

2020 Book Club Picks

NONFICTION

Victoria & Albert: A Royal Love Affair—Daisy Goodwin (303 pages)

More than 16 million viewers watched the first season of the Masterpiece presentation of *Victoria*, created and written by Daisy Goodwin. But what happened after the Queen married her handsome prince? Did they live happily ever after, or did their marriage, like so many royal marriages past and present, fizzle into a loveless round of duty? This all-new companion book by Daisy Goodwin and Sara Sheridan transports us to the private world of Victoria and Albert. Though first cousins, they could not have been more different: Victoria was impulsive, emotional, and capricious, Albert cautious, self-controlled, and logical. But together they forged a bond with each other and with their people that would change the world. Drawing on letters and diaries and fresh insights into royal history, this book charts the constant ebb and flow of power within the couple's surprisingly ardent and modern marriage.

Stay Sexy and Don't Get Murdered—Karen Kilgariff (300 pages)

A conversation between friends Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark about what they've learned from their biggest mistakes, their most triumphant successes, their favorite therapists, and their mutual obsession with true crime. From growing up as latchkey kids to their formative years working at the Gap and Hot Topic to their struggles with substances and mental health, Karen and Georgia share some of the most significant moments in their lives. Together they inspect their own hard-earned wisdom with brutal and hilarious candor. In a culture that mythologizes killers, celebrates 'personality-corrupting toxic masculinity bullshit,' and holds victims responsible for the violence committed against them, Karen and Georgia preach self-advocacy, self-love, and freedom from responsibility for other people's choices. Guided by their own experiences and revelations with a little help from the Riot Grrrl movement, Ann Rule, and 'billions of hours of therapy,' Karen and Georgia are here to encourage you to put your own needs first and become unfuckwithable. Part dual memoir, part life manual, this is an account of two lives that collided over the dark stuff. Inspired by the empowering and offbeat battle cries made famous on their hit podcast, Karen and Georgia recount the formative moments of their lives that taught them everything they know, and everything they don't, about life, friendship, and various pancake situations.

The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth—Josh Levin (400 pages)

On the South Side of Chicago in 1974, Linda Taylor reported a phony burglary, concocting a lie about stolen furs and jewelry. The detective who checked it out soon discovered she was a welfare cheat who drove a Cadillac to collect ill-gotten government checks. And that was just the beginning: Taylor, it turned out, was also a kidnapper, and possibly a murderer. A desperately ill teacher, a combat-traumatized Marine, an elderly woman hungry for companionship; after Taylor came into their lives, all three ended up dead under suspicious circumstances. But nobody--not the journalists who touted her story, not the police, and not presidential candidate Ronald Reagan--seemed to care about anything but her welfare thievery.

Growing up in the Jim Crow South, Taylor was made an outcast because of her color. As she rose to infamy, the press and politicians manipulated her image to demonize poor black women. Part social history, part true-crime investigation, Josh Levin's mesmerizing book, the product of six years of reporting and research, is a fascinating account of American racism and an expose of the "welfare

queen" myth, one that fueled political debates that reverberate to this day. The Queen tells, for the first time, the fascinating story of what was done to Linda Taylor, what she did to others, and what was done in her name.

The Castle on Sunset: Life, Death, Love, Art, and Scandal at Hollywood's Chateau Marmont—Shawn Levy (384 pages)

For nearly ninety years, Hollywood's brightest stars have favored the Chateau Marmont as a home away from home. An apartment house-turned-hotel, it has hosted generations of gossip and folklore: 1930s bombshell Jean Harlow took lovers during her third honeymoon there; director Nicholas Ray slept with his sixteen-year-old *Rebel Without a Cause* star Natalie Wood; Anthony Perkins and Tab Hunter met poolside and began a secret affair; Jim Morrison swung from the balconies, once falling nearly to his death; John Belushi suffered a fatal overdose in a private bungalow; Lindsay Lohan got the boot after racking up nearly \$50,000 in charges in less than two months.

Perched above the Sunset Strip like a fairytale castle, the Chateau seems to come from another world entirely. Its singular appearance houses an equally singular history. While a city, an industry, and a culture have changed around it, Chateau Marmont has welcomed the most iconic and iconoclastic personalities in film, music, and media. It appeals to the rich and famous not just for its European ambiance but for its seclusion: Much of what's happened inside the Chateau's walls has eluded the public eye.

