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BOOK CLUB

What Will
You Read
Next?

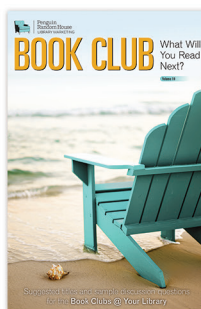
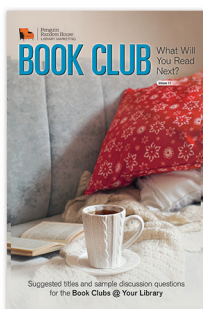
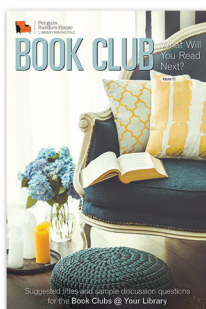
Volume 13



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

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the hottest book club titles!

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TinyUrl.com/BCeNewsletter

V. S. Alexander The Magdalen Girls

978-1-496-70612-6 | \$15.00/\$16.95C | Kensington | TR
📞 978-1-496-70613-3

READERS' ADVISORY:
For readers of Colm Tóibín and Martin Sixsmith.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Within the gated grounds of The Sisters of the Holy Redemption lies one of Dublin's Magdalen Laundries. Once places of refuge, the laundries have evolved into grim workhouses. Some inmates are "fallen" women; most are ordinary girls whose only sin lies in being too pretty, too independent, or tempting the wrong man. The Mother Superior, who has secrets of her own, inflicts cruel, dehumanizing punishments, but always in the name of love. Stripped of their freedom and dignity, the girls are given new names and denied contact with the outside world. Among them are Teagan, Nora, and the reclusive Lea, who together endure—and plot an escape. But as they will discover, the outside world has dangers too, especially for young women with soiled reputations.

Told with candor, compassion, and vivid historical detail, *The Magdalen Girls* is a masterfully written novel of life within these notorious institutions, and an inspiring story of friendship, hope, and unyielding courage.

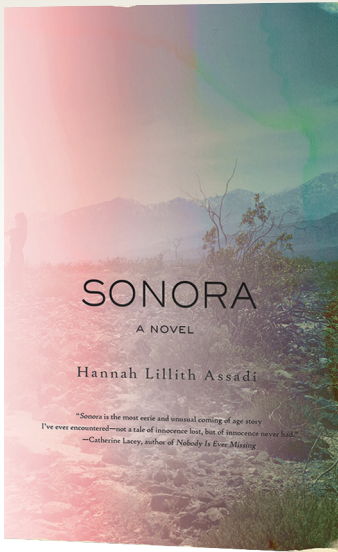
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The book is set in Dublin in 1962. What climate changes occurring at that time would have affected the characters?
2. How does Teagan Tiernan's relationship with her parents affect the outcome of the story?
3. Do you think Father Mark should have entered the priesthood considering his background and thoughts about Teagan?
4. How would you describe the differences in home life between Teagan and Nora Craven?
5. Why do you think Nora's and Teagan's escapes from the laundries were doomed to fail?



Movie Night: Host a movie night to watch *The Magdalene Sisters*. Have a discussion comparing the stories of the three women in the movie with the three girls in the novel.

For more discussion questions visit: www.KensingtonBooks.com/book.aspx/34243



Hannah Lillith Assadi

Sonora

978-1-61695-792-6 | \$16.00/\$20.00C | Soho Press | TR
📞 978-1-61695-793-3

READERS' ADVISORY:
For fans of *Girls*, *Mary Gaitskill*, and *Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

There has been a series of premature deaths among the teenage population in Scottsdale, Arizona. Ahlam, the daughter of a Palestinian refugee and his Israeli wife, battles chronic fever dreams and isolation. When she meets her tempestuous counterpart Laura, the two fall into infatuated partnership, experimenting with drugs and sex until they execute a plan to escape to New York City, where they push hedonism to its limits. *Sonora* is an ode to youth's obsessions and delusions, with the ultimate revelation that, no matter far we run, we are ever rejoined by the phantom of the past.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do Ahlam's 'visions' function in relation to the deaths that occur in each chapter? And why do you think she never talks about them to anyone?
2. The father in the novel remains obsessed with finding unlikely forms of transportation. Over the course of the book, this obsession becomes more tragic and isolating—beginning with his animation over the Phoenix Lights and culminating in the ship he hallucinates in the desert after the night in the hospital. How is this search related to his being a refugee?
3. Both Laura and the narrator Ahlam go by two names. This is one of several ways that they act as foils to one another. What are some of the other ways Laura is contrasted to Ahlam?
4. There are two central triangles in this book: one between Ahlam, her mother, and father and the other between she, Laura, and Dylan. Are there any echoes between the two?



Dust Off the Yearbook: Share a photo of you and your BFF from way back when, and talk about how that person changed your life.

For more discussion questions visit: [Bitly.com/SonoraBookClub](https://bitly.com/SonoraBookClub)

Margaret Atwood Hag-Seed

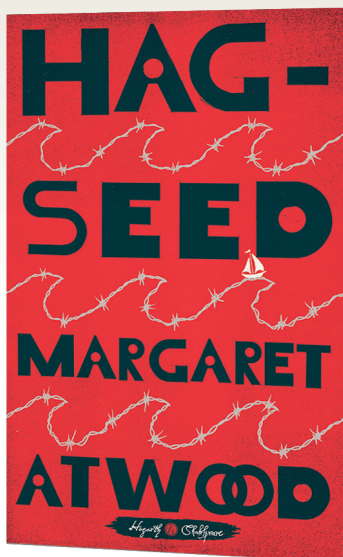
978-0-804-14129-1 | \$25.00 | Hogarth | HC

978-0-804-14130-7

AD: 978-0-735-28660-3 | CD: 978-0-735-28659-7

READERS' ADVISORY:

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* retold as *Hag-Seed*. For the countless readers and fans of Shakespeare, devotees of Margaret Atwood, and the growing crowd of Hogarth Shakespeare fans.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Felix is at the top of his game as Artistic Director of the Makeshew Theatre Festival. His productions have amazed and confounded. Now he's staging a *Tempest* like no other: not only will it boost his reputation, it will heal emotional wounds.

Or that was the plan. Instead, after an act of unforeseen treachery, Felix is living in exile in a backwoods hovel, haunted by memories and brewing revenge.

After twelve years, revenge finally arrives in the shape of a theatre course at a nearby prison. Here, Felix and his inmate actors will put on his *Tempest* and snare the traitors who destroyed him.

Margaret Atwood's novel take on Shakespeare's play of enchantment, retribution, and second chances leads us on an interactive, illusion-ridden journey filled with new surprises and wonders of its own.

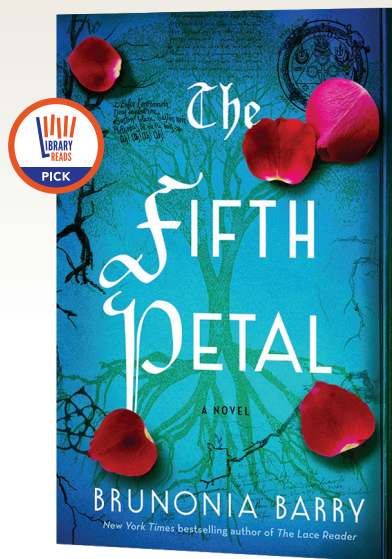
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think the notion of vengeance morphs and evolves throughout the book?
2. What do you think of Felix's relationship with the Fletcher Correctional Players? Are they simply a means to an end? Or do you think he feels attachment to them?
3. What are your thoughts about how Margaret Atwood reimagined *The Tempest*? Did her approach surprise you?
4. Why do you think contemporary writers and readers remain so engaged with Shakespeare's plays? What makes them relevant to today's literature and society?



The Bard: Host a night of Reader's Theater or throw a Shakespearean costume party!

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



Brunonia Barry

The Fifth Petal:

A Novel

978-1-101-90560-9 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Crown | HC

● 978-1-101-90561-6

📍 AD: 978-0-735-28642-9 | 📍 CD: 978-0-735-28643-6

READERS' ADVISORY:

Perfect for fans of Deborah Harkness, Erin Morgenstern, Sarah Addison Allen, and Paula Brackston.

The bestselling author of *The Lace Reader*, returns to her contemporary, otherworldly Salem with this spellbinding brew of suspense, seduction, and murder.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Salem's chief of police, John Rafferty, now married to gifted lace reader Towner Whitney, investigates a 25-year-old triple homicide dubbed "The Goddess Murders," in which three young women, all descended from accused Salem witches, were slashed one Halloween night. Aided by Callie Cahill, the daughter of one of the victims who has returned to town, Rafferty begins to uncover a dark chapter in Salem's past. Were the women victims of an all-too-human vengeance, or was the devil raised in Salem that night?

"Brunonia Barry's Salem is alive with rich history, and with a unique and colorful cast of characters. A mesmerizing take on the ways the past affects and influences the present."
—Jennifer McMahon, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Night Sister*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Contemporary Salem is a safe haven for neo-witches, greatly enhancing the city's tourist trade, but there are many who want to "ditch the witch." Could a modern day witch hunt happen in Salem again, and, if so, what might it look like? Are witch hunts happening in other parts of the world?
2. Social media is both a resource and a curse in the novel. The wealth of available information helps Rafferty with his case, but the opinions of anonymous posters also condemn Rose, mirroring Salem's accusers of 1692. Discuss the positive and negative impacts of social media.
3. Religion played a huge role in 1692 Salem, as did misogyny and fear of the unknown. Discuss Rose's quote: "Tell me what you want, and I'll tell you who you think you are. Tell me what you fear, and I'll tell you who you really are."



