
Kennebecasis Public Library – Book Club Program

Librarian: Madaline Boutilier

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

!!! Please let Kirstin know which book(s) are selected so she can contact Madaline to reserve the book(s) the club wants to read next.

Date of next meeting: Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 1:30PM

The Diary of a Bookseller, by Shaun Bythell

About the Author: **Shaun Bythell** is the owner of The Bookshop in Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town, and also one of the organisers of the Wigtown Festival. Shaun Bythell has run The Bookshop in Wigtown since 1 November 2001. His internationally bestselling books *The Diary of a Bookseller*, *Confessions of a Bookseller* and *Seven Kinds of People You Find in Bookshops* have been translated into over thirty languages. His passion for bookselling is matched only by his sense of despair for its future.

When not working amongst The Bookshop's mile of shelving, Shaun's hobbies include eavesdropping on customers, uploading book-themed re-workings of Sugarhill Gang songs to YouTube and shooting Amazon Kindles in the wild.

A) Here are discussion questions to help kick-off discussion. Members can take turns reading the question aloud.

- 1.** How would you describe Shaun Bythell? Does "grumpy old man" hit the mark? Is he truly a curmudgeon? Or, given the customers he deals with on a daily basis, does he have reason to be a tad acerbic?
- 2.** Talk about Bythell's customers. What about those who seemingly spend hours among the shelves but never purchase a book? Or the ones who threaten to go home and buy a title online? Do you see yourself in some of those people? Given Bythell's less-than-flattering descriptions, would you have the courage to walk through his door?

3. Speaking of buying books online, discuss the economics of the bookselling trade — especially the power that Amazon and other large chain stores have vis-a-vis smaller, independent brick & mortar shops.
4. Given the seemingly never ending challenges his bookstore faces (i.e., difficult customers and difficult economics), why does Bythell continue? He says he loves his work? What specifically does he love?
5. What is Bythell's case for books, the paper and ink kind, over digital readers?
6. What curious fact about the book trade surprises you most: that first editions are not usually all that valuable, for instance, or that people who ask about Bibles, never buy them? What about men and railway books?
7. "On the whole (in my shop at least) the majority of fiction is still bought by women, while men rarely buy anything other than nonfiction." Care to make a comment? Perhaps things are different in the US than the UK? What about spy thrillers: do men read them more frequently than women do?
8. What does Bythell have to say about the long-term survival of books and bookshops? What does he see as the future of the book trade? What do you see?
9. What do you think of Bythell's staff? Who do you find more endearing ... or amusing?
10. Talk about how Bythell sources his bookstore — about the auctions and estate sales he attends.
11. What incidents or passages or quips do you find especially funny in *The Diary of a Bookseller*?

B) Book questions and discussion from Book Club Members.

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