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# BOOK CLUB

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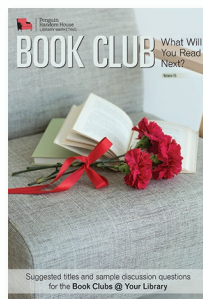
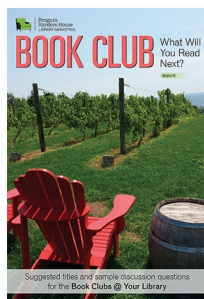
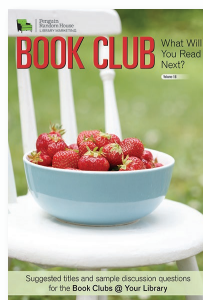
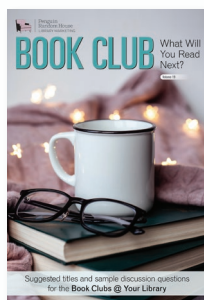
Volume 21



Suggested titles and sample discussion questions  
for the **Book Clubs @ Your Library**

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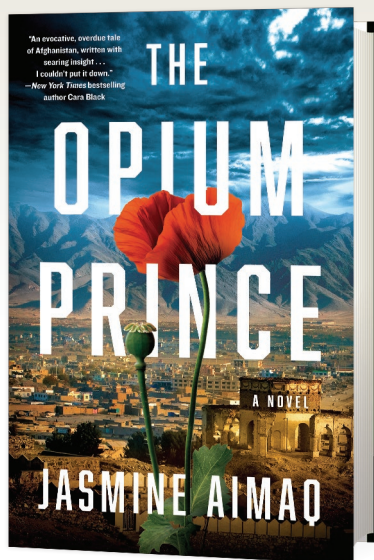
# Jasmine Aimaq

## The Opium Prince

978-1-64129-158-3 | \$27.95/\$35.95C | Soho Crime | HC  
📍 978-1-64129-159-0

### READERS' ADVISORY:

**“[A] stellar debut. Fans of Lauren Wilkinson’s Cold War thriller *American Spy* won’t want to miss this one.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review**



### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**A**fghanistan, 1970s. Born to an American mother and a late Afghan war hero, Daniel Sajadi has spent his life navigating a complex identity. After years in Los Angeles, he is returning home to Kabul at the helm of a US foreign aid agency dedicated to eradicating the poppy fields that feed the world’s opiate addiction.

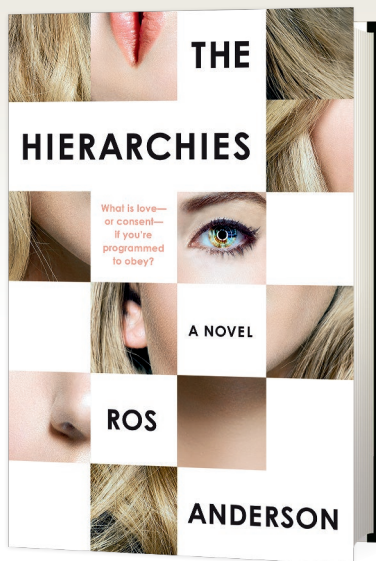
But on the drive out of Kabul for an anniversary trip with his wife, Daniel accidentally hits and kills a young Kochi girl named Telaya. He is let off with a nominal fine, in part because nomad tribes are ignored in the eyes of the law, but also because a mysterious witness named Taj Maleki intercedes on his behalf. Wracked with guilt and visions of Telaya, Daniel begins to unravel, running from his crumbling marriage and escalating threats from Taj, who turns out to be a powerful opium khan willing to go to extremes to save his poppies.

This groundbreaking literary thriller reveals the invisible lines between criminal enterprises and political regimes—and one man’s search for meaning at the heart of a violent revolution.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways does Daniel’s personal story mirror the history of Afghanistan during this period? In what ways does it differ?
2. What choices did Daniel have following the accident? In the face of Taj’s blackmail?
3. How are Daniel and Taj alike and different? Did you find one more sympathetic than the other, and if so, why?
4. What are the ultimate goals of the Communist revolutionaries? Do you think they succeed to those ends? Why or why not? Did you empathize with Leila and her role in the movement?

For more discussion questions visit: [TinyUrl.com/TheOpiumPrince](https://TinyUrl.com/TheOpiumPrince)



## Ros Anderson

# The Hierarchies:

### A Novel

978-0-593-18287-1 | \$26.00/\$35.00C | Dutton | HC

📞 978-0-593-18288-8 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-29234-1

#### **READERS' ADVISORY:**

Set in a recognizable near future, and laced with dark, sly humor, Ros Anderson's deeply observant debut novel is less about the fear of new technology than about humans' age-old talent for exploitation. Perfect for readers of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Farm*.

#### **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**S**ylv.ie is a synthetic woman. A fully sentient robot, designed to cater to her Husband's every whim. She lives alone on the top floor of his luxurious home, her existence barely tolerated by his human wife, and concealed from their child.

Deeply curious about the world beyond her room, she watches the family. Longing to experience more of life, she confides her hopes and fears only to her diary.

As Sylv.ie learns more about the world and becomes more aware of her place within it, something shifts within her. Is she malfunctioning, as her Husband thinks, or coming into her own? As their interactions become increasingly fraught, she fears he may send her back to the factory for reprogramming. If that happens, her hidden diary could be her only link to everything that came before. And the only clue that she is in grave danger.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think the consequences are for women's rights in a society with human and robot women?
2. Sylv.ie pretends to be a human woman, while another character pretends to be a robot. Both are adept at fooling others. What does this say about what makes us human? Why does technology that mimics human life make us uncomfortable?
3. It is through writing in a diary that Sylv.ie is able to better understand the world and learn about herself. What about writing allows one to discover themselves? Have you ever kept a diary and why?
4. Without memory, Sylv.ie begins to malfunction, but it also allows her to have hope. Why is memory so important? Do you agree with Cook.ie that our ability to forget and rewrite ourselves makes our lives bearable?
5. How is the world in *The Hierarchies* similar or different to our own? Does it seem set in the future or right now?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Kristin Bair  
**Agatha Arch  
is Afraid of  
Everything:**  
A Novel

978-1-64385-500-4 | \$16.99/\$22.99C | Alcove Press | TR  
📞 978-1-64385-501-1

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

*"Fans of Where'd You Go, Bernadette and Elinor Oliphant Is Completely Fine will love this clever romp."* —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**A** quirky, nervous wreck of a New England mom is forced to face her many fears in this touching, irresistible novel from author Kristin Bair.

Agatha Arch's life shatters when she discovers her husband in their backyard shed, in flagrante delicto, giving the local dog walker some heavy petting. Suddenly, Agatha finds herself face to face with everything that frightens her . . . and that's a loooooong list.

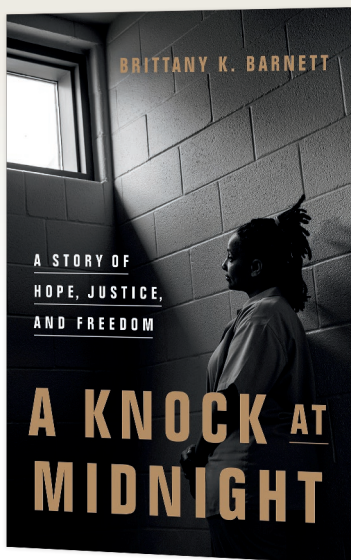
Defying her abundant assortment of anxieties, Agatha dons her "spy pants"—a pair of khakis whose many pockets she crams with binoculars, fishing line, scissors, flashlight, a Leatherman Super Tool 300 EOD, candy, and other espionage essentials—and sets out to spy on her husband and the dog walker.

It's all a bit much for timorous Agatha. But with the help of her Bear Grylls bobblehead, a trio of goats, and a dog named Balderdash, Agatha may just find the courage to build a better life.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Which characters did you most relate to and why? Were there characters you disliked?
2. What is your greatest fear? Have you tried to conquer it? If yes, how? And were you able to?
3. Agatha employs a number of unorthodox methods to keep tabs on her husband and the Interloper. Which was your favorite and why?
4. Agatha's mantra is a quote from extreme survivalist Bear Grylls: "Fear sharpens us." Do you have a mantra or quote that helps you?
5. Pretend you are a well-funded Hollywood producer. Who would you cast to play Agatha Arch in the film adaptation?

For more discussion questions visit: [TinyUrl.com/AgathaArchBookClub](https://TinyUrl.com/AgathaArchBookClub)



## Brittany K. Barnett

# A Knock at Midnight:

## A Story of Hope, Justice, and Freedom

978-1-9848-2578-0 | \$28.00/\$37.00C | Crown | HC

📞 978-1-9848-2579-7 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-21019-2

### READERS' ADVISORY:

An urgent call to free those buried alive by America's legal system, and an inspiring true story about unwavering belief in humanity. For readers of *The New Jim Crow*, *American Prison*, and *Just Mercy*.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Brittany K. Barnett was only a law student when she came across the case that would change her life forever—that of Sharanda Jones, single mother, business owner, and, like Brittany, Black daughter of the rural South. A victim of America's devastating war on drugs, Sharanda had been torn away from her young daughter and was serving a life sentence without parole—for a first-time drug offense. In Sharanda, Brittany saw haunting echoes of her own life, as the daughter of a formerly incarcerated mother. As she studied this case, a system came into focus in which widespread racial injustice forms the core of America's addiction to incarceration. Moved by Sharanda's plight, Brittany set to work to gain her freedom.

Brittany's riveting memoir is at once a coming-of-age story and a powerful evocation of what it takes to bring hope and justice to a system built to resist them both.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The book opens with a vivid portrait of a young life balanced between all-enveloping family love on one hand, and disaster unfolding "a tiny arm's reach away" on the other. What are the positive and negative forces in Brittany's upbringing? How do these forces directly influence her throughout the narrative?
2. "A statue of a lone Confederate general towers over the Clarksville town center. . . . To hear my grandpa tell it, [it] was a warning regarding where the town's heart lies." What role do broader social forces (racial, economic, historical) play in the lives of people portrayed in the book?
3. "I wanted space . . . from my mother's struggles, from witnessing her decline." How does Brittany's mother's addiction, subsequent imprisonment, and further rehabilitation affect her and her future decisions? Do you think Brittany was right to move away when she did?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Aimee Bender  
**The Butterfly  
Lampshade:**  
A Novel

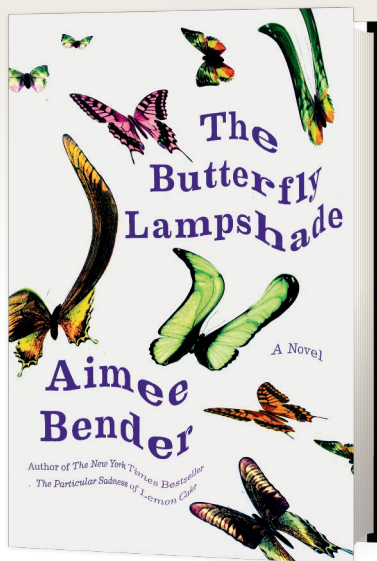
978-0-385-53487-1 | \$26.95/\$35.95C | Doubleday | HC

📞 978-0-385-53488-8 | 📍 AD: 978-0-593-29467-3

📖 LP: 978-0-593-34209-1

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

For readers of Carmen Maria Machado,  
Karen Russell, Kelly Link, Ottessa Moshfegh,  
and Rachel Khong.



