



## MPL 2025 Reading List

- January:     **The Queen of Sugar Hill by Reshanda Taste****  
Bestselling author ReShonda Tate presents a fascinating fictional portrait of Hattie McDaniel, one of Hollywood’s most prolific but woefully underappreciated stars—and the first Black person ever to win an Oscar for her role as Mammy in the critically acclaimed film classic *Gone With the Wind*.
- February:   **Before and After: The Incredible Real-Life Stories of Orphans Who Survived The Tennessee Children’s Society by Judy Christie and Lisa Wingate****  
From the 1920s to 1950, Georgia Tann ran a black-market baby business at the Tennessee Children’s Home Society in Memphis. She offered up more than 5,000 orphans tailored to the wish lists of eager parents--hiding the fact that many weren't orphans at all, but stolen sons and daughters of poor families, desperate single mothers, and women told in maternity wards that their babies had died.
- The publication of Lisa Wingate's novel *Before We Were Yours* brought new awareness of Tann's lucrative career in child trafficking. Adoptees who knew little about their pasts gained insight into the startling facts behind their family histories. Encouraged by their contact with Wingate and award-winning journalist Judy Christie, who documented the stories of fifteen adoptees in this book, many determined Tann survivors set out to trace their roots and find their birth families.
- Before and After* includes moving and sometimes shocking accounts of the ways in which adoptees were separated from their first families. Often raised as only children, many have joyfully reunited with siblings in the final decades of their lives. In *Before and After*, Wingate and Christie tell of first meetings that are all the sweeter and more intense for time missed and of families from very different social backgrounds reaching out to embrace better-late-than-never brothers, sisters, and cousins. In a poignant culmination of art meeting life, long-silent victims of the tragically corrupt system return to Memphis with Wingate and Christie to reclaim their stories at a Tennessee Children's Home Society reunion . . . with extraordinary results.
- March:       **The Lost Bookshop by Evie Woods****

*'The thing about books,' she said 'is that they help you to imagine a life bigger and better than you could ever dream of.'*

**On a quiet street in Dublin, a lost bookshop is waiting to be found...**

For too long, Opaline, Martha and Henry have been the side characters in their own lives.

But when a vanishing bookshop casts its spell, these three unsuspecting strangers will discover that their own stories are every bit as extraordinary as the ones found in the pages of their beloved books. And by unlocking the secrets of the shelves, they find themselves transported to a world of wonder... where nothing is as it seems.

**April: The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson**

Rosalie Iron Wing has grown up in the woods with her father, Ray, a former science teacher who tells her stories of plants, of the stars, of the origins of the Dakota people. Until, one morning, Ray doesn't return from checking his traps. Told she has no family, Rosalie is sent to live with a foster family in nearby Mankato--where the reserved, bookish teenager meets rebellious Gaby Makespeace, in a friendship that transcends the damaged legacies they've inherited.

On a winter's day many years later, Rosalie returns to her childhood home. A widow and mother, she has spent the previous two decades on her white husband's farm, finding solace in her garden even as the farm is threatened first by drought and then by a predatory chemical company. Now, grieving, Rosalie begins to confront the past, on a search for family, identity, and a community where she can finally belong. In the process, she learns what it means to be descended from women with souls of iron--women who have protected their families, their traditions, and a precious cache of seeds through generations of hardship and loss, through war and the insidious trauma of boarding schools.

Weaving together the voices of four indelible women, *The Seed Keeper* is a beautifully told story of reawakening, of remembering our original relationship to the seeds and, through them, to our ancestors.

**May: The Measure by Nikki Erlick**

Eight ordinary people. One extra ordinary choice.

It seems like any other day. You wake up, pour a cup of coffee, and head out.

But today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. This box holds your fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live.

From suburban doorsteps to desert tents, every person on every continent receives the same box. In an instant, the world is thrust into a collective frenzy. Where did

these boxes come from? What do they mean? Is there truth to what they promise?

