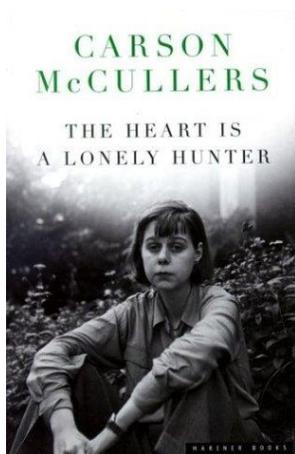


# Book Group Selection Ideas

March 15, 2022 Edition



It is time to select our book group titles for the rest of the year. Here are some ideas to get us started. We will need to select five more for the rest of the year, not counting our Great Michigan Reads selection for September with author Maria Doria Russell.



**The Heart is a Lonely Hunter** by Carson McCullers

Genre: Literary Fiction

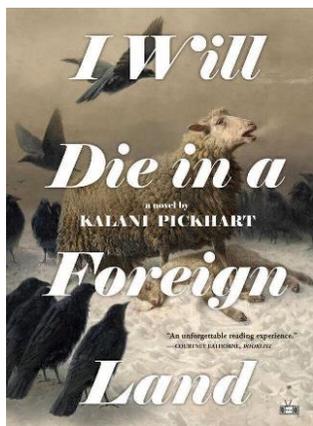
### Selling Points

Modern Classic from 1940

Group Member Suggestion

### Description

“With its profound sense of moral isolation and its sensitive glimpses into the inner lives of lonely people, it is considered McCullers’s finest work. The novel’s protagonist is a deaf man, John Singer, who lives in a Georgia mill town during the 1930s. When Singer’s mute Greek companion of 10 years goes insane, Singer is left alone and isolated. He becomes a sounding board for the town’s misfits, who turn to him for understanding but have no knowledge of his inner life.” ~Britannica Encyclopedia



**I Will Die in a Foreign Land** by Kalani Pickhart

Genre: Contemporary Fiction

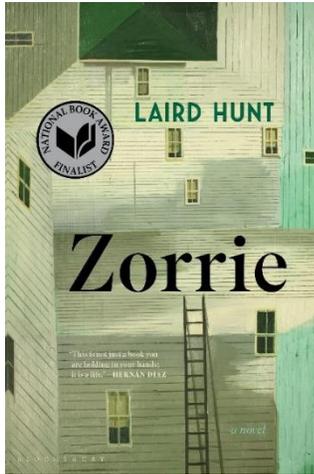
### Selling Points

New York Public Library best book of 2021

Fictional Account of Recent Ukrainian History

### Description

"Kalani Pickhart's timely debut novel, *I Will Die In a Foreign Land*, is about the 2014 Ukrainian revolution which provided a pretense for Russia to annex Crimea. The story follows the experiences of several characters whose lives intersect as the country's political situation deteriorates. There's a Ukrainian-American doctor, an old KGB spy, a former mine worker, and others, and these episodes are interspersed with folk songs, news reports, and historical notes. The effect—kaleidoscopic but never confusing—provides an intimate sense of a country convulsing, mourning, and somehow surviving" ~CBS News, Washington Post Critic Ron Charles

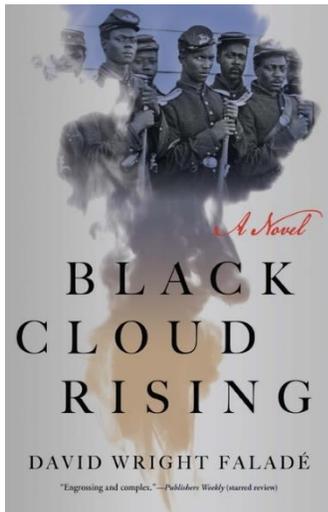


**Zorrie** by Laird Hunt  
Genre: Literary Fiction

**Selling Points**  
National Book Award Finalist  
Group Member Suggestion.

**Description**  
Spanning an entire lifetime, a life convulsed and transformed by the events of the 20th century, Laird Hunt's extraordinary novel offers a profound and intimate portrait of the dreams that propel one tenacious woman onward and the losses that she cannot outrun. Set against a harsh, gorgeous, quintessentially American landscape, this is

a deeply empathetic and poetic novel that belongs on a shelf with the classics of Willa Cather, Marilynne Robinson, and Elizabeth Strout.

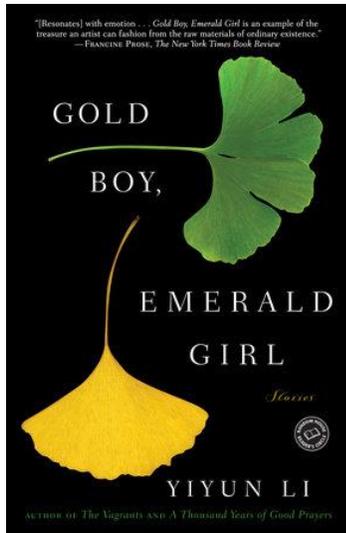


**Black Cloud Rising** by David Wright Faladé  
Genre: Historical Fiction

**Selling Points**  
New title this March with Rave reviews  
Interesting bit of American history

**Description**  
By the fall of 1863, Union forces had taken control of Tidewater Virginia, and established a toehold in eastern North Carolina, including along the Outer Banks. Thousands of freed slaves and runaways flooded the Union lines, but Confederate irregulars still roamed the region. In December, the newly formed African Brigade, a unit of these former slaves led by General Edward Augustus

Wild—a one-armed, impassioned Abolitionist—set out from Portsmouth to hunt down the rebel guerillas and extinguish the threat.



