

FLC BOOK CLUB NOMINEE TITLES FOR 2024-2025

When we meet on May 21, 2024 at FLC at 2:00 pm, please be ready to vote to select seven of the following titles for our 2024-25 year (September-May; no meeting in December). Remember, it's Dessert and Decisions!

If you can't make the meeting, please submit your seven selections by number to either Marilyn Wilson or Steve Thompson.

The price listed is for a single copy—most usually used paperback. The price listed is a rough estimate, based on current prices found in our online book outlets. It may change when Steve actually places the order during 2024 and 25.

For questions ahead of our May 21 get-together, speak to Marilyn or Steve. Thanks!

1. *The Whip* by Karen Kondazian *Amazon, \$6*

The Whip is inspired by the true story of a woman, Charlotte "Charley" Parkhurst (1812-1879) who lived most of her extraordinary life as a man in the old west. As a young woman in Rhode Island, she fell in love with a runaway slave and had his child. The destruction of her family drove her west to California, dressed as a man, to track the killer.

Charley became a renowned stagecoach driver for Wells Fargo. She killed a famous outlaw, had a secret love affair, and lived with a housekeeper who, unaware of her true sex, fell in love with her. Charley was the first known woman to vote in America in 1868 (as a man). Her grave lies in Watsonville, California. **This book contains strong language.**

2. *Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead

Amazon, \$6

When Elwood Curtis, a black boy growing up in 1960s Tallahassee, is unfairly sentenced to a juvenile reformatory called the Nickel Academy, he finds himself trapped in a grotesque chamber of horrors. Elwood's only salvation is his friendship with fellow "delinquent" Turner, which deepens despite Turner's conviction that Elwood is hopelessly naive, that the world is crooked, and that the only way to survive is to scheme and avoid trouble. As life at the Academy becomes ever more perilous, the tension between Elwood's ideals and Turner's skepticism leads to a decision whose repercussions will echo down the decades.

Based on the real story of a reform school that operated for 111 years and warped the lives of thousands of children, *The Nickel Boys* is a devastating, driven narrative that showcases a great American novelist writing at the height of his powers and "should further cement Whitehead as one of his generation's best" (*Entertainment Weekly*).

3. *Sold on a Monday: A Novel* by Kristina McMorris Amazon, \$6

2 CHILDREN FOR SALE.

In 1931, near Philadelphia, ambitious reporter Ellis Reed photographs the gut-wrenching sign posted beside a pair of siblings on a farmhouse porch. With the help of newspaper secretary Lily Palmer, Ellis writes an article to accompany the photo. Capturing the hardships of American families during the Great Depression, the feature story generates national attention and Ellis's career skyrockets.

But the piece also leads to consequences more devastating than he and Lily ever imagined - and it will risk everything they value to unravel the mystery and set things right.

Inspired by a newspaper photo that stunned readers throughout the country, *Sold on a Monday* is a powerful novel of ambition, redemption, love, and family.

4. *The Saints of Swallow Hill* by Donna Everhart

Amazon, \$ 6.50

Where the Crawdads Sing meets *The Four Winds* in this Depression-era historical fiction novel set in the turpentine camps and pine forests of the American South.

A captivating story of friendship and survival as the lives of three vagabonds intersect in rural Georgia and North Carolina.

It takes courage to save yourself...

In the dense pine forests of North Carolina, turpentiners labor, hacking into tree trunks to draw out the sticky sap that gives the Tar Heel State its nickname, and hauling the resin to stills to be refined. Among them is Rae Lynn Cobb and her husband, Warren, who run a small turpentine farm together.

Though the work is hard and often dangerous, Rae Lynn, who spent her childhood in an orphanage, is thankful for it—and for her kind if careless husband. When Warren falls victim to his own negligence, Rae Lynn undertakes a desperate act of mercy. To keep herself from jail, she disguises herself as a man named "Ray" and heads to the only place she can think of that might offer anonymity—a turpentine camp in Georgia named Swallow Hill.