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: best friends whose dreams are forever entwined, pen pals finding refuge in the unknown, a couple who thought they didn't have to rush, a doctor who cannot save himself, and a politician whose box becomes the powder keg that ultimately changes everything.

**June:            **The Third Gilmore Girl by Kelly Bishop****

Kelly Bishop's long, storied career has been defined by landmark achievements, from winning a Tony Award for her turn in the original Broadway cast of *A Chorus Line* to her memorable performance as Jennifer Grey's mother in *Dirty Dancing*. But it is probably her iconic role as matriarch Emily in the modern classic *Gilmore Girls* that cemented her legacy.

Now, Bishop reflects on her remarkable life and looks towards the future with *The Third Gilmore Girl*. She shares some of her greatest stories and the life lessons she's learned on her journey. From her early transition from dance to drama, to marrying young to a compulsive gambler, to the losses and achievements she experienced—among them marching for women's rights and losing her second husband to cancer—Bishop offers a rich, genuine celebration of her life.

Full of witty insights, *The Third Gilmore Girl* is a warm, unapologetic, and spirited memoir from a woman who has left indelible impressions on her audiences for decades and has no plans on slowing down.

**July:             **The Wedding People by Alison Espach****

In turns uproariously, absurdly funny and devastatingly tender, Alison Espach's *The Wedding People* is a look at the winding paths we can take to places we never imagined—and the chance encounters it sometimes takes to reroute us.

**August:         **The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore by Evan Friss****

An affectionate and engaging history of the American bookstore and its central place in American cultural life, from department stores to indies, from highbrow dealers trading in first editions to sidewalk vendors, and from chains to special-interest community destinations

**September:    **Crow Talk by Eileen Garvin****

Nationally bestselling author of *The Music of Bees* Eileen Garvin returns with a moving story of hope, healing, and unexpected friendship set amidst the wild natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest.

**October:      **What the Wind Knows by Amy Harmon****

Anne Gallagher grew up enchanted by her grandfather's stories of Ireland. Heartbroken at his death, she travels to his childhood home to spread his ashes. There, overcome with memories of the man she adored and consumed by a history she never knew, she is pulled into another time.

The Ireland of 1921, teetering on the edge of war, is a dangerous place in which to awaken. But there Anne finds herself, hurt, disoriented, and under the care of Dr. Thomas Smith, guardian to a young boy who is oddly familiar. Mistaken for the boy's long-missing mother, Anne adopts her identity, convinced the woman's disappearance is connected to her own.

As tensions rise, Thomas joins the struggle for Ireland's independence and Anne is drawn into the conflict beside him. Caught between history and her heart, she must decide whether she's willing to let go of the life she knew for a love she never thought she'd find. But in the end, is the choice actually hers to make?

**November:     **The Women in Black by Madeleine St John****

Sydney in the late 1950s. On the second floor of the famous F.G. Goode department store, in Ladies' Cocktail Frocks, the women in black are girding themselves for the Christmas rush. Lisa is the new Sales Assistant (Temporary). Across the floor and beyond the arch, she is about to meet the glamorous Continental refugee, Magda, guardian of the rose-pink cave of Model Gowns.

With the lightest touch and the most tender of comic instincts, Madeleine St. John conjures a vanished summer of innocence. *The Women in Black* is a classic.

**December:     **A December to Remember by Jenny Bayless****

Wildly different half-sisters Maggie, Simone, and Star have hardly seen one another since their sprightly summers at Rowan Thorp, their eccentric father Augustus's home. Known for his bustling approach to the knick-knack shop he ran, Augustus was loved by all and known by none, not even his daughters.

Now, years later, the three estranged women are called upon for the reading of Augustus's will and quickly realize he's orchestrated a series of hoops through which they must jump to unlock their inheritance—the last thing any of them want to do. But Maggie and Star desperately need the money. And who would Simone be to resist?

Through hilarious goose chases, small-town mishaps, and one heart-warming winter solstice celebration, love, hope, and reconciliation is in the air, if only the three sisters can let themselves grasp it.