

# BCC Book Club Suggestions for 2020-2021

We will need to select **nine** from this list of 17. The tenth selection will be the Washington County Read Book. Thanks to Barbara Lange and friends for this list.

\_\_\_ 1 *The Beantown Girls* by Jane Healey 365 pages

\_\_\_ 2 *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn 560 pages

\_\_\_ 3 *The Myth of Perpetual Summer* by Susan Crandall 368 pages

\_\_\_ 3 *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving 627 pages

\_\_\_ 5 *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion: A Novel* by Fannie Flagg 384 Pages

\_\_\_ 6 *The Tender Land* by William Kent Krueger 464 pages

\_\_\_ 7 *The Nightingale* by Kristen Hannah 608 Pages

\_\_\_ 8 *A Fire Sparkling* by Julianne MacLean 432 pages

\_\_\_ 9 *The Last Road Home* by Danny Johnson 304 pages

\_\_\_ 10 *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards 401 pages

\_\_\_ 11 *Little Sister, A Memoir* by Patricia Chadwick 336 pages (spoke to Chappell Hill Historical Society)

\_\_\_ 12 *Talking to Strangers* by Malcolm Gladwell 140 pages (non-fiction)

\_\_\_ 13 *When We Believed in Mermaids* by Barbara O'Neal 352 pages

\_\_\_ 14 *The Masterpiece* by Fiona Davis 384 pages

\_\_\_ 15 *Finding Chika: A Little Girl, an Earthquake, and the Making of a Family* by Mitch Albom 304 pages

\_\_\_ 16 *The Giver Of Stars* by Jojo Moyes 592 pages

\_\_\_ 17 *Olive Again* by Elizabeth Strout 304 pages (hardback) No paperback version yet available

**Name of Person Voting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If you cannot be at the January meeting, please submit ballot by January 22 by mail or snail.  
address: Susan Lake 2921 Twisted Oak Dr Brenham, TX 77833  
email: [slake@susanlake.net](mailto:slake@susanlake.net) (you can just copy and paste your selections into the email)**

### 1 *The Beantown Girls* by Jane Healey 365 pages

1944: Fiona Denning has her entire future planned out. She'll work in city hall, marry her fiancé when he returns from the war, and settle down in the Boston suburbs. But when her fiancé is reported missing after being shot down in Germany, Fiona's long-held plans are shattered. Determined to learn her fiancé's fate, Fiona leaves Boston to volunteer overseas as a Red Cross Clubmobile girl, recruiting her two best friends to come along. There's the outspoken Viviana, who is more than happy to quit her secretarial job for a taste of adventure. Then there's Dottie, a shy music teacher whose melodious talents are sure to bring heart and hope to the boys on the front lines. Chosen for their inner strength and outer charm, the trio isn't prepared for the daunting challenges of war. But through it all come new friendships and romances, unforeseen dangers, and unexpected dreams. As the three friends begin to understand the real reasons they all came to the front, their courage and camaraderie will see them through some of the best and worst times of their lives.

### 2 *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn 560 pages

1947. In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, American college girl Charlie St. Clair is pregnant, unmarried, and on the verge of being thrown out of her very proper family. She's also nursing a desperate hope that her beloved cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France during the war, might still be alive. So when Charlie's parents banish her to Europe to have her "little problem" taken care of, Charlie breaks free and heads to London, determined to find out what happened to the cousin she loves like a sister.

1915. A year into the Great War, Eve Gardiner burns to join the fight against the Germans and unexpectedly gets her chance when she's recruited to work as a spy. Sent into enemy-occupied France, she's trained by the mesmerizing Lili, the "Queen of Spies", who manages a vast network of secret agents right under the enemy's nose. Thirty years later, haunted by the betrayal that ultimately tore apart the Alice Network, Eve spends her days drunk and secluded in her crumbling London house. Until a young American barges in uttering a name Eve hasn't heard in decades, and launches them both on a mission to find the truth...no matter where it leads.

### 3 *The Myth of Perpetual Summer* by Susan Crandall 368 pages

Tallulah James's parents' volatile relationship, erratic behavior, and hands-off approach to child rearing set tongues to wagging in their staid Mississippi town, complicating her already uncertain life. She takes the responsibility of shielding her family's reputation and raising her younger twin siblings onto her youthful shoulders. If not for the emotional constants of her older brother, Griff, and her old guard Southern grandmother, she would be lost. When betrayal and death arrive hand in hand, she takes to the road, headed to what turns out to be the not-so-promised land of Southern California. The dysfunction of her childhood still echoes throughout her scattered family, sending her brother on a disastrous path and drawing her home again. There she uncovers the secrets and lies that set her family on the road to destruction.