Swallow Hill is no easy haven. The camp is isolated and squalid, and commissary owner Otis Riddle takes out his frustrations on his browbeaten wife, Cornelia. Although Rae Lynn works tirelessly, she becomes a target for Crow, the ever-watchful woods rider who checks each laborer's tally. Delwood Reese, who's come to Swallow Hill hoping for his own redemption, offers "Ray" a small measure of protection, and is determined to improve their conditions. As Rae Lynn forges a deeper friendship with both Del and Cornelia, she begins to envision a path out of the camp. But she will have to come to terms with her past, with all its pain and beauty, before she can open herself to a new life and seize the chance to begin again.

5. *In the Unlikely Event* by Judy Blume

Amazon, \$5

In her highly anticipated new novel, Judy Blume, the *New York Times* # 1 best-selling author of *Summer Sisters* and of young adult classics such as *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, creates a richly textured and moving story of three generations of families, friends and strangers, whose lives are profoundly changed by unexpected events.

In 1987, Miri Ammerman returns to her hometown of Elizabeth, New Jersey, to attend a commemoration of the worst year of her life.

Thirty-five years earlier, when Miri was fifteen, and in love for the first time, a succession of airplanes fell from the sky, leaving a community reeling. Against this backdrop of actual events that Blume experienced in the early 1950s, when airline travel was new and exciting and everyone dreamed of going somewhere, Judy Blume imagines and weaves together a haunting story of three generations of families, friends, and strangers, whose lives are profoundly changed by these disasters. She paints a vivid portrait of a particular time and place — Nat King Cole singing “Unforgettable,”

Elizabeth Taylor haircuts, young (and not-so-young) love, explosive friendships, A-bomb hysteria, rumors of Communist threat. And a young journalist who makes his name reporting tragedy. Through it all, one generation reminds another that life goes on.

6. *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* by Erik Larson

Amazon: \$5.50

From the #1 New York Times bestselling author and master of narrative nonfiction comes the enthralling story of the sinking of the Lusitania

On May 1, 1915, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were anxious. Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone, and for months, its U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the Lusitania was one of the era's great transatlantic "Greyhounds" and her captain, William Thomas Turner, placed tremendous faith in the gentlemanly strictures of warfare that for a century had kept civilian ships safe from attack. He knew, moreover, that his ship - the fastest then in service - could outrun any threat.

Germany, however, was determined to change the rules of the game, and Walther Schwieger, the captain of Unterseeboot-20, was happy to oblige. Meanwhile, an ultra-secret British intelligence unit tracked Schwieger's U-boat, but told no one. As U-20 and the Lusitania made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small - hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more--all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history.

It is a story that many of us think we know but don't, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era. Full of glamour, mystery, and real-life suspense, *Dead Wake* brings to life a cast of evocative characters, from famed Boston bookseller Charles Lauriat to pioneering female architect Theodate Pope Riddle to President Wilson, a man lost to grief, dreading the widening war but also captivated by the prospect of new love. Gripping and important, *Dead Wake* captures the sheer drama and emotional power of a disaster that helped place America on the road to war.

7. *The First Lady* by James Patterson about \$6

One secret could bring down the government when the President's memorable affair becomes a nightmare, he longs to forget in this page-turner from James Patterson that will keep you up reading all night long.

Sally Grissom is a top-Secret Service agent in charge of the Presidential Protection team. She knows that something is amiss when she's summoned to a private meeting with the President and his Chief of Staff without any witnesses. But she couldn't have predicted that she'd be forced to take on an investigation surrounding the mysterious disappearance of the First Lady -- with strict orders to keep it a secret.

The First Lady's absence comes in the wake of the scandalous, public revelation of the president's affair, so at first it seems as though she is simply cutting off all contact as she recuperates at a horse farm in Virginia. What begins as an innocent respite quickly turns into a twisted case when the White House receives a ransom note along with the First Lady's finger.

8. The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold about \$7

"My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973."