Until now. Shawn Levy recounts the wild revelries and scandalous liaisons; the creative breakthroughs and marital breakdowns; the births and deaths that the Chateau has been a party to. Vivid, salacious, and richly informed, his book is a glittering tribute to Hollywood as seen from inside the walls of its most hallowed hotel.

The Starved Rock Murders—Steve Stout (364 pages)

Tells the story of the 1960s murder of three women at Starved Rock State Park.

Call the Midwife—Jennifer Worth (340 pages)

Reflects on the experiences of Jennifer Worth as a midwife in London's postwar East End, including the nuns from whom she learned her craft and the interesting and challenging births she aided during her career.

FICTION

Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch—Neil Gaiman (384 pages)

The world is going to end next Saturday, but there are a few problems--the Antichrist has been misplaced, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride motorcycles, and the representatives from heaven and hell decide that they like the human race.

City of Girls—Elizabeth Gilbert (480 pages)

In 1940, nineteen-year-old Vivian Morris has just been kicked out of Vassar College, owing to her lackluster freshman-year performance. Her affluent parents send her to Manhattan to live with her Aunt Peg, who owns a flamboyant, crumbling midtown theater called the Lily Playhouse. There Vivian is introduced to an entire cosmos of unconventional and charismatic characters, from the fun-chasing

showgirls to a sexy male actor, a grand-dame actress, a lady-killer writer, and no-nonsense stage manager. But when Vivian makes a personal mistake that results in professional scandal, it turns her new world upside down in ways that it will take her years to fully understand. Ultimately, though, it leads her to a new understanding of the kind of life she craves - and the kind of freedom it takes to pursue it. It will also lead to the love of her life, a love that stands out from all the rest.

Now eighty-nine years old and telling her story at last, Vivian recalls how the events of those years altered the course of her life - and the gusto and autonomy with which she approached it. "At some point in a woman's life, she just gets tired of being ashamed all the time," she muses. "After that, she is free to become whoever she truly is." Written with a powerful wisdom about human desire and connection, *City of Girls* is a love story like no other.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time—Mark Haddon (226 pages)

Although gifted with a superbly logical brain, for fifteen-year-old Christopher everyday interactions and admonishments have little meaning. He lives on patterns, rules, and a diagram kept in his pocket. Then one day, a neighbor's dog, Wellington, is killed and his carefully constructive universe is threatened. Christopher sets out to solve the murder in the style of his favourite (logical) detective, Sherlock Holmes. What follows makes for a novel that is funny, poignant and fascinating in its portrayal of a person whose curse and blessing are a mind that perceives the world entirely literally.

11/22/63—Stephen King (849 pages) (If interested, we can read this book over the course of two months)

On November 22, 1963, three shots rang out in Dallas, President Kennedy died, and the world changed. What if you could change it back? The author's novel is about a man who travels back in time to prevent the JFK assassination. In this novel that is a tribute to a simpler era, he sweeps readers back in time to another moment, a real life moment, when everything went wrong: the JFK assassination. And he introduces readers to a character who has the power to change the course of history. Jake Epping is a thirty-five-year-old high school English teacher in Lisbon Falls, Maine, who makes extra money teaching adults in the GED program. He receives an essay from one of the students, a gruesome, harrowing first person story about the night fifty years ago when Harry Dunning's father came home and killed his mother, his sister, and his brother with a hammer. Harry escaped with a smashed leg, as evidenced by his crooked walk. Not much later, Jake's friend Al, who runs the local diner, divulges a secret: his storeroom is a portal to 1958. He enlists Jake on an insane, and insanelly possible, mission to try to prevent the Kennedy assassination. So begins Jake's new life as George Amberson and his new world of Elvis and JFK, of big American cars and sock hops, of a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald and a beautiful high school librarian named Sadie Dunhill, who becomes the love of Jake's life, a life that transgresses all the normal rules of time.

Confessions of a Domestic Failure—Bunmi Laditan (330 pages)

There are good moms and bad moms, and then there are hot-mess moms. Introducing Ashley Keller, career girl turned stay-at-home mom who's trying to navigate the world of Pinterest-perfect, Facebook-fantastic, and Instagram-impressive mommies but failing miserably. When Ashley gets the opportunity to participate in the 'Motherhood Better' bootcamp run by the mommy-blog-empire maven she idolizes, she jumps at the chance to become the perfect mom she's always wanted to be. But will she fly high or flop?