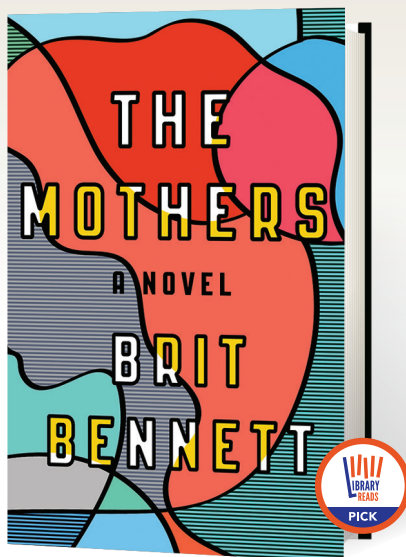
Witch's Brew: Get into the spirit of the otherworldly with a historical discussion of our macabre past. Invite speakers from your local historical society.

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

Brit Bennett
The Mothers: A Novel

978-0-399-18451-2 | \$26.00/\$35.00C | Riverhead | HC
978-0-399-18453-6
AD: 978-0-735-28828-7 | CD: 978-0-735-28827-0
LP: 978-1-524-70986-0

READERS' ADVISORY:
For readers of Celeste Ng and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. And for fans of emotional fiction engaged with ideas about family, community, and identity.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

It's the last season of high school life for Nadia. Mourning her mother's recent suicide, she takes up with the local pastor's son. Luke is twenty-one, and a former football star. They are young; it's not serious. But the pregnancy that results from this teen romance—and the subsequent cover-up—will have an impact that goes far beyond their youth. As adults, they are living in debt to the choices they made and constantly nagged by the same question: What if they had chosen differently? In entrancing, lyrical prose, *The Mothers* asks if, as time passes, we must always live in servitude to the decisions of our younger selves and the decisions we make that shape our lives forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Nadia is the only person in her family to go to college and one of the few from her church community to leave after high school. Do you think her community sees her as an outsider because of it? Why is leaving home so revolutionary for Nadia?
2. Why do you think Nadia makes the choices she does when she finds out she is pregnant? How do these choices affect her life, Luke's life, and even the larger community?
3. How does Luke's sense of masculinity change, before and after his injury? How does the author explore masculinity in the depiction of Nadia's father, a professional military man who must learn to connect with his daughter?
4. How does Nadia's grief of her mother's suicide change her? Do you think it ultimately strengthens her? Weakens her?
5. Do you think a book can be both for teens and adults? Is there a point at which teen lives and adult lives inevitably overlap?



Multi-Generational Teen Talk: Since adult and teen lives overlap in this book, invite young adults to read and join in the discussion.

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

Carol Birch

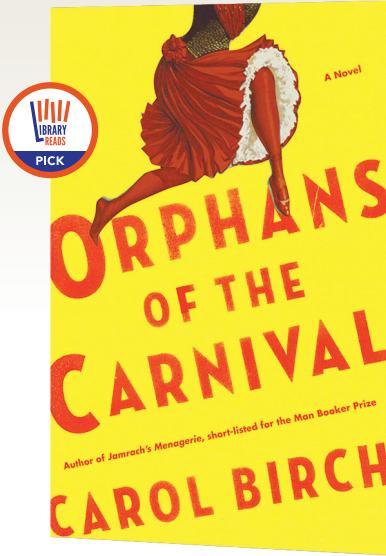
Orphans of the Carnival: A Novel

978-0-385-54152-7 | \$27.95 | Doubleday | HC

📞 978-0-385-54153-4

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, *Orphan Train*, and *The Marriage of Opposites*.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Pronounced by the most eminent physician of the day to be “a true hybrid wherein the nature of woman presides over that of the brute,” Julia Pastrana stood apart from the other carnival acts. She was fluent in English, French and Spanish, an accomplished musician with an exquisite singing voice, equally at ease riding horseback and turning pirouettes—but all anyone noticed was her utterly unusual face. Alternately vilified and celebrated, Julia toured through New Orleans, New York, London, Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow, often hobknobbing with high society as she made her fame and fortune. Stunningly written and deeply compelling, *Orphans of the Carnival* is a haunting examination of how we define ourselves and, ultimately, of what it means to be human.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think was the good and bad that the fortune teller predicted would happen to Julia?
2. Why do you think Rose collects unwanted things?
3. Why did the author choose to alternate between Julia’s and Rose’s narratives?
4. How do you think Theo truly feels about Julia? Do you think he ever loved her?
5. Where does the title *Orphans of the Carnival* come from?
6. Were there times you felt yourself relating to Julia?
7. Looking back, what advice do you think would have been most valuable to Julia?



Three Ring Circus: What is the appeal of books about the circus? Grab some popcorn and discuss the best stories about the Big Top.

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

Bill Burnett and Dave Evans

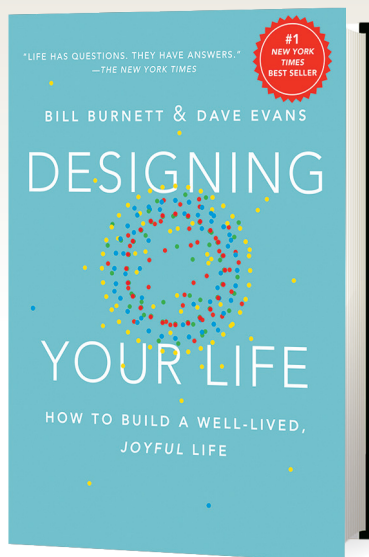
Designing Your Life:

How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life

978-1-101-87532-2 | \$24.95/\$33.95C | Knopf | HC
978-1-101-87533-9
AD: 978-1-101-92311-5 | CD: 978-1-101-92310-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, *The Purpose Driven Life*, *A New Earth*, and *What Color is Your Parachute?*



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Designers create worlds and solve problems using design thinking. Look around your office or home—at the tablet or smartphone you may be holding or the chair you are sitting in. Everything in our lives was designed by someone. And every design starts with a problem that a designer or team of designers seeks to solve.

In this book, Bill Burnett and Dave Evans show us how design thinking can help us create a life that is both meaningful and fulfilling, regardless of who or where we are, what we do or have done for a living, or how young or old we are. The same design thinking responsible for amazing technology, products, and spaces can be used to design and build your career and your life, a life of fulfillment and joy, constantly creative and productive, one that always holds the possibility of surprise.

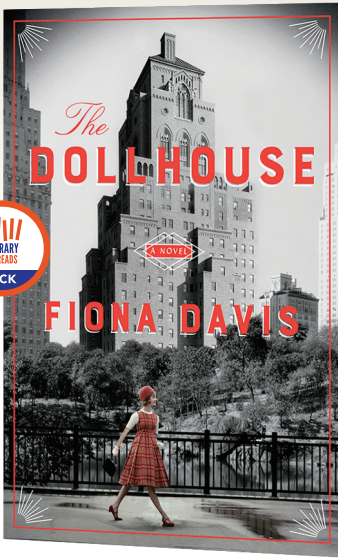
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the introduction, the authors point out that only 27 percent of college graduates have a career related to their majors. What did you think when you read that statistic? Are you among the 27 percent?
2. The concept of “reframing”—pivoting your perspective to address a perceived problem—plays an important role in this book. What experiences have you had with reframing, either in your career or in your personal life?
3. The authors say that the process of reconciling Workview and Lifeview often leads to the biggest “aha” moments. What became clear to you?
4. The notion of failure as a useful thing comes up frequently in the book, and particular in chapter 10. In your own life, how have you “failed forward”?



Put It Into Practice: Assemble “Life Design Teams” as described in the book to help each club member.

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



Fiona Davis

The Dollhouse:

A Novel

978-1-101-98499-4 | \$26.00/\$34.00C | Dutton | HC
📞 978-1-101-98500-7
📍 AD: 978-1-524-70317-2 | 📍 CD: 978-1-524-70316-5

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *The Best of Everything* and Amor Towles's *The Rules of Civility*. Historical fiction readers will love this captivating novel set in New York City's famed Barbizon Hotel for Women.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Darby arrives at the Barbizon Hotel in 1952, secretarial school enrollment in hand, convinced she doesn't belong. Yet when Darby befriends Esme, a Barbizon maid, she's introduced to a new side of New York City: downtown jazz clubs, the sounds of bebop, and even the possibility of romance. Over half a century later, rumors of Darby's involvement in a deadly skirmish with a hotel maid back in 1952 haunt the halls of the Barbizon. It's a story journalist Rose Lewin, Darby's upstairs neighbor, can't resist. As Rose's obsession deepens, the ethics of her investigation become increasingly murky, and neither woman will remain unchanged when the truth is revealed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Darby attracted to Esme as a friend? What characteristics did Esme espouse that Darby desired? Is Esme a foil for Darby? If so, then what does Stella represent?
2. What did you think about how *The Dollhouse* portrays the darker, seedy underbelly of the New York City jazz scene in the 1950s? Does it still retain its glamour? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Esme kissed Darby? Was it a sexual kiss? What did it mean to each woman?
4. What did you think of Rose's concern about her future after her breakup with Griff? Were they justified? Was Rose fair in how she viewed the lives of the elderly Barbizon women?
5. What do you think of the older women's lives now? Are they a symbol of feminism or a dying breed? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being one of the original Barbizon inhabitants?



High Society: Go back in time to the glitz and glamour of the Barbizon Hotel. Grace Kelly attire only!

