

BGBG Reading Book List 2022-2023

September 7, 2022 [The Invisible Library](#) by Genevieve Gogman. Discussion led by Jaimie Buckman at the home of Suzanne Ligon. Fantasy. [The Invisible Library](#) marks the start in a brand-new adventure series, featuring stolen books, secret agents and forbidden societies. The story follows Irene, a professional spy for the mysterious Library, which harvests fiction from different realities. Along with her enigmatic assistant Kai, she's posted to an alternative London. Their mission – to retrieve a dangerous book. But when they arrive, it's already been stolen. London's underground factions seem prepared to fight to the very death to find her book.

October 5, 2022 [Book of Longings](#) by Sue Monk Kidd. Discussion led by Susan Scott. Historical/biographical fiction This extraordinary story set in the first century about a woman, Ana, who finds her voice and her destiny. Raised in a wealthy family with ties to the ruler of Galilee, she is rebellious and ambitious, with a brilliant mind and a daring spirit. She engages in furtive scholarly pursuits and writes narratives about neglected and silenced women. Ana is expected to marry an older widower, a prospect that horrifies her. An encounter with eighteen-year-old Jesus changes everything. Their marriage evolves with love and conflict, humor and pathos in Nazareth, where Ana makes a home with Jesus, his brothers, and their mother, Mary. Ana's pent-up longings intensify amid the turbulent resistance to Rome's occupation of Israel, partially led by her brother, Judas. Ana determines her fate during a stunning convergence of events considered among the most impactful in human history. Grounded in meticulous research and written with a reverential approach to Jesus's life that focuses on his humanity, *The Book of Longings* is an inspiring, unforgettable account of one woman's bold struggle to realize the passion and potential inside her, while living in a time, place and culture devised to silence her.

November 2, 2022 [Violeta](#) by Isabel Allende. Discussion led by Suzanne Ligon. Historical fiction novel This is epic story of Violeta del Valle, a woman whose life spans one hundred years and bears witness to the greatest upheavals of the twentieth century. Violeta comes into the world on a stormy day in 1920, the first girl in a family of five boisterous sons. From the start, her life will be marked by extraordinary events, for the ripples of the Great War are still being felt, even as the Spanish flu arrives on the shores of her South American homeland almost at the moment of her birth. She tells her story in the form of a letter to someone she loves above all others, recounting devastating heartbreak and passionate affairs, times of both poverty and wealth, terrible loss and immense joy. Her life will be shaped by some of the most important events of history: the fight for women's rights, the rise and fall of tyrants, and, ultimately, not one but two pandemics.

December 7, 2022 Banned book selection (list TBA). Each person will preselect a banned book and conduct a short discussion on why and where the book was banned, brief summary, and opinion of the book. This meeting will be held at the home of Lynne Walters.

January 4, 2023 [The Lincoln Highway](#) by Amor Towles. Discussion led by Linda Young. Historical Fiction/coming-of-age In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to

Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served fifteen months for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother, Billy, and head to California where they can start their lives anew. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have hidden themselves in the trunk of the warden's car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take them all on a fateful journey in the opposite direction—to the City of New York.

February 1, 2023 [Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) by Zora Neale Hurston. Discussion led by Heather Thompson at the home of Lynne Walters. Psychological fiction novel This novel is the story of Janie Crawford's search for love, told in the form of a frame. In the first few pages, Janie returns to her hometown of Eatonville, Florida, after nearly two years absence. Her neighbors are curious to know where she has been and what has happened to her. They wonder why she is returning in dirty overalls when she left in bridal satin. Janie tells her story to her friend Pheoby Watson, and after the story is over, the novelist returns to Janie's back steps. Thus, the story, which actually spans nearly 40 years of Janie's life, is "framed" by an evening visit between two friends. The story that Janie tells is about love — how Janie sought love in four relationships.

