

2025 Book Club Picks!

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Remarkably Bright Creatures: A Novel by Shelby Van Pelt

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago.

Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors—until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova.

Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Before the Coffee Gets Cold: A Novel by Toshikazu Kawaguchi

In a small back alley of Tokyo, there is a café that has been serving carefully brewed coffee for more than one hundred years. Local legend says that this shop offers something else besides coffee—the chance to travel back in time.

Over the course of one summer, four customers visit the café in the hopes of making that journey. But time travel isn't so simple, and there are rules that must be followed. Most important, the trip can last only as long as it takes for the coffee to get cold.

Heartwarming, wistful, mysterious and delightfully quirky, Toshikazu Kawaguchi's internationally bestselling novel explores the age-old question: What would you change if you could travel back in time?

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

I'm Glad My Mom Died by Jennette McCurdy

Jennette McCurdy was six years old when she had her first acting audition. Her mother's dream was for her only daughter to become a star, and Jennette would do anything to make her mother happy. So she went along with what Mom called "calorie restriction," eating little and weighing herself five times a day. She endured extensive at-home makeovers while Mom chided, "Your eyelashes are invisible, okay? You think Dakota Fanning doesn't tint hers?" She was even showered by Mom until age sixteen while sharing her diaries, email, and all her income.

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In *I'm Glad My Mom Died*, Jennette recounts all this in unflinching detail—just as she chronicles what happens when the dream finally comes true. Cast in a new Nickelodeon series called *iCarly*, she is thrust into fame. Though Mom is ecstatic, emailing fan club moderators and getting on a first-name basis with the paparazzi (“Hi Gale!”), Jennette is riddled with anxiety, shame, and self-loathing, which manifest into eating disorders, addiction, and a series of unhealthy relationships. These issues only get worse when, soon after taking the lead in the *iCarly* spinoff *Sam & Cat* alongside Ariana Grande, her mother dies of cancer. Finally, after discovering therapy and quitting acting, Jennette embarks on recovery and decides for the first time in her life what she really wants.

Told with refreshing candor and dark humor, *I'm Glad My Mom Died* is an inspiring story of resilience, independence, and the joy of shampooing your own hair.

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation by Kristin Kobes Du Mez (Author), Kristin Kobes Du Mez (Author)

Jesus and John Wayne is a sweeping, revisionist history of the last seventy-five years of white evangelicalism, revealing how evangelicals have worked to replace the Jesus of the Gospels with an idol of rugged masculinity and Christian nationalism—or in the words of one modern chaplain, with “a spiritual badass.”

As acclaimed scholar Kristin Du Mez explains, the key to understanding this transformation is to recognize the centrality of popular culture in contemporary American evangelicalism. Many of today's evangelicals might not be theologically astute, but they know their VeggieTales, they've read John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*, and they learned about purity before they learned about sex—and they have a silver ring to prove it. Evangelical books, films, music, clothing, and merchandise shape the beliefs of millions. And evangelical culture is teeming with muscular heroes—mythical warriors and rugged soldiers, men like Oliver North, Ronald Reagan, Mel Gibson, and the Duck Dynasty clan, who assert white masculine power in defense of “Christian America.” Chief among these evangelical legends is John Wayne, an icon of a lost time when men were uncowed by political correctness, unafraid to tell it like it was, and did what needed to be done.

Challenging the commonly held assumption that the “moral majority” backed Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020 for purely pragmatic reasons, Du Mez reveals that Trump in fact represented the fulfillment, rather than the betrayal, of white evangelicals' most deeply held values: patriarchy, authoritarian rule, aggressive foreign policy, fear of Islam, ambivalence toward #MeToo, and opposition to Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ community. A much-needed reexamination of perhaps the most influential subculture in this country, *Jesus and John Wayne* shows that, far from adhering to biblical principles, modern white evangelicals have remade their faith, with enduring consequences for all Americans.

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Tuesday, May 27, 2025

The One In A Million Boy by Monica Wood

The story of your life never starts at the beginning. Don't they teach you anything at school?

So says 104-year-old Ona to the 11-year-old boy who's been sent to help her out every Saturday morning. As he refills the bird feeders and tidies the garden shed, Ona tells him about her long life, from first love to second chances. Soon she's confessing secrets she has kept hidden for decades.