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

Malin Persson Giolito

Quicksand

978-1-59051-857-1 | \$26.95/\$35.99C | Other Press | HC

📞 978-1-59051-858-8

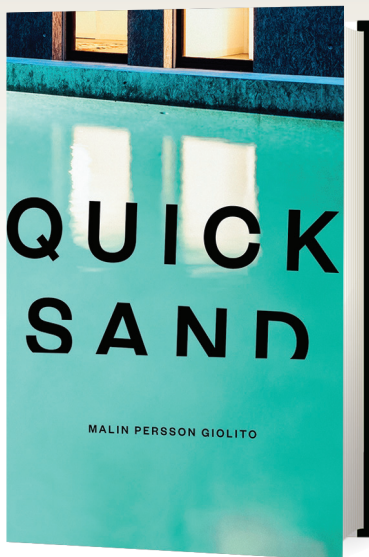
📍 AD: 978-1-5247-7451-6

READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of Jodi Picoult, and readers of *Defending Jacob* and *The Dinner*.

“A dark exploration of the crumbling European social order and the psyche of rich Swedish teens . . . telling the first person story of Maja, a rich-girl-accused-shooter who is perfectly portrayed as obsessed with the actions of others and simultaneously jaded beyond belief by them.”

—*Booklist*, starred review



ABOUT THE BOOK:

A mass shooting has taken place at a prep school in Stockholm’s wealthiest suburb. Maja Norberg is eighteen years old and on trial for her involvement in the massacre where her boyfriend and best friend were killed. When the novel opens, Maja has spent nine excruciating months in jail awaiting trial. Now the time has come for her to enter the courtroom. But how did Maja, the good girl next door who was popular and excelled at school, become the most hated teenager in the country? What did Maja do? Or is it what she didn’t do that brought her here?

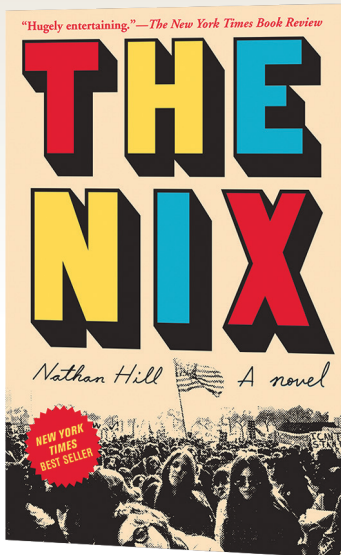
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Sander asks, “Is that who Maja is?” Who is Maja? How would you describe her?
2. What do you think of the narrator’s—Maja’s—voice? Does it change over the course of the novel? Do you think Maja’s narration of her own story attracts you to her, or are you repelled by it? How would your reaction to or understanding of Maja change if *Quicksand* were not told in the first person?
3. Samir tells Maja “You aren’t responsible for him.” Her mother, meanwhile, tells her “[Sebastian] needs you, Maja.” How are the adults around Maja and Sebastian implicated in the murders at the center of the trial? Do you think the adults in Maja’s life failed her in anyway?
4. Do you think there is a difference between what Maja thinks and narrates and how the people in front of her perceive her actions? Do you trust Maja?



The Jury’s Out: Discuss the most high-profile case of the moment. Show your favorite newspaper cover story.

For more discussion questions visit: [OtherPress.com/books/quicksand](https://www.otherpress.com/books/quicksand)



Nathan Hill

The Nix: A Novel

978-1-101-94661-9 | \$27.95/\$36.95C | Knopf | HC

📞 978-1-101-94662-6

📻 AD: 978-0-14-752329-7 | 📻 CD: 978-0-14-752328-0

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Jennifer Egan, Don DeLillo, and Jonathan Franzen.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

It's 2011, and Samuel Andresen-Anderson—college professor, stalled writer—has a Nix of his own: his mother, Faye. He hasn't seen her in decades, not since she abandoned the family when he was a boy. Now she's re-appeared, having committed an absurd crime that electrifies the nightly news, beguiles the internet, and inflames a politically divided country. The media paints Faye as a radical hippie with a sordid past, but as far as Samuel knows, his mother was an ordinary girl who married her high-school sweetheart. Which version of his mother is true? Two facts are certain: she's facing some serious charges, and she needs Samuel's help.

To save her, Samuel will have to embark on his own journey, uncovering long-buried secrets about the woman he thought he knew, secrets that stretch across generations and have their origin all the way back in Norway, home of the mysterious Nix.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think that the author chose to call his novel *The Nix*? What is a Nix according to folklore? How does the Nix function symbolically within the novel and which major themes of the novel does it help to facilitate or uncover?
2. At the beginning of the story, Faye reveals that she believes the things a person loves the most will ultimately hurt them the worst. Which events in her life may have caused her to adopt this point of view?
3. In addition to the story of the Nix, another recurring tale in the novel is the parable of the elephant. What is the lesson in this parable, and what does it reveal about the true self?



What is the Nix?: The title of *The Nix* comes from Norwegian folklore. Explore the various myths about the Nix and the artistic depictions—in word and art—throughout history.

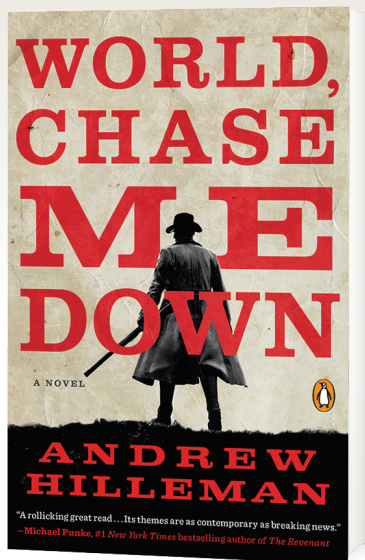
For more discussion questions visit: [KnopfDoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center](https://www.knopfdoubleday.com/Reading-Group-Center)

Andrew Hilleman World, Chase Me Down: A Novel

978-0-143-11147-4 | \$16.00/\$22.00C | Penguin | TR

978-1-101-99278-4

READERS' ADVISORY:
For fans of *True Grit*, *The Revenant*, and
The Sisters Brothers, and for readers of
Larry McMurtry, Jim Thompson,
and Cormac McCarthy.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Resurrecting a forgotten American folk hero who captivated the nation as an outlaw for economic justice, *World, Chase Me Down* is a debut novel of adrenaline-fueled, page-turning suspense based on the first great crime of the last century: the revenge kidnapping by out-of-work former butcher Pat Crowe of the sixteen-year-old son of Omaha's wealthiest meatpacking tycoon for a ransom of \$25,000 in gold. What follows is a manhunt that was dubbed "the thrill of the nation." As if channeling Mark Twain and Charles Portis, Hilleman has given us a character who is bawdy and soulful, grizzled, salty, and hard-drinking, and with an unforgettable voice.

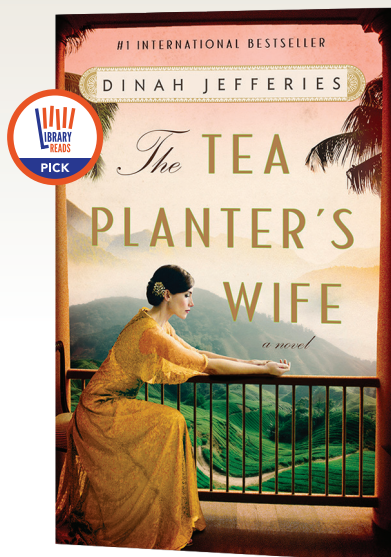
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The author has created a character who is bawdy and soulful, a lovable rogue. An anti-hero you can't help but root for. Do you admire or disapprove of him? How are his actions ever justified? Were you surprised by any complications or conflicts of interest?
2. Like the best historical fiction, the book's themes are as contemporary as breaking news. Income inequality and working class frustrations are consistently in the headlines. How does a historical perspective shed light on these topics?
3. Did the courtroom drama seem reminiscent of those in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Lincoln Lawyer*? How so?
4. Why do Westerns seem as relevant as ever? Do they accurately speak to today's class and racial divides, the standoffs between the privileged and the dispossessed, our preoccupations with good guys versus bad guys?
5. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?



Wanted: Nothin' but cowgirl boots and good ol' cowboy hats at this book club discussion!

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



Dinah Jefferies

The Tea Planter's Wife: A Novel

978-0-451-49597-6 | \$26.00 | Crown | HC
📞 978-0-451-49599-0 | 📄 AD: 978-0-735-28539-2

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Paula McLain, Melanie Benjamin, Beatriz Williams, and Daisy Goodwin.

Recommended for fans of historical love stories and exotic settings.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

In this lush, sexy, atmospheric page-turner, a young Englishwoman, 19-year-old Gwendolyn, marries a rich and seductively mysterious widower, Laurence Hooper, after a whirlwind romance in London. When she joins him at his Ceylon tea plantation, she's certain she'll be the perfect wife and, someday, mother. But life in Ceylon is not what Gwen expected. The plantation workers are resentful, the neighbors and her new sister-in-law, treacherous. But most troubling are the terrible secrets in Laurence's past that soon come to light. Set in rich and exotic 1920s Ceylon, *The Tea Planter's Wife* is an utterly engrossing, compulsive page-turner that climaxes with more than one heartbreaking twist.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who did you think the woman in the prologue was and where did you think she was going? Did your perception of this character change as you read the novel?
2. Discuss Gwen leaving her life behind to live in a tea plantation. Could you see yourself making this drastic lifestyle change?
3. Discuss the issues of race and colonialism in the novel. Do you think racism is a cultural stigma that is learned? The two children in the book get along well and don't care about the color of their skin, do you think this is an argument that racism is not inherited?
4. Discuss the secrets that the characters kept from one another and how they impacted their lives. How could things have been different if the characters told each other the truth? Do you think there are times when hiding a secret is better than telling the truth? Is this decision easier or harder when it's someone you love?



Tea Time: Explore the history of tea production in Sri Lanka paired with a tasting of tea varietals.

