November 2, 2019  
9:00 a.m.  
The Kitchen House  
by Kathleen Grissom, discussion led by Julie Baird  
In this gripping novel, a dark secret threatens to expose the best and worst in everyone tied to the estate at a thriving plantation in Virginia in the decades before the Civil War. Orphaned during her passage from Ireland, young, white Lavinia arrives on the steps of the kitchen house and is placed, as an indentured servant, under the care of Belle, the master’s illegitimate slave daughter. Lavinia learns to cook, clean, and serve food, while guided by the quiet strength and love of her new family. In time, Lavinia is accepted into the world of the big house, caring for the master’s opium-addicted wife and befriending his dangerous yet protective son. She attempts to straddle the worlds of the kitchen and big house, but her skin color will forever set her apart from Belle and the other slaves. Through the unique eyes of Lavinia and Belle, Grissom’s debut novel unfolds in a heartbreaking and ultimately hopeful story of class, race, dignity, deep-buried secrets, and familial bonds. –Amazon.com

December 7, 2019  
9:00 a.m.  
Catch-22  
by Joseph Heller, discussion led by Jerry Harvey  
Fifty years after its original publication, Catch-22 remains a cornerstone of American literature and one of the funniest - and most celebrated - novels of all time. In recent years, it has been named to “best novels” lists by Time, Newsweek, the Modern Library, and the London Observer. Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But his real problem is not the enemy - it is his own army, which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous missions he’s assigned, he’ll be in violation of Catch-22, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: A man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved. Since its publication in 1961, no novel has matched Catch-22’s intensity and brilliance in depicting the brutal insanity of war. –Amazon.com
January 4  
9:00 a.m.  
**A River Runs Through It**  
by Norman MacLean, discussion led by Tim Garvey

From its first magnificent sentence, “In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing,” to the last, “I am haunted by waters,” *A River Runs Through It* is an American classic. Based on Norman Maclean’s childhood experiences, *A River Runs Through It* has established itself as one of the most moving stories of our time; it captivates readers with vivid descriptions of life along Montana’s Big Blackfoot River and its near magical blend of fly fishing with the troubling affections of the heart. Norman Maclean (1902-90), woodsman, scholar, teacher, and storyteller, grew up in the Western Rocky Mountains of Montana and worked for many years in logging camps and for the United States Forestry Service before beginning his academic career. He retired from the University of Chicago in 1973. —Goodreads.com

February 1  
9:00 a.m.  
**Five Days at Memorial**  
by Sheri Fink, discussion led by Ruth Sendecki

In the tradition of the best investigative journalism, physician and reporter Sheri Fink reconstructs five days at Memorial Medical Center and draws the reader into the lives of those who struggled mightily to survive and to maintain life amid chaos. After Katrina struck and the floodwaters rose, the power failed, and the heat climbed, exhausted caregivers chose to designate certain patients last for rescue. Months later, several health professionals faced criminal allegations that they deliberately injected numerous patients with drugs to hasten their deaths. *Five Days at Memorial*, the culmination of six years of reporting, unspools the mystery of what happened in those days, bringing the reader into a hospital fighting for its life and into a conversation about the most terrifying form of health care rationing. In a voice at once involving and fair, masterful and intimate, Fink exposes the hidden dilemmas of end-of-life care and reveals just how ill-prepared we are in America for the impact of large-scale disasters—and how we can do better. A remarkable book, engrossing from start to finish, *Five Days at Memorial* radically transforms your understanding of human nature in crisis. —Goodreads.com

March 7  
9:00 a.m.  
**The Woman Warrior**  
by Maxine Hong Kingston, discussion led by Caroline Evans

In her award-winning book *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston created an entirely new form—an exhilarating blend of autobiography and mythology, of world and self, of hot rage and cool analysis. First published in 1976, it has become a classic in its innovative portrayal of multiple and intersecting identities—immigrant, female, Chinese, American. As a girl, Kingston lives in two confounding worlds: the California to which her parents have immigrated and the China of her mother’s “talk stories.” The fierce and wily women warriors of her mother’s tales clash jarringly with the harsh reality of female oppression out of which they come. Kingston’s sense of self emerges in the mystifying gaps in these stories, which she learns to fill with stories of her own. A warrior of words, she forges fractured myths and memories into an incandescent whole, achieving a new understanding of her family’s past and her own present. —Amazon.com

April 4  
9:00 a.m.  
**The Library Book**  
by Susan Orlean, discussion led by Meg Nagel

On the morning of April 29, 1986, a fire alarm sounded in the Los Angeles Public Library. As the moments passed, the patrons and staff who had been cleared out of the building realized this was not the usual fire alarm. As one fireman recounted, “Once that first stack got going, it was ‘Goodbye, Charlie.’” The fire was disastrous: it reached 2000 degrees and burned for more than seven hours. By the time it was extinguished, it had consumed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. Investigators descended on the scene, but more than thirty years later, the mystery remains: Did someone purposefully set fire to the library—and if so, who? Weaving her lifelong love of books and reading into an investigation of the fire, award-winning *New Yorker* reporter and *New York Times* bestselling author Susan Orlean delivers a mesmerizing and uniquely compelling book that manages to tell the broader story of libraries and librarians in a way that has never been done before. —Amazon.com
**May 2**  
9:00 a.m.  
*The Johnstown Flood*  
by David McCullough, discussion led by Mabel Risch

