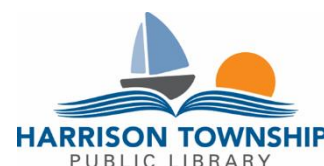


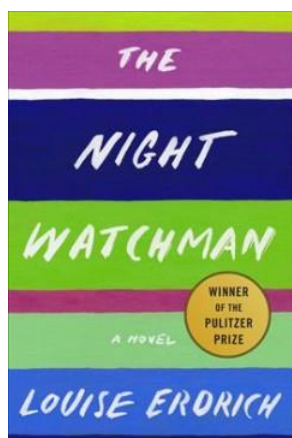
# Book Group Selection Ideas

November 18, 2022



I have had a few suggestions from the group for our 2023 book selections, they are listed here below. I have also gathered together some of the most popular book group titles that we haven't read. And, at the end, you will see a list of some top titles that made our lists before that we may wish to reconsider.

## New Suggestions from our group members:



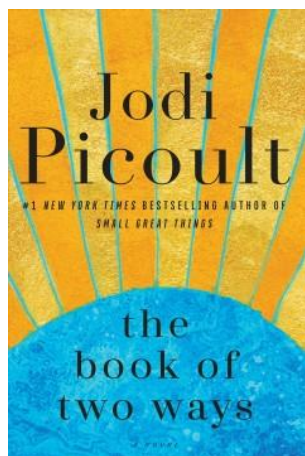
**The night watchman** (Mar 2020) by Louise Erdrich  
Genre: Historical, Literary Fiction

### Selling Points

2021 Pulitzer Prize/Fiction. Based on the author's grandfather in the 1950's fighting against the removal of Chippewa natives in south Dakota.

### Description

Thomas is a member of the Chippewa council, and deeply concerned about a 1953 bill pending in the U.S. Congress that threatens to terminate the legal status of their Chippewa band. As Patrice ventures into the horrific underworld she fears has claimed Vera, Thomas writes perfectly penned letters to federal officials, and marshals the community—destitute but for their cherished land and culture—for a trip to Washington, DC, to ensure that their voices are heard. Each risky mission to confront insidious forces endangering Chippewa lives and heritage generates a stream of involving, concurrent stories of longing and love. Through the personalities and predicaments of her many charismatic characters, and through rapturous descriptions of winter landscapes and steaming meals, sustaining humor and spiritual visitations, Erdrich traces the indelible traumas of racism and sexual violence and celebrates the vitality and depth of Chippewa life.



**The book of two ways** (Sep 2020) by Jodi Picoult  
Genre: Relationship Fiction, popular book club pick

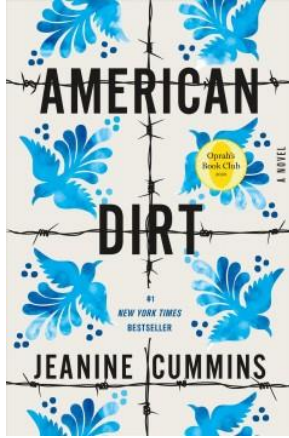
### Selling Points

This novel challenges us “to explore the life we are living and if possible change our mind and live another way.”

### Description

Fifteen years after her mother's death led Dawn Edelstein to veer away from the career she was pursuing as an Egyptologist, she's forced to face the past she left behind. Mostly happily married to Brian, a theoretical physicist who ponders the existence of parallel lives, and the mother of self-conscious teen Meret,

Dawn has been working as a death doula to help dying clients make the transition as smoothly as possible. But then she suddenly finds herself forced to confront her still powerful feelings for her first love, Wyatt Armstrong, a dashing English Egyptologist who went from being her rival to her lover during an excavation. Dawn's what-if crisis prompts her to a soul-searching journey halfway across the world to discover whether the career and the man she left behind are truly her past.



**American dirt** (Jan 2020) by Jeanine Cummins

Genre: Literary Fiction, Immigrant Experience

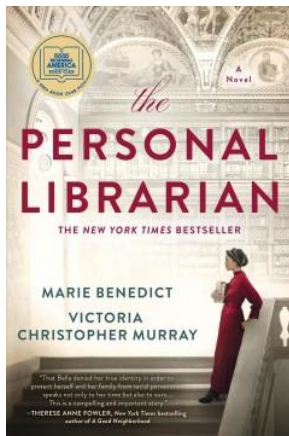
### **Selling Points**

Popular book club pick (Oprah pick), Renee's Mom Recommends, Fast-paced, character-driven.