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

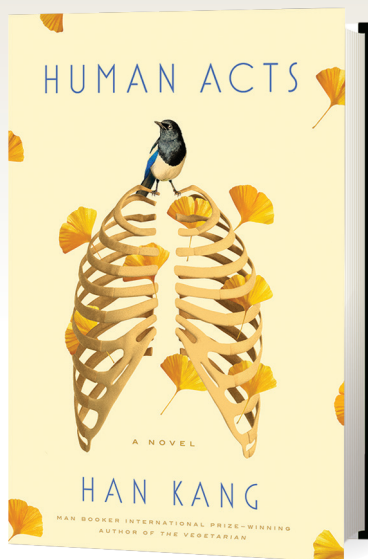
Han Kang

Human Acts: A Novel

978-1-101-90672-9 | \$22.00 | Hogarth | HC
978-1-101-90673-6 | AD: 978-1-524-70800-9

READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of ambitious, elegant novels that focus on matters of love and war, heroism and sacrifice, like *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*, *Snow Hunters*, and *The Surrendered*.



ABOUT THE BOOK:


In the midst of a violent student uprising in South Korea, a young boy named Dong-ho is shockingly killed.

The story of this tragic episode unfolds in a sequence of interconnected chapters as the victims and the bereaved encounter suppression, denial, and the echoing agony of the massacre. From Dong-ho's best friend who meets his own fateful end; to an editor struggling against censorship; and to Dong-ho's own grief-stricken mother; and through their collective heartbreak and acts of hope is the tale of a brutalized people in search of a voice.

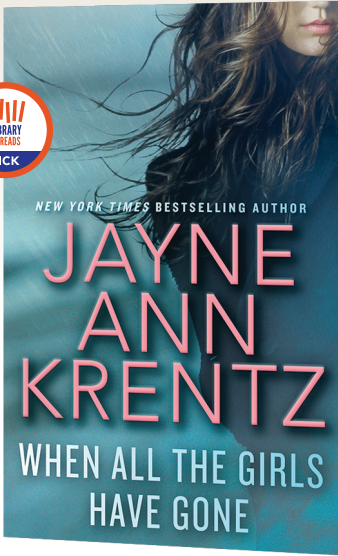
An award-winning, controversial bestseller, *Human Acts* is a timeless, pointillist portrait of an historic event with reverberations still being felt today, by turns tracing the harsh reality of oppression and the resounding, extraordinary poetry of humanity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When Han Kang uses the second person "you," what do you think is the effect? How did you feel being addressed that way as the reader?
2. *Human Acts* is told through multiple perspectives. Which perspective resonated most with you? Why do you think the author chose to tell the story this way?
3. What about this story surprised you most? Why?
4. Though this is set in Korea, it is a globally relevant portrait of friendship and family, war and trauma. How does Kang explore our fundamental need to do what we believe is right? Would you risk everything for those who you love?

 **Country Celebrations:** Discover the sites, sounds, and tastes of South Korea through a series of programs. Include a taste of Korea with some kimchi and Korean barbecue or host a viewing of the PBS documentary *Hidden Korea* to learn more about the setting for *Human Acts*.

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



Jayne Ann Krentz

When All The Girls Have Gone

978-0-399-17449-0 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Berkley | HC
📞 978-0-698-19367-3

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Nora Roberts and Danielle Steel. And for those readers who enjoy thrilling novels of deception, explosive passion, and deadly vengeance like *Devoted in Death* and *Alone in the Dark*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

When Charlotte Sawyer's step-sister, Jocelyn, vanishes, Charlotte joins forces with Max Cutler, a struggling PI who recently moved to Seattle after his previous career as a criminal profiler went down in flames. After surviving a near-fatal attack, Charlotte and Max turn to Jocelyn's closest friends, women in a Seattle-based online investment club, for answers. But what they find is chilling. When her uneasy alliance with Max turns into a full-blown affair, Charlotte has no choice but to trust him with her life. The shadows of Jocelyn's past are threatening to consume her—and anyone else who gets in their way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What qualities did Charlotte and Jocelyn possess that enabled them to transcend their differences and form such a strong bond?
2. Throughout the story several characters confront the fallout of various acts of revenge. Do you think that those who seek revenge always pay a price?
3. The notorious Seattle weather plays an important part in the story. How did the author use it to create atmosphere? To help illustrate the personalities of Charlotte and Max?
4. Do you think Charlotte's advice—that Max should continue to search for answers—was good advice? Or should she have told him to "let it go" and "move on"? What would you have advised?
5. The story is driven by the long shadows cast by secrets from the past; most are long-buried family secrets. What makes those kinds of secrets so fascinating to readers?



It Was a Dark & Stormy Night: Seattle and romantic suspense means dim lights and Dark & Stormy cocktails—they can be virgin, too!

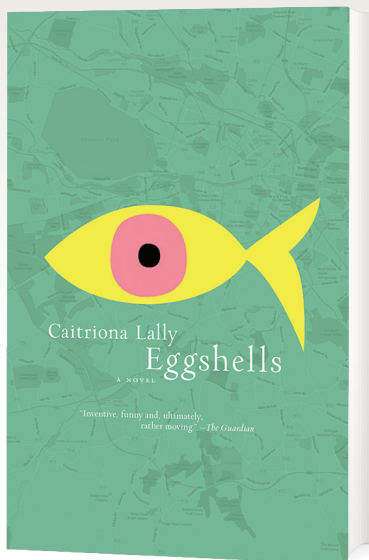
For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Caitriona Lally Eggshells

978-1-61219-597-1 | \$16.99 | Melville House | TR | March
978-1-61219-598-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *A Man Called Ove*.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

A whimsical, touching debut about loneliness, friendship, and hope. Vivian doesn't feel like she fits in, and never has. As a child, her parents told her she was "left by fairies." As an adult, she roams Dublin, seeking her escape route to a better world, the other world her parents told her she came from. And then one day someone named Penelope answers her personal ad "seeking a friend." And from that moment on, Vivian's life begins to change.

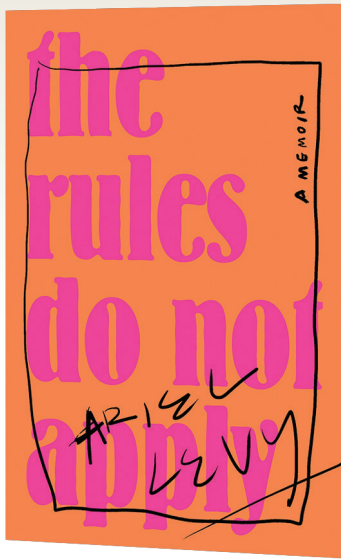
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Vivian makes a lot of lists and plays with word associations and sounds. She also searches through her notebook of lists to look for her own feelings and significance. What insight do we gain into Vivian by the way she plays with language? What do we learn about her character specifically and only through this device?
2. The drawings in the book show not only how visually perceptive Vivian is, but also how abstract she can be. How literally can the reader interpret these images to be her mental maps and shapes?
3. Many moments in the book feel like they honor Irish traditions and lore, like the plaque that Vivian reads: "Near here is the reputed site of the well where St. Patrick baptized many local inhabitants in the 5th century AD." Do you feel like these scenes connect to broader symbolism? What references or allusions stand out?
4. In Greek mythology, Penelope is the wife of Odysseus, and is known for her faithfulness to him while he is on his Odyssey. Do you think the issue of faithfulness is what prompted Vivian to advertise for a friend named Penelope? Do you think she feels she needs a Penelope of her own, because she is on an Odyssey of her own? If not, why might she have preferred this particular name?



Top of the Morning: Enjoy the best Irish snacks while discussing the nuances of Irish writing.

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



Ariel Levy

The Rules Do Not Apply: A Memoir

978-0-8129-9693-7 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Random House | HC | March
978-0-8129-9694-4
AD: 978-0-525-49196-5 | CD: 978-0-525-49195-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

A gorgeous, darkly humorous memoir for readers of Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* about a woman overcoming dramatic loss and finding reinvention—based on this writer's award-winning *New Yorker* article “Thanksgiving in Mongolia.”

ABOUT THE BOOK:

As a young woman Ariel Levy decided that to be a writer would be like being a professional explorer; she'd be free to do and travel anywhere she chose. When, as a 38-year-old working journalist, she left for a reporting trip to Mongolia she thought she had figured out her life: she was married, pregnant, financially secure and successful on her own terms. A month later, none of that was true.

In gorgeous, moving, sharp, unforgettable prose, Levy describes her own ill-fated assumptions: thinking that anything is possible, that the old rules do not apply, that marriage doesn't have to mean monogamy, that aging doesn't have to mean infertility. In telling her own searing story, Levy has captured a portrait of our time, of the shifting forces in American culture, of what has changed and what has remained. And of how to begin again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. “Daring to think that the rules do not apply is the mark of a visionary,” Ariel believes. “It’s also a symptom of narcissism.” Do you agree with her? What are some examples you’ve witnessed of societal or personal progress enabled by someone ignoring or rewriting rules? And when has this kind of thinking rather been an enactment of selfishness or narcissism?
2. What does Ariel mean when she says that “Women of my generation were given the lavish gift of our own agency by feminism”? How do we see that playing out in the choices she makes?
3. Is it significant that Ariel has an affair at exactly the moment when her friends start having children? Why does she do this? What is she trying to prove or avoid?



Ground Rules: Ask group members to write down on strips of paper some “rules” they thought they could avoid. Throw the strips into a hat, and have members select them to spark discussion.

