
Kennebecasis Public Library – Book Club Program

Librarian: Madaline Boutilier

Email: Madaline.boutilier@gnb.ca **Phone:** (506) 849-5314 and ask for her.

Contact Madaline by email or phone to let her know that they are a part of the HIVE book club and what books the club wants brought in, when they are needed, and any future titles wanted if it has been decided.

Not a Happy Family, by Shari Lapena

About the Author: Shari Lapena is the internationally bestselling author of the thrillers *The Couple Next Door*, *A Stranger in the House*, *An Unwanted Guest*, *Someone We Know*, *The End of Her*, and *Not a Happy Family*, which have all been *New York Times* and *The Sunday Times* (London) bestsellers. Her books have been sold in thirty-eight territories around the world. She lives in Toronto.

A) To help kick-off discussion, here are 7 discussion questions to get started provided by the Publisher. Members can take turns reading the question aloud.

1. Catherine, Dan, and Jenna each stand to inherit millions when their parents die, and each has their own difficult relationships with other members of the family. Did you suspect one of the Merton children could be behind the murder of their parents, or did you think it was someone else? Explain who and why.
2. Most of, if not all, the characters are unlikable in some way. Despite that, their flaws make them seem more human. Did you find any one character more relatable than the others? Why or why not? Discuss.
3. Shari Lapena is known for incorporating many twists and turns in her novels. Did you anticipate how the story would unfold? What did you guess correctly, and how did you know?
4. Current housekeeper Irena, originally hired as the nanny for the Merton children, has been working for the family for decades. She, too, will inherit a significant sum when Fred and Sheila's wealth is divided, as will Fred's sister, Audrey. In their own way, both Irena and Audrey are outsiders to the Merton family—Irena as their employee and Audrey as the much-despised relation—and each plays an important role in the novel. Do you think the detectives handled their investigations into the two women in the right way? Discuss.

5. As the novel goes on, more information is revealed about the motivations of each character as we witness their interior thoughts and their assumptions about the others. Did your feelings toward anyone shift as you read? If so, how?

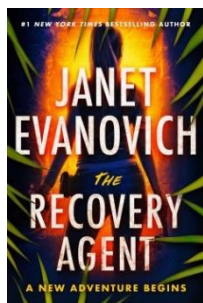
6. Rose and Catherine have a complicated relationship that only grows more challenging as a certain truth about Rose comes to light. Of the two women, who were you siding with most and why? Did your sympathies toward one of the women change at any point?

7. Lapena uses short chapters to keep the momentum propulsive and to leave readers with cliff-hangers before shifting to a new point of view. Was there any one cliff-hanger or reveal that caught you particularly off guard or made you doubt what you thought you knew?

B) Book questions and discussion from Book Club Members.

C) Discussion and choosing of the next book to read (by popular vote).

Here are 5 of the most popular books with availability from the Public Library:



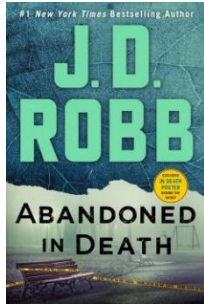
Title: The recovery agent

Author: Evanovich, Janet

Pages: 297

Call Number: F EVA

Abstract: Lost something? Gabriela Rose knows how to get it back. As a recovery agent, she's hired by individuals and companies seeking lost treasures, stolen heirlooms, or missing assets of any kind. She's reliable, cool under pressure, and well trained in weapons of all types. But Gabriela's latest job isn't for some bamboozled billionaire, it's for her own family, whose home is going to be wiped off the map if they can't come up with a lot of money fast. Inspired by an old family legend, Gabriela sets off for the jungles of Peru in pursuit of the Ring of Solomon and the lost Treasure of Lima. But this particular job comes with a huge problem attached to it--Gabriela's ex-husband, Rafer. It's Rafer who has the map that possibly points the way to the treasure, and he's not about to let Gabriela find it without him. Rafer is as relaxed as Gabriela is driven, and he has a lifetime's experience getting under his ex-wife's skin. But when they aren't bickering about old times the two make a formidable team, and it's going to take a team to defeat the vicious drug lord who has also been searching for the fabled ring. A drug lord who doesn't mind leaving a large body count behind him to get it.