**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**O**n the night her single mother is taken to a mental hospital after a psychotic episode, eight year-old Francie is staying with her babysitter, waiting to take the train to Los Angeles to go live with her aunt and uncle. There is a lovely lamp next to the couch on which she's sleeping, the shade adorned with butterflies. When she wakes, Francie spies a dead butterfly, exactly matching the ones on the lamp, floating in a glass of water. She drinks it before the babysitter can see.

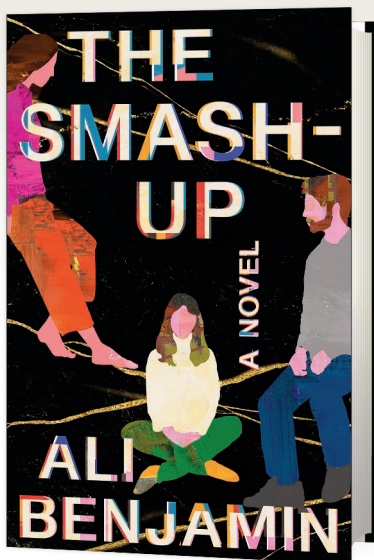
Twenty years later, Francie is compelled to make sense of that moment, and two other incidents—her discovery of a desiccated beetle from a school paper, and a bouquet of dried roses from some curtains. Her recall is exact—she is sure these things happened. But despite her certainty, she wrestles with the hold these memories maintain over her, and what they say about her own place in the world.

As Francie conjures her past and reduces her engagement with the world to a bare minimum, she begins to question her relationship to reality. The scenes set in Francie's past glow with the intensity of childhood perception, how physical objects can take on an otherworldly power. The question for Francie is, What do these events signify? And does this power survive childhood?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do you think Francie feels safer locked in her room? Did you ever feel baby Vicky was in real danger? When is a time you felt as if your thoughts were frightening?
2. Why does Francie want the poison bottle as a centerpiece? Why does that motivate her enough to stand up to her dominant grandmother?
3. In parts of the book, different characters have varying relationships with the way their minds work—Elaine blurs reality and fantasy and thinks there's a spider in her hand; Francie is worried about her own darker thoughts, and Minn is worried that her child and niece will "catch" what her sister has. In your own family, what are some of the different ways you see your relatives (and yourself) processing the world?

For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)



## Ali Benjamin **The Smash-Up:** A Novel

978-0-593-22965-1 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Random House | HC  
February 2021

📞 978-0-593-22966-8 | 📍 AD: 978-0-593-39401-4  
📖 LP: 978-0-593-40141-5

### **READERS' ADVISORY:**

A family is upended when their small-town life becomes the latest battlefield in the culture wars in this of-the-moment novel for readers of Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* and Taffy Brodesser-Akner's *Fleishman Is in Trouble*.

### **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

Life for Ethan and Zo used to be simple. Ethan co-founded a lucrative media start-up, and Zo was well on her way to becoming a successful filmmaker. Then they moved to a rural community for a little more tranquility—or so they thought.

When newfound political activism transforms Zo into a barely recognizable ball of outrage and #MeToo allegations rock his old firm, Ethan finds himself a misfit in his own life. Enter a house-guest who is young, fun, and not at all concerned with the real world, and Ethan is abruptly forced to question everything: his past, his future, his marriage, and what he values most.

Taking inspiration from a classic Edith Wharton tale about a small-town love triangle, *The Smash-Up* is a wholly contemporary exploration of how the things we fail to see can fracture a life, a family, a community, and a nation.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What did you think of the title of this book? What is the meaning of 'the smash up'?
2. Which character did you most relate to or empathize with? Did your perception of the characters change at all throughout the book, and if so, how?
3. Ethan considers himself "one of the good guys." Do you agree? How does Ethan's perception of himself as a good guy affect his behavior? How do you think his idea of morality differs from Zo's? How might a woman who behaved similarly to Ethan be judged or treated differently?
4. Were you surprised by the reveal of the narrator at the end of the novel? How does the book play with perspective and point of view throughout?
5. How does *The Smash-Up* reflect the state of our country in 2016 and beyond? Are there elements you recognize from your own life?
6. The book ends with some ambiguity. What do you imagine the future looks like for Zo and Ethan?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

# Melanie Benjamin The Children's Blizzard: A Novel

978-0-399-18228-0 | \$28.00/\$37.00C | Delacorte Press | HC

📖 978-0-399-18229-7 | 📻 AD: 978-0-525-49279-5

📻 CD: 978-0-525-49276-4

## READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *Orphan Train* and *Before We Were Yours* comes the newest novel from the bestselling author of *The Aviator's Wife*—a story of courage on the prairie, inspired by the devastating storm that struck the Great Plains in 1888, threatening the lives of hundreds of immigrant homesteaders, especially schoolchildren.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

The morning of January 12, 1888, was unusually mild, following a punishing cold spell. It was warm enough for the homesteaders of the Dakota Territory to venture out again, and for their children to return to school without their heavy coats—leaving them unprepared when disaster struck. At the hour when most prairie schools were letting out for the day, a terrifying, fast-moving blizzard blew in without warning. Schoolteachers as young as sixteen were suddenly faced with life and death decisions: Keep the children inside, to risk freezing to death when fuel ran out, or send them home, praying they wouldn't get lost in the storm?

Based on actual oral histories of survivors, this gripping novel follows the stories of Raina and Gerda Olsen, two sisters, both schoolteachers—one becomes a hero of the storm and the other finds herself ostracized in the aftermath. It's also the story of Anette Pedersen, a servant girl whose miraculous survival serves as a turning point in her life and touches the heart of Gavin Woodson, a newspaperman seeking redemption.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss Raina and Gerda and their relationship. How do their personalities and their relationships with each other change over the course of the novel?
2. Both Raina and Gerda find their hearts involved in unlikely and even illicit entanglements. How does the blizzard change their perception of love?
3. Anette Pedersen is given away by her family. Why do you think her mother made the decision to sell her to another family?
4. Nebraska bills itself as the Garden of Eden. But Gavin Woodson, who writes the articles that lure foreigners from their homeland to the prairie, leaves "Godforsaken Omaha" to find and connect with surviving homesteaders. Why do you think he does that?
5. What modern day parallels do you see in this story?
6. What are your thoughts about the end of the book, about the path each sister took?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Camilla Bruce

# In the Garden of Spite:

## A Novel of the Black Widow of La Porte

978-0-593-10256-5 | \$26.00/\$35.00C | Berkley | HC  
📍 978-0-593-10258-9 | 🗣️ AD: 978-0-593-29073-6

### READERS' ADVISORY:

Fans of true crime fiction and readers of *Burial Rites* will love this audacious novel of feminine rage about one of the most prolific female serial killers in American history—and the men who drove her to it.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**T**hey whisper about her in Chicago. Men come to her with their hopes, their dreams—their fortunes. But no one sees them leave. No one sees them at all after they come to call on the Widow of La Porte.

The good people of Indiana may have their suspicions, but if those fools knew what she'd given up, what was taken from her, how she'd suffered, surely they'd understand. Belle Guinness learned a long time ago that a woman has to make her own way in this world. That's all it is. A bloody means to an end. A glorious enterprise meant to raise her from the bleak, colorless drudgery of her childhood to the life she deserves. After all, vermin always survive.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What part does poverty play in Belle's development? Do you think she could have turned out differently if she had grown up with financial security?
2. In the 19th century, the female ideal was 'the domestic angel', whose main occupation was child rearing and housekeeping. Women were generally perceived as being delicate and sentimental. How did these prejudices help Belle? How did she exploit them?
3. In the novel, Belle is described as being close to her children. Do you think it is possible to love ones' children and still be a cold-blooded murderer? If so, would that love be different from the one you and I feel?
4. Belle was more than likely a sociopath. How does this come through in the text? How does she compare to her sister Nellie?
5. Although money was Belle's main motive for murder, it might not have been her only drive. Did she carry a hatred for men? If so, was the attack she suffered in Selbu the only reason for her negative feelings?
6. Referring to the novel's title, what role does spite play in Belle's development? Did it help her to survive?

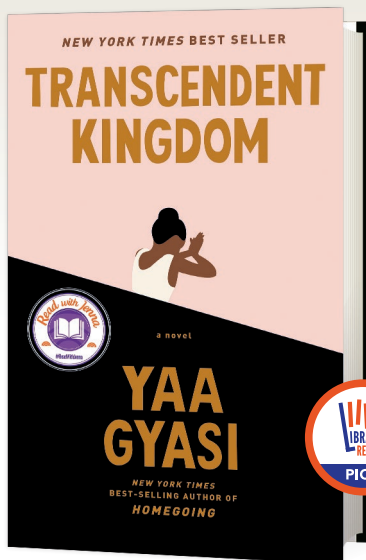
For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

# Yaa Gyasi Transcendent Kingdom: A Novel

978-0-525-65818-4 | \$27.95 | Knopf  
978-0-385-69517-6 | \$32.95C | Bond Street Books  
📞 978-0-525-65819-1 | 📻 AD: 978-0-593-21532-6  
📻 CD: 978-0-593-21530-2 | 📻 LP: 978-0-593-21533-3

**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
For readers of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,  
Jesmyn Ward, Tayari Jones, Toni Morrison,  
Celeste Ng, and Colson Whitehead.

