

# East Providence Public Library

## 2023-2024 Book Club Selections\*

### **Such A Fun Age by Kiley Reid : September 2023**

Alix Chamberlain is a woman who gets what she wants and has made a living, with her confidence-driven brand, showing other women how to do the same. So she is shocked when her babysitter, Emira Tucker, is confronted while watching the Chamberlains' toddler one night, walking the aisles of their local high-end supermarket. The store's security guard, seeing a young black woman out late with a white child, accuses Emira of kidnapping two-year-old Briar. A small crowd gathers, a bystander films everything, and Emira is furious and humiliated. Alix resolves to make things right. But Emira herself is aimless, broke, and wary of Alix's desire to help. At twenty-five, she is about to lose her health insurance and has no idea what to do with her life. When the video of Emira unearths someone from Alix's past, both women find themselves on a crash course that will upend everything they think they know about themselves, and each other. With empathy and piercing social commentary, *Such a Fun Age* explores the stickiness of transactional relationships, what it means to make someone "family," the complicated reality of being a grown up, and the consequences of doing the right thing for the wrong reason.

### **Grief Cottage by Gail Godwin : October 2023**

The haunting tale of a desolate cottage, and the hair-thin junction between this life and the next, from bestselling National Book Award finalist Gail Godwin. After his mother's death, eleven-year-old Marcus is sent to live on a small South Carolina island with his great aunt, a reclusive painter with a haunted past. Aunt Charlotte, otherwise a woman of few words, points out a ruined cottage, telling Marcus she had visited it regularly after she'd moved there thirty years ago because it matched the ruin of her own life. Eventually she was inspired to take up painting so she could capture its utter desolation. The islanders call it "Grief Cottage," because a boy and his parents disappeared from it during a hurricane fifty years before. Their bodies were never found and the cottage has stood empty ever since. During his lonely hours while Aunt Charlotte is in her studio painting and keeping her demons at bay, Marcus visits the cottage daily, building up his courage by coming ever closer, even after the ghost of the boy who died seems to reveal himself. Full of curiosity and open to the unfamiliar and uncanny given the recent upending of his life, he courts the ghost boy, never certain whether the ghost is friendly or follows some sinister agenda. *Grief Cottage* is the best sort of ghost story, but it is far more than that--an investigation of grief, remorse, and the memories that haunt us. The power and beauty of this artful novel wash over the reader like the waves on a South Carolina beach.

### **Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro : November 2023**

From her place in the store that sells artificial friends, Klara--an artificial friend with outstanding observational qualities--watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass in the street outside. She remains hopeful a customer will soon choose her, but when the possibility emerges that her circumstances may change forever, Klara she is warned not to invest too much in the promises of humans. In this luminous tale, *Klara and the Sun*, Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro looks at our rapidly changing modern world through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator to explore a fundamental question: what does it mean to love?

### **One Night Two Souls Went Walking by Ellen Cooney : December 2023**

A young chaplain at a large medical center fears her "soul is broken," though she hasn't subscribed to any formal religion in years--she's far too busy tending to the souls of her patients to do anything about her own. But strange things happen over the course of a single night shift, and interactions with patients in various states of consciousness and with various relationships to spirituality give her insight into her own life as they pinpoint our most human vulnerabilities and impulses. There's the former airport employee who never flew and, in his last moments of life, wants her to speak to him as if he's in a plane that's about to take off. The fifteen-year-old surfer who is the sole survivor of a rock-climbing accident and must now learn how to surf in his head. A frail elderly woman who has had a stroke and is unable to speak but does not want to be admitted. And the chaplain's companions: a student researching out-of-body experiences, and a dog that may or may not be a ghost. Though the novel unfolds over the course of a single night, Cooney renders the interior lives of the chaplain and her patients with great depth, evoking the challenges and rewards of solidarity in moments of fear and pain. A tender, intelligent novel that exudes wisdom and warmth and grants the most challenging moments of our human lives--those in which our bodies begin to fail us--a shimmer of magical possibility.