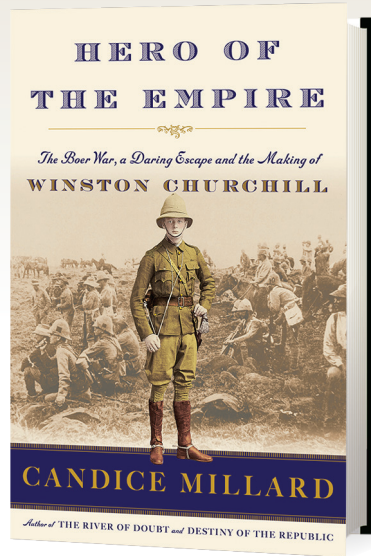
For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Candice Millard

Hero of the Empire: The Boer War, a Daring Escape, and the Making of Winston Churchill

978-0-385-53573-1 | \$30.00/\$40.00C | Doubleday | HC
📞 978-0-385-53574-8 | 📖 AD: 978-0-307-98809-6
📀 CD: 978-0-307-98799-0 | 📻 LP: 978-0-8041-9489-1

READERS' ADVISORY:
For readers of Erik Larson and Hampton Sides.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

At age twenty-four, Winston Churchill was utterly convinced it was his destiny to become prime minister of England one day, despite the fact he had just lost his first election campaign for Parliament. Churchill arrived in South Africa in 1899, valet and crates of vintage wine in tow, there to cover the brutal colonial war the British were fighting with Boer rebels. But just two weeks after his arrival, the soldiers he was accompanying on an armored train were ambushed, and Churchill was taken prisoner. Remarkably, he pulled off a daring escape—but then had to traverse hundreds of miles of enemy territory, alone, with nothing but a crumpled wad of cash, four slabs of chocolate, and his wits to guide him. The story of his escape is incredible enough, but then Churchill enlisted, returned to South Africa, fought in several battles, and ultimately liberated the men with whom he had been imprisoned.

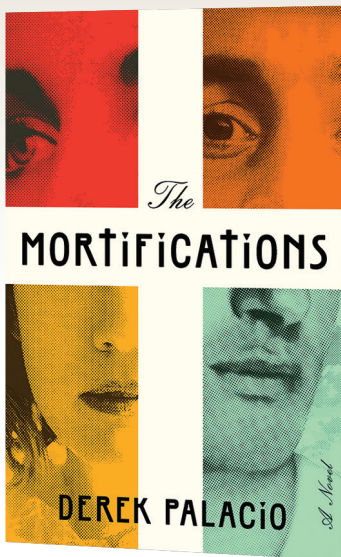
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What were your first impressions of Winston Churchill as a young man? Did you admire his confidence and his “unshakable conviction that he was destined for greatness”?
2. Class plays an important role in Churchill’s exploits during his early life. How does his status as a member of a wealthy, prominent family work for—and against—him?
3. What were your impressions of Jennie Churchill? Did you think she was a modern woman ahead of her time or an opportunist?
4. Did you find the circumstances of Churchill’s escape foolhardy or was Churchill simply taking advantage of what may have been his only chance to escape?
5. *Kidnapped*, *Treasure Island*, *Plato’s Republic*, *Aristotle’s Politics*, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: Are there any books on Churchill’s reading list that you would like to try?



Compare and Contrast: There have been many books written on Winston Churchill. Choose a more traditional biography to read and compare to *Hero of the Empire*.

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



Derek Palacio

The Mortifications:

A Novel

978-1-101-90569-2 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Tim Duggan Books | HC
📞 978-1-10190570-8 | 📄 AD: 978-1-524-70293-9

READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of evocative, international fiction by writers such as Zadie Smith, Rachel Kushner, Marlon James, and Junot Díaz.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

A powerful family saga ... Gorgeous and challenging ... Palacio's writing is deceptively simple and startlingly original, and his characters, raw, almost mythic in scope, hang on long after the last page. Searching, heartbreaking, and achingly beautiful, the novel is as intimate as it is sweeping."—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

In 1980, a rural Cuban family is torn apart during the Mariel Boatlift. Uxbal Encarnación—father, husband, political insurgent—refuses to leave behind the revolutionary ideals and lush tomato farms of his sun-soaked homeland. His wife Soledad takes young Isabel and Ulises hostage and flees with them to America. There, in the long shadow of their estranged patriarch, now just a distant memory, the exiled mother and her children begin a process of growth and transformation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The first line of the novel claims that "Ulises Encarnación did not believe in fate." Does this assertion hold true throughout the rest of the novel or does Ulises come to understand his life as fated? How does the novel explore tensions between free will and fate?
2. How does Soledad's decision to leave Cuba with Ulises and Isabel affect her concept of motherhood? What obligations does she feel toward the children following their relocation, and how is she limited by the choices she's already made? How do the children react to their mother's decision?
3. How does each character understand Cuba in this novel? How is that understanding influenced by their position in the family? Are they all lacking in some way? Do the characters ever truly understand each other's vision of Cuba? Why or why not?



Havana Nights: Armchair travel from the comfort of your meeting with Cubano sandwiches and Afro-Cuban jazz notes. Cigars optional.

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

Allison Pataki Sisi: Empress on Her Own: A Novel

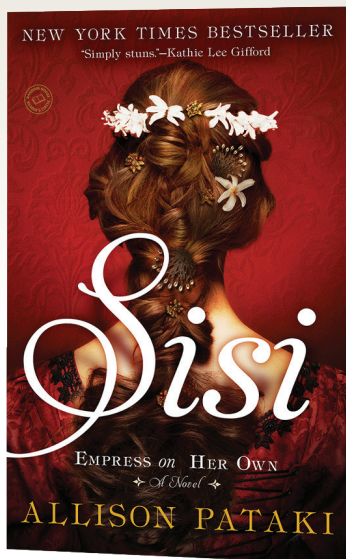
978-0-8129-8933-5 | \$17.00/\$23.00C | Random House | TR

📞 978-0-8129-8906-9

📍 AD: 978-0-399-56692-9

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Philippa Gregory, Paula McLain, and Daisy Goodwin comes a sweeping and powerful novel of historical fiction that tells the little-known story of Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary, the Princess Diana of her time.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Married to Emperor Franz Joseph, Elisabeth—fondly known as Sisi—captures the hearts of her people as their “fairy queen,” but beneath that dazzling persona lives a far more complex figure.

In mid-nineteenth-century Vienna, the halls of the Hofburg Palace buzz not only with imperial waltzes and champagne but with temptations, rivals, and cutthroat intrigue. Feeling stifled by strict protocols and a turbulent marriage, Sisi grows restless. She finds solace at her estate outside Budapest. There she rides her beloved horses and enjoys visits from the Hungarian statesman Count Andrassy, the man with whom she’s unwittingly fallen in love. But tragic news brings Sisi out of her fragile seclusion, forcing her to return to her capital and a world of gossip, envy, and sorrow where a dangerous fate lurks in the shadows.

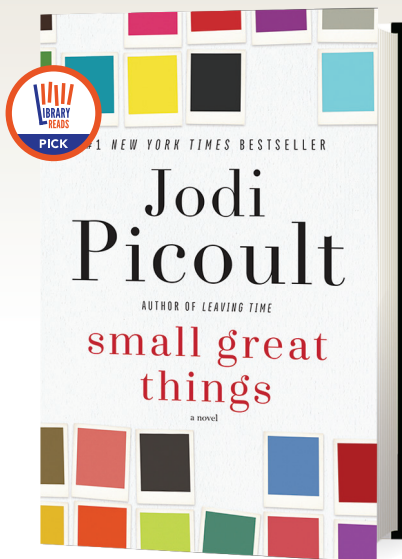
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The Habsburg family is perhaps most known for being the family to start World War I when its heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated in Sarajevo. But the world did not simply erupt into a global conflict over night. What signs do we see throughout this novel that a major international crisis is looming?
2. The opening quotes of this novel are Sisi explaining why she is such a compulsive traveler. What significance does travel play in Sisi’s life throughout this novel? What are some other forms of escape, literal or symbolic, for the empress?
3. Discuss the three great love interests of Sisi’s life—Franz Joseph, Julius Andrassy, and Bay Middleton. How do they each treat her differently? How does Sisi behave differently with each of them? Was any one of them the one true love of Sisi’s life?



Sweeten Them Up: Tempt your guests with Apfelstrudel (Apple Strudel), the favorite dessert of Empress Sisi and Crown Prince Rudolf. It is considered to be the national dish of Austria.

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



Jodi Picoult

Small Great Things:

A Novel

978-0-345-54495-7 | \$28.99 | Ballantine Books | HC
978-0-345-81338-1 | \$32.00C | Random House Canada
📞 978-0-345-54496-4
📍 AD: 978-0-735-21020-2 | 📍 CD: 978-0-735-21019-6

READERS' ADVISORY:

“[Picoult] offers a thought-provoking examination of racism in America today, both overt and subtle. . . . readers will find much to discuss in the pages of this topical, moving book.”
—*Booklist*, starred review

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than twenty years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene?

With incredible empathy, intelligence, and candor, Jodi Picoult tackles race, privilege, prejudice, justice, and compassion—and doesn't offer easy answers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the three main characters (Ruth, Turk, or Kennedy) do you most relate to and why? Think about what you have in common with the other two characters as well—how can you relate to them?
2. The title of the book comes from the Martin Luther King, Jr. quote that Ruth's mother mentions: "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." What does this quote mean to you? What are some examples of small great things done by the characters in the novel?
3. Kennedy seeks out a neighborhood in which she is the only white person to help her gain some perspective. Can you think of an example of a time when something about your identity made you an outsider? How were you affected by that experience?



Diversify Your Bookshelf: Propose that your next read be by an author whose background is different from your own. Ask members to share book and author suggestions, and put it to a vote.

