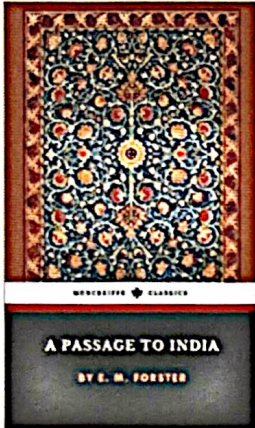


# St. Stephen's Book Club Selections for 2024

## January

Hosts: Ellen and Bill Kirby

NOTE: The book club will meet on the first Thursday of January.



### A Passage to India by E. M. Forster

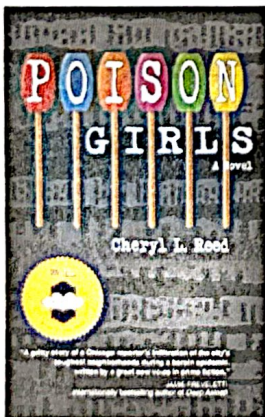
*"India—a hundred Indias—whispered outside beneath the indifferent moon, but for the time India seemed one and their own, and they regained their departed greatness by hearing its departure lamented, they felt young again because reminded that youth must fly."*

*A Passage to India* is a 1924 novel by celebrated English author E. M. Forster, deriving its title from Walt Whitman's 1870 poem "Passage to India" in *Leaves of Grass*. Set against the backdrop of the British Raj and the Indian independence movement in the 1920s, the work is based on Forster's own personal experiences in India.

The story revolves around four characters: Dr. Aziz, his British friend Mr. Cyril Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and Miss Adela Quested. During a trip to the fictitious Marabar Caves, Adela thinks she finds herself alone with Dr. Aziz in one of the caves, when in fact he is in an entirely different cave. When Dr. Aziz finds himself facing trial for assault, the racial tensions and prejudices between Indians and the British are brought to a head.

## February

Host: TBD



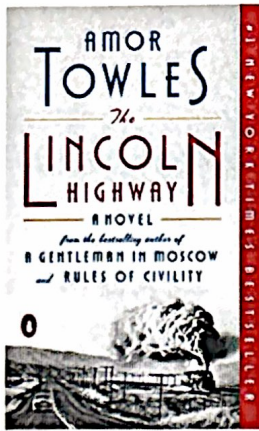
### Poison Girls by Cheryl L. Reed

It's the summer of 2008. Chicago's Hyde Park Senator is running for the White House, the city is vying to host the 2016 Summer Olympics, and "poison," a lethal form of heroin, has killed more than 250 people, including dozens of suburban girls from prominent families.

Natalie Delaney, a crime reporter from the *Chicago Times*, discovers that daughters of Democratic powerhouses are the real targets. Obsessed with finding who is behind the killings, Natalie becomes entangled in an underworld where drugs, cops, gangs, politics, and privilege collide. Risking everything, this reporter becomes the story...

## March

Hosts: TBD



### **The Lincoln Highway** by Amor Towles

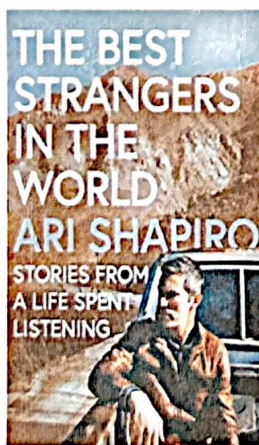
The bestselling author of *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *Rules of Civility* and master of absorbing, sophisticated fiction returns with a stylish and propulsive novel set in 1950s America

In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served fifteen months for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother, Billy, and head to California where they can start their lives anew. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have hidden themselves in the trunk of the warden's car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take them all on a fateful journey in the opposite direction—to the City of New York.

Spanning just ten days and told from multiple points of view, Towles's third novel will satisfy fans of his multi-layered literary styling while providing them an array of new and richly imagined settings, characters, and themes. "Once again, I was wowed by Towles's writing—especially because *The Lincoln Highway* is so different from *A Gentleman in Moscow* in terms of setting, plot, and themes. Towles is not a one-trick pony. Like all the best storytellers, he has range. He takes inspiration from famous hero's journeys, including *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Hamlet*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Of Mice and Men*. He seems to be saying that our personal journeys are never as linear or predictable as an interstate highway. But, he suggests, when something (or someone) tries to steer us off course, it is possible to take the wheel." – Bill Gates

## April

Hosts: TBD



### **The Best Strangers in the World: Stories from a Life Spent Listening** by Ari Shapiro

From the beloved host of NPR's *All Things Considered*, a stirring memoir-in-essays that is also a lover letter to journalism.