March 1, 2023 [The Woman They Could Not Silence](#) by Kate Moore. Discussion led by Judy Griffin. Biography 1860: As the clash between the states rolls slowly to a boil, Elizabeth Packard, housewife and mother of six, is facing her own battle. The enemy sits across the table and sleeps in the next room. Her husband of twenty-one years is plotting against her because he feels increasingly threatened—by Elizabeth's intellect, independence, and unwillingness to stifle her own thoughts. So he makes a plan to put his wife back in her place. One summer morning, he has her committed to an insane asylum. The horrific conditions inside the Illinois State Hospital in Jacksonville, Illinois, are overseen by Dr. Andrew McFarland, a man who will prove to be even more dangerous to Elizabeth than her traitorous husband. But most disturbing is that Elizabeth is not the only sane woman confined to the institution. There are many rational women on her ward who tell the same story: they've been committed not because they need medical treatment, but to keep them in line—conveniently labeled "crazy" so their voices are ignored.

April 5, 2023 [The Girls in the Stilt House](#) by Kelly Mustian. Discussion led by Paige Hadsall. Historical Fiction Set in 1920s Mississippi, this debut Southern novel weaves a beautiful and harrowing story of two teenage girls cast in an unlikely partnership through murder. Ada promised herself she would never go back to the Trace, to her hard life on the swamp and her harsh father. But now, after running away to Baton Rouge and briefly knowing a different kind of life, she finds herself with nowhere to go but back home. And she knows there will be a price to pay with her father.

Matilda, daughter of a sharecropper, is from the other side of the Trace. Doing what she can to protect her family from the whims and demands of some particularly callous locals is an

ongoing struggle. She forms a plan to go north, to pack up the secrets she's holding about her life in the South and hang them on the line for all to see in Ohio. As the two girls are drawn deeper into a dangerous world of bootleggers and moral corruption, they must come to terms with the complexities of their tenuous bond and a hidden past that links them in ways that could cost them their lives.

May 3, 2023 Book selection for the upcoming year TBA

June 7, 2023 The Last Diving Horse in America by Cynthia A. Branigan. Discussion led by Marilyn Morrow at the home of Judy Griffin. Nonfiction From legendary animal rescuer, the inspiring story of the rescue of the last diving horse in America, and of how horse and animal rescuer were each profoundly transformed by the other. It was the signature attraction of Atlantic City's Steel Pier from the 1930s to the 1970s, the golden age of "America's Favorite Playground" Doc Carver's High Diving Horses. Four times a day, seven days a week, a trained horse wearing only a harness ran up a ramp, a diving girl jumped on its back, and they both sailed forty feet through the air, plunging into a ten-foot-deep tank of water. Decades later, the act was finally shuttered, and in May 1980, the very last Atlantic City Steel Pier Diving Horse was placed on the auction block. The author, on a rescue mission for her employer--the animal-rights pioneer Cleveland Amory--spent \$2,600 in a fierce auction, and Gamal, gleaming-coated, commanding, was hers: she who knew almost nothing about horses. Cynthia Branigan tells the story of how horse and new owner came to know, educate, and trust one another, teaching each other important lessons of living and loving. Branigan writes of the history of diving horses and how rescuing and caring for Gamal led her to save other animals--burros, llamas, and goats--first as company for Gamal and, finally, saving a ten-year-old retired greyhound, nearly broken in spirit, who, with Gamal, came back to his happy self and opened up for the author a new and purposeful world.

AAUW all read:

Fields of White Gold: Remembering a Forgotten Time in the Arkansas Delta by George Ann Byrd Danehower. Discussion led by Emily Simms. Creative nonfiction George Ann Byrd Danehower has captured the essence of a particular place and time with her first book of non-fiction short stories, set in the 1930s-1950s and centered in Mississippi County, Arkansas, at the northeastern corner of the state along the western bank of the Mississippi River. Fields of White Gold is alive with detailed memories of Daddy, Mother, Ruth, Papa and Mama Edwards, and her siblings and countless relatives, friends, teachers, and customers, as well as characters like the Medicine Man, the Witch, the TB Lady, Tight the hired hand, and Caleb the thief and murderer. She tells of growing up in her family's house-store in Mandalay, Arkansas, which was surrounded by fields of white gold (cotton), and then later in the small Arkansas town of Blytheville. George Ann (her given name) points out in her Introduction: We Southerners do love our tradition of storytelling; often our stories cause us to laugh to keep us from crying. Each story captures a vivid memory of growing up in Arkansas, with its fierce natural beauty, strong family traditions, and complex social challenges.