**A Today Show #ReadWithJenna Book Club Pick!**



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

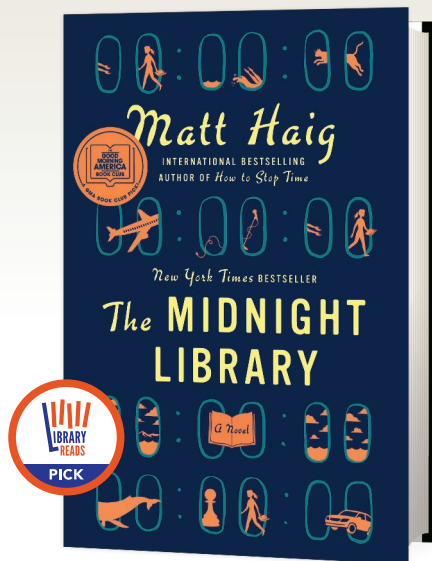
**G**ifty is a sixth-year PhD candidate in neuroscience at the Stanford University School of Medicine studying reward-seeking behavior in mice and the neural circuits of depression and addiction. Her brother, Nana, was a gifted high school athlete who died of a heroin overdose after an ankle injury left him hooked on OxyContin. Her suicidal mother is living in her bed. Gifty is determined to discover the scientific basis for the suffering she sees all around her. But even as she turns to the hard sciences to unlock the mystery of her family's loss, she finds herself hungering for her childhood faith and grappling with the evangelical church in which she was raised, whose promise of salvation remains as tantalizing as it is elusive.

*Transcendent Kingdom* is a deeply moving portrait of a family of Ghanaian immigrants ravaged by depression and addiction and grief—a novel about faith, science, religion, love.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do Gifty and her mother use prayer differently throughout their lives, and especially after Nana's death? What variations of prayer do the two women discover in the novel?
2. How does Gifty approach the moral predicament of running her science experiments on mice? What elements of her faith and sense of connection to God's creations are evident in how she treats the mice?
3. Consider the stigmas surrounding addiction, especially opioid addiction, the rates of which are exploding in today's society. What other stigmas and expectations was Nana responding to by not asking for help to deal with his addiction, and others not doing more to help?
4. In what ways does Gifty take on the role of caretaker for those in her life? Who, if anyone, takes care of Gifty?

For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)



# Matt Haig

# The Midnight Library:

## A Novel

978-0-525-55947-4 | \$26.00/NCR | Viking | HC  
978-0-593-08729-9 | AD: 978-0-593-34024-0

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Deborah Harkness,  
Graeme Simsion, Nick Hornby,  
Maria Semple, and Jess Walter.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Somewhere out beyond the edge of the universe there is a library that contains an infinite number of books, each one the story of another reality. One tells the story of your life as it is, along with another book for the other life you could have lived if you had made a different choice at any point in your life.

In *The Midnight Library*, Matt Haig's enchanting new novel, Nora Seed finds herself faced with this decision. Faced with the possibility of changing her life for a new one, following a different career, undoing old breakups, realizing her dreams of becoming a glaciologist; she must search within herself as she travels through the Midnight Library to decide what is truly fulfilling in life, and what makes it worth living in the first place.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

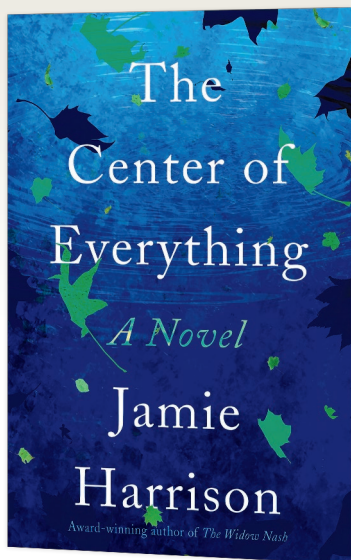
1. The Midnight Library is different for each person who enters it. Nora experienced it as a library because of the meaningful relationship she had with Mrs. Elm, her childhood school librarian. Later, we learn that Huge experienced it as a video store, with a cherished uncle instead of a librarian. What do you think your Midnight Library would be? And who would be there?
2. In the library, Nora learns that the life she gave her cat was one of the best he could have experienced. Are there any parts of your life that you feel could not be improved by living it differently?
3. Mrs. Elm showed Nora the *Book of Regrets* when she first entered the library, and Nora was overwhelmed by it when she first looked in. But as she experienced more and more lives, her list of regrets began to shrink. Do you think by considering the ways in which our lives might have turned out differently our regrets truly go away, or do we simply learn to live with them?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Jamie Harrison  
**The Center of Everything:**  
A Novel

978-1-64009-234-1 | \$26.00/\$26.00C | Counterpoint | HC  
📞 978-1-64009-235-8

**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
For readers of Elizabeth Strout,  
Kristin Hannah, and Ann Patchett.



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### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**S**et against the wild beauty of Montana as a woman attempts to heal from a devastating accident, this generational saga from the award-winning author of *The Widow Nash* is a heartfelt examination of how the deep bonds of family echo throughout our lives.

For Polly, the small town of Livingston, Montana, is a land charmed by raw, natural beauty and a close network of family that extends back generations. But the summer of 2002 finds Polly at a crossroads: a recent head injury has scattered her perception of the present, bringing to the surface long-forgotten events. As Polly's many relatives arrive for a family reunion during the Fourth of July holiday, a beloved friend goes missing on the Yellowstone River.

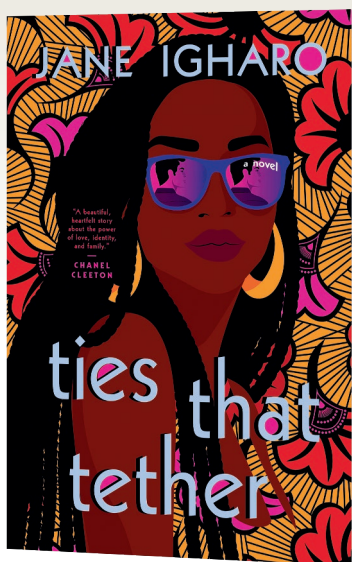
Search parties comb the river as carefully as Polly combs her mind, and over the course of one fateful week, Polly arrives at a deeper understanding of herself and her larger-than-life relatives.

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you see as the inciting incident in this book—the moment that launches the story and from which the rest of the action unfolds? Or perhaps you see more than one?
2. After her accident, Polly sifts through her fragmented memory as if she were “editing her story.” Have there been moments in time when you’ve attempted to recast your own memory or perception of your own life? How did you do so, and what were the results of your efforts?
3. The scene of Polly ‘recognizing’ her long-dead paternal grandparents Frank and Evie in a laundromat in New York City is one that echoes throughout the novel, with many people questioning Polly’s sanity because of the memory. But by the end of this book, we learn that these anonymous doppelgangers also thought they recognized Polly. Why do you think this meeting was important to Polly? Have you ever had a similar moment of misrecognition?

For more discussion questions visit: [TinyUrl.com/CenterOfEverythingBookClub](https://TinyUrl.com/CenterOfEverythingBookClub)



## Jane Igharo **Ties That Tether**

978-0-593-10194-0 | \$16.00/\$22.00C | Berkley Jove | TR

📞 978-0-525-54246-9 | 📖 AD: 978-0-593-16347-4

📻 LP: 978-0-593-17179-0

### **READERS' ADVISORY:**

For readers of *The Wedding Date* and *The Matchmaker's List*, a powerful *Own Voices* debut about a Nigerian woman who falls for a man she knows will break her mother's heart and the choice she must make between love and her family.

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### **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**A**t twelve years old, Azere promised her dying father she would marry a Nigerian man and preserve her culture, even after immigrating to Canada. Her mother has been vigilant about helping—well forcing—her to stay within the Nigerian dating pool ever since. But when another match-made-by-mom goes wrong, Azere ends up at a bar, enjoying the company and later sharing the bed of Rafael Castellano, a man who is tall, handsome, and . . . white.

When their one-night stand unexpectedly evolves into something serious, Azere is caught between her feelings for Rafael and the compulsive need to please her mother. Soon, Azere can't help wondering if loving Rafael makes her any less of a Nigerian. Can she be with him without compromising her identity? The answer will either cause Azere to be audacious and fight for her happiness or continue as the compliant daughter.

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### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think of the promise Azere made to her father? How do you think the promise constructed her perception of what a Nigerian woman should be?
2. Do you think some immigrants often have two sides to them—one they present to the world and one they reserve for the comfort of family? Why do you think that is?
3. Both Azere and Rafael experienced the death of loved ones. How do you think their losses impacted the development of their relationship and how they interacted with each other?
4. Azere's mother was often harsh. Knowing her actions were provoked by fear—fear that her children would lose their culture—do you think they were justified? Why do you think this? Azere's mom and Rafael's parents are immigrants. How do they approach preserving their cultures with their children? How do their methods differ?
5. What role do you think Azere's family and friends played in her growth? Who do you think was the most influential character in her development and why?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

# Robert Jones, Jr. **The Prophets:** A Novel

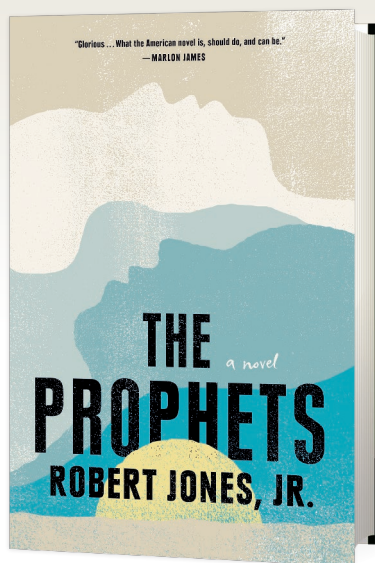
978-0-593-08568-4 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Putnam | HC

📖 978-0-593-08570-7 | 📖 AD: 978-0-593-28701-9

📖 LP: 978-0-593-29550-2

## **READERS' ADVISORY:**

**A stunning debut novel about the forbidden union between two enslaved young men on a Deep South plantation, the refuge they find in each other, and a betrayal that threatens their existence. Perfect for readers of Colson Whitehead and Toni Morrison.**