### **Description**

Lydia Perez's life is not extraordinary; she is a bookstore owner with a husband and eight-year-old son, Luca, in Acapulco. When cartel jefe Javier Fuentes has her entire extended family killed while Lydia and Luca are fortuitously hiding in a bathroom, Lydia realizes they must leave Mexico immediately or be killed when Javier finds out she is still alive. Luca, confused but trusting in his mother, embarks with her on an odyssey to the north, joining other migrants trying to make it to the U.S. border. What they see along the way will bring readers both heartbreak and hope, pain and promise. Beautiful, straightforward language drives home the point that migration to safer places is not a political issue but a human one.

## **Top Book Club Titles We Missed**



**The personal librarian** (Jun 2021) by Marie Benedict

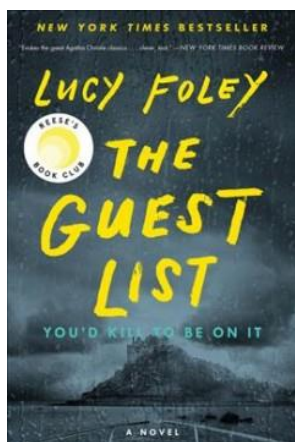
Genre: African American Fiction, Biographical Fiction, Historical Fiction

### **Selling Points**

Popular book club pick (Good Morning America) Character-driven

### **Description**

Every element of this blockbuster historical novel is compelling and revelatory, beginning with the bedazzling protagonist based with awestruck care on Belle da Costa Greene. Hired in 1905 when she is her twenties, over the years Belle boldly oversees J. P. Morgan's world-class collection of rare books and illuminated manuscripts, strategically acquires treasures with witty charm and ruthless bargaining, and becomes the feared financier's most trusted confidante. She attains international renown while secretly navigating the severe risks involved in presenting herself as an olive-skinned white woman of Portuguese descent when she is, in fact, African American.



## The guest list (May 2020) by Lucy Foley

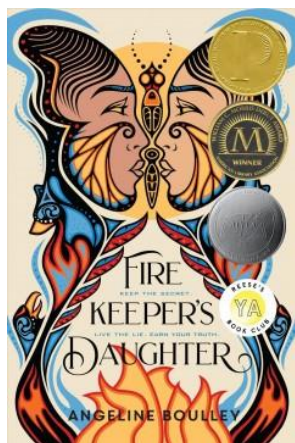
Genre: Thriller, Suspense

### Selling Points

Popular Book Club Pick (Reese Witherspoon), intricately plotted, atmospheric.

### Description

This is one guest list no one would want to be on, just as no one would have wanted an invitation to the New Year's Eve party in Foley's previous novel, *The Hunting Party* (2019). Lives unravel amid the revelry on an eerie and remote island as family and friends assemble for a glam wedding in an updated *Murder on the Orient Express*. Each of the principal characters has a reason to want one of their number dead. The narcissistic bride, the unstable bridesmaid, the odd wedding planner and her husband, the resentful plus-one, the groom and his former schoolmates, with "something dark and cruel hiding behind the schoolboy manners," who are revealed to be a pack of sadistic bullies. By the time the worst of them is found murdered, readers will not be sorry and might, in a Christie moment, have wanted to kill her or him themselves.



## Firekeeper's Daughter (Mar 2021) by Angeline Boulley

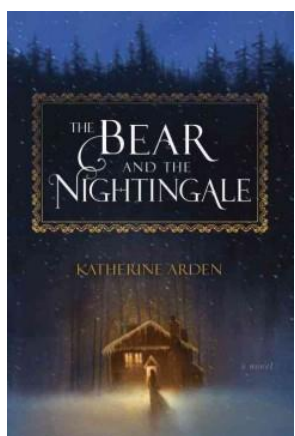
Genre: Thriller, Suspense, Teen, Michigan Setting/Author

### Selling Points

Book Club Favorite (Reese Witherspoon), Candid and compelling. Michigan Notable Book author (possible author visit?)

### Description

With sharp turns and charming characters, this debut thriller by Anishinabe (ojibiwa) author Boulley centers 18-year-old Daunis Fontaine, who loves and fits into her community but yearns for official citizenship in the Sault tribe. Science-minded Daunis had planned on going away for college, but after her uncle overdoses on meth and her grandmother has a stroke, she stays closer to her Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., home, negotiating a complex familial situation having to do with her deceased Anishinabe father. After witnessing her best friend's murder by her meth-reliant boyfriend, she begins looking into the mounting local meth overdoses, using her knowledge of chemistry as well as traditional plants and medicine to source the drug and, amid growing danger, reveal its seller.



## The bear and the nightingale (Jan 2017) by Katherine Arden

Genre: Historical fantasy; Literary fiction; Mythological fiction

### Selling Points

Character-driven, strong world-building, strong female character.

