



**American Association of University Women
Lake/Sumter Branch**

2024-25 Book Club Selections

(Unless otherwise noted, descriptions are from Amazon.com)

Ordinary Grace
William Krueger

Frank Drumm is 13 years old and lives in New Bremen, Minnesota, where it's summertime, a summer that begins with the death of a child on railroad tracks outside the town. More death is to follow, in a summer that will change lives in the small town forever. Themes include grief, sibling relationships, faith, loyalty, trust, respect, mystery, bullying, mental health, friendship, community, loss of innocence, forgiveness, prejudice, and the Grace of God.

The Women
Kristin Hannah

Women can be heroes. When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances “Frankie” McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path.

The Women is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on all women who put themselves in harm's way and whose sacrifice and commitment to their country has too often been forgotten. A novel about deep friendships and bold patriotism, The Women is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era.

Babylon's Ark
Lawrence Anthony

When the Iraq war began, conservationist Lawrence Anthony could think of only one thing: the fate of the Baghdad Zoo, caught in the crossfire at the heart of the city. Hostilities and uncontrolled looting devastated the zoo and its animals.

Working with members of the zoo staff and a few U.S. soldiers, he bartered for food on war-torn streets, and scoured bombed palaces for desperately needed supplies.

Tom Lake
Ann Patchett

In the spring of 2020, Lara's three daughters return to the family's orchard in Northern Michigan. While picking cherries, they beg their mother to tell them the story of Peter Duke, a famous actor with whom she shared both a stage and a romance years before at a theater company called Tom Lake. As Lara recalls the past, her daughters examine their own lives and relationship with their mother, and are forced to reconsider the world and everything they thought they knew.

The Girl Who Wrote in Silk
Kelli Estes

A novel of Chinese Immigration to the Pacific Northwest is a dual historical and contemporary novel in which modern-day aspiring hotelier Inara Erickson discovers a beautifully embroidered sleeve depicting a tragic event from the 1880s through which Chinese American Mei Lien lived over a hundred years before.

The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir
Kao Kalia Yang

Yang's memoir covers several politically turbulent events in Southeast Asia. Her story addresses the Vietnam War, in which American soldiers recruited men from Hmong communities to fight for them, resulting in over 30,000 Hmong deaths. The book begins in the aftermath of the war, when North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao soldiers initiate a genocide against the Hmong people for their involvement with the American military. The genocide wiped out a third of the Hmong's total population. Yang also documents her family's experiences at several Thai refugee camps in the 1980s, including Ban Vinai Refugee Camp

(operational from 1975–1992). It housed over 45,000 Hmong refugees. The final portion of Yang’s story is set during a large wave of Hmong immigration to the United States in the late 1980s. Over 90,000 Hmong people, including Yang’s family, emigrated to Minneapolis, Minnesota around this time. *

An Unfinished Love Story
Doris Kearns Goodwin

This book by one of America’s most beloved historians, artfully weaves together biography, memoir, and history. She takes you along on the emotional journey she and her husband, Richard (Dick) Goodwin embarked upon in the last years of his life.**

Remarkably Bright Creatures
Shelby Van Pelt

After Tova Sullivan’s husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she’s been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago.

Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn’t dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors—until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova. Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova’s son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it’s too late.

Shelby Van Pelt’s debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

* Source: <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-latehomecomer#context>

** Source: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/An-Unfinished-Love-Story/Doris-Kearns-Goodwin/9781982108663>