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

Emily Ruskovich

Idaho: A Novel

978-0-8129-9404-9 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Random House | HC
978-0-8129-9405-6
AD: 978-1-524-72382-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

O. Henry Prize-winner Emily Ruskovich tells the story of a woman piecing together the mystery of what happened to a family—a debut novel that is perfect for readers of Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge*, Marilynne Robinson, Louise Erdrich, and Annie Proulx.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Ann and Wade have carved out a life for themselves from a rugged terrain in northern Idaho, where they are bound together by more than love. With her husband's memory fading, Ann attempts to piece together the truth of what happened to Wade's first wife, Jenny, and to their daughters. In a story written in exquisite prose and told from multiple perspectives—including Ann, Wade, and Jenny, now in prison—we gradually learn of the mysterious and shocking act that fractured Wade and Jenny's lives, of the love and compassion that brought Ann and Wade together, and of the memories that reverberate through the lives of every character in *Idaho*.

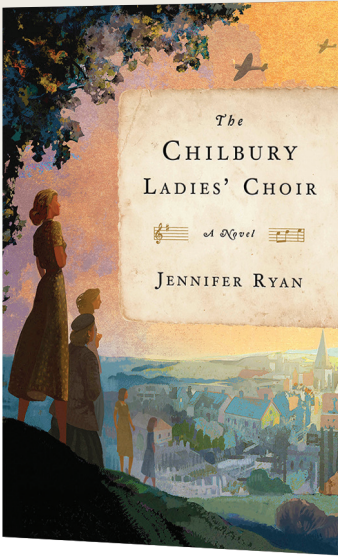
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Though at the novel's center is an act of shocking violence, this is also a story about many different kinds of love. What are these various forms of love? What role does love play in this novel, and how does love contribute to the feelings you are left with in the end?
2. When Wade's memory begins to fail, Ann endures humiliation and physical pain because of his actions, which, to someone outside of the relationship, would look like domestic abuse. Discuss the ways in which she copes with these episodes. How does Ann interpret these acts of violence, and what does that say about her as a character? Did you feel nervous and uncomfortable about the fine line she is walking between her love and her safety?
3. What are other examples of sacrifice in this novel?
4. What role does art play in this story? Consider music, painting, and poetry. How do you understand Tom Clark's motivations?



Location, Location, Location: Ann learns the history of Idaho's name. Have members share unexpected tidbits about the history of their home states, cities, or towns.

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



Jennifer Ryan

The Chilbury Ladies' Choir: A Novel

978-1-101-90675-0 | \$26.00/\$33.00C | Crown | HC
● 978-1-101-90676-7
📻 AD: 978-1-524-72137-4 | 📻 CD: 978-1-524-72136-7
📻 LP: 978-1-524-75189-0

READERS' ADVISORY:

Perfect for readers who love warm-hearted WWII novels like *The Nightingale*, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, and *The Postmistress*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

The *Chilbury Ladies' Choir* tells the stories in letters and journals of five members of a female-only choir in an English village in Kent during World War II. Initially shuttered, as all its men had gone off to war, the choir resurrects itself as a “ladies group” when a charismatic music teacher emboldens the village’s women to carry on singing in the name of national pride and wartime effort. The story moves effortlessly from village intrigue to heartbreaking matters of life and death, and we come to know the home-front struggles of five charismatic members of this unforgettable outfit. In turns funny, charming, and heart-wrenching, this lovingly executed ensemble novel illuminates the true strength of women on the home front in a village of indomitable spirit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are there any recurrent symbols throughout the book? Why do you think they were chosen?
2. Are there any allusions to other books or plays hidden throughout? What are they, and why are they relevant?
3. What impact did the war have on women, work, and society? How do you think women’s equality has progressed since the Second World War?
4. And now, a show of hands: did you shed a few tears while reading *Chilbury*? Be honest now, there are some sad and very moving parts. Which did you find most heartrending, and why?



Pitch Perfect: Attend a choir concert at a local school or church.

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

Will Schwalbe Books for Living

978-0-385-35354-0 | \$25.95/\$34.95C | Knopf | HC

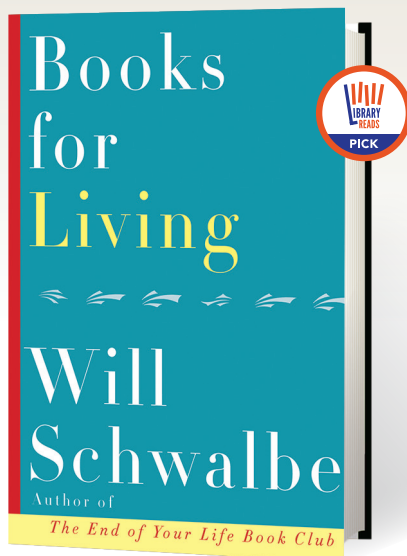
📞 978-0-385-35355-7

📍 AD: 978-0-553-39813-7 | 📍 CD: 978-0-553-54619-4

📍 LP: 978-1-5247-5700-7

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of *The End of Your Life Book Club*,
How Reading Changed My Life,
and *My Reading Life*.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Why is it that we read? Is it to pass time? To learn something new? To escape from reality? For Will Schwalbe, reading is a way to entertain himself but also to make sense of the world, to become a better person, and to find the answers to the big (and small) questions about how to live his life. In this delightful celebration of reading, Schwalbe invites us along on his quest for books that speak to the specific challenges of living in our modern world, with all its noise and distractions. In each chapter, he discusses a particular book—what brought him to it (or vice versa), the people in his life he associates with it, and how it became a part of his understanding of himself in the world. These books span centuries and genres (from classic works of adult and children’s literature to contemporary thrillers and even cookbooks), and each one relates to the questions and concerns we all share. Rich with stories and recommendations, *Books for Living* is a treasure for everyone who loves books and loves to hear the answer to the question: “What are you reading?”

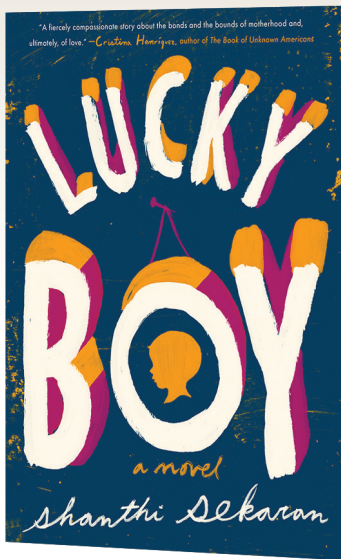
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the significance of the George R. R. Martin epigraph that opens *Books for Living*. How does it set the tone for the book?
2. In “Searching,” Schwalbe discusses his appreciation for *Stuart Little* after rereading it as an adult. Have you ever returned to a book from your childhood or adolescence? If so, how did your feelings toward the book evolve? Did it gain new meaning for you?
3. Discuss the idea of trust in relation to a book’s narration, per Schwalbe’s discussion of *The Girl on the Train*. What books have twisted your expectations because of narrative voice or voices? How does the idea of the “unreliable narrator” reflect greater truths about the subjectivity of human experience?



Name Your Favorites: Have members choose a book that means something to them and present to the group, sharing how it helped to guide them through a challenge in their life.

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



Shanthi Sekaran

Lucky Boy

978-1-101-98224-2 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Putnam | HC

📞 978-1-101-98225-9

📍 AD 978-1-524-70303-5 | 📻 CD 978-1-524-70302-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Janice Y. K. Lee, Meg Wolitzer, and Junot Díaz. And for book clubs looking for provocative, moving fiction like *The Book of Unknown Americans* and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Soli embarks on a journey across the US/Mexican border and weeks later she arrives on her cousin's doorstep in California, pregnant. Kavya Reddy unexpectedly desires to have a child in her mid-thirties. When she can't get pregnant, it will test her marriage, her sanity, and it will set Kavya and her husband on a collision course with Soli, when she is detained and her infant son comes under Kavya's care. As Kavya learns to be a mother she builds her love on a fault line, her heart wrapped around someone else's child. *Lucky Boy* is an emotional journey that will leave you certain of the redemptive beauty of this world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The narrative alternates between Soli and Kavya. Did you relate to one woman more than the other? If so, why?
2. Soli travels to America riding on La Bestia, while Kavya's family arrived by more traditional means. How does this novel portray privileged versus unprivileged immigration? Do you feel differently about immigration after reading this book?
3. Discuss how the novel explores motherhood. What are some key differences between the way that Soli thinks of motherhood and the way Kavya does? In what ways is motherhood the same for both women?
4. As Soli plans to become a housekeeper in California, she remembers her father telling her that "servitude lives in the heart." How does the novel portray class stratification? Does race play a role in these class divides?
5. How did you feel about the ending? Were you surprised? Do you think Soli should have made a different choice?



Made With Love: Nothing says nurture more than comfort food. Have members bring the foods that comfort them most.

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

Marisa Silver

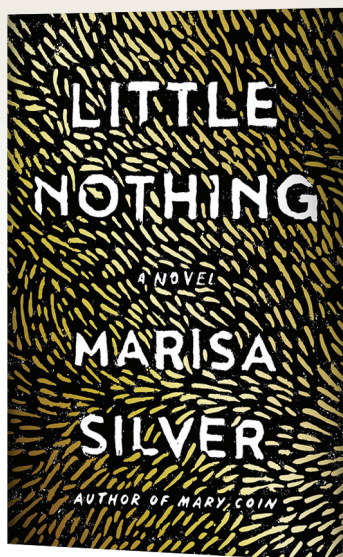
Little Nothing

978-0-399-16792-8 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Blue Rider Press | HC
978-0-698-14680-8

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Sara Gruen and Jeffrey Eugenides.

A stunning, provocative new novel from
New York Times bestselling author Marisa Silver.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

At the beginning of the last century, Pavla is born to peasant parents. Her arrival stuns her parents and brings outrage and disgust from her community. Pavla has been born a dwarf and, as the years pass, she grows no further than the edge of her crib. When her parents turn to the treatments of a local doctor and freak sideshow proprietor, his terrifying cure opens the floodgates of persecution for Pavla. With a cast of remarkable characters, a wholly shocking and original story, and extraordinary, page-turning prose, Silver delivers a novel of sheer electricity.