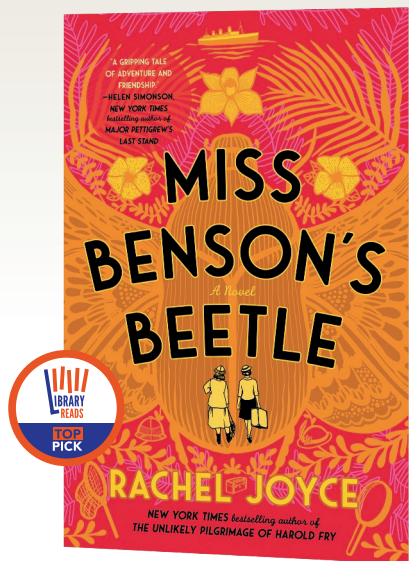
## **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**I**saiah was Samuel's and Samuel was Isaiah's. That was the way it was since the beginning, and the way it was to be until the end. In the barn they tended to the animals, but also to each other, transforming the hollowed-out shed into a place of human refuge, a source of intimacy and hope in a world ruled by vicious masters. But when an older man—a fellow slave—seeks to gain favor by preaching the master's gospel on the plantation, the enslaved begin to turn on their own. Isaiah and Samuel's love, which was once so simple, is seen as sinful and a clear danger to the plantation's harmony. As tensions build and the weight of centuries—of ancestors and future generations to come—culminates in a climactic reckoning, the pain and suffering of inheritance is revealed, but is also shot through with hope, beauty, and truth, portraying the enormous, heroic power of love.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. *The Prophets* is told from the perspective of slaver and enslaved alike. How did the shift in voice impact your experience reading the novel? Were there any viewpoints that surprised you the most?
2. Talk about the representation of queer love in *The Prophets*. How is it contextualized within the novel, as well as within the larger canon of Black literature?
3. How does a name impose significance in *The Prophets*? How does it attribute or strip one of their identity?
4. How does Adam's biracial heritage influence his sense of identity and his role at Empty?
5. After Amos betrays Isaiah and Samuel to Paul, the story takes an explosive turn. What tensions led to this point? Do you think the rebellion was inevitable?
6. Discuss Isaiah's final version of Samuel. What do you think happens to Isaiah in the end?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Rachel Joyce

# Miss Benson's Beetle: A Novel

978-0-8129-9670-8 | \$18.00 | The Dial Press | TR  
978-0-385-68126-1 | \$25.95C | Bond Street Books  
📞 978-0-8129-9671-5 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-33994-7

### READERS' ADVISORY:

From the bestselling author of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* comes an irresistible novel about two women on a life-changing adventure. Perfect for fans of *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* and *The Summer Before the War*.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

It is 1950. London is still reeling from World War II, and Margery Benson, a schoolteacher and spinster, is trying to get through life, surviving on scraps. One day, she reaches her breaking point, abandoning her job and small existence to set out on an expedition to the other side of the world in search of her childhood obsession: an insect that may or may not exist—the golden beetle of New Caledonia. When she advertises for an assistant to accompany her, the woman she ends up with is the last person she had in mind. Fun-loving Enid Pretty in her tight-fitting pink suit and pom-pom sandals seems to attract trouble wherever she goes. But together these two British women find themselves drawn into a cross-ocean adventure that exceeds all expectations and delivers something neither of them expected to find: the transformative power of friendship.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do the various members of Margery's family—her father, her mother, her aunts, Barbara—inform who she is as a person? What values and beliefs, good and bad, do they pass along to her?
2. When Margery stole the boots, what was your initial reaction? What do you think the boots represent to her?
3. How does Margery and Enid's relationship evolve? How do they complement each other as characters? How do they learn from and change each other?
4. Why do you think Mr. Mundic fixated on Margery to the point that he followed her to New Caledonia? What does the journey mean to him? What similarities, if any, do Margery and Mundic share?
5. What does the golden beetle mean to Margery? Do you have a "golden beetle" in your own life? If so, what is it and what does it mean to you?
6. What did you think was going to be in the red valise? Were you surprised when it was finally opened?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Ben Macintyre  
**Agent Sonya:**  
Moscow's Most Daring  
Wartime Spy

978-0-593-13630-0 | \$28.00 | Crown | HC  
978-0-771-00194-9 | \$36.00C | McClelland & Stewart | HC  
978-0-593-13631-7 | AD: 978-0-593-28766-8  
CD: 978-0-593-28902-0 | LP: 978-0-593-29510-6

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

The “master storyteller” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) behind the *New York Times* bestseller *The Spy and the Traitor* uncovers the true story behind the Cold War's most intrepid female spy. Perfect reading for fans of John le Carré, Alan Furst, Charles Cumming, Erik Larson, and Lynne Olson.



**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

In 1942, in a quiet village in the leafy English Cotswolds, a thin, elegant woman lived in a small cottage with her three children and her husband, who worked as a machinist nearby. Ursula Burton was friendly but reserved, and spoke English with a slight foreign accent. By all accounts, she seemed to be living a simple, unassuming life.

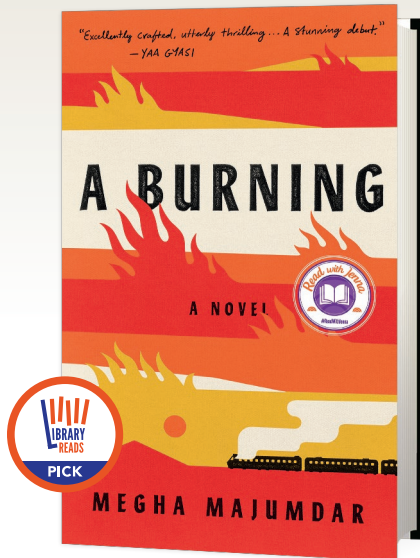
Her neighbors didn't know that she was a high-ranking Soviet intelligence officer. They didn't know that her husband was also a spy, or that she was running powerful agents across Europe. Behind the facade of her picturesque life, Burton was a dedicated Communist, a Soviet colonel, and a veteran agent, gathering the scientific secrets that would enable the Soviet Union to build the bomb.

This true-life spy story is a masterpiece about the woman code-named “Sonya.” Over the course of her career, she was hunted by the Chinese, the Japanese, the Nazis, MI5, MI6, and the FBI—and she evaded them all.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Before reading *Agent Sonya*, how much did you know about Ursula Kuczynski, communism, and the Cold War era? Which historical aspects of the book surprised you the most? Did you learn new details about this period in history?
2. How does this story reflect the great ideological clash of the twentieth century—between communism, fascism, and Western democracy?
3. Why do you think Ursula became and stayed a spy for so many years, despite all the risks and challenges? What was she drawn to most? Can you imagine ever doing what she did?
4. There were many important supporting characters (and spies) in this book—who will you remember most and why?
5. What role did sexism play in potentially enabling Ursula to operate undetected throughout her career?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Megha Majumdar

# A Burning:

## A Novel

978-0-525-65869-6 | \$25.95 | Knopf | HC  
978-0-7710-5983-4 | \$32.00C | McClelland & Stewart  
📞 978-0-525-65870-2 | 📍 AD: 978-0-593-21211-0  
📺 LP: 978-0-593-21476-3

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of Tommy Orange, Yaa Gyasi,  
Jhumpa Lahiri, and Arundhati Roy.

*A Today Show #ReadWithJenna Book Club Pick!*

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Jivan is a Muslim girl from the slums, determined to move up in life, who is accused of executing a terrorist attack on a train because of a careless comment on Facebook. PT Sir is an opportunistic gym teacher who hitches his aspirations to a right-wing political party, and finds that his own ascent becomes linked to Jivan's fall. Lovely—an irresistible outcast whose exuberant voice and dreams of glory fill the novel with warmth and hope and humor—has the alibi that can set Jivan free, but it will cost her everything she holds dear. Taut, symphonic, propulsive, and riveting from its opening lines, *A Burning* has the force of an epic while being so masterfully compressed it can be read in a single sitting.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In *A Burning*, Jivan's social media usage ultimately leads her to become a victim of the state. Consider her statement: "If the police didn't help ordinary people like you and me, if the police watched them die, doesn't that mean . . . that the government is also a terrorist?" How does this messaging reverberate throughout the novel? How is social media used both as a tool of activism and as a tool of repression in our current society? Have you ever felt at risk expressing your opinions on social media?
2. Why do you think Lovely dreams of becoming a movie star? How does this ambition relate to the instances of disrespect she faces in public, as well as to the ceremonies at which she is welcomed?
3. Consider your initial impression of PT Sir. How would you describe his day-to-day life before he attends the rally? How did the rally change his point of view on political engagement?
4. Education plays an integral role in *A Burning*. How is the education system described? Consider PT Sir's role within it and Jivan's experience in his school. How does the act of learning English become a form of empowerment for her? For Lovely?
5. At several points in the novel, the reader witnesses characters become morally flexible as they strive to achieve personal goals. Who, in your opinion, is the most morally reprehensible?

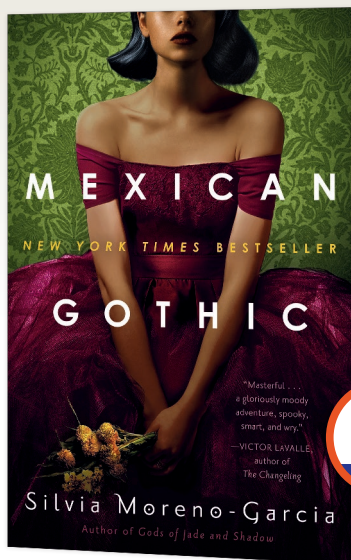
For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)

# Silvia Moreno-Garcia Mexican Gothic

978-0-525-62078-5 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Del Rey | HC  
📍 978-0-525-62079-2 | 📖 AD: 978-0-593-21387-2

## READERS' ADVISORY:

From the author of *Gods of Jade and Shadow* comes “a terrifying twist on classic gothic horror” (*Kirkus Reviews*) set in glamorous 1950s Mexico—perfect for readers of Victor LaValle’s *The Changeling* and Alma Katsu’s *The Hunger*.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

After receiving a frantic letter from her newly-wed cousin begging for someone to save her from a mysterious doom, Noemí Taboada heads to High Place, a distant house in the Mexican countryside. She’s not sure what she will find—her cousin’s husband, a handsome Englishman, is a stranger, and Noemí knows little about the region.

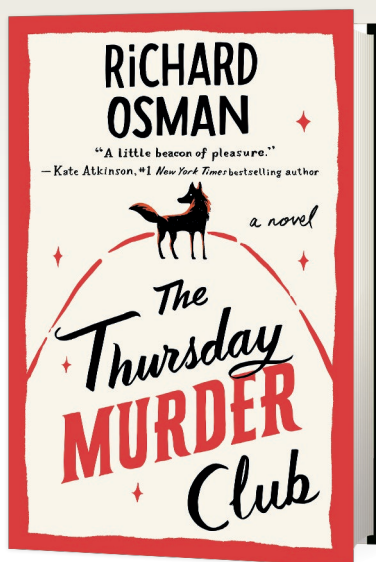
Noemí is also an unlikely rescuer: She’s a glamorous debutante, and her chic gowns and perfect red lipstick are more suited for cocktail parties than amateur sleuthing. But she’s also tough and smart, with an indomitable will, and she is not afraid: Not of her cousin’s new husband, who is both menacing and alluring; not of his father, the ancient patriarch who seems to be fascinated by Noemí; and not even of the house itself, which begins to invade Noemí’s dreams with visions of blood and doom.

