



Manteno Public Library

Tuesday Afternoon Book Club

2020 Reading List

January: **Where'd You Go, Bernadette, *By Maria Semple***
Bernadette Fox has vanished!

When her daughter Bee claims a family trip to Antarctica as a reward for perfect grades, Bernadette, a fiercely intelligent shut-in, throws herself into preparations for the trip. But worn down by years of trying to live the Seattle life she never wanted, Ms. Fox is on the brink of a meltdown. And after a school fundraiser goes disastrously awry at her hands, she disappears, leaving her family to pick up the pieces--which is exactly what Bee does, weaving together an elaborate web of emails, invoices, and school memos that reveals a secret past Bernadette has been hiding for decades. *Where'd You Go Bernadette* is an ingenious and unabashedly entertaining novel about a family coming to terms with who they are and the power of a daughter's love for her mother.

February: **Get Capone: The Secret Plot that Captured Americas most Wanted Gangster, *by Jonathan Eig***

Drawing on thousands of pages of recently discovered government documents, wiretap transcripts, and Al Capone's handwritten personal letters, *New York Times* bestselling author Jonathan Eig tells the dramatic story of the rise and fall of the nation's most notorious criminal in rich new detail.

From the moment he arrived in Chicago in 1920, Capone found himself in a world of limitless opportunity. He was an impetuous, affable young man of average intelligence, ill prepared for fame and fortune, whose most notable characteristic was his scarred left cheek. Yet within a few years, Capone controlled an illegal bootlegging business with annual revenue rivaling that of some of the nation's largest corporations. Along the way he corrupted the Chicago police force and local courts while becoming one of the world's first international celebrities.

A furious President Herbert Hoover insisted that Capone be brought to justice because the criminal was making a mockery of federal law. Legend credits Eliot Ness and his "Untouchables" with apprehending Capone. But it was the U.S. attorney in Chicago and little-known agents working on direct orders from the White House who compromised their ethics—and risked their lives—to get their man.

The most infamous crime attributed to Capone was the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, a crime that Capone insisted he didn't commit. Using newly discovered FBI records, Eig offers a surprising explanation for the murders.

Get Capone explores every aspect of the man called "Scarface," paying particular attention to the myths that have for so long surrounded and obscured him. Capone emerges as a worldly, emotionally complex man, doomed as much by his ego as by his vicious criminality. This is the real Al Capone.

March: *The Clock Makers Daughter, by Kate Morton*

In the summer of 1862, a group of young artists led by the passionate and talented Edward Radcliffe descends upon Birchwood Manor on the banks of the Upper Thames. Their plan: to spend a secluded summer month in a haze of inspiration and creativity. But by the time their stay is over, one woman has been shot dead while another has disappeared; a priceless heirloom is missing; and Edward Radcliffe's life is in ruins.

Over one hundred and fifty years later, Elodie Winslow, a young archivist in London, uncovers a leather satchel containing two seemingly unrelated items: a sepia photograph of an arresting-looking woman in Victorian clothing, and an artist's sketchbook containing the drawing of a twin-gabled house on the bend of a river.

Why does Birchwood Manor feel so familiar to Elodie? And who is the beautiful woman in the photograph? Will she ever give up her secrets?

April: *The Jane Austen Project, by Kathleen A. Flynn*

Perfect for fans of Jane Austen, this engrossing debut novel offers an unusual twist on the legacy of one of the world's most celebrated and beloved authors: Two researchers from the future are sent back in time to meet Jane and recover a suspected unpublished novel.

London England, 1815: Two travelers—Rachel Katzman and Liam Finucane—arrive in a field, disheveled and weighed down with hidden money. They are not what they seem, but colleagues from a technologically advanced future, posing as a doctor and his spinster sister. While Rachel and Liam aren't the first team of time travelers, their mission is the most audacious yet: meet, befriend, and steal from Jane Austen.

Carefully selected and rigorously trained by The Royal Institute for Special Topics in Physics, disaster-relief doctor Rachel and actor-turned-scholar Liam have little in common except their extraordinary circumstances. Circumstances that call for Rachel to stifle her independent nature and let Liam take the lead as they infiltrate Austen's circle via her favorite brother, Henry.

But diagnosing Jane's fatal illness and obtaining an unpublished novel hinted at in her letters pose enough of a challenge without the convolutions of living a lie. While her friendship with Jane deepens and her relationship with Liam grows complicated, Rachel fights to reconcile her true self with the constrictions of 19th century society. As their portal to the future prepares to close, Rachel and Liam struggle with their directive to leave history as they found it...however heartbreaking that proves.

May: *Daughters of the Lake, by Wendy Webb*

After the end of her marriage, Kate Granger has retreated to her parents' home on Lake Superior to pull herself together—only to discover the body of a murdered woman washed into the shallows. Tucked in the folds of the woman's curiously vintage gown is an infant, as cold and at peace as its mother. No one can identify the woman. Except for Kate. She's seen her before. In her dreams...

One hundred years ago, a love story ended in tragedy, its mysteries left unsolved. It's time for the lake to give up its secrets. As each mystery unravels, it pulls Kate deeper

into the eddy of a haunting folktale that has been handed down in whispers over generations. Now it's Kate's turn to listen. The drowned woman reaches out from the grave, Kate reaches back. They must come together, if only in dreams, to right the sinister wrongs of the past.