### **I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home by Lorrie Moore : January 2024**

Lorrie Moore's first novel since *A Gate at the Stairs*--a daring, meditative exploration of love and death, passion and grief, and what it means to be haunted by the past, both by history and the human heart. A teacher visiting his dying brother in the Bronx. A mysterious journal from the nineteenth century stolen from a boarding house. A therapy clown and an assassin, both presumed dead, but perhaps not dead at all... With her distinctive, irresistible wordplay and singular wry humor and wisdom, Lorrie Moore has given us a magic box of longing and surprise as she writes about love and rebirth and the pull towards life. Bold, meditative, theatrical, this new novel is an inventive, poetic portrait of lovers and siblings as it questions the stories we have been told which may or may not be true. *I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home* takes us through a trap door, into a windswept, imagined journey to the tragic-comic landscape that is, unmistakably, the world of Lorrie Moore.

### **The Reckless Oath We Made by Bryn Greenwood : February 2024**

At almost six-foot, with a redhead's temper and a shattered hip, Zee has a long list of worries: never-ending bills, her beautiful, gullible sister, her five-year-old nephew, her housebound mother, and her drug-dealing boss. Zee may not be a princess, but Gentry is an actual knight, complete with sword, armor, and a code of honor. Two years ago the voices he hears called him to be Zee's champion. He's barely spoken to her since, but he has kept watch, ready to come to her aid. When an abduction tears Zee's family apart, she turns to the last person she ever imagined--Gentry--and sets in motion a chain of events that will not only change both of their lives, but bind them to one another forever.

### **Mercy Street by Jennifer Haigh : March 2023**

For almost a decade, Claudia has counseled patients at Mercy Street, a clinic in the heart of the city. The work is consuming, the unending dramas of women in crisis. For its patients, Mercy Street offers more than health care; for many, it is a second chance. But outside the clinic, the reality is different. Anonymous threats are frequent. A small, determined group of anti-abortion demonstrators appears each morning at its door. As the protests intensify, fear creeps into Claudia's days, a humming anxiety she manages with frequent visits to Timmy, an affable pot dealer in the midst of his own existential crisis. At Timmy's, she encounters a random assortment of customers, including Anthony, a lost soul who spends most of his life online, chatting with the mysterious Excelsior11--the screenname of Victor Prine, an anti-abortion crusader who has set his sights on Mercy Street and is ready to risk it all for his beliefs.

### **Reading Across Rhode Island (RARI) 2024 Selection : April 2024**

Every year, the Rhode Island Center for the Book chooses a title for an annual statewide reading event. We will read this selection for the month of April. The title is announced in early 2024. You can read more about this program and browse past selections by visiting their website: <https://ribook.org/rari/>

### **Rules for Visiting by Jessica Francis Kane : May 2024**

A beautifully observed and deeply funny novel of May Attaway, a university gardener who sets out on an odyssey to reconnect with four old friends over the course of a year. At forty, May Attaway is more at home with plants than people. Over the years, she's turned inward, finding pleasure in language, her work as a gardener, and keeping her neighbors at arm's length while keenly observing them. But when she is unexpectedly granted some leave from her job, May is inspired to reconnect with four once close friends. She knows they will never have a proper reunion, so she goes, one-by-one, to each of them. A student of the classics, May considers her journey a female Odyssey. What might the world have had if, instead of waiting, Penelope had set out on an adventure of her own? *Rules For Visiting* is a woman's exploration of friendship in the digital age. Deeply alert to the nobility and the ridiculousness of ordinary people, May savors the pleasures along the way--afternoon ice cream with a long-lost friend, surprise postcards from an unexpected crush, and a moving encounter with ancient beauty. Though she gets a taste of viral online fame, May chooses to bypass her friends' perfectly cultivated online lives to instead meet them in their messy analog ones. Ultimately, May learns that a best friend is someone who knows your story--and she inspires us all to master the art of visiting.