NFPL Afternoon Book Club 2021-22

Tuesday, September 14th @ 1:00 PM

The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway

In a city under siege, four people whose lives have been Upended are ultimately reminded of what it is to be human. From his window, a musician sees twenty-two of his friends and neighbors waiting in a breadline. Then, in a flash, they are killed by a mortar attack. In an act of defiance, the man picks up his cello and decides to play at the site of the shelling for twenty-two days, honoring their memory. Elsewhere, a young man leaves home to collect drinking water for his family and, in the face of danger, must weigh the value of generosity against selfish survivalism. A third man, older, sets off in search of bread and distraction and instead runs into a long-ago friend who reminds him of the city he thought he had lost, and the man he once was. As both men are drawn into the orbit of cello music, a fourth character—a young woman, a sniper—holds the fate of the cellist in her hands. As she protects him with her life, her own army prepares to challenge the kind of person she has become.

Tuesday, October 12th @ 1:00 PM

If the Creek Don’t Rise by Leah Wise

In a North Carolina mountain town filled with moonshine and rotten husbands, Sadie Blue is only the latest girl to face a dead-end future at the mercy of a dangerous drunk. She’s been married to Roy Tupkin for fifteen days, and she knows now that she should have listened to the folks who said he was trouble. But when a stranger sweeps in and knocks the world off-kilter for everyone in town, Sadie begins to think there might be more to life than being Roy’s wife.

As stark and magnificent as Appalachia itself, If the Creek Don’t Rise is a bold and beautifully layered debut about a dusty, desperate town finding the inner strength it needs to outrun its demons. The folks of Baines Creek will take you deep into the mountains with heart, honesty, and homegrown grit.

Tuesday, November 9th @ 1:00 PM

Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse

It is the story of the quest of Siddhartha, a wealthy Indian Brahmin who casts off a life of privilege and comfort to seek spiritual fulfillment and wisdom. On his journey, Siddhartha encounters wandering ascetics, Buddhist monks, and successful merchants, as well as a courtesan named Kamala and a simple ferryman who has attained enlightenment. Traveling among these people and experiencing life’s vital passages—love, work, friendship, and fatherhood—Siddhartha discovers that true knowledge is guided from within.
Tuesday, December 14\textsuperscript{th} @ 1:00 PM

\textit{The Sense of an Ending} by Julian Barnes

Tony Webster and his clique first met Adrian Finn at school. Sex-hungry and book-hungry, they navigated the girl drought of gawky adolescence together, trading in affectations, in-jokes, rumour and wit. Maybe Adrian was a little more serious than the others, certainly more intelligent, but they swore to stay friends forever. Until Adrian’s life took a turn into tragedy, and all of them, especially Tony, moved on and did their best to forget.

Now Tony is in middle age. He’s had a career and a marriage, a cabin divorce. He gets along nicely, he thinks, with his one child, a daughter, and even with his ex-wife. He’s certainly never tried to hurt anybody. Memory, though, is imperfect. It can always throw up surprises, as a lawyer’s letter is about to prove. The unexpected bequest conveyed by that letter leads Tony on a dogged search through a past suddenly turned murky. And how do you carry on, contentedly, when events conspire to upset all your vaunted truths?

2022

Tuesday, January 11\textsuperscript{th} @ 1:00 PM

\textit{The Paris Library} by Janet Skeslien Charles

PARIS, 1939

Odile Souchet is obsessed with books, and her new job at the American Library in Paris - with its thriving community of students, writers and book lovers - is a dream come true. When war is declared, the Library is determined to remain open. But then the Nazis invade Paris, and everything changes. In Occupied Paris, choices as black and white as the words on a page become a murky shade of grey - choices that will put many on the wrong side of history, and the consequences of which will echo for decades to come.

MONTANA, 1983

Lily is a lonely teenager desperate to escape small-town Montana. She grows close to her neighbour Odile, discovering they share the same love of language, the same longings. But as Lily uncovers more about Odile’s mysterious past, she discovers a dark secret, closely guarded and long hidden. Based on the true Second World War story of the heroic librarians at the American Library in Paris, this is an unforgettable novel of romance, friendship, family, and of heroism found in the quietest of places.
Tuesday, February 8th  @ 1:00 PM

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman

Looking at real estate isn’t usually a life-or-death situation, but an apartment open house becomes just that when a failed bank robber bursts in and takes a group of strangers’ hostage. The captives include a recently retired couple who relentlessly hunt down fixer-uppers to avoid the painful truth that they can’t fix their own marriage. There’s a wealthy bank director who has been too busy to care about anyone else and a young couple who are about to have their first child but can’t seem to agree on anything, from where they want to live to how they met in the first place. Add to the mix an eighty-seven-year-old woman who has lived long enough not to be afraid of someone waving a gun in her face, a flustered but still-ready-to-make-a-deal real estate agent, and a mystery man who has locked himself in the apartment’s only bathroom, and you’ve got the worst group of hostages in the world.

