

Friends and Newcomers Book Club Suggested Schedule for January to November 2023. The synopsis is from GOODEADS website. The Book Club meets the second Monday of every month at 10:00 A.M. at the Millbrook Library, 3650 Grandview Drive, Millbrook Alabama.

January 9, 2023

The Book Woman's Daughter by Kim Michele Richardson

This book continues the story we read in the Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by the same author. Honey Lovett, the daughter of the beloved Troublesome book woman, who must fight for her own independence with the help of the women who guide her and the books that set her free. As the daughter of the famed blue-skinned, Troublesome Creek packhorse librarian, Honey and her family have been hiding from the law all her life. But when her mother and father are imprisoned, Honey realizes she must fight to stay free, or risk being sent away for good. Picking up her mother's old packhorse library route, Honey begins to deliver books to the remote hollers of Appalachia. Honey is looking to prove that she doesn't need anyone telling her how to survive. But the route can be treacherous, and some folks aren't as keen to let a woman pave her own way.

February 13, 2023

West With Giraffes by Linda Rutledge

Woodrow Wilson Nickel, age 105, feels his life ebbing away. But when he learns giraffes are going extinct, he finds himself recalling the unforgettable experience he cannot take to his grave. It's 1938. The Great Depression lingers. Hitler is threatening Europe, and world-weary Americans long for wonder. They find it in two giraffes who miraculously survive a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. What follows is a twelve-day road trip in a custom truck to deliver Southern California's first giraffes to the San Diego Zoo. Behind the wheel is the young Dust Bowl rowdy Woodrow. Inspired by true events, the tale weaves real-life figures with fictional ones, including the world's first female zoo director, a crusty old man with a past, a young female photographer with a secret, and assorted reprobates as spotty as the giraffes. Part adventure, part historical saga, and part coming-of-age love story, *West with Giraffes* explores what it means to be changed by the grace of animals, the kindness of strangers, the passing of time, and a story told before it's too late.

March 13, 2023

Big Lies in a Small Town by Diane Chamberlain

North Carolina, 2018: Morgan Christopher's life has been derailed. Taking the fall for a crime she did not commit; she finds herself serving a three-year stint in the North Carolina Women's Correctional Center. Her dream of a career in art is put on hold—until a mysterious visitor makes her an offer that will see her released immediately. Her assignment: restore an old post office mural in a sleepy southern town. Morgan knows nothing about art restoration, but desperate to leave prison, she accepts. What she finds under the layers of grime is a painting that tells the story of madness, violence, and a conspiracy of small-town secrets.

North Carolina, 1940: Anna Dale, an artist from New Jersey, wins a national contest to paint a mural for the post office in Edenton, North Carolina. Alone in the world and desperate for work, she accepts. But what she doesn't expect is to find herself immersed in a town where prejudices run deep, where people are hiding secrets behind closed doors, and where the price of being different might just end in murder. What happened to Anna Dale? Are the clues hidden in the decrepit mural? Can Morgan overcome her own demons to discover what exists beneath the layers of lies?

April 10, 2023

Switchboard Soldiers by Jennifer Chiaverini

From New York Times bestselling author Jennifer Chiaverini, a bold, revelatory novel about one of the great untold stories of World War I—the women of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, who broke down gender barriers in the military, smashed the workplace glass ceiling, and battled a pandemic as they helped lead the Allies to victory.

In June 1917, General John Pershing arrived in France to establish American forces in Europe. He immediately found himself unable to communicate with troops in the field. Pershing needed operators who could swiftly and accurately connect multiple calls, speak fluent French and English, remain steady under fire, and be utterly discreet, since the calls often conveyed classified information.

At the time, nearly all well-trained American telephone operators were women—but women were not permitted to enlist, or even to vote in most states. Nevertheless, the U.S. Army Signal Corps promptly began recruiting them. More than 7,600 women responded, including Grace Banker of New Jersey, a switchboard instructor with AT&T and an alumna of Barnard College; Marie Miossec, a Frenchwoman and aspiring opera singer; and Valerie DeSmedt, a twenty-year-old Pacific Telephone operator from Los Angeles, determined to strike a blow for her native Belgium.

May 8, 2023

Girls In the Stilt House by Kelly Mustian

Set in 1920s Mississippi, this debut Southern novel weaves a beautiful and harrowing story of two teenage girls cast in an unlikely partnership through murder—perfect for readers of *Where the Crawdads Sing* and *If the Creek Don't Rise*.

Ada promised herself she would never go back to the Trace, to her hard life on the swamp and her harsh father. But now, after running away to Baton Rouge and briefly knowing a different kind of life, she finds herself with nowhere to go but back home. And she knows there will be a price to pay with her father. Matilda, daughter of a sharecropper, is from the other side of the Trace. Doing what she can to protect her family from the whims and demands of some particularly callous locals is an ongoing struggle. She forms a plan to go north, to pack up the secrets she's holding about her life in the South and hang them on the line for all to see in Ohio. As the two girls are drawn deeper into a dangerous world of bootleggers and moral corruption, they must come to terms with the complexities of their tenuous bond and a hidden past that links them in ways that could cost them their lives.

June 10, 2023

Fearless Heart (Formerly The Birdhouse: A Gift of Hope) by Gail Cauble Girley

Robert Blair and his small family are stranded in New York City after the market crash of 1929. He walks many blocks to the river docks each day, hoping for enough work to feed his wife Ellen and their four year old son Stephen as well as pay the \$8.00 monthly rent for the slum in which they are forced to live. The small family is fortunate to have friends and faith to help them endure their precarious living conditions as they meet and commune with many gentle people in similar situations but with much of the same courage and faith demonstrated by the Blairs.

