The Art Thief by Michael Finkel (240 pages, 2023)

Led by Bob Gamper

In this spellbinding portrait of obsession and flawed genius, the best-selling author of *The Stranger in the Woods* brings us into Stephane Breitwieser's strange world—unlike most thieves, he never stole for money, keeping all his treasures in a single room where he could admire them. 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. This is a riveting story of art, crime, love, and an insatiable hunger to possess beauty at any cost.

January 17th, 2025

Birnam Wood by Eleanor Catton (432 pages, 2023)

Led by Diana Bristol

A gripping psychological thriller from the Booker Prize–winning author of *The Luminaries*, Eleanor Catton's *Birnam Wood* is Shakespearean in its drama, Austenian in its wit, and, like both influences, fascinated by what makes us who we are. *Birnam Wood* is set near a fictional national park on the South Island of New Zealand where a group of young activists named after the forest in *Macbeth* make a deal with an American tech mogul who appears to have purchased the land on which they mean to guerrilla garden. His stated goal is to create a bunker to survive coming natural disasters and he surprises them by offering funding. The book rotates through different points of view, revealing that each character has an ulterior, nefarious motive. Betrayals and revelations about the reality of the situation build toward an apocalyptic, fiery ending.

February 21st, 2025

The Measure by Nikki Erlick (368 pages, 2022)

Led by Olga Simoncelli

One day, a little wooden box arrives for each person on the planet, no matter where they are. This box holds each recipient's fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live. In an instant, the world is thrust into a collective frenzy. As society comes together and pulls apart, everyone faces the same shocking choice: Do they wish to know how long they'll live? And, if so, what will they do with that knowledge? *The Measure* charts the dawn of this new world through an unforgettable cast of characters whose decisions and fates interweave with one another. *The Measure* is an ambitious story about family, friendship, hope, and destiny that encourages us to live life to the fullest.