

DBC Book Club Book Recommendations

The Underground Railroad: A Novel, Colson Whitehead (Cindy H.)

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, this #1 New York Times bestseller chronicles a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor: engineers and conductors operate a secret network of actual tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora, a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia, embarks on a harrowing flight from one state to the next, encountering, like Gulliver, strange yet familiar iterations of her own world at each stop.

The Overstory: A Novel, Richard Powers (Sharon W.)

Winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction. This is a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of—and paean to—the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, the novel unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking stories that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is a world alongside ours—vast, slow, interconnected, resourceful, magnificently inventive, and almost invisible to us.

The Rent Collector, Cameron Wright (Adrienne)

Survival for Ki Lim and Sang Ly is a daily battle at Stung Meanchey, the largest municipal waste dump in all of Cambodia. They make their living scavenging recyclables from the trash. Life would be hard enough without the worry for their chronically ill child, Nisay, and the added expense of medicines that are not working. Just when things seem worst, Sang Ly learns a secret about the ill-tempered rent collector who comes demanding money—a secret that sets in motion a tide that will change the life of everyone it sweeps past. This is a story of hope, of one woman's journey to save her son and another woman's chance at redemption. It demonstrates that even in a dump in Cambodia—perhaps especially in a dump in Cambodia—*everyone deserves a second chance*.

Thick as Thieves, Sandra Brown (Chris B.)

In this tantalizing, a woman uncovers lifelong secrets as she searches for the truth behind her father's involvement in a heist gone wrong. Twenty years ago in the dead of night, four seemingly random individuals pulled the ultimate heist and almost walked away with half a million dollars. But by daybreak, their plan had been shot to hell. One of them was in the hospital. One was in jail. One was dead. And one got away with it—presumably with the money, after murdering his accomplice.

Arden Maxwell, the daughter of the man who disappeared all those years ago decides to return to her family home near mysterious Caddo Lake, and finally get answers to the many questions that torment her. Little does she know, two of her father's co-conspirators—a war hero and a corrupt district attorney—are watching her every move.

Count the Ways, Joyce Maynard (Peggy)

Eleanor and Cam meet at a crafts fair in Vermont in the early 1970s. She's an artist and writer, he makes wooden bowls. Within four years they are parents to three children, and their New Hampshire farm provides everything she always wanted. Then comes a terrible accident, caused by Cam's negligence. Unable to forgive him, Eleanor is consumed by bitterness, losing herself in her life as a mother, while Cam finds solace with a new young partner.

Over the decades that follow, the five members of this fractured family make surprising discoveries and decisions that occasionally bring them together, and often tear them apart. This is a beautifully told story of holding on and learning to let go, of a family forced to confront essential, painful truths of its past, and find redemption and forgiveness in its darkest hours.

The Four Winds: A Novel, Kristin Hannah (Chris B.)

This is the story about love and heroism and hope, set during the Great Depression, a time when the country was in crisis and at war with itself, when millions were out of work and even the land seemed to have turned against them.

Texas in 1921 is a place and time of abundance. The Great War is over, the bounty of the land is plentiful, and America is on the brink of a new and optimistic era. But for Elsa Wolcott, deemed too old to marry in a time when marriage is a woman's only option, the future seems bleak. With her reputation in ruin, there is only one respectable choice: marriage to a man she barely knows. By 1934, the world has changed; millions are out of work and drought has devastated the Great Plains. In this uncertain and perilous time, Elsa—like so many of her neighbors—must make an agonizing choice: fight for the land she loves or leave it behind and go west, to California, in search of a better life for her family.

The Giver of Stars: A Novel, Jojo Moyes (Patty S.)

Based on a true story rooted in America's past this is a tale of five extraordinary women, who become known as the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky, and their remarkable journey through the mountains of Kentucky and beyond in Depression-era America. Women who refuse to be cowed by men or by convention. And though they face all kinds of dangers in a landscape that is at times breathtakingly beautiful, at others brutal, they're committed to their job: bringing books to people who have never had any, arming them with facts that will change their lives.

The Dutch House: A Novel, Ann Patchett (Patty S.)

At the end of WWII, Cyril Conroy combines luck and a single canny investment to begin an enormous real estate empire, propelling his family from poverty to enormous wealth. His first order of business is to buy the Dutch House, a lavish estate in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia. Meant as a surprise for his wife, the house sets in motion the undoing of everyone he loves. The story is told by Cyril's son Danny, as he and his older sister, Maeve, are exiled from the house where they grew up by their stepmother. The two wealthy siblings are thrown back into the poverty their parents had escaped from and find that all they have to count on is one another. It is this unshakeable bond between them that both saves their lives and thwarts their futures.