### 3 *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving 627 pages

I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice—not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany. In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills the other boy's mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn't believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen after that 1953 foul ball is extraordinary.

### 5 *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion: A Novel* by Fannie Flagg 384 Pages

Mrs. Sookie Poole of Point Clear, Alabama, has just married off the last of her daughters and is looking forward to relaxing and perhaps traveling with her husband, Earle. The only thing left to contend with is her mother, the formidable Lenore Simmons Krackenberry. Lenore may be a lot of fun for other people, but is, for the most part, an overbearing presence for her daughter. Then one day, quite by accident, Sookie discovers a secret about her mother's past that knocks her for a loop and suddenly calls into question everything she ever thought she knew about herself, her family, and her future. Sookie begins a search for answers that takes her to California, the Midwest, and back in time, to the 1940s, when an irrepressible woman named Fritzzi takes on the job of running her family's filling station. Soon truck drivers are changing their routes to fill up at the All-Girl Filling Station. Then, Fritzzi sees an opportunity for an even more groundbreaking adventure. As Sookie learns about the adventures of the girls at the All-Girl Filling Station, she finds herself with new inspiration for her own life.

### 6 *The Tender Land* by William Kent Krueger 464 pages

1932, Minnesota—the Lincoln School is a pitiless place where hundreds of Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to an orphan named Odie O'Banion, a lively boy whose exploits earn him the superintendent's wrath. Forced to flee, he and his brother Albert, their best friend Mose, and a brokenhearted

little girl named Emmy steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi and a place to call their own. Over the course of one unforgettable summer, these four orphans will fly into the unknown and cross paths with others who are adrift, from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds. With the feel of a modern classic, *This Tender Land* is an enthralling, big-hearted epic that is “more than a simple journey; it is a deeply satisfying odyssey, a quest in search of self and home”

### 7 *The Nightingale* by Kristen Hannah 608 Pages

France, 1939 - In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband, Antoine, as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France ... but invade they do, in droves of marching soldiers, in caravans of trucks and tanks, in planes that fill the skies and drop bombs upon the innocent. When a German captain requisitions Vianne's home, she and her daughter must live with the enemy or lose everything. Without food or money or hope, as danger escalates all around them, she is forced to make one impossible choice after another to keep her family alive. Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious eighteen-year-old girl, searching for purpose with all the reckless passion of youth. While thousands of Parisians march into the unknown terrors of war, she meets G etan, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France, and she falls in love as only the young can ... completely. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance and never looks back, risking her life time and again to save others.

### 8 *A Fire Sparkling* by Julianne MacLean 432 pages

After a crushing betrayal by the man she loves, Gillian Gibbons flees to her family home for a much-needed escape, but when she finds an old photograph of her grandmother in the arms of a Nazi officer, Gillian's life gets even more complicated. Rattled by the discovery, Gillian attempts to unravel the truth behind the photos, setting her off on an epic journey through the past...

1939. England is on the brink of war as Vivian Hughes falls in love with a handsome British official, but when bombs begin to fall and Vivian's happy life is destroyed in the blitz, she will do whatever it takes to protect those she loves... As Gillian learns more about her grandmother's past, the old photo begins to make more sense. But for every question answered, a new one takes its place. Faced with a truth that is not at all what she expected, Gillian attempts to shine a light not only on the mysteries of her family's past but also on her own future.

### 9 *The Last Road Home* by Danny Johnson 304 pages

At eight years old, Raeford "Junebug" Hurley has known more than his share of hard lessons. After the sudden death of his parents, he goes to live with his grandparents on a farm surrounded by tobacco fields and lonesome woods. There he meets Fancy Stroud and her twin brother, Lightning, the children of black sharecroppers on a neighboring farm. As years pass, the friendship between Junebug and bright, compassionate Fancy takes on a deeper intensity. Junebug, aware of all the ways in which he and Fancy are more alike than different, habitually bucks against the casual bigotry that surrounds them--dangerous in a community ruled by the Klan. On the brink of adulthood, Junebug is drawn into a moneymaking scheme that goes awry--and leaves him with a dark secret he must keep from those he loves. And as Fancy, tired of saying yes'um and living scared, tries to find her place in the world, Junebug embarks on a journey that will take him through loss and war toward a hard-won understanding.