In his first book, broadcaster Ari Shapiro takes us around the globe to reveal the stories behind narratives that are sometimes heartwarming, sometimes heartbreaking, but always poignant. He details his time traveling on Air Force One with President Obama, or following the path of Syrian refugees fleeing war, or learning from those fighting for social justice both at home and abroad.

As the self-reinforcing bubbles we live in become more impenetrable, Ari Shapiro keeps seeking ways to help people listen to one another; to find connection and commonality with those who may seem different; to remind us that, before religion, or nationality, or politics, we are all human. *The Best Strangers in the World* is a testament to one journalist's passion for Considering All Things—and sharing what he finds with the rest of us.

**May**

**Hosts: TBD**



**The Stranger by Albert Camus**

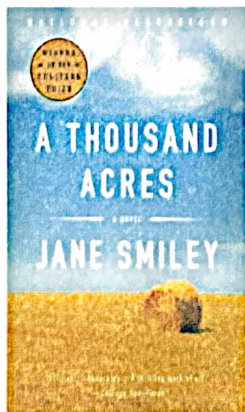
With the intrigue of a psychological thriller, *The Stranger*—Camus's masterpiece—gives us the story of an ordinary man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder on an Algerian beach. With an Introduction by Peter Dunwoodie; translated by Matthew Ward.

Behind the subterfuge, Camus explores what he termed "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd" and describes the condition of reckless alienation and spiritual exhaustion that characterized so much of twentieth-century life.

"*The Stranger* is a strikingly modern text and Matthew Ward's translation will enable readers to appreciate why Camus's stoical anti-hero and devious narrator remains one of the key expressions of a postwar Western malaise, and one of the cleverest exponents of a literature of ambiguity." —from the Introduction by Peter Dunwoodie.

**June**

**Hosts: TBD**



**A Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley**

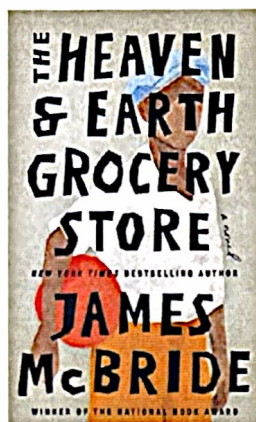
PULITZER PRIZE WINNER • NATIONAL BESTSELLER • A "powerful and poignant" twentieth-century reimagining of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (*The New York Times Book Review*) that takes on themes of truth, justice, love, and pride—and centers on a wealthy Iowa farmer who decides to divide his farm between his three daughters.

When the youngest daughter objects, she is cut out of his will. This sets off a chain of events that brings dark truths to light and explodes long-suppressed emotions. Ambitiously conceived and stunningly written, *A Thousand Acres* reveals the beautiful yet treacherous topography of humanity.

“A family portrait that is also a near-epic investigation into the broad landscape, the thousand dark acres of the human heart.... The book has all the stark brutality of a Shakespearean tragedy.”  
—*The Washington Post Book World*

July

Hosts: TBD



### **The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store by James McBride**

From James McBride, author of the bestselling Oprah’s Book Club pick *Deacon King Kong* and the National Book Award–winning *The Good Lord Bird*, a novel about small-town secrets and the people who keep them

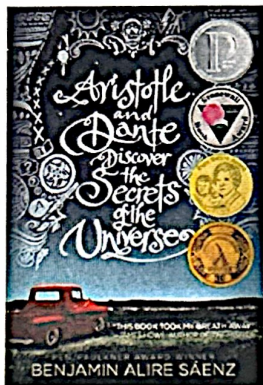
In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighborhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows. Chicken Hill was where Moshe and Chona Ludlow lived when Moshe integrated his theater and where Chona ran the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store. When the state came looking for a deaf boy to institutionalize him, it was Chona and Nate Timblin, the Black janitor at Moshe’s theater and the unofficial leader of the Black community on Chicken Hill, who worked together to keep the boy safe.

As these characters’ stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins of white, Christian America struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town’s white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community—heaven and earth—that sustain us.

Bringing his masterly storytelling skills and his deep faith in humanity to *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*, James McBride has written a novel as compassionate as *Deacon King Kong* and as inventive as *The Good Lord Bird*.

## August

Hosts: TBD

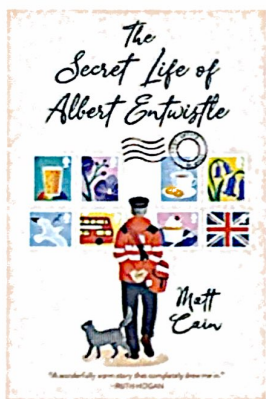


### **Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe** by Benjamin Saenz

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be.