The Other Mrs.: A Novel, Mary Kubica (Chris B.)

A woman is drawn into a mysterious web of secrets in this twisty whodunnit. Sadie and Will Foust have only just moved their family from Chicago to a coastal island in Maine when their neighbor Morgan Baines is found dead in her home. The murder rocks their tiny coastal island. As the eyes of suspicion turn toward the new family in town, Sadie is drawn deeper into the mystery of what really happened that dark and deadly night. But the more Sadie discovers about Mrs. Baines, the more she begins to realize just how much she has to lose if the truth ever comes to light.

Klara and the Sun: A Novel, Kazuo Ishiguro (Sharon G.)

Here is the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend for young people with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass on the street outside. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her. This is a look at the world (set in the near future) through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator, and explores the fundamental question: what does it mean to love? Ishiguro is a Nobel laureate and author of "The Remains of the Day," among other bestsellers.

The Vanishing Half: A Novel, Brit Bennett (Jane)

The Vignes are identical twin sisters. But after growing up together in a small, southern black community and running away at age sixteen, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different as adults, it's everything: their families, their communities, their racial identities. Many years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same town she once tried to escape. The other secretly passes for white, and her white husband knows nothing of her past. Even separated by so many miles and so many lies, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen to the next generation, when their own daughters' storylines intersect?

Gap Creek (Oprah's Book Club): A, Robert Morgan (Sheryl)

Young Julie Harmon works "hard as a man," they say, so hard that at times she's not sure she can stop. People depend on her to slaughter the hogs and nurse the dying. At just 17 she marries and moves down into the valley of Gap Creek, where perhaps life will be better. But Julie and Hank's new life in the valley, in the last years of the 19th century, is more complicated than they ever imagined. Sometimes it's hard to tell what to fear most—the fires and floods or the flesh-and-blood grifters, drunks, and busybodies who insinuate themselves into their new life. To survive, they must find out whether love can keep the chaos and madness at bay.

The Evening and the Morning, Ken Follett (Robin S.)

Covering ten years 997AD - 1007AD, this is a semi-historically based story of a small area of Britain. We meet Ragna, a young Norman woman who was married off to a nobleman in hopes of getting help protecting the British area from the Vikings. We also meet a young British lad, Edgar, who shows unique talents and abilities. The third major player is Aldred, an intelligent and ambitious young priest. Throughout the book, the small village gradually becomes thriving Knightsbridge, through the input the three main characters. Knightsbridge, of course, is the setting for Follett's *Pillars of the Earth* trilogy, which begins in the twelfth century AD. *The Morning and the Evening* serves as a prequel. Highly recommended whether or not you've read the *Pillars of the Earth* trilogy.

The Third Twin: A Novel of Suspense, Ken Follett (Chris B.)

Jeannie Ferrami is a young professor at Jones Falls University who is investigating the balance of nature versus nurture in criminality. Driven by a secret from her past, Dr. Ferrami is overjoyed to find a straightarrow law student at JFU who has an identical twin (raised separately) who is a convicted rapist. She is not overjoyed, however, when that man is arrested for raping her best friend. Surely Mr. Perfect couldn't be guilty? Enter the evil masterminds, three Nixon-era compadres who have been toiling for decades to make America safe for racial purity. It's bad enough that one of the conspirators is Dr. Ferrami's boss, but another is eyeing the Oval Office. The young professor has stumbled onto a secret that could ruin them all, and it's only a matter of pages before bad things start to happen.

Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune, by Bill Dedman and Paul Clark Newell, Jr. (Chris B.)

When Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Bill Dedman noticed a grand home for sale, empty for nearly sixty years, he stumbled upon a mystery of wealth and loss, connecting the Gilded Age of the 19th century with a 21st century battle over a \$300 million inheritance. At its heart is a reclusive heiress named Huguette Clark, a woman so secretive that, at the time of her death at age 104, no new photograph of her had been seen in decades. Though she owned several palatial estates, why had she lived for 20 years in a simple hospital room, despite being in excellent health? Was she in control of her fortune, or controlled by those managing her money? This is an enthralling story of an eccentric woman, a last jewel of the Gilded Age who lived life on her own terms.

A Time for Mercy, John Grisham (Sharon G.)

Readers return to Clanton, MI in the 1990s where Jake Brigance’s client is Drew Gamble, a timid 16 year old boy charged with murdering his mother’s abusive boyfriend who happens to be an officer of the law in Clanton. The story deals with issues of social class, policing, alcoholism, rape, spousal abuse, small town corruption and much more.

Many in Clanton want a swift trial and the death penalty, but Brigance digs in and discovers that there is more to the story than meets the eye. Jake’s fierce commitment to saving Drew from the gas chamber puts his career, his financial security, and the safety of his family on the line.

