

RPCB BOOK CLUB

Reading List for 2025-2026



Remarkably Bright Creatures, Shelby Van Pelt: This debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible. A charming, witty and compulsively readable exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope that traces a widow's unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus.

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. (360 p, *Discuss in October, Fiction*)



American Wings: Chicago's Pioneering Black Aviators and the Race for Equality in the Sky, Smith and Wren: In the years between World War I and World War II, aviation fever was everywhere, including among Black Americans. But what hope did a Black person have of learning to fly in a country constricted by prejudice and Jim Crow laws, where Black aviators like Bessie Coleman had to move to France to earn their wings? *American Wings* follows a group of determined Black Americans who created a flying club and built their own airfield south of Chicago. As the U.S. hurtled toward World War II, they established a school to train new pilots, teaching both Black and white students together and proving, in a time when the U.S. military was still segregated, that successful integration was possible. *American Wings* brings to light a hidden history of pioneering Black men and women who, with grit and resilience, battled powerful odds for an equal share of the sky. (384 p., *Discuss in November, History*)



The Measure, Nikki Erlick: It seems like any other day. You wake up, drink a cup of coffee, and head out. But today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. The contents of this mysterious box tells you the exact number of years you will live.

The Measure charts the dawn of this new world through an unforgettable cast of characters whose decisions and fates interweave with one another: best friends whose dreams are forever entwined, pen pals finding refuge in the unknown, a couple who thought they didn't have to rush, a doctor who cannot save himself, and a politician whose box becomes the powder keg that ultimately changes everything. Enchanting and deeply uplifting, *The Measure* is an ambitious, invigorating story about family, friendship, hope, and destiny that encourages us to live life to the fullest. (368 p., *Discuss in December, Fiction*)



Live Like a Narnian, Joe Rigney: Careful readers of the *Chronicles of Narnia* know that there is more to the stories than meets the eye. There are layers of meaning in these fairy tales, spiritual gold beneath these Narnian hills. Those who delight in Lewis's magical world love to journey further up and further in, returning to Narnia again and again so that the same old stories can awaken our minds afresh to the wonder and glory all around us.

But just how are these stories meant to change us? When we tumble back out of the wardrobe, in what ways should we be different? Drawing upon Lewis's other writings and the *Chronicles* themselves, Joe Rigney shows the intricate and sometimes subtle ways that Lewis intended his beloved fairy stories to shape our hearts and minds. In doing so, he commends Lewis's *Chronicles* as a fruitful part of Christian discipleship, so that in reading the Narnian stories, breathing Narnian air, and seeking to live like Narnians, we are wonderfully transformed into the image of Jesus Christ—the Great Lion and High King Above All Kings. (157 p. *Discuss in January, Christian Living*)

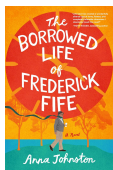


Love in Tandem, Becca Kinzer: She's perfectly content leading a quiet life in her small hometown. He's an adventurer with unquenchable wanderlust. The two couldn't be any more opposite if they tried. But a tandem bicycle and a 500-mile road trip just might change all that. After a failed engagement and her mother's battle with cancer, Charlotte Carter's life is finally turning around now that she's landed a dream

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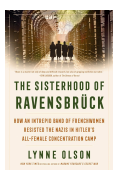
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job teaching music. What she didn't see coming was the imminent closure of the school's music program. She's determined to save it, even if it means getting creative. She can set aside her differences with Zach long enough to cross the finish line and win the giant cash prize . . . can't she? A few hundred miles in, she's questioning her deeply held assumptions about Zach and wondering if maybe tandem biking is only the start of their biggest adventure yet. (320 p, *Discuss in February, Christian Romance,*)



The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife, Anna Johnstone: Frederick Fife was born with an extra helping of kindness in his heart. If he borrowed your car, he'd return it washed with a full tank of gas. The problem is, at age eighty-two, there's nobody left in Fred's life to borrow from, and he's broke and on the brink of eviction. But Fred's luck changes when he's mistaken for Bernard Greer, a missing resident at the local nursing home, and takes his place. Now Fred has warm meals in his belly and a roof over his head—as long as his look-alike Bernard never turns up.

Bittersweet and remarkably perceptive, *The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife* is a hilarious, feel-good, clever novel about grief, forgiveness, redemption, and finding family. (336 p, *Discuss in March, Fiction*)



The Sisterhood of Ravensbrück, Lynne Olson: The extraordinary true story of a small group of Frenchwomen, all Resistance members, who banded together in a notorious concentration camp to defy the Nazis. Ravensbrück was atypical not just as the only all-female German concentration camp, but because 80 percent of its inmates were political prisoners, among them a tight-knit group of women who had been active in the French Resistance. Already well-practiced in sabotaging the Nazis in occupied France, these women joined forces to defy their German captors and keep one another alive.

After the war the women from Ravensbrück refused to allow their achievements, needs, and sacrifices to be erased. They banded together once more, first to support one another in healing their bodies and minds and then to continue their crusade for freedom and justice—an effort that would have repercussions for their country and the world into the twenty-first century. (384 p, *Discuss in April, Historical Non-Fiction*)



The Island of the Lost, Joan Druett: Hundreds of miles from civilization, two ships wreck on opposite ends of the same deserted island in this true story of human nature at its best—and at its worst.

Separated by only twenty miles and the island's treacherous, impassable cliffs, the crews of the Grafton and the Invercauld face the same fate. And yet where the Invercauld's crew turns inward on itself, fighting, starving, and even turning to cannibalism, The Grafton's crew bands together to build a cabin and a forge—and eventually, to find a way to escape. Using the survivors' journals and historical records, award-winning maritime historian Joan Druett brings to life this extraordinary untold story about leadership and the fine line between order and chaos. (304 p., *Discuss in May, Historical Non-Fiction*)



Demon of Unrest, Eric Larsen: On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the fluky victor in a tight race for president. The country was bitterly at odds; Southern extremists were moving ever closer to destroying the Union, with one state after another seceding and Lincoln powerless to stop them. Slavery fueled the conflict, but somehow the passions of North and South came to focus on a lonely federal fortress in Charleston Harbor: Fort Sumter.

Master storyteller Erik Larson offers a gripping account of the chaotic months between Lincoln's election and the Confederacy's shelling of Sumter—a period marked by tragic errors and miscommunications, enflamed egos and craven ambitions, personal tragedies and betrayals. Lincoln himself wrote that the trials of these five months were “so great that, could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to survive them.”

Drawing on diaries, secret communiques, slave ledgers, and plantation records, Larson gives us a political horror story that captures the forces that led America to the brink—a dark reminder that we often don't see a cataclysm coming until it's too late. (559 p, *Discuss in September 2026, History*)