At once tender and unflinching, *The Last Road Home* delves deep into the gritty, violent realities of the South's turbulent past, yet evokes the universal hunger for belonging.

### 10 *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards 401 pages

Kim Edwards's stunning novel begins on a winter night in 1964 in Lexington, Kentucky, when a blizzard forces Dr. David Henry to deliver his own twins. His son, born first, is perfectly healthy, but the doctor immediately recognizes that his daughter has Down syndrome. Rationalizing it as a need to protect Norah, his wife, he makes a split second decision that will alter all of their lives forever. He asks his nurse, Caroline, to take the baby away to an institution and never to reveal the secret. Instead, she disappears into another city to raise the child herself. So begins this beautifully told story that unfolds over a quarter of a century--in which these two families, ignorant of each other, are yet bound by the fateful decision made that winter night long ago.

A family drama, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* explores every mother's silent fear: What would happen if you lost your child and she grew up without you? It is also an astonishing tale of love and how the mysterious ties that hold a family together help us survive the heartache that occurs when long-buried secrets are finally uncovered.

### 11 *Little Sister, A Memoir* by Patricia Chadwick 336 pages (spoke to Chappell Hill Historical Society)

Imagine an eighteen-year-old American girl who has never read a newspaper, watched television, or made a phone call. An eighteen-year-old-girl who has never danced--and this in the 1960s. It is in Cambridge, Massachusetts where Leonard Feeney, a controversial (soon to be excommunicated) Catholic priest, has founded a religious community called the Slaves

of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Center's members—many of them educated at Harvard and Radcliffe—surrender all earthly possessions and aspects of their life, including their children, to him. Patricia Chadwick was one of those children, and *Little Sister* is her account of growing up in the Feeney sect. Separated from her parents and forbidden to speak to them, Patricia bristles against the community's draconian rules, yearning for another life. When, at seventeen, she is banished from the Center, her home, she faces the world alone, without skills, family, or money but empowered with faith and a fierce determination to succeed on her own, which she does, rising eventually to the upper echelons of the world of finance and investing.

### 12 *Talking to Strangers* by Malcolm Gladwell 140 pages (non-fiction)

How did Fidel Castro fool the CIA for a generation? Why did Neville Chamberlain think he could trust Adolf Hitler? Why are campus sexual assaults on the rise? Do television sitcoms teach us something about the way we relate to each other that isn't true? *Talking to Strangers* is a classically Gladwellian intellectual adventure, a challenging and controversial excursion through history, psychology, and scandals taken straight from the news. He revisits the deceptions of Bernie Madoff, the trial of Amanda Knox, the suicide of Sylvia Plath, the Jerry Sandusky pedophilia scandal at Penn State University, and the death of Sandra Bland—throwing our understanding of these and other stories into doubt. Something is very wrong, Gladwell argues, with the tools and strategies we use to make sense of people we don't know. And because we don't know how to talk to strangers, we are inviting conflict and misunderstanding in ways that have a profound effect on our lives and our world. In his first book since his #1 bestseller, *David and Goliath*, Malcolm Gladwell has written a gripping guidebook for troubled times.

### 13 *When We Believed in Mermaids* by Barbara O'Neal 352 pages

Her sister has been dead for fifteen years when she sees her on the TV news...

Josie Bianci was killed years ago on a train during a terrorist attack. Gone forever. It's what her sister, Kit, an ER doctor in Santa Cruz, has always believed. Yet all it takes is a few heart-wrenching seconds to upend Kit's world. Live coverage of a club fire in Auckland has captured the image of a woman stumbling through the smoke and debris. Her resemblance to Josie is unbelievable. And unmistakable. With it comes a flood of emotions—grief, loss, and anger—that Kit finally has a chance to put to rest: by finding the sister who's been living a lie. After arriving in New Zealand, Kit begins her journey with the memories of the past: of days spent on the beach with Josie. Of a lost teenage boy who'd become part of their family. And of a trauma that has haunted Kit and Josie their entire lives. Now, if two sisters are to reunite, it can only be by unearthing long-buried secrets and facing a devastating truth that has kept them apart far too long. To regain their relationship, they may have to lose everything.

### 14 *The Masterpiece* by Fiona Davis 384 pages

For most New Yorkers, Grand Central Terminal is a crown jewel, a masterpiece of design. But for Clara Darden and Virginia Clay, it represents something quite different.

