



Not Your Mother's Book Club 2025/2026 Reading list

October 2025 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her enslaved ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they’d weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb’s effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Henrietta’s family did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research without informed consent. And though the cells had launched a multimillion-dollar industry that sells human biological materials, her family never saw any of the profits. As Rebecca Skloot so brilliantly shows, the story of the Lacks family — past and present — is inextricably connected to the history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of.

November 2025 *Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano

William Waters grew up in a house silenced by tragedy, where his parents could hardly bear to look at him, much less love him—so when he meets the spirited and ambitious Julia Padavano in his freshman year of college, it’s as if the world has lit up around him. With Julia comes her family, as she and her three sisters are inseparable: Sylvie, the family’s dreamer, is happiest with her nose in a book; Cecelia is a free-spirited artist; and Emeline patiently takes care of them all. With the Padavanos, William experiences a newfound contentment; every moment in their house is filled with loving chaos.

But then darkness from William’s past surfaces, jeopardizing not only Julia’s carefully orchestrated plans for their future, but the sisters’ unshakeable devotion to one another. The result is a catastrophic family rift that changes their lives for generations. Will the loyalty that once rooted them be strong enough to draw them back together when it matters most?

December 2025 *One for the Blackbird, One for the Crow* by Olivia Hawker

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January 2026 There will be no book discussion this month. Readers can pick up their copy of "A Sorceress Comes to Call" which we will discuss in February.

February 2026 A Sorceress Comes to Call by T. Kingfisher

Cordelia knows her mother is unusual. Their house doesn't have any doors between rooms, and her mother doesn't allow Cordelia to have a single friend—unless you count Falada, her mother's beautiful white horse. The only time Cordelia feels truly free is on her daily rides with him. But more than simple eccentricity sets her mother apart. Other mothers don't force their daughters to be silent and motionless for hours, sometimes days, on end. Other mothers aren't sorcerers.

After a suspicious death in their small town, Cordelia's mother insists they leave in the middle of the night, riding away on Falada's sturdy back, leaving behind all Cordelia has ever known. They arrive at the remote country manor of a wealthy older man, the Squire, and his unwed sister, Hester. Cordelia's mother intends to lure the Squire into marriage, and Cordelia knows this can only be bad news for the bumbling gentleman and his kind, intelligent sister.

Hester sees the way Cordelia shrinks away from her mother, how the young girl sits eerily still at dinner every night. Hester knows that to save her brother from bewitchment and to rescue the terrified Cordelia, she will have to face down a wicked witch of the worst kind.

March 2026 The Sirens by Emilia Hart

2019: Lucy awakens in her ex-lover's room in the middle of the night with her hands around his throat. Horrified, she flees to her sister's house on the coast of New South Wales hoping Jess can help explain the vivid dreams that preceded the attack—but her sister is missing. As Lucy waits for her return, she starts to unearth strange rumours about Jess's town—tales of numerous missing men, spread over decades. A baby abandoned in a sea-swept cave. Whispers of women's voices on the waves. All the while, her dreams start to feel closer than ever.

1800: Mary and Eliza are torn from their loving home in Ireland and forced onto a convict ship heading for Australia. As the boat takes them farther and farther away from all they know, they begin to notice unexplainable changes in their bodies.

A breathtaking tale of female resilience, *The Sirens* is an extraordinary novel that captures the sheer power of sisterhood and the indefinable magic of the sea

April 2026 Where the Forest Meets the Stars by Glendy Vanderah

After the loss of her mother and her own battle with breast cancer, Joanna Teale returns to her graduate research on nesting birds in rural Illinois, determined to prove that her recent hardships have not broken her. She throws herself into her work from dusk to dawn, until her solitary routine is disrupted by the appearance of a mysterious child who shows up at her cabin barefoot and covered in bruises.

The girl calls herself Ursa, and she claims to have been sent from the stars to witness five miracles. With concerns about the child's home situation, Jo reluctantly agrees to let her stay—just until she learns more about Ursa's past.

Jo enlists the help of her reclusive neighbor, Gabriel Nash, to solve the mystery of the charming child. But the more time they spend together, the more questions they have. How does a young girl not only read but understand Shakespeare? Why do good things keep happening in her presence? And why aren't Jo and Gabe checking the missing children's website anymore?

