

Book Club Selections 2017

January **The Great Bridge: The Epic Story of the Building of the Brooklyn Bridge (1972) Second half of the Book**
By David McCullough

The dramatic and enthralling story of the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge at the time, a tale of greed, corruption, and obstruction but also of optimism, heroism, and determination. This book is the enthralling story of one of the greatest events in our nation's history, during the Age of Optimism—a period when Americans were convinced in their hearts that all things were possible. In the years around 1870, when the project was first undertaken, the concept of building a bridge to span the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn required vision and determination comparable to that required to build the great cathedrals. Throughout the fourteen years of its construction, the odds against the successful completion of the bridge seemed staggering. Bodies were crushed, lives lost, political empires felled, and surges of public emotion constantly threatened the project. This is not only the saga of an engineering miracle; it is a narrative of the social climate of the time and the heroes and rascals who had a hand in either constructing or exploiting the surpassing enterprise. (amazon.com)

February **A Man Called Ove (2015)**
By Fredrik Backman

Ove is a curmudgeon—the kind of man who points at people he dislikes as if they were burglars caught outside his bedroom window. He has staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. But behind the cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. So when one November morning, a chatty young couple with two chatty young daughters move in next door and accidentally flatten Ove's mailbox, it is the lead-in to a comical and heartwarming tale of unkempt cats, unexpected friendship, and the ancient art of backing up a U-Haul, all of which will change one cranky old man and a local residents' association to their very foundations.

March **Walden (1854)**
By Henry David Thoreau

In 1845, Henry David Thoreau moved into a cabin by Walden Pond. With the intention of immersing himself in nature and distancing himself from the distractions of social life, Thoreau sustained his retreat for just over two years. More popular than ever, "Walden" is a paean to the virtues of simplicity and self-sufficiency.

April **Nightingale (2015)**
By Kristin Hannah

FRANCE, 1939. In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France, but invade they do. A German captain requisitions Vianne's home, and she and her daughter are forced to make one impossible choice after another to stay alive. Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious eighteen-year-old who gets involved with Gætan, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance, risking her life time and again to save others. *The Nightingale* captures the epic panorama of WWII and illuminates a part of history seldom seen: the women's war. It tells the stories of two sisters, separated by years and experience, by ideals, passion and circumstance, each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France.

May **Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story (2015)
By David Maraniss**

In 1963, Detroit was on top of the world. The auto industry was selling more cars than ever before and inventing the Mustang. Motown was capturing the world with its amazing artists. The progressive labor movement was rooted in Detroit with the UAW. Martin Luther King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech there two months before he made it famous in the Washington march. *Once in a Great City* shows that the shadows of collapse were evident even then. Before the devastating riot. Before the decades of civic corruption, neglect and white flight. Before people trotted out the grab bag of rust belt infirmities and foreign competition to explain Detroit's collapse, one could see the signs of a city's ruin. Detroit at its peak was threatened by its own design. It was being abandoned by the new world. Yet so much of what Detroit gave America lasts.

June **The Dorito Effect: The New Truth about Food and Flavor (2015)
By Mark Schatzker**

The Dorito Effect shows us how our approach to the nation's number one public health crisis has gotten it wrong. The epidemics of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes are not tied to the overabundance of fat, carbs or any specific nutrient. Instead, there is a growing divide between flavor—the tastes we crave—and the underlying nutrition. Since the late 1940s, we have been slowly leeching flavor out of the food we grow. Simultaneously, technology has allowed us to produce in the lab the very flavors being lost on the farm. Seemingly healthy food is becoming more like junk food: highly craveable but nutritionally empty. *The Dorito Effect* casts the food crisis in a fascinating new light, explaining how we got to this point and where we are headed. We are on the cusp of a new revolution in agriculture that will allow us to eat healthier and live longer by enjoying flavor the way nature intended.

July **No Book Club**

August **No Book Club**

September **Fred Meijer: Stories of His Life (2009)
By Bill Smith & Larry ten Harnsel**

Retailing pioneer Fred Meijer comes alive in the pages of this intimate biography, told in part by the people in Fred's life — from store cashiers to American presidents. Astute businessman, visionary arts patron, homespun philosopher — Fred is a man of many parts. His story weaves a chronicle of how to succeed in business, how to shape one's life, how to leave the world a better place, and how to have fun along the way.

October **Annie's Ghosts (2010)
By Steve Luxenberg**

Steve Luxenberg's mother always told people she was an only child. However, when she was dying, she mentioned that she had had a sister she'd barely known, who early in life had been put into a mental institution. Luxenberg began his research after his mother's death, discovering the startling fact that his mother had grown up in the same house with this sister, Annie, until her parents sent Annie away to a local psychiatric hospital at the age of 23. Through interviews and investigative journalism, Luxenberg teases out her story from the web of shame and half-truths that had hidden it. He also explores the social history of institutions such as Eloise in Detroit, where Annie lived, and the fact that in the 1940s and 50s, locking up a troubled relative was much more common than anyone realizes today.

**November *America's First Daughter: A Novel (2016)*
Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie**

The authors draw from thousands of letters and original sources to tell the fascinating, untold story of Thomas Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph. Patsy Jefferson knows that though her father loves his family dearly, his devotion to his country runs deeper. As his oldest daughter, she becomes his helpmate, protector, and constant companion after her mother's death, traveling with him when he becomes minister to France. It is there that 15-year-old Patsy learns about her father's troubling liaison with Sally Hemings, a slave girl her own age. Meanwhile, Patsy has fallen in love with her father's protégé William Short, a staunch abolitionist and ambitious diplomat. Torn between love, principles, and family, Patsy questions whether she can choose a life as William's wife and still be a devoted daughter. Her choice will follow her to Virginia farmland, Monticello, and even the White House. And as scandal, tragedy, and poverty threaten her family, Patsy must decide how much she will sacrifice to protect her father's reputation, in the process defining his political legacy and that of the nation he founded.

**December *The Wright Brothers (2015)*
By David McCullough**

On a winter day in 1903, on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, two brothers from Ohio, Wilbur and Orville Wright, changed history. The age of flight had begun with the first heavier-than-air powered machine carrying a pilot. The Wright brothers were men of exceptional ability, unyielding determination, and far-ranging intellectual interest and curiosity, as was their devoted sister, Katharine, who played a far more important role in their endeavors than has been generally understood. Master historian David McCullough draws on the immense riches of the Wright Papers to tell the human side of a profoundly American story.