Each of them carries a lifetime of grievances, hurts, secrets, and passions that are ready to boil over. None of them is entirely who they appear to be. And all of them—the bank robber included—desperately crave some sort of rescue. As the authorities and the media surround the premises these reluctant allies will reveal surprising truths about themselves and set in motion a chain of events so unexpected that even they can hardly explain what happens next.

Tuesday, March 8th  @ 1:00 PM

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz by Erik Larson

On Winston Churchill’s first day as prime minister, Adolf Hitler invaded Holland and Belgium. Poland and Czechoslovakia had already fallen, and the Dunkirk evacuation was just two weeks away. For the next twelve months, Hitler would wage a relentless bombing campaign, killing 45,000 Britons. It was up to Churchill to hold his country together and persuade President Franklin Roosevelt that Britain was a worthy ally—and willing to fight to the end.

In The Splendid and the Vile, Erik Larson shows, in cinematic detail, how Churchill taught the British people “the art of being fearless.” It is a story of political brinkmanship, but it’s also an intimate domestic drama, set against the backdrop of Churchill’s prime-ministerial country home, Chequers; his wartime retreat, Ditchley, where he and his entourage go when the moon is brightest and the bombing threat is highest; and of course 10 Downing Street in London. Drawing on diaries, original archival documents, and once-secret intelligence reports—some released only recently—Larson provides a new lens on London’s darkest year through the day-to-day experience of Churchill and his family: his wife, Clementine; their youngest daughter, Mary, who chafes against her parents’ wartime protectiveness; their son, Randolph,
and his beautiful, unhappy wife, Pamela; Pamela’s illicit lover, a dashing American emissary; and the advisers in Churchill’s “Secret Circle,” to whom he turns in the hardest moments.

_The Splendid and the Vile_ takes readers out of today’s political dysfunction and back to a time of true leadership, when, in the face of unrelenting horror, Churchill’s eloquence, courage, and perseverance bound a country, and a family, together.

**Tuesday, April 12th @ 1:00 PM**

_The Water is Wide_ by Pat Conroy

The island is nearly deserted, haunting, and beautiful. Across a slip of ocean lies South Carolina. But for the handful of families on Yamacraw Island, America is a world away. For years the people here lived proudly from the sea, but now its waters are not safe. Waste from industry threatens their very existence unless, somehow, they can learn a new way. But they will learn nothing without someone to teach them, and their school has no teacher—until one man gives a year of his life to the island and its people. Here is Pat Conroy’s extraordinary drama based on his own experience. The true story of a man who gave a year of his life to an island and the new life its people gave him.

**Tuesday, May 10th @ 1:00 PM**

_Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West_ by Dee Brown

First published in 1970, _Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee_ is Dee Brown’s eloquent, meticulously documented account of the systematic destruction of American Indians during the second half of the nineteenth century. Using council records, autobiographies, and firsthand descriptions, Brown introduces readers to great chiefs and warriors of the Dakota, Ute, Sioux, Cheyenne, and other tribes, revealing in heart-wrenching detail the battles, massacres, and broken treaties that methodically stripped them of freedom. A forceful narrative still discussed today as revelatory and controversial, _Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee_ permanently altered our understanding of how the American West came to be defined.

**Tuesday, June 14th @ 1:00 PM**

_Dracula_ by Bram Stoker

_Dracula_ is a novel by Bram Stoker, published in 1897. As an epistolary novel, the narrative is related through letters, diary entries, and newspaper articles. It has no single protagonist, but opens with solicitor Jonathan Harker taking a business trip to stay at the castle of a Transylvanian noble, Count Dracula. Harker escapes the castle after discovering that Dracula is a vampire, and the Count moves to England and
plagues the seaside town of Whitby. A small group, led by Abraham Van Helsing, hunt Dracula and, in the end, kill him.

Book titles are decided by the group a few months ahead – watch this list for more titles.