And Noemí, mesmerized by the terrifying yet seductive world of High Place, may soon find it impossible to ever leave this enigmatic house behind.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How did you feel about the historical period and setting the book takes place in?
2. What did you think of the main character, Noemí? Who was your favorite character and why?
3. How did you feel about the relationship between Noemí and Francis?
4. What did you think about the ending? What do you wish had been different?
5. What do you think the author’s purpose was in writing this book? How well do you think she got it across?
6. What did you enjoy most about this book? What did you enjoy the least? What changes to the story, if any, would you make? Would you read a sequel to this story? Would you prefer it feature Noemí and Francis, or would you prefer a story in the same world with new characters?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Richard Osman The Thursday Murder Club: A Novel

978-1-984-88096-3 | \$26.00/\$35.00C | Pamela Dorman Books | HC  
978-1-984-88097-0 | AD: 978-0-593-28951-8  
LP: 978-0-593-41025-7

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of Anthony Horowitz, Alexander McCall Smith, and Alan Bradley. Also for fans of the hit TV show *Grace and Frankie* and the movie *Knives Out*.

"A little beacon of pleasure in the midst of the gloom... SUCH FUN!" —Kate Atkinson, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Big Sky*

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**F**our septuagenarians with a few tricks up their sleeves. A female cop with her first big case. A brutal murder. Welcome to... *The Thursday Murder Club*.

In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet weekly in the Jigsaw Room to discuss unsolved crimes.

When a local developer is found dead with a mysterious photograph left next to the body, the Thursday Murder Club suddenly find themselves in the middle of their first live case.

As the bodies begin to pile up, can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer, before it's too late?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

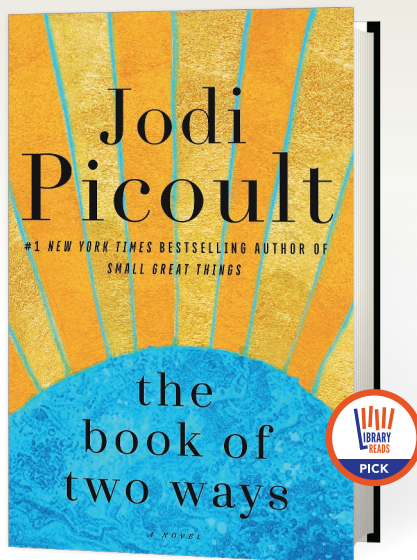
1. Though the book follows the four friends—Joyce, Elizabeth, Ibrahim, and Ron—solving the murder, the only first-person POV is Joyce's via her diary. Why do you think the author chose to show her perspective in such a way?
2. Society often writes off the abilities of the elderly—assuming both body and mind are deteriorating. At the heart of *The Thursday Murder Club* is a lesson to never to underestimate this population. Who misjudges the residents of Cooper's Chase the most? What are the consequences of underestimating the four friends?
3. One of the reoccurring themes is the gray area between the law and each character's moral code. Do you think Penny's husband, John, did the right thing? How about Penny?
4. At any point, did you have an idea of who might have committed the murder? Who did you suspect, and why? Were you correct?
5. If you had to solve a murder, which three people—could be friends, family, celebrities—would you choose to help you solve it?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Jodi Picoult  
**The Book of  
Two Ways:**  
A Novel

978-1-9848-1835-5 | \$28.99 | Ballantine Books | HC  
978-0-7352-7690-1 | \$35.00C | Random House Canada  
📞 978-1-9848-1836-2 | 📍 AD: 978-0-593-28968-6  
📻 CD: 978-0-593-28966-2

**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
From the bestselling author of *A Spark of Light*  
and *Small Great Things*, a riveting novel about  
the choices that change the course of our lives.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

Everything changes in a single moment for Dawn Edelstein. She's on a plane when the flight attendant makes an announcement: Prepare for a crash landing. She braces herself as thoughts flash through her mind. The shocking thing is, the thoughts are not of her husband but of a man she last saw fifteen years ago: Wyatt Armstrong.

Dawn, miraculously, survives the crash, but so do all the doubts that have suddenly been raised. She has led a good life. Back in Boston, there is her husband, Brian, their beloved daughter, and her work as a death doula, in which she helps ease the transition between life and death for her clients.

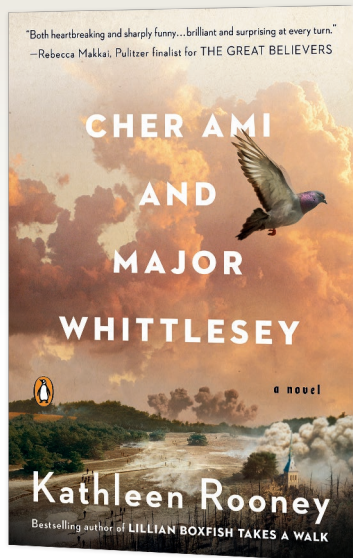
But somewhere in Egypt is Wyatt Armstrong, who works as an archaeologist unearthing ancient burial sites, a career Dawn once studied for but was forced to abandon when life suddenly intervened. And now, when it seems that fate is offering her second chances, she is not as sure of the choice she once made.

As the story unfolds, Dawn's two possible futures unspool side by side, as do the secrets and doubts long buried with them.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The book asks: "Who would you be, if you hadn't turned out to be the person you are right now?" If you had to pinpoint the one person or thing you left behind, what or who would it be? Do you wonder: What if? How might your life be different if you had taken that different route?
2. Had you ever heard of a death doula before reading *The Book of Two Ways*? What did you think of this care practice and the way it is incorporated in the novel?
3. Both Egyptian mythology and quantum physics are explored in the book, and they are often presented as two opposites in Dawn's life. Do you think they're as different as Dawn perceives them to be, or are there ways in which they actually overlap?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Kathleen Rooney

# Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey

978-0-525-50782-6 | \$26.00/\$35.00C | Penguin Books | HC Library Edition

978-0-143-13542-5 | \$17.00/\$23.00C | Penguin Books | TR

📞 978-0-525-50709-3 | 📄 AD: 978-593-29150-4

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Helen Simonson, Sara Gruen, Kate Atkinson, and fans of *Seabiscuit* and *The Art of Racing in the Rain*.

“Brilliant and surprising at every turn.”

—Rebecca Makkai, Pulitzer finalist for *The Great Believers*

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

A heart-tugging and gorgeously written novel based on the incredible true story of a WWI messenger pigeon and the soldiers whose lives she forever altered, from the author of *Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk*.

From the green countryside of England and the gray canyons of Wall Street come two unlikely heroes: one a pigeon and the other a soldier. Answering the call to serve in the war to end all wars, neither Cher Ami, the messenger bird, nor Charles Whittlesey, the Army officer, can anticipate how their lives will briefly intersect in a chaotic battle in the forests of France, where their wills will be tested, their fates will be shaped, and their lives will emerge forever altered.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Kathleen Rooney chooses to tell the story in the alternating voices of Cher Ami, a pigeon, and Charles Whittlesey, a human. How would the story be different if she had only offered one perspective? What do the two interwoven perspectives do for the impact of the overall narrative?
2. Do you consider yourself an animal lover? Does that love extend to pigeons? Did this book change the way you look at pigeons or other animals? If so, how?
3. The media, including Damon Runyon and others, plays a complex role in this story in that it makes the men—and animals—of the Pocket so famous as to require them to be saved (when, under other circumstances, they would have been sacrificed), but it also paints a simplified and damaging picture of their heroism and what they endured. How should people on the home front think about the experience of soldiers at war, given that the information that they receive will always be suspect?
4. After she is shipped to the United States, Cher Ami is used by the army as a public relations tool in order to make people feel better about the war. How does that make you feel?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

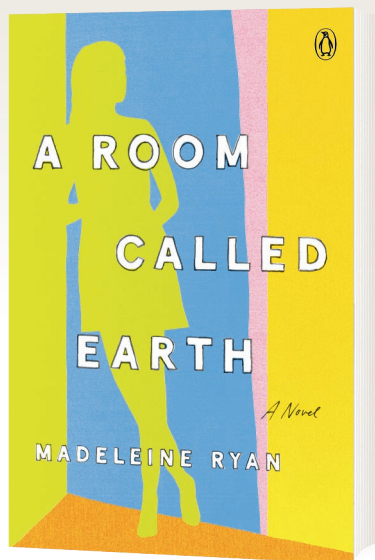
Madeleine Ryan  
**A Room  
Called Earth:**  
A Novel

978-0-143-13545-6 | \$17.00/\$23.00C | Penguin Books | TR

📞 978-0-525-50712-3 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-29160-3

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

For readers of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*, and *The Silver Linings Playbook*.



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**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**T**he debut novel from the inimitable Madeleine Ryan, *A Room Called Earth* is a humorous and heartwarming adventure inside the mind of a bright and dynamic woman. This hyper-saturated celebration of love and acceptance, from a neurodiverse writer, is a testament to moving through life without fear, and to opening ourselves up to a new way of relating to one another.

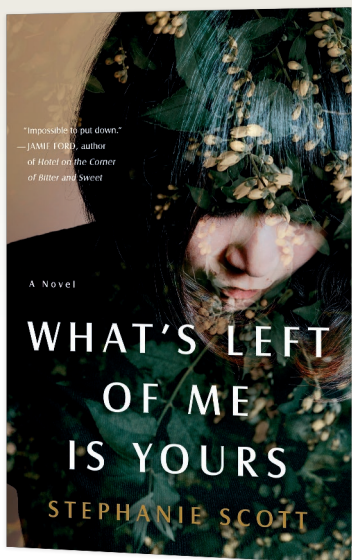
As a full moon rises over Melbourne, Australia, a young woman gets ready for a party. And what appears to be an ordinary night out is—through the prism of her singular perspective—extraordinary. As the evening unfolds, each encounter she has reveals the vast discrepancies between what she is thinking and feeling, and what she is able to say. And there's so much she'd like to say. So when she meets a man and a genuine connection occurs, it's nothing short of a miracle.