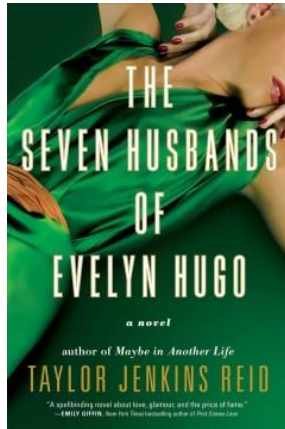
### Description

Reading Arden's debut novel is like listening to an entrancing tale spun out over nights in the best oral tradition. This mesmerizing fantasy takes place in medieval Russia, at a time when women had but two choices in life: serve their appointed husband by bearing his children and taking care of his household, or serve God in a convent. Vasilisa Petrovna refuses to do either. She has been a wild thing since

birth, escaping her household duties to run free in the forest and conversing with spirits only she can see. But Vasilisa's behavior is taken in stride until a charismatic priest comes to her father's village, convincing his patronage that their custom of leaving offerings to curry favor from the spirits is sacrilege. Vasilisa knows that if this practice is stopped, the spirits will grow weak and be unable to defend the village when evil comes knocking. When first crops and then villagers begin to die, Vasilisa's unladylike behavior and refusal to follow the priest's teachings mark her as a witch in the villagers' eyes.

### What is all the fuss about titles

Both these titles remain on the bestsellers list even though they were published 5-7 years ago.



#### **The seven husbands of Evelyn Hugo (Jun 2017) By Taylor**

Jenkins Reid

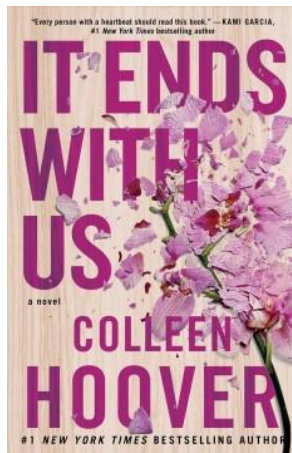
Genre: Relationship Fiction

#### **Selling Points**

Flawed sympathetic characters, high-drama, compelling

#### **Description**

Adored movie icon Evelyn Hugo is finally ready to tell her story, and does she have a story to tell. Born to Cuban immigrants in New York's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, Evelyn remade herself into a classic Hollywood beauty, marrying seven men along the way. First there was Eddie, the man who brought her to Los Angeles; then there was Don, an abuser; then Mick; and then Rex—but everyone knows that the true love of her life was Harry Cameron, who had been with her through thick and thin. But as Monique, her biographer, uncovers more of her past, she finds that the heart of Evelyn's love life doesn't involve men at all. Willing to use her looks and her body to advance her career, Evelyn may know that some of her actions were wrong, but she doesn't feel any guilt for her past.



#### **It ends with us (Aug 2016) by Colleen Hoover**

Genre: Contemporary Romance

#### **Selling Points**

Relatable characters, Issue-oriented.

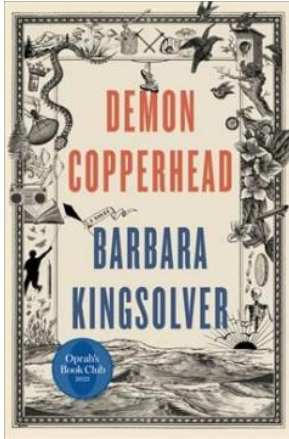
#### **Description**

Lily is starting her dream of owning a flower shop in Boston and tries to forget the sexy doctor she met on a rooftop one evening. When he turns out to be her new assistant's brother, it seems like fate, and they fall in love. When he hits her the first time, she struggles with her memories of her father hitting her mother. She finds a diary from her teens and remembers the homeless teen she fell for then, and how her father beat him to a pulp. She runs into that person, now a chef, at a nearby restaurant. She returns to her boyfriend and tries to have a normal life and marriage, only to realize that her situation can't last. The power and pain of the relationship will stay with readers even as Hoover offers hope



## Hot off the press

Here are some new titles that are trending now with book groups.



