

Book club keeps neighbors connected >



Anne Hutchinson is credited with forming the first book club — in 1634 — on a ship headed for the Massachusetts Bay. She gathered women together for analytical discussions of that week's sermon. By 1727, Benjamin Franklin organized a literary society to discuss current issues. Fast forward to Oprah's Book Club that helped spark a renaissance of book clubs.

Pearl District resident Judy Douglas has been a member of multiple book clubs and says she “enjoys hearing perspectives on books” that comes from the discussion. She helped form a book club at the Elizabeth Condos in 2016, meeting in their community room but held online since Covid-19.

“I especially look forward to our Zoom calls — the connection of friends and neighbors with books is even more important to me now.”

How does a book club work?

Judy said that she prefers a loose format when it comes to their book club. She said that each member of the club chooses a book and will help lead the discussion of it at the monthly meeting. The discussion can vary, from discussing the author's style to discussing details of the story. Of course, she said, sometimes the discussion will veer off, but the leader eventually brings it back to the book at hand.

Judy noted that as “a testament to the vitality of the group, we've scheduled books through June of 2021.” She noted that their group might be different than some in that it includes three men — statistics show roughly 70 to 80% of book clubs are all women.

She shared their schedule of books for the coming months:

- **November:** The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- **December:** The Splendid and the Vile by Erik Larson
- **January:** Crossing to Safety by Wallace Stegner
- **February:** The Shadow King by Maaza Mangista
- **March:** The Lying Life of Adults by Elena Ferrante

- **April:** Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro
- **May:** The Sunrise by Victoria Hislop
- **June:** The Cold Millions by Jess Walter

Judy's tips on starting a book club

Get comfortable with Zoom — Judy said their first couple of meetings were a little bumpy, but everyone is now comfortable and the discussion feels like it did in the community room.

Keep the online group to a manageable number — Keeping to under ten people has helped the conversation work well online without needing to mute, as is needed with bigger groups.

Plan ahead to get books — It's important for the group to decide on the books so that everyone has time to get ahold of the books. With libraries closed again, it can take time get the book and there are only so many e-copies to check out.

Ready to start your own book club?

Start by putting the word out on your building's discussion board or posting a flier on the bulletin board. Of course, you can also put the ask out on your social media pages since this will be an online group.

Once your group chooses a title to read, encourage club members to shop local favorite **Powell's Books** < <https://www.powells.com> >. They are open for in-person shopping and have express pickup service, and also offer free shipping to your members.

Consider reviewing past speakers at Portland's Literary Arts series. You can learn more about them and listen to recorded talks from the author you can share with your book club. Click [here < https://literary-arts.org/archive/ >](https://literary-arts.org/archive/) to learn more.

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