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Did your feelings toward the narrator change between the beginning and the end of the book?
2. The author chose not to write, within the book itself, that the narrator is autistic. In fact, she eschews most labels. Did you notice this? Did it change how you thought about the narrator or the people she meets?
3. The narrator has many self-care rituals and completes them before she goes to the party. Is there anything you do in particular before you go to a social gathering? How does it make you feel?
4. Have you ever gone to a party where you didn't know many people? In what ways was your experience similar? In what ways was it different?
5. Discuss a situation in which you've felt like an outsider. How does the narrator deal with feeling different?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## Stephanie Scott

# What's Left of Me is Yours:

## A Novel

978-0-385-54470-2 | \$26.95/\$35.95C | Doubleday | HC  
📞 978-0-385-54471-9 | 🌐 AD: 978-0-593-16926-1

### **READERS' ADVISORY:**

For fans of *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng, *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, and *Big Little Lies* by Liane Moriarty.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**I**n Japan, a covert industry has grown up around the “wakaresaseya” (literally “breaker-upper”), a person hired by one spouse to seduce the other in order to gain the advantage in divorce proceedings. When Satō hires Kaitarō, a wakaresaseya agent, to have an affair with his wife, Rina, he assumes it will be an easy case. But Satō has never truly understood Rina or her desires and Kaitarō’s job is to do exactly that—until he does it too well. While Rina remains ignorant of the circumstances that brought them together, she and Kaitarō fall in a desperate, singular love, setting in motion a series of violent acts that will forever haunt her daughter’s life.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Before reading the novel, had you heard of the wakaresaseya or “marriage breakup” industry? What do you think are the risks of this industry being allowed to operate? How does this relate to honey trapping in your own culture?
2. From the beginning, photography plays a large role in the novel. How does photography influence Sumiko’s telling of her mother’s story?
3. What do you think Sumiko means when she says that every member of her family, including her, is guilty of her mother’s death?
4. This novel revolves around a murder, but we learn the identity of the alleged murderer relatively early in the story. How does that affect your reading of the events leading up to the crime?
5. What do you think of the novel’s title? How does it apply to all the characters?
6. The novel is a mediation of all the different forms of love. What does love mean to you? Who from the book best exemplifies this definition of love?

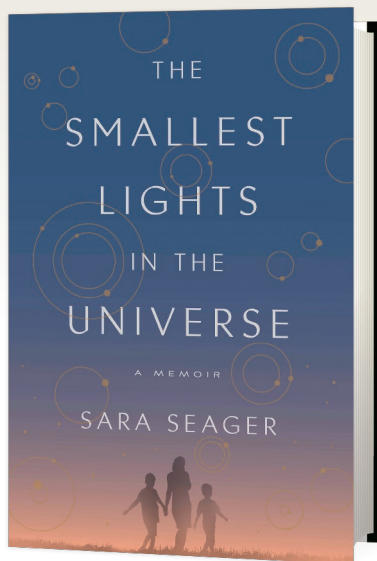
For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)

Sara Seager  
**The Smallest Lights  
in the Universe:**  
A Memoir

978-0-525-57625-9 | \$28.00 | Crown | HC  
978-0-385-69279-3 | \$34.95C | Doubleday Canada | HC  
978-0-525-57627-3 | AD: 978-0-593-14804-4  
LP: 978-0-593-17203-2

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

**For readers of *H Is for Hawk*, *When Breath Becomes Air*, and *Lab Girl* comes a luminous memoir about an MIT astrophysicist who must reinvent herself in the wake of tragedy and discovers the power of connection on this planet, even as she searches our galaxy for another Earth.**



**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

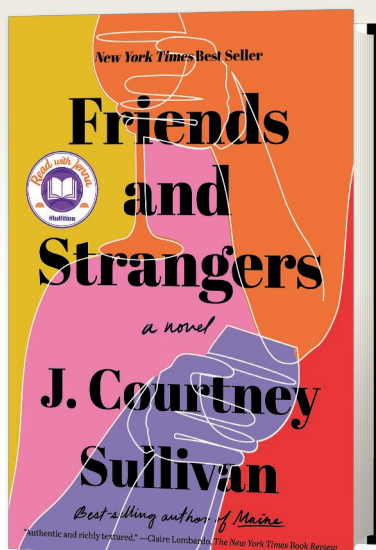
Sara Seager has always been in love with the stars: so many lights in the sky, so much possibility. Now a pioneering planetary scientist, she searches for exoplanets—especially that distant, elusive world that sustains life. But with the unexpected death of Seager’s husband, the purpose of her own life becomes hard for her to see. Suddenly, at forty, she is a widow and the single mother of two young boys. For the first time, she feels alone in the universe.

As she struggles to navigate her life after loss, Seager takes solace in the alien beauty of exoplanets and the technical challenges of exploration. At the same time, she discovers earthbound connections that feel every bit as wondrous, when strangers and loved ones alike reach out to her across the space of her grief. Most unexpected of all, there is another kind of one-in-a-billion match, not in the stars but here at home.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. The author opens the book by describing rogue planets; she uses them as a metaphor for her children, who she says have gone “halfway to rogue” following the death of their father. What else in her life appears “rogue”? Who or what in your life could be described as a “rogue planet,” with no star to orbit?
2. Throughout the book, the author talks about the power of belief and of positive thought. Do you feel that belief is a type of magic? Why or why not?
3. The author is an extremely successful woman in a field dominated by men. Was there a point in the book when you thought this circumstance was especially affecting her? Do you think the fact that she’s a woman has had an impact on her career trajectory, for better or for worse? Why?
4. Is there anything in your life that you’ve pursued with blind faith despite opposition, in the way that the author is driven to find exoplanets in the face of backlash from her scientific community? What kept the author moving toward her goal? What keeps you moving toward your goal?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



## J. Courtney Sullivan Friends and Strangers: A Novel

978-0-525-52059-7 | \$27.95/\$36.95C | Knopf | HC  
978-0-525-52060-3 | AD: 978-0-525-53219-4  
CD: 978-0-525-53216-3 | LP: 978-0-593-21474-9

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Meg Wolitzer, Emma Straub, Curtis Sittenfeld, Maria Semple, Cynthia Sweeney, Lauren Groff, Celeste Ng, and Jennifer Weiner.

A Today Show #ReadWithJenna Book Club Pick!

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Elisabeth, an accomplished journalist and new mother, is struggling to adjust to life in a small town after nearly twenty years in New York City. Alone in the house with her infant son all day (and awake with him much of the night), she feels uneasy, adrift. She neglects her work, losing untold hours to her Brooklyn moms' Facebook group, her "influencer" sister's Instagram feed, and text messages with the best friend she never sees anymore. Enter Sam, a senior at the local women's college, whom Elisabeth hires to babysit. Sam is struggling to decide between the path she's always planned on and a romantic entanglement that threatens her ambition. She's worried about student loan debt and what the future holds. In short order, they grow close. But when Sam finds an unlikely kindred spirit in Elisabeth's father-in-law, the true differences between the women's lives become starkly revealed and a betrayal has devastating consequences.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

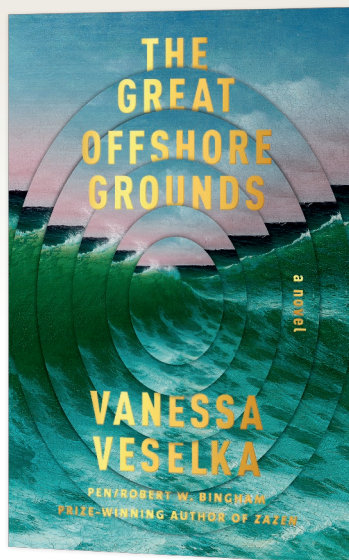
1. Discuss Elisabeth's fascination with the BK Mamas Facebook group. Why does it have such a strong hold on her? Does she continue to identify as a BK Mama after she moves away, or does she feel different from the women who post in the group?
2. Examine Sam and Elisabeth's connection. What draws them to each other? How accurate is each woman's perception of the other? When and why do cracks begin to form in their friendship?
3. Explore Elisabeth and Andrew's marriage. What challenges does their relationship face over the course of the novel, and how do they confront them? How does parenthood affect their relationship? Do you feel they have a strong foundation as a couple? Why or why not?
4. Consider the role that money plays in the novel. How are the characters' relationships with each other affected by money? To what extent does money give people power over others? Can money ever strengthen a relationship or is it always a toxic element?

For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)

Vanessa Veselka  
**The Great  
Offshore Grounds:**  
A Novel

978-0-525-65807-8 | \$27.95/\$36.95C | Knopf | HC  
📖 978-0-525-65808-5 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-29216-7

**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
For readers of Nathan Hill, Lidia Yuknavitch,  
Adam Johnson, and Ottessa Moshfegh.



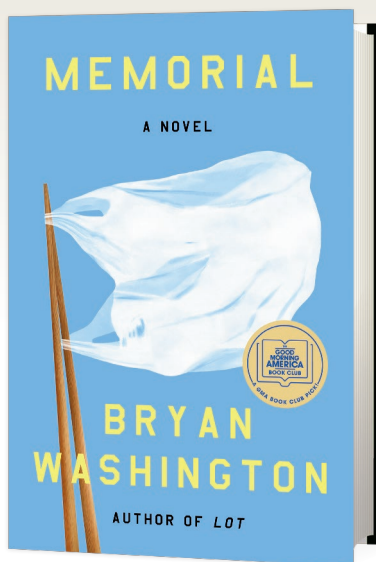
### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**O**n the day of their estranged father's wedding, half sisters Cheyenne and Livy set off to claim their inheritance. It's been years since the two have seen each other. Cheyenne is newly back in Seattle, crashing with Livy after a failed marriage and a series of dead ends. Livy works refinishing boats, her resentment against her freeloading sister growing as she tamps down dreams of fishing off the coast of Alaska. But the promise of a shot at financial security brings the two together to claim what's theirs. Except, instead of money, what their father gives them is information—a name—which both reveals a stunning family secret and compels them to come to grips with it. In the face of their new reality, the sisters and their adopted brother each set out on journeys that will test their faith in one another, as well as their definitions of freedom.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *The Great Offshore Grounds* takes us over the country, from Washington state to Boston, North Carolina to Alaska. What feels distinctly "American" about this novel? What does it say about such a complicated and sprawling country?
2. The idea of "The American Dream" has grown and evolved over the years, and remains a classic lens through which to examine American literature. What does *The Great Offshore Grounds* say about the American Dream? What is the American Dream to Cheyenne, Livy, and Essex?
3. *The Great Offshore Grounds* begins with Livy and Cheyenne receiving Ann's name from their father. What does novel say about inheritance? What does it say about family?
4. For a book that is largely about exploring the United States, there is an emphasis on the sea and areas beyond the mainland. What does this emphasis illuminate?
5. What does the novel say about women who explore America?