The stunning story of one of America’s great disasters, a preventable tragedy of Gilded Age America, brilliantly told by master historian David McCullough. At the end of the nineteenth century, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was a booming coal-and-steel town filled with hardworking families striving for a piece of the nation’s burgeoning industrial prosperity. In the mountains above Johnstown, an old earth dam had been hastily rebuilt to create a lake for an exclusive summer resort patronized by the tycoons of that same industrial prosperity, among them Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and Andrew Mellon. Despite repeated warnings of possible danger, nothing was done about the dam. Then came May 31, 1889, when the dam burst, sending a wall of water thundering down the mountain, smashing through Johnstown, and killing more than 2,000 people. It was a tragedy that became a national scandal. Graced by David McCullough’s remarkable gift for writing richly textured, sympathetic social history, *The Johnstown Flood* is an absorbing, classic portrait of life in nineteenth-century America, of overweening confidence, of energy, and of tragedy. It also offers a powerful historical lesson for our century and all times: the danger of assuming that because people are in positions of responsibility they are necessarily behaving responsibly. –Amazon.com

**June 6**  
9:00 a.m.  
*Birding Without Borders*  
by Noah Strycker, discussion led by Carol Cox

In 2015, Noah Strycker set himself a lofty goal: to become the first person to see half the world’s birds in one year. For 365 days, with a backpack, binoculars, and a series of one-way tickets, he traveled across forty-one countries and all seven continents, eventually spotting 6,042 species—by far the biggest birding year on record. This is no travelogue or glorified checklist. Noah ventures deep into a world of chronic sleep deprivation, airline snafus, breakdowns, mudslides, floods, war zones, ecologic devastation, conservation triumphs, common and iconic species, and scores of passionate bird lovers around the globe. By pursuing the freest creatures on the planet, he gains a unique perspective on the world they share with us—and offers a hopeful message that even as many birds face an uncertain future, more people than ever are working to protect them. –Amazon.com

**July 11**  
9:00 a.m.  
*The Angle of Repose*  
by Wallace Stegner, discussion led by Brenda Joyce Coda

An American masterpiece and iconic novel of the West by National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize winner Wallace Stegner—a deeply moving narrative of one family and the traditions of our national past. Lyman Ward is a retired professor of history, recently confined to a wheelchair by a crippling bone disease and dependent on others for his every need. Amid the chaos of 1970s counterculture he retreats to his ancestral home of Grass Valley, California, to write the biography of his grandmother: an elegant and headstrong artist and pioneer who, together with her engineer husband, made her own journey through the hardscrabble West nearly a hundred years before. In discovering her story he excavates his own, probing the shadows of his experience and the America that has come of age around him. –Amazon.com

**August 1**  
9:00 a.m.  
*Planning Meeting for 2020–2021 Book Club*

Choose one or two books that you’ve personally read and would like to see discussed during the next book club season. We choose next year’s reading list from suggestions made by group members. Please note, if your book is selected, you will be expected to facilitate the discussion for that book.
September 5
9:00 a.m.

**The Hobbit**
by J.R.R. Tolkien,
discussion led by Anita Brown & Sally Thoreson

A great modern classic and the prelude to *The Lord of the Rings*. Bilbo Baggins is a hobbit who enjoys a comfortable, unambitious life, rarely traveling any farther than his pantry or cellar. But his contentment is disturbed when the wizard Gandalf and a company of dwarves arrive on his doorstep one day to whisk him away on an adventure. They have launched a plot to raid the treasure hoard guarded by Smaug the Magnificent, a large and very dangerous dragon. Bilbo reluctantly joins their quest, unaware that on his journey to the Lonely Mountain he will encounter both a magic ring and a frightening creature known as Gollum. A glorious account of a magnificent adventure, filled with suspense and seasoned with a quiet humor that is irresistible . . . All those, young or old, who love a fine adventurous tale, beautifully told, will take The Hobbit to their hearts. –New York Times Book Review

October 3
9:00 a.m.

**How to Hide an Empire**
by Daniel Immerwahr, discussion led by Tiffany McNeil

We are familiar with maps that outline all fifty states. And we are also familiar with the idea that the United States is an “empire,” exercising power around the world. But what about the actual territories—the islands, atolls, and archipelagos—this country has governed and inhabited? In *How to Hide an Empire*, Daniel Immerwahr tells the fascinating story of the United States outside the United States. In crackling, fast-paced prose, he reveals forgotten episodes that cast American history in a new light. We travel to the Guano Islands, where prospectors collected one of the nineteenth century’s most valuable commodities, and the Philippines, site of the most destructive event on U.S. soil. In Puerto Rico, Immerwahr shows how U.S. doctors conducted grisly experiments they would never have conducted on the mainland and charts the emergence of independence fighters who would shoot up the U.S. Congress. In the years after World War II, Immerwahr notes, the United States moved away from colonialism. Instead, it put innovations in electronics, transportation, and culture to use, devising a new sort of influence that did not require the control of space. Rich with absorbing vignettes, full of surprises, and driven by an original conception of what empire and globalization mean today, How to Hide an Empire is a major and compulsively readable work of history. –Amazon.com

Join us to discuss these books; everyone is welcome.
The Book Club meets on the first Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.
in the meeting room at the Montrose Regional Library.