

2026 BOOK CLUB SELECTIONS

Almond: A Novel by Won-pyung Sohn

Thursday, January 29, 2026

This story is, in short, about a monster meeting another monster.

One of the monsters is me.

Yunjae was born with a brain condition called Alexithymia that makes it hard for him to feel emotions like fear or anger. He does not have friends—the two almond-shaped neurons located deep in his brain have seen to that—but his devoted mother and grandmother provide him with a safe and content life. Their little home above his mother's used bookstore is decorated with colorful Post-it notes that remind him when to smile, when to say "thank you," and when to laugh.

Then on Christmas Eve—Yunjae's sixteenth birthday—everything changes. A shocking act of random violence shatters his world, leaving him alone and on his own. Struggling to cope with his loss, Yunjae retreats into silent isolation, until troubled teenager Gon arrives at his school, and they develop a surprising bond.

As Yunjae begins to open his life to new people—including a girl at school—something slowly changes inside him. And when Gon suddenly finds his life at risk, Yunjae will have the chance to step outside of every comfort zone he has created to perhaps become the hero he never thought he would be.

A different Kind of Power: A memoir by Jacinda Ardern

Thursday, February 26, 2026

What if we could redefine leadership? What if kindness came first? Jacinda Ardern grew up the daughter of a police officer in small-town New Zealand, but as the 40th Prime Minister of her country, she commanded global respect for her empathetic leadership that put people first. This is the remarkable story of how a Mormon girl plagued by self-doubt made political history and changed our assumptions of what a global leader can be.

When Jacinda Ardern became Prime Minister at age thirty-seven, the world took notice. But it was her compassionate yet powerful response to the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks, resulting in swift and sweeping gun control laws, that demonstrated her remarkable leadership. She guided her country through unprecedented challenges—a volcanic eruption, a major biosecurity breach, and a global pandemic—while advancing visionary new policies to address climate change, reduce child poverty, and secure historic

international trade deals. She did all this while juggling first-time motherhood in the public eye.

Ardern exemplifies a new kind of leadership—proving that leaders can be caring, empathetic, and effective. She has become a global icon, and now she is ready to share her story, from the struggles to the surprises, including for the first time the full details of her decision to step down during her sixth year as Prime Minister.

Through her personal experiences and reflections, Jacinda is a model for anyone who has ever doubted themselves, or has aspired to lead with compassion, conviction, and courage. *A Different Kind of Power* is more than a political memoir; it's an insight into how it feels to lead, ultimately asking: What if you, too, are capable of more than you ever imagined?

How to Read a Book: A Novel by Monica Wood

Thursday, March 26, 2026

Our Reasons meet us in the morning and whisper to us at night. Mine is an innocent, unsuspecting, eternally sixty-one-year-old woman named Lorraine Daigle...

Violet Powell, a twenty-two-year-old from rural Abbott Falls, Maine, is being released from prison after serving twenty-two months for a drunk-driving crash that killed a local kindergarten teacher.

Harriet Larson, a retired English teacher who runs the prison book club, is facing the unsettling prospect of an empty nest.

Frank Daigle, a retired machinist, hasn't yet come to grips with the complications of his marriage to the woman Violet killed.

When the three encounter each other one morning in a bookstore in Portland—Violet to buy the novel she was reading in the prison book club before her release, Harriet to choose the next title for the women who remain, and Frank to dispatch his duties as the store handyman—their lives begin to intersect in transformative ways.

How to Read a Book is an unsparingly honest and profoundly hopeful story about letting go of guilt, seizing second chances, and the power of books to change our lives. With the heart, wit, grace, and depth of understanding that has characterized her work, Monica Wood illuminates the decisions that define a life and the kindnesses that make life worth living.

Encampment: Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community by Maggie Helwig
Thursday, April 30, 2026

An activist priest provides sanctuary for an encampment of unhoused people in her churchyard

The housing crisis plaguing major urban centres has sent countless people into the streets. In spring 2022, some of them found their way to the yard beside the Anglican church in Toronto's Kensington Market, where Maggie Helwig is the priest. They pitched tents, formed an encampment, and settled in. Known as an outspoken social justice activist, Helwig has spent the last three years getting to know the residents and fighting tooth and nail to allow them to stay, battling various authorities that want to clear the yard and keep the results of the housing crisis out of sight and out of mind.

Encampment tells the story of Helwig's life-long activism as preparation for her fight to keep her churchyard open to people needing a home. More importantly, it introduces us to the Artist, to Jeff, and to Robin: their lives, their challenges, their humanity. It confronts our society's callousness in allowing so many to go unhoused and demands, by bringing their stories to the fore, that we begin to respond with compassion and grace.

The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife by Anna Johnston
Thursday, May 28, 2026

"Would you mind terribly, old boy, if I borrowed the rest of your life? I promise I'll take excellent care of it."

Frederick Fife was born with an extra helping of kindness in his heart. If he borrowed your car, he'd return it washed with a full tank of gas. The problem is, at age eighty-two, there's nobody left in Fred's life to borrow from, and he's broke and on the brink of eviction. But Fred's luck changes when he's mistaken for Bernard Greer, a missing resident at the local nursing home, and takes his place. Now Fred has warm meals in his belly and a roof over his head—as long as his look-alike Bernard never turns up.

