
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.

The Great Alone, by Kristin Hannah

About the Author: Kristin Hannah is an award-winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels including the international blockbuster, *The Nightingale*, *Winter Garden*, *Night Road*, and *Firefly Lane*. Kristin is a former-lawyer-turned writer who lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband.

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. “It was otherworldly somehow, magical in its vast expanse. An incomparable landscape.” (31) Alaska is definitely a character in this novel. The author clearly wants you to understand both the grandeur and danger that are present every day in the Last Frontier. How did the landscape create and shape this story? Is this a story that could have taken place anywhere? Or was the solitude of Alaska part of the fabric of the novel?
2. Alaska is called many things. The Last Frontier, The Land of the Midnight Sun, The Great Alone. How do you think these different nicknames describe different parts of the state?
3. What aspects of the Alaska/homesteader lifestyle would you find the most challenging in the wild? How would you handle the isolation, the interdependence among neighbors, the climate? Would you have what it takes to survive?
4. Large Marge tells Cora and Leni that “in Alaska, everyone is either running to something or running away from something.” Do you think this is particularly true to wild places like Alaska? Or has it always been true of the American pioneer? How would you compare and contrast the homesteaders in Alaska to the pioneers in early America, who came west in covered wagons? How are the modern Alaska

homesteaders different? How are they the same? What do you think draws people to the wild, unpredictable and remote corners of Alaska?

5. The Great Alone is set in the turbulent world of America in the 1970's. Why do you think the author chose this time period? How did the world at that time, with the political unrest and kidnappings and plane hijackings, factor into the plot? Why do you believe the back-to-the-earth movement spoke to so many people in the seventies? Why did it speak to Ernt?

6. Do you think the world feels dangerous today? Do you think the unrest and troubles of the seventies are relevant today? Can we learn from them? What does The Great Alone have to say about the idea of turning one's back on civilization and the problems of society?

7. If you experienced the seventies, what was it like to read about those years? Did it match up with your memories of it, or color the story for you? Did the popular culture references remind you of your own life? And if you didn't experience the seventies, what did you learn about the era from the novel?

8. Ernt was a prisoner of war for several years. We know now about PTSD and the ways in which Ernt would have been suffering and the ways in which he could now be helped, but that help didn't exist in the seventies. Additionally, the Vietnam vets were often treated badly by people upon their return. How do you think Ernt's war experiences changed him? Do you believe, as Cora tells Leni, that he was "changed" when he came home? Did the war and PTSD "make" Ernt violent, or do you believe he was violent before?

9. Cora is a complicated character. When Leni is reminiscing about her mother and their days in the commune, she notes that "her mother changed her personality just enough to fit in." What do you think this passage tells us about Cora? Why do you think she stayed with Ernt all those years? Was it love? Fear? In general, why do you think women stay with abusive men?

10. One of the issues highlighted in the novel is the lack of legal support for women in the seventies. Large Marge often makes the point that the law can't help women like Cora, and Leni, even as young as she is, intuitively that only Cora can save herself. Do you think that was true then? Is it true today? Does the law do enough to help battered women?

11. Leni is shaped by the complexity of her parents' toxic relationship. How does she explain her life before she sees the truth of the violence? As is often the case in abusive families, Leni—the child—takes on the role of caretaker. How did it mold Leni's character, this need to keep the ugly truth of her family, secret?

12. Would you say that Leni is a survivor? Is Cora?

13. "Your mother was a kite string. Without her strong, steady hold on you, you might just float away, be lost somewhere among the clouds." (126) If you have faced the loss of a loved one, did you find this quote to have special resonance for you? What did the author get right about this sentiment? How else would you describe a mother's influence? In many ways, *The Great Alone*, is a mother-daughter love story, but one with a broken spine. How did Cora let Leni down in life, how did she save her? Do you think Cora was a good mother?

14. Leni and Matthew experience first friendship and first love. There is an obvious Romeo-and-Juliet aspect to their love story. How did you feel about their relationship as it was growing? Did you root for them? Or did you feel that Leni was taking a terrible risk that was going to have dark consequences.

15. "This is dangerous, she thought again, but she couldn't make herself care. All she could think about now was Matthew, and how it had felt when he kissed her, and how much she wanted to kiss him again." (241) Do you recall your own days of young love and that rush of feeling? Do you think the experience is universal?

16. How did the building of Ernt's wall affect you as a reader? As he was building it, what did you think was going to happen? Did you think someone was going to kill Ernt? Who did you think the killer would be? Who did you want it to be?

17. Did you see Cora's explosive act of protection coming? What did it feel like to read that scene? As a parent, do you think you'd be capable of the same act, or write such a confessional letter?

18. Did you hold Leni responsible in your mind for any of Matthew's misfortune? Why or why not? How does Leni show her devotion in the end? Did you anticipate the kind of future that is set in motion for them at the close of the book?

19. At the end of the story, Leni ends up back in Alaska—do you think there's an ultimate place where people belong? How would you know if you got there?

