

## Read Between the Wines Book Club Recommendations February 2017

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### 1. **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak 584 pages

The Book Thief centers around the life of Liesel Meminger, a nine-year-old girl living in Germany during World War II. Liesel's experiences are narrated by Death, who describes both the beauty and destruction of life in this era. After her brother's death, Liesel arrives in a distraught state at the home of her new foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann. During her time there, she is exposed to the horror of the Nazi regime and struggles to find a way to preserve the innocence of her childhood in the midst of her destructive surroundings. As the political situation in Germany deteriorates, her foster parents hide a Jewish man named Max, putting the family in danger. Hans, who has developed a close relationship with Liesel, teaches her to read in secret. Recognizing the power of writing and sharing the written word, Liesel begins to not only steal books the Nazi party is looking to destroy, but also write her own stories and share the power of language with Max. As Liesel copes with the trauma of her past and the violent horrors of the war-torn world around her, she embarks on a journey of self-discovery, the formation of a new family, and mostly, her life as a book thief.

### 2. **Havisham** by Ronald Frame 357 pages

Before she became the immortal and haunting Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations*, she was Catherine, a young woman with all of her dreams ahead of her. Spry, imperious, she is the daughter of a wealthy brewer. But she is never far from the smell of hops and the arresting letters on the brewhouse wall—HAVISHAM—a reminder of all she owes to the family name and the family business.

Sent by her father to stay with the Chadwicks, Catherine discovers elegant pastimes to remove the taint of her family's new money. But for all her growing sophistication, Catherine is anything but worldly, and when a charismatic stranger pays her attention, everything—her heart, her future, the very Havisham name—is vulnerable.

In *Havisham*, Ronald Frame unfurls the psychological trauma that made young Catherine into Miss Havisham and cursed her to a life alone, roaming the halls of the mansion in the tatters of the dress she wore for the wedding she was never to have.

### 3. **The Travelers**, by Chris Pavone (author of *Expats*) 466 pp

When newly married disillusioned travel writer Will Rhodes is on assignment in the Argentina wine region, his bad choices draw him into a tangled web of international intrigue. It soon becomes clear that the people closest to him may pose the greatest threat of all.

### 4. **Hidden Figures** by Margot Lee Shetterly, 349 pp

The American dream and the untold story of the black women mathematicians who helped with the space race. An account of the previously unheralded but pivotal contributions of NASA's African-American women mathematicians to the space program describes how they were segregated from their white counterparts by Jim Crow laws in spite of their groundbreaking successes.

### 5. **Luckiest Girl Alive** by Jessica Knoll, 352 pp

One woman's carefully orchestrated, perfect life slowly cracks to reveal a dark underbelly in Knoll's knockout debut novel. Ani FaNelli has left her Main Line suburban Philadelphia roots behind to reinvent herself as a writer for a successful New York magazine. She is now engaged to the successful, wealthy Luke. But her past threatens to come back to haunt her, in the form of a documentary about a school shooting that happened at her prestigious private high school years ago. Ani leaves New York to travel back to suburban Philadelphia to tell her side of the story. Knoll carefully unravels Ani's past, her fractured relationship with her mother, and her suffering at the hands of her fellow high school students. Flashbacks reveal the psychological and physical damage inflicted by Ani's classmates, the effects of which linger in the present.

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### 6. **Crossing on the Paris**, by Dana Gynther (336 pages)

The year is 1921. Three women set out on the impressive Paris ocean liner on a journey from Paris to New York. Julie Vernet is a young French woman from a working class family who has just gotten her first job as a crew worker on the ship. Escaping her small town and the memory of war, she longs for adventure on the high seas. Constance Stone is a young American wife and mother who has traveled to Paris to rescue her bohemian sister, Faith, who steadfastly refuses to return to America and settle down. Constance returns home to New York, having failed at the duty her father asked of her. Vera Sinclair, a rich, ex-patriate American is leaving France after thirty-one years to live out her remaining time home in America. Over the course of the transatlantic voyage, she reflects on her colorful life and looks forward to a quiet retirement. While each of these women come from different walks of life, their paths cross while at sea in a series of chance encounters. The powerful impact these disparate lives have on one another make for a magnificent and unforgettable read.

### 7. **This Is How It Always Is**, by Laurie Frankel (Goodreads Author), 336 pp

This is how a family keeps a secret...and how that secret ends up keeping them. This is how a family lives happily ever after...until happily ever after becomes complicated. This is how children change...and then change the world. This is Claude. He's five years old, the youngest of five brothers, and loves peanut butter sandwiches. He also loves wearing a dress, and dreams of being a princess. When he grows up, Claude says, he wants to be a girl. Rosie and Penn want Claude to be whoever Claude wants to be. They're just not sure they're ready to share that with the world. Soon the entire family is keeping Claude's secret. Until one day it explodes. *This Is How It Always Is* is a novel about revelations, transformations, fairy tales, and family. And it's about the ways this is how it always is: Change is always hard and miraculous and hard again, parenting is always a leap into the unknown with crossed fingers and full hearts.