For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)



## Bryan Washington

# Memorial:

### A Novel

978-0-593-08727-5 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Riverhead | HC  
📞 978-0-593-08729-9 | 📄 AD: 978-0-593-28878-8

#### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of wise, big-hearted novels with a love story like *The Mothers* by Brit Bennett, and insightful, electric fiction about identity and family, like *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith.

**A Good Morning America Book Club Pick!**

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#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**A** funny, sexy, profound dramedy about two young people in Houston at a crossroads in their relationship and the limits of life. Benson, a black day care teacher, and Mike, a Japanese America chef, aren't quite sure why they're still a couple. What happens when their love story collides with the limits of love—and everyone has an opinion?

"This book, in what feels like a new vision for the 21st century novel, made me happy."  
—Ocean Vuong, author of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

"Stunning. Everything happening in this book is so intimate, sensual, and wise. . . I love this book." —Tommy Orange, author of *There, There*

"Truly unlike anything I've read before. Bryan Washington's take on love, family, and responsibility is as complicated and true as life itself. I can't stop thinking about it."  
—Ann Patchett, author of *The Dutch House*

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#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Memorial* delivers a vivid and poignant portrait of how love, romantic and familial, is weathered and ultimately deepened by time. What do you think the author was trying to say about the state of modern love and relationships today? How do they accelerate and deteriorate? What is the author saying about the many forms a family can take?
2. The healing power of food is a delicious theme in the novel. Food is used as a connection and bridge between people in profound ways. It can be an olive branch and help lessen the strain of difficult conversations. How can food be used to express personal feelings or facilitate understanding of cultural differences between you and loved ones?
3. Empathy is a message woven throughout the novel. What did you think about the author's open-ended questions to encourage you as the reader to understand a characters' motivation. What were your own reactions to each of the central characters, Benson, Mike, and Mitsuko?

For more discussion questions and a Book Club Kit visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

# Isabel Wilkerson

## Caste:

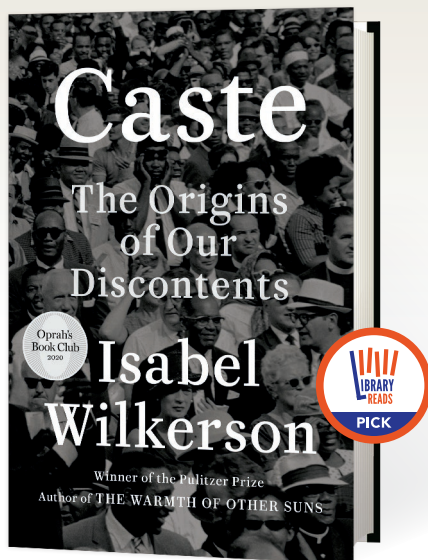
### The Origins of Our Discontents

978-0-593-23025-1 | \$32.00/\$42.00C | Random House | HC  
📞 978-0-593-23026-8 | 📻 AD: 978-0-593-33981-7  
📻 CD: 978-0-593-39669-8

#### READERS' ADVISORY:

The Pulitzer Prize–winning, bestselling author of *The Warmth of Other Suns* examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives today are still defined by a hierarchy of human divisions. For readers of *On Tyranny* and *Between the World and Me*.

**Oprah's Book Club Pick!**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

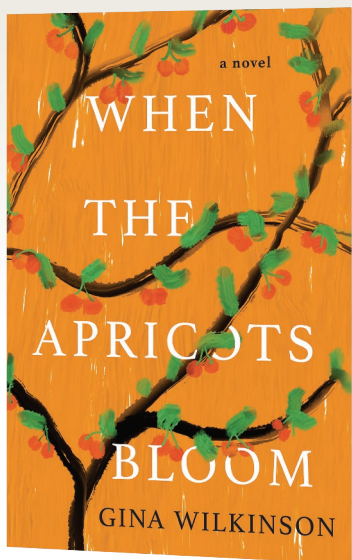
In this brilliant book, Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores, through an immersive, deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson explores eight pillars that underlie caste systems across civilizations, including divine will, bloodlines, stigma, and more. Using riveting stories about people—including Martin Luther King, Jr., baseball's Satchel Paige, a single father and his toddler son, Wilkerson herself, and many others—she shows the ways that the insidious undertow of caste is experienced every day. Finally, she points forward to ways America can move beyond the artificial and destructive separations of human divisions, toward hope in our common humanity.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. At the beginning of *Caste*, author Isabel Wilkerson compares American racial hierarchy to a dormant Siberian virus. What are the strengths of this metaphor? How does this comparison help combat the pervasive myth that racism has been eradicated in America?
2. Wilkerson begins the book with an image of one lone dissenter amidst a crowd of Germans giving the Nazi salute. What would it mean—and what would it take—to be this man today?
3. Caste and race are not the same thing. What is the difference between the two? How do casteism and racism support each other?
4. Did learning about the lens and language of caste change how you look at U.S. history and society? How?

For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.PenguinRandomHouse.com)



Gina Wilkinson  
**When the  
Apricots Bloom:**  
A Novel of Riveting and  
Evocative Fiction

978-1-4967-2935-4 | \$16.99/\$22.99C | Kensington | TR

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

For readers of *A Place for Us*, *Everything Here is Beautiful*, and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*.

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**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**I**nspired by her own experiences stationed in Baghdad during Saddam Hussein's rule, former foreign correspondent Gina Wilkinson's evocative, suspenseful debut is told through the eyes of three very different women in Iraq at the turn of the millennium. A secretary, an artist and a diplomat's wife, each must confront the complexities of trust, friendship, and motherhood under the rule of a dictator and his ruthless secret police.

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. *When the Apricots Bloom* was partly inspired by the author's own experiences living in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein, at a time when Western sanctions kept Iraq virtually cut off from the outside world. During that period, her closest Iraqi friend worked as a secret police informant and reported on her every move. Did her portrayal of life in Baghdad seem realistic to you? What did you learn about life for ordinary Iraqis that surprised you?
2. If you were in Huda's situation, how would you have responded to the orders from the secret police? Should Huda have felt guilty about any of her actions?
3. Compared to Huda, how does Rania handle pressure from the regime? Does her family's status protect her, or is that just an illusion?
4. Rania is an artist—a respected role in Iraqi society. How does this compare to prevailing attitudes toward artists in your own culture?
5. Ally is desperate to find a connection with her mother. Given the restrictions she's under, do you think her subterfuge is justified, or is her search for clues to her mother's past irresponsible? What would you have done differently?

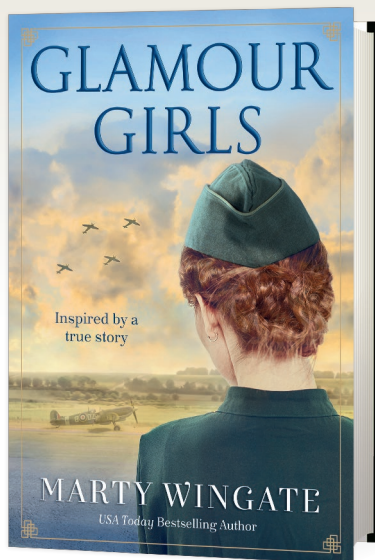
For more discussion questions visit: [TinyUrl.com/ApricotsInBloom](https://www.tinyurl.com/apricotsinbloom)

# Marty Wingate Glamour Girls: A Novel

978-1-64385-527-1 | \$27.99/\$36.99C | Alcove Press | HC  
978-1-64385-528-

## READERS' ADVISORY:

*USA Today* bestselling author Marty Wingate's historical debut is "like reading a personal diary of the brave women who were unsung heroes of WWII." —Rhys Bowen, author of the Royal Spyness Mystery Series



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

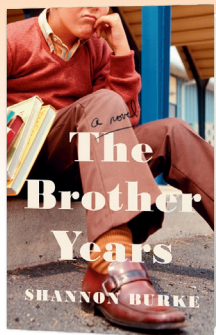
Ever since she was 10 years old, Rosalie Wright's eyes have been on the skies. But at the age of 18, on the verge of earning her pilot's license, the English farmer's daughter watches her dreams of becoming an aviatrix fly away without her. Britain's entry into World War II brings civilian aviation to a standstill. Then, Rosalie's father dies, leaving her, her mother, and her brothers to run the farm.

Everything changes when she learns that the Air Transport Authority is recruiting women pilots to ferry warplanes across Britain to Royal Air Force bases. Despite her mother's objections, Rosalie cannot resist the call of her country—and the lure of the skies. Her trusty Ferry Pilots Notebook by her side, Rosalie delivers to five airfields in a day—while fighting an endless battle against skeptical male pilots and ground crews. She would much rather spend her time on the wing than on the arm of any man. . . until she meets pilot Snug Durrant and squadron leader Alan Chersey. Will a romantic rivalry send Rosalie's aerial dreams plummeting to earth?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which scene stuck with you the most? Why do you think it did?
2. As we follow Rosalie in the book, we are also moving through the war. How did Rosalie's years reflect the years of the war?
3. What did you like or dislike about Rosalie's relationship with Alan? What about Snug? Were you rooting for one or the other?
4. There have been numerous books about the strength and power of women during wartime. Why do you think this is such a popular topic now?
5. Siblings! How did Rosalie's place as the youngest and only girl influence her personality?

For more discussion questions visit: [TinyUrl.com/GlamourGirlsBookClub](http://TinyUrl.com/GlamourGirlsBookClub)



Shannon Burke

## The Brother Years: A Novel

978-1-5247-4864-7 | \$25.95/\$34.95C | Pantheon | HC

📞 978-1-5247-4865-4 | 📻 AD: 978-0-593-21300-1

**F**rom the acclaimed author of *Black Flies* and *Into the Savage Country* and co-creator of top-ten Netflix hit *Outer Banks*, a powerful new novel of class striving and the precarious dynamics of brotherhood in the Chicago suburbs of the late 1970s.

Anna Carey

## This Is Not the Jess Show

978-1-68369-197-6 | \$18.99/\$24.99C | Quirk Books | HC

📞 978-1-68369-198-3

**T**he year is 1998: Titanic just won 6 Oscars, boy bands are dominating MTV's airwaves, and like any other teenager Jess Flynn is just trying to survive high school. Between a crush on her childhood best friend, overprotective parents, and her sister's worsening health, the only constant is her hometown of Swickley, which feels smaller by the day. Jess is resigned to her small-town life, until the day she discovers a mysterious device with an apple logo, causing her to question everything and everyone she's ever known.