June: *Where the Crawdad's Sing, by Delia Owens*

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.

Perfect for fans of Barbara Kingsolver and Karen Russell, *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.

July: *The Summer Before the War, by Helen Simonson*

The bestselling author of Major Pettigrew's Last Stand returns with a breathtaking novel of love and war that reaches far beyond the small English town in which it is set.

East Sussex, 1914. It is the end of England's brief Edwardian summer, and everyone agrees that the weather has never been so beautiful. Hugh Grange, down from his medical studies, is visiting his Aunt Agatha, who lives with her husband in the small, idyllic coastal town of Rye. Agatha's husband works in the Foreign Office, and she is certain he will ensure that the recent saber rattling over the Balkans won't come to anything. And Agatha has more immediate concerns; she has just risked her carefully built reputation by pushing for the appointment of a woman to replace the Latin master.

When Beatrice Nash arrives with one trunk and several large crates of books, it is clear she is significantly more freethinking—and attractive—than anyone believes a Latin teacher should be. For her part, mourning the death of her beloved father, who has left her penniless, Beatrice simply wants to be left alone to pursue her teaching and writing.

But just as Beatrice comes alive to the beauty of the Sussex landscape and the colorful characters who populate Rye, the perfect summer is about to end. For despite Agatha's reassurances, the unimaginable is coming. Soon the limits of progress, and the old ways, will be tested as this small Sussex town and its inhabitants go to war.

August:

Hillbilly Elegy. A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, by J.D. Vance

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class.

Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck.

The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.'s grandparents were "dirt poor and in love," and moved north from Kentucky's Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility.

But as the family saga of Hillbilly Elegy plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance's grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history.

A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, Hillbilly Elegy is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

September: Before We Were Yours, by Lisa Wingate

Memphis, 1939. Twelve-year-old Rill Foss and her four younger siblings live a magical life aboard their family's Mississippi River shantyboat. But when their father must rush their mother to the hospital one stormy night, Rill is left in charge—until strangers arrive in force. Wrenched from all that is familiar and thrown into a Tennessee Children's Home Society orphanage, the Foss children are assured that they will soon be returned to their parents—but they quickly realize the dark truth. At the mercy of the facility's cruel director, Rill fights to keep her sisters and brother together in a world of danger and uncertainty.

Aiken, South Carolina, present day. Born into wealth and privilege, Avery Stafford seems to have it all: a successful career as a federal prosecutor, a handsome fiancé, and a lavish wedding on the horizon. But when Avery returns home to help her father weather a health crisis, a chance encounter leaves her with uncomfortable questions and compels her to take a journey through her family's long-hidden history, on a path that will ultimately lead either to devastation or to redemption.

Based on one of America's most notorious real-life scandals—in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country—Lisa Wingate's riveting, wrenching, and ultimately uplifting tale reminds us how, even though the paths we take can lead to many places, the heart never forgets where we belong

October: One Book One Community Book or Group Pick

November: *The Dress Maker*, by Kate Alcott

Just in time for the centennial anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic* comes a vivid, romantic, and relentlessly compelling historical novel about a spirited young woman who survives the disaster only to find herself embroiled in the media frenzy left in the wake of the tragedy.

Tess, an aspiring seamstress, thinks she's had an incredibly lucky break when she is hired by famous designer Lady Lucile Duff Gordon to be a personal maid on the *Titanic's* doomed voyage. Once on board, Tess catches the eye of two men, one a roughly-hewn but kind sailor and the other an enigmatic Chicago millionaire. But on the fourth night, disaster strikes.

Amidst the chaos and desperate urging of two very different suitors, Tess is one of the last people allowed on a lifeboat. Tess's sailor also manages to survive unharmed, witness to Lady Duff Gordon's questionable actions during the tragedy. Others—including the gallant Midwestern tycoon—are not so lucky.

On dry land, rumors about the survivors begin to circulate, and Lady Duff Gordon quickly becomes the subject of media scorn and later, the hearings on the *Titanic*. Set against a historical tragedy but told from a completely fresh angle, *The Dressmaker* is an atmospheric delight filled with all the period's glitz and glamour, all the raw feelings of a national tragedy and all the contradictory emotions of young love

December: *Seven Days of Us*, by Francesca Hornak

It's Christmas, and for the first time in years the entire Birch family will be under one roof. Even Emma and Andrew's elder daughter—who is usually off saving the world—will be joining them at Weyfield Hall, their aging country estate. But Olivia, a doctor, is only coming home because she has to. Having just returned from treating an epidemic abroad, she's been told she must stay in quarantine for a week...and so too should her family.

For the next seven days, the Birches are locked down, cut off from the rest of humanity—and even decent Wi-Fi—and forced into each other's orbits. Younger, unabashedly frivolous daughter Phoebe is fixated on her upcoming wedding, while Olivia deals with the culture shock of being immersed in first-world problems.

As Andrew sequesters himself in his study writing scathing restaurant reviews and remembering his glory days as a war correspondent, Emma hides a secret that will turn the whole family upside down.

In close proximity, not much can stay hidden for long, and as revelations and long-held tensions come to light, nothing is more shocking than the unexpected guest who's about to arrive...