## September

Hosts: TBD



### **The Secret Life of Albert Entwistle** by Matt Cain

Every day, Albert Entwistle makes his way through the streets of his small English town, delivering letters and parcels and returning greetings with a quick wave and a “how do?” Everyone on his route knows Albert, or thinks they do—a man of quiet routines, content to live alone with his cat, Gracie.

Three months before his sixty-fifth birthday, Albert receives a letter from the Royal Mail thanking him for decades of service and stating that he is being forced into retirement. At once, Albert’s simple life unravels.

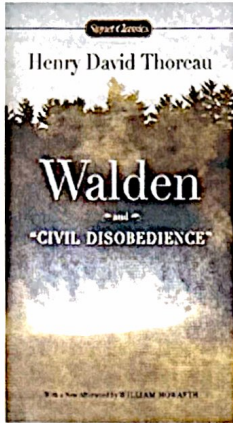
Without the work that fills his days, what will he do? He has no friends, family, or hobbies—just a past he never speaks of, and a lost love that fills him with regret. And so, rather than continue his lonely existence, Albert forms a brave plan to start truly living, to be honest about who he is . . . and to find George, the man with whom he spent one perfect spring and summer long ago.

One painful yet exhilarating step at a time, Albert begins searching for George and revealing his story to those around him. As he does, something extraordinary happens. Albert finds unlikely allies, new friends, and the courage to help others—even as he seeks the happiness he’s always denied himself.

Beautifully written, funny, and wise, *The Secret Life of Albert Entwistle* is a book to fall in love with and to be inspired by, one that proves it is never too late to live, to hope, and to love.

**October**

**Hosts: TBD**



**Walden by Henry David Thoreau**

In 1845, Thoreau moved to a cabin that he built with his own hands along the shores of Walden Pond in Massachusetts. Shedding the trivial ties that he felt bound much of humanity, Thoreau reaped from the land both physically and mentally, and pursued truth in the quiet of nature. In *Walden*, he explains how separating oneself from the world of men can truly awaken the sleeping self. Thoreau holds fast to the notion that you have not truly existed until you adopt such a lifestyle—and only then can you reenter society, as an enlightened being.

These simple but profound musings—as well as “Civil Disobedience,” his protest against the government’s interference with civil liberty—have inspired many to embrace his philosophy of individualism and love of nature. More than a century and a half later, his message is more timely than ever.

**November**

**Hosts: TBD**



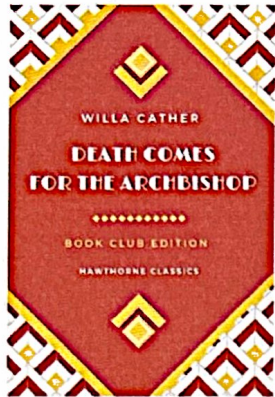
**My Life in France by Julia Child**

Although she would later singlehandedly create a new approach to American cuisine with her cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and her television show *The French Chef*, Julia Child was not always a master chef. Indeed, when she first arrived in France in 1948 with her husband, Paul, who was to work for the USIS, she spoke no French and knew nothing about the country itself.

But as she dove into French culture, buying food at local markets and taking classes at the Cordon Bleu, her life changed forever with her newfound passion for cooking and teaching. Julia’s unforgettable story—struggles with the head of the Cordon Bleu, rejections from publishers to whom she sent her now-famous cookbook, a wonderful, nearly fifty-year long marriage that took the Childs across the globe—unfolds with the spirit so key to Julia’s success as a chef and a writer, brilliantly capturing one of America’s most endearing personalities.

**December**

**Hosts: TBD**



**Death Comes for the Archbishop** by Willa Cather

*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Willa Cather's critically acclaimed book, reigns as the one of the supreme achievements of Willa Cather's writing career - along with her Pulitzer Prize winning book *One of Ours* - was first published in 1927. This quintessential classic novel has been loved by generations of readers. It's the type of book you want to read over and over again!

*Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather explores the lives of two Catholic priests in New Mexico during the mid-19th century. The novel touches on themes of religion, colonialism, cultural conflict, and the human experience of loss and suffering. **Willa Cather's novel is a masterpiece of American literature**, a bestseller, and a thrilling read!

You are never too young or too old to enjoy this classic book of American literature - Willa Cather's masterpiece is a treasure for generations of readers of the classics.