The Last Collection: A Novel of Elsa Schiaparelli and Coco Chanel—Jeanne Mackin (352 pages)

Paris, 1938. Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli are fighting for recognition as the most successful and influential fashion designer in France, and their rivalry is already legendary. They oppose each other at every turn, in both their politics and their designs: Chanel's are classic, elegant, and practical; Schiaparelli's bold, experimental, and surreal.

When Lily Sutter, a recently widowed young American teacher, visits her brother, Charlie, in Paris, he insists on buying her a couture dress—a Chanel. Lily, however, prefers a Schiaparelli. Charlie's beautiful and socially prominent girlfriend soon begins wearing Schiaparelli's designs as well, and much of Paris follows in her footsteps.

Schiaparelli offers budding artist Lily a job at her store, and Lily finds herself increasingly involved with Schiaparelli and Chanel's personal war. Their fierce competition reaches new and dangerous heights as the Nazis and the looming threat of World War II bear down on Paris.

Leave No Trace—Mindy Meija (322 pages)

There is a place in Minnesota with hundreds of miles of glacial lakes and untouched forests called the Boundary Waters. Ten years ago a man and his son trekked into this wilderness and never returned. Search teams found their campsite ravaged by what looked like a bear. They were presumed dead until a decade later ... the son appeared. Discovered while ransacking an outfitter store, he was violent and uncommunicative and sent to a psychiatric facility. Maya Stark, the assistant language therapist, is charged with making a connection with their high-profile patient. No matter how she tries, however, he refuses to answer questions about his father or the last ten years of his life. But Maya, who was abandoned by her own mother, has secrets, too. And as she's drawn closer to this enigmatic boy who is no longer a boy, she'll risk everything to reunite him with his father who has disappeared from the known world.

Sleeping Giants—Sylvain Neuvel (304 pages)

17 years ago: A girl in South Dakota falls through the earth, then wakes up dozens of feet below ground on the palm of what seems to be a giant metal hand. Today: She is a top-level physicist leading a team of people to understand exactly what that hand is, where it came from, and what it portends for humanity. A swift and spellbinding tale told almost exclusively through transcriptions of interviews conducted by a mysterious and unnamed character, this is a unique debut that describes a hunt for truth, power, and giant body parts.

The Whisper Man—Alex North (355 pages)

After the sudden death of his wife, Tom Kennedy believes a fresh start will help him and his young son Jake heal. A new beginning, a new house, a new town. Featherbank. But the town has a dark past. Twenty years ago, a serial killer abducted and murdered five residents. Until Frank Carter was finally caught, he was nicknamed "The Whisper Man," for he would lure his victims out by whispering at their windows at night. Just as Tom and Jake settle into their new home, a young boy vanishes. His disappearance bears an unnerving resemblance to Frank Carter's crimes, reigniting old rumors that he preyed with an accomplice. Now, detectives Amanda Beck and Pete Willis must find the boy before it is too late, even if that means Pete has to revisit his great foe in prison: The Whisper Man. And then Jake begins acting strangely. He hears a whispering at his window.

Where the Crawdads Sing—Delia Owens (370 pages)

For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. She's barefoot and wild; unfit for polite society. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark. But Kya is not what they say. Abandoned at age ten, she has survived on her own in the marsh that she calls home. A born naturalist with just one day of school, she takes life lessons from the land, learning from the false signals of fireflies the real way of this world. But while she could have lived in solitude forever, the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. Drawn to two young men from town, who are each intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new and startling world -- until the unthinkable happens.

Lock Every Door—Riley Sager (368 pages)

The next heart-pounding thriller from New York Times bestselling author Riley Sager follows a young woman whose new job apartment sitting in one of New York's oldest and most glamorous buildings may cost more than it pays. No visitors. No nights spent away from the apartment. No disturbing the other residents, all of whom are rich or famous or both. These are the only rules for Jules Larsen's new job as an apartment sitter at the Bartholomew, one of Manhattan's most high-profile and mysterious buildings. Recently heartbroken and just plain broke, Jules is taken in by the splendor of her surroundings and accepts the terms, ready to leave her past life behind. As she gets to know the residents and staff of the Bartholomew, Jules finds herself drawn to fellow apartment sitter Ingrid, who comfortingly reminds her of the sister she lost eight years ago. When Ingrid confides that the Bartholomew is not what it seems and the dark history hidden beneath its gleaming facade is starting to frighten her, Jules brushes it off as a harmless ghost story. Until the next day, when Ingrid disappears. Searching for the truth about Ingrid's disappearance, Jules digs deeper into the Bartholomew's sordid past and into the secrets kept within its walls. What she discovers pits Jules against the clock as she races to unmask a killer, expose the building's hidden past, and escape the Bartholomew before her temporary status becomes permanent.

