

Book Club Bags New Title Synopses

Spring 2019

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***Beartown* by Fredrik Backman** (Donated by Circle of Readers)

The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Man Called Ove* returns with a dazzling, profound novel about a small town with a big dream—and the price required to make it come true.

People say Beartown is finished. A tiny community nestled deep in the forest, it is slowly losing ground to the ever encroaching trees. But down by the lake stands an old ice rink, built generations ago by the working men who founded this town. And in that ice rink is the reason people in Beartown believe tomorrow will be better than today. Their junior ice hockey team is about to compete in the national semi-finals, and they actually have a shot at winning. All the hopes and dreams of this place now rest on the shoulders of a handful of teenage boys.

Being responsible for the hopes of an entire town is a heavy burden, and the semi-final match is the catalyst for a violent act that will leave a young girl traumatized and a town in turmoil. Accusations are made and, like ripples on a pond, they travel through all of Beartown, leaving no resident unaffected.

***Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman**

No one's ever told Eleanor that life should be better than fine.

Meet Eleanor Oliphant: She struggles with appropriate social skills and tends to say exactly what she's thinking. Nothing is missing in her carefully timetabled life of avoiding social interactions, where weekends are punctuated by frozen pizza, vodka, and phone chats with Mummy.

But everything changes when Eleanor meets Raymond, the bumbling and deeply unhygienic IT guy from her office. When she and Raymond together save Sammy, an elderly gentleman who has fallen on the sidewalk, the three become the kinds of friends who rescue one another from the lives of isolation they have each been living. And it is Raymond's big heart that will ultimately help Eleanor find the way to repair her own profoundly damaged one.

Soon to be a major motion picture produced by Reese Witherspoon, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* is the smart, warm, and uplifting story of an out-of-the-ordinary heroine whose deadpan weirdness and unconscious wit make for an irresistible journey as she realizes. . . The only way to survive is to open your heart.

***The German Girl* by Armando Lucas Correa** (Donated by the Newcomers Book Club)

A stunningly ambitious and beautiful debut novel, perfect for fans of *Sarah's Key* and *All the Light We Cannot See*, the story of a twelve-year-old girl's harrowing experience fleeing Nazi-occupied Germany with her family and best friend, only to discover that the overseas asylum they had been promised is an illusion.

In 1939 before everything changed, Hannah Rosenthal lived a charmed life. Her family moved in Berlin's highest social circles, admired by friends and neighbors. Eleven-year-old Hannah was often taken by her mother for an afternoon treat at the tea room of the beautiful Adlon Hotel, both dressed in their finest clothes. She spent her afternoons at the park with her best friend Leo Martin. But, in an instant, that sunlit world vanished. Now the streets of Berlin are draped with red, white, and black flags; their fine possessions are hauled away, and they are no longer welcome in the places that once felt like home. The two friends make a pact: come what may, they promise to have a future together.

As Hannah and Leo's families desperately begin to search for a means of escape, a glimmer of hope appears when they discover the *Saint Louis*, a transatlantic liner that can give Jews safe passage to Cuba. After a frantic search to obtain visas, the Rosentals and the Martins depart from Hamburg on the luxurious passenger liner bound for Havana. Life aboard the ship is a welcome respite from the gloom of Berlin—filled with masquerade balls, dancing, and exquisite meals every night. *(Continued on pg 2)*

The German Girl (Continued...)

As the passengers gain renewed hope for a bright future ahead, love between Hannah and Leo blossoms. But soon reports from the outside world began to filter in, and dark news overshadows the celebratory atmosphere on the ship; the governments of Cuba, the United States, and Canada are denying the passengers of the *St. Louis* admittance to their countries, forcing them to return to Europe as it descends into the Second World War. The ship that had seemed their salvation seems likely to become their death sentence.

After four days anchored at bay, only a handful of passengers are allowed to disembark onto Cuban soil, and Hannah and Leo must face the grim reality that they could be torn apart. Their future is unknown, and their only choice will have an impact in generations to come.