Robert notices a strange, black limousine in the neighborhood on several occasions as he walks to and from work and is curious as to its presence in the slums of New York. He manages to provide a small Christmas for his family but shortly after Christmas, the company which provides day work leaves the docks to move across town and he is without any hope of employment. He is desperate as he leaves their apartment building to seek work of any kind so as to feed and shelter his family. He steps aside as the frequently observed mysterious black limousine stops in front of him and he is approached by a stranger who will direct and influence the destiny of the Blairs. He is swept into a world he has never known and given information of which he has never dreamed. He has the support of his wife and their son as well as many friends as he struggles with the shocking torrent of information and choices he is forced to make. (This may be hard to find. Did not see it on Kindle, only in used stores.)

July 10, 2023

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Aging and reclusive Hollywood movie icon Evelyn Hugo is finally ready to tell the truth about her glamorous and scandalous life. But when she chooses unknown magazine reporter Monique Grant for the job, no one is more astounded than Monique herself. Why her? Why now? Monique is not exactly on top of the world. Her husband has left her, and her professional life is going nowhere. Regardless of why Evelyn has selected her to write her biography, Monique is determined to use this opportunity to jumpstart her career. Summoned to Evelyn's luxurious apartment, Monique listens in fascination as the actress tells her story. From making her way to Los Angeles in the 1950s to her decision to leave show business in the '80s, and, of course, the seven husbands along the way, Evelyn unspools a tale of ruthless ambition, unexpected friendship, and a great forbidden love. Monique begins to feel a very real connection to the legendary star, but as Evelyn's story near its conclusion, it becomes clear that her life intersects with Monique's own in tragic and irreversible ways.

August 14, 2023

Miss Julia Raises the Roof by Ann B. Ross

The nineteenth installment of the beloved and New York Times bestselling Miss Julia series. With her husband Sam off on a trip to Europe, Miss Julia reckons it's about time to roll up her sleeves and be of some use to her community. It's then that she hears that the nosy do-gooder Madge Taylor and the new pastor Rucker are embarking on a mission to buy up the vacant house next door to Hazel Marie and establish a group home for wayward teenagers. No stranger to taking in the down-and-out herself, Miss Julia is shocked to learn Madge and the pastor are keeping the project a secret. When Miss Julia and Hazel Marie start investigating, though, they uncover a far less philanthropic plot for the house that even Madge doesn't know about--one that could change the quiet, peaceful neighborhood forever.

September 11, 2023

The Lost Power (VanOps #1) by Avanti Centrae

DA VINCI CODE meets TOMB RAIDER in this award-winning thriller.

Spain 1057: During a thunderous battle, the first King of Aragon wrestles Alexander the Great's priceless Egyptian weapon from the Moors, but finds it holds a terrifying and mysterious power. Nearly a thousand years later, on a fog-shrouded Napa Valley morning, gunshots and the sound of breaking glass rip through the silence. Maddy Marshall, an app designer with special martial-arts abilities, and her twin brother, Will Argones, quickly run toward the sound. Horrified, they discover a sniper has cut down two members of their family. Before the pool of blood on the living room floor is dry, their father sends the twins on a dangerous quest to recover Alexander's ancient weapon. Joined by a broad-shouldered friend who harbors a secret alliance with VanOps, an ultra-black covert agency, they soon discover the lethal sniper is from Russia. They follow time-worn clues from a medieval Spanish castle to a lost warren under the streets of Jerusalem, racing to unlock the secrets that will lead them to an arcane power—before a hostile state seizes the power and cripples the United States. To survive, they must go undercover and off-grid. No place is safe, a wrong move means death, and even a simple phone call is off limits. Because now, the sniper has his sights set on them.

October 9, 2023

Hidden Figures by Margot Lee Shetterfly

The #1 New York Times Bestseller. Set amid the civil rights movement, the never-before-told true story of NASA's African-American female mathematicians who played a crucial role in America's space program. Before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of professionals worked as 'Human Computers,' calculating the flight paths that would enable these historic achievements. Among these were a coterie of bright, talented African-American women. Segregated from their white counterparts, these 'colored computers' used pencil and paper to write the equations that would launch rockets and astronauts, into space. Moving from World War II through NASA's golden age, touching on the civil rights era, the Space Race, the Cold War, and the women's rights movement, 'Hidden Figures' interweaves a rich history of mankind's greatest adventure with the intimate stories of five courageous women whose work forever changed the world.

November 13, 2023

The Christmas Train by David Baldacci

delightful journey filled with memorable characters who have packed their bags with as much wisdom as mischief...and a story that shows how we do get second chances to fulfill our deepest hopes and dreams, especially during this season of miracles.

Disillusioned journalist Tom Langdon must get from Washington to L.A. in time for Christmas. Forced to take the train across the country because of a slight "misunderstanding" at airport security, he begins a journey of self-discovery and rude awakenings, mysterious goings-on and thrilling adventures, screwball escapades, and holiday magic.

He has no idea that the locomotives pulling him across America will actually take him into the rugged terrain of his own heart, as he rediscovers people's essential goodness and someone very special he believed he had lost.

Equal parts hilarious, poignant, suspenseful, and thrilling, David Baldacci's *The Christmas Train* is a delightful journey filled with memorable characters who have packed their bags with as much wisdom as mischief...and a story that shows how we do get second chances to fulfill our deepest hopes and dreams, especially during this season of miracles.