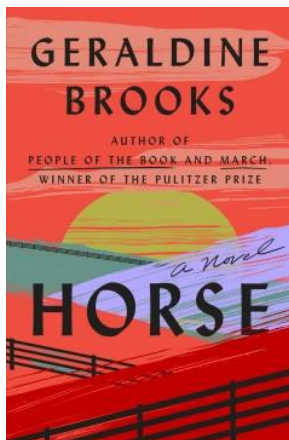
**Demon Copperhead (Oct 2022)** by Barbara Kingslover  
Genre: Coming of Age, Literary Fiction

### Selling Points

Oprah Book Club Pick,

### Description

“A kid is a terrible thing to be, in charge of nothing.” So says young Damon Fields, who's destined to be known as Demon Copperhead, a hungry orphan in a snake-harboring holler in Lee County, Virginia, where meth and opioids kill and nearly everyone is just scraping by. With his red hair and the “light-green eyes of a Melungeon,” Damon's a dead-ringer for his dead father, whom he never met. More parent to his mother than she was to him, he's subjected to hellish foster situations after her death, forced into hard labor, including a stint in a tobacco field, which ignites one of many righteous indictments of greed and exploitation. Damon funnels his dreams into drawings of superheroes, art being one of his secret powers. After risking his life to find his irascible grandmother, he ends up living in unnerving luxury with Coach Winfield and his smart, caustic, motherless daughter. Kingsolver's capacious, ingenious, wrenching, and funny survivor's tale is a virtuoso present-day variation on Charles Dickens' David Copperfield, and she revels in creating wicked and sensitive character variations, dramatic trials-by-fire, and resounding social critiques, all told from Damon's frank and piercing point of view in vibrantly inventive language. Every detail stings or sings as he reflects on nature, Appalachia, family, responsibility, love, and endemic social injustice. Kingsolver's tour de force is a serpentine, hard-striking tale of profound dimension and resonance. -- Donna Seaman



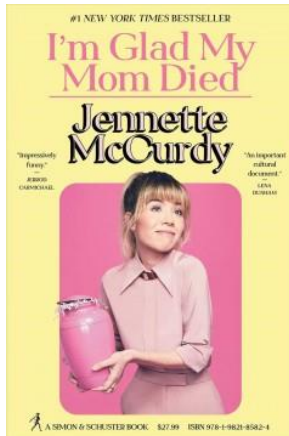
**Horse (Jun 2022)** by Geraldine Brooks  
Genre: Australian Fiction, Literary Fiction

### Selling Points

Dramatic, Character-driven, Pulitzer Prize winning author

### Description

Pulitzer Prize winner Brooks writes historical fiction (*People of the Book*; *March*), but she also writes about our endless fascination with, and abuse of, power. Here, power is literally embodied in Lexington, one of the most successful race horses in history and around whom this novel is centered. Moving across three centuries, the story is told through Jarret, the horse's enslaved handler in the late 1850s; Martha, a gallery owner specializing in horse paintings in the 1950s; Jess, an osteologist interested in the horse's skeleton; and Theo, a budding art historian who comes to possess a painting of the horse in 2019. Brooks illuminates Lexington's illustrious racing history while also detailing the profit reaped from the horse's abilities, likeness, and bones. This history is paralleled with the historical erasure of Jarrett's contributions to the horse's prowess and success. Once again, Brooks probes our understanding of history to reveal the power structures that create both the facts and the fiction.



**I'm glad my mom died (Aug 2022)** by Jennette McCurdy  
Genre: Memoir

### **Selling Points**

Moving and Candid Storytelling.

### **Description**

In this explosive debut, former iCarly star McCurdy recounts a harrowing childhood directed by her emotionally abusive stage mother. A narcissist and “full-blown hoarder,” McCurdy’s mother, Debra, pushed her daughter into acting at age six in 1999, doling out her scarce affection in tandem with the jobs McCurdy booked (while weaponizing her breast cancer—which eventually killed her in 2013—for good measure). After McCurdy hit puberty around age 11, her mother steered her to anorexia via “calorie restriction,” and later began performing invasive breast and genital exams on McCurdy at age 17. As she recounts finding fame on Nickelodeon, beginning in 2007 with her role on iCarly, McCurdy chronicles her efforts to break free from her mother’s machinations, her struggles with bulimia and alcohol abuse, and a horrific stint dating a schizophrenic, codependent boyfriend. McCurdy’s recovery is hard-won and messy, and eventually leads her to step back from acting to pursue writing and directing. Despite the provocative title, McCurdy shows remarkable sympathy for her mother, even when she recalls discovering that the man she called Dad while growing up was not, in fact, her biological father. Insightful and incisive, heartbreaking and raw, McCurdy’s narrative reveals a strong woman who triumphs over unimaginable pressure to emerge whole on the other side

### **Titles from past lists that almost made the cut**

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Richardson

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

Ella Minnow Pea by Mark Dunn

The heart is a Lonely Hunter by Carson McCullers

Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo

The Memory Police by Yoko Ogawa

The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race by Walter Issacson

Next Year in Havana by Chanel Cleeton

Please send me any other titles that you would like added to our voting list. We will be voting on November 28<sup>th</sup>.