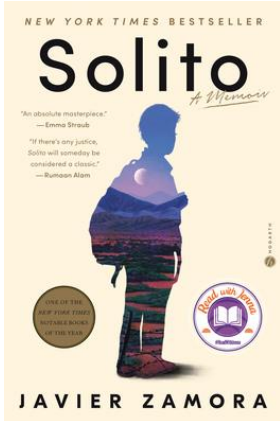


## Book Discussion Selections 2024-2025

Book Discussion meets on the last Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM whenever possible. Please note the dates below.

March 28<sup>th</sup>



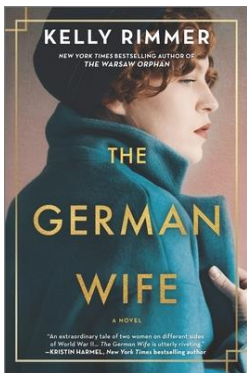
***Solito* by Javier Zamora (Read Across Rhode Island Selection – Hoping to read in March 2024)**

A young poet tells the inspiring story of his migration from El Salvador to the United States at the age of nine in this “gripping memoir” (NPR) of bravery, hope, and finding family.

April 25<sup>th</sup>

***The German Wife* by Kelly Rimmer**

**Berlin, 1930**--When a wave of change sweeps a radical political party to power, Sofie von Meyer Rhodes's academic husband benefits from the ambitions of its newly elected chancellor. Although Sofie and Jürgen do not share the social views growing popular in Hitler's Germany, Jürgen's position with its burgeoning rocket program changes their diminishing fortunes for the better. But as Sofie watches helplessly, her beloved Berlin begins to transform, forcing her to consider what they must sacrifice morally for their young family's security, and what the price for their neutrality will be.



Twenty years later, Jürgen is one of the many German scientists offered pardons for their part in the war and taken to America to work for its fledgling space program. For Sofie, this is the chance to exorcise the ghosts that have followed her across the ocean, and make a fresh start in her adopted country. But her neighbors aren't as welcoming or as understanding as she had hoped. When scandalous rumors about the Rhodes family's affiliation with Hitler's regime spreads, idle gossip turns to bitter rage, and the act of violence that results will tear apart Sofie's community and her family before the truth is

finally revealed.

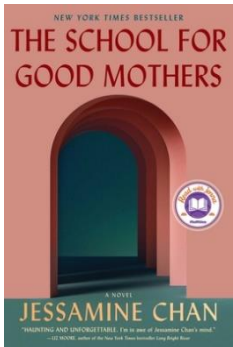
May 30<sup>th</sup>

***Olive Again* by Elizabeth Strout** Prickly, wry, resistant to change yet ruthlessly honest and deeply empathetic, Olive Kitteridge is "a compelling life force" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). *The New Yorker* has said that Elizabeth Strout "animates the ordinary with an astonishing force," and she has never done so more clearly than in these pages, where the iconic Olive struggles to understand not only herself and her own life but the lives of

those around her in the town of Crosby, Maine. Whether with a teenager coming to terms with the loss of her father, a young woman about to give birth during a hilariously inopportune moment, a nurse who confesses a secret high school crush, or a lawyer who struggles with an inheritance she does not want to accept, the unforgettable Olive will continue to startle us, to move us, and to inspire us--in Strout's words--"to bear the burden of the mystery with as much grace as we can."



June 27<sup>th</sup>



### ***School for Good Mothers* by Jessamine Chan**

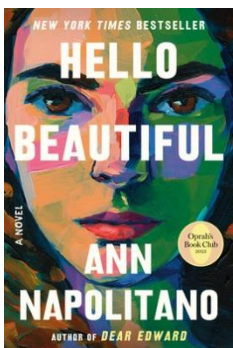
Frida Liu is struggling. She doesn't have a career worthy of her Chinese immigrant parents' sacrifices. She can't persuade her husband, Gust, to give up his wellness-obsessed younger mistress. Only with Harriet, their cherubic daughter, does Frida finally attain the perfection expected of her. Harriet may be all she has, but she is just enough.

Until Frida has a very bad day.