Title: Abandoned in death

Author: J.D. Robb.

Pages: 356

Call Number: F ROB

Abstract: The woman's body was found in the early morning, on a bench in a New York City playground. She was clean, her hair neatly arranged, her makeup carefully applied. But other things were very wrong--like the tattoo and piercings, clearly new. The clothes, decades out of date. The fatal wound hidden beneath a ribbon around her neck. And the note: "Bad Mommy," written in crayon as if by a child. Eve Dallas turns to the department's top profiler, who confirms what seems obvious to Eve: they're dealing with a killer whose childhood involved some sort of trauma--a situation Eve is all too familiar with herself. Yet the clues suggest a perpetrator who'd be roughly sixty years old, and there are no records of old crimes with a similar MO. What was the trigger that apparently reopened such an old wound and sent someone over the edge? When Eve discovers that other young women--who physically resemble the first victim--have vanished, the clock starts ticking louder. But to solve this case she will need to find her way into a hidden place of dim light and concrete, into the distant past, and into the cold depths of a shattered mind.



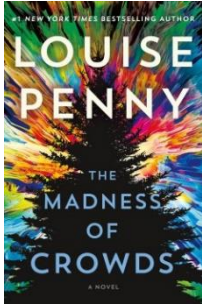
Title: The school for good mothers

Author: Jessamine Chan

Pages: 324

Call Number: F CHA

Abstract: Protagonist Frida Liu, a 39-year-old Chinese-American single mother in Philadelphia, loses custody of her 18-month-old daughter, Harriet, after she leaves Harriet home alone for two hours on one very bad day. To regain custody, Frida must spend a year at a newly-created institution, where she practices parenting with bad mothers from all over the county. There, she learns to love an uncannily life-like toddler girl doll in order to demonstrate her maternal instincts and prove to her family court judge that she deserves a second chance. Frida is an outsider in every way: better educated, more affluent, and the only Asian. The mothers, whose transgressions range from benign to horrific, are under constant surveillance. If they don't pass all the school's tests, their parental rights will be terminated.



Title: The madness of crowds

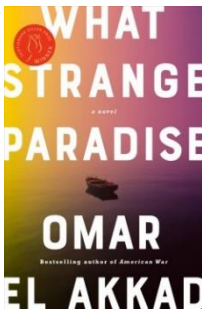
Author: Louise Penny

Pages: 436

Call Number: F PEN

Abstract: You're a coward. Time and again, as the New Year approaches, that charge is leveled against Armand Gamache. It starts innocently enough. While the residents of the Québec village of Three Pines take advantage of the deep snow to ski and toboggan, to drink hot chocolate in the bistro and share meals

together, the Chief Inspector finds his holiday with his family interrupted by a simple request. He's asked to provide security for what promises to be a non-event. A visiting Professor of Statistics will be giving a lecture at the nearby university. While he is perplexed as to why the head of homicide for the Sûreté du Québec would be assigned this task, it sounds easy enough. That is until Gamache starts looking into Professor Abigail Robinson and discovers an agenda so repulsive he begs the university to cancel the lecture.



Title: What strange paradise

Author: Omar El Akkad

Pages: 235

Call Number: F ELA

Abstract: More bodies have washed up on the shores of a small island. Another over-filled, ill-equipped, dilapidated ship has sunk under the weight of its too many passengers: Syrians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinians, all of them desperate to escape untenable lives in their homelands. And only one has made the

passage: nine-year-old Amir, a Syrian boy who has the good fortune to fall into the hands not of the officials but of Vanna: a teenage girl, native to the island, who lives inside her own sense of homelessness in a place and among people she has come to disdain. And though she and the boy are complete strangers, though they don't speak a common language, she determines to do whatever it takes to save him. In alternating chapters, we learn the story of the boy's life and how he came to be on the boat; and we follow the girl and boy as they make their way toward a vision of safety. But as the novel unfurls, we begin to understand that this is not merely the story of two children finding their way through a hostile world, it is the story of our collective moment in this time: of empathy and indifference, of hope and despair--and of the way each of those things can blind us to reality, or guide us to a better one.

D) Date of next meeting: Thursday, August 25, 2022, at 1:30PM.