Mary, Mary, James Patterson (Jeanine) (Alex Cross series, book 11)

Someone is murdering Hollywood's A-list. FBI Agent Alex Cross is on vacation with his family when he gets a call: a well-known actress was shot outside her home in Beverly Hills. Then an editor for the *Los Angeles Times* receives an email describing the murder in vivid details. Alex quickly learns that the killer, known as Mary Smith, has killed before and plans to kill again. Is this the plan of an obsessed fan or a spurned actor, or is it part of something much more frightening? Members of Hollywood's A-list fear they're next on Mary's list, and the case grows by blockbuster proportions as the LAPD and FBI scramble to stop Mary before she can kill again.

Long Bright River: A Novel, Liz Moore (Cindy H.)

In a Philadelphia neighborhood rocked by the opioid crisis, two once-inseparable sisters find themselves at odds. One, Kacey, lives on the streets in the vise of addiction. The other, Mickey, walks those same blocks on her police beat. They don't speak anymore, but Mickey never stops worrying about her sibling. Then Kacey disappears, suddenly, at the same time that a mysterious string of murders begins in Mickey's district. Mickey becomes dangerously obsessed with finding the culprit--and her sister--before it's too late.

Lonesome Dove: A Novel, Larry McMurtry (Dorothy)

A Pulitzer Prize-winning classic of the American West that follows two aging Texas Rangers embarking on one last adventure. Journey to the dusty little Texas town of Lonesome Dove and meet an unforgettable assortment of heroes and outlaws, whores and ladies, Indians and settlers. Richly authentic, beautifully written, always dramatic. Considered by some to be the grandest novel ever written about the last defiant wilderness of America.

The Witch Elm: A Novel, Tana French (Sharon G.)

Toby is a happy-go-lucky charmer who’s dodged a scrape at work and is celebrating with friends when the night takes a turn that will change his life—he surprises two burglars who beat him and leave him for dead. Struggling to recover from his injuries, beginning to understand that he might never be the same man again, he takes

refuge at his family's ancestral home to care for his dying uncle Hugo. Then a skull is found in the trunk of an elm tree in the garden—and as detectives close in, Toby is forced to face the possibility that his past may not be what he has always believed. *The Witch Elm* asks what we become, and what we're capable of, when we no longer know who we are.

The Winemaker's Wife, Kristen Harmel (Sheryl)

This moving story begins in Champagne in 1940. Inès has just married Michel, the owner of storied champagne house, Maison Chauveau, when the Germans invade. As the danger mounts, Michel turns his back on his marriage to begin hiding munitions for the Resistance. Inès fears they'll be exposed. But for Céline, half-Jewish wife of Chauveau's chef de cave, the risk is even greater as rumors abound of Jews being shipped east to an unspeakable fate.

In New York in 2019, Liv Kent has just lost everything when her eccentric French grandmother shows up unannounced, insisting on a trip to France. She has an ulterior motive and a tragic, decades-old story to share. When past and present finally collide, Liv finds herself on a road to salvation that leads right to the caves of the Maison Chauveau.

Beach Music: A Novel, Pat Conroy (Peggy)

A Southerner living abroad, Jack McCall is scarred by tragedy and betrayal. His desire to find peace after his wife's suicide draws him into a painful, intimate search for the one secret in his family's past that can heal his anguished heart. Spanning three generations and two continents, from the contemporary ruins of the American South to the ancient ruins of Rome, from the unutterable horrors of the Holocaust to the lingering trauma of Vietnam, *Beach Music* sings with life's pain and glory. It is a novel of lyric intensity and searing truth, another masterpiece among Pat Conroy's legendary and beloved novels.

Little Fires Everywhere: A Novel, Celeste Ng (Maggie)

In Shaker Heights, a progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned. No one embodies this more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. Mia Warren, an artist and single mother, arrives with her teenaged daughter, Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. When friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town—and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena tries to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs.

The Bean Trees, Barbara Kingsolver (Dorothy)

This is Barbara Kingsolver's first novel and widely regarded as a modern classic. It is the charming tale of rural Kentucky native Taylor Greer, who only wants to get away from her roots and avoid getting pregnant. She succeeds but inherits a 3-year-old native-American girl named Turtle along the way. Together, from Oklahoma to Tucson, Arizona, half-Cherokee Taylor and Turtle search for a new life in the West. This highly praised novel focuses on love and friendship, abandonment and belonging as Taylor, out of money and seemingly out of options, settles in Tucson and begins working at Jesus Is Lord Used Tires while trying to make a life for herself and Turtle.