## **Gold Boy, Emerald Girl** by Yiyun Li

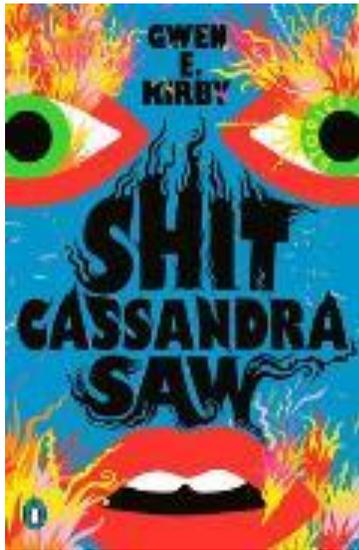
Genre: Contemporary Chinese Fiction  
Short Stories,

### **Selling Points**

Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award winner  
Inside look at contemporary Chinese culture  
Bookbrowse book group recommendation

### **Description**

Though each narrative corresponds to social concerns that are pertinent to China, the characters and their dilemmas could take place in Oklahoma, Geneva, Siberia, Johannesburg, or some other foreign locale. Li's Spartan prose style, with limited description and dialogue, strengthens both the Chinese culture and the universal concerns of each story. Readers who want to relate to the characters they meet, more so than the locales, will be dazzled by Li's writing. I, for one, will remember the people in these stories for many years to come. (Elizabeth Whitmore Funk)  
Bookbrowse



## **Shit Cassandra Saw** by Gwen E. Kirby

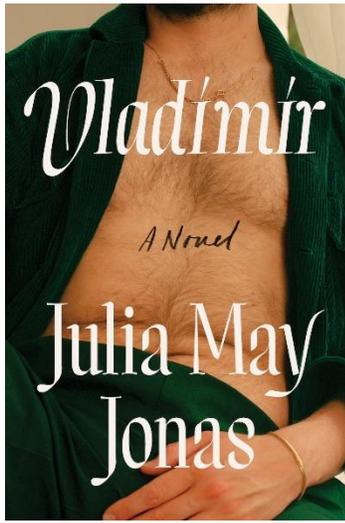
Genre: Contemporary Fiction, Short Stories

### **Selling Points**

New collection with rave reviews.

### **Description**

In this ebullient collection, virgins escape from being sacrificed, witches refuse to be burned, whores aren't ashamed, and every woman gets a chance to be a radioactive cockroach warrior who snaps back at catcallers. Gwen E. Kirby's fierce, irreverent narrators show how creativity within an enclosed space undermines and deconstructs the constraints themselves. When these women tell the stories of their triumphs as well as their pain, they emerge as funny, angry, loud, horny, lonely, strong protagonists who refuse to be secondary characters a moment longer. From *The Best and Only Whore of Cym Hyfryd, 1886* to *the Midwestern Girl Is Tired of Appearing in Your Short Stories*, Kirby is playing and laughing with the women who have come before her and they are telling her, we have always been this way. You just had to know where to look.



**Vladimir** by Julia May Jonas

Genre: Contemporary Fiction, Literary Fiction

**Selling Points**

New release

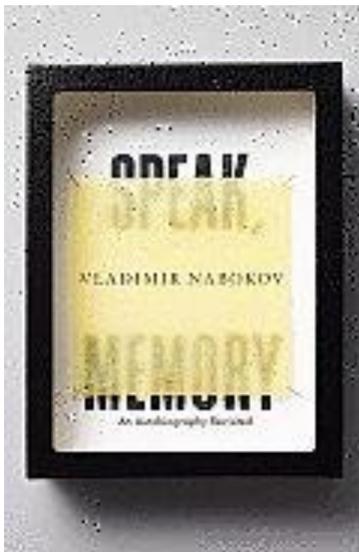
Positive Reviews

Book Group Member Suggestion

**Description**

The guilty pleasures of *Vladimir*, a virtuoso debut novel by Julia May Jonas, begin with its cover: a close-up from the neck down of man's very nice open-shirted chest and hands resting on his clothed crotch. That naughty cover, combined with the novel's title, also serves as a warning that this is going to be a sly and

subversive read. After all, there's only one Vladimir who reigns supreme in the literary realm, so any novel that gestures to Vladimir Nabokov and, by implication, *Lolita* is a novel to be wary of. Our unnamed narrator here, our Humbert Humbertina, if you will, is a professor of women's literature in her late 50s who's so witty, sharp and seductive that, as a reader, I was pretty much putty in her hands, as generations of her students have been. ~Maureen Corrigan, NPR Books



**Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited** by Vladimir

Nabokov

Genre: Biography/ Memoir

**Selling Points**

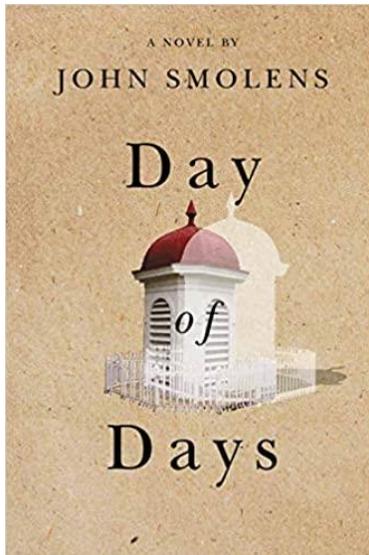
Powell's Books 25 memoirs to read before you die list.

Group Members suggest a biography

**Description**

Vladimir Nabokov once described *Speak, Memory* as "a new type of autobiography, a scientific attempt to unravel and trace back all the tangled threads of one's personality." But the book is much more: a beautifully articulated account of the times he lived in, the history-rich days before and after the Russian Revolution. There are so many reasons to love *Speak, Memory*: its scope, its insights,

its poetry, the nonlinear, almost impressionistic approach that so beautifully evokes the feeling of memory, but what I love the most is pure Nabokov: the entertaining frankness of his ego and the audacity of his language. – Gigi L. at Powell's Books



**Day of Days** by John Smolens

Genre: True Crime Fiction, Michigan Fiction

**Selling Points**

Michigan Author

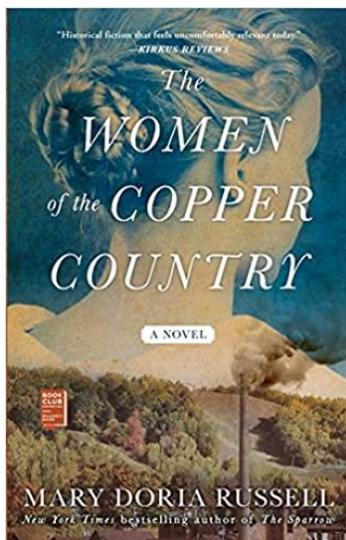
Possible Author Visit in late fall or winter.

Renee recommends this writer

**Description**

In the spring of 1927, Andrew Kehoe, the treasurer for the school board in Bath, Michigan, spent weeks surreptitiously wiring the public school, as well as his farm, with hundreds of pounds of dynamite. The explosions on May 18, the day before graduation, killed and maimed dozens of children, as well as teachers, administrators, and village residents, including Kehoe's wife,

Nellie. A respected member of the community, Kehoe himself died when he ignited his truck, which he had loaded with crates of explosives and scrap metal. Decades later, one survivor, Beatrice Marie Turcott, recalls the spring of 1927 and how this haunting experience leads her to the conviction that one does not survive the present without reconciling hard truths about the past. In its portrayal of several Bath school children, *Day of Days* examines how such traumatic events scar one's life long after the dead are laid to rest and physical wounds heal, and how an anguished but resilient American village copes with the bombing, which at the time seemed incomprehensible, and yet now may be considered a harbinger of the future.



**Women of Copper Country** by Maria Doria Russell

Genres: Literary Fiction, Historical Fiction, Michigan Fiction

**Selling Points**

We won 30 free copies of this title through the Michigan Reads program

We hope to schedule an author visit this September

Renee recommends this title, and this author.

**Description**

From the bestselling and award-winning author of *The Sparrow* comes an inspiring historical novel about “America’s Joan of Arc” Annie Clements—the courageous woman who started a rebellion by leading a strike against the largest copper mining company in the world.

In July 1913, twenty-five-year-old Annie Clements had seen enough of the world to know that it was unfair. She’s spent her whole life in the copper-mining town of Calumet, Michigan where

men risk their lives for meager salaries—and had barely enough to put food on the table and clothes on their backs. The women labor in the houses of the elite, and send their husbands and sons deep underground each day, dreading the fateful call of the company man telling them their loved ones aren't coming home. When Annie decides to stand up for herself, and the entire town of Calumet, nearly everyone believes she may have taken on more than she is prepared to handle.

### **Titles from our last Voting Cycle**

#### **Books that almost made our last list.**

Player Piano by Kurt Vonnegut  
Ella Minnow Pea by Mark Dunn  
Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo  
Sleepless Nights by Elizabeth Hardwick  
The Code Breaker: Jennifer Duodna, Gene Editing, and the Future ... by Walter Issacson

#### **Books that had just one vote last time:**

1619 Project  
Oryx & Crake by Margaret Atwood  
Killing Crazy Horse by Bill O'Reilly  
The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek  
Under a White Sky: The Nature of the Future by Elizabeth Kolbert  
Stranger in the Lifeboat by Mitch Album  
Project Hail Mary by Andy Weir  
Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the search for Identity by Andrew Solomon.  
Next Year in Havana by Chanel Cleeton  
Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

Please send me your suggestions for the next newsletter!