The state has its eye on mothers like Frida. The ones who check their phones, letting their children get injured on the playground; who let their children walk home alone. Because of one moment of poor judgement, a host of government officials will now determin

Faced with the possibility of losing Harriet, Frida must prove that a bad mother can be redeemed. That she can learn to be good. An "intense" (*Oprah Daily*), "captivating" (*Today*) page-turner that is also a transgressive novel of ideas about the perils of "perfect" upper-middle class parenting; the violence enacted upon women by both the state and, at times, one another; the systems that separate families; and the boundlessness of love, *The School for Good Mothers* introduces, in Frida, an everywoman for the ages. Using dark wit to explore the pains and joys of the deepest ties that bind us, Chan has written a modern literary classic.

July 25<sup>th</sup>



### ***Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano**

William Waters grew up in a house silenced by tragedy, where his parents could hardly bear to look at him, much less love him--so when he meets the spirited and ambitious Julia Padavano in his freshman year of college, it's as if the world has lit up around him. With Julia comes her family, as she and her three sisters are inseparable: Sylvie, the family's dreamer, is happiest with her nose in a book; Cecelia is a free-spirited artist; and Emeline patiently takes care of them all. With the Padavanos, William experiences a newfound contentment; every moment in their house is filled with loving chaos.

But then darkness from William's past surfaces, jeopardizing not only Julia's carefully orchestrated plans for their future, but the sisters' unshakeable devotion to one another. The result is a catastrophic family rift that changes their lives for generations. Will the loyalty that once rooted them be strong enough to draw them back together when it matters most?

An exquisite homage to Louisa May Alcott's timeless classic, *Hello Beautiful* is a profoundly moving portrait of what is possible when we choose to love someone not in spite of who they are, but because of it.

## August 29<sup>th</sup>

### ***Finding Me: A Memoir* by Viola Davis**

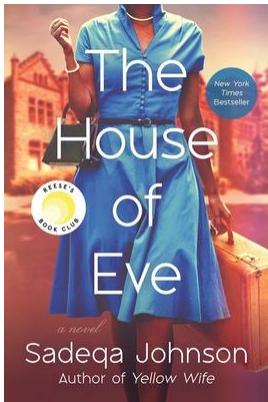
In my book, you will meet a little girl named Viola who ran from her past until she made a life-changing decision to stop running forever. This is my story, from a crumbling apartment in Central Falls, Rhode Island, to the stage in New York City, and beyond. This is the path I took to finding my purpose but also my voice in a world that didn't always see me.



As I wrote *Finding Me*, my eyes were open to the truth of how our stories are often not given close examination. We are forced to reinvent them to fit into a crazy, competitive, judgmental world. So I wrote this for anyone running through life untethered, desperate and clawing their way through murky memories, trying to get to some form of self-love. For anyone who needs reminding that a life worth living can only be born from radical honesty and the courage to shed facades and be . . . you.

*Finding Me* is a deep reflection, a promise, and a love letter of sorts to self. My hope is that my story will inspire you to light up your own life with creative expression and rediscover who you were before the world put a label on you.

## September 26<sup>th</sup>



### ***The House of Eve* by Sadeqa Johnson**

1950s Philadelphia: fifteen-year-old Ruby Pearsall is on track to becoming the first in her family to attend college. But a taboo love affair threatens to pull her back down into the poverty and desperation that has been passed on to her like a birthright.

Eleanor Quarles arrives in Washington, DC, with ambition and secrets. When she meets the handsome William Pride at Howard University, they fall madly in love. But William hails from one of DC's elite wealthy Black families, and his parents don't let just anyone into their fold. Eleanor hopes that a baby will make her finally feel at home in William's family and grant her the life she's been searching for. But having a baby--and fitting in--

is easier said than done.

With their stories colliding in the most unexpected of ways, Ruby and Eleanor will both make decisions that shape the trajectory of their lives.

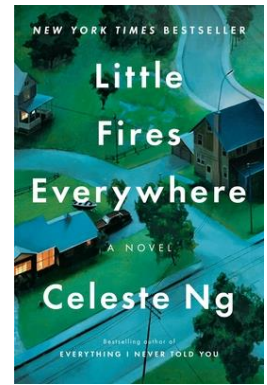
## October 24<sup>th</sup>

### ***Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng**

In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned--from the layout of the

winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules.

