

BACK IN TIME BOOK CLUB

2024 titles

Books are available at the Circulation Desk about 1 month before the meeting.

Thursday, January 18

2:00pm

***Carnegie's Maid* by Marie Benedict**

Clara Kelley is not who they think she is. She's not the experienced Irish maid who was hired to work in one of Pittsburgh's grandest households. She's a poor farmer's daughter with nowhere to go and nothing in her pockets. But the other woman with the same name has vanished, and pretending to be her just might get Clara some money to send back home. If she can keep up the ruse, that is. Serving as a lady's maid in the household of Andrew Carnegie requires skills she doesn't have, answering to an icy mistress who rules her sons and her domain with an iron fist. What Clara does have is a resolve as strong as the steel Pittsburgh is becoming famous for, coupled with an uncanny understanding of business, and Andrew begins to rely on her. But Clara can't let her guard down, not even when Andrew becomes something more than an employer. Revealing her past might ruin her future -- and her family's.

(Cafe)

Thursday, February 15

2:00pm

***The House of Eve* by Sadeqa Johnson**

Fifteen-year-old Ruby Pearsall is on track to becoming the first in her family to attend college, in spite of having a mother more interested in keeping a man than raising a daughter. But a taboo love affair threatens to pull her back down into the poverty and desperation that has been passed on to her like a birthright...Eleanor Quarles arrives in Washington, DC, with ambition and secrets. When she meets the handsome William Pride at Howard University, they fall madly in love. But William hails from one of DC's elite wealthy Black families, and his parents don't let just anyone into their fold. Eleanor hopes that a baby will make her finally feel at home in William's family and grant her the life she's been searching for.

(Cafe)

Thursday, March 21

2:00pm

***Before We Were Yours* by Lisa Wingate**

Based on one of America's most notorious real-life scandals--in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country--Lisa Wingate's riveting, wrenching, and ultimately uplifting tale reminds us how, even though the paths we take can lead to many places, the heart never forgets where we belong.

(Cafe)

Thursday, April 18

2:00pm

***Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel**

With no male heir, the infamous Henry VIII wants to annul his 20-year marriage to allow himself to marry Anne Boleyn. When Cardinal Wolsey fails to convince the Catholic Church to follow his king's ideas, he falls out of favor. In steps Thomas Cromwell--a blacksmith's son who has seen his share of hardship. When he is able to give the king his heart's desire, he finds himself in a powerful position. But his new role is a dangerous one with the volatile king.

(Cafe)

Thursday, May 16

2:00pm

***Brightest Star* by Gail Tsukiyama**

Arriving in Hollywood to become an actress, Anna May Wong discovers her beauty and talent aren't enough to overcome the racism that relegates her to supporting roles and, over the years, fights to win lead roles, accept risqué parts, and keep her illicit love affairs hidden--even as she finds global stardom.

(Cafe)

Thursday, June 20

2:00pm

***Shadow King* by Maaza Mengiste**

With the threat of Mussolini's army looming, recently orphaned Hirut struggles to adapt to her new life as a maid to Kidane and his wife Aster. Kidane, an officer in Emperor Haile Selassie's army, rushes to mobilize his strongest men before the Italians invade. His initial kindness to Hirut shifts into cruelty when she resists his advances, and Hirut finds herself tumbling into a new world of thefts and violations, of betrayals and rage. As the war begins in earnest, the Emperor goes into exile and Ethiopia quickly loses hope. Hirut helps disguise a gentle peasant as the emperor and soon becomes his guard, inspiring other women to take up arms against the Italians.

(Cafe)

Thursday, July 18

2:00pm

***Burial Rites* by Hannah Kent**

Charged with the brutal murder of two men, Agnes Magnúsdóttir has been removed to her homeland's farthest reaches, to an isolated farm in northern Iceland, to await execution. Horrified at the prospect of housing a convicted murderer, the family on the farm avoids Agnes. Her arrival threatens the peaceful rhythm of their way of life, while her stoic approach to the daily chores is an unsettling contrast to the passion that, rumor has it, drove her to kill Hannah Kent brings to vivid life the saga of this young woman, the last to be publicly beheaded in Iceland, in the early nineteenth century. (Cafe)

Thursday, August 15

***Only the Beautiful* by Susan Meissner**

2:00pm

California, 1938--When she loses her parents in an accident, sixteen-year-old Rosanne is taken in by the owners of the vineyard where she has lived her whole life as the vinedresser's daughter. She moves into Celine and Truman Calvert's spacious house with a secret, however--Rosie sees colors when she hears sound. She promised her mother she'd never reveal her little-understood ability to anyone. Driven by her loneliness, she not only breaks the vow to her mother, but in a desperate moment lets down her guard and ends up pregnant. Banished by the Calverts, Rosanne believes she is bound for a home for unwed mothers, but she soon finds out she is not going to a home of any kind, but to a place far worse than anything she could have imagined. Austria, 1947--After witnessing firsthand Adolf Hitler's brutal pursuit of hereditary purity--especially with regard to "different children"--Helen Calvert is ready to return to America for good. But when she arrives at her brother's peaceful vineyard after decades working abroad, she is shocked to learn what really happened nine years earlier to the vinedresser's daughter, a girl whom Helen had long ago befriended. (Cafe)

Thursday, September 19

2:00pm

***Good Night Irene* by Luis Alberto Urrea**

Abandoning her abusive fiancé in New York in 1943 to enlist with the Red Cross and head to Europe, Irene Woodward befriends Dorothy Dunford as they join the Allied soldiers streaming into France after D-Day where they are embroiled in danger, from the Battle of the Bulge to the liberation of Buchenwald, and where Irene learns to trust again through their friendship. (Cafe)

(Ballots for 2025 selections distributed. Cast your votes!)

Thursday, October 17

2:00pm

***The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett**

The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical. 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. Ten years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same southern town she once tried to escape. The other secretly passes for white, and her white husband knows nothing of her past. Still, even separated by so many miles and just as many lies, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen to the next generation, when their own daughters' storylines intersect?. (Café)

(Ballots for 2025 selections collected. Cast your votes!)

Thursday, November 21

2:00pm

***Gilded Mountain* by Kate Manning**

In the early 1900s, Sylvie Pelletier leaves her family's Colorado mountain cabin to start work at a wealthy mine-owner's manor house and is fascinated by the luxury around her until she discovers the family's philosophy is at odds with the unfair labor practices that built their fortune. (Cafe)

Thursday, December 19

2:00pm

***Golden Hill : a Novel of Old New York* by Francis Spufford**

New York, a small town on the tip of Manhattan island, 1746. One rainy evening in November, a handsome young stranger fresh off the boat arrives at a countinghouse door on Golden Hill Street: this is Mr. Smith, amiable, charming, yet strangely determined to keep suspicion shimmering. For in his pocket, he has what seems to be an order for a thousand pounds, a huge sum, and he won't explain why, or where he comes from, or what he is planning to do in the colonies that requires so much money. Should the New York merchants trust him? Should they risk their credit and refuse to pay? Should they befriend him, seduce him, arrest him; maybe even kill him? (Café)

The Back in Time Book Club welcomes everyone interested in reading and discussing historical fiction.

New Members are always welcome

For more information, please contact the Adult Reference Desk at 262-782-4140, opt. 1