Decades later in New York City on her eleventh birthday, Anna Rosen receives a mysterious envelope from Hannah, a great-aunt she has never met but who raised her deceased father. In an attempt to piece together her father's mysterious past, Anna and her mother travel to Havana to meet Hannah, who is turning eighty-seven years old. Hannah reveals old family ties, recounts her journey aboard the *Saint Louis* and, for the first time, reveals what happened to her father and Leo. Bringing together the pain of the past with the mysteries of the present, Hannah gives young Anna a sense of their shared histories, forever intertwining their lives, honoring those they loved and cruelly lost.

***Ghost Boy: The Miraculous Escape of a Misdiagnosed Boy Trapped Inside His Own Body* by Martin Pistorius**

They all thought he was gone. But he was alive and trapped inside his own body for ten years.

In January 1988 Martin Pistorius, aged twelve, fell inexplicably sick. First he lost his voice and stopped eating. Then he slept constantly and shunned human contact. Doctors were mystified. Within eighteen months he was mute and wheelchair-bound. Martin's parents were told an unknown degenerative disease left him with the mind of a baby and less than two years to live. Martin was moved to care centers for severely disabled children. The stress and heartache shook his parents' marriage and their family to the core. Their boy was gone. Or so they thought.

Ghost Boy is the heart-wrenching story of one boy's return to life through the power of love and faith. In these pages, readers see a parent's resilience, the consequences of misdiagnosis, abuse at the hands of cruel caretakers, and the unthinkable duration of Martin's mental alertness betrayed by his lifeless body.

We also see a life reclaimed—a business created, a new love kindled—all from a wheelchair. Martin's emergence from his own darkness invites us to celebrate our own lives and fight for a better life for others.

***The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas**

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

***Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* by David Grann**

In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, the Osage rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe.

Then, one by one, they began to be killed off. One Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, watched as her family was murdered. Her older sister was shot. Her mother was then slowly poisoned. And it was just the beginning, as more Osage began to die under mysterious circumstances. *(Continued on pg 3)*

Killers of the Flower Moon (Continued)

In this last remnant of the Wild West—where oilmen like J. P. Getty made their fortunes and where desperadoes such as Al Spencer, “the Phantom Terror,” roamed – virtually anyone who dared to investigate the killings were themselves murdered. As the death toll surpassed more than twenty-four Osage, the newly created F.B.I. took up the case, in what became one of the organization’s first major homicide investigations. But the bureau was then notoriously corrupt and initially bungled the case. Eventually the young director, J. Edgar Hoover, turned to a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to try to unravel the mystery. White put together an undercover team, including one of the only Native American agents in the bureau. They infiltrated the region, struggling to adopt the latest modern techniques of detection. Together with the Osage they began to expose one of the most sinister conspiracies in American history.

A true-life murder mystery about one of the most monstrous crimes in American history.

***Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris**

In April 1942, Lale Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew, is forcibly transported to the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. When his captors discover that he speaks several languages, he is put to work as a *Tätowierer* (the German word for tattooist), tasked with permanently marking his fellow prisoners.

Imprisoned for more than two and a half years, Lale witnesses horrific atrocities and barbarism—but also incredible acts of bravery and compassion. Risking his own life, he uses his privileged position to exchange jewels and money from murdered Jews for food to keep his fellow prisoners alive.

One day in July 1942, Lale, prisoner 32407, comforts a trembling young woman waiting in line to have the number 34902 tattooed onto her arm. Her name is Gita, and in that first encounter, Lale vows to somehow survive the camp and marry her.

A vivid, harrowing, and ultimately hopeful re-creation of Lale Sokolov's experiences as the man who tattooed the arms of thousands of prisoners with what would become one of the most potent symbols of the Holocaust, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* is also a testament to the endurance of love and humanity under the darkest possible conditions.

***Under the Wide and Starry Sky* by Nancy Horan**

The passionate and turbulent story of Robert Louis Stevenson and his tempestuous American wife, Fanny. At the age of thirty-five, Fanny van de Grift Osbourne leaves her philandering husband in San Francisco and sets sail for Belgium to study art, with her three children and a nanny in tow. Not long after her arrival, however, tragedy strikes, and Fanny and her brood repair to a quiet artists' colony in France where she can recuperate. There she meets Robert Louis Stevenson, ten years her junior, who is instantly smitten with the earthy, independent and opinionated belle Americaine.

A woman ahead of her time, Fanny does not immediately take to the young lawyer who longs to devote his life to literature, and who would eventually write such classics as *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In time, though, she succumbs to Stevenson's charms. The two begin a fierce love affair, marked by intense joy and harrowing darkness, which spans decades as they travel the world for the sake of his health. Eventually they settled in Samoa, where Robert Louis Stevenson is buried underneath the epitaph:

*Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.*

*This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

(Requiem, Robert Louis Stevenson)

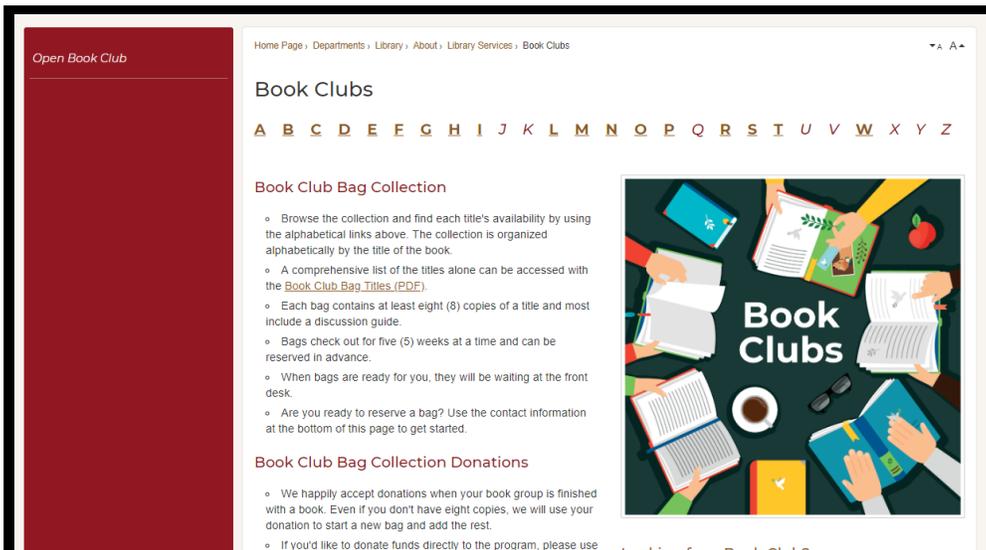
Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens (Donated by the Newcomers Book Club)

For years, rumors of the “Marsh Girl” have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life—until the unthinkable happens.

Perfect for fans of Barbara Kingsolver and Karen Russell, *Where the Crawdads Sing* is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.

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Great Alone by Kristin Hannah (11 copies + Audiobook)

Available after April 20, 2019. Reserved July 21 – August 30, 2019 and June 9, 2020 – July 17, 2020.

Ernt Allbright, a former POW, comes home from the Vietnam War a changed and volatile man. When he loses yet another job, he makes an impulsive decision: he will move his family north, to Alaska, where they will live off the grid in America's last true frontier.

Thirteen-year-old Leni, a girl coming of age in a tumultuous time, caught in the riptide of her parents' passionate, stormy relationship, dares to hope that a new land will lead to a better future for her family. She is desperate for a place to belong. Her mother, Cora, will do anything and go anywhere for the man she loves, even if means following him into the unknown.

At first, Alaska seems to be the answer to their prayers. In a wild, remote corner of the state, they find a fiercely independent community of strong men and even stronger women. The long, sunlit days and the generosity of the locals make up for the Allbrights' lack of preparation and dwindling resources.

But as winter approaches and darkness descends on Alaska, Ernt's fragile mental state deteriorates and the family begins to fracture. Soon the perils outside pale in comparison to threats from within. In their small cabin, covered in snow, blanketed in eighteen hours of night, Leni and her mother learn the terrible truth: they are on their own. In the wild, there is no one to save them but themselves.