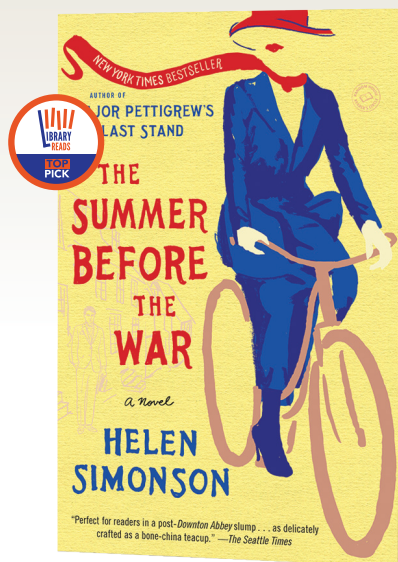
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a baby, Pavla acquires many pet names, from the affectionate to the derogatory. How does the town's perception of Pavla change during her childhood? How does her family's?
2. Wolves, dwarves, clocks. These are images we see in some of literature's most popular fairy tales and folklore. How does *Little Nothing* play with this storytelling tradition?
3. "Look at yourself. What do you see?" he says. She stares into the glass. "Nothing . . . I'm not here," she says. What do you think Pavla means when she says "I'm not here?" How might this tie into the themes of identity and nothingness that appear throughout the whole book?
4. Pavla finds the wolfpack, Markus finds Danilo. How do the surrogate families these characters create compare to those they've been born into?
5. Love, loyalty, transformation, parenthood. Which of these do you feel *Little Nothing* is most about?



It's Greek to Me: Create a literary folk tale setting inspired by famous mythology, legend, and *Little Nothing*.

For more discussion questions visit: PenguinRandomHouse.com



Helen Simonson

The Summer Before the War:

A Novel

978-0-8129-8320-3 | \$17.00 | Random House | TR
978-0-385-67708-0 | \$22.00C | Anchor Canada
📞 978-0-679-64464-4 | 📍 AD: 978-1-101-88860-5
📍 CD: 978-1-101-88859-9 | 📧 LP: 978-0-451-48211-2

READERS' ADVISORY:

The bestselling author of *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* returns with a breathtaking novel of love on the eve of World War I—perfect for readers of *At the Water's Edge*, and “a novel to cure your *Downton Abbey* withdrawal.” (*The Washington Post*)

ABOUT THE BOOK:

East Sussex, Summer 1914. Hugh Grange, down from his medical studies, is visiting his Aunt Agatha in the small, idyllic coastal town of Rye. Agatha has just risked her carefully built reputation by pushing for the appointment of a woman to replace the Latin master.

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

But just as Beatrice comes alive to the beauty of the landscape and the colorful characters who populate Rye, the perfect summer is about to end. Soon the limits of progress will be tested as this small Sussex town and its inhabitants go to war.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. An important subject in *The Summer Before the War* is women's lives: their role and limits, and how women work within and against Edwardian strictures. Do you think we can take any modern lessons from these women's lives?
2. Beatrice and Celeste both idolize their fathers. However, are they both betrayed? Do all of the characters place too much trust in father figures? Do you think this a useful metaphor for England as it goes to war?
3. Why do we love the Edwardian era so much? Is it the gentility and supposed innocence of the age? Does this attraction remain for you after reading *The Summer Before the War*?
4. The author has said she thinks the whole world can be explained in a small town. Did she succeed at that in this book?



Set the Table: Host an Edwardian dinner party—white tablecloth, napkins folded in the Bishop's Miter style, flower centerpiece, candlesticks, the works!

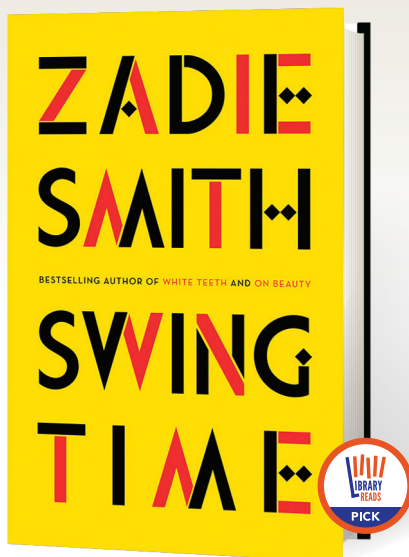
For more discussion questions visit: [PenguinRandomHouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)

Zadie Smith Swing Time

978-1-594-20398-5 | \$27.00 | Penguin Press | HC
978-0-399-56431-4
AD: 978-0-735-20564-2 | CD: 978-0-735-20563-5
LP: 978-1-524-72319-4

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of novels like *Americanah* and *Minaret* that encompass all the major social and political issues du jour: race, nationality, freedom of express, place, and class.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Two brown girls dream of being dancers—but only one, Tracey, has talent. The other has ideas: about rhythm and time, about black bodies and black music, what constitutes a tribe, or makes a person truly free. It's a close but complicated childhood friendship that ends abruptly in their early twenties, never to be revisited, but never quite forgotten, either. Dazzlingly energetic and deeply human, *Swing Time* is a story about friendship and music and stubborn roots, about how we are shaped by these things and how we can survive them. Moving from North-West London to West Africa, it is an exuberant dance to the music of time.

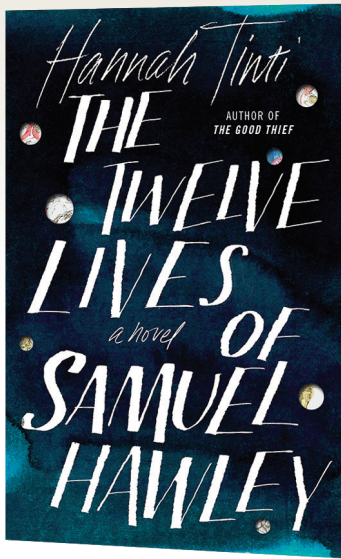
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The author has captured the world of prepubescence, with all its unwritten rites, rules, and frank sexuality. Can you relate to any of the societal expectations or adolescent hierarchies explored through Tracey and our narrator?
2. *Swing Time* captures the delicate intersections of class and race. How do the characters navigate their biracial experiences and identity? For Tracey, did her class or race seem to give her any advantages over our narrator? Were there passages that struck you as particularly insightful, even profound?
3. The narrator is not simply telling us a story; at various moments she informs us that she is remembering everything and "writing it all down." Unnamed, unsure, neither black nor white, the narrator is fittingly indistinct. How does this affect the readers' impression and opinion of her? What is the illusion of self?



Dance the Night Away: A chance for music and dancing. Create a *Swing Time*-inspired playlist for your meeting.

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



Hannah Tinti

The Twelve Lives of Samuel Hawley:

A Novel

978-0-8129-8988-5 | \$27.00/\$34.00C | The Dial Press | HC | March
978-0-8129-8989-2 | LP: 978-1-524-75638-3

READERS' ADVISORY:

A father protects his daughter from the legacy of his past—and the truth about her mother's death—in this thrilling new novel from the prize-winning author of *The Good Thief*. Perfect for readers of *The Goldfinch*, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, and *Life After Life*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

After years spent living on the run, Samuel Hawley moves with his teenage daughter, Loo, to Olympus, Massachusetts. There, in his late wife's hometown, Hawley finds work as a fisherman, while Loo struggles to fit in at school and grows curious about her mother's mysterious death. Haunting them both are twelve scars Hawley carries on his body, from twelve bullets in his criminal past—a past that eventually spills over into his daughter's present, until together they must face a reckoning yet to come.

Both a coming-of-age novel and a literary thriller, *The Twelve Lives of Samuel Hawley* explores what it means to be a hero, and the cost we pay to protect the people we love most.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The central relationship in this story is the one between Samuel Hawley and his daughter, Loo. In what ways are they similar, and in what ways are they different? How do Hawley and Loo evoke the special bond between fathers and daughters?
2. So much of this story begins at the "Greasy Pole." What did you like about this particular chapter? How does it color your understanding of the distinctive town of Olympus, Massachusetts? How does it shift your perspective of Hawley, as a father, and as a man?
3. Discuss the theme of secrets. What are the secrets that drive the action of the novel? How do secrets bring characters together? How do they drive them apart?
4. So many great stories are founded on the distinction between heroes and villains, but in this novel, the line between the two is not so easily discernable. Who do you feel are the heroes of this story? And who are the villains? How did this novel make you rethink how you define good and evil?



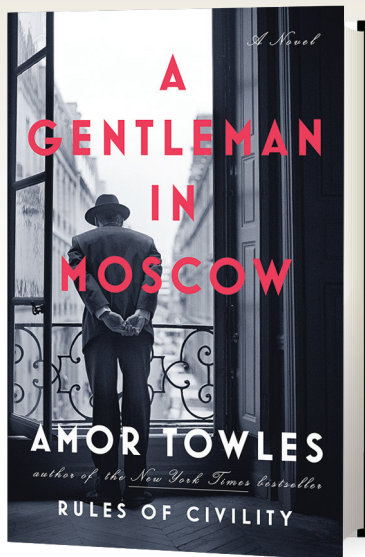
Memento: Hawley carries with him physical reminders of his past. Share with the group a memento that has helped you keep the memory of a person or event close to you at all times.

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

Amor Towles A Gentleman in Moscow: A Novel

978-0-670-02619-7 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Viking | HC
978-0-399-56404-8
AD: 978-0-735-28855-3 | CD: 978-0-735-28854-6
LP: 978-1-524-70869-6

READERS' ADVISORY:
For readers of *Rules of Civility*, and fans of stylish
and sophisticated historical fiction.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

A *Gentleman in Moscow* immerses us in an elegantly drawn era with the story of Count Alexander Rostov. When, in 1922, he is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, the Count is sentenced to house arrest in The Metropol, a grand hotel. Rostov has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Brimming with humor, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the Count's endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose.