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:



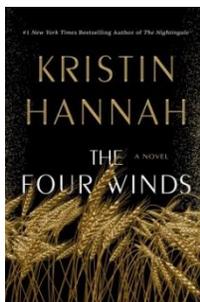
Title: Wish you were here

Author: Jodi Picoult

Pages: 321

Call Number: F PIC

Abstract: Diana O'Toole is perfectly on track. She will be married by thirty, done having kids by thirty-five, and move out to the New York City suburbs, all while climbing the professional ladder in the cutthroat art auction world. She's a junior appraiser at Sotheby's now, but her boss has hinted at a promotion if she can close a deal with a high-profile client. She's not engaged just yet, but she knows her boyfriend Finn, a surgical resident, is about to propose on their romantic getaway to the Galapagos--days before her thirtieth birthday. Right on time. But then a virus that felt worlds away has appeared in the city, and on the eve of their departure, Finn breaks the news: it's all hands on deck at the hospital. He has to stay behind. You should still go, he assures her, since it would be a shame for their nonrefundable trip to go to waste. And so, reluctantly, she goes. Almost immediately, Diana's dream vacation goes awry. Her luggage is lost, the Wi-Fi is nearly nonexistent, and the hotel they'd booked is shut down due to the pandemic. In fact, the whole island is now under quarantine, and she is stranded until borders reopen. Completely isolated, she must venture beyond her comfort zone. Slowly, she carves out a connection with a local family when a teenager with a secret opens up to her, despite her father's suspicion of outsiders. In the Galapagos Islands, where Darwin's theory of natural selection was formed, Diana finds herself examining her relationships, her choices, and herself--and wondering if when she goes home, she too will have evolved into someone completely different.



Title: The four winds

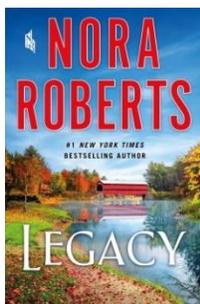
Author: Kristin Hannah

Pages: 454

Call Number: F HAN

Abstract: From Kristin Hannah, the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Nightingale* and *The Great Alone*, comes an epic novel of love and heroism and hope, set against the backdrop of one of America's most defining eras - the Great Depression. Texas, 1934. Millions are out of work and a drought has broken the Great Plains.

Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as the crops are failing, the water is drying up, and dust threatens to bury them all. One of the darkest periods of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl era, has arrived with a vengeance. In this uncertain and dangerous time, Elsa Martinelli - like so many of her neighbors - must make an agonizing choice: fight for the land she loves or go west, to California, in search of a better life. *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American Dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.



Title: Kristin Hannah

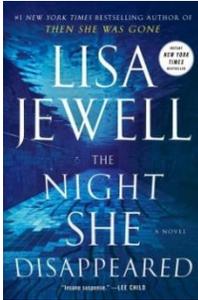
Author: Nora Roberts

Pages: 434

Call Number: F ROB

Abstract: Adrian Rizzo was seven when she met her father for the first time. That was the day he nearly killed her--before her mother, Lina, stepped in. Soon after, Adrian was dropped off at her grandparents' house in Maryland, where she spent a long summer drinking lemonade, playing with dogs, making a new best friend--

and developing the stirrings of a crush on her friend's ten-year-old brother. Lina, meanwhile, traveled the country promoting her fitness brand and turning it into a billion-dollar business. There was no point in dwelling on the past. A decade later, Adrian has created her own line of yoga and workout videos, following in Lina's footsteps but intent on maintaining creative control. And she's just as cool-headed and ambitious as her mother. They aren't close, but they're cordial--as long as neither crosses the other. But while Lina dismisses the death threats that Adrian starts getting as a routine part of her daughter's growing celebrity, Adrian can't help but find the vicious rhymes unsettling. Year after year, they keep arriving--the postmarks changing, but the menacing tone the same. They continue after she returns to Maryland and becomes reacquainted with Raylan, her childhood crush, all grown up and as gorgeously green-eyed as ever. Sometimes it even seems like the terrifying messages are indeed routine, like nothing will come of them. Until the murders start, and the escalation begins...



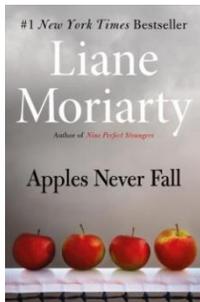
Title: The night she disappeared

Author: Lisa Jewell

Pages: 401

Call Number: F JEW

Abstract: On a beautiful summer night in a charming English suburb, a young woman and her boyfriend disappear after partying at the massive country estate of a new college friend. One year later, a writer moves into a cottage on the edge of the woods that border the same estate. Known locally as the Dark Place, the dense forest is the writer's favorite area for long walks and it's on one such walk that she stumbles upon a mysterious note that simply reads, "DIG HERE." Could this be a clue towards what has happened to the missing young couple? And what exactly is buried in this haunted ground?



Title: Apples never fall

Author: Liane Moriarty

Pages: 467

Call Number: F MOR

Abstract: If your mother was missing, would you tell the police? Even if the most obvious suspect was your father? This is the dilemma facing the four grown Delaney siblings. The Delaneys are fixtures in their community. The parents, Stan and Joy, are the envy of all of their friends. They're killers on the tennis court, and off it their chemistry is palpable. But after fifty years of marriage, they've finally sold their famed tennis academy and are ready to start what should be the golden years of their lives. So why are Stan and Joy so miserable? The four Delaney children--Amy, Logan, Troy, and Brooke--were tennis stars in their own right, yet as their father will tell you, none of them had what it took to go all the way. But that's okay, now that they're all successful grown-ups and there is the wonderful possibility of grandchildren on the horizon. One night a stranger named Savannah knocks on Stan and Joy's door, bleeding after a fight with her boyfriend. The Delaneys are more than happy to give her the small kindness she sorely needs. If only that was all she wanted. Later, when Joy goes missing, and Savannah is nowhere to be found, the police question the one person who remains: Stan. But for someone who claims to be innocent, he, like many spouses, seems to have a lot to hide. Two of the Delaney children think their father is innocent, two are not so sure--but as the two sides square off against each other in perhaps their biggest match ever, all of the Delaneys will start to reexamine their shared family history in a very new light.

D) Date of next meeting: Thursday, September 29, 2022, at 1:30PM.