Though the three have formed an incredible bond, they know difficult choices must be made. As the summer nears an end and Ursa gets closer to her fifth miracle, her dangerous past closes in. When it finally catches up to them, all of their painful secrets will be forced into the open, and their fates will be left to the stars.

May 2026 *The Echo of Old Books* by Barbara Davis

A novel about the magical lure of books and summoning the courage to rewrite our stories by the Amazon Charts bestselling author of *The Keeper of Happy Endings* and *The Last of the Moon Girls*.

Rare-book dealer Ashlyn Greer's affinity for books extends beyond the intoxicating scent of old paper, ink, and leather. She can feel the echoes of the books' previous owners—an emotional fingerprint only she can read. When Ashlyn discovers a pair of beautifully bound volumes that appear to have never been published, her gift quickly becomes an obsession. Not only is each inscribed with a startling incrimination, but the authors, Hemi and Belle, tell conflicting sides of a tragic romance.

With no trace of how these mysterious books came into the world, Ashlyn is caught up in a decades-old literary mystery, beckoned by two hearts in ruins, whoever they were, wherever they are. Determined to learn the truth behind the doomed lovers' tale, she reads on, following a trail of broken promises and seemingly unforgivable betrayals. The more Ashlyn learns about Hemi and Belle, the nearer she comes to bringing closure to their love story—and to the unfinished chapters of her own life.

June 2026 *The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamali

In 1950s Tehran, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father, forcing Ellie and her mother to move to a tiny home downtown. Lonely and bearing the brunt of her mother's endless grievances, Ellie dreams for a friend to alleviate her isolation.

Luckily, on the first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind girl with a brave and irrepressible spirit. Together, the two girls play games, learn to cook in the stone kitchen of Homa's warm home, wander through the colorful stalls of the Grand Bazaar, and share their ambitions of becoming "lion women."

But their happiness is disrupted when Ellie and her mother are afforded the opportunity to return to their previous bourgeois life. Now a popular student at the best girls' high school in Iran, Ellie's memories of Homa begin to fade. Years later, however, her sudden reappearance in Ellie's privileged world alters the course of both of their lives.

Together, the two young women come of age and pursue their own goals for meaningful futures. But as the political turmoil in Iran builds to a breaking point, one earth-shattering betrayal will have enormous consequences.

July 2026 *The Life Impossible* by Matt Haig

"What looks like magic is simply a part of life we don't understand yet..."

When retired math teacher Grace Winters is left a run-down house on a Mediterranean island by a long-lost friend, curiosity gets the better of her. She arrives in Ibiza with a one-way ticket, no guidebook and no plan.

Among the rugged hills and golden beaches of the island, Grace searches for answers about her friend's life, and how it ended. What she uncovers is stranger than she could have dreamed. But to dive into this impossible truth, Grace must first come to terms with her past.

Filled with wonder and wild adventure, this is a story of hope and the life-changing power of a new beginning.

August 2026 *The Bones Beneath My Skin* by T.J. Klune

In the spring of 1995, Nate Cartwright has lost everything: his parents are dead, his older brother wants nothing to do with him, and he's been fired from his job as a journalist in Washington DC. With nothing left to lose, he returns to his family's summer cabin outside the small mountain town of Roseland, Oregon to try and find some sense of direction. The cabin should be empty. It's not. Inside is a man named Alex. And with him is an extraordinary little girl who calls herself Artemis Darth Vader. Artemis, who isn't exactly as she appears.

Soon it becomes clear that Nate must make a choice: let himself drown in the memories of his past, or fight for a future he never thought possible. Because the girl is special. And forces are descending upon them who want nothing more than to control her.

September 2026 *The Vaster Wilds* by Lauren Groff

A servant girl escapes from a colonial settlement in the wilderness. She carries nothing with her but her wits, a few possessions, and the spark of god that burns hot within her. What she finds in this terra incognita is beyond the limits of her imagination and will bend her belief in everything that her own civilization has taught her.

Lauren Groff's new novel is at once a thrilling adventure story and a penetrating fable about trying to find a new way of living in a world succumbing to the churn of colonialism. *The Vaster Wilds* is a work of raw and prophetic power that tells the story of America in miniature, through one girl at a hinge point in history, to ask how—and if—we can adapt quickly enough to save ourselves