One Saturday, the boy doesn't show up. Ona starts to think he's not so special after all, but then his father arrives on her doorstep, determined to finish his son's good deed. The boy's mother is not so far behind. Ona is set to discover that the world can surprise us at any age, and that sometimes sharing a loss is the only way to find ourselves again.

Readers won't be able to resist falling for Ona ☺ The conclusion will leave them smiling through their tears."- *Shelf Awareness*

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan

"A hypnotic and electrifying Irish tale that transcends country, transcends time." —Lily King, New York Times bestselling author of *Writers & Lovers*

Small Things Like These is award-winning author Claire Keegan's landmark new novel, a tale of one man's courage and a remarkable portrait of love and family

It is 1985 in a small Irish town. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant and family man faces into his busiest season. Early one morning, while delivering an order to the local convent, Bill makes a discovery which forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church.

An international bestseller, *Small Things Like These* is a deeply affecting story of hope, quiet heroism, and empathy from one of our most critically lauded and iconic writers.

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

The Knowing Hardcover by Tanya Talaga

From Tanya Talaga, the critically acclaimed and award-winning author of *Seven Fallen Feathers*, comes a riveting exploration of her family's story and a retelling of the history of the country we now call Canada

For generations, Indigenous People have known that their family members disappeared, many of them after being sent to residential schools, "Indian hospitals" and asylums through a coordinated system designed to destroy who the First Nations, Métis and Inuit

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people are. This is one of Canada's greatest open secrets, an unhealed wound that until recently lay hidden by shame and abandonment.

The Knowing is the unfolding of Canadian history unlike anything we have ever read before. Award-winning and bestselling Anishinaabe author Tanya Talaga retells the history of this country as only she can—through an Indigenous lens, beginning with the life of her great-great grandmother Annie Carpenter and her family as they experienced decades of government- and Church-sanctioned enfranchisement and genocide.

Deeply personal and meticulously researched, *The Knowing* is a seminal unravelling of the centuries-long oppression of Indigenous People that continues to reverberate in these communities today.

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Mrs. Quinn's Rise to Fame: A Novel by Olivia Ford

Nothing could be more out of character, but after fifty-nine years of marriage, as her husband Bernard's health declines, and her friends' lives become focused on their grandchildren—which Jenny never had—Jenny decides she wants a little something for herself. So she secretly applies to be a contestant on the prime-time TV show *Britain Bakes*.

Whisked into an unfamiliar world of cameras and timed challenges, Jenny delights in a new-found independence. But that independence, and the stress of the competition, starts to unearth memories buried decades ago. Chocolate teacakes remind her of a furtive errand involving a wedding ring; sugared doughnuts call up a stranger's kind act; a simple cottage loaf brings back the moment her life changed forever.

With her baking star rising, Jenny struggles to keep a lid on that first secret—a long-concealed deceit that threatens to shatter the very foundations of her marriage. It's the only time in six decades that she's kept something from Bernard. By putting herself in the limelight, has Jenny created a recipe for disaster?

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada by Jane Philpott

Jane Philpott has spent her life learning what makes people sick and what keeps people well. She has witnessed miracles in modern medicine. She has also watched children die of starvation in a world that has plenty of food. With *Health for All*, she sounds a clarion call for a radical disruption in a health care system that is broken—but not beyond repair. The vision is rooted in a deep-seated commitment to health equity.

Decades ago, a few visionary Canadian leaders put laws in place to ensure health care insurance for all. But the structures to deliver that care were never fully developed as envisioned. As a result, our health systems are not comprehensive or well-coordinated. In the wake of a pandemic, we risk it all falling apart. More than six million people have no family doctor, nor any other access to primary care. Emergency rooms are routinely closed.

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Exhausted health workers wonder if it will ever get better. Some say we should hand health care over to the private sector. But to abandon our commitment to publicly funded health care now would only lead to more expensive and less equitable care. Philpott outlines a different solution—an ambitious, once-in-a-generation reset of health systems with universal access to primary care teams.

What sets this book apart is that it's more than a prescription for better medical care. Philpott looks at the big picture of health for all. This includes an intimate look at the personal roots of well-being: hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose. Then, through real-life stories, she examines the impact of the social determinants of health. Finally, she explains that none of this will happen without the political will to do the hard work of rebuilding a healthy society. The remedy we await is serious leadership to implement what we already know and to put the well-being of Canadians at the top of the agenda.