Denise Simms is stuck breathing the same disappointing air again and again. A middle-aged mom and caregiver at Bernard's facility, her crumbling marriage and daughter's health concerns are suffocating her joy for life. Wounded by her two-faced husband, she vows never to let a man deceive her again.

As Fred walks in Bernard's shoes, he leaves a trail of kindness behind him, fueling Denise's suspicions about his true identity. When unexpected truths are revealed, Fred and Denise rediscover their sense of purpose and learn how to return a broken life to mint condition.

Bittersweet and remarkably perceptive, *The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife* is a hilarious, feel-good, clever novel about grief, forgiveness, redemption, and finding family.

Forest Euphoria: The Abounding Queerness of Nature - Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian
Thursday, June 25, 2026

Growing up, Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian felt most at home in the swamps and culverts near her house in the Hudson Valley. A child who frequently felt out of place, too much of one thing or not enough of another, she found acceptance in these settings, among other amphibious beings. In snakes, snails, and, above all, fungi, she saw her own developing identities as a queer, neurodivergent person reflected back at her—and in them, too, she found a personal path to a life of science.

In *Forest Euphoria*, Kaishian shows us this making of a scientist and introduces readers to the queerness of all the life around us. Fungal species, we learn, commonly encompass more than two biological sexes—and some as many as twenty-three thousand. Some intersex slugs mutually fire calcium carbonate “love darts” at each other during courtship. Glass eels are sexually undetermined until their last year of life, a mystery that scientists once dubbed “the eel question.” Nature, Kaishian shows us, is filled with the unusual, the overlooked, and the marginalized—and they have lessons for us all.

Wide-ranging, richly observant, and full of surprises, *Forest Euphoria* will open your eyes and change how you look at the world.

Finding Flora by Elinor Florence
Thursday, September 24, 2026

Scottish newcomer Flora Craigie jumps from a moving train in 1905 to escape her abusive husband. Desperate to disappear, she claims a homestead on the beautiful but wild Alberta prairie, determined to create a new life for herself. She is astonished to find that her nearest neighbours are also female: a Welsh widow with three children; two American women raising chickens; and a Métis woman who supports herself by training wild horses.

While battling both the brutal environment and the local cynicism toward female farmers, the five women with their very different backgrounds struggle to find common ground. But when their homes are threatened with expropriation by a hostile government, they join

forces to “fire the heather,” a Scottish term meaning to raise a ruckus. To complicate matters, there are signs that Flora’s violent husband is still hunting for her. And as the competition for free land along the new Canadian Pacific Railway line heats up, an unscrupulous land agent threatens not only Flora’s livelihood, but her very existence.

The Exvangelicals: Loving, Living, and Leaving the White Evangelical Church by Sarah McCammon

Thursday, October 29, 2026

Growing up in a deeply evangelical family in the Midwest in the ‘80s and ‘90s, Sarah McCammon was strictly taught to fear God, obey him, and not question the faith. Persistently worried that her gay grandfather would go to hell unless she could reach him, or that her Muslim friend would need to be converted, and that she, too, would go to hell if she did not believe fervently enough, McCammon was a rule-follower and—most of the time—a true believer. But through it all, she was increasingly plagued by fears and deep questions as the belief system she’d been carefully taught clashed with her expanding understanding of the outside world.

After spending her early adult life striving to make sense of an unraveling worldview, by her 30s, she found herself face-to-face with it once again as she covered the Trump campaign for NPR, where she witnessed first-hand the power and influence that evangelical Christian beliefs held on the political right.

Sarah also came to discover that she was not alone: she is among a rising generation of the children of evangelicalism who are growing up and fleeing the fold, who are thinking for themselves and deconstructing what feel like the “alternative facts” of their childhood.

Rigorously reported and deeply personal, *The Exvangelicals* is the story of the people who make up this generational tipping point, including Sarah herself. Part memoir, part investigative journalism, this is the first definitive book that names and describes the post-evangelical movement: identifying its origins, telling the stories of its members, and examining its vast cultural, social, and political impact.

The Last Garden in England by Julia Kelly

Thursday, November 26, 2026

Present day: Emma Lovett, who has dedicated her career to breathing new life into long-neglected gardens, has just been given the opportunity of a lifetime: to restore the gardens of the famed Highbury House estate, designed in 1907 by her hero Venetia Smith. But as

Emma dives deeper into the gardens' past, she begins to uncover secrets that have long lain hidden.

1907: A talented artist with a growing reputation for her ambitious work, Venetia Smith has carved out a niche for herself as a garden designer to industrialists, solicitors, and bankers looking to show off their wealth with sumptuous country houses. When she is hired to design the gardens of Highbury House, she is determined to make them a triumph, but the gardens—and the people she meets—promise to change her life forever.

1944: When land girl Beth Pedley arrives at a farm on the outskirts of the village of Highbury, all she wants is to find a place she can call home. Cook Stella Adderton, on the other hand, is desperate to leave Highbury House to pursue her own dreams. And widow Diana Symonds, the mistress of the grand house, is anxiously trying to cling to her pre-war life now that her home has been requisitioned and transformed into a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers. But when war threatens Highbury House's treasured gardens, these three very different women are drawn together by a secret that will last for decades.

In this sweeping novel reminiscent of Kate Morton's *The Lake House* and Kristin Harmel's *The Room on Rue Amélie*, Julia Kelly explores the unexpected connections that cross time and the special places that bring people together forever.