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter—Erika L. Sanchez (344 pages)

Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never abandon their family. But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role. Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out every possible way Julia has failed.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society—Mary Ann Shaffer (278 pages)

As London is emerging from the shadow of World War II, writer Juliet Ashton discovers her next subject in a book club on Guernsey--a club born as a spur-of-the-moment alibi after its members are discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying their island.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies—Seth Grahame-Smith (319 pages)

As a mysterious plague falls upon the village of Meryton and zombies start rising from the dead, Elizabeth Bennet is determined to destroy the evil menace, but becomes distracted by the arrival of the dashing and arrogant Mr. Darcy.

The Light Between Oceans—M.L. Stedman (345 pages)

Australia, 1926. After four harrowing years fighting on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns home to take a job as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, nearly half a day's journey from the coast. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes once a season and shore leaves are granted every other year at best, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby.

Tom, whose records as a lighthouse keeper are meticulous and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the man and infant immediately. But Isabel has taken the tiny baby to her breast. Against Tom's judgment, they claim her as their own and name her Lucy. When she is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in the world. Their choice has devastated one of them.

The Female Persuasion—Meg Wolitzer (464 pages)

Greer Kadetsky is a shy college freshman when she meets the woman she hopes will change her life. Faith Frank, dazzlingly persuasive and elegant at sixty-three, has been a central pillar of the women's movement for decades, a figure who inspires others to influence the world. Upon hearing Faith speak for the first time, Greer—madly in love with her boyfriend, Cory, but still full of longing for an ambition that she can't quite place—feels her inner world light up. And then, astonishingly, Faith invites Greer to make something out of that sense of purpose, leading Greer down the most exciting path of her life as it winds toward and away from her meant-to-be love story with Cory and the future she'd always imagined.

YOUNG ADULT

Midnight at the Electric—Jodi Lynn Anderson (272 pages)

Kansas, 2065. Adri has secured a slot as a Colonist—one of the lucky few handpicked to live on Mars. But weeks before launch, she discovers the journal of a girl who lived in her house over a hundred years ago, and is immediately drawn into the mystery surrounding her fate. While Adri knows she must focus on the mission ahead, she becomes captivated by a life that's been lost in time...and how it might be inextricably tied to her own.

Oklahoma, 1934. Amidst the fear and uncertainty of the Dust Bowl, Catherine fantasizes about her family's farmhand, and longs for the immortality promised by a professor at a traveling show called the Electric. But as her family's situation becomes more dire—and the suffocating dust threatens her sister's life—Catherine must find the courage to sacrifice everything she loves in order to save the one person she loves most.

England, 1919. In the recovery following the First World War, Lenore struggles with her grief for her brother, a fallen British soldier, and plans to sail to America in pursuit of a childhood friend. But even if

she makes it that far, will her friend be the person she remembers, and the one who can bring her back to herself?

While their stories spans thousands of miles and multiple generations, Lenore, Catherine, and Adri's fates are entwined.

Out of the Blue—Sophie Cameron (266 pages)

Jaya's life has completely fallen apart. Her mother is dead, her dad is on an obsessive wild goose chase, and mysterious winged beings are falling from the sky. For the past nine months, none of the them have survived the plummet to Earth, but when a female being lands near Jaya - and is still alive - she doesn't call the authorities. She hides the being and tries to nurse her back to health.

Set against the backdrop of a society trying to come to grips with the possibility of a world beyond, Out of the Blue is the story of how one unexpected turn of events can put you on a path toward healing.

We Were Liars—E. Lockhart (227 pages)

A beautiful and distinguished family.

A private island.

A brilliant, damaged girl; a passionate, political boy.

A group of four friends—the Liars—whose friendship turns destructive.

A revolution. An accident. A secret.

Lies upon lies.

True love.

The truth.

We Were Liars is a modern, sophisticated suspense novel from New York Times bestselling author, National Book Award finalist, and Printz Award honoree E. Lockhart.