For Clara, the terminal is the stepping stone to her future. It is 1928, and Clara is teaching at the lauded Grand Central School of Art. Though not even the prestige of the school can override the public's disdain for a "woman artist," fiery Clara is single-minded in her quest to achieve every creative success—even while juggling the affections of two very different men. But she and her bohemian friends have no idea that they'll soon be blindsided by the looming Great Depression...and that even poverty and hunger will do little to prepare Clara for the greater tragedy yet to come.

By 1974, the terminal has declined almost as sharply as Virginia Clay's life. Dilapidated and dangerous, Grand Central is at the center of a fierce lawsuit: Is the once-grand building a landmark to be preserved, or a cancer to be demolished? For Virginia, it is simply her last resort. Recently divorced, she has just accepted a job in the information booth in order to support herself and her college-age daughter, Ruby. But when Virginia stumbles upon an abandoned art school within the terminal and discovers a striking watercolor, her eyes are opened to the elegance beneath the decay. She embarks on a quest to find the artist of the unsigned masterpiece—an impassioned chase that draws Virginia not only into the battle to save Grand Central but deep into the mystery of Clara Darden, the famed 1920s illustrator who disappeared from history in 1931.

### 15 *Finding Chika: A Little Girl, an Earthquake, and the Making of a Family* by Mitch Albom 304 pages

Chika Jeune was born three days before the devastating earthquake that decimated Haiti in 2010. She spent her infancy in a landscape of extreme poverty, and when her mother died giving birth to a baby brother, Chika was brought to The Have Faith Haiti Orphanage that Albom operates in Port Au Prince.

With no children of their own, the forty-plus children who live, play, and go to school at the orphanage have become family to Mitch and his wife, Janine. Chika's arrival makes a quick impression. Brave and self-assured, even as a three-year-old, she delights the other kids and teachers. But at age five, Chika is suddenly diagnosed with something a doctor there says,

“No one in Haiti can help you with.”

Mitch and Janine bring Chika to Detroit, hopeful that American medical care can soon return her to her homeland. Instead, Chika becomes a permanent part of their household, and their lives, as they embark on a two-year, around-the-world journey to find a cure. As Chika’s boundless optimism and humor teach Mitch the joys of caring for a child, he learns that a relationship built on love, no matter what blows it takes, can never be lost.

Told in hindsight, and through illuminating conversations with Chika herself, this is Albom at his most poignant and vulnerable. *Finding Chika* is a celebration of a girl, her adoptive guardians, and the incredible bond they formed—a devastatingly beautiful portrait of what it means to be a family, regardless of how it is made.

### 16 *The Giver Of Stars* by Jojo Moyes 592 pages

Alice Wright marries handsome American Bennett Van Cleve hoping to escape her stifling life in England. But small-town Kentucky quickly proves equally claustrophobic, especially living alongside her overbearing father-in-law. So when a call goes out for a team of women to deliver books as part of Eleanor Roosevelt’s new traveling library, Alice signs on enthusiastically.

The leader, and soon Alice’s greatest ally, is Margery, a smart-talking, self-sufficient woman who’s never asked a man’s permission for anything. They will be joined by three other singular women who become known as the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky.

What happens to them--and to the men they love--becomes an unforgettable drama of loyalty, justice, humanity and passion. These heroic women refuse to be cowed by men or by convention. And though they face all kinds of dangers in a landscape that is at times breathtakingly beautiful, at others brutal, they’re committed to their job: bringing books to people who have never had any, arming them with facts that will change their lives.

Based on a true story rooted in America’s past, *The Giver of Stars* is unparalleled in its scope and epic in its storytelling. Funny, heartbreaking, enthralling, it is destined to become a modern classic--a richly rewarding novel of women’s friendship, of true love, and of what happens when we reach beyond our grasp for the great beyond.

### 17 *Olive Again* by Elizabeth Strout 304 pages (hardback) **No paperback version yet available**

“*Olive, Again*,” like its predecessor is a collection of inter-related stories about the denizens of Crosby, Maine, particularly in relation to *Olive Kitterage*. We meet some familiar characters, but also a few new ones. There is a disturbing story of a young girl who cleans houses and a strange relationship that follows. I was especially touched by the continuation of a story from the first book that relates a poignant conversation between the sister of a murderer and her parent’s lawyer as she returns to Crosby and her memories of growing up there. Evidence of *Olive* growing as an individual is in a piece where she visits a former pupil who has cancer. I loved these conversations so much because *Olive* reveals a lot about her marriages. Plus, it’s quite funny! Happily, one section brings us up to date on the Burgess boys - another of Strout’s novels!