Perfect for fans of *Black Mirror*, *This Is Not the Jess Show* will keep readers guessing until the very end.



Ernest Cline

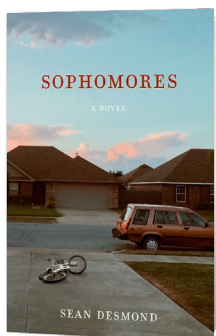
## Ready Player Two: A Novel

978-1-524-76133-2 | \$28.99/\$38.99C | Ballantine Books | HC

📞 9781524761356 | 📻 AD: 978-0-593-39697-1

📻 CD: 978-0-593-39695-7 | 📻 LP: 978-0-593-40038-8

**T**he highly anticipated sequel to the beloved worldwide bestseller *Ready Player One*, the near-future adventure that inspired the blockbuster Steven Spielberg film. Lovingly nostalgic and wildly original as only Ernest Cline could conceive it, *Ready Player Two* takes us on another imaginative, fun, action-packed adventure through his beloved virtual universe, and jolts us thrillingly into the future once again.



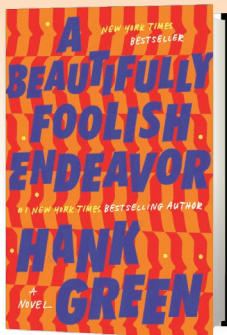
Sean Desmond

## Sophomores

978-0-525-54268-1 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Putnam | HC

📞 978-0-593-08484-7 | 📻 AD: 978-0-593-28711-8

**T**he late 1980s come alive in this moving and keenly observed story of one boy's unforgettable sophomore year, and his parents' surprising journey alongside him. Perfect for readers of Matthew Thomas and Jonathan Franzen, and fans of *Dead Poets Society*.



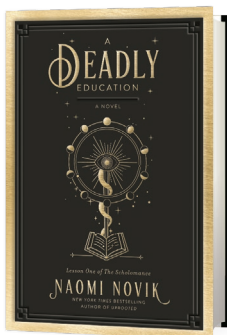
Hank Green

## A Beautifully Foolish Endeavor

978-1-5247-4347-5 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Dutton | HC

📖 978-1-5247-4348-2 | 🗣️ AD: 978-0-593-14633-0 | 📖 LP: 978-0-593-15228-7

**A**pril May and the Carls are back in the sequel to Hank Green's #1 *New York Times* bestselling debut novel, *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing*. Perfect for readers of Ernest Cline and Blake Crouch.



Naomi Novik

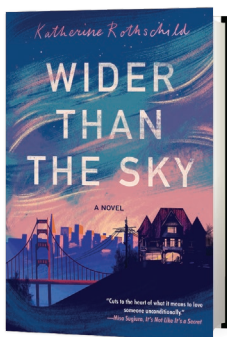
## A Deadly Education: A Novel

978-0-593-12848-0 | \$28.00/\$34.95C | Del Rey | HC

📖 978-0-593-12849-7 | 🗣️ AD: 978-0-593-28742-2

**F**rom the author of *Uprooted* and *Spinning Silver* comes the story of an unwilling dark sorceress who is destined to rewrite the rules of magic.

"The dark school of magic I've been waiting for." —Katherine Arden, author of *Winternight Trilogy*



Katherine Rothchild

## Wider than the Sky

978-1-64129-113-2 | \$18.99/\$21.99C | Soho Teen | HC

📖 978-1-64129-114-9

**I**n the wake of sudden tragedy, twin sisters uncover a secret that rips open their world. Katherine Rothchild explores the pain and power of forgiveness in a stunning debut novel that will shatter your heart and piece it back together, one truth at a time.

For readers of #AllTheFeels young adult fiction, for readers who appreciate references to poetry and popular music.



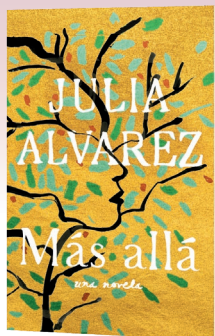
Jane Smiley

## Perestroika in Paris: A Novel

978-0-525-52035-1 | \$26.95/\$35.95C | Knopf | HC

📖 978-0-525-52036-8

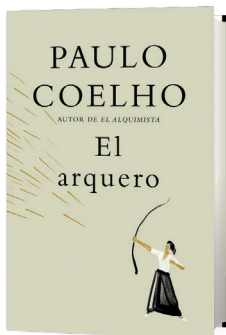
**F**rom the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Thousand Acres* and the *New York Times* bestselling Last Hundred Years Trilogy, a captivating, brilliantly imaginative story of three extraordinary animals—and a young boy—whose lives intersect in Paris.



**Julia Alvarez**  
**Más allá**

978-0-593-08258-4 | \$15.95/\$21.95C | Vintage Español | TR  
 978-0-593-08259-1

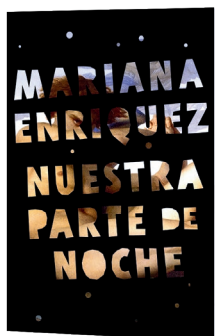
**T**he first novel in almost fifteen years by the internationally bestselling author of *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. For readers of Sandra Cisneros, Edwidge Danticat, and Mario Vargas Llosa.



**Paulo Coelho**  
**El arquero**

978-0-593-31166-0 | \$21.00/\$28.00C | Vintage Español | HC

**F**rom the #1 internationally bestselling author of *The Alchemist* comes an inspiring story about a young man seeking wisdom from an elder, and the teachings imparted along the way. For readers of self-help and personal growth books.



**Mariana Enriquez**  
**Nuestra parte de noche**

978-0-593-31245-2 | \$17.95/\$23.95C | Vintage Español | TR  
 978-0-593-31246-9

**L**egacy, paternity. From the horrendous, to the intimate and the political, *Nuestra parte de noche* is an anthem to the will to live. A haunting, daring novel in which supernatural terror overlaps with the very real horrors of daily life. For readers of Margaret Atwood, Roberto Bolaño, and Shirley Jackson.



**Ibram X. Kendi**  
**Cómo ser antirracista**

978-0-593-31311-4 | \$16.95/\$22.95C | Vintage Español | TR  
 978-0-593-31312-1

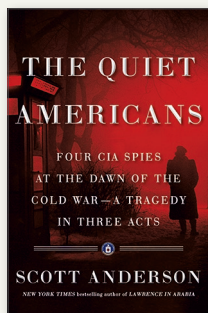
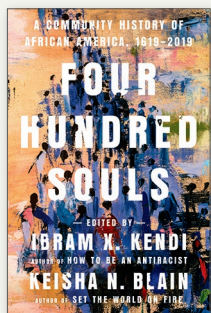
**F**rom the National Book Award-winning author of *Stamped from the Beginning* comes a bracingly original approach to understanding and uprooting racism and inequality in our society—and in ourselves. For readers of Ta-Nehisi Coates, Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi, Trevor Noah and Jorge Ramos.

For Spanish-Language Discussion Guides, visit: [TinyUrl.com/BRRGuidesEnEspañol](http://TinyUrl.com/BRRGuidesEnEspañol)

For more information about books in Spanish, visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Imprint/Vintage-Espanol](http://KnopfDoubleday.com/Imprint/Vintage-Espanol)

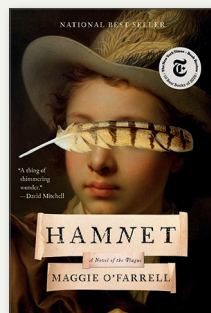
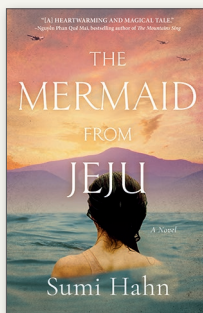
# LOOKING FOR MORE . . .

## Nonfiction for Book Clubs



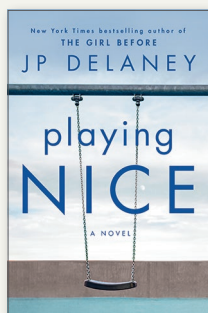
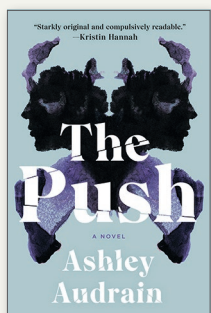
For more of our favorite Nonfiction picks, visit: [TinyUrl.com/BRRNonfiction](https://TinyUrl.com/BRRNonfiction)

## Historical Fiction for Book Clubs



For more of our favorite Historical Fiction picks, visit: [TinyUrl.com/BRRHistoricalFiction](https://TinyUrl.com/BRRHistoricalFiction)

## Mysteries & Thrillers for Book Clubs



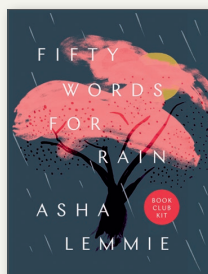
For more of our favorite Mystery and Thriller picks, visit: [TinyUrl.com/BRRMysteryThriller](https://TinyUrl.com/BRRMysteryThriller)

## Celebrity Book Club Picks



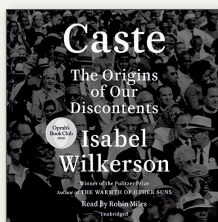
For more of our favorite picks from Oprah, Reese Witherspoon, and Jenna Bush Hager, visit: [TinyUrl.com/PRHOprahsBookClubPicks](https://TinyUrl.com/PRHOprahsBookClubPicks)  
[TinyUrl.com/PRHReesesBookClubPicks](https://TinyUrl.com/PRHReesesBookClubPicks)  
[TinyUrl.com/PRHJennasBookClubPicks](https://TinyUrl.com/PRHJennasBookClubPicks)

## Book Club Kits



Make the most of your meetings with discussion questions, author Q&As, recipes, playlists, and more. Browse our book club kits: [TinyUrl.com/BRRBookClubKits](https://TinyUrl.com/BRRBookClubKits)

## Audiobooks



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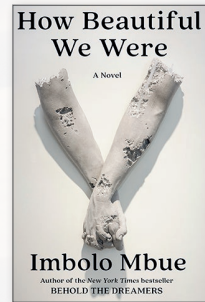
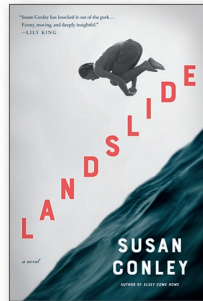
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The next author that everyone will be talking about?

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