So begins the story of Susie Salmon, who is adjusting to her new home in heaven, a place that is not at all what she expected, even as she is watching life on earth continue without her -- her friends trading rumors about her disappearance, her killer trying to cover his tracks, her grief-stricken family unraveling. Out of unspeakable tragedy and loss, *The Lovely Bones* succeeds, miraculously, in building a tale filled with hope, humor, suspense, even joy.

9. Shadow Prey by John Sandford about \$5

A series of ritualistic murders committed across the United States draws Lucas Davenport into an unimaginable conspiracy of revenge in this "classic"(Boston Globe) thriller in the #1 New York Times bestselling series. A slumlord butchered in Minneapolis...A rising political star executed in Manhattan...A judge slashed to death in Oklahoma City... Each victim has a history of bad behavior, but the only thing the killings have in common is the murder weapon--a Native American ceremonial knife--and a trail of blood that leads to an embodiment of evil known only as Shadow Love. Recruited to be the lethal hand of a terrorist campaign, Shadow Love has his own bloody agenda, one he will do anything to achieve. Enlisted to find him are Minneapolis police lieutenant Lucas Davenport and New York City police officer Lily Rothenburg. But despite the countrywide carnage they needn't look far. Because Shadow Love is right behind them. This description may be from another edition of this product.

10. Run by Ann Patchett, Amazon, about \$6

It's a winter evening in Boston and the temperature has drastically dropped as a blizzard approaches the city. On this fateful night, Bernard Doyle plans to meet his two adopted sons, Tip the older, and more serious and Teddy, the affectionate dreamer, at a Harvard auditorium to hear a speech given by Jesse Jackson. Doyle, an Irish Catholic and former Boston mayor, has done his best to keep his two sons interested in politics, from the day he and his now deceased wife became their parents, through their childhoods, and now in their lives as college students. Though the two boys are African-American, the bonds of the family's love have never been tested. But as the snow begins to fall, an accident triggers into motion a series of events that will forever change their lives.

Run is at its very center, is a novel about what truly defines family and the lengths we will go to protect our children.

11. *The History of Us* by Leah Stewart, about \$7 amazon

Sometimes home is the hardest place to go

Eloise Hempel is on her way to teach her first class at Harvard when she receives the devastating news that her sister and her husband have been killed in a tragic accident. Eloise leaves her life in Cambridge and moves back into her family's century-old house in Cincinnati, pouring her own money into the house's upkeep and her heart into raising her sister's three children, Theodora, Josh, and Claire.

Nearly twenty years later, the now-grown children seem ready to leave home, and Eloise plans to sell the house and finally start a life that's hers alone. But when Eloise's mother decides that they should all compete for the chance to keep the house and Claire reveals a life-changing secret, the makeshift family begins to fall apart and ultimately must decide what in life is worth fighting for.

12. *The Bishop's Pawn* by Steve Berry, amazon, about \$6

The Bishop's Pawn continues renowned *New York Times* top 5 bestseller Steve Berry's Cotton Malone series with another riveting, history-based thriller.

History notes that the ugly feud between J. Edgar Hoover and Martin Luther King, Jr., marked by years of illegal surveillance and the accumulation of secret files, ended on April 4, 1968 when King was assassinated by James Earl Ray. But that may not have been the case.

Now, fifty years later, former Justice Department agent, Cotton Malone, must reckon with the truth of what really happened that fateful day in Memphis.

It all turns on an incident from eighteen years ago, when Malone, as a young Navy lawyer, is trying hard not to live up to his burgeoning reputation as a maverick. When Stephanie Nelle, a high-level Justice Department lawyer, enlists him to help with an investigation, he jumps at the opportunity. But he soon discovers that two opposing forces—the Justice Department and the FBI—are at war over a rare coin and a cadre of secret files containing explosive revelations about the King assassination, information that could ruin innocent lives and threaten the legacy of the civil rights movement's greatest martyr.

Malone's decision to see it through to the end--from the raucous bars of Mexico, to the clear waters of the Dry Tortugas, and ultimately into the halls of power within Washington D.C. itself--not only changes his own life, but the course of history.