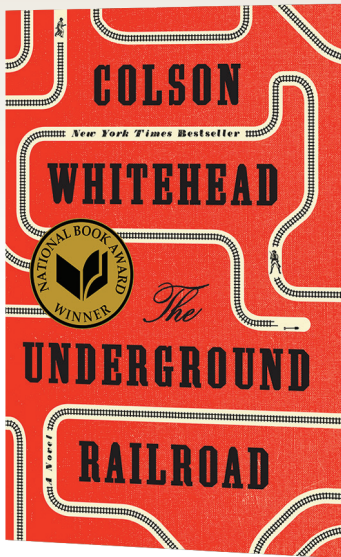
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Count Rostov loses one way of life and has to invent another. How does the Count manage to maintain his dignity and his passion for life, after being stripped of everything he had known?
2. Human connection is an important theme in *A Gentleman in Moscow*; the Count ends up having close, life-changing relationships with many people who work in the Metropol. What is the role of friendship in the novel?
3. The count must live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. How does Towles bring these outside events into the novel?



Nostrovia!: Transport your book club to the Metropol with traditional Russian delicacies and Moscow Mules.

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



Colson Whitehead

The Underground Railroad: A Novel

978-0-385-54236-4 | \$26.95/\$34.95C | Doubleday | HC

● 978-0-385-53704-9

📍 AD: 978-1-524-73628-6 | 📍 CD: 978-1-524-73627-9

📖 LP: 978-1-524-73630-9

READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Anthony Doerr.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

A magnificent, wrenching, thrilling tour de force chronicling a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Like the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey—hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. *The Underground Railroad* is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the depiction of slavery in *The Underground Railroad* compare to other depictions in literature and film?
2. The scenes on Randall's plantation are horrific—how did the writing affect you as a reader?
3. In North Carolina, institutions like doctor's offices and museums that were supposed to help 'black uplift' were corrupt and unethical. How do Cora's challenges in North Carolina mirror what America is still struggling with today?
4. How does the state-by-state structure impact your reading process? Does it remind you of any other works of literature?
5. Why do you think the author chose to portray a literal railroad? How did this aspect of magical realism impact your concept of how the real underground railroad worked?



Literal vs. Magical Realism: Screen a movie such as *12 Years a Slave* and compare a literal depiction of slavery against the magical realism used in *The Underground Railroad*.

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

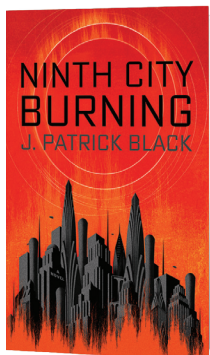


Katherine Arden
The Bear and the Nightingale: A Novel

978-1-101-88593-2 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Del Rey | HC
 978-1-101-88594-9 | AD: 978-0-399-56718-6

For readers of Naomi Novik’s *Uprooted*, Erin Morgenstern’s *The Night Circus*, and Neil Gaiman’s myth-rich fantasies comes a magical debut—inspired by Russian fairy tales—about a young woman whose family is threatened by forces both real and fantastical.

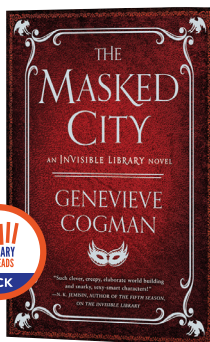
“Utterly bewitching . . . an immersive, earthy story of folk magic, faith, and hubris, peopled with vivid, dynamic characters, particularly clever, brave Vasya, who outsmarts men and demons alike to save her family.” —*Booklist*, starred review



J. Patrick Black
Ninth City Burning

978-1-101-99144-2 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Ace | HC
 978-1-101-99145-9
 AD: 978-0-735-20928-2

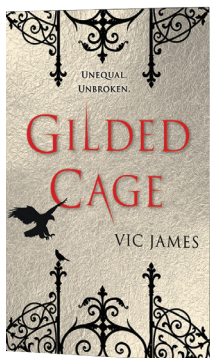
Entire cities disappeared in the blink of an eye, leaving nothing but dust and rubble. When an alien race came to make Earth theirs, they brought with them a weapon we had no way to fight. It seemed nothing could stop it—until we discovered we could wield the power too. Five hundred years later, the Earth is locked in a grinding war of attrition. Civilization revolves around supporting the Legion to take on the aliens. Those who refused to support the war have been exiled to the wilds of a ruined Earth. But the enemy’s tactics are shifting. As a terrible new onslaught threatens the end of our world, heroes will rise from unlikely quarters . . . and fight back.



Genevieve Cogman
The Masked City

978-1-101-98866-4 | \$16.00/\$22.00C | Roc | TR
 978-1-101-98867-1

Librarian-spy Irene collects important fiction for the mysterious Library at her post in an alternate Victorian London. But when her apprentice, Kai—a dragon of royal descent—is kidnapped by the Fae, her carefully crafted undercover operation begins to crumble. Kai’s abduction could incite a conflict between the forces of chaos and order that would devastate all worlds and all dimensions, and it’s up to Irene to travel to a strange alternate version of Venice to make sure the catastrophic war never starts. But to ward off Armageddon and save her friend, Irene might have to sacrifice everything she holds dear.

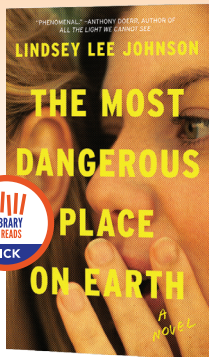


Vic James
Gilded Cage

978-0-425-28415-5 | \$20.00/\$27.00C | Del Rey | HC
 978-0-425-28413-1 | AD: 978-1-524-72299-9

For readers of Victoria Aveyard and Kiera Cass comes a darkly fantastical debut set in a modern England where magically gifted aristocrats rule—and commoners are doomed to serve.

“Brisk plotting, sympathetic characters, and plenty of intrigue will keep readers on the edges of their seats, eager for the next book in a very promising series.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



Lindsey Lee Johnson The Most Dangerous Place on Earth: A Novel

978-0-8129-9727-9 | \$27.00/\$36.00C | Random House | HC
 978-0-8129-9728-6 | ♻️ AD: 978-0-451-48401-7 | ♻️ CD: 978-0-451-48400-0

A debut novel for readers of *Everything I Never Told You* and *Prep*, which unleashes a colorful cast of characters into one of the world’s most dangerous places: The American high school.

“In sharp and assured prose, roving among characters, Lindsey Lee Johnson plumbs the terrifying depths of a half-dozen ultraprivileged California high school kids. . . . a compassionate *Less Than Zero* for the digital age.”

—Anthony Doerr, bestselling author of *All the Light We Cannot See*



Justine Larbalestier My Sister Rosa

978-1-61695-674-5 | \$18.99/\$21.99C | Soho Teen | HC
 978-1-61695-675-2

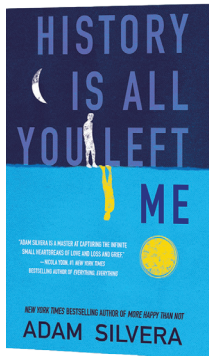
A dark young adult thriller about a ten-year-old psychopath and her brother’s mission to keep her safe—and the world safe from her. Seventeen-year-old Aussie Che Taylor loves his little sister, Rosa, but he’s also certain she’s a psychopath: literally, clinically, and dangerously. She hasn’t hurt a person yet, but her clever manipulations have Che convinced that it’s only a matter of time. Until now he has always protected Rosa from the world. But as her complex and disturbing games ratchet up, he must act to protect their world from her.



Phoebe Robinson You Can’t Touch My Hair: And Other Things I Still Have to Explain

978-0-143-12920-2 | \$16.00/\$22.00C | Plume | TR
 978-0-143-12921-9
 ♻️ AD: 978-1-524-73561-6

Phoebe Robinson is a stand-up comic and, as a black woman in America, she asserts that sometimes you *need* to have a sense of humor to deal with the nonsense you are handed every day. Robinson has been questioned about her love of U2 and Billy Joel (“isn’t that . . . white people music?”); she’s been called “uppity” for having an opinion in the workplace; she’s been followed around stores by security guards; and yes, people do ask her whether they can touch her hair *all the time*. *You Can’t Touch My Hair* is an utterly modern essay collection: one that examines our cultural climate and skewers our biases, all told from Robinson’s singularly witty point of view.



Adam Silvera History is All You Left Me

978-1-61695-692-9 | \$18.99/\$21.99C | Soho Teen | HC
 978-1-61695-693-6

For fans of unreliable narrators; and readers of Andrew Smith, David Arnold, John Corey Whaley, and Jandy Nelson. In this explosive new novel from Adam Silvera, author of the electrifying *More Happy Than Not*, an unreliable narrator embarks on a destructive relationship in the wake of a tragic death.

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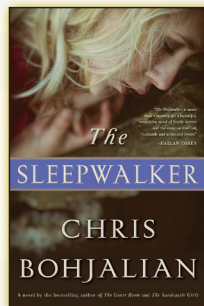
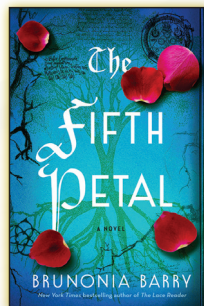
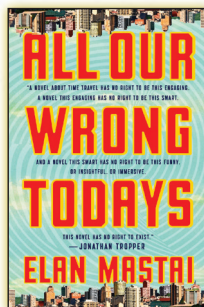
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