Enter Mia Warren--an enigmatic artist and single mother--who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community.



When old family friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town--and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs.

Little Fires Everywhere explores the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the ferocious pull of motherhood--and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.

## November 21<sup>st</sup>



### **Guncle by Steven Rowley**

Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP, for short), has always loved his niece, Maisie, and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for weeklong visits, or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. But in terms of caretaking and relating to two children, no matter how adorable, Patrick is, honestly, overwhelmed.

So when tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick's brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself suddenly taking on the role of primary guardian. Despite having a set of "Guncle Rules" ready to go, Patrick has no idea what to expect, having spent years barely holding on after the loss of his great love, a somewhat-stalled acting career, and a lifestyle not-so-suited to a six- and a nine-year-old. Quickly realizing that parenting--even if temporary--isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human.

With the humor and heart we've come to expect from bestselling author Steven Rowley, *The Guncle* is a moving tribute to the power of love, patience, and family in even the most trying of times.

## December 19<sup>th</sup>

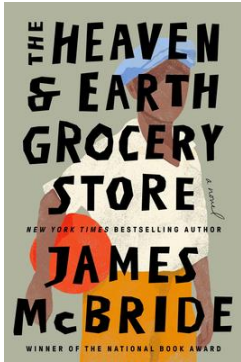
### **Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan (no LP)**

It is 1985 in a small Irish town. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant and family man faces into his busiest season. Early one morning, while delivering an order to the local convent, Bill makes a discovery which forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church.

Already an international bestseller, *Small Things Like These* is a deeply affecting story of hope, quiet heroism, and empathy from one of our most critically lauded and iconic writers.



January 30<sup>th</sup> 2025



### ***Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride**

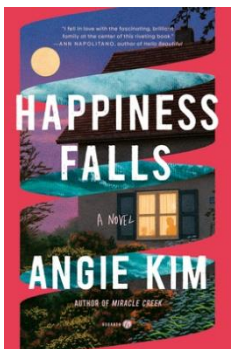
In 1972, when workers in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, were digging the foundations for a new development, the last thing they expected to find was a skeleton at the bottom of a well. Who the skeleton was and how it got there were two of the long-held secrets kept by the residents of Chicken Hill, the dilapidated neighborhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side and shared ambitions and sorrows. Chicken Hill was where Moshe and Chona Ludlow lived when Moshe integrated his theater and where Chona ran the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store. When the state came looking for a deaf boy to institutionalize him, it was Chona and Nate

Timblin, the Black janitor at Moshe's theater and the unofficial leader of the Black community on Chicken Hill, who worked together to keep the boy safe. As these characters' stories overlap and deepen, it becomes clear how much the people who live on the margins of white, Christian America 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.

February 27<sup>th</sup> 2025

### ***Happiness Falls* by Angie Kim**

"We didn't call the police right away." Those are the electric first words of this extraordinary novel about a biracial Korean American family in Virginia whose lives are upended when their beloved father and husband goes missing.



Mia, the irreverent, hyper analytical twenty-year-old daughter, has an explanation for everything--which is why she isn't initially concerned when her father and younger brother Eugene don't return from a walk in a nearby park. They must have lost their phone. Or stopped for an errand somewhere. But by the time Mia's brother runs through the front door bloody and alone, it becomes clear that the father in this tight-knit family is missing and the only witness is Eugene, who has the rare genetic condition Angelman syndrome and cannot speak.

What follows is both a ticking-clock investigation into the whereabouts of a father and an emotionally rich portrait of a family whose most personal secrets just may be at the heart of his disappearance. Full of shocking twists and fascinating questions of love, language, and human connection, *Happiness Falls* is a mystery, a family drama, and a novel of profound philosophical inquiry. With all the powerful storytelling she brought to her award-winning debut, *Miracle Creek*, Angie Kim turns the missing-person story into something wholly original, creating an indelible tale of a family who must go to remarkable lengths to truly understand one another.