### 8. **The Woman Next Door**, by Yewande Omotoso , 288 pp

Hortensia James and Marion Agostino are neighbours. One is black, one white. Both are successful women with impressive careers. Both have recently been widowed. And both are sworn enemies, sharing hedge and hostility which they prune with a zeal that belies the fact that they are both over eighty. But one day an unforeseen event forces the women together. And gradually the bickering and sniping softens into lively debate, and from there into memories shared. But could these sparks of connection ever transform into friendship? Or is it too late to expect these two to change?

### 9. **Iza's Ballad** by Magda Szabo, 352 pp

The story of a mother, Ettie, and her daughter, Iza, both of whom have the best of intentions but can't escape the political and technological circumstances of their historical moment. When Ettie's husband died, Iza brings her Mom to live with her in the city thinking that would be for the best. Sadly, the reality is far from that simple. Finding a satisfactory answer proves heartbreaking difficult.

### 10. **A Thousand Splendid Suns** by Khaled Hosseini, 379 pp

Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation.

### 11. **Everybody's Fool** by Richard Russo 477 pages

Richard Russo, at the very top of his game, now returns to North Bath, in upstate New York, and the characters he created in *Nobody's Fool*. The irresistible Sully, who in the intervening years has come by some unexpected good fortune, is staring

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down a VA cardiologist's estimate that he has only a year or two left, and it's hard work trying to keep this news from the most important people in his life: Ruth, the married woman he carried on with for years . . . the ultra-hapless Rub Squeers, who worries that he and Sully aren't *still* best friends . . . Sully's son and grandson, for whom he was mostly an absentee figure (and now a regretful one). We also enjoy the company of Doug Raymer, the chief of police who's obsessing primarily over the identity of the man his wife might've been about to run off with, *before* dying in a freak accident . . . Bath's mayor, the former academic Gus Moynihan, whose wife problems are, if anything, even more pressing . . . and then there's Carl Roebuck, whose lifelong run of failing upward might now come to ruin. And finally, there's Charice Bond—a light at the end of the tunnel that is Chief Raymer's office—as well as her brother, Jerome, who might well be the train barreling into the station.

*Everybody's Fool* is filled with humor, heart, hard times and people you can't help but love, possibly because their various faults make them so stridently human. This is classic Russo—and a crowning achievement from one of the greatest storytellers of our time.

### 12. **The Race for Paris** by Meg Waite Clayton 336 pages Fiction

The New York Times bestselling author of *The Wednesday Sisters* returns with a moving and powerfully dynamic World War II novel about two American journalists and an Englishman, who together race the Allies to Occupied Paris for the scoop of their lives

Normandy, 1944. To cover the fighting in France, Jane, a reporter for the Nashville Banner, and Liv, an Associated Press photographer, have already had to endure enormous danger and frustrating obstacles—including strict military regulations limiting what women correspondents can do. Even so, Liv wants more.

Encouraged by her husband, the editor of a New York newspaper, she's determined to be the first photographer to reach Paris with the Allies, and capture its freedom from the Nazis.

However, her Commanding Officer has other ideas about the role of women in the press corps. To fulfill her ambitions, Liv must go AWOL. She persuades Jane to join her, and the two women find a guardian angel in Fletcher, a British military photographer who reluctantly agrees to escort them. As they race for Paris across the perilous French countryside, Liv, Jane, and Fletcher forge an indelible emotional bond that will transform them and reverberate long after the war is over.

Based on daring, real-life female reporters on the front lines of history like Margaret Bourke-White, Lee Miller, and Martha Gellhorn—and with cameos by other famous faces of the time—*The Race for Paris* is an absorbing, atmospheric saga full of drama, adventure, and passion. Combining riveting storytelling with expert literary craftsmanship and thorough research, Meg Waite Clayton crafts a compelling, resonant read.

### 13. **When the Moon is Low** by Nadia Hashimi 400 pages Fiction

Mahmoud's passion for his wife Fereiba, a schoolteacher, is greater than any love she's ever known. But their happy, middle-class world—a life of education, work, and comfort—implodes when their country is engulfed in war, and the Taliban rises to power.

Mahmoud, a civil engineer, becomes a target of the new fundamentalist regime and is murdered. Forced to flee Kabul with her three children, Fereiba has one hope to survive: she must find a way to cross Europe and reach her sister's family in England. With forged papers and help from kind strangers they meet along the way, Fereiba makes a dangerous crossing into Iran under cover of darkness. Exhausted and brokenhearted but undefeated, Fereiba manages to smuggle them as far as Greece. But in a busy market square, their fate takes a frightening turn when her teenage son, Saleem, becomes separated from the rest of the family.

Faced with an impossible choice, Fereiba pushes on with her daughter and baby, while Saleem falls into the shadowy underground network of undocumented Afghans who haunt the streets of Europe's capitals. Across the continent Fereiba and Saleem struggle to reunite, and ultimately find a place where they can begin to reconstruct their lives.

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