

Book Club Selections 2025

January

FIREBALL, By Julia Walker, pgs. 196

Memoir

The true story of a Tennessee plow girl from the Oak Ridge area. Her voice in this memoir tells the tale of overcoming poverty, abuse, and 11 husbands with wit, wisdom, and tenacity.

February

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle

By Barbara Kingsolver

Non-fiction, 400 pages

Kingsolver's family's struggles and triumphs on their Appalachian farm, as they embark on a year of becoming locavores, eating only what is grown and produced locally. Critically acclaimed, the book came out when more people were examining and taking control of their food sources. Imagine a year without coffee, bananas, oranges, avocados, shrimp, etc.

March

The Paris Novel Ruth Reichl 274 pages, Fiction

When her estranged mother dies, Stella is left with an unusual inheritance: a one-way plane ticket and a note reading "Go to Paris." Stella is hardly cut out for adventure; a traumatic childhood has kept her confined to the strict routines of her comfort zone. But when her boss encourages her to take time off, Stella resigns herself to honoring her mother's last wishes.

April

The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice, by Christopher Hitchens (Nonfiction, 105 pages). She was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and has been canonized in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, to all appearances, Mother Teresa might appear unassailable — but that was before the notorious essayist and contrarian Christopher Hitchens trained his jaundiced eye on the famed Albanian nun. Hitchens, in his inimitable fashion, chips away at the public reputation of Mother Teresa and raises troubling questions that both amuse and provoke

May

Playground: A Novel Richard Powers 389 pages

Four lives are drawn together in a sweeping, panoramic new novel from Richard Powers, showcasing the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Overstory* at the height of his skills. Twelve-year-old Evie Beaulieu sinks to the bottom of a swimming pool in Montreal strapped to one of the world's first aqualungs. Ina Aroita grows up on naval bases across the Pacific with art as her only home. Two polar opposites at

an elite Chicago high school bond over a three-thousand-year-old board game; Rafi Young will get lost in literature, while Todd Keane's work will lead to a startling AI breakthrough

June

WEST WITH GIRAFFES By Lynda Rutledge

Historical Fiction, 372 pgs

Historical fiction, engaging and delightful -

'Few true friends have I known and two were giraffes . . . an emotional, rousing novel inspired by the two giraffes who made headlines and won the hearts of Depression-era Americans

July

Shortest History of Israel and Palestine: From Zionism to Intifadas and the Struggle for Peace (The Shortest History Series)

Nonfiction

288 pages

Chronicle of how the Israel-Palestine conflict originated and developed over the past century. Thanks to Susan for helping me with this important topic.

August

Revenge of the Tipping Point: Overstories, Superspreaders, and the Rise of Social Engineering

Nonfiction Malcolm Gladwell

368 pages

Gladwell takes us to the streets of LA to meet the world's most successful bank robbers, rediscover a forgotten 1970s tv show that changed the world, and offers an alternate history of the biggest epidemic of our day: COVID and the opioid crisis. He offers a guide to make sense of the modern world. Tipping points are not to be ignored.

September

The Complete Maus, by Art Spiegelman (Nonfiction, 296 pages). In the battles of which books are appropriate for students in Tennessee public schools, this one has been a flashpoint. Maus quite movingly describes the experiences of the author's father, a European Jew, during WWII. But there's a twist: Maus is a graphic novel, meaning that the story is told in the form of a sort of comic book, albeit one with very serious themes. So is this book fit for the schoolkids of Tennessee? Let's read it and decide for ourselves. (And if you've never read a graphic novel, this one is a good decide for ourselves. (And if you've never read a graphic novel, this one is a good introduction.)

October

The Forest Unseen

By David George Haskell

Non-Fiction, 288 pages

Biologist David Haskell uses a one-square-meter patch of old growth Tennessee forest as a window onto the entire natural world. Visiting it almost daily for one year to trace nature's path through the seasons, he brings the forest and its inhabitants to vivid life

November

The Embassy Wife: A Novel Katie Crouch 386 pages

Meet Persephone Wilder, a displaced genius posing as the wife of an American diplomat in Namibia. Persephone takes her job as a representative of her country seriously, coming up with an intricate set of rules to survive the problems she encounters: how to dress in hundred-degree weather without showing too much skin, how not to look drunk at embassy functions, and how to eat roasted oryx with grace. She also suspects her husband is not actually the ambassador's legal counsel but a secret agent in the CIA. The consummate embassy wife, she takes the newest trailing spouse, Amanda Evans, under her wing.