

Date	Presenter /Host	Book & Description
July 29th	P: H:	<p>West with Giraffes</p> <p>By Lynda Rutledge</p> <p>Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Best Historical Fiction (2021)</p> <p>An emotional, rousing novel inspired by the incredible true story of two giraffes who made headlines and won the hearts of Depression-era America.</p> <p><i>“Few true friends have I known and two were giraffes...”</i></p> <p>Woodrow Wilson Nickel, age 105, feels his life ebbing away. But when he learns giraffes are going extinct, he finds himself recalling the unforgettable experience he cannot take to his grave.</p> <p>It’s 1938. The Great Depression lingers. Hitler is threatening Europe, and world-weary Americans long for wonder. They find it in two giraffes who miraculously survive a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. What follows is a twelve-day road trip in a custom truck to deliver Southern California’s first giraffes to the San Diego Zoo. Behind the wheel is the young Dust Bowl rowdy Woodrow. Inspired by true events, the tale weaves real-life figures with fictional ones, including the world’s first female zoo director, a crusty old man with a past, a young female photographer with a secret, and assorted reprobates as spotty as the giraffes.</p> <p>Part adventure, part historical saga, and part coming-of-age love story, <i>West with Giraffes</i> explores what it means to be changed by the grace of animals, the kindness of strangers, the passing of time, and a story told before it’s</p>

		<p>too late.</p> <p>Genres Historical Fiction Fiction Animals Historical Book Club Adventure Coming Of Age ...more</p> <p>381 pages, Kindle Edition</p> <p>First published February 1, 2021</p>
<p>August 26th</p>	<p>P: H:</p>	<p><i>One Summer: America, 1927</i> is a 2013 history book by Bill Bryson. The book is a history of the summer of 1927 in the United States. It was published in October 2013 by Doubleday. The book focuses on various key events of that summer as lenses through which to view American life: what it had recently been and what it was becoming.</p> <p>The events covered include the nonstop transatlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh; the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927; the unusual season played by Babe Ruth and the rest of the 1927 New York Yankees; the transition from the Ford Model T to the new Model A; the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti; the presidency of Calvin Coolidge; and the advent of the talking-picture era with the release of <i>The Jazz Singer</i>.</p> <p>One of the themes explored is the contrast between the Roaring Twenties of the time, and the looming Great Depression. For example, the rapid rise and equally rapid fall of the business empire of the Van Sweringen brothers is discussed, with its glimpses of future suburbia (at Shaker Heights, Ohio) and future shopping malls (at Union Terminal), as well as the brothers' eventual death in poverty. Also briefly discussed is the rise and fall of Charles Ponzi's postal coupon business, the original Ponzi scheme. The primary focus of the book, however, is on daily life, and popular culture during that summer, such as daredevil flying, the party life of sports stars, the habits of eccentric geniuses, and what people did during hot times when air conditioning was unknown except as a scarce luxury at a few theaters and hotels.</p> <p>The focus on a particular moment in history as a means to explore the wider world parallels Bryson's previous book, 2010's <i>At Home: A Short History of Private Life</i>, which used a particular place on Earth (a parson's house in England) as a home base from which to explore a broader</p>

		<p>subject. Both books note a singular coalescence of coincidences or turning points in a particular year (<i>At Home</i>, 1851; <i>One Summer</i>, 1927).</p> <p>These location-centered and timepoint-centered approaches offer a contrast to 2003's <i>A Short History of Nearly Everything</i>, which used a diametrically opposite approach, sweeping widely across time, distance, and scale. All of the books share the common theme that they help the reader to understand life and the universe as integrated wholes and yet simultaneously as variegated collections of details.</p> <p>Bryson does not address himself solely to American readers. For example, Babe Ruth and baseball are a major topic of the book, and Bryson gives useful explanations of this American game and its terminology.^[1]</p>
September 23rd	P: H:	<p>The Jungle by Upton Sinclair Published serially in 1905 and as a single-volume book in 1906. The most famous, influential, and enduring of all muckraking novels, <i>The Jungle</i> was an exposé of conditions in the Chicago stockyards. Because of the public response, the U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906, and conditions in American slaughterhouses were improved. The main plot of <i>The Jungle</i> follows Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis Rudkus, who came to the United States in the hope of living the American dream, and his extended family, which includes Ona, Jurgis's wife; Elzbieta, Ona's stepmother; Elzbieta's six children; Marija, Ona's cousin; and Dede Rudkus, Jurgis's father. They all live in a small town named Packingtown in Chicago. The title of Sinclair's novel describes the savage nature of Packingtown. Jurgis and his family, hoping for opportunity, are instead thrown into a chaotic world that requires them to constantly struggle in order to survive. Packingtown is an urban</p>

		jungle: savage, unforgiving, and unrelenting.
October 28th	P: H:	<p>Neu-land</p> <p>by Eshkol Nevo</p> <p>Dori's father has gone traveling in South America and, suffering from some kind of breakdown, following the death of his wife, he goes missing. Dori sets out to find him, leaving his wife and young son at home in Israel. Inbar is escaping from her life — from the grief that she can't shake after her brother's death, from the boyfriend she doesn't love — and impulsively sets out for South America. While she's there she meets a man who is searching for his father...In his most ambitious novel to date, Eshkol Nevo weaves a beautiful love story with two tales: the story of the wandering Jews who came to their Promised Land in the wake of the Second World War, embodied by Inbar's grandmother Lily's narrative of her sea journey over from Poland, and the story of a new generation of wandering Israelis who leave again to go backpacking, perhaps hoping that the distance will allow them to see their homeland more clearly. Neu-land is a romantic adventure, a search for a father that leads to love, and a quest for an understanding of identity and for second chances. Is it ever possible to start again? Nevo has produced a daring, epic novel that asks profound questions, but the truth and warmth of his writing make it all-consuming and irresistibly loveable.</p>
November 25th	P: H:	<p>The Alice Network</p> <p>by Kate Quinn</p> <p>Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Best Historical Fiction (2017)</p> <p>In an enthralling new historical novel from national bestselling author Kate Quinn, two women—a female spy recruited to the real-life Alice Network in France during World War I and an unconventional American socialite searching for her cousin in 1947—are brought together in a mesmerizing story of courage and redemption.</p>

		<p>1947. In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, American college girl Charlie St. Clair is pregnant, unmarried, and on the verge of being thrown out of her very proper family. She's also nursing a desperate hope that her beloved cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France during the war, might still be alive. So when Charlie's parents banish her to Europe to have her "little problem" taken care of, Charlie breaks free and heads to London, determined to find out what happened to the cousin she loves like a sister.</p> <p>1915. A year into the Great War, Eve Gardiner burns to join the fight against the Germans and unexpectedly gets her chance when she's recruited to work as a spy. Sent into enemy-occupied France, she's trained by the mesmerizing Lili, code name Alice, the "queen of spies", who manages a vast network of secret agents right under the enemy's nose.</p> <p>Thirty years later, haunted by the betrayal that ultimately tore apart the Alice Network, Eve spends her days drunk and secluded in her crumbling London house. Until a young American barges in uttering a name Eve hasn't heard in decades, and launches them both on a mission to find the truth...no matter where it leads.</p>
December 23rd	P: H:	<p>Golden Hill by Francis Spufford</p> <p>A SUNDAY TIMES TOP 100 NOVEL OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY</p> <p>New York, a small town on the tip of Manhattan Island, 1746. One rainy evening, a charming and handsome young stranger fresh off the boat from England pitches up to a counting house on Golden Hill Street, with a suspicious yet compelling proposition -- he has an order for a thousand pounds in his pocket that he wishes to cash. But can he be trusted? This is New York in its infancy, a place where a young man with a fast tongue can invent himself afresh, fall in love, and find a world of</p>

		trouble . .
		<p>To be considered in the future: The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store</p> <p>By James McBride</p> <p>Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Best Historical Fiction (2023)</p> <p>The new novel from the bestselling, National Book Award-winning, Oprah Book Club-picked, Barack Obama favourite James McBride.</p> <p>In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighbourhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows.</p> <p>As these characters' stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins struggle and what they must do to survive. When the truth is finally revealed about what happened on Chicken Hill and the part the town's white establishment played in it, McBride shows us that even in dark times